



CHAITANYA CHARAN DAS

Practical spirituality

The practical purpose for all our activities is happiness. Spirituality points to the best form of happiness, a happiness that can never be taken away from us. The Vedic texts explain that as souls, we all have an eternal loving relationship with the all-attractive supreme lord. In loving and serving god, we can relish supreme and everlasting happiness; the more we love god, the happier we become. The scriptures of the great religions like Christianity and Islam also describe love of god as the ultimate goal of life. Hence, love of god is the nonsectarian, universal, spiritual goal of life.

Love for god certainly directs our vision to the other world, the eternal spiritual world beyond the temporary material world. But this other-worldly goal does not make us impractical; rather, it builds the most solid foundation for living practically in this world. Just as when we switch on the master switch in a house, all the lights in the house automatically turn on, similarly, love for god results in love for all living beings. We realise that all of us are brothers and sisters in the one universal family of god. When we love all living beings, we no longer desire to exploit or manipulate others for our selfish interests. Instead, our love for god inspires us to love and serve each other. This creates a culture of warmth, trust and service, which encourages moral behaviour. This contrasts sharply with the modern culture of alienation, suspicion and exploitation, which fosters immorality.

When we follow a genuine spiritual path, even in its early stages, it triggers our inborn value system. We intuitively realise that god is our greatest well-wisher and that the rules he has made for us are in our ultimate interest. So we voluntarily and lovingly choose to lead a life of moral and spiritual integrity, as ordained by god. And as we find inner happiness by loving god, we become freed from selfish, lusty, greedy, and egoistic drives. No longer do we feel we are missing something because of our morality. Morality ceases to be the "difficult but right" choice. Rather we choose morality as the natural path to our spiritual growth.

The most comprehensive yet concise textbook for gaining spiritual education is the Bhagavad-gita and the easiest yet quickest spiritual practice to awaken our dormant love for god is the chanting of the holy names of god like the Hare Krishna *mahamantra*. Thus the process is practical and easy and the results too are practical and beneficial. So let's rid ourselves of this misconception that spirituality is impractical.

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