SRI BALARAMA
JAYANTI
Monday,
Aug 7, 2017

revati-ramana tvam vai
baladevacyutagraja
halayudha pralamba-ghna
pahi mam purushottama

Oh, husband of Revati,
oh, Lord Balarama,
oh elder brother of
Lord Krishna, oh Lord who
holds a plough as a weapon,
oh killer of Pralambasura,
oh Supreme Lord,
please, protect me!

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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, came to America in 1965, at age 69, to fulfill his spiritual master’s request that he teach the science of Krishna consciousness throughout the English-speaking world. In a dozen years he published some seventy volumes of translation and commentary on India’s Vedic literature, and these are now standard in universities worldwide. Meanwhile, travelling almost nonstop, Srila Prabhupada moulded his international society into a world wide confederation of ashrams, schools, temples and farm communities. He passed away in 1977, in Vrindavana, the place most sacred to Lord Krishna. His disciples and followers are carrying forward the movement he started.

To know more about Srila Prabhupada visit www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada
Changing Our Standard of Happiness

Material happiness often takes the form of relieving distress. Isn't human life meant for something more?

A lecture in Toronto in June 1976
by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

sri-prahrada uvaca
sukham aindriyakam daitya deha-yogena dehinam
sarvatra labhyate daivad yatha duhkham ayatnatah

"Prahlada Maharaja said, 'My dear friends born of demoniac families, the happiness of sensual pleasure can be obtained in any form of life, according to one's past activities. We obtain such happiness, just as we obtain distress, automatically, without endeavour.'" (Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.6.3)

Every one of us is fully under the control of material nature. There is no question of independence. The scriptures say our condition is just like that of a horse or a bull bound by the nose. The animal has to move according to how the driver pulls on the rope; it has no independence.

So, our so-called declaration of independence—"There is no God, there is no controller; we can do whatever we like" is all ignorance. And in ignorance we perform so much sinful activity. In other words, we irresponsibly do anything we like, and then we become entrapped in the karmic reactions and suffer.

As we have experienced in our ordinary life, ignorance is no excuse from punishment. Suppose a child touches fire. The fire will not excuse him because he is a child. No. Whether you are a child or a grown-up man, when you touch fire it will burn. There is no excuse. Similarly, if we do something against the laws of God, knowingly or unknowingly, we have to be punished. Whether in adulthood or in childhood, whether knowingly or unknowingly, we must suffer.

Now, our suffering and enjoyment are due to the senses (matra-sparsas tu kaunteya sitosna-sukha-duhkha-dah). As long as we have this material body, with material senses, two things will be there: suffering and enjoyment. For example, take the sensation of touch. We touch many things with our skin. Sometimes this touching is painful, and sometimes it is pleasing, depending on different circumstances. Cold water is very pleasing to the skin if it is summer, but it is very painful to the skin if it is winter. The water is the same and my skin is the same, but due to seasonal changes, the same water is sometimes pleasing and sometimes displeasing. Therefore, as long as we remain in this material world, or as long as we continue in this material body, two things continue: happiness and distress. You cannot stop them. It is not possible.

Then Krishna says, agamapayino 'nityah: This happiness and distress come and go; they are temporary. Therefore we should not be very much disturbed by distress, nor should we waste our valuable time seeking so-called happiness. Yet out of ignorance, everyone is working very hard for happiness and trying to avoid distress. This is the material world.

Sometimes we see a dog running from one side of the street to the other. He's feeling some pleasure. Similarly, so-called civilized men are also "running" in their cars from this side to that side. It is simply a dog's race. We are thinking that because we are driving a car, we are civilized, but our business is simply the dog's race.

So Prahlada Maharaja's point is that we should try to understand the value of life. We should not waste our time in the dog's race, whether on four legs or on four wheels. That is the point.

Here Prahlada Maharaja addresses his friends as daityas. There are two classes: daitya and devata, or demons and devotees. Daityas do not know anything; they are just like animals, simply after sense gratification. And the devatas are fully aware of the existence of God, of their relationship with God, and of their duty with reference to God. That is the difference between the daityas and the devatas.

Because Prahlada Maharaja was to deliver the daityas, by the will of the Supreme Lord he circumstantially took his birth in a daitya family. Sometimes devotees appear in a certain family to deliver a particular community or society. Here Prahlada Maharaja's classmates were all daityas. They did not take their birth in very enlightened families.

Next Prahlada Maharaja says, deha-yogena dehinam. Deha means "body," and dehi means "the person who possesses the body." In the modern age, in this so-called civilization, people do not understand the difference.
between deha and dehi, the body and the spirit soul. I think 99.9% are unable to understand the difference. They think the body is everything. But that is not the fact.

There are so many different types of bodies, and each and every body is possessed by a spirit soul. And when a spirit soul is within the encagement of a particular body, he experiences a standard of happiness and distress according to that body. For example, the hog has a particular type of body, and the human being has a particular type of body. Therefore the happiness of the spirit soul encaged in the hog's body is different from the happiness of the soul in a man's body. If you give a man nice halava [a buttery toasted-grain dessert], he'll be pleased. And if you give a hog fresh stool, he'll be pleased. He'll not protest; rather, he will like it: "Oh, this stool is very nice." But a man will hate even to stand near it. Why this difference? Deha-yogena dehinam: The spirit soul (dehi) has a particular type of body (deha), and therefore he's taking pleasure in a particular type of food. As it is said, "One man's food is another man's poison."

So, every one of us is under the control of the laws of nature (karanam guna-sango 'syaa sad-asad-yoni-janmasu). We are born in a particular family, under particular circumstances, with particular tastes. Why are there differences? Karanam guna-sango 'syaa. The karana, the reason, is that we are associating with a particular combination of the modes of nature. For example, one person will be pleased to come here and understand bhagavata-dharma, the science of devotional service, while another person will be pleased to go to a brothel or a liquor shop. Why? Karanam guna-sango 'syaa: Each one is influenced by a particular combination of the modes of nature.

Now, bhagavata-dharma is so nice that even if one is in the lowest stage, by association he can be raised to the highest stage. Therefore the practice of bhagavata-dharma should begin in childhood. As Prahlada Maharaja said at the beginning of this chapter of the Srimad-Bhagavatam:

kaumara acaret prajno dharman bhagavatan iha
durlabham manusam janma tad apy adhruvam arthadam

"An intelligent person should take up this bhagavata-dharma from the early age of childhood. This human form of life is very rarely achieved, and it is also temporary but it enables one to achieve the ultimate purpose of life" [Bhag. 7.6.1].

The word artha means "the purpose of life." Those who are not taking part in bhagavata-dharma have a different artha from those who are taking part. The goal of one who is practicing bhagavata-dharma is to go back home, back to Godhead. And the goal of the materialist is sense gratification. This is the difference. Materialists do not know that there is life after death, that there is eternal life, that there is eternal happiness.

Actually, in this material world there is no happiness. Everything is distress. But on account of ignorance, we accept distress as happiness. That is maya, illusion. The word ma means "not," and ya means "that." So when one is in maya, he accepts something for what it is not. Again the example of the hog: He is feeling happiness by eating stool, but it is not happiness, actually. One who is not in maya, who is not in the hog's body, says, "Oh, what nasty food he's eating!" Just in terms of food value, stool is very valuable. Scientists have analyzed it. But simply because it has very good food value, that does not mean human beings will agree to eat stool. In World War II, in the concentration camps, some human beings were obliged to eat their own stool. That is karma.

So, we must rectify our karma. And if you cultivate bhagavata-dharma, your karma can be changed (karmani nirdahati kintu ca bhakti-bhajam, Bs. 5.54). Otherwise, it is not possible. Everyone is born with the reactions of his past karma. People in modern times also do not understand that what is past, what is future, what is present. Simply animals. Like the animals, the cats and dogs, they cannot understand what is the spirit soul or what is karma. Human life should not be wasted living like the animals. As Lord Rsbahadeva says, nayam deho deha-bhajam nrloke kastan kaman arhate vid-bhujam ye: "Human beings should not waste their time working hard for sense gratification like the stool-eating hogs." [SB 5.5.1]

Therefore, the state, the father, the elderly persons, the guru-they must all be very responsible. And what is that responsibility? They must see that every person under their care is trained up in such a way that he can be elevated to the highest position. How can this be done? By bhagavata-dharma. Not otherwise. Not by karma [pious activities], jnana [philosophical speculation], or yoga [mystic meditation]. No. Simply by acting in devotional service to Krishna, bhagavata-dharma, anyone can be raised to the highest position.

Even those who are leading a very abominable life can be raised to the highest perfection by practicing bhagavata-dharma. As Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gita [9.32], mam hi partha vyapasritya ye 'pi syuh papa-yonayah. Papa-yoni means "sinful persons." Civilized human beings, advanced human beings, are called Aryans, and those below that are papa-yoni.

In the Aryan society there is varnashrama, a system of dividing people into four social orders and four spiritual
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orders. The social orders are the brahmanas [intellectuals], the kshatriyas [administrators and military men], the vaishyas [merchants and farmers], and the shudras [manual labourers]. The spiritual orders consist of the brahmacharis [celibate students], grihasthas [householders], the vanaprasthas [retired persons], and the sannyasis [renunciants]. This is the real Vedic system.

Human life begins when one observes the varnashrama regulations, by which one can elevate oneself to spiritual consciousness, or God consciousness. But people in the modern age do not know this (na te viduh svartha-gatim hi vishnum). Because there is no bhagavata-dharma, no education, people are kept completely in darkness. This is the modern civilization.

Srimad-Bhagavatam [1.1.10] describes the people of this age as follows:

\[ \text{prayenalpayusah sabhya kalav asmin yuge janah} \]
\[ \text{mandah sumanda-matayo manda-bhagya hy upadrutah} \]

"In the present age of Kali men generally have a short duration of life. They are quarrelsome, lazy, misguided, unlucky, and, above all, always disturbed."

Although in the Kali-yuga one should live a hundred years, with the progress of this age the duration of life is decreasing. Nowadays almost nobody lives a hundred years. One who is eighty years old is considered an old man. But the time will come when one who is twenty years old will be considered a very old man. That time is gradually coming. This is the effect of the Kali-yuga.

The duration of life, bodily strength, mercy, memory—these things will decrease gradually. Nowadays you won't find many people with a very fertile brain, nor are people very strong physically. And mercy? There is no question of it. If somebody sees you being killed on the street, he doesn't care; he'll go on walking. There is no mercy. Even the mother has no mercy—killing her child in the womb. This is the Kali-yuga.

So there is a great necessity for preaching this bhagavata-dhama. And this is what Prahlada Maharaja is preaching to his daitya classmates. The daityas, or demons, do not understand that human life is meant for cultivating Krishna consciousness. They do not understand the value of human life. Therefore Prahlada Maharaja is teaching them about bhagavata-dharma.

He says that sense gratification is not our goal in life. He describes sense gratification as deha-yogena dehinam, "happiness in reference to the body." Another meaning of deha-yogena dehinam is "sex." One deha [body] is embracing another deha; they're kissing, they're having sexual intercourse. That is the ultimate happiness in the material world.

Prahlada Maharaja says that you can get this kind of happiness everywhere, whether you are in a human body or a dog's body or a hog's body. Don't think that sex happiness is less for a dog than for a human being. No. Whether one is in a hog's body or a dog's body or a man's body, the pleasure of sex is the same. For example, if you take something eatable from a golden pot and put it into an iron pot, the taste will not change. The taste is the same. It is only our misconception that if I put it into a golden pot the taste will improve. It's not a fact.

So, we are trying to become an advanced civilization by changing the "pot." That's all. But that will not change the quality of our activities. The quality will remain the same. We have to go beyond ahara-nidra-bhaya-maithunam-eating, sleeping, defense, and sex. These are necessary as far as the body is concerned, but these are also there in the lives of the dogs and cats and hogs. We have to go further. That is bhagavata-dhama. Deha-dhama, bodily activities, are the same for the cats, dogs, and human beings, but bhagavata-dhama, activities of self-realization, are for the human beings alone.

Therefore Prahlada Maharaja declares, kaumara acaret prajnah: "From the very beginning of life a human being should practice bhagavata-dhama." Here we see these children coming to the temple. It is very good. They are associating with devotees and offering respect to the Deity and the guru. This will not go in vain. It is all recorded, and one day they'll become pure devotees. That is bhagavata-dharma.

Prahlada Maharaja is stressing that we shouldn't try very hard for sense enjoyment because it is available in any condition of life, without any effort. By superior arrangement, daiva, everyone gets a certain type of sense gratification. The hog, because he has been given the body of a hog, must eat stool. That is daiva. Similarly, cows, goats, and other four-legged animals eat grass. They'll never touch meat. But tigers, dogs, and cats will not even touch grass. They want meat. Their standard of eating, their standard of happiness, is already fixed up. It cannot be changed.

But in the human form of life we can change our standard of happiness if we take to bhagavata-dhama. For example, here are these European and American boys. They have changed their habits. How is it possible? Because they have taken to bhagavata-dhama. That is the only way. Otherwise, it is not possible. In America, the authorities admitted, "We are spending so many millions of dollars, but we cannot stop the intoxication habit,
the LSD habit. How is it that this Krishna consciousness movement is stopping it?” Yes, as soon as one joins our movement sincerely, he can very easily give up these four abominable things: illicit sex, meat eating, intoxication, and gambling. How? Because he’s taking to bhagavata-dharma, Krishna consciousness.

So if you want to change the mentality of the people in the modern civilization, which at present is the dog’s mentality, you cannot do it by passing resolutions in the United Nations assembly. No. You must take to bhagavata-dharma. Then everything will be all right. Otherwise, it is not possible.

Thank you very much. Hare Krishna.

Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.2.3, purport

Just to help establish these babblings, paid government servants assign registered trademarks and copyrights for names. Advertising firms and public relations agencies are paid to promote names and create fame for them. But God is transcendental, and He’s not trying to get a piece of the action. He has no need to sue anyone who uses His name. He is never depleted by any infringement. Rather, because He feels sorry that we’re missing the responsibility of using our human intelligence, He appears in this age as Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to establish the chanting of His holy names.

Lord Chaitanya prayed, “O my Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings, and thus You have hundreds and millions of names like Krishna and Govinda. In these transcendental names You have invested all Your transcendental energies.”

While we mix in this world with names like John, Ashok, Mikhail, and Suzanne, our names usually don’t reveal anything of our real identity. They’re just more material sounds to add to the babble. Yet Krishna’s names describe His transcendental attributes and favourite activities, and we can relish His qualities and enter into His pastimes through His names.

What’s in a name? Well, if you are asking about the names of God, you won’t find the answer in any college textbook. Sure, the linguists have analysed every word ever uttered. And they have a very high regard for the use and maintenance of language. They are seeking a sort of perfection. Yet everything that they’re searching for, that we’re all searching for, is in Krishna’s names.—Karuna-devi dasi

Krishna Voice, July 2017
The following conversation between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and a guest—Dr. Christian Hauser, a psychiatrist—took place in Stockholm on September 10, 1973.

Dr. Hauser: You know, I met your student James before he was your student. And I must say he was a very aimless person—a person who hadn't found anything very specific in life. He floated about very much. But when I met him yesterday, he was very happy; he felt happy about himself and his new life as a devotee, and that made me very happy. I liked James very much.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, Krishna consciousness is the original status of the living entity. For instance, a young child is always conscious that "I am the son of such-and-such person." This consciousness is natural.

A person may go mad. But when he's cured, he immediately understands, "I belong to such-and-such family, and I am such-and-such gentleman's son."

Similarly, once in contact with this material nature, the spiritual spark, the living entity—he's in madness. Even though we are all part and parcel of Krishna and our original consciousness of Krishna cannot be broken, somehow here in this world we have forgotten our relationship with Krishna. This is madness.
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You are a psychiatrist. You know very well—every man in this material world is more or less a madman.

Dr. Hauser: Or he has the germ within himself.

Srila Prabhupada: There is a Bengali poem that says, pisace paile jana mote channa haya/ mayara grasta jivera sei dasa upajaya: "Anyone who is living within this material energy—he is as if haunted by a ghost."

Do you have any experience of a man haunted by a ghost, or possessed?

Dr. Hauser: Oh, yes. That’s very often a symptom of a psychosis. They feel that they are persecuted by foreign powers.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Foreign powers. That is the idea. Our material conception of life—it is as if we are haunted by a foreign power. It is madness. “I am Christian.” “I am Hindu.” “I am Muslim.” “I am English.” “I am German.” These conceptions are all haunted. Mad. Because the soul is pure. Asango ’yam purusah: the pure spirit soul has no connection with any designations of the body.

For instance, in a dream we see so many things that have nothing to do with us. This is our nighttime dream, and we recognize it when we wake up.

Unfortunately, when we wake up, generally we go back into our daytime dream. “I am this.” “I am that.” “I am white.” “I am black.” “I am American.” And so forth.

At night, when we dream, we are in a different situation and we forget everything from the daytime. And again, in the daytime we forget everything from the nighttime. But actually we are entering another dream.

When we leave our nighttime dream, we forget all about it, and we see it for what it was—a temporary situation, a dream. But our daytime situation is also temporary; it is also a dream. We have got to know the permanent reality: I am the permanent spiritual observer within this temporary material situation, nighttime and daytime.

The difficulty is, most of us see these two dreams and recognize only one as a dream; we take the daytime dream as the permanent reality. When someone takes a dream state as reality, you treat him, do you not?

Dr. Hauser: Hmm. Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: So for practical purposes, everyone who is in contact with this temporary material energy is mad. And we are trying to take him out of this mad, dreaming condition. That is the sum and substance of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Dr. Hauser: But does he stop dreaming? I mean, substantially, does he stop... does one stop dreaming?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, in the sense we are using the word: the soul no longer identifies with what is not his eternal self or with what is not his eternal duty. He knows, “I am separate from this dreaming condition.” So when one knows himself to be simply the observer and not actually a part of the dream, then he’s cured.

Dr. Hauser: But the dreaming of the night also has another function.

Srila Prabhupada: No, that is not the idea. Dreaming at night and dreaming during the day are the same thing. Superficial, illusory. Simply their durations are different—at night you dream for a number of minutes, and during the day you dream for a number of hours.

But in the daytime if you think that you are English or you are Swedish, or that you are Hindu or Muslim, that is also a dream. You are none of these, any more than you are part of your nighttime dream. Because of madness, sometimes we take it, “This daytime dream is a fact,” or “That daytime dream is a fact.” But none of them are facts. Under their sway, we may accept them as facts, but none of them are facts.

So, once again, sanity means sarvopadhi-vinirmuktam tat-paratvena nirmalam: I have to become completely free from all dreamlike designations. For instance, during a nighttime dream I may think, “I have now become a king,” or “I am the proprietor of a factory.” But none of these are reality. They are only dreams. Similarly, in the daytime I may think, “I am Russian,” “I am African,” “I am this,” or “I am that.” But that, too, is all a dream.

In reality, I am a spirit soul, part and parcel of the Supreme Spirit, and my duty, my nature, is to serve Him. It is all very simple. So sanity requires that I become free from this dreaming condition, liberated from all kinds of false designations.

Dr. Hauser: But some of these false... false designations also are the necessary machinery of our society.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. That society is also false. (To be continued.)

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How do I love thee? Let me count the ways."

One, two, three, four

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways."

Poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning had something else in mind when she penned her beatific “How do I love thee?” question, but the Vedic literature of ancient India, highly poetic itself, answers that there are primarily five ways that an “I” and a “thee” can love each other: (1) in a mood of reverence, (2) in a mood of service, (3) in a mood of friendship, (4) in a mood of parental, or protective, affection, and (5) in a mood of conjugal affection.

Browning fans might think these five categories constitute a relatively cold analysis of love's ways. Even a cold analyst might take exception. What would Sigmund Freud have to say? Does his Oedipus complex fit into the parental mood or the conjugal mood, or not fit at all? And how about Carl Jung? If these five categories exist, then why in his extensive research in the fields of personality and self-discovery did he never discover them? Erich Fromm does list five types of love in his book The Art of Loving, but they differ from the Vedic types.

Nevertheless, the five loving moods, while not listed in the writings of modern poets and psychoanalysis, are easy to recognize in our own everyday lives. The Sanskrit term for these moods is rasa, a word that also carries the connotations of “relationship” and “taste.” We taste loving relationships in these five rasas. For clarification, let us count the ways again, briefly elaborating on each rasa.

1. Reverence. We revere, or stand in awe of, persons we consider greater than ourselves—a politician, a famous artist or athlete, a successful businessman. Knowledge of someone’s achievements and social position is an important factor in invoking our respect. Reverence is sometimes called the neutral rasa because it involves only passive admiration, not an active exchange with the revered person. In the strictest sense, therefore, it is not a loving mood, although it may foster love.

2. Loving service. When reverence intensifies, it inspires us to perform service, which is the next rasa. Out of admiration for a political candidate, for example, we may help in his election campaign, or at least vote for him. Our feeling of reverence is still there, but we act on it. Not only in the political field but in other social situations as well, the voluntary rendering of service develops from a foreground of reverence and respect. Service rendered strictly for money, or involuntarily out of fear, is not love.

3. Friendship. When the rasa of service intensifies, it may develop into friendship. Again the example of a politician: through prolonged service in his or her campaign, you may come to know the candidate personally, and the candidate, instead of treating you like a servant, may begin to confide in you as a friend. The rasa of friendship contains the previous two rasas, but since friendship involves equality and familiarity, the rasa of awe and reverence diminishes markedly. Your friend's awe-inspiring credentials are not as important as his individual qualities.

4. Parental affection. Intensify friendship and add to it a feeling of protective superiority toward the object of your affection, and you have the parental rasa. Parenthood ordinarily denotes the relationship between a biological father and mother and their children. But we cannot confine the parental rasa to biological kin. Men and women often show parental affection for others' children or for each other.

5. Conjugal affection. This topmost rasa includes the previous four. In addition to respect, service, friendship, and protective affection, conjugal lovers enjoy erotic exchanges as well as feelings of exclusive intimacy. So there it is. Are these five rasas not apparent in our daily affairs? Vedic authorities assert that any other categories of love we might perceive are merely subdivisions of these.

The concept of rasa encompasses not just loving relationships but unloving ones as well. When the five primary rasas are disturbed, or when they are absent altogether, seven secondary rasas take over.

Aach! More counting of the ways? Yes, just one last tally. The secondary rasas are: (1) anger, (2) wonder, (3) comedy, (4) chivalry, (5) mercy, (6) dread, and (7) ghastliness. Secondary rasas vary in intensity—from the dread of a visit to the dentist to the horror of losing a child, parent, or other loved one. The story of Romeo and Juliet is one famous example of a secondary rasa, ghastliness, resulting from the disruption of a primary rasa, conjugal love. These twelve rasas, five primary and seven secondary, constitute the sum total of personal relationships in every society. Life is an ocean of rasa.

The Vedic science of rasa provides an interesting and
useful analytical framework for the study of interpersonal psychology. We could discuss current high divorce rates, for example, in terms of the negative effect that secondary rasas have on family members when the primary marital and parental relationships are broken. Or we could advocate friendly relationships between nations, since in the absence of friendship dreadful and ghastly wars are likely. But it is also interesting and far more useful to understand that the great self-realized authors of the Vedic literature have given us the science of rasa first and foremost to help us reawaken our eternal loving relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna.

Krishna is no less a person than we are, which means that He can also relate to others in twelve rasas. In fact, He is the original person, the primeval cause of all causes. The conception of God as an enjoyer of rasa does not originate in the human imagination. No, Krishna is our origin. We reflect His qualities. Although God is great and we are small, we are qualitatively equal to Him. Therefore, just as you can know something of the Atlantic Ocean by tasting one drop of ocean water, you can know something of Krishna by observing yourself.

Observe myself? How? By looking in the mirror?

Not exactly. In the Bhagavad-gita Krishna explains that
the self, the individual person, is not the physical body but an eternal spirit soul dwelling in the body. The body is temporary clothing covering the eternal soul. Not only in the human body but in every living body in all species of life—the plants, aquatics, insects, birds, beasts, and human beings—there is an individual soul. The proof of the soul’s presence is that even the animals exchange rasa, showing affection for mates, children, parents, and so on. So to observe the self means to observe not the body but how a living entity exchanges rasas.

In general we see that rasas are exchanged only with members of the same species. It is sometimes said that the dog is man’s best friend, but there are in fact many obstacles to a meaningful exchange of rasa between a human being and a dog, or between a human being and any other species. We naturally restrict “counting of the ways” to our own kind. Man to man. Dog to dog. Salamander to salamander.

On the spiritual platform, however, every person, whatever his temporary bodily covering, is of the same quality, the same species, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna. Exchange of rasa with Krishna is therefore natural for everyone. Most religious traditions teach us to respect God as the all-great, all-powerful, all-knowing Supreme, and to serve Him in the mood of awe and reverence. This is certainly correct, but we overlook His true greatness and power if we ignore that He can also relate to others in the higher rasas of friendship, parenthood, and conjugal love. The Narada-pancharatra clearly states that pure love of God means to completely transfer our affection to the Supreme Person and to completely repose all sense of kinship in Him. The pure devotee takes Krishna as everything—master, friend, child, lover—and relates affectionately to everyone else as fellow servants of Krishna.

Mundane affairs in this temporary physical world appear more interesting to us than religious or spiritual pursuits precisely because mundane affairs hold the promise of varieties of personal exchanges in each of the twelve rasas, whereas religious advancement, we falsely believe, does not. Without at least some preliminary knowledge of the completeness of God’s personality, of His ability to exchange rasa, it is difficult, if not impossible, even to revere Him. How can you revere a non-entity? Ignorant of the Vedic science of Krishna consciousness, people gradually take to agnosticism, nonentity? Ignorant of the Vedic science of Krishna consciousness movement five hundred years ago, taught that there is no better worship of Krishna than that displayed by the damsels of Vraja, who worshiped Him in conjugal love. Yet Lord Chaitanya was a strict renunicant and, although not disrespectful toward women, avoided even distant association with them. Conjugal love of Krishna is therefore not the conjugal love we know of in the material world. The material is a perverted reflection of the spiritual.

Accompanied by His confidential devotees, Krishna occasionally visits the material world, appearing in human society to display His transcendental pastimes and demonstrate to the embodied souls, who are absorbed in temporary loves, that He is Rasaraja, the king of loving affairs. He thus invites us to reawaken our eternal spiritual rasa with Him. Pure devotees of Krishna have recorded His earthly pastimes in epic works such as the Mahabharata (of which the Gita is one chapter), the Srimad-Bhagavatam, and the Ramayana. Through these great literatures one can relish the Lord’s pastimes with His devotees, learn the art and science of devotion, and gradually rise to the pure devotional platform.

Unfortunately, when Krishna mercifully appears, many foolish people mistake Him for an ordinary human being. They discount His superhuman pastimes or take them for myths and ignore the Vedic teachings, which establish beyond doubt His supreme dominion over all that be. We should not be misled by such confused persons, who cannot see beyond counting the paltry ways of love in this material world; instead we should take advantage of Krishna’s mercy and help the ones we truly love to do the same.
Krishna Voice, July 2017

Pray to their Lordships to bless each one of us

With Best Wishes from

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The Creeper of Devotion

From Lord Chaitanya’s teachings—an analogy to illustrate the development of pure love for God.

by Drutakarma Dasa

Seeds are mysterious. When planted, these compact entities grow into complex botanical organisms that produce fruits, vegetables, nuts, flowers, and other things we value. The seed has become a potent metaphor for growth—physical, mental, and spiritual. In the sixteenth century, Lord Chaitanya explained to Rupa Gosvami how a spiritual seed planted in the heart can grow into a creeper of devotional service that produces the most valuable fruit—pure love for God.

Lord Chaitanya explained how one receives this valuable spiritual seed: “According to their karma, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe... Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Krishna. By the mercy of both Krishna and the spiritual master, such a
person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service."

In this explanation, Lord Chaitanya states that before the living entity receives the devotional seed, he moves according to karma, the universal law of action and reaction. Huston Smith, a professor of philosophy at MIT, has said, "Science has alerted the Western world to the importance of causal relationships in the physical world. Every physical event, we are inclined to believe, has its cause, and every cause will have its determinate effects. India extends this concept of universal causation to include man's moral and spiritual life as well."

The law of karma provides that one receives a particular body on a particular planet, and suffers or enjoys in material existence, according to the quality of one's previous thoughts and actions.

The Vedic literature explains that there are millions of kinds of bodies the soul can inhabit, ranging from microbes to human beings. Only in the human form do we have the chance to break out of the cycle of birth and death and attain our natural state of God consciousness.

As recounted by Lord Chaitanya, the karmic journey involves not only travel through different bodies but also different planets. The Vedas inform us that there are many planets beyond those we can see, all of which are inhabited. Taking birth on earth is considered good karma, because the conditions here are favourable for cultivating God consciousness. On lower planets there is too much suffering, and one must struggle for bare survival. And on the upper planets, there is so much material enjoyment that one may feel no impetus for developing God consciousness. But here we find a favourable balance of comfort and distress—enough comfort to give us the peace of mind to cultivate God consciousness, and just enough suffering to make this desirable.

We are therefore good candidates for receiving the seed of devotional service. Even so, it's a rare opportunity. Lord Chaitanya told Rupa Gosvami that only one who is fortunate meets a bona fide spiritual master, who gives him the seed.

Who is the bona fide spiritual master? He is one who in his words and personal behaviour manifests perfect God consciousness. One important qualification of the bona fide spiritual master is that he appears in an authorised disciplic succession. He carefully repeats what he has heard from his spiritual master, who heard the message from his spiritual master, who heard from his, and so on. If you trace the message back far enough, you find that it originates with Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

For example, Lord Chaitanya told the story of the creeper of devotion to Rupa Gosvami five centuries ago. What Lord Chaitanya said was described in the sixteenth century by Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami in his biography of Lord Chaitanya, Chaitanya-charitamrita. This work was passed down through the chain of spiritual masters from Lord Chaitanya, and in the seventh decade of the twentieth century Srila Prabhupada translated it into English. I've read the story of the creeper of devotion in Srila Prabhupada's translation of Chaitanya-charitamrita, and now I am passing the story on to the readers of Back to Godhead. And perhaps someday you in turn will be repeating it to someone.

How does one meet a bona fide spiritual master? Lord Krishna is in everyone's heart as the Supersoul, and as such He is intimately aware of our innermost desires. When Krishna detects that a conditioned soul desires, perhaps even unconsciously, to re-establish a loving relationship with Him, He arranges for such a soul to meet His confidential representative, the bona fide spiritual master, who gives the bhakti-lata-bija, the seed of the creeper of devotional service.

Srila Prabhupada has given the following explanation of that seed: "Everything has an original cause, or seed. For any idea, programme, plan, or device, there is first of all the contemplation of the plan, and that is called bija, or the seed. The methods, rules, and regulations by which one is perfectly trained in devotional service constitute the bhakti-lata-bija, or seed of devotional service."

The question is whether or not one will actually cultivate this seed by taking up the "methods, rules, and regulations." The choice is up to each individual. But one should recognize that if one does not cultivate the seed of devotional service, one will certainly cultivate other seeds—the seeds of material ambition.

In other words, desiring different types of material gratification, one will contemplate the methods for obtaining such gratification. One will perform a certain kind of work, following certain rules and regulations. If one desires to become wealthy as a stock broker, he'll cultivate that seed of desire by, possibly, obtaining employment in a Wall Street firm and learning to do business according to the formal rules and regulations of the Stock Exchange and the SEC. But although he'll expend great effort cultivating such a seed of material desire, the fruit he obtains won't be worth the effort; the result of his work won't carry him out of the cycle of birth and death. Only devotional service can free one from this endless suffering. So it makes sense to cultivate the seed of devotional service.

Lord Chaitanya told Rupa Gosvami, "When a person receives the seed of devotional service, he should take care of it by becoming a gardener and sowing the seed in his heart. If he waters the seed gradually by the process of sravana and kirtana (hearing and chanting), the seed will begin to sprout."

"Hearing and chanting" means hearing and chanting God's holy names. God is nondifferent from His names, so Krishna is personally present in the Hare Krishna
Hearing and chanting are natural. Unfortunately, we all spend quite a bit of time each day hearing and talking about things that really do not help us very much spiritually. We hear the office gossip—the vice-president's getting transferred, the company's being reorganised, one of the married ones is carrying on with a male co-worker. We hear family talk—Uncle Bob's retiring, your cousin got arrested for selling cocaine. We talk with our husbands and wives about all kinds of things. We talk about politics, the movies. We listen to the radio and watch television. We are constantly filling our ears with all kinds of repetitious soul-deadening sounds that ultimately will not help us escape the cycle of birth and death and awaken our dormant love of Godhead, which alone can make us permanently happy.

So somehow or other we have to make time to chant the Hare Krishna mantra, to read Bhagavad-gita, and to talk about things connected with Krishna consciousness. Otherwise our creeper of devotional service will wither and die. It must be properly watered with hearing and chanting. This takes some effort and determination, which we'll get when we become convinced about how extremely important it is to water the creeper of devotion.

Undoubtedly, people tend to feel that their life is already too full, every second allocated. That means if you want to add chanting Hare Krishna to your life, you are going to have to make room for it.

How much room? First you should know that the Hare Krishna mantra is chanted in two ways: quietly, on japa meditation beads; and loudly, to musical accompaniment. Both are recommended. Initiated disciples in the Krishna consciousness movement chant the Hare Krishna mantra at least 1,728 times daily on meditation beads (that's sixteen times around a string of 108 beads and takes about two hours) and spend at least an hour each day chanting Hare Krishna congregationally, usually with mridangas (drums) and karatalas (hand cymbals). If you are just starting out, however, you might wish to gradually build up to this level. Start with an amount of chanting you are comfortable with and can practice each day without fail. Regularity is important.

Probably an easy way for many people to make time for chanting is to cut back on the amount of television they watch. Is the quality of your life really going to suffer if you miss a couple of shows? Perhaps you don't watch much television. But if you analyse your daily schedule, you will certainly be able to identify some time that is not being spent very profitably. Eliminate the marginally important activities and substitute hearing and chanting, which can deliver immense transcendental benefit.

If you do make time to chant, and do so regularly, you will definitely notice results. Lord Chaitanya said, “As one waters the bhakti-lata-bija, the seed sprouts, and the creeper gradually increases to the point where it penetrates the walls of this universe and goes beyond the Viraja River between the spiritual world and the material world. It attains brahmaloka, the Brahma effulgence, and, penetrating through that stratum, it reaches the spiritual sky and the spiritual planet Goloka Vrindavana.

But let's be honest—these days it's difficult to commit oneself to a path of action beyond the material range. We tend to be surrounded by people not at all interested in talking or acting in a purely spiritual way. Commitment is valued, but only to things like getting a degree, attaining political office, making your mark in a material way. To be sure, most people are nominally members of some religion, but their involvement is generally materially motivated, in that their intention is to get something from God or avoid undesirable situations through God's intercession.

In general, people are extremely reluctant to discuss spiritual subjects. Conversation among friends and family tend to focus on purely mundane activities, and unpleasant matters such as the suffering of disease, old age, and death are politely avoided. Although many people do wonder about philosophical questions, such as nature of the self or the nature of God, who dares to bring them up in the middle of a football game or the evening news? The pressure is always on to keep your mouth shut about such things—what to speak of the pressure against actually doing something like watering your creeper by chanting the Hare Krishna mantra for an hour or two each day.

What a statement that would be! Taking time out from all the routine stereotype activities to clear your mind and meditate on the all-powerful name of God? What on earth for? No doubt it would be difficult to do so in front of unsympathetic persons. So then you have to arrange to do so elsewhere. Perhaps you go to a room where you can be alone and chant. Back out in the television room they're wondering what you're up to. But at a certain point you have to be able to rise above the social pressure not to chant and do it, convinced that it is important and beneficial. You know that if you don't water your creeper, it's going to shrivel, and your understanding of your spiritual identity will be stunted.

Don't expect much encouragement. Unless they are also Krishna conscious, your friends and family are not
likely to push you to make spiritual progress. They generally want you to be like them—primarily concerned about economic and social and physical well-being. If you were to tell them you’re going out to jog or work out, that’s fine. But tell them you’re going out to do some chanting to elevate your spiritual awareness, well...

So it would be nice to have support, but don’t expect it. Pick up your beads, head out the door, and go to a park and chant for an hour. Do it every day. Others will eventually get used to it. Or maybe won’t get used to it. Some people never do. That is what makes living in a community of people who are practicing Krishna consciousness attractive—there is a lot of support and encouragement for spiritual development, instead of discouragement or begrudging tolerance. The creeper of devotional service naturally flourishes in such a friendly environment.

Lord Chaitanya told Rupa Gosvami: “Being situated in one’s heart and being watered by shravana-kirtana, the bhakti creeper grows more and more. In this way it attains shelter of the desire tree of the lotus feet of Krishna, who is eternally situated in the planet known as Goloka Vrindavana in the topmost region of the spiritual sky. The creeper greatly expands in the Goloka Vrindavana planet, and there it produces the fruit of love for Krishna. Although remaining in the material world, the gardener regularly sprinkles the creeper with the water of hearing and chanting.”

Therefore you can be moved through this world, just like everyone else, and simultaneously be experiencing your original, spiritual nature and eternal loving connection with the Supreme Lord Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada writes, “The conditioned soul within the material world can neither understand nor appreciate how a pure devotee in the material world can render confidential service to the Lord out of feelings of ecstatic love and always engage in pleasing the Supreme Lord’s senses. Although seen within this material world, the pure devotee always engages in the confidential service of the Lord.” If you want to experience this, keep watering your creeper with the hearing and chanting of the holy name of the Lord. Those around you may not understand—but you will understand what’s happening to you as you experience increasing transcendental pleasure and satisfaction.

Beyond watering the creeper of devotion, one must protect it from disturbances. Lord Chaitanya told Rupa Gosvami, “If the devotee commits an offense at the feet of a Vaishnava while cultivating the creeper of devotional service in the material world, his offense is compared to a mad elephant that uproots the creeper and breaks it. In this way the leaves of the creeper are dried up.”

As we have seen, one obtains the seed of the creeper of devotional service from the bona fide spiritual master, who is a pure Vaishnava, a devotee of Krishna. The spiritual master guides one along the path of spiritual advancement. So the relationship between spiritual master and disciple is very confidential. In any intimate relationship one has to be very careful, for bad feeling may develop and poison the entire relationship. Similarly, if the disciple behaves improperly or disrespectfully towards his Vaishnava guru, he greatly hamper his spiritual progress. One must therefore guard against offenses, which are compared to a mad elephant. One of the chief offenses is to disobey the instructions of the spiritual master, especially the instructions to avoid the unwanted activities of illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating, and gambling. Lord Chaitanya said, “The gardener must defend the creeper by fencing it all around so that the powerful elephant of offenses may not enter.”

Lord Chaitanya further told Rupa Gosvami: “Sometimes unwanted creepers, such as the creepers of desires for material enjoyment and liberation from the material world, grow along with the creeper of devotional service. The varieties of such unwanted creepers are unlimited. Some unnecessary creepers growing with the bhakti creeper are the creepers of behaviour unacceptable for those trying to attain perfection, diplomatic behaviour, animal-killing, mundane profiteering, mundane adoration and mundane importance. All these are unwanted creepers. If one does not distinguish between the bhakti-lata creeper and the other creepers, the sprinkling of water is misused because the other creepers are nourished while the bhakti creeper is curtailed. As soon as an intelligent devotee sees an unwanted creeper growing beside the original creeper, he must cut it down instantly.”

Srila Prabhupada comments: “Sometimes these unwanted creepers look exactly like the bhakti creeper. They appear to be of the same size and the same species.... A pure devotee can distinguish between the bhakti creeper and a mundane creeper, and he is very alert to distinguish them and keep them separate.”

So, progress in spiritual life is not so easy, it requires constant attention and vigilance, and most of all it requires help—the kind of help only a bona fide spiritual master can give. The spiritual master is the expert gardener who can help us properly cultivate the rare plant of the creeper of devotional service.

Lord Chaitanya told Rupa Gosvami what happens if proper care is taken: Then the real creeper of bhakti-lata-bija grows nicely, returns home, back to Godhead, and seeks shelter under the lotus feet of Krishna. When the fruit of devotional service becomes ripe and falls down, the gardener tastes the fruit and thus takes advantage of the creeper and reaches the desire tree of the lotus feet of Krishna in Goloka Vrindavana. There the devotee serves the lotus feet of the Lord, which are compared to a wish-fulfilling tree. With great bliss he tastes the juice of the fruit of love and becomes eternally happy.”
The Hymns of Brahma

An ancient text offers us a vision of the spiritual world—a vibrant, transcendentally variegated world of devotion to Krishna.

by Subhananda Dasa

The article that follows is adapted from the Introduction to the recently published Bhaktivedanta Book Trust edition of Sri Brahma-samhita, a celebrated Vaishnava text. This important new publication is an expanded edition of the first English-language version of Brahma-samhita—published in India in 1932—featuring the translation and commentary of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami (1874-1937). Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, a great Vaishnava saint and scholar, was the guru of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder and spiritual master of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

The origins of the text known as Sri Brahma-samhita are lost in cosmic antiquity. According to Vedic tradition, these “Hymns of Brahma” were recited or sung countless millennia ago by the first created being in the universe, just prior to the act of creation. The text surfaced and entered calculable history early in the sixteenth century, when it was discovered by a pilgrim exploring the manuscript library of an ancient temple in what is now Kerala State in South India. Prior to the introduction of the printing press, texts like Brahma-samhita existed only in manuscript form, painstakingly handwritten by scribes and kept under brahminical custodianship in temples, where often they were worshiped as shastra-Deity, or God incarnate in holy scripture.

The pilgrim who rescued Sri Brahma-samhita from obscurity was no ordinary pilgrim, and His pilgrimage was meant not for self-purification, as is the custom, but for world-purification. He was Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu—saint, mystic, religious reformer, and full incarnation of the Supreme Lord. Sri Krishna, descending for world-purification. He was Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu—saint, mystic, religious reformer, and full incarnation of the Supreme Lord. Sri Krishna, descending into the present epoch for the salvation of all souls. Upon His return to Puri (Madhya-lila, Ch. 11), Sri Chaitanya presented Brahma-samhita to appreciative followers like Ramananda Raya and Vasudeva Datta, for whom Chaitanya arranged copies to be made. As word of the discovery of the text spread within the Vaishnava community, “each and every Vaishnava” copied it. Gradually, Brahma-samhita was “broadcast everywhere” and became one of the “major texts of the Gaudiya-Vaishnava canon.”

At the time of His discovery of the text, Sri Chaitanya was touring South India, preaching His message of love of Krishna and promulgating the practice of sankirtana, congregational singing of the holy names of God. Sri Chaitanya commenced this tour shortly after becoming a monk (sannyasi), at age twenty-four, and the tour lasted approximately two years. After a southward journey from Puri (in Orissa State) to holy places such as Sri Ranga-kshetra, Setubandha, Rameshwaram, and finally Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin), He turned northward and, traveling along the bank of the Payasvini River in Travancore State, reached the temple of Adi-keshava in Trivandrum District.

Sri Chaitanya’s principal biographer, Srila Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, writes in Chaitanya-charitamrita (Madhya-lila, Ch. 9) that upon beholding the holy image of Adi-keshava (Krishna) in the temple, Sri Chaitanya swooned in spiritual ecstasy, offered fervent prayers, and chanted and danced in rapture, a wondrous sight that was beheld with astonished appreciation by the devotees present.

After discussing esoteric spiritual matters among some highly advanced devotees, Sri Chaitanya found “one chapter of the Brahma-samhita.” (What we now have as Brahma-samhita is, according to tradition, only one of a hundred chapters composing an epic work lost to humanity.) Upon discovering the manuscript. Sri Chaitanya felt great ecstasy and fell into an intense mystic rapture that overflowed onto the physical realm, producing a profusion of tears, trembling, and perspiration. (We would search the literature of the world in vain to find a case in which the discovery of a lost book inspired such unearthly exhilaration!) Intuiting the Sri Brahma-samhita to be “a most valuable jewel,” Sri Chaitanya employed a scribe in hand copying the manuscript and departed with the copy for His return journey north.

In spite of the seemingly topical complexity of the text, the essential core of the Brahma-samhita consists of a brief description of the enlightenment of Lord Brahma by Lord Sri Krishna followed by Brahma’s extraordinarily beautiful prayers elucidating the content of his revelation: an unearthly, beatific vision of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna, and His eternal, transcendental abode, Goloka Vrindavana, beyond the

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In spite of the seemingly topical complexity of the text, the essential core of the Brahma-samhita consists of a brief description of the enlightenment of Lord Brahma by Lord Sri Krishna followed by Brahma’s extraordinarily beautiful prayers elucidating the content of his revelation: an unearthly, beatific vision of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna, and His eternal, transcendental abode, Goloka Vrindavana, beyond the
material cosmos. This core of the text stretches from verse twenty-nine through fifty-six, and a brief, subsequent exposition by Lord Krishna on the path of Krishna-bhakti, love of God, brings the text to a close.

The Brahma-samhita’s account of Lord Brahma’s enlightenment is quite interesting and can be summarized here. When Lord Garbhodakashayi Vishnu desires to recreate the universe, ** (According to the Puranas the material cosmos is created and destroyed in a perpetual cycle through eternity, and so the act of creation is not a one-time affair but one that is repeated an infinite number of times.) a divine golden lotus flower grows from his navel, and Brahma is born from the lotus. As he is not born from parents, Brahma is known as Svayambhu, “self-existent” or “unoriginated.” Upon his emergence from the lotus, Lord Brahma begins—in preparation for his role as secondary creator—to contemplate the act of cosmic creation ** (Once the physical universe and its constituent parts are brought into being by Lord Vishnu, Brahma’s role in the creation act is to evolve the multifarious types of bodily forms (species) to be inhabited by the innumerable conditioned living beings (jivas) in accordance with their previous karma-actions performed by them during their existence in previous millennia.) but, seeing only darkness about, is bewildered in the performance of his duty. Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, appears before him and instructs him to meditate upon the kama-bija mantra (klim krishnaya govindaya gopijana-vallabhaya svaha), promising that this mantra “will assuredly fulfill your heart’s desire.”

Lord Brahma thus meditates upon Lord Krishna in His spiritual realm and hears the divine sound of Krishna’s flute. The kama-gayatri mantra (klim kamadevaya vidmahe puspa-banaya dhimahi tan no nangah pracodayat), the “mother of the Vedas,” is made manifest from the sound of Krishna’s flute, and Brahma, thus initiated by the supreme primal preceptor Himself, begins to chant the Gayatri. As Srila Prabhupada puts it, “When the sound vibration of Krishna’s flute is expressed through the mouth of Brahma, it becomes gayatri” (Teachings of Lord Chaitanya, p. 322).

Enlightened by his meditation upon the holy Gayatri, Brahma “became acquainted with the expanse of the ocean of truth.” Inspired by his profound and sublime realizations, his heart overflowing with devotion and transcendental insight, Lord Brahma spontaneously begins to offer a series of poem—prayers to the source of his enlightenment and the object of his devotion, Lord Sri Krishna. These exquisite verses form the heart of Brahma-samhita.

There is nothing vague about Brahma’s description of the Lord and His abode. No dim, nihilistic nothingness,
no blinding bright light, no wispy, dreamy visions of harps and clouds; rather, a vibrant, luminescent world in transcendental colour, form, and sound—a sublimely variegated spiritual landscape populated by innumerable blissful, eternally liberated souls reveling in spiritual cognition, sensation, and emotion, all in relationship with the all-blissful, all-attractive Personality of Godhead.

Here is a sample:

“I worship Govinda [Krishna], the primeval Lord, the first progenitor who is tending the cows, yielding all desire, in abodes built with spiritual gems, surrounded by millions of purpose trees, always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds of thousands of lakshmis or gopis. I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is adept in playing on His flute, with blooming eyes like lotus petals, with head decked with peacock’s feather, with the figure of beauty tinged with the hue of blue clouds, and His unique loveliness charming millions of Cupids... I worship [Goloka Vrindavana]... where every tree is a transcendental purpose tree; where the soil is the purpose gem, all water is nectar, every word is a song, every gait is a dance, the flute is the favourite attendant... where numberless milk cows always emit transcendental oceans of milk.”

The commentator [Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati] reminds us that in the transcendental region of Goloka are found the same elements as are found in the mundane worlds, but in their highest purity and beauty: “trees and creepers, mountains, rivers and forests, water, movement, speech, music of the flute, the sun and the moon, tasted and taste...” Krishna’s divine abode, Goloka Vrindavana, is a world in the fullest and realest sense.

There are those who will have difficulty with Brahma’s highly graphic and personalistic depiction of the spiritual world and of the liberated state. Some, for instance, whose conception of transcendence is determined by a certain logical fallacy based on the arbitrary assumption that spirit is the literal opposite of matter (and thus that because matter has form and variety, spirit must necessarily be formless and unvariegated), conceive of ultimate reality as some sort of divine emptiness. However, any conception of transcendence that projects or analogizes from our limited sensory and cognitive experience within the material world is, by its very nature, limited and speculative and thus unreliable. No accumulated quantity of sense data within this world can bring us to knowledge of what lies beyond it. Residents of the material world cannot get even a clue of transcendence, argues our Brahma-samhita commentator, “by moving heaven and earth through their organic senses.”
The Brahma-samhita teaches that transcendence, truth, ultimate reality can be apprehended only by the mercy of the supreme transcendent entity, the Absolute Truth Himself, and that perception of ultimate reality is a function not of speculative reason but of direct spiritual cognition through divine revelation. This revelation is evolved through bhakti, pure, selfless love of God. Only by such spiritual devotion can Krishna be seen: “I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord... whom the pure devotees see in their heart of hearts with the eye of devotion tinged with the salve of love” (Bs. 38). Further, as our commentator explains, “the form of Krishna is visible [to the eye of the pure spiritual self] in proportion to its purification by the practice of devotion.”

Bhakti as a state of consciousness, then, is attained through bhakti as a practice, a discipline. For this reason, Lord Krishna, in His response to Brahma at the end of the text, summarizes the path of bhakti in five aphorisms. This devotional discipline goes beyond conventional piety. It necessitates “constant endeavour for self-realization” (Bs. 59), involving both a turning from worldliness and sense gratification and an adherence to spiritual practices and behaviour, under the guidance of authorized scripture. Through such practice, then, the materialist is soon purified of his tendency toward philosophical negation and comes to understand the nature of positive transcendence.

Others will find Lord Brahma’s vision of the spiritual realm problematic for a related, but perhaps more subjective, emotional reason that goes to the heart of the human condition. There is a kind of ontological anxiety, a conscious or subconscious apprehension about beingness or existence itself, that goes along with embodied life in-the-world—that accompanies the soul’s descent into the temporal, endlessly changing world of matter. Material bodies and minds are subjected to a huge variety of objective and subjective discomfitures, unpleasantries, and abject sufferings. Viewed philosophically, embodied personhood, false-self (ahankara), is, to a greater or lesser degree, innately a condition of suffering.

Because personal existence has been experienced by materialists as essentially painful, writes Srila Prabhupada in his Bhagavad-gita commentary, “the conception of retaining the personality after liberation from matter frightens them. When they are informed that spiritual life is also individual and personal, they become afraid of becoming persons again, and so they naturally prefer a kind of merging into the impersonal void” (Bg. 4.10, purport). Entering the path of bhakti, however, such persons can gradually begin to experience their real, spiritual selves and a release from egoistic anxiety. In that purified state, they become able to relish Brahma’s vision of blissful, personal spiritual existence in Goloka.

Still others, however, might criticize Brahma-samhita on the grounds that the text, being quite specific and concrete in its depiction, merely offers another limited, sectarian view of God and His abode—a view in conflict with other, similarly limited views. Such persons prefer a kind of generalized Deity who doesn’t offend variant theological views with definable, personal attributes. Brahma-samhita, however, is not a polemic against “competing” conceptions of the Deity (except those, of course, which would deny His transcendental personhood). Vaishnava tradition does not dismiss images of the Divine derived from authoritative scripture from beyond its own cultural and conceptual borders. It respects any sincere effort at serving the Supreme Person, although it holds its own texts as most comprehensive and authoritative. It promotes neither an arrogant sectarianism that would constrain transcendence to exclusive cultural, ideational, or linguistic forms (while burning a few heretics), nor a syncretistic ecumenism that would try to pacify all claimants on the truth by departicularizing it into bland vagary. Let the syncretists and the sectarian come together to appreciate, at least, the aesthetic magnificence of Lord Brahma’s theistic epiphany.

What we are experiencing through Lord Brahma in his samhita is not mystic hallucination or quaint mythologizing or an exercise in pious wishful thinking. We are getting a glimpse, however dimmed by our own insensitivities, into the spiritual world as seen by one whose eyes are “tinged with the salve of love.” We are seeing, through Brahma, an eternal, transcendental world, of which the present world is a mere reflection. Goloka is infinitely more real than the shadowy world we perceive daily through our narrow senses. Brahma’s vision of the spiritual realm is not his alone. It is shared by all those who give themselves fully unto the loving service of Lord Krishna—though Brahma admits that Goloka is known “only to a very few self-realized souls in this world” (Bs. 56). We are asked not to accept Brahma’s account of transcendence uncritically and dogmatically but to avail ourselves of the spiritual discipline, bhakti-yoga, that will gradually lead us to our own experiential understanding of this highest truth.

In his commentary to the twenty-eighth verse of the Brahma-samhita Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati writes that Lord Chaitanya “taught this hymn to His favourite disciples inasmuch as it fully contains all the transcendental truths regarding Vaishnava philosophy,” and he asks his readers to “study and try to enter into the spirit of this hymn with great care and attention, as a regular daily function.” Srila Bhaktisiddhanta’s disciple Srila Prabhupada was very fond of Brahma’s prayers to Lord Krishna, and there are several recordings of Srila Prabhupada singing these prayers with intense devotion. We therefore invite readers to dive deeply into the sweet, transcendental ocean of Brahma’s hymns as a daily meditation.
The symptoms of spiritual deprivation are the same for everybody in the material world. Consider that we are all subject to birth, disease, old age, and death. We suffer from the three-fold miseries: miseries inflicted upon us by our own minds and bodies, by other living entities (viruses, mosquito bites, wars), and by Nature in the form of hurricanes, floods and other dangers and inconveniences. In addition, we are always imperfect, prone to make mistakes, and illusioned, and our memory is poor. Our senses are blunt and imperfect, we cannot see through a piece of paper a tiny fraction of an inch thick, and at night we are blind without artificial lighting. Any scientist knows that we are capable of perceiving only a minute portion of the known vibratory spectrum of the material world, great areas of which are invisible to our senses and our inventions.

A sane man should accept this as the description of the human condition and as the actual plight of his personal self. Failure to recognize this is the work of illusion, and because we are illusioned we make mistakes and cannot be perfect no matter how hard we try. All because we have forgotten God.

Spiritual deprivation is forgetfulness of God. This is the only reason that what we see around us is happening at all. What we see around us, this material world, is the embodiment of our forgetfulness. At a time not traceable even in the Vedas, the most ancient of scriptures on this planet, we desired to be imitations of the Supreme Lord. We wanted to lord it over our private domains, and that Supreme Personality of Godhead, infinitely kind in His Love, gave us what we desired. But since such desire to be as powerful as the Supreme was born of illusion, what else could be reaped but another illusion, this material world, this reflection of the Kingdom of God? Because we wanted to forget our relationship with God, He gave us this world in which to live out our forgetfulness. We will remain here until we remember that we are actually His servants and recover our love for Him, our Master. Our personal realization of this is called Krishna consciousness.

We must begin our recovery from the disease of forgetfulness by understanding that we are deprived, mired in this material misfortune, bound in this body by the immutable laws of nature. Can this misery be doubted? Ask any man if he is happy and contented. If he says yes, we automatically do not believe him, because experience teaches us that whatever happiness comes our way is only temporary. Yet it is our illusion, as with the drunk lying in the Bowery and the pig eating stool, to be thinking that we are happy. Or, if we do admit that we are mostly unhappy, we do not know what to do about it.

Mention God and we are embarrassed, flying into impersonal and abstract concepts such as "Society," "moral responsibility," "existentialism" or some political issue. This instant depersonalization, when the mind refuses to concentrate on thoughts of God, is speculation leading away from our real self. Afraid of becoming personal about our real business, we seek shelter in ultimate voidism.

In this perpetual struggle to cope with happiness and misery, adjustments can be made, but never permanently; there is neither victory nor escape, only certain defeat in death or rebirth. Our misery and happiness automatically accrue to us by the control of nature. Nature or maya—the material energy—controls us, and Krishna the Supreme Personality of Godhead controls maya. Krishna tells us:

“The whole cosmic order is under Me. By My will is it manifested again and again, and by My will is it annihilated at the end.”

“This material nature is working under My direction, O son of Kunti, producing all the moving and unmoving beings; and by its rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again.” (BG 9.8 and 10)

We control nothing, not even our own minds and bodies. As long as we think that we are of this matter, then we serve matter. As long as we serve matter, we are out of control, quite beserk. In the Bhagavad-gita Krishna says,

“One who is not in transcendental consciousness can have neither a controlled mind, nor steady intelligence, without which there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be any happiness without peace?” (2.66)

We are merely the guests of time and space until we start to remember Krishna; then He will allow us a little control and our self-realization, our spiritual life begins. Until that time, a person manufactures his own brand of deprivation—with considerable cooperation, especially from the "psychotherapist" or "psychoanalyst." It is our misfortune that we can produce no better offer for guidance than these bogus spiritual masters (or the fashionable heir-apparent, the psychedelic guru). Although psychological theories center around
deprivation as the primal cause of mental disturbance, the conception is material only. Therefore, any adjustment must necessarily be temporary, and where then is the cure? It is sought in the realignment of our desires. It is said in explanation that our desires are still attached to our parents, and our search for love and happiness will fail because it is still infantile. Therefore we must detach such desire from that parent who never fulfilled it, and re-attach it to someone or even something else which will. Hopefully another woman, a wife or a husband.

There are a number of variations on the theme, but the premise is the same: deprived of love we are unable to develop and to give love, and thus we cannot be happy. The skill of the therapist is to manipulate the so-called unconscious desire and to re-attach it consciously to the fulfilling object. Yet still there is the anxiety that always goes with desire, and there is no cure for frustration.

All this is only sexual and economic adjustment and is a reflection of the real life taking place right now on the spiritual plane, where every living entity is eternally in exchange of love with God. On the material plane, the embodied soul takes all Krishna provides in love for us, but gives nothing in return. Krishna is in love with us, but we are not in love with Him. There is no question of being deprived of God's love; rather we are in love with our own desires, our minds and bodies. As Swami Bhaktivedanta says, we are merely tasting our own blood.

It is a fact that the history of bodies as worked out in ancestry and family relationships, communities, organizations and countries, has nothing to do with us. It all goes on quite automatically, in order to provide us with a particular body, time, and space so that our individual desires can be facilitated. As spirit-soul we are related only to the Supreme, and we are all brothers because our positions are the same although individual: we are the servants of the servants of the servants of servants of servants of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna. "Relatives" and relativity belong to the material world. The spirit-soul knows no generations, only the transcendental connection between the disciple and his spiritual master, and all the spiritual masters in the line of disciplic succession, all the way
Karma means that to every action there is a reaction of karma which govern the transmigrations of the soul. We can choose God anytime we want, or we can remain love God we automatically love all living entities.

Therefore, there is only one problem for all of us, the material bodies. The living being is by constitution transcendental to material engagements, but he is now imprisoned by the external energy and therefore he thinks himself one of the material products, due to such unholy contact. And due to this unholy contact, the pure spiritual entity suffers all material miseries under the modes of material nature. The living entity misconstrues himself as a material product. This means that the present perverted way of thinking, feeling, and willing of the living being under material conditions is not natural for him, but that he has his normal way of thinking, feeling, and willing as much as there is a difference between a normal healthy man and the diseased man. (Srimad Bhagavatam, Vol. I, Chap. 7, Text 5)

In the final analysis, all misery, all disease, all frustration and dissatisfaction are symptoms of spiritual deprivation because existence in matter is itself this deprivation. The psychiatrist senses this as a separation, a lack of love, but he has no knowledge of love of Godhead. And it is not that God fails to give us His love, for it is always within our hearts, but that we fail to return it. Our anxiety comes from this separation, all other separation is illusion. The love that our parents perhaps never gave us was a love between body and body; it was a thing of identifications, or material attachments between material bodies.

Therefore, there is only one problem for all of us, the body. Our problem is that we think that we are this body or matter. That is the only real disease. But we are not this body; we are spirit-soul and our real attachment, our real desire is the spiritual love of Godhead. If we love God we automatically love all living entities.

We can choose God anytime we want, or we can remain separated and disturbed. The facility for separation is worked out in the arrangement of the immutable laws of karma which govern the transmigrations of the soul. Karma means that to every action there is a reaction leading to further action-reaction, good for good and bad for bad, continuously involving further commitment and entanglement. The aggregate of these activities, including past lives, determines the type of body we take, birth after birth after birth. Living a miserable life, we take a miserable birth because we get only what we want. Our desire has always been our destiny. Unfortunately, the tendency is often downward: in the Vedas are described lower planets where the only light is provided from jewels in the heads of serpents.

There is no end to this samsara, or wheel of birth and death; we have been so engaged since time immemorial. What does the therapist armed with shock treatments and the fantasies of sons and lovers know of this? What does the self-appointed guru think he is doing? Prodding the Supreme Personality of Godhead with a pill? Such is the power of our ancient bad habits.

We cannot by such imagination free ourselves. We cannot cure ourselves merely by changing the objects of our material desire because by doing so we remain only on the material plane, this distorted reflection of the spiritual world. It is a choice we must make: love of God or love of matter. There is no half-way house. As soon as Krishna sees that we are trying to revive our love for Him, He will help us. And just as anxiety goes with desire in the material world, so anxiety will accompany our desire for Krishna consciousness, but this anxiety has now become an aspect of our transcendental love of Godhead. We must give up the symptoms of spiritual deprivation, and develop the symptoms of God-realization.

We can develop these symptoms by thinking about the supreme person—His name, His fame, His pastimes. This process of being so engaged in the goal of all life is called bhakti, or devotional service. The International Society for Krishna consciousness demonstrates and teaches, under the expert guidance of a spiritual master, how to develop a taste for this love of Godhead. By hearing, chanting, remembering, serving, singing, dancing, reading, eating, and telling others, our distorted consciousness becomes purified. It is not that we have to stop our work, whatever it is, but that we have enough faith to chant HARE KRISHNA, HARE KRISHNA, KRISHNA KRISHNA, HARE HARE/HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA, RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE.

If we can follow this, then no longer disturbed we gradually become peaceful. The bleak duality of the pleasure-pain world cannot engage us, our illusions lose their grip on us: deprivation ends as we recover the memory of Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami assures us that “advancement can be tested by the decreased taste for material consciousness: there will be no more taste for material miseries and happiness. YOU WILL BE CURED.”

Krishna Voice, July 2017
PANIHATI chida dahi utsava

Bangalore

Ahmedabad

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Akshaya Patra News

TTP Technologies Pvt Ltd, Peenya Industrial Area, Bengaluru, donated a food distribution vehicle to deliver hot meals to schoolchildren under the mid meal programme of The Akshaya Patra Foundation.

MPP Technologies Pvt Ltd, Peenya Industrial Area, Bengaluru, donated a food distribution vehicle for supplying hot meals for underprivileged children under Akshaya Patra programme.

Himalaya Wellness has donated Rs 46,00,000 to The Akshaya Patra Foundation, towards feeding around 4850 children for a year.
Free Puja in your name on Sri Krishna Janmashtami
(August 15, 2017)

Register online to have a free puja performed in your name to Lord Krishna on the day of Janmashtami. Those of you who have registered will also be able to participate online in the puja which will be broadcast live.

To avail of this unique offer, visit:
www.iskconbangalore.org/free-online-puja

Registration commences on July 16, 2017.
An exciting way for you and your kids to remember Sri Krishna on the occasion of Janmashtami.

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The contest opens on August 1, 2017 for kids up to 10 years of age.

To participate, visit: www.iskconbangalore.org/krishna-costume-contest
ISKCON Bangalore conducted a ten-hour long Harinam festival at its Open Air Theatre on June 4. Several devotees led the Harinam sankirtana in batches with melodious tunes. It proved to be a great festival for both devotees and the temple visitors alike to immerse themselves in chanting the nectarean holy names of Lord Krishna.
Read More: https://goo.gl/tTXQ33

ISKCON Bangalore conducted the Srila Prabhupada Ashraya ceremony on June 11. This was the first Ashraya ceremony conducted for donors and life members of the temple, who were willing to take up chanting of the Hare Krishna Maha mantra every day and follow a few other simple spiritual practices as part of their daily life.
Read More: https://goo.gl/RtDVWU

Sri Baladeva Vidyabhushana was born at the end of 17th century in a village near Remuna in the district of Balasore, Odisha. From his young age, he had an extremely sharp intellect and an exceptional talent for logical reasoning. Later on, he wrote Sri Govinda Bhasha, a commentary on Brahma-sutra.
Read More: https://goo.gl/aYkTR2

An uncivilized man can do anything for the satisfaction of his senses. He can kill children, he can kill cows, he can kill brahmans, he can kill old men; he has no mercy towards anyone. According to Vedic civilization, cows, women, children, old men and brahmans should be excused if they are at fault.
Read More: https://goo.gl/cKj4Kx

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**Reviews from tripadvisor**

**Blissful place:** I can say it’s a blissful place & my love to Radha Krishna is too much & endless. We regularly visit this place for darshan & pooja. Srinivasa Govinda temple is also a bonus darshan we get. Clean & neat place; well maintained. About prasad, no words to say. Parking is available here. **Jaydeep S**

**Holy place:** One of the best clean temples around. Finely structured tour, good food, good book collection, great people to talk and guide on. **Ritesh M**

**Worth a visit:** Chants of Krishna with peaceful aura come in every moment u spend in the temple. In the temple u can buy quality snacks. Try coconut barfi. **sumit j**

**Place of peace:** I visited the place with my family. For a few moments, I felt that I am in a completely different world. I love the Krishna bhajan, divinity of the place. I also enjoyed the food sold as prasad here. **Arika_Kolkata**

**A genuine divine place:** It was my wedding anniversary and I visited this temple for the first time. We were in time for the aarti and it was a wonderfully divine feeling. The 108 steps you pass while chanting at each step was a moving feeling. A place you feel where God actually resides. A very well organized temple. A place you can’t miss if you are in Bengaluru. **ami461**

**Amazing place to visit!** Peaceful and relaxing! So many things to do at ISKCON. Pray, meditate, sing, participate in chanting, great food corner, books and other interesting gift ideas. The idols just speak to you!! A must-visit place if you are in Bangalore! **vmk10**

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**Top YouTube Picks**

https://goo.gl/ZosjGY
ISKCON Culture Camp 2017
Batch 1

https://goo.gl/xZ8ii9
Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa speaking at the 'Message of Bhagavata' conference

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