

Lesson 1

Bhagavad Gita – The Timeless Science

1.1 Introduction

Bhagavad Gita is the most quintessential literature among all Vedic compositions. This composition as compiled by the great sage Vyasadeva has been endearing to all those who seek Truth, who look for perfection, who are interested in a complete science of everything irrespective of caste, creed, religion, and nationality. This holy book presents the science of life, as it is, which was originally spoken to Arjuna by Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the battlefield of Mahabharata approximately 5000 years ago.

Through the ages, Srimad Bhagavad Gita has inspired and guided hosts of philosophers and scientists. Its influence is not limited to India. There is not a single language in the world in which Bhagavad Gita has not been translated. Just like the Quran and Bible are known all over the world, Bhagavad Gita is also known and respected in the entire world.

Bhagavad Gita is not the science of a particular community - it is the universal science of the soul. It is a science that compels us to embrace divinity and divine qualities. All other bodies of knowledge are subject to change, but this body of knowledge contained in Bhagavad Gita is timeless - eternal.

If a big reservoir of water is within one's reach, why is there the need to go looking for a well to quench thirst? Bhagavad Gita is exactly like a big reservoir of water that explains the essence of all Vedic literature and indeed there is no need to resort to any other literature to understand the science of self-realization.



Figure 1.1: Bhagavad Gita is like a big water reservoir



1. *Who is Bhagavad Gita endearing to?*
2. *In how many languages has Bhagavad Gita been translated?*
3. *Why is Bhagavad Gita timeless?*
4. *Give an analogy to compare Bhagavad Gita with other Vedic literature.*



1.2 Bhagavad Gita - The Torchlight of Wisdom

Arjuna in the battlefield got confused about his duty. Like Arjuna, we are all confused about our duty. This world is a battlefield. It requires great humility to ask perfect questions. Arjuna had that humility and thus he surrendered to Lord Krishna - the Absolute Truth, to get his confusion removed. Similarly, we should also surrender to Lord Krishna while seeking His guidance. Lord Krishna's instructions are compiled in Bhagavad Gita to guide us through the ups and downs of life.

Bhagavad Gita is meant for those who wish to transcend all confusion. It seems that Krishna spoke to Arjuna so it is meant only for him but that is not true. It is meant for everybody. When you are confused in your search for truth, then the removal of that kind of confusion will bring enlightenment to one and all.



1. *What quality is needed to ask perfect questions?*
2. *How did Arjuna remove his confusion?*
3. *Bhagavad Gita is a conversation between Krishna and Arjuna, why should I read it?*

1.3 Reverses of Life - How to handle them?

Just like Arjuna got confused in the battlefield, we also get overwhelmed by many situations. A businessman makes a huge loss and then feels gutted. A young couple decides to get married to live their dream life - alas it ends in bitter divorce just after a few years. A student works hard to qualify a competitive examination, but the success eludes him. When one loses a near and dear one, it feels like the earth has collapsed underneath one's feet. When there is no material motivation around, the inspiration to struggle completely evaporates, disappointment stares and depression sinks in, one may decide to end one's life. This list of reverses in life is endless and unless one prepares oneself in the complete science of life as it is, such situations cannot be faced with courage and fortitude. It requires embracing the divinity to face failures in life - no medicine in chemist shops can be of any help. Searching for the Truth, facing failures, seeking answers to the origin of life and universe are some of the aspects of the defining motivation to study Bhagavad Gita. Let's see what some of the great historical personalities have said about Bhagavad Gita.

“When doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and I see not one ray of hope on the horizon, I turn to Bhagavad Gita and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. Those who meditate on the Gita will derive fresh joy and new meanings from it every day.”

--Mahatma Gandhi

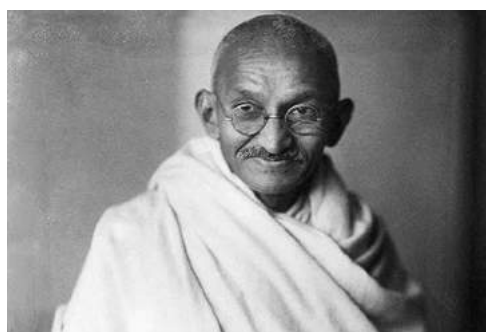


Figure 1.2: Mahatma Gandhi

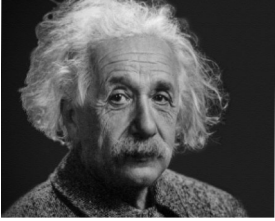


Figure 1.3: Albert Einstein

“When I read the Bhagavad-Gita and reflect about how God created this universe everything else seems so superfluous.”

-- Albert Einstein

“Gita is the most systematic statement of spiritual evolution of endowing value to mankind. It is one of the most clear and comprehensive summaries of perennial philosophy ever revealed; hence its enduring value is subject not only to India but to all of humanity.”

-- Aldous Huxley



Figure 1.4: Aldous Huxley



Figure 1.5 : Herman Hesse

“The marvel of the Bhagavad-Gita is its truly beautiful revelation of life's wisdom which enables philosophy to blossom into religion.”

-- Herman Hesse, the author of the book 'Siddhartha'

All lessons as presented in this book derive the spirit and substance from the book Bhagavad Gita-As It Is written by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada is also the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), popularly known as the Hare Krishna Movement. The compilation of these lessons as contained in this book are inspired and blessed by His Divine Grace. Here is the invocation of his divine mercy:

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

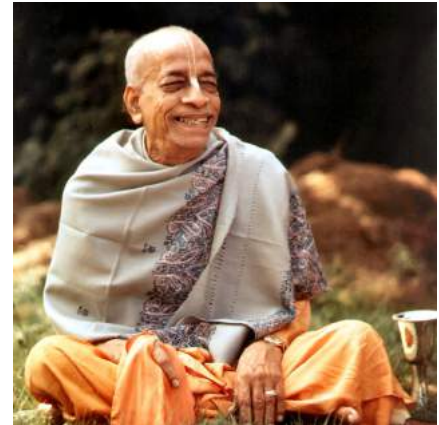


Figure 1.6: His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

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

1.4 Scientific Search for Truth

The Solar system has been a great source of inspiration for early scientists in the modern context.

The astronomical data recorded by Tycho Brahe lead to the discovery of laws of planetary motion by Johannes Kepler. Subsequently Newton's Universal law of gravitation captured the essence of it. Newton's law has since been superseded by Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity.

“The most beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being.”

-- Sir Isaac Newton

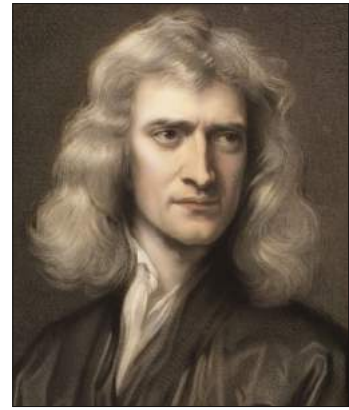



Figure 1.7:
Sir Isaac Newton

These scientific laws may not make much sense to ordinary populace; however, everybody can appreciate the fact that every object (planets) in the solar system appears to be floating in space. For example, the planet Earth is like a sphere, and it is spinning around her axis. If you think deeply, you will realize that all of us are hanging - our heads being downward and legs upward. Everything is hanging under some force. Ocean water is hanging but it is not spilling out. This observation led Newton to coin the concept of the gravitational force by which the objects near the surface of the Earth are drawn towards the Earth. Einstein's space time curvature has better explanative power in explaining planetary arrangement in this solar system. Although these laws try to explain the arrangement of the planetary system, this system is operating perfectly from the time of creation as per the laws of the creator – God. In this sense, God's law of gravitation remains a mystery – no one can unpack the creative mind of God.

	<p><i>This section discusses how the solar system had put Newton to awe and made him spontaneously appreciate God.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. Could you tell other observations or creations which have made intelligent humans awestruck? If possible, name the corresponding persons too.</i><i>2. Have you experienced getting amazed at different aspects of God's creations? Did it inspire you to appreciate God?</i>
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1.4.1 Solar System and my Tiny Existence

The radius of the Earth itself is 6371 km. The distance between Earth and Sun is approximately 150 million km. The radius of the Sun is 695500 km. The city where you are sitting is just a tiny part of this universe. In that tiny city, you live in a very small house. Although you claim that you are the owner of that house, the place is cohabited by numerous other living entities mostly unnoticed by you. There are lizards, mosquitoes and many other insects and microscopic germs etc. which have forcefully occupied some of your space as well. If you count them, they will surely exceed the number of residents in your town. They are also as important as you think of yourself, from their perspectives.




Figure 1.8: Solar system

Such introspection about your identity in this gigantic solar system will naturally make you humble. In natural humility, one starts asking thought provoking questions. These questions may resemble some of those stated below:

- What is the purpose of this creation?
- Why is the solar system organized the way it is?
- Why are there so many varieties of life-forms?
- What is the purpose of my own existence?
- What is my identity?

Numerous such questions may arise. When one starts contemplating, introspecting and questioning in this way, **the search for Truth begins.**

Human life is very precious. In this life if we do not give importance to the nature of the Absolute Truth then our existence would be no better than animals. Why things are the way they are, what substance we are made up of, what will be our destination when we die - these are more important questions than the kind of questions that we are being conditioned to ask. True humility awakens us and makes us bold to ask pertinent questions.



1. *What does the observation of floating planets have to do with our quest for the Absolute Truth?*
2. *Could you give real life example(s) of someone feeling humble and asking such questions on experiencing the vastness of creation?*
 - i) *Read from the 11th chapter of Bhagavad Gita - what makes Arjuna awestruck and what questions does he ask?*

1.5 Some fundamental aspects of life

Just like scientists, policy makers and statisticians are adept in collecting data concerning their field of interests, seekers of Truth also abreast them with life data. Here are some of them that may interest you.

1.5.1 Everybody is a servant

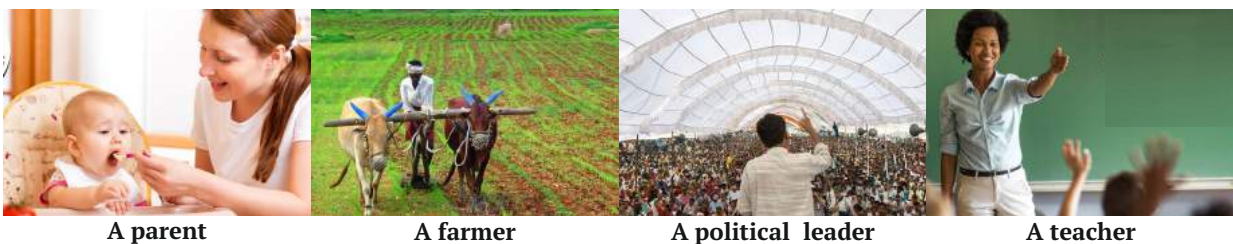


Figure 1.9: Everybody is a servant

Parents serve their children. A leader serves his followers. A student serves his teacher, and a teacher serves his students. Plants and animal kingdom serve human society and vice-versa. If you take care of your garden you will get flowers and fruits. If you take care of your paddy crops you will get rice and wheat. If you take care of water bodies then you will get fresh water. Nothing is free for us - we must serve to survive.

Whoever is serving nicely they are very happy. If you observe your mother, she serves you and you can

always see happiness on her face. As long as you are happy, she is also happy. There are thus two distinct observations:

- We are all servants.
- Service must be selfless to become happy.



1. *In what way does a blade of grass serve?*
 2. *In what way does a house fly serve?*

We will learn from Bhagavad Gita that we must selflessly serve with devotion to the Absolute Truth to become happy.

1.5.2 We all seek relationships

As human beings, we are committed to various relations in this world. Parental relationships bind father and mother to their kids. A servant is bound by a servitor relationship with his/her master.

Friendship is something that we crave for, while conjugal love adds another dimension to our human bonding. There are some for whom we reserve our awe and reverence. These are basic relationships that we see in this world. These relationships become sublime and pure when grounded in eternity and selfless attitude.

In the Introduction to Bhagavad Gita, Srila Prabhupada talks about this. We all have a relationship with the Absolute Truth. God is not something inanimate, God is a person. So, as a person we can approach Him. The moment God is impersonal you can't approach Him. If you simply think that God is gigantic and infinite, then how will you approach Him?



Yashoda-as Mother

Hanuman-as Servitor

Sudama-as Friend

Figure 1.10: We all seek Relationships with the Lord

But anyone can understand scientifically that God is a person and you can approach Him as His father, mother just like Nanda Maharaja and Yashoda Maiya approached Him. You can approach Him as a servitor like Hanumanji, as a friend like Arjuna, Sudama, Uddhava, etc. The trees and cows in Vraj, all

have affection for Krishna. Gopis approached Krishna as their lover. So, these are the aspects that are also explained in Bhagavad Gita.



1. *What are the prominent types of relationships with the Lord? Give examples of a few devotees for each.*
2. *Give, from Ramayana, examples of devotees related to Lord Ram in different types of relationships mentioned above.*

1.5.3 We seek possession or proprietorship

Each one of us is very proud of our own body and would like to have this body for eternity. Do you possess your body? Now you are young, and you do not want to become old but is that possible? Youth is given to you, and it will also be snatched away from you. Time gives you everything and time takes away everything as well. Time gives you family and time will snatch you away from the same family in the form of death. Do you possess your car, your home, your intellect, your memory, your wealth, and your followers? Margaret Thatcher, the British prime minister, was a very powerful woman. During her last days she lost her memory, and she didn't even realize that her husband had already died.

Who can thus claim that he/she has proprietorship over his/her memory, and intellect? Do we possess our wealth? You can see in this world that the people who were very rich finally had to part with it at the time of death.

As one introspects this way, a seeker recognizes that no one is the proprietor of everything that exists around. In that state, the seeker recognizes that He who is the real proprietor must be God. Thus, true renunciation is to understand that everything belongs to God. The moment you recognize that you own nothing in this world, you will be a wise person. The man who is attached to this world cannot be a person with wisdom; he is simply an ignorant fool. Detachment is the sign of wisdom.



1. *Give the moral of this section in one sentence.*
2. *This is an age of intellectual property rights in the form of patents, etc., and this section says I am not the proprietor of my intellect. Why?*
3. *I built my house with hard efforts and I do not allow anyone to live here without my permission, still this section says I am not the owner of my house. Why?*
4. *At best I am the care-taker of my house, so it should be used in _____ (whose) service.*

1.5.4 Temporariness pervades this world

Everything in this world is temporary. The United Kingdom is smaller in size to Uttar Pradesh, one of the provinces in India. Yet at one point of time, British ruled almost the entire world. That vast British Empire is no more. The great USSR is no more. Many great civilizations have come and gone by the influence of great time (kala).



Neither happiness nor misery is permanent. Neither success nor failure is permanent. All of one's achievements and accomplishments hardly make any sense at the end of his life. Even great leaders like Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Indira Gandhi had to submit to this temporariness of this world. We are mere mortals. As Indians, we know very well that inspite of all our so-called achievements, at the end, this body will be taken on four bamboos to the cremation ground.

Lord Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita 8.15:

*mām upetya punar janma
duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam
nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ
samāsiddhim paramām gatāḥ*

Translation: “After attaining Me, the great souls, who are yogīs in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection”.

Bhagavad Gita is that timeless science which enlightens people of all ages in such deliberations. We are always servants, we seek pure and eternal relationships, we owe no proprietorship in this world and our so-called identities and existence are devoured by the temporariness of this world. Nobody can deny these observations. Thus, Lord Krishna advises us through Arjuna in Bhagavad Gita 5.29:

*bhoktāramī yajña-tapasāmī
sarva-loka-maheśvaram
suhṛdamī sarva-bhūtānāmī
jñātvā māmī śāntim ṛcchati*

Translation: “A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries.”



1. *The narrative on the temporariness of this world paints a very gloomy picture of life. Where is the ray of hope?*
2. *What is the universal peace formula as given in BG 5.29?*

1.6 Dull and Living Matter

We know that a table, a chair and a house are dull (inert) matter. However, we know for certain that our bodies are not dull matter. They respond to different stimuli in a conscious manner. We will reflect upon this living matter as we contrast with dull matter.

1.6.1 Our Living Body

There are 8.4 million different varieties of species in this world as explained in Padma Purana - one of the Vedic literatures. Each bodily form evolves from a single cell. Let us look at the human body that evolves from only one cell - a combination of half of the mother's cell and half of the father's cell at the

time of conception. This original cell through repeated cell division gives rise to your bones, nails, hair, different body organs, skin and what not. Plants also grow like this. Every form of life whether plants, aquatics, insects, birds, reptiles, animals and humans - all follow the same process.

Have you ever pondered over these observations? How is hair growing on your body? When you cut your hair, you do not feel pain but when you cut your skin, you feel the pain. Have you ever thought about it? In the same body, you can cut your hair, you can cut your nails, but you cannot cut your hand.



Figure 1.11: Our living body

The miracle is that even if we can observe this process of development of a living body from a single cell, we cannot replicate the process. Scientists can only play with what God has already given. We can use genetic manipulation and produce more fruits and vegetables. We can put more urea in the field (soil) and get more yields. This kind of manipulation we can do but we cannot self-replicate the process, the way nature self-replicates.

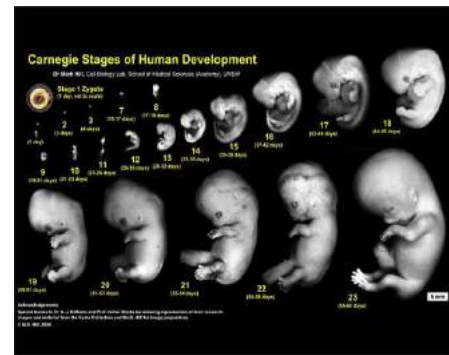


Figure 1.12: Stages of human development



1. *What is dull matter and what is living matter?*
2. *What is wondrous in the way a human cell multiplies?*
3. *What is a miracle in the process of natural self-replication?*

1.6.2 A Self-replicating Machine

A self-replicating machine is a construct that is capable of autonomously manufacturing a copy of itself using raw materials taken from its environment, thus exhibiting self-replication in a way analogous to that found in nature.

A detailed conceptual proposal for a physical non-biological self-replicating system was first put forward by mathematician John von Neumann in lectures delivered in 1948 and 1949, when he proposed a kinematic self-reproducing automaton model as a thought experiment.

John von Neumann thus dreams that one day a single automaton - a computing machine with a single memory - will grow in terms of hardware as well as software such that this machine will be a Noble prize winner. This dream has its inspiration in the way the human body evolves as explained in this section. The human body evolves from one cell both in terms of hardware and software, i.e. bodily growth and mental and intellectual growth. So, can a single automaton grow both in terms of hardware and software to become a full-fledged intelligent machine? Simultaneously can it self-replicate as well, as the natural organisms exhibit?



If we can do so, then one may claim that there is no need for God or that God is an irrelevant entity. Even after more than seventy years of such a hypothesis, scientists have not been able to scratch the surface of this problem. No laboratory in the world can even produce a biological grass. However, even if such a machine is ever created, it cannot solve most of our problems especially those related to hunger and food production. We know very well that mother cow eats grass and gives us milk – a wholesome nutritious food. If we maintain cows in a healthy manner, food security will be guaranteed.



1. This section has two messages - one is the utility of studying the intriguing self-replication process in the natural biological organisms and the other is our futile attempt to develop an artificial self-replicating machine. Elaborate the two in your own words.

1.6.3 Can I replicate the Miracle?

Although one can observe the process of self-replication in nature, one cannot replicate the process. The reason has been explained in Srimad Bhagavatam as follows:

“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. (SB 3.31.1)”

Thus, when we cannot replicate even grass, what can we speak of any higher form of living entity? Machines do not produce food that will sustain the creation. Machines are there to enhance our comfort level. You can use a machine like a tractor that will help you in cultivation. You can create a machine in the form of a motor that will help you to bring water from deep in the ground, but you can't create a machine that will create water. Water must be taken from nature. Air must be taken from nature.

If we maintain cows in a healthy manner, then food security will be guaranteed, but instead we are worried about self-replicating machines. All these people who are thinking about self-replicating machines, if they would have invested their energy in taking care of cows properly, innocent people would not have been subject to purchasing synthetic milk and impure ghee in the market.

Thus, formation of a living body is a mystical coupling of the soul (anti-material) with the body (material). This forms a substantial portion of the subject matter of the Bhagavad Gita.



- 1. Who has compiled the literature Bhagavad Gita?*
- 2. Why is the message of Bhagavad Gita still relevant even after 5000 years when it was spoken by Lord Krishna?*
- 3. What do you conclude after contemplating on the gigantic nature of this universe?*
- 4. When does the search for Truth begin in one's life?*
- 5. What kind of questions within you can cripple you?*
- 6. What kind of questions can rejuvenate you?*



7. *Why does Bhagavad Gita attract you?*
8. *Enumerate a list of objects for which you are an absolute proprietor.*
9. *Everybody in this world is a servant. Justify your answer by relating the different roles that you play in your life.*
10. *Self-replicating machines as dreamt by Von Neumann have not been actualized by current researchers. Do you think that this is possible in the future?*
11. *What is the miracle in nature as far as self-replication is concerned?*

1.7 Spirit of the Bhagavad Gita

Bhagavad Gita is meant to awaken our divine nature in the human form of life. Temporariness pervades our perception. However human perception can be sanctified to perceive that which is eternal, full of knowledge and joy-sat-chit-ananda. This is what is called divine, beyond our mundane perception of material space and time. As of now we are all soaked in our material experience whose basis is our tendency to enjoy our senses. Obviously, concepts given in Bhagavad Gita would appear to be alien to most of the newcomers. However one can start relishing the message of Bhagavad Gita with an open mind. Let me tell you *the Story of an Exploding Frog*.

Once a baby frog jumped out of a small well and went out to explore the world outside. He was astounded by seeing a big elephant. He informed his mother about this big creature. The mother frog was convinced that there can not be another big one other than her. The mother frog in its attempt to fathom the size of this new creature began bloating itself, asking the baby frog if the creature was as big



Figure 1.13: The exploding frog

as itself now. Each time the frog bloated itself more, the baby would say “No. Bigger”! In this way the mother frog gradually puffed up her body and when it went beyond limit, it exploded with a big bang.

Very often it is assumed that there is very little beyond what we have seen. Because of our limited experience we tend to dismiss anything anti-material or anything beyond matter. Our situation is like that of this mother frog whose baby one day claimed to have seen a very big creature. This instructive story could well be our own when we get very puffed up with our own limited knowledge and assume that there is nothing beyond matter. However, our narrow understanding could cripple us just like that exploding frog.



1.7.1 What we are?

We saw in the previous section that our body is a mystical coupling of the body that is material and the soul that is anti-material. Thus Bhagavad Gita teaches us about objects consisting of two natures - spirit and matter in the following manner:

- The world that we perceive is a place where unlimited jīvas (atomic souls) are engaged in 8.4 million different bodies.
- The world is there to help us rediscover our divinity by purifying our consciousness.
- All our endeavor must be to ascertain the Truth – not to get entangled in ignorance.
- Distinguishing spirit from matter is the first step in this process.

In the Introduction to Bhagavad Gita Srila Prabhupada says: *“That destination is called the sanātana sky, the eternal, spiritual sky. In this material world we find that everything is temporary. It comes into being, stays for some time, produces some by-products, dwindles and then vanishes. That is the law of the material world, whether we use as an example this body, or a piece of fruit or anything. But beyond this temporary world there is another world of which we have information. That world consists of another nature, which is sanātana, eternal. Jīva is also described as sanātana, eternal, and the Lord is also described as sanātana in the Eleventh Chapter. We have an intimate relationship with the Lord and*



Figure 1.14: Spiritual sky

because we are all qualitatively one with the the sanātana Supreme Personality of Godhead — the whole purpose of Bhagavad-gītā is to revive our sanātana occupation, or sanātana dharma, which is the eternal occupation of the living entity. We are temporarily engaged in different activities, but all of these activities can be purified when we give up all these temporary activities and take up the activities which are prescribed by the Supreme Lord and that is our pure life.”

All our endeavors must be to search for the Absolute Truth, not to get entangled in ignorance. Distinguishing spirit from matter is the first step in this process. So the aim of this course will be to motivate you that there is something beyond matter, something spiritual, something eternal, and something timeless, which we are made up of.



1. Give the moral of the story of an exploding frog?
2. What is divine? Why is the human form of life special?
3. All living beings are made of two nature. What are they?
4. How many varieties of living species are there?
5. How do we attain our divine nature?
6. Bhagavad Gita is there to awaken our _____ dharma.
7. What is the process of purification to attain our divine nature?
8. What is first step as we contemplate on the nature of Truth?

1.7.2 Spirit I – Lord Krishna, the Absolute Truth

Sri Krishna is the Absolute Truth and He is the speaker of Bhagavad Gita. Thus the message of Bhagavad Gita is Absolute - not subject to any interpretation. Vyasadeva is merely the compiler. You will see in Bhagavad Gita whenever Krishna speaks, Vyasadeva didn't write *Sri Krishna uvaca*, rather he writes this as *Sri Bhagavān uvaca*.

Everybody knows that Krishna spoke Bhagavad Gita then why did he write “*Sri Bhagavān uvaca*”? Because he anticipated that a time would come in future when people will ascribe Lord Krishna as a mere human being. Such understanding would minimize the Absolute position of Bhagavad Gita. Therefore to prevent such abuse of this great literature, Srila Vyasadeva wisely preserves Lord Krishna's supreme position. Krishna is God Himself. That's why Bhagavad Gita is very enduring. It is God's instructions for humanity.

Srila Vyasadeva divided Veda into four divisions for people of the age of Kali. He also wrote Puranas, Itihasas like Mahabharata, and finally he wrote Brahma sutra (or Vedanta sutra). Bhagavad Gita is a part of the Mahabharata. Srila Vyasadeva is thus the greatest authority in the Vedic literature. He unequivocally declares Lord Krishna as the Absolute Truth not only in Bhagavad Gita but all across the vedic literature.

Not only the great Vyasadeva ascertains Lord Krishna to be the Absolute Truth, all great acharyas (spiritual authorities) such as Adi Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Nimbarka swami, Vishnu swami, and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also confirm this truth. In all Vedic literatures, this truth that Lord Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead has been established by great spiritual authorities like Srila Narada, Bhishma deva, Lord Shiva, Lord Brahma, Sage Kapila, Prahlada, Janaka, Sukadeva Goswami, Manu, Four Kumaras, Bali Maharaja, and Yamaraja. They are famously known as 12 Mahajanas - greatest authority in the science of vedanta.



1. *The speaker of Gita is not an ordinary teacher, but the Absolute Truth Himself. How do we know that? Elucidate*
2. *Mention the name of acharyas who have ascertained Lord Krishna to be the Supreme Absolute Truth?*
3. *Who is a Mahajana? Tell the names of 12 Mahajanas.*
4. *Why is Krishna addressed as Bhagavan in BG by Srila Vyasadeva?*

1.7.3 Spirit II – Becoming a Right Thinker

A person who always acts from a neutral position is a right thinker. A right thinker can churn the nectar from Bhagavad Gita. Bhagavad Gita makes a person think. Lord Krishna defines such a right thinker in Bhagavad Gita 2.58 as:

*yadā samharate cāyaṁ
kūrmo 'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ
indriyāṅindriyārthebhyas
tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*



Translation: “One who is able to withdraw his senses from the sense objects as the tortoise draws its limbs within the shell, is firmly fixed in perfect consciousness.”

Lord Krishna further distinguishes right thinkers from those who are very ordinary in Bhagavad Gita 2.69 as:

*yā niśā sarva-bhūtānām
tasyām jāgarti saṁyamī
yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni
sā niśā paśyato muneh*

Translation: “What is night for all beings is the time for awakening for the self-controlled, and the time of awakening for all beings is night for the introspective sage.”

An introspective sage is the right thinker. He is always self-situated - situated in atman. He is not biased by his bodily senses. Although Bhagavad Gita is literature for those who can think, anybody who starts taking interest in Bhagavad Gita starts thinking. This is the underlying sublime principle by which Bhagavad Gita works. Isn't it a wonderful thing? That is the sublime aspect of Bhagavad Gita. Anybody who will take shelter of Bhagavad Gita, he will become a right thinker. A person who always acts from a neutral position is a right thinker. He is not biased by his selfish mentality, he is not biased by other's selfish mentality, he is not biased by his own name and fame, and he is not biased by anything. The moment you are biased, you cannot become a right thinker. That is why the yogis of India leave everything - family, home and fame - and enter the caves of Himalayas or take shelter in holy places. There they perform severe austerities and spiritual practices to gain neutrality. Neutral position means neither one has any hatred nor one is partial to anyone. In this state, one sees everyone as God's dear child.

One thinker is sufficient to guide 1000 people. Considering that the current population is at 7 billion, we need 7 million people who are educated in Bhagavad Gita. These 7 million thinkers will be able to guide the world of 7 billion in the path of self-enlightenment, prosperity, and peace. Then the world will become “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.”

The real problem is that we do not have the right thinkers. Srila Prabhupada once said that every village and city of India must be converted to Gita-nagari following in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi. Thus, we have endeavoured to run this Bhagavad Gita correspondence course to reach out to all those who have no opportunity to be properly educated in the science of Bhagavad Gita.



1. Who is a right thinker? Quote the verse from BG with meaning?
2. What is the most essential quality of a right thinker?
3. How does one attain the state of neutrality?
4. What is the best way to become a right thinker?
5. The whole world needs the guidance of Bhagavad Gita. How many right thinkers are necessary to make the whole world Gita Nagari?



1.7.4 Spirit III- Building a Relationship with the Lord

Besides being a right thinker, one must be a friend and devotee of Lord Krishna. He should have simple faith in Lord Krishna's instructions. As Lord Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita 4.3:

*sa evāyamī mayā te 'dya
yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ
bhakto 'si me sakhā ceti
rahasyamī hy etad uttamam*

Translation: “That very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend; therefore you can understand the transcendental mystery of this science.”

One must accept Bhagavad Gita As It Is as Lord Krishna spoke to Arjuna – no addition or no deletion to His instructions. As Srila Prabhupada says in the Introduction:

“The spirit of Bhagavad-gītā is mentioned in Bhagavad-gītā itself. It is just like this: If we want to take a particular medicine, then we have to follow the directions written on the label. We cannot take the medicine according to our own whim or the direction of a friend. It must be taken according to the directions on the label or the directions given by a physician. Similarly, Bhagavad-gītā should be taken or accepted as it is directed by the speaker Himself.”

Ultimately Lord Krishna will reveal this knowledge to us if we sincerely surrender unto Him. He is there within our hearts and He will reveal this knowledge as we hear from the bonafide spiritual master. That is why in this correspondence course we will follow Bhagavad Gita As It Is by **HDG AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada** as the textbook.

This Bhagavad Gita has revolutionized the hearts of millions across the globe. Srila Prabhupada is against the idea of using selected verses from Bhagavad Gita to put forth one's misdirected ideas. There are 700 verses in Bhagavad Gita and one must accept all the verses, just like as per your medical prescription you have to accept all medicines - you cannot reject one and accept another.



1. Arjuna is the first student of this Bhagavad Gita. Why did Lord Krishna select him to receive this eternal science of Bhagavad Gita?
2. What is the foremost qualification that would enable one to understand the science of Bhagavad Gita?
3. What is the spirit of Bhagavad Gita as explained by Srila Prabhupada?

1.8 Subject Matter of the Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita deals with five subject matters which are as follows:

1. Isvara (God)
2. Jīva (living entity)

3. Kala (time)
4. Prakriti (nature)
5. Karma (action)

Among these five topics, Lord Krishna deals mostly with the fifth topic, i.e. karma. Karma means the form of duty that liberates us from the influence of ignorance. Thus, Lord Krishna prescribes duties in the form of Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Dhyana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. The yoga system that is spoken in Bhagavad Gita is duty because anything that is duty must connect you to Lord Krishna. You are doing something, but you are not getting connected to Lord Krishna that means you are wasting your human life. So, this is the most talked about subject in Bhagavad Gita. We all must be situated in the yoga system and according to Bhagavad Gita the highest form of yoga is Bhakti Yoga.

1.9 Definition of God

Parasara Muni, in Vishnu Puran, gave the definition of Bhagavān. He said that Bhagavān is that person who possesses six opulences in full:

1. All beauty
2. All wealth
3. All power/strength
4. All knowledge
5. All fame
6. All renunciation

This is Bhagavān and the goal of Bhagavad Gita is to know Him and get connected to Him through a prescribed yoga system - in particular Bhakti Yoga.



Figure 1.15: Bhagavān- The possessor of six opulences

1.10 Conclusion

Bhagavad Gita (BG) is a complete science - science of both spirit and matter from a holistic perspective. This book provides timeless science that is applicable to every human race in every corner of society.

Bhagavad Gita informs us that we are tiny divine particles having the same quality as that of the Absolute divinity – Lord Krishna. Daily bathing in the message of Bhagavad Gita will help us to revive our divinity – spiritual qualities.

There has been debate among intellectuals about the chemical origin of life or life eternal – Bhagavad Gita speaks of the latter. Our empirical observations show that matter comes from life not vice versa.

We are servants, who is the master? Bhagavad Gita answers this question very lucidly. Lord Krishna is the ONLY master. He is also known by different traditions as Allah, Jehovah, God etc.

We crave relationships – but all of them are temporary – some of them are even a source of agony. Bhagavad Gita answers the nature of this pure relationship and its shelter. When we connect ourselves in the yoga-system with Lord Krishna, we establish our divine relationship with Him. This in turn makes our filial or worldly relationships also divine. Everything here is temporary – what is permanent? Bhagavad Gita again provides a wonderful answer stating that the shelter of the Lord, His abode and His devotional service are eternal.

We are here in this material world because we want to become God. Suppose you have created a robot. And plan in such a way that this robot will follow you. Would you like a robot that will revolt against you? So that's the difference between you and God. God has created you but has given you freedom as well. It is up to you to use your freedom, to use your free will to accept God or reject Him. He is your loving father after all.

Thus Bhagavad Gita is that timeless science which has answers to all our thought provoking queries.



1. *Choose the correct word from the parenthesis*
 - *The world is here to help us rediscover our (humanity/divinity).*
 - *In this material world we find that everything is (eternal/temporary).*
 - *The Lord is described as sanatana or eternal and the jiva is described as (also eternal/ temporary).*
 - *We are (qualitatively/quantitatively) one with the Lord.*
 - *The whole purpose of the Bhagavad Gita is to revive our (eternal occupation/ eternal ignorance)*
2. *We can understand Bhagavad Gita if we follow three spirits. Describe these three spirits.*
3. *Enumerate five topics discussed in BG.*
4. *Which topic is most talked about in BG?*
5. *What is the definition of God?*

Lesson 2

The Krishna-Concept of Infinity

2.1 Introduction

One of the five topics discussed in Bhagavad Gita is God. This lesson is all about God – Does God exist? Those who do agree that He exists also say that God is great! How great is He? That is something that very few people know. God is infinite! Everybody knows. What is the measure of this infiniteness? Hardly one knows. In this lesson, we will provide some empirical evidence to establish the existence of God. Then the authority of holy scriptures and holy seers will be invoked further substantiating the existence of God. In the process of understanding the concept of infinity, we will establish how the Krishna-concept of God (Infiniteness) is Absolute. These topics will be dealt with in this lesson based on the teachings of Bhagavad Gita.

2.1.1 Does God exist?

Whether God exists or not is a fundamental question facing mankind today. What was accepted commonly as a fact in bygone ages is now being increasingly questioned. In the following presentation we will discuss some of the logical reasons proving the existence of God.

2.2 Empirical Evidence 1 – Perfect design

2.2.1 Story of Newton's Solar System Model:

A friend of Sir Isaac Newton came over for a dinner. His friend was an atheist while he was a monotheist (raised a Christian but denounced the trinity as it opposed one god). They often got into debates. While Newton was preparing the dinner, his friend noticed an extraordinary model of the solar system Isaac had in his library bookshelf. His friend was amazed and asked him who made it and where it came from. Sir Isaac Newton responded coyly that nobody had made it and that it just happened to appear. His friend, confused and irritated, retorted, “You must think I am a fool! Of course, somebody made it, and he is a genius.” Newton then spoke to his friend in a polite yet firm way: “This thing is but

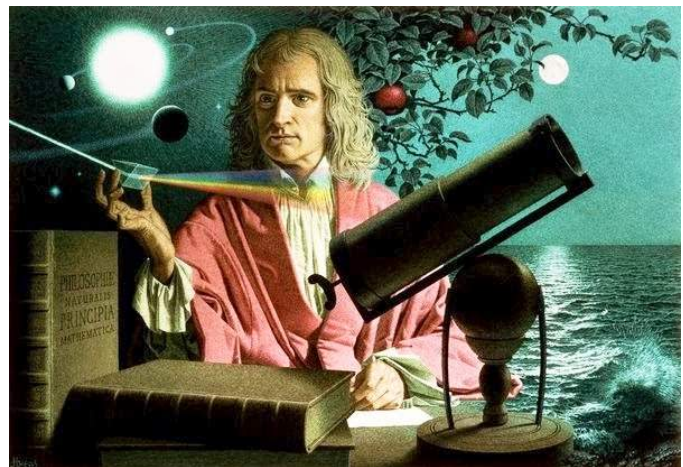


Figure 2.1: Sir Issac Newton with his model



a puny imitation of a much grander system whose laws you know, and I am not able to convince you that this mere toy is without a designer or maker; yet you profess to believe that the great original from which the design is taken has come into being without either designer or maker! Now tell me by what sort of reasoning do you reach such an incongruous conclusion?”

2.2.2 The Precision of the Solar System

The solar system itself is a perfect example of amazing order and design. The movement of planets around the sun in their distinct orbits are so precise that we can even set our watch against these movements. Earth is located at a right distance from the sun as shown in the figure 2.2. If it were to move a little closer, earthly life forms would go extinct because of high temperature, and if the earth were to go a little away from the sun, again these forms would not survive because of the freezing temperature. Given this delicate yet persistent equilibrium, how can we deny the existence of a designer and assembler behind the universe? Everything in this universe is perfectly designed. Let us examine in this section some facts around us that can help us keenly observe some distinct patterns.



Figure 2.2: Distance of Earth from Sun

2.2.3 The Complex Living Body

Every living body starts with a single cell. That single cell multiplies and gives rise to gigantic bodies like elephants, whales, and humans and even tiny insects and microbes. Every organ of our body is very intricate and more complex than a computer. If a computer cannot come about by some random event (chance factor), how can a living body, which is a perfect working assembly of complex organs, come by chance?

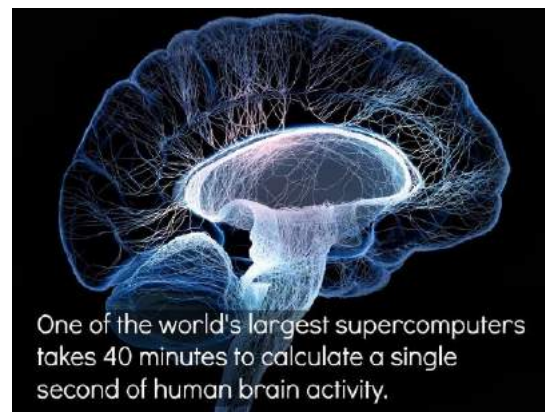


Figure 2.3: Human Brain

Similarly, the human brain processes information at a speed that cannot be simulated by the best of supercomputers. The cognitive function of a human brain is far beyond the abilities of present-day supercomputers. We do not have a machine that can properly understand language. A small boy can learn to understand a few languages but no machine is capable of this. Similarly, the eye has the ability to discriminate millions of colours. The combination of three primary colours – Red, Green and Yellow – can provide millions of colour shades and the eyes have the power to differentiate them. There must be a creator who has created all these wonderful things.

2.2.4 The E. coli bacterium: A Classic Case of Perfect Complex Design

E. coli is a common flagellate bacterium. Flagellum is a thin filament that rotates and helps the bacteria in moving. The scientists are astounded by the immense complexity of this simple structure of a common bacterium. Flagellum is driven by a reversible rotary motor located at its base. It is powered by an ion flux. The motor is about 45 nm in diameter and is assembled from about 20 different kinds of parts. When the motor at the base of flagella rotates at a very high speed, it causes bacteria to swim in the water. Even a single cellular organism is so complex in its design. If you look at the research community, there are thousands of people doing PhDs to understand this nano-motor. So if E. coli bacteria motor is so complex, what to speak of other living beings from reptiles to birds to animals to human beings.

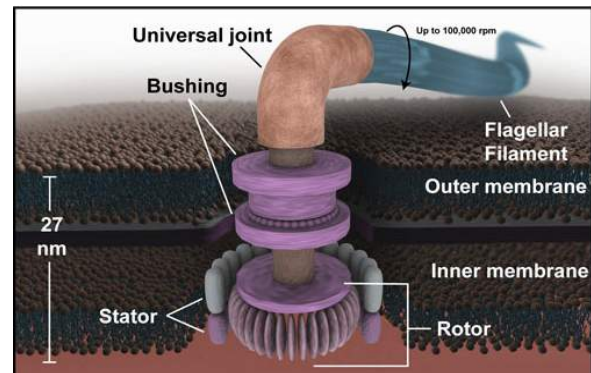


Figure 2.4: E. Coli Bacterial Flagella Rotary Motor

2.2.5 The Self- Restrained Water Bodies

Water must continuously flow to remain unpolluted. Good flow of water in rivers keeps it in pure condition. Similarly, the vast body that supplies water is the ocean. The moon is at perfect distance from the Earth and it creates important ocean tides and movements so that the ocean waters do not stagnate, and this water is always in motion because of the moon's gravitational pull (fig 2.5). But the pull is only so much that there are tides in it, had it been little more, it would have inundated the land. Thus the massive oceans are restrained from spilling over across the continents. What a perfect design!



Figure 2.5: Moon's graviational pull on water bodies

2.2.6 Natural Symbiotic Living Order

When we observe in nature, we see that there is a harmonious symbiotic relationship between different living entities. There are microbes in the soil that eat the soil and make it porous. If we provide for their fast growth, then they help us to make the land light and fertile. The plants in turn grow better when the soil becomes light and fertile naturally as they can now consume the elements of the soil better. Thus, we see that there is everything in nature designed perfectly to co-exist. Also, cows eat grass and give us milk. We drink milk and if we take care of cows a perfect symbiotic relationship is harnessed – A perfect design! Everything in nature inspires us because of the perfect design. When we observe the wonders of creation around us closely, then there is hardly a chance to miss the beauty and aesthetics of perfect design at all levels.



1. The Solar System is a perfect example of amazing _____ and _____.
2. Even the *E coli* bacterium has a _____ design.
3. Only because the moon is at a perfect distance from Earth, huge water bodies are _____.
4. Some examples of perfect design are given. Can you think of some more examples that would support this empirical evidence?

2.3 Empirical Evidence 2–Perfect order

“I can do that better than the robot”

Once there was a young scientist who received a national award in robotic science. The institute where he studied proudly announced a display of his work. Many came to see the genius and his robots. One robot which especially attracted everybody's attention was designed to walk and pick a ball that was kept 6 feet away. Seeing this and seeing all the people who were in awe, a little girl screamed “But I can do this much faster and better than the robot!” Perfect design in nature also implies a perfect order. And this in turn also means a perfect controller who not only designs complex orders but also controls them. We may design many complicated robots but God has designed us and unlimited other creatures that are astounding in their complexity and functions.



Figure 2.6: Humanoid Robot

In this section we will discuss how there is perfect order maintained in nature through certain unchangeable laws, physical and natural and thus conclude that the perfect order must be associated with a perfect being - God.

2.3.1 Physical Laws

Law of Gravity: Most of the observable phenomena we see around us are governed by definite laws. For example, the acceleration due to gravity, g has a definite value of 9.8 m/s^2 . This acceleration due to gravity does not change with time for a specific location.

Speed of Light: The speed of light does not change in a given medium. In Rig Veda there is a mantra for Sun God and it says, sun rays travel at the speed of 2202 yojanas in half a nimisha. Yojana and nimisha are ancient units of length. Calculations give the speed of light as 189547 miles per second. This is given in Rig Veda which is thousands of



Figure 2.7: Vedic calculation of speed of light

years of old literature. The modern estimate of the speed of light is 186281 miles per second. Earth spins in 24 hours causing day and night. It perfectly follows the order of rotation and revolution. Even a slight change in this order will create catastrophe in the climatic condition. Such a perfect order we have in nature.



1. *Enumerate some more examples that would support the idea that there is perfect order within this universe.*

2.4 Empirical Evidence 3 – Maintainer

In nature everything is provided to us. Water to drink, air to breathe, food to eat and everything that is needed for survival is fulfilled by nature. The sunlight and moonlight that are so essential for our maintenance and sustenance are also given to us by Mother Nature.

Most importantly, every living entity, from insects to humans, is given parents, who have an instinct to go at lengths caring for their offspring. These instinct and other sorts of intelligence are also given to us.

How far can one go to protect one's offspring? Can we starve ourselves to death to protect our babies? The Giant Pacific female octopus does just that. She lays her eggs in thousands and divides them into different groups based on size, shape, and likeliness of survival. She then dedicates the next two months of her life in protecting them from predators and ensuring they get enough oxygen supply by constantly pushing water current towards them. She is so busy keeping them alive that she does not have time to feed herself. Once the eggs hatch, the Pacific female octopus is totally exhausted and in a matter of minutes, dies.

It is evident that an invisible hand always guides us, particularly in difficult times. All arrangements have been made for our survival here. It is not that we were thrown into some kind of isolated place and that we have to start everything from scratch. This again signifies towards an intelligent universal maintainer.



1. *Although you are brought up by the special care of your parents and other near and dear ones, can you contemplate on some of your personal examples that makes you believe that your parents are just instruments of the real maintainer - God (Lord Krishna)?*
2. *This world appears to be self-sustained. Is there a need to invoke God as the ultimate maintainer?*
3. *We have been provided with everything in nature and that includes a set of parents who care for us. Hardly we are grateful to the Lord for such a wonderful arrangement. Comment.*



2.5 Empirical Evidence 4 - The Law of Karma

One might surely question after reading the above section that though much of what we need is provided by nature itself, why is the world full of disparities? Some are rich, some are poor. Some are born healthy; some drag with sickness. Bad people seem to flourish. Good people seem to suffer. Without committing any apparent mistake, I seem to be suffering.

Why is it so? This brings us to the law of karma that is summed up in the adage - "As you sow, so shall you reap". Not just in terms of reactions, but we also see the law of karma at work in terms of inspiration that comes from within. You will see that all our scientific discoveries, and artistic discoveries happen because of sudden inspiration. If that inspiration is not there, you will not be functional. Some inspiration must come from within.

And sometimes this inspiration is so profound that it impacts generations. It impacts the nation; it impacts the world. And whatever may happen, finally you can see that always virtue wins, and evil is defeated in the long run. For example, it appeared like Hitler had been conquering the world but ultimately, he was vanquished. There is the law of karma and the law of nature. Many times, we can experience these laws. But sometimes we are cognizant and reflect on them.



1. *Seeing the perfect design and perfect order in nature, we can conclude that there must be a perfect designer and that must be _____.*
2. *Can the so-called evolution or other modern scientific paradigm explain the phenomena that someone is born poor while another is born rich?
Hint: A nobel laureate does not produce an offspring that also becomes another nobel laureate.*
3. *People often complain that bad things often happen to good people. Can you refute this allegation through the paradigm of law of karma?*
4. *Environmental pollution is a result of going against the laws of nature.
Comment.*

2.6 God Does Exist: What Next?

In the previous section we have provided many empirical evidences that help us understand that there must be God. However, accepting the existence of God alone does not help us understand the details about God. Where is He? What does He do? What is the purpose of the universe? These questions cannot be answered through empirical evidence. What is then the method to know God? Divine revelation is the ONLY way. Srila Prabhupada gives a very apt analogy in this regard. How does one know about his father? The ONLY authority is one's mother. Just as a mother alone can reveal the identity of the father, the process of divine revelation alone can help us understand or know God as He is.

2.7 Divine Revelation

Divine revelation is the process by which things become self evident. This may occur in four different ways:

2.7.1 The Holy Books

God is revealed through Holy books. Bhagavad Gita, Vedas, Bible, Koran, Srimad Bhagavatam, Ramayana, Guru Grantha Sahib and other bonafide holy books are there to let us know God. These holy books are NOT man-made. These books descend to this world through divine revelations. Thus, God reveals Himself through scriptures.



Figure 2.8: Holy books

2.7.2 Seers of Truth

The sages who have seen the Truth reveal the same Truth unto the other seekers who are sincere and faithful. Adi Sankaracharya, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Prophet Mohammad, Jesus, Arjuna, Bhisma Deva, Vyasadeva and Srila Narada are some of the seers who have guided humanity towards God Consciousness. These seers of Truth left behind many literatures such as Vedas, Mahabharata, Puranas, and Narada Bhakti Sutra for our benefit.

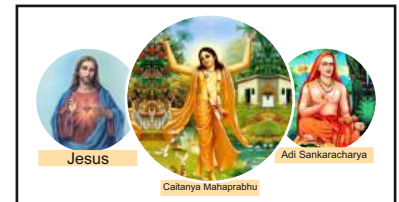


Figure 2.9: Seers of truth

2.7.3 Incarnations of God

Supreme Lord Krishna appears time and again in this world in His many beautiful incarnations as Lord Rama, Lord Nrsimha, Lord Varaha, Parasurama, and Lord Buddha to endear humanity towards Him. His places of appearance such as Vrindavana, Ayodhya, Jagannatha Puri, Kurma Kshetra, Varaha Kshetra, and Tirumala etc. remind us about His divine activities and pastimes. These places are like transcendental touchstones that impregnate the hearts of devotees with devotion for the Lord.



Figure 2.10: Ten incarnations of Lord

2.7.4 Self-Realization – Ultimate Divine Revelation

We may have all the empirical evidence and the various sources of divine revelation may also facilitate. Yet is it possible to see God face to face? This enquiry leads us to the ultimate realization. You need a special eye. You need special qualifications. You should be able to see God using your transcendental senses – not by physical senses. Using your divine eye, using your divine ears, using your divine touch you should be able to experience God. You should be able to see Him directly. But how is it possible?

We need to acquire this qualification and that is explained clearly in Chapter 12 of Bhagavad Gita. Chapter 12 enumerates spiritual qualities of those who seek Krishna. A seeker of Truth, when engages himself in the loving devotional service of the Lord, becomes blessed. Ultimately, it is the divine grace of Sri Guru and Krishna that enables a seeker with qualification to see Krishna face to face - as a direct perception.

How a five-year-old boy, Prahlad, could feel and see God face to face: Prahlad was a five year old little boy who was born in the family of demons. His father was an atheistic king with extraordinary powers. In the Srimad Bhagavatam, Prahlad's qualities are described as follows:



Figure 2.11: Prahlad sees Lord directly

“He was completely cultured as a qualified brāhmaṇa, having very good character, and being determined to understand the Absolute Truth. He had full control of his senses and mind. Like the Supersoul, he was kind to every living entity and was the best friend of everyone. To respectable persons he acted exactly like a menial servant, to the poor he was like a father, to his equals he was attached like a sympathetic brother, and he considered his teachers, spiritual masters and older Godbrothers to be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He was completely free from unnatural pride that might have arisen from his good education, riches, beauty, aristocracy and so on. He was not agitated when put into danger, and was neither directly nor indirectly interested in the fruitive activities described in the Vedas. Indeed, he considered everything material to be useless, and therefore he was completely devoid of material desires. He always controlled his senses and life air, and being of steady intelligence and determination, he subdued all lusty desires.”

Because of being fully absorbed in the thoughts of Lord Krishna, Prahlad felt oneness with the Lord. In this way he could sometimes feel the touch of the Lord's lotus hands. It is described that because of his highly advanced consciousness, Prahlad could see the Lord and cry out, sing, and dance in ecstasy.



1. Knowledge of God is factually obtained through _____ (sense perception/divine revelation).
2. Holy books like the Bhagavad-Gita are written by _____ (intelligent men/Lord Himself).
3. By empirical observations, we can understand that God does exist. What are the right sources from where we can know God as He is?
4. What is divine revelation?
5. Name some of the seers of truth.
6. Enumerate some of the incarnations of God. How many incarnations does God have?
7. God is divine and beyond purview of space and time. How can one cultivate such subject matter?
8. By seeking the truth, we are blessed to transcend the material space and time. How does this mechanism work?
9. What is self-realization? Why is this called the ultimate divine revelation?

2.8 Krishna Concept of God

In the previous sections, we saw how God indeed exists and how His greatness is confirmed through divine scriptures, divine seers, His incarnations or *Avatars* and also through direct perception. In this section we will focus on the Krishna concept of God. There are various concepts of the Absolute Truth - but Krishna concept is the supreme.

We will attempt at understanding how Krishna is truly infinite and the original infinity, from where other ideas of infinity emerge.

2.8.1 On Infinity

There are varieties of concepts of infinity. For example, if you go and walk along the bank of the ocean and when you see the sand particles, they appear to be infinite. Then you feel the vastness of the ocean - you have another experience of the infinity. You ponder over the limitless sky - then you have another idea of that infinity. Someone, (say a physicist) who has dedicated his whole life to contemplating on the gigantic nature of this universe, will have another understanding of this infinity. A mathematician will encounter this concept of infinity from another angle. What is an Infinity? 10^{9999} and $99999!$ are very big natural numbers, but not infinity. Sometimes one may assume that the number of sand particles in the entire earth planet may tend to be infinite, but a scientist very well knows that the total number of sand particles is a finite quantity just as the number of molecules that this earth consists of.



Figure 2.12: Vastness of ocean looks like infinity but is not an infinity

Let us ask this question: is the number of photons emitted by all luminaries within this universe infinite? Then one would wonder if this universe has a closed boundary or open boundary. Thus the answer will remain different for different persons as per their view of this universe.

Scientists, in general, are interested in mathematical or physical concepts that can be realized in the real world using the laws of finites. Since infinity as an entity is not accessible in their domain, the subject has hardly any relevance to them. It is important to point out some of the popular misuses of this term in scientific literature. For example, many would consider the following mathematical entities to be correct:

$$\frac{1}{\infty} = 0 \quad (1); \quad \lim_{x \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{x} = \infty \quad (2)$$

In equation (1), ∞ is not a natural number. By definition, if n is a natural number, then $n+1$ is also a natural number which is not true at the infinity. Hence the division operation as given in (1) is not mathematically valid unless one assumes that the infinity is a very large natural number.



Equation (2) is often used in mathematics as well as in other scientific disciplines and is accepted as a valid operation. However, a careful examination of this operation will lead us to understand that the right-hand side is simply a very large natural number, but not the *actual infinity*. Here, our argument is that operations involving infinity are not amenable to current mathematical operations. In other words, *mathematical operations within a finite domain cannot generate infinity*.

CANTOR'S PERSPECTIVE ON INFINITE

In the pre-Cantor era (prior to 1850 AD), mathematicians looked at infinity as *potential* but not *actual*. It was accepted that infinity is simply a very big, large number [Gauss 1831]. Interestingly, Georg Cantor figured out infinity as an actual mathematical object, and not just a very large number.

Consider a set of natural numbers $\{N = 1, 2, 3, 4, \dots\}$. This sequence is potentially infinite as every natural number has a successor even after many enumerations as the process of enumeration can only remain finite. Consider a set of integers as $I = \{\dots, -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, \dots\}$. This set can also be written as $I = \{0, 1, -1, 2, -2, 3, -3, \dots\}$. Once one looks at the set as a whole, then the set becomes *actual* infinity. Cantor thus argued that there exists a full-fledged mathematical object that is infinity using set theoretic approach and demonstrated that this object does not follow the mathematical laws observable at the finite scales. His argument for the existence of such an object was supported by the well proven existence of irrational numbers like $\sqrt{2}$ and π . If one does not accept the existence of infinity as a real mathematical object, then these irrational numbers will cease to exist.

Consider a set of natural numbers as shown in Figure 2.13. If one takes out the set of even natural numbers, what remains is the set of odd natural numbers. One can notice that that which is subtracted, that which is the net result as well as the original set are all infinite.

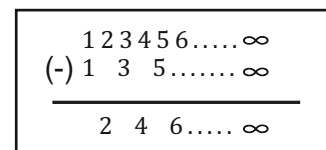


Figure 2.13

Given one set of natural numbers, one comes across three different infinite sets as shown in the Figure 2.13. Interestingly, Cantor found a method to compare these sets using the principle of one-to-one correspondence. For example, the sets $\{A, B, C\}$ and $\{1, 2, 3\}$ have the same size because we can form a one-to-one pairing as $\{A,1\}$, $\{B,2\}$ and $\{C,3\}$.

Using the above argument one can establish one to one correspondence between the set of natural numbers and the set of even numbers as shown in Figure 2.14. Using these principles, readers will be able to see that at the level of infinity, the super set (set of natural numbers) and subsets such as the sets of odd numbers, perfect squares, primes and so on are all of same size.

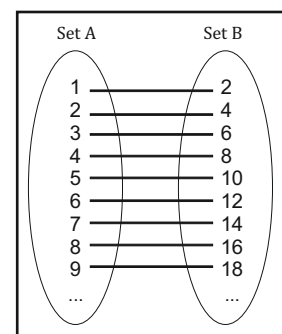


Figure 2.14

Let us consider the set of rationals, which is far dense, compared to the natural numbers. It is known that between any two rationals, however close they may be,

we can find another rational number. Still, Cantor showed that the set of rationals is of the same size as that of the set of natural numbers and is countably infinite. The set of rational numbers is shown in the Figure 2.15.

Readers can see that every sequence both in rows and columns is an infinite set. However, by indexing the rationals along the arrows as shown in this Figure (first horizontal movement, then diagonal movement downward, then vertical downward movement, then horizontal movement and then diagonal upward movement and repeat), starting from the origin, and skipping the repeated entries, one will be able to generate the sequence of natural numbers $N = \{1, 2, 3, 4, \dots\}$. This implies that even a set of rational numbers is also countably infinite as that of the set of natural numbers. This discovery made Cantor to say:

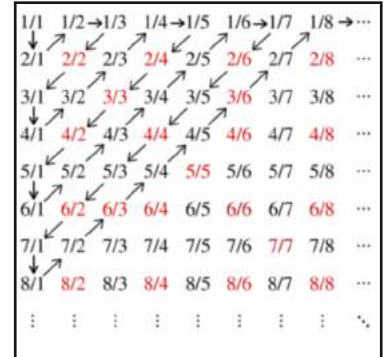


Figure 2.15: Counting of rational numbers

“I see it but I can't believe it.”

Cantor made many other discoveries regarding infinity, but the interesting feature of his discovery is that at infinity, laws of finites are not applicable. The laws at the level of infinity will always remain inconceivable.



1. Are sand particles that exist on the surface of earth finite or infinite?
2. What is the contribution of George Cantor to the understanding of infinity?
3. What do you mean by the law of finites?
4. How is the law of infinite different from the law of finites?
5. What is the most significant attribute of the infinity that even a layman can understand?

2.8.2 Infinity in Vedanta

Vedanta talks about infinity - the Absolute Infinity - in many ways. For example, the nature of the infinity is spoken in one of the Upanisads known as Sri Isopanisad as an invocation mantra:

*om pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idaṁ
pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya
pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate*

Translation: “The Personality of Godhead is perfect and complete, and because He is completely perfect, all emanations from Him, such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped as complete wholes. Whatever is produced of the Complete Whole is also complete in itself. Because He is the Complete Whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance.”

This explanation is quite remarkable as we can observe that infinity is hidden even within His creation that makes this world to be self-organized. Simultaneously, the infinite remains the same even after infinite emanations come out of Him. Consider the example of the original cell that comes into being by the combination of half the mother cell and half the father cell. This cell has all information hidden within it that makes it grow through the process of cell division to become a very complex biological body consisting of hair, nails, skin, nerve cells and so forth. Even after years of research and endeavours, life-science researchers are unable to comprehend a single cell. Rather, the mystery of a cell remains as complex as the gigantic cosmos. Thus, it is imperative that the process of understanding the natural phenomenon is not to control it but to be aware of the infinite beauty of the infinity through His creations.



1. *What is the concept of transcendental infinity as given in the invocation of Isopanisad?*
2. *A cell looks like a gigantic cosmos as we use more powerful microscopes to study it. Why is our understanding of the cell will always remain incomplete?*
3. *What is the purpose of understanding each natural process or unit?*

2.8.3 Krishna - The Original Infinity

Every sense of our infinity concept is just a reflection of the original Infinity - Lord Krishna. He says so in Bhagavad Gita 7.7:

*mattaḥ parataram nānyat
kiñcid asti dhanañjaya
mayi sarvam idam protam
sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva*

Translation: “O conqueror of wealth, there is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread.”

Any faithful person who approaches Bhagavad Gita accepts Lord Krishna as the Absolute Truth. He is the greatest. How great is Lord Krishna?

In Bhagavad Gita 10.2 Krishna Himself says:

*na me viduḥ sura-gaṇāḥ
prabhavaṁ na maharṣayaḥ
aham ādir hi devānām
maharṣīṇām ca sarvaśaḥ*

Translation: “Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin or opulences, for, in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and sages.”

Thus, Krishna is saying that nobody can understand Him. Because if you can understand God, it implies that you become superior to God, by simple logic. That is why He (Lord Krishna) is saying that neither

the hosts of demigods, nor the great sages (rishis) know Krishna's origin or Krishna's opulence, for in every respect, Krishna is the source of all of them (both demigods and sages).

So Krishna concept of infinity is the ultimate concept of infinity. There is no bigger concept than that. He is the Absolute Truth. He further confirms this in Bhagavad Gita 10.8:

*aham sarvasya prabhavo
mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante mām
budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ*

Translation: “I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.”

This is the definition of infinity. Here, Krishna says - *aham sarvasya prabhavo* - He is the ultimate source of everything that exists. You can see in Figure 2.16, Krishna as Mahavishnu lying in the Karanodaka Ocean and from every pore of His body comes out one seed of the universe and it grows to become gigantic in size. Krishna says that He is the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Him. Lord Krishna not only conceptualizes each of these universes, but also, He alone supplies all ingredients (upādāna) to give shape and structure to these universes. He is simultaneously the efficient cause in terms of conceptual construct and purpose of this universe and causal principle of universal ingredients that make up this universe. That means Krishna is wholly and solely the source of everything that exists. After hearing Lord Krishna, Arjuna made a pertinent statement regarding the Absolute position of Lord Krishna as the ultimate form of Infinity - the Absolute Truth in Bhagavad Gita 10.12-13



Figure 2.16: Mahavishnu lying in the Karanodaka ocean

*arjuna uvāca
paraṁ brahma paraṁ dhāma
pavitraṁ paramaṁ bhavān
puruṣaṁ śāśvataṁ divyam
ādi-devaṁ ajaṁ vibhum
āhus tvām ṛṣayaḥ sarve
devarṣir nāradas tathā
asito devalo vyāsaḥ
svayaṁ caiva bravīṣi me*

Translation: “Arjuna said: You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ultimate abode, the purest, the Absolute Truth. You are the eternal, transcendental, original person, the unborn and the greatest. All the great sages such as Nārada, Asita, Devala and Vyāsa confirm this truth about You, and now You Yourself are declaring it to me.”

Upon being requested by Arjuna, Lord Krishna further elaborates His multifarious energy by which He pervades His entire creation. This knowledge would help us to always remember Krishna: Krishna says in the 10th chapter, “I am the Supersoul, O Arjuna, seated in the hearts of all living entities. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings.” He further says, “Among the Ādityas, He is Viṣṇu; among the luminaries, He is the radiant Sun; among the stars, He is moon; among the Vedas, He is Sama Veda; among the demigods, He is Indra; among the Rudras, He is Lord Shiva; among the priests, He is Brihaspati; and among the mountains, He is Meru. He is the Supersoul situated in every spiritual and material atom. He is the ability of men.” After such narrations, He unequivocally declares in Bhagavad Gita 10.42:

*athavā bahunaitena
kim jñātena tavārjuna
viṣṭabhyāham idaṁ kṛtsnam
ekāmśena sthito jagat*

Translation: “But what need is there, Arjuna, for all this detailed knowledge? With a single fragment of Myself I pervade and support this entire universe.”

By His mere will, Lord Krishna manifests millions of universes effortlessly. This is His Absolute Infinite nature where any so-called wondrous activity is just like raising eyebrows. Krishna effortlessly creates, sustains, and maintains every aspect of all universes. It is not that He has to work very hard to do this. God does not have to take any stress for maintaining and sustaining His creation. That is why Lord Krishna is advising Arjuna that this detailed knowledge of Him in terms of His opulence will not help anyone to comprehend Krishna - The Infinity. Upon request by Arjuna, Lord Krishna showed His Universal form - the way He pervades this entire creation. We will just cite two verses that are sufficient to recognize the inconceivable nature of Lord Krishna: Bhagavad Gita 11.12, 11.16.

*divi sūrya-sahasrasya
bhaved yugapad utthitā
yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syād
bhāsas tasya mahātmanaḥ*

Translation: “If hundreds of thousands of suns were to rise at once into the sky, their radiance might resemble the effulgence of the Supreme Person in that universal form.”



Figure 2.17: Universal form of Krishna

*aneka-bāhūdara-vaktra-netraṁ
paśyāmi tvāṁ sarvato 'nanta-rūpam
nāntaṁ na madhyaṁ na punas tavādim
paśyāmi viśveśvara viśva-rūpa*

Translation: “O Lord of the universe, O universal form, I see in Your body many, many arms, bellies, mouths and eyes, expanded everywhere, without limit. I see in You no end, no middle and no beginning.”

It is very clear that Infinity has no end and no beginning. Infinity must be beyond mathematical constructs like openness or closed, bounded or unbounded. For example, a house is a finite object, hence we can define the inside and outside of the house. But for infinite, there cannot be any inside or outside, as we can see in the following incident described in Srimad Bhagavatam.

Once, mother Yashoda looks into the mouth of Krishna (the Absolute Infinite) as she wants to verify if Lord Krishna has eaten mud. At this time, He is less than 3 years old.

“When Kṛṣṇa opened His mouth wide by the order of mother Yaśodā, she saw within His mouth all moving and nonmoving entities, outer space, and all directions, along with mountains, islands, oceans, the surface of the earth, the blowing wind, fire, the moon and the stars. She saw the planetary systems, water, light, air, sky, and creation by transformation of ahaṅkāra. She also saw the senses, the mind, sense perception, and the three qualities, goodness, passion, and ignorance. She saw the time allotted for the living entities, she saw instinct and the reactions of karma, and she saw desires and different varieties of bodies, moving and nonmoving. Seeing all these aspects of the cosmic manifestation, along with herself and Vṛndāvana-dhāma, she became doubtful and fearful of her son's nature.” (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.8.37-39)

Is it not inconceivable to see that Mother Yashoda sees herself within the mouth of her son? She is simultaneously inside and outside of Krishna.



Figure 2.18: Mother Yashoda looks into the mouth of Krishna

After Lord Krishna married the 16108 princesses in Dwaraka, the sage Narada visited Dwaraka. He could see that Lord Krishna is simultaneously present in all 16108 palaces as well as other places such as Svadharma assembly hall. Lord Krishna is found to perform different activities in different palaces at the same time. This is the inconceivable potency of the Lord, that He demonstrates as His sweet pastimes. As such, the same Lord Krishna performs His variegated pastimes in millions of spiritual and material universes at the same time while pervading each and every atom as the supersoul. Anyone who observes Lord Krishna's activities and qualities with an open mind will be able to ascertain that He is the ultimate superset of all possible infinities.



1. Krishna is the source of everything _____ (material/ spiritual/material and spiritual).
2. The Universal form of Krishna is infinite because _____ (it has no end/it has no beginning, middle or end).
3. Absolute Truth can be understood through _____ (finite logic/ surrendering to the Lord).
4. Lord Krishna declares Himself as the Absolute Truth. Quote these verses as given in this section.
5. Only _____ can perfectly and completely describe the Absolute Truth?
6. By definition nobody can know God completely. Quote the verse where Lord Krishna says nobody knows Him.
7. How does Arjuna describe Lord Krishna?
8. How is Lord Krishna ascertained as the ultimate superset of all infinities?
9. What is the meaning that every unit emanating from Lord Krishna is complete?
10. Lord Krishna is infinite yet He is the son of mother Yashoda. Explain through the pastimes of mother Yashoda looking into the mouth of Krishna.

2.9 Story of the Brahmin and the Cobbler:

There is an instructive story wherein the transcendental space sage Narada was going to Vaikuntha, and on the way a very learned scholar met him and enquired from him where he was going. When Narada replied that he was going to Vaikuntha to see Lord Narayana, the brahmin requested him to ask Lord Narayana when he would be liberated. Sage Narada agreed and proceeded on his way when he met a cobbler who also presented the same request to him. As promised, Narada inquired from the Lord about both the brahmin and the cobbler to which Lord Narayana said, "The cobbler will be liberated in this life, and that brahmin will take many births". Sage Narada was astonished and asked the lord why and how a brahmin who was regularly chanting prayers and performing rituals would take many births to be liberated while a simple cobbler would be liberated after the same birth.

Lord Narayana then gave him one needle and said to the puzzled sage, "When they enquire what Narayana was doing, tell them that Narayana was pulling an elephant through the eye of this needle".

Thus, when sage Narada returned, the brahmin offered his obeisances to the sage and Lord Narayana and enquired from him about what the Lord was doing when Narada met Him. When he heard the sage's reply, the brahmin scoffed and refused to believe what Narada said, accusing him of not ever having met the Lord at all. When it was the cobbler's turn to meet the great sage and hear his reply, the cobbler began weeping in great admiration for the Lord.

Narada was amazed at his conviction and enquired the basis of his faith. The cobbler said, "Oh, my Narayana is so powerful that He can do everything. This banyan tree under which I am sitting bears many small figs, which in turn have many tiny seeds. In each of these tiny seeds there is a huge banyan tree and if Lord Narayana can keep hundreds of banyan trees within each fig fruit, why is it surprising that He can pull an elephant through the eye of a needle!"

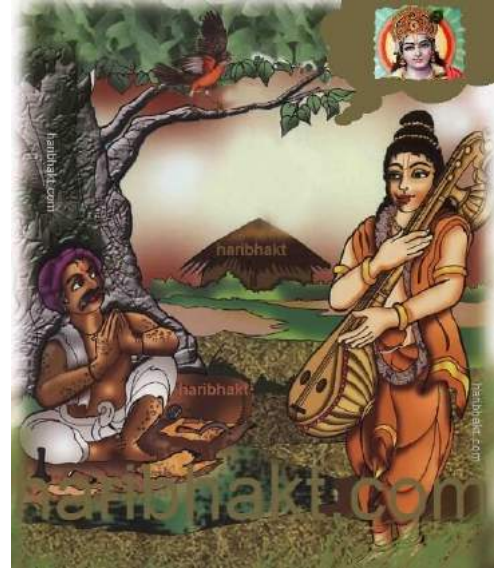


Figure 2.19: Cobbler and Narada

Thus, the faith of the cobbler was not blind but he presented proof of the inconceivable potency of the Lord. And it is this faith in Vedic knowledge that will help one transcend unto the spiritual plane from the material plane.

Although the Lord is infinite, the experience of His grace and His magnanimity makes a sincere soul attain true humility. Thus, he surrenders to Lord Krishna and acts as His instrument voluntarily. When a seeker transcends to the conscious plane, he sees his Master - Lord Krishna - as his best friend. The beauty of the truth overwhelms his scientific knowledge of the infinite where he feels no fear from the infinity. Although one lives in this world, no event in this world, including death, can create fear within him as he has already taken shelter of the lotus feet of his Master in love. The mundane logic does not disturb him as he knows that the Lord Infinite is beyond such mundane logic that follows the laws at the finite level.

Although infinite always will remain inconceivable for the jīva, his consciousness becomes pure as he contemplates on this all pure Infinity. He thus sees Him everywhere and thus lives a life of fearlessness while dwelling in Truth.



1. Why is cobbler more qualified to understand and appreciate Lord Narayana than the so-called brahmana?
2. What is the symbolism behind the statement - "passing an elephant through the eye of a needle"? How did cobbler answer such a statement?
3. Did the cobbler blindly believe in the Krishna-concept of infinity?
4. Infinite is always _____ to a jiva, but his consciousness becomes _____ and _____ by the proper contemplation on the Infinite.

2.10 The Bhaktivedanta Purport to BG 10.8

A learned scholar who has studied the Vedas perfectly and has information from authorities like Lord Caitanya and who knows how to apply these teachings can understand that Kṛṣṇa is the origin of everything in both the material and spiritual worlds, and because he knows this perfectly, he becomes firmly fixed in the devotional service of the Supreme Lord. He can never be deviated by any number of nonsensical commentaries or by fools. All Vedic literature agrees that Kṛṣṇa is the source of Brahmā, Śiva and all other demigods. In the Atharva Veda (Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad 1.24) it is said, *yo brahmāṇaṁ vidadhāti pūrvaṁ yo vai vedāṁś ca gāpayati sma kṛṣṇaḥ*: “It was Kṛṣṇa who in the beginning instructed Brahmā in Vedic knowledge and who disseminated Vedic knowledge in the past.” Then again, the Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad (1) says, *atha puruṣo ha vai nārāyaṇo 'kāmayata prajāḥ sṛjeyeti*: “Then the Supreme Personality Nārāyaṇa desired to create living entities.” The Upaniṣad continues, *nārāyaṇād brahmā jāyate, nārāyaṇād prajāpatiḥ prajāyate, nārāyaṇād indro jāyate, nārāyaṇād aṣṭau vasavo jāyante, nārāyaṇād ekādaśa rudrā jāyante, nārāyaṇād dvādaśādityāḥ*: “From Nārāyaṇa, Brahmā is born, and from Nārāyaṇa, the patriarchs are also born. From Nārāyaṇa, Indra is born, from Nārāyaṇa the eight Vasus are born, from Nārāyaṇa the eleven Rudras are born, from Nārāyaṇa the twelve Ādityas are born.” This Nārāyaṇa is an expansion of Kṛṣṇa.

It is said in the same Vedas, *brahmaṇyo devakī-putraḥ*: “The son of Devakī, Kṛṣṇa, is the Supreme Personality.” (Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad 4) Then it is said, *eko vai nārāyaṇa āsīn na brahmā neśāno nāpo nāgni-somau neme dyāv-āpṛthivī na nakṣatrāṇi na sūryaḥ*: “In the beginning of the creation there was only the Supreme Personality Nārāyaṇa. There was no Brahmā, no Śiva, no water, no fire, no moon, no heaven and earth, no stars in the sky, no sun.” (Mahā Upaniṣad 1.2) In the Mahā Upaniṣad it is also said that Lord Śiva was born from the forehead of the Supreme Lord. Thus, the Vedas say that it is the Supreme Lord, the creator of Brahmā and Śiva, who is to be worshiped.

In the Mokṣa-dharma section of the Mahābhārata, Kṛṣṇa also says,

*prajāpatiṁ ca rudraṁ cāpy
aham eva sṛjāmi vai
tau hi māṁ na vijānīto
mama māyā-vimohitau*

“The patriarchs, Śiva and others are created by Me, though they do not know that they are created by Me because they are deluded by My illusory energy.” In the Varāha Purāṇa it is also said,

*nārāyaṇaḥ paro devas
tasmāj jātaś caturmukhaḥ
tasmād rudro 'bhavad devaḥ
sa ca sarva-jñatārṇ gataḥ*

“Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and from Him Brahmā was born, from whom Śiva was born.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa is the source of all generations, and He is called the most efficient cause of everything. He says, “Because everything is born of Me, I am the original source of all. Everything is under Me; no one is above Me.” There is no supreme controller other than Kṛṣṇa. One who understands Kṛṣṇa in such a way from a bonafide spiritual master, with references from Vedic literature, engages all his energy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and becomes a truly learned man. In comparison to him, all others, who do not know Kṛṣṇa properly, are but fools. Only a fool would consider Kṛṣṇa to be an ordinary man. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person should not be bewildered by fools; he should avoid all unauthorized commentaries and interpretations on Bhagavad-gītā and proceed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness with determination and firmness.



1. *Enumerate all scriptural references besides Bhagavad Gita that Lord Krishna is indeed the Absolute Truth.*
2. *How can you learn about Lord Krishna scientifically?*
3. *Who is a fool?*
4. *Indians do not differentiate among different demigods (devatas). They also club Lord Krishna in that category. Is this understanding correct? How do you explain to such people that Lord Krishna indeed is the Absolute Truth.*

2.11 Conclusion

This human life is very precious. The beauty of this human life is that ONLY in the body of a human we can understand God. Animals do not discuss the subject matter of God. Lord Krishna is that Absolute Truth which includes every possible concept of God. Let's use this human life to understand this Krishna concept of infinity. Seers have described Him in thousands of ways as if having thousands of mouths. It requires the grace of Krishna to appreciate Him and in the process, our consciousness transcends from imperfection to perfection. In that transcendental consciousness, that infinity (Krishna) reveals Himself with all His grandeur as well as compassion. Such revelations have been made by various saints from various traditions like Suradas, Meera, Purandar, Tygaraj, Rāmanujācharya, Madhvācharya, Chaitanya Dev and many others. These descriptions are like sand particles in the sandbank along the sea-beach kept for the benefit of all jīvas (mortals) who inhabit this world.

As Lord Brahma prays in Srimad Bhagavatam 10.14.7:

“In time, learned philosophers or scientists might be able to count all the atoms of the earth, the particles of snow, or perhaps even the shining molecules radiating from the sun, the stars and other luminaries. But among these learned men, who

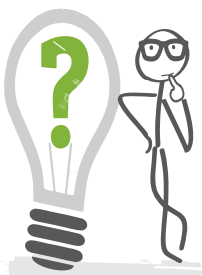


Figure 2.20: Lord Brahma prays to Lord Krishna

could possibly count the unlimited transcendental qualities possessed by You, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Person, who have descended onto the surface of the earth for the benefit of all living entities?” Lord Brahma is a great authority, and he is accepting the Krishna concept of Infinity as the Absolute Truth. Such truth cannot be ascertained by using finite logic. In this lesson, we learned the ineffectiveness of arithmetic laws on the infinite as against on the finite domain, illustrated by the great mathematician, Cantor. As in the words of Lord Brahma, the Krishna-concept of Infinity overwhelms a person who is a seeker of Truth. Not only, Lord Krishna as infinity is inconceivable as observed by Lord Brahma and Arjuna, but His creation also manifests this inconceivability and indescribability. We describe the world because the world is indescribable. That is why poets, scientists, and philosophers from the time of yore have been trying to describe various aspects of this world. Despite all these efforts, we can observe the following:

- An atom has not yet been properly described.
- A biological cell has also not been properly described.
- So also, the cosmos as it is remains elusive.
- So also, the consciousness is a BIG riddle.
- The more one tries to understand any such subjects, the more it becomes elusive.

God - Lord Krishna - pervades through His creation, thus every aspect of creation will remain elusive despite our best efforts. His footprints (infiniteness - inconceivability - indescribability) are imprinted in every aspect of His creation. Only those who are freed from the curtain of His illusory energy can perceive that Lord Krishna is indeed the ultimate form of Infinity.



1. Knowledge of God is factually obtained through divine revelation. Why? What are the sources of these revelations?
2. What analogy does Srila Prabhupada give while advocating that the subject matter related to God can be ascertained through divine revelations?
3. The world remains elusive no matter how hard we may try to describe it. Explain.
4. God effortlessly sustains and maintains all of creation. Quote the verse of the Bhagavad Gita where Lord confirms the above statement.
5. How does Bhagavad Gita inform us about the Krishna-concept of infinity?
6. Explain the Krishna-concept of infinity through the event of mother Yashoda looking into Krishna's mouth.
7. Absolute Truth is never exhaustible. Explain?
8. Why is there scarcity in this world even if Krishna is infinite?
9. How does Lord Brahma explain the Krishna-concept of infinity?

Lesson 3

Krishna as He is

3.1 Introduction

We have learnt in the last lesson that God is infinite. At the level of infinity, laws of finites do not apply. Even if infinite units – each of infinite size – are taken away from this infinity, the same infinity remains as the original infinity. So, God as infinity is always inconceivable. In this lesson, we will describe how this inconceivable infinity is also the transcendental person in His original state.

3.1.1 Is God Some Supernatural force or Power?

'God is Supreme power' – all those who believe in God often proclaim so. This very idea is not accepted in Bhagavad Gita. As a concept, 'power' (*shakti*) is always dependent and possessed. By definition, God must be independent. Hence, He is infinitely powerful. We request our readers to abandon this concept of God as Supreme power. As a common sense, you can delineate power from powerful as it is the powerful who controls the power and not vice-versa.

God is not power, rather He is most powerful or the source of all power. Power is just one of His opulence. Power is always controlled by somebody. For instance, electric power is controlled by an engineer. The person who controls power is more powerful than the power itself. One must understand that God is not power, but God is powerful and rather much more.

3.1.2 Is Nature God?

Some people say that nature is God but that is also not true. According to Bhagavad Gita, nature is Krishna's energy and works under His dominion. Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita 9.10:

*mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ
sūyate sa-carācaram
hetunānena kaunteya
jagad viparivartate*



Figure 3.1: Material Nature works under Lord Krishna's direction

Translation: “This material nature, which is one of My energies, is working under My direction (*mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ*), O son of Kunti, producing all moving (*cara*) and nonmoving beings (*acara*). Under its rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again.”



So, by accepting the authority of Bhagavad Gita, the argument that 'Nature is God' must be abandoned.

3.1.3 Is God impersonal Brahman?

Many who believe in Vedic culture argue that God is formless - a divine light, i.e., impersonal Brahman. However, this is just a partial description of God. As the sage Suta Goswami says in Srimad Bhagavatam,

*vadanti tat tattva-vidas
tattvaṁ yaj jñānam advayam
brahmeti paramātmēti
bhagavān iti śabdyate*

Translation: “Learned transcendentalists who know the Absolute Truth call this non-dual substance Brahman, Paramātmā or Bhagavān.” (SB 1.2.11)

Here it is very clear that Absolute Truth is simultaneously realized as Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān. So, God is the personal Brahman - not impersonal Brahma jyoti. Rather Brahma jyoti is Lord Krishna's bodily effulgence.

In Bhagavad Gita 14.27, it is clearly stated that Lord Krishna is the resting place for Brahman:

*brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham
amṛtasyāvyayasya ca
śāśvatasya ca dharm asya
sukhasyaikāntikasya ca*

Translation: “And I am the basis of the impersonal Brahman, which is immortal, imperishable and eternal and is the constitutional position of ultimate happiness.”

Brahman is the glaring light or the rays that are coming from Krishna. The rays are His impersonal feature, but He is always a person. However, unlike us, He is a transcendental person whose body is not subject to birth, death, old age, and disease. We are inside the domain of the universe where the time factor is present, and hence, changes in our body are inevitable. God exists beyond material space and time. He has been existing eternally and His body remains pure and spiritual, not subject to change.

The greatest authority Lord Brahma further states in his treatise Brahma Samhita that Lord Krishna is the Absolute Truth in Bhagavān feature. In addition, he states that Lord Krishna has a transcendental form.

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ
sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam
[Brahma Samhita verse-1]*

Translation: “Krishna who is known as Govinda, is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternal blissful spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin, and He is the prime cause of all causes.”

3.1.4 Is Krishna one of the many Hindu Gods?

In Vedic literature, there exist two different concepts: God (Bhagavān) and demigod (Devata). Lord Krishna is the source of all demigods, who assist Him in various worldly affairs. There are 33 crores of demigods – each one of them works under Lord Krishna's direction. Thus our readers must abandon the idea that Lord Krishna is also one of the many demigods. Intuitively one can say that the Absolute Truth is one. Who among the many Hindu gods can conform to this idea of Absolute Truth? Readers, if they use their common sense, can find this out easily.

Once a young German man started on a world tour to find out who God is. He argued that God must be there in some culture in a proper description as implied in the notion of the Absolute Truth. He just had to find out. When he was told that Atlas is God, he was not convinced. He thought how is it that God must put so much effort just to lift the earth planet. To him, Atlas as a bearded old man, does not look like the right candidate to be God. After searching west, he headed for India. When Lord Shiva was presented as God to him, he was again not convinced. His argument was that how can God be in a meditation posture always. God must be He who is the object of meditation for Lord Shiva. Finally, he arrived in Vrindavana. Here he saw Lord Krishna is always in different enjoying spirits. Somewhere He is dancing with the damsels of Vrindavan, in another place He is playing with His cowherd friends while grazing the cows. When Lord Krishna was presented as God, he finally got convinced. Seeing Krishna always playing on His flute, the young German man thought, “Krishna is surely the Supreme Lord since He is smiling and enjoying”. After all, God must be sustaining everything effortlessly while He Himself must be in the most jovial mood among His associates. That is Lord Krishna. If a German can understand this so easily, our readers should be able to appreciate it better as we present Krishna as He is.



Figure 3.2: Lord Krishna, in Vrindavana, is a perfect enjoyer

One of the meanings of Krishna is all attractive. The word 'Krish' is a dhātu (root) sabda and the meaning is 'to attract'. Krishna means He who attracts everybody, *sarvākarṣaka*- all attractive. So Krishna is not something sectarian. Krishna refers to God. God's original name is Krishna. He has unlimited names. *Rāma*, Allah, Jehovah, *Viṣṇu*, *Nārāyaṇa*, *Padmanābha*, *Ananta*, *Keśava*, and *Mukunda* are some of His other names. As such He has unlimited names. This implies that Krishna is neither another demigod nor is He the God of a particular class of people. This can be further understood by the following simple humorous story.

Sun: Indian or American?

Once there were two drunkards who were fighting amongst themselves. One of the drunkards who loved everything American, was arguing that the Sun was originally from America. The other insisted vociferously that the Sun was always an Indian and will continue to do so. When their argument got

highly animated, they decided to ask the opinion of a passerby who happened to be a foolish simpleton. When posed with the question whether the sun was Indian or American, the foolish person replied “I happen to be new in this part of the country. So, I am not sure if your Sun belongs to India or America”!

Similarly, labeling Krishna as Hindu or Indian reflects very narrow thinking and is a baseless idea.



1. God is the supreme _____ (power/powerful).
2. Often people describe God as supreme power. What is the fallacy in such a description?
3. Give two examples of how power is always under the control of a powerful person.
4. Is nature God?
5. Is God impersonal Brahman?
6. How is Bhagavan realization the ultimate one in regard to the Absolute Truth? Quote authorities as well.
7. What made the German lad understand that Krishna is God?
8. Explain why "Krishna" is not a sectarian name or concept.
9. Write the moral of the story "Sun: Indian or American" in your own words.
10. By looking at age-old cultural systems, one can figure out who is God - the way the German seeker could figure out. Is there any short-cut to this conundrum?

3.2 Divinity of Krishna

In 4th chapter of Bhagavad Gita Krishna says:

*janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma
naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*

Translation: “One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna.”

Krishna - the Absolute Truth - by definition, is unborn. Yet He takes birth as the son of Devaki, as the son of Yashoda, as the son of Aditi or as the son of Kausalya. But this does not mean that He is like one of us. He selects His own mother and father. His activities are all pleasing. For example, Krishna stole butter from the houses of the Gopis or the milkmaids of Gokul and He became the celebrated butter thief! Krishna's activities are not happening in the



Figure 3.3: Krishna showed His four handed Narayana form to Vasudev and Devaki

material realm but in the spiritual realm and thus they are divine. His activities are always auspicious and are meant to give transcendental pleasure to His devotees.

Lord Krishna's appearance is unimaginably wonderful and divine. His father Vasudeva conceived Lord Krishna in his pure consciousness through divine austerities and devotion. As a chaste wife, Devaki was privileged to attain pure consciousness by her transcendental association with her husband. Lord Krishna thus agreed to remain in the womb of His mother. At the right time, Krishna appeared in front of Mother Devaki in four handed Narayana form with *shankha* (conch-shell), *chakra* (disk), *gada* (club) and *padma* (lotus). He looked exquisitely beautiful being adorned with a beautiful garland of forest flowers, ever fresh *vaijayantimala*, dazzling helmet and properly dressed in yellow garment. Upon Devaki's prayer, Lord Krishna by His sweet will became a small baby. This is how Krishna appears.

But that baby orders Vasudeva to take Him to Gokul. Although Vasudeva was in the prison and all the doors of the prison were locked, as Vasudeva headed towards carrying out the orders of Krishna, the doors mysteriously unlocked themselves and all the guards of the prison fell fast asleep. Then Vasudeva had to cross the river Yamuna which was over-flooding due to torrential rain. Ananta Shesha became the umbrella for the Lord and Yamuna got bifurcated making way for Vasudeva. These sweet pastimes of Krishna are just inconceivable and are being enacted in the divine plane.



Figure 3.4: Vasudev carries Krishna



1. List the prominent differences between the birth of Krishna and our birth.
2. How did Devaki conceive Lord Krishna?
3. Why do people praise and worship when Krishna steals?
4. According to Bhagavad Gita, how is one benefitted if one understands the transcendental nature of Krishna's birth and activities?
5. What are the four things Lord Narayana carries in His four hands?
6. Krishna's pastimes do not take place in a mundane but in a divine plane. Explain.

3.2.1 Lord Krishna pervades the existence as a person

Who is a person? The meaning of a person is he who has a form, who enjoys with other persons in many relationships such as friend, lover, and son, who can think and who has the ability to express and fulfil his desires. He has his likes and dislikes. These and many other personal traits define a person. Lord Krishna is a person, but His personality is inconceivable. Although He appears as the son of mother Yashoda, He also pervades the entirety of creation as a person. He can appear simultaneously in unlimited places - an aspect of His inconceivable personality. That is why in Bhagavad Gita 13.14 Krishna says:

*sarvataḥ pāṇi-pādam tat
sarvato 'kṣi-śiro-mukham
sarvataḥ śrutimal loke
sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati*

Translation: “Everywhere are His hands and legs, His eyes, heads and faces, and He has ears everywhere. In this way the Supersoul exists, pervading everything.”

Krishna is referred as *nirākāra* or formless because He does not have a material form. He is referred as *nirguna* because He does not have material qualities. But He has spiritual form, and He possesses spiritual qualities. BG 13.14 proves that as Krishna pervades the creation in His Paramātmā feature, He does so as a person. This means that within my heart He hears me, He can feel my innermost desire, and He can reciprocate with my feelings. Krishna says, “Everywhere are My hands, My legs, My ears, My eyes, My heads.” This is inconceivable.



Figure 3.5: Lord Krishna is an inconceivable person

And one who understands that Krishna's appearance and Krishna's activities are divine (*divyam*), does not come back to this material world (*punar janma naiti*) once he quits his mortal body (*tyaktva deham*), rather he attains Krishna, he goes back to the spiritual world (*punar janma naiti*). Each one of us has a wonderful home in the spiritual abode. This is mentioned not only in Bhagavad Gita but even the Bible tells us in many places that our home is in God's kingdom, and we are lost here.

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Bible: 6.31-33)

So the Absolute Truth is a person. That is demonstrated when He descended in His original form as Krishna. Impersonal means where there is no activity. But Krishna is full of *rasa* - mellows which He relishes with His infinite devotees eternally.



1. What is the meaning of 'person'? What is impersonal?
2. Some people think, "a person's form is limited by space and time, then how can God have a personal form?" Give the correct understanding of this as per Bhagavad Gita.
3. Quote the verse that states that Lord Krishna pervades the creation as a person.
4. How do Nirakara and Nirguna refer to Lord Krishna?

3.2.2 Krishna, His devotees, and eternal relationships

The set of four verses of Bhagavad Gita 10.8, 10.9, 10.10 and 10.11, which is known as *chatuh-shloki*, is very important in this context. These four verses together state the nature of the Absolute Truth and the process of attaining the Absolute Truth. Lord Krishna defines Absolute Truth in BG 10.8, and devotional service in BG 10.9. He speaks as a person and assures the individuality of His devotees. As a person, He reciprocates with those who want to get liberated.

*aham sarvasya prabhavo
mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante mām
budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ
[BG 10.8]*

Translation: “I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.”

This verse makes it clear that the existence of God is independent of multitudes of universes including their inhabitants. Our existence is completely dependent on His grace. Krishna emphatically declares that He is that God. So, a wise person worships Him with devotion and gratitude. Such wise persons perform devotional service as defined in the next verse:

*mac-cittā mad-gata-prāṇā
bodhayantaḥ parasparam
kathayantaś ca mām nityam
tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca
[BG 10.9]*



Figure 3.6: Devotees discuss Krishna katha together

Translation: “The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me.”

Verse 10.9 states that Lord Krishna is the Absolute Truth, and a devotee performs devotional service to please Him. It explains the process of devotional service. And the process is to live a Krishna conscious life where devotees are happy simply by conversing about Krishna and explaining about Krishna - the Absolute Truth.

*teṣām satata-yuktānām
bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ
yena mām upayānti te
[BG 10.10]*

Translation: “To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.”

We are covered by layers of ignorance which prohibit us from penetrating the divine sphere of Krishna consciousness. For attaining liberation from conditioned life, seekers of Truth give up the comforts of family, friends and society and seek the shelter of holy dham or the caves of Himalayan mountains. Still the access to the divine realm in which Krishna operates is very difficult for such seekers. If such seekers take to devotional service as defined in verse 10.9, Krishna provides intelligence by which they can come to Him. This verse thus says that Krishna reciprocates as a person (guide) with all those devotees who are engaged in Krishna-Katha, i.e., topics related to Krishna.

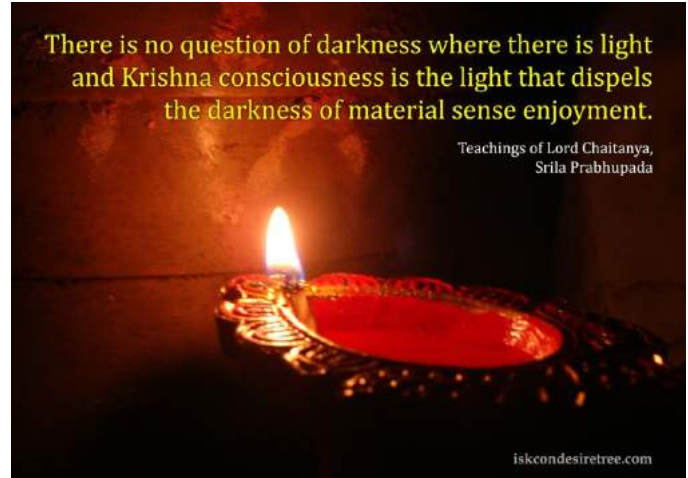


Figure 3.7: Lord Krishna dwells as Supersoul in the heart and guides His devotees

*teṣām evānukampārtham
aham ajñāna-jaṁ tamaḥ
nāśayāmy ātma-bhāva-stho
jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā
[BG 10.11]*

“To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.”

Verse 10.11 tells how Krishna provides intelligence to genuine seekers of truth. As Krishna resides within every one's heart as the Supersoul, He personally guides each of His devotees with the torch light of knowledge while vanquishing their ignorance. Krishna is a person so also we are. But His personality is inconceivable as He can simultaneously reciprocate with devotees who are infinite in number. In a perfected state, these relationships between Krishna and His devotees are firmly established. This topic will be further elaborated in the next section.



1. *What is implied by the first verse of Chaturshloki BG 10.8?*
2. *How do most intelligent people behave after understanding that Lord Krishna is the original form of the Absolute Truth?*
3. *How should one worship Krishna as explained in BG 10.9?*
4. *We are all drowning in the ocean of ignorance and miseries even after performing devotional service 24 hours a day. Who would guide us in such turmoil situations? Refer Bg 10.10.*
5. *What is the main obstacle in our path to reach Krishna? How does Krishna help us to overcome that obstacle? Refer 10.11.*
6. *What is the main import from the Chaturshloki BG 10.8-11? How does Krishna's personality dazzle through these four verses?*

3.2.3 The Sweet Relationship

Although the knowledge of Bhagavad Gita given by the Absolute Truth Lord Krishna is acknowledged everywhere, it is the personality of this Absolute Truth that makes Him look most attractive and beautiful. Lord Krishna as a friend or lover is much more attractive than He as the Supreme controller or the Supreme knowledge. Following narration will entail that Krishna and His devotees are eternally bound by an eternal loving relationship where the boundary between master and servant vanishes.

South Indian Brahmana

In the holy place of Sri Ranga-Kshetra (in Tamil Nadu), a Vaishnava brahmana would daily visit the temple of Lord Ranganath and recite the entire text of Bhagavad-Gita. However, he was not able to pronounce the Sanskrit words correctly. So, the Sanskrit scholars around the temple used to make fun of him. But, just by reading the Bhagavad Gita, he was overflowing with great spiritual ecstasy, and so he did not bother at all about what people were talking about him.

When Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, during His pilgrimage, visited Sri Ranga-Kshetra and saw the brahmana shedding tears of love, He asked the brahmana, "My dear sir, why are you in such ecstatic love? Which portion of Bhagavad Gita gives you such transcendental pleasure?" The brahmana replied, "My Lord, I am illiterate and therefore do not know the meaning of the words. Sometimes I read Bhagavad-gita correctly and sometimes incorrectly, but in any case, I continue with my reading because it is the order of my spiritual master."

The brahmana continued, "Actually whenever I open the Bhagavad Gita, I only see a picture of Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, sitting as a charioteer on the magnificent chariot of Arjuna. With the reins in His hands, Lord Krishna appears very beautiful. When I see this picture of Lord Krishna driving the chariot of Arjuna, His beloved devotee, I am filled with ecstatic happiness."

Lord Chaitanya thus embraced this brāhmana and stated that he had actually realized the essence of Bhagavad Gita.

What is the essence of Bhagavad Gita? We have already discussed that Lord Krishna as infinite is inconceivable. So what is that which makes a seeker of Truth to dedicate oneself life after life? It is one's relationship with the Supreme.

Though Lord Krishna is Lakshmiapati (husband of the goddess of fortune), He readily took the humble position of a chauffeur - chariot driver. For this extraordinary pastime of His, He is glorified even today as Pārtha-Sarathi (the charioteer of Pārtha or Arjuna). And the Brāhmana of Sri Ranga Kshetra is able to perfect his life by simple mediation on this sweet relationship - the relationship between Krishna and His devotees. Let us pray for our own divine relationship with Krishna which is our eternal right.



1. The _____ of Absolute Truth is more attractive than the knowledge of Absolute Truth.
2. Why was the brahmana of Sri Rangam not perturbed by the humiliation he was subjected to?
3. What made Lord Chaitanya get attracted to the brahmana?
4. What in Bhagavad Gita kept the brahmana always blissful?
5. One can not fully understand Lord Krishna, yet a devotee is ready to sacrifice his life for the satisfaction of Krishna. Why?
6. What is more attractive - Krishna as the supreme controller or Krishna as the best friend?
7. God exists beyond material _____ and _____.
8. Nature itself is not Krishna, it is Krishna's _____.
9. Impersonal Brahman is the glaring light of the rays that are coming from _____.
10. Among the many opulences that Krishna possesses, He also possesses the supreme opulence of _____.
11. One who understands the transcendental nature of Krishna's birth and activities does not take birth in this _____ world but attains His eternal abode.
12. Krishna can appear simultaneously in _____ number of places.
13. Because we are engaged in many layers of _____, it is very difficult to see Krishna.
14. The _____ of Absolute Truth is more attractive than the knowledge of Absolute Truth.
15. Krishna means He who attracts (all Hindus/ everybody).
16. God means (some unknown power/He Who is the source of all power).
17. Detachment can be acquired by (renouncing all our work/ connecting all our work to the supremely detached Lord Krishna).
18. There are many verses in the Bhagavad Gita that reveal (Krishna as the supreme divine personality/ Krishna as a formless light).

3.3 Krishna - The Supreme Person

We have been discussing how Krishna is the original transcendental person. Among various traits that define the idea of personhood, what is the most important trait? **Relationships are** the most defining aspect of personhood. Krishna is that transcendental person who possesses unlimited relationships. If you observe in this world, you can at best make few relationships with a lot of endeavors, and they are not even permanent. The relationships that you make in this world are temporary because your personality is not spiritual, it is mostly material. When you become a spiritual being, i.e., you discover yourself as a divine being, then you see that you have a relationship with Krishna. Krishna is our father, Krishna is our mother, Krishna is our teacher, Krishna is our all in all and these relationships are permanent or eternal. You can establish a relationship only with Krishna but He can establish a relationship with everyone. This is the difference between our tiny potency and Krishna's infinite potency. One of the defining opulences of Krishna is His relationship. Krishna as Absolute Truth is ONE, but He becomes many to celebrate His opulence. His friendly spirit makes Him manifest unlimited friends as cowherds in Vrindavana. His mood of a lover makes Him manifest unlimited girlfriends such as damsels of Vraja. These relationships are so sweet that the greatest of yogis contemplate on these relationships with care and attention. A few examples of such relationships are given below to realize this statement.

3.3.1 Krishna Responds to Draupadi's Call

When Draupadi was being disrobed by Dushasana in the assembly of Hastinapur, she called out 'Govinda!, and Krishna!' and Krishna personally became infinite saree to give her protection. It did not take Him any time to do this, in spite of the fact that when Draupadi was being disrobed, Krishna was in Dwaraka while she was in Hastinapur. For Him, there is no distance because He is everywhere.

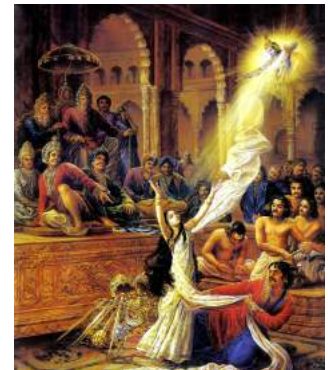


Figure 3.8: Krishna responds to Draupadi's call

3.3.2 Krishna protects Draupadi from the Wrath of Sage Durvasa

Another instance of how Krishna protected Draupadi and the Pandavas is as follows. While the Pandavas and Draupadi were in exile after they lost everything in gambling, sage Durvasa along with his sixty thousand followers came to see them. This actually was the wicked plan of Duryodhana, who knew well that being in the forest, Yudhishtira would not be able to provide any hospitality to the sage, who was known for his short temper.

It was a tradition in Vedic times that when a rishi comes to a Kshatriya, the latter should offer him nice food. So Durvasa asked Yudhishtira to make arrangements for their food while he and his disciples went for bathing in the nearby river. It so happened that Draupadi had a magical pot called the *Akshayapatra* in which she could cook and feed an unlimited number of people. However, she would not

be able to serve, once she had taken her food. The day sage Durvasa had come, Draupadi and her husbands had already taken their food. The Pandavas were in a crisis situation since Durvasa's wrath could turn them all into ashes. At that moment Draupadi just remembered Krishna and He appeared without any time lag because if you build a relationship with Krishna, He reciprocates spontaneously.

Krishna used to address Draupadi as *sakhi* because she was friend of Krishna.

He said, "What happened *sakhi*? Why did you remember Me?"

Draupadi said, "You already know everything, there is nothing hidden from you. Please solve my problem".

Krishna said, "You give me something to eat. If I am satisfied, these sixty thousand men will also be satisfied."

In utter despair, Draupadi exclaimed that there was nothing in the pot. Still Lord Krishna asked Draupadi to show the pot - *Akshaypatra*. There He saw that one tiny particle of rice was sticking to the bottom of the pot. As soon as Lord Krishna accepted that particle of rice, Durvasa and his sixty thousand followers immediately felt the satisfaction of having eaten a huge feast. They were in no position to eat another meal that they thought Yudhishtira would have nicely arranged. So Durvasa and his followers hurriedly left from the river itself without returning to the Pandavas' cottage.

From this sweet pastime, we can see that Krishna easily reciprocates with His devotees even in dire situations. He has all renunciation, power, fame, riches, knowledge, and beauty. But the most important among all such opulences is His relationship with His devotees, and time and again He reveals how He cares for them. These two examples should inspire us to build our individual relationship with Krishna. After all He is the Supreme Transcendental person.

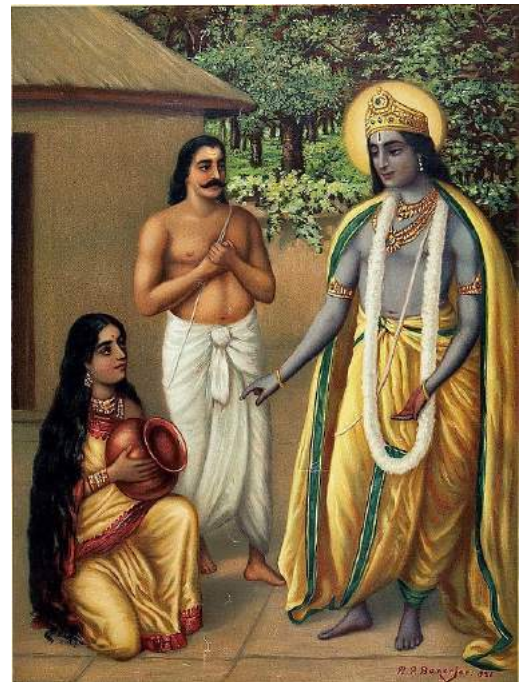


Figure 3.9: Krishna eats from the akshaya patra of Draupadi



1. *The most important defining principle of personhood is _____.*
2. *List key differences between the nature of relationships we have and that of the relationships Krishna has.*
3. *When Draupadi cried out, Krishna could appear in Hastinapura, which is a thousand mile from Dwarka, in no time because _____.*
4. *Why did the sage Durvasa visit Pandavas in the forest? How are Pandavas saved from this calamity?*
5. *"In extreme situations, even when our best of material means fail, Krishna protects us easily". Elaborate with examples.*

3.4 Transcendental Traits of Krishna's Personality

Any person is referred to by his name, form, address, activities, and qualities. Krishna, being the Absolute Person, also has infinite names, infinite forms, and infinite qualities. He performs sweet pastimes with His devotees, and He has a definite address. But all these traits of Krishna are divine.

3.4.1 Holy Name (Naama)

In this mundane world we may have several nicknames besides our official name. While we have names, these names are different from our persona. For example, a person may be named as Daya (compassion), but he may be cruel by action. The Absolute Truth has unlimited names, and his original name is Krishna. His name is divine as His name and He, the person, are non-different. Just like Draupadi called out for Krishna in the Kuru assembly, Krishna was there in person to help her out. In fact, Krishna has invested His full potency in His holy name. Thus, in this age of quarrel, it is the holy name alone that can liberate anyone:

*Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare*

3.4.2 Divine Form (Rupa)

In India, anyone can recognize a picture of Krishna. Krishna always holds a flute, His hair is bedecked with a peacock feather, He wears Gunja Mala as well as Vajrayantimala, glittering yellow garments dazzle upon Him, and His everfresh charming smile removes all distress of everyone. This form of Krishna is divine - that of eternal existence, knowledge, and bliss. Sat-Chit-Ananda Vighraha is attributed to Krishna. Being Sat or eternal, Krishna never crosses the youthful age of 16. He is always nava-yauvana - ever youthful. His body never changes but emits newer and newer transcendental beauty always.

Being *Chit*, He is always Full of Knowledge. Krishna knows the past, present and future in totality. In Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna was confused when He heard that Krishna has already spoken this divine science



Figure 3.10: Lord Krishna is ever youthful



to Sun God some 120 million years ago although He is his contemporary only. In reply, Krishna said:

“Many many births both you and I have passed. I can remember all of them, but you cannot, O Arjuna!”

Krishna has perfect memory and knows everything. That is why He is God.

Ananda or full of joy - Krishna is never affected by distress. What to speak of the Lord, His Devotees are also never distressed. All of us definitely go through much turmoil in life. However, once we turn to Krishna the smile on our face will return since Krishna is the source of all happiness. In essence, Krishna's form is divine, and that form is immeasurable. Like Mother Yashoda could not bind little Krishna despite her attempts to join many ropes together until He allowed her to bind Him in pure love.

3.4.3 Divine qualities (*Guna*)

Krishna has unlimited divine qualities. All of His qualities are very attractive. Devotees are attracted to Him for His qualities. Krishna as protector of Draupadi, as chariot driver of Arjuna, as messenger of Pandavas and as butter thief resides in our heart more than He as the Supreme controller. Our acharyas say that Krishna has 64 prominent qualities in infinite quantities. In particular, His rupa mādhuri, venu mādhuri, lila mādhuri and bhakta mādhuri are most talked about.

Lila-mādhuri—He is the performer of wonderful varieties of pastimes (especially His childhood pastimes).

Bhakta-mādhuri—He is surrounded by devotees endowed with the wonderful love of Godhead.

Venu-mādhuri—He can attract all living entities in all the universes by playing on His flute.

Rupa-mādhuri—He has a wonderful excellence of beauty which cannot be rivaled anywhere in the creation.

3.4.4 Pastimes (Leela)

When we perform activities, those very activities bind us to the cycle of birth, death, old age, and disease. But Krishna's activities are all auspicious and divinely natural. His stealing of butter, His killing of demons or His protection of devotees are all of Absolute nature, i.e., there is no anomaly.

3.4.5 Divine Abode (*Dhāma*)

Krishna speaks of His abode in the 15th chapter of the Bhagavad gita as follows (15.6): “That Supreme abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or the moon, nor by fire or electricity. Those who reach it never return to this material world.”

Just like there are innumerable universes in the material space, there are unlimited spiritual universes in the conscious space, known as Vaikuntha planets. That is why Vrindavana, Ayodhya, Jagannatha Puri and Mayapur are much revered by the seekers of Truth. Goloka Vrindavana is the topmost Vaikuntha planet. So, Krishna has a definite address.



1. In how many ways a person is known to others?
2. How is Krishna's name different from our name?
3. What are four special divine qualities that Lord Krishna has but His other Vishnu expansions do not have?
4. There is no difference between Krishna's killing and His protection. Why?

3.5 Who cannot understand Krishna as He is?

In verse 7.25 of Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says that not everybody can understand Him.

*nāham prakāśaḥ sarvasya
yoga-māyā-samāvṛtaḥ
mūḍho 'yaṁ nābhijānāti
loko mām ajam avyayam*

Translation: “I am never manifest to the foolish and unintelligent. For them I am covered by My internal potency, and therefore they do not know that I am unborn and infallible.”

So, to the foolish and unintelligent, Krishna will never manifest. Even when Krishna was present in this world 5000 years ago Duryodhana could not recognize Him. The following story will elaborate this further.

3.5.1 Krishna is Bhāvagrāhi (Krishna Accepts Our Emotions)

Once Duryodhana to show off his opulence, employed many expert chefs in preparing thousands of food items for Krishna. He arrogantly thought that Krishna was a cowherd boy, and He would at best know how to eat butter. He decided to show Krishna how many varieties of foodstuffs one can enjoy. But when Krishna arrived, He did not even look at those preparations. He went to the house of Vidura, who was a dear devotee of the Lord. Vidura was not there but Vidura's wife, also a dear devotee of the Lord, was present. Seeing the Lord at home, she became overjoyed and anxious to serve Him. In her excitement and anxiety, she began serving the Lord with some bananas that were lying in her kitchen. However, she was so excited that as she was peeling off the bananas, she kept throwing off the bananas and feeding the peels to Krishna. And Krishna was actually eating those banana peels!



Figure 3.11: Vidur's wife feeds banana peels to Krishna



From this story we can see how Krishna accepts our emotions or *bhāva*. He relishes our feelings for Him. Vidura's wife was in ecstasy because she could not believe that Krishna had come to her small cottage. Though she could not serve the Lord properly in her ecstasy and served Him banana peels, she was overwhelmed with emotions of pure love for the Lord and that pure feeling attracted the Lord. He is not attracted by all the opulence one may possess because ultimately all that opulence belongs to Krishna.

3.5.2 Wisdom through Renunciation

It is interesting to know how and why we are attached to everything we possess - even to the most insignificant things, like our clothes or our coffee mug! On introspection, one wonders why one is attached to the things one possesses. A feeling of attachment comes from the fear of losing. If we know that our possessions are going to be taken away from us, then it implies that they do not belong to us anyway. We literally possess nothing and that is why we have the fear of losing. God, however, is not attached to anything since He truly possesses everything, and nobody can take away anything from Him.

STORY: Sleeping on the Bare Ground When the Bed is Broken

A man received a bed as dowry from his father-in-law. But he was not much respected by his in-laws, so he was given a very cheap bed. Very soon the bed was broken and the man, just to save his face, started speaking like a renunciate in respect of his material loss. He decided to sleep on the bare ground thereafter. He also started preaching to everyone that every object of pleasure and comfort is temporary, and we should renounce everything without a false sense of attachment.

Purport of the Story by Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Sarasvati Thakura :

True renunciation is not that one sleeps on the bare ground when the bed is broken. In fact, this reflects nothing but a motive for earning fame and appreciation for one's unusual activities. When an impersonalist or illusionist shows off his renunciation in this material world, he simply exposes himself to be in anger or deep attachment with those objects of apparent renunciation. He would have continued to enjoy those objects if they were of no trouble to him before. Pure devotees will never expose their spirit of renunciation in such a manner. They renounce everything for the satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna. They know very well that the Lord is the Supreme enjoyer, and that no living entity should have any desire for enjoyment for his own sake. A pure devotee is ever satisfied with the remnants obtained from the Lord as His causeless mercy, and he is never unhappy or attached with any such object.



1. Krishna can reciprocate with unlimited jivas or souls simultaneously because He is _____.
2. Krishna and Krishna's names are _____.
3. In the _____ world, no one hankers for anything since there are unlimited resources available for everyone unlimitedly.
4. The relationship that each one of us has in this material world is _____ (permanent/temporary).



5. Krishna's body ___ (is afflicted by distress just as ours/ is always blissful).
6. Just as pearls of a necklace are strung on a thread, everything rests upon ___ (the living entity/ Lord Krishna).
7. Krishna will never manifest Himself to the ___ (foolish and unintelligent/simple and intelligent).
8. One should be ___ (highly educated/ humble) to be able to understand Krishna.
9. Krishna is attracted to our ___ (opulence/ emotions of pure love).

3.6 Purport (BG 10.12-13)

In these two verses the Supreme Lord gives a chance to the Māyāvādī philosopher, for here it is clear that the Supreme is different from the individual soul. Arjuna, after hearing the essential four verses of Bhagavad-gītā in this chapter, became completely free from all doubts and accepted Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He at once boldly declares, "You are param brahma, the Supreme Personality of Godhead." And previously Kṛṣṇa stated that He is the originator of everything and everyone. Every demigod and every human being is dependent on Him. Men and demigods, out of ignorance, think that they are absolute and independent of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That ignorance is removed perfectly by the discharge of devotional service. This has already been explained in the previous verse by the Lord. Now, by His grace, Arjuna is accepting Him as the Supreme Truth, in concordance with the Vedic injunction. It is not that because Kṛṣṇa is Arjuna's intimate friend Arjuna is flattering Him by calling Him the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Absolute Truth. Whatever Arjuna says in these two verses is confirmed by Vedic truth. Vedic injunctions affirm that only one who takes to devotional service to the Supreme Lord can understand Him, whereas others cannot. Each and every word of this verse spoken by Arjuna is confirmed by Vedic injunction.

In the Kena Upaniṣad it is stated that the Supreme Brahman is the rest for everything, and Kṛṣṇa has already explained that everything is resting on Him. The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad confirms that the Supreme Lord, in whom everything is resting, can be realized only by those who engage constantly in thinking of Him. This constant thinking of Kṛṣṇa is smaraṇam, one of the methods of devotional service. It is only by devotional service to Kṛṣṇa that one can understand his position and get rid of this material body.

In the Vedas, the Supreme Lord is accepted as the purest of the pure. One who understands that Kṛṣṇa is the purest of the pure can become purified from all sinful activities. One cannot be disinfected from sinful activities unless he surrenders unto the Supreme Lord. Arjuna's acceptance of Kṛṣṇa as the supreme pure complies with the injunctions of Vedic literature. This is also confirmed by great personalities, of whom Nārada is the chief.

Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and one should always meditate upon Him and enjoy one's transcendental relationship with Him. He is the supreme existence. He is free from bodily needs, birth and death. Not only does Arjuna confirm this, but all the Vedic literatures, the Purāṇas and histories. In all

Vedic literatures Kṛṣṇa is thus described, and the Supreme Lord Himself also says in the Fourth Chapter, "Although I am unborn, I appear on this earth to establish religious principles." He is the supreme origin; He has no cause, for He is the cause of all causes, and everything is emanating from Him. This perfect knowledge can be had by the grace of the Supreme Lord.

Here Arjuna expresses himself through the grace of Kṛṣṇa. If we want to understand Bhagavad-gītā, we should accept the statements in these two verses. This is called the paramparā system, acceptance of the disciplic succession. Unless one is in the disciplic succession, he cannot understand Bhagavad-gītā. It is not possible by so-called academic education. Unfortunately those proud of their academic education, despite so much evidence in Vedic literatures, stick to their obstinate conviction that Kṛṣṇa is an ordinary person.



1. Out of ignorance what do men and demigods think? How can this ignorance be removed?
2. How can we understand that Arjuna is not flattering Krishna since Krishna is Arjuna's intimate friend?
3. How can one become free from all sinful activities?
4. It is not possible to understand the Bhagavad-Gita by so-called academic education'. Elaborate.
5. List at least three doubts that you or someone you know may have regarding the Absolute Truth. What steps can you take to clear these doubts?

3.7 The Conscious World

There is a normal perception that God, who is the greatest, is all pervading but does not have His own address. This is NOT correct. Lord Krishna has His own address. He permanently stays in the capital divine city - Goloka Vrindavana, the top-most planet in the spiritual sky.

*ānanda-cinmaya-rasa-pratibhāvitābhis
tābhir ya eva nija-rūpatayā kalābhiḥ
goloka eva nivasaty akhilātma-bhūto
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi
[Brahma Samhita 5.37]*

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Govinda, the one who enlivens the senses of everyone by His personal bodily rays, resides in His transcendental abode, called Goloka. Yet He is present in every nook and corner of His creation by expansion of happy spiritual rays, equal in power to His personal potency of bliss."



Figure 3.12: Lord Krishna's abode



But this abode of Lord Krishna is transcendental as described in Bhagavad Gita:

*na tad bhāsayate sūryo
na śāsāṅko na pāvakaḥ
yadgatvā na nivartante
tad dhāma paramam mama*
[BG 15.6]

Translation: “That supreme abode of mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by electricity. One who reaches it never returns to this material world.”

The spiritual world is made up of conscious space while this physical world is made up of material space. The trait of conscious space is that it is all illuminating, full of knowledge and self-effulgent. In contrast, the material space is full of darkness and ignorance. The conscious space is eternal and is pervaded by the divine grace of the Lord all around. This space is reverberated with divine joy. In contrast, temporariness pervades the material space, and it is full of misery.

Indeed, everything in the spiritual world is conscious - trees, breeze, the flute, the garland, sand, sky - everything is surcharged with transcendental emotions for Krishna. The ultimate perfection is to become a devotee of Krishna. When you become a devotee of Krishna, you become free from material conditioning. All your ignorance will be vanquished.

3.7.1 Material Space

Space may be defined as that which gives a unique identity to any object. We are able to distinguish distinct objects owing to the existence of space. The moment you withdraw space, there is nothing tangible or physical. When space is actually withdrawn, it sets in the process of devastation. Actually, this space is a manifestation of Krishna's illusory energy. Some of the traits of this space are as follows:

- Material space has no connection with the spirit soul. However, it is within Krishna. This is possible through Krishna's illusory energy or *māyā shakti*.
- Activities in the material space create more distance between *Jīva* and *Krishna*.
- Two individuals may have much physical proximity in the material space. However, they may be far apart in terms of their mental consciousness. This implies there exists a hierarchy in material space, i.e. two objects can be in proximity in terms of locational semantics while the same two objects can be far apart from each other in terms of emotional semantics.
- Unfortunately, we do not have a semantic understanding of the material space as of now within current science. But Bhagavad Gita states that this space consists of temporary existence, ignorance, and misery. We need to contemplate this space.

3.7.2 Conscious Space

The material space is just the reflection of the conscious space. The conscious space is made up of eternal existence, knowledge, and spiritual joy. Some of the traits of this space are:

- In this space, every object is conscious, effulgent and self-revealing.
- In the conscious space, we have a distinct identity based on our relationship with Krishna.
- Each conscious being is defined by a relationship with the Absolute Being, Krishna.
- The distinctions among entities in the spiritual space are not based on spatial distance but on their nature of *Divine Bhava* or loving emotions for Krishna.
- There is an immediate feeling of intimacy or closeness between the entities in the spiritual space. There is no physical or spatial distance here.
- Conscious space can expand. This can be explained through the instance when Krishna lifted Govardhana hill. There were an uncountable number of men, women, and animals under the hill, which is not really possible in the material world. This happened because space expanded to fulfil Krishna's desire.



Figure 3.13: Krishna lifts Govardhan hill



1. What is the address of Lord Krishna?
2. Lord Krishna's abode is made of _____.
3. What is the nature of Krishna's abode as given in BG 15.6?
4. What is material space?
5. How is conscious space different from material space?
6. Lord Krishna performs His pastimes within the conscious space.
How does this idea change our world-view?

3.8 Krishna and the Living Entity (Jīva):

Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita:

*mamaivārṁśo jīva-loke
jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manaḥ-śaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi
prakṛti-sthāni karṣati*
[BG 15.7]

Translation: “The living entities in this conditioned world are my eternal, fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind.

Thus, we as living entities are parts and parcels of Krishna but there are many differences between the two and they are listed below:

Differences between Krishna and Jīva

- Krishna is the supreme conscious being while jīva is a tiny conscious being.
- Krishna's free-will is unlimited and His desires always get fulfilled while jīva's free will is very limited and his desires hardly get fulfilled.
- Krishna feels everyone's desires and satisfies them accordingly while jīva hardly feels beyond his/her own selfish desires.
- Krishna thinks for everyone while jīva hardly thinks for others.

So, Krishna is the only Purusha.

Katha Upanishad 2.2.13 says that:

*nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām
eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān*

Translation: “He is the prime eternal among all eternal. He is the supreme living entity of all living entities, and He alone is maintaining all life.”

3.8.1 Krishna's Energy

As we discussed before, Krishna is the source of all opulence, power or energy. His energies are mainly classified into two: **spiritual and material**. While both are derived from Krishna, one is considered to be superior, the spiritual and the other inferior, the material energy. We, as jīvas or individual living entities belong to the superior or spiritual category but are covered by the inferior or material energy. In Bhagavad Gita seventh chapter, Krishna Himself says the following about His energy:

- “Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego - all together these eight constitute My separated material energies.” (BG 7.4)
- “Besides these, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is another, superior energy of Mine, which comprises the living entities who are exploiting the resources of this material, inferior nature.” (BG 7.5)
- “All created beings have their source in these two natures. Of all that is material and all that is spiritual in this world, know for certain that I am both the origin and the dissolution.” (BG 7.6)

We will discuss more on these energies and the manner in which the superior energy is covered by inferior energy in later chapters to come



1. Describe the relation between Krishna and Jiva and their individual traits.
2. How many categories of energies Lord Krishna has? In which category we, the jivas belong to?
3. Some say that there is no distinction between Lord Krishna and the jiva. How would you refute such a claim?
4. Name five material elements.
5. Krishna is the only Purusha in all of existence. Comment

3.9 A passage from the Introduction to Bhagavad Gita As It is

Lord Krishna 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 *jñānī*, the *yogī* and the *bhakta*, or the impersonalist, the meditator and the devotee. Here the Lord clearly tells Arjuna that He is making him the first receiver of a new *paramparā* (disciplic succession) because the old succession was broken. It was the Lord's wish, therefore, to establish another *paramparā* in the same line of thought that was coming down from the Sun-God to others, and it was His wish that His teaching be distributed anew by Arjuna. He wanted Arjuna to become the authority in understanding the *Bhagavad-gītā*. So, we see that *Bhagavad-gītā* is instructed to Arjuna especially because Arjuna was a devotee of the Lord, a direct student of Kṛṣṇa, and His intimate friend. Therefore, *Bhagavad-gītā* is best understood by a person who has qualities similar to that of Arjuna. That is to say he must be a devotee in a direct relationship with the Lord. As soon as one becomes a devotee of the Lord, he also has a direct relationship with the Lord. That is a very elaborate subject matter, but briefly it can be stated that a devotee is in a relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in one of five different ways:

1. One may be a devotee in a passive state;
2. One may be a devotee in an active state;
3. One may be a devotee as a friend;
4. One may be a devotee as a parent;
5. One may be a devotee as a conjugal lover.

Arjuna was in a relationship with the Lord as a friend. Of course, there is a gulf of difference between this friendship and the friendship found in the material world. This is transcendental friendship, which everyone cannot have. Of course, everyone has a particular relationship with the Lord, and that relationship is evoked by the perfection of devotional service. But in the present status of our life, not only have we forgotten the Supreme Lord, but we have forgotten our eternal relationship with the Lord. Every living being, out of the many, many billions and trillions of living beings, has a particular relationship with the Lord eternally. That is called *svarūpa*. By the process of devotional service, one can revive that *svarūpa*, and that stage is called *svarūpa-siddhi* – perfection of one's constitutional position. So Arjuna was a devotee, and he was in touch with the Supreme Lord in friendship.



1. *Why is the Supreme Lord Krishna revealing the supreme secret of the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna?*
2. *Name the three classes of transcendentalists. For whom is the Bhagavad Gita especially meant?*
3. *Who can best understand the Bhagavad Gita?*
4. *What are the five ways in which a devotee can be in a relationship with the Personality of Godhead?*
5. *Explain what you have understood by svarupa-siddhi and share some practical ways that you can implement in your life in order to establish your relationship with the Supreme Lord.*

3.10 Conclusion

Krishna is the Supreme Divine person. All of us can establish a transcendently sweet personal relationship with Him as a servant, friend, parent, and lover. As infinity, He is inconceivable yet, He can reciprocate with each one of us, just the way He acted as the chariot driver of Arjuna, messenger for Pandavas and friend of Sudama Brahmin. Everything rests within Krishna, yet He is performing sweet pastimes among His dear devotees. This is again inconceivable.

All kinds of inauspicious activities within this world are merely manifestations of our own dirty, petty, and selfish desires. Krishna is a mere witness but not at all responsible. These desires which we have been contemplating within ourselves for a long time get translated into our actions. As a result of these actions, we are transferred to this material world which is like the prison house of Krishna. Here again we have a choice regarding our actions which will further decide our stay in this prison house.

Krishna as the Supreme transcendental person is very endearing to all seekers of Truth as this is the only way we can attain completeness. Personal philosophy is the ultimate form of Truth. The realization of Truth although categorized as Brahman svarūpa, Paramātmā svarūpa and Bhagavān svarūpa, all forms of realizations are actually personal. Only some with poor funds of knowledge declare that the Absolute Truth is impersonal. Let's be clear that Lord Krishna is that Supreme Absolute Truth as all seekers of Truth have accepted.



State whether the following statements are true or false and rewrite the correct statements.

1. *Lord Krishna repeatedly reminds us that this material world is perfect.*
2. *Activities in the spiritual space create more distance between jiva and Krishna.*
3. *In the conscious space our identity is merged with that of Krishna.*
4. *Material space can expand or contract depending on an individual's desire.*
5. *Living entities are parts and parcels of Krishna. Thus they are the same as Krishna.*

Lesson 4

Description of Atomic Soul

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we studied in detail how Lord Krishna is the Supreme person. His personality transcends our experience of space and time. His divine personality is technically called *saccidānanda* (sat-chit-ananda). Being non-dual, His name, form, quality, abode and pastimes are all Absolute and hence transcendental (divine). We discussed in brief the nature of the conscious space and the material space as well as how both spaces have their origin in Krishna. In this chapter, we will discuss in detail the qualities of the individual spirit soul, or the *jīva*, and how it can transcend from the material space into the conscious space.

Once on a sea beach, a person named Gopal got swayed into the sea and was drowning. When he asked for help, the nearby fisherman dived in to search for him. Instead of saving the drowning person Gopal, he brought out the shirt of Gopal. All of us will certainly agree that the effort of the fisherman was in vain.

This simple allegory is there to illustrate that mere saving of the body will NOT save the soul. In the present-day world, all are concerned about the body, which is like the shirt for the soul, while they have no concern about the soul at all. We all know that there is a difference between the living body and the dead body. A body is living because consciousness pervades the entire body. Lord Krishna teaches us that the soul, a very tiny fragmental portion of Him, is the basis of this consciousness. A learned person must learn how to ascertain the difference between a dead body and a living body. Technically, knowledge starts when one introspects the difference between the spirit (soul) and the matter. As Lord Krishna affirms in BG 2.17 that it is the consciousness that pervades the whole body and is the basic principle by which a living body differs from the dead body.

*avināśi tu tad viddhi
yena sarvam idaṁ tatam
vināśam avyayasyāsyā
na kaścit kartum arhati*

Translation: “That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul.”

We will learn about the spirit soul as Lord Krishna has taught in the second chapter of Bhagavad Gita.



1. *What pervades the entire body? What does it signify?*
2. *Soul is divine. What does it mean?*
3. *What is the lesson from the drowning man story?*

4.2 The Spirit Soul

The mother of all questions is who I am? In vedic tradition everybody used to refer to oneself as ātma. Atma can refer to body, mind and soul as per the usage. The mystery is that even if the soul is pure and eternal as a unity of consciousness, it is hidden by the curtain of subtle body and gross body. Unless we approach a right authority, who is knowledgeable in the science of soul, we can never properly address the nature of soul. How can I get back to my original nature? How would I know that I am situated in my original nature?

4.2.1 Krishna and Soul are Co-Eternal:

In the battlefield of Mahabharata, Arjuna became crestfallen after realising that he must fight against Bhishma, Drona and likes who are dearer to him more than his own life. He could not decide whether he should fight or not. As he surrendered to Krishna seeking His instructions, the Lord said (BG 2.12):

*na tv evāhaṁ jātu nāsam
na tvarṁ neme janādhipāḥ
na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ
sarve vayam ataḥ param*

Translation: “Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be.”

By this particular instruction, Krishna is clearly saying that all of us are eternal, have always existed and will always continue to exist. Though we die at some point of time, it is our body which perishes, not the soul. In fact, both birth and death are only an illusion as they pertain to different material bodies. There are 8.4 million material bodies in which a soul is forced to dwell based on his past *karma*. We should thus recognise that we have already taken birth among plants, aquatics, insects, reptiles, birds, animals, and human beings many times.

4.2.2 Soul is Part and Parcel of Krishna

Lord Krishna emphatically tells that, as spirit souls, we are part and parcel of Him (BG 15.7):

*mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke
jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manaḥ-ṣaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi
prakṛti-sthāni karṣati*

Translation: “The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind.

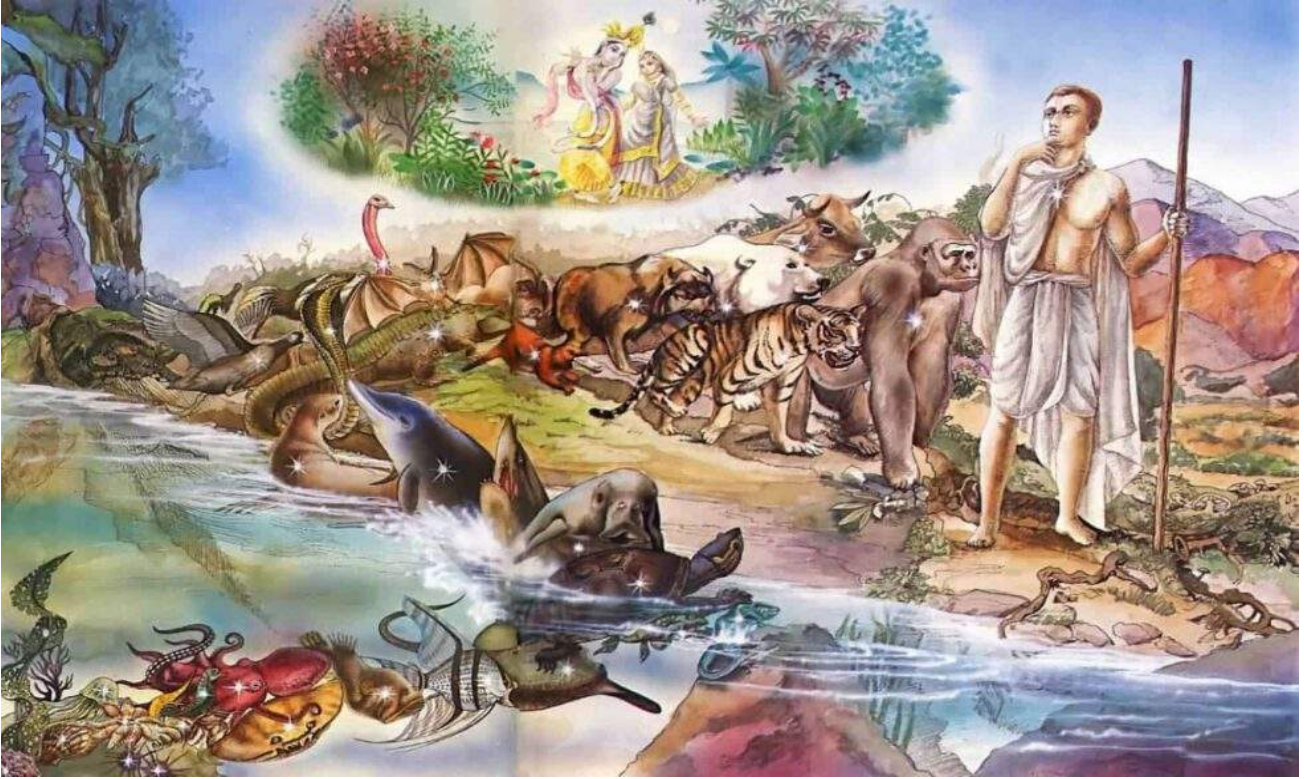


Figure 4.1: Being forgetful of Krishna, the embodied soul tries to lord over the material nature

The soul (*jīva*) and Krishna are coeternal because *jīva* is part and parcel of Krishna. Krishna is the father of each and every living being from a tiny insect to a large elephant. He alone is maintaining each and every living being. Krishna's form is *sat-chit-ananda* so also is *jīva*'s form. But while Krishna's form is infinite and inconceivable, *jīva*'s form is minuscule. As *jīva* is part and parcel of Krishna, many divine qualities of Krishna are there in *jīva*, but in a minute quantity. Therefore, Krishna is the master and we are all His servants.

“I am the soul, not the body. I am divine, not ephemeral.” This important knowledge is not being taught in present day education systems. Hence, our way of life has become antithesis to our actual nature so much so that people are made to behave like robots. This has serious ramifications in our ecology as well. Lesser mortals such as plants, aquatics, hills, and rivers are being destroyed.

In Vedic culture, all 8.4 million species – from plants and aquatics to human beings – are called '*prajā*'. Since everybody is a soul, a part of Krishna, there is no difference between plants, aquatics, birds, and human beings. All living forms are interconnected. Unless we understand this, we cannot make our world peaceful.



1. Quote the BG verse that affirms eternal individuality of all *jivas* and Lord Krishna.
2. All *jivas* are part and parcel of Krishna. Quote the verse.
3. There is a distinction between Lord Krishna and the *jiva* (atomic soul). What is that distinction?
4. What is meaning of the sanskrit word '*praja*'?.

4.2.3 Transmigration of the Soul

In Veda, the soul is referred to as *jīva* or *ātman*. But in the impure state, the *jīva* is engaged in a physical body. This embodied soul is continuously migrating from one body to another including the present body. As Lord Krishna aptly states in Bhagavad Gita 2.13

*dehino 'smin yathā dehe
kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā
tathā dehāntara-prāptir
dhīras tatra na muhyati*

Translation: “As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.”

The soul is continuously transmigrating in this very body from boyhood to youth to old age (refer Figure 4.2). Learned men who understand the nature of the soul do not bereave as they see death as a process in which the soul has transmigrated to a completely new body. So, *death* is the biggest illusion for those who are ignorant. Krishna is telling this in the beginning of Bhagavad Gita because Arjun was lamenting that he has to kill his teacher and his grandfather whom he loved so much. Krishna is assuring Arjuna: “My dear friend there is nothing called death, it's simply an illusion.”

Figure 4.2 depicts the transmigration of the soul from one body to another. Even from a human body one may transmigrate to a lower form of body such as plant, insect, or animal. Now, what decides our next body? We are actually forced to take up another body according to our consciousness at the time of death.



Figure 4.2: Transmigration of the soul within the body

In this context Srila Prabhupada gives this interesting example. In a prison house, prisoners are forced to wear a certain type of dress while their regular household dress and other belongings are taken away. Similarly in this material world, we are forced to take different bodies/different dresses (8.4 million dresses) according to our consciousness. There is a conscious evolution in ascending order from plants onwards until human form of life. Unless human life is used for perfection, the karmic cycle will put us again in the cycle of 8.4 million species.

So when the body perishes, it doesn't mean that the person is gone. The person still exists. The embodied soul cannot see this, and thus, laments. A learned person sees this, and hence, does not lament.



1. Which is true?
 - a. Transmigration of the soul from one body to another takes place at the time of death.
 - b. Transmigration of the soul takes place in this very body continuously.
 - c. Soul is ever existing and its dress is subject to continuous change.
 - d. All of the above.
2. Death is an illusion, so also birth. Explain.
3. The soul takes on a dress from 8.4 million species as per karmic cycle or as per conscious evolution. How does this affect your lifestyle and goal of life?

4.2.4 Further Description of the Soul

Jiva being part and parcel of Krishna is divine. Hence its qualities are inconceivable in terms of our mundane experiences. Here are some of these properties:

Bhagavad Gita 2.18

*antavanta ime dehā
nityasyoktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ
anāśino 'prameyasya
tasmād yudhyasva bhārata*

Translation: “The material body of the indestructible, immeasurable and eternal living entity is sure to come to an end; therefore, fight, O descendant of Bharata.”

Even a super microscope better than an atomic force microscope cannot measure the size of the soul. The soul has a spiritual dimension and is thus immeasurable using any material instrument.

Bhagavad-Gita 2.19:

*ya enam vetti hantāraṁ
yaś cainam manyate hatam
ubhau tau na vijānīto
nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate*

Translation: “Neither he who thinks the living entity the slayer nor he who thinks it slain is in knowledge, for the self slays not nor is slain.”

Bhagavad-Gita 2.20:

*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin
nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yaṁ purāṇo
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*

Translation: “For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.”

The chemical origin of life has been refuted in this statement of Lord Krishna. Life is never created, it is eternal. We were always existing trillion and trillions of years back, and we will continue to exist trillion and trillions of years in the future as well. Only our garments (bodies) are changing.

Bhagavad Gita 2.23:

*nainam chindanti śastrāṇi
nainam dahati pāvakaḥ
na cainam kledayanty āpo
na śoṣayati mārutaḥ*

Translation: “The soul can never be cut to pieces by any weapon, nor burned by fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind.”

Bhagavad Gita 2.24:

*acchedyo 'yam adāhyo 'yam
akledyo 'śoṣya eva ca
nityaḥ sarva-gataḥ sthāṇur
acalo 'yam sanātanaḥ*

Translation: “This individual soul is unbreakable and insoluble, and can be neither burned nor dried. He is everlasting, present everywhere, unchangeable, immovable and eternally the same.”

Bhagavad Gita 2.25:

*avyakto 'yam acintyo 'yam
avikāryo 'yam ucyate
tasmād evaṁ viditvainaṁ
nānuśocitum arhasi*

Translation: “It is said that the soul is invisible, inconceivable and immutable. Knowing this, you should not grieve for the body.”

Lord Krishna gives us information that seems to be inconceivable. Each one of us is a soul - a unit of consciousness. However, this very tiny unit of consciousness is indestructible, insoluble, unburnt, uncut, immovable, immeasurable and immutable. None of our physical experience allude to any such property. Since Lord Krishna gives us this information, hence it must be true. The soul must be anti-material or divine. Usually this is referred to as sat-chit-ananda - that which is eternally existing, full of knowledge and joy. This implies that in this human body we have the ability to sense ourselves as the soul divine provided, we follow the spiritual path laid down by Lord Krishna Himself. This is the main take-away that we must seek out what we are.



1. Enumerate properties of the soul. Do you have the experience of any of these properties? How does this experience make a difference to your life in general?
2. Why is the soul immeasurable?
3. Lord Krishna explains that the soul is the basis of all life forms which refutes the chemical origin of life. Write an essay on this topic.

4.3 Soul has the Form, not the Matter:

Every living being has a form. Does the soul have form? This is also answered in Bhagavad Gita 2.22:

*vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni gṛhṇāti naro 'parāni
tathā śarīrāni vihāya jīrṇāny
anyāni samyāti navāni dehī*

Translation: “As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.”

Trousers that we wear have two legs and the T-shirt that we wear has two hands because of the fact that our body has two hands and two legs. Similarly, every living being has legs, hands, nose, eyes, ears because the soul has these attributes. That is why Lord Krishna is saying that the body is the dress of the soul. So, the soul has an original spiritual form and assumes different garments based on his polluted consciousness. In our conditioned state, this concept of soul is an abstraction, but as we act on the platform of the soul, this abstraction becomes a self-evident reality.

We believe in the gross forms as they can be sensed by our sensory perception. But the origin of such gross forms lies in their subtle forms in the first place. A photograph of the original Benz patent motor wagon is shown in Figure 4.3. It was first built in 1885 and awarded the patent for the concept. The concept has the form, and hence, the gross form of that concept in the form of a car also has a form. Not only is the car, any gross object from a house to a robot is conceptualised first in the intellect and mind. Its form is given there. Any activity, be it technical research or cooking in the kitchen, we can experience that the ideas come first and these ideas must have some form. If the ideas do not have any form, its product will not have any form. In the same way, we can conclude that the soul has the form and hence the dress it puts on also has the form. So the popular notion that the body has a form but not the soul is grossly incorrect.

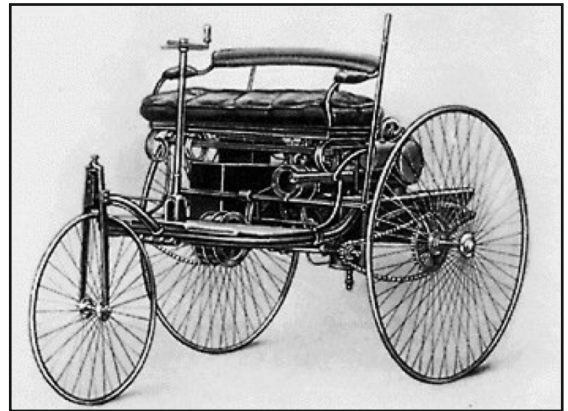


Figure 4.3: The first version of original Benz car



1. Many spiritualists argue that the soul is formless. Using BG teachings, refute this argument and establish that the soul has a divine form.
2. Ideas first manifest in subtle form before these percolate to gross forms. Explain this through the example of Benz patent.
3. The soul does not have material form but it has spiritual form. Establish this fact through logical arguments.



4.4 The Living Body

The Vedic literature provides a very illustrative idea of a living body while comparing it to a chariot as shown in Figure 4.4. We see in the picture a chariot drawn by five horses, a chariot driver and a passenger. The chariot itself depicts our body. The five horses of the chariot are the five senses of the body i.e., visual sense, auditory sense, touch, smell and taste. The ropes/reins represent our mind. The chariot driver is intelligence. The senses are to be controlled by the mind through intelligence. When a chariot is driven by uncontrolled horses, the passenger can only wait for his imminent death. That is how disastrous our situation is when we allow our senses to go uncontrolled. Those who are sincere in realising that we are souls, must control their senses. **When senses are controlled, the mind is controlled.** The mind can be controlled by spiritual intelligence which is contained in the wonderful verses of Bhagavad Gita.



Figure 4.4 Living body as a chariot

4.4.1 The Subtle body carries the soul from one body to another

The body in which the soul resides may be divided into two categories: one is the gross body (consisting of earth, water, fire, air, ether) and another is the subtle body (consisting of mind, intelligence and false ego). As we transmigrate from one body to another body, only the gross body perishes. The subtle body carries us from one body to another. We do not change our mind, our intellect and our false ego. These three things we always carry. You must have seen that when a child grows, he manifests certain behaviour. We see some children are very peaceful, yet others are very naughty. It is not that somebody has taught them how to become naughty. As the body grows, many traits that manifest in the gross body are derived from the subtle body.

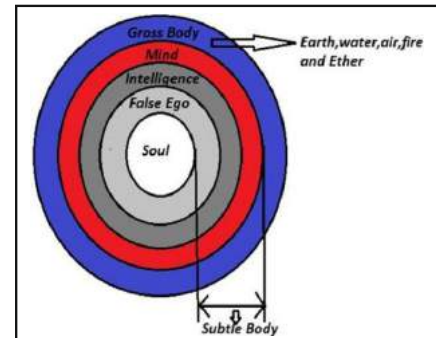


Figure 4.5: Jiva encaged in different layers of matter

Gopal and Ram are twins. They study together and are brought up in a similar manner. Yet, later Gopal goes on to become a professor in a reputed university while Ram excels in fine arts.

You will find such examples aplenty. Such examples are well understood when both subtle and gross bodies are taken together. Besides the environment, the gross body is influenced by the subtle body. So, the mind, intellect and false ego are always with the soul. Once the soul becomes detached from mind, intellect and false ego, then it is liberated. In that state, one can see Krishna directly. The process of liberation is to become dissociated from both gross and subtle bodies while getting fully attached to Lord Krishna. This is the basic instruction in Bhagavad Gita.

When death comes, all our subtle desires dissolve in our mind, and that mind carries us to a new body. Just like the air carries the aroma of a flower from one place to the other, the subtle body carries the soul from one body to the other. This is the reason why different people have different desires. Even if two brothers are born in the same family, they will develop different tastes because they are carrying their own karma/ own impressions with them. This mind is different from the mind of the soul. So, the physical mind and the mind of the soul are different. Soul has its own spiritual body comprising mind, ears, eyes, heart, and other organs. The material mind, intellect and false ego are the part of the subtle body while earth, water, fire, air, and ether constitute the gross body. We need to transcend our experiences beyond these gross and subtle bodies to be able to experience our-selves (the soul). That is why Lord Krishna concludes the description of the soul as (BG 2.29):

*āścarya-vat paśyati kaścīd enam
āścarya-vad vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ
āścarya-vac cainam anyaḥ śṛṇoti
śrutvāpy enam veda na caiva kaścit*

Translation: “Some look on the soul as amazing, some describe him as amazing, and some hear of him as amazing, while others, even after hearing about him, cannot understand him at all.”



1. Explain the analogy given here to understand the structure of the living being.
2. What carries the soul from one gross body to another?
3. Why is the soul so amazing and inconceivable?
4. Both subtle and gross bodies are physical. Still modern science has not understood the subtle body. Why?
5. What are constituents of the gross body?
6. What are constituents of the subtle body?
7. Can we kill someone giving the argument that ‘You are not this body but soul’? Justify your answer.
8. Animal slaughter is prohibited as per the teachings of Bhagavad Gita. Why?
9. Soul has the form NOT the matter. Explain.

4.5 Learning from History

King Chitraketu's life story is very illustrative to learn about the soul and its transmigration.

King Chitraketu's Lamentation

Once the world was ruled by a powerful king named Chitraketu. King Chitraketu had many beautiful wives, but he did not receive a child from any of them, as they were all barren. Upon the advice of Angira muni, King Chitraketu arranged for a special sacrifice to the demigods and then offered the remnants of the sacrificial food to one of his queens named Krtadyuti. At the end of the sacrifice, Angira muni told him, “O great king, you will now have a son who will be the cause of both jubilation and lamentation.”

Chitraketu was overjoyed to know that he would finally get a son, but he wondered about the sage's last words. He thought, "Angira must have meant that I will be greatly happy when my son is born. But what did he mean by the child being the cause of lamentation? Of course, being my only son, he will automatically become the heir to my throne. Therefore, he might become proud and disobedient. That might be a cause for lamentation. But a disobedient son is better than no son at all."

In due course of time, Krtadyuti begot a son. King Chitraketu could not contain his joy. He raised his infant son carefully and his affection for queen Krtadyuti increased daily. The other wives, who felt neglected, burned with anger and envy. As their envy increased, they lost their intelligence, and their hearts became hard like stone. They met secretly and decided that the only way to regain the love of their husband was to poison the child.

Death of the Prince

One afternoon, as queen Krtadyuti walked in the courtyard of the palace, she thought of her son sleeping peacefully in his room. Because she loved the child dearly and could hardly bear to be without him for a moment, she ordered the nurse to awaken him from his nap and bring him to the garden. But when the maidservant approached the child, she saw that his eyes were turned upwards, and there were no signs of life. Horrified, she held a swab of cotton beneath the boy's nostrils, but the cotton did not move. In great agitation, she struck her breast with both hands and wept loudly.

Some time passed, and the anxious queen approached the child's bedroom. Hearing the nurse's wailing, she entered the room and saw that her son had passed away from this world. In great lamentation, with her hair and dress in disarray, the queen fell to the ground unconscious. When the King heard of his son's death, he became nearly blind with grief. His lamentation grew like a conflagration, and as he ran to see the dead child, he repeatedly stumbled and fell.

Surrounded by his ministers and court officers, the king entered the boy's room and collapsed unconscious at the child's feet, his hair and dress scattered. When he regained consciousness, he was breathing heavily, his eyes were filled with tears, and he was unable to speak.

When the queen saw her husband's suffering and again viewed the dead child, her grief increased all the more. This increased the pain in the hearts of all the residents of the palace. The queen's flower garlands slipped from her body, and her smooth jet-black hair became tangled. Falling tears smeared the cosmetics beneath her eyes. She began to curse the Supreme Lord, "O Providence! During the lifetime of the father, you have caused the death of his son. You are certainly the enemy of the living beings and are not at all merciful." Turning to her beloved child, she said, "My dear son, I am helpless and aggrieved. You should not give up my company. How can you leave me? Just look at your lamenting father! You have slept for a long time. Now please get up. Your playmates are calling you to play. You must be very hungry, so please get up immediately and take your lunch. My dear son, I am most unfortunate, for I can no longer see your sweet smile. You have closed your eyes forever. You have been taken from this planet to another place, from which you will not return. My dear son, unable to hear your pleasing voice, I can no longer maintain my life."

The king began crying loudly. As the mother and father lamented, all their followers joined them, bemoaning the untimely death of the child. Because of the sudden demise of the prince, all the citizens of the kingdom were also grief-stricken.

Arrival of Angira Muni and Narada Muni

When the great sage Angira understood that the king was almost dead-person immersed in an ocean of sorrow, he went there with his friend, the saint Narada. The two sages found the king, overwhelmed by lamentation, lying like a dead body beside the dead body of his son. Angira addressed the king sharply, “Wake up from the darkness of ignorance, O king! What relationship do you have with this child? You may say that you are now related as father and son, but do you think that this relationship existed before his birth? Does it truly exist now? Will it continue now that he is dead? O King, as small particles of sand sometimes come together and are sometimes separated due to the force of the ocean's waves, living entities who have accepted material bodies sometimes come together and are sometimes separated by the force of time.” Angira wanted the king to understand that all bodily relationships are temporary.

Narada Muni Invites the soul back into the Body of the Prince

Then, Narada Muni, by his mystic power, brought the soul of the prince back into the dead body. Narada said, “O living entity, all good fortune unto you. Just see your father and mother. All your friends and relatives are overwhelmed with grief because of your death. Because you died untimely, the balance of your life still remains. Therefore, you may enjoy the remainder of the years allotted to you in this body with your friends and relatives, and later you may accept the royal throne and all the opulences given by your father.”



Figure 4.6: Chitraketu's son is brought back to life by Sri Narada

The Child gives a Transcendental Message

The child who had been dead sat up and began to speak, not with the childishness of a young boy, but with the full knowledge of a liberated soul, “According to the results of my material activities, I, the living being, transmigrate from one body to another, sometimes going to the species of the demigods, sometimes to the species of lower animals, sometimes incarnating among the vegetables, and appearing sometimes in the human species. In which birth were these two people my father and mother? No one is actually my father and mother. I have had millions of so-called parents. How can I accept these two people as my father and mother?”

The Vedas teach that the eternal living being enters a body made of material elements. Here we find that such a living being entered a body produced by King Chitraketu and his wife. Actually, however, he was not their son. The living entity is the eternal son of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but because he wants to enjoy this material world, God gives him a chance to enter various bodies. Yet the pure living being has no true relationship with the material body he gets from his father and mother. Therefore, the

soul who had taken the body of Chitraketu's son flatly denied that the king and queen were his parents. In the material world, we come together as a family, stay together temporarily, and get separated, never to meet again.

The soul continued, "In this material world, which is like a swiftly flowing river, all people become friends, relatives and enemies in due course of time. They also act neutrally and in many other relationships. But despite these various transactions, no one is permanently related."

Millions of living entities come to this world, and all of them are given a certain type of body. A few living entities, say five or six, are put in a group called a family and they stay together for a period of time. They are then separated by death, never to meet again. It is like meeting somebody on a train journey from one place to another. During the journey, one makes friends with others, but once the destination comes, one goes one's way and others go their way. This is the case with families also. But once a living entity is put in a particular family he becomes attached to others as father, mother, brothers, sisters, etc., because of falsely identifying himself with the body. This attachment makes the living entity undergo the cycle of repeated birth and death.

Krishna Is the Real Father

The soul continued to speak, "Just as gold and other commodities are continually transferred from one place to another through buying and selling, so the living entity, as a result of his karma, wanders throughout the universe, being injected into various bodies in different species of life through the semen of one father after another."

The *Bhagavad-gita* explains that it is not by any father or mother that the living entity is given birth. The living entity's true identity is completely separate from the so-called father and mother. By the laws of nature, the soul is forced to enter the semen of a father and is injected into the womb of a mother. She cannot directly control the kind of father she will get; this is automatically determined by her activities in previous lives. The laws of karma force her to go to different fathers and mothers, just like a commodity that is bought and sold.

The living entity sometimes takes shelter of an animal father and mother, and sometimes a human father and mother. Sometimes she accepts a father and mother among the birds, and sometimes she accepts a demigod father and mother in the heavenly planets. As the soul transmigrates through different bodies, in every form of life – be it human, animal, tree, or demigod – she gets a father and mother. This is not very difficult. The real difficulty is to obtain a spiritual father – a bonafide spiritual master. Therefore, the duty of a human being is to search out such a spiritual master, for under his guidance one can become free from the cycle of reincarnation, return to his original home, and attain the original father, Shri Krishna, in the spiritual world.

"The living being is eternal", the pure soul continued, "and has no relation with so-called fathers and mothers. He falsely accepts himself as their son and acts affectionately. After he dies, however, the relationship is finished. Under these circumstances, one should not be falsely involved with jubilation

and lamentation. The living entity is eternal and imperishable; he has no beginning and no end, nor does he take birth or die. The living being is equal in quality to the Supreme Lord. Both are spiritual personalities. But because the living entity is so small, he is prone to be illusioned by the material energy, and thus he creates bodies for himself according to his different desires and activities.”

The Vedas tell us that the soul is responsible for her life in the material world, where she is trapped in the cycle of reincarnation, getting one material body after another. If she likes, she can remain suffering in the prison house of material existence, or she can return to her original home in the spiritual world. Although God arranges, through the material energy, to give the living beings the bodies they desire, the Lord's true desire is that the conditioned souls get off the miserable Ferris wheel of material life and return home, back to Godhead.

Suddenly the boy became silent, as the pure soul left the body of the child, and the body fell lifeless to the floor. Chitraketu and the other relatives were astonished. They cut the shackles of their false attachments and gave up their lamentation. Then they performed the funeral ceremony, cremating the body. Because King Chitraketu and his queen had become fully cognizant of spiritual knowledge, including the science of reincarnation, they easily gave up the material attachment that leads to pain, fear, grief, and illusion.



1. *It is the special affection of King Chitraketu for Kritadyuti that resulted in the death of his son. What do you learn from this incident for your own life?*
2. *Narrate your own experience of losing one of your near and dear ones. How did you handle that experience then? How will you handle that experience now?*
3. *Based on teachings from this story, prepare a brief that you will read out when you are asked to speak at a condolence meeting held for an important person in your community.*
4. *We are related to one another as mother, father, son, daughter, husband, wife, friend and so forth. What did you learn about the nature of these relations based on this story?*
5. *What do you learn about the nature of attachment from this story? How does attachment start, what does it bring with it and how does it end?*
6. *What is the importance of sadhu sanga like that of Sri Angira and Sri Narada?*
7. *Why did the son (Harshashoka) refuse to acknowledge King Chitraketu as his father?*
8. *Explain how one's life is like a journey among 8.4 million species. How can you break this cycle? What is the ultimate journey?*
9. *What factors decide what next body you would get? What kind of body would you prefer to have in your next life and why?*
10. *Who is responsible for the pleasures and distresses in our lives? Who is responsible for the different bodies we have to wander through?*
11. *Lord Krishna is our real father. How can we establish this eternal relation?*

4.6 Conclusion

Arjuna surrendered to Lord Krishna when he was confused in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Lord Krishna explained to Arjuna the science of the soul - ātma-jñāna. 'Who am I?' is always more than a multi-billion-dollar question. Unless I know my original nature, whatever I do has no value. Human life is meant to factually experience that I am the soul, eternal part and parcel of Krishna. While Lord Krishna is infinite, the jīva is infinitesimal. The soul is a very tiny spiritual spark but animates all living organisms that include plants, aquatics, reptiles, birds, animals and humans. The soul is perceived by the divine consciousness it manifests both in subtle and gross body. Lord Krishna explains in the Chapter 2 of Bhagavad Gita that this unit of consciousness is indestructible, unburnt, immutable and immovable. This divine nature can be experienced by sanctifying bodily actions which is popularly known as the yoga system. This will be dealt in Chapter 6. But the very idea that we are immortal but are transmigrating from one body to another should open our eyes to another kind of lifestyle which must be eternal and full of bliss. The information that the soul has a spiritual form and can attain an eternal blissful life in Lord Krishna's divine abode is a revolutionary idea that can catapult human endeavour in another dimension free from material vices such as lust, greed, anger, pride, arrogance and illusion. We will deal with this aspect in the next chapter.

Lesson 5

Description of the Soul – Part II – Matter and Consciousness

5.1 Introduction

In the previous lesson - Chapter 4, we learnt how we, the atomic souls, are parts and parcels of Supreme Lord Krishna. We learnt that the presence of soul is the difference between a living entity and dead matter. Lord Krishna taught Arjuna that the soul is eternal, and it transmigrates from one body to another. The Lord also described the eternal qualities of the Atomic Soul. In this lesson, the distinction between matter and consciousness as taught by Lord Krishna will be further deliberated upon.

5.2 Who am I?

In this world, we are all inquisitive about the ontology of everything. What is everything made up of? Within science, we believe that an object consists of atoms and molecules. The structure of the object depends on the type of molecular bonding which results in structures such as solids, liquids, and gases. Can we extend such ideas while contemplating our own self?



Figure 5.1: Are we just a bag of chemicals?

On a lighter note, if we contemplate that way, it may turn out that we are just a bag of chemicals, just worth a few hundred rupees. Certainly, this is not what you are.

So, who are we? We are certainly not our eyes, ears and tongue. We can exist being blind, deaf or dumb. We cannot claim that we are our thoughts, intellect and feelings. These are just our attributes, and they continuously change. Chemical origin of life as proposed by modern scientists is an unsolved problem, a mere theory with many deficiencies. That is because, even a blade of grass cannot be manufactured in any scientific laboratory. Nor any laboratory can transform dry grass to milk as the mother cow so expertly does.



Figure 5.2: Cow eats dry grass and gives you milk full of vitamins

Here is an interesting quote of Srila Prabhupada: *(From Bg 3.13-16, May 23, 1966, New York)*



“Now, there are so many scientists. They are discovering vitamin value from foodstuff. Now, what is the vitamin value in the dry grass? Can any scientist say that this is the vitamin value in dry grass? If there is no vitamin value in dry grass, how the cow is producing so much milk, which is full of vitamins A and D? How, from dry grass, are vitamins coming out? Nowadays a physician prescribes some artificial vitamins for maintaining your body. **Now, what is the vitamin there in the dry grass so that the cow is eating dry grass and giving you nice milk full of vitamins A and D, essential for your life?** So, these are all wrong theories, that “This contains this vitamin. This contains this.” Let them go on. But natural foodstuff which is meant for human being, they are full of vitamins already by nature's law, by God's wish. So annad bhavanti bhutani [Bg. 3.14].”

In essence, we need to first understand the distinction between living matter and dead matter before we can ascertain what we are.

5.2.1 Living Body and Dead Matter

Let us first try to understand the distinction between living and dead matter. At the first level, we can see a difference between us and the dead-matter. We have the ability to feel, desire, love and think. A dead-matter cannot do so. As soon as we are pinched, we feel the pain. Yet we are not that pain. So even the living body is not part of the soul. There are thus two distinct experiences - one pertaining to inert matter and the other concerning the living matter. Please look at Table 5.1. Here we can note that no machine in this world is capable of experiencing hunger, fear, sleep and sexual desires. In addition, living organisms are capable of self-replication and can exhibit creative potency. So, there is a stark difference between inert matter and living matter yet both are matter only.

Living Organism	Machine
Experience Of hunger, fear, sleep, sexual desires	No AI machines as of now has these properties
Self replication	No Self replication
Creativity	No Creativity

Table 5.1: Differences between Living organism and machine

Yet there is a third experience - the divine experience which transcends the above two experiences completely. And very few of us are blessed to have such an experience although all of us in the human body are capable of having this third experience - that of pure conscious experience.

Bg 13.6-7 “ The five great elements — false ego, intelligence, the unmanifested, the ten senses and the mind, the five sense objects, desire, hatred, happiness, distress, the aggregate, the life symptoms, and convictions – all these are considered, in summary, to be the field of activities and its interactions.”

This verse from Bhagavad Gita tells us that all that we experience and can experience are part of matter - which I am not. I am not my desire; I am not my living symptoms, nor I am my own convictions. So, what am I? Thus, the search for pure consciousness begins.



1. Are you just a bag of chemicals?
2. If a cow is a bag of chemicals, how does she provide us milk - the wholesome food - by just eating dry grass? Why are we not producing food using AI machines?
3. How is the inert matter different from living matter? Explain using the difference between a most advanced AI machine and a living organism.
4. The living symptoms and convictions are not the part of the soul but that of living matter. Is this a shocking revelation for you? Comment.
5. How do you distinguish between a living and a dead body?
6. How can you perceive the existence of the soul?

5.2.2 Consciousness - What is it?

Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita 2.17:

*avināśi tu tad viddhi
yena sarvam idaṁ tatam
vināśam avyayasyāśya
na kaścit kartum arhati*

Translation: “That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul.”

Here, Lord Krishna asserts that the presence of the soul in the body is known by the spread of the consciousness throughout it. As a person, I am conscious of my own body. This consciousness tells me to search for the source — that is the soul — me. We immediately recognise any external threat or aggression on any part of our body. For example, even if a tiny thorn pricks our little toe, it hurts. This is because consciousness as a unitary whole pervades the entire body. Thus, I experience the unity of perception about the phenomenal world around me. Lord Krishna says that the source of this consciousness is imperishable. You cannot destroy it. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul. So, if you meditate more on yourself, you can always feel that you are a conscious being.

You are conscious of so many things around you. You are conscious of your bank balance, your relationship with near and dear ones, your life and death situations, your ambitions and so forth. But you are not conscious of your conscious-self. Why? Lord Krishna answers:

*mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke
jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manaḥ-ṣaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi
prakṛti-sthāni karṣati
[Bg 15.7]*

Translation: “The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind.”

From time immemorial, our way of life is soaked in deep ignorance - association with matter. We have considered our body and bodily extensions to be real. Thus, we have been subjected to pain and pleasure as well as birth and death. This is the ultimate problem of life, which will be solved if we start meditating on our natural self that is divine; that divine self is a part and parcel of Lord Krishna and is a mere instrument of Lord Krishna.



1. *When I see you in person, I have a unitary perception about your size, shape and demeanor. I do not experience your shape in a specific part of the brain while your color in another part. Explain this through the idea of consciousness given in BG 2.17.*
2. *Why do I not experience the "self" - the soul proper?*
3. *What are three different grades of experiences that a human is capable of?*
4. *Are we a bag of chemicals as science would make us believe?*

5.2.3 Analogy between the Car and the Body

The atomic soul is the driving force in the body. It is the presence of the soul which animates the body. Just as a car cannot move without the driver, similarly a body cannot function without its driver, the *soul*. The moment the soul leaves the body, this same body has no value. One may not be able to directly see the soul or find where the soul is situated but one can still understand the presence of the soul simply by the presence of consciousness. Sometimes we may not be able to see the sun due to the cloudy sky, but the sun is always there. The sunshine spreads everywhere. Similarly, we can understand the presence of the soul by the all-pervading consciousness in the body.

Srila Prabhupada gives an example in this context: A small drop of Cyanide (poison), when it touches the tongue of a person, spreads throughout the body. Similarly, the soul, though present near the heart region, manifests its presence through consciousness which is spread all over the body. Just like the sun, though present at one place spreads out sunshine everywhere, the soul, though present at one point, spreads consciousness all over the body.

Another example of fire and heat can explain this consciousness. If there is fire at one place, it is known by its heat and light that the fire radiates around that place. Similarly, the spirit soul present in your body spreads consciousness all over it.

Lord Krishna says in BG 15.7 that all forms of living beings are part and parcel of Lord Krishna, and hence, are divine. I am divine but I cannot experience that divinity by mundane material senses. Since time immemorial, I have been materially conditioned, and hence, I have lost touch with my divinity. Instead, I experience the material consciousness that is a perverted reflection of the original consciousness. That which is divine cannot be experienced by any material endeavour. The first step is to adopt the principle of Krishna consciousness as given in BG which will enable us to enter into the mode of goodness. Then the grace of Guru and Krishna will help us to start experiencing our divine nature.



1. Complete the analogies
 - sun : sunshine :: soul : _____
 - consciousness : soul :: _____ : fire
2. If I am divine, why do I not experience my divinity?
3. The consciousness I experience now (in a conditioned state) is a _____ of original consciousness.
4. What is the process by which one can experience the consciousness-proper?

5.2.4 Reflected consciousness

Experience is the basis for acceptance of any verifiable truth. An atom needs to be experienced, so also the cells of the body. Our experience has two realms: one is external and the other internal. We experience in our consciousness that which is temporary and that which is eternal. When we experience that which is temporary, the state of our consciousness is imperfect. When we experience that which is eternal, the state of our consciousness is perfect.

Thus, the process of self-realisation is a journey starting from imperfection and culminating in perfection. As we endeavour to perfect ourselves, our experience of the eternal makes us steadfast to remain on the path of self-realization. Although, soul is originally pure, its consciousness gets reflected through matter. Thus, our experience is mostly that of false consciousness which we may also call as reflected consciousness. If we experience in our false consciousness, we will experience the traits of lust, anger, greed, illusion, pride, and envy.

There are different material situations that trigger different emotions within us. Each emotion is a specific trait of our own consciousness. The presence of opposite sex or the possibility of acquiring a lot of wealth may arise lust in us. The failure to satisfy our desires may lead to anger. Demonstration of envy to our rivals and the pride that hides in us in terms of our high birth, bodily beauty, erudite education, or wealthy background are different states of our own consciousness.

As long as I experience these traits in my consciousness, that is not me. This is my false consciousness. The original attribute of the pure consciousness is beautifully described by the Lord as follows:

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā
na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām
[Bg 18.54]*

Translation: “One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me.”

In this verse, Lord Krishna says that in pure consciousness, one is devoid of any trace of six traits of false

consciousness - lust, anger, greed, pride, illusion and envy. Such a person does not lament for the past nor hankers something for the future. He sees in every living organism the unity of consciousness and the presence of the supersoul in each of them. Such a self-situated person is eligible for the divine grace of Lord Krishna to perform devotional service. But the attainment of such a state is not so easy. It is because of the covering of false consciousness, that even great yogis and mystics fall from grace. However, even if some mystics may conquer sex desire, which is the root of material existence, they fail to distinguish between the ultimate form of false consciousness and the pure consciousness, as both appear to be almost similar at the level of mode of goodness. So foolishly they declare themselves as God.



1. *What is false consciousness and what are its traits?*
2. *Which verse of BG describes the original attribute of pure consciousness?*
3. *Why do some yogis declare themselves to be God?.*

5.2.5 Experience of the reflected consciousness

A flower represents one of the natural aesthetics. As one moves around a beautiful garden, full of fragrant and colourful flowers, one may get intoxicated. Still, you will find individuals who may ignore such beauty as their passions lie somewhere else - perhaps in a beer bar. Let's dwell on this topic a little more. There are many people in this world for whom such beautiful flowers fail to make any impression on their consciousness. A botanist may become inquisitive about scientific reasoning of the emergence of such beautiful patterns that makes these flowers so endearing to people. Still, one may think that it is a good idea to start a business around flower and flower extracts. Another person may appreciate nature for blessing us with such wonderful manifestations. Yet a very rare soul will start glorifying the Lord from whom everything comes. He would remind himself that all beauty resides in Lord Krishna.



Figure 5.3: For a seeker, a flower represents the smile of Krishna

These deliberations will help us understand that no two persons have the same perception about the flower. This is also true for any other event in this world. This is because each individual is associated with a different level of false consciousness. This false consciousness is a mixture of three modes of material nature - modes of goodness, passion and ignorance - in different proportions. Thus, one sees things through a colored glass that is representative of one's false consciousness. Just like if you wear green coloured glasses, you see the whole world greenish and if you wear yellow-coloured glasses, the whole world appears yellowish. Similarly, because of our karma/previous activities and association, we have developed different consciousness (like different coloured glasses) and that's why different persons perceive the same object differently.

It is our false consciousness that determines our next body. Lord Krishna confirms this in the Bhagavad Gita 8.6:

*yam yam vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ
tyajaty ante kalevaram
taṁ taṁ evaiti kaunteya
sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitaḥ*

Translation: “Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, O son of Kuntī, that state he will attain without fail.”

If one dies in a state of wild consciousness, one may find himself taking birth among wild animals. If one dies in the consciousness of fruitive actions, he may take birth as a fruitive worker. If one remembers Lord Krishna at the time of death, he is blessed to attain the spiritual abode of the Lord.



Figure 5.4: One gets a body as per the consciousness at the time of death

What one remembers at the time of death is dependent on the way of life that he selects in the human birth. Animals are normally not endowed with the ability to pursue the process of self-realization. In human birth, it is our responsibility to know what is divine and reflected consciousness, so that we can adopt a way of life that is congenial for self-realization. Thus, is it not important for us to understand what is divine consciousness and what is reflected consciousness?



1. *In what different ways can different people look at a rose? Why is there such a difference in their perception?*
2. *What decides what one remembers at the time of death?*

5.3 Individual Consciousness & Absolute Consciousness:

Individual consciousness means that one is conscious of his own body, he is conscious of this phenomenal or material world through his own senses and he is only conscious of his own state. We are all individually conscious. Everybody has their own world view or their own conscious world, but nobody is aware of other's conscious world. This is called individual consciousness. Whereas Krishna is conscious of everything and everybody, and His consciousness is known as Absolute consciousness. A jīva can never attain Absolute consciousness. To explain this, let us take an example. Suppose you were with many other people and suddenly you were bitten by an insect, only you can feel the pain and others can't feel your pain even though they are in your proximity. Similarly, you can't feel others' pain or can't know what is happening to them. This is because you are conscious of only your body and not others. On the other hand, Lord Krishna is conscious of everything. This is the difference between individual consciousness and Absolute consciousness.

Think of a situation when you were traveling in a train and befriending a stranger. In a short time, you realize that you have been robbed by your so-called adorable new friend. That is because you failed to see his consciousness. You were only conscious of your body but not his — so you got cheated. There is another example that may make this point very clear. It often happens that a young boy and a young girl get attracted to each other just on the basis of lust. After some time, they both decide to get married. After marriage, both of them realize that they are poles apart in their consciousness in terms of likes/dislikes, priorities of life and so forth. Thus in a few months, their marriage ends up in a divorce. That is because none of them is blessed to see through the other's consciousness.

Even a liberated soul is only conscious of his own body and not of others. However, we notice many charlatans in this world who declare themselves God and cheat innocent people. That is why it is important that we learn Bhagavad Gita as Lord Krishna has taught to Arjuna and not allow ourselves to be victims of such charlatans.



1. *What is the difference between individual consciousness and Absolute consciousness? Explain with examples.*
2. *"After liberation one becomes God" - defy this idea using the concept of individual and Absolute consciousness.*

5.4 External and Internal Consciousness

We become aware of this phenomenal world through sensory perceptions, i.e., when senses including mind come in contact with objects of senses. The phenomenal world is the world of experience. There are five forms of object of senses: sound, touch, form, taste and smell. The way we react to such sensory perceptions reflects our consciousness.

When a lusty action of my friend arises lust in me, it is to be understood that my consciousness had lust. If some behaviour of my friend makes me angry, it implies anger was already there in my consciousness. When I see fault in others, it entails envy and pride sitting in my consciousness. However, if one remains undisturbed even in the presence of actions connected to lust, greed, envy and pride, then it is to be understood that such a person is internally (self) situated.



Figure 5.5: A honeybee like saintly person sees only others' good qualities.

Please ask this question to yourself: What is my consciousness? At present, the consciousness of each and every one of us is filled with vices such as envy, lust, greed, anger and ignorance. In another sense, the structure of my consciousness is very ghastly - like a venomous snake, full of envy to others or a worm inside the stool in absolute ignorance. Unfortunately, we all have similar states, but the irony is

that we always find fault in others. This fault finding is compared to the mentality of a fly in our śāstra. A fly always sits on dirt, similarly we always find faults in others instead of looking into our own faults. On the other hand, is a honeybee, which always sits on flowers; likewise an internally situated person sees others' good qualities. This is why one needs a realized soul, the spiritual master, to guide us in spiritual life. As the external manifestation of the Super soul, the spiritual master is empowered to see through the consciousness of a conditioned soul so as to guide him effectively in steady spiritual progress.

To summarize, a jīva can be externally conscious or internally conscious. When one is externally conscious, which every jīva is in the present situation, the consciousness is reflected through the illusory energy of Krishna. Whatever we perceive in our present situation, is through our gross senses (eyes, ears, nose, skin and tongue) and subtle-body (mind, intelligence and false-ego), and all of them together give us an impression of our “self” that is entirely different from us (spirit souls). Through such a process, we get a notion of false consciousness only, not the real one. We thus start searching for a chemical origin of life, assuming that everything is just matter. If one's lifestyle is such that he always resides in the conditioned state, i.e. a lifestyle that makes him externally conscious of the phenomenal world, the resulting consciousness is *asat*, *achit* and *nirananda*. His conscious experience is temporary - that of ignorance - and is in a state of substantial suffering. Thus, the soul in the impure state is predominantly unhappy and manifests the qualities of lust, anger, greed, pride, illusion and envy. That is why it is called external consciousness. This state is external to the soul.



1. *How can I tell the state of my consciousness by looking at my sensory experiences? Explain with examples.*
2. *Explain the difference between internally and externally situated consciousness with the analogy of a honey bee and a fly.*
3. *"The spiritual master can tell us about our consciousness better than us." Explain.*
4. *How does an externally conscious person come to a conclusion that life comes from just chemicals?*

The jīva (soul) can become internally conscious by purifying his consciousness. In this state of internal consciousness, the jīva concomitantly becomes conscious of Lord Krishna and of his own self. This is called self-realization. When you become internally conscious, you see things using the spiritual mind and spiritual senses. In this state, we have access to the conscious space. We see Krishna and we see ourselves as His servants - His part and parcel. In this state, the jīva is no longer under illusion. As stated in Caitanya Caritamrita:

*Kṛṣṇa sūrya-sama; maya haya andhakāra
jaha kṛṣṇa, tāhān nāhi māyāra adhikāra
[Caitanya Charitamrita-Madhya Lila – 22.31]*

Lord Caitanya states that Lord Krishna is like Sun and maya is like darkness. Wherever there is light, there can be no darkness. Similarly, when one is blessed with the mercy of spiritual master and Lord

Krishna, Lord Krishna reveals Himself within the heart of such a fortunate soul. As this fortunate soul sees Krishna, he also sees himself as well as other unlimited liberated souls who are constantly rendering devotional service to the Lord. This is called internal consciousness. In this stage, his divine senses and his mind, heart and body are all non-dual. As Lord Chaitanya says:

jivera svarupa haya krishnera nitya das

In my liberated state, I am an eternal servant of Lord Krishna. I am situated in conscious space, and I am non-different from my bodily parts (spiritual body). In this state I am naturally Krishna conscious. I am naturally attracted to Lord's qualities, abode, name and His unlimited activities in the form of His unlimited pastimes. That is the state of Krishna consciousness in which I would dwell when liberated.



1. *How can we become internally conscious?*
2. *Shall we still have senses in the liberated state, i.e., when we are internally conscious? What shall we experience then?*
3. *Why is it wrong when a liberated soul claims that he is god?*
4. *What is the svarupa of the soul?*
5. *What is the nature of the soul in a pure state?*
6. *What are the characteristics of the soul in an impure state?*
7. *What is a phenomenal world?*

5.4.1 Crossing this Ocean of Ignorance

When one is able to recognise that one's consciousness is ghastly and desires to purify oneself, Lord Krishna directs that sincere soul to the spiritual master who helps her kill her inner enemy and purify her polluted consciousness. But instead, if we continue to live without recognising (which we are doing at present) how ghastly our consciousness is, we have to suffer perpetually. In this context, there is a famous verse by Adi Shankaracharya depicting our helpless situation and how we should take shelter of Lord Krishna.

*punarapi jananam punarapi maranam
punarapi janani jathare sayanam
iha sam sare bahudustare
kṛpayā'pāre pāhi murāre
[Bhaja Govindam Stotram Verse-21]*

Translation: “Again and again one is born, and again and again one dies, and again and again one sleeps in the mother's womb. Help me to cross this limitless ocean of life, which is uncrossable, my Lord Murari.”

In our present state of polluted consciousness, we (conditioned souls) are subjected to dualities of the world and suffer due to repeated birth, old age, disease and death. The conditioned soul is subjected to tri-vidha klesha or three-fold miseries, as explained here:

1. **Adhyatmika Klesha:** This is the suffering caused by one's own mind and body. Diseases, depression, stress, and anxiety are manifestations of these sufferings. As long as one has a body in this material world, he or she must suffer in this way. We have practical experience that there is no one in this world who has never suffered from some disease, small or big. Mental diseases or psychological problems are the most common issues faced by the present society. Even great personalities like Ronald Reagan suffered from Alzheimer's disease and Margaret Thatcher from dementia.



Figure 5.6 : An example of Adhyatmika Klesha

2. **Adhibhautika Klesha:** This suffering is caused by other living entities. Mosquitoes cause malaria. My peers may act envious that might make me lose my job. War between countries, mass killing of Jews in the concentration camps and black plague that devoured Europe are some of the examples of this kind of suffering.

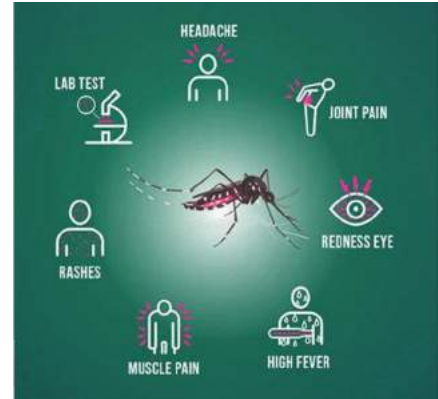


Figure 5.7 : An example of Adhibhautika Klesha

3. **Adhidaivika Klesha:** This kind of suffering is caused by demigods when humans in this earthly planet do not follow the path of dharma—righteousness. Excessive heat/cold, floods, earth-quakes, famines are some examples of this kind of suffering. We have no control over these kinds of miseries. These are forced upon us by superior living entities, i.e. the demigods.



Figure 5.8: An example of Adhidaivika Klesha

Everybody in this world must suffer from these three kinds of *kleshas* (sufferings). Nobody is free from them because we are in the conditioned state of false identification. But if you are pure then you are not affected by these sufferings as you have transcended this physical plane and are situated in the pure conscious space. The suffering is for those who are attached to this phenomenal world. But those who have dissociated themselves with this phenomenal world do not suffer from these threefold miseries.

Every conditioned soul must go through these threefold miseries whereas, soul, in its pure state is *sac-cid-ānanda*, where he is always happy, full of knowledge and eternal. One can retain their original state by cleansing their consciousness through the process of Bhakti. In this age of Kali Yuga, by the process of chanting the holy names of Krishna, “Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare”, one can purify his/her impure consciousness and regain the original one. This is stated in Brhan-Naradiya Puraṇa [38.126] as:

*harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gati anyatha*

Translation: “In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the holy name of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.”

In this verse, three times repetition signifies the chanting of the Hare Krishna Mahamantra as the definitive and the only way to attain pure consciousness and this has also been taught by Lord Chaitanya.



1. *What is the real problem of human life?*
2. *This world is constantly fraught with three-fold miseries - tri-vidha klesha. What are these miseries? Have you gone through any one of them?*
3. *What is the process by which one can remain in Krishna consciousness even while dealing with three fold miseries?*
4. *What are the four unavoidable problems a conditioned soul has to go through?*
5. *What are the different kinds of sufferings a conditioned soul is subjected to?*

5.5 The Story of the King Bharata

Bharata Maharaj is the legendary king after whom this land is known as Bhārata Varsha. Being ordered by his father, Lord Ṛṣabhadeva, Bharata Mahārāja married Pañcajanī, the daughter of Viśvarūpa. After this, he ruled the whole world peacefully. Formerly this planet was known as Ajanābha, and after the reign of Bharata Mahārāja it became known as Bhārata-varṣa. Bharata Mahārāja was very rigid in executing religious principles and following in the footsteps of his father. He therefore ruled the citizens very successfully. Because he performed various *yajñas* to satisfy the Supreme Lord, he was personally very satisfied. Being of undisturbed mind, he increased his devotional activities unto Lord Vāsudeva. Bharata Mahārāja was competent in understanding the principles of saintly persons like Nārada, and he followed in the footsteps of the sages. He also kept Lord Vāsudeva constantly within his heart. After finishing his kingly duties, he divided his kingdom among his five sons. He then left home and went to the place of Pulaha Ṛṣi known as Pulahāśrama. There he ate forest vegetables and fruits, and worshiped Lord Vāsudeva with everything available. Thus, he increased his devotion toward Vāsudeva, and he automatically began to further realize his transcendental, blissful life. Due to his highly advanced spiritual position, *aṣṭa-sāttvika* transformations, such as ecstatic crying and bodily trembling, which are symptoms of the love of Godhead, were sometimes visible in his body.



Figure 5.9: Bharata Maharaj remembers the baby deer at the time of death

Although Bharata Mahārāja was very elevated, he fell down due to his attachment to a young deer. One day after Bharata Mahārāja had taken his bath as usual in the river Gaṇḍakī and was chanting his *mantra*, he saw a pregnant she-deer who came to the river to drink water. Suddenly there was a thundering roar of a lion, and the deer was so frightened that it immediately gave birth to its fawn. It then crossed the river but died immediately thereafter. Mahārāja Bharata took compassion upon the motherless fawn, rescued it from the water, took it to his āśrama and cared for it affectionately. He gradually became attached to this young deer and always thought of it affectionately. As it grew up, it became Mahārāja Bharata's constant companion, and he always took care of it. Gradually he became so absorbed in thinking of this deer that his mind became agitated. As he became more attached to the deer, his devotional service slackened. Although he was able to give up his opulent kingdom, he became attached to the deer. Thus, he fell down from his mystic *yoga* practice. Once when the deer was absent, Mahārāja Bharata was so disturbed that he began to search for it. While searching and lamenting the deer's absence, Mahārāja Bharata fell down and died. Because his mind was fully absorbed thinking of the deer, he naturally took his next birth from the womb of a deer.

As Lord Krishna says in **Bhagavad Gita 8.6**:

*yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ
tyajaty ante kalevaram
taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya
sadā tad-bhāva-bhāviṭaḥ*

Translation: “Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, O son of Kunti, that state he will attain without fail.”

However, because he was considerably spiritually advanced, he did not forget his past activities, even though he was in the body of a deer. He could understand how he had fallen down from his exalted position, and remembering this, he left his mother deer and again went to Pulaha-āśrama.

He finally ended his fruitive activities in the form of a deer, and when he died, he was released from the deer's body. Then he took birth as Jada Bharata in the family of a Brahmin. In this body, he remained like one dull, deaf and dumb, so much so that when he was brought before the goddess Kālī to be killed as a sacrifice, he didn't protest but remained silent. In this life he could also remember the activities of his past life, and in order to avoid the influence of society, he remained like a deaf and dumb person. He was very careful not to fall down again. He did not mix with anyone who was not a devotee.

This process should be adopted by every devotee. As advised by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu: *asat-saṅga-tyāga* — *ei vaiṣṇava-ācāra*. One should strictly avoid the company of non-devotees, even though they may be family members. When Bharata Mahārāja was in the body of a *brāhmaṇa*, the people in the neighbourhood thought of him as a crazy, dull fellow, but within, he was always chanting and remembering Vāsudeva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although his father wanted to give him an education and purify him as a *brāhmaṇa* by offering him the sacred thread, he remained in such a way

that his father and mother considered him as crazy and not interested in the reformatory methods. Nonetheless, he remained fully Krishna conscious, even without undergoing such official ceremonies. Due to his silence, some people who were no better than animals began to tease him in many ways, but he tolerated this. After the death of his father and mother, his stepmother and stepbrothers began to treat him very poorly. They would give him the most condemned food, but still he did not mind; he remained completely absorbed in Krishna consciousness. One night, he was ordered by his stepbrothers and mother to guard a paddy field, and at that time the leader of a dacoit party took him away and tried to kill him by offering him as a sacrifice before Bhadra Kālī. When the dacoits brought Bharata Mahārāja before the goddess Kālī and raised a chopper to kill him, the goddess Kālī became immediately alarmed due to the mistreatment of a devotee. She came out of the deity and, taking the chopper in her own hands, killed all the dacoits there. Thus, a pure devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead can remain silent despite the mistreatment of non-devotees and will never fear for anything. Rogues and dacoits who misbehave toward a devotee are punished at last by the arrangement of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.



1. After whom, the Indian subcontinent is known as Bharata Varsha?
2. Who is Rishabh Deva?
3. How did King Bharata rule the whole world?
4. Why did he leave his kingdom?
5. How did he get attached to a deer?
6. After leaving his body, King Bharata attained the body of the deer. Why?
7. Describe his spiritual status in the body of a deer. What did you learn from this incident?
8. In the body of Jada Bharata, how did he act?
9. How did Jada Bharata react to the dacoits' attempt of sacrificing him in front of Goddess Kali?
10. Jada Bharata remembered his past lives. What will happen to you if you are given memories of your past lives?
11. What is the moral of this story?
12. Lord Krishna promises that His devotees will never perish. Explain this using the story of King Bharata.

5.6 Conditioning of Jīva - False consciousness

In Bhagavad Gita 7.5, Lord Krishna says:

*apareyam itas tv anyāṁ
prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parāṁ
jīva-bhūtāṁ mahā-bāho
yayedam dhāryate jagat*

Translation: “Besides these, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is another, superior energy of Mine, which comprises the living entities who are exploiting the resources of this material, inferior nature.”

There are two energies of Lord Krishna in this entire cosmic manifestation. The inferior and superior energies. The living entities (jīvas) belong to the superior energy and the matter (material nature) belongs to the inferior energy. In the 13th chapter of Bhagavad Gita, Krishna elaborately explains about matter and jīva. Let us revisit some of these verses:

BG 13.20: “Material nature and the living entities should be understood to be beginningless. Their transformations and the modes of matter are products of material nature.”

Here, Lord Krishna is saying that both the material nature and the living entities are eternal, i.e., always existing. In the beginning, the material energy is unmanifested. Maha Vishnu, the plenary portion of Krishna, glances over the material nature, and through His glance, unlimited jīvas enter into the womb of the material nature. Thus, jīvas attain different bodies as per their consciousness.

BG 13.21: “Nature is said to be the cause of all material causes and effects, whereas the living entity is the cause of various sufferings and enjoyments in this world.”

Material nature provides the living entity with different kinds of bodies in 8.4 million species according to his desires. When the living entity is put in a body, he enjoys and suffers in that body according to his past desire and activity/karma. Thus, he becomes responsible for his sufferings and enjoyments.

BG 13.22: “The living entity in material nature thus follows the ways of life, enjoying the three modes of nature. This is due to his association with that material nature. Thus he meets with good and evil among various species.”

From time immemorial, the living entity keeps on taking different kinds of bodies because of his association with material nature, so that he can fulfil his unlimited material desires of sense gratification.

BG 13.23: “Yet in this body there is another, a transcendental enjoyer, who is the Lord, the supreme proprietor, who exists as the overseer and permitter, and who is known as the Supersoul.”

Lord Krishna as Paramātmā always resides with the soul, whether the soul dwells in the body of a human, dog, or even a worm. In this way, He knows all our past, present and future. In Mundaka and Svetasvatara Upanishads, this material body, soul (ātma) and Supersoul (Parmātmā) are compared, respectively, with a tree and

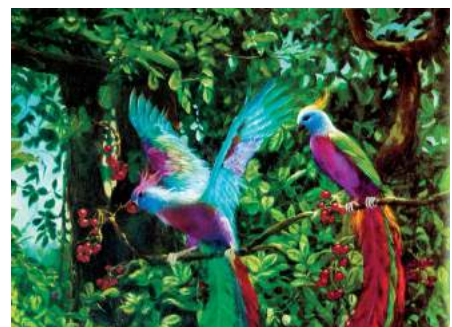


Figure 5.10: Soul and Supersoul are compared to two birds on the same tree

two birds sitting on it. One bird (soul) is enjoying the fruits of the tree while the other one (Supersoul) is the witness.

Let us revisit the verse from chapter 4 of Svetasvatara Upanisad:

*samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno
'nīśayā śocati muhyamānaḥ
juṣṭam yadā paśyaty anyam īsam
asya mahimānam iti vīta-śokaḥ*

“Although the two birds are in the same tree, the eating bird is fully engrossed with anxiety and moroseness as the enjoyer of the fruits of the tree. But if in some way or other he turns his face to his friend the Lord and knows His glories – at once the suffering bird becomes free from all anxieties.” Both (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.1.2), *Svetasvatara Upaniṣad* (4.7))

This verse makes it clear that the supersoul is eternally accompanying the jīva and is waiting for that fortunate moment when the jīva will look for His association.

BG 13.24: “One who understands this philosophy concerning material nature, the living entity and the interaction of the modes of nature is sure to attain liberation. He will not take birth here again, regardless of his present position.”

Krishna is saying that those who understand this science of atomic soul, supersoul and material nature will transcend the material space completely. All the manifestations in this world are caused in the material nature under the supervision of the Supreme Lord. Although nature activates all the actions but is not the cause of misery and happiness of a jīva. The jīva remains responsible for his perpetual continuance in the world as he has forsaken his duty to surrender to the will of the Supreme Lord Krishna.



1. Why does a conditioned soul identify itself with material nature?
2. Although material nature enacts, the soul remains responsible for various sufferings and enjoyments that result from such actions. Why?
3. What is the significance of 'two birds sitting on the same tree'?
4. Each dress - the body of a living entity - represents the false consciousness of the soul. Explain.
5. The proper knowledge of soul, supersoul and prakriti can liberate one. Why?

5.7 Evolution of Consciousness

It is important that we understand the process of evolution of consciousness. There are 8.4 million species and a jīva takes birth in these species as his consciousness gets evolved. However, in the human form of life, one must exclusively devote to the perfection of life. Let us enumerate these stages of consciousness:

1. **Anna maya:** First stage is the anna maya state where a conditioned jīva is conscious only about food. Every object is seen in terms of food or no food. For example, birds wake up early in the morning and search for food until evening. In the human body, if our endeavour too is solely for bread and butter, we are also in the *Anna maya* state.
2. **Prāna maya:** In this state, we are aware of our existence, so also of others. We start learning to respect every living being. Wild-life, environmental protection groups and many others are manifestations of such consciousness. However, a devotee sees all living entities as parts and parcels of Krishna and tries to engage them in His service.
3. **Jñāna-maya:** In this state, we start understanding what is divine and what is matter - the difference between spirit and matter. The jīva in pure consciousness is *sat-chit-ananda* (sachidananda) eternally full of bliss and knowledge. The jīva in impure consciousness is *asat-achit-nirananda*, has a temporary existence, full of ignorance and suffering. So, by understanding Bhagavad Gita, one can directly come to *jñāna maya* state. In this state, one recognizes Lord Krishna as the Absolute Truth and others as His servants. One is capable of making distinctions between matter and spirit.
4. **Vijñāna maya:** In this state, one becomes realized in the science of Krishna consciousness and his attraction for Krishna becomes spontaneous. He walks the talks i.e., he practices what he preaches. He is the embodiment of grace of Guru and Krishna. He is internally situated - brahma bhuta prasannātma. He is equally disposed to all living beings. He sees no one as his enemy and sees Lord Krishna within every living being.
5. **Ananda maya:** In this state one relishes his eternal relationship with Lord Krishna. This is the state from which one never falls down. Such a fortunate soul always renders devotional service to Lord Krishna as an assistant of His most confidential servitors.

As a spirit soul, we have always existed. All of us have already received unlimited bodies as per our desires and we have gathered all kinds of experiences. Sometime as a scientist, as a king, sweeper, animal, plant, and even as a reptile. But still, unfortunately we are not getting awakened towards our original consciousness. The original consciousness is that we are eternally servants of Lord Krishna. To awaken this consciousness, we should regularly chant Hare Krishna Mahamantra,

**“HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE
HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE”**

This mantra is a transcendental sound vibration and helps us to purify our consciousness. To take an example, when a mirror is covered with dust, one will not be able to see himself in the mirror. Once the dusty mirror is cleansed, we will be able to see our real self. Similarly, in the present situation our consciousness is materially contaminated, and this transcendental sound vibration of Hare Krishna Mahamantra cleanses the dust accumulated from millions of births in our consciousness and helps us to

achieve our actual state of eternal bliss and knowledge. This mantra is a simple prayer to Krishna. If we are simply chanting this prayer all the time, Krishna will personally guide us. Lord Krishna as the supersoul would guide each one of us to approach a bonafide spiritual master.

*teṣām evānukampārtham
aham ajñāna-jam tamaḥ
nāśayāmy ātma-bhāva-stho
jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā*

BG 10.11: “To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.”

Let's be assured of Krishna's mercy in our endeavour to perfect our life.



1. *What are the five states of consciousness? Which one is topmost and is desirable in the human form of life?*
2. *How can we attain the state of vijñanamaya and anandamay states?*
3. *Who helps us to attain the ultimate state of consciousness?*

5.8 Revisit of an Event

There is an event mentioned in the 10th Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam. Nalakūvara and Maṇigrīva were great devotees of Lord Śiva, but because of material opulence they became so extravagant and senseless that one day they were enjoying with naked girls in a lake and shamelessly walking here and there. Suddenly Nārada Muni passed by, but they were so maddened by their wealth and false prestige that even though they saw Nārada Muni present, they remained naked and were not even ashamed. In other words, because of opulence and false prestige, they lost their sense of common decency. Of course, it is the nature of the material qualities that when one becomes very much opulent in terms of wealth and a prestigious position, one loses one's sense of etiquette and does not care about anyone, even a sage like Nārada Muni. Srila Narada became annoyed by their behaviour and cursed them to become trees. But since they were cursed by a devotee, they became trees in the courtyard of Nanda Maharaj in Gokul and got liberated by Lord Krishna. Before cursing, Narada chastised them by saying the following words:



Figure 5.11: Narada Muni cursed Nalakuvera and Manigriva

“While alive, does this body belong to its employer, to the self, to the father, the mother, or the mother's father? Does it belong to the person who takes it away by force, to the slave master who purchases it, or to the sons who burn it in the fire? Or, if the body is not burned, does it belong to the dogs that eat it? Among the many possible claimants, who is the rightful claimant? Not to ascertain this but instead to maintain the body by sinful activities is not good.”

[Srimad Bhagavatam 10.10.11]

Manigriva and Nalakuvera are twin sons of the celebrated demigod, Kuvera. Instead of asking pertinent questions in relation to spirit and matter, these two brothers were engaged in gross sense-gratification. Through this action, Srila Narada is teaching us that this human form of life is meant for inquiring about Absolute Truth. Unless we come to this point of “Athāto Brahma Jijnāsa”, we are no better than animals. Lord Krishna has explained in great detail in Bhagavad Gita that we are not the physical body (gross body), nor are we the subtle body consisting of mind, intellect and false ego but each one of us is an eternal conscious being (*sac-cid-ānanda*) the part and parcel of Lord Krishna. This information should hunt us to strive hard until we get back our original svarupa as Lord Krishna's eternal servant.



1. *Why did Narada curse Manigriva and Nalakuvera?*
2. *How did Narada analyze the constitutional position of a living entity?*
3. *How should a human life be used?*

5.9 Famous Personalities on Reincarnation

Lord Krishna instructed Arjuna with the following definition of re-incarnation:

BG 2.13: “As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.”

We are continuously transmigrating from one physical body to another. Here are remarks by some famous personalities on this idea of reincarnation from different traditions and cultures.

“Finding myself to exist in the world, I believe I shall in some shape or other always exist.”

-Benjamin Franklin

“Those souls who revolted against God were placed here to transmigrate through various species of animals, birds, reptiles, etc.” -**John Adams**

“**Song Of Myself**” - “I know I am deathless...We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers, there are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.” - **Walt Whitman**

“I am confident that there truly is such a thing as living again and the living spring from the dead.”

-Socrates

“First, the fallen souls take birth in human forms, the highest of which is that of the philosopher, who strives for higher knowledge. If his knowledge becomes perfect, the philosopher can return to an eternal

existence. But if he becomes hopelessly entangled in material desires, he descends into the animal species of life. After some time, the soul again attains the human form and another chance to achieve liberation.” –Plato



1. *What is reincarnation?*
2. *What do personalities such as Plato and Socrates say about reincarnation?*
3. *Only vedic literature talks about reincarnation. How is it then that people from other cultures believe in reincarnation?*

5.10 Conclusion

Experience is the basis for acceptance of any verifiable truth. Atoms need to be experienced, so also the cells of the body. Our experience has two realms: one is external, through the use of mundane senses and the other internal, through the use of divine process. Although the soul is originally pure, its consciousness gets reflected through matter. Thus, our experience is mostly that of false consciousness which we may also call as reflected consciousness. If we reflect upon our consciousness (false), we will experience the following traits: Lust, anger, greed, illusion, pride and envy. Let us adopt a way of life where we can continuously reflect upon our divine nature as eternal servants of Lord Krishna.

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi
na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau
svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*

“No one can understand the transcendental nature of the name, form, quality and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa through his materially contaminated senses. Only when one becomes spiritually saturated by transcendental service to the Lord are the transcendental name, form, quality and pastimes of the Lord revealed to him.” (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.234)

Krishna realization and self-realization both are the same concepts. Without realizing Krishna, one cannot realize the self and vice versa. This beautiful science as ordained in the Bhagavad Gita is the essence of all Vedic literature. Let us dive in the ocean of this nectar, day and night.



1. *Bhagavad Gita teaches one to be a Krishna loving person – not a God-fearing person – Explain.*
2. *We are eternal servants of Lord Krishna. How can we have this divine experience?*
3. *Krishna realization and self-realization is one and the same. Explain.*

Lesson 6

Yoga Systems

6.1 Introduction

We have discussed the Kṛṣṇa-concept of the Absolute Truth in Lesson 2. We learned that the living entities are parts and parcels of Lord Kṛṣṇa. While Kṛṣṇa is infinite, the *jīva* is infinitesimal. Lessons 3 and 4 covered the topics related to atomic soul, matter and consciousness. We learned that due to *jīva*'s association with matter from time immemorial, *jīva*'s original consciousness has become dormant. As a result, *jīva* acts in false consciousness characterized by the six unwanted traits of lust, anger, greed, illusion, pride and envy. Any action performed under the influence of these six levels of polluted consciousness will have the wrong effect even if the intended action appears to be noble. Despite this we have to perform actions as they are the only way of knowing ourselves. That is why Lord Kṛṣṇa advised Arjuna:

*buddhi-yukto jahātīha
ubhe sukṛta-duṣkṛte
tasmād yogāya yujyasva
yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*

BG 2.50: A man engaged in devotional service rids himself of both good and bad reactions even in this life. Therefore strive for yoga, which is the art of all work.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has prescribed different yoga systems by which if one acts, self-realization is guaranteed. Often people ask what one's duty is. So, in this chapter, we will learn about different yoga systems which when properly understood can ascertain a person's duty. Every action of ours must be connected to Krishna - then it is called yoga. Yoga is the way of life. Every prescribed duty must be seen from the perspective of a valid yoga system - Karma yoga, Jñāna Yoga, Dhyāna Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. As BG 2.50 says, a yogi only knows how to perform one's prescribed duty.



1. *How is one's duty connected to a specific yoga system?*
2. *Explain BG 2.50 in the context of your own occupation.*

6.2 Experience and Consciousness

All our actions bring in variegated dual experiences such as happiness or distress, success or failure, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, elation or depression etc. Some actions bring fame while others infamy. Usually the motivation, let us call them as positive experiences, behind performing actions is to attain happiness, success, satisfaction or fame. But no matter how hard we may try, our actions will bring both positive and negative experiences. Here are some examples:


- Every day, a researcher goes to the laboratory thinking that he will be able to invent something new or unravel some mystery behind nature. But success comes after many failures.
- A businessman goes to his office every day and works hard to make an impact on the economy. Despite his fierce competitors, uncertain market situations and his own limitations, he strives hard to succeed. But he must swallow both success and failure.
- A leader works hard to meet the aspirations of people. By the time he seems to have achieved some goal, the people's aspirations either change or they go to another level. So, for the leader, the struggle to attain success continues.

We can go on with many such examples. Experience of happiness and distress, experience of someone's wrath, of hard struggle, and experience of inventing the scientific truth are called by the wise men as **duality of the experiences**. So learned men have ascertained that one must perform actions as a matter of duty while concomitantly tolerating the duality of such experiences.

Lord Kṛṣṇa advises in BG 16.24:

*tasmāc chāstram pramāṇam te
kāryākārya-vyavasthitau
jñātvā śāstra-vidhānoktaṁ
karma kartum ihārhasi*

BG 16.24: 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.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What is a positive experience and what is a negative experience? Give some examples.</i> 2. <i>Give an example of an action that gives only positive experience.</i> 3. <i>A person in yoga knows to transcend the experience of both positive and negative. Comment.</i>
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6.2.1 How does an Experience arise?

Apparently, it may seem that our senses including mind give rise to an experience. However scientifically, the process of experience is still a riddle. Even the bigger puzzle is who that experiencer is. How does the brain treat complex patterns arising out of sensory perceptions? We see an actor in the movie hall, performing in a specific situation, wearing a certain dress and exhibiting specific emotions. Given the visual framework, we all do it expertly even anticipating what would be his next action (refer Figure 6.1(B))

According to neurophysiology as well as brain imaging such as fMRI and PET Scan, there is enough evidence that some part of the brain processes shape, some other part colour and yet some other part position. Yet we have a coherent perception of the entire scene as can be seen in Figure 6.1(A). We are

unconsciously so absorbed in the play that we start partaking in the happiness and distress of the actor. This whole process is still a scientific riddle. This problem of how the actor, the background and the associated emotional features are combined into a single experience is known as the **binding problem** in the neuroscience literature. Unless modern science answers who is the perceiver, this binding problem will remain a mystery. In BG, we learn that there exist different levels of perceiver or observer - an exciting prospect to pursue even within empirical science.



Figure 6.1: While observing a drama performance, the brain records different aspects in different parts but there is a unity of perception - An illustration of binding problem

Keeping aside the scientific riddle, it suffices to say that six senses including mind give rise to the experience of five objects of senses. The objects of senses are as follows:

- Sabda (sound)
- Sparsa (touch)
- Rupa (form)
- Rasa (taste)
- Gandha (smell)

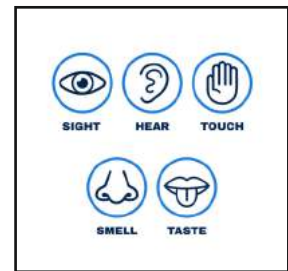


Figure 6.2 Five sense objects

Anything experienced using five senses and mind is a gross experience. Interestingly enough, beyond this gross level experience, we have experiences at the subtle level as well. These include experiences of lust, anger, greed, illusion, pride and envy.

When we contemplate about our consciousness, we can experience these enemies within us. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says in BG:

*dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsaḥ
saṅgas teṣūpajāyate
saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmaḥ
kāmat krodho 'bhijāyate*

BG 2.62: While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises.

*krodhād bhavati sammohaḥ
sammohāt smṛti-vibhramaḥ
smṛti-bhramśād buddhi-nāśo
buddhi-nāśāt praṇaśyati*

BG 2.63: From anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one falls down again into the material pool.

When we experience using our external senses, it becomes an experience of our false consciousness (as explained in the previous chapter). To experience our own spiritual consciousness, we need to use our internal (spiritual) senses. Using our material senses, we cannot see the self - the atman as it is - because we are spirit souls and spirit is superior to matter. Our mind, intellect, false ego and senses are all material and so one can't see himself/ herself as a spirit soul using these material senses. Nonetheless, we can categorize all our experiences as:

- Temporary and
- Eternal/permanent

A person, who is seeking truth, is not interested in temporary experiences. A seeker of truth, even when comes across a mine of gold or a beautiful mansion or a beautiful man or woman or so many other things that he/she knows to be temporary, remains un-attracted by such illusory experiences. But for those (most of us) who are externally conscious, these temporary experiences are very wonderful. That is why, Lord Kṛṣṇa has prescribed *yoga* system so that we all can transcend from the level of temporary experience to eternal experience.

*viṣayā vinivartante
nirāhārasya dehinaḥ
rasa-varjaṁ raso 'py asya
paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate*

BG 2.59: Though the embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness.

This verse lets us know that the experience of divinity automatically makes us lose the taste for material sense gratification. Thus, the Yoga system is meant to provide us that higher taste, so that our journey is positively directed toward self-realization.



1. Explain dualities of experiences according to your own realisations.
2. Name five sense objects.
3. Unity of perception is a riddle in modern science. Why?
4. Everything that we see, touch, hear, smell and taste is merely an experience. So also our consciousness is an experience. How would you separate divine experience from material experience?
5. What is the most important takeaway from verse 2.59 which is central to the success in any form of bonafide yoga system?
6. How does a seeker of truth handle such dualities of experiences?
7. How do senses get entangled with objects of senses and what is the natural outcome of it?
8. Why is it necessary to transcend to eternal experience from a temporary one?
9. How does one transcend to an eternal plane?



6.2.2 A Century old Incident in Himalaya

It was around the beginning of the 20th century when India was still under the British rule. There lived a young boy in a village near Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh. In a land dispute, six of his neighbours killed his father. On one night, after his father was killed, he took an axe and killed all the six neighbours in revenge and fled to the Himalayas. While wandering in the Himalayas, he found one saint's ashram. He stayed and served there for more than 25 years. He performed menial services like sweeping the floor, cleaning the utensils, and bringing wood from the forest. Every day he used to hear the discourse - mostly on the Bhagavad Gita, given by the saint. In due course, that tender boy transformed into a grown-up responsible adult.

One day this grown-up man started thinking, "I am a murderer. I have killed six people. My guru always tells me that every action has a reaction. Shouldn't I fear the actions that I have performed?" After contemplating, he thought that he must go and confess to his guru. So, he went and narrated the whole incident — what he had done and why he came to his ashram. Pleading guilty, he asked for the atonement. Immediately the guru said, "You have been listening to me for the past twenty-five years. Based on what you have heard, can you ascertain what your duty is now?" The person after contemplation replied, "I must go and surrender to the police." The guru smiled and said, "so be it". To encourage further, he said, "You have taken the right decision. You go and don't fear imprisonment, don't fear that you will be hanged. You have learnt that the soul is indestructible, eternal and immutable, don't fear."

So, the saint blessed him and the person reached the police station and surrendered to the police accepting his crime. With the departure of the British Raj, old records also got lost. The inspector felt embarrassed as he had no record to ascertain the truth and hence politely said, "We have no records of any such incidents which happened so long ago. Please go back." The man went back to the guru's ashram and followed the path of truth with honesty and integrity.

This event tells us that no matter how ghastly one's consciousness is, if one associates with a saintly person, he will be able to transcend to the eternal plane.

Lord Krishna Himself says in Bhagavad Gita 9.31:

*kṣīpram bhavati dharmātmā
śāśvac-chāntim nigacchati
kaunteya pratijānīhi
na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*

Translation: He quickly becomes righteous and attains lasting peace. O son of Kuntī, declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes.



1. *In this story, we saw the transformation of a person from worldly consciousness to divine consciousness. What is the takeaway for you as a seeker of Truth?*
2. *Why did the young boy of Gorakhpur voluntarily want to atone for his crime?*
3. *What lessons will you take for your life from the story of the Gorakhpur boy?*

6.2.3 Yoga is the way of life

Yoga means connectedness with Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth. Nowadays, yoga is popularly presented to the world as some form of physical and breathing exercise that can help to keep the body fit. However, until and unless one connects oneself to the Absolute Truth, the process cannot be called as yoga according to the Bhagavad Gita.

Yoga is pursued in order to control the senses and mind. Actual goal of yoga is to become internally conscious (self-situated) i.e., to perceive the spiritual world using spiritual senses. Yoga means actions that embody the search for the truth. Yoga means self-control, to achieve the state of neutrality. Yoga embodies actions pursuing the goal of eternal life. *Ātman* is eternal and thus it has eternal *dharma*, the pursuance of that eternal *dharma* is Yoga. There are so many variant meanings of yoga but finally yoga means to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. We will learn this idea in this lesson.

When a living entity (*jīva*) tries to enjoy independent of Kṛṣṇa, he is given an opportunity to do so in this material world. But as soon as the *jīva* comes in contact with matter, he is influenced by the material energy or *māya*. Etymologically, *māya* means that which is not i.e., illusion.

Māya is the external energy of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa Himself being the Supreme Personality of Godhead can never be under this illusion. *Māya* is His instrument and deludes those who do not want the truth. By practicing yoga system, one gets connected to Kṛṣṇa. That state is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In this state one is blessed to remain free from the influence of Kṛṣṇa's illusory potency. Thus, in yoga, the *jīva* is blessed to see things as they are and always serves Kṛṣṇa who is both the master of illusion and the giver of liberation.

Any action performed by us culminates in a reaction and it is the reaction of the action that makes our future action degraded. But if we connect ourselves to Kṛṣṇa by performing yoga, our actions will be free from both good and bad reactions. A bonafide yoga system thus makes our actions blessed. In turn, we become blessed to achieve the art of perfection in our actions.

According to Bhagavad Gita, there are four primary divisions of yoga system:

1. Karma yoga
2. Jñāna yoga
3. Dhyāna yoga / Astanga yoga
4. Bhakti yoga

Among these four divisions of yoga, Lord Kṛṣṇa declares that *bhakti* yoga is the best [refer Bhagavad Gita 6.47].

*yoginām api sarveṣāṃ
mad-gatenāntar-ātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām
sa me yukta tamo mataḥ*

BG 6.47: 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.

6.2.4 Beginning of any Yogic Process

Dharma always stands on four legs. A sincere seeker of truth strives hard to maintain these four pillars of *dharma* in his actions:

1. *Satya*: Truthfulness
2. *Daya*: Compassion
3. *Saucha*: Cleanliness
4. *Tapa*: Austerity

All yogic practices — *karma*, *jñāna*, *dhyāna*, and *bhakti* yoga, preserve these four pillars of eternal *dharma*. Each pillar of *dharma* is associated with a regulative principle which states the prohibition of an action which will surely break the very pillar.

Anyone who aspires for spiritual progress through any of these yogic processes perseveres to preserve the above four pillars of *dharma*. Thus, one is required to follow four basic regulative principles which are as follows:

1. No Gambling
2. No Meat Eating
3. No Illicit Sex
4. No Intoxication

If one follows the path of *Satya*, he/she will not cheat i.e., no gambling. If one follows the path of *Daya*, s/he will not eat meat, egg, or fish. If one follows path of *Saucha*, s/he will not indulge in illicit sex. Sex outside marriage is illicit, that's why Kṛṣṇa says in



Figure 6.3: Four regulative principles preserve the pillars of Dharma

Bhagavad Gita, - '*dharma avriodho kamosmi*' i.e., Lord embodies the principle of sex life which is not contrary to *dharma*. If one follows the path of *Tapa*, s/he will not consume intoxicating substances as these are detrimental to the process of austerity.

For different stakeholders, these basic regulative principles can be understood in a specific manner. For example, a student, following the path of truthfulness will not cheat in the examination. For him/her, austerity would mean a disciplined life such as getting up early in the morning, attending all classes and having regulated food habits. He/she can show real compassion to his/her friends by first learning the science of Bhagavad Gita and then disseminating the same to them.

In addition, you should show compassion to other living entities by not eating meat, fish and eggs. The other kind of compassion is fasting, because by fasting you regulate your senses. For a student, cleanliness means to be celibate i.e., not to lose semen. If you preserve your semen, your memory will be strengthened, and intelligence sharpened. You should not do anything that unnecessarily agitates your sexual desires.

Sex energy must be channeled towards creative endeavours.

The four regulative principles mentioned above are the stepping stones for any yogic process. Without following them there cannot be any advancement in spiritual life, whether you are a *karma*, *jñāna*, *dhyāna* or a *bhakti* yogi.

In Kali yuga no yogic process will bear results unless accompanied by the chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. As stated in Brihad Naradiya Purana 38.128:

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

Translation: In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is chanting of the holy name of only Lord Hari. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.

In essence, chanting of the holy name is the most effective medicine in this age of Kali to cultivate self-realization. The best way to chant the holy name is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahamantra as prescribed by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. This mahamantra can be chanted anywhere and everywhere. That is why this is known as “maha mantra”. Etymologically, *mantra* means that which delivers the mind and this Hare Kṛṣṇa mahamantra liberates the soul as well.

In Kaliyuga, very few are capable of performing *dhyāna* yoga as the person has to take shelter in a secluded place, mostly in the Himalayas. *Jñāna* yoga — the process of separating spirit from matter by analysis — can be practiced by a few only and is very difficult to perfect as said in BG 12.3-4. In essence, only *karma* yoga and *bhakti* yoga are easy to practice in this age. However, by following tenets of *Bhakti* yoga, one can easily realise three aspects of Absolute Truth: Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavan.



Figure 6.4: Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his associates doing Hare Krishna Sankirtan



1. *What is the definition of Yoga?*
2. *Yoga has many meanings. Enumerate them. Which one do you like the most?*
3. *Name principal forms of yoga systems.*
4. *Which is the topmost yoga system? Quote Bhagavad Gita verse in this regard.*
5. *Enumerate four pillars of religion. What are four regulative principles that are binding on any yoga system?*
6. *For a student we have explicitly given basic norms to follow four regulative principles. Please describe how you would follow these principles given your specific asrama.*
7. *Why is the chanting of the holy name of Lord Hari a must for any of the yoga systems? Quote relevant verse as well.*
8. *What are the two yoga systems that people of kali yuga can easily follow and why?*
9. *The success of any yoga system in Kaliyuga depends on a very essential practice. What is that?*

6.3 Karma Yoga

Each one of us has a certain nature. Based on this nature, one relishes certain type of work. In particular, Karma yoga is prescribed to those who are attached to performing actions according to their nature. There are four varieties of fruitive actions - intellectual, administrative, business and labour types. Such actions when sanctified using vedic wisdom become acts of sacrifice or yajña. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says in Bhagavad Gita 3.14:

*annād bhavanti bhūtāni
 parjanyaād anna-sambhavaḥ
 yajñād bhavati parjanya
 yajñāḥ karma-samudbhavaḥ*

Translation: All living bodies subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains. Rains are produced by performance of yajña [sacrifice], and yajña is born of prescribed duties.

When everyone performs his own prescribed duty, then there will be sufficient rains and grains. Human society is endowed with natural prosperity by the higher arrangement of the Lord. But how do we know what is our nature and corresponding prescribed duties? This is described in Bhagavad Gita. Any society at a given time will have four classes of people — intellectuals, administrators, businessmen, and labour class. These four classes are defined according to one's qualities and occupation as per Bhagavad Gita 4.13:

*cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam
 guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ
 tasya kartāram api mām
 viddhy akartāram avyayam*

Translation: According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society were created by Me. And, although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the non-doer, being unchangeable.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is saying that these four orders of the society are based on *guna* and *karma*. *Guna* means qualities and *karma* means action. Any society will have a class of people who are intellectuals, some who are administrators, some who are businessmen and some who are workers. We cannot have a society without these four classes because different people are meant for different works. Suppose one is an intellectual and is sent to do road work, he will not be able to do that work properly. One must support his/her qualities with similar action as well. An intellectual is a person who contributes to the society by giving it the true knowledge. Simply taking birth in a Brahmin family does not make an individual intellectual. Similarly, unless somebody is contributing in terms of leadership to the society, he cannot be called an administrator or a kshatriya. By the same token, a businessman's contribution is in terms of wealth creation. Nobody is inferior or superior, everyone has his role in a Vedic society.

Therefore, an elevated person sees everyone on an equal footing as Lord Kṛṣṇa says in Bhagavad Gita 5.18,

*vidyā-vinaya-sampanne
 brāhmaṇe gavi hastini
 śuni caiva śva-pāke ca
 paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*

Translation: The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brāhmaṇe, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].

So, the dignity of every occupation is the same as long as one connects one's action with the Supreme Lord. Let us see the qualities associated with each class as given in 18th Chapter of Bhagavad Gita:

BG 18.42: *Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom and religiousness – these are the natural qualities by which the brāhmaṇas work.*

BG 18.43: *Heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and leadership are the natural qualities of work for the kṣatriyas.*

BG 18.44: *Farming, cow protection and business are the natural work for the business class and for the labor class, the prescribed duty is service to others.*

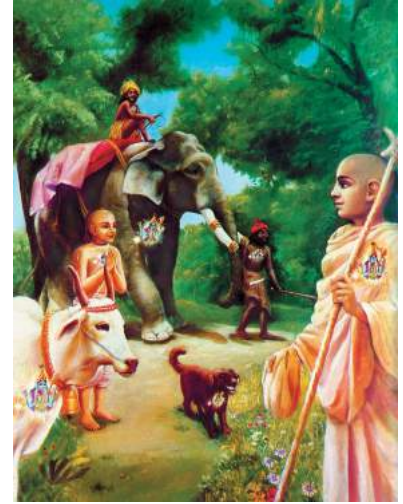


Figure 6.5: A self-realized person sees a brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog eater with equanimity.

All these activities must be performed for the satisfaction of the Lord. As stated in 3rd Chapter of Bhagavad Gita, B.G 3.9:

*yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra
loko 'yam karma-bandhanaḥ
tad-artham karma kaunteya
mukta-saṅgaḥ samācara*

Translation: Work done as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu has to be performed; otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kuntī, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage.

This verse BG 3.9 is central to understanding karma yoga. A conditioned soul is forced to act as per his nature. Such actions must be sanctified by the understanding of acts of sacrifice. An act of sacrifice makes a person detached from the results of the actions. When one understands one's nature and performs actions as per his nature selflessly, that becomes a prescribed duty. Such prescribed duties must be ascertained according to law books of God such as Bhagavad Gita and these activities must be performed for the pleasure of Lord Krishna. Otherwise, the very actions will bind us to cycles of birth and death perpetually.

Thus, Karma yoga begins with service without any expectation. Every action must be performed as a matter of duty/service. A mother must take care of her kids as a service. Analogously, teachers must take care of students as a service. In a similar manner, leaders must take care of their citizens as a service. These selfless services are also acts of sacrifice or *yajña*. For example, as a teacher or a family man, you must sacrifice your personal comforts for the benefit of students/ kids. However, ultimate recipient of all such sacrifices is Vishnu or Kṛṣṇa. We are engaged in a specific service because of Him only.

When we do not have this mentality of doing the service for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa, we develop expectations. The moment we expect and get something in return for our actions, we get bound by them. This leads to repeated birth & death as a consequence of the reactions to our work. In this connection, Adi Sankaracharya in his Bhaja Govindam text says —

*punarapi jananam punarapi maranam
punarapi janani jatare sayanam
iha samsaare khalu dusthare
krupayaa pare pahi murare*

Translation: Again and again one is born, and again and again one dies, and again and again one sleeps in the mother's womb. Oh my Lord Murari! Please help me to cross this endless cycle of birth and death – Murari is one of the names of Kṛṣṇa.

When one is attached to performing an action, attachment to the results of such an action may arise. Those who are karma yogis should hear the following advice of Lord Kṛṣṇa as stated in Bhagavad Gita 2.47:

*karmany evādhikāras te
mā phaleṣu kadācana
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr
mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmaṇi*

Translation: You have a 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.

Here Lord Kṛṣṇa is saying that one should perform one's duty but should not get attached to the results. But then the question is, how to become detached from the results of one's activities? As has been said in BG 3.9, Lord Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate beneficiary of our actions, all results must be offered to Him. He further elaborates this point in Bhagavad Gita 9.27 as

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi
yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya
tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam*

Translation: Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform — do that, O son of Kuntī, as an offering to Me.

One must attune his/her life in such a way that Kṛṣṇa is at the center of all activities. For example, in order to maintain this body, one has to do some work, so Kṛṣṇa is saying, do it for Him. One has to eat, so Kṛṣṇa is saying offer it to Him and then eat. If one wants to give some charity, then Kṛṣṇa says, give it for spreading Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. In other words, if we have a desire to do something, then we should do it as an offering to Kṛṣṇa. This is Karma Yoga.

To understand it better, let us take an example. I want to eat a mango, thus I brought it and offered it to Kṛṣṇa before eating. This is karma yoga. Please note that here I have brought the mango for myself. But since I offered it to Kṛṣṇa before eating, this is Karma yoga. If I bring the mango to offer to Kṛṣṇa and not for myself then that act becomes Bhakti yoga. So, this is the difference between Karma yoga and Bhakti yoga. In Karma yoga we have the desire to enjoy and hence we purify our actions by appropriately connecting them with Kṛṣṇa. When we desire only for Kṛṣṇa's satisfaction, it becomes Bhakti yoga.



1. Who is a karmi? How can he transcend to the position of karma yogi?
2. How do acts of sacrifice ensure all necessities of life? Quote the verse as well.
3. Enumerate four broad categories of prescribed duties. How are these duties categorized for any person?
4. Who is a pandita - wise person? Quote the verse.
5. What is an act of sacrifice or yajna? Is it simply pouring ghee on a sacrificial fire?
6. How can an act of sacrifice be liberating instead of binding to the cycle of birth, death, old-age and disease?
7. Verse 3.9 of the Bhagavad Gita gives the essence of Karma Yoga. Explain.
8. Quote the verse of Adi Shankaracharya that talks of taking shelter of Krishna to get out of cycles of birth and death.
9. Everyone performs an action. How can it be converted into karma yoga?
- 10 What is the distinction between karma yoga and bhakti yoga as illustrated through the example of a mango? Can you enumerate another example?

6.3.1 Essence of Karma Yoga

We all have fruitive mentality or in other words we have the mentality of getting something in return for each of our actions, due to which we invariably seek profit, adoration, and distinction. We are thus attached to work for selfish motives. Such work binds us to the cycle of birth, death, old age and disease. In Karma yoga, whatever actions we perform, the results are offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa.


But we cannot perform all kinds of actions and offer their results to Kṛṣṇa. For example, if you want to eat meat, you cannot offer it to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa does not accept meat. The kind of food items liked by Him are stated in BG 9.26:

*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam
aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ*

Translation: If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I will accept it.

We cannot offer anything and everything to Him simply because we wanted to eat the same.

We must offer the results of our prescribed duty to Kṛṣṇa. 'Prescribed duty' means all those actions whose results can be offered to Kṛṣṇa. Suppose you have a tobacco factory and you want the profit to be offered to Kṛṣṇa. This is NOT possible, as intoxication is a violation of the principles of dharma. But fruit vendors can offer fruits to Kṛṣṇa, and farmers can offer their crop yield to Kṛṣṇa. All these acts are Karma yoga. So, *any action that can be connected to Kṛṣṇa becomes a prescribed duty*. Therefore, before performing any action you must ask yourself whether it is a prescribed duty or not.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What is Prescribed Duty? Enumerate some actions that are in the category of prescribed duty and some which are not.</i> 2. <i>All occupations cannot be transformed to Karma yoga. Why?</i>
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Further, Kṛṣṇa says in Bhagavad Gita that He Himself performs His prescribed duties.

BG 3.21: *Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.*

BG 3.22: *O son of Pṛthā, there is no work prescribed for Me within all the three planetary systems. Nor am I in want of anything, nor have I a need to obtain anything - and yet I am engaged in prescribed duties.*

BG 3.23: *For if I ever failed to engage in carefully performing prescribed duties, O Pārtha, certainly all men would follow My path.*

BG 3.24: *If I did not perform prescribed duties, all these worlds would be put to ruination. I would be the cause of creating unwanted population, and I would thereby destroy the peace of all living beings.*

There are prescribed duties for the conditioned souls such that they can progress in their spiritual consciousness. This is possible when such prescribed duties are done as a service for pleasing Kṛṣṇa. There are liberated souls like Janaka Maharaja who are situated in Krishna consciousness. Yet they perform actions to set ideal standards such that common people can follow. So, such great personalities perform austerities, penances, charitable works and other duties knowing fully well that Lord Krishna is the ultimate beneficiary. Even Lord Krishna - the Absolute Truth - gets up early in the morning and gets engaged in brahma muhurta rituals. Then He donates brahmanas generously on a daily basis. A common man is very eager to imitate Krishna, the God. Thus, Lord Krishna acts like a human being so that the common man can follow the path of dharma. The person who knows how to please Kṛṣṇa by his actions is a person of wisdom. Thus, one must carefully ascertain what is prescribed duty by careful study of scriptures as stated in BG 16.24.

We must perform our prescribed duties but while performing them, we should also understand that we the *jīva* aren't the actors. In connection to this assertion, Kṛṣṇa says in Bhagavad Gita 3.27,

*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni
guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā
kartāham iti manyate*



Translation: The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature.

Every action that we do is because of the influence of three modes of material nature. These are modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance. Primarily, the mode of goodness is responsible for acts of maintenance, mode of passion for acts of creation, and mode of ignorance for those of destruction. The combination of these modes results in the performance of different actions by different people. Modes of nature works under the superintendence of Kṛṣṇa. In our success or failure, the modes of material nature act. We are only used as an instrument. In reality, we take credit for success and blame God for our failures. When we practice yoga systems, we recognise that we are only instruments, and it is best to allow ourselves to be Lord Kṛṣṇa's instrument. This is the perfection of life. When we misuse our free will, we become instruments in the hands of māya. When we properly utilise our free will, we become Lord Kṛṣṇa's instrument. Although we are responsible for our actions based on our proper use or misuse of the free-will, still we are not the actors. In essence there are three actors in the execution of an event. Soul is responsible for the results of an action as it is he who misused his freewill. Material nature executes the action under the guidance of the Supersoul. They are thus 2nd and 3rd actors respectively. The outcome of such actions is governed by the laws of God. Although as jīvas we are responsible for an action, the actual doer is the material nature.

To know exactly what you must or mustn't do, you need a guide, and that guide is Bhagavad Gita. Those people who never follow these things and simply act, are blind. That is why Bhagavad Gita is a must for everybody.



1. *A liberated person does not have to perform any duty still he performs. Why?*
2. *Lord Krishna being the Absolute Truth has no action to perform. Yet He performs. Why?*
3. *How should one ascertain his prescribed duty?*
4. *Who are three actors in any action? Explain the role of each actor.*
5. *In all states, we are not the actors, only instruments. Explain.*
6. *Even though I am only an instrument, why am I still responsible for my actions?*

6.4 Jñāna Yoga

A *jñāna* yogi tries to understand God by means of philosophical speculation. A *jñānī* starts from the level where he rejects those aspects of creation that are temporary and is in search of that which is eternal - sat. He is by nature a seeker of Truth. However, by philosophical speculation, which is also one of the ways of realizing God, a *jñānī* can reach only the impersonal aspect of the Lord i.e., the Brahman realization. Srila Prabhupada elaborates this in Srimad Bhagavatam 3.32.33

SB 3.32.33 - *A single object is appreciated differently by different senses due to its having different qualities. Similarly, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is one, but according to different scriptural injunctions He appears to be different.*

Purport: It appears that by following the path of jñāna-yoga, or empiric philosophical speculation, one reaches the impersonal Brahman, whereas by executing devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness one enriches his faith in and devotion to the Personality of Godhead. But it is stated here that both bhakti-yoga and jñāna-yoga are meant for reaching the same destination — the Personality of Godhead. By the process of jñāna-yoga the same Personality of Godhead appears to be impersonal. As the same object appears to be different when perceived by different senses, the same Supreme Lord appears to be impersonal by mental speculation. A hill appears cloudy from a distance, and one who does not know may speculate that the hill is a cloud. Actually, it is not a cloud; it is a big hill. One has to learn from authority that the sight of a cloud is not actually a cloud but a hill. If one makes a little more progress, then instead of a cloud he sees the hill and something green. When one actually approaches the hill, he will see many varieties. Another example is in perceiving milk. When we see milk, we see that it is white; when we taste it, it appears that milk is very palatable. When we touch milk, it appears very cold; when we smell milk, it appears to have a very good flavor; and when we hear it, we understand that it is called milk. Perceiving milk with different senses, we say that it is something white, something very delicious, something very aromatic, and so on. Actually, it is milk. Similarly, those who are trying to find the Supreme Godhead by mental speculation may approach the bodily effulgence, or the impersonal Brahman, and those who are trying to find the Supreme Godhead by yoga practice may find Him as the localized Supersoul, but those who are directly trying to approach the Supreme Truth by practice of bhakti-yoga can see Him face to face as the Supreme Person.



1. *Who is a Jnani? What does he realize?*
2. *Philosophical speculation can help one to understand the Truth partially. Why?*
3. *Using the example hill, explain Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan realizations of the Absolute Truth*



Figure 6.6: Four categories of pious men who approach Krishna

In essence jñāna yoga can help one to partially realize the Absolute Truth but not completely. In BG 7.19, it is explained that a jñāna yogi after many many births becomes eligible to attain the complete realization of the Absolute Truth as Bhagavan Krishna. Let's revisit the seventh chapter BG to know in detail.

There are four categories of pious persons who approach Lord Kṛṣṇa for shelter.

BG 7.16: *O best among the Bhāratas, four kinds of pious men begin to render devotional service unto Me — the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute.*

Among these, a jnani is very dear to Kṛṣṇa as he is directly searching for the Absolute Truth. Lord Kṛṣṇa states this very clearly as:

BG 7.17: *Of these, the one who is in full knowledge and who is always engaged in pure devotional service is the best. For I am very dear to him, and he is dear to Me.*

BG 7.18: *All these devotees are undoubtedly magnanimous souls, but he who is situated in knowledge of Me I consider to be just like My own self. Being engaged in My transcendental service, he is sure to attain Me, the highest and most perfect goal.*

But a *jñānī* has to struggle for many births to understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate shelter. After many repeated births, a *jñānī* recognizes that nothing in this world can be described with perfection. Perfect understanding of an atom, a cell or even the cosmos remains elusive, despite great attempts of many intellectuals. Hence a *jñānī* finally surrenders to Lord Kṛṣṇa recognizing that He alone is summum bonum of all that exists.

BG 7.19: *After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare.*

The above verse states that a *jñāna* yogi finally accepts the tenets of *bhakti* yoga. Four Kumaras and Sukadeva Gosvami were *jñānīs*. But when they came in contact with the devotional service - *Bhakti* - they got transformed to pure devotees of the Lord. Sometimes, some argue that *jñāna* yoga is superior to *bhakti* yoga. But Bhagavad Gita concludes just the opposite that a *jñāna* yogi becomes a *bhakti* yogi after many many births.

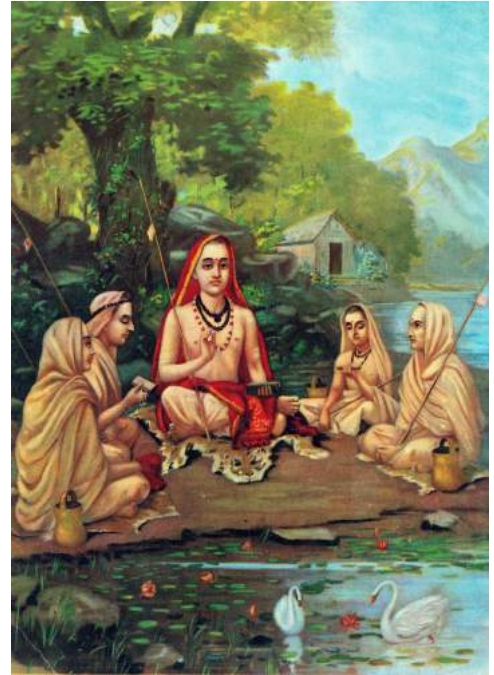


Figure 6.7: A *Jñāna* Yogi after many Births and Deaths understands Krishna



1. *A jnani has to take many many births before he can accept the path of Bhakti. Why?*
2. *Four kinds of pious men surrender to Lord Krishna. Enumerate them. Who is very dear to Krishna among these four categories?*
3. *Establish why a pure devotee of Krishna is very rare.*

However, all seekers of Truth do not differentiate one form of yoga from the other. All yoga systems are there to cater to the needs of various categories of seekers of Truth situated at different levels of consciousness. The ultimate goal of each yoga system is to understand Krishna as the Absolute Truth. As Lord Krishna say in BG:

BG 5.4: *Only the ignorant speak of devotional service [karma-yoga] as being different from the analytical study of the material world [Sāṅkhya]. Those who are actually learned say that he who applies himself well to one of these paths achieves the results of both.*

BG 5.5: *One who knows that the position reached by means of analytical study can also be attained by devotional service, and who therefore sees analytical study and devotional service to be on the same level, sees things as they are.*

It is clear in these two verses that an ignorant person makes a distinction between karma yoga, sankhya yoga and bhakti yoga. A jñānī follows the path of Sāṅkhya - a process of analysis to separate brahman from matter. All of them ultimately attain pure devotion to Lord Krishna. Srila Prabhupada further elaborates in the purport of verse 13.25 of Bhagavad Gita:

“The Sāṅkhya philosophers analyze this material world into twenty four elements, and they place the individual soul as the twenty fifth item. When they are able to understand the nature of the individual soul to be transcendental to the material elements, they are able to understand also that above the individual soul there is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is the twenty sixth element. Thus gradually they also come to the standard of devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Those who work without fruitive results are also perfect in their attitude. They are given a chance to advance to the platform of devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”



1. *In all bonafide spiritual practices, the end result is devotional service to Lord Krishna. Why do seekers of Truth not follow the path of bhakti?*
2. *It is not a good idea to discriminate one yoga process from another. Why?*
3. *How does a sankhya philosopher come to the platform of bhakti as given in the purport of BG 13.25?*

6.5 Dhyāna Yoga

Dhyāna yoga is popularly known as Aṣṭāṅga-yoga or eight-fold mystic perfection which is popularised by the sage Patanjali in recent times. In this yoga, a yogi relieves himself from all engagements by the regulative processes of meditation, concentration, sitting postures, blocking the movements of the internal circulation of air, etc.

Kṛṣṇa describes the process of *dhyana* yoga in the sixth chapter of Bhagavad Gita as:

BG 6.11-12: *To practice yoga, one should go to a secluded place and should lay kuśa grass on the ground and then cover it with a deerskin and a soft cloth. The seat should be neither too high nor too low and should be situated in a sacred place. The yogī should then sit on it very firmly and practice yoga to purify the heart by controlling his mind, senses and activities and fixing the mind on one point.*

BG 6.13-14: *One should hold one's body, neck and head erect in a straight line and stare steadily at the tip of the nose. Thus, with an unagitated, subdued mind, devoid of fear, completely free from sex life, one should meditate upon Me within the heart and make Me the ultimate goal of life.*

BG 6.15: *Thus practicing constant control of the body, mind and activities, the mystic transcendentalist, his mind regulated, attains to the kingdom of God [or the abode of Kṛṣṇa] by cessation of material existence.*

BG 6.20-23: *In the stage of perfection called trance, or samādhi, one's mind is completely restrained from material mental activities by practice of yoga. This perfection is characterized by one's ability to see the self by the pure mind and to relish and rejoice in the self. In that joyous state, one is situated in boundless transcendental happiness, realized through transcendental senses. Established thus, one never departs from the truth, and upon gaining this he thinks there is no greater gain. Being situated in such a position, one is never shaken, even in the midst of greatest difficulty. This indeed is actual freedom from all miseries arising from material contact.*

A dhyani by insulating himself from material elements establishes a direct connection with the Supersoul. In that process, he becomes aware of the information that is not attainable by any material means. This way he recognizes the all-pervading feature of the Supersoul who is the source of his newfound intelligence. The eightfold yoga mysticism is automatically practiced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness because the ultimate purpose is served. There is a gradual process of elevation in the practice of *yama, niyama, āsana, prānāyama, pratyāhara, dhāraṇa, dhyāna* and *samādhi* as done in *aṣṭāṅga* yoga. All the benefits of *aṣṭāṅga*-yoga are obtainable in *bhakti* yoga but *bhakti* yoga promises highest goal of human life — the spontaneous attraction for Lord Kṛṣṇa.

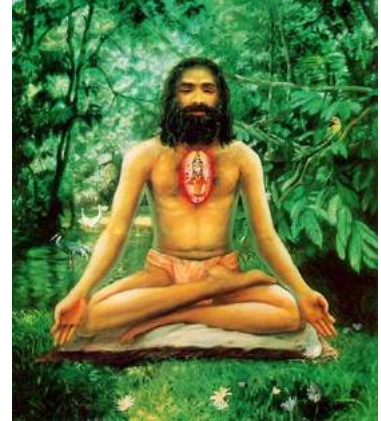


Figure 6.8: A Dhyani Yogi meditating on Supersoul

Srila Prabhupada nicely summarizes the *aṣṭāṅga*-yoga in SB 3.21.12, Purport:

“In the *samādhi* stage one can see the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His partial form as *Paramātmā*, or as He is. *Samādhi* is described in authoritative yoga scriptures, such as the *Patañjali-sūtras*, to be a transcendental pleasure. The yoga system described in the books of *Patañjali* is authoritative, and the modern so-called *yogīs* who have manufactured their own ways, not consulting the authorities, are simply ludicrous. The *Patañjali* yoga system is called *aṣṭāṅga* - yoga. Sometimes impersonalists pollute the *Patañjali* yoga system because they are monists. *Patañjali* describes that the soul is transcendently pleased when he meets the Supersoul and sees Him. If the existence of the Supersoul and the individual is admitted, then the impersonalist theory of monism is nullified. Therefore some impersonalists and void philosophers twist the *Patañjali* system in their own way and pollute the whole yoga process.”

Although the proper practice of *aṣṭāṅga*-yoga would lead to realization of *Paramātmā*, a perverted yogi assumes that he is that *Paramātmā*. Moreover, this process empowers a yogi with mystic opulence such as *anima, laghima* and *prapti*. Such mystical opulence most often traps the yogi from making further spiritual progress and he becomes the puppet of such mystical opulence. *Saubhari muni* is an example of this kind of fall down. He was performing severe austerities with in the water but got agitated by the tinkling bell sound of princesses who were daughters of King *Mandhāta*. This led to his marriage with 50 daughters of King *Mandhāta*.

There is another example of a mystic yogi - Durvāsā Muni who became a bhakta. Durvāsā Muni once visited King Ambarisha who was fasting for Ekadashi. Since Durvāsā Muni took a long time to finish his morning rituals, King Ambarisha drank water to break his Ekadashi fast. This action of the king made Durvāsā Muni so furious that he cursed the king. Ambarīṣa being a pure devotee of Lord Krishna was always protected by Lord's divine weapon Sudarshana. So Sudarshana chased Durvasha from the earthly planet to Brahma loka and then to Kailasha. Neither Lord Brahma nor Lord Shiva could give him protection. Finally, he took shelter of Lord Vishnu who advised him to beg forgiveness from King Ambarīṣa. By the divine association of King Ambarīṣa who is a pure devotee of the Lord, Durvāsā Muni became a devotee. This example also illustrates that a mystic yogi gets promoted to a bhakta exemplifying that Bhakti yoga is supermost.



1. Describe a Dhyani and how does he realize paramatma?
2. What are different stages of the eightfold yoga system?
3. In what ways the followers of Maharsi Patanjali have polluted his original teachings?
4. What are pitfalls of dhyana yoga?
5. Through the example of the sage Durvasha, establish that bhakti yoga is superior to dhyana yoga.

6.6 Topmost Yoga System

It has been stated in Srimad Bhagavatam 1.2.11 that the Absolute Truth can be realized in three stages, *Brahman, Paramātmā* and *Bhagavan*

*vadanti tat tattva-vidas
tattvaṁ yaj jñānam advayam
brahmeti paramātmēti
bhagavān iti śabdyate*

Translation: Learned transcendentalists who know the Absolute Truth call this non dual substance Brahman, Paramātmā or Bhagavān.

This verse states that the same Absolute Truth is realized as Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavan. All three concepts are non-dual and complete expressions of the same Absolute Truth. In reality Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavan are indistinguishable and thus the divine person is the foremost attribute of all of them. Thus, Arjuna describes Lord Krishna as Param Brahma and Param Purusha. However, a jñāni partially understands Brahman as divine effulgence of the Absolute Truth, i.e impersonal feature of the Absolute Truth.



Figure 6.9: Bhakti Yoga is the Topmost Yoga System

A dhyāni attains Paramātmā realization as a localized aspect of the Absolute Truth. A pure bhakta realizes the Absolute Truth as Bhagavan - a Supreme divine person whose personality is inconceivable. But Lord Krishna is Param Braman, He is Paramātmā and He is the lover of Srimati Radharani and all of her friends. Thus, a devotee's realization is complete while those of jñānī and dhyāni are incomplete. A devotee perfectly understands all three aspects of the Absolute Truth as non-different from each other. So *bhakti yoga* is superior to other forms of yoga because you get the *highest realization of the Absolute Truth, i.e., God as a person*, Bhagavān. God is a supremely divine person, and that's what you realize when you become His devotee. So finally, everybody, whether he is a dhyāna yogi, jñāna yogi, or karma yogi, sooner or later has to enter into bhakti yoga because the Brahman and Paramātmā realizations of jñānīs and dhyānīs are incomplete. The Absolute Truth realization is complete only when you realize Him as the Supreme person by bhakti yoga. This has been corroborated by Lord Krishna in BG 6.47:

*yoginām api sarveṣāṃ
mad-gatenāntar-ātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo māṃ
sa me yukta tamo mataḥ*

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 most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all. That is My opinion.

Kṛṣṇa is personally declaring that the performers of the bhakti yoga are the best among all yogis. Srila Prabhupada further elaborates this in the purport of verse 10.10 of Bhagavad Gita as follows:

“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 Kṛṣṇa but he takes pleasure in mental speculations to understand Kṛṣṇa, he is acting in jñāna-yoga. And when he knows the goal and seeks Kṛṣṇa completely in Kṛṣṇa 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.”



1. *Absolute Truth is realized in three aspects. Enumerate them.*
2. *A devotee's realization of Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan is complete while that of dhyani and jnani are incomplete. Explain.*
3. *How does one select a yoga process - jñana, dhyana or bhakti? Hint: BG 10.10 purport*

6.7 Meeting of Prahlada Maharaja & an Avadhuta

Srila Narada narrated this event to Yudhisthira Maharaja. An 'Avadhuta' is a self-realized person who knowingly hides his saintly nature and acts like a mad man.

Once Prahlada Mahārāja went out of his kingdom on a tour across the universe with some of his confidential associates to study the nature of saintly persons. Thus he arrived at the bank of the Kāverī,

where there was a mountain known as Sahya. There he found a great saintly person who was lying on the ground, covered with dirt and dust, but who nevertheless was looking deeply spiritually advanced. Neither by that saintly person's activities, by his bodily features, by his words nor by the symptoms of his *varṇāśrama* status could people recognise him properly. However, Prahlāda Mahārāja, an advanced devotee, duly worshiped and offered obeisances to the saintly person who had adopted a python's means of livelihood. After thus worshiping the saintly person and touching his own head to the saint's lotus feet, Prahlāda Mahārāja, in order to understand him, inquired very submissively as follows.



Figure 6.10: Prahlāda Mahārāja

Seeing the saintly person to be quite fat, Prahlāda Mahārāja said, “My dear sir, you undergo no endeavour to earn your livelihood, but you have a stout body, exactly like that of a materialistic enjoyer. I know that if one is very rich and has nothing to do, he becomes extremely fat by eating and sleeping and performing no work. O Avadhuta, fully in knowledge of transcendence, you have nothing to do, and therefore you are lying down. It is also understood that you have no money for sense enjoyment. How has your body become so fat? Under the circumstances, if you do not consider my question disrespectful, kindly explain how this has happened. Your Honour appears learned, expert and intelligent in every way. You can speak very well, saying things that are pleasing to the heart. You see that people in general are engaged in fruitive activities, yet you are lying here inactive.”

Being pleased with a smiling face, the saintly brāhmaṇa said, “O Prahlāda Mahārāja, you are aware of the different stages of life because of your inherent transcendental eyes, with which you can see a man's character and thus know clearly the results of acceptance and rejection of things as they are. Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is full of all opulences, is predominant within the core of your heart because of yourself being a pure devotee. He always drives away all the darkness borne out of ignorance, as the sun drives away the darkness of the universe. My dear King, although you know everything, you have posed some questions, which I shall try to answer according to what I have learned by hearing from authorities. I cannot remain silent in this regard, for a personality like you is just fit to be spoken to by one who desires self-purification.”

Avadhuta continued, “Because of insatiable material desires, I was being carried away by the waves of material nature's laws, and thus I was engaging in different activities, struggling for existence in various forms of life. In the course of evolutionary process, which is caused by fruitive activities due to

undesirable material sense gratification, I have received this human form of life, which can lead to the heavenly planets, to liberation, to the lower species, or to rebirth among human beings. In this human form of life, men and women unite for the sensual pleasure of sex, but by actual experience we have observed that none of them are happy. Therefore, seeing the contrary results, I have stopped taking part in materialistic activities.”

Avadhuta further continued, “Actual form of life for the living entities is the one of spiritual happiness, which is real happiness. This happiness can be achieved only when one stops all materialistic activities. Material sense enjoyment is simply an imagination. Therefore, considering this subject matter, I have ceased from all material activities and am lying down here. A conditioned soul living within the body forgets his self-interest because he identifies himself with the body. Because the body is material, his natural tendency is to be attracted by the varieties of the material world. Thus the living entity suffers the miseries of material existence.”

Avadhuta narrated the hopeless condition of the living entities, “Just as a deer, because of ignorance, cannot see the water within a well covered by grass, but runs after water elsewhere, the living entity covered by the material body does not see the happiness within himself, but runs after happiness in the material world. The living entity tries to achieve happiness and rid himself of the causes of distress, but because various bodies of the living entities are under the full control of material nature, all his plans in different bodies, one after another, are ultimately baffled. Materialistic activities are always mixed with three kinds of miserable conditions— *adhyātmika*, *adhidaivika* and *adhibautika*. Therefore, even if one achieves some success by performing such activities, what is the benefit of this success? One is still subjected to birth, death, old age, disease and the reactions of his fruitive activities.”

Avadhuta continued, “I am actually seeing how a rich man, who is a victim of his senses, is very greedy to accumulate wealth, and therefore suffers from insomnia due to fear from all sides, despite his wealth and opulence. Those who are considered materially powerful and rich are always full of anxieties because of governmental laws, thieves and rogues, enemies, family members, animals, birds, persons seeking charity, the inevitable time factor and even their own selves. Thus, they are invariably afraid. Those in human society who are intelligent should give up the original cause of lamentation, illusion, fear, anger, attachment, poverty and unnecessary labour. The original cause of all of these is the desire for unnecessary prestige and money.”

Avadhuta while greatly admiring his two gurus said, “The bee and the python are two excellent spiritual masters who give us exemplary instructions regarding how to be satisfied by collecting only a little and how to stay in one place and not move. From the bumblebee, I have learned to be unattached to accumulating money, for although money is as good as honey, anyone can kill its owner and take it away. I don't endeavour to get anything but am satisfied with whatever is achieved in its own way. If I do not get anything, I am patient and unagitated like a python and lie down in this way for many days. Sometimes I eat a very small quantity and sometimes a great quantity. Sometimes the food is very palatable, and sometimes it is stale. Sometimes *prasāda* is offered with great respect, and sometimes food is given

neglectfully. Sometimes I eat during the day and sometimes at night. Thus, I eat what is easily available. To cover my body I use whatever is available, whether it be linen, silk, cotton, bark or deerskin, according to my destiny, and I am fully satisfied and unagitated. Sometimes I lie on the surface of the earth, sometimes on leaves, grass, or stone, sometimes on a pile of ashes, or sometimes, by the will of others, in a palace on a first-class bed with pillows.”

Avadhuta continued, “O Prahlada, sometimes I bathe myself very nicely, smear sandalwood pulp all over my body, put on a flower garland, and dress in fine garments and ornaments. Then I travel like a king on the back of an elephant or on a chariot or horse. Sometimes, however, I travel naked, like a person haunted by a ghost. Different people are of different mentalities. Therefore, it is not my business either to praise them or to blaspheme them. I only desire their welfare, hoping that they will agree to become one with the Supersoul, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. The mental concoction of discrimination between good and bad should be accepted as one unit and then invested in the mind, which should then be invested in the false ego. The false ego should be invested in the total material energy. This is the process of fighting false discrimination. A learned, thoughtful person must realize that material existence is an illusion. This is possible only by self-realization. A self-realized person, situated in self-realization who has actually seen the truth, should retire from all material activities. Prahlāda Mahārāja, you are certainly a self-realized soul and a devotee of the Supreme Lord. You do not care for public opinion or the so-called scriptures. For this reason, I have described to you without hesitation the history of my self-realization.”



1. *Prahlada Maharaja could recognise the Avadhuta while his friends could not..Why?*
2. *What is interesting about Prahlada Maharaja's question?*
3. *According to Avadhuta, a person in the human body can transmigrate to other forms of bodies. What are those forms?*
4. *Why did Avadhuta cease all material activities?*
5. *Narrate the hopeless condition of the living entities as described by the avadhuta.*
6. *Bee and Python are two spiritual masters accepted by the avadhuta. Why?*
7. *What did you learn from the life of the Avadhuta? What lesson did you take for your life?*

6.8 Conclusion

All kinds of actions are binding to the cycle of birth and death. Actions are born out of nature. In the human form of life, one must sanctify one's action by connecting these actions to Lord Krishna. This process of connection with the Absolute Truth is called yoga. It is required that every human being must practice a yoga system according to his level of consciousness and thus his action is then termed as prescribed duty. Such duty liberates a person and elevates one to Krishna consciousness.



There are four types of fruitive activities resulting in four societal classes - intellectual, administrative, business and labour class. When such fruitive workers offer results of their occupational duties to Krishna, then they are categorized as karma yogi.

One who is addicted to speculative knowledge but wants to know the Absolute Truth is a jnani. He has no interest in the temporariness of this world but seeks out eternal existence. Such a jñāna yogi has to take many births to realize that Lord Krishna is indeed the Absolute Truth.

One who meditates on the Supersoul, recognizing that He alone is the source of all intelligence, is a dhyāna yogi. Such a dhyāna yogi can become a pure devotee when he is graced by the divine association of a pure devotee. Example of Durvāsā Muni and King Ambarīṣa is very appropriate here. Until then, he can be trapped by the mystical opulence accrued from the practice of aṣṭāṅga-yoga.

One who engages in direct devotional service to Lord Krishna under the guidance of a pure devotee connected to a bonafide guru-shishya parampara is a bhakti yogi. Such devotees are freed from speculative knowledge and fruitive activity. They are only interested in pleasing Krishna by devotional service. They are most peaceful and are bonafide representatives of Lord Krishna in the matter of disseminating the transcendental knowledge of Bhagavad Gita. That is why Bhakti Yoga is the topmost yoga system.



1. *Why does a jnani surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa after many repeated births?*
2. *Why is the path of Bhakti yoga superior to the path of jnana yoga contrary to the popular belief?*
3. *Enumerate three stages of realisation of the Absolute Truth.*
4. *Define Karma, Jnana and Bhakti yoga as given in the purport of B.G 10.10.*
5. *According to Lord Kṛṣṇa what is the topmost yoga system and why? Quote the relevant B.G verse.*
6. *What did you specifically learn from this entire lesson? How will it change your lifestyle?*

Lesson 7

Transcendental Knowledge

7.1 Introduction

In previous lessons, we learnt that the soul or spirit is immeasurable, immutable, indestructible and unborn. This individual soul is a tiny spiritual spark of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supersoul. Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth is infinitely opulent, pervades as a person all across totality of existence and is beyond mundane senses. No sophisticated instrument, be it a powerful telescope or any atomic force microscope, can help one to see either the soul or Supersoul, but they can be perceived by spiritual senses. In other words, topics regarding soul and Kṛṣṇa are not within the purview of mundane senses. This knowledge has to be realized in atman or self, using the transcendental senses. Hence, these topics are placed in the category of transcendental knowledge, as described in the Chapter 4 of Bhagavad Gītā. It is spirit that is the basis of matter, and not vice versa. Hence, spiritual knowledge is the basis of all knowledge.

In this chapter, we describe the process of acquiring this spiritual knowledge. The following is the subject content of this chapter:

- First, it explains the descending process of acquiring transcendental knowledge.
- Then it prescribes the attitude in which a student should approach this process.
- Finally, it narrates an anecdote of a hunter to illustrate how this process leads to perfection without demanding any pre-qualification of the student.

7.2 Epistemology: The Acquisition of Knowledge

This section describes four methods of acquiring knowledge — direct perception, logical inference, historical evidence, and hearing from authorized sources.

7.2.1 Direct Perception

It is a common saying that seeing is believing. We use our five senses — eyes (vision), ears (hearing), nose (smell), tongue (taste) and skin (touch) to know the world around us. This is called direct perception. Direct perception depends on the senses and the mind. In direct perception, we can say that the



Figure 7.1: Direct perception

food is tasty by eating, or that the weather is cold or warm by the experience of our skin. Flowers give fragrance, stream water is naturally cool, and too much bright light is painful to see — these are all direct experiences. Sophisticated instruments are built to observe microscopic and macroscopic objects. Using an electronic microscope, one can observe cellular growth of a worm starting from a single cell. Using the Hubble telescope, one can see the celestial objects.

7.2.2 Historical Evidences

To establish historical facts such as how in a particular era people lived, what foods they ate, what clothes they wore, what their beliefs were, what their lives were like, and what their thoughts were, historians use written, visual, aural, and physical evidence. For example, some



Figure 7.2: Historical evidences

recent events — e.g., Akbar ruled India from 1556 to 1605, Britishers ruled India from 1757 to 1947, and Cāṇakya founded Mauryan Dynasty in 322 BCE — have been recorded in recent history. Similarly, from the Vedic literature, we learn that Lord Rāma ruled Bhārata Varṣa around 2 million years ago and Lord Kṛṣṇa performed His divine līlā around 5000 years ago.

7.2.3 Logical Inference

Inferences are made to go beyond the available evidence of direct perception to reach a conclusion with the help of logical reasoning. One particular form in logic is called as modus ponens, which has the following structure:

- If A then B,
- Since A
- Therefore B

Here, I and II are premises, and III is the conclusion, i.e., if I and II are correct, then III will be correct. For example, if we take “If the sky is cloudy, it may rain” and “The sky is cloudy” as two premises then “it may rain” will be the conclusion.

7.2.4 Hearing from Authorized Sources

A very efficient and effective method of acquiring knowledge is to learn it from an authorized source. For example, one gets admitted in a top University like IIT Kanpur to become a professional Electrical Engineer. One gets admitted in AIIMS Delhi to get Medical education. Similarly, one seeks the guidance of a spiritual expert and spiritual books to learn the science of soul.



1. Enumerate four processes of acquiring knowledge. Give one example from each category using your personal experience.

7.2.5 Pitfalls in the Path of Knowledge and their Remedy

However, we must notice that any method of acquiring knowledge that is based on the senses and the mind is never perfect because of the following four unavoidable fallacies:

- *Our senses are limited:* For instance, eyes can see only a limited range of stimuli (e.g., they cannot see radio waves), have a limited resolution power, their vision is blocked by things, etc. The same is true for the other senses, and even the sophisticated scientific instruments.

- *We are subjected to illusion:* The inference derived from sense experience is subject to faults because the mind itself is imperfect. For example, a stick partially immersed in water appears broken near the water surface and a rope in the dark frightens us by appearing like a snake. This happens because we try to make an inference based on limited sense experience and limited knowledge. Even in science, we base our inference on our prior imperfect inferences, thereby getting entangled in a thick network of illusion. For example, Rutherford described the atom to be like the solar system.



Figure 7.3: We are subjected to illusion - rope appears to be a snake

- *We make mistakes:* On top of the limited senses and mind, we have limited cognitive, intellectual and physical resources. Hence, we commit mistakes. Errors and accidents do happen even with the best of scientists. For example, even Einstein made many errors in his calculations before he derived the present form of relativity theory.
- *We have a tendency to cheat others:* One has to be absolutely unbiased and unprejudiced to reach perfect knowledge. But our pursuit of knowledge is often clouded by many other temptations, which may be for wealth, fame, or sense gratification, to name a few. Even science has seen so many false theories and results put forth by scientists with vested interests.



1. What are four defects in human endeavor to acquire knowledge?
2. Why is the knowledge acquired by human material endeavor subject to defects and cannot be perfect?

Because of these defects, direct perception—either based on mundane senses or on sophisticated instruments and logical inference alone cannot take us to perfect knowledge. In order to reach perfect knowledge, however, one can rely on the perfect authorized sources.



Especially, in the case of the knowledge of soul and Supersoul, one can depend upon the perfect source—Krishna. Hearing from Krishna is certainly the most infallible way to gain transcendental knowledge. Such a hearing process and its application in one's life is called Bhakti Yoga.

The Bhakti yoga process guides one's senses and mind to become purified of all defects. Then, even direct perception and logical reasoning helps one to see the soul and the Supersoul. We will dwell on this subject later.



1. *How do you know who your father is?*
2. *How can we acquire perfect knowledge?*

7.2.6 Importance of Hearing from Authorized Sources

In 1994, while addressing around 200 school children in Betanati, Odisha, I asked this question: “How do you know who your father is?”. I was pleasantly surprised when all of them resonated with the answer that they knew it from their mothers. When I ask this question to IIT students, they mostly remain silent while odd ones would answer that they would go for a DNA test. This answer is shocking as all of them have already accepted their fathers based on the authority of their mothers. This can be called denial mode as we do not want to accept the authority. Just like you have been accepting your biological father based on the authority of your mother, similarly, to understand your spiritual father you should accept the authority of Veda. If you reject the authority of your mother, then you may have the embarrassing situation of having to conduct DNA tests. This is not the way society works.

Such a behaviour shows false pride and hypocrisy, which have to be given up by sincere seekers of truth. A sincere seeker humbly acknowledges his/her limitations and fervently seeks guidance from authorized sources.



1. *Who is the authority in the matter of spiritual or divine knowledge?*

7.3 Ascending and Descending Processes

The process to acquire knowledge can further be analysed as — ascending or descending.

In the **ascending process**, one relies on one's own strength and efforts. This includes making observations and generalizing them with the help of philosophical speculation or meditation. Consider, for example, the attempts to understand natural systems. One can build electron & atomic force microscopes to see objects on the atomic scale. Similarly, one can build very powerful telescopes to observe the structure of the universe. Based on observed data, one can propose mathematical laws and understanding. But eventually someone may observe some data contradicting that law, and then he/she must give up the earlier understanding and come up with a better one. Hence, the ascending process can take one to a restricted understanding of a narrow domain, limited by the observations that are within one's reach.

Thus, the ascending process entails great uncertainty, and hence, cannot lead to perfect knowledge. This is because it relies only on one's senses and the mind, which are defective, as we have discussed in the previous section. Because of its inherent limitations and uncertainty, the ascending process cannot be applied to perfectly understand even physical nature, what to speak of soul and Supersoul, who are beyond our sensual observations. The sensory experiences are mundane, while the spirit is supra-mundane, and hence, cannot be described in terms of mundane experiences. However, there are philosophers who rely on mental speculation, rooted in sensory observations, to comprehend the nature of soul and Supersoul. They are eventually baffled in their attempts, and the spiritual subject matter remains ever elusive to them [Brahma Samhita 5.34].

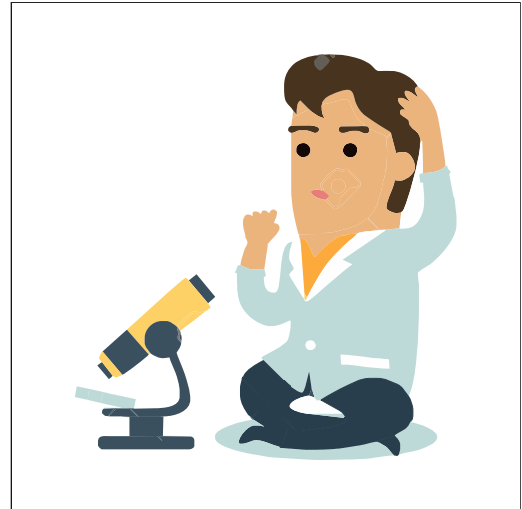


Figure 7.4: The ascending process entails great uncertainty due to the defective senses

In the **descending process**, on the other hand, one's end goals are guided by a perfect authority, and one understands one's absolute dependence on the higher authority. One learns the knowledge from authoritative sources, and experiences it by applying it to specific domains.

Hearing from authoritative sources is the perfect way to receive knowledge about the soul and Supersoul. These authorities include the Vedic scriptures and the spiritual masters coming in bonafide disciplic succession. Both the Vedic scriptures (śāstra) and the bonafide disciplic successions can impart us perfect knowledge because they both come from Krishna, who is all-perfect. These two sources are explained in detail in the next section.

In order to get perfect knowledge, be it about spirit or matter, one has to purify the defective senses and mind, and get situated at the level of pure transcendental experience. Such a transition occurs when the Lord directly lifts the soul from the material space to the conscious (pure, transcendental) space. This happens through the mercy of the Lord only.

It is the **spiritual grace** that embodies the process of dissemination of spiritual knowledge from one generation to another. It is the grace of the Lord that awakens our spiritual consciousness and spiritual identity. No amount of material ability can help one to draw this divine grace of the Lord. A person with great material ability can become very wealthy, famous or powerful. But such extraordinary abilities count for nothing for gaining spiritual knowledge. Real knowledge can be gained only by the grace of the Lord. In general, a spiritualist wholly depends on the mercy of the Lord, thus the path s/he follows is known as the descending process. Even if s/he has some extraordinary ability to prosper materially, he acknowledges that the source of these abilities is the Lord Himself. He uses such abilities to attain spiritual perfection.

This method of obtaining transcendental knowledge is a descending process where a seeker of Truth surrenders to the tradition of *guru—śiṣya paramparā*. The spiritual enlightenment happens due to descending of the Lord's grace (mercy) upon a conditioned soul - who is situated in the bottom-most layer of spiritual existence - the complete ignorance.

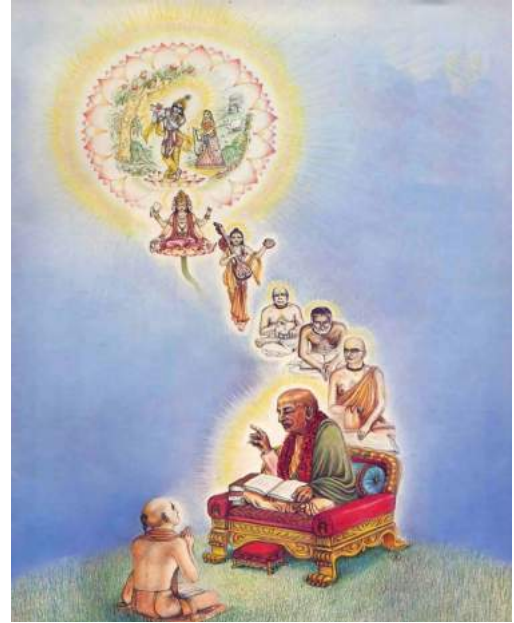


Figure 7.5: Transcendental knowledge descends when a seeker of truth surrenders to the guru—śiṣya paramparā.

Even for acquiring material knowledge, sincere seekers depend upon the grace of the Lord. Then, their pursuits aid to the understanding of the spiritual (transcendental) knowledge. Such spiritual scientists engage in the study of physical nature with a goal to get closer to the Absolute Truth while disentangling themselves from the material bondages. Due to their complete dependence on the grace of the Lord, they are distinctly different from the mundane scientists, who study physical nature to lord over it with an enjoying mentality,

following the ascending process. Such mundane scientists take humans away from their natural self. Hence the modern materialistic civilization, along with its so-called advancement of science and technology, has generated great physical and mental stress leading to colossal personality disorders.



1. *What is the ascending process? Illustrate through an example.*
2. *What is the descending process? Illustrate through an example.*
3. *What is spiritual grace or divine grace?*

7.4 Sources of Perfect Knowledge

We learned in the previous section that the descending process is the way to gain perfect knowledge. The perfect knowledge can come from the perfect source, that is the Supreme Lord Krishna. He gives us the perfect knowledge from outside through scriptures and spiritual teachers, and from within as Paramatma.

7.4.1 Vedic Scriptures

*māyā-mugdha jīvera nāhi
svataḥ kṛṣṇa-jñāna
jīvere kṛpāya kailā kṛṣṇa veda-purāṇa
(CC Madhya 20.122)*

The conditioned soul cannot revive his original consciousness by his own effort. But out of causeless mercy, Lord Kṛṣṇa compiled the Vedic literature to bestow perfect knowledge. The perfect knowledge

always comes from Kṛṣṇa. Only Absolute Truth can bless us with the perfect knowledge by revealing it unto a sincere seeker. Bhagavad Gītā is inundated with the divine mercy that Arjuna drank by surrendering to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Prior to Arjuna, Vivasvata Manu received this mercy about 28 *divya kalpas* ago from his father Vivasvān, the Sun God. This incident is described in the Bhagavad Gītā 4.1:

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca
imam̐ vivasvate yogaṁ
proktavān aham avyayam
vivasvān manave prāha
manur ikṣvākave 'bravīt*

“The Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, said: I instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun god, Vivasvān, and Vivasvān instructed it to Manu, the father of mankind, and Manu in turn instructed it to Ikṣvāku.”



Figure 7.6: Lord Krishna instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun god, Vivasvān

It must be noted that the Vedas not only talk about spiritual subjects, but they also discuss various physical aspects such as the diameter of this universe, the basic building block of this universe, and physical structure of this universe that can be verified empirically. Such knowledge concerning the physical world increases the credibility of the Vedas even more. Some examples are given as follows:

Sacred Cow Dung and Conch Shell: Although any contact with any kind of excreta is considered to be contaminating, still the cow dung, an animal stool, has been accepted as the sacred substance based on the authority of Veda. When Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared in Nanda Mahārāja's house, He was bathed with cow urine and cow dung. The value of a cow is not only due to her milk or milk products, but also due to her dung and urine. Majority of Ayurvedic medicines are taken with cow dung and urine (*panca-gavya*). Cow dung has been used as organic manure in India for millions of years. However, in the post-independence era, inorganic farming, together with branding the Vedic knowledge as mythological, has been encouraged. It has become evident now that applications of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides will make all our lands barren within another 20-30 years.

Conch shell can be taken as another example. Usually, animal bones are not considered sacred. Still the conch-shell, although an animal bone, is considered very auspicious. In all Vedic ceremonies, blowing of conch-shells invokes auspiciousness. It is an animal bone but it is *pavitra* (pure) because Vedas declare so.



Value of Pi: There is a prayer to Lord Kṛṣṇa:

*gopi bhāgya madhuvrāta
śṛṅgiśodadhisandhiga
khalajīvitakhātāva
galahālārasandhara*

“Oh Kṛṣṇa, the fortune of the Gopīs, the destroyer of the demon Madhu, protector of cattle, He who ventured the ocean depths, destroyer of evil doers, one with plough on the shoulder and bearer of nectar, may protect us.”

In Kaṭāpayādi Sāṅkhya, each devanāgarī alphabet is assigned a number, i.e., one for ka, two for kha and three for ga and so on. If you take that table (alphabets in Devanagari to numbers) and apply on this verse, then you get the following

3.1415926535897932384626433832792

i.e., the value of pi up to the 31 decimal places! It is interesting to note that in a prayer, value of pi up to the 31 decimal places is encoded. One purpose is to pray Lord Kṛṣṇa and other purpose is to remember the value of pi.

Rig Veda gives the value of Speed of Light: Rig Veda Samhita, Mandalam 1, suktam 50, mantrah 4 is :
tathā ca smaryate yojanam sahasram dve dve sate dve ca yojane ekena nimisardhena kramamana namostu te

Translation: Let me offer my obeisances to Sun God, who travels with a speed of 2,202 yojanas per half a nimisha.

This is a prayer to Sun God. The famous Sāyaṇa has given commentary on this literature.

As per Vedic literature, half a *nimiṣa* is 0.114286 seconds and 2202 *yojanas* is 21,144,705 miles. Sun God covers 2202 *yojanas* per half a *nimiṣa*. So, sun light travels at a speed of 185,016,169 miles per second which is close to the modern value of speed of light as 186,282,397 miles per second.

The Debate on Human History continues: From Vedic literature we learn that Lord Rāma appeared in Ayodhyā approximately 2 million years ago. But based on evolution theory, people think that human civilization is only 40,000 years old. There are many evidences against this current belief of human civilization is only 40,000 years old:

- There are some, the so called “out of place artifacts” which seems to be man-made, and which should not have been found where they have been that suggest human civilization can be significantly old as compared to the contemporary acceptance. For example (a) shoe heel from the Triassic (i.e., 200 million years old) (b) a nicely made gold thread in sediments more than 320 million years old (c) a metallic jar more than 600 million years old in rocks from the Precambrian have been found by archeologists.

- The first significant African discovery related to human origins occurred in 1913 when Professor Hans Reck, of Berlin University, found a human skeleton in the upper part of Bed II at Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania. Modern dating methods give a date of around 1.15 million years for this site.



Figure 7.7: Rama Setu: the bridge built by Lord Rama

- Figure 7.7 shows the NASA picture of the bridge (Ram Setu) that connects India and Śrī Lanka. It is believed to be the same bridge built by Lord Rama. The age of this bridge is estimated as 1.7 million years old. This is in agreement with Vedas, according to which Lord Rāma appeared 2 million years ago.
- “The findings in Dwaraka and other archeological evidence found there are compatible with the Mahabharat’s tradition removing the lingering doubt about the historicity of the Mahabharat,” says Dr Rao, of the National Institute of Oceanography that was instrumental in conducting much of the underwater excavations. This example is evidence of the historicity of Mahabharat. That is the time when the great Vyasadeva compiled all vedic literature. Thus, historical narratives as recorded in Ramayana, Mahabharat, Bhagavata Purana and other literature thus become bonafide.



1. Vedic knowledge is perfect and infallible. Explain in your own words.

7.4.2 Disciplic Succession

Lord Krishna talks about the disciplic succession for the dissemination of the perfect knowledge in Chapter 4 of Bhagavad Gita. In BG 4.2-3, He says

*evam paramparā-prāptam
imam rājarṣayo viduḥ
sa kāleneha mahatā
yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa*

“This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. But in course of time the succession was broken, and therefore the science as it is appears to be lost.”

*sa evāyam mayā te 'dya
yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ
bhakto 'si me sakhā ceti
rahasyam hy etad uttamam*

“That very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend and can therefore understand the transcendental mystery of this science.”

Guru śiṣya paramparā is a descending process. In Vedic system for learning anything, the learner has to come to the *guru śiṣya paramparā*. *Rajarṣi* means a saintly king. The saintly kings received this knowledge in a chain of disciplic succession and this succession goes back to Kṛṣṇa Himself. But in course of time, the disciplic succession was broken. Lord Kṛṣṇa, 5000 years ago, reestablished this *paramparā* by enlightening Arjuna. Additionally, this divine event enlightened all bonafide *paramparās*. We are learning this science of Bhagavad Gītā in the Brahma — Madhva — Gauḍīya *paramparā* in the following sense. This chain of disciplic succession comes from Kṛṣṇa via Brahmājī, Narada, Vyasa and so forth, then *Caitanya Mahāprabhu* and eventually reaching A. C. *Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*. In the last hundred years, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, Śrīla Gaura Kīśoradāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Thākura and Śrīla A. C. *Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada* have appeared in this disciplic succession. We, the followers of ISKCON, being situated at the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupada have received this transcendental knowledge from him.

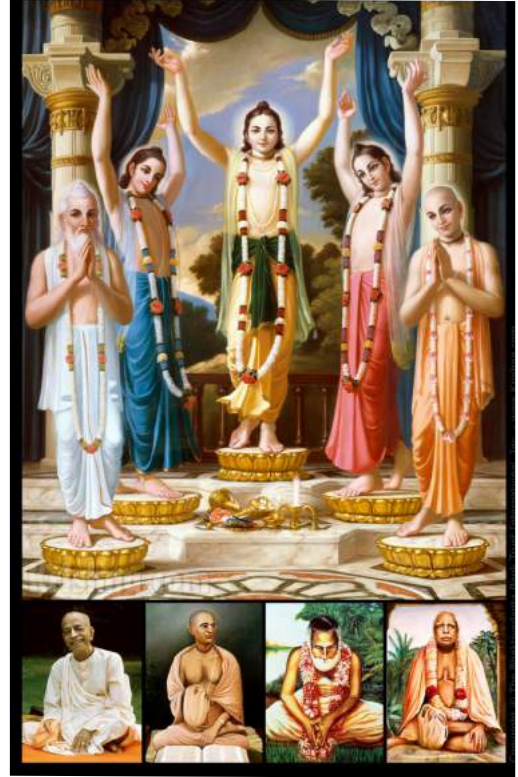


Figure 7.8: Chaitanya Mahāprabhu (above, center), A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami (below from left), Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Thākura, Śrīla Gaura Kīśoradāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura.

The descending knowledge is transmitted through *guru śiṣya paramparā*. Just like power plug connected to a powerhouse can get you electricity, a bonafide *paramparā* whose source is Lord Kṛṣṇa can make you connected to Lord Kṛṣṇa. When one is blessed to get connected to such a bonafide guru śiṣya *paramparā*, one will naturally feel connected to Kṛṣṇa. Then the transcendental knowledge will become self-evident through direct experience by the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa. The following teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī makes this very clear:

*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja
(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya Līlā 19.151)*

“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 Kṛṣṇa. By the mercy of both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.”

Divinity cannot be accessed by any material endeavour. One may say that he will give charity and by giving unlimited charities he will be able to achieve Krishna. Another person will say that he will do

severe austerities and he will achieve Kṛṣṇa. Some other person might say that he will read Vedic literature day and night and will know Kṛṣṇa. But one will not realize Kṛṣṇa by such endeavours unless he has received the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is giving stress to the importance of guru in the verse BG 4.34:

*tad viddhi praṇipātena
paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ
jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.”

In the descending process, one cannot demand knowledge from the spiritual master by paying him handsomely. One must accept a bonafide guru and please him by his sincere service as per his instructions. When satisfied with disciple's determination, humility and constant endeavour, guru and Kṛṣṇa show special mercy by which the transcendental knowledge is revealed unto the heart of such a fortunate soul. A bonafide guru becomes happy when his disciples are making spiritual progress. So pleasing a guru doesn't mean to make him happy by any monetary means. If you find such a guru, who asks money for spiritual knowledge, you should reject him. Thus, there are three aspects to properly approaching a spiritual teacher. The student must have humility to admit that he is ignorant about divine subject-matter. He serves the guru to please him. He must have pertinent questions in regard to his own spiritual well-being. Then a bonafide spiritual master endows such a surrendered disciple with spiritual knowledge. Thus, the guru is that person who is very much concerned about the spiritual well-being of the conditioned souls:

*yasya deve parā bhaktir
yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ
prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*
(Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23)

“Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.”

Bhagavad Gītā is written in Sanskrit and people think that by learning Sanskrit they can become experts in Bhagavad Gītā. Suppose you learn English to understand Physics written in English language – is this a clever approach? One must approach a learned physicist to understand Physics. Similarly, one must approach a person who is realized in the science of the Bhagavad Gītā. He is called guru or the spiritual master. The bonafide guru has established a pure relation with Lord Kṛṣṇa through his unalloyed devotional service. But guru is not God rather he is His representative, an eternal servitor of Kṛṣṇa. Guru is a *jīva* like us but has perfected his life by accepting Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We can only understand this

divine science by the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa. One should have faith in Kṛṣṇa and one should have faith in guru.

There are four main *sampradāyas*, or unbroken chains of disciplic succession descending down through important ācāryas, or spiritual teachers. These are also the main schools of thought in the Vedic tradition. Thus, a person should belong to or should be a part of one of these *sampradāyas* if he/she is going to be considered authorized in his/her Vedic teachings or practice. This has been corroborated in Gārga Saṁhitā as:

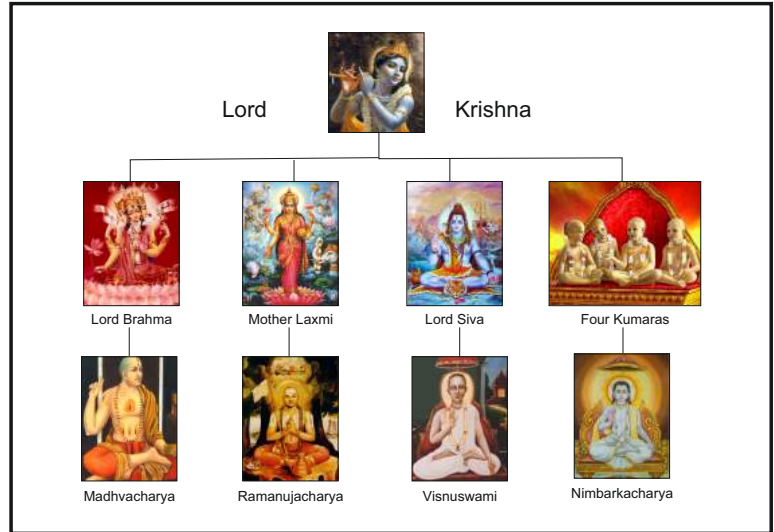


Figure 7.9: The four sampradayas

“Vāmana, Brahmā, Ananta Śeṣa and Sanaka Kumāra will appear as brāhmanas by the order of Viṣṇu, for the preservation of eternal righteousness in Kali yuga. Viṣṇusvāmī, Madhvācārya, Ramanujacharya and Nimbarkacharya will appear respectively as a portion of Vamana, Brahma, Ananta Sesa and Sanaka Kumāra. These four saviors will be the establishers of the four authorized and empowered spiritual channels of disciplic succession in the period calculated from the reign of King Vikrama in 54 B.C. subsequently through the 432,000-year cycle of Kali yuga. These four authorized and empowered spiritual channels of disciplic succession are to be fully accepted by all beings; as any word, combination of words or formulation of sound frequencies, invoked or addressed, audible or inaudible, secret or revealed, ancient or contemporary outside their auspices prove to have absolutely no efficacy.” **Gārga Saṁhitā, 10:61:23-26**

The four *sampradāyas* and their main philosophical ideas can be summarized as follows:

1. The **Śrī Sampradāya**, promulgated by Śrī Rāmānujācārya in 12th century AD, advocates the doctrine of *viśiṣṭa advaita*, i.e., simultaneous oneness and difference between Lord and His energies. Śrī or Goddess Lakṣmī is said to be the originator of this doctrine.
2. The **Brahma Sampradāya**, where the main exponent is Madhvācārya, propagated the doctrine of *viśiṣṭa dvaita* or duality with varieties in 13th century AD. This is said to have originated from Lord Brahmā.
3. The **Rudra Sampradāya** was propagated by Viṣṇusvāmī, under *śuddha dvaita*, or pure transcendental duality. Saint Vallabhācārya's philosophy forms a branch of this *sampradāya*. It is believed that this *sampradāya* has originated from Rudra or Lord Śiva Himself.
4. The **Kumara Sampradāya** is the 4th one whose main exponent is Nimbarkacharya, who propagated the doctrine of *dvaita advaita* or simultaneous oneness and duality. This is said to have originated from Lord Brahma's sons, the Kumaras.

ISKCON founder Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda belongs to Gauḍīya Sampradāya which has its origin from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is considered to be Kṛṣṇa Himself and is the *prāmāṇika yuga avatāra* for the Kali Yuga for spreading the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahāmantra. However, He Himself got connected to Madhva *sampradāya* after taking initiation from Śrīla Īśvara Puri whose spiritual master is the famous Śrīla Mādhavendra Puri. Thus, we ISKCON followers belong to Brahmā—Madhva—Gauḍīya Sampradāya which in short form is popularly known as Gauḍīya Sampradāya. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu established the philosophical tradition of achintya bheda-abheda tattva that amalgamates all previous four doctrines into one.



1. Describe a bonafide guru-shishya parampara.
2. How should one approach a guru? Quote the verse as well.
3. What are three aspects to approach a bonafide spiritual master?
4. Who is eligible to receive the transcendental knowledge? Quote the verse from Svetasvatara Upanishad.
5. In what language Bhagavad Gita is written?
6. How many bonafide sampradayas are there as per vedic scripture?
7. How does one get connected to a bonafide parampara?

7.5 Spirit of Descending Process

Kṛṣṇa gave this knowledge again when Arjuna was confused on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. For bestowing compassion upon all of us, Lord Kṛṣṇa made Arjuna as His instrument and re-established the seemingly lost knowledge among the general populace:

Bhagavad Gita 4.3: “That very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend and can therefore understand the transcendental mystery of this science.”

So this is the spirit of the Bhagavad Gītā and the descending process. Kṛṣṇa is revealing this science to Arjuna as he is His friend and devotee (*bhakta*). This knowledge is never revealed to somebody who is not inclined to establish a pure relation with Lord Kṛṣṇa. When one becomes a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa by Bhakti yoga, this knowledge naturally manifests within his heart. Such is the power of Bhakti yoga that Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is inconceivably infinite whom Lord Brahma and Lord Siva also cannot comprehend, allows an infinitesimal jiva to have a relationship with him. Thus, one realizes the supreme knowledge that *jīva* is eternal, Kṛṣṇa is eternal and that they have an eternal relationship.

One receives this knowledge by the mercy of Krishna and the spiritual master as explained in Caitanya Caritamrita, Madhya 19.151.

Hence, an essential element in the descending process of Bhakti yoga is our ability to depend upon the grace of Lord Krishna and the spiritual master, who is a representative of Krishna. This has been quoted

earlier in this lesson from Shvetashvatara Upanisad 6.23. We just have to repeat the words of Sri Guru and Lord Krishna based on our own realization. We cannot add or delete from what is received from the top i.e. Lord Krishna.

Sometimes, some seekers, after making a little advancement in spiritual path, think of themselves as liberated and consider themselves as equal to or independent of Krishna and/or the spiritual master. This mentality is a great obstacle for the progress of a spiritual seeker. The following story illustrates this situation in a dramatic way.

punar mushikah bhava: Once there lived a mouse who was very much harassed by a cat. To get relieved of the harassment, the mouse approached a saintly person and requested the saintly person to make him into a cat. The saintly person being merciful granted the benediction and turned the mouse into a cat. After becoming a cat, he was harassed by a dog. He approached the saintly person to make him into a dog. When he became a dog, he was harassed by a tiger. This time he wanted to become a tiger and the saintly person granted his request.

But when he became a tiger, he stared at the saintly person. The saintly person asked him, "What do you want?". The tiger said, "I want to eat you." The saintly person cursed him, saying, "punar mushikah bhava" which means "May you again become a mouse." This story illustrates how we have been wandering in this material world among 8.4 million species. The mouse forgot that he became a tiger by the grace of the sage. His ingratitude made him rescind to the status of mouse again. Our ingratitude to Lord Krishna makes us remain eternally bound to the cycle of birth and death. Sometimes one dwells in a dog's body while another time in a tiger's body. But with the award of the human body, one must learn how to make use of this opportunity to perfect one's life and not fall trap to *punar mushikah bhava* syndrome.



Figure 7.10: Story of "Become a mouse again"

Hence, a sincere follower of Bhakti yoga is very careful to always seek the grace and shelter of Krishna and the spiritual master.



1. What is the essential element in a disciple to receive divine knowledge in a guru-shishya parampara?
2. What is the qualification of Arjuna that made him receive BG knowledge from Lord Krishna?
3. What do you learn from the story of punar mushikah bhava?
4. What qualification one must have to receive the knowledge in a descending process?

7.6 Perfection through Descending Process

This section tells the anecdote of a hunter and Narada Muni to illustrate the power of Bhakti yoga, which can elevate a person to the highest perfection, without any pre-requisite of high birth, knowledge, or piety.

Once upon a time the great saint Nārada, after visiting Lord Nārāyaṇa in the Vaikuṅṭhas, went to Prayāga to bathe at the confluence of three rivers—the Ganges, Yamunā and Sarasvatī. Narada Muni saw that a deer was lying on the path through the forest and that it was pierced by an arrow. It had broken legs and was twisting due to much pain. Farther ahead, Narada Muni saw a boar pierced by an arrow. Its legs were also broken, and it was twisting in pain. When he went farther, he saw a rabbit that was also suffering. Narada Muni was greatly pained at heart to see living entities suffer so. When Narada Muni advanced farther, he saw a hunter behind a tree. This hunter was holding arrows, and he was ready to kill more animals.

The hunter's body was blackish. He had reddish eyes, and he appeared fierce. It was as if the superintendent of death, Yamaraja, was standing there with bows and arrows in his hands. When Narada Muni left the forest path and went to the hunter, all the animals immediately saw him and fled. When all the animals fled, the hunter wanted to chastise Narada with abusive language, but due to Narada's presence, he could not utter anything abusive. The hunter addressed Narada Muni: 'O Gosvami! O great saintly person! Why have you left the general path through the forest to come to me? Simply by seeing you, all the animals I was hunting have now fled'. Narada Muni replied, 'Leaving the path, I have come to you to settle a doubt that is in my mind'.

'I was wondering whether all the boars and other animals that are half-killed belong to you.' The hunter replied, 'Yes, what you are saying is so.' Narada Muni then inquired, 'Why did you not kill the animals completely? Why did you half-kill them by piercing their bodies with arrows?'

The hunter replied, 'My dear saintly person, my name is Mrgari, enemy of animals. My father taught me to kill them in that way. When I see half-killed animals suffer, I feel great pleasure'. Narada Muni then told the hunter, 'I have one thing to beg of you.' The hunter replied, 'You may take whatever animals or anything else you would like. I have many skins if you would like them. I shall give you either a deer skin or a tiger skin'. Narada Muni said, 'I do not want any of the skins. I am only asking one thing from you in charity'.

I beg you that from this day on, you will kill animals completely and not leave them half-dead. The hunter replied, 'My dear sir, what are you asking of me? What is wrong with the animals lying there half-killed? Will you please explain this to me?'

Narada Muni replied, If you leave the animals half-dead, you are purposefully giving them pain. Therefore, you will have to suffer in retaliation. This is an authoritative statement given by the greatest authority, Narada Muni. If one gives another living entity unnecessary pain, one will certainly be punished by the laws of nature by a similar pain. Although the hunter Mrgari was uncivilized, he still had

to suffer the results of his sinful activities. However, if a civilized man kills animals regularly in a slaughterhouse to maintain his so-called civilization, using scientific methods and machines to kill animals, one cannot even estimate the suffering awaiting him. So-called civilized people consider themselves very advanced in education, but they do not know about the stringent laws of nature. According to nature's law, it is a life for a life. We can hardly imagine the sufferings of one who maintains a slaughterhouse. He endures suffering not only in this life, but in his next life also. It is said that a hunter, murderer or killer is advised not to live and not to die. If he lives, he accumulates even more sins, which bring about more suffering in a future life. He is advised not to die because his dying means that he immediately begins to endure more suffering. Therefore, he is advised not to live and not to die.

Narada Muni continued, 'My dear hunter, your business is killing animals. That is a slight offense on your part, but when you consciously give them unnecessary pain by leaving them half-dead, you incur very great sins.'

Narada Muni continued, 'All the animals that you have killed and given unnecessary pain will kill you one after the other in your next life and in life after life.'

This is another authoritative statement made by the great sage Narada. Those who kill animals and give them unnecessary pain-as people do in slaughterhouses-will be killed in a similar way in the next life and in many lives to come. One can never be excused from such an offense. If one kills many thousands of animals in a professional way so that other people can purchase the meat to eat, one must be ready to be killed in a similar way in his next life and in life after life. This is the law of nature. The Sanskrit word *māmsa* means "meat." It is said: *mām sah khādati iti mamsah*. That is, "I am now eating the flesh of an animal who will someday in the future be eating my flesh."

In this way, through the association of the great sage Narada Muni, the hunter was a little convinced of his sinful activity. He therefore became somewhat afraid due to his offenses. The hunter then admitted that he was convinced of his sinful activity, and he said, 'I have been taught this business from my very childhood. Now I am wondering how I can become freed from these unlimited volumes of sinful activity.'

The hunter continued, 'My dear sir, please tell me how I can be relieved from the reactions of my sinful life. Now I fully surrender unto you and fall down at your lotus feet. Please deliver me from sinful reactions.'

By the grace of Narada Muni, the hunter came to his good senses and immediately surrendered unto the saint's lotus feet. This is the process. By associating with a saintly person, one is able to understand the reactions of his sinful life. When one voluntarily surrenders to a saintly person who is a representative of Krishna and follows his instructions, one can become freed from sinful reaction.

Narada Muni assured the hunter, 'If you listen to my instructions, I shall find the way you can be liberated'. The hunter then said, 'My dear sir, whatever you say I shall do'. Narada immediately ordered him, 'First of all, break your bow. Then I shall tell you what is to be done'. The hunter replied, 'If I break



my bow, how shall I maintain myself?' Narada Muni replied, 'Do not worry. I shall supply all your food every day'.

The source of our income is not actually the source of our maintenance. Every living being from the great Brahma down to an insignificant ant is being maintained by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As stated in Katha Upanishada 2.2.13, *eko bahunām yo vidadhāti kāmān*, the one Supreme Being, Krishna, maintains everyone. Our so-called source of income is our own choice only. If I wish to be a hunter, it will appear that hunting is the source of my income. If I become a brahmana and completely depend on Krishna, I do not conduct a business, but nonetheless my maintenance is supplied by Krishna. The hunter was disturbed about breaking his bow because he was worried about his income. Narada Muni assured the hunter because he knew that the hunter was not being maintained by the bow but by Krishna. Being the agent of Krishna, Narada Muni knew very well that the hunter would not suffer by breaking the bow. There was no doubt that Krishna would supply him food.

Being thus assured by the great sage Narada Muni, the hunter broke his bow, immediately fell down at the saint's lotus feet and fully surrendered. After this, Narada Muni raised him with his hand and gave him instructions for spiritual advancement.

Narada Muni then advised the hunter, 'Return home and distribute whatever riches you have to the pure brahmanas who know the Absolute Truth. After distributing all your riches to the brahmanas, both you and your wife should leave home, taking only one cloth to wear.'

Narada Muni continued, 'Leave your home and go to the river. There you should construct a small cottage, and in front of the cottage you should grow a tulasi plant on a raised platform. After planting the tulasi tree before your house, you should daily circumambulate that tulasi plant, serve her by giving her water and other things, and continuously chant the Hare Krishna maha-mantra.'

Narada Muni continued, 'I shall send sufficient food to you both every day. You can take as much food as you want.' When a person takes to Krishna consciousness, there is no need to care for material necessities. Krishna says that He personally provides all the necessities to His devotees.

*ananyāś cintayanto mām
ye janāḥ paryupāsate
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*

“But Those who worship Me with love and devotion, meditating on My transcendental form-to them I carry what they lack and preserve what they have.” (Bg. 9.22)

The three animals that were half-killed were then brought to their consciousness by the sage Narada. Indeed, the animals got up and swiftly fled. When the hunter saw the half-killed animals flee, he was certainly struck with wonder. He then offered his respectful obeisances to the sage Narada and returned home. After all this, Narada Muni went to his destination. After the hunter returned home, he exactly followed the instructions of his spiritual master, Narada.

For spiritual advancement one must have a bona fide spiritual master and follow his instructions in order to be assured of advancement.

The news that the hunter had become a Vaisnava spread all over the village. Indeed, all the villagers brought alms and presented them to the vaisnava who was formerly a hunter.

In one day, enough food was brought for ten or twenty people, but the hunter and his wife would accept only as much as they could eat.

One day, while speaking to his friend Parvata Muni, Narada Muni requested him to go with him to see his disciple the hunter. When the saintly sages came to the hunter's place, the hunter could see them coming from a distance. With great alacrity the hunter began to run toward his spiritual master, but he could not fall down and offer obeisances because ants were running hither and thither around his feet. Seeing the ants, the hunter whisked them away with a piece of cloth. After thus clearing the ants from the ground, he fell down flat to offer his obeisances.

Narada Muni said, 'My dear hunter, such behaviour is not at all astonishing. A man in devotional service is automatically nonviolent. He is the best of gentlemen. At the present moment there are many so-called gentlemen who are experts in killing animals and birds. Nonetheless, these so-called gentlemen profess a type of religion that strictly prohibits killing. According to Narada Muni and Vedic culture, animal killers are not even gentlemen, to say nothing of being religious men. A religious person, a devotee of the Lord, must be nonviolent. Such is the nature of a religious person. It is contradictory to be violent and at the same time call oneself a religious person. Such hypocrisy is not approved by Narada Muni and the disciplic succession.

O hunter, good qualities like nonviolence, which you have developed, are not very astonishing, for those engaged in the Lord's devotional service are never inclined to give pain to others because of envy.

The hunter then received both the great sages in the courtyard of his house. He spread out a straw mat for them to sit upon, and with great devotion he begged them to sit down. He then fetched water and washed the sages' feet with great devotion. Then both husband and wife drank that water and sprinkled it on their heads.

When the hunter chanted the Hare Krsna maha-mantra before his spiritual master, his body trembled, and tears welled in his eyes. Filled with ecstatic love, he raised his hands and began to dance, waving his garments up and down. When Parvata Muni saw the ecstatic loving symptoms of the hunter, he told Narada, 'Certainly you are a touchstone.'

When a touchstone touches iron, it turns the iron to gold. Parvata Muni called Narada Muni a touchstone because by his touch the hunter, who was lowest among men, became an elevated and perfect Vaisnava. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura said that the position of a Vaisnava can be tested by seeing how good a touchstone he is—that is, by seeing how many Vaisnavas he has made during his life. A Vaisnava should be a touchstone so that he can convert others to Vaisnavism by his preaching, even

though people may be fallen like the hunter. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu advised His followers to increase the numbers of Vaisnavas.

*yare dekha, tare kaha 'krsna'-upadesa
amara ajnaya guru hana tara' ei desa*
(CC. Madhya 7.128)

It is Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's wish that everyone should become a Vaisnava and guru. Following the instructions of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His disciplic succession, one can become a spiritual master, for the process is very easy. One can go everywhere and anywhere to preach the instructions of Krsna. Bhagavad-Gita is Krishna's instructions; therefore, the duty of every Vaisnava is to travel and preach Bhagavad-Gita, either in his country or a foreign country. This is the test of sparsa-mani, following in the footsteps of Narada Muni.

Parvata Muni continued, 'My dear friend Narada Muni, you are glorified as the sage among the demigods. By your mercy, even a lowborn person like this hunter can immediately become attached to Lord Krsna .



Figure 7.11: Narada muni and Parvata muni meets Mrgari

Narada Muni then asked the hunter, 'My dear Vaisnava, do you have some income for your maintenance?' The hunter replied, 'My dear spiritual master, whoever you send gives me something when he comes to see me.' This confirms the statement in Bhagavad-gita (9.22) to the effect that the Lord provides all necessities to His Vaisnava devotee. Narada Muni asked the former

hunter how he was being maintained, and he replied that everyone who came to see him brought him something for his maintenance. Krishna, who is situated in everyone's heart, says, "I personally carry all necessities to a Vaisnava." He can order anyone to execute this. Everyone is ready to give something to a Vaisnava, and if a Vaisnava is completely engaged in devotional service, he need not be anxious for his maintenance.

The former hunter said, 'Please do not send so many grains. Only send what is sufficient for two people, no more.' The former hunter only wanted enough for two people to eat, no more.

Narada Muni approved his not wanting more than a daily supply of food, and blessed him, saying, 'You are fortunate.' Narada Muni and Parvata Muni then disappeared from that place.



1. *One who gives pain gets pain as per laws of nature, elaborate from the above pastime.*
2. *Why is a sinful person advised 'not to live' or 'not to die' in our sastras?*
3. *Animal killing, a prime reason for many calamities and massacres happening in the present-day world. True/False? Support your answer.*
4. *Do Vedas support animal killing as sacrifices?*
5. *Explain the meaning of 'mamsa'.*
6. *Krsna says that He will give protection from all kinds of sinful activities for those who surrender unto Him. Quote the verse with meaning.*
7. *What is the proper atonement as performed by the hunter?*
8. *How can one become free from sinful reactions?*
9. *Lord Krishna is the actual maintainer, elaborate from your experience.*
10. *Quote the verse where Lord Krsna says that He personally takes care of His devotees.*
11. *Initiation is the first step to cultivate spiritual life. What is this process?*
12. *All good qualities are achieved by a Krsna conscious person. Explain through the example of Mrgari - the hunter.*
13. *Why is Narada muni compared to a touchstone in the above pastime?*
14. *How does the transformation of the Mrgari into a pure devotee affect your spiritual commitment?*

7.7 Conclusion

A sincere seeker of perfect knowledge readily accepts the help of all-perfect Kṛṣṇa through the teachers in disciplic succession and through the Vedic scriptures. Practicing the process of Bhakti yoga purifies one's senses and mind, which then help one to come closer to the knowledge of both matter as well as spirit.

Kṛṣṇa is infinite. Just like the algebra of finite numbers fails at infinity, similarly no mundane means can help us comprehend the transcendental knowledge — the knowledge of conscious space and time, and hence, the need of descending process. Just like mother is the authority to know one's father, similarly Vedic authority is needed to attain information about the transcendence — the spiritual world. Vedic knowledge is infallible as it is a revealed sound which directly comes from Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is always perfect. Bhagavad Gītā is the essence of all Vedic knowledge. Let us read this literature carefully under proper guidance. At the stage of perfection, Lord Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself to the seeker of truth in terms of a relation such as parental, lover, friend and servant. One must approach guru, *sādhū* and *sāstra* for obtaining this transcendental knowledge.

This process demands that the sincere seeker must seek out the help of a bonafide spiritual master who has seen the Truth. The seeker must be humble enough to understand that he is a novice in spiritual

matter. He is ready to serve the teacher as per teacher's wishes. The seeker must have pertinent questions as to know how of the spiritual truth. Lord Krishna who is situated in the heart of such a seeker as the supersoul guides him to a bonafide spiritual master. Thus, this descending process is a divine one where the spiritual truth is revealed to the genuine seeker. Just like material subject matters are revealed to us through material senses, the spiritual truth is revealed to us through the divine grace of Sri guru and Sri Krishna. Although the Bhagavad Gita knowledge is accessible in terms of Sanskrit slokas to everyone, the message contained in it still remains a mystery to many.



1. *What should be the aim of any kind of knowledge?*
2. *Why, can a seer of truth impart knowledge unto us? Quote the verse from Bhagavad Gita.*
3. *Vedic knowledge comes through the ascending Process. True/False? Support your answer.*
4. *In which parampara system are you learning Bhagavad Gita on the LGLG platform?*
5. *Who are prominent acharyas in this disciplic succession?*
6. *Compare and contrast between relative and absolute knowledge.*
7. *Vedic knowledge is infallible. Explain.*

