



CHAITANYA CHARAN DAS

## *Shine with love*

What's the difference between lust and love? Mistaking lust for love is the single greatest tragedy of modern society. Due to the media and movie portrayals of bodily lust as love, most people, especially young people, think bodily contact and union is the essence of love. Lust originates from - and perpetuates - the fundamental ignorance of who we actually are. When we mistake ourselves to be physical bodies, whether male or female, we become lusty. When we indulge in lust, that overwhelming experience of subordination to the body for pleasure seals our bodily misidentification. Lust creates within us a sense of incompleteness, which we struggle to fulfill by exploiting another person's body for our pleasure. But lusty pleasures are treacherously anticlimactic; fantasies cherished for years end within minutes. And when relationships are formed based on lust, as happens often in "love" marriages, those relationships too are heartbreakingly short-lived.

Love is based on a true understanding of our spiritual identity. We are spirit souls, complete units emanating from the complete whole. The self is not like an incomplete half that needs another half to become complete. The self is complete in the natural, eternal relationship with the supreme that is its inalienable characteristic. The supreme is the supremely lovable and loving person, god who has innumerable names and who is best described by the name Krishna (meaning "one who is all-attractive").

Unfortunately, we have at present forgotten that relationship. When we revive that divine relationship, the resulting love fills us with a sense of completeness. Does this completeness make us indifferent to all worldly relationships? Not at all. We form relationships with others, not to fill our incompleteness, but to share our completeness. That's why the great saintly persons across the religious traditions were able to radiate love to and transform thousands, even millions. Srila Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON, transformed thousands of drug-addicted hippies into spiritually-satisfied "happies" within 11 years. How? Because the hippies whose motto of life was to rebel against every authority found him a source of unconditional, divine love and so abided by his guidance and transformed their lust into love. How? By two simple yet sublime steps:

- Cultivate knowledge of the real self by studying the Bhagavad-gita
- Revive our love for god by chanting his holy names like the Hare Krishna mahamantra.

When we can so easily shine with love, why should we continue to burn with lust?

*(The author is a spiritual mentor at ISKCON, Pune)*