

May 4, 2013

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

40%, 3 hrs.

- Attempt the questions of the closed-book section (A) first.
- The suggested maximum time for Section-A is $\frac{3}{4}$ hr. but you may take more time if you wish.
- Inform the invigilator after you complete Section-A, before proceeding with Section-B.

Marks: 10**SECTION-A** (Closed-book)**Duration: $\frac{3}{4}$ hr.**

- (a) What is meant by the word *yoga* according to the Bhagavad Gītā? What are the four steps of the *yoga* ladder described by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad Gītā? Write a brief description on each of these, including the essential features. **[4]**
 (b) Why does Lord Kṛṣṇa describe the other three lower steps also, instead of describing only the topmost system of *yoga*? **[1]**
- This material world is described as a temporary place, filled with miseries (*duḥkhālayam aśaśvatam*). Of the seven major sources of miseries that a living entity in the material world is subjected to, list at least four. And what is Kṛṣṇa's solution to overcome these miseries? **[2]**
 (or)
 Mention four distinct lines of evidence you have learnt in this course that support the fact that Krishna is God. **[2]**
- Why is having a strong relationship with a devotee of Kṛṣṇa the most important requirement for understanding the message of Bhagavad Gītā and pursuing spiritual life? Please present your answer in a point-wise manner. **[3]**

Marks: 30**SECTION-B** (Open-book)**Duration: 2¼ hrs.**

- Examine each of the following statements for its truth or falsity. If a statement is false, explain why it is so. If it is true, give a short comment or remark to support it. **[5]**
 - Because demigods are also parts and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, worshipping them produces the same effect as worshipping Kṛṣṇa.
 - Being completely free from all vices (bad habits) is not a prerequisite for surrendering to a spiritual teacher.
 - Dhyāna-yoga* is also called *aṣṭāṅga yoga* (eightfold mystic *yoga*) because it enables the practitioner to bring all the eight material elements (five gross and three subtle) under his/her control.
 - The most fundamental demoniac quality in people is disobedience to God.
 - Without superior help from Lord Kṛṣṇa or His bona fide representative, one cannot be freed from the bondage of material nature, i.e., the influence of the three modes.
- Lord Kṛṣṇa is called “*svarāt*”. This Sanskrit word is translated as “fully independent”. Viewing from several perspectives, elaborate how this word befits Krishna, and only Krishna. **[4]**

(or)

The analogy of watering the root of a tree is often used in several contexts to explain principles. Explain various aspects of this analogy and how it fits each context very appropriately. **[4]**

6. According to a great nineteenth-century *Vaiṣṇava* teacher Bhaktivinoda Thākura, pseudo-religion is of five types:
- outright atheism (*nāstikyavāda*)
 - Skepticism or doubtfulness (*sandehavāda*)
 - seeing matter as all that is (*jadavāda*)
 - the doctrine/theory of no soul (*anātmavāda*)
 - the idea that God exists but has no form (*nirviśeṣavāda*)
- a. In the Bhagavad Gītā, each of these five forms of pseudo-religion is refuted. Choose any three of these five and explain how each one is countered in the Bhagavad Gītā. You must cite specific, relevant verses from the book to support your answer. **[6]**
 - b. What is Lord Kṛṣṇa's final instruction to us about different varieties of religion? What is the real religion? **[2]**
7. The first lesson that Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches in the Bhagavad Gita is the fundamental truth that we are not the bodies, but spirit souls. Understanding and acting on the platform of the soul will bring about a profound impact on individuals, and thereafter societies, countries and the world.
- a. Describe, citing at least two practical examples, how in our everyday life we generally act on the bodily platform. **[1]**
 - b. What, according to you, means by "acting on the platform of the soul", and how does this inseparably include the conception of God? **[1]**
 - c. Now, take at least two societal problems and trace how they are ultimately rooted in a bodily concept of life (and de-linked from spiritual life). You may choose from issues like communal/caste violence, substance (drug) abuse, corruption, divorce, prostitution, international conflicts and the like. According to the Bhagavad Gītā, what would be the spiritual solution(s) to these two problems you have picked? **[3]**
8. In the fifty-ninth verse of the second chapter, Lord Kṛṣṇa expresses the need for acquiring a higher taste in order to achieve sense control. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swāmi Prabhupāda further clarifies this in his purport about how acquiring a "taste for Kṛṣṇa consciousness" automatically makes one lose the "taste for pale things".
- a. Share an experience of the higher taste you obtained after undergoing this semester-long course on Bhagavad Gītā that led to sense control in your life, however small this change may have been. **[1]**
 - b. How does one acquire this "higher taste", specifically the "taste for Kṛṣṇa consciousness"? (Hint: Your answer to part a of this question will give an idea) **[1]**
 - c. What is the importance of controlling the senses? **[1]**
9. Being the outpouring of the heart of Kṛṣṇa, several verses in the Bhagavad Gītā spoken by the Lord contain very hopeful statements that are appealing to the eager spiritual aspirant. Cite one such verse that inspired you the most when you heard or read it, and explain in what way you see great hope in it personally. **[3]**
10. As a student of this course, you have been exposed to a lot of new information, undoubtedly. You may have read the textbook thoroughly, remembered the details carefully and even end up with a good grade in the course effortlessly. Explain how and why these achievements alone do not qualify you become a teacher of Bhagavad Gītā, despite having heard lectures from a bona fide authority. What makes a person eligible to teach this science, and what internal quality/qualities must he primary possess? And how does one acquire these requisites? **[3]**
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