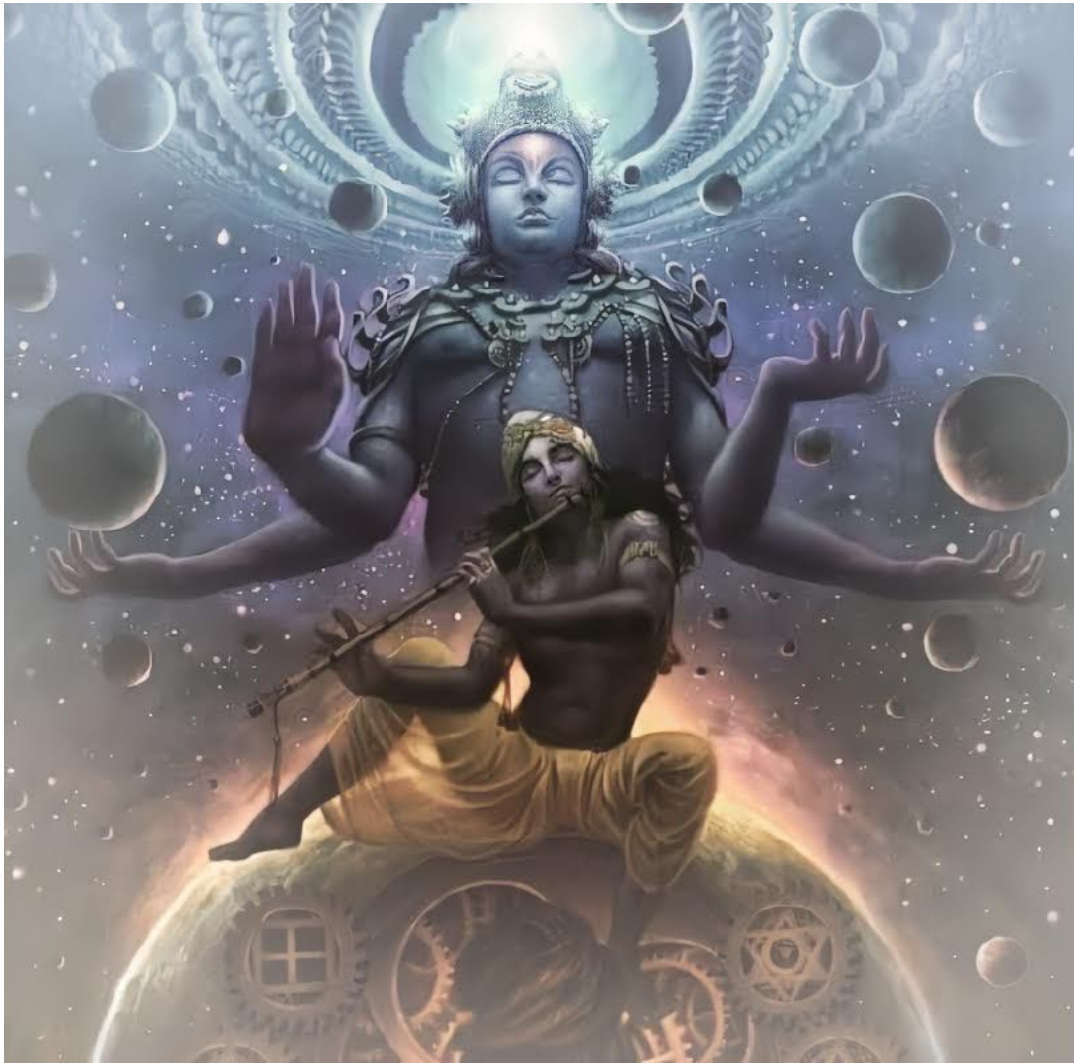


## ***Three Absolute Energies of God and the Creation of the Vedic Multiverse***



*This presentation is an attempt to give a comprehensive visual analysis of the distinct energies of Lord Krishna using three ancient texts as a foundation: the Bhagavad Gita, the Srimad Bhagavatam, and the Brahma Samhita. My sincere desire is to share knowledge great scholars have shared with me over the years. It covers many topics and I relish the idea the reader can study the different sections at their own pace without having to shuffle back and forth between more than one pdf; please consider this offering a quasi compilation. If you're new to Krishna Consciousness and this pdf is your first point of reference on the science of Bhakti Yoga, how wonderful! Krishna explains in His Gita this knowledge is our human birthright to have, so if you feel it is quite remarkable, please share it with those most fortunate to know you. Infinite blessings, Om-Tat-Sat*

*Three Absolute Energies of Krishna (pg. 1)*

*The Creation Of the Multiverse & the Material Energy (pg. 9)*

*The Supreme Consciousness (Om-Tat-Sat) is both personal & impersonal (pg. 29)*

*Bhakti Yoga: Eternity, Bliss, and Knowledge Contained Within Sound Vibration (pg. 45)*

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*An Introduction to the Five-Thousand year old Bhagavad- Gita of Lord Krishna (pg. 67)*

*Dedicated to Mother Sandamini, a very saintly Devotee*

## *The three absolute energies of God (Bhagavan)*

There is no greater paradox than the notion of an eternal spirit soul (Jiva) existing within every living entity. The symptom of its manifestation is the inexplicable reality we call ‘consciousness’ and yet it cannot be understood using our temporary, imperfect, material senses. We are the soul, or the conscious life force within our bodies, and we are completely different from our bodies, which are only highly complex machines. We sit in the heart, the seat of all energies of the body. From there we experience the world through the wired machinery of the body’s senses, as well as through the more subtle energies of mind, intelligence, and ego. Understanding the difference between body and soul—between matter and spirit—is the beginning of spiritual life and the only basis for true self-realization. Our body is constantly changing: infancy, childhood, youth, middle age, old age, and finally death. But we, the unchangeable soul, witness this “virtual reality” from within. That’s why, even though our body changes throughout life, we always keep our sense of identity. Matter is temporary, and spirit is eternal. Therefore we eternal souls are more important than our bodies. To understand this point is real knowledge. We are by nature eternally happy and full of knowledge. The human body affords us the opportunity to perform spiritual activities that will free us from getting further material bodies, which are by nature full of suffering.

According to the Vedic literature the living entity is not only a material body, but it is built of three different layers. The visible material body is constituted of the elements of the periodic system; this is our body that we see when we look in the mirror. The mind, intelligence and the false ego constitute our subtle material body that we can’t experience with our senses. This covers the soul, the real bearer of life- our real self. The soul is the real bearer of our personality, self. The subtle body is like a cloud around the soul and the gross body is only a lot of complicated but lifeless molecules. Herein lies the paradox. According to the Srimad-Bhagavatam, if you’re endeavoring for realization of its presence, it cannot be perceived by the mind, where duality and false ego reside. It can only be realized via the heart chakra- where every living entities eternal companion also resides- the localized Supersoul called Paramatma. The eternal vibration between the Jiva soul and the Paramatma feature of Krishna is not a product of the ephemeral, manifested universe, it is a transmutation from the realm that all souls originate- Vaikuntha-loka; the 'mind' (false-ego) is formed in the brain, and it is a material energy so it is only a conduit with which to process the exchange. This Supreme Absolute Truth is sub- atomic and it exists in the spaces between atoms and is present within every atom. In this Paramatma feature, Krishna permeates the entire Cosmos via the subatomic point of subspace throughout His entire Impersonal Brahman feature we call creation. By chanting mantras (man means mind and tra means to liberate), which liberate the Jiva soul from illusion, we unlock the eternal consciousness within. The Jiva soul is made of eternity, bliss, and knowledge, called sat-chit-ananda (this is what Krishna's form comprises) and the combination of mind and matter enclose this consciousness into the illusory and temporary form you have now. A more detailed and elaborate explanation of the three energies of Krishna from “The Hidden Glory of India” book by Steve Rosen-

# 3 ASPECTS OF GOD

Indian theology recognizes three aspects of God: Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan—the Lord's impersonal feature, His all-pervading localized aspect, and His supreme personhood. The three primary attributes of God—*sat* (being, or eternity), *chit* (full cognition), and *ananda* (unending bliss)—appear in these three aspects. *Sat* is realized in Brahman, *sat* and *chit* in Paramatma, and *sat*, *chit*, and *ananda* in Bhagavan. In Bhagavan, therefore, one realizes the sum total of all God's qualities.

## BRAHMAN

Brahman realization (an understanding of God as an all-pervading universal force) is a fundamental view of God. This view is appealing to empiricists who are inclined to spiritual subjects. Those who take this conception more seriously undertake a mystical path called *gyana-yoga*, a traditional discipline that focuses on the intellect. By this path one can achieve full Brahman realization, or awareness of eternity (*sat*). Most current forms of yoga and religiosity, at their best, attempt to bring adherents to this basic spiritual perception. Persons who follow this path are known as *gyana-yogi*. Their quest for truth brings them to the Lord's effulgence, the impersonal Brahmayogi, into which they may merge after death. There is a tendency, however, to fail in this pursuit, because the vast



The impersonal Brahman

impersonalism of eternity impels one to long for natural, interpersonal relationships. And so the practitioner may be born again to continue on the spiritual path.

## PARAMATMA

A *gyana-yogi* may raise himself to the next level of realization and become an *ashtanga-yogi*, practicing the eightfold path of yoga as outlined in Patanjali's *Yoga-sutras*. If such a *yogi* is successful, he realizes the localized form of God, who is in every heart



as well as within every atom. This manifestation of the Lord is called the Paramatma, or Supersoul. Upon realizing Him, one achieves awareness of more than immortality; one attains the essence of spiritual knowledge (*chit*) as well.

The Vaishnava *acharyas* explain the position of the Paramatma in the following way: As the sun may appear reflected in countless jewels, so the Lord within every atom may appear like many, though He is one, existing (in His original form) in the spiritual world.

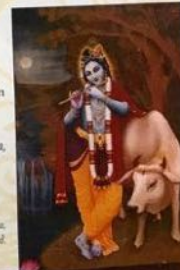
An inherent danger in pursuing the path of the Paramatma is misidentification of one's individual soul with the Supersoul (Paramatma). To clarify this subject, the Vedic literature gives the following analogy. The Supersoul and the individual soul are like two birds sitting in the same tree. The individual soul is enjoying the fruits of the tree, while the Supersoul stands by and watches, waiting for

Paramatma, the Lord in the heart.

His companion to give up the pursuit of temporary pleasures. This, of course, may take many lifetimes. But when the living being finally turns to the Supersoul in love and devotion, the Supersoul agrees to direct him. He brings the living being into association with a pure devotee, one who is accomplished in Bhagavan realization. When this occurs, one moves on to the final aspect of God consciousness.

## BHAGAVAN

The word *Bhagavan* is the Sanskrit equivalent of "God." It literally means "He who possesses all opulences in full." The sages of the East have identified six primary opulences: strength, beauty, wealth, fame, knowledge, and renunciation. Only the Supreme Personality of Godhead has these qualities in full. One who becomes adept at worshipping Him becomes aware of eternity and knowledge—as in Brahman and Paramatma realization—and develops a profound sense of transcendental bliss (*ananda*) as well. The person on the path of Bhagavan realization attains intimacy with God, ultimately developing a loving relationship with him in a deep and meaningful way. Thus, Vaishnavism teaches that Bhagavan realization is the perfection of *gyana-yoga* and *ashtanga-yoga*, and, indeed, of all spiritual pursuits.



Bhagavan Krishna, the Supreme Lord

THE HIDDEN GLORY OF INDIA

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# 3 ASPECTS: AN ANALOGY

To make the three levels of God-realization more understandable, later Vaishnava commentators have supplied the following apt analogy. Three simple villagers and their guide are at a railway station, waiting in great anticipation for the train to arrive. The three have never before seen a train. As one of them notices a massive structure pulling in at a distance, he comments on the headlight: "What is this?" he asks. The guide responds: "This is the train." Confident that he has seen the train, the first villager leaves, satisfied.

When the train approaches the platform, one of the remaining two villagers exclaims, "Oh! This is the train!" He has seen the series of cars pulling into the station—the form behind the headlights. He is now also confident that he has seen all there is to see, and leaves.

The third man patiently remains behind. And when the train comes into the station, he has the opportunity to meet the conductor and to see the various passengers on board.

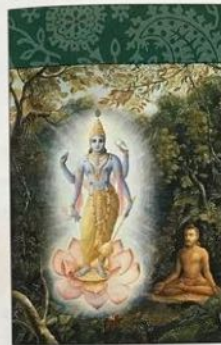
The three villagers went back to their small village and began to tell everyone what they had seen. Though it was an undeniable truth that each had seen the same train, their descriptions were diverse; their realizations were different. The third

villager obviously had a more complete experience than the other two. He was able to convince the others of this, for he perfectly described what his two comrades had seen, and more.

Analogically, the big light represents the effulgent impersonal aspect of the Lord (Brahman). This light with something more concrete behind it conveys the idea of divine substance, a personality that pervades all existence (Paramatma). And



the third villager's vision represents the most complete aspect of God realization (Bhagavan), wherein one meets the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Shri Krishna, and develops a relationship with Him.



Paramatma, the Supersoul.

In the Vaishnava view, these three are considered different aspects of the same Absolute Truth, and they are all valid. One views these different aspects of God according to one's level of spiritual advancement. Vaishnava teachers recommend meditation on the fullest truth: Bhagavan realization. The other processes were developed for gradual elevation to this point. Under the direction of an elevated Vaishnava, however, one can immediately pursue the path of Bhagavan realization, surpassing the levels of Brahman and Paramatma.



Left: The impersonal aspect.

Right: Lord Krishna, ultimate Godhead, in all His glory.

THE HIDDEN GLORY OF INDIA

44 THE GODHEAD

*The Vedas explain it takes some Souls many, many lifetimes to learn this in full realization. These different varieties of perception are also the source of all world religions and philosophies*

## Levels of Perception



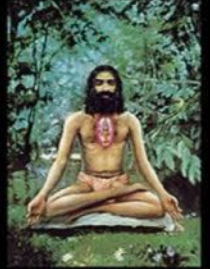
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya



Lord Sri Krsna, the Absolute Truth, is an eternally existent, cognizant, sentient being who is the ultimate cause of all causes. The Supreme Truth in His cognizant energy feature, known as **Brahman**, is present throughout the entire cosmic existence. As our own consciousness pervades our body, the consciousness of the Absolute is similarly manifest through His Brahman feature. Some yogis seek to merge with the formless Brahman effulgence of the Lord, which is the invisible, inferior feature. While the concept of Impersonal Brahman is spiritual, this Yogi has not attained the highest spiritual understanding of the Personality of Godhead, because impersonal Brahman is subordinate to the complete Absolute. In the Brahma-sutra, Brahman is explained to be like the rays of the sunshine. The impersonal Brahman is the shining rays of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is like the sun. Impersonal Brahman is incomplete realization of the absolute whole.

The Supreme Truth is also eternally manifest in the sub-atomic form called **Paramatma**. In this feature, the Absolute Truth manifests as four-handed, fully-bedecked persons, each known as Paramatma. These sub-atomic persons exist in the spaces between atoms and also within each atom. In His Paramatma feature, the Lord permeates the entire cosmos. These Paramatmas, while uncountably multiplied, are actually one single entity through which the Absolute Truth remains fully cognizant of every subatomic point of subspace throughout all creation. While Paramatma is also partial realization of the Supreme Absolute, a Krsna conscious yogi is the perfect seer because he sees Krsna, the Supreme, situated in everyone's heart as Supersoul (Paramatma).



The same Supreme Truth remains manifest at all times under all circumstances in His eternal personal form known as **Bhagavan**, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Sanskrit word *bhagavan* is explained in Bhagavad-gita as the Supreme Personality who possesses all riches, all strength, all fame, all beauty, all knowledge and all renunciation. There are many persons who are very rich, very powerful, very beautiful, very famous, very learned, and very much detached, but no one can claim that he possesses all riches, all strength, etc., entirely. Only Krsna can claim this because He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. No living entity, including Brahma, Lord Siva, or Narayana, can possess opulences as fully as Krsna. Therefore it is concluded in the Brahma-samhita by Lord Brahma himself that Lord Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The yogi who has achieved realization of Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality, has attained the topmost level of transcendental knowledge.

*There are many paths to God and each one offers a different realization of the Supreme. In this chart the four different levels of yoga are explained along with the type of knowledge they offer*

## Origin of Yoga & Four Progressive Vedic Disciplines

<p><i>Yoga</i> means controlling the senses, and <i>bhakti-yoga</i> means purifying the senses. When the senses are purified, they are also, automatically, controlled. You cannot stop the activities of the senses by artificial means, but if you purify the senses, not only are they kept back from rubbish engagement, but also they become positively engaged in transcendental service to the Lord.- <i>Science of Self Realization, Chapter 5a, "Superconsciousness."</i></p>				
<p><b>Yoga Process</b> Path to Realization c/o Sri Nimbarka Acarya</p>	<p><b>Karma Yoga</b> Charity / Danam Ritual Action / Karma</p>	<p><b>Astanga Yoga</b> Austerity / Tapas Meditation / Upasana</p>	<p><b>Jnani Yoga</b> Study / Sankya Knowledge / Vidya</p>	<p><b>Bhakti Yoga</b> Devotion / Bhakti Surrender / Prapatti</p>
<p>Essential Aspects &amp; Core Processes</p>	<p>Detachment from results of one's labor via philanthropy, tithing to church/charity/volunteering etc.</p>	<p>Severe austerities &amp; methods to control the mind via breathing exercises, sitting, &amp; mantra etc.</p>	<p>Eliminating what is NOT true via rigorous study &amp; analysis. Neti/Neti (Not this, Not That)</p>	<p>Complete surrender of the ego to the will of God as directed by a personal, living spiritual master.</p>
<p>Development Stage</p>	<p>(1st Spiritual Growth Step)</p>	<p>(Spiritual Objective)</p>	<p>(Tinged Spiritual Objective)</p>	<p>(Transcendent Objective)</p>
<p>Nurturing Aspect: <i>Examples</i></p>	<p>Heart/hrdaya: <i>Christians</i></p>	<p>Mind/manas: <i>Buddhists</i></p>	<p>Intelligence/budhi: <i>Monists/Advaita</i></p>	<p>Soul/Atma: <i>Devotees/Vaishnavas</i></p>
<p>Destination</p>	<p>Heavenly Material Planets</p>	<p>Body of the Lord/hari deha</p>	<p>Lords Effluence/Brahmajyoti</p>	<p>Spiritual World/Vaikuntha</p>
<p>Yuga Dharma</p>	<p>Treta Yuga / Sacrifices</p>	<p>Satya Yuga / Meditation</p>	<p>Dwarpa Yuga / Worship</p>	<p>Kali Yug /Sankirtan</p>
<p><b>Bhagavad Gita</b> Summary &amp; Conclusion</p>	<p><i>Krsna</i> says it's "BETTER" than false renunciation. -Bg. 3.6-7</p>	<p><i>Arjuna</i> rejects as "TOO DIFFICULT" -Bg. 6.33-34</p>	<p><i>Krsna</i> states this path is very "TROUBLESOME" -Bg. 12.5</p>	<p><i>Krsna</i> Declares Bhakti Yoga as "HIGHEST of ALL" -Bg. 6.46</p>
 <p><i>Yet; In this body there is another, a transcendental enjoyer (the Supersoul) who is the Lord, the supreme proprietor, who exists as the overseer and permitter, and who is known as the Supersoul.</i><sup>23</sup> One who understands this philosophy concerning material nature, the living entity and the interaction of the modes of nature is sure to attain liberation. He will not take birth here again, regardless of his present position.<sup>24</sup> That Supersoul is perceived by some through working without fruitive desire<sup>25</sup> (<i>Karma Yoga</i>).</p> <p>-Bhagavad Gita As It Is 13.23-26</p> <p><b>Perception of Supersoul:</b></p>	<p><b>8 Mystical Powers</b> SB11.15.3-8</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Anima: So small can enter stone</li> <li>2) Laghima: lighter then feather, float on air, water, or ride sun's rays.</li> <li>3) Prapti: ability to acquire from anywhere in the universe.</li> <li>4) Isita: create &amp; annihilate at will</li> <li>5) Yasitva: can exploit others, control their minds and take their funds.</li> <li>6) Mahima: bigger then anything else</li> <li>7) Prakamya: free from desire</li> <li>8) Kamavasayita: assume any shape, Magic ability to do the impossible.</li> </ol>	<p>...by some through the practice of rigorous daily meditation<sup>25</sup> (<i>Astanga Yoga</i>).</p>	<p><b>24 + 2 Elements of Universe</b></p> <p><b>5 Great Elements (Maha-Bhuta)</b> Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether</p> <p><b>5 Objects of the Senses</b> · Smell, Taste, Form, Touch, Sound</p> <p><b>5 Knowledge Acquiring Senses</b> Eyes, Ears, Nose, Tongue, Skin</p> <p><b>5 Working Senses</b> · Voice, Legs, Hands, Anus, Genitals</p> <p><b>2 Subtle Senses</b> · Intelligence, False Ego</p> <p><b>1 Inner Sense</b> · The Mind</p> <p><b>Jiva Atma</b> · Unique Eternal Soul <b>Krsna</b> · The Personality of Godhead</p> <p>... and by others through the cultivation of analytical knowledge<sup>25</sup> (<i>Jnani Yoga</i>).</p>	<p>Not attained by charity, penance, or study. (Bg. 11.53) But: "A person who accepts the path of devotional service is not bereft of the results derived from studying the Vedas, performing sacrifices, undergoing austerities, giving charity or pursuing philosophical and fruitive activities. <i>Simply by performing devotional service, he attains all these, and at the end he reaches the supreme eternal abode.</i>" - Bg 8.28</p> <p>&gt; Properly hears of <i>Krsna</i>, worships Him &amp; transcends death (<i>Bhakti Yoga</i>).<sup>25</sup></p>

**"Those who are seers of the truth have concluded that of the nonexistent [the material body] there is no endurance and of the eternal [the soul] there is no change. This they have concluded by studying the nature of both." —Sri Krishna, Bhagavad-gita 2.16.**

**The ancient Vedic literatures clearly reveal the nature and identity of the Absolute Truth or Supreme Personality. One such reference is the first and second verses of the Vedanta Sutas. The first verse states simply that "...now one should enquire into the Bhagavan."**

**This means that now that you have attained a human body, you should use your intelligence to discover what is really spiritual and what is the Absolute Truth. In no other form of life does the living being have such an opportunity. The second verse begins to explain what is this Absolute Truth: "He from whom everything originates is the Absolute." Thus, as it refers to "He", the source of all that exists, the ultimate point of creation is a person. Lord Krishna Himself is the one undivided Absolute Truth and ultimate reality. He manifests in three features, namely the Brahman (all-pervading spiritual energy), Paramatma (Supersoul in all beings) and Bhagavan (the Supreme Personality); Sri Krishna is the Supreme Divinity as the Paramount Eternal Reality among all other sentient beings and the Fountain-source of consciousness to all conscious beings. He is the only reality without a second but as a Supersoul dwelling in the cave of the hearts of all beings.**

**Physicists explain how water flows down a mountain in a path of least resistance. 5000 years ago, such a direct path was given to the human kind in Vrindavan, India by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna. Krishna is a name of the original, unique Supreme Person, the source of all that exists. God has many names, and each describes a different aspect of His personality- creator, maintainer of the universe, and Lover of all. The name Krishna—"the all-attractive one"—indicates the unequalled charm and beauty of the Supreme Person, as He appears to His most dear devotees. Krishna appears as other forms of God—avatars—to create and maintain the universe, while He simultaneously enjoys loving relationships with His countless associates in the spiritual world. He visits this material world from time to time to free His devotees from material existence and establish Bhakti Yoga or Krishna Consciousness.**

**Krishna is the source of all other incarnations and forms of God. He is the ultimate and end of all Truth and philosophical enquiry, the goal or end result of Vedanta. He is the all-attractive personality and source of all pleasure for which we are always hankering. He is the origin from which everything else manifests. He is the unlimited source of all power, wealth, fame, beauty, wisdom, and renunciation. Thus, no one is greater than Him. Since Krishna is the source of all living beings, He is also considered the Supreme Father and source of all worlds. He is shown with a blue or blackish complexion. This represents absolute, pure consciousness, which also is unconditional love. Krishna is the embodiment of love. He is also sat-chit-ananda vigraha, which means the form of eternal knowledge and bliss, for which we are all seeking. If we are expected to understand God, then who better to explain His qualities and characteristics than Himself? So in the Bhagavad-gita, Krishna provides the Self-revelatory truth about His position in His explanations to Arjuna. There are numerous verses in this regard, of which the following are but a few: "And when you have thus learned the truth, you will know that all living beings are but part of Me--and that they are in Me, and are Mine. (4.35) The sages, knowing Me to be the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attain peace from the pangs of material miseries. (5.29) Of all that is material and all that is spiritual in this world, know for certain that I am both its origin and dissolution." (7.6) "I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me.**

**The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts." (Bg.10:8) In the Srimad-Bhagavatam, Lord Krishna specifically explains that before, during, and after the creation, there is always Himself that exists. "Brahma it is I, the Personality of Godhead, who was existing before the creation, when there was nothing but Myself. Nor was there the material nature, the cause of this creation. That which you see now is also I, the Personality of Godhead, and after annihilation what remains will also be I, the Supreme Lord." (Bhag.2.9.33)**

The Brahma-samhita (5.40) explains how the Brahman is but Sri Krishna's physical brilliance: "I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord who is endowed with great power. The glowing effulgence of His transcendental form is the impersonal Brahman, which is absolute, complete and unlimited, and which displays the varieties of countless planets with their different opulences in millions and millions of universes." It is clear from the ancient Vedas that Lord Krishna's name, form, pastimes, etc., exist eternally in the spiritual dimension and are never affected by even a tinge of the material energy. Thus, He can appear as often and whenever He likes as He is, or in any form He chooses within this material manifestation. He is completely and totally spiritual for He is the Absolute Truth. As the Vedanta Sutras explain, the Absolute Truth is He from whom all else manifests. Thus, the Absolute Truth is the ultimate Person known as Sri Krishna.

Krishna consciousness means an awareness of and affection for the Supreme Person, Krishna. It is the culmination of all forms of yoga, knowledge, meditation, and spirituality. Krishna consciousness is the natural, original, and blissful condition of every individual soul. Only when we're covered by maya, illusion, do we forget who we are and who the Supreme Person is. We want happiness, but without Krishna consciousness, we don't know who we are or what we're supposed to do. We try to enjoy life through the body and mind, with hit-or-miss results. And we fear death since we don't know what happens afterwards. Einstein said energy can neither be created nor destroyed and he was right. The soul as an inconceivable unique individual and expansion of the Supreme; it is eternal, never was born and will never cease to be. The practices of Krishna consciousness, or bhakti-yoga, are meant to free us from the root cause of all anxiety by reawakening our normal, eternal spiritual happiness.

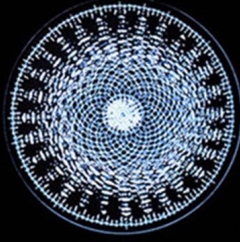
The process is simple—meditation on the name, form, activities, and qualities of Krishna. He's known by different names in different cultures, but all genuine spiritual traditions agree that there's only one Supreme God. The goal of bhakti-yoga is to recover our natural sense of connectedness (yoga) with that one supreme God by serving Him with love (bhakti). Krishna personally gave us the "Maha Mantra" and as inconceivable as it is, this mahamantra (maha=great/man=mind/tra=to liberate ones self from) is the original sound vibration of the living entity. Not only does it give direct perception of the "Self" (you're a soul, not a material body), it serves 33 billion demi Gods that serve Krishna in His form as Maha Vishnu. This is also the sound vibration of the Lord residing within your heart chakra as the "Paramatma" (Supersoul). This mantra is like a baby wailing for his mother, as the soul longs to be liberated from the pangs of material existence.

Bhakti Yoga is an incredibly personal experience because when we once rejected God with our desire to enjoy separately from Him- we abandoned our constitutional position as loving, eternal associates in the spiritual world where we have always originated. We were able to reject the supreme beloved as pure love is always unconditional. In our so-called independent state as separate individuals seeking our own realities in the multiverse we have incarnated into many different forms since time immemorial and thus we forget lifetime after lifetime the different energies that make up creation. As we perpetually move around within the material universe giving up one form for another- in the higher realms and lower realms being directed by the three modes of nature- trying to find our eternal pleasure, some of us with great fortune take birth on a star system where Krishna has performed a past time.

When Krishna appeared in India 5000 years ago, it was understood that the Gopis- were the topmost loving associates of Krishna because in a selfless mood they had no ulterior motive- they simply wanted to love Him. And curiously, this is why God appears on earth-like planets to attract the humankind to return to the natural state in Krishna Consciousness. Sometimes, Krishna would appear to them and more often than not He would disappear into the forests of Vrndarvan and the Gopis would feel enormous anxiety. Krishna, being situated within their hearts as the Paramatma, was tasting their love for Him.

According to the Vedic Scriptures, it takes some Souls infinite lifetimes to understand these Absolute truths in “full” realization:

### The three energies of the Absolute Truth



**Brahman**  
(external energy)

Krishna's impersonal material energy; ubiquitous, cosmic, unending creation fractal source of the multiverse



**Paramatma**  
(supersoul)

Krishna localized as One consciousness within every atom and the quantum observer within every single living entity as their eternal companion.



**Bhagavan**  
(internal energy)

The eternal, blissful, all knowing consciousness of a Souls relation to the Supreme Person; pure spiritual energy pervading in the unlimited, eternal realms.



According to the Srimad Bhagavatam Vedas, Lord Krishna has very distinct energies, which are everywhere. Although innumerable, His energies fall into three primary categories:

#### INTERNAL ENERGY

Krishna's internal energy expands as the spiritual world in all of its variety, including His ever-liberated associates there. The internal energy is eternal and full of knowledge & happiness. Presently beyond our perception, the spiritual world makes up most of reality.

#### EXTERNAL ENERGY

Krishna's external energy consists of all that is matter: the material world, the laws of material nature, material bodies, and so on. The external energy is temporary and full of ignorance and suffering. It is inert by nature and must be moved by spirit. The material world is a tiny fraction of God's creation.

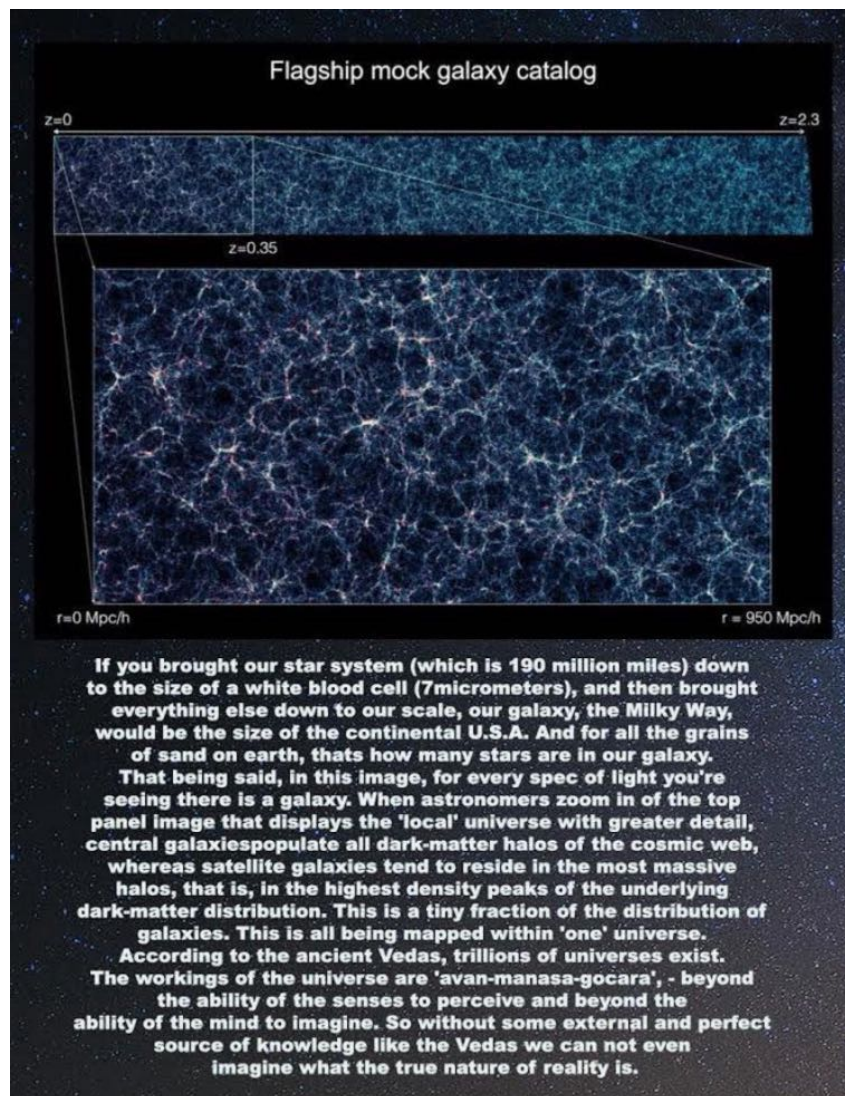
#### MARGINAL ENERGY

We finite spirit souls are expansions of Krishna's marginal energy. We can choose to live in the spiritual world or the material world. Or, to put it another way, we can be deluded by matter or illuminated by spirit.



# The creation of the Multiverse and the Material Energy

It is said in the ancient Srimad Bhagavatam that "God" has always existed and His beloved, innumerable, inconceivable expansions called jiva souls who are expressions of His divine love (we are qualitatively one but quantitatively different from Krishna), have as well. In the spiritual world, the jiva soul has no idea Krishna is "God" as there is no need for Krishna to be omnipotent in this realm; love and ecstasy is always manifesting in eternity; you were created just like a parent creates a child- to love and be loved. Love in its purest sense should always be unconditional and often times there is a chance of rejection. Some souls wanted to know how their beloved Krishna is the epicenter of "reality", some wanted to become their own "Gods" and some even wanted to experience a reality separate from Him (this is the original meaning of free-will). Without this choice, there is no question of loving God, since love is necessarily an act of free will. These souls, misusing their independence, desire to enjoy life without Krishna. Begrudgingly, Krishna assumed the form of Lord Vishnu to "dream" the material subatomic energy into "existence". Since all energy comes from the Supreme, the illusion of separateness (material energy) has to be dreamed



# EXPANSIONS OF KRISHNA

Krishna is Bhagavan (God), the source of all reality, but He has many other manifestations. He **exists** in various forms to accommodate the diverse sentiments of His devotees. Though Krishna is **love personified**, He also manifests Himself as Vishnu (Narayana), who is power and majesty personified. Vishnu further expands as the avatars (incarnations), such as Nrisimha, Vamana, Varaha, and Rama.



The supplementary Vedic texts afford considerable technical information about these expansions and incarnations. Krishna and His expansions are referred to as *svayam rupa*, *tad-ekatma*, and *aveshya*. Krishna's personal form (*svayam rupa*) embodies His original, self-existent nature.

From this form comes His secondary manifestation (*tad-ekatma*), which is identical in essence to His original form but may differ in appearance and potency. In addition, He may manifest Himself as an especially empowered living being (*aveshya*), such as Buddha or Jesus.

These three aspects of the Supreme expand further into subdivisions

known as *vilasa* and *svamsha*, which in turn can be divided into *vaibhava* and *prabhava* expansions. In other words, Gaudiya-Vaishnava texts outline the many aspects of God in great detail.

Despite God's many manifestations, the scriptures say that "God is one" (*eka brahma dvititya nasti*). This stands in contrast to the often-held view that Indian religion promulgates the worship of many gods. Given the intricacy of the tradition—especially regarding Krishna and His multitudinous expansions and incarnations—it becomes clear how such an oversimplified idea has arisen. However, a careful examination of the texts reveals a highly monotheistic tradition.



In addition to expanding into His various incarnations, Vishnu also expands into His unnumberable universes and then into every atom.

# THE SPIRITUAL SKY

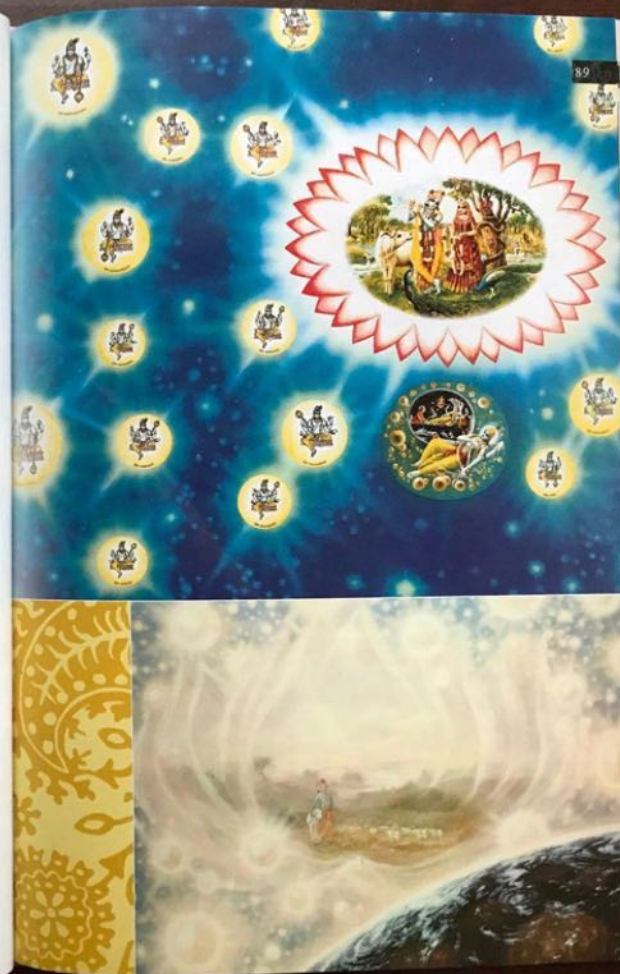
While in the previous pages we have briefly explained the fourteen divisions of material planetary systems, here we will explore the polydimensional universe known as the Spiritual Sky. Though the material cosmos is inconceivably vast, in comparison to the world of the spirit, it seems like little more than a **small cardboard box**.

Vaishnava texts describe Devī-dham, or the material world, as the lowest of all possible realms. Mahesh-dham, or the abode of Lord Shiva, is slightly higher than the multifarious universes that make up Devī-dham. The worlds encompassed by both Devī-dham and Mahesh-dham range from the grossly material, such as those in the lower and middle planetary systems (like Earth), up to those that are composed almost exclusively of subtle energy, such as mind, intelligence, and ego.

Beyond these lesser realms is Hari-dham, also known as Vaikuntha. This is the Spiritual Sky proper, where there are no material imperfections and life is eternal. And above the highest realm in Hari-dham is Goloka, Krishna's supreme abode. Details on why Goloka is the topmost spiritual abode can be found in both the *Brahma-samhita* and the writings of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan.

To elaborate, on the outer shell of the material cosmos is the Viraja River, beyond which one finds the freed souls, or those liberated from material existence. Further still is the Paravyoma, where infinite numbers of *anatars*, or partial manifestations of Krishna, reside. Here one can locate the planets of Narasimha, Vamana, and Rama, for example, and devotees of these particular manifestations of Godhead may go to these spiritual realms after death. Above all other realms is Krishna's supreme planet, Goloka, which can manifest as Dvaraka, where opulence reigns supreme; as Mathura, where opulence is mixed with sweetness; and, ultimately, as Vrindavan, where all lordly power is eclipsed by love.

Expansions of these three latter abodes exist on Earth, and their material counterparts are considered nondifferent from their corresponding spiritual regions.



into existence! Edgar Allen poe, the famous poet once said, "Is all that we see or seem but a dream within a dream?" And it is fascinating to note that it is only in the material energy that Krishna is omnipotent; as the soul leaves the spiritual world to find enjoyment as a separate individual, Krishna accompanies them as their eternal companion called the "paramatma" or super soul. As they search endlessly for material pleasure, souls inherit different levels of awareness due to various activities (karma) and they take on many different types of forms within the material creation; it is to fulfill—as well as to reform—this unnatural desire that Lord Krsna creates the material world. Walled within the shells of material universes, the independently-minded jivas are awarded bodies

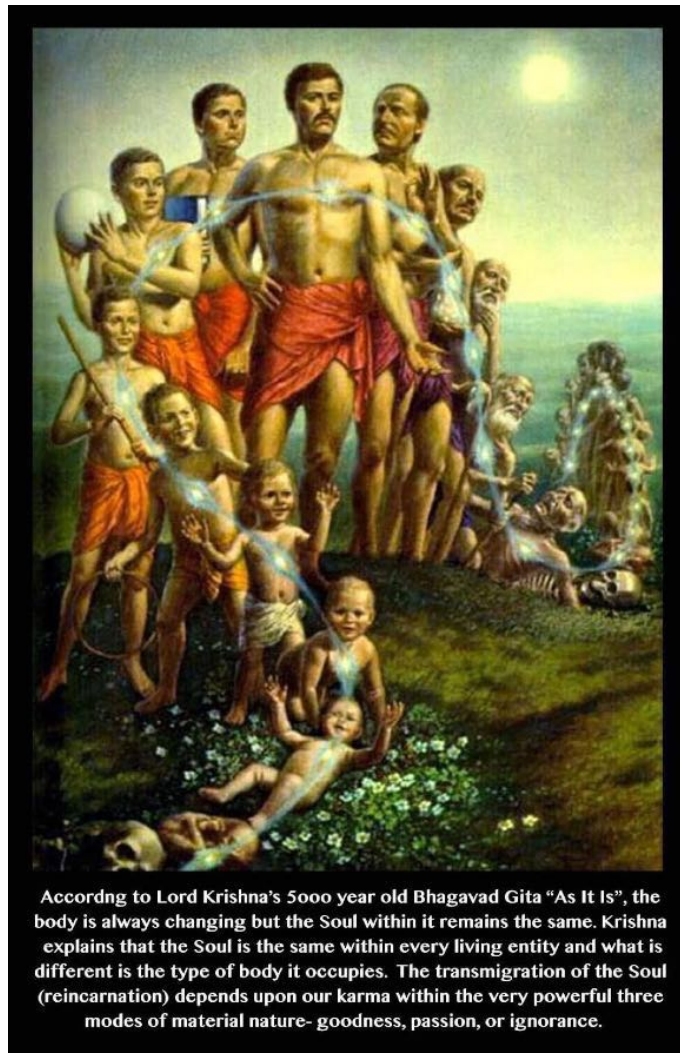
Lord Vishnu dreaming innumerable universes



Sri Krishna assumed the form of Lord Vishnu to manifest unlimited universes consisting of material nature. The ancient Vedas of India purport that 1/4 of Krishna's energy are the innumerable universes that exist; the remaining 3/4s constitute the spiritual realms consisting of eternity, unending bliss, and knowledge.

in any of the trillions of species and are allowed to forget their eternal life of bliss and knowledge. And curiously, the reason why we suffer in the material energy is because we know of a greater pleasure beyond our limited senses but the gross and subtle energies encase the soul into the illusion of a material form.

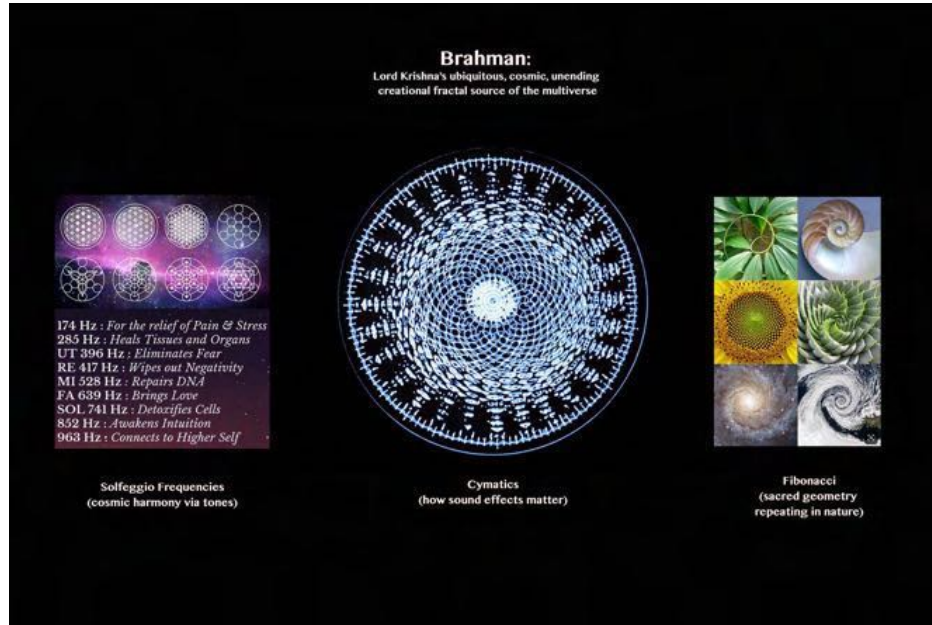
According to Bhagavad-gita, a soul is situated in each living body just as a driver is situated in an automobile. The driver is different from his car, although he directs its movements. Similarly, the jiva soul, although doggedly trying to enjoy a body made of the material elements, is separate from it. Each kind of body—from the microbe to the human being—affords the soul a particular kind of sense enjoyment, a different means for trying to satisfy his godless longings. Evolution, for example, was understood thousands of years ago to mean that the paramatma within all species is constantly making the souls within them happy and so many living entities desire so many unlimited things; when creatures desire, Krishna manifests it. Of all the billions and billions of life forms within the universe, it is understood that the human form of life is the most highly desired as it is in this form you can regain your eternal identity. There are infinite number of entities living in different dimensions within every universe and Krishna only appears on earth like planets- love versus fear -as this is frequency specific to bring forth the presence of an avatar of the Supreme. Krishna doesn't appear in the higher realms as inter-dimensional beings (Demigods) are too centered on enjoying His opulent energy and some are trying to lord it over the material creation and He doesn't go to the lower worlds below earth because there is too much suffering for souls



there to contemplate divinity. According to this ancient text, the trillions of universes that exist comprise 1/4 of Krishnas energy. The other 3/4s constitute the spiritual world made of Sat-Chit-Ananda (eternity/bliss/knowledge). Within each manifested universe a "Brahma" engineers and manages each universe and hence not one universe is the same. He is the first created entity within the universe.

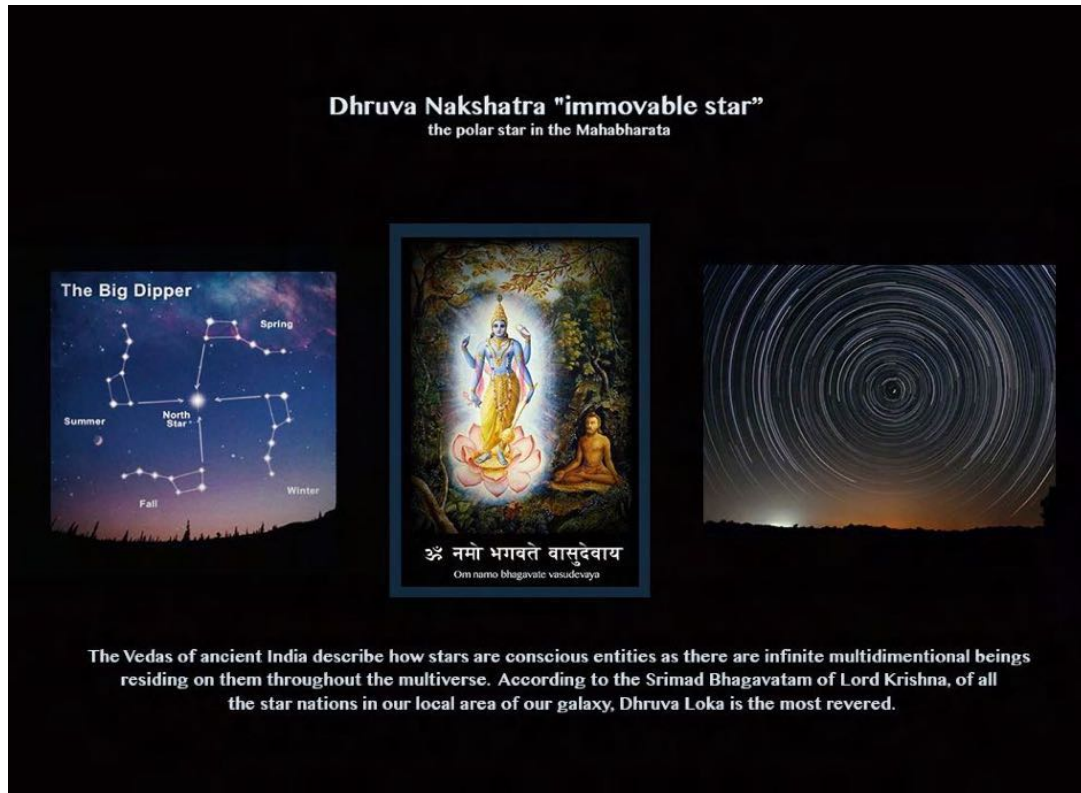
The Supreme Person Krishna, in His role as Vishnu, creates the material world. He then empowers a Brahma to act as the engineer and manager within each universe. Of all the demigods in charge of generating various species of life and managing universal affairs, Brahma is the chief. Brahma is also the original spiritual mentor of everyone within the universe. Krishna entrusts him with the sum total of all knowledge—the Vedas—by which everyone can attain success in life and ultimately return to the spiritual world. Brahma, in turn, sees to it that Vedic knowledge is spread everywhere by his representatives. This mission is known as the Brahma-sampradaya, or school of theistic thought originating from Brahma. The material world is a fraction of the whole creation. As far as you can see in the sky, you see this universe. But this is only one universe.

*There are unlimited universes clustered together, and that cluster is called the material world. Beyond that cluster is the spiritual sky. That fact is also mentioned in the Bhagavad-gita: paras tasmāt tu bhavo 'nyo 'vyakto 'vyaktat sanatanaḥ. The Lord says, "Beyond this material world is another nature, which is eternal." There is no history of its beginning or end. That is eternal: no beginning, no end. Vedic knowledge is the perfection of yoga and it is called sanatana-dharma, "eternal knowing," because no one can trace out when the Vedic philosophy began. When looking at these massive maps of the multidimensional universe, consider the laws of quantum science: energy precedes matter. "I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness," said Max Planck, the originator of Quantum theory.*



The elaborate Vedic description of creation can make even an atheist curious. The universe around us appears to be orderly and symmetrical. The planets rotate perfectly in their orbits. Our bodies possess complex circulatory, respiratory, and digestive systems. Even the atoms are highly

structured. All this suggests that the universe was created not by chance, but by an intelligent person. If human beings can create houses, skyscrapers, and many other structures, it is plausible that a person far more powerful than any human created the universe and everything in it.

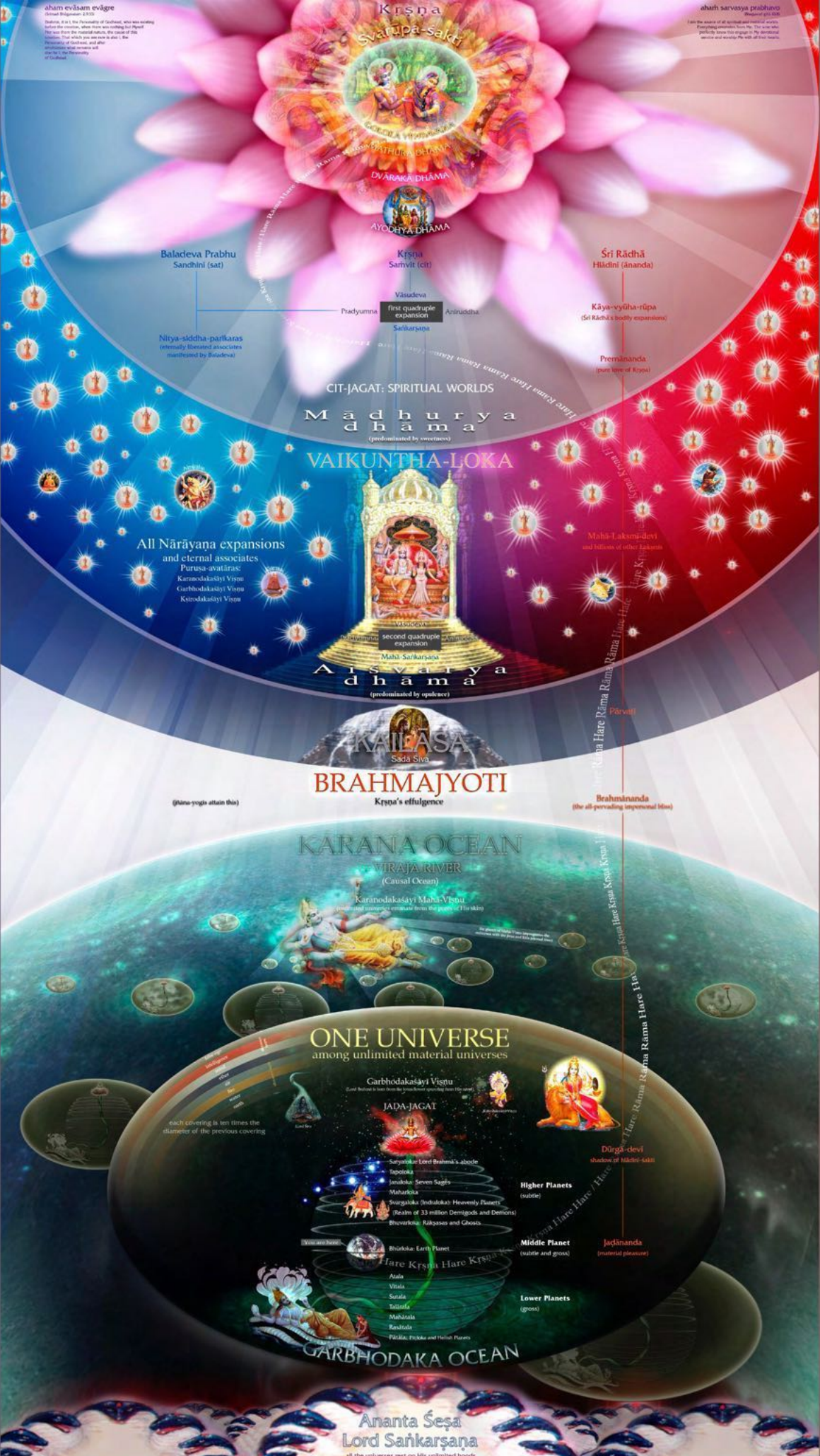


But although the design evident in every corner of the visible world strongly indicates the plan of an intelligent creator (God), by logic alone we cannot be absolutely certain that He exists. The origin of the cosmos is beyond our experience. We did not observe the creation of the universe, and for all we know it could have happened in any number of ways that we have not considered or are unable to consider. On the platform of logic, therefore, the debate over whether or not there is a Supreme Being, a Creator, must always end in stalemate.

The Vedic literature confirms that we cannot conclusively understand the Supreme Being by logic alone. The Bhagavad-gita declares that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, who is the creator of both this universe and the spiritual world beyond it, can be understood only by His mercy, when He is pleased to reveal Himself to His faithful devotees. Although our logic and mental gymnastics cannot rise to embrace the Lord, He can by His omnipotence pierce through the uncertainty and ignorance of His faithful servants and show Himself to them.

While confirming the fallibility of human reasoning, however, the Vedas do not recommend that we abandon reason. If we lack a deep philosophical understanding of God, our faith in Him tends toward sentiment and fanaticism and easily falls prey to atheistic arguments. The Vedic literature therefore includes all manner of logical arguments—including the argument from design—indicating that the universe is the work of a supremely powerful person. But the Vedic literature goes further as well, describing in detail the stages of creation, the age and dimensions of the universe, the purpose of the creation, and the origin of the material elements. The Vedic literature, in other words, not only proclaims “God created” but also tells us how and *why* He created.

Brahma-saṁhita Verse 1  
Brahma-saṁhita Verse 6  
Brahma-saṁhita Verse 12  
Brahma-saṁhita Verse 13  
Brahma-saṁhita Verse 14  
Brahma-saṁhita Verse 15  
Brahma-saṁhita Verse 20  
Brahma-saṁhita Verse 21  
Brahma-saṁhita Verse 22  
Brahma-saṁhita Verse 26



Srī Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, is the embodiment of eternity, knowledge and bliss. He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the controller of all lesser controllers, and the source of all incarnations. He has no beginning or origin, though He is the source of everything and the cause of all causes.

Thus it is seen that Bhagavān Gokuleśvara is the self-effulgent worshipable personality, the Supreme Absolute Truth and the embodiment of eternal bliss. He is absorbed in amorous pastimes with His eternal potency in His own eternal abode, and He has no direct connection with the dull material nature.

This Mahā-Viṣṇu is celebrated within the world of māyā by the name "Nārāyaṇa." The water of the Causal Ocean has emanated from this eternal puruṣa. In Bhagavān, the supreme predominator, possessed of thousands of plenary portions, although He is Himself a plenary portion of the Śaṅkarṣaṇa of Parayamā. The eternal puruṣa takes shelter of mystic slumber and lies down in the vast waters of Viṣṇu.

The transcendental seeds of Śaṅkarṣaṇa emerge in the form of countless golden eggs from the pores of the skin of Mahā-Viṣṇu as He reclines in the Causal Ocean. All those eggs remain covered by the great material elements.

This Mahā-Viṣṇu entered into every individual universe as His individual plenary portions, each of which is complete with all His mystic opulences. In other words, within each universe Mahā-Viṣṇu assumes the form of the universal soul with thousands upon thousands of heads.

When Garbhodakāsya Viṣṇu desired to create, from His navel emerged a golden lotus flower, from which the creator, Brahmā, appeared. Complete with its stem, this wonderful golden lotus flower is the residence of Brahmā and is known as Brahmāloka or Satyaloka.

When Śrī Bhagavān mixed together the individual essential realities, He manifested unlimited numbers of material universes. After that He personally entered into His hidden abode, the innermost region of each universe. At that time, all the living entities woke up from the sleeping condition in which they had passed the duration of the cosmic dissolution.

The living entities are eternal, and they have an eternal relationship with Bhagavān that extends throughout time, with neither beginning nor end. By constitution they are intrinsically His superior potency.

The lotus flower that emerged from the area of Śrī Viṣṇu's navel contained the collective bodily conception of all living entities. The four-headed Brahmā, who is the knower of the four Vedas, was manifested from that lotus.

After hearing this divine message, Brahmā engaged in avasthā for a very long time in order to please Govindā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Svātipā, who is situated in Cokkā Vindāvana. Brahmā's meditation was as follows: "In that land, which is made of transcendental desire-f fulfilling gems, there is a lotus with thousands of petals and millions of filaments. In the center or pericarp there is a great sitting-place or throne, upon which is seated Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the eternal form of effulgent cognizance and bliss. With His lotus lip He is playing the flute, whose sound contains all the Vedic hymns, and He is surrounded by giggles engaged in pleasure-pastimes with Him. He is attended by His own plenary portions who are pastime expansions, and who are engaged in offering praise to Him. From outside Śrī Kṛṣṇa's abode, māyā, who takes the form of the three material modes of ignorance, passion and goodness, is also worshipping Him."





To begin with, the Vedic literature asserts that the Supreme Lord is not obliged to participate directly in the creative work. While theists sometimes conceive of God as an extremely hardworking old man, who has little time off from His duties as creator, the Vedic literature explains that God creates by His desire alone, without having to exert Himself in the least. Since He possesses unlimited power and wealth, He can, like any wealthy person, get others to do the work for Him. If a wealthy financier wants to construct an office building, he doesn't do everything himself. He conceives a general plan or chooses a building site, then hires lawyers, architects, engineers, contractors, and so on to execute His will. The financier doesn't have to dig the foundation, pour the cement, or lay the bricks.



Like the wealthy financier, the Supreme Lord is aloof from the work of creation, but just how He delegates the creative duties, and to whom, is unique. Unlike ordinary persons, Krishna can expand Himself into innumerable forms, known as plenary expansions, who are equal to Him in power and opulence. These expansions are all the same Personality of Godhead, Krishna Himself, and yet at the same time They are individuals with independent thoughts and actions. Brahma-samhita gives the analogy that just as one candle can light many other candles, each with the same power to illuminate, so Krishna, the original Personality of Godhead, can expand Himself into innumerable plenary forms and still maintain His identity as the supreme, original person.

A person's appearance on millions of television screens at once partially illustrates Krishna's power to expand, the difference being that the television expansions are only images of the original person and must move and speak as that person does, whereas Krishna's expansions, although non-different from Him, can act as They please. They are not mere images, but complete individuals.

While the wealthy financier must employ others to fulfill his desires, Krishna creates the universe through these individual expansions of His own self. Further elucidating this transcendental

phenomenon, the Svetashvatara Upanishad explains that to achieve our goals, we rely on three attributes, knowledge (jnana), strength (bala), and activity (kriya). To construct a large building, for example, the architects and engineers need sufficient knowledge of the building sciences, the construction company must have sufficient strength in the form of manpower and machines, and everyone has to engage in various activities. The Supreme Lord, however, possesses within Himself



all knowledge, all strength, and all potential to act and can therefore accomplish anything He wants. By investing these powers in His various expansions. Krishna effortlessly executes the business of creation. The financier works through his money, while Krishna works through His personal expansions and energies.

Krishna's ability to expand Himself is inconceivable—beyond the range of ordinary logic. But it is inconceivable only in that we human beings cannot do it and have not seen anyone else do it. Otherwise, accepting that God is all-powerful, nothing He does is inconceivable. Rather, His apparently inconceivable attributes serve as testimony to His omnipotence. Therefore the Vedic literature, by describing Krishna's attributes in detail, does not preclude a logical approach to understanding the Supreme Lord, but rather draws our use of logic onto a higher, transcendental platform.

Krishna's first expansion for the creation is Maha- Vishnu, who begins by manifesting the material elements from His transcendental body. Modern scientists will object to the mention of a creator. The material energy is eternal, they say, so why bring in God? But the Vedic literatures respond that Maha-Vishnu is also eternal and that the material elements are His eternal energy. God and His energy are like the sun and the sunshine, which exist simultaneously, although one is the origin of the other. Both God and the material energy are eternal, and yet God is the source of the material energy.



*viṣṇoḥ tu trīṇi rūpāni puruṣakhyāny atho viduḥ  
ekantu mahataḥ sraṣṭr dvītyaṁ tv anḍa-saṁsthītam  
trītyaṁ sarvabhūta-sthāni idāni jātva vimucyate*

"For material creation, Lord Kṛṣṇa's plenary expansion assumes three Viṣṇus. The first one, Mahā-Viṣṇu, creates the total material energy, known as *mahat-tattva*. The second, Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, enters into all the universes to create diversities in each of them. The third, Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, is diffused as the all-pervading Supersoul in all the universes and is known as Paramātmā, who is present even within the atoms. Anyone who knows these three Viṣṇus can be liberated from material entanglement.\*

This material world is a temporary manifestation of one of the energies of the Lord. All the activities of the material world are directed by these three Viṣṇu expansions of Lord Kṛṣṇa. These *Puruṣas* are called incarnations. Generally one who does not know the science of God (Kṛṣṇa) assumes that this material world is for the enjoyment of the living entities and that the living entities are the causes (*Puruṣas*), controllers and enjoyers of the material energy. According to *Bhagavad-gītā* this atheistic conclusion is false. In the verse under discussion it is stated that Kṛṣṇa is the original cause of the material manifestation. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* also confirms this. The ingredients of the material manifestation are separated energies of the Lord. Even the *brahmajyoti*, which is the ultimate goal of the impersonalists, is a spiritual energy manifested in the spiritual sky. There are no spiritual diversities in *brahmajyoti* as there are in the Vaikuṅṭhalokas, and the impersonalist accepts this *brahmajyoti* as the ultimate eternal goal. The Paramātmā manifestation is also a temporary all-pervasive aspect of the Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. The Paramātmā manifestation is not eternal in the spiritual world. Therefore the factual Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa. He is the complete energetic person, and He possesses different separated and internal energies.

In the material energy, the principal manifestations are eight, as above mentioned. Out of these, the first five manifestations, namely earth, water, fire, air and sky, are called the five gigantic creations or the gross creations, within which the five sense objects are included. They are the manifestations of physical sound, touch, form, taste and smell. Material science comprises these ten items and nothing more. But the other three items, namely mind, intelligence and false ego, are neglected by the materialists. Philosophers who deal with mental activities are also not perfect in knowledge because they do not know the ultimate source, Kṛṣṇa. The false ego-"I am," and "It is mine," which constitute the basic principle of material existence-includes ten sense organs for material activities. Intelligence refers to the total material creation, called the *mahat-tattva*. Therefore from the eight separated energies of the Lord are manifest the twenty-four elements of the material world, which are the subject matter of *sāṅkhya* atheistic philosophy; they are originally offshoots from Kṛṣṇa's energies and are separated from Him, but atheistic *sāṅkhya* philosophers with a poor fund of knowledge do not know Kṛṣṇa as the cause of all causes. The subject matter for discussion in the *sāṅkhya* philosophy is only the manifestation of the external energy of Kṛṣṇa, as it is described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

We might also wonder how Maha-Vishnu could perform the gigantic act of creating all the material elements without becoming totally depleted, dispersing Himself into the elemental creation. Materially speaking, when we take something from a particular source, we gradually exhaust that source. Withdraw money from your bank account, and the balance goes down. Pour water from a glass, and the glass empties. Take milk from a cow, and the cow gradually dries up—unless she can replenish her supply from a pasture or feed bin. Since God is by definition the source of everything, there is nothing outside of Him to replenish Him. So what happens to Maha-Vishnu when He creates the material elements from Himself?

The Ishopanishad says that nothing happens to Him at all. Maha-Vishnu is unaffected and unchanged, even while supplying an unlimited quantity of elements. How could this be? Because depletion and exhaustion are properties of matter. Maha-Vishnu, however, is not matter, but pure spirit, and therefore He has no material properties. He produces the complete cosmic manifestation from His own form, yet remains perfect and complete.

As Krishna expands into Maha-Vishnu without changing His form or identity, so Maha-Vishnu creates the material elements, yet remains complete in Himself.

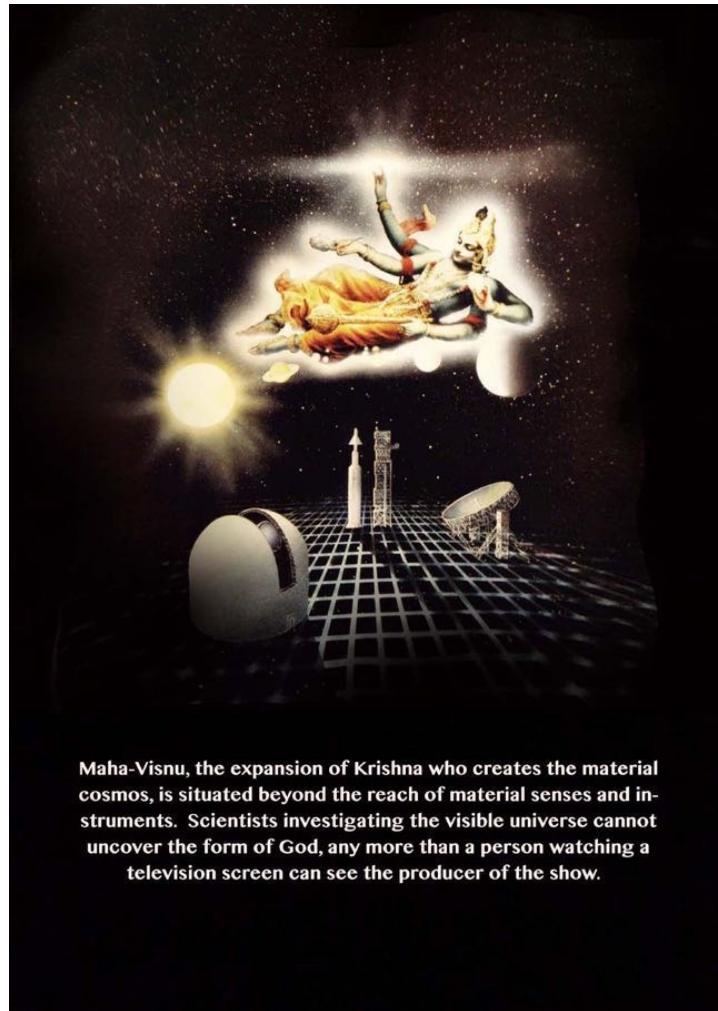
The Srimad-Bhagavatam informs us that from the material elements Maha-Vishnu produces not one, but innumerable universes, or, rather, universal shells. These gigantic shells are hollow spheres. The lower half is filled with water, and the upper half is—at least initially—empty. The Bhagavatam also states that our particular universe is the smallest of all the universes, and yet the space inside the shell measures four billion miles in diameter, while the shell itself is billions of miles thick.

Maha-Vishnu expands His personality and enters each universe as Garbhodakasayi Vishnu. Garbhodakasayi Vishnu then generates Brahma, the first living entity in the universe.

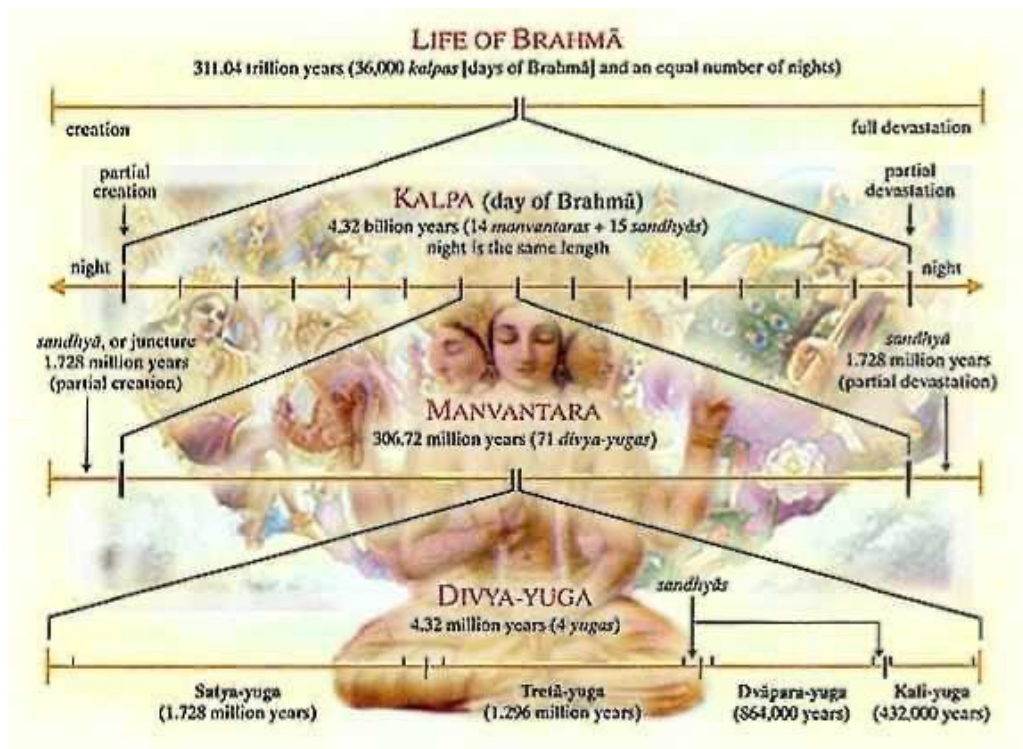
Although Lord Brahma is an eternal, individual person, he is not a plenary expansion of the Lord. He, like you and me, is a jiva-tattva expansion, in quality equal with Krishna but quantitatively minute. The jiva-tattva expansions are part and parcel of Krishna, and as such their eternal, blissful function is to render loving service to Him.

In fact, they have no other function, just as a finger has no other function than to render service to the entire body. When the jiva souls are separated from the eternal service of Lord Krishna, they lose their eternal blissful nature, just as a finger loses its very life when severed from the body.

Before coming to the material creation, the jiva souls live in the eternal spiritual world, which lies beyond the material universes. There they act in their relationships as servants, friends, and associates of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna. Since these relationships with Krishna are based solely on love, however, the jiva souls have a minute degree of independence: they can choose to remain subordinate to the all-powerful Supreme Person, or they can desire to neglect His service and become independent lords themselves. Without this choice, this freedom to serve or not to serve, there is no question of loving God, since love is necessarily an act of free will. A minority of jiva souls, misusing their independence, desire to enjoy life without Krishna.



Maha-Visnu, the expansion of Krishna who creates the material cosmos, is situated beyond the reach of material senses and instruments. Scientists investigating the visible universe cannot uncover the form of God, any more than a person watching a television screen can see the producer of the show.



It is to fulfill—as well as to reform—this unnatural desire of a relatively small number of jivas that Lord Krishna creates the material world. Walled within the shells of material universes, the independently-minded jivas are awarded bodies in any of the millions of species and are allowed to forget their eternal life of bliss and knowledge with Krishna. According to Bhagavad-gita, a jiva soul is situated in each living body just as a driver is situated in an automobile. The driver is different from his car, although he directs its movements. Similarly, the jiva soul, although doggedly trying to enjoy a body made of the material elements, is separate from it. Each kind of body—from the microbe to the human being—affords the jiva a particular kind of sense enjoyment, a different means for trying to satisfy his godless longings.

Within each of the innumerable universes, Garbhodakasayi Vishnu expands as Kshirodakashayi Vishnu, who then expands Himself unlimitedly to enter the hearts of all the living entities in His particular universe. This expansion of Krishna is known as Paramatma, the Supersoul, who accompanies each jiva soul in his search for material pleasure. In the Gita, Lord Krishna says that, as the Supersoul. He directs the jivas' search by supplying them with memory, knowledge, and forgetfulness. At death, the jiva soul is taken from his present body and prepared for his next birth in one of the infinite number of species. All this is arranged by the Lord in the heart. The human body is just suitable for austerity, self-realization, and reawakening Krishna consciousness, but if a human being acts and desires like an animal, he is allowed, in his next life, to enjoy in the body of an animal.

In marked contrast to the jiva soul, the Supersoul, although situated within the material body, is never controlled by a desire to enjoy matter. Krishna and His expansions are the controllers of the material energy, whereas the jiva, as long as he desires to forget Krishna, is controlled by the same energy. In the Upanishads the jiva soul and the Supersoul are compared to two birds sitting in the same tree of the body. One Bird (the jiva) tries to enjoy the fruits on the tree—material pleasures—forgetting the other bird (the Supersoul), who is patiently watching. The Supersoul observes and directs the jiva's activities, unaffected by material desire. Only the jiva souls assume material bodies and try to enjoy matter.

We all have experienced, however, that this material world is not a place of unadulterated enjoyment. In fact, it is sometimes argued that even if there is a God. He could not be good or just. since His creation is filled with disease, old age, death, and many other miseries. Krishna, however, creates the material world not just for our independent sense enjoyment, but also to remind us that enjoyment outside of His service is illusory. When a man goes mad, forgetting his friends, relatives, and his own self, whatever enjoyment he experiences in that maddened state is worthless. In the same way, the jiva souls have forgotten their eternal relationship with their dearest friend, Krishna. Until they reestablish that relationship, they will be able to realize but a small fraction of their potential for happiness, even if they acquire wealth, fame, beauty, education, and other temporary material advantages. The material desires are designed to remind the jiva that the material creation is foreign to him, and thus they evince God's concern for our true welfare. The jiva who comes to his senses and practices Krishna consciousness can very quickly return to the spiritual world.

Lord Brahma, the first jiva soul in each universe, is in charge of constructing all the planets and planetary systems. He is also in charge of creating the innumerable species of life, including aquatics, insects, plants, birds, animals, and human beings. Inspired and empowered by Garbhodakashayi Vishnu, Brahma assembles the creation using the material elements. Starting from just above the waters of the ocean that fills half the universe and extending up to his own



*Oil paintings illustrating the unending lilas of the spiritual abode of Lord Krishna. Every Soul has access to Krishna in the spiritual world; in a mirrored way, the material energy or multiverse, Krishna is the superposition theory of quantum physics which explains an object being in multiple states at 'once' until it is 'observed'.*



planet in the topmost reaches of the dome of universal space, Brahma constructs fourteen planetary systems, one above the other. The earth planet is in the seventh of those fourteen planetary systems.

Brahma doesn't create his own materials—the elements—and even in manipulating them he is dependent on Lord Vishnu for guidance and inspiration. Nor does Brahma create the life which animates each body, for life is not the result of a combination of the material elements. Brahma only assists in creating the bodily vehicles, while the life, the eternal jiva souls, is supplied by the Supreme Lord.

Of the many differences between this short description of Brahma's creation and currently popular scientific descriptions, two are especially important. The first is that the Vedic literature portrays the original creature in each universe as highly intelligent, more so than even the greatest modern scientist. Brahma's intelligence, and his resultant creative accomplishments, are surpassed only by Lord Vishnu Himself. Modern scientists, on the other hand, assert that the original creature in the universe was a microbe, and that the forefathers of modern man were apes and cave-dwellers.

The second contrast is that the Vedic literature asserts that all species were produced more or less simultaneously at the beginning of the creation, while popular evolutionary theory holds that the species have gradually evolved. According to the evolutionists, aquatics evolved into land animals and land animals evolved—only a relatively short time ago—into human beings.

Evolutionists acknowledge, however, that one of the many flaws in their theories is that there is still—more than a century after Darwin's debut—no fossil record showing one species evolving from





another. For dedicated Darwinists this lack of evidence is only an impetus to revamp their theories. But for the dedicated devotee of Krishna it is a confirmation of the Vedic version that all species of life, including the civilized human beings, have existed since the dawn of creation.

In this connection it is also interesting to note the Vedic calculations of the age of the universe. The Vedic literature states that Lord Brahma lives for one breath of Maha-Vishnu. When Maha-Vishnu exhales, the material elements and universes emanate from Him, and when He inhales, the universes are destroyed and merge back into His body. Thus the universes and their respective Brahmas are created and destroyed with every breath of Maha-Vishnu. The entire cycle—one breath of Maha-Vishnu, or one lifetime of Brahma—takes 310 trillion solar years.

According to Srimad-Bhagavatam, Brahma's life is half over at present, which means that this universe has existed, along with all the species, for 155 trillion years. In the Bhagavatam, the context-sensitive approach was rendered particularly appropriate by the conviction that reality, in the ultimate issue, is *avak-manasam*, or beyond the reach of the mundane mind or words. This implies that a literal, one-to-one model of reality is unattainable, and so one may as well pack as much meaning as possible into a necessarily incomplete description of the universe. The cosmology of the Bhagavata Purana is a sophisticated system of thought, with multiple layers of meaning, both physical and metaphysical. It combines practical understanding of astronomy with spiritual conceptions to produce a meaningful picture of the universe and reality.



# Time

A discussion of the broad concept of time found in the Vaishnava tradition naturally begins with a description of the four yugas. However, the Vaishnava concept of time goes far beyond the basic yuga cycle. The solar calendar divides the year into six seasons (determined astronomically): *vasanta* (spring), *grishma* (hot season), *varsha* (rainy season), *sharad* (autumn), *hemanta* (winter), and *shishira* (cool season). Further, the 24-hour solar day is divided into 30 *muhurtas* (48 minutes each). A *muhurta* is again divided into 2 *ghatis* (of 24 minutes each). Each *ghati* is broken down into 30 *kalas* (of 48 seconds each). Each *kala* is divided into 2 *palas* (of 24 seconds each), and each *pala* into 6 *pranas* (of 4 seconds each). Each *prana* is divided into 10 *vipalas* (of 0.4 seconds each), and each *vipala* into 60 *prativipalas* (0.00666 seconds each). In this way, time is calculated down to the most minute measurements.

**T**heologically, the Vedic literature discusses time as a potency of God. It is measured in terms of the movements of atomic particles and is identified with Krishna Himself, or with His all-pervading impersonal aspect. This atomic particle (called *anu*) is among the fundamental building blocks of material nature. The *Bhagavatam* elaborates, explaining how atoms take up material space and are consequently subject to time (since time is measured in terms of motion in space). Because both space and time are material, the *Bhagavatam* connects them to *maya*, the illusion. In other words, all changes that result from the vicissitudes of time

are temporary, like a dream. Only Krishna and His *avatars*, belonging to the spiritual domain, are beyond the dictates of time.

However, in some ways time does appear to exist in the spiritual realm. Krishna, in His pastimes, rises in the morning, milks the cows, then cats breakfast, goes to the forest with His friends and the cows, plays all day, and in the evening returns to Vrindavan village, etc. It must be noted, though, that all these pastimes exist simultaneously. Each moment is eternally present. Since this constitutes an unathomable concept of time, the Vedic literature concludes that, in the spiritual realm, time (as we know it) is conspicuous by its absence.



THE HIDDEN GLORY OF INDIA



Although the spiritual world is free from time as we know it, all beings in the material world are subject to time and thus must suffer repeated birth and death. They appear to go through six phases of life: birth, growth, persistence (staying for some time), production of by-products, dwindling, and, finally, death.



# THE FOUR AGES

In contrast to the Western concept of linear time, the sacred texts of India view reality from the perspective of cycles called *yugas*. Our current cycle of history is seen as one of many stages that recur eternally. Ages turn into new ages, and then back again. Nature shows hints of this throughout life: the seasons repeat themselves, the days of the week recur, day turns into night and then day again.

**U**ndian seers take this as an indicator of what happens in all aspects of reality: life does not end with death; rather, the soul is reborn in a new body. In this way, the soul lives through a cycle of lives, much as the various ages associated with cosmic time repeat themselves.

History moves in a succession of great cycles called *divya-yugas*. The Vedic texts give minute details on the length of these cycles. Each *divya-yuga* is composed of four ages progressively declining in length: Satya-yuga (sometimes Krita-yuga), which lasts 1,728,000 years; Treta-yuga, which lasts 1,296,000 years; Dvapara-yuga, which lasts 864,000 years; and Kali-yuga, our current age, which lasts 432,000 years. These four periods are called the golden, silver, copper, and iron ages, respectively.

We are now more than 5,000 years into Kali-yuga. After that, in roughly 472,000 years, there will be a partial destruction of the universe, and then a new Satya-yuga will dawn. According to the texts, as the

ages decline in length from Satya- to Kali-yuga, piety and other virtues also diminish in a commensurate way.

The four *yugas* altogether (and thus one *divya-yuga*) last 4,520,000 human years. One thousand such cycles (4.52 billion years) make up merely one day in the life of Brahma. Each day is followed by a night of equal length. During the night, Brahma sleeps and most planets are submerged in waters of devastation. At the end of the night, Brahma awakens and another day of one thousand cycles commences. Three hundred and sixty of these days and nights make up one of Brahma's years; Brahma lives one hundred such years.

### Notes

1. Regarding methods of worship in each of the ages: In Satya-yuga one attained the Absolute through deep meditation; in Treta-yuga, through opulent sacrifices; in Dvapara-yuga, through *devty* (cosmic) worship; and in Kali, through chanting the holy name of the Lord.

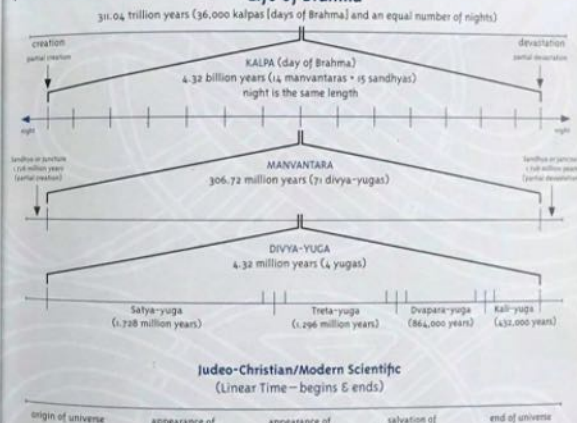


THE HIDDEN GLORY OF INDIA



Lord Brahma lives for the duration of the universe, which is repeatedly created and destroyed. Every time the universe is created, a new Brahma is born. Both full and partial devastations of the universe occur at regular intervals. Brahma's present day began 2.3 billion years ago.

### Life of Brahma



# THE DEMIGODS SERVANTS OF KRISHNA

Much of the Hindu world recognizes 33 million gods (*devas*). Vaishnavas refer to them as demigods. The prefix "demi," from the Latin *dimidius*, or "half," indicates that these gods are "half-gods" and not the complete Personality of Godhead. In other words, they are not God but highly empowered beings who are subservient to God. Consequently, worship of the demigods is inappropriate; worship is reserved for the Supreme alone.

It is for this reason that Krishna says, "Those who are devotees of other gods (demigods) and worship them with faith actually worship only Me, O son of Kunti, but they do so without complete understanding." (*Bhagavad-gita* 9:23) The exact words Krishna uses are *avidhi-purakam*—"in an inappropriate, unauthorized way." He further states, "Men in this world desire success in fruitive activities, and therefore they worship the demigods..." (*Bhagavad-gita* 4:12) In other words, demigod worship is materially motivated. Vaishnava commentators have asserted that material gain can never truly satisfy man, because he is a spiritual being. They further state that if one prays to demigods, one should do so for spiritual reasons. For instance, Ganesh, who is the remover of obstacles, can be asked to remove obstacles on the path to God realization. However, Vaishnava tradition stresses that even this is

unnecessary, because all benedictions ultimately come from Krishna.



## THE STATUS OF THE DEMIGODS ACCORDING TO BRAHMA-SAMHITA

To highlight Krishna's supremacy and to indicate the secondary status of the demigods, the demigod Brahma composed the treatise known as *Brahma-samhita*. The Gaudiya saint Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur has written in his commentary to this great work:

"The *Brahma-samhita* has refuted Panchopasana [Hinduism's traditional worship of five gods: Vishnu, Surya, Ganesh, Durga, and Shiva].... The worship of Vishnu as found in Panchopasana does not please Vishnu; it is heterodox and highly improper.... The worship of Vishnu as one of the five deities makes His highest dignity, which is without any equal, similar to that of the other deities, and [in that system] His Lordship is counted as one of several deities, which is a great spiritual offense.... It is the eternal duty of all *jivas* [living beings] to serve [only] Krishna, the Lord of all Lords. All other deities are His servitors. Their function is only to carry out Govinda's [Krishna's] commands. They will never acquire liberation who conceive of the deities as the different names and bodies of Vishnu instead of knowing them as His servitors. Five *shlokas* of the *Brahma-samhita* have described the natures of the five deities.... (1) 'I (G.e., Brahma) adore the primeval Lord Govinda, in pursuance of whose order the Sun-god, the king of the planets and the eye of this world, performs his

journey mounting the wheel of time.' (2) 'I adore the primeval Lord Govinda, whose lotus-like feet are always held by Ganesh on his head in order to obtain power for his function of destroying all the obstacles of the three worlds.' (3) 'I adore the primeval Lord Govinda, in accordance with whose will Durga, His external potency, conducts her function as the creating, preserving, and destroying agent of the world.' (4) 'I adore the primeval Lord Govinda, who transforms Himself as Shambhu [Shiva] for performing the work of destruction, just as milk is transformed into curd, which is neither the same as, nor different from, milk.' (5) 'I adore the primeval Lord Govinda, who manifests Himself as Vishnu in the same manner as one burning candle communicates its light to another candle which, though existing separately, is of the same quality as the first.'"

### Notes

1. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, 1934, "Dasi Chaitanya" Teachings, 309-311. Madras: Sri Sri Gaudiya Math.

# Vedic COSMOLOGY

Cosmology refers to the study of the physical universe, including its meaning and structure. One might wonder, therefore, why Vaishnava texts, which focus on the soul and its relation to God, have anything to say about this subject. The external universe, after all, is clearly a material phenomenon as opposed to a spiritual one. And yet one who understands Vaishnavism knows that it is concerned not just with spiritual subjects as such but also with the spiritual dimension of all things material. Vaishnavas are thus keen to understand and use this universe and its accoutrements in the service of the Divine. In this spirit, the Vedic literature contains detailed analyses of the material universes and how living in one or another planetary system might be advantageous or disadvantageous in one's pursuit of God.

Amazingly, these ancient texts offer details of the universe still unknown in modern studies of the subject. One may accept or reject this information, but its sheer volume makes one wonder: Where did the ancients get these elaborate details, and why does their knowledge of cosmology seem so consistent and thorough?

The most important texts on Vedic cosmology may well be the *Bhagavatam* and the *Vishnu Purana*, but the subject is explained in all its complexity in the *Surya-siddhanta*, a mystical text revealed by a demigod from the sun almost two

million years ago. Basically, the cosmology found therein divides material existence into innumerable universes, each one contained within a spherical shell composed of layers of elemental matter. Each universe contains fourteen planetary systems, from higher to lower. Interestingly, Vedic cosmology is geocentric, locating the Earth and similar planets midway on the axis of these planetary systems. It is not, however, ethnocentric, for Mount Meru, recognized in this system as the center of the universe, is found far from the Indian subcontinent. It should be noted, though, that in a

mystical sense Vrindavan is considered the center of the universe.

Since earthly planets are considered equidistant from both extremes of the cosmos, the earthly realm is considered an ideal middle ground for working out one's karma, between the heavenly delights of the upper spheres and the torturous pain of the lower planets. Great demigods from the higher dimensions thus pray for birth on earth, for here they can avoid sensuality long enough to engage in the service of the Lord; tormented beings from the lower planets also hope for birth in the earthly region, for here they can avoid pain long enough to pursue higher goals.

The seven netherworlds are each named in the Vedic texts, and what the unfortunates who live there undergo is described in graphic detail. The earthly middle is made up of Svarloka, Bhurvarloka, and Bhurloka (Earth). From here one may graduate to the four higher planetary systems, known as Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, and Satyaloka, the highest planets of the demigods—if one acts piously and accrues good karma. Otherwise, one falls back down to the lower planets.

Vedic texts describe the prodigious duration of life and day-to-day interests of beings on the upper planets, sparing no details. Again, it is astounding that these ancient texts present such extremely detailed knowledge about a subject that would appear to be beyond its scope. For more on this subject, see *Mysteries of the Sacred Universe*, by Richard L. Thompson (Alachua, Florida: Govardhana Hill Publishing, 1999).

## A Passage to Matter

Vedic texts describe that when one first incarnates in the material world, one may be born as Brahma, a primary being in one of the highest material planets. Because the soul's Brahma incarnation is initially pure, having no experience of the material world, its body is not grossly material. Rather, it is comprised of subtle matter only—it is made of pure intelligence. But then, due to association with the irrational passions borne of having a nonspiritual body, one falls to the lowest species, known as the Indragopa, a single-celled organism on a lower planet. From there, one gradually evolves through the 8,400,000 species of life, and eventually takes birth on an earthly planet. From here, again, one can go up, or go down.



# AVATARS of Vishnu

As Krishna expands into His Vishnu forms, He also expands into unlimited kinds of avatars, each descending to accomplish a different mission. Of the many incarnations, ten figure most prominently in various texts.

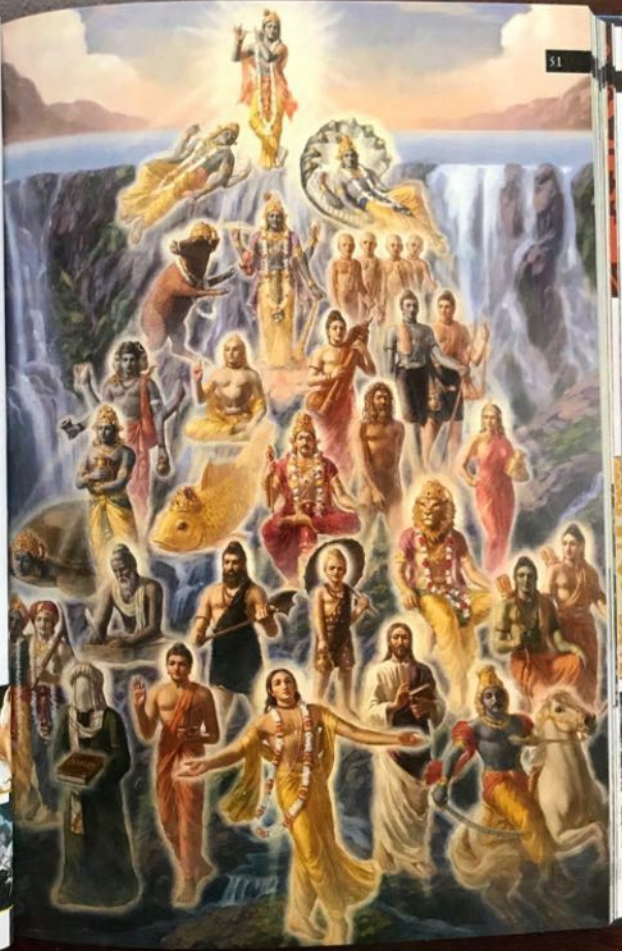
The Lord "descends from His abode" (this is the root meaning of the word *avatar*) from age to age. At the dawn of creation, Vishnu incarnated as an aquatic known as Matsya Avatar—a divine fish that plunged into the depths of the ocean to recover the Vedas. He then appeared as a tortoise, Kurma, and played a vital role in the churning of the Milk Ocean. As the ages began to shift, the Lord appeared as a boar named Varaha and rescued the earth from the demon Hiranyaksha. As the half-man, half-lion Nrisimha He rescued His pure devotee, the little boy Prahlad, from the tyranny of Prahlad's evil father. He also became a dwarf *brahmana*, Vamana, who reclaimed the earth from a demon-king by an ingenious trick involving a mere

"three steps of land"—three steps that engulfed the entire cosmos. He then manifested Himself as Parashuram, or "Rama-with-an-axe," and rid the world of merciless warriors. He also came as the celebrated Ramachandra and later appeared in His original form as Krishna, along with His immediate expansion Balaram, who appeared as His elder brother. Twenty-five hundred years ago He appeared as Buddha.

In the future, toward the end of Kali-yuga (in roughly 427,000 years), the Lord is predicted to appear as Kalki. At this time, He initiates the devastation of the material world and liberates the souls who remain at that time, taking them with him to his eternal kingdom. Vaishnava texts devote countless pages to descriptions of such avatars.



THE HIDDEN GLORY OF INDIA



# THE MODES OF NATURE

The concept of the three modes of material nature is an integral part of the Vaishnava worldview. According to this concept, material existence is understood in terms of three essential characteristics: *sattva* (goodness, virtue), *rajas* (exertion, passion, turbulence), and *tamas* (inertia, ignorance).

The word "mode" is a loose translation of the Sanskrit word *guna*, which literally means "thread" or "rope" (implying that goodness, passion, and ignorance are the ropes that bind individuals to the material world). These constituent qualities underlie everything we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. The entire world, in fact, is made up of various permutations of these qualities, and like the primary colors red, blue, and yellow, the *gunas* can be mixed in unlimited ways, producing uncountable variations.

*Sattva* is associated with virtues and qualities such as wisdom, joy, and altruism; *rajas* with ambition, greed, frustration, and anger; and *tamas* with idleness, sloth, and delusion. In the Varnashrama system, for example, *brahmanas* are considered to be in the mode of goodness, *kshatriyas* in the mode of passion, *vaisyas* in passion and ignorance combined, and *shudras* in ignorance.

The three modes are often described as clarifying, confusing, and obscuring, or as pacifying, impelling, and impeding, respectively.

In the Vaishnava tradition each mode is associated with a principal deity: Vishnu, the Supreme Godhead, who maintains the cosmic manifestation, is master of the mode of goodness; Brahma, the creator demigod, predominates over passion; and Shiva, the destroyer, presides over ignorance.

In a given person's life, a particular mode predominates, and this conditions the way he or she behaves. Understanding how one is conditioned by the modes, and how the modes are interacting with the consciousness, helps an individual achieve stability and happiness. Still, one should aspire to become detached from all three modes, even from goodness. Although goodness embodies finer material qualities, such qualities are still material and can serve as "the last infirmity of a noble mind," as indologist A. L. Basham has said, "causing the soul to cling to wisdom and joy as opposed to God consciousness proper."

The first systematic analysis of the modes occurs in the *Bhagavad-gita*, which devotes to this subject 100 of its 700 verses. According to the *Gita*,



## THE THREE MODES IN OTHER TRADITIONS

Other traditions have elaborated upon tripartite categories that correspond to personality types. Plato, for example, discusses the rational soul, the spirited soul, and the appetitive soul. This refers to the intellectual, contemplative person, the pugnacious and overly active person, and the self-centered braggart, respectively. Plato acknowledges that all three personality types can be found in any given individual, but inevitably, as with the three modes of nature, one personality type will predominate.

Certain schools of modern psychology acknowledge three somatotypes, or body type: ectomorphy (thin), mesomorphy (muscular), and endomorphy (fat). It is said that these correspond to certain mental dispositions: cerebrotonia (brain-oriented), somatonia (muscle-oriented), and viscerotonia (stomach-heart-oriented). Scholars of Indian religion, such as A. L. Herman, professor of philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, have noted that, while this taxonomy does not directly correspond to the three modes of material nature, there is enough similarity to warrant further research. Nonetheless, as Herman acknowledges, the *Gita* provides one of the most penetrating psychological analyses of individuals and their conditional responses to the material world.

God, as the creator of the modes, is naturally above them, but the ordinary soul is not. The *Gita*'s fourteenth chapter outlines the general characteristics of the modes and tells of the importance of understanding and thus rising beyond them. The seventeenth chapter analyzes the workings of the modes in the areas of worship, sacrifices, and austerities, in the food one eats, and even in the way one distributes gifts. Essentially, the *Gita* brings into focus the subtleties of the three modes and helps us understand distinct personality types resulting from these modes.



## The Supreme Consciousness (Om-Tat-Sat) is both personal & impersonal



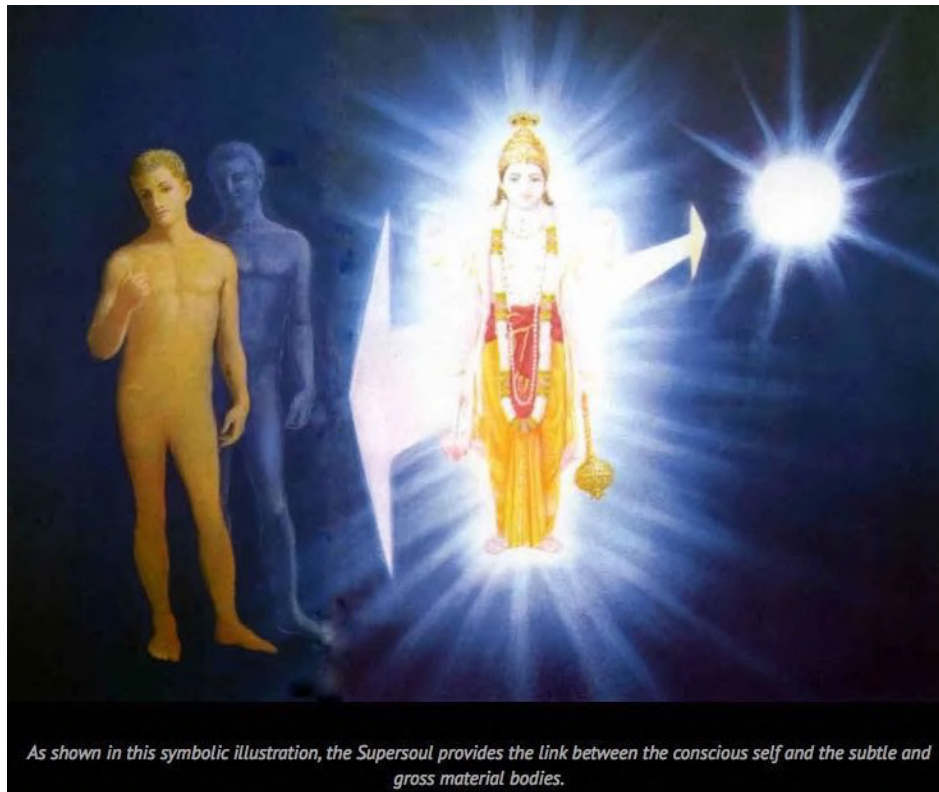
When it comes to understanding God, many people do not quite understand what is God. Often we find a pervasive view that God is impersonal, like an indescribable force of which we are all a part. Or that everything is God, or that we are all God, or that God is love, or God is the Absolute Truth, and so on. However, we need to understand that these are simply small aspects of what is God. The Vedic literature gives detailed information on each of these aspects, no matter whether it is the impersonal aspect of God, called the Brahman, or the very personal nature of the Supreme, called Bhagavan. So let's find out what this information is and how it is developed in the Vedic system.

When it comes to Vedanta, many commentaries on it revolve around the topic of the Brahman. The Brahman generally means the all-pervading, self-existent power. The concept of the Brahman was, for the most part, first developed in the *Upanishads*. There we begin to find descriptions from which our understanding of it grows. It is invisible, ungraspable, eternal, without qualities, and the imperishable source of all things. (*Mundaka Upanishad* 1.1.6-7)

It is explained that Shankara's *advaita* doctrine was based on the famous passage in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (6.10.3), *tat tvam asi*, meaning "That thou art." He taught that "thou and that" were not to be regarded as object and subject, but as identical, without difference (*a-bheda*), like the real self (*atman*). Thus, anything that was variable, like the body, mind, intellect, and ego are objects of knowledge, are changeable, and not the *atman*.

These concepts were more fully explained on the basis of the *Vedanta-sutras*. The *Vedanta-sutras* are a systemization of *sutras* or codes for understanding Vedic knowledge. As you know, they are short codes that are later to be explained by the spiritual master, guru, or spiritual authority. By themselves, without further explanations, it is not easy to fathom their depths. So it is from these commentaries that contain the additional information about such things as the Brahman.

Vedanta means the conclusion of the *Veda* or end of all knowledge. Vedanta is also known as *Uttara Mimamsa*, or later examination, and is a companion to the *Purva Mimamsa*, or preliminary examination. The *Purva Mimamsa* deals with the early portions of the *Vedas* and the *Uttara Mimamsa* deals with the latter portions. The Vedic tradition, unlike other religions and philosophies, is rooted in such remote antiquity that its origin cannot be fully traced.



The Vedic literature explains that it exists in the form of eternal spiritual vibrations and is present both within and outside the universal creation.

Vedanta has been the most influential of the seven main systems of Eastern philosophy. Though the name Vedanta is often taken to indicate the impersonalist, nondual or Mayavada school of thought, it is essentially dualistic theism, but various commentaries have interpreted it to mean different things. It was the *Sariraka-Bhasya* commentary by Shankara that established the Vedanta as a nondualistic philosophy, meaning that the ultimate reality is but one. In this regard, the Brahman and the Atman (individual souls) are identical, and the Brahman is the Absolute Reality from which everything manifests and back into which everything merges. This interpretation has gained much respect and influence, but is not the ultimate or correct viewpoint of the Vedic literature, as will be explained.

The *Vedanta-sutras* are like short, condensed bits of information used as reminders for the spiritual master in his discussions on Vedic philosophy with a student or disciple. Each line, therefore, is meant to be elaborated upon by the spiritual master for the understanding of the student.

Vedanta means "the end of knowledge," or the final conclusion of the Vedic philosophy. The *Vedanta-sutras* are also called the *Brahma-sutra*, *Sariraka*, *Vyasa-sutra*, *Vedanta-darshana*, *Uttara-mimamsa*, as well as *Badarayana-sutra*. Vyasa and Badarayana are two names for the same person who is considered to be the author and compiler of the major portions of Vedic literature.

The *Vedanta-sutras* are divided into four chapters with four divisions each. In each division the theme within is stated, reasons for it are given, examples are supplied to uphold the presented facts, the theme is then explained further for clearer understanding, and finally authorized quotations from the *Vedas* are supplied to support it. In this way the information is given in a format meant to show the authenticity and reliability of the Vedic viewpoint.

The first two chapters discuss how the material world manifested from the Supreme and the relationship between the living entity and the Supreme. The third chapter explains how one engages in the prescribed duties to perform and how to act according to the loving relationship we have with the Supreme. The fourth chapter describes the result of such devotional service (or *bhakti*), which is ultimately to attain liberation, or return to the spiritual world.

The first verse of the *Vedanta-sutras* states: "*athato brahma-jijnasa*", which means, "Now is the time to inquire about the Absolute Truth." Why is it time? Because we are presently in the human form of life and should utilize it properly since only in the human form do we have the intelligence and facility to be able to understand spiritual reality. In animal forms, the living entities cannot understand such things because they do not have the brain power. So we should not waste this human form of life by pursuing only the animalistic propensities, such as eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. Therefore, the *Vedanta-sutras* begin by stating that now is the time for us to understand the Absolute Truth.

The *Vedanta-sutras*, however, being written only in codes, can be somewhat vague and requires a commentary to elaborate and explain the aphorisms. Practically speaking, some of the codes are fairly unclear for anyone who is not experienced in Vedic philosophy. And since Vedanta comprises the purport of the *Upanishads* which contain knowledge of both the personal and impersonal aspects of the Absolute, which commentary on the *Vedanta-sutras* you read can make a big difference. Some commentaries sway toward the impersonal understanding of the Absolute, while other commentaries sway toward the personal realizations. Obviously, to reach a mature understanding in this regard, we need to comprehend both of these viewpoints. In fact, it is stated that unless one understands all the features of the Absolute Truth, namely, the impersonal Brahman, the localized Paramatma or Supersoul, and ultimately the Supreme Personality of God, Bhagavan or Krishna, one's knowledge is imperfect.

After studying the previous portions of the Vedic literature, such as the four *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, only when we arrive at this *Brahma-sutra* of Srila Vyasa-deva do we find an emphasis on doing *bhakti-yoga*, or devotional activities, for realizing God. This means that God is ultimately the Supreme Person from whom there is the imminent loving exchange that can be attained by lovingly surrendering to Him. That devotion and emotional absorption in God is the process for becoming free from the illusory attraction and attachments to the material world. This paves the way for genuine liberation from worldly existence.

There have been many commentaries written on the *Vedanta-sutras*. The most influential were by such famous *acharyas* as Shankara, Bhaskara, Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Vallabha, Madhva, and Baladeva. So let us review a few of these to get a better view of the development of the *advaita* and *dvaita* philosophies.

Shankara (509-477 BC, though others have said 788-820 AD) was a follower of Shiva, born of a South Indian *brahmana* family in the town of Kaladi, on the banks of the Periyar river. He established four main maths, or schools of study. These have records of their original establishment and list all of the successive *acharyas* who followed from the time of Shankaracharya. And these lists, such as the one displayed at the Kamakoti Shankara Math in Kanchipuram, date back to 477 BC, thus dating earlier than the time of Christ.

Shankaracharya's two major works are the *Vivida-cudamani* and *Sariraka-basya*. When Shankara appeared, Buddhism and anti-Vedic thought had spread throughout India because it had been patronized by Emperor Asoka in the third century B.C., and the followers of Buddhism had given up the *Vedas*. The Buddhist philosophy establishes that the material creation is the only manifestation of the Absolute Truth, which itself is temporary and brought on by egoistic desires. It is asserted that these desires must be eliminated for one to enter back into the void. The void itself is said to be all that is real and eternal, and the source from which everything manifests. Shankara's purpose, therefore, was to reform and purify religious life by re-establishing the authority of the Vedic scriptures. His interpretation of the *Vedas* is known as *advaita* or nondualistic because he taught that the individual *jiva* or soul is identical with God, and that there is ultimately no variety, no individuality or personality in spiritual existence. The individuality of both the Supreme Being and the *jiva*, according to him, is false.

In order for Shankara to teach like this, he had to ignore the many statements in the Vedic literature which assert that the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Person and the *jivas* are His subordinate parts. Therefore, by word jugglery, he developed a twofold theory that Brahman consists of the pure impersonal Brahman, and that any incarnation of God within this universe is simply a manifestation of that Brahman. This was a complete rejection of some of the Vedic literature, such as *Bhagavad-gita*, and in this way he differed with all orthodox Vedic schools. Like Buddha, he also refused to answer questions about the origin of the cosmos and said that *maya*, the illusory energy, was inexplicable.

This Mayavadi philosophy teaches that the material world is false and the impersonal Brahman, or great white light, is truth. One merges back into the Brahman, where there exists no activities or spiritual characteristics, after giving up the ego or bodily consciousness. Therefore, we find that impersonalists generally do not study the *Vedas* beyond the *Vedanta-sutras* because as we progress through the Vedic literature up to the *Puranas*, it becomes more specific about the personal characteristics of the Absolute Truth which contradicts the impersonal viewpoint.

We must point out that Shankaracarya was an incarnation of Lord Shiva who had been ordered by the Supreme Lord to cheat the atheists. The *Shiva Purana* quotes the Supreme Lord as ordering Shiva: "In Kali-yuga mislead the people in general by propounding imaginary meanings from the *Vedas* to bewilder them." To do so, Shankara gave up the direct method of Vedic knowledge and presented an indirect meaning which actually covered the real goal of Vedanta. This is confirmed in the *Padma Purana* where Lord Shiva addresses his wife, Parvati:

My dear wife, hear my explanations of how I have spread ignorance through Mayavada philosophy. Simply by hearing it even an advanced scholar will fall down. In this philosophy which is certainly very inauspicious for people in general, I have misrepresented the real meaning of the *Vedas* and recommended that one give up all activities in order to achieve freedom from *karma*. In this Mayavada philosophy I have described the *jivatma* and Paramatma to be one and the same. The Mayavada philosophy is impious. It is covered Buddhism. My dear Parvati, in the form of a *brahmana* in Kali-yuga I teach this imagined Mayavada philosophy in order to mislead the entire population toward atheism by denying the personal form of God.

Herein, Lord Shiva himself points out that to believe God has no form is not accurate and equal to atheism. Even though this Mayavada philosophy was not good for pious people to hear because it would sway them toward an impersonalistic viewpoint, we should note that Shankara's philosophy was just right for the time and circumstance. The Buddhists, who had spread throughout India and neglected the *Vedas*, believed in neither a soul nor a God and that, ultimately, the essence of



everything is the nothingness or void wherein lies *nirvana*, freedom from all suffering. So considering how the Buddhists had followed a philosophy of complete atheism for hundreds of years and would never have accepted a viewpoint which advocated a supreme personal God, Shankara's was the only philosophy they would have considered. It was like a compromise between atheism and theism, but Shankara used portions of Vedic knowledge as the basis of his arguments. In this way, as Shankara traveled throughout India his arguments prevailed. Thus, Buddhism bowed and Vedic culture was brought back to prominence. Therefore, his purpose was accomplished, so much so that his *Sariraka-bhasya* is considered the definitive rendition of Vedanta even to the present day.

Several times, however, Shankara revealed his true beliefs, that he was actually a devotee of Lord Krishna. For example, in the first verse of his *Vivida-cudamani* he explains that it is Krishna Himself who is the source of the supreme bliss and the Divine Master to whom he offers obeisance. Furthermore, in his birthplace of Kaladi there is a temple near the *samadhi* tomb of his mother that has a Deity of Lord Krishna that was installed by Shankara himself. Also, in his *Gita-bhasya*, the first verse explains that Narayana (another incarnation of Lord Krishna), or Bhagavan, is transcendental to the material creation. In *The Bhagavad-gita with the Commentary of Sri Sankaracarya*, Dinkar Vishnu Gokhale establishes that Lord Shiva writes in his "Meditations on the Bhagavad-gita": "Salutations to thee, O Vyasa [the incarnation of Krishna who compiled the essential Vedic literature]. Thou art of mighty intellect, and thine eyes are as large as a full-blown lotus. It was thou who brightened this lamp of wisdom, filling it with the oil of the *Mahabharata*." Shankara also readily points out that it is Bhagavan Krishna "whose glories are sung by the verses of the *Vedas*, of whom the singers of the *Sama* sing, and of whose glories the *Upanishads* proclaim in full choir." This would seem to indicate that Shankara was encouraging everyone to read *Bhagavad-gita* and *Mahabharata* as written by Srila Vyasadeva to understand the conclusion of spiritual knowledge. This would also give evidence that Shankara's own personal beliefs were different from the philosophy that he taught. There is no evidence that makes this more clear than texts eight and nine of his *Meditations on the Bhagavad-gita* as follows:

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, the transcendental, blissful husband of the Goddess of Fortune, whose mercy turns the dumb into eloquent speakers and enables the lame to cross mountains. Let all obeisances be unto the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna, whom Brahma, Varuna, Indra, Rudra, the Maruts, and all divine beings praise with the divine hymns of the *Vedas* and their supplementary parts, such as the *Upanishads*, whom the followers of the *Sama-veda* glorify with song, whom great mystics see with their minds absorbed in perfect meditation and of whom all the hosts of demigods and demons know not the limitations. To Him, the Supreme Lord, let there be all obeisances.

Near the end of his life, Shankara wrote his *Bhaja Govindam* prayers. Verses 1 and 34, which are the conclusive verses in these prayers, are often overlooked by his followers. Yet they were written especially for those who might miss the actual purport of the *Vedas*. He wrote, "Worship Govinda [another name of Krishna], worship Govinda, worship Govinda, you intellectual fools. At the end of your life all your grammatical arguments will not help you." And again in verse 34 he writes: "Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda, Oh fool. Other than chanting the Lord's names, there is no other way to cross the material ocean [of birth and death]."

In this way, even Shankaracharya emphasized that it is Krishna who is the Supreme form of God, and that the supreme form of God-realization is through the process of worshiping Him and chanting Krishna's holy names, which is the sure way of liberation from material existence.

Ramanuja (A.D. 1017-1137) did not accept Shankara's Mayavada interpretation of the *Vedanta-sutras* and sought to expose Shankara's contradictory arguments which were actually in defiance of the real Vedic conclusions. The three major commentaries for which Ramanuja is most known is his *Vedanta-sangraha*, which is on the *Vedas*; *Sri-bhasya*, on the *Vedanta-sutras*; and *Bhagavad-gita-bhasya*, which is on *Bhagavad-gita*. His prominent theme is his opposition to impersonal monism, especially of Shankara, and the support of Vaishnavism, worship of the one God Vishnu or Bhagavan Sri Krishna.

Ramanuja's interpretation of Vedanta, as related in his *Sri Bhasya* commentary, establishes that God is one and the soul is a part of God, but that it remains individual in nature even after liberation from the body, rather than merging into the Absolute. This is called *vishishtadvaita*. He also explains that the process for liberation includes surrendering to the personal form of God.

Ramanuja accepted that the Supreme and the individual living entities are one in spiritual quality, but the individual souls are very small and God is unlimited, and between them is a relationship based on *bhakti*, or spiritual love. By logical reasoning, he taught that just as the *jiva* controls his own body and uses it as an instrument, God controls the whole material creation as well as the *jiva* souls within. The soul is eternal and after being liberated from material entanglement lives in an eternal spiritual body. The soul is the eternal servant of God, in which case the soul becomes fully happy after meeting and engaging in service to God.

Madhvacharya (A.D. 1239-1319) was another prominent philosopher with his own school of thought. He was also a Vaishnava who worked to combat Shankara's impersonal philosophy. Madhva accepted the renounced order of *sannyasa* when he

was only eleven years old. He studied the Vedanta and after traveling to the Himalayas, he met Vyasadeva who taught him to teach the glories of *bhakti*. Thereafter, he traveled around the country and established the importance of *bhakti* through his talent of debating with the use of scriptural evidence.

Madhva's interpretation of Vedanta, as found in his *Tatparya Nirnayas*, also presents Vedanta philosophy as dualistic (*dvaita*), similar to Ramanuja's but more developed. Madhva taught pure dualism and that there are three energies: the spiritual, marginal, and inferior. The Lord is of the superior spiritual energy and controller of all other energies. The living entities are the marginal energy since they can be engrossed spiritually or materially. And the material energy is inferior due to its temporary nature. The Lord and the living entities are eternal and always distinct, but the Lord is always completely transcendental to the material world. The Lord is the ultimate cause of the creation, maintenance, and annihilation of the material manifestation, thereby being completely independent while the living entities are completely dependent on the Lord. They remain bound up in material energy by the result of their own *karma* or activities based on their fruitive desires. But Madhva pointed out that through *bhakti*, devotion to God, they could eliminate their *karma* and return to their position in the spiritual world.

Nimbarka also delivered a commentary called *Vedanta Parijata Saurabh* based on the dualistic idea. He was born in south India, somewhere near the Godavari River, but it is not known exactly when. The tradition is that he was initiated by Narada Muni. In His commentary he establishes that God is one with but separate from each soul. This is called the *dvaitadvaitvad* philosophy. This means that God and the individual souls are spiritual in quality, yet God is infinite, and the living entities are infinitesimal. Nimbarka also explained that Radha-Krishna are the ultimate form of God.

Vallabhacharya (1478-1530) also wrote a commentary on the *Vedanta-sutras*, called the *Anu Bhashya*. He also wrote on the *Bhagavatam*, along with a few other books, which emphasized that the *Bhagavatam* is the essence of all spiritual and devotional knowledge. He established that Krishna was the supreme form of God, and that the soul is not merely a part of God's energy, but is qualitatively the same as God, but small in potency. Furthermore, Krishna gives a person everything for spiritual development when one surrenders with love to Him.

Vallabhacharya was born in Raipur. By the time he was eleven years old he went to Kashi and became well educated in the knowledge of the Vedic scripture. After staying for a time in Vrindavana, he traveled to the major holy places of India and spread the understanding of devotion to Lord Krishna. After he returned to Vrindavana he started the temple of Sri Nathji at Govardhan. He established a structured form of Deity worship centered around the Deity of Lord Krishna. When he was 28, he was married and had two sons, Gopinatha and Vitthalnath. Vitthal became known as Goswamiji and started six more temples, of which four are in the area of Vrindavana, two in Kamban and one in Gokul. Kashi was the home to Vallabhacharya the last years of his life, and it is said that in front of hundreds of people he ascended up into the spiritual abode.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu (A.D. 1486-1534) also strongly opposed Shankara's philosophy and established the principle of *acintya-bhedabheda-tattva*. This specified that the Supreme and the individual soul are inconceivably and simultaneously one and different. This means that the Supreme and the *jiva* souls are the same in quality, being eternally spiritual, but always separate individually. The *jivas* are small and subject to being influenced by the material energy, while the Supreme is infinite and always above and beyond the material manifestation.

Sri Caitanya taught that the direct meaning of the Vedic *shastras* is that the living entities are to engage in devotional service, *bhakti*, to the Supreme, Bhagavan Sri Krishna. Through this practice there can develop a level of communication between God and the individual by which God will lovingly reveal Himself to those who become qualified. In this understanding the theistic philosophy of Vaishnavism reached its climax.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is considered and was established by Vedic scripture as the most recent incarnation of God, did not become much involved in writing. In fact, He only wrote eight verses called the *Shikshastaka*, but His followers compiled extensive Sanskrit literature that documented His life and fully explained His teachings. However, it is one of His followers, Baladeva, who wrote a commentary on the *Vedanta-sutras* called *Govinda-bhasya*.

Baladeva Vidyabushana also wrote a very important commentary on the Vedanta and also established the individual nature of the soul in his *Sri Bhasya* commentary. It is said that Baladeva had a dream one night in which Lord Krishna appeared and explained the *Vedanta-sutras* to him. Upon awakening, he wrote this powerful commentary and called it *Govinda-bhasya*, signifying that it was the words of Sri Krishna Himself.

There is one more commentary on the *Vedanta-sutras* which we cannot neglect. Srila Vyasadeva, the original author of the *Vedanta-sutras*, was still not satisfied after writing it. After explaining this perplexing situation to his spiritual master, Narada Muni, he was advised to write the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (also called the *Bhagavat Purana*). After doing so, Vyasadeva considered it his own commentary on the *Vedanta-sutras* and the complete explanation and conclusion of all Vedic philosophy. This is why Sri Caitanya never cared for writing a commentary on the *Vedanta-sutras*, because He considered *Srimad-Bhagavatam* to be the topmost commentary which had already been

written. As explained herein, the Supreme and the infinitesimal living entities are all individual; otherwise, if they all merged into oneness, there could not be loving relationships between them. Yet, we find that in all religious and theistic philosophies around the world there are two schools of thought. One holds the idea that God is a personal being to whom we can pray, on whom we can meditate, and from whom we can expect some reciprocal exchange. The impersonalistic school advocates that God is an impersonal force, a void, or a great white light from which everything has emanated and back into which everything merges.

Many people, not having a clear understanding of what God is, are left with nothing more than their imagination to help them figure out what God must be. With such a lack of spiritual knowledge and realization, one generally comes to the conclusion that either there is no God, or God may be present everywhere but is seen nowhere and must, therefore, be impersonal. In that case, we would accept Him to be nothing more than a great force or all-pervading energy within this universe. If our understanding is more fundamental, we may simply say that God is love. Or we may refer to God as the unfathomable, ever-new joy, the one-ness, the Supreme Eternal, highest bliss, the all-pervading, the Brahman, the Self, and so on. These are all obscure names touching only the outer edges of understanding God and do not reach the depth of God's real form or personality as described in the Vedic literature.

Any scripture or philosophy that has no distinct description of the form of God has the potential for leaving its students or followers with no alternative than to accept the possibility that God is impersonal and has no specific form. This only means that they do not know what God is. This is the danger of incomplete knowledge. Therefore, rather than to speculate, we need to use the Vedic texts to increase our understanding of what is actually God.

#### *GOD IS PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL*

The Vedic literature points out that God is both personal and impersonal. God's impersonal aspect is called different names by different people. Generally, the impersonal aspect is known as the Brahman effulgence or *brahmajyoti*. A description of the Brahman can be found in various portions of the Vedic literature, including the *Mundaka Upanishad* (2.2.10-12) where it says: "In the spiritual realm, beyond the material covering, is the unlimited Brahman effulgence, which is free from material contamination. That effulgent white light is understood by transcendentalists to be the light of all lights. In that realm there is no need of sunshine, moonshine, fire or electricity for illumination. Indeed, whatever illumination appears in the material world is only a reflection of that supreme illumination. That Brahman is in front and in back, in the north, south, east and west, and also overhead and below. In other words, that supreme Brahman effulgence spreads throughout both the material and spiritual skies." To realize or attain entrance into the impersonal Brahman, one must practice yoga for many years without falling down from such strict practice. One must be celibate, chant the *om mantra* correctly, raise the life airs within the body to the top of the head, and leave the body while meditating on the Brahman. If one cannot void his mind of all sensual engagement and concentrate on the Brahman for hours at a time without agitation, one will not be successful. If one is successful, one can be liberated from material existence by merging into the Brahman, where there is eternity and knowledge. However, there is no real *ananda* or bliss there. The only pleasure in the *brahmajyoti* is the freedom from all material suffering. Some yogis think such pleasure, which may be felt on elementary levels of meditation, is a sign of reaching the final goal. But real *ananda* is found only in spiritual engagement. Without understanding this, one's spiritual knowledge is incomplete.

The goal of the impersonalists is to merge into the Brahman effulgence, where they lose all of their individual characteristics. If they succeed, they remain there as an inactive spiritual spark, floating in the rays of the *brahmajyoti*. They do not develop a spiritual body that would give them the opportunity to engage in various spiritual activities because they do not know about such engagement that can be found on the spiritual Vaikuntha planets that exist within the Brahman effulgence. So, if they again have any yearning for engaging in activities, they cannot go upward to the spiritual planets because they are not qualified to do so. Thus, they are forced to seek shelter in the material world, where they start over again.

The problem is that it is our natural inclination to be active, always doing something. So if the soul is so active while within the material body, how can the impersonalist philosophers suggest that once we are liberated we will be completely inactive? This is not very logical. The Vedic literature states that once one has attained liberation and reaches the *brahmajyoti*, he will not stay there, but at some point he will again desire to return to the material world for engagement. Therefore, the *brahmajyoti* is not considered the highest form of spiritual liberation, although some so-called sages today speak of it as if it is.

Such impersonalist yogis or philosophers either do not know or simply reject the fact that beyond *nirvana* and the outskirts of the Brahman effulgence are the Vaikuntha planets of the spiritual sky. Thus, due to their ignorance, or even rebelliousness against God, they concentrate only on the impersonal Brahman. One can enter that region by the difficult, mechanical yoga process for controlling the mind, but cannot go any higher. Just as a person cannot escape the material world if he still has material desires, he cannot enter the spiritual planets if he is still absorbed in thinking of the void. In this way, such people are unable to enter into the spiritual life of complete eternity, knowledge, and bliss. Therefore, the idea of achieving spiritual liberation by merging into the Brahman effulgence is considered the process of a cheating religion. Why it is considered this is that it destroys the opportunity for people to reestablish their loving relationship with the Supreme. This is confirmed in the *Caitanya-caritamrita* (*Adi. 1.92*): "The foremost process of cheating is to desire to achieve liberation by merging in the Supreme, for this causes the permanent disappearance of loving service to Krishna." Therefore, those who have reached mature spiritual realization look upon merging into the Brahman effulgence as a great mistake.

The impersonal realization of the Brahman effulgence is the indirect process of understanding the Absolute Truth and is considered a difficult path according to *Bhagavad-gita*. "But those who fully worship the unmanifested, that which lies beyond the perception of the senses, the all-pervading, inconceivable, fixed and immovable--the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth--by controlling the various senses and being equally disposed toward everyone, such persons, engaged in the welfare of all, at last achieve Me. For those whose minds are attached to the unmanifested, impersonal feature of the Supreme, advancement is very troublesome. To make progress in that discipline is always difficult for those who are embodied." (*Bg.12.3-5*)

By realizing this impersonal Brahman, one only realizes the bodily effulgence of the Absolute. In other words, the all-pervading spiritual force has a source.

This is clearly described in the *Caitanya-caritamrita*, (*Adi.2, 5 & 15*):

"What the *Upanishads* describe as the impersonal Brahman is but the effulgence of His body, and the Lord known as the Supersoul is but His localized plenary portion. He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna Himself, full with six opulences. He is the Absolute Truth, and no other truth is greater than or equal to Him. . . The opulences of the impersonal Brahman spread

throughout the millions and millions of universes. That Brahman is but the bodily effulgence of Govinda [another name of Krishna]."

The fifteenth and sixteenth *mantras* of the *Isa Upanishad* also acknowledge that from the personal body of God comes the rays of the Brahman effulgence: "O my Lord, sustainer of all that lives, Your real face is covered by Your dazzling effulgence. Please remove that covering and exhibit Yourself to Your pure devotee. O my Lord, O primeval philosopher, maintainer of the universe, O regulating principle, destination of the pure devotees, well-wisher of the progenitors of mankind-- please remove the effulgence of Your transcendental rays so that I can see Your form of bliss. You are the eternal Supreme Personality of Godhead, like unto the sun, as am I."

From these verses it is clear that without going beyond the Brahman effulgence, one cannot see the real form of the Supreme. If one reaches the stage of realizing the Brahman and becomes convinced that he has attained the Ultimate, then he does not have complete understanding or full realization. He still must go further until he has reached the source of the Brahman, which, according to the *Isa Upanishad*, is the Supreme Personality.

### *THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH IS A PERSON*

Many times there are so-called gurus or saints who say that the Absolute Truth, especially in referring to the void or Brahman effulgence, cannot be described with words. Of course, if that were actually the case, why would they expect people to attend their lectures when they spoke about the Absolute? But the *Vedanta-sutras* (1.1.5) point out that, "Brahman is not inexpressible by words, because it is seen that He is so expressly taught in the *Vedas*." The Absolute may not be completely expressible and understood by words alone, but there is a great deal that one can learn by this means. Beyond this, one can learn by practical experience and realization for which the various yoga practices are described. This is what the Vedic texts teach.

If the Brahman had no personality or characteristics, then, obviously, Brahman would be very difficult to describe. But the *Vedanta-sutras* correct this viewpoint in the very second verse: "He, from whom proceeds the creation, preservation and reconstruction of the universe, is Brahman." This is further substantiated in the *Mundaka Upanishad* (1.1.9) where it states that the Brahman comes from Him who knows all: "From Him who perceives all and who knows all, whose penance consists of knowledge, from Him (the highest Brahman) is born that Brahman, name, form and matter." Therefore, Brahman ultimately means a person. The conclusion, according to the Vedic texts, is that the Absolute Truth is that source from which everything emanates, and that source is, ultimately, the Supreme Person.

Since the Brahman effulgence is considered to be but one of the opulences of the Supreme, it should be understood that whenever the Vedic texts speak of Brahman, they are indicating the Supreme Personality of God. In fact, it is stated that in the Vedic literature the word *Brahman* means, "in whom all the attributes reach to the infinity." In this way, it is clear that Brahman primarily means the Supreme Person, of whom the Vedic literature is full of descriptions of various aspects of His infinite qualities and characteristics. The *Caitanya-caritamrita* clearly states: "The word 'Brahman' indicates the complete Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is Sri Krishna. That is the verdict of all Vedic literature." (*Cc.Madhya-lila*, 6.147)

The *Caitanya-caritamrita* (*Adi.7.112*) also explains that, "Everything about the Supreme Personality of Godhead is spiritual, including His body, opulence and paraphernalia. Mayavadi philosophy, however, covering His spiritual opulence, advocates the theory of impersonalism."



*Mother Yashoda & Gopal Krishna*

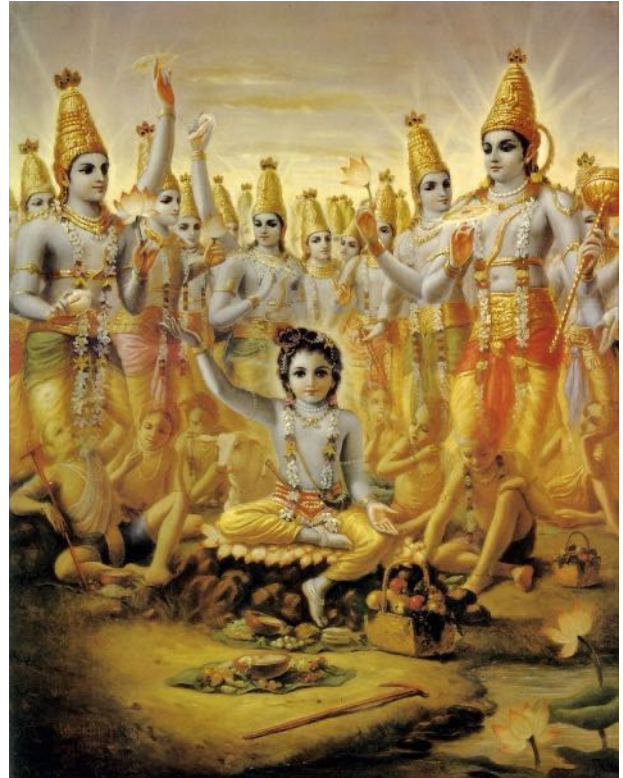


*Krishna and His elder brother, Balarama*

*Paintings from the 5000 year old Srimad Bhagavtam of Lord Krishna*



*Radha Krishna by the Yamuna River, India*



*Lord Krishna displays His infinite expansions*

The Mayavadi impersonalists say that God is formless and has no attributes other than eternity and knowledge. But the truth of the matter is that God has no *material* form because He is completely spiritual. He is a transcendental person. Just as we are individuals, God is also an individual and has His form. If He were formless only, then He would be less than that which has form. Therefore, God, the complete whole, must have that which is formless as well as that which has form. Otherwise, He would not be complete. In this way, the Supreme has immense potencies, including everything within as well as beyond our experience. Krishna says: "I am the origin of everything. Everything emanates from Me." (*Bg.10.8*) Thus, the Supreme expands Himself into everything but does not lose His original form. This is also confirmed in the first verse of *Isa Upanishad* where it says: "Because He is the complete whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance."

The impersonalists believe that after God has expanded Himself into matter and into the innumerable living entities, He must no longer exist, just as a large piece of paper no longer exists once it has been torn into many little pieces. If such were the case, then matter and the living beings are equal to or the same as God. In other words, the impersonalists say that we are God but are temporarily undergoing the pains and pleasures in this material world due to forgetfulness of our godlike position. Once we are free from this illusory forgetfulness, or our individuality, we can merge back into the Absolute and again become God. But impersonalists fail to explain how the individual soul became separated from the Brahman effulgence to exist within this material world. Furthermore, if the soul is the same as God, how could it fall into the illusion of identifying itself as a material body? How could we, if we are God, be controlled by the illusory energy? This would mean that material nature is more powerful than God, which would negate God's supremacy.

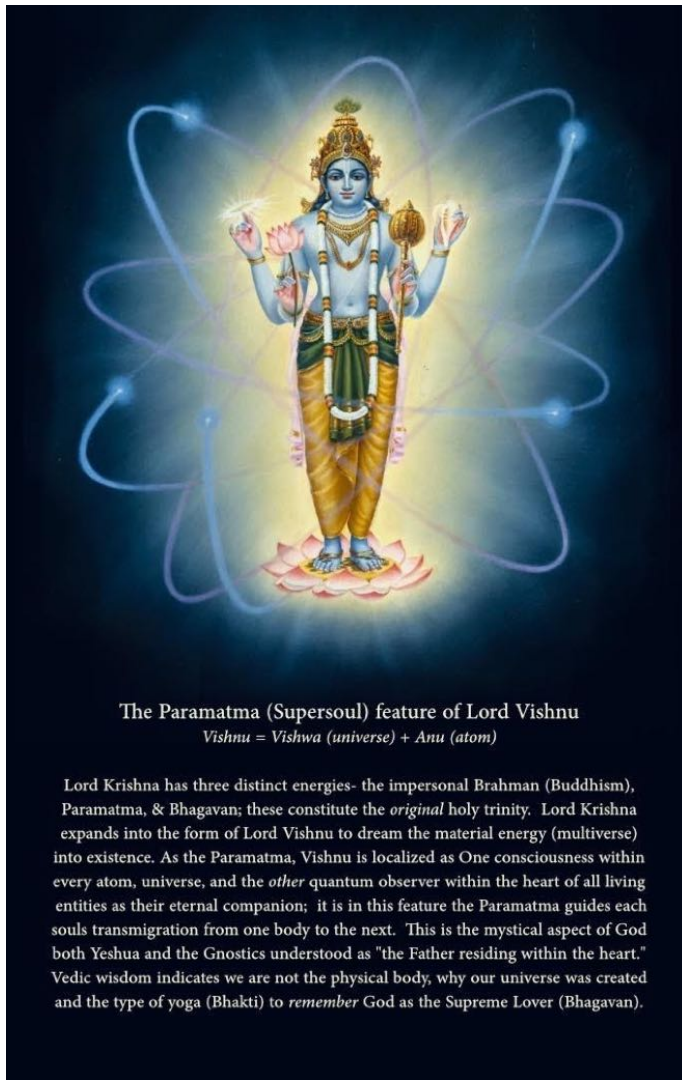
In the logic of this kind of philosophy, there is no point in praying to God, singing praises to Him, or serving Him since, being formless, God has no ears to hear you or eyes to see you. In fact, such a formless God would have very little to do with us. He could not judge what is right or wrong, or reward the righteous or punish the wrongdoers. This impersonal viewpoint actually pervades much of our society today and allows people to reason that anyone can do anything he or she wants to do and face no retribution from God or the universal laws He sets in motion.

Another point is that if God is impersonal, then it puts the process of the creation of the universe in a different light. If God were simply a mass of energy, it would not be possible for God to create the material manifestation and then watch over and control it. Thus, the way the world was created might have happened in any number of different ways. This is the point of view many people have, especially the scientists who try to piece together proof to show that the theory of evolution is truth and the world started from some miraculous big bang. The idea that God is simply an impersonal force or does not exist at all is the one factor which gives theories like evolution and the big bang some potential for credibility. But in spite of the popularity of these theories, no one has yet proved them to be true.

These various impersonalist beliefs, as briefly described above, are not supported by the *Vedas*. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says, *punam idam purnat purnam udacyate*: "Although He expands in many ways, He keeps His original personality. His original spiritual body remains as it is." Thus, we can understand that God can expand His energies in many ways, but is not affected or diminished in His potency.

The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (6.6) also states: "The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the original person, has multifarious energies. He is the origin of material creation, and it is due to Him only that everything changes. He is the protector of religion and annihilator of all sinful activities. He is the master of all opulences." This verse specifically points out that only due to God's multi-potencies does the world continue to change and be maintained. He also protects religion, which could not be done if He were impersonal. This is only logical since it takes a person to watch over, protect, or maintain anything.





In the *Katha Upanishad* (2.2.13) there is the important verse; *nityo nityanam cetanas cetananam eko bahunam yo vidadhati kaman*: "He is the supreme eternally conscious person who maintains all other living entities." From these descriptions in the Vedic texts, we can clearly understand that God is the Supreme Person who is the source of everything and controller of all. This Supreme Person is the Absolute Truth, as confirmed in the *Caitanya-caritamrita* (Adi.7.111): "According to direct understanding, the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has all spiritual opulences. No one can be equal to or greater than Him."

Since it is established in the Vedic texts that the Absolute is a person, then meditating on the personal form of God rather than the impersonal feature is the highest form of meditation. This is verified in *Bhagavad-gita* (12.2): "The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: 'He whose mind is fixed on My personal form, always engaged in worshiping Me with great and transcendental faith, is considered by Me to be the most perfect.'"

Herein, we can understand that realizing the Absolute Truth in the form of the Supreme Person is much easier and much more attractive than struggling to merge into the great white light of the *brahmajyoti*. By understanding the Supreme Personality, all other aspects of the Absolute, such as the Brahman effulgence and Paramatma or Supersoul, are also understood. In fact, those who are absorbed in Brahman realization can easily become attracted to understanding the Supreme

Personality as did such sages as Sukadeva Gosvami and the Kumaras, as noted in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*:

"Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, the son of Vyasadeva, Sukadeva Gosvami. It is he who defeats all inauspicious things within this universe. Although in the beginning he was absorbed in the happiness of Brahman realization and was living in a secluded place, giving up all other types of consciousness, he became attracted by the most melodious pastimes of Lord Sri Krishna. He therefore mercifully spoke the supreme Purana, known as Srimad-Bhagavatam, which is the bright light of the Absolute Truth and which describes the activities of Lord Krishna." (Bhag. 12.12.68)

"When the breeze carrying the aroma of *tulasi* leaves and saffron from the lotus feet of the lotus-eyed Personality of Godhead entered through the nostrils into the hearts of those sages [the Kumaras], they experienced a change in both body and mind, even though they were attracted to impersonal Brahman understanding." (Bhag.3.15.43)

How the *jnani* and other yogis absorbed in the impersonal realization of the Absolute become attracted to the personal form of God is further described in the *Caitanya-caritamrita* (*Madhya-lila*, 17.137,139-140): "The mellows of Lord Krishna's pastimes, which are full of bliss, attract the *jnani* from the pleasure of Brahman realization and conquer him. . . The transcendental qualities of Sri Krishna are completely blissful and relishable. Consequently Lord

Krishna's qualities attract even the minds of self-realized persons from the bliss of self-realization. Those who are self-satisfied and unattracted by external material desires are also attracted to the loving service of Sri Krishna, whose qualities are transcendental and whose known as *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, which is the bright light of the Absolute Truth and which describes the activities of Lord Krishna." (Bhag.12.12.68) "When the breeze carrying the aroma of *tulasi* leaves and saffron from the lotus feet of the lotus-eyed Personality of Godhead entered through the nostrils into the hearts of those sages [the Kumaras], they experienced a change in both body and mind, even though they were attracted to impersonal Brahman understanding." (Bhag.3.15.43)



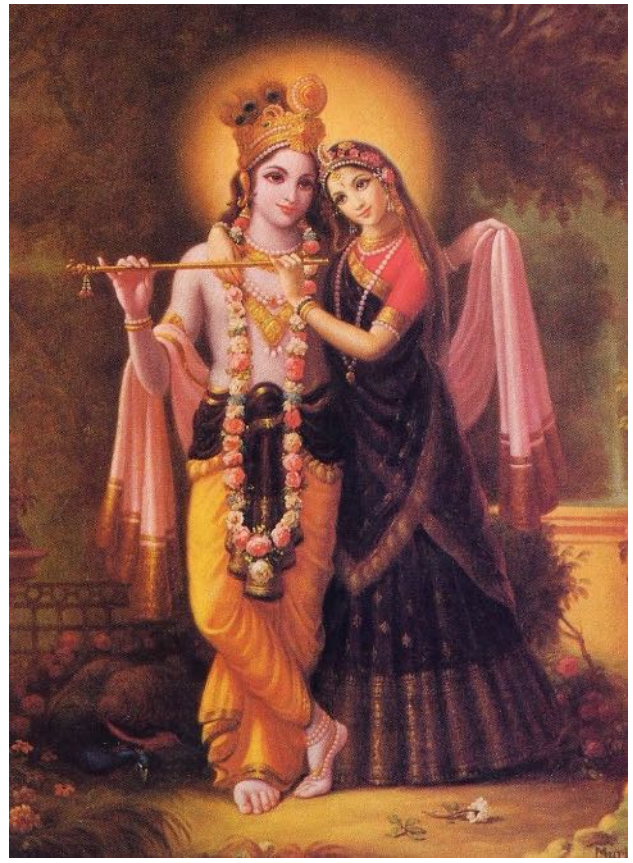
*Krishna's qualities attract even the minds of self-realized persons from the bliss of self-realization. Those who are self-satisfied and unattracted by external material desires are also attracted to the loving service of Sri Krishna, whose qualities are transcendental and whose activities are wonderful. Hari, the Personality of Godhead, is called Krishna because He has such transcendently attractive features.*



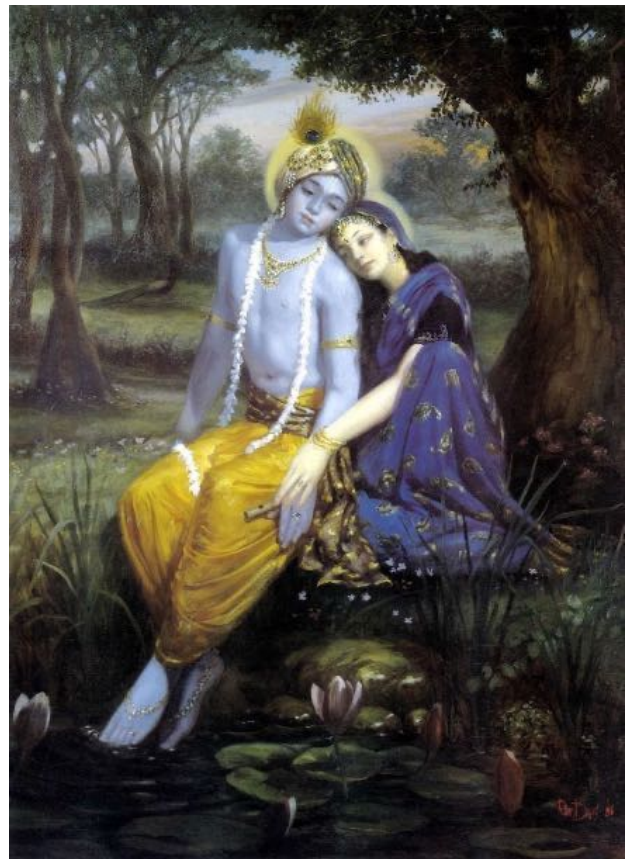
Many of the Gosvamis of Vrindavan who had personally realized the attractive features of the Supreme wrote many books about the transcendental personality of God. One of the greatest of these saints was Rupa Gosvami (1489-1564 A.D.) who wrote a list of Krishna's characteristics in his book, *Bhakti rasamrita-sindhu*. This list describes 64 different qualities of God that are mentioned in the Vedic literature. Some of these are; beautiful bodily features, strong, ever-youthful, effulgent, highly learned and intelligent, artistic, grave, gentle, heroic, happy, expert in joking, talks pleasingly, source of all other incarnations, giver of salvation, performs wonderful pastimes, attracts everyone by His flute playing, and so on. All of these qualities are those of someone who has a highly developed form and personality.

Even the Bible verifies that God has a most beautiful form and is not formless, as is shown in the next few verses that are very similar to the Vedic description of God's form: "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl; his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend." (*Song of Solomon 5.10-16*)

Obviously, there is no more elevated truth or higher bliss than the personal form of the Supreme. As Sri Krishna says: "O conqueror of wealth [Arjuna], there is no truth superior to Me." (Bg.7.7) Many great transcendental scholars have accepted this fact, including Lord Brahma, who, after performing many austerities for spiritual purification, became perfectly self-realized and, getting a glimpse of the Lord's spiritual nature, composed the *Brahma-samhita* many thousands of years ago and described what his confidential realizations were.



*Oil paintings illustrating Krishna displaying His love via His internal potency*



# *Bhakti Yoga: Eternality, Bliss, and Knowledge Contained Within Sound Vibration*

## The Perfection of Mantra Recitation

By His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



*Radha-Krishna, the Supreme Lovers & Supreme Personalities of Godhead*

The transcendental vibration established by the chanting of *Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare* is the sublime method of reviving our Krsna consciousness. As living spiritual souls we are all originally Krsna conscious entities, but due to our association with matter from time immemorial, our consciousness is now polluted by the material atmosphere. The material atmosphere, in which we are now living, is called Maya, or illusion. Maya means "that which is not." And what is this illusion? The illusion is that we are all trying to be lords of material nature, while actually we are under the grip of her stringent laws. When a servant artificially tries to imitate the all-powerful master, this is called illusion. In this polluted concept of life, we are all trying to exploit the resources of material nature, but actually we are becoming more and more entangled in her complexities. Therefore, although we are engaged in a hard struggle to conquer nature, we are ever more dependent on her. This illusory struggle against material nature can be stopped at once by the revival of our Krsna consciousness.

Krsna consciousness is not an artificial imposition of the mind; this consciousness is the original energy of the living entity. When we hear the transcendental vibration, this consciousness is revived. And this is the process recommended for this age by authorities. By practical experience also, one can perceive that by chanting this maha-mantra or the Great Chanting for Deliverance, one can at once feel a transcendental ecstasy coming through from the spiritual stratum. And when one is factually on the plane of spiritual understanding- surpassing the stages of the senses, mind, and intelligence-one is situated on the transcendental plane. This chanting of *Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare* is directly enacted from the spiritual platform, and thus this sound vibration surpasses all lower strata of consciousness- namely sensual, mental, and intellectual. There is no need, therefore, to understand the language of the mantra, nor is there any need for mental speculation or any intellectual adjustment for chanting this maha-mantra. It springs automatically from the spiritual platform, and as such, anyone can take part in the chanting without any previous qualification, and dance in ecstasy. The word Hara is the form of addressing the energy of the Lord, and the words Krsna and Rama are addressing the Lord Himself. Both Krsna and Rama mean "the supreme pleasure" and Hara is the supreme pleasure energy of the Lord, changed to hare in the vocative. The supreme pleasure energy of the Lord helps us to reach the Lord.

The material energy, called Maya, is also one of the multi energies of the Lord. And we, the living entities, are also the energy-marginal energy-of the Lord. The living entities are described as superior to material energy. When the superior energy is in contact with the inferior energy, an incompatible situation arises; but when the superior marginal energy is in contact with the superior energy, called Hara, the living entity is established in his happy, normal condition.

These three words, namely Hare, Krsna, and Rama, are transcendental seeds of the maha-mantra. The chanting is a spiritual call for the Lord and His internal energy, Hara, to give protection to the conditioned soul. This chanting is exactly like the genuine cry of a child for its mother. Mother Hara helps the devotee achieve the grace of the supreme Father, Hari, or Krsna, and the Lord reveals Himself to the devotee who chants this mantra sincerely. No other means of spiritual realization, therefore, is as effective in this age as chanting the maha- mantra:

*Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*



# SHRI KRISHNA

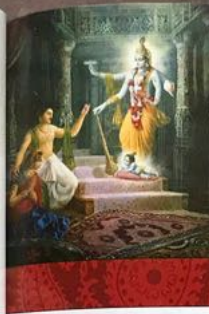
"The Supreme Lord, the embodiment of truth, consciousness, and joy, is known as Govinda, or Krishna. He is beginningless, the origin of everything, and the cause of all causes." (*Brahma-samhita* 5.1)

**K**rishna is Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The *Shrimad Bhagavatam* (1.5.27), a scripture central to Vaishnava thought, reveals Krishna's identity: "Krishna is God Himself" (*krishnas tu bhagavan svayam*)—He is not merely a portion or manifestation of God, as are so many other divinities in India; He is the original Manifestor, the Complete Godhead. He displayed on earth His eternal *lila*, or spiritual activities, approximately 5,000 years ago. Vaishnava tradition teaches that Krishna engages in these activities eternally but manifested them on our planet only at that time. Among Krishna's various pastimes, the following comprise the very essence of Indian culture: His birth in the prison of Kamsa, His playful and mischievous childhood activities as the son of Nanda and Yashoda, His killing of various demons, His dalliances with Shri Radha and the *gopis*, His heart-rending departure from Braj for Mathura, His regal



activities in His kingdom in Dvaraka, His tryst with Radha at Kurukshetra, and His speaking of the *Bhagavad-gita*.

Several pastimes of Krishna reflect grandeur and even retribution, as when He rides the world of evil forces. Despite this, Krishna's appearance underscores the superiority of love over power, sweetness over opulence. While most concepts of God evoke feelings of awe and reverence, Krishna



evokes intimacy and personal relationship. Vaishnava poets have suggested that His beautiful appearance—dark-bluish skin, large lotuslike eyes, and long raven-black hair adorned with a colorful peacock feather—seems to beckon the soul, to call out for interpersonal relationship. It is said that when one hears Krishna's flute, one cannot help but run to Him in a state of divine madness.



## KRISHNA'S DIVINITY IN BHAGAVAD-GITA

In the *Gita*, Krishna's status is clear: "I am the source of everything; from Me the entire creation flows." (10.8) "There is no truth superior to Me." (7:7) "By all the Vedas, I am to be known." (15:15)

Arjuna prays to Krishna, "You are the Supreme Brahman, the Ultimate... the Absolute Truth, and the eternal Divine Person. You are the primal God, transcendental and original..." (10.12), "You are the original personality, the Godhead..." (11.38)

Throughout the *Gita*, Krishna is called Purushottama ("the Supreme Person"), Parabrahman ("the Supreme Brahman"), Adideva ("the original Lord"), Parameshvara ("the Supreme Controller"), and so on.



# RADHA

"Essence of beauty and *rasa*, Quintessence of bliss and compassion, Embodiment of sweetness and brilliance, Epitome of artfulness, graceful in love: May my mind take refuge in Radha, Quintessence of all essences."

—Prabodhananda Sarasvati

"Radha's name is the greatest treasure. Krishna plays that name on His flute, remembering it constantly. She is the thread in every fabric, each yantra and mantra, each *Veda* and *Tantra*. Shukadeva knew this secret of secrets, but decided it best stay unveiled; Krishna incarnates to pursue it: still its depth eludes even Him."

—Harinam Vyas

In traditional Vaishnava literature, Krishna is compared to the sun, and Radha to the sunshine. Both exist simultaneously, but one comes from the other. Still, it is a misconception to say that the sun is prior to the sunshine—as soon as there is a sun, there is sunshine. More importantly, the sun has no meaning without sunshine, without heat and light. And heat and light would not exist without the sun. Thus, the sun and the sunshine co-exist, each



"Lord Krishna enchants the world, but Shri Radha enchants even Him. Therefore She is the supreme goddess of all."

(*Chaitanya-charitamrita*, *Adi-lila* 4.95)

the possessor of full power. The two are not different, as evidenced by the revealed scriptures. They are indeed the same, just as musk and its scent are inseparable, or as fire and its heat are nondifferent. Thus, Radha and Krishna are one, although They have taken two forms to enjoy a relationship—this is Their mysterious *lila*." (*Chaitanya-charitamrita*, *Adi-lila* 4.95-98)

To increase the joy of relationship, Radha further expands into the many *gopis* of Braj. In the ancient Vaishnava texts, such as *Harivamsa* and some early Puranas, the individual *gopis* are not mentioned by name, though they are referred to as a group. Krishna is depicted as meeting with many cowherd girls at once. But in the *Bhagavatam* one sees that a special *gopi* emerges, particularly in the episode of the *Rasa Dance*. However, Shukadeva, the speaker of the *Bhagavatam*, does not mention Her by name. Gaudiya tradition asserts that this *gopi* is Radha (literally "She who satisfies Krishna most"). She and the other *gopis* are elaborately described in the *Natadiya Padma*, and *Brahma-vivarta Puranas* and in later literature. Radha's place in Vaishnava history, however, was not fully revealed until as late as the 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E., when Jayadeva Goswami and Nimbarkacharya wrote about Her

in their poetic treatises. In the writings of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan, there is a wealth of information about the *gopis*, and preeminently about Radha.

In his *Stavanali* (15.1-10), Raghunath Das Goswami, the great mystical poet among the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan, describes Radha as if She were standing before him: "Radha makes even Lakshmi [the goddess of fortune] despair of her charms. Radha's inner silken garment is Her modesty. Her body is delicately



painted with the saffron of beauty and the musk of glowing *shringara-rasa* [the amorous mood]. Her ornaments are fashioned from nine most precious jewels: Her trembling tears, thrilling stupor, perspiration, stammering blushing, madness, and swoon. Her garland is prepared from the flowers of a select assortment of aesthetic qualities, and Her garment is freshened with the pure, subtle perfume of Her exquisite virtues. She reddens Her lips with the betel-leaf of intense attachment, and the guile of love is Her mascara. Her ears are perpetually adorned with glorious earrings—the sound of Krishna's name."

# BHAKTI DEVOTIONAL LOVE

The essence of Shri Chaitanya's teaching is *bhakti*, or "devotional love for Krishna." The word itself is derived from either of two Sanskrit roots. The first is *bhanj*, which refers to "separation." This derivation indicates the importance of Vaishnava dualism: one can serve only a God who is "separate" from the self. If the living being is fundamentally one with God, as Advaita Vedantists propose, there is no opportunity for *bhakti*, because *bhakti* implies two entities: the devotee and the one to whom he or she is devoted.

More commonly, *bhakti* is traced to the verbal root *bhuj*, which means "to worship," "to be devoted to" or "to participate in." In the second verse of his famed *sutas* on *bhakti*, Shandilya defines *bhakti* as "exclusive and intense loving attachment to the Lord." The Vaishnava sage Narada elaborates upon this definition in his *Narada-bhakti-sutra*, where he says, "Bhakti consists of offering one's every action to the Supreme Lord and feeling extreme distress in forgetting Him." (*Suta* 19). The very first book of the *Bhagavatam* defines *bhakti* as *parama-dharma*, or "the highest and most satisfying function of the soul." *Bhakti* is thus paramount in Vaishnava thought.

The concept of *bhakti* is found in the writings of the South Indian Alvars, who belonged to India's earliest organized Vaishnava tradition, Shrivaisnavism. And

it is also found in the North, as is amply represented by the works of Rupa Goswami, whose *bhakti-rasa* theology is at the very core of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. *Bhakti* became prominent in 15<sup>th</sup>- and 16<sup>th</sup>-century India, which witnessed a "bhakti renaissance."

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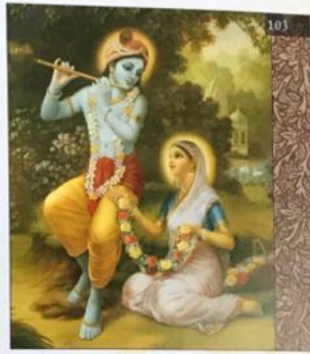


Coincidentally, during this same period the Western world experienced its own renaissance—one that moved in the opposite direction. If the Indian renaissance emphasized devotion to God, the Western one focused on empirical learning and material progress, on science and technology. In essence, Western materialism came to the fore, and spirituality receded to the background.



The European Renaissance is often remembered as a period of growth, a journey toward self-sufficiency and self-discovery. To characterize these times, historian Jules Michelet coined the term "rebirth." Those were times of a newfound awakening, when man was able to escape his preoccupation with religion and superstition and to become truly progressive by focusing on material nature, on the body, and on the world around him. Man moved toward materialistic complexity, leaving spirituality and simple living as a thing of the past.

The bhakti renaissance, unlike its Western counterpart, was a move



toward minimalism, if also towards essential spiritual truths. Rather than reach for new levels of complexity, this renaissance was concerned with the essential dynamics of the religious impulse: it responded to man's inner need for devotional exchange with his Creator, to man's longing for love.

There were those, however, who held on to ritualistic tradition and resisted the "new ideas" of the bhakti reformers, even though the bhakti movement drew its premises from the very same texts the traditionalists used.

Nonetheless, most of India has been greatly influenced by *bhakti* and *bhakti's* practitioners. This may be because *bhakti* speaks to something fundamental in man, and because the opposite—a renaissance moving toward material progress—while advantageous in some ways, ultimately leaves one spiritually barren, without a soul.

# THE GOPIS: COWHERD MAIDENS OF BRAJ

"The energies [consorts] of the Supreme Lord are of three kinds: the Lakshmis in Vaikuntha, the queens in Dvaraka, and the *gopis* in Vrindavan. The *gopis* are the best of all, for they have the privilege of serving Shri Krishna, the primeval Lord, the son of the King of Braj."

(Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila 1.79-80)

Shri Radha is the foremost of the *gopis*, able to please Krishna with Her mere glance. However, Radha feels that Her love for Krishna can always expand to greater heights. Therefore, She manifests Herself as the many *gopis* of Braj, who fulfill Krishna's desire for relationship (*rasa*) in a variety of ways.

The *gopis* are considered the *kaya-syuhu* of Shri Radha. There is no English equivalent for this term,

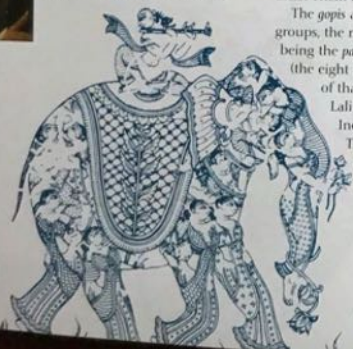
but it can be explained as follows: If one person could simultaneously exist in more than one human form at a single time, those forms would be known as the *kaya* ("body") *syuhu* ("multitude of") of that individual. In other words, these forms are one and the same person, but occupy different space and time and have different moods and emotions. As Radha and Krishna's sole purpose is to love each other, the *gopis* exist to assist Them in this love.

The *gopis* are divided into five groups, the most important group being the *parama-preshtha-saktis* (the eight primary *gopis*). The *gopis* of that group are named Lalita, Vishakha, Chitra, Indulekha, Champakalata, Tungavidya, Rangadevi, and Sudevi. Many details of their lives

According to the Vaishnava scripture Bhakti-Ratnakara, the *gopis* so loved Krishna that they combined their bodies into the form of an elephant and allowed Him to ride upon them, to spare His lotus feet from the hot sands of Braj.

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and services are described in esoteric scriptures, including their parents' names, their spouses' names, their skin color, ages, birthdays, moods, temperaments, favorite melodies, instruments, closest girlfriends, and so on. These elements form the substance of an inner meditation, or *sadhana*, which is designed to bring the devotee to the spiritual realm. Through such meditation one gradually develops *prema*, or love for Krishna.

Clearly, the tradition sees the love of the *gopis* as transcendental love of the highest order, countering any accusations of mundane sexuality, with clearly defined distinctions between lust and love. Like the Bride-of-Christ concept in the Christian tradition, and the Kabbalistic concept of the Feminine Divine in Jewish mysticism, "gopi love" is theologically profound and constitutes the zenith of spiritual awareness. *Gopi* love represents the purest love a soul may have for its divine source; the only correlation this love may have to mundane lust is in appearance alone.





*Krishna Consciousness is the highest Yoga performance by trained devotional yogis. The Yoga system, as is stated in the standard Yoga practice formula given by Lord Krishna in The Bhagavad Gita, and as recommended in the Patanjali Yoga discipline, is different from the nowadays practiced Hatha Yoga, as is generally understood in the Western Countries.*

*Real Yoga practice means to control the senses and, after such control is established, to concentrate the mind on the Narayana Form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna. Lord Krishna is the Original Absolute Personality, the Godhead, and all the other Vishnu Forms—with four hands, decorated with conch, lotus, club and wheel—are plenary expansions of Krishna.*

*In The Bhagavad Gita it is recommended that we should meditate upon the form of the Lord. For practicing concentration of the mind, one has to sit down in a secluded place sanctified by a sacred atmosphere, and the yogi should observe the rules and regulations of Brahmacharya—to live a life of strict self-restraint and celibacy. Nobody can practice Yoga in a congested city, living a life of extravagance, including unrestricted sex indulgence and adultery of the tongue.*

*We have already stated that Yoga practice means controlling the senses, and the beginning of controlling the senses is to control the tongue. You cannot allow the tongue to take all kinds of forbidden food and drink, and at the same time improve in the practice of Yoga. It is a very regrettable fact that many unauthorized and stray so-called yogis now come to the West and exploit the leaning of the people towards Yoga. Such unauthorized yogis even dare to say publicly that one can indulge in drinking and at the same time practice meditation.*

*Five thousand years ago, in The Bhagavad Gita dialog, Lord Krishna recommended the Yoga practice to His disciple Arjuna, but Arjuna flatly expressed his inability to follow the stringent rules and regulations of Yoga. One should be practical in every field of activity. One should not waste his valuable time simply in practicing some gymnastic feats in the name of Yoga. Real Yoga is to search out the four-handed Supersoul within one's heart, and to see Him perpetually in meditation. Such continued meditation is called Samadhi. If, however, one wants to meditate upon something void or impersonal, it will require a very long time to achieve anything by Yoga practice. We cannot concentrate our mind on something void or impersonal. Real Yoga practice is to fix up the mind on the Person of the four-handed Narayana Who dwells in everyone's heart.*

## ***The Supersoul***

*Sometimes it is said that, by meditation, one will understand that God is seated within one's heart always, even when one does not know it. God is seated within the heart of everyone. He is not only seated in the heart of the human being, but He is also there within the hearts of the cats and dogs. The Bhagavad Gita certifies this with the declaration of the Lord: Iswara, the Supreme Controller of the world, is seated in the heart of everyone. He is not only in everyone's heart, but He is also present within the atoms. No place is vacant, no place is without the presence of the Lord.*

*The feature of the Lord by which He is present everywhere is called the Paramatman. Atman means the individual soul, and Paramatman means the individual Supersoul. Both Atman and Paramatman are individual Persons. The difference between Them is that the Atman, or soul, is present only in one particular place, whereas the Paramatman is present everywhere.*

*In this connection, the example of the Sun is very nice. An individual person may be situated in one place, but the Sun, even though a specific individual entity, is present over the head of every individual person. In The Bhagavad Gita this is very nicely explained. Therefore, even though the qualities of all entities, including the Lord, are equal, the Supersoul is different from the individual soul by quantity of expansion. The Lord or Supersoul can expand Himself into millions of different forms, while the individual soul cannot do so.*

*The Supersoul, being seated in everyone's heart, can witness everyone's activities, past, present and future. In the Upanishads the Supersoul is said to be sitting with the individual soul as a friend and witness. As a friend He is always anxious to get the individual soul back to home, back to Godhead. As a witness, He is the endower of all benedictions that result from the individual's actions. The Supersoul gives all facility to the individual soul for achieving whatever he may desire. But he instructs His friend, so that he may ultimately give up all other engagements and simply surrender unto God for perpetual bliss and eternal life, full of knowledge. This is the last instruction of The Bhagavad Gita, the most authorized and widely read book on all forms of Yoga.*

## ***Krishna Consciousness***

*The last word of The Bhagavad Gita, as stated above, is the last word in the matter of perfecting the Yoga system. It is further stated in The Bhagavad Gita that a person who is always absorbed in Krishna Consciousness is the topmost yogi. What is this Krishna Consciousness? Just as the individual soul is present by his consciousness throughout the whole body, so the Supersoul, or Paramatman, is present throughout the whole creation by His super consciousness.*

*This super consciousness cannot be imitated by the individual soul, who has limited awareness: I can understand what is going on within my limited body, but I cannot feel what is going on in another's body. I am present all over my body by my consciousness, but I am not present in any other's body by my consciousness. However, the Supersoul or Paramatman, being present within everyone, situated everywhere, is conscious of every existence. The theory that the soul and the Supersoul are one is not acceptable, because the individual soul's consciousness cannot act in superconsciousness. This super consciousness can only be achieved by dovetailing individual consciousness with the super consciousness; and this dovetailing process is called surrender, or Krishna Consciousness.*

## ***Mystic Powers***

*To simply understand that God is seated in everyone's heart is not perfection. One has to be acquainted with God from within and without, and thus to act in Krishna Consciousness. This is the highest perfectional stage for the human form of life, and the topmost stage in all Yoga systems.*

*For a perfect yogi there are eight kinds of super-achievements:*

- one can become smaller than an atom,*
- one can become bigger than a mountain,*
- one can become lighter than the air*
- one can become heavier than any metal,*
- one can achieve any material effect he likes (create a planet, for example),*
- one can control others like the Lord,*
- one can travel anywhere within (or without) the universe freely,*
- one can choose his own time and place of death, and take rebirth wherever he may desire.*

*But when one rises to the perfectional stage of receiving dictation from the Lord, that is more than the stage of the material achievements above mentioned.*

*The breathing exercise of the Yoga system which is generally practiced is just the beginning of the system. Meditation on the Supersoul is just a step forward. Achievement of wonderful material success is also only a step forward. But to attain direct contact with the Supersoul and to take dictation from Him is the highest perfectional stage.*

*The breathing exercises and meditation practices of Yoga are very difficult in this age. It was difficult even 5,000 years ago, or else Arjuna would not have rejected the proposal of Krishna. This age of Kali is called the Fallen Age. At the present moment people in general are short-living and very slow in understanding self-realization or spiritual life. They are mostly unfortunate, and as such, if somebody is a little bit interested in self-realization, he is misguided by so many frauds. The only actual way to realization of the perfect stage of Yoga is to follow the principles of The Bhagavad Gita as they were practiced by Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. This is the simplest and highest perfection of Yoga practice.*



## ***Supreme Knowledge***

*Lord Chaitanya practically demonstrated Krishna Consciousness Yoga simply by chanting the Holy Names of Krishna, as they are mentioned in the Vedanta, Srimad Bhagwatam, and many important Puranas. The largest number of Indians follow this Yoga practice, and in the U.S.A. also it is gradually growing in many cities. It is very easy and practical for this age, especially for those who are serious about success in Yoga. No other process can be successful in this age.*

*The meditation process in right earnest was possible in the Golden Age of Satya Yuga because the people at that time lived for a hundred thousand years on the average.*

*If you want success in practical Yoga, take to the chanting of Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, and feel for yourself how you are making progress. One should know for himself how much he is progressing in Yoga practice.*

*In The Bhagavad Gita this practice of Krishna Consciousness is described as Rajavidya, the king of all erudition; Rajaguhyam, the most confidential system of spiritual realization; Pavitra, the purest of all that is pure; Susukham, very happily performed; and Avayam, inexhaustible.*

## ***Bhakti Yoga***

*Those who have taken to this most sublime Bhakti Yoga system, this practice of devotional service in transcendental love of Krishna, can testify to how they are nicely enjoying its happy and easy execution. Yoga means controlling the senses, and Bhakti Yoga means purifying the senses. When the senses are purified, they are also, automatically, controlled. You cannot stop the activities of the senses by artificial means, but if you purify the senses they are not only kept back from rubbish engagement, but also they become positively engaged in transcendental service to the Lord.*

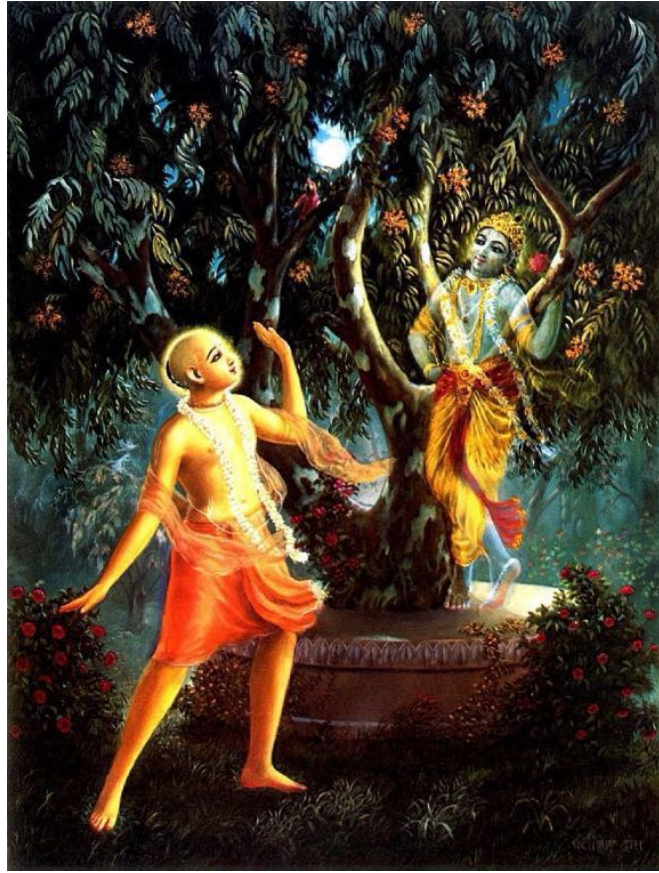
*Krishna Consciousness is not manufactured by us through mental speculation. It is the injunction of The Bhagavad Gita, Which says that, when we think in Krishna, chant in Krishna, live in Krishna, eat in Krishna, talk in Krishna, hope in Krishna, and sustain in Krishna, we return to Krishna without any doubt. And this is the substance of Krishna Consciousness.*



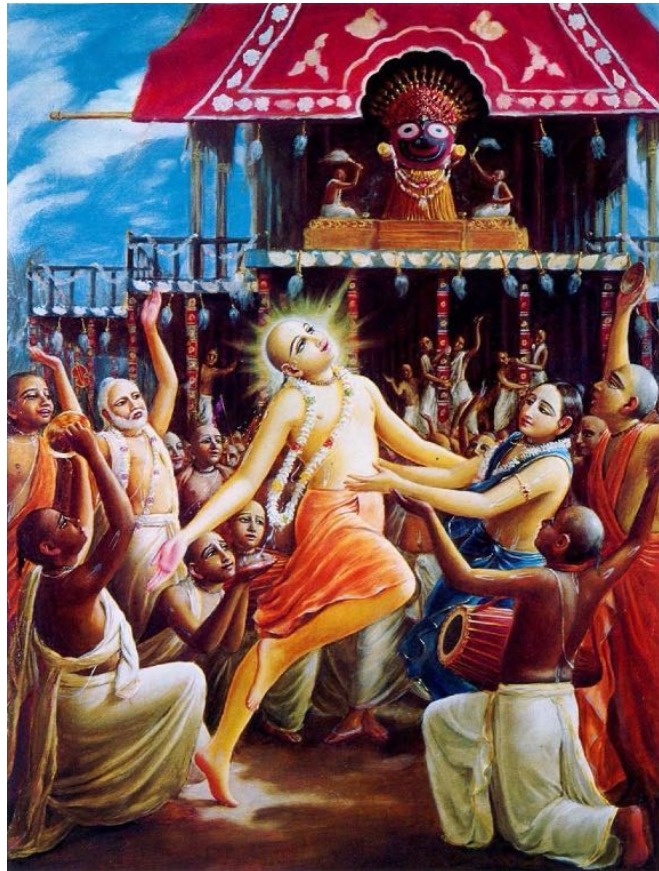
## *Lord Caitanya: The Most Confidential “Golden” Avatar*



*When the Renaissance movement began in Europe in the 15th Century, on the other side of the globe, a very confidential avatar of Krishna appeared in India: Sri Lord Caitanya. Many scholars have declared that it is not coincidental the enlightenment period began with the re-appearance of Lord Krishna. It is also understood that Lord Caitanya's appearance is very rare within the universe; Lord Caitanya in His "original" form appear "once" during the "day-time" in one of the 1000 Maha yugas which is the same "time" as 1000 Maha yugas (4 billion 320 million years) according to the Brahma Samhita- which is 8,640,000,000 human years. The Vedas say that in the spiritual world every word is a song, every movement is a dance. In this very confidential and esoteric advent of Krishna we understand that He wonders how much transcendental pleasure is within Himself, and in order to taste His own potency, He sometimes takes the position of tasting Himself. From the historical records about Lord Chaitanya, we certainly see a picture of a God- conscious saint who appeared to gift the planet the most confidential maha mantra. But we have to seek further—into the devotional Vedic literature—to understand the full, spiritual significance of Lord Chaitanya and the bhakti movement that He inaugurated. We should consult the biographies of Lord Chaitanya, especially the Chaitanya- bhagavata, by Vrindavana dasa Thakura, and the Chaitanya-charitamrita, by Krishnadasa Kaviraja. Both of these works were compiled in the sixteenth century and are filled with first-hand accounts of Lord Chaitanya's acts and teachings. They also give us an accurate picture of the social and religious setting in which Lord Chaitanya lived. The Chaitanya-charitamrita is especially valuable, because the author quotes extensively from the Sanskrit Vedic scriptures to authoritatively and logically establish the divinity of Lord Chaitanya. One of the opening verses of Chaitanya-charitamrita boldly asserts that Lord Chaitanya is none other than the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna Himself: What the Upanishads describe as the impersonal Brahman is but the effulgence of His body, and the Lord known as the Supersoul (Paramatma) is but His localized plenary portion. He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna Himself, full with six opulences [wealth, fame, strength, beauty, knowledge, and renunciation]. He is the Absolute Truth, and no other truth is greater than or equal to Him.*

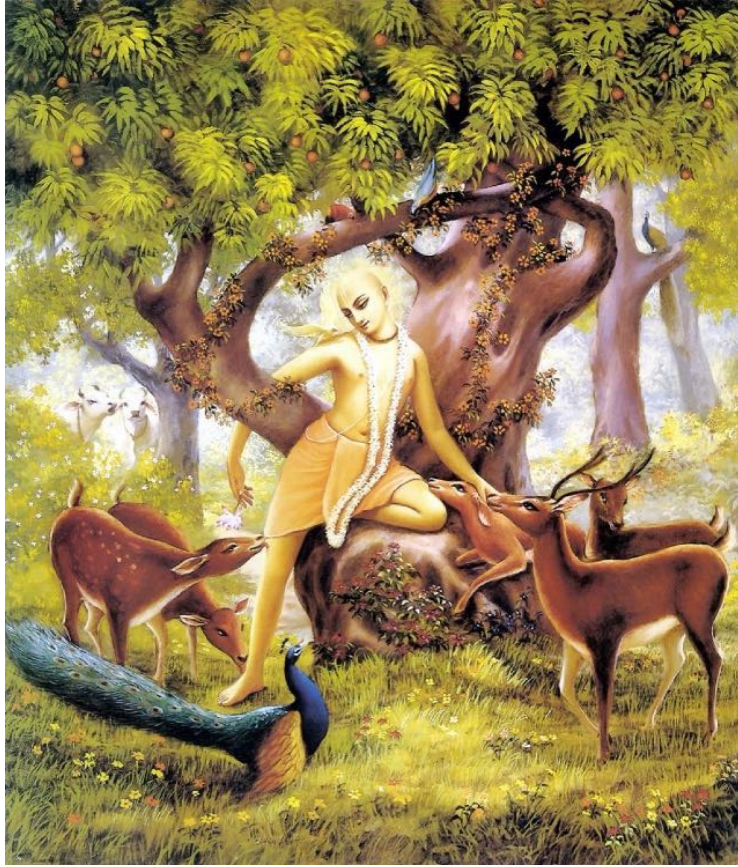


*Lord Caitanya exhibiting ecstatic symptoms of love for Krishna*



*The author of Chaitanya-charitamrita does not expect us to accept this statement without proof; therefore, he carefully argues on the basis of guru, shastra, and sadhu to support his assertion about Lord Chaitanya. (According to Vedic knowledge, spiritual truth is revealed through three harmonious sources: the scriptures [shastra], the disciplic succession of previous saints and teachers [sadhu], and one's own spiritual master [guru]. When these three authorized sources agree, then information is conclusive.) The verse I have quoted from Chaitanya-charitamrita, which asserts that Lord Chaitanya is the Supreme Lord, contains two important Sanskrit terms. Brahman and Paramatma. According to the Srimad-Bhagavatam, the Absolute Truth is manifest in three features. The impersonal feature is called Brahman, or the formless, eternal existence beyond the dualities of this temporary world. Brahman is the highest truth for the speculative, Vedanta philosophers and for certain mystic yogis. Paramatma refers to the Supersoul, the personal form of God as He appears in the heart of every living being. This expansion of God grants liberation from birth and death to those highly elevated yogis rapt in meditation on Him. The third feature of the Absolute described in Vedic literature is Bhagavan, or the original, personal form of Godhead as He eternally exists in His own spiritual abode. This form of the Absolute is the cause of both Brahman and Paramatma and is the highest truth of eternity, bliss, and knowledge. Bhagavan, or the Personality of Godhead, can be realized, however, not by philosophy or good works or yoga, but only by pure devotion. The conception of Bhagavan is the pure monotheistic idea described (though not very clearly) in Biblical references to the loving, all-powerful, all-knowing Father in heaven, the creator. In other words, God is more than an eternal force or law. Ultimately He is a loving person, and the goal of human life is to know Him, serve and love Him, and attain to eternal life in His blissful spiritual kingdom. According to Vedic literature, Bhagavan, or the Personality of Godhead, appears in this world in various incarnations foretold in the scriptures. The Srimad-Bhagavatam gives a comprehensive list of the prominent incarnations and then concludes: ete camsha-kala pumsah krishnas tu bhagavan svayam. This means that all of the listed incarnations are parts of the Godhead, but the appearance of Lord Krishna is special because Krishna is bhagavan svayam, the original Personality of Godhead from whom all incarnations emanate. This is the conclusion of all the Vedic literatures—the Upanishads, the Puranas, and the Mahabharata and Bhagavad-gita. In the Gita Arjuna refers to the great authorities who accept Lord Krishna as the Supreme: “You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ultimate abode, the purest, the Absolute Truth. You are the eternal, transcendental, original person, the unborn, the greatest. All the great sages such as Narada, Asita, Devala, and Vyasa confirm the truth about You, and now You Yourself are declaring it to me.”*

*Lord Chaitanya is Krishna Himself, but He appears as a devotee to taste the sweetness of the transcendental mellow in Himself which is tasted by Srimati Radharani, the greatest of all devotees. During the time of the Shri Krishna Chaitanya's appearance, most of the brahmanas in India were impersonalists of the Mayavada school. Mayavadis believe that there is no Supreme Personality of Godhead and that the living entities are part of the impersonal Brahman energy. They believe in silent meditation as the means of self-realization with the aim of negating all activities and merging into the Brahman effulgence and thus become “one with Brahman”. Lord Chaitanya came to teach the real meaning of the Vedas, that Lord Shri Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that mankind's highest duty is to be constantly engaged in Krishna's service. The specific mission of Lord Chaitanya was, by both example and precept, to distribute the religion (dharma) specifically ordained for this age, the chanting of the holy names of God. Historically Lord Chaitanya may be described as a Bengali saint, but His mercy is not intended merely for the Bengalis. It is for the entire world. He even predicted that the chanting of the name of Krishna would one day be known in every city, town, and village in the world. The chanting of the holy names of God as delivered by Lord Chaitanya is not only an easy practice, but it is also the topmost method for achieving spiritual perfection. No one but the Supreme Lord Himself could distribute the highest form of devotional service, and thus Lord Krishna Himself appeared as a devotee. That is Lord Chaitanya.*



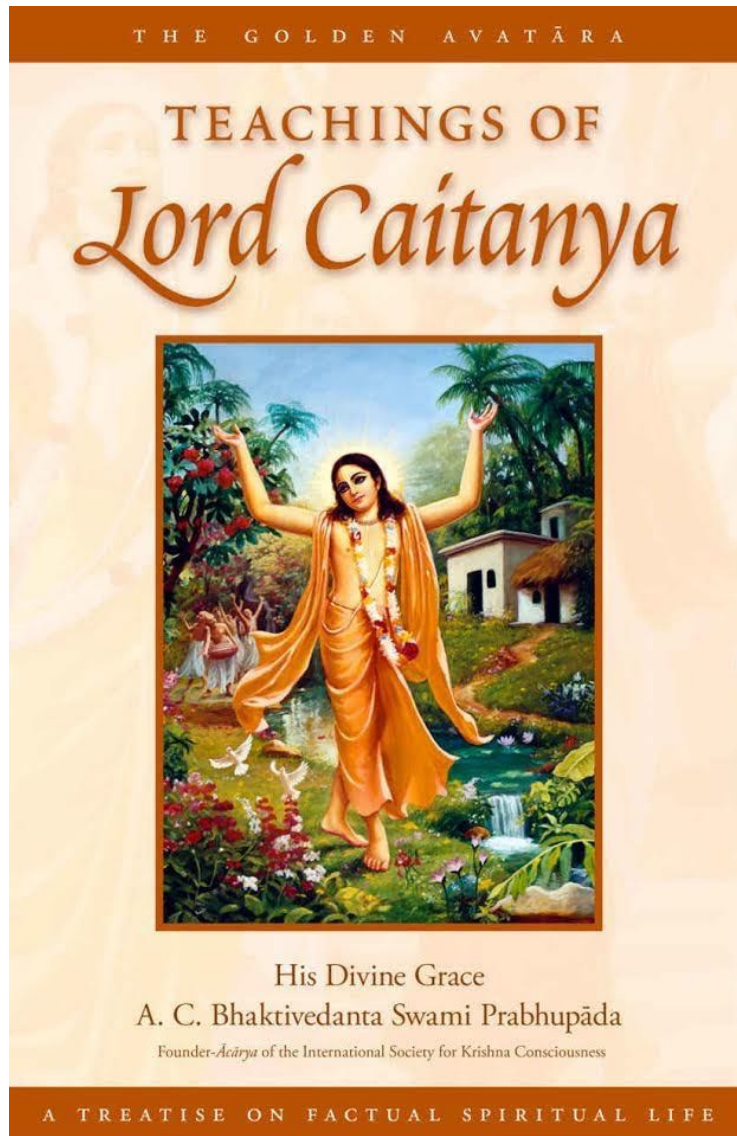
*Lord Chaitanya sometimes walked through the jungle, chanting loudly. ‘When Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said, “Chant Krishna! Krishna!” the tigers and deer began to dance and chant, “Krsna!” When all the tigers and does danced and jumped, Balabhadra Battacharya saw them and was struck with wonder.’  
-CC, Madhya – lila, 17.40-41*





*One doesn't have to stop all activities, but instead should dovetail all activities with Krishna. The simplest way to do this is the method taught by Lord Chaitanya, called sankirtana, or the congregational chanting of the holy name of God to anyone who would take it. Lord Chaitanya is Lord Krishna in His most merciful feature. Therefore, even if one doesn't understand Lord Chaitanya's identity as the Supreme Lord, but accepts Him as a saintly person or as a social reformer and philosopher, one can still derive the highest benefit by chanting the names of God. Without knowing anything at all about Lord Chaitanya, people throughout the world have enthusiastically participated in Lord Chaitanya's sankirtana movement of chanting the most sacred, ancient Maha Mantra. Lord Chaitanya did not invent a system of religion; religious systems are meant to show the existence of God, who is then generally approached as the cosmic order-supplier. Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's transcendental mission is to distribute love of Godhead to everyone- irregardless of qualification. Anyone who accepts God as the Supreme can take to the process of chanting Hare Krishna and become a lover of God. Therefore Lord Chaitanya is the most magnanimous. This munificent broadcasting of devotional love via the singing of the Mahamantra is considered to be the path of least resistance in liberating oneself from the illusion of the material energy- such an inconceivable act of mercy and display of love.*

*May you never forget how rare, how extraordinary it is to have a human form. It is only in the form you have now that you can regain your innate love of God.*



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# THE MAHA MANTRA

The Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*, or “the great chant for deliverance,” is considered by scripture the most powerful of mantras, for it includes the potency of all others.

The mantra runs as follows: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, and the Vedic literature particularly recommends it for the current age. Statements to this effect can be found in the *Brahmanda Purana*, the *Kalisanatana Upanishad*, and in many other Vedic and post-Vedic texts.

Breaking down the sacred mantra into its component parts: The word “Hare” refers to Lord Hari—a name for Krishna that indicates His ability to remove obstacles from His devotees’ path. In a higher sense, the word “Hare” is a vocalic form of “Hara,” which refers to Mother Hara, or Shrimati Radharani, the divine feminine energy.

“Krishna” means “the all-attractive one,” referring to God in His original form. Etymologically, the

word *krish* indicates the attractive feature of the Lord’s existence, and *na* means spiritual pleasure. When the verb *krish* is combined

with the affix *na*, we have *krishna*, which means “the absolute person, who gives spiritual pleasure through His all-attractive qualities.” According to Sanskrit semantic derivation (*nirukti*), it is also understood that *na* refers to the Lord’s ability to stop the repetition of birth and death.

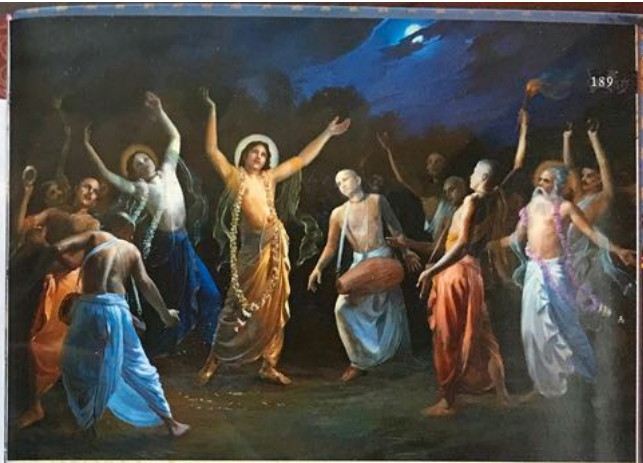
And *krish* is a synonym for *sattartha*, or “existential totality.” Another way of understanding the word *krishna*, then, is “that Lord who embodies all of existence and who can help the living entities overcome the repeated suffering of birth and death.”

“Rama” refers to both Balaram (Krishna’s elder brother) and also Radha-Ramana-Rama, which is a name for Krishna meaning “one who brings pleasure to Shrimati



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Radharani.” Thus the *maha-mantra*, composed solely of the Lord’s most confidential names, embodies the essence of the Divine. As a prayer, the mantra is translated in the following way: “O Lord, O divine energy of the Lord! Please engage me in Your service.”

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কৃষ্ণ  
রাম



Above: Radha and Krishna, the ultimate divine couple evoked by the *maha-mantra*. Left: Krishna and His elder brother, Balaram. Top: Shri Chaitanya chants the *maha-mantra* and dances with His associates.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare  
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare

# SHRI CHAITANYA HIS LIFE

“I could believe only in a God who understood how to dance.” — Friedrich Nietzsche

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was born on February 18, 1486. His birth name was Vishvambhar Mishra, but later He became popular as Nimal Pandit, and still later, after becoming a renunciant, as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He was born in the holy town of Navadvip, also known as Mayapur, in West Bengal. Mahaprabhu’s parents—Jagannath Mishra and Sachidevi—had suffered through the deaths of their first eight children, all girls. The birth of Vishvarup, Mahaprabhu’s elder brother, signaled a change in their lives. Soon after, Mahaprabhu was born.

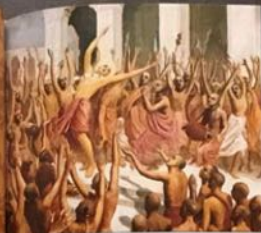
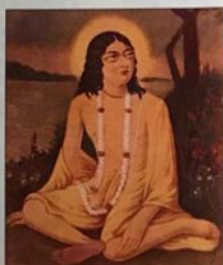
When Mahaprabhu was about eight years of age, He began school under the tutelage of Gangaadas Pandit. Two years later, in 1496, He became known as a great scholar, having mastered logic, hermeneutics, philosophy, and several languages. It was in this year, too, that His elder brother, Vishvarup, took *sannyas*, the renounced order of life, and became a traveling mendicant. This event had a deep influence on young Mahaprabhu.

Four years later, in the year 1500,

He married Lakshmi priya, and when she passed away untimely, He remarried. Vishnupriya, greatly respected in the Vaishnava community, became His second wife.

In 1505 Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu traveled to Gaya, in Bihar province, to perform the funeral rites for His father. While in Gaya,

He met Ishvara Puri, a great saint, and took initiation from him. It is said that immediately after initiation, by chanting the mantras His teacher gave Him, Mahaprabhu became God-intoxicated. According to sacred texts, spiritual sound virtually comes to life when it is bestowed upon



a disciple by a genuine spiritual teacher. The chanter thus associates with God through His holy name in the form of a mantra and experiences spiritual bliss culminating in love of God.

Appropos of this, Shri Chaitanya was enraptured by the holy name of Krishna. He was totally given to theomania, which made Him chant and dance in ecstasy. His biographers recount that He spontaneously danced with wild abandon, His followers joining Him in His vigorous chanting episodes. After His initiation Shri Chaitanya also performed many miracles—curing lepers, bringing the dead back to life, appearing in several places at once, manifesting divine forms, etc. These many supernatural occurrences were documented by His contemporaries. Accomplished devotional practitioners recognized Shri Chaitanya in His own time, as Jesus was earlier recognized by his disciples.

In the beginning of 1510, when Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was twenty-four, He traveled to nearby Katwa and was initiated there into the renounced order of life (*sannyas*). The initiation was performed by Keshava Bharati, a renowned monk of the impersonalistic school, who was soon to be converted by

Mahaprabhu Himself. After His *sannyas* initiation, Mahaprabhu went to Vrindavan and then to Puri, gradually undertaking a two-year tour of South India. During these travels He met many notable personalities, including the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan and Ramananda Roy, to whom He revealed His divine essence as Radha and Krishna combined.

After inundating the subcontinent with His message of divine love, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu returned to Jagannath Puri. As He passed His days among His associates, He was more and more overtaken by *radha-bhava*, the ecstasy associated with Radharani’s love for Krishna. In the last few years of His manifest life, Mahaprabhu even exhibited complete contraction of His bodily limbs. This is called *dvadasahadaha* and occurs only in the twelfth stage of *mahabhava*, one of the most exalted levels of devotional mysticism. Such stages of devotion are very rarely achieved. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu lived out His final days sharing His secret of divine love with His most intimate associates.



Shri Chaitanya dances in ecstasy before the Radha-yatra carts.

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# SHRI CHAITANYA

## AN INTRODUCTION

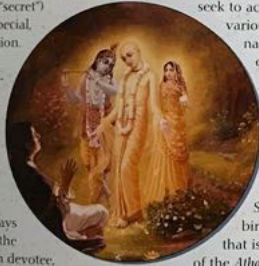
Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486–1533) is considered a combined manifestation of Radha and Krishna. This esoteric incarnation of God brought to the world a process of spirituality by which one can enter into the deepest realms of transcendence.

In the *Shrimad Bhagavatam* (7.9.38) God is called "Tri-yuga"—"He who appears in only three of the four ages (Satya, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali)." This is so because in the fourth age (Kali) He manifests as the Channa ("secret") Avatar, or the special, hidden incarnation. His existence in Kali-yuga is considered hidden because, unlike other avatars, Channa Avatar does not reveal Himself as an incarnation. Rather, He displays His pastimes in the guise of His own devotee, allowing only His most intimate followers to know of His divinity. Still, those who study the scriptures will know who He is.

The Puranas explain that in Satya-yuga the Lord comes in a white color; in Treta, reddish; in Dvapara, blackish; and in Kali, golden. Shri Chaitanya is distinguished by His golden color,

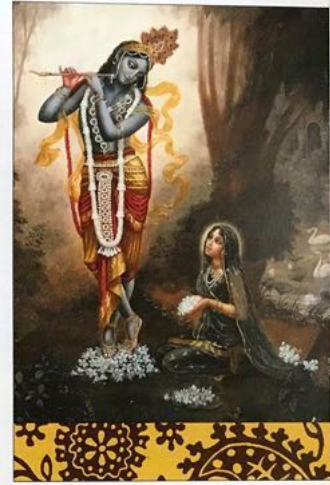
as has been noted by all His biographers. Vedic and post-Vedic writings describe avatars in considerable detail: their "parentage," the town where they appear, the mission they seek to accomplish, and

various specifics of this nature. Direct, corroborative statements about the divinity of Shri Chaitanya are found in the *Mahabharata* and *Shrimad Bhagavatam*, compiled centuries before Shri Chaitanya's birth. An entire text that is considered part of the *Atharva Veda* and is known as the *Chaitanya Upanishad* foretells His glories. The *Krishna-yamala* and *Brahma-yamala* specifically mention His mother's name and the town of His birth, Navadvip. These two scriptures also relate His mission: propagating the Sankirtan movement, which focuses on the congregational chanting of the holy name of God.



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The *Vayu Purana* says: "In the Age of Kali, when the Sankirtan movement is inaugurated, Krishna will descend as the divine son of Sachidevi." The *Bhagavatam* substantiates the statement about Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu being the "golden" avatar of Kali-yuga, and adds further information about the Sankirtan movement: "In the Age of Kali the incarnation of the Lord always chants the holy name 'Krishna' in the company of His associates. His complexion is not blackish but golden. The wise worship Him by chanting His name in congregation." (*Shrimad Bhagavatam* 11.5.32) Indeed, Shri Chaitanya and His teachings of divine love through congregational chanting of the holy name are the hidden glory of India—India's actual glory.



# SHRI CHAITANYA

## HIS TEACHINGS

Shri Chaitanya composed eight Sanskrit prayers known as the *Shikshashtakam*. Gaudiya Vaishnavas see them as the essence of all devotional moods and spiritual instructions.

The first of the eight prayers expounds the glory of chanting the holy name of Krishna:

"Let there be all victory for the chanting of Krishna's holy name, which can cleanse the mirror of the heart and stop the miseries of the blazing fire of material existence. That chanting is the waxing moon that spreads the lotus of good fortune for all living entities. It is the life and soul of all education. The chanting of the holy name of Krishna expands the blissful ocean of transcendental life. It gives a cooling effect to everyone, and enables one to taste full nectar at every step."

In the second verse, in the mood of a sincere devotee, Mahaprabhu expounds the potency of the holy name and the misfortune of not having the desire to chant: "My Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, in Your holy name there is all good fortune for the living entity, and therefore You have many names, such as Krishna and Govinda,

by which You expand Yourself. These names are invested with all Your potencies, and there are no hard and fast rules for chanting them. My dear Lord, although You bestow such mercy on the fallen, conditioned souls by liberally teaching Your holy names, I am so unfortunate that I commit offenses while chanting these names, and therefore I do not achieve attachment for chanting."

The third verse describes the humble person who is eligible to chant the Lord's name purely: "One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor but is instead always ready to give all respect to others, can easily chant the holy name of the Lord all the time."

The fourth verse establishes the exclusivity of purpose necessary for pure chanting: "O Lord of the universe, I do not desire material wealth, followers, a beautiful wife, or fruitive activities described in

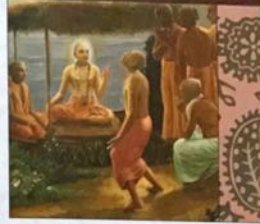
flowery language. All I want, life after life, is pure, unmotivated devotional service unto You."

In the fifth verse, Shri Chaitanya cites the reason for material conditioning and speaks of the humility required to become free: "O my Lord, O Krishna, son of Maharaj Nanda, I am Your eternal servant, but because of my fruitive acts I have fallen into this horrible ocean ofnescience. Please be causelessly merciful to me. Consider me a particle of dust at Your lotus feet."

In the sixth verse, a hint is given of the three external symptoms that accompany the dawn of true love for God: "My dear Lord, when will my eyes be beautified by tears that constantly glide down as I chant Your holy name? When will my voice falter and all of the hairs of my body stand on end in transcendental happiness as I chant Your name?"

The seventh verse describes the soul who is nearing perfection. In a mood of inconceivably blissful separation, the pure devotee becomes mad after Krishna: "My Lord Govinda, because of separation from You, I consider even a moment to be like a great millennium. Tears flow from my eyes like torrents of rain, and I see the entire world as void in Your absence."

The final verse of the *Shikshashtakam* elucidates the highest end in chanting the holy name—losing selfish interest and becoming absorbed in a state of Divine Rapture. This is the result of true



spiritual love. In such an intensely emotional state, the devotee experiences transcendental intimacy, which allows him to address Krishna with loving familiarity: "Let Krishna tightly embrace me. His maidservant, who has fallen at His lotus feet. Let Him trample me or break my heart by not being present before me. He is a debaucher, after all, and can do whatever He likes. But He is still, no matter what, the worshipable Lord of my life."

All these teachings are elaborated upon in the *Shri Chaitanya-charitamrita*, which has been translated and commented on by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.



Shri Chaitanya-charitamrita in English, translated and commented on by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Shri Chaitanya with His associates.

THE HIDDEN GLORY OF INDIA

# Buddha & Shankara

According to Vaishnava history, the majority of India strictly followed the Vedic tradition until the time of Buddha (500 B.C.E.). By that time there was rampant misinterpretation of Vedic texts. This resulted in the performance of outdated sacrifices (meant for previous ages) and in these sacrifices the slaughter of animals.

To remedy the situation, Buddha found that he had to repudiate the Vedas in toto. Rather than address metaphysical dimensions of reality as the Vedas do, he was concerned with morals, ethics, principles of psychological empowerment, the nature of suffering, and how to overcome suffering. He taught the law of impermanence, that is to say, he elaborated on the temporary nature of everything material and on the law of causation, i.e., that nothing happens by chance.

Buddha taught that the best way to live in such a world was to follow the Middle Way. This evokes a balanced, harmonious view of life without the extremes of either self-indulgence or severe asceticism. The Four Noble Truths, which lay at the basis of Buddhist thought, state that (1) suffering is

universal, (2) suffering is caused by desire or craving, (3) suffering can be prevented or overcome, and (4) the principles of Buddhism embody the way to remove suffering. These principles can be summarized as the Eightfold Path: right conduct, right motive, right resolve, right speech, right livelihood, right attention, right effort, and right meditation on behaving in a good way.

Buddhism, then, basically carries a pre-theistic message: "Purify your thoughts and be a good person; by doing this, you will rise beyond material suffering." Consequently, Buddhism does not discuss God or earlier Vedic teachings.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E., however, Shankara, an incarnation of Lord Shiva, appeared. He reestablished the Vedic scriptures, albeit in a slightly altered form. Shankara taught that the Vedas were divinely inspired but were to



be interpreted in a metaphorical and, ultimately, impersonalistic way. In other words, for Shankara, God was primarily an abstract force, and any personal reference to God in the scriptures was to be taken either in a symbolic sense or as a statement of God's lesser nature. This appealed to Shankara's predominantly Buddhist audience, who were trained to think in terms of abstract philosophy and psychology, and not in terms of recognizing a Supreme Being.

In summary, Buddha's appearance in this world served the function of distracting people from the Vedic texts because people were misinterpreting those texts, and Shankara served the purpose of reestablishing the Vedas in a way that Buddhists could appreciate. According to Vaishnavas, this was part of a divine plan to reinstate Vedic culture. This reinstatement began to occur by the 11<sup>th</sup> century, with the appearance of Ramanujacharya.



Above: Buddha in meditation.  
Right: Shankara, the teacher of impersonalism.



## SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA

Vaishnavas accept Buddha (whose birth name was Siddhartha Gautama) as an incarnation of Vishnu. The *Shrimad Bhagavatam* (1.8.24), which predates his appearance 2,500 years before he was born, states that he would take birth in the province of Gaya and that his mother's name would be Anjana. Historically, however, Siddhartha Gautama was not born in Gaya but in Nepal. It was his enlightenment that occurred in Gaya. In other words, "Siddhartha" may have been born in Nepal, but "Buddha" was born in Gaya. Similarly, history relates that Buddha's mother was known as Mayadevi, not Anjana. Nonetheless, it was his grandmother, Anjana, who raised Buddha from the moment his mother passed away, six days after his birth. Thus, effectively, Anjana was his mother.

In this way, the *Bhagavatam* gives an inner reading on the life of Buddha. According to the poet Jayadeva Goswami, Buddha's hidden mission was not to found Buddhism per se; his purpose, rather, was to put an end to needless violence and animal sacrifices.

# Yoga

When a Westerner thinks of traditional India, some form of yoga or meditation comes to mind. Because the yoga system is described in eight steps (see chart on page 156), it is sometimes called *ashtanga-yoga*, "the eightfold path," but it is more commonly known as *hatha-yoga*. The word "yoga" comes from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, which means "to link up with, to combine." It is similar to *religio*, the Latin root of the word "religion," which means "to bind together." Religion and yoga, then, have the same end in mind: combining or linking with God.

Yoga was systematized in medieval India by Patanjali in his *Yoga-sutras*, a text that explains the methodical process whereby one can learn to control the body and mind, with the ultimate goal of using these finely tuned material instruments in the service of the Lord. In yoga the body is viewed as the temple of the soul. By means of postures (*asanas*) and breath control (*pranayama*), yoga promotes physical health and mental well-being that help strengthen the "temple." In the West, the physical fitness part of it has become an end in itself. According to the traditional yoga system, however, this was merely the first step on the path of God realization.

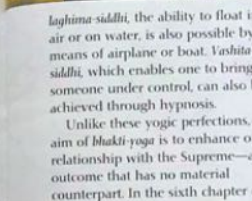
Just as we in the West may overlook the deep spiritual foundation of yoga, Indian yogic adepts can be distracted from the ultimate goal to the attainment of *siddhis*, or "mystic perfections." These are described in chapter three of Patanjali's *Yoga-sutras*. There are eight kinds of mystic yogic perfections, among which are the ability to assume a minute size (*anima-siddhi*), the ability to float in air or on water (*laghima-siddhi*), and the power to immediately acquire things from far-off distances (*prapti-siddhi*).

All of the *yoga-siddhis* are ultimately material achievements, as attainable through materialist science as through yoga. For example,

*laghima-siddhi*, the ability to float in air or on water, is also possible by means of airplane or boat. *Vashita-siddhi*, which enables one to bring someone under control, can also be achieved through hypnosis.

Unlike these yogic perfections, the aim of *bhakti-yoga* is to enhance one's relationship with the Supreme—an outcome that has no material counterpart. In the sixth chapter of

*Bhagavad-gita*, Krishna in effect tells Arjuna not to worry, for he, Arjuna, is already the best of yogis. Krishna tells him that of all yogis—including *hatha-yogis*, *gyana-yogis*, *dhyana-yogis*, *karma-yogis*, and *bhakti-yogis*—the best is the *bhakti-yogi*: "Of all yogis, the one with great faith who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me—he is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all."





Achintya-bhedabheda-tattva refers to the inconceivable oneness and difference of the Supreme Person and His energies. As parts of God's energy, we're also equal in quality with God, but there's a vast difference in quantity. We're each infinitesimal sparks of spiritual energy, and the Supreme Person, Krishna, is the infinite, supreme source of all energies. Some parts of the Vedas say that all beings are one with God, and others say that God is different from all beings- and both statements are simultaneously true.

Just as the sun is the source of heat and light, God is the ultimate source of all energy. The sun is inseparable from its rays, and God is inseparable from His energies. God and His energies are therefore nondifferent. At the same time, God and His energies are distinct. The sun and its rays are one, but they're also different: we can feel the sun's light and heat while the sun itself is millions of miles away. Similarly, God is omnipresent by His energy but also maintains His distinct personal identity – His own name, form, qualities, home, activities, and associates. Since everything is a display of God's energy, God is simultaneously different (bheda) and nondifferent (abheda) from everything. This truth (tattva) is inconceivable (achintya) to the mind. All that exists within the spiritual world and the material world is also God's energy, and therefore one with and different from God simultaneously.



### ***im-pe-tus:***

*\*the force or energy with which a body moves.*

*\*the force that makes something happen or happen more quickly.*

*According to mystic yogis and the ancient Srimad-Bhagavatam, Krishna's Rasa Lila is a plethora of different meanings ranging from being the Superposition theory in quantum physics all the way to detailing the incredible and unfathomable observation of Krishna's internal potency.*

*Notice how Radha-Krishna are in the center and each Gopi is dancing with "Krishna". The rasa lila takes place one night when the gopis of Vrindavan, upon hearing the sound of Krishna's flute, sneak away from their households and families to the forest to dance with Krishna throughout the night, which Krishna supernaturally stretches to the length of one Night of Brahma, a Hindu unit of time lasting approximately 4.32 billion years.*

*In the Krishna Bhakti traditions, the rasa-lila is considered to be one of the highest and most esoteric of Krishna's pastimes. In these traditions, romantic love between human beings in the material world is seen as merely a diminished, illusionary reflection of the soul's original, ecstatic spiritual love for Krishna, God, in the spiritual world.*



### *Are we the body or the soul?*

*We are the soul, or the conscious life force within our bodies, and we are completely different from our bodies, which are only highly complex machines.*

*We sit in the heart, the seat of all energies of the body. From there we experience the world through the wired machinery of the body's senses, as well as through the more subtle energies of mind, intelligence, and ego. Understanding the difference between body and soul—between matter and spirit—is the beginning of spiritual life and the only basis for true self-realization.*

*Our body is constantly changing: infancy, childhood, youth, middle age, old age, and finally death. But we, the unchangeable soul, witness this "virtual reality" from within. That's why, even though our body changes throughout life, we always keep our sense of identity. Matter is temporary, and spirit is eternal. Therefore we eternal souls are more important than our bodies. To understand this point is real knowledge. We are by nature eternally happy and full of knowledge. The human body affords us the opportunity to perform spiritual activities that will free us from getting further material bodies, which are by nature full of suffering.*

# CYMATICS

THE SCIENCE OF HOW SOUND CREATES FORM



Cymatics illustrates how sound animates matter and the ancient Vedas of India corroborate this as the recitation of mantras (sound vibration) is the most powerful method for reviving our original consciousness as the eternal atman (soul). Science + mantra meditation confirm that energy precedes matter and the Vedas elaborately explain how mantras are the perfection of yoga and philosophy; as the meditator gradually enters into a state of trance, a direct perception is given so one can distinguish between material nature & spiritual energy and experience the energy coming directly from the spiritual stratum, thus opening the door to perceiving their eternal Self.



Mahamantra:

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna / Krishna Krishna Hare Hare  
Hare Rama Hare Rama / Rama Rama Hare Hare



The Origin of the "Great Spirit" & "Holy Ghost"  
via the ancient knowledge of the Supersoul



The Gnostics were the *original* "Christians" and their ethos was non-intellectual and non-rational; it can only be experienced, not explained. Rather than making the world a more complicated place — as intellectual and theological arguments tend all too often to do — gnosis has the effect of liberating the soul. Their knowledge stemmed from ancient Vedic scriptures and they understood the confidential aspect of the Supreme Absolute known as Lord Vishnu, the personification of the Paramatma or the "Supersoul". Both the Gnostics and the Hindu Vaishnavas understood the mysticallity of Lord Vishnu, as He is localized within every atom and He exists within the hearts of all living entities as their eternal companion, while also sustaining & maintaining innumerable universes. This knowledge refers to a direct, experiential knowing — a knowing in the heart (bhakti yoga) as opposed to the head/mind (jnani yoga). Rather than making the world a more complicated place, as intellectual & theological arguments tend all too often to do, bhakti yoga has the effect of liberating the soul. Christianity refers to the Paramatma as "the kingdom of God" within you, hence why Christ is often depicted with a heart or pointing to his heart region. This knowing is also referred to as the "Great Spirit" by many Native Americans and the "Holy Ghost" in Abrahamic texts. It is also partially realized as the Brahman to many Buddhists who are attracted to Vishnu's impersonal aspect, as they conceive the Supreme as being only a material/mind phenomena. The highest stage of realization is called Bhagavan, knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, of whom Lord Vishnu is an expansion; Lord Krishna is the source of all material and eternal energy and He is the source of all expansions (Souls), eternity, bliss, and knowledge.



Is Jesus gifting us love of the Father, Krishna?

Yeshua, Bhakti Yoga, & Lord Krishna



According to ancient Vedic scriptures, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, only appears on dualistic star systems to give *absolute* knowledge of Himself. He cannot appear in higher dimensions because certain demigods think themselves to be "Gods" and He can't appear on worlds lower than earth because souls suffer so much in this realm they cannot fathom or perceive spiritual knowledge. So earth-like planets (Ying/Yang) are most favorable for the Vedas to be learned *absolutely*. Certain demigods and higher celestial beings from other realms within the multiverse understand that Avatars of the Supreme appear on such star systems and thus they become inspired to take birth in such places to learn knowledge (Veda) of the Bhagavans via a process called Bhakti Yoga. The book of Job indicates Yeshua may have come from the stars of the Seven Sisters (Pleiades) to learn how the Lord resides within the heart as the Paramatma or *Supersoul* & the Bhavishya Purana Veda corroborates this fact.



# KARMA & REINCARNATION

All beings are born and, in time, all die. According to the Vaishnava tradition, all beings are then born again. The idea of reincarnation—the cyclical round of births and deaths that are experienced but not remembered—and the closely related concept of karma (“for every action there is a corresponding reaction”) have been an integral part of Indian culture since time immemorial. Indeed, one of the most ancient Indic texts, the *Shatapatha Brahmana* (10.4.3.1), states, “Whoever knows Truth conquers recurring death and attains a full life.” The exact words—*punar mrityu* (“recurring death”)—traditionally refer to reincarnation, for, according to the original Sanskrit, they indicate being born, dying, and being born again (only to die again). The Vaishnava understanding of reincarnation and its related concepts can be summarized in the following three principles:

1. Each living entity is a soul within a material body. Vedic texts are precise regarding the soul within the body. “When the upper point of a hair is divided into one hundred parts, and each part is further divided into one hundred parts, each such part is the dimension of the spirit soul.” (*Shvetashvatara Upanishad* 5.9) Accordingly, the tradition teaches that the universe contains innumerable particles of spiritual atoms—souls—measured as one-ten-thousandth of the upper portion of a hair. Knowledge of the soul’s dimensions is augmented by information regarding the position of the soul in the body. “The soul is

atomic in size and can be perceived by perfect intelligence. This atomic soul is floating in the five kinds of air (*prana, apana, vyana, samana, and udana*). It is situated within the heart and spreads its influence all over the body of the embodied living entities. When the soul is purified from the contamination of the five kinds of

material air, its spiritual influence is exhibited.” (*Atmabika Upanishad* 5.1.9) The soul is thus caught in the body, and from the moment of its birth falsely identifies with the body.

In one lifetime an individual passes through many different bodies—baby, child, youth, adult, and so on—but remains the same person. The soul does not change; what changes is the body. The *Bhagavad-gita* (2.13) states: “As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, so at death the same soul passes into another body.”

2. Actions performed in this body determine the next body. Vaishnava texts assert that the soul’s transmigration from body to body does not take place in a random way. The soul’s journey is instigated by subtle desires and charted according to karma, or prior actions, whether earlier in this life or in previous existences. It is for this reason that the various species are created—each type of body is equipped with a particular sensual forte. Individuals inhabit bodies according to their tastes and desires. For example, for a human being inclined to sluggishness and sleep, the body of a bear (who sleeps for months at a time) may be more appropriate.

3. The soul can escape rebirth by developing consciousness of God. Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita* (8.15), “After attaining Me, the great souls, who are yogis in devotion, are never born again...” Thus, the Vaishnava tradition teaches that the process of bhakti-yoga (devotional

yoga) can free one from the cycle of birth and death. As stated in the *Brahma-samhita* (5.59), “The highest devotion is attained by constant endeavor for self-realization with the help of scriptural evidence, theistic conduct, and perseverance in practice.”

A. L. Herman, professor of philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, explains the importance of bhakti-yoga in the following manner:

*“Bhakti-yoga, ‘The Way of Adoration,’ offers a way out of the problem of (re)incarnation by showing the path of selfless devotion to God. In other words, Bhakti-yoga... produces actions without karmic residues as the bhakta [devotee] dedicates his actions and their consequences to an adored God, as a result, the karma generated by the act becomes God’s and not the bhakta’s. The conclusion is that the problem of suffering is solved once again, as the cause of dukkha, desire, is crushed in the surrendering to God of all the fruits of one’s labors. And, once again, the way to heaven is open.”*

Krishna states, “From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery, wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode never takes birth again.” (*Bhagavad-gita* 8.16)

## Notes

1. A. L. Herman, 1991. *A Brief Introduction to Hinduism*, 119. San Francisco: Western Press.

THE HIDDEN GLORY OF INDIA



# YOGA

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THE HIDDEN GLORY OF INDIA



## ***An Introduction to the Five-Thousand year old Bhagavad- Gita of Lord Krishna***

*The Bhagavad-gita is universally renowned as the jewel of India's spiritual wisdom. Spoken by Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead to His intimate disciple Arjuna, the Gita's seven hundred concise verses provide a definitive guide to the science of self realization. No other philosophical or religious work reveals, in such a lucid and profound way, the nature of consciousness, the self, the universe and the Supreme.*

*His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada is uniquely qualified to present this English translation and commentary on Bhagavad-gita. He is the world's foremost Vedic scholar and teacher, and he is also the current representative of an unbroken chain of fully self-realized spiritual masters beginning with Lord Krishna Himself. Thus, unlike other editions of the Gita, this one is presented as it is--without the slightest taint of adulteration or personal motivation. This edition is certain to stimulate and enlighten with its ancient yet thoroughly timely message.*

*Bhagavad-gita is also known as Gitopanisad. It is the essence of Vedic knowledge and one of the most important Upanisads in Vedic literature. Of course there are many commentaries in English on the Bhagavad-gita, and one may question the necessity for another one. This present edition can be explained in the following way. Recently an American lady asked me to recommend an English translation of Bhagavad-gita. Of course in America there are so many editions of Bhagavad-gita available in English, but as far as I have seen, not only in America but also in India, none of them can be strictly said to be authoritative because in almost every one of them the commentator has expressed his own opinions without touching the spirit of Bhagavad-gita as it is.*

*The spirit of Bhagavad-gita is mentioned in Bhagavad-gita itself. It is just like this: if we want to take a particular medicine, then we have to follow the directions written on the label. We cannot take the medicine according to our own whim or the direction of a friend. It must be taken according to the directions on the label or the directions given by a physician. Similarly, Bhagavad-gita should be taken or accepted as it is directed by the speaker himself. The speaker of Bhagavad-gita is Lord Sri Krsna. He is mentioned on every page of Bhagavad-gita as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Bhagavan. Of course the word "bhagavan" sometimes refers to any powerful person or any powerful demigod, and certainly here Bhagavan designates Lord Sri Krsna as a great personality, but at the same time we should know that Lord Sri Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as is confirmed by all great acaryas (spiritual masters) like Sankaracarya, Ramanujacarya, Madhvacarya, Nimbarka Svami, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and many other authorities of Vedic knowledge in India. The Lord Himself also establishes Himself as the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the Bhagavad-gita, and He is accepted as such in the Brahma-samhita and all the Puranas, especially the Srimad-Bhagavatam, known as the Bhagavata Purana (Krsnas tu bhagavan svayam). Therefore we should take Bhagavad-gita as it is directed by the Personality of Godhead Himself.*

*In the Fourth Chapter of the Gita the Lord says:*

- (1) imam vivasvate yogam proktavan aham avyayam  
vivasvan manave praha manur iksvakave 'bravit*
- (2) evam parampara-praptam imam rajarsayo viduh  
sa kaleneha mahata yogo nastah parantapa*
- (3) sa evayam maya te 'dya yogah proktah puratanah  
bhakto 'si me sakha ceti rahasyam hy etad uttamam*

*Here the Lord informs Arjuna that this system of yoga, the Bhagavad-gita, was first spoken to the sun-god, and the sun-god explained it to Manu, and Manu explained it to Ikshvaku, and in that way, by disciplic succession, one speaker after another, this yoga system has been coming down. But in the course of time it has become lost. Consequently the Lord has to speak it again, this time to Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra.*

He tells Arjuna that He is relating this supreme secret to him because he is His devotee and His friend. The purport of this is that Bhagavad-gita is a treatise which is especially meant for the devotee of the Lord. There are three classes of transcendentalists, namely the jnani, the yogi and the bhakta, or the impersonalist, the meditator and the devotee. Here the Lord clearly tells Arjuna that He is making him the first receiver of a new parampara (disciplic succession) because the old succession was broken. It was the Lord's wish, therefore, to establish another parampara in the same line of thought that was coming down from the sun-god to others, and it was His wish that His teaching be distributed anew by Arjuna. He wanted Arjuna to become the authority in understanding the Bhagavad-gita. So we see that Bhagavad-gita is instructed to Arjuna especially because Arjuna was a devotee of the Lord, a direct student of Krsna, and His intimate friend. Therefore Bhagavad-gita is best understood by a person who has qualities similar to Arjuna's. That is to say he must be a devotee in a direct relationship with the Lord. As soon as one becomes a devotee of the Lord, he also has a direct relationship with the Lord. That is a very elaborate subject matter, but briefly it can be stated that a devotee is in a relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in one of five different ways:

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

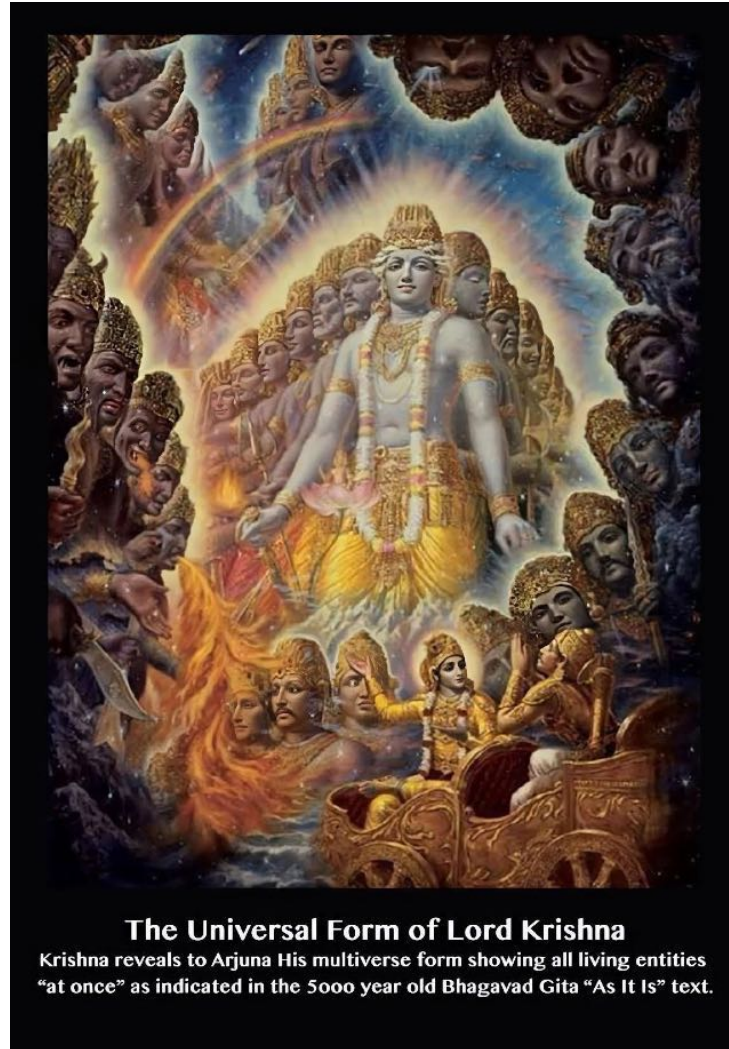
Arjuna was in a relationship with the Lord as friend. Of course there is a gulf of difference between this friendship and the friendship found in the material world. This is transcendental friendship which cannot be had by everyone. Of course everyone has a particular relationship with the Lord, and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

How Arjuna accepted this Bhagavad-gita should be noted. His manner of acceptance is given in the Tenth Chapter.

- (12) arjuna uvaca  
 param brahma param dhama pavitram paramam bhavan  
 purusam sasvatam divyam adi-devam ajam vibhum  
 (13) ahus tvam rsayah sarve devarsir naradas tatha  
 asito devalo vyasah svayam caiva bravisi me  
 (14) sarvam etad rtam manye yan mam vadasi kesava  
 na hi te bhagavan vyaktim vidur deva na danavah

"Arjuna said: You are the Supreme Brahman, the ultimate, the supreme abode and purifier, the Absolute Truth and the eternal Divine Person. You are the primal God, transcendental and original, and You are the unborn and all-pervading beauty. All the great sages like Narada, Asita, Devala, and Vyasa proclaim this of You, and now You Yourself are declaring it to me. O Krsna, I totally accept as truth all that You have told me. Neither the gods nor demons, O Lord, know Thy personality." (Bg. 10. 12-14).

*After hearing Bhagavad-gita from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Arjuna accepted Krsna as Param Brahma, the Supreme Brahman. Every living being is Brahman, but the supreme living being, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the Supreme Brahman. Param dhama means that He is the supreme rest or abode of everything, pavitram means that He is pure, untainted by material contamination, purusam means that He is the supreme enjoyer, divyam, transcendental, adi-devam, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, ajam, the unborn, and vibhum, the greatest, the all-pervading.*



*Now one may think that because Krsna was the friend of Arjuna, Arjuna was telling Him all this by way of flattery, but Arjuna, just to drive out this kind of doubt from the minds of the readers of Bhagavad-gita, substantiates these praises in the next verse when he says that Krsna is accepted as the Supreme Personality of Godhead not only by himself but by authorities like the sage Narada, Asita, Devala, Vyasadeva and so on. These are great personalities who distribute the Vedic knowledge as it is accepted by all acaryas. Therefore Arjuna tells Krsna that he accepts whatever He says to be completely perfect. Sarvam etad rtam manye: "I accept everything You say to be true." Arjuna also says that the personality of the Lord is very difficult to understand and that He cannot be known even by the great demigods. This means that the Lord cannot even be known by personalities greater than human beings. So how can a human being understand Sri Krsna without becoming His devotee?*

*Therefore Bhagavad-gita should be taken up in a spirit of devotion. One should not think that he is equal to Krsna, nor should he think that Krsna is an ordinary personality or even a very great personality. Lord Sri Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, at least theoretically, according to the statements of Bhagavad-gita or the statements of Arjuna, the person who is trying to understand the Bhagavad-gita. We should therefore at least theoretically accept Sri Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and with that submissive spirit we can understand the Bhagavad-gita. Unless one reads the Bhagavad-gita in a submissive spirit, it is very difficult to understand Bhagavad-gita because it is a great mystery.*

*Just what is the Bhagavad-gita? The purpose of Bhagavad-gita is to deliver mankind from the nescience of material existence. Every man is in difficulty in so many ways, as Arjuna also was in difficulty in having to fight the Battle of Kuruksetra. Arjuna surrendered unto Sri Krsna, and consequently this Bhagavad-gita was spoken. Not only Arjuna, but every one of us is full of anxieties because of this material existence. Our very existence is in the atmosphere of nonexistence. Actually we are not meant to be threatened by nonexistence. Our existence is eternal. But somehow or other we are put into *asat*. *Asat* refers to that which does not exist.*

*Out of so many human beings who are suffering, there are a few who are actually inquiring about their position, as to what they are, why they are put into this awkward position and so on. Unless one is awakened to this position of questioning his suffering, unless he realizes that he doesn't want suffering but rather wants to make a solution to all sufferings, then one is not to be considered a perfect human being. Humanity begins when this sort of inquiry is awakened in one's mind. In the Brahma-sutra this inquiry is called "brahma-jijnasa." Every activity of the human being is to be considered a failure unless he inquires about the nature of the Absolute. Therefore those who begin to question why they are suffering or where they came from and where they shall go after death are proper students for understanding Bhagavad-gita. The sincere student should also have a firm respect for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such a student was Arjuna.*

*Lord Krsna descends specifically to reestablish the real purpose of life when man forgets that purpose. Even then, out of many, many human beings who awaken, there may be one who actually enters the spirit of understanding his position, and for him this Bhagavad-gita is spoken. Actually we are all followed by the tiger of nescience, but the Lord is very merciful upon living entities, especially human beings. To this end He spoke the Bhagavad-gita, making His friend Arjuna His student.*

*Being an associate of Lord Krsna, Arjuna was above all ignorance, but Arjuna was put into ignorance on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra just to question Lord Krsna about the problems of life so that the Lord could explain them for the benefit of future generations of human beings and chalk out the plan of life. Then man could act accordingly and perfect the mission of human life.*

*The subject of the Bhagavad-gita entails the comprehension of five basic truths. First of all, the science of God is explained and then the constitutional position of the living entities, jivas. There is *isvara*, which means controller, and there are *jivas*, the living entities which are controlled. If a living entity says that he is not controlled but that he is free, then he is insane. The living being is controlled in every respect, at least in his conditioned life. So in the Bhagavad-gita the subject matter deals with the *isvara*, the supreme controller, and the *jivas*, the controlled living entities. *Prakṛti* (material nature) and time (the duration of existence of the whole universe or the manifestation of material nature) and *karma* (activity) are also discussed. The cosmic manifestation is full of different activities. All living entities are engaged in different activities. From Bhagavad-gita we must learn what God is, what the living entities are, what *prakṛti* is, what the cosmic manifestation is and how it is controlled by time, and what the activities of the living entities are.*




*Out of these five basic subject matters in Bhagavad-gita it is established that the Supreme Godhead, or Krsna, or Brahman, or supreme controller, or Paramatma—you may use whatever name you like—is the greatest of all. The living beings are in quality like the supreme controller. For instance, the Lord has control over the universal affairs, over material nature, etc., as will be explained in the later chapters of Bhagavad-gita. Material nature is not independent. She is acting under the directions of the Supreme Lord. As Lord Krsna says, "Prakrti is working under My direction." When we see wonderful things happening in the cosmic nature, we should know that behind this cosmic manifestation there is a controller. Nothing could be manifested without being controlled. It is childish not to consider the controller. For instance, a child may think that an automobile is quite wonderful to be able to run without a horse or other animal pulling it, but a sane man knows the nature of the automobile's engineering arrangement. He always knows that behind the machinery there is a man, a driver. Similarly, the Supreme Lord is a driver under whose direction everything is working. Now the jivas, or the living entities, have been accepted by the Lord, as we will note in the later chapters, as His parts and parcels. A particle of gold is also gold, a drop of water from the ocean is also salty, and similarly, we the living entities, being part and parcel of the supreme controller, isvara, or Bhagavan, Lord Sri Krsna, have all the qualities of the Supreme Lord in minute quantity because we are minute isvaras, subordinate isvaras. We are trying to control nature, as presently we are trying to control space or planets, and this tendency to control is there because it is in Krsna. But although we have a tendency to lord it over material nature, we should know that we are not the supreme controller. This is explained in Bhagavad-gita.*

*What is material nature? This is also explained in Gita as inferior prakrti, inferior nature. The living entity is explained as the superior prakrti. Prakrti is always under control, whether inferior or superior. Prakrti is female, and she is controlled by the Lord just as the activities of a wife are controlled by the husband. Prakrti is always subordinate, predominated by the Lord, who is the predominator. The living entities and material nature are both predominated, controlled by the Supreme Lord. According to the Gita, the living entities, although parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord, are to be considered prakrti. This is clearly mentioned in the Seventh Chapter, fifth verse of Bhagavad-gita: "Apareyam itas tv anyam." "This prakrti is My lower nature." "Prakrtim viddhi me param jiva-bhutam maha-baho yayedam dharyate jagat." And beyond this there is another prakrti: jiva-bhutam, the living entity.*


*Prakrti itself is constituted by three qualities: the mode of goodness, the mode of passion and the mode of ignorance. Above these modes there is eternal time, and by a combination of these modes of nature and under the control and purview of eternal time there are activities which are called karma. These activities are being carried out from time immemorial, and we are suffering or enjoying the fruits of our activities. For instance, suppose I am a businessman and have worked very hard with intelligence and have amassed a great bank balance. Then I am an enjoyer. But then say I have lost all my money in business; then I am a sufferer. Similarly, in every field of life we enjoy the results of our work, or we suffer the results. This is called karma.*

## GREAT MEN ON BHAGAVAD GITA




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M.K. GANDHI





*Isvara (the Supreme Lord), jiva (the living entity), prakrti (nature), eternal time and karma (activity) are all explained in the Bhagavad-gita. Out of these five, the Lord, the living entities, material nature and time are eternal. The manifestation of prakrti may be temporary, but it is not false. Some philosophers say that the manifestation of material nature is false, but according to the philosophy of Bhagavad-gita or according to the philosophy of the Vaisnavas, this is not so. The manifestation of the world is not accepted as false; it is accepted as real, but temporary. It is likened unto a cloud which moves across the sky, or the coming of the rainy season which nourishes grains. As soon as the rainy season is over and as soon as the cloud goes away, all the crops which were nourished by the rain dry up. Similarly, this material manifestation takes place at a certain interval, stays for a while and then disappears. Such are the workings of prakrti. But this cycle is working eternally. Therefore prakrti is eternal; it is not false. The Lord refers to this as "My prakrti." This material nature is the separated energy of the Supreme Lord, and similarly the living entities are also the energy of the Supreme Lord, but they are not separated. They are eternally related. So the Lord, the living entity, material nature and time are all interrelated and are all eternal. However, the other item, karma, is not eternal. The effects of karma may be very old indeed. We are suffering or enjoying the results of our activities from time immemorial, but we can change the results of our karma, or our activity, and this change depends on the perfection of our knowledge. We are engaged in various activities. Undoubtedly we do not know what sort of activities we should adopt to gain relief from the actions and reactions of all these activities, but this is also explained in the Bhagavad-gita.*

*The position of isvara is that of supreme consciousness. The jivas, or the living entities, being parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord, are also conscious. Both the living entity and material nature are explained as prakrti, the energy of the Supreme Lord, but one of the two, the jiva, is conscious. The other prakrti is not conscious. That is the difference. Therefore the jiva-prakrti is called superior because the jiva has consciousness which is similar to the Lord's. The Lord's is supreme consciousness, however, and one should not claim that the jiva, the living entity, is also supremely conscious. The living being cannot be supremely conscious at any stage of his perfection, and the theory that he can be so is a misleading theory. Conscious he may be, but he is not perfectly or supremely conscious.*

*The distinction between the jiva and the isvara will be explained in the Thirteenth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita. The Lord is ksetra-jnah, conscious, as is the living being, but the living being is conscious of his particular body, whereas the Lord is conscious of all bodies. Because He lives in the heart of every living being, He is conscious of the psychic movements of the particular jivas. We should not forget this. It is also explained that the Paramatma, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is living in everyone's heart as isvara, as the controller, and that He is giving directions for the living entity to act as he desires. The living entity forgets what to do. First of all he makes a determination to act in a certain way, and then he is entangled in the acts and reactions of his own karma. After giving up one type of body, he enters another type of body, as we put on and take off old clothes. As the soul thus migrates, he suffers the actions and reactions of his past activities. These activities can be changed when the living being is in the mode of goodness, in sanity, and understands what sort of activities he should adopt. If he does so, then all the actions and reactions of his past activities can be changed. Consequently, karma is not eternal. Therefore we stated that of the five items (isvara, jiva, prakrti, time and karma) four are eternal, whereas karma is not eternal.*

*The supreme conscious isvara is similar to the living entity in this way: both the consciousness of the Lord and that of the living entity are transcendental. It is not that consciousness is generated by the association of matter. That is a mistaken idea. The theory that consciousness develops under certain circumstances of material combination is not accepted in the Bhagavad-gita. Consciousness may be pervertedly reflected by the covering of material circumstances, just as light reflected through colored glass may appear to be a certain color, but the consciousness of the Lord is not materially affected. Lord Krsna says, "mayadhyaksena prakrtih." When He descends into the material universe, His consciousness is not materially affected. If He were so affected, He would be unfit to speak on transcendental matters as He does in the Bhagavad-gita. One cannot say anything about the transcendental world without being free from materially contaminated consciousness. So the Lord is not materially contaminated. Our consciousness, at the present moment, however, is materially contaminated. The Bhagavad-gita teaches that we have to purify this materially contaminated consciousness. In pure consciousness, our actions will be dovetailed to the will of isvara, and that will make us happy. It is not that we have to cease all activities. Rather, our activities are to be purified, and purified activities are called bhakti. Activities in bhakti appear to be like ordinary activities, but they are not contaminated. An ignorant person may see that a devotee is acting or working like an ordinary man, but such a person with a poor fund of knowledge does not know that the activities of the devotee or of the Lord are not contaminated by impure consciousness or matter. They are transcendental to the three modes of nature. We should know, however, that at this point our consciousness is contaminated.*

*When we are materially contaminated, we are called conditioned. False consciousness is exhibited under the impression that I am a product of material nature. This is called false ego. One who is absorbed in the thought of bodily conceptions cannot understand his situation. Bhagavad-gita was spoken to liberate one from the bodily conception of life, and Arjuna put himself in this position in order to receive this information from the Lord. One must become free from the bodily conception of life; that is the preliminary activity for the transcendentalist. One who wants to become free, who wants to become liberated, must first of all learn that he is not this material body. Mukti or liberation means freedom from material consciousness. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam also the definition of liberation is given: Mukti means liberation from the contaminated consciousness of this material world and situation in pure consciousness. All the instructions of Bhagavad-gita are intended to awaken this pure consciousness, and therefore we find at the last stage of the Gita's instructions that Krsna is asking Arjuna whether he is now in purified consciousness. Purified consciousness means acting in accordance with the instructions of the Lord. This is the whole sum and substance of purified consciousness. Consciousness is already there because we are part and parcel of the Lord, but for us there is the affinity of being affected by the inferior modes. But the Lord, being the Supreme, is never affected. That is the difference between the Supreme Lord and the conditioned souls.*

*What is this consciousness? This consciousness is "I am." Then what am I? In contaminated consciousness "I am" means "I am the lord of all I survey. I am the enjoyer." The world revolves because every living being thinks that he is the lord and creator of the material world. Material consciousness has two psychic divisions. One is that I am the creator, and the other is that I am the enjoyer. But actually the Supreme Lord is both the creator and the enjoyer, and the living entity, being part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, is neither the creator nor the enjoyer, but a cooperator. He is the created and the enjoyed. For instance, a part of a machine cooperates with the whole machine; a part of the body cooperates with the whole body. The hands, feet, eyes, legs and so on are all parts of the body, but they are not actually the enjoyers. The stomach is the enjoyer. The legs move, the hands supply food, the teeth chew and all parts of the body are engaged in satisfying the stomach because the stomach is the principal factor that nourishes the body's organization. Therefore everything is given to the stomach. One nourishes the tree by watering its root, and one nourishes the body by feeding the stomach, for if the body is to be kept in a healthy state, then the parts of the body must cooperate to feed the stomach. Similarly, the Supreme Lord is the enjoyer and the creator, and we, as subordinate living beings, are meant to cooperate to satisfy Him. This cooperation will actually help us, just as food taken by the stomach will help all other parts of the body. If the fingers of the hand think that they should take the food themselves instead of giving it to the stomach, then they will be frustrated. The central figure of creation and of enjoyment is the Supreme Lord, and the living entities are cooperators. By cooperation they enjoy. The relation is also like that of the master and the servant. If the master is fully satisfied, then the servant is satisfied. Similarly, the Supreme Lord should be satisfied, although the tendency to become the creator and the tendency to enjoy the material world are there also in the living entities because these tendencies are there in the Supreme Lord who has created the manifested cosmic world.*

*We shall find, therefore, in this Bhagavad-gita that the complete whole is comprised of the supreme controller, the controlled living entities, the cosmic manifestation, eternal time, and karma, or activities, and all of these are explained in this text. All of these taken completely form the complete whole, and the complete whole is called the Supreme Absolute Truth. The complete whole and the complete Absolute Truth are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. All manifestations are due to His different energies. He is the complete whole.*

*It is also explained in the Gita that impersonal Brahman is also subordinate to the complete. Brahman is more explicitly explained in the Brahma-sutra to be like the rays of the sunshine. The impersonal Brahman is the shining rays of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Impersonal Brahman is incomplete realization of the absolute whole, and so also is the conception of Paramatma in the Twelfth Chapter. There it shall be seen that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Purusottama, is above both impersonal Brahman and the partial realization of Paramatma. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is called sac-cid-ananda-vigraha. The Brahma-samhita begins in this way: isvarah paramah krsnah sac-cid-ananda-vigrahah/anadir adir govindah sarva-karana-karanam. "Krsna is the cause of all causes. He is the primal cause, and He is the very form of eternal being, knowledge and bliss." Impersonal Brahman realization is the realization of His sat (being) feature. Paramatma realization is the realization of the cit (eternal knowledge) feature. But realization of the Personality of Godhead, Krsna, is realization of all the transcendental features: sat, cit and ananda (being, knowledge, bliss) in complete vigraha (form).*

*People with less intelligence consider the Supreme Truth to be impersonal, but He is a transcendental person, and this is confirmed in all Vedic literatures. Nityo nityanam cetanas cetananam. As we are all individual living beings and have our individuality, the Supreme Absolute Truth is also, in the ultimate issue, a person, and realization of the Personality of Godhead is realization of all of the transcendental features. The complete whole is not formless. If He is formless, or if He is less than any other thing, then He cannot be the complete whole. The complete whole must have everything within our experience and beyond our experience, otherwise it cannot be complete. The complete whole, Personality of Godhead, has immense potencies.*



*How Krsna is acting in different potencies is also explained in Bhagavad-gita. This phenomenal world or material world in which we are placed is also complete in itself because the twenty-four elements of which this material universe is a temporary manifestation, according to Sankhya philosophy, are completely adjusted to produce complete resources which are necessary for the maintenance and subsistence of this universe. There is nothing extraneous; nor is there anything needed. This manifestation has its own time fixed by the energy of the supreme whole, and when its time is complete, these temporary manifestations will be annihilated by the complete arrangement of the complete. There is complete facility for the small complete units, namely the living entities, to realize the complete, and all sorts of incompleteness are experienced due to incomplete knowledge of the complete. So Bhagavad-gita contains the complete knowledge of Vedic wisdom.*

*All Vedic knowledge is infallible, and Hindus accept Vedic knowledge to be complete and infallible. For example, cow dung is the stool of an animal, and according to smṛti or Vedic injunction, if one touches the stool of an animal he has to take a bath to purify himself. But in the Vedic scriptures cow dung is considered to be a purifying agent. One might consider this to be contradictory, but it is accepted because it is Vedic injunction, and indeed by accepting this, one will not commit a mistake; subsequently it has been proved by modern science that cow dung contains all antiseptic properties. So Vedic knowledge is complete because it is above all doubts and mistakes, and Bhagavad-gita is the essence of all Vedic knowledge.*

*Vedic knowledge is not a question of research. Our research work is imperfect because we are researching things with imperfect senses. We have to accept perfect knowledge which comes down, as is stated in Bhagavad-gita, by the parampara disciplic succession. We have to receive knowledge from the proper source in disciplic succession beginning with the supreme spiritual master, the Lord Himself, and handed down to a succession of spiritual masters. Arjuna, the student who took lessons from Lord Sri Krsna, accepts everything that He says without contradicting Him. One is not allowed to accept one portion of Bhagavad-gita and not another. No. We must accept Bhagavad-gita without interpretation, without deletion and without our own whimsical participation in the matter. The Gita should be taken as the most perfect presentation of Vedic knowledge. Vedic knowledge is received from transcendental sources, and the first words were spoken by the Lord Himself. The words spoken by the Lord are different from words spoken by a person of the mundane world who is infected with four defects. A mundaner 1) is sure to commit mistakes, 2) is invariably illusioned, 3) has the tendency to cheat others and 4) is limited by imperfect senses. With these four imperfections, one cannot deliver perfect information of all-pervading knowledge.*

*Vedic knowledge is not imparted by such defective living entities. It was imparted unto the heart of Brahma, the first created living being, and Brahma in his turn disseminated this knowledge to his sons and disciples, as he originally received it from the Lord. The Lord is purnam, all-perfect, and there is no possibility of His becoming subjected to the laws of material nature. One should therefore be intelligent enough to know that the Lord is the only proprietor of everything in the universe and that He is the original creator, the creator of Brahma. In the Eleventh Chapter the Lord is addressed as prapitamaha because Brahma is addressed as pitamaha, the grandfather, and He is the creator of the grandfather. So no one should claim to be the proprietor of anything; one should accept only things which are set aside for him by the Lord as his quota for his maintenance.*

*There are many examples given of how we are to utilize those things which are set aside for us by the Lord. This is also explained in Bhagavad-gita. In the beginning, Arjuna decided that he should not fight in the Battle of Kuruksetra. This was his own decision. Arjuna told the Lord that it was not possible for him to enjoy the kingdom after killing his own kinsmen. This decision was based on the body because he was thinking that the body was himself and that his bodily relations or expansions were his brothers, nephews, brothers-in-law, grandfathers and so on. He was thinking in this way to satisfy his bodily demands. Bhagavad-gita was spoken by the Lord just to change this view, and at the end Arjuna decides to fight under the directions of the Lord when he says, "karisye vacanam tava." "I shall act according to Thy word."*

*In this world man is not meant to toil like hogs. He must be intelligent to realize the importance of human life and refuse to act like an ordinary animal. A human being should realize the aim of his life, and this direction is given in all Vedic literatures, and the essence is given in Bhagavad-gita. Vedic literature is meant for human beings, not for animals. Animals can kill other living animals, and there is no question of sin on their part, but if a man kills an animal for the satisfaction of his uncontrolled taste, he must be responsible for breaking the laws of nature. In the Bhagavad-gita it is clearly explained that there are three kinds of activities according to the different modes of nature: the activities of goodness, of passion and of ignorance. Similarly, there are three kinds of eatables also: eatables in goodness, passion and ignorance. All of this is clearly described, and if we properly utilize the instructions of Bhagavad-gita, then our whole life will become purified, and ultimately we will be able to reach the destination which is beyond this material sky.*



*That destination is called the sanatana sky, the eternal spiritual sky. In this material world we find that everything is temporary. It comes into being, stays for some time, produces some by-products, dwindles and then vanishes. That is the law of the material world, whether we use as an example this body, or a piece of fruit or anything. But beyond this temporary world there is another world of which we have information. This world consists of another nature which is sanatana, eternal. Jiva is also described as sanatana, eternal, and the Lord is also described as sanatana in the Eleventh Chapter. We have an intimate relationship with the Lord, and because we are all qualitatively one—the sanatana-dhama, or sky, the sanatana Supreme Personality and the sanatana living entities—the whole purpose of Bhagavad-gita is to revive our sanatana occupation, or sanatana-dharma, which is the eternal occupation of the living entity. We are temporarily engaged in different activities, but all of these activities can be purified when we give up all these temporary activities and take up the activities which are prescribed by the Supreme Lord. That is called our pure life.*

*The Supreme Lord and His transcendental abode are both sanatana, as are the living entities, and the combined association of the Supreme Lord and the living entities in the sanatana abode is the perfection of human life. The Lord is very kind to the living entities because they are His sons. Lord Krsna declares in Bhagavad-gita, "sarva-yonisu...aham bija-pradah pita." "I am the father of all." Of course there are all types of living entities according to their various karmas, but here the Lord claims that He is the father of all of them. Therefore the Lord descends to reclaim all of these fallen, conditioned souls to call them back to the sanatana eternal sky so that the sanatana living entities may regain their eternal sanatana positions in eternal association with the Lord. The Lord comes Himself in different incarnations, or He sends His confidential servants as sons or His associates or acaryas to reclaim the conditioned souls.*

*Therefore, sanatana-dharma does not refer to any sectarian process of religion. It is the eternal function of the eternal living entities in relationship with the eternal Supreme Lord. Sanatana-dharma refers, as stated previously, to the eternal occupation of the living entity. Ramanujacarya has explained the word sanatana as "that which has neither beginning nor end," so when we speak of sanatana-dharma, we must take it for granted on the authority of Sri Ramanujacarya that it has neither beginning nor end.*

*The English word "religion" is a little different from sanatana-dharma. Religion conveys the idea of faith, and faith may change. One may have faith in a particular process, and he may change this faith and adopt another, but sanatana-dharma refers to that activity which cannot be changed. For instance, liquidity cannot be taken from water, nor can heat be taken from fire. Similarly, the eternal function of the eternal living entity cannot be taken from the living entity. Sanatana-dharma is eternally integral with the living entity. When we speak of sanatana-dharma, therefore, we must take it for granted on the authority of Sri Ramanujacarya that it has neither beginning nor end. That which has neither end nor beginning must not be sectarian, for it cannot be limited by any boundaries. Yet those belonging to some sectarian faith will wrongly consider that sanatana-dharma is also sectarian, but if we go deeply into the matter and consider it in the light of modern science, it is possible for us to see that sanatana-dharma is the business of all the people of the world—nay, of all the living entities of the universe.*

*Non-sanatana religious faith may have some beginning in the annals of human history, but there is no beginning to the history of sanatana-dharma because it remains eternally with the living entities. Insofar as the living entities are concerned, the authoritative sastras state that the living entity has neither birth nor death. In the Gita it is stated that the living entity is never born, and he never dies. He is eternal and indestructible, and he continues to live after the destruction of his temporary material body. In reference to the concept of sanatana-dharma, we must try to understand the concept of religion from the Sanskrit root meaning of the word. Dharma refers to that which is constantly existing with the particular object. We conclude that there is heat and light along with the fire; without heat and light, there is no meaning to the word fire. Similarly, we must discover the essential part of the living being, that part which is his constant companion. That constant companion is his eternal quality, and that eternal quality is his eternal religion.*



*When Sanatana Gosvami asked Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu about the svarupa of every living being, the Lord replied that the svarupa or constitutional position of the living being is the rendering of service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If we analyze this statement of Lord Caitanya, we can easily see that every living being is constantly engaged in rendering service to another living being. A living being serves other living beings in two capacities. By doing so, the living entity enjoys life. The lower animals serve human beings as servants serve their master. A serves B master, B serves C master and C serves D master and so on. Under these circumstances, we can see that one friend serves another friend, the mother serves the son, the wife serves the husband, the husband serves the wife and so on. If we go on searching in this spirit, it will be seen that there is no exception in the society of living beings to the activity of service. The politician presents his manifesto for the public to convince them of his capacity for service. The voters therefore give the politician their valuable votes, thinking that he will render valuable service to society. The shopkeeper serves the customer, and the artisan serves the capitalist. The capitalist serves the family, and the family serves the state in the terms of the eternal capacity of the eternal living being. In this way we can see that no living being is exempt from rendering service to other living beings, and therefore we can safely conclude that service is the constant companion of the living being and that the rendering of service is the eternal religion of the living being.*

*Yet man professes to belong to a particular type of faith with reference to particular time and circumstance and thus claims to be a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist or any other sect. Such designations are non-sanatana-dharma. A Hindu may change his faith to become a Muslim, or a Muslim may change his faith to become a Hindu, or a Christian may change his faith and so on. But in all circumstances the change of religious faith does not effect the eternal occupation of rendering service to others. The Hindu, Muslim or Christian in all circumstances is servant of someone. Thus, to profess a particular type of sect is not to profess one's sanatana-dharma. The rendering of service is sanatana-dharma.*

*Factually we are related to the Supreme Lord in service. The Supreme Lord is the supreme enjoyer, and we living entities are His servitors. We are created for His enjoyment, and if we participate in that eternal enjoyment with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, we become happy. We cannot become happy otherwise. It is not possible to be happy independantly, just as no one part of the body can be happy without cooperating with the stomach. It is not possible for the living entity to be happy without rendering transcendental loving service unto the Supreme Lord.*

*In the Bhagavad-gita, worship of different demigods or rendering service to them is not approved. It is stated in the Seventh Chapter, twentieth verse:*

*kamais tais tair hrta-jnanah prapadyante 'nya-devatah  
tam tam niyamam asthaya prakrtya niyatah svaya*

*"Those whose minds are distorted by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures." (Bg. 7.20) Here it is plainly said that those who are directed by lust worship the demigods and not the Supreme Lord Krsna. When we mention the name Krsna, we do not refer to any sectarian name. Krsna means the highest pleasure, and it is confirmed that the Supreme Lord is the reservoir or storehouse of all pleasure. We are all hankering after pleasure. Anandamayo 'bhyasat. (Vs. 1.1.12) The living entities, like the Lord, are full of consciousness, and they are after happiness. The Lord is perpetually happy, and if the living entities associate with the Lord, cooperate with Him and take part in His association, then they also become happy.*

*The Lord descends to this mortal world to show His pastimes in Vrndavana, which are full of happiness. When Lord Sri Krsna was in Vrndavana, His activities with His cowherd boy friends, with His damsel friends, with the inhabitants of Vrndavana and with the cows were all full of happiness. The total population of Vrndavana knew nothing but Krsna. But Lord Krsna even discouraged His father Nanda Maharaja from worshiping the demigod Indra because He wanted to establish the fact that people need not worship any demigod. They need only worship the Supreme Lord because their ultimate goal is to return to His abode.*

*The abode of Lord Sri Krsna is described in the Bhagavad-gita, Fifteenth Chapter, sixth verse:*

*na tad bhasayate suryo na sasanko na pavakah  
yad gatva na nivartante tad dhama paramam mama*

*"That abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by electricity. And anyone who reaches it never comes back to this material world." (Bg. 15.6)*

*This verse gives a description of that eternal sky. Of course we have a material conception of the sky, and we think of it in relationship to the sun, moon, stars and so on, but in this verse the Lord states that in the eternal sky there is no need for the sun nor for the moon nor fire of any kind because the spiritual sky is already illuminated by the brahmajyoti, the rays emanating from the Supreme Lord. We are trying with difficulty to reach other planets, but it is not difficult to understand the abode of the Supreme Lord. This abode is referred to as Goloka. In the Brahma-samhita it is beautifully described: Goloka eva nivasaty akhilatma-bhutih. The Lord resides eternally in His abode Goloka, yet He can be approached from this world, and to this end the Lord comes to manifest His real form, sac-cid-ananda-vigraha. When He manifests this form, there is no need for our imagining what He looks like. To discourage such imaginative speculation, He descends and exhibits Himself as He is, as Syamasundara. Unfortunately, the less intelligent deride Him because He comes as one of us and plays with us as a human being. But because of this we should not consider that the Lord is one of us. It is by His potency that He presents Himself in His real form before us and displays His pastimes, which are prototypes of those pastimes found in His abode.*

*In the effulgent rays of the spiritual sky there are innumerable planets floating. The brahmajyoti emanates from the supreme abode, Krsnaloka, and the anandamaya-cinmaya planets, which are not material, float in those rays. The Lord says, na tad bhasayate suryo na sasanko na pavakah yad gatva na nivartante tad dhama paramam mama. One who can approach that spiritual sky is not required to descend again to the material sky. In the material sky, even if we approach the highest planet (Brahmaloka), what to speak of the moon, we will find the same conditions of life, namely birth, death, disease and old age. No planet in the material universe is free from these four principles of material existence. Therefore the Lord says in Bhagavad-gita, abrahma-bhuvanal lokah punar avartino 'rjuna. The living entities are traveling from one planet to another, not by mechanical arrangement but by a spiritual process. This is also mentioned: yanti deva-vrata devan pitrn yanti pitr-vratah. No mechanical arrangement is necessary if we want interplanetary travel. The Gita instructs: yanti deva-vrata devan. The moon, the sun and higher planets are called svargaloka. There are three different statuses of planets: higher, middle and lower planetary systems. The earth belongs to the middle planetary system. Bhagavad-gita informs us how to travel to the higher planetary systems (devaloka) with a very simple formula: yanti deva-vrata devan. One need only worship the particular demigod of that particular planet and in that way go to the moon, the sun or any of the higher planetary systems.*

*Yet Bhagavad-gita does not advise us to go to any of the planets in this material world because even if we go to Brahmaloka, the highest planet, through some sort of mechanical contrivance by maybe traveling for forty thousand years (and who would live that long?), we will still find the material inconveniences of birth, death, disease and old age. But one who wants to approach the supreme planet, Krsnaloka, or any of the other planets within the spiritual sky, will not meet with these material inconveniences. Amongst all of the planets in the spiritual sky there is one supreme planet called Goloka Vrndavana, which is the original planet in the abode of the original Personality of Godhead Sri Krsna. All of this information is given in Bhagavad-gita, and we are given through its instruction information how to leave the material world and begin a truly blissful life in the spiritual sky.*



*In the Fifteenth Chapter of the Bhagavad-gita, the real picture of the material world is given. It is said there:*

*urdhva-mulam adhah-sakham asvattham prahur avyayam  
chandamsi yasya parnani yas tam veda sa veda-vit*

*"The Supreme Lord said: There is a banyan tree which has its roots upward and its branches down, and the Vedic hymns are its leaves. One who knows this tree is the knower of the Vedas." (Bg. 15.1) Here the material world is described as a tree whose roots are upwards and branches are below. We have experience of a tree whose roots are upward: if one stands on the bank of a river or any reservoir of water, he can see that the trees reflected in the water are upside down. The branches go downward and the roots upward. Similarly, this material world is a reflection of the spiritual world. The material world is but a shadow of reality. In the shadow there is no reality or substantiality, but from the shadow we can understand that there is substance and reality. In the desert there is no water, but the mirage suggests that there is such a thing as water. In the material world there is no water, there is no happiness, but the real water of actual happiness is there in the spiritual world.*

*The Lord suggests that we attain the spiritual world in the following manner:*

*nirmana-moha jita-sanga-dosa  
adhyatma-nitya vinivrtta-kamah  
dvandvair vimuktah sukha-duhkha-samjnair  
gacchanty amudhah padam avyayam tat.*

*That padam avyayam or eternal kingdom can be reached by one who is nirmana-moha. What does this mean? We are after designations. Someone wants to become a son, someone wants to become Lord, someone wants to become the president or a rich man or a king or something else. As long as we are attached to these designations, we are attached to the body because designations belong to the body. But we are not these bodies, and realizing this is the first stage in spiritual realization. We are associated with the three modes of material nature, but we must become detached through devotional service to the Lord. If we are not attached to devotional service to the Lord, then we cannot become detached from the modes of material nature. Designations and attachments are due to our lust and desire, our wanting to lord it over the material nature. As long as we do not give up this propensity of lording it over material nature, there is no possibility of returning to the kingdom of the Supreme, the sanatana-dhama. That eternal kingdom, which is never destroyed, can be approached by one who is not bewildered by the attractions of false material enjoyments, who is situated in the service of the Supreme Lord. One so situated can easily approach that supreme abode.*

*Elsewhere in the Gita it is stated:*

*avyakto 'ksara ity uktas tam ahuh paramam gatim  
yam prapya na nivartante tad dhama paramam mama.*

*Avyakta means unmanifested. Not even all of the material world is manifested before us. Our senses are so imperfect that we cannot even see all of the stars within this material universe. In Vedic literature we can receive much information about all the planets, and we can believe it or not believe it. All of the important planets are described in Vedic literatures, especially Srimad-Bhagavatam, and the spiritual world, which is beyond this material sky, is described as avyakta, unmanifested. One should desire and hanker after that supreme kingdom, for when one attains that kingdom, he does not have to return to this material world.*

Next, one may raise the question of how one goes about approaching that abode of the Supreme Lord. Information of this is given in the Eighth Chapter. It is said there:

*anta-kale ca mam eva smaran muktva kalevaram  
yah prayati sa mad-bhavam yati nasty atra samsayah*

"Anyone who quits his body, at the end of life, remembering Me, attains immediately to My nature; and there is no doubt of this." (Bg. 8.5) One who thinks of Krsna at the time of his death goes to Krsna. One must remember the form of Krsna; if he quits his body thinking of this form, he approaches the spiritual kingdom. Mad-bhavam refers to the supreme nature of the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being is sac-cid-ananda-vigraha—eternal, full of knowledge and bliss. Our present body is not sac-cid-ananda. It is asat, not sat. It is not eternal; it is perishable. It is not cit, full of knowledge, but it is full of ignorance. We have no knowledge of the spiritual kingdom, nor do we even have perfect knowledge of this material world where there are so many things unknown to us. The body is also nirananda; instead of being full of bliss it is full of misery. All of the miseries we experience in the material world arise from the body, but one who leaves this body thinking of the Supreme Personality of Godhead at once attains a sac-cid-ananda body, as is promised in this fifth verse of the Eighth Chapter where Lord Krsna says, "He attains My nature."

The process of quitting this body and getting another body in the material world is also organized. A man dies after it has been decided what form of body he will have in the next life. Higher authorities, not the living entity himself, make this decision. According to our activities in this life, we either rise or sink. This life is a preparation for the next life. If we can prepare, therefore, in this life to get promotion to the kingdom of God, then surely, after quitting this material body, we will attain a spiritual body just like the Lord.

As explained before, there are different kinds of transcendentalists, the brahmavadi, paramatmavadi and the devotee, and, as mentioned, in the brahmajyoti (spiritual sky) there are innumerable spiritual planets. The number of these planets is far, far greater than all of the planets of this material world. This material world has been approximated as only one quarter of the creation. In this material segment there are millions and billions of universes with trillions of planets and suns, stars and moons. But this whole material creation is only a fragment of the total creation. Most of the creation is in the spiritual sky. One who desires to merge into the existence of the Supreme Brahman is at once transferred to the brahmajyoti of the Supreme Lord and thus attains the spiritual sky. The devotee, who wants to enjoy the association of the Lord, enters into the Vaikuntha planets, which are innumerable, and the Supreme Lord by His plenary expansions as Narayana with four hands and with different names like Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Govinda, etc., associates with him there. Therefore at the end of life the transcendentalists either think of the brahmajyoti, the Paramatma or the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krsna. In all cases they enter into the spiritual sky, but only the devotee, or he who is in personal touch with the Supreme Lord, enters into the Vaikuntha planets. The Lord further adds that of this "there is no doubt." This must be believed firmly. We should not reject that which does not tally with our imagination; our attitude should be that of Arjuna: "I believe everything that You have said." Therefore when the Lord says that at the time of death whoever thinks of Him as Brahman or Paramatma or as the Personality of Godhead certainly enters into the spiritual sky, there is no doubt about it. There is no question of disbelieving it.

The information on how to think of the Supreme Being at the time of death is also given in the Gita:

*yam yam vapi smaran bhavam tyajaty ante kalevaram  
tam tam evaiti kaunteya sada tad-bhava-bhavitah*

"In whatever condition one quits his present body, in his next life he will attain to that state of being without fail." (Bg. 8.6) Material nature is a display of one of the energies of the Supreme Lord. In the Visnu Purana the total energies of the Supreme Lord as Visnu-saktih para prokta, etc., are delineated.

*The Supreme Lord has diverse and innumerable energies which are beyond our conception; however, great learned sages or liberated souls have studied these energies and have analyzed them into three parts. All of the energies are of Visnu-sakti, that is to say they are different potencies of Lord Visnu. That energy is para, transcendental. Living entities also belong to the superior energy, as has already been explained. The other energies, or material energies, are in the mode of ignorance. At the time of death we can either remain in the inferior energy of this material world, or we can transfer to the energy of the spiritual world.*

*In life we are accustomed to thinking either of the material or the spiritual energy. There are so many literatures which fill our thoughts with the material energy—newspapers, novels, etc. Our thinking, which is now absorbed in these literatures, must be transferred to the Vedic literatures. The great sages, therefore, have written so many Vedic literatures such as the Puranas, etc. The Puranas are not imaginative; they are historical records. In the Caitanya-caritamṛta there is the following verse:*

*maya mugdha jiver nahi svatah kṛsna-jnana  
jivera kṛpaya kaila kṛsna veda-purana  
(Cc. Madhya 20.122)*

*The forgetful living entities or conditioned souls have forgotten their relationship with the Supreme Lord, and they are engrossed in thinking of material activities. Just to transfer their thinking power to the spiritual sky, Kṛsna has given a great number of Vedic literatures. First He divided the Vedas into four, then He explained them in the Puranas, and for less capable people He wrote the Mahabharata. In the Mahabharata there is given the Bhagavad-gita. Then all Vedic literature is summarized in the Vedānta-sūtra, and for future guidance He gave a natural commentation on the Vedānta-sūtra, called Srimad-Bhagavatam. We must always engage our minds in reading these Vedic literatures. Just as materialists engage their minds in reading newspapers, magazines and so many materialistic literatures, we must transfer our reading to these literatures which are given to us by Vyāsadeva; in that way it will be possible for us to remember the Supreme Lord at the time of death. That is the only way suggested by the Lord, and He guarantees the result: "There is no doubt." (Bg. 8.7)*

*tasmat sarvesu kalesu mam anusmara yudhya ca  
mayy arpita-mano-buddhir mam evaisyasy asamsayah*

*"Therefore, Arjuna, you should always think of Me, and at the same time you should continue your prescribed duty and fight. With your mind and activities always fixed on Me, and everything engaged in Me, you will attain to Me without any doubt."*

*He does not advise Arjuna to simply remember Him and give up his occupation. No, the Lord never suggests anything impractical. In this material world, in order to maintain the body one has to work. Human society is divided, according to work, into four divisions of social order—brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya, sudra. The brahmana class or intelligent class is working in one way, the ksatriya or administrative class is working in another way, and the mercantile class and the laborers are all tending to their specific duties. In the human society, whether one is a laborer, merchant, warrior, administrator, or farmer, or even if one belongs to the highest class and is a literary man, a scientist or a theologian, he has to work in order to maintain his existence. The Lord therefore tells Arjuna that he need not give up his occupation, but while he is engaged in his occupation he should remember Kṛsna. If he doesn't practice remembering Kṛsna while he is struggling for existence, then it will not be possible for him to remember Kṛsna at the time of death. Lord Caitanya also advises this. He says that one should practice remembering the Lord by chanting the names of the Lord always. The names of the Lord and the Lord are nondifferent. So Lord Kṛsna's instruction to Arjuna to "remember Me" and Lord Caitanya's injunction to always "chant the names of Lord Kṛsna" are the same instruction. There is no difference, because Kṛsna and Kṛsna's name are nondifferent. In the absolute status there is no difference between reference and referent. Therefore we have to practice remembering the Lord always, twenty-four hours a day, by chanting His names and molding our life's activities in such a way that we can remember Him always.*



*How is this possible? The acaryas give the following example. If a married woman is attached to another man, or if a man has an attachment for a woman other than his wife, then the attachment is to be considered very strong. One with such an attachment is always thinking of the loved one. The wife who is thinking of her lover is always thinking of meeting him, even while she is carrying out her household chores. In fact, she carries out her household work even more carefully so her husband will not suspect her attachment. Similarly, we should always remember the supreme lover, Sri Krsna, and at the same time perform our material duties very nicely. A strong sense of love is required here. If we have a strong sense of love for the Supreme Lord, then we can discharge our duty and at the same time remember Him. But we have to develop that sense of love. Arjuna, for instance, was always thinking of Krsna; he was the constant companion of Krsna, and at the same time he was a warrior. Krsna did not advise him to give up fighting and go to the forest to meditate. When Lord Krsna delineates the yoga system to Arjuna, Arjuna says that the practice of this system is not possible for him.*

*arjuna uvaca*

*yo 'yam yogas tvaya proktah samyena madhusudana  
etasyaham na pasyami cancelatvat sthitim sthiram*

*"Arjuna said, O Madhusudana, the system of yoga which you have summarized appears impractical and unendurable to me, for the mind is restless and unsteady." (Bg. 6.33)*

*But the Lord says:*

*yoginam api sarvesam mad-gatenantaratmana  
sraddhavan bhajate yo mam sa me yuktatamo matah*

*"Of all yogis, he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in yoga, and is the highest of all." (Bg. 6.47) So one who thinks of the Supreme Lord always is the greatest yogi, the supermost jnani, and the greatest devotee at the same time. The Lord further tells Arjuna that as a ksatriya he cannot give up his fighting, but if Arjuna fights remembering Krsna, then he will be able to remember Him at the time of death. But one must be completely surrendered in the transcendental loving service of the Lord.*

*We work not with our body, actually, but with our mind and intelligence. So if the intelligence and the mind are always engaged in the thought of the Supreme Lord, then naturally the senses are also engaged in His service. Superficially, at least, the activities of the senses remain the same, but the consciousness is changed. The Bhagavad-gita teaches one how to absorb the mind and intelligence in the thought of the Lord. Such absorption will enable one to transfer himself to the kingdom of the Lord. If the mind is engaged in Krsna's service, then the senses are automatically engaged in His service. This is the art, and this is also the secret of Bhagavad-gita: total absorption in the thought of Sri Krsna.*

*Modern man has struggled very hard to reach the moon, but he has not tried very hard to elevate himself spiritually. If one has fifty years of life ahead of him, he should engage that brief time in cultivating this practice of remembering the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This practice is the devotional process of:*

*sravanam kirtanam visnoh smaranam pada-sevanam  
arcanam vandanam dasyam sakhyam atma-nivedanam*

*These nine processes, of which the easiest is sravanam, hearing Bhagavad-gita from the realized person, will turn one to the thought of the Supreme Being. This will lead to niscala, remembering the Supreme Lord, and will enable one, upon leaving the body, to attain a spiritual body which is just fit for association with the Supreme Lord.*

*The Lord further says:*

*abhyasa-yoga-yuktena cetasa nanya-gamina  
paramam purusam divyam yati parthanucintayan*

*"By practicing this remembering, without being deviated, thinking ever of the Supreme Godhead, one is sure to achieve the planet of the Divine, the Supreme Personality, O son of Kunti." (Bg. 8.8)*

*This is not a very difficult process. However, one must learn it from an experienced person, from one who is already in the practice. The mind is always flying to this and that, but one must always practice concentrating the mind on the form of the Supreme Lord Sri Krsna or on the sound of His name. The mind is naturally restless, going hither and thither, but it can rest in the sound vibration of Krsna. One must thus meditate on paramam purusam, the Supreme Person; and thus attain Him. The ways and the means for ultimate realization, ultimate attainment, are stated in the Bhagavad-gita, and the doors of this knowledge are open for everyone. No one is barred out. All classes of men can approach the Lord by thinking of Him, for hearing and thinking of Him is possible for everyone.*

*The Lord further says:*

*mam hi partha vyapasritya ye 'pi syuh papa-yonayah  
striyo vaisyas tatha sudras te 'pi yanti param gatim  
kim punar brahmanah punya bhakta rajarsayas tatha  
anityam asukham lokam imam prapya bhajasva mam*

"O son of Prtha, anyone who will take shelter in Me, whether a woman, or a merchant, or one born in a low family, can yet approach the supreme destination. How much greater then are the brahmanas, the righteous, the devotees, and saintly kings! In this miserable world, these are fixed in devotional service to the Lord." (Bg. 9.32-33)

Human beings even in the lower statuses of life (a merchant, a woman or a laborer) can attain the Supreme. One does not need highly developed intelligence. The point is that anyone who accepts the principle of bhakti-yoga and accepts the Supreme Lord as the summum bonum of life, as the highest target, the ultimate goal, can approach the Lord in the spiritual sky. If one adopts the principles enunciated in Bhagavad-gita, he can make his life perfect and make a perfect solution to all the problems of life which arise out of the transient nature of material existence. This is the sum and substance of the entire Bhagavad-gita.

*In conclusion, Bhagavad-gita is a transcendental literature which one should read very carefully. It is capable of saving one from all fear.*

*nehabhikrama-naso 'sti pratyavayo na vidyate  
svalpam apy asya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat*

"In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear." (Bg. 2.40) If one reads Bhagavad-gita sincerely and seriously, then all of the reactions of his past misdeeds will not react upon him. In the last portion of Bhagavad-gita, Lord Sri Krsna proclaims:

*sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja  
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo moksaisyami ma sucah*

"Give up all varieties of religiousness, and just surrender unto Me; and in return I shall protect you from all sinful reactions. Therefore, you have nothing to fear." (Bg. 18.66) Thus the Lord takes all responsibility for one who surrenders unto Him, and He indemnifies all the reactions of sin.

One cleanses himself daily by taking a bath in water, but one who takes his bath only once in the sacred Ganges water of the Bhagavad-gita cleanses away all the dirt of material life. Because Bhagavad-gita is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one need not read any other Vedic literature. One need only attentively and regularly hear and read Bhagavad-gita. In the present age, mankind is so absorbed with mundane activities that it is not possible to read all of the Vedic literatures. But this is not necessary. This one book, Bhagavad-gita, will suffice because it is the essence of all Vedic literatures and because it is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is said that one who drinks the water of the Ganges certainly gets salvation, but what to speak of one who drinks the waters of Bhagavad-gita? Gita is the very nectar of the Mahabharata spoken by Visnu Himself, for Lord Krsna is the original Visnu. It is nectar emanating from the mouth of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the Ganges is said to be emanating from the lotus feet of the Lord. Of course there is no difference between the mouth and the feet of the Supreme Lord, but in our position we can appreciate that the Bhagavad-gita is even more important than the Ganges.

The Bhagavad-gita is just like a cow, and Lord Krsna, who is a cowherd boy, is milking this cow. The milk is the essence of the Vedas, and Arjuna is just like a calf. The wise men, the great sages and pure devotees, are to drink the nectarean milk of Bhagavad-gita.

In this present day, man is very eager to have one scripture, one God, one religion, and one occupation. So let there be one common scripture for the whole world—Bhagavad-gita. And let there be one God only for the whole world—Sri Krsna. And one mantra only—Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. And let there be one work only—the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.



THE HIDDEN GLORY OF INDIA

20 SACRED TEXTS

# THE MAHABHARATA

As an epic of immense proportions—both in terms of length and content—the *Mahabharata* has become the basis of Indian myth, religion, and philosophical thought. It is composed of 110,000 Sanskrit couplets and is thus seven times the length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined, or nearly three times the size of the Judeo-Christian Bible. Regarded by many to be as authoritative as the Vedas, the *Mahabharata* is known as “the fifth Veda.” Vaishnavas regard it as an *itihasa*, or “history.”

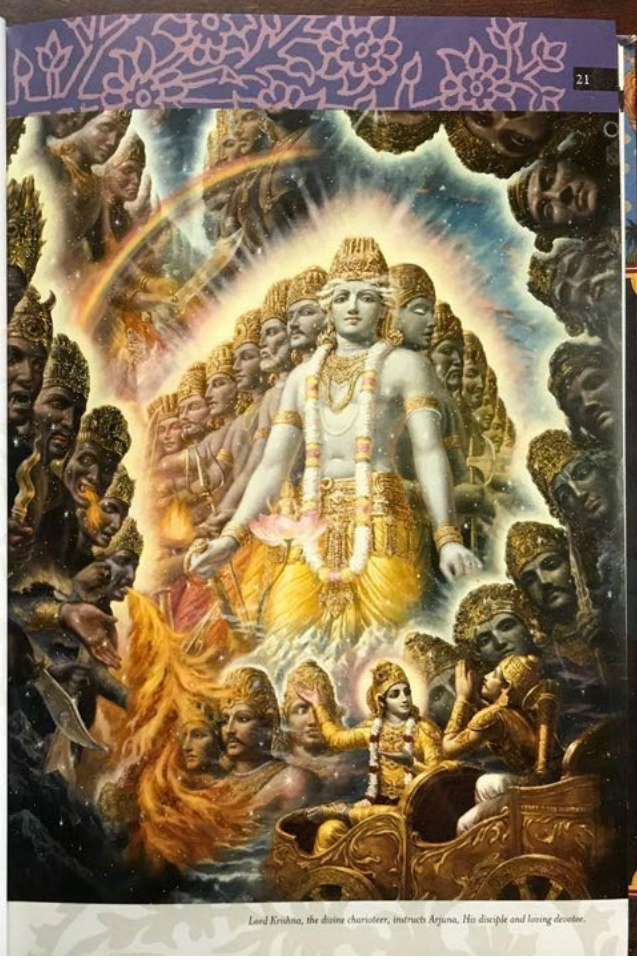
**T**n its voluminous pages, the *Mahabharata* deals with a host of subjects, but the central narration focuses on the quarrel between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, two groups of cousins. The quarrel escalates into a full-scale civil war involving gods and men, tricksters and ascetics with magical powers, and *brahmanas* and royalty, and it ultimately jeopardizes the fate of the entire universe.

The *Mahabharata* has traditionally been interpreted in three distinct ways. Externally, it is the story of a particular royal family that becomes involved in a fierce fratricidal war. Even on this seemingly superficial level, the



*Mahabharata* elucidates such qualities as heroism, courage, and saintliness. On the ethical plane, the war is seen as the perennial conflict fought in daily life between good and evil, justice and injustice, right and wrong—essentially, *dharma* against *adharma*.

On the spiritual level, the *Mahabharata* focuses on the battle between the higher self and the lower self, the war between man's spiritual calling and the dictates of the body, mind, and senses. The Vaishnava tradition views the *Mahabharata* as encompassing all three levels of reality, and the tradition offers guidance for each.



Lord Krishna, the divine charioteer, instructs Arjuna, His disciple and loving devotee.

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THE HIDDEN GLORY OF INDIA

22 SACRED TEXTS

# THE BHAGAVAD GITA

*Gita* means “song,” and *bhagavad* refers to “God, the possessor (*vat*) of all opulence (*bhaga*).” The *Bhagavad-gita*, therefore, is “The Song of the All-Opulent One”; it embodies the teachings of Lord Krishna.

**T**he work comes to us in the form of dialogue between Lord Shri Krishna and the princely warrior Arjuna just before the onset of the devastating *Mahabharata* war.

Arjuna, putting aside his duty as a *kshatriya* (warrior), decides not to fight. This decision is motivated by personal considerations: his kinsmen and teachers are in the opposing army.

Krishna, who has agreed to become the driver of Arjuna's chariot, sees His friend and devotee in illusion, paralyzed by the fear that he must kill his relatives and friends. Feeling compassion, Krishna eloquently reminds Arjuna of his immediate social duty (*varna-dharma*) as a warrior upon whom people are depending, and, more importantly, of his religious duty (*santana-dharma*) as an eternal spiritual entity in relationship with God. The relevance and universality of Krishna's teachings transcend the immediate historical setting of Arjuna's battlefield dilemma.

The dialogue moves through a series of questions and answers that elucidate metaphysical concepts such

as the distinction between body/soul (matter/spirit), the principle of nonattached action, the virtues of discipline (*योग*) and meditation, and the place of knowledge (*gyana*) and devotion (*bhakti*). Krishna teaches that perfection lies not in renunciation of the world, but rather in disciplined action (*karma-yoga*), performed without attachment to results (*karma-phala-tyaga*).

Krishna shows Arjuna His Universal Form, which includes everything in existence, then His mystical four-armed Vishnu form, and finally His original two-armed form. He explains His many manifestations, such as Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan (see later section on this subject), and ultimately reveals that His personal feature supersedes His impersonal aspects.

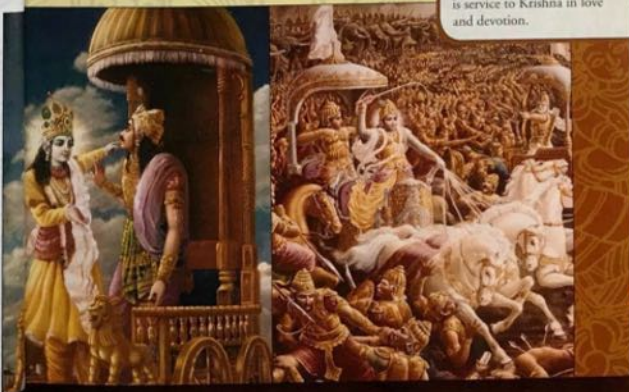
Krishna explains the three modes of material nature—goodness, passion, and ignorance—showing how an understanding of these three qualities, along with knowledge of the divine and demonic natures, can lead to enlightenment. He explains the different kinds of liberation and the ultimacy of surrendering to Him with a heart of devotion.



## WHAT IS DHARMA?

Although many scholars agree that “duty” is an acceptable translation of the Sanskrit *dharma*, the term is difficult to translate. It is used to refer to religion, ordinary religiosity, sacred duty, virtue, cosmic order, and so on. Etymologically, it derives from the verbal root *dhri*, which means “to hold,” and more specifically, “that which holds everything together.” Things are held together by their essential qualities. *Dharma* is consequently seen as “the essence of a given thing,” or “a thing's inherent nature.” The *dharma* of water is wetness. The *dharma* of honey is sweetness. And, according to the *Bhagavad-gita* the *dharma* of the soul is service to Krishna in love and devotion.

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# GITA COMMENTARIES

Although widely published and read as a separate text, originally the *Bhagavad-gita* appears as an episode in the sixth book of the *Mahabharata* (*Bhishma-parva*, chapters 23–40). It consists of 700 verses in eighteen chapters and is often referred to as the “Gitopanishad,” in that it follows the style and philosophical conclusions of the Upanishads.

The *Gita*’s depth of wisdom has inspired numerous commentaries; the *Gita* is said to be the most commented-upon book in the religious history of man. In India, practically every major teacher, dating back to antiquity, has contributed a commentary on the *Gita*. And the *Mahabharata* has its own built-in explanation of the *Gita*, because Book Fourteen (called the *Anugita*) is basically a summarization of the *Gita*’s contents.

Long-established Vaishnava texts, such as the *Varaha Purana* and the *Padma Purana*, include a *Gitamahatmya* (verses

glorifying the *Gita*), and these are used by all schools of Indian thought. In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E., teachers of the impersonalistic school, such as Bhaskara and Shankara, wrote what are now considered classic *Gita* commentaries as well, though such works lack the personalistic insights of the Vaisnavas.

Most important are the many highly theistic commentaries that followed, particularly that of Shri A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.



After the *Gita* was translated into English for the first time (by Charles Wilkins in 1795), its popularity began to soar outside India. Intellectuals among the Germans (Schlegel, Deussen, and Schopenhauer), Americans (Emerson and Thoreau), Englishmen (Max Mueller, who was English by adoption, and Aldous Huxley), Frenchmen (Romain Rolland), and Russians (Tolstoy) were greatly intrigued by the *Gita*’s message. This message continues to be expounded upon even today.



“Of the sacred books of the Hindus, the *Bhagavad-gita* is the most widely read and probably the most important text for the understanding of Eastern mysticism.”

R. C. Zaehner, *University of Oxford*



# THE VEDIC LITERATURE

In the Indian tradition, the esoteric wisdom of the universe is called *Veda*. This word can be traced to the Sanskrit root *vid*, which means “to know” or “knowledge.” It is related to the words “wit” and “wisdom” from the German; “idea” (originally *widea*) from the Greek; and “video” from the Latin. (One who knows, sees the truth; hence: video.) The holy books of India, containing the essence of Vedic knowledge, are called the Vedas.

According to Vaishnava tradition, the Vedas emanate from the Lord Himself. Vedic knowledge is carefully passed down, from master to disciple; this is called *parampara*, or disciple succession. The lineages in which the Vedic message is transmitted are called *sampradayas*. In this way, the Vedic prophets sought to maintain the integrity of their oral tradition. The idea is that the Vedas, when properly received in disciple succession, are devoid of imperfection and interpolation, qualities invariably associated with secular literature.

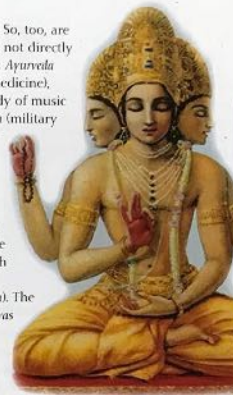
The Vedic knowledge was given by the Supreme Lord to creator-god Brahma, who in turn gave it to Narada, one of his sons. Narada gave this knowledge to the sage Vyasa, who then, roughly 5,000 years ago, put it into written form for the benefit of modern man. (Prior to the modern age, according to the Vedic texts, man had a superb memory and did not require the written word.) Originally the Vedas existed as one

exceedingly lengthy work. Vyasa, to make this knowledge accessible, divided it into four books, called *Samhitas*. These are the *Rig Veda* (the earliest sacred hymns of the Vedas), the *Sama Veda* (the Veda of melodies), the *Yajur Veda* (the Veda of rituals), and the *Atharva Veda* (the Veda of incantations). Vedic literature also includes explanatory books known as *Brahmanas* (treatises dealing with the technicalities of sacrifices) and *Aranyakas* (treatises for renunciants who go off into the wilderness to fulfill vows).

Also included is the vast storehouse of Upanishadic literature, philosophical texts meant to elucidate Vedic concepts. In addition, there are numerous *Sutras* (books of concise truths), such as the *Vedanta-sutras*, the *Shrauta-sutras*, the *Grihya-sutras*, the *Dharma-sutras*, and the *Shulba-sutras*. The *Vedangas* (auxiliary sciences connected with Vedic study) are also important: *shiksha* (phonetics), *chandasa* (meter), *vyakarana* (grammar), *nirukta* (etymology), and *jyotish*

(astronomy/astrology). So, too, are the *Upavedas* (sciences not directly related to Vedic study): *Ayurveda* (the study of holistic medicine), *Gandharva-veda* (the study of music and dance), *Dhanur-veda* (military science), and *Shilpa-veda* (architecture). Theologically most important are the many *Puranas* (such as the *Bhagavat Purana*) as well as the epics (like the *Mahabharata*—which includes the *Bhagavad-gita*—and the *Ramayana*). The many writings of *acharyas* (“enlightened teachers”) should also be included in the Vedic literature, since they bring out the essence of earlier Vedic works and are thus considered “Vedic” in a practical sense.

The verses in each of the thousands of Vedic texts conform to strict rules of poetry and meter, and contain information on varied topics: from medicine and farming to a description or explanation of time sequences on upper and lower planets; from techniques of yoga and meditation to household hints and recipes for vegetarian dishes; from detailed explanations of governmental organization to masterful directions on construction and decoration of temples or residential buildings. The Vedas contain drama, history, and complex philosophy, as well as simple lessons of etiquette, military protocol, and the use of musical instruments. Most significantly, however, is that the Vedic literature explains both *rasa* (“relationship with God,” or “the intense pleasure that comes from a distinct relation with the Supreme”) and *bhakti* (“devotional love”) in minute detail, as a science.



## DIVISION OF SCRIPTURES

- Shruti** (revealed writings of “that which is heard”).
  - The four Vedic *Samhitas*: *Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva*
  - *Brahmanas*
  - *Aranyakas*
  - *Upanishads* (of which there are more than 108 separate books)
- Smriti** (tradition, or “that which is remembered”).
  - *Itihāsas* (epics) such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (which includes the *Bhagavad-gita*)
  - *Puranas*, such as the eighteen prominent *Mahapuranas*:
    - **Six saurvik Puranas:** *Vishnu Purana, Varaha Purana, Matsya Purana, Bhagavata Purana, Garuda Purana, Padma Purana*
    - **Six rajasek Puranas:** *Varaha Purana, Matsya Purana, Bhishma Purana, Bhishma Purana, Brahma-sahasra Purana, Markandeya Purana*
    - *Bhavisya Purana, Varaha Purana*
    - **Six tamasik Puranas:** *Matsya Purana, Karma Purana, Linga Purana, Shiva Purana, Skanda Purana, Agni Purana*
  - Eighteen *Upapuranas* and numerous *sthalas* (regional) *Puranas*
  - Verified equivalents of the *Dharma-sutras*: *Manu-smṛiti, Vishnu-smṛiti*, etc.
- Sutras** (aphorisms)
  - *Shrauta-sutras, Grihya-sutras, Dharma-sutras, Shiksha-sutras, Vedanta-sutras*, etc.
- Other categories include the *Vedangas*, the *Upavedas*, and the writings and commentaries of the great *acharyas* throughout history.



*All Glories to the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada for coming to the West to give us pure love of Krishna, Bhakti Yoga. His 5000 year old lineage traces back to Lord Krishna 'directly'.*

## SHRILA PRABHUPADA

### A MODERN-DAY MASTER

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada began the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in New York City in 1966. He came to the West as a representative of the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya—a lineage dating back to antiquity.

**S**hrila Prabhupada was born of devoted Gaudiya Vaishnava parents in Calcutta, India, in 1896. His father's name was Gour Mohan De and his mother's, Rajani. He was named Abhay Charan, but sometimes he was called Nandu because he was born on Nandotsava—the day immediately following Krishna's birthday celebration.

Shrila Prabhupada's early childhood was steeped in Krishna culture. From his earliest days he was extremely fond of Lord Krishna and Ratha-yatra, and he would regularly stage his own miniature Ratha-yatra festivals. Although he preferred to play

his small *mrtdanga* (clay drum) rather than attend school, his mother's counsel prevailed, and Abhay Charan excelled in his studies, taking particular interest in oral expression, debate, and discussion. He completed his higher education in philosophy, economics, and English at Calcutta's Scottish Churches' College, and shortly thereafter became dedicated to the cause of Mahatma Gandhi.

While a young nationalist, he started a family and developed a successful pharmaceutical concern.

All this was to change, however, in 1922, when he met his soon-to-be guru, Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was one of the great Vaishnava renunciants of modern India, a singularly gifted scholar who translated complex philosophical texts and successfully established Gaudiya-Vaishnava monasteries throughout the subcontinent. He



was Prabhupada's link with the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya. Both pure and learned, he had a deep effect on Prabhupada. Within ten years he not only initiated Prabhupada as a disciple but gave him a life mission: to explain the universal message of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the English language, and to help the world with this knowledge.

Shrila Prabhupada began by publishing articles, and in 1944 started a magazine, *Back to Godhead*. In 1959 he took *sannyasa* (the renounced order of life). After this, Prabhupada dedicated his life to fulfilling the order of his spiritual master.

In 1965, at age sixty-nine, alone and with only forty rupees in his possession, His Divine Grace set sail from Calcutta. His destination: America. He carried within himself an intense desire to bring the balm of God consciousness to a materialistic world. It was with this hope and intent that he founded ISKCON, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. In the decade that followed, Prabhupada established 108 temples in major cities around the world and initiated thousands of spiritual seekers of all races and ages. In addition, he established farm communities, founded religious elementary schools, and opened vegetarian restaurants.

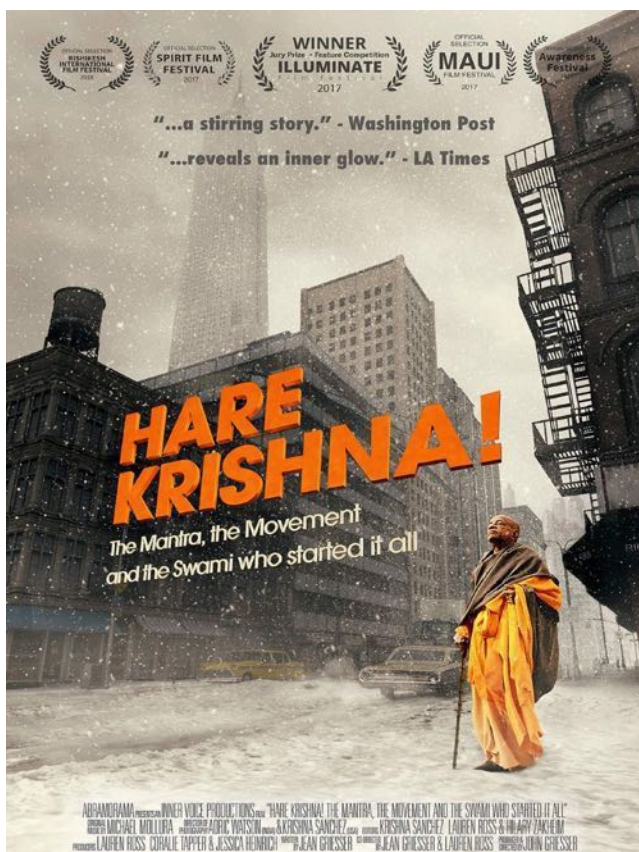
Many revere Shrila Prabhupada as India's greatest scholar, philosopher, prophet, and cultural ambassador. According to the 1976 *Britannica Book of the Year*, he "astonished academic and literary communities worldwide by writing and publishing fifty-two

books on the ancient Vedic culture... in the period from October 1968 to November 1975."

Prabhupada's books, now translated into more than eighty languages, are being used in many of North America's universities and in thousands of libraries throughout the world. His *Back to Godhead* magazine continues as a bi-monthly after almost sixty years of publication.

What Prabhupada achieved in twelve years is legendary. He left this world in 1977 in Vrindavan (the holy land most dear to Lord Krishna), having circled the globe fourteen times—writing books, translating scriptures, giving lectures, and personally guiding his disciples all the while.



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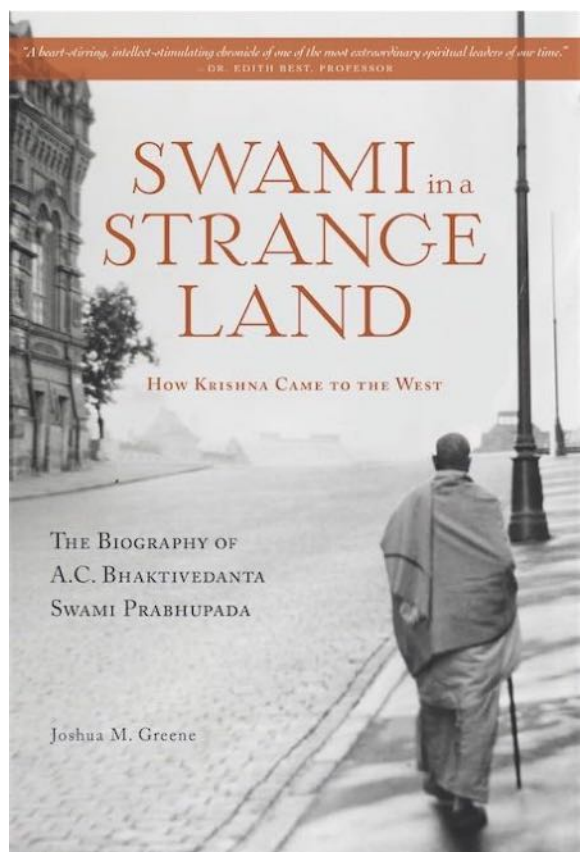
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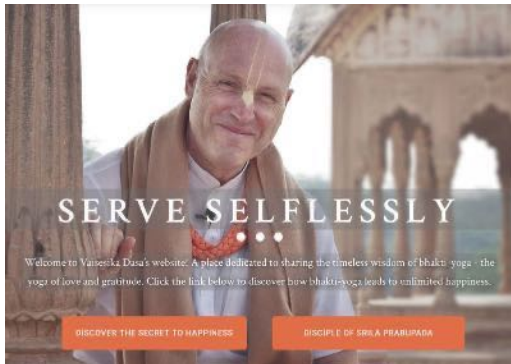
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## *Examples of Wonderful Teachers of Krishna Consciousness*

*There are so many wonderful teachers, Gurus, and mystical practioners within Srila Prabhupada's 5000 year old disciplic succession (parampara) of Lord Krishna. and here are some wonderful teachers. Please visit their websites and listen to their scholarly classes on youtube:*

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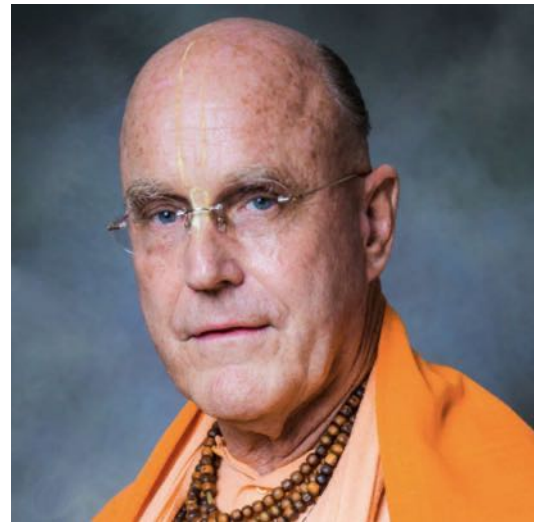
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