



## *A certain rise from fear to hope*

**H**ope is the last gift given to man. When we lose everything, we still have hope. But when we lose hope, we lose everything. We never truly lose till we lose hope. If we imagine there is no God in control and we are at the mercy of cruel chance, we become fearful. If we imagine that God is like an order-supplier, who will provide whatever we pray for, we become falsely hopeful. We need to free ourselves from ignorant fear and illusory hope before we can empower ourselves with true hope.

The Shrimad Bhagavatam explains that the root cause of fear is forgetfulness of spiritual reality. When we misidentify with our material bodies and forget our spiritual relationship with God as His beloved children, we place ourselves in the material realm. Here, fear is natural because dangers – accidents, diseases, misunderstandings, natural calamities, market crashes – can befall us any moment. Faced with dangers, people pray to God, hoping that He will immediately, miraculously make everything the way they want it to be. When their prayers are not answered, many give up faith in God; they infer that God doesn't exist or that He can't fulfill their prayers -- or doesn't care to. But are they not presuming that they know better than God what is best for them? The presumption exposes our basic philosophical misconception that the purpose of life is to enjoy in this world and the purpose of God's existence is to provide and protect that enjoyment. As souls, we are spiritual and eternal, whereas everything in this world is material and temporary. Due to this inescapable incompatibility, nothing material can satisfy us. Often due to spiritual shortsightedness, we forget this, but God doesn't. So, to bring us back on spiritual track and ultimately bless us with eternal happiness, He withdraws or withholds some material resources from us. God is like a father, who, though wanting to give entire wealth to his son, temporarily stops or decreases the boy's pocket money to save the boy from squandering it on bad habits.

Of course, we need material things in life and God knows that. He wants to provide them to us, but not if they distract us from our eternal, joyful life in His kingdom. Therefore, when faced with difficulties, we should not only pray, but also base our hopes on spiritual truth. When we are convinced of God's unfailing love for us and when we are determined to serve Him, our hope will be real – and undefeatable.

*Adapted from the author's latest book "Recession – Adversity or Opportunity"*