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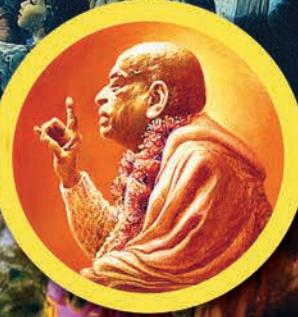
Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience

# BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

Pages : 36

May 2022



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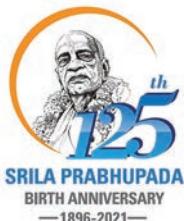


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# BACK TO GODHEAD

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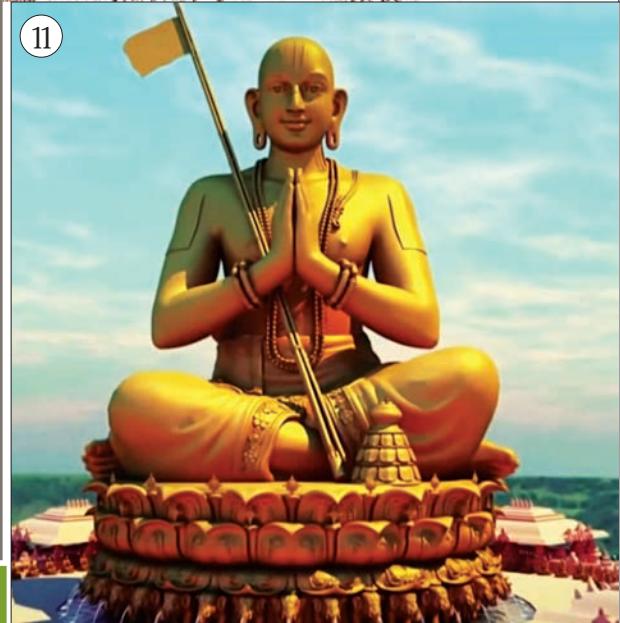
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### Dear readers, please note:

Due to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine and the pandemic, we face a shortage of LWC printing paper (imported) for our Back to Godhead magazine. For the next few months, until the situation improves, we are going to use an alternative paper available in India. We request you to bear with us.

Thanks.

### OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

# BACK TO GODHEAD



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

## FOUNDER

(under the direction of His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda) His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda - Founder-ācārya of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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# LETTERS

## Awe and Reverence More Realistic

I'm reading about Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, and although undoubtedly the ultimate in terms of God love, it really seems beyond my capacity at present. Becoming fixed in reverential worship of Him as Śrī Viṣṇu seems a lot closer to my present nature. More attainable or realistic.

What to speak of spotlessly pure, selfless devotion, I've hardly thought of God in my life! Is there any fault or loss in focusing more on reverential, regulated, dutiful service? Will the Lord be unhappy with me?

—Sunita Goel

Via the Internet

*Our reply:* Even in ISKCON we worship the Lord in reverence. It is only when one is a liberated soul situated in pure bhakti that one can relate to the Lord with familiarity and intimacy.

Technically, even though ISKCON temples have deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, They are receiving our worship as Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Temple worship is always in the mood of awe and reverence.

The direct worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is done in our eternal forms as *gopīs*, *gopas*, etc., in Goloka Vāndāvana. That is a very lofty goal, but one we should aspire to. Our progress begins with regulated service in awe and reverence; gradually spontaneous intimate devotion arises. That is the path given to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the other spiritual masters in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

So your situation is not different from that of devotees worshiping Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in our present impure condition.

## Why Tulasī Beads?

I was told that devotees wear tulasi beads all the time because after death (which may occur at any time) the Yamadūtas [messengers of the god of death] will not be able to approach the soul, and the Viṣṇudūtas [messengers of Lord Viṣṇu] will definitely come and take the soul back to Godhead. How do tulasi beads on the body protect the soul after its departure?

—Padmapriya Ravic  
Via the Internet

*Our reply:* Devotees wear tulasi beads for several reasons. One is that they mark a person as Kṛṣṇa's servant. Śrīla Prabhupāda compared them to a dog collar. "We are Kṛṣṇa's dog," he would say. "We are servants; He is master." Another reason is that tulasi is sacred. She is all-auspicious, and simply by touching her, karmic reaction is minimized and the tendency to act in a pious way is increased.

Still another reason is that tulasi beads identify us as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, followers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Tilaka and tulasi are signs of a practicing devotee. Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged us to wear both all the time, even when dressed in Western clothes, to identify ourselves as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Finally, there are the reasons you stated. A body adorned with tilaka and tulasi indicates to the Yamadūtas and Viṣṇudūtas that this body was used in Kṛṣṇa's service and therefore should not be treated as sinful. Please refer to the story of Ajāmila in the Sixth Canto of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

## Desiring to See God

I'm an engineering student and quite a spiritual person. Can I see Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Rāma on my own? I want to talk to them. I want to see them without opening my eyes, but with my third eye. Is that possible?

—Harish

Via the Internet

*Our reply:* You can certainly see and talk with Kṛṣṇa, but as you suggest in your letter, it is not possible to really see Him with material eyes. One must have transcendental vision, which comes from "anointing the eyes with the salve of love of Godhead." And that comes from rendering loving devotional service to the Lord under the guidance of someone who already has done that and has achieved a high degree of spiritual vision.

Being able to associate with the Lord is not a cheap thing. It cannot be purchased, or even earned by doing certain things. There is no quick formula for opening the transcendental vision. Those who say that by practicing some technique for a few months one can see God through the "third eye" are bluffing.

In the material world we are trained to get things very quickly and with as little investment as possible. This is not the case with the darśana of the Lord. The Lord is in the heart of every living entity. He knows not just what we do but also the state of our heart, mind, and consciousness. In Bhagavad-gītā Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that He is speaking with him because

Arjuna is sinless, without envy, and His dear friend. The devotee aspires to develop these qualities, wanting to serve the Lord with selfless devotion, free from personal desire. When the Lord detects such an attitude, then from within the heart He "destroys with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance." (Bhagavad-gītā 10.11) In this way Lord Kṛṣṇa or Lord Rāma rewards the devotee with pure devotion.

So if you want to see the Lord and speak to Him, you should follow the process given by the Lord Himself. Find and follow a spiritual master who is a servant of the Lord, and in time you too will develop pure love of God, which is the qualification for knowing, seeing, and talking with Him.

## Hope for the Hectic Professional

I'm a professional with a hectic schedule. How can I manage my time for devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa?

—Sahadan

Via the Internet

*Our reply:* The best way to manage to fit devotional service into your busy schedule is to try to offer everything you do, or some portion of everything you do, to Kṛṣṇa. For example, offer your skills or the fruits of your work to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Offer to help at a temple and use your skills for the benefit of the deity, the temple, and the devotees. In Chapter Twelve of Bhagavad-gītā Lord Kṛṣṇa gives several alternatives for conducting the process of devotional service.

You can read that chapter for guidance.

Kṛṣṇa also says that offering Him a little water, a fruit, or a flower with love constitutes devotional service. Prayer and chanting—especially (please turn to page 15 chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—are devotional service. They will clean personal desire from your heart and allow you to focus on rendering loving service to Kṛṣṇa. These acts of devotion can be done in the car or on a train—anywhere. For example, you can chant softly to yourself or listen to devotional music, books, or lectures.

The ultimate barometer of devotional service is the love with which the offering is made. Lord Kṛṣṇa has everything, but anyone who renders Him service with love, free from envy, becomes His friend and devotee. So it is not what you do so much as how you do it.

Arjuna was fighting on a battlefield, and Kṛṣṇa told him, "Fight and think of Me."

Try to put Kṛṣṇa into your thoughts, and whenever possible offer some part of your work or the fruits of your work to Him. He will be happy and will reciprocate according to the degree of devotion in your offering. ♣

*Replies were written by Krishna.com Live Help volunteers. Please write to us at: 302, Amrut Industrial Estate, 3rd floor, Western Express Highway, Mira Road (E) 401 104. E-mail: indiabtg@gmail.com*

# HOW TO FIND REAL KNOWLEDGE

*Knowledge of this world, acquired from sources within it, will always be imperfect and limited.*

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

vidyām cāvidyām ca yas  
tad vedobhayam saha  
avidyayā mr̄tyuṁ tīrtvā  
vidyayāmātam aśnute

“Only one who can learn the process of nescience and that of transcendental knowledge side by side can transcend the influence of repeated birth and death and enjoy the full blessings of immortality.”

—Śrī Ḫopaniṣad, Mantra 11

**P**eople do not understand what immortality is. Because they have no knowledge of the subject, they think it is a vague idea. Nowadays we are very proud of our advancement of knowledge.

But there are so many things we do not know, and can never know, even by our modern experimental knowledge. If you want real knowledge, you must go to the source of knowledge: the *Vedas*. *Veda* means “knowledge.”

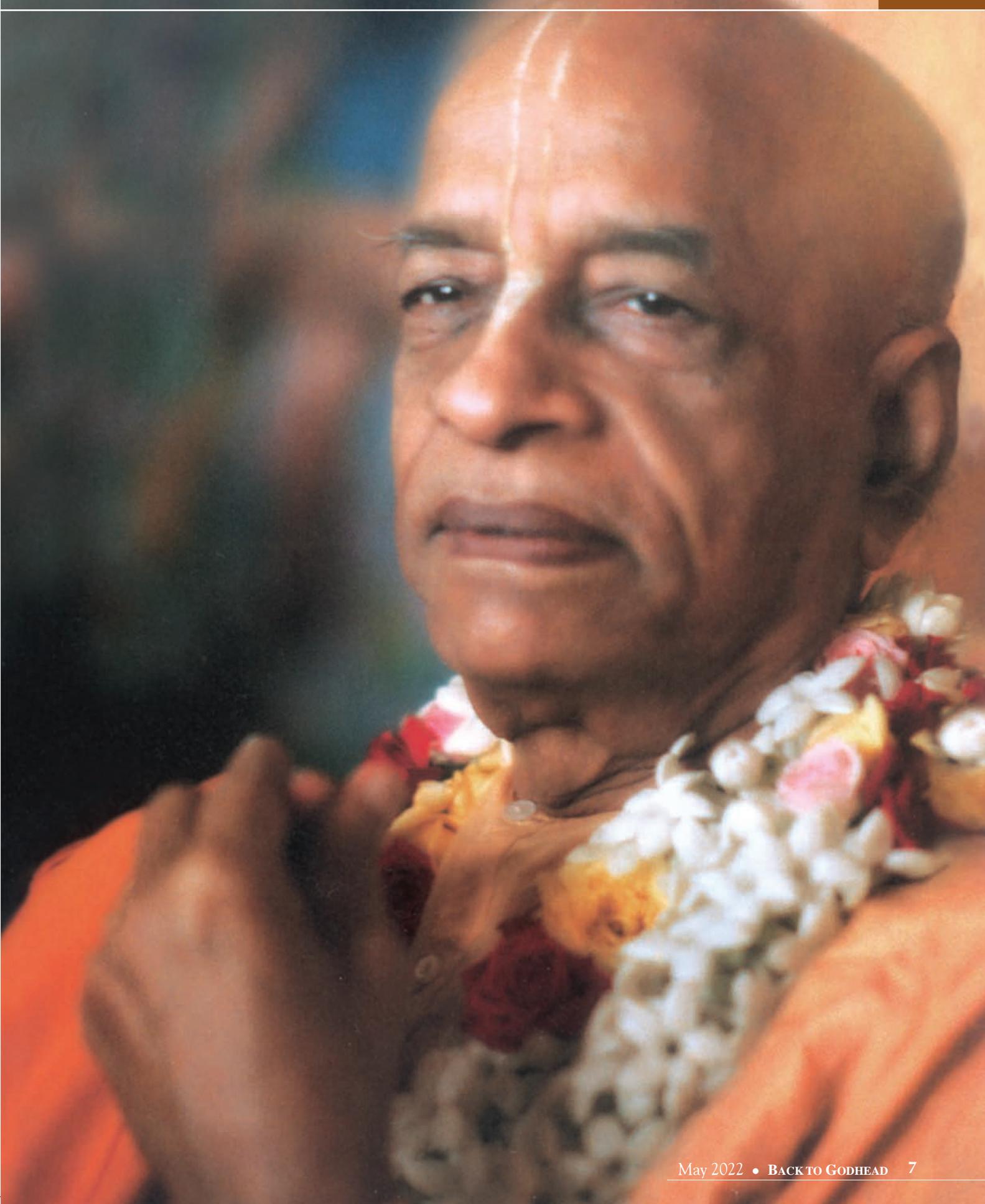
There are 108 Vedic Upaniṣads, out of which nine are very important. And out of those nine, this *Īśopaniṣad* stands first, then *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*. *Upa* means “nearing.” This knowledge will take you nearer to Kṛṣṇa.

For the ācāryas, the most learned members of society, the best evidence is *śruti*, which means the *Vedas*. They are not experimental knowledge. They

are not knowledge established by the research work of contaminated, conditioned souls, whose senses are imperfect and who cannot see things as they are. They simply theorize: “It may be like that.” They can say only that much. “It may be like that.” That is not knowledge. Knowledge must be definite, with no mistake.

Conditioned souls commit mistakes, are deluded, have imperfect senses, and cheat. One who does not understand *Bhagavad-gītā* but writes a commentary on it is cheating the public. Because he has a name as a scholar, he takes advantage of the popularity of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and writes a commentary.

FOUNDER'S LECTURE



Such people claim that anyone can give his own opinion. But that is not the process. You cannot give any opinion. Suppose I am a preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—how I can give an opinion on medical science? That is ludicrous. I can give opinions within my jurisdiction. That's all right. But if somebody asks for my opinion about some medical treatment or some legal implication, what can I do?

### THE NEED FOR A GURU

To get real knowledge one has to go to the right person. Therefore it is said, *tad-vijñānārthatam sa gurum evābhigacchet*: “To understand these things properly, one must humbly approach, with firewood in hand, a spiritual master who is learned in the *Vedas* and firmly devoted to the Absolute Truth.” [Mundaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12]

And in the Bhagavad-gītā (4.34) Lord Kṛṣṇa says,

*tad viddhi pranipātena  
paripraśnena sevayā  
upadekṣyanti tad jñānam  
jñāninās tattva-darśināḥ*

**Vidyām avidyām ca: two sides, darkness and light. You must know two things: what is māyā, or illusion, and what is Kṛṣṇa. Then your knowledge is perfect.**

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because

they have seen the truth.” *Tattva-darśināḥ* means one who has seen, or realized, the Absolute Truth. You have to go to such a person.

In today's verse it is said, *avidyayā mrtyum*: if you do not go to the spiritual master, then you remain in darkness. In the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* verse I quoted, the word *gacchet* means “must go.” One cannot think, “Oh, I may accept a spiritual master, or I may not. There are books. I shall learn from them alone.” No. In order to understand spiritual knowledge, you must go to a spiritual master. Otherwise you remain in *avidyā*, ignorance.

*Vidyām avidyām ca*: two sides, darkness and light. You must know two things: what is *māyā*, or illusion, and what is Kṛṣṇa. Then your knowledge is perfect.

Of course, Kṛṣṇa is so nice that if somehow or other you surrender to Him, then all your business is finished. If you fully surrender to Kṛṣṇa, you will automatically learn what *māyā* is. Kṛṣṇa will give you

devotional service. How is that? The mercy comes in parallel lines. If you have not found a spiritual master but are sincere, then Kṛṣṇa will take you to a bona fide spiritual master. And if you get a bona fide spiritual master, then he will take you to Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa is always sitting within your heart as *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within the heart. And that spiritual master within the heart manifests Himself externally as the spiritual master. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes, *sāksād-dharitvena samasta-sāstrair uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhīḥ*. *Sāksāt* means “directly.” The spiritual master is directly the representative of Kṛṣṇa. This is the verdict of all scriptures: *samasta sāstraiḥ*. And it is not only stated, but it is accepted as such by all great devotees: *sadbhīḥ*.

### VIDYĀ AND AVIDYĀ

We should learn what *vidyā* and *avidyā* are. *Avidyā* means materialistic knowledge. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has sung, *jada-vidyā yato, māyāra vaibhava*: “Advancement of material knowledge means advancement of *māyā*'s jurisdiction.” The more you become implicated and entangled in material knowledge, the less you can understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness. People who are supposed to be very advanced in material knowledge think, “What is this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement?” They have no attraction. For example, Indian

intelligence from within. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya 19.151) says, *guru-Kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*: By the mercy of the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa, one enters into

boys who have come to America to learn technology question why we are interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They have rejected these things. When they see that I have introduced the things they have rejected in India, they are surprised.

I came to America because modern India has rejected spiritual knowledge. Indians are thinking that if they can imitate Western technology, then they will be happy. Such thinking is *māyā*. They do not see that those who are advanced three hundred times more than us in technology—what do they really have? They do not see that.

India cannot advance in technology like America or Europe because people in the Western countries have undertaken this business for a very long time. But Indian culture, beginning from the creation, is a spiritual culture.

Consider Vyāsadeva. He is the original guru of Vedic knowledge. How was he living? In a cottage at Badarikashrama in the Himalayas. But just see his knowledge! He has written so many *Purāṇas*, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is one of them. The Vedānta philosophy, *Mahābhārata* — if you study each verse, you can study for your whole life. In some book he has written 100,000 verses, and many are not less than 20,000 or 25,000 verses. Each verse is so full of meaning that one has to learn it throughout his life.

This is Vedic culture. There is no comparison to the knowledge

contained within Vedic culture. And the knowledge is not only spiritual knowledge, but knowledge in other departments as well, such as astronomy and mathematics.

It is not that in the olden age there were no airplanes. We get information about airplanes from

Then you are meant for the slaughterhouse.

## REAL KNOWLEDGE

Material knowledge, nationalism, socialism—they are simply spoiling time. Real knowledge is Vedic knowledge and knowledge of Kṛṣṇa.

## I came to America because modern India has rejected spiritual knowledge. Indians are thinking that if they can imitate Western technology, then they will be happy.

the *Purāṇas*. They were so powerful and fast that they could easily reach other planets. Arjuna went to the heavenly planet. It is not that there was no advancement of material knowledge in the Vedic age. The opulence was far beyond what we have now. Gold, jewels—every city, every person, had them, and what to speak of kings and rich men. Material advancement was there, but the people did not care much for it. They were interested in spiritual knowledge.

If we advance in *avidyā*, or material science, then we have to suffer repeated birth and death. And there is no guarantee where you shall get your next birth. That is not in your hands. You cannot dictate. Now you are a happy American, but after quitting this body you cannot dictate, “Please give me another American body.” No. That is not possible. You may get an American body, but you may get an American animal’s body.

*Bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate* [Bhagavad-gītā 7.19]. Therefore one who is in real knowledge after many, many births comes to Kṛṣṇa and surrenders unto Him. Such a person realizes, *vāsudevah sarvam*: “Vāsudeva, Kṛṣṇa, You are everything.” [Bg. 7.19]

We are trying to distribute that knowledge freely, without any charge. Our mission is very great. You should be conscious of this responsibility. We are giving this highest thing to human society. Try to understand it thoroughly and distribute it. That will make you very dear to Kṛṣṇa. He says in the *Gītā*, *na ca tasmān manusyeṣु kaścin me priya-kṛttamah*: “No one is dearer to Me than one who is preaching knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” So if you want to be very dear to Kṛṣṇa quickly, preach this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement very nicely.

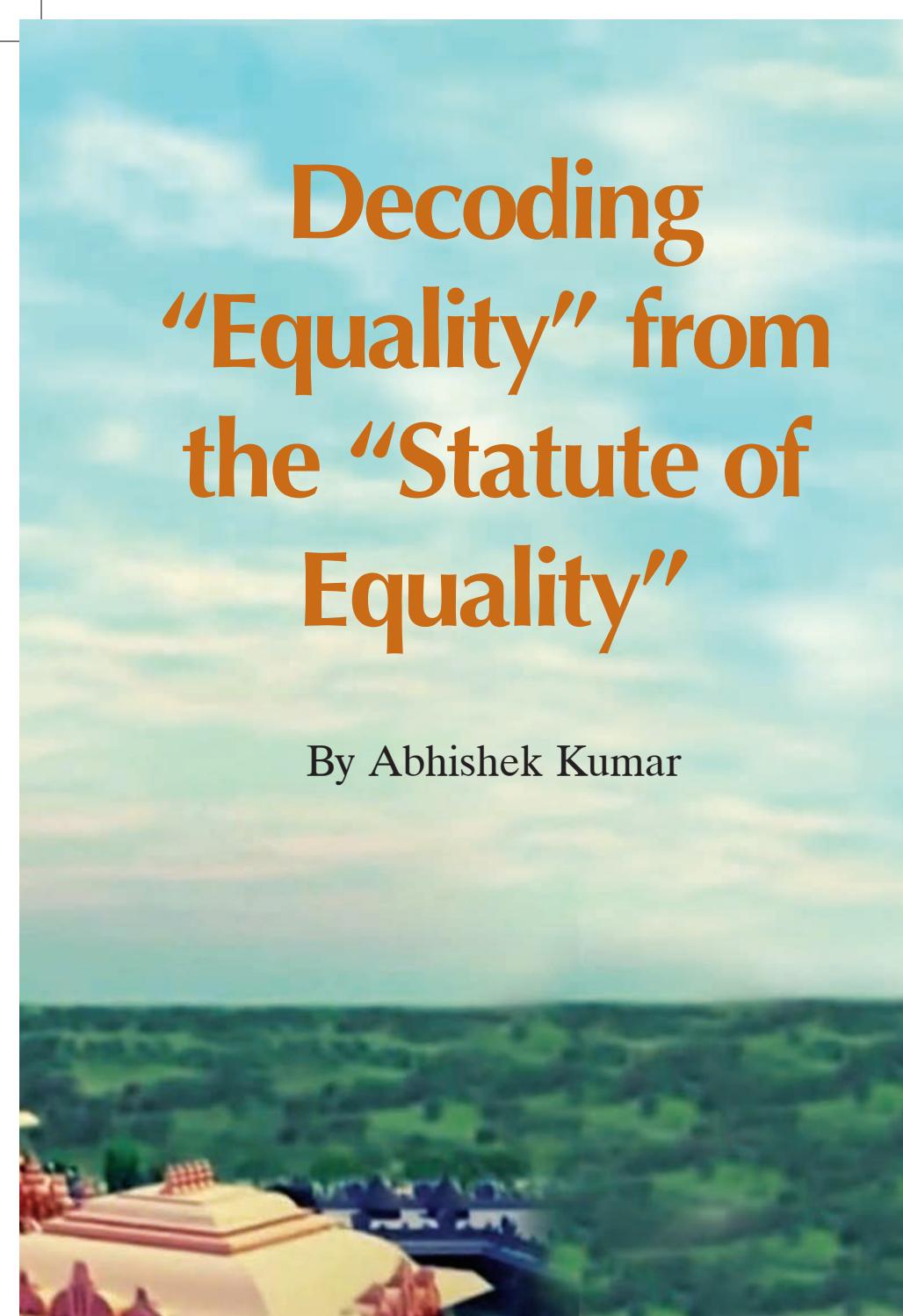
Thank you very much. ☩



The statue of equality inaugurated in Hyderabad on February 2022 stands as a figure of solidarity in the land of rich cultural diversity. His Holiness Sri Chinna Jeeyar Swami of the Rāmānuja Ashram envisioned the project to mark the millennium appearance year of

Śrīpāda Rāmānujācārya. The statue of the principal acharya in the bhakti movement, Śrīpāda Rāmānujācārya, invokes the message of spiritual unification through his life teachings, resembling through his calm and serene *namaskāram* posture. The magnificence of the statue and its architectural marvel

depicts the deep, intricate science as per the jurisprudence of the agama sastras. Incidentally, delving into the intricate sciences of the bhakti tradition becomes the central node in deciphering the message of the bhakti theology as a living tradition in the current age.



# Decoding “Equality” from the “Statute of Equality”

By Abhishek Kumar

## PHILOSOPHICAL QUEST OF ŚRĪPĀDA RĀMĀNUJA

Rāmānuja was born in 1017 AD to a devout *brāhmaṇa* couple in the village of Sriperumbudur, presently in the state of Tamil Nadu. Subsequently, he joined the *gurukula* to get educated and

qualified in the Vedic sciences from the prevalent tradition of Advaita Vedānta (non-dualistic) school of thought under the discipleship of Yādavaprakāśa.

The Advaita school proposed non-duality, meaning there is no duality between Brahman (the supreme reality) and *ātmā* (the

individual soul). And it said that this material world is false, and only the Absolute Truth is real (*brahma satyam jagan mithyā*). Rāmānuja had deep philosophical contentions on such points with Yādavaprakāśa, and consequently he parted ways from the school.

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE VISISTHA-ADVAITA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Eventually, he shifted along with his family to Kanchipuram and served as a priest in the Varadaraja Perumal Temple. Being adept in understanding the imports of the entire Vedic scriptures, he gave discourses on the philosophy of qualified monism (Visistha-Advaita). The following verse from shruti-sastras define the ontology of the terminology:

*visisthacye visisthacye visistha  
visithayodaitam visisthadiatam  
sukhsma jadchetan visistha  
sthulam  
chidchidrisithayordriatam  
bhedithertha*

In simple words, the absence of the adjective (visheshan) makes the substantive (visesha) redundant. In other words, one who is free from the adjective is called an individual (visista). Hence, God is an Individual (visista) and is different from jad (unconscious) and Chetan (conscious), even though both originate from God, which is called Visista-Advaita.

The import of the above verse

is classified into three groups: jad, chetan, and visitha; all three are mutually exclusive and eternally existing. The “archetypical” classification is refined in the teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (CC.M. 20.140) illustrated in the

enabling factor for life in the material world. It supports the theological import that nature empowered by the divine, acts as a secondary cause in the functioning of the world (Gītā 9.10, 14.03). Therefore, nature is intrinsically neither false as

imports of BG 2.12. Though there is qualitative oneness (*bheda*), quantitatively both are mutually exclusive/distinct (*abheda*). But the Advaitic school interpreted that there is only oneness (*bheda*). Because we (*jīva*) are in *māyā* covered by ignorance (avidya). Once we are freed from *māyā*, we become Brahman/God. But then, how does Brahman gets covered by illusion? We slide into an infinite regress and such structural weakness in the epistemology of Advaitic school didn't bode well with Rāmānujācārya.

Contrary to the Advaitic interpretations, Rāmānuja presented that each *jīva* is an eternal part of the Supreme Whole, even in the supposedly liberated state (Gītā 15.07). Principally it can be deduced from the sunlight. It can't be separated nor can it be supplanted with the sun. In the same way, the energies (*jad/cetan*) of the divine can't be divorced nor can they supersede the divine, which remains simultaneously one and distinct. Thus, both the individual (soul) and the supreme reality (God) are simultaneously one in quality (*advaita*) and remain distinct (*viśiṣṭa*), even when united — that is termed as Viśiṣṭādvaita.

## BHAKTI — THE MEANS AND THE END

Because of the individual entities' free will to enjoy independently of the Lord, the *jīva* transiently gets divorced from the Supreme. Subsequently,

following table:

The Advaitic School clubs the above duality between Individual consciousness and Brahman into one whole (Advaita). Further, the school proposes that illusion (*Māyā*) veils the real identity of the *jīva*, which is Brahman.

### Refuting the eternal nature of the universe:

**A key concern arises:** If the *jīva* is Brahman (supreme reality), how does it get bounded by *māyā*? And in reality, the individual is bounded by *māyā* that's the reason every living being is stuck in the cycle of birth and death, which implies *māyā* supersedes Brahman. That means Supreme reality becomes illusory and *māyā* emerges as absolute reality! One has to bend over backward to reconcile such internal inconsistencies within Advaitic philosophy.

Conversely, an empirical study of nature suggests the creative potential organically embedded within creation, and to a greater degree nature is the

originally proposed by the Advaitic school nor temporary as appropriated by the exponents of the Adavaitic school.

Instead, think of nature as a cloud. There is the formation of vapor, the expansion and then the vapor precipitates into water. And cloud is the secondary cause, while the sun is the absolute cause. So, the existence of the cloud is not an illusion, nor is it temporary because the same cycle is taking place at another place in the world. Likewise, the material world mimics – an eternal loop around creation, expansion, and dissolution, running concurrently in the cosmos curated by the presence of the divine potency (*Brahmasaṁhitā* 5.35).

### Refuting the separate identity of the Jīva and the Brahman:

Further, Rāmānuja distinguished that the individual soul is distinct from the supreme reality, eternally based on the

the *jīva* descends into the realm of illusion (*māyā*). Devotion towards the Lord dispels *avidyā*, the ignorance of one's true self, and removes the veil of *maya* that forges *avidyā* (Gītā 7.14). Consequently, bhakti facilitates overcoming the functional boundaries of society and awakens the vision of spiritual equality, perceiving everyone as parts of the supreme whole (Bhāg. 1.9.42).

Further, Rāmānuja presented that *nirvāṇa* or mokṣa is not necessarily about meditating on the nothingness or merging with the impersonal Brahman. Instead, the supreme reality has a non-material form that is spiritually manifest and consecrated in the form of a deity. And devotional service (*bhakti*) towards the Lord in the deity form, transcends the functional cum social boundaries and instantiates spiritual equality in the society. Thus, elevating the seeker to the state of the spiritual transformation – wherein the personal association of the supreme personality of the godhead becomes experiential (Bhāg. 2.2.31, Gītā 15.06). That's the essence of Viśiṣṭādvaita in a nutshell.

### THE AUTHORITY OF RĀMĀNUJĀCĀRYA

Although Rāmānujācārya is historically projected as the founder of the bhakti movement in India and as a social reformist, there is more it than meets the eye. The following verse sheds light on the hidden identity of Rāmānuja from Yādavācalamāhātmyam:

*anantah prathamāṁ rūpam  
lakṣmaṇaś ca tataḥ paraḥ  
balabhadram tr̄tyas tu kalau  
kaścit bhaviṣyati*

"It is the same who was Ananta-śeṣa first, Lakṣmaṇa after, and Balarāma in the third will certainly reappear in the Kali."

The word *kaścit* is considered by *acāryas* as a pointer to Rāmānuja. To put it simply, as per the opinion of the precedent *acāryas* Rāmānuja was an expansion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Vetting over the life and the impact Rāmānuja has created, hardly there is any doubt over the validity of such prophetic statement.

### THE INCLUSIVE NATURE OF BHAKTI

For spiritual guidance,

**Rāmānuja's spiritual guide was Kāñcipūrṇa Swami, a śūdra disciple of saint Yāmunācārya. Though hailing from a brāhmaṇa background, Rāmānujācārya had no second thoughts before taking**

Rāmānuja prioritized the selection of his Guru based on the realization over the social disposition. His spiritual guide was Kāñcipūrṇa Swami, a śūdra disciple of saint Yāmunācārya. Though hailing from a *brāhmaṇa* background, Rāmānujācārya had no second thoughts before taking instructions from Kāñcipūrṇa. Clearly, that's a

personal application of his message for the unification of the society despite the social disposition. Due to an aberration by Rāmānuja's wife, Rāmānuja missed the opportunity to take initiation from Kāñcipūrṇa.

Eventually, Rāmānuja approached the Vaiṣṇava saint Śrīpāda Goṣṭhīpūrṇa for *dikṣā*. The sacred mantra given at the time of *dikṣā* was confidential, befitting the seriousness of a seeker for spiritual elevation. But Rāmānujācārya didn't keep it confidential. Instead, he called everyone in the nearby vicinity and chanted out the mantra loud and clear. His guru rebuked him, saying such an act will lead him to hell. Rāmānuja, however, said that he won't mind going to hell if this act of sharing the mantra can award the highest benefit to the listeners of the mantra. Such an act within the existing social normative structure was unique

and suggests the intention of Rāmānuja for universal integration through bhakti-yoga.

Thus, representing his Guru and the Sri Vaiṣṇava tradition, Rāmānuja propagated the spirit of spiritual equality that transcended the functional dualities of the society like ethnicity or gender or economic class, or social status. The

propagation of the glorification of the Lord through his discourses and poems sparked the dormant bhakti within people across generations transcending social boundaries from north to south and from east to west.

### LITERARY CONTRIBUTION

To simplify and expand the accessibility of the complex Vedic texts for the common

equality that integrated the land of India for millennia. The followers of the bhakti tradition left no stone unturned to unite society at every level of society.

There have been many such exemplary examples in the history of India, like Nāmācārya Haridāsa Ṭhākura, who although born in a Muslim family, transcended the boundaries of sectarian religious boundaries through his pure devotional sentiments

**Rāmānuja propagated the spirit of spiritual equality that transcended the functional dualities of the society like ethnicity or gender or economic class, or social status.**

mass, Rāmānuja ventured on a serious literary presentation. Some of his devotional expositions include *Śrī-bhāṣya*, *Vedānta-dīpa*, *Vedānta-sāra*, *Gadyatraya*, the *Gītā-bhāṣya*, and *Nitya-grantha*. At the same time, Rāmānuja toured the entire India to unify the society with the common thread of devotion.

### EFFORTS FOR SPIRITUAL EQUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Bhakti emerged as the greatest unifier, even in the face of adverse situations. Every overt and covert means that were employed to propagate inequality and division in the society through conversions or desecrations or genocides or philosophical manipulations couldn't disunite the spiritual

and activities. Another such instance recorded in the 1900s was the historic debate between Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura from the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava tradition and the local caste-conscious *brāhmaṇas*. The Gaudiya tradition has its roots laced through Rāmānujācārya's *Viśiṣṭādvaita* school of thought.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura firmly established that caste of a person has to be determined based on the activities and inclinations, and not by birth alone, as mentioned in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.13). Therefore, anyone can become a *brāhmaṇa* based on their action, and a Vaiṣṇava is above the caste/social order, one who leads a devotional lifestyle, positioning the Supreme Personality of

Godhead at the focal point of their life.

Similar events of spiritual equality can be witnessed, even to the present day, with the globalization of the bhakti movement by His Divine Grace A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. As a sincere disciple of Bhaktisiddhānta, he embarked on a novel mission of his guru to unify the west with the east, on the strand of bhakti. The global Rathayātrā festival organized by ISKCON is held across many nations drawing people in droves from a wide array of ethnicity, race, gender and economic disposition, unifying them with the rope of love and devotion while pulling the chariot of the Lord. The present-day manifestation of ISKCON through its several outreaches across the globe works on the same spirit that Rāmānujācārya embarked upon in the tenth century to bring humanity on the path of spiritual equality.

The statue of Śrīpāda Rāmānujācārya is beheld as a living inspiration in the living bhakti tradition, calling upon humanity to lower all material boundaries and rise to the pedestal of spiritual equality, being eternal parts of the supreme personality of godhead. Thus, uniting humanity on the string of devotion is the amplifying message echoing from the core of the statute of equality. 

Painting by Parksit Dāsa



# A Pause for Prayer

O Gopinātha, my mind is crazy and does not care for any authority. It is always senseless and has remained in the dark pit of worldly affairs.

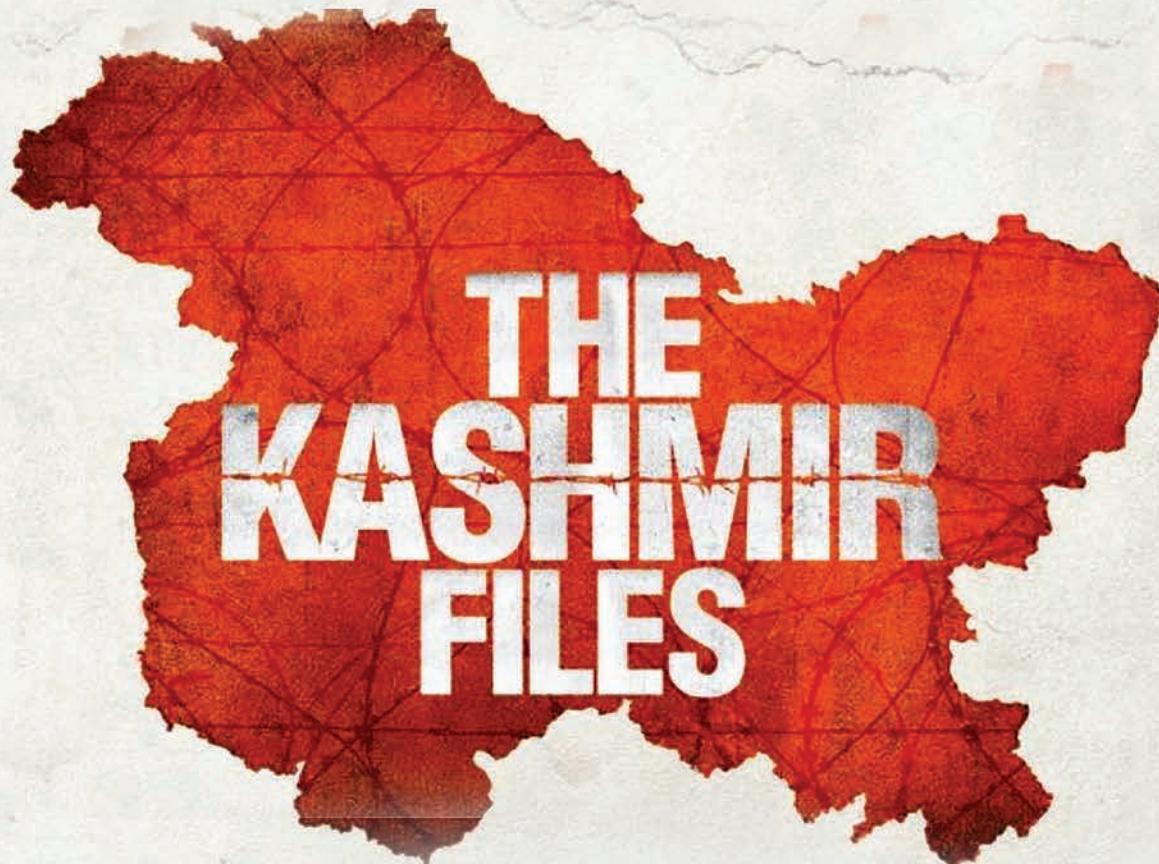
O Gopinātha, I have accepted my defeat. All of my various endeavors were useless. Now You are the only hope.

O Gopinātha, how shall I make any advancement when my mind has come under the control of the powerful senses and does not abandon its attachment to materialism?

O Gopinātha, after sitting down in the core of my heart and subduing my mind, please take me to You. In this way the horrible dangers of this world will disappear.

O Gopinātha, You are Hṛṣikeśa, the Lord of the senses. Seeing me so helpless, please control these senses of mine and deliver me from this dark and perilous worldly existence.

— Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura  
Selected verses from the song *Gopinātha*



# The Kashmir Files

## Reflection

*Tolerance at the cost of truth destroys both*

by Caitanya Carana Dāsa

**T**he Kashmir Files movie has shocked and enraged Indians — not only because such a horrifying ethnic cleansing occurred in our own country just a few decades ago, but also because the systematic brutality was allowed and

concealed. Worse still, the reality was distorted by a nefarious nexus of corrupt politicians, inept law enforcers, negligent media and complicit intellectuals. The movie's lack of any superhuman stunts makes the story all the more human and

hard-hitting, thereby driving home the reality, gravity and brutality of events that happened to people just like us. Actually, such horrors have happened to people just like us, not just once but on many occasions across the world — given that extremist

violence has been and continues to be a significant threat to humanity.

One criticism of the movie in some circles is that it may lead to stereotyping of all Muslims as fanatics, extremists or even terrorists. While that is a valid concern, how can that concern be actually addressed? By concealing the truth?

### TRUTH

With regards to the issue underlying the Kashmir files, let's consider some of the undeniable facts:

- A massive exodus of Kashmiri Hindus happened,
- The exodus was caused by an ethnic cleansing (irrespective of the exact number of people who were killed),
- The Kashmiri Hindus lived for a long time as refugees in desolate and even desperate conditions.
- In India's mainstream media, the story of their tragedy and trauma remained untold and, worse still, was often downplayed, denied or even distorted.

Shouldn't the telling of their experience be a valid concern, even a vital concern? While more may need to be done to avoid negative stereotyping of Muslims, at least something has been done by Bollywood — in fact, entire movies like My name is Khan have been dedicated to this theme. But what has been done to highlight, or even convey, the agony of the Kashmiri Hindus, who were the victims of the ethnic cleansing.

### SACRIFICING TRUTH FOR TOLERANCE'S SAKE?

Once it's recognized that the truth was concealed, let's analyze why this might have been done. There could be broadly three reasons:

- Malevolence: The people involved were evil and wanted to harm others or
- Incompetence: Those people just didn't have the abilities or skills to do the right thing
- Ignorance: Those people didn't know what was the right thing to do and they did what they thought was right, even if it wasn't.

Let's consider which of these explanations apply to the denial

distortion: a young man whose own parents were killed in the ethnic cleansing thought that they died in just an accident — and he grew up to believe, or rather was (mis)educated to believe that the murderers of his family were actually freedom fighters, justified in the use of violence. In fact, a major plotline in the movie is his confusion and tension about what actually happened. And what resolved the tension? The truth; the carefully documented factual reports about events — the documentation is the basis of the movie's name.

Depending on how history is told, victims may end up being remembered as the victimizers or at least as those who brought

**Depending on how history is told, victims may end up being remembered as the victimizers and victimizers may end up being remembered as people who were wronged and who were justified in doing what they did.**

of the plight of the Kashmiri Hindus. While a few may be malevolent and some may be incompetent, let's adopt a spirit of charity and assume that they were largely ignorant: they genuinely thought that concealing the truth was the best way to avoid communal violence in India and even in the world at large.

Of course, the way the leftist intellectuals went about concealing the truth was not at all incompetent. The history was not just concealed but also distorted. The movie itself depicts the magnitude of the

the victimization on themselves. And victimizers may end up being remembered as people who were wronged and who were justified in doing what they did. For example, during the Holocaust, Hitler's propaganda machinery made many non-Nazi Germans believe that the Jews deserved whatever was being done to them — and that the Nazis were not just righteous in their actions but also glorious.

Thus, the attempt to conceal the truth, for whatever reason, ends up in the situation of 'blaming the victim' — making



such violence is ignorance — or more specifically, in the language of the Bhagavad-gītā, knowledge in the mode of ignorance (18.22). This paradoxical term underscores the situation where a person acquires knowledge in such a way that their increased knowledge simply reinforces their ignorance instead of removing their ignorance. How might this happen?

When a person gains

the victim believe that their actions were the cause of their victimization, not the victimizer's vile actions. When 'blaming the victim' is used to explain away crimes such as an assault on a woman, the mainstream modern worldview finds it reprehensible; how much more reprehensible is it when an entire community is subjected to something similar?

### THE CAUSE OF INTOLERANCE

Intolerance, especially in the form of extremist ideology, is the enemy of humanity — it can attack humanity through many channels, be it through secular ideologies such as communism that left the USSR and China with a hundred million corpses or through religious ideologies such as Islamic extremism. Whichever be the channel through which extremism seeks to divide and destroy humanity, the point is

that extremism needs to be curbed and countered.

Significantly, the Bhagavad-gītā doesn't categorize people based on religious divisions, certainly not religious designations as we see them today. It categorizes people based on behavioral and psychological characteristics into three modes: sattva (goodness), rajas (passion) and tamas (ignorance). Sattva is characterized by reflection before action, rajas by action before reflection and tamas by inaction or indiscriminately destructive action. These three modes exist in everyone, though their relative percentage varies from person to person. Depending on which mode is prominent in a person, that person is said to be in sattva, rajas or tamas.

Extremist violence is an especially toxic example of tamas. And one major reason for

knowledge about only one particular point in a complex situation, they think they know what happened, but they only end up neglecting or rejecting other pertinent points — and rejecting it self-righteously or even arrogantly.

Consider a relatively innocuous example of such knowledge in the mode of ignorance. Suppose a child wants a toy, but his parents don't get it — and the child concludes, "My parents don't love me." There could be a dozen other reasons why the parents didn't get that toy for the child, maybe because the family needed other things urgently at that time. But the more the child sees other things being bought, the more the child's knowledge 'grows' and reinforces his ignorant inference that his parents don't love him.

A far more dangerous example of such knowledge in

the mode of ignorance is seen in the mainstream strategy for dealing with extremism: its focus on Islamophobia instead of on Islamic extremism. Yes, it's true that some people are stereotyped negatively in some parts of the world because they belong to a particular community. But does that mean the only reason for such stereotyping is that all of society is filled with judgmental people who are prejudiced against that community? And is the solution to such prejudice denying the acts of intolerance by any member of that community? Not at all, the actual solution is preventing acts of intolerance. When the fire is extinguished, the smoke will automatically go away. When the fire of Islamic extremism is dealt with firmly, the smoke of Islamophobia will automatically go away.

### TOLERATING INTOLERANCE SPREADS INTOLERANCE

Here, an argument is often advanced: "But the extremists are a tiny fringe. Why label an entire community negatively?" Agreed; considering that every fourth person in the world today is a Muslim, it's entirely unreasonable to claim that every Muslim is an extremist — if they were, the world would be a far worse place. Still, there are several places in the world where the extremists are not the fringe; they are the mainstream. And the fringe can become mainstream in no time. As the *Kashmir Files* movie shows, violent terrorists were abetted

by neighbors who turned informers, by priests who turned rationalizers and by housewives who actively aided in consuming, diverting or destroying the ration meant for the Hindu refugees, thereby starving them and compelling them to flee.

Extremism is like a cancer — if untreated, it can rapidly spread from the fringe of society to segments of society that we would normally never associate with extremism: segments such as children who are indoctrinated into becoming suicide bombers. Can the spread of such cancer be fostered by denying the truth — in this case, the truth of horrendous incidents of intolerance justified in the name of Islam? Not at all; it's

up against the intolerant. If moderate Muslims don't know what extremist Muslims have done — if they are taught to believe that allegations of extremism arise not from a grain of truth but from a smog of prejudice — then they will never even feel the need to stand up against extremists. And if extremists are allowed to get away with their violent actions, that will only embolden them further. Over time, such extremists will turn against people of their own faith, if those people disagree with them. Eventually, the moderates will become silenced and even co-opted in the cause of the extremists. Thus, concealing the truth about intolerance actually

**Extremism is like a cancer — if untreated, it can rapidly spread from the fringe of society to segments of society that we would normally never associate with extremism: segments such as children who are indoctrinated into becoming suicide bombers.**

like arguing that cancer can be treated by denying its existence — that's a suicidal strategy. To treat cancer, the exact areas where cancer exists have to be determined and those parts need to be rigorously treated while protecting and promoting the overall health of the rest of the body. Similarly, the key to fostering tolerance is twofold: disempower the intolerant and empower the tolerant. Neither of these is aided by concealing the actions of the intolerant. Such concealment takes away the impetus for the tolerant to stand

ends up empowering the intolerant and disempowering the tolerant. The sobering reality is that covering up intolerance by a group doesn't help anyone — not even members of that very group. Indeed, tolerating intolerance spreads intolerance.

Consider several countries where Islamic extremists have significant political influence, if not absolute power. Such countries are characterized by persecution of not just non-Muslim faiths, but even Muslim denominations that differ from the ruling dispensation.

Thus, Sunni Muslims are targeted in Shia Iran. The Ahmadiyya Muslims in pre-independence India chose to support the partition of the country and went to Pakistan. But there they are persecuted by mainstream Muslims — and many of them have sought and found refuge in India.

While much is made about Hindu-Muslim violence in India, the fact is that apart from a few incidents of widespread riots, overall Muslims are far safer in India than in other parts of the world, including even in Islamic theocratic states. Though India has among the largest Muslim populations in the world, Shia-Sunni violence in India is almost non-existent.

### **THE TRUTH THAT CAN FOSTER TOLERANCE**

It is the recording and repeating of the truth that is essential for empowering the tolerant and disempowering the intolerant.

How can the tolerant be empowered? By ensuring that they are exposed fully and frankly to the horrors of intolerance. Otherwise, they will not have sufficient impetus to resist and reject intolerance.

How can the intolerant be disempowered? By taking the existence and occurrence of

intolerance seriously, not whitewashing or rationalizing it. And a part of taking intolerance seriously is taking into account the self-professed motivations of the intolerant. While their intolerance may have many causes including socio-economic and geopolitical, those causes alone don't need to lead to extremist violence. The Kashmiri Hindus had sufficient socio-economic and geopolitical reasons to take to violence; they didn't; instead, they sought education, employment and made a new life for themselves in other parts of the world. A large number of disaffected Kashmiri Muslims, whose plight certainly was not worse than that of the refugee Kashmiri Hindus, chose violence. If we want to get a full picture of why they chose

this course of action, we need to consider what they themselves considered as a primary justification for violence. And their justification was religion.

The point is not to condemn a particular religion; the point is to recognize that at this particular point in history, extremism is expressing itself especially virulently through a specific channel, viz, namely Islamic extremism. The world's failure to recognize Nazi intolerance darkened human history with the Holocaust; do we want that horrendous history to be repeated? It is the moral responsibility of everyone, whatever be their religion, to prevent Islam from being taken over by Islamic extremists. Rather than playing games with the truth in the vain hope that

*The world's failure to recognize Nazi intolerance darkened human history with the Holocaust.*



appeasement will pacify the intolerance, we need to see that truth is the precondition for tolerance.

To foster tolerance grounded in truth, we need to deal with both the channel and the source of intolerance. What does dealing with the channel of intolerance mean? It means recognizing where, when and how intolerance appears, and spreading awareness of such intolerance so that resistance to it can be galvanized. What does dealing with the source of intolerance mean? It means recognizing that intolerance arises frequently from an elitist, exclusivist mentality that derides, dehumanizes, demonizes and finally destroys others who don't share that mentality.

The channel of intolerance can be dealt with by documenting historical truths about the emergence of intolerance. The source of intolerance can be dealt with by assimilating spiritual truths that can help counter an exclusivist mindset.

The two major religions of the world — Christianity and Islam — are characterized, at least in their mainstream versions, by an exclusivist ethos: "Our way is the only way." This ethos doesn't mean that everyone following that religion has an exclusivist attitude; some or even many practitioners of that religion may well be broad-minded as individuals. Nonetheless, exclusivism can act as a fertile breeding ground for extremism; once someone has come to believe, "Those who don't follow

my path are doomed", they may well be manipulated by power-hungry leaders into believing, "Those who don't follow our path can be destroyed or even should be destroyed." This degeneration from exclusivism to extremism is a significant cause of most of the violence that the world has seen in the name of religion. In the medieval times, the Crusades were fought between Christianity and Islam. Even today, countries like Lebanon and Nigeria are witnessing inter-religious violence between these two exclusivist religions.

How can such exclusivism be countered? By fostering a more inclusivist ethos. One time-tested source of such inclusivism is Vedic wisdom. This ethos is embodied in the well-known aphorism, *ekam sat vipra bahudhā vadanti*: "There is but one truth, though it is known by different names." (Rg Veda 1.164.46) Echoing that theme, the Gītā too offers an inclusive worldview which acknowledges the value and validity of different paths for different people (04.11). And a foundational aspect of this worldview is stressing the shared spirituality that defines our identity. The Gītā explains that at our core, we all are spiritual beings. This understanding can uproot prejudice and foster an equal vision toward everyone (05.18). This equal vision is not a naive denial of the differences between people and their choices, be they secular or religious — it is a mature acknowledgement that the things that draw us apart are less defining than the things

that draw us together. To bring about that unity and harmony, the forces that unite us need to be strengthened and the forces that divide us need to be weakened. In terms of the modes, this means sattva needs to be strengthened in individual human hearts and people in whom sattva is already strong need to be empowered. Sattva is manifest in moderation. If moderates from various paths can come together to have candid discussions and formulate tangible solutions, then that collaboration can be the strongest insurance against intolerance. Who knows, many who are presently intolerant may rise from tamas to sattva and become moderates. If not, they will at least be exposed and empowered, thereby substantially decreasing their capacity to spread their toxic influence to the rest of society. Over time, they will lose both their deadly powers: the power to destroy the targets of their intolerance and the power to corrupt the targets of their radicalization.

The world needs such an inclusive ethos if it is to challenge and counter extremism. The truth-telling that has begun with the *Kashmir Files* movie needs to extend to the spiritual wisdom that made Kashmir and India at large the arena for a rich and inclusive culture. ♣

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# Love of God in Separation

*Advanced devotees experience greater presence of God in separation than in actual union.*

By Puridāsa

Once Śrīla Prabhupāda was asked how a bona fide religion can be recognized. Śrīla Prabhupāda answered that any religion that

teaches love of God is a bona fide religion. At times, externals of different religions appear so contradictory. Still sincere seekers have recognized that the

underlying principle of all religions is to connect to the supreme with love and reflecting that same love towards all living beings, understanding them as



parts and parcels of that same supreme.

In our Sanātana-dharma, many sages have taught the same process of cultivating love of God in differently ways. Technically these all are known as bhakti-yoga. Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, an incarnation of supreme Lord in the guise of a devotee saint, gave the most refined form of love, love in separation from the beloved. Obviously, it is very difficult to

receive such highest state of ecstatic love. Still, it is our *prayojana*, or objective. Therefore, it is important for us to understand it to appreciate it properly. If we are able to appreciate it, one day by mercy of Lord and His pure devotees, we will experience it.

### UNDERSTANDING LOVE

Love unites and hatred separates. Love is an attractive force that acts between spiritual entities or in simple word, conscious beings. Most prominently, it acts between supreme Lord, the infinite, all-cognizant, supreme spiritual being and His minute spiritual parts, all of us. Though we may have many who loves us in this world, the person who loves us the most is the supreme Lord. Therefore, the Bhagavad-gītā describes the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, as the best well-wishing friend of all living entities, *suhṛdam sarva-bhūtānām*.

So, love is an intense yearning to be united with the beloved. When the purpose of such yearning is completely to please the beloved, the love is considered fully pure. Because Supreme Lord is fully pure, we can approach Him only with pure love. Although all of us have pure love in our heart, at the present moment the impurity of selfish desires has made our love contaminated. Pure devotional service is a sort of cultivation of that pure love. When this is done under the guidance of an expert devotee, we slowly get free from our selfish desires and our love becomes more intense. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has given

us the process of offenseless chanting of the holy name as the principle means to cultivate this pure love for Kṛṣṇa. The holy name does both purification and intensification of our love.

### LOVE IN SEPARATION

This love is experienced through different mellites. There are five primary mellites, namely neutrality, servitorship, friendship, parental and conjugal. All these mellites have two aspects of ecstasy, called *yoga* and *viyoga*, or meeting and separation. In our general experience also, we can see that when we love someone, there are certain emotions we go through in their presence and there are certain emotions we go through in their absence.

In this world, however, our so-called love with our friends, relatives, near and dear ones has two major problems. Firstly, love in this world is not pure; it is always tainted with some selfish expectation. Therefore, it never satisfies our heart. And, what to say of satisfying our heart, our misdirected love can become reason for our terrible pain. Secondly, in this world our object of love is another conditioned living entity like us. As they are also conditioned, they cannot neither fully understand our love nor can they fully reciprocate with our love. Moreover, by the force of time everyone is going to die. And, with the end of the body, our love turns into a painful eternal separation. Therefore, love in this world is to some degree joyful in meeting or union but it is painful in separa-

tion. And separation being the unavoidable destiny, love in this world is simply a source of pain.

On the contrary, in love for Kṛṣṇa both union and separation are sources of transcendental joy. From our conditioned stage, we can understand that union with Kṛṣṇa is a source of joy, although it may be difficult for us to comprehend how separation from Kṛṣṇa can be source of transcendental joy. But pure and advanced

that intense experience of love of Kṛṣṇa, union and separation act as two complementary phases to make the entire experience more complete. So, love in transcendental plane is always a source of happiness.

### SPECIAL FEATURE OF LOVE IN SEPARATION

As previously discussed, pure devotional service has two purposes — purification and intensi-

spoken by Kṛṣṇa, from the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:

*śravaṇād darśanād dhyānān  
mayi bhāvo ‘nukīrtanāt  
na tathā sannikarsena  
pratiyāta tato gr̄hān*

“It is by hearing about Me, seeing My Deity form, meditating upon Me and chanting My names and glories that love for Me develops, not by physical proximity. Therefore, please go back to your homes.” In summary, we can develop a love for Kṛṣṇa better and faster while in separation from Kṛṣṇa than while in union with Kṛṣṇa.

For that reason, Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu especially taught us that we should cultivate the feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa. The feelings of meeting with Kṛṣṇa are not as important as cultivating feelings of separation. Advanced devotees always feel separation from Kṛṣṇa. The greater the devotee is, the greater the feeling of separation because separation is far more intimate. On the contrary, in our conditioned state we are practically separated from Kṛṣṇa from time immemorial, and yet we have no feeling for Kṛṣṇa.

### CULTIVATING THE FEELING OF SEPARATION

The most important consideration in cultivating the feeling of separation is that it is much safer because Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa’s divine pastimes in union are very confidential. To think of intimate meeting of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī is a very elevated subject matter and quite dangerous for the

**“It is by hearing about Me, seeing My Deity form, meditating upon Me and chanting My names and glories that love for Me develops, not by physical proximity.”**

**—Bhāgavatam 10.23.33**

devotees relish both the sentiments union and separation with Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, this transcendental separation is so acute that advanced devotees feel it to be more ecstatic than meeting. For better understanding, we can consider an example. A diseased person, suffering from sore throat, can relish hot health drinks nicely but chilled ice-creams would be very difficult to him. A healthy person, however, relishes both hot drinks and chilled ice creams as different flavours. Similarly, it is because of our impure state, our diseased situation, that we are bereft of fine transcendental sentiments by which we can understand the joy in separation. But a pure devotee is like a healthy person who relishes both union and separation. And obviously Kṛṣṇa is eternal and fully competent to reciprocate His love with us. In

fication of our love for Kṛṣṇa. Undoubtedly for us, the conditioned souls, both the feeling of union and separation in relation to Kṛṣṇa are purifying and uplifting from the three modes of material nature. Yet, the special feeling of separation is that along with purification it intensifies our love further more. In this regard, scriptures give example of sugarcane. The gradual development of love can be compared to different states of sugar. First there is the seed of sugarcane, then sugarcane and then the juice extracted from the cane. When this juice is boiled, it forms liquid molasses, then solid molasses, then sugar, candy, rock candy and finally lozenges. Similarly, our love for Kṛṣṇa, which is now in seed form, can be intensified up to great extent, by the process of cultivation of mood of separation. In this regard we can cite a verse

neophyte seekers. But in the cultivation of the feelings of separation and in longing for that separation, there is no such danger.

Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has shown by His own example how to cultivate this mood of separation from Kṛṣṇa. He used to say, “My lord, I do not even have one drop of love for you in My hard heart because I am not seeing you and if I have had one drop of love for you, I could not live one moment without seeing you. The fact is I am breathing, the fact my heart is still beating, means I have no love for you”. He would cry out, “Please My Lord, give Me just one drop of love and one drop of devotion to you. I have nothing.” In this way, the great devotees think.

Now the question is, how can we start cultivating feeling of separation from Kṛṣṇa. First of all, we have to recognize that this feeling is very necessary for our spiritual life and is quite practical. If it were impractical, Mahāprabhu would not have come to teach longing for Kṛṣṇa out of separation. Before we genuinely feel separation from Kṛṣṇa, we must regret that we are yet far from that feeling. After that, we have to earnestly pray for that. Not only we have to pray to Kṛṣṇa, we have to pray to the Vaiṣṇavas and please them by our service and surrender. Thus, by serving the great souls, who are relishing these feelings of separation in their hearts, these feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa will also awaken in our hearts. The price of love of God is our eagerness.

We all have different

strengths and weaknesses. When we perform some service to Kṛṣṇa and experience joy in it, that experience comes by Kṛṣṇa's grace. In that sense, performing such services are a kind of experience of union with Kṛṣṇa at our level. At times, it is seen that devotees are keen to do the service they like to do but not so much eager to do something that they may not like but is the need of the hour. Such attitude becomes an obstacle in our growth in devotional service. On the contrary, when for a higher cause or according to the instructions of our spiritual guides and mentors, we abstain from something that we like and commit ourselves to something that is the need of the situation, we really please Kṛṣṇa and grow in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Such separation from the service that we like, for the time being in a higher cause, will definitely intensify our love. Such attitude of pleasing superiors is very helpful for cultivating the feeling

to remember, discuss, sing and enact the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. Like them, if we also desire to cultivate the mood of separation from Kṛṣṇa, we should strongly take shelter of all these means through which Kṛṣṇa is available to us now. The chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra especially nourishes our feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa.

## THE MOOD OF OUR PREDECESSORS

The Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan, the direct followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, have also set the same example. They would pray, *he rādhe vraja-devike ca lalite he nanda-sūno kutah, śrī-govardhana-kalpa-pādapa-tale kālindī-vane kutah?*: “Where, Rādhārāṇī, where You are? Where are Your associates? Where You are, Nanda-suno, the son of Nanda Maha-raja, Kṛṣṇa? Where you are, all? Are you there under the Govardhana hill or on the banks of the Yamuna?” This is the

**Kṛṣṇa may not be physically present before us. Still, Kṛṣṇa is very much present in the form of his instructions, his pastimes, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the holy dhams, and in his holy names.**

of separation.

Kṛṣṇa may not be physically present before us. Still, Kṛṣṇa is very much present in the form of his instructions, his pastimes, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the holy dhams, and in his holy names. In separation of Kṛṣṇa, the cow-herd damsels of Vrindavan used

mood of our paramparā. ●

*Puridas das, an Electrical Engineer from BESU, Shibpur (presently known as IEST). Resident Brahmācari in ISKCON, Kolkata since 2016. Serving in different departments and youth outreach.*

# What's new out there?

*This craving points to a deep spiritual need that we need to identify soon.*

By Rukmiṇī Vallabha Dāsa

There is search for something “new” everywhere. We are in the lookout for something and someone ‘new’ – be it while shopping, watching the headlines or every time browsing through the various notifications on our smartphones. Is this an indicator of our search for an ultimate fulfillment? Or is it endlessly exhausting and frustrating?? Why is it there in the first place? Is this urge inherent or imposed? Let us explore about this tendency to seek novelty and the right means to fulfill it.

Products provide us sensual happiness. People provide us emotional happiness. Let us first study about the new products.

## NEW PRODUCTS

All our efforts are directly or indirectly directed to a great extent to produce or provide something new for ourselves or others. A toddler is looking for a new toy, or a young adult is looking forward for the latest movie and party with his friends

at the newly-opened hotel. An adult is exploring newer avenues for his next vacation. An old man is trying a new health therapy.

A lion’s share of finances, resources, manpower and time is being invested at all levels to find new solutions to minimize pain and multiply pleasure. Governments are investing in new defenses and new financial policies. MNCs are investing in new products and marketing strategies. Are these attempts successful?

The result of an endeavor is determined by the place and the instruments (Gitā18.14). If we dig hard on a dry land, it is not going to yield water because it is not the right place to dig. We are putting our hard efforts in our world of matter to minimize pain of our body and magnify pleasure of our senses. But matter is limited by space and time. Thus, the sensual pleasure we can derive from matter is also limited by space and time. The resources are limited in quantity and also are perishable. As we



Photo by Melanie Lim on Unsplash



experience happiness from matter, our desires for sensual happiness increase. Our desires for sensual happiness are unlimited whereas the happiness we can derive from matter is limited (*Gītā* 5.22). This way, we end up in frustration.

Our ability to enjoy the sensual pleasure is also limited by space and time. Even though a large quantity of grain is produced from the crop, we can only consume a limited quantity. Therefore, our endeavors to derive pleasure from matter are bound to end in frustration. We cannot quench our thirst for unlimited and unending sensual happiness through our attempts to manipulate matter.

Moreover, our knowledge of matter is limited. Our ability to manipulate matter for our sensual pleasure is limited. We have only partial control over matter. Therefore, in our attempts, there is constant fear and anxiety of failure. We can only sow the seeds of a crop. Rain, pests and weeds are not fully in our control. Therefore, our efforts are filled with anxiety and the fruits of our efforts are frustrating. Overall, the sensual happiness is inherently limited and the pain is implicitly present (*Gītā* 16.11).

Being ignorant of this truth and upon encountering repeated frustration, we are making one attempt after another to derive sensual pleasure. We are trying our best to explore new and novel ways to find sensual happiness but the result is same – frustration and failure. Because of ignorance, we are

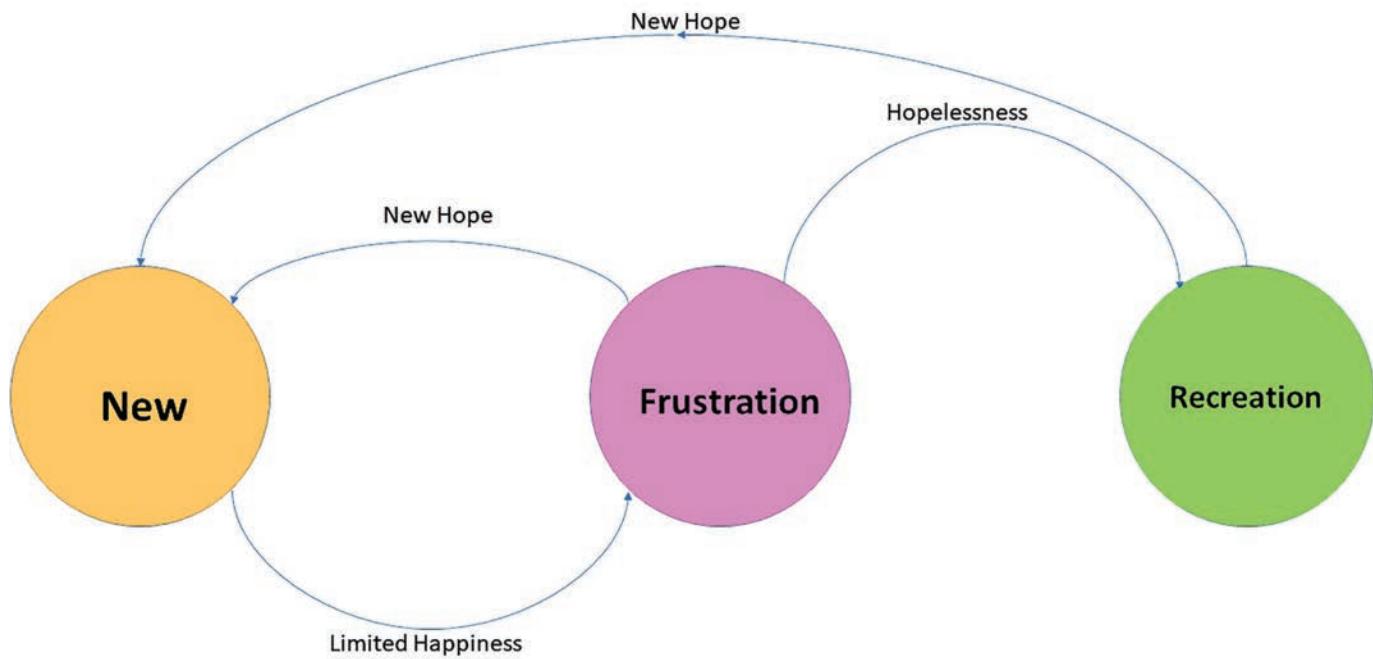
keeping hope after hope. Aggressive and rampant advertisements are trying to convince us that purchasing a new phone, installing a new app, putting on a new fashion and trying a new cuisine will make us happy. Something “new” has become synonymous with something that can make us happy forever. But that was never the reality. New products cannot provide us long lasting happiness.

What about new people?

## NEW PEOPLE

Relationships are an integral part of our existence. Of late, there has been an increased lookout for new relationships and new ways of making relationships. We are eager to make new friends and connections on social media, workplaces and social events. Culture, or the way people interact with and treat each other, is undergoing continuous transformation. Pre-marital relationships, live-in culture and same sex relationships have come into vogue. The ways of expressing love and care are also undergoing transformation. A toddler is taken care either by mother or a babysitter or in a playschool. Let us explore and evaluate whether these transformations are meeting the end that they are intended to.

Our relationships in this world are based on the body, which is made of matter, and the means of reciprocation is also based on matter. Love is exchanged in the form of gifts, words and food. The means of expressing love,



our ability to express love and experience love are all limited by space and time. A child's ability to experience the mother's love in the form of food, toys and affectionate words is limited. The child's body has limited capacity and is affected by fatigue and disease. The mother also has similar limitations in expressing her love. The means of exchanging love – toys and food – are withered and decayed by time. The mother and child cannot be always connected to each other. They are separated by space and time.

The relationships in this world are tainted by selfish motives of various degrees. Selfishness corrodes and corrupts our expressions of love towards others and our experiencing of love of others. Selfish parents complain about what their children did not give them rather than focusing on how to reciprocate with what

they got from their children. Selfish children calculate what they would get from their parents in return rather than focusing on what makes their parents happy. Selfishness makes us hard-hearted and lonely (Gītā 3.16).

Because of not being aware of the limitations of the worldly relationships and increased selfishness, the dissatisfaction levels in the relationships have increased. Divorce rate, promiscuity, homicides, and single-parent families have increased. We spend more time on social media with the hope that virtual relationships will be more fulfilling. Nonetheless, in case of every solution, the principle is going to be the same – the happiness is limited and is further reduced due to selfishness. On top of it, these newer ways of relationships potentially lead to newer emotional and sociological challenges.

Therefore, our endeavors for sensual happiness and emotional happiness in this world are bound to limitations and frustration. This world is not the right place to acquire unlimited happiness.

### THE BOREDOM

When our attempts to find happiness get frustrated, we try other ways of finding happiness or we may end up losing hope. The more we are selfish, the more we lose freshness in life. We become lonely, depressed and hopeless. We will feel bored. Some people try to overcome this frustration through recreation and intoxication. Usually, a greater interest and investment of time and money in recreation indicates a greater degree of overall frustration in life.

Recreation in the form of television, cinema, video games, etc. temporarily makes us forget our real world of finiteness and

frustration. It takes us to an imaginary world of unending happiness and newness by painting an illusory picture of the real world. Unfortunately, it cannot alter the nature of real world. Recreation may replenish our energy levels, or renew our hope of becoming happy in this world. But it can never rewrite the truths of life in this world. It is going to remain the same – the world of finite and flawed happiness. Through this recreation, we end up increasing our false hope in this world. We spend a significant part of our hard-earned resources on this recreation. Through recreation, we are made to believe that we need to acquire more resources or a different type of resources to become happy. We again work for resources. Once again, when we get frustrated, we end up resorting to the same or a different recreation. This cycle is unending (Gītā 16.16). As such recreation is a multi-billion dollar enterprise with vested

interests. Its purpose is not to make consumers happy but rather make the investors, advertisers and actors happy.

As mentioned before, this world can offer us only finite happiness. It cannot satiate our unending thirst for unending happiness. Not knowing this, we work hard for worldly happiness. Failing in our attempt, we are forced to try a new way of happiness, which eventually end in frustration.

How then is it possible to really quench our unending thirst for unending happiness?

### SPIRITUAL HAPPINESS

The fact that we have unending desire for unending happiness implies that we have experienced such happiness in the past. We cannot experience such unending happiness through material physical body that has several defects and deficiencies. But scriptures tell that we can experience such happiness with something beyond this material body.

The Bhagavad-gītā clearly answers these fundamental questions.. We are constitutionally spiritual beings, which means we are eternal. We have experienced such unending happiness in the spiritual

realm. Currently, we are encaged in a temporary material body which is temporary. The source of this unending happiness is God. He is all-powerful and can provide unlimited happiness to unlimited beings in unlimitedly different ways for all time to come. Our real happiness lies in offering loving service to God. God is the most lovable person because he is most loving and all-attractive. He is also called as Kṛṣṇa – the all attractive one. Kṛṣṇa's love is unlimited and unending. It is beyond limitations of space and time. Our ability to offer love to Kṛṣṇa is also beyond limitations of space and time. This completely fulfils our self. It is pure i.e. it is totally selfless untinged by any trace of selfishness.

There is no frustration when we offer loving service to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa always reciprocate with our love. This is enacted on a platform of fearlessness. There is no loss or diminution of any kind. The experience is always fresh because the relationship is fully selfless and beyond fear.

### THE ACTUAL NEWNESS

Since God is all-powerful, he can reciprocate with the devotional service performed by our mind and senses. With mind, we can meditate on the divine name, form, qualities and activities of the God, as described in the revealed scriptures like the Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. We can offer our innate creative talents and aptitudes in the service of Kṛṣṇa. These talents bestow



*Worldly relationships can be spiritualized by centering them on service to Kṛṣṇa.*

ultimate fulfilment when they are offered in the service of God. If these talents are used for fulfilling our selfish ends, they will lead us to frustration. We end up in the vicious cycle as explained previously under new products.

This may make us think that one may have to give up all our worldly activities. Not necessarily. All we have to do is offer the fruits of our worldly these activities for the service of Lord. This way, we will be

uplifting. It minimizes our hopes in the worldly happiness and attracts us to spiritual happiness. As we are more and more purified of the selfishness within in this way, we experience more and more freshness in life and less and less frustration. Owing to selfishness, spiritual activities, especially in the initial days, may appear monotonous and boring. We can overcome this through encouraging association of like-minded spiritual

## Worldly relationships can be spiritualized by centering them on service to Kṛṣṇa. Upon doing this, such relationships transcend their worldly limitations.

immunized from the entangling effects of these activities.

Worldly relationships can be spiritualized by centering them on service to Kṛṣṇa. Upon doing this, such relationships transcend their worldly limitations. Nonetheless, as long as we engage in these worldly activities and relationships for some selfish ends, we experience frustration. This frustration can be overcome by engaging in direct spiritual activities like divine meditation and practical devotional service. In these activities, we experience spiritual happiness and our material selfish ends also get purified and transformed into spiritual selfless ends. This spiritual recreation is externally rejuvenating and internally

practitioners and regular spiritual education and fulfilling spiritual service engagements. When we are gradually freed from the contaminations of selfishness and materialistic attraction by sincere and serious practice of devotional service, then every act of devotional service becomes ever-fresh and ever-new and we become fully satiated.

Our search for new-ness in this world is largely impelled by the frustration we face while trying to be happy in this world. In that sense, it is imposed. We have an inherent ability to offer something new. This will find its ultimate fulfilment when directed in service of God. When we become fully God conscious, everything we do becomes fresh and new. ☺

### Editorial....

(Continued from page 34)

his mother's actions. This was seemingly easier for him than returning back to Ayodhyā and to rule the kingdom against his heart's wishes. But ultimately he did it to please Rāma.

9. God is the proprietor: The Supreme Lord is the ultimate proprietor of all things in this material world. Therefore everything should be done in His interest. Bharata was ruling the kingdom on behalf of Lord Rāma by keeping His wooden sandals (*pädkas*) on the throne of Ayodhyā. We are only caretakers; the Lord is the real proprietor. He can give and take away. The caretaker simply acts according to the will of the owner.

10. Anyone can make a show of greatness: It's the reversals in our lives that reveal who we are from inside. Çurpaëakhä, the demoness sister of Rāvaëa took an extremely bewitching form to lure Rāma away from Sétä. When she failed she tried to attack Sétä and therefore Rāma had to order Lakñmaëa to punish her appropriately. As Lakñmaëa cut off her nose and ears her charming form vanished and instead a most ghastly demoness stood there. She was already ugly but now her punishment made her even uglier. One's greatness is tested by one's ability to tolerate provoking situations. ☺

—Śyāmānanda Dāsa

## HOLI AND MINI RATHA YATRA FESTIVAL IN AUSTRALIA



The Melbourne ISKCON devotees living in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Australia have for years participated in the annual local Hindu Holi festival in which they have incorporated a mini Ratha Yatra parade. Many hundreds of people from the culturally diverse community attended the festival and the devotees engaged them all in the festivities. With the cooperation of the festival management, the devotees were able to distribute books and prasāda (sanctified food), and much more.

## “BOOK CHANGES CONTROVERSY” COMING TO A CLOSE

On October 17, 2019, the BBT and GBC cooperatively appointed an Editorial Review Panel (ERP) to address devotees’ concerns about making changes to Srila Prabhupada’s books after his physical departure.

Formed with the mandate to review all proposed and previously published edits to Srila Prabhupada’s books in the English language, the ERP has now been convening for more than a year, and they are making progress in their review. The panel consists of devotee scholars and editors who were nominated and approved by both the GBC and BBT.

## APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

This month ISKCON’s Child Protection Office is sharing child abuse prevention and response

resources via newsletters and daily Facebook postings. This is a time to feel encouraged to share information and insights on child protection from all points of view – scriptural, legal, ecclesiastic, personal, and social.

Be part of the solution to ending abuse. Learn more about how to identify, prevent and respond to child abuse. Understanding the long-term impacts of child abuse on individuals and society allows us to make safer, healthier choices today.

## ISKCON TEMPLE ATTACKER CONVICTED OF BIAS CRIME



On March 30, 2022, Washington County Circuit Court Judge Brandon Thompson found Sean Lawrence Michel-White guilty of two counts of first-degree bias crime, second-degree bias crime, two counts of fourth-degree assault, and harassment in a bench trial. He was then sentenced to three years of formal probation after serving seven months in jail. Deputy District Attorney Mitchell Diesko prosecuted the case against the defendant.

On August 29, 2021, the defendant went to an ISKCON Temple located in Hillsboro, Oregon. Members of the temple initially welcomed the defendant but asked that he wear a mask. He refused and became combative. He then entered the temple, attempted to knock over statues, hit two members of the congregation, bit them, and caused injury to multiple people.

## UKRAINIAN STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

April 3rd, Update on Vamshi Madhava das and



**his Shooting Injury**  
Vaiśī  
Mādhava dāsa,  
his wife Vimalā  
devī dāsī, and  
their three  
children, Vrinda  
(15 years old),  
Radha Raman  
(9 years old),  
and Haridas (7  
years old), live

in Oleshki in the Kherson region. Vaiśī Mādhava was shot in the arm while in his home. He had sustained shrapnel damage to his chest as well. Devotees brought him to a local hospital for surgery and subsequently, he had to be driven back and forth every day to have his bandages changed. His wound has healed but he is experiencing weakness, especially in his arm.

Oleshki and the whole Kherson region are on the brink of a humanitarian crisis. Besides the shortage of supplies, the region is experiencing looting shops, stealing vehicles, and breaking into office buildings. The region is not safe and many people are in stress and fear.

#### April 3rd, Pāvana Gaura dāsa and Family

Pāvana Gaura dāsa, his wife, daughter, sister, and mother are from Oleshki in the Kherson region. This devotee family had been experienced a lot of financial hardships, but thanks to financial donations given to the family they were able to purchase some food and have made a small reserve. Pavana

Prabhu was able to buy most of the necessary provisions and prepare for planting and growing food in a vegetable garden. He expects the harvest will be



sufficient for about one year. The family is very grateful to the Vaiśnavas who have supported and donated to help their family survive.

#### March 29th, 8:30 AM EST

Abhaya Nitāi dāsa, his wife Katya, and son Radhika Raman, are a devotee family from Kyiv and they were engaged in regular service in the temple. The family asked for financial help when they came to Ternopil, they had no means to sustain themselves. They are able to buy groceries and pay for their basic needs like utilities. Every two days, they now hold programs for local devotees in their apartment and are able to give provide them with prasāda. In the background of the picture is the Ternopil temple.



Vraja Bihārī dāsa, his wife Premamaya Rādhā devī dāsī, and his mother were struggling. Due to the conflict in Ukraine, they were not working and money soon started to run out. They urgently needed to leave and started their journey by car from Khmelnytskyi to Europe, and were accepted in Lithuania. ☸

## Write for BTG!



Share your thoughts.  
Describe your exciting  
experiences and devotional  
realizations. Send us your  
articles, poems and letters to:  
[btgindia@gmail.com](mailto:btgindia@gmail.com)

# CENTRES IN INDIA

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Founder-Ācārya: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivendanta Swami Prabhupada

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## VAIŚNAVA CALENDAR

May 1 – June 15 2022

**3 May:** Akṣaya Tṛtyā. Candana Yātrā starts.

(Continues for 21 days)

**8 May:** Jāhnu Saptamī

**10 May:** Śrīmatī Sitā Devī (consort of Lord Śrī Rāma) Appearance, Śrī Madhu Paṇḍita Disappearance, Śrīmatī Jāhnavā Devī Appearance

**12 May:** Fasting for Mohini Ekādaśī

**13 May:** Break fast 05:31 - 10:00 (LT), Rukmiṇī Dvādaśī

**14 May:** Śrī Jayānanda Prabhu Disappearance

**15 May:** Nṛsiṁha Caturdaśī: Appearance of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva (Fasting till dusk)

**16 May:** Kṛṣṇa Phula Dola, Salila Vihāra, Śrī Parameśvarī Dāsa Ṭhākura Disappearance, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa Devajī Appearance, Śrī Mādhavendra Pūri Appearance, Śrī Śrīmivāsa Ācārya Appearance

**20 May:** Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya Disappearance

**26 May:** Fasting for Aparā Ekādaśī

**27 May:** Break fast 05:25 - 09:59 (LT), Śrīla Vṛṇḍāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura Appearance

**10 Jun:** Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣāna Disappearance, Gaṅgā Pūjā, Śrīmatī Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāmīnī Appearance

**11 Jun:** Trisprśā Mahādvādaśī, Fasting for Pāñḍava Nirjalā Ekādaśī (Total fast, even from water)

**12 Jun:** Break fast 05:23 - 10:00 (LT), Pānihāti Ciḍā Dahī Utsava

**14 Jun:** Snāna Yātrā, Śrī Mukunda Datta Disappearance, Śrī Śrīdhara Paṇḍita Disappearance

# CAN THE RĀMĀYANA HELP ME TODAY?

**H**ere are ten reasons why the story of Lord Rāma can be of great value in your life today –

1. Understanding the power of association: One of the most important factors in anyone's life is the choice of people in our network. In fact, one popular saying is that you are the average of five people you most spend time with. Even if this is partially true it became one of the deciding factors in the Rāmāyaëa when Kaikeyé's love for Lord Rāma was transformed into extreme hatred by her association with her housemaid Mantharä. Publicly Kaikeyé had proclaimed that she loves Rāma even more than she loves Bharata, but the poison of hatred which Mantharä had filled her heart acted against her own interest. As a result, she even lost the sympathy and love of her Bharata himself.

2. Service versus position: Lord Rāma agreeing to become coroneted as the king of Ayodhyä was out of his desire to serve the wishes of His dear father, Daçaratha. However as soon as He came to know that the king had agreed to Kaikeyé's demands that Rāma should be exiled to the forest and her son Bharata should be enthroned instead, Rāma immediately agreed.

3. How to understand the mission of our human lives: Lord Rāma is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He incarnated to kill demons like Rāvaëa and the Rāvaëa-like mentality of people in all ages. However, His mission could not be fulfilled unless He stayed in the forest; therefore, under the pretext of getting banished into the forest He rid the world of hundreds and thousands of demoniac persons. Even though millions of years have passed since the advent of Lord Rāma, the demoniac tendencies of lust, anger, pride, envy, madness and illusion are still prevalent; in fact, they have become more formidable in this age of Kali

(quarrel and hypocrisy).

4. How to deal with reversals in life: The Rāmāyaëa teaches us that even extreme reversals can be properly dealt with by using proper emotional responses. We can see that the Law of Gravity can affect only in the earth's sphere and not beyond a particular altitude. Similarly laws of material nature act only in this material world and can affect you only if you are operating under material consciousness. Reading the Rāmāyaëa can at once uplift your consciousness to the spiritual realm and thus make you free from material distress.

5. Rāma or A-Rāma: Lord Rāma was loved as a leader by the citizens of Ayodhyä. In fact they so loved Him that they all wanted to go to the forest with him and live a life of exile similar to His own. This is the true test of governance and civic leadership. These citizens were ready to leave behind all comforts (A-Rāma) and seek the association of Rāma.

6. Alertness in spiritual life: The Rāmāyaëa describes how Lord Rāma left His capital when everyone was sent back and they all slept throughout the night. A life lesson from this episode is that if one is inattentive or lazy, one can easily lose taste in the process of bhakti, devotional service.

7. Sometimes saintly persons can inflict pain to others; not to hurt them but for their eternal benefit: When Bharata disowned Kaikeyé or in another event of Vedic history, when Prahläda disowned his father, Hiraëyakaçipu it resulted in them both getting eternal benefit. It is something like a doctor causing pain with his treatment but the patient gets cured.

8. The ultimate goal of all activities is the pleasure of the Lord: Bharata really wanted to stay in the forest with Lord Rāma and atone for

(Continued on page 30)



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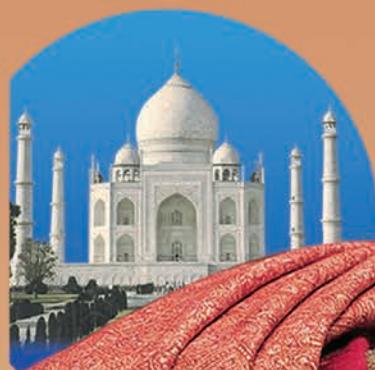
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**'Sakha'**

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