

cs

nl

en

pt-br

es

zu

Share

 Recommend

Bhaktivedanta VedaBase®

A TREASURE OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE Beta-1

[Books](#) [Index of verses](#) [Index of synonyms](#) [About site](#) [VedaBase information](#) [Kindle](#)
[Books](#) [Contact](#) [Search](#)

Books

Diacritics

Message of Godhead

[MoG Introduction](#)

[MoG 1: Transcendental Knowledge](#)

[MoG 2: Karma-yoga](#)

[< previous](#)

[next >](#)



His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Content used with permission of The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International, Inc. All rights reserved.
This is a site of the Bhaktivedanta Archives. Powered by Drupal and hosted on Linode.

MoG Introduction

Introduction

At present, we are concerned primarily with two things: one, ourselves; and the other, the place where we live. In other words, we are concerned with two objects: namely, everything that is related to our gross and subtle bodies; and the world at large, with all its paraphernalia. But there are others above us, the transcendentalists, who are concerned not only with their body and mind and the world at large, but also with the transcendental subject that is above the body and mind and the world at large. The transcendentalists are very much concerned with the Absolute Truth, and much less with relative truths.

These transcendentalists (ordinarily known as saints, philosophers, reformers, messengers, and so forth) appear in various places in the world at various times. They render transcendental service to the Absolute Truth and to humanity, also, by preaching the message of the transcendental world. According to these transcendentalists, even lower animals like cats and dogs are also concerned primarily with two things, namely, themselves and the world at large. Living entities other than human beings have no capacity to understand transcendental subjects. The human being is therefore considered to be the highest of all creations, and we must understand the nature of this higher standing.

When man, who is the highest of all created beings, is fully developed in consciousness, he concerns himself not only with his own self and the world where he lives, but he tries to understand the Absolute Truth. The Absolute Truth regulates man as well as the world, and knowing Him, the transcendentalist

regulates his activities on the right path. This regulating process is commonly known as a system of faith or religion. All over the civilized world we find some process or form of religion—when man is devoid of any such religion or of transcendental traits, he is nothing but a beast. This subject matter, which the religionists delineate according to different countries, times, and people, is more or less aimed at the objective of the Absolute Truth.

The Absolute Truth is one without a second, but He is viewed from different angles of vision by different religionists or transcendentalists under different circumstances. Some transcendentalists view the Absolute Truth as an impersonal force, generally known as the formless Brahman, while others view Him as the all-pervading localized aspect, dwelling within all living entities and generally known as *Paramātmā* or the Supersoul. But there is another important sect of transcendentalists, who understand the Absolute Truth as the Absolute Personality of Godhead, possessing the potentialities of being impersonal and all-pervasive simultaneous with His Absolute Personality.

At the present moment, the word *religion* is being sacrificed on the altar of materialistic tendencies. The human race is more concerned now with subject matters related to eating, sleeping, defending, and gratifying the senses, much as are the lower animals. The general tendency is to avoid transcendental subject matters as far as possible or, in any case, not to go into the details. Even the biggest political leaders have been heard to say that the hungry man or woman finds no meaning in God and religion. People in general, under the leadership of such materialistic men, are gradually descending to the status of lower animals, devoid of all transcendental realization, knowing nothing beyond their material bodies and the material world.

Thus, the human race has descended to the qualitative status of the dogs, who are habituated to barking as soon as they come upon another set of dogs who happen to hail from another quarter. We cannot conceive of a greater degradation of the human being than when he is apt to raise a hue and cry as soon as he sees another human being who does not happen to belong to his quarter or his religious denomination. He raises this hue and cry as if he had been faced with a tiger or a wolf. Without transcendental knowledge, the human race has actually become no more than the tigers and the wolves.

It is therefore necessary at the present moment to understand something about absolute knowledge if we want to bring the human race back to sanity. Thus intelligent persons or leaders of men should not devote their energies only for worldly betterment in the matter of eating, sleeping, defending, and gratifying the material senses. Leaders who think a hungry man or woman has no use for God and religion should be told emphatically that no man or woman in the world is not hungry—and that it is precisely the hungry man or woman who has to understand the meaning of God and religion now, more than ever.

In this connection, we would like to quote the substance of a speech delivered by Śrī Radhakrishnan (former president of India) at a recent meeting of UNESCO in Paris. He said that when a nation proudly turns away from God and concentrates on worldly success and prosperity, it meets its doom. What is essential today is not so much the rehabilitation of schools and libraries or shops and factories but the rehabilitation of man; we must re-create man if we are to create a new world community.

It is therefore more necessary than ever to realize the all-important relationship of man with God if we want at all to rehabilitate the human race, which is already shattered more than ever.

The philosophers and the logicians have tried to understand the intrinsic relationship of living entities with God by various conceptions and methods, on the strength of their mundane education and scholastic research. But the Absolute Truth remains above the philosophers and their acquired knowledge. The conception of the Absolute is never perfectly attained by such an ascending process, because of its being born of imperfect, material senses. These empiric philosophers and logicians cannot realize their imperfection by the vanity of material knowledge, and the ultimate conclusion of such materialistic philosophers is atheism. They deny the existence of God, who is the Supreme Person, different from all other persons. Under such a vague assumption, we remain in the same darkness as before. We are content with a conception of Godhead according to our own individual idea, without knowing the real relationship of Godhead and ourselves.

Therefore, the transcendentalists do not recognize such a process of generalization but pass over direct perception to receive the knowledge of deduction in its various

stages—from authorities who have actual revelation of transcendental knowledge. This revelation is made possible from the deeper aspect within the human personality. The real knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His relationship with us can be revealed only by this transcendental method. Since the Supreme Personality of Godhead is absolute, He reserves the right of not being exposed to the mundaners. He can be known by one absolute process, and the relative process of sense perception cannot reach Him ever. If Godhead were subject to being revealed by our relative sense perception, then our sense perception, and not Godhead, would be absolute. The process is therefore fallacious in all its manifold stages.

We cannot approach the Absolute by our poor fund of knowledge, but the Absolute becomes revealed out of His own mercy by His own appearance. In the darkness of night, the sun cannot be obliged to appear, even by the power of our highest technology. But in the morning the sun reveals itself of its own accord without the help of any materialistic enterprise of ours. When the sun appears, the darkness of the night automatically disappears. It is therefore a truth that the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself or His confidential servants manifest themselves by their own potency and without any help from this material world. They descend out of their causeless mercy, just to benefit the fallen souls who are apt to be illusioned by the material energy of Godhead, called the modes of nature.

However, if we keep our doors and windows shut when the sun rises in the morning, surely the rays of the sun will not enter into our somber room. In the same way, when the Supreme Personality of Godhead or His confidential servants manifest themselves and preach the message of Godhead, we must not shut the doors and windows of our body and mind; otherwise, the light emanating from the Lord and His servants shall not enter into us. The lights that emanate from such transcendental sources generally enter into us by our aural reception. So only if we are ready to offer a submissive aural reception to the message of Godhead can we know Godhead as He is and our relationship with Him as it is. This message of Godhead is presented herewith in that transcendental spirit, for the benefit of people in general and real seekers of truth in particular. We do not know how far we shall be successful in our tiny attempt, but we must always apologize for all our defects in this respect.

The Author

[< previous](#)

[next >](#)



His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Content used with permission of The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International, Inc. All rights reserved.

This is a site of the Bhaktivedanta Archives. Powered by Drupal and hosted on Linode.

MoG 1: Transcendental Knowledge

We offer our most sincere and humble obeisances to our spiritual master, who is all merciful and the savior of the fallen. He dissipates the darkness of nescience by opening our eyes with the probe of knowledge transcendental. He reveals this transcendental knowledge for the benefit of all people.

We are very proud of our two small eyes, and puffed up with vanity, we are always enthusiastic to see everything with our own eyes. But we do not know that whatever we are seeing at the present moment is covered with the darkness of nescience, and, as such, whatever we are seeing is either misperceived or only partially perceived. It is not a fact that we can see everything as it is simply by applying our ocular power to it. Every morning when the sun rises, we see this vast mass of matter as if it were just a small disc. Of course, the sun is much larger than the earth on which we live, and thus every morning of every day our self-reliant ocular vanity is put to the test and reduced to absurdity. Our eyes can gather knowledge only under certain favorable conditions. We cannot see things that are too far away from us; we cannot penetrate the darkness, nor can we see things that are very close to the eye, such as our own eyelids. Thus we can be proud of our eyes only under certain favorable conditions created by an external agency, namely the material nature. Otherwise, even though we have our wonderful eyes, we cannot see things in their true perspective. What is true for the eyes is also true for the other senses we use for gathering knowledge.

Under these circumstances, whatever we are experiencing at the present moment is totally conditional and is therefore subject to mistakes and incompleteness. These

mistaken impressions can never be rectified by the "mistaker" himself or by another, similar person apt to commit similar mistakes.

In the darkness, if we want to perceive a certain object, we cannot use just our eyes; we have to rely on some other means to aid our perception. So, in the darkness, the object cannot be known to us in its entirety. In such a situation, even if we get some knowledge by touch or otherwise, it is all either mistaken or incomplete. It is just like the group of blind men who had encountered an elephant and tried to describe the strange new creature to one another. One man felt the trunk and said, "This is a huge snake." Another man felt a leg and said, "No, this is a great pillar." And so forth.

There is but one way to perceive things in the depth of darkness. Only if somebody brings a light into the darkness is it truly possible to see things as they are. Similarly, the light of knowledge is kindled by our preceptors, and we can see things as they are only by our preceptors' mercy. From our very birth we have become accustomed to gathering knowledge by the mercy of our preceptors, whether father, mother, or teacher. We can march along the path of progressive knowledge only by the help of such preceptors, from whom we gather experience by submissive hearing.

We go forward on the path of knowledge by the mercy of our preceptors—from learning the alphabet up to completing our university career. And if we want to go still further and acquire knowledge transcendental, we must first of all seek qualified transcendental preceptors who can lead us on the path. The knowledge that we gather by our education in the schools and colleges may help us temporarily in the study of some particular subject in the present span of life, but this acquisition of knowledge cannot satisfy our eternal need for which we hanker life after life, day after day, hour after hour.

To achieve success in any subject, it is necessary to establish a relationship with a master of that subject and to work favorably in that particular line. To acquire a degree at an academic university, we first have to establish a relationship with that institution. We have to abide by the direction of our instructors there and work favorably according to their direction. This is essential in order to achieve the ultimate desired success. In the same manner, if we are really anxious to know the principles of eternal life or life after death, and if we really want to see things in

their true perspective, it is necessary for us to establish a relationship with a preceptor who can really open our eyes and lift us from the clutches of nescience. This process of approaching the spiritual master is an eternal verity. No one can do without abiding by this eternal rule.

The process of initiation begins from the date when we establish our transcendental relationship with the spiritual master. In the Upaniṣads and allied scriptures, it is ordained that one must approach with awe and reverence the feet of a spiritual master who is well versed in all the scriptures and who has attained perfection in transcendental knowledge. To attain perfection in transcendental knowledge is to accept the disciplic succession, the spiritual line, by culture, practice, and education in that line. The professional heads of various spiritual societies or communities often may not have attained to this standard of spiritual perfection and so may not possess the qualifications required for being a spiritual master. It is therefore no use to approach such professional spiritual masters as a matter of formality or custom. Attainment of spiritual perfection can never be possible without undergoing spiritual discipline.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the ideal spiritual master, spoke the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā* to Marshal Arjuna, His disciple. Here is a perfect example of the relationship between the spiritual master and the disciple. Arjuna was a most intimate friend of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and thus Śrī Kṛṣṇa explained to him the essence of all scriptures, in the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Because we are always very busy in the discharge of our worldly duties, generally we do not wish to understand any philosophy except our mundane philosophy of the stomach and allied subjects. We have extended many branches and sub-branches of this philosophy of the belly in various directions, and thus we have hardly any time to understand the philosophy of gaining eternal life—for which we are perpetually struggling life after life.

Marshal Arjuna pretended to display philosophical ignorance and weakness, like an ordinary man, when with his chariot between the two opposing armies on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, he refused to fight. In this way, age after age, the Personality of Godhead and His beloved confidential-servitor devotees bestow their unbounded mercy by dissipating the darkness of nescience of the people of the world. We could hardly have attained to transcendental knowledge if they had not

bestowed such mercy upon us.

Sometimes the Personality of Godhead descends Himself; otherwise, He deposes His confidential servants to do this act of kindness. All the messiahs-saints who have come before or who will come in the future to preach the transcendental message of the kingdom of Godhead—are to be understood as the most confidential servants of the Personality of Godhead. Lord Jesus Christ appeared as the son of Godhead, Muhammad introduced himself as the servant of Godhead, and Lord Caitanya presented Himself as the devotee of Godhead. But whatever may be their identity, all such messiahs were of the same opinion about one thing. They preached unanimously that there is no peace and prosperity in this mortal world. All of them agreed that we have to go to a separate world, where peace and prosperity have their real being. We have to search out our eternal peace and prosperity in the kingdom of God, which is a place other than this mortal world. Even such messiahs and reformers as Lord Buddha—who did not accept the existence of Godhead and preached morality and ethics in the spirit of atheism—and Śaṅkarācārya—who did not accept the Personality of Godhead and preached morality and ethics in the spirit of pantheism—never preached that there is any possibility of attaining eternal peace and prosperity in this material world.

But at the present moment, the leaders of thought and the people in general have decided mistakenly that there is no other world except the one in which we live—that all peace and prosperity are available here, and that there is no existence of any other world wherein we can find a better position than here. According to such leaders, the material body is the actual self, understanding everything that pertains to the body constitutes self-realization, and we have no more duty than satisfying the senses of the body and maintaining it by all means. According to these leaders, God and philosophical approaches to Him are merely leisure pursuits or parlor games to exercise the brain. By such discussions, however, the world does not gain anything of substance.

So Marshal Arjuna pretended to display weakness, placing himself in the category of ordinary people who are illusioned in the material world. And by this action of his, Marshal Arjuna helped in the manifestation of *Bhagavad-gītā* from the transcendental lips of the Personality of Godhead. Whenever the Personality of Godhead descends to this mortal world, He is accompanied by His confidential servants. Marshal Arjuna is the eternal, confidential servant of the Personality of

Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and thus the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā* was taught to him directly for the benefit of the people in general.

Being an unalloyed devotee of the Personality of Godhead, Marshal Arjuna was able to discuss the transcendental philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā* even on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. We modern men have no time to get into the details of the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*, even in the midst of our much more ordinary daily duties. But just to teach us, Marshal Arjuna tried to understand the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā* at a time when a moment was virtually impossible to spare. All this he did for the sake of people like us, and he fought the battle with full vigor once he had understood the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Affinity for family relations, which Marshal Arjuna displayed overwhelmingly in the manner of the typical modern man, is the sign of our lack of transcendental knowledge. But attaining transcendental knowledge does not necessarily mean renouncing the duties of our ordinary life. After Arjuna had understood the spirit of the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, never advised him to give up his seemingly ordinary duties. On the contrary, Arjuna fought the battle with even greater energy and vigor after he had obtained the transcendental knowledge imparted by Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The real spirit we attain through transcendental knowledge is self-negation and the determination to render transcendental service unto the Personality of Godhead. The purport of *Bhagavad-gītā* is this and nothing else.

When Marshal Arjuna was unable to solve the problem posed to him by the impending battle of Kurukṣetra, he surrendered himself as a disciple to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in all submissiveness to hear his problem's solution. At the outset, the Personality of Godhead talked with Arjuna just as a friend talks with a friend. But such friendly discussions generally end in friendly—and fruitless—debate. Thus, Marshal Arjuna surrendered himself as the disciple of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, for a disciple cannot disobey the orders of his spiritual master. That is the relationship between a disciple and his master.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, imparted to Marshal Arjuna the vitally important teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* only when He saw that Arjuna had surrendered to Him without any vanity regarding his own erudition, and without any other reservation. It is very common for us, like Arjuna, to try to dissipate our

disillusionments by our own devices, culled from our own mundane experience. This attempt to remove our daily bodily and mental difficulties is always misdirected. Unless one tries to solve his problems from the perspective of eternal varities, there cannot be any peace whatsoever, either in this life or in the life after death. That is the supreme teaching of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

This spiritual subject matter, which is transcendental to the hankerings of the material body and mind, is our supreme need. Unless we reach this transcendental plane of activities, we cannot achieve real peace. This spiritual, transcendental plane is the plane of eternal life, without which the material body and mind would have no existence. However, at present we do not possess any information of this eternal life, although we have much pride, even vanity, about our material knowledge.

We are more or less absorbed in the external material designations, the external dresses that now cover the eternally living soul. And because we have absorbed ourselves in these external designations of the spirit soul, we encounter so much disunity and turmoil. When we are free from such designations—when our real nature will be uncovered—then and only then will we attain our dream of real happiness and peace. Our present attempts to remove the difficulties of the material world—through the pretensions of erudite scientists, great statesmen, and *mahātmās*—do not reach the spiritual, transcendental plane, but simply garb the body and mind with various colorful dresses. And thus these attempts will be always frustrated. That is the intrinsic instruction of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, rebuked Marshal Arjuna, so to say, when Arjuna surrendered unto Him as a disciple, being unable to solve the problems that always confront us in our material existence. Lord Kṛṣṇa said, "Arjuna, I see that you are talking like a learned man, but you may know that you have very little knowledge—because I see that you are lamenting over something for which no one would lament if he were truly learned."

A learned man never laments over a subject which appears and disappears as a matter of course. The material body, which we get from the womb of our mother, becomes transformed after some time into ashes, earth, or stool, as the case may be. And the subtle mental body, which is also material and composed of false ego and intelligence, likewise vanishes when the soul is liberated. Therefore, those who

are truly learned do not give much importance to this material body and mind, or to the happiness and distress that pertain only to the material body and mind.

On the other hand, such learned men do give much stress to the happiness and distress of the soul proper, which is spirit and transcends the existence of the body and the mind. When we enter into such culture of knowledge, it is called transcendental knowledge. Marshal Arjuna portrayed himself as a materialistic fool, without any transcendental knowledge, just to teach us, who are cent-percent materialistic fools. For His part, the Personality of Godhead imparted the transcendental knowledge of *Bhagavad-gītā*, because He found Marshal Arjuna the most deserving person to hear it.

Just like Marshal Arjuna, the prime minister for Nawab Hussain Shah of Bengal—namely Sākara Mallika, who was later known as Sanātana Gosvāmī, one of the chief disciples of Lord Caitanya—represented himself as a materialistic fool before Lord Caitanya, when he met the Lord at Benares. He presented his case before Lord Caitanya as follows: "Ordinary persons, those who have no knowledge of transcendence, address me as a great leader, a great scholar, a *mahātmā*, a *paramahansa*, and so on. But I am doubtful whether I am really so; they may be insulting me indirectly by calling me something that I am not. I know that I have no knowledge about myself as I am, but still, some of the materialistic fools address me as learned. This is undoubtedly a joke and an insult."

With these words, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī presented his case. In fact, he really was learned in transcendental knowledge, but he pretended to be a materialistic fool like us. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī refused to let himself be called a great leader or erudite scholar, since he had no transcendental knowledge. Indirectly, he asserted that there is no greater materialistic fool than one who advertises himself and collects the cheap votes of similar fools to gain fame as a great scholar, great leader, great philosopher, great *mahātmā*, or great *paramahansa*, all without any knowledge of his real self, the spirit soul, and without doing any benefit to the soul proper—simply wasting time in the matter of the happiness and distress of the temporary material body and mind. *Sanātana* means "eternal." Thus, Sanātana Gosvāmī was interested in the eternal happiness of the living entities more than just the temporary happiness of their temporary body and mind. When one thus becomes interested in the permanent happiness of the permanent soul, he becomes a disciple of Sanātana Gosvāmī, or a real "sanātanist," that is, a transcendentalist.

Throughout the world at the present moment, almost all the leaders, scholars, and *mahātmās* are more or less materialists, without any taste for transcendental knowledge. Thus, in the first instance Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, rebuked Marshal Arjuna and refused to accept him as a *paṇḍita* or scholar, with a view to teach the so-called learned scholars and leaders of the materialistic fools.

Almost all the leaders of the people have popularized various modes of religiosity that have to do only with the material body and mind. But very few of them know that the body and mind are nothing but the outward coat and shirt of the soul proper. Simply by taking care of the outward coat and shirt, one cannot do any good for the real self, the soul proper. Since factually the soul is the chief interest, the real self, no sane man can look after the interest of the outward paraphernalia while overlooking the chief interest, his very self; the interest of the subordinates, the material bodies, is looked after automatically. But no one can serve the chief simply by serving the subordinates. In other words, it is not possible to satisfy one's inner hunger simply by soaping the outer clothing.

So when we speak of a living entity, we must see the body and the mind as two outward coverings, two layers of paraphernalia—and the living force or spirit soul as the chief, central figure. The outward coverings are temporary arrangements, and therefore everything dependent on the outward covering is also a temporary arrangement. Happiness or distress perceived in relation with the temporary arrangement of the body and mind is also temporary. Thus, in *Bhagavad-gītā* the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, says, "O son of Kuntī! All forms of happiness or distress, such as winter cold or summer heat, are due to material sense perception only. They come and go according to the laws of nature, and they are therefore to be tolerated without our being disturbed. One who is not disturbed by all these comings and goings of temporary happiness and distress—he alone becomes a fit person to attain eternal life."

But at the present stage of our existence, it is difficult to be unaffected by the temporary happiness and distress pertaining to the body and mind. Nor is it possible at present to assert that we are unidentified with the body and mind. Therefore, in our present state of existence, there is no possibility of our being indifferent in these matters of material happiness and distress. Thus, acquiring transcendental knowledge does not mean that we become indifferent to our

present state of affairs, but it means that we should not be overwhelmed by the coming and going of happiness and distress.

We must know the nature of those temporary states of material happiness and distress. It would be sheer stupidity to ignore them, or to remain indifferent in matters concerning the spirit soul, around which the material body and mind exist. In fact, if one is fortunate enough to understand the happiness and distress of the spirit soul and gets a taste for transcendental knowledge, then he will be indifferent to the happiness and distress of the body and mind and will relish a transcendental peace eternal, even in the midst of worldly happiness and distress. Real peace can be obtained only in that transcendental stage of existence. That is the state of real contentment. If, after a long time, somebody embarks on a homeward journey, the pleasure of being homeward—bound diminishes the accompanying distress of the journey. The inconveniences of traveling become subordinate to the pleasure of heading homeward.

Sense perception is the cause of feeling all sorts of happiness and distress. Form, taste, odor, sound, and touch are different sense perceptions, which render happiness or distress in cooperation with the mind. In winter, bathing in cold water gives us pain, but in summer, the same cold water gives us pleasure. In winter, fire gives us pleasure and warmth, but in summer, the same fire gives us distress. Thus, neither fire nor water has any intrinsic power to give us happiness or distress, but they appear to us as agents of happiness or distress, according to our mode of sense perception in various circumstances. Therefore, everything that exists in the world is neither an object of happiness nor an object of distress; everything is simply subjective—that is, subject to our sense perceptions as they relate to our processes of thinking, feeling, and willing.

But such temporary sensations of happiness and distress, pertaining to the act of thinking, feeling, and willing under a false ego, are eternally different from the spirit soul and are therefore "unreal reality." Whatever advancement of knowledge, whether in art or science, that has been made by mundane scholars without reference to the eternal spirit soul is but a manifestation of the illusory modes of nature that encompass and limit the material body and mind.

Real peace and happiness can never come about through such advanced materialistic knowledge, deluded as it must be by the illusory modes of nature with

a view to playing up this "unreal reality." Rather, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, confirms in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, only those who cultivate transcendental knowledge in relation to the eternal spirit soul and without being disturbed by temporary happiness and distress will be able to escape the cruel hands of birth, death, old age, and disease and will be truly happy by gaining eternal, spiritual life.

We therefore suggest that all those who have tried their utmost to do good for others but have failed despite all honest endeavors should approach Śrī Kṛṣṇa or His bona fide servitors, following the footsteps of Marshal Arjuna. One should try to do good for others, but only after knowing perfectly how to do good for others. Otherwise, if one embraces others in a false sense of altruism, one can get only a temporary benefit for himself in the shape of some profit, adoration, or distinction.

A Hitler, a Mussolini, or any other leader of that materialistic persuasion may offer his followers the mental concoction of doing good together in violent or nonviolent programs, and by such acts of so-called benevolence the leader may get recognition from his followers for some time. But the followers for whom this kind of leader has endeavored to do good will never get any lasting benefit out of such temporarily beneficial work. A void will be felt with the progress of all such benevolent activities. In fact, the followers will be put into more and more distressed conditions by following the path chalked out by this kind of so-called leader. If a blind man pretends to help another blind man cross a road, then both the blind leader and the blind follower shall fall into the further darkness of some unseen ditch. Everyone who is devoid of transcendental knowledge is just like a blind man; such a blind man must first eradicate his blindness before he can attempt to lead others to light.

Everyone who happens to take his birth in India is a potential benefactor of others, because it is on Indian soil alone that the culture of transcendental knowledge has been most elaborately presented, from ancient times to the present. The saints and sages of Bhārata-varṣa, as India has long been known, never tried to cultivate or satisfy artificially the needs of the body and the mind exclusively; they always cultured the transcendental spirit soul, which is above the material body and mind. And even now, the saints and sages continue to do so, in spite of all difficulties. But it would be sheer stupidity if Indian people attempted to do good to others without first themselves attaining transcendental knowledge.

Now, if we want to acquire transcendental knowledge, our first duty will be to understand that the spirit soul is eternal truth. The external ingredients, the body and the mind which develop around the spirit soul, are all relative or partial truths. In the second chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Personality of Godhead explains this fact elaborately:

"The spirit soul which pervades this body is eternal, and thus one should understand that no one can destroy the eternal, ever-existing spirit soul. Although this material body is subject to annihilation, the proprietor of the body is eternal. Therefore, O scion of Bharata, knowing this eternal truth, you can go on with your fighting engagement.

"Both the person who thinks the spirit soul can slay and the person who thinks that the spirit soul can be slain are ignorant of the fact that the spirit soul is neither slayer nor slain at any time. The spirit soul is never born, nor can he ever die. He has no past, present, or future, because he is eternal. And although very old, he is always fresh and does not become annihilated even after the annihilation of the body. One who understands the soul as eternal and indestructible—how can he hurt or kill anyone? It is only the outward body and mind that are destroyed.

"The body and the mind are just like a person's outward clothing. The clothing is changed when it is old, and the living person takes on a new set of clothing after giving up the old one.

"The spirit soul can never be struck by the sharp sword, nor can he be burnt by fire. He can never be affected by water or air, and thus, the spirit soul is eternally indestructible, nonflammable, nonevaporable, and noncorrodable. He is permanent, all-pervading, and eternal. He cannot be explained by any human language, nor can he be perfectly conceived of by any human mind. He remains always unchangeable, and knowing all these facts, one should not lament over his disappearance."

In the language of *Bhagavad-gītā*, the spirit soul is called *kṣetrajña*, the knower or tiller of the field, whereas the body and mind, the coverings of the spirit soul, are called *kṣetra*, or the field. In the thirteenth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, discusses the subject matter of *kṣetra*, *kṣetrajña*, and also *prakṛti* (nature, or the phenomenal world, which is enjoyed) and *puruṣa*

(the enjoyer of the phenomenal world). Lord Kṛṣṇa explains that all actions and reactions that take place in this phenomenal world are the actions and reactions of this combination of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*, or nature and the enjoyer of nature. For instance, rice paddy is produced by the action and reaction of the field and the tiller, or a child is begotten by the combination of *prakṛti*, the enjoyed, and *puruṣa*, the enjoyer. In the same way, whatever we see in the phenomenal world is produced by this combination of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*.

This *kṣetrajñā* is the living spirit, whereas the *kṣetra* is the material which is lorded over. Physics, chemistry, astronomy, pharmacology, economics, sexology, and other material sciences deal with the materials of *kṣetra*. But the science that deals with spiritual existence—pertaining to *kṣetrajñā*—is called transcendental knowledge. Real culture of knowledge, therefore, pertains not to *kṣetra* but to *kṣetrajñā*. We shall get full opportunity to discuss all these subjects more elaborately, but for the present we may be satisfied simply by knowing that the *kṣetrajñā* (*puruṣa*, or enjoyer) is the central objective of all knowledge, because it is this *kṣetrajñā* alone that creates everything in conjunction with the material body and mind and the allied physical elements.

The *kṣetrajñā* is the eternal spirit, whereas the *kṣetra* is matter, which is temporary and ephemeral. This eternal truth is summarized in the *Vedas* in the aphorism *brahma satyaṁ jagan mithyā*: "Spirit is fact and the world is a false shadow." By "false shadow" one should understand that the world is temporary, existing only for the time being. But one should not make the mistake of thinking the world has no existence at all. I really possess my temporary material body and mind, and I must not make myself a laughing stock by denying the existence of my body and mind. At the same time, I must always remember that the body and mind are temporary arrangements. However, the spirit encaged by this body and mind is eternal truth and indestructible. No one can destroy the eternal spirit—that is what we need to understand at the present moment. The indestructible spirit is thus above the conception of violence and nonviolence.

Today, the whole world is mad after the culture of knowledge in relation to temporary arrangements for the gross material body and the subtle material mind. But more important than the body and mind is the spirit, which has been set aside without any proper culture of knowledge. As a result, the darkness of nescience has overshadowed the world and has brought about great unrest, disturbance, and

distress. How long can one enjoy external happiness? It is like soaping the outer garments without putting any nourishment into the stomach.

But this eternal truth, the indestructible spirit, does exist as the living entity in each and every body. He is very minute and is finer than the finest atom. Learned experts have attempted to make a measurement of this living spirit. They say that the living spirit, the soul proper, can be measured approximately as one ten-thousandth part of the tip of a hair.

This living spirit remains within the body just like a tiny dose of a potent medicine: the soul spreads its presence all over the body. And thus, we can understand, the sensitivity we experience to even the slightest touch on any part of the body is due to the spreading of this living spirit throughout the body. But when this minute quantity of living spark is gone from the body, the body lies dead, prostrate, and it cannot feel the slightest pain—even if hacked by an ax.

That this minute living spark, the spirit, is not a material thing is proved by the fact that no material scientist has ever been able to create the living spark by any combination or quantity of material substances. Experienced material scientists have been obliged to accept the fact that the living spark cannot be duplicated by material science. Whatever can be created by the manipulation of matter is destructible and temporary. In contrast, the living spark is indestructible, precisely because it can never be constructed by any combination or quantity of matter. We can produce material atomic bombs but not the spiritual spark of life.

There is much advancement of material science all over the world, but regrettably, these advanced scientists have made no attempt to understand the living spark, the spirit, which is always the most important subject. This is our gross ignorance. This is our helplessness.

Śrī Jagadish Chandra Bose, Sir Isaac Newton, Benjamin Franklin—the brilliant brain substance of each of them stopped working utterly, as soon as this little spark of living substance separated from their respective bodies. If it were possible to create this living substance by chemical or physical combination or permutation of matter, then surely some disciple or other of these great scientists would have brought them back to life and would thus have prolonged their scientific contribution to the world. But no material scientist can create the living spark by any material

arrangement, and those who say they can do so in the future are the greatest of fools and hypocrites. The living spirit is eternal—he has no end and no beginning and thus can never be created by any method whatsoever. After all, it is within our experience that every created thing is subject to annihilation. The eternality of the spirit soul is proved through its noncreatability by material means.

And thus one who thinks that he can destroy the living spark also does not know anything about it. The Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, therefore emphatically declares that the living entity, being spirit, is never born. The living entity exists eternally and has no past, present, or future tenses. The spirit is never annihilated, nor can anyone annihilate him, even after the annihilation of the material body. He therefore has no birth and no death. Nor does he grow or diminish by repeated material births and deaths. The spiritual entity is ever fresh and new, although he is the oldest of all. He is always different from the material body and mind, which are always subject to death and annihilation.

The learned scholar, who is aware of this transcendental knowledge, does not try to annihilate anyone or order anyone annihilated, like a fool. One may then ask this question: What was the purpose for which Arjuna fought on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra? The answer is plain and simple. The fight that is fought in pursuance of military duty touches the body only. The effects of war or pitched upheavals touch the body only and not the soul, much as the effects of a sumptuous feast touch the hunger of the stomach only and not that of the mind. None of these material effects ever touches the eternal living entity, the spirit soul, because the living spirit is invincible, nonflammable, nonmoistenable, and nondryable. Everything that is material can be cut into pieces, can be burnt up, can be moistened, and can be dried up in the air. Thus, to illustrate that the living entity, or spirit soul, is entirely metaphysical, the above explanation is given as indirect proof by negation of material attributes.

It is said that the living spirit is eternal, all-pervading, unchangeable, indestructible, and so forth. What is known in India as *sanātana-dharma*, or "the eternal religion," is meant for this living spirit. That is to say, real spiritualism is transcendental to the various religions that focus on the gross material body or the subtle material mind. This *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal religion, is never established just for one particular people, place, or time. It is for this reason that *sanātana-dharma* is also termed all-pervasive. All other religions except the one that is known as *sanātana-*

dharma are meant for the culturing of physical or psychological effects.

The psychological effects of various peoples, places, and times have led us to designate ourselves as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Congressites, Luddites, Socialists, Bolsheviks, and so forth. Specifically in the field of religion, we have tried to establish many varieties of ephemeral physical and mental arrangements, varieties of denominations, according to various peoples, places, and times. And precisely for this reason, we can envision ourselves "changing religions." One who is a "Hindu" today may become a "Muhammadan" the next day, or one who is a "Muhammadan" today may become a "Christian" the next day, and so on. But when we attain transcendental knowledge and are established in the actual, eternal religion of the actual living entity—the spirit soul—then and then only can we attain real, undeniable peace, prosperity, and happiness in the world. Until that time, there can be no peace and prosperity for us, because we are not situated on the plane of *sanātana-dharma*, or the eternal religion of the soul.

Being minute and thus invisible to our material eyes, the spirit soul is called inexplicable, inconceivable, and so on. The spirit soul is nonetheless understood to be eternal, because he is never subject to the ordeals of birth, death, disease, and old age or to any other physical transformations. Therefore, eternal peace and prosperity will be established only when there is vigorous propagation of this inexplicable, eternal religion of the living spirit soul. For then only shall we be relieved of physical transformations such as birth, death, disease, and old age. We should always remember, however, that this eternal religion of the soul is never bound by any physical limitation of people, place, or time.

[< previous](#)

[next >](#)



His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Content used with permission of The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International, Inc. All rights reserved.

This is a site of the Bhaktivedanta Archives. Powered by Drupal and hosted on Linode.

MoG 2: Karma-yoga

Factually, also, in no country other than India have the great sages endeavored so much for the realization of the spirit self. It is admitted that in the Western countries the people have done their best to advance in the culture of material science, centered on the material body and mind. But it is admitted, also, that notwithstanding all such advancement of material knowledge in the West, the people in general there are suffering the pangs of the poisonous effects of materialism because they have cared very little for the culture of spiritual science. Great thinkers in the Western countries must therefore look to the people of India if the message of Godhead, of genuine spiritualism, is to reach their ears.

Therefore, in *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, has elaborately discussed *karma-yoga*, work with transcendental results, to douse the fire of materialism and brighten the future of humankind. There is a great difference between work for material gain and work with transcendental results. In many places throughout *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Personality of Godhead mentions the word *buddhi-yoga*, or intelligence with transcendental results. And by this word *buddhi-yoga* we can also understand transcendental, devotional activities. For the Personality of Godhead says that He always favors His devotees by endowing them with the intelligence to perform devotional activities, so that at the end His devotees may attain to Him. In other places, also, it is said that God is attainable only through devotional activities. We can get rid of the results of our work only by the intelligent process of work with transcendental results.

In the second chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa,

advises as follows: "Thus far I have explained to you about transcendental knowledge. Now I shall explain to you about work with transcendental results. By this work with transcendental results, you can get rid of the bondage of ordinary work. In this process there is no loss or diminution. Even if very little of this work is done, it can save one from the greatest trouble."

Pure devotional activities are of one variety only. And how these devotional activities can be coordinated with our daily, active life has been explained in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Coordinating such devotional activities with our daily activities is technically known as *karma-yoga*. The same devotional activities when mixed with the culture of knowledge are technically called *jñāna-yoga*. But when such devotional activities transcend the limits of all such work or mental knowledge, this state of affairs is called pure transcendental devotion, or *bhakti-yoga*.

All the various actions that we perform in this world beget various specific results. When we begin to enjoy the fruits of such performances, these further actions also produce, in their turn, further specific results as a matter of course. Thus, we have a big tree of these actions and reactions with their respective fruits. And as the enjoyers of these fruits, we become bound up in the network of such work and its fruit. Birth after birth, the spirit soul becomes bound up in the process of producing such fruits and enjoying the same.

While passing through various of the 8,400,000 species of life, the spirit soul is overwhelmed by the suffering created by those reactions. We have very little chance of escaping this bondage of action and reaction—work and its fruitive results. Even after abdicating all work and accepting the life of a *sannyāsī*, or renunciant, one still has to work, if only for his hungry stomach. And thus Śaṅkarācārya, the great monist philosopher and religious reformer, said that simply for the matter of the stomach, one may not adopt the dress of a renunciant. Therefore, there is no way out—no way to avoid doing work, if only for the belly's sake.

As a result, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, advises Marshal Arjuna in the following words: "O Arjuna, you must always do your duty. To do something is far better than to do nothing. You cannot even secure your everyday sustenance without doing any work."

"Work" means the work that is ordered in the scriptures and sacred law books. It means standard, prescribed duties. Such work is far better than laziness under the pretension of being a renunciant or mystic. To earn a living, one can honorably adopt the profession of a street sweeper, but one must not change his dress to the saffron robes of a renunciate simply to fill up his empty stomach. In the present age of quarrel and pretension, one should prefer to do the ordinary, prescribed duties rather than adopt the life of a *sannyāsī*, a renunciate. Those who are genuinely renounced understand that they must not give up performing their prescribed daily duties in the social order, because otherwise there will be disaster, plain and simple. When we cannot secure our everyday sustenance without doing any work, how is it possible to give up our prescribed duties? And yet one must not forget the difficult position of one's being in the network of action and reaction by which the spirit soul becomes bound up in material existence.

So, to solve this dilemma, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, advises us as follows: "The best policy for doing work is to perform all prescribed duties for the satisfaction of Yajña, the Supreme Being—Viṣṇu, the Absolute Truth. Otherwise, all actions will produce reactions that will cause bondage. If work is done for the sake of Yajña, then one can become free from all bondages."

This method of work, or prescribed duties, that does not cause any bondage is called work with transcendental results, or *karma-yoga*. By such work with transcendental results, or *karma-yoga*, not only does one become immune from the bondage of work, but also one develops his transcendental devotion toward the Absolute Personality of Godhead. One must not enjoy the fruits of his work himself, but must dedicate the same for the transcendental loving service of the Personality of Godhead. This is the first step on the ladder of devotional activities. Lord Caitanya taught this process of devotional service, or work with transcendental results, to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī at Daśāśvamedha-ghāṭa in Prayāga. Lord Caitanya said that only one who is fortunate can get the seed of transcendental loving service, by the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, and that of the spiritual master. *Karma-yoga*, or work with transcendental results, is the seed of pure devotional activities. This science is taught by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself or by His bona fide, confidential servants. Unless one takes his lessons from such sources, one must inevitably misunderstand the import of *karma-yoga*, as do the ordinary mundaners who often advertise themselves as *karma-yoga* experts.

We have to earn some wealth just in order to push on with our material existence. In exchange for that wealth, we have to secure the necessities of life, and primarily, we have to cook something for our hungry stomach. For if we do not eat, we cannot keep a healthy body, and if we do not keep a healthy body, we cannot earn our livelihood. It is very difficult to ascertain which exigency is the cause of the other, but we can describe this process of reciprocity as the wheel of work. And to travel all over the universe is to circumambulate the wheel of work. There is no estimation of our circumambulation and the concomitant distress resulting from such travel life after life for illusory, material happiness, which is compared to the will o' the wisp. In the capacity of a false enjoyer, without any obedience to the supremely powerful Lord, the living soul searches for permanent happiness life after life, but he does not know where the real happiness is. Therefore, Prahlāda Mahārāja says that no one knows that his ultimate goal of self-realization is to reach Viṣṇu, the all-powerful Godhead.

Without knowing the goal of our self-realization, we are aimlessly voyaging on the ocean of material existence, life after life. And tossed as we are by the waves of action and reaction, we cannot ascertain the volume of our distresses in undertaking such an ominous journey. Here we must know that the goal of our voyage is to reach the Absolute Truth, Viṣṇu, the all-pervading Godhead. Śrī Kṛṣṇa confirms this goal of life by saying that everything must be performed for the satisfaction of Viṣṇu, or Yajña. In the *R̥g Veda* the same truth is described: Viṣṇu is the Supreme Deity, and thus all the subordinate gods, the *suris*, look to Viṣṇu and His lotus feet. The author of the *Vedas* is the Personality of Godhead Himself. Consequently, His *Bhagavad-gītā* is the finest summary of all the teachings in the *Vedas* (the books of knowledge), and there is no doubt about it. The instruction is, therefore, that we must do everything for the satisfaction of Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu only, if we want to be free of the bondage to the wheel of our work.

Formerly, the people of India (now misnamed as "Hindus") followed *varṇāśrama-dharma* or *sanātana-dharma*, the system that organizes human affairs according to four social orders and four spiritual orders. Those in the three higher social orders—namely, the *brāhmaṇas* (the instructive order), the *kṣatriyas* (the administrative order), and the *vaiśyas* (the productive order)—all used to lead the life of Vaiṣṇavism, or centering every action upon the Supreme Deity, Viṣṇu. In all the four spiritual orders—the student, the householder, the retired, and the renounced

—and especially the householder order, Viṣṇu was being worshiped. The *brāhmaṇa* householders, particularly, used to worship Viṣṇu without fail, and even now the descendants of those *brāhmaṇas* continue to worship Viṣṇu daily as their family Deity.

These spiritually cultured people used to do everything for the sake of Viṣṇu. They used to earn wealth according to their capacity for the service of Viṣṇu. With their earnings they used to acquire eatables, and the eatables were cooked for the worship of Viṣṇu. Then the meal offered to satisfy Viṣṇu became *prasādam*—"the Lord's mercy," the remnants of His meal—and could be accepted by them. What was possible in days gone by and is still being done here and there even today can again be made possible in all spheres of life, by a little adjustment suitable to time, place, and people. In this way, everyone can get free of the binding network of actions and reactions.

The learned sages say that to approach the lotus feet of Viṣṇu is to get liberation. We can satisfy our ordinary desires by satisfying the transcendental senses of Viṣṇu, which is the ultimate goal of *karma-yoga*, or work with transcendental results. If we do not perform our duties in this manner, for the satisfaction of Viṣṇu, then certainly all and any work done by us will produce nothing but poisonous material results, and ultimately there will be disaster in the world. By doing everything for the satisfaction of Viṣṇu and taking the remnants of the offerings made to Viṣṇu, we can get rid of the vices and sinful reactions that accumulate in the course of our performing our prescribed duties.

Although we may take so many precautions against these vices and sinful reactions, even in the course of ordinary business exchanges and ventures we have to commit so many sins. For instance, we find it necessary and unavoidable in business dealings to speak lies—not to mention the volumes of lies that are spoken by members of the legal profession. Lawyers have to resort to all sorts of trickery to get around a law in which they have become professionally entangled. And of course, those who are in the service of other professions have to do the same kind of thing without fail. Intentionally or unintentionally, one has to commit such sins—and incur the sinful reactions—without any doubt.

Even if we take all precautions to protect ourselves against committing any sins—for the *Vaiṣṇavas*, the devotees of Viṣṇu, naturally do take all such precautions—

still, unconsciously we kill many ants and other insects while discharging even the most ordinary duties, such as walking from one place to another. Even in simply drinking water, we kill many tiny aquatic creatures. We kill many such living entities merely by cleaning our homes or when eating and sleeping. In sum, we cannot avoid all the sins we incur, even unconsciously, in the ordinary course of life.

According to the laws of man, a person may be hanged when he commits homicide, but he is not hanged when he kills lower animals. But according to the laws of God, one commits the same sin by killing a lower animal as he does by killing a man. We are punished by the laws of God for either action. Those who do not believe in the laws of God or in His existence may go on committing such sins, and they may not come to their senses despite the countless sufferings they are put into for committing such sins, but that does not affect the existence of God or His eternal laws.

The law books known as the *smṛtis* mention five kinds of sin which everyone inevitably commits, no matter how unwillingly. They are as follows: (1) Sins committed by itching, (2) sins committed by rubbing, (3) sins committed by starting a fire, (4) sins committed by pouring water from a pot, and (5) sins committed by cleaning the house. Even if we do not commit any intentional sins, we have to commit the above five kinds of sin, without a shadow of doubt. Thus, it is our duty to accept the remnants of offerings made to Viṣṇu, to escape the reactions of all sinful actions committed unconsciously and unavoidably. Unfortunately, those who cook food not for offering to Viṣṇu, but only for satisfying their senses, have to undergo punishments for all the sins they have committed consciously or unconsciously, while discharging prescribed duties. For this reason, the worship of Viṣṇu still goes on in the households of the followers of *sanātana-dharma*, and especially in the households of the *brāhmaṇas*.

Therefore, those who are leaders of their respective countries and communities should first be sure to satisfy Viṣṇu, for their own benefit and for the benefit of those whom they profess to lead. All leaders should ponder how they can discharge their duties by satisfying the transcendental senses of Viṣṇu, for what the leaders do will be imitated by their followers. Therefore, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, advises Arjuna as follows: "What is done by the leader is followed by the ordinary man. Whatever the leader establishes as truth, the followers take to it unhesitatingly."

But alas, the time has already come when the leaders, whom ordinary men regard as beacons, are themselves mostly atheists at the bottom of their hearts and are against the principles laid down by Godhead. As such, what can they do for the satisfaction of the transcendental senses of Viṣṇu? And if they do not do everything for the satisfaction of the transcendental senses of Godhead, how can they expect to drag themselves or their followers from the mire of sins committed in the course of discharging prescribed duties? If the leaders do not recognize the existence of the all-powerful Viṣṇu, who is simultaneously both the supreme transcendental personality and the impersonal spirit existing everywhere, then what will ordinary men understand about Him? He is the supreme enjoyer of everything that be, and thus none of us, however great we may be, can be the enjoyer of the universe and its paraphernalia. Since our position is subordinate to that of the almighty Viṣṇu, the Supreme Godhead (Īśvara, the supreme controller), we can enjoy only what comes from Him as a token of His kindness. We must not enjoy anything that is not offered by Him. We should not make any extra effort to obtain anything which belongs to Him or others. That is the spirit of Vaiṣṇavism.

In the *Īśopaniṣad* this same spirit is described as follows: "Whatever we see existing throughout the universe is intrinsically the property of the supreme enjoyer, and one may enjoy a thing that is kindly given by Him, but one must never touch the property of others."

Therefore, civic and other popular leaders should center their activities upon Viṣṇu, and by this act of transcendental work, they will themselves be benefited and shall be able to do good for their respective followers. If these leaders, including preachers and heads of state, do not perform this act of Vaiṣṇavism—and instead place themselves artificially in the exalted position of Viṣṇu, the supreme enjoyer—then they may indeed enjoy temporary gain, adoration, and mundane fame, and may delude their unfortunate followers from the right path by a false display of renunciation. But such materialistic, godless leaders will never be able to do any good for the ignorant souls who follow them like a flock of sheep to the slaughterhouse. By such leadership the leader himself is temporarily benefited, but the followers are put into the worst position. The leaders incite them toward false, illusory gain and thus engage them in various acts of sin. In temporarily benefiting themselves, such leaders sacrifice the real interest of their followers and destroy

the followers.

Such leaders do not know that their temporary gains will vanish along with the destruction of their temporary body. But the acts of commission and omission made by them during their lifetime of leadership will remain in the psychic engagement of mind, intelligence, and false egoism in a very subtle form, and the subtle psychic life will develop again in another suitable body, by the process of transmigration of the spirit soul, and thus put them in ordeals of different wheels of action and reaction by obliging them to transmigrate from one body to another for many, many years.

The people in general will follow what the leaders, without any transcendental knowledge, ask them to do. The leaders, therefore, must be aware of this fact for the benefit of all concerned. The leaders must know first of all how they can do good for their followers, by understanding the real method of *karma-yoga*, or work with transcendental results. If the physician is himself a diseased fellow, how can he endeavor to heal others? The physician must heal himself first, before treating the disease of the general public. To gratify the senses of the diseased fellow is not the business of a real physician. A good, qualified physician cannot indulge the patient by merely satisfying him, but must prescribe the real medicine, whether it satisfy the senses of the patient or not.

The leaders therefore must know that the real disease of the people in general is their aversion to serve the almighty Godhead, Viṣṇu. So if, instead of treating the people's inherent disease—atheism—the leaders simply show a superficial sympathy for the disease's symptoms, certainly there will be no benefit whatsoever for suffering humanity. The real remedy for this disease lies in partaking of the remnants of offerings made to Godhead; this is the ideal diet for the spiritual patient. And the medicines include hearing and chanting and remembering the glories of Godhead, worshiping the transcendental form of Godhead, offering Him transcendental service, accepting Him as one's supreme friend and, lastly, surrendering unto Him in all circumstances. The leaders should therefore arrange for this diet and these medicines—if they really want to dissipate the sufferings of humanity.

At the same time, it is pleasing to see that the veteran leader Mahatma Gandhi is trying his best to invent a method for bringing in a godly atmosphere all over the

world. He is preaching restraint, toleration, moral principles, and so on. But it is not possible to reach the unlimited by any novel, invented method, which is always limited. The Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, has therefore said in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that after many births, learned sages eventually surrender unto Him, and that such a *mahātmā* who is able to connect everything that be to Vāsudeva (the plenary manifestation of Viṣṇu) is rarely to be seen. The purport is that *mahātmās* are everywhere, but the *mahātmā* who knows the real relationship between Godhead and the manifested world is very rare.

Such a *mahātmā* never tries to approach Godhead by any invented method, any inductive, ascending process. Rather, he accepts the standard, deductive, descending process—that is, the method that comes down directly from the Supreme Lord or through His bona fide representatives. By the ascending process, no one can reach the Lord, even by a long-term endeavor of many, many years. What is obtained by this ascending process, however, is imperfect, partial, impersonal knowledge, liable to be deviant from the Absolute Truth.

We can see such signs in the method of preaching espoused by Gandhijī. Although he chants the name of Rāma, he is not aware of the transcendental science of the name. He is a worshiper of the impersonal Godhead. That is to say, his Godhead or Viṣṇu is devoid of transcendental activities. His Godhead cannot eat, cannot see, and cannot hear; for impersonality means being without any of these sensory activities. When the empiric philosopher tries to approach the Absolute Truth, he can reach only as far as the impersonal feature of Godhead, without knowing anything about the Lord's transcendental pastimes. When the Absolute Truth is not credited with having any transcendental senses or sensory activities, certainly He is supposed impotent. An impotent Godhead, of course, cannot hear the prayers of His devotees, nor can He ameliorate the distress of the universe.

By the empiric process of philosophical research, one can possibly distinguish the metaphysical subjects from the physical objects; but unless such seekers of truth can reach the personal feature of the Absolute Truth, they gain only dry, impersonal knowledge of Him, without any actual transcendental profit. It is therefore necessary that leaders like Gandhi establish themselves on the transcendental footing of the personal feature of the Absolute Truth, known as Viṣṇu or the all-pervading Godhead, and arrange for His transcendental service by *karma-yoga*, so that they can do good for the people in general.

The people in general are extremely busy in the affairs of the material body and mind. Those who are in the lowest stage of such mundane activities very rarely can understand the activities of the spiritual plane. These people are generally baffled because their various acts of sin and virtue are directed merely toward ameliorating the distress and enhancing the happiness of the temporary body and mind by behavior like eating, sleeping, defending, and gratifying the senses. The material scientists—the modern quasi priests who invoke such material activities—invent many objects to gratify the material senses such as the eye, ear, nose, and tongue and ultimately the mind, and there results a field of unnecessary competition for enhancement of such material happiness, which leads the whole world into the whirlpool of uncalled-for clashes. The net result is scarcity all over the world, so much so that even the bare necessities of life, namely food and clothing, become objects of contention and control. And so arise all sorts of obstacles to the traditional, God-given life of plain living and high thinking.

Persons who are a little above such gross materialists believe firmly in life after death and thus try to rise a little above the plane of gross sensory enjoyment of this one life. They try to accumulate something for the next life by acts of virtue, just as a man banks some money for future happiness. But these people do not understand that neither any sinful nor any virtuous act can bring freedom from the bondage of work, as we have explained above. On the contrary, both sinful and virtuous acts will bind the worker up in the wheel of action and reaction.

Neither the sinful nor the pious materialist can understand the essence of *karma-yoga* as the means to attain liberation from the always uncongenial bondage of work. The expert *karma-yogī* therefore behaves just like an attached materialist to teach the people in general about the way one can get rid of the tangle of action and reaction in ordinary work. By such acts, the *karma-yogī* himself and the world at large are simultaneously benefited. The Personality of Godhead therefore says as follows: "O descendant of Bharata, better you continue to perform work like an attached materialist who is not conversant with transcendental knowledge, so that you can recruit men to the path of *karma-yoga*, or work with transcendental results."

So those who are aware of transcendental knowledge, and who thus are actually learned, perform all acts needed for maintaining the body and mind, but with a

view to satisfying the transcendental senses of the Supreme Godhead, Viṣṇu. Ordinary men regard these learned transcendentalists as common workers, but in fact, the transcendentalists are not workers for mundane benefit—they are *karma-yogīs*, or workers for transcendental results. And in such transcendental work, the material results are gained automatically, without any separate endeavor.

In the present age we are witnessing an enormous expansion of material activities, an endlessly variegated multiplicity of material engagements. Mills and factories, as well as hospitals and other institutions, are now in vogue. In ancient times, there was not so great an expansion of material activities. In those days the mode of living was simple, and yet the thoughts were sublime. So now there is a very good field of activities for the *karma-yogīs*, who can engage all the various modern institutions in the transcendental service of Viṣṇu, for the satisfaction of His transcendental senses.

It is incumbent, therefore, to install a temple of Viṣṇu in all the aforementioned institutions, and in individual homes, for the same purpose—worshiping the Absolute Godhead in the same spirit of work with transcendental results as was maintained by the sages of ancient times. Although the all-pervading Personality of Godhead manifests Himself in His various transcendental, eternal forms as incarnations or plenary portions or various partial portions, the sages recommended the worship of the eternal dual forms of Śrī Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Śrī Sītā-Rāma, and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, it is desired most earnestly that the proprietors and managers of big mills, factories, hospitals, universities, hotels, and various other institutions install a temple for worshiping any of these transcendental forms of Viṣṇu. This will transform all the workers in these institutions into *karma-yogīs*.

It is generally experienced that workers in big mills and factories are addicted to many abominable habits, and thus they gradually glide down to the lowest status to which a human being can descend. But if they are graciously offered the advantage of partaking of the remnants of foodstuffs offered to Viṣṇu, gradually they will develop a transcendental sense of spirituality and rise to the same status as that of spiritually advanced personalities. However, these people cannot rise to that exalted position of "Harijans" simply by being rubber-stamped as such. If they are influenced by a desire other than the transcendental service of Viṣṇu, every effort to raise them up from their degraded position will result in disaster and disturbance

of the peace and tranquillity of the social order. Leaders who incite such downtrodden laborers uselessly—simply for the sake of temporary gain—can never do the laborers any good. Nor can the leaders themselves benefit by such ill-conceived actions. On the contrary, through such material activities both the laborers and the capitalists inevitably fall into unwholesome quarreling and so bring on great disturbance of the social order. The problem can be solved only by a determined program of *karma-yoga*. If *karma-yoga*, or work with transcendental results, is systematically performed, we shall transcend and more than fulfill all fragmented endeavors—whether by the socialists toward equality, by the Bolsheviks toward a grand social order of fraternity, or by the laborites toward a mundane heaven wherein laborers surpass capitalists in the acquisition of wealth.

Fraternity in human society develops gradually—from love for self to love for family; from love for family to love for community; from love for community to love for nation; and from love for nation to love for the international community. And in this gradual process, there is always a center of attraction that helps our love progress and develop from one stage to another. We do not know, however, that in that constant struggle for fraternal development, the center of attraction is neither the family nor the community nor the nation, nor even the international community, but the all-pervading Godhead, Viṣṇu. This ignorance is due to the material curtain, the illusory energy of the Absolute Truth. The great devotee Prahlāda Mahārāja confirms that people in general do not know that their ultimate center of attraction is Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And in the Viṣṇu category, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the supreme attraction.

In fact, the word *Kṛṣṇa* is derived from the root *kṛṣ*, meaning "that which attracts." Thus, there cannot be any other name of the Absolute Truth than Kṛṣṇa—"the all-attractive." Learned sages have made extensive research in this connection, and they have firmly concluded that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Godhead. The sages of Naimiṣāraṇya (at present, Nimsar, in Sitapur District, U.P.), who assembled under the presidency of Sūta Gosvāmī, discussed in detail all the various incarnations of the Absolute Truth. They came to the conclusion that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that all other incarnations are either His plenary portions or else portions of plenary portions. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is Śrī Kṛṣṇa; that is the verdict of the Bhāgavata school, or the transcendentalists. Also, the *Brahma-saṁhitā*—which is described to be compiled by Brahmā, the

creator of this universe—confirms, "Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, with an eternal, all-blissful, transcendental form. He is the original person, known as Govinda. He is without any cause, and He is the cause of all other causes." Therefore, if and only if we can establish our relationships with one another upon the central attraction of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the prime cause of all causes, will we really turn the concepts of fraternity and equality into workable means of lasting peace.

To understand a little better the principles involved, we can look at the mundane relationships around us. For example, the husband of our sister, who may have been unknown to us before he married her, nonetheless becomes our brother-in-law—simply by virtue of the shared central relationship with her. And thanks to that shared central relationship, this previously unknown man's sons and daughters become our nephews and nieces. Again, all these loving relationships center upon our sister. In this case, our sister has become the center of attraction.

If, for example, we make our country the center of attraction, we designate ourselves with some limiting and divisive national label, such as "Bengali," "Punjabi," or "English." Or when we profess a particular faith or religion and make this the center of attraction, again we designate ourselves with some sectarian label, such as "Hindu," "Muslim," or "Christian." Thus we have chosen a center of attraction that many others cannot share with us—because for them, our center of attraction is not all-attractive.

Our relationships with one another can be perfected only when we make our center of attraction Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive Personality of Godhead. Constitutionally, we are all eternally related to Kṛṣṇa, who is the original living being and thus the center of all attraction. So what we need to do is to revive this relationship which has merged into oblivion because the covering and detaching process of the illusory energy, called *māyā*, has fostered temporary forgetfulness. And to proceed in this direction of rehabilitation of our eternal relationship is to adopt *karma-yoga*, the first step to such transcendental realization. It is stated in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that the living entity, the spirit soul, is encaged by *māyā*, or the illusory energy, in a process of forgetfulness of his eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

The *karma-yogī* can help revive this transcendental relationship of the living spirit with Kṛṣṇa as His eternal servitor. And the *karma-yogī* renders this immense

benefit to the ordinary living entities—who are entirely addicted to mundane activities—without disturbing them in their ordinary engagements. In fact, the *Bhagavad-gītā* advises that in the interest of the mundane workers, they should not be restrained from their ordinary engagements; on the contrary, they may be encouraged to stay engaged in that way, within the process of *karma-yoga*, or work with transcendental results.

Ordinarily, these mundaners cannot easily understand their eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Instead, they themselves have posed as Kṛṣṇa, under the false inducement of the illusory energy. This false position of supreme enjoyer gives them much trouble as they search for lordship over the powers of nature, but still these mundaners cannot give up the spirit of lording it over. And when they pretend to give up the enjoying spirit, under the pressure of disappointment and frustration, they usually take shelter of pseudo renunciation, with an even greater spirit of enjoyment. The mundane workers, who are always desirous of enjoying the fruits of their mundane activities, suffer greatly under the pressing disadvantages of such activities, just like poor oxen tightly tethered to the grinding mill. But under a false pretense of "enjoyer" dictated by the illusory energy, they think themselves to be really enjoying. Therefore, the learned *karma-yogīs* tactfully engage such foolish mundaners in the respective works for which they have special attachments—but in relation with Kṛṣṇa—without disturbing them in their general activities. For this purpose only, the learned and liberated souls who are eternal servitors of Kṛṣṇa sometimes remain in the midst of ordinary activities, just to attract the foolish mundaners to the process of *karma-yoga*.

The foolish mundaners would have been left perpetually in the darkness of foolish activities if Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, or His eternal associates, such as Marshal Arjuna, had not kindly taken the trouble of initiating the process of *karma-yoga* by the direct method of personal example. The foolish mundaners are unable to come to an awareness of the immeasurable difficulties that confront them in pursuance of their foolish mundane activities. However much they may bewilder themselves by the conception of lordship over their various actions, they are always being driven under the direction of the modes of nature—that is the considered verdict of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He says that the foolish mundaner considers himself the author or doer of all his activities by a sense dictated by his false egoism, without knowing that it is the modes of nature

that lead him to do everything in all his engagements. The foolish mundaner cannot understand that he is under the spell of Lord Kṛṣṇa's illusory energy, Maya-devi, who has made the mundaner bound to do as she desires. Consequently, the foolish mundaner enjoys only the temporary results of his activities—fleeting mundane happiness or distress—and undergoes a severe penalty of servitude dictated by the modes of nature.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa affirms that each and every living entity that be is His part and parcel, and as such, each and every living entity is His eternal, transcendental servitor. The natural position of one who is part and parcel is to render service to the complete whole. In *Hitopadeśa*, a Vedic book of ancient fables, there is a lucid analogy entitled *Uddeśa Indriyāṅām* which explains the relationship of the parts of the body to the whole. The hands, legs, eyes, nose, and so forth are all parts of the complete whole that is the body. Now if the hands, legs, eyes, nose and so on do not endeavor to provide food for the stomach, but themselves try to enjoy the eatables collected by them, then there will be a maladjustment of the whole body. The bodily parts would be working against the interest of the body as a whole. By such foolish activities, the hands, legs, and so on could never improve their respective positions, but on the contrary, for want of sufficient nourishment of the whole body through the medium of the stomach, the whole system of bodily structure and function would become weakened, deteriorated, and diseased.

The Personality of Godhead is the original cause of all causes, and He is the life of the whole creation. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is the root of the tree of the whole creation. That is the statement of *Bhagavad-gītā*. It is also said in *Bhagavad-gītā* that there is no person superior to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is the supreme enjoyer of all sacrifices and activities. But still, those who are utterly sinful do not surrender unto Him, even though He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and all other living beings are His transcendental, eternal servitors, part and parcel of Him.

Forgetfulness of this transcendental relationship between the living entity and the Personality of Godhead has created a false sense of everyone's being a miniature Kṛṣṇa, who tries to enjoy the world to his best capacity, while overlooking the transcendental service of the Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, the complete whole and the origin of all. This kind of work is done under the spell of

the modes of material nature, called *māyā*, or the illusory energy. Actually, the living entity has no capacity to lord it over the forces of nature. The living entity becomes subjugated by the modes of nature as soon as he tries to put himself into the position of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the supreme enjoyer—under a false egoistic sense, since he is constitutionally unable to do so, any more than the hands, legs, eyes, and so on can individually function as a complete, whole body. The living entity therefore undergoes many difficulties under the pretense of being an enjoyer. So to get rid of all these troubles and difficulties that we suffer due to our work, we have to adopt the process of *karma-yoga*.

In contrast with the ordinary living entity, those who are transcendentalists are really learned. Such transcendentalists do not perform any work in the manner of the common mundaner. They know that mundane activities done under the modes of nature are completely different from activities of transcendental service. The transcendentalist, knowing himself to be different from the material body and mind, always tries to cultivate transcendental activities. He knows that although temporarily within mundane existence, he is an eternal spirit, part and parcel of the Supreme Spirit. As such, he remains always separate from the mundaners, even though his material senses such as the hands, legs, eyes, and so on are engaged in temporary material activities. When engaged in the transcendental service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, however, such activities make the doer free from the bondage of work. The Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, says to Arjuna, "O Arjuna! Therefore give up the spirit of enjoying all your worldly work, and through this consciousness become a transcendentalist. You may adopt your circumstantial occupation of warfare, which is a duty for you. And whoever performs his every activity with transcendental consciousness—according to My direction, without any grudge toward Me—he also becomes free from the bondage of work."

The process of bodily self-consciousness—the misunderstanding that I am this material body and mind and, for that matter, that I am part and parcel of this material world and that everything in this material world is thus an object for my enjoyment—does not allow me to become a transcendentalist or a really learned fellow. Up to this point, we have already discussed this transcendental knowledge somewhat. And on the basis of this preliminary discussion, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, advises us to become spiritually inclined, to become transcendentalists. Then only can we understand that we are nothing whatsoever

of this material world, that we are eternal, spiritual living entities. By such spiritual realization, disintegration of our material affinity naturally begins, and the more we become spiritually developed, the less we are affected by the happiness or distress that arise out of sense perception in contact with material association. The false ego created by material contact is then gradually vanquished, and this dismantling of false egoism causes liberation from all material designations and renewed awareness of our relationship with the Absolute Truth. This is called liberation in life.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, is the Absolute Truth. This is corroborated in all authentic scriptures. Our spiritual life begins to develop as soon as our relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa is reawakened. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is compared to the sun. The darkness of nescience disappears as soon as our relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa is established. With the appearance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa within our heart, we become cleansed of the impurities of material contact, much as the morning appears new and fresh with the appearance of the sun. This is not a concoction of childish imagination but a factual experience of spiritual realization. One who has sincerely followed the footsteps of Śrī Kṛṣṇa or His bona fide servants has also realized this simple truth.

But one who envies Śrī Kṛṣṇa and poses himself as a competitor of Śrī Kṛṣṇa—one with such a foolhardy and perverted mentality does not accept this statement of fact. Thus, without understanding the primacy of *karma-yoga*, the foolish mundaners indulge in unrestricted material activities resulting in bondage; their very work keeps them in the material existence of births and deaths perpetually. Such foolish mundaners actually envy Śrī Kṛṣṇa and deride Him as one who is like other mundaners. The truth about Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not easily enter into the perverted brain of such mundaners infected with the empiric approach to philosophy. But a devoted person faithfully understands just what is actually stated in the pages of *Bhagavad-gītā* and does not resort to imagination, or the empiric philosophical approach, generally called "spiritual interpretation." Only such a devoted person can accept the logic of fully surrendering unto Kṛṣṇa and can thus adopt the process of *karma-yoga* to escape the dangerous bondage of work.

There is nothing in the codes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to stipulate that these devoted persons will make their appearance within the boundaries of a particular caste, creed, color, or country. These devoted persons can and do appear everywhere, without any

restriction of caste, creed, color, or country. So everyone, whatever and whoever he may be, is eligible to be a devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. To confirm this fact, in *Bhagavad-gītā* the Personality of Godhead says the following words: "O son of Pṛthā, even those who are faithless and are of lower birth—including fallen women or professional prostitutes, ignorant manual laborers, and the merchant class—all shall attain perfection and reach the Kingdom of God, if they actually take shelter of the devotional service of the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa." In other words, the unscrupulous caste system now dominant in the society of the *asuras* or the faithless cannot be any barrier to approaching Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Personality of Godhead.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself has enumerated the basic principles of a caste system that is real and universal. The four social orders (intellectual, administrative, mercantile, and laborer) are set by Him according to the qualities these persons have acquired through their actions under the modes of nature. So although in one sense He is the maker of this caste system all over the world, still, in another sense, He is to be understood as not its maker. That is, He is not the maker of a tyrannical and unnatural caste system in which the faithless dictate one's position according to one's birth. Rather, He is the maker of a caste system that is applicable universally, is voluntary and natural, and is based on one's qualities and abilities.

The four social orders—generally known as the "caste system" and consisting of the *brāhmaṇas* (priests and intellectuals), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (merchants and farmers), and the *śūdras* (laborers)—were never meant for a caste system by birthright. This system is universally applicable in terms of one's mundane, practical qualifications and personality traits. The classification of *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* or *śūdra* is never made with reference to one's accidental birth—any more than someone could become a medical practitioner by some mere birthright, simply because he happened to be the son of a noted doctor. The real qualification of a medical practitioner can be obtained only through strenuous study of medical science for a considerably long period, and only upon completion of his studies can he take up the medical profession. Naturally, when a patient goes to a medical practitioner, he does not look at the birthright of the physician, but at his real, professional qualifications.

Just as physicians are always present in all countries and at all times, so also

brāhmaṇas or *kṣatriyas* are always present in every part of the earth, by dint of personal and practical qualifications. The present caste system—which we have localized within a particular part of the world and then within a particular sectarian faith—is undoubtedly wrong and a perversion of the natural, universal caste system. If somebody passes himself off as a medical practitioner for the reason that he is the son of a medical practitioner—without having any knowledge of medical science or without having attended medical college—and if this medical practitioner is accepted as such by a section of the public, then both this medical practitioner and his blind followers are to be considered members of a society who cheat one another and are cheated by one another. Theirs is a society of the cheaters and the cheated. So the caste system created by the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and referred to in the *Bhagavad-gītā* is not the same as the caste system of the society of the cheaters and the cheated. The caste system created by the Personality of Godhead and referred to in the *Bhagavad-gītā* is universally true at all times and in all parts of the world, and actually, the universe.

The qualifications of the various orders of the caste system are enumerated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, and here we shall touch on them briefly. The *brāhmaṇas* are the highest social order, and they imbibe the modes of goodness and are engaged in the activities of equality, restraint, and forgiveness. The *kṣatriyas* are the second-highest social order, and they imbibe the qualities of creative passion and are engaged in the activities of public leadership as executive heads of different political and social bodies. The *vaiśyas* are the third social order. They imbibe mixed qualities, namely creative passion as well as the darkness of ignorance, and generally they are engaged as farmers and merchants. The *śūdras* are the lowest social order, inasmuch as they imbibe the modes of darkness, or ignorance, and generally take up the service of the other three social orders. As a class, the *śūdras* are servitors of the whole mundane social body. In the present age of darkness, which is known as the Kali-yuga, the age of quarrel, hypocrisy, and ignorance, virtually everyone is born a *śūdra*.

If we examine human affairs in the light of the caste system as created by the Personality of Godhead, surely we can visualize the four social orders functioning in every part of the world. In every part of the globe, wherever there is human habitation, there are some persons who have the qualifications of *brāhmaṇas*, and there are others who have the qualifications of *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, and *śūdras*. The

various modes of nature are persistent in every corner of the universe, and since *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, and so forth are simply products of the modes of nature, how can one say that the four castes do not exist in a particular part of the world? This is absurd. In every country and at all times there have been, there are, and there will be the four social orders, according to the modes of nature.

Those who persist in the theory that the four social orders called the caste system exist only in India are totally mistaken. In all other countries, also, there are the same orders of life, under some name or other. And thus everywhere in the world, even those who are far below the qualifications of an ordinary *śūdra*, the fourth social order, are eligible for the transcendental service of the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual perfection which a qualified *brāhmaṇa* attains by the transcendental service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa can also be attained by anyone, even in a lower status than that of *śūdra*, by the same process of transcendental service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. For this reason, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive Personality of Godhead, is the Absolute Truth in all creation, and *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* is the supreme scripture within the universe. According to other scriptures such as the *Purāṇas*, even a *caṇḍāla*, or a person of the fifth social order (lower than a *śūdra*), becomes more than a person of the first order (a *brāhmaṇa*) by dint of his transcendental devotional service. The confidential teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* are therefore meant for nothing but attaining the highest perfection of human life—the transcendental service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

So, regardless of caste, creed, or color, everyone must adopt the process of *karma-yoga*, or work with transcendental results. And by so doing, everyone shall help to spiritualize all the activities of the world. By such activities, both the performer and the work performed become surcharged with spirituality and transcend the modes of nature. And as his activities become spiritualized, the performer automatically attains the qualifications of the highest social order, the *brāhmaṇas*. In fact, one who becomes fully spiritualized is transcendental to the modes of nature, and thus he is more than a *brāhmaṇa*. After all, although of the highest mundane order, the qualifications of a *brāhmaṇa* are not transcendental. How one can attain to the supreme transcendental knowledge simply by the performance of transcendental service to the Personality of Godhead is explained in the twenty-fourth verse of the fourth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*. It is explained there that through performance of work with transcendental results, everything becomes spiritualized. Ācārya

Śaṅkara's philosophy of "pantheism," which has spread a perverted interpretation of the *Vedānta* maxim that the Supreme Spirit is omnipresent, nonetheless has a practical bearing on the above verse.

There are various kinds of sacrifices that will be examined later on, but we should understand that the ultimate goal of all sacrifices is to please the Supreme Godhead, Viṣṇu. During our material existence, we have to deal with material objects, if only to keep body and soul together. But in all such material activities we can evoke the spiritual atmosphere, in terms of the Vedantic truth that the Supreme Spirit is omnipresent. This truth is imperfectly explained by the proponents of pantheism, the misconception that everything *is* the Supreme Spirit simply because the Supreme Spirit is everywhere. Once this misconception is cleared up and if we remember that the Supreme Spirit is indeed omnipresent, we can create a spiritual atmosphere by performing all our activities in relation to the Supreme Spirit, with everything directed by one who is a self-realized soul. Then the whole thing is transformed into spirit.

An example may be given here to illuminate the above process of spiritualization. When the iron is put into the fire and becomes red hot, the iron then develops the qualities of fire and stops functioning as iron. In the same way, when all our activities are done in terms of our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, then everything is surcharged with spiritualization. Because pleasing Kṛṣṇa has become our ultimate goal, all our activities have become spiritual activities. In a sacrifice there are five primary elements—namely, (1) the process of offering, (2) the offering itself, (3) the fire, (4) the sacrifice, and (5) the result of the sacrifice. When all of these elements become related with the Supreme Spirit, all of them become spiritualized; and at that time the whole thing becomes really a sacrifice. So when offered to the transcendental service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all the above-mentioned five elements become interrelated with Him, and thus they become totally spiritualized.

Therefore, learned men perform all their activities for transcendental results and thus direct all their activities toward the transcendental service of the Personality of Godhead. These genuinely purified souls actually control all their sensory activities and also master their true, spiritual self. Such spiritualized persons alone can show actual sympathy to the fallen in terms of the individual, the place, and the time. And in spite of performing apparently material activities, such spiritualized persons are free from the bondage of work. This process is explained in the seventh verse

of the fifth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*: "Householders who perform their work with a view to transcendental results, out of sympathy for all others, are really eligible to become public leaders. All others who claim to be public leaders are mistaken."

The enemies of the *karma-yogīs*—who generally perform all works for self-satisfaction or sense gratification, and who are not in touch with the Supreme Spirit by the transcendental relationship of service—sometimes pose themselves as working according to the desire of the supreme will. As a matter of fact, they are pantheist pretenders, trying to cover their extravagancy by falsely labeling it transcendental service to Godhead. But those who are pure in heart—that is, those who have surrendered everything unto the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead—remain aloof and separate from such easygoing pseudo transcendentalists, while giving them all respects that they may demand.

Such pure-in-heart transcendentalists know that although the living entity is very insignificant, he is part and parcel of the Absolute Truth and so has a proportionate measure of independence. And although the Personality of Godhead is all-powerful, He never interferes with this little freedom that the living entity enjoys. Thus the living entity sometimes becomes conditioned by the modes of nature, simply by abusing his small measure of independence that he is entitled to enjoy. When he becomes conditioned by nature's modes of goodness, passion, or ignorance, he develops those respective qualities of goodness, passion, and ignorance. As long as the living entity remains conditioned by material nature, he has to act according to his particular mode of nature. If these modes were not acting, then we would not have observed in the phenomenal world different varieties of activities. These different varieties of activities are conditioned by the different modes of nature.

Therefore, without knowing the subtle laws of nature, if we tried to justify all our deeds as influenced by the will of the Personality of Godhead, we would be attempting to bring partiality, inebriety, and gracelessness into the acts of the all-good Personality of Godhead. It should never be imagined that various mundane discrepancies arise by the will of the Personality of Godhead—that some are happy by His will, while others are unhappy by His will. Such differences in the material world are due to the proper or improper use of free will enjoyed by the individual living entity. Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, enjoins everyone to give up all such conditional engagements dictated by the various modes of nature. Such

varieties of engagements of the living entity arise out of ignorance perpetuated by the modes of nature. Therefore, the Lord says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (5.13) that He is not the cause of anyone's particular work, nor the authority, nor the result of such work—but that all these come out of the various modes of nature. Thus, all acts performed by the living entity—except those with transcendental results—are self-created engagements arising from an abuse of the free will, and therefore such acts or engagements are never to be considered as if the works and the results were somehow ordained by the almighty Godhead. Such works are all material and are therefore conditioned and directed by the modes of nature. The Personality of Godhead has nothing to do with such works.

Similarly, the *karma-yogī* exists always in a transcendental position, far away from the conditions of the modes of nature, for all his works attain to the platform of the Absolute. When one is in a state of freedom from the modes of nature, the phenomenal world manifests its noumenal feature—its spiritual aspect. With the world thus spiritually manifest, its modes of nature, such as goodness, passion, and ignorance, cannot present any obstacle to one's spiritual advancement. When such obstacles are surpassed, one attains to the absolute vision.

Bhagavad-gītā (5.17) further elucidates that when a learned man attains to absolute vision, he can observe every living being—whether a learned and gentle *brahmaṇa*, a cow, an elephant, a dog, or a dog-eater—with equanimity. A learned and gentle *brahmaṇa* is the embodiment of nature's mode of goodness. Among the beasts, the cow is the embodiment of this same mode of goodness. The elephant and the lion are embodiments of the passionate mode of nature, while the dog and the *caṇḍāla* (dog-eater) are the embodiments of nature's mode of darkness, or ignorance. However, instead of focusing on the various external tabernacles of these living entities (their embodiments under various modes of nature), with his absolute vision the *karma-yogī* penetrates to the spirit which is embodied therein. And because this infinitesimal spirit emanates from the infinite Supreme Spirit, the *karma-yogī* in the highest state can observe everyone and everything with equanimity. Such a *karma-yogī* views everything in relation to the Absolute, and therefore he engages everything in the transcendental service of the Absolute. He observes all living entities as so many transcendental servitors of the absolute Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. His perfect spiritual vision cannot but penetrate the encagement of every material body, just as a red-hot iron cannot but burn

everything that it contacts. Thus, the *karma-yogī* sets an example of transcendental character, by engaging everyone and everything in the transcendental service of the Personality of Godhead.

The *karma-yogī* knows very well that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, is the enjoyer of everything, and that He is the Lord of all living entities. He sees very little value in the false prestige by which all living entities in this material world put themselves in the position of either an enjoyer or a renouncer. The learned sages feel disgust with this sort of false prestige as the quintessential disease of material existence. All good work, culture of knowledge, meditation, austerity, and so forth—whatever is performed—all of these activities are meant to ameliorate this material disease. Therefore, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (5.28) that one can attain the supreme peace by knowing that He is the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, the Lord of all the universes, and also the supreme friend of all living entities.

We have already discussed the necessity of performing work for sacrifice only, or to please the transcendental senses of Viṣṇu. And in the above statement of *Bhagavad-gītā*, it is clear that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality, who alone is capable of enjoying the result of all sacrificial performances. The sacrifices of the ordinary workers and the meditation and austerities of the empiric philosophers are all ordained and maintained by the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In turn, the Supersoul—the localized aspect of Viṣṇu, which is the object of meditation for the mystics—is a plenary portion of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.

We may be able to further discuss all these workers and their work later. But one may know at present that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the friend of everyone, whether he be an ordinary worker, an empiric philosopher, or even a mystic—and what to speak of the transcendentalists who are cent-percent servitors of the Personality of Godhead. The Personality of Godhead always does good for one and all, by empowering His devotees to preach and propagate the transcendental process of devotional service to Godhead everywhere in accord with the specific time, place, and audience. The Lord is therefore called "Govinda," or the prime cause of all causes and the reservoir of all blessings. And the people in general can attain to perfect peace and tranquillity when they come to know Him by the gradual process of work with transcendental results.

Those who do everything for the transcendental service of the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, have no need to perform any sacrifice, penance, or meditation that is unrelated to the service of Godhead. We have already discussed hereinbefore that the mundane qualities of goodness that are the signs of the *brahmaṇa* are included and coexisting within the qualities of the transcendentalist. In the same manner, the dexterity and sacrifice of the devoted worker, the knowledge of the *sannyāsī* (renunciant), the stillness and profound love for Godhead of the mystic—all these qualities are included and coexisting within the qualities of the transcendental worker, the *karma-yogī*. Therefore, in *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.1), the Personality of Godhead says, "One who performs his duty for duty's sake, without seeking the fruitive results of such work, is the true renunciant and mystic—not he who has discarded all his duties and relieved himself of his responsibilities."

The fact is that Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself becomes the enjoyer of the fruits of the work performed by the transcendentalist. Thus, the transcendentalist has no responsibility for the results of his work, may those results be good or bad in the estimation of worldly people. The transcendentalist acts under the impetus of his obligation to do everything for the sake of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He never views any activity as an object of enjoyment or renunciation on his own account. In contrast, the *sannyāsī* or renouncer relieves himself of all worldly responsibilities in order to free himself for acquiring knowledge relating to the all-pervasive Spirit. The mystic takes similar measures so that he can enhance his meditation and better visualize within himself the localized aspect of the same Supreme Spirit. But the transcendentalist who acts only for the satisfaction of the Supreme Person, without being impelled by a motive of self-satisfaction, is actually free from all worldly duties—without the separate effort made by the *sannyāsīs* and the mystics. The spiritual knowledge acquired by the *sannyāsīs* and the eightfold perfections achieved by the mystics are all within easy reach of the transcendentalist. Therefore, the transcendentalist does not desire to achieve any profit, adoration, or distinction. He desires no gain whatever, except to be engaged in the transcendental service of Godhead—because simply by such service, he gains all. Once one achieves the supreme gain, which encompasses all other gains, what is there still to be achieved?

The mystic, who virtually ceases his various bodily functions according to Patañjali's system of mysticism, tries to attain trance by these systematic modes of meditation

and so forth. Thus, the mystic tolerates all sorts of tribulations in order to visualize the localized aspect of the Supreme Spirit. In other words, he does not care about what it may take, even if it means meeting with death, to realize his ideal, which has no equal in the universe. To underscore the validity of such mystics or devotees, the Personality of Godhead says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.22) that He does not consider anything more valuable than the attainment of that transcendental state: "It is the greatest gain. To be in that state means not to be perturbed by any distress, however heavy and intolerable it may be."

According to Patañjali's system, mysticism means perfect control of the mental plane with its various fickle inclinations. According to Patañjali, the transcendental state is to become free from sensuous activities and to attain the stage of perfection perceptible purely by the spirit soul. In such a state, the attention of the mystic never deviates from that spiritual achievement. The eightfold material perfections—such as *añimā*, *laghimā*, *prāpti*, *īśitā*, *vaśitā*, *prākāmya*, and so on—are concomitant in the attainment of perfection in mysticism, and are but indirect by-products of that process.

After attainment of one or two of the above perfections, many mystics fall into the trap of mental oscillation. In such a state, the mystic fails to attain to the highest perfection, namely, pure devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But the transcendental worker, or *karma-yogī*, has no such fear of falling down, for his attention is already fixed in the transcendental service of the Personality of Godhead. Thus, he does not need to enter separately into trance. For the *karma-yogī*, the mystic perfections manifest automatically due to the ever-increasing freshness of their object of attention, the Personality of Godhead. A mundaner is surely unable to realize how there can be so much transcendental happiness in the service of the Personality of Godhead.

Further, there can be no loss for either the mystic or the *karma-yogī* in his attempt to perfect such transcendental activities. And the gain is always assured, even if the process is only partially completed. Anything that is material or mundane—be it acquisition of knowledge or of wealth—is vanquished along with the annihilation of the material body. But the transcendental work of the *karma-yogī* surpasses the mundane limits of the material body and mind, because it is performed in relation with the transcendental spirit soul. Being thus spiritualized, these transcendental activities transcend the limits of material annihilation. Just as the soul is not

annihilated, even after annihilation of the material body, so also these spiritualized activities are not annihilated, even after the annihilation of the body or mind.

To some extent, we have already discussed this endurance of the results of transcendental work in the section on transcendental knowledge. The Personality of Godhead confirms this reality in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.40), and Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda explains it in the following manner: "After all, the human race is divided into two sections. The one is legitimate and the other is illegitimate. Those who do not care about any laws of life, but simply work on the principle of sense gratification—they are all illegitimate. They may be civilized or uncivilized, they may be learned or illiterate, they may be powerful or weak, but such illegitimate persons, generally known as outlaws, always act like the lower animals. There is no good in them, in spite of all appearances. But those who are legitimate or law-abiding persons may be divided into three transcendental divisions: namely, the lawful workers, the empiric philosophers, and the transcendental devotees. The lawful workers are again divided into two sections: namely, the workers with a desire to enjoy the fruits of their work; and the transcendental workers, without any such desire. The worker with a desire to enjoy the fruits of his work is hankering after transient material happiness, and such a worker is rewarded with worldly or heavenly happiness within the material worlds. But it must be known that all these forms of happiness are temporary. Thus, the worker cannot attain to real happiness, which is permanent and transcendental. This real and transcendental happiness is attained only after liberation from the bondage of material existence. Any action which does not aim at such transcendental happiness is always temporary and baffling."

When ordinary work aims at such a transcendental objective, this work is called *karma-yoga*. By this process of *karma-yoga*, one gradually attains self-purification, then transcendental knowledge, next perfect meditation, and ultimately transcendental service to the Personality of Godhead. Sometimes a mundane worker is misunderstood to be a *tapasvī* (renunciant) or a *mahātmā* (great soul) because of the many austerities he performs to attain his mundane goals. But these austerities accepted by such rigid mundaners are, after all, aimed merely at material sense gratification, and therefore these austerities are useless in the transcendental sense. Some of the *asuras*, or demons, such as Rāvaṇa and Hiraṇyakaśipu, also underwent a severe process of austerity and penance, but they

obtained nothing except some temporary objects of sensory pleasure. Therefore, only when one has transcended the limits of sensory pleasure can he be classified as a *karma-yogī*, or a worker for transcendental results. Real goodness lies in the activities of *karma-yoga*, even if one is only in the preliminary stages. Further, a *karma-yogī* makes progressive headway life after life, and this is confirmed as follows in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.43): "Even after successive births, the *karma-yogī* revives the transcendental sense of service, and by his natural attachment, he tries again to give further perfection to the progress of his transcendental activities."

Even if such transcendentalists slip away from the path of progress in some way or other, they are again given chances for making progress. As confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.41), they are allowed to take their next birth either in the family of a bona fide *brahmaṇa* or in the family of a rich merchant who is devoted to the service of Godhead.

But among the transcendental mystics, variously classified as *karma-yogīs*, *dhyāna-yogīs*, *jñāna-yogīs*, *haṭha-yogīs*, and *bhakti-yogīs*, the last-named *bhakti-yogīs* are the greatest of all—because as again confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.47), they are always absorbed in the thoughts and actions of transcendental loving service to Godhead.

Obviously, attainment of transcendental loving service to the Personality of Godhead is the ultimate goal of all mysticism. That is the purport of the above-mentioned verse. It is also worth mentioning the statement that Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda makes in this connection: "The mystic who is engaged in the performance of the principle of loving service of Godhead is the highest of all mystics." One who renders loving service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, with devotion and austerity, is the greatest of all mystics. Men who undertake austerities motivated by a desire for material results cannot be called *yogīs* or mystics. Those who are not motivated by material results include the empiric philosopher, the mystic pursuing the eightfold mystic perfections, and finally the mystic engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Personality of Godhead.

Factually, the mystic path is uniform and one. It is something like a series of stepping-stones to the highest goal. By accepting this path of mysticism, one becomes a pilgrim toward spiritual perfection. Work with transcendental results is the first stepping-stone on this transcendental path. When empiric philosophical

deductions and a desire for renunciation are added, progress is made to the second stepping-stone. When one adds a definite conception of the supreme ruling principle, the Supreme Lord, one progresses to the third stepping-stone. And finally, when a process of transcendental loving service to the Supreme Personality is added, progress is made perfectly to the ultimate goal. The mystic path is therefore a transcendental evolution in which all the above stages are part of the gradual process of spiritual development. It is necessary to mention all the above stages to understand the final stage. Therefore, one who desires to attain to the supreme goal may adopt the systematic mystic path.

But one should not stop simply upon stepping on the first, second, or third stone, but must make his progress complete by going all the way to the final step, the perfect stage of transcendental loving service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One who reaches an intermediate stage but does not make any substantial progress beyond it, merely remaining satisfied with that particular stage of his development, may be called by that particular name, as, for instance, "*karma-yogī*," "*jñāna-yogī*," "*haṭha-yogī*," and so on. For this reason alone are the mystics of different stages named differently. So the conclusion is that although the path of mystic *yoga* is one, the transcendental devotee is the greatest of all mystics, because he alone follows the path to its ultimate goal.

At this point, it should be noted that progressive development along the transcendental mystic path is not totally identical with ordinary material progress. In the material world one has to pass through a certain stage of development before one can be admitted to the next stage, and there is no alternative to this process of progress. It may be cited, for example, that if somebody wants to pass the M.A. examination, he has to pass through the preliminary examinations, and there is no alternative to this. No one can expect to be admitted into the M.A. level without having passed the other, preliminary examinations. Yet in the transcendental world—although there are approved regulations to bring one from the lower stages to the highest goal by a gradual process of development—one can, by the mercy of Godhead, pass the transcendental M.A. examination without even having passed the preliminary examinations. But this extraordinary mercy of Godhead is possible only by a confidential relationship with the Personality of Godhead. And this confidential relationship with the Personality of Godhead is possible only by the transcendental association of the devotees of the Personality of

Godhead.

Each and every soul has a potent, confidential, eternal relationship with the Personality of Godhead. But due to long association with the illusory material energy, every one of us has forgotten that relationship from time immemorial. We are as if roaming in the street like street beggars, although we are all the transcendental sons of the richest personality, the Personality of Godhead. With a cool head, we could very well understand this fact. But unmindful of our supremely rich father and our relationship with Him, we go on endeavoring in many ways to solve our street-beggar problems of poverty and hunger, but with practically no appreciable results. On the streets we meet many friends who are similarly poverty-stricken. Sometimes those who are a little better off than we are direct us toward some progressive stage of life, but actually we do not derive any happiness from such directions. These people show us the paths of work, knowledge, meditation, mysticism, and various other ways also, but unfortunately none of them is able to give us that happiness for which we are ever hankering. For this very reason, Lord Caitanya advised Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī at Daśāśvamedha-ghāṭa, on the bank of the Ganges at Prayāga, that only the most fortunate souls can obtain the seed of devotional service, by the mercy of the Personality of Godhead and His bona fide representative.

Thus, we can get this seed of transcendental devotional service from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead Himself, in His transcendental message of *Bhagavad-gītā*. If we are at all able to grasp this genuine message of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the teacher of *Bhagavad-gītā*, then and only then can we perfectly appreciate the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Otherwise, we can go on reading *Bhagavad-gītā* life after life, and we may write a thousand and one commentaries on it, but all such attempts will prove futile.

What the Personality of Godhead is, He Himself has explained in *Bhagavad-gītā*. How many common men have written their autobiographies, and how enthusiastically we have read and accepted them. But when the Personality of Godhead Himself tells about Himself, we cannot take it as it is. This is nothing but our misfortune. On the other hand, we try to drag concocted meanings out of the simple passages of *Bhagavad-gītā* to establish some man-made idea which is never supported by *Bhagavad-gītā*. By such artificial dragging, one cannot ultimately establish his rubbish theory, but at the end, one confirms the whole thesis by

putting a monkey in place of God. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is definitively established that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is established, also, that our only duty is to render transcendental loving service unto Him. Thus, once we really understand these two facts from the pages of *Bhagavad-gītā*, then we can enter into the primary classes of spiritual education.

< previous



His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Content used with permission of The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International, Inc. All rights reserved.

This is a site of the Bhaktivedanta Archives. Powered by Drupal and hosted on Linode.