

# Inquiries into the Absolute

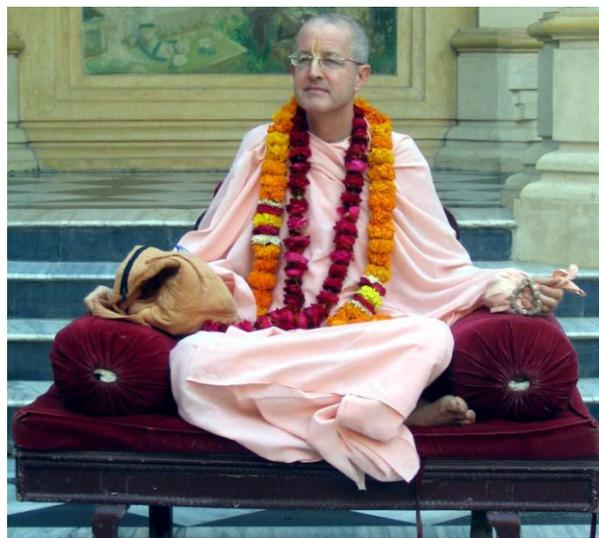
(A collection of thought provoking & intriguing answers given by His Holiness Romapada Swami for questions raised by devotees on various spiritual topics)



**Shri Shri Radha Govinda, Brooklyn, NY**

We invite you to immerse yourself into the transcendental answers given by Srila Romapada Swami! These sublime instructions are certain to break our misconceptions into millions of pieces and to deepen our understanding of various topics in Krishna consciousness.

**Compilation of weekly digests 1 to 242 (Upto December 2007)**



**His Holiness Srila Romapada Swami Maharaj!**

Everyone one likes to inquire. Srila Prabhupada writes,  
"The whole world is full of questions and answers. The birds, beasts and men are all busy in the matter of perpetual questions and answers... Although they go on making such questions and answers for their whole lives, they are not at all satisfied. Satisfaction of the soul can only be obtained by questions and answers on the subject of Krishna." --

Purport to Srimad Bhagavatam 1.2.5

"Inquiries into the Absolute" is a wonderful opportunity provided by Srila Romapada Swami to help us fruitfully engage our propensity to inquire and seek answers. Please take advantage!

## Guide to “Inquiries into the Absolute”

om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā  
cakṣur unmīlitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ

I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, who has opened my eyes, blinded by the darkness of ignorance, with the torchlight of knowledge.

‘Inquiries into the Absolute’, is a weekly email digest comprising of thought provoking and sublime answers given by His Holiness Romapada Swami Maharaj to the questions raised by devotees on myriad spiritual topics. In addition to his innumerable services, His Holiness Romapada Swami Maharaja inaugurated this inspiring service on April 19, 2001 to guide the devotees to advance in their Krishna consciousness. As of December 2007, we have close to 250 digests addressing over 580 questions dealing with various topics.

These digests are very comprehensive and thus encompass countless questions which we may encounter often in our devotional life. These questions are already answered wonderfully and elaborately by Srila Romapada Swami. We invite you to immerse yourself into the authoritative, loving, and thought provoking answers given by Srila Romapada Swami. These sublime instructions are certain to break our misconceptions into millions of pieces. Furthermore, these instructions will deepen our understanding of various topics in Krishna consciousness and elevate our consciousness. Moreover, this treasure house contains innumerable practical tips for our spiritual advancement. Any devotee who is serious about their advancement in Krishna consciousness is strongly urged to carefully study this wonderful rendering of Maharaj.

The weekly digests were organized as follows:

- **Topics:** The weekly digests were categorized into 28 major topics and further divided into several related subtopics.
  - Topics were presented alphabetically in this document.
- **Subtopics:** Subtopics were used when there was significant number of questions dealing with a particular subtopic. However, subtopic was also used for unique and important themes, despite the number of questions available. Questions, which did not have a specific subtopic, were grouped under ‘General questions’.
  - The subtopics were arranged alphabetically in this document.
- **Questions/Answers:** At the end of each question, the original digest number is given followed by the question number (for instance, digest 2.1 indicates question 1 of digest 2) for easy cross-reference. Due to the nature of some questions, more than one topic was discussed in a particular Q/A. In these cases, questions were placed under the most representative topic/subtopic.
  - Questions were arranged based on a logical order in most cases, under each subtopic.
- **Table of contents:** Topics, subtopics and the titles of Q/A were provided in the table of contents.

- A model organization, as used in this manuscript, is given as follows:

## 1. Topic

### 1.1. Subtopic

#### 1.1.1) Title of the question/answer

**Question in bold letters (Digest number. question number)**

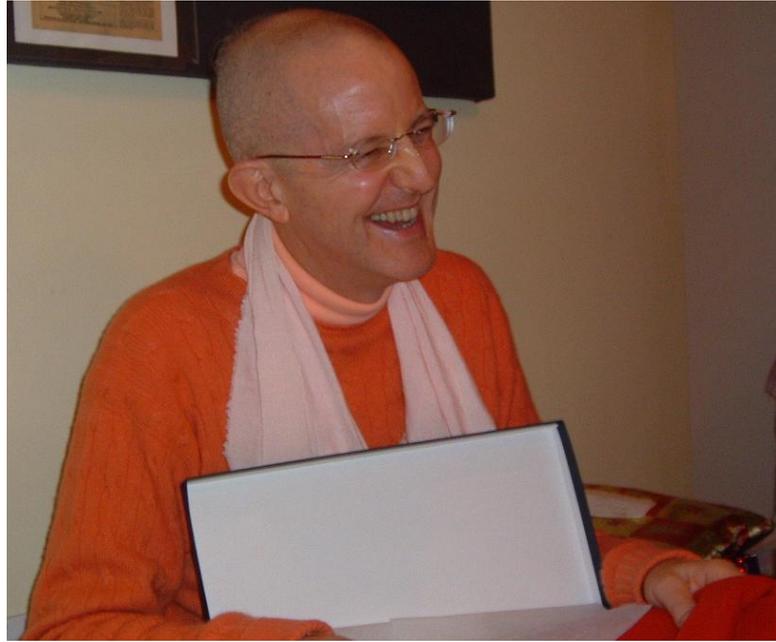
Answer by Srila Romapada Swami.

- **Appendix:** For five questions dealing with ‘patience’, ‘Deity worship’, ‘Caitanya Mahaprabhu & Kalki avatar’, ‘humility’, and ‘yoga ladder’, Maharaj had provided supporting documents with elaborate description. These documents were provided in Appendix.
- **Index:** Index, provided at the end of the document, take into account different topics dealt within each question and thus very comprehensive. Index is divided into keywords and sub-keywords. Whenever it was appropriate, cross-reference of related keywords were also provided at the end of each keyword.
- **Pdf documents:** Several versions of the pdf documents were made available at Maharaj’s website.
  - **Offline browsing:** For offline browsing, a single pdf document (with all the digests up to December 2007) is provided.
  - **Printing:** A two volume set, optimized for printing and binding, is also presented. Comprehensive ‘table of contents’ and ‘index’ were included in both the volumes for easy access. Page margins of these documents were optimized for ‘printing on both the sides’ and binding.
  - **Smaller size document:** Smaller size documents are also made available for those who have slower internet connections.

Please note that we are currently working on improving the organization of this document. If you come across any mistake, please let us know. Your suggestions for the improvement are highly appreciated. Please forgive us if we made any inadvertent mistakes during our compilation.

You are welcome to send in your questions to His Holiness Romapada Swami at [iskcondc@gmail.com](mailto:iskcondc@gmail.com) with the word "Question" included in the subject line. All previous and current digests can be accessed at Maharaj’s official website <http://www.romapadaswami.com>. Lectures given by Maharaj can be accessed at <http://www.caitanya.com>.

## Biography of His Holiness Romapada Swami Maharaj



Srila Romapada Swami appeared in this world on December 27, 1948. He was born in Utica, New York, as the youngest of five children. Although the youngest member of the family, Srila Romapada Swami was respected by the others as the most responsible, the most principle-centered, and the highest achiever amongst them. In course of time, the youngest son of the family would display his unique wisdom and superexcellence in all respects.

Coming from a Christian upbringing, he received a strong sense of values, as passed on by his mother and father. As a child, he was deeply thoughtful about his experiences in life. He carefully contemplated the teachings of the Bible that were imparted to him. He would frequently question such things as: "What does it mean to love God with all one's heart, mind and soul? How does one practically live by the principle 'Love thy neighbor as thyself'? What is it like in the Kingdom of God? What do people do when they get there?"

In search of the answers to these questions, he explored various teachings of transcendental knowledge and was gradually lead to the Bhagavad-Gita. He read seven or eight English translations of Bhagavad-Gita and experimented with meditation. Yet his search was still incomplete.

It was as a student at the State University of New York in Buffalo, in 1969, that Srila Romapada Swami finally found the path to the Absolute Truth that he had been searching for. It was there that he had his first introduction to Krsna consciousness when he heard His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada chanting on campus. He squeezed himself into a packed lecture hall and there was Srila Prabhupada and Alan Ginsberg on stage chanting the Hare Krsna maha-mantra. Although he did not know it at the time, Srila Romapada Swami had just contacted his eternal spiritual master. His journey into Krsna consciousness had begun.

Sometime thereafter, Srila Romapada Swami received a copy of Back to Godhead Magazine and Srila Prabhupada's Bhagavad-Gita, As It Is, the first translation he read that revealed the transcendental message with clarity. He attained the association of devotees who were participating in the preaching center that formed near campus, headed by one of Srila Prabhupada's senior

disciples. He became more and more attracted to Krsna consciousness on account of Srila Prabhupada's purity, the perfect philosophy, and the practical life of devotion based upon practices that actually purified. As he took up those principles and practices of Krsna consciousness, a profound realization unfolded that Srila Prabhupada had undergone great personal sacrifice to deliver a divine message that was now changing his life. Thus, Srila Romapada Swami developed a very deep sense of indebtedness to Srila Prabhupada and concluded that he must dedicate himself in full gratitude to the mission of his spiritual master.

Srila Romapada Swami was 21 years old and had just been accepted to medical school when he joined the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. His family had so much confidence and appreciation for his high sense of values and his individual expression of them, that when he decided to live his life in full devotion to Krsna they respected his decision. In fact, after becoming finally accustomed to the fact that his new way of life was not just a passing fling, they privately expressed the fact that they were quite proud of him; although they shared similar ideals, they saw that he was factually living by them.

During July of 1971, Srila Romapada Swami received first initiation from Srila Prabhupada at the temple located on Henry Street in Brooklyn, New York. One year later, during the summer of '72, Srila Romapada Swami received second initiation. At the time he was fully engaged as the Sankirtana Leader and the Temple Commander in a temple of 150 devotees. During that same summer, Their Most Beautiful Lordships, Sri Sri Radha Govinda, arrived in New York.

Srila Romapada Swami has remained a faithful servant at the lotus feet of Their Lordships ever since. In the summer of 1982, Srila Romapada Swami received initiation into the renounced order of life. After accepting sannyasa, he traveled to many temples throughout the United States and Europe, preaching Krsna consciousness. Yet he always maintained his base at Sri Sri Radha-Govinda Mandir in New York, and continued to orchestrate many local opportunities for college preaching, distributing prasadam and giving the message of Krsna consciousness to others.

In March of '92, he was appointed Governing Body Commissioner for New York and New Jersey. In '94 he accepted the same responsibility for the Midwest United States. Under his inspiration and direction many Sunday Schools and congregational development programs have sprouted and flourished. Due to his indebtedness to Srila Prabhupada, and the particular circumstances in which he contacted Krsna consciousness, Srila Romapada Swami remains forever dedicated to college preaching.

It is not possible to describe the entire range of his activities in devotional service even in the course of one day, what to speak of one decade, or the course of his entire lifetime thus far. One thing that can be said for certain, however, is that each and every moment of his life Srila Romapada Swami is cent-per-cent absorbed in serving the instructions and the mission of his beloved spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada.

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**Chant and Be Happy!**

**Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare!  
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare!**

# 1. Animals, animal sacrifice and animal killing

## 1.1. General questions: Animals, animal sacrifice and animal killing

### 1.1.1) Animal sacrifices/hunting in vedic times

**In the case of animal sacrifices/hunting in Vedic times, why allow a license for such things (regardless of the benefit to the sacrificed animal, etc) - if wise people KNEW that in future common men will just misinterpret this and imitate blindly? (Digest 86.2)**

Vedas gave provisions for animal sacrifice and other such acts primarily to give some concession to those who might otherwise be unable to refrain from them anyway. This is stated in Bhagavatam (SB 11.5.11) When performed **\*\*under the able guidance of a qualified brahmana\*\*** they would gradually bring detachment to the performer on account of their submission to the Vedic authority. For want of qualified brahmanas to administer such prescriptions, scriptures declare them to be prohibited in Kali yuga.

Again, what is important is proper application under proper guidance. In the drug store, there are many drugs available and there is a danger that they may be misused. But those who are conscientious would abide by the warnings on the label and consult qualified physicians. Similarly the Vedas are a vast body of knowledge containing prescriptions for the entire range of human civilization and for all times; they are not to be applied whimsically.

### 1.1.2) Hunting animals for sports during Lord Krishna's time

**2.1.2) While there are clear references by Lord Krishna against killing animals, why was killing of animals still taking place during Lord Krishna's time? Why did Pandu and Arjuna kill animals for sport? Why does Lord Rama hunt for a deer, etc? (Digest 97.1)**

Ksatriyas were meant to give protection to the citizens and to curb down miscreants. They had to be strong and powerful so as to instill fear in the hearts of lawbreakers, and they had to use force sometimes to protect the innocent from the aggressors. Thus they were trained in the art of fighting and part of the training was to hunt down wild animals and practice the art of killing. We could compare it to surgeons first practicing to cut open dead bodies before actually treating real patients. Non-violence is not the duty of a ksatriya.

Apart from honing their chivalrous spirits, there was yet another reason for such hunting: it was the duty of the ksatriyas to keep the forests free from disturbing wild animals so that the sages could reside there and peacefully pursue their spiritual practices.

In any case, their killing was definitely not for unrestricted gratification of senses. It was strictly regulated by religious principles, not whimsical, at least in the case of pious and devoted kings. And never was it an instance of indiscriminate, organized slaughter of innocent animals for commercial purposes, as it is almost always the case in the world today.

### **1.1.3) Killing and karma**

**Is it a sin to kill a living entity like ant, mosquito, cockroach or spider etc? They harm human beings by some means and because of this only one would kill them. It is written in purport of BG 14.16 that one should not kill any living entity. But, microorganisms (bacteria, virus) are always killed by us and plants are also living entities. While I accept that one should not kill animals for eating, but what about plants and bacteria and vermins? Does that incur sin? Please clarify. (Digest 55.1)**

Yes, killing any living entity knowingly, or even unknowingly, incurs sinful reactions. The Supreme Lord is the supreme Father of all beings and every living entity has the right to live in this world, just as we humans do. We do not have the right, because of being in a superior life form, to needlessly take the life of or even cause pain to any other living entity; rather as human beings we are expected to show compassion to these innocent creatures. In fact, Srimad Bhagavatam describes that it is the duty of a grihastha (householder) to protect and maintain even the insects, lizards and other lower life forms as if they were one's own children, what to speak of killing them! (Please refer SB 7.14.9)

We also hear of great saintly persons taking the trouble to not kill even some insignificant ants crossing their path. It is the nature of a sadhu to be compassionate and not harm anyone even if it meant bearing personal inconvenience; and if there is an option to get rid of a troublesome living entity without killing that should be preferred. Only when a living entity poses a dangerous threat, then they may be killed. For instance, scriptures sanction the killing of a snake or scorpion because these living entities are very envious and will thus be relieved of their sinful bodies.

As you have indicated, it is impossible for an embodied living entity in the material world to exist without unavoidably inflicting some difficulty upon other embodied living entities. Just by one's very existence one kills many micro-organisms even while harmlessly walking or just by breathing. Does this mean that we should opt instead to go out of existence so as to escape these sins, as some impersonalist schools propose? No. The solution is to purify our existence. These unavoidable sinful reactions can be counteracted only by dedicating our lives unto God's service and performing yajna (such as sankirtana yajna, chanting the Lord's Holy Names). If one's very existence is completely dedicated to the Lord, and one is not envious towards any living entity but a well-wisher of all, then whatever one does becomes beneficial even to the unseen microorganisms.

You cited the example of killing plants for food. Such an activity also incurs sin, albeit relatively less sinful compared to killing of animals. But when a devotee prepares food items and cooks for Krishna, offers the food to the Lord and then partakes the prasadam, there is no sin incurred for the devotees. Conversely, the plants derive great spiritual benefit because of being offered to the Lord's in devotion, and are thus promoted to higher forms of life than would have been the case had natural death taken place instead.

### **1.1.4) Old testament and animal killing**

**In reference to this question and your answer pertaining to animal sacrifice, I would like to point out that in the Old Testament of the Bible, not only was Abraham instructed**

**by the Lord to perform animal sacrifice, the Lord provided Abraham with an animal to sacrifice. Also, the apostle Paul was given the revelation by the Lord, that the dietary laws practiced by the Hebrews were no longer required, that all food, including meat, was clean to eat. Are these examples not clashes between Judaism/Christianity and the Vedas?**

**(Ref: Q) It is always mentioned that the Supreme God is Lord Krishna. People who know about Vedas or about Indian culture can understand and accept this. How can a man of a different religion or a different region accept this? How can we convince others that everybody in the universe is governed by the laws of Vedas? (Digest 38.3)**

[Ref: There are many apparent discrepancies in teaching found amongst diverse religious traditions, but a deeper study and a scrutinizing eye will often catch the ultimate non-difference, in systems of religion that are actually bona fide. For example see Caitanya-caritamrta Adi Lila Chapter 17.153-171 for a discussion on the apparent basis of animal sacrifice and eating meat in the Koran. There are many similar examples. Ultimately, we will find congruity, not clash.]

Based on the time, place and circumstance, based on the particular need of the people, apparently different teachings may be presented in different systems of bona fide religions. We do not deny the existence of such instances of contradictions, but that does not indicate a fundamental difference.

The underlying principle found in all religion is mercifulness. There may be instances of animal sacrifice or recommendation to eat meat in a particular circumstance. Even within the Vedic literatures there might be such isolated instances of contradiction. But there is also the consistent teaching and injunction that one should refrain from killing and should be merciful to all beings, is it not so? No bona fide religion recommends unrestricted eating of meat; there is always prohibition, which points to the higher principle of abstinence. And certainly no bona fide religion encourages maintaining organized slaughterhouses to regularly kill millions of innocent animals. All bona fide religions teach progressive cultivation of mercifulness. Thus, ultimately there is no clash.

#### **1.1.5) Can animal killers/meat eaters become devotees?**

**Is it possible for a killer of animal to develop & attain pure love of God? Were there any instances in the history where meat eaters or other low class people became devotees of God? If so, did they have to leave meat eating once they become a devotee? Is surrender to Guru & Pure love of God open only for vegetarians? If you could kindly share Your knowledge on the above questions, it would be very helpful in my spiritual progress. Thank you. (Digest 97.2)**

When we think about it, it is not difficult to see that killing innocent animals simply for the satisfaction of one's tongue is certainly lacking in compassion. If one were factually awakening love for God, it is natural to expect that there would be growing compassion in one's heart for other living entities, and aversion to inflict unnecessary pain upon others, is it not? Besides lacking in mercy and making people hard-hearted, meat-eating also makes one's brain dull and unable to understand higher, spiritual subject matters.

Love of God is dormant in everyone's heart. Any one of us, from any condition of life, is equally eligible to approach the Lord and chant His Names. But a natural progression for one who is trying in earnest to please God is that they develop all saintly qualities. If this does not

happen, it is to be understood that there is something wanting in their efforts.

There are many examples of persons from all different walks of life becoming pure devotees. One in particular is the story of Mrigari, who was a hunter with the habit of half-killing animals and taking pleasure in their suffering. Upon meeting Narada Muni, however, Mrigari changed his ways and later he became such a saintly person that he was careful to not step upon and accidentally kill even an ant!

It is not just a question of vegetarianism; devotees of Krishna are more concerned about pleasing Krishna. They are interested in accepting Krishna-prasadam i.e. they offer everything first to Krishna with love and devotion and then accept His remnants as their only foodstuff. And naturally, we would offer to the Lord only what He wants, and the Lord mentions only foods in the mode of goodness, such as fruits, grains and milk. Conversely, if the Lord orders to kill, as in executing the duty of ksatriya, that is the proper thing to do; to refuse to kill would then be a sin.

### **1.1.6) Cow slaughtering**

**Why does Krishna allow millions of cows to be slaughtered even though they are most dear to Him? (Digest 17.4 and 19.4)**

Nothing happens without the sanction of the Supreme Lord, but God's sanction is not the same as God's actual desire or will. (Please refer to our earlier discussions on free-will of the living entity.) Certainly Krishna is not pleased when such atrocities are performed, and by such acts the human society is depriving itself of the Lord's mercy, resulting in the endless difficulties we are presently facing. However, as Krishna promises in Bhagavad-gita, when there is a great decline in these religious principles, He advents Himself, or sends His representative to chastise the miscreants and protect the righteous, to set the situation right again.

### **1.1.7) Can animals be allowed inside the temple?**

**It is said that animals should not be allowed in the temple. Do they not have souls? By going in the temple will they not get the blessings of Krishna? What really makes us different from them? How come we don't stop meat-eaters from coming into the temple? They too are considered to be like animals. I think this philosophy is wrong. On the one hand we say that one should not kill animals because we are all the same, everyone has a soul. But on the other hand the animals are not allowed to come into God's house. It is difficult to understand that we should treat them with respect and we should not harm or kill any living creatures, however animals are not allowed into the temple. Please explain. (Digest 34.2)**

On the spiritual platform, yes, we are all equal as spirit souls. But on the material platform, there ARE differences between animals and human beings, and even among human beings, and that should not be ignored. A devotee may treat different living entities differently, but appropriate treatment to the embodiment of a particular soul is not biased when based on the realization of the spiritual equality of the soul. In order to best serve everyone, there is a necessity to make such discernment. But there is a difference between such intelligent discernment of what is what, and biased actions. A self-realized soul sees a cow, a tiger or a brahmana as equal, but his treatment of the three would be different.

In Krsna consciousness there is unity in diversity.

The prohibition in allowing animals in the temple is because animals are generally unclean. Ideally, by strict Vedic standards, one should not enter the temple without completely purifying oneself internally and externally. There are many other standards found in the scriptures meant to maintain the purity of a place of worship, as well. Here is a more fundamental difference in the nature between animals and human beings: humans have the capacity to inquire into and understand the nature of self and God but animals can't. Thus they cannot achieve the same benefit a human can, just by coming into the temple area.

For Kali Yuga we often find that there are concessions in the standards for allowing people in a temple even if they may not be already following prescribed standards. In Kali yuga most of us are untrained and greatly unqualified, but by giving people in general a chance to come to the temple, they will be given the chance to become elevated in consciousness; then they will be able to follow the proper standards.

There are other ways that souls in animal bodies can be benefited, such as by giving them Krishna prasadam, and where appropriate engaging them in Krishna's service (offering cow's milk, engaging bulls in plowing fields for Krishna etc). There is no question of disrespect to animals, but they are respected appropriately; Lord Krishna Himself taught us how to worship the cow with great respect, although they were not brought inside the living quarters or Deity rooms, even in Krishna's pastimes.

#### **1.1.8) Keeping dogs for security**

**As a neophyte devotee, I need more clarification on the topic of keeping pets (dogs and cats). My family and I live on a farm in Durban, South Africa. The crime situation is rather serious here, in terms of the womenfolk being held up at their homes. I would like to know if there are any rules or regulations in terms of keeping dogs as a measure of security. (Digest 22.6)**

In the Vedic system, householders in general maintained domestic animals, especially cows and sometimes other animals such as dogs also. However, while such animals were maintained for particular purposes, they were not considered part of the household and would not be permitted within the house, the most obvious reason being cleanliness, as the householders were engaged in their religious duties, worshiping the Deities etc. There are specific injunctions that animals should not be allowed in sanctified places such as the temple room of the Deity or the kitchen where offerings to the Deity are cooked.

Another important aspect for which Srila Prabhupada often downplayed the concept of keeping pets is the undue attachment one may develop for the pets on the bodily platform. This can be detrimental to one's spiritual cultivation and the classic example we know of is the story of Maharaja Bharata, who became so attached to his pet deer that he had to take birth as a deer in his next life. While maintaining the above concerns, keeping dogs for security purposes and offering them prasadam is not improper for a devotee.

## 2. Chanting

### 2.1. Chanting of Maha mantra

#### 2.1.1) Meaning of Maha mantra

**It is said that chanting means to request Radharani for Krishna's service. On the other hand it is also said that out of all the services chanting 16 rounds is most important. So is this definition of chanting complete or do you think that there should be some other definition of chanting? (Digest 20.1)**

It was Srila Prabhupada's teaching that the meaning of chanting the mahamantra is, as you have stated, requesting Srimati Radharani to engage us in the service of Krishna. This description is perfect and complete. Yet, he also taught us that chanting is both the means and the end. Once when someone asked Prabhupada, 'What do you hope to achieve by chanting all the time?', Prabhupada replied that we hope to achieve more chanting, and that we continue to chant eternally.

In other words, chanting in itself is service; kirtana is one of the nine limbs of devotional service. As far as the practicing stage of devotion that we are in, we serve following the guidelines of the spiritual masters; of all the services the acaryas have prescribed, such as reading scriptures, preaching, worshiping Deities etc., chanting the Holy Names of the Lord is the most important. This was directly declared by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to Sarvabauma Bhattacharya, in response to Sarvabauma's question "What is the singlemost important activity to be observed by a vaisnava?" And when one attains perfection in devotion, one is always chanting, always calling out to Krishna to be engaged in His service, even while performing other forms of service.

The definition you have quoted in your question does not lead to circular logic, but to more service, i.e. more chanting, along with other forms of devotional expression!

#### 2.1.2) Meaning and the effect of Maha Mantra

**My question is regarding the Maha Mantra - HARE KRISHNA, HARE KRISHNA, KRISHNA, KRISHNA, HARE, HARE; HARE RAM, HARE RAM, RAM, RAM, HARE, HARE. Lords Krishna and Rama had different personalities and characters; both of them were avatara (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu in two different Yugas. My question is why these two names are combined in the Maha Mantra? Could you please kindly explain about the Maha Mantra? How did it derive? What are the meanings, if any, behind the Mantra? For instance, when we chant the Mantra, does the vibration provide positive effect in our body etc? (Digest 90.1)**

The words `Krishna' and `Rama' both refer to one Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Absolute Truth is called Krishna because He is "all-attractive"; He is called "Rama" which means `the reservoir of all pleasure'. Although these two names specifically refer to two different

incarnations, essentially Krishna and Rama are not different persons. They are two different features or manifestations of the same Absolute Truth.

More specifically, Krishna is the Original Personality of Godhead and Rama, the Lord of Sita, is one of the innumerable manifestations of that Original Personality. Srila Prabhupada sometimes explained this by saying that Lord Vishnu is God in an official mood, and Krishna is God at home, but both are the same person. [We understand Krishna not just as an avatar, but as the source of all avatars as concluded in Srimad Bhagavatam (SB 1.3.28). However, when He or any of His other expansions descend to the material world, they descend through Lord Vishnu, and are hence sometimes described as an avatar of Vishnu.]

Regarding the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, it is recommended especially for this age in many Vedic literatures such as Kali-Santarana Upanishad, and was propagated by Lord Caitanya, who is the yuga-avatara for this age.

Srila Prabhupada would say that the chanting of the mahamantra is to be performed exactly in the mood of a child helplessly crying for its mother: "O Energy of the Supreme Lord (Hara), O all-attractive Lord (Krishna), O Reservoir of all bliss (Rama), please engage me in Your service." This is the meaning of the maha-mantra.

In the material world, we are ceaselessly and fruitlessly engaged in the service of matter; but by chanting the Maha-mantra we are calling out for the mercy of God, not for any material profit but simply to be engaged in His service instead of that of maya.

The maha-mantra, being a powerful spiritual vibration, cleanses the mirror of the heart of all contaminations. As the seat of our consciousness is purified, naturally it has a positive effect on all levels of our existence --- physical, mental, intellectual and beyond. Nonetheless, scriptures ordain that we refrain from giving interpretations or speculative purports to the Holy names. Nor is it necessary for us to make any intellectual adjustments in trying to understand how the mantra acts. The recommended process is that the practitioner accepts the authoritative explanations given in the scriptures and simply chant the mantra attentively and hear the sound vibrations - by this cultivation the true import of the Holy names will automatically be realized in the heart.

### **2.1.3) Significance of the Mahamantra**

**Can you explain me the significance of the mahamantra? Is it more effective than devotional songs and Vedas? (Digest 3.8)**

The sixteen syllable Hare Krishna mahamantra is a plea to the internal potency (Hare) of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (Krishna, Rama) - namely to Srimati Radharani, to be engaged in the service of Krishna. The Upanisads mention this mahamantra as the means of perfection especially in this age of Kali.

Singing devotional songs or chanting Vedic hymns are also forms of devotional service. However, the mahamantra has been empowered by Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is non-different from Sri Krishna and is the yuga avatar, and is therefore considered to be most potent.

#### 2.1.4) Reference to chanting in Bhagavad-Gita

**It is said that for Kali Yuga chanting is the recommended process for reaching Lord Krishna. But is this statement given in Bhagavad-Gita? My friend argues that only the statements given in Bhagavad-Gita and Vedas are acceptable without any argument, as Bhagavad-Gita came straight from Lord Krishna. But anyway I have strong belief in Srila Prabhupada and ISKCON, and I chant regularly the holy name of Lord Krishna. (Digest 197.1)**

Chanting Krishna's Holy Names is recommended both in the Vedic texts as well as Bhagavad-gita and Puranas. The Hare Krishna Mahamantra is also specifically prescribed in the Upanishads, as well as the Pancaratras which are said to be particularly important for the present age.

Some References from Bhagavad-Gita: In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna describes the great souls as constantly chanting His glories: 'satatam kirtayanto mam' - "Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, the great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion." (BG 9.14) Glorification implies not some abstract theorizing but 'chanting and praising the Supreme Lord's holy name, His eternal form, His transcendental qualities and His uncommon pastimes.'

And again, throughout the Bhagavad-gita, performance of sacrifices is recommended and stressed as essential for all embodied living entities. Different types of sacrifices are also identified (e.g. Ch 4.25-33 <http://www.vedabase.net/bg/4/en> ). The sacrifice specifically recommended for this age, and the most suitable and easy to perform, is the chanting of the Holy Names of Lord Hari. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita as well when Krishna states yajnanam japa yajno 'smi, "Of all sacrifices I am the chanting of the holy names [japa]" (BG 10.25)

Krishna also further directs us in the Bhagavad-gita -- after concluding His discussion on the various types of sacrifice and stating that sacrifice culminates in transcendental knowledge, the Lord then directs us to approach a self-realized spiritual master to learn the Truth, render service unto such a spiritual master and inquire submissively. (Bg 4.34) The essential principles of spiritual perfection are outlined in the Bhagavad-gita in a nutshell - these principles are eternal and meant for all time and space, but to learn their specific application and details of execution in our lives, the guidance of self-realized souls, sadhu and guru, corroborated by explanations from other relevant scriptures, is indispensable. The bona fide spiritual master, who is well-versed with the conclusions of all scriptures, can prescribe us the appropriate means according to time, place, circumstances and individual needs.

Without such guidance, how are we to know the proper procedures to perform sacrifice in the present context of our daily life as recommended throughout the Gita? An authentic medical handbook may list all varieties of drugs and their uses, but in order to know what medicine will work for us and how exactly to administer it we have to take the help of an experienced physician, otherwise it could prove useless or even dangerous. Similarly, the prescriptions given in Bhagavad-Gita are to be followed as directed by Krishna, i.e. under the guidance of His authorized representatives.

Interestingly enough, this same argument which your friend presented was brought before Srila Prabhupada by Dr. Staal, Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley

-- that Bhagavad-Gita and the Vedas do not directly recommend chanting. Srila Prabhupada extensively and thoroughly addresses this misconception with numerous quotes and references from Bhagavad-Gita as well as the Vedas and puranas. I invite you to go through this unusual and interesting exchange of letters between Prof. Staal and Srila Prabhupada, now published in the book "Science of Self Realization" under the title "Discovering the Roots." After the back-and-forth debate, Srila Prabhupada concludes that discussion with this same final note: the appropriate medicine has to be prescribed by an experienced physician.

Through lexicographic interpretations, one may choose to conclude that Bhagavad-Gita could be indicating something else and thus altogether miss the spirit of its conclusion, but we resort to the authority of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu who was the greatest teacher of Bhagavad-Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam and who propagated the yuga-dharma of chanting the Hare Krishna Mahamantra as the ultimate conclusion of all scriptures. We can also rely on the practical effects of this chanting process in comparison to any other alternative process in the matter of systematically awakening one's dormant love of God.

Some References from Upanishads and puranas: The four Vedas, Upanishads, Mahabharata and the 18 puranas all belong to the same body of Vedic literature - they are all emanations from the breathing of the Supreme Lord. Srila Vyasadeva subdivided and compiled them for our benefit. Thus, to accept the Vedas (shruti) and reject the puranas (smriti) as less authentic is against the conclusions of the Vedas themselves. (See Digest 141 where we discussed this in greater detail) Of course, the superexcellent and indisputable authority of Bhagavad-Gita cannot be minimized - but this does not invalidate other scriptures, rather it implies that all other scriptural conclusions are to be understood and apparent contradictions resolved in light of the statements of Bhagavad-gita.

Although the standard principles in scriptures are eternal, they recommend specific processes suitable to particular time, place and circumstances. It is stated Srimad Bhagavatam (SB 12.3.52): "Whatever result was obtained in Satya-yuga by meditating on Vishnu, in Treta-yuga by performing sacrifices, and in Dvapara-yuga by serving the Lord's lotus feet (worship of Deity in the temple) can be obtained in Kali-yuga simply by chanting the holy names of Lord Hari." Almost identical statements are found also in the Vishnu purana, Padma purana and Brihan Naradiya purana.

The Brihan-naradiya Purana 3.8.126 states:

harer nama harer nama  
harer namaiva kevalam  
kalau nasty eva nasty eva  
nasty eva gatir anyatha

"In this age of Kali there is no other means, no other means, no other means for self-realization than chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name of Lord Hari."

The Hare Krishna Mahamantra is specifically mentioned in the Narada Pancaratra and Kali-Santarana Upanishad:

hare Krishna hare Krishna Krishna Krishna hare hare  
hare rama hare rama rama rama hare hare  
ity sodasakam namnam kali kalmasa nasanam  
natah parataropayah sarva vedeshu drishyate

"These sixteen words of the Hare Krishna mantra are especially meant for counteracting the sins of the age of Kali. To save oneself from the contamination of this age there is no alternative but to chant the Hare Krishna mantra. After searching through the entire Vedic literatures one cannot find a method of religion for this age so sublime as the chanting of Hare Krishna." (Lord Brahma instructs Narada, Kali Santarana Upanishad 5-6)

### **2.1.5) 'Stages of chanting' and 'how to measure the purity of chanting?'**

**What are the different stages of chanting? How can one understand that one's chanting is good and pure? Is there any unit to measure the purity of the chanting? (Digest 12.8)**

The three stages of chanting are as follows: offensive stage (nama aparadha), clearing stage (nama abhasa) and pure chanting (shuddha nama). In the beginning, a neophyte devotee may commit many offenses while chanting the Holy Name, and the stage of trying to overcome these offenses is called clearing stage. One has to know what the ten offenses to the Holy Names are, as we recite in our temples every morning, and diligently try to avoid them. The degree to which one has overcome these offenses is the measure of one's purity in chanting.

### **2.1.6) Progressive realizations during the 'stages of chanting'**

**Can you kindly explain what are the potential realizations in each stage of chanting i.e. nama-aparadha, nama-abhasa, and suddha-nama? Is there any positive realization (that which is favorable to Krishna consciousness) for a person in nama-aparadha stage? In other words, how can one know that one is progressing from one stage to another? (Digest 220.1)**

The Holy Name is like a touchstone, it can grant all desirable objects to the chanter. We know from Hari Nama Cintamani that even one who chants the Holy Name unintentionally, inattentively, jokingly or derisively, can get delivered from material existence. Such chanting is considered as "namabhasa" or a faint shadow of the Holy Name - even this shadow of the Holy Name is so powerful that it can grant all auspiciousness, up to liberation, if chanted without offense.

But chanting will not be very soon fruitful if done to facilitate sinning or if one commits any of the other ten offenses such as blaspheming the devotees etc. The holy name is so powerful that It still acts, but when one utters the holy name with offenses, its action will be delayed.

The types of Namabhasa chanting mentioned above, like that of Ajamila or Sisupala, are without real understanding or faith in Krishna. For instance, Ajamila was calling the name of Narayana unintentionally, and thus there was no question of any offense in his chanting. Such namabhasa are on the lower border of the Nama-abhasa stage.

On the other hand, if one has genuine faith in Krishna and takes up the chanting, even

though anarthas are present, that stage is known as "Sraddha namabhasa". If even namabhasa without faith can grant liberation, faithful chanting is so much more powerful. Such faithful chanting can absolve one of all sins, destroys the effects of Kali yuga and can grant all the desirable goals of dharma-artha-kama-moksha. Harinama Cintamani states that one can go 'up to the border of Vaikuntha planets by this chanting.' However, when one commits offenses, the effect is delayed. Furthermore, the highest goal, viz. love of Godhead cannot be attained by namabhasa chanting. Pure love of Godhead, Krishna-prema can be attained only through chanting the pure Name. By accumulation of namabhasa, however, one eventually gains faith to accept the path of pure devotional service and by following the path, it gradually brings one to the stage of pure chanting.

Sraddha-namabhasa is the clearing stage of chanting - the symptom of one who is on this stage is that they strive towards chanting the pure name, by constant practice and by carefully striving to avoid the offenses. Sraddha-namabhasa can clear away anarthas and aparadhas (offenses) very quickly and the devotee becomes steady.

One continues to chant in the namabhasa stage as long as one is not firmly established in understanding the transcendental nature of Holy Name. In other words, the mist of ignorance, anarthas and aparadhas -- which are the causes of namabhasa, like clouds obstructing one's vision of the sun-like Holy Name - all these are present as long as the living entity does not have clear understanding of the nature of Holy Name, of oneself, of material nature and their mutual relationship (sambandha-jnana). A sincere and faithful chanter can dissipate these clouds by taking shelter of a bona fide spiritual master, who is established in pure chanting of the Holy Name. The spiritual master instructs the serious student in proper sambandha-jnana and in the sadhana practice of culturing the Holy Name, which is abhideya-jnana. By sincerely serving the spiritual master and faithfully following his instructions regarding chanting the Holy Name, the cloud-like anarthas, aparadhas and ignorance are dissipated and thus one can quickly come to the stage of pure chanting, shuddha-nama. At this stage, the pure Holy Name manifests on the tongue of the chanter. One begins to actually relish chanting the Holy Name and pure love of Krishna quickly manifests.

There may be many anarthas or aparadhas generated out of ignorance or weakness of heart during the namabhasa stage, but they are cleared by continuing to chant faithfully under proper guidance. However, if one does not seek or accept transcendental knowledge of sambandha, one continues on the namabhasa platform, and the effect of chanting is limited.

Alternatively, if one deliberately holds on to misconceptions about the Holy Name despite opportunities to get pure faith, considering the chanting to be a means to some higher end, due to one's duplicity or mayavada misconceptions, such chanting will not lead to purification but could end in further offenses, despite chanting for a long time. Generally this is the effect of the chanting by mayavadis, for they consider Krsna and His Holy Name to be temporary or imaginary, and are thus offenders against the Name. The Holy Name is a desire tree and may grant their desire for impersonal merging into the Brahman effulgence, but a devotee considers this is as a misfortune worse than hell.

Vishvanatha Cakravarti Thakur indicates in "Madhurya Kadambini" two yardsticks for measuring one's progress towards steadiness in bhakti -- the intensity in effort and the ease of chanting. Whether there is intensification or slackening in hearing and chanting and following the rules of sadhana as laid down by the spiritual master - this is a good indicator of whether we are becoming free from anarthas and progressing towards pure chanting. He also charts out in detail the different stages of anartha-nivritti, including becoming free from different stages of

inattention during chanting (sleep or inertia, distraction, indifference), as well as freedom from tendency towards bad-habits, attraction for sense-gratification etc; we can judge our progress based on the progressive ease with which we are able to overcome these obstacles. Conversely, as long as there is difficulty in absorption and inability to relish the chanting, we can take it as an indication, as Lord Caitanya expresses in His Siksastakam prayers, that it is due to committing one or more offenses.

### 2.1.7) Chanting leads to eradication of sins

**Can a mantra really neutralize the sins already done or does it only give the courage to bear the pain (result)? (Digest 96.1)**

The Holy Name of God can actually eradicate the reactions for all the sins already committed.

Not only that, scriptures state that when properly chanted, hari-nama can destroy more sins than one can possibly ever commit.

In order to derive the full benefit of chanting --- it can even burn up the residual tendency in the heart to commit further sins! --- chanting must be taken up properly. One should carefully avoid the ten kinds of offenses in chanting, especially the mentality that one can continue sinning and that it will be adjusted on the strength of chanting. Conversely, an attitude of surrender, sincere repentance and adherence to a theistic way of life are favorable and quickly help to perfect one's chanting.

Chanting gives immediate relief from the blazing reactions of past sins, and quickly ushers in auspiciousness - this can be tangibly experienced in our lives. Yet, as long as we are in this material ocean, its waves and whirlpools will not cease; that is to say that by taking up chanting it is not to be expected that there will be never be another difficulty/pain/reversal in one's life. But these do not have the same disturbing effect upon those who take firm shelter in the Holy Name. In that sense, one could say that chanting gives the spiritual strength to tolerate material disturbances, but this is not the same as suffering that comes from past sins. And the Holy Name ultimately delivers one from this treacherous material existence altogether.

### 2.1.8) Chanting leads to purification and self realization

**Can the Supreme Soul can be realized only when mind becomes pure? Does the chanting of "Hari Om" purify the mind? Is there any mantra helpful in attaining the highest goal of self-realization? What are the different phases of sadhana practiced in ISKCON? (Digest 15.3)**

Yes, practical realization of the Supreme Soul is attained when one becomes fully pure, free from the effects of passion and ignorance, and lust, greed and other attendant impurities of heart.

Chanting of any of the innumerable Holy Names of the Supreme Lord purifies the mind. The sixteen syllabled mantra, "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare", which is called the mahamantra, is especially recommended in the Upanishads as the most effective mantra in this age of Kali, and chanting of this mantra can bring one to the highest platform of self-realization and God-realization.

The most important element of sadhana for a devotee in ISKCON is to chant at least sixteen rounds (each round consisting of chanting the mahamantra mentioned above 108 times on tulasi beads). One also must follow the four regulative principles, namely, no eating of non-vegetarian foods including fish, meat and eggs; no intoxication including coffee and tea; no gambling; and no illicit sex. Devotees eat only Krishna prasadam (food prepared and offered to Krishna). In addition, devotees read and hear lectures on devotional books like Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam everyday.

Another important part of the daily sadhana is to rise early during the brahma-muhurta (an hour and a half before sunrise) and worship and sing prayers in honor of the spiritual master and the Supreme Lord, and worship Tulasi. This morning worship is called mangala-arati, and can be done either at home or by participating in a regular temple program. Devotees generally chant most of their sixteen rounds early in the morning, before and after mangala-arati, prior to beginning their day's work. In addition to the above basic sadhana, one can do more according to one's availability of time and resources.

### **2.1.9) Is chanting alone sufficient for spiritual elevation?**

**In this Kali-yuga is chanting the best way to get spiritually elevated? And is chanting alone sufficient? (Digest 20.3)**

Yes, that is the recommendation of the Vedic literatures. Harer nama harer nama harer nama eva kevalam / kalu nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatih anyatha: "There is no other way, no other way, no other way of spiritual progress in this age of Kali than the chanting of the holy names of Lord Hari, Krishna."

In one sense, chanting alone is sufficient, but such chanting should be done offenselessly. There are mainly ten offenses in chanting, and we should know and avoid these (see next question). And in order to be able to overcome these offenses, in most of our cases we need the association of devotees, and guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. When we chant under such guidance and association, it will become quickly effective.

Along with chanting, it is recommended to purify our senses by practical services, which means engaging them in various ways to please the Lord. Cf. SB 9.4.18. The activities of bhagavata marg (hearing and chanting about the Supreme) are best complimented by the activities of pancaratrika marg (Deity worship).

### **2.1.10) Afraid to chant because of the destruction of material desires**

**One of my close friends has stopped chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra saying that since the mantra destroys all material desires, as a grhastha (householder), he needs the material motivation to support his family, and also that chanting the maha-mantra while maintaining material desires is offensive. He has taken to the chanting of Sri Lakshmi Suktam, which awards material prosperity and also indirectly reminds him of Lord Vishnu. How do I explain things properly to him? (Digest 15.2)**

The grhastha ashrama is an important part of the social structure and has been created by Krishna Himself. If by chanting Hare Krishna everyone will abandon their household life or the prescribed duties connected to it, that would be a great social disturbance and the scriptures

would have prescribed that householders should not chant Hare Krishna! But that is not the case; rather, our vaishnava acaryas have sung: grihe thako vane thako sada hari bole dako - "whether you are a grhastha managing the responsibilities of household life, or a sannyasi, always chant Hare Krishna." Many of our vaishnava acaryas, including Bhaktivinode Thakur and even Srila Prabhupada had their families and were very responsible householders. Thus chanting Hare Krishna is not endangering to one's worldly duties.

Rather, by chanting the holy names, one gets spiritual motivation and strength, which is far greater than even the impetus of material motivation. By chanting the maha-mantra, one acknowledges the fact that it is ultimately the Supreme Lord who is maintaining us and providing for us. He is the source of all opulences, and the master of Lakshmi. Then one sees oneself as the instrument through whom the Lord is protecting the other family members, and in that consciousness one can work very hard to serve one's family members and see them and all one's possessions as the Lord's property and mercy, which is the actual fact. Only by working in that consciousness, can one be free from facing the reactions to one's work. And Lakshmi will automatically bless that person who has accepted Her Lord as his master also, just as when Sudama offered Krishna whatever he had, Rukmini was so much obliged that she made him prosperous without any endeavor.

In other words, the mahamantra purifies the heart of all material desires, but that does not necessarily mean that one has to abandon his family or duties connected to family life.

Regarding the consideration of offense in having material desires, Srimad Bhagavatam also mentions that whether one is full of material desires, desirous of liberation or has no desires, one who is broad-minded should worship the Supreme Lord, because He is ultimately the Supreme Master of all. (Cf. SB 2.3.2-10) That is the duty of all, and by worshiping the Supreme Lord, gradually the heart will be cleansed of all misconceptions.

## 2.2. Chanting of other mantras

### 2.2.1) Difference between 'vedic mantra' and 'Maha mantra'

**What is the difference between Vedic mantra and nama mantra? What is the significance of the mantra that starts with "Hare Rama Hare Rama?" (Digest 44.1)**

There are many different Vedic mantras, some of which describe different aspects of the Supreme, aid in meditation upon the Brahman, offer sacrifices to different devatas etc. While these various mantras are all pointing toward the Supreme Personality of Godhead, some mantras directly address the Supreme Lord, wherein we simply and directly call upon His eternal names (nama). By chanting these Holy Names of the Lord, one can immediately access direct association of the Lord.

Among all these mantras, the Hare Krishna mantra, sometimes also chanted beginning with 'Hare Rama', is called Maha-mantra (the Top-most mantra). This mantra is specified in different Upanishads as the special means of deliverance for this age of Kali. For example- Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare ity shodasakam namnam kali kalmasa nasanam (Kali santarana Upanishad)

Lord Krishna, in His yuga-avatar for this age as Lord Caitanya, propagated the chanting

of this mantra in His inauguration of the yuga-dharma, the process of self-realization for this age. The special feature of this maha-mantra, as opposed to other Vedic mantras, is that there are no hard and fast rules for chanting the maha mantra. Vedic mantras can be chanted only by qualified brahmanas, and only at specific auspicious times accompanied by many purificatory rituals and rules. But the maha-mantra can be chanted by anyone without consideration of qualification, at any time or place or circumstance. That is the special mercy and potency invested within these Holy Names. Just as treatment given to a severely diseased person is expected to be very powerful, similarly just by the easy process of chanting this mahamantra even the most fallen souls of Kali-yuga can be delivered and uplifted to the highest possible spiritual perfection.

### 2.2.2) Difference between the chanting of "Hare Krishna" and "om namah shivaya"

**I have a question that is bothering me. I went last year to see MATA AMRITANDAMAYI also known as AMMA. She is a big devotee of Lord Krishna, always speaks of Lord Krishna's glories. She has the same message to humankind that our place is with the Lord and that we have to go back to Lord Krishna. My question is, I have seen devotees of amma chanting "om nama shivaya". So I am confused. What is the difference between the maha mantra and this mantra? I hope you would enlighten me on this. (Digest 168.1)**

Before directly answering your question about the two different mantras, I would like to give a short prelude about the process of Krishna-bhakti.

Pure Devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna is a great science. Although it is very simple that even a child can perform devotional service under proper guidance, it is also very scientific and has to be learned carefully from learned and authorized devotees. Just as in a scientific experiment, if some procedures are not followed properly it may not yield the desired result and may even prove dangerous, similarly also the science of bhakti-yoga has to be carefully understood and applied.

Srila Rupa Goswami, one of the great Vaishnava acharyas, cautions us that devotional service which is not performed according to the injunctions of the authorized scriptures is simply a source of disturbance:

shruti-smrti-puranadi-pancaratra-vidhim vina  
aikantiki harer bhaktir utpatayaiva kalpate

"Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literatures like the Upanishads, Puranas and Narada-pancaratra is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society." (Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu 1.2.101)

It is for this reason that Lord Krishna Himself spoke the entire Bhagavad-gita in which He clearly delineates the spiritual science and the Vaishnava acharyas in disciplic succession have also written so many elaborate and authoritative books explaining this science for our benefit. Those of us who aspire for devotion to Krishna should take full advantage of these literatures and familiarize ourselves with this science. It may be beneficial for anyone to simply chant or hear the Holy Names of the Lord with devotional sentiments and aspire to go back to Him, but if one wants to systematically cultivate their devotion and make tangible progress towards the goal of reaching Lord Krishna's lotus feet, it is imperative that they approach a

qualified spiritual master, who comes in disciplic succession, and learn this science - this is the Vedic recommendation.

With that background, I can address your question in light of what the scriptures teach. According to Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the source of all spiritual and material worlds, and from whom everything is emanating. (BG 10.8) For the affairs of managing the material creation, He expands as Mahavishnu who is the source of Lord Brahma, who in turn appoints many demigods such as Indra, Candra, Ganesha etc, in charge of universal administration. Lord Shiva is considered the chief of all these demigods, and he himself is a transformation of Lord Vishnu, although he is not the Supreme Godhead himself. The example given is that of yogurt, which is a transformation of milk, but is neither the same as, nor entirely different from its cause viz., milk. (Brahma Samhita 5.45)

It is certainly very auspicious to worship and chant the names of Lord Shiva, for he is most exalted and one of the greatest devotees of Lord Hari, "vaishnavanam yatha shambhu". In fact, he himself is a spiritual master and head of a vaishnava sampradaya (disciplic succession) and he teaches pure devotion to Lord Krishna. Yet, shastras teach that one does not derive the same benefit from the worship or chanting of the names of Lord Shiva as the worship of the Supreme Lord.

Krishna conclusively states in the Bhagavad-gita that different kinds of worshipers attain different destinations: "Those who worship the demigods will take birth among the demigods; those who worship the ancestors go to the ancestors; those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth among such beings; and those who worship Me will live with Me." (BG 9.25) The same idea is conveyed in the Isopanishad also: "It is said that one result is obtained by worshipping the supreme cause of all causes and that another result is obtained by worshipping what is not supreme. All this is heard from the undisturbed authorities, who clearly explained it." (Isopanisad Mantra 13)

Ishopanishad further recommends that we approach such learned and undisturbed authorities to clearly understand who that supreme Cause of all causes is, and simultaneously also know what the temporary material creation is with its temporary demigods, men and animals. Without such clear knowledge, it is possible that our innate tendency for worship and devotion of someone superior to us may be misdirected towards something other than the Supreme Absolute Truth. This will be like the example of performing a science experiment with a wrong ingredient! Such persons, despite all their devotional sentiments, can not achieve the desired result not to speak of giving it others. One who actually knows these truths perfectly, however, he surpasses death and the ephemeral cosmic manifestation with it, and in the eternal kingdom of God he enjoys his eternal life of bliss and knowledge. (Cf. Iso Mantra 14)

As far as the Hare Krishna mahamantra is concerned, it is a direct prayer to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and even amongst the many Vedic mantras addressing the Supreme Lord, this particular mantra is recommended in the Upanishads and puranas as the 'Mahamantra', and as especially beneficial for the present age of Kali. (Cf. Kali Santarana Upanishad 5)

I hope this clarifies your doubt.

(Further discussion about the position of Lord Shiva can be found on Digests 100, 43 & 89)

### 2.2.3) Comparison between the chanting of the names of Lord Krishna, Lord Rama and Lord Vishnu

**I've read that if one chant a 1000 names of Visnu it gives the same result as one name of Rama and if one chants 3 names of Rama is gives the same result as Krishna. (Digest 46.4)**

From SB 1.19.6- "According to the Varaha Purana, as quoted by Srila Jiva Gosvami, there is no difference between the water of the Ganges and the Yamuna, but when the water of the Ganges is sanctified one hundred times, it is called the Yamuna. Similarly, it is said in the scriptures that one thousand names of Vishnu are equal to one name of Rama, and three names of Lord Rama are equal to one name of Krishna."

We can understand from the above statement the nondifference feature of the Ganges and the Yamuna. We can also understand the difference between the two. Same re. the names of the Lord. The names of Visnu can deliver one to Vaikuntha but not to Goloka Vrndavan in a state of Krishna-prema. While there is a non-difference feature of these two names there is a simultaneous distinction as well.

### 2.2.4) Qualification for chanting the Gayatri-mantra

**I have grown up chanting the Gayatri Mantra but since joining Krishna consciousness movement, I was told that we can not do it until we are brahmana-initiated. Why is that? (Digest 109.1)**

According to Vedic injunction, "sampradaya-vihina ye mantras te nisphala matah" i.e. unless one is initiated in the mantra by a bona fide spiritual master, coming in disciplic succession, the mantra will not be effective or will not give the desired result.

The Gayatri mantra, in particular, is meant for spiritually trained persons who are perfectly situated in the mode of goodness. Unlike the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra, there are certain rules and standards to be upheld in chanting the Gayatri mantra, such as specific times when it should be chanted, certain circumstances in which it should not be uttered and so on. When chanted by a duly qualified and properly trained brahmana, with proper purity and without offenses, then one can attain success in chanting Gayatri mantra which has the potency to immediately bring one to the transcendental realm. When the spiritual master sees that the disciple has reached the necessary standard and spiritual advancement for chanting the Gayatri mantra, he then awards brahminical initiation to the disciple.

In contrast, there are no such rules and regulations in the chanting of Hare Krishna maha-mantra. It is the yuga-dharma for the age, and by the mercy of Lord Caitanya, it can be chanted by anyone, at any time and under any circumstances without consideration of qualifications. This, indeed, is our principal sadhana, and simply by perfectly chanting the maha-mantra one can attain full spiritual perfection. Chanting the Gayatri mantra and other such pancaratrīki system of activities (such as worshiping the Deities etc), however, offer further purification and impetus for the devotee to quickly come to the stage of perfection in chanting the Hare Krishna maha mantra.

### 2.2.5) 'Meaning of "OM"' and 'sacrifices to Lord Vishnu'

**`OM' is chanted in Vedic sacrifices. What does the term refer to? Are all religious sacrifices performed for Lord Vishnu first? (Digest 5.5)**

The 'om' or omkara is a sound representation of the Supreme Lord, specifically His Brahman feature. It is an address to the Supreme Lord. Yes, the ultimate enjoyer of all sacrifices is Lord Krishna, or Lord Vishnu, and this is confirmed throughout the Vedas. For instance, in the Rg Vedas it is mentioned, Om tad visnoh paramam padam (Rg Veda 1.22.20).

### 2.2.6) Meaning of "Om Tat Sat"

**Can you please let me know the meaning of "Om Tat Sat?" (Digest 13.5)**

In BG 17.23 Krishna states that "From the beginning of creation, the three words om tat sat were used to indicate the Supreme Absolute Truth. These three symbolic representations were used by brahmins while chanting the hymns of the Vedas and during sacrifices for the satisfaction of the Supreme." For further explanation refer to the purport by Srila Prabhupada.

### 2.2.7) Can we make up variations of mantras?

**Is it wrong to make up variations of mantras using names of the Lord? For instance, I've never heard the mantras "Nama om vasudevaya," or "Om namo hrishikeshaya" but the Sanskrit seems grammatically correct, like "Om namo narayanaya" or "Nama om vishnu padaya." It fits into the following verse I could sing:**

**Om namo narayanaya  
Nama om vasudevaya  
Om namo hrishikeshaya  
Namaste deva deva**

**As a lyricist, I have the tendency to put words together in whatever way they best fit a tune, but I realized it might be an offensive mentality to assume that I can just arrange mantras as I'd like. I've also heard that the mantras used by mahajanas have their own potencies. If you please, what is your wisdom and suggestion on this subject? (Digest 190.1)**

You are right in concluding that it may not be appropriate to arrange and make up mantras. In fact, mantras are very specific arrangements of sound vibration that are generally found directly in the Vedas. Thus they are apaurusheya i.e. not man-made. Each mantra has very specific spiritual significance and is invested with special spiritual potencies.

It may not be an offensive mentality on your part, in trying to express your creativity and dovetail your ability to compose lyrics to glorify the Holy Names, and yet it does depart from standard practices. Nonetheless, your mood of inquiry and eager willingness to accept the authorized conception is very appropriate and appreciated. Thank you for asking this question.

Writing verses to glorify the Supreme Lord, especially poetry consistent with the length

and breadth of Vaishnava conclusions, is not very easy. Without proper knowledge and realization of the intricacies of devotional conclusions, there is danger of subtle inconsistencies or overlapping mellows (rasabhasa).

This is demonstrated by the pastime where a brahmana from Bengal composed a drama about the activities of Lord Caitanya and went to Jagannatha Puri to show it to the associates of the Lord. Although many devotees praised it and could not recognize any discrepancy, when Lord Caitanya's secretary, Svarupa Damodara Gosvami, heard the drama, he discerned a tinge of Mayavada philosophy and pointed it out to the author and thoroughly condemned the entire drama. He then advised the brahmana to study Bhagavatam under an advanced Vaishnava, which the brahmana accepted with great happiness and felt benefited. (Cf. Caitanya Caritamrita Antya Ch 5 <http://vedabase.net/cc/antya/5/en>)

A more recent demonstration of this principle was during the time of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, when a famous sadhu had made up a modified version of chanting Hare Krishna. Although this chant became quite popular among general public, it was later thoroughly condemned by Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura as being opposed to standard devotional conclusions. (See Cc Adi 7.168 purport <http://vedabase.net/cc/adi/7/168/en>)

This is true of any form of literary expression, but as far as mantras go, there is much less room for individual creativity. In fact, even in the case of standard mantras, if they are not received in proper disciplic succession, they do not produce the desired result. Srila Prabhupada unequivocally stressed this point on many occasions, as during his conversation with John Lennon and George Harrison: ?sampradaya vihina ye mantras te nishphala matah? (Padma purana) --- unless received in sampradaya, the words themselves are not even mantra, although the sound arrangements may seem identical! Although it is popular these days to adopt a published mantra or media-broadcast mantra, this verse stresses that unless the mantra is received from a bona fide devotee in parampara, it is ineffective and fruitless (nishphala). The spiritual potencies of a mantra can be accessed only from authorized persons.

It is possible that the specific phrases you have suggested above might be bona fide addresses to the Lord, although I have not come across them so far, but in light of these above considerations it is best to recite the standard mantras we have received in disciplic succession. As far as chanting Krishna's Holy Names, Krishna has innumerable names, and all of them are invested with His transcendental potencies and non-different from Him. We would undoubtedly benefit to call upon and sing any of these names. And yet, in terms of regular chanting/recital or in congregational sankirtana, the standard mantras and notable prayers sung by the acharyas are especially potent and to sing them in the spirit of following in the footsteps of previous mahajanas is very purifying and quickly effective. There are innumerable prayers found in the Bhagavatam, such as prayers by Queen Kunti etc which you could also sing.

I would like to clarify that there is certainly room for employing creativity and individuality in service to Krishna, especially as a musician, and this need not be stifled or discouraged. One need only to exercise sufficient caution and seek the guidance and blessings of advanced devotees in attempting such compositions so as not to depart from the siddhanta, or the proper philosophical conclusions regarding the Holy Names and Krishna's transcendental characteristics.

Another area of caution is to maintain a humble mood of dependence and following in the footsteps of previous acharyas. In fact, the Nectar of Devotion recommends both the practice of personal prayers expressing one's own feelings as well as regularly reciting notable prayers

offered by great devotees which are especially very effective in evoking our own dormant spiritual feelings. (NOD Ch 9) I hope this answer is helpful to you.

## *2.3. Effective chanting: practical tips*

### *2.3.1) Making oneself fit to chant: by hearing and attracting the spiritual master's mercy*

**I read in digest 189 that "who does not follow the regulative principles is not fit for chanting (kirtana)". I am struggling with my attachments and find it difficult and sometimes or most times not motivated to chant. I feel very bad and sometimes dejected due to my own way of life of not watering the seed of devotion I received due to the mercy of devotees and especially one devotee.**

**Now after reading the statement in quote from digest 189, I am confused. I request you to be merciful to explain this statement. (Digest 234.1)**

The statement you refer to appears in the following context: "After receiving the spiritual master's mercy, one must repeat his instructions, and this is called sravana-kirtana--- hearing and chanting. One who has not properly heard from the spiritual master or who does not follow the regulative principles is not fit for chanting (kirtana)."

The particular emphasis here is on the importance of "hearing" from the spiritual master, and 'applying what one has heard', as a prerequisite for proper chanting; it is not meant to disqualify one from chanting all together.

In fact, this statement you have referred to could offer you a hint on how to overcome the present struggles you are grappling with in your devotional progress --- the solution is to once again take shelter of the hearing process, and thus your difficulties in chanting will be overcome without extraneous effort.

It is further elaborated within that same question & answer (digest 189) how one can attract and receive the mercy of the spiritual master -- by continuing to hear -- with eagerness, warm regard, service attitude and willingness to change one's conceptions. Within this hearing process, all perfection is available. By associating and hearing from devotees, you have received the seed of devotion, and by continuing to hear, the seed will be nourished and the taste for hearing as well as chanting will naturally grow.

Krishna reassures that in the beginning one may not be able to fully discharge all the injunctions of the Lord, but if one has firm faith in His instructions, without being resentful or envious of Him, and "works sincerely without consideration of defeat or hopelessness, he will surely be promoted to the stage of pure Krishna consciousness." (Cf. BG 3.31 p)

It is possible to receive the mercy and overcome all misconceptions and attachments in just one instant, as described by the example of Srila Prabhupada's personal life. However, even if one does not make such a breakthrough in one or few exchanges with devotees, it is not a cause for discouragement - one simply has to continue to eagerly and submissively hear. The process is absolutely powerful and will be effective in due course of time.

So there is no need for you to despair. You have some appreciation and gratitude for having received the seed of devotion; you also have the desire for properly cultivating the same, and a sincere regret for not doing so. Now, taking these as impetuses, continue to engage

yourself in the process of hearing from realized devotees - seek out such opportunities to hear Krishna-katha, if possible even on a daily basis for at least a few minutes.

Material attachments, although undesirable, do not disqualify one from devotional service. Rather, by enthusiastic engagement in devotional service, one will progressively and naturally find so much higher taste that would make all material attachments become pale and superfluous.

As stated in the Bhagavatam, "akama sarva kamo va" --- whether one is full of all material desire, without any material desire, or desiring liberation, a person who has broader intelligence must by all means worship the supreme whole, the Personality of Godhead." (SB 2.3.10)

"Sri Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramatma [Supersoul] in everyone's heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge to hear His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted.

By regular attendance in classes on the Bhagavatam and by rendering of service to the pure devotee, all that is troublesome to the heart is almost completely destroyed, and loving service unto the Personality of Godhead, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact." (SB 1.2.17-18)

Srila Prabhupada reassures us in his purport to these slokas: "To become restless in the contact of women and wealth is not an astonishment, because every living being is associated with such things from remote time, practically immemorial, and it takes time to recover from this foreign nature. But if one is engaged in hearing the glories of the Lord, gradually he realizes his real position. By the grace of God such a devotee gets sufficient strength to defend himself from the state of disturbances, and gradually all disturbing elements are eliminated from his mind."

### 2.3.2) Surrendering to the Holy name

#### **How can I surrender to the Holy Name? (Digest 44.2)**

The Holy Name is non-different from the Person, Krishna; realization of this fact is very important in order to improve our chanting. Thus, surrendering to Krishna is surrendering to the Holy Name, and vice versa. We can progressively surrender to the Holy Name by placing complete faith in the Holy Name as our only shelter and cultivating the habit of chanting diligently, attentively and in a mood of dependence upon the Lord. Mahaprabhu teaches that one should cultivate humility like that of a blade of grass, become more tolerant than a tree, always offer all respects to others, without expecting any honor in return. (Cf. Sikshashtaka 3)

Our acharyas have identified the six-fold process of surrender as follows: (1) becoming completely humble; (2) dedication of one's self, body, mind and words and all one possesses to the Lord's service; (3) accepting whatever is favorable & (4) rejecting unfavorable to please the Lord; (5) having complete confidence that Krishna will protect me and (6) seeing Krishna as one's sole maintainer.

We can conscientiously endeavor to cultivate these qualities in relation to chanting the Holy Name, such as seeing ourselves as tiny and helpless without the shelter of the Holy Name, accepting only that which enhances our attraction for the Holy Name, avoiding unfavorable habits and offenses, developing faith in the protection of the Holy Name, dedicating our body,

mind and words and so on. In short, surrender is an ongoing process, not an event that happens in a moment, and it takes continuous cultivation and practice in the mood of surrender.

### **2.3.3) Effect of chanting Panca-tattva mantra before chanting Maha mantra**

**What is the proper method to chant the Hare Krishna mantra? If someone is chanting 16 rounds, then should one chant the Panca-tattva mantra after every round or should we chant the Panca-tattva mantra at the beginning of chanting & then continuously chant the Hare Krishna mantra without break?**

**Did Srila Prabhupada introduce the chanting of Panca-tattva mantra after every round? Please enlighten me on this. (Digest 116.1)**

There are no hard and fast rules in chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra. Most standard Vedic mantras are governed by specific rules and prohibitions in chanting; but the holy names of Lord Krishna and specifically the Hare Krishna maha-mantra can be chanted in any condition regardless of the time, place or any other consideration.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu confirms this in His Siksastakam prayers ([Verse 2](#))

namnam akari bahudha nija-sarva-saktis  
tatrarpita niyamitah smarane na kaalah

"O my Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings, and thus You have hundreds and millions of names, like Krishna and Govinda. In these transcendental names You have invested all Your transcendental energies. There are not even hard and fast rules for chanting these names."

Regarding chanting of the Panca-tattva mantra, in the Caitanya Caritamrita, Srila Prabhupada indicates a general recommendation or instruction that before chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra one must chant the Panca-tattva's names and offer respects to them. There are ten offenses to be avoided in chanting the Holy Names, but Lord Caitanya and His associates the Panca-tattva, being the most magnanimous, do not consider any offenses. Thus chanting their names will enable one to derive the full benefit of chanting the maha-mantra. (See Caitanya-caritamrta, [Adi Lila 7.4](#) & [8.4](#))

Many devotees have chanted in this way since the Caitanya Caritamrita was published, i.e. chanting Panca-tattva mantra before beginning every round of Maha Mantra. Also, many don't chant the Panca-tattva mantra interspersed within the Maha Mantra. But in either case, the general principle is to offer respects to the Panca-tattva, who are the inaugurators of the yuga dharma of chanting Hare Krishna mantra, in order to quickly achieve success in chanting Hare Krishna purely.

### **2.3.4) Role of pronunciation while chanting the Holy names**

**If the name of the Lord is identical to Him, then is it not important that the name be pronounced correctly? For instance Krishna is pronounced in many ways, depending on the accent and the nationality of the person. Will all of these chanting be equally effective or is it important that one finds out the correct enunciation of the name and then chant in**

### **that manner? (Digest 44.3)**

Srila Prabhupada personally addressed a similar dilemma in one funny instance. Sometimes Prabhupada's disciples would address him as `goru' instead of `guru'. Srila Prabhupada amusedly remarked about this mistake: "Goru means a cow; but even though you, my disciples, are calling me `goru' I do not consider it as an offense, because you do not know Sanskrit but you are all so sincere and dedicated and have such love for me."

Then he went on to explain how Krishna is famous as `bhava-grahi-Janardana', one who accepts only the mood of love and devotion of His devotees. When His devotee offers something, even if full of faults, Krishna ignores all the shortcomings and accepts the essence of their devotion and becomes fully satisfied. On the other hand, He does not care much for an elaborate, perfectly arranged offering (or for that matter perfectly enunciated mantras) by a non-devotee, who simply tries to make a show of religiousness for his or her own personal satisfaction.

This is not to say that one need not take care to properly chant the Holy Names. Krishna does look only for one's sincerity of purpose and devotion. But the sign of sincerity is that one must surely make the endeavor to properly enunciate the Holy Name, and must avoid chanting neglectfully or improperly. But if because of accent and other such unavoidable reasons, one's enunciation differs slightly, it is overlooked.

One of our twelve principle authorities, or mahajanas, Yamaraja, confirms this understanding directly in SB 6.3.24 "Even if one chants the holy name of the Lord with improper pronunciation, he will achieve relief from material bondage if he chants without offenses."

### **2.3.5) How to obtain concentration while chanting?**

**While chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra sometimes the mind deviates and I am not able to concentrate on the chanting. How to obtain the concentration while chanting the holy name of the Lord always? Please clarify. (Digest 37.2)**

This is an exhaustive topic! It can be discussed endlessly from many angles. Earlier we discussed this in Digest 20-Q.5. Some further thoughts: When Prabhupada was asked this question, he replied very simply --- "Just chant and hear, where is the question of mind?" !! In other words, initially we should try to focus upon just hearing the sound vibration, chant and hear and chant and hear. By practicing like that in a sustained manner, the mind becomes captured between the senses of hearing and speaking. In fact, that is the meaning of mantra: man=mind, tra=that which delivers. By focusing on the mantra one becomes delivered from the material mind. Setting aside the best part of one's day for chanting, especially the early morning hours when one is undisturbed by other responsibilities is especially helpful in this effort.

Another more fundamental feature is to try to call upon Krishna from the core of one's heart, in a very prayerful attitude: "My dear Krsna! I am Your eternal servant. Having turned my attention away from you, I have fallen into this miserable material existence. Let me take shelter of You. Please engage me in Your service." The japa time is thus a period of continuous prayer, calling out to Krishna helplessly, like a lost child crying for its mother. The material mind is just an external feature of the conditioned soul. As Krishna explains in Bhagavad-gita, the soul is higher than the mind and intelligence. When we offer our soul, our very self at the lotus feet of

the Holy Name, in a mood of surrender, inattentive and mechanical chanting automatically ceases.

### **2.3.6) Reason for chanting on beads**

**One of the elder relatives of my family does not want me to chant on beads. He says by using beads concentration is lost. He also says Kabir advised not to use beads. Can someone please give me material describing advantage of chanting on beads so that I can tell him or any pointers where I can get that material. (Digest 37.3)**

Please refer Digest 20-Q.2 Further references can be found in: Hari-bhakti-vilasa (quoted in Cc Madhya 1.35), Cc Madhya 4.125, Antya 3.100, 3.115, Sri Sadgosvami-astaka V.6 etc. Besides, our principal authority in following any spiritual practice is the precept and example of the acaryas. It is through the bona-fide spiritual master that sastra comes to life and since Srila Prabhupada, and all the previous acaryas, such as Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur, Bhaktivinoda Thakur and so on have taught us and personally demonstrated by chanting on beads, therefore we accept the practice of chanting on beads as very important and beneficial.

### **2.3.7) Advantages of chanting on beads**

**Where does it say that the Hare Krishna maha-mantra should be chanted on beads? I chant every day, but without using the beads, since using the beads breaks my concentration. Please clarify if I can only become a devotee by chanting on beads? (Digest 20.2)**

There are no hard and fast rules for chanting. We can chant the Holy names, anywhere, at any time. However, it has been the standard practice of Vaishnavas, since time immemorial, to chant on beads and this has been proven to be very effective. Even Lord Caitanya would chant on beads, and keep count of the Holy Names. Namacarya Srila Haridas Thakur did so, and so did the six gosvamis in Vrindavan, and these descriptions are found in the Caitanya caritamrita and other scriptures.

Practically also, it is seen that chanting on beads helps improve our concentration while chanting and to make a commitment to chant a minimum number of rounds daily also helps us become more fixed on chanting the Holy Name. Many contemporary devotees have also initially felt the same way as you have described but eventually found that chanting on beads aids their focus and steadiness in chanting. Many have described that employing the sense of touch while chanting also helps them concentrate better.

Nevertheless, although it is recommended for our benefit, chanting on beads is not the deciding factor for someone to become a devotee. What matters the most is our sincerity and devotion in taking shelter of the Holy Names.

### **2.3.8) Chanting with or without beads**

**Please can you advise if there is a difference in chanting with beads or without them? (Digest 206.2)**

Please refer to Digest 20, Q 166 where a similar question is addressed.

## 2.4. Offenses in chanting

### 2.4.1) Ten offenses in chanting

**What are the various offenses when chanting the holy name of the Lord? (Digest 20.4)**

There are ten offenses in chanting, the most important ones being offenses to or criticism of vaishnavas, disrespecting the orders of the spiritual master and committing sinful activities on the strength of chanting. A complete list of these offenses is found in The Nectar of Devotion, end of Chapter Eight and also in Srimad Bhagavatam 2.1.11.

### 2.4.2) 'Offensive chanting' and 'chanting leads to taste for the Holy Name'

**It is said that if one chants with offenses he may go on chanting for millions of years but he will never get the taste for the holy name. Also it is said that chanting only gives taste for chanting. How are both things possible? Please resolve the contradiction? (Digest 15.1)**

Offensive chanting is not useless. However, through imperfect chanting flawed with offenses it takes a long time to purify the heart and to bear the fruit of chanting, i.e. developing a taste for chanting, and approaching the stage of love of God. Therefore, in addition to chanting one must make the endeavor to know what the offenses against the holy name are and diligently avoid them. It is only by striving to continue one's chanting that one can overcome one's lack of taste and also get the strength to ultimately overcome the offenses.

In other words, if one is committing offenses against the Holy Name, the solution is not to give up chanting, but to quantitatively and qualitatively increase one's chanting, by endeavoring with great care to remove one's offenses.

If someone thinks that it is okay to keep committing offenses, because by chanting all of one's offenses will be effortlessly neutralized, such a mentality is considered to be the greatest offense, and the Holy Name will never bestow His mercy upon one who has such an attitude.

The purification which comes from chanting 'in the clearing stage' brings one to the point where one can remove one's offenses; but if one carelessly and casually remains complacent towards the removal of offenses, then one will not get the full benefit of chanting. This is the implication of the first statement you have quoted. Therefore, there is no actual contradiction between the two statements.

### 2.4.3) Afraid to chant due to the fear of committing offenses

**In your Madhurya Kadambini - Hyderabad lecture you said that a person loses the taste for bhakti when he commits nama-aparadha and also there is a possibility he may turn averse to (against) guru and Krishna.**

**A person may get discouraged to chant (maybe my utter ignorance and foolishness) while knowing this effect of nama-aparadha being afraid of consequences. (Digest 217.1)**

Understanding the offenses related to chanting is meant to help us to properly approach the Holy Name with due reverence, with proper knowledge of Its transcendental nature and potency and thereby help us quickly achieve the desired success, Krishna-prema. Certainly, it is not meant to discourage us from chanting.

Although the Holy Names are so powerful, merciful and easily accessible, and they can easily vanquish all of one's disqualifications including volumes of previous sinful reactions, there is one thing that is so devastating, that can cause such havoc and even make us averse to Krishna and devotional service - offenses. What are these offenses? -- by understanding them one can take proper precautions to carefully avoid them.

For this reason, our acharyas have very compassionately delineated the offenses, elaborately describing the anatomy of offenses, their consequences and remedial measures, so that we can be aware and guard against the likely pitfalls and mistakes that conditioned souls are generally prone to. Often it is seen that a sadhaka-devotee may inadvertently or negligently fall prey to committing one or more of these offenses, or they may even be suffering from the consequences of offenses, such as lack of taste and weakening of faith, but unable to identify the cause or not knowing how to rectify. Hearing and discussing these topics from time to time, in the association of devotees, helps the devotee to recognize where their obstacles are and remedy the situation, or to stay on track and prevent such pitfalls.

Fire or electricity is greatly beneficial and essential but can also prove very dangerous if handled carelessly - and yet we cannot afford to live without fire. It is certainly helpful to understand the consequences of improper handling of fire and the proper precautions to be taken, but that should not make us hesitant to use fire to carry out our daily duties and take advantage of its numerous, indispensable benefits. Just as fire or electricity carries immense power, similarly the Holy Name, the Deity or the pure devotees carry immense spiritual potency and it is recommended that we approach them with due care and reverence lest we minimize or neglect them as ordinary.

Similarly, a student of chemistry who is about to perform a laboratory experiment is given a set of instructions and precautions, and is warned that there could be serious repercussions for neglecting them. The intention is that if one sticks to these precautions, one can avoid mishaps and achieve the desired result of the experiment; it is not meant to intimidate the student or stifle their enthusiasm, but to ensure their safety and success.

In a sense, this goes to show how scientific the process of chanting and devotional service is, in giving us such a detailed roadmap and such bold & clear signs by which we can identify progress as well as possible wrong turns! Rather than feeling unnerved, I would like to encourage you to take this as an impetus to approach the process of chanting with greater attentiveness, diligence and enthusiasm.

Everyone is encouraged to chant the Holy Name, for any attempt to chant the Holy Name

is beneficial, but one cannot experience the full benefit when there are offenses. But, the Holy Name is very merciful indeed, and even if there are some offenses, by continuing to take shelter of the Holy Name without duplicity, by repeated chanting, and humbly submitting to the spiritual master who can guide us in chanting, offenses can be avoided and eliminated. If some offenses are committed accidentally or unintentionally, it can be rectified by properly regretting and seeking forgiveness from the vaishnavas and the offender can quickly be reinstated. Thus this is the most auspicious path.

On the other hand, if one hesitates to chant the Holy Name due to these considerations, then they remain in the treacherous material whirlpool - that is certainly not a better alternative.

#### 2.4.4) Reinstating oneself after committing offenses

**If he becomes against guru and Krishna bhakti, how can he regain bhakti and be liberated from this situation. Kindly slash my ignorance with your transcendental explanation. In Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna says svalpam apy asya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayaat, "My devotees are never vanquished, they always succeed." (Digest 217.2)**

Madhurya Kadambini gives the example that if a servant offends his powerful and wealthy master, the master may neglect him, and thus the servant suffers. But when the servant realizes his mistake, understands the feelings of the master, begs apology and continues to serve and try to please the master, the loving master quickly accepts him again.

Another example is just as a very sick patient loses all appetite, similarly a grievous offender may lose his attachment for hearing, chanting, and other devotional activities, and may even become averse and turn to sensual enjoyment. However, just as the patient's sickness abates after some time, his appetite gradually returning, similarly after a period of aversion towards devotional service or forgetfulness and consequent suffering, their interest in devotional service is rekindled again. Just as a seriously diseased person is unable to derive nourishment even from a healthy diet of milk, but by continuing with proper diet and medicines, he gradually regains good health, similarly by taking shelter of the process of devotion, despite the lack of taste, the devotee gradually regains and returns to sincere engagement in hearing, chanting and serving. (Cf. Madhurya Kadambini Ch 3)

In this sense, it is true that a devotee is never vanquished. As Krishna promises, even a little bit of sincerely rendered devotional service never goes in vain. Krishna may neglect or seemingly punish a deviant devotee, but the suffering of such a devotee is not the same as the suffering of a non-devotee who never approaches Krishna. Srila Prabhupada likens the difference to the difference between the sufferings of an orphan and the suffering of a beloved child of the king. Although superficially they may seem similar, the king's son is always under the care and vigilance of the father, and is sooner or later rectified and reinstated in his original position. (Cf. SB 1.5.19p)

#### 2.4.5) Is it an offence to chant while still eating meat?

**We have a family friend that has been attending the ISKCON temple for years (but not regularly). He has just recently started chanting. We are very happy for him and his progress to 10 rounds a day. My question is: he still has not given up eating meat totally,**

**yet. Is it an offense to chant the Holy Name while still eating meat? (Digest 88.1)**

This situation in itself does not preclude your friend from the eligibility to chant; one can and should be encouraged to chant from any circumstance of life. As long as one sincerely takes the Holy Name, while trying to purify oneself step-by-step of detrimental habits according to one's honest capacity, the Holy name will purify the heart and help purge those sinful habits.

However, if a chanter continues to cling to sinful activities despite understanding its demerits without making effort to change, such chanting will not be very effective. Moreover, if they specifically think that by chanting they can counteract the effects of sinful activities, then that constitutes a serious offense to the Holy Name and must be rectified.

**2.4.6) Effect of offenseless chanting**

**By chanting without offenses one will no longer experience any suffering in this world, because one will be mercifully transferred to the abode of Lord Krishna. Does this mean that one will give up their material body and die when they attain that state? (Digest 13.1)**

The result of offenseless chanting is that one develops pure love for Krishna. This stage can be attained even in one's present lifetime. In that condition, a devotee is no longer disturbed by the upheavals of the material world, because the devotee in such a purified consciousness tastes the happiness of devotional service from within. According to Krishna's own sweet will, the pure devotee will be mercifully transferred to Krsna Loka, in due course of time!

During the duration of their present lifetime, they will not prematurely leave their body, but the offenseless chanter of the holy name, like Haridas Thakur, will relish Krishna's association through His holy name, and instruct others for their life's duration in the ways of devotional life by both their conduct (achar) and teachings (prachar).

## 3. Death and transmigration

### 3.1. Death

#### 3.1.1) Remembering Lord Krishna at the time of death

In the Bhagavad-Gita, last verse of the second chapter, Krishna says that "... If one is thus situated even at the hour of death, one can enter into the kingdom of God". Also the purpose of all the practice that we do is to remember Krishna at the time of our final exam - The DEATH. Regarding Ajamila's deliverance, is his previous karma also involved in this or is it just purely because he chanted Krishna's name? In case of Ajamila, he didn't even cry out for Krishna; rather he was calling for his son. So how did he get the mercy of Lord, and what happened to all his karma for all of his bad activities? Does it mean that any person who doesn't have even a slight spiritual knowledge or bhakti calls his friend or relative whose name is related to Krishna will get the same benediction like Ajamila, and get liberated? We understand that the Name of Krishna is non-different from Krishna Himself, but how do we understand this incident? It is not really clear and looks contradictory to laws of karma.

At least in case of Valmiki when he was a hunter he regretted for all the sins he did and took shelter of his Guru and chanted Krishna's name sincerely, but again it is not sure what happened to Valmiki after his death, whether he went back to Godhead or was given a better life!! Could you kindly clear this question: what does it mean to remember Krishna at the time of death; does it really have to be with love or can it be out of fear or can it be just calling out someone whose name is Krishna-related? (Digest 68.1)

There are three stages of chanting, namely the offensive stage, the clearing stage and the pure stage. Scriptures list different offenses against chanting the holy names, specifically ten in number. (See Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 8, pg. 72.) The Holy Name is compared to the sun, but offenses shroud the sunshine like clouds. The clearing stage of chanting is called Namabhasa, meaning a shadow or a dim reflection of the holy name. It is compared to the light at daybreak before the sun actually appears on the horizon and yet at once dissipates the darkness of night. In the pure stage of chanting, one's love of God awakens and Krishna actually manifests to the chanter. Namabhasa, the 'clearing stage of chanting', is so powerful that it can burn up the reactions to more sins than one is able to commit! Note that while namabhasa can easily destroy sins and bestow liberation, it cannot give love of God, which is attained only in the pure stage of chanting. Ajamila's unintentionally calling out the names of Narayana is considered to be in the Namabhasa stage, for it is free of the ten kinds of offenses to the holy name. In other words, Ajamila was not sinning on the strength of his chanting, nor did he consider his chanting to be some material ritualistic activity, etc. Scriptures state that one who chants either unintentionally as when calling a relative, or derisively as did Sisupala, or even unknowingly, as when saying "Bowl-o-Rama" one utters the name "Rama" - they get the benefit of Namabhasa! This is not contradictory to the law of Karma, because Krishna is the Supremely independent Lord, who is

the master of the laws of Karma, also provides measures for those who violate the laws of nature to be relieved of the karmic reactions. Chanting of His holy names and the rendering of other forms of devotional services are those very means. This is an exhibition of Krishna's unlimited mercy to the most fallen conditioned souls who would never willingly serve Him otherwise. Krishna and His names are Absolute and fully pure and thus are fully capable of destroying all impurities even by a slight contact. This implies that the effect of mountains of sins can be easily overcome by chanting as long as one carefully guards against the ten offenses. Ample scriptural evidence to support the above statements can be found in the section of the Ajamila story wherein the Visnuduttas are addressing the Yamaduttas (Chapter 2, Canto 6). You have asked if Ajamila's great fortune was due to his previous karma. No, devotional service is never created by good karma nor prevented by bad karma; devotional service is obtained only by the Lord's mercy. By virtue of his practice of brahminical principles in his youth before he had become corrupted, he was somehow inspired to name his youngest son as Narayana. Entirely due to his material attachment, Ajamila constantly chanted his son's name. However, some Vaishnava acharyas have explained that by his intensely calling out the name of Narayana at his deathbed, he was freed from all sinful reactions and thus he actually began to remember Lord Narayana, the Lord whom he had learned to worship in his childhood.

In either case, anyone who remembers Krishna at the time of death in any frame of mind, whether in love, fear or even hatred is delivered from all sinful reactions. They may be given a second chance, as was the case of Ajamila himself, to perfect their life in devotion. However, it is not certain that one will accidentally remember and offenselessly chant the Lord's names at the crucial time of death. Those who are wise do not take such chances and therefore diligently practice during their lifetime to take shelter of the holy name. For the sincere devotee, Krishna assures that He will personally appear in their minds at the time of death, even if they happen to forget Him by chance.

### **3.1.2) Why should we live if there is death?**

**I have been wondering about a lot of issues related to religion. I wonder if you can help me find some answers and direction. I sometimes feel confused. Knowing that we are going to die, what is the point of living? (Digest 192.1)**

[NOTE: This question was presented by a 13 year old. The language within the answer has been chosen accordingly.]

Thank you for your very thoughtful questions. In answering your questions, I will share with you the timeless wisdom as found in the Bhagavad-Gita, which systematically addresses all these vital questions about the meaning and purpose of our life.

According to Bhagavad-Gita's teachings, we are eternal living beings -- we are not this body but eternal spirit souls residing in this body. Our real self, the spirit soul, is never subject to death. The body is just like an outer garment, or a vehicle, and it is the soul only that animates the body. When the body becomes old or useless, the soul leaves that body and takes on a new body, just like a person changing his dress, or giving up an old car and getting a new one. Death, therefore, is not an end as it seems to us, but merely a changing of body.

This present life and body, of course, are temporary and will come to an end, and therefore too much absorption in accumulating material knowledge, wealth, position, or superficial bodily relations in one sense does not have any lasting value and thus are futile,

because they will all be taken away at death. And yet, whatever we do in our present life \*IS\* quite important in another sense, because it decides what kind of future we are going to have. Therefore it behooves us to live our life responsibly and in proper knowledge.

At death, we acquire a new body based on our previous activities (karma) and desires, taking birth in any of 8.4 million species of life in any planet within the universe! This continues in repeated cycles of birth, death and transmigration. The human form of life is a very special opportunity in this cycle, because in this human body alone, unlike those of animals, we are endowed with intelligence to inquire into the purpose of this repeated cycle, just as you are inquiring now. Unless one comes to this point of inquiry, his human life is considered to be wasted, or lived in vain.

Because we are eternal, the prospect of death and changing bodies is very unnatural, unpleasant and depressing. But the reason we find ourselves subject to the unpleasantness of birth, death, diseases or old age or any other misery of this world is only due to our having forgotten our real spiritual nature and our relationship with God. Just like if you turn the lights off in your room one night, you would neither be able to see yourself, nor the objects around you, in the same way, God, Krishna is compared to the Sun and when we forget Him or turn away from Him, then we are subject to a type of darkness called ignorance or the illusory energy called Maya. Under its influence, people think themselves to be identical with the body and think life as having no ultimate goal or meaning, and abruptly ending in death. But as soon as we turn our attention back to God, this illusion is removed.

The real purpose of this life then is to understand our real spiritual nature and transfer our desires from matter to spirit, turn our attention back to God. When we start acting in our relation with God, then even the ordinary activities and relationships that we pursue in this life take on new meaning and significance, instead of being temporary and illusory. Moreover, ultimately it will put an end to this cycle of birth and death and enable us to go back to our eternal home, where we can eternally engage in blissful loving service to the Supreme Lord, without being subjected to the stringent laws of birth, death, old age, disease and suffering.

This message, in effect, is the essence of any true religious system. Bhagavad-Gita gives us very detailed, scientific descriptions of how we can understand God, ourselves and our place in this material world. It also teaches us the methods by which we can revive our forgotten relationship with God, the best process being bhakti yoga, or performing devotional service to God and calling upon His Holy Names, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

### 3.1.3) Bringing life to a dead body

**Srila Prabhupada said scientists cannot create life or bring life in to dead body. but in ancient ages "Sanjevani Vidya" was used to bring life back in dead bodies. it is also a material science, so in future scientists may rediscover "Sanjevani Vidya" and can bring life from dead. (Digest 156.1)**

Sanjivani-vidya is a technique to bring the soul back to the body. This is clearly seen in the 6th Canto narration of Narada's revival of the dead son of King Citraketu. Srila Prabhupada's basic point is that scientists cannot make a dead body live by MATERIAL means. The sanjivani vidya requires knowledge of the soul (the existence of which the scientific community largely

totally rejects), as well as far more subtle sciences than modern science will be able to access due to the lack of purity and sattva-guna.

## 3.2. Transmigration

### 3.2.1) Is there life after death?

**How can you know for sure that there really is life after death, instead of the other belief that we are just mechanistic organisms that live and then die and then are nothing? (Digest 4.8)**

There are different processes of acquiring knowledge, such as by direct perception, by experiment, by logic and example, by hypothesizing etc. But none of these methods bring us to the point of conclusive knowledge, especially about something that lies beyond our sense perception; all these processes are subject to defects. The best way of acquiring knowledge is therefore to hear from qualified authorities. We accept the Vedas as authority on all subjects, because they are not man-made but given by the Supreme Lord, the creator Himself. It would be a big mistake to think that Vedic knowledge is nothing but a set of blind beliefs or that it is fictitious; the Vedas are very scientific and reasonable. From Vedic evidence, such as Bhagavad-gita, we can get very clear and scientific understanding of our true nature as spiritual entities beyond the combination of material ingredients, in the shape of the material bodies which we presently occupy.

### 3.2.2) What is rebirth?

**What is rebirth? (Digest 11.8)**

Spirit soul is eternal, and thus has no real business in this temporary atmosphere. If he manifests a desire apart from his spiritual nature, he obtains a material body suitable to accommodate that his material desire. At the termination of the particular body which the soul has been awarded, the soul quits that body and takes on another, according to the consciousness at the time of death. This is called rebirth or transmigration of the soul, and it continues on until one is free from all material desires, at which time the spirit soul can return back to the eternal spiritual world.

### 3.2.3) 'Transmigration' and 'the form of God in the Vedas'

**I wanted to know about the concept of transmigration of soul which is preached in the Bhagavad-Gita, but this transmigration is no where mentioned in the Vedas. In fact, the Vedas also say that God has no form; please clarify on the same. (Digest 141.1)**

Bhagavad-gita is integral part of Vedic literature; in fact it is popularly called Gitopanisad, for it summarizes the essence of all Vedas, and has emanated directly from the lotus mouth of the Supreme Lord, as do all of the Vedas.

Most likely, by "Vedas" you are referring specifically to the four Rg, Sama, Yajur and Atharva Vedas. Bhagavad-gita, and in fact the Upanishads, Puranas, Mahabharata, samhitas etc are all part and parcel of the same body of Vedic literature. Vyasadeva divided the one Veda into many and presented them in these different divisions; the Mahabharata and the puranas are called the fifth Veda. (Please see SB 1.4.19 and 20 purport)

Srila Jiva Gosvami, in his treatise Tattva Sandarbha, analyzes this subject extensively and proves how evidence from the Puranas is as good as evidence from the four Vedas, or even superior. Jiva Goswami's points are too elaborate to go deeply into here, but one of them explores the fact that the Vedas are not available in their entirety at present - hardly two percent of the original Vedas is extant today! Thus, if one discards these other divisions of Vedic literatures as superfluous or non-Veda, we are left with a very incomplete and fragmentary picture of the message of Vedas, indeed!

Moreover, Krishna confirms that His statements in the Gita are directly based on the Vedas and Vedanta-sutra. (BG 13.5). In fact, you will find many of its verses to be identical with texts from other Upanishads. (e.g. see BG 2.20, 29)

Having said that, there are indeed numerous references directly in the shruti shastras (i.e. 4 Vedas, Vedanta sutra and Upanishads) both on transmigration of soul and the personal feature of the Absolute Truth. Before we consider these, however, it would do well to bear the following in mind:

### **Negation of Form of God in the Vedas**

First, a large part of the four Vedas is comprised of karma-kanda rituals, leading to promotion to heavenly realms. When we turn to the Upanishads or Brahma sutra which deal with the topics of spirit soul and the Supreme Absolute Truth, their language and style are very terse, encoding volumes of meaning in short aphorisms and thus accessible only to highly learned professors of Vedas. Besides, with a few exceptions, they mostly give only indirect pointers to the realm of Transcendence, through the classic "neti, neti" approach i.e. extensive negative description of the material realm. But negation of the non-essentials does not mean negation of the essential - the positive spiritual form. When the Supreme Brahman is described as 'nirguna' or 'nirakara', the real implication is that He has no material qualities or material form; but He does have transcendental form and qualities, inconceivable to material sense perception but directly perceived and glorified by those with spiritual vision.

Typical descriptions of the all-pervading, inexplicable and omnipotent features of the Supreme in the shruti mantras -- "The Supreme walks and does not walk. He is far away, but is very near as well. He is within everything, and yet outside of everything." -- may bewilder some and cause them to conclude that a Being endowed with such characteristics must ultimately be formless. The Upanishads frequently employ such 'double-talk' and we find similar statements in the Gita also, (See BG 13.14, 15, 16, and 17) but their purpose is simply to portray to the conditioned soul the inconceivable, non-material nature of the Supreme; they do not in any way negate the Spiritual Form. Rather than taking these texts exclusively and out of context, when we study the Gita or any of the Upanishads in its entirety, under proper guidance, it becomes clear that there is Transcendental Form and that Krishna's Original Form actually encompasses all such apparently contradictory and inconceivable qualities.

## Some Vedic References to Transmigration of soul

In [Chapter 2](#) of Bhagavad Gita As It Is, Srila Prabhupada quotes many references from different Upanishads discussing the nature of soul: his eternality, his repeated entanglement to fruitive actions in the embodied state and how he can attain eternal freedom and happiness by turning his attention towards the Supersoul. (Please see purports to BG [2.12](#), [2.17](#), [2.20](#), and [2.7](#)) The soul is described as eternal, is neither born nor annihilated with the body and is always full with individual consciousness. Naturally, this indicates the soul's embodiment in other forms before and after this life. In terms of Vedic Karma kanda, this would mean promotion to heavenly planets and coming back down to martya loka or hellish life, cyclically.

The soul and Supersoul are described as being seated on the same tree of material body, and due to forgetfulness of his relationship with the Supreme, the atomic soul is changing his position from one tree to another, or one body to another. (From Mundaka and Svetasvatara Upanishad, as quoted in [BG 2.22](#) purport)

## Some Vedic references to Krishna's Transcendental Form

The Rg Veda mantra "om tad vishnoh paramam padam sada pasyanti surayah" speaks of the abode and lotus feet of Lord Vishnu. "The lotus feet of Lord Vishnu are the supreme objective of all the demigods. These lotus feet of the Lord are as enlightening as the sun in the sky." (Rg Veda 1.22.20)

The Brahma sutra indicates that by the glance of the Supreme, the entire cosmic creation was manifested (sa aikshata) and also refers to Him by phrases such as "ananda maya", "raso vai sah" (embodiment of bliss and reservoir of all rasas). Naturally, though implicitly, these and numerous other such statements indicate a personality - and not impersonal energy - who wills, glances, creates and maintains the material cosmos and also enjoys all varieties of transcendental mellows in His own abode. He is the Energetic, the possessor of multifarious energies/potencies. {Svetasvatara Up. Quoted in [BG 3.22](#) purport)

There are also explicit references to the form of the Lord, covered by the dazzling effulgence of Brahmajyoti, as in this prayer from Ishopanishad (Mantras [15](#), [16](#)): "O my Lord, sustainer of all that lives, Your real face (mukham) is covered by Your dazzling effulgence. Kindly remove that covering and exhibit Yourself to Your pure devotee.

O my Lord, O primeval philosopher, maintainer of the universe, O regulating principle, destination of the pure devotees, well-wisher of the progenitors of mankind, please remove the effulgence of Your transcendental rays so that I can see Your form of bliss. (yat te rupam kalyana tamam tat te pashyami)" etc.

Thus, it is not true that the Vedas merely describe God as formless.

### 3.2.4) Purpose of transmigration and the human form of life

**The laws of karma are very complex, but at least we have some understanding from Srila Prabhupada: there are 8,400,000 forms of life through which the soul can transmigrate, 400,000 of which are human. In any of those human forms (if I'm not mistaken), we are permitted the opportunity to re-establish our dormant relationship with Krishna.**

**But what is the nature and purpose of transmigration through the other 8,000,000 forms of life, a very long process to say the least? Are those species transmigrating due to their past activities, and how are they becoming qualified to accept the human form of life once again? (Digest 181.1)**

The understanding you have expressed is quite accurate. Yes, the soul transmigrates due to its past activities and desires. The many varieties of bodies are created by the Lord to facilitate the variegated, independent desires of the conditioned soul to enjoy separate from Krishna.

The human form of life is the most crucial juncture in this long cycle, where we are given the opportunity to either conduct our lives in such a way as to get out of this cycle altogether, or get another material body in any of the higher or lower species, based on the nature of desires one cultivates in this life and thinks of at the point of death. The more deeply a human being's consciousness and activities are engrossed in passion and ignorance, the lower the life form one will attain in the hierarchy of species. The cycle of gradual evolution of species from that point onwards resumes.

The nature of transmigration in these species, expressed in a very simple manner, is that that they evolve through progressively higher forms until they once again reach the human form of life.

There is no further generation of karma in these lower species; they are simply conducted by the instincts of their particular bodies.

The purpose of this long process, as I mentioned before, is that each of the forms of life facilitate and simultaneously ever-so-gradually elevate the living entity in its evolving trajectory of variegated material desires.

### **3.2.5) How does karma influences the transmigration of the soul?**

**If soul is constitutionally Caitanya (conscious) and not influenced by karma, then how does karma influence its rebirth? (Digest 11.9)**

If someone lost their hard-earned money, the person himself is not hurt by the incident, but because they are attached to the money and identify it as their property, they have to suffer the consequence of the loss. Similarly, the soul mistakenly identifies himself with the material body, and thus becomes attached and 'conditioned' by the desire to enjoy the facilities of material existence. Therefore, he is forced to take another body to enjoy or suffer the consequences of past actions.

### **3.2.6) Reincarnation and gender**

**When you are reincarnated is it always the same gender? (Digest 4.9)**

Not necessarily. In fact it is said that if one is too attached to the opposite sex, they will be attain a body of the opposite gender in their next life!

### 3.2.7) Remembering past lives

**Why Lord Krishna has not given us remembering power of our past lives. If we had that power, it would have been a full meaning about the "second chance". [Editor's Note: The reference here is to a Bhaktivedanta Book Trust publication entitled "Second Chance", which discusses the transmigration of the soul from one body to the next.] (Digest 6.12)**

The arrangements of the Supreme Lord are perfect, because they are in our best interest, even if we are unable to see how. For instance, the trauma of transmigration, death, and birth are so painful, that if one were to remember them, one could possibly not bear them and remain balanced in mind. Therefore, fortunately the Lord has given us forgetfulness. But there are some rare cases where He does give this remembrance.

### 3.2.8) Destination of the killer of the soul

**In Sri Isopanisad, Mantra 3, page 30 - Srila Prabhupada says, "The killer of the soul is destined to enter the darkest region of ignorance to suffer perpetually." Does perpetual here mean forever or eternally? Do such living entities ever have hope again or are they condemned forever in the lower planetary regions? (Digest 36.1)**

Lord Krishna also makes a very similar statement in Bhagavad-gita (16.19,20): "I perpetually cast such persons in the ocean of material existence, into various demoniac species of life... Gradually they sink down to the most abominable type of existence." Krsna is all-merciful, and as Srila Prabhupada explains in his purports to the above verses, this is just another feature of the Lord's mercy. In these verses, the word 'perpetually' conveys the idea that such souls glide down further and further, repeatedly being born in demoniac species until they at last reach the animal species of life such as cats and dogs. Thereafter, one again goes through the entire cycle of transmigration until they attain another human form of life, the rare opportunity to put an end to this cycle.

Krishna's desire is that ALL living entities come back to Him, to the spiritual world. The very purpose of the material creation is to facilitate the living entity to rectify his mentality and go back to Godhead. Therefore, NO ONE is eternally condemned to material existence; everyone is repeatedly and endlessly given yet another chance to revive his or her spiritual consciousness.

In addition, Krishna personally incarnates, especially in His most-munificent feature as Caitanya Mahaprabhu to benefit even the most sinful and demoniac persons. And so also the pure devotees of the Lord compassionately walk the earth; just by coming in contact with them even the birds and beasts are spiritually uplifted! Krishna's mercy is endless and one can take advantage of it in any status of life.

## 4. Demigods

### 4.1. Demigod and Demigod worship

#### 4.1.1) Are all Hindu gods the same?

##### **Do you believe that all the Hindu gods are the same? (Digest 6.2)**

The Vaishnava understanding, based on Bhagavad-gita and other Vedic literatures, is that there is one Supreme Personality of Godhead, Bhagavan, who is the source of everything else. There are representatives of the Lord called demigods or devas, who are like directors and officers in the government of the Supreme Lord. They are in charge of administration of universal affairs. Although very, very powerful and exalted in their position, it would be very wrong to consider these demigods to be on an equal level with the Supreme Lord, as much as mistaking a minister or ambassador of state to be the king.

#### 4.1.2) Role of demigods

##### **Are the demigods obliged to pay back to their worshiper the boon he is asking for? If they are administrators of this universe then how is it that they are offering benedictions? Is this in addition to their normal duty of administration? (Digest 50.1)**

Basically, when a living entity wants to enjoy some material facilities through the agency of someone other than the Supreme Lord, then they have an arrangement by which they can approach specific demigods. In fact, Krishna Himself inspires such persons from within their hearts to worship that particular demigod according to their desire. The methods of worship are also prescribed in the Vedas and through such worship if one can appease the demigod, then the demigod bestows the worshiper's desired goal, in the role of an appointed agent. (Please refer Bg As It Is 7.21 & 7.22 plus purports.)

We should note however that such worship of demigods is to be perfectly executed through perfectly qualified brahmanas without the slightest discrepancy (which is nearly impossible in this age of Kali, where there are no sufficiently qualified brahmanas to perfectly perform these rituals and such little purity!). When yajnas or rituals are flawlessly executed, the demigods are obliged to offer the desired result for that prescribed religious act according to their capacity.

The demigods are not independently powerful to offer anything to anyone on their own. Nevertheless, they do have their minute independence, power and influence, which they derive from the Supreme Lord. We may compare this to a highly placed government officer also having the ability and influence to favor those who approach him/her, by virtue of their position. Similarly the demigods can choose to favor someone who approaches them for shelter or for some material benefit.

#### **4.1.3) Fate of demigods after their duration of rule**

**What is the fate of demigods after their duration of rule over the occupied post is over? (Digest 50.3)**

Their fate will be based upon their Karma. If they have accumulated further pious or devotional credits, such demigods can ascend to even higher planetary systems such as Tapoloka, Janaloka, up to Brahmaloaka. These planets are inhabited by highly advanced pious souls and they have a chance there to perfect their lives. However, generally the heavenly regions are a place of unlimited sense enjoyment, not one of spiritual cultivation. For example, we don't generally find vacationers going to the exotic tourist spots on a spiritual quest! Such people are busy extravagantly spending their hard-earned money. When one thus depletes their pious credits in enjoying heavenly opulence, they then fall back again to earthly realm to continue their karmic cycle. Ksine punye martya lokam visanti. (Cf. Bg 9.21)

#### **4.1.4) Demigod worship**

**Are the demigods dependent on the yajna / puja from their worshipers for their subsistence? What will happen if nobody worships them? (Digest 50.2)**

We are supplied with all the necessities of life through the demigods, and in turn we have to offer sacrifices; otherwise one becomes a thief, just as a person who does not pay his taxes. The actual beneficiary of all those sacrifices, however, is Lord Vishnu, not the multi-demigods. By propitiating Him, the demigods are automatically pleased.

For one who cannot understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead, or is simply unwilling to surrender to Him due to having too many attachments to material and sensual desires, sacrifices to demigods is recommended. But just as they are authorized supply agents on behalf of the Lord, in the same way they are like the tax collectors who collect our worship on behalf of the Lord. The tax collector does not misappropriate the taxes but simply offers them to the government, and he is in turn well maintained by the government. Similarly, Krishna is the actual maintainer of all living entities, including the demigods. Performance of sacrifices is recommended for our own benefit, and giving it up is our own loss. But sacrifices mutually benefit both - humanity is pleased by profuse supply of necessities and the demigods are pleased by discharging their duty on behalf of the Lord. (Cf. Bg 3.11, 3.12)

Besides, even if the whole population becomes atheistic, there will always be pious persons, if not on the earth planet, at least in the upper planetary systems (such as the rishis, siddhas, caranas etc) and they also perform sacrifices to the administrative demigods. And even though the ritualistic worship of various demigods has declined to almost nil, by the performance of sankirtana yajna, the yuga dharma for this age by the followers of the Lord Chaitanya, all living entities including the demigods will all be satisfied.

#### 4.1.5) 'Demigod worship' and 'worship of Lord Ganesha for removing obstacles'

**What are demigods? Why can't we pray to them? I am a bit confused on this issue. Is Lord Ganesha a demigod? If he is, then why do people look up to him as the clearer of obstacles? Why is it said that one has to pray to him first, before approaching other gods. Please clarify my doubts!! (Digest 16.5)**

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the Supreme powerful and the source of everything and everyone in existence. The demigods are powerful living entities who are appointed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead for the management of universal affairs, just as officers and directors appointed by the government for different affairs of the State. Demigods are parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord; they act under His will and derive all their powers from Him.

From the Vedic literatures, we understand that there are 33 million demigods including administrative demigods such as Indra, Candra, Varuna etc., who are in charge of supply of water, air and all such administrative affairs for the smooth functioning of the universe, and primal demigods including Brahma, Siva, Ganesha etc. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the source of all demigods, is Lord Sri Krishna as confirmed in various Vedic scriptures.

In the Vedic literatures there are recommendations for worshiping different demigods for different purposes, such as worshiping Ganesha for removal obstacles. Demigod worship is not forbidden, but doing so for temporary material benefits or with improper understanding of their actual position is described in Bhagavad-gita as a less intelligent position. Most people approach demigods for quickly achieving some material benefit. But an intelligent person understands that both the demigods and the results achieved by their benedictions are all perishable.

Also, in general demigod worshipers have a misunderstanding that the demigods are equal or independent of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But the fact is that the demigods themselves derive their powers from the Supreme Lord, and it is the Supreme Lord Who actually bestows benedictions, through the agency of the demigods. Thus, demigod worshipers are indirectly worshiping the Supreme Lord, but in an improper way, as described in Bhagavad-gita (avidhi-purvakam) and with an improper understanding. Srila Prabhupada once compared this with someone trying to bribe a government officer for some immediate benefit rather than approach the head of the state, i.e. the person from whom the government officer derives his power. The proper method is to depend on the Supreme Lord and follow His orders. An intelligent person directly worships the Supreme Source of all, knowing that this will satisfy everyone just as one would water the root of the tree and thereby satisfy all parts of the tree or feed the stomach rather than trying to separately nourish each part of the body.

Thus a devotee simply concentrates on pleasing the Supreme Lord; however, sometimes they may worship the demigods also in order to be able to properly execute their duties in service to the Supreme Lord. For instance, the gopis prayed to goddess Katyayani for obtaining Krishna as their husband; or a devotee without material motives might pray to Lord Ganesha for removing the obstacles on the path of one's attaining pure Krishna-bhakti. Such worship must be carefully performed with proper understanding of the actual position of the demigods in relation to Krishna and not for some temporary material boon. Generally, this clear understanding and purity of motive is absent, and therefore such worship is not recommended. (Cf. Bg 4.12, 7.20-23, 9.23)

#### 4.1.6) *Worship of Lord Ganesa vs. Lord Narashinga dev*

**In Hindu culture, in all pujas we used to pray first for Ganesa but we are not following this. Why? (Digest 63.1)**

According to Vedic tradition, ceremonial rituals were generally begun by worshipping the demigod Ganesa; the reason for doing so is the fact that Ganapati drives away all impediments in the execution of such rituals. In the Brahma Samhita, prayers by Lord Brahma, it is stated that Ganesa worships the lotus feet of Lord Narasimhadev and has thus become a source of great auspiciousness and is able to clear all impediments. (Text 50)

Vaishnava scriptures and our acaryas at times indicate the worship of Ganesa in the execution of specific vaishnava tantras or rituals, although it is not a mandatory principle. Perhaps you have read in Bhagavad-gita about the differences between worshipping demigods and worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead. These distinctions are nicely explained in Bg. 7.20-23, 9.23+25 and 4.12). Krishna describes ritualistic or materially motivated worship of demigods, without proper understanding of their position in relation to Krishna, as improper and less intelligent.

But if this difference is properly understood, as well as one bears in mind the proper motive for approaching the demigod, viz. enhancing devotion for Krishna and NOT advancing one's material well-being or prosperity, then it is not incorrect to offer one's respect and worship demigods. Worship of Krishna, the source of all demigods, however, is sufficient and complete in itself, just as by watering the roots of a tree one automatically nourishes all parts of the tree.

Srila Rupa Goswami mentions the worship of Ganesa in his Bhakti-rasamrta Sindhu (see Nectar of Devotion Chapter 8, pg. 71). Srila Prabhupada, however, did not encourage his disciples to take up such worship, stating that it was not practically necessary and could potentially prove to be a distraction, since one's aspirations are not only for attaining pure devotion, in the beginning stages of sadhana bhakti. Instead, seeking the mercy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and worshipping Lord Narasimhadeva were what he instituted as our means to remove all obstacles and inauspiciousness in our devotional life.

Although there are many principles in the scriptures, the essential principles applicable to a particular time, place and circumstances are selected and indicated by our immediate acaryas. Knowing the difficulties of the age of Kali, where our lives are very short and disturbed, and there being so many opportunities to be deviated from the pure knowledge and practice of Krishna consciousness, Srila Prabhupada placed emphasis on simply focusing our attention without any diversion on the primary processes of bhakti which are sravanam kirtanam visnu smaranam (hearing, chanting, remembering etc. about Vishnu).

#### 4.1.7) *Animal sacrifice for worshipping Durga devi*

**In Srimad Bhagavatam (10.2.11-12,10) Lord Krishna blessed Mayadevi by saying, "In different places on the surface of the earth, people will give you different names, such as Durga, Bhadrakali, Vijaya, Vaisnavi, Kumuda, Candika, Krsna, Madhavi, Kanyaka, Maya, Narayani, Isani, Sarada and Ambika. By sacrifices of animals, ordinary human beings will worship you gorgeously, with various paraphernalia, because you are supreme in fulfilling the material desires of everyone."**

**My question is, why did Lord Krishna say that by sacrifices of animals, ordinary**

**human beings will worship Durga? Isn't it wrong to kill any creature? Or is it that one can kill in the name of sacrifice? Why is it necessary to kill animals to worship Durga devi? (Digest 27.2)**

The Vedas are all encompassing and accommodate people in all different levels of spiritual advancement, from the lowest to the highest. Thus, there are provisions even for those who are addicted to sinful activities just to regulate them. Those who are grossly and uncontrollably addicted to meat eating are permitted to do so, although under explicit and stringent restrictions, accompanied by a suitable mode of worship such as worshiping the ghastly form of Kali.

Krishna as well as the Vedas recognize that such people will eat meat in any case; however, by doing so in submission to Vedic strictures, they will become gradually purified and slowly elevated. This does NOT however mean that the Vedas permit slaughtering animals. It is specifically to curtail such misuse of Vedas that Lord Buddha incarnated. (Note: Such methods of achieving gradual elevation by Vedic procedures of animal sacrifice are all rendered practically ineffective in this age of Kali due to lack of qualified brahmanas, and are very difficult to perform. Therefore the easy process of harinam sankirtan is recommended by Lord Caitanya and is appealing to all.)

Krishna is certainly not advocating animal killing here, nor is it "prescribed" as the way to propitiate Durga; rather He is just referring to the tendency of people in general in the yuga which will follow His manifest pastimes' completion.

#### **4.1.8) 'Arjuna seeking help of Lord Indra' & 'devotion only to Krishna'**

**Why did Arjuna, a great devotee of the Lord approach Lord Indra a demigod for help? Does this not contradict the teachings of Srila Prabhupada that intelligent men worship only Krishna? (Digest 1.1)**

My reply will be a two part response. First, bear in mind that the message of Bhagavad Gita and the message of Srimad Bhagavatam are describing unalloyed devotion to Krsna as the ultimate goal. This is the highest teaching and the means of the highest attainment of life. While this is true, the Mahabharata is presenting another important lesson of life, namely the principles of ethics and morality which should guide human society, whether one is an exalted unalloyed devotee of Krsna or not. Everyone should be ethical and moral, and these instructions are found in Mahabharata. The reference of Arjuna seeking weapons from the demigods adds to the grandeur of the figure of Arjuna, who was a most exalted friend of Krsna. Because of that dearness to Krsna, he had the capacity to even travel from the earthly planet to the svarga loka region, etc. What I am indicating here is that there are two levels of instructions which we find in scriptures. One level is describing the highest possible attainment, the other is describing the religious principles which should guide our life. You should not become confused when you read various literatures and find that there are different levels of instructions or teaching-by-example exhibited by great devotees. The second part of my answer has to do with the exalted nature of Arjuna. Because Arjuna was Krishna's unalloyed devotee, therefore whatever Arjuna did was exclusively in the line of service to his master and dear friend Lord Krsna. On the other hand, if someone less qualified than Arjuna were to go to the demigods for divine astras, their purpose would not be the same. They would want to do this for name and fame, or for influence, or for

some personal aggrandizement. That is not the case of Arjuna, given his exalted and pure devotion to Krsna. Therefore his activities are not subject to the same defects that others might be subject to, even when performing the same activities.

## 4.2. Lord Brahma

### 4.2.1) Lifetime of Lord Brahma - reference

**Srila Prabhupada in his purport to Bg 8.17 gives in detail about the lifetime of Brahma (i.e. about yuga, Manvantra, Kalpa and so forth). Can I get the actual reference to these statements? (Digest 68.2)**

The calculation of Vedic time scales is described in great detail in Srimad Bhagavatam, Canto Three, Chapter 11. Specifically see 3.11.18, 19, 22 & 23 for above definitions.

### 4.2.2) Lord Brahma's age

**How old was Brahma when he was born. How old is he now? (Digest 6.3)**

The answer to that question should be very obvious. The soul of Brahma, of course, is eternal. But when any living entity is first born, their calculation of age begins from birth. Therefore, at the very beginning of Lord Brahma's life, he is not even yet one year old.

As far as calculating the present age of Lord Brahma, we can calculate in this way. During this present day of Lord Brahma, we are now in the seventh Manu, namely Vaivasvata Manu. In each Manu's reign there are 71 yuga cycles which complete their cycle, and we are now in the 28th of those 71. Therefore, in this day of Brahma, it is something just before midday

### 4.2.3) Lord Brahma's meditation and realization

**In SB 3.8.21, it says, "Thus, controlling all objectives, he concentrated his mind on the Supreme Lord." Does Brahma know about the Lord already or what does he meditate on? (Digest 16.8)**

This particular passage is narrating the stage of Brahma's existence prior to realization of Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is meditating upon the mantra that was given to him, as we find in the Sri Brahma Samhita: the Gopal Gayatri Mantra. After meditating upon his mantra for 100 years, he realized Govinda in His fullness, as well he realized his own spiritual identity.

#### **4.2.4) Will all Lord Brahmās' return back to Goloka Vrindavana?**

**Is Lord Brahma guaranteed to return to Goloka Vrindavana at the end of his lifetime? I said that I believe it is not a guarantee but probably likely given that whichever jiva occupies the post of Lord Brahma will have 50/64 of the transcendental qualities. (Digest 218.1)**

It is not a guarantee that all Lord Brahmās will return to Goloka Vrindavana at the end of their lifetime. It depends on their spiritual attainment and what they think at the time of death (anata kale ca). Srila Prabhupada tells us that the current Brahma is a pure devotee and that he will return back to Godhead. Generally that is the case, as well. But that is not an "always" situation.

#### **4.2.5) Worship of Lord Brahma**

**There are no temples for Brahma as far as I know of. Why is it so? (Digest 6.4)**

This is because of some curse received by Lord Brahma that he would not be worshiped. However there is a famous temple of Lord Brahma in Puskar.

### **4.3. Lord Siva**

#### **4.3.1) Worship of Lord Siva, a pure devotee of Lord Krishna**

**Lord Krishna told Arjuna: "Those who claim to be directly My devotees are actually not my devotees. But those who are devotees of my servants are factually My devotees." In Srimad Bhagavatam purports of first canto, Srila Prabhupada mentions that Lord Shiva is a pure devotee of Lord Krishna. According to the above sloka, does it not directly imply that all of us must serve Lord Shiva? How far is this justifiable? (Digest 22.2)**

Yes, Lord Shiva is certainly worshipable, as a great devotee, but not independently. Lord Shiva is one of the four primary spiritual masters (the others being Brahma, Lakshmi and the Kumaras) and teaches pure devotional service to the Supreme Lord. Therefore, factual service to Lord Shiva is to follow his instructions to worship and chant the Holy names of Lord Vishnu .

#### **4.3.2) Performing parikrama of Lord Siva**

**Is it forbidden to perform parikrama of Lord Shiva? (Digest 199.3)**

By parikrama I assume you mean circumambulation. Scriptures say that Lord Siva is half circumambulated. You may notice that in Siva temples there is often a fence on one side. When

circumambulating Lord Siva we go around to the fence, and then turn around and go back. This is called half circumambulation.

#### **4.3.3) Fasting on Siva ratri**

**If Lord Shiva is considered to be a great Vaisnava then why do we not observe Shiva Ratri with fasting as we do the appearance days of other great Vaisnava acharyas? (Digest 218.3)**

This question was answered in Inquiries of Absolute - Digest 12 (please refer to 5.6.3)

#### **4.3.4) Fasting on Siva ratri**

**My question is related to Lord Shiva. He is considered to be the topmost Vaishnava. When a devotee or Vaishnava sannyasi comes, we are eager to take their association but we don't go to Shiva temples to take his association. Similarly we observe fasting till noon on appearance and disappearance days of acharyas. But we don't do such a thing on Shivaratri (the festival marking Lord Shiva drinking poison). Why is this so?**

**Whenever a vaishnava comes, we are eager to take association. Lord Shiva is a senior most vaishnava: "vaishnavanam yatha shambu" and yet we don't go to his temple. Besides, on the appearance or disappearance days of Vaishnava acaryas we observe a fast till noon but we don't do so on Shiva-ratri festival day, which marks Lord Shiva's drinking of the poison. Why is this so? (Digest 12.6)**

Vaishnavas are not prohibited or discouraged from visiting Lord Shiva's temples. In fact, Lord Caitanya visited many Shiva temples during His tour of South India, where He chanted Hare Krishna mahamantra and danced in great ecstasy before the Deity. But unfortunately, there are hardly any bona fide temples of Lord Shiva today where worship is performed with the mood and understanding that he is the topmost devotee of Lord Krishna. Therefore, devotees generally do not make it a point to visit such temples, although they don't specifically avoid them either. The best way to honor Lord Shiva, in any case, is to chant Krishna's holy names and glories, just as Lord Siva instructed the Pracetas to do, and to dedicate our lives to the worship of Krishna. This would be most pleasing to Lord Shiva, and in this way automatically we will receive his blessings. Even in our temples, therefore, devotees celebrate Shivaratri by chanting in sankirtan and discussing the glories and the great devotion of Lord Shiva as described in Srimad Bhagavatam and offering a feast in his honor.

#### **4.3.5) How can Lord Siva be influenced by maya?**

**I just read digest 169 which was about Arjuna's material attachment. In that it was mentioned that Arjuna was an eternal associate of Lord, so there was no question of he being under illusion, and the Lord chooses his devotee to give the message to human kind.**

**In this regard, I have a doubt when it is said that Lord Shiva was bewildered by Maya or illusionary energy of the Lord when he was under the meditation and as a result Kartikeya was born. Was it not plan of the Lord to kill the demons? I really fail to understand how Lord Shiva, being an expansion of the Lord Himself and the greatest**

**devotee, can be influenced by the illusory energy. Please clarify the doubt. (Digest 175.1)**

Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma are no doubt highly exalted devotees, heads of entire sampradayas, and are guna-avatars (qualitative incarnations) as well. Although they are controllers in charge of the modes of ignorance and passion respectively, being in constant touch with the modes of material nature, unlike Visnu they have the tendency or potential to sometimes come under its influence. Pastimes that seem to indicate some apparent discrepancies in their activities, including the one you have indicated and others, are meant to illustrate this fact: except for Lord Vishnu, who is the master of illusory energy and the ONLY entity who can deliver liberation (unless He gifts that specific capacity to another), all other beings in the universe are potentially subject to the influence of the material modes. (SB 1.2.23-24)

We do know however, that fully surrendered devotees of Lord Krishna can also transcend the modes of nature. (BG 7.14, 14.26) While we have to understand the unique position of Lord Vishnu being beyond the modes as stated above, we should not mistakenly think that Lord Shiva or Brahma are disposed to improper conduct, nor should we offend them in any other way. At the same time, we are not to become disturbed when we come to know of features that show them to be distinct from Visnu-tattva (Remember here BG 9.30 --- even in extreme circumstances, they are to be regarded as exalted entities, saintly devotees, but they are \*not\* equal to Visnu). Rather, we are to take these features as instructions for us: if even such exalted personalities can become victimized in extreme circumstances by the Lord's illusory potency, how careful we have to be to take constant shelter of the process of devotional service, which keeps us ever connected with Visnu or Krishna!

Srila Prabhupada taught us that we should be very careful not to criticize the apparent fall-down or seeming degradation of very powerful and great devotees. Highly advanced devotees are not influenced by apparent transgressions and are faultless. An ordinary person must be very cautious not to criticize such powerful personalities. This is one of the many instructive lessons from the pastime of Citraketu's apparent offense to Lord Shiva. (See SB 6.17.9-10 purport)

The example is given of the sun which is capable of evaporating a filthy place and still remain uncontaminated, whereas if ordinary persons were to stay in a filthy place they would be infected. Similarly, Lord Shiva is so powerful that he could drink poison and yet remain unaffected; thus his activities cannot be imitated nor are they to be criticized.

Care should be taken, however, that this principle not be misused by unscrupulous persons to transgress social norms.

Therefore, we are recommended to learn proper discernment under the guidance of those devotees who are themselves scrupulously free from all vices.

#### *4.4. Lord Krishna and Demigods*

##### *4.4.1) Understanding the position of various scriptures pointing out different personalities (Lord Krishna, Lord Siva & demigods) as the supreme*

**In Bhagavad Gita, Krishna claims Himself to be the only supreme Lord. But in Siva Gita (which is in Padmapurana) Siva claims that He is the only supreme Lord. Various**

**puranas praise various Lords to be the supreme absolute truth. This is very much confusing and this suggests the possibility of scriptures being man made. It is obvious that Bhagavad Gita or Srimad Bhagavatam are not special since Siva Gita and other puranas can sufficiently counter the claims made by the above said scriptures. So how to know who the Almighty is? (Digest 43.1)**

Different puranas and literatures are meant for those under different modes of nature - goodness, passion or ignorance. Each emphasizes different objects of worship according to the particular modes. According to the mode one is situated in, one's faith varies (Ch 17, Bhagavad-gita). For example, someone influenced by mode of ignorance may resort to witch-craft or violence or some such unclean/harmful practices to attain their desires; someone in mode of passion may rely on their own capabilities or the favor of someone influential, but one situated in goodness may believe in righteous performance of duties and performing sacrifices to God as the means to good fortune. The Vedic literatures are meant to cater to all these classes of people, by strengthening the kinds of faith they are already inclined to in such a way that gradually they can be elevated to the mode of goodness and beyond. Because there are literatures for different kinds of people, obviously such literatures glorify different objects and highlight different practices as the supreme goal and means. Thus some fearsome practices of worshiping Goddess Kali may be repulsive to one in the mode of goodness, but that is what a person in ignorance can strongly place faith in.

Alternative to the hypothesis of scriptures being man-made, (the differences being due to different authors' personal opinions), such differences may also suggest the work of a higher intelligence to encompass and provide for the spiritual upliftment of entire humanity regardless of the wide spectrum of their modes of nature, their corresponding faith, and their level of spiritual evolvment. This is the actual fact, because all the myriad Upanishads, puranas, upapuranas and so on were all compiled by one person --- Srila Vyasadev --- for the above said purpose.

A simple analogy may illustrate this idea: a professor in Math can outline syllabus for Math instruction for elementary, high school and university Math courses. Elementary math teaches that a greater number can never be subtracted from a smaller number, but as one learns the concept of negative numbers in higher grades, one knows better. Thus although the elementary and high school math seem contradictory, it is taught by the same person for those with different capabilities. If we understand that the same authority is behind all the different instructions, then it is easy to reconcile all contradictions.

True, it could be bewildering to sort through these seemingly contradictory statements and understand the final conclusion, and more often than not people resign thinking that everything must be relative, or that the Absolute is something void. Such conclusions are products of mundane logic and hence fallacious. It is like concluding that all math is wrong. The fact is that in such contradictory statements, both statements may be true, but one truth is a higher truth than the other! One fool-proof way to understand the real conclusion is to understand what the author himself has to say in conclusion.

At this point it becomes necessary to understand that Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam are in fact special evidences even among the other Vedic literature.

Srimad Bhagavatam, especially, is called amala purana (or spotless purana) meaning that it is beyond the three modes of material nature unlike the other puranas which give instructions within the modes of nature; thus it is identified as para-dharma. The Bhagavatam is described as

the mature fruit of the Vedic tree, just as of all parts of a fruit-bearing tree, it's ripened fruit is the most desired. There is indication even within the other puranas that among all the puranas Srimad Bhagavatam is the emperor, or ultimate authority. The puranas themselves indicate that any contradictions among them should be resolved by consulting Srimad Bhagavatam.

(The author's intention is not to confuse us, so he himself gives hints and indications where to look for the final truth. Scriptural evidences of this are quoted in Jiva Gosvami's Tattva sandarbha.)

The Bhagavatam was written by Vyasadev in his complete maturity. As the history goes, Vyasadev completed all the Vedic scriptures including the Vedanta sutras and the puranas etc., and was still feeling despondent when he was instructed by Narada to compose a literature simply dedicated to the Absolute Truth without any distraction. (Please refer SB Ch 4-6) It was then that Vyasadev writes Srimad Bhagavatam, wherein he himself declares that all other literatures that don't exclusively glorify the Supreme Absolute Truth propound "a cheating religion" but the Bhagavatam is devoid of all such cheating mentality and that the only Supreme Truth is Vasudeva, the son of Devaki. (Cf. SB 1.1,2)

As mentioned before, other puranas do glorify some other Deity as exalted, and in a sense, it is true. For instance, Devi Bhagavat may glorify Durga as the creator, maintainer and annihilator of the cosmic manifestation and so on. This is a fact, these are not to be taken as mere stories to impress faith upon less intelligent. But as said before all these are relative truths, and thus dependent upon an Absolute Truth which is Krishna. Durga is the immediate cause of creation etc, whereas the efficient cause of all causes is Krishna. When Lord Brahma receives transcendental knowledge after thousands of years of penance, he offers prayers to the Supreme Lord and there he describes the entire cosmic situation. He states there that Durga creates, maintains and annihilates just as instrument to carry out the will of Govinda (Cf. Brahma Samhita) Similarly, Lord Shiva is in one sense non- different from Krishna; he is but a transformation of Vishnu, just as yogurt is but a transformation of milk. His glories cannot be minimized. Within the created region, he is the 'Mahesvara', the controller of all other isvaras, greater than even Lord Brahma. Thus his supremacy in the material world is established, even within Vaishnava literatures and the statements such as the one referred to by you are not false. However, even Lord Shiva is NOT SUPREMELY INDEPENDENT of Krishna. Sri Krishna alone claims "There is no other Truth beyond Me." (Bg. 7.7) Lord Shiva is thus himself one of principal acaryas of the four bona fide sampradayas teaching Krishna bhakti to his followers. Even Sankaracarya (who is but an incarnation of Lord Shiva with a special mission to preach impersonalism and bewilder the atheists) concludes that only Narayana is beyond the material realm: 'narayana paro `vyaktat' etc.

Finally, I would like to mention that transcendental truth cannot be established merely by logical arguments and counter-arguments. Vedic authority is the final evidence, and in order to reconcile different interpretations of its conclusions, we may use logical inferences that establish the truth.

However, as Krishna recommends (Bg 4.34), the only way to conclusively understand the truth is by receiving guidance from self-realized souls or as said in Mahabharat, to follow such mahajanas as Prahlada, Bhisma, Brahma, Shiva, Narada etc. and by the grace of God.

#### 4.4.2) Position of Lord Krishna and Lord Shiva in Shiva Purana

**What position does Lord Krishna have according to Shiva Purana? What kind of relationship do Krishna and Shiva maintain (according to Shiva purana)? This is a question I came across in preaching and though I have been able to give references according to the Brahma Samhita, Srimad Bhagavatam, Gita Mahatmya, and also explain that the different puranas are meant for people in different modes, I wasn't able to give a direct answer as to Krishna's position according to the Shiva Purana. I would really appreciate if you could please elaborate on this. (Digest 89.2)**

Before directly answering your question, let me provide a prelude, a context in which to understand how different puranas relate to one another. Since different puranas address the needs and temperaments of those situated in different modes of nature, just as you have pointed out, it is natural that they identify different personalities as the greatest object of worship. Indeed we can expect that any scriptural text will focus on extolling the glories of its subject matter.

Yet, even as they glorify a particular Deity exclusively, portrayed as "superlative to all others", within the various puranas themselves are found indications hinting at a higher stage of realization of the Absolute Truth to those sincerely seeking for it. Sometimes they may directly refer to another purana as superlative (namely the Bhagavata Purana) and at other times do so more subtly by directing the reader to approach a self-realized soul to learn the truth.

To elaborate on this scriptural issue our acharyas, particularly Jiva Gosvami in his Tattva Sandarbha, gives much evidence showing how various puranas singularly point towards Srimad Bhagavatam as being the foremost and the ultimate authority amongst them all (the puranas), being the "spotless" purana and the ripened fruit of Vedic tree. Thus, in case of any apparent contradictions or conflicting conclusions among the puranas (which are inevitable due to the differences in their subject matters and their audience), the verdict of Bhagavatam is to be upheld as superior. This is indicated within the Bhagavatam itself, but it is corroborated by other puranas as well.

Thus, one will find in Shiva Purana or some other Purana, narrations depicting Lord Shiva as the Supreme controller of the material universe and so on. Such glories are indeed true, not exaggerations, but they are to be understood in context and in light of the conclusion of Srimad Bhagavatam. Thus, Lord Shiva performs the service of being the Supreme Controller of the material universe, in service to Krishna.

It is also to be noted that Lord Shiva in particular has a unique position and relationship with Krishna among other devatas, being in some aspects non-different than Vishnu. Thus even within the Vaishnava literatures, not to speak of Shiva purana, there are narrations where Vishnu worships Lord Shiva (e.g. Lord Rama), glorifies Shiva as superior to Himself (as in the pastime of churning milk ocean) and obtains boons from him (e.g. Krishna seeking benediction for a good son). For those without a grasp of the ultimate conclusion of the scriptures, this may be confusing, but these instances illustrate the special affection and intimate relationship Sri Krishna has with Lord Shiva, in that He offers His dearest devotee a position greater than Himself.

#### **4.4.3) 'Why are there so many gods mentioned in Vedas?' and 'why are Hindus biased in accepting Lord Krishna as the Supreme'**

**I would like to know why there are many Hindus biased in accepting Sri Krishna as the Supreme Lord. Why are there clearly so many Hindu gods stated in the Vedas. Why are there so many points of view regarding the Vedas? (Digest 6.1)**

Vedas are very vast; although all of the Vedic scriptures unanimously concur in their conclusions, they also prescribe instructions by which a person from the lowest platform of consciousness can be gradually elevated to the highest stage. Being so vast and varied, the actual conclusions of the Vedas can be understood only in disciplic succession, from pure devotees. Brahmans and philosophers (sages) were meant for the purpose of learning these conclusions and disseminating it to the masses according to their level of spiritual advancement, guiding them gradually through those various stages progressively.

However, in due course of time, the disciplic chain has broken, the brahmans have become unqualified, and Vedic knowledge has become a subject matter for speculation and interpretation. Thus, the varied conceptions and misconceptions about what is Vedic conclusion and what is religion that is prevailing.

Bhagavad-gita is practically universally accepted as an authoritative source of Vedic wisdom, and it clearly states that Krishna is the Supreme Lord.

#### **4.4.4) Is it correct to consider Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Siva as the trinity?**

**Is it correct to call Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva as the Trinity? (knowing that Brahma came from Vishnu's navel and Shiva came from Sankarsana) (Digest 100.1)**

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are qualitative incarnations of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, technically called 'guna avataras'. They are in charge of the three qualities or modes of material nature viz. passion, goodness and ignorance. In that sense, it is right to consider them a Trinity -- in charge of creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe, respectively.

'Trinity', however, is generally a misleading term as it is often used and understood as indicating three aspects of the same Absolute, which is a conception or terminology borrowed from Christian teachings. This understanding is not fully correct. Although Brahma and Siva are incarnations from Vishnu and, as you have mentioned, they have their origin in Vishnu, both Brahma and Shiva are in a different category ("tattva") altogether, and it is important to understand this distinction.

Krishna is the source of everything, the original cause of all causes. Thus He is the Absolute, and source of all incarnations. But Brahma is actually a living entity ("jiva tattva"), just like any one of us, but he is specially empowered by the Lord for the work of creation. Any qualified living entity can occupy the post of Brahma. Lord Shiva is not an ordinary living entity, in fact he is altogether within a different category ("siva tattva") than living entities. However, he is not in the Vishnu category ("visnu tattva") either. He is in a special category of his own. Thus Brahma and Shiva cannot be considered on the same platform as Vishnu. Of the three, Vishnu alone is understood to be beyond the control of material influence.

#### 4.4.5) Can Lord Vishnu be classified as a demigod?

**Can Vishnu be classified as Demigod? (when I am listing all the demigods to these kids) (Digest 100.3)**

No, Vishnu is not one among the demigods, but is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The demigods are empowered administrators of material affairs, and are like different assistants or limbs of the Personality of Godhead, something like the different cabinet ministers are to the Chief Executive of State.

As mentioned before, demigods are living entities, like any of us, who have but achieved that post by virtue of their exalted pious activities. They are within the covering of this material world, and are subject to birth, death and transmigration to other bodies, although their lifespan and opulence are fabulously far greater than human beings. Vishnu, however, is eternal, beyond this material world, and is the master of all demigods and human beings.

The demigods derive their power from Visnu; He is their energetic source, and thus not in the same category as an administrative demigod. (Please refer to Bg As It Is, [Chapter 3 Texts 10, 11, and 12](#))

#### 4.4.6) Understanding the pastime of Lord Ramachandra worshipping Lord Siva

**In addressing persons who are worshipers of Lord Siva, we find them sometimes quoting Ramayana as one proof that Siva is supreme. They refer to the lila of Ram's worshipping Siva before going to Lanka. How to best respond to this line of reasoning? (Digest 91.1)**

There are many cogent responses to the question arising from the Ramayana lila of Lord Rama's worshipping Lord Siva before proceeding to Lanka. Here is one presented by our great acarya, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada.

In the siddhanta-ratnam, third pada, text 22, 23, 26, and 27, it is stated: "By displaying the pastime of worshipping his own form as Rudra, Lord Vishnu taught the worship of Rudra not to His own sincere devotees but to the insincere living entities who desire religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation." The Lord Himself has confirmed this fact when He spoke in the Narayaniya to Arjuna as follows: 'O Arjuna, I am the soul of the universe. My worship of Rudra is worship of My own self. Whatever I do, common people follow. Examples set by Me should be followed. That is why I worship Rudra. Vishnu does not offer obeisances to any demigod. I worship Rudra, considering him to be My own self. I am the indwelling supersoul of the entire universe. Rudra is my own part, just as a hot iron rod is non-different from fire. I have set the standard that the demigods headed by Rudra should be worshipped. If I did not set the example of worshipping Rudra then people would not follow that standard. Therefore I teach the worship of My servants through My personal behavior. There is no one greater than or equal to Me. Therefore, since I am the greatest, I do not worship anyone. But since Rudra is My part I display the example of worshipping Rudra and other demigods to teach the ordinary people.'

In this connection, Brahma told Rudra that Vishnu alone is the supersoul of everyone including Brahma and Rudra. He said, "Lord Vishnu is the supersoul of me as well as of you and all other embodied living entities. No one can restrict Him within the confines of their mundane

knowledge. If simply because Sri Ramachandra displayed the pastime of worshipping Lord Shiva to teach the worship of that great vaisnava, Shiva should be considered the Supreme Lord and Ramachandra his subordinate, then since Sri Ramachandra worshipped the ocean, the ocean should also be considered the Supreme Lord. It should be understood that whenever the associates of the Supreme Lord have enacted the pastime of worshipping the demigods, their purpose was to teach the worship of demigods, who are subordinate to Vishnu. It is the pastime of the Lord's associates to teach, "All demigods are subordinate to Vishnu." Their worship of the demigods should never be accepted as the ultimate conclusion. Lord Vishnu is certainly the controller of everyone. His activity of maintaining the universe, like Brahma's activity of creation and Rudra's activity of annihilation, and His interactions with the demigods is just like a king's interaction with thieves. Actually Brahma and Rudra create and annihilate only after being empowered by Vishnu. Therefore Lord Vishnu is certainly eternally worshipable by all the demigods headed by Brahma and Rudra."

This can be found in Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada's purport to Sri Caitany-bhagavata, antya 2.399.

## 5. Devotional service

### 5.1. Deity worship, Tulasi worship

#### 5.1.1) Installing Radha Krishna Deities and caring for Them

**I had a question about installing Deities in one's home. If one installs Deities of Radha and Krishna in the home what measures must be taken in order to care for the Deity? For example, how many times should we offer prasadam, how many time should the outfit be changed, how many times should one worship the Deity daily? (Digest 158.1)**

In the attached PDF file ([Appendix B](#)), you will find a set of general instruction for Deity worship at home which I provide for those who are seeking general instructions in home Deity worship for Gaura Nitai. This is taken almost entirely from Pancaratra pradipa, published by the GBC Ministry of Deity Worship. The mantras for Gaura Nitai would need to be altered for Radha Krishna.

Simplification of these procedures is certainly permissible. For starters you can choose just a minimum standard that you can maintain, but as time passes you may want to learn some of the mantras because they are really nice and will increase your standards.

If you have further questions, please go to the website and inquire from the Minister of Deity Worship directly.

#### 5.1.2) Identifying the Deity as Bhagavan

**Kindly inform me on what basis we identify Krishna/Bhagavan Vighraha, which is sat chit ananda, with Deity/archa which is made up of matter. I want to know the Gaudiya logic and appropriate scriptural backing. (Digest 103.1)**

The Personality of Godhead is the source of all energies, both material and spiritual. Because He is full of inconceivable potencies, God can convert His different potencies according to His own will, much as an expert electrician can employ the same electric energy for both heating as well as cooling purposes. For the Lord there is no difference between material and spiritual energies; that He can transform His energies as He wills is Srila Vyasadeva's sublime teaching of shakti-parinamavada. He is the controller of both energies, and He cannot come under their influence at any time, as we do. A fundamental and axiomatic principle in spiritual science is that unless one accepts this inconceivable nature of God's potencies, there is no way of understanding Him. The conclusion is that Krishna, being omnipotent, can transform matter into spirit and spirit into matter as He desires, and He can accept our service through any sort of medium.

The Supreme Lord is called 'adhoksaja', which means One Who is beyond the reach of our mundane, imperfect senses. It is also stated that we can approach the Lord only by engaging our senses in His service. How are we to serve and learn to appreciate Him who cannot be perceived? Therefore, out of causeless compassion for the conditioned souls, Krishna appears in a so-called material form, just to become visible to and accept His devotees' service.

Just as the Supreme Personality of Godhead accepts various incarnations, similarly He takes on forms made out of clay, wood, metal and jewels, which according to shastra is known as archa-vigraha. By doing so this does not mean that His sac-cid-ananda form has been touched by material influence. The archa-vigraha is not fashioned from an artist's whimsical imagination but is the eternal form of the Lord, confirming in exacting detail to scriptural injunctions. The Lord Himself personally descends in the archa-murti at the request of the acharyas, and invests all His spiritual potencies within the Deity. Thus the devotees get an opportunity to easily approach Him and serve Him even with their present material senses, thereby purifying and spiritualizing their senses.

As Krishna explains in Bhagavad-gita, He is not visible to all (BG 7.25), but reciprocates according to a devotee's degree of surrender to Him (BG 4.11). Thus, to the degree of one's faith and devotion, one is able to perceive the presence of the Supreme Lord in His Deity form. There are many historical instances wherein the Deities have personal exchanges with the worshiper, talk to them and accept their offerings. But for one who considers Him to be merely stone or wood, He continues to remain so.

Therefore scriptures warn us to carefully avoid such mundane perception of the archa-vigraha. (Isopanishad Mantras 5,8 purports, Padma purana, quoted in Cc Madhya 5.95-97, etc)

### **5.1.3) 'Is the Deity, Lord Krsna Himself?' or 'does Lord Krishna reside in the Deity?'**

**You have explained that the Supreme Lord Himself personally descends in the archa-murti at the request of the acharyas, and invests all His spiritual potencies within the Deity.**

**The use of the word "descends" creates the impression in my mind that the murti is like a residence, with the Lord being free to leave anytime if He is not well taken care of. I've also heard from a senior vaishnava that Srila Prabhupada had once stated that the Deity form is Krishna.**

**I cannot reconcile the two: is the Deity Krishna Himself, or does Krishna reside in the Deity? Can you please clear my doubts. (Digest 104.1)**

Bhaktivinode Thakur, on many occasions, discussed the limitations of language to describe spiritual events. The particular doubt which you have seems to be one of those cases.

Srila Prabhupada did teach that the Deity is non-different from Krishna Himself. We also sometimes say that the Lord kindly agrees to come and 'reside' in the Deity form, but once He manifests Himself thus, He is non-different from the archa-vigraha. Indeed, there is a specific procedure during the Deity installation ceremony to destroy the material elements (or their influence) which are used to create the murti and in turn to invest in the Deity all of the Lord's spiritual potency, thus manifesting His spiritual form. Unlike material bodies which are but residences for the embodied soul, the Deity form is no longer to be considered as made of material elements after being properly installed.

When the Deity is not properly worshiped, He can withdraw His mercy, and become inaccessible, as much as when one chants the Holy Name inattentively, Nama prabhu withholds His full mercy from the chanter. Yet the Holy Name is fully spiritual, and is not rendered into a material sound vibration because of improper chanting; the same can be said about the archa-murti. There are several instances in history where an ancient Deity, being neglected and forgotten over a period of many years or even centuries, revealed Himself again before an

exalted devotee, requesting to be worshipped again. Sri Caitanya Caritamrita narrates one such instance. The history of Gopal appearing in the dream of Srila Madhavendra Puri in this way. (Cc. Madhya Ch 4)

#### **5.1.4) Deity worship by uninitiated devotees**

**Can a devotee of Lord Krsna who Has not been initiated yet but has been following all the instruction from HDG Prabhupada is allowed to worship Lord Krsna Archa Vighraha form in his house? (Digest 2.3)**

Yes. Yet that devotee should know that, in course of time, the injunctions of scripture indicate that each sincere devotee should become initiated in the line of disciplic succession. Certainly Srila Prabhupada's teachings reflect this fact. Historically, Srila Prabhupada authorized that his traveling sankirtan devotees in India could take Gaura Nitai Deities with them for distribution to newcomers; non-initiated devotees were expected to become Their worshipers. For a sincere follower of Srila Prabhupada's teachings, aspiring to achieve the standards for initiation is essential, particularly for one who has taken to the arcana process. Worship of Gaura Nitai would be the preferable initial Deity forms to be worshiped by uninitiated devotees, because Gaura Nitai are so merciful.

#### **5.1.5) 'Difference in the style of Deity worship in south Indian temples and ISKCON temples' and 'authenticity of dancing in kirtan'**

**I am from Southern part of India and it is true that the Deities in South Indian style temples are different from our ISKCON Deities. I have heard some people making comments about this and also the way Deities are dressed/decorated. One person even asked me if I believe in north Indian Gods and their kind of worship. How should one answer such questions? Another person, very recently at Ratha-yatra, said that dancing along with kirtan does not appear to be an authentic way of worship because being from South India, that person never saw anything like this before. (Digest 226.2)**

It is a common occurrence that those who are accustomed -and even attached- to certain forms and modes of worship may initially express reservation about what appears to them as a different, unfamiliar form of worship. But if they can get an opportunity to hear in the right association, soon their misgivings are replaced by genuine appreciation. Oftentimes such persons may not have a deep grasp of the significance behind their own practices either, but are going simply by customary observances or popular opinion.

You can take such exchanges as an opportunity for reflecting and deepening your own understanding of the significance and authoritativeness behind our practices, as well as an opportunity to educate/share it with others. When you express your understanding in a non-confrontational, kind, humble and thoughtful manner, it quickly removes preconceptions and prejudices; and people become not only appreciative, but experience a deepening of their own faith and understanding of spiritual life.

Thus, in a conversation such as the one you have presented, you could direct the discussion to the platform of scriptural authority, rather than certain individual's personal beliefs/preferences. For example, Deity worship in ISKCON is performed with very high

standards, and strictly in adherence with shastras (specifically the Pancaratra standards prescribed for the present age), and following the guidelines and examples set by great acharyas in the line of Lord Caitanya, over many generations -- just as much as the Deity worship in South Indian Sri Vaishnava temples are strictly regulated by the procedures established by Ramanujacharya, following another equally valid rendering of the same scriptural tradition.

Were you (or they) to become more familiar with the mantras, mudras, etc connected with Deity worship, you (or they) would be astonished to see how the essences of the worship within the Sri Vaisnavas, the Madhva vaisnavas and the Gaudiya vaisnavas are so overlapping, in many cases identical!

You could further point out how it is more important to seek the essence of any religious practice than be attached to the external formularies - although the formal procedures are also important, provided the essence is in place. Conversely, sticking to the 'form' without the essence is the prime reason why most spiritual/religious traditions have currently become either dogmatic & fanatical, or have become corrupted beyond recognition. The real essence of religion is to reawaken our dormant loving devotional service to the Transcendental Lord (SB 1.2.6). If a system of religious practice is seen to arouse such genuine, unmotivated devotion very effectively and purely in the lives of so many sincere practitioners, such a system will be accepted with great appreciation by broad-minded persons.

Similarly, dancing for the pleasure of the Deities is also very much a bona fide practice - in fact it is one of the 64 items of devotional service enjoined in Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu. As discussed in the previous inquiry, there are numerous pastimes of Lord Caitanya and His devotees dancing in ecstasy before the Deities. Such a mood of spontaneous love of God and dancing in joyful adoration of the Lord is very exalted, and before the appearance of Lord Caitanya it was very rarely to be found; but Lord Caitanya - as the most munificent incarnation - distributed it freely and made it available to everyone without consideration of qualifications.

In fact, when Lord Caitanya traveled in South India, where most vaisnavas are accustomed to worshiping Lord Vishnu in a mood of great awe and reverence, they were all struck with wonder to witness the ecstatic dancing and bodily transformations of the Lord. They had never seen anyone or anything quite like this before, but simply by coming in contact with Caitanya Mahaprabhu, they were also invested with spontaneous love of God and began to chant and dance in sankirtana. This is described in Caitanya Caritamrita (Madhya-lila).

#### **5.1.6) Sri Radha Krishna worship**

**In olden days as far as I know people used to worship Lord Sri Krishna only. I think it was in our (ISKCON) spiritual line Sri Sri Radha Krishna are worshiped? (Digest 7.8)**

You have asked a very interesting question, regarding the introduction of Radha and Krishna worship, as opposed to worship of Lord Sri Krishna without Srimati Radharani.

For your information, Radha Krishna worship is also found in the Nimbarka Sampradaya as well. The Vraja dham affection of conjugal love between Radha and Krishna and the very confidential mood of service found in Vraja in general is enhanced by the worship of Radha Krishna. In fact, it is by the mercy of Srimati Radharani, and the other associates of Vrindavan, that one can enter into the confidential understandings of the love of Krishna that is known in Vrindavan only. Worship of Krishna without His hladini sakti, Srimati Radharani, which is found in many places in India, not only in the past but even at present, permits one to enter into

the aisvarya mood of worshipping the Supreme Lord in opulence. It is understood that some parts of the paraphernalia of Lord Krishna represents the internal potency of the Lord. For example, in the Vallabha sampradaya the mala of Sri Nathji is understood to be the manifestation of the Lord's internal potency, or Srimati Radharani. In this way, worship is also performed, but in a mood of opulence rather than in a mood of intimacy, as the worship of Radha Krishna facilitates.

#### 5.1.7) Significance of Lord Narashinga dev's worship

**After we worship Lord Krishna, why do we only glorify Lord Narasimhadeva and no one else like Lord Rama, Vishnu, Venkateshwara etc.? (Digest 17.1)**

Vaishnavas adore and worship Lord Narasimhadev as the destroyer of all obstacles on the path of one's devotional service and protector of one's devotion, for He came specifically to protect His devotee Prahlada from his demoniac father. Therefore, devotees offer specific prayers to Him, at the end of worship begging Him to please forgive any offenses that might have been committed unknowingly during the worship, and to remove all obstacles in one's attempts to worship and seeking protection.

#### 5.1.8) Significance of Lord Narashinga dev's worship

**In our study group we are doing Narasimha Arati after Bhagavad-gita session. Is there anything wrong in this order? (Digest 63.2)**

No, there is nothing wrong. We worship Lord Narasimhadeva as the destroyer of all obstacles and difficulties in the path of devotion, as I indicated in the previous answer (Digest 63, see under Demigod worship, worship of Lord Ganesh). Lord Narasimha is famous as the protector of His devotee. Generally, we sing the Narasimha arati prayers at the end of Deity worship, morning and evening arati or sankirtana, so that all our offenses and shortcomings in the endeavor we made to worship the Lord are vanquished.

#### 5.1.9) Significance of Tulasi worship

**Maharaja, could you explain the significance of Tulasi worship? Digest 3.6)**

Tulasi devi is a very dear and intimate associate of Sri Krishna. She has the benediction of being able to impart Krishna-bhakti to one who prays to her sincerely. Vaishnavas pray to Tulasi devi to engage them in the loving service of Radha-Krishna.

## 5.2. General questions: Devotional service

### 5.2.1) What is devotional service?

**In the Bhagavad-gita, Krishna speaks about devotional service. Does this mean something like church or temple service, or something else? (Digest 31.3)**

The scriptures classify nine major limbs of devotional service, one of which is worshipping the Lord, as in a temple or church; this worship can also be performed in one's own home, for that matter, by following standard procedures of worship as directed by the revealed scriptures. The other eight processes of devotional service are: hearing, chanting and remembering (of the holy names, qualities, pastimes and instructions of the Supreme Lord), serving the lotus feet of the Lord, offering prayers to the Lord, becoming His servant, considering the Lord one's best friend and surrendering everything to Him. (Cf. Srimad Bhag 7.5.23-24) One can perform devotional service in any of the above nine ways, but the most important of them are the first two, viz. hearing and chanting. These nine processes, or any one of them, can be considered devotional service.

Krishna also explains the same idea in Bhagavad-gita: 'Offer everything to Me in love and devotion, always think of Me, worship Me and offer obeisances unto Me and make Me the Supreme goal of your life' (Cf. Bg 9.26,27,34; 10.9)

### 5.2.2) 'Eligibility for devotional service' & 'Bhagavata-marg vs. vaidic viddhi-marg'

**In the Ekalavya pastime, it is mentioned that one should perform duties according to one's propensity and capability. However, Lord Krishna declares that it is not the prerogative of only the Brahmanas to indulge in sacred activities such as reading scriptures etc.; rather anyone who can raise himself to the platform of bhakti is eligible for this. Are these not contradictory? (Digest 27.1)**

There are different ways to approach this question. First, I will briefly explain an important distinction between the bhagavata-marg approach to qualifying oneself to perform brahminical activities, vs. the vaidic viddhis. Krishna's statements in BG, much like the Srimad Bhagavatam's essence, are connected to the path of bhagavata-marg. According to this method, one becomes purified of \*ALL\* material contaminations by the process of bhakti primarily focused on hari-katha; then, sequentially, one becomes eligible to perform brahminical activities, following proper initiation.

In contrast, the Ekalavya story is connected to the vaidic viddhis, wherein gradually evolving in one's qualities and birth by following Vedic viddhis and prescribed duties is the focus. Ekalavya was disqualified on both accounts; Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur comments that Dronacarya assessed the character disqualification of Ekalavya, and thus was not inclined to become his teacher.

Note that these are two distinct yet equally valid approaches to becoming purified sufficiently to perform brahminical activities. Please also note that the Vedas consistently instruct us that only the bhagavata- marg is effective in Kali-yuga.

Here is another way to view this whole subject. Krishna says in Bhagavad- gita that

everyone is eligible for attaining the highest perfection through devotional service. (Bg. 9.32). This is not contradictory to the statement regarding Ekalavya, as you have made reference to in your question. Rather, each of us can perform our own prescribed duties; but by doing so in focused devotion upon Krishna, one can attain liberation. Krishna Himself outlines different kinds of duties for the different social orders based on their nature. (Cf. Bg. 18.42-46) Thus, those who have brahminical propensities such as austerity, cleanliness, sense control etc., can perform devotional service through activities such as sacrificial performance, reciting and teaching Vedas etc., similarly, one who has propensity for administration, business or labor can still worship Krishna through his own occupation. As far as devotional activities such as chanting, hearing Srimad Bhagavatam etc., there is no bar for anyone.

By following this bonafide process, one eventually attains the perfected stage of pure devotee, in which one becomes situated above the modes of material nature. Consequently he can perform any activity; but until one attains that stage everyone should abide by their own prescribed duties in Krishna consciousness.

As far as the pastime of Ekalavya is concerned, Dronacarya studied him and deemed him unfit to learn the ksatriya's skills. Ekalavya then disobeyed the order of his spiritual master and proceeded to learn the martial arts by himself, and exhibited apparent pride in his accomplishment. By this prideful and independent-minded spirit, he actually proved that Drona's assessment was correct: Ekalavya was unfit to receive ksatriya training and therefore restricted Ekalavya's opportunity to exploit his acquired skills.

### **5.2.3) 'Qualification for devotional service' and 'nine processes of devotional service'**

**What qualifies one for devotional service and what are the practical means by which perfection in devotion may be achieved? (Digest 10.7)**

Nectar of Devotion describes that even if one is not in a perfectly purified condition, contact with a pure devotee, and an unflinching attraction for Krishna are preliminary qualifications that make one eligible for devotional service.

Thereafter, by engaging in the nine processes of devotional service, beginning with hearing and chanting about Krishna under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, in the association of devotees, one can gradually achieve the highest perfection in devotion.

### **5.2.4) Is bhakti predestined?**

**Was it destined when I was born that I would one day become associated with ISKCON and do all these spiritual activities? If yes, then why do we preach? Won't people destined to join ISKCON join it, and those not destined to join ISKCON not join it? If no, then does it mean that joining ISKCON is outside the influence of destiny? (Digest 219.1)**

Bhakti is supreme, causeless and fully independent - no material cause can either induce or impede bhakti from appearing in one's heart. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarthi Thakura analyses this as follows: if material pious deeds, suffering, blind fortune or any such material condition could guarantee or give rise to bhakti, then that material cause would be considered more powerful than bhakti - this is contradictory and cannot be true.

It is therefore understood that bhakti is attained only by the mercy of bhaktas, who carry

pure devotion for Krishna in their heart. In other words, bhakti (present in the heart of devotees) is the cause of bhakti.

Lord Caitanya taught that a rare and fortunate soul achieves the seed of bhakti through the mercy of a pure devotee.

brahmanda bhramite kona bhagyavan jiva  
guru-Krishna-prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija

"According to their karma, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. Some of them are being elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some are going down into the lower planetary systems. Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Krishna. By the mercy of both Krishna and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service." (Cc Madhya 19.151)

Devotional service is thus not predestined. It is by the causeless mercy of devotees that one attains the opportunity for pure devotional service and to revive one's forgotten relationship with the Supreme Lord. Therefore the pure devotees of the Lord move here and there out of great compassion, taking great troubles to create opportunities for people in general to render devotional service.

Even upon receiving the mercy of the devotees, and getting the seed of this devotional creeper (bhakti-lata-bija), it is the choice of the living entity to take up the process of devotion. In other words, it is a matter of individual freewill. At every point, the conditioned living entity has full freedom of choice to turn his misdirected attention back to the Supreme Lord or not - otherwise there would be no meaning to the term freewill at all. (We have previously discussed freewill and predestination at some length - please see Digest 4 and Digest 12 Q 117)

Thus, it is only by the causeless mercy of devotees, when received and accepted by a conditioned living entity by proper use of their freewill, results in their taking up pure devotional service.

It is sometimes seen that certain individuals take to the process of devotional service very quickly and effortlessly, upon coming in contact with devotees - just like dry wood catching fire. In such cases, it can be understood that they are continuing or resuming their spiritual progress from a previous life. One who takes up the path of spiritual realization, or devotional service, but does not achieve complete success in this lifetime is given a further chance in the next life - this is confirmed by Krishna in BG 6.41-44. The Lord arranges in the lives of such persons an environment or an opportunity that is conducive to once again take up the process from where they left. But even in such a case, it is not quite a matter of predestination - the individual still has the full freedom to choose or reject the opportunity given to them, to misuse or to properly utilize it.

Also, Krishna is fully independent, and so is Bhaktidevi - thus, it cannot be expected that bhakti is obliged to appear because of one's previous devotional practices. Srila Prabhupada explains how the transcendental system of devotional service is fully independent -- it may or may not develop in a particular person even after he undergoes all the detailed formulas. Similarly, the association of devotees is also free from material causes. One may be fortunate to have it, or one may not have it even after thousands of endeavors. Thus, freedom is the main pivot in all spheres of devotional service. (Cf. SB 1.6.37 p) By sincerely surrendering to the Lord

through the transparent medium of the spiritual master, we can hope to attract His causeless mercy.

#### **5.2.5) When does seed of devotion get implanted?**

**When does the "devotional seed" get implanted in the heart. As soon as someone gets in contact with the Hare Krishna Mantra or when the Guru gives initiation? (Digest 7.2)**

Generally either one of two explanations is valid. Sometimes the explanation is given that the seed of devotion is received when one first gets the association of devotees and thus begins the process of devotional service. Alternatively, it is also explained that the seed of bhakti is imparted by the spiritual master when one receives initiation. Both understandings have their place, particularly with regard to furthering the evolution of bhakti. Yet another understanding is that bhakti is already there in the heart, and the association of devotees simply serves to bring that out. The awakening of our dormant devotion for Krishna is enhanced by devotee association; the process of diksa further enhances the awakening of bhakti. Of these three possible explanations, one can simply think of the 'seed of devotion' to indicate the aptitude for devotion that is being revived through good association. The tendency for bhakti is already there, and aptitude ('seed') is enhanced through siksa as well as through diksa.

#### **5.2.6) Real happiness can come only by Krishna consciousness**

**In one of Bhakti-vriksha [cell] edification material, I read the following line: "UNLESS YOU TAKE TO KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS, YOU CANNOT BE HAPPY." Can you please let us know, what is sastric or sloka reference for this emphatic statement? (Digest 42.3)**

This statement is just in accordance with the ultimate conclusion of all scriptures. For instance, Suta Gosvami makes a similar statement when questioned about the highest welfare for all of humanity: sa vai pumsam paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhoksaje / ahaituky apratihata yayatma suprasidati (SB 1.2.6) This verse says that only unmotivated, uninterrupted devotional service to the transcendent Lord can lead to complete self-satisfaction. Further he continues, "Everything else, if they do not lead one to this point of causeless devotion is simply a waste of time." (SB 1.2.8)

This is also echoed by Krsna das Kaviraja Gosvami in Caitanya Caritamrta: bhukti mukti siddhi kami sakali ashanta, Krishna bhakta niskama atha eva shanta: only an unalloyed devotee of Krishna is fully peaceful, everyone else, be they ordinary materialists, those seeking for mystic perfection or seeking liberation, is ashanta or unhappy. Krishna Himself declares in Bhagavad-gita that without sacrificing one's work to Vishnu, no one can be peaceful or happy. (Bg 3.9, 4.31 etc)

This of course is not a dogmatic statement, however, and should not be taken in that sense. The basis of this statement is that the original, natural position of a living entity is in loving servitorship to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna; under any designation other than that, one is in an unnatural position just like a fish out of water and cannot therefore be truly

happy. [Note that here we are defining HAPPINESS in an absolute sense, not in the sense of sense pleasures, or the diminution of distress.]

**5.2.7) What is transcendental happiness free of material anxiety?**

**I have struggled through material life and achieved material success but I am still not happy. I also chant Hare Krishna mantra 4 rounds and sometimes 16 rounds. What is transcendental happiness? Is it possible to live happily without material worries? (Digest 98.1)**

The nature of our real self, the soul, is "sac-cid-ananda vigraha", or eternal, full of knowledge and happiness. The soul is always searching for pleasure, ananda. In its pure state, the soul is ever blissful, the source of this happiness being the soul's exchange of loving relationship with Krishna.

In contrast, material happiness is based upon bringing the senses in contact with sense objects, and in the false conception of 'I' and 'mine'. Forgetful of Krishna, one hopes to find happiness by attaining the desired objects of the senses. Unfortunately this is actually the very source of suffering. (Ref. Bg 5.21-22) The more one tries to enjoy matter, the more one finds it frustrating, because matter/ material designation does not have the potency to satisfy the soul, much as a fish out of water cannot find pleasure in any object of the land. Even when there does seem to be some pleasure, it is but flickering and temporary, and often brings with it more attendant suffering than enjoyment.

Transcendental happiness is eternal, and ever increasing. It is intrinsic to the soul and not touched by any material circumstance around us. It is very much possible for every one of us to attain this transcendental happiness even while in this material world, and to live without material worries --- by reviving our original spiritual consciousness. To do so takes spiritual cultivation - by striving for self-realization and reviving our dormant relationship with Krishna. Practices such as chanting (as you are now doing), hearing and reading scriptures, and other forms of devotional service help bring about this transformation of consciousness.

Fear and anxiety arise when we see ourselves separate from Krishna. The key to practically transcending our material worries is to dovetail or dedicate all those seemingly worldly activities, and to see all our belongings and ourselves in relation to Krishna. One of our previous acharyas, Srila Bhaktivinod Thakur, wrote: "All my possessions---body, home, servants, brothers, friends, wife, sons, and personal belongings ... all of these things are now Yours, for I have become Your servant. You are the owner of the house, and I am Your most obedient servant. My only activity now is endeavoring for Your happiness. Within my mind I have always been anxious for the maintenance of my wife and children, my own body and relatives. Now, through self-surrender, I have been relieved of all anxiety." (Cf. Saranagati)

In this spirit, one may continue to diligently fulfill all of one's responsibility, but doing so on behalf of the Lord, not anxious for personal gain or loss.

NOTE: A wonderful purport in BG 2.41 directly addresses your question, as well. "When one is awake in Krsna consciousness, he need no longer endeavor for good results in his activities. When one is situated in Krsna consciousness, all activities are on the absolute plane, for they are no longer subject to dualities like good and bad. The highest perfection of Krsna consciousness is renunciation of the material conception of life. This state is automatically achieved by progressive Krsna consciousness.

**5.2.8) 'How to express oneself as part of the Lord?' and 'how to prepare oneself so that the Lord can accept?'**

**Could you please tell me how to express myself as part of Krishna and Rama? How to prepare myself so that the Lord accepts me? (Digest 30.1)**

Srila Prabhupada often gave the example of a hand connected to the body or a part of a machine connected to the machine to illustrate the idea that we are parts and parcels of Krishna. The hand for instance does not act independently. The analogy is given that the parts of the body work to bring food to the stomach, and by feeding the stomach they automatically become fully satisfied and nourished. Similarly we have no existence independent of Krishna, and all of our endeavors should be not for personal gratification but for satisfying Krishna. Therefore, Krishna advises in Bhagavad-gita, "Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you give away, whatever austerities you perform, do it as an offering for Me." (Bg. 9.27) Thus, a devotee's words, deeds and mind are always completely engaged in serving, glorifying and satisfying Krishna.

This is a simple principle, but it is difficult to apply in all facets of our life, and therefore takes the guidance of an expert teacher or spiritual master to come to that platform. Therefore, the best way you can prepare yourself is by seeking the association of sincere devotees of Lord Krishna, taking guidance from experienced devotees and eventually taking shelter and guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. Krishna's devotees are very dear to Him, and one who is accepted by His devotee is easily accepted by Krishna. Krishna is very difficult to approach, but by the mercy of His devotee one can very quickly approach Him. Another very effective way of re-connecting ourselves with the Lord is by calling upon His Holy Names, such as chanting the mahamantra: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

**5.2.9) Revelation of siddha-svarupa (constitutional relationship with Lord Krishna)**

**During one of our recent discussions in our study group there was a discussion on siddha svarup. One of the devotees said that the spiritual master would reveal one's svarup at some point of time when such a disciple has reached such a stage. My humble opinion is that such a practice is not there in ISKCON and as and when a devotee reaches such a stage of advancement it will be known to him naturally. Can I humbly request you to kindly clarify this? (Digest 176.1)**

Every living entity has an eternal constitutional relationship with Krishna, and when one attains the liberated platform he automatically understands this relationship. It is not the system supported by Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur that one's spiritual identity be artificially declared before the stage when Krishna reveals this, especially when one is still affected by the modes of nature. Srila Prabhupada clearly taught that just as we cannot force the sun to rise at our convenience or by our pronouncements, but it rises of its own accord at the right time, similarly our constitutional position becomes manifest at the right time.

Sometimes less mature devotees are misled by a false sense of enthusiasm to prematurely understand their relationship with Krishna. They may consider this justifiable as a means that would enable them to practice and cultivate the eagerness for such a relationship. Unfortunately,

however, this is not the recommended process given by our founder-acharya, and almost always proves dangerous for the tender devotional creeper of less qualified sadhakas. Without cultivating the fundamental spiritual qualities of submission to one's spiritual master, a selfless service mood, sense-control and completely uprooting one's materialistic conceptions, one is certain to impose some material conceptions upon one's so-called svarupa or eternal nature. The Nectar of Devotion confirms that this type of longing or prayer for some spiritual perfectional stage, technically called the 'lalasamayi' stage of submission, actually comes in the stage of perfect liberation and spiritual advancement, and is not to be artificially induced. (Cf. NOD Ch 9, Submission)

You are correct when you indicate that the procedure of HOW the revealing of one's svarupa takes place is not spelled out in great detail. However, the other BV member is also correct: the fundamental faith of a sincere devotee is that their spiritual master connects them with Krishna via the disciplic succession, and by the collective descending mercy of the guru parampara all truths become naturally revealed. This is our natural process, without having before us the micro-technology of this mystical process.

#### **5.2.10) What is the absolute minimum: chanting, scriptural reading, or devotee association?**

**What should not one miss a day with respect to chanting or reading scriptures or association with devotees? (Digest 6.8)**

Your question seems to center on the absolute minimum that one must observe in a given day. Caitanya Mahaprabhu's instructions to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was that the most important of all devotional activities is the chanting of the Holy Name. Your minimum chanting should be maintained each day, as your number one priority. The other items may fluctuate from individual to individual, namely the reading of scripture daily or the associating with devotees daily. Reading of course is most essential, and generally this falls within the category of essential daily activities. One may be able to maintain one's Krishna consciousness through regular reading even if association is just physically not possible. However, each of us finds a particular inspiration that maintains our enthusiasm in Krishna consciousness. You may find that daily association with the devotees is of utmost importance. Scripturally speaking, hearing and chanting take the priority.

#### **5.2.11) When, how, and why should we pray?**

**What is praying? Why do we have to pray? When should we pray? How should we pray? (Digest 10.6)**

Prayer is an address to a superior in supplication. Of all those who are worshipable, the Personality of Godhead is the most worthy object of one's prayers, and so are His pure devotees who are His direct and confidential representatives.

There is certainly a need for us to pray to the Supreme Lord because, by constitution we are tiny and in need of the mercy of the Supreme Lord in every breath of our life. When one realizes one's own dependent position and acknowledges the greatness as well as the mercy of God, naturally one offers prayers in praise and implores the Lord for shelter.

Different people pray according to their different level of faith, with different motivations and for different ends. The best prayer is to beg the Supreme Personality of Godhead to engage us in His service. Within that all of one's material and spiritual needs are taken care of.

The import of chanting the mahamantra, "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare" is exactly this: addressing God (Krishna, Rama) and His internal energy (Hare) to kindly engage us in His service. The scriptures describe the chanting of God's Holy Names, such as the mantra above, as the best form of prayer.

We can pray from the core of our hearts at any time, place or circumstances, indeed every moment, 24 hours a day! Especially in chanting the Holy Names of God there are no rules or regulations as in other formal forms of worship.

There are some further nice descriptions about prayers found in the Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 9 under the headings Submission and Offering Notable Prayers.

### **5.2.12) Keeping faith in great difficulty: Is it OK to pray?**

**Is it wrong to pray to the Lord to help us in the situation that we are placed in? Is that considered totally material and why does it sometime feel that the Lord does not reciprocate? Is it some shortage from our side? How do we react to such situations? (Digest 163.2)**

It is certainly not wrong to pray to the Supreme Lord; it is the natural inclination of a devotee. We see how when the residents of Vrndavana were put in repeated difficulties, or when Draupadi was in a dire predicament due to the untimely arrival of Durvasa muni and later at the vicious assembly of Kurus, their immediate response was to call out to Krishna.

Gajendra also took shelter of Krishna in great difficulty, although he later regretted having called to the Lord for merely a selfish purpose. Of course, praying to the Supreme Lord for material arrangements is not the most intelligent or elevated position. Devotees like Ambarish Maharaja or Haridas Thakur were so surrendered and faithful of Krishna's protection that even under great distress they never asked for personal protection. Yet while living in this material world we are repeatedly placed in awkward and dangerous situations and as aspiring devotees we are recommended to practice seeing Krishna as our only Maintainer and Protector under all situations. Therefore, it is very nice to take shelter of Krishna in even ordinary, day-to-day affairs and difficulties. The qualifying factor is that we do so in a mood of surrender, seeking the Lord's favor on His terms, not on ours. Srila Prabhupada taught us how to petition the Lord, "My dear Lord Krishna, if you so desire, then kindly fulfill this prayer if it will enhance my attachment and service to You."

A heartfelt prayer to the Lord from any condition is never ignored by Him and He does reciprocate, but His reciprocation may not take the same form as we expected. Krishna is such a loving master that He does not grant our wishes that may not really be beneficial for us, just like a mother strictly refuses to give candy to a sick child despite repeated entreaties. Also, sometimes the Lord may seem unreciprocative, simply to increase the intensity of our dependence on Him; indeed the very purpose of difficulties and disturbances in this material world is to make us realize our dependence on the Lord. Unfortunately, because we do not understand this we sometimes become baffled when nothing seems to happen or even the opposite of what we wanted happens. Therefore it is essential to understand how Krishna

protects and reciprocates with His devotee by hearing from saintly persons and to cultivate the faith that however the Lord chooses to reciprocate our prayers is in our best and absolute interest.

**5.2.13) Can we directly pray to Krishna, when we have a spiritual master?**

**If we have a spiritual master, is it wrong to pray to the Lord directly? (Digest 163.3)**

Once Srila Prabhupada was asked a similar question and his response was How can you think of Krishna without thinking of the spiritual master? And how can you conceive of the spiritual master without Krishna? They are inseparable!" In other words it is not wrong at all to pray to one's spiritual master, however it is not quite possible to actually think of Krishna without simultaneously remembering the spiritual master who is always situated at Krishna's lotus feet. Conversely, it is by the spiritual master's mercy alone that we know anything about Krishna in a proper fashion, or have access to Him!

The spiritual master, of course, is simply training the disciple to take shelter of Krishna, training us how to pray and how to serve the Lord, and he himself functions simply as a transparent via medium. Just as in Deity worship or in chanting the Holy Names, we have the opportunity to serve Krishna and directly access His presence but we do so with the understanding that our service / prayer is in fact accepted and offered to the Lord through the spiritual master.

It is actually more powerful and effective to approach the Lord through His recognized devotee than approaching Him directly, and Krishna Himself recommends this. The devotees of the Lord are more merciful than the Lord Himself and specifically the spiritual master is the mercy representation of Krishna in our lives. Prayers offered through the spiritual master, who is so dear to Krishna, immediately attracts the Lord's attention and makes Him favorably disposed towards our pleas.

**5.2.14) Emphasis on sankirtana**

**In BG As It Is chapter 3, Srila Prabhupada clarifies that the performance of sacrifices for Krishna (Vishnu) are required for spiritual elevation and for comfortable living in the material world. He goes on in verses 3.10, 3.12, 3.13 (and perhaps others) to elaborate that sacrifices are very difficult to perform in this age, but that the merciful Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has made the sankirtan sacrifice more available for this purpose.**

**The question I'd like to humbly place before your superior knowledge is: although we do perform sankirtan in ISKCON temples, it doesn't seem that the sankirtan process is greatly emphasized at this time. Can you please give insight into whether I am overlooking the emphasis it is being given, or why at this particular time it is not so highly emphasized if it is described as one of the few types of sacrifices we are qualified to perform in this age? (Digest 236.1)**

Sankirtana is undoubtedly the easiest, most appropriate and recommended method of sacrifice for this age. Srila Prabhupada called it the Universal religion -- unlike other methods of sacrifices, all classes of people can equally take part in sankirtana - irrespective of language, religious denomination, education, social status or any other consideration.

Certainly Srila Prabhupada emphasized it greatly, throughout his writings, as well as in

his practical directions to his disciples. In fact, it was because of the massive sankirtan parties organized under his direction - with his disciples going out en masse into the streets of every major city and enthusiastically chanting Hare Krishna in rain or shine -- that Hare Krishna became a popular household word around the world.

It is not clear whether your question refers to the emphasis on sankirtan within our movement, or in general among other followers of Vedic traditions. At least in India, among those who are religiously minded, it is common knowledge that hari-nama-sankirtana is the most effective process for this age, although due to lack of systematic education, it is not always performed in the authorized way and many continue to be devoted to other forms of traditional and ritualistic practices.

In any case, the importance of sankirtana yajna cannot be overemphasized, and it is always nice to seek opportunities and find ways and means to increase sankirtana performances both within devotee communities and also impress upon others of its importance.

### **Japa and Book Distribution as Sankirtana:**

Although sankirtana particularly refers to 'congregational chanting' of the Holy Names, it also includes our regular, individual chanting of japa. Due to consideration of time, place and lifestyle, even if it is not possible for people to daily come together to chant congregationally, the practice of daily chanting prescribed number of rounds of the Hare Krishna mahamantra is very much stressed.

The publishing and distribution of devotional literatures in glorification of Krishna is also Sankirtana. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur as well as our Srila Prabhupada referred to it as "brihat-mridanga" -- glorification of Krishna that can be heard by millions of people.

### **Performing Duties and other services as part of Sankirtana Yajna:**

For a variety of reasons, our movement in North America (which is primarily your frame of reference, or personal experience) has largely become congregation based. Unless one is sufficiently purified, it is not possible for the conditioned soul to renounce other prescribed duties and constantly chant Hare Krishna, or render the full scale of activities found within the ashramas of renunciates. Therefore, the yajna of rendering one's occupation as an offering or sacrifice to Visnu depends upon the accompaniment of chanting the holy name. This yajna of the Holy Name is japa-yajna, minimally.

Artificial attempts to increase chanting cannot be sustained over time without proper engagements to purify the mind and senses, and without responsibly discharging one's prescribed occupational duties. Thus, along with cultivating regulated practices of chanting and hearing, one should simultaneously perform one's occupational duties in a 'spirit of sacrifice to the Supreme.' How to perform one's duties in this way is an important message of Chapter 3 of Bhagavad-gita. There must also be a balanced program of hearing of Krishna-katha, study of scriptures, and practical engagements to cultivate humility and service attitude -- all these are meant to support and enhance our absorption in chanting and sankirtana. They are all inter-related, and are not to be seen as disjointed activities independent of chanting. Our primary process of purification in this age is chanting, and when all other activities are seen as a support to spiritual awakening, then that is also sankirtana.

A devotee may be working as an artist or scientist or administrator, but if the purpose of

all those engagements is purely for the glorification of Krishna, then that is also sankirtana. (Please see SB 1.5.22 p) Srila Prabhupada very much wanted the devotees to cultivate this spirit of sacrifice in all their activities and thus he writes "... the very life of the devotee is a symbol of sacrifice." (SB 1.16.20)

All this is not to minimize the importance of direct congregational chanting of the Holy Names and glories of the Lord. This is the most important and sublime process of self-realization for this age -- all other activities are to be seen as integral parts of this sankirtana process, as a support to increase our absorption in chanting, but not in lieu of direct participation in sankirtana.

#### **5.2.15) Destination of the devotees with materialistic desires**

**On page 32 of Isopanisad Mantra 3, Srila Prabhupada talks about the word atma-sambhavita. Do devotees who have approached Krishna Consciousness with materialistic desires (for fame and recognition), and therefore fall from this path eventually, also have the same destination as the asuras? (Digest 36.2)**

Devotional service is very powerful and purifying. Therefore it is recommended that whether one is desireless or full of desires, one should perform tiva-bhakti (intense devotional service), which can burn up all impurities. (Cf. Bhag. 2.3.10) Initially many people who begin Krishna consciousness come with some material motivation (Bg 7.14) but they are quickly purified of such desires. Krishna personally instructs them from within and from without through the spiritual master and scriptures to relieve them of all such material contamination.

However, care should be taken that one should not hold on to such desires steadfastly and nourish and cultivate such desires even after having repeatedly heard and understood the messages of pure devotional service. This is the tenth offense to the Holy Name. It is because of continuing to cultivate such desires, that one eventually falls away from the path. Nevertheless, Krishna never forgets any service done to Him, even casually. Even if such persons fall away, as stated in the purport they are given a chance to take birth in good families or personally corrected by Krishna.

The risk is however there, that on account of maintaining such material attachments and conceptions, one may seriously offend an exalted Vaishnava and by so doing his devotional creeper is destroyed, even though whatever service has been performed is to that person's eternal credit. And therefore we ought to very carefully correct such materialistic mentality.

#### **5.2.16) Afraid of devotional service due to 'testing by Krishna'**

**I have come to understand that in engaging oneself in spiritual life, one has to undergo a whole process of testing. This happens because Krishna is testing the devotee if he is ready for the spiritual world or not. What if one is scared of engaging oneself in spiritual life because of the fear that one will undergo an extreme testing phase? How would you encourage such a person to not lose hope and continue engaging oneself in spiritual life? (Digest 70.1)**

Krishna is the most expert teacher and would never give His devotee a test that he/she cannot pass! In other words, He knows our strengths and weaknesses, what exactly we need in order to take the next step in our journey towards Him and when we are ready to be tested and

purified. Accordingly, when He sees that a sincere devotee is really eager to come to Him, yet at the same time is distracted by or struggling to give up some material attachment, He arranges for their purification in a variety of ways, sometimes through some ordeal.

We should not imagine the Lord to be a hard taskmaster who ensures that only those strong enough to withstand the most excruciating ordeals are allowed entry to the spiritual world. Rather the seeming 'tests and ordeals' are actually an exhibition of His great love for His devotees, meant to make them exclusively attached to Him, by way of their letting go of other, false shelters. All that the devotee has to do, when such circumstances arise, is to make a simple but bold and firm choice, "I want only Krishna as my shelter, in all circumstances"; then Krishna Himself will give all the requisite strength and knowledge required, by which we can overcome the circumstantial tests and quickly come to His lotus feet. Krishna simply wants our love. When He sees an unflinching mood of loving service and willingness to surrender even in the face of adversities, then just as He promises in Bhagavad-Gita, He preserves what we have and carries what we lack. (See Bg 9.22)

When a devotee understands this aspect of Krishna's 'tests', the prospect of being subject to purification and tests is no longer intimidating, not in the least! Rather, such circumstances are perceived and an act of special kindness coming from Krishna, a welcoming invitation or an graciously-offered opportunity to come closer to Him. The devotee comes to appreciate that the so-called difficulty is actually a blessing extended by Krishna, to bring His devotee closer to the very goal they actually desire, i.e. attachment to Krishna. Immediate circumstances may seem to be painful; but the devotee experiences great happiness in recognizing that the Lord has been so kind as to not disqualify them from receiving His mercy, and instead is actively removing particular anarthas or obstacles from their path.

Please consider: does material life, a denial of God's existence and His merciful nature, in any way offer us a promising alternative? Fear of the tests of spiritual life may encourage us to shy away from it, but one needs only closely examine the alternative to be convinced which path of action is superior. For example, is there any guarantee that there would be no reverses or extreme hardships in this world, sans spiritual shelter? Very much to the contrary, this material world is declared as a place of misery - where there is danger at every step. Everyone in this material world is always in anxiety, always at risk of so many calamities, culminating in the sufferings of birth and death, repeatedly. What shelter do we have in the face of these calamities? On the other hand, Krishna promises that those who surrender to Him are NEVER vanquished, that all their sins are destroyed, that even a little endeavor in this path saves one from greatest danger of gliding down to lower life and so many comforting reassurances. (Cf. Bg 9.31, 18.66, 2.40, 6.40-41) So there is every reason to take to the process of devotional service in all enthusiasm and earnestness. An easygoing life is not expected for one trying to attain spiritual perfection. Yet, while material nature inevitably afflicts everyone with hardships that simply entangle us in further misery, austerities faced in Krishna's service, while filling us with a sense of the Lord's infallible protection even now, ultimately open the doors to Vaikuntha.

### 5.2.17) Falldown of devotees

#### **Why does a devotee fall down after years of devotion? (Digest 7.4)**

Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur has given a very direct and clear answer to this question. In the beginning of one's activities of devotion, there is a degree of submission to

Krishna, and then to the spiritual master, which develops gradually in course of time. One will remain fixed in devotion as long as that submission remains steady. However, if one slackens in one's submission to Krishna and to the Spiritual Master, one will certainly fall from the platform of devotion. In this way, you can understand that submission to Guru and Krishna is our protection; conversely, even if we have established great spiritual credit by performing so many activities of devotion in life, such previous activity will not sustain our spiritual position if we slacken in our submission. Our spiritual advancement will never be lost; that is to say, our devotion may become temporarily covered or obscured, only. Devotion is eternally with the soul, but it may or may not be practically displayed or evidenced. Our submission to guru and Krishna on a moment-to-moment basis will sustain our present activities in devotional service and ensure that we continue to make nice progress in spiritual life.

## 6. Devotee and non-devotee relationships

### 6.1. 'Dealing with devotees' and 'devotee association'

#### 6.1.1) How to deal with disliking another devotee

**What should be done when a devotee can't help himself from disliking another devotee? (Digest 73.1)**

Likes and dislikes of the material world are based on a bodily or an external conception of life. When considered carefully, we can see that one's dislike of another has hardly anything to do with the other individual's soul proper, but is due to some external aspect of their life only. By understanding this and by practicing to see everyone as spirit soul, with Krishna seated in their heart, we can learn to respect everyone and overcome aversion or hatred.

Specifically in the case of devotees, not only are they pure spirit souls distinct from the soul's covering, but they are very special and rare souls who have taken to devotional service. We may be unable to immediately transcend all our likes and dislikes and come to the point of loving exchanges with that devotee, but our dealings and feelings towards the other devotee should minimally be one of respect. Putting aside the external aspects of a devotee that one may have difficulty adjusting to, keep in mind how dear they are to Krishna because of the offerings of service they are rendering to Him; with this appreciation we can offer them all respects. Harboring ill feelings toward a devotee is simply harmful to our own relationship with Krishna.

Offering obeisances, trying to focus and express appreciation for some of their good qualities (every person has at least some good qualities!) and when possible taking the opportunity to render some direct and humble service to them --- these are some positive and potent ways of dissolving negative feelings of the heart.

Meanwhile, as we continue to diligently purify our own hearts by the practice of devotional service, we can come to a higher stage where we may begin to genuinely appreciate their true nature. Through passage of time, the other devotee, also having taken shelter of the all-purifying process of bhakti, may have become a transformed person altogether, as well! Let our prayers be for both outcomes to come to pass, by contact with Krishna's all-merciful devotional service!

#### 6.1.2) 'Are devotees really expecting me to be happy, even when I am in a miserable situation?' and 'developing deep relationship with one or two devotees'

**I have been (and continuing to be) in a constant attack of very intense miseries since the last 6 years. I am very fortunate and grateful for the association of devotees since the last 4 years. However sometimes I am so worn out and exhausted physically and mentally that I just want to be left alone for months being a recluse. This is partly because I'm forced to act happy and enthusiastic (amongst devotees or non-devotees) when there is so much mental agony, anguish and anxiety that is constantly bombarding my mind.**

**Just as an example say I go to a home program or visit the temple I have to maintain my peaceful and joyful outlook, if not I can observe that my mood and lack of enthusiasm**

affects others. I have observed that it is very natural for people in happy and balanced lives to be joyful (within their comfort zones), but on the other hand this outlook is painful to be adapted by people in extreme situations. I also feel there is expectation that people in extreme situations become oblivious to their miseries and try to be happy i.e. you are not this body, Krishna is the doer etc. Although I whole heartedly welcome this expectation, it however does not seem to do me much good because I have not reached that level of spiritual stability yet. I am a slow learner.

**My question: Is there a better alternative to tackle this situation? Please advise. I am very grateful to you for taking the time and attention to visit my Wife when she was hospitalized two years ago in spite of your very, very busy schedules. Thank you very much Maharaj. (Digest 229.1)**

Thank you very much for opening your heart, as well as for your perseverance and your devotion in taking shelter of Krishna and the sanga of His devotees throughout so many reverses.

I can very much empathize with your struggles and admittedly it is not easy. I can assure you, however, that in terms of the process of Krishna consciousness, there is no expectation that a devotee should obliterate his feelings, or artificially induce a peaceful outlook, or try to act beyond his level of realization. It is quite possible that some beginning devotees may have such a conception or expectation of spiritual life, but in fact what we are striving for is genuine development of spiritual realization where we are naturally undisturbed and happy in all conditions.

Krishna is a loving person, and the most dear friend. By acting in our relationship with Him, whether in the midst of a situation that may be the cause of happiness or in distress, we gradually attain deep realization of His protection under all circumstances. On this basis, a devotee's ability to deal with all types of situations in this world becomes strengthened and matures -- not by brute force but by natural spiritual advancement.

Devotional life is not at all impersonal or repressive, rather it allows for fully opening one's heart and expressing one's innermost feelings within the framework of our loving relationship with Krishna and His devotees. We see in the opening pages of the Bhagavad-gita how Arjuna opens his heart before Krishna, freely expressing his intense grief and confusion. The Lord does not command Arjuna to suppress those feelings by some artificial mental adjustment or intellectual exercise. Rather, He speaks transcendental knowledge to help Arjuna factually "transcend" those feelings by becoming established in his relationship with the Lord and execute his service.

There are many such examples of how devotees cross over or even transcend great difficulties, bewilderment and grief by opening their hearts and confidentially discussing with qualified devotees. (e.g. Maharaja Yudhisthira opening his heart to Bhishma, and later to Narada, and being pacified by them (see SB Canto 1, 1.8.46-52, 1.9.1-21 (<http://vedabase.net/sb/1/9/en>) and SB 1.13.31-50 <http://vedabase.net/sb/1/13/en>)

These dialogs such as the one between Arjuna and Krishna can be best appreciated when we understand it not just as a philosophical discourse but in the context of their relationship, in this case the very intimate loving friendship between Arjuna and Krishna, and further by Arjuna's accepting Krishna as His spiritual master and reposing full trust in His guidance. Because of this strong fabric of loving relationship between them, Krishna's words are not merely dry philosophizing nor are they painful and demanding -- even though they may apparently sound reprimanding or stern at times -- but they factually empower the devotee to

overcome his obstacles and attain to the transcendental stage.

In the same way, what can provide you much support and strength through all this is having the opportunity to regularly open your heart in a close loving relationship. You have expressed much appreciation and gratitude for the association of devotees; I would like to encourage you to now take deeper shelter in such association -- because Krishna's mercy is manifested in the sanga of His devotees.

By association, I mean not just the larger gatherings - which are also nice and have their place -- but find some avenue for personal one-to-one relationship with one or two devotees whom you feel can understand your situation, which will allow for deep, heart-to-heart exchanges -- this is likely to prove much more beneficial than withdrawing into a solitude that is devoid of any truly uplifting factor.

In an intimate relationship, you can feel free to be open and share your innermost feelings without feeling constrained by formalities, and also feel fully understood, yet not judged. In a mature and balanced friendly relationship, you would not only disclose your difficulties and pains and frustrations and seek help, but also from time to time share positive confidential expressions, such as heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for the support and solace you are getting from devotees, how the process of Krishna-consciousness is helping you face these extreme difficulties, acknowledging the spiritual resources and good fortune that have been bestowed upon you even amidst these difficulties, some of the realizations you are getting by facing these ordeals God-consciously and so on. Such opening of the heart and sharing, although it sounds deceptively simple, can provide a well-spring of fresh strength, enthusiasm, relief, hope and confidence.

One powerful way to nourish such a relationship where such open exchanges become easier is to discuss relevant scriptural topics - hearing together or studying and discussing Bhagavad-gita etc -- such discussions need not always be focused on your particular situation and yet from time to time they can be related to your personal life, and you can also hear from others their realizations and experiences. As you openly express your heart, you will also find strength to open your heart to receive and gain strength from their encouragement, suggestions and counsel.

When you feel this support even in one or two spiritually-centered relationships, and when you gain deeper realizations of how Krishna is actually protecting you amidst these situations, then you will find it progressively easier to associate with devotees in larger gatherings, where you can feel comfortable, feeling at peace with your situation and grateful, or at least tolerant, even if not bubbling with enthusiasm and jubilation.

In the course of interactions with devotees in general, you should try to cultivate an attitude of genuine service mood, as much as you can, knowing that service to vaishnavas is highly beneficial and pleasing to Krishna. When there is such a mood of service, you will feel empowered to go beyond the immediate personal absorption and interact with devotees in a genuine way rather than interacting on the basis of artificial social obligations only.

You may not be particularly joyful, nor would you have to disclose all your troubles and feelings to everyone, and yet you could maintain a pleasant and genuine mood of service towards them and thus gain their good will. If devotees were to inquire into your well-being and occasionally offer some philosophical advice, you could gratefully accept it as a loving gesture and reminder, and carry forward with your inner devotional cultivation, rather than feel pressured by those statements. Seeing you in such a disposition, even amidst adversities, could prove to be a source of strength and inspiration for others as well.

To sum it up, I would like to encourage you to seek opportunities for confidential loving relationships with some qualified and trusted devotees and by regular heartfelt exchanges with them you will find necessary devotional strength when faced with adverse situations, rather than withdrawing into seclusion. And also by virtue of the support you find therein, you will feel uplifted enough to interact with the larger devotee community by development of a genuine mood of service. I hope these suggestions are of some help to you.

You have my best wishes.

Hare Krishna!

### **6.1.3) Mentally serving the pure devotees**

**In Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.5.35) Srila Prabhupada in his purport has mentioned that "...the neophyte devotee must render loving service (to pure devotees) physically and mentally without reservation". Maharaja, what does 'rendering service mentally' mean? (Digest 18.2)**

The functions of the mind are thinking, feeling and willing and 'rendering service mentally' means all these functions should be engaged favorably in the service of the pure devotees. In other words, physical service should not just be a mechanical act, but one's mental disposition should also be in a loving, serving mood. Thinking of the glories of the devotee with great appreciation, cultivating feelings of respect, love and gratitude and the willingness to act for their pleasure - offering them all respects, without holding back and without resentment: these are some of the ways one can render service mentally.

One practical reference is made in Bhagavad-gita in one purport: "One should contemplate how to spread Krishna consciousness, this is the best way of controlling the senses." In another place it is said (I am paraphrasing) "One should contemplate how to carry out the orders of the spiritual master, and in this way engage the mind."

### **6.1.4) Eternality of the spiritual relationships**

**I was wondering if our spiritual relationships or relationships in general carry on to the next life or the spiritual world. Let's say my significant other and me have a loving relationship that is also in the realm of Krishna consciousness, does this mean that we will be always connected in some capacity in future lifetimes? What about brother, sister, mother, father or friends? Even if we relate with one another spiritually, these are not totally spiritual relationships as they are material in some capacity. Will it carry over and grow in future lifetimes? It would be very helpful if you can clarify some of these questions. I appreciate your feedback. (Digest 92.1)**

Relationships based on the body or mind are certainly temporary but relationships of the soul are eternal, as they are connected through the medium of service to Krishna. Even bodily relations may be spiritual in as much as they are fully centered around service to Krishna.

We pray to our spiritual masters: "janme janme prabhu sei", he is my Lord birth after birth. Similarly, for very elevated souls who are accustomed to the association of other similarly realized souls, they are connected with one another beyond the limits of this mortal coil.

Although eternal, however, such relationships will not necessarily continue in a similar

form as they are in our present material condition (as brothers, sisters or husband and wife etc.). Nor will we remember, as fallible living entities, the details of those relationships; nonetheless we remain connected through our relationship with Krishna. Ultimately this is all completely under Krishna's independent jurisdiction, and a devotee

is simply ready to go wherever the Lord may want to send him; but by the Lord's grace one attains the company of the devotee-associates to whom one is deeply attached and obliged.

A nice scriptural example that illustrates this is of Dhruva Maharaja: when he was ascending the Vaikuntha airplane, he remembered his mother Suniti, feeling greatly obliged, for it was she who had initially given him impetus towards Krishna consciousness. Understanding his mind the Vishnudutas showed him his mother also ascending a similar airplane. (Cf. SB 4.12.32)

Another example is of the Pandavas who we understand to be on the eternal entourage of the Lord, always serving in some capacity wherever the Lord is manifesting His pastimes. Although Queen Kunti petitions the Lord to please sever her material attachments with the Pandavas and Vrishnis, in doing so she is speaking of the 'skin-relationship', so that all her thoughts and actions including her relationships may be connected to Krishna. Srila Prabhupada remarks here that their relationship to each other was not out of the range of devotional service, and that such relationship and service to the Lord's devotees is sometimes more valuable than even direct service to Krishna. (Cf. 1.8.41-42) There is no question of wanting to sever such relationships altogether.

## *6.2. Dealing with non-devotees and parents/acquaintances*

### *6.2.1) Dealings of a spiritual aspirant towards devotees and non-devotees*

**Both in spiritual life and also in material life people speak of attitude. What should be the approach of a spiritual aspirants towards other spiritual aspirants and with materialists? (Digest 1.5)**

The answer to this can be found in a number of places, where qualifications of a madhyama adhikari are described. Amongst spiritual aspirants, there are those more advanced, those who are peers and those who are less advanced. In all cases, we should try to render service to the vaisnavas. Those who are more advanced, we should hear from them and serve them favorably. Amongst those who are peers, we should exchange realizations in the matter of spiritual understanding. With regard to those who are less advanced, we should try to extend ourselves in a helpful and compassionate way. As far as the materialists are concerned, their individual attitude should be carefully determined. It should first be determined whether the materialist is simply innocent and requires good association, or is adamant and opposed to the supremacy of God. If the non-devotee is simply innocent, then we should carefully try to give some association to help that individual progress in his spiritual life. Those who are overt atheists, we should carefully guard against taking confidential association with them.

### 6.2.2) Dealing with parents and acquaintances

**My parents are not devotees. When they go to parties, they force me to accompany them and I get very frustrated because I am forced to tolerate materialists all round me. I try to preach but in the end I find myself more frustrated because there are some persons who find all kinds of arguments to contradict me and when I refute them, they just go on talking and do not give me the opportunity to voice out, thus forcing me to listen to them. What should I do? (Digest 82.1)**

This is a common difficulty, with different dynamics of course, for many devotees. Rest assured, you have a lot of good company!

The best solution, obviously, would be to find ways to avoid such situations of unfavorable association if at all possible. But when that is not possible, it would be best to refrain from entering into confrontations and arguments with non-devotees who are not open-minded. Such endless debates would serve no good purpose for either party, conversely it may serve to deepen the entrenched material conceptions of the other party; in fact, unless one is a sufficiently advanced devotee who has understood scriptural conclusions thoroughly, debates with hard core materialists could prove to be harmful to one's own budding faith in devotional service.

Although Vedic authority offers the highest and most logical conclusions, those who are blindly or dogmatically attached to their own ideas can never accept these conclusions. Moreover, Krishna cannot be understood through arguments and counter-arguments, but only through humble service and submissive inquiries in association of those who have realized Him. Krishna remains hidden from those who don't want to know Him. Instead of coming closer to Krishna, such persons may even become more averse or inimical to Krishna when attempts are made to forcefully dismantle their conceptions. For this reason, scriptures forbid us from instructing faithless persons about the glories of the Holy Name and of devotional service, lest they commit more offenses against the Lord.

When in such unavoidable non-devotee association, therefore, it is best to externally act like one among them while being internally detached from meaningless exchanges and frivolous conversations. This certainly proves to be quite a challenge, but by practicing being prayerful and taking shelter of Krishna, we can be protected.

This advice is not meant to diminish your desire to preach. It is natural that when one has the matchless treasure of Krishna consciousness, one is eager to share it with others and to tell the whole world. But when someone is disinclined and even averse, or they are simply interested in mundane wrangling than pursuing a change of heart, the best service we could do for them is to try to not disturb them, yet whenever possible to give them Krishna's mercy indirectly. If possible, you could give them Krishna prasadam, with or even without their knowledge, and that will gradually purify their hearts.

Most important in all of this is that our own consciousness be actually absorbed in Krishna and in a mood of humble service; that will leave a deeper impact on others, more than a thousand words spoken. Those who are sincere will sense the difference. When you find someone who is open minded and favorably disposed, you could share your knowledge of Krishna consciousness with them, and their reasonable doubts can be dispelled with logical explanations. Such exchanges will actually be both satisfying and beneficial.

### 6.2.3) Responsibly dealing with parents

I am writing this mail to inform you about an obstacle I am facing in my attempt to practice Krishna Consciousness. I come from a so called "traditional Brahmin family". We are said to be belonging to a sect which represents original "Vedic tradition" Brahmins. I guess, like anyone else, my parents and especially my Mother is totally upset about my devotional activities. Now they are coming to know about the lifestyle of a devotee - mostly through their speculation, based on their experience, I guess.

My mother has warned me that I should keep away from ISKCON. I should not go to the temple, nor keep association of devotees. I am even forbidden from reading Srila Prabhupada's books. She has said she is my best well wisher and the ISKCON devotees are trying to put me into maya - on a completely wrong path. She even says - she and my father will have to take a "Neecha Janma" (degraded life) because of my devotional activities.

But the problem is - over the last few months I have developed so much attachment to devotional service that I cannot leave it at any cost. I have been trying to chant regularly, worship a Radha Krishna Deity along with Srila Prabhupada & Pancha Tattva, at home. I offer flowers and dhoop every day. I constantly chant - when I am driving or when I am free. I try to listen to nothing other than bhajans and Kirtans when at home. I regularly read the literature of Srila Prabhupada. I think no one will be able to convince me that taking to Krishna Consciousness is not the right thing.

Now my mother has threatened me that she may even commit suicide. She says she will throw away all pictures / Deities of Lord Krishna at home and she will start hating Lord Krishna. Even in the best case, she might leave home and stay at her parent's place or a pilgrimage place like Kasi. I think she got very disturbed because my social life may be so much different from non-devotees.

Moreover I am the only son - apart from 2 daughters. I have tried to explain to her about the rationale behind taking to Krishna Consciousness. I have also told her that we are no longer acting like "brahmins", about which we are so proud of.

All this is of no avail. I have to confront my mother and I either loose her or I stop practicing Krishna Consciousness. Both are painful to me. Please guide me. I beg your mercy. (Digest 179.1)

First of all, congratulations for your firm conviction and earnestly accepting the process of pure devotion that Srila Prabhupada has magnanimously brought to us. Please rest assured that as you steadily cultivate and become mature in your own Krishna consciousness and with careful, considerate and mature dealings with your parents, the situation will improve and their outlook towards Krishna consciousness is sure to change for the better, without your having to take any drastic measures.

It appears from your description that the main cause for concern for your parents is based on certain misgivings they might have about Krishna consciousness and more importantly how they think it might affect your life as well your relationship with them and others. It would thus help to address their concerns and reassure them on these particular issues, rather than trying to reason with them or convince them rationally about the validity and importance of this process and so on. In fact, you can be sure that the best of logical conclusions and philosophy would not reach their hearts until their concerns and fears are allayed by your own reassuring conduct and day-to-day dealings.

The best course of action at this point, therefore, would be to avoid all sorts of arguments and confrontations; instead, simply reassure your mother of your respect and love for her, both by words and more importantly in everyday actions, while maintaining your personal practices without much ado. In other words, internally, inconspicuously and quietly do your devotional practices without stirring attention; and by manifesting higher qualities such as humility and respect in your dealings with them, being caring and considerate, being responsible in your day-to-day activities and participating normally in some of the routine social interactions, you can allay her fears, show her that they are unwarranted and gain her trust.

You can personally take this apparent tension as an opportunity provided by Krishna to deepen your own devotion, to enable you to go beyond the formal activities and enter into the real spirit of devotional service, to study scriptures more attentively and so on, which will then carry into and illuminate all of your interactions with family members and the society at large.

As far your parents forbidding you from performing devotional activities is concerned, you could gently but firmly explain to them that as an adult and working individual, you deserve the freedom to choose your personal activities, preferences and mode of worship as long as it does not disrupt other's lives; in all fairness, you cannot let anyone impede this freedom to cultivate your eternal relationship with the Supreme Lord.

And yet, quite apart from the spiritual reasons that inspire you personally, you can appeal to your parents from just an ordinary platform that these particular activities give you great peace of mind, and you have chosen them just as someone else might choose movies, sports or music. You could highlight to them in a light-hearted manner, the benefits of the sattvic eating habits and social habits even from the mundane point of view. They should be happy and proud that you have chosen this rather than some of the quite corrupt activities that modern youth are prone to indulge in today's rapidly degrading, westernized culture overtaking India. Rather than focusing on the differences between your traditional practices and Krishna consciousness, highlight to them how similar and close it is to the pure practices and ideals of your own tradition, and so on.

Regarding your mother's well-intentioned but misinformed concern that your devotional activities would lead them to a degraded birth, this is simply not true; if anything, they are assured of a much higher destination simply by virtue of your simple yet heartfelt devotional practices such as chanting and associating with saintly persons, which are superior to even high-grade Vedic sacrifices! For the sake of strengthening your own personal conviction, you might like to recollect numerous examples from scriptures that give quite a contrary picture to your mother's idea. For example, see the prayers by Prahlada Maharaja (<http://vedabase.net/sb/7/9/10/en>) and Prayers by Devahuti (<http://vedabase.net/sb/3/33/7/en>)

It might be beneficial to arrange for your parents to meet with some experienced and well-situated devotee(s), if possible of similar age and cultural background, whom you feel your parents would be able to respect and trust; in such association they might be able to resolve some of these basic misunderstandings and cultural differences. This need not be an immediate, primary step but can be considered when they become somewhat more comfortable, receptive and not so threatened by your practices.

In any case, I would like to suggest that you be totally non-confrontational and joyful in all your dealings with your family members. Your genuine happiness and the qualities you exhibit would be the best argument that could convince them. This will take time, and may not be accomplished overnight; meanwhile be patient, both with your parents as well as with yourself as you mature in your application of Krishna consciousness.

I hope this is of help in overcoming your obstacle. I wish you the very best. Hare Krishna!

#### **6.2.4) Avoiding bad association**

**I have heard that in Krishna consciousness it is bad to be in contact with non-devotees. But I am a student who stays in a hostel. So what can I do to avoid contamination of mind when I have to live with non-devotees even though I am an initiated devotee. (Digest 32.1)**

Giving up 'bad association' is very much emphasized in Vaishnava teachings. But just coming in contact with non-devotees is not considered to be 'bad'. Intimate association is what is detrimental to one's bhakti. This means cultivating deep friendships or exchanges or extensive interaction more than essential with those who are too materialistic or disinclined towards Krishna consciousness.

It can certainly be very challenging to practice Krishna consciousness while living in the midst of non-devotees. However, if you keep your Krishna conscious practices and sadhana strong (such as rising early, chanting attentively, studying Prabhupada's books, offering your food to Krishna---this item is VERY important!), and if in all of your dealings with others you try to maintain a mood of service to guru and Krishna, then you will find an amazing potency of protection; this attentive acts will go a long way to protecting you from material contamination. By Krishna's mercy you may find some other students who are favorable to Krishna consciousness or show some appreciation for a devotional way of life. If Krishna arranges this, such a circumstance can be a wonderful opportunity for you to bring Krishna into their lives and thus gradually creating for yourself the association of like-minded devotees with whom you can share your devotional life.

## 7. Devotees of the Lord, their qualities and activities

### 7.1. Arjuna

#### 7.1.1) Is Arjuna, a jiva tattva or Vishnu tattva?

**Is Arjuna a jiva tattva or Vishnu tattva? In Bhagavad Gita he seems to be considered as a jiva tattva. In Krishna book, it is described that he is an expansion of Nara Narayana rishi. (Digest 13.4)**

In the Krishna book Srila Prabhupada mentions that Arjuna is considered to be an empowered (shakti-avesha) incarnation of Nara-Narayana; this means that Arjuna is a jiva who has been specially empowered by a one of the Lord's own potencies.

#### 7.1.2) Arjuna's bhavas

**I have a question on Bhagavad Gita Chapter 11 text 41-42 page 587. Arjuna is in Sakhya Bhava and Krishna's Yoga Maya potency helps Arjuna to have that kind of relationship. Now when the Universal form is shown to him, his bhava changes to awe and reverence. In 41-42 he pays his obeisances and asks Krishna to pardon his offenses towards Krishna. In the purport second line Prabhupada writes that "Arjuna remembers his friendly relationship with Krishna and is therefore asking pardon and requesting Krishna to excuse him..."**

**Is it right to say that Arjuna could only exhibit dasya bhava when Universal form was shown although he could remember his sakhaya relationship that he had with Krishna. So the Yoga Maya changes his relationship? How to understand it? (Digest 9.9)**

Awe and reverence exist in the Vaikuntha realm, when one is overwhelmed with awe, or holds Narayana in awe at the sight and recognition of His majesty and spiritual splendor. All four of the higher rasas exist in the Vaikuntha realm, not just dasya rasa.

The universal form, however, is not conducive to a personal relationship of service. The awe and reverence is so profound that one is left without an opportunity to serve. This is painful and most awkward for the devotee, as Arjuna's response indicates. As you wrote, yes, yoga maya facilitates the rasa of friendship.

#### 7.1.3) Varnashrama duties: 'Arjuna's compassion' and 'can one's nature change due to devotional service?'

**My question is about Arjuna's softhearted, devotee-like nature, and not so Ksatriya-like nature. Varnashrama divisions are based on nature and not by birth. Though one may be born in any one of the varnas, one can be elevated to the position of a Vaishnava by practice of devotional service. Right? Arjuna was a Ksatriya, but on the battlefield he did not want to fight because he was also a devotee and softhearted by nature. I understand that some of Arjuna's reactions were due to material conceptions and attachments.**

[Editor's note: Refer BG 1.28-30 purports, for a discussion on why Arjuna refused to fight.]

My questions are:-

**Part 1. Once someone comes to devotional service, can their nature (according to Varnashrama system) change and therefore their occupation also? Or do they have to still continue with their prescribed duty? (Digest 37.1)**

A person's propensities may or may not change by taking to devotional service. Whatever stage of bhakti in which one is situated, as one progresses in devotional service, they are gradually elevated to the brahminical status or mode of goodness, (and ultimately beyond mode of goodness). Thus one becomes increasingly austere, self-controlled, clean, truthful etc., but one's propensities towards work may or may not change. For instance, a person with artistic or administrative tendencies may not become a scholarly, studious person, but they can continue to serve Krishna with whatever qualities and tendencies they have, under the guidance of a pure devotee.

When someone becomes completely transcendental, then they actually are not bound to any social duties, but are spontaneously attracted to serve Krishna. Even then, one might continue to function within their previous occupational duties in service to Krishna, just as Nanda Maharaja was the king of the cowherds. On the other hand, being transcendental, they can function in any other capacity also, if service to Guru and Krishna requires it. Someone functioning as a brahmana may take up some administrative role when called upon to do so, for example.

**Part 2. A hypothetical question - If Arjuna did not have material conceptions but just reacted the way he did out of compassion because he was a pure devotee - would that be right?**

Any action is judged based on how much it is pleasing to the Supreme Lord. That is the ultimate criterion. Krishna's will was that the unrighteous should be vanquished. One who is situated on the platform of pure devotion will make no other consideration than executing the Lord's plan.

It is noteworthy that Srila Prabhupada simultaneously lauds the soft-heartedness of Arjuna, and in the same breath criticizes the materialistic calculations of Arjuna's arguments against fighting (BG 1.28-36 purports). The soft-hearted nature in itself is virtuous for a Vaishnava; but if it comes in the way of one's surrender and service to the Lord, it has no meaning. In such a circumstance, soft-heartedness can be understood to be acting as a material conception. This is an important conclusion of the message of Bhagavad-gita: no matter how lofty or noble an act may appear to be, it is worthless when divorced from loving service to the Supreme Lord.

#### 7.1.4) Arjuna's material attachment

**In all the preaching I have heard, one thing that is common is that one should not be attached to material world in order to get close to Krishna. The question is, even though Arjuna had material attachment, (BG 1.29) Lord Krishna revealed Himself to Arjuna.**

## Why? (Digest 169.1)

Srila Prabhupada writes in regard to Arjuna's bewilderment before the battle: "The popular saying is that a housewife teaches the daughter-in-law by teaching the daughter. Similarly, the Lord teaches the world by teaching the devotee." [SB 1.9.17] Arjuna is a pure devotee, an eternal associate of the Lord; hence there is no possibility of his coming under illusion due to material attachment. Whenever, therefore, a show is made to teach an exalted devotee such as Arjuna, it is to be understood as an arrangement made by the Lord Himself to place him in such illusion for the sake of teaching us through that instance.

Furthermore, even though Arjuna was placed under illusion by the Lord, his qualification for spiritual enlightenment is evidenced by the qualities of compassion, detachment and sense-control he exhibits in presenting his considerations for refusing to fight, much unlike the disposition of Duryodhana, for example, who was simply interested in his personal aggrandizement and didn't care for any religious principles, welfare of citizens or relatives. (See BG 2.6 purport <http://vedabase.net/bg/2/6/en>) These qualities, of course, are very conducive but insufficient for spiritual progress; but more importantly, Arjuna surrendered and accepted Krishna as his spiritual master.

Just as you have heard, material attachments are certainly stumbling blocks for spiritual advancement, and even a highly virtuous and soft-hearted person may be misled and impeded by them - this was precisely the reason why Krishna chastises Arjuna, that despite his highly learned and virtuous arguments, he was still on the bodily platform rather than spiritual platform.

But the method of overcoming material attachment is the very process that Arjuna rightly adopted: accepting that he was confused on account of his miserly weakness, placing himself humbly before his spiritual master with great faith, seeking instruction and willing to fully accept and execute the instructions given. (Please refer BG 2.7,8 and 18.73)

After hearing the Bhagavad-Gita, Arjuna did not continue to hold on to his material attachments/ conceptions, but was ready to execute Krishna's will - in this way, he was relieved of his temporary illusion and attachment. Contrast this with the material attachment held on by Dhritarashtra who also simultaneously heard the entire Bhagavad-gita as did Arjuna! As mentioned above, Arjuna's so-called illusion and his response to it present us with lessons on how to properly respond to and overcome our own attachments.

## 7.2. *Eternal associates of the Lord*

### 7.2.1) 'Austerities done by mother Yasoda' and 'worship of Subhadra devi'

**What austerities were done by Yasoda to obtain Krishna as her son? Why is Subhadra worshipped with Krishna and Balarama? (Digest 28.3)**

Mother Yasoda is actually an eternal associate of Krishna, She is eternally Krishna's mother. However, in terms of lila or pastimes, it is described that Yasoda and Nanda, in their previous lives, underwent great austerities as Sutapa and Prsni. The 10th Canto of SB refers to Subhadra Devi as the daughter of Vasudeva and Devaki, thus she is the sister of Krishna and Balarama. She represents the internal potency of Krishna.

### 7.2.2) Lilas of Subhadra Maharani

**Who was the mother of Subhadra Maharani? Kindly tell me the lilas of Subhadra Maharani being the sister of Lord Krishna. (Digest 199.1)**

Subhadra is the daughter of Vasudeva and Devaki. (Cf SB 10.1.56) For descriptions of lilas of Subhadra, you can use the vedabase link given below, particularly refer Canto 10, Ch 86 and also a summary description given in SB 1.13.3-4 (<http://vedabase.net/sb>)

## *7.3. Lord Krishna's reciprocation with the devotees*

### 7.3.1) Surrender to Lord Krishna and Lord Krishna's reciprocation

**It is known that If one comes forward one step, Krishna comes forward ten steps. But in BG 4.11 Krishna says: "As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly." How should we understand that contradiction? (Digest 13.6)**

In BG 4.11 Krishna is referring to the qualitative aspect of surrender, not the quantitative. He reciprocates according to the mood with which one approaches Him. One devotee may want Krishna as supreme master, another as his personal friend, another as his son, and still another as his lover. Krishna rewards all the devotees equally, according to their different intensities of love for Him. The "10-to-1" figures simply inform us that Krishna is \*SO\* loving, that our tiniest gesture of love is reciprocated from His side so many times beyond ours. This quality of Krishna is universal, extended to all who surrender to Him, regardless of their position on the path of devotion, or their particular rasa even.

### 7.3.2) Surrender to Lord Krishna and Lord Krishna's reciprocation

**It is said that if we take one step towards Krishna he takes ten steps towards us. Simultaneously its said as much as the level of surrender so much is the protection given by the Lord. Kindly elaborate on these points which are apparently not fully agreeing to one another. (Digest 7.3)**

The two understandings are not contradictory. If you take one step towards Krishna, He takes ten steps towards you. And thus, proportionate to our surrender to Krishna, Krishna's protection will be there. These two are not contradictory statements.

### 7.3.3) 'Were we originally residents of Goloka Vrindavan?' & 'No falling down, once we go back to Godhead'

**On one hand Krsna has promised us that if we reach Goloka Vrindavan through devotional process then we won't return to this world of birth and death and at the same time we all are in this material world due to our envy towards Krsna. Weren't we all**

### **originally residents of Goloka Vrindavan? (Digest 18.6)**

Originally we are all pure Krishna conscious entities, but somehow or other due to envy we came to the material world. This is true. But now if we reinstate ourselves in proper devotional attitude and go back to Godhead, then it's Krishna's promise to us that we don't have to come back, and on the strength of Krishna's promise we can rest assured that we don't have to come back.

#### **7.3.4) No falling down, once we go back to Godhead**

**Krishna says that once we go back to the spiritual world, we will never fall again. Does that mean we will never again be a victim of maya, ego or free will? Also in addition to Krishna loka there are many other lokas presided by expansions of Krishna. Is there an hierarchy in falling down or going back? (Digest 8.8)**

The statement about one not having to return from the spiritual world means that one is no longer bound by sinful reactions nor even has any remaining scent of material desires, which force one to take another material body (in contrast to one who has reached up to the Brahma loka, who will also have to fall down when their pious credits are finished.) Krishna gives His promise of personal protection, i.e. once one regains his position in The spiritual world, He will protect one from returning to this material realm. However, being marginal, the living entity always has freewill, either to use or misuse. This is just like saying that a prisoner who has sincerely and thoroughly reformed his character is terminated of his prison sentence, and being reformed he is not likely to come back to the prison again. However, he can still exercise his freewill to act, as he likes. To say the same thing differently, if freewill is taken away from us, that amounts to becoming inert particles instead of being conscious entities! As far as the different spiritual planets are concerned, they are all of the same spiritual quality, except in the difference of the mood of the devotion to the Lord exhibited by the different devotees, either in awe and reverence or in intimate love.

#### **7.3.5) How should we know that we will not come back to the material world, once we go back to Vaikuntha?**

**I've read that if we go back to Vaikuntha after this life, we will never come back to the material world. I think I have also read (or heard) that we were in the spiritual world before, but we were thrown in this material world because we misbehaved. How can you say that we will never come back here again? (Maybe we will misbehave again.) (Digest 12.3)**

This question was answered in a previous issue also. We always have the freewill to 'misbehave', but if we cent-percent reinstate ourselves in pure devotion during this life and go back to the spiritual world, Krishna promises that He will extend His special protection to us, in such a way that we never have to come back again and experience life in this material world. This is His special, causeless mercy.

### 7.3.6) Is there a sin which Lord Krishna does not forgive?

**Does Sri Krishna forgive anybody who seeks His refuge even after sinning? Are there sins that Krishna cannot tolerate and does not accept? (Digest 162.1)**

Krishna promises to forgive and deliver all sinful reactions of those who surrender to Him exclusively. (Bg 18.66.) This applies to even the most sinful persons, the only qualification being that they sincerely regret and rectify their misdeeds and never go back to their sinful ways again by being situated in devotional service to Krishna. The most outstanding example of this is Lord Caitanya's deliverance of the two notorious sinners Jagai and Madhai, infamous for having committed sins of every description, who were by His mercy transformed into flawless pure devotees. On the contrary, continuing to sin on the strength of doing devotional activities and thinking this will counteract the sins is most heinous. Sometimes people make a habit of confessing their sins or atoning for them (prayascitta) with no intention of giving up sinning; this is an offense and simply makes it much harder to earn the Lord's forgiveness and reinstate oneself.

Although Krishna can forgive all types of sins, there is something worse than sinning, which the Lord does not forgive, and that is Vaishnava aparadha, or offending the devotees of the Lord. This offense is compared to a wild elephant that simply destroys, and this is also illustrated in the pastime of deliverance of Jagai and Madhai. Although both Jagai and Madhai were equal partners in committing all conceivable sinful activities, while Madhai assaulted Nityananda prabhu Jagai prevented further assaults. For this one reason, Lord Caitanya delivered Jagai but refused to accept Madhai's pleas for apology. Only when Madhai fell at the feet of Nityananda prabhu and begged forgiveness from Nitai, it was then that he was accepted and forgiven by Lord Caitanya.

## 7.4. Other devotees

### 7.4.1) Fate of Pandavas after the war

**What happened to the Pandavas after the war? As per my information, once their children were murdered, they left for the Himalayas on the path of heaven. (Digest 134.2)**

After the war, Maharaja Yudhisthira was established as the rightful emperor of the world. Despite his deep lamentation for the death of so many warriors, Yudhisthira ruled the planet righteously and peacefully for 36 years, according to the instructions of Bhismadeva and under the guidance of Lord Krishna. Detailed narrations of how he ruled the planet with the cooperation of his brothers are found both in Mahabharata and in Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 1 (Ch 7 - 14) During this time, King Yudhisthira conducted many sacrifices and the entire world was very prosperous and all the citizens including the animals and plants were peaceful and joyous.

At the end of 36 years Maharaja Pariksit, the grandson of Arjuna, and the only surviving descendant of the Kuru dynasty, who was perfectly trained under Yudhisthira's care, was

installed on the throne. At that time, the Pandavas received news of the Lord's departure from the planet and they also retired and went to the Himalayas.

#### **7.4.2) Did Bhismadeva participate in Rajasuya yajna?**

**Canto 1 Text 41 of chapter 9 purport: When the Rajasuya Yajna was performed by Maharaj Yudhisthira, Bhismadev was present when first respect was offered to Lord Sri Krishna, and Sishupal was killed in that. But after the battle of Kurukshetra was over, Bhismadev was lying on the bed of arrows. And in the purport Srila Prabhupada writes that Bhismadev was present in the Rajasuya yajna performed after the battle of Kuruksetra was over. I am not able to understand this. If you so desire, kindly clarify the position. (Digest 209.5)**

The Rajasuya sacrifice was performed much before the battle of Kurukshetra, not after the battle.

Not long after Maharaja Yudhisthira built the city of Indraprastha by the grace of Lord Krishna, and the beautiful assembly hall within it was constructed by Maya Danava, Yudhisthira desired to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice. With the help of Lord Krishna and his own brothers, he conquered Jarasandha and established himself as the world emperor, upon which he performed this wonderful yajna -- Bhismadev was present during this sacrifice. Duryodhana, who was also present at that time, was filled with envy seeing the opulence and influence of the Pandavas and subsequent to that contrived the dice game, usurped their kingdom and sent the Pandavas into exile. This description can be found in Krsna Book, Ch 71-75.

After the battle also, Maharaja Yudhisthira performed three Asvamedha horse sacrifices as the emperor of the world with Lord Krishna presiding over -- Srila Prabhupada is making reference to these sacrifices in the purport, but these are different from the Rajasuya sacrifice in which Sishupala was killed and Bhishma witnessed the agra-puja being offered to Krishna.

#### **7.4.3) Jaya and Vijaya: did they return back to Godhead?**

**Jaya and Vijaya's case they took birth only for a curse so did they return after three lives? (Digest 24.6)**

Yes.

#### **7.4.4) Yudisthira maharaj and Arjuna foreseeing the outcome of Kurukshetra war**

**Yudhisthira could see outcome of the battle of Kurukshetra only after the battle was over and he was aggrieved very much. But Arjuna was able to foresee the massacre. Is this quality of Arjuna that made him eligible to receive Bhagavad-Gita directly from the Lord even though all the Pandavas are His dear devotees? (Digest 209.1)**

There is no explicit mention of a special qualification that made Arjuna to be chosen as the recipient of Bhagavad-Gita, except of course that Arjuna was the dearest friend of the Lord who acted as his charioteer.

Maharaja Yudhisthira also foresaw the evil effects of a battle well before the actual

commencement of the battle, as did Arjuna. There were many elaborate discussions between the Pandavas with Krishna and other great sages and saintly persons, deeply considering all possible means to avert the war. But finding no other recourse, and being convinced by all the great authorities, they were ultimately obliged to fight. And yet again, on seeing the Kurus actually assembled in the battlefield, Arjuna was once again overcome by lamentation, being induced by the Lord Himself, so that the Bhagavad-Gita could be delivered for the benefit of all humanity.

The quality that is brought out by Maharaja Yudhisthira's bereavement after the battle (SB 1.8.47-52) is his soft-heartedness and compassion -- the fact that he only acted as obliged by religious principles and even the Lord Himself did not make him callous to the suffering of countless victims nor did he rest upon this to justify his actions. As stated by Saunaka, even up to the end, Yudhisthira and his brothers could never enjoy the kingdom with unrestricted consciousness, but ruled simply as a matter of duty.

## *7.5. Srila Prabhupada*

### *7.5.1) Srila Prabhupada as an Acharya*

**"Why is Srila Prabhupada awarded the title Acharya - doesn't one of the meanings of acharya mean one who has started something new? We call Madhvacharya or Shankaracharya as acharya and not swami because he started something new, isn't it? But Srila Prabhupada didn't start something new, he just brought it to the western world, so what is the understanding why he is given the title Acharya? I would really appreciate your answer to this question." (Digest 224.1)**

"Acharya" literally means 'one who teaches by example.' ('Achar' = behavior or personal conduct) One who sets the highest standard of behavior for all humanity by his own personal example is called an Acharya.

Thus, any such exemplary teacher of Vedic knowledge could rightly be called an acharya. For example, Dronacharya was an Acharya of Dhanur-veda (the Vedic military science).

But the title "Acharya" is especially awarded to those great saintly spiritual masters who revived or strongly established the principles and teachings of an authorized disciplic succession for the spiritual benefit of the world for many generations to come.

Thus, an acharya does not have to be someone that starts something new. Quite the opposite, the mark of a bonafide acharya or spiritual master is that he does not invent anything new or independent of the Vedic teachings - (which are eternal), but simply re-presents the eternal teachings of Srila Vyasadev and his predecessor acharyas in the parampara, in a manner suitable for the particular time/place/circumstances.

It is stated in Padma Purana that there are four bonafide paramparas (disciplic successions), all beginning from Lord Krishna Himself, viz. Brahma, Sri, Rudra and Kumara sampradayas. Only those who faithfully represent one of these four paramparas can be accepted as a spiritual master or acharya.

The great vaishnava acharyas like Madhvacharya or Ramanujacharya did not present something new that was not there before them. Ramanujacharya belonged to the Sri Sampradaya,

and Madhvacharya accepted initiation into the Brahma sampradaya from the spiritual masters in that line before him. But during their time, because of the spread of Buddhism followed by mayavada-impersonalism, vaishnava culture was not very widespread. Ramanujacarya and Madhvacharya strongly defeated mayavada doctrines, and systematically presented the teachings of their predecessor acharyas. They revived Vaishnavism all over the Indian subcontinent and strongly established an institution of vaishnavas that practiced these teachings. Therefore, they are regarded as the most prominent acharya of their respective sampradaya and the entire sampradaya is known after them. Their writings and the standards established by them will be the guiding light for all the followers and spiritual masters coming in their line in the future.

Similarly, Srila Prabhupada systematically presented the teachings of Caitanya Mahaprabhu by writing so many authoritative books and established a world-wide institution of vaishnavas, defeating so many opposing atheistic and impersonal schools of thought that are currently prevalent. Although he simply presented the teachings of previous acharyas, nevertheless his contribution is unique in making these principles and their practices most relevant and applicable and to address the mentality and needs of present-day society, and his teachings and directions will guide all the future spiritual masters carrying on this disciplic line. Therefore he is known as the Founder Acharya of ISKCON.

### 7.5.2) Is Srila Prabhupada accepted as a nitya-siddha devotee?

**I was wondering if it is the official view of ISKCON that Srila Prabhupada is Nitya Siddha? (Digest 138.1)**

There is no such official view. By studying the life of Srila Prabhupada and on the basis of scriptural evidence, however, we can see that Srila Prabhupada was an exceptionally empowered representative of the Lord and a perfected soul, siddha.

We know from scriptures three kinds of liberated souls - sadhana siddha, kripa siddha and nitya siddha. But once they become siddha, perfect, through whichever process, they are all considered on the same level. Ultimately there is no distinction.

This is also in line with the conclusion that the soul is always untouched by the influence of matter, even in the conditioned state. Just as the moon appears to move in its reflection on water, despite its actual steady position in the firmament, so the conditioned soul's reflection on the material body appears to be changing, but the soul is unaffected, and as soon as he is reinstated in his constitutional position, he is eternally liberated.

Numerous examples are found where a perfected pure devotee is accepted as a perfect or siddha associate of the Lord. The classical example is Narada Muni - we can read narrations of his previous life as the son of a maidservant, and even the lifetime prior to that as a Gandharva in heavenly planets. But by the mercy of Bhaktivedantas he became a siddha, and was awarded a transcendental body. Again in his next life, which was in the next day of Brahma, he appeared as Narada Muni, but with complete freedom to move anywhere in the material and spiritual worlds. (Cf SB 1.6.27, 28, 29, and 30). Similarly, Prahlada is also described as a siddha or perfect soul, although born in a demoniac family, and there are other such examples.

Srila Prabhupada in fact sometimes defined a nitya siddha as one who is never forgetful of Krishna throughout his whole life. He also said of his own life, "So far my present life is concerned, I do not remember any part of my life when I was forgetful of Krishna" (Letter to Tamala Krsna dasa - Los Angeles 21 June, 1970), and that despite numerous opportunities to

engage in sinful activities, he had always led a spotlessly pure life. From his characteristics and his extraordinary endowment to uplift all classes of people to the highest perfection of life, we can get a glimpse of appreciation of his own position of perfection in spiritual realization.

### 7.5.3) Can S.B. 11.5.32, refer to Srila Prabhupada?

**Five hundred years from now, with the advancement of his disciples, couldn't one make the case that this verse refers to Srila Prabhupada? (Digest 145.4)**

This particular case would be very difficult to make -- not unless one entirely distorts and manipulates all of Prabhupada's teachings and direct statements, discarding a major part of his writings, as well as the numerous testimonies of his direct followers.

Srila Prabhupada unequivocally explained his position in relation to Lord Caitanya as his humble servant, and squarely established Lord Caitanya as the yuga-avatar as did his direct disciples. Apart from his extensive writings, his life is well-recorded. We know how he severely chastised and even excommunicated some disciples who made the mistake of claiming him to be God. Although he was greatly empowered to fulfill the prophecy of Mahaprabhu in bringing the chanting of His names to every town and village, he did not leave any room for such interpretation where one can claim him to be the yuga avatara.

Lord Caitanya's life is also similarly well-recorded by His close associates who were of high character and many with high social standing as well. As Krishna das Kaviraj Goswami appeals, we can apply our logic and reasoning power to the activities, teachings and mercy of Lord Caitanya - and one will not fail to be struck with wonder and moved to accept His divinity.

### 7.5.4) Why are there difference of opinions about Srila Prabhupada's teachings?

**In spite of Srila Prabhupada writing so many books, why are there differences of opinions in ISKCON regarding his teachings? (Digest 5.1)**

Differences in details will always exist because we are all individuals and our philosophy acknowledges the scope for such differences, because ours is a personalist philosophy. Differences in principles, however, occur when one is not strictly submissive to the previous acaryas.

## *7.6. Understanding the activities of the devotees*

### 7.6.1) Bhishma's fighting against Arjuna

**If Bhishma was a devotee of the Lord, then why did he choose to fight against the Pandavas? Also why did he have to undergo a painful situation of lying down in a bed of arrows? (Digest 170.1)**

In addition, why didn't Bhishmadev surrender to Lord Krishna like Vibhishana surrendered to Lord Rama? Is it because Bhishma gave more importance to his vow (his dharma)

than to surrender to Krishna?

Bhishmadev is one of the 12 mahajanas, or great authorities in devotional service to the Supreme Lord, and an eternal companion of the Lord. As such, there is no question of his making a mistake or undergoing painful situations; such apparent mistakes or difficulties in the lives of pure devotees carry instructions for the conditioned souls as explained in the previous answer, or they are meant for enhancing the pastimes of the Lord and glorification of His pure devotees. All these different reasons are true in the enigmatic life of Bhishmadev. These apparent contradictions are nicely explained in Srimad Bhagavatam (Canto 1, Ch 9 "The Passing Away of Bhishmadev" <http://vedabase.net/sb/1/9/en>)

Re. Bhishma's lying on a bed of arrows: Bhishmadeva was endowed with the amazing benediction of leaving his material body at will, and his lying down on the bed of arrows was his own choice. His unflinching devotion and wisdom even in such a seemingly aggrieved condition speaks volumes of the character of Bhishmadev. This situation was especially arranged by Lord Krishna Himself to glorify His pure devotee.

Subsequent to the battle, Maharaja Yudhisthira was in a state of intense lamentation and remorse due to feeling responsible for the entire massacre; no one including even Vyasadeva or Krishna Himself could pacify the emperor. At that time, he came along with his brothers and Lord Krishna to seek instructions from Bhismadev, lying on his bed of arrows. Knowing that the great warrior was on the verge of leaving this mortal world and become liberated, all the great sages in the universe had assembled there, and although apparently in an excruciatingly painful condition, Bhishma received the sages and Lord Krishna in an exemplary manner, managed to pacify Yudhisthira, and spoke eloquently and at length, instructing Yudhisthira on religious and transcendental subjects, with stunning depth and clarity. This entire episode was orchestrated by Lord Krishna Himself just to establish the exalted character of Bhishma.

Although in the dress of a warrior and statesman, Krishna wanted to show the world that a pure devotee like Bhishma was no less in spiritual achievement than great sages such as Vyasadeva, Vasishtha or Narada. The Lord also wanted to show how a devotee is undisturbed and "always sound in body and mind by dint of spiritual enlightenment, and thus in any circumstances a devotee of the Lord is in perfect order to speak of the right way of life." (Cf SB 1.9.1-10,25)

Re. Bhishma's fighting against the Pandavas: Bhishmadev was fully aware of the transcendental position of Krishna and had no misgivings regarding the goal of all dharma being complete surrender unto Him - this is demonstrated in his instructions to Yudhisthira as well as the excellent prayers he offers to Krishna before quitting his body at will. Despite knowing all this, he was simply surrendered to be engaged in the plan of the Lord according to His will, even if it meant being on the wrong side and being defeated. It was the plan of the Lord to establish to the world that vice cannot conquer virtue, regardless of who tries to execute it. Bhishmadeva's choosing to fight against the Pandavas was by the will of the Lord because the Lord wanted to show that even a fighter like Bhishma cannot win on the wrong side. (Cf SB 1.9.16)

There is also another deeper, internal reason for Bhishma's taking the side of the opposing party, which is quite mysterious and can be comprehended only by understanding to some extent the nature of pure devotional service. Srila Prabhupada remarks that an astounding feature of dealings in pure devotion is that a devotee can please the Lord by playing the part of an enemy. Bhishmadev's mood of devotion to the Lord was servitude, but he also relished exchanges in the chivalrous humor. He relished the opportunity to see the Lord face-to-face on the battlefield in his military feature, guiding the chariot and protecting His devotee Arjuna. He

fought so valiantly so as to make the Lord break His own promise and take up a weapon to save Arjuna, thus proving the nature of his Lord as bhakti-vatsala. His entire meditation and absorption, even at the time of death, was on these chivalrous exchanges and feature of the Lord as Parthasarathi, whom he could observe with more relish than even Arjuna who was standing behind the Lord!

That it was all done entirely on the platform of pure devotion and nothing less is borne out by the fact that Lord Krishna personally came before Bhishma and awaited by him at the time of his quitting his body! (Cf. SB 9.33,38,39 <http://vedabase.net/sb/1/9/38/en>)

### **7.6.2) Garuda's eating fish**

**While reading Krishna Book I read that Garuda, a pure devotee of Lord Vishnu, used to visit Vrindavana and would eat fish from Yamuna River. I also read that every living entity in Vrindavan is a devotee of Lord Krishna. It follows that the fishes were also devotees of the Lord. How can we understand this act of Garuda? My doubt is that in Vrindavan, especially when Lord Krishna was personally present, all living beings (including fishes) in Vrindavan were in their spiritual form. How can living being in spiritual form be killed? (Digest 105.1)**

There are several assumptions built into your question, and multiple parts to the question as well.

For example, demons were sent by Kamsa into Vrindavan, so it is not a fact that every living entity who enters into Vrindavan must be considered a devotee, manifesting his eternal spiritual form.

Fish, snakes etc. are recommended natural food for those with bird forms (Garuda is a very large bird), just as grains, milk, fruits, vegetables etc. are recommended natural diet for those with a human form. So there was no offense on Garuda's part. [You may want to read the following sections from the Srimad Bhagavatam in connection with this question: S.B. [10.17.9](#) and S.B. [8.6.39](#).

Becoming the food of Garuda, the Lord's eternal associate, must not be equated with a mundane death in the jaws of a predator. For that matter, all of the residents of Vrindavan would eat something daily, not only Garuda. Their eating is not like our eating, nor are their bodies like our bodies. Consider: where are all the bodies of all of the residents of Vrindavan, from the time of Krishna's lila there? These forms were manifest to assist Krishna in performing His lila. Even the demigods were requested to descend to earth to take birth for the purpose of assisting Him in His pastimes. Even demons were in contact with Krishna in Vrindavan, Mathura and Dwaraka.

In addressing the second part of your question, it is worth noting that not all of the devotees in Vrindavan are nitya-siddha (eternally liberated souls in spiritual forms), even during Lord Krishna's manifest pastimes. Highly purified devotees, who are ready to enter the spiritual world, first get an opportunity to take birth where the Lord is performing His lila and get trained by His eternal associates in the ways of serving Krishna. When they become perfected in such association, they become eligible to enter the Lord's nitya-lila in the spiritual world. For example, we hear of some gopis who were forcibly restrained from going to Krishna during the rasa-lila; being unable to bear the separation, they quit their bodies. They belong to this category of devotees, and being completely purified by such intense feelings of separation they attained the spiritual world.

Finally, although this is not directly concerning this particular question re. Garuda's eating of fish, you may wish to recall that all of the associates who participated in the Lord's earthly pastimes eventually left the planet under the pretext of apparent death or killing (as when the entire Yadu dynasty was annihilated in a fratricidal war). This is to be understood as the Lord's lila, for these liberated associates can never be killed in the higher sense of things, as your question alludes. I hope this sheds some light on your questions.

### 7.6.3) Prahalada maharaj's calf transforming

**In Bhagavatam Canto 4 chapter 18 text 16 it says that Prahlad Maharaj was turned into a calf and the demons extracted various kinds of liquor and beer from him. How come? Prahlad Maharaj is such a pure devotee of the Lord and they used Him to get liquor and beer! (Digest 57.1)**

Below are texts that follow this quoted SB 4.18.16. The overall message is that the Supreme Lord, through His mystic powers and various manifestations on earth, supplied to all beings their necessities and their desirable commodities (note the list of items supplied to other groups; the supply was according to their natures). Prahlad Maharaja was a pure devotee, yet at the same time he served the Lord in the capacity of the king of the daityas. One can be certain that Prahlad ruled his citizens perfectly, which included his seeing to it that all his citizens were nicely cared for. Prahlad was naturally compassionate, and very powerful. Thus, it was only natural that he would be the candidate for this service to the daitya kingdom under Prithu's rule, at a time when "calf transforming" was going on in all worldly realms.

SB 4.18.26

TRANSLATION

The planet earth supplied everyone his respective food. During the time of King Prthu, the earth was fully under the control of the King. Thus all the inhabitants of the earth could get their food supply by creating various types of calves and putting their particular types of milk in various pots.

SB 4.18.27

TRANSLATION

My dear Vidura, chief of the Kurus, in this way King Prthu and all the others who subsist on food created different types of calves and milked out their respective eatables. Thus they received their various foodstuffs, which were symbolized as milk.

### 7.6.4) Gambling of Yudisthira maharaj

**Who was Yudhisthira in his previous birth? I am trying to reconcile why he had gambling tendencies. (Digest 23.2)**

Yudhisthira Maharaja is an eternal associate of the Supreme Lord, and a pure devotee. His participation in the gambling match was not based on any tendency for material sense-gratification on his part; rather, Mahabharata describes how, after deep consideration and being bound by religious obligations, he unwillingly agreed to the proposal for gambling. According to ksatriya codes, a ksatriya cannot refuse when challenged in a competition, for a battle or a game

of dice. Besides, Yudhisthira Maharaja was personally invited by the elderly king Dhritarashtra, for 'a friendly match' and he could not refuse the King and was duty bound to comply with the invitation. On these grounds he agreed, although he was deeply unhappy to do so.

#### **7.6.5) Understanding the appearance and disappearance of Maharaj Pariksit**

**Maharaj Parakshit was protected by Lord Krishna from the womb of Uttara because he was a spotless pure devotee. Now if that is the case:**

**a) Normally it is told that such an elevated devotee doesn't have to take a rebirth and that he goes directly back to Godhead. Why should Pariksit Maharaj take a rebirth?**

**b) If he was saved from the womb by Lord Krishna, when he had a death incurred by a sin, why was he not saved by the Supreme Personality? (Digest 83.1)**

a) Conditioned souls take birth forced by their past karma. However, for a spotless devotee like Maharaja Pariksit there is no question of sin. The birth and disappearance of a pure devotee are both orchestrated by Krishna's divine will. Much as Krishna Himself takes birth from the womb of Devaki, the birth of pure devotees is under the shelter of internal potency, and they appear amongst us to benefit the conditioned souls.

The characteristic of a pure devotee is that he simply wants to serve Krishna and is not even interested in his own liberation. He is not even interested in going back to Vaikuntha and does not mind taking repeated births, if by so doing he can serve the Lord. Lord Caitanya prays in this way in His Siksastaka prayers (Verse 4). Similarly, Prahlada Maharaja also prays to Lord Nrsimhadeva that he is not so much concerned about crossing over material existence but would rather remain in the material world and preach the Lord's glories to the foolish materialists. In fact even if the pure devotee happens to be in hellish planets, they are actually in Godhead, because their consciousness is always absorbed in Krishna's lotus feet. [Please refer to our discussion on "Going back to Godhead", Digest 64]

b) In the same vein, the apparent cursing of Maharaja Pariksit and his being killed by the snake-bird were not due to sinful reaction but due to Krishna's inexplicable will. King Pariksit, although powerful enough to easily counteract the curse of the young son of a brahmana, he did not do so, because he understood that this was somehow Krishna's plan and accepted it as such. The dramatic unfolding of events leading to Maharaja Pariksit sitting down on the bank of Ganges awaiting death was orchestrated by the Lord, and in this way the stage was set for Srimad Bhagavatam to be spoken by Sukadeva Goswami for the benefit of the entire humanity. [Please refer SB 1.18.27-47]

## 8. Duties and occupational duties

### 8.1. Dishonest activities in occupation

#### 8.1.1) Can devotees involve in dishonest activities?

I'm practicing Krishna Consciousness through ISKCON since 3 years irregularly, following three regulative principles except 'no illicit sex'. But chanting 16 rounds daily since 2 months and interested in life-long Krishna Consciousness. I am also donating to ISKCON Rs. 2000/- (INR) monthly since six months. So considering this, please answer the following question. Can we claim money from our office against false receipts. And also please explain elaborately considering all the situations. (Digest 61.4)

As devotees of Krishna, we are required to act within the society as representatives of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Our actions also will directly reflect on the entire devotee community and the parampara we represent, just as the misbehavior of a son brings ill repute to the entire family. Therefore, this demands that we maintain impeccable standards in all our dealings, words and actions, and certainly of the highest religious and moral standards.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu confirmed this standard of ethical conduct in His dealings with Gopinath Pattanayaka (see CC Antya-lila Ch 9).

In principle, therefore, devotees are to refrain from illegal and also improper activities and strictly uphold principles such as honesty etc. Vaishnava acharyas have always stressed the importance for householders to earn money only by honest means. Even though we may be engaged in Krishna's service, money earned through less-than-legitimate means is tainted with impurity. Even if such money was to be directly used in Krishna's service, still the end does not fully justify the means.

Not only will such an act be a bad example and bring bad name to the devotees of Krishna, but personally such seemingly harmless falsehood or dishonest practices will still leave deep 'samskaras' or impressions in one's mind that will repeatedly impel them towards such activities and implicate the individual deeper and deeper. Therefore, as aspiring devotees, we should be very wary and refrain from such activities.

#### 8.1.2) 'Are we held responsible, if superiors asked us to involve in dishonest activities at workplace?' & 'can one come to the mode of goodness platform, if involving in dishonest activities?'

**Part 1: If at work, whether in business, education, or the military, etc., one is told to do something dishonest, is it the worker's responsibility to refuse an order or does the responsibility for that action fall upon the superior? (Digest 177.1)**

We do have to bear responsibility for all our words and deeds, the only exception being activities in devotion and surrender done on the order of Supreme Lord or His representatives. Just as in ordinary state law, although a superior who directs others to act nefariously is certainly

held seriously responsible, those who execute such actions are also personally responsible for their compliance. The laws of karma work similarly. It helps, therefore, to choose one's occupational field carefully and judiciously at the very outset considering one's own nature and the nature of the occupation, so as not to be implicated in compromising situations.

You will find that when you choose honesty in your dealings and stand on that principle, over the course of time you are very likely to earn the respect of those you work for or work with, and even if not, more importantly you will gain the favor and protection of the Supreme Lord.

It is instructive in this regard to consider the stark example of Bali Maharaja when he promises to give three paces of land in charity to Vamanadeva, and his guru Sukracarya tries to dissuade him from keeping his promise. Sukracarya warns that Bali was about to lose everything due to Vamanadev's trickery, and although he offers many arguments and loopholes by which Bali can safely retract from his promise, Bali Maharaja takes the great risk of transgressing the order of his preceptor & being cursed by him for the sake of upholding truthfulness, the highest truthfulness being satisfying and surrendering to Lord Vishnu. Bali Maharaja is celebrated for this exemplary act of surrender, by even rejecting the so-called pseudo spiritual master who comes in the way of such truthful surrender. (Cf. SB 8.19.28-43; 8.20.1-5)

Srila Prabhupada would say that the better part of valor is to maintain the principles of religion despite all kinds of odds; those who protect virtue are in turn protected by virtue.

**Part 2: Similarly, is it possible to come to the mode of goodness while working in a situation that requires one to perform dishonest activities?**

According to Vedic understanding, the duties and qualities of the different social orders are based on the different modes they are associated with. That which is condemnable and unrighteous for one person may be permissible for another, based on their different occupational statuses which in turn is determined by one's nature and work (guna and karma). The qualities of the different social orders are delineated in BG 18.42-44 (<http://www.vedabase.net/bg/18/42/en>). As Krishna explains in BG 18.47, any endeavor in this material world is covered by some fault as much as fire is covered by smoke. A ksatriya is obliged to use violence and diplomacy, a sudra has to obey his master even if the master is bad and similarly a vaisya may have to speak some untruth in the course of business transactions in order to make a profit for living, but in all cases one should stick to his own prescribed duty. While certain degree of dishonesty may be permitted in business, a vaishya must execute his own duties prescribed for that occupation, viz. cow-protection, giving in charity, cleanliness in dealings etc and this will keep him on the path of truth. Whereas, for one who wants to function in the capacity of a brahmana by cultivating the mode of goodness and accepting responsible positions such as in the field of education, in guiding the lives of others, in representing religion and so on, such a person must be scrupulously truthful. When one abides by the prescriptions of scriptures for their own particular status in life, they can become gradually elevated to a higher stage.

Krishna's recommendation is that one should not shirk one's prescribed duties out of fear of these unavoidable faults associated with any occupation in the material world; rather, by executing them under scriptural guidance and fully dedicating the endeavor and the results of the work in service to the Supreme, one can attain perfection. (Please see BG 18.47 purport <http://www.vedabase.net/bg/18/47/en>) It is by this principle of dedication unto the Supreme, as Arjuna did in fighting the battle without any personal motives, that one is actually absolved from

the unavoidable sinful reactions and implications of his work.

Having said that, great discretion must be exercised here to not misuse this principle, for one could easily be tempted to justify any and every wrongdoing on this basis. A simple lie or unavoidable violence in the line of executing a particular occupation, not done whimsically but under scriptural direction is quite different from deliberate violation and unscrupulous acts of sins invariably involved in the modern context of occupational environment and social setup.

Truthfulness, simplicity, being satisfied with whatever comes by honest means --- these are symptoms of one working in the mode of goodness. A brahmana is a brahmana in name only if he is untruthful. Choosing an occupation that opposes living by these principles is not very conducive to cultivating goodness for one sincerely attempting to do so.

Circumstantially one might be obliged to work in an unfavorable situation, but a sincere devotee very much regrets and seeks opportunities to rectify the situation --- this example was set by Rupa and Sanatana Goswamis. Although very highly qualified brahmanas, they were obliged by the Nawab of Bengal to work for his government under threat that if they did not consent to work for him, then he would persecute the brahmanas and vaishnavas. Rupa and Sanatana most unwillingly accepted their posts in the Nawab's court just to avoid this unnecessary persecution of devotees. They executed their duties so conscientiously that the Nawab practically entrusted the entire administration to them. Yet, despite all the opulence and power that their positions afforded them, they were very much repenting having to work for and support a ruler who violated all religious principles and given to cow-killing, cruelty and destroying of brahminical culture. Thus, at the first opportunity they relinquished their highly honored positions and fully dedicated their lives to the service of Lord Caitanya.

In summary, the guiding principle for an aspiring devotee is to choose, with consultation and guidance from able and experienced devotees, an occupational situation that suits their present nature and would not hinder their spiritual cultivation and service to Krishna - then one is sure to be protected.

Please see a related question on this topic at digest 61

## *8.2. General questions: Duties and occupational duties*

### 8.2.1) 'Prime duty of the life' & 'duty of the Lord'

**As per the Bhagavad-gita sloka 4.8 "paritranaya sadhunam, vinasaya ca duskrtam.." the Godhead commits Himself to come to the world for performing His duties. This being the case, how we can aspire for a condition of no birth? Hence, for us too, birth is certain, and consequently sufferings and worldly pleasures are equally certain. Bondage to this world is unavoidable and permanent. As Godhead has a larger duty to perform, each and every soul has duties assigned to them for which they have to take birth. This makes it clear that our prayer can only be for the support of Godhead in doing our duties (dharma) correctly and effectively. Is this not correct? (Digest 5.6)**

There are several assumptions you have made, which need to be addressed. First, when Krishna appears, He comes of His own will, not out of obligation to perform some duty. His duties are not obligatory, like ours are for us. He states this directly in Bhagavad-gita.

It is true that the Lord has created the material world and declares that He will come again and again to establish peace. However, the Lord also describes His abode as lying beyond this material creation; He confirms that the spiritual world is the highest destination for the conditioned soul. Krishna also promises that those who go there do not have to come back to this material region. (Cf. Bg 15.6; Bg 8.15,16). The material world exists, and we are temporarily within it. But the soul is not bound here; he actually belongs in the spiritual region.

A simple analogy is that the State maintains a prison, and the head of the State may visit the prison from time to time for the benefit of the prisoners, but that does not mean that the head of State has become a prisoner by his entering into the prison house; rather, if the common prisoner manages to rectify his consciousness and become a reformed individual, and if he becomes an obedient citizen, on the request of the head of State he may be set freed.

While in this world, we have act within the Lord's plan for us, i.e. we must fulfill our God-given duties. But our higher duty is to heed to Krishna's call, which is to go back to His eternal abode, on the strength of His mercy and our unalloyed devotion to Him.

NOTE: In the following questions several have overlapping points. In answering a question, I have not repeated points already explained in previous questions of that section.

### 8.2.2) Our duty in the world

**I have been trying to understand the purpose of our life, what is our duty in this world including fulfilling the family obligations. (Digest 5.8)**

The purpose of this human life is to understand that we are not this body, but we are spiritual by nature and eternal servants of the Supreme Lord. By understanding this, we have to revive our lost loving relationship with God. And our duty is simply to do those activities that will help this realization and revive our love for God, as mentioned in the scriptures. Hearing and chanting about the Supreme Lord are the best ways by which we can achieve this. Other duties are not contradictory or independent but simply subsidiary to this prime duty.

### 8.2.3) Routine, emergency and desired duties

**This question is in response to [digest 84](#) (refer question 21.2.9) on "How to make good decisions and priorities?"**

**You have raised my curiosity about the following statement: "... scriptures place our day-to-day duties in three categories viz. daily or obligatory duties, emergency duties, and preferred or occasional duties."**

**I absolutely agree with this statement. But I do not know if there is some scriptural reference to it? The author of the Seven Habits of Successful People, Steven Covey, teaches this approach to prioritizing, but I don't know where it is in Srila Prabhupada's books. Could you please share with me just what scriptural reference you are referring to?**

**I was hoping to find more information regarding how to properly discriminate between "Our Duties", "Emergency Work" and "Desired Activities". Needless to say what one person would claim as duty, another might call Emergency, or even just "Desired Activities." How we make those distinctions is what makes us so different. (Digest 95.2)**

These three categories of activities are mentioned in various contexts within Vedic literatures and Srila Prabhupada makes a direct reference to it in his purport to Bhagavad-gita 2.47.

Srila Bhaktivinod Thakur also makes this classification of the three types of karma within his writings: nitya (daily), naimittika (occasional) and kama (desired).

Of the three, `kama karma' or desired activity is more or less selfish, and in the Vedic context, usually refers to karma-kanda sacrifices performed with some specific desired results. In any case, it does not really fall under the category of "prescribed duties".

Emergency duties are commonly referred to in Vedic culture as "apad-dharma". Prabhupada describes this in SB 1.17.16 p, and more direct references can be found, such as in SB 7.11.17 which describes how the various varnas should determine their duty during social upheavals or emergencies. Mention is made of them also in SB 5.26.15,19.

As Srila Prabhupada indicates in Bg 2.47 purport, routine duties are to be executed as obligatory, and desired activities should be regulated and done for Krishna - but both of them should be in line with scriptures. Determining what constitutes one's obligatory or desired duty is definitely complex and has to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Hence the necessity for consulting and taking superior direction from one's spiritual authority. (Please see [Digest 80](#))

#### **8.2.4) Past life connections and our duty towards them**

**What is the significance of having a past life connection with someone in this life? Do we have a duty to them if they are not Krishna conscious? (Digest 9.2)**

Sometimes it is said that when someone is too attached to another person, or bound in terms of karmic reactions, then in their next life their paths will meet, although this is not always the case.

Regarding the second part of the question, I can only offer a general consideration that our foremost duty towards such (or any) individual is to somehow assist them to become more Krishna conscious if possible, according to our capacity. In any case, we are obligated to so many individuals in the course our material existence, and by executing our own spiritual duties very conscientiously, we can best compensate our obligation to everyone else. Material obligations definitely exist, and we are scripturally obliged to fulfill these obligations, to the degree that we have not become fully surrendered to Krishna.

#### **8.2.5) How to think of Krishna while being a businessman?**

**I am an optician and I sell spectacles. Srila Prabhupada mentions in almost all of his lectures that you should think of Krishna 24 hours. Since I am a businessman, I need to think about my business; therefore how do I follow Srila Prabhupada's instructions? (Digest 69.2)**

From our experience we can understand that the only way one can constantly think of someone / something is when there is love and attachment. When there is love, all activities and all things are seen in relation to the object of love. The gopis were engaged in many household

affairs but their minds were always on Krishna. So was Arjuna's, even in the thick of the catastrophic battle.

Of course, love for Krishna is dormant in all of us. The practices of bhakti yoga are meant to reawaken that dormant love. Therefore, strong practice of sadhana bhakti is the key to destroy our forgetfulness and bring us to the position of constant remembrance of Krishna.

The stage described above is an advanced stage. Attaining that advanced stage requires cultivation. All of us have variegated responsibilities - occupational duties, family responsibilities, personal needs etc - that demand our attention. However, if we dedicate a certain portion of the day, especially in the early morning hours before we begin our routine work, to fully focus one's attention on Krishna through direct devotional activities such as chanting, hearing/reading and worshiping, then that effect would linger and permeate the consciousness throughout the rest of the day, even while dealing with other practical matters. For this reason, Srila Prabhupada very much stressed the importance of attending the morning program, which can be performed right within your home, daily (typically consisting of Mangala-arati, Japa and Srimad Bhagavatam class, as is performed in all of our ISKCON centers).

In order to be able to do so, on a consistent basis, one may have to make some other adjustments such as modifying the activities of the previous evening, minimize unnecessarily stressful endeavors etc. In other words, as Srila Prabhupada often said, we have to mold our life in a way that is conducive to and promotes remembrance of Krishna. At the same time, as far as possible we should avoid those things which would impede our positive remembrance of Krishna. (See Texts 2&3 of Nectar of Instruction)

The second part of the answer is to dedicate one's occupation itself in service to Krishna. In other words, one's business is not seen as a secular activity separate from devotional service; rather a devotee cultivates the mentality that their occupation is also part of their daily expression of devotion to Krishna; our business is done for Krishna. This means that not only the fruits of that activity are given to Krishna, but the activity itself is to be dedicated for Krishna's pleasure. In practical terms, a devotee should think: "Krishna is the Master of this enterprise - both of its management as well as the profits - and I am His ordered servant." (Please see Bg 18.57 Text and purport)

Most certainly there will be practical details that need to be attended to, but they are attended to with this meditation. Interaction with others during the course of business is also done in a way that is pleasing to Krishna. In this way, there would be no possibility of forgetting Krishna.

Practice makes a thing perfect. By practicing in this way consistently, our remembrance of Krishna will become more and more sustained and eventually unbroken.

### **8.2.6) 'Working without expectation' & 'significance of freewill and our efforts'**

**In Bhagavad-Gita 2.47, Lord Krishna says, "You have the right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty."**

**Question a) In this world activities are performed with the results in mind and in fact the results are the motivation for one to do work. How does one perform his activities in this world without expectation of fruits / results? (Digest 78.1)**

Krishna is not saying here that the results should be ignored or that the duties be carelessly performed without concern for the results. What He is saying is simply that we are not entitled to be the enjoyer of the fruits of our duties or activity. They are meant to be dedicated to Him. We have the right to do our duty - very nicely and conscientiously - not so we can enjoy the results but for Krishna to enjoy. If you are cultivating a garden, for example, you should make every effort to get the best yield; however, the actual yield of that garden is up to Krishna. Whatever is produced, offer those fruits to Krishna.

Krishna is the actual beneficiary or enjoyer of the results. This is only natural, because Krishna is the actual proprietor of everything, including the strength and intelligence with which we perform our work. Motivation for work in this case comes not from the expectation of how the results will benefit oneself, but from the expectation of pleasing Krishna, which is far more satisfying, and hence far more motivating than any meager material achievements.

**Question b) Apparently we are doing the activity. So how do we reconcile that "I am not the cause of my activities"?**

In Bg 18.14, Krishna explains that there are five factors of action, only one of which is our self, the others being the senses and instruments, the field of action, the different endeavors and ultimately the Supersoul. As said above, everything required for performing an activity, including our own intelligence and strength comes from Krishna. Our independent will constitutes one of the factors, but we are miniscule and dependent on the Lord for every movement and can act only under His sanction. Thus, with a little introspection, we can understand that we are not the cause or doer. We may be an immediate or intermediate cause, but the ultimate doer is Krishna.

See also BG 5.14 ("The embodied spirit, master of the city of his body, does not create activities, nor does he induce people to act, nor does he create the fruits of action. All this is enacted by the modes of material nature.") Material nature is creating the fruits of all material activities, not the soul. We have the capacity to perform work, we make various endeavors, material nature creates results...and material nature works under Krishna's direction (BG 9.10).

**Question c) Does this mean that because of one's past karma one gets results, and not by just one's own efforts only?**

Certainly past karma influences the results we get now. From observing around us and from our own experience, we can see that people don't always get results in exact proportion to their endeavors. This does not render our present efforts useless; they make up our future karma! (Please refer to our previous discussions on karma and freewill. Digest 4, 70)

**Question d) What is the significance of one's free will and efforts?**

As Krishna has unlimited freewill, so we have minute freewill, by which we can choose and desire to enjoy in so many ways in this world, and make efforts to attain them. Alternately, by our freewill we can choose to act in relationship with Krishna and offer our efforts in His service. By doing our prescribed duties without attachment to the results, as advised by Krishna, we are still exercising our freewill, but in subordination to or in harmony with the Supreme Will.

Srila Prabhupada often gave the simple example of the finger in relation to the body. If a finger decides to feed itself instead of doing its prescribed function of bringing the food to the mouth, and detaches itself from the body, then despite working hard, its efforts will bring no benefit to the finger. Similar will be our efforts for obtaining our individual interests in this world apart from Krishna. Such efforts may bring some temporary enjoyment but ultimately leaves the soul suffering the miseries of material existence.

[For additional details to discussions on this topic, please refer to the Digest of Answers available on the web page.]

### **8.2.7) "Job satisfaction" vs. "Money for Krishna"**

**As a householder we do not have to give up our job, but change our consciousness in doing it. One way of doing it is to donate a portion of the income coming from the job for Lord Shri Krishna's service and use the rest to maintain and raise the family in Krishna consciousness.**

**Part A) Now I have a desire to do the job also because it gives me job satisfaction, not just fruits in the form of money. If the higher level motivation of surrender of fruits of action irrespective of the job that I do is taken care of, do lower level motivations such as job satisfaction matter? I don't have the realization of love for Krishna to motivate me to do a job that's less satisfying. I do it as a responsibility towards my family. Could you please throw some light in this matter? (Digest 107.1)**

From the teachings of Lord Krishna in Bhagavad-gita, we certainly learn the importance of doing one's duty with detachment from the results. This is called Niskama-karma-yoga. Further, Krishna also teaches how our duty is to be determined in the first place: prescribed duty is based on one's guna and karma i.e. the qualities one has acquired from the modes of material nature and one's tendency towards a particular work.

We could say that engagement in work born of one's own nature yields one the most 'job-satisfaction.' For example, someone with brahminical inclination would be more satisfied in the position of a teacher rather than in a vaisya occupation, and conversely a businessman by nature would feel restless in the position of a priest. Arjuna, for instance, was to fight as a ksatriya because that was his natural propensity. When he considered giving up fighting, and earn his livelihood by begging and practice of non-violence, the Lord rebuked him and instructed him: "It is better to engage imperfectly in one's own occupation than perfectly in another's." (Bg 18.47) "To follow another's path is dangerous." (Bg 3.35). Thus job-satisfaction, or more precisely consideration of one's natural propensity towards work, is not secondary or unimportant in choosing one's occupational duty; rather it is a primary deciding factor, and generally it is prescribed by one's spiritual superiors who knows the nature of the student.

The whole institution of Varnasrama dharma is to dovetail our natural propensities in the service of the Lord and gradually increase our attachment to Him and proportionately diminish the spirit of "I am the proprietor, and I am the enjoyer." This includes not only the gradual detachment from the fruits of work but also the sense of enjoyment independent of Krishna. In the higher stages of niskama-karma-yoga, one offers not just the fruits/results of one's work, but also the work itself is dedicated to Krishna's pleasure. Such a person is not interested in his own satisfaction but will do any work that serves Krishna's interest best. As you have honestly indicated, we may not be at that stage yet, and therefore we should engage according to our

nature following the codes of varnashrama dharma. By this practice of karma-yoga in combination with our daily devotional practices of hearing, chanting, associating with devotees and so on, we will be raised to the stage of real attachment to Krishna.

Finally, please read carefully the purport of Brahma Samhita Text 61, from which the following quote is taken: "Brahma cherishes the desire for creation in his heart. If that creative desire is practiced by conjoining the same with the meditation of obeying therein the command of the Supreme Lord, then it will be a subsidiary spiritual function (gauna-dharma) being helpful for the growth of the disposition for the service of the Divinity by reason of its characteristic of seeking the protection of Godhead."

**Part B) Is it better to hold on to a job that gives more money (ultimately more money for Krishna) and less job satisfaction? Or is it better to take up a job that gives less money (ultimately less money for Krishna) and more job satisfaction? Job satisfaction gives better productivity and hence probably better fruits and I can server Krishna better in that way. But if I know I like certain jobs better that give me more job satisfaction but less money, what is better for me to do? (Digest 107)**

As far as niskama-karma is concerned, it is not measured by the quantity of the offering as much as the quality of devotion with which the offering is made and the spirit of detachment one cultivates through this act. The principle is to do one's duty for duty's sake and become detached from the sense of proprietorship. An ideal example in this regard was a great devotee of Lord Chaitanya, named Kholaveca Sridhar, who earned his livelihood by selling banana leaves. He hardly earned a few paisas everyday, yet he would donate half of whatever he earned for the worship of Vishnu and mother Ganges at the end of the day. Although he lived in abject poverty, he was completely satisfied at heart, and by his humble devotion, he purchased the Lord who granted him pure devotion. Krishna refused to accept the royal hospitality and palaces and gifts offered by the cunning and scheming Duryodhana, but He was fully satisfied with the humble meal offered by Vidura.

In other words, the economic needs of the family may be certainly a valid consideration in deciding one's occupational choices but it is unnecessary, and could even prove detrimental to one's devotion, to over-endeavor beyond one's means in an attempt to offer in greater quantity to Krishna. Of course, according to one's means one should want to offer the maximum and the best to the Lord as an expression of our devotion, but ultimately the Lord wants only our love and devotion.

### 8.3. Occupation against regulative principles

#### 8.3.1) Occupation promoting meat eating

**I work in a hotel that serves meat. By working there have I committed a sin? Would I be ineligible for Krishna Consciousness? I was reading the book "Yoga for The 21st century" by Tamal Krishna Goswami. In the book chapter 8, he says that anyone that has any connection to the death of an animal whether it be feeding, delivering, serving, etc., has committed a sin and is punishable by the laws of karma. Of course meat is cooked and served at our hotel. I am an Executive Chef at the hotel. Although I do not cook or eat meat I was really stunned by this statement as I have gained much from chanting the name of God. (Digest 61.1)**

The laws of karma are subtle and very stringent. As you have described, yes, anyone connected to sinful actions like animal killing, whether directly or indirectly, reaps proportionate reactions.

While this is true, no one is barred from Krishna consciousness or ineligible for His mercy. Even if unknowingly, or even knowingly, one may perform some punishable sinful actions, such a person may still take to chanting the Names of God and other devotional activities. I would like to reassure you that any sincerely performed devotional service will certainly be accepted by Krishna; it cannot be nullified by an act of sin. In reciprocation with the devotional service rendered to Him, Krishna enlightens the devotee how to further purify their lives and come closer to Him (as, for example, you have come to a crossroads of your life where you are making this inquiry). With sincerity in your heart, you should strive to become situated in an occupation that does not involve the compromises that your current profession is shrouded within.

One serious caution is that we must not knowingly indulge in sinful activities thinking that it can be adjusted or counteracted by chanting. Such a mentality is offensive to the Holy name and should be avoided. Devotees in general prefer to carefully choose an occupational duty that is as pure and 'karma-free' as possible. While every activity in the material world is covered by some unavoidable fault, occupations that directly break regulative principles can have a very deleterious effect on one's consciousness and spiritual life as well as bring adverse reactions, and this has been practically experienced by devotees in situations similar to yours. In your case, you could consider possible alternative chef situations where vegetarian food only is prepared, in the upcoming future of your career.

Meanwhile, although there may be some inevitable reactions, the best recourse is to take increased shelter of Krishna's holy names praying for His protection, mercy and guidance to lead your life to a more conducive situation.

### 8.3.2) Occuring sins due to our occupation in industries like defense

**Also would anyone connected with other industries like defense also commit sin. (Digest 61.2)**

It is true that in this present age, the whole society is set up in such a way that it is very hard to lead a pure life. Just by virtue of living in a society that openly promotes all sorts of vices, we are in one way or another contributing to these sinful activities, what then to speak of being directly connected to some enterprise that is dedicated to such prohibited actions! Although most people are ignorant of these negative effects, the reactions are nonetheless treacherous! Over and above our deliberate efforts to choose relatively harmless professions under the guidance of experienced devotees, the only way to completely inoculate ourselves from these vicious reactions is by dedicating our lives cent percent to the service of the Supreme Lord.

To the extent our life is molded according to the instructions of the scriptures and our activities are done purely in service to the Lord, to that extent we are untouched by the reactions to our work. (See Bg 3.9, 18.57) Another significant way we can counteract such unavoidable contaminations while living in the material world is by contributing positively to the eradication of such vices, such as by directly or indirectly promoting or supporting the dissemination of knowledge of Krishna consciousness to others.

### 8.3.3) Can 'result of a sinful activity' be offered to Krishna?

**"In short, sinful activity cannot be brought under the purview of 'offering everything to Krishna.'" (Narada Bhakti Sutra 35)**

**Could you please elaborate on the above? Because so many devotees say that whatever you do, you should offer it to Krishna. For example, suppose I am a software engineer, if I develop some software and it is used for something sinful in the first place, then how can I offer it to Krishna? But devotees recommend offering it. (Digest 232.1)**

Yes, it is true that one cannot expect to dedicate to Krishna the results of sinful or forbidden activities. When Krishna says "Whatever you do, do that as an offering to Me," it is just as much as when He indicates to us to first offer to Him whatever we eat. One who actually loves God would make the effort to know what He will accept and offer Him such pure foodstuffs only, as recommended by Him in scriptures.

Similarly, we are recommended to act and live purely - that is, to live by theistic conduct, within the codes of religious principles and more specifically under the guidance of saintly devotees. When our life is regulated in that way, then we can begin by offering whatever we do to Krishna. The Lord stresses in the Bhagavad-Gita that "One should therefore understand what is duty and what is not duty by the regulations of the scriptures. Knowing such rules and regulations, one should act so that he may gradually be elevated." (BG 16.24) And yet, doing the prescribed activities according to rules and regulations is alone not sufficient; one must do them with the conscious meditation of dedication to the Supreme - this is the import of "offering whatever we do to Krishna." Such work will elevate us; otherwise, we will be implicated.

To deliberately continue involvement with sinful activities thinking that it can be adjusted

or purified by devotional service constitutes a great offense and will adversely affect one's devotional progress.

Srila Prabhupada underscores this understanding of how we should work: "One should, however, note that after doing something whimsically he should not offer the result to the Supreme Lord. That sort of duty is not in the devotional service of Krishna consciousness. One should act according to the order of Krishna. This is a very important point. That order of Krishna comes through disciplic succession from the bona fide spiritual master. Therefore the spiritual master's order should be taken as the prime duty of life. If one gets a bona fide spiritual master and acts according to his direction, then one's perfection of life in Krishna consciousness is guaranteed." (BG 18.57 p) Therefore, it is so crucial to have the close guidance of the spiritual master in making important decisions in one's life such as choosing one's occupation.

An aspiring devotee who wants to dedicate their work to Krishna should make efforts to carefully avoid overtly sinful professions and try to choose some virtuous occupation as far as possible. For example, one would certainly not want to be involved in developing a technology meant for improving lethal weapons or slaughterhouses. Thus, if your occupation is such that it is directly opposed to religious principles, it would be wise to consider alternatives. (We have also discussed similar questions from different perspectives in Digests 61 and 177. Please see <http://www.romapadaswami.com/Inquiries/> )

The narration of Lord Caitanya's disapproval of Gopinatha Pattanayaka is very instructive in this regard. (Cc Antya Chapter 9.) Gopinatha Pattanayaka was a devotee of Lord Caitanya and was engaged as a tax collector in the government, but he apparently misappropriated some funds from the treasury and was about to be punished by the king. When the devotees appealed to Lord Caitanya on behalf of Gopinatha Pattanayaka, Lord Caitanya was not at all happy to hear that the property of the government was misappropriated, and he refused to support Gopinatha Pattanayaka's position, notwithstanding the fact that he and his entire family were all very dear and devoted servants of the Lord. Thus, Lord Caitanya taught us unequivocally that we should conduct our life exemplifying religious principles even in our ordinary worldly dealings, and not compromise them on the grounds that we are serving the Supreme Lord.

Having said that, it should be mentioned that in the present age, given the way society is setup, it is not very easy to not be involved in sin. Due to the loss of varnashrama society, just by our living in a predominantly non-theistic society we become involved in many sins, and virtually any action performed by us contributes in some way to sinful activities. Nonetheless we cannot merely take a helpless or indifferent attitude, thinking there is no alternative, because such adverse activities do implicate us and are not favorable for the cultivation of bhakti. Rather a sincere devotee feels very regretful (as in the example of Rupa and Sanatana Goswami, as discussed in Digest 177); and they look for ways and means to progressively move towards a more favorable engagement and live an increasingly pure life dedicated to Krishna and His mission.

In the meanwhile, with the understanding that one's engagement is not the ideal, one should act under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, for the spiritual master is competent to engage the disciple and appropriately dovetail the results of their work in service to Krishna and to progressively help them become disentangled from capricious and unfavorable activities.

## 9. Karma

### 9.1. Devotees and Karma

#### 9.1.1) 'Devotees and karma' & 'understanding the sufferings of a devotee'

**Krishna says in BG "Surrender unto me and I'll take all your sins" but sometimes we see a devotee of Krishna also suffers. So please explain how karma affects a devotee (i.e. karma done in previous life, in this life and all future karmas). (Digest 53.1)**

Complete surrender to Krishna destroys all stages of karma, both a priori and a posteriori, just as Krishna promises. In other words, a fully surrendered devotee is NOT AFFECTED by karma.

How, then, are we to understand the devotee's suffering? Srila Prabhupada likened this to a fan that is switched off, yet continues to rotate for a while due to previous momentum. Similarly, when a person surrenders to Krishna, he may continue to experience some of the effects of residual material conditioning for a while, but they are soon depleted and destroyed.

Further, the suffering of a surrendered devotee is not exactly a karmic reaction under the agency of the Lord's external energy. Rather, Krishna Himself may give His devotee some token reaction just to purify him/her of any residual material attachment or to increase their dependence on Him. This suffering and the suffering of a non-devotee are not the same just as the suffering of an orphan is not the same as the apparent suffering/punishment a king's son might undergo in the process of being trained by the king.

Because of their confidence in the Lord's protection, a pure devotee actually never suffers, even if externally they seem to be undergoing difficulties. Being situated in transcendental knowledge by the Lord's grace, they know that all suffering pertains only to the material body, which is simply a source of suffering in any case, and is illusory. In fact Queen Kunti, in her famous prayers, requests Krishna for more and more calamities because such calamities are an opportunity for her ecstatic remembrance of Krishna and taking shelter of His lotus feet! (SB 1.8.25)

Of course, to the degree one is surrendered, to that degree one becomes free from past material reactions. And as far as their present and future karma is concerned, a symptom of surrender is acting fully in accordance with the directions of the Supersoul through the medium of scripture / spiritual master and with the intention of serving Krishna. Therefore all such activities become Krishna-karma and therefore free of material reactions.

#### 9.1.2) How can eternal associates of Lord Krsna have past pious activities?

**In the purport to SB 1.15.46, Srila Prabhupada mentions that Pandavas performed supreme pious work in this life and also in their previous lives. But we have the understanding from Srila Prabhupad's books that when Krishna appears in this material world to perform His pastimes, His eternal associates also appear along with Him to assist in His pastimes. So, can you kindly explain how the Pandavas, who are eternal associates of**

**the Lord, have a previous life sukriti?**

**I have similar doubt with respect to the life of Sri Narada Muni. (Digest 174.1)**

As eternal associates of the Lord, the Pandavas accompany the Lord wherever the Lord appears within the material universes to participate in His pastimes. Krishna reminds Arjuna that both Arjuna and He have passed many, many lives which Arjuna has forgotten but the Lord has not. (Bg 4.5) In all such births, the Pandavas remain liberated associates of the Lord, uncontaminated by matter. Thus all their activities were supreme pious work, being on the transcendental platform.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura identifies different categories of sukriti, viz. pious work aimed at fruitive enjoyment (bhoga-unmukhi-sukriti); aimed towards liberation (moksa-unmukhi-sukriti) and finally, pious action that awaken one's devotion (bhakti-unmukhi-sukriti) which is the highest. Devotional activities such as hearing & chanting about Krishna, serving His devotees etc constitute this third type and are thus supreme pious work. [See Cc Madhya 22.45 purport]

One may mistakenly infer that although the Pandavas were very virtuous, their tribulations might have been the consequence of sins in a previous life, but this is refuted here by the above statement.

In the case of Sri Narada Muni, we understand from his personal account of his past life how his association with the bhaktivedantas elevated him from the position of an ordinary and obscure son of a maidservant to that of a perfected, pure devotee. He offers this as a personal testimony to the fact that anyone from any position in life can attain the perfection of pure devotion. Once having attained spiritual perfection, past pious / impious background becomes inconsequential. For further discussion on this topic, see digest138.

There are many such examples in Bhagavatam which make it adequately clear that perfection in devotion is not simply exclusive to eternal associates or something to be admired but never to be achieved by common people.

**9.1.3) Reason for someone being put into the same situation of misery/contempt again and again**

**If one has been in a situation which was surcharged with contempt, which filled one with anger, and which one could not overcome, is there a reason why someone would be put into that same situation? Would this be some kind of a test? (Digest 9.1)**

If one is a devotee, then such a situation can be seen as a test, or as a way for Krishna to glorify His devotee, like Prahlad Maharaja. Otherwise, such a situation is but the fruit of one's past misdeeds.

## 9.2. General questions: Karma

### 9.2.1) What is karma?

#### **What is Karma? (Digest 2.11)**

Every action has its equal or greater reaction - this is a simple definition of karma. Whatever activity we do, good or bad, brings us good or bad reactions. Due to good karma, one may get a beautiful body, become wealthy or very intelligent etc., and bad reactions may come in the form of disease, poverty etc., or in terms of heavenly enjoyment or hellish sufferings and so on.

### 9.2.2) Why should we suffer, if we do not have control over the environment in which we are born/grow-up?

**We are a product of the environment that we take birth and grow up in. To a great extent this environment determines whether one will be religious or not. If God is in control of this, then why should one have to suffer the consequences of being born in an atheistic family? (Digest 12.1)**

That God is the ultimate controller does not imply that God is responsible for all our actions. Every individual is responsible for his/her own actions. We make our own destiny based on our desires and past actions, but that happens under the direction and sanction of God. If one is born in atheistic family, it is a result awarded in accordance with their own desires and past misdeeds.

God's ultimate control does not exempt us from bearing the responsibility to act in accord with His will and according to the codes of theistic conduct.

However, although our natures are greatly molded by the environment as you have described, even in the most unfortunate of circumstances one still has one's freewill and one could take that very situation as an impetus to take shelter of God. A person coming from unfortunate circumstances from birth may be inspired by God Himself, from within his heart, assisting him to understand God. The classic example is that of Prahlada Maharaja who, although was born as the son of the most formidable demon, became an exalted devotee by the association of Srila Narada Muni.

### 9.2.3) If we are not the doer, why do we incur karma?

**In various writings, we are taught that we are not the doer. If we are not the doer, then why are we liable for the results of our actions (good or bad) i.e. karma? (Digest 95.1)**

We are not the doer, but when we identify ourselves falsely as the doer, by the laws of nature we become responsible for our actions.

With a little introspection, it is easy to see that we are limited and completely controlled. By dint of our tiny freewill a living entity can wish or choose to do something, and subsequently make some endeavor with the help of senses and other instruments; all of the movements of

matter that follow are actually carried out by material nature, which is again under the control of Krishna. Thus we are not the independent cause or doer. (Please refer [Digest 78](#), where we have discussed this in greater detail)

By contrast, if one is acting fully under the direction of the Lord, and who understands his position as the Lord's instrument, he is not held karmically responsible for his actions.

#### **9.2.4) Karma and freewill**

**I am very unclear and confused. Bhagavan Shri Krishna says that all that is happening is predestined and nothing moves without His sanction. Then He says in BG 2.47 'Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion-at that time I descend Myself.' (Digest 4.1)**

Our present material position has been determined by our past activities. This does not mean that we are like programmed robots without any free will. Within our present circumstances, we have some freedom - just as a tethered cow can move in a small circle. Depending on how we choose to act now, in accordance with the Supreme Lord's laws or against His laws, we can get greater facilities or we can bind ourselves further, or we can get totally liberated by fully surrendering to Him.

#### **9.2.5) Karma by force**

**Does a child who is forced to eat meat by his parents incur negative karma? Does the logic change for a mentally unstable adult? (Digest 211.1)**

The laws of karma are very intricate, subtle and stringent. It is not easy to always determine a one-to-one correspondence between a particular action and what exact reactions are incurred as a result, and what proportion is assigned to whom.

In the case of a young child or a dependent who is incapable of making decisions for themselves, great part of the responsibility lies with the parents or the caretaker - consequently, they take the major portion of the reaction. We touched on this subject in our discussion on 'collective karma' (see [Digest 185](#)). A child or an incapacitated person is helpless, dependent and not in a position to assert their will, therefore they are not held accountable for their actions. Nonetheless, there may still be some negative reactions incurred. This is just as much as when a child is exposed to fire, even if it was due to someone else's fault, the child suffers burns - that's how the physical laws of nature work, and the subtle laws of nature (i.e. karma) also, in some ways, work similarly.

Thus, a young child would not incur a sinful reaction to the same degree as the person responsible for the decision, and yet one can expect some undesirable consequence. Minimally, this consequence would be in the form of some samskaras (or impressions formed in the mind) resulting from indulging in such acts. The child then becomes conditioned and accustomed to such behavior which could later prove an obstacle and impel them to commit such sins repeatedly.

There are different kinds of sinful reactions, as explained in Padma Purana - sinful reactions already manifest, about to fructify, latent or in seed-like form (quoted in BG 9.2 purport). When one commits a sinful act, apart from the direct consequences, impressions are

made in the mind which forms the seed (papa-bija) of a tendency to perform such a prohibited act again and again. Even from our common experience, we know that those who repeatedly break the law feel less and less compunction about doing it again. Thus a person, who is exposed to karma by force of circumstance, even if they come to recognize the mistake, may have to work harder to rid themselves of such a habit than one who is not so disadvantaged. The saving grace, however, is that if they take up the process of pure devotion, even the seed-like tendencies for sinning are quickly burned up.

As children grow up, as they mature in their faculty of independent thinking and asserting their own will, they become increasingly and proportionately responsible for their actions.

### **9.2.6) Will one incur karma if (s)he is ignorant of the laws of karma?**

#### **What if an adult did not know about the philosophy of karma? (Digest 211.2)**

Ignorance of the law does not excuse one from the consequences - this is true even in enforcing state laws. One cannot claim innocence on the grounds that this was how they were trained by their parents or society. In this human form of life, where we are endowed with the faculty of higher intelligence and conscience, it behooves us to inquire into and make ourselves familiar with the laws of God as much as we are expected to do with the laws of state. Thus, those of us who have this human form of life are held responsible for our actions.

Of course, one who knowingly transgresses the law, or one who has the asset of being born and brought up in a culture where such knowledge is readily available and still chooses to ignore it, becomes even more culpable. But in any part of the world, in all civilized societies, there is some form of religious principle which prohibits, or at least greatly restricts and regulates grossly sinful actions such as killing and hurting other living entities - whether or not such regulations are in common vogue or even rightly represented by contemporary religious denominations is a different question, but the vast majority of us still have at least the opportunity to become aware of the existence of such strictures. And any common man, with a little introspection and compassion, can begin to recognize the cruelty in needlessly slaughtering innocent creatures. Thus ignorance is not quite a valid excuse.

### **9.2.7) Human beings and karma**

#### **I have heard that karma is counted only for those who are in human form and staying on earth. Can you elaborate on this? (Digest 114.2)**

Bharata-varsha or the earthly realm is referred to as the field of activities, or karma bhumi. That is to say one gets the opportunity here to perform activities by which one can either accumulate pious credits or sinful reactions. In all the other realms, one is more or less expending their karmic account, good or bad.

Just as in exotic tourist spots most people are generally busy spending their hard-earned money in the lap of luxury, similarly residents of heavenly planets are primarily busy enjoying its vast pleasures at the expense of their accumulated piety. For the most part, they do not have occupational duties and obligations as in the case of humans. Similarly, the residents of hellish planets and those in animal species are simply fulfilling those particular terms and gradually evolving towards human life.

In the human form of life there is an outstanding opportunity to perform duties according to varna-ashrama and perfect one's life, or to neglect one's higher duties and thus be implicated in the consequences of that neglect.

### **9.2.8) "Mercy killing" and karma**

**If a person is suffering for a long time, 'mercy killing' of that person is practiced in America. Won't that affect the spiritual life of the person being killed? How will it affect? Will the doctors also incur sin by this? Please clarify. (Digest 130.1)**

For clarification sake, I am assuming that your use of the term 'mercy killing' is restricted to the category of medically assisted suicide.

None of us have the right to take the life of another living entity, not only by ethical standards but by spiritual standards too; the only exception is when it is specifically sanctioned by scriptures and that also by the authorized upholders of law only.

Suicide -- and therefore likewise 'mercy killing', by logical extension -- is not condoned by scriptures. By prematurely terminating a person's life, it is to be understood that we are interfering with their karma. The intended purpose may be to put an end to the person's suffering; but due to lack of understanding the soul and its eternal nature such an action in fact prolongs the person's suffering.

By nature's arrangement, the soul is awarded another gross material body after death. But when life is ended untimely before the end of one's allotted duration, as in a suicide for instance, it is understood that the person suffers for the remaining period without having the opportunity for getting another suitable body. The soul remains in the subtle body in a ghostly form, which is an unbearable condition of suffering. In addition, they still have to undergo, in their future life, the due reactions of karma which is the cause of their present suffering. Thus 'mercy-killing' is not so merciful, after all, and all parties involved incur stringent reactions.

A greater act of compassion for the suffering person is to consider their ultimate well-being, both in this and future life, by providing spiritual care and facilitating their final days with some opportunity for devotional engagement such as hearing the Holy Names and glories of the Lord which alone can free one from the complicated meshes of pain and death.

### **9.2.9) Bad thoughts due to past karma**

**Why does bad thoughts come in my mind without any desire or even if I don't like to have such thoughts? Is it the result of past karma that is acting on the mental plane? (Digest 24.2)**

Exactly! Seeds or subtle impressions are stored in the mind from past bad activity; these impressions or seeds fructify in the form of bad thoughts after some time, bringing the reaction of disturbance to the mind for the past bad activities.

### 9.2.10) Does karma entangles the soul?

**Please help me to understand the purport to [verse 32 of chapter 13](#) of the Bhagavad Gita. I thought that the soul enjoys and suffers due to his contact with the material body and also entangles himself with the karma that he performs with that body. How is it then that the activities performed due to his contact with material bodies do not entangle him? (Digest 131.1)**

The soul is always transcendental even when situated in the material body. The changes of the body do not affect the soul in the sense that the soul does not take birth when the material body is born, nor does it grow old, die etc.

In the following verse ([13.33](#)) the Lord gives the example of how the sky or air, although all-pervading, does not mix with anything. Similarly, spirit does not ever mix with matter. Similar ideas are expressed in [BG 15.8](#) and [SB 1.3.31](#): when blowing wind passes over different objects, it acquires different aromas, but the air itself is neither sweet-smelling nor foul. Although it appears that the conditioned soul is suffering or enjoying the fruits of his actions and contaminated by the modes of material nature he is in contact with, actually he is not touched by matter.

Srila Prabhupada gives the example of one who is dreaming: in the dream one may be experiencing great danger or even get killed and may feel all the attendant emotions, but in reality they are safely lying in their bed. Similarly, the soul is apparently subject to the happiness and distress of material body & mind, but is factually unaffected. The appearances of reality in this world which are factually but illusion are accomplished by the tricks of maya.

### 9.2.11) Blaming karma vs. taking responsibilities

**We often hear devotees saying that whatever they or others are experiencing is due to their karma. So our question is, how does taking responsibility come into the picture? Can we just 'lay the blame' on past karma for our present misdeeds and wrongful activities and get away with it? (Digest 54.3)**

The principle of karma is misused by many people as a `rubber crutch', ie. the 'fall guy' or an external blame for one's unfortunate circumstances. However, one major purpose of educating persons in the principle of karma \*is\* to create within them a sense of being held personally responsible for their present actions via the reactions that will come back upon them. This seems to be your main point, which I am confirming.

One's present situation in life may be the byproduct of his/her past actions, but their present actions are not predestined; one's present actions are executed by one's own volition, albeit within the limited framework that they received due to their past actions. For example, someone may be put into prison for some crime; while in prison, they are not fully free to act like a non-imprisoned citizen. However, while in the prison, if they get into an altercation with another prisoner, it only implicates them further in being restricted, even within prison! Is this not the case?

Here is the point: past karma does NOT dictate nor mandate my current choices of action.

I can choose to act within the mode of goodness, or I can choose to serve Krishna always, no matter what the past's impelling forces dictate.

### **9.2.12) Fate and karma**

**What is fate? Why is a person born in a particular place to a particular parents, some rich, some poor, some beautiful, some wise etc.? Is this because of past karma? (Digest 4.3)**

Yes. As the saying goes, 'As we sow, so shall we reap.'

### **9.2.13) Fate and role of God**

**OK, then after we are born in this world with certain predetermined benefits (like being rich, wise etc), one has to lead an ongoing good life. At this juncture what is the role of God? Is He going to change my fate in my present life, or does He have no control at all, once fate is determined by my past actions? Why I should pray to God? (Digest 4.4)**

Please refer to the last few answers. Depending on our action, we get appropriate rewards (or punishments), but we must always remember that there is a Supreme Person Who awards the results. And that person is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is independent and is not bound to give us the results. He can relieve us altogether of the reactions to our past deeds. He is not bound by any laws because He is the lawmaker. He can choose to give a different result, or He can absolve us of all past reactions completely. Therefore, we are dependent on His mercy.

### **9.2.14) Fate and reason for making wrong decisions**

**How can I do my duties if everything is predestined? I want to do them and I want to follow the teachings of Bhagavan Shri Krishna, but circumstances prevailing at certain times sometimes push me to take any optional decision which ultimately proves to be disastrous. (Digest 4.5)**

In addition to the above answers: It is the mode of passion that forces us to take up a course of action that opposes our deepest convictions. Therefore, we must carefully cultivate a life centered in goodness. Bhagavad-gita teaches us so clearly what will help us remain centered in a life of goodness. However, because we have entangled ourselves so much in this material condition, it is very perplexing how to make the right decisions, even if we learn about the Lord's teachings. Therefore, it is essential that we need to take guidance from advanced devotees, ultimately taking shelter of a bona fide guru, who can help us progressively align ourselves with the Lord's instructions and not commit blunders, which will only entangle us further.

### **9.2.15) Fate and our efforts**

**Some people claim that what is to happen in this life is already determined by God (i.e. fate). Their idea is that we do not have much control on our life. We are under the illusion of Maya. Others think that only because of our intelligence and our carefully**

**executed efforts, we achieve desirable ends. My question is, do our efforts really matter? (Digest 4.6)**

Yes, we create our own destiny, but the scope for doing so is quite restricted or limited. We have our desires and free will, but they are supervised by the Supreme, according to natural laws. Thus, our freedom to 'create our destiny' is VERY restricted! We really have not so much control, ultimately. With unrestricted freedom, we can choose if we are going to act according to God's laws or not. That is within our control. But ultimately Krishna is the supreme controller and actual doer.

### **9.2.16) Collective karma**

**What do the scriptures including the Bhagavad-Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam have to say about "collective karma"? Our individual karma is generated by our own intentional and unintentional actions but what about the actions we perform as part of a group or as a society? Does responsibility get assigned to each one of us? Particularly, in the context of the planetary environment, we have collectively made impacts on the earth and are now seeing the consequences. (Digest 185.1)**

As member of any community, the actions of the individual members have a collective impact on the rest of the community. Even within a family, we can readily see that an action of one member affects the lives of other family members just by virtue of their connection to each other, and similarly our individual karmas impact each other also.

We see this principle demonstrated in the Mahabharata - for the transgressions by Duryodhana and a few of his cohorts against the Pandavas and their chaste wife, the entire dynasty of Kuru had to pay the price for having stood by him and failed to check his sinful actions.

Vedic social organization or Varnashrama is designed in such a way that by executing one's own prescribed duties nicely, each member of society automatically contributes positively to the overall welfare of the society, not only human beings but even the animals, plants, environment, demigods and forefathers! Conversely when a member of the society deviates from his/her duties, it creates negative impact. In the modern paradigm of scientific research, we are discovering that it is impossible to test or predict what impact our actions might have down the road, and no one knows what they are supposed to do or not do.

Contrastingly, those who execute their duties under proper guidance in the Vedic society, even if they themselves may not be learned or far-sighted enough to understand the consequences and they may also not be on the platform of pure devotion, they can still be confident that their actions are not detrimental but uplifting to all sections of society, simply because they are acting under the infallible direction of scriptures. Therefore, each person simply had to execute their own prescribed duty conscientiously.

As far as assigning karmic reaction, although each person is responsible for his/her own action, much greater responsibility is placed upon the leaders of the society. The king or executive head, parents, teachers, husband and highly educated members of the society (brahmanas) are natural leaders because their actions and decisions guide and affect the lives of their dependents. Whatever great persons do, common people follow. (BG 3.21) Thus the head of state (or head of family or community) has great responsibility to set the right example and

also to guide, facilitate and ensure that their dependents are properly engaged in their respective duties and do not get implicated in bad karma.

According to Vedic social codes, the king has to bear one-sixth of the collective karma of his citizens! (Cf. SB 4.20.14 <http://vedabase.net/sb/4/20/14/en>) We can see that it is quite a serious responsibility and therefore it was required that these leading members be conversant with standard scriptural codes and be guided by saintly persons. Conversely, a citizen benefits from the piety of the King, and the King benefits from the pious activities of the citizen.

"Prthu Maharaja continued: Therefore, my dear citizens, for the welfare of your king after his death, you should execute your duties properly in terms of your positions of varna and asrama and should always think of the Supreme Personality of Godhead within your hearts. By doing so, you will protect your own interests, and you will bestow mercy upon your king for his welfare after death." (SB 4.21.25)

Regarding a King's duty to spiritually elevate his citizens: "If a king neglects to give such instructions and is simply satisfied with levying taxes, then those who share in the collection—namely, all the government servants and the head of the state—are liable to share in the impious activities of the general masses. The laws of nature are very subtle. For example, if one eats in a place which is very sinful, he shares in the resultant reaction of the sinful activities performed there."

Similarly, it is warned that parents who beget children without discharging their responsibility to train them spiritually will have to bear responsibility for the karma of the children as well. The spiritual master also has to take on the sinful reactions of his disciples. (SB 5.5.18)

Certainly, we are all individually fully responsible for our own actions due to our freewill, but those who are in such leading roles are held greatly accountable also. Individually it is our responsibility to choose as far as possible the right type of association and leadership which will not implicate us in further sins. There are examples within scripture of subordinates rejecting the king, spiritual master, father or husband under dire circumstances when such authority was leading them down the wrong path. (This, of course, should be done only with great caution and superior guidance and not whimsically.)

There are also very instructive examples found in the Caitanya-caritamrita, in this case not just of sinful reactions but the much more serious consequence of offending great saintly devotees. (Please see Caitanya Caritamrita Antya 3.147-164, 3.191-212; <http://vedabase.net/cc/antya/3/en>) Both these incidents illustrate how when an advanced devotee of the Lord is insulted it has such serious repercussions that for one man's fault the entire village or country can become afflicted. In the case of Ramachandra Khan, his entire village suffered as a consequence of his offense to Haridas Thakur and Lord Nityananda. Contrastingly, in the case of Gopala Cakravarti who also insulted Haridas Thakur, he was immediately dismissed and rejected by all the members of the assembly who knew of the grave danger in insulting saintly persons, and thus they were not implicated. "Wherever an advanced devotee is insulted, for one man's fault the entire town or place is afflicted." Cc Antya 3.164

### **9.2.17) Reasons for mass destruction**

**What is the explanation for people dying due to disasters, accidents, war etc.? Is it due only to karma or is it because of persons who follow the path of "adharma" and are creating trouble for the innocent people by misusing their free will? (like Duryodhana**

### **created trouble for Pandavas) (Digest 54.4)**

Mass destruction is brought about by a combination of both causes. When there are many people who deserve a terrible death because of their previous sinful acts, and there are likewise persons who want to misuse their freewill and inflict pain on others, material nature creates circumstances to bring them together. We cannot dismiss away cruelty inflicted upon someone simply as their well-deserved karma. One's past misdeeds is a most probable contributing factor for someone's personal suffering. Nonetheless, there are individuals who perpetrate nefarious acts which bring disastrous effects within others' lives, and these persons are certainly doing so out of misuse of their freewill. Unfortunately, they await similar and greater punishment in future.

Suppose that someone is karmically destined to die at my hands. Yet, it is my prerogative as a human being to exercise compassion and mercy instead. I may choose to not become part of an act of violence which once again entangles one in the endless, vicious karmic cycle.

### **9.2.18) Freeing oneself from collective karma**

**That leads to my second related question: If there is collective karma, how can one free oneself from the results of such karma? (Digest 185.2)**

The process of getting relief from karma is the same - to surrender unto the Supreme Lord and to live in harmony with His instructions by being guided by His bona fide representatives and scriptures. We can also set a good example from whatever position we may be in and honestly discharge our responsibility towards our family members, friends and those that we may have some influence upon to guide their actions on the right path. As mentioned before, one should carefully avoid participating in or contributing to directly irreligious/sinful activities as far as possible.

By taking steps towards leading such a pure life in service to the Lord and by taking up chanting of His Holy Names, one can become immune to all types of sinful reactions - Krishna promises to deliver such a surrendered soul. We can practically see that those who take shelter of the divine energy of the Lord can remain completely protected and transcendental even in the midst of great confusions and upheavals in the rest of the society around us; not only they remain unaffected but they can also extend great shelter to so many others around them.

### **9.2.19) Is detachment, a way to bypass dharma/karma by demons?**

**If the same "detachment" perspective on moral values can be used both by the demon Kamsa (in justifying his killing of the sons of Devaki) and a divine avatar, it is hard to accept that such an approach could represent a true basis for morality. Is detachment a way to by-pass dharma/karma for a demon? (Digest 11.6)**

No, a demon does not by-pass karma by detachment. A person of demoniac nature has the tendency to misuse even the best philosophy. Kamsa's behavior is a typical example to illustrate that knowledge can be dangerous in the hands of demons. However, abuse of a principle does not discredit the value of that principle itself.

Arjuna was also asked to be detached in killing his grandfather and teacher, but to serve

the higher cause of fulfilling the Lord's mission. Since God is Absolute and equally merciful towards everyone, whatever He does benefits everyone. Therefore He is beyond all morality and rules, and His killing results in the liberation of the other's soul. This is not the same as the justification that Kamsa gave. Unlike Kamsa, the true basis of morality for the rest of us is to abide by God's laws, and by following this principle we can do equal justice to all. We do have to cultivate detachment, not to use as an excuse for justifying our whims, but to detach ourselves from our independent notions, so that we can act as an instrument of the all-good Supreme Lord, absent the intervention of our self-centered likes and dislikes.

### **9.2.20) Removing bad karma**

**Many people have the idea that the bad karma can be reduced or removed through meditation, worship, samskara or sacrifice. What do you think? (Digest 2.12)**

Sukadeva Gosvami gives a similar answer to Maharaj Pariksit when he asks how to mitigate the hellish sufferings and sinful reactions. Sukadeva Gosvami prescribes that by performance of atonement to the sinful activities and by cultivating tapasya, brahmacarya, truthfulness, control of mind and senses etc., one can counteract the sinful reactions. So it is possible to reduce one's sinful actions if one follows the prescribed way. However, this is hardly possible, especially in this age of Kali, when performance of the prescribed methods of atonement according to Vedic rituals, under the guidance of qualified brahmanas or strictly following the above-mentioned processes, is very difficult, to say the least. Further King Pariksit asks, "But how can atonement really help if the sinful tendencies are not removed from the heart of the living entity?" He will be driven by those tendencies to keep committing the same sinful activities again and again and will thus be bound to suffering. Pariksit Maharaj compares this to the bathing of an elephant, which after a nice bath, comes ashore and throws mud all over its body again. The real remedy is therefore to remove the root cause of bad karma, i.e. sinful tendencies. Sukadeva Gosvami confirms this. And he describes how to do it: by surrendering to the Supreme Lord and performing devotional service all sins are completely eradicated, just as darkness is immediately dissipated by sunlight. Krsna will automatically take away all of one's sinful reactions at one stroke, as He promises in the Bhagavad Gita, without our having to undergo much trouble for atoning the untold amount of sinful reactions we have. Cf SB Canto 6, Ch. 1.

### **9.2.21) Incurring punya by demigod worship**

**Can any person get more than he is destined to get especially by worshipping demigods? Prahlada Maharaja has said that material happiness and unhappiness is fixed. Then why do people get immediate results when they start worshipping demigods? Are these results in addition to what they are destined to get? What is destiny then? (Digest 25.4)**

By performance of punya of any type, one increases one's entitlement to reap the fruits of one's piety. Prahlada Maharaja's statement is not contradicted by a demigod worshiper's enjoying fruits coming from their worship. As you have written, yes, "these results in addition to what they are destined to get". The worshiper's previous 'punya account' has just been increased by a

'deposit', and their prayers for receiving a benediction has just depleted the 'punya account' by a sizable 'withdrawal'.

### *9.3. Why do bad things happen to good people?*

#### *9.3.1) Why do bad things happen to good people?*

**Right now I don't know if I believe in God or not. I got this feeling because of recent Tsunami devastations. I didn't quite understand how God/nature can destroy so many innocent lives when they didn't do any bad karma, even if there might be few people who had done bad karma. I also couldn't understand how so many people were destined to die at the same time even though they didn't have anything in common. (Digest 117.1)**

The laws of karma are very intricate. With our limited perception, we may not be able to discern the exact cause-and-effect relationship in every situation. Both scripturally and logically, however, we can conclude that every reaction hints at past actions. Nothing in the workings of nature is haphazard or due to blind chance; if that were accepted as the alternative explanation to God, it does not explain very much either, in any case.

Truly, many have faced this difficulty in trying to understand or explain pain and suffering in the material world - how can an omnipotent, all-loving God allow such suffering? But Vedic scriptures give a very consistent explanation understanding which, having properly understood, one is not bewildered and shaken in their faith in God in the face of a tragedy.

While the living entity is indeed dependent on God for both happiness and distress, God is not responsible for either; we are. Under His sanction, our lives are orchestrated by higher beings (demigods) and each of us is awarded the fruits of our own past actions.

Karma can be individual, or it can be collective, i.e. reactions experienced by an entire community or large segments of society. Large-scale sinful activities of society such as organized slaughterhouses or undue exploitation of nature can lead an entire society to experience mass karmic reactions in the form of wars, epidemics and natural disasters.

Superficially it seems that the hundreds of victims of the tsunami had apparently nothing in common; yet by the intricacies of karma, and unseen superior orchestration, they were meant to experience the same calamity. But that is not the end; the future destinations of those souls are likely to be equally varied: those who were more pious among them will achieve better destinations and furthermore, those that took shelter of God in that calamitous hour of test were sure to have received His personal protection.

A deeper lesson for all of us to learn from this experience is that the very nature of this material world we inhabit is one of inevitable calamities. Krishna has described it as 'duhkhalayam asasvatam' - a temporary place full of misery. (Bg 8.15) Srimad-Bhagavatam certifies this world as "a place where there is danger at every step" (SB 10.14.58), yet there is a place beyond this material realm, free from all anxieties, and which is our real home, and our goal should be to return there.

(Please note that what we have said here is NOT to 'explain away' and coldly dismiss the tragic suffering of so many as "just what they deserved". Much to the contrary, one who fully understands the laws of karma and the spiritual nature of self and is faithful to God, would

naturally feel deep compassion for the magnitude of mass suffering; and in feeling thus, he/she would see the need to take deeper shelter of the Lord and encourage others to do so, knowing that to be the only real solution.)

### 9.3.2) Karma: why a pious person, suffer?

**I have always been a pious man, given in charity and donated to the temple. Then why am I made to suffer? (Digest 4.2)**

Our present suffering is due to past sinful reactions from this or previous lives. Ultimately, our suffering will continue as long as we continue in this cycle of repeated birth and death. Therefore, it is very important for each of us, in addition to performing our charity work and donating to the temple, we must very carefully cultivate our dormant spirit of unalloyed devotion for Krishna. The most effective means for this is to daily and regularly chant the Holy Name of the Lord. When we attain the stage of chanting without offenses, we will no longer experience any suffering in this world, because we will be mercifully transferred to the abode of Lord Krishna!

Are you regularly chanting yet? If not, please begin, today!

### 9.3.3) Why do bad things happen to good people, even devotees?

**Even after doing lot of pious activities, devotional services one still undergoes lot of suffering? Why? What is the solution? Good people go through bad things and Bad people go through good things? Why? (Digest 173.1)**

The root cause of suffering is ignorance, which results in sin. When someone has a contagious disease, we can invariably conclude that they must have contracted the infection somehow, even if it may not be apparent wherefrom, how and so forth. Similarly, when there is some suffering we can conclude that there must have been some past sinful act committed by the person in question, either in this or a previous lifetime, knowingly or unknowingly.

Everyone in this material world, even those who are pious and reasonably good-hearted, still performs many sinful activities. Even seemingly harmless acts such as our cooking and eating food or even in walking or breathing, we cause suffering to other living entities, what to speak of other acts of deliberate harshness in speech & action, and our exploitation of Krishna's energies for selfish ends! Each of these acts bears consequent reactions.

Pious activities have their own good karmic reactions (viz. "punya") but punya, even volumes of it, does not negate or counteract the sinful reactions. One has to both enjoy the results of punya as well as suffer whatever sinful reactions are due them. A good example is the story of King Nrga found in the Krsna Book (Ch 64) When we see a so-called "bad" person flourishing, it is to be understood that they are simply reaping the results of some past piety.

If any activity involves some good or bad karma, are we to resign that suffering is inevitable? No, Bhagavad-Gita gives a solution to this predicament: all work should be done as a sacrifice to Vishnu for such work has no pious/sinful reactions and causes no bondage. (Please study BG 3.9-14, 4.31) There are also specific ways by which our past sinful reactions can be countered and the best of these methods is performing pure devotional service by taking shelter and careful guidance of pure devotees. You can find a more detailed discussion of this topic in

the Inquiries into Absolute - Digest 2 Q 12, Digest 4 Q2, Digests 117 and 120.  
(<http://vcal.iskcondc.org/cgi-bin/renderphilo.pl?ndx=132>)

You have raised the question that even after performing much devotional service, one may experience some suffering. But this suffering is not the same as that of an ordinary fruitive worker. What seems like suffering in the case of fully surrendered devotees like the Pandavas or Srila Prabhupada is in fact not at all suffering, but a type of transcendental exchange with the Lord. But even in the beginning stages, pure devotional service brings relief from all distress, as explained in NOD Ch1. You can find further discussion on this point in <http://vcal.iskcondc.org/cgi-bin/renderphilo.pl?digestname=digest53>

You may also find it insightful to go over the previous digests where I have addressed various topics and many such commonly raised questions.

#### **9.3.4) Understanding the passing away of Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami**

**Regarding the recent passing away of His Grace Tamal Krishna Maharaja, how should one interpret his leaving his body in an accident? Is this karma? Do pure devotees also have karma? What mental state would maharaja have been in? It has happened all of a sudden. Will he go back to Godhead? Why such a death? How does Krishna's statement that my devotee will not perish fit in this? Lastly I am convinced Maharaja went back to Godhead but how to preach in a congregation if asked these questions? Please forgive me for any offences committed due to the nature of my questions. All glories to His Grace Tamal Krishna Gosvami ki, Jai! (Digest 42.1)**

Tamal Krishna Gosvami's exceptional dedication and devotion to Srila Prabhupada's service is a well-known fact within ISKCON and he exhibited nothing but unswerving surrender to Srila Prabhupada and Krishna and unfailing service to the vaishnavas. He rendered incalculable volumes of service, with great resourcefulness, perseverance, and dynamism - all for the purpose of fulfilling Prabhupada's desires. While making no claim that he was a flawless and perfect person, there can be no question of Tamal Krishna Goswami's being completely protected by Krishna.

Those who have completely surrendered themselves to Krishna are no longer under the influence of the external energy of the Lord, the agent of karma, and that is Krishna's solemn promise. Such devotees are acting under the internal potency of Krishna, and even where there is some difficulty coming from the material energy, it is to be taken as a direct reminder by Krishna of their past misdeeds, directly orchestrated by Krishna for their further advancement in their devotion. Such events are NOT to be seen as enactments of the external material energy.

We should not misunderstand Krishna's protection as absolute material protection and this is indeed a point that devotees often tend to misunderstand in the initial excitement and idealism when coming in contact with Krishna consciousness philosophy. And this could be a wonderful opportunity for you to also address this point to congregation devotees! Does Krishna's promise to protect His devotee mean that a devotee's body will never dwindle or that it will never die? Or that devotees will never meet an accident or lose in a venture? No. Rather, a pure devotee is not affected by these external changes, being situated in their constitutional position and absorbed in their relationship with Krishna. Not that Srila Prabhupada's departure from his body was in any manner equal to TKG's, yet one may similarly question the apparently depleted condition of Srila Prabhupada's body towards the end of his physical presence with us

or the physical ailments he apparently suffered. Quite to the contrary, instead of diminishing his disciple's faith, these very symptoms enhanced their appreciation of the glories of a pure devotee, since Prabhupada's consciousness always remained transcendental right until the last moment unaffected by the external.

We cannot ascertain what Maharaja's mental state might have been, now why his departure happened precisely in the way it did. Krishna, being completely independent, has very special ways of dealing with His devotees, and whatever it may be, the devotee doesn't complain. But Krishna's promise for His devotee's ultimate victory will never be made in vain. In one sense, Tamal Krishna Maharaja's passing away was also glorious because it was within Navadvipa dhama, the holiest of dhams, in Puliya where Haridas Thakur performed many wonderful pastimes. As you may know, anyone who leaves their body in the Holy Dham is liberated. Also it was at a very auspicious hour during Brahma muhurta, and as Krishna says in Bg. Chapter 8, the yogis who leave their body at such auspicious moments are sure to reach Him. But factually even these are not important considerations in the case of an unalloyed bhakti yogi; wherever such a pure devotee is, that place is a holy dhama itself.

Also Prabhupada once assured his disciples: if a devotee gives his entire life to serve the mission of Lord Caitanya, then at the end of his life, even if by some adverse condition he is unable to remember Krishna, Prabhupada said, Lord Caitanya will personally appear in the mind of the devotee and take him back to Godhead.

We can conclude that Tamal Krishna Maharaja, much like Srila Prabhupada's statement regarding Jayananda Prabhu, has either attained the highest auspicious destination, or is engaged in some manner in the eternal confidential service to Srila Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya.

This incident has, among many other realizations, given us an opportunity to appreciate that the association of such great souls is very rare and invaluable and we should take the association of the exalted devotees amidst our presence with very seriously.

## 10. Krishna's forms, expansions, energies, and incarnations

### 10.1. Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan futures

#### 10.1.1) Brahman effulgence

The soul's evolution, or transmigration, is based on his actions. When a human being acts piously, he is eligible to ascend to the higher realms but once his pious credits are finished he has to come down again to the earthly-planets. (Cf. [BG 9.20-22](#)) Those who act impiously are forced to enter the lower hellish planets or the animal species and in this way conditioned souls undergo repeated birth and death, wandering within the material cosmos. But when one fully awakens his dormant relationship with God, he becomes eligible to quit the material world and return to the spiritual world for an eternal life.

I have come to understand from many spiritual readings and also from hearing after-death experiences of people that there is a huge divine light that is there up in the heavens and this Divine Light is God. If the truest form of God is only Divine Light / Pure Light, I wonder how something so impersonal as Light be God? Is Krishna a manifestation of this Divine Light? And how can this Light manifest Itself as Krishna, Rama, etc? How is this Light greater than all the suns in this universe, greater than all the minds in this material world, and how could It have created this wonderful creation - planets and universes? (Digest 126.2)

According to Vaishnava understanding, there are three phases of understanding the Absolute Truth - Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan. ([SB 1.2.11](#)) Brahman is the all-pervading impersonal aspect; Paramatma is the localized partial representation, perceived as the Supersoul within everyone's heart; and Bhagavan is the Original Personality of Godhead. Srila Prabhupada explains: these three divine aspects can be compared respectively to the sunshine, the sun's surface and the sun itself. One who studies the sunshine only is the preliminary student. One who understands the sun's surface is further advanced. And one who can enter into the sun planet and meet its presiding Deity is the highest. Similarly, the Brahman feature is only the glaring, all-pervasive effulgence of Bhagavan, and understanding the Bhagavan feature is the highest and fullest realization of God.

In other words, Krishna is not a manifestation of the Divine Light; conversely this Divine Light called Brahma-jyoti is the effulgence emanating from the transcendental person of Lord Krishna, and His Personal feature is the source of everything, there being nothing above and beyond Him (Cf. [BG 10.8, 7.7](#))

The Brahman effulgence emanates from the Supreme planet of Goloka, mentioned above, and within this effulgence all the spiritual planets are situated. The entire material cosmos is also situated in the Brahma-jyoti like a speck of cloud. Krishna declares in the Bhagavad-gita that He is the basis of the Brahman effulgence. ([BG 14.27](#)) Just as the source of all energy in our earth is a reflection of the sun, similarly all the suns in the material world are a mere reflection of this Effulgence.

### 10.1.2) Impersonal Brahman as the constitutional position of ultimate happiness?

We were studying the Modes of Material Nature and we had a question on [14.27](#): "And I am the basis of the impersonal Brahman, which is immortal, imperishable and eternal and is the constitutional position of ultimate happiness."

**Question 1: Why is Brahman (in this verse it seems clear that the Brahman referred to is the impersonal Brahman) referred to as the constitutional position of ultimate happiness? (Digest 118.1)**

Brahman is pure spiritual existence, quite unlike the inferior material energy. The nature of Brahman is sat (eternal existence) and is transcendental, whereas everything in the material realm is temporary and is colored by the three modes of nature. Krishna is thus making the point that it is only in the Brahman region, beyond the material sky, that one can find transcendental happiness. And He further asserts in this sloka that He is the basis or resting place of that Brahman. The Brahma-jyoti which pervades the entire spiritual sky is in fact the bodily effulgence of Krishna.

Impersonal Brahman is often likened to the rays of the sun: just as one with no access to the Sun God can at least perceive sunshine, similarly a beginning transcendentalist who has no information of the Personal feature of Absolute sees His shining effulgence as impersonal Brahman.

**Question 2: Also from the [previous verse](#), "One who engages in full devotional service, unflinching in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman.", it seems that the discussion is on one who has transcended the modes. So the question is that we read that only unmotivated, uninterrupted devotional service can completely satisfy the soul, and the object of such activity is Krishna - the personal aspect. But how come in this verse the impersonal brahman is stated as the constitutional position of ultimate happiness, especially for one who is on the platform of having transcended the modes of material nature? (Digest 118.1)**

In addition to above answer, you may also want to refer [BG 18.54](#), verse and purport. Attaining the Brahma-bhuta or 'brahma-bhuyaya' stage can be thought of as stepping into the threshold of transcendence, beyond the three modes of nature. It is only after attaining this stage that one can actually attain pure devotional service (mad-bhaktim labhate param). As Prabhupada explains in [18.54](#) purport, in order to serve the Supreme Brahman, one has to be on the platform of Brahman, just as in order to enter fire, one must have a body with the quality of fire.

And yes, only pure devotional service to the Personality of Godhead can completely satisfy the soul and sustain one on the brahma-bhuta stage, and it is both the means and the end. In other words, from the outset it is the most effective process to liberate us to that transcendental stage. But having attained the Brahman stage by whatever means, if one fails to take shelter of the Personality of Godhead, they are sure to fall back into the material pool. ([SB 10.2.32](#))

### 10.1.3) 'Impersonal Brahman' & 'Aum: The sound representation of Lord Krishna'

**In the Bhagavad-gita Krishna Himself says that He is 'aum', and in His impersonal feature He is Brahman. Why does ISKCON not give due regards to aum and impersonal Brahman, "nir vishesha shunya vadi"? [Editor's Note: This is part of the pranama mantra for Srila Prabhupada describing his mission to defeat the impersonalists]. Also, we have to be humbler than the grass, so why develop a superiority complex over other modes of worship of His potencies, which are He Himself (how can His potencies, lower or higher, be different from Him)? (Digest 12.4)**

Krishna says that He is the basis of the impersonal Brahman [Bg 14.27]. The brahmajyoti is the effulgence of His transcendental body and 'aum' is a sound representation of Himself. Vaishnavas never disrespect or disregard the Brahman feature or the omkara, rather they extol them, seeing them as identical to the Supreme, just as we also find in Srila Prabhupada's books. (Cf. purports to Bg. 7.8, 8.13, 9.17 etc)

However, a Vaishnava certainly takes objection to the impersonalist theory which maintains that the form of Krishna is a product of material transformation and that the Absolute Truth is the undifferentiated impersonal Brahman only (nirvishesha) or that in the ultimate issue there is no God and that everything is a void (shunya vadi). This is blasphemous to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and therefore a devotee cannot tolerate such an idea, and for the same reason Srila Prabhupada soundly defeated such ideas.

Regarding the second part of the question, the Supreme Lord and His energies are in one sense non-different, but there is certainly a difference between the energies and the Energetic, Who is the source and controller of all the energies? Everything in existence is ultimately an energy of the Supreme Lord, but as stated in Sri Ishopanishad, (Mantra 13) different results are obtained by worship of the Absolute Energetic and worship of the various energies. Therefore, Vaishnava devotees consider the Personality of Godhead, the reservoir of all the energies, to be the ultimate object of worship and devotion. Making such discrimination is not out of pride or to minimize the position of another, but just to see things in the proper perspective.

### 10.1.4) Are conscience and Paramatma, the same?

**I am wondering whether it is actually Paramatama prompting someone when he says that his conscience tells him that something is right or wrong. Is it correct to say that what one calls conscience is actually Paramatama? (Digest 113.1)**

Often, but not always. Supersoul sanctions everything that happens within the material energy, so we can say that "Not even a blade of grass moves without the sanction of the Supreme."

Conscience, moreover, implies an explicit direction towards goodness or even divinity, which most certainly emanates from Supersoul.

But some of the "inner directions" that we feel are far from Divine, or even goodness. For example, it is possible for someone to do something that is terrible, and to feel no sense of conscience. That absence of conscience, or the acceptance of some wrong to be right (ignorance, forgetfulness) is sanctioned by Paramatma, but that is not at all the personal wish or higher

direction of Paramatama.

On the other hand, one may be tuning into on an inner prompt that is NOT the divine direction of God, yet still think it to be so. In fact, the prompt may be harmful for the individual as well as for others.

That is not the function of conscience, but of ignorance.

#### **10.1.5) Where is Paramatma situated in living entities?**

**According to BG 18.61 the Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart. But then according to Bramha Samhita, Paramatma is also situated within every atom. "andantarasatam paramanu chayantarastam." Now if I say He is situated in my heart, is He not in my hand as He is already present within every atom? What does it mean when it is said that He is present within every atom. (Digest 60.1)**

The Lord is present within every atom in His all-pervasive localized feature. He is simultaneously seated in the region of the heart of the soul, specifically, along with the individual living entity occupying that body. In this particular form, He acts as the witness and permitter of the soul's activities in the material world. As the soul transmigrates through various species of life, suffering and enjoying the fruits of his actions in forgetfulness of the Lord, the Lord accompanies him through all species of life in His Supersoul feature as his constant well-wishing companion.

#### **10.1.6) Seeing the personal form of Lord Krishna beyond the impersonal by the mercy of Guru and Krishna**

**Is it by the mercy of Sri Krishna that those with Brahman realization are provided with `divine sunglasses', to see through His bright illumination to worship His personal feature? (Digest 128.1)**

It is by the combined mercy of Krishna and guru, wherein the guru is the conduit or the instrument of Krishna's mercy.

Your question is nicely discussed in Madhurya Kadambini, Chapter 1. Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur explores the question "How does bhakti arise?" After proposing a number of possibilities and then refuting each one, he concludes that "Bhakti arises when one receives bhakti from a merciful bhakta, who is empowered directly by Krishna to distribute Himself to others." In fact, this is what bhaktas who are laden with compassion do!!

Your question very much resembles [Mantra 15 of Sri Isopanisad](#). But where does the person offering the prayer get the notion to offer such a prayer, to begin with? From the descending mercy of a spiritual guide, teacher, or guru.

## 10.2. Completeness of the Lord

### 10.2.1) 'Fragmented yet unchanged Absolute' and 'Is completeness of the Lord an assumption?'

**Isn't perfectionism / completeness of God an assumption we make so that our picture of Him as "above the rest", leaves no room for debate? (Digest 47.2)**

I would like to make a clarification on this point: Yes, we can say God is "by definition" perfect, but it does not stop with just being an `assumption'. Such an assumption is a good place to start with, but as one progresses on the spiritual path, one can personally realize this to be a fact, and history recounts many such persons who have had that realization. In other words, God is not a 'concept' made by man to fill some gaps. God is a reality, and the Vedic scriptures describe that God is ultimately realized as a Person. It is knowledge that is \*meant\* to be directly perceived!

See BG 9.2

pratyakṣāvagamaṁ dharmyaṁ  
su-sukhaṁ kartum avyayam

#### TRANSLATION

This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion.

### 10.2.2) How to understand the incompleteness of material world and jivas, as they emanated from the Supreme?

**I have a query, which I want to humbly put forward to you for clarification. The Lord is supreme and complete, "purna". So anything emanating from `purna' will also be `purna'. Like 1+1=1, or 1-1=1. My question is - why are the jivas and material energy not complete or as powerful as the Lord? I know that this point is not linked with the `purna' analogy so the question is foolish. But still I am not able to convince myself. Can you kindly clarify this foolish doubt of mine? (Digest 45.1)**

This is an important question, thank you for asking it!

A common similar question to the one you are asking is "If God is perfect, then how is it possible that the material world and living entities, which have come from Him, be full of imperfections?" Your question is related, but slightly different: "Both living entities and material creation exhibit incompleteness. How is this possible, since they emanate from the Complete Whole, and are said to be themselves complete?"

Living entities and material nature, since they are connected to the Supreme source of everything, are not imperfect; they are all complete and perfect. But quantitatively we are infinitesimal (anu) while the Lord is infinite (vibhu), just as a drop of ocean water is to the ocean. Thus, our completeness is a dependent reality, whereas the Lord's completeness is a fully

independent reality. By carefully noting these two distinct types of 'completeness', you will find the answer to your puzzle or doubt.

We are complete, but dependently complete. To clarify this understanding, let us take an example that Srila Prabhupada often quoted, ie. the relationship between one's finger and the body. The finger is a complete functional unit, but it is complete only as long as it is connected to the body. It cannot detach itself from the body and somehow act as a separate entity, equal in completeness to the body; rather it becomes dysfunctional when so detached. In the same way the living entity, though never equal to the Lord, has been provided with everything he needs for complete and wholesome existence in relation to the Supreme. Imperfections and scarcity and all other types of incompleteness result from forgetfulness of that relationship with God, which in turn is caused by deliberate misuse of our tiny free will.

Similarly, the completeness of this created realm is experienced in fullness when we direct our free will completely in relation to God. More exactly, this realm becomes as good as Vaikuntha, if and only if our minute free will is connected in pure devotion to the will of the Supreme.

In summary, the concept of purna is to be understood in a qualitative sense. We are NOT quantitatively equal to God, as your question points out. But qualitatively, all emanations from the Absolute are of the same absolute nature, due to their being part of the absolute. When the tiny soul's consciousness is directed away from Krishna, recognition of his qualitative oneness with the Supreme becomes covered. Instead, he experiences illusion, ie the sense of incompleteness. Illusion becomes mistaken for reality, by this error of consciousness. Once again, we see that our 'completeness' is of a dependent nature. That is our spiritual identity.

Cf Sri Isopanisad, Invocation.

### 10.2.3) Completeness of the Lord and the material world

**Will there be always some souls in this material world or will there be a moment in eternity when there won't be any material world. For I heard that for the completeness of Lord Krishna there is need for material world. (Digest 7.6)**

The Lord is in fact full, and one part of that fullness is the existence of His external energy. However, Krishna can withdraw that external energy and keep it in a dormant condition and still maintain His fullness. There is also a clear statement found in Srila Prabhupada's teaching, that there will be souls eternally existing in this material world if they so choose to remain here. There is no necessity that they must return to the spiritual world. Were that to be the case, then free will would not be a reality, and this would be a fundamental contradiction in Krishna conscious understanding.

### 10.2.4) Completeness of God and jivas

**What is dependently complete? If there are two things like dependently complete and independently complete - what is incomplete? (Digest 47.1)**

Here we are talking about completeness with respect to an object's purpose. For example, an earthen pot is said to be 'complete' if it looks and works the way its designer intended it to be. If it has a dent or a hole that makes it unfit to store water, it is incomplete or imperfect. I would

not call it imperfect because it is unable to contain the Atlantic ocean, because it is not intended to do so!

The same goes with the example of the finger in relation to the body. This is just a crude analogy, and the earthen pot is just an inert material object.

But by the same principle, the living entity, by his constitution, is a minute fragment of the Absolute Whole and his purpose is to enjoy in loving relation with the Supreme Whole by serving Him. God expanded Himself so that He could enjoy loving relationships with His parts and parcels (eko bahu syam). And for this purpose, the living entity is completely endowed with all that he needs.

An individual soul may not be omniscient, omnipotent or the supreme controller of everything and everyone else, but that does not interfere with the soul's completeness.

#### 10.2.5) Completeness of God and jivas

**In that case God is perfect /complete by definition and we as beings molded by the perfect entity should again be perfect by definition - then why aren't we? (Digest 47.3)**

In addition to above, I would like to add this: the Isopanishad mantra we are discussing (Invocation Mantra, Isopanishad) essentially says this: from the complete Whole, many complete units have emanated, and yet the complete Whole remains unchanged. Thus, there are two distinct categories here: the whole and the units. We refer to these two identities as Paramatma (Supersoul) and atma (soul). While affirming both of their 'completeness', "purna", the Upanishad is NOT indicating that they are equal in all respects.

Rather, the purport of the mantra is this: the Absolute is complete, and from the Absolute many entities have emanated - marginal entities like us, and the material energy. Now that so many entities have emanated, the Absolute has not become reduced in any way. This is what we shortly referred to by saying 1-1=1.

The minute units are perfect, but minutely perfect. This goes to say that although we perceive imperfections, one should not conclude that living entities are all imperfect; all such imperfections and short-comings can be overcome as soon as one realizes one's real identity in relation with the Absolute.

I hope this clarifies your questions!

### *10.3. General questions: Krishna's forms, expansions, energies, and incarnations*

#### 10.3.1) Form of God

**When someone says God is Nirakar (formless) and when they say that God has suddenly became man and after that slowly the men degenerated. How to express that God is like us with a spiritual body, that men and women are His creation and not that He has Himself become men and women. Please explain briefly. (Digest 8.4)**

Krishna resolves all doubts about His nature in the Bhagavad-gita where He says that the idea that He was impersonal before and has later assumed this form as Krishna, is incorrect. (Bg 7.24) The form of the Supreme Lord is called sac-cid-ananda vigraha, which means that His form (vigraha) is eternal and has not come into being at some point in time. The term Nirakar (formless) only negates the idea that His form is within the scope of our mundane conception. As far as the living entities are concerned, both human beings as well as other species, Krishna says that He is our Father, and He is the supreme creator. (Cf. Bg 14.4) Another way to explain this is if we were 'God' at some point of time, then please consider: why did we degrade? Why is that we are suffering, and covered by illusion? This would mean that illusion is greater than God! Why is that we cannot just remember that we are supreme and immediately resolve all problems? Bhagavad-gita teaches that our true identity is that we are fragmental parts and parcels of God (Bg 15.7). We are His dependents, equal to Him in quality but not in quantity.

### 10.3.2) Expansions of Lord Krishna

**Can you tell me where I can find the complete chart of expansions starting from Lord Krishna -> Sankarsana and so on. (Digest 100.2)**

Srimad Bhagavatam, [1.2.23 purport](#) gives a condensed list of the catur-vyuha expansion. (It also partly addresses your first question) The actual description of the different levels of expansion is quite complex and presented in great detail in later cantos of Srimad Bhagavatam, and [Caitanya Caritamrita](#). There is also a detailed summary description of the different categories of expansion from Vishnu found in [SB 1.3.5 purport](#).

### 10.3.3) 'Expansions of Krsna' & 'concept of time in the spiritual world'

**I have a question about origins. We say Krishna is the source or origin of all incarnations and also all living entities. From Krishna expands Vishnu and all the other expansions. Does this mean there was some point in time when there were no expansions? We say in the spiritual world there is no time or time is conspicuous by its absence. But as soon as we say origin, it looks like the time factor is being introduced. So what does it mean to say origin in terms of spiritual matters? (Digest 59.1)**

The various expansions of Krishna, including the Vishnu expansions as well as the living entities, are described as being \*co-eternal\* with Krishna. It is the limitation of language, which is unavoidable, as our acarya Bhaktivinode Thakura writes, to speak of spiritual events using worldly language, eg describing Krishna as the `origin' of these eternal expansions. Yet Krishna is their source (janmady asya yathah) while the others are emanations.

Krishna's expanding Himself in this way is not a chronological event, but "an ontological event". In other words, it is not that at one point in time there was just Krishna, and after some time lapse the other manifestations of the spiritual world came into being. Such a description would be appropriate for material events. In this case, the term 'origin' or 'source of emanation' in spiritual manifestations indicates a transcendental relationship between two spiritual entities. The Absolute Whole refers to Krishna with all His transcendental expansions and paraphernalia.

The position of Krishna as the 'source of all spiritual emanations' is beyond the grasp of our conditioned minds, accustomed and limited to conceive of events only in a relative time-

sequential way. Our material mind and intelligence are in themselves products within material time, and thus have a beginning and end. These faculties cannot conceive of something that lies beyond the purview of time. This understanding can be realized by the soul through the cultivation of bhakti yoga.

**10.3.4) 'Vaikunta planets for the various forms of the Lord' & 'why was the 'form of Lord Narashinga dev' never seen by even the Goddess of fortune?'**

**It is stated that all the Vishnu forms are eternal. Are there separate lokas for the Kurma, Matsya, Varaha, Narasimha, Rishabhadev, Parasurama forms? If so why does the Bhagavatam say that the form of Narasimha was never seen by anybody before? And also what about the form of Lord Caitanya? If He is eternal, where is His planet? (Digest 17.3)**

Yes, there are innumerable Vaikuntha planets and the various forms of the Lord preside in each of those planets. Srimad Bhagavatam describes that when Lord Narasimhadev appeared even the Goddess of Fortune had never seen that form before, as one of the Lord's lila-avatars. This refers to the fiery form of half-man and half-lion that the Lord exhibited to kill Hiranyakasipu. Lord Narasimha's form as Lord Narayana in Vaikuntha, exhibiting four arms holding the symbols of Visnu, exists in the spiritual world.

Our Vaishnava acaryas have described that within the innermost whorls of the Goloka Vrindavana planet, which is shaped like a lotus, is situated the spiritual counterpart of Sri Navadvipa dhama and Lord Caitanya eternally manifests His pastimes there.

**10.3.5) Do all the incarnations of the Lord exist in the spiritual world in the same form in which they descend?**

**Avatar means to descend. That means all avatars exist in various Vaikunta lokhas. Do all avatars exist in the form in which they descend. For example does Lord Narasimhadev exist in the form in which we worship him, or He exists as a four armed Vishnu form. If Vishnu form then why is it that Lord Krishna and Rama are in the same form in which they descend? (Digest 7.10)**

Again you have assumed something incorrectly. We know that the goddess of fortune, had never before seen the form of Lord Nrsingadev. This means that He exists in the spiritual world in a four-armed form, identified with the four symbols of Visnu held in a particular sequence. Likewise, when Ram returned to the spiritual region, His Visnu form was that form by which others knew Him. When Krishna descends, we also know that He manifested His four armed form in the prison house of Kamsa, but then His original svayam bhagavan Krishna form was manifest in Gokul.

### 10.3.6) Difference between principal avatars

**If we see a difference between the principal avatars, isn't this considered an offense? (Digest 142.2)**

There is no offense in considering these transcendental distinctions between the different features of the One Supreme Lord, in the light of scriptures, as long as there is no intended disregard, mundane judgment or putting down of particular feature of the Lord or His devotees. The essence of Lord Caitanya's teachings is to appreciate the simultaneous oneness and difference in these transcendental varieties.

As we see in the dealings of Lord Caitanya with devotees such as Vyenkata Bhatta or Murari Gupta, even while discussing differences and glorifying the supremacy of Goloka Vrindavan, Lord Caitanya offers immense respect and acceptance for all the different moods of worship of the Supreme Lord, according to the intrinsic mood of the devotee, and there is no display of mundane party divisions.

### 10.3.7) Attachment to a particular form of the Lord

**I understand that it's blasphemous to say that Lord Vishnu is different from Lord Krishna. Then, how is it that a lot of ISKCON devotees say that they want to go only to Goloka Vrindavan and not to Vaikuntha? Even when Srila Prabhupada was asked to describe his spiritual master, he replied, 'What can I say, he was a Vaikuntha man.' (Digest 12.5)**

In very advanced stages of devotion, a devotee becomes exclusively attached to a particular feature of the Supreme Lord. For example, Sri Hanumanji is such a staunch devotee of Lord Rama that although he respects Lord Narayana or adores the devotion of the gopis towards Krishna, his only worshipful Lord and master is Lord Rama. Such exclusive attachment to the form of Krishna, Rama or any other form naturally develops in a very advanced stage of devotion.

Lord Caitanya taught that the highest object of worship is that of svayam bhagavan Krishna in His Vrindavan feature, which is full of sweetness, and so naturally His devotees follow in His footsteps and aspire for unalloyed devotion to the form of Krishna. But while cultivating such an attachment, we should also understand that all of the forms of the Supreme Lord are equally worthy of our devotion and worship and are beyond any mundane discrimination. Even in the pastimes of Lord Caitanya, we find that the Lord was very pleased and encouraged to experience the exclusive devotion of some devotees of Lord Ramachandra and of Lord Narasimha. Thus a devotee's mood of attachment to Krishna does not to minimize Vaikuntha; rather, it increases one's own attachment to the Vrindavana feature of the Lord's pastimes.

### 10.3.8) Virata-rupa: material or spiritual?

**In the 3rd Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, Srila Prabhupada regularly says that the virat-rupa is a material manifestation. Yet in some places it is said that it is manifested from the Lord's internal potency (3.6.35). I thought the internal potency was completely spiritual. Can you please clarify this? (Digest 164.1)**

Material energy, or maya, which bewilders all conditioned souls, is simply a partial expansion of the Lord's spiritual energy or yogamaya. Krishna thus refers to this deluding material energy as "this Divine energy of Mine". (see BG 7.14)

The relationship between these two energies is elaborately explained in the description of how Yogamaya becomes Durgadevi and bewilders Kamsa, as follows. In the Narada Pancaratra it is stated that the Supreme Personality has one potency, Yogamaya, who in her partial expansion becomes Durga or Mahamaya and bewilders the conditioned souls. As Yogamaya she transfers the pregnancy of Devaki to Rohini, bewildering all parties concerned into thinking that Devaki had a miscarriage and that Rohini's son is Balarama. Then she appears as the daughter of Yasoda, then she is transferred by Vasudeva to the side of Devaki, then presenting herself before Kamsa as Mahamaya, for Kamsa can have no access to see or touch Yogamaya. [see Appendix to SB Canto 10 Ch 1]

The Brahma-samhita describes "chayeva yasya bhuvanani bibharti durga": The external potency Maya, is of the nature of the "shadow" of the cit potency, and is worshiped by all people as Durga. [BS. 5.44] The mahamaya-sakti, however, is a partial expansion of yogamaya, who serves to keep unqualified jivas from directly confronting and offending Krishna, and thus she is called the covering potency. In conclusion, bewildering the conditioned souls (indirectly thru her shadow expansion) and liberating the devotees (directly, thru the agency of devotional service to Krishna) are both functions belonging to Yogamaya.

Thus the virat rupa, although a temporary manifestation and not one of the Lord's eternal forms in the spiritual sky and therefore can be understood as material, it can still be considered as manifested from the Lord's internal potency in the above sense - as a form exhibited for the conditioned souls.

Srila Prabhupada sums this up in the following purport quoted below, drawing somewhat of a parallel with the arca vigraha of the Lord within the material world, that Krishna's manifestation in these forms is the inconceivable performance by the internal potency of the Lord. "In spite of their material touch, such forms of the Lord as the virat and arca are all non-different from His eternal form as Lord Krishna." (SB 3.6.4)

### 10.3.9) Understanding S.B. 3.8.12: color of 'Lord Vishnu's body' and 'the aggregate living entities'

**In Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.8.12 (page 353), translation it says, "He saw His transcendental body as bluish." Since it is capitalized H doesn't it mean Vishnu? In the purport it says, "Due to this polluted mentality and due to material sins, the aggregate combination of living entities appeared to be bluish." Isn't Vishnu bluish always? (Digest 16.7)**

Yes, Vishnu is always bluish, transcendently bluish. The purport indicates that the aggregate living entities appeared bluish, also. This material coloration was due to their fruitive activities (as in the state of ignorance, thus bluish).

**10.3.10) 'Does Ksiryodakashayi Vishnu has a spiritual body?' & 'does Lord Brahma has a supersoul?'**

**Does Ksiryodakashayi Vishnu also have a spiritual body? Does He exist in Lord Brahma also? (Digest 2.6)**

Yes. He enters as the Supersoul within the heart of every embodied living entity, including Brahmaji and is unaffected by material nature.

**10.3.11) Lord Ananta Sesa**

**Why is Ananta Sesa "a many hooded serpent?" Serpents are from the lower planetary system, and are synonymous with "evil". What explanation can be given for this? (Digest 17.2)**

The form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (as well as His plenary expansions, or Vishnu expansions) is all-transcendental and fully pure. It is not to be considered as a mundane form. For example, Lord Krishna and Lord Rama appeared among the human beings as one of them, but does that mean that they were contaminated with the frailties of a mundane human being? The answer is no. Likewise, The Supreme Lord appeared in the form of a hog or wild boar in His Varaha incarnation. The hog is considered to be a very abominable species of life by material calculation, but when the Lord appeared as the transcendental Varaha, His beauty was unexcelled and all the demigods and Vedas offered prayers to Him as the purifier of the three worlds! In the same way, we can understand the form of Ananta sesa as a "serpent". It is not a mundane form, like any other serpent but is all transcendental.

**10.3.12) Lord Rama's appearance**

**I saw some places on the Internet that say Lord Rama manifested in the 5th mahayuga, some say 24th mahayuga, and some say this current (28th) mahayuga of this manvantara. Is there a scriptural reference that says which mahayuga Lord Rama was born? (Digest 187.2)**

Lord Rama is a lila-avatara, and appears in every Treta yuga. Srila Prabhupada confirms Lord Rama's appearance in the most recent Treta yuga while recounting the history of Bhagavad-Gita in BG 4.1 purport - "In the beginning of the millennium known as Treta-yuga (Note: of the current yuga cycle), this science of the relationship with the Supreme was delivered by Vivasvan to Manu. Manu, being the father of mankind, gave it to his son Maharaja Ikshvaku, the king of this earth planet and forefather of the Raghu dynasty, in which Lord Ramachandra appeared."

### 10.3.13) Appearance of Lord Jagannatha

**It will be very kind enough of you if you let me know about the appearance of Lord Jagannath. When did He appear and what was the purpose of His appearing in that form? (Digest 71.1)**

The manifestation of Lord Jagannath is transcendently wonderful. His appearance in that form is described by Jaimini Rsi in Skanda purana to an assembly of sages. The story of King Indradyumna who became the first worshiper of Lord Jagannath, and his life's expression of devotion, is in itself a great delight. In short, the king was exceedingly eager to see the form of Lord Vishnu on this earth, and at the end of a sequence of miraculous events, the Supreme Lord had revealed through His representatives Narada and Lord Siva that He would appear in a `daru', a wooden log, and that Vishvakarma would carve His form from that transcendental log. Vishvakarma had stipulated that he not be intruded upon for 21 days during the carving, but when there was a break in the chiseling sound, the greatly anxious king hastily came into the room where the Deities were being carved, only to find what he thought to be unfinished forms of the Deities. The king was in utter despair, thinking that he had committed a great offense. But Sri Narada Muni pacified him by explaining that it was the Lord's transcendental will to manifest in that particular form.

Then Narada narrated the following pastime of how the Lord had originally manifested this extraordinary form that was now before the king.

Once the residents of Dwaraka became very eager to hear about the childhood pastimes of Krishna in Vrindavana. They knew how attached their Lord was to Vraja and its residents, but they did not know much about His pastimes there.

So they inquired from Rohinidevi, the mother of Balarama and one of the wives of Vasudeva, who happened to stay in Vrindavana with mother Yasoda during the entire childhood of Krishna-Balarama. Rohini was of course very happy to oblige, but there was one concern: if Krishna happened to overhear the glories of the love of the residents of Vrindavana, His feelings and transcendental emotions of separation from them would become attract the attention of Krishna to such a degree that His ecstasies would prevent Rohini from completing her narration of Krishna's Vraja-lila. Therefore Subhadra devi, the sister of Krishna, volunteered to guard the door and keep Krishna from entering the room where Rohini's Vraja-katha was taking place. But as Rohini devi started recounting the wonderful pastimes and the depth of intimacy in the loving exchanges between Krishna and the Vrajavasis, Subhadra devi became stunned. Just then Krishna and Balarama came and stood on either side of her hearing these narration and They too became stunned. Their eyes became wide, and in a mood of indescribable ecstasy, Their hands and feet retracted within Their bodies. This is the form of Lord Jagannath - Krishna in Dwaraka, enraptured and overwhelmed in thinking about the unrepayable and intense selfless love of His Vraja-bhaktas.

Narada who happened to be there also requested the Lord to please manifest this most wonderful form for the benefit of the entire world, and thus Lord Jagannatha unfolded the pastime of manifesting in that form to Indradyumna in Sri Jagannatha Puri. This amazing form of the Lord is said to indicate that even though He does not appear to have hands, the Supreme Lord accepts the offerings of His devotees, and even without feet, He comes at once to protect His

devotees. Lord Jagannatha is famous as most merciful even to the most fallen and is very affectionate to His devotees.

### **10.3.14) Hyagriva incarnation**

#### **Who is Hyagriva avatar? Are there more than one? (Digest 55.2)**

There is not much detail about the Hayagriva Avatara in the Bhagavatam. He killed Madhu and Kaitabha when they tried to steal the Vedas from Brahma. The story is told differently in different Puranas. In the Matsya Purana Madhu and Kaitabha confront Brahma and tell him that they are supreme and that they would cover the entire universe with passion and ignorance. Brahma replies that Visnu would kill them. Visnu then just grabs them by extending His arms right from the place on His couch, has a short talk with them and then squeezes them to death. In the Matsya this Visnu form is not described as Hayagriva. The Bhagavatam, however, mentions Hayagriva or Hayasirsa at least twice in connection with the killing of Madhu and Kaitabha. One recension of the Ramayana tells that Madhu and Kaitabha were born from the ear-wax of Maha-Visnu.

While the Bhagavatam does not mention the killing of Madhu and Kaitabha in connection with Hayagriva described in SB 2.7.11, this is nevertheless the passage that Rupa Gosvami chose for his description of the Hayagriva Avatara in his Laghubhagavatamrta: "He (Hayagraiva), having appeared from the sacrificial fire, killed the two Danavas Madhu and Kaitabha. Thereafter He returned the Vedas to the Lord of the goddess of speech (Vagisvari)."

There seems to be only one Hayagriva Avatara.

### **10.3.15) Purpose of Lord Buddha's appearance**

**It is said that Buddha is one of the incarnations of Lord Krishna. If this is so, how is it that Buddha has proposed a totally different path for salvation rather than Bhakti Marga? (Digest 22.4)**

The purpose of the incarnation of Buddha is described in Srimad Bhagavatam. During the time of Buddha, people in general were atheistic, and were misusing the Vedas for promoting violence and indulging in unrestricted killing of animals and meat-eating. In order to curb these malpractices and out of compassion for the innocent animals, Lord Buddha advised the people to reject the Vedas and taught sub-religious principles such as morality and non-violence which are the preliminary steps for spiritual realization. Thus he bewildered the faithless atheists to place their faith on Him. (Cf. Bhag 1.3.24).

## 10.4. Lord Krishna

### 10.4.1) Yuga cycle of Lord Krishna's appearance

**I have read in the Krishna Book that in the 31st cycle of the Vaivasvata Manu, the Dvapara-yuga changes places with Treta-yuga due to the appearance of Lord Krishna. I would like to know how Krishna appears in the other cycles of other Manus. (Digest 205.3)**

Lord Krishna appears in His original form as the Original Supreme Personality of Godhead only once in a day of Brahma - this is when He performs His most attractive and intimate Vrindavana pastimes, displaying very confidential loving exchanges with the Vrajavis as a child and youth. This occurs during the 28th yuga cycle of Vaivasvata Manu (not 31st). In every other Dvapara yuga, a plenary expansion of Krishna, the four-handed Vasudeva-Krishna appears.

### 10.4.2) Reason for Lord Krishna's appearance

**What does Lord Krishna have to do with His lila (pastimes) with this samsar (material world), where almost everyone is envious of Krishna? Does the Lord have anything to enjoy in this material world or He simply comes to teach us out of His kindness? (Digest 2.20)**

The Lord is atmarama, fully self-satisfied, and always enjoying His own internal potency in the spiritual world. He has nothing to enjoy in this material world, but He comes out of His great compassion to not only teach us, but by displaying His wonderful spiritual pastimes, to attract the forgetful souls to the spiritual world and to His association.

### 10.4.3) Reason for Krishna appearing in His original form in this kali yuga

**As I know, Lord Krishna appears in this material world with His original form (human-like form) in Kali-yuga. My question is why the Lord chooses to reveal Himself in His original form especially in this yuga? (Digest 39.3)**

The incarnations of the Lord appear in a scheduled manner in each of the four yugas, throughout the course of the history of the universe. As Krishna explains in Bhagavad-gita, He descends millennium after millennium to reestablish religious principles, and so on. Why a particular incarnation appears at a particular time is difficult to explain; He does so according to His own sweet will. The Lord appears in order to fulfill some mission, but above that He appears for His own pleasure, according to His Supreme Will. Prahlada Maharaja explains this in his prayer to Lord Nrsingadev: "One may consider that the Lord appeared in that fearful form to protect His devotee Prahlad, or to keep the boons of Brahma intact, but factually it is for Your own pleasure that You have performed this pastime." So we understand that Krishna's appearance in His original form before the beginning of Kali yuga, or more precisely at the end of Dvapara yuga once in a day of Brahma, as being according to His own sweet will.

**10.4.4) 'Lord Krishna: an avatar of Lord Vishnu or the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself?' & 'is Lord Balarama, an incarnation of Lord Krishna?'**

**I have gone through several websites for 'DASAVATAR' (ten incarnations), and there is a confusion whether Lord Krishna is an avatar or Sri Hari (the original Supreme Lord) Himself Who came down on earth. At a few sites Krishna is shown as an avatar and Balarama also as an avatar of Ananta Sheshanaag (also Lakshmana); while on some others Balarama is presented as avatar and they treat Krishna as Sri Hari Himself, the original Avtari, not an avatar. (Digest 39.1)**

The Gaudiya Vaishnava understanding, as presented in the conclusions of Srimad Bhagavatam, Brahma Samhita etc., is that Krishna is non-different from Lord Hari, and He is the source of all other incarnations. (Cf. Srimad Bhagavatam 1.3.23,26,28)

It is described that Lord Krishna expands Himself into many equally powerful forms. Lord Balarama is the first expansion of Krishna. Through Lord Balarama, He then expands into the catur-vyuha, viz., Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, and from the catur-vyuha expands Narayana, who in turn expands into innumerable other plenary expansions such as Rama, Narasinga, Vamana, Janardana etc. (Note that the incarnations of Krishna are not limited to ten in number, although we often speak of Dasavatara, famous from the song of Jayadeva Gosvami). All of these different plenary portions preside eternally in one of the innumerable Vaikuntha planets in the spiritual world. Sri Brahma Samhita explains that this is like lighting many candles from one source candle, and that original source is Lord Krishna, Govinda. (Cf. Brahma Samhita 46, 39, 47, 48).

Furthermore, for the affairs of material creation Lord Narayana manifests as Maha-Vishnu. Krishna is not directly involved with the creation and maintenance of the material world, but Maha-Vishnu is in-charge. Thus when the Supreme Lord Krishna or any of His plenary portions descend from the spiritual sky, the incarnation emanates from Vishnu; thus, in that sense, it is right to say that all the incarnations come from Vishnu. (Cf. Krsna book, Intro.) And some devotees of the Lord worshiping His Vishnu feature worshiping Him as such, an incarnation coming through Vishnu. Thus Krishna is also included as an avatar sometimes, because He descends by His causeless mercy (avatar = one who descends); yet He is distinguished from the avatars as the avatari.

**10.4.5) Is Lord Krishna, an avatara of Lord Vishnu?**

**I understand Lord Vishnu comes from Krishna who is the source of all sources, but in Hinduism this conception is not there. My question is why is that? How do they scripturally come to believe that Krishna is the 8th incarnation of Lord Vishnu. I did a search on google "define: Krishna" and was quite shocked at the different meanings of Krishna, but the general one that came out was that Krishna is an avatar or incarnation of Lord Vishnu and was wondering how that conception has come about and where in the Vedas is this stated and misunderstood. (Digest 132.1)**

For affairs of the material creation, the Personality of Godhead expands Himself as the purusha avatars. Maha-Vishnu, a plenary portion of Lord Krishna, is the original cause of the material creation, from Him Garbhodakasayi Vishnu expands, and then Kshirodakasayi Vishnu.

Generally, all the incarnations appearing within this material universe are described as being plenary expansions from Kshirodakasayi Vishnu. But we also know that all these various forms of the Lord are existing eternally in the spiritual world and their descent to the material world is called avatar (literally, one who descends) In other words when the Lord descends, the incarnation emanates from or through Kshirodakasayi Vishnu.

Thus in Srimad Bhagavatam, we hear the purusha avatar being described as the seed of all the multifarious incarnations within this universe. (SB 1.3.5) Bhagavatam then goes on to describe the various incarnations of Vishnu (SB 1.3.6-25), among which are included Krishna and Balarama. However, right after this list, it is explained that although Krishna appears to be one of the avatars, He is in fact the Original Personality of Godhead, and that all other incarnations are His plenary expansions: Krishnas tu bhagavan svayam (SB 1.3.28) Krishna is the complete whole, and when He descends, all plenary expansions and incarnations, including Maha Vishnu, descend along with Him in His transcendental body.

Thus, in one sense, it is not entirely wrong to say that Krishna is an avatar of Vishnu, and in fact some Vaishnavas understand Krishna as such, being most attracted to the reverential worship of Vishnu or Narayana as the supreme form of worship. However, based on scriptural conclusions of Srimad Bhagavatam, we understand Lord Krishna to be svayam Bhagavan, or the summum bonum.

Another popular source, which many believe to be describing Krishna as the eighth avatar of Vishnu, is Srila Jayadeva Gosvami's Dasavatara stotra; yet here again we find that after listing ten of the most prominent among the innumerable incarnations of the Lord, the poet concludes his composition with an ode to Lord Krishna who appears in these ten forms.

You can also refer to our previous discussion on this question at [this link](#).

#### **10.4.6) Similarities and differences between Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna**

##### **What are the similarities and differences between Vishnu and Krishna? (Digest 148.1)**

Vishnu is a plenary expansion of Krishna or Lord Narayana for the purpose of material creation. He is the same as Krishna in the sense that all plenary expansions are equally powerful as Krishna. In that sense, all the expansions such as Narayana in Vaikuntha are called 'Vishnu tattva' as opposed to the jiva-tattva or the miniscule living entities.

The difference is that Vishnu is worshiped in awe and reverence while the pastimes of Krishna with His pure devotees are very intimate and sweet. Srila Prabhupada compared Lord Vishnu as God in an official mood, and Krishna as God at home -- just as a king may be venerated, worshiped and obeyed by all citizens including great ministers, while at his own home the king acts subordinate to his beloved children, while both are the same person, exhibiting different aspects of their relationships. Similarly Krishna becomes subjugated by the intimate loving dealings of His pure devotees, as we see in the Damodara-lila and other pastimes.

The Nectar of Devotion (Ch 21) gives a list of 64 transcendental qualities of Krishna. It is explained that all living entities can have upto 50 qualities in minute degrees of perfection and Lord Shiva upto 55 qualities. Lord Vishnu has 60 of these qualities unlimitedly in their fullness whereas svayam bhagavan Krishna alone has four special unique qualities not manifested even in Vishnu viz. His superexcellent beauty, the attraction of His flute playing, the wonderful varieties of His intimate pastimes (such as childhood pastimes) and His being surrounded many devotees

endowed with wonderful love of God. (For further details please refer to [Digest 132](#) & [Digest 39](#))

**10.4.7) 'Why is Krishna's body bluish-blackish?' & 'reason and logic for Krishna's actions'**

**Why is Krishna's body (Krishna) bluish-blackish?**

We often get these sorts of questions and the answer generally given is "Well, He's God, therefore He can be any color He wants to be." But this isn't so satisfying. With the same logic, the question "Why does Krishna descend to the material world?" could be answered "Well, He's God, therefore He can go anywhere He wants to go." I doubt that answer is going to take us back to Godhead since Krishna gives us the promise that one who understands His appearance and activities will never take birth again. (BG 4.9)

So my question also implies that since Krishna has a personality, wouldn't it be sensible for Him to have a reason for choosing to be a certain color? Maybe it is His favorite color. In other words, can we expect every single action of Krishna's to have some logic or reason, even if it is something silly or extraordinary according to His personality. Does Krishna ever do something without any real reason?

The most satisfying answer I have found for this question is that the color of Krishna's body (Krishna) is the color of madhurya rasa, the color of pure love. So can you confirm this and also perhaps elaborate if we have such information. (Digest 125.1)

Krishna is unlimited and His actions are indeed unfathomable by our limited intelligence. The limited living entity can never FULLY understand the unlimited, but we can understand to the extent He reveals Himself and empowers us to understand. Whatever we do know, we can know through the medium of revealed scriptures and saintly persons. As Krishna recommends in [Bg 4.9](#), it is important for us to understand the divine nature of His appearance and activities, but the process of such understanding is not through our mental exertion, but by hearing in Disciplic succession. ([Bg 4.2](#) & [4.34](#)) Such hearing, with an attitude of submission, service and great faith, will enable us to actually understand (tattvatah) and thus go back to Godhead; theoretical or intellectual understanding will not.

In the case of why Krishna descends to the material world, He does state some specific reasons ([Bg 4.8](#)) and there are further elaborate discussions on this topic (for instance see prayers by Queen Kunti, [SB 1.8.30-35](#)) It is certainly important for us to be eager to get an insight into these reasons but equally important is the understanding that ultimately He is not bound by any of these reasons. As revealed in Prahlad's prayers and other places, the Lord actually appears for His own pleasure and to please His devotees. ([SB 7.9.13](#))

Even great mahajans like Bhismedeva admit that no one can fully understand Krishna's plans. ([SB 1.9.16](#)) Likewise, great devotees like Krishnadas Kaviraj Gosvami repeatedly state the impossibility of penetrating into the meaning of Lord Caitanya's pastimes. This is to say that we may not expect to be able to understand the logic and reason behind everyone of the Lord's actions; trying to do so would be presumptuous and also unnecessary. Devotees are happy to appreciate the fact that their Lord is completely independent & merciful, and simultaneously eager to understand the confidential reasons behind His actions as much as guru, sadhu and sastra reveal to them, which they fully accept without further doubts.

As for the reason behind Krishna's having a bluish complexion, here is a very beautiful explanation given in Krishna Bhakti Ratna Prakasa by Raghava Gosvami wherein it is said:

atha kaiscid uktam. yadi sva-prakaso lila-rasa-mayah paramatma-svarupas tasmin katham  
syama-varnatvam sarvatra prasiddham. yatha srutau rupam na vedyam na ca bindunadah ity adi.  
tad aha

syamabhatvam vidhatte yat  
sarva-varno 'tra liyate  
nityam ca prabhavaty eva  
kalo 'smin naiva vidyate

**Translation:**

At this point some may ask: Why is it that the form of the Personality of Godhead, which He manifests only by His own wish, and which is made of the sweetness of transcendental pastimes, is famous everywhere for its dark complexion?"

Part of the answer to this question may be found in the statement of the Sruti-sastra: "No one can understand even a drop of the Lord's transcendental form." Aside from this it is also said: "He eternally manifests the color syama, within which all colors rest. His complexion is not the material color black."

Thus from the last verse we see it says "sarva-varno" which means that the colour syama is a special color, which is like a composite of all colours. And we notice that if we combine all colours we get a colour which is blackish, but not black.

**10.4.8) Why does Lord Krishna have multiple senses, if one sense can perform the function of all others?**

**If Krishna can perform His hearing with His eyes, for example, then what is the purpose of His having eyes and also ears? Do jivas have the same capabilities? (Digest 184.1)**

The ability that Krishna can perform the function of any sense through any other sense organ is an indication that He is Absolute, that His body is not compartmentalized like ours but Absolute, Omnipotent and Independent. If we lose our eyesight, for instance, we would become dependent and cannot see anymore. But Krishna is not dependent like that, He does not need a particular bodily part to perform a particular action - every limb of His body is absolutely potent and complete as His Original Self -- purna. Another way of saying the same thing is that Krishna is not different from His body and His different bodily limbs are non-different from His Self.

Although Absolute and undifferentiated, yet simultaneously Krishna's spiritual body is full of variegatedness. He has variegated senses simply for His enjoyment, not because He is dependent on them for different functionalities. The common mistake that students of transcendental science often make in trying to understand the Absolute Realm with the help of their limited intelligence is that when they hear descriptions such as this of Omnipotence and all-pervasiveness, they imagine that the Absolute Truth to be some form of homogenized, uniform Energy without any form or features and without any variegated senses. These are the impersonalists whom Krishna declares in Bhagavad-Gita to be mistaken in their understanding. Krishna is the Supreme Enjoyer and as the saying goes, "Variety is the mother of enjoyment".

The inconceivable potencies of His spiritual body are meant for His enjoyment, and His Spiritual abode is full of variety for the same reason.

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura points out that although the Lord can perform any function with any one of His senses, in His transcendental pastimes as Sri Krishna He generally sees with His eyes, touches with His hands, hears with His ears and so on. Thus He behaves like the most beautiful and charming young cowherd boy. (Cf. SB 10.14.2 p) And whenever He uses His limbs in extraordinary ways, that is also to enhance His enjoyment and thus He enjoys in many unlimited ways. At the same time, He is exhibiting his supremacy by these acts; e.g. entering Mathura, Krsna straightened Kubja's hunchback with his fingertips and toes, AND with the same fingertip he separated the the head of the washerman from his torso!

The living entities do not possess such omnipotence constitutionally - this is the distinction between the Supreme Lord and the minute living entity; but Krishna may choose to invest such capability upon some living entity who can attain such mystic powers by His grace.

#### **10.4.9) 'Krishna's transcendental goodness' & 'Krishna: the source of good and evil'**

**I am struggling with the dual concepts of good and evil as they are perceived from the mundane perspective in relationship to Krishna. I understand that Krishna is the source of everything, which brings a few questions that I cannot resolve in my mind. They are: How can Krishna be considered "all-good" and yet be the source of evil at the same time? Also, Is Krishna's goodness (Love) superior to his evil or are they qualitatively the same? And lastly, is there a difference between human evil and Krishna's evil, and if there is a difference what is it? (Digest 17.5)**

Srila Prabhupada resolved this conflict by saying that for Krishna there is no good or evil. "Everything within Krishna is transcendental goodness," he explained.

Does that mean that goodness and evil are of the same importance for us? No. Rather, for God there is nothing evil, just as for the sun there is no darkness. But for us there is light and darkness. If one keeps one's back to the sun, one will find darkness. And if you face the sun, there is no darkness. We create darkness as soon as we deny our constitutional position by turning our attention away from Krishna. If instead of remaining in front of God we keep God to our backs, then we will experience darkness. When we forget God, we experience what is known as evil. As one who remains within the light of the sun knows no darkness, so also one who remains in true God consciousness can perform no evil.

#### **10.4.10) Relationship between Lord Krishna and dharma**

##### **What is the relationship between Krishna and Dharma? (Digest 201.1)**

Dharma or the codes of religion are laid down by God Himself. This is stated by Yamaraja, or Dharmaraja, who is the executor of these laws: "dharmam tu saksat bhagavat pranitam - real religious principles are enacted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself." No one else - not even the topmost demigods fully situated in the mode of goodness, what to speak of fallible human beings - can manufacture religious principles. (SB 6.3.19) Thus Krishna is the establisher of Dharma.

This is natural because principles laid down by the Supreme Personality of Godhead,

Krishna, can alone be infallible and universally applicable to everyone. Manufactured ideologies and rules legislated by any imperfect person or by collective opinion are bound to be defective & biased and cannot benefit all living entities at all times. Thus, real religious principles are those given by the Lord Himself in the form of Vedic scriptures. The Vedas are not man-made, they are 'apaurusheya', directly manifested from the breathing of the Supreme Lord.

Krishna also states in the Bhagavad-gita that He comes to re-establish religious principles - 'Whenever there is a decline in religious principles (dharma) and predominant rise of irreligion (adharma), Krishna appears within this world to reestablish the principles of religion.' (BG 4.7-8)

The codes of dharma are quite intricate and at times even appear contradictory and irreconcilable. What holds well as dharma for a particular person or circumstance can prove to be unrighteous in a different situation. However, knowing dharma to be the laws of God, we can also understand that the ultimate purpose of dharma is to please Krishna - this becomes the basis for ascertaining what is dharma and reconciling differences.

This is the verdict given by Suta Gosvami when asked by the assembly of sages to kindly tell, in an easily understandable way, the highest religious principle and the essence of all scriptures. Suta Gosvami answers right away without any hesitation or ambiguity that "the supreme occupation [para-dharma] for all humanity is that by which men can attain to unmotivated and uninterrupted loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord" and "the highest perfection of performing one's occupational duty (dharma) is to please the Personality of Godhead - samsiddhir hari tosanam." (Srimad Bhagavatam 1.2.6&13)

Quite often there seems to be much cause for perplexity as to what the standard of dharma should be in a particular circumstance/context. This is the setting in which the Bhagavad-gita is spoken, in response to Arjuna's bewilderment about his real duty or dharma, and his subsequent surrender to Krishna as a disciple. Krishna's conclusive direction to Arjuna was "sarva dharman parityajya mam ekam sharanam vraja" - to abandon all other subordinate varieties of dharma and surrender to Him exclusively.

In several instances, it appears to the uninformed that in the course of His pastimes Krishna is violating or inducing others to violate the principles of righteousness --- which those who do not have a deep grasp of Krishna's transcendental position find it extremely difficult to comprehend. A typical example is Krishna encouraging Maharaja Yudhisthira to speak a lie in order to overpower Dronacharya. Krishna is however establishing through these instances that true morality and the highest dharma is to abide by Him and please Him - this is the real criterion and the Absolute basis on which the right course of action is to be decided in all circumstances.

In other words, virtue for the sake of virtue without caring to please Krishna is not beneficial. There are examples of asuras like Ravana and Jarasandha observing Vedic regulations, respecting brahmanas and liberally giving charity etc. But because they were inimical towards Krishna, the ultimate goal and shelter of all religious principles, their so-called adherence to dharma was of not much value. On the other hand, by trying to please Krishna, even if it means transgressing conventional codes of ethics, as when Yudhisthira spoke an untruth or the gopis and wives of the brahmanas left their homes to meet Krishna, their actions are considered to be the highest dharma. (We should note however that these are not meant to encourage licentious / irreligious behavior in the name of service to Krishna. These are exceptional examples meant to illustrate a higher principle, whereas in the normal course of life Krishna's devotees strictly abide by the highest theistic conduct, for the sake of pleasing Krishna and under the guidance of saintly devotees, mahajanas who are well-versed in the application of scriptural conclusions apt to time, place and circumstances.)

**10.4.11) 'The highest form of Krishna: Gopinatha or Syamasundara' & 'what the names of the Lord represent?'**

**I understand that the 2 hand form of Krishna is the highest. Which form in particular? Gopinath or Syamasundara? The names of the Lord represent the relationships he enacts with his devotees, does it not? Please clarify. (Digest 132.2)**

The 2-handed form of Krishna is the form in which He is known in Vrndavan. Either Gopinatha or Syamasundara (or many other names, for that matter) identify Krishna in His Vraja lila.

Yes, names of the Lord identify His specific relationships or His transcendental qualities.

***10.5. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu***

**10.5.1) Appearance of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu**

**I have also read that that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appears only once in a day of Brahma. Is it true? Does it mean He does not appear in other Kali-yugas? Kindly elaborate. (Digest 205.4)**

Yes, Lord Caitanya also appears in His original form and teaches the highest mellows of pure love for Krishna only once in a day of Brahma -- in the Kali yuga immediately following the appearance of Lord Krishna in His original form, which happens to be the present age! But just as a plenary portion of Krishna appears in every Dvapara, similarly in every Kali yuga a form of the Lord appears as the yuga-avatar to teach the process of congregational chanting of the Holy Names.

**10.5.2) Scriptural quotes to establish Lord Caitanya's identity**

**I understand that the scriptures we use as authoritative come primarily from within our sampradaya (and some quotes from the Vedas and Upanishads that many can't find or accept as conclusively authoritative). We accept them based on our faith in the authors who are recognized as realized souls/eternal associates of the Lord. Thus when Srila Jiva Gosvami explains that krsna-varnam means Sri Krishna Caitanya, "Krsna-varnam and Krsna Caitanya are equivalent", we accept it on faith. I'm curious about that as well. (Digest 145.5)**

I assume that you are specifically referring to scriptural quotes in this context of establishing Lord Caitanya's identity; otherwise all the important siddhantas of our philosophy are based on standard Vedic texts accessible and familiar to all sampradayas.

As mentioned above, there are puranic and Vedic references directly mentioning the Name of Lord Caitanya, His mother Sacidevi, His advent in the town of Navadvipa and His mission of spreading sankirtana. (Cf. Cc Adi 2.22) While some of these texts and quotes may indeed not be so well-known (for the reason discussed previously), there are others which are not

difficult to verify. For example, the Vayu Purana, which is often quoted from by Prabhupada in a number of different contexts, says: kalau sankirtanarambhe bhavishyami saci sutah: "In the age of Kali, when the sankirtana movement is inaugurated, Krishna will descend as the divine son of Saci devi."

Scriptural evidence is indeed the only authority by which we can ascertain the avatars; nonetheless we cannot do away with the need for guidance by expert and self-realized devotees who alone are able to, in accordance with the scriptural evidence, actually detect the avatara. This is applicable in all ages and more so in the age of Kali. Faith in authority is essential in any endeavor or discipline, not the least in acquiring transcendental knowledge. But our faith is not blind, nor are the teachings of the saintly persons whimsical - they are firmly established on the foundation of scripture. Thus Jiva Goswami offers this explanation not arbitrarily but based on other scriptural statements.

Even during the advent of Krishna, the common population could understand His identity not without the guidance of the sages such as Vyasadev and confidential associates of the Lord, while Duryodhana and his accomplices could not recognize Him even after personally witnessing His potencies. In fact, we also hear how even at that time Paundraka assumed the signs and name of Vasudeva and was even worshiped by some, despite numerous Vedic references to Krishna's identity.

This brings us to the question of personal qualifications of the candidate who wishes to verify and gain conviction in the Lord's manifestation. When Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was trying to understand the position of Mahaprabhu, Gopinatha Acharya gave many scriptural evidences but finally said that one can understand the Lord only by His mercy, and not otherwise. (See Madhya 6.80-104) One may come to the right understanding after scholarly scrutinization or by simple-minded acceptance of the right authority --- but in both cases personal sincerity and the mercy of the Lord are indispensable factors. Thus, even though the population is less intelligent in this age, those who sincerely seek the Ultimate Truth will be able to confidently and conclusively know and worship the Lord by His mercy - such souls are therefore called sumedhasa (very intelligent).

### 10.5.3 and 10.5.4) Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and kalki avatar

**I'm confused on the subject of yuga avatars in this cycle of Kali. Gaudiya Vaisnavas claim Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu as the avatar for this particular cycle of Kali yuga. Since he has already appeared, will this kali yuga end without the appearance of the Kalki avatar? This seems to contradict the Vishnu Purana.**

**Also, it is cited in Caitanya Caritamrita (Madhya 6.99) that there is no lila avatar in this age of kali, but it does acknowledge Mahaprabhu as an avatara in this cycle, although hidden. This seems to contradict the Vishnu Purana and the Bhagavata Purana as well. The word hidden isn't used, or as far as I can see, implied in the Bhagavatam verse 11.5.32. Is there any Vedic literature outside of the Gaudiya tradition that support these conclusions? (Digest 206.1)**

**The description of the appearance of Krsna for this age is cited Srimad Bhagavatam 11.5.32. It is also cited in the Vishnu Purana "will be born in the family of Vishnuyasas, an eminent Brahman of Sambhala village, as Kalki, endowed with the eight superhuman faculties." Vishnu Purana 4:24.**

**Can it be argued that the two descriptions are of the Kalki avatar? Gaudiya Vaisnavas point to this verse, particularly the word akrsnam, as proof that this means golden or yellow. But, the appearance of Kalki seems to fit the translation of the word, as well as the other descriptions (particularly weapons) in the 11.5.32 Srimad Bhagavatam verse. (Digest 206.2)**

I will answer these questions together as there is some degree of overlap because of the nature of the topic.

Lord Caitanya is the avatar for Kali Yuga and Kalki avatar will come at the juncture of the 2 yugas - Kali Yuga and Satya Yuga. There are a number of scriptural predictions about appearance of Kalki avatar and Lord Caitanya and they are very distinct and don't contradict each other.

Though the word hidden is not directly used in the Srimad Bhagavatam verse, there are a number of other indications from Vedic scriptures indicating that His appearance is hidden. Please read the detailed quotes found in the following file:

[http://www.romapadaswami.com/Inquiries/Kalki\\_CaitanyaMahaprabhu.pdf](http://www.romapadaswami.com/Inquiries/Kalki_CaitanyaMahaprabhu.pdf) (Appendix C)

The Srimad Bhagavatam verse 11.5.32 definitely indicates Lord Caitanya and the Visnu Purana verse indicates Kalki avatar.

You raised a point about other descriptions particularly weapons - In the purport to the SB 11.5.32 verse, Srila Jiva Goswami indicates the meaning of Sangopangastra-parsadam. Everything else in the verse indicates that it is referring to Lord Caitanya, especially sankirtana-prayaih which is not a described activity of Lord Kalki in the scriptures.

"Sangopangastra-parsadam further indicates that Lord Caitanya is Lord Krsna. His body is always decorated with ornaments of sandalwood and with sandalwood paste. By His superexcellent beauty He subdues all the people of the age."

In other descents the Lord sometimes used weapons to defeat the demoniac, but in this age the Lord subdues them with His all-attractive figure as Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Srila Jiva Goswami explains that His beauty is His astra, or weapon, to subdue the demons. Because He is all-attractive, it is to be understood that all the demigods lived with Him as His companions. His acts were uncommon and His associates wonderful. When He propagated the sankirtana movement, He attracted many great scholars and acaryas, especially in Bengal and Orissa. Lord Caitanya is always accompanied by His best associates like Lord Nityananda, Advaita, Gadadhara and Srivasa.

Apart from our Vedic scriptures, Lord Kalki's avatar appears to be indicated in the Book of Revelations in the Bible. Please read quoted sections in the following file:  
[http://www.romapadaswami.com/Inquiries/Kalki\\_CaitanyaMahaprabhu.pdf](http://www.romapadaswami.com/Inquiries/Kalki_CaitanyaMahaprabhu.pdf) (Appendix C)

### **10.5.5) 'Divinity of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu' and 'interpretation of S.B. 11.5.32'**

**When the particular verse often cited (11.5.32) is taken in context of the whole Canto, and with the translation of akrsnam - meaning not black, taken without the added golden (which seems to be an interpolation), I don't understand how it necessarily translates to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. (Digest 145.3)**

Although this particular verse does not mention the golden color, it is not an arbitrary interpolation, but substantiated by references from other places, presented here in context for our

benefit.

Srila Prabhupada often translated in this way, thus giving us the benefit of understanding each verse in the context of the entire scripture without having to read and assimilate all of them and personally figure out the connection. The golden or yellow complexion is mentioned in other places, even in Bhagavatam. For example, during the name giving ceremony of Krishna, Gargamuni mentions the color of incarnation in each of the other 3 ages - white, red, and yellow. (Cf. SB 10.8.13)

Verses 11.5.22,24 describe the incarnations of white and red complexion in satya and treta yugas respectively; thus we can understand the incarnation in Kali yuga to have a yellow or golden complexion.

**10.5.6) 'The divinity of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu' and 'why Mahaprabhu appears as a hidden incarnation?'**

**I'm having difficulty understanding the divinity of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Within Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 11, there seems ample opportunity to reveal his name directly as an avatar. The idea that people in the age Kali aren't capable of recognizing him - ["Thus it is understood that it is difficult for common people in Kali-yuga to recognize the incarnation of the Lord since in this age the Lord's appearance is slightly concealed."] - seems to be more the reason for specifically naming Lord Caitanya in the context of the questions put forth in the Canto.**

**Leaving His divinity unannounced seems to go against the reason for Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance in the first place. If we in the age of Kali aren't capable of understanding, why hide the identity? It only seems to make things confusing. (Digest 145.1)**

The reason why Lord Caitanya's identity is concealed is stated within the Bhagavatam itself: the incarnation for this age does not directly assert Himself to be the Personality of Godhead. Prahlada Maharaja states this in Bhagavatam (7.9.38): "According to the age, O my Lord, You protect the principles of religion. In the age of Kali, however, You do not assert Yourself as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore You are known as Triyuga, or the Lord who appears in three yugas."

It is by His own desire that the Lord chooses to appear as a 'channa-avatara' or 'gupta-avatara' (hidden incarnation). Through one action the Lord accomplishes many purposes; one of the external reasons for His maintaining His identity discrete is understood thus: Lord Caitanya appears in the mood of a devotee to teach by example the process of devotional service. During Lord Caitanya's manifest pastimes, He confidentially revealed His identity to a few fortunate devotees but forbade them from disclosing it to anyone, at least not until after His manifest pastimes, because such disclosure would have been a hindrance to His mood and to the unfolding of His pastimes. Similarly, there are direct evidences both in the sruti and puranas giving details of the name and activities of Lord Caitanya, which I will briefly mention further below, but these references are also confidential for the same reason and only later revealed by His followers such as Krsna das Kaviraja, Vrindavan das Thakur and Bhaktivinode Thakura.

Another reason is that Kali yuga, being an age of hypocrisy, it would be a welcome opportunity for unscrupulous people to misuse scriptural evidence to pose as incarnations and cheat common men. Even in such a clearly defined instance as Kalki avatar, who is supposed to

appear only after some 400,000 years from now, we have already witnessed the rise of many so-called Kalki avatars! Thus, quite contrary to the expectation that declaring His name in the Bhagavatam would make it easier for us to identify him, it could have paved way for so many pseudo-incarnations in the name of Caitanya, Kalki, etc to bewilder and mislead the innocent public.

#### **10.5.7) Why is Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's name, not mentioned as an incarnation in Srimad Bhagavatam?**

**Why is Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu not mentioned in the Srimad Bhagavatam First canto, where all other incarnations are included? (Digest 48.1)**

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is a hidden incarnation. Krishna appears in the age of Kali in the disguised form of His own devotee in order to teach everyone devotional service unto Himself by example, and moreover because He Himself wanted to experience and relish the mood of a devotee. So in this incarnation, He does not show Himself to be God in front of the general people. References to His incarnation are also therefore highly confidential within the Vedas.

Although not openly declared, Lord Chaitanya is indirectly referred to in many places, even in the Bhagavatam. For example, Prahalad Maharaja in his famous prayers to Lord Narasimhadev says, "You appear in every age in different forms, but because You do not assert Yourself as the Supreme Lord in the age of Kali, and advent as a channa-avatara (covered incarnation), therefore You are known as Triyuga, or the Lord who appears in three yugas." (Cf. SB 7.9.38) In the Tenth Canto, while Garga Muni is describing to Nanda Maharaja the other appearances of his son Krishna, he indicates that the Lord appears in a yellow complexion, (Cf. Krsna Book, pg 94) and great devotees have ascertained that this refers to Lord Chaitanya.

The Vishnu Sahasranama also indicates a golden-complexioned incarnation in the form of a sannyasi (suvarna-varno hemango & sannyasa krc-chama santah) Again the Bhagavatam states that in the age of Kali, intelligent persons would worship the incarnation of Godhead who is Krishna Himself although His complexion is not blackish, by performing congregational chanting." (SB 11.5.32) In the Vayu purana and various other scriptures, His appearance as the son of Mother Saci in the land of Navadvipa and other such details are mentioned.

By the potency of yogamaya, however, His identity was kept concealed so as to not disturb the purpose and the mood or bhava of His incarnation. Even while manifesting His pastimes, only among close associates would He reveal His real identity as the Supreme Lord, but would strongly deny it whenever so addressed in public.

#### **10.5.8) Why is Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's name, not mentioned as an incarnation in Srimad Bhagavatam?**

**The Bhagavatam is particular and authoritative in naming names. Why leave out the name of the most sublime and merciful form of Krishna? Wasn't his advent for all conditioned souls (not just the followers of our sampradaya)? In Bhagavad-Gita, the personality of Godhead is clearly named in various ways, and the purpose is the same. (Digest 145.2)**

While the Bhagavatam specifies the names of many incarnations, it also gives us the method for ascertaining the innumerable incarnations: by their personal characteristics (such as the various signs and marks on the body by which an incarnation can be distinguished) and their uncommon activities and specific mission.

This is also explained in Lord Caitanya's teachings to Sanatana Gosvami. It is described that Lord Caitanya exhibited all the features of a maha-purusha and even more evident to us are His extra-ordinary activities -- distributing love of God and establishing the congregational chanting of Hare Krishna maha-mantra which is declared to be the yuga-dharma for this age in many scriptures. Other details of His activities and features are also described in SB 11.5.34 as well as in Vishnu-sahasranama, which is accepted by all sampradayas (as quoted in SB 11.5.32).

**10.5.9) Why did Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took sannyasa from Kesava Bharati, a mayavadi sannyasi?**

**In the introduction of Srimad Bhagavatam, Prabhupada has written that Caitanya Mahaprabhu took sannyasa from Kesava Bharati, who was a mayavadi sannyasi. If Mahaprabhu was very much against mayavadis, then why did he take his sannyasa initiation from Kesava Bharati? (Digest 18.1)**

Before answering the question, I would like to make a minor comment. While Caitanya Mahaprabhu was certainly very much against the "mayavada philosophy" and cautioned His devotees in the strictest of terms not to associate with mayavadis, in a broader sense He was not 'against' mayavadis per se. In certain circumstances He exhibited His great compassion towards them; when there was an opportunity, He delivered Krishna consciousness to Prakasananda Sarasvati and his numerous mayavadi disciples.

The pastime of Lord Caitanya accepting sannyasa is described in detail in the Caitanya Caritamrta. One of the main reasons why Lord Caitanya decided to take sannyasa was because the non-devotees were offending Him, mistaking Him to be an ordinary person. He took sannyasa for showing compassion to such offenders, so that at least on account of His position as a sannyasi, they would offer Him respect and thereby derive spiritual benefit.

Srila Prabhupada explains in Caitanya Caritamrta how during the time of Lord Caitanya, the influence of Sankaracarya in society was very strong, and consequently people in general thought that one could accept sannyasa only in the Sankaracarya sampradaya. Since His acceptance of sannyasa was also designed to invoke the respect of the common members of the public as well as the brahminical community, if only due to social convention (and in this way receive spiritual benefit by respecting him, rather than faulting Him for His ecstatic moods of prema), Lord Caitanya, not wishing to disturb the current social convention of His time, took the renounced order of life from Keshava Bharati who was in the Sankaracarya sampradaya, although sannyasa order was also sanctioned in the Vaishnava sampradaya.

Besides, although Keshava Bharati belonged to Sankaracarya sampradaya, he was also a great devotee. According to some authoritative opinions, although Keshava Bharati belonged to the Sankara-sampradaya, he had formerly been initiated by a great Vaishnava, Srila Madhavendra Puri (see Adi lila 9.13-15 purport).

**10.5.10) Why don't we discuss the pastimes of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu extensively in ISKCON?**

**Although it is clear that Gauranga Mahaprabhu is the all-munificent avatar of Kali age, it is often found in ISKCON that there is less concentration in description of Lord Caitanya's pastimes? Why is this so? Even after long association in some congregations, very few pastimes of Lord Caitanya are described. How is that we could get attracted to Gauranga in this scenario? (Digest 9.7)**

Hearing Caitanya-lila or Krishna-lila is certainly not less important, and is very purifying. Prabhupada has given us the Krishna book, Srimad Bhagavatam and also the Caitanya Caritamrta, which describe in detail various lilas. But, hearing about the soul or for that matter, the defects of modern science, is also Krishna katha! Hearing these basic topics will certainly bring us gradually to the platform of real attachment to Lord Caitanya and hearing His transcendental pastimes.

The first lesson in spiritual life is to understand that we are not the body but we are spirit souls, parts and parcels of Krishna. Technically this is called sambandha jnana. Without a solid foundation in sambandha jnana, it is very difficult to properly understand the pastimes of the Lord, which are beyond all mundane perception. What we require to properly understand Caitanya-lila is not just a theoretical understanding, but we need to actually become fixed in the spiritual conception. This takes repeated hearing due to our strong material conditioning.

Srila Prabhupada made this emphasis in his own preaching as well and was very effective in quickly uplifting the consciousness of his disciples. If we hear the hundreds of lecture tapes of Srila Prabhupada, we will find that he repeatedly spoke on the most fundamental topics such as 'you are not this body'. We are trying to closely follow his footsteps.

Based on your encouragement, as well as that of others, I intend to speak more often on the pastimes of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, however.

## ***10.6. Srimati Radharani***

**10.6.1 and 10.6.2) 'Worship of Srimati Radharani' and 'references to Srimati Radharani worship in Bhagavad Gita & Srimad Bhagavatam'**

**If worship of Srimati Radharani is so important why does Lord Krsna not talk about it in the Gita? I indicated that the Bhagavatam references to the glory of Radharani as does Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. (Digest 218.5)**

**Since worship of Sri Sri Radha Krsna is so important and we belong of the Brahma-Gaudiya-Madhva-sampradaya, why is that the temple founded by Madhvacarya (I believe this is in reference to the temple at Udupi) does not have Srimati Radharani? (Digest 218.6)**

I will answer 543 (please refer 11.9.2) and 544 (please refer 11.9.3) together - Bhagavad Gita is the preliminary book for spiritualists and it is read by all the

sampradayas, and where Bhagavad Gita ends Srimad Bhagavatam begins, and where Srimad Bhagavatam ends Caitanya Caritamrta begins. Though name of Radha is not mentioned directly, Srila Prabhupada indicates that in the explanation to the verse "mahatmanas tu mam partha daivim prakritim asritah" that daivim prakritim asritah refers to pure devotees taking shelter of the para prakrti, the internal potency of the Lord called Lakshmidēvi, Sitadevi, Srimati Radharani or Srimati Rukminidevi by which they become great souls or mahatmas. So there is indirect mention.

In the Bhagavatam too there is not direct mention of Radharani's name because if Sukadev Goswami had mentioned Her name he would not be able to complete his recitation of Srimad Bhagavatam; he would have been lost in an ecstatic mood! Therefore there is only one place that Radharani's name is mentioned and that too indirectly. "Truly the Personality of Godhead has been worshiped by Her. Therefore Lord Govinda, being pleased, has brought Her to a lonely spot, leaving us all behind." Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.30.28.

Beginning from Madhvacarya down to the spiritual master of Madhavendra Puri, the acarya named Lakshmiapati, there was no realization of devotional service in conjugal love. Sri Madhavendra Puri personally experienced and introduced the conception of conjugal love for the first time in the Madhvacarya- sampradaya, and this conclusion of the Madhvacarya-sampradaya was revealed in fullness by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu when He toured southern India and met the Tattvavadis, who supposedly belonged to the Madhvacarya-sampradaya. (CC Madhya 4.197)

Radha Krishna worship is a very intimate form of worship; although there were many advanced Vaisnavas even in other sampradayas who worshipped Radha Krsna, this spontaneous mood of worship was never freely distributed until Lord Caitanya came. The mood of Udupi Krsna worship is in the mood of awe and reverence.

Below a question that was answered in Inquiries which also sheds further light: Digest 7, Question 8 (Please refer question 6.1.6)

### **10.6.3) Understanding the relationship of Srimati Radharani and Rukmini devi with Lord Krishna**

**My 8-year-old daughter asked me the following 2 questions: Why did Krishna not marry Srimati Radharani, when Her Deity is always next to Krishna and we worship Krishna and Radha? I could not give her a good answer. I think what confuses her is that Krishna loved Srimati Radharani, but married someone else.**

**I was telling her that in our culture, a man couldn't have more than one wife. She promptly asked me - Why did Sri Krishna marry so many women? I understand that Srimati Radharani is the internal potency of Sri Krishna. I am not very clear about the real relationship between Krishna and Rukmini. What is Rukmini's position? Is she just a great devotee of Krishna or more than that? I want my daughter to learn moral values from our scriptures, but she gets very confused with life led by our demigods and God. Please provide me an answer, which my daughter (with material mind) can understand. (Digest 40.1)**

My reply will be mixed with points for your personal understanding, as well as with simple statements to help your precocious daughter feel satisfied. Both are intended to address your concern for your daughter's ethical training.

The relationship between Radha and Krishna in Their Vrindavan-lila is of a very special

type known as "parakiya rasa" or unwedded love. Even from our mundane experience we know that such a relationship can be of greater intensity than within marriage. Yet these 'affairs' are grossly perverted reflections of the love found in the spiritual world; worldly paramourship is morally reprehensible, but the spiritual counterpart is of the highest level of spiritual joy as well as purity. In Vrindavana, yoga-maya (the Lord's personal internal potency) orchestrates events just to enhance this 'parakiya-bhava', which serve to increase the intensity of the loving pastimes between Radha and Krishna. For example, there is a very sweet pastime described by our acaryas wherein Radha and Krishna were actually to be betrothed, but Purnamasi (who is Yogamaya herself) foils the plan on the pretext of so-called inauspicious planetary influences, just so that the parakiya relationship is preserved.

In short, the lila of Radha and Krishna is that of an unwed couple, lover and beloved, but the spiritual reality is that they are eternally with one another as the Lord and His internal potency, or His 'consort'. Their unmarried love enhances the sweetness of their exchanges, and is altogether wholesome and pure.

Rukmini devi is an expansion of Radharani. She also belongs to the internal potency of Krishna, just like Radha, only the lila is that they marry.

Your concern for upholding moral values is justified because the facts of Radha and Krishna's loving relationship can be (and has been) misused by unscrupulous people to manipulate religious principles. But Radha-Krishna relationship should not be confused with that of a mundane relationship.

The material world is 180 degrees the opposite of the spiritual world. Give the example to your daughter of examining a tree reflected in a lake. When looking upon the lake's surface where a tree is growing on the far bank of the lake, what do you see? You see a reflection! And what is the upper portion of the tree which you see in the reflection? Since the reflected image is upside down, you will see the roots growing up, and the branches growing down!

In the 'spiritual tree of life', everything is actually meant for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord, but when misused for our sense gratification, it becomes reflected, upside-down and perverted. Thus we see even lust, greed, anger ---all abominable qualities!---have their untainted spiritual counterpart in 'the spiritual tree, in the spiritual realm, the realm of Krishna's pastimes.

Radharani, as you have mentioned, is Krishna's own internal pleasure potency. Thus there is no question of immorality in their relationship. Krishna, being self-satisfied, does not depend on an external source for happiness, but manifests His own potency when He wants to enjoy; this manifestation is Radharani. We worship Radha with Krishna, because She is the dearest devotee of Krishna, and by pleasing Her we can also become dear to Him.

You mentioned that your daughter questioned about Krishna having multiple wives. In the Vedic system, a ksatriya could have more than one wife, and we find many examples of this. (When Krishna accepted wives, he did so in His lila as a king, or ksatriya.) Even so, we cannot find anyone marrying 16,108 wives! And to satisfy all of His queens, He manifested Himself in an expanded form of Krishna to reside with each queen, simultaneously! This is but one demonstration of the unique opulence and unlimited potency of Krishna. "Why only 16,000 wives?", Srila Prabhupada would sometimes remark about Krishna's marriages. Everything and everyone ultimately are His property and He is ultimate enjoyer.

The safest way so as not to be misled into ethical misunderstandings about these things is to follow in the footsteps of great personalities, and not to imitate the Divine Couple. Krishna taught Bhagavad-gita and lived as an ideal king and we should abide by those instructions. But

just as we cannot imitate Krishna's lifting Govardhana or dancing on Kaliya's hoods, similarly we cannot imitate His rasa-lila or marrying so many wives.

#### **10.6.4) Lord Krishna never leaves Srimati Radharani**

##### **How can Lord Sri Krishna ever leave Srimati Radharani? (Digest 7.10)**

This is a transcendently wonderful question! Actually, Krishna never leaves Srimati Radharani. It only appears to be so. When Krishna left Vrindavan to go to Mathura, He entered into the hearts and into the minds of all the devotees in Vrindavan, and in this way Krishna never left them even for a moment. That form of Krishna which went to Mathura was Vasudev Krishna, as was exhibited by the pastime envisioned by Akrura, as he was bathing in the Yamuna river in transit to Mathura.

#### **10.6.5) Lotus feet of Srimati Radharani**

**Are we not supposed to take pictures of Srimati Radharani's lotus feet on Radhastami? If we can take pictures can we not look at those Divine Lotus feet on any other day of the year? I have Srimati Radharani's lotus feet picture as my screen on my cell phone, am I not supposed to do that? (Digest 139.1)**

Radharani shows her feet only this one day per year. You may certainly take a picture at that time, but it is not a good idea that you keep her feet as the screen on your cell phone.

#### **10.6.6) Srimati Radharani and Subhadra Maharani – do They wear tilak?**

**Why is it Srimati Radharani and Subadra Maharani do not wear tilak? (Digest 199.2)**

I have no answer as to why it is so, but tradition is that they wear bindis, not urdhva pundra tilaka.

From a conversation in 1972 with Srila Prabhupada:

Cintamani: Thank you. Krsna wears tilaka like we do, Srila Prabhupada?

Prabhupada: Yes. Radharani only red spot.

#### **10.6.7) Freewill of Srimati Radharani**

**How is it that Srimati Radharani, who doesn't have the inherent freedom to turn away from Krishna as the jivas do, can still be considered a Person who experiences love for Krishna? As Maharaja states, if the jivas didn't have this free will our forced love wouldn't be considered love at all, yet when it comes to Radharani, who by nature doesn't have this freedom, Her experience is still called love. Would you please explain this apparent contradiction? (Digest 3.11)**

There are three principal categories of energies of the Supreme Lord: internal potency, external potency and marginal potency (antaranga, bahiranga and tatastha sakti). The jivas are by

constitution the marginal potency of the Lord; as the name indicates, they are marginal in the sense that they can go either way, i.e. take shelter of either the internal or external potency. Srimati Radharani and other eternal personal associates of the Lord, however, are in the category of internal potency. It is not that they have no free will, but being 'not marginal', they ALWAYS choose to serve Krishna, and never become subject to the external energy. This is due to the constitutional difference between the two types of energies.

A crude analogy would be that of the fire and spark, as explained previously. The blazing fire is never separated from its heat and light, or for that matter, a big log in the fire blazes with the fire, but a small spark of that fire can easily drift away.

#### **10.6.8) Lakshmi: An expansion of Srimati Radharani**

**In almost all avatars it has been that Lakshmi is the consort of the Lord. For ex: Whether be it mother Sita or Visnupriya or Padmavathi (Lord Venkateswara's consort). And not Radharani., why is it that way? (Digest 7.9)**

I think you have a fundamental misunderstanding here. As Krishna is the original personality of Godhead, so Srimati Radharani is His hladini sakti manifestation, or His eternal consort. Since Narayana in Vaikuntha is an expansion of Krishna, we can say that Lakshmi is also an expansion of Srimati Radharani. For that matter, all the goddesses of fortune in the spiritual realm are manifestations of Srimati Radharani. Your thinking seems to be in the converse. Having made the above statements, we can identify the particular consort of the Supreme Lord by a particular nomenclature also. For example Sita is the consort of Ram. Ramadevi (found in Sri Brahma Samhita) is the consort of Maha Visnu. In your letter you have indicated that Padmavati is the consort of Lord Venkatesvara. Each of the expansions of the Supreme Lord have their consorts, or energetic expansions. They go by various names, but the original Personality of Godhead is Krishna, and His eternal consort is Srimati Radharani.

### ***10.7. Understanding the pastimes of the Lord***

#### **10.7.1) How do we know if Lord Krishna's pastimes are real?**

**How do we know if the stories of Krishna or of any other god ever happened? Are they real? If you could answer these questions, I would very much appreciate it. (Digest 192.3)**

By logic and reasoning, like we just did, we can come to the conclusion that there must be God, or a Supreme Controller behind everything. But in order to conclusively know Him and understand more about Him, what His name is, what He looks like, what are His qualities - to know these we need to take the help of scriptures and realized souls who already know Him. In this way, we come to know that one of His principal name is Krishna, and of His various activities and pastimes, because they are revealed in the Vedic scriptures. On their authority, we accept Krishna.

How can we know for sure about anything at all, which is beyond the reach of our sense

perception? Only by hearing from proper authorities. How does someone who has never been to Australia know that there really is such a continent on the other side of the globe? By hearing from someone who has been there - either in words or pictures or some such form. Similarly, if one wants to know who his father is, the only way to be sure is to take the authority of the mother. In the same way, we can be positively sure of God's existence and particularly of the descriptions of Krishna being that Supreme Personality of Godhead because of the fact that so many saintly personalities, with such remarkable personal characters, have come throughout the ages and taught us the science of God.

If you study the characters, credibility and conviction of these saintly representatives of Krishna, it is one surely compelling reason which will strengthen our faith in God. If you have not already had a chance, you might appreciate acquiring a copy of the biography of Srila Prabhupada and studying it. You will come to admire what an incredibly qualified individual he was - his humility, compassion, concern for entire humanity and the sacrifices he made, his deep faith and inner stability in the face of all kinds of adversities and challenges, these are equally matched by his deep scholarly knowledge, the brilliance of his logic and penetrating insight into all aspects of life, even his astuteness in business, organization and leadership -- surely such a person was not going to believe in some fairy tales and dedicate his life for propagating them and worship Him, nor did he have any personal motivation to mislead us with unverifiable facts. It would be hard to favorably compare the caliber of such a person with the personal lives & character of any other authorities in science or philosophy that we so commonly tend to believe but rarely know. And this was not just some individual's self-styled ideas, but that of an entire parampara, generations of such highly qualified teachers striving to pass down these messages to us intact and without any corruption, for the welfare all. In fact, there were many such disciplic lines, all over the world and most certainly at least in India, dedicated to purely worshipping Krishna for thousands of years.

We can also meditate and reflect upon the gravity and seriousness of the setting in which the messages of Krishna are spoken. It was narrated by Sukadeva Goswami while instructing King Pariksit, the emperor of the world at that time, on the verge of his predicted death, to enable the king to fix his mind on the transcendental activities of Krishna. At this most crucial time, in the context of discussing one's duty at the time of death and other such profound topics, we would not suppose that they would have discussed some fictional stories which have no reality or substance.

Another very compelling proof is to study the lives of those who are, even today, sincerely taking to hearing about Krishna regularly and living by these messages. They are left with not just a few minutes of feelings of peace or sense of well-being, but it brings about a total transformation of their lives and character, making them very sober, compassionate and responsible individuals developing all godly qualities. This is the potency of chanting Krishna's holy names and hearing about His pastimes. Is it possible that any ordinary person's name & activities, what to speak of a fictional character, have such potencies that can bring about such transformations in the hearts of people?

The merit of something is known by the result it produces. Or we could say, the proof of the pudding is in eating. Of course, one who does not follow quite faithfully, or due to misfortune follows an unauthorized person who is not representing Krishna purely, these changes do not manifest for them, as in the case of many so-called religious followers today. But those who do apply themselves by proper means, the difference in their person is self-evident. And you yourself can also personally not only verify but get to know God, Krishna, personally

and feel His reciprocation in your life by following these messages given by Him and coming through His devotees in disciplic succession.

I hope this brings some clarity to you. I would be more than happy to try to answer any further questions you may have.

### 10.7.2) Role of yogamaya in Lord Krishna's pastimes

**If Krishna knows everything that is going to happen, and has complete control of everything, then how is this leela fun for Him? Wouldn't it be entertainment for Krishna only if there was some degree of suspense? (Digest 48.2)**

By the agency of His own yoga-maya potency, Krishna knows everything, yet occasionally seems to not know -- that is His inconceivable greatness! I will attempt to explain this enigmatic statement. The Supreme Lord has innumerable, inconceivable potencies. Everything is executed by His mere will through the agency of these multifarious energies, who are all always eager to increase His pleasure. Krishna does not have to exert Himself to even think, plan or execute every detail of what He wants to accomplish. Through His yogamaya potency He arranges His leela, and under the influence of yogamaya, to enhance His pastimes, sometimes even Krishna forgets Himself! Thus the Supreme, Infallible, All-knowing Lord becomes momentarily 'bewildered' when His dear cowherd friends enter the mouth of Aghasura, or in the madness of ecstasy of love for Radha He sometimes tries to milk a bull instead of a cow. He is not just pretending, but He actually experiences these bewildered states, which is absolutely inconceivable! Krishna is the ultimate master of His own yogamaya, but He also comes under yoga-maya's sway according His will and thus enjoys His suspense-filled pastimes.

The contradiction you have pointed out and all other contradictions are all reconciled in the Supreme Personality.

### 10.7.3) Following the Lord's teachings without imitating His pastimes

**Can you please explain how we can follow the Supreme Lord's teachings without imitating His deeds during His pastimes? (Digest 237.4)**

Krishna's appearance or incarnation in this material world, as stated in BG 4.8 has three-fold purposes: punishing the atheists and establishing religious principles are two, while the third and in fact more important one is pleasing His devotees. Whereas the other two purposes can be accomplished through other means besides His personal appearance also, He comes to display His supra-mundane pastimes simply to attract the conditioned souls.

While manifesting His pastimes, He generally acts in such a way as to set the ideal example, but He also asserts Himself from time to time as the Original Supreme Person, not only as the All-powerful and Irreproachable but also as the enjoyer of various rasas (mellows) with His devotees. Thus He establishes His true identity; His pastimes become most relishable and attract all pious souls to draw closer to their relationship with Him. This feature of intimate loving exchanges 'transcendental' to mundane morality (not in 'transgression' of it), is the highest aspect of our relation with the Absolute Truth; without this, the secondary aspect of establishing religious principles would leave Krishna's manifestation of His pastimes to our vision incomplete.

Stated in reverse, the highest form of morality is that which leads to Krishna's satisfaction. His internal satisfaction, even beyond His leading sinful souls to the path of righteousness, is reciprocating with the selfless love of His unalloyed devotees. Topmost amongst those selfless lovers are the gopis.

So, how do we ensure that we understand these pastimes properly and do not imitate them? - Within this vital question we discover the ABSOLUTE NEED to strictly follow authorized and bona fide acharyas, and in this way live our lives in genuine devotion to Krishna. Knowing this tendency of conditioned souls to imitate, it is therefore forbidden to hear Krishna katha, from unqualified persons, or conversely to cheaply discuss them in public gatherings.

We are to follow in the footsteps of great souls, which means to abide by their \*teachings\* (e.g. Krishna's words in BG) and in the process of doing so we can make unimpeded progress on the spiritual path. Our duty, is to simply follow the instructions of the acharyas and become gradually purified and in this lies our protection.

#### 10.7.4) Exemplary actions of the Supreme Lord

**In Bg 3.22 purport, Srila Prabhupada writes "Although He (Lord Krishna) is above all the regulations of the revealed scriptures, He does not do anything that violates the revealed scriptures". And similarly in 2.23p: "because He descended to establish the principles of religion He followed the prescribed rules. Otherwise, common men would follow in His footsteps, because He is the greatest authority."**

**Based on the above, one may deduce that the Lord wishes not to do anything which is against the "revealed scriptures" as there is a danger that "common men" would follow in His footsteps and commit wrongdoings of some sort.**

**Actions like lifting Govardhan Hill, killing demons, manifesting many cows and cowherd boys, etc. are obviously not going to be imitated or attempted by "common men". However, Lord Krishna's dealing with the gopis, having intimate relations with married women - like Srimati Radharani and other gopis (which is normally referred to as "adultery"), stealing their clothes whilst they were bathing, etc, surely these acts aren't exactly "in line with the revealed scriptures" Even though the Lord is "above all regulations...." and is the law creator, etc - these types of act ARE easily copy-able by any common man. So if the Lord doesn't want common men following Him if He does something "against revealed scriptures" - then why does He do such things as above even though He has the full right do so, knowing that common men can easily misinterpret such things and act immorally? (Digest 86.1)**

Krishna's appearance or incarnation in this material world, as stated in Bg 4.8 has three-fold purposes: punishing the atheists and establishing religious principles are two, while the third and in fact more important one is pleasing His devotees. Whereas the other two purposes can be accomplished through other means besides His personal appearance also, He comes to display His supra-mundane pastimes simply to attract the conditioned souls.

While manifesting His pastimes, He generally acts in such a way as to set the ideal example, but He also asserts Himself from time to time as the Original Supreme Person, not only as the All-powerful and Irreproachable but also as the enjoyer of various rasas (mellows) with His devotees. Thus He establishes His true identity, His pastimes become most relishable and attract all pious souls to draw closer to their relationship with Him. This feature of intimate

loving exchanges `transcendental' to mundane morality (not in `transgression' of it), is the highest aspect of our relation with the Absolute Truth; without this, the secondary aspect of establishing religious principles would leave Krishna's manifestation of His pastimes to our vision incomplete.

Stated in reverse, the highest form of morality is that which leads to Krishna's satisfaction. His internal satisfaction, even beyond His leading sinful souls to the path of righteousness, is reciprocating with the selfless love of His unalloyed devotees. Topmost amongst those selfless lovers are the gopis.

You pointed out that Krishna certainly has the right or privilege of doing as He likes, without restriction; moreover, His pastimes exhibit this higher code of ethic. In this realm of loving exchange, worldly morality does not apply.

Of course unscrupulous persons could and in fact are likely to misunderstand and abuse such precedence; hence the need to strictly follow authorized and bona fide acharyas. Knowing this tendency of conditioned souls, it is therefore forbidden to hear Krishna katha, and specifically these confidential pastimes, from unqualified persons or cheaply discuss them in public gatherings. A bona fide speaker or reader of Bhagavatam would never "jump to the Tenth Canto", Srila Prabhupada would often say, without firmly establishing the fundamental principles in the preceding 9 Cantos. Sukadeva Gosvami and King Pariksit themselves set this example.

When there are bona-fide discussions on the intimate pastimes of Krishna with the gopis, ample warning is repeatedly given both within the scriptures as well as by the saintly persons who speak them, to not take them cheaply and to not "copy", i.e. to not imitate the extra-ordinary activities either of Krishna or of great personalities, such as Lord Shiva's drinking an ocean of poison. If in spite of such warnings one misunderstands, it is unfortunate.

We are to follow in the footsteps of great souls, which means to abide by their \*teachings\* (e.g. Krishna's words in Bg) and in the process of doing so we can make unimpeded progress on the spiritual path.

One additional point should also be mentioned: those of us who are fortunate recipients of the proper knowledge also have the important responsibility to help disseminate it, for when there is proper education on these matters, there is little scope for the unscrupulous to mislead or exploit ignorant masses.

#### **10.7.5) Nitya lila of Lord Krishna**

**It is said that Lord Krishna descends himself in every day of Brahma. But its already said he performs nitya lila in Golokha Vrindavan. How is this possible... Is it something like expanding into as many forms as his consorts in Dwaraka? (Digest 8.9)**

Yes, it is a fact that Krishna can manifest forms that are simultaneously performing the same functions, or different functions. There is no limit in Krishna's ability to expand Himself and exhibit His lilas.

### 10.7.6) Does Krishna ever leave Vrindavana?

**A friend of mine said that Krishna never returned to Vrindavana after the battle of Kurukshetra. Yet, Caitanya-Caritamrta says that it was Vishnu who went to Mathura and that Krishna never leaves Vrindavana. Then there is Ratha Yatra, which is celebrating Krishna's return to Vrindavana. Could you please shed light on this? (Digest 59.2)**

Yes, Krishna never takes even one step out of Vrindavana. Those manifestations of Krishna outside Vrindavana, in Mathura, Dvaraka etc., are plenary expansions of Krishna. Krishna who appears in Mathura as the son of Devaki is understood to be Vasudeva Krishna, one of the four `catur-vyuha' expansions (Krishna's first expansion is Balaram who then expands into the catur-vyuha viz. Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. From the catur-vyuha emanate all other expansions come.)

Our acharyas explain how this Vasudeva-Krishna then transcendently merged into the body of Yasoda-nandana Krishna, when Vasudeva brought Him to Vrindavana in the dead of the night. Even within Vrindavana, the pastimes of killing demons were not performed by `svayam-bhagavan' Krishna, but by this portion of Vasudeva Krishna. When Krishna apparently left for Mathura with Akura, it was Vasudeva Krishna who departed, while `svayam bhagavan' Krishna entered the Yamuna and into the hearts of the residents of Vrindavana and remained there inconspicuous as the Vrajavasis were relishing Krishna's association in the highest ecstasy of love in separation.

The general narration we find is that Krishna never performed the pastime of again `returning back' to Vrindavana from Dvaraka. However, the selected following quotes from Srila Jiva Goswami's Sankalpa Kalpa-druma indicate the scriptural references that indicate otherwise. Other of our vaisnava acarya's indicate a similar conclusion, again based upon similar scriptural references. You will find one of these references in the BBT's purport to SB 10.78.16, which clearly indicates with ref. to Padma Purana that Krishna entered Vrindavan after killing Dantavakra.

In addition, the residents of Vrindavana had the opportunity to meet Him during the solar eclipse at Kurukshetra. At that time the gopis, being unable to bear seeing their beloved Krishna in royal attire and surrounded by royal paraphernalia, wanted to take Him back to the forests of Vrindavana. In that mood they started pulling His chariot. Ratha yatra signifies this attempt by the gopis to bring Krishna back to Vrindavana.

## **SRILA JIVA GOSWAMI'S SANKALPA KALPADRUMA: PART ONE**

### **Chapter One: Janmadi Lila. Lord Krishna's Birth and other Pastimes**

12. Sri Krishna, the son of Nanda, who, although He hides from the Vedic rituals and is not in the Vedic mantras, does happily appear before some persons in this world....

226. ...who returned to Vraja, as the people of Dvaraka explained in the prayer recorded in SB 1.11.9...("O lotus-eyed Lord, whenever You go away to Mathura, Vrindavana or Hastinapura to meet Your friends and relatives, every moment of Your absence seems like a million years. O

infallible one, at that time our eyes become useless, as if bereft of sun.")

227. ...who grants His auspicious presence to the people of Vraja eternally, as is described in the Padma Purana, Uttara Khanda...

228. ...who, staying in Vraja, assumed another form and went to Dvaraka, this action clearly recorded in the scriptures...

229. ...about who Uddhava said "Krishna will very soon return to Vraja" (in SB 10.46.34), who must have returned to Vraja, for otherwise Uddhava would have spoken a lie...

257. ...who said in the Brhad Gautamiya Tantra "I, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the master of all the demigods, never leave the forest of Vrndavana..."

258. ...who said in the Brhad Gautamiya Tantra "Millennium after millennium I appear in Vrndavana and then again I disappear, Vrndavana cannot be seen with material eyes"...

260. ...whose words "I never leave Vrndavana" may be interpreted in two ways: either "I am always present in Vrndavana, even when it seems I have left" or "If somehow I leave Vrndavana I always quickly return"...

261. ...who eternally stays in His two cities (Mathura and Dvaraka) as SB 10.1.28 explains "The city and district of Mathura are very intimately connected with Krishna, for Lord Krishna resides there eternally"

266. ...killed Dantavakra on the open road, and then returned to live in Vraja. King Nanda and the other people of Vraja went to Him like hungry cakora birds gazing at the moon.

267. Seeing His father and the people of Vraja were withered and dry from not having seen Him, Lord Krishna splashed them all with the nectar of His presence. Pretending to stand with the hairs of their bodies erect, the trees that were the cowherd people again and again sprouted new shoots of joy.

268. Then Lord Krishna, showing the same features as before, approached the doe-eyed gopis. Wondering whether Lord Krishna had actually come before them, the gopis were bewildered, not bewildered, and bewildered again, moment after moment.

269. As He entered Vraja the people offered arati to Him with many jewels, showered Him with flowers, called out "Jai! Jai!" and greeted Him with auspicious words.

270. Pleasing them with graceful and humble words, Lord Krishna gave His association to the people of Vraja. Then, to shower His mother with happiness, He quickly entered His home.

271. For a long time He pleased her. Then, with her permission He lay down on a splendid bed and, surrounded by all His friends, slept at night.

272. Rising from bed, glorious Krishna brought great happiness to His eternal friends. His lotus face blossoming with happiness, He began a great festival of nectar for the bumblebee eyes of His friends.

273. Day after day the people of Vraja loved Krishna with a love greater than before. Day after day they saw that Krishna's handsomeness was greater than they had seen before.

274. Yearning to see King Nanda after some days, Lord Krishna took Rohini, Uddhava, and many others and quickly went by chariot to Vraja.

275. Goddess Yogamaya created a Deity form of Krishna. The beautiful-eyed gopis who yearned to marry Krishna worshipped that Deity with the honey of their passionate love.

276. When Lord Krishna assumed a different form and went to the city of the Yadavas, His original form was visible only to the people in the glorious village of Vraja. O mind, please always think of that form of the gopa Krishna.

#### **10.7.7) Was Lord Krishna unfaithful to Srimati Radharani by marrying Rukmini devi?**

**We all know of the great epic of Lord Krishna, the holy war between good and bad but on the other end I have few questions unanswered: We have always heard of Radha-Krishna rasa lila but once Krishna left Gokul, the entire focus of Mahabharat goes to war and other important topics, but there is no explanation of what happened to Radha and her life. With all true respect I am somehow not convinced why it was not possible for Lord Krishna to be with Radha and why He had to marry Rukmini. This act is totally unfaithful; the very typical answer is that for the sake of the world, God has to leave everything and move to save the world and defeat the evil. If that was the case why in the first place did He love Radha? (Digest 133.1)**

Krishna's leaving Vrindavana and all of His beloved associates there was not an act of unfaithfulness; rather it has very deep spiritual import. You might have heard that the Supreme Personality of Godhead accomplishes many purposes through one action. The external reason for Krishna's leaving Vrindavan was to attend to other affairs such as killing the demons and establishing religious principles (as He had promised Mother Earth prior to His appearance, and which He did in the battle of Kurukshetra) as well as to reciprocate with His other devotees in Mathura and Hastinapura.

However, the internal reason was His desire to reciprocate with the unparalleled love of the residents of Vrindavan. Krishna actually never leaves Vrindavan - this is the statement of scriptures. Rather He remained with the gopis and mother Yashoda in His bhava expansion, and apparently in separation only for the reason of increasing their ecstatic love for Him. (Cf. Krsna Book, Ch 11)

Krishna explains this in His message through Uddhava, "My dear gopis, in order to increase your superexcellent love for Me, I have purposely separated Myself from you. I have done this so that you may be in constant meditation on Me." (Cf. Krishna book Ch 12) The gopis had attained such an intense degree of love for Krishna that Krishna felt unable to repay them; He explains later on that the only way He could further increase their transcendental happiness

was by having them serve Him in separation.

This method of loving and serving in the mood of separation is the highest form of absorption in Krishna and the highest source of spiritual ecstasy - and this fact is very difficult to understand from the material point of view. Krishna Himself was constantly absorbed in this mood of love in separation from Radharani while in Dvaraka.

His marrying Rukmini and other queens should also not be seen from the mundane platform. Rukmini and all the other queens of Dvaraka are actually expansions of Srimati Radharani and are the internal spiritual energy of the Lord. There is nothing immoral, unfaithful or reproachable in the divine pastimes of the Supreme Lord - they are all meant simply for increasing the spiritual happiness of His devotees.

Please refer to further discussion on this topic from previous digests:

[Digest 40 Question 1](#) Why Krishna does not marry Radharani?

[Digest 7 Question 11](#) Did Krishna leave Radharani?

### **10.7.8) Lord Krishna advising Arjuna to kill Karna**

**In the Srimad Bhagavatam 1.7.36, Krishna reminds Arjuna: "A person who knows the principles of religion does not kill an enemy who is careless, intoxicated, insane, asleep, afraid or devoid of his chariot", thereby highlighting Ashwatthama's heinous crime. But during the Mahabharata war Krishna Himself advises Arjuna to kill Karna who was devoid of his chariot and not resisting. I find this contradictory and difficult to understand. Could you please clarify this matter? (Digest 216.1)**

If Krishna chooses to deceive a person, no one can surpass Him in deceit. As Srila Prabhupada remarks, Krishna's greatness is not one-sided - He can be the greatest cheat when He chooses to. But His cheating is also the supreme justice. Krishna arranges that one who cheats others is in turn cheated. This was one of the lessons He wanted to demonstrate through this episode - those who adopt deceitful means also deserve to be killed by deceitful means.

Right from the beginning Karna, along with Duryodhana and his cohorts, was involved in all of the unrighteous schemes to try to annihilate the Pandavas - beginning with the construction of the lac palace, the treacherous dice game and the attempted insulting of Draupadi. Even during the battle of Kuruksetra, Karna, Dronacharya and others had joined to deceitfully kill Abhimanyu.

Knowing well the lack of scruples and the characteristic disregard for rules of chivalry within Duryodhana's party, the Pandavas made a condition at the outset of the battle, stipulating the rules for the battle. They said that they would not be the first to break the standard rules for combat, but if the Kauravas adopted devious and unfair means, then they too would resort to whatever tactics they deemed appropriate. Thus, when Abhimanyu was brought down by unfair means, Krishna arranged for those involved in that unrighteous act to also meet their end by similar means.

When Karna's chariot was stuck due to a brahmana's curse, and he requested Arjuna to desist from fighting on the principle of virtue, Lord Krishna explicitly reminded Karna of each of the instances in which he violated the principles of virtue. The Lord then reminded him that he did not deserve a righteous fight and thus instigated Arjuna to immediately kill him.

**10.7.9) 'Lord Krishna meditating upon Himself' & 'Radha and Krishna are never separated'**

**I heard that Lord Sri Krishna used to worship his own Deity. Is it true? If so, why not Radha Krishna Deities? (Digest 5.2)**

It is mentioned in the Bhagavatam that during His Dvaraka pastimes, Krishna used to 'meditate' upon Himself everyday. And when we speak of Krishna we should understand that He is always situated along with His internal potency, Srimati Radharani, and is never separated.

**10.7.10) Disappearance of Lord Krishna**

**How did Krishna disappear from the material world in that lila? (Digest 60.3)**

The departure of Lord Krishna from this material world is described in the Mahabharata, Mausala parva, and also in the Srimad Bhagavatam. After having established the Pandavas as the emperors of the planet, Lord Krishna decided to wind up his pastimes in this universe, and on the pretense of a curse, He arranged to withdraw all the members of the Yadu clan from the surface of the earth. And then He sat down in a forest, displaying His brilliant four-armed form and surrounded by His personal weapons in their embodied form, when on the pretense of the curse, and by the inconceivable will of the Lord, a hunter named Jara mistakenly pierced the lotus foot of the Lord with an arrow. The Lord then departed from the planet, and it is described that as He entered His abode, even the demigods, headed by Lord Brahma, could not see Him or ascertain His movements, and thus became astonished.

As with the appearance of the Lord from the womb of Devaki, His disappearance, although resembling an ordinary living entity, is actually an enactment of yogamaya, and is very difficult to understand for the common man. Although His body is non-different from His self, unlike ordinary conditioned living entities, it is described that when Krishna returned to His abode, He left behind His virat-rupa form in the material world just to bewilder the atheists who did not understand the transcendental nature of the Lord. (Cf. SB 1.14.8)

**10.7.11) 'Disappearance of Lord Krishna' & 'Vajra-Nabha ruling Mathura'**

**What happened to Krishna after Mahabharata? As per my information he was shot by someone on his foot thinking it to be a deer's eye, but are we telling that the disappearance of God from this world was just like that? Who ruled Mathura after His departure? (Digest 134.1)**

Mausala Lila or the disappearance of Lord Krishna is described in response to [Digest 60 Question 3](#) (See question 11.11.9).

Vajra-Nabha, the great grandson of Lord Krishna became the ruler of Mathura after the Lord's departure.

**10.7.12) Why were Lord Rama and Lakshmana affected by weapons?**

**I humbly ask why was the snake weapon allowed to 'capture' Sri Rama and why was the weapon of Ravana's son allowed to 'knock-out' Laskmana? (Digest 5.3)**

This is just part of the Lord's pastimes. When the Supreme Lord appears to fight with His so-called enemies, He is actually enjoying His lila, just as a father might take pleasure in a mock-wrestling with his child, and allow himself to be defeated by the child. The example is also given that just as Garuda sometimes plays with a snake that he is about to defeat, the Lord playfully appears to be struck by His enemies or lets go of them, but He eventually defeats them. In all cases, the Lord is the Supreme Controller, and nothing can overpower Him...unless He allows Himself to be overpowered, to facilitate His sporting pastimes.

**10.7.13) 'Maya-Sita and protection', 'understanding the pastimes of the Supreme Lord' & 'purity and chastity of women in Vedic culture'**

**Part 1: Regarding Ravana's touching/kidnapping Mother Sita, Srila Prabhupada often explains that Ravana could not really capture Sita, but maya-Sita (also in Lord Caitanya's discussion with Ramadasa Vipra in [Cc. Madhya 9.178-212](#)). It also appears from the description in Caitanya-Caritamrta that this was only known to Mother Sita or perhaps only to Her and Lord Rama.**

**If it was maya-Sita who was kidnapped, and maya-Sita was a different person from the real Mother Sita, how do we understand the pastimes in the rest of the Ramayana? It seems to make Lord Rama's feelings of separation and His tremendous efforts to get Her back appear like theatrical acting. It also seems to make the feelings of separation and devotion of Mother Sita in Lanka as somewhat inapplicable.**

**For example, Lord Krishna's becoming afraid of Mother Yasoda is described by Queen Kunti as very difficult to understand because fear personified is afraid of Him and Lord Krishna is not just acting - Lord Krishna is really afraid. Is Lord Rama keeping up an act even though He "knows" that the real Sitadevi was not kidnapped? In one sense, all lila of the Supreme Lord could be called acting for the pleasure of His devotees, given that ultimately Lord Krishna or Lord Rama knows everything. (Digest 124.1)**

The pastimes of the Supreme Lord are enacted under the influence of yoga-maya or the internal potency of the Lord. Although Lord Krishna or Rama is omniscient, under the influence of yoga-maya He "becomes forgetful", or so-called "makes mistakes" or is apparently ignorant of real facts. He is not simply putting an act "as if" afraid of Mother Yasoda, or "as if" overwhelmed by lamentation at losing Sita. He is actually experiencing the mood of a dependent child or a lover who has lost his beloved.

Sometimes being absorbed in thoughts of Srimati Radharani, Krishna tries to milk a bull! He is not pretending, but actually makes such mistakes under the influence of yoga-maya. This does not however interfere with His capacity for omniscience. Yoga-maya is His own energy, always subservient to Him, but He voluntarily comes under her influence in order to enjoy His pastimes.

As far as Sita is concerned, the fact that it was only an illusory form that Ravana seized and brought to Lanka does not interfere with the profound feelings of separation felt by Mother Sita. She was actually experiencing the ecstasy of love in separation, and Her shadow replica, maya-Sita, was also exhibiting similar feelings in Lanka.

Quite apart from the unfolding of events that led to Ravana's destruction and establishment of the victory of virtue over evil, on another dimension this entire pastime was orchestrated to enhance the intensity of love in separation between Rama and Sita, much like the unfolding of events that led to Krishna leaving Vrindavana.

**Part 2: How can Sitadevi be considered polluted/pollutable (e.g. by Ramadasa Vipra) by the touch of Ravana, which was very much against Her will, and even though Sitadevi is eternally pure as Maha-Laksmi? According to the Vedic system, is an ordinary woman considered materially polluted by the society by the mere touch or minor molestation by another person against her will? She may consider herself polluted, but does the society also consider her polluted? Of course, if she willingly touches or gets touched by another person in any way, she is definitely polluted.**

**Lord Rama consistently said that He knew Sitadevi to be pure. Yet, as an ideal ruler, He was concerned about the common public opinion, and so He asked her to take a fire-bath and even sent her to the forest. (Digest 124.1)**

In the Vedic culture, great importance was attached to the purity and chastity of women, and as much importance was given to protecting them also. Srila Prabhupada remarked that if a lady happened to stay away from home even for the duration of one night without being accompanied by her father or husband, her character would come under question, and it was socially quite unacceptable. Essentially, such strictures and restrictions were placed in order to protect women from undesirable situations or abuse, and it was equally the responsibility of her guardians to offer her such protection. It was for this reason that Rama reproached Himself for allowing Sita to be left unprotected.

Although this is the normal standard, there are exceptions to be found. Lord Krishna Himself accepted and married the 16000 princesses who were kidnapped by Bhaumasura; although socially they might have been considered impure and thus no one would have married them, they were fully purified by virtue of their devotion. Draupadi was subjected to unthinkable harassment by the Kauravas, but was protected by Lord Krishna Himself and later avenged by her husbands, and certainly there was no question in anyone's mind about her purity. There is also the story of Ahalya who was deceived by Indra and was cursed by her husband to become a stone, but was later purified from all contamination by coming in touch with Lord Rama and reunited with her husband, and other such examples.

As far as mother Sita is concerned, she was definitely beyond reproach. Lord Rama's subjecting her to the test of fire, as you have already stated, was to establish the strength of her purity for the common public, which He did in the role of an ideal king. And Ramadasa Vipra's anguish was not about whether Sita was considered to be polluted but about the fact that she was touched by the evil Ravana against her will.

**10.7.14) Why did Lord Vamana dev punish Bali Maharaja, a pure devotee?**

**I would like to ask about Vamana avatar. Mahabali is a pure devotee of Krishna and he ruled with all the qualities of a king; all of his people were happy with him. But Krishna came as Vamana and removed him from the earth. Why did He do so?**

**In Kerala, a southern state of India, people are celebrating Onam festival to celebrate the arrival of Mahabali to visit his people. All the people are getting together to celebrate this occasion with one mind. The Christian community is utilizing this particular festival to preach against Krishna by speaking of Mahabali's greatness. Please clarify all doubts about this particular avatar of Krishna. (Digest 81.1)**

Bali Maharaja was indeed a pure devotee. In fact he is glorified in Srimad Bhagavatam as one of the 12 mahajanas or great authorities in the devotional line. Despite the glorious nature of Bali Maharaja, by external analysis it seems as if the Lord treated Bali unjustly. Actually, however, Vamanadeva's dealings with Bali Maharaja were completely transcendental and the apparent punishment of Bali is simply a glorification of both the Lord and His pure devotee. Lord Vamana explicitly explains this Himself in Srimad Bhagavatam. He expresses His appreciation and love for Bali, and discloses that He orchestrated this whole lila just to show to the world the depth of Bali's wonderful qualities.

Although a devotee, Bali who was the grandson of Prahlad Maharaja, was the king of the asuras. As a matter of his kingly duty, he led the demons in battle against the demigods and conquered Indra, thus becoming the ruler of the universe.

It is stated in Srimad Bhagavatam (1.3.28) that Lord Krishna always protects the pious demigods, and He incarnates to vanquish the enemies of Indra, the demons. Thus, by the prayers of Aditi, the mother of Indra, He incarnated as Vamana, to divest the asuras of their control over the heaven and give it back to Indra.

Vamanadev came to Bali Maharaja's sacrificial arena in the form of a dwarf brahmana, begging him simply for three paces of land. Bali's guru, Sukracharya, knowing Vamanadev's real identity and mission, induced Bali not to promise charity. But Bali Maharaja was very happy to offer something to Vishnu, even if He came in the role of an enemy. Thus he transgressed the order of his guru. Nobody can check the worship of Lord Vishnu, and if one does, even if they may be one's guru, they should be rejected. For showing this example, Bali is considered one of the 12 mahajanas.

Bali knew that by asking for three paces of land, Vamanadev will take the whole universe. Yet he agreed to be so-called "cheated" by the Lord. This is the symptom of a devotee. A devotee agrees to any action of the Lord. When the Lord expanded Himself as Trivikrama and covered the whole universe with two steps, he offered his own head for the third pace. Thus by giving everything to Lord Vishnu, he purchased the Lord. Even under extreme tribulation -- having lost everything and being humiliated and rejected by his own guru and even family members - Bali was not resentful in the slightest towards Vamana nor did his mind budge from the disposition of complete surrender to the Lord's will. Vamana demonstrated this glorious character of Bali by this lila with him.

Of the nine processes of bhakti, Bali Maharaja is the example for one who achieved perfection by complete self-surrender; sarvasvatma nivedane bali.

In the end, Vamanadev was so satisfied that He awarded Bali the Sutala planet to rule and

personally remained there as his doorkeeper!

In general when great devotees appear to be subjected to trials and tribulations, such pastimes simply magnifies their own glory and the glory of devotional service. In addition, tribulations experienced by great souls and the Lord's consequent protection nurture our own faith and impart deep lessons and inspiration to us on how to face adversities in our own lives. Ultimately this pastime is a glorification of Krishna and not otherwise, for it demonstrates how Krishna becomes conquered by unflinching surrender of His devotee and even subordinates Himself to them.

#### **10.7.15) Pastimes of Lord Rshabadev**

**One point of confusion for me of late has been trying to understand the pastimes of Lord Rsabhadeva in the Fifth Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam. Could you kindly explain to me what is the proper way to understand the pastimes of Lord Rsabhadeva? (Digest 2.19)**

This question is very broad. Can you be more specific in what you would like to know about Lord Rsabhadeva?

#### **10.7.16) Understanding Lord Rshabadev's seemingly strange behavior**

**How does one reconcile to the 'strange' behavior of Lord Rsabhadeva (he used to walk around naked, lay in his stool and urine etc.) to Sri Krishna's injunction in the Bhagavad Gita (3.21) stating that as great men do, general masses follow. Lord Rsabhadeva was a great king, an ideal upholder of dharma, yet why did he then set such a bewildering example? (Digest 8.10)**

Lord Rsabhadeva was an incarnation of the Supreme Lord and He exhibited the symptoms of one who has reached the paramahansa stage, where one is completely beyond all bodily conception. The condition of his final lila was that of an avadhuta, or one who totally neglected his external body and all social conventions; by mundane standards, it appears to the world that an avadhuta is a madman. These pastimes can be appreciated by us, but are certainly not to be imitated. Our duty, rather, is to simply follow the instructions of the acaryas and become gradually purified.

### **10.8. Vyasadeva**

#### **10.8.1) Time of appearance of Srila Vyasadeva**

**From SB 1.4.14 we see that Srila Vyasadeva was born at the overlap of Treta and Dwapar yuga. From Srila Vyasadeva's mother to Parikshit Maharaj, there were about 6 generations. My question is how did all of Dwapar yuga get covered by the passing of 6 generations only? I believe Dwapar yuga is 864,000 years long and the age of people in Dwapar yuga in general was 10 times that of people in Kali yuga - around 1000 years. In**

that case the passing of six generations would cover only about 6000 years or so. But the six generations I mentioned above covered nearly 864,000 years. How is that possible?

The translation itself for SB 1.4.14 clearly indicates that Srila Vyasadeva was born when the second millennium overlapped the third - "Sukadeva Goswami said: When the second millennium overlapped the third, the great sage [Vyasadeva] was born to Parasura in the womb of Satyavati, the daughter of Vasu."

In light of this, how can the length of Dwapar yuga be explained? The extent of the overlap is not mentioned and that could perhaps explain the extent of Dwapar yuga. Is that the explanation for my question?

If, however, Srila Vyasadeva was born at the sandhya of Dwapar and Kali yuga then does that mean that all these events - Krishna's lilas, Mahabharata and many others took place in Kali yuga? (Digest 182.1)

1) Application of the term "Overlap" in this case- In the 28th cycle of the four yugas in the life of Vaivasvata Manu, Krishna appears. During the particular Dvapara Yuga of that 28th cycle, the Dvapara and Treta Yugas change places. By definition, Treta means third and Dvapara means second, but in this cycle we understand that Dvapara Yuga has just finished and we are now in Kali Yuga. However, normally the order is Satya, Dvapara, Treta and Kali.

The use of the word "overlap" means they changed place, not that they literally overlapped as we commonly used the term. This fact is not commonly discussed, because we generally are dealing with our current cycle of 4 yugas. However, it is a technical fact.

2) The sequence of Vyasa's appearance with Krishna's - Vyasa appeared in the third sandhya (sesa sandhya) or final sandhya of Dvapara Yuga. While Vyasa previously appeared at some point during the sesa sandhya of Dvapara Yuga, Krishna appeared some time after him, and then the Battle of Kuruksetra happened about 90 years into the time that Krishna was here, and then after Krishna had been here for 125 years He left, and then the prathama sandhya (first sandhya) of Kali Yuga began.

### 10.8.2) Qualificaiton and perfection of Vyasadev

**Based on the story of Vyasadeva running after his son, Sukadeva Goswami, some people I know argue that Vyasadeva is not perfect and hence the Vedas composed by Him may not be perfect. Please shed some light on this story and how it relates to Vyasadeva's qualification for writing the Vedas. (Digest 187.1)**

This pastime you have mentioned is described in the Bhagavatam itself (please see SB 1.2.2 and 1.4.5 <http://vedabase.net/sb/1/4/5/en> and purport) -- it is a wonderful glorification of the transcendental position of Sukadeva Goswami, even at the time of his birth. Great acharyas have explained these verses; here is what Srila Prabhupada writes in the purport to this sloka: "The ladies, by their special qualifications, could sense this at once, and therefore they were not very concerned about him (Sukadeva Goswami). But when his father (Vyasadeva) passed, the ladies quickly dressed. The ladies were exactly like his children or grandchildren, yet they reacted to the presence of Vyasadeva according to the social custom because Srila Vyasadeva played the part of a householder. A householder has to distinguish between a male and female, otherwise he cannot be a householder ... Srila Vyasadeva was also in the transcendental stage,

but because he was in the householder's life, he did not pretend to be a liberated soul, as a matter of custom."

Vyasadeva is an incarnation of the Personality of Godhead; he is playing the role of a householder and thus setting an example for everyone in the ideal behavior of a householder. Sukadeva Goswami's glorification of being transcendental to bodily distinctions of male and female is very befitting to his position in the renounced order of life. On the other hand, one who is functioning within the society as a grihastha should not artificially pretend to be beyond bodily distinctions - this would only lead to social disturbance and disruption. It is not that the damsels could not appreciate the transcendental character of Vyasadeva, but because he was appearing as a householder, they followed the protocol for that ashram very appropriately. Rather than diminishing his position, this pastime actually highlights the qualities and character of Vyasadeva who, although fully liberated, accepts the position of householder to set an ideal example for common men to follow, just like king Janaka and others did, as stated in BG 3.20-21.

Vyasadeva is accepted as an incarnation of the Supreme Lord; he is confirmed as such by his father Parasura Muni in the Visnu Purana. To set an example (just as Krishna did, by attending the school of Sandipani Muni), Vyasa became disciple of Narada Muni, who extols Vyasa as pure & having perfect vision and appoints him to compose the Srimad Bhagavatam, the cream of all Vedas (SB 1.5.21). Vyasadeva is revered, accepted and followed by all great sages and saintly persons including recent acharyas like Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, and Lord Caitanya up to Srila Prabhupada. Indeed, Sukadeva Goswami himself --- whom this pastime is meant to glorify --- accepted Vyasadeva as his spiritual master and came back to learn the Srimad Bhagavatam from him. He would not have done so if Vyasa was not on an equally transcendental platform. (SB 1.7.8)

So there is no room for any blemish, disqualification or doubts upon Vyasadeva's authority in presenting the Vedas - at least as it is accepted by all the greatly learned and saintly teachers thus far. We would be most safe in accepting the verdict of these mahajanas and following their footsteps.

The activities of great souls cannot be measured by the mundane yardstick of our mental preconceptions. Only a highly qualified person can rightly understand another great personality. Just as the pastimes of Krishna or Rama, although often misrepresented, can be rightly understood only by hearing in disciplic succession, the same is true of the activities of great devotees. We have to exercise great degree of caution and discretion in trying to understand their activities, and should be careful to draw our conclusions based on hearing from bona fide acharyas or tattva-darshis. Lord Krishna enjoins that in order to learn the truth, one must approach a tattva-darshi, seer of truth, and inquire submissively and render service (BG 4.34) - this is the process of obtaining knowledge of the transcendental dealings of Krishna and His exalted devotees.

## 11. Liberation

### 11.1. General questions: Liberation

#### 11.1.1) Liberation: Sarupya, Salokya, Sarsti and Samipya mukti

**I read somewhere that those who achieve Sarupya, Salokya, Sarsti and Samipya mukti are not born again, and are eternal. For each of these, please give examples of persons who have achieved this liberation. Why is it that they do not reach Krishna's abode in Goloka Vrindavana? I was under the impression that the ultimate goal for each soul is to reach Krishna's abode. (Digest 29.2)**

Sarupya mukti is to attain the same form as the Lord; the residents of Vaikuntha planets all have a four-handed forms and features resembling the four-handed Lord Narayana. Salokya mukti is to attain the same planet of the Lord, Sarsti is to have similar opulences as the Lord and samipya is to gain His personal association. Generally these liberations refer to achieving a position in the Vaikuntha planets, but one can also reside in Goloka, as well manifest opulences given by Krishna to assist Him in His service in some way, etc. Thus a devotee may attain any one of the Vaikuntha planets or Goloka Vrindavana according to his mood of devotion to the particular form of the Personality of Godhead.

As far as the ultimate goal of the soul is concerned, the ultimate goal is to achieve pure love of Godhead (as discussed in the question above) and to be engaged in devotional service to Krishna. That is the constitutional position of the soul - to serve Krishna. This may mean to actually be transferred to the spiritual planets, or attain one of the above four kinds of liberation, but not necessarily. Since devotional service is absolute, it is non-different from Krishna's abode. Anyone who is engaged in devotional service in full Krishna consciousness, even while in the material realm, is actually situated in the spiritual world.

#### 11.1.2) 'Going after liberation' vs. 'preaching to the conditioned souls'

**Why do you ask people to get "mukti" (liberation) when it would be better for them to become self-controlled and take repeated births to serve other people by showing them the right path? (Digest 29.3)**

Your concern for the welfare of other people is certainly very noble. A very essential quality for a Vaishnava is to carry such compassion for others. A Vaishnava is para-duhkha-dukhki, he cannot bear to see others suffering. Prahlada Maharaja exhibits this mood when he prays to Lord Nrsimadev that he does not want liberation when so many living entities are still suffering. His only wish was to bring them back to the shelter of the Lord's lotus feet even if he had to remain in the material world. (Cf. Bhag. 7.9.43)

However, we have to understand that in order to show the right path to others and help them, we have to know the right path ourselves and be in a position to help them. A drowning man cannot save another drowning man; a bound man cannot free another. And we have to know

how to serve others; otherwise it may do more harm than good. It is just like trying to perform a surgery to help someone in need, without having undergone any medical training!

Real service to others is to help them become free from all material circumstances of life and to bring them to the shelter of the Lord (as Prahlada Maharaja prays); all other help is well intended but temporary. If one is acting under the clutches of modes of material nature oneself and is bound by birth and death, how can one help others become free?

Bearing all this in mind, it becomes important for an individual to personally follow the instructions of scriptures under the guidance of the spiritual master, and thus try to elevate oneself to the spiritual platform. In turn, one can then become empowered by the Lord to help others on His behalf. As discussed in the above questions, a devotee may also be apparently undergoing birth and death, but he is not bound by nature's laws because he is directly under God's protection, therefore he is in a transcendental position, specifically enabled or empowered to help others.

### 11.1.3) Liberation vs. 'love of Godhead'

**It is said that Krishna can award liberation, but He confers love of God only to those who are really sincere. What is the difference? (Digest 29.1)**

In general people consider the goal of religiousness to be economic development, satisfying material necessities and ultimately gaining liberation (dharma artha kama moksha). By liberation we mean ending the repeated cycles of birth and death and absolving all actions and reactions of material life. But Lord Caitanya taught that the ultimate goal of life reaches far beyond this neutral sense of moksha; life's ultimate goal is to develop unalloyed love of God. This very message, and how this is achieved is the essence of Srimad Bhagavatam.

The happiness derived from this pure love of God far surpasses the happiness derived even from liberation (c.f. Nectar of Devotion, Ch. 1). It is said that all the happiness of this material world and that of liberation are awaiting at the doorstep of a pure devotee, but the devotee is so absorbed in relishing their service to Krishna that they do not care so much for liberation, nor do they care whether they are in hell or heaven, as long as they can serve Krishna.

For example, the residents of Vrindavana or the Pandavas were simply interested in loving Krishna and pleasing Him; they did not care for their own spiritual advancement or wellbeing. Yet by their love the Supreme Lord became completely controlled by them, so much so that He took a subordinate position to His devotees. This goes far beyond the conception of a person trying to gain liberation from material clutches. Of course, one so engaged in the Lord's service is very dear to Him, and thus automatically becomes eligible for liberation from material miseries.

Even the enemies of Krishna who were personally killed by Him attained liberation. But pure devotion is very rare to achieve because by devotional service the Lord becomes purchased by the devotee.

#### 11.1.4) Where should we desire to go (Goloka? or somewhere else? or nowhere?)

**Where should we desire to go to? Some say to desire Goloka Vrndavana, and some say not to desire to go anywhere. I am really confused. (Digest 64.1)**

Pure devotees of Krishna do not desire anything for themselves. They simply desire to serve Krishna, from whichever place that Krishna wants to send them to. They do not make conditions that they will serve Krishna only if He will give them liberation and take them to Goloka. This is however a very, very advanced and pure stage of devotion. In our beginning stages of devotion, it is wonderful to desire to leave this illusory material world and go back to Godhead, to Goloka Vrndavana. Such an aspiration gives impetus for progress. This strong desire will help us overcome the pulling of other kinds of desires in the heart.

Everyone has desires, even among spiritualists. The jnanis want liberation and yogis want mystic siddhis. But as long as one desires something for himself/herself apart from Krishna, one cannot be peaceful. When a devotee wants to go back to Godhead, not simply to get out of the difficulties of the material world, but to become pure and serve Radha and Krishna, then this is not a selfish desire. It is the pure nature of the soul to want to enjoy with Krishna, by serving Him.

As our relationship with Krishna is revived and grows stronger and stronger, service to Krishna becomes more important than going to Krishna's abode, because it is through devotional service that we are connected to Krishna. The pure devotee actually feels Krishna's presence everywhere.

Therefore we say that pure devotees like Prabhupada carry Vrndavana in their heart. Srila Prabhupada left Vrindavana and came to New York City! But his consciousness was always in Vrndavana. Until we come to such a stage of constant connection with Krishna, we are recommended to cultivate the desire, even greed, for 'going back to Godhead'.

#### 11.1.5) Pure devotee's family members' attaining liberation

**It is said that 7 generations up and down get liberated when a pure devotee is born in that family or if a family member has perfected himself at the end of life. Also we hear that one cannot go back to godhead unless he has fully surrendered and achieved love of Krishna. What happens when the people in that family are not devoted? We can take Srila Prabhupada's family as an example. Please explain. (Digest 65.3)**

There is a distinction between 'attaining liberation' and 'going back to Godhead, or achieving love of Krishna.' The freewill of a living entity is never interfered with, and as long as one maintains aversion to Krishna, one cannot enter the spiritual world.

Srila Prabhupada answered this specific question by explaining that the 'type of liberation achieved by those related to devotees is that they are given the direct opportunity to engage in devotional service in their next life.' The understanding offered by Srila Prabhupada was that the rendering of devotional service is itself on the liberated platform; however, one may or may not favorably accept that opportunity.

The family members of a pure devotee are greatly benefited and purified by that connection; the Lord arranges to extend to them the opportunity to become free from all their

past sinful actions, simply out of his unlimited love for his beloved devotee and anyone connected to them. Opportunity is provided for spiritual progress and in such an elevated state of purity and liberation from material reactions, they may (or may not) become more favorably disposed towards devotional service based on that living entity's own free will.

One such example was the son-in-law of Sarvabauma Bhattacharya, Amogha.

#### **11.1.6) 'Nitya siddha souls' & 'impersonal liberation'**

**Are there many souls in the other worlds who are serving Krishna with full devotion and do not want to come back to this world? Are liberated souls always playing and singing happily around Krishna? Or do they become submerged in Krishna and do not have any soul-body or soul- identification? (Digest 126.4)**

Yes, there are unlimitedly far more perfect living entities in the spiritual world than there are conditioned souls in the material worlds. They are called nitya-siddha (eternally liberated). They maintain their individual identity and engage in devotional service in five types of relationship with Krishna viz. neutrality, servitude, friendship, parenthood, and conjugal love.

There are also some souls who sometimes choose to merge into the bodily effulgence of Krishna, i.e. Brahman. Those conditioned souls in the material world, who are frustrated with this life and want to end it all, sometimes aspire to become liberated and merge into Brahman in this way. However, the soul by nature is always seeking enjoyment, whereas merging into Brahman is a dormant state of existence devoid of the positive pleasure that comes from loving exchanges with the Lord. Therefore this is a temporary position and such souls sooner or later tire of remaining dormant and return to the material world.

#### **11.1.7) Fall down of jivas from Brahmajyoti**

**Since from Brahmajyoti one will fall down after sometime will they keep repeating birth and death? (Digest 24.5)**

Yes.

#### **11.1.8) Destination of the demons killed by Lord Krishna**

**Will the demons killed by Krishna ever go back to Godhead? (Digest 24.4)**

With some very special exceptions, the demons killed by Krishna went back to Godhead.

## 12. Living entities

### 12.1. Freewill

#### 12.1.1) 'Freewill' and 'is everything predestined?'

**I have been struggling for some time with questions such as: Is everything pre-determined? Do we have to accept that everything is pre-determined and occupy ourselves with devotional service while still performing our duties? Or do we have to strive toward a goal (even if that means being competitive) while still performing devotional service? (Digest 70.2)**

We have extensively discussed karma and freewill previously (See Digest 4) which may partly answer your questions. If I understand correctly, it seems that your question focuses on whether or not someone performing devotional service should strive to achieve something in the field of their occupational duties, or in some specific way strive to improve their present life situation.

Devotees also have goals and aspirations that they strive towards, but their impetus is simply to please Krishna and increase their devotion, and not the achievement of any material objective in itself.

In the course of trying to cultivate our Krishna consciousness and steadily progress towards the spiritual plane, we are advised to carefully perform our prescribed occupational duties, and so we do. In the course of executing duties there may be standards to achieve and milestones to be reached. Our acharyas recommend that devotees should live very simply, but whatever is needed to perform one's duties nicely, one should strive according to their best capacity and to dedicate such endeavors and all facilities provided for that service fully unto Krishna. While working industriously the devotee also knows fully well that the result of one's endeavors is in Krishna's hands, not merely a product of their personal efforts.

Finally, there is a clear connection between devotionally-based endeavors and the notion of predestination.

As concluded in previous Digest discussions, our past actions "pre-determine" our present circumstances in life, but they do not pre-determine what we choose to do now. Our present choices determine our future. What we choose to do now can be executed on the material plane (deliberately or mindlessly, impelled by past conditioning), yielding temporary material results; or our present choices can be enacted on the spiritual plane, thus lifting us completely out of the cycle of karma. In other words, a devotee is not so directly interested in changing their karmic destiny nor overly concerned with improving their material circumstances per se, simply for sake of material welfare; however they are keenly interested in cultivating their relationship with Krishna. The devotee is contented to base their spiritual endeavors upon whatever position or within whatever circumstance of life they find themselves. In turn, Krishna takes charge of such a surrendered devotee, and their life is orchestrated by Krishna, and not karma.

### 12.1.2) Freewill: why Lord Krishna does not take us back to Godhead, forcibly?

**If Krishna is all powerful and wants us to come back to Him, then why does He not simply do it? (Digest 1.3)**

The answer to your question, which you have said is a very fundamental one, rests on the understanding of the living entity's free will. Because there is free will, the living entity can choose to misuse their free will. When this choice of misuse of free will is exercised by the living entity, the Lord may sanction it. But the punishment is also there along with the sanctioning, so that the living entity learns the lesson that misuse of freewill will not bring happiness. If you look on the other side of the question, 'Why is it that God does not restrict our free will so that we cannot misuse it?', then you have a situation where love is also not voluntary but forced. That is not love, that is something else. In order for there to be real love for God, there must also be the opportunity for free will, including the misuse of free will.

### 12.1.3) Jiva's only possession: freewill & relationship with Lord Krishna

**In a recent lecture I heard the following explanation: "Our bodies are not ours, even our soul is not something we can claim to be ours, since the soul is directly an energy of Krishna. The only thing which we can claim to be ours is our relationship with Krishna." Does this mean that, similarly, our free will is the only thing which is ours (that too being given by Krishna)? We can use our free will to come closer to or go further away from our relationship with Krishna. Can we infer it like this also? (Digest 108.1)**

Yes, this is a correct understanding. Our only possession is our relationship with Krishna and the freedom to choose whether or not to act within that relationship is an act of free will.

Another way of saying the same thing is that we, the living entities, are infinitesimal (anu) and therefore have but a tiny free will, thus minute independence. Our only independence is to choose how we regard Krishna and accordingly we are placed under the jurisdiction of either the internal energy or the external, material energy. Under the influence of the external energy, maya, one may falsely think oneself to be the proprietor and controller of something, at least of one's own self. But in reality, all of a conditioned soul's actions and choices are controlled by the modes of material nature.

### 12.1.4) Degree of freewill

**When an individual makes a decision in the material world, is it the soul (jiva) making the choice or is it purely the 3 modes of material nature acting? Is the jiva merely an observer? How much free-will/independence do we have? (Digest 77.1)**

"Tiny free will" is Srila Prabhupada's phrase. "The jiva as an observer" is a wrong notion. We have tiny free will, and we exercise it.

The 3 modes influence the decision-making capacity which we have, but we also make conscious choices (distinct from animals and other lower forms, who have much less evolved consciousness) and thus hold the responsibility for those decisions. This is karma.

Animals can be trained, by conditioning, to not bark or to walk, etc. Humans can be

conditioned/trained by similar systems. Evolved consciousness and with it choice-making capacity, however, is a unique feature of consciousness of the soul with a human form and manifests actions distinct from the modes of nature and its behaviors. Chanting the Holy Name, for example, is not modes-of-nature induced.

I think of the balance between freewill and conditioning by the modes to be something like an animal on a leash or rope. The mode of goodness allows more freedom because one earned it and will likely use it wisely; ignorance has less freedom, more restriction, or "a shorter leash". Still, while we are on a leash of some kind, we simultaneously have some modest mobility, lesser or greater, depending upon our association with the 3 modes.

#### 12.1.5) Why is our freewill minute?

**Why is our free-will infinitesimally smaller compared to the Supreme free-will?  
(Digest 166.3)**

Because we are infinitesimal. The Lord is vibhu, or Great, whereas we are anu, or tiny. Just as a drop of ocean contains much of the same chemicals as the ocean does but in minute quantity, similarly, as minute parts and parcels of the Infinite Lord, we possess in minute quantities all the qualities of the Lord, one of them being His Supreme free-will or independence.

#### 12.1.6) 'Freewill' & 'understanding B.G. 16.19-20'

**I'm wondering how individual free will factors into the verses and purports describing the species of demoniac life. Specifically BG 16.19 - 20.**

**Srila Prabhupada's purport states: "In this verse it is clearly indicated that the placing of a Particular individual soul in a particular body is the prerogative of the supreme will." "As for the demoniac, it is clearly said here that they are perpetually put into the wombs of demons, and thus they continue to be envious, the lowest of mankind."**

**These statements seem to indicate that the individual (in human form by indication of the word mankind), at some point, loses his free will to serve Krsna. The verses and subsequent purports of BG 16 also would seem to apply to most of society. Is it proper to think of the majority of mankind as demoniac? (Digest 214.1)**

As You know, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Absolute Truth is fully independent, svarat and the living entities being parts and parcels of the Lord, have minute independence/free will. Minute free will is an inherent quality of the soul and it can never be taken away from a living entity at any time (in the material or spiritual world). We choose (due to our minute free will), and there are outcomes for our choices but these outcomes cannot be independently determined or created. All endeavors, following a free will choice which we make, are fully dependent in their outcome upon the Will or Sanction of the Supreme. Karmana daiva netrena - under sanction of Superior authority [SB 3.31.1]. We have our desires and our free will, but they are supervised by the Supreme, according to natural laws. Thus, our freedom to 'create our destiny' is VERY restricted! We really have not so much control, ultimately. Within our restricted freedom, we can choose if we are going to act according to God's laws or not. That is within our control. But ultimately Krishna is the supreme controller, the actual and ultimate doer.

Our present material position has been determined by our past activities. This does not mean that we are like programmed robots without any free will. Within our present circumstances, we have some freedom - just as a tethered cow can move in a small circle. Depending on how we choose to act now, in accordance with the Supreme Lord's laws or against His laws, we can get greater or lesser facilities thus binding ourselves further, or we can get totally liberated by fully surrendering to Him.

The statement you quoted from Srila Prabhupada's purport BG 16.19 "In this verse it is clearly indicated that the placing of a particular individual soul in a particular body is the prerogative of the supreme will" is very nicely explained in SB 3.31.1:

#### TRANSLATION

The Personality of Godhead said: Under the supervision of the Supreme Lord and according to the result of his work, the living entity, the soul, is made to enter into the womb of a woman through the particle of male semen to assume a particular type of body.

#### PURPORT

As stated in the last chapter, after suffering different kinds of hellish conditions, a man comes again to the human form of body. The same topic is continued in this chapter. In order to give a particular type of human form to a person who has already suffered hellish life, the soul is transferred to the semen of a man who is just suitable to become his father. During sexual intercourse, the soul is transferred through the semen of the father into the mother's womb in order to produce a particular type of body. This process is applicable to all embodied living entities, but it is especially mentioned for the man who was transferred to the Andha-tamisra hell. After suffering there, when he who has had many types of hellish bodies, like those of dogs and hogs, is to come again to the human form, he is given the chance to take his birth in the same type of body from which he degraded himself to hell.

Everything is done by the supervision of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Material nature supplies the body, but it does so under the direction of the Supersoul. It is said in Bhagavad-gita that a living entity is wandering in this material world on a chariot made by material nature. The Supreme Lord, as Supersoul, is always present with the individual soul. He directs material nature to supply a particular type of body to the individual soul according to the result of his work, and the material nature supplies it.

#### 12.1.7) 'Freewill' & 'humility'

**If a person is addicted to drinking alcohol, for example, this is a result of an individual's past choices of association and action. With such an understanding, it seems that we are the doer, at least in terms of the choice being our doing. One might argue that it is ego to think that way.**

**I understand that each of our endeavors must have the blessing of the Great One to make it happen. So, good or bad is it ok to say/understand that we do have a small part to play - making that choice? Or are we saying that when good things happen be humble and don't get attached to results, but when there is suffering then understand it was our choice? (Digest 80.1)**

Of the two options you have offered within your question, the former understanding is correct and complete.

The second understanding is correct but incomplete.

Correction:

We should be humble in all circumstances of life. Humility is affective, ie. an emotion, but also objective, ie. an understanding of self based upon clear, specific and certain knowledge of Reality.

Bhagavad-gita indicates that we choose (due to our minute free will), and that there are outcomes for our choices, which we do not independently determine or create. All endeavors, following a free will choice which we make, are fully dependent in their outcome upon the Will or Sanction of the Supreme (NOTE: this is an objective cause for humility!) We are entitled to our minute free will, and in turn to endeavor accordingly, but we are not entitled to claim ownership or enjoyership over the results of our endeavors. (See BG 2.47) This is true whether the present circumstances of our life, which represent the combined fruit of our past activities, are good or bad.

### **12.1.8) Factors of karma and freewill**

**As it said in Bhagawad geeta Ch 3 Text 27 everything is under the control of three modes of nature or the Supreme Lord we under the false ego think that we are the doers. not even a blade of grass move without His will. Bg. Ch 18 Text 14 also says in 5 things are require for any action to be done and in that the doer is one of them. my question is that than how the free will works? if anything good or bad happens how is the doer responsible for that particular act since everything is controlled by Krsna. second question is that do we get our modes according to our previous karma and that mode forces us to do particular kind of karma.**

**I understand that devotees are under direct control of spiritual energy of the Lord whereas maya devi acts on non devotee that means always we are under control of our previous Karma and we have to act accordingly. so how does a person is responsible for any act in this life. (Digest 174.3)**

We have discussed similar questions on karma and free-will and predestination in previous issues, digests 4, 70, 78.

### **12.1.9) If Krishna knows the future, where is our freewill?**

**In BG AS IT IS Krishna says I know past, present and future. Knowing past and present is ok, if Krishna knows exactly (means every single moment of us) that means our future is well defined then where is the free will for us. If there is free will then how Krishna knows what will we do in future. I already asked Maharaja same question, he explained that there is free will, Krishna will not interfere in that, but at the same time He knows what will we choose from that free will. I have not satisfied with that answer, can you elaborate that. (Digest 2.1)**

A father may know that his son likes ice-cream better than anything else. Still, out of love he might ask his son, "My dear son, would you like to have ice-cream or cake?" The father

knows the son will choose ice-cream, but the choice is still there and the boy can still choose either of the two. This is just a very crude example; Krsna's 'knowing' is much more than that. He is omniscient, beyond just the present circumstances of time, and He exactly knows our innermost desires, propensities etc. Even if we were going to choose 'cake' this time, He would know it! Yet as the Supreme loving father, He gives us the choice every moment, 'Choose Me or choose maya', and we can choose as we like! Krsna's knowing 'future time' does not diminish our freedom of will to choose.

**12.1.10) Do 'demonic persons' lose their freewill?**

**“As for the demoniac, it is clearly said here that they are perpetually put into the wombs of demons, and thus they continue to be envious, the lowest of mankind.”**

**These statements seems to indicate that the individual (in human form by indication of the word mankind), at some point, loses his free will to serve Krsna. (Digest 214.2)**

Bhurijana Prabhu writes in 'Surrender Unto Me' 16.20:

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana comments: Arjuna may ask, "But, after many lifetimes, they should eventually receive Your mercy, by which they will be freed from their demoniac births." Lord Krsna answers: "These foolish persons take birth in demoniac forms of life birth after birth. Failing to achieve Me, they descend to lower forms of life, even taking birth as dogs."

In the phrase "failing to achieve Me," the word eva, "certainly," indicates: "There is no possibility of My mercy falling upon them. It is even difficult for them to achieve a good form of life that would be a prerequisite to obtaining Me."

The following question can then be raised: "But the Supreme Lord automatically has His every desire fulfilled. He can make even the unqualified qualified." The answer is: "Yes, He could, if He had such a desire. But actually He does not have even the seed of that desire. Thus the author of the Vedanta-sutra has described the Lord's partiality in the sutra, vaisamya-nairghnyena: the Supreme seems to be unfair because of His partiality to some and His enmity toward others."

Srila Prabhupada writes strongly in his purport to text 20: "It is clearly stated that the demoniac people, life after life, are put into the wombs of similar demons, and, not achieving the mercy of the Supreme Lord, they go down and down, so that at last they achieve bodies like those of cats, dogs and hogs. It is clearly stated that such demons have practically no chance of receiving the mercy of God at any stage of later life."

Birth after birth they suffer, especially by being born into lower species.

Because such souls have no desire to get out of material existence, they don't. They don't want Krsna's mercy, and He doesn't give it to them.

According to Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana, Arjuna now asks Krsna: "People hearing this are going to want to give up these qualities. What can they do to accomplish this?" Krsna answers this question, and in this way presents us with our own choice either adopt demonic life and become degraded or reject it and obtain the supreme destination.

SB 3.30.34 also sheds further light:

TRANSLATION

Having gone through all the miserable, hellish conditions and having passed in a regular order through the lowest forms of animal life prior to human birth, and having thus been purged

of his sins, one is reborn again as a human being on this earth.

#### PURPORT

Just as a prisoner, who has undergone troublesome prison life, is set free again, the person who has always engaged in impious and mischievous activities is put into hellish conditions, and when he has undergone different hellish lives, namely those of lower animals like cats, dogs and hogs, by the gradual process of evolution he again comes back as a human being.

As long as one has rebellious and envious mentality one will only get more and more bound. Freedom in this world is very restricted. Any conditional rule will only chain us more and more. But when rebellious mentality is completely gone, one's freedom is practically unlimited as demonstrated by Narada Muni - SB 1.6.37 (what a contrast!):

Suta Gosvami said: Thus addressing Vyasadeva, Srila Narada Muni took leave of him, and vibrating on his vina instrument, he left to wander at his free will.

#### PURPORT

Every living being is anxious for full freedom because that is his transcendental nature. And this freedom is obtained only through the transcendental service of the Lord. Illusioned by the external energy, everyone thinks that he is free, but actually he is bound up by the laws of nature. A conditioned soul cannot freely move from one place to another even on this earth, and what to speak of one planet to another. But a full-fledged free soul like Narada, always engaged in chanting the Lord's glory, is free to move not only on earth but also in any part of the universe, as well as in any part of the spiritual sky. We can just imagine the extent and unlimitedness of his freedom, which is as good as that of the Supreme Lord. There is no reason or obligation for his traveling, and no one can stop him from his free movement. Similarly, the transcendental system of devotional service is also free. It may or may not develop in a particular person even after he undergoes all the detailed formulas. Similarly, the association of the devotee is also free. One may be fortunate to have it, or one may not have it even after thousands of endeavors. Therefore, in all spheres of devotional service, freedom is the main pivot. Without freedom there is no execution of devotional service. The freedom surrendered to the Lord does not mean that the devotee becomes dependent in every respect. To surrender unto the Lord through the transparent medium of the spiritual master is to attain complete freedom of life.

## *12.2. General questions: Living entities*

### 12.2.1) 'Why is there God?' & 'why are we created?'

**Why is there God and why are we created? I mean why it is wrong to conclude that there is no God and no life, but only zero? (Digest 6.11)**

The fact is that we exist and are conscious of our existence. And it is easy to understand the existence of God also. The reason why we exist is to exchange the pleasure of loving relationship with God. This is substantiated in the Vedic literatures. The philosophy of voidism arises out of frustration in instances such as when we are unfortunately out of alignment in our

relationship with God and thus do not experience the pleasure of loving exchanges with Him, for which our very being and existence is meant!

### **12.2.2) Why did God create humans?**

**Some people say that God became man when He wished to, and later the generations degraded, until now where the present situation prevails. My question is, has God created man as His eternal servant, to enjoy Himself with human beings, or did He become man/woman by his will. Why should he create human beings? (Digest 8.5)**

There are some assumptions that I would like to clarify in this question. First, there is a distinction between the living entity (spirit soul) and the species 'human being'. The soul is eternal, an eternal servant of God. But man is not eternal. By man, we mean the human body. Vedic literatures explain that the soul, being eternal, was never created, and is meant to enjoy in service to God, in the spiritual world. God has created the material world and the various species of life here (i.e. the different forms of body). The conditioned soul accepts a body in the material world, evolving through different species of life. In the human body the soul gets the special facility to understand his real nature and his relationship with God, and thus go back to the spiritual world.

### **12.2.3) Why did we come to the material world?**

**Why did we come to the material world in the first place? I know this question has been asked many times and it seems no one really has the correct answer. I have heard from various other devotees that each individual will eventually find out why based on their own individuality; but there must be some logical explanation for God to build this material world. From my own conclusion and what I have heard is that we were given a choice to enjoy independently of Him while we were in the spiritual world since we are all individual beings, but why would we make that choice if we were enjoying eternal happiness? Could it be that we still didn't have freedom, perhaps? And keeping us there in the spiritual world with no choice at all would have meant He really caged us in and forced us to be there. But then again it is our eternal position. It's confusing - can you please elaborate on this subject. Why did we come to the material world? (Digest 72.1)**

We have discussed this question in previous issues in some detail. As you indicated, yes, we are here because of our choice to enjoy independently of Krishna. But your question probes the reason or cause as to why would someone who is experiencing complete happiness in the spiritual world would make such a choice, as if he was experiencing some shortcoming, or exhibiting a reaction to his dissatisfaction or rebellion against being 'caged' within the spiritual realm?

If you search through the digest of previous questions and answers, you will find that the 'event' of misuse of free will is not a 'chronological event' (this means 'an event within time', eg "In the past I was outside of this room, then some time passed, then some notion came into my mind, and that inspired me to come within the room, which also took place through the passage of some time.") but constitutes an event nonetheless. Call it an ontological event, if you will.

Now let us explore the 'cause' of the soul's misuse of free will.

The source of any hypothetical dissatisfaction could not be a reaction to the lack of freedom, as it seems your question proposes. The very fact that we are within the material circumstance of life implies that we do have such freedom; if we were forced or caged within the spiritual world, as you put it, we wouldn't be here! The point is that free will also exists in the spiritual realm, and naturally so, since minute free will is an inherent quality of the soul, just as unlimited free will is an inherent quality of God.

Despite the all-perfect nature of the spiritual world, there is one desire which a living entity cannot possibly satisfy in that realm, a desire which can only be approached in illusion - the unceremonious aspiration to become God oneself!

The source of the misuse of free will is NOT coming from some source outside of the soul, acting upon it. Tiny free will is inherent within the soul itself, and there is no other cause.

By constitution, the living entity, being a miniscule fragmentary part of the Supreme, has freedom which is correspondingly limited. Jivas are dependent on the Supreme for enjoyment, much as a child is dependent on their mother and father. In the spiritual world, souls can enjoy unlimited bliss, but by serving the Lord and not independently. There, Krishna is the only Enjoyer and the Cynosure of everybody's attention and devotion. For those who unfortunately resent the Lord's unrivaled opulence and His position as the central Enjoyer of all existence, He out of great kindness creates this illusory realm - like a loving father's indirect protection of his prodigal son. Besides giving the soul the opportunity for an illusory sense of unlimited freedom, by illusion's inherent miserable nature, it helps rectify the soul of this mentality. This is one of the grand mysteries of material creation.

#### **12.2.4) Why did God create living entities and evil?**

**God created evil and good. If He was as merciful as he is supposed to be, then why create evil at all, put marginal souls in a vulnerable position, and then punish them when they sin? Why create us at all? If there was no existence, there would be no karma and no consequences. Did God create all of us for His entertainment? (Digest 22.5)**

First of all, we need to understand that the soul was never "created". The individual soul is co-eternal with God being His part and parcel. The purpose of our existence is enjoyment - not only God's enjoyment but ours also! But as part and parcel of the Supreme Whole, our enjoyment is in relation with God's enjoyment. "Ananda mayo 'bhyasat": in our relationship with the Supreme Lord, in serving Him, both the Lord and the living entity experience transcendental bliss.

However, when the individual soul forgets his real position and comes to the material world, his so-called punishment by the material energy is not cruelty on the part of the Supreme Lord; rather that is another feature of his mercy to help the living entity reinstate himself in his original position. This is just like a father who might 'punish' his child in order to train him: the chastisement is another feature of the father's love and is for the child's benefit. There would be no meaning to argue why one should beget a child and then punish the child! (Please also refer to our discussion on 'good and evil' from the previous issue, Digest 17)

### 12.2.5) Living entities and marginal energy

**I have read that all living entities are generated from tatastha- shakti (SB 3.7.9). Living entities can be influenced by the internal or external potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.**

**Please explain how do living entities behave while under the influence of Tatastha-sakti. Is the marginal potency an intermediate state between Pradhan and Prakriti? How long they belong to this region of marginal energy of Lord? What is the characteristic of marginal potency with regards to Internal and external potencies? (Digest 155.2)**

There seems to be some fundamental misconception in how you relate the living entities to the tatastha-shakti within your question. Lord Vishnu or Krishna is the Supreme Energetic and He possesses multifarious energies. These energies are generally classified into three principal categories, one of which *\*is\** the living entity belonging to the tatastha category (marginal energy).

The statement from Vishnu Purana, from which Srila Prabhupada makes this inference in SB 3.7.9, identifies these three distinct categories of energy: "The internal potency of the Supreme Lord, Vishnu, is spiritual, as verified by the sastras. There is another spiritual potency, known as kshetra-jna, or the living entity. The third potency, which is known as nescience, makes the living entity godless and fills him with fruitive activity." The same idea is conveyed in Bhagavad-gita (Bg 7.4, 5). In other words, the jiva souls are the third category of energy, called marginal energy and they constitutionally belong to that category eternally, sometimes coming under the influence of inferior material potency and otherwise under the influence of spiritual potency; they are not 'under the influence' of tatastha shakti as if the latter was another and a separate category.

The word 'tatastha' can be thought of as the meeting place between water and land, as at a riverbank or shoreline. Just as the seashore is sometimes under water and sometimes exposed, similarly the marginal living entities, although spiritual in quality, can either be under the influence of the internal or external energy, which is decided by their own attitude towards the Supreme Lord.

The Bhagavatam purport you have referred to gives a graphic example --- although the sun's rays are qualitatively non-different from the sun, they are sometimes overpowered by another energy of the sun, namely by clouds or by snowfall, although the clouds can never cover the sun itself. Likewise, a spark of fire can become extinguished when it is separated from the original fire. Similarly, although the living entities are qualitatively one with the superior energy of the Lord, because they are marginal they have the tendency to be overpowered by the inferior energy when they turn their attention away from the Lord. The modes of material nature then react upon and cover the ray-like living entities.

Tatastha-shakti therefore refers to the spirit souls and is not an intermediate state between pradhan and material nature. Pradhana refers to nothing but the unmanifested totality of material energy prior to creation and in its manifest state, it is called prakriti - both belong to the category of material energy. At the time of creation, the undifferentiated Pradhana becomes agitated by the glance of Maha Vishnu and at this time the living entities are also impregnated into the material energy. The three modes of material nature and subsequently the 24 material elements then become manifest.

### 12.2.6) 'Why are jivas, covered by maya' and 'material vs. spiritual personality/individuality'

**I have a question related to digest 144. If the Supreme Lord can expand himself into the tiny souls with separate individualities for His enjoyment, why do they have to be covered by the illusory energy? Does the covering not create a virtual entity with the particle of spirit being forgetful of its oneness with the Supreme in order for the living entity to display a separate individuality? I recall in another email it was said that even the soul does not belong to us as the only thing we have is our relationship with Krishna. Am I just a temporary instance in time with no factual existence? (Digest 152.2)**

This was also explained within the answer being referred to: the living entity does NOT have to be covered by illusory energy, but has the choice to do so, by choosing to enjoy independent of the Supreme Lord.

The spirit soul is eternally individual, either under the covering of illusory energy or under the shelter of Krishna's internal energy -- but in either case we exist with our individual separate identity. This is affirmed by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad-gita 2.12.

Once again, we DO NOT HAVE TO be in forgetfulness in order to display separate individuality. The residents of Vaikuntha are eternally rendering loving devotional service to the Lord in their individual capacities in the liberated state. And since all spirit souls are expansions from Krishna, this eternal loving service is the real purpose to be fulfilled by our existence also.

### 12.2.7) Source of envy

**What is the source of envy which brought us to this material world in the first place? I asked this question in one of our Sunday program and the speaker told me that there is no answer to this question. This really surprised me because I was thinking that Krishna could still be the source of the envy but yet unaffected by it. Just like 'maya' for which although Krishna is the source He is not affected by it. Please clarify. (Digest 161.1)**

Anything in existence, indeed, has its source in Lord Krishna and yet it is not that He explicitly created such things as evil, misery or envy toward Himself. Srila Prabhupada explains this using the analogy of darkness and light – darkness is nothing but the absence of sunlight; there is no meaning to darkness independent of the existence of light, and yet the sun itself does not literally 'create' darkness.

Similarly by misuse of their tiny independence, the living entity can turn away from the all-pure Lord, and thereby experience envy and its corollaries. In the language of Bhagavad-gita, the experience of envy etc. is due to 'desire' and 'hate' – iccha dvesha samutthena. (BG 7.27)

There is attraction and aversion without any tinge of inebriety or material duality in the spiritual world; even something that resembles worldly envy is seen when the gopas or gopis compete to satisfy the Lord ever- increasingly, but there is no malice therein, only the desire to see Krishna's pleasure. When desire and hatred are misdirected, however, due to misuse of freewill, one becomes deluded to desire to be the Lord himself and envies Krishna's supreme, unique position as the master.

In one sense, the answer you were given is right, in that it is quite inexplicable that the living entity would exhibit envy towards his most well-wishing benefactor. There could be no sensible reason for his doing so and it can simply be understood as a foolish choice by the

fallible living entity – in \*this\* sense we could say there is no answer as to how and why envy for the Lord came about. Misuse of free will, and in turn the entire material experience, arise without "a good reason".

**12.2.8) Why do certain qualities in jivas dominate?**

**We as a soul are said to have minute amounts of all the qualities of Lord Krishna. Then why is that some qualities dominate. Is it to do with the modes of material nature? (Digest 7.7)**

Yes, this has to do with both guna and karma.

**12.2.9) 'Why do jivas falldown?' & 'Lord Krishna's assurance that devotees will go back to Godhead'**

**It is said that all souls are originally with Lord Krishna. Then how we came back to this earth? What is the assurance that the soul would go back to Godhead if the person performs bhakti towards Him. (Digest 8.6)**

Bhagavad-gita describes the cause of our coming to the material world as desire and hatred (iccha-dvesa) (Cf. Bg 7.27). In the spiritual world no one has any desire, save and except to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When one somehow develops the unceremonious desire to enjoy separately from the Supreme Lord and become Lord oneself, such a soul comes to the material world to be an illusory master of this illusory world. The assurance of going back to Godhead is that the Supreme Lord Himself has given His word. He promises that one who perfects the performance of bhakti yoga will certainly go back to His abode. (Cf. Bg 18.65, Bg 8.7)

**12.2.10) Relationship between body, soul, mind, and suffering**

**What is the relation between soul and body; soul and mind; body and mind: sufferings of soul; suffering of body? (Digest 2.8)**

The body is like a vehicle or machine upon which the soul is seated. There is nice analogy in Katha Upanisad which describes the body as the chariot, the senses as the horses, the mind as the driving instrument, the intelligence as the driver of the chariot, and the soul is riding on this chariot. The soul actually experiences neither enjoyment or suffering in this material region, because it is spiritual by nature, and is full of eternity, knowledge and bliss. However, the soul experiences the pains and pleasures of the body, which are just material interactions, because he is thinking he is this body. The suffering or enjoyment of the soul is just like one's suffering in a dream; it has no reality. Cf BG 13.21 and 22.

### 12.2.11) Ciranjivas

**If jivas are eternal then how are ciranjivas (like Hanuman, Ashvathama etc.) different? (Digest 11.5)**

Jivas are eternal, but in conditioned life, when the term of existence in one body is finished, they transmigrate to another body. Ciranjivas are those who have a special capacity to live for a very, very long period of time, over a span of several yugas in that very same form. However, at the end of the allotted time, they also have to quit their body. Both jivas and ciranjivas are entitled to go back to the spiritual world if they become pure in their devotion to the Supreme Lord. Otherwise, they will have to rotate in the cycle of birth and death.

### 12.2.12) 'Are dreams real?' & 'what do dreams represent?'

**Are dreams real? Do they represent anything or does it only represent our subconscious mind? (Digest 51.2)**

In most cases, dreams are just activities of the subconscious mind. The soul is active by nature, and even when the gross body is asleep, the subtle mind is also active, acting out one's deeply buried fears and fantasies, which manifest in different forms as dreams. In some cases, it is considered that a karmic reaction which one is due may be experienced subtly in the form of a dream, without having to actually endure the grosser form of that karma's reaction. Rarely, as in the lives of those who are highly elevated in spiritual consciousness, one may receive some experience of or direction from Krishna or His representatives in a dream. Such dreams may be truly from a spiritual plane, provided they do not prove contrary to any scriptural indications. For most of us, however, who are not so highly spiritually qualified, we can understand dreams about something very spiritual to be a manifestation of some kind of descending mercy, but not necessarily to be taken literally, or gospel, if we receive some instruction.

## *12.3. Significance of human form of life*

### 12.3.1) Does one need human form to go back to Godhead?

**First of all, thank you for your sanga and your potent enlightening answers. We have heard that the human form is the most valuable one and that only out of human form can the living beings go back home, back to Krishna. Does this refer also to the great sages and demigods? Do they also fall down on the earth in drops of rain, attain human bodies and out of them go back home when they also finish the process of bhakti yoga?**

**Is it only through the human form that the living entities can go back home also out of the bodies of animals (from Vrndavan) or if they attain the association of pure Vaisnavas (like a dog in Lord Caitanyas lila). We thank you very much in advance for your answer and pray that you are well. (Digest 65.1)**

Thank you very much for your kind words and your well-wishing prayers!

There is no rule that souls embodied in other forms of life cannot go back to Godhead, but it doesn't happen that way generally because of the strongly pervasive mood of enjoyment of the superior pleasures of heaven that most of its inhabitants are preoccupied with, or in activities of ignorance, in the case of lower life forms like animals. It is the human form of life that provides the greatest impetus and facility for spiritual pursuit; other forms of life are designed for other purposes.

There are examples of great sages ascending through all the higher planets up to Brahma-loka and being completely purified, they along with Brahma, directly return back to Godhead from Satyaloka, at the time of universal annihilation. Again, in some instances greatly advanced souls may take one last birth in a lower body due to some residual sinful reactions or offenses, before they return back to Godhead, as said about the animals in Vrndavan, or as we see in the history of Gajendra. Instances such as Sivananda's dog being delivered and Gajendra's being liberated are rare.

Regardless of the external situation, however, as soon as one revives their original spiritual consciousness, they are immediately in the kingdom of God.

### **12.3.2) If animals can attain liberation, what is the need for human life?**

**We hear cases of dogs or fish taking four-handed forms and going to the spiritual world when devotees gave them some prasadam. Then why is it that the human form of life is considered more valuable? Devotees could bless everyone to become fish and give them prasadam. (Digest 65.2)**

Certainly one pure devotee is capable of delivering all living entities; yet although they are freely distributing their mercy, only the qualified recipients derive the full benefit. Prabhupada explains that while the sun is distributing its rays everywhere, the blind man is unable to receive those rays.

This qualification for receiving descending mercy is not to be calculated in material terms, but based on our faith and great eagerness to achieve that mercy. All of our sincere devotional efforts, sadhana, and execution of duties is simply to attract that mercy, or more precisely to make ourselves eligible to receive that mercy. Work AND grace - both are necessary.

One reference which you perhaps have previously heard relates an incident wherein some fish that had eaten the remnants of Ramanujacarya attained four-handed forms and ascended to the sky. It is said that his disciples then inquired of him how the fish could have attained such a destiny, while they themselves having honored his remnants many times have not yet attained such perfection. Ramanujacarya replied that because the disciples did not yet have complete faith, they committed offenses by discriminating and making material judgements about prasadam, and thus could not experience the potency of the prasadam, while the fish were not guilty of any such offense. This is not to say that animals, being ignorant, have a better chance than human beings. Rather such pastimes go to illustrate the efficacy of transcendental association in a simple heart, while those lacking such simplicity and faith, even though more qualified by our human estimation in austerity, knowledge, piety etc are bereft of such grace if they failed to guard themselves from offenses.

Sometimes an honorary doctorate may be awarded to an illiterate person for their

exceptional qualifications, but this doesn't minimize the need for other students to apply themselves ever-so-diligently to their studies.

## 12.4. Spirit soul

### 12.4.1) Definition of atma

**In the Bhagavad Gita we find the word "atma" used to denote the mind, body and soul and even senses, as defined in the Vedic Dictionary. My question is: If the soul is an eternal, spiritual particle, why is it lumped in with these other subtle and gross material objects under the word "atma?" (Digest 191.1)**

Sanskrit is a rich and refined language, thus many Sanskrit words often denote multiple meanings. "Atma" is a word that refers to the "self", and thus would naturally denote the spirit soul, which is actually the real self. However, since embodied living entities most commonly tend to identify the self with the body or mind, 'atma' refers to these coverings of the self as well.

This is something like how we might remark "There goes the President," upon sighting the President's car. The intended meaning becomes clear when one understands the context in which it is used.

### 12.4.2) How can we know that the soul exists?

**It is said that spirit is very tiny invisible to the gross material eye! but for any person willing to do bhakti, he should first understand distinction between body and spirit! For a neophyte how is it possible to know about something (spirit) which is not visible to gross material senses! For the gross materialists won't this be an easy argument for atheism? (Digest 3.5)**

The spirit soul can be detected by inference, since there is no change in the material composition of a body at the time of death. So one may inquire from the gross materialist as to what is the cause of consciousness?

However this debate can and will go on forever. Our senses are far from perfect and even with all the material advancements we cannot even solve the mysteries of the material world - trying to reach or even understand Krishna, or even the spirit soul, with our imperfect senses is impossible. The basis of spiritual advancement is to have faith in the scriptures. The ultimate proof of the existence of the soul is that Krishna affirms it in the Bhagavad Gita.

### 12.4.3) What is consciousness?

**We say that both the subtle and gross body belong to this material creation. A person's destination depends upon his consciousness at the time of death. So my question is whether our consciousness is material or spiritual. Does a person go to spiritual world with his consciousness (material or spiritual)? Are soul and consciousness the same? (Digest**

## 22.1)

Consciousness is concomitant with the soul; it is an attribute of the soul. In other words, consciousness itself is not a material element. When one falsely identifies oneself with the material energy, then one's consciousness is said to be materially engrossed. In that state, at the time of death the subtle body carries the soul to the next gross body. However, when one purifies his/her consciousness from material identification, then the soul returns to the spiritual world in spiritual or purified consciousness.

### 12.4.4) 'Origin of the spirit soul' & 'what happens to the soul and unused karma at the time of total annihilation?'

**The soul is like God but it is not God. The soul is eternal - it has no birth and death. How does the soul come into being from God? What happens to the soul after 'complete destruction' i.e. after the death of Lord Brahma? What happens to the 'unused' karma? (Digest 2.10)**

The soul is co-eternal with God, just as a spark of a blazing fire exists with the fire, although not independent of it. At the time of total annihilation all the conditioned souls enter into the body of Maha Visnu and remain there in a dormant state for eons. 'Unused karma' is held in a dormant or suspended state, awaiting the next creation. Each soul gets another material body in one of the 8,400,000 species of life during the next creation, according to his residual karma. If he becomes a pure devotee, all his karma is finished and he can go back to Godhead.

### 12.4.5) Nature of the soul and independence

**Is it correct to say that the individual souls have natural inclination to enjoy independently? If yes, then what is the hope that the individual soul will ever become dependent and serve the Lord? How natural would that state be? (Digest 166.2)**

No, it is not a natural inclination of the soul to enjoy independent of the Lord. It is the nature of the soul to be jubilant and to enjoy; as the Vedanta sutra says, anandamayo 'bhyasat. But we have the choice to seek that enjoyment in service to Krishna or in forgetfulness of Him.

What is natural for the soul is the propensity to serve. Our acharyas have taught that this is the 'dharma' or eternal occupation or natural inclination of all living entities. Just as the dharma of sugar is sweetness or the dharma of water is liquidity, similarly the nature of living entity is rendering service; but we have the choice - to voluntarily serve God or to serve something other than God. We can readily observe that everyone in this world, without an exception, is serving someone or something. But because it is not in relation to the Supreme, they find all their services to be unfulfilling, frustrating and baffling.

It is the most natural state for the living entity to feel dependent on the Lord; in fact, we are dependent on Him for our existence in any case, whether we acknowledge it or not. What is unnatural is our forgetfulness, just as the frozen condition of water is an unnatural state, and as soon as normal conditions are restored, ice becomes liquid again. Living entities in their pure or natural state are called devotees.

#### 12.4.6) 'Dimensions of the soul' & 'spiritual vs. material dimensions'

**It is described that the individual spirit spark measures less than 1/10,000th the tip of a hair. How is it that something spiritual has a material measurement? Wouldn't this mean that the spiritual sky has limited material dimensions also? (Digest 191.2)**

This is one of the many inconceivable attributes of the soul. The scriptures themselves describe the soul as immeasurable (aprimeyasya; see BG 2.18) and then also assign a measurement to it! It is not even possible for us to see or perceive the soul, what to speak of measure it by any means. And yet, although impossible to measure, we can know this dimension to be true, a perfect description of the reality of the soul, because it is given by shastric evidence. [as quoted from Svetasvatara Upanishad in BG 2.17p]

These verses describing the size of the soul also give us an idea of the infinitesimal nature of the soul, and yet simultaneously it is not a gross material or perceivable measurement.

We can think of a slightly different example to get some idea of the nature of spiritual dimensions. Scriptures also describe the Supersoul as being situated in the heart of the living entity, and measuring the size of a thumb. Does this measurement limit Krishna's unlimited form, or does it mean this shastric statement is not to be taken literally? The answer to both questions is negative - the Paramatma is both unlimited as well as measuring thumb-high in the heart of the living entity--- this is inconceivable. Similarly, in the Damodara-lila (which Vaishnavas around the world are celebrating and glorifying each day during this entire month of Kartika by singing the Damodarastakam prayers), the child-like form of Krishna could not be bound by any length of mother Yashoda's ropes. Thus, describing Krishna's height or form does not limit or restrict Him as also His presence in one place does not mean He is confined to that location and is not all-pervasive. Of course, the characteristics of the minute soul cannot be equally compared to that of the inconceivable potencies of the Infinite Supreme Lord, still being of the same spiritual nature, the spirit soul has inconceivable qualities. Thus the spirit soul, residing in the material body, is the size of one-ten-thousandth of the tip of a hair, but not materially limited by such a dimension.

#### 12.4.7) How is our soul, part of Krishna?

##### **How is our soul a part of Krishna? (Digest 2.7)**

The analogy of a spark to a blazing fire is given to describe our relationship with Krsna. We are the energy of Krsna and are just like a small spark of the Infinite Absolute. We have our individual identity and freewill, but we can never function independently of Krsna.

#### 12.4.8) Do plants and animals have souls?

##### **Do plants and trees have souls? (Digest 11.2)**

Yes. However, the consciousness of the soul is in a very covered condition in such bodies.

**12.4.9) Does other's soul enter into the heart during heart transplant?**

**I believe that the soul resides in the heart and it is the soul that keeps this body functional. How is it that when someone leaves there body, their organs can be transplanted into another body? When the soul leaves the body, does the heart and all other organ seize? When does the other persons' soul enter into this heart and what happens to the one that is replaced. (Digest 2.9)**

The material body is just like a machine. Prabhupada gives the example of a microphone. When electric energy passes through it, it transforms sound into electronic impulses, etc.; but when there is no electricity, nothing happens. Whether the microphone is working or not, it remains nothing more than an assembly of metal, plastic, and other inert material ingredients. Thus, you can take a component of it and replace it, or altogether replace it with another microphone. Organ transplant is just like that - it is just switching of "parts".

Although the soul is said to reside in the region of the heart, it is very subtle. It is not that a different soul enters this body with the replacement of heart. Rather, the same soul remains in the region of the heart, as a replacement body part is inserted. Conversely, if the soul has departed, the patient is considered already dead, and thus replacing another component cannot bring the dead back to life.

**12.4.10) What happens to the spirit soul, when someone is cursed to become a stone?**

**In Vedic history we find that a person is sometimes cursed to become a stone. What happens to soul of the person while he is a stone? (Digest 11.7)**

The soul remains in a dormant condition for some time.

**12.4.11) Separated expansions**

**What does separated expansion actually mean, in terms of our relationship with Krishna? (Digest 152.1)**

(Question in connection with Inquiries Into the Absolute: Digest 144 Understanding how and why God becomes many)

'Separated' refers to our existence as eternally separate entities with individual identity, having minute freewill. Further, unlike the integrated expansions, viz. the Vishnu-tattva forms, the tiny living entities are prone to turn toward illusory energy and become separated from Krishna's association, by improper use of their freewill -- the same idea as conveyed by the term 'marginal energy'.

At the same time, the term 'separated parts-and-parcels' implies that the living entity cannot be completely independent of Krishna at any time, although he may think himself to be so under the influence of external energy.

**12.4.12) How to practically realize that we are not this body, but spirit soul?**

**It is easy to theoretically understand that we are not the body. But it is hard to really realize this fact in every situation, especially if the situation is extremely harsh or extremely wonderful. How can one practically realize that we are not the body in any situation whether good or bad? (Digest 12.2)**

Realization of our spiritual nature takes cultivation. Regular hearing of spiritual topics such as Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam, and regular chanting of the Holy Names of the Lord are two of the most potent activities that can spiritualize our consciousness. Further, by applying the principles of Srimad Bhagavatam as we perform our practical devotional service, cultivating tolerance towards the dualities of the material world in the course of execution of our services, and being fixed in a service mood toward Krishna and His devotees can bring profound realizations in our hearts, spiritually empowering us to remain undisturbed in any circumstance.

**12.4.13) Why is the soul considered not the doer of the actions, but the body?**

**"One who can see that all activities are performed by the body, which is created of material nature, and sees that the self does nothing, actually sees". Why is it said that the self does nothing and that the body is the doer? (Digest 16.6)**

The soul is being carried on the machine (yantra) of prakrti, or material energy, like a chariot carries a passenger. The body is performing activities, or prakrti is the performer, not the soul.

The soul's activity or business is to desire. We can also 'endeavor'. See BG 18.14 the living entity is called the 'karta' (doer) in the Secondary sense of one who makes an endeavor (cestah). Action is actually being carried out by material nature: See BG 5.14.

**12.4.14) Fate of souls that have not yet realized God at the end of Kali yuga**

**What happens at the end of Kali yuga to all those souls that have not yet realized God? (Digest 11.4)**

According to Srimad Bhagavatam, 12.2.20-22, the normal course of Kali Yuga ends with Kalki Avatar annihilating the millions of souls who masquerade as kings; these souls receive sayujya liberation, or a state of sinlessness, but their devotion to the Supreme Lord still needs to be awakened. The remaining souls are uplifted by the Lord's presence, they become transcendently purified, and they come at once to the platform of goodness. These souls assist in populating the planet with other elevated souls, thus playing their role in ushering in the Satya Yuga.

In Chapter Four of Canto 12, we find a detailed description of what happens at the end of the Kali Yugas that come at the end of Brahma's day (i.e. after 1,000 yuga cycles are completed), as well as the end of Brahma's life. The basic idea is that the souls are held in a dormant state, with no manifested activities or forms, and they remain in that condition until the next creation takes place.

#### **12.4.15) What does nitya-baddha (eternally conditioned) actually refer to?**

I was reading SB 3.26.5 purport where Prabhupada talks about nitya-baddha.  
<http://www.vedabase.net/sb/3/26/5/en>

**How one can be nitya-baddha or eternally conditioned? One can take the process of devotional service seriously by accepting bona fide spiritual master and can achieve the transcendental association of the Lord and go beyond the cycle of birth and death. So, how one can be nitya-baddha or eternally conditioned? I thought a soul is temporarily conditioned. (Digest 166.1)**

The term 'nitya baddha' refers to the living being's long-term entanglement in matter going beyond even the beginning of the present creation. It does NOT allude to a condition where some souls are permanently conditioned, nor does it preclude them from ever becoming liberated.

In the purport quoted above, Srila Prabhupada explains: 'We say that they have been conditioned from time immemorial because no one can trace out when the living entity, the part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, became rebellious against the supremacy of the Lord.' In other words, it is not a chronological event that can be traced within the history of material time as we know it. Material time itself has a beginning at the beginning of each cycle of creation, whereas the soul exists eternally and his predisposition towards the Lord precedes the creation and the beginning of Time as we know it.

In that sense, the word 'nitya' or 'eternally conditioned' in the context of our material bondage is not used in the sense of absolute time but in terms of material time. If this was not so, Lord Krishna and all the great acharyas would not take the trouble to give us the process of liberation and encourage us to revive or reestablish our eternal loving relationship with Him.

#### **12.4.16) How is the nitya-baddha soul considered to be not entangled?**

**Can you please help me understand how these verses/purports do not contradict each other?**

**Bhagavad-gita As It Is 7.14.**

**"The living entities belong to the eternal superior nature of the Lord, but due to contamination by the inferior nature, matter, their illusion is also eternal. The conditioned soul is therefore called nitya-baddha, or eternally conditioned. No one can trace out the history of his becoming conditioned at a certain date in material history. Consequently, his release from the clutches of material nature is very difficult." "Another meaning of guna is rope; it is to be understood that the conditioned soul is tightly tied by the ropes of illusion. A man bound by the hands and feet cannot free himself."**

**Bhagavad-gita As It Is 13.32**

**"Those with the vision of eternity can see that the imperishable soul is transcendental, eternal, and beyond the modes of nature. Despite contact with the material body, O Arjuna, the soul neither does anything nor is entangled." "He does not engage himself in any material activities; therefore the activities performed due to his contact with material bodies do not entangle him." (Digest 135.1)**

In a recent posting (digest 131), we discussed the import of BG 13.32: the soul's apparent entanglement is perceptual only, not factual, as in a dream.

However, due to a conditioned soul's long term misidentification with the inferior material energy, he is tightly bound or deeply 'conditioned' by it; therefore, extracting himself from this conception is not easy.

This situation is what is indicated when the soul is described as being 'contaminated', 'bound' or 'entangled', as stated in BG 7.14 quoted above. Nonetheless, the original pure nature of the soul still remains untouched, as described in 13.32.

Only those with spiritual vision can actually see this fact while the conditioned soul sees himself as struggling or as enjoying, suffering the fruits of his actions which are actually induced by the modes of nature.

Meanwhile the original, transcendental nature of the soul is not transformed in any way. He still remains superior to and untouched by dull matter which is the inferior energy, but he apparently becomes bound by it because of his aversion to Krishna. As soon as one crosses over the seemingly insurmountable network of maya by surrendering to Krishna, his original nature is revived, like one waking from a dream.

Thus there is no contradiction.

I hope this answer clarifies your concern.

#### 12.4.17) Understanding the nitya-siddha and nitya-baddha souls

**The soul is marginal, i.e. it can be on the material or spiritual platforms. Then again, it is stated that the soul is either eternally liberated (nitya-siddhas) or eternally conditioned (nitya-baddha). Don't these two statements seem contradictory? (Digest 11.10)**

The term nitya siddha means those great devotees who are eternally manifesting perfected existence in the spiritual world or although sometimes appearing in this world amongst us for some purpose of serving the Supreme Lord, are actually never contaminated by the material nature at any point of time. The term nitya baddha refers to those who have been conditioned since time immemorial within the material world.

These two terms do not conflict with the two alternative positions for the soul, mentioned in the first part of your question. The grammar of the initial definition of the soul as marginal, however, as found in your question, needs to be modified:

"The soul is called tatastha, or marginal, because although it is spiritual in nature, due to its tiny existence, it can be influenced by either the internal (spiritual) or the external (material) energy of the Lord."

There is actually no contradiction in these two definitions.

#### 12.4.18) Transcendental qualities of the liberated souls

**How many of the 64 transcendental qualities do the jivas who have returned to Goloka Vrindavana have? (Digest 218.2)**

50 qualities or 78% of 64 qualities, and those qualities are not possessed in fullness. See the following quotes from scripture.

"Learned scholars in transcendental subjects have carefully analyzed the summum bonum

Krsna to have sixty-four principal attributes. All the expansions or categories of the Lord possess only some percentages of these attributes. But Sri Krsna is the possessor of the attributes cent percent. And His personal expansions such as svayam-prakasa, tad-ekatma up to the categories of the avatars who are all visnu-tattva, possess up to ninety-three percent of these transcendental attributes. Lord Siva, who is neither avatara nor avesa nor in between them, possesses almost eighty-four percent of the attributes. But the jivas, or the individual living beings in different statuses of life, possess up to the limit of seventy-eight percent of the attributes. In the conditioned state of material existence, the living being possesses these attributes in very minute quantity, varying in terms of the pious life of the living being. The most perfect of living beings is Brahma, the supreme administrator of one universe. He possesses seventy-eight percent of the attributes in full. All other demigods have the same attributes in less quantity, whereas human beings possess the attributes in very minute quantity. The standard of perfection for a human being is to develop the attributes up to seventy-eight percent in full. The living being can never possess attributes like Siva, Visnu or Lord Krsna. A living being can become godly by developing the seventy-eight-percent transcendental attributes in fullness, but he can never become a God like Siva, Visnu or Krsna. He can become a Brahma in due course. The godly living beings who are all residents of the planets in the spiritual sky are eternal associates of God in different spiritual planets called Hari-dhama and Mahesa-dhama. The abode of Lord Krsna above all spiritual planets is called Krsnaloka or Goloka Vrndavana, and the perfected living being, by developing seventy-eight percent of the above attributes in fullness, can enter the planet of Krsnaloka after leaving the present material body." (SB 1.3.29)

"All the expansions and incarnations of the Lord are partial. Lord Brahma and Lord Siva, His qualitative expansions, only partially display the nature of the Supreme Lord. Everything about the Supreme Lord Krsna is infinite, eternal, unlimited and absolutely spiritual. He alone has the full sixty-four qualities, whereas His expansions, starting from Lord Narayana to Lord Ramacandra, are ornamented with only the first sixty of His transcendental qualities. Lord Brahma, Lord Siva and the other demigods possess but the first fifty-five of these qualities, and these only to a partial degree. Ordinary jivas have just the first fifty, visible in mere fractional degrees, like small drops. Only Krsna, even amongst all His Visnu expansions, displays the preeminence of being the master of four exceptional spiritual qualities unique to Him alone." - (Harinam Chintamani, Chapter 2)

## *12.5. Spiritual body and spiritual senses*

### *12.5.1) Nature of the spiritual body (soul)*

**It is said that when we reach the spiritual world we get a spiritual body. What is the nature of the spiritual body? Is it the same as our soul? (Digest 8.7)**

Spiritual body and soul are synonymous. The nature of the spiritual body is sac-cid-ananda vigraha, full of eternity, bliss and knowledge.

### 12.5.2) What happens to the spiritual body when we take on a material body?

#### **What happens to our spiritual bodies once we take on a material body? (Digest 2.5)**

The spiritual body (or spirit soul) is described as being situated in the region of the heart and is covered by the subtle and gross material coverings. Prabhupada compares this to a man wearing a shirt and coat. It is the spirit soul (or spiritual body) which is activating the material body, just as when the man's hands move, the arms of coat also move. In other words, the spiritual body is present, but covered and existing in a dormant state.

### 12.5.3) Interaction between the spiritual senses and the spiritual objects

**In a recent discussion about our original, eternal spiritual form and relationships as compared to our temporary material forms and relationships, I was asked "what are spiritual senses?", that is, of what are they composed and how do they interact with the spiritual equivalent of the "objects (or Object, so to speak) of the senses". I gave an answer that satisfied the inquirer, but did not fully satisfy me. Would you kindly answer this question? Thank you. (Digest 180.1)**

Our present material senses are simply a covering upon our original, spiritual senses - I presume that your own answer comprised of this understanding. Srila Prabhupada gave the analogy that the shirt and coat are designed with two hands which indicate that the person they are tailored for must have two hands also. Similarly, if the material body is a covering over the spirit soul, then the soul must possess spiritual senses similar to the material senses we know of.

Another way to think of this could be in terms of a person experiencing virtual reality --- imagine a person entering a virtual world provided with 'virtual' extensions of the eyes, ears, hands and so on to perceive the virtual sights and sounds and interact with the virtual objects of this simulated experience, as for example in a simulated flight training program. It is possible that one would become so engrossed in this virtual world, rendered unable to interact with and even temporarily forget the reality outside! Our situation in this material world is quite similar. Once again when the original senses are restored from the covering of 'hooked-on' extensions, they can interact normally with spiritual reality.

The Caitanya Caritamrita (Cc Adi 5.53) states that "the earth, water, fire, air, and ether of Vaikuntha are all spiritual. Material elements are not found there." From this statement, we can understand that the spiritual realm is also composed of variegated spiritual elements just as we experience in the material world. The difference is that the ingredients of material nature, viz. the material elements, senses and sense objects are described as separated energies of Krishna (BG 7.4) whereas the elements in the spiritual world also belong to the same Absolute Spiritual nature, having the qualities of sac-cid-ananda.

The material ingredients, combined with the three modes of material nature, make the living entity forget Krishna by creating an appearance of illusory reality, but in the original, pure state, the spiritual senses can, without any encumbrance, perceive the Object of senses, viz. the Supreme Personality of Godhead, His transcendental abode, paraphernalia and associates. There are many vivid example of this in scriptures as in the history of how Narada Muni, in his previous life as the son of a maidservant, upon becoming purified of the contamination of the

material modes, was able to perceive with his enlivened spiritual senses the Transcendental Form of the Lord and heard His transcendental voice. (SB 1.6.15-20 See <http://vedabase.net/sb/1/6/15/en>)

## *12.6. Understanding the subtle body (mind, intelligence and false ego)*

### **12.6.1) Composition of the subtle body**

**In the SB 6.1.51 it is explained that the subtle body is endowed with sixteen parts -- the five knowledge-acquiring senses (nose, tongue, eyes, skin and ears), the five working senses (speech, hands, legs, genitals and anus), the five objects of sense gratification (beauty, taste, smell, sound and touch), and the mind. In other places the subtle body is described as composed of mind, intelligence and false-ego. In SB 6.1.51 it is stated that "this subtle body is an effect of the three modes of material nature and is composed of insurmountably strong desires."**

**How does one reconcile all these compositions of the subtle body. Are they quantitative, qualitative and functional? How do we relate these elements to one another? (Digest 24.1)**

The sankhya-yoga system of Lord Kapiladev identifies the material composition of creation as being composed of 24 elements, whereas the seventh chapter of BG identifies 8 elements which comprise the entire material creation. They can be thought of as two systems, both of which are equally valid and correct. They both analyze material composition effectively; one will obviously have more detail than the other, yet they are both equally valid.

The same comparison can be made with the 16 parts which make up the subtle body in the sankhya system, found in SB 6.1.51 and the 3 subtle elements which make up subtle body, per BG Ch 7's analysis.

In SB 3.26.24-34, an explanation is found wherein the subtle body is manifest in its various components due to contact of the primal element of creation, i.e. ahankar, with the 3 modes of nature.

Finally, the subtle body includes the mind in both systems of analysis. The mind is the sitting place of all material desires, which are very strong---so strong that they bind and bewilder the superior energy, the jiva soul!

### **12.6.2) Understanding that the mind, intelligence and false ego are material**

**There is a simple argument for mind being a material element: mind can be controlled with breath exercises, which are a material process. Are there more obvious arguments like this, for mind, but also for intelligence and false ego being material? (Digest 51.4)**

We derive conclusive knowledge from scriptures, whereas logic and argument are always inconclusive. We can easily understand, with a little introspection that mind, intelligence and false ego are all contaminated by matter and influenced by material circumstances. As the soul

changes from one body to another, his mental disposition, intelligence and false conception of who he is - all change. The only unchanging entity is the soul himself, and he is spiritual. Krishna says in Bhagavad-gita that mind, intelligence and false-ego are His material energies, and the living entities are part of His superior energy (Bg 7.4-5). Lord Krishna also gives a detailed analysis of the distinction between matter and spirit in Chapter 2. On this scriptural basis, we can firmly conclude that mind, intelligence, false ego, etc. are all material.

### 12.6.3) Difference between the mind and the soul

#### **What is the difference between mind and soul? (Digest 11.3)**

The soul is our real self; it is all-spiritual and eternal. When the soul comes to the material world, he accepts a material body, which comprises of a gross body and a subtle body. Mind is part of the subtle body; it is a subtle sense, sometimes called the 6th sense, distinguishing it from the sense of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste. The soul is the seat of consciousness, whereas the mind simply receives impressions from the five senses, and then processes those impressions by way of thoughts, feelings, and volition. The mind also is the resting place of our conceptions of life.

### 12.6.4) What is intelligence?

#### **What really is intelligence? Is it something part and parcel of the soul? Is one given a different intelligence in different births, or is it something eternal? (Digest 92.2)**

Material intelligence is one of the energies of Krishna --- a subtle material energy, just as earth, water, air etc are gross material energies.

When the spirit soul comes to the material world, just as he is provided with a gross body, he is also provided with a subtle body which constitutes the mind, intelligence and false ego. Krishna identifies all these gross and subtle matter as His separated material energies or inferior energies. The soul is a superior energy of Krishna, and it can manipulate the inferior energies. (Bg 7.4-5)

The subtle body carries the soul from one birth to another through different species of life, and in these different births the intelligence is sometimes more developed, and sometimes dull or dormant, according to the body one achieves by past karma. Material intelligence helps the soul to forget his real identity and to exploit material nature for one's own attempted sense-gratification.

Spiritual intelligence, on the other hand, is of a different kind. It is the intelligence by which the soul can once again come back to Krishna. To those who have once again turned their attention to Krishna and are constantly trying to serve Him, the Lord directly gives them spiritual intelligence. (Bg 10.10)

### 12.6.5) Which is superior: mind or intelligence?

**In Bhagavad-gita (BG) 3.42 it is said "The working senses are superior to dull matter; mind is higher than the senses; intelligence is still higher than the mind; and he [the soul] is even higher than the intelligence." However in Srimad Bhagavatam (SB)**

**3.26.27** it is said, "From the false ego of goodness, another transformation takes place. From this evolves the mind, whose thoughts and reflections give rise to desire." And in SB **3.26.29** "By transformation of the false ego in passion, intelligence takes birth, O virtuous lady. The functions of intelligence are to help in ascertaining the nature of objects when they come into view, and to help the senses." So while the BG seems to say that intelligence is higher than the mind, the SB indicates that mind evolves from the mode of goodness and intelligence from the mode of passion which would lead one conclude the mind is superior to intelligence. How to explain this apparent contradiction? (Digest 14.4)

Material intelligence has the function of assisting the mind and senses in fulfilling their demands, and therefore it is in the mode of passion; in other words, the intelligence is acting subservient to the mind, 'ascertaining the nature of objects' to give the best pleasure to the mind and senses. However, spiritual intelligence is guided by superior knowledge from guru and sastras, and this 'spiritualized intelligence', when properly trained, can act superior to the mind and control the mind.

Due to its capacity to control the mind and elevate the soul under the guidance of higher instruction, the intelligence is said to be superior.

#### **12.6.6) Guidance from 'material intelligence' vs. 'spiritual intelligence'**

**It is a common observation that most people are guided by their intelligence. It is stated in Bhagavad-Gita that Soul is higher than intelligence. So, can a person be guided by his/her Soul? If so how do we know that we are being guided by the Soul? (Digest 207.1)**

The spirit soul belongs to para-prakriti, the superior energy of the Lord. Although he is trying to exploit the inferior material nature, nonetheless the soul belongs to the category of prakriti (energy) of the Lord and thus controlled by Him, either directly or indirectly. In the conditioned state, we are conducted by material intelligence. But when the soul is directly connected to or engaged in his relation with the Supreme, then he is guided by superior spiritual intelligence coming directly from Krishna.

Material intelligence implies that the intelligence is subservient to the mind. Although intelligence is supposed to be superior to the mind, it is busy catering to the mind's demands for sense-gratification. It is seen practically that most people employ their intelligence for the singular purpose of maximizing sense-gratification, either individual or collective - this is the function of material intelligence! The soul is compared to an almost helpless passenger seated on a chariot, and the intelligence which is compared to the driver is simply pulled in different directions by the senses which are likened to wild horses. But when the spirit soul makes the right free-will choice to act in his original relationship of service to the Supreme, then with the help of superior, spiritual intelligence the soul can then steady and direct the mind & senses.

As Krishna says in BG 10.10, dadami buddhi yogam tam yena mam upayanti te - "To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the intelligence by which they can come to Me." This spiritual intelligence is quite different than the mundane intelligence that helps us manipulate material energy in different ways. This superior intelligence comes in the form of directions from scriptures & saintly persons and in mature stages of self-realization, through direct inspiration by the Supersoul from within.

Krishna therefore concludes -- right after describing the hierarchy of the senses, mind,

intelligence and spirit soul - that one should steady the mind by "deliberate spiritual intelligence [Krishna consciousness]" (BG 3.43). He then proceeds to explain in the following chapter, Chapter 4, how this superior, transcendental knowledge is attained by approaching a bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession. Thus the test of one who is acting from the platform of the pure soul rather than being conducted by material intelligence is that one is acting under superior spiritual guidance in the form of instructions from scriptures and spiritual master.

### 12.6.7) 'Real ego' vs. 'false ego'

**Our BG discussion group has been rambling for lack of our ability to grapple with the meaning of 'ego'. All of us generally agree that spirituality is about surrendering the ego or getting rid of 'I consciousness'. But understanding it conceptually itself seems a challenge. We discussed 'I am not the body, I am the soul', and 'I am the eternal servant of the Lord' aspects. We also cited the example of sage Valmiki - he must have lost consciousness of body altogether. We would appreciate hearing from you about this topic. (Digest 67.2)**

There is a distinction between `ego' and `false-ego' which I would like to point out --- perhaps that would help understand the concept of ego better. Ego is the conception that one has of oneself, a conscious awareness of one's identity, or as you put it, "I-consciousness".

The soul cannot get rid of ego, or the conscious awareness of oneself, even with one's greatest effort. The soul *\*IS\** conscious, and being conscious of one's spiritual identity is experienced in the liberated state. However, by uncovering our real-ego, or the true and eternal sense of self, we can discard the false-ego or the false identification of the soul with external objects, such as the bodily coverings of the soul, both gross and subtle, and things related to the body.

Getting rid of false-ego does not necessarily mean to `lose awareness of the body or mind', as was the case of Valmiki during his deepest meditation on Ram's name. Rather, ridding oneself of false-ego means to change one's perception of one's self --- to see oneself not as the enjoyer and controller of the material energy, but as a part and parcel of Krishna and an instrument in Krishna's hands.

To repeat, a self-realized soul is not necessarily disconnected from sensory perception of the external world; but a self-realized soul *\*is\** disconnected from any misidentification with matter, as much as the driver of a car is fully conscious of the movements of his vehicle but doesn't identify himself to be the car. As one's real-ego or awareness of one's eternal identity awakens, one becomes transcendental to the pains and pleasures and changes of the body although fully connected to the body, seeing it as a mere instrument.

Here is one final thought on this topic.

Real ego is the consciousness that one is the eternal servant of the Lord, while false-ego is characterized by the mentality of being the doer and mover of material energy (Bg 3.27). Very often, beginners in spiritual life, trying to overcome false ego and the doer-ship mentality, mistakenly suppose that abandonment of false ego means giving up action or taking initiative. Karma-tyaga is their objective, not just karma-phala tyaga. They think that surrendering or acting as an instrument of God, moreover, is akin to becoming something like a mindless programmed robot. This is not correct. Rather, giving up false ego is to give up whimsical actions and the mentality that one can achieve something independent of Krishna, replacing this false-ego with

the consciousness that one's actions are to be placed subordinate to and subject to God's will.  
I hope this sheds some light on this topic.

## 13. Love

### 13.1. Love in the material world

#### 13.1.1) 'Love in the material world' & 'mother's love'

**Do you think true love really exists in this world? I am talking about the love we see in relationships between husband-wife, friends, or brothers. As far as I have understood, the only form of true love is between a mother and her child. Even here, it is more from the mother's side. Do you think that a mother loves a child because it's her child, because a woman always desires to have and love children? A person who has achieved and realized the existence of God is definitely a great soul since that is perfection of love - based only on trust and faith (even that is based on materialistic grounds these days). All other types of love seem to be just so superficial and shallow. Please comment. (Digest 74.1)**

You are right, material love is indeed very shallow. "There is actually no love in the material world", Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati would often remark. True love is other-worldly. The so-called love of this world is almost always based on self-centered considerations, or lust: 'I love you because you satisfy such and such of my needs'.

In Sri Caitanya Caritamrita, two distinct terms are identified: kama and prema, i.e. lust and love. Kama is defined as the desire to satisfy one's own senses, but when one's only desire is to satisfy the beloved, without a tinge of personal consideration, that is prema.

This pure love is very difficult to attain, since no conditioned soul in this world can be fully free of selfish interests (other than a pure devotee).

Whatever form of love we find in the material world is therefore, more or less tinged with kama. Srila Prabhupada often stated that the love of a mother is the closest thing to pure love, in as much as there is a high degree of selflessness in that relationship. But ultimately we can see that love also to be restricted and temporary from the absolute perspective.

Love is a natural propensity of the soul. However, pure love can factually be experienced only in relation with Krishna; and He alone can perfectly reciprocate our love. For the spirit soul to repose love on something non-spiritual, based on considerations such as bodily relationship, is quite incompatible, and therefore quite unfulfilling, often ending in frustration. In fact, Krishna is the active principle of everything; thus whatever is lovable or attractive to us is only due to its connection with Krishna. If at all we love someone it is due to the fact that they are a spark of Krishna. For instance when the soul, which is a spark of Krishna, leaves the body, no one loves the dead body.

Because our love is now misdirected towards matter and has been thwarted so many times in frustrated attempts to find a worthy object for our love, most of us even become reluctant to trust and love anyone at all. Even if we do so it is sustained only on superficial, conditional terms. But as soon as we turn our attention and affection again to Krishna, the natural love of the soul can flow unimpeded. Srimad Bhagavatam describes such love as unmotivated and uninterrupted; there is no cause or personal motivation why we love Krishna except that He is so lovable, and there is no stop to such love (SB 1.2.6).

On this platform a devotee can truly love everyone else also in relation to Krishna as His parts and parcels. This alone is fully satisfying for the soul.

### **13.1.2) Can a bad person, love himself?**

**I would just like to ask if a bad person can love himself (is it allowed to)? Can this help him to become a better person? (Digest 196.2)**

Each one of us is part and parcel of Krishna. Thus originally we are all pure; the soul itself is neither bad or good.

By turning away from God and coming into the association of material energy, one becomes infected with bad qualities - thus the solution is simply turn our loving attention back to Krishna or God and once again all the good qualities of demigods will become manifest in that person.

A 'bad' person certainly need not condemn himself. They can apply the teaching "Hate the sin, not the sinner" towards themselves - i.e. recognize that their previous conduct and mentality was not correct and regret it, but be willing to forgive themselves. The next important step is to see beyond this temporary setback into their original eternal nature as pure soul, in relation with God - as an eternal servant of God and thus very dear to Him. It is not unnatural for a reforming soul to feel some remorse for their previous misdeeds - such sincere regret can be helpful when rightly done as it burns away the consequences of those misdeeds. But one need not dwell in lamentation and self-reproach, rather forgive oneself and eagerly go forward to rectify oneself and reinstate in one's relationship with God, which will prevent future downfalls.

Focusing too much on one's own self independently may not be the best method to transform oneself, however. It may serve initially to heal deeply ingrained negative thought-patterns. What would make a more lasting and sustainable impact, however, is to cultivate the positive sense of one's identity in loving relation with the Lord. When we do so, the Lord - being a person - reciprocates, by completely absolving us of all reactions to past mistakes. The Supreme Lord's mercy is unlimited - He is always willing to give each of us a fresh chance, and thus one can happily reinstate oneself in serving Him. By doing so, all unwanted habits are quickly eradicated and one becomes fully righteous and peaceful. And when we repose our love in Him, then automatically we come to love and satisfy everyone else including ourselves - just as when the fingers work to bring food to the stomach, the fingers are automatically nourished and energized without separate endeavor to satisfy themselves.

## ***13.2. Loving relationships with Lord Krishna***

### **13.2.1) 'Experiencing loving relationships with Krishna' & 'Lord Krishna is the only enjoyer'**

**I had once expressed that I'd like to use my desire to enjoy my original, loving relationship with Krishna as a motivation for my every activity. A senior devotee corrected my language at that time by saying that I should use my desire to experience - not enjoy - that original, loving relationship. Why is the word "experience" preferable, when the enjoyment referred to was in relation to Krishna? Is it because a devotee never**

**aspires to enjoy anything -- not even in relation to Krishna, since his nature is to aspire only to serve -- even though enjoyment does come as a byproduct of his service? (Digest 76.2)**

Krishna is the only Enjoyer or Master; others are to be enjoyed by Him. He is Purusa, we are prakrti. We are His servants, by our constitutional position. When we are situated in our loving relationship with Krishna, we experience a particular quality of happiness --- we experience being connected to Krishna's happiness! Therefore the term "experience" is more appropriate than "enjoyment". He is enjoying, and we experience His happiness through the medium of devotional service.

This is the key to understanding and experiencing what rasa is: "raso vai saha", or "Krishna \*IS\* rasa!"

**13.2.2) 'How do we know that our love towards Krsna is pure?' & 'differentiating love and lust'**

**How do we know that the love we show to Lord Krishna is not contaminated, and how do we differentiate love and lust in the material sense? (Digest 237.1)**

Below is an answer I had given to another person some time ago about "love" in the material world but it addresses your question as well:

A link for the answer below:

\*On ["love" in the material world](#) (Digest 74)\* (Please refer question 14.2.1)

## 14. Material problems, spiritual solutions

### 14.1. General questions: Material problems, spiritual solutions

#### 14.1.1) Regret and expression of gratitude to the Lord

**I need your guidance. By the Grace and the Kindness of Krishna Almighty, I have progressed in my life in terms of my standard of living, and have acquired a respectable job that does not give me physical stress at all, (though there is a considerable amount of mental stress). I am happy, there is no doubt, but the drawback is, I have involved myself a lot into materialistic attractions of this world - MAYA. And I can realize very well that I have moved millions and millions of light-years away from my Dear Lord, who gave me what I asked for, who answered my prayers, was always by my side when I wanted Him to be, was my Guide, my Motivator, my Consoler, my Counselor -- almost everything to me.**

**My question is: I feel like a very selfish and a self centered person, who remembers his Lord only when he needs something from Him and when I receive what I asked for, I just forget my Lord. This is a very ungrateful attitude on my behalf. I know it's a terrible sin. I feel so ashamed of myself that I am just not able to even join my hands, and look up to my dear Lord anymore because of this terrible guilt. Please guide me, what should I do? How could my Lord forgive me? (Digest 79.1)**

The fact that you are able to appreciate the many favors bestowed upon you by the Lord and recognize the shortcoming in your own reciprocation with Him, is in itself a very positive beginning step. Gratitude is a key to furthering your spiritual progress. Now you just need to act positively, in ways that further express your feelings of gratitude, directing those actions as an offering of your gratitude and love to Lord Sri Krishna. This is devotional service!

As you have very nicely expressed, the Lord has been your constant companion and faithful friend, not just in this lifetime, but in countless lifetimes in the past! Not only is He granting your prayers and desires, but He is also providing everything for your sustenance - all the basic necessities of everyday life that most of us take for granted. Thus we basically owe Him everything we have. Therefore, just as a child should serve the parents when he grows up and recognizes the sacrifices of the parents in raising him, similarly now in this human form of life, when we have the developed consciousness to recognize the Lord's kindness, we should express our gratitude by serving Him.

In a sense, regret for not having done so in the past is a good sign, because sincere feelings of regret and repentance burn away any residual tendency to repeat those acts or tendencies that we regret; and they can provide the impetus towards rectification. However, let those feelings not magnify into shame and lamentation that hold you back you from coming closer to the Lord. Anything that impedes the favorable cultivation of our eternal relationship with Krishna is to be rejected as a product of ignorance only. Instead we can come before the Lord, submitting our repentance before Him as sincere expressions of our feelings for Him, making a firm commitment to rectify the situation. Although we might have ignored Him

foolishly, Krishna does not feel reproachful. He is ever merciful, and always willing and eager to forgive the sincerely repentant souls and accept them back into His fold.

Expressing our gratitude towards the Lord is not very complicated. Krishna simply wants our love and He is satisfied simply with a fruit or flower or leaf offered with love and devotion. One can begin simply by regularly coming before the Lord, as in the temple, or at one's own home before one's place of worship, and offer before Him the fruits of one's labor with sincere expressions of gratitude; make it a practice to offer all food first to Krishna, and then only accept His prasadam; chant His Holy names; and read / hear about His glories in the association of devotees. These simple acts of devotion are not only most pleasing to the Lord, but have the potency to revive the deep feelings of devotion dormant in our hearts. You can also see that as these practices are taken up, all other unwanted entanglements in one's life will gradually disappear without much extraneous endeavor, and those material involvements that one does have can easily be dovetailed in service to the Lord. I hope this is of some help to you.

#### **14.1.2) Building faith in God**

**My mind has become very rational and logical. I am losing the faith on God due to one/two mistakes I have made in my life. I am feeling depressed and guilty about the incidents. Please let me know how to build the faith on God. (Digest 56.2)**

Faith is built by association. Association with the modes of nature result in various kinds of faith in different categories of people, while association with the transcendental devotees of God builds our faith in God.

In this Kali age, the entire atmosphere is surcharged with faithlessness. The principles and goals of society at large, and consequently its education system and its culture and lifestyle are by far atheistic. Naturally even those who are pious and have some training and innate belief in God are bewildered when faced with reverses in their lives due to lack of proper education in spiritual science and misguided by the godless training of modern science.

Therefore it is so crucial that one strengthens their intuitive understanding of God by hearing from proper authorities. Rationale and logic are not divorced from faith in God. If you study the works of some of the acaryas, you will find that they are most brilliant and full of superior reasoning. But that reasoning definitively answers all questions whereas mundane logic only bewilders us.

The Vaishnava philosophy gives a very cohesive understanding of everything in this material world and beyond, and the cause of everything. It is important to understand this sambandha jnana -- factual knowledge about the science of soul, who God is and what the soul's relationship with God is and what his purpose in the material world is. When this understanding is secured, one will not be bewildered in any situation. On the other hand, without this knowledge, and being unable to unravel the mysteries of life or understand the motive of God, the atheists resort to annihilate God and propose a theory born out of frustration: "No one is in control, and everything is happening by chance." Is it not illogical to propose that this vast universe is conducted so meticulously just by chance and for no tangible purpose?

Regarding the unfortunate incidents you have mentioned, we learn from Bhagavad-gita that this material world we are in is by design a treacherous place. Everyone in this material world is covered by ignorance and illusion. By the very nature of this place, therefore everyone makes mistakes and everyone faces calamities. Even the greatest personalities make mistakes

and blunders or have to go through very unfortunate circumstances. Srila Prabhupada gave the example of how even a great leader like Gandhi made mistakes that cost his very life. Once we recognize this specific design of the material world, ie. its precarious nature, the purpose of this design then becomes apparent: we are provided with clear messages that we are to use this human form of life to get out of this temporary place of miseries and return to the spiritual world full of eternal knowledge and bliss.

We are fallible, but when we recognize it and take shelter of the Infallible Supreme, we can attain true enlightenment and protection from all dangers and illusions. Giving up our relation with God in the face of difficulty only increases one's misfortune and entangles one further in the treacherous material energy, resulting in more calamities and mistaken judgments. The wise position is to turn back our attention to the Lord to completely be lifted out of this situation.

How to strengthen and nourish such faith? This is best accomplished by hearing the narrations of the topics of the Lord in the association of devotees. In addition, the most powerful process recommended for this age is chanting. Just calling upon these holy names dissipates all ignorance, illuminates the heart with factual knowledge of our real identity, and destroys all that is troublesome to the heart. If you are not already doing so, please do try chanting: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, and the Lord sitting in the core of everyone's heart will reveal Himself to you.

## *14.2. Material desires*

### *14.2.1) 'How do desires appear?' & 'role of Supersoul in the appearance of desires'*

**May I ask for some explanation for the role of the Supersoul in the appearance of a living being's desires? The whole process seems to be out of reach for a living being's self control. (Digest 196.1)**

Desires are concomitant with the soul; to have no desires is characteristic of inanimate dull matter. In other words, it is not possible to conceive of a living being without desires. It is thus misleading to think of 'appearance' of a living entity's desires; we always have some desire or another. The nature of one's desires may vary, falling into one of 2 categories - either in relation to service to the Supreme, or for independent enjoyment; this choice depends upon one's own freewill. (Please see Digests 2, 77 & 140 for more discussion on free-will)

The Supersoul is not responsible for and does not interfere with our desires and choices, but we are dependent upon His help to fulfill our desires. The Supersoul is seated in our hearts as the witness and is neutral to whatever choice we make. He gives remembrance of our previous desires (or choices of association within the modes of nature), and facilitates our enjoyment of those desires in different types of bodies. (BG 13.23, 15.15)

What influences our desires to a great degree is association. Krishna describes this in BG 2.62, *sangaat sanjayate kaamah*: by coming in contact with the objects of senses, one begins to contemplate about them, becomes attached to the idea of enjoying them and thus material desires develop. On the other hand, when one comes in contact with saintly association, appreciates that association and renders some favorable service then one develops spiritual desires. Material

desire (to enjoy the senses) causes bondage, whereas spiritual desires (to serve the Supreme) are liberating. As Srila Prabhupada often remarked, desires need not be given up or suppressed, we need to only change the quality of our desires, from the desire for enjoyment into the desire to serve the Lord.

For those of us presently conditioned by material desires, sense-control is an important stepping stone to help us become detached from the spirit of enjoyment. However, artificially restricting the senses is not effective - even great yogis and sages have failed in that department, and our own attempts to do so \*on our own strength\* is what makes it seem impossible and out of reach. The key factor in being able to control the senses is in making the right freewill choice in deciding to serve Krishna. Conversely, when the living entity is averse to serve the Supreme Lord, he himself comes under the control of the senses and becomes their servant.

As we learn from BG, the soul is superior to the mind and senses (BG 3.42-43 <http://vedabase.net/bg/3/42/en>) So when the spirit soul firmly chooses to serve Krishna, the Lord helps him to advance by cleansing material desires from his heart. When this proper choice is made, then the mind and senses can be systematically trained to engage in the service of Krishna. Scriptures provide a systematic program by which the senses are given superior engagement - this process is known as yoga, and among the different types of yoga, bhakti yoga is recommended by Krishna as the highest, both easy and sublime. By applying ourselves to this scientific process, step-by-step our desires can be transformed, and even though the senses are very strong, like serpents, they will be subdued and no more effective than serpents with broken fangs.

In practicing yoga, a regulated life in the mode of goodness is very conducive for self-control. Excessive association with the mode of passion and ignorance - characterized by ambitious plans for material progress and comforts or a highly unregulated life - these make self-control very difficult. Within the framework of a regulated life, rising early and regularly chanting the Holy names of Krishna and eating only Krishna prasadam - these are some simple measures that are highly effective in helping us control the senses, when firmly practiced along with strongly cultivating the desire to serve Krishna. The Lord has given us many opportunities and arrangements, good instructions in the form of scriptures and good association --- taking advantage of these can help us overcome the pushings of the senses.

#### 14.2.2) 'Thoughts lead to desires' & 'can we have control over our thoughts and desires'

##### **Part 1: What is the correlation between desires and thoughts? How are one's desires manifest into thoughts? (Digest 119.1)**

Thinking, feeling, and then willing are the sequential steps that lead connect thoughts to desires, and these are manifested as activities of the mind. In its pure state, thinking, feeling and willing are all centered on Krishna and His service. In the conditioned state, the mind is almost always thinking about objects of the senses. The conditioned mind is described as having a binary function - accepting and rejecting. Based on our likes and dislikes, we are always accepting some thoughts related to corresponding sense objects which we consider desirable and rejecting others as undesirable.

Bhagavad-Gita (2.62-63) describes that by contemplating sense objects, attachment and desires develop; when the willful attempts to fulfill those desires are hampered, it further leads to anger, bewilderment of memory, loss of intelligence etc. In turn, our thoughts reflect a composite

of our most prominent desires and activities. The mind is the root cause of all of these phenomena.

## **Part 2: Also, do we have control over our desires and thoughts?**

We can have control over desires and thoughts, however it is also possible that our desires control us! Krishna explains that intelligence is superior to the mind, intelligence is superior to the mind, and the soul is even higher. One can thus steady the mind's functions with the help of spiritually strengthened intelligence. (See [BG 3.42-43](#))

The whole yoga process - whether it is bhakti-yoga, dhyana-yoga or jnana-yoga - is aimed at controlling the mind. Throughout the Gita, Krishna often addresses this: [Bg 2.58-64](#), [70, 6.5-6, 6.24-26, 8.6-8, 17.16](#) to name a few.

With practice, the mind can be trained to think only of beneficial thoughts and even better, Krishna-centered thoughts. The sublime and most effective process recommended in this age for training the mind is chanting of the maha-mantra: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. Similarly by developing, in good association, attachment for Krishna and things related to Him effects detachment from lower desires.

### **14.2.3) Can karma & material desires be removed by the processes other than bhakti?**

**I recently heard the story of Lord Yamaraj cursed by a Sage to be born as Sri Vidura. When the Sage heard from Yama-dharmaraj that his child-hood mistakes caused the Sage to undergo much suffering, the sage got angry and cursed. {Editor's note: The reference is to the history of Manduka Muni, see [SB 1.13.1](#) purport}**

**I have the following doubts:**

**1) We read from the scriptures that by performing austerities (other than activities of Bhakti), one can also drain away his past vasanas (material desires). Then why didn't the childhood mistakes of this Sage drain away? (We hear from the story that the Sage was in full trance when the whole incident happened)**

**2) Does it mean that one has to drain away their accumulated vasanas (material desires) by some sort of sufferings/happiness? (Digest 120.1)**

The underlying assumption in your question, as I understand it, is that certain activities such as performance of austerities, yoga or meditation can counteract material contamination (vasana, as you say) and the sage Manduka Muni should have thus burned up all such contamination by dint of his ascetic practices.

There is a fine distinction, which I would like to draw your attention to, between material desires (arising from past material association) and reactions to past material activities. The term 'vasana' usually refers to the first while the latter is called karma. Karmic reaction can either be good or bad; pious activities result in good karma and sinful activities bring bad karma. Austerities and penances, other than those performed strictly for spiritual progress, fall under the category of pious karma. It should be noted that sinful reactions cannot be counteracted simply by performing pious karma -- both of them accumulate individually, and a person must accept reactions for both sinful and pious activities, individually. (For an example, see the Story of King Nriga, Krishna Book.)

Sinful activities can however be counteracted by performance of specific atonements (prayascitta) according to the particular nature of sin committed. Bhagavatam explains that if 'prayascitta' is not undertaken within one's lifetime, then those reactions accrue upon death for which the soul will have to suffer in hell or in a future life. (Cf SB 6.1.7) Yet, even if prayascitta is undertaken, it can only counteract the karmic reaction, not the impure desires of the heart which impelled one to commit those sins in the first place.

Bhagavatam describes that processes such as tapasya, tyaga, charity etc are better than atonement, and can burn up karma just as fire burning up a bamboo forest, although their roots remain to grow back at the first opportunity. However, the process of devotion to Vasudeva is so uniquely powerful that it can completely uproot from the heart even the desires and tendency to commit sin, or in other words, visaya-vasana. (Cf. SB 6.1.10, 14, 15)

A transcendentalist, or one who desires to go beyond both good and bad karma, therefore adopts this process of devotion, exclusively.

I hope this addresses your questions.

### 14.3. Material obligations

#### 14.3.1) Material obligations and the prime duty of life

**In family life, one has to look after wife, children, earn sufficient money for their better education, health, and comfort. One has to look after parents in their old age. We cannot just forget this materialistic life. As a head of a family one has to fulfill many of these duties at his best. (Digest 5.9)**

Amongst these and many other obligations we have, the supreme obligation is to our Supreme Father, Who is the actual maintainer of all of us. By fulfilling that obligation, all others are fulfilled, just as by watering the root of the tree, one takes care of the whole tree.

#### 14.3.2) 'Devotees are not obligated to forefathers' & 'understanding Caitanya Mahaprabhu's performance of shraddha ceremony.'

**Once in Krishna Consciousness or devotional service, do we have to offer food and water to forefathers periodically? If not, then why did Caitanya Mahaprabhu go to Gaya for sraddha ceremony? In one purport, Srila Prabhupada says that if offerings to forefathers are stopped, generations of family members remain in hell. Is this true for devotees also? (Digest 35.2)**

When one seriously takes up practice of Krishna consciousness under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, then by dint of one's service to the Supreme Lord, all of their other obligations are automatically fulfilled. And automatically their forefathers are greatly benefited and liberated (Please refer Bg. 1.41 purport).

The pastimes of Lord Caitanya and their inner meanings are very mysterious, as the author of Caitanya Caritamrita, Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraj Gosvami himself describes. However, one of the external reasons why Lord Caitanya went to Gaya is as follows. At that time Lord

Caitanya had not yet manifested His sankirtana pastimes and His ecstatic mood of pure devotion. He was playing the part of a learned brahmana and pandita, and in that role He meticulously carried out all the prescribed duties of a householder brahmana, in order to set an ideal example for householders.

One of the internal reasons of His journey to Gaya, on the pretext of performing sraddha ceremony, was to actually meet His spiritual master Isvara Puri. It was in Gaya that Mahaprabhu first revealed His ecstatic devotion when He saw the lotus footprints of Lord Vishnu and then upon meeting His spiritual master, He was completely transformed. By this pastime, He also taught that however learned or qualified one may be, one can attain pure devotion only by contacting and taking shelter of a pure devotee.

### 14.3.3) Dovetailing family responsibilities to keep Krishna in the center

**How can I solve this dilemma? I have surrendered completely to Lord Krishna, but I am a human being, also. I need to do something for my family and friends. But these services take me away from the Krishna. (Digest 5.10)**

The secret is to keep Krishna in the center of one's life and dovetail all other duties in the fulfillment of that primary service. One must act responsibly in taking care of the need of family and friends ultimately for the sake of assisting them and ones own self in achieving the goal of life. If we keep this in clear focus, then being with family and friends need not take us away from Krishna or His teachings. Arjuna was also a family man, and had the responsibility of ruling the whole world!

## 14.4. Material sufferings

### 14.4.1) Dealing with unexpected reversals in life

**Prabhupada told us to "Chant Hare Krishna and Be Happy". I have been chanting the maha mantra since two years and I am following the rules and regulations but I am still very unhappy. I guess that there is a problem somewhere with me. My life is a mess. Krishna gives me too many tests which I can't handle. I have been struggling with my spiritual life and I am tired now. I am helpless.**

**I was engaged with a devotee for 1 year and we were planning to get married after our studies. Recently, his Guru Maharaj told him that, being so young (he is 21 and I am 18), he should remain brahmachari for the time being. So he has left me. I know that his Guru is pure and is directly guided by Krishna and his decision is most appropriate but being such a fallen human being, I am suffering a lot because being engaged for me was very important as it stabilized my mind. I am trying my best but I am unable to forget him and to get over it. Please tell me what I should do to become stronger and to stop suffering from it. (Digest 127.1)**

Part of your struggle is clearly connected to the situation re. your engagement. The feelings you have described are natural; although you have correctly accepted the course of

events as being inspired by Krishna for some reason and are not begrudging or holding anyone at fault, it is nevertheless difficult for you to remain unaffected by the turn of events, and this is but natural.

When faced with such unexpected reversals in life, Krishna advises us to learn to tolerate. (See [Bg 2.14](#)) It is not easy, but this tolerance is a very important quality a devotee needs to cultivate in order to successfully chant the Holy names. ([Siksastaka 3](#))

The ability to tolerate comes from the internal faith in Krishna's shelter, even if we don't yet have a strong realization of it. A devotee can always remain happy because of this shelter they feel. Knowing Krishna to be the Supreme Controller and my dearest well-wishing friend, the devotee is confident that Krishna will surely protect me and is orchestrating my life for the best. This trust that if I faithfully follow Krishna's instructions, He will surely protect me (avashya rakibe Krishna) is an important limb of the process of surrender. In addition, a devotee always feels deeply grateful for the numerous blessings Krishna has already provided in their life and is thus not too disturbed by apparent reversals or by what is seemingly lacking.

There is a beautiful verse in the Bhagavatam, Prayers offered by Lord Brahma ([SB 10.14.8](#)) which states that when a devotee faces a condition of so-called distress or reversal, rather than seeing it as a stringent punishment or unsurpassable test, he considers it a gift or benediction from the Lord. A devotee thinks: "Thanks to my past misdeeds I should suffer far, far greater than I am suffering now. So it is by the mercy of the Supreme Lord that I am not getting all the punishment I am due. I am just getting a little token, which is also for my purification." Therefore he is always calm, quiet and patient, despite many distressful conditions, and continues to serve the Lord with greater enthusiasm. Such a person is eligible to go back to godhead.

Krishna is not promising His devotee an idyllic life in the material world. Rather He warns us that this is a place of temporality and suffering, where there is danger at every step. And yet a devotee is always happy and satisfied because of the above-mentioned qualities viz, tolerance, gratefulness and faith in Krishna's shelter. These are not artificial adjustments of the mind but factually feelings of a pure devotee and by progressively cultivating these qualities, we can also be happy even amidst struggles.

Of course it is easier said than done, especially when the mind is disturbed and agitated. But it is possible to turn this into a wonderful opportunity for you to take deeper shelter and become further attached to Krishna. It becomes especially easy if you can have the association of devotees who carry such deep faith. Try to seek such association and hear and chant in their company. You could also associate with Srila Prabhupada through reading his biography and derive great strength from seeing how he persevered through all kinds of trials and reversals. Another powerful process is to cultivate the habit of offering heartfelt prayers to the Lord for His mercy and help.

So have faith and persevere. Please do not feel defeated, helpless or frustrated. Krishna consciousness is full of hope. In the ultimate picture of our eternal relationship with Krishna, even the most trivial of our services and attempts to connect to Him will be remembered and rewarded by Him abundantly, so your efforts in Krishna consciousness are not in vain. The present circumstance itself may be such reciprocation from Krishna to facilitate your advancement, and by continuing patiently with your devotional service, one day you may look back and appreciate how it was so.

One concluding thought: Consider what your reaction would be if you were to receive notice that you would die in 7 days, as was the case with Pariksit Maharaja. How would you

respond?

Here is what Srila Prabhupada writes in [SB 1.18.3](#) on the topic of meeting drastic reversals in life: "Knowing the transcendental position of the Lord and the transcendental method by which one can approach that transcendental dhama, the King was confident about his ultimate destination, and by knowing this he could leave aside everything material, even his own body, without any difficulty of attachment. In the Bhagavad-gita, it is stated, param drstva nivartate: [[Bg. 2.59](#)] one can give up all connection with material attachment when one is able to see the param, or the superior quality of things.... Unless one thoroughly understands this superior or eternal energy of the Lord, it is not possible to leave the material energy, however one may theoretically speculate on the true nature of the Absolute Truth."

#### **14.4.2) Tribulations: allowing Krishna to control in times of tribulations**

**In one class you expressed: "When tribulations come we should allow Krishna to control, who wants to control as He likes." Please elaborate this further if you so desire. (Digest 209.4)**

The actual statement I made is more accurately stated as follows: "When tribulations come we should allow Krishna to control. Our department is the service department, and controlling is Krishna's department." This means that in times of tribulation, rather than trying to manipulate the material energy in an effort to overcome the tribulation, we should stay fixed in the mood of service to Krishna.

Material consciousness dictates that we figure out some means by which to fix a problem, to eliminate or circumvent the cause of difficulty, to gain control over the situation and try to set things in order. One becomes attached to such plans, and outcomes, and doer-ship mentality, so much so that one does not even mind flexing and compromising some principles or relaxing/ overlooking some superior instructions for the time being in order to accomplish this end.

Pleasing Krishna by my sincere efforts to serve is no longer the driving force of one's actions.

But in spiritual consciousness, one is conscious that it is in Krishna's hands to alter a difficult situation, feels fully dependent on His mercy and is fully trusting in the fact that Krishna knows what is in our best interest. Dependence on Krishna does not translate as being passive, but in this consciousness, one makes every effort as needed, while always staying within the periphery of instructions received from guru, sadhu and shastra. We serve, to the best of our ability, and Krishna controls. And as I am doing the needful service, ultimately the result is left up to Krishna, on Krishna's terms.

#### **14.4.3) How to understand Krishna's desire in situations of hardship and accordingly respond?**

**It has always been puzzling for me when, in the heat of life's struggles, one faces situations of hardship, how does one know if it is, for example, Krishna testing our resolve to serve him, or is it karma because our endeavor is contaminated by material desires or, is it a message meant to make us realize that adjustments need to be made in order to achieve our goals? In other words, how does one know if Krishna's desire is that we learn from this situation and keep fighting in this direction, or does He want us to change the way we are**

## doing things? (Digest 193.1)

As a practicing devotee in the sadhana stage, in trying to understand the cause of difficulties or struggles, or in testing one's own motivation and purity of endeavor, we can take it for granted that it is most likely a mix. Even as we are striving to surrender and selflessly serve Krishna, we can safely guess that our own desires may be tinged with some shades of a spirit of enjoyment or independence, and it could also be some residual reactions from the past. But in any case, a sincere devotee who is taking shelter of a bona fide spiritual master can be assured that whatever the reasons, ordeal is being kindly orchestrated by Krishna for our purification.

This is quite different from the difficulties imposed by material nature in the life of one who is not under the shelter of devotional service. Neither is it quite like the tribulations in the lives of pure devotees like the Pandavas or Srila Prabhupada, which Krishna puts before them as a sort of exchange of transcendental bhava, while simultaneously for the purpose of teaching the world through their struggles. In our case, it is neither of these two positions, but likely a third middle-ground -- arranged by the Lord Himself, but for our further purification and edification.

As far as understanding Krishna's indication or what should be our response in the face of such hardships -- whether to persist with confidence that we are on the right course or to make adjustments /change track -- this is best done in consultation with the spiritual master and other advanced devotees. Grandfather Bhishmadev explains this principle in the Bhagavatam while pacifying Maharaja Yudhisthira who was devastated thinking of the great massacre in the battle fought on his account. (See SB 1.9.12 [www.vedabase.net/sb/1/9/12/en](http://www.vedabase.net/sb/1/9/12/en)) His assurances were based on the principle that "As long as a person is fully in cooperation with the wishes of the Lord, guided by the bona fide brahmanas and Vaishnavas, and strictly following religious principles, one has no cause for despondency, however trying the circumstances of life."

When these three checkpoints are satisfied "vipra-dharma-acyuta ashraya", viz. (1) we are guided by vaishnavas, (2) we are abiding by scriptural directions in conducting our life / a particular service assignment and (3) we are doing so to please Krishna, then we can be utterly confident of our efforts, regardless of what setbacks, trials and tribulations come on the way and whether or not we can perceive tangible success.

This was how Srila Prabhupada was able to persist for more than 30 long years, with apparently no visible success! It would be impossible for any ordinary person to be undeterred year after year, against enormous odds, without seeing any sign of progress. Twice his manuscript on the translation of Bhagavad-Gita was lost, and yet he did it all over again, without feeling discouraged or bewildered. Hardly anyone appreciated his mission and came forward to co-operate or offer solid help to him. But as Srila Prabhupada spoke of himself, "It is not very encouraging, still I'm not a man to be disappointed." He was unshakeable because he was completely confident and clear about the order of his spiritual master - to preach in the English language in the western parts of the world. And he executed whatever was needed to fulfill that order, with incomparable enthusiasm.

In the beginning stages, we might need closer direction and guidance on how to deal with the different twists and turns of life, to understand Krishna's desires and how to apply scriptural principles to practical life. So, when faced with uncertainty, take the opportunity to consult and seek the guidance of vaishnavas. Having gotten a clear direction, you can then proceed confidently on that basis with great resolve.

#### 14.4.4) Keeping faith in great difficulty

**When we are in great difficulty, why does our faith in the Supreme Lord decrease? How can we keep great faith in the Lord in such time? (Digest 163.1)**

In the Bhagavad-gita (2.41p) Srila Prabhupada defines faith as "unflinching trust in something sublime." Krishna is beyond the immediate perception of our senses and intelligence. Therefore, faith means feelingly completely dependent and confident that having taken shelter of Him, Krishna will definitely protect me, although one may not understand exactly how the Lord is going to protect; therefore it is called sublime. The actual strength of our faith is tested only when there is some disturbance. In fact, there is not much meaning to having faith when everything is going our way, isn't it! Therefore such difficulties are a blessing in disguise, showing us where our faith is lacking, and giving us an opportunity to strengthen it.

Faith wavers when we lose sight of Krishna, or when we are unable to see Krishna's hand behind the course of events. By continuing to take shelter of the Lord amidst difficulties, we can see how Krishna protects us at every step of life - this magnifies and strengthens our faith in Him manifold. This is what we see in the lives of devotees like Draupadi and Kunti, and therefore Kunti prays, "Let these calamities come again and again." (SB 1.8.25)

Another reason that our faith weakens is because we look for material shelters. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura prays, taking the role of conditioned soul, "O Lord, I have fallen into this deep ocean and instead of searching out for the infallible boat of Your lotus feet, I am trying to grab hold of the sea-weeds floating by, thinking they will give me protection." Because of lifetimes of being in forgetfulness of the Lord and being accustomed to placing faith in our own efforts and intelligence, we fail to recognize that Krishna alone can give protection and we may try to look for some quick-fix solution.

We can strengthen faith by hearing in the association of faithful devotees. Repeated hearing the topics and pastimes of the Lord, specifically those pastimes in which He displays His protection and loving reciprocation with devotees who know no other shelter than Him --- such as the pastimes of deliverance of Gajendra, Prahlada, Dhruva Maharaja, the Pandavas and so on -- this is both pleasing to the heart and acts as a potent medicine to endow us with firm faith and devotion. (Please see SB 3.25.25) Srila Prabhupada therefore repeatedly stressed the habit of hearing every morning and evening, and this hearing process is repeatedly recommended throughout the Bhagavad-Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam.

#### 14.4.5) 'How to accept happiness & distress equally' & 'Understanding rapid sufferings'

**How should one learn to accept happiness and sufferings equally? What does rapid sufferings of an initial beginner in spiritual path indicate? Does God give material benefits to a neophyte or does he give rapid sufferings to test him? (Digest 3.3)**

In Bhagavad Gita (5.15) Krishna says that, 'Embodied beings, however, are bewildered because of the ignorance which covers their real knowledge.' Being in a bewildered condition, therefore, the embodied soul identifies himself with the circumstantial material body and becomes subjected to the temporary misery and happiness of life. Real knowledge is our understanding of our relationship to Krishna and attempting to re-establish it. With such

knowledge one becomes equipoised, without any attachment to success or failure.

Regarding your point about 'rapid sufferings,' - Srila Rupa Goswami mentions in the Nectar of Devotion that 'bhakti is klesaghni subhada,' that it provides immediate relief from material distress. Srila Prabhupada gives the analogy of a fan that continues to rotate even after the plug is pulled out. Similarly one may suffer from past reactions in the early stages of bhakti, but gradually this will also cease.

With respect to the third part of your question, Krishna reciprocates according to the desires and advancement of the devotee. He gave unlimited opulences to Sudama and put Queen Kunti into so much distress, both very dear devotees, and in both cases the end result was bringing them closer to Him.

#### **14.4.6) How can a common man understand that tribulations are due to karma?**

**How can a common person without any religious background understand that tribulations are due to karma or time? (Digest 209.2)**

Srila Prabhupada remarks in his purport to SB 2.2.35, that it is not difficult, even for a common man, to realize the presence of the Supersoul in everyone's heart by reason and perception. He even elaborates a seven-step procedure by which one can do so. This is to say that with a little introspection and truthful reflection, any common man can come to have an intuitive sense of the truths about the presence of a Superior controller, superior intelligence directing us, the effects of one's action and their reactions (karma) and so forth -- provided one possesses a simple heart with humility and service attitude.

On the other hand, one who has an intrinsically competitive and challenging attitude towards God however becomes covered in his intelligence, and cannot possibly understand these things even if they were explained in great detail.

Going further than a vague and intuitive inclination towards these truths, to actually have firm, practical conviction and clear understanding of their application is generally possible only by coming in contact with the descending knowledge coming through the association of realized devotees in disciplic succession, in some form either directly or indirectly. Therefore, the association of devotees is so valuable and Srila Prabhupada was so anxious to make this association widely available to people in general.

#### **14.4.7) Frustration in life**

**Why do people often get frustrated with life? (Digest 26.3)**

A fish out of water will get frustrated if it tries to find shelter in anything other than a body of water. Similarly, we are eternal but we are in the alien atmosphere of this material world, hankering to find happiness in temporary things or temporary relationships. And sure enough, we become frustrated sooner or later, irrespective of whether we succeed or fail to obtain the object of our desire. Our natural position is in the eternal spiritual world in relation with the Personality of Godhead and His devotees - in that position there is no hankering, lamentation or frustration.

**14.4.8) Responding to the suffering of other living entities**

**Please help me solve one of the mysteries that panic me often. I do wish to be in the service of the Supreme Lord. But I am often disturbed by the sufferings like poverty that exists in the world. Should we just leave all this saying that its the result of karma? And how do you preach a person, who is not getting even a meal a day, about Krishna? (Digest 3.4)**

A devotee is compassionate by nature. However equipped with the higher truth, he tries to provide ultimate relief - relief from material existence. If one is disturbed to see people starving, then he should try and feed them Krishna prasada. The food will alleviate their material distress and the fact that is sanctified food will also provide them with spiritual relief. Similarly hospitals, orphanage, schools can be operate that take care of the material and spiritual needs.

**14.4.9) If material happiness and distress are predestined, what is the use of performing pious activities?**

**A seven year old devotee asked:**

**SB 1.5.18 says "... As far as happiness derived from sense enjoyment is concerned, it can be obtained automatically in course of time, just as in course of time we obtain miseries even though we do not desire them."**

**Your question is: "If according to the above verse our happiness is determined by destiny, then why do scriptures recommend so many different sacrifices and means to achieve material comforts and positions such as 'you do hundred asvamedha yajnas and you could become Indra', or 'you could go to that planet, or you could become a king' etc. If our happiness is predetermined by our destiny, then why do scriptures recommend these activities to achieve certain goals for happiness? One should achieve that happiness without performing these sacrifices etc." (Digest 222.1)**

By performance of punya or pious activities of any type, one \*increases\* one's entitlement to reap the fruits of one's piety. This does not contradict what Bhagavatam is saying – that ‘happiness is determined by destiny’.

Srila Prabhupada writes in the purport to 1.5.18, “By the law of the Supreme, different places are meant for different grades of living beings according to the work they have performed. By good work only, as prescribed in the scriptures, can one obtain birth in a good family, opulence, good education and good bodily features. We see also that even in this life one obtains a good education or money by good work. Similarly, in our next birth we get such desirable positions only by good work. Otherwise, it would not so happen that two persons born in the same place at the same time are seen differently placed according to previous work."

In other words, by performing some pious activities like sacrifices, one makes a ‘deposit’ into their ‘punya account’ i.e. as Prabhupada says 'they are doing some good work'.

Moreover, when a pious soul reaps the benefits of the good work, they are making a sizeable ‘withdrawal’ and their ‘punya account’ gets depleted!

The results or the happiness that such a person experiences because of his newly-made deposit by performing today's sacrifice is \*in addition to\* what was determined by his previous

piety, which was the basis of his previous destiny. Why? Because he just added some good work, which improved or changed his destiny.

In the grand scheme of existence, ultimately all such material positions are impermanent, as Srila Prabhupada says: “Miseries and mixed happiness are two features of material life, and they are obtained in Brahmaloaka and in other lokas also. The miseries and mixed happiness of all living beings are only of different degree and quality, but no one is free from the miseries of birth, death, old age and disease. Similarly, everyone has his destined happiness also. No one can get more or less of these things simply by personal endeavors. Even if they are obtained, they can be lost again. One should not, therefore, waste time with these flimsy things; one should only endeavor to go back to Godhead. That should be the mission of everyone's life.”

### *14.5. Mind and sense control*

#### **14.5.1) Mind: the casue of suffering & distress (story of Avanti Brahmana and BG 14.19)**

**I have a question relating to Avanti Brahmana narration found in Canto 11 of the SB. His conclusion was that the false ego is the cause of his suffering - is it the same meaning that is conveyed in Bg.14.19? (Digest 69.1)**

The story of Avanti Brahmana is narrated by Krishna to illustrate how one should soberly tolerate the disturbances and offenses caused by others, and remain fixed on the spiritual path. Note that the conclusion of Avanti brahmana was that the mind, not the false ego, is the cause of one's happiness and distress.

Since the soul, which is spiritual, cannot actually be touched by happiness or distress, he concludes that neither other living entities, nor the effects of past actions nor any other factor could cause one to enjoy or suffer. Through the agency of false ego the soul misidentifies itself with matter but it is the mind alone, which is the reservoir of ideas and conceptions, that makes the soul wander in the material world making one perceive happiness and distress. Therefore the only way to rise above one's suffering is to control the mind. Concluding in this way, he firmly resolves to fix his mind on the lotus feet of Krishna, and attains perfection.

Bg 14.19 does not directly address the experience of happiness and distress by the living entities and the means of counteracting them. Here Krishna describes how the living entity is not the doer or controller, rather his activities are simply based on the particular mode he is situated in. One who factually sees his true position and how he is entrapped, can learn to transcend the influence of the modes.

#### **14.5.2) Dealing with the disturbances from the mind**

**If there is something that is haunting one's mind everyday in one's thought pattern and there is nothing one can do about it, and it gives lot of irritation, anger and suspicion, what should one do? (Digest 66.1)**

Since the specific details are not clear, I will attempt to give only a very general answer. The mind is a repository of lifetimes of thoughts, impressions, attachments and aversions. It is

also greatly and very subtly affected by our immediate circumstances and surroundings. The food we eat, the company we keep, our daily activities, the sounds and sights we are exposed to, etc., have a great bearing upon our mental state; for example, by eating food cooked by someone who is irritated, we can become affected with a similar mental state for apparently no reason!

In this Iron Age, these above mentioned aspects of our life are all contaminated and naturally people in general are always disturbed. Or even if there are no immediate causes for disturbance, impressions stored from the past can rise to one's conscious awareness, like a bubble rising from the bottom to the surface of a clear lake. In either case, these disturbances are by and large taken care of by molding our lives so as to minimize the disturbing impressions. In Bhagavad-Gita (6.17) it is described how by leading a regulated life, and adopting spiritual practices, one can mitigate almost all material pains, including those disturbances arising from the body and mind. Even further, by spiritualizing our activities - for example, by eating spiritual food cooked and offered to the Lord with devotion, by associating with saintly persons, by carefully following the regulative principles of spiritual life - we can inoculate ourselves from most disturbances from within or without.

Most effective of all is hearing / reading transcendental literatures about Krishna, and chanting His holy names. These spiritual vibrations not only cleanse the mind of all contamination but are so attractive and powerful that they can capture even the most disturbed mind from its preoccupations.

There may be some other practical measures you may have to take, but reposing the mind in taking shelter of spiritual energy as said above gives the basis and support for all other secondary measures, and it is the only ultimate solution to all difficulties.

### **14.5.3) Mind/self control through practice of devotional service & detachment**

**How can one control the mind? Often the mind wanders to unnecessary thoughts. What are the tips to achieve self-control? (Digest 20.5)**

Arjuna asks the same question of Krishna in the Bhagavad-gita (6.33-36) and Krishna's answer is 'practice and detachment'. By meticulously practicing the different processes of devotional service, the mind becomes purified, develops a higher taste and then automatically becomes controlled. Especially powerful is hearing about Krishna - His names, pastimes, qualities, etc., from pure devotees. By cultivating the habit of hearing about Krishna, detachment from unnecessary thoughts naturally follows. Therefore, we need to practice, whenever it wanders, to bring it back to Krishna. (Also refer 6.26)

### **14.5.4) How to bring the mind to focus on Krsna?**

**I am trying to be more conscious about my daily activities and thoughts so that they are centered on Krishna, but it is not easy. I find myself thinking or daydreaming about how I can enjoy separate from Krishna. When I bring my thoughts back to Krishna my mind feels so much clearer. How can I keep my thoughts on the right track?**

**I really want to clean out my mind. I feel like there is so much garbage cluttered there from the past few years. Sometimes it is really overwhelming. I want to focus on Krishna and not on sense gratification but that desire sense gratification keeps creeping**

**back! Please describe a practical way that I can control my mind and be a better devotee. (Digest 146.1)**

Cleansing the mind and training it to think of Krishna takes constant and vigilant practice - so please do not be dissuaded or discouraged for having to make a strong effort to achieve this. What you are doing is on the right track and is recommended by Krishna -- "From wherever the mind wanders due to its flickering and unsteady nature, one must certainly withdraw it and bring it back under the control of the self." (BG 6.26)

The sadhana stage is one of deliberate effort and cultivation. A sadhaka has some attraction for Krishna but it is not yet strong and mature. That spark of attachment has to be, therefore, constantly kindled and nurtured by the process of hearing, chanting and remembering until it becomes a steady, blazing fire.

To replace thoughts centered on matter, deliberately shift the focus of those thoughts to Krishna. Cultivate the habit of contemplating on those desires you do have in relation to Krishna --- "In what specific ways would I like to serve Guru and Krishna", or "What are some things I can do to improve the quality of my chanting tomorrow morning", or "How can I accomplish this instruction in a manner pleasing to my spiritual master", and so on. Another enlivening meditation is contemplating on the wonderful qualities of Krishna and the acharyas, their mercy upon us and remembrance of their instructions. This exercise of the mind should be done repeatedly and daily without flagging, as many times as it takes to fix the mind on Krishna. Some devotees practice by writing down relevant instructions & realizations and regularly reviewing them from time to time, even several times during the course of the day.

Moreover, remembrance is made possible by and consequent to quality hearing and chanting. Therefore, we should do everything in our power -- mold our lives in such a way -- so as to give quality time and undivided attention to these two activities viz. hearing or study of scriptures and chanting, on a daily basis. As the Bhagavatam says, for those who are engaged in eagerly hearing the messages of Krishna which are virtuous in themselves, the Lord Himself being seated in their hearts will personally cleanse the desire for sense enjoyment. (Please read SB 1.2.17 and purport)

The desire for sense-gratification is deeply ingrained in us due to our long association with matter in so many species of life. But by hearing about Krishna from His pure devotees we quickly develop attachment to Him. In fact, it is through association that we develop attachment of any kind. Bhagavad-gita graphically illustrates this idea: by associating with the sense-objects or those who take pleasure in sense-objects, we begin to contemplate on those objects and become attached; we imbibe their materialistic values and rest our hopes for happiness on these desires. (BG 2.62, 63) Conversely, by associating with saintly persons and hearing from them submissively, the nature of our contemplation can be changed. When we hear of the happiness derived from Krishna's reciprocation with His devotees, naturally our hopes for enjoyment from matter pales and slackens.

This positive cultivation is much more effective and is emphasized more than battling alone to get rid of unwanted desires. Needless to say, the mind is very treacherous and therefore we should be wary of inauspicious thoughts and keep them far distant, but side by side if we are actively engaged in nurturing the positive, automatically thoughts of sense-gratification will have no room to enter.

#### 14.5.5) How to avoid sleeping during the day time

**My question is very simple, yet very much related to my progress in devotional service. Everyday I get up at 4 a.m., chant my rounds and hear lecture. But in the day time I cannot resist my tendency to sleep. Every time I make a commitment but fail. How can I avoid sleeping in the day time? (Digest 110.1)**

Sleep is one of the bodily requirements. As sadhaka-devotees, just as we fulfill other bodily demands in a regulated way, with a view to keep ourselves fit for the execution of the real purpose of life, similarly we can practice to regulate our sleep, just to keep our body & mind healthy and refreshed.

Generally about 6-7 hours of sleep should be sufficient for most healthy adults, but the specific requirement may vary for different individuals. You can determine the number of hours that your body requires and take that much rest all at one time. After making that adjustment within your schedule, do not yield. Devotional service should be performed with strong determination, 'drdha-vrata'.

Regulation and cultivation of the mode of goodness will dispel sleep and ignorance. During the daytime, keep yourself fully engaged in meaningful activities. Also, mechanically going through the motions is an invitation for tamo-guna to creep in. Make a conscientious effort from time to time to bring the mind to focus on Guru and Krishna. As Bhismadev instructs "By spiritual culture one is able to conquer sleep." (SB 1.9.27 purport (third para from the end))

### 14.6. Overcoming anarthas

#### 14.6.1) Overcoming sinful thoughts/actions

**In your last mailing, you mentioned that bad thoughts and actions were the results of seeds of sinful activities committed in past lives. Could you please explain how to overcome them? (Digest 32.3)**

Sinful activities implicate one with various types of gross and subtle effects. The gross effects are the distresses one is suffering from or due to suffer in the near future. But there are subtle effects of committing sin, which leave sinful impressions that are stored in the heart like seeds, and manifest as bad thoughts or sinful desires that impel one in further sinful actions. These subtle reactions or impressions in the heart can only be overcome by achieving Krishna consciousness.

Many methods recommended in the scriptures, such as performance of sacrifice or charity to counteract resultant suffering of sin, or austerities and penance to curb one's acting in sinful ways, give but a temporary relief. Technically, one's prarabdha karma, or 'effects of our past sins for which we are presently suffering', are mitigated by these religious and scripturally prescribed high-grade activities. After some time, however, one is sure to again be pushed by the seed-like dormant sinful tendencies lying in the heart. This effect of this subtle seed of dormant tendency leads to an endless cycle of sinning and atonement.

But devotional service to Lord Krishna is so powerful that it can completely uproot even traces of tendencies for sin and all the other reactions of previous sinful life. Krishna Himself helps His devotee in this regard by taking away all of one's past karma and by cleansing the heart of the devotee (Cf. Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 1, Relief from Material Distress; Srimad Bhagavatam 6.1.13-15; 1.2.17)

#### **14.6.2) 'Six bad qualities' and 'how to get rid of all sins?'**

**What is kama, krodha, lobha, madha? What should one, who is too kami (lustful), do to get rid of all those sins? How can one be purified after of all the sins accrued by just living in this world and family life? In Bhagavad-Gita Krishna says "come to Me and I will release you from all sins." How do we do this? By chanting or is there some other way? (Digest 32.4)**

There are six bad qualities which are considered to be the enemies of a living entity, of which you have mentioned four (lust, anger, greed, madness respectively), the other two being illusion and jealousy. All of these arise primarily from misuse of free will, ie. turning our attention away from attending to Krishna's happiness; this results in abhinivesa, or our pervasive penchant to enjoy material sense objects. The process of purification is exactly as you have quoted - surrendering to Krishna and rendering pure devotional service. (Please refer to above answer.)

Even while living in this material world, while engaged in one's respective occupational and social duties, "becoming released from our sins" can be accomplished by dedicating all of our activities and duties in service to Krishna and in a spirit of detachment from the results. As we have discussed before, Arjuna was also a king with "worldly" responsibilities. Like Arjuna, the primary focus, while going through our duties in the material world, should however be the cultivation of a service mood towards Krishna and His devotees, nourished by our daily direct devotional activities. There are nine forms of devotional service which we have discussed previously. Chanting is most certainly very essential and most effective in this age. Another very important item is to hear and discuss topics related to Krishna in the association of devotees.

#### **14.6.3) Overcoming lust and greed**

**How to overcome lust and greed, which kills me now? Please help (Digest 9.3)**

Lord Krishna explains in Bhagavad-gita that the lower tastes are conquered when we are able to experience a higher taste (Cf. Bg 2.59-61) by engaging the senses in devotional service. This method is very practical, because devotional service is both joyful and easy and also very purifying. When lust and greed are employed in Krishna's service, for example by desiring only Krishna prasadam, by desiring to see the beautifully decorated Deity form of the Lord and by cultivating greediness for devotee association, sankirtan and devotional service, and so forth, and by regularly engaging in these activities, especially hearing Bhagavatam in the association of devotees, lower tendencies automatically subside. In other words, the more our mind and senses become absorbed in Krishna-related activities, the less there is inclination for other thoughts and undesirable tendencies.

#### 14.6.4) 'Overcoming false ego' & 'rectifying offenses committed against devotees'

**If one commits offenses against devotees, and also has a strong false ego problem, then how to purify it and rectify the offenses? How to convert false ego? (Digest 12.7)**

The way to overcome false ego is to cultivate real ego. Our real identity, constitutionally, is that we are eternal servants of Krishna and servants of His servants. By diligently cultivating a spiritual vision, by seeing ourselves as humble servants of the devotees and being in the attitude of serving them beneficially, replaces offensive and false egoistic mentality.

Our acaryas describe that the only way to rectify offenses committed against devotees is to seek the forgiveness of that same devotee and render service to them and please them. When we cultivate a spiritual conception of ourselves and of all other devotees, then it becomes easier to overcome the false ego and take these above-mentioned steps. By regular hearing from advanced Vaishnavas, by praying sincerely to Lord Krishna, and by calling upon His Holy Name, each of these activities helps situate us in the spiritual conception of life. Such a sincere effort also invokes Krishna's mercy, who kindly helps remove our false ego and pride.

#### 14.6.5) Overcoming fault finding and critical tendency

**I have a "natural" tendency to be very critical and hence find mistakes/faults in people. Most of the time, I find fault with people at the mental level and not necessarily express it. This habit also extends to devotees. I feel and know I am not supposed to do this. But, like I said, this has become a habit and I am finding it hard to relinquish it.**

**In this whole process, I know I am wrong and hence I am always upset with my behavior (but this happens as a reflex action and not able to control my mind). Please advise me as to what I should do and how I should stop this habit of mine! I feel this will hamper my devotional process and that Guru and Krishna will not be happy with me. (Digest 183.1)**

There is a very simple and sure solution recommended to overcome fault-finding tendency -- deliberately cultivate the opposite habit! Search out and heartily appreciate the genuine good qualities in others, particularly in relation to how these qualities are the gift of Guru and Krishna, and are to be used in their service.

You can begin by making a very deliberate & conscious effort, as a daily exercise, of acknowledging and appreciating good qualities in devotees, and whenever circumstances allow, verbally expressing such appreciation and praise. Even better are opportunities to offer heartfelt service to devotees in a humble mood, and while offering such service doing so as a meditation and expression of appreciation of specific good qualities you find in them - such genuine service to vaishnavas can soften the heart and purge all critical mentality. You can also seek out the association of those who themselves have such a quality of genuine appreciation for others and serve in their company.

As you practice appreciating others, rather than arbitrarily praising some independent traits, it would be much beneficial to try to identify in what way Krishna's descending mercy is flowing into & transforming these devotees' lives and how they are making sincere efforts according to their capacity to take shelter of Krishna and His devotees. It is by this one good quality -- "krsna-eka-sharana" - that a devotee in time develops all desirable qualities, whereas it

is concluded that a non-devotee has no good qualities whatsoever, because he is hovering on the mental plane. (Cf BG 1.28 purport)

Ultimately, we are interested neither in criticizing so-called bad qualities nor in praising mundane good qualities. Krishna decorates His faithful devotees with transcendental good qualities and by appreciating His devotees we are actually praising the manifestation of His mercy. You will find that even if there may be some factual, minor discrepancies in devotees, these become insignificant in comparison to the more significant factor of how their original nature is unfolding in relationship with Krishna, just like the black spots on the moon become insignificant in comparison to the flood of cooling illumination it provides.

Another very helpful meditation you can cultivate is to learn to see through the eyes of scriptures what the praiseworthy qualities in a devotee are. You can repeatedly study relevant sections from the Bhagavad-Gita or Srimad Bhagavatam where Krishna glorifies those engaged in His devotional service and how very dear they are to Him. E.g see BG 7.16-18, 9.14,15,22, 9.29-34. By regularly meditating on these passages, we can cultivate very deep respect and appreciation for the actual position of devotees beyond the external, circumstantial and temporary characteristics that we generally tend to focus on and instead appreciate their essential characteristic of taking shelter in Krishna.

By developing this spiritual vision, it can then also be extended to those who are not devotees; rather than being disturbed by their faults, we can learn to see the root cause of their difficulties viz. their disconnection from God and thus develop compassion for them.

Moreover, remind yourself of the fact that devotional service rendered sincerely is *\*SO\** powerful that it can wipe out all discrepancies, in us and in others.

The process of devotional service is very powerful and by adopting the right means and applying oneself to them, lifetimes of habits and conditioning can be easily overcome. Have trust in this fact and with enthusiasm take up these positive steps. When we are actively cultivating the positive, there is no room for the negative; and the converse is also true! You are recognizing what is wrong and why it is wrong and you also feel genuine regret, but now do not dwell on it and let yourself be defeated by negative thoughts of frustration or anger towards yourself or how you are displeasing Guru and Krishna. Instead take up the positive and liberating process of rectification -- this will be most pleasing to them and attract their descending mercy which will further fill your heart with deeper appreciation of the glories of vaishnavas.

#### **14.6.6) Cause of self-pity and overcoming self-pity**

##### **What is the cause of self pity? How can we overcome it? (Digest 99.1)**

Self pity stems from improper understanding of the self. The self, or spirit soul, is fully satisfied and secure by virtue of his relationship with Krishna. The pure soul is decorated with all auspicious qualities and is unfettered by any material limitation.

But in the conditioned state, the soul is overcome by many unfortunate circumstances. Generally, one tries by various means to counteract the reversals in life and works hard to fulfill their unending desires. Sometimes however, due to repeated frustration, one may feel overwhelmed by the odds against them and baffled in all their attempts to enjoy, and this often gives way to lamentation and self-pity.

Indulging in self-pity can be rather destructive and one should seek active and positive alternatives to address the immediate cause(s), if any, that lies behind it. However, the ultimate

remedy is to actually address the root cause, and be situated in proper knowledge of our spiritual self, and of our relationship with Krishna. One who takes shelter in Krishna as the ultimate controller and our best well-wishing friend can be always cheerful. (cf. Bg 5.29)

Rather than being preoccupied by one's misfortunes, feeling gratitude in acknowledgement of our assets (you might be surprised how many assets we each have that we have not noticed or have taken for granted!) and feeling deep gratitude in the heart for these resources that the Lord has kindly provided - this is an exercise that can immediately lift one out of self-pity. The lives of so many great devotees like the Pandavas, Draupadi, Mother Saci and others, all checkered by a series of reversals, time and again teach a valuable lesson - a simple and grateful heart is a happy heart.

#### 14.6.7) Overcoming fear due to impatience

**How do I overcome fear because of impatience either in spiritual path or in material affairs...because impatience bring tension and I get disturbed mentally? (Digest 235.1)**

Enthusiasm, confidence, patience - these are the first three of the six important principles, mentioned by Rupa Goswami, which can assure complete success in devotional service. (Nectar of Instruction 3) Success in any sphere of life is impossible without enthusiasm. Whereas enthusiasm for material endeavor springs from the performer's hopes for enjoyment or personal benefit from the activity, our enthusiasm for the activities of Krishna consciousness is nourished by our faith, by the strong conviction that "execution of this devotional service will bring all perfection and complete satisfaction of the self." Indeed when there is strong faith, it naturally manifests as enthusiasm, and without enthusiasm, faith becomes lifeless.

But faith becomes dampened or even shaken when enthusiasm is not accompanied by patience. Srila Prabhupada gives the example of a newly married girl who may very much desire to have an offspring, but she cannot expect to have a child immediately; she has to be patient and confident that the child will be born in due time. Similarly, we have to develop the confidence in the fact that this process has been approved by all great authorities and is sure to bear fruit, if we continue to follow it diligently.

With some introspection, you would be able to see that the practices of devotion have most definitely brought about undeniable changes in your life, however insignificant they may seem during such times when you feel dissatisfied or fearful. At the very least, as Krishna promises in the Gita (2.40, 6.41), there is no loss in this endeavor even if left incomplete; rather one is assured of continued chance for improvement from wherever we left.

Unsteadiness in one's practices is expected in the immature stages, but as you mature in devotional service, you can be rest assured that by Krishna's merciful reciprocation, the enthusiasm of your endeavors will become steady and bear fruit. Therefore, do not let short-term apparent and temporary setbacks dampen your faith and enthusiasm! See the longer-term trajectory of your devotional path, and continue moving forward. Practice with diligence, confident in the purifying capacity of bhakti.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur describes in Bhaktyaloka: "For the practitioner of devotional service, \*dhairya\*, patience, is extremely necessary. Those who possess the quality of \*dhairya\* are called \*dhira\*, sober. Due to lack of this quality, men become restless. Those who are impatient cannot do any work. By the quality of \*dhairya\*, a practitioner controls first himself and then the whole world. In the first verse of \*Upadesamrta\* the symptoms of \*dhairya\* are

explained."

I am sending to you as an attachment the section on patience from Bhaktyaloka for your further reading and contemplation.

<http://www.romapadaswami.com/Inquiries/patience.pdf> (Appendix A)

#### **14.6.8) How to break habits and become serious?**

**My question is how to break habits? How can one become serious and follow Srila Prabhupada's instructions more closely? (Digest 75.1)**

Retraction of bad habits was compared by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura as being synonymous to the jiva's returning back to the spiritual world, because in effect these bad habits are nothing but the binding effects of our long material association and past activities.

The first step in overcoming this material conditioning is of course to recognize the bad habits themselves. This recognition should be accompanied by sincere regret followed by firm resolve to give up the habit. But often we find that despite being aware and regretful for their habits, many people are unable to avoid their sinful tendencies, because of the lack of proper effort. It takes great commitment sustained over time to accomplish the result.

Srila Rupa Gosvami gives us the formula for accomplishing it: Enthusiasm, determination, patience, following regulative principles under the guidance of saintly authorities, and avoiding bad association. (Nectar of Instruction verse 3) The particular methods for addressing specific bad habits may vary, but these are the fundamental principles and I would like to particularly highlight two key factors that support all the others, and help us stay on track until we completely break free -- good association and adopting strong daily practice of devotional activities.

Submission and developing attachment to the good preceptor is the most compelling force that gives leverage to overthrow our deep-rooted bad habits. This again is the answer to your second question of how to become serious. This is also how, Srimad Bhagavatam describes, that even lowborn and uncivilized people can come to the highest perfection of life. Once again how we can develop that submission and attachment is by valuing and appreciating very deeply the association of such saintly devotees.

One way of practical expression of such submission is to take up strong devotional practices, (daily chanting, scriptural study etc) which themselves give us determination and keeps us enthusiastic. But beyond that they attract the mercy of the Lord, Who alone can ultimately cleanse all material contamination from within our hearts (See SB 1.2.17).

Without the accompanying cultivation of theistic knowledge and positive spiritual practices, other methods to counteract bad habits, as we often see around us, would at best effect a temporary change. Sooner or later the living entity will once again become susceptible to and overwhelmed by material energy.

In short, the process of retraction of bad habits can be summed up as follows: Recognition, Regret, Rectification, and Reinstatement - aided by saintly association and devotional practices.

**14.6.9) Is it possible to cross all stages of anartha nivrtti in one life time?**

**Is it possible in Krishna Consciousness to cross all the stages of anartha nivritti in one life time and become a pure devotee? Can our efforts, along with Krishna's mercy, help us achieve pure transcendental love of Krishna in this life time itself?(Digest 121.2)**

Yes, most definitely, Srila Prabhupada assured us, that it is possible to achieve pure loving devotion to Krishna in this very life time. The deciding factors are, as you have mentioned in your question, the intensity of our efforts taken up under proper guidance and in a mood of submission to Guru and Krishna, combined with the mercy of Krishna.

Pure devotional service, like the intense rays of the sun, when performed with singular focus and attention in the matter of hearing, chanting, worshiping and serving devotees, can very quickly uproot all anarthas (unwanted things in the heart) and bring us to the stage of pure devotion. (Cf SB [1.2.14](#), [18](#), [19](#), [20](#), and [21](#))

## 15. Material world

### 15.1. Creation

#### 15.1.1) What does Lord Brahma create at the inception of the universe?

**As we are part and parcel of Krishna, we were already there in different bodies maybe spiritual or material bodies depending upon our karma and wandering between the universes, What exactly does Lord Brahmaji create at the inception of the universe? Is it the new spirit, or new body or new form? (Digest 2.4)**

Lord Brahma creates the material bodies of all the different species of life out of the total material ingredients. Before creation the living entities are lying dormant in the body of Maha Visnu. The material ingredients are present in an undifferentiated, aggregate form, called pradhana. Maha Visnu is the original creator, and by His glancing over the material energy the living entities are impregnated into the material energy, or pradhana. Also, from the body of Maha Visnu, the universes are generated. Brahmaji is the secondary creator and he simply executes the details of sub-creation, by following the 'blue print' supplied to him by the Purusa Avatar Garbhodaksayi Visnu. Brahma then creates the various planetary systems within the universe and the various species of life; in turn the living entities take are awarded their respective life forms, according to their karma and their previous association with the modes of nature.

#### 15.1.2) Understanding creation

**Somehow, the words "I Am" and "I created this World for my Play" seem inadequate to explain creation. Where did this God/Divine Light come from? Why is God there? Why all this Play? Why did we souls come into existence, even before we came to this earth? I read in Back To Godhead a very beautiful article on why and how we souls came to the earth - the article was like a story where it was said that we souls wanted to enjoy separately from Krishna and Krishna, out of His Compassion and Love, sent us to the earth. Is all this true or was the article a metaphorical illustration of why we came to earth? (Digest 126.3)**

The article you describe is a factual portrayal of this cosmic manifestation as described in Vedic scriptures. God, who is known as Krishna, meaning "All-attractive", is the source of everything while He Himself has no source or beginning. The Upanishads describe Him as being an embodiment of enjoyment - raso vai sah; and therefore He expands Himself into many and enjoys with His part-and-parcel living entities, who are co-eternal with Him. This indeed is the purpose of our existence - to enjoy eternal happiness in our loving relationship in service to God. Unfortunately, due to a miscalculated desire to enjoy separate from Him, the conditioned souls come to the material world which is full of strife and suffering, but once they rectify this desire they can return to the spiritual world.

**15.1.3) 'What happens to time during annihilation?' & 'time in the spiritual world'**

**Kala or time is said to be eternal. During creation, time exists. At annihilation, when the Universe is withdrawn with the body of Maha Vishnu, does time exist then? With everything being in a state of flux, there should be no change. Change is the effect of time. Without the effect what happens to the cause?**

**The 37th verse of Brahma Samhita refers to a transcendental time. Is this transcendental time due to the variegatedness and ever increasing mellows in Goloka Vrindavana? (Digest 77.2)**

Kala or time is an energy of the Supreme Lord. When the cosmic manifestation is withdrawn, the energies of creation still exist, but are in a dormant state called avyakta. Time energy continues to exist as well. It's action is likewise withdrawn, but it continues existing. It is again released or set forth at the time of creation along with the glance of Maha Visnu when He glances over the pradhana.

The 37th verse of Brahma Samhita is speaking of another feature of time, namely the feature of eternal time as we find it in the spiritual world. The evidence of past, present and future as we know it is conspicuous by its absence.

**15.1.4) Does time change?**

**Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita that He is Kala (Kalosmi). So time is eternal. But when we practically speak ("In due course of time, time will answer" etc) it apparently looks as though time changes. Please clarify how to understand this? (Digest 209.3)**

Time is indeed eternal and is not subject to the relativities of this world. Yet, it acts as the instrument (as His energy, or kala-sakti) of the Supreme Lord in moving material nature. When Maha Vishnu casts His glance upon material nature, for example, material nature is agitated by this Time energy and thus the cycle of creation, maintenance and annihilation is set into motion. Thus, by the influence of time, material nature appears to produce many wonderful manifestations.

We tend to calculate time in terms of the movements or changes within nature, but actually Eternal Time is unaffected by these relative changes. Although Time itself is unchanging, yet all activities in this world is measured by time, by which everything seems to be changing and there appears to be past, present and future.

It is not quite easy to comprehend the nature of Time, as much as it is not easy to understand the Supreme Lord Himself. But we can understand this much that Time has supreme influence over everything and every being in this world, and knowing it to be a manifestation of the Lord and thus identical with Him, we should cooperate with the plan of the Lord as revealed to us by His agents, without begrudging the unavoidable influence of time - this is Bhishmadev's advice.

## 15.2. Heavenly planets

### 15.2.1) Soul's progress and planetary systems

**What are the different lokas in this universe? Bhuloka is the material world in which we live. Other than this, I believe there are many other lokas where different levels of souls exist. For example, Gandhiji's soul is supposed to be in Satya Loka. So, what are these lokas? In which loka does the Supreme God exist? What is the hierarchy these worlds? (Digest 126.1)**

The planetary systems within the universe are generally categorized into either 3 or 14 planetary systems. Of these, bhuloka or the earthly realms belong to the middle planets and there are seven upper planetary systems and seven lower. Note that all of these 14 are within this material world only. The upper planets, which include the Sun and Moon, are considered heavenly while the lower planets are generally hellish. The topmost planet within this material world is Satya loka, the abode of Lord Brahma.

All of these planets are inhabited, but many of these higher realms are inaccessible to our gross sense perception; they are made of subtle material elements and their inhabitants also have subtle bodies. It is stated that those who are 100% sinless and have remained perfectly celibate since birth are eligible to attain Satya loka.

According to Vedic scriptures, there are innumerable such universes floating in the Causal ocean, all of which are material, a place of birth and death. Beyond this material cosmic manifestation is the spiritual sky, which is eternal, full of knowledge and bliss. (Cf Bhagavad Gita As it is 8.16-20, 15.6) In the spiritual sky, unlimited spiritual planets are situated. These are the abodes of the many plenary expansions of Lord Narayana. The topmost of these spiritual planets is Goloka Vrindavan, where Lord Krishna presides as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Detailed descriptions of the structure of the universe are given in the [Fifth Canto](#) of Srimad Bhagavatam, and also explained in the [Brahma Samhita](#).

### 15.4.2) Life on Satyaloka: free of bereavement, old age, painful death, pain & anxiety

**Srila Prabhupada has been explaining many times that Satyaloka is the topmost planet in the material universe. And material world is a place of miseries such as birth, disease, old age and death. But in SB 2.2.27, it said that "In the planet of Satyaloka, there is neither bereavement, nor old age nor death. There is no pain of any kind, and therefore no anxieties..." Can you please clarify this contradiction? (Digest 88.2)**

By all practical considerations, life in Satyaloka is free from all problems infirmity and anxieties and with a lifetime so inconceivably long by human perception so much that one could say virtually eternal. Still, it is temporary! The preceding verse to the one you have quoted, Text 26, mentions the duration of life in Satyaloka, hinting that at the end of that period one has to again transmigrate.

There is no painful death in Satyaloka, as we know death in this planet. But at the end of Brahma's lifetime the entire universe including Satyaloka are consumed by cosmic fire, and at that time the inhabitants have to move on. The next verse (Text 28) describes three different types of souls who come to Brahmaloaka and their respective destinations. In any of those cases,

it is not an everlasting situation. This very state of temporality, uncertainty and change are not constitutional to the soul and in that sense a source of misery, except that is for a pure devotee. Thus there is no contradiction.

### 15.4.3) Liberation of Lord Brahma and yogis in Brahma loka

The end of purport to [SB 6.1.1](#) reads - "Yogis, however, instead of directly going to the spiritual world, sometimes want to see other planetary systems. ...At the time of dissolution, Lord Brahma, along with all the inhabitants of Brahmaloaka, goes directly to the spiritual world." I have doubts here. (Digest 139.2)

**a) The yogis do not have unalloyed bhakti. So how can they go back to Godhead at the time of dissolution?**

As mentioned in the verse itself, the statement above by Maharaj Pariksit refers back to the discussion on nivrtti-marga in the Second Canto ([Chapter 2](#)), which describes the yogic process of meditation on the Lord in the heart. By fixing his mind on the form of Paramatma feature of Lord Vishnu, the yogi is enabled to attain the spiritual world or gradually transfer himself to the higher planets up to Satyaloka. ([SB 2.2.25, 26, 27, and 28](#)). This system of yoga is similar to Dhyana yoga as outlined in [Chapter 6](#) of Bhagavad-gita.

As we know, there are three aspects of Absolute Truth, viz. Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan. The object of meditation and worship for the yogis is generally the Paramatma or Hiranyagarbha feature of the Lord. Such yogis do not attain direct association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in Vaikuntha planets, but remain in Brahmaloaka for the duration of Brahma's life, and attain liberation along with him. (Cf. [SB 3.32.8](#))

As pointed out by Arjuna himself, although authoritative, this process is very difficult and practically not viable in this age. The recommended process for self-realization in Kali yuga, which is simultaneously also the most sublime method, is hari-nama-sankirtana.

**b) We have heard that those who are celibate from birth go to Brahmaloaka, but they are not pure devotees. So how can they go back to Godhead with Brahma? Is it possible that when they are in Brahmaloaka they then develop love of Godhead, perform pure devotional service and get qualified to go back?**

Those who reach Brahma-loka are qualified for three different types of perfection depending upon how they reached there. Those who attain Satyaloka by dint of pious activities achieve a position in terms of their comparative pious credits, the Hiranyagarbha worshipers as mentioned above are liberated along with Brahma, whereas those who are on the path of devotional service can continue to perfect their devotion in Brahmaloaka and attain the spiritual world. (Cf [SB 2.2.28](#) purport)

**c) We have heard that in some lifetime anyone us could have been Brahma and after our account of pious activities was exhausted we came back to martyaloka. But from the above verse it seems that Brahma always goes back to Godhead.**

Lord Brahma generally attains liberation, but this is not always necessarily the case. Srila

Prabhupada explains that Brahma and the inhabitants of his planet are also subject to the laws of material nature and are not free from birth and death; but because Lord Brahma is directly engaged in the service of the Supreme Lord in the management of the Universe, he is able to attain liberation. (Cf. [BG 8.17](#))

In the Brihad-Bhagavatamrita, Lord Brahma states that being always conscious of the imminent destruction of his planet, he is concerned about his liberation and thus engages himself and other inhabitants of his planet in worshiping the Supreme Lord. (Sri Brhat Bhagavatamrta 1.2.62)

#### **15.2.4) Influence of kali-yuga in heavenly planets**

**We know that this running age is Kali yuga and from scriptures we understand its symptoms. Are the Svarga-loka planets or lower planetary systems also influenced by Kali yuga? (Digest 114.1)**

Kali yuga lasts for 1200 years in the time of demigods; at the end of 1000 four-yuga cycles there is a partial devastation up to svarga-loka. This gives us an estimate of the relative time scale on the higher planets compared to the earth planet, but I am unaware of any specific indication in scriptures with regard to the specific influence of Kali or offering details regarding time cycles on the higher or lower planets. The four-yuga cycles are mentioned only in terms of their influence within the earthly realm, as far as any reference I have come across.

#### **15.2.5) 'Benediction due to sankirtana movement' & 'spiritual perfection in heavenly planets'**

**It is said that even demigods pray to take birth on earth in this age, to avail themselves of the benediction found within the current Golden period within Kali Yuga. [Editor's NOTE: This 'Golden Period' in Kali Yuga is due to the sankirtana movement of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.] If they know that this is the best opportunity, then why do they not have tried the same process in their planet? Is it that the life being shorter here they can quickly go back home? (Digest 5.4)**

The process given by Lord Caitanya is so simple and sublime and His mercy is so freely available in this Kali yuga here on Earth where He appeared to perform His pastimes in this universe that even demigods try to take advantage of this rare opportunity. In addition, it is considered to be very difficult to achieve spiritual perfection by absorbing one's mind in Krishna consciousness in the heavenly planets, because there is so much opportunity for sense pleasures.

## 16. Other religious/philosophical schools & thoughts

### 16.1. Absolute is one

#### 16.1.1) 'What do we mean by "Absolute Truth"?' & 'Why is Lord Krishna, the Absolute Truth?'

**How can we understand the Absolute nature of Lord Sri Krishna? What do we mean by "Absolute Truth" and in what sense is Lord Sri Krishna the Absolute Truth? This question came to my mind when I overheard someone saying that all qualities in the material world are relative, i.e. to say someone is tall doesn't suffice because a person considered tall in India would be considered average height in USA. (Digest 194.1)**

Just as in the example you have given, everything in this material world is relative or dependent on something for its existence and definition. Similarly, conceptions such as darkness, coldness or pain are irrelevant without the opposite conceptions of light, heat or pleasure -- there is no absolute pain or absolute pleasure in our experience, it is only a question of relative perception. Another example: there is no meaning to the word or the concept of father independent of the existence of the relationship with a son/daughter and vice versa - therefore it is relative.

In contrast, Absolute Truth is that which does not depend upon anything or anyone else for Its existence. The definition of Absolute Truth (param satyam) is given in the first sloka of Srimad Bhagavatam - as the source everything in creation (janmady asya yatha), as being Completely Independent and fully Cognizant of everything both directly and indirectly. This Absolute Truth is Vasudeva, Krishna and He is beyond the illusion of duality. Another way of understanding Absolute Truth is that all varieties are included and all contradictions are resolved within Him.

In this world, there is duality of matter and spirit - matter which is temporary, a source of misery and full of ignorance, and spirit which is trying to exploit this material energy. But there is no such duality in Krishna; He is Absolute Spirit, sat-cit-ananda vigraha. And His abode, the Vaikuntha planets in the spiritual sky, is also of the same Absolute nature, because there is no duality of matter and spirit. Everything there is also of the nature of sac-cid-ananda.

#### 16.1.2) God's topmost form

**Why do you please think that God has only one best form or topmost in your religion and is the best and topmost only in the Form of Krishna, when there have been great holy people and saints who worship God not in the form of Krishna. So will all others not go to God, or will they go to a God in the form they can comprehend? It's very confusing. (Digest 195.3)**

It is not a personal, sectarian opinion that we claim the form of Krishna to be topmost, nor does Krishna to belong to any particular religious denomination. Krishna Himself declares

that His form, that particular two-handed form which He exhibits before Arjuna is the topmost, there being nothing superior to it, (BG 7.7, 11.52-54) which indicates that all other forms are also included in this form. Similar conclusions are given in different scriptures such as Srimad Bhagavatam and Brahma Samhita, and vaishnavas accept this as such. This does not mean that His other forms are less important in a mundane sense of comparison. The Supreme Lord has unlimited forms, all of which are equally Absolute, and those who worship any of the bona fide forms of the Lord, as revealed in authorized scriptures, will attain Him in that particular form. Indeed there are many great saintly devotees, even within the Vedic tradition, who have worshiped Him in other forms, (including the Fish, Boar, Narasimha and Rama etc) according to their inner mood of devotion, and they attained the spiritual planet where the Lord presides in that particular form. All these devotees are equally respected, with no mundane envy or distinctions of superior or inferior, although often these devotees themselves speak of the superlative glories of the Lord in His original feature of Krishna. (Please see Digest 167 and Digest 142 for further discussion on this subject)

### **16.1.3) 'God is one' & 'similarities between Krishna, Christ, Maheswarudu, and Mohammed'**

**I feel all Gods are same and there is only one God. I see lot of similarities between Krishna and Christ, Maheswarudu and Mohammed. What do you think? (Digest 41.1)**

Yes, there is only one God; it cannot be otherwise, because by definition God is 'asamaurdhva', meaning one who has no equal or superior power than Him. If there were more than one God, then who among them is superior? This question defeats the very meaning of God. However that one God has infinite forms and names by which He is known. (The converse is not true however, ie. that any form or name can be God!) His true identity, His actual names and forms, can be known through bona fide scriptures.

### **16.1.4) Understanding how and why God becomes many**

**I was listening to Srila Prabhupada's lecture on BG 2.7-12 where he mentions about why God became many. Srila Prabhupada states that God became many individual beings to enjoy His pleasure potency. But we also learn that our material existence is due to our propensity to own, control and enjoy independent of the Lord. How to connect these two understandings? (Digest 144.1)**

The Vedic statement quoted by Srila Prabhupada that God becomes many is understood as follows: the Supreme Personality of Godhead expands Himself into many categories of individual beings in order to enjoy loving exchanges with them. In doing so, however, He does not lose His original identity, His absolute independence, or His complete supremacy; the infinitesimal living entities expanded from Him are thus able to enjoy in their relationship with Him and in service to Him, however not independent of Him.

When one hears that the Lord becomes many, one might imagine it to be something like ripping a large sheet of paper into many small pieces there being nothing left of the original sheet anymore --- implying now that God has become many, each of us being one such "fragment" of God, each of us are rightfully enjoying in our own ways. This is NOT the idea presented by the Vedic statement, however, nor can such a theory ever explain the suffering and perplexity faced

by so many Gods!! The actual understanding is presented in the invocation mantra of [Sri Isopanishad](#). Lord Krishna is perfect and complete in Himself, and although innumerable complete units emanate from Him, He still remains Complete; all the emanations from Him are also complete in relation to Him.

We mentioned earlier that when the Personality of Godhead expands He does so in many categories, into many integrated and separated forms. The integrated forms are Vishnu-tattva or different plenary expansions of Godhead, such as Lord Balarama, Narayana and incarnations such as Rama and Narasimha, all of them equally powerful as the Lord. There are also expansions of His internal energy, called sakti-tattva expansions, such as Srimati Radharani and Her expansions. The separated forms are the jiva-tattva or spirit souls, qualitatively one with the Lord but quantitatively infinitesimal.

As explained in the invocation mantra quoted above, the jivas or living entities, although complete units, are dependent on the Supreme Whole for their completeness. Just as the finger in the body or a part in a machine is a complete functioning unit as long as it is attached to the whole, but becomes dysfunctional when detached, similarly the living entities are in their natural sac-cid-ananda condition when they are functioning in their relation with the Lord. But when they become forgetful of this relation due to misuse of their tiny freewill, and think themselves to be independent controllers and enjoyers, that unconstitutional state is manifested as material existence. I hope this addresses your question.

Another important contrast is that the expansions of the Lord are eternal, not time-bound, like whatever we may try to create and enjoy.

Ultimately, in effect He is enjoying Himself by way of expansions of Himself, as opposed to the bondage we experience when we try to enjoy something or someone outside of ourselves. For us, such imitation enjoyment creates bondage and suffering. For Krishna, His enjoying His expansions is part of His ever-expanding eternal bliss.

#### **16.1.5) Is it limiting to claim an exclusive name/form as the highest realization of Godhead?**

**Is it limiting, on an absolute level, when one claims an exclusive name/form as being the highest realization of Godhead? In other words, once someone says the highest can only be this, it seems to impart a restriction on God based on the condition of the particular consciousness (of that individual). (Digest 167.2)**

It is not limiting. All of the Holy Names and Forms of the Personality of Godhead are completely spiritual and equally absolute as the Lord Himself, the Name and the Named being identical. (abhinnatvan nama naminoḥ) Absolute Truth signifies that He is all-inclusive; just as the Supreme Personality of Godhead is inclusive of all other expansions and energies and everything else emanating from Him, so His Name is all-inclusive.

Thus, if scriptures offer a particular name of the Personality of Godhead as the primary name, that Name - not being a man-made name - is all-inclusive; it does not exclude or restrict the Lord. The name Krishna, meaning "All-Attractive" is inclusive of any other description of God. This does not exclude any other Name from applying to Him, because He has unlimited Names which are all invested with His transcendental energies. If someone were to 'give' a name to God based on their limited perception, then your concern may apply, but not so when the information is directly received from the 'apaurusheya' scriptures through the descending process.

On the other hand, consider the implication of where this argument could lead to: 'since the Absolute Truth is Infinite and Unlimited, He cannot possibly have a particular Original form or Name or at least we cannot know them, since that would restrict Him or lead to so many conflicts; therefore let's refrain from even trying to ascertain these attributes of the Unknowable Supreme!' Another conclusion could be that whatever Name or Form you choose to accept is equally valid. Clearly, both of these positions, often held by many modern philosophers, are simply a form of impersonalism and ends in polytheism and finally atheism.

However, our Vaishnava acharyas hold that although the Absolute is Unlimited, He has a supreme transcendental Name and Form, as well as many variegated manifestations of spiritual Forms, Names and Activities. Any of these attributes can be known by descending mercy only. By accepting this descending mercy, we are able to easily know Him and enter into a loving relationship with Him. This process of accepting descending knowledge is recommended by Lord Caitanya, and in the Bhagavatam, as the only means to conquer the Unconquerable Lord. (Refer Lord Brahma's prayers, SB 10.14.3) Because it is known through descending mercy, from the infallible source of bona fide scriptures and accepted by countless mahajanas, we can be confident that this information is not the limited conception of a tiny living entity but the Lord's own revelation. Of course, He may reveal Himself to different degrees according to the receptivity of audience, time and place, but when He personally testifies that a particular form of His is the Supreme, and there is nothing beyond that, as He does in the Bhagavad-Gita (BG 7.7), we accept it.

I would like to conclude with the remark that we are to be considered very fortunate to be the recipients of a very authorized, unique and deep revelation of the Lord's Spiritual Nature - this fortune is not just a subjective appreciation but can be evaluated quite objectively by the symptoms as mentioned in the previous answer, the extra-ordinary characters of the acharyas as well as the by the scientific depth of this philosophy and its practical effect in the lives of sadhakas. Being the recipient of such rare fortune need not make us doubtful if it is possible that we actually have stumbled on such Truth, nor lead us to feel, in a sectarian way, a sense of exclusivity or dogmatic superiority. It is simply the causeless mercy of Lord Caitanya and even as we are being objective and respectful of others, we can accept the unique greatness of this cream of all knowledge confidently, faithfully, eagerly and with due appreciation, share this causeless good fortune with as many others who are eager to accept it.

#### **16.1.6) Does our limited view of God change, God's position?**

**My question is a follow up to an answer in this last digest: "Krishna promises to forgive and deliver all sinful reactions of those who surrender to Him exclusively." Can you explain how this is different than Christians who say only those who accept Jesus Christ will be saved? I understand the point of how one sees God according to their level of realization, and the different levels of surrender to God. I'm wondering about the apparent limitation these statements seem to impose in an absolute sense, and the exclusive claims of salvation each appear to make. (Digest 167.1)**

Regarding how it differs from someone else who seems to make an exclusive claim, there is no difference in principle, \*IF\* such claims are made on spiritual principles and not merely dogmatic. The principle is that one must exclusively surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Cause of all causes, abandoning all other shelters, and an equally valid principle is

that such surrender and redemption is possible only by accepting the shelter of a pure devotee and not on one's own. The Vedic command for our surrender to Krishna is qualified, however, by the acceptance of regulative principles and living by the principles of surrender and is not merely a verbal or mental act of acceptance. This principle is exclusive and that is in the absolute sense. Srila Prabhupada often remarked that if someone knows the Supreme Personality of Godhead by another bona fide Name or Feature or of another equally effective process by which to approach Him, by all means they should sincerely take to that Name or process. If such clear information or conception is lacking, however, a sincere seeker of Absolute Truth, whether a Christian or a Vaishnava, would eagerly accept when it is presented regardless of where it is coming from.

The ultimate test is how efficacious it is in transforming the hearts of a sincere practitioner, who is diligently applying themselves to the process, in awakening unmotivated, uninterrupted devotional service. (SB 1.2.6) We should expect such a transformation to reflect in their day-to-day life and character. Phalena pariciyate - a thing is judged on the merit of the result it produces. For example, the Bhagavatam gives us detailed accounts of the mechanics of surrender: how and why is Lord Krishna worthy of our surrender, the character of His devotees and how exactly the Lord protects them -- completely rejecting all materially motivated religious processes. What we see in the pages of Bhagavatam is an unending stream of examples of the lives of unalloyed devotees of such impeccable and glorious character, and the Lord's reciprocation with them. Further it gives us a detailed program how we, the common man, can attain to that stage step-by-step.

Similarly Bhagavad-Gita enumerates the qualities that a devotee develops by surrendering to Krishna (e.g. BG 12.13-20); there is nothing sectarian in these descriptions. Any religious system that systematically leads to such transformation of qualities is accepted and glorified by those who are thoroughly honest. There is one Supreme Godhead, He is non-dual and may be known through different features but anyone who develops these pure devotional qualities through whatever means become dear to that Supreme Godhead and attains Him.

## 16.2. Atheism

### 16.2.1) How do we know, if God is real?

#### **How do we know if God is real? (Digest 192.2)**

One way we can come to understand or verify the existence of God is simply by studying the meticulous organization of this universe and all the things happening around us. There is such precise design, order and control in the way everything in nature functions, from the gigantic planetary movements down to the intricate workings of a cell. Is it not illogical to propose that this vast universe is conducted so meticulously just by chance and for no purpose?

From our practical experience, we know that without much laborious planning, organization and maintenance, everything quickly degrades to chaos. So who has planned, organized and is maintaining the universe? Consider how is it that the sun rises every morning without fail or why there isn't a tsunami or earthquake every week, consider who has supplied all our necessities like fresh water, air and food? Scientists would try to explain that away as natural laws which have come by blind chance, but law means there must be a law-maker. Nothing in

our experience works automatically or by chance. A child may be amazed to see a remote-controlled car and conclude that it is moving by itself, but an intelligent person knows that somebody is operating it from behind the scenes. Just because we cannot see the operator does not mean he doesn't exist!

Not just in the physical laws governing the universe, but there is order even in subtler laws that govern human interactions. It is hardly rational or meaningful to suppose that someone is born rich and another poor for no reason, some are endowed with brilliant intelligence, and others are born blind or crippled. There is reason and justice behind all these and there is a Controller or law-maker -- we can come to this conclusion simply with a little introspection, although our modern ways of education and artificial living styles often rob us of opportunities for such introspection.

### 16.2.2) 'Is God, just a concept?' & 'understanding the existence of God'

**I got a feeling that God is a concept which people use to find comfort during their difficult times. I would really appreciate if you could answer some of these questions. (Digest 117.1b)**

God is not a man-made concept nor is His spiritual abode mentioned above an imagined realm of perfection or a fantasy to make us feel good in the midst of a meaningless and insecure life. God's existence can be inferred logically - even by the very precise way everything is coordinated from the gigantic universe to the intricate living cell; such intelligent design points to a designer. Furthermore, His Personality can be verified through scriptures and through scores of testimonies of honest and saintly persons who have tangibly experienced not only His existence but His personal reciprocation in their lives as well.

If there is a God, it does not help to attempt to put Him out of existence simply on the grounds that we don't understand some of His actions. How to understand His actions is also discussed exhaustively in the scriptures, a glimpse of which we discussed above. Finally, the ultimate test is that He can be personally known and experienced by each one of us if we take the time to do so by bona fide processes.

### 16.2.3) Knowledge of God: how to accept something which we cannot explain?

**A friend of mine told me that he does not believe in God. His explanation was "I don't believe in anything. I have no need. If I come across something that I cannot explain, I accept the fact that I cannot explain it. I feel that it is a very hard thing to do and I feel those who believe in God cannot do that. They need some way to explain things and God is just an excuse. I believe the ones who believe in God are so weak within that they need someone to blame their mishaps or their wrongs upon."**

**What he told me did make an impact on me. I don't have an answer to what I believed in but he had a reason to not believe in. I thought maybe you could give me an answer to my belief . (Digest 33.2)**

It is the nature of the inquisitive mind to inquire. That is the special feature and indeed the purpose, of human form of life. Animals also have intelligence but their intelligence is exercised only for the purpose of procuring food, and for mating and defending. However,

human beings have the capacity to inquire and understand the deeper meaning of life.

Is there no need to seek the deeper meaning in life? There is a great need to do so. Here are some reasons why. If I don't know the purpose of life or why I exist, what kind of life is that? An intelligent person naturally asks these questions, "Where did I come from, where am I going, what is the meaning of all the orderliness in nature I see around, who has made it, why is there suffering?" A child may believe that a remote-controlled toy car is running by itself, and may accept this as fact, and may have no need to inquire further, but it is not so for a thoughtful adult.

Belief in God is not an excuse made up by people who didn't have any other explanation. This is the view of anthropomorphism, the view of God as a "creation" or "imagination" of man, conjured up by the wishful thinking of weak-minded individuals. However, if you read some of the writings of the great acaryas you would realize that they certainly were the opposite of weak-minded. They were scholars of the highest caliber and also men of great character and accomplishment. Nor were they unsuccessful people who turned to philosophy in frustration; many of them held responsible posts in society and were very much respected, wealthy, successful and so on. Men of such caliber have pondered over questions of existence, cause and effect and so on and logically arrived at the ultimate conclusion of the cause of all causes --- God.

It is quite possible to come to a completely atheistic or impersonalistic conclusion through such inquiry, as so many modern philosophers and scientists have done. However, the missing point is that they are trying to understand God and His plans, who is beyond the perception of our mundane senses, through their own intellectual exercises. Srila Prabhupada often ridiculed the foolishness of this attempt with the story of a well frog trying to understand the Atlantic ocean in terms of Dr. Frog's well - the only world he knew. The Vedic method is that in order to understand the true picture of things, to get the right answer to these existential questions we discussed above, one must approach those who have already realized the truth. But acceptance of Vedic authority is not blind sentiment, as many people think. It is very much based on logic and the Vedas are so exactly scientific. When one makes his/her inquiry in the light of the intelligence of Vedic authority, then one comes to the undefeatable conclusion - the cause of all causes is a transcendental person, God, Who is the source of everything (including our selves) and under Whose control everything moves.

Some unscrupulous or uninformed people might have taken advantage of this fact, to explain away their misdeeds, because after all "without God's sanction nothing would happen". However that is not the teaching of these acaryas; the Vedic science very much holds one responsible for one's actions, and one's freewill, but under the sanction of God. (Please refer to our previous discussions on Freewill.)

The bhakti yoga process of devotion to God is simultaneously simple and sublime; it is so effective that even a child can practice it, as can a great scholar. Even those who do not have very much knowledge of theological aspects may worship the Supreme Lord by simple acts of faith. Krishna says in BG that unto those who do so, even if they may not have full knowledge initially, He reveals everything to them gradually. After all, it is He who in fact gives knowledge and faith to everyone, including to your friend; his ability to think and speak and have strong faith is also dependent on gifts from God! To those who have faith in the existence and benevolence God, He gives them the real knowledge by which they can know Him and His creation in truth.

#### 16.2.4) Refuting atheism

**Is there a way to answer atheists who rely on the rules of argument when they refute the existence of God? Atheists say that theists resort to: Ad hominem, Straw Man, Red Herring etc. when trying to prove God's existence.**

**[Editor's note: The dictionary defines these terms as follows: ad hominem --- appealing to feelings or prejudices rather than intellect; being an attack on an opponent's character rather than by an answer to the contentions made; Straw Man --- weak or imaginary opposition (as an argument or adversary) set up only to be easily refuted; Red herring --- something that distracts attention from the real issue] (Digest 230.1)**

Absolute Truth or the Supreme Being - if there is One - must be, by definition, transcendental to man-made rules of argument and logic.

This statement itself is quite logical, isn't it? And yet faith in the existence of a Supreme Personality is in fact quite logical, not an irrational belief or sentiment.

The contention that theists don't have a strong intellectual basis for their faith is simply not true; many distinguished devotees throughout the millennia have been exceptionally learned scholars and intellectuals, who have written outstanding literatures that present sound logic and reason to corroborate the existence of God. Sainly teachers in our line such as Jiva Goswami, Bhaktivinoda Thakur or Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati would regularly raise within their writings every conceivable argument the atheistic opposition might present -- not just some cursory weak arguments -- and then very systematically and vigorously refute each of them, establishing the devotional conclusions.

I invite you to scrutinizingly study some of the famous dialogs and conversations that Srila Prabhupada had with his students as well as many distinguished guests --- especially those presented in books such as "Life Comes from Life", "Beyond Illusion and Doubt", "Perfect Questions Perfect Answers" and "Science of Self Realization" etc. You will come to appreciate the penetrating logic, common sense and intellectual acumen in these arguments. Prabhupada's arguments were so cutting and brilliant that eminent scholars, philosophers and professors were often left speechless and had to concede to him with due admiration.

Going in the other direction, it could easily be demonstrated that many of the modern atheistic scientists and impersonal philosophers are invariably guilty of these very same faults that they charge the theists with. Srila Prabhupada himself would often expose this. Very often it is seen that when presented with direct evidences and contentions that are irrefutable and inexplicable within their theoretical framework, they resort to these very measures to sidestep the issue.

A look into the question of origin of the universe or the origin of life is a case in point. While presenting bombastic theories of how everything has come into existence by chance, when it gets down to the details, the scientific body is completely at a loss to explain the intricate organization and complexities of life forms and so on. And yet, even as they are grappling hard to answer some of these basic questions, they profess as if they have explained everything by means of a few high-sounding formulas and theories, which simply throw a smokescreen on the eyes of simple laymen and lead them to believe that there is now no need to invoke God to explain these questions.

It is true that there are many common people who may be instinctively devoted to God

but are not quite conversant or adept with logical arguments and reasoning, and may not be able to stand up to a sophisticated debate. But even a casual study of the learned acharyas would prove how consistent and unbeatable their logical conclusions are. By making yourself familiar with the lines of reasoning as found in these discussions referred to above, your own convictions will be systematically strengthened and you will also be able to present them in a consistent manner to someone who is sincerely trying to probe into a scientific understanding of the existence of God.

However, it should be mentioned that devotees are not very much interested in debating with convinced atheists nor are they interested in endless arguments just to prove their point or defend their position; neither is it possible to understand God merely by logic and argument. One of the Names of Krishna is "Ajita", meaning 'The Unconquerable', because He cannot be known by the intellectual wrangling of insignificant human beings. He reserves the right of not being exposed to those who do not have the right disposition towards Him. He discloses in the Bhagavad-Gita that He is covered by the curtain of yogamaya, and without His mercy, one cannot possibly conceive of His existence even by prolonged speculation. One will simply be repeatedly baffled in such attempts.

As mentioned in our opening statement, this conclusion itself is quite logical -- for even within our experience we can understand that it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for a subordinate to fully understand a superior, or for a child to fully understand about his forefathers, unless someone discloses such knowledge to him, what then to speak of knowing God. If we could expect to reach up and capture an understanding of God merely by mundane exercises of logic and reason, then our intelligence would prove to be superior to God, which is contradictory. There is, of course, a scientific process of approaching God viz. when one becomes genuinely humble and submissive, when the purpose of one's inquiry into the existence of God is to serve Him and not to exploit or challenge His authority, then God reveals Himself to such a gentle soul.

Once again, this is not to sidestep the issue or to say that there is no sound logic behind a vaishnava's conviction in the existence of God. Rather, the idea is that logic and reason alone are insufficient to understand God, one has to rely upon a different approach for conclusive knowledge. Despite the best evidences and proofs and in fact even if God Himself were to come and stand in front of them, those who harbor deep aversion or envy towards the Supreme Personality of Godhead will be unable to understand Him! Krishna confirms in the Bhagavad-gita that there will always be two classes of people within this material world -- atheists and theists. (Bg 16.6) Therefore, when devotees do present logical arguments, it is not so much to convince the atheists as much as to expose the flaws in their arguments and thus strengthen the intelligence of those that are innocent but are misled by the atheistic propaganda.

One final point: quite naturally, the theistic presentation of a devotee appeals not merely to the intellect but to all aspects of our existence - including our emotional faculties and our social, cultural and practical aspects of living. This is only natural and a great merit rather than being a flaw -- a philosophy that simply concerns itself with dry intellectual arguments is neither complete nor beneficial; it merely makes people hard-hearted. Indeed, a thoughtful person can readily see how such so-called rationalism has caused havoc in the ethics, values and finer instincts of human society and its devastating effects on the quality of life in general. Of course, religion without sound philosophy is also sentimental and fanatical; but atheistic rationalism is not the remedy for that - one mistake cannot be corrected by another.

The philosophy of Bhagavad-gita and the Bhagavatam is simultaneously devotional as

well as philosophically sound. It is very scientific, systematic, consistent and simultaneously very touching to the heart and brings out the finest qualities of a human being. As Krishna promises in Bhagavad-Gita, simply by hearing this philosophy with an open mind, and by practicing this yoga in full consciousness of Him, one can factually come to know and understand God in full, free from any doubt. (Cf. BG 7.1)

### 16.3. *Brahmavada*

#### 16.3.1) *Sampradaya of Brahmavadis*

**Brahmavadis also get self realization (the basic realization that they are not this bodies). Under what sampradaya to they belong. Do they have a disciplic succession? Is it bonafide? (Digest 9.5)**

Srila Prabhupada mentions this term (Brahmavadis), but he does not expand on it so much. Thus, to comment more than what Srila Prabhupada has given is highly speculative. Two examples that I am aware of who can be called 'bonafide brahman realized souls' (brahmavadis) are Sukadeva Goswami and the four Kumaras. Before they came in touch with vaisnavas or Lord Visnu, they had no sampradaya to be situated in this condition.

One other reference I am aware of is the SB 5.5.2, "One can attain the path of liberation from material bondage only by rendering service to highly advanced spiritual personalities. These personalities are impersonalists and devotees. Whether one wants to merge into the Lord's existence or wants to associate with the Personality of Godhead, one should render service to the mahatmas..." Not much detail is there.

### 16.4. *Buddhism*

#### 16.4.1) *Why do teachings of Lord Buddha and Lord Krishna differ?*

**If Buddha and Krishna are the same Person then why is there a contradiction in Their teachings? While Buddha preached non-violence, why does Krishna justify anger and violence? I have seen that over time, some of the teachings of Buddha have been modified to suit the times. Could the same have happened to Krishna's teachings also? (Digest 23.3)**

[The questioner is a Buddhist in London who recently discovered Krishna in ISKCON, has started chanting and developed a lot of faith in Krishna] [Please also refer to the question on the purpose of Lord Buddha's advent, Digest 22]

Lord Buddha is described as an empowered incarnation of the Original Personality of Godhead, meaning that Lord Buddha manifested the specific potency to curb unnecessary violence and misuse of scriptures during His advent. His teachings were not the absolute conclusions of transcendental knowledge; rather, they were 'upadharma', or sub-religious

principles meant to elevate the consciousness of the people for that time, place and circumstance.

As far as Bhagavad-gita is concerned, these teachings describe the ultimate conclusions of spiritual knowledge. By careful study, one can understand that what Krishna is calling for is the highest degree of surrender to His will. Krishna does encourage Arjuna's fighting and killing. But He is not encouraging mundane anger and violence. In fact, throughout the Bhagavad-gita in many places, He describes the divine qualities of a saintly person or His devotee as being non-violent, equal and kind to all, not causing agony to anyone etc. Yet, finally He urges Arjuna to fight and to kill the miscreants 'as His instrument'. The apparent contradiction is resolved in the understanding that even anger or violence can be used in surrender to the plan of the Lord, and such surrender is superior to so-called non-violence independent of the Lord's plans. Lord Krishna appeared to protect religious principles, and when all other measures to do so were not yielded to by the Kauravas, only then was protecting religious principles by military strength deployed.

Thus the differences in teaching between Lord Krsna and Buddha are due to the difference in the time, place, circumstance and the audience for whom the teachings were intended.

When the teachings of the Supreme Lord or great saintly teachers are received through the system of parampara, or disciplic succession, the teachings are passed on AS IT IS by the members of the disciplic succession faithfully, without any modification, addition, deletion or interpretation. An empowered acarya, (who is authorized by his spiritual master, who is in turn authorized by his guru and so on) may sometimes make some adjustments according to time, place and circumstance, but such adjustments are made in details of application, never in the fundamental principles.

Surely the teachings of Lord Krishna have been badly misinterpreted and misrepresented over the ages, but if one takes care to approach a bona-fide member of the disciplic succession, such as Srila Prabhupada, the founder acarya of ISKCON, one can receive the exact teachings of Krishna intact, as He spoke them 5000 years ago.

## *16.5. Christianity*

### *16.5.1) Position of Jesus Christ*

**What is the position of ISKCON with respect to Jesus Christ. Why do you only glorify Krishna, Rama and not other Gods? (Digest 7.5)**

You will find repeated references in Srila Prabhupada's teachings indicating the exalted position of Jesus Christ as a wonderful devotee of the Lord. Because the audience that Srila Prabhupada was addressing, at least in the English speaking parts of the world, were predominantly Christian, he therefore naturally acknowledged their primary figure of glorification. Prabhupada identifies even in his Bhaktivedanta purports that Jesus Christ was a sakti-avesa avatar. If you read very carefully, including the conversations of Srila Prabhupada discussing Christianity with others, you'll find numerable references where Prabhupada is extolling the great qualities of Jesus Christ and Mohammed. On the other hand, it is quite natural that a proponent of the Vedic tradition would primarily give glorification to Lord Krishna, Lord

Rama, and their exalted devotees. The primary scriptural references which are the basis of the Gaudiya Vaisnava tradition are Srimad Bhagavatam and Bhagavad Gita. The personalities depicted in these literatures are naturally the primary focus of attention and glorification. This is to be expected.

**16.5.2) 'Vaishnava perspective on Christian mysticism' & 'the three point check system: guru, sadhu, and sastra'**

**There are stories about Christian mystics who fell victims to demons while thinking that they communicate with God. For example, during deep prayers and austerities, some of them smelled heavenly fragrance and a divine being appeared to them, speaking seemingly about spiritual truths, but in fact that "angel" was misleading that ardent Christian mystic. Is something like that possible in Vaishnavism? How to recognize who is on the other side of the line? (Digest 45.2)**

The science of God is very precise and when it is not properly executed, then there is all chance of being misled. Generally, when someone has somehow been influenced by tama guna (mode of ignorance) they are contacted by such spirits and beings. And this may happen even to an aspiring spiritualist if they are not under proper guidance concerning the spiritual science. One who is advanced in the mode of goodness can immediately distinguish such beings from divine ones.

In the teachings of Vaishnavism, one is always recommended to make a three-point check: guru, sadhu and sastra. One must take guidance from elevated saintly persons but one must make sure that their message or teaching is in consonance with the basic teachings of sastra and with previous saintly persons and acharyas. In order to do this, one must make the effort to familiarize oneself and be conversant with the standard teachings of the sastra, for example Bhagavad-gita.

We find in the descriptions of Caitanya caritamrita that even when Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu was manifesting uncommon love of God and divine opulences, learned persons like Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya did not accept him blindly. When told that Lord Caitanya was an incarnation of Krishna, he analyzed based on sastra, where such incarnations are mentioned. If someone deviates from the basic principles of sastra (and such 'spirits' always do so) immediately they are to be rejected, whatever mystic miracles they may display.

Quite apart from this, a side point is that Vaishnavas in general are not obsessed with this kind of mystical communion with God. They are more interested simply in serving God and purifying their hearts. Their confidence is that the Lord will manifest Himself before them when they become qualified, drawn by their devotion. Even the six gosvamis, who were all pure devotees and liberated souls, and could enter into Krishna's pastimes in meditation, never claimed that they saw Krishna. Rather, in a humble mood, they were always praying to the Lord, desiring for that day to come when they would be fortunate enough to see Krishna. Or, as one of our previous acharyas, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, would instruct: "Don't try to see Krishna. Rather, you should conduct your life in such a way that Krishna will want to see you!"

## 16.6. General questions: Other religious/philosophical schools & thoughts

### 16.6.1) 'Essence of the religious teachings' & 'understanding other religions'

**If Jesus, Mohammed and Buddha were giving a message relevant to a particular time and place, why didn't they give the name Krishna as it would have meant the solution to a lot of problems of today? Just because they didn't, does it mean that their teachings are not valid? (Digest 62.1)**

Spiritual teachings are disseminated according to the particular needs of the people being preached to, based on their level of spiritual advancement. Lord Buddha's mission was simply to dissuade the cruel animal killing practices that were being carried on in the name of Vedas. Similarly Sankaracharya also preached impersonalism, according to his own statement, in order to simply delude the atheists, and to bring people back to the fold of the Vedas from Buddhism and other deviated sects. In other words, their mission at that particular time was not the dissemination of Absolute Truth, because the people were not ready for it. Their purpose was to uplift the population from a course of abject degradation and pave way for progressive advancement in future. While their actions amount to incomplete revelation of the truth or even deception, their efforts accomplished a needed step away from total material absorption.

Similarly, Christ's and Mohammed's choice not to reveal the topmost understanding about the nature of the spiritual world and detailed descriptions of God and His topmost holy names, given their particular time and circumstances, was for very good reasons. They both declared the fact that they were not disclosing the complete Truth in its entirety. This does not invalidate their teachings but they are to be accepted as appropriate to their time and circumstances.

Srila Prabhupada compared such apparent discrepancies between different systems of religion to that which is sometimes found between elementary and higher level mathematics. These 'seeming contradictions' were introduced purposefully; distinctions are indispensable because it is important at the elementary level to simplify concepts, thus leaving out higher understandings.

Quite often, and naturally so, beginners in spiritual life are unable to penetrate to the essence of their religious teachings and see the points of underlying unity with other systems. It may sometimes even be important for neophytes in spiritual life, therefore, to devoutly stick to their own particular principles as taught in their own faiths until they come to a higher level of spiritual realization and purity. Difficulties arise, however, when we accept the external aspects as all-in-all and fail to respect the differences in those systems laid out for others based on their own level of advancement. [Then there are those who tend to the other extreme of secularism and indiscriminately accept anything and everything as equally valid and finally adhere to none. The result is simply a complete loss of systematic spiritual cultivation.] The real solution is only the continued education within different groups to gradually come to a higher spiritual understanding where such apparent differences are eliminated, once again as in the example of understanding higher-level mathematics.

It has indeed been the prediction of the acaryas that there will be a golden age in this Kali when all the different religions of the world and their sub-sects will unite under the banner of Lord Caitanya's sankirtan movement and at that time all of their particular understandings and

realizations will be synthesized in his philosophy of 'acintya-bhedabheda' or "simultaneous-oneness-and-difference."

**16.6.2) Why should the Supreme Lord confuse people who are already confused by presenting different religious/philosophical schools of thoughts?**

**Lord Vishnu incarnated as Buddha and preached voidism. Lord Siva appeared as Sankaracarya and preached impersonalism. Why are there different and deliberate attempts to confuse people by preaching false beliefs when they are already struggling with Maya? (Digest 231.1)**

Whatever the Supreme Lord does is all-merciful, even if we may not initially understand how it is so. By hearing from His authorized representatives we can begin to understand His mercy.

For those who want to forget Him, the Supreme Lord grants them forgetfulness; in fact this is the whole purpose of material creation. This is in fact the Lord's compassion upon the conditioned souls, that He creates this material world and gives various forms and identities to the conditioned souls, simply so that they can try to enjoy an illusory sense of happiness independent of Him, just as they desired. Simultaneously, the material world also serves to offer an opportunity to rectify the conditioned living entities of this bewildered mentality. This the two-fold purpose of this material creation.

The living entity is completely dependent on the Lord for every aspect of his existence, whether it be remembrance or forgetfulness. *Mattah smrtir jnanam apohanam ca*, "From Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness." (BG 15.15) Unless God gives us the freedom and facility, we cannot forget Him! Therefore, He facilitates those who want to forget Him and pursue different goals, thereby developing faith in different paths. Krishna reveals that He is seated in everyone's heart as the Supersoul and makes one's faith stronger in different objects of worship. (BG 7.21-22)

In a similar manner, by appearing as Lord Buddha He makes arrangements for living entities who want to be misled in Kali-yuga by giving them that opportunity in the form of nihilistic and impersonal philosophies.

Yet, even in such an act there is His underlying compassion. As Lord Buddha, He propounded voidism, while simultaneously he stopped the misuse of the Vedas (viz. indiscriminate animal killing in the name of Vedic sacrifices), he took the unscrupulous followers away from tampering with the Vedas and instead tricked them into following Him. Thus indirectly He gave them the benefit of following the Lord, so that they may be gradually elevated by following sub-religious principles clearly given within the Vedas (!) such as ahimsa.

Similarly, Shankaracharya's advent accomplished many purposes - he drove away Buddhism and many other atheistic offshoot religions outside the borders of India and strongly reestablished the authority of the Vedas. By preaching "covered Buddhism", i.e. a philosophy that was not too different from voidism, he brought people one step closer and back to the fold of the Vedas. Thus Shankaracarya paved the way for ushering in devotional teachings once again by the vaishnava acharyas who came after him. Simultaneously, he kept away those who have strong aversion to the Supreme Lord by keeping them busy with the philosophical wrangling of the Vedanta sutra. As a result, the devotees can freely discuss and understand the confidential

glories of Lord Krishna amongst themselves without disturbance! According to our acaryas, this was an intentional albeit indirect act of kindness to the devotees.

### **16.6.3 and 16.6.4) Destination of those who follow other religions**

**Bhagavad Gita says that if a living entity does not know that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his life has no meaning. What I wish to know is what about persons who are from different religions like Muslims, Sikhs or Christians who do not know Krishna as the Supreme, though they are doing their duties faithfully. Are they differently treated by God? How can they attain the supreme planet of Lord Krishna? (Digest 54.1)**

**What happens to those who follow Islam or Christianity? Will it take more time for them to revive their dormant love of God? (Digest 54.2)**

We discussed this question in a recent issue (Digest 41, Q2); the conclusion was that when one practices true religion, irrespective of its external formalities, God reveals Himself within the heart of the practitioner. The rituals of a religion are not unimportant, but the real essence of religion is to see if it is bringing one to the point of unmotivated, uninterrupted loving service to God. And the processes of religion are universal -- calling upon the Holy names of God, hearing about God, praying to Him with a sincere heart so that we can come closer to Him, and serving Him. Since God is one, and is situated within everyone's heart, He guides a sincere and unprejudiced devotee, no matter what his or her language of prayer is. One is not differently or less-preferentially treated by God in revealing Himself based on external circumstances.

A word of caution here is that one can be successful in his or her quest for knowing God only by following bona fide scriptures under bona fide representatives of the scriptures, and not by personal endeavor alone, however well-intentioned may be one's efforts.

Therefore, while what is said above regarding personal sincerity holds true, it is essential that one seek proper guidance wherever it is available. The necessity of receiving knowledge through disciplic succession must be very carefully observed, if one is sincere in knowing God in truth.

A further consideration is that different scriptures reveal different levels of truth, both within the Vedic scriptures and other religious faiths, based on the time, place and circumstance of those it is meant for. Thus there may not be as much information or direct revelation of the kingdom of God in some scriptures as within others; still, an unprejudiced seeker can accept and embrace the truth when they come in contact with it.

A sincere practitioner who is not aware of higher truths revealed in another scripture is not condemned; one who rejects it even after hearing about it is unfortunate. One who does not at all inquire into the subject of God, however, it is that person whose life is meaningless, as you have mentioned.

Unfortunately such apparent differences lead the immature to religious fanaticism or zealous proselytizing for religious conversion, which have nothing to do with God realization. Real religion will impart realization of the soul beyond the designations of the body such as place of birth, language or external formalities of religious faith. From such a state of

transcendental consciousness one can approach the full fruit of religion, namely love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna.

**16.6.5) Destination of those who perfectly follow other religions**

**What happens to devotees who are not aware of Krishna but are totally sincere devotees of the religion they follow, like the Christians or Muslims? This religion they follow is what they get by birth. Please explain. (Digest 41.2)**

Real religion is described by the word `dharma' in Sanskrit, which is often misunderstood to refer to one's belief system or faith such as Christianity etc. Different people have different faiths as Christianity, Islam or Hinduism. But the particularities and rituals of different belief systems are not the essence of religion in themselves. The real definition of religion, as Prabhupada states within Srimad Bhagavatam, is "that which sustains one's existence. A living being's sustenance of existence is to coordinate his activities with his eternal relation with the Supreme Lord ..." (SB 1.2.6)

The Sanskrit word `dharma' literally means intrinsic quality. For example we might say that the dharma of fire is heat and light. Similarly the intrinsic quality of the soul is to serve, and in its pure state to render loving service to the Supreme Soul, God. The faith or religion one abides by today may change tomorrow, but one's dharma or constitutional nature can never change, although in our present condition that intrinsic love of God is covered. Any system which revives that dormant mood of love for God is real religion, irrespective of external appearances. When one sincerely tries to approach God in that way, the Lord reveals all knowledge of Himself within the heart of that devotee, notwithstanding the faith or particular belief system they adhere to.

**16.6.6) 'Why do people follow pseudo incarnations?' & 'importance of fighting against pseudo-incarnations'**

**I was watching Good Morning America and they did a story on a man that claims to be Jesus. The question is that when such individuals claim to be God what kind of bad karma will he get for saying he is God, what kind of punishment will this man have to endure for committing this act? I don't know why but this has been bothering me because I can't understand why people follow and believe in such people. When they should know that there is only one God, Krishna, why is it that people will believe anything that they are told? (Digest 186.1)**

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur summed up this material world as a society of cheaters and cheated. There are many people in this world who want to be cheated, who want to settle for something cheap that pleases their senses and are not serious about purity or truth. So Krishna arranges for a big cheater to mislead them. There have been many such persons in history and the cheaters are themselves in turn cheated and have to meet their end; even at the time of Krishna's pastimes on this planet, there were some persons like Paundraka who claimed to be God and had his own set of followers for some time, but finally Krishna annihilated him. (Krsna book Ch 66)

It can be seen that the blind followers of such cheaters are generally very much interested

in wanting to enjoy sense gratification through the medium of religious or spiritual life, rather than a sincere desire to know and serve the Supreme. This constitutes a cheating mentality on their part - to enjoy the material world in the name of God but without actually surrendering to God; thus they themselves are cheated, although they may otherwise seem innocent and even serious and dedicated in their following. Often it can be observed that such followers are desperate for some quick material gain or relief from suffering, so much so that they would readily accept anyone or anything that promises them such illusory benefits, and Krishna sanctions their desire to follow such illusory goals. Krishna or God, however, can be understood only by those who approach Him with genuine attitude of service and devotion. As Krishna says in BG 7.25, He reserves the right to not reveal Himself to those who do not have such a disposition.

Krishna also explains different types of faith in BG Ch 17, in response to a question that Arjuna asks similar to your question. (See BG 17.1-4) According to the modes of nature acquired by a person, one evolves a particular type of faith. Those who are in the modes of passion and ignorance will worship demons, spirits or select a powerful man to be God, whereas those who are in the mode of goodness tend to worship different higher demigods. By following scriptural directions, those in the mode of goodness have a better opportunity to accept the association a devotee, take up devotional service and gradually rise to the point of understanding the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

From the above discussion, it is evident that one should be minimally in the mode of goodness and free from sinful desires, and genuinely seeking to know the Absolute Truth, in order to understand Krishna. However, even if one may not be so qualified, if one is fortunate to come in contact with a pure devotee or his teachings and accepts his direction, one can immediately understand Krishna, and under the guidance of the devotees one can become fully purified of all misconceptions.

This gives a clue how we can respond when we see or hear about such misleading pseudo-incarnations or so-called spiritual processes/groups. The solution lies in educating people and disseminating real transcendental knowledge. Rather than feel disturbed or agitated, we can understand the true nature of this material world and develop compassion for these souls who are unfortunate and embarrassed by their own material desires due to their ignorance of Krishna. Of course a devotee, being para-duhkha-duhkhi, does feel some disturbance to see so many innocent people being cheated, but he takes it as an impetus to strive to disseminate this unadulterated knowledge found in Bhagavad-Gita, carefully preserved and handed down to us through many generations in disciplic succession.

This is what Srila Prabhupada did to fight the many pseudo-gurus and organizations prevalent during his time. He worked tirelessly to translate the Vaisnava literatures and traveled incessantly to teach and personally train the devotees in the actual science of God- realization. But for his sacrifices, we would not have access to this scientific knowledge about Krishna. So you can also strive to become his able representative and transmit this knowledge, not only by speaking about it but more importantly by being a living example of these teachings, such that those who come in contact with you will naturally appreciate and accept these teachings. When people are educated in the right knowledge and culture, then they cannot be cheated.

## 16.7. Hinduism vs. Krishna consciousness

### 16.7.1) 'Krishna consciousness' vs. 'traditional religious practices of India'

**What is the difference between the Krishna consciousness and the normal Hindu religion? (Digest 9.4)**

I take it that the phrase 'normal Hindu religion' indicates to you the traditional religious practices and faith as practiced in most of India. Originally the Vedic religion was known as Sanatana dharma or Varnashrama dharma, which was based on the idea of engaging every human being according to their nature and occupation in a culture that will help them to be gradually elevated to the point of unmotivated loving devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This indeed is the ultimate goal of the Vedas or any religion.

This, also, is the essence of the Krishna Consciousness philosophy: to mold every single activity (religious, occupational or social) of one's life so as to achieve this ultimate goal, i.e. to become conscious of Krishna at every point of life.

To reach this goal, many intermediate processes are provided within the Vedas, e.g. karma-kanda rituals, their attendant teachings, worship of devatas, forms of yoga disciplines, etc. The ultimate attainment of the entire range of the Vedas is the same, after passing through many stages of development and forms of practice. The all culminate in unmotivated loving devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

However, with the passage of time, the varnashrama culture of the Vedic times has begun to slowly degenerate, and while the external aspects of the culture, as well as the rituals and forms of worship and practices have remained, the essential understanding behind all of it, as described above, has become lost or at least obscured by many differences of opinions and diverging philosophies. This missing link needed to tie the many disunited threads together is found in the teachings of Krishna consciousness.

## 16.8. Mayavada (impersonalism)

### 16.8.1) Who is the Absolute Truth: Lord Krishna or impersonal Brahman?

**There are still people (at least in India) who believe God is impersonal and say that devotion is just a stepping stone for realizing the Supreme Truth which they say is actually impersonal.**

**I am really eager to know what the Absolute Truth is. And I don't like this confusion about the Absolute Truth. I am aware of all counter arguments that the Vaishnavas (that is us) give to defeat impersonalists. But then, I am told (by Vaishnavas) that the impersonalists will also have strong arguments for defeating personalism. So, how will I know what the Absolute Truth is? Is it Krishna (and I dearly want it to be so) or is it the impersonal Brahman?**

**I really want to be absolutely fixed in my devotion to Krishna, but this impersonal**

### **philosophy poses an obstacle in my progress. (Digest 210.1)**

An axiomatic principle in understanding the Absolute Truth is that it is NOT possible to be ascertained through arguments, counter-arguments and debates! Then how are we to know? By following the mahajanas. This is the advice from Mahabharata (Vana Parva 313.117):

tarko apratisthah shrutayo vibhinna  
nasav rishir yasya matam na bhinnam  
dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhayam  
mahajano yena gatah sa panthah

"Dry arguments are inconclusive. One is not considered a great muni unless he puts forward a new opinion different from others. Simply by studying the Vedas, which are variegated, one cannot come to the right path by which religious principles are understood. The solid truth of religious principles is hidden in the heart of an unadulterated self-realized person. Consequently, one should follow the path advocated by the mahajanas."

Who these mahajanas are is also spelled out in the Bhagavatam (6.3.20-21) - There are 12 mahajanas or authorities on the subject of Absolute Truth: Lord Brahma, Narada, Lord Shiva, the four Kumaras, Lord Kapila, Svayambhuva Manu, Prahlada Maharaja, Janaka, Grandfather Bhishma, Bali Maharaja, Sukadeva Gosvami and Yamaraja.

Thus if one wants to know the Absolute Truth conclusively, without doubts, one has to follow these great mahajanas, and those strictly following in their footsteps. By treading the path chalked out by such great souls as Narada, Prahlada, Hanuman, Bhishma, Arjuna, Sukadeva Goswami and so on up to the great saintly acharyas of recent times such as Ramanujacarya, Madhvacharya or Lord Caitanya and even the final teachings of Sankaracharya -- we can rest assured that we are on the right track, regardless of the opinion of others. None of these great authorities have hinted in their teachings that devotional service to Vishnu is simply a means to realize some higher truth! Quite to the contrary, both by their precepts and personal attainment they have demonstrated devotional service as our eternal occupation, as both the means AND the ultimate goal of life that can be achieved.

Even if we were to simply accept the words of the Supreme Lord Krishna, whose authority is indisputable, then Krishna amply assures us, numerous times in the Bhagavad-Gita, that His personal form is the highest. In fact this very question you are posing was asked by Arjuna directly to Krishna so that the Lord can give His conclusive opinion leaving no room for ambiguity. (See BG 12.1 <http://www.vedabase.net/bg/12/1/en>) Krishna promptly replies that those who steadily worship Him are the most perfect; although the path of impersonal meditation may possibly bring one to the same goal of surrendering to Krishna, it is simply troublesome. (BG 12.1-8) He assures that there is no truth superior to Him (7.7), that His abode and the process of devotional service to Him are eternal (15.6. 9.2) and those who think that He was impersonal before and has assumed a human-like form later - He declares them to be less intelligent! (7.24) And His final instruction is that we give up all other considerations and surrender to Him alone & become His devotee (BG 18.65, 66). Is it reasonable to suppose that the Lord would make so many assertions to mislead us away from Reality? One who simply accepts Krishna's direct statements with implicit faith will never be let down and is sure to achieve the highest destination of His Eternal Abode.

By great good fortune you have had the opportunity to hear Krishna's message through

His unadulterated devotees and you also have natural devotion for Him, so take shelter in Krishna's words whenever false arguments sway your mind. Regularly meditate on the purport of His statements quoted above and try to enter into the spirit of this transcendental knowledge Krishna has mercifully given to slash all our misconceptions, and reassure us of His true nature. Simply on the basis of our faith in Krishna, we can proceed confidently on the path of pure devotion, free from doubt, as so many great souls have done in the past.

### 16.8.2) Can impersonalism be defeated once and for all?

**Is it possible to defeat impersonalism once and for all? I am told (by Vaishnavas) that the impersonalists will also have strong arguments for defeating personalism. So, how will I know what the Absolute Truth is? (Digest 210.2)**

Actually one who is a true knower of Truth understands that both the impersonal and personal are features of the same, non-dual Absolute. This is stated in Srimad Bhagavatam (SB 1.2.11 [www.vedabase.net/sb/1/2/11/en](http://www.vedabase.net/sb/1/2/11/en)). And Krishna states that He is the basis of the impersonal Brahman. (BG 14.27) Thus there is no real conflict between those searching after Brahman realization and those seeking to worship Bhagavan.

A beginning transcendentalist who is not yet acquainted with the all-attractive Supreme Personality, Bhagavan, may think of the Absolute as non-differentiated Brahman, but when they come in contact with Krishna's transcendental nature through association with His message or His devotees, being already purified of material attachments, they immediately become attracted to the transcendental glories of Krsna. This is demonstrated in the lives of the four Kumaras and Sukadeva Goswami, who were all initially Brahman-realized and later became devotees of the Lord. In this instance, we see that quite contrary to devotional service being a stepping ladder to Brahman-realization, it actually happens to be the other way around! So, how fortunate are those who are right from the beginning trained to become attached to His personal feature!

A sincere student on the path of Brahman-realization (a brahma-vadi), however, does NOT minimize the position of devotional service nor do they deprecate the transcendental form, qualities and pastimes of Krishna or consider them to be a temporary, material manifestation - they have simply not realized this feature of the Absolute, just as a person seeing a hill from great distance thinks of it as a massive big cloud but is not aware of the variegated objects present on the hill. On the other hand those who relegate the transcendental attributes of Krishna and His devotional service to be a material, time-bound phenomenon - they are known as the mayavadis and are not in truth seekers of Absolute Truth but in fact offenders at the lotus feet of Krishna. Their opinion of devotional service is not substantiated by any authority.

Apart from considering the authority of scriptures and mahatmas, a compelling reason to reject the impersonal philosophy is that it is not practicable. Aside from the high sounding philosophical wrangling, it is not something that one can conduct his day-to-day life by. It is fraught with internal inconsistencies and cannot really address fundamental concerns such as why are we suffering and what is the remedy to end our suffering. "If we are all particles of Brahman why is it that Brahman is overcome by illusion now? And if it is simply a lila/pastime (as the impersonalists often tend to rationalize) then what is the meaning of 'striving' to attain liberation? And meanwhile what is the point in pursuing one's present course of life in this world if it is ultimately just illusion?" - these crucial questions can never be satisfactorily answered by the mayavadis. Their practical life hardly ever reflects their theories. Whereas the life of pure

devotees of Krishna is fully consistent with the philosophy they teach.

The Vaishnava theology explains that this material world is created to accommodate those living entities who want to be forgetful of God. By the process of engaging everything we have in this world in the course of our daily lives, once again in service to God, we can purify our existence and return back to Him again. And for those who are strongly averse to the personal feature of Krishna, He allows them to remain forgetful of His nature, and facility is provided for their gradual purification by focusing on the impersonal conception of God or the universal form of God. Considering this, in all likelihood there will always be a section of people in the material world who subscribe to an impersonal understanding, with reasons to justify their position - the Lord Himself has purposefully allowed for this to happen. The fact that there are some people who follow such an indirect path does not preclude a sincere seeker of Truth from accepting the true conception of Reality when it is presented to them.

Your understanding that the impersonalists also may have sound, consistent, justifiable arguments to defeat personalism is not a fact. Arguments there may be - in a court of law, two advocates may put forth strong arguments to defend their respective stand, but ultimately it is for the judge to hear both sides and decide what the real situation is. Similarly, in spite of all the arguments presented by both parties, we rely on the final judgment of the mahajanas and the great authorities in their line such as Lord Caitanya, Ramanujacarya or Madhvacharya to conclusively know the Truth.

### **16.8.3) Do we need to take impersonalism seriously and defeat it?**

**These discussions about the impersonal feature and the arguments and the efforts to defeat the philosophy mean that we are also taking the impersonal philosophy seriously enough to try to defeat it. (Digest 210.3)**

Yes, Srila Prabhupada and all these other previous acharyas seriously opposed and defeated the impersonal Mayavada misconception - not due to viewing contradictory opinions as a threat to their own convictions, like mundane sectarians defend their theories. A Vaishnava is by nature meek and humble, not interested in arguments and asserting over others. Rather, it is compassion that moves them to speak forcefully against mayavada - because, in Srila Prabhupada's words, it is the last snare of maya.

Our real disease is that conditioned souls want to enjoy independent of God; when one is frustrated in one's attempts for material enjoyment, one turns to inquiring into the Absolute, but because of this deep-rooted spirit of independent-mindedness one becomes attracted to impersonal speculations by which one can philosophically put God out of existence and conveniently continue the illusion of being independent of the Lord. Obviously, if ultimately there is only non-differentiated Brahman, there is no need for my surrender or submission to anyone, you see! Therefore, not only the acharyas but even Lord Krishna Himself soundly defeats this dangerous misconception throughout the Bhagavad-Gita, for the benefit of conditioned souls, so that we may not be misled.

**16.8.4) Mayavadis attaining self realization by Vaishnava association**

**How about the Mayavadis (Shankarites) can they attain self realization? Can at any point of time a Mayavadi become a vaishnava (by association of a Uttama adhikari) is it possible? (Digest 9.6)**

Yes, by the mercy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the sannyasis of Benares and Sarvabauha Bhattacharya became pure devotees, and thus self-realized.

## 17. Science and nescience

### 17.1. Evolution

#### 17.1.1) 'Reconciling gradual evolution and simultaneous creation' & 'gradual change of consciousness and creation of blueprint of bodies'

(Based on the following references) How to reconcile the "gradual evolution" and the "simultaneous creation" explanations? I'm aware of the soul moving upwards through different species of life. It seems that Srila Prabhupada also says how there is a sequence and time factor of evolution from lower developed bodies into more complex forms. And then again he says that all forms come up simultaneously at once.

Some excerpts from Srila Prabhupada's writings:

"Creation is simultaneously. Brahma then created ants and birds and beasts and everything. It is all simultaneous." (June 11, 74)

"The whole process of creation is an act of gradual evolution and development from one element to another, reaching up to the variegatedness of the earth as so many trees, plants, mountains, rivers, reptiles, birds, animals and varieties of human beings. The quality of sense perception is also evolutionary, namely generated from sound, then touch, and from touch to form. Taste and odor are also generated along with the gradual development of sky, air, fire, water and earth. They are all mutually the cause and effect of one another, but the original cause is the Lord Himself in plenary portion, as Maha Visnu lying in the causal water of the mahat-tattva." (SB 2.5.25)

"Our history begins from the beginning of the creation because the creation takes place with the birth of Brahma from the abdomen lotus flower of Lord Vishnu. Then Brahma gradually creates. He begets so many sons known as Prajapatis who are supposed to be the generators of living entities, and therefore the history begins from Brahma. ... This planet comes later on. We can take the idea from the tree - the tree grows gradually, and the different fruits, branches, and twigs gradually appear. Therefore it is to be understood that this planet has grown later on. Besides this we understand that although the planet was later on grown up, it was covered with water-pralaya payodhi jale, merged into the water after devastation. Then gradually it emerges from water. That we can experience, that gradually land is coming out of the oceans. Because of its being merged into water, it is natural to conclude that the beginning of life was aquatic. This is confirmed in Padma Purana that the species of life evolved from aquatics to plants, vegetables, trees; thereafter insects, reptiles, flies, birds, then beasts, and then human kind. This is the gradual process of evolution of species of life.

But we do not accept Darwin's theory. According to Darwin's theory, homo sapiens came later on, but we see that the most intelligent personality, Brahma, is born first. So according to Vedic knowledge, Darwin or similar mental speculators are rejected so far the fact is concerned. (letter to Hayagriva, 9 March, 1970)

"As stated in Brahma-vaivarta Purana, there is a gradual evolutionary process, but

**it is not the body that is evolving. All the bodily forms are already there. It is the spiritual entity, or spiritual spark within the body, that is being promoted by the laws of nature under the supervision of superior authority." (SB 4.24.73) (Digest 208.1)**

As explained in the final quotation from Brahma-vaivarta purana, there is gradual evolution but the evolution is not of the body-types but an evolution of the consciousness of the soul from one type of body to another. The bodies of all 8.4 million species of life are already present from the beginning of creation, at least in their blueprint forms.

The Vedic understanding of creation of the universes and planets is not a linear one-time event, but a cyclic process. There are many creations and sub-creations, the original source of creation being Maha-vishnu and Lord Brahma being the secondary creator. When it is time for Lord Brahma to begin another creation of the universal planets, using the ingredients and following the blueprints provided by the Supreme Lord, Brahma creates the different planets and the prajapatis (progenitors) who in turn populate the universe with different species of life. Thus, even before the manifested creation, all these bodily forms of different species exist in the form of prototypes or blueprints. At the appropriate periods of creation and to accommodate the desires and consciousness of individual souls, different bodies are provided to different living entities at the appropriate time.

Furthermore, there are various sub-creations of the different planets within the universe. We learn from Bhagavad-gita of the periodic devastations of the earthly planets at the end of different manvantaras and at the end of Brahma's day. At such times, it may appear that the species are newly evolving from one another but it is simply that the souls are given suitable bodies according to the time and situation in the process of creation. The unfolding of the parts of a tree, quoted above, is perfectly appropriate; while the body of the tree and its various parts and stages of development are gradually manifesting from the seed, it is actually the consciousness of the soul within that is evolving, merely reflected in the stages of the development of the body of the tree.

Srila Prabhupada further illustrates this idea with the example of changing apartments. According to one's ability to afford a residential arrangement, one gets a certain type of apartment. When one is able to afford more, one may move to a bigger and better apartment; but all categories and varieties of apartments already exist - even if only as blueprints and to be constructed as required. It is not that the bigger apartments are newly conceived of ONLY at a later point in time; and certainly they do not automatically evolve in slow degrees from already existing apartments as suggested by modern evolutionary theories!

### **17.1.2) Adaptation**

**Mosquitoes develop immunity to mosquito repellent chemicals after some period of time. so this proves living entity adapts itself to environment. (Digest 156.4)**

The body's adaption capacity (some call this 'micro-evolution') is not a contradiction to the Vedic model by any means. Certain changes "within" the species that increase its fitness are certainly observed within a population. Antibiotic resistance is another example. However, what Darwinian evolution talks about is generating a totally new species, which is not acceptable. There have been veritably millions of mutagenesis experiments done on Drosophila but there has

been never been a case when a house-fly or some other species developed from a fruit-fly. There has never been a case when a human gave birth to a monkey or vice-versa. Like begets like.

### **17.1.3) Adaptation is not a macro-evolution**

**According to theory of evolution by Darwin living entity adapts itself to the environment in which it lives. (eg zebra turning into giraffe by elongating its neck). Logically its perfectly right.**

[Response: Darwin's theory says for scarcity of food on the ground, the giraffes had to extend their necks to get food from tree tops. But deer, antelopes and other herbivores were eating from ground anyways. So is it logically perfectly right to say that zebra had to become a giraffe?]

**In nature we see so many examples. Someone living in cold countries develops white body while someone living in hot climates develops black body. People of different countries have different bodily features due to climatic conditions. (Digest 156.2)**

The hinge of these arguments is that adaptation results from chance. Let's see how valid is this explanation. (What follows is the result of assistance provided by a scientist devotee.)

Skin color comes from special cellular organelles called melanosomes. The difference in skin color of different races comes because of differential pigment synthesis. The synthesis begins from tyrosine -> DOPA -> dopaquinone. At this point the pathway branches and dopaquinone either reacts with cysteine to produce pheomelanin or it is converted to leucodopachrome to produce eumelanin (there are some intermediate steps before the specific melanin is produced). So the point is the change in body color cannot just come because of temperature. This is not to say that change in temperature does not affect the body color but is not sufficient enough to cause generation of totally different race/ethnicity. Furthermore, its not only the skin color that is different between the races but also bodily features (as you have correctly pointed out) and each characteristic that we mention may it be skin color or something else has to result from some elegant biochemistry. And if you study these different biochemical processes (a couple I have mentioned above on melanin biogenesis) are irreducibly complex and tightly controlled by precise biochemical and biophysical parameters. What is the probability that these will just result from a chance?

### **17.1.4) Appendix (part of the body): why did it become invaluable?**

**Appendix (part of body) was used by primitive people to digest hard foodstuffs. But now as it is not used it is led invaluable and can be removed without any loss. (Digest 156.3)**

Whatever science says has to be accepted with a grain of salt as it is dependent on information gathered from our imperfect senses and hence is far from perfect. This case of appendix is an excellent example. The supposed "uselessness" of appendix is one of the controversial subject matters in human physiology. There are some schools that hypothesize that appendix has lymphatic, endocrine, exocrine and neuromuscular functions and there are others who disagree with this view. Thus we cannot use appendix as a case to defend evolution. Let us await what science has to say about appendix in future; it should not come as a surprise to us that scientists are able to ascribe some function to appendix as they did it with the pineal gland that

once considered as a "vestigial remnant of evolution".

I beg to correct you on the primitive function of appendix that you have mentioned: the human appendix is considered as a vestigial organ of larger cellulose-digesting cecum that was used by the herbivore ancestors and not used by primitive people to digest hard foodstuffs.

#### 17.1.5) Do monkeys turn into human beings by adaptation?

##### **So why not monkeys turn into human beings due to adaptability? (Digest 156.5)**

I again would like to correct you that the Theory of Evolution does not say that monkeys became human beings. As per Theory of Evolution, humans, apes, monkeys and other "look-alikes" descend from a common ancestor.

On a concluding note, the proposed Theory of Evolution is not so simplistic that "something adapts itself". With the advent of molecular biology, the theory is becoming more complex and is seeking its justification at the DNA and protein level. Changes in allele frequencies, genome duplications, orthology, paralogy and similar other observations are being used to substantiate its credibility. But Evolution is far from being "proved". Moreover, as devotees we are more concerned with the atheistic foundation and subsequent implications of ToE rather than the theory itself. This was also one of the reasons that Darwin did not publish his findings until very late even though he had compiled them much earlier.

## *17.2. General questions: Science and nescience*

### 17.2.1) Age of earth

**I've read information on Michael Cremo's web site (Drutakarma Prabhu) where he calculates earth age based on SB Canto 3-Chapter 11. His estimation is about 2 billion years. Today, the scientifically studied data reveals an age of 4 billion or so. How should we approach the difference when challenged (other then the limited vision prone to make mistakes example)? (Digest 215.1)**

I presented this question to Drutakarma Prabhu directly, who replied as follows:

I do not know exactly what he is quoting from my site. But in general, the position I take is that the Srimad Bhagavatam says that humans beings and all other forms of life were manifested in the Svayambhuva manvantara period, which takes place at the beginning of the kalpa, or day of Brahma.

The blessed King said to Sukadeva Gosvami: My dear Lord, the demigods, demons, human beings, Nagas, beasts and birds were created during the reign of Svayambhuva Manu. You have spoken about this creation briefly [in the Third Canto]. Now I wish to know about it elaborately. (Ref. VedaBase: SB 6.4.1, SB 6.4.2, SB 6.4.1-2)

So from the third canto, we can tell that the beginning of the kalpa was about 2 billion solar years ago. But the earth would have existed before that, because at the beginning of the kalpa it was taken from the depths of the Garbha Ocean by Varaha.

Lord Boar penetrated the water with His hooves, which were like sharp arrows, and found the limits of the ocean, although it was unlimited. He saw the earth, the resting place for all living beings, lying as it was in the beginning of creation, and He personally lifted it.

#### PURPORT

The word rasayam is sometimes interpreted to mean Rasatala, the lowest planetary system, but that is not applicable in this connection, according to Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura. The earth is seven times superior to the other planetary systems, namely Tala, Atala, Talatala, Vitala, Rasatala, Patala, etc.

Therefore the earth cannot be situated in the Rasatala planetary system. It is described in the Visnu-dharma:

patala-mulesvara-bhoga-samhatau  
vinyasya padau prthivim ca bibhratah  
yasyopamano na babhuva so 'cyuto  
mamastu mangalya-vivrddhaye harih

Therefore the Lord found the earth on the bottom of the Garbhodaka Ocean, where the planets rest during the devastation at the end of Brahma's day. (Ref. VedaBase: SB 3.13.30)

So the earth is older than the beginning of the kalpa, older than 2 billion years.

When I give the figure of 2 billion years, I am talking about the appearance of life on earth. Actually, the oldest undisputed evidence for life on earth, according to modern paleontology, goes back to about that time (some say they can detect indirect chemical evidence for life somewhat earlier than 2 billion years). But scientists say that only the most simple single celled creatures were there, whereas the Srimad Bhagavatam says there were other kinds of life present in the Svayambhuva manvantara period. And there is some physical evidence for this basic idea, that advanced life has been present for longer than today's scientists believe possible.

In considering these questions, we have to keep in mind the principles of Vedic epistemology, which tell us there are three kinds of evidence: pratyaksha (sense evidence), anumana (logical inference) and shabda (transcendental sound coming from a perfect source of knowledge). Modern science relies on pratyaksha and anumana. Scientists look at the world with their senses and then use the mind's logic to make some conclusions about the age of the earth, the history of life, etc. But this process is imperfect because the senses are limited and imperfect and the mind we use for logic is also imperfect. It can make mistakes, become illusioned, or become the victim of cheating. As devotees, we do not rely on these imperfect methods. We rely on perfect knowledge as it comes down to us in shabda, transcendental sound. This sound is recorded in the Vedic literature, like the Srimad Bhagavatam, which can be properly understood only from spiritual authorities in the line of disciplic succession from the source of shabda, Krsna. So we accept this as our standard of knowledge. We do not need to prove it by pratyaksha and anumana. If shabda required proof from pratyaksha and anumana, then sense evidence and logic would be superior to shabda, and if that were true, then why study Bhagavatam at all? Why accept the spiritual authority of the great acharyas? So for ourselves, as devotees, we have no need to concern ourselves with lesser forms of evidence. Actually, we use shabda to judge pratyaksha and anumana. If there is sense evidence and logic that go along with the conclusions of shabda, then we can accept them and use them in our preaching. But if sense evidence and logic contradict shabda, then we can know they are mistaken.

I hope this helps.  
Ys. Drutakarma Dasa

### **17.2.2) Understanding moon landing**

**When we look at the sky at night do we see the moon or some other planet like Rahu? I have a lot of trouble explaining and understanding the whole lunar controversy. I am willing to accept that the lunar mission landed elsewhere other than the moon. I just feel like a stubborn idiot when trying to defend Srila Prabhupada's comments on the matter by using the theory that the whole landing was filmed in some fake stage. The hard bit is to accept that the lunar mission traveled towards the moon that we see in the night sky, but didn't get there. (Digest 151.1)**

Srila Prabhupada, based on his firm conviction in the Vedic truth, challenged the lunar-mission on two accounts: (1) it is not possible to reach the heavenly moon by mechanical means; (2) the moon is not a barren desert devoid of life.

According to Vedic evidence, the moon is counted among the heavenly planets and is inhabited by heavenly denizens who live for 10,000 years and is presided by the Deity Candra; only those with much pious credits can enter the moon, and that only after attaining a suitable body fit to live there. Even if humans made the effort for mechanical travel towards the moon, we are dependent on the authority of Candra to actually reach there. Therefore, Srila Prabhupada was convinced that man could not have landed on the moon.

One explanation offered by Prabhupada was perhaps they were deluded and diverted by higher authorities to the invisible planet Rahu (incidentally, Rahu is connected to the ascending node of the moon, astronomically.) He also offered other possible explanations, including one that the whole thing might have been faked (which, by the way, is a prominent proposal by several modern writers).

In any case, the basic principle that Prabhupada wanted us to understand is the unreliability of empirical methods which are always open to question. At present, we do not have sufficient empiric facts to prove either way, while based on Vedic assertions, to the contrary, he urged us to think and question rather than blindly accept the claim of man landing on the moon and finding it lifeless.

One of the scientist-disciples of Prabhupada, Sadaputa dasa, who has done much work in laying the scientific framework for understanding the cosmological materials from Bhagavatam, explores this subject from a higher-dimensional perspective: A higher dimensional realm may have a 3-dimensional location, just as a three-dimensional object has its location in two-dimensional space. For example, if one needs to reach a certain office in Manhattan, one could move up, down and across the grid of streets and arrive at the right address, and yet may not be able to perceive the office one is looking for; to reach the actual destination, they may have to further move 50 stories in the vertical dimension, and a being whose sense-perception is restricted to two-dimensions only cannot access this region. (Cf. Vedic Cosmography and Astronomy by Sadaputa Dasa, Ch 3) This is a crude example but by way of drawing a parallel, even supposing that astronauts might have reached the phenomenal moon -- which the event itself is not beyond question -- even so, they still could not have made the higher-dimensional travel necessary to perceive the moon's heavenly inhabitants and surroundings. Being restricted in the gross realm, they would have had to return with the impressions of a lifeless planet.

For those who are scientifically trained and keen on such details, there are works as mentioned above that analyze this subject with technical rigor. For our purposes or in preliminary discussions with others, however, it would suffice to stick to the basic principle of establishing faith in Vedic authority, which is our goal, rather than get into involved technical debates.

### 17.2.3) Mars and moon missions

**When I read articles on present day scientists saying there is life on Mars or human beings trying to land on moon, how do I relate that to material worlds described in Vedas? (Digest 149.1)**

Modern science exclusively relies on empiric methods, i.e. what can be observed and experimented with our senses or their extensions. Anything that falls outside the scope of our sense perception is assumed, a priori, to be non-existent (or, more ethically consistent, "We cannot talk about such things, since it lies beyond the purview of verifiable science.") Thus it confines itself to the study of only that which can be subject to empiric observation and experiment.

Despite rapid advancement in neurology and other such branches, scientists can hardly put their finger on even such commonplace experiences such as intelligence, love, goodwill, faith, sorrow etc – after all it is difficult to explain these in terms of molecular reactions -- and therefore such phenomena are largely kept outside the scope of rigorous science! There is no clear consensus as yet amongst scientists even of what exactly constitutes life and what distinguishes a dead body from a living person, beyond the observation of some chemical reactions -- not to speak of acknowledging the presence or absence of the subtle body or the soul.

According to Vedic epistemology, the methods for acquiring knowledge are broadly classified under 3 headings: pratyaksa (direct perception, empirical method); anumana (induction i.e. arriving at conclusions using hypothesis, logic and examples), and shabda-pramana (hearing from authoritative sources). The first two of these 3 methods can never lead to conclusive knowledge -- even of matter, what to speak of aspects of reality that lie beyond gross matter. As stated before modern science confines itself to these two methods only.

Direct perception is bound to be defective because our senses are limited and imperfect; mechanical extensions of the senses, such as a telescopes, microscopes or the instruments meant to detect life, are also perceived through and built upon the parameters of these defective senses.

The process of hypothesizing is also ever subject to revision. For instance, when one studies the night sky, all one can see are static patterns of light and radiation coming from distant stars. The scientists make some basic assumptions about the characteristics of matter and certain laws it obeys; they then take for granted that the laws prevailing in remote parts of the universe and at remote times are the same as the laws that hold here and now on the earth. Given these laws, they then deduce the nature of object that could have produced the pattern of light or the observed readings. But matter by nature is always under flux, and as newer phenomena and laws are discovered, their theories keep getting revised. Evidently, this ascending method can never lead to perfect, conclusive knowledge. If you want to know your father, the only reliable method is through the verdict of the mother. Any amount of experimentation, however laborious, cannot be conclusive.

Of course, care should be taken to approach the right authority. Blind acceptance of

unscrupulous authorities leads to equal havoc and confusion. Therefore, we take conclusive knowledge from the Vedas, because Vedic scriptures are not man-made (apaurusheya) and therefore free from the four defects that all conditioned living beings are subjected to, viz. imperfect senses, tendency to make mistakes, susceptibility to illusion and the propensity to cheat, consciously or subconsciously.

Vedic literatures assert that the universe is filled with life. Such life may or may not be perceivable by our physical senses, or their extensions. Thus, even granting that the astronauts or their instruments visited some place in space, it is no surprise that they could not detect the presence of subtle life forms there or that they could only detect microbial life forms and biological signs, because that is what their instruments are tuned to detect in the first place. What to speak of the moon or mars, even on our own planet there are regions inaccessible to our mundane, three-dimensional perception and yet co-existing with our perceivable realm. These are described in the scriptures, and are accessible to those with proper qualification and refined means of perception.

Vedic knowledge is not dogmatic; it is also scientific i.e. there is room for experimentation and direct verification, provided one is willing to go through the prescribed training and follow standard procedures – much as in any discipline, including modern science. But the scope of modern scientific research is too constricted to explore these aspects of reality. Most lamentably, instead of admitting that they are working merely with sketchy theories and hypothesis, most representatives of science tend to portray a graphic picture of the nature of things as if with absolute certainty. This not only misleads laymen but also serves to shut science off from higher levels of reality.

One final comment: we should not imagine that the sages of ancient India were grossly ignorant of the nature of the world and have constructed some irresponsible fantasy or mythology – as modern anthropologists often portray. Considering the gravity of the subject matter discussed in the Bhagavatam or Bhagavad-gita, these descriptions are certainly worthy of serious attention and scientific study and should not be lightly dismissed, even if one is unable to accept them at face value.

#### **17.2.4) Archaeological proof of civilization during Lord Rama's time**

**There seems to be archaeological proof of a civilization during Lord Krishna's time (about 5 thousand years ago) in India. But if you calculate back to Treta-yuga when Lord Rama was on the earth (earliest would be  $2 \times 432$  thousand = 864 thousand years ago), archaeologists or the concept of human evolution says that at a couple million years ago there was not human-like skulls on the earth (only a degenerated homo-species). Was some of the things in scriptures then in fact on a different "plane" of existence that did not materially exist on this earth? Or is there something wrong with the dating system of evolution scientists? (Digest 188.1)**

I requested Drutakarma Prabhu to assist by providing the answer to this question. Here is his response.

"I would answer something like this: According to Vedic epistemology, the shabda pramana (shastra, transcendental sound from perfect sources, as recorded in the Vedic literature ) is superior to the pratyaksha pramana (material sense evidence) and the anumana pramana (conclusions from logical inference), because the senses and mind are imperfect. So if there is

some contradiction between the evidence of shastra and the evidence in the form of archeological discoveries and theories, then we accept the evidence of shastra, and assume that there is some imperfection in the archeological evidence and theories.

In this case, if we have evidence from shastra (Ramayana, etc.) that there were humans in the Treta Yuga, then we accept that as true, no matter what archeologists may say. There is no need to prove shastra by material evidence, for that would mean that material evidence is superior to shastra, and that is not the case.

In the case of the Ramayana, it is true that archeologists believe that only primitive apelike human ancestors existed at that time. But, as shown in my book Forbidden Archeology, there is also evidence that humans of our kind existed in the Treta Yuga. For example, Reck's skeleton, from Bed II of Olduvai Gorge (at least 1.15 million years old) is anatomically modern. Of course, all material archeological evidence is imperfect, and one can always raise questions pro and con. Nevertheless, there is archeological evidence that humans were present at the time of the Treta Yuga. But the superior evidence is the evidence from shastra, and there can be no doubt about that.

There is not any suggestion in shastra that the events of the Ramayana refer to some other planet or level of existence. Shastra makes reference to places that can still be identified on earth."

**17.2.5) Scientific explanation for 'blood from the battlefield' spraying up to the sun during the fighting between demigods and demons**

**In the text below from SB 8.9.38, how is it possible that the blood in the battle field can go up to sun?**

**SB 8.9.38**

**Fighting between demons and demigods after mohini murti cheats demons**

**TRANSLATION**

**Because of the impact on the ground of the legs of the demons and demigods and the wheels of the chariots, particles of dust flew violently into the sky and made a dust cloud that covered all directions of outer space, as far as the sun. But when the particles of dust were followed by drops of blood being sprinkled all over space, the dust cloud could no longer float in the sky.**

**PURPORT**

**The cloud of dust covered the entire horizon, but when drops of blood sprayed up as far as the sun, the dust cloud could no longer float in the sky. A point to be observed here is that although the blood is stated to have reached the sun, it is not said to have reached the moon.**

**Apparently, therefore, as stated elsewhere in Srimad-Bhagavatam, the sun, not the moon, is the planet nearest the earth. We have already discussed this point in many places. The sun is first, then the moon, then Mars, Jupiter and so on. The sun is supposed to be 93,000,000 miles above the surface of the earth, and from the Srimad-Bhagavatam we understand that the moon is 1,600,000 miles above the sun. Therefore the distance between the earth and the moon would be about 95,000,000 miles. So if a space capsule were traveling at the speed of 18,000 miles per hour, how could it reach the moon in four days?**

**At that speed, going to the moon would take at least seven months. That a space capsule on a moon excursion has reached the moon in four days is therefore impossible. (Digest 157.1)**

[Answer Supplied by one of our devotee scientists.]

Even if we accept that the Sun is 100,000 yojanas above the earth, as indicated in the SB, we would not expect drops of blood to spray that high, given our understanding of the laws of nature. Therefore, if the drops did spray that high, it must have occurred in the context of some higher natural laws, perhaps pertaining to the heavenly planets. It is worth noting that the battle between the demons and the demigods took place on the shore of the Milk Ocean, which is certainly a heavenly realm. The distance up to the Sun from the Milk Ocean must therefore be understood in terms of higher dimensional geometry and physics. It does not refer to distance in ordinary space from the surface of the earth globe as we know it.

In fact, the distance to the sun must be defined in relation to the plane of Bhumandala, and in this context to say that the Moon is higher than the Sun does not contradict modern astronomy. If Bhumandala refers to the ecliptic plane, then the Moon does go higher than the Sun in some parts of its orbit. However, the sending of drops of blood from Bhumandala to the Sun still requires some physics which is unknown to us. (Indeed, if there are living beings in or on the plane of Bhumandala, they must function in ways that are unknown in our experience.)

**17.2.6) 'Refuting Spinoza's theory of substance' & 'fragmented yet unchanged Absolute'**

**One other question, from an Asst Professor in Dept. of Philosophy In Western philosophy, the most radical treatment of the question is Spinoza's theory of "substance" (ultimate reality, which he calls, interchangeably, God or Nature) in Book One of his Ethics. I cannot speak to how the question is resolved philosophically in the Gita, though I am aware that, in the vision of the 11th teaching, and probably before, all the powers of the cosmos are presented as fragments or facets of the divine brilliance--expressing it in different and partial ways, rather than as it is in itself. I would be interested to hear more on this issue. (Digest 47.4)**

Vaishnava theology does not accept that the Absolute has become fragmented into multitudes of little sparks, as Spinoza's theory seems to suggest. The Upanishad Mantra under discussion (Invocation mantra, Isopanishad), in fact, directly contradicts such a hypothesis. According to Isopanishad, although so many fragments have come into being from the Absolute, still the Absolute remains unchanged, the Complete Whole in Itself. It is NOT like cutting a paper into pieces and then the original paper ceases to exist any longer. How is this possible for God, the Source of all, to cease existing? Rather, by the inconceivable powers of the Absolute, the Absolute is inexhaustible!

When we consider "the fragments of the divine brilliance" within Spinoza's theory, we see that each of those individual fragments are not in themselves manifesting the entirety of the perfection of the Absolute, is it not? Would this indicate that they are all individually imperfect? Even accepting that taken all together, they comprise the Absolute, then how do we explain the discrepancies and limitations we find in ourselves and the world around, without any unifying entity in the picture?

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the greatest teacher of Vaishnavism and bhakti science who

appeared about 500 years ago, resolved this question by establishing the 'acintya-bheda-abheda tattva' vada or doctrine (literally, 'The Inconceivable Truth of Simultaneous Oneness and Difference'). This is not a new theory, but is found in the Bhagavad-gita itself. See Gb. 9.4-6. Thus, in one sense, the Absolute Whole comprises of God, the living entities, and all material manifestations (Cf. Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Introduction, pg. 13 last para) --- yet simultaneously, the Absolute has its independent existence in the Complete Personality of Godhead. This Absolute Personality is known as Krishna (the all-attractive), and He is that unifying principle.

Bhagavad-gita explains that all that is beautiful, opulent and glorious is but a spark of the opulence of that Absolute (Bg, Ch.10, specifically Text 40-42). Further Krishna says, "All beings are in Me, but I am not in them. And yet everything that is created does not rest in Me. Behold My mystic opulence!" (Bg. 9.4-5)

The concept of "substance" or divine brilliance in Spinoza's theory seems comparable to the "Brahman" or Brahmajyoti of Vedic literature, but the Gita concludes that the Brahman rests on the Personality of Godhead, or in other words, It is nothing but His bodily effulgence (Bg. 14.27).

In this sense, I agree with you that Absolute perfection (as found in the Personality of Godhead) is unique indeed, i.e. the individual souls are not omnipotent or omnipresent etc. The individual completeness and the very existence of the fragmental sparks is dependent on this ultimate reality of the Absolute Whole, Personality of Godhead. When disconnected from Him, the living entities lose their original brilliance, just as a spark that is separated from the flame gradually dies out.

### 17.2.7) What is nescience?

**I have a question about nescience. I understand what the word means but I do not understand it in the context that it is used in His Divine Graces books. If you think I might understand could you give me the mercy of some explanation. (Digest 6.9)**

Perfect knowledge is to know Krishna. When one knows Krishna, who is the ultimate source of all things, one comes to the position where one can know everything. So any conception that eclipses the proper understanding of Krishna as the Supreme enjoyer, the Cause of all causes, and any knowledge which fails to acknowledge the spirit soul as His eternal servant, is said to be nescience, or ignorance. Prabhupada also uses the word nescience sometimes in the sense of 'maya' (which is also just an energy of the Lord that covers our knowledge of Him).

## *17.3. Vedic astrology and astronomy*

### 17.3.1) Astrology: influence of time of birth in one's life

**What is Astrology? I have heard it said that when one is born in this world his horoscope is fixed depending on the time and place of birth. People born at auspicious time will have all the good of nine Grahas, which determines ones life, i.e., what he will become,**

**how long he will survive, rich/poor etc. Was Duryodhana born as wicked man and Yudhisthira born as good man? Is this all based on their past karma? (Digest 4.7)**

The material circumstances of a person, their future, their general disposition etc., are all predestined according to one's guna and karma. When the soul takes birth in this world, the event takes place according to their karma, during a corresponding arrangement of constellations. Astrology is a branch of Vedic science that, among other things, gives detailed techniques of how to use this information (stellar arrangement at the time of birth) to predict one's future. While one may have particular tendencies or conditioning of modes of nature from birth, it is also to be understood that the association one is in has a great influence on their character traits.

**17.3.2) 'Illumination of sun and stars' & 'Vedic description of planetary systems'**

**I read somewhere that Sun is the only material object that is self-illuminating in material world. But present day science says that all stars that we see in the sky are all self-illuminating and they are some times more powerful than the Sun in our solar system. Can you please give some insight on how planets are situated according to Vedic description? (Digest 150.1)**

Yes, Srila Prabhupada makes this assertion based on the statements of Bhagavad-Gita and Bhagavatam. Krishna states in BG 10.21, "Among the stars I am the moon." Also, in BG 13.34 and 15.12 He asserts that the sun alone illuminates the whole universe.

I took some direct assistance from Sadaputa Prabhu in responding to your question, and here is one paragraph extracted from what he wrote to me in reply:

"The Vedic literature describes the universe as having one sun, and the same is true of European cultural tradition up to the time of Copernicus and Galileo. Srila Prabhupada has granted that stars may have the same composition as the sun, and the story of Arjuna traveling to the region of the stars indicates that stars may shine with their own light. This agrees with the scientific observation that stars have an emission spectrum. If we define a sun to be a star illuminating inhabited planets, then our sun is the only such star that is known to science at the present time. (Indeed, the earth is the only planet known by science to have life.) In that sense, science knows of only one sun in the universe at the present time, even though many scientists tend to believe that there are other inhabited planets. (It is ironic that leading Darwinian evolutionists such as Theodosius Dobzhansky and George Gay Lord Simpson have argued that human-like life must be limited to the earth due to the great improbability that it will evolve twice by the random Darwinian evolutionary process.)"

According to Vedic description, there are innumerable universes floating in the Causal Ocean, and each universe is enveloped by 7 layers of elemental matter. Thus everything visible to us, including all the stars, lie within the boundaries of our particular universe and there is only one sun within each universe. The Brahma samhita also says that sun is the eye of the universe.

Scientists conclude that the stars must be very far away and by the inverse square law of propagation of light they must be shining very brightly. Also, since it is observed that light from the stars show an emission spectrum, it must follow that they are actively generating light rather than passively reflecting it. Thus they deduce that the stars must be like the sun or more powerful. But as we discussed above, physical laws observed on earth cannot be assumed to hold universally.

Besides, although Prabhupada concluded that the stars derive illumination from the sun, this does not exclude the possibility of their generating their own light. The Mahabharata describes Arjuna traveling to the region of the stars, en route to heaven, and seeing the presiding denizens and sages of the stars shining with the effulgence of their ascetic merits. Similarly, Srila Prabhupada gives an 'educated guess' that there may be pleasing flames on the moon that generate illumination as they do in some regions of the Bhumandala. (SB 5.20.13 p) Prabhupada does also say that the stars may also have a similar composition as the sun, but they are not independent suns. (Letter to Svarupa Damodara dasa, Nov. 21, 1975)

See also SB 4.12.36 purport: "In the spiritual world the Vaikunthalokas are themselves illuminated; there is therefore no need of sun, moon or electric light. It is in fact the illumination of the Vaikunthalokas which is reflected in the material sky. Only by this reflection are the suns in the material universes illuminated; after the illumination of the sun, all the stars and moons are illuminated. In other words, all the luminaries in the material sky borrow illumination from Vaikunthaloka."

See also descriptions such as found in the 4th Canto, where it is described that "the solar systems and other planets rotate, or circumambulate, around the Pole Star." See SB 4.12.25. Reference is made, as you can see, to multiple solar systems.

### **17.3.3) Reconciling the modern and Vedic theory of formation of eclipses**

**How do we justify explanation of eclipses given in the Vedas as Rahu swallowing Chandra etc, while science gives explanations of shadows of one falling over other? (Digest 198.1)**

First, I would like to make a general comment that it is not quite necessary to justify evidence from shastras or try to reconcile them in light of modern discoveries. Vedic truths stand on their own authority and also have their own deeper reason and logic even though it may not seem evident to us. According to Vedic methods, the modern scientific methods are lesser methods of arriving at truth and knowledge, and as we know all too well, they are ever subject to revision. (Please see Digest #149 for more detailed discussion on this topic). Thus whenever there seems to be a discrepancy between Vedic statements versus the evidence of our sense perception or empirical scientific experiments, we can assume that it is the empiric conclusion that might be in need of justification and revision!

Let us now turn to have a clearer picture of what the Vedic sciences really have to say about eclipses. Perhaps it may come as a surprise to some that the explanation based on the shadow theory was not unknown to Vedic astronomers. There has been, since time immemorial, a strong tradition in Vedic culture where people's daily life was tightly interwoven with and constantly regulated by astronomical and astrological considerations. Intricate ritualistic ceremonies and religious duties were connected to astronomical events, and complex astrological and calendrical calculations were regularly performed by highly learned brahmanas. Vedic calendars since ancient times have had accurate predictions of the eclipses. For example, we hear in the pastimes of Krishna that once there was a rare type of solar eclipse which was predicted by astronomical calculation, and people from all over India traveled to arrive at Kurukshetra in anticipation of this occasion. (Krishna Book Ch 82)

The body of Indian astronomical literature called jyotisha shastra gives computational rules to predict the occurrence of both lunar and solar eclipses and even compute the degree to

which the disc of the sun or moon will be obscured! These calculations are based on the model that eclipses are caused by the passage of the moon in front of the sun or into the earth's shadow. At the same time, rules are also given for calculating the position of Rahu and another similar planet named Ketu, which are invisible planets whose positions, notably, correspond to the ascending and descending nodes of the moon (the points where the orbit of the moon intersects the ecliptic, or the orbit of the sun), respectively. It turns out that either Rahu or Ketu will always be lined up in the direction of any solar or lunar eclipse. (Reference: Vedic Cosmography and Astronomy by Sadaputa Dasa)

Modern scholars tend to hypothesize that these calculations are probably later introductions borrowed from the Greek, but there is no real evidence to this and there is nothing that suggests that the transfer of knowledge might not have happened the other way round, (viz. India to Greece) given the fact that astrology and the influence of planets such as Rahu and Ketu have played such a vital role in Vedic society for centuries. We can conclude that these methods of calculation were in common use in India at least since Krishna's time, i.e. 5000 years ago.

This may then raise the question that if such astronomical sophistication was indeed known to Vedic sciences, then what about the stories involving Rahu being the head of a demon decapitated by the Mohini incarnation. One might tend to think that perhaps these are just superfluous or mythological stories with no substance to them and were simply added on as poetic interpretations to entertain the common man. However, Vedic accounts have multiple levels of meanings embedded in them and thus descriptions of the personalities such as Surya, Candra (the presiding Deities of sun and moon), or Rahu and Ketu need not preclude their simultaneously being astronomical entities.

One may raise the objection that if these celestial bodies are in fact controlled by divine personalities, how is it that they obey such precise patterns and predictable natural laws. But even within our day-to-day experience it is not impossible to find highly regulated protocols and routine procedures being executed by human beings.

In summary, physical and astronomical explanation and calculation of eclipses were an integral part of Vedic sciences, and in addition the narration of Rahu chasing the sun and moon are not merely poetic myths but factual accounts which may contain multiple levels of meaning, both astronomical as well as involving personal Deities.

## 18. Service

### 18.1. General questions: Service

#### 18.1.1) How to avoid sinful activities and maintain a mood of service?

**Part 1:** For the past 3-4 months I have usually had a pretty balanced life as in balanced diet and extremely regulated mundane activities like watching TV. However there have been certain periods when I went on a binge both in mundane activities (watching TV, playing online computer games) as well as in eating. Is there something I can do to avoid that? Whenever I have these binges the chanting I do the next day is a severe austerity for me. I do not have any enthusiasm for chanting following such days.

**Part 2).** Often times there are certain activities pertaining to our Vedic Society on Campus that I do not feel like doing even though I know that it is a good thing to do. In such cases I wonder should I back off from doing that activity citing an excuse or should I do that activity. If I agree to carry out the activity there is a kind of irritation at an activity that I am convinced/forced into doing (by myself or others). On the other hand if I make up an excuse then there is a certain guilt involved. Is there some way I can make a good decision which will help me improve in KC? (Digest 123.1)

1) Binges in sense gratification are due to residual impurities of heart, intermittent contact with the mode of passion, and your prior tendencies/bad habits resurfacing.

Binges can be counteracted by

(1) Sustained progress in Krsna Consciousness (where one attains steadiness in bhakti, or the 'nistha stage').

(2) Broadly, a lifestyle & habits of goodness will diminish the influences of the mode of passion, and in turn in taking shelter of binges.

(3) Acquiring a higher taste, which will result in the attraction of TV and video games appear gradually less and less attractive [BG 2.59].

2) Your second question plays right into the answer given for the first question: in what manner should you address the aftermath of bingeing? How to establish steadiness in bhakti, while there are still causes for unsteadiness?

The two sides of this issue have been nicely described by you:

“If I agree to carry out the activity there is a kind of irritation at an activity that I am convinced/forced into doing (by myself or others). On the other hand if I make up an excuse then there is a certain guilt involved. Is there some way I can make a good decision which will help me improve in KC?”

To the degree that you can tolerate the push-and-pull of duality [BG 2.14] and be situated in purity, above sin's reactions [BG 7.28], you will experience the determination needed to BOTH stay away from TV, video games and other time wasters and brain polluters AND to become reinstated in the steady practices of bhakti in the aftermath of a slip-up. When your devotional practices are strong and steady, likewise will your service mood.

Summary:

Frame your life in habits of goodness (cleanliness, regulation, truthfulness, honesty, compassion, charity, kindness, etc). Always strive for greater purity -- external and internal, both. Place faith in the principle of bhakti, as the means to carry you beyond the struggle with the material energy [BG 7.14]. Study regularly, apply what you read, chant intently.

**18.1.2) 'What is the real service to humanity and God?', 'is service to humanity better than service to God?' & 'how do we properly serve humanity in service to God?'**

**If I have two options, viz.**

**1) Serve someone in need i.e. help others through community service -OR-**

**2) Chant the name of the God.**

**Which should I choose? It is said chanting the name of the God will give me "Mukti". But if I spend my time in chanting, I may miss out an opportunity to serve/save the fellow human beings. So is it not worth to dedicate my current life to do service to the others and not worry about what my next body will be? If I am fortunate/unfortunate enough to be born again as a human being I will worry about gaining "Mukti" in that life. What is real service to humanity and God? (Digest 137.1)**

In order to decide between humanitarian service and devotional service, it is important to have a clear idea of what constitutes real service to humanity and what is real service to God.

We discussed in a previous digest (Digest 122) the idea of service -- specifically in terms of service to one's parents -- but the same ideas can be extended to our service responsibility towards fellow human beings. In summary, we concluded that true service to others must take into account spiritual well-being, and that service is truly effective only when rendered under scriptural guidance. Material well-being automatically follows spiritual well-being, whereas our independent attempts directed only towards the body and neglecting the soul are comparable to saving the dress of a drowning man. Secondly, devotional service to Lord Krishna does not neglect but is inclusive of service to all living entities (the example of watering the roots of a tree), but the converse is not true.

### **Devotional service and chanting is not intended for personal salvation**

Regarding service to God, and specifically the process of chanting the Hare Krishna maha mantra -- such practices are \*NOT\* intended to be selfish programs for personal salvation. The statement "chanting will give mukti" gives an seriously incomplete understanding of the nature and scope of devotional service; personal salvation is neither the focus nor even the explicit goal of chanting, according to the teachings of the vaishnava school. Rather, the disease of our own soul's contamination with matter and it's binding modes (gunas) must be cured, before the long-term fundamental position of suffering of others can be addressed.

### **We need to be properly trained and purified to help others**

A drowning man cannot save another drowning man, nor can a blind man lead others safely along a path; we have to recognize that as long as we are ourselves influenced by the

material modes of nature, and are ourselves disconnected from God, it is impossible to render meaningful and enlightening service to others. Rather, because of our ignorance of reality, we are sure to plunge ourselves deeper and drag others deeper into the complexities of material nature. It is the Vaisnava's choice, by properly educating and purifying ourselves, to placing ourselves as an instrument in the Lord's hand \*factually\* and in full consciousness of Him, thus we can become most useful in any undertaking.

That is the purpose of chanting, and choosing the path of devotional service to God, NOT salvation.

### **Devotees are interested in everyone's ultimate welfare**

Vaishnavas are para-duhkha-duhkhi, i.e. they do not care very much for their personal comforts but are distressed to see others suffering. Because of transcendental knowledge, they are equally not interested in stop-gap measures of material adjustments for bring short-term relief only to distress; while contemplating how to address our concerns for the immediate distresses and sufferings of worldly life, vaisnavas are not forgetting for a single moment the soul's ultimate and permanent well-being, as well. Vaisnavas know very well that root cause behind the immediate distress of life in this world is the soul's disconnection with God. To address THIS problem is the ultimate welfare work.

This is graphically illustrated in the prayers of Prahlada - the ideal hero of all aspiring vaishnavas.

When Lord Narasimhadev personally offered him any benediction he desires, this is what Prahlada prays: "O best of the great personalities, I am not at all afraid of material existence, for wherever I stay I am fully absorbed in thoughts of Your glories and activities. My concern is only for the fools and rascals who are making elaborate plans for material happiness and maintaining their families, societies and countries. I am simply concerned with love for them... I do not wish to be liberated alone, leaving aside all these poor fools and rascals. I know that without Krishna consciousness, without taking shelter of Your lotus feet, one cannot be happy. Therefore I wish to bring them back to shelter at Your lotus feet." (Cf. [SB 7.9.43-44](#))

This, of course, is the consciousness of an advanced, pure devotee and is difficult to replicate. But even supposing that a beginning practitioner of devotional life is chanting Krishna's names for his/her own purification, it is still not considered a merely selfish act, since by its very nature devotional service brings all-auspiciousness upon even the onlookers, and anyone who the vaisnava's life comes in contact with.

### **Despite humanitarian effort people are suffering**

Please consider: there has been no shortage of humanitarian relief efforts in the history of mankind but people are continuing to suffer, in certain ways even more than ever before.

Shortage of education in God consciousness

The only shortage in this material world and the real panacea for all troubles is God-consciousness. The real need of humanity, especially in today's society, is spiritual education in the principles of Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam; those who participate in this effort to whatever capacity are rendering the most valuable service!

18.1.3) 'Doing good out of "humanity" independent of the relationship with God' & 'what is real welfare?'

**People should help people just for the sake of helping them, and without any additional motivation. The propagation of that kind of behavior is the positive part of society in general. Doing everything for God negates the basic human decency of every good act, even though the outcome might be the same. The difference in motivation removes all of the good will from the equation. Essentially, people who do things only for indirect purposes are only automatons. I don't consider the act nearly as positive for society, because people appreciate and gain inspiration from a gesture that is truly from the heart. If everyone acted in the name of God instead of their fellow humans, and nobody formed deep attachments to other people, would the world really be a better place, or would the best aspects of humanity be lost? Note: The word 'human' can be replaced with 'animal'. They are interchangeable. (Digest 213.1)**

Although the ideal of a positive society you are presenting is noble, practically we see that it is unrealizable and utopian without acknowledging God in the picture.

In the last several decades, after having made the state secular, carefully keeping any mention of God out of educational institutions and relegating religion to a sort of personal hobby or an unofficial non-governmental Social Welfare agency, there has been no dearth of researches and reform movements and humanitarian efforts targeting the upliftment of others, seeking in various ways to help people. Thousands of good-willed social scientists, educators & psychologists are all trying their very best to come up with improved methods for character education for children, and so on. For all that effort, the world should be becoming increasingly more peaceful, people becoming increasingly courteous and loving and accommodating of each other etc - but any objective and discerning onlooker can see that the trend is in the reverse, with crime, fraud and social unrest on the rise every day; even neighbors think twice to trust each other and so on.

Thus, when God is removed from the equation, it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals or groups of individuals of differing interests to focus on a common goal or identity for want of a common center. It is only a matter of time before whatever goodwill is present will diminish and vanish.

**Definition of good:**

Please consider, in the scenario you have presented, how would one define what is actually good? Actual goodwill would have to go beyond just helping an old lady across the street or giving some donation to the salvation army, or more seriously dedicating oneself to a noble and worth cause and feeling very good about oneself - there are many who do this, but simultaneously their life doesn't necessarily reflect a high standard of character in many other aspects. In fact by their very lifestyle, knowingly or unknowingly, they are often hurting and destroying so many helpless victims unintentionally, even as they are trying to be "good" to certain others.

The very concept of competitiveness and getting ahead of others in life, on the basis of which the whole society is operating, is opposed to the ideal of goodwill. Rob Peter and help Paul - that is also not a very nice definition of goodwill. But in this world, if you want to help

one entity, without keeping God in the center, it would invariably involve hurting or exploiting another. Sympathizing with the cause of women's freedom often ends up with the consequence of terrible neglect and imbalances for the cause of children; someone may champion the cause of feeding the poor at the expense of killing innocent animals; another person's compassion may extend a little further to include the animals also, but then what about the trees, and what about the lesser forms of life, microbes and so on?

For want of an absolute authority, everyone is left to come up with their own definition and limits of goodwill - but that's like trying to drive on the highway with no rules and simply depending on the goodwill and good judgment of one another! The definition of good in a godless society is arbitrary or at best conventional -- based on the current opinion of the majority, which simply means might is right, and what is right keeps changing with the changing whims of the public.

Thus when God is removed from the equation, it is not even possible to ascertain what constitutes being truly good to each other and have everyone come to an agreement. In such a condition how are we to train people at large and inculcate such character in them if at all we are able to even define it?

### **Vedic conception of welfare:**

On the other hand, followers of Vedic culture understand that God is the Supreme authority, and also the best well-wisher of every living entity. Dharma is the codes of conduct laid by God Himself. His laws are universally applicable for all times and places. By following the God-given laws, all living entities are simultaneously benefited, without any side-effects so to speak. Contrarily, any man-made set of laws is bound to be defective; limited by our own limited vision and cannot be universally applicable.

Furthermore, the Vedic understanding of welfare is long-term (shreyas), not short-term, stop-gap solutions (preyas). Real welfare is to bring one to the end of all miseries by connecting them back to God. Material amelioration is likened to giving a plate of food to a lost child, or like blowing over a boil to give temporary relief. Whereas real and true help is to take the child back to the parents, to find a permanent cure to the disease, to address the root cause which has brought upon this suffering to others. In the ultimate sense this means to connect people back to their relation with God --- it may include offering some kind words or prasadam or relief, but it goes further than that.

### **Devotee of God develops good qualities:**

You have stated that those who act nobly or help others only to please God are automatons and in this I beg to differ. One who is accomplished in the art of acting in his relationship with God, a pure devotee, automatically develops all good qualities worth possessing. When such a person acts compassionately, it is not simply out of courtesy, formality or religious obligation, but he actually feels and is moved deeply by feelings of compassion, not just in a limited, self-centered or self-extended way - but for all parts and parcels of the Lord. It is certainly done from the heart, more deeply and genuinely than the humane courtesy or obligation one may momentarily feel upon coming across a needy person.

This was practically and amply demonstrated by Srila Prabhupada through his personal example. When, for instance, Srila Prabhupada first arrived in California to fulfill the order of his

spiritual master, the scene was one of tumult and madness - the youth had become disenchanted with materialistic goals of Western culture and turned hippies. Feeling lost and confused, high on LSD and other drugs, dropped out of mainstream society, home & school and flocking the streets of San Francisco - their cause had stirred great public concern, becoming an uncontrollable social problem. All public authorities and responsible citizens including the police, civic leaders, social workers, and even the doctors were completely at a loss and having no clue how to handle and help these wild, intoxicated youth. In the midst of this pandemonium walked in Srila Prabhupada, an elderly and cultured sadhu from Vrindavana, with no precedents or experience with dealing with any such crises, with no resources or support, and provided the hippies a transcendental refuge and a higher alternative. He welcomed and gave shelter to them, fed them, directed and engaged them, treated them gently yet confidently, administered the process of devotional service to them fearlessly and not only that - in time he reformed and trained many of them to in turn become saints! The authorities of San Francisco were not just appreciative but struck by his effectiveness in doing this single-handedly where all their collective efforts had failed.

This was because Prabhupada actually knew the science of God and how to administer it suitably in all situations; he was not perplexed but knew for certain what is the absolute good for everyone and confident that only this could factually help humanity while all other solutions would be patchwork at best. And what he did was deeply heartfelt, not a routine religious obligation, or meant for achieving some indirect goal or personal salvation - indeed it would have been impossible to take that kind of risks and face the kind of challenges that he did by routine formulas or selfish motivations. Thousands of people from all walks of life became deeply moved, inspired and felt their lives transformed by coming in contact with him and experiencing his love and affection. If you read some of the accounts of his activities, one cannot fail to be deeply moved by the intensity of compassion and love he personally felt for humanity that drove him to make such sacrifices at such an advanced age. There are many such examples in the history of the world. The kind of sacrifices that Jesus Christ or Haridas Thakur undertook on behalf of humanity is inconceivable for a mundane humanist.

### **So-called good qualities in non-devotees are unsteady and do not bear the right results:**

On the other hand, one who does not understand how everything and everyone is related to God cannot actually manifest these good qualities in a steady and consistent manner. Their attempts to be kind, truthful, co-operative etc will only go so far as the extent of their attachments - some may have a lesser degree of attachment than others, but the point where their sense-gratification feels pinched, there ends their practice of virtue.

Besides, whatever good they may do is also frustrated in time and does not bear ultimately good result because of their lack of proper knowledge of the true nature of things. It is like the attempt of trying to water the individual branches of a tree and neglecting the root. Real and proper welfare is to connect the branches back to the root and to water the root, then automatically the branches become nourished.

### **A devotee-in-practice:**

I was so far describing the nature of highly accomplished saintly devotees of God. There may be others who are mere beginners in the science of God and who out of good faith and in

good association begin to worship God. Such persons may themselves not have developed these good qualities but \*if\* they act under the direction of a bona fide devotee, their acts are also flawless and truly beneficial - just as a nurse functioning under the direction of a qualified doctor is also rendering valuable service that is authorized and not whimsical.

Or like a child who is lovingly induced and educated by the parents to give some of her toys in charity. Such beginners are not automatons; rather they are simply at a less mature stage of devotional perfection, but on the right track. The child on her own may have not yet developed the maturity to realize the need for sharing and helping others, but because she is acting without resentment and out of affection for her loving parents, quickly she will also acquire that quality. However, if the nurse or the child tries to whimsically do something to help others without guidance, they may not be very effective.

### **Good intentions are not good enough:**

Srila Prabhupada narrates a simple incident that graphically illustrates this idea - one boy was suffering from very severe case of typhoid and his mother had placed him under very strict diet and medical care. The younger brother of this boy felt very sorry for his sick brother. Out of affection and goodwill, he brought to him fried samosas and puris, but his mother noticed this and reprimanded the little boy for his foolish act. Despite his fine sentiments, his well-intentioned act could have proved deadly to the sick boy. In other words, good intentions are not good enough. Just as the goodwill of a doctor is heightened by his/her efforts to properly learn the medical science, similarly one who really wants to do good to others would take the time to learn and practice the science of Bhagavata-dharma by which real help can be rendered.

### **Proper conception of God and spiritual training:**

There are some spiritually poorly-informed people who hold a fallacious conception that the idea of 'God' was simply fabricated by some wise ancestral philosophers in order to instill virtue or fear among common men, in-order to extraneously motivate them to be good. If that were the case and people are induced in the fashion of a child being coaxed to do something based on false promises, then your concern may be valid that such a tactic spoils the motivation behind a good act.

But that is far from the truth, at least when devotional service is guided by bona fide acharyas who know the spiritual science - as in the case of a qualified doctor or parent in the above examples. Even if someone begins with an indirect motivation of wanting some piety, because of acting under proper authority they render more valuable help and also quickly come to the right standard of knowledge and motivation - the key being proper spiritual training under qualified authority.

God is a real person, the Supreme Personality, on whom all other living beings are dependent upon to fulfill their needs. He is the Supreme Father and Maintainer, perfectly supplying the needs of all living entities, and He is the most well-wishing friend of every living being. Those who have forgotten their relationship with him are placed in this material world, and are something akin to being in a spiritually sick condition - God is still providing for them but with many restrictions. If we find some scarcity or suffering in this world, it is because of the living entities' own diseased state of forgetfulness and disconnection from God, it is certainly not because Krishna has somehow neglected them or incapable of helping them.

Therefore the real welfare that we can do for anyone is effected when we act under the direction of the Supreme Father, which means under the direction of scriptures and saintly persons who represent Him. Trying to do so independently will actually not prove helpful and could even bear adverse effect.

### **Relationships in proper perspective:**

Keeping Krishna in the center doesn't mean we have no relationships with others; rather, we then have the proper perspective of our spiritual relationship with all beings. On the other hand, attempting to have an independent relationship with other parts and parcels of the Lord is unnatural and ineffective - like the fingers trying to independently feed the different limbs of the body.

Again consider the example of a family - a mature son who has received training from the father to serve his other siblings also simultaneously develops deep affection, care and concern for them, he works with them and helps them according to the father's direction - but that is not independent of the relationship with their most loving, common father.

When human society is trained in this way in the culture and science of God consciousness, naturally everything will be harmonious - humans, animals, demigods and nature will all act in full co-operation with one another in their common service to the Supreme Lord. Try to attain unity and harmony any other way, keeping the Supreme Father out of the equation, it is bound to fail; quarrels, misunderstandings and selfish concerns will prevail, as is amply demonstrated by the state of affairs in the world around us!

### **18.1.4) 'Dharma of a family man' & 'service to humanity'**

**I need little more illustration on the following: "Dharme Rakshita Rakshitaha" - which means "If you protect Dharma it will protect you". What is Dharma in this materialistic world for a family man? Is it to not cheat others, to speak truth, to not harm others (manasa, vacha, karmana)?**

**"Service to people is service to God": Does this mean to not be self-centered in this life? If you are fortunate to have material benefits in this world, are you to share a little for the sake of others who are less fortunate, have concern for fellow human beings, etc. After all we are children of the same God. Is this is act of Dharma? (Digest 5.7)**

The Sanskrit word 'dharma' refers to one's constitutional nature or occupation. For example, we can say that the 'dharma' of fire is heat and light. Similarly, the dharma of soul is to serve. This service has to be directed to the Supreme Lord, and anything that furthers the development of that pure service has to be taken up as our duty. (Cf. Bhag 2.6) As part of that duty we may try to serve others, family and society, to help them also in executing their ultimate dharma of progressing spiritually. So, a partial answer to your question is, "Yes, the items you have mentioned are all parts of dharma."

Please note, however, that Srimad Bhagavatam indicates that these duties are unfortunately wastes of labor if the performer of duties does not awaken an attraction for hearing topics of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In other words, this attainment is the actual intended goal of all sacrifices, charity, duties, good works, etc.

18.1.5) Is service to parents, the same as serving God?

**I can say I have practically no knowledge of the scriptures; but I believe in GOD - in all gods. Prior to coming to the US, I used to pray a lot. However, after coming here I have reduced that, apparently for no particular reason. But I have started praying to my parents, because I feel that by serving one's parents, one can serve God. I would like to understand what really is a person's duty - is it to serve God directly or to serve his parents and reach God through them? (Digest 122.1)**

True service or proper service, to any being, can be rendered when we are in knowledge. Action done in ignorance, despite all good intentions, could turn out to be a disservice to others. For example, if someone is very ill, it would be a disservice to feed them opulent, fatty foods. Just as we acquaint ourselves with knowledge of the material world from the worldly authorities (physicians, scientists etc), in order to understand our ultimate duty in life and how we can serve others best, we need to acquaint ourselves with scriptural authority. When our actions are based on scriptural knowledge, they will be beneficial for all living entities. Any other man-made plan is bound to be defective and imbalanced.

From scriptures, we learn that real service is done by serving the Personality of Godhead, Krishna, just as by watering the roots of a tree all the branches are automatically nourished. Any amount of extraneous care of the branches of a tree would be futile if the root is neglected, or if the branch is disconnected. Similarly Krishna is the source and sustenance of everything, and all the multitude of devas are the limbs of His body. The demigods, and indeed all living beings, can be satisfied by worshiping the Supreme Lord and by connecting them to His service. (Cf. SB 4.31.14)

Thus, in answer to your question, our foremost duty is to DIRECTLY serve God by chanting His Names, hearing about Him and worshiping Him. This means that all other duties, such as towards one's family and society are not to be neglected, nor should they be done independently, but should be done AS A SERVICE to God.

Service to one's parents is not only noble but an important duty for everyone. They have been the Lord's instrument in giving us the gift of human body, have nourished us and sacrificed much, at least for one's material well-being; in turn we express our gratitude through service and care. But what should that service be? Again, we learn from scripture that service to the material body, without caring for the spirit soul, is like saving the coat of a drowning man or like polishing the cage of a bird while neglecting to feed the bird.

Thus a very important aspect of one's service to his / her parents is to facilitate their onward spiritual journey, if possible, by giving them the opportunity for performance of devotional service. Even if that is not possible, however, scriptures conclude that if one dedicates one's life to Krishna's service, out of affection for such a devotee, the Lord liberates not only their parents but many generations of his forefathers! This is the ultimate service one can render their parents.

## 19. Spiritual master and disciple

### 19.1. Disciplic succession

#### 19.1.1) List of disciplic succession starting from Krishna

**Where can I find a list of disciplic succession starting from Krishna down? I know that we have to have a spiritual master in the disciplic succession, so I want to know who and where does the disciplic succession start? (Digest 32.2)**

The disciplic succession from the Brahma-Gaudiya sampradaya is listed in the beginning of Bhagavad-gita As It Is by Srila Prabhupada. There are four bona fide disciplic successions which all originate from the Supreme Lord Krishna, then coming respectively through Lord Brahma, Lakshmi-devi, Lord Shiva and the Kumaras. The principal acaryas who strongly reestablished these four lines in recent times were Madhvacarya, Ramanujacarya, Vishnu Swami and Nimbarkacarya. Lord Caitanya took initiation in the Brahma-Madhva-sampradaya, and thus the disciplic succession following Lord Caitanya and His associates is called Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya sampradaya.

#### 19.1.2) Understanding ISKCON's lineage

**I thought that Sampradaya applies only to those initiated in disciplic succession (according to BG AS IT IS). For eg. I am not initiated in the ISKCON sampradaya at present. But I don't think that it would be right if I claim to be part of the sampradaya. My question arises due to the fact that even though Srila Bhaktivinod Thakura is not the initiating guru of Gaura Kishora dasa babaji maharaja but still he appears in our sampradaya. Actually Gaurakishora dasa babaji maharaja is disciple of Srila Bhagavata Dasa Babaji who is a disciple of Srila Jagannatha Dasa Babaji (Digest 1.4)**

One can be considered to be part of a sampradaya if one receives instructions and faithfully adheres to those instructions according to the sampradaya. Initiation into the sampradaya is a formalization of the acceptance of the teachings and instructions of that sampradaya. In our particular disciplic succession, the lineage is traced by the source of primary instruction that one receives. Another way of saying the same thing is that our disciplic line is a siksa line, not a diksa line. You most certainly can be considered part of the sampradaya if you receive instructions from Srila Prabhupada's teachings. He is your primary siksa guru and others may also be guiding you very nicely in your spiritual progress. This is what constitutes being part of a sampradaya. At some point in time diksa will formally connect you with the disciplic succession, but you may very well be presently part of this sampradaya by taking primary instruction from Srila Prabhupada's books and teachings.

### 19.1.3) Faith in scriptures and disciplic succession

**How can we know that the shastra is correct? The ancient traditions are oral and only recently in historical time were they written down. And we all know that when a story is told it changes from one person to the other. The new testament of the bible was written 70-100 years after Christ's death. Here you talk about thousands of years.**

**Even the Mahabharata is known to be full of corruptions. So, how can one be sure that all the other texts were not altered also? You assume the former guru's were not cheaters or misrepresented for their own aggrandizement but there are thousands of so called religious people then and now who do. I am not being adversarial here. I really want to believe. So please answer me. (Digest 195.1)**

The way we can ascertain that that we are getting the unadulterated message is because of the presence of an unbroken, living disciplic succession, which can be traced all the way back to Lord Krishna Himself and coming down to the present day. Yes, there is a high possibility of the pure message being eroded or misinterpreted - as in Christianity or any other tradition most of which have no claim of unbroken, unadulterated disciplic succession representing the teachings of their original preceptors.

This is not uncommon in history; even Krishna Himself speaks in Bhagavad-Gita of this knowledge being lost: "in course of time the succession was broken, and therefore the science as it is appears to be lost."(BG 4.2) Therefore, He comes to reestablish by speaking this science again to Arjuna, and also assures that He regularly appears in every millennium or sends His representatives, to reestablish true religious principles whenever they are in decline. In other words, it is the Lord's will and established system that there will always be His pure representatives preserving His pure message available to humanity, to the pious and sincere seekers. If this knowledge happens to be corrupted or covered up, He personally arranges to rectify and reinstate these principles. On this basis, we can be sure.

The acharyas in Vaishnava disciplic line themselves candidly point out that portions of the Vedic texts do not have the proper disciplic lineage continuing today, as in the case of Mahabharata. But the principal texts that elaborate on the essential teachings of the Vedas in a suitable manner for the present age are indeed perfectly preserved and handed down -- this can be verified directly at least from writings that extend back to several generations.

More importantly, as we discussed in a recent digest (Digest 192), we can see that the pure disciplic succession is preserved healthy and intact through the qualities manifested by its most recent and living representatives. You write that you accept the principles given in BG, wherein Krishna delineates the qualities by which we can identify a truly transcendental person, one who is qualified to be His pure representative. When we come in contact with such a person, we can be sure that he is representing the original teachings of scriptures.

Consider a tree which appears as if lifeless in the autumn and winter - but when spring arrives, even if several branches have indeed dried up and perished, if just one branch comes forth with new shoots and leaves, we can know that the tree is alive, and that this branch must be connected to the root. In the same way, when we see such qualities perfectly manifested in the person of a devotee, it must be concluded that he is strongly connected to the root, i.e. transmitting the pure teachings of scripture. Without being specifically empowered by Krishna, it is not possible for a mundane person to manifest these qualities and also influence & uplift so

many others to become pure vaishnavas. (krsna sakti vina nahe tara pravartana Cc 13.1 p) True, there are and have been many false religious proponents and factions, and many dried up branches, but we cannot conclude from this that all are faulty - especially when it is the Lord's desire that a pure disciplic line should be preserved. One might have come across many counterfeit currencies, but one should not conclude that there is no authorized currency in circulation.

#### 19.1.4) 'Arjuna and disciplic succession' & 'history of Bhagavad Gita'

**Going through a discussion on Bhagavad-Gita, we discussed regarding "Why Krishna had to start a new parampara?" During the discussion we encountered many complex understandings.**

**Krishna says in beginning of Bhagavad-Gita Chapter 4, He chose Arjuna as the first one to get the knowledge of Bhagavad-Gita for the new parampara. Now our concerns are:**

**Q1: If Arjuna is the first one to receive Bhagavad-Gita in new parampara, why his name is not mentioned in disciplic succession as Srila Prabhupada mentioned 32 names for disciplic succession of Bhagavad- Gita?**

**Q2: In the disciplic succession mentioned by Srila Prabhupada, Brahma is the first one to receive the knowledge from Krishna. Are the texts exactly the same with what we have in Bhagavad-Gita As It Is or only the essence (meaning) is the same? If the texts are same then did Krishna tell Brahma about Mahabharata?**

**Q3: Vyasadev is the one who wrote Bhagavad-Gita. Did Mahabharat actually take place or was it just Vyasadev's realization or vision? Or did Vyasadev get As It Is from Narada?**

**Actually all these questions lead us to confusion as we cannot understand the connections. (Digest 154.1)**

All of these questions are answered if the underlying understanding about the system of 'parampara' is clear. The parampara is an unbroken chain of disciplic succession where each member transparently represents the previous teachers without adding, deleting or modifying the parampara message with their personal agenda. The parampara is not just a series of "parrot-like" transmitters, but faithful representatives who can impart realized transcendental knowledge to their students in a manner suitable to their understanding.

Undoubtedly, the Bhagavad-gita text itself is preserved as it is. But more importantly the charge of the parampara is to preserve the essential meaning of the text as intended by the original speaker, Lord Krishna Himself. As Srila Prabhupada said, "No obscure meaning should be 4-screwed out of (the text)."

It is not difficult to conceive how, even when the original text is preserved, the meaning of the words can be grossly misunderstood or even completely eclipsed by the interpretations of a speaker motivated by anything other than the desire to exclusively represent the speaker's interest. This is practically demonstrated in the myriad different interpretations on Bhagavad-Gita. Prabhupada qualified his translation as Bhagavad-gita "As It Is" not because it was a lexicographic translation but because this edition is completely faithful to its original speaker Lord Krishna and His message as handed down by the succession of acharyas.

By the same principle, it follows that the spiritual master is not \*necessarily literally\* the one from whom we may have heard the recitation of Gita, but he who imparts the understanding

and realization of transcendental knowledge within the disciple's heart (as happens when one reads Srila Prabhupada's books).

With that understanding in place, we can now look at the history of the Bhagavad-gita's being written.

Vyasadeva's spiritual master was Narada, and yet he personally witnessed the entire episode of the Battle at Kurukshetra, a true historical event. Vyasadeva himself was physically involved in many events in the Kuru dynasty. Although not personally present at the battle scene, he had access to the events at Kurukshetra just as, by his mercy, Sanjaya had access to witness the battle from Dhritarashtra's quarters. Along with Arjuna, Vyasa was also simultaneously the recipient of the Gita which he recorded and transmitted through his disciples. He should be known as tri-kalajna, or one who is conscious of time past-present-future.

Since the time of the Vyasa's compiling Mahabharata and Bhagavad-gita, it has been handed down to us through the mercy of his direct disciple Madhvacarya, in whose line came Lord Caitanya and his followers up to Srila Prabhupada; this particular lineage of disciplic succession is mentioned in the beginning of Bhagavad-gita As It Is.

### **19.1.5) Difference in the teachings of Madhvacarya and Lord Caitanya**

**We are taught to accept Guru as he represents the disciplic line. I've read and heard that guru always speaks without deviation from the previous Acharya in the line. I was wondering about the difference between Sri Madhvacharya and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Specifically as it pertains to our line, and the question of authenticity. (Digest 136.1)**

The mandate for a bona fide representative of the disciplic line is indeed, as you say, to speak without deviation from the previous acharyas; but they also present the subject matter according to their own personal realization and according to the needs of the time and audience - this is not a contradiction. This is explained nicely in [SB 1.4.1 p](#). Besides it is the special prerogative of especially empowered acharyas and the Supreme Lord to make such necessary adjustments according to time and place without contradicting scriptural principles and conclusions of previous acharyas. Based on these two considerations, there is actually no difference between Sri Madhvacharya and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

In a conversation about the apparent difference of opinion among the four principal vaishnava acharyas - Madhva, Ramanuja, Nimbarka and Vishnu Swami - Srila Prabhupada explained that actually there are no contradictions. Despite some minor differences their conclusions are consistent: "There is no difference of opinion, but (each of them) has explained the Absolute Truth more vividly in their own angle of vision. Otherwise there is no difference." (Lecture on Science of Krsna - Hyderabad, April 14, 1975) And specifically regarding Lord Caitanya, Srila Prabhupada remarked, "No, there is no difference. Rather, Caitanya Mahaprabhu's teaching is the summary of ...all four sampradayas. So Caitanya Mahaprabhu follows everyone." (Room Conversation with Dr. Copeland, Professor of Modern Indian History - May 20, 1975, Melbourne) As the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Caitanya unified all the four sampradayas - this was demonstrated by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati who installed and honored the Deities of all four acharyas in Mayapur. Lord Caitanya took the essential principles of each sampradaya and presented the acintya bheda-abheda philosophy, which is not contradictory to the teachings of Madhvacharya but exemplifies it in its completeness.

Once Srila Prabhupada explained the differences among the five great preachers who appeared in India - Buddha, Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva and Lord Caitanya: "But you will find a link, a link, although superficially we may see that Lord Buddha is speaking something which is contradictory to Lord Sankaracharya's teaching, or Ramanujacharya is speaking something which is contradiction to Sankara. No. There is no contradiction. It is the question of studying how they are paving way for ultimate spiritual realization. That requires a very, I mean to say, substantial knowledge, how they are paving the way, just step by step. So these are gradual development so far the human society is concerned." (Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 2.58-59 - New York, April 27, 1966)

As you have likely heard before, Lord Buddha rejected the Vedas in order to stop unauthorized animal sacrifices and preached non-violence; later on Shankara preached 'covered Buddhism' and brought back people under the fold of Vedic authority. Both Sri Ramanuja and Madhva came to defeat the stronghold of Shankaracharya's Mayavada theory and firmly established Lord Vishnu as the Supreme Person. Later, when the time was appropriate, Srila Madhavendra Puri coming in the same disciplic line as Madhvacharya exhibited symptoms of ecstatic love, which was so far latent in the disciplic line.

The Caitanya Caritamrita explains: "Sri Madhavendra Puri introduced the conception of conjugal love for the first time in the Madhva Sampradaya. This conclusion of the Madhvacharya Sampradaya was revealed by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu when he toured Southern India and met Tattvavadis, who supposedly belonged to the Madhva Sampradaya." (Cc Madhya 4.197) Thus, 'this conclusion of Madhvacharya sampradaya' (viz. the conception of ecstatic worship of Radha-Krishna) was not a foreign element but one of the inherent conclusions of Madhvacharya sampradaya later revealed by Lord Caitanya. Likewise, although Madhvacharya established the ultimate goal of transcendentalism to be attainment of pure devotional service, love of Godhead (Cc Madhya 9.11), followers in that sampradaya had accepted the five kinds of liberation as the ultimate goal and varnashrama as the means to achieve it. This is not the conclusion of pure devotional service as Lord Caitanya points out to them during his discussions with the Tattvavadis in His South Indian tour. (Cc Madhya 9.256, 257, 258, 259, and 260).

In summary, the apparent differences viz. Lord Caitanya's presentation of acintya-bheda-abheda tattva, love of Krishna as the highest goal and the worship of Radha-Krishna in ecstatic love are neither contradictions nor attempts to artificially supercede the teachings of the previous acharyas. Rather, these conclusions were inherently present in Madhvacharya's teachings but were revealed and perfectly explained only by the mercy of Lord Caitanya and His devotees, when the time was ripe.

Moreover, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He came with a mission of delivering vraja-prema, which was distinct from the mission of Madhvacharya (who is commonly accepted as an incarnation of Vayu), whose primary mission was to solidly refute and defeat mayavada doctrine. As their mission was distinct, so also were their points of emphasis. However, this does not constitute a deviation.

Even the staunch Ramanadis of the Sri Vaisnava sampradaya accepted Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and his followers as a bonafide branch of the Madhva line, in one historical debate on this issue in Jaipur; this historical incident demonstrates that it is allowed even in the strictest of forums of vaisnava authority for comprehensive structuring of vaisnava conclusions to represent the vaisnava line from which it descends, with some specific points of emphasis which may not appear to match cent-percent the prior acaryas' points of emphasis, provided there is a systematic representation of these teachings which follow the Vedanta Sutra codes. This

condition was fulfilled by Baladev Vidyabhusana in his Govinda Bhasya, and thus Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was accepted by the Ramanadis as fully and authentically representing the Madhva line.

## *19.2. General questions: Spiritual master and disciple*

### *19.2.1) Can all self realized persons become spiritual masters?*

**Spiritual Masters are self realized then can we say all self realized persons can be a spiritual masters? (Digest 10.3)**

Yes, if they are authorized by their spiritual master to perform this service, and if they are receiving knowledge in disciplic succession.

### *19.2.2) Siksa guru*

**Can somebody act like a guru without actually initiating somebody. In the sense I accept somebody as my guru and follow his instructions. And when I am able to fully follow all his instructions take initiation? (Digest 10.2)**

This is called siksa guru, and it is most certainly a very real consideration in making spiritual advancement. Most likely there are persons who are guiding you at present, and those persons are a type of spiritual guide or leader in your life. To accept someone in the role of guru, however, means that their guidance is accepted in an absolute manner by you. That is to say, even if your present practices are not yet so mature that you are eligible for diksa, you can still take shelter of someone whose instructions you accept in an absolute manner. This is of course a very 'heavy' kind of submission to present unto another person, and therefore should not be taken in any light manner by you. But to answer your question directly, most certainly one can fully follow the instructions of someone, prior to being an initiated devotee.

### *19.2.3) 'Siksa and diksa guru', 'accepting disciples when one's guru is still present' & 'approaching a spiritual master for initiation'*

**My sister and I have been receiving instructions for some time from a very nice devotee. Now we want to approach him for initiation. However his guru is also present in body and we are not sure what the protocol is in such a situation. Also should we take the initiative and approach him or wait for his approval and desire to initiate us? (Digest 25.1)**

To respond to your specific question, I would like to first give some general vaishnava principles from which you may benefit. According to vaishnava teachings, there are two equally respected kinds of guru - diksa guru or initiating spiritual master, and siksa guru or instructing spiritual master. One may have many instructing spiritual masters, but the initiating spiritual master is one; the siksa gurus instruct the disciple either in consultation with the diksa guru or

along the general guidelines given by the diksa guru.

One may accept instructions in Krishna consciousness from a siksa guru, and submit to the instructor and to his instructions; such a very significant relationship is extremely important. Such relationships may be many, while accepting diksa, likewise, is another serious consideration. The general etiquette or protocol is that a devotee does not accept formal disciples and initiate in the presence of his own spiritual master, although he may be instructing many students. When the spiritual master departs from the planet, then the disciple may begin to accept initiated disciples under the authorization of his own spiritual master and the sanga of senior vaishnavas. During Srila Prabhupada's time, many devotees did not get Prabhupada's personal association very much; they were being trained by and working under Prabhupada's disciples but formally they accepted Srila Prabhupada as their eternal spiritual master and were initiated by him.

From the information you supplied, it seems that you have been very fortunate to have a siksa relationship with the devotee who you wrote about, and etiquette dictates that you should continue to cultivate the relationship in that manner. Diksa should be sought elsewhere.

It is an approved vaishnava principle and is welcome that a disciple approach the spiritual master, take shelter of his lotus feet and request initiation, as recommended by Krishna in Bg

#### **19.2.4) Vartama-pradarsaka guru**

**"Spiritual Masters are representatives of God". I think this statement applies to person who is an acharya and not anyone and everyone who preaches Krishna consciousness. Am I right? Can you expand a little bit and explain. (Digest 10.4)**

In practical terms, is it not a fact that members of the public receive knowledge of God through all types of preachers/sankirtan devotees? E.g. book distributors, those who are asked questions by the public, lecturers, etc. all 'represent' God's message. This category is sometimes called 'one who shows the path', or a vartama-pradarsaka guru.

#### **19.2.5) Relationship with the spiritual master is eternal**

**When one accepts a spiritual master, it is said that the relationship is eternal. However, if one is not able to go back to Godhead in one lifetime, then how can he accept another guru in the next life? Or does the same guru have to come back to fulfill his duty? (Digest 25.3)**

The concept of 'guru-tattva' is inconceivable and most difficult to understand. In principle, as Srila Prabhupada explains in his famous Vyasa-puja address, the Guru is one; guru cannot be two. (Cf. Science of Self Realization pp. 70-71) The Original spiritual master is Lord Balarama or Lord Nityananda and He appears in infinite forms to instruct us. This of course does not de-personalize or minimize the value of the empowered devotee of the Lord who plays the part of a spiritual master. This fundamental spiritual principle is difficult to understand with mundane logic, but with this understanding we can simply accept that one's relationship with his spiritual master is eternal.

**19.2.6) Spiritual master's association through vapu (physical association) and vani (instructions)**

**When one is not in the proximate physical presence of one's guru, how does one take necessary help for eliminating the obstacles on the path of sadhana? (Digest 16.3)**

As Srila Prabhupada always emphasized, association of the guru or a saintly person through 'vani' (i.e. their instructions) is more important than association through 'vapu' (personal, physical association). Even in the proximate physical presence of the spiritual master, it is the vani, or his instruction that is the most important. Therefore, especially when one does not get much opportunity for physical association, one should make all endeavor to regularly associate with the instructions of the spiritual master, through hearing or reading, meditating, discussing and by continuing to apply those instructions in our day-to-day activities.

Hearing is a powerful method, and thanks to modern technology we have the opportunity to hear tapes virtually anywhere and at any time. By making a very conscientious effort to hear regularly and attentively the instructions of the spiritual master, one can keep oneself always connected to his instructions. Maintaining a deep mood of service to the spiritual master and trying to execute ALL of our activities in accordance with his instructions so as to please him, makes that connection very strong and deep on the spiritual platform. Associating with one's godbrothers/ godsisters in the same service mood when such opportunity is available, enthusiastically trying to serve the spiritual master together, discussing his teachings and his glories - all these greatly support, enhance and revitalize one's constant connection with the spiritual master, allowing us to feel his presence always. If the instructions of the spiritual master remain always close to our heart, this is like being personally trained by the spiritual master as he resides within our hearts due to our love for him!

**19.2.7) How to increase our gratitude to the spiritual master**

**How do I make sure that my gratitude for my spiritual master and those guiding me day-by-day in my spiritual life keeps on increasing, and does not become interrupted? (Digest 235.2)**

Below is an answer I gave to a similar question asked by someone else about hearing from a single source.

(please refer 23.2.2 –Digest 227)

**19.2.8) Seeking recognition from the spiritual master**

**Is it acceptable to desire recognition from the spiritual master or is it inappropriate and a version of materially seeking distinction? (Digest 165.1)**

The desire to see the spiritual master become pleased with our efforts & services or to want to earn his approval is not inappropriate for the disciple. In the beginning stages it may even be healthy in some cases, like a child wanting the assurance of seeing the parents pleased -- provided it is with genuine service attitude rather than to increase one's feeling of self-importance.

However, as one matures in devotional service, one understands that what actually draws the attention and recognition of the spiritual master is a genuine and humble mood of service and execution of instructions. When we try to impress Guru and Krishna, they are actually not very impressed! One who is truly satisfied and confident in one's relationship with the spiritual master and Krishna is not bothered by wanting to be recognized; they find complete satisfaction in simply being in the background and enhancing the pleasure and service of the spiritual master, and seek to give the credit and recognition to others.

Sublime examples of this mood are gloriously exhibited by each of the six Goswamis of Vrndavan, and so many of Lord Caitanya's intimate associates.

This disposition is very pleasing to Guru and Krishna and actually attracts their merciful glance. Lord Caitanya Himself often demonstrated this characteristic of the Master's exceptional appreciation for a superlatively humble and affectionate devotee's qualities within His pastimes, by recognizing and giving special mercy to the most simple, humble and unnoticed devotees who were simply happy to be engaged in menial service to the Vaishnavas.

4.34.

### **19.2.9) Spiritual master accepting both strong and weak disciples**

**Srila Prabhupada was a pure devotee and a strong guru, yet we see that he accepted both strong and weak disciples. Was that a kind of lila? (Digest 14.2)**

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur also had both weak and strong disciples. Both he and Srila Prabhupada were very compassionate and wanted to extend the mercy of Lord Caitanya to whoever was willing to take it. Anyone who came forward to give up their sinful life and take up a life of devotion to Krishna, by following the four regulative principles and chanting Hare Krishna, anyone who demonstrated their sincerity in this way for a fixed period of time - both Srila Prabhupada and his guru maharaja accepted them as disciples. Those disciples who continued to strictly and faithfully adhere to instructions remained strong, but those who wavered due to some weakness of heart were not so strong, and gradually faded in their spiritual standing.

Thus, it was their compassion that compelled them to give others this chance to improve themselves, including by offering harinama diksa.

### **19.2.10) What should one do if the spiritual master falls down or turns out to be not bonafide?**

**When one thinks he has found a bona fide spiritual master and later it proves to be wrong, would it be appropriate to say that initially, or in the first place, the judgment of the disciple was wrong and thus he never got a bonafide spiritual master? (Digest 25.2)**

That may be a possibility. There are some instances when one does accept a bona fide spiritual master but later on that spiritual master may fall away from the strict standards. Narahari Sarkar, one very saintly follower of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, has written one text which describes the latter of these two situations. In either case, the aspiring devotee should just go forward on his spiritual journey, with greater wisdom, and accept the shelter of one who is a bona fide spiritual master. When one is fully sincere to attain spiritual perfection, then Krishna will bring the devotee to His bona fide representative.

### 19.3. Initiation (diksa)

#### 19.3.1) 'Purpose and the necessity of initiation', 'difference between first and second initiation', 'initiation and removal of karma', & 'purpose of Gayathri mantra'

**When you give 1st initiation you take all of your disciples Karma right, so if when you give 2nd initiation do you also take the karma that has accumulated in the time span between the two initiations or do you not take it until they are ready for the third initiation. This question has been a topic of debate also, but this time in my mind. (Digest 225.1)**

This is an interesting question -- to address this, let us first try to understand what is involved in the absolving of karma during initiation.

At the time of initiation, specifically the 1st initiation (or harinama diksha), a devotee surrenders himself at the lotus feet of Krishna, through His representative, the spiritual master: "My dear Lord Krishna, from this day, I am yours." When a disciple surrenders in this way, Krishna relieves the devotee from all their past karma, just as He promises in the Bhagavad-Gita, "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear." (BG 18.66)

Krishna is the Supreme Pure and He alone can take away the sinful reactions of someone without becoming affected, just as the sun can burn up any impurity without itself getting contaminated. But the spiritual master, as the empowered representative of Krishna, acting on His behalf and in a mood of very deep compassion, takes the sinful reactions of the disciple, and by the fire of his own intense devotional service burns up the reactions to these sins.

However, the surrender and initiation is not a matter of formal ceremony only. It calls for actual surrender of the heart, and conducting one's life in a mood of surrender from that point onwards, under the direction of Guru and Krsna. The devotee thus vows at the time of initiation to 'SIN NO MORE' - specifically by giving up the four pillars of sinful activity viz. meat-eating, intoxication, illicit sex and gambling. They also vow to regularly chant the Holy Names and sincerely follow the guidance of the spiritual master - by doing so they will be insulated from accumulating any further sins, because actions done for pleasing Krishna under the direction of scriptures & guru have no karma (BG 3.9).

Srila Prabhupada gave the example that initiation is like unplugging a fan. The idea is that one should not continue to keep sinning after initiation. That would be like plugging in the fan once again, which means the cycle of karma will continue to spin again. If a disciple thinks, "I will keep engaging in karmic and sinful activities, and my spiritual master will take the reactions, or I will chant the Holy Name and nullify the reactions", such a mentality is considered most offensive.

It is on this basis that Srila Prabhupada often expressed deep unhappiness whenever he came across so-called followers of Christianity who professed that one can go to the church every Sunday and confess their sins without ever rectifying themselves, or that one can accept Jesus Christ as their savior and carry on with their sinful ways, with the idea that Christ will suffer on the cross for their sins. Such an attitude is not at all in a loving devotional spirit, is it not? Rather it is very heinous.

The Bhagavatam also censures such a method of repeated sinning and atoning as useless like the bathing of an elephant. Have you ever observed elephants bathe? They would take a

nice, fresh bath in the lake but as soon as they return to the land, they throw dust all over their bodies. Thus, if after initiation a disciple does not gratefully and sincerely endeavor to abide by Krishna's teachings and live a pure life, they will not be able to experience the efficacy of the initiation process nor make further progress.

In short, initiation is not a sort of periodic cleansing of karmic reactions, rather it is meant to put a full-stop to all karma and embark on a life of purity and surrender to Krishna. The second initiation (or brahminical initiation) is taking another forward step by making further commitments to deepen one's purity, whereupon the disciple receives the Gayatri mantra and can formally worship Deities and so on. Thus one makes further and further spiritual advancement, moving closer to one's eternal relationship with Lord Krishna.

I hope this clarifies your doubt!

Yes it is true that the spiritual master takes all the sinful reactions/karma of a disciple immediately after the disciple's initiation.

Here is a quote from Bhagavatam that supports this:

“As Krsna takes away all the sinful reactions of a person immediately upon his surrender unto Him, similarly the external manifestation of Krsna, the representative of Krsna who acts as the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, takes all the resultant actions of the sinful life of the disciple immediately after the disciple's initiation. Thus if the disciple follows the principles instructed by the spiritual master, he remains purified and is not contaminated by the material infection. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu therefore states that the spiritual master who plays the part of Krsna's representative has to consume all the sinful reactions of his disciple.”  
(Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.21.31)

If after initiation the disciple again commits sinful activities, his spiritual master has to suffer. Below is what Srila Prabhupada said regarding this:

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**Srila Prabhupada:** He [Jesus Christ] took the sinful reactions of all the people. Therefore he suffered. He said - that is in the Bible - that he took all the sinful reactions of the people and sacrificed his life. But these Christian people have made it a law for Christ to suffer while they do all nonsense. Such great fools they are! They have let Jesus Christ make a contract for taking all their sinful reactions so they can go on with all nonsense. That is their religion. Christ was so magnanimous that he took all their sins and suffered, but that does not induce them to stop all these sins. They have not come to that sense. They have taken it very easily. "Let Lord Jesus Christ suffer, and we'll do all nonsense." Is it not?

**Bob:** It is so.

**Srila Prabhupada:** They should have been ashamed: "Lord Jesus Christ suffered for us, but we are continuing the sinful activities." He told everyone, "Thou shall not kill," but they are indulging in killing, thinking, "Lord Jesus Christ will excuse us and take all the sinful reactions." This is going on. We should be very much cautious: "For my sinful actions my spiritual master will suffer, so I'll not commit even a pinch of sinful activities." That is the duty of the disciple. After initiation, all sinful reaction is finished. Now if he again commits sinful activities, his spiritual master has to suffer. A disciple should be sympathetic and consider this. "For my sinful activities, my spiritual master will suffer." If the spiritual master is attacked by some disease, it is due to the sinful activities of others. "Don't make many disciples." But we do it because we are preaching. Never mind - let us suffer - still we shall accept them. Therefore your question was - when I suffer is it due to my past misdeeds? Was it not? That is my misdeed - that I accepted

some disciples who are nonsense. That is my misdeed.

**Bob:** This happens on occasions?

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. This is sure to happen because we are accepting so many men. It is the duty of the disciples to be cautious. "My spiritual master has saved me. I should not put him again into suffering." When the spiritual master is in suffering, Krsna saves him. Krsna thinks, "Oh, he has taken so much responsibility for delivering a fallen person." So Krsna is there. Kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati [Bg. 9.31]. ["O son of Kunti, declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes."] Because the spiritual master takes the risk on account of Krsna.

**Bob:** Your suffering is not the same kind of pain...

**Srila Prabhupada:** No, it is not due to karma. The pain is there sometimes, so that the disciples may know, "Due to our sinful activities, our spiritual master is suffering."

**Bob:** You look very well now.

**Srila Prabhupada:** I am always well ... in the sense that even if there is suffering, I know Krsna will protect me. But this suffering is not due to my sinful activities.

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After initiation, the disciple must not cause trouble for his spiritual master by committing sinful acts:

"A devotee sometimes accepts a sinful person as his disciple, and to counteract the sinful reactions he accepts from the disciple, he has to see a bad dream. Nonetheless, the spiritual master is so kind that in spite of having bad dreams due to the sinful disciple, he accepts this troublesome business for the deliverance of the victims of Kali-yuga. After initiation, therefore, a disciple should be extremely careful not to commit again any sinful act that might cause difficulties for himself and the spiritual master. Before the Deity, before the fire, before the spiritual master and before the Vaisnavas, the honest disciple promises to refrain from all sinful activity. Therefore he must not again commit sinful acts and thus create a troublesome situation." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 8.4.15)

### **Difference between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> initiation**

Within our Krsna Consciousness Movement there are two stages of initiation, each having their particular significance and function. There is a great science to their inter-relationship, as revealed to us specifically by the writings of the six gosvamis in their expanding upon the teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

In quick summary, first initiation of Hari Nama initiation can theoretically be sufficient for going back to Godhead if the devotee can come to the stage of pure and offenseless chanting. However, the added purification that comes from the chanting of the Gayatri mantra and from the strict observance of the rules and regulations involved in Deity worship are practically essential for bringing us to the stage of pure chanting.

In the sections below you will find what our devotional scriptures teach on this topic.

### **What is initiation (Diksa):**

Diksa is a compound word which is derived from the verb "diyate", "to give" and "ksiyate" to "destroy". Knowledge and liberation are given while sins are destroyed. Srila Jiva Gosvami explains diksa in his Bhakti-Sandarbha (283):

divyam jnanam yato dadyat kuryat papasya sanksayam tasmat dikseti sa prokta desikais tatva-kovidaih

"Diksa is the process by which one can awaken his transcendental knowledge and vanquish all reactions caused by sinful activity. A person expert in the study of the revealed scriptures knows this process as diksa."

### **The necessity and purpose of initiation:**

One's actual connection with Krsna is established at the time of initiation by a bona fide spiritual master:

This relationship [with Krsna] is established by connecting oneself with the bonafide spiritual master who is the direct representative of Krsna in disciplic succession. The connection with the spiritual master is called initiation. From the date of initiation by the spiritual master, the connection between Krsna and a person cultivating Krsna consciousness is established. Without initiation by a bona fide spiritual master, the actual connection with Krsna consciousness is never performed. (The Nectar of Devotion)

### **The purpose of initiation:**

It is the spiritual master who delivers the disciple from the clutches of maya by initiating him into the chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra. In this way a sleeping human being can revive his consciousness by chanting Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. In other words, the spiritual master awakens the sleeping living entity to his original consciousness so that he can worship Lord Visnu. This is the purpose of diks, or initiation. Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness. (Sri Caitanya-caritamrta Madhya-lila 9.61)

### **The requirements of initiation:**

We do not immediately initiate disciples in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. For six months, a candidate for initiation must first attend arati and classes in the sastras, practice the regulative principles and associate with other devotees. When one is actually advanced in the purascarya-vidhi, he is recommended by the local temple president for initiation. It is not that anyone can be suddenly initiated without meeting the requirements. When one is further advanced by chanting the Hare Krsna mantra sixteen rounds daily, following the regulative principles and attending classes, he receives the sacred thread (brahminical recognition) after the second six months. (Sri Caitanya-caritamrta Madhya-lila 15.108)

### **First initiation:**

For the holy name to have effect, it must be received from the spiritual master:

One has to learn about the beauty and transcendental position of the holy name of the Lord by hearing the revealed scriptures from the mouths of devotees. Nowhere else can we hear of the sweetness of the Lord's holy name.

PURPORT: It is said in the Padma Purana, atah sri-krsna-namadi na bhaved grahyam indriyaih [Cc. Madhya 17.136]. Chanting and hearing of the transcendental name of the Lord

cannot be performed by the ordinary senses. The transcendental vibration of the Lord's holy name is completely spiritual. Thus it must be received from the spiritual sources and must be chanted after having been heard from a spiritual master. One who hears the chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra must receive it from the spiritual master by aural reception. Srila Sanatana Goswami has forbidden us to hear the holy name of Krsna chanted by non-Vaisnavas, such as professional actors and singers, for it will have no effect. It is like milk touched by the lips of serpents. (Sri Caitanya-caritamrta Antya-lila 1.101)

The teachings of Sanatana Goswami and his worship of Madan Mohan Deity both represent the perfectional stage of sambanda-jnana, or that which can bring the conditioned soul to the point of understanding his relationship with God. It is this function, namely sambanda-jnana, which is manifested in all those activities which precede initiation and finally culminate in initiation.

In Hari-bhakti vilasa by Sanatana Goswami we find these preliminary activities described as the purascarya process. The word "purah" means "before" and "carya" means "activities".

Srila Prabhupada explains that we observe this injunction of Sanatana Goswami within our ISKCON Temples' program. Of course, the same should apply to all non-initiates living outside of the temples: rising early, performing mangala-arti, the worship of Tulasi (if only by reciting prayers), chanting the holy name, hearing from the scripture, offering of all foodstuffs to Krsna, etc. As far as possible, considering household circumstances, etc., these items should all be carefully observed as part of purascarya-vidhi, just to purify us in a preliminary way from the grosser contamination of material life. Vidhi means rules and regulations. Animals are not subject to such rules and regulations any more than animals can be restricted from jaywalking at a street corner; whereas a human being may be subject to a police arrest or summons. All the regulations we find in Nectar of Devotion, as well as the items mentioned above, constitute our regulative duties thus releasing us from animal like unregulated life and preparing us for initiation into the holy name.

If one wishes to perfect his initiation, he must first undergo the purascarya activities. The purascarya process is the life-force by which one is successful in chanting the mantra. Without the life-force, one cannot do anything; similarly, without the life force of purascarya vidhi, no mantra can be perfected." (Hari-bhakti-vilasa 17.47).

### **Second initiation:**

"Even though born in a brahmana family, one cannot engage in Vedic rituals without being initiated and having a sacred thread. Although born in a brahmana family, one becomes a brahmana only after initiation and the sacred thread ceremony. Unless one is initiated as a brahmana, one cannot worship the holy name properly." (Hari-bhakti-vilasa (2.3-4) and the Bhakti-sandarbha (283)

The spiritual master offers the sacred thread (brahminical initiation) to a disciple who has become competent and purified by chanting, by his own judgment:

Usually, initiation depends on the bona fide spiritual master, who directs the disciple. If he sees that a disciple has become competent and purified by the process of chanting, then he offers the sacred thread to the disciple just so that he will be recognized as one hundred percent equal with a brahmana. This is also confirmed in the Hari-bhakti-vilasa by Sri Sanatana Goswami: "As a base metal like bell metal can be changed into gold by a chemical process,

similarly any person can be changed into a brahmana by diksa-vidhana, the initiation process."

... Whether one has acquired the qualification of a brahmana depends on the judgment of the bona fide spiritual master. He bestows upon the disciple the position of a brahmana by his own judgment. When one is accepted as a brahmana in the sacred thread ceremony, under the Pancaratric system, then he is dvija, twice-born. That is confirmed by Sanatana Gosvami: dvijatvam jayate. By the process of initiation by the spiritual master, a person is accepted as a brahmana in his purified state of chanting the holy name of the Lord. He then makes further progress to become a qualified Vaisnava, which means that the brahminical qualification is already acquired. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.33.6)

To chant the holy name of the Lord, one need not depend upon other paraphernalia, for one can immediately get all the desired results of connecting or linking with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It may therefore be questioned why there is a necessity for initiation or further spiritual activities in devotional service for one who engages in the chanting of the holy name of the Lord. The answer is that although it is correct that one who fully engages in chanting the holy name need not depend upon the process of initiation, generally a devotee is addicted to many abominable material habits due to material contamination from his previous life. In order to get quick relief from all these contaminations, it is required that one engage in the worship of the Lord in the temple.

The worship of the Deity in the temple is essential to reduce one's restlessness due to the contaminations of conditional life. Thus Narada, in his pancaratrici-vidhi, and other great sages have sometimes stressed that since every conditioned soul has a bodily concept of life aimed at sense enjoyment, to restrict this sense enjoyment the rules and regulations for worshipping the Deity in the temple are essential. Srila Rupa Gosvami has described that the holy name of the Lord can be chanted by liberated souls, but almost all the souls we have to initiate are conditioned. It is advised that one chant the holy name of the Lord without offenses and according to the regulative principles, yet due to their past bad habits' they violate these rules and regulations. Thus the regulative principles for worship of the Deity are also simultaneously essential. (CC Adi 7.76)

The second initiation mantra, or gayatri mantra, when properly chanted serves to propel the chanter toward submission to Guru and Krsna. Absent material attachment and material mental conceptions of the holy name, ushered on by the process of submission to the Transcendence, the fullest effect of Hari Nama initiation can be experienced.

### **The purpose of the Gayatri mantra:**

[In the Srimad-Bhagavatam] Vyasadeva purposefully invokes the Gayatri mantra: dhimahi. This Gayatri mantra is especially meant for spiritually advanced people. When one attains success in chanting Gayatri mantra, he can enter into the transcendental position of the Lord. First, however, one must acquire the brahminical qualities and become perfectly situated in the mode of goodness in order to chant the Gayatri mantra successfully. From that point one can begin to transcendently realize the Lord, His name, His fame, His qualities, etc. (Teachings of Lord Caitanya)

### 19.3.2) Requirements for initiation

**I wish to know when a person is eligible to take diksha (spiritual initiation). I am chanting sixteen rounds and following the four regulative principles. What more conditions are to be followed before taking diksha - initiation. Please specify in detail. (Digest 52.1)**

Srila Prabhupada established a bare minimum general condition within ISKCON that if one is chanting sixteen rounds daily and following the regulative principles under the guidance of a spiritual master for six months to a year, they can be considered for initiation. Since that time, ISKCON has established further criteria for receiving diksa. For further details about these regulations, please refer to (Digest 10 Q2), to be found on the Potomac Temple webpage, and write directly to the GBC Secretary requesting a copy of the regulations which are the formal standards within ISKCON for receiving diksa.

It is an approved vaishnava principle and is welcome that an aspiring disciple approach a bonafide spiritual master, take shelter of his lotus feet and request initiation, as recommended by Krishna in Bg 4.34.

The process of making submissive inquiries & receiving instructions and the rendering of service lays the foundation for a relationship of strong faith between the spiritual master and the candidate for initiation. During this time the devotee is also encouraged to understand the philosophy through study of Srila Prabhupada's books such as Bhagavad-gita, Nectar of Instruction etc, and develop a deeper understanding of the import of diksa and spiritual master and disciple relationship.

There is a book published by BBT, called "The Spiritual Master and The Disciple" which describes in great detail about the qualities and duties of a spiritual master and also that of the disciple. When opportunity arises, you could study this book to gain deeper understanding of the spiritual master and disciple relationship.

### 19.3.3) 'Importance of diksa ceremony' & 'accepting another spiritual master when the spiritual master aspired for' left his body'

**I had taken shelter from a spiritual master and he from his pure lips mentioned, "I can initiate you anytime," and later confirmed that he will be initiating me in the coming initiation function. However, later by Krishna's mercy the spiritual master left his body. As I have already accepted him as my spiritual master, is it still necessary for me to get initiated from a different spiritual master. Isn't the promise from the spiritual master indicative that I am already his initiated disciple? (Digest 16.4)**

The confirmation of the spiritual master most certainly affirms his acceptance of you as his disciple, and so also have you accepted him as your spiritual master in your heart. However, although what happened is unfortunate, according to the teachings of our scriptures and previous acaryas, we learn that the formal diksa ceremony is an essential and vital event or milestone in spiritual life for a devotee. Initiation or acceptance and taking shelter of a spiritual master is essentially a matter of the heart; however, the formal ceremony of initiation and formal acceptance of a spiritual master is not unimportant either.

It is through the diksa ceremony that a devotee is formally connected to the guru-

parampara and ultimately to Krishna. Therefore the scriptural recommendation is that one must accept the formal diksa initiation from a bona fide spiritual master through whom one is connected to the parampara. Taking initiation from another spiritual master will not hamper your feelings of devotion and gratitude to the other spiritual master, nor will it nullify that acceptance of the heart; rather the shelter and guidance of your diksa-guru should only support and strengthen your connection with the former relationship.

#### **19.3.4) Keeping the vow of chanting 16 rounds under all circumstances**

**Say a devotee after getting initiated, is unable to do his 16 rounds of chanting on a day or few days, due to illness or anything of that sort, it is like breaking the vows, right? So how and what the devotee should do in such situation? (Digest 212.1)**

The power to execute or fulfill an instruction of the spiritual master is within the instruction itself, when we accept it with faith and submission. Srila Prabhupada enjoined that initiated devotees must chant minimum 16 rounds everyday without fail, and within this order is invested the empowerment to do it; he would not have asked us to do it if it were not possible!

By taking a solemn vow before the spiritual master and vaishnavas and Deities, we receive also the empowerment to able to keep that vow, under all circumstances, barring very rare, exceptional emergencies. A disciple should therefore be determined to keep their vow at all costs, with the conviction that the ability to fulfill is latent within that commitment - we simply have to be willing to do it.

This means making all necessary efforts to make it happen - such as giving one's chanting the first priority in the day, dedicating a specific time early in the day for this most important activity before other duties demand our attention, arranging our life in such a way that this is made possible. It also means keeping good association, studying scriptures and so on to ensure that the fire of our determination to chant nicely is maintained healthy and strong. Thus, even when minor challenges arise in day-to-day life, such as mild illnesses or other exigencies, we would be able to withstand by virtue of devotional strength. In short, the commitment to chant 16 rounds involves ongoing effort and ensuring that we don't create circumstances for ourselves where we cannot fulfill our commitments.

If after all sincere efforts on our part, due to some unavoidable situation or emergency, one is unable to complete the prescribed chanting on an occasional day, then one should feel genuinely repentant and make up for those rounds the very next day or at the earliest opportunity - this was the recommendation Srila Prabhupada gave.

The caution, however, is that this should not be made a common practice, a rationale ushering weakness within our internal resolve to fulfill vows. A tendency is commonly there in conditioned souls to relax one's commitments and take solemn vows more lightly over a period of time; by genuinely regretting occasional lapses and taking the chanting very seriously, this tendency can be curbed and offenses of negligence can be avoided.

**19.3.5) 'Is it allowed: considering Srila Prabhupada as one's spiritual master and not accepting diksa from others?' & 'Siksa and Diksa gurus'**

**Let us assume hypothetically that someone accepts the Bhagavad Gita of Srila Prabhupada, and decides to follow and accept that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then he realizes his inability to choose a guru who is a pure devotee. If he then resorts to simply following Prabhupada, but accepting that he is not a diksha disciple of Prabhupada but a siksha disciple, can he go back to Godhead by following the instructions of Prabhupada and chanting?**

**Didn't some acharyas simply take siksha initiation seriously and not the diksha initiation? (Digest 178.1)**

If we want to follow the instructions of Srila Prabhupada, one of his often repeated and clear instructions is the necessity for everyone of us to accept a bona fide spiritual master and serve such a spiritual master with surrender and submission. Those who faithfully accept this instruction of Prabhupada will be empowered to find and take shelter of a pure spiritual master and follower of Srila Prabhupada, since within the instruction of the guru is the ability to carry it out. Srila Prabhupada would not have given this unequivocal direction if this was not possible.

Taking diksa or spiritual initiation formally establishes one's relationship with the disciplic succession and Krishna. This is not dispensible; rather the scriptures state it as mandatory. Tad-vijnanartham sa gurum eva abhigacchet [Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.12]. The word 'abhigacchet' is used in the sense of 'compulsory' or 'imperative'. There are few rare exceptional cases such as that of Sukadeva Gosvami, who was liberated from birth and did not have to undergo any purificatory ceremonies. But for those of us who are not of the caliber of Sukadeva Gosvami, initiation is necessary for purification from our past samskaras and sinful reactions, to help us advance on the spiritual path without obstacles.

As recommended in BG 4.34, Surrender and service are to be offered to a personal spiritual master who is purely and transparently representing the disciplic succession and from whom we can hear and inquire of the practical applications of Srila Prabhupada's teachings specific to our lives. Through this personal relationship we are able to factually access the teachings of previous acharyas most effectively. If this were not a necessary principle, one might as well insist that we can override Prabhupada and accept Vyasadeva or Narada as the siksa guru and directly access their teachings!

There are examples in our disciplic succession of acharyas having very special relationship and deriving immense inspiration from a siksha guru or a previous acharya, but not circumventing or neglecting the diksha relationship. Rather, it is under the approval and direction of the diksha guru that one takes instructions from a particular siksha guru, as demonstrated in those examples in our disciplic succession.

The qualifications and duties of a bona fide spiritual master are adequately described by Srila Prabhupada in his books, and it is the duty of a sincere devotee to assimilate them and search out such a bona fide spiritual master. For such a sincere seeker, Krishna always sends His bona fide representative. By Krishna's plan & desire, pure devotee spiritual masters are always present in this material world at any point in time; if not, it would defeat one of the main purposes of Krishna creating this material world, which is to give us a chance for rectification and reestablish our connection with the Lord through the association of His pure devotees.

## 19.4. Spiritual master's mercy and instructions

### 19.4.1) Recognizing, receiving and attracting the mercy of the spiritual master

**How to understand the mercy which descends from Sri Guru? How can/do we recognize such mercy? Must we endeavor to receive such mercy? (Digest 189.1)**

To address this question, I would like to quote this very nice purport from Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya Lila 19.152 which talks about the word Guru- prasada or spiritual master's mercy.

"The word guru-prasada indicates that the spiritual master is very merciful in bestowing the boon of devotional service upon the disciple. That is the best possible gift the spiritual master has to offer. Those with a background of pious life are eligible to receive life's supreme benefit, and to bestow this benefit, the Supreme Personality of Godhead sends His representative to impart His mercy. Endowed with the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the spiritual master distributes the mercy to those who are elevated and pious. Thus the spiritual master trains his disciples to render devotional service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is called guru-krpa. It is krsna-prasada, Krsna's mercy that He sends a bona fide spiritual master to the deserving disciple. By the mercy of Krsna, one meets the bona fide spiritual master, and by the mercy of the spiritual master, the disciple is fully trained in the devotional service of the Lord. Bhakti-latā-bija means "the seed of devotional service." Everything has an original cause, or seed. For any idea, program, plan or device, there is first of all the contemplation of the plan, and that is called the bija, or seed. The methods, rules and regulations by which one is perfectly trained in devotional service constitute the bhakti-lata-bija, or seed of devotional service. This bhakti-lata-bija is received from the spiritual master by the grace of Krsna. If one is not fortunate enough to receive the bhakti-lata-bija from the spiritual master, he instead cultivates such seeds as karma-bija, jnana-bija, or political, social or philanthropic bijas. However, the bhakti-lata-bija is different from these other bijas. The bhakti-lata-bija can be received only through the mercy of the spiritual master. Therefore one has to satisfy the spiritual master to get the bhakti-lata-bija (yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado). The bhakti-latā-bija is the origin of devotional service. Unless one satisfies the spiritual master, he gets the bija, or root cause, of karma, jnana and yoga without the benefit of devotional service. But one who is faithful to his spiritual master gets the bhakti-latā-bija. This bhakti-latā-bija is received when one is initiated by the bona fide spiritual master. After receiving the spiritual master's mercy, one must repeat his instructions, and this is called sravana-kirtana-hearing and chanting. One who has not properly heard from the spiritual master or who does not follow the regulative principles is not fit for chanting (kirtana). This is explained in the Bhagavad-gītā (2.41): vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana. One who has not listened carefully to the instructions of the spiritual master is unfit for chanting or for preaching the cult of devotional service. One has to water the bhakti-latā-bija after receiving instructions from the spiritual master."

Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura states in the Gurb astaka prayers:

yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado  
yasyaprasadan na gatir kuto 'pi

"By the mercy of the spiritual master one is benedicted by the mercy of Krsna. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement."

The spiritual master is compared to a cloud. Just as there are torrents of rain from a cloud, so the spiritual master brings mercy from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A cloud takes water from the sea. It doesn't have its own water but takes water from the sea. Similarly, the spiritual master brings mercy from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He has no mercy of his own, but he carries the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is the qualification of the spiritual master.

So how can we practically understand and recognize spiritual master's mercy in our lives?

Actually the moment we contact a bona fide spiritual master the worst is over and we begin to experience reciprocation from Krsna in the form of desire to become purified, give up sinful life and to become free from miseries. This is the seed that we have received.

Here is a wonderful example from our scriptures of how Narada Muni received that seed - In his former life as the son of a maidservant, Narada Muni received the association of the sages, or the bhakti-vedantas, while they were in residence at the inn where he and his mother were residing. He had the opportunity to serve those bhaktivedantas, and through that service rendered -- the way that Narada conducted himself, they were pleased with him. He says to Vyasa, 'They were so pleased with me that they benedicted me with an eagerness for hearing their messages.' And Prabhupada's comment is that that is the gift -- very significant -- that's the gift of the pure devotee to those who associate with the pure devotee; it is the gift of attraction for messages of transcendence, or Krsna-katha. So many other things may also be what one thinks of when one is getting some merciful association of a saintly personality, but really that's the transcendental gift: attraction for Krsna-katha. Because it is through that attraction for the messages of transcendence that one comes fully to the transcendental position."

This naturally brings us to your next question - how can we attract spiritual master's mercy or in your own words must we endeavor to receive such mercy?

We can attract spiritual master's mercy by our eagerness to hear, submissive inquiries, service attitude, warm regard we carry for him and by our gentleness.

What does eagerness to hear really mean? One cannot really be eager to hear if one is full of preconceptions and attachments. We have to want to hear to get free of all preconceptions and when we hear like this all our preconceptions will go and this is what submissive hearing really means. And the proof that our conceptions have been cleared is that our actions, speech etc will change. These preconceptions come from our millions of lifetimes of conditioning. Spiritual master becomes very happy when we are willing to change our conceptions.

Gentleness means very gratefully and happily receiving whatever the spiritual master gives. This quality of gentleness attracts the blessings of the spiritual master. Our qualification to receive blessings is having very warm regard for the person who is representing the Absolute Truth. Warm regard means that, "I am willing to give up my misconceptions and accept the conceptions of the spiritual master." One small blessing of a saintly personality cannot match years and years of self study!

Actually just by hearing one Srimad Bhagavatam class we can give up so many misconceptions when we hear submissively. For e.g. Srila Prabhupada met his spiritual master Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur only once but all his misconceptions were gone in one

meeting.

Spiritual master's mercy is always there in our lives but in order to perceive it we have to make our hearts a suitable receptacle to hold that mercy. Just like when rain falls it falls everywhere but if one is under the umbrella and he will still stay dry. Similarly in order to get wet and soaked by the mercy of the spiritual master we have to receive it with an open heart and remove the umbrella in the form of our preconceptions, attachments, aversions etc.

#### **19.4.2) Empowerment in the instructions of the spiritual master**

**Please elaborate the statement "Within the instruction of the spiritual master lies the empowerment to carry out the instruction". (Digest 76.3)**

The bonafide spiritual master is a confidential servant of Krishna. Whatever instruction he gives to his disciple to progress in Krishna Consciousness, Krishna protects the words of His confidential devotee. The spiritual master is expert in his disciples, after evaluating the platform of life they are situated on and their nature, in Krishna's service. As he is very well aware of the psycho-physical condition of his disciples even better than they understand themselves, he instructs the individuals to engage in do-able services to make progress in Krishna consciousness. The spiritual master, while giving instructions, also blesses that particular devotee to carry out that particular instruction. Since he is very very dear to Lord Sri Krishna, He sanctions this personal blessing. Therefore it is said that within the instructions of the spiritual master lies the power to execute them.

See SB 10.2.30 for one specific scriptural reference in this regard.

#### **19.4.3) Instructions vs. recommendations of the Spiritual Master**

**Is there a difference between a recommendation and an instruction from a spiritual master to the disciple? If so, then how does one deal with the recommendation in a manner that is conducive to the spirit of surrender to the spiritual master? (Digest 85.1)**

An instruction is to be taken as one's life and soul, inseparable from one's life's breath. A recommendation is to be very seriously factored into making a decision on a particular matter being contemplated. There may be multiple additional factors that require review when contemplating a final decision on some issue, and knowing this to be the case, the spiritual master may make a recommendation, ie. point towards a path to follow in a certain direction.

It may also be that the spiritual master, considering the level of faith and attendant surrender of the disciple, knows that providing a firm instruction on a particular matter might not be followed by the disciple. Were this to happen, it would be quite detrimental to the disciple.

The main responsibility with re. to receiving 'recommendations', then, is to very honestly, seriously take the recommendation to heart, contemplate the message, its import, its personal applicability and its unique and particular value. One's spiritual master 'knows the pulse of the disciple', and this very personal consideration has been taken when a recommendation is given. If one's heart is open to the spiritual master's shelter, this will very naturally take place. If there is some interference within one's heart to taking guru's shelter (eg. an independent spirit, pride, strong material desire, a slackened state of submission, overall complacency in one's spiritual

life, etc), an attentive devotee will feel resistance within the heart even to treasure the recommendation on its face value. That means that there is \*ANOTHER\* problem besides the particular 'recommendation' which is being contemplated. That problem needs to be addressed at once!!!

**19.4.4) Can a disciple have a dialouge with the spiritual master without offending him, if the instruction/recommendation is not the disciple's propensity?**

**What if the SM gives an instruction or recommendation that is not the disciple's propensity? Should the disciple accept this and try his/her best or is it OK to have a dialog on this without any offenses? (Digest 85.2)**

Dialogue without a challenging attitude is always welcome. The spirit of trust, submission, faith, love etc behind the dialogue constitutes the presence or absence of offense.

***19.5. Taking shelter of a bonafide spiritual master***

**19.5.1) Necessity of having a spiritual master**

**When and how does a devotee feel the necessity of a spiritual master? (Digest 14.1)**

In the purport to the verse where Arjuna accepts Krishna as His spiritual master (Bg. 2.7), Srila Prabhupada describes how in this material world, there is perplexity in every step and this behooves one to approach a spiritual master. Arjuna was in total despair and confusion about his duty and what is best for him. Similarly, by arrangement, the conditioned soul repeatedly finds himself/herself in the midst of perplexities, bewilderment and despondency. Srila Prabhupada also explains the culmination of all these repeated fleeting problems are the insurmountable problems of repeated birth and death. When one wants to find ultimate solution to all these problems, and wants to inquire into the subject of the Absolute Truth, when one wants guidance in knowing and achieving the goal of life --- then one needs to seek a spiritual master.

**19.5.2 and 19.5.3) How to identify and approach a self-realized spiritual master?**

**How to recognize a self-realized spiritual master and how to approach for spiritual initiation? (Digest 10.1)**

**It is said in Bhagavad-Gita that we must approach a bonafide spiritual master who has seen the truth. Now how is it possible for a candidate to identify the person who has seen the truth? (Digest 10.2)**

One of the primary characteristics of a bona fide spiritual master is that such a guru himself belongs to a bona fide disciplic succession, beginning from the Supreme Lord Himself, and is authorized to perform the service of a spiritual master.

The intelligence of a conditioned living entity is subject to defects. A bona fide guru would never present any invented, self-made defective teachings, but will always simply repeat what the scriptures and Supreme Lord say, without any modification or distortion. Only these teaching can be considered flawless, and they constitute the teachings of a bona fide spiritual master.

When asked how to recognize which of the various translations of Bhagavad-gita was best to read, Srila Prabhupada replied, 'Who do you think will represent the Bhagavad-gita better - one who is cent percent devoted to Krishna, and who is always speaking about and glorifying Krishna, or one who lectures on Bhagavad-gita for two hours and never mentions the name of Krishna?' Thus, one who knows the science of Krishna and is devoted to Krishna is the topmost guru.

Most importantly, they never claim to be God themselves. Also they themselves are strict followers of sastra and guide their followers on the path of liberation from material attachment.

Your specific question addresses the symptoms of a self-realized soul. This is addressed directly in both Bhagavad-gita and in Srimad Bhagavatam. For some sample references see BG 2.54-58, 14.21-26, and 7.28, and SB. 4.22.20-14, and 27-28. There are many such references in Srimad Bhagavatam.

You also asked how to approach a spiritual master for initiation. Bhagavad-gita (4.34) describes the process of approaching the spiritual master very clearly. One should surrender to him with submission, render humble service to him, and inquire about spiritual topics. Through the medium of submissive inquiry and service, one can develop a meaningful relationship with a particular spiritual master, and by this same process one can also become gradually eligible to receive spiritual initiation. (For further references on this topic, there is a book published by BBT, "The Spiritual Master and The Disciple" which describes in great detail about the qualities and duties of a spiritual master and disciple.)

One has to directly request the spiritual master to accept one as a disciple. This direct request is best done after some mutual understanding and confidence are established in the relationship.

#### **19.5.4) How to "choose" a spiritual master?**

**I am coming to realize that a ship without a captain can have no direction and could get lost; in the same way I'm constantly thinking of choosing a Guru to help me understand and lead my life in the proper guided direction. How to make this difficult choice with so many great learned spiritual teachers (Gurus) out there? (Digest 223.1)**

It is essential for a prospective disciple to gain a clear, scripturally-based understanding of the qualifications and duties of a guru, as well as that of a disciple. We have briefly discussed the characteristics by which one can ascertain a bona fide spiritual master in Digest 10 (Q 100, 101 <http://www.romapadaswami.com/Inquiries>). "The Spiritual Master and The Disciple", a BBT publication, gives a detailed compilation from Prabhupada's writings on this subject - you may find this book beneficial. It is also available in electronic form on Vedabase.

Before making the decision of accepting a particular spiritual master, it is the duty of the aspiring disciple to carefully examine and ascertain whether one can actually surrender to such a spiritual master and follow him. Thus, in addition to preparing yourself by seeking a basic scriptural understanding on this subject, one should also seek opportunities to regularly associate

with an advanced devotee or, if possible, one who is an authorized spiritual master --- hear from them, and simultaneously observe their nature and qualities in the light of the scriptural indications mentioned in the scriptures. This builds confidence and trust in how the devotee is purely and faithfully representing the disciplic succession.

When presenting one's concerns or doubts before a prospective spiritual master, one should examine whether one's doubts can in fact be dispelled. See SB 11.3.21. Also Tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhighacchet samit-pani srotriyam brahma-nistham [MU 1.2.12].

Likewise, it is also the duty of the spiritual master to test the disciple in turn to ensure they are sincere and eligible to receive confidential spiritual knowledge. Establishing a relationship based on service and inquiry (as indicated in BG 4.34) before initiation is important for this mutual confidence to grow and strengthen. Thus, generally, in most cases, choosing or accepting a spiritual master is not an instantaneous affair, but a carefully deliberated decision.

Choosing a spiritual master is quite different from a mundane exercise of 'choosing' some physical article or a relationship in this material world based on the mind's likes and dislikes. Going by personal appeal or by some superficial criteria such as popular acclaim or some other external traits, or making comparisons --- these are likely to be misleading. Rather, one must look for the symptoms of a self-realized soul manifesting in the person of such a spiritual master, in the light of scriptural directions as stated above.

In the course of this process, the most important criterion on the part of the aspiring disciple is to nurture and strengthen their own internal convictions, sincerity and commitment for spiritual life.

If the disciple harbors ulterior motives for some temporary, material benefits, then one is likely to be misled in the search for a guru. Therefore one should progressively cultivate one's own sincerity of purpose in seeking a bona fide spiritual master competent to guide one to ultimate spiritual perfection. (jijnasuh shreya uttamam SB 11.3.21).

When the disciple's heart is ready and prepared in this way, Lord Krishna reciprocates with such sincerity and prayers by sending the bona fide spiritual master into the devotee's life. It will become amply clear who one's spiritual master is at that time and the earnest disciple will be able to readily recognize and thus proceed to solidify that relationship as described above.

#### 19.5.5) 'Knowledge leads us to seek the shelter of guru' & 'vartmapradarsaka guru'

**"While going through Srimad Bhagavatam, in Canto 11 Chapter 7.19-21, it is revealed that one can become his own guru and experience Krishna's full potencies. This is contradicting to what Krishna says in BG 4.2, which states that one must learn this knowledge from bonafide spiritual master coming in the line of disciplic succession."**

**"My question is Does Krishna approve both or only the process mentioned in BG 4.2? If He approves the former, where is the question of bogus gurus since every one can become his own guru, as per scriptural injunctions?" (Digest 101.1)**

To address your question, let us first refer to two short statements made in the purports to these verses.

In the [purport to #20](#), we find-

"Srla Jiva Gosvami states in this connection, gurv-anusarane pravartaka ity arthah: the knowledge acquired by one's own perception and intelligence leads one to appreciate the value of

the representative of Lord Krsna. The word sreyas in this verse indicates that one can advance in life through one's own intelligence. By good association one should gradually come to understand one's eternal position as servant of Krsna, and then one becomes very eager to live in the company of other enlightened persons."

In the [purport to #21](#), we find-

"A spiritual master becomes bona fide by his full surrender to his spiritual master; but as explained in this chapter, one may also act as his own guru. This means that an intelligent and perceptive person can understand the nature of this world and his own limitations. Such a person then becomes very much inclined to associate with the pure devotees of the Lord and to receive the mercy of those who are advanced in Krsna consciousness."

The emphasis here is that one stage or one level of intelligence, or guru-like direction, can come from one's own efforts in the matter of perception and discrimination (which is a function of intelligence). What is that guru-like attainment? "This world is limited, and therefore not providing actual shelter. However, as revealed in scriptures and confirmed by my experience, there is a power and an intelligence beyond this machine of the material energy. Let me seek the shelter of one of his representatives, or a tattva-darshi, who can bring me to His lotus feet!"

This is a vartmapradarsaka-guru function, one of the categories of guru, viz one who shows one the path of devotion. See [Cc Madhya 8.128](#).

Receiving direction to approach Krishna and to know Him in fullness, as described in [BG 4.2](#) or in [4.34](#), is the outcome of the process described in [SB 11.7.19-21](#).

One type of guru (as Krishna is describing to Uddhava in this Canto 11 reference) leads one to a 2nd type or category of guru (the category which Krishna describes to Arjuna in Ch 4 of BG).

The vartmapradarsaka guru instructs us that we must take shelter of the type of guru mentioned in [BG 4.2](#).

#### **19.5.6) Qualifications and training needed for completely surrendering to a spiritual master**

**What sort of heart and qualification required to completely surrender to a Spiritual master? What is the kind of regular training needed so that I can surrender to a spiritual master? Please answer for the benefit of me and to people who would like to surrender. (Digest 2.14)**

Krsna describes in Bhagavad Gita how one should approach a realized spiritual master (Bg 4.34). He indicates three components: submission, inquiry and service. We should approach the spiritual master with all humility, hear from him submissively and inquire from him to get a clear understanding about the spiritual science. Inquiring alone is not sufficient, but one must also render service to the spiritual master according to what one has heard and please him. One should be prepared to render menial service to the spiritual master and follow his instructions.

If one is very sincere to know Krishna, He will send His mercy in the form of a representative, to provide exactly the kind of spiritual upliftment the soul requires.

**19.5.7) Why are some people unable to approach a bonafide spiritual master?**

**Why an aspirant is unable to approach Lord Krishna or his representative or a Sadhu or obtain a spiritual master even after they have spent time for the last 60 years of its life? This person is totally materially inclined, but occasionally turn to the Lord without any desires wholeheartedly. (Digest 2.13)**

It is said that the living entities are wandering in the universe in different species of life, and out of those only a fortunate soul can receive the seed of bhakti by the grace of Krsna and Guru. Especially so in this age of Kali, where people in general are unfortunate and easily misguided, and where pure representatives of the Lord are so few, it is very rare to come in contact with a genuine spiritual master! It requires a sincere desire and genuine endeavor on our part to find a bona fide guru, and along with our endeavor it also requires the mercy of the Lord.

## 20. Spiritual practices and advancement

### 20.1. Fasting

#### 20.1.1) 'Ekadasi fasting: rules' & 'who can fast on Ekadasi?'

**What are the rules for Ekadasi fast? Can children and unmarried girls also observe this fast? How should one fast - is it completely fasting, even from water, or in some other way. Please explain. (Digest 31.4)**

Ekadasi is a very auspicious day, and is called Hari-vasa or the day for remembering Lord Hari (or Krishna). Most important on this day is to increase one's spiritual activities, such as increasing ones' chanting of God's holy name, and discussing Krishna katha. On the side of restraint, one should minimize as much as possible one's eating and sleeping and other mundane engagements.

Ekadasi fast requires that one minimally refrains from grains and beans, strictly. It is very good if one can observe full fasting, even from water, until the daybreak hours of the next day (there are details for this timing, for which you can consult your nearest ISKCON temple to find out the local timings); however, those who are unable to observe a full fast can take water, or fruits, etc., in different gradations of fasting, but they must strictly refrain from grains and beans. Those who eat grains and beans on Ekadasi are considered to be eating sin, because Sin Personified resides in grains on that day. Overall, the general principle of Ekadasi fast is to reduce our normal level of eating, because such determined performance of austerities on the auspicious Ekadasi day helps us to control our senses, increases our determination for devotional service, and quickly purifies our hearts. Such devotional austerities are very pleasing to Krishna.

Everyone, including children and unmarried girls can, and in fact are recommended to, observe Ekadasi. Even if they are unable to fast completely, they should fast from grains and beans, and engage in increased devotional activities on that day.

[Editor's Note: For more details please refer to the article on [Ekadasi](#)]

#### 20.1.2) Reason for breaking Ekadasi fast at a particular time

**Stories abound on the origin of the Ekadasi day. Even more stories are told on the benefits and warnings given for breaking this fast. My question is why we break fast on the Dwadasi at a particular time and what might be the 'result' of breaking ones fast after the allotted time has passed, say if you are traveling or something like that or have just simply forgotten to break fast at the appropriate time. (Digest 3.7)**

In the stage of regulative sadhana bhakti, several do's and do not's are prescribed. One such set of rules applies to the Ekadasi vrata, and it is said that to get the full benefit of observing the fast, the fast has to be broken within the prescribed time; if not, the benefit of fasting would be minimized. While it is certainly important for us to follow these rules as meticulously as

possible, we have to keep in mind that the rules are not the be-all and end-all. The higher prerogative is the mood of devotion in pleasing the Supreme Lord. We endeavor to follow the rules meticulously to please the Lord. All rules are servants of this one rule.

## *20.2. General questions: Spiritual practices and advancement*

### *20.2.1) 'Krishna consciousness is for everyone' & 'having difficulties following certain devotional practices'*

**I have been a devotee, but my brother convinced me that Krishna consciousness was for very advanced people and that ordinary persons like me would take a very long time and will need to sacrifice a lot before becoming Krishna conscious. Also I have very little taste for chanting, find it very difficult to get up early in the mornings and am more of a late night person and rarely get to associate with devotees. Yet there is a deep yearning in me to decorate the temple, eat prasadam and do things that are colorful. I keep falling in and out of Krishna consciousness, but what about my dream? (Digest 16.2)**

Krishna consciousness is not just for a special elite group nor just for very advanced people. On the contrary, it is open for all and in fact it is THE process by which even the most fallen, most conditioned people of this Age of Kali can be saved. Therefore, it is they who need Krishna consciousness most, because any other process is too difficult in this age. Certainly those who are greatly advanced will take to devotional service with great relish, but even for the beginners, even for the 'ordinary' people or even the most sinful, fallen people, devotional service is very easily and joyfully performed. It is both the means and the end.

It is true that rising early in the morning is very important and helpful for practicing devotion. However, if one has difficulty in rising early or in doing any particular activity of devotional service, that does not bar one from being eligible to take up devotional service. You can still perform those activities that you are enthusiastic and able to do. Meanwhile you can keep trying to improve in those areas that are difficult also. Gradually by practice and purification, these will become easier. Similarly, chanting is the most important activity of devotional life; even if you do not have taste for it, by continuing to chant, and by continuing to associate with devotees whenever possible, hearing Krishna-katha, decorating the temple and other such services, you will gradually develop a taste for chanting.

The whole point is to always remember Krishna and never forget Him. All other rules like rising early etc., are to enable us to do this one thing. We are all parts and parcels of Krishna and our 'dharma' or constitutional position is to serve Him according to our capacity. From whatever position we are in, elevated or not, we can begin serving Krishna. We can worship Him with our occupation and dovetail whatever propensities we have in serving Him. Krishna says, whatever you do, you do for Me, whatever you eat, eat for Me, etc. By such a devotional attitude of offering whatever we have for Krishna's happiness, Krishna is very easily pleased, and gradually we become blessed and qualified to offer better service to Him.

### 20.2.2) Best method of surrender to Lord Krishna

**Please also explain what is the best method of surrender to Lord Krishna, so that a devotee can become free from his sins at the earliest and engage himself in the service of the Lord with full determination. (Digest 53.1a)**

As you have rightly pointed out, one cannot engage in devotional service with full determination unless one is freed from sins. (Bg. 7.28) Yet the best process for getting relieved from sinful reactions, and tendencies, is devotional service! The process of surrender resolves this 'chicken or egg logic'. Even if one is not yet freed from all sinful reactions, one should unhesitatingly accept Krishna as the supreme savior of all living entities. If one thus surrenders to Him with faith and love, saying: "My dear Lord Krishna, from this day I am Yours," then that devotee is absolved of all past karmic reactions.

Our acharyas have identified the following six items as the specific characteristics of the above said mood of surrender. The six-fold process of saranagati constitutes: (1) becoming completely humble; (2) dedication of one's self, body, mind and words and all one possesses to the Lord's service; (3) accepting those acts favorable to pure devotion; (4) rejecting anything which is adverse to pure devotion; (5) having complete faith that Krsna will surely protect me and (6) seeing Krishna as one's sole maintainer. It should be noted here that surrender is an ongoing process, not an event that happens in a moment. It is accomplished by a mental culture and continuous practice of living our day-to-day lives in these six ways of saranagati (Cf. Bhagavad-gita As It Is Text 18.66 purport)

All this is best accomplished by taking shelter of an unalloyed devotee of Krishna, a bona fide spiritual master and acting under their instruction. Our surrender to Krishna can be best expressed through our surrender to His instructions coming through His representatives, and by firmly acting under their guidance we become free from sinful propensities and attain full determination for devotional service.

### 20.2.3) 'Devotee as a living offering to the Lord'

**I recently heard a lecture on the Bhagavad-Gita, Chapter 9 texts 26-34. The verses speak about offerings to Krishna, how we should make our offerings with genuine love and devotion.**

**In the Dharma book published by the BBT, Chapter 8 page 59 it says: "A spiritually advanced Krishna conscious person sees all moving and non-moving things, but he does not exactly see their forms. Rather, wherever he looks he sees the manifestation of His worshipable Lord."**

**My question is: If a person like the one described above is able to see Krishna in every moving and non-moving things, is this person a living offering to the Lord? (Digest 67.1)**

Yes, one could say that such person is a living offering to the Lord. The advanced devotees dedicate all their life energy and their very selves to Krishna.

Krishna's multifarious energies are broadly divided into three categories - internal energy, external energy and marginal energy. The living entities are described as superior to dull matter,

and are marginal in nature, i.e. in between material energy and the Lord's internal energy; the Lord's marginal energy, jiva souls, are capable of choosing either the spiritual energy or the material energy to associate with and thus identify with (see Bg 7.5). The self-realized souls understand that the material energy belongs to Krishna and thus they try to engage whatever they come in contact with in His service. Beyond that, they understand that even their own body, mind, words, all their relationships, and even their very soul do not belong to them but are Krishna's energy. Thus they offer their very \*selves\* to Him. This is called atma-nivedana, or total self surrender.

#### **20.2.4) 'Gradual elevation in Krishna consciousness' & 'role of patience in devotional service'**

**Although I have been trying to practice Krishna Consciousness for about three years, I still find it difficult to control my senses. It is often really very frustrating. Shall I tell myself that there is so much dirt accumulated in my mind and therefore I have to be patient, or what else do I need to do? (Digest 16.1)**

Devotional service is very powerful and purifying, but in one sense it is also a gradual process, at least for most conditioned souls. Due to our long association with material energy, 'from time immemorial', we are deeply conditioned; or as you have expressed, 'so much dirt is accumulated', and it may take time, just as someone suffering from some chronic illness takes time to fully recover, even when treated with the right, potent medicine in proper doses.

Patience is a very essential quality, therefore, that an aspiring devotee should cultivate. However, while one has to be patient to achieve the results, "patience" should not become "slackness" in applying the science of bhakti or the rules and regulations of devotional life. In following the rules, we have to be very enthusiastic and diligent, but if the senses are still disturbing, we should tolerate the disturbances and remain patient, with the faith that enthusiastic practice of bhakti will destroy all dirty things of the heart in due course of time, however long it may take (NOI, Text 1).

Here is another important consideration: the bhakti process is indeed devotional, and we need to seek the mercy of the Supreme Lord. In other words, it is not by our endeavor alone, by trying with all our might, that we can accomplish something in devotional service, such as the attempt to control the senses. Rather, it is possible by the mercy of guru and Krishna. Effort is necessary, but insufficient without utter dependence on the grace of Krishna. When Krishna sees a devotee's full-hearted devotional effort, He will come and sit in the heart of the devotee and personally cleanse it of all contamination! (Cf. SB 1.2.17-20) Rather than feeling frustrated, we should take impetus from recognizing our inadequacies, and strive with greater determination to take shelter of Krishna.

#### **20.2.5) 'Lord Krishna's help to devotees' & 'why doesn't Krishna help us control the senses immediately?'**

**Once a person is fortunate enough to hear about Lord Krishna and starts on spiritual path, does God help him to advance rapidly? I find many cases were people wishing to advance on spiritual path are suffering from their inability to control their sense? If one strongly wishes to take to lotus feet of Lord why doesn't God immediately**

### **help him control his senses? (Digest 3.2)**

In the Bhagavad Gita (10.10) Krishna says, "To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me." Krishna is situated in everyone's heart as the Supersoul (paramatma). As soon as one takes to Krishna consciousness, Krishna helps him. If he comes forward one step, Krishna comes forward ten steps.

The second part of the question (why doesn't God immediately help him control his senses) goes back to the issue of free will. If Krishna did everything for us, then where would be our desire, our effort, our love? A genuine desire manifests itself as a sincere effort and Krishna will undoubtedly reciprocate when He sees that sincere effort.

### **20.2.6) How to advance in devotional service?**

#### **What is the secret of advancing in Krishna Bhakti from the Sadhana Bhakti (regulated devotional service) to the next stages? (Digest 52.2)**

Bhakti is independent. In Digest 42, Q-2 we discussed how the appearance of bhakti in one's heart is independent of any material activity, and that bhakti is the cause of bhakti. One gets bhakti through the medium of a devotee, a carrier of bhakti. This holds true not only in the beginning but in the later stages of bhakti also.

In other words bhakti grows in our heart by her own sweet will. Caitanya Mahaprabhu compares bhakti to a creeper. The devotee sows the seed in our hearts, and the activities of sadhana, such as hearing and chanting are like watering the bhakti creeper. When we carefully nourish the creeper and protect it from the weeds of our bad habits and offenses, then by the sunshine of Krishna's mercy, she grows. The flowering and fruition of this creeper are compared to the later stages of spontaneous love of God, which is beyond the regulated devotional stage.

Our sadhana of watering the creeper is indispensable but not sufficient. We cannot force bhakti to grow or purchase Krishna through any amount of perfectly executed sadhana. The real secret is the mercy of Krishna, which flows very wonderfully and freely through the medium of His wonderful devotees. Our sadhana is our way of showing Krishna our sincere and intense desire to attain His lotus feet. Upon seeing our devotional efforts in a mood of humility, Krishna, His devotees and Bhakti devi, who are naturally merciful, may shower Their mercy. Krishna then helps the devotee to eradicate from his/her heart all anarthas (unwanted desires and tendencies unfavorable to Krishna bhakti). This stage is called anartha-nivrtti. When this is successfully accomplished, then the creeper of bhakti grows into the stages of steadiness, taste, attachment, and spontaneous attraction respectively and finally produces the wonderful fruits of Krishna prema. (For a detailed explanation please refer to Madhurya Kadambini by Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakur; and Srimad Bhagavatam. 1.2.17-21)

### **20.2.7) How to perceive the transformation we have undergone in Krsna Consciousness?**

#### **When do we know we have undergone a transformation in the path of Krishna Consciousness? (Digest 237.2)**

Srila Prabhupada writes in his purport to BG 9.2:

"It is said that the execution of devotional service is so perfect that one can perceive the results directly. This direct result is actually perceived, and we have practical experience that any person who is chanting the holy names of Krsna (Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare) in course of chanting without offenses feels some transcendental pleasure and very quickly becomes purified of all material contamination. This is actually seen. Furthermore, if one engages not only in hearing but in trying to broadcast the message of devotional activities as well, or if he engages himself in helping the missionary activities of Krsna consciousness, he gradually feels spiritual progress. This advancement in spiritual life does not depend on any kind of previous education or qualification. The method itself is so pure that by simply engaging in it one becomes pure.

In the Vedanta-sutra (3.2.26) this is also described in the following words: "Devotional service is so potent that simply by engaging in the activities of devotional service one becomes enlightened without a doubt." So the process of devotional service is so potent that as soon as we come in contact with it we can be rest assured that our heart is actually going through transformation. In a continuous manner, the transformation that one experiences through this process is ongoing and continues all the way till we achieve love of God (prema). Here is a very brief description of the transformations one undergoes while passing through different stages of bhakti:

"In the beginning there must be faith. Then one becomes interested in associating with pure devotees. Thereafter one is initiated by the spiritual master and executes the regulative principles under his orders. Thus one is freed from all unwanted habits and becomes firmly fixed in devotional service. Thereafter, one develops taste and attachment. This is the way of sadhana-bhakti, the execution of devotional service according to the regulative principles. Gradually emotions intensify, and finally there is an awakening of love. This is the gradual development of love of Godhead for the devotee interested in Krsna consciousness." (CC Madhya 23.14-15) But a small word of caution – to keep going through the progressive stages of bhakti and further deeper transformations of heart we must endeavor to practice PURE devotional service that is unmixed with fruitive mentality or speculative tendencies. Rupa Goswami gives the definition of pure devotional service in Nectar of devotion – "One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord Krsna favorably and without desire for material profit or gain through fruitive activities or philosophical speculation. That is called pure devotional service."

Along with this endeavor in pure devotional service under the guidance of bona fide spiritual master, we must also carefully avoid offenses while chanting the holy name, serving the Lord and His devotees.

When we practice like this, we can be rest assured that we will go all the way to Krsna Prema in this very life.

Srila Prabhupada also used to quote an analogy from the 11th canto of Bhagavatam – When a hungry man eats, he feels satisfaction, nourishment and cessation of hunger. He does need to inquire from anyone about what his feelings are. Similarly when we are practicing devotional service and serving God, we will naturally feel awakening of devotion, have experience of the Supreme Lord and feel detachment from worldly things. So like Srila Prabhupada said earlier in BG 9.2 purport, we can directly perceive the results of devotional service in the form of transformation of heart when practiced in the prescribed manner.

### 20.2.8) Qualities of a matured devotee

**When one has a goal of becoming a mature sadhaka in Krishna Consciousness, what exactly should we think of? (Digest 35.3)**

Here are some preliminary thoughts on this wonderful question. In addition to keeping your devotional practices intact with fixed regularity, here are some specific qualities that a mature devotee will exhibit.

1) One measure of maturity is how equipoised and balanced we remain in response to difficult or averse circumstances. See story of Brighu kicking Visnu. [Dhira means remaining undisturbed even in the face of provocation (Cf Sri Isopanisad, Mantras 10 & 13).]

2) Another measure of maturity is to be able to maintain proper respect and social decorum in the midst of multiple social relationships. A mature devotee is ALWAYS sensitive to social propriety even in complex circumstances, and acts appropriately.

3) A major measure of maturity is the degree of one's internalization of living our life in genuine devotion to guru and Krishna; immaturity is to accept and act externally only, flickering in our 'being in a mood of devotion' depending on time and circumstance, OR exhibiting shallow bhakti without connecting with our natural deeper core of feelings of devotion. In a word, a mature devotee is steady in their execution of devotional service. (Cf-SB 1.2.6, 1.2.18). A common example of immaturity is to use the philosophy of Krishna consciousness as a stick to beat upon others who are not obeying the tenets of devotion as much as I am. Another example is to feel pride and superiority for one's meager attainments in Krishna conscious life.

4) A mature devotee carefully deliberates FROM A SELFLESS AND SPIRITUAL PLATFORM what will be the outcome or consequences of my actions upon OTHERS, BEFORE I act. ["Do the right things, in the right way."]

5) A mature devotee consistently sees others with love and compassion, wanting to be of some service to them in a meaningful way.

### 20.2.9) How to depend on Lord Krishna?

**Can you also please describe more on how to depend on Krishna? I will be very happy to take shelter of your instruction on this. (Digest 147.1)**

In [Digest 127](#) it was already discussed how one can depend on Krishna and remain undisturbed in case of unexpected reversals and difficulties in life.

To summarize: we can practice taking shelter of Krishna beginning with tolerance & knowing the material world to be a place of suffering, having firm faith in Krishna's protection, being grateful for the numerous blessings we do have rather than become overwhelmed by the difficulties and going further, seeing the difficulty itself as Krishna's special blessing to help us come closer to Him in some way.

Further, by fixing the mind on the transcendental destination we want to achieve, it becomes easy to transcend the material situation. As discussed in the above answer, how did King Pariksit respond when given the notice that he would die in 7 days? How was he able to easily give up everything material, even his body, without difficulty of attachment? This was because he was confident of his ultimate destination and knowing the transcendental process by

which to approach that transcendental destination.

Difficulties with health could sometimes prove more challenging, by affecting our ability to perform devotional service and other normal duties, but it is possible to overcome these obstacles with enthusiasm. The external modes of your routine functioning may have to be adjusted as needed, but internally you can prepare your consciousness to stay fixed on achieving the goal of life -- nurture the desire to chant intensely, study scripture and so on, and with great enthusiasm look for opportunities to serve and please Guru and Krishna even slightly, within your ability at any given time.

When the mind is engaged in this way in thoughts of Krishna and enthusiastic devotional service, you may find your overall health itself improving - as physical health is affected by the disposition of the mind; and even otherwise the ability to transcend the body and take shelter of Krishna will steadily increase. Many devotees in our movement have demonstrated through their personal lives that it is possible to completely transcend the needs of the body - not by our own strength but definitely through the agency of descending mercy.

**20.2.10) How did Srila Prabhupada persist in his service, while we succumb to maya?**

**Prabhupada had undergone so many troubles in his life; still he continued his preaching in his life even after having so many temples to manage. That was his success. But when we are trying to follow his teachings in our life, why are we not able follow it perfectly?**

**Sometimes we say Maya is so strong. What will happen to us? When we are sick, it is so difficult to even complete 16 rounds. Why does this happen to us? (Digest 159.1)**

We know from Srimad Bhagavatam (SB 1.2.6) that there is no material force that can stop the flow of pure devotional service - it is 'ahaituki apratihata', causeless and uninterrupted. It is the characteristic of one who is in the steady stage of pure devotion that they are not swayed by any material influences or circumstances - this was exemplified in Srila Prabhupada's life. Conversely, unsteadiness in our execution of Krishna consciousness is caused by lack of maturity in our faith & devotion, thus permitting impediments or "unwanted things in the heart" (anarthas) to prevail. For sadhakas, or those of us in the practicing stage of devotion, as long as unwanted residual desires (anarthas) are present in the heart, there is experience of unsteadiness and struggles.

When these anarthas are uprooted by proper execution of hearing, chanting etc (as described in SB 1.2.18) then one becomes situated in nistha, or irrevocable devotional service.

In other words, imperfections and unsteadiness in our initial efforts to cultivate devotion is not unexpected and not something to be discouraged about. This should not however make us complacent or indifferent to our lack of success thinking, "Anyway I am not a very advanced devotee like Prabhupada and this is how it is going to be for a long time to come." The weeds of anarthas, if left unattended, will completely outgrow and choke our bhakti-creeper. Therefore, taking inspiration from the example the pure devotees have set before us, we should enthusiastically uproot these sources of unsteadiness, having full confidence in the potency of the process given by the acharyas.

The most important element that carries one from the position of anisthita bhakti to the other side of nistha is strong faith. Strong faith is defined as the unflinching trust that simply by executing Krishna consciousness, one automatically performs all subsidiary activities and

achieves the highest perfection. In practical terms, this translates to acting firmly and obeying the instructions of the representative of Krishna; by firmly following the orders of Guru and Krishna, all obstacles are overcome. (Please see BG 2.41 p.) And the backbone of faith is enthusiasm. Eagerness to attain the fearless shelter of lotus feet of Krishna and enthusiastically striving for it by the proper means: this will completely ensure our success in devotional service.

Maya is indeed very strong but Krishna is stronger than maya. A devotee should regard Maya with respectful caution and therefore take shelter of Krishna for protection. Krishna promises that those who surrender to Him can easily cross over Maya. Srila Prabhupada once remarked "The reason I can never fall down to Maya is because I am ALWAYS praying to Krishna to kindly protect me from falling down."

### 20.2.11) Maintaining individuality and making desires one with Lord Krsna's desires

**I have trouble in understanding the Bhagavad Gita purports to [text 16](#) and [17](#) of 5th chapter. The last line of purport to text 16 is "...Identity with individuality in spiritual life is real knowledge." The last two lines of the purport to text 17 are "...A Krishna conscious person can thoroughly understand that there is duality (simultaneous identity and individuality) in Krishna, and, equipped with such transcendental knowledge, one can make steady progress on the path of liberation."**

**Please explain how does the living entity maintain his individuality? I have a specific nature. After becoming Krishna conscious, I change all my desires to fulfill Krishna's desire. So, how do we maintain our individuality? (Digest 140.1)**

Fulfilling Krishna's desire or surrendering to His will does not require giving up one's individuality. We are not expected to become something like an automaton programmed to follow commands from the Lord. Liberated souls have variegated desires to serve the Lord according to their own specific individual natures, and the Lord is very pleased to reciprocate with them in different ways.

Srila Prabhupada explains this in Isopanishad: "(We should) play the part designated for us by the Lord. This does not mean that the individual soul has no initiative of his own. Because he is part and parcel of the Lord, he must partake of the initiative of the Lord as well. When a person properly utilizes his initiative, or active nature, with intelligence, understanding that everything is the Lord's potency, he can revive his original consciousness." (Isopanishad [Mantra 4](#) purport)

As infinitesimal part and parcel of the Lord, each of us has our minute individuality. In the conditioned state, the soul's desires are perverted and his true nature is eclipsed due to association with the modes of material nature; i.e. what we think of as our 'nature' in the conditioned state is simply a designation based on the material body and mind. In the practice stage of sadhana bhakti, we purify our desires by engaging them in Krishna's service under the guidance of guru, sadhu and shastra.

Even in this condition, it is not recommended that we annihilate our desires, but only replace them with desires for service to Krishna. In the initial stages, our initiatives need to be taken up under careful guidance and based on scriptural direction, because our capacity for proper use of free will and the spontaneous attraction to serve Krishna have not yet awakened. The spiritual master expertly helps us engage our particular natures in the Lord's service. Through careful practice of regulated devotional service, our original nature or individuality is

revived.

When we speak of simultaneous oneness and individuality, the oneness refers to oneness of interest with the beloved. In Nectar of Devotion ([Chapter 40](#)), there is a description of the reverential devotion exhibited by Pradyumna, Krishna's son. Pradyumna would immediately accept Krishna's orders as if nectar, even though it may have been poison and reject whatever Krishna disapproved even if he personally considered it nectar. In other words, devotees are not devoid of personal tastes and preferences but they subordinate their will, out of love, to that of their beloved. Sometimes, however, very exalted and intimate associates of the Lord may even exhibit desires contrary to Krishna's wishes - as we sometimes find in the activities of Lord Balarama or the gopis - but their ultimate goal is simply to enhance the Lord's pleasure.

### 20.2.12) How to make good decisions and priorities?

**In reality a person assumes different roles from birth till death - starting off as a son, brother, cousin, then a student, husband, father, and grandfather. In addition, there are professional roles like a Teacher/Professor, Mason, Carpenter, Leader, Manager etc.**

**My question is, many a time simultaneously one has to discharge these many roles and often there comes a time of conflict and a time to prioritize roles. For example, if one's wife is sick, one has to attend to her, probably even neglecting other roles which also probably demand one's time at the same time. For instance, one's father or mother might be sick at the same time. What should the person do - attend to one's wife or father or mother or his own son or daughter? How should one decide, since one cannot be at two or three places at the same time? Are there any guiding principles to decide and prioritize?**

**I have been grappling with this problem for a while and unable to justify my decisions and actions. Any guidelines or principles that you may offer would help me in making good decisions. Ideally, the best way is to leave those decisions to God himself, but practically in real life, often times one is stumped in such complex situations. (Digest 84.1)**

A fundamental basis in good decision making, for a spiritual aspirant, is to consider one's actual spiritual role and act from that platform. We certainly play variegated roles, but let us consider what is at the core of all those multiple roles? Who are we? Our real identity is we are eternal servants of Krishna, nitya Krishna dasa. We act in different capacities - as husband, father, leader etc - all in service to Krishna, like an order-carrier. It follows then that the test of appropriateness of any decision is to consider whether it would satisfy Krishna or how well we have acted in the role of 'Krishna dasa'.

By nature's own way, material life is filled with perplexities. Arjuna was in a similar conflicting situation, torn between his roles as a ksatriya and those as a relative, disciple and so on. His solution was simple - to surrender and inquire from the spiritual master, in his case the Lord Himself.

In our present conditioned stage, we may not be in direct communion with the Supersoul and in complex day-to-day matters, we may be unable to understand what exactly Krishna wants of us. Yet, although we may not necessarily 'leave the decision to God', but in the mood of a dependent servant and in a prayerful mood we can seek the Lord's guidance, while we exercise our God-given intelligence in making a decision. By acting in that spirit, we become fit to receive Krishna's inspiration from within, and through so many other wonderful sources inspired by Krishna.

We can expect that we may make some mistakes, for we are tiny and fallible. But by practice and cultivation of this consciousness of acting in relationship with Krishna, we become empowered not only to decide but also to serve with expanded capacity.

While that lays a spiritual foundation from which to act upon, here are some practical considerations in evaluating decisions in the light of sastras: scriptures place our day-to-day duties in three categories viz. daily or obligatory duties, emergency duties, and preferred or occasional duties. The obvious rule of thumb is to attend to emergencies first, perform obligatory duties steadily only to be superceded by factual emergencies, and finally make time for occasional or 'preferred' duties.

In the event of a conflicting situation, in some cases we can again refer to scriptural principles; "mahajano yena gatah sa panthah" instructs us to follow the path of the mahajanas [Cc. Madhya 17.186]. This mandate calls for our becoming familiar with the prioritizing of principles exemplified by our mahajanas, which results from our regular scriptural study, and discussing application of these principles in the association of experienced devotees. For example, when unable to act in a physical capacity, one can still render service by kind words or thoughtful speech. (Refer Bhag. 1.9.9 Purport)

A third, very important factor is to consider what impact our decision is going to have on others. In other words, not only should we take care to do the right thing but to do it in the right way, in a way that has beneficial and uplifting effect upon all those around us. Although not directly addressing your question, an instance that nicely illustrates this principle is Arjuna's dilemma and ultimate decision not to kill Ashvatama considering how it would affect his widowed mother Kripi. (Bhag 1.7.45-55) A note of caution that this, however, does not mean trying to satisfy every individual; rather we try to satisfy Krishna but take into consideration the needs of others and act in a way that helps bring everyone closer to serving the Lord.

One final thought is this: repeatedly in his BG puports Srila Prabhupada highlights the necessity of our duties in life 'being guided by a bonafide spiritual master". Some persons must be found who we trust to guide us in spiritual life. This is Krishna system.

### **20.2.13) Scared of spiritual life as it can affect material life unfavorably**

**I have very strong faith in Gaudiya Vaishnava philosophy. but I am scared that too much spiritual involvement will affect my material life unfavorably. What should be done? (Digest 3.1)**

It is natural that with the awakening of attachment to Krishna, one will gradually develop detachment from worldly things. However this does not mean that a devotee will give up his worldly responsibilities; rather he would do those same duties more meticulously, as long as they are not detrimental to the cultivation of devotional service, but he would do them as a service to the Lord and without attachment for profit and recognition.

There are innumerable examples of great Vaisnava devotees who were householders and held very responsible social positions. Bhaktivinoda Thakur was an ideal example, he was a magistrate and had ten children! But he used all his position, wealth, family and abilities in the service of the Lord. When we take up some spiritual activities, even if in small incremental steps in the beginning, we will find that the Lord gives us more time and ability to perform our duties nicely and to take further steps.

#### 20.2.14) No time for spiritual practices

**My problem is that I have to spend most of my time for my academic studies and have very little left for chanting and other spiritual activities. This makes me very frustrated. Please advise me how can I advance in my spiritual life? (Digest 14.6)**

Time is Krishna's energy, isn't it? Krishna says, "Time I am." So when one decides to serve Krishna with firm conviction, Krishna reciprocates with their devotion; Krishna arranges for His time energy to act differently, in the lives of his devotees. Experienced devotees know this fact very well, from repeated personal experience. When we surrender to Krishna's desires and instructions, we find that our time has expanded in such a way that we can do more service! If you fix Krishna-seva as a priority in your life, and with faith and dependence on Krishna chant a fixed number of rounds regularly and attentively, then from that activity you will find spiritual strength, by which not only you will be able to maintain and even improve your academics in less time than before, but you may find more time to do more spiritual activities! Conversely, if one does not want to serve Krishna, then material energy will consume all one's time, and one will always remain overwhelmed and unfulfilled even in their material ambitions.

#### 20.2.15) Maintaining consistent sadhana

**I try to chant eight rounds, but some days I cannot even chant a single round. Because of my financial situation I am forced to stay with non-devotees. What can I do to chant my rounds nicely and always keep myself in Krishna consciousness? (Digest 14.7)**

As described in the above answer, when we are committed to serve Krishna, Krishna gives us the strength by which we can serve Him. To have a fixed time for chanting, preferably in the morning hours, and everyday chanting during that time without any other distraction, is very helpful to focus the mind and chant nicely.

You have asked how to "always keep oneself in Krishna consciousness". That can be accomplished, at least progressively, by strong sadhana. Whatever time you are able to give for chanting and other devotional activities, even if very little, if it is done in a regulated and in a wholehearted manner, with great sincerity and earnestness, that powerful experience can permeate your consciousness throughout the day, even amidst all other responsibilities. In addition to chanting one's rounds nicely, regular reading or hearing of spiritual messages, Bhagavad-gita or Srimad Bhagavatam etc., is very important to keep one spiritually alive. Even just these two activities, hearing or reading and chanting attentively, if done steadily, can give enormous strength to face all challenges and progress further. Then even in the midst of non-devotees, one can maintain Krishna consciousness and even inspire others around you.

#### 20.2.16) What does self realization mean?

**What does the term self-realization mean? Does it refer to the understanding that we are not these bodies or the understanding that we are servants and our prime most duty is to serve Krishna? (Digest 26.1)**

Both! To understand that we are not these bodies is the first lesson in spiritual life. But who are we? Definition by negation is insufficient. The next lesson then is to understand that we are eternal spirit souls, but that knowledge is also incomplete without further understanding the nature and the activities of the spirit soul in its original state.

The soul is not inert; rather his activity in the pure state is service to God and, resulting from his intimate relationship and loving exchanges in service to the Lord, he is full of transcendental bliss. When all of one's activities are actually above bodily consciousness and on the platform of spirit, beyond theoretical acceptance, i.e. in a mood of service to Krishna - that is self-realization! Self realization is concurrent with God-realization just as someone coming from darkness into the presence of sunlight is simultaneously able to see the source of light as well as one's own self. See SB 1.2.21: "seeing the self as master".

**20.2.17) Acting on the platform of soul leads to self-realization.**

**Does acting on the platform of soul (although I may not have realized that I am a soul) lead to the actual realization of soul? (Digest 227.4)**

Srila Prabhupada says that by practicing something it becomes our second nature. So as you said, by acting on the platform of the soul we can gradually come to the actual realization of the soul by practice. But one thing to be wary about is that while we practice it must be genuine practice realizing that I am not there yet but I am practicing and it may seem a little awkward too. But if we keep practicing like this without any pretension or imitation, gradually it will become our second nature. In fact our daily practices of sadhana are meant for this purpose.

Below is a nice room conversation of Srila Prabhupada illustrating this point (April 2nd 1972, Sydney) –

"Practice means employing both the mind and the senses in practical devotional service. \*This practice is not for developing something artificial.\* For example, a child learns or practices to walk. This walking is not unnatural. The walking capacity is there originally in the child, and simply by a little practice he walks very nicely. Similarly, devotional service to the Supreme Lord is the natural instinct of every living entity. Even uncivilized men like the aborigines offer their respectful obeisances to something wonderful exhibited by nature's law, and they appreciate that behind some wonderful exhibition or action there is something supreme. So this consciousness, though lying dormant in those who are materially contaminated, is found in every living entity. And when it is purified, this is called Krsna consciousness.

"There are certain prescribed methods for employing our senses and mind in such a way that our dormant consciousness for loving Krsna will be invoked, as much as the child, with a little practice, can begin to walk. One who has no basic walking capacity cannot walk by practice. Similarly, Krsna consciousness cannot be aroused simply by practice. Actually there is no such practice. When we wish to develop our innate capacity for devotional service, there are certain processes which, by our accepting and executing them, will cause that dormant capacity to be invoked. Such practice is called sadhana-bhakti."

**20.2.18) Does dancing induces sexual desires?**

**It is a belief that dancing promotes sexual desires? Is it correct? Please clarify. (Digest 226.1)**

Dancing for the pleasure of Krishna -- such as dancing in sankirtan -- is transcendental devotional service. It purifies one of material infections. Such dancing is the natural activity of the soul - in fact, it is described that in the spiritual world every word is a song and every step is a dance. Whereas dancing for sense gratification as seen in the material world is but a perverted reflection.

We find numerous descriptions in the pastimes of Lord Caitanya and His devotees of their ecstatic dancing and chanting which purified all three worlds. Thus, dancing before the Deities or in sankirtan -- in a mood of service and for the pleasure of the Lord -- is a recommended practice in devotional service, and a very spontaneous and joyful form of worship; it is especially suited for this age.

Mundane art, music, dance etc, which are not dovetailed in service to the Supreme Lord generally promote the mode of passion. Invariably it is seen that such forms of art are often employed to attract recognition from others or for personal sense gratification. Srila Prabhupada therefore remarked once that by dancing for Krishna and decorating the temple we can go to Vaikuntha, whereas by decorating a dancing club one degrades in consciousness! The determining factor is one's motivation or consciousness.

***20.3. Prasadam***

**20.3.1) Why is consumption of onion and garlic, prohibited?**

**I would appreciate if you can elaborate on why we should not consume or eat either onion or garlic. Is it stated in any Sastra? Please help me this question will be helpful for my preaching purpose. (Digest 3.10)**

In Bhagavad Gita (17.9) Krishna states that 'Foods that are too bitter, too sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning are dear to those in the mode of passion. Such foods cause distress, misery and disease.' Onion and garlic fall in this category. They excite the baser instincts and make it difficult for one to control the senses. The prohibition on onion, garlic etc. is implicit, by virtue of their characteristics.

**20.3.2) Why is consumption of onion, garlic and mushrooms, prohibited?**

**Why we cannot eat onions, garlic, mushrooms etc? (Digest 162.2)**

These foods are known to influence us with the modes of passion and ignorance. Bhagavad Gita describes how different types of foodstuffs affect our consciousness with

different qualities of nature. (Bg 17.8-10) Based on this principle, different types of food are analyzed to belong to any one of the three modes of nature. Those who are on the spiritual path are recommended to accept only foods in the mode of goodness which are fit to be made as an offering to Lord Krishna. Onions, garlic and mushrooms which increase the influence of lower modes are avoided in offerings to Krishna and therefore we avoid eating them too.

### 20.3.3) Can we use hot spices for cooking bhoga?

**In Bhagavad-gita (17.9) Krishna states that 'Foods that are too bitter, too sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning are dear to those in the mode of passion. Such foods cause distress, misery and disease.'**

**\* When I go to the Sunday Feast at the temple, sometimes the food is very hot. Should I quote this verse of the Gita to the cook? Or are hot spices, like chili, an exception?**

**\* How about chilies? They are hot by nature- some are very hot. Yet I have tasted prasadam (offered to the Deities) that are unbearably hot. We are told that chilies are okay since they increase the fire of digestion. My argument is that like onions and garlic they would cause disease. I personally do not eat chilies. What is your opinion? (Digest 14.3)**

Krishna's statement in Bhagavad-gita is about foods that are excessively hot, pungent etc. However, spices like chilies, in themselves are not harmful when used moderately and in fact we see from the literatures of Vaisnava acaryas that Krishna does like to eat food preparations of all six tastes, and nicely spiced, as opposed to bland foods.

Spicing in excess, chilies or other spices for that matter, is not in the mode of goodness, and thus not desirable for Deity offerings.

### 20.3.4) Consciousness of the cook affects prasadam

**I have one query about prasadam. Prasadam is transcendental and hence free from karmic reactions. But it is said that the consciousness of the cook goes into the prasadam and it effects the consumer of prasadam with that consciousness. I have seen devotees who take prasadam which is cooked by brahmana-initiated devotees only and not by any other, because it may affect their spiritual consciousness. I am confused that if prasadam is transcendental then how is it possible that the consciousness of the cook remains in the prasadam and affects even after offering to the Lord. (Digest 46.2)**

"The chanting of the holy name," Srila Prabhupada recommended, "should be heard as far as possible from the lips of a pure devotee." One might ask a similar question to yours re. the chanting of the pure Holy Name of the Lord, as with prasadam.

When an offering is made to the Supreme Lord, He accepts the offering due to the love and devotion that has gone into the offering. As He states in the Bhagavad-gita, ye yatha mam prapadyante (Bg 4.11): "As one approaches Me, I reciprocate proportionately." To the degree of devotion and care with which an offering is prepared, and then brings the offering to Him with sincere devotion, to that degree Krishna relishes that offering. Thus, when a qualified and pure devotee cooks in a thoroughly clean atmosphere and cleansed consciousness, the prasadam correspondingly becomes that much more transcendently enjoyed by Krishna. Conversely to the degree one is not purified, Krishna does not accept the offering.

Although there is no bar for anyone to begin devotional service by chanting the Holy Names and so on, one should come at least to the platform of goodness in order to render intimate personal services for the Lord such as cooking for and worshiping the Deities. Krishna is pure goodness, so someone influenced by passion and ignorance and not trained in the principles of devotion by qualified devotees is unable to approach and serve Him properly. Therefore, in our temples, it is the standard that only properly trained and brahminically qualified

### **20.3.5) Cleanliness while serving prasadam**

**Some devotees insist that, while taking prasadam, only those who have not eaten can serve; they say that those who have just eaten are unclean. How can one be unclean while taking in prasadam? One added point is that if we were to be taking prasadam in a house where we would like to have all of the family members honor prasadam simultaneously, it would not be possible to do so if we insisted on the above rule. (Digest 4.11)**

The general principle is that after eating, one must at least wash one's mouth, hands and feet, before touching other things, especially kitchen utensils which are used in Krishna's service (like serving utensils). Although prasadam is transcendental and purifying, while eating our hands touch our mouth (either directly or with a spoon or fork), which is not clean. The minimum Vedic standard of cleanliness we should follow after eating is that we must cleanse our hands and mouth thoroughly. Prior to worship of an installed Deity in the Temple, one must fully bathe and put on a clean set of clothes after eating.

### **20.3.6) Exchange of karma/bhakti involved in taking remnants of food/prasadam**

**I was wondering if you could help me understand something. Could you please explain the exchange of karma/bhakti involved when you take someone's remnants? Could you explain the following scenarios if there is a difference...**

**1) Taking the remnants of a pure devotee - do you get the bhakti of the pure devotee and does the pure devotee get some of your karma?**

**2) Taking the remnants of a mixed devotee - is it a mutual exchange of karma and bhakti or does the person who takes the remnants get the bhakti and the devotee who it was taken from get the karma?**

**3) Taking the remnants of a non devotee. (Digest 233.1)**

Srila Prabhupada explains in BG 17.10, "Remnants of food may be eaten only when they are part of a meal that was first offered to the Supreme Lord or first eaten by saintly persons, especially the spiritual master. Otherwise the remnants of food are considered to be in the mode of darkness, and they increase infection or disease."

Thus, exchanging remnants of ordinary food, particularly in the case of non-devotees (part 3 of your question) is definitely not recommended. It increases the mode of ignorance; even from the external point of view, it is not hygienic, and furthermore as indicated in your question, one also becomes infected on a subtle level by the qualities and karma of the person.

On the other hand, the remnants of saintly persons as well as the dust of their lotus feet and the water used to wash their feet, are all highly potent to re-awaken our bhakti. Srila Prabhupada explains, "Pure devotion is as much infectious, in a good sense, as infectious

diseases. A pure devotee is cleared from all kinds of sins... The bhakti-vedantas as above mentioned were pure devotees, and the boy [Narada, in his previous life as the son of a maidservant] became infected with their qualities of purity by their association and by eating once the remnants of the foodstuff taken by them.

"Such remnants may be taken even without permission of the pure devotees. There are sometimes pseudo-devotees, and one should be very much cautious about them." (SB 1.5.25)

In answer to part 1 of your question, the pure devotees are not only free from all sins or karma, but they are also prophylactic - just as the sun can purify any contaminated place but itself remains uncontaminated, similarly great saintly persons can purify even holy places of pilgrimage, because they always carry the Supreme Lord within their hearts. "It is said that sinful persons go to the holy places and leave their sins there to accumulate. But the presence of the great saints disinfects the accumulated sins, and thus the holy places continue to remain sanctified by the grace of the devotees and saints present there." By their own intensity of absorption in devotional service, all such accumulated sins are burned up and thus the saintly persons remain unaffected.

However, Srila Prabhupada did indicate that when one allows materialistic people to touch his feet or offer obeisances, he would have to take their sinful reactions, which may sometimes have adverse consequences such as bringing ill-health etc to the devotee.

A devotee is naturally humble and reluctant to allow others to touch their feet or take their remnants, and furthermore so, knowing the risks involved. Nevertheless they do permit it on certain occasions, knowingly and voluntarily taking the risk just to benefit the conditioned souls. This is due to their immense compassion, as well as to establish this scriptural principle and spiritual culture of the importance and potency of honoring saintly persons. Thus they offer their remnants, particularly to disciples/followers who are looking up to them as the representative of the Supreme Lord and are sincere to cultivate bhakti.

On the part of those receiving such remnants, they should not take this as simply an opportunity to get rid of their sinful reactions so that they can continue on with their materialistic life, taking advantage of a pure devotee. But if they take this as a great opportunity for spiritual advancement, then they would be highly benefited.

Thus the element of faith has a great bearing on the efficacy of this principle. Honoring the remnants of vaishnavas is very powerful but in proportion to the faith and respect with which one honors such remnants.

In a simple and genuinely humble state of consciousness, one may take the remnants of any sincere vaishnava without considering whether they are high or low. This is illustrated in the famous narration of Kali dasa, who had taken the prasadam remnants left by ALL the vaishnavas in Bengal, be they neophyte or advanced devotees. Because of his simplicity and \*great faith\* in honoring the maha-prasadam of vaishnavas, he won the very special favor of Lord Caitanya. Although Lord Caitanya strictly forbade anyone from taking the water that washes his feet, he made an exception and allowed Kalidasa three times to drink his caranamrita, as well as gave His own food remnants to Kalidasa. Thus Kalidasa achieved supreme mercy. (cf. Cc Antya Ch 16)

When one has not yet developed such a strong faith and is still accustomed to evaluating devotees, then it is not as beneficial to artificially or frivolously exchange remnants among devotees. This will tend to make us superficial rather than increase our faith and devotion. This is the only caution required.

It would be better in this stage to seek the permission of advanced vaishnavas and respect

them with genuine faith and devotion, and continue to cultivate sincere attitude of service and respect towards all vaishnavas, which is the actual essence.

### **20.3.7) Why does prasadam decay like normal food?**

**If prasadam is spiritual why does it decay like normal food does in a day or so.  
(Digest 4.10)**

Prasadam is spiritualized by virtue of its contact with the Supreme Lord. Prabhupada gives the example of iron rod and fire. The iron rod kept in fire acts like fire, but is not fire itself. Prasadam is spiritual in that it has been accepted by Krishna, and thus it has a spiritualizing effect on those who partake of it. Nevertheless, it is still made of material elements and appears to our mundane vision as undergoing material transformations. The same applies to the Deity forms of the Lord (archa-vigraha), the body of a pure devotee, the holy dhama (place of pilgrimage) and the sacred scriptures.

An advanced devotee, however, would be able to see the actual spiritual nature of each of these items, and would never consider them according to their material appearance, just as Raghunatha dasa Gosvami was accepting old and spoiled remnants of Jagannath maha prasadam as delightful mercy of Lord Jagannath.

## ***20.4. Preaching***

### **20.4.1) Preaching is the essence: Levels of preaching**

**Srila Prabhupada said 'preaching is the essence', what does this mean? What are the qualifications of the preacher? Are performing nagar sankirtan and book distribution a kind of preaching? What are the levels in preaching? (Digest 2.15)**

Preaching is the essence of our movement because this is an exhibition of the highest and most compassionate part of a vaisnava's character, the essential nature of a devotee - trying to awaken Krsna bhakti within the hearts of the suffering souls. This was the essence of Lord Caitanya's pastimes, to freely distribute love of God. Without preaching neither our movement, nor our own individual bhakti creeper will continue to grow, rather they will both become weakened. Especially in this age full of faults and disturbances, only by being in a preaching spirit and thus attracting and achieving the mercy of Lord Caitanya can we sustain and increase our Krsna consciousness. Without that spirit we can easily become distracted, slackened and overwhelmed by the material energy. Srila Prabhupada said anyone can preach, if they hear attentively from a bona fide speaker in disciplic succession and simply repeat what he has heard, without concoction. One of Prabhupada's disciples had a 5 year old daughter, and she used to go the visitors and ask them, "Do you know who is Krsna?", and then reply herself, "Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead!". Prabhupada commented that even a child can preach by simply repeating what they heard. So the most important qualification for a preacher is that they should hear submissively from a bona fide spiritual master and faithfully represent what they

have heard, according to their capacity.

Varieties of preaching exist, as do various levels of preaching. We may show people the path of bhakti in an introductory manner, or we may help them traverse the path, or train them, or carry them to the conclusions of bhakti. We each have our capacity, and we should try to preach accordingly

#### **20.4.2) Preaching is by empowerment**

**Srila Prabhupada said that unless one is empowered, he cannot preach, could you kindly explain? (Digest 8.3)**

Knowledge of Krishna, devotional service to Him, the Holy Name - all of these belong to the spiritual region and cannot be accessed by our mundane efforts. What then to speak of being instrumental in awakening these in the hearts of others, through one's material influence? One must be invested with spiritual 'shakti', through the mercy of Krishna and His representative, and then one can preach Their message.

#### **20.4.3) Do we have to be trained before preaching?**

**What are the essential training that a person should undergo before he can preach? (Digest 8.2)**

We had discussed in a previous question, that anyone could preach by simply repeating faithfully what he or she has heard from a bona fide devotee. However, for a more systematic preaching effort in representing the Krishna consciousness philosophy, minimally one should have thoroughly studied, and be conversant with four main books written by Srila Prabhupada, under the guidance of devotees: Bhagavad Gita, Sri Isopanisad, Nectar of Instruction, and Nectar of Devotion. Srimad Bhagavatam Canto One also contains our essential Gaudiya vaisnava teachings, and should also be studied very carefully. Practicing the rules and regulations of devotional life strictly, accepting a qualified spiritual master, and working under his shelter and guidance makes one further eligible to effectively represent the message of disciplic succession.

#### **20.4.4) 'Cause of bhakti' & 'preaching in Hinduism'**

**21.4.4) If a person takes to Krishna consciousness based on his or her prior karma, then what is the need to preach to them? Is that why there is no really no concept of preaching in Hinduism? (Digest 42.2)**

Actually, you may be surprised to know that a person's taking up Krishna consciousness is not in the least created by one's previous pious or impious activities, because Krishna consciousness is completely beyond the jurisdiction of material activities. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarty Thakur elaborately discusses this in his book 'Madhurya Kadambini' (Chapter 1) where he states that Bhakti is supremely independent. If a material activity can be the cause of one's attaining bhakti, it means bhakti has a material cause and is therefore not completely spiritual! Then how at all does one get bhakti? If it were causeless, why is that only some people take to Krishna consciousness? He examines different possibilities finally concluding that bhakti

is the cause of bhakti. More specifically, one gets the seed of bhakti from another bhakta. When one meets a devotee carrying bhakti in his/her heart, one is entitled to receive that seed of bhakti if one responds favorably to that association, irrespective of what their previous pious / impious credits are. So the conclusion is there is actually GREAT need to `preach' or distribute Krishna consciousness.

I would not agree that there was no concept of preaching in the Vedic tradition, because as we see, all the great acaryas such as Ramanujacarya, Madhvacarya, even Sankaracarya, and Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His followers extensively traveled, preached, wrote books and trained their followers similarly, driving out opposing materialistic and atheistic conceptions and inspiring the masses towards spiritual life. It is an intrinsic principle of Vedic culture to share with others the knowledge and good fortune one receives, especially the fortune of transcendental knowledge and try to engage everyone in devotional service, knowingly or unknowingly. In fact, the whole social structure of varnashrama was structured in this way so that the brahmanas could teach all others in the community to live a god-centered life and that is a wonderful, natural way of preaching to and training every member of society!

#### **20.4.5) 'Can bhakti be spread freely among masses?'**

**I have a confusion regarding whether bhakti can be spread freely among masses. Although Srila Prabhupada demonstrated practically, my doubt relates to observing the lives of simple minded villagers in the dham, who have a simple living and great dependency on guru and Lord. It is practically not possible for me to live such a simple, spiritual life (due to present obligations). So is it to be concluded that Srila Prabhupada wanted to lift us to certain level, before we could take pure devotion (in next life in dham) or with the present practice, the same can be achieved? (Digest 2.17)**

Srila Prabhupada taught that you should stay in your present position, and purify your existence by hearing and chanting about Krsna. Gradually, higher and higher spiritual qualifications will come. You must learn the art, gradually, of dedicating your God-given talents and assets to His service. This is also wanted. In this way, the masses can take part in the process of bhakti with incredible success.

#### **20.4.6) Preaching: Facts to support that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead**

**What are some facts that help people understand why Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead? (Digest 2.16)**

When Arjuna saw the Universal form he mentions some such facts as to why Krsna is considered the Supreme Personality of Godhead: All the great authorities, such as Asita, Devala, and Vyasa and all the scriptures have accepted Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Not only that, Krsna Himself asserts and explains this in so many ways in Bhagavad Gita, how He 's the source of everything and there is no truth beyond him. He does not simply make these empty statements, but He actually shows His universal form in the battlefield. All the great mahajanas beginning from Brahma, Narada, Siva, Sukadeva Gosvami, and Bhismadeva, glorify Krsna as the Supreme Absolute Truth and are engaged in His devotional service. Besides, throughout His lila, all of His uncommon, supramundane activities bear testimony to this fact,

such as the lifting of Govardhana Hill at the age of seven, showing the universes within His mouth, expanding Himself into all the cowherd boys and calves, marrying 16,108 princesses, etc. Thus there are innumerable evidences within the Vedas about Krsna's identity. In fact, as stated in Bhagavad-gita, the purpose of the Vedas is itself to know Krsna only.

**20.4.7) 'How to interact with different classes of people' & 'will Caitanya Mahaprabhu be angry for failing in preaching?'**

**What should I do if someone says that my behavior in Krishna consciousness is weird, just because I get up at 3am and eat only Krishna prasadam, I do not allow any mundane social gatherings at my home and do not socialize with any mundane people? This person claims that it is mental torture on him. Did I commit an offense for first trying to turn this person into Krishna consciousness and then after years of effort gave up? Is Lord Caitanya who is the savior of the most fallen mad at me for giving up? (Digest 94.1)**

The guidelines given for a madhyama adhikari or a preacher, as discussed in the previous question, are very appropriate in such situations, in helping us understand how to interact with different classes of people. A sincere practitioner of bhakti yoga, while trying to interact with others, should be careful to intimately make friendship only with other like-minded devotees, lest it hampers their own budding devotional faith; they should be careful to identify the innocent and avoid the non-devotees who are completely disinclined.

Those who don't understand or share the same principles and values that mold our lives and daily routines are very well likely to not appreciate a devotee's lifestyle and may consider it weird, just as for a devotee, the aimless life of sense-gratification of the materialists seems weird. As Krishna says, what is day for the introspective is night for the common men. (Bg 2.69)

In trying to extend compassion to such persons, it is generally good to start with small doses - offering prasadam, making friendship, engaging in light conversations on spiritual matters, encouraging them to take up some chanting and so on. Try to 'feel the pulse' of the other person, rather than to introduce them initially to our entire lifestyle. If the individual is innocent and shows some inclination, we can share our Krishna consciousness with them further. But if one is not so inclined, or even outright unappreciative, it is best to avoid them, as force and coercion will only make them more resentful. After all, surrendering to Krishna is a matter of individual free will; while we can do our best to impart its wisdom, we cannot 'make' anyone Krishna conscious.

Lord Caitanya, who is certainly most merciful, cannot be mad at you for your well-intended efforts, but in the future you may want to more carefully consider the guidelines placed before the madhyama adhikary to distinguish whom to share this mercy with, so that your efforts to extend compassion will be more effective.

**20.4.8) Preaching to the people from different religious backgrounds**

**It is always mentioned that the Supreme God is Lord Krishna. People who know about Vedas or about Indian culture can understand and accept this. How can a man of a different religion or a different region accept this? How can we convince others that everybody in the universe is governed by the laws of Vedas? (Digest 11.1)**

Spiritual knowledge is not just a belief system, but a science. When one understands that there is one Supreme Lord Who is the Creator and Maintainer of all of us, then it naturally follows that we are all under the jurisdiction of that one Supreme Lord, and the laws He created are likewise universal.

For example, we do not distinguish between Indian physics and American physics. The fundamental laws of physics are applicable everywhere and such scientific knowledge is accepted from wherever it is available. Similarly, the laws of birth and death, of actions and their reactions, the basic principles of religion and the ultimate object of worship - all these are equally applicable to all human beings. When a wealth of knowledge on these subjects are made available within the Vedas, one who is a sincere seeker of truth would accept and benefit from such knowledge, irrespective of their cultural or other extraneous background differences.

There are many apparent discrepancies in teaching found amongst diverse religious traditions, but a deeper study and a scrutinizing eye will often catch the ultimate non-difference, in systems of religion that are actually bona fide. For example see Caitanya-caritamrta Adi Lila Chapter 17.153-171 for a discussion on the apparent basis of animal sacrifice and eating meat in the Koran. There are many similar examples. Ultimately, we will find congruity, not clash.

As far as the acceptance of the name of Krishna as God's name, this fact is repeatedly stated in the Vedas, as your question confirms; so someone from another tradition or culture would only require hearing from a proper authority on the Vedas to accept this conclusion, according to the Vedic system and information.

#### **20.4.9) Is preaching to a non-believer, a nama-aparadha?**

**One of the nama aparadhas (offenses against the holy name) is to preach to a non believer. Would you please elaborate on this. It's confusing me as devotees many times preach to a non believer. (Digest 8.1)**

Preaching to a non-believer is in itself not an offense. The ninth offense to the Holy Name is stated as follows: 'To instruct a faithless person about the glories of the Holy Name'. The offense is, therefore, in disclosing very confidential truths about the nature of devotional service to someone who hasn't yet developed faith in spiritual existence. On the other hand, one could very well help such persons come to the point of faith, by addressing their basic misconceptions about spiritual life, provided they are innocent and open-minded. Srila Prabhupada often demonstrated this and won over so many scientists and philosophers. If one is totally envious of Krishna or of devotees, however, then the injunction is that their intimate association should be avoided.

#### **20.4.10) 'Does a perfect devotee not preach?' & 'Srila Prabhupada's humility'**

**Recently I was reading "Perfect Questions and Perfect Answers (which is a conversation between Prabhupada and one novice devotee.) During the conversation Prabhupada tells that he (Prabhupada) is not a perfect devotee. On being asked why he thinks so, he answers that a perfect devotee does not preach because he sees all living beings loving Krishna and that nobody is against Krishna! Subsequently he gives the example of Radharani who sees everybody as a devotee of Krishna.**

**I could not understand the above comments of Prabhupada. Could you please**

## **clarify the above statement that a perfect devotee does not preach! (Digest 94.2)**

This of course is an instance of Srila Prabhupada's transcendental humility, as well as a scriptural statement.

There are three grades of devotees, as identified in the Nectar of Instruction (Texts 5,6) - the kanistha adhikari, madhyama adhikari, and uttama adhikari or perfected devotee. The kanistha adhikari or neophyte is one who has developed faith in worshiping Krishna but has not yet developed proper regard for Krishna's devotees, nor compassion for others. The uttama adhikari is the perfected devotee, and is completely free from the tendency of fault finding. He sees everyone as being engaged in the service of Krishna, either directly or indirectly, and therefore he does not preach. But the madhyama adhikari has to make distinctions - he worships Krishna, makes friendship with devotees, shows compassion to the ignorant (and therefore preaches to them), and he avoids the envious.

However an uttama adhikari, in service to Krishna, may sometimes come to the madhyama platform and preach. Because he has to teach others, he externally engages in the four types of behavior recommended for the madhyama devotee.

This does not mean that there is any diminution in his advanced state consciousness or devotion, but he simply takes that position for the sake of service.

## *20.5. Regulative principles*

### 20.5.1) Intoxication and illicit sex

#### **Is drinking alcohol and having sex with one's spouse is bad? Please explain. (Digest 6.6)**

Human life is a life of responsibility as opposed to animal life; animals need not follow any law except those of their natural instinct for eating, mating, sleeping and defending. However, in human form of life, we have to regulate these activities in accordance with scriptures, and utilize the higher facilities that we have for self-realization.

Activities forbidden in the scripture are principally the following four: meat eating, intoxication, illicit sex and gambling. Such activities are called sinful and are forbidden because they bring down our consciousness rather than elevating it, and thus push us down to animalistic existence.

Sex life in accordance with religious principles, i.e. strictly for the sake of begetting good progeny, is accepted as religious. However, sex life based on sense gratification, even with one's spouse, is considered sinful because it degrades one's consciousness. So does drinking alcohol.

**20.5.2) Is it worthwhile for a person to follow devotional service, if (s)he is not able to follow the regulative principles?**

**If one knows that he/she will never be an initiated devotee because of lack of desire to follow the very strict regulative principles and life style, is there any benefit to anyone for this person to maintain interest in Krishna Consciousness? There are times when Srila Prabhupada says in his books that some people are just a disturbance. How do you know if he means these kinds of people? (Digest 61.3)**

Srila Prabhupada was most compassionate and so large hearted that he freely engaged all sorts of people in Krishna's service, even the drug-addicted hippies of the 60s, in whatever capacities they could be engaged. He knew our deficiencies and sometimes spoke strongly to strengthen our determination, but he never turned down a soul that sincerely approached Krishna, regardless of their capacities or inabilities. (Also refer to Bg 3.31 purport.) I am not sure of the exact reference within Srila Prabhupada's writing which you are making, but perhaps Prabhupada was referring to someone who was explicitly envious of Krishna and approached the devotees to take advantage of them.

Please refer to Q1 above re. the eligibility for Krishna consciousness. Krishna consciousness is the natural function of the soul, and by its continued performance, all undesirables will eventually be removed. Even if one may not yet be able to or even committed to follow all the spiritual standards strictly, simply by continued chanting and hearing about Krishna in the association of sincere devotees, such a practitioner will eventually develop a strong taste for devotional service. The desire and the ability to follow the rules and regulations of devotional life will just be the natural by-product. Even otherwise, even if they are unable to come to the point of initiation, there is no loss in serving Krishna. On the other hand, what is the use of successful and perfect execution of millions of other materialistic goals?

The acharyas have therefore recommended that somehow or other one should always think of Krishna; even if one is full of lust or fear or greed, because such contact with Krishna can purify one of all impure actions and desires. Srila Prabhupada narrates the story of a thief who heard about the expensive ornaments of Krishna and went in search of Krishna to rob Him. Although his motive was simply greediness, and he had no interest in sadhana bhakti, simply by his eagerness to see Krishna, he was able to see Krishna face to face and in course of their conversation, the thief became a pure devotee. The only requirement is therefore to have a sincere eagerness for the Supreme Lord and be in the association of pure devotees.

## 21. Spiritual world and spiritual planets

### 21.1. General questions: Spiritual world and spiritual planets

#### 21.1.1) What is spiritual world?

##### **What exactly is the spiritual world? (Digest 23.4)**

The spiritual world lies beyond the material creation that we know of. To explain by negation, it is that place where there are no dualities of the material world such as happiness and distress, pain and pleasure, love and hatred etc. It is free from all inebriety of the material world such as birth, death, disease, old age, poverty, greed, competition, strife and loss. Stating positively, it is the kingdom of God, inhabited by those pure souls who are eternal, full of knowledge and bliss, who live in harmony with and in pure love for the Personality of Godhead, thereby enjoying unlimited happiness in relation with Him. There are innumerable spiritual planets as described in the scriptures where the residents exchange various types of loving relationships with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

#### 21.1.2) How are things absolute in the spiritual world?

**In this context, how are things absolute in the spiritual world? Even in the spiritual realm, the gopis are dearer to Krishna than anyone else, and even amongst the gopis, Radharani is most dear to Him. So, therefore there is relativity in the spiritual realm too. (Digest 194.2)**

There is certainly variety in the spiritual world, but not relativity as we speak of it in the mundane realm. As we have discussed in previous digests, Absolute is quite so often confused, by beginning transcendentalists, with some sort of homogeneous entity without any variegatedness, but this is not so. Those who are impersonalists have difficulty accommodating this because of their frustrated experience in the material world. Here, variety or multiplicity almost always brings quarrel, discrimination and misery, and so out of frustration and a poor fund of knowledge, they conclude that the Absolute must be devoid of any kind of variety or hierarchy.

But Krishna enjoys varieties of pleasures, and they are all of the same absolute nature - sat, cit and ananda. There are hierarchies in the spiritual world, as well - perfect, more perfect, and most perfect; pure, purer, purest, and even further ever-expanding degrees of purity and intensities of love. But they are all pure, and in that sense absolute. There is even so-called separation and lamentation in spiritual world, and even day and night, but these are all just different varieties of absolute pleasure.

The variegatedness of the Absolute is *\*VERY DIFFICULT\** to understand from our present conditioned nature, and with a materially conditioned mind, but it is possible to understand by adopting a humble mood of service to the Absolute Supreme and by submissively hearing from those who know Him, the tattva-darshis. (BG 4.34)

### 21.1.3) Why are there spiritual gems in Goloka Vrindavana?

**Brahma Samhita Text 29 describes the nature of the Goloka Vrindavana, which is said to contain millions of desire trees with spiritual gems. Why do we need desire trees there, if we go there only when we become sarvopadhi vinirmuktam or anyabhilashita sunyam? Why is there mention of gems to indicate the greatness of the place - is opulence greater than tranquility and purity? (Digest 23.5)**

As you have stated, the eligible inhabitants of Goloka Vrindavana are free from all material designations and material desires (anyabhilashita sunyam etc.) Nevertheless, they are not "devoid of desires"; rather they have 'spiritual' desires, because it is the symptom of life or symptom of spirit soul to desire. The desires of the pure devotees are entirely related to the loving service and the pleasure of Lord Sri Krishna, and all their desires to serve the Lord immediately become reality in the spiritual world, the land full of desire trees.

As far as the spiritual gems are concerned, why should the abode of the Lord not be opulent? After all, Krishna is the source of all opulence. God's glory is not one-sided, it is all-encompassing.

Because of our experiences in the material world, many of us tend to have a limited conception or expectation of the spiritual world. However, the spiritual world is not only full of tranquility, beauty and love, it is also full of opulence, knowledge and inconceivable powers. Of course, in the material world it is difficult to find humility and love and compassion in the same place as great wealth, fame or beauty. However, in the spiritual world, such opulences serve as impetuses to increase one's adoration of and devotion to the Personality of Godhead, not as hindrance or distraction from the ultimate object of love, Krishna.

### 21.1.4) Difference in the levels of bliss that exist in Vaikuntha, Ayodhya, Dwaraka, and Goloka

**Recently I read this quote attributed to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura purported to be published in the Harmonist (Sri Sajjana Tosani, Interview with Professor Johans, head of the Department of Philosophy, St. Xaviers College):**

**"The bliss available in Ayodhya is better than that in Vaikuntha; the bliss in Dwaraka is superior to that in Ayodhya; and the bliss of the denizens of Goloka is the climax of all bliss. The difference in the degree of a particular Rasa or sentimental mellowness is the cause of the difference in the degree of the bliss. Even the afflictions and distresses that may be there in Goloka dance on the crest of all forms of blisses and happinesses; these are rather nourishers of the highest form of bliss."**

**How is this so based on the authority of the puranas? I can understand this point coming from a philosophical predilection, but based on objective interpretation, how can we say that there's a difference of superiority when one attains the association of the absolute supreme? (Digest 142.1)**

Objectively, or rather in terms of material distinctions, there is no differentiation of inferior and superior in the Absolute realm. And yet there is unlimited variegatedness. Variety is exhibited in different degrees of perfection, i.e. there is perfect - more perfect - and most perfect. The implication is that in the relative world, by exalting one object we automatically denigrate another to a lower status as being faulty or lacking in some way, whereas in the Absolute Realm,

appreciation of greater perfection does not imply a lack of perfection in another.

Intensity of attraction and affection is exhibited in varying degrees within each rasa, and Krishna is reciprocally respondent to His variegated devotees: thus there are different, ever-increasing levels of loving exchanges and corresponding bliss.

Another aspect of transcendental variegatedness lies in the intimacy of services and loving exchanges, as illustrated in Brhad-Bhagavatamrita. All the different grades of devotees in different Vaikuntha realms indicated in the above quote are fully satisfied in their respective relationships with the Lord of Vaikuntha, according to their individual constitutional rasa. There is no envy, nor is there any tint of dissatisfaction or hankering for achieving a superior position. And yet there is an objective acknowledgment of the greater degree of intimacy and loving exchanges enjoyed by the more confidential devotees.

For example, Hanuman is perfectly satisfied in his relationship with Lord Rama and would not accept any other position, even if it were offered to him. At the same time, he glorifies the uncommon and most confidential pastimes of Krishna and the superior perfection attained by the Pandavas, the intimacy of their service and the Lord's reciprocation with them. (Sri Brihad Bhagavatamrita, Chapter 4) In the Bhagavatam also we read of the appreciation Queen Kunti and Devaki have for the love of Mother Yashoda, and so on.

The adoration of Krishna's abode and pastimes by the acharyas in our disciplic line are not entirely built on their predilection towards worship of Krishna. While that is indeed the mood of the followers of Lord Caitanya, it is also based on ample evidences and conclusions supported by shastra. Krishna or Govinda is the fountainhead of all the multi-incarnations, as confirmed in the Bhagavatam, Brahma samhita, as well as other puranas and Upanishads. All the plenary incarnations of the Lord are also equally powerful as He is and yet Krishna is the Primeval person; Brahma Samhita gives the example of many candles lit from one original candle. (Text 46) Narayana is the majestic manifestation of Krishna and all the majestic attributes of Krishna - sixty in number - are fully present in the various incarnations expanding from Narayana. But Lord Krishna or Caitanya Mahaprabhu, as the avatari, possesses special excellences that surpass all others; you may know these four special qualities described in Nectar of Devotion Chapter 21.

This is yet another aspect of transcendental variety exhibited as different features of the Supreme - aishvarya, madhurya and audarya. Krishna's form, qualities, pastimes etc in Goloka Vrindavan are characterized by intense sweetness (madhurya) that includes, surpasses and overshadows His majesty and opulence (aishvarya) in Vaikuntha, Ayodhya or Dvaraka. We know from the exchange between Lord Caitanya and Vyenkata Bhatta that because of her aishvarya bhava, Lakshmidivi was unable to enter the rasa dance, despite her performing severe austerities for that end, although there is no factual difference between Narayana and Krishna. (Cc Madhya 9.111-138) Similarly, the pastimes of Lord Caitanya manifest unparalleled magnanimity that eclipses His opulences and sweetness, which are also simultaneously present in their fullness in His pastimes.

## 22. Understanding Vedic scriptures

### 22.1. *Brahma samhita*

#### 22.1.1) *Is Brahma-Samhita, a sruti?*

**Can you explain where in our Vedic Scriptures does Brahma Samhita comes under? Does it come under pancaratra, or directly under Shruti? (Digest 174.2)**

The different Samhitas, like the Upanishads, are part of the 4 Vedas, and thus come under Shruti. They form the portion of the Vedas that comprise the mantras.

### 22.2. *General questions: Understanding Vedic scriptures*

#### 22.2.1) *Three methods of acquiring knowledge: Sabdha, pratyaksha and anumana*

**I'd like to know something about Vedic knowledge: specifically about categories of Sabdha, Pratyaksha and Anumana. Can you tell me what do they mean? (Digest 205.1)**

Srila Prabhupada explains these three methods of acquiring knowledge in his Sri Isopanishad, Introduction:

"There are three kinds of evidence: pratyaksha, anumana and shabda. Pratyaksha means "direct evidence." Direct evidence is not very good because our senses are not perfect. We are seeing the sun daily, and it appears to us just like a small disc, but it is actually far, far larger than many planets. Of what value is this seeing? Therefore we have to read books; then we can understand about the sun. So direct experience is not perfect. Then there is anumana, inductive knowledge: "It may be like this" - hypothesis. For instance, Darwin's theory says it may be like this, it may be like that. But that is not science. That is a suggestion, and it is also not perfect. But if you receive the knowledge from the authoritative sources, that is perfect. If you receive a program guide from the radio station authorities, you accept it. You don't deny it; you don't have to make an experiment, because it is received from the authoritative sources.

Vedic knowledge is called shabda-pramana. Another name is shruti. Shruti means that this knowledge has to be received simply by aural reception. The Vedas instruct that in order to understand transcendental knowledge, we have to hear from the authority. Transcendental knowledge is knowledge from beyond this universe. Within this universe is material knowledge, and beyond this universe is transcendental knowledge. We cannot even go to the end of the universe, so how can we go to the spiritual world? Thus to acquire full knowledge is impossible (without hearing from authority).

The Vedic knowledge comes down by disciplic succession. It is also confirmed in the

Bhagavad-Gita that Vedic knowledge is understood in this way. If you make experimental endeavor, you come to the same conclusion, but just to save time you should accept. If you want to know who your father is and if you accept your mother as the authority, then whatever she says can be accepted without argument."

(We have also discussed these terms briefly in Digest 149)

### 22.2.2) How to go beyond seeing paradoxes?

**I have a question regarding a statement I heard in the past and remembered recently:**

**Seeming paradoxes are found in various places in scripture. For instance, in one scripture it may be said "all the forms of the Lord are equal," while in another it may be said, "no other form of the Lord is as complete as Krishna." While he didn't use this particular example, I have heard from an advanced Vaishnava that such "contradictions" force us as readers to stop and contemplate instead of speeding along thinking that we understand things. I'm wondering if this understanding is correct and if you can elaborate to provide clearer understanding? (Digest 227.1)**

As you have hinted within your question, what 'appears' to be paradoxes or contradictions within scripture are only seemingly so; factually, there is no real contradiction.

In some instances, scriptures are deliberately filled with apparent double-talk. A typical example is the language of the Upanishads: e.g., "The Supreme Lord walks and does not walk. He is far away, but He is very near as well. He is within everything, and yet He is outside of everything." (Isopanishad Mantra 5) Such contradictory statements are provided to indicate His inconceivable, transcendental nature. He walks, but His walking is nothing like the walking within this mundane realm. So, thanks to these paradoxes, we are induced to reconsider and reform the deep-rooted material conceptions in our mind when contemplating the Supreme Absolute Truth.

It is not necessarily that all such contradictions are purposefully presented by the scriptures in order to get us to contemplate. It is just the nature of Absolute Truth, which appears to us to be contradictory when we try to capture it within the limited vocabulary of language or within the limited framework of our material mind and intelligence. But by patient and repeated aural reception of the whole message, and by receiving clarification from a realized soul, such contradictions become resolved. The Bhaktivedanta Purports explicitly serve this purpose!

Some of these apparent contradictions, which often become topics of debate among inter-faith discussions, are resolved by understanding the example of higher and lower level mathematics. One may learn in a simple way in elementary math that it is not possible to subtract a bigger number from a smaller one, but as one progressively learns the concepts of negative numbers, rational and irrational numbers, imaginary numbers and so on, instead of seeing contradictions, one's understanding becomes wider and deeper.

Often, what appears as contradiction is due to our own lack of understanding or preconceptions about what God or spiritual life must look like. Sometimes it is seen that even when Reality is presented in a very simple and straightforward manner, people find it hard to reconcile. A common example is in understanding how Krishna favors His devotees like the Pandavas. God is supposed to be impartial and yet He gives different rewards to different living entities and He particularly seems to favor and take the side of His devotees. This is not a

contradiction, but appears to be so because of not understanding that He EQUALLY reciprocates with everyone as they approach Him. As one's spiritual understanding and realization matures, such things cease to be contradictions but rather become another impetus for deeply appreciating the qualities of Krishna.

Another way to understand the same thing is that all contradictions are reconciled in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna. That is to say, He is simultaneously equal and yet different from all of His other expansions, He is simultaneously impartial and yet partial to His devotees, He is simultaneously present everywhere and yet never leaves His abode in Vrindavan and so on.

Another fundamental reason for seeing contradictions is often due to not understanding Krishna's Personal nature; Krishna is a Person and He has desires, likes and dislikes, and freedom. Behind all the variegated arrangements one can experience within the material creation, and behind all His dealings with different living entities -- is Krishna's very personal, loving, compassionate nature and inimitable capacity in reciprocating with His different parts and parcels. How He acts and why He does certain things may not always follow a set pattern or formula. Thus, His will is said to be "inscrutable".

The common tendency amongst those educated in the modern school of rationalism is to try to subject everything, including spiritual topics, to analysis and rationalization and reductionism -- but these tools fail us miserably in trying to understand Spirit. You are likely to be familiar with the famous example of the five blind men --- each of them came up with completely contradictory pictures of the elephant, while in fact none of them were close to whole truth. Our approach to scripture is often like those blind men, and thus we run into many "contradictions". Therefore, in order to learn the truth, it is indispensable to approach a seeing man, i.e. a self-realized soul. Under the guidance of such a spiritual master, one can systematically learn to reconcile all contradictions and see the Whole Truth.

This brings us to your next question.

### **22.2.3) Morning and evening classes in ISKCON**

#### **Why is it a general practice in ISKCON to discuss Srimad-Bhagavatam during morning hours and Bhagavad-gita during evening hours? (Digest 18.3)**

I can only answer this question from my experience in Krishna consciousness. In the beginning stages of Krishna consciousness, classes in ISKCON were in the evening, when the young American students could attend. Bhagavad-gita was their introduction to Krishna consciousness. Later, when temple ashrams formed, regular morning classes were also introduced. Since Srimad-Bhagavatam was being translated at the same time in ISKCON's evolution, there was need to have a time to hear & discuss it. Hence, morning Srimad-Bhagavatam class!

It always seemed very natural for me, and I never really inquired about the reason behind this general ISKCON practice. There are certainly no hard and fast rules about it.

## 22.3. Mahabharata

### 22.3.1) Reason for Kuruksetra war

**Are we saying that the entire war was fought just to kill Duryodhana, whom I think was very correct in his thinking except his one mistake of Draupadi vastra haran? (Digest 134.3)**

Lord Krishna's purpose was to establish the rule of righteous leaders and reduce the burden of earth in the form of belligerent kings who were simply interested in personal aggrandizement. By Vedic standards, the king is not only expected to be an expert administrator but also a representative of God on earth (nara-deva) who can both uphold the laws of God within society and facilitate the citizens on the path of spiritual progress. (Please see [BG 4.1](#) and [4.2](#) purports)

Duryodhana obviously did not possess these qualifications, for he repeatedly demonstrated his disregard for religious principles, not only in insulting Draupadi but also in the dice game and in his numerous attempts to murder the Pandavas, in which his primary goal was simply to establish his own supremacy. Many a times he disregarded and even insulted saintly persons such as Bhishma, Vidura and even sages like Vyasa and Maitreya Rishi. Ultimately he directly derided and assaulted Lord Krishna Himself, when the Lord came to the Kuru assembly as a messenger of peace. How could such a king who had no regard for virtue be expected to exemplify, protect and guide the citizens on the path of virtue? Therefore, it was the supreme will of the Lord to remove Duryodhana and his associates and establish Yudhisthira, just as in the paddy field unwanted plants are removed. This would serve an instruction to the whole world that virtue always wins over vice.

Please also refer to [Digest 46](#) Some Reasons for Mahabharata war:

[Digest 49](#) Character of Karna and Duryodhana.

### 22.3.2) Revenge of Dronacarya against Drupada

**Why did Dronacarya take revenge to acquire a kingdom from Drupada even though he was a brahmana? (Digest 35.1)**

Dronacarya was trained in martial skills along with Drupada. Shortly after Drupada became king, Dronacarya approached him in a friendly spirit but was treated unkindly. Dronacarya was pained to see this attitude of his friend soon after ascending the throne; he also wanted to reinstate his friendship with Drupada, but the only apparent way he could do so was to gain equal footing with Drupada. So he took away Drupada's kingdom through Arjuna's help, and gave back Drupada half of the kingdom so that now, as the masters of equal kingdoms, he could solicit Drupada's friendship again. Dronacarya was not personally aspiring Lordship over a kingdom; Drona's main motivation was that Drupada had promised him his lifelong friendship and to uphold his promise and teach his friend a lesson, he acted the way he did.

### 22.3.3) 'Karna and Duryodhana: partial incarnations of demons' & 'character evaluation of Karna'

**Brhat-bhagavtamrta is BBT's latest publication. On p 414 there is indication that Karna and Duryodhana were 'partial incarnations of demons'. Could you supply the background to this statement? Was it due to the past life of Karna, or some other reason as to why he was destined to suffer so much, and do so many bad things? What wrong deeds had he done in his previous life or in his present life as Karna? (Digest 49.1)**

There are three different angles to consider this from. The first is simply from a scriptural or textual point of view.

1) In the Vana-parva of Mahabharata it is described that Duryodhana and Karna found out that the Pandavas were living in a forest nearby and decided to humiliate them. So, under some pretext, they took their army, dressed very opulently and headed that way. On the way, Duryodhana wanted to bathe in a river which is occupied by the Gandharvas. Owing to this, finally a battle ensued in which Karna was severely hurt and fled from the battle, while Duryodhana was held captive by the king of Gandharvas. One of his soldiers went to the Pandavas for help and under instructions by Yudhishthira, Arjuna battled the Gandharvas and rescued Duryodhana.

This humiliated Duryodhana to such a great extent that he resolved to give up his life by entering into type of self-igniting samadhi, much like we find at the end of Dhrtarashtra's life. While he was doing so, the Danavas found out and performed a sacrifice to create a celestial goddess. She was instructed by the Danavas to go and get the subtle body of Duryodhana, which she did, and then brought Duryodhana before the Danavas.

The Danavas then explained to Duryodhana that he had been created as a result of a great sacrifice they performed to please Lord Shiva. His body was like thunderbolt and his strength immense. They also mentioned that the powerful demon Narkasura has incarnated as Karna and "remembering his old enmity with Vishnu, will fight with great determination." They also assured that at the time of the battle, great warriors like Drona and Bhishma would come under the influence of the Danvas and give up their natural compassion and discrimination to fight with great vigor against the Pandavas. Thus they assured that Duryodhana's victory was certain and that he should thus give up his resolve to commit suicide.

Elsewhere in the Mahabharata, indication is given that Duryodhana was the incarnation of Kali.

#### **2) Character evaluation of Karna**

Our ISKCON translator of Mahabharata, Hridayananda Maharaja, makes the following comments in relation to Karna's character. Karna was basically an evil person. Even though he was abandoned at birth, he was brought up in a very loving and nurturing family, so the generally accepted fact of a "dysfunctional childhood" really does not hold true.

He deliberately lied to get training from Parsurama, and was simply envious of Arjuna (like trying to humiliate Arjuna in his graduation ceremony). In addition there was his conduct with Draupadi, his refusal to accept the instructions of Krishna and his steadfast friendship with Duryodhana, who was obviously evil. On more than one occasion Karna ran away from the battle field leaving his friends and army exposed. In Mahabharata war, he refused to fight alongside Bhishma because he did not want to share the glory. His charity etc. was the result of

vows he had taken to enhance his own material position.

Though he had excellent parentage, namely Kunti and Surya, because he was conceived out of lust, fear and anger, his character was thus shaped. Apparently after summoning the Sun god, Kunti became fearful of the consequences, but also very much attracted to the Sun god (who was angry at being summoned trivially). During the time of pregnancy he was concealed, thus there were no purificatory rites performed, and there was also the constant refrain of fear and connivance. All this combined to possibly shape Karna into what he finally became.

3) The third response to this question has to do with the principle of association. Through the association of Duryodhana, Karna's character became debased. Even the direct son of Lord Krishna, Bhauma, born of Mother Bhumi through her contact with Lord Varaha, became changed from a good son to an asura due to his association with a bad person, namely Banasura.

#### **22.3.4) Why was 'Ekalavya's self-learning' considered a mistake?**

**Since Dronacharya refused to teach martial arts to Ekalavya, therefore Ekalavya was left with no choice but to learn himself. Why was it wrong? (Digest 39.4)**

Having approached Drona for instructions, Ekalavya should have deferred to his decision. When a qualified preceptor offers an assessment or order, however unpalatable or contrary to one's expectations it may be, one should be willing to honor it whole-heartedly: that is real respect. By doing so, in a mood of absolute respect, Ekalavya could have easily won the favor of Drona.

But to sidestep the guru when he does not approve one's whimsical desires and to work independently of him is not only wrong in etiquette but also completely contradictory to the guru-disciple relationship, especially when the guru is fully qualified. This simply demonstrates Ekalavya's act to be presumptuous. Vedic culture holds in great respect the sanctity of guru-disciple relationship. The fact is that without the blessings of the preceptor, one will not be able to make any lasting and tangible advancement independently.

#### **22.3.5) 'Ekalavya's prideful and independent-minded spirit' & 'how come Duryodhana was accepted by Drona as a student, not Ekalavya?'**

**You said, "By this prideful and independent-minded spirit, he actually proved that Drona's assessment was correct: Ekalavya was unfit to receive ksatriya training."**

**If pride was a disqualification to become a student then how was Duryodhana qualified to become Drona's student? How did Drona disregard Ekalavya's respect for guru? It appears Drona was also in the bodily conception of life and differentiated Ekalavya based on his bodily appearance and his birth. Moreover, isn't pride a quality of a ksatriya? Maybe all that needs to be done was to expand that pride from self-level to national level. Please answer my concerns about Drona's decision not to have Ekalavya as a student. (Digest 39.5)**

As far as pride is concerned, it is true that ksatriyas generally tend to be chivalrous in the wielding of their prowess. However, pride has no place in one's relationship with one's teachers. Ksatriyas are also required to be absolutely respectful of and submissive to brahminical culture;

however powerful they were, ksatriyas were trained to always defer to the brahmanas. Although Duryodhana was so wicked and envious of his cousins, he was not arrogant towards his teachers. He may not have been the ideal student, but he wasn't disqualified for ksatriya training. (We also see the common trait of pride in many of the demoniac kings killed by Krsna; they were actually very religious, charitable and apparently respectful to brahmanas, as a result of which they were very powerful kings. But their envy for Krsna deteriorated all other good qualities and brought about their doom.)

As explained before, Drona was competent to assess the character of his prospective student: neither by birth nor by qualities did Ekalavya exhibit ksatriya traits and that was his primary consideration. (Stated a different way, Ekalavya was not disqualified by his birth, but by his underlying lack of proper regard for his would-be teacher, Drona.) While it appeared by external examination that Ekalavya had full respect for Drona, from the discussion of the previous Q & A, we see that Ekalavya was actually not at all respectful to Drona; rather, he was the opposite. His so-called self-conceived worship of guru was merely external and even prideful.

This is very instructive for all of us to note that respect for guru is not just performing some external rituals or cultivating some sentimental feelings, although such rituals and feelings are important; real respect is essentially to cultivate a high regard for the spiritual master and his instructions, and abide by them.

### 22.3.6) 'Bhagavata-marg and viddhi-marg' & 'Ekalavya'

**In responding to one question about Ekalavya you said, "Please also note that the Vedas consistently instruct us that only the bhagavata-marg is effective in Kali-yuga."**

**In ISKCON, we regularly hear that the viddhi-marg is the only way for persons in the material world to attain Krishna consciousness. There is constant reference, perhaps more so in some quarters than others, to rules and regulations - yama & niyama, not this, not that. Please, Maharaja, could you clarify this apparent contradiction. (Digest 39.6)**

Bhagavata-marg is not devoid of following rules or regulations; for those of us who are not yet pure and still under the modes of nature while trying to cultivate devotion, there are prescribed rules and prohibitions that guide us in devotional service. These are called the viddhis of sadhana-bhakti. There is a world of difference between these viddhis, as opposed to the Vaidic viddhis mentioned in the discussions of Ekalavya.

Viddhi-sadhana-bhakti is aimed at helping us to directly awaken our dormant Krsna bhakti, such as chanting prescribed number of rounds, rising early, following the regulative principles, worshiping the Deities according to the proper Vaishnava procedures etc. Contrastingly, the Vedic viddhis are very elaborate systems of rules based on one's birth and varna, performing many rituals with perfect ingredients at proper timings, under very expertly trained brahmanas, and so on and so forth; even if there is some slight discrepancy, the whole thing is no good, or worse. These viddhis are intended to bring about gradual purification for the performer through the modes of nature, and are almost impossible to carry out in this age.

## 22.4. Scriptural study

### 22.4.1) Systematic study of the scriptures under guidance

**I keep reading a lot of spiritual topics, but I have so many unanswered questions. I do know that the questions I have asked here are all jumbled. But, I earnestly hope you will be able to understand what exactly I am asking, and if these questions are found relevant to be answered, I would be very glad to hear the answers. (Digest 126.5)**

I hope these answers provide some clarity to your questions. Vedic scriptures are vast and there are many intriguing and apparently contradictory concepts, what to speak of the so many other schools of thoughts prevalent today. But by systematically studying the Vedic literatures beginning with the Bhagavad Gita, under proper guidance, one can find authoritative and definitive answers to all questions and get a comprehensive picture of reality - of our spiritual nature, of God, our relationship with Him, the material world and our duty here. I would like to encourage you, if possible, to study the [Bhagavad-Gita As It Is](#), and you would find much valuable insights into these topics.

### 22.4.2) Confused [by hearing from multiple sources] and unable to apply/remember

**I am a confused man, with lots of worries. I always hear Shri Ramesh Oza, and Pujya Morari Babu, on cassettes. The time I hear I get emotional and happy. Next day I forget everything I heard, and the same routine continues.**

**Please help me and tell me what I should do. I want to get deeper in to this. Your reply (in simple English) will be a utmost help to my soul. (Digest 204.1)**

Doubts and worries haunt us due to impurities in the heart and due to lack of true knowledge - just as one becomes fearful and uncertain when one is in darkness. Spiritual knowledge of the Supreme Lord Krishna is compared to sunlight - where there is light there is no confusion or worries.

True spiritual knowledge is a science. It has to be systematically cultivated. When we sincerely apply ourselves to a genuine spiritual process, purification of heart happens. When the heart is gradually purified, then the knowledge becomes part of our life and existence, never to be forgotten. In that condition, we can experience boundless joy and remain undisturbed even in the middle of great difficulty.

Please note that for purification of heart to happen, two conditions have to be fulfilled: (1) the process must be genuinely spiritual, authorized and pure; (2) we have to not just passively hear but actively apply the science with diligent practice in our daily life.

The first important criterion in this process is to hear from those who are impeccably pure in their personal character, completely free from all vices and sins. A second criterion is that they should personally follow and guide their followers strictly according to standard scriptures. It is the duty of the sincere student to seek out and make sure he is hearing from authorized acharyas or their representatives.

For example, it is stated in scriptures that hearing is not effective when we hear from a professional reciter of Bhagavatam or someone who has their own personal agenda or philosophy other than pure devotion to Krishna the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Following

such a person or process does not transform the heart. In this age, it is quite common to find many watered-down spiritual methods, which seem very appealing to the innocent common man, but don't offer standard practices or scientific guidelines by which to conduct one's life according to scriptures. Therefore even if they sound highly motivating and churn many sentiments in the heart, because there is no scientific step-by-step process to put into practice, it cannot bring about a lasting transformation of our heart. Srimad Bhagavatam compares such philosophies to the light of glowworms or fireflies - fireflies provide some light on a dark, rainy night and may look attractive, but their light is just fleeting and cannot provide much illumination. (Cf. SB 10.20.8 <http://vedabase.net/sb/10/20/8/en> )

In order to effectively distinguish the proper representative of the Supreme Lord, the sincere student will himself have to be familiar with the basic teachings and standards of scriptures such as Bhagavad-gita. It will be very beneficial, if time permits, for you to study the Bhagavad-gita systematically - this will help the essential knowledge enter deeply in your heart and then whatever you hear from others can be evaluated and understood against this background. (Here is an online link to Bhagavad-gita As It Is <http://vedabase.net/bg/en> )

It is also very important to maintain some day-to-day practice of some authorized devotional-spiritual activities e.g. the practice of daily chanting of the Holy Names of Lord Hari. Particularly recommended for this age is the Hare Krishna mahamantra: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. You can begin with a minimum of even 10 - 15 minutes of chanting daily and gradually improve upon it. Similarly, making an offering of our food to Krishna with love and devotion, and eating only such sanctified food (prasadam) is another very important and helpful practice.

Simply theoretically hearing / thinking about devotional or philosophical subjects but not engaging the senses in practical devotional service does not give full benefit. This is why even if for the time being we may feel some sensation of peace or emotional upsurge, it does not last very long nor helps us in time of need. It is very important to take up practical spiritual engagements that can purify the senses and mind. The effect of chanting of Hare Krishna mantra is described as "ceto-darpana-marjanam" - it cleanses the mirror of the mind. The mind is filled with so many impressions, memories and other trash which always cause much agitation. But by faithful chanting, the turbulent mind becomes tranquil because the Hare Krishna mantra is a spiritual sound vibration.

Moreover, by chanting in a prayerful mood, we attract the mercy of Krishna. Krishna says in Bhagavad-gita "To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance." (BG 10.10-11) The Lord will thus give us the right intelligence when we engage in devotional service and help us identify a bona fide spiritual master who is His pure devotee, and who can then guide us systematically in the science of Krishna by which one can attain to perfect peace and happiness.

I wish you the very best in this endeavor! Hare Krishna!

**22.4.3) Is there a contradiction: 'hearing from a single source' and 'cross-checking with guru, sadhu, and sastra'?**

**Also, in light of the above it seems necessary at some point for those engaged in hearing and reading to make references between guru, sadhu and shastra in order to develop correct understanding. However, I've also heard that one should hear from a single**

**source in order to avoid confusion. This is a seeming contradiction in itself, which leads to the question: when is the right time to implement this system of understanding? (Digest 227.2)**

Once again, there is no contradiction in this principle, although there seems to be! The bona fide sadhu, shastra and guru are always in line with each other - the three-point check involves observing how each of them reinforces each other, which solidifies our faith in each of these.

Being familiar with shastra and previous saintly persons is essential to ascertain a bona fide guru in the first place, and yet factually one can have no access to the first two without the help of the latter. For instance, how would we know what is the bona fide version or meaning of Bhagavad-gita, without the help of a faithful representative of Bhagavad-gita in disciplic succession, such as Srila Prabhupada? But as we hear or study Prabhupada's books and observe his life, we see that he had no personal opinion to offer; both his prachar as well as achar were perfectly in line with and bringing to life the messages of Bhagavad-gita and the teachings of the previous mahajanas which he presented. Thus, we can affirm that "Here is a bona fide guru", based on the authority of sadhu and shastra, not just by personal or popular opinion. Simultaneously, the personal purity, empowerment and example of Prabhupada's life reinforces our faith and understanding in the validity and practicability of shastra and the teachings of previous acharyas. Thus, reference to sadhu-shastra-and-guru help reinforce each other, and yet simultaneously it is through one's personal spiritual master that one can gain access to sadhu and shastra, as well as properly understand how to practically and systematically apply their teachings in our personal life.

The three-point check is rendered futile if one doesn't develop absolute faith in any one of them. Once having ascertained a bona fide spiritual master - in the light of sadhu and shastra -- and having developed firm confidence that here is a transparent representative of Krishna and the disciplic succession, one should then set aside all of one's personal conceptions and hear from the spiritual master in order to learn the proper conclusions of scriptures. This firm faith is the fulcrum or basis from which one is able to overcome all contradictions. Please note that the disciple still appreciates the spiritual master in the light of sadhu and shastra, not independently; but his reference to sadhu and shastra is not exactly for the purpose of perpetual cross-checking. Such an attempt to try to validate and substantiate every action or statement of guru or sadhu or shastra is not helpful when done without proper guidance - it could lead one into the realm of "apparent contradictions" discussed above, and weaken one's faith, especially for the neophyte student who does not have deep grasp of scripture and spiritual principles.

By hearing from one spiritual authority, especially in the beginning stages or when one is riddled with contradictions, one develops the ability to see in synthesis. Isopanishad uses the word 'anupasyatah', or seeing through authority, by which one can become undisturbed by dualities. (Iso Mantra 7) The spiritual master knows the mentality of the disciple - what his doubts and possible areas of confusions could be - and thus he helps to address them and trains the disciple to see the world through the eyes of scriptures. Having gained the maturity and ability to see everything in synthesis, then one is able to hear from multiple sources and not become disturbed, because of having been thoroughly trained FIRST to see the underlying essential unity.

#### 22.4.4) Detaching ourselves from the material world by hearing

**How we can detach ourselves from the materialistic world to get back to Krishna? (Digest 2.18)**

It begins with hearing about Krishna in disciplic succession. By regularly hearing about Krishna in the association of devotees, and rendering service according to what we hear, knowledge and detachment automatically arise and attachment to Krishna is awakened. Then all the impurities in the heart are vanquished and we become eligible to go back to Godhead.

#### 22.4.5) Not able to execute scriptural injunctions

**My main concern is that I am being disrespectful by having knowledge of the correct way to live and not following it. I do what I can, but at present I do not have the skills to follow perfectly. Please advise. (Digest 6.10)**

Prabhupada writes in Bhagavad-gita (Bg 3.31 purport) that if one has firm faith in the injunctions of the Lord and doesn't resent them, even if he is unable to execute all the injunctions in the beginning, he will be promoted to the stage of pure Krishna consciousness. We certainly have to work sincerely and seek out the means by which we can execute these principles better. Part of that sincere effort is to seek the help of those who are able to execute them properly. Under the guidance of realized devotees, gradually that position can be achieved.

### *22.5. Srimad Bhagavad-Gita*

#### 22.5.1) Understanding Bhagavad-gita

**His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada says in BG that one has to have faith in Krishna and should understand Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then only he can understand BG. But how will a person who is at the very beginning level or not even a devotee and who just starts to read BG will understand it? Will reading BG give more faith and help him to understand it or he has to accept Krishna as the supreme personality of Godhead and then only he has to read BG? (Digest 228.1)**

Right from the very beginning of Bhagavad-Gita, it is made clear that this is being spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead -- "sri bhagavan uvaca". Srila Vyasadeva emphasizes this fact by repeatedly stating, "sri bhagavan uvaca", rather than merely "sri Krishna uvaca". In fact, the very name "Bhagavad-Gita" suggests that these are not the words of an ordinary, fallible being.

Thus, even if one is a completely new beginner with no prior conception of who Sri Krishna is, if they can begin with a simple mind by accepting the Bhagavad-gita at face value as the words of God -- just as it is stated within the book itself -- they would benefit immensely from such study of the Gita. One may initially not have a full understanding or appreciation of

Krishna's true position, how He is the proprietor and controller of everything, how He is the constant companion and Witness of all our activities, the Cause of all causes, and so on. But as long as they are not envious of the Lord and begin with even just a little drop of faith, then by further study and hearing that faith will grow and mature.

On the other hand, if one thinks of Lord Krishna in a relative way --- as an ordinary person or even an extraordinary historical personality or as one among the multitudes of demigods within this created material universe, then for them the Bhagavad-gita loses its position as an authoritative and perfect scripture. Srila Prabhupada comments in BG 2.12 p, "A common man with all the four defects of human frailty is unable to teach that which is worth hearing... When one accepts Krishna as an ordinary man, the Gita loses all importance." Thus, those who approach the Bhagavad-gita with their own ideas and interpretations that sidestep Krishna's position as the Supreme personality of Godhead, and those who challenge or relativize the authority of Krishna, their study of Gita will prove to be no more than a futile labor, as far as spiritual realization is concerned, because they are unable to accept its authoritative conclusions.

### 22.5.2) Understanding Bhagavad-gita requires faith

**His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada says in BG that one has to have faith in Krishna and should understand Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then only he can understand BG. But how will a person who is at the very beginning level or not even a devotee and who just starts to read BG will understand it? Will reading BG give more faith and help him to understand it or he has to accept Krishna as the supreme personality of Godhead and then only he has to read BG? (Digest 228.1)**

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the authority of Krishna, their study of Gita will prove to be no more than a futile labor, as far as spiritual realization is concerned, because they are unable to accept its authoritative conclusions.

### **22.5.3) Vasudeva Krishna delivers Bhagavad-Gita**

**In Chapter 4 beginning Krishna says that he instructed the imperishable science of yoga to sun god Vivasvan. I am curious as to which Avatar does this happened. (Digest 2.2)**

Each time Krsna appears to deliver Bhagavad-gita, it is as Vasudeva Krsna.

### **22.5.4) Kurukshetra battle: 'what were others doing when Krishna was speaking Bhagavad-Gita to Arjuna?' & 'reason for Arjuna's request to take the charriot to the middle of the battlefield after the start of the war'**

**While the preaching of Sri-Gita by Sri-Krishna to Arjuna was taking place, what were the others doing? Why were they simply waiting even though the war had already commenced by the blowing of holy conches? Why did Arjuna ask to take the chariot to the middle of the battlefield after the start of the war and not before? (Digest 83.2)**

As in the previous answer about setting the stage for the narration of Bhagavatam, the entire Mahabharata, complete with all its intricate plots and drama, sets the stage for this most historic event - the speaking of Bhagavad-gita by the Supreme Lord for the benefit of all conditioned souls. Thus at the most crucial moment, when the attention of the entire world was focused on this great battle, by Krishna's will, Arjuna was put into illusion, following which the Lord spoke the Gita.

Of course, it was only after much deliberation, and consultation with many saintly persons and Lord Krishna Himself that the Pandavas assembled in Kuruksetra to fight the battle. It was not a whimsical decision, and they knew what to expect. Even so, seeing the countless warriors actually assembled before him, Arjuna desired to take a good look at them, and seeing all around him relatives and friends, he became overwhelmed. It was the perfect moment for spiritual instructions, and seeing the illustrious warrior and his transcendental charioteer engaged in that discussion, the generals on both sides stood back out of curiosity and respect, to watch the outcome of that great discussion.

### **22.5.5) Kurukshetra battle: significance of the names of conchshells**

**Why do the conchshells blown by Lord Krishna, Arjuna and others on the Kuruksetra field have names? What is the significance of those names? (Digest 13.2)**

At the time it was common practice for the important paraphernalia of warriors to be given names. For instance the bow of Arjuna was known as Gandiva, Krishna's club is known as Kaumodaki etc. They were named in much the same way people were named, to describe some quality, present or desirable, or some pastime related to it.

Srila Vishwantha Cakravarti Thakura attaches special significance to the fact that only those warriors whose conchshells were named survived the battle. Everyone else with the exception of Satyaki (who is described as 'unconquerable'), perished.

**22.5.6) Understanding how Krishna had already killed Bhishma and Dronacarya though they were physically present**

**In Bhagavad-gita (1.32-35), Prabhupada mentions "At that point he (Arjuna) did not know that Krsna had already killed them before their coming into the battlefield...". My question is, if the soul is indestructible and if Bhishma and Dronacarya were physically present on the battlefield then what did Prabhupada mean by saying 'Krsna had already killed them'? (Digest 18.5)**

The first part of your question is 'If the soul is indestructible, then how can Krishna kill Bhishma and Drona?' For that matter, how can anybody be killed? This killing does not refer to the annihilation of the soul, but just to the destruction of material body.

The 2nd part of your question is 'Bhishma and Drona were present on the battlefield, so how is that they are already killed?' Krishna is Time personified, and He is knower of past, present and future. He had decided that Bhishma and Drona should be killed in this battle, and just by His will, they were already destined to die, whether Arjuna fought the battle or not. That is what Srila Prabhupada means when he says that they were already killed. Krishna Himself says so in a later chapter (refer to Ch 11, verses 27-33) where He shows His universal form and Arjuna then sees all the soldiers being devoured by the Universal Form in the manifestation of Time.

**22.5.7) BG 5.17: meaning of 'misgivings'**

**What is the word 'misgivings' in the translation to [Bg. 5.17](#) mean? (Digest 140.2)**

Our misgivings are in relation to our understanding of the true nature of the soul, Supersoul and the proper relation between them. As explained within the purport, understand one's identity to be spirit soul but mistaking it to be equal with the Supreme soul is a grave misgiving.

**22.5.8) BG 9.29: How to understand that devotees "are in Krishna"**

**In Chapter 9 Prabhupada gives the translation for text 29 as follows: "I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all. But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him." Can you guide me regarding understand the words \*is in Me\*? (Digest 9.8)**

The answer to this question is very simple. When the devotee is situated in the internal potency of Krishna, then he is situated in Krishna. You can understand this from the verse in Bhagavad-gita (9.13), 'mahatmanas tu mam partha daivim prakrtim asrita'. The phrase 'daivim prakrtim asrita' is equivalent to the statement that a devotee is 'in Krishna.'

### 22.5.9) BG 16.19-20: Are majority of mankind demoniac?

**The verses and subsequent purports of BG 16 also would seem to apply to most of society. Is it proper to think of the majority of mankind as demoniac? (Digest 214.3)**

If you consider that only 25 percent of Lord's creation is in the material world, then it would seem like only minority of mankind is demoniac. But yes in Kali Yuga in this planet at the current time, it does seem like majority of mankind is demoniac. But even many of these demoniac personalities are getting saved from the most dangerous type of fear (BG 2.40) because of the ajnata sukriti that is being created in their lives by the presence of devotees.

How extraordinarily merciful is our loving Lord Krsna!

## 22.6. Srimad Bhagavatam

### 22.6.1) Uniqueness and accessibility of Srimad Bhagavatam

**While reading Srimad Bhagavatam (Canto 1, Ch 4) I read that Srila Vyasdeva was not satisfied at heart although he finished compiling the 4 vedas, Mahabharat, 108 Upanishads, puranas & Vedanta Sutras. The reason is also given: "He did not glorify the Supreme Personality of Godhead & pure devotional service." (Digest 121.1)**

**My questions:**

**1. Does this mean that without Shrimad Bhagavatam, the Vedas are not perfect & complete?**

Srimad Bhagavatam is an integral part of the Vedas; it is described as the cream of Vedic knowledge or as the ripened fruit of the Vedic tree. The most valuable part of a tree is its fruit, and so also the Bhagavatam represents the essence of the Vedas. So, yes, Vyasadev's presentation of the Vedas remained incomplete until he elaborately presented the Srimad Bhagavatam; hence he was feeling despondent and unfulfilled.

**2. How did people in the previous ages attain pure devotional service if S.B. was not available?**

The Vedas are all eternal - including the Upanishads, Puranas and Itihasas. What Srila Vyasadeva did at the end of Dvapara yuga was to compile and present them in a systematic written form for the benefit of the less-qualified population of the Kali age.

Within the Bhagavatam itself we find conversations and narrations spanning many previous ages. The narrations of Prahlad preaching pure devotional service to his classmates and demoniac father, or Lord Kapila instructing His mother Devahuti, for instance, took place in Satya yuga. Also, as stated in BG 4.7, the Lord Himself descends in every age to establish the yuga-dharma, just as He did in the form of Nara-Narayana Rishi or Lord Caitanya and He also sends His empowered incarnations and representatives such as Vyasadev. Thus, by the

arrangement of the Lord, the path of pure devotion is made available to people in all ages, according to time, place and circumstance.

### **22.6.2) Srimad Bhagavatam is not a mythology**

**Some of the stories in the Bhagavatam are like Sci Fi or Fantasy novels. How do we know they were not just made up by man, legends based on good spiritual ideas to give us spiritual knowledge in a way the culture at the time could understand. I believe there is a God, I believe without doubt there is an after life and reincarnation to help us grow spiritually. I do not believe karma is a punishment or a reward but a way to grow spiritually. I do not believe in transmigration because what would be the point ... that's like a punishment which has no value. I do love God and I want to believe in the texts and the only one I can really believe is the Bhagavad-Gita, without interpretation. I believe it speaks for itself, because the religious truths are the same as most other religions but the Srimad Bhagavatam is difficult to believe, other than as parables or stories to prove a point. (Digest 195.2)**

Yes, our goal is ultimately to simply and humbly serve God and love Him. But a symptom of one's desire to love and serve is the eagerness to hear and know more about Him. It is natural that when you make friendship with someone, you want to know more intimately about their life, activities, likes and dislikes, about their opulence and other associates etc, which will enhance your intimate relationship with that person. In the same way, devotees do not want to just serve God as some abstract, unknown principle, but are eager to enter into a relationship with Him, to prepare to enter His kingdom and serve Him along with His eternal associates. To give us the opportunity to know Him better, God descends to this earth and performs superhuman pastimes along with His associates from the spiritual kingdom - this is not impossible for the Omnipotent Lord. Srimad Bhagavatam records some of these most intimate portrayals of the Lord's supernatural activities and loving exchanges - for us to reject them as parables would be to reject a part of the revelation of Himself that He is giving us in order to help us come closer to Him.

It may seem difficult or beyond one's comprehension to conceive of certain aspects of spiritual knowledge from our present level of spiritual evolvment. It is important therefore to get training in the spiritual science in a systematic, step-by-step manner, under the guidance of some realized devotee. For example, a young child who has just learned how to read will be thoroughly bewildered if he undertakes the task of comprehending high-school or college texts, without systematic guidance that takes him through different grades of knowledge, from the simple to the more complex. The Srimad Bhagavatam is compared to post-graduate studies, very much based on the principles of Bhagavad-Gita but elaborating those principles in great depth and detail. Therefore it is recommended that one should study Bhagavatam under the guidance of a Bhagavata (realized devotee). Without such help, it is quite possible that one may become confused by apparent contradictions.

Therefore, presently, I would like to encourage you to strengthen your foundational faith and devotion, by following the basic principles as you are now doing and acting on those teachings which you are able to understand and relate to. By acting in knowledge, faith grows and matures to be able to access deeper truths.

At the same time, please allow me to caution you not to reject or discount those parts of

shastra you are unable to reconcile. If each of us starts accepting and rejecting parts of scripture that seem incredible to our limited minds, in effect we are simply being guided by our own fallible opinions, is it not? This is often the approach of mundane academic scholars and by this method of successive rejection of what they "feel" is not rational or unacceptable, they have done great injustice and practically relegated the entire body of scriptures to the status of myth. However, when we really carry deep respect and honor for those who have presented these scriptures, and value their superior intelligence and judgment, how can we justify brushing aside their descriptions as superfluous or allegorical, when they themselves assert that these details are indeed factual, as Srila Prabhupada often does throughout the Bhagavatam. There are indeed some narrations in scriptures which are allegorical, but often it is clearly indicated that they are so, and those descriptions which are held to be factual by the text itself, and by the great devotees, it would be best for us to defer to that even if it seems beyond our understanding for the present.

One can admit one's ability to comprehend or penetrate into the meanings of these sections, admit that we have many preconceptions based on our own limited experience within this material world which blocks our ability to understand transcendence, and with sincere prayers to the Lord to give us the ability to understand His transcendental activities, continue studying. And if possible, you can seek out some realized devotees from whom you can hear the Bhagavatam. By this humble, devotional, and respectful approach to the Bhagavatam, you will get newer and fresher insights into its message.

**22.6.3) How is Srimad Bhagavatam, a commentary on the vedanta sutras, as vedanta sutras mainly deals with impersonal Brahman?**

**In Srimad Bhagavatam 1st canto 5th chapter, Srila Prabhupada says that Vedanta-sutra is the complete deliberation on the impersonal Brahman and yet he also says that Srimad Bhagavatam, which is purely Personal is the natural commentary. How to reconcile this two apparently contradicting statements? (Digest 153.1)**

Jiva Goswami teaches in Bhagavat-Sandarbha that the term Brahman, whenever found in the Vedas (including in Vedanta Sutra) refers to Bhagavan, just as whenever we speak of sunshine we should know that the sun is ultimately what is being indicated by the presence of sunshine.

Vedanta-sutra is appreciated primarily by impersonalists, which is the message of the Canto 1, Chapter 5 reference sited. However, both SB and Govinda-bhasya (Baladev's Gaudiya-vaisnava commentary on Vedanta-sutra) are purely personal commentary on Vedanta-sutra. This means that both SB and Govinda-bhasya point us to the "sun" rather than the sunshine, or to the personal feature of the Absolute Truth as opposed to the impersonal feature.

You might find the following verse and purport to be very illuminating as well. It is one of Dhruva Maharaja's prayers to Lord Visnu, who is standing before Dhruva. See SB 4.9.16. Be sure to examine carefully the purport.

"My dear Lord, in Your impersonal manifestation of Brahman there are always two opposing elements—knowledge and ignorance. Your multienergies are continually manifest, but the impersonal Brahman, which is undivided, original, changeless, unlimited and blissful, is the cause of the material manifestation. Because You are the same impersonal Brahman, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You."

**22.6.4) How is that Srimad Bhagavatam, one of the 18 puranas, if all the puranas existed before Vyasa dev composed Srimad Bhagavatam ?**

**I have read in one of Srila Prabhupada's book that Srimad Bhagavatam is one of the eighteen puranas. As we know Vyasadeva compiled all Vedic scriptures and he was not satisfied. Later on Narada Muni came and advised him to compile the Srimad Bhagavatam and then He wrote it. How then is Srimad Bhagavatam considered to be one of the 18 puranas? If it is so then there is a conflict in time sequence. Please clarify. (Digest 89.1)**

Vyasadev did compile all the eighteen puranas including Bhagavat Purana, along with the four Vedas, Upanishads and Vedanta sutra. But he had only composed the essence of the Bhagavatam, not the entirety of Srimad Bhagavatam's 18,000 slokas.

Later on, Narada censured Srila Vyasadev for not having sufficiently glorified the Absolute Truth as much as he had dwelt on the materialistic religious principles. Following Narada's directions, Vyasa then proceeded to first perfect his own realization when in a trance of devotional meditation he actually saw the Supreme Lord in His fullness, along with His internal and external potencies; he also saw how the conditioned souls can become free by the process of bhakti yoga. (Cf. SB 1.7.4-6) In that stage of mature realization, he then expanded the essence of Srimad Bhagavatam to its full 18000 slokas, composed as a natural commentary on the Vedanta sutra as well as Gayatri Mantra, and a work exclusively dedicated to the glorification of Krishna and the process of pure devotional service.

**22.6.5) Catur sloki Bhagavatam**

**I have been told that the Srimad Bhagavatam is a commentary/explanation of only 4 verses. These 4 verses are the original instructions to Lord Brahma. I think it is called "catur sloki Bhagavata." Please comment and explain also which canto and which chapter and verse numbers do this refer to. (Digest 60.2)**

In the beginning of creation, when Lord Brahma appeared on a lotus flower born from the navel of Lord Vishnu, he was perplexed as to the source of the lotus flower and of his own existence. Brahma also required direction how to proceed with his creative work, ie. the engineering and construction of the entire universe. All he could see was the lotus flower upon which he was seated and endless darkness. At that time, hearing the syllables 'tapa' being vibrated from an unknown source, he executed devotional penances for a long time. At the end of a thousand celestial years, the Lord being very much satisfied by Brahma's penance manifested before him along with His spiritual abode, and instructed him the essence of Bhagavatam in four verses.

Graphic description of this episode of Brahma's perplexity, penance and finally seeing the Supreme Lord are found in the Second Canto, Chapter Nine. The questions Lord Brahma put to the Lord upon seeing Him are answered by the Lord in the catur-sloki or four essential verses, which are Texts 33-36. As in the Bhagavad-gita, where Krishna has summarized the whole text in four verses [Bg. 10.8-11], so the complete Srimad-Bhagavatam has also been summarized in these four verses. Brahma instructed them to Narada and requested him to expand them further. Later on Naradji gave the same instruction to Vyasadeva, who then expanded the entire Srimad Bhagavatam (this is described in Canto 1, Ch. 5-7), which was later recited by Sukadeva

Gosvami to Maharaja Pariksit.

The questions asked by Brahmaji were as follows: (1) What are the forms of the Lord both in matter and in transcendence? (2) How are the different energies of the Lord working? (3) How does the Lord play with His different energies? (4) How may Brahma be instructed to discharge the duty entrusted to Him, without being conditioned by such activities? The answers to these four questions forms the nucleus of Bhagavatam. The Lord informs Brahma that this knowledge is very subtle and can be understood only by the grace of the Lord, achieved through the process of devotional service. (Cf. SB 2.9.31-32)

### **22.6.6) Why was Arjuna not able to protect the queens of Lord Krishna?**

**The events in Srimad Bhagavatam, Canto 1, Ch.12, refer to Arjuna going to Dwaraka to bring back all of Lord Krishna's wives after Lord Krishna's departure. It is said that Arjuna's weapon did not work. Why was Arjuna not able to protect the queens? Why were the wives who were great devotees of Krishna abducted during this attack? (Digest 23.1)**

This incident is explained in a later chapter wherein both of these questions are specifically answered in detail within the purports, as well as by Srila Prabhupada in SB 1.15.20-21. In short, it was a wonderful pastime of the Lord where the Lord Himself came in disguise to abduct the queens. Simultaneously the pastime illustrates clearly that Arjuna's strength and prowess was solely due to Lord Krishna's presence with him; Arjuna had no independent power.

### **22.6.7) 'Story of Ajamila' & 'glories of offenseless chanting'**

**I've heard three different versions of the end result of Ajamila's story. a) Because he chanted Lord Narayana's name at the time of death, he is liberated; b) He is given another chance to be born again to lead a Krishna Conscious life; c) He is given another chance in the same lifetime to lead a Krishna Conscious life. Which of the above is true? Should not the first one be the correct version, because according to Bhagavad-gita if we chant Krishna's names at the time of death we will be liberated? (Digest 14.5)**

Although Ajamila chanted the name of Lord Narayana, he had not yet attained devotion or knowledge of the Supreme Lord. In other words, he was not situated in pure devotion to Lord Narayana, although he chanted His holy names. He was certainly relieved of all his sins, and of the prosecution by the Yamadutas, by virtue of his chanting. Then he was given another chance, and his devotion having been aroused by the association of the Visnudutas, he went to Haridwar and practiced devotional service thereby perfecting his life. [Remember, the soul of Ajamila was NOT taken from his body by the Yamadutas; thus, Ajamila still had some time left in his elderly body.]

Even unintentional chanting of the Holy name, if done offenselessly, can relieve one of all sins and in that sense is liberating. But, one has to go further and to attain eligibility to go back to Godhead. One has to develop knowledge of, and attachment or devotion to, the Personality of Godhead.

### 22.6.8) Hiranyaksha going to Garbodhaka ocean

**Does Hiranyaksha go into the Garbhodaka ocean looking for Vishnu, after talking to Varuna (SB 3.2.1)? Is the ocean mentioned there the ocean that Lord Vishnu lies on Ananta Sesha? (Digest 24.3)**

Yes.

## 22.7. Upanishads

### 22.7.1) Understanding the chariot analogy given in Katha Upanishad: soul, senses, mind, intelligence, and the Supersoul

**I have a question related to the chariot analogy of the living entity. In the Katha Upanishad a description is given of a chariot drawn by 5 horses representing the senses, the mind the reins, the charioteer the intelligence and the passenger the soul.**

**My understanding is that as long as the soul/passenger is asleep, the living entity is conditioned, as he has no proper direction and undergoes repeated "birth and death" in the material world. (Digest 115.1)**

**Q1: When the soul/passenger is awake and directs the intelligence and the senses, since one is no longer acting on the urge of the unbridled senses, the mind and the intelligence, is one in a liberated state?**

Your description and understanding of the analogy is correct, although the soul is not specifically compared to the states of being asleep and awake.

When the self directs the intelligence according to spiritual instructions, the Upanishad states that one can reach the destination, Vishnu, who is paramam padam, the supreme goal of life (Katha Upanishad 1.3.9\*). Thus, in this analogy, the liberated state can be understood as the destination and the self is on the path towards liberation.

Srila Prabhupada comments on this verse: One may drive well, or else one may drive whimsically, in which case it is quite possible that he may have an accident and fall into a ditch. In other words, if one takes directions from the experienced spiritual master one can go back home, back to Godhead. (SB 7.15.41 purport)

**Q2: Why is the Super-soul not mentioned in this analogy as the second passenger on the chariot?**

Katha Upanishad does mention the Supersoul, although not in this particular analogy, but both in preceding and following sections. Clear distinction is made between the soul, Supersoul and the body in this Upanishad. The Supersoul is specifically described as residing in the heart along with the atomic soul. (Katha Upanishad 1.2.20 quoted in purport of [Bhagavad-gita 2.20](#)),

Katha Upanishad 2.2.13 quoted in [Bhagavad-gita 2.12](#) and [Bhagavad-gita 15.17](#))

\* The Kathopanishad, 1.3.9, states:

vijnana-sarathir yas tu  
manah pragrahavan narah  
so'dhvanah param apnoti  
tad visnoh paramam padam

"One who possesses vijnana, realization of the Lord, as his charioteer, and who thus maintains a steady control of the mind, which is like the reins that control the horses of the bodily senses, crosses this material reality and attains the supreme abode of Sri Visnu, who is the omnipresent Supersoul known as Vasudeva."

### 22.7.2) Isavasya: God is the proprietor

**How would you explain the concept of "isavasya" given in Isopanisad? (Digest 148.2)**

I am not sure if you have some specific angle or point of clarification on this. The basic idea of 'isavasya' is to recognize the Lord's proprietorship over everything, since everything in the universe including all spirit souls (us!) are emanations from Him, and therefore conducting our life accordingly.

When we recognize the Lord as proprietor, we would work only for His interest, and use everything at our disposal - including our body, our mental faculties, social relationships etc, in His service. We should take steps to mold our life in such a way that this becomes possible. This means being satisfied with whatever privileges are given to us by God's grace and not endeavor ever-increasingly for greater material gains (this is called prayasa, in the language of Upadesamrita, and it destroys bhakti). As Krishna says in the Gita, we are to perform our prescribed duties without claiming proprietorship over the results. One who is living by the principles of isavasya would not envy or covet the position or possessions of others but is satisfied to execute the duties given to him nicely to his utmost ability, for the pleasure of the Lord. Isavasya also implies conducting our activities according to the laws of God as given in Vedic scriptures, without being affected by undue attachments and aversions -- in other words, we not only offer the results to Krishna but also do the work itself according to His directions, not whimsically.

Srila Prabhupada gives some examples of application of this idea in the purport to Isopanisad Mantra 1 - such as offering all our food to the Supreme Isa and accepting only Krishna prasadam. Another example is that a laborer cannot claim proprietorship over a building he has constructed simply because he worked hard to manufacture it. Thus a devotee does not think that he/she is being maintained or evaluated by the results of their own hard labor or personal abilities, rather one recognizes that all the ingredients including one's physical and intellectual capabilities come from Krishna, and thus Krishna is the actual doer, proprietor and maintainer.

Srila Prabhupada often described nicely how young brahmacaris were trained within the Vedic system in this spirit within the Gurukula: the students would collect and bring alms for the

Guru, and whatever they bring becomes the property of the spiritual master. The student will eat only when invited by the spiritual master and if the guru neglects to call him, he will fast; although it was the student that labored to collect the alms, he was trained to see it as Guru's property and not think of eating without permission. Thus from the outset they are trained to later on see everything as the property of Guru and Krishna.

## 22.8. Vedas

### 22.8.1) Study of Vedas

**This is a question on BG 2.45. Sri Krishna advises 'traigunya-visaya veda' by asking us to rise above the Vedas; and in some other chapter He says 'shrutis mrutir mamaivagya...', thereby asking us to study the Vedas. Could you please clarify. (Digest 13.3)**

In BG 2.45 Krishna is advising Arjuna to rise above the three modes as described in the Vedas, not above the Vedas. In the purport, Srila Prabhupada explains that Arjuna is being advised to raise himself to the transcendental position of the Vedanta philosophy.

Srila Rupa Gosvami writes in his *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* (1.2.101): "Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literatures like the Upanishads, Puranas and Narada-pancaratra is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society."

However in BG 2.53, Sri Krishna comments that "When your mind is no longer disturbed by the flowery language of the Vedas, and when it remains fixed in the trance of self-realization, then you will have attained the divine consciousness." In this context He is referring to the aspect of Vedas that deals with fruitive activities for materialistic gains, which tend to lead one away from unalloyed devotional service.

NOTE: The "shrutis mrutir mamaivagya" reference is not from BG, but study of the vedas is always recommended, under the guidance of a bonafide spiritual master.

## 23. Vaishnava sampradayas

### 23.1. General questions: Vaishnava sampradadays

#### 23.1.1) List of items accepted by Lord Caitanya from the four sampradayas

**Which are the things which Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has taken from four sampradayas? (Digest 155.1)**

The list of items that Lord Caitanya accepted from the four sampradayas are as follows.

**Madhva :**

1. Complete Rejection of Mayavada philosophy
2. Dedication to the Service of the Deity of Krsna

**Ramanuja:**

1. Pure devotional service, unpolluted by karma and jnana
2. Service to the vaisnavas

**Visnuswami:**

1. Sentiment of Exclusive Dependence on Krsna
2. Raga-marg or Spontaneous devotion

**Nimbarka:**

1. The utter Necessity of taking shelter of the lotus feet of Sri Radha
2. The high esteem of the gopis worship for Krsna

#### 23.1.2) Why do sampradayas compare & contrast their teachings with other sampradayas?

**Why does a particular sampradaya not just teach as it is what it believes in, instead of trying to compare and contrast with other sampradayas and constantly try to prove its view point or interpretation as the last word? (Digest 102.2)**

I will not attempt here to speak for other traditions and schools of thought but contain this present discussion to our Vaishnava sampradaya. As you are probably aware, there are four Vaishnava sampradayas that are accepted as bona fide, based on the scriptural authority of Padma Purana - the disciplic lines descending from Brahma, Rudra, Kumaras and Sri (Lakshmi).

There are subtle shades of variations among these four sampradayas based on their mood of worship and desired goal, but there are no serious clashes of a fundamental nature nor inherent disagreements amongst these four sampradayas themselves.

As far as the overall Vaishnava theology, it is important to understand that the acharyas or preceptors coming in each of these sampradayas are not simply propounding their viewpoint or interpretation of truth. Rather they are representing an unbroken chain beginning from the

Supreme Lord Himself, and are simply repeating His Absolute message. But when there appear other schools of thought that are not in line with the message of God, it is then that differences arise.

For example, Krishna plainly and simply requests in Bhagavad-gita that we give up all other forms of religion and surrender to Him. But some scholar had interpreted it thus: "It is not to Krishna that we have to surrender, but to the unborn within Krishna." - which is far from the direct meaning of Krishna's statement. Besides, such an interpretation is not in line with sastras, because it is clearly and repeatedly mentioned throughout scriptures, and in the Gita itself, that Krishna is an Absolute Person, there being no difference between His inside and outside, as in the case of ordinary living entities. He \*is\* the Unborn, there is no unborn "within" Him. When there are such serious aberrations, and especially when innocent people are misled by such propaganda, there is a dire need for such theories to be refuted and the truth be told!

Devotees of the Lord are least interested in endless logical debates and wranglings to prove their ideological superiority or to promote some personal agenda, although such motivations are not uncommon sometimes amongst intellectuals and dry scholars. Devotees, however, are simply interested in humble service to Godhead. In course of such service to the Lord, it behooves the acharya to distinguish and differentiate right from wrong pictures of Reality for the benefit of the disciples, as well as to establish that the teachings of the parampara are absolute (which they are), and not just another interpretation or theory among many others. It is their solemn responsibility not only to pass down this great science unadulterated but also to safeguard the truth from being misinterpreted or eclipsed by concocted forms of religion, and thereby becoming lost (as Krishna mentions in Bg 4.1-2). Truth cannot be established without dispelling illusion, the deep-rooted misconceptions and deviations from the original conclusion of scripture. (See SB 1.1.2)

In speaking the Bhagavad-gita, the Lord Himself does this a number of times. He addresses some of the typical misconceptions and philosophies of the time, sometimes dismissing them as ignorant or not based on scripture, and at other times strongly condemning them as foolish and demoniac. He also points to different gradations or levels of self-realization and concludes that they all culminate in devotional service to Him (Some examples: 2.42-43, 6.47, 7.24, 12.1-5 etc.). His representatives are simply following in the same spirit.

Far from being self-aggrandizement or criticism of others, their real motivation is compassion, just as you might call out to someone you see heading towards the cliff or strongly object when you see someone you love making a really bad decision. When a devotee sees how much the common people are in ignorance and are being misled by impersonalists, atheists, materialists and pseudo-spiritualists, and how much they are suffering as a result, the devotee is not content to simply present something that may be interpreted as "his viewpoint" but attempts to educate people in general on the Vedic authority, sometimes in the form of a strong and even at times a straightforward and forceful challenge of very harmful misconceptions.

I hope this eases your doubt.

### **23.1.3) Is it acceptable to compare teachings of other sampradayas and take time to accept the teachings?**

**In recent Bhakti Vriksha meetings, some of my previous understandings of the Trimurthy Concept and Dasa-avatars has been changed significantly and this has prompted me to study the structure of Indian Philosophies and inquire into the various**

**schools of thought to understand objectively the different philosophical traditions or sampradayas and their teachings. Is this inquiry wrong?**

**As a result of my recent inquiries, I am unable to blindly follow the discussions and accept everything on the face value. My upbringing, education, and the professional work place culture that I am associated with for 38 years of my life do not permit me to accept one school of thought as the single authority or final word versus the other. In essence, I think I need more time to convince myself of the authenticity of any teachings. I hope some time will be given to any devotee to develop faith in a particular sampradaya. Is seeking more time acceptable? (Digest 102.1)**

Inquiry is very essential to obtain knowledge; it is definitely not wrong to want to deeply inquire, take time to study and try to objectively understand the philosophy of Krishna consciousness from different angles; rather it is recommended and very welcome. In fact, Srila Krishnadas Kaviraj, a great Vaishnava saint and author, invites us to apply all of our power of inquiry and logic to this process of Krishna consciousness. Such understanding of the sastra strengthens the mind and intelligence and can protect us from the numerous pitfalls on the spiritual path.

Srila Prabhupada also held both blind acceptance and blind rejection as equally to be rejected.

I would like to add a word of caution, though. The spirit of inquiry, Krishna explains in Bhagavad-gita, must simultaneously be accompanied by a spirit of service, submission and humility. (Bg 4.34) Submission and hearing from authority does not mean blind acceptance; rather it is to carefully consider the teachings as far as our God-given intelligence allows, and to do so in a humble frame of mind and sincere eagerness to come closer to God as opposed to the spirit of challenge. Spiritual knowledge, unlike material knowledge, cannot be attained by exhaustive analysis or intellectual pursuits. It is most confidential and can be understood only by following in the footsteps of mahajanas, and thereby achieving the grace of the Lord.

Modern upbringing and education are geared in the opposite direction, but they can lead only to relative truths, not to the Absolute. They are aimed at sense-gratification, not at self-realization. Spiritual education however is on a different platform. However, even if one is trained in modern ways of inquiry, if one can avoid the pitfall of endless skepticism, and study carefully from trustworthy sources in a devotional disposition as mentioned above, the Lord in the heart will guide us to knowledge.

**23.1.4) 'Caitanya Mahaprabhu's acceptance of Madvacarya' & 'celebration of the appearance day of Madvacarya'**

**"Did Caitanya Mahaprabhu also accept that Madhvacharya was Jagat guru or did he disregard that fact because as He is the incarnation of God, He can do anything. Why don't you celebrate Madhva Navami when even Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Himself claimed Himself to be a follower of Madhva? I would really appreciate the answers to these Questions. (Digest 224.2)**

Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu came in the role of a devotee and an acharya. He taught by His own personal example how to be a devotee of Krishna. He is the yuga-avatara and thus He taught the process of congregational chanting. He also most munificently distributed pure love of

God, unlike ever before in the history of the world. Yet, even though the Independent Supreme Personality of Godhead, He accepted initiation in the Madhva sampradaya, just to teach by His own example the importance of accepting a bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession. He certainly did not disregard Madhvacharya. Furthermore He took the teachings of not only Madhvacharya but from all the four vaishnava sampradayas, and presented them in synthesis in the philosophy of 'acintya-bheda-abheda-tattva' (Inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference).

The appearance of Madhvacharya is indeed observed as a holy day in our Gaudiya-vaishnava calendar each year, at which time we remember and discuss his glories on this day following the path chalked out by the followers of Lord Caitanya.

## 24. Vaishnavas

### 24.1. Cultivating Vaishnava qualities

#### 24.1.1) Relationship between 'acquiring mode of goodness qualities', 'manifesting vaishnava qualities', 'making endeavors' and 'chanting'

I'm confused about the relationship between acquiring mode of goodness qualities, manifesting Vaisnava qualities, making endeavors, and chanting. For example, there seems to be a Catch-22 relationship between chanting and acquiring mode of goodness qualities.

I thought that attentive chanting would magically endow me with those qualities, yet we're supposed to endeavor to acquire these qualities so that we can chant more. If we acquire these qualities as a result of Krsna reciprocating with our endeavors to attain those qualities, then what role does chanting play in our progressing to the mode of goodness? A similar confusion exists for me concerning exhibiting Vaisnava qualities. Since the holy names are supposed to automatically bring about these qualities, why do we have to make an extra endeavor to exhibit these qualities in our dealings with other people? (Digest 76.1)

While chanting very prayerfully, one's motivation and intensity of desire to please Krishna increases. One of the specific ways in which our desire to please Krishna intensifies is to desire to present ourselves before Krishna with finer qualities, and fewer faults, flaws, shortcomings, etc. With this purpose in mind, we naturally begin to endeavor to obtain these better qualities, motivated NOT by something material hankering (for respect, acceptance by others, praise, gaining a sense of self-accomplishment, etc), but ONLY to increase the happiness Krishna receives when we come before Him to offer Him our services. Only by His bestowing His mercy, however, not by our efforts alone, the desirable good qualities develop to enhance the pleasure of Krishna. Thus, one is not chanting while separately in pursuit good qualities. In fact, everything comes from chanting!

#### 24.1.2) How to give up the doership mentality?

**How should we understand that ultimately we are not the doer of our activity? How to keep this understanding always and work, because many times when we work we often get carried away thinking that actually I'm the doer (and it appears to be so)? (Digest 171.1)**

With some introspection, guided by spiritual intelligence from Bhagavad-Gita, we can recognize that we are not the ultimate doer. We discussed this in a previous digest, (<http://vcal.iskcondc.org/cgi-bin/renderphilo.pl?digestname=digest78>):

"In Bg 18.14, Krishna explains that there are five factors of action, only one of which is our self, the others being the senses and instruments, the field of action, the different endeavors and ultimately the Supersoul. As said above, everything required for performing an activity,

including our own intelligence and strength comes from Krishna. Our independent will constitutes one of the factors, but we are miniscule and dependent on the Lord for every movement and can act only under His sanction. Thus, with a little introspection, we can understand that we are not the cause or doer. We may be an immediate or intermediate cause, but the ultimate doer is Krishna.

See also BG 5.14 ("The embodied spirit, master of the city of his body, does not create activities, nor does he induce people to act, nor does he create the fruits of action. All this is enacted by the modes of material nature.") Material nature is creating the fruits of all material activities, not the soul. We have the capacity to perform work, we make various endeavors, material nature creates results...and material nature works under Krishna's direction (BG 9.10)."

To maintain this consciousness while working in the field of our activities, however, takes devotional practice --- by increasingly recognizing our insignificance and cultivating a mood of dependence on Krishna in doing our activities. When we practice doing every activity in the mood of a servant, simply as an order-carrier of Guru and Krishna - from simple things as chanting or cleaning to executing occupational duties, discussing philosophy or interacting with colleagues - this internal cultivation strengthens the realization of our totally dependent position.

While doing so it will become increasingly evident that the result derived from work done in such a mood of surrender and dependence is perceptibly much different from the result obtained by acting in the mood of doer, in terms of what effect it has on our own consciousness and also upon the environment and others around us. When acting according to scriptural direction, under the guidance of the Lord's representatives, and for the purpose of pleasing the Lord - you will begin to see that such actions are uplifting, liberating and beneficial for all, while you are simply being an instrument, personal qualifications/disqualifications notwithstanding. In contrast, when acting under the impression that 'I'm the doer', under the influence of false-ego, what is really happening is that we are being completely conducted by the modes of nature - be it goodness, passion or ignorance (Bg 3.27 <http://vedabase.net/bg/3/27/en>); consequently the results are also completely controlled by the modes, not in our control. This personal realization reinforces our recognition of the fact that we are not the doer but simply an instrument, fully under the control of either the modes of nature or the internal potency of devotion, depending upon our desire or freewill disposition.

In summary, by acting in a mood of service under the guidance of realized devotees, we can become free of the false sense of doer-ship. By adopting the mood of humble service, Krishna provides us with ample yet gradual realization of this important spiritual reality.

### **24.1.3) Practical cultivation of the mood of humble service**

**How can I practically cultivate the mood of being a humble servant of devotees in regular interactions? (Digest 172.1)**

In the following file

[http://www.romapadaswami.com/Songs\\_And\\_References\\_About\\_Humility.pdf](http://www.romapadaswami.com/Songs_And_References_About_Humility.pdf) (Appendix D) there are some discussions on the topic of humility, including some direct quotes from Srila Prabhupada's books on the topic of "Humility and Eagerness to Serve".

Here is a brief description of what humility is and being humble means;

1) Humility deals with what we think of ourselves. With a spiritual conception of ourselves, we act from constitutional position of being a servant of Krsna.

2) When one has a spiritual conception of humility it increases one's enthusiasm/desire to serve Krsna and thus increases devotional service.

3) Srila Prabhupada said - God is great and we are small. Krsna Consciousness is very simple if we understand this. Most people accept that God is great but they do not know how great God is. When we understand how great God is, we realize how tiny we are and this inspires service.

4) If we are not humble, we will never understand someone/something greater than us. Humility is the precursor to knowledge and with knowledge, detachment comes.

5) Humility is the foundation of pridelessness. Pride rests upon misconception of self.

6) We cannot surrender without being humble. For instance, Jarasandha was humiliated so many times but he did not get the message. Even when everything is taken away, one does not surrender if one is not humble.

7) When one takes a humble position, duality does not disturb that person.

Here are some hints on how to develop humility and eagerness to serve:

i) Hear descriptions of personalities who are humble, glorify them, remember them, offer prayers to them.

ii) Regular recitation of prayers by entering into the spirit of the prayers.

iii) Find happiness simply in serving.

iv) Establish close relationships with those that are humble and who are eager for that goal.

v) Study Srila Prabhupada's books regularly and scrutinizingly.

vi) Participate and create opportunities for saintly association.

vii) Missionary spirit - taking preaching spirit upon us. We meet the whole spectrum of people when we preach - we should stay humble and dedicated. Preaching helps develop humility, value devotee association.

viii) Ramanujacarya describes a three-fold process to cultivate any Vaisnava quality - a) regular devotional practices, b) Cultural - hearing glories of great acaryas and reciting prayers, c) Internal cultivation

### **Quotes on humility from Srila Prabhupada Sikasamrta**

1) Personally one should be very meek and humble even in the presence of greatest provocation but a slight insult to Krsna or His representative should at once be taken seriously. (Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Brahmananda, 15th November, 1967)

2) A devotee should always remain humble and meek, especially to authorities and devotees. Lord Caitanya's philosophy is not to become God but to become servant, servant of God. The more one becomes the lower grade servant of Lord, the more he is devoted nearer to the Lord. (Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Jaya Govinda, 8th February, 1968)

3) The more you think as imperfect, the more you make actual progress in Krsna consciousness. This hankering after perfection is seen even in the most perfect devotees. So, we should never think of being perfect at any stage. Actually, Krsna consciousness is unlimited, because Krsna is unlimited, so we do not know at which point perfection is there. Even Krsna thinks that he is imperfect to understand Radharani's feelings of devotion; and to understand the devotional feelings of Radharani, He became Lord Caitanya, to worship Krsna in the feelings of Radharani. (Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Hamsaduta, 17th February, 1968)

4) This humbleness is the sign of progress in Krsna consciousness. A Krsna conscious person thinks always about himself as the lowest creature in the world, and the more one thinks like that he becomes elevated more and more. A Krsna conscious person is never falsely puffed up; he is satisfied with his humble position as the servant of servant of Krsna. (Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Krsnadasa, 1st June, 1968)

5) You ask about the desire for fame. Fame is a material desire, but to desire fame in Krsna consciousness is not bad. If you think that people may know you as a great devotee of Krsna, that they may acknowledge me as a nice devotee of Krsna, that is not at all bad. But even one is highly elevated in Krsna consciousness he should not think himself a great devotee, he should always think himself humble. (Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Upendra, November 13th, 1968)

6) In the spiritual world to accept one's inferior position does not mean envious mentality upon the other. Unhappiness experienced by a devotee on account of feeling himself inferior is not unusual, rather such mentality is imperative to further development of devotional service. (Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Satsvarupa, 20th February, 1969)

7) The actual Vaisnava always feels himself lowly and unqualified, but this submissiveness and humbleness is his actual qualification for becoming perfect in Krsna consciousness. In material everyone is thinking that I am so wonderful, I am so expert, but actually the living entity is an insignificant spark of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. So when we see we are becoming aware of our infinitesimal nature, then we begin to also understand something of how infinitely great Krsna is. One cannot be falsely puffed up and still expect to make progress in spiritual life. Rather one must learn to accept his constitutional position of Krsna's tiny servant. Then Krsna is pleased to reveal Himself to such devotee, and the devotee becomes more and more engaged in rendering transcendental service to the Lord. (Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Gajendra, 20th July, 1969)

8) When a Krsna conscious person is elevated to a responsible position he never becomes puffed up. Just like a tree overladen with fruits become humble and lower down, similarly, a great soul in Krsna consciousness become humbler than grass and bowed down like fruitful trees, because a Krsna conscious person acts as the agent of Krsna, therefore he discharges his duty with great responsibility. (Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Gajendra, 27th January, 1970)

### **Quotes on humility from scripture**

1)

trnad api sunicena taror api sahisnuna  
amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada harih

One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking himself lower than the straw in the street, more tolerant than the tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.

These are the symptoms of one who chants the Hare Krishna maha-mantra. Although he is very exalted, he thinks himself lower than the grass on the ground, and like a tree, he tolerates everything in two ways. When a tree is cut down, it does not protest, and even when drying up, it does not ask anyone for water. The tree delivers its fruits, flowers and whatever else it possesses to anyone and everyone. It tolerates scorching heat and torrents of rain, yet it still gives shelter to

others. If one chants the holy name of Lord Krishna in this manner, he will certainly awaken his dormant love for Krishna's lotus feet."

Although a Vaishnava is the most exalted person, he is prideless and gives all respect to everyone, knowing everyone to be the resting place of Krishna. If one chants the holy name of Lord Krishna in this manner, he will certainly awaken his dormant love for Krishna's lotus feet." (Cc Antya 20.21-26)

2) Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura recommends that we become humble by practicing the following meditation: "The earth, which is always visible to me, is the expansion of the lotus feet of my Lord, who is always to be meditated upon. All moving and nonmoving living beings have taken shelter of the earth and are thus sheltered at the lotus feet of my Lord. For this reason I should respect every living being and not envy anyone. In fact, all living entities constitute the Kaustubha gem on My Lord's chest. Therefore I should never envy or deride any living entity." By practicing this meditation one can achieve success in life." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 12.11.24 purport)

3) If anyone wants to compete with God and at the same time make advancement in spiritual knowledge, he will be frustrated. It is clearly stated that without humility, understanding is not truly possible. To think oneself God is most puffed up. Although the living entity is always being kicked by the stringent laws of material nature, he still thinks, "I am God" because of ignorance. The beginning of knowledge, therefore, is amanitva, humility. One should be humble and know that he is subordinate to the Supreme Lord. Due to rebellion against the Supreme Lord, one becomes subordinate to material nature. One must know and be convinced of this truth. (Narada Bhakti Sutra 27 purport)

4) As servants of the Supreme Lord, all living entities are one, but a Vaishnava, because of his natural humility, addresses every other living entity as prabhu. A Vaishnava sees other servants to be so advanced that he has much to learn from them. Thus he accepts all other devotees of the Lord as prabhus, masters. Although everyone is a servant of the Lord, one Vaishnava servant, because of humility, sees another servant as his master. Understanding of the master begins from understanding of the spiritual master.

yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado  
yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi

"By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Krishna. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.5.11 purport)

5) Chanting is compared to the helpless cry of a child for its mother. It is a prayer from the core of the repentant heart. It is chanted, therefore, in humility. Once, in a state of devotional ecstasy while in the company of two close followers (Svarupa Damodara Gosvami and Ramananda Raya), Sri Caitanya described the quintessential importance of chanting with the mood of humility. He said, "One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor but is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord." Commenting upon this famous verse, Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, author of Sri Caitanya-caritamrita, declares, "Everyone please hear me! String this verse on the thread of the holy name and wear it on your neck for continuous remembrance. One must strictly follow the principles given by Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu in this verse. If one simply does so, certainly he will achieve the ultimate goal of

life, the lotus feet of Sri Krishna." (Sri Namamrta introduction)

6) Humility means that one should not be anxious to have the satisfaction of being honored by others. The material conception of life makes us very eager to receive honor from others, but from the point of view of a man in perfect knowledge—who knows that he is not this body—anything, honor or dishonor, pertaining to this body is useless. One should not be hankering after this material deception. People are very anxious to be famous for their religion, and consequently sometimes it is found that without understanding the principles of religion one enters into some group which is not actually following religious principles and then wants to advertise himself as a religious mentor. As for actual advancement in spiritual science, one should have a test to see how far he is progressing. He can judge by these items. (BG 13.8-12 purport)

7) The conditioned souls in this material world become falsely proud of their so-called family lineage. This pride is false because one who has taken birth in the material world is in a fallen situation, even in the best of cases. Vasudeva, however, was certainly not fallen, since he had taken birth in the family of Krishna. Since he was Krishna's father, his position was most exalted, yet because he was a pure devotee he did not become proud of his special relationship with Krishna. Instead, considering himself deficient in spiritual understanding, he took advantage of the appearance of Narada Muni, a great preacher of Krishna consciousness, by immediately inquiring from him about devotional service. This incomparable humility of a pure devotee of Krishna is far superior to the false humility of the impersonalist, who actually maintains a desire to be equal to God though adopting the external behavior of a meek and saintly person. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.2.7 purport)

8) We should always be prepared to take instruction from the authorities. We should never think that we have become perfect. Although you are perfect. *Trnad api sunicena taror api sahisnuna*. One should be very humble, meek, and always think that "I am nothing." Just like the author of Caitanya-caritamrita, such a great, stalwart man, such a great devotee. Nobody has produced such literature as Caitanya-caritamrita. He is presenting himself that "I am lighter than the worm in the stool." *Purishera kita haite muni se laghishta*. *Purish* means stool and *kita* means worm. So "I am lower than the worm in the stool. Anyone who takes my name, all his pious activities immediately becomes lost." In this way he is presenting himself. That does not mean that he's actually so, but that is the attitude of a devotee. He's always very meek and humble. And the opposite side is, "I am God. Now finish all business." You see? So this maya is very strong. He's (She's) always enticing me, "Oh, you are so great, so big, so... You have nothing to learn. Finish all..." This is maya's instruction. But we should always be very humble, meek, and we should know always that "What I know? I do not know anything." The knowledge is unlimited. God is unlimited. And my position is very minute, fractional, infinitesimal. What I can accommodate? I shall go on. I shall go on. Remain. *Gopi-bhartuh pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanudasah*. We shall always try to remain servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the... Hundred times servant. Then it will be all right. The more you become humble, meek, the more you advance. That is real advancement. (SP Lecture, NY, April 16th, 1969)

9) Vedic way allows the brahmachari to beg just to learn humbleness, not beggar. Coming from very big, big family all family, they practice it. This is not begging. This is to learn how to become humble and meek. And Christ said, "To the humble and meek, God is available." It is not begging. You do not know what is this culture. (Room conversation, Calcutta, Feb 4th, 1977)

## Lectures on Humility by His Holiness Romapada Swami

- 1) Seminar on Humility at Potomac, MD, November 27th-30th, 2003 - Four lectures (Available at [http://www.caitanya.com/lectures\\_available\\_online.html](http://www.caitanya.com/lectures_available_online.html))
- 2) Humility and Eagerness to serve - 3 lectures - given in India, Feb '05 (These lectures can be made available online or on CD)
- 3) Two lectures on Trnad Api Sunicena given at Potomac, MD in March '06 (These lectures can be made available online or on CD)
- 4) Lectures on Siksasatam prayers - Given in India (These lectures can be made available on a CD)
- 5) Lectures on Siksasatam prayers - Given in St. Louis during March '06 (Not available online yet but can be made available)

### **24.1.4) Humility depends on our knowledge and acceptance of Krishna's greatness**

**It was also said that "What we think about ourselves (aham) is a measure of how humble we are". Is it correct to extrapolate it a little by thinking that "What/how much we know about Krishna determines our humbleness"? The more we know/feel the all-merciful, all-loving, all-attractive, all- beautiful and compassionate nature of Krishna, the more we are humbled? In this way, all the great souls like Srila Bhaktivinod Thakur and Srila Narottam Das Thakur know/feel so much about Krishna and hence they are so humble. Please enlighten. (Digest 108.2)**

Our conception of self is very dependent upon how much we understand the Supreme Self and our relationship with Him. As Srila Prabhupada would say, self-realization depends upon God-realization, as much as we are able to see ourselves when we simultaneously perceive the light of the sun during daytime.

Thus, we could say that the more we know of Krishna's greatness, and in turn acknowledge Krishna's greatness, the more we feel humbled. Conversely, one who does not know, or fails to acknowledge the fact, that Krishna is the actual controller, enjoyer and best-wishing friend of all and that we are simply His dependent servants --- such a person cannot become truly free from pride, however much they may try to do so by other means.

### **24.1.5) Maintaining one's enthusiasm in Krishna consciousness**

**While practicing Krishna consciousness, sometimes I am very enthusiastic and sometimes I feel very morose. The cause for being morose is not being able to see any change in my attitude. Please help me. (Digest 106.1)**

Enthusiasm, confidence, patience - these are the first three of the six important principles, mentioned by Rupa Goswami, which can assure complete success in devotional service. (Nectar of Instruction 3) Success in any sphere of life is impossible without enthusiasm. Whereas enthusiasm for material endeavor springs from the performer's hopes for enjoyment or personal benefit from the activity, our enthusiasm for the activities of Krishna consciousness is nourished by our faith, by the strong conviction that "execution of this devotional service will bring all perfection and complete satisfaction of the self." Indeed when there is strong faith, it naturally

manifests as enthusiasm, and without enthusiasm, faith becomes lifeless.

But faith becomes dampened or even shaken when enthusiasm is not accompanied by patience. Srila Prabhupada gives the example of a newly married girl who may very much desire to have an offspring, but she cannot expect to have a child immediately; she has to be patient and confident that the child will be born in due time. Similarly, we have to develop the confidence in the fact that this process has been approved by all great authorities and is sure to bear fruit, if we continue to follow it diligently.

With some introspection, you would be able to see that the practices of devotion have most definitely brought about undeniable changes in your life, however insignificant they may seem during such times when you feel dissatisfied with yourself. At the very least, as Krishna promises in the Gita (2.40, 6.41), there is no loss in this endeavor even if left incomplete; rather one is assured of continued chance for improvement from wherever we left.

Unsteadiness in one's practices is expected in the immature stages, but as you mature in devotional service, you can rest assured that by Krishna's merciful reciprocation, the enthusiasm of your endeavors will become steady and bear fruit. Therefore, do not let short-term apparent and temporary setbacks dampen your faith and enthusiasm! See the longer-term trajectory of your devotional path, and continue moving forward. Practice with diligence, confident in the purifying capacity of bhakti.

## *24.2. General questions: Vaishnavas*

### 24.2.1) Who is a Vaishnava?

**What is the definition of a Vaishnava? Can Hare Krishna devotees be classified under Vaishnavas? (Digest 30.2)**

One who is devoted to Lord Vishnu is called a Vaishnava. In the most broad and liberal definitions of a vaishnava, Lord Caitanya once described that one who even once chants the holy names of Krishna (or Vishnu) is to be considered a Vaishnava, and is worthy of all respect. Of course, there are further more elevated gradations amongst vaishnavas depending on the growing degree of faith in Krishna, His holy names and devotional service. But anyone who sincerely chants Hare Krishna is to be considered a Vaishnava.

### 24.2.2) Why don't we call worshippers of Krishna as Krishnavas?

**Why are worshipers of Krishna called Vaishnava, why not Krishnavas? Does this not indicate that we are actually worshippers of Vishnu? (Digest 39.2)**

Vishnu is non-different from Krishna, and there is no material distinction between Vishnu and Krishna. When we speak of a distinction between Vishnu and Krishna in terms of Who is the source, this does not indicate some kind of material discrimination where one is superior to another. Just as in the example of many candles being lit from one original candle, there is factually no fundamental difference.

When we speak of Vishnu tattva, it refers to the Supreme Energetic Personality of Godhead, as distinct from His subordinate energies viz., shakti tattva or jiva tattva. Krishna and all His plenary expansions discussed in the above question belong to Vishnu tattva. So, yes, devotees of Krishna are worshipers of Vishnu and so they are Vaishnavas.

In the spiritual world, everything is absolute yet there are differences, varieties and varying degrees of intimacy with the Lord. Generally by the term Vishnu we refer to the plenary expansions in the Vaikuntha region or the purusha avatars in the material region to refer to the majestic (aisvarya) feature of the Lord, whereas worshipers of Krishna are more attracted to His sweetness (madhurya) feature since in the feature of Krishna there is the greatest degree of intimacy and sweetness of exchange of love between the Lord and His devotees.

### **24.2.3) Difference between a Brahmana and a Vaishnava**

#### **What is the difference between a Brahmana and a Vaishnava? (Digest 30.3)**

A brahmana is one who is firmly situated in the mode of goodness, above the influence of the modes of passion and ignorance. The character traits of a brahmana are described in the Bhagavad-Gita (18.42): peacefulness, austerity, simplicity, sense control, cleanliness, honesty, religiousness - these are the qualities of a brahmana. Literally, brahmana means one who knows or has realized Brahman.

Among the four social orders, the brahmana is considered to be the topmost, just as among the three material modes, goodness is the best. Nevertheless, a brahmana is also under the influence of modes of nature, since goodness is also one of the material modes.

A Vaishnava on the other hand, is imbued with devotion to the Supreme Lord, which is situated beyond the dutiful platform of religiousness. And by virtue of his devotion to the Personality of Godhead, a pure vaishnava actually transcends the modes of material nature; by direct service to the Supreme Lord he is situated beyond the four social orders. An unalloyed Vaishnava has all the qualifications of a brahmana (i.e. he is not influenced by ignorance and passion, which is a necessary qualification to approach and serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead), yet such a Vaishnava is more than a brahmana. Anyone who takes full shelter of the lotus feet of Krishna, whatever condition they may come from, is quickly promoted to the status of a brahmana and further becomes transcendently situated.

### **24.2.4) Does one function better in society by being Krsna conscious?**

**This question was asked to Srila Prabhupada, but I did not understand his answer. Does one function better in a society as a result of Krishna consciousness or does it have to do with the individual's desires or perception about life as a whole? (Digest 237.3)**

When one is actually practicing Krsna consciousness with proper understanding and maturity, it most certainly results in better functioning of that individual in a society. There are many reasons for it but the foremost reason is because the devotee does everything for pleasure of Guru and Krsna and therefore naturally he does everything with greater sincerity. I personally know of a number of individuals who have reported to me how they have become more efficient in their occupational duty, how they are performing better in their studies, how their family and friends are so impressed by their transformation of character and qualities, how they have

become better parents and better children and how their relationship with spouse has improved etc. The list can go on.

Through the process of devotional service our focus improves greatly because our intelligence becomes one-pointed. When one is on a material platform, our intelligence is multi-branched (BG2.41) and therefore one is so easily distracted by so many things. Also as we get purified and experience the bliss of transcendental happiness, the material anxieties and worries that plague us so much and drain so much of our vital energy disappear.

A devotee has no other desire other than to please Krsna through all his activities and therefore he does not act with a selfish or exploitative or egotistical mentality. So naturally all his relationships improve and become very beautiful.

### 24.3. Qualities of Vaishnavas

#### 24.3.1) 'Compassion and other Vaishnava qualities' & 'The primary Vaishnava quality: Krishna-eka-sharanam'

**Part1: This is with regard to 'disliking other devotees' (referred to in a previous digest). Whilst I understand it is possible to forgive a person who has caused physical pain to another person, I have wondered for sometime about the following.**

**If someone claims to be a devotee (i.e. they carry out services in a number of ways, they chant and worship, are vegetarian, and have been born to parents who have been associated with ISKCON for many years) but they appear to lack compassion, what does this mean? If a person displays lack of compassion, are they actually a devotee? (Digest 93.1)**

Compassion is one of the qualities of a devotee. Scriptures identify 26 qualities of a pure devotee. Of these twenty-six, taking exclusive shelter of Krishna is the primary quality (Krishna-eka-sharanam). The others are said to be secondary or marginal qualities. They are not unimportant, but one who is fixed in the primary symptom gradually develops all the other qualities in due course of time, due to the mercy of Krishna upon such a devotee.

Someone who takes to Krishna consciousness may not initially exhibit the finer qualities of a devotee, due to their past background. But if they are sincerely taking shelter of the process of devotional service with an earnest desire to please Krishna, it is only a matter of time before they develop all other qualities. Krishna Himself commands that they are definitely to be considered as saintly persons and respected as such, overlooking their defects, because they are properly situated in their determination'. (Bg. 9.30,31)

This does not mean that sincere devotee will be complacent or slack in cultivating these qualities, for example considering their character (compassion etc.) is irrelevant. Mechanical execution of services or a complacent attitude is NOT the disposition of a Krishna-eka-sharana bhakta.

In contrast, one may apparently exhibit many good qualities, much as in the case of many noble persons in this world, but lacking devotion and surrender to Krishna, their goodness is insubstantial and fluctuates according to the dictates of their mind and the modes of nature. For

instance, Karna and Jarasandha were famous for being very charitably disposed, but because of their aversion to Krishna they often yielded to ungodly and atrocious activities.

**Part 2) Are the above `devotional' activities more exalted than compassion? Would such a person be more favorable to Krishna than someone who reads ISKCON literature, but knows less mantras, chants less, and drinks alcohol for example?**

As discussed above, the quality of devotion or attraction to Krishna and His service is primary and in fact the basis of real compassion, humility or any other good qualities. Of course, one's quality of devotion is not necessarily measured by the quantity of chanting, the number of slokas one knows or any other such considerations.

These devotional activities do help increase or deepen one's devotion and should be accepted in that spirit. Likewise, prohibited activities eclipse or diminish the awakening of one's pure state of consciousness. One's Krishna consciousness goes much deeper than just the superficial performance of the activities.

Therefore, one who is taking up the do's and avoiding the don'ts should personally take care to avoid pride and not overlook or justify their own defects and shortcomings, on account of their devotional practices; rather with the impetus gained by these practices, one should strive to serve Krishna with improved qualities.

There is very limited value in comparing the devotion of one person to that of another or of ourselves, since such comparisons are of often not of much help to anyone. As will be discussed in the next answer, scriptures give some guidelines to distinguish different grades of devotees so that we can offer appropriate respect to them. Ultimately Krishna alone is the judge of every individual's devotion.

Meanwhile, if it appears that someone is lacking compassion, we could extend compassion to them! While appreciating the fact that here is a rare soul who has considerable attraction for Krishna, and perhaps even imbibing some nice qualities from them that one may personally lack (such as their attraction to chanting or other direct devotional activities), we could consider if there is some way we can be a humble instrument of Krishna in helping this person come to a position of improved service to the Lord. This mood is most pleasing to Krishna.

### **24.3.2) Humility**

**I would like to really understand what humility is. Can you please explain the same to me? (Digest 51.1)**

Humility is often mistaken to simply be some sort of meekness in behavior. Vaishnava humility is, however, a completely spiritual quality, not a material one. It comes from understanding one's real self in relation with God. Real humility is the understanding that one is but an instrument or ordered servant of the Supreme Lord: "I do not have any good qualities whatsoever; on my own strength I cannot accomplish anything independently, and I am of no special significance in the vastness of creation. My only qualification is the order of my spiritual master and Krishna. By Their potency I may be empowered to do anything as They wish."

Srila Prabhupada defines humility as "not hankering for the satisfaction of being honored by others." (Bg 13.8 p) Thus a vaishnava does not endeavor to prove his/her worth to others or to

themselves; they simply endeavor to serve and please Krishna. Ironically, when the meaning of humility is not properly understood, one could be "acting humbly" just to attract others' attention to appreciate how so-called humble one is!

In the mood of real humility, one can act very boldly and confidently. On one's personal behalf, a vaishnava is very meek and tolerant, but when Krishna's service demands a humble vaisnava will do the needful in a complete mood of service. In mundane humility, the focus is on one's own inadequacies rather than upon Krishna's mercy; 'I am in the center, not Krishna. That is the crucial distinction.

In a previous issue, we discussed the example of Hanuman regarding his burning down Lanka. He did many other mighty tasks such as crossing over the ocean, and even carrying Lord Rama across the stone bridge and bringing Lakshman back to life. But he was not in the mood of a doer; it was by the power of Rama's Holy Name alone that he was able to accomplish these feats and he was simply an order carrier.

Srila Prabhupada himself was such an example of perfect humility. At an advanced age, he single-handedly pioneered and established a world-wide movement, and accomplished many humanly impossible tasks. But he passed on all the credit to his spiritual master and admitted that his only credit was that he followed his spiritual master's instructions and repeated his words with strong faith. He never attracted any attention to himself, so much so that most people did not even know his name or who he was! The 'founder of the Hare Krishna movement' was all they knew, and he was content simply to popularize Hare Krishna and canvas for Krishna.

#### 24.3.3) Silence (gravity): always thinking of self-realization

**I couldn't follow one sentence in the purport of Bhagavad Gita verse (10.38): "Among the confidential activities of hearing, thinking and meditating, silence is most important because by silence one can make progress very quickly". Could you please elaborate this? (Digest 143.1)**

Krishna describes silence or "maunam" - also translated as gravity -- as one of the austerities of the mind in [BG 17.16](#). Srila Prabhupada explains there what this silence is: "Silence means that one is always thinking of self-realization. The person in Krishna consciousness observes perfect silence in this sense."

Unless one refrains from the urge to talk mundane topics, it is not possible to completely think about and meditate on the activities and glories of the Supreme Lord.

But the so-called vow of silence adopted mostly by impersonalists -- without any positive engagement -- is not very much appreciated by great devotees such as Prahlada Maharaja; following this Prabhupada also often criticized this mundane silence as he did meditation on void, but for the transcendentalists, silence means to speak only about Krishna and not otherwise. As with every negative injunction there is also a positive injunction, we are recommended to refrain from prajalpa and simultaneously practice talking only in service to Krishna.

## 24.4. Vaishnava life style

### 24.4.1) 'Significance of wearing Tulasi and Tilak', 'observing caturmasya vrata', & 'offering food'

**What is the significance of wearing Tulasi and tilok? Why should one fast in Caturmasya? Why do men wear shikas? Why should one offer food before eating it? [Editor's Note: Caturmasya is the four months of rain, from July to October] (Digest 6.7)**

#### **Tulasi and Tilok:**

The way we dress ourselves has an influence on our consciousness. This is one of the reasons for wearing tulasi beads and tilok. For example, the meditation in wearing tilok is that one is marking one's body as the temple of God. So the devotee considers their body and the body of all others beings as a temple where God resides. We try to maintain that conception in all our activities. The tilok and tulasi neck beads remind of that fact, and those who see the devotee marked in this way are also reminded similarly.

#### **Caturmasya and Shika:**

It is a standard vaishnava practice, to observe simple austerities during these months, because they are auspicious times, and we receive spiritual benefit by observing these little austerities.

Vaishnava men are indicated by the shika. This quickly identifies us as worshipers of Lord Krishna or Vishnu, as opposed to Buddhists who keep shaven heads with no shika.

#### **Offering food:**

The food that we eat is given by God, Who is the actual proprietor of everything. When one does not acknowledge this, but cooks for his own self, he is considered a thief. Therefore the food that he eats is considered to be sinful and binds one to sinful reaction. However, one who realizes God as the real proprietor and is in love with the Lord, would offer the food to Him in love and then partake of it. Krishna recommends that one does everything as a sacrifice to Him and that would purify one from any reaction.

### 24.4.2) Devotee's attire

**Why does it say in the Nectar of Devotion that a devotee should not wear clothes that are colored red or blue? (Digest 51.3)**

When Srila Prabhupada was asked this question after the first printing of Nectar of Devotion, he indicated that this particular prohibition is not so important for us to concern ourselves with; there are prohibitions of far greater concern. Generally, while coming before the Deities to worship Them, one should wear simple and clean clothes that are in the mode of goodness. Saffron and white colored clothes are generally recommended for men devotees, because they promote goodness and are simple and pleasing. Our attire has a subtle influence on our consciousness, and this can be readily experienced; but beyond that, a devotee wants to

present himself very pleasingly before the Deities. The most important ingredient is our mood of devotion, and the all-important activity is to chant Hare Krishna.

**24.4.3) BBT calendar and secular days**

**Why does BBT Vaisnava calendar include days like St. Patricks day? I told them that is probably a practical decision since for some, this calendar is the only one available and thus it needs to be all encompassing? (Digest 218.4)**

Yes, it is just to make practical decisions/considerations. The BBT calendar in India does not have St. Patrick 's Day etc on it rather they have other Hindu festivals marked on the calendar.

## 25. Varnasrama dharma

### 25.1. Brahmacharya

#### 25.1.1) Celibacy: characteristics and behavior of a brahmachari

**What is meant by Bramhacharya? Who is a bramhachari? How he should behave? What are his characteristics? I want to follow bramhacharya perfectly. Please give explanation. (Digest 3.9)**

There are four stages of life namely: brahmacharya, grhastha, vanaprastha and sannyas. The word 'brahmacharya' indicates one who is situated in cultivation of knowledge of Brahman. In the stage of brahmacharya one follows the vows of celibacy, takes shelter of and serve the instructing gurus and immerses completely in the systematic study of the scriptures and their implementation. It will not be possible for me to do justice to this question within the scope of this format. Please correspond to me separately.

#### 25.1.2) Why do brahmacharis in ISKCON change to grahastha ashram?

**Why do brhamacharis at ISKCON get into grhastha ashrama? After knowing the philosophy so well and also convinced that the samsara sagara is so deep and full of suffering. It does not make any sense in getting in the grhastha ashrama. (Digest 7.1)**

You have asked a question about the grhastha ashram, namely why it might be taken up by one who has practiced a life of a brahmachari for some time, has understood the perils of becoming involved in samsara, and yet makes the change from brahmachari ashram to grhastha ashram. You will find a very practical answer in the Gajendra Moksa lila section of Srimad Bhagavatam. There Srila Prabhupada clearly explains that the reason the king of elephants was being defeated by the crocodile is because the crocodile was in its natural element, namely the water, whereas the elephant was in an unnatural element. As a result the crocodile was becoming stronger, and the elephant was becoming weaker. Bearing this comparison in mind, Srila Prabhupada explains in his purport to this lila that the person in the grhastha ashram may find himself in a more natural element for making spiritual progress than he would if he tried to maintain himself artificially in the brahmachari ashram. There is an underlying assumption in your question, i.e. you seem to indicate that grhastha ashram compels one to remain in samsara sagara. This is not necessarily so. To the contrary, we find that many stalwart acaryas were grhasthas, while many were also brahmachari and sannyasi. The same can be said for those who are mahajans, identified by Prahlad Maharaj in the Seventh Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam. Some of them are brahmacharis like Narada, and some of them are grhasthas. Attaining perfection is not dependent upon what particular ashram one finds oneself in. Rather, perfection comes from full dedication in devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one properly accepts the responsibilities of grhastha ashram, one can make one's life perfect and go back home back to

Godhead, every bit as much as one who does the same in the position of brahmacari. One who lives one's life properly in the grhastha ashram will likely find himself to be a good candidate for sannyasa live, later on!

## 25.2. General questions: Varnashrama dharma

### 25.2.1) Determination of one's varna

**Question Premise: It is said in the scriptures and Bhagavad-Gita that people should do only the work assigned to them according to the chatur-varna, and that chatur-varna is according to karma and not birth.**

**How can a person know in which varna he is included? (Digest 112.1)**

Varna can be discerned by the qualities an individual possesses, and there are ample descriptions of these qualities found within the scriptures. Likewise, scripture also directs us to understand the finer points of application of these scriptural teachings by seeking guidance from a qualified spiritual preceptor. Based upon the qualities and tendency towards work and behavior that the individual exhibits, varna is determined.

### 25.2.2) 'How to determine one's nature/duty?' & 'duty of a grhastha'

**How do we know what is our nature/duty? In modern times we do not do the duties of the sect we are born into. Plus if we are not from India we won't know if we are a brahman, kshatriya, etc. So how does one know what is his/her duty? For example I am a family person. Is my duty to take care of my family members' needs both admin and monetary needs? Do I also need to think of my duty towards my parents, my -in-laws? To me defining one's duty is a complex issue. Once defined then we can keep doing it or at least try to. (Digest 80.2)**

As you have stated, defining what is duty is a complex issue, this is true. Still, there are principles to apply in determining duty.

First, duty is determined by Quality and Work, not by birth. See BG 4.13.

Second, duties are to be determined both by assessing one's varna and ashram, not just one of them. A grhastha's earning a livelihood by honest labor via some profession is their duty, for example, but is NOT to be taken up by a sannyasi. This is an ashram principle. In the varna dept, another obvious example of improper understanding of duty was found in Arjuna's willingness to give up his duty as a ksatriya and to become a mendicant living on charity instead. This is an example of duty being varna-related, not just ashram-related.

Third, one can evaluate one's own qualities to a certain degree, to see what position one generally falls within (see BG 18.42-45). However, scriptures ALWAYS indicate that one should take indication as to what one's nature is and to understand one's corresponding duties by receiving instructions & training from a bonafide spiritual master. Training in performing

religious duties in life is essential. Otherwise one will be speculating too much and not receiving knowledge in disciplic succession.

**25.2.3) Is the caste system authorized by the scriptures?**

**Is the caste system authorized by the scriptures? (Digest 6.5)**

The caste system, or more appropriately know in its original and god-given form as the varnasrama system, has been given by the Supreme Lord Himself for the smooth functioning of social order, where all members of all different tendencies are given the opportunity and training to advance spiritually, from their respective positions and occupations. Abuse or misuse of the system, as with any system, is bound to create anomalies.

**25.2.4) Are sudras eligible to study the scriptures?**

**Also, if a man is born as sudra, is he not eligible to study the shastras, because the sudra's karma is to help all other varnas? (Digest 112.2)**

As you stated in the initial premise of your question, one cannot be designated as sudra solely on the basis of birth, but by guna and karma.

A sudra-by-birth was not NECESSARILY forbidden from study of shastras, as evidenced in the Upanisadic narration of Gautama Rsi accepting Satyakama Jabala as his disciple. Only a well-examined pupil with high character and brahminical training was given access to Vedas, in order to preserve the potency and purity of the Vedas, and to prevent misuse of knowledge.

The essence of the Vedas is presented in a simple form in the Puranas and Itihasas; in fact Srila Vyasadeva compiled these just for the benefit of the sudras and dvija-bandhus (those born of brahmana parents but lacking the prerequisite brahminical qualification.) By purificatory processes, these persons can also achieve perfections (BG 9.32).

In the Vedic setting, if it is ascertained that one has the nature of a sudra, they were given vocational education; literacy for the masses was not given great importance in Vedic society. However, as the sudras gave service to the other varnas, it was in turn the duty of brahmanas to systematically disseminate shastric knowledge to the general public. In fact, the temple in a Vedic community was to serve just this purpose - as a center of learning - where the mercantile and laborer classes would come and learn about religious principles through art, drama and regular discourses on scriptural teachings.

**25.2.5) 'Which varna, candalas belong to?' & 'can candalas realize Krishna?'**

**In which category, among the varnas, do the candalas belong to? Will they be able to realize Godhead if they observe chanting? (Digest 112.3)**

Candala referred to a class of people lower than the sudras, and generally dog-eaters. They were considered to be 'fifth-class' and outside the varnashrama system.

There are many references in the scripture specifically about candalas becoming elevated through devotional service. Bhagavatam states that even a candala who has once offenselessly chanted the Holy Name becomes immediately eligible to perform Vedic sacrifices, and becomes

worshipable for all. (SB 3.33.7) In the Padma Purana it is said that an unalloyed vaishnava, even if born in a dog-eating family, is qualified to become a Guru (Quoted in Bhagavad-gita 2.8, Purport). Krishna also assures that even those born in sinful families can attain the supreme destination by [taking shelter of Him](#).

### 25.3. *Grahasta asram*

#### 25.3.1) 'Are marriage partners, predestined?' & 'how to choose a marriage partner?'

**Is the choice of our spouse predestined by karma (are marriages made in "heaven")? Is it predestined by God? Does my free-will have a role in such a choice?**

**If I like one person and am neutral towards another, how do I make a decision that is best? Should I simply surrender to God and let God decide - is such surrender cowardice or escapism? If God will make a decision, how does God decide in such situations - will God take my preferences into account? (Digest 111.2)**

At every step, freewill has a bearing upon one's destiny. The range of choices in various situations of life, including marriage, is defined by Karma - both past and present (i.e. actions and choices made in past and present life), and yet there is scope for redefining those choices by our present actions.

Krishna does not directly involve Himself in arranging the details of karmic events in everyone's life. As stated in the Gita (BG 9.9, BG 13.23) -- including those who want material enjoyment -- He is seated in their heart as though neutral, witnessing and permitting the soul's material enjoyment as well as sufferings that result from their own choices. Under His sanction, material nature awards the due results of their desires and actions, as they deserve.

But for those who want to become His surrendered devotee, Krishna personally orchestrates their life and guides their decisions in such a way that will bring them closer to Him. (Bg 10.10) Thus, He may bless His devotee with a marriage situation which will be conducive to spiritual progress.

In short, the Lord's reciprocation in guiding our life depends on our predisposition or inner purpose, and not necessarily the particular preferences and choices.

Regarding making the decision on who to marry, certainly it is nice to be surrendered to the Lord's direction, but surrender does not dictate absolute passivity. While sincerely praying for the Lord's guidance and inspiration, you can at the same time actively make considerations based on your personal nature, compatibility and needs. In the same spirit, you should also seek counsel from experienced grhasthas who know your nature well, and who can take your attention beyond superficial attractions and aversions to help make a wise decision.

#### 25.3.2) *Gradually bringing future life partner to Krishna consciousness*

**It took me nearly three years to be able to follow all the rules of ISKCON correctly. However when I get married, since the chances of me marrying a Krishna conscious girl is remote, is it reasonable for me to expect my wife to become totally compliant to all the**

**regulative principles from day one? How do I correct her and bring her to the level of compliance? How do I conduct myself during this time? (Digest 28.1 and Digest 160.2)**

Ideally, the best thing for an aspiring and properly practicing devotee would be to try to find a like-minded marriage partner who is interested or at least inclined towards spiritual life. Even if it does not seem possible to find a practicing devotee, it would be good to at least discuss before the marriage and make clear to the other person about one's own Krishna conscious practices and ideals. If the girl seems receptive and enthusiastic, then based on mutual understanding both husband and wife can strive together and help one another as needed in maintaining the proper standards of spiritual practices. Once the basic understanding and respect for your mutual spiritual goals are established, then by your own good example and inspiration, your wife would easily be able to follow your lead. While this is all being established in your relationship, the challenge for you would be to remain patient, kind and understanding with your new wife, all the while remaining internally determined in your own higher purposes and in your spiritual practices. Create an atmosphere within your home in all possible ways that inspires a sense of acceptance, care and protection for your wife; in this environment, gently but firmly maintain the lines of spiritual discipline that you have already communicated that you are committed to uphold.

It is very advisable to find a 'role model', a mature devotee couple who are themselves properly maintaining these standards, and who you feel you can trust with confidentiality, to help closely guide you through these initial phases of grhastha life.

**25.3.3) How to bring future wife to Krishna consciousness?**

**My question is related to my future life. Very soon I am going to get married. My would-be life partner does not know anything about Hare Krishna movement. I do not know how to tell her about it. She is very fond of listening to film songs. I am not sure how to divert her to Krishna conscious life. Please help me how can I tackle the situation. (Digest 160.1)**

My suggestion would be that you VERY gently and gradually introduce your prospective wife to your Krishna consciousness, your personal appreciation of its uplifting impact in your life. Then communicate to her about your convictions, your devotional practices and the principles you would like to commit yourself to in a very straightforward yet pleasant manner. You could further discuss with her frankly about your own personal goals and aspirations and try to understand in turn her general expectations and how she feels about your spiritual commitments. The sooner you have such an open communication, the better it would be to help prepare her mind, as well as for you to accommodate her response, rather than to let it come as an unexpected surprise or to wait until it is too late, leaving either you or her disappointed and unprepared to accept the other's reaction.

Of course, it would be wonderful if you find from your talks that she is also spiritually inclined and expresses some interest; but in any case it is not advisable to bear down upon her with numerous do's and don'ts or force upon her something she is disinclined to do, provided she is favorable and has no major objections to the basic principles of a Krishna conscious way of life, such as your chanting, following the regulative principles, associating with devotees and leading a spiritually-centered life. In case there is such a major disagreement, it would do well to

address them BEFORE you enter into this life-long commitment of marriage. If she is favorable in principle however, then there is room to change the other habits and inclinations in course of time; by your own good example and your cultivation of the vaishnava qualities as well as through association of devotees, she is likely to become naturally attracted to take up this wonderful way of life. I hope this is of help to you.

There are some questions about marriage in Krsna consciousness in Digest 111 and Digest 28.

**25.3.4) 'Taking up marriage as a service', 'controlling sexual feelings' & 'inspiring the spouse by being a good example & exhibiting higher qualities'**

**I am getting married and I would like to know how to control my sexual feelings as a vaishnava. Will Krishna be angry with me if I chant and my wife does not want to chant? (Digest 111.1)**

For a vaishnava, married life is an opportunity for cultivation of spiritual values. Take up the responsibility of marriage in a mood of service to another soul, a devotee of Krishna, a vaishnava. This quality, when cultivated over some time, will lift you above rajo-guna, and the mood of being the enjoyer.

There are allowances for regulating sense-enjoyment within married life, but as Krishna advises in Bhagavad-gita, one should not "rely upon the control of such allowances." Rather, the rules and regulations have to be followed carefully, but without undue attachment to them and in a spirit of service as mentioned above. (Cf. Bg 3.34)

Krishna will not be angry with you or with her if she is disinclined to chant. But by your good example and by exhibiting higher qualities, such as patience, kindness and inner happiness -- your wife will be naturally attracted to take up that which sustains those qualities in your person.

**25.3.5) Marrying a non-devotee**

**I am in love with a person who strictly follows the four regulative principles. However, unlike me, he is not a devotee of Krishna nor favorable towards ISKCON, and would like our children to exercise their choice. Please advise me how to handle this situation. (Digest 56.1)**

This question is of a very personal nature, and it is difficult to give a general response. What is best for some may not be ideal for another. However, a general principle in making any important decision in life is to consider what would help best in bringing us closer to the ultimate goal of this rare human life, and closer to our relationship with God. The soul's ultimate love is for Krishna, and a devotee tries as much as possible to arrange all of his/her worldly activities and relationships in such a way that is conducive to that ultimate relationship with Krishna and would never do anything that might jeopardize their spiritual growth.

While marriage is just a temporary issue from the point of view of the eternal soul, it is nevertheless an important life-long decision. In light of this principle of life, there are personal considerations as to how you might personally be affected by the responsible and final choice that you make. A lot depends on what your own priorities at this point of time in your life. You

could consider deeply how your aspirations for a spiritual / Krishna conscious life will be supported or affected by this particular marriage decision in very practical ways, and how that might affect you and the relationship with your possible marriage partner in the long run; on the other hand, you could also explore different possibilities of taking another course of action for your future marriage and consider how your life would be affected.

The best would be to for you to thoroughly discuss your thoughts and feelings with some experienced and mature devotee couple in whom you have trust and who know you personally. Seek their counsel and guidance.

### **25.3.6) Duties of a husband**

**In Digest 17 you spoke about the duties of a wife (as an explanation of the answer given by Yudhishtira to Dharmaraja). Could you elaborate on the duties of a husband? (Digest 26.2)**

In the Vedic picture, the relationship of the husband to the wife is similar to that of the spiritual master to his disciple. In other words, the ultimate duty of the husband is to set the example and provide spiritual leadership to his wife, and make necessary arrangements so that she will be delivered from the material world. It is a Vedic injunction that one should not become a spiritual master, husband or father if one is not capable of delivering one's dependents. Therefore, the husband has to first of all qualify himself to provide such shelter. Even if the husband may not be a pure devotee himself, by his full surrender to the instructions and service of his spiritual master, he can extend that same shelter to his wife.

In addition to spiritual shelter, it is the duty of the husband to give protection to the wife, and this is also naturally accomplished by his own engagement in his occupational duties under the guidance of the spiritual master, and by providing the wife with fruitful engagement in service to Guru and Krishna, such as worshiping Deities, attending to guests, etc.

### **25.3.7) 'Duties of a wife' & 'dharma, artha & kama co-exist harmoniously when one has a virtuous wife'**

**I was reading about the conversation between Dharmaraja disguised as a Yaksha and Yudisthira. One of the questions put forward by Yaksha to Yudhisthira was - "since Dharma (Virtue), Artha (Profit), and Kama (Desire) are opposed to each other, how can they co-exist harmoniously?" Yudhisthira replied- "These three become congenial to one another when one has a virtuous wife." Could you please explain on this reply of Yudhisthira? (Digest 17.4 and digest 160.3)**

What seems obvious is that at times dharma, artha, and kama are in opposition. Virtue and self-interest don't always coincide, at least not superficially, and sense gratification opposes virtue and even practical self-interest in obvious ways.

A virtuous wife protects her husband by her scripturally-directed service mood and activity, assisting her husband in each of the three depts. (dharma, artha, kama). This is no guarantee that her duties being executed properly will provide a 100% clash-free dynamic in life, but her presence helps the religious-minded man to stay on course toward the goal, and not fall sway to excesses.

To be more specific, a virtuous wife makes sure that religious duties are performed at home, as well as with regard to guests, relatives, associates, and general living beings; in this way she plays a key role in protecting the family's dharma or virtue, even if the husband is temporarily distracted by affairs of artha. At the same time, she encourages her husband in his worldly affairs, protecting artha. And finally she satisfies her husband's material requirements by cooking and performing other domestic duties, and by fulfilling his desire for female companionship within the codes of dharma; excesses or indulgences never originate from the side of the qualified wife, and her religious nature will help both husband and wife to maintain all the regulations that lead to freedom from material existence. Approaching this final goal through the assistance of a qualified wife will bring a very natural balance to the man who is trying to properly follow the spiritual path.

## 25.4. Ksatriya

### 25.4.1) Duty of a ksatriya

**I always thought that the spiritual and dharmic role of a person is to be calm and never get angry, under any circumstance, and sacrifice one's own life before resorting to violence. However, in the Mahabharata, Krishna keeps saying so many times that it is a coward that backs down from a war. At the same time, He says that war is inevitable when all other options are exhausted. However, I don't understand this because whenever He says this, the war is referring to protecting one's honor. I can understand a king resorting to war because it is his duty to protect his kingdom, but protecting one's "honor" is like justifying one's false ego. I would have thought that Krishna would have suggested not to fight, since, tolerance, forgiveness, and patience are the highest levels of dharma and spirituality (as stated by Yudhisthira). (Digest 46.1)**

The ultimate goal of all spiritual and religious principles (dharma) is satisfaction of the Supreme Lord. svanusthitasya dharmasya samsiddhir hari tosanam. (SB 1.2.13) In and of itself, nothing is intrinsically good or bad; the real test of the merit of any action is found in the satisfaction of the Supreme. If Krishna is pleased, that is the highest perfection of dharma, and if He is not served by one's meticulous upkeep of morality and ethics, such endeavor is simply useless labor! notpadayed yadi ratim shrama eva hi kevalam (SB 1.2.8)

Certainly tolerance, forgiveness etc. are highly virtuous qualities; but a higher principle is executing the will of the Lord. For example when Krishna wanted to Yudhisthira to tell a lie, doing so was his dharma; if he had disobeyed the Lord's order on the grounds of mundane morality, it would have been adharm. Under ordinary circumstances one must always speak only the truth, again because that pleases Krishna. Conversely, materially ignoble and even despicable qualities like anger become glorious when used in God's service. For example, in a mood of transcendental anger Hanuman burned Lanka; such anger is not a sign of Hanuman's spiritual disqualification rather it exemplifies his intense devotion and attachment to serving Lord Ram very gloriously. Contrastingly, anger or violence should certainly not be used for self-aggrandizement nor exhibited because of one's inability to control one's senses.

All this is not to recommend transgression of moral principles, but to keep in focus the real purpose and goal of all religious principles, and not to be stuck upon their external aspects. Through these and many such seemingly adharmic situations in His pastimes, Krishna is actually reinforcing his final teaching: sarva dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja, "Give up all other so-called dharma and just surrender to Me. That is the highest dharma."

Having said all of the above, there are several reasons why Krishna wanted the battle to be fought. One reason is He wanted to establish the righteous kingdom of the Pandavas and reduce the burden of demoniac kings.

Another reason is that Yudhishthira was the rightful king and the Pandavas asked for at least five villages to rule but were refused; as ksatriyas they could not live by any other means and they had to gain the kingdom for the execution of their livelihood. They were thus left with no choice but to resort to war.

Even from the material point of view, non-violence is not the dharma of a ksatriya; they have to show heroism and chivalry in establishing righteousness and must not ignore, in the name of nonviolence, acts of adharma and other forms of wrongdoings brought before them. "Upholding the Pandava's honor" was thus not an appeal to their false-ego but rather to their mandate to uphold righteousness.

## 25.5. Sannyasa asram

### 25.5.1) Yukta-vairagya in sannyasa

**The word 'sannyasi' means one in the renounced order of life, which also means being away from homely comforts. But how is that some sannyasis [gurus] hold administrative positions and material assets [fixed and liquid], accept material gifts and tend to lead an opulent life style [taking very opulent prasadam, jet traveling, doing shopping during foreign trips etc.] Is it that if one is spending 24 hours of his time in Krishna consciousness, he is exempted from the above rules? (Digest 28.2)**

Being affected by one's position of respect, or worse, abuse of that position, is very detrimental to a spiritually accomplished person, and should be closely guarded against by a sincere bhakta. According to Visvanath Cakravarti Thakur, labha, puja and pratistha are sources of unwanted conditions of heart (anarthas) for anyone who becomes a little spiritually capable. Your concerns and cautions are most warranted.

Serving Krishna from a position of administration, or using technology in His service (eg air travel), however, are not in themselves blemishes upon the ashram of sannyasa. I will attempt to explain.

The general idea of sannyasa, which is especially popular among the impersonalists school, is that everything material has to be rejected. However the vaishnava understanding of renunciation is quite different. Vaishnavas see everything as belonging to Narayana and therefore to be used in the service of Narayana. As vairagya is symptom of sannyasa, yukta-vairagya must also be carefully considered in the service of a vaishnava sannyasi.

Prabhupada gives the example of a hundred dollar bill lying on the street. One man might

pocket it, while another man may think that it does not belong to him and walk away in a spirit of renunciation. Yet another person might pick it up, find its original owner and return it to him. This third position is the most honest, and the most intelligent.

Living one's life in this world according to this principle is called 'yukta vairagya', or detachment by dovetailing everything in Krishna's service. Srila Rupa Gosvami, one of our principal acaryas and follower of Lord Caitanya, taught this principle of yukta vairagya. That renunciation which shuns things which can be useful in relation to the service to Lord Hari, he says, is in fact 'phalgu' or false renunciation! This is a very deep concept, however, and only those who are completely free from the propensity to enjoy and fully surrendered to the Lord can successfully implement it - to go fishing but not get wet, as they say! So, your note of caution is well deserved.

Time and again we see the principle of yukta-vairagya exhibited in the lives of great acaryas - Sanatana Gosvami, Rupa Goswami, and in recent times by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati and ISKCON's founder acarya Srila Prabhupada. They engaged wealthy disciples in building grand temples for Lord Krishna and dealt with worldly men and matters, but strictly to spread Krishna consciousness only. On my wall right by my desk in NY, I have a photograph of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur riding in a convertible car, decked out in an overcoat and turban, driving right through the main shopping streets of Vrndavan! He was making a strong statement to those not understanding the principle of yukta-vairagya: for Krishna's service, a renunciate can accept a wide range of facilities--\*IF\* they are accepted in a mood of service to Krishna, only.

Our Srila Prabhupada set an example by traveling around the globe, building grand temples, printing and distributing millions of dollars worth of books, and accepting the worship of thousands of adoring disciples. Yet his followers have repeatedly recorded his remarkable detachment, renunciation, humility and simplicity. He extended his efforts of humble service to Krishna, and accepted the worship and profit in the mood of a menial representative of Krishna - -- much like a bank clerk may deal with transactions of hundreds of thousands but does not claim anything for himself. Srila Prabhupada's purpose was simply to glorify Krishna, in service to his guru maharaja.

In conclusion, we have to carefully consider one's capacity utilize some part of God's creation fully in the spirit of detachment. While it is true that certain activities are strictly forbidden for a sannyasi, utilizing products of technology and accepting overseeing posts in service to the mission of spreading Krishna consciousness are not fundamentally in that category. When exercising caution in estimating what is an appropriate application of the yukta vairagya principle, it is best to err on the side of caution, especially for a sannyasi, while abuse of this principle is never condoned. Yet we must not forget that the essence of the renounced order of sannyasa is attachment to Krishna; a sannyasi's sacrifices and efforts to utilize God's creation in the Lord's service may well be an actual demonstration of his sannyasa. (Please refer to Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Verses 5.3, 5.6, and 6.1.)

### 25.5.2) Women and the renounced order of life

**I have heard that Lord Caitanya took Sannyasa so the general public would take Him seriously, offering Him respect instead of seeing Him on an ordinary platform. This has sparked a question in me about the role of women and the 'rule' that women cannot take sannyasa. This particular topic has been somewhat of a problem for me and I have**

been trying to understand it.

**When posing this question to others, I have been told that women can be a renunciate, and take disciples, though they are not awarded the title of sannyasa. My point has been that it doesn't matter (materially) what one is spiritually qualified to do if the general public does not take him/her seriously. So in conclusion I have come to think that no matter what ideal people set up for the women in ISKCON, they will never have as much authorized spiritual authority as the men because they cannot take sannyasa (because they lacked the title). It seems to me that Lord Caitanya understood this. I know I am not very qualified, and there are some things I don't understand but want to. Please help me. (Digest 58.1)**

The issue here is the cultural role of the female gender in making a society spiritually prosperous and protected, truly loving and dynamic, both at the same time.

Our position as servants of Krishna is to please Him. That is a given, for starters. With that in mind, as a spirit soul in a man's body, like it or not, I have a specific role to play, a role that is designed by the Creator of this world and of this body. So does a spirit soul in a woman's body.

The highly spiritually advanced woman devotee has a nurturing role; she leads by her service to others, from the 'mother of all' position. For example, young boys are to be trained to respect \*ALL\* women as their mother, so that when they grow up they will be similarly disposed (viz, NOT to see women as exploitable sense objects, but as respected mothers). This provides a natural respect and protection for women, in general. Then, what is my mother's role? To nurture me, her son, to provide her breast milk as an infant, to care for my emotional needs for love from a mother, etc. Extended to a broad cultural scale, this would indicate that women/mothers must provide that service for society in general, not only for their own biological children. If a growing-up child has many such 'mothers' who are so spiritually advanced that they provide association like an advanced renunciate provides, giving realized knowledge and detachment from the illusory conceptions of life, but genuine motherly love at the same time, what glorious children such a culture will produce!!

A highly spiritually advanced woman is an ambulatory cornucopia of spirituality for society, and a great treasure, to be protected and valued and respected like a materialist convents their most precious family ornaments as heirlooms. A woman's role as I understand it, and have described briefly above, is a spiritual society's spiritual heirloom. The protectors are the spiritually advanced men. The roles are different, but the outcome is completely harmonious and complimentary.

Mother Saci did not accept sannyasa following her son's taking sannyasa, nor did Visnupriya, although they provided immense spiritual shelter for so many devotees!

When society is brought to the position of being replete with 'spiritual culture', and when both women and men are spiritually advanced, then the picture of our social roles will be like that of Lord Caitanya, his mother Saci, and his wife Visnupriya.

## 26. Vegetarianism

### 26.1. General questions: Vegetarianism

#### 26.1.1) 'Is God, a vegetarian?' & 'refuting the misconception that Lord Rama hunted for His food'

##### **Is God a vegetarian? I read that Lord Rama used to hunt deer for His food. (Digest 34.1)**

There is no mention within any authorized accounts of Lord Rama's pastimes that He hunted deer for His food. This might be a corrupted accounts of the pastime in which Sitadevi was once attracted by a golden deer (which was actually a demon in disguise); Lord Rama went to get the deer for His beloved consort to have as a pet. It is clearly stated in many places in Ramayana that while in the forest, Lord Rama and His brother collected roots and fruits from the forest for their food.

As we have discussed before, vegetarian food is in the mode of goodness while animal flesh induces ignorance. In general, the majority of the population in Vedic civilization was vegetarian, what then to speak of the Supreme Lord, Who is situated in pure goodness, transcendental to three modes of material nature. With very little exception, it was only in the limited case of people who were addicted to a life in the lower modes of nature that sometimes animal flesh was allowed under restriction.

#### 26.1.2) Physiological and spiritual implications of meat eating

##### **Does a man err by consuming non-vegetarian food? What could be its physiological and spiritual implications? (Digests 19.2 and Digest 38.2)**

Human beings are not meant for consuming animal flesh. Physiologically, the human body is not adapted to eat and digest flesh - this has been proven in scientific circles also. There are many back and forth arguments among scientists about the effect of meat eating, but it is easy to see that there are many unwanted diseases caused by such a diet and many experiments have also proved that one can lead a normal, healthy life, in fact healthier life by maintaining a vegetarian diet than otherwise.

On a deeper level, eating of animal flesh, fish etc., has adverse effects on the consciousness and character of those who maintain this kind of diet. We learn from the Bhagavad-gita that eating of such foods plunge one in the mode of ignorance, in which one cannot understand right from wrong, especially with respect to religious principles and spiritual truths.

As stated earlier, in the human species of life, we are endowed with higher intelligence and therefore higher responsibility to show mercy to our fellow living beings. Such acts of mercilessness implicate one in the endless laws of karma, and therefore, as a reaction to the

injustice done to the innocent animals, human society has to face so many consequences today by way of natural calamities, war, terrorism and the increasing unrest in the minds of individuals as well as within the society in general.

### **26.1.3) Eating plants vs. animals**

**In our religion it is stated that we should not eat meat. However what is the difference between eating plants and eating animals? Either way we are killing a living entity. The only difference I see is that animals can voice their agony while plants cannot. (Digest 19.1 and Digest 38.1)**

One living entity is food for another - that's the law of material nature. *jivo jivasya jivanam*, SB 1.13.47. One's mere existence in the material world involves some unavoidable 'himsa' or violence. This does not entitle us to reckless killing, however. As human beings with higher intelligence, we are meant to follow higher religious principles and avoid unnecessary violence.

By nature's arrangement, human beings can lead a healthy life by taking fruits, vegetables, grains and milk. We should also consider that, by nature's arrangement, plants are in a lesser state of consciousness although they have life, and thus experience less pain than higher life forms. Additionally, in most cases we do not kill a plant or tree, or unduly cut short its lifespan, but we only use its products such as its fruits, flowers or leaves. Considering all this, animal killing is a needless violence just for the satisfaction of the tongue.

It is very important to bear in mind that just being vegetarian is not transcendental in itself. The Vedic standard is that killing or hurting the plants for one's own satisfaction also involves sin, although much less severe of a sin compared to unnecessary killing of animals. The only solution, as recommended in *Bhagavad-gita*, is to therefore first offer whatever we require as sustenance in sacrifice to the Supreme Lord before consuming it. The Supreme Lord is the actual creator and rightful proprietor and enjoyer of everything; so accepting as our sustenance foods that are within the mode of goodness, such as fruits or vegetables, and offering them to the Supreme Godhead - that is not violence to the plant, rather the plant derives spiritual benefit and so does the person who makes the offering and then partakes of the remnants of the Supreme Lord! Such a God-conscious life based on the directions of the scriptures is the only way by which man can sustain the body while minimizing harm to anyone including himself.

### **26.1.4) Cow's milk and vegetarianism**

**Why do we drink milk from the cows? Is that not also inflicting cruelty upon them? (Digest 19.3 and Digest 38.3)**

Cow's milk is considered to be a miracle food because not only is it rich in all the nutrients we require for a healthy body but it is also said to help in developing the finer tissues of the brain by which one can understand the higher values of life. Cow's milk is in the category of goodness, and even great sages and saintly persons would subsist only on cow's milk. Not only do we derive nutrition, but in fact it is said that religious principles are derived from cow's milk.

The cow is endowed with the capacity to give plenty of milk, abundantly more than what is needed by her own calves - this is nature's arrangement for the benefit of the humans. In the

Vedic culture, every householder maintained at least one or more cows and the cow was treated like one's own mother. By such affectionate treatment also the cows give plenty of milk, enough for a whole community to subsist on. However, the modern day practices of separating the calves from the cow early and drawing milk from the cow artificially for commercial purposes are all extremely cruel acts. There is a great need, therefore, to educate people about the importance and benefits of cow protection and curb such malpractices. Milking the cows in a natural, loving atmosphere as described above is in itself, however, harmless and in fact healthy for the cows. Rather, not doing so unhealthy both to the cow and her calves.

#### **27.1.5) Cow's milk and vegetarianism**

**How can we consider milk as vegetarian food since it is coming from the cow, being an animal and how come the milk is sacred? (Digest 51.5)**

Please refer to Digest 38.2 and 38.3 (Refer 26.1.4).

#### **26.1.6) Are eggs considered vegetarian?**

**Some people consider eggs to be vegetarian. I had a discussion with one such person who kept claiming that eggs are nothing but protein and carbohydrates. Could you give me some quotes from Prabhupada's books or scientific reasoning that defeats this proposition? (Digest 23.6)**

People now-a-days consider even fetuses to be 'non-living'! Following such a line of thought, time may come when one might even consider one's own child as just 'protein and carbohydrates' and can therefore be killed and eaten! This is the horrific and pathetic state of affairs in Kali yuga, owing to the neglect of culture of spiritual knowledge and mass education of materialistic science. In such a context, where there is no understanding of the soul or of the need for spiritual cultivation, arguments on vegetarianism cannot accomplish much.

Our standards are based on the simple authority of the scriptures, as Prabhupada repeatedly says: human beings are meant to eat fruits, grains, vegetables and milk. These are in the mode of goodness and help us in spiritual advancement, and all other kinds of food are to be avoided.

#### **26.1.7) How to convince people of other religious faith to become vegetarians?**

**In your Krishna Consciousness literature it is always mentioned that the Supreme God is Lord Krishna, who is also known as Govinda, the protector of the brahmanas and the cows. People who know about Vedas or about Indian culture can understand and accept this. How can a man of a different religion or a different region accept this? How can we convince others that everybody in the universe is governed by the dietary laws of Vedas? (Digest 19.5)**

Based on time, place and circumstance, based on the particular needs of the people, apparently different teachings may be presented in different systems of bona fide religions. We do not deny the existence of such instances of differences, but that does not indicate a

fundamental contradiction.

There are many apparent discrepancies in teaching found amongst diverse religious traditions, but a deeper study and a scrutinizing eye will often catch the ultimate non-difference of ethics amongst systems of religion that are actually bona fide.

The underlying principle found in all religion is mercifulness. There may be instances of animal sacrifice or sanction to eat meat in a particular circumstance. Even within the Vedic literatures there might be such isolated instances. But there is also the general teaching and injunction that one should refrain from killing and should be merciful to all beings; this is found in all of the world's scriptures. No bona fide teachings of God in scripture recommend unrestricted killing of animals, and in turn the eating of meat; there is always restriction, which points to the higher principle of abstinence. And certainly no bona fide scripture encourages maintaining organized slaughterhouses to regularly kill millions of innocent animals.

Once again, all bona fide religions teach progressive cultivation of mercifulness. Thus, ultimately there is no clash. For example see Caitanya-caritamrta Adi Lila Chapter 17.153-171 for a discussion on the apparent basis of animal sacrifice and eating meat in the Koran. There are many similar examples. Ultimately, we will find congruity, rather than contradiction of principles.

#### **26.1.8) Hitler's vegetarianism**

**If someone say's even Hitler was vegetarian but he created so much havoc. How can one support the argument that vegetarian food results in pleasant thoughts. (Digest 1.2)**

You have asked a question about Hitler's vegetarianism, yet obviously he did not 'have pleasant thoughts'. Certainly one can do one thing that induces the quality of goodness, and fifty other things that induce ignorance and passion. What will prevail, or which mode is likely to predominate? Fifty to one, ignorance and passion will prevail. Vegetarianism is not everything in determining disposition, in other words.

## 27. Women

### 27.1. General questions: Women

#### 27.1.1) 'Understanding and accepting that there is a spiritual hierarchy' & 'understanding the role of women'

In the Srimad Bhagavatam - Third Canto, Chapter 15: Description of the Kingdom of God - we find some verses and purports with language I find problematic. For example, SB 3.15.17: "In the Vaikuntha planets the inhabitants fly in their airplanes, accompanied by their wives and consorts, and eternally sing of the character and activities of the Lord."

In these verses it seems that the archetype of spiritual identity is characterized as inherently male ("The inhabitants" of the Vaikuntha planets) and the female form, even in spiritual perfection, is relegated to the role of sidekick ("accompanied by their wives and consorts"). The subject/object framing of the male/female forms and the inherent implication of relative status appears to contradict the assertions of absolute equality in a pure, spiritual atmosphere amongst all beings, moving and non-moving, to be found in other verses (such as SB 3.15.16: "everything in the Vaikuntha planets is spiritual and personal") and numerous purports.

However, Srila Prabhupada's wording in the purport to this verse seems to reinforce this understanding and sets us up for an even greater implication of inequity in verse 20-- SB 3.15.17p: "The inhabitants of Vaikuntha give first preference to the service of the Lord, not their own sense gratification. Serving the Lord in transcendental love yields such transcendental pleasure that, in comparison, sense gratification is counted as insignificant."

SB 3.15.20: "The inhabitants of Vaikuntha travel in their airplanes made of lapis lazuli, emerald and gold. Although crowded by their consorts, who have large hips and beautiful smiling faces, they cannot be stimulated to passion by their mirth and beautiful charms."

Between the purport to verse 17 and the text of verse 20 we find the implication that even in this archetype of spiritual perfection the female form is relegated to a second-class position and is intended to function as a "passion stimulator", a function the male-formed spiritual archetype is presumably immune to. Despite considerable time given to the concept of spiritual equality of all Jivas in both verses and purports, the problem remains that an educated person may reasonably assert that a society's biases are revealed in its language and when the language of gender inequality is found in a religious scripture, particularly one meant to be understood literally and even more particularly when the literature is describing the ultimate spiritual archetype to be aspired to by the faithful, then you have to expect a culture, a society, or a religious institution whose values are derived from such literature to instill in its members a sense of righteousness in the devaluing of the female form; a glaring imperfection that invalidates any claim that the literature itself is the word of God (since God would never countenance such inequity) as opposed to the

**word of a patriarchal power structure comprised of fallible human beings - men who contrive a misogynous theology to assuage their gynophobia and justify their social domination.**

**I know the issue of institutionalized sexism is not new to ISKCON, but this is the first time I've noticed the implication of the language found in verses directly referring to spiritual archetypes (no doubt the result of my education by a discerning cynic predisposed to feminist politics and testimony to 30 years of poor study habits that I'm trying to rectify). Do you have any suggestions as to how I may properly understand the nature of the language in these verses for myself and for the sake of explaining it to others as transcendental literature that informs a transcendental culture? (Digest 202.1)**

You are to the point in stating that Srimad Bhagavatam is a transcendental literature that is describing a transcendental culture. Therefore, to understand it we have to be free from biases and preconceptions that come with our own material culture and upbringing. We can admit, to begin with, it is quite likely that we are imposing the biases of our conditioning upon a transcendental literature, as opposed to presuming that the literature is reflecting the society's bias. If we are seeing through red glasses, the world appears red! Thus it is quite possible that the perceived inequality is most likely springing from our own predisposition and sensitivity to this subject as you acknowledge, and the connotations we provide to the language based on our present social context. If we carefully reflect, we can understand that in reality the Bhagavatam is describing a totally different cultural paradigm - we have to have some appreciation of this culture to understand its conception of equality.

There is certainly Absolute equality in Vaikuntha but not homogeneity; there is all variety and even hierarchy - we have discussed this in previous digests in different contexts. (see Digests 184, 194)

Let us try to just explore the theme of these verses in question from another perspective ... suppose that a similar idea was conveyed in the following context: "the inhabitants of Vaikuntha were attended to by their 'servants', and although they were given all sorts of comforts by these 'servants', there was no sense of exploitation and the residents found no pleasure in these indulgences. They were simply absorbed in service to the Lord, indifferent to the attentions given by their servants." Were such statements to be made, should it be taken to indicate that there are relative distinctions of master and servant and the position of servant is in some way inherently inferior? Not for those of us who understand the spiritual concept of servitorship. But the very mention of such a concept would be abhorred by someone who is sensitized by a proletariat idea of exploitation of working class and sympathetic to the cause of abolishing all distinctions between social classes. But those of us familiar with Srila Prabhupada's teachings know well how he dismantled such ideologies of classless society as impractical and unnatural.

There is no claim of artificial equality in the spiritual world in some sense of utopian uniformity. The equality lies in the fact that everybody is engaged to their full capacity and full satisfaction in the service of the one Supreme Enjoyer, Lord Krishna - spiritual communism as Prabhupada would say. One in a subordinate position does not feel belittled or deprived in some way compared to a direct servitor of the Lord, nor does Krishna make such distinctions. Rather, in Vaikuntha consciousness, one prays to be servant of the servant of the servant, many times removed - such a position is more cherished than even direct service to the Lord. For example, the manjaris in Vrindavana whose service it is to assist the gopis do not feel inherently inferior in some capacity nor deprived of Krishna's direct attention; rather they enjoy greater bliss in

enhancing the service of the gopis. The gopis are very eager for Radha to meet Krishna, and Radharani in turn is eager to arrange the gopis' meeting with Krishna, and so on. (Cc. Madhya 8.207-214) Although by material yardstick a bumblebee is not considered highly attractive, in Vaikuntha the cuckoo birds admire the song of the bumblebee. (SB 3.15.18) Thus the real basis of no-discrimination lies in the fact that there is no envy or exploitation in the spiritual world, not that there are no hierarchies and categories. If a soul, by constitution, has such a disposition of assisting their male counterpart in service to Krishna, they are provided with a suitable female form - there is no denigration in this.

Material world is simply a perverted reflection of the spiritual world - thus the categories and hierarchies we find here also exist in the spiritual sky, minus the inebriety found in this realm. The reflecting surface that perverts everything is the desire to enjoy and predominate. Here, those who have male bodies want to enjoy and thus exploit the female form rather than perform their designated service of offering protection; likewise, those with female bodies also want to enjoy and thus rebel against their subordinate position. The solution lies not in reversing the exploitation sequence by asserting oneself as equal and merging their respective roles, but in transforming the consciousness of both parties from the mood of enjoyment to service. The spiritual archetypes portrayed in the Bhagavatam - whether they are that of a male, female, bumblebee or lotus flower - highlights this perfection of the mood of service.

Not to speak of the Vaikuntha planets, even within this world there are illustrious examples of this paradigm in the Vedic culture. We do not find that powerful personalities such as Queen Kunti, Draupadi, Devahuti or Archi (the consort of King Prithu) were contending for equal rights and opportunities! Although in one sense they did enjoy equal footing with their respective husbands, they happily, willingly and gracefully accepted their roles as a dependent and subordinate, and as a fortress of support to their husbands. Did that diminish their qualifications or accomplishments in anyway or affect the Supreme Lord's disposition or dealings with them? Not in the least. These ladies were fully content doing their specific services. Each of them also faced uniquely difficult challenges in their roles as wives and queens, which they faced very competently. They were grateful for the protection offered by their respective husbands and by the society. In turn, their exalted husbands were equally grateful for their extraordinary sacrifices and services. There was no sense of domination or exploitation, nor was there an artificial attempt at sharing of each other's roles. The husbands saw themselves as humble servants of the Lord playing their part as a husband in extending to their wives the protection of the Lord. Thus they perfectly complemented and enhanced each other's service to the Lord, who alone is the Supreme Master and Maintainer of everyone.

Quite contrary to giving room for minimizing womanhood, Vedic literatures and culture give tremendous emphasis and importance to respecting them as highly valuable members of the society even in this world, and as members deserving protection just as the brahmanas, cows, children and elderly deserve protection. An observant reader would not fail to notice this deep respect and importance given to women in the pages of Bhagavatam and Bhagavad-gita. We find powerful statesmen and world emperors such as Arjuna and Maharaja Yudhisthira giving considerable time and deliberation to the special interests of the women in society and the irreparable social consequences of neglecting their needs. If it should be considered that those performing the role of housekeeping, raising and training God-conscious children, protecting family tradition and offering much-needed support for the men constitute subordinate, unimportant roles, such an outlook reflects inequality in fact, because we are relegating these most crucial services to a denigrated position. This is not the outlook of Bhagavatam, for if it

were so there would not be such concern expressed for their welfare. By Krishna's natural arrangement, the female body is equipped to fulfill these roles which demand, in their own way, as much competency, resourcefulness and dedication as do the services traditionally assigned to men in a Vedic society. When the value of their roles is duly recognized and appreciated, competition for the latter's role or for the form of respect offered to them is rendered meaningless and unnecessary.

We find this spirit also in Srila Prabhupada's personal example - although he spoke quite candidly and openly about the myths of women's liberation, in all of his dealings with the matajis (he trained us to see the women as mothers deserving the highest respect!) he treated them with utmost dignity and respect. It was unthinkable for him to neglect women as insignificant or secondary, what to speak of minimizing or exploiting them. Actual protection and dissemination of Vedic culture calls for imbibing this spirit.

Artificial attempts to create equality are bound to fail. In our attempts to negate the disparities and injustices found in this world, we seek to homogenize everything -- not much different from the impersonal school of thought which aspires to "make everything zero" - but such a conception of equality is unnatural even in the spiritual world. Our expectation to find such uniformity in the pages of Bhagavatam leaves us disappointed and amounts to imposing our limited material conceptions on spiritual reality. Real equality lies in acknowledging that there are indeed differences in the natures and capacity of different classes of living entities and facilitating optimal engagement of everyone in their natural service to the Supreme.

I hope this helps to alleviate your discomfort on this subject!

### **27.1.2) Are women, less intelligent?**

**In his purports Srila Prabhupada has called women less intelligent. If all of us, men or women, are basically Prakrti (feminine), then why a soul with a woman's body considered less intelligent? (Digest 18.4)**

The first point that should be made here is that as soon as one is fully self-realized in Krishna consciousness, irrespective of whether one is in the body of a man or woman or child, one is most intelligent, as we see in the examples of Pahlada Maharaja, Queen Kunti etc. Similarly, Srila Prabhupada said on several occasions that these comparisons (in intelligence, for example) no longer apply once one becomes fixed in devotion to Krishna.

To directly respond to your question, Srila Prabhupada does not identify the soul of a woman to be 'less intelligent'. The soul is full of knowledge. However, in the conditioned state, one's innate qualities are covered by a conditioned nature, which is based on the particular body. See verse and purport to Bhagavad-gita 13.21.

## 28. Yoga ladder and yogic siddhis

### 28.1. General questions: Yoga ladder and yogic siddhis

#### 28.1.1) Description of the yoga ladder

I have heard reference to a "Yoga Ladder" which is taught within Bhagavad-gita and other of the Vedic literatures. Can you explain this concept? (Digest 87.1)

A summary description of the yoga ladder can be found below as plain text and as printable HTML at: [Yoga Ladder Description](#)

Here is a picture of the Yoga Ladder: [Yoga Ladder Picture](#)

If you would like a more detailed description, please download this file: [Detailed Description of Yoga Ladder \(PDF file\)](#) (Appendix E)

#### **Summary description of yoga ladder**

The word "Yoga" means to link - linking of our consciousness with the Supreme Absolute Truth. There are different types of yoga systems described which are named differently according to the particular method adopted. When the linking process is predominantly in fruitive activities it is called karma-yoga, when it is empirical it is called Jnana Yoga when it is predominantly in a devotional relationship with the Supreme Lord it is called Bhakti-Yoga, which is the ultimate perfection of all yogas (B.G. 6.46)

The material world is meant for the gradual purification of the conditioned souls, through the process of sacrifice. By this process, the conditioned souls can re-awaken their spiritual consciousness, which they have forgotten. The Yoga Ladder is the Supreme Lord's system for facilitating this.

#### **1. KARMA- KANDA: (No spiritual objective).**

This is the first step in the elevation of a conditioned spirit soul. By encouraging regulated sense gratification, it brings animalistic people to a platform of religiosity. Karma-kanda purifies the practitioner in many ways.

- A. It makes him practice some regulations, which brings detachment. Detachment fosters knowledge.
- B. It brings him to the Vedas, which also contain Jnana (knowledge) and Upasana (worship) sections.
- C. By practicing yajnas (sacrifice) and getting results, it gives him faith in sastra (scriptures).
- D. It makes him associate with Brahmanas (those who are engaged in the cultivation of spiritual knowledge) who can give him knowledge.
- E. After bringing one to the Vedic path and giving one faith, it will naturally lead him to

examine the Jnana (knowledge) sections and Upasana (worship) sections, because the sense gratification of karma-kanda inevitably leads to frustration.

## **2. KARMA-YOGA:**

The practice of karma-kanda leads one to the next step, karma-yoga. Here one is frustrated with living for sense gratification and wants to advance spiritually, but is still too attached to completely stop working for himself. Therefore, one starts karma-yoga on the sakama (with desire) stage.

## **3. SAKAMA-KARMA-YOGA: (Spiritual objective with material desires).**

Here one will work in the world, but will still be attached to some of the fruits for himself. Out of a desire for purification, he will give up some of the fruits of his labor. The practice of sakama-karma-yoga leads one to the stage where he is completely detached to the fruits of his activities (nishkama-karma-yoga)

## **4. NISHKAMA-KARMA-YOGA: (Spiritual objective)**

Here one has some fixedness in transcendental knowledge. Generally, one at this stage is detached from the fruit of his labor, but is still attached to the work itself.

## **5. ASTANGA-YOGA: (Spiritual objective)**

This is a yoga system which helps one to achieve just as that obtained by nishkama-karma-yoga.

There are two stages in astanga-yoga: Yogaruruksu (the beginning stage) and Yogarudha (the advanced stage). These are further divided in to eight steps (asta means "eight", and anga means "parts").

Of the eight steps in astanga-yoga, the first two are yama and niyama i.e., following the prohibitions and regulations. After one learns to strictly follow the rules and regulations, he begins to practice asanas, sitting postures (what people commonly call hatha-yoga). While the asanas are being mastered, one begins pranayama, breathing exercises. The breath is intimately connected with the mind. Therefore, pranayama helps to control the mind. When his mind is controlled, the aspiring yogi advances to the practice of pratyahara, withdrawing his senses from their objects. When he becomes detached, he practices first dharana, then dhyana, different intensities of meditation. Such meditation leads to the final stage, samadhi.

Different transcendentalists attain distinct kinds of samadhi. In samadhi, the mind and consciousness are fully focused on the Absolute. The jnani focuses on the Brahman (the impersonal, all pervading aspect of the supreme) the Patanjali yogi on paramatma (the localized aspect of the Supreme who is situated within the heart) and the bhakti yogi on Krishna (the Supreme Lord with all His opulences, one who has a spiritual form composed of eternity, knowledge and bliss). Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura explains that in the yogaruruksu (beginning) stage, one works in nishkama-karma-yoga while simultaneously practicing astanga-yoga. That purifies his heart. When the aspiring yogi becomes elevated in his practice to the point of yogarudha, he gives up nishkama-karma-yoga. Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana adds that

the yogarudha stage begins at dhyana (intense meditation on the Supreme Absolute Truth, Krishna).

## 5. JNANA-YOGA: (Spiritual objective)

Can be equated to giving up all social obligations in pursuit of spiritual advancement This is not recommended by Krishna because one must be highly qualified to fully give up work



## 6. BHAKTI-YOGA:

Is a quality that can permeate any of the stages that involve a spiritual objective, but generally, it is only fully entered into after the jnana stage.

### 28.1.2 and 28.1.3) Comparison of 'yoga ladder' and the 'sequence of elevation to perfection' described in B.G. 12.8-12

**Bhagavad-gita Chapter 12.8-12 offers us a sequence of elevation to perfection. The Yoga Ladder similarly offers us such a sequence. How do these two descriptions compare? (Digest 221.1)**

**It seems that there is a discrepancy between the two lists regarding where in sequence one places karma-yoga. Can you explain? (Digest 221.2)**

Different things, Krsna consciousness included, can be viewed from different angles. Depending on the angle of viewing something, descriptions may differ even of the same object.

Both the sequence given by Krsna in 12.8-12 and the Yoga Ladder found in the purport to BG 6.47 (see below) are offering a perspective on the same thing: Yoga, or the Systems of Yoga. Let us look closely at these two perspectives on Yoga.

## Stages of Bhakti, Devotion to Krsna

Krsna's description in Chapter 12 focuses primarily remembrance of Him, and upon the goal of fully and spontaneously remembering Him. He then offers stages or degrees of remembrance of Him, which can be seen as stages on the way to the attainment of that goal.

These stages of remembrance of Krsna are framed within specific yoga processes. Progress evolves as follows –

- a) Discerning matter from spirit by Knowledge (impersonal process)
- b) Meditating upon the impersonal feature of the Supreme (note carefully the first verses of this chapter, BG 12.1-3)
- c) Sacrificing fruits of work unto Visnu, the Supersoul
  - 1) sakama karma-yoga (sacrifice some fruits unto Visnu, but still attached to one's activity and to some extent to the fruits as well)
  - 2) niskama karma-yoga (more complete in attachment to Visnu)
- d) becoming attached to Krsna by regulations of viddhi sadhana bhakti
- e) uninterrupted remembrance of Krsna.

[Momentarily I will offer details on how 12.8-12 delineate 'degrees of remembrance of Krsna', but first let me offer a comparative explanation for the Yoga Ladder, in which Karma Yoga is placed below both Jnana Yoga and Astanga Yoga, which is NOT the sequence found in Ch 12.]

## The Yoga Ladder

The focus of the Yoga Ladder is Detachment from Matter, as well as one's Attachment to a particular aspect of the Supreme (Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan). In bhakti, one cultivates attachment to Bhagavan by service. In astanga yoga, one becomes attached to the Paramatma feature. In Jnana yoga, one become attached to the Brahman feature. In Karma yoga, one is trying to become detached enough from matter that one can free one's intelligence from the encumbrance of worldliness such that discerning the spiritual realm can be effective.

Here is the relevant passage from Srila Prabhupada's purport in BG 6.47:

“The culmination of all kinds of yoga practices lies in bhakti yoga. All other yogas are but means to come to the point of bhakti in bhakti-yoga. Yoga actually means bhakti-yoga; all other yogas are progressions toward the destination of bhakti-yoga. From the beginning of karma-yoga to the end of bhakti-yoga is a long way to self-realization. Karma-yoga, without fruitive results, is the beginning of this path. When karma-yoga increases in knowledge and renunciation, the stage is called jnana-yoga. When jnana-yoga increases in meditation on the Supersoul by different physical processes, and the mind is on Him, it is called astanga-yoga. And when one surpasses the astanga-yoga and comes to the point of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krsna, it is called bhakti yoga, the culmination. Factually, bhakti-yoga is the ultimate goal, but to analyze bhakti-yoga minutely one has to understand these other yogas. The yogi who is progressive is therefore on the true path of eternal good fortune. One who sticks to a particular point and does not make further progress is called by that particular name: karma-yogi, jnana-yogi or dhyana-yogi, raja-yogi, hatha-yogi, etc. If one is fortunate enough to come to the point of

bhakti-yoga, it is to be understood that he has surpassed all other yogas.”

Thus, the Yoga Ladder traces detachment from matter, and consequent progressive attachment to Brahman, Paramatama and finally Bhagavan.

### **Stages of Bhakti, Devotion to Krsna, in terms of Remembrance of Him**

Remembrance of Krsna can be stated as the goal in bhakti, since all the rules and regulations in bhakti are to assist our remembrance of Krsna. Favorable and full absorption in and remembrance of Krsna is practically the same as love for Krsna. That remembrance, which is done by injunction in vaidhi bhakti (BG 12.9), is done spontaneously in raga marg, and ultimately in love for Krsna (BG 12.8).

To rise to the platform of full remembrance of Krsna, Karma yoga on both levels (namely niskama and sakama karma-yoga) is described in 12.10. In the previous text 9, one remembers Krsna through practices of vaidhi bhakti, such as following the morning program and watering tulasi.

In 12.10, which seems to describe Karma yoga, one's main attachment can be categorized as either [1] to the work (niskama); or [2] to the work and to its fruit (sakama). Those two, as described in 12.10, purify one so that one can remember Krsna, for in karma yoga, one's mind will tend to be focused on the element (either the work or the fruit) that one is attached to.

A higher stage of working than the karma yoga described in 12.10, is working with bhakti, with attachment to and remembrance of Krsna. This is describes in Bg. 18.57: "In all activities just depend upon Me and work always under My protection. In such devotional service, be fully conscious of Me."

This clearly involves a deeper stage of surrender, which is bhakti, and which is higher than karma yoga. Such a surrendered devotee constantly remembers his master, as Srila Prabhupada describes in his purport to that text:

"When one acts in Krsna consciousness, he does not act as the master of the world. Just like a servant, one should act fully under the direction of the Supreme Lord. A servant has no individual independence. He acts only on the order of the master. A servant acting on behalf of the supreme master is unaffected by profit and loss. He simply discharges his duty faithfully in terms of the order of the Lord. Now, one may argue that Arjuna was acting under the personal direction of Krsna but when Krsna is not present how should one act? If one acts according to the direction of Krsna in this book, as well as under the guidance of the representative of Krsna, then the result will be the same. The Sanskrit word mat-parah is very important in this verse. It indicates that one has no goal in life save and except acting in Krsna consciousness just to satisfy Krsna. And while working in that way, one should think of Krsna only: "I have been appointed to discharge this particular duty by Krsna." While acting in such a way, one naturally has to think of Krsna. This is perfect Krsna consciousness."

#### **28.1.4) Niskama karma-yoga and bhakti-yoga**

**Questions Preface: Thanks so much for all the inspiration you have given me in Krishna consciousness through your lectures and the Q&A forum. I have a question regarding the differences between bhakti yoga and nishkama karma yoga on the platform of knowledge (detached from work and fruits of the work, but still performing work as per Krishna's injunctions in chapter 3). It seems that sometimes these two terms are used**

**interchangeably and sometimes they are distinguished. Based on this, I have a few questions:**

**Is work performed with detachment to work and the fruits of the work offered to Krishna - ALWAYS bhakti yoga or could it also be nishkama on the platform of jnana based on some factor - maybe the kind of work being done (the factor about detachment from work and fruits being offered to Krishna being same). (Digest 203.1)**

Generally, 'nishkama karma yoga' refers to performing prescribed duties without attachment to the fruits. Such a worker is not necessarily detached from the work itself, nor does he necessarily dedicate the results to Krishna.

A 'jnani' (one who is cultivating knowledge of transcendence) or a 'brahma-vadi' is a typical example: there is knowledge that one is spirit soul, different from matter, but there is not an understanding of the Supreme Soul yet. When their knowledge further advances to include knowledge of Vishnu, by coming in contact with vaishnavas, the nishkama karma yogi begins to dedicate the fruits to the Supreme Lord.

In other words, one can perform nishkama karma yoga on two levels, depending on the advancement of one's transcendental knowledge. In the first, one dutifully performs prescribed work with detachment (based on knowledge that we are not this body), without necessarily offering the fruits to Krishna in devotion. The other offers the results of one's labor to Krishna, while still being attached to the specific type of work he does - the latter is a devotee who knows that the goal is Krishna but is not yet on the platform of pure devotion. This is a superior stage of nishkama-karma-yoga. In pure bhakti yoga, on the other hand, the sole impetus for work is surrender to the order of Guru and Krishna.

For our benefit, Srila Prabhupada often explains those verses which describe nishkama-karma-yoga from the platform of bhakti, in light of the ultimate purpose of Bhagavad Gita, as explained in response to Question 2 below. Thus by his explanations we are immediately promoted to this higher stage, without having to go through the gradual, step-by-step process of attaining knowledge of Krishna and then dedicating the results to Him.

#### **29.1.5) Niskama karma-yoga and bhakti-yoga**

**I have also heard BG 9.27 "Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform-do that, O son of Kunti, as an offering to Me." being nishkama karma and verses like 9.26 ("If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it."), 9.22 ("But those who always worship Me with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form to them I carry what they lack, and I preserve what they have.") and similar verses as Bhakti Yoga. Is this a right understanding? (Digest 203.4)**

There are different systems of analyzing these verses; it is not that one system is THE system, thus dismissing all others.

Bearing this in mind, let me reiterate the main point I have been emphasizing thus far. As mentioned before, the prominent distinguishing factor between these two terms is that a nishkama karma yogi dedicates the fruits of work but remains attached to the work itself; the upper end of nishkama karma yoga overlaps into the realm of karma-misra-bhakti. In pure bhakti, on the other hand, the work itself is done exclusively for the pleasure of Krishna---like

the gopis decorating themselves \*JUST\* to please Krishna.

For example, one may very much like to sing - an activity one derives great pleasure from and one may dovetail this propensity in service to Krishna by singing in kirtana for the pleasure of the Deities. Whereas for one on the platform of pure bhakti yoga, the act of singing itself is done simply because it pleases Krishna regardless of how much one personally likes /dislikes the activity.

Similarly, one may have an inclination for a certain type of work, such as teaching or business or management, and one may engage in an occupation that suits his propensity while being detached from the results which is offered in Krishna's service - this is nishkama karma yoga, or karma-misra-bhakti. In contrast, a practitioner of pure bhakti yoga would perform his work simply for pleasing Krishna -- remembering Krishna while executing such occupation and performing the occupation itself according to the instruction of Krishna or His representative. He is not attached to a particular type of work but is willing to act in any capacity as directed by Guru and Krishna. He works for Krishna's pleasure and earns for Krishna's pleasure, he shops for Krishna and cooks for Krishna, all the while absorbed in meditation of serving Krishna, and thus naturally the results that come from that work are directly engaged in service to Krishna. This is the spirit of bhakti-yoga: "offering with love and devotion a leaf, flower, fruit or water."

For one who has not yet attained this stage of attachment to Krishna, the Lord then recommends, "Never mind whatever you are doing, offer the results to Me." This is karma-yoga.

#### 29.1.6) Does BG 3.30 describe nishkama karma-yoga or bhakti-yoga?

**BG 3.30 reads: "Therefore, O Arjuna, surrendering all your works unto Me, with full knowledge of Me, without desires for profit, with no claims to proprietorship, and free from lethargy, fight." - is this a definition of nishkama karma yoga or is this bhakti yoga? (Digest 203.2)**

Here Krishna is directing Arjuna to surrender all work unto Him. Working in full knowledge of Krishna without proprietorship and desires for profit is nishkama-karma-yoga, but when the work itself is surrendered to Krishna, it comes to the platform of bhakti - work done for the pleasure of Krishna. Srila Prabhupada points out that this verse 3.30 clearly indicates the purpose of BG. Although in previous verses Krishna exhorts Arjuna to work out of duty and with detachment, in this verse He reveals the purpose of the Gita, viz. to act for His pleasure.

#### 28.1.7) King Janaka and nishkama karma-yoga

**29.1.7) In the 3rd chapter when Gita explains about King Janaka, is King Janaka referred to as an example of having performed nishkama karma yoga? (Digest 203.5)**

Yes. As Srila Prabhupada explains in the purport, Janaka being a great devotee was transcendently situated, but he was setting an ideal example for his subjects how to perform prescribed duties without attachment.

**28.1.8) Yogic mysticism**

**Is there a science that explains miraculous activities like assuming a gigantic form, multiplying into many forms etc.? (Digest 46.3)**

There are different yogic siddhis, which may be attained by practice of yoga, such as Patanjali's yoga system. They work on the principle of manipulating subtle matter, such as by sound vibration (chanting of mantras), just as modern science manipulates gross matter. Specifically, there are eight mystic perfections such as mahima (assuming giant form), anima (becoming smaller than the smallest), prapti (attaining whatever one desires) etc.

These mystic capacities are derived from the Supersoul.

## 29. Appendix A. Dhairya - Patience

For the practitioner of devotional service, *dhairya*, patience, is extremely necessary. Those who possess the quality of *dhairya* are called *dhīra*, sober. Due to lack of this quality, men become restless. Those who are impatient cannot do any work. By the quality of *dhairya*, a practitioner controls first himself and then the whole world. In the first verse of *Śrī Upadeśāmṛta* the symptoms of *dhairya* are explained:

*vāco vegam manasaḥ krodha-vegam jihvā-vegam udaropastha-vegam  
etān vegān yo viśaheta dhīraḥ sarvām apīmām pṛthivīm sa śiṣyāt*

**"A sober person who can tolerate the urge to speak, the mind's demands, the actions of anger, and the urges of the tongue, belly, and genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world."**

There are six types of urges: namely, the urges of speech, mind, anger, belly, tongue, and genitals. With a desire to speak more, a person becomes talkative. If speech is not regulated, then enmity arises from talking about others. To speak uselessly is the business of a fool; but out of a desire to unnecessarily engage in speech the materialists always waste time and face so many distresses. Pious people observe *mauna-vrata*, or silence, in order to get rid of this disturbance. That is why the *ṛṣis* have made provisions for observing various vows like *mauna-vrata*. The practitioners of devotional service should not speak unnecessarily. If you do have to speak unnecessarily, better to keep quiet. Besides topics regarding Kṛṣṇa, all other topics are unnecessary. But to speak about the subjects favorable to devotional service is not unnecessary. Therefore devotees should speak only on topics about Lord Hari or those favorable to such topics. All other topics will be counted in the category of the urge to speak. On who is able to control the urge to speak is a sober person. It is the duty of a sober person to tolerate the urge of the mind. Until one is habituated to control the urge of the mind, how can one perform devotional service with attention? A materialist sits in the chariot of the mind and never gets relief from its various urges, except during sleep.

Even during sleep many thoughts such as good and bad dreams come. In order to regulate the urges of the mind, *ṛṣis* have propounded *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* and *rāja-yoga*. But the Lord's prescription is that one should regulate the mind from the inferior tastes by giving it a higher taste. Those who are on the path of devotional service can easily regulate the mind. The mind cannot remain without urges. If urged towards spiritual subjects, the mind is properly engaged and it will not hanker for insignificant subjects. Many people think that without *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* there is no alternative to regulate the mind. But Patañjali Muni has accepted that just as *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* regulates the mind, *bhakti-yoga* can also. Meditation on the Supreme Lord as propounded by Patañjali is not pure devotional service, rather it is *sakāma-bhakti*, or motivated. If devotional service is performed for the purpose of regulating the mind, then it is certainly not devoid of material desires. Favorable cultivation of devotional service in relationship to Kṛṣṇa is the real meaning of pure *bhakti*. Therefore whenever pure devotional service is performed, joyfulness of the mind automatically arises from amongst extraneous fruits. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.1.32) states:

*tasmāt kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet*

**"Somehow or other, one must consider the form of Kṛṣṇa very seriously."**

If one follows this instruction, then the mind will be engaged at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and it will not easily wander into other subjects. For the practitioner, the urge of the mind is regulated by pure cultivation of favorable devotional service in relationship to Kṛṣṇa. By carefully meditating on this subject, one can know the inherent differences between *yoga* and *bhakti*. To restrain the urge of anger is compulsory for those who are thirsty for devotional service. Anger arises when a man's lust is unfulfilled. When one is angry the result gradually leads one to ruination. It is said in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya 19.149):

*kṛṣṇa-bhakta-niṣkāma, ataeva 'śānta'*

**"Because a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa is desireless, he is peaceful."**

No insignificant lust can remain in the heart of one who relishes pure devotional service. Therefore there is no possibility of anger arising in his mind. Those whose devotional service is motivated cannot conquer anger. It is not possible to conquer anger by intelligence alone. In a very short time attachment for sense enjoyment overcomes the function of the intelligence and gives anger a place in its kingdom. It is seen in the song of the *Avanti brāhmaṇa* from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.23.33-35, 37, 40) that he was able to quickly control anger.

*taṁ vai pravayaśaṁ bhikṣuṁ avadhūtam asaj-janāḥ dṛṣṭvā paryabhavan  
bhadra bahvibhiḥ paribhūtibhiḥ*

**"O kind Uddhava, seeing him as an old, dirty beggar, rowdy persons would dishonor him with many insults."**

*kecit tri-veṇuṁ jagṛhur  
eke pātraṁ kamaṇḍalum  
pīṭhaṁ caike 'kṣa-sūtraṁ ca  
kanthāṁ cīrāṇi kecana  
pradāya ca punas tāni  
darśitāny ādadur muneḥ*

**"Some of these persons would take away his sannyāsī rod, and some the waterpot which he was using as a begging bowl. Some took his deerskin seat, some his chanting beads, and some would steal his torn, ragged clothing. Displaying these things before him, they would pretend to offer them back but would then hide them again."**

*annaṁ ca bhaikṣya-sampannaṁ bhujjānasya  
sarit-taṭe mūtrayanti ca pāpiṣṭhāḥ  
ṣṭhivanty asya ca mūrdhani*

**"When he was sitting on the bank of a river about to partake of the food that he had collected by his begging, such sinful rascals would come and pass urine on it, and they would dare to spit on his head."**

*kṣīpanty eke 'vajānanta eṣa dharma-dhvajaḥ śaṭhaḥ  
kṣīṇa-vitta imām vṛttim agrahīt sva-janojjhitaḥ*

**"They would criticize and insult him, saying, "This man is just a hypocrite and a cheat. He makes a business of religion simply because he lost all his wealth and his family threw him out.**

*evam sa bhautikaṁ duḥkhaṁ daivikaṁ daihikaṁ ca yat bhoktavyam ātmano  
diṣṭaṁ prāptaṁ prāptaṁ abudhyata*

**"The brāhmaṇa understood that all his suffering-from other living beings, from the higher forces of nature and from his own body-was unavoidable, being allotted to him by providence."**

That Avanti mendicant then spoke the following verse in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.23.57):

*etām sa āsthāya parātma-niṣṭhām  
adhyāsītām pūrvatamair maharṣibhiḥ  
ahaṁ tariṣyāmi duranta-pāraṁ  
tamo mukundāṅghri-niṣevayaiva*

**"I shall cross over the insurmountable ocean of nescience by being firmly fixed in the service of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. This was approved by the previous ācāryas, who were fixed in firm devotion to the Lord, Paramātmā, the Supreme Personality of Godhead."**

This *parātma-niṣṭā*, being firmly fixed in the service of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, is sometimes followed by householders like Janaka and sometimes by *sannyāsīs* like Sanaka and Sanātana. In both circumstances the *parātma-niṣṭā* is the same. Without this *parātma-niṣṭā* one cannot cross the insurmountable ocean of nescience. Service to Lord Mukunda is the only shelter; one will be delivered by accepting that. We can clearly see from this song of the Avanti *brāhmaṇa* that it is impossible to cross the material ocean by the process of *yoga*. By unflinching devotion to Kṛṣṇa, everything is achieved. One who can control the urges of speech, mind, and anger by devotional service is called *dhīra*. It is everyone's duty to subdue the urge of the tongue. Materialistic persons are always busy trying to enjoy the six kinds of tastes by chewing, sucking, and so on. "Today I will enjoy spiced rice with non-veg, today I will endeavor for kitri, today I will enjoy the finest drinks." Hankering like this, the materialist always wanders. The more the tongue eats, the more its hankering increases. For those who wander for the pleasure of the tongue, attaining Kṛṣṇa is very difficult. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Antya 6.225-227):

*vairāgī hañā kare jihvāra lālasa paramārtha yāya, āra haya rasera vaśa vairāgīra kṛtya—sadā nāma-  
saṅkīrtana śāka-patra-phala-mūle udara-bharaṇa jihvāra lālase yei iti-uti dhāya śiśnodara-parāyaṇa  
kṛṣṇa nāhi pāya"*

**"If a renunciate is eager for his tongue to taste different foods, his spiritual life will be lost, and he will be subservient to the tastes of his tongue. The duty of a person in the renounced order is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra always. He should satisfy his belly with whatever vegetables, leaves, fruits, and roots are available. One who is subservient to the tongue and who thus goes here and there, devoted to the genitals and the belly, cannot attain Kṛṣṇa."**

One should fill his belly with whatever is easily available. By offering Kṛṣṇa foods in the

mode of goodness and honoring them as *prasāda*, the tongue is satisfied and service to Kṛṣṇa is cultivated. If palatable *prasāda* is easily available, then the tongue's greed will gradually be controlled rather than increased. The urge of the belly is a disturbance. The requirement of the stomach is to eat for the maintenance of the life and mitigation of hunger. Those who are thirsty for devotional service should maintain their life by moderate eating. Those who endeavor to overeat are called gluttons. One of the qualities of devotees is *mita-bhuk*, eating what is necessary. By eating less, the body remains healthy and does not disturb one's devotional service. Those who have no strength to tolerate the urge of the stomach are always greedy to eat. Those who are firmly convinced that nothing can be eaten besides *kṛṣṇa-prasāda* are especially able to tolerate the urge of the belly. Restrictions like fasting on prescribed days are also models of instruction for controlling the urge of the stomach. The urge of the genital is formidable for persons who are averse to the Lord. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.5.11) it is said:

*loke vyavāyāmiṣa-madya-sevā nityā hi jantor na hi tatra codanā*

**"In this material world the conditioned soul is always inclined to sex, meat-eating, and intoxication. Therefore religious scriptures never actually encourage such activities."**

The purport of this statement from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is confidential. Those who possess a material body made of flesh and blood are always inclined to associate with women. To minimize this inclination, the marriage ceremony is recommended. Those who wish to get free from the codes of marriage are almost like animals. But those who have crossed beyond the rules of this natural inclination by the association of devotees and the strength of their service and have thus attained attraction for spiritual subject matters, for them associating with the opposite sex is very insignificant. Persons who are filled with attachment for material enjoyment can never tolerate the urge of the genital. Many of them engage in illicit activities. Regarding this propensity, those who thirst for devotional service are divided into two groups. Those whose attraction has been purified by the strength of *sādhu-saṅga* give up the association of women altogether and continually engage in devotional service. Persons in this group are known as renounced Vaiṣṇavas. Those whose propensity for associating with women has not been destroyed accept the codes of marriage and remain as householders while engaging in devotional service. Associating with women as prescribed in the scriptures means to control the urge of the genitals. When one properly tolerates the above mentioned six urges, that is favorable for his devotional service. And when those urges are strong, that is unfavorable for one's devotional service. To subdue these six urges is called *dhairya*. As long as one has a material body these propensities cannot be totally uprooted, but by properly engaging them in their appropriate subjects they no longer remain faulty. Therefore Śrī Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has written in his *Prema-bhakti-candrikā* as follows:

*kāma, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, mātsarya, dambha-saha  
sthāne sthāne niyukta kariba  
ānanda kari' hṛdaya, riṇu kari' parājaya,  
anāyāse govinda bhajiba.  
'kāma' kṛṣṇa-karmārpaṇe, 'krodha' bhakta-dveṣi jane,  
'lobha' sādhu-saṅge hari-kathā  
'moha' iṣṭa-lābha vine, 'mada' kṛṣṇa-guṇa-gāne,  
niyukta kariba yathā tathā.*

"I will engage lust, anger, greed, illusion, madness, envy, and pride in appropriate ways, and by defeating these enemies I will feel happiness in my heart as I peacefully worship Govinda. I will engage lust by offering it in Kṛṣṇa's service. Anger I will direct towards those who are envious of the devotees. I will be greedy to hear the topics of Hari in the association of devotees. I will feel illusioned without achieving my worshipable Lord. I will be maddened while singing the glories of Kṛṣṇa. In this way I will engage these enemies in their proper places."

The confidential meaning of this song is that the duty of an intelligent person is to direct these urges away from their respective subjects and make them favorable to devotional service. That can only be done with patience. There is another meaning applicable to the word *dhairya*. Those who engage in *sādhana* desire to attain the results. *Karmis* hope to attain heavenly happiness by fruitive activities; *jñānīs* hope to attain liberation by speculative knowledge, and devotees hope to please Kṛṣṇa by their devotion. Being impatient due to prolonged *sādhana*, some people fall from the path to the ultimate goal; therefore a practicing devotee who desires to achieve his goal attains that result only when he becomes patient. "Kṛṣṇa must be merciful to me either today or after one hundred years or in some other birth. I will take shelter of His lotus feet with determination and never leave." This type of *dhairya*, patience, is most desirable for the practitioners of devotional service.

## 30. Appendix B. Procedures for Deity worship at home

### 1) Waking Up and Remembering the Lord

Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself set the example for waking up and performing early-morning regulated activities, called nitya-kṛīya:

Lord Kṛṣṇa would immediately get up from bed exactly on the appearance of brāhma-muhūrta.... After rising from bed, Lord Kṛṣṇa would wash His mouth, hands, and feet and would immediately sit down and meditate on Himself. This does not mean, however, that we should also sit down and meditate on ourselves. We have to meditate upon Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. That is real meditation.... After His meditation, the Lord would regularly bathe early in the morning with clear, sanctified water. Then He would change into fresh clothing, cover Himself with a wrapper, and then engage Himself in His daily religious functions. Out of His many religious duties, the first was to offer oblations into the sacrificial fire and silently chant the Gāyatrī mantra. Lord Kṛṣṇa, as the ideal householder, executed all the religious functions of a householder without deviation. When the sunrise became visible, the Lord would offer specific prayers to the sun-god. [Kṛṣṇa book, “Lord Kṛṣṇa’s Daily Activities”]

To rise early and immediately cleanse both body and mind is important for health and regulation. After slowing down and restoring itself for six hours, the human body naturally activates itself before sunrise. Then, just as we must immediately bathe to get rid of impurities accumulated in and expelled from the gross body during sleep, we must also free ourselves from the subtle impurities exuded as negative thought patterns—lustful desires, fears, and attachments—in the form of dreams, by remembering the Lord and chanting His glories.

#### 1.1) The Time of Rising from Bed

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

The time early in the morning, one and a half hours before sunrise, is called brāhma-muhūrta. During this brāhma-muhūrta, spiritual activities are recommended. Spiritual activities performed early in the morning have a greater effect than in any other part of the day.\* [Bhāg. 3.20.46, purport]

#### 1.2) Waking and Chanting

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

In the early morning hours (known as brāhma-muhūrta) one should get up and immediately chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, or at least ‘Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa.’ In this way, one should remember Kṛṣṇa. Some śloka or prayers should also be chanted. By chanting, one immediately becomes auspicious and transcendental to the infection of material qualities. Actually one has to chant and remember Lord Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours daily, or as much as possible. [Cc. Madhya 24.331, purport]

#### 1.3) Offering Obeisances to the Spiritual Master

After waking up and chanting the Lord’s name, honor your spiritual master and the Lord by offering praṇāmas, or obeisances, accompanied by prayers. By offering obeisances upon awakening, we focus on the goal of surrendering our life to the order of the spiritual master and the service of Kṛṣṇa. Focusing on the positive goal drives away any lingering negative thoughts.

## 2) Before Entering the Deity Room

### ❖ **Outside the Deity room, sit on an āsana and perform acamana.**

#### Acamana

Acamana, or sipping water, is a means of purification. Sit on a proper sitting place (asana, a clean mat or cushion). (If there is no asana, kneel with your right knee touching the floor and your left foot flat on the floor.) With an acamana-patra filled with water clean both hands by sprinkling them with water; holding the acamana spoon in your left hand, pour a few drops into the right palm:

- Chant om kesavaya namah and sip water from the palm of your right hand. Pour a few drops into the right palm, and discard the drops over a cloth on the floor. Pour a few drops into the right palm.
- Chant om narayanya namah and sip water from the palm of your right hand. Pour a few drops into the right palm, and discard the drops over a cloth on the floor. Pour a few drops into the right palm.
- Chant om madhavaya namah and sip water from the palm of your right hand. Pour a few drops into the right palm and discard the water over a cloth on the floor.
- Offer obeisances to your spiritual master, saying his praṇāma prayers and requesting his blessings to perform the day's activities:

nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale śrimate srila romapada swami iti nāmine

I offer my respectful obeisances unto Srila Romapada Swami, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa, having taken shelter at His lotus feet.

### ❖ **While ringing a bell just outside the Deity room, you may chant the following verses, meditating on the Lord awakening and begging Him to bestow His mercy:**

so 'sāv adabhra-karuṇo bhagavān vivṛddha-prema-smitena nayanāmburuhaṁ vijṛmbhan  
utthāya viśva-vijayāya ca no viśādaṁ mādhyā girāpanayatāt puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ

The Lord, who is supreme and is the oldest of all, is unlimitedly merciful. I wish that He may smilingly bestow His benediction upon me by opening His lotus eyes. He can uplift the entire cosmic creation and remove our dejection by kindly speaking His directions. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.9.25]

deva prapannārti-hara prasādaṁ kuru keśava avalokana-dānena bhūyo mām parayācyuta

O Keśava, O infallible Lord, O You who remove the distress of the surrendered souls! Please bestow Your mercy upon me by again awarding me Your transcendental glance.

jaya jaya kṛpamaya jagatera nātha sarva jagatere koro śubha-dṛṣṭi-pāta

All glories, all glories to the merciful Lord of the universe! O Lord, please cast Your auspicious glance upon all the worlds.

### 3) Entering the Deity Room

- ❖ Before entering the Deity room, draw the Lord's attention by making a sound, either by clapping your hands, ringing a bell, or knocking on the Deity room door.
- ❖ Open the door, turn on the lights, and chant the names of the Deities in a festive mood: jaya [or your Deities' names] kī-jaya
- ❖ Then step into the Deity room with your right foot first and light the ghee or oil lamps.

### 4) Waking the Spiritual Master and the Deities

- ❖ While ringing a small bell with your left hand, approach your spiritual master's bed, touch his lotus feet with your right hand, and chant:

uttiṣṭhottiṣṭha śrī-guro tyaja nidrām kṛpā-maya

O all-merciful spiritual master, please rise from sleep.

- ❖ Approach Lord Nityānanda's bed, touch His lotus feet, and chant:

uttiṣṭha jāhnaveśvara yoga-nidrām tyaja prabho  
nāmno haṭṭe divya-nāmaṁ su-śraddhārthaṁ vitarasi

O Nityānanda Prabhu, Lord of Jāhnava, please arise and give up Your divine sleep. At the marketplace of the holy name You distribute the divine name, asking only for one's faith in payment.

- ❖ Approach Lord Caitanya's bed, touch His lotus feet, and chant:

uttiṣṭhottiṣṭha gaurāṅga jahi nidrām mahāprabho  
śubha-dṛṣṭi-pradānena trailokya-maṅgalaṁ kuru

O Lord Gaurāṅga, please rise from sleep and bless the three worlds with Your auspicious glance.

- ❖ Next approach the bed of Lord Jagannātha, Lord Balarāma, and Śrīmatī Subhadrā, touch Their lotus feet, and chant:

tyaja nidrām jagan-nātha śrī-baladevottiṣṭha ca jagan-mātar ca  
subhadre uttiṣṭhottiṣṭha śubha-de

O Lord Jagannātha and Lord Baladeva, please give up your sleep and arise. O Śrīmatī Subhadrā, dear mother of the universe, please arise and bestow good fortune upon us.

❖ Then approach Rādhā's and Kṛṣṇa's bed, touch Their lotus feet, and chant:

īśvara śrī-hare kṛṣṇa devakī-nandana prabho nidrām muñca jagan-nātha  
prabhāta-samayo bhavet

O supreme controller, O Lord Hari, O Kṛṣṇa, O son of Devakī, O master, O Lord of the universe, please give up Your sleep, for daybreak has come.

go-gopa-gokulānanda yaśodā-nanda-varadhana  
uttiṣṭha rādhayā sārḍham prātar āsij jagat-pate

O master of the universes, O bliss of Gokula, the cowherds, and the cows, O You who gladden the hearts of Yaśodā and Nanda, please rise from bed with Śrī Rādhikā, for morning has come.

Chant the following mantra for other viṣṇu-tattva Deities:

uttiṣṭhotttiṣṭha govinda uttiṣṭha parameśvara  
uttiṣṭha kamalā-kānta trailokyam maṅgalaṁ kuru

O Govinda, O Parameśvara, O beloved of Lakṣmī, please rise and bestow good fortune on all the three worlds.

For other Deities, chant uttiṣṭhotttiṣṭha, "please rise," and the name of the Deity. You may now return to the altar any small Deities in bed. If there are only large Deities, meditate on waking Them and leading Them from Their beds to the altar.

❖ Then replace any crowns, turbans, chādars, or veils that belong to Their Lordships' night dress. After removing any remaining flowers and garlands\* from the previous day, clean the Deity room floor and then wash your hands.

### 5) Bhoga [Unoffered Food] Offering

1. On a plate reserved for the Lord's use, nicely arrange the bhoga preparations. Perform acamana and offer obeisances to your spiritual master. Set the offering plate in front of the Deities, either directly on the altar or on a table before the altar. Arrange for the Lord to eat in private, perhaps by putting up a curtain before the altar.
2. With your right hand purify the bhoga by sprinkling it lightly with water from a Panca-patra while chanting the maha-mantra.
3. Sitting on an asana (cushion) before the altar and ringing a bell, recite three times the pranama prayer(s) to your spiritual master, begging permission to assist him in his service to the Lord:

*nama om visnu-padaya krsna-presthaya bhuta-tale  
srimate [spiritual master's name] iti namine*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto [spiritual master's name], who is very dear to Lord Krishna, having taken shelter at His lotus feet.

Chant the following prayer to Lord Caitanya three times, requesting His mercy:

*namo maha-vadanyaya krsna-prema-pradaya te krsnaya  
krsna-caitanya-namne gaura-twise namah*

O most munificent incarnation! You are Krishna Himself appearing as Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu. You have assumed the golden color of Srimati Radharani, and You are widely distributing pure love of Krishna. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You. [Chaitanya Caritamrta, Madhya 19.53]

Chant the following prayer three times, offering respect to Lord Krishna:

*namo brahmanya-devaya go-brahmana-hitaya ca jagad-dhitaya  
krsnaya govindaya namo namah*

I offer my obeisances again and again to Lord Krishna, who is always worshiped by qualified brahmanas and is very dear to them. He is always concerned with the welfare of the cows, the brahmanas, and the whole universe, and He gives pleasure to the cows, land, and senses. [Visnu Purana]

1. Leave the room for ten minutes, allowing the Lord and His associates (including your spiritual master and the previous acaryas) to eat. During this time you may chant the *Gayatri mantras* [if you have received second initiation] for your spiritual master and for Lord Caitanya (the third and fifth guru-given mantras); then you may chant the Hare Krishna mantra and other Vaisnava songs.
2. Re-enter the room, clapping the hands three times. Remove the plate, praying that you have served the Lord and His associates to Their full satisfaction. While it is not expected that home worship be strictly punctual, it is best to keep as regular a schedule as possible. Whatever food one prepares for oneself and others must be offered to the Deities, so the number of offerings may vary; however, one should have a set number of offerings in the day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner, for example) to which the family cooking schedule is oriented.

## 6) Arati Ceremony

Every scheduled bhoga offering is followed by an arati. Except for kirtana, offering arati is the only regular daily function of Deity worship performed publicly.

### 6.1) Required Paraphernalia

Make sure the following items are present:

For all Aratis:

- 1) a bell on a plate;
- 2) a Panca-patra containing samanya-arghya water (or simply fresh water) and a spoon;
- 3) a conch (for blowing) with a water-filled lota for purifying it;
- 4) a receptacle to catch the water from rinsing the conch (just outside the Deity room, in the temple room).

In addition, for full *Arati*:

- 1) an incense holder with an odd number of incense sticks;
- 2) a ghee lamp with an odd number of wicks (at least five);
- 3) a conch for *arghya* water, with a stand;
- 4) a waterpot with a spout and a cover, filled with water (this is for the *arghya* water to be offered in the conch);
- 5) a small *visarjaniya-patra* (throw-out container) for the offered *arghya*;
- 6) a handkerchief;
- 7) flower(s) on a plate;
- 8) a *chamara* (yak-tail whisk);
- 9) a peacock fan (only in warm weather).

### 6.2) Preliminary Activities for Arati

- ❖ Outside the Deity room, after performing *acamana* (if not already done for previous services), offer obeisances to your spiritual master, requesting to assist him in the worship.
- ❖ After cleaning the place where the *arati* paraphernalia will be set up (either on a low table, on the floor, or, if space allows, on the altar itself), bring the tray with paraphernalia and place them in the order of offering.
- ❖ Ringing the bell again, open the Deity room doors. Then, take the blowing conchshell and *lota* with water just outside the Deity room (without the bell), blow the conch three times, rinse it off over a receptacle placed outside for that purpose, and then bring the conch and *lota* back inside. (You may place the conch horizontally on top of the *lota*.) Next wash your hands with water from the *Panca-patra* and open the curtain while ringing the bell.

### 6.3) Performing the Arati

- ❖ *Arati* paraphernalia should be offered gracefully, in a meditative mood. But do not be either too slow or too fast, and do not perform it in a showy manner, but as a humble servant of your spiritual master and the assembled Vaisnavas. Stand to the left of the altar (as viewed from the temple room)--not hidden entirely from view but also not distracting by your presence. For devotees who are not direct disciples of Srila Prabhupada: Along with the worship of one's own spiritual master, devotees in ISKCON worship His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada as both the Founder-Acarya of ISKCON and the *siksa-guru* for all devotees of ISKCON. In addition to the worship of Srila Prabhupada in his *guru-puja*, one should also honor him when performing *arati* by presenting the *arati* items to Srila Prabhupada after presenting them to one's own spiritual master.
- ❖ Then, with the consciousness that you are offering each item on behalf of your spiritual master and, offer each item with the full number of circles (listed below) to the main Deity.
- ❖ Then "distribute it" (with one or three circles) to the assembled Vaisnavas as the *prasada* of the Lord and His associates.
- ❖ Offer the remaining items in a similar way. When offering each *upacara* (item of worship), say softly the name of the item and the appropriate *mula-mantra* (see below) of the Deity being worshiped. Or in simplified worship, simply say to each personality, "Please accept this offering of [incense, lamps, etc.]."
- ❖ Offered items should not be mixed with unoffered items. You may place offered items back

on the plate that was used to bring in the paraphernalia, provided no unoffered paraphernalia remains on it.

❖ **How to Offer Each Item**

Offer all the items, except the camara and fan, by moving them in clockwise circles while ringing a bell with your left hand (above waist level), fixing your attention on the Deities.

**Incense:** offer four circles to the lotus feet, two circles to the navel, and then offer seven circles to the Lord's whole body.

**Lamp(s):** offer four circles to the lotus feet, two circles to the navel, and three circles to the Lord's face; then offer seven circles to the Lord's whole body.

**Arghya in a conch:** offer seven circles to the whole body of the Lord. Then pour a small amount of the offered arghya into the visarjaniya-patra (small throw-out pot) before proceeding to offer arghya to the next personality. (Arati arghya: plain or scented water).

**Cloth:** offer four circles to the lotus feet, two circles to the navel, and three circles to the Lord's face; then offer seven circles to the Lord's whole body.

**Flowers:** offer four times around the Lord's lotus feet.

**Camara:** wave before the Lord a suitable number of times.

**Fan:** wave before the Lord a suitable number of times. You may give out the lamp(s) to the assembled devotees immediately after offering them to the Deities; it is traditional in many temples, to avoid interrupting the arati, to distribute arghya water and flowers at the end of the arati, after blowing the conch.

#### 6.4) Upacara-mantras for Arati

The mantras for each item are as follows:

- ❖ Incense: esa dhupa and the mula-mantra
- ❖ Camphor and ghee lamps: esa dipa and the mula-mantra
- ❖ Water in a conchshell: idam arghyam and the mula-mantra
- ❖ Cloth: idam vastram and the mula-mantra
- ❖ Flowers: etani puspani and the mula-mantra (idam puspam if offering a single flower)
- ❖ Camara: esa camara-seva and the mula-mantra
- ❖ Fan: esa vyajana-seva and the mula-mantra

#### 6.5) Mula-mantras

The standard mula-mantras for the Deities worshiped in ISKCON are given below. They should be chanted only by devotees duly initiated by a bona fide spiritual master into the chanting of Pancaratrika Gayatri mantras. See the Supplement for a further explanation of mantras used in Deity worship.

**Your guru:** *aim gurave namah* Previous guru: *om parama-gurave namah*

**Lord Caitanya:** *klim gauraya namah*

**Lord Nityananda:** *klim nityanandaya namah* or *klim devi-jahnava-vallabhaya namah*

**Lord Krishna, Lord Jagannatha, Govardhana-sila, and Dvaraka-sila:** *klim krsnaya namah*  
Srimati

**Radharani:** *Srim ram radhikayai svaha* or *Srim radhayai namah*

**Radha-Krishna:** *Srim klim radha-krsnabhyam namah*

**Srimati Tulasi-devi:** *om tulasyai namah*

**Lord Nrsimha:** *klim nrsimhaya namah or ksraum nrsimhaya namah*

**Laksmi-Nrsimha:** *Srimklim laksmi-nrsimhabhyam namah or Srim ksraum laksmi-nrsimhabhyam namah*

#### 6.6) Completing the Arati :

- ❖ After completing the arati, blow the conch three times outside the Deity room, as at the beginning of the arati. Then distribute the arghya and flower prasada to the assembled devotees.
- ❖ Chant the prema-dhvani mantras if the kirtana leader or another devotee in the temple does not chant them.
- ❖ Then with joined palms offer pranama prayers softly to your spiritual master and Their Lordships.
- ❖ Next remove the arati paraphernalia from the Deity room, clean the area and articles, and at last offer dandavat-pranamas (prostrated obeisances) outside the Deity room.

#### 7) The basic procedure for Gaura-Nitai worship is as follows:

- i. Gather all the required paraphernalia and arrange it neatly and conveniently for performing the worship. Make sure you have everything you need so that you will not have to interrupt the worship to get something.
- ii. Sit on an asana and perform acamana; then lightly sprinkle yourself, the area, and the paraphernalia with water from the Panca-patra, chanting the Hare Krishna mantra.
- iii. Offer worship to your spiritual master as follows: Ringing a bell with your left hand, offer a flower(s) dipped in sandalwood paste (if it is available) at his lotus feet. Beg for his blessings to perform the worship of Gaura-Nitai. Then chant the guru-given Gayatri mantras silently [if you have received those mantras].
- iv. Offer worship to Gaura-Nitai as follows:
  - Invite Their Lordships to the bathing receptacle with a gesture of the hands, remove Their clothing, clean Them with a damp cloth, and cover Them with gamchas. If the Deities are metal, polish Them at this time, using a cloth to apply almond paste or powdered gopi-candana mixed with a little lemon juice. Avoid the eyes and painted areas. Clean off the gopi-candana or paste with a soft, damp cloth.
  - Ringing a bell in your left hand, pour water over Their Lordships from a conch held in your right hand. Fill the conch at least three times.
  - Chant the Brahma-samhita prayers while bathing Them:

*cintamani-prakara-sadmasu kalpa-vrksa-laksavrtesu surabhir abhipalayantam laksmi-sahasra-sata-sambhrama-sevyamanam govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami*

I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, the first progenitor, who is tending cows yielding all desires among abodes built with spiritual gems and surrounded by millions of desire trees. He is always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds of thousands of laksmis, or gopis.

*venum kvanantam aravinda-dalayataksam barhavatamsam asitambuda-sundaraigam  
kandarpa-koti-kamaniya-visesa-sobham govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami*

I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is adept at playing on His flute, who has eyes like the petals of a blooming lotus, whose head is bedecked with a peacock feather, who has a figure of beauty tinged with the hue of blue clouds, and whose unique loveliness is charming millions of Cupids.

- ❖ Dry the Deities with towels, dress Them, and offer ornaments and garlands.
- ❖ Ringing a bell, offer flowers and Tulasi leaves (if available) with candana (tilaka) to Their Lordships lotus feet; then offer incense and a ghee or camphor lamp.
- ❖ Ringing a bell and chanting the prayers for offering bhoga (as described above), offer some fruit and/or sweets and drinking water.
- ❖ Offer obeisances and beg forgiveness for any offenses you may have committed in the worship.
- ❖ Finally, clear away the paraphernalia used in the worship. At this time you may offer a simple *darshana-Arati* with incense, flowers, and chamara--or simply chamara--while playing a recording of the *Govindam* song.

#### 8) Services in the Course of the Day

You may offer breakfast, lunch, and the evening meal in the same manner as Bhoga Offering above. After lunch (followed by a dhupa-arati if possible) the Deities should be put to rest, at least by meditation, and They should be closed from view in the afternoon. (Also, if the Deities reside in your living room, amid various family activities, you may need to close the Deity curtains at other times of the day. When the Deities are visible, make sure They are offered proper respect.

#### 9) Putting the Deities to Rest at Night

If there are only large Deities, offer Them small beds, escorting Them to the beds by meditation, and offer Them services, just as you would offer to small Deities.

Outside the Deity room, perform ācamana and offer obeisances to your spiritual master. Place each Deity's bed before or beside the altar—either on the floor or on a low table.

Then invite Their Lordships to take rest by chanting the following mantra (for Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa) and offering Them your hand:

*āgaccha śayana-sthānaṁ priyābhiḥ saha keśava  
divya-puṣpātya-śayyāyāṁ sukhaṁ vihara mādharma*

Now come, O Keṣava, along with Your beloved Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Her friends, to the bed covered with transcendental, aromatic flowers. Now happily enjoy Your pastimes, O Mādhava.

- Bring Their Lordships' shoes from the altar to the bed, thinking that you are escorting the Deities to Their resting place. Place the shoes next to the bed on a small mat or pillow; then bring Their Lordships to Their bed

For Lord Jagannātha, Lord Balarāma, and Śrīmatī Subhadrā chant the following prayer:

āgaccha śayana-sthānam agrajeṇa hy adhokṣaja  
āgaccha nija-śayyām ca subhadre me dayām kuru

O Lord Jagannātha, if You please, You and Your elder brother Balarāma may now come to Your beds. O Mother Subhadrā, please come to your resting place and kindly bestow your mercy upon me.

For Lord Gaurāṅga, chant the following verse:

āgaccha viśrama-sthānam sva-gaṇaiḥ saha gaurāṅga  
kṣaṇam viśramya sukhena līlayā vihara prabho

O Lord Gaurāṅga, please come to Your resting place along with Your associates. O Lord, rest comfortably for a moment, enjoying Your pastimes.

Then chant this prayer to Lord Nityānanda:

āgaccha śayana-sthānam nityānanda jagad-guro  
tava rūpe mahā-viṣṇor anante śayanam kuru

O spiritual master of the universe, Lord Nityānanda, please come to Your place of rest. In Your form of Mahā-Viṣṇu, please rest upon the thousand-headed serpent known as Śeṣa.

Follow the same procedure for putting your spiritual master to rest, with the guru-mūla-mantra, and then chant:

āgaccha śayana-sthānam sva-gaṇaiḥ saha śrī-guro

O spiritual master, please come to your resting place, along with all your associates. For other Deities chant:

āgaccha śayana-sthānam sva-gaṇaiḥ saha

and the name of the Deity.

- Put out the lamps, quietly leave the room, lock the door, and offer praṇāmas to your spiritual master and all Their Lordships. At night the pūjārī or an assistant should carefully put the Deities' jewelry, decorations, and clothes in their proper storage places, respecting them as the Lord's paraphernalia.

**10) Verses for Requesting Forgiveness for One's Offenses (aparādha-śodhana-mantras)- can be chanted before putting Deities to rest or after worship.**

mantra-hīnam kriyā-hīnam bhakti-hīnam janārdana yat pūjitaṁ mayā deva  
paripūrṇam tad astu me

O my Lord, O Janārdana, whatever little pūjā or worship that has been performed by me, although it is without devotion, without proper mantras, and without the proper performance, please let that become complete.

yad-dattaṁ bhakti-mātreṇa patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ jalam āveditaṁ  
nivedyaṁ tu tad gṛhāṇānukampayā

Whatever has been offered with devotion—the leaf, the flower, the water, the fruit, the food offering— please accept it out of Your causeless mercy.

idhi-hīnaṁ mantra-hīnaṁ yat kiñcid upapāditaṁ kriyā-mantra-vihīnaṁ vā tat sarvaṁ  
kṣantum arhasi

Whatever has happened without the proper chanting of the mantra, or without following the proper procedure, kindly forgive all that.

ajñānād athavā jñānād aśubhaṁ yan mayā kṛtam kṣantum  
arhasi tat sarvaṁ dāsyenaiva gṛhāna mām sthitiḥ sevā gatir yātrā smṛtiś cintā s  
tutir vacaḥ bhūyāt sarvātmanā viṣṇo madiyaṁ tvayi ceṣṭitam

Whatever inauspicious things I have done out of ignorance or unknowingly, please forgive that, and accept me as Your insignificant servant. Let my normal condition be service, let my movement be holy pilgrimage, let my thought be remembrance of You, let my words be glorification of You. O Viṣṇu, let my activities, with my whole mind, body and soul, be engaged in You.

aparādha-sahasrāṇi kriyante 'har-niṣaṁ mayā dāso 'ham  
iti mām matvā kṣamasva madhusūdana

Thousands of offenses are performed by me day and night. But thinking of me as Your servant, kindly forgive those, O Madhusūdana.

pratijñā tava govinda na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati iti saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya  
prāṇān saṁdhārayāmy aham

O Govinda, Your promise is that Your devotee will never perish. By remembering this over and over again, I am able to retain my life-airs.

### 11) General principles for Deity worship: Minimum Standards for Home Deity Worship

In a letter Srila Prabhupada gives simple instructions for the worship of Gaura-Nitai: He can worship Gaura-Nitai in his home. The most important element for their worship is the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra. They can have at least one aratrika, and whatever foodstuffs are prepared can be offered. [letter from Srila Prabhupada, 15 February 1975]

### **11.1) Cleanliness and Regulation**

A devotee can perform Deity worship in the home simply, according to his capacity. However, he should maintain a high standard of cleanliness in his worship, following as far as possible the rules given in this manual. Although it is not expected that worship at home will follow as strict a schedule as that in a public temple, the more regulated the Deity worship is, the more meaningful and satisfying it becomes.

### **11.2) Children and Deity Worship**

Householders who worship Deities at home have a great opportunity to bring up their children in an atmosphere of practical devotional service to the Lord. Children should be encouraged to take shelter of the Deities by bowing down, chanting, dancing, and performing various services. One may also encourage them to offer the Lord whatever they receive, such as new clothes. If a child draws a picture or produces some other artwork, the parent may have him show it to the Deities. In this way a child can develop a natural attraction and attachment to the Lord in His Deity form.

Young devotees who are properly trained and encouraged may become excellent pujaris because of the attachment they develop for Krishna through regular association with Deities of the Lord from early childhood.

### **11.3) Travel and Deity Worship**

A devotee who undertakes Deity worship at home should have a similar commitment as he would have in caring for a baby. Although difficulties may arise that impede regular service, one should feel the same sense of duty to make the necessary arrangements for the Deity as one would for one's own children. If a devotee performing Deity worship at home must travel, he must arrange for the Deity worship to continue, either by leaving them under suitable care at home or elsewhere. If no family members remain at home who can worship the Deities during his absence, he may arrange for another qualified person to do it, but in general a householder or his own family members should do the worship. A householder should not expect the public temple he is affiliated with to help maintain the worship of his household Deities. Also, if he is traveling with his Deities and staying at a temple, he should take care that his worship does not inconvenience the devotees living there.

### **11.4) Tulasi Leaves and Buds**

If fresh Tulasi leaves are unavailable, you may use dry Tulasi leaves for offering bhoga and for placing on the Lord's lotus feet. If no Tulasi leaves are available, during puja you may touch Tulasi wood to the Lord's body as an offering of Tulasi, and before offering the Lord's meal you may sprinkle the offering lightly with water containing ground Tulasi wood. If even Tulasi wood is unavailable, you should chant the name of Tulasi-devi and perform the worship meditating on her presence.

### **11.5) Ornaments**

Since precious metals and precious stones attract thieves, Srila Prabhupada instructed devotees to decorate Deities with synthetic jewelery. However, semi-precious stones and silver generally may be used, with due consideration for protection of the Deities and Their paraphernalia.

### 11.6) Flowers

The Hari-bhakti-vilasadedicates an entire chapter to the subject of flowers. Flowers are a very important item in Deity worship, and thus we should take great care to offer the best flowers possible. If flowers are unavailable, you may offer leaves (especially Tulasi, jambu, mango, amalaki, sami, and tamala leaves) or newly grown grass shoots. If neither leaves nor grass are available, you may substitute pure water. Srila Prabhupada writes: There is no question of using paper [or] plastic fruits and flowers for worshipping the Deities. If no fresh fruits or flowers are available, then you can decorate with some fresh leaves. You have seen our temples; nowhere do we use such things.-- We are not after decoration; we are after devotional service for pleasing Krishna's senses. Decoration must be there, of course, to make the temple as opulent as possible for pleasing Krishna. Outside the temple, you can use the plastic ornaments. But not for worship.

For daily worship there must be fresh fruit, flowers, and leaves. [letter from Srila Prabhupada, 26 December 1971]

### 11.7) Forbidden foods

Common forbidden foods include meat, fish, eggs, onions, mushrooms, garlic, masur-dal (red lentils), burned rice, white eggplant, hemp (marijuana), citron,\* saps from trees (if not boiled first), buffalo- and goat-milk products, and milk with salt in it. Also, one should not offer canned or frozen foods to the Deity, and it is best to avoid offering foods containing unhealthy substances such as yeast and white sugar.

Srila Prabhupada comments: Frozen means nasty. I never take frozen.-- All rotten, rather the same vegetable, as we have got in India practice, we dry it and keep it. That is tasteful. [conversation with Srila Prabhupada, Vrndavana, 3 November 1976] Regarding purchasing things in the market, these items are considered as purified when we pay the price for them. That is the general instruction. But when we know something is adulterated, we should avoid it. But unknowingly if something is purchased, that is not our fault. Things which are suspicious, however, should be avoided. [letter from Srila Prabhupada, 21 October 1968] Since it is offensive to offer anything to Krishna that He will not accept, one should be extremely cautious not to offer (or eat) anything questionable.

### 11.8) Offerable foods

The Hari-bhakti-vilasa lists some of the foods that may be offered: bilva, amalaki, dates, coconut, jackfruit, grapes, tala fruit, lotus root, leafy vegetables, cowmilk products, and items made from grains, ghee, and sugar. Grains, especially rice, should always be offered with ghee. Rice without ghee is considered asuric. The Lord is pleased when offered items made with ghee, sugar, yogurt, gur (jaggery), and honey; chickpea preparations, dals, soups (wet sabjis), varieties of cakes, and other items that can be licked, chewed, sucked, or drunk are all pleasing as well.

One may also offer drinks such as sugarcane juice, yogurt drinks, sweetened lemon water, water flavored with cinnamon, camphor, or cardamom, and fruit drinks of various scents and colors. Many passages in the *Caitanya-caritamrta* describe preparations that please Krishna. Here is a sample, from *Antya-lila*, describing what Lord Caitanya's associates would prepare for Him:

They offered [Him] pungent preparations made with black pepper, sweet-and-sour preparations, ginger, salty preparations, limes, milk, yogurt, cheese, two or four kinds of spinach, soup made with bitter melon [sukta], eggplant mixed with nimba flowers, and fried patola. [Cc. Antya 10.135--136]

In a letter Srila Prabhupada described foods in the mode of goodness and how to present them to the Lord: Foodstuffs in the modes of goodness are wheat, rice, pulse (beans, peas), sugar, honey, butter, and all milk preparations, vegetables, flowers, fruits, grains. So these foods can be offered in any shape, but prepared in various ways by the intelligence of the devotees. [letter from Srila Prabhupada, 13 November 1968]

In his *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, Srila Prabhupada describes the best type of rice for If nothing else offerable is available, one may offer fruit alone. If even fruit is unavailable, one may offer edible herbs. And if herbs are not available, one may offer pure water while meditating on offering elaborate preparations. If even water is unavailable, one should at least mentally make an offering of *bhoga*.

#### 11.9) Size of the Lord's Offering

Srila Prabhupada writes in his *Caitanya-caritamṛta*: [Krishna] does not become hungry like an ordinary human being; nonetheless, He presents Himself as being hungry, and as such, He can eat everything and anything, regardless of quantity. The philosophy underlying Krishna's eating is understandable by our transcendental senses. [Cc. *Madhya* 4.77, purport]

And in a letter Srila Prabhupada writes:

Regarding prasadam offering to the Deities, you will take from the cooked foodstuffs in a plate just sufficient for one man's eating, and this prasadam should be offered to the Deity, not the whole quantity. The rest of the foodstuffs may remain in the oven to keep it hot until the devotees accept and honor it.\* [letter from Srila Prabhupada, 14 February 1969]

#### 11.10) Kitchen Standards

Just as we must select pure, excellent foods to offer to Krishna, so we must also prepare them purely. To prepare food for the Lord, one must meticulously observe the rules for cleanliness and take the utmost care to prepare the food properly, maintaining the correct consciousness so that the Lord will accept the offering. The consciousness of the cook enters into the food he prepares, and therefore he should strive to be Krishna conscious while in the kitchen. The kitchen, where the Lord's food is prepared, is an extension of the Deity room, where He eats. So the same high standard of cleanliness should be maintained in both places.

#### 11.11) Kitchen Dress

- ❖ Cover your hair so as to avoid any hair falling into a preparation. If there is even a single hair in the food being offered to the Lord, it is a great offense.
- ❖ Do not wear wool in the kitchen.
- ❖ All clothing must be clean--that is, it must not have been worn in the bathroom, when eating or sleeping, or outside the temple grounds.

#### 11.12) Personal Cleanliness

- ❖ You should be freshly showered and wearing tilaka and neckbeads.
- ❖ Wash your hands when first entering the kitchen, and wash them again if you touch your face, mouth, or hair, or if you sneeze or cough (having--hopefully--covered your mouth).

#### 11.13) Food Purity

- ❖ After assembling the ingredients for cooking, wash all vegetables and fruits and anything

else that can be washed.

- ❖ If something washable falls on the floor or in a sink, wash it off; if it is unwashable, reject it. Discard anything that falls on your feet, whether it is washable or not.
- ❖ The cook should cover all preparations as soon as they are cooked. If an animal sees a preparation before it is offered, it must be rejected. No one except the cook and the pujari should see the unoffered food.
- ❖ The kitchen staff should cover the ghee used for frying when it is not in use. Old ghee should be replaced regularly with fresh ghee.
- ❖ See to it that all ingredients are properly stored in closed containers.

#### **11.14) Kitchen and Utensil Cleanliness**

- ❖ Devotees who serve in the kitchen should thoroughly clean it regularly, including inside the stoves, ovens, and refrigerators.
- ❖ The cleaners should scrub the pots after they are used (the sooner they are cleaned after use, the easier they are to clean).
- ❖ No one should eat or drink in the kitchen; nor should anyone use the sink for spitting into or drinking from.
- ❖ Remove all garbage from the kitchen at least once a day.

#### **11.15) Maintaining Proper Consciousness**

- ❖ Allow yourself enough time to prepare the offering in good consciousness. "Haste makes waste."
- ❖ Conversation should be restricted to Krishna-katha.
- ❖ Do not play recordings of popular-style music in the kitchen. Traditional bhajana and kirtana recordings are appropriate.

## 31. Appendix C. Lord Caitanya and Kalki avatar

You wrote:

**Q1:** I'm confused on the subject of yuga avatars in this cycle of Kali. Gaudiya Vaisnavas claim Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu as the avatar for this particular cycle of Kali yuga. Since he has already appeared, will this kali yuga end without the appearance of the Kalki avatar? This seems to contradict the Vishnu Purana.

Also, it is cited in Caitanya Caritamrita (Madhya 6.99) that there is no lila avatar in this age of kali, but it does acknowledge Mahaprabhu as an avatara in this cycle, although hidden. This seems to contradict the Vishnu Purana and the Bhagavata Purana as well. The word hidden isn't used, or as far as I can see, implied in the Bhagavatam verse 11.5.32. Is there any Vedic literature outside of the Gaudiya tradition that support these conclusions?

**Q2;** The description of the appearance of Krsna for this age is cited Srimad Bhagavatam 11.5.32. It is also cited in the Vishnu Purana "will be born in the family of Vishnuyas'as, an eminent Brahman of Sambhala village, as Kalki, endowed with the eight superhuman faculties." Vishnu Purana 4:24.

Can it be argued that the two descriptions are of the Kalki avatar? Gaudiya Vaisnavas point to this verse, particularly the word akrsnam, as proof that this means golden or yellow. But, the appearance of Kalki seems to fit the translation of the word, as well as the other descriptions (particularly weapons) in the 11.5.32 Srimad Bhagavatam verse.

I will answer these questions together as there is some degree of overlap because of the nature of the topic. Lord Caitanya is the avatar for Kali Yuga and Kalki avatar will come at the juncture of the 2 yugas – Kali Yuga and Satya Yuga. There are a number of scriptural predictions about appearance of Kalki avatar and Lord Caitanya and they are very distinct and don't contradict each other.

Though the word hidden is not directly used in the Srimad Bhagavatam verse, there are a number of other indications from Vedic scriptures indicating that His appearance is hidden. Please read below.

The Srimad Bhagavatam verse 11.5.32 definitely indicates Lord Caitanya and the Visnu Purana verse indicates Kalki avatar. You raised a point about other descriptions particularly weapons – In the purport to the SB 11.5.32 verse, Srila Jiva Goswami indicates the meaning of Sāṅgopāṅgāstrapārṣadam. Everything else in the verse indicates that it is referring to Lord Caitanya, especially *sankirtanaprayaiḥ* which is not a described activity of Lord Kalki in the scriptures. "Sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārṣadam further indicates that Lord Caitanya is Lord Kṛṣṇa. His body is always decorated with ornaments of sandalwood and with sandalwood paste. By His superexcellent beauty He subdues all the people of the age. In other descents the Lord sometimes used weapons to defeat the demoniac, but in this age the Lord subdues them with His all-attractive figure as Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains that His beauty is His astra, or weapon, to subdue the demons. Because He is all-attractive, it is to be understood that all the demigods lived with Him as His companions. His acts were uncommon and His associates wonderful. When He propagated the sankirtana movement, He attracted many great scholars and ācāryas, especially in Bengal and Orissa. Lord Caitanya is always accompanied by His best associates like Lord Nityānanda, Advaita, Gadādhara and Śrīvāsa.

Apart from our vedic scriptures, Lord Kalki's avatar appears to be indicated in the Book of

Revelations in the Bible. Please read below.

The descriptions and predictions below are not exhaustive but very comprehensive and authoritative. Please take the time to read them carefully.

Yours in service to Srila Prabhupada,  
Romapada Swami

Here is what Srila Prabhupada said about Kali Yuga avatar

**Srila Prabhupada Lecture, 02-18-70, Los Angeles**

"The next avatar incarnation is Kalki. That is yet to take place. Kalki avatara will appear at the end of this age, Kali- yuga. The age of Kali-yuga, duration of this age is still to be, I mean to say, fulfilled in 400,000's of years. So at the end of Kali, that means at the last stage, after about 400,000's of years, the incarnation of Kali will appear. That is predicted in the Vedic literatures, as Lord Buddha's appearance was also predicted in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. And Srimad-Bhagavatam was compiled five thousand years ago, and Lord Buddha appeared about 2,500 years ago. **Therefore about Lord Buddha's appearance it is predicted that at the beginning of Kali-yuga Lord Buddha will appear. There was prediction, and that has actually come to be true. Similarly, there is prediction about Kalki avatara, and that will also come to be true.** So at that time Lord Kalki's business will be simply to kill. No instruction. Just like... In Bhagavad- gita Lord Krsna gave instruction in the shape of Bhagavad-gita. But at the end of Kali-yuga, people will be so much degraded that there is no more possibility to give any instruction. They will not be able to understand even. At that time the only weapon will be to kill them. And one who is killed by the Lord, he also gets salvation. That is God's all-merciful quality. Either He protects or He kills, the result is the same. So that will be the last stage of this Kali-yuga, and after that, again Satya-yuga, the age of religiosity, will begin. These are the statements of Vedic literature."

**Sastric predictions about appearance of Kalki Avatar**

There are many incarnations of the Supreme Being as stated in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (1.3.26): "O *brahmanas*, the incarnations of the Lord are innumerable, like rivulets flowing from inexhaustible sources of water." However, out of all the various incarnations of the Supreme, the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (1.3.28) specifically states "*Krishnas tu bhagavan svayam*," which means that Lord Sri Krishna is the original Supreme Personality of God. All others are His plenary portions, or parts of His plenary portions, who descend into this material world to carry out certain responsibilities and to do specific things. This is especially the case when the planets are overly disturbed by miscreants and atheists. In Kali-yuga many years go by in which constant disturbances and social upheavals are allowed to happen, but the Vedic literature predicts that at the end Lord Kalki will make His appearance to change everything, as described in the following verses:

"Thereafter, at the conjunction of two *yugas* [Kali-yuga and Satya-yuga], the Lord of the creation will take His birth as the Kalki incarnation and become the son of Vishnuyasha. At this time the rulers of the earth will have degenerated into plunderers." (***Bhag.1.3.25***)

"Lord Kalki will appear in the home of the most eminent *brahmana* of Shambhala village, the great soul Vishnuyasha." (***Bhag.12.2.18***)

"At the end of Kali-yuga, when there exist no topics on the subject of God, even at the residences of so-called saints and respectable gentlemen of the three higher castes, and when the

power of government is transferred to the hands of ministers elected from the lowborn *shudra* class or those less than them, and when nothing is known of the techniques of sacrifice, even by word, at that time the Lord will appear as the supreme chastiser." (**Bhag.2.7.38**)

The **Vishnu Purana** (Book Four, Chapter 24) also explains that, "When the practices taught in the *Vedas* and institutes of law have nearly ceased, and the close of the Kali age shall be nigh, a portion of that divine being who exists of His own spiritual nature, and who is the beginning and end, and who comprehends all things, shall descend upon earth. He will be born in the family of Vishnuyasha, an eminent *brahmana* of Shambhala village, as Kalki, endowed with eight superhuman faculties."

The **Agni Purana** (16.7-9) also explains that when the non-Aryans who pose as kings begin devouring men who appear righteous and feed on human beings, Kalki, as the son of Vishnuyasha, and Yajnavalkya as His priest and teacher, will destroy these non-Aryans with His weapons. He will establish moral law in the form of the fourfold *varnas*, or the suitable organization of society in four classes. After that people will return to the path of righteousness.

The **Padma Purana** (6.71.279-282) relates that Lord Kalki will end the age of Kali and will kill all the wicked *mlecchas* and, thus, destroy the bad condition of the world. He will gather all of the distinguished *brahmanas* and will propound the highest truth. He will know all the ways of life that have perished and will remove the prolonged hunger of the genuine *brahmanas* and the pious. He will be the only ruler of the world that cannot be controlled, and will be the banner of victory and adorable to the world.

Here in these verses we find that Lord Kalki will come as a chastiser or warrior. By this time the planet will be filled with people who will be unable to understand logical conversations. They will be too slow-minded and dull-witted, not capable of being taught much, especially in the way of high philosophy regarding the purpose of life. They will not know what they need to do or how to live. And they certainly will be unable to change their ways. Therefore, Lord Kalki does not come to teach, but simply to chastise, punish, and cleanse the planet.

Furthermore, we also find the name of the place where Lord Kalki will appear and the name of the family in which He will be born. The family will be qualified *brahmanas*. This means that a disciplic and family line of spiritually qualified *brahmanas* will remain on the planet throughout the age of Kali, no matter how bad things get. Though they may be hidden, living in a small village somewhere, it will be this line of *bhaktas*, spiritual devotees, from which Lord Kalki will appear in the distant future. No one knows where this village of Shambhala is located. Some feel that it is yet to manifest, or that it will be a hidden underground community from which Lord Kalki will appear.

In this connection we find in the **Padma Purana** (6.242.8-12) the prediction that Lord Kalki will be born in the town of Shambhala near the end of Kali-yuga from a *brahmana* who is actually an incarnation of Svayambhuva Manu. It is described that Svayambhuva performed austerities at Naimisa on the bank of the Gomati River for acquiring the privilege of having Lord Vishnu as his son in three lifetimes. Lord Vishnu, being pleased with Svayambhuva, granted the blessing that He would appear as Svayambhuva's son as Lord Rama, Krishna, and Kalki. Thus, Svayambhuva would appear as Dasaratha, Vasudeva, and then Vishnuyasha. Also, in the **Padma Purana** (1.40.46) we find Lord Vishnu admits that He will be born in Kaliyuga. Thus, He will appear as Lord Kalki.

#### **Predictions about Caitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance:**

Predictions of the appearance of Lord Caitanya can be found in many Vedic texts. One of the oldest prophecies concerning Sri Caitanya's appearance in this world is found in the **Atharva-**

*veda* verse, starting as: *ito 'ham krita-sannyaso 'vatarisyami*. In this verse the Supreme states: "I will descend as a *sannyasi*, a tall, fair, and saintly *brahmana* devotee, after four to five thousand years of Kali-yuga have passed. I will appear on earth near the Ganges shore and with all the signs of an exalted person, free from material desires. I will always chant the holy names of the Lord, and, thus, taste the sweetness of My own devotional service. Only other advanced devotees will understand Me."

Also, in a verse from the *Sama-veda*, starting as: *tataham krita-sannyaso bhu-girbanah avatarisye*, the Supreme Being says that He will descend to earth as a *brahmana-sannyasi* at a place on the shore of the Ganges. Again and again He will chant the names of the Lord in the company of His associates to rescue the people who are devoured by sins in the age of Kali.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* (3.3) also relates the prophecy of Sri Caitanya in a different way. It states, "When one realizes the golden form of Lord Gauranga, who is the ultimate actor and the source of the Supreme Brahman, he attains the highest knowledge. He transcends both pious and impious activities, becomes free from worldly bondage, and enters the divine abode of the Lord."

Another prophecy of the appearance of Sri Caitanya is found in two verses in the *Bhavishya Purana*. It states:

*ajayadhvamaja yadhvam na sansayah  
kalau sankirtana rambhe bhavisyami saci sutah*

"The Supreme Lord said: 'In Kali-yuga, I will appear as the son of Saci, and inaugurate the *sankirtana* movement. There is no doubt about this.'"

*anandasru-kala-roma-harsa-purnam tapo-dhana  
sarve mam eva draksyanti kalau sannyasa-rupinam*

"O sage whose wealth is austerity, in the Kali-yuga everyone will see My form as a *sannyasi*, a form filled with tears of bliss and bodily hairs standing erect in ecstasy."

Another is from the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (3.12): "Mahaprabhu [the great master], the Supreme Being, is brilliantly effulgent and imperishable like molten gold, and [through *sankirtana*] bestows spiritual intelligence on the living beings. In the guise of a *sannyasi*, He is the source of spiritual purity and liberation." Another is from the *Vayu Purana*: "In the age of Kali I shall descend as the son of Sachidevi to inaugurate the *sankirtana* movement." This is also confirmed in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (11.5.32) where it states: "In the age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the names of Krishna. Although His complexion is not blackish [like that of Lord Krishna], He is Krishna Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons and confidential companions."

The great classic *Mahabharata* (*Vishnu-sahasra-nama-stotra*, 127.92.75) confirms that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is not different from Lord Sri Krishna: "The Supreme Lord has a golden complexion [when He appears as Lord Caitanya]. Indeed, His entire body, which is very nicely constituted, is like molten gold. Sandalwood pulp is smeared all over His body. He will take the fourth order of life [*sannyasa*] and will be very self-controlled. He will be distinguished from Mayavadi *sannyasis* in that He will be fixed in devotional service and will propagate the *sankirtana* movement."

The *Caitanya-caritamrita* (Adi-lila, 3.19-20) also explains how the Supreme Lord Himself describes how He will appear as His own devotee to perform and teach devotional service by

inaugurating the *sankirtana* movement, which is the religion for this age.

How He is the “great master” or will “bestow spiritual intelligence” is described in another *Upanishad*. This is one of the lesser *Upanishads* known as the ***Chaitanyopanishad***, or ***Sri Caitanya Upanishad***. This comes from the ancient ***Atharva Veda***. In this description there is not only the prediction of His appearance but a description of His life and purpose, and the reasons why His process of spiritual enlightenment is so powerful and effective in this age of Kali. The *Chaitanyopanishad* is a short text with only nineteen verses. All of them are very significant.

The *Sri Caitanya Upanishad* (texts 5-11) explains that one day when Pippalada asked his father, Lord Brahma, how the sinful living entities will be delivered in Kali-yuga and who should be the object of their worship and what mantra should they chant to be delivered, Brahma told him to listen carefully and he would describe what will take place in the age of Kali. Brahma said that the Supreme Lord Govinda, Krishna, will appear again in Kali-yuga as His own devotee in a two-armed form with a golden complexion in the area of Navadvipa along the Ganges. He will spread the system of devotional service and the chanting of the names of Krishna, especially in the form of the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*; Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Another interesting story about the prediction of the appearance of Lord Caitanya in Kali-yuga is related in a lengthy conversation between Murari Gupta and Damodara Pandita, two contemporaries of Sri Caitanya. It is found in the ***Sri Caitanya Mangala***, a biography of Sri Caitanya by Srila Locana Dasa Thakura. Among the many things they discuss are the symptoms and difficulties found in the age of Kali, how Lord Krishna appears on earth in this age, His confidential reasons for doing so, and how He revealed to Narada Muni His form as Lord Gauranga that He would accept while appearing on earth in this age. In this form He would distribute love of God to everyone He met by chanting the holy names. This conversation is very enlightening.

Within this conversation they further relate an incident recorded as the ***Vishnu-Katyayani Samvada of the Padma Purana***. This is a conversation between Lord Vishnu and Katyayani (Parvati), Lord Shiva’s wife. The story is that one time the great sage Narada Muni acquired the *maha-prasada*, personal food remnants, of Lord Narayana, Vishnu, and gave a morsel to his friend Lord Shiva. Shiva tasted it and he began to dance in ecstasy, to the point of disturbing the earth. When he was approached by Parvati about why he was dancing so, he explained what happened. However, she was unhappy and angry that he did not share any with her. Being devoted to Lord Vishnu and concerned for the spiritual well-being of all conditioned souls, she then vowed that if she should get the blessings of Lord Vishnu, she would see to it that the Lord’s *mahaprasada* was distributed to everyone. Just then Lord Vishnu Himself appeared and conversed with her. He assured her that He would appear in the world as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in the age of Kali and would keep her promise and spread His mercy in the form of *maha-prasada*, food that has been offered to Him, and the chanting of His holy names to everyone, distributing His mercy everywhere.

Another book is the ***Sri Hari-bhakti-vilasa*** by Sanatana Gosvami. Sanatana lived about 500 years ago in Vrindavana, India and was a great scholar of the Vedic scripture. A portion of the book contains an anthology of an amazing assortment of verses from the Vedic texts which predict the appearance of Lord Caitanya. Besides some of the quotes we have already cited, he includes verses from such texts as the ***Chandogya Upanishad, Krishna Upanishad, Narada Purana, Kurma Purana, Garuda Purana, Devi Purana, Nrisimha Purana, Padma Purana, Brahma Purana, Agni Purana, Saura Purana, Matsya Purana, Vayu Purana, Markandeya Purana, Varaha Purana, Vamana Purana, Vishnu Purana, Skanda Purana, Upapuranas, Narayana-Samhita, Krishna-yamala, Brahma-yamala, Vishnu-***

*yamala, Yoga-vasistha, and the Tantras, such as Urdhvamnaya-tantra, Kapila Tantra, Visvasara Tantra, Kularnava Tantra, and others.*

#### Specific predictions of Lord Caitanya being hidden

**\*\*In the Adi-Purana and in the Narada Purana, the Supreme Person says:**

*aham eva dvija-srestho nityam pracchanna-vigraha bhagavad-bhakta-rupena  
lokam raksami sarvada*

I shall advent in the form of a Brahmana devotee [*aham eva dvija-srestho*] and I shall hide my factual identity [*prachanna vigraha*]. I shall deliver all the worlds [*lokam raksami sarvada*].

#### Prediction of His advent as a sannyasi

**\*\* In the Upa-Puranas, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna speaks to Srila Vyasadeva:**

*aham eva kvacid brahman sannyasa asramam asritah  
hari bhaktim grahayami kalau papa-hatan naran*

O Brahmana, I occasionally take the Sannyas Asram [*sannyasa asrama asritah*] in an attempt to bring the fallen people of Kali Yuga to take up the path of Bhakti or devotional service to Lord Krishna [*hari bhaktim grahayami*].

#### Prediction of His actual time of incarnation

**\*\*In the Kurma-Purana, it is stated:**

*kalina dahyamanam uddhararaya tanu-bhrtam janma  
prathama sandhyayam bhavisyati dvijalaye*

The Supreme Person will appear in the first part of the age of Kali [*janma prathama sandhyayam*]. He will appear in the home of a Brahmana [*bhavisyati dvijalaye*], to save the embodied conditioned souls [*uddharaya tanu-bhrtam*] burning in the troubles of Kali-Yuga.

**Description of the purpose of Sri Chaitanya's incarnation:**

**\*\* In the Garuda-Purana, the Supreme Person says:**

*kalina dakyamananam paritranaya tanu-bhrtam janma  
prathama sandhyayam karisyami dvijatisu*

In the first part [*prathama sandhya*] of the age of Kali, I will come among the brahmanas [*karisyami dvijatisu*] to save the fallen souls, [*paritranaya tanu-bhrtam*] who are being burned by the troubles of the age of Kali [*kalina dahyamananam*].

Prediction of the name of His mother and the actual name of His future birthplace

\*\* In the Garuda-Purana, the Supreme Lord says:

*aham purno bhavisyami yuga-sandhyau visesatah mayapure  
navadvipe bhavisyami sachi sutah*

I will take birth as the son of Sachi [bhavisyami sachi sutah], in Navadvip-Mayapur [mayapure navadvipe]. I will come in my complete spiritual form in the first part of Kali-Yuga.

Prediction of the name of His future first wife and His future assumption of the sannyasa order:

\*\* In the same Garuda-Purana, it is Also stated:

*kaleh prathama sandhyayam lakshmi- kanto bhavisyati  
daru-brahma-samipa-sthah sannyasi gaura-vigraha*

In the first part of Kali-Yuga, the Supreme Personality of Godhead will come in a gold-like form. First He will become the husband of Lakshmi [Srimati Lakshmi Devi, Lord Chaitanya's first wife]. Then He will become a sannyasi, near Lord Jagannatha who will appear in a divine wooden form.

Prediction of the bodily color of Sri Chaitanya and the nature of His future activities:

\*\* In the Nrsimha-Purana, it is said:

*satye daitya-kuladhi-nasa-samaye  
simhordhva-martyakrtis  
tretayam das-kandharam  
paribhavan rameti namakrtih*

*gopalan paripalayan vraja-pure  
bharam haran dvapare  
gaurangah priya-kirtanah  
kali-yuge chaitanya-nama prabhuh*

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead who in the Satya-Yuga appeared as a half-man, half-lion to cure a terrible disease that had ravaged the daityas, and who in the Treta-Yuga appeared as a person named Rama [Lord Ramachandra], the person who defeated the ten-headed Demon Ravana, and who in the Dvapara-Yuga removed the earth's burden, and protected the Gopa [cowherd men] people of Vraja-pura, will appear again in the Kali-Yuga. His form will be golden, He will delight in chanting the Lord's holy names, and His name will be Chaitanya."

## Prediction of the future advent of Sri Chaitanya by His direct name

**\*\* In the Padma-Purana, it is said:**

*yatrayogesvarah saksad yogi-cintyo janardanah chaitanya  
vapur aste vai sandranandatmakah*

The Supreme Personality, Janardana, who is the object of the yogis' meditation [*yogi-chintyo-janardanah*], who saves the devotees from various sufferings, and who is the master of all yogic practices [*yogesvarah*], who is always full of divine transcendental ecstasy and bliss [*sandra-ananda-atmakah*], will advent in His own divine form of Sri Chaitanya [*Chaitanya-vapah*].

## Description of the time and place Sri Chaitanya's future advent

**\*\* In the Padma-Purana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself states:**

*kaleh prathama-sandhyayam gaurangotham mahi-tale  
bhagirathi-tate ramye bhavisyami sachi-sutah*

I shall appear on this earth [*mahi-tale*] in the first part of Kali-Yuga [*kaleh prathama sandhyayam*] in a beautiful place on the bank of the Bhagirathi [*bhagirathi-tate ramye*]. I shall have a golden form [*gaurangah*], and I shall take birth as the son of Sachi [*bhavisyami sachi-sutah*].

## Prediction of the purpose of Sri Chaitanya's advents

**\*\* In the Narada-Purana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead says:**

*aham eva kalau vipra nityam prachanna-vigraha bhavavad-bhakta-rupena  
lokan raksami sarvada*

O Vipra, in the age of Kali, I will come disguised [*nityam prachanna vigraha*] as a devotee [*bhagavad-bhaktarupena*] and I will save all the worlds [*lokan raksami sarvada*].

## Prediction of His mother's name and the nature of His specific preaching method [sankirtana]

**\*\* The Supreme Personality of Godhead states in the Narada-Purana:**

*divija bhuvi jayadhvam jayadhvam bhakta rupinah kalau  
sankirtana arambhe bhavisyami sachi-sutah*

O Divija (demigods), please come and advent as devotees on this earth [*bhuvi jayadhvam jayadhvam*] in the age of Kali-Yuga. I will incarnate as the son of Sachi [*bhavisyami sachi-sutah*] to inaugurate the congregational chanting of the name of Krishna [*kalau sankirtana arambhe*].

### Prediction of the revelation of Sri Chaitanya's form

**\*\* In the Brahma-Purana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead says:**

*kaleh prathama sandhyayam gaurangotham mahi-tale  
bhagirathi-tate bhumni bhavisyami sachi-sutah*

I will reveal my eternal golden form [*gaurangotham mahi-tale*] in the first part of Kali-Yuga [*kaleh prathama sandhyayam*]. I will advent on the earth on the bank of the Bhagirathi [*bhagirathi-tate bhumni*] as son of Mother Sachi [*bhavisyami sachi-sutah*].

### Prediction of the future sannyasi role and ecstasy of Sri Chaitanya

**\*\* In the Bhavisyas-Purana, the Supreme Lord says:**

*anandasru-kala-roma harsa-purnam tapo-dhana sarve mama eva  
draksyanti kalau sannyasa-rupinam*

O austere sage, you should know that in the age of Kali, everyone will see my transcendental form as a sannyasi [*kalau sannyasa rupinam*]. I will be exhibiting symptoms of ecstasy like shedding tears of bliss and hairs standing in ecstasy [*anandasru-kala-roma-harsa-purnam*].

### Prediction of the color of Sri Chaitanya and the nature of His future associates.

**\*\* In the Agni-Purana, it is said:**

*prasantatma lamba-kanthas gaurangas ca suravrtah*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead will come in a golden form [*gaura-anga*], full of peace [*prasantatma*], and a beautiful long neck [*lamba-kanthah*]. He will be surrounded by many saintly devotees [*sura-avrtah*].

Note: This is an indirect prediction of the future advent of the members of the *Pancha-Tattva*.

### Prediction of the characteristics of Sri Chaitanya

**\*\* In the Matsya-Purana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead says:**

*mundo gaurah su-dirghangas tri-srotas-tira-sambhavah  
dayaluh kirtana-grahi bhavisyami kalau-yuge*

In the age of Kali, I shall advent [*bhavisyami kalau yuge*] where the three rivers meet [*tri-srotas-tirasambhavah*]. I shall have a shaven head [*mundah*]. I shall have a golden complexion [*gaurah*]. I will be very kind and always chant the holy name of Krishna [*dayaloh kirtana-grahi*].

Prediction of the name of the river where Sri Chaitanya will take his birth and other characteristics.

**\*\* In the Vayu-Purana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead states:**

*suddho gaurah-su-dirghango ganga-tira-samudbhavah  
dayaluh-kirtana-grahi bhavisyami kalau yuge*

In the age of Kali-Yuga, I shall come [*bhavisyami kalau yuge*] in a place on the bank of the Ganges [*gangatira-samudbhavah*]. I will be very pure [*suddhah*], have a golden complexion [*gaurah*], and be very tall [*sudirghangah*] and chant the holy names of Krishna. [Vyau Puran next quote]

Prediction that the Supreme Lord will leave Goloka and come in a golden form

**\*\* In the Markandeya-Purana, the Supreme of Godhead declares:**

*golokam ca parityajya lokanam trana-karanat kalau  
gauranga-rupena lila-lavanya-vigrahah*

"In the Kali-Yuga, I will leave Goloka and, to save the people of the world, I will become the handsome and playful Lord Gauranga."

Prediction of one of the purpose of Sri Chaitanya's appearance.

**\*\* In the Varaha-Purana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead declares:**

*aham eva dvija-srestho lila-pracurya-vigrahah  
bhagavad-bhakta-rupena lokan raksami sarvada*

I shall come as the best of the brahmanas [*aham eva dvija-srestha*]. I will exhibit many pastimes [*lilapracurya-vigrahah*] in the form of a devotee [*bhagavad-bhakta-rupena*]. I shall deliver the people of the world [*lokan raksami sarvada*].

Prediction of the name of the mother of Sri Chaitanya and His future role as the deliverer of the darkness of Kali-Yuga.

**\*\* In the Vamana-Purana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead declares:**

*kali-ghora-tamas-channat sarvan acara varjitan  
sachigarbhe ca sambhuya tarayisyami narada*

O Narada Muni, I will take birth in the womb of Sachi [*sachi-garbhe ca sambhuya*]. I shall save the people, who will give up all proper good conduct [*sarvan acara varyitan*], from the terrible darkness of the age of Kali-Yuga [*kali-ghora-tamas-channan*].

Prediction of the future advent of Sri Chaitanya, His birth time, His mother, His birth city, His name and His mission.

**\*\* In the Vayu-Purana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead says:**

*paurnamasyam phalgunasya  
phalguni-rksa-yogatah  
bhavisye gaura-rupena  
sachi-garbhe purandarat*

*svarnadi-tiram asthaya  
navadvipe janasraye  
tatra dvija-kulam prapto  
bhavisyami janalaye*

*bhakti-yoga-pradanaya  
lokasyanugrahaya ca  
sannyas-rupam asthaya  
Krishna-chaitanya-nama-dhrk*

*tena lokasya nistaras  
tat kurudhvam mamajnaya  
dharitri bhavita cabhir  
mayaiva dvija-dehina*

I shall advent in the month of Phalguna, when the star Phalguni is conjoined with the full moon. I shall incarnate in a golden complexion in the womb of Sachi and Purandara Misra. I will be born in the city of Navadvipa, on the Ganges's shore, in a Brahmana's family. I shall take the renounced order of life [sannyasa] and show kindness to the people in general and engage them in Bhakti. I will be known as Sri Krishna Chaitanya. All of you should follow My order and deliver the people of the world. I shall appear as a Brahmana. I shall make this earth fearless.

**Prediction of Sri Chaitanya's birth city, the name of the river close to His birth site, the name of His mother, His close associates and their divine roles in His lila, His divine reason for incarnating as well as different names by which Sri Chaitanya will be known**

**\*\* In the Ananta-Samhita, it is said:**

*svarnadi-tiram asritya  
navadvipe dvijalaye  
sampradatum bhakti-yogam  
lokasyanugrahaya ca*

sa eva bhagavan krm  
radhika-prana-vallabhah  
srsty-adau sa jagannatho  
gaura asin mahesvari

avatirno bhavisyami  
kalau-nija-ganaih saha  
sachi-garbhe navadvipe  
svardhuni-parivarite

aprakasyam idam guhyam  
na prakasyam bahir mukhe  
bhaktavataram bhaktakhyam  
bhaktam bhakti-pradam svayam

man-maya-mohitah kecin  
na jnasyanto bahir-mokhah  
jnasyanti mad-bhakti-yuktah  
sadhavo-nyasinotmalah

krmavatara-kale-yah  
striyo ye purusah priyah  
kalau te'vatarisyanti  
sridama-subaladayah

catuh-sasti-mahantas te  
gopa dvadas balakah  
Caitanyera Simhera...

dharma-samsthapanarthay  
a viharisyami tair aham

kale nastam bhakti-patham  
sthapayisyamy aham punah  
gacchantu bhuvih te putrah  
jayantam bhakta-rupinah

dharma-samsthapanam kale  
kurvantu te mamajnaya

Krishnas chaitanya-gaurango  
gaurachandrah sachi-sutah  
prabhur gauro gaura-harir  
namani-bhakti-dani me

"To show mercy to the people and give them devotional service, the Supreme Personality of Godhead will appear in a Brahmana's home in Navadvip by the Ganges' shore. The Supreme Person, Sri Krishna Himself, who is the life of Srimati Radharani, and is the Lord of the universe in creation, maintenance, and annihilation, appears as Gaura, O Mahesvari.

In Kali-Yuga, I will descend to the earth with My associates. In Navadvip, which is surrounded by the Ganges, I will take birth in Sachi-devi's womb.

They who are bewildered by My illusory potency will not understand the great secret of the appearance in this world of Me in My personal form,

- 1) in My form as the incarnation of devotion,
- 2) in My form as the incarnation of a devotee,
- 3) in My form bearing the name of a devotee,
- 4) in My form as a devotee, and
- 5) in My form as the giver of devotional service.

This secret is not to be revealed to them. Only the saintly, pure, renounced devotees, diligently engaged in My devotional service, will be able to understand Me in these five forms.

My dear male and female associates, headed by Sridama and Subala, who came to this world at the time of My advent as Lord Krishna, will come again during the Kali-Yuga. The Gopas will become the sixtyfour *mahantas* and the twelve *gopas*. To establish the truth of religion, I will enjoy many pastimes with them.

In this way I will again reveal the path of devotional service, which has been destroyed in the course of time. My sons should also descend to the earth, assume the forms of devotees, and, by My order, also work to re-establish the principles of true religion.

At this time My names will be: **Lord Krishna Chaitanya, Gauranga, Gaurachandra, Sachisuta, Mahaprabhu, Gaura and Gaurahari**. Chanting these names will bring devotion to Me."

What other major vedic literatures also describe characteristics of the advent of Sri Chaitanya?

\*\* The Great Epic Mahabharata (Dana-Dharma, Visnu-Sahasra-Nama Stotra) points out the divine characteristics of Sriman Mahaprabhu's appearance.

*suvarna varna hemango varangas candanangadi sannayasa  
krt-chamah santo nistha shanti parayanah*

In His early activities Lord Chaitanya comes as a householder. He has a golden complexion [*suvarna varnah*]. His limbs are very beautiful [*vara-anga*] and are smeared with sandalwood pulp [*candana-angadi*]. He has the appearance of molten gold [*hema-anga*].

The Supreme Lord Chaitanya accepts the renounced order of life [*sannayasa-krt*]. He is fully sense-controlled or equiposed [*sama*], and is completely peaceful [*santa*]. He is completely fixed in

the chanting of the holy name of Lord Krishna, [nistha]. He is the highest abode of devotion and transcendental peace. He silences the *mayavadi* impersonalists [nistha santi parayanah].

The sanskrit words *suvarna-varna* indicate one who has gold-like complexion. The Vedic text to support this point is:

*yada pasya pasyate rukma-varnam kartaram  
isam purusam brahma-yonim*

The words *rukma-varnam kartaram isam* refer to the Supreme Person [Sri Chaitanya] who has a complexion like molten gold.

**\*\* Quotations of Lord Chaitanya's bodily features according to some of the great devotees present at the time:**

Srila Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, one of the foremost disciples of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in Jagannath Puri, composed an entire series of prayers describing in detail the various features of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, called *Sri Gauranga-Prati-Anga-Varnanakhya-Stava-Rajah*, or the King of Prayers, proclaiming the glory of each limb of Sri Gauranga. Let us carefully present a few of these divine gems.

**\*\* Lord Chaitanya's bodily luster**

Srila Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya has described the complexion of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's body.

*tapta hema dyutim vande kali-Krishnam jagad-gurum caru-dirgha-tanum srimac chaci-hrdaya-nandanam*

I worship Lord Krishna, the spiritual master of the universe, who appears in the age of Kali with a luster like molten gold. His body is beautiful and tall. He is like molten gold, and He is the delight and the son of Sachidevi.

Srila Prabodhananda Sarasvati Thakura also describes Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's golden complexion.

*ananda lilamaya vighraya hemabha-divya-cchavi-sundaraya*

"O Lord Chaitanyachandra, O Lord whose form is full of blissful pastimes, O Lord whose complexion is as splendid as gold..."

Srila Krishna das Kaviraj Goswami similarly describes Lord Chaitanya:

*tapta hema sama kanti prakanda sarira*

"...the luster of His expansive body resembles molten gold..."

Prabodhananda Sarasvati also further describes Sri Chaitanya's golden complexion.

*svayam devo yatra-kanaka-gaurah karunaya*

"His complexion is as fair as molten gold."

**\*\* Sri Chaitanya's beautiful hair.**

*lasan-mukha-lata-naddha charu-kuncita-kuntalam*

"His lovely curling locks are interwoven with creepers of glistening pearls..."

**\*\* Sri Chaitanya's shoulders and chest.**

Prabhodananda Sarasvati Thakura describes the shoulders of Mahaprabhu.

*simha skandham...*

"May Lord Chaitanya, whose shoulders are like a lion..."

Srila Krishna das Kaviraj Goswami also points out the nature of Sri Chaitanya's shoulders and voice.

*simha griva simha-virya simhera hunkar*

"He has the shoulders of a lion, the powers of a lion, and the loud voice of a lion."

**\*\* Sri Chaitanya's arms.**

*ajanulambita-bhuja*

His arms reach all the way to his knees.

*ajanulambita bhumau kanaka vadatau*

Their arms (of Lord Chaitanya and Lord Nityananda) reach all the way to their knees.

*kankanangada-vidyoti-janu-lambi-bhaja-dvayam*

"...His two arms, glittering with bracelets and bangles, extend down to His knees."

**\*\* Sri Chaitanya's face**

*prema-pravaha-madhura*

*raktotpala-vilocanam*

*h la-prasuna-susnidha*

*nutanayata-nasikam*

His beautiful eyes are just like reddish lotus flowers. They are most beautiful, just like lakes of Krishna *Prema*. His nose is arched and is resplendent just like the sesame flower.

*sri-ganda-mandollasi ratna-kundala-manditam savya-karna-suvinyasta  
sphurac-caru-sikhandakam*

His cheeks are round and they shine brilliantly. He wears jeweled earrings. He has a peacock feather placed near His left ear.

*madhura-sneha-susnigdha praraktadhara-pallavam isad-danturita-snigdha sphuran-mukta-radoijvalam*

His lips are tender and very lustrous. They resemble reddish blossoming flowers. He reveals his pearl-like teeth out His kindness.

**\*\* Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-Lila 3.77**

*sankirtana-pravartaka sri krma-chaitanya sankirtana-yajne tanre bhaje sei dhanya*

"Lord Sri Krishna Chaitanya is the initiator of *sankirtana* [congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Krishna]. One who worships Him through *sankirtana* is fortunate indeed"

**\*\* Susloka-Satakam -59- Sri Gauranga Mahima**

*vintala-kamala-vaktrah pakva-bi nbadharosthas tila-kusu  
na-su-nasah katnbu-kanthah su-dirghah suvaliuta-bhuja-dando  
nabhi-gambhira-rupah sphuratu hrdaya-madhye gaura-candro-natendrah*

"His face is flawless like a blooming lotus and His lips are red as ripe as *bimba* fruits. His nose is as beautiful as the sesame flower and his neck is like a three-ringed conch. He is very tall and His rod-like arms make artistic movements while He dances. His navel is very deep. May my Lord Gaura Chandra, the king of dancers, reveal Himself in the core of My heart."

## IS LORD KALKI PREDICTED IN THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS?

-by Stephen Knapp

(An excerpt from The Vedic Prophecies)

Here are some additional interesting points to consider. There are verses from the book of *Revelations* in the Bible that are very similar to the above descriptions in the *Puranas* about Lord Kalki. These verses are so similar that they cannot be ignored and may provide additional insight for Christians and similarities they may share with Vedic culture. In *Revelations* (19.11-16, & 19-21) it states:

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, but no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And

the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat on the horse."

This sounds so much like the incarnation of Lord Kalki that it could hardly be anyone else. Surely, by the time Lord Kalki appears, no one will have the slightest expectation of Him or His appearance. No one will know His name. And His army of *brahmanas* will be as pure as if they had descended from heaven. At the time of Lord Kalki's appearance, He will kill the remaining miscreants and deliver the few saintly people from the present conditions of the earth, changing it back to the Golden Age of Satya-yuga. In this regard, *Revelations* (14.1-3) also describes: "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb [a typical symbol for the Divine or an incarnation of the Divine] stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."

One significant description in the above verses is that those who are redeemed from the earth will have God's name written on their foreheads. This is a widespread custom of the *brahmanas* in India to write the name of God, such as Vishnu or Krishna, on their foreheads. This is *tilok*, which is usually put on with clay made from the banks of a holy river. We often see this in the middle of the forehead in the shape of a "V" which represents the name of God and that the body is a temple of God, or the three-lined markings of the Shaivites. The Vaishnava mark is made while reciting "*Om keshavaya namaha*," which means "Salutations to Lord Keshava," another name of Krishna.

So herein could be an indication that when the last of society is delivered from the earth during the end times, they will be those who wear the name of God on their foreheads, at least according to these verses. Also, as in accord with other Vedic prophecies, we can understand that there will be very few people left in the world who will have any piety at all. So it would fit in with the Vedic prophecies that by the time Lord Kalki appears, there may, indeed, be only 144,000 who will be left in the world worthy of being delivered from the godless and chaotic conditions of the earth. Or these may be the seeds of the new civilization that will start the beginning of the next age of Satya-yuga.

## 32. Appendix D. Songs and references about humility

### Bhajanas on Humility

From Saranagati by Bhaktivinoda Thakura

First Principle of Surrender: Dainya (Humility) -- Seven Songs -

#### Song 1

bhuliyā tomāre, saṁsāre āsiyā,  
peye nānā-vidha byathā  
tomāra caraṇe, āsiyāchi āmi,  
bolibo duḥkhera kathā

O Lord, I forgot You and came to this material world, where I have experienced a host of pains and sorrows. Now I approach Your lotus feet and submit my tale of woe.

jananī-jaṭhare, chilāma jakhona,  
biṣama bandhana-pāṣe  
eka-bāra prabhu! dekhā diyā more,  
vañcile e dīna dāse

While still bound up tightly in the unbearable confines of my mother's womb, O Lord, You once revealed Yourself before me. Appearing only briefly, You then abandoned this poor servant of Yours.

takhona bhāvinu, janama pāiyā,  
koribo bhajana tava  
janama hoilo, poḍi' māyā-jāle,  
nā hoilo jñāna-lava

At that moment I thought, "After my birth, I will worship You." But alas, after taking birth I fell into the entangling network of worldly illusions; thus I possessed not even a drop of true knowledge.

ādarera chele, swa-janera kole,  
hāsiyā kāṭānu kāla  
janaka-jananī- snehete bhuliyā,  
saṁsāra lāgilo bhālo

As a dear son fondled in the laps of relatives, I passed my time smiling and laughing. The affection of my father and mother helped me to forget You still more, and I began to think that the material world was a very nice place.

krame dina dina, bālaka hoiyā,  
khelinu bālaka-saha  
āra kichu dine, jñāna upajilo,  
pāṭha poḍi ahar-ahaḥ

Day by day I gradually grew into a young boy and began playing with other boys. Soon my powers of understanding emerged, so I diligently read and studied my school lessons every day.

vidyāra gaurave, bhrami' deśe deśe,  
dhana uparjana kori  
swa-jana pālana, kori eka-mane,  
bhulinu tomāre, hari!

Proud of my accomplished education, later I traveled from place to place and earned much wealth. Thereby maintaining my family with undivided attention, I forgot You, O Lord Hari!

bārdhakey ekhona, bhaktivinoda,  
kāṅdiyā kātara ati  
nā bhajiyā tore, dina bṛthā gelo,  
ekhona ki habe gati?

Now in old age, this Bhaktivinoda very sadly weeps. I failed to worship You, O Lord, and instead passed my days in vain. What will be my fate now?

### Song 2

vidyāra vilāse, kāṭāinu kāla,  
parama sāhase āmi  
tomāra caraṇa, nā bhajinu kabhu,  
ekhona śaraṇa tumi

With great enthusiasm I spent my time in the pleasures of mundane learning, and never worshiped Your lotus feet, O Lord. Now You are my only shelter.

poḍite poḍite, bharasā bārilo,  
jñāne gati habe māni'  
se āśā biphala, se jñāna durbala,  
se jñāna ajñāna jāni

Reading on and on, my hopes grew and grew, for I considered the acquisition of material knowledge to be life's true goal. How fruitless those hopes turned out to be, for all my knowledge proved feeble. Now I know that all such erudition is actually pure ignorance.

jaḍa-vidyā jata, māyāra vaibhava,  
tomāra bhajane bādhā  
moha janamiyā, anitya saṁsāre,  
jīvake koraye gādhā

All the so-called knowledge of this world is born of the flickering potency of Your illusory energy (māyā). It is an impediment to the execution of devotional service to You. Indulgence in mundane knowledge verily makes an ass of the eternal soul by encouraging his infatuation with this temporary world.\*

sei gādhā ho'ye, saṁsārera bojhā,  
bahinu aneka kāla  
bārdhakeyē ekhona, śaktira abhāve,  
kichu nāhi lāge bhālo

Here is one person who has been turned into such an ass, who for so long has carried on his back the useless burden of material existence. Now in my old age, for want of the power to enjoy, I find that nothing at all pleases me.

jīvana jātanā, hoilo ekhona,  
se vidyā avidyā bhelo  
avidyāra jwālā, ghaṭilo biṣama,  
se vidyā hoilo śelo

Life has now become agony, for my so-called erudite knowledge has proven itself to be worthless ignorance. Material knowledge has now become a pointed shaft and has pierced my heart with the intolerable, burning pain of ignorance.

tomāra caraṇa, binā kichu dhana,  
saṁsāre nā āche āra  
bhakativinoda, jaḍa-vidyā chāḍi,  
tuwā pada kore sāra

O Lord, there is no treasure worth seeking in this world other than Your lotus feet. Bhaktivinoda abandons all his mundane knowledge and makes Your lotus feet the sum and substance of his life.

### Song 3

jauvane jakhona, dhana-upārjane,  
hoinu vipula kāmī  
dharama smariyā, gṛhinīra kara,  
dhorinu takhona āmi

When I was young, I felt a boundless ambition for earning money. At that time, bearing in mind the codes of religion, I accepted the hand of a wife.\*

saṁsāra pātā'ye, tāhāra sahita,  
kāla-khoy koinu koto  
bahu suta-sutā, janama lobhilo,  
marame hoinu hato

Along with her I set up a household and therein wasted so much of my time. Many sons and daughters were born, and my spirit was totally crushed.

saṁsārera bhāra, bāḍe dine dine,  
acala hoilo gati  
bārdhakya āsiyā, gherilo āmare,  
asthira hoilo mati

The burden of family life increased day by day, and under its weight I felt my personal progress in life forcibly come to a halt. Old age came and beleaguered me on all sides, making my mind incessantly disturbed.

pīḍāya asthira, cintāya jwarita,  
abhāve jwalita cita  
upāya nā dekhi, andhakāra-moya,  
ekhona ho'yechi bhīta

Diseases trouble me, constant anxiety has made me feverish, and my heart burns with every want. I see no way out of this predicament, for all is darkness. Now I am very much afraid.

saṁsāra-taṭani- srota nahe śeṣa,  
maraṇa nikaṭe ghora  
saba samāpiyā, bhojibo tomāya,  
e āśā biphala mora

The current of this worldly river is strong and relentless; a frightening, gloomy death approaches. 'Finishing my worldly duties, I will worship You, O Lord'—that hope is now fruitless as well.

ebe śuno prabhu! āmi gati-hīna,  
bhaktivinoda koya  
tava kṛpā binā, sakali nirāśā,  
deho' more padāśroya

Now please hear me, O Lord! I am utterly helpless. Bhaktivinoda says, "Without Your mercy, everything is lost. Please give me the shelter of Your lotus feet."

## Song 4

āmāra jīvana, sadā pāpe rata,  
nāhiko punyera leṣa  
parere udvega, diyāchi je koto,  
diyāchi jīvere kleśa

My life is ever given to sin; in it there is not a particle of good. I have caused others great anxiety, and have troubled all souls.\*

nija sukha lāgi', pāpe nāhi ḍori,  
doyā-hīna swārtha-paro  
para-sukhe duḥkhī, sadā mithya-bhāṣī,  
para-duḥkha sukha-karo

For the sake of my own enjoyment I have never hesitated to perform sinful acts. Devoid of all compassion, I am concerned only with my selfish interests. Perpetually speaking lies, I become dejected upon seeing others happy, whereas the misery of others is a source of great delight for me.

aśeṣa kāmanā, hṛdi mājhe mora,  
krodhī, dambha-parāyana  
mada-matta sadā, viṣaye mohita,  
himsā-garva vibhūṣana

There are limitless material desires within the core of my heart. I am wrathful, fond of exhibiting arrogance, intoxicated by vanity, and bewildered by worldly affairs. I wear the cherished ornaments of envy and egotism.

nidrālasya hata, sukārye virata,  
akārye udyogī āmi  
pratiṣṭha lāgiyā, śāṭhya-ācaraṇa,  
lobha-hata sadā kāmī

Ruined by laziness and sleep, I resist all pious deeds, yet am very enthusiastic to perform wicked acts. For the sake of worldly fame and reputation I engage in the practice of deceitfulness. I am victimized by my own greed, being always lustful.

e heno durjana, saj-jana-varjita,  
aparādhi nirantara  
śubha-kārya-śūnya, sadānartha-manāḥ,  
nānā duḥkhe jara jara

A vile, wicked man such as this, rejected by godly people, is a constant offender. Devoid of all good works, forever inclined toward evil, he is worn out and wasted by various miseries.

bārdhake ekhona, upāya-vihīna,  
tā'te dīna akiñcana  
bhaktivinoda, prabhura caraṇe,  
kore duḥkha nivedana

Now in old age, deprived of all means of relief, thus humbled and poor, Bhaktivinoda submits his tale of grief at the feet of the Supreme Lord.

### Song 5

(prabhu he!) śuno mor duḥkher kāhīnī  
viṣaya-halāhala, sudhā-bhāne piyaluñ,  
āb avasāna dinamāṇi

O Lord! Please hear the story of my sadness. I drank the deadly poison of worldliness, pretending it was nectar, and now the sun is setting on the horizon of my life.

khelā-rase śaiśava, poḍhaite kaiśora,  
gowāoluñ, nā bhelo vivek  
bhoga-baśe yauvane, ghara pāti' bosiluñ,  
suta-mita bāḍhalo anek

I spent my childhood in play, my youth in academic pursuit, and in me there arose no sense of discrimination. In young manhood I set up a household and settled down to the spell of material enjoyment while my children and friends quickly multiplied.

vṛddha-kāla āolo, saba sukha bhāgalo,  
piḍā-baśe hoinu kātār  
sarvendriya durbala, kṣīna kalevara,  
bhogābhāve duḥkhita antar

Old age soon arrived, and all joys consequently departed. Subjected to the torments of disease, I am troubled and weak. All my senses are feeble now, my body is racked and exhausted, and my spirits are downcast in the absence of former sense pleasures.

jñāna-lava-hīna, bhakti-rase vañchita,  
āra mora ki habe upāy  
patita-bandhu, tuhuñ, patitādhama hāma,  
kṛpāya uṭhāo tava pāy

Devoid of even a particle of enlightenment, cheated of the mellows of devotion—what help is there for me now? O Lord, You are the friend of the fallen. I am certainly fallen, the lowest of men. Please, therefore, in mercy lift me to Your lotus feet.

vicārite ābahi, guna nāhi pāobi,  
kṛpā koro, choḍato vicār  
tava pada-paṅkaja- sīdhu pibāoto,  
bhaktivinoda karo pār

Were You to judge me now, You would find no good qualities. Have mercy and judge me not. Cause me to drink the honey of Your lotus feet and thereby deliver this Bhaktivinoda.

### Song 6

(prabhu he!) tuwā pade e minati mor  
tuwā pada-pallava, tyajato maru-mana,  
viṣama viṣaye bhelo bhor

O Lord! I offer this humble prayer at Your feet. I gave up the shelter of Your feet, which are soft as newly-grown leaves, and now my mind has become dried up like a desert, being scorched by the fire of absorption in horrible worldliness.

uṭhayite tākata, puna nāhi milo-i,  
anudina korohuñ hutās  
dīna-jana-nātha, tuhuñ kahāyasi,  
tumāri caraṇa mama āś

I find no strength to rise again, and thus I spend my days bitterly lamenting. O Lord who is called the master of the meek and humble! Your lotus feet are my only hope.

aichana dīna-jana, kahi nāhi milo-i,  
tuhuñ more koro parasād  
tuwā jana-saṅge, tuwā kathā-raṅge,  
chāḍahuñ sakala paramād

There has never been a soul as forlorn as me. Please be merciful and award me the association of Your devotees, for by tasting the pleasure of hearing discussions of Your pastimes I shall give up all evils.

tuwā dhāma-māhe, tuwā nāma gāoto,  
gowāyabuñ divā-niśi āś  
tuwā pada-chāyā, parama suśītala,  
māge bhaktivinoda dās

One hope animates my soul: To spend day and night singing Your holy name while living in Your divine abode. Your servant Bhaktivinoda begs a place in the supremely cooling shade of Your lotus feet.

## Song 7

(prabhu he!)  
emona durmati, saṁsāra bhitorē,  
poḍiyā āchinu āmi  
tava nija-jana, kono mahājane,  
pāṭhāiyā dile tumi

O Lord! With such a wicked mind as this I have fallen into the material world, but You have sent one of Your pure and elevated devotees to rescue me.

doyā kori' more, patita dekhiyā,  
kohilo āmāre giyā  
ohe dīna-jana, śuno bhālo kathā,  
ullasita ha'be hiyā

He saw me so fallen and wretched, took pity, and came to me saying, "O humbled soul, please listen to this good tiding, for it will gladden your heart.

tomāre tārīte, śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya,  
navadvīpe avatār  
tomā heno koto, dīna hīna jane,  
korilena bhava-pār

"Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya has appeared in the land of Navadvīpa in order to deliver you. He has safely conducted many miserable souls such as you across the sea of worldly existence.

vedera pratijñā, rākhibāra tare,  
rukma-varna vipra-suta  
mahāprabhu nāme, nadīyā mātāya,  
saṅge bhāi avadhūta

"To fulfill the promise of the Vedas, the son of a brāhmana, of golden complexion and bearing the name of Mahāprabhu, has descended along with His brother, the avadhūta. Together They have overwhelmed all of Nadīyā with divine ecstasy.\*

nanda-suta jini, caitanya gosāi,  
nija-nāma kori' dān  
tārilo jagat, tumi-o jāiyā,  
loho nija-paritrān

"Śrī Caitanya Gosāi, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the son of Nanda, has saved the world by freely distributing the gift of His own holy name. Go to Him also and receive your deliverance."

se kathā śuniyā, āsiyāchi, nātha!  
tomāra caraṇa-tale  
bhaktivinoda, kāṅḍiyā kāṅḍiyā,  
āpana-kāhinī bole

Hearing those words, O Lord, Bhaktivinoda has come weeping and weeping to the soles of Your lotus feet and tells the story of his life.

### Nectar of Devotion Detachment

The senses are always desiring sense enjoyment, but when a devotee develops transcendental love for Kṛṣṇa his senses are no longer attracted by material desires. This state of mind is called detachment. There is a nice example of this detachment in connection with the character of King Bharata. In the Fifth Canto, Fourteenth Chapter, verse 43, of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam it is stated, "Emperor Bharata was so attracted by the beauty of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa that even in his youthful life he gave up all kinds of attachments to family, children, friends, kingdom, etc., as though they were untouchable stools." Emperor Bharata provides a typical example of detachment. He had everything enjoyable in the material world, but he left it. This means that detachment does not mean artificially keeping oneself aloof and apart from the allurements of attachment. Even in the presence of such allurements, if one can remain unattracted by material attachments, he is called detached. In the beginning, of course, a neophyte devotee must try to keep himself apart from all kinds of alluring attachments, but the real position of a mature devotee is that even in the presence of all allurements, he is not at all attracted. This is the actual criterion of detachment.

### Pridelessness

When a devotee, in spite of possessing all the qualities of pure realization, is not proud of his position, he is called prideless. In the Padma Purāṇa it is stated that King Bhagīratha was the emperor above all other kings, yet he developed such ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa that he became a mendicant and went out begging even to the homes of his political enemies and untouchables. He was so humble that he respectfully bowed down before them. There are many similar instances in the history of India. Even very recently, about two hundred years ago or less, one big land Lord known as Lāl Bābu, a Calcutta landholder, became a Vaiṣṇava and lived in Vṛndāvana. He was also begging from door to door, even at the homes of his political enemies. Begging involves being ready to be insulted by persons to whose home one has come. That is natural. But one has to tolerate such insults for the sake of Kṛṣṇa. The devotee of Kṛṣṇa can accept any position in the service of Kṛṣṇa.

### Great Hope

The strong conviction that one will certainly receive the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is called in Sanskrit āśābandha. Āśā-bandha means to continue to think, "Because I'm trying my best to follow the routine principles of devotional service, I am sure that I will go back to Godhead, back to home."

In this connection, one prayer by Rūpa Gosvāmī is sufficient to exemplify this hopefulness. He says, "I have no love for Kṛṣṇa, nor for the causes of developing love of Kṛṣṇa—namely, hearing and chanting. And the process of bhakti-yoga, by which one is always thinking of Kṛṣṇa and fixing His lotus feet in the heart, is also lacking in me. As far as philosophical knowledge or pious works are

concerned, I don't see any opportunity for me to execute such activities. But above all, I am not even born of a nice family. Therefore I must simply pray to You, Gopījana-vallabha [Kṛṣṇa, maintainer and beloved of the gopīs]. I simply wish and hope that some way or other I may be able to approach Your lotus feet, and this hope is giving me pain, because I think myself quite incompetent to approach that transcendental goal of life." The purport is that under this heading of āsā-bandha, one should continue to hope against hope that some way or other he will be able to approach the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord.

#### **Eagerness for Achieving the Desired Success**

When one is sufficiently eager to achieve success in devotional service, that eagerness is called samutkaṅṭhā. This means "complete eagerness." Actually this eagerness is the price for achieving success in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Everything has some value, and one has to pay the value before obtaining or possessing it. It is stated in the Vedic literature that to purchase the most valuable thing, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one has to develop intense eagerness for achieving success. This intense eagerness is very nicely expressed by Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura in his book Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta. He says, "I am eagerly waiting to see that boy of Vṛndāvana whose bodily beauty is captivating the whole universe, whose eyes are always bounded by black eyebrows and expanded like lotus petals, and who is always eagerly glancing over His devotees and therefore moving slightly here and there. His eyes are always moist, His lips are colored like copper, and through those lips there comes a sound vibration which drives one madder than a mad elephant. I want so much to see Him at Vṛndāvana!"

#### **Attachment to Chanting the Holy Names of the Lord**

In the same Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta there is another statement, about the chanting of Rādhārāṇī. It is said by one of the associates of Rādhārāṇī, "O Lord Govinda, the girl who is the daughter of King Vṛṣabhānu is now shedding tears, and She is anxiously chanting Your holy name—'Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!'"

#### **Eagerness to Describe the Lord's Transcendental Qualities**

Attachment for chanting the glories of the Lord is also expressed in the Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta as follows: "What shall I do for Kṛṣṇa, who is pleasing beyond all pleasurable conceptions, and who is naughtier than all restless boys? The idea of Kṛṣṇa's beautiful activities is attracting my heart, and I do not know what I can do!"

#### **Attraction for Living in a Place Where Kṛṣṇa Has His Pastimes**

In the book Padyāvalī by Rūpa Gosvāmī there is the following statement about Vṛndāvana: "In this place the son of Mahārāja Nanda used to live with His father, who was king of all cowherd men. In this place Lord Kṛṣṇa broke the cart in which the Śakaṭāsura demon was concealed. At this place Dāmodara, who can cut the knot of our material existence, was tied up by His mother, Yaśodā." A pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa resides in the district of Mathurā or Vṛndāvana and visits all the places where Kṛṣṇa's pastimes were performed. At these sacred places Kṛṣṇa displayed His childhood activities with the cowherd boys and mother Yaśodā. The system of circumambulating all these places is still current among devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and those coming to Mathurā and Vṛndāvana always feel transcendental pleasure. Actually, if someone goes to Vṛndāvana, he will immediately feel separation from Kṛṣṇa, who performed such nice activities when He was present there.

Such attraction for remembering Kṛṣṇa's activities is known as attachment for Kṛṣṇa. There are impersonalist philosophers and mystics, however, who by a show of devotional service want ultimately to merge into the existence of the Supreme Lord. They sometimes try to imitate a pure devotee's sentiment for visiting the holy places where Kṛṣṇa had His pastimes, but they simply have a view for salvation, and so their activities cannot be considered attachment.

It is said by Rūpa Gosvāmī that the attachment exhibited by pure devotees for Kṛṣṇa cannot possibly be perfected in the hearts of fruitive workers (karmīs) or mental speculators, because such attachment in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very rare and not possible to achieve even for many liberated persons. As stated in Bhagavad-gītā, liberation from material contamination is the stage at which devotional service can be achieved. For a person who simply wants to have liberation and to merge into the impersonal brahmajyoti, attachment to Kṛṣṇa is not possible to acquire. This attachment is very confidentially kept by Kṛṣṇa and is bestowed only upon pure devotees. Even ordinary devotees cannot have such pure attachment for Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, how is it possible for success to be achieved by persons whose hearts are contaminated by the actions and reactions of fruitive activities and who are entangled by various types of mental speculation?

There are many so-called devotees who artificially think of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes known as aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā. Sometimes one may artificially imitate these, pretending that Kṛṣṇa is talking with him in the form of a boy, or else one may pretend that Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa both have come to him and are talking with him. Such characteristics are sometimes exhibited by the impersonalist class of men, and they may captivate some innocent persons who have no knowledge in the science of devotional service. However, as soon as an experienced devotee sees all of these caricatures, he can immediately evaluate such rascaldom. If such a pretender is sometimes seen possessing imitative attachment to Kṛṣṇa, that will not be accepted as real attachment. It may be said, however, that such attachment gives the pretender hope that he may eventually rise onto the actual platform of pure devotional service.

This imitative attachment can be divided into two headings—namely, shadow attachment and parā (transcendental) attachment. If someone, without undergoing the regulative principles of devotional service or without being guided by a bona fide spiritual master, shows such imitative attachment, this is called shadow attachment. Sometimes it is found that a person actually attached to material enjoyment or salvation has the good fortune to associate with pure devotees while they are engaged in chanting the holy name of the Lord. By the good grace of the Lord one may also cooperate and join in the chanting. At that time, simply by the association of such pure devotees, the moonlike rays from their hearts reflect on him, and by the influence of the pure devotees he may show some likeness of attachment caused by inquisitiveness, but this is very flickering. And if by the manifestation of such shadow attachment one feels the disappearance of all material pangs, then it is called parā attachment.

Such shadow attachment or parā attachment can develop if one associates with a pure devotee or visits holy places like Vṛndāvana or Mathurā, and if an ordinary man develops such attachment for Kṛṣṇa and fortunately performs devotional activities in the association of pure devotees, he can also rise to the platform of pure devotional service. The conclusion is that transcendental attachment is so powerful that if such attachment is seen manifested even in some common man, by the association of a pure devotee it can bring one to the perfectional stage. But such attachment for Kṛṣṇa cannot be invoked in a person without his being sufficiently blessed by the association of pure devotees. As attachment can be invoked by the association of pure devotees, so attachment can also be extinguished by offenses committed at the lotus feet of pure devotees. To be more clear, by the association of pure devotees attachment for Kṛṣṇa can be aroused, but if one

commits offenses at the lotus feet of a devotee, one's shadow attachment or parā attachment can be extinguished. This extinguishing is like the waning of the full moon, which gradually decreases and at last becomes dark. One should therefore be very careful while associating with pure devotees to guard against committing an offense at their lotus feet.

Transcendental attachment, either shadow or parā, can be nullified by different degrees of offenses at the lotus feet of pure devotees. If the offense is very serious, then one's attachment becomes almost nil, and if the offense is not very serious, one's attachment can become second class or third class. If someone becomes attached to the principles of salvation or to merging into the existence of the brahmajyoti, his ecstasies gradually diminish into shadow and parā attachment or else transform into the principles of ahaṅgrahopāsanā. This ahaṅgrahopāsanā describes a living entity when he begins spiritual realization by identifying himself with the Supreme Lord. This state of self-realization is technically known as monism. The monist thinks himself one with the Supreme Lord. Thus, because he does not differentiate between himself and the Supreme Lord, it is his view that by worshiping himself he is worshiping the supreme whole.

Sometimes it is found that a neophyte is taking part in chanting and dancing very enthusiastically, but within himself he is under the impression that he has become one with the supreme whole. This conception of monism is completely different from pure, transcendental devotional service. If, however, it is seen that a person has developed a high standard of devotion without having undergone even the regulative principles, it is to be understood that his status of devotional service was achieved in a former life. For some reason or another it had been temporarily stopped, most probably by an offense committed at the lotus feet of a devotee. Now, with a good second chance, it has again begun to develop. The conclusion is that steady progress in devotional service can be attained only in the association of pure devotees.

If one can gradually advance his status in devotional service, this is understood to be due to the causeless mercy of Kṛṣṇa Himself. If a person is completely detached from material enjoyment and has developed pure ecstatic devotion, even if he is sometimes accidentally found not living up to the standard of devotional service, one should not be envious of him. It is confirmed also in Bhagavad-gītā that a devotee who has unflinching faith in and devotion to the Lord, even if sometimes found to be accidentally deviated from pure devotional characteristics, should still be counted among the pure. Unflinching faith in devotional service, in Lord Kṛṣṇa and in the spiritual master makes one highly elevated in the activities of devotional service.

In the Nṛsimha Purāṇa it is stated, "If a person has completely engaged his mind, body and activities in the service of the Supreme Godhead, but externally he is found to be engaged in some abominable activities, these abominable activities will surely be very quickly vanquished by the influence of his staunch devotional force." The example is given that on the full moon there are some spots which may appear to be pockmarks. Still, the illumination spread by the full moon cannot be checked. Similarly, a little fault in the midst of volumes of devotional service is not at all to be counted as a fault. Attachment for Kṛṣṇa is transcendental bliss. Amid unlimited volumes of transcendental bliss, a spot of some material defect cannot act in any way.

## KARPAᅇYA-PAᅇJIKĀ-STOTRA (A LIST OF REQUESTS) BY ŚRĪLA RŪPA GOSVĀMĪ

### TEXT 10

O king of Vᅇndāvana, O queen of Vᅇndāvana, bowing down before You, with a choked voice this foolish person appeals to You.

### TEXT 11

Although I am not worthy to receive Your mercy, please be merciful to me, for You are the crowns of all who are merciful.

### TEXT 12

O king and queen worshiped by the masters of all the worlds, they who are very merciful are filled with mercy even for the unworthy and even for the offenders.

### TEXT 13

Although I have not the dimmest shadow of pure devotion, which is the only way to attain You, still, because You are the masters of playful transcendental pastimes, please be merciful to me.

### TEXT 14

O my king and queen, in this world many powerful controllers and many playful persons are seen to be merciful to the impious and indifferent.

### TEXTS 15 AND 16

Although I am the lowest and You the highest, although I am fool and You the greatest philosopher, although I am wicked and You the most saintly, and although I commit offenses when I think of You, still, O king and queen the shadow of whose holy name delivers one from a host of sins, please be kind to this person who sometimes chants Your holy name.

### FROM ŚRĪLA NAROTTAMA DĀSA ᅇHĀKURA'S "PRĀRTHANĀ"

One of only two or three books constantly carried by ŚrĪla Gaurakiᅇora dāsa BābājĪ. Always kept carefully in print for the Vaiᅇnavas by ŚrĪla Bhaktisiddhānta Mahārāja.

### SONG 2

### SAMPRĀRTHANĀTMIKĀ (APPEAL FOR AWAKENING OF ATTACHMENT TO THE LORD)

### TEXT 3

O My Lords, the narration of Your transcendental glories is like a ferryboat which enables the devotees to cross beyond the three material worlds. O my Lords, You are very merciful to this fallen and misdirected person. Please listen to this appeal from the mouth of Your devotee. Let his words touch Your ears. Please do not neglect me.

**FROM THE SAME WORK  
SONG 5 PRĀṆEŚVARA! NIVEDANA EI JANA KARE**

**TEXT 3** I wander through this world of suffering, my mind fixed on the objects of the senses which bring only pain, and my chest pierced by the javelin of forgetfulness of You. My body and mind are withered and shattered, and from that moment I become unconscious. Immersed in pain, I am like a living corpse.

**TEXT 4** Please give me Your merciful glance. Make me Your servant, and allow me to stay in Vṛndāvana. That golden-complexioned person who bears the name Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is my master, Narottama dāsa takes shelter of Him.

**FROM ŚRĪLA NAROTTAMA DĀSA ṬHĀKURA’S “ŚRĪ PREMA BHAKTI-CANDRIKĀ”  
SONG 3 ĀTMA-NIVEDANA (SELF-SURRENDER)**

**TEXT 1** O Lord, You are an ocean of mercy. You are the friend of the fallen souls. Please notice me. I have become like a non-devotee, swallowed by the timingila fish of lust. O Lord, please protect me.

**TEXT 2** In every birth, I repeatedly offended You. In every birth, I failed to worship You sincerely. No one is as fallen as I. Nevertheless, You are the only goal of my life. O Lord of my life, please do not abandon me.

**TEXT 3** O Lord, You are known as Patita-pāvana, the deliverer of the fallen, and You are also known as Śyāmasundara. Please do not ignore my appeal. Even if I am an offender, I think that You are the real goal of life. That is the truth.

**TEXT 4** O Supreme Personality of Godhead, please do not neglect me. O master of my life, please hear my words. Even if I have committed offenses to You, I always think of You as my master. Please allow me to serve You as Your associate and follower.

**TEXT 7** Narottama dāsa is very unhappy. O Lord, please engage him in Your saṅkīrtana movement and thus make him happy. O Lord, I am very afraid that I will not be able to overcome the many obstacles that stop me from advancing in devotional service. O Lord, at every moment I beg You to remove all those obstacles.

**FROM ŚRĪLA RAGHUNĀTHA DĀSA GOSVĀMĪ’S “STAVĀVALĪ”  
ŚRĪ GOVARDHANA-VĀSA-PRĀRTHANĀ-DAŚAKA  
TEN APPEALS FOR RESIDENCE AT GOVARDHANA HILL**

**TEXT 10** Although I am a cheater and a criminal, unlimitedly merciful Lord Śacīnandana, who is very dear to you, has given me to you. O Govardhana, please do not consider whether I am acceptable or not, but simply grant me residence near you.

FROM ŚRĪLA BHAKTIVINODA ṬHĀKURA'S "ŚRĪ ŚRĪ GĪTĀ-MĀLĀ" (A GARLAND OF SONGS)

FROM CHAPTER 1 YAMUNĀ-BHĀVĀVALĪ  
(DERIVED FROM STOTRA-RATNA OF ŚRĪ YĀMUNĀCĀRYA)

SONG 5 THE LORD'S QUALITIES

TEXTS 1-3

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, You have all virtues. You are the master of all powers. You are generous, honest, pure, gentle, kind, sweet, equal to all, pious, peaceful, grateful, and heroic. You are the best of all.

You possess all auspicious virtues. You are a nectar ocean of virtues. The individual souls possess only some few drops of the virtues You, the master of all powers, possess in full perfection Bhaktivinoda, who is worthless like a pile of ashes, folds his hands and speaks words from his heart. Again and again, he begs: O Lord, may I pass this life in the company of Your servants, servants who find their pleasure in describing Your pastimes.

SONG 7 THE LIBERATED MIND CAN SEE THE LORD

TEXT 3

O Lord, Your glories and opulences have no end. You are an ocean of mercy. You are the master of all souls. Poor Bhaktivinoda, who has no pure devotional service, again and again begs for pure devotion to You.

SONG 8 THE SOUL'S FALLEN POSITION

TEXTS 1-3

*hari he!*

*dharmā-niṣṭhā nāhi māyā, ātmā-bodhaḥ bhāṅgī,  
bhaktiḥ nāhi tomāra carāṇe  
ātaeva akincana, gati-hīna dusta-jana,  
rāta sādā āpana bāṅgī*

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, I have no faith in the path of religion, nor have I spiritual knowledge, nor have I beautiful devotion to Your feet. I have nothing of any value, nor does a good future await me. I am a wicked hedonist. I am a thief who again and again robs his own self. You are the purifier of the fallen, and I am very fallen. You are my only shelter. I place myself before Your feet. I take shelter of You. I am the servant, and You are my master. Bhaktivinoda weeps. There is no peace in his heart. Falling to the ground, he says, "O Lord Kṛṣṇa, please be merciful to this wicked person. Please give him the shade of Your feet forever."

SONG 20 NATURAL ETERNAL SURRENDER  
TEXTS 1-3

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, never will I leave You and become without my master. Without my master I am a servant without shelter. O Lord, if You do not accept me, You will not remain a master. Who will You dominate then?

That is our relationship, ordained by fate. O Kṛṣṇa, O killer of Madhu, You are the abode of all virtues. Therefore please hear my appeal: I do not wish that we shall ever be apart.

Bhaktivinoda sings: Please protect me. Please never leave me. When I am at fault, with proper anger please punish me, and then place me at Your graceful feet.

## 33. Appendix E. Yoga ladder

### OUTLINE

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2. YOGA LADDER DEFINED
3. ANIMAL LIFE DEFINED

#### SECTION B.

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#### SECTION C.

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3. KARMA-KĀṆDA LEADS TO REPEATED BIRTH AND DEATH
4. KARMA-KĀṆDA - A BURDEN AND LOSS
5. KARMA-YOGA DEFINED
6. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KARMA AND KARMA-YOGA, JNĀNA AND JNĀNA-YOGA
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3. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KARMIS, JNĀNIS, YOGIS AND DEVOTEES
4. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VIPRA (FRUITIVE ACTIVITY), BRĀHMAṆA (SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE) AND VAIṢṆAVA (DEVOTIONAL SERVICE)
5. THE THREE CLASSES OF TRANSCENDENTALISTS
6. THE COMMON FACTOR OF ALL YOGĀS
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10. AṢṬĀṄGA YOGA
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1. THE YOGA FOR THE AGE OF KALI
2. A PURE DEVOTEE HAS ALREADY SURPASSED ALL YOGAS

## SECTION A

### 1. INTRODUCTION

SB 2.3.10

akāmaḥ sarva-kāmo vā  
mokṣa-kāma udāra-dhīḥ  
tīvreṇa bhakti-yogena  
yajeta puruṣam param

#### SYNONYMS

akāmaḥ—one who has transcended all material desires; sarva-kāmaḥ—one who has the sum total of material desires; vā—either; mokṣa-kāmaḥ—one who desires liberation; udāra-dhīḥ—with broader intelligence; tīvreṇa—with great force; bhakti-yogena—by devotional service to the Lord; yajeta—should worship; puruṣam—the Lord; param—the supreme whole.

#### TRANSLATION

A person who has broader intelligence, whether he be full of all material desire, without any material desire, or desiring liberation, must by all means worship the supreme whole, the Personality of Godhead.

SB 4.21.34 purport

Everyone—whether akāma (a devotee), sarva-kāma (a karmī) or mokṣa-kāma (a jnani or yogī)—is encouraged to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead by the direct method of devotional service. In this way one can get both material and spiritual profit simultaneously.

### 2. YOGA LADDER DEFINED

Bg 6.3 purport

The process of linking oneself with the Supreme is called yoga. It may be compared to a ladder for attaining the topmost spiritual realization. This ladder begins from the lowest material condition of the living entity and rises up to perfect self-realization in pure spiritual life. According to various elevations, different parts of the ladder are known by different names. But all in all, the complete ladder is called yoga and may be divided into three parts, namely jnana-yoga, dhyānayoga and bhakti-yoga. The beginning of the ladder is called the yogāruruṣu stage, and the highest rung is called yogārūḍha.

#### Path of Perfection, Chapter Two

One may compare the yoga system to a stepladder. One yogī may be situated on the fifth step, another yogī may be on the fiftieth step and yet another on the five-hundredth step. The purpose, of course, is to reach the top. Although the entire ladder may be called the yoga system, one who is on the fifth step is not equal to one who is higher up. In Bhagavad-gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa delineates a number of yoga systems—karma-yoga, jnana-yoga, dhyāna-yoga, and bhakti-yoga. All of these systems are connected with God, Kṛṣṇa, just as the entire ladder is connected to the topmost floor.

This is not to say that everyone practicing the yoga system is situated on the topmost floor; only he who is in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so situated. Others are situated on different steps of the yogic ladder.

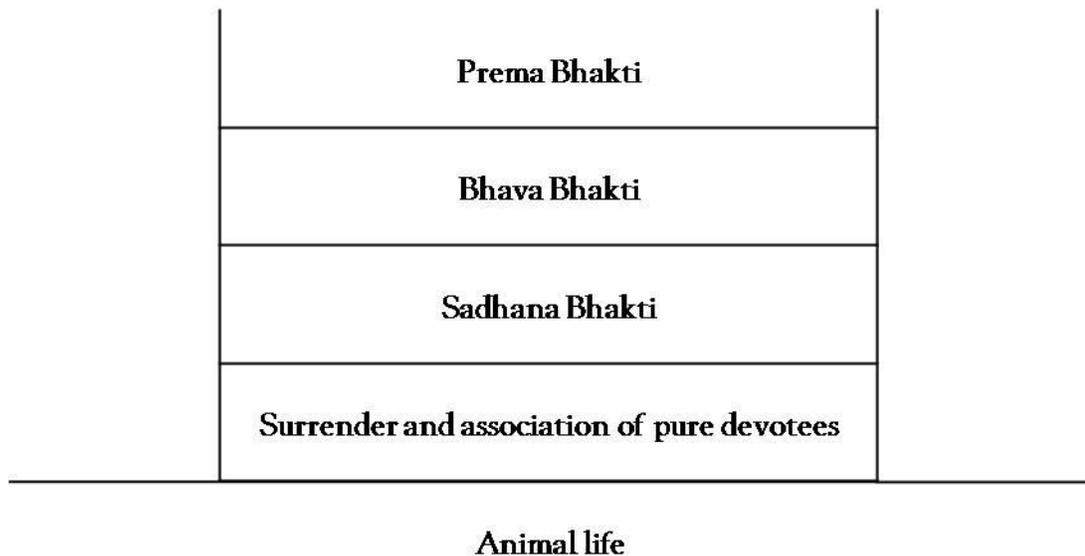
### 3. ANIMAL LIFE DEFINED

#### SB 1.1.2 purport

Religion includes four primary subjects, namely pious activities, economic development, satisfaction of the senses, and finally liberation from material bondage. Irreligious life is a barbarous condition. Indeed, human life begins when religion begins. Eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating are the four principles of animal life. These are common both to animals and to human beings. But religion is the extra function of the human being. Without religion, human life is no better than animal life. Therefore, in human societies there is some form of religion which aims at self-realization and which makes reference to man's eternal relationship with God.

### SECTION B

#### 1. THE EXPRESS ELEVATOR OF BHAKTI YOGA - DIAGRAM ONE



#### Narada Bhakti Sutra, Chapter Four

In ignorance and defiance of the recommended yuga-dharma, unauthorized teachers make a business of teaching yoga and meditation. But since almost no one is qualified to practice the severe austerities of meditation, streamlined versions are taught, which are mostly a form of cheating. Even if a person seriously takes up the path of karma-yoga, jnana-yoga, or aṣṭāṅgayoga, he will meet with many difficulties. For example, the jnani may become very attached to accumulating knowledge for its own sake, up to the point where he tries to merge with the Absolute Truth. The karma-yogī, or man of action, too often forgets to dedicate his activities to God and instead becomes attached to

the fruits of his work or to fame. The aṣṭ āṅga-yogīs, if they are able to progress at all in the eightfold system, are liable to get sidetracked by the siddhis, or powers, that come to them. But bhakti, by its very nature, purifies one's senses, actions, and motives. Moreover, one doesn't have to go painfully and slowly through every single step on the yoga ladder from karma to jnana to bhakti. At any moment, whenever one decides to surrender, and wherever one gets the association of pure devotees, one can take the express elevator of bhakti-yoga.

## 2. BHAKTI-YOGA DEFINED

### SB 1.7.10 Purport

Unalloyed devotional service of the Lord progresses in different stages. Practice of devotional service in the material field is of eighty-one different qualities, and above such activities is the transcendental practice of devotional service, which is one and is called sādhana-bhakti. When unalloyed practice of sādhana-bhakti is matured into transcendental love for the Lord, the transcendental loving service of the Lord begins gradually developing into nine progressive stages of loving service under the headings of attachment, love, affection, feelings, affinity, adherence, following, ecstasy, and intense feelings of separation.

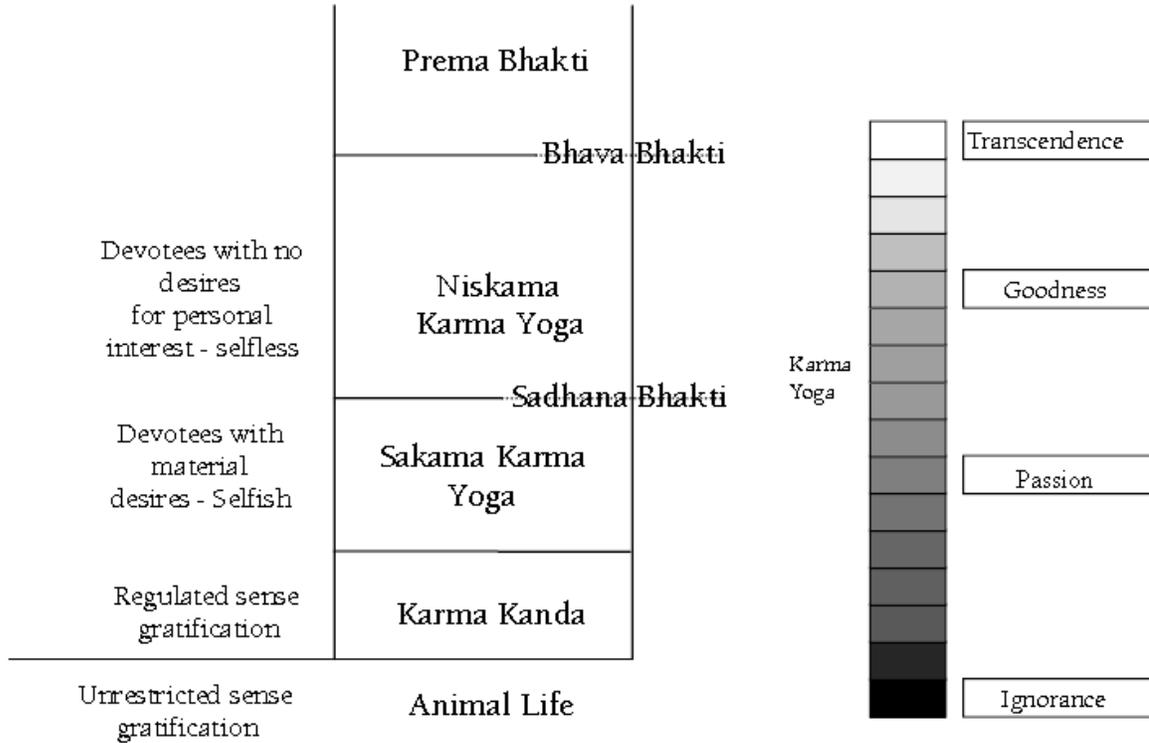
The attachment of an inactive devotee develops up to the stage of transcendental love of God. Attachment of an active servitor develops up to the stage of adherence, and that for a friendly devotee develops up to the stage of following, and the same is also the case for the paternal devotees. Devotees in conjugal love develop ecstasy up to the stage of intense feelings of separation. These are some of the features of unalloyed devotional service of the Lord.

According to Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya, the import of the word ittham-bhūta is "complete bliss." Transcendental bliss in the realization of impersonal Brahman becomes comparable to the scanty water contained in the pit made by a cow's hoof. It is nothing compared with the ocean of bliss of the vision of the Personality of Godhead. The personal form of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is so attractive that it comprehends all attraction, all bliss and all tastes (rasas). These attractions are so strong that no one wants to exchange them for material enjoyment, mystic powers and liberation. There is no need of logical arguments in support of this statement, but out of one's own nature one becomes attracted by the qualities of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We must know for certain that the qualities of the Lord have nothing to do with mundane qualities. All of them are full of bliss, knowledge and eternity. There are innumerable qualities of the Lord, and one is attracted by one quality while another is attracted by another.

Great sages, such as the four bachelor-devotees Sanaka, Sanātana, Sananda and Sanat-kumāra, were attracted by the fragrance of flowers and tulasī leaves anointed with the pulp of sandalwood offered at the lotus feet of the Lord. Similarly, Śukadeva Gosvāmī was attracted by the transcendental pastimes of the Lord. Śukadeva Gosvāmī was already situated in the liberated stage, yet he was attracted by the pastimes of the Lord. This proves that the quality of His pastimes has nothing to do with material affinity. Similarly, the young cowherd damsels were attracted by the bodily features of the Lord, and Rukmiṇī was attracted by hearing about the glories of the Lord. Lord Kṛṣṇa attracts even the mind of the goddess of fortune. He attracts, in special cases, the minds of all young girls. He attracts the minds of the elderly ladies by paternal affection. He attracts the mind of the male in the humors of servitude and friendship.

SECTION C

1. THE YOGA LADDER - DIAGRAM TWO



2. KARMA-KĀṆDA DEFINED

Bg 2.43

TRANSLATION

Men of small knowledge are very much attached to the flowery words of the Vedas, which recommend various fruitive activities for elevation to heavenly planets, resultant good birth, power, and so forth. Being desirous of sense gratification and opulent life, they say that there is nothing more than this.

PURPORT

People in general are not very intelligent, and due to their ignorance they are most attached to the fruitive activities recommended in the karma-kāṇḍa portions of the Vedas. They do not want anything more than sense gratificatory proposals for enjoying life in heaven, where wine and women are available and material opulence is very common. In the Vedas many sacrifices are recommended for elevation to the heavenly planets, especially the jyotiṣṭ oma sacrifices. In fact, it is stated that anyone desiring elevation to heavenly planets must perform these sacrifices, and men with a poor fund of knowledge think that this is the whole purpose of Vedic wisdom. It is very difficult for such inexperienced persons to be situated in the determined action of Kṛ ṣṇa consciousness. As fools are

attached to the flowers of poisonous trees without knowing the results of such attractions, unenlightened men are similarly attracted by such heavenly opulence and the sense enjoyment thereof.

In the karma-kāṇḍa section of the Vedas it is said, apāma somam amṛtā abhūma and akṣayyaṁ ha vai cāturmasya-yājinaḥ sukṛtaṁ bhavati. In other words, those who perform the four-month penances become eligible to drink the soma-rasa beverages to become immortal and happy forever. Even on this earth some are very eager to have soma-rasa to become strong and fit to enjoy sense gratifications. Such persons have no faith in liberation from material bondage, and they are very much attached to the pompous ceremonies of Vedic sacrifices. They are generally sensual, and they do not want anything other than the heavenly pleasures of life. It is understood that there are gardens called Nandana-kānana in which there is good opportunity for association with angelic, beautiful women and having a profuse supply of soma-rasa wine. Such bodily happiness is certainly sensual; therefore there are those who are purely attached to such material, temporary happiness, as Lords of the material world.

Bg 2.45

#### TRANSLATION

The Vedas deal mainly with the subject of the three modes of material nature. O Arjuna, become transcendental to these three modes. Be free from all dualities and from all anxieties for gain and safety, and be established in the self.

#### PURPORT

All material activities involve actions and reactions in the three modes of material nature. They are meant for fruitive results, which cause bondage in the material world. The Vedas deal mostly with fruitive activities to gradually elevate the general public from the field of sense gratification to a position on the transcendental plane... When the activities for sense gratification, namely the karma-kāṇḍa chapter, are finished, then the chance for spiritual realization is offered in the form of the Upaniṣads, which are part of different Vedas, as the Bhagavad-gītā is a part of the fifth Veda, namely the Mahābhārata. The Upaniṣads mark the beginning of transcendental life.

SB 4.21.34

#### TRANSLATION

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is transcendental and not contaminated by this material world. But although He is concentrated spirit soul without material variety, for the benefit of the conditioned soul He nevertheless accepts different types of sacrifice performed with various material elements, rituals and mantras and offered to the demigods under different names according to the interests and purposes of the performers.

## PURPORT

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura comments that these karma-kāṇḍa ritualistic ceremonies, although contaminated, contain touches of devotional service because whenever there is a performance of any yajna, Lord Viṣṇu is given a central position. This is very important because even a little endeavor to please Lord Viṣṇu is bhakti and is of great value. A tinge of bhakti purifies the material nature of the performances, which by devotional service gradually come to the transcendental position. Therefore although such yajnas are superficially material activities, the results are transcendental. Such yajnas as Sūrya-yajna, Indra-yajna and Candra-yajna are performed in the names of the demigods, but these demigods are bodily parts of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The demigods cannot accept sacrificial offerings for themselves, but they can accept them for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, just as a departmental tax collector of a government cannot collect taxes for his personal account but can realize them for the government. Any yajna performed with this complete knowledge and understanding is described in Bhagavad-gītā as brahmārpaṇam, or a sacrifice offered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Since no one but the Supreme Lord can enjoy the results of sacrifice, the Lord says that He is the actual enjoyer of all sacrifices (bhoktāraṁ yajna-tapasāṁ sarva-loka-maheśvaram).

### 3. KARMA-KĀṆḌA LEADS TO REPEATED BIRTH AND DEATH

SB 11.19.18

## TRANSLATION

An intelligent person should see that any material activity is subject to constant transformation and that even on the planet of Lord Brahmā there is thus simply unhappiness. Indeed, a wise man can understand that just as all that he has seen is temporary, similarly, all things within the universe have a beginning and an end.

## PURPORT

The word adṛ ṣṭ am indicates the heavenly standard of life available in the higher planets within this universe. Such celestial neighborhoods are not actually experienced on the earth planet, although they are described in the Vedic literatures. One may argue that promotion to material heaven is recommended in the karma-kāṇḍa portion of the Vedas and that although the happiness available there is not eternal, at least for some time one may enjoy life. Lord Kṛ ṣṇa here states, however, that even on the planet of Lord Brahmā, which is superior to the heavenly planets, there is no happiness whatsoever. Even in the upper planetary systems there is rivalry, envy, irritation, lamentation and ultimately death itself.

### 4. KARMA-KĀṆḌA - A BURDEN AND LOSS

SB 11.21.4 purport

Those who follow the ritualistic karma-kāṇḍa section of the Vedas are burdened with innumerable regulations, rituals and ceremonies, which must be personally performed by the worshipers or performed on their behalf by qualified brāhmaṇas. At any moment there is danger of

discrepancy resulting in the total loss of their accumulated piety. Similarly, those on the philosophical path must painstakingly define, refine and adjust philosophical categories, a process that generally ends in confusion and hopelessness. The practitioners of mystic yoga undergo grueling penances, subjecting themselves to severe heat and cold, near starvation and so on. All such materialistic persons have personal desires to fulfill, whereas the devotees of the Lord, who desire the Lord's pleasure, simply depend upon the Lord's mercy and go back home, back to Godhead.

## 5. KARMA-YOGA DEFINED

### Message of Godhead, Chapter Two

The Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, advises us as follows: "The best policy for doing work is to perform all prescribed duties for the satisfaction of Yajna, the Supreme Being—Viṣṇu, the Absolute Truth. Otherwise, all actions will produce reactions that will cause bondage. If work is done for the sake of Yajna, then one can become free from all bondages."

This method of work, or prescribed duties, that does not cause any bondage is called work with transcendental results, or karma-yoga. By such work with transcendental results, or karma-yoga, not only does one become immune from the bondage of work, but also one develops his transcendental devotion toward the Absolute Personality of Godhead. One must not enjoy the fruits of his work himself, but must dedicate the same for the transcendental loving service of the Personality of Godhead. This is the first step on the ladder of devotional activities. Lord Caitanya taught this process of devotional service, or work with transcendental results, to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī at Daśāśvamedha-ghāṭa in Prayāga. Lord Caitanya said that only one who is fortunate can get the seed of transcendental loving service, by the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, and that of the spiritual master. Karma-yoga, or work with transcendental results, is the seed of pure devotional activities. This science is taught by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself or by His bona fide, confidential servants. Unless one takes his lessons from such sources, one must inevitably misunderstand the import of karma-yoga, as do the ordinary mundaners who often advertise themselves as karma-yoga experts.

## 6. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KARMA AND KARMA-YOGA, JNĀNA AND JNĀNA-YOGA

Bg 6.46

### TRANSLATION

A yogī is greater than the ascetic, greater than the empiricist and greater than the fruitive worker. Therefore, O Arjuna, in all circumstances, be a yogī.

### PURPORT

When we speak of yoga we refer to linking our consciousness with the Supreme Absolute Truth. Such a process is named differently by various practitioners in terms of the particular method adopted. When the linking process is predominantly in fruitive activities it is called karma-yoga, when it is predominantly empirical it is called jnana-yoga, and when it is predominantly in a

devotional relationship with the Supreme Lord it is called bhakti-yoga. Bhakti-yoga, or Kṛ ṣṇa consciousness, is the ultimate perfection of all yogas, as will be explained in the next verse. The Lord has confirmed herein the superiority of yoga, but He has not mentioned that it is better than bhakti-yoga. Bhakti-yoga is full spiritual knowledge, and therefore nothing can excel it. Asceticism without self-knowledge is imperfect. Empiric knowledge without surrender to the Supreme Lord is also imperfect. And fruitive work without Kṛ ṣṇa consciousness is a waste of time. Therefore, the most highly praised form of yoga performance mentioned here is bhaktiyoga, and this is still more clearly explained in the next verse.

#### **Bg 10.10 purport**

When a person knows the goal of life but is addicted to the fruits of activities, he is acting in karma-yoga. When he knows that the goal is Kṛ ṣṇa but he takes pleasure in mental speculations to understand Kṛ ṣṇa, he is acting in jnana-yoga. And when he knows the goal and seeks Kṛ ṣṇa completely in Kṛ ṣṇa consciousness and devotional service, he is acting in bhakti-yoga, or buddhi-yoga, which is the complete yoga. This complete yoga is the highest perfectional stage of life.

#### **SB 1.2.15 Purport**

Liberation from material bondage is, therefore, a by-product of devotional service. Attainment of spiritual knowledge is not sufficient to insure liberation. Such knowledge must be overcoated with devotional service so that ultimately the devotional service alone predominates. Then liberation is made possible. Even the reactionary work of the fruitive workers can lead one to liberation when it is overcoated with devotional service. Karma overcoated with devotional service is called karma-yoga. Similarly, empirical knowledge overcoated with devotional service is called jnana-yoga. But pure bhakti-yoga is independent of such karma and jnana because it alone can not only endow one with liberation from conditional life but also award one the transcendental loving service of the Lord.

### **7. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SAKĀMA DEVOTEES AND NISKĀMA (AKĀMA) DEVOTEES**

#### **SB 3.9.12 Purport**

The demigods are called sakāma devotees, or devotees with material desires in mind, while the pure devotees are called niṣkāma devotees because they have no desires for their personal interests. The sakāma devotees are self-interested because they do not think of others, and therefore they are not able to satisfy the Lord perfectly, whereas the pure devotees take the missionary responsibility of turning nondevotees into devotees, and they are therefore able to satisfy the Lord more than the demigods. The Lord is unmindful of the nondevotees, although He is sitting within everyone's heart as well-wisher and Supersoul. However, He also gives them the chance to receive His mercy through His pure devotees who are engaged in missionary activities. Sometimes the Lord Himself descends for missionary activities, as He did in the form of Lord Caitanya, but mostly He sends His bona fide representatives, and thus He shows His causeless mercy towards the nondevotees. The Lord is so satisfied with His pure devotees that He wants to give them the credit for missionary success, although He could do the work personally. This is the sign of His satisfaction with His pure, niṣkāma devotees, compared to the sakāma devotees.

**SB 3.21.24 Purport**

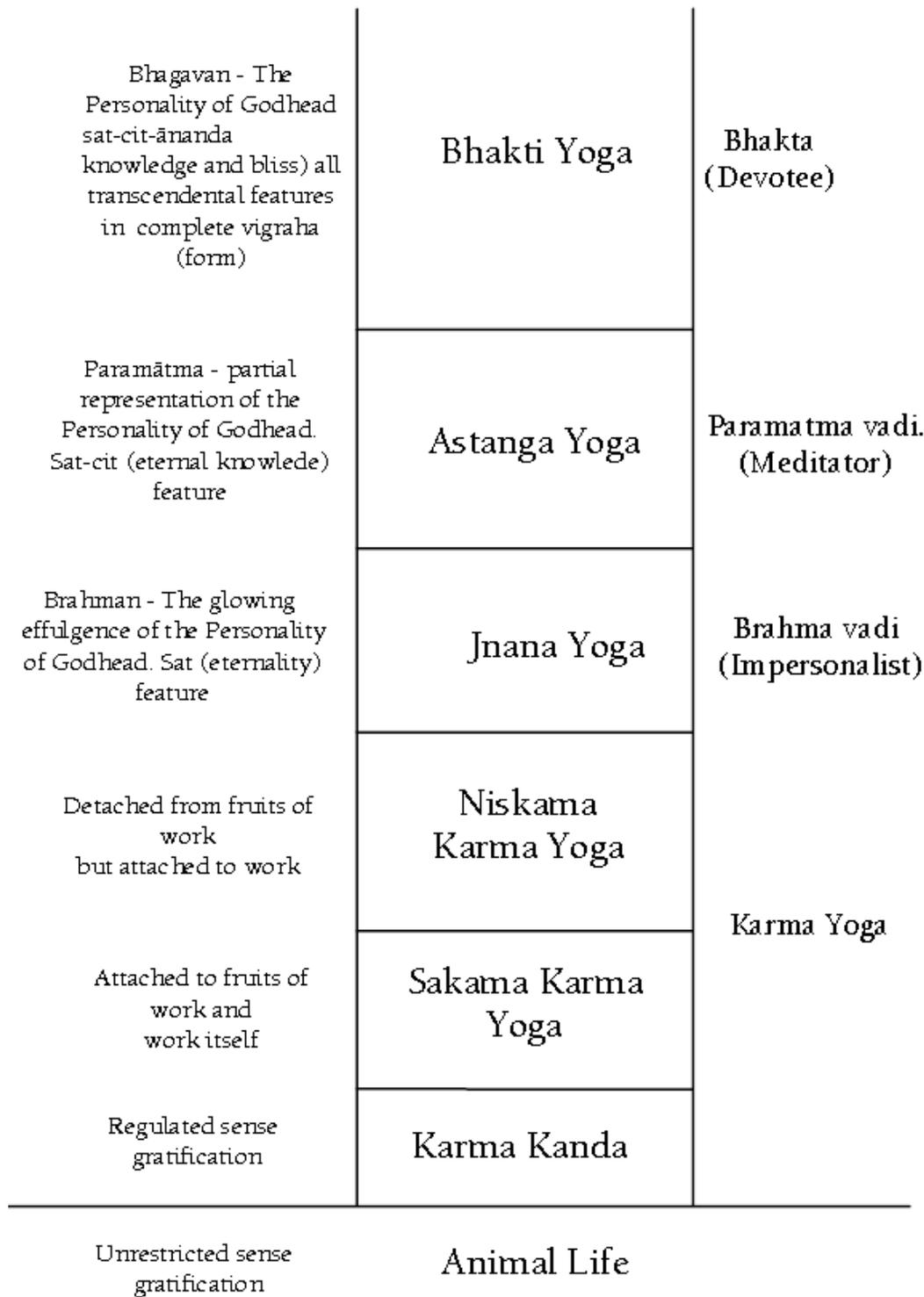
Even if he has some desires, one engaged in the service of the Lord is never frustrated. Those engaged in His service are called sakāma and akāma. Those who approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead with desires for material enjoyment are called sakāma, and those devotees who have no material desires for sense gratification but serve the Supreme Lord out of spontaneous love for Him are called akāma. Sakāma devotees are divided into four classes—those in distress, those in need of money, the inquisitive and the wise. Someone worships the Supreme Lord because of bodily or mental distress, someone else worships the Supreme Lord because he is in need of money, someone else worships the Lord out of inquisitiveness to know Him as He is, and someone wants to know the Lord as a philosopher can know Him, by the research work of his wisdom. There is no frustration for any of these four classes of men; each is endowed with the desired result of his worship. (Further reference: Bg 7.16)

**SB 6.9.40 Purport**

The difference between sakāma and akāma devotees is that when sakāma devotees, like the demigods, fall into difficulty, they approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead for relief, whereas akāma devotees, even in the greatest danger, never disturb the Lord for material benefits. Even if an akāma devotee is suffering, he thinks this is due to his past impious activities and agrees to suffer the consequences. He never disturbs the Lord. Sakāma devotees immediately pray to the Lord as soon as they are in difficulty, but they are regarded as pious because they consider themselves fully dependent on the mercy of the Lord.... 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. Sakāma devotees, of course, achieve from the Lord the results they desire from their prayers, but they do not immediately become fit to return to Godhead.

SECTION D

1. THE YOGA LADDER - DIAGRAM THREE



## 2. PROGRESSION: KARMA-YOGA TO JNĀNA-YOGA TO AṢṬ ĀNGA-YOGA (includes Rāja-yoga and Haṭha-yoga) TO BHAKTI-YOGA

Bg 6.47

### TRANSLATION

And of all yogīs, the one with great faith who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me—he is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all. That is My opinion.

### PURPORT

The culmination of all kinds of yoga practices lies in bhakti yoga. All other yogas are but means to come to the point of bhakti in bhakti-yoga. Yoga actually means bhakti-yoga; all other yogas are progressions toward the destination of bhakti-yoga. From the beginning of karma-yoga to the end of bhakti-yoga is a long way to self-realization. Karma-yoga, without fruitive results, is the beginning of this path. When karma-yoga increases in knowledge and renunciation, the stage is called jnana-yoga. When jnana-yoga increases in meditation on the Supersoul by different physical processes, and the mind is on Him, it is called aṣṭ āṅga-yoga. And when one surpasses the aṣṭāṅga-yoga and comes to the point of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa, it is called bhakti yoga, the culmination. Factually, bhakti-yoga is the ultimate goal, but to analyze bhakti-yoga minutely one has to understand these other yogas. The yogī who is progressive is therefore on the true path of eternal good fortune. One who sticks to a particular point and does not make further progress is called by that particular name: karma-yogī, jnana-yogī or dhyānayogī, rāja-yogī, haṭ ha-yogī, etc. If one is fortunate enough to come to the point of bhakti-yoga, it is to be understood that he has surpassed all other yogas. Therefore, to become Kṛ ṣṇa conscious is the highest stage of yoga, just as, when we speak of Himālayan, we refer to the world's highest mountains, of which the highest peak, Mount Everest, is considered to be the culmination.

### SB 11.21.2 purport

In the lower stages of human life one is entangled in false identification with the gross material body and desires to execute material fruitive activities based on society, friendship and love. When such materialistic activities are offered in sacrifice to the Supreme Lord, one becomes situated in karma-yoga. By regulated sacrifice one gradually gives up the gross bodily concept of life and advances to the stage of realization of spiritual knowledge, whereby one understands oneself to be an eternal spirit soul completely different from the material body and mind. Feeling relief from the pangs of materialism one becomes very attached to one's spiritual knowledge, and thus one is situated in the stage of jnana-yoga. As the candidate further advances on the spiritual path, he understands himself to be part and parcel of the Supreme Soul, the Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛ ṣṇa. He then sees that his conditional life as well as his spiritual knowledge was obtained from the Personality of Godhead, who awards the results of all types of activities, both pious and sinful. By directly engaging in the loving service of the Supreme Lord and understanding oneself to be the Lord's eternal servant, one's attachment evolves into pure love of Godhead. Thus one first gives up the lower stage of attachment to the material body and then subsequently gives up attachment to cultivation of spiritual knowledge. This relieves one of material life. Finally one recognizes the Lord Himself as the resting place of one's eternal love and fully surrenders to God in full Kṛ ṣṇa

consciousness.

### 3. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KARMIS, JNĀNIS, YOGIS AND DEVOTEES

#### SB 2.4.1 Purport

Those who are on the path of self-realization are generally classified as karmīs, jnānis, yogīs, or devotees of the Lord. The karmīs, who are much attracted by the fruitive activities of the Vedic rituals, are called bhukti-kāmī, or those who desire material enjoyment. The jnānis, who try to become one with the Supreme by mental speculation, are called mukti-kāmī, or those who desire liberation from material existence. The mystic yogīs, who practice different types of austerities for attainment of eight kinds of material perfection and who ultimately meet the Supersoul (Paramātmā) in trance, are called siddhi-kāmī, or those who desire the perfection of becoming finer than the finest, becoming heavier than the heaviest, getting everything desired, having control over everyone, creating everything liked, etc. All these are abilities of a powerful yogī. But the devotees of the Lord do not want anything like that for self-satisfaction. They want only to serve the Lord because the Lord is great and as living entities they are eternally subordinate parts and parcels of the Lord. This perfect realization of the self by the devotee helps him to become desireless, to desire nothing for his personal self, and thus the devotees are called niṣkāmī, without any desire. A living entity, by his constitutional position, cannot be void of all desires (the bhukti-kāmī, mukti-kāmī and siddhi-kāmī all desire something for personal satisfaction), but the niṣkāmī devotees of the Lord desire everything for the satisfaction of the Lord. They are completely dependent on the orders of the Lord and are always ready to discharge their duty for the satisfaction of the Lord.

### 4. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VIPRA (FRUITIVE ACTIVITY), BRĀHMAṆA (SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE) AND VAIṢṆAVA (DEVOTIONAL SERVICE)

#### SB 1.12.2

#### TRANSLATION

Thus those who were expert in astrological knowledge and in performance of the birth ceremony instructed King Yudhiṣṭhira about the future history of his child. Then, being sumptuously remunerated, they all returned to their respective homes.

#### PURPORT

The Vedas are the storehouse of knowledge, both material and spiritual. But such knowledge aims at perfection of self-realization. In other words, the Vedas are the guides for the civilized man in every respect. Since human life is the opportunity to get free from all material miseries, it is properly guided by the knowledge of the Vedas, in the matters of both material needs and spiritual salvation. The specific intelligent class of men who were devoted particularly to the knowledge of the Vedas were called the vipras, or the graduates of the Vedic knowledge. There are different branches of knowledge in the Vedas, of which astrology and pathology are two important branches necessary for the common man. So the intelligent men, generally known as the brāhmaṇas, took up all the different branches of Vedic knowledge to guide society. Even the department of military education (Dhanur-veda) was also taken up by such intelligent men, and the vipras were also

teachers of this section of knowledge, as were Droṇācārya, Kṛpācārya, etc.

The word vipra mentioned herein is significant. There is a little difference between the vipras and the brāhmaṇas. The vipras are those who are expert in karma-kāṇḍa, or fruitive activities, guiding the society towards fulfilling the material necessities of life, whereas the brāhmaṇas are expert in spiritual knowledge of transcendence. This department of knowledge is called jnana-kāṇḍa, and above this there is the upāsana-kāṇḍa. The culmination of upāsana-kāṇḍa is the devotional service of the Lord Viṣṇu, and when the brāhmaṇas achieve perfection, they are called Vaiṣṇavas. Viṣṇu worship is the highest of the modes of worship. Elevated brāhmaṇas are Vaiṣṇavas engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord, and thus Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which is the science of devotional service, is very dear to the Vaiṣṇavas. And as explained in the beginning of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, it is the mature fruit of Vedic knowledge and is superior subject matter, above the three kāṇḍas, namely karma, jnana and upāsana. Amongst the karma-kāṇḍa experts, the jāta expert vipras were good astrologers who could tell all the future history of a born child simply by the astral calculations of the time (lagna). Such expert jāta-vipras were present during the birth of Mahārāja Parikṣit, and his grandfather, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, awarded the vipras sufficiently with gold, land, villages, grains and other valuable necessities of life, which also include cows. There is a need of such vipras in the social structure, and it is the duty of the state to maintain them comfortably, as designed in the Vedic procedure. Such expert vipras, being sufficiently paid by the state, could give free service to the people in general, and thus this department of Vedic knowledge could be available for all.

## 5. THE THREE CLASSES OF TRANSCENDENTALISTS

### Bg Introduction P.4 para 2

He tells Arjuna that He is relating this supreme secret to him because Arjuna is His devotee and His friend. The purport of this is that Bhagavad-gītā is a treatise which is especially meant for the devotee of the Lord. There are three classes of transcendentalists, namely the jnani, the yogī and the bhakta, or the impersonalist, the meditator and the devotee.

### Bg Introduction P.14 para 1

It is also explained in the Gītā that impersonal Brahman is also subordinate to the complete Supreme Person (brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham). Brahman is more explicitly explained in the Brahma-sūtra to be like the rays of the sunshine. The impersonal Brahman is the shining rays of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Impersonal Brahman is incomplete realization of the absolute whole, and so also is the conception of Paramātmā. In the Fifteenth Chapter it shall be seen that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Puruṣottama, is above both impersonal Brahman and the partial realization of Paramātmā. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is called sac-cidānanda-vigraha. The Brahma-sāṃhitā begins in this way: *īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cidānanda-vigrahaḥ/ anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*. “Govinda, Kṛṣṇa, is the cause of all causes. He is the primal cause, and He is the very form of eternity, knowledge and bliss.” Impersonal Brahman realization is the realization of His sat (eternity) feature. Paramātmā realization is the realization of sat-cit (eternal knowledge). But realization of the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is realization of all the transcendental features: sat, cit and ānanda (eternity, knowledge, and bliss) in complete vigraha (form).

### Bg Introduction P.25 para 2

As explained before, there are different kinds of transcendentalists—the brahma-vādī, paramātmā-vādī and the devotee—and, as mentioned, in the brahmajyoti (spiritual sky) there are innumerable spiritual planets. The number of these planets is far, far greater than all of the planets of this material world. This material world has been approximated as only one quarter of the creation (ekāṁśena sthito jagat). In this material segment there are millions and billions of universes with trillions of planets and suns, stars and moons. But this whole material creation is only a fragment of the total creation. Most of the creation is in the spiritual sky. One who desires to merge into the existence of the Supreme Brahman is at once transferred to the brahmajyoti of the Supreme Lord and thus attains the spiritual sky. The devotee, who wants to enjoy the association of the Lord, enters into the Vaikuṅṭha planets, which are innumerable, and the Supreme Lord by His plenary expansions as Nārāyaṇa with four hands and with different names like Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Govinda associates with him there. Therefore at the end of life the transcendentalists think either of the brahmajyoti, the Paramātmā or Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In all cases they enter into the spiritual sky, but only the devotee, or he who is in personal touch with the Supreme Lord, enters into the Vaikuṅṭha planets or the Goloka Vṛndāvana planet.

### Bg 2.2 Purport

Kṛṣṇa and the Supreme Personality of Godhead are identical. Therefore Lord Kṛṣṇa is referred to as Bhagavān throughout the Gītā. Bhagavān is the ultimate in the Absolute Truth. Absolute Truth is realized in three phases of understanding, namely Brahman, or the impersonal all-pervasive spirit; Paramātmā, or the localized aspect of the Supreme within the heart of all living entities; and Bhagavān, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.2.11) this conception of the Absolute Truth is explained thus:

vadanti tat tattva-vidas  
tattvaṁ yaj jnanam advayam  
brahmeti paramātmēti  
bhagavān iti śabdyate

“The Absolute Truth is realized in three phases of understanding by the knower of the Absolute Truth, and all of them are identical. Such phases of the Absolute Truth are expressed as Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān.” These three divine aspects can be explained by the example of the sun, which also has three different aspects, namely the sunshine, the sun’s surface and the sun planet itself. One who studies the sunshine only is the preliminary student. One who understands the sun’s surface is further advanced. And one who can enter into the sun planet is the highest. Ordinary students who are satisfied by simply understanding the sunshine—its universal pervasiveness and the glaring effulgence of its impersonal nature—may be compared to those who can realize only the Brahman feature of the Absolute Truth. The student who has advanced still further can know the sun disc, which is compared to knowledge of the Paramātmā feature of the Absolute Truth. And the student who can enter into the heart of the sun planet is compared to those who realize the personal features of the Supreme Absolute Truth. Therefore, the bhaktas, or the transcendentalists who have realized the Bhagavān feature of the Absolute Truth, are the topmost transcendentalists, although all students who are engaged in the study of the Absolute

Truth are engaged in the same subject matter. The sunshine, the sun disc and the inner affairs of the sun planet cannot be separated from one another, and yet the students of the three different phases are not in the same category.

## 6. THE COMMON FACTOR OF ALL YOGĀS

SB 3.32.27

The greatest common understanding for all yogīs is complete detachment from matter, which can be achieved by different kinds of yoga.

### PURPORT

There are three kinds of yoga, namely bhakti-yoga, jnana-yoga and aṣṭ āṅga-yoga. Devotees, jnanis and yogīs all try to get out of the material entanglement. The jnanis try to detach their sensual activities from material engagement. The jnana-yogī thinks that matter is false and that Brahman is truth; he tries, therefore, by cultivation of knowledge, to detach the senses from material enjoyment. The aṣṭ āṅga-yogīs also try to control the senses. The devotees, however, try to engage the senses in the service of the Lord. Therefore it appears that the activities of the bhaktas, devotees, are better than those of the jnanis and yogīs. The mystic yogīs simply try to control the senses by practicing the eight divisions of yoga—yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, etc.—and the jnanis try by mental reasoning to understand that sense enjoyment is false. But the easiest and most direct process is to engage the senses in the service of the Lord. The purpose of all yoga is to detach one's sense activities from this material world. The final aims, however, are different. Jnanis want to become one with the Brahman effulgence, yogīs want to realize Paramātmā, and devotees want to develop Kṛṣṇa consciousness and transcendental loving service to the Lord. That loving service is the perfect stage of sense control. The senses are actually active symptoms of life, and they cannot be stopped. They can be detached only if there is superior engagement. As it is confirmed in Bhagavad-gītā, *paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate*: the activities of the senses can be stopped if they are given superior engagements. The supreme engagement is engagement of the senses in the service of the Lord. That is the purpose of all yoga.

## 7. THE GOAL OF JNĀNA-YOGA, AṢṬ ĀṄGA-YOGA AND BHAKTĪ-YOGA

SB 3.32.26

The Supreme Personality of Godhead alone is complete transcendental knowledge, but according to the different processes of understanding He appears differently, either as impersonal Brahman, as Paramātmā, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead or as the puruṣa-avatāra.

### PURPORT

The word *dṛṣy-ādibhiḥ* is significant. According to Jīva Gosvāmī, *dṛṣī* means jnana, philosophical research. By different processes of philosophical research under different concepts, such as the process of jnana-yoga, the same Bhagavān, or Supreme Personality of Godhead, is understood as impersonal Brahman. Similarly, by the eightfold yoga system He appears as the Paramātmā. But in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or knowledge in purity, when one tries to understand

the Absolute Truth, one realizes Him as the Supreme Person. The Transcendence is realized simply on the basis of knowledge. The words used here, paramātmeśvaraḥ pumān, are all transcendental, and they refer to Supersoul. Supersoul is also described as puruṣa, but the word Bhagavān directly refers to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is full of six opulences: wealth, fame, strength, beauty, knowledge and renunciation. He is the Personality of Godhead in different spiritual skies. The various descriptions of paramātmā, īśvara and pumān indicate that the expansions of the Supreme Godhead are unlimited. The one Supreme Personality of Godhead reveals Himself to different thinkers as the Supreme person or impersonal Brahman or Paramātmā. Impersonalists merge into the impersonal

Brahman, but that is not achieved by worshiping the impersonal Brahman. If one takes to devotional service and at the same time desires to merge into the existence of the Supreme Lord, he can achieve that. If someone desires at all to merge into the existence of the Supreme, he has to execute devotional service. The devotee can see the Supreme Lord face to face, but the jnani, the empiric philosopher or yogī cannot. They cannot be elevated to the positions of associates of the Lord. There is no evidence in the scriptures stating that by cultivating knowledge or worshiping the impersonal Brahman one can become a personal associate of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Nor by executing the yogic principles can one become an associate of the Supreme Godhead. Impersonal Brahman, being formless, is described as adṛśya because the impersonal effulgence of brahmajyoti covers the face of the Supreme Lord. Some yogīs see the four-handed Viṣṇu sitting within the heart, and therefore in their case also the Supreme Lord is invisible. Only for the devotees is the Lord visible. Here the statement dṛśy-ādibhiḥ is significant. Since the Supreme Personality of Godhead is both invisible and visible, there are different features of the Lord. The Paramātmā feature and Brahman feature are invisible, but the Bhagavān feature is visible.

## 8. MĀYĀVĀDI PHILOSOPHERS DEFINED

### Bg 7.24 Purport

One cannot understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛ ṣṇa, or His form, quality or name simply by mental speculation or by discussing Vedic literature. One must understand Him by devotional service. When one is fully engaged in Kṛ ṣṇa consciousness, beginning by chanting the mahā-mantra—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—then only can one understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Nondevotee impersonalists think that Kṛ ṣṇa has a body made of this material nature and that all His activities, His form and everything are māyā. These impersonalists are known as Māyāvādīs. They do not know the ultimate truth...

### Madhya 17.132 Puport

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is herein pointing out to the brāhmaṇa that Māyāvādī philosophers cannot understand that the living entity is equal in quality with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Because they do not accept this, they think that the living entity has been falsely divided from the original Brahman due to being conditioned by māyā. Māyāvādīs believe that the Absolute Truth is ultimately impersonal. When an incarnation of God or God Himself comes, they think He is covered by māyā. In other words, Māyāvādī impersonalists think that the Lord's form is also a product of this material world. Due to a poor fund of knowledge, they cannot

understand that Kṛṣṇa has no body separate from Himself. His body and Himself are both the same Absolute Truth. Not having perfect knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, such impersonalists certainly commit offenses at His lotus feet. Therefore they do not utter the original name of the Absolute Truth, Kṛṣṇa. In their impersonal way, they utter the name of impersonal Brahman, spirit soul. In other words, they indulge in indirect indications of the Absolute Truth. Even if they happen to utter the name of Govinda, Kṛṣṇa or Mādhava, they still cannot understand that these names are as good as Govinda, Kṛṣṇa or Mādhava the person. Because they are ultimately impersonalists, their uttering of the personal name has no potency. Actually they do not believe in Kṛṣṇa but consider all these names to be material vibrations. Not being able to appreciate the holy name of the Lord, they simply utter indirect names like Brahman, ātmā and caitanya.

## 9. MĀYĀVĀDIS FALLDOWN

### Bg 5.6 Purport

The Māyāvādī sannyāsīs sometimes fall down from the path of self-realization and again enter into material activities of a philanthropic and altruistic nature, which are nothing but material engagements. Therefore, the conclusion is that those who are engaged in Kṛṣṇa conscious activities are better situated than the sannyāsīs engaged in simple speculation about what is Brahman and what is not Brahman, although they too come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, after many births.

### SB 10.2.32 Purport

Aside from devotees, there are many others, nondevotees, known as karmīs, jnanis or yogīs, philanthropists, altruists, politicians, impersonalists and voidists. There are many varieties of nondevotees who have their respective ways of liberation, but simply because they do not know the shelter of the Lord's lotus feet, although they falsely think that they have been liberated and elevated to the highest position, they fall down.

### SB 7.13.27 Purport

The difference between the philosophy of the Māyāvādīs and that of the Vaiṣṇavas is explained herein. Both the Māyāvādīs and Vaiṣṇavas know that in materialistic activities there is no happiness. The Māyāvādī philosophers, therefore, adhering to the slogan brahma satyaṁ jagan mithyā, want to refrain from false, materialistic activities. They want to stop all activities and merge in the Supreme Brahman. According to the Vaiṣṇava philosophy, however, if one simply ceases from materialistic activity one cannot remain inactive for very long, and therefore everyone should engage himself in spiritual activities, which will solve the problem of suffering in this material world. It is said, therefore, that although the Māyāvādī philosophers strive to refrain from materialistic activities and merge in Brahman, and although they may actually merge in the Brahman existence, for want of activity they fall down again into materialistic activity (āruhya kṛcchreṇa paraṁ padaṁ tataḥ patanty adhaḥ). Thus the so-called renouncer, unable to remain in meditation upon Brahman, returns to materialistic activities by opening hospitals and schools and so on. Therefore, simply cultivating knowledge that materialistic activities cannot give one happiness, and that one should consequently cease from such activities, is insufficient. One should cease from materialistic activities and take up spiritual activities. Then the solution to the problem will be achieved.

Spiritual activities are activities performed according to the order of Kṛṣṇa (ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam).

### SB Adi 7.142

The Māyāvādī philosophers miss even the first stage in self-realization because they have no conception of God's being personal. He is the master of all, and He is the only person who can accept the service of all living entities, but since this knowledge is lacking in Māyāvāda philosophy, Māyāvādīs do not have knowledge even of their relationship with God. They wrongly think that everyone is God or that everyone is equal to God. Therefore, since the real position of the living entity is not clear to them, how can they advance further? Although they are very puffed-up at being liberated, Māyāvādī philosophers very shortly fall down again to material activities due to their neglecting the lotus feet of the Lord. That is called patanty adhaḥ.

### Bg 15.1 Lecture. Bombay, October 28, 1 73

So simply to realize that "I am Brahman," ahaṁ brahmāsmi, that is not perfection. That is aviśuddha-buddhayaḥ, uncleansed intelligence. Ye 'nye 'ravindākṣa vimukta-māninas tvayy asta-bhāvād aviśuddha-buddhayaḥ. Simply understanding ahaṁ brahmāsmi will not help us because it is stated in the śāstra that āruhya kṛcchreṇa paraṁ padaṁ tataḥ patanty adhaḥ, even by severe austerities and penances one comes to the stage of merging into Brahman, sāyujya mukti, still, there is chance of falling down. Āruhya kṛ cchreṇa paraṁ padaṁ tataḥ patanty adhaḥ. Why? Now anādṛta-yuṣmad-aṅghrayaḥ. One who has not realized the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛ ṣṇa, he falls down.

We have seen many big, big sannyāsīs in India, very learned scholar, and very nicely they can describe śāstra also, but they are entangled in politics. Why? If this world is mithyā, jagan mithyā, you have rejected it, then why you are again coming to politics? Why you are coming in the mithyā world? Because there is no realization. Aviśuddha-buddhayaḥ. Ye 'nye 'ravindākṣa vimukta-māninaḥ. They are thinking that "We have now become liberated," māninaḥ. Actually, they are not liberated. Because aviśuddha-buddhayaḥ, their intelligence is not yet clear, therefore, even after severe austerities, penances, they come to the point of Brahman realization, because they have no realization of the lotus feet of Kṛ ṣṇa, they fall down. Because there is no engagement. I do not wish to name the big, big sannyāsīs of India who fell down in this way. But you know that the Māyāvādī sampradāya, they take this world as mithyā. Brahma satyaṁ jagan mithyā. If jagat is mithyā, then why you come down again for philanthropic activities, for political activities? That is called māyā. That is the last snare of māyā. Māyā dictates that "Now we have failed to become minister, to president, and so many other big, big posts. Now you become Brahman." You are already Brahman. Simply you have to realize. That's all. That is knowledge, that I am not the... Brahman realization means that "I am not this body." Because so long one identifies with this body, he is no better than animal. That is the first lesson. Kṛ ṣṇa says in the beginning of the Bhagavad-gītā, dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā, tathā dehāntara-prāptiḥ. Deha and dehināḥ. So that is preliminary knowledge of Brahman realization. But if you do not fix up in your Brahman realization... That is parā-bhakti.

## 10. AṢṬ ĀṄGA YOGA

Bg 5.27-28

Shutting out all external sense objects, keeping the eyes and vision concentrated between the two eyebrows, suspending the inward and outward breaths within the nostrils, and thus controlling the mind, senses and intelligence, the transcendentalist aiming at liberation becomes free from desire, fear and anger. One who is always in this state is certainly liberated.

### PURPORT

Being engaged in Kṛ ṣṇa consciousness, one can immediately understand one's spiritual identity, and then one can understand the Supreme Lord by means of devotional service. When one is well situated in devotional service, one comes to the transcendental position, qualified to feel the presence of the Lord in the sphere of one's activity. This particular position is called liberation in the Supreme.

After explaining the above principles of liberation in the Supreme, the Lord gives instruction to Arjuna as to how one can come to that position by the practice of the mysticism or yoga known as aṣṭ āṅga-yoga, which is divisible into an eightfold procedure called yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyāna and samādhi. In the Sixth Chapter the subject of yoga is explicitly detailed, and at the end of the Fifth it is only preliminarily explained. One has to drive out the sense objects such as sound, touch, form, taste and smell by the pratyāhāra process in yoga, and then keep the vision of the eyes between the two eyebrows and concentrate on the tip of the nose with half-closed lids. There is no benefit in closing the eyes altogether, because then there is every chance of falling asleep. Nor is there benefit in opening the eyes completely, because then there is the hazard of being attracted by sense objects. The breathing movement is restrained within the nostrils by neutralizing the up-moving and down-moving air within the body. By practice of such yoga one is able to gain control over the senses, refrain from outward sense objects, and thus prepare oneself for liberation in the Supreme.

This yoga process helps one become free from all kinds of fear and anger and thus feel the presence of the Supersoul in the transcendental situation. In other words, Kṛ ṣṇa consciousness is the easiest process of executing yoga principles. This will be thoroughly explained in the next chapter. A Kṛ ṣṇa conscious person, however, being always engaged in devotional service, does not risk losing his senses to some other engagement. This is a better way of controlling the senses than by the aṣṭ āṅga-yoga.

## 11. MYSTIC PERFECTIONS

SB 2.2.22 Purport

In the upper status of the planetary systems there are facilities thousands and thousands of times greater for material enjoyments than in the lower planetary systems. The topmost planetary systems consist of planets like Brahmaloḥa and Dhruvaloka (the polestar), and all of them are situated beyond Maharloḥa. The inhabitants of those planets are empowered with eightfold achievements of mystic perfection. They do not have to learn and practice the mystic processes of yoga perfection and achieve the power of becoming small like a particle (aṇimā-siddhi), or lighter than a soft feather (laghimā-siddhi). They do not have to get anything and everything from

anywhere and everywhere (prāpti-siddhi), to become heavier than the heaviest (mahimā-siddhi), to act freely even to create something wonderful or to annihilate anything at will (īśitva-siddhi), to control all material elements (vaśitva-siddhi), to possess such power as will never be frustrated in any desire (prākāmya-siddhi), or to assume any shape or form one may even whimsically desire (kāmasāyitā-siddhi). All these expedencies are as common as natural gifts for the inhabitants of those higher planets. They do not require any mechanical help to travel in outer space, and they can move and travel at will from one planet to any other planet within no time. The inhabitants of the earth cannot move even to the nearest planet except by mechanical vehicles like spacecraft, but the highly talented inhabitants of such higher planets can do everything very easily.

## SECTION E CONCLUSION

### 1. THE YOGA FOR THE AGE OF KALI

#### SB 11.2.4 purport

The pure devotee of the Lord, however, does not experience material misery, because he has given up the bodily concept of life and identifies himself correctly as an eternal servitor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. As stated by the Lord Himself in Bhagavad-gītā (9.2), *susukhaṁ kartum avyayam*. Even in the stage of regulative practice, the process of bhakti-yoga is very joyful. Similarly, Locana dāsa Ṭhākura, a near contemporary of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, said, *saba avatāra sāra śiromaṇi kevala ānanda-kāṇḍa*. Although there are various kāṇḍas, or divisions, of Vedic discipline, such as karma-kāṇḍa (fruitive ceremonies) and jnana-kāṇḍa (regulated speculation), Caitanya Mahāprabhu's hari-nāma saṅkīrtana movement is kevala ānanda-kāṇḍa, the pathway of pure bliss. Simply by chanting the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, eating the remnants of sumptuous food offered to the Supreme Lord and hearing the enchanting pastimes of the Personality of Godhead, one merges into an ocean of bliss called Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare  
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

### 2. A PURE DEVOTEE HAS ALREADY SURPASSED ALL YOGAS

#### SB 10.8.45

#### TRANSLATION

The glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are studied through the three Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the literature of Sāṅkhya-yoga, and other Vaiṣṇava literature, yet mother Yaśodā considered that Supreme Person her ordinary child.

#### PURPORT

As stated in Bhagavad-gītā (15.15) by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, the purpose of studying the Vedas is to understand Him (*vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*). Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu explained to Sanātana Gosvāmī that there are three purposes in the Vedas.

One is to understand our relationship with Kṛ ṣṇa (sambandha), another is to act according to that relationship (abhidheya), and the third is to reach the ultimate goal (prayojana). The word prayojana means “necessities,” and the ultimate necessity is explained by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. premā pum-artho mahān: the greatest necessity for a human being is the achievement of love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Here we see that mother Yaśodā is on the highest stage of necessity, for she is completely absorbed in love for Kṛ ṣṇa.

In the beginning, the Vedic purpose is pursued in three ways (trayī)—by karma-kāṇḍa, jñanakāṇḍa and upāsana-kāṇḍa. When one reaches the complete, perfect stage of upāsana-kāṇḍa, one comes to worship Nārāyaṇa, or Lord Viṣṇu. When Pārvatī asked Lord Mahādeva, Lord Śiva, what is the best method of upāsana, or worship, Lord Śiva answered, ārādhanaṁ sarveṣāṁ viṣṇoḥ ārādhanaṁ param. Viṣṇūpāsana, or viṣṇv-ārādhana, worship of Lord Viṣṇu, is the highest stage of perfection, as realized by Devakī. But here mother Yaśodā performs no upāsana, for she has developed transcendental ecstatic love for Kṛ ṣṇa. Therefore her position is better than that of Devakī. In order to show this, Śrīla Vyāsadeva enunciates this verse, trayyā copaniṣadbhiḥ etc.

When a human being enters into the study of the Vedas to obtain vidyā, knowledge, he begins to take part in human civilization. Then he advances further to study the Upaniṣads and gain brahma jñana, impersonal realization of the Absolute Truth, and then he advances still further, to sāṅkhya-yoga, in order to understand the supreme controller, who is indicated in Bhagavad-gītā (param brahma param dhāma pavitraṁ paramaṁ bhavān/puruṣaṁ śāśvatam). When one understands that puruṣa, the supreme controller, to be Paramātmā, one is engaged in the method of yoga (dhyānāvasthita-tad-gatena manasā paśyanti yaṁ yoginaḥ). But mother Yaśodā has surpassed all these stages. She has come to the platform of loving Kṛ ṣṇa as her beloved child, and therefore she is accepted to be on the highest stage of spiritual realization. The Absolute Truth is realized in three features (brahmeti paramātmēti bhagavān iti śabdyate), but she is in such ecstasy that she does not care to understand what is Brahman, what is Paramātmā or what is Bhagavān. Bhagavān has personally descended to become her beloved child. Therefore there is no comparison to mother Yaśodā’s good fortune, as declared by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (ramyā kācid upāsanaṁ vrajavadhū-vargeṇa yā kalpitā). The Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, may be realized in different stages. As the Lord says in Bhagavad-gītā (4.11):

ye yathā mām prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham mama  
vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ

“As men surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Pṛthā.” One may be a karmī, a jñani, a yogī and then a bhakta or prema-bhakta. But the ultimate stage of realization is prema-bhakti, as actually demonstrated by mother Yaśodā.

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**Chant and Be Happy!**

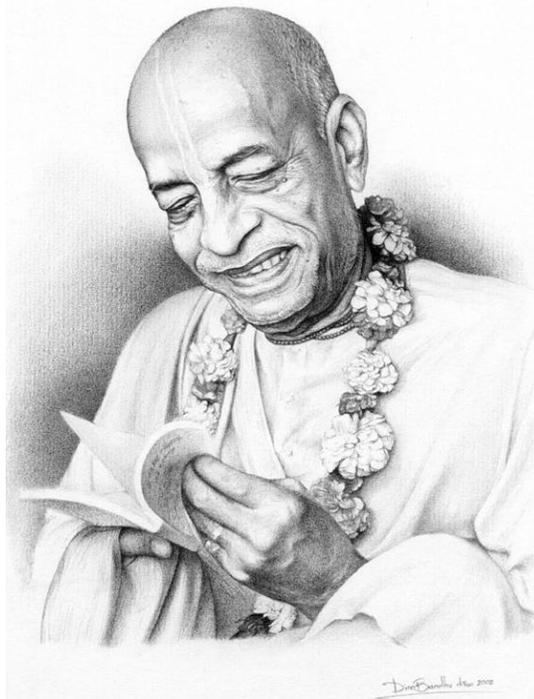
**Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare!  
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare!**

**Chant and Be Happy!**

**Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare!  
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare!**

# Inquiries into the Absolute

by His Holiness Romapada Swami Maharaj



Have questions?! You are welcome to send in your questions to His Holiness Romapada Swami at [iskcondc@gmail.com](mailto:iskcondc@gmail.com) with the word "Question" included in the subject line.

**Chant and Be Happy!**

**Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare!  
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare!**