

Accelerated Learning Series

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Modules in Spiritual Philosophies

Vedic Philosophy

A set of notes based on the teachings of

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Dedicated To

Bhakti Tirtha Swami Krishnapad

*For bringing the Vedic Philosophy to the remote villages of Africa.
Your departure from this planet has left a void that is difficult to bear.*

*Author: SKG.
July 2005.*

Revision History

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- 1) Adapted an earlier presentation on Vedic philosophy for a more general audience.

Table of Contents.

<i>Prerequisites</i>	5
<i>Preface</i>	6
<i>1. Topics on the composition of the individual being</i>	7
1.1 – Background of Vedic Scriptures	8
The Four Vedas...	8
The Upanishads...	8
The Puranas...	8
The Bhagavad-Purana...	8
The Mahabharat...	9
The Bhagavad-Gita...	9
The Vedangas...	9
The Jyotisha Vedanga...	9
The Siddhantas...	9
1.2 – The Soul	11
Lord Krishna reveals...	11
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	11
1.3 – Intelligence	12
Lord Krishna reveals...	12
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	12
1.4 - The Mind	14
Lord Krishna reveals...	14
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	14
1.5 – The Ego	17
Lord Krishna reveals...	17
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	18
1.6 – The Senses	20
Lord Krishna reveals...	20
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	21
1.7 – Summary	23
<i>2. Topics on the dimension of Time and Space</i>	24
2.1 - Time	25
Introduction...	25
A Summary on the dimension of Time...	25
Lord Krishna reveals...	26
Saint Vidura talks with Maitreya Rsi...	27
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	30
2.2 - Symptoms of the different Yugas	32
Background on Dharma...	32
Summary...	32
Suta-Gosvami responds to Saunaka Rsi...	33
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	36
2.3 - Astrology	37
Introduction...	37
Astronomical background	38

Basics on casting a horoscope...	39
Vimshottari Dasha...	41
Dasha calculation example...	42
2.4 -Summary	43
3. Topics on the Practice of the Science of Self-realization	44
3.1 – Background on The Essence of Vedic thought	45
Introduction...	45
The Yoga Systems...	46
3.2 - Modes of material nature	48
Summary...	48
Lord Krishna reveals...	48
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	49
3.3 - Regulative principles	51
Introduction...	51
Summary...	52
Maharaj Pariksit punishes the personality of Kali...	53
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	54
3.4 - Karma Yoga	55
Summary...	55
Lord Krishna reveals...	56
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	58
3.5 - Dhyana Yoga	60
Summary...	60
Lord Krishna reveals...	60
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	62
3.6 - Bhakti Yoga	64
Introduction...	64
Summary...	64
Lord Krishna reveals...	65
Srila Prabhupada discusses...	68
3.7 - Summary	71
4. Conclusion	72
4.0 - Concluding remarks	73

Prerequisites

- An interest in philosophy and religion.

Preface

In this series on Vedic philosophy we share concepts and perspectives that serves as a starting point for those interested in exploring the ancient teachings of the Maha-Bharat (greater India). Arguably the oldest scriptures available to mankind, the Vedic philosophy offers a unique and practical outlook on life, its source and its purpose. Though compiled primarily by Veda-Vyaas, the knowledge incarnation of God 5000 years ago, the true source of the Vedas date back to the creation of the universe. And yet the merits of its teachings remain as relevant today as they have ever been.

While there is little I can offer in this series in the form of personal realizations, the format, the selection of subject matter from the vast spectrum of knowledge covered by the Vedas and the presentation sequence are reflective of my appreciation for its essence and its purpose. It is by no means the singular slice possible, but it is the slice that is most reflective of my understanding. For my omissions and derelictions I seek your pardon in advance.

My intention is to offer a synopsis on the following three subjects.

- Topics on the composition of the individual being.
- Topics on the dimension of Time and Space.
- Topics on the practice of the Science of Self-realization.

The primary source of input for this presentation will be the Bhagavad-Gita (the song of God) and discussions on it by my mentor, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. I will also make reference to the Srimad Bhagvatam or Bhagavad-purana in the course of this presentation.

It must be noted that Vedic philosophy conceives the Creator in both personal and impersonal forms. In the personal conception, God is realized as an individual with qualities. One who attains salvation in this context is considered to be qualitatively one with the Lord but quantitatively subordinate to the Lord. Further, in this context the distinction between the living entity and the Lord is of an eternal nature.

In the impersonal realization, God is realized as an all pervading energy without any conceivable qualities. Salvation in this context refers to merging into this energy and becoming one with God. In the Bhagavad-Gita, the Lord discourages the impersonal path because it is considered very difficult for an embodied soul to realize this aspect of the Lord's existence.

Srila Prabhupada is opposed to the impersonal aspect of God realization, although he acknowledges that such an aspect exists in scripture. Hence this set of notes will only pursue the personal path to God realization.

Unfortunately debates on spiritual philosophies are always very passionate and polarized. This is not particularly conducive to an open and free dialog. There is a need, now more than ever, for an eclectic approach to spirituality. Srila Prabhupada sums up this sentiment by stating that the yardstick used to measure the merits of any faith is based on the amount of love for God that it inspires in an individual. It is hoped that this presentation will inspire love for our Creator.

1. Topics on the composition of the individual being

In this chapter we will attempt to investigate who we really are. Our goal will be to understand the true source of our motivations in life and who within us instigates these motivations. Our desire will be to better understand the source of human urges, with the hope that this understanding will contribute to our ability to better control our existence.

But before we begin, we will start by very briefly outlining the Vedic scriptures that we will refer to throughout this discussion.

1.1 – Background of Vedic Scriptures

To give some background perspective on Vedic thought we will start by introducing the prominent Vedic scriptures and how they piece into the puzzle of the vast spectrum of knowledge offered under the umbrella known as the Vedas. The Sanskrit language, in which the bulk of the Vedic knowledge is presented, is very detailed and particular about linguistic semantics. It leaves no room for ambiguity. A large volume of Vedic knowledge deals with the semantic rules of the language, so as to provide an inherent mechanism to police the integrity of Vedic knowledge. This was essential, particularly when the knowledge was being passed down by oral tradition generation after generation. The corroborative integrity of the content of Vedic literatures in many diverse and geographically distant regions of the world is a testament to the merits of these inherent policing systems. It almost seems unimaginable that Vedic literatures could have resisted the propensity for sentiment and perspective creep over thousands and thousands of years of oral tradition, and yet its resilience to alteration and change is perhaps the most remarkable, fascinating and distinguishing factor that characterizes Vedic scriptures.

The Four Vedas...

Originally there was only one universal law book known as the "Veda". However, due to degraded level of intelligence in age of Kali (our current age), Veda-Vyaas (The 17th incarnation of God - The knowledge incarnation of God) found it appropriate to divide the one Veda into 4 separate Vedas based on subject matter. These in turn are the Rig, Yajur, Saama and Atharva Vedas.

The Upanishads...

Veda-Vyaas then compiled the aphorisms of the Vedas in the form of 108 prominent Upanishads.

The Puranas...

Veda-Vyaas also offered commentaries on the Vedas in the form of 18 prominent Puranas.

The Bhagavad-Purana...

Of the eighteen Puranas, the Bhagavad-Purana shares a position of prominence among the Vedic scholars who promote the merits of devotion to the Lord. The Bhagavad-Purana or Srimad Bhagvatam is an epic, philosophical and literary classic written by Veda-Vyaas under the direction of His spiritual master Narada Muni. It is often referred to as the ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic literature. It is the most complete and authoritative commentary on the Vedas discussing topics ranging from the nature of the self to the origin of the universe. Veda-Vyaas taught this Purana to His son Sukudev Gosvami, who later related these teaching to the saintly king, Maharaj Pariksit who was seated among an assembly of sages in Hastinapur (present Delhi) awaiting death in seven days due the curse of a Brahmin child. One of the sages in that assembly, Suta Gosvami, later spoke the entire Bhagvatam to yet another assembly of sages who were seated in the forest of Naimasharania attempting to counteract the evils of the age of Kali. So the Bhagavad-purana is an intermingling of dialogs between the sages in these two assemblies along with lengthy narrations of past historical scenes.

The Mahabharat...

In addition to the Puranas, Upanishads and Vedas, Veda-Vyaas wrote a historical narration of the life and times of the people that inhabited the area surrounding the Indus river. This is known as the Mahabharat.

The Bhagavad-Gita...

Eighteen chapters out of the Mahabharat record a conversation between Lord Krishna (the 20th incarnation of God) and His friend and devotee Arjuna. This conversation is referred to as the Bhagavad-Gita which literally translates to mean "The song of God". The Bhagavad-Gita is of primary importance in the study of Vedic scripture and is sometimes referred to as an Upanishad.

The Vedangas...

Yet another set of literatures that also relate to Vedic knowledge and in some respects are considered essential to our practice and policing of the essence offered by the Vedas are the Vedangas, which literally translate to mean the "limbs of the Vedas". In Vedic times, those entrusted with the responsibility for preserving and promoting Vedic knowledge, studied the Vedangas extensively and different families laid claim to certain subjects as their specializations. The Vedangas cover six distinct, yet related, subject matters titled, Siksha, Kalpa, Niruktam, Vyakarna, Chandas and Jyotisha. Siksha involves the study of pronunciation and articulation. Kalpa deals with time and the modes of performing rituals. Niruktam deals with lexicon and etymology. Vyakarana deals with grammar. Chandas deal with poetic measurement. Jyotisha is a combination of astrology, astronomy and philosophy.

The Jyotisha Vedanga...

The Jyotisha vedanga is of interest to us when dealing with subjects on time and particularly space. While the Puranas give us some perspective on both these subjects, it is the Siddhantas that give detailed mathematical models that describe the astronomical layout of our solar system. The Siddhantas (also known as Ganita) are one of the three divisions (also known as Skandhas) of the Jyotisha Vedanga. The other two divisions are Jataka (or Hora - deals with astrological predictions) and Shakuna (or Samhita - deals with the subject of omens).

The Siddhantas...

The true origins of the Siddhantas, like all other Vedic literatures, is a subject of debate among both western and eastern scholars. But there appears to be ample evidence to suggest that these literatures date back over a thousand years. In some circles, it is believed that Veda-Vyaas had Himself contributed to the eighteen original Siddhantas. Siddhanta literally means "the final conclusion" and they are treatises on the model of our solar system. Of the original eighteen, only five prominent ones are discussed in our recent history. These are the Paitamaha, Romaka, Surya, Vasistha and Paulisa. Among the relatively recent Vedic astronomers to make reference to these siddhantas and to add to them are Aryabhatta (AD 476), Varahamihira (AD 500), Bhaskara I (AD 600), Brahmagupta (AD 598) and Bhaskara II (AD 1114). Aryabhatta is the author of the more recent Siddhanta called Aryabhatia while Bhaskara II is the author of Siddhanta-Shiromani. One of the most recent authorities on the siddhantas was Bimal Prasad Dutta (AD 1873). On assuming the renounced order of life, Bimal Prasad was offered the title Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Gosvami in recognition of his contribution to the Siddhantas.

Incidentally, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Gosvami is the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

While on the subject of the origins of the siddhantas, in his dissertation on Vedic cosmography and astronomy, Dr. Richard L. Thompson of the Bhaktivedanta Institute, concludes based on empirical study, that the Surya siddhanta "was probably updated some time around A.D. 1000, since its calculations agree most closely with modern calculations of that time. However, this does not mean that this is the date when the Surya-siddhanta was first written. Rather, the parameters of planetary motion in the existing text may have been brought up to date at that time. Since the original text was as useful as ever once its parameters were updated, there was no need to change it, and thus it may date back to a very remote period."

1.2 – The Soul

Lord Krishna reveals...

That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul. (BG 2:17)

For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain. (BG 2:20)

As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones. (BG 2:22)

The soul can never be cut to pieces by any weapon, nor burned by fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind. (BG 2:23)

This individual soul is unbreakable and insoluble, and can be neither burned nor dried. He is everlasting, present everywhere, unchangeable, immovable and eternally the same. (BG 2:24)

It is said that the soul is invisible, inconceivable and immutable. Knowing this, you should not grieve for the body. (BG 2:25)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

The soul is the true self. It has a size of 1/10,000 part of the tip of the hair. While it resides at a localized point (the heart) within the body, its energy permeates all over the body. A good analogy is the light bulb. It is positioned in a lamp holder. But its energy permeates the entire room in the form of light. Similarly the soul permeates the entire body in the form of consciousness.

The soul is always a distinct entity. Krishna explains that we have existed in the past, we exist in the present and we will continue to exist in the future as individual beings. So there is no question of merging into some larger soul at the time of liberation. The individual distinction is eternal and hence maintained even after liberation.

One may ask what is the difference between my soul and God's Soul if we are all individually distinct entities. The difference is that my soul spreads over my body only. But God's Soul spreads over all the universes. God's Soul is also localized in His abode, but His consciousness is there in every atom in every universe. This is the difference between the soul and the Super Soul.

Skin, bones, blood etc. are also present all over the body. But they are not related to the spirit soul. They are matter. The body is composed of five material elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether) and three subtle elements (mind, intelligence and ego). Until the time of death the soul is spread over the material elements as well as the subtle elements. But at the time of death the soul limits its reach to the subtle elements and takes on a new material body. This process is referred to as the transmigration of the soul.

1.3 – Intelligence

Lord Krishna reveals...

Those who are on this path (working without fruitive results) are resolute in purpose, and their aim is one. O beloved child of the Kurus, the intelligence of those who are irresolute is many-branched. (BG 2:41)

When your intelligence has passed out of the dense forest of delusion, you shall become indifferent to all that has been heard and all that is to be heard. (BG 2:52)

For one thus satisfied [in Krishna consciousness], the threefold miseries of material existence exist no longer; in such satisfied consciousness, one's intelligence is soon well established. (BG 2:66)

As a boat on the water is swept away by a strong wind, even one of the roaming senses on which the mind focuses can carry away a man's intelligence. (BG 2:67)

Therefore, O mighty-armed, one whose senses are restrained from their objects is certainly of steady intelligence. (BG 2:68)

The working senses are superior to dull matter; mind is higher than the senses; intelligence is still higher than the mind; and he [the soul] is even higher than the intelligence. (BG 3:42)

Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures (BG 7:20)

And I declare that he who studies this sacred conversation of ours worships Me by his intelligence. (BG 18:70)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

Veda means knowledge. Intelligence is the ability to connect knowledge to decipher supreme knowledge. The supreme knowledge is that the constitutional position of the soul is to serve the Master. This is the highest level of realization. And it is reached by exercising intelligence. We have already discussed that intelligence is part of the three components that make up the subtle body.

Is there anyone in this world who can claim that he/she is not a servant? Everybody is engaged in serving somebody. You either engage in serving family, employer, country, dog, cat etc. So no one is a master. Everyone is a servant. Serving another servant cannot give you good rewards. You get maximum rewards when you serve someone who is at a much higher level than you. This is very practical. Everyone wants to work for a big organization. Why? Because it comes with wealth, power and prestige associated with the organization you work for. So one who exercises intelligence will quickly understand that the highest possible form of service must be to serve the master who is not subordinate to anybody else. That is understood by exercising intelligence.

So we are not training people to simply obey commandments. We are training people to exercise intelligence. This is very practical.

Of course in the beginning, when one engages in Krishna consciousness, there is the possibility of falling down due to the inability to surrender fully. This is very similar to a child learning to walk. The child will fall all the time. But the child persists because he sees that the adult can walk and so knows that it is possible to walk. So the best form of preaching is to live by example. And when we see someone is falling down, we have to encourage them to stand up and try again. This encouragement is provided in the form of exemplary life. When they see that devotees are always so happy to serve Krishna, they will automatically become interested. This is the use of intelligence in preaching.

But if you do not try to become Krishna conscious but become envious of God, then you are doomed. If you fail to serve God, then you will be forced to serve God's external energy, maya. You have to serve. This we have already discussed. Everybody has to serve. So if we don't serve God, then we will serve dog. Krishna has 3 forms of energies, internal (spiritual), external (maya) and marginal. We are marginal energies. This means we can choose to associate with spiritual energy or maya. This independence is available in the form of free will. So we must use our intelligence to become attached to the spiritual energy because we can see very practically that the illusionary energy is the cause of all misfortune.

There are 2 methods available to approach Krishna. The long method is to progress through the mode of ignorance, passion and goodness and finally transcend the 3 modes of nature. The second and easier method is to take to the practice of Krishna consciousness directly. This can be done by chanting the names of God and thinking about God all the time. This is a direct method and available to everybody in any stage of realization. So one who is intelligent will always opt for the short and direct method.

Always remember that where there is light there cannot be darkness. So light and darkness cannot co-exist. Krishna's internal energy is light and Krishna's external energy (maya) is darkness. So engage your intelligence in activities related to the spiritual energy and automatically the illusionary external energy will at once go away. This is automatic. This is very practical. You can experience this everyday. But you must use your intelligence to perceive this difference.

You may ask how can one regulate the senses? Regulating the senses does not mean that you instruct the senses not to do things. It means you engage the senses in spiritual activities. That is regulation. As soon as they are engaged in spiritual activities, maya will not be able to visit. So it is like a child playing with a toy. You cannot remove the toy and say don't play. You have to give a different toy and draw the attention away. That is the process we are offering in this Krishna consciousness movement. This is a very scientific movement. You can experience it yourself by applying your intelligence.

1.4 - The Mind

Lord Krishna reveals...

One must deliver himself with the help of his mind, and not degrade himself. The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well. (BG 6:5)

For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy. (BG 6:6)

For one who has conquered the mind, the Super-soul is already reached, for he has attained tranquility. To such a man happiness and distress, heat and cold, honor and dishonor are all the same. (BG 6:7)

A person is said to be established in self-realization and is called a yogi [or mystic] when he is fully satisfied by virtue of acquired knowledge and realization. Such a person is situated in transcendence and is self-controlled. He sees everything – whether it be pebbles, stones or gold – as the same. (BG 6:8)

A person is considered still further advanced when he regards honest well-wishers, affectionate benefactors, the neutral, mediators, the envious, friends and enemies, the pious and the sinners all with an equal mind. (BG 6:9)

A transcendentalist should always engage his body, mind and self in relationship with the Supreme; he should live alone in a secluded place and should always carefully control his mind. He should be free from desires and feelings of possessiveness. (BG 6:10)

Arjuna said: O Madhusudana, the system of yoga which You have summarized appears impractical and unendurable to me, for the mind is restless and unsteady. (BG 6:33)

The mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate and very strong, O Krishna, and to subdue it, I think, is more difficult than controlling the wind. (BG 6:34)

Lord Sri Krishna said: O mighty-armed son of Kunti, it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by suitable practice and by detachment. (BG 6:35)

For one whose mind is unbridled, self-realization is difficult work. But he whose mind is controlled and who strives by appropriate means is assured of success. That is My opinion. (BG 6:36)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

In issue 1.2 we explained the composition of the individual being as consisting of the five elements (earth, water, air, fire and ether) and the three subtle components (intelligence, mind and ego). We also explained that the true self is the Soul which permeates the entire body in the form of consciousness. At a more advanced level of understanding, however, the “field of activity” for an individual being is made up of 24 components – 5 knowledge acquiring senses (eyes, ears,

nose, tongue and skin), 5 working senses (voice, legs, hands, anus and genitals), 5 objects of the senses (smell, taste, form, touch and sound), 5 great elements (earth, water, air, fire and ether), 3 subtle elements (intelligence, false ego and the un-manifested stage of the 3 modes of nature) and the mind. The mind is also sometimes considered to be the 11th sense. The Bhagavad-Gita only gives a summery of the “field of activity”. One who is interested in details of this “field of activity”, must study the Vedas in-depth.

The mind is a very important component in the process of self-realization. The essence of all yoga systems is to teach us to make the mind a friend of the true self (the soul) and not an enemy. Material existence is essentially a battle between the working senses and the intelligence. The mind must play the role of a judge in this battle. If the mind is persuaded by the intelligence then the mind will become a friend of the true self. If however the mind is persuaded by the working senses, then the mind is the greatest enemy. So this Krishna consciousness movement is training people to control the mind and make the mind a friend through the process of regulative principles and devotional service. These two activities are designed to conquer the mind.

In our Krishna consciousness movement we have four regulative principles - No meat eating, No illicit sex, No gambling and No intoxication. Sometimes people question the merits of these regulations by pointing to the Puranas (commentaries on the Vedas) that acknowledge Goat sacrifice. Yes, that is true that Goat sacrifice is recommended for a certain class of people. There are eighteen Puranas. Six of these are for people in the mode of goodness. Yet another six are for the people in the mode of passion and the final six are for the people in the mode of ignorance. The purana that details Goat sacrifice is for those in the mode of ignorance. These people are unable to control their desire for eating flesh. So there is a regulated method prescribed, whereby they may offer a Goat in sacrifice to the Goddess Kali on the day of the dark moon (or in other words, once a month). Also as part of the sacrifice a mantra is recited where the person performing the sacrifice reveals to the Goat that he will attain a human birth in his next life and will be able to take the life of the person performing the sacrifice, if he so desires in the next birth. So again there are regulations to guide the pursuit of desires for every class of mankind. Desires are there. We don't deny it. We don't say that once you join the Hare Krishna movement all desires will vanish tomorrow. No. But we provide a system so that each individual can make gradual progress in the path of self-realization, by revealing the ultimate goal of human life.

Each person is at a different stage of progress. So we are all faced with different degrees of the material disease. So the dose of medicine to cure the disease must take into account the degree of the disease. So in the beginning it may not be possible to obey all the regulative principles, depending on the current position. That does not mean that one cannot engage in Krishna consciousness. One must engage to the fullest extent possible based on the current level of disease. And then there will be gradual but sure progress. One can very practically see that without regulation, there will be chaos. For example if one engages in uncontrolled sex life, there will be all kinds of diseases. If one engages in animal slaughter, there is the accumulation of bad karma for inflicting unwarranted pain on another soul.

Devotional service goes hand-in-hand with the regulative principles. One must always try to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is the essence of all religions. A devotee of the Lord is always merciful to all of God's children. So a devotee will always be inclined to serve God's children. Like Jesus Christ. Even when the foolish people were killing Him, Jesus Christ was begging God to forgive them because they were in the mode of ignorance or practically mad. That is the spirit of one engaged in pure devotional service - always willing to except pain and pleasure with equal delight in the service of the Lord.

This movement is not for a special group of people. This philosophy is universally applicable to people of all faiths. We are not in the business of claiming one religion is first class and another

religion is third class. We are open to people of all faiths. And we are training people to control their mind through regulative principles and devotional service.

1.5 – The Ego

Lord Krishna reveals...

The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality are carried out by the three modes of material nature. (BG 3:27)

A person who has given up all desires for sense gratification, who lives free from desires, who has given up all sense of proprietorship and is devoid of false ego – he alone can attain real peace. (BG 2:71)

That is the way of the spiritual and godly life, after attaining which a man is not bewildered. If one is thus situated even at the hour of death, one can enter into the kingdom of God. (BG 2:72)

One who is not envious but is a kind friend to all living entities, who does not think himself a proprietor and is free from false ego, who is equal in both happiness and distress, who is tolerant, always satisfied, self-controlled, and engaged in devotional service with determination, his mind and intelligence fixed on Me – such a devotee of Mine is very dear to Me. (BG 12:13-14)

Arjuna said: O my dear Krishna, I wish to know about prakṛti (nature), puruṣa (the enjoyer), and the field and the knower of the field, and of knowledge and the object of knowledge. (BG 13:1)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: This body, O son of Kuntī, is called the field, and one who knows this body is called the knower of the field. (BG 13:2)

O scion of Bharata, you should understand that I am also the knower in all bodies, and to understand this body and its knower is called knowledge. That is My opinion. (BG 13:3)

Now please hear My brief description of this field of activity and how it is constituted, what its changes are, whence it is produced, who that knower of the field of activities is, and what his influences are. (BG 13:4)

That knowledge of the field of activities and of the knower of activities is described by various sages in various Vedic writings. It is especially presented in the Vedānta-sūtra with all reasoning as to cause and effect. (BG 13:5)

The five great elements, false ego, intelligence, the un-manifested, the ten senses and the mind, the five sense objects, desire, hatred, happiness, distress, the aggregate, the life symptoms, and convictions – all these are considered, in summary, to be the field of activities and its interactions. (BG 13:6-7)

Humility; pridelessness; nonviolence; tolerance; simplicity; approaching a bona fide spiritual master; cleanliness; steadiness; self-control; renunciation of the objects of sense gratification; absence of false ego; the perception of the evil of birth, death, old age and disease; detachment; freedom from entanglement with children, wife, home and the rest; even-mindedness amid pleasant and unpleasant events; constant and unalloyed devotion to Me; aspiring to live in a solitary place; detachment from the general mass of people; accepting the importance of self-realization; and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth – all these I declare to be knowledge, and besides this whatever there may be is ignorance. (BG 13:8-12)

Being purified by his intelligence and controlling the mind with determination, giving up the objects of sense gratification, being freed from attachment and hatred, one who lives in a secluded place, who eats little, who controls his body, mind and power of speech, who is always in trance and who is detached, free from false ego, false strength, false pride, lust, anger, and acceptance of material things, free from false proprietorship, and peaceful – such a person is certainly elevated to the position of self-realization. (BG 18:51-53)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

False ego means accepting this body as oneself. When one understands that he is not his body and is spirit soul, he comes to his real ego. Ego is there. False ego is condemned, but not real ego. In the Vedic literature (Kṛhad-aranyaka Upanisad 1.4.10) it is said, aham brahmasmi: I am Brahman, I am spirit. This "I am," the sense of self, also exists in the liberated stage of self-realization. This sense of "I am" is ego, but when the sense of "I am" is applied to this false body it is false ego. When the sense of self is applied to reality, that is real ego. There are some philosophers who say we should give up our ego, but we cannot give up our ego, because ego means identity. We ought, of course, to give up the false identification with the body.

When we dream, our body lies on the bed, but we go somewhere else. In this way we all experience that our real identity is separate from this body. When we dream we forget the body lying on the bed. We act in different bodies and in different locations. Similarly, during the day we forget our dream bodies in which we traveled to so many places. Perhaps, in our dream bodies, we flew in the sky. At night we forget our waking body, and in the daytime we forget our dream body. But our conscious self, the soul, still exists, and we remain aware of our existence in both bodies. Therefore, we must conclude that we are not any of these bodies. For some time we exist in a certain body, then at death we forget it. So the body is really only a mental structure, somewhat like a dream, but the self is different from all of these mental structures. That is self-realization.

That is the pure ego. For instance, now I have this seventy-eight-year-old Indian body, and I have this false ego that thinks, "I am Indian," "I am this body." This is a misconception. Someday this temporary body will vanish and I'll get another temporary body. It's just a temporary illusion. The reality is that the soul, based on its desires and activities, transmigrates from one body to another.

Pure consciousness, the soul, does not need a material body. For instance, when you dream, you forget your present body, but you still remain conscious. The soul, the consciousness, is like water: water is pure, but as soon as it falls from the sky and touches the ground, it becomes muddy. Similarly, we are spirit souls, we are pure, but as soon as we leave the spiritual world and come in contact with these material bodies, our consciousness becomes covered. The consciousness remains pure, but now it is covered by mud (this body). And this is why people are fighting. They are wrongly identifying with the body, thinking, "I am German," "I am English," "I am black," "I am white," "I am this," "I am that"—so many bodily designations. These bodily designations are impurities. This is why artists sculpt or paint nude figures. In France, for example, they regard nakedness as "pure" art. Similarly, when you understand the "nakedness," or true condition, of the spirit soul—without these bodily designations—that is purity.

The effect of chanting the holy name of the Lord is perceived by the chanter as liberation from the conception of false egoism. False egoism is exhibited by thinking oneself to be the enjoyer of the world and thinking everything in the world to be meant for the enjoyment of one's self only. The

whole materialistic world is moving under such false egoism of "I" and "mine," but the factual effect of chanting the holy name is to become free from such misconceptions.

1.6 – The Senses

Lord Krishna reveals...

In the material world, one who is unaffected by whatever good or evil he may obtain, neither praising it nor despising it, is firmly fixed in perfect knowledge. (BG 2:57)

One who is able to withdraw his senses from sense objects, as the tortoise draws its limbs within the shell, is firmly fixed in perfect consciousness. (BG 2:58)

The embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness. (BG 2:59)

The senses are so strong and impetuous, O Arjuna, that they forcibly carry away the mind even of a man of discrimination who is endeavoring to control them. (BG 2:60)

One who restrains his senses, keeping them under full control, and fixes his consciousness upon Me, is known as a man of steady intelligence. (BG 2:61)

While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises. (BG 2:62)

From anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one falls down again into the material pool. (BG 2:63)

But a person free from all attachment and aversion and able to control his senses through regulative principles of freedom can obtain the complete mercy of the Lord. (BG 2:64)

For one thus satisfied [in Krishna consciousness], the threefold miseries of material existence exist no longer; in such satisfied consciousness, one's intelligence is soon well established. (BG 2:65)

One who is not connected with the Supreme [in Krishna consciousness] can have neither transcendental intelligence nor a steady mind, without which there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be any happiness without peace? (BG 2:66)

As a boat on the water is swept away by a strong wind, even one of the roaming senses on which the mind focuses can carry away a man's intelligence. (BG 2:67)

Therefore, O mighty-armed, one whose senses are restrained from their objects is certainly of steady intelligence. (BG 2:68)

What is night for all beings is the time of awakening for the self-controlled; and the time of awakening for all beings is night for the introspective sage. (BG 2:69)

A person who is not disturbed by the incessant flow of desires - that enter like rivers into the ocean, which is ever being filled but is always still - can alone achieve peace, and not the man who strives to satisfy such desires. (BG 2:70)

A person who has given up all desires for sense gratification, who lives free from desires, who has given up all sense of proprietorship and is devoid of false ego - he alone can attain real peace. (BG 2:71)

Arjuna said: O descendant of Vrishni, by what is one impelled to sinful acts, even unwillingly, as if engaged by force? (BG 3:36)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: It is lust only, Arjuna, which is born of contact with the material mode of passion and later transformed into wrath, and which is the all-devouring sinful enemy of this world. (BG 3:37)

As fire is covered by smoke, as a mirror is covered by dust, or as the embryo is covered by the womb, the living entity is similarly covered by different degrees of this lust. (BG 3:38)

Thus the wise living entity's pure consciousness becomes covered by his eternal enemy in the form of lust, which is never satisfied and which burns like fire. (BG 3:39)

The senses, the mind and the intelligence are the sitting places of this lust. Through them lust covers the real knowledge of the living entity and bewilders him. (BG 3:40)

Therefore, O Arjuna, the best of the Bharatas, in the very beginning curb this great symbol of sin [lust] by regulating the senses, and slay this destroyer of knowledge and self-realization. (BG 3:41)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

There are 10 senses - 5 knowledge acquiring senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin) and 5 working senses (voice, legs, hands, anus and genitals).

The subject matter being discussed here relates to transferring our activities from the material world to the spiritual world. In the material world we are consumed by four activities; eating, sleeping, defending and mating. In order to progress to the spiritual world there is a need to regulate these activities. However the modern tendency is to attempt to progress to the spiritual world without any regulation of the senses. In other words, people want to enjoy unrestricted sense pleasure and simultaneously seek progress to the spiritual world. Lord Krishna is explaining here that this is not possible.

I have seen that your boys and girls are taking classes in Hatha yoga for over 10 years and still they are not able to even meet the basic requirements of sense control. All yoga systems are designed to bring the mind under control. For example Hatha yoga is prescribing mechanical postures and breathing exercises to focus the mind internally. But what is the use of this process if it is not generating the ultimate result?

All of the yoga systems are recommending these rules and regulations for controlling the mind. But here Krishna is telling us that the senses are very powerful and these artificial restrictions will not be successful. So He is recommending that we don't try to impose these restrictions by force but instead simply by engaging the senses in His service, we can automatically achieve sense control. When one engages the consciousness in Krishna's service then even if the privilege and desire for sense gratification is available, one is not inclined to participate in it, because the individual has recognized a higher taste and hence recognizes that this lower taste is not worth

fulfilling but rather is the cause of all misfortune. So this is when the intelligence becomes very strong.

The senses are very very strong. Krishna is explaining here that they can even carry away the intelligence of a man in knowledge. In modern society we are claiming to be progressive and we are allowing boys and girls to mix openly. In past traditions this was not allowed. There is a reason why cultures in the past came up with these rules. They were not simply imposed to curtail freedom. They were imposed for the betterment of the society. Today they are arguing for so-called freedom. But in the process they are getting into all kinds of trouble. Scripture warns us about the strength of the senses and tells us very clearly that the senses are mad and cannot be controlled. So there is no point tempting it and then wondering why things are going wrong. The rules prescribed are so strict that even a man in knowledge is not allowed to be with his mother, sister or daughter in a solitary place. One may say that this is restricting freedom. But it is for one's own good. Otherwise you will end up with unwanted population. We are seeing this very practically now. Out of the four ashramas (stages in life), only one in the family life is allowed to associate with a woman. In all the other 3 stages, one must avoid unnecessary interaction with the woman.

Actually making spiritual advancement is a great penance. It is not an easy process. We can see even in our limited recorded history that Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Shankaracharya, Caitanya Mahaprabhu had all performed great great penances to make spiritual advancement. Spiritual perfection is not an easy thing. This is because the senses are very very powerful. So Lord Krishna is sharing the trick to control the senses in this age. He is asking us to use the senses in His service. Of all the senses the tongue is the most uncontrollable. So we must engage the tongue in chanting the names of God in this age and eating food stuffs that is first offered to the Lord. Chanting the names of God does not mean only the Hare Krishna mantra. Any name of God in any language is allowed. Not just Hare Krishna Maha mantra. The Lord is glorified in so many languages all over the world. So we are encouraging everybody to use their tongue to sing the glories of God. This way both the tongue and the ear will be satisfied. This is the only possible method in this age. Penances will not work in this age.

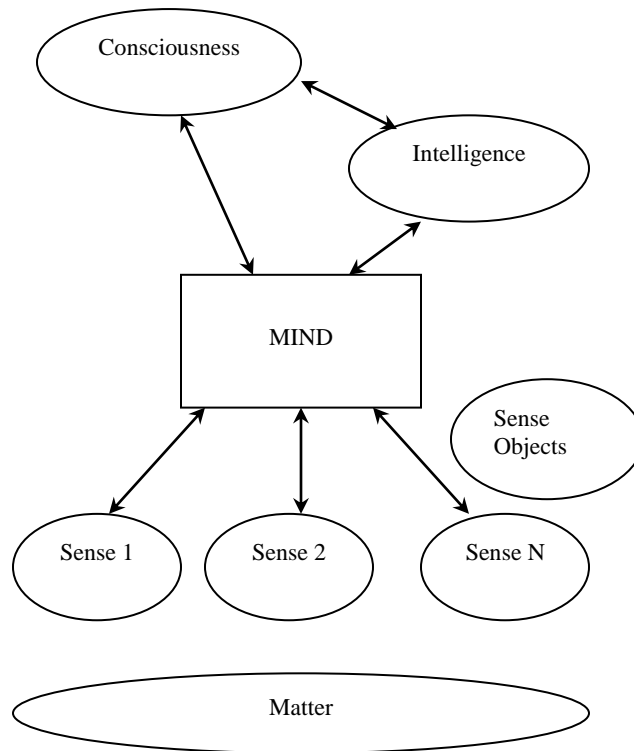
Lord Krishna is very nicely telling us the sequence of activity that leads to total failure. Everything starts by engaging the mind in thought. So if we read a sex novel, our mind will think about sex. Then we will get attached to sex. From attachment, lust develops. When lust is not satisfied, anger develops. When anger develops, we lose the power of intelligence. And once intelligence is lost, we commit havoc. This is very practical. So in the very beginning we have to engage the mind in thoughts of the spiritual world. Then we will be safe and we can make spiritual progress.

We are so foolish that we are unable to control the senses and engage the senses in divine service, birth after birth and because of that we are continually swimming in the miseries of material existence, constantly tossed around by the laws of Karma. Shouldn't an intelligent person find the need to come out of this cycle of birth, old-age, disease and death? Especially when this very rare opportunity is provided in the form of a human birth in an affluent environment?

The senses are always available. But because we are currently misusing them for self-pleasure instead of the pleasure of the owner of the senses (Rishikesha is another name for the Lord and it means master of the senses), we are suffering. All this is so clearly explained by Lord Krishna. What is the difficulty in understanding this? So now that we are fallen in this material universe we have to make the best use of a bad bargain. We have to use the senses for the pleasure of the Lord.

1.7 – Summary

In issues 1.x we discussed the composition of the individual being. We identified five elements namely, the eternal soul, intelligence, mind, ego and the senses. We discussed each element briefly and recognized that human life was a battlefield between the senses and the consciousness with the mind playing the role of an arbitrator. We also studied the importance of intelligence in serving as a guide in the directions chosen by the mind. Further we recognized that the both the material energy (maya) and the spiritual energy originate from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We defined our position as a form of marginal energy with the propensity to choose between the material energy and the spiritual energy. We indicated that the material energy will bind us to the material world, whereas the spiritual energy will lift us away from the material world into the spiritual kingdom.



2. Topics on the dimension of Time and Space

In this chapter I would like to articulate the very limited knowledge that I have gathered over the years on the Vedic concepts surrounding time and space and in the process give a synopsis on the different ages recognized by the Vedas and the symptoms that characterize these ages. I would also like to give a summary on Vedic astrology, with an interest in highlighting some of the differences between Vedic and western astrology.

2.1 - Time

Introduction...

In this issue we will discuss some of the concepts surrounding "Time" as revealed by the Vedic scriptures. In the beginning we will give a summary of the Vedic conception of Time as it relates to our existence on this planet. For those with an eye for detail and specifics, we will follow the summary with some of the direct references made to the dimension of time by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita. Then we will highlight a very detailed account of Time by visiting the third canto of the Bhagavad-Purana, where we will be privy to a discussion between saint Vidura and Maitreya Rsi. Following that we will conclude with some of purports provided by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in His translation of the Bhagavad-Purana.

Since the discussion between saint Vidura and Maitreya Rsi will form the bulk of the details we present here, I thought it appropriate to offer some background to this discussion. Saint Vidura is the younger brother of the blind king Dhrtarastra, who by his piety had achieved a heightened state of self-realization. After being ridiculed by his family for speaking against evil and corruption, saint Vidura had traveled alone in anonymity for an extended period of time, his mind constantly immersed in the thoughts of the Supreme Lord Krishna. It was in this mood of deep spiritual ecstasy that saint Vidura met Uddhava, a great devotee of the Lord on the banks of river Yamuna. Vidura was ever so pleased to meet Uddhava and had a multitude of questions for him. After a lengthy discussion, Uddhava directed Vidura to the great sage Maitreya Rsi who was then living on the banks of the river Ganges. It was at this meeting between saint Vidura and Maitreya Rsi that the subject of time was discussed at length. Fortunately for us, King Pariksit had recognized the importance of this meeting and hence had asked Sukudev Gosvami its poignant details. It is this query by King Pariksit that led to this detailed documentation of "Time" in the Bhagavad-Purana.

The discussion between Vidura and Maitreya Rsi always triggers my fascination. Buried in there, I feel, is a treasure chest of profound information that if we can comprehend in its entirety we may be able to supply the missing links to our empirical understanding on topics such as the wave-particle duality and the relation between time and velocity. Unfortunately, Maitreya Rsi acknowledges that this subject can only be fully appreciated by self-realized souls.

A Summary on the dimension of Time...

The Vedas define time as a function of physical position. In other words, the scale used to perceive time will vary from one planetary system to another. Our particular material universe is engineered by Lord Brahma after receiving instructions and benedictions from the Supreme personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna. In the simplistic model, our universe comprises of three planetary systems; The higher, middle and lower planetary systems. Above all these three planetary systems is the abode of Lord Brahma who is the controller of this particular universe. The higher planetary systems are the abode of the many demigods, or in other words, the ministers in charge of the various faculties associated with the material universe. The middle planetary system, earthly planets, is where we find ourselves. And the lower planetary systems are inhabited by the demons. [NOTE: This is a very simplistic model. For details on the multiple models that can be derived from the Vedas, refer to Dr. Richard L. Thompson's work on Vedic Cosmology].

The references to time in the Vedic literatures are often defined with respect to the higher planetary systems. However the Vedas also tell us the relationship between time for the demigods and time for humans. This allows us to extrapolate the information in a way that is applicable to our planetary system. As a side note, I should also mention that Vedic cosmology is always presented in a geocentric fashion. Results derived through this process need not vary from the heliocentric approach adopted by the modern empirical studies.

Since one can very easily get confused by the variation of the time quantum based on the reference point, I will start defining terminology as it relates to Lord Brahma's planetary system and then work my way down to the earthly planets.

Time is presented as a cyclical flow of four ages or "yugas". The proportion of time consumed by each yuga follows the ratio 4:3:2:1, with the first yuga consuming the longest time. The four yugas are defined as Satya yuga, Treta yuga, Dvapara yuga and Kali yuga. One complete cycle of these four yugas corresponds to one "Maha-yuga". A thousand maha-yugas represents one day for Lord Brahma. So also is his night. One day for Lord Brahma is also known as a "kalpa". So two kalpas make one day and one night for Lord Brahma. 360 such days or 720 kalpas represent Lord Brahma's year. Lord Brahma lives for 100 such years.

The Vedas tell us that one day for the demigods (higher planets) corresponds to half a cycle of the sun's orbit around the earth. So also are their nights. 360 such days and nights represent a year for the demigods. In other words, 360 human years corresponds to one demigod year. The Vedas also tell us that Satya yuga lasts for 4,800 demigod years. Treta yuga lasts for 3,600 demigod years. Dvapara yuga lasts for 2,400 demigod years. And Kali yuga lasts for 1,200 demigod years.

Based on this, we know that Satya yuga lasts for 1,728,000 human years ($4,800 \times 360$), Treta yuga lasts for 1,296,000 human years ($3,600 \times 360$), Dvapara yuga lasts for 864,000 human years ($2,400 \times 360$) and Kali yuga last for 432,000 human years ($1,200 \times 360$).

Now we will introduce yet another sub-level that further delineates the dimension of time. Each Kalpa (1000 Maha-yugas) is reigned over by a succession of 14 Manus (primordial father of the human race), each for an equal amount of time. This translates to approximately 71 Maha-yugas for each Manu. This quantum of a Manu is referred to as a "Manvantara". The end of each manvantara is marked by deluge. According to the Vishnu purana, each Manu lives for about 852,000 demigod years or 306,720,000 human years.

Based on the study of various Vedic literatures, scholars have concluded that we are currently in the 51st year of Brahma, the 7th manvantara in the first day and the 28th Maha-yuga within that manvantara. We are currently 5000 years into Kali yuga within this Maha-yuga.

Lord Krishna reveals...

From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But One who attains to My abode, O son of Kunti, never takes birth again. (BG 8:16)

By human calculation, a thousand ages taken together form the duration of Brabma's one day. And such also is the duration of his night. (BG 8:17)

At the beginning of Brahma's day, all living entities become manifest from the unmanifest state, and thereafter, when the night falls, they are merged into the unmanifest again. (BG 8:18)

Again and again, when Brahma's day arrives, all living entities come into being, and with the arrival of Brahma's night they are helplessly annihilated. (BG 8:19)

Yet there is another unmanifest nature, which is eternal and transcendental to this manifested and unmanifested matter. It is supreme and is never annihilated. When all in this world is annihilated, that part remains as it is. (BG 8:20)

That which the Vedantists describe as unmanifest and infallible, that which is known as the supreme destination, that place from which, having attained it, one never returns - that is My supreme abode. (BG 8:21)

Of letters I am the letter A, and among compound words I am the dual compound. I am also inexhaustible time, and of creators I am Brahma. (BG 10:33)

Saint Vidura talks with Maitreya Rsi...

The material manifestation's ultimate particle, which is indivisible and not formed into a body, is called an atom. It exists always as an invisible identity, even after the dissolution of all forms. The material body is but a combination of such atoms, but it is misunderstood by the common man. (SB 3.11.1)

Atoms are the ultimate state of the manifest universe. When they stay in their own forms without forming different bodies, they are called the unlimited oneness. There are certainly different bodies in physical forms, but the atoms themselves form the complete manifestation. (SB 3.11.2)

One can estimate time by measuring the movement of the atomic combination of bodies. Time is the potency of the almighty Personality of Godhead, Hari, who controls all physical movement although He is not visible in the physical world. (SB 3.11.3)

Atomic time is measured according to its covering a particular atomic space. That time which covers the unmanifest aggregate of atoms is called the great time. (SB 3.11.4)

The division of gross time is calculated as follows: two atoms make one double atom, and three double atoms make one hex-atom. This hexatom is visible in the sunshine which enters through the holes of a window screen. One can clearly see that the hexatom goes up towards the sky. (SB 3.11.5)

The time duration needed for the integration of three trasarenu (hexatom) is called a truti, and one hundred truties make one vedha. Three vedhas make one lava. (SB 3.11.6) [1/1687.5 seconds is one truti]

The duration of time of three lavas is equal to one nimesa, the combination of three nimesas make one ksana, five ksanas combined together make one katha and fifteen kaths make one laghu. (SB 3.11.7)

Fifteen laghus make one nadika, which is also called a danda. Two dandas make one muhurta, and six or seven dandas make one fourth of a day or night, according to human calculation. (SB 3.11.8)

The measuring pot for one nadika, or danda, can be prepared with a six-pala-weight [fourteen ounce] pot of copper, in which a hole is bored with a gold probe weighing four masa and measuring four fingers long. When the pot is placed on water, the time before the water overflows in the pot is called one danda. (SB 3.11.9)

It is calculated that there are four praharas, which are also called yamas, in the day and four in the night of the human being. Similarly, fifteen days and nights are a fortnight, and there are two fortnights, white and black in a month. (SB 3.11.10)

The aggregate of two fortnights is one month, and that period is one complete day and night for the Pita planets. Two of such months comprise one season, and six months comprise one complete movement of the sun from south to north. (SB 3.11.11)

Two solar movements make one day and night of the demigods and that combination of day and night is one complete calendar year for the human being. The human being has a duration of life of one hundred years. (SB 3.11.12)

Influential stars, planets, luminaries and atoms all over the universe are rotating in their respective orbits under the direction of the Supreme, represented by eternal Kala (time). (SB 3.11.13)

There are five different names for the orbits of the sun, moon, stars and luminaries in the firmament, and they each have their own samvatsara (orbital period). (SB 3.11.14)

O Vidura, the sun enlivens all living entities with his unlimited heat and light. He diminishes the duration of life of all living entities in order to release them from their illusion of material attachment, and he enlarges the path of elevation to the heavenly kingdom. He thus moves in the firmament with great velocity, and therefore everyone should offer him respects once every five years with all ingredients of worship. (SB 3.11.15)

Vidura said: I now understand the life duration of the residents of Pita planets and heavenly planets as well as that of the human beings. Now kindly inform me of the duration of life of those greatly learned entities who are beyond the range of a kalpa. (SB 3.11.16)

O spiritually powerful one, you can understand the movements of eternal time, which is the controlling form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Because you are a self-realized person, you can see everything by the power of mystic vision. (SB 3.11.17)

Maitreya said: O Vidura, the four millenniums are called the Satya, Treta, Dvapara and Kali yugas. The aggregate number of years of all of these combined is equal to twelve thousand years of the demigods. (SB 3.11.18)

The duration of the Satya millennium equal 4,800 years of the demigods; the duration of the Treta millenium equals 3,600 years of the demigods; the duration of the Dvapara millenium equals 2,400 years; and that of the Kali millennium is 1,200 years of the demigods. (SB 3.11.19)

The transitional periods before and after every millennium, which are a few hundred years as aforementioned, are known as a yuga-sandhyas, or the conjunctions of two millenniums,

according to expert astronomers. In those periods all kinds of religious activities are performed. (SB 3.11.20)

O Vidura, in the Satya millennium mankind properly and completely maintained the principles of religion, but in other millenniums religion gradually decreased by one part as irreligion was proportionately admitted. (SB 3.11.21)

Outside of the three planetary systems [Svarga -higher, Martya -middle, Patala -lower], the four yugas multiplied by one thousand comprise one day on the planet of Brahma. A similar period comprises a night of Brahma, in which the creator of the universe goes to sleep. (SB 3.11.22)

After the end of Brahma's night, the creation of the three worlds begins again in the daytime of Brahma, and they continue to exist through the life durations of fourteen consecutive Manus, or fathers of mankind. (SB 3.11.23)

Each and every Manu enjoys a life of a little more than seventy-one sets of four millenniums. (SB 3.11.24)

After the dissolution of each and every Manu, the next Manu comes in order, along with his descendants, who rule over the different planets; but the seven famous sages, and demigods like Indra and their followers, such as Gandharvas, all appear simultaneously with Manu. (SB 3.11.25)

In the creation, during Brahma's day, the three planetary systems - Svarga (higher), Martya (middle) and Patala (lower) - revolve, and the inhabitants, including the lower animals, human beings, demigods and Pitras, appear and disappear in terms of their fruitive activities. (SB 3.11.26)

In each and every change of Manu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead appears by manifesting His internal potency in different incarnations, as Manu and others. Thus He maintains the universe by discovered power. (SB 3.11.27)

At the end of the day, under the insignificant portion of the mode of darkness, the powerful manifestation of the universe merges in the darkness of night. By the influence of eternal time, the innumerable living entities remain merged in that dissolution, and everything is silent. (SB 3.11.28)

When the night of Brahma ensues, all the three worlds are out of sight, and the sun and the moon are without glare, just as in the due course of an ordinary night. (SB 3.11.29)

The devastation takes place due to the fire emanating from the mouth of Sankarsana and thus great sages like Bhrgu and other inhabitants of Maharloka transport themselves to Janaloka, being distressed by the warmth of the blazing fire which rages through the three worlds below. (SB 3.11.30)

At the beginning of the devastation all the seas overflow, and hurricane winds blow very violently. Thus the waves of the seas become ferocious, and in no time at all the three worlds are full of water. (SB 3.11.31)

The Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, lies down in the water on the seat of Ananta, with His eyes closed, and the inhabitants of the Janaloka planets offer their glorious prayers unto the Lord with folded hands. (SB 3.11.32)

Thus the process of the exhaustion of the duration of life exists for every one of the living beings, including Lord Brahma. One's life endures for only one hundred years, in terms of the times in the different planets. (SB 3.11.33)

The one hundred years of Brahma's life are divided into two parts, the first half and the second half. The first half of the duration of Brahma's life is already over, and the second half is now current. (SB 3.11.34)

In the beginning of the first half of Brahma's life, there was a millennium called Brahma-kalpa, where in Lord Brahma appeared. The birth of the Vedas was simultaneous with Brahma's birth. (SB 3.11.35)

The millennium which followed the first Brahma millennium is known as the Padma-Kalpa because in that millennium the universal lotus flower grew out of the navel reservoir of water of the Personality of Godhead, Hari. (SB 3.11.36)

O descendant of Bharata, the first millenium in the second half of the life of Brahma is also known as the Varaha millennium because the Personality of Godhead appeared in that millennium as the hog incarnation. (SB 3.11.37)

The duration of the two parts of Brahma's life, as above mentioned, is calculated to be equal to one nimesa [less than a second] for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is unchanging and unlimited and is the cause of all causes of the universe. (SB 3.11.38)

Eternal time is certainly the controller of different dimensions, from that of the atom up to the super divisions of the duration of Brahma's life; but, nevertheless, it is controlled by the Supreme. Time can control only those who are body conscious, even up to the Satyaloka or the other higher planets of the universe. (SB 3.11.39)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

The subject matters of physics, chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, time and space dealt with in the above verses of Srimad-Bhagvatam are certainly very interesting to students of the particular subjects, but as far as we are concerned, we cannot explain them very thoroughly in terms of technical knowledge. The subject is summarized by the statement that above all the different branches of knowledge is the supreme control of kala (time), the plenary representation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Nothing exists without Him, and therefore everything, however wonderful it may appear to our meager knowledge, is but the work of the magical wand of the Supreme Lord. As far as time is concerned, we beg to subjoin herewith a table of timing in terms of the modern clock.

One truti - 8/13,500 second
One vedha - 8/135 second
One lava - 8/45 second
One nimesa - 8/15 second
One ksana - 8/5 second
One kastha - 8 seconds
One laghu - 2 minutes
One danda - 30 minutes
One prahara - 3 hours
One day - 12 hours
One night - 12 hours

One paksa - 15 days

Two paksas comprise one month, and twelve months comprise one calendar year, or one full orbit of the sun. A human being is expected to live up to one hundred years. That is the way of the controlling measure of eternal time. The Brahma-samhita (5.52) affirms this control in this way: "I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, under whose control even the sun, which is considered to be the eye of the Lord, rotates within the fixed orbit of eternal time. The sun is the king of all planetary systems and has unlimited potency in heat and light."

[NOTE: I have left out a substantial amount of substance in the interest of brevity. However, Srila Prabhupada has mercifully offered a lot more detail in His purports. I encourage the interested reader to consult Srila Prabhupada's purports to the Bhagavad-purana for all these and more realizations.]

2.2 - Symptoms of the different Yugas

Background on Dharma...

Vedic philosophy distinguishes the position of the spiritual and the material universes and identifies the Creator, but it refrains from attempting to conclusively explain the inconceivable Supreme Personality of Godhead. Instead it lays emphasis on the "obligation" or "duty" of an individual soul, such that it will allow the soul to progress back to the Kingdom of God. This obligation is referred to as "dharma". There are two dharmas discussed in Vedic scriptures; Sanatana (eternal obligation) and Varna-ashrama (material obligation). The Sanatana dharma is one of servitude to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Varna-ashrama dharma is the prescription for social order in the material world, so as to gradually come to the point of fulfilling one's Sanatana dharma. Since the Varna-ashrama dharma is the only bona-fide social system recognized by the Vedic scriptures, I thought it pertinent to briefly review it at this juncture.

"Varnas" relate to the classification of individual aptitude available in all societies. Vedic scripture recognizes four universally applicable classes or professions. These are the labor class (Shudra), the business class (Vaisya), the military class (Kshatriya), and the intellectual class (Brahmana). It is important to note that the classification discussed in the vedic literatures relates to individual aptitude and should not be confused with the birth-caste system.

"Ashramas" relate to stages in life. The Vedic scripture recognizes four stages in human life. These are the student (brahmacari), house-holder (grhastha), retired (vanaprastha) and renounced (Sannyasi). The student life is aimed at training an individual in both spiritual and material well-being. The house-holder stage is designed for marital unity with the primary obligation of bringing souls into this planet and providing material and spiritual nourishment. The retired stage is meant for a gradual transition into complete renunciation. In this phase the individual gradually gives up his attachment for material desires and comforts and prepares for the inevitable death. Sannyas is the final stage where the individual completely detaches from material activity and surrenders fully to the will of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Summary...

In this issue we will discuss the four virtues, that are offered as pillars that support religious principles, as it relates to the four yugas discussed previously. We will derive the bulk of our knowledge from the 16th and 17th chapters of the first canto of the Bhagavad-Purana.

The material world is said to be supported by four virtues; austerity, cleanliness, mercy and truthfulness. Each Maha-yuga begins with Satya yuga where all the four virtues are intact. In each of the subsequent yugas, we lose one of these four virtues. For example, in Treta yuga we lose austerity, in Dwapara yuga we lose cleanliness and in Kali yuga we lose mercy. In Kali yuga, the only accepted virtue is truthfulness. Incidentally, our current legal system does not legislate the need for austerity, cleanliness or compassion. Instead it relegates these virtues to the domain of benevolence. This seems to reconcile with the age with find ourselves in.

In the 16th and 17th chapters of the first canto of the Bhagavad-purana, there is a discussion between Saunaka Rsi and Suta-Gosvami related to symptoms of the various ages. Saunaka Rsi enquired about an incident related to King Pariksit and the master of Kali-yuga. He was however, very particular that only topics related to Lord Krishna be addressed in the meeting at Naimasharania. He considered all other topics simply a waste of valuable time. So he explicitly

qualified the question by asking Suta-Gosvami to speak about the incident only if it related to Lord Krishna. Suta-Gosvami responded to this in detail. He spoke of a meeting between the personality of religious principles in the form of a bull and the personality of mother earth in the form of a cow. Mother earth was depicted as sad and bereft of all luster. And the bull interrogated mother earth as to the cause of her sorrow. Mother earth responded to the bull by reminiscing about the time when Lord Krishna was personally on the planet and how all the merits of religion and the Varna-ashrama dharma had been lost with the departure of the Lord and the simultaneous dawn of the age of Kali.

It was toward the end of this conversation that king Pariksit rides into the scene. He observes that the master of Kali was torturing the personality of religion in the form of a bull. The King was unsure as to who the bull was. So he attempts to identify the bull by interrogation. In the process, the personality of religion acknowledges the king as a personality befitting the Pandava dynasty because the king took his responsibility to protect his citizens seriously. The king in turn acknowledges the bull to be the personality of religion because he had been non-committal when asked who the true perpetrator of the crime was. The king recognized this response was in accord with the principle that the destination intended for the perpetrator of irreligious acts is also intended for one who identifies the perpetrator. In other words, one who is fully aware of the Supreme personality of Godhead surrenders all observances to the inconceivable energies of the Lord. Such an individual will not speculate on the Lord's plans or attempt to juggle the words of the Lord in search of the Lord's intentions.

For those interested in the exact versus that detail this conversation between Saunaka Rsi and Suta-Gosvami, I have included below Srila Prabhupada's translation to some of the versus in the 16th and 17th chapters of the first canto, followed by a purport by Srila Prabhupada on this subject.

Suta-Gosvami responds to Saunaka Rsi...

Once, when Maharaj Pariksit was on his way to conquer the world, he saw the master of Kali-yuga, who was lower than a sudra, disguised as a king and hurting the legs of a cow and bull. The King at once caught hold of him to deal sufficient punishment. (SB 1.16.4)

Saunaka Rsi inquired: Why did Maharaj Pariksit simply punish him, since he was the lowest of the sudras, having dressed as a king and having struck a cow with his leg? Please describe all these incidents if they relate to the topics of Lord Krishna. (SB 1.16.5)

The devotees of the Lord are accustomed to licking up the honey available from the lotus feet of the Lord. What is the use of topics which simply waste one's valuable life? (SB 1.16.6)

Suta Gosvami said: While Maharaj Pariksit was residing in the capital of the Kuru empire, the symptoms of the age of Kali began to infiltrate within the jurisdiction of his state. When he learned about this, he did not think the matter very palatable. This did, however, give him a chance to fight. He took up his bow and arrows and prepared himself for military activities. (SB 1.16.10)

The personality of religious principles, Dharma, was wandering about in the form of a bull. And he met the personality of earth in the form of a cow who appeared to grieve like a mother who had lost her child. She had tears in her eyes, and the beauty of her body was lost. Thus Dharma questioned the earth as follows. (SB 1.16.18)

Dharma [in the form of a bull] asked: Madam, are you not hale and hearty? Why are you covered with the shadow of grief? It appears by your face that you have become black. Are you suffering from some internal disease, or are you thinking of some relative who is away in a distant place? (SB 1.16.19)

I have lost my three legs and am now standing on one only. Are you lamenting for my state of existence? Or are you in great anxiety because henceforward the unlawful meat-eaters will exploit you? Or are you in a sorry plight because the demigods are now bereft of their share of sacrificial offerings because no sacrifices are being performed at present? Or are you grieving for living beings because of their sufferings due to famine and drought? (SB 1.16.20)

Are you feeling compunction for the unhappy women and children who are left forlorn by unscrupulous persons? Or are you unhappy because the goddess of learning is being handled by brahmanas addicted to acts against the principles of religion? Or are you sorry to see that the brahmanas have taken shelter of administrative families that do not respect brahminical culture? (SB 1.16.21)

The so-called administrators are now bewildered by the influence of this age of Kali, and thus they have put all state affairs into disorder. Are you now lamenting this disorder? Now the general populace does not follow the rules and regulations for eating, sleeping, drinking, mating etc., and they are inclined to perform such anywhere and everywhere. Are you unhappy because of this? (SB 1.16.22)

O mother earth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, incarnated Himself as Lord Sri Krishna just to unload your heavy burden. All His activities here are transcendental, and they cement the path of liberation. You are now bereft of His presence. You are probably now thinking of those activities and feeling sorry in their absence. (SB 1.16.23)

Mother, you are the reservoir of all riches. Please inform me of the root cause of your tribulations by which you have been reduced to such a weak state. I think that the powerful influence of time, which conquers the most powerful, might have forcibly taken away your fortune, which was adored even by the demigods. (SB 1.16.24)

The earthly deity [in the form of a cow] thus replied to the personality of religious principles [in the form of a bull]: O Dharma, whatever you have inquired from me shall be known to you. I shall try to reply to all those questions. Once you too were maintained by your four legs, and you increased happiness all over the universe by the mercy of the Lord. (SB 1.16.25)

In Him reside truthfulness, cleanliness, intolerance of another's unhappiness, the power to control anger, self-satisfaction, straightforwardness, steadiness of mind, control of the sense organs, responsibility, equality, tolerance, equanimity, faithfulness, knowledge, absence of sense enjoyment, leadership, chivalry, influence, the power to make everything possible, the discharge of proper duty, complete independence, dexterity, fullness of all beauty, serenity, kindheartedness, ingenuity, gentility, magnanimity, determination, perfection in all knowledge, proper execution, possession of all objects of enjoyment, joyfulness, immovability, fidelity, fame, worship, pridelessness, being (as the personality of Godhead), eternity and many other transcendental qualities which are eternally present and never to be separated from Him. That personality of Godhead, the reservoir of all goodness and beauty, Lord Sri Krishna, has now closed His transcendental pastimes on the face of the earth. In His absence the age of Kali has spread its influence everywhere, so I am sorry to see this condition of existence. (SB 1.16.26-30)

I am thinking about myself and also , O best amongst the demigods, about you, as well as about all the demigods, sages, denizens of Pitrloka, devotees of the Lord and all men obedient to the system of varna and ashrama in human society. (SB 1.16.31)

[...The personality of earth continued to reminisce about the departure of Lord Krishna at the dawn of Kali yuga...]

While the earth and the personality of religion were thus engaged in conversation, the saintly King Pariksit reached the shore of the Sarasvati River, which flowed toward the east. (SB 1.16.36)

Suta Gosvami said: After reaching that place, Maharaj Pariksit observed that a lower-caste sudra, dressed like a king, was beating a cow and a bull with a club, as if they had no owner. (SB 1.17.1)

The bull was as white as a white lotus flower. He was terrified of the sudra who was beating him, and he was so afraid that he was standing on one leg, trembling and urinating. (SB 1.17.2)

Although the cow is beneficial because one can draw religious principles from her, she was now rendered poor and calfless. Her legs were being beaten by a sudra. There were tears in her eyes, and she was distressed and weak. She was hankering after some grass in the field. (SB 1.17.3)

Maharaj Pariksit, well equipped with arrows and bow and seated on a gold-embossed chariot, spoke to him [the sudra] with a deep voice sounding like thunder. (SB 1.17.4)

Oh, who are you? You appear to be strong and yet you dare kill, within my protection, those who are helpless! By your dress you pose yourself to be a godly man [king], but by your deeds you are opposing the principles of the twice-born ksatriyas. (SB 1.17.4)

You rogue, do you dare beat an innocent cow because Lord Krishna and Arjuna, the carrier of the Gandiva bow, are out of sight? Since you are beating the innocent in a secluded place, you are considered a culprit and therefore deserve to be killed. (SB 1.17.6)

Then he [Maharaj Pariksit] asked the bull: Oh, who are you? Are you a bull as white as a white lotus, or are you a demigod? You have lost three of your legs and are moving on only one. Are you some demigod causing us grief in the form of a bull? (SB 1.17.7)

Now for the first time in a kingdom well protected by the arms of the kings of the Kuru dynasty, I see you grieving with tears in your eyes. Up till now no one on earth has ever shed tears because of royal negligence. (SB 1.17.8)

O son of Surabhi, you need lament no longer now. There is no need to fear this low-class sudra. And, O mother cow, as long as I am living as the ruler and subduer of all envious men, there is no cause for you to cry. Everything will be good for you. (SB 1.17.9)

The supreme duty of the ruling king is to give all protection to law-abiding persons and to chastise those who stray from the ordinances of the scriptures in ordinary times, when there is no emergency. (SB 1.17.16)

The personality of religion said: These words just spoken by you befit a person of the Pandava dynasty. Captivated by the devotional qualities of the Pandavas, even Lord Krishna, the personality of Godhead, performed duties as a messenger. (SB 1.17.17)

O greatest among human beings, it is very difficult to ascertain the particular miscreant who has caused our sufferings, because we are bewildered by all the different opinions of theoretical philosophers. (SB 1.17.18)

Some of the philosophers, who deny all sorts of duality, declare that one's own self is responsible for his personal happiness and distress. Others say that superhuman powers are responsible, while yet others say that activity is responsible, and the gross materialists maintain that nature is the ultimate cause. (SB 1.17.19)

There are also some thinkers who believe that no one can ascertain the cause of distress by argumentation, nor know it by imagination, nor express it by words. O sage amongst kings, judge for yourself by thinking over all this with your own intelligence. (SB 1.17.20)

The King said: O you, who are in the form of a bull! You know the truth of religion, and you are speaking according to the principle that the destination intended for the perpetrator of irreligious acts is also intended for one who identifies the perpetrator. You are no other than the personality of religion. (SB 1.17.22)

Thus it is concluded that the Lord's energies are inconceivable. No one can estimate them by mental speculation or by word jugglery. (SB 1.17.23)

In the age of Satya [truthfulness] your four legs were established by the four principles of austerity, cleanliness, mercy and truthfulness. But it appears that three of your legs are broken due to rampant irreligion in the form of pride, lust for women, and intoxication. (SB 1.17.24)

You are now standing on one leg only, which is your truthfulness, and you are somehow or other hobbling along. But quarrel personified [Kali], flourishing by deceit, is also trying to destroy that leg. (SB 1.17.25)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

The principles of religion do not stand on some dogmas or man-made formulas, but they stand on four primary regulative observances, namely austerity, cleanliness, mercy and truthfulness. The mass of people must be taught to practice these principles from childhood. Austerity means to accept voluntarily things which may not be very comfortable for the body but are conducive for spiritual realization, for example fasting. Fasting twice or four times a month is a sort of austerity which may be voluntarily accepted for spiritual realization only, and not for any other purposes, political or otherwise. Fasting which is not meant for self-realization but for some other purpose is condemned in the Bhagavad-Gita (17:5-6). Similarly, cleanliness is necessary both for the mind and for the body. Simply bodily cleanliness may help to some extent, but cleanliness of the mind is necessary, and it is effected by glorifying the Supreme Lord. No one can cleanse the accumulated mental dust without glorifying the Supreme Lord. A godless civilization cannot cleanse the mind because it has no idea of God, and for this simple reason people under such a civilization cannot have good qualification, however well they may be materially equipped. We have to see things by their resultant action. The resultant action of human civilization in the age of Kali is dissatisfaction, so everyone is anxious to get peace of mind. This peace of mind was complete in the Satya age because of the existence of the above mentioned attributes of the human beings. Gradually these attributes have diminished in the Treta-yuga to three fourths, in Dvapara to half, and in this age of Kali to one fourth, which is also gradually diminishing on account of prevailing untruthfulness. By pride, either artificial or real, the resultant action of austerity is spoiled; by too much affection for female association, cleanliness is spoiled; by too much addiction to intoxication, mercy is spoiled; and by too much lying propaganda, truthfulness is spoiled. The revival of bhagavata-dharma can save human civilization from falling prey to evils of all description.

2.3 - Astrology

Introduction...

As discussed in earlier issues, Jyotisha or Astrology is one of the six Vedangas. It is among the oldest sciences known to mankind. The scriptural presentation of astronomy has been largely linked to the Jyotisha vedanga. Despite its prominent position in Vedic scriptures, the ultimate merit of Jyotisha is often questioned by the scholars of Vedic philosophy. While they do not dispute the concept of destiny, they argue that it is of little relevance to one who has fully appreciated the essence scriptural injunctions. Perhaps their thoughts are best summed by the following verses in the Mahabharata;

"The whole universe moves at the will of its creator, but it moves under the controlling influence of fate. It is not free." (Mahabharata 2.57.4)

"Destiny and human effort depend upon each other. The high-minded perform good and great deeds. It is only eunuchs who worship fate." (Mahabharata 12.139.81)

It is with this backdrop that we will discuss some of the elementary concepts surrounding the Jyotisha Vedanga. It is important to recognize that while the Jyotisha Vedanga can offer guidelines for human existence, it is not a tool to be used in defining the human purpose.

The Jyotisha Vedanga comprises of three parts or skandas. The first is Ganita or mathematical astrology, the second is Samhita or natural phenomena and the third is Jataka (Hora) or predictive astrology. In this issue we will discuss elements from the first skanda (mathematical astrology) with the hope of presenting a useful background to a novice reader. We will sum up our understanding by working through an example in calculating the "dashas" for an individual given the location of the moon at the time of the individual's birth. I am not qualified to cover any concepts in the Samhita and Jataka skandas and hence there will be no reference to those aspects of the Jyotisha vedanga in this issue.

Among the many fields of Vedic knowledge, Jyotisha seems to have crossed the most number of cultural boundaries. Through the Greek and Egyptian influences in Vedic astrology, we get a rare glimpse into what might perhaps be a common root to all the cultures of the world. Indeed as one dwells on spirituality and the different faiths and scriptures available to mankind, the discerning student of comparative religion, who is able to filter out the elements of sentiment and fanaticism, quickly realizes that the essence of God's instructions are simple, consistent and shares a universal appeal.

Before we begin, I must apologize for level of detail I have chosen in presenting this material. I have tried to assume no background knowledge, except for some very basic astronomical and mathematical knowledge. And yet the material is of a nature that may not be of particular interest to the casual reader. This will be further compounded by the variation in terminology for planets and the signs of the zodiac used in Vedic astrology. But once we get over that hurdle, I hope that the substance in this issue will serve as an elementary foundation for one who may wish to pursue further into Vedic astrology.

Astronomical background

The early studies of the Siddhantas assumed that the earth was at the centre of the universe since all the discussion was presented in a geocentric fashion. However, Aryabhatta-I (476 A.D) corrected this perception by indicating that the Earth was itself moving in an orbit around the Sun. The geocentric perception however continued to hold its appeal, since the calculations for astrological purposes were not altered by assuming the geocentric or heliocentric models. It was not till 1543 A.D that Copernicus felt the need to challenge Ptolemy's theory that the Earth lay at the centre of the universe. Galileo agreed with Copernicus and Johannes Kepler (1609 A.D) would later perfect the heliocentric model by indicating that not only were the earth and the other planets revolving around the Sun, but that these orbits were elliptical in nature and defined planes that were inclined to one another. Kepler's model is the current empirical understanding of our solar system.

[Note: Pete Ferreira pointed out that a Greek by the name Aristarchus of Samos proposed a heliocentric model in the 3rd century BC. Unfortunately he was unable to convince others, until Copernicus came along]

In the Vedic model, the Sun appears to revolve around the earth. The path of the Sun, which in reality is the path of the earth's revolution around the Sun, is known as the ecliptic. The angle between the ecliptic and the celestial equator (the extension of the plane defining the earth's equator) is known as the obliquity of the ecliptic (caused by the tilt of the earth's axis). Currently this is measured to be approximately 23 degrees and 26 minutes.

The Zodiac refers to a region extending 8 degrees in width on either side of the ecliptic (for a total of 16 degrees), and right around the 360 degrees of the ecliptic. This belt captures the nine planets of relevance in Vedic astrology. Vedic astrology divides this belt into twelve equal parts of 30 degrees each, to give the twelve signs of the zodiac. Vedic astrology also divides this belt into twenty-seven "nakshatras" (constellations) of thirteen degrees and twenty minutes each.

Of the nine planets of relevance to Vedic astrology, two are imaginary. They refer to the points where the moon's orbit intersects the ecliptic on its northerly course (Rahu) and on its southerly course (Ketu). The other seven planets of relevance are Sukra (Venus), Ravi (Sun), Chandra (Moon), Kuja (Mars), Guru (Jupiter), Sani (Saturn) and Budha (Mercury).

On the 21st of March the Sun appears overhead at the equator causing a vernal equinox. And on the 23rd of September we have the autumnal equinox. The vernal equinox is a reference point in western astrology. It represents the first point of Aries and is the point of intersection of the ecliptic with the celestial equator. This point is however moving each year. The zodiac based on the vernal equinox is known as the zodiac of signs (Tropical zodiac). Vedic astrology obtains planetary positions based on the vernal equinox and then applies a correction to this known as the "ayanamsha" (the precession of the equinoxes). In effect, this correction makes the Vedic zodiac have a fixed first point of Aries. The zodiac based on the fixed first point of Aries is known as the zodiac of constellations (Sidereal zodiac). This explains the difference in the Sun sign obtained through Vedic and western astrology. Currently this difference is approximately 23 degrees or within one sign (30 degrees). So one who may be an Aquarius in western astrology, may be a Pisces in Vedic astrology. Note that the western and Vedic calculation would have led to the same results in 285 A.D.

Yet another difference worth noting is that Vedic astrology gives a lot of prominence to the position of the Moon in the zodiac of the constellations as opposed to the position of the Sun in the zodiac of signs. "Janma Nakshatra" refers to the position of the Moon among the twenty-seven constellations. We will see this when we discuss "dashas" below.

The following table details the twelve signs of the zodiac used in both vedic and western astrology along with the "Lordships" ascribed to each in vedic Astrology.

Rashi	Sign	Range (in degrees)	Lordships
Mesha	Aries	0-30	Kuja (Mars)
Vrishabha	Taurus	30-60	Sukra (Venus)
Mithuna	Gemini	60-90	Budha (Mercury)
Karka	Cancer	90-120	Chandra (Moon)
Simha	Leo	120-150	Ravi (Sun)
Kanya	Virgo	150-180	Budha (Mercury)
Tula	Libra	180-210	Sukra (Venus)
Vrischika	Scorpio	210-240	Kuja (Mars)
Dhanu	Sagittarius	240-270	Guru (Jupiter)
Makar	Capricorn	270-300	Sani (Saturn)
Kumbha	Aquarius	300-330	Sani (Saturn)
Meena	Pisces	330-360	Guru (Jupiter)

The twenty-seven nakshatras are Ashwini (Lordship - Ketu), Bharani (Lordship - Venus), Krittika (Lordship - Sun), Rohini (Lordship - Moon), Mrigshira (Lordship - Mars), Ardra (Lordship - Rahu), Punarvasu (Lordship - Jupiter), Pushya (Lordship - Saturn), Ashlesha (Lordship - Mercury), Magha (Lordship - Ketu), Purva Phalguni (Lordship - Venus), Uttar Phalguni (Lordship - Sun), Hasta (Lordship - Moon), Chitra (Lordship - Mars), Svati (Lordship - Rahu), Vishakha (Lordship - Jupiter), Anuradha (Lordship - Saturn), Jyeshtha (Lordship - Mercury), Moola (Lordship - Ketu), Purva Ashadha (Lordship - Venus), Uttara Ashadha (Lordship - Sun), Shravana (Lordship - Moon), Dhanishta (Lordship - Mars), Shatbhishaj (Lordship - Rahu), Purva Bhadrapad (Lordship - Jupiter), Uttar Bhadrapad (Lordship - Saturn) and Revati (Lordship - Mercury).

Since I have already indicated that each nakshatra occupies 13 degrees and 20 mins (or 800 mins), and since Ashwini is the first nakshatra, one can workout the range for each nakshatra.

Basics on casting a horoscope...

The word "Horoscope" is derived from two words "Hora" meaning the hour and "scopos" meaning the watcher. The Horoscope is a chart of the heavens at the time of birth of an individual. It depicts the twelve signs and places the nine planets (discussed above) in houses among these signs. The house numbering, unlike the signs, is determined by the individual's time and place of birth. The Earth moves on its axis from West to the East. This allows each sign and nakshatra to rise on the eastern horizon once every twenty-four hours.

The exact degree of the sign that is rising in the eastern horizon at the time of birth is called the Ascendant or Lagna. This is the first house for the individual. All the other eleven houses are determined with respect to this house in the same order as the signs of the zodiac.

Once the ascendant is determined, the next step involves calculating the position of the nine planets and placing them in appropriate houses. The chart thus obtained is referred to as the "birth chart".

Note that the process for determining the lagna and the position of the planets involves detailed calculations to correct for different years, different localities, application of the ayanamsha, war-

time time corrections, summer time corrections etc. We will not discuss the details of these calculations here, in the interest of brevity.

To help illustrate the layout of a birth chart, I have attached below an example chart with a set of fictitious planetary positions. There are currently three prominent variations in displaying a birth chart. The first is the western style in which the layout is in a circular pattern that perhaps is more reflective of the belt of the zodiac than the other two formats. The second is the north Indian format, in which the planets are represented in rhombi within a rectangular pattern. The third is the south Indian pattern, which is a simple rectangle with the zodiac signs appearing in a clockwise fashion. The merits of each pattern seem to be purely dictated by what one becomes accustomed to. Personally I have a bias toward the south Indian pattern since it was what I was initially introduced to. And hence I have chosen that pattern for the illustrations here.

For the purpose of this illustration, let us assume that we have the following fictitious planetary locations;

Lagna (Ascendant) at 160 degrees and 0 mins
 Sukra (Venus) at 25 degrees and 0 mins
 Ravi (Sun) at 65 degrees and 0 mins
 Chandra (Moon) at 100 degrees and 0 mins
 Kuja (Mars) at 130 degrees and 0 mins
 Rahu (Imaginary) at 160 degrees and 0 mins
 Guru (Jupiter) at 190 degrees and 0 mins
 Sani (Saturn) at 220 degrees and 0 mins
 Budha (Mercury) at 250 degrees and 0 mins
 Ketu (Imaginary) at 310 degrees and 0 mins

Pisces	Aries	Taurus	Gemini
	Venus	Sun	
Aquarius			Cancer
Ketu			Moon
Capricorn			Leo
			Mars
Sagittarius	Scorpio	Libra	Virgo
Mercury	Saturn	Jupiter	Rahu
Ascendent			

We know that the zodiac comprises of the 12 signs starting with Aries and each occupying 30 degrees. We also know that the Ascendant determines the first house for the native. So in this example the Ascendant is at 160 degrees, which would make the native a Virgo ascendant. So Virgo is the first house for this native, Libra is the second house, Scorpio the third and so on.

Venus will be housed in the first sign (Aries) since it is within the 0 - 30 degree range. And Aries happens to be the 8th house for this native.

Similarly one can place the remaining 8 planets in their respective signs and houses. When you complete this exercise, the birth chart, in the south Indian layout, should resemble the attached document.

Each house has a particular relevance in the Jataka skanda of the Jyothisha vedanga. The first house reflects general personality, the sixth house deals with karmic impediments, the ninth house deals with spiritual possibilities etc. So the Jataka skanda deals with the meanings of having a particular house in a particular sign and the effects of planetary interactions between planets in different houses.

Vimshottari Dasha...

Once a horoscope is casted, the position of the planets with respect to their houses and the inter-relation between these positions is the subject of the Jataka skanda of the Jyothisha vedanga. Expert and gifted astrologers can make predictions on the reactions to past karmic events based on this map of the chart of the heavens. However, these charts do not offer an accurate means of predicting when these reactions are scheduled to happen. Many sages have in the past provided many systems to overcome the problem of timing of events. However vedic astrologers appear to agree that of the many systems available, the vimshottari Dasha seems to offer the most accurate results.

Vimshottari literally means "120" in Sanskrit. The vimshottari dasha system follows a cycle of 120 years. Each of the nine planets lord over the twelve signs (approx 3 nakshatras) for a fixed number of years. The table below gives the number of years for each planet.

Planet	Years
Sukra (Venus)	20
Ravi (Sun)	6
Chandra (Moon)	10
Kuja (Mars)	7
Rahu (imaginary)	18
Guru (Jupiter)	16
Sani (Saturn)	19
Budha (Mercury)	17
Ketu (imaginary)	7
Total	120

The first step in calculating the vimshottari dasha for a native's chart is to work out the position of the moon and the corresponding nakshatra in which the moon is located. Then the balance in minutes for that nakshatra to complete from the position of the moon is evaluated. The ratio of this balance and the total range of a nakshatra (constant -13degrees and 20 minutes or 800 minutes) is then multiplied by the number of years corresponding to the planet that rules the nakshatra in which the moon is located. This represents the balance of that planet (or dasha) at the time of birth.

Subsequent dashas will depend on this starting dasha at the time of birth. The cyclical order starting with Venus would be Sukra (Venus), Ravi (Sun), Chandra (Moon), Kuja (Mars), Rahu (imaginary), Guru (Jupiter), Sani (Saturn), Budha (Mercury) and Ketu (imaginary).

Dasha calculation example...

As an example, let us say a native's moon is located at 11S 22d 50m 34s (which reads 11 complete signs and 22 degrees, 50 mins and 34secs into the 12 sign). This is the equivalent of $((((11 * 30) + 22) * 60) + 50) = 21170$ minutes from the first point of Aries.

If we divide this by 800 minutes (range per nakshatra) we will know which nakshatra this belongs in.

=> $21170 / 800 = 26.4625$. (or in other words the moon is in the 27th nakshatra).

The 27th nakshatra starts at $26 * 800 = 20800$ minutes and ends at $(20800 + 800) 21600$ minutes.

For this native the moon is .4625 into the 27th nakshatra.

or in other words, $21170 - 20800 = 370$ minutes into Revati (27th nakshatra).

The Lord of Revati is Budha (Mercury) which has a life of 17 years.

=> $(370 * 17) / 800 = 7.8625$ years of Mercury is completed at the time of birth.

=> balance of mercury at birth is $(17 - 7.8625) = 9.1375$ or 9 years, 1 month and 15.165 days.

So for the native chosen in this example, the individual starts with Budha (Mercury) dasha at birth and then moves on to Ketu dasha at the age of 9. Ketu will last for 7 years and then the native will move to Sukra at the age of 16. Sukra will last for 20 years and then the native will move to Ravi at the age of 36 and so on.

2.4 -Summary

In issues 2.x we attempted to satiate our curiosity about our environment by probing the dimensions of time and space. In the process we recognized that one lifetime on this planet is a rather insignificant amount of time in terms of the life of the demigods and the life of the master engineer of this material universe, Lord Brahma. We also identified the three worlds associated with this material universe namely the higher planetary systems inhabited by the demigods, the middle planetary systems where we find ourselves and the lower planetary systems inhabited by the demons. We distinguished the Spiritual world from the material world and recognized Lord Brahma as the creation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna. And finally we discussed some of the mathematical aspects of the Jyothisha vedanga with the hope of giving us some insight into astronomy and destiny. We also introduced the concept of obligation or "dharma" and discussed the two bona-fide dharmas namely Sanatana dharma and Varna-ashrama dharma.

3. Topics on the Practice of the Science of Self-realization

We will begin issues 3.x by discussing the essence of Vedic thought. Then we will discuss the three modes of nature and how they impact an individual's mind in the quest for self-realization. We will follow that with the need for regulation and the recommend principles for regulating our activities. Then we will discuss the yoga systems. In particular we will discuss Karma yoga (working in devotion), Dhyana yoga (meditation) and finally we will discuss Bhakti yoga (devotional service). Along the way, we will recognize the three stages of God realization namely, Bhraman (all pervading impersonal energy), Paramatma (The Lord within our heart) and Bhagavan (The Supreme Personality of Godhead).

3.1 – Background on The Essence of Vedic thought

Introduction...

The process of self-realization often begins with the genuine and sincere recognition of human mortality and the transience of human life. This recognition leads to questions like, who am I? What is my purpose here? What are my choices in terms of where I go from here? How do I make progress in the direction I wish to take? We will use these set of questions in dictating the objectives and sequence of our discussions in this series. The bulk of the discussion in issues 1.x covered the subject matter related to "who am I?". Issues 2.x gave some indications on the options available in terms of where we can go from here. We discussed the lower planetary systems, the higher planetary systems, the planet of Lord Brahma and the Spiritual World outside of the material universe. In the following issues, we will concentrate on what our purpose is and how we can promote ourselves to the Spiritual Kingdom that is free from the miseries of the material world. We will reach our conclusions primarily by studying and understanding the true relationship of love we share with our Creator, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna. To this end, we will revisit the Bhagavad-Gita and study the discussion between Lord Krishna and His friend and devotee, Arjuna.

As we study the word of God, we realize quickly how considerate and accommodating our Creator is toward us. Time and again we see versus like "O sinless Arjuna, I have already explained that there are two classes of men who try to realize the self. Some are inclined to understand it by empirical, philosophical speculation, and others by devotional service"(BG: 3-3). The Lord always acknowledges that each individual may opt for a different style in the process of self-realization. But He also distinguishes differences in learning styles from mental concoctions designed to justify the desires of lust and false ego. He says "Bewildered by false ego, strength, pride, lust and anger, the demons become envious of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is situated in their own bodies and in the bodies of others, and blaspheme against the real religion. Those who are envious and mischievous, who are the lowest among men, I perpetually cast into the ocean of material existence, into various demoniac species of life. Attaining repeated birth amongst the species of demoniac life, O Son of Kunti, such persons can never approach Me. Gradually they sink down to the most abominable type of existence." (BG: 16.18-20). And so it appears that the primary ingredient required to pursue the process of self-realization is the sincerity in purpose without envy. Friendship and devotion to the Lord is also necessary. In the very beginning Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, "That very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend and can therefore understand the transcendental mystery of this science." (BG: 4.3)

There are some who argue that the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita are tuned to meet the requirements of Arjuna and hence not applicable to people in general. This argument does not hold much merit, especially when one considers the following explicit declaration by Lord Krishna. "I declare that he who studies this sacred conversation of ours worships Me by his intelligence. And one who listens with faith and without envy becomes free from sinful reactions and attains to the auspicious planets where the pious dwell." (BG: 18.70-71). Indeed, the Bhagavad-Gita is the complete text on the process of self-realization, applicable to all humankind. It starts by identifying lust as the source of all miseries. And it concludes by acknowledging devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the only remedy to the miseries of material existence. In between, it accommodates many different paths and practices in recognition of individual style and state. But it leaves no doubt in the final chapter as to what the true destination is meant to be.

The Bhagavad-Gita starts the process of self-realization with the following versus;

Arjuna said: O descendant of Vrsni, by what is one impelled to sinful acts, even unwillingly, as if engaged by force? (BG: 3-36)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: It is lust only, Arjuna, which is born of contact with the material mode of passion and later transformed into wrath, and which is the all-devouring sinful enemy of this world. (BG 3-37)

Therefore, O Arjuna, best of the Bharatas, in the very beginning curb this great symbol of sin [lust] by regulating the senses, and slay this destroyer of knowledge and self-realization. (BG: 3:41)

And the Bhagavad-Gita concludes the process of self-realization with the following verses;

One can understand Me as I am, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of Me by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God. (BG: 18.55)

Though engaged in all kinds of activities, My pure devotee, under My protection, reaches the eternal and imperishable abode by My grace. (BG:18.56)

In all activities just depend upon Me and work always under My protection. In such devotional service, be fully conscious of Me. (BG: 18.57)

If you become conscious of Me, you will pass over all the obstacles of conditioned life by My grace. If, however, you do not work in such consciousness but act through false ego, not hearing Me, you will be lost. (BG: 18.58)

Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend. (BG: 18.65)

Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear. (BG: 18.66)

The Yoga Systems...

A brief summary on the different yoga systems will allow a novice reader to get some perspective to better place the school of thought that we are presenting in this series. Unfortunately my knowledge on comparative yoga systems is anecdotal at best. But I will share my thoughts with the hope that those who are more familiar will be able to guide us along the way.

Yoga means to connect with the Supreme. The different yoga systems offer different processes to connect with the Supreme. If one were to attempt to categorize yoga systems, in a broad sense, there are possibly four yoga systems that are prominent. These are **Karma Yoga** (Yoga of work or action), **Jnana Yoga** (Yoga of empirical analysis), **Raja Yoga** (Yoga of self-control) and **Bhakti Yoga** (Yoga of devotional service to the Lord). However, when one studies commentaries on Yoga systems, this categorization can get cloudy very quickly with additional nomenclature that may refer to systems that belong to the periphery of these four categories or systems that are a combination of elements within the scope of these four categories.

The fundamental premise of Vedic knowledge relates to distinguishing the body from the soul (subjects covered in issues 1.x of this series). This sort of knowledge is often referred to as **Sankhya yoga** (Yoga of Knowledge) and is applicable to all the four categories discussed above.

The most common practice of Raja yoga is the **Astanga yoga** of Pathanjali. This is an eight-fold yoga system that attempts to take an individual through abstinence (**Yama**), observance (**Niyama**), exercise and posture (**Asana**), energy control (**Pranayama**), abstraction (**Prathyahara**), concentration (**Dharana**), meditation (**Dhyana**) and finally complete absorption in the Lord's energy (**Samadhi**). Each of these stages are also referred to as yoga systems in their own right.

Jnana yoga mostly takes the form of self-analysis through a process of eliminating possibilities of what could be considered reality. This process is commonly called the "Neti-Neti" process, which literally means "I am not this", "I am not that" and "I am not the other". There is also a meditative aspect to jnana yoga that is called Vijana yoga. Due to this meditative aspect of Jnana yoga, commentaries on yoga systems may lump Jnana and Dhyana (meditation under the Astanga yoga system) together.

Chanting of a particular mantra may be considered a yoga system in its own right. This is referred to as the Mantra yoga system. But most yoga systems will acknowledge some sound vibration as part of that yoga process and in that sense, the mantra yoga system is an element of all yoga systems.

Yet another yoga system is the Laya yoga system. This deals with revealing energy points in the spine and the head. This revelation is expected to open the way to higher realizations. In one sense this yoga system would fall under Raja yoga because self-control is a big part of this process.

Then there is Tantra yoga that deals with an attempt to expand the horizons of consciousness in an attempt to connect with the mother of the universe. There are meditative aspects as well as self-control associated with this yoga system.

Hatha yoga is essentially a yoga system designed for the health and well being of the individual. Some consider this as valid yoga system for connecting with the energy of the Lord, but most seem to use it to better the condition of the body.

Some yoga systems like Kundalini and Kriya are considered to be explicit combinations of other yoga systems. Kriya is a harmonious combination of Raja, Jnana and Bhakti.

I hope that above summary gives some perspective on commonly practiced yoga systems.

3.2 - Modes of material nature

Summary...

In this issue Lord Krishna reveals the three modes of nature namely goodness, passion and ignorance. He indicates that the mode of goodness elevates the soul to the higher planets, while the mode of passion keeps the soul in the earthly planets and the mode of ignorance demotes the soul to the lower planets. Lord Krishna also indicates that one who clearly sees that no other performer is at work than the modes of nature knows the Supreme Lord and that one who transcends all the modes of material nature actually attains the spiritual nature.

Srila Prabhupada discusses this revelation by indicating that while aspiring for the mode of goodness is certainly worthy of merit, there is the risk of becoming complacent and hence becoming bound to the material nature without transcending to the spiritual nature. His desire is that we transcend the modes of material nature and attain the spiritual nature.

Lord Krishna reveals...

It should be understood that all species of life, O son of Kunti, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father. (BG: 14.4)

Material nature consists of three modes - goodness, passion and ignorance. When the eternal living entity comes in contact with nature, O might-armed Arjuna, he becomes conditioned by these modes. (BG: 14.5)

O sinless one, the mode of goodness, being purer than the others, is illuminating, and it frees one from all sinful reactions. Those situated in that mode become conditioned by a sense of happiness and knowledge. (BG: 14.6)

The mode of passion is born of unlimited desires and longings, O son of Kunti, and because of this the embodied living entity is bound to material fruitive actions. (BG: 14.7)

O son of Bharata, know that the mode of darkness, born of ignorance, is the delusion of all embodied living entities. The results of this mode are madness, indolence and sleep, which bind the conditioned soul. (BG: 14.8)

O son of Bharata, the mode of goodness conditions one to happiness; passion conditions one to fruitive action; and ignorance, covering one's knowledge, binds one to madness. (BG: 14.9)

Sometimes the mode of goodness becomes prominent, defeating the modes of passion and ignorance, O son of Bharata. Sometimes the mode of passion defeats goodness and ignorance, and at other times ignorance defeats goodness and passion. In this way there is always competition for supremacy. (BG: 14.10)

The manifestations of the mode of goodness can be experienced when all the gates of the body are illuminated by knowledge. (BG: 14.11)

O chief of the Bharatas, when there is an increase in the mode of passion the symptoms of great attachment, fruitive activity, intense endeavor, and uncontrollable desire and hankering develop. (BG: 14.12)

When there is an increase in the mode of ignorance, O son of Kuru, darkness, inertia, madness and illusion are manifested. (BG: 14.13)

When one dies in the mode of goodness, he attains to the pure higher planets of the great sages. (BG: 14.14)

When one dies in the mode of passion, he takes birth among those engaged in fruitive activities; and when one dies in the mode of ignorance, he takes birth in the animal kingdom. (BG: 14.15)

The result of pious action is pure and is said to be in the mode of goodness. But action done in the mode of passion results in misery, and action performed in the mode of ignorance results in foolishness. (BG: 14.16)

From the mode of goodness, real knowledge develops; from the mode of passion, greed develops; and from the mode of ignorance develops foolishness, madness and illusion. (BG: 14.17)

Those situated in the mode of goodness go upward to the higher planets; those in the mode of passion live on the earthly planets; and those in the abominable mode of ignorance go down to the hellish worlds. (BG: 14.18)

When one properly sees that in all activities no other performer is at work than these modes of nature and he knows the Supreme Lord, who is transcendental to all these modes, he attains My spiritual nature. (BG: 14.19)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

If one understands the subject matter discussed here through the process of philosophical speculation, he will come to an understanding of devotional service. In the thirteenth chapter of Bhagavad-Gita, it is clearly explained that by humbly developing knowledge one may possibly be freed from material entanglement. Here it is explained that it is due to association with the modes of nature that the living entity is entangled in this material world.

After acquiring perfect transcendental knowledge, one acquires qualitative equality with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, becoming free from the repetition of birth and death. One does not, however, lose his identity as an individual soul.

The living entity, because he is transcendental, has nothing to do with this material nature. Still, because he has become conditioned by the material nature, he is acting under the spell of the three modes of material nature. Because living entities have different kinds of bodies, in terms of the different aspects of nature, they are induced to act according to that nature. This is the cause of the varieties of happiness and distress.

A man in the mode of goodness is not so much affected by material miseries, and he has a sense of advancement in material knowledge. The difficulty here is that when a living entity is situated in the mode of goodness he becomes conditioned to feel that he is advanced in knowledge and is better than others. In this way he becomes conditioned. The best examples are the scientist and the philosopher. Each is very proud of his knowledge, and because they generally improve their

living conditions, they feel a sort of material happiness. This sense of advanced happiness in conditioned life makes them bound by the mode of goodness of material nature. Thus there is no likelihood of liberation, or of being transferred to the spiritual world. Repeatedly one may become a philosopher, a scientist or a poet, and repeatedly become entangled in the same disadvantages of birth and death. But, due to the illusion of the material energy, one thinks that that sort of life is pleasant.

The mode of passion is characterized by the attraction between man and woman. Woman has attraction for man, and man has attraction for woman. This is called the mode of passion. And when the mode of passion is increased, one develops the hankering for material enjoyment. He wants to enjoy sense gratification. For sense gratification, a man in the mode of passion wants some honor in society, or in the nation, and he wants to have a happy family, with nice children, wife and house. These are products of the mode of passion. As long as one is hankering after these things, he has to work very hard. Therefore it is clearly stated here that he becomes associated with the fruits of his activities and thus becomes bound by such activities.

The mode of ignorance is just the opposite of the mode of goodness. Everyone under the spell of the mode of ignorance becomes mad, and a madman cannot understand what is what. Instead of making advancement, one becomes degraded. For example, everyone can see that his grandfather has died and therefore he will also die; man is mortal. So death is sure. Still, people are madly accumulating money and working very hard all day and night, not caring for the eternal spirit. This is madness. In their madness, they are very reluctant to make advancement in spiritual understanding.

This body is often referred to as the city of nine gates. There are nine gates namely, two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, the genitals and the anus. When every gate is illuminated by the symptoms of goodness, it should be understood that one has developed the mode of goodness.

One can transcend all the activities of the modes of material nature simply by understanding them properly by learning from the proper souls. The real spiritual master is Krishna and He is imparting this spiritual knowledge to Arjuna. Similarly, it is from those who are fully in Krishna consciousness that one has to learn this science of activities in terms of the modes of nature. Otherwise, one's life will be misdirected. By the instruction of a bona fide spiritual master, a living entity can know of his spiritual position, his material body, his senses, how he is entrapped, and how he is under the spell of the material modes of nature.

3.3 - Regulative principles

Introduction...

If there has been one prevalent theme to hold on to in the issues thus far, I hope it is this concept that both the spiritual energy and the material energy emanate from the Supreme personality of Godhead and that we as marginal energies have the option to associate with either the spiritual or the material energy. However there are consequences for the choice we opt for and these consequences are policed by the laws of Karma (action and reaction). The Lord situated within us is a constant witness to our desires, our actions and our restraints. There is nothing that escapes His notice. For one who is conscious of this reality, the sincerity of purpose is a natural consequence. Such an individual is no longer guided by the thoughts and opinions of those around the individual. Nor is such an individual tempted to satiate the craving to gain acceptance and recognition among the peers. Instead the individual is engaged in a constant dialog with the Supreme Personality of Godhead discussing the limitations brought upon by many lifetimes of material conditioning.

The regulative principles are guidelines that help us navigate toward the spiritual energies of the Lord. Much like the societal laws that offer guidelines to ensure that the actions of one individual do not encroach on the freedoms of another individual, the regulative principles offer guidelines on limiting the karmic impediments of our conscious actions. These guidelines should not be seen as a criteria defining who can or cannot pursue the spiritual path, but instead they must be understood in the spirit for which they exist - to limit our individual karmic impediments. For one who recognizes this spirit, there is no need to dilute guidelines to accommodate one's current material conditioning. Rather the regulative principles offer a bar to aspire for.

Ultimately the spiritual sojourn is an individual journey during which one develops a loving relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. While we can get directions from those who have taken this path ahead of us, the obligation to walk the path is one that falls on the individual soul. And as we walk, we have a further obligation to share the path with those souls who are searching. Some of these souls will debate the merits of the path we have taken, others will embrace it, and yet other will ridicule it. We should remain undisturbed though it all, for as the Lord will point out in our study of the yoga processes, the results of our efforts do not belong to us. They belong to Him, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Our rights are limited to performing our duties. This duty of sharing the path is a simple one. It involves feeding the hungry and sharing the transcendental knowledge of learning to love the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We must ask for nothing in return – not honor, not wealth, not glory, not even a following.

One of the many stumbling blocks in the path of those who debate the teachings of the Lord is an inherent interest to defend one institution of faith over another. In my opinion, this urge is born out of a failure to recognize the true purpose of religious institutions. Institutions of faith are a meeting place where directions to the Lord are discussed. They are centers for education. They are centers where the hungry can drop by for a meal. They are centers where we can practice worship. For as long as they are serving these purposes, they hold merit and we must support them all without discrimination. But when institutions of faith become a breeding ground for those seeking power and fame, we must take leave for they can no longer help us. This is the criteria we must use to discriminate institutions of relevance from institutions that fail live up to the promise for which they are established. To defend on any other basis, in my opinion, is unworthy of rational thought.

In this issue we present the four regulative principles widely accepted in Vedic philosophy, along with the scriptural references to the merits of the restraints imposed by these regulative principles.

Summary...

In issue 2.3 we were privy to the discussion between mother earth in the form of a cow and the personality of religion in the form of a bull at the dawn of the age of Kali. Toward the end of this encounter, Maharaj Pariksit rides into the scene and decides to punish the personality of Kali who was engaged in hurting the personality of religion. Maharaj Pariksit was so angry that he decided to kill the personality of Kali. When the personality of Kali recognized that the King was willing to kill him, he completely surrendered to the King and begged for mercy requesting some place where he may live permanently. Out of compassion, the King then decided not to kill but instead asked the personality of Kali to flee from that part of his kingdom where religious principles are strictly observed. The King then offered the personality of Kali residence in places where gambling, intoxication, prostitution and animal slaughter were performed. The personality of Kali then pleaded for one more place to stay. And to this request the King obliged by allowing Kali to stay where there was gold, since where there is gold there is also gambling, intoxication, prostitution, animal slaughter, envy and enmity.

This ruling by Maharaj Pariksit effectively offers the regulative principles to abide by. Srila Prabhupada reiterates these guidelines by instructing us on the importance of following these principles. The four regulative principles are as follows;

1) **No gambling**: Engaging in gambling leads to many undesired consequences that impact both the individual and the society. Despite the clear consequences of gambling, sadly our modern leaderships encourage this activity because it generates short term gains in taxes.

2) **No intoxication**: In issue 1.4 we studied the fickle nature of the mind. It is said that even in the best of circumstances, the mind is harder to control than the wind. The mind is entrusted with the responsibility of judgment in a battle between the senses and the consciousness. Any form of intoxication impairs judgment and consequently adversely impacts an already difficult situation. So strict was Srila Prabhupada's direction that he spoke against not just alcohol but tea and coffee.

3) **No illicit sex**: The only form of contraception that Srila Prabhupada advocated was abstinence. Sex was for the purpose of procreation, he argued. Misuse of this sense would degenerate society and lead to unwanted progeny.

4) **No meat eating**: The consumption of Meat, fish and eggs is also forbidden. Animal slaughter for the purpose of gratifying the urges of the tongue, lead to karmic impediments. For those who cannot restrain themselves, the recommendation is to engage in regulated sacrificial rituals that explicitly recognize this weakness and seek strength from the Supreme Personality of Godhead to overcome this urge.

For those interested in the discussion between Maharaj Pariksit and the personality of Kali, I have transcribed the relevant versus below along with a purport by Srila Prabhupada.

Maharaj Pariksit punishes the personality of Kali...

Maharaj Pariksit, who could fight one thousand enemies single-handedly, thus pacified the personality of religion and the earth. Then he took up his sword to kill the personality of Kali, who is the cause of all irreligion. (SB 1.17.28)

When the personality of Kali understood that the King was willing to kill him, he at once abandoned the dress of a king and, under pressure of fear, completely surrendered to him, bowing his head. (SB 1.17.29)

Maharaj Pariksit, who was qualified to accept surrender and worthy of being sung in history, did not kill the poor surrendered and fallen Kali, but smiled compassionately, for he was kind to the poor. (SB 1.17.30)

The King thus said: We have inherited the fame of Arjuna; therefore since you have surrendered yourself with folded hands you need not fear for your life. But you cannot remain in my kingdom, for you are the friend of irreligion (SB 1.17.31)

If the personality of Kali, irreligion, is allowed to act as a man-god or an executive head, certainly irreligious principles like greed, falsehood, robbery, incivility, treachery, misfortune, cheating, quarrel and vanity will abound. (SB 1.17.32)

Therefore, O friend of irreligion, you do not deserve to remain in a place where experts perform sacrifices according to truth and religious principles for the satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (SB 1.17.33)

In all sacrificial ceremonies, although sometimes a demigod is worshiped, the Supreme Lord Personality of Godhead is worshiped because He is the Supersoul of everyone, and exists both inside and outside like the air. Thus it is He only who awards all welfare to the worshiper. (SB 1.17.34)

Sri Suta Gosvami said: The personality of Kali, thus being ordered by Maharaj Pariksit, began to tremble in fear. Seeing the King before him like Yamaraja (superintendent of death), ready to kill him, Kali spoke to the King as follows. (SB 1.17.35)

O Your Majesty, though I may live anywhere and everywhere under your order, I shall but see you with bow and arrows wherever I look. (SB 1.17.36)

Therefore, O chief amongst the protectors of religion, please fix some place for me where I can live permanently under the protection of your government. (SB 1.17.37)

Suta Gosvami said: Maharaj Pariksit, thus being petitioned by the personality of Kali, gave him permission to reside in places where gambling, drinking, prostitution and animal slaughter were performed. (SB 1.17.38)

The personality of Kali asked for something more, and because of his begging, the King gave him permission to live where there is gold because wherever there is gold there is also falsity, intoxication, lust, envy and enmity. (SB 1.17.39)

Thus the personality of Kali, by the direction of Maharaj Pariksit, the son of Uttara, was allowed to live in those five places. (SB 1.17.40)

Therefore, whoever desires progressive well-being, especially kings, religionists, public leaders, brahmanas and sannyasis, should never come in contact with the four above-mentioned irreligious principles. (SB 1.17.41)

Thereafter the King reestablished the lost legs of the personality of religion [the bull], and by encouraging activities he sufficiently improved the condition of the earth. (SB 1.17.42)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

The basic principles of irreligion, such as pride, prostitution, intoxication and falsehood, counteract the four principles of religion, namely austerity, cleanliness, mercy and truthfulness. The personality of Kali was given permission to live in four places particularly mentioned by the King, namely the place of gambling, the place of prostitution, the place of drinking and the place of animal slaughter.

Srila Jiva Gosvami directs that drinking against the principles of scripture, such as sautramani-yajna, association with women outside marriage, and killing animals against the injunctions of scripture are irreligious. In the Vedas two different types of injunctions are there for the pravrttas, or those who are engaged in material enjoyment, and for the nivrttas, or those who are liberated from material bondage. The Vedic injunction for the pravrttas is to gradually regulate their activities towards the path of liberation. Therefore, for those who are in the lowest stage of ignorance and who indulge in wine, women, flesh, drinking by performing sautramani-yajna, association of women by marriage and flesh-eating by sacrifices are sometimes recommended. Such recommendations in the Vedic literature are meant for a particular class of men, and not for all. But because they are injunctions of the Vedas for particular types of persons, such activities by the pravrttas are not considered adharmā. One man's food may be poison for others; similarly, what is recommended for those in the mode of ignorance may be poison for those in the mode of goodness. Srila Jiva Gosvami Prabhu, therefore affirms that recommendations in the scriptures for a certain class of men are never to be considered adharmā, or irreligious. But such activities are factually adharmā, and they are never to be encouraged. The recommendations in the scriptures are not meant for the encouragement of such adharmā, but for regulating the necessary adharmā gradually toward the path of dharma.

Following in the footsteps of Maharaj Parikṣit, it is the duty of all executive heads of states to see that the principles of religion, namely austerity, cleanliness, mercy and truthfulness, are established in the state, and that the principles of irreligion, namely pride, illicit female association or prostitution, intoxication and falsity, are checked by all means. And to make the best use of a bad bargain, the personality of Kali may be transferred to places of gambling, drinking, prostitution and slaughterhouses, if there are any places like that. Those who are addicted to these irreligious habits may be regulated by the injunctions of the scripture. In no circumstances should they be encouraged by any state. In other words, the state should categorically stop all sorts of gambling, drinking, prostitution and falsity.

3.4 - Karma Yoga

Summary...

Continuing with our theme on detaching from the material energy and attaching to the spiritual energy, in this issue we discuss the yoga process related to working. In the beginning a person in the mode of ignorance may not find it necessary to work to satisfy the senses. Such a person may justify stealing as a valid way of making a living. Slowly one recognizes that earning a decent living to satisfy one's needs is better than stealing. That sets the stage for the next level of development which is to identify why we are entangled in work life. We recognize that the reason for this is because we have lost control over our needs and desires. We have become slaves to the senses. At this stage we try to regulate the needs of the senses by practicing the regulative principles described in the previous issue. But practicing regulation by simply restraining the senses becomes a miserable existence. Regulation only works when the mind changes its focus from the material activities to the spiritual activities. For one who adopts this approach with determinism, the material needs of the individual decreases in due course and that gives way to offering more of one's activities to the Lord in sacrifice. Work done as a sacrifice to the Lord is not subject to the bondage of karmic reaction. Work done to satisfy the senses, however, is subject to karmic reactions. So Karma yoga is the process of gradually switching from work done to satisfy the senses to work done as a service to the Lord.

In this issue Lord Krishna, The Supreme Personality of Godhead, recommends the performance of prescribed duties for all souls irrespective of their stage in the process of self-realization. He goes on to add that He, Lord Krishna, Himself engages in performing prescribed duties. Though the act of performing prescribed duties may appear to be the same for everyone, Lord Krishna explains that the true purpose behind this action will vary and is a function of our stage in the process of self-realization. A fully self-realized person will not have any material desires to fulfill. So in that respect a fully self-realized person has no need to perform any activity. But still he performs prescribed duties to fulfill two obligations; the first obligation is to offer work as a sacrifice to the Lord and the second obligation is to guide the ignorant by example. The other end of the spectrum involves those individuals in the mode of ignorance. Such individuals will be engaged in prescribed duties out of attachment for the results of such activities and with no other purpose in mind. Lord Krishna instructs us not to disrupt such individuals by asking them to stop working but rather to gradually introduce them to act in the spirit of devotion to the Lord.

Srila Prabhupada discusses this revelation on Karma yoga by making four points. First he discusses the need to be satisfied with whatever the Lord has offered us and not to exercise greed and jealousy. Then he discusses the merits of human existence in terms of its advanced consciousness and equates the ignorance of the spiritual dimension in mankind to animal life. Then he makes the point that the only way one can detach from the material energy is by attaching to the spiritual energy of the Lord. To attempt to detach from the material energy without attaching to the spiritual energy is miserable existence, he argues. And finally he talks about the highest level of realization that can be achieved by philosophical speculation. This level, he insists, is a realization that the Lord is the impersonal all pervading energy (Brahman).

Lord Krishna reveals...

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: O sinless Arjuna, I have already explained that there are two classes of men who try to realize the self. Some are inclined to understand it by empirical, philosophical speculation, and others by devotional service. (BG: 3.3)

Not by merely abstaining from work can one achieve freedom from reaction, nor by renunciation alone can one attain perfection. (BG:3.4)

Everyone is forced to act helplessly according to the qualities he has acquired from the modes of material nature; therefore no one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment. (BG: 3.5)

One who restrains the senses of action but whose mind dwells on sense objects certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender. (BG: 3.6)

On the other hand, if a sincere person tries to control the active senses by the mind and begins karma-yoga [in Krishna consciousness] without attachment, he is by far superior. (BG: 3.7)

Perform your prescribed duty, for doing so is better than not working. One cannot even maintain one's physical body without work. (BG: 3.8)

Work done as a sacrifice for Vishnu has to be performed, otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kunti, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage. (BG: 3.9)

A self-realized man has no purpose to fulfill in the discharge of his prescribed duties, nor has he any reason not to perform such work. Nor has he any need to depend on any other living being. (BG: 3.18)

Therefore, without being attached to the fruits of activities, one should act as a matter of duty, for by working without attachment one attains the Supreme. (BG: 3.19)

Kings such as Janaka attained perfection solely by performance of prescribed duties. Therefore, just for the sake of educating the people in general, you should perform your work. (BG: 3.20)

Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues. (BG: 3.21)

O son of Partha, there is no work prescribed for Me within all the three planetary systems. Nor am I in want of anything, nor have I a need to obtain anything - and yet I am engaged in prescribed duties. (BG: 3.22)

For if I ever failed to engage in carefully performing prescribed duties, O Partha, certainly all men would follow My path. (BG: 3.23)

If I did not perform prescribed duties, all these worlds would be put to ruination. I would be the cause of creating unwanted population, and I would thereby destroy the peace of all living being. (BG: 3.24)

As the ignorant perform their duties with attachment to results, the learned may similarly act, but without attachment, for the sake of leading people on the right path. (BG: 3.25)

So as not to disrupt the minds of ignorant men attached to the fruitive results of prescribed duties, a learned person should not induce them to stop work. Rather, by working in the spirit of devotion, he should engage them in all sorts of activities [for the gradual development of Krishna consciousness]. (BG: 3.26)

The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature. (BG: 3.27)

One who is in knowledge of the Absolute Truth, O might-armed, does not engage himself in the senses and sense gratification, knowing well the differences between work in devotion and work for fruitive results. (BG: 3.28)

Bewildered by the modes of material nature, the ignorant fully engage themselves in material activities and become attached. But the wise should not unsettle them, although these duties are inferior due to the performers' lack of knowledge. (BG: 3.29)

Therefore, O Arjuna, surrendering all your works unto Me, with full knowledge of Me, without desires for profit, with no claims to proprietorship, and free from lethargy, fight. (BG: 3.30)

Those persons who execute their duties according to My injunctions and who follow this teaching faithfully, without envy, become free from the bondage of fruitive actions. (BG: 3.31)

But those who, out of envy, disregard these teachings and do not follow them are to be considered bereft of all knowledge, befooled, and ruined in their endeavors for perfection. (BG: 3.32)

Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish? (BG: 3.33)

There are principles to regulate attachment and aversion pertaining to the senses and their objects. One should not come under the control of such attachment and aversion, because they are stumbling blocks on the path of self-realization. (BG: 3.34)

It is far better to discharge one's prescribed duties, even though faultily, than another's duties perfectly. Destruction in the course of performing one's own duty is better than engaging in another's duties, for to follow another's path is dangerous. (BG: 3.35)

Arjuna said: O Krishna, first of all You ask me to renounce work, and then again You recommend work with devotion. Now will You kindly tell me definitely which of the two is more beneficial? (BG: 5.1)

The Personality of Godhead replied: The renunciation of work and work in devotion are both good for liberation. But of the two, work in devotion is better than renunciation of work. (BG: 5.2)

One who neither hates nor desires the fruits of his activities is known to be always renounced. Such a person, free from all dualities, easily overcomes material bondage and is completely liberated, O mighty-armed Arjuna. (BG: 5.3)

Only the ignorant speak of devotional service [Karma-yoga] as being different from the analytical study of the material world [Sankhya]. Those who are actually learned say that he who applies himself well to one of these paths achieves the results of both. (BG: 5.4)

One who knows that the position reached by means of analytical study can also be attained by devotional service, and who therefore sees analytical study and devotional service to be on the same level, sees things as they are. (BG: 5.5)

Merely renouncing all activities yet not engaging in the devotional service of the Lord cannot make one happy. But a thoughtful person engaged in devotional service can achieve the Supreme without delay. (BG: 5.6)

One who performs his duty without attachment, surrendering the results unto the Supreme Lord, is unaffected by sinful action, as the lotus leaf is untouched by water. (BG: 5.10)

The steadily devoted soul attains unadulterated peace because he offers the results of all activities to Me; whereas a person who is not in union with the Divine, who is greedy for the fruits of his labor, becomes entangled. (BG: 5.12)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

The problems with work life in the material world are greed, jealousy and competition. One man sees that another is a millionaire and so he is thinking I must also be a millionaire. Both are fighting with each other for greater profit. This sort of fighting will never offer a solution. This sort of fighting is called the material disease. The real solution can only be reached when an individual is satisfied with what he can make without too much strain. Of course he must try to do his best in a job, but not at the expense of the main purpose which is to progress the situation of the soul. One must understand that one does not have to go chasing after profit. One should simply graciously accept profit, when it comes his way just like one is forced to accept misery when it comes one's way. No one is going around looking for misery. But misery is coming to people. They have to accept it. The same should apply to profit. It is like in a hospital where two patients are sleeping in beds next to each other. One patient is offered nice food stuff while the other is on a restricted diet based on the order of the doctor. The two are trying to fight different diseases. So one can enjoy good food because good food does not affect that disease. But for the other, good food makes the situation worse. So the doctor is offering this recommendation and the hospital is policing this order. Similarly Krishna is making arrangements for both the rich and the poor. And the law of Karma is enforcing this arrangement. One must simply be satisfied with whatever arrangement Krishna is providing and then the situation in the material world will improve. Not any other way. When one is Krishna conscious, it does not mean that from that point on that person will always be materially successful. To be Krishna conscious means to be able to accept success and failure with grace and without getting disturbed. Always saying whatever Krishna chooses let it be. That is Krishna consciousness.

Actually the original reason for the material existence is also this very problem. We were jealous about Krishna. We wanted to compete with Krishna. In reality we don't belong to the material world. We belong to the spiritual world. But Krishna has sent us to prison in the material world, because we did not have good intentions. It is just like our prison house in our cities. The government does not want its citizens to end up in prison. But out of necessity it has to send the disobedient to prison. Similarly Krishna does not want us here. But our actions do not leave Him any alternative. Now that we are here we must change this behavior and go back home, back to Godhead. Instead we are simply carrying on this business of greed, jealousy and competition. Even among family members, when one brother is prosperous the other brother is jealous. This is the material disease. Unless you can cure this disease, the situation is going to get worse.

Human civilization means a rare opportunity for correction. Human means advanced state of consciousness. So we must use this very rare opportunity to make progress on our journey back

home, back to Godhead. But if we simply show interest in eating, sleeping and sex life, then we are just like the animals. The animals don't have any religion or educational institution. They are simply enjoying sense pleasure and then dying. They cannot understand the full picture. But as humans we have to first learn ourselves and then teach others. That is the purpose of this Krishna consciousness movement. We are revealing this mystery of life so everybody can benefit. We are not saying come to our temple and pay some money and we will do some show business for you and then you can go home. This institution is not for profit. This institution is for education. We want you to come to the temple see how devotees are getting so much pleasure from doing Deity worship and then we want you to go home and start a little temple at your house so you can also get the same benefit. That is the purpose of this institution, to teach people the philosophy and how to practice the philosophy.

Of course, when we ask people to reduce their taste for the material way of life, we have to offer something in exchange. It is like asking me to vacate this room. I cannot vacate this room unless you give me another room to live in. Similarly when we say you have to give up the material energy or maya we have to offer an alternative. The alternative is Krishna consciousness. Karma yoga means working in Krishna consciousness. One who is working in Krishna consciousness is always dovetailing all his activities for Krishna. Whatever you do, do it as an offering to the Lord. Krishna does not say that you should stop working and go to some mountain. No. He says we must work to maintain the body. Depending on the stage of realization of the Lord our work may be purely to satisfy our senses or to guide others on how work can be done as an offering to the Lord. Krishna is explaining this concept very clearly to Arjuna in this chapter. Simply trying to detach without attaching to something else is misery. So renunciation must be understood as leaving the material energy to engage in the spiritual energy. Krishna is clearly explaining that if we simply restrain the senses we will not be successful because the mind will not be restrained. So the solution is to engage the mind in Krishna consciousness.

Philosophical speculation is accepted by Lord Krishna as a valid starting point in the process of self-realization. But the highest level of God realization that can be reached by this process is the impersonal Brahman realization. One cannot understand the Lord within (Paramatma) or The Supreme Personality of Godhead (Bhagavan) by philosophical speculation.

3.5 - Dhyana Yoga

Summary...

In this issue Lord Krishna reveals the process of Dhyana yoga. He discusses the very strict rules and regulations that apply to the process of meditation. He discusses at length the settings that are required for the practice of meditation. After listening attentively to these revelations, Arjuna indicates that the process being described is impractical since controlling the mind is more difficult than controlling the wind. The Lord acknowledges the difficulty but indicates that it is possible through suitable practice.

Srila Prabhupada discusses this revelation by acknowledging dhyana yoga as a legitimate stage in spiritual progress. He indicates that the goal of all yoga systems is to finally attain to bhakti-yoga or devotional service. However to fully understand the minute details of devotional service, one has to go through the systems of karma yoga, jnana yoga, dhyana yoga and finally reach Bhakti yoga. Srila Prabhupada states that the most suitable practice that is required to make progress in any yoga system is the process of Krishna consciousness and hence the process of chanting the Holy names of the Lord and engaging in serving the Lord is an essential requirement in making progress in yoga systems. Srila Prabhupada further adds that the highest level of realization one attains through the process of meditation is the localized Paramatma realization (The Lord within the heart).

Lord Krishna reveals...

Shutting out all external sense objects, keeping the eyes and vision concentrated between the two eyebrows, suspending the inward and outward breaths within the nostrils, and thus controlling the mind, senses and intelligence, the transcendentalist aiming at liberation becomes free from desire, fear and anger. One who is always in this state is certainly liberated. (BG: 5.27-28)

A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries. (BG: 5.29)

What is called renunciation you should know to be the same as yoga, or linking oneself with the Supreme, O son of Pandu, for one can never become a yogi unless he renounces the desire for sense gratification. (BG: 6.2)

For one who is a neophyte in the eightfold yoga system, work is said to be the means; and for one who is already elevated in yoga, cessation of all material activities is said to be the means. (BG: 6.3)

One must deliver himself with the help of his mind, and not degrade himself. The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well. (BG: 6.5)

For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy. (BG: 6.6)

To practice yoga, one should go to a secluded place and should lay kusa grass on the ground and then cover it with a deer skin and a soft cloth. The seat should be neither too high nor too low and should be situated in a sacred place. The yogi should then sit on it very firmly and practice yoga to purify the heart by controlling his mind, senses and activities and fixing the mind on one point. (BG: 6.11-12)

One should hold one's body, neck and head erect in a straight line and stare steadily at the tip of the nose. Thus, with an unagitated, subdued mind, devoid of fear, completely free from sex life, one should meditate upon Me within the heart and make Me the ultimate goal of life. (BG: 6.13-14)

Thus practicing constant control of the body, mind and activities, the mystic transcendentalist, his mind regulated, attains to the kingdom of God [or the abode of Krishna] by cessation of material existence. (BG: 6.15)

There is no possibility of one's becoming a yogi, O Arjuna, if one eats too much or eats too little, sleeps too much or does not sleep enough. (BG: 6.16)

He who is regulated in his habits of eating, sleeping, recreation and work can mitigate all material pains by practicing the yoga system. (BG: 6.17)

When the yogi, by practice of yoga, disciplines his mental activities and becomes situated in transcendence - devoid of all material desires - he is said to be well established in yoga. (BG: 6.18)

As a lamp in a windless place does not waver, so the transcendentalist, whose mind is controlled, remains always steady in his meditation on the transcendent self. (BG: 6.19)

In the stage of perfection called trance, or samadhi, one's mind is completely restrained from material mental activities by practice of yoga. This perfection is characterized by one's ability to see the self by the pure mind and to relish and rejoice in the self. In that joyous state, one is situated in boundless transcendental happiness, realized through transcendental senses. Established thus, one never departs from the truth, and upon gaining this he thinks there is no greater gain. Being situated in such a position, one is never shaken, even in the midst of greatest difficulty. This indeed is actual freedom from all miseries arising from material contact. (BG: 6.20-23)

One should engage oneself in the practice of yoga with determination and faith and not be deviated from the path. One should abandon, without exception, all material desires born of mental speculation and thus control all the senses on all sides by the mind. (BG: 6.24)

Gradually, step by step, one should become situated in trance by means of intelligence sustained by full conviction, and thus the mind should be fixed on the self alone and should think of nothing else. (BG: 6.25)

From wherever the mind wanders due to its flickering and unsteady nature, one must certainly withdraw it and bring it back under the control of the self. (BG: 6.26)

The yogi whose mind is fixed on Me verily attains the highest perfection of transcendental happiness. He is beyond the mode of passion, he realizes his qualitative identity with the Supreme, and thus he is freed from all reactions to past deeds. (BG: 6.27)

Thus the self-controlled yogi, constantly engaged in yoga practice, becomes free from all material contamination and achieves the highest stage of perfect happiness in transcendental loving service to the Lord. (BG: 6.28)

Such a yogi, who engages in the worshipful service of the Supersoul, knowing that I and the Supersoul are one, remains always in Me in all circumstances. (BG: 6.31)

Arjuna said: O Madhusudana, the system of yoga which You have summarized appears impractical and unendurable to me, for the mind is restless and unsteady. (BG: 6.33)

For the mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate and very strong, O Krishna, and to subdue it, I think, is more difficult than controlling the wind. (BG: 6.34)

Lord Sri Krishna said: O mighty-armed son of Kunti, it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by suitable practice and by detachment. (BG: 6.35)

A yogi is greater than the ascetic, greater than the empiricist and greater than the fruitive worker. Therefore, O Arjuna, in all circumstances, be a yogi. (BG: 6.46)

And of all yogis, the one with great faith who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me - he is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all. That is My opinion. (BG: 6.47)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

The process of linking oneself with the Supreme is called yoga. It may be compared to a ladder for attaining the topmost spiritual realization. This ladder begins from the lowest material condition of the living entity and rises up to perfect self-realization in pure spiritual life. According to various elevations, different parts of the ladder are known by different names. But all in all, the complete ladder is called yoga and may be divided into three parts, namely jnana-yoga, dhyana-yoga and bhakti-yoga. When the linking process is predominantly in fruitive activities it is called karma-yoga, when it is predominantly empirical it is called jnana yoga and when it is predominantly in a devotional relationship with the Supreme Lord it is called bhakti-yoga. Bhakti-yoga, or Krishna consciousness, is the ultimate perfection of all yoga systems.

Real yoga practice entails meeting the Paramatma (the localized Super-soul) within the heart and then following His dictation to serve Him in devotional service. So finally meditation ends up in devotional service to the Lord.

Arjuna is not an ordinary man. But even he is telling Krishna that this system of yoga is not practical. So Krishna is responding by saying that it is possible by suitable practice. So what is this suitable practice? In the present age no one can observe the strict rules and regulations of placing oneself in a sacred place, focusing the mind on the Super-soul, restraining the senses and the mind, observing celibacy, remaining alone, etc. By the practice of Krishna consciousness, however, one engages in nine types of devotional service to the Lord. The first and foremost of such devotional engagements is hearing about Krishna. This is a very powerful transcendental method for purging the mind of all misgivings. The more one hears about Krishna, the more one becomes enlightened and detached from everything that draws the mind away from

Krishna. By detaching the mind from activities not devoted to the Lord, one can very easily learn vairagya. Vairagya means detachment from matter and engagement of the mind in spirit. Impersonal spiritual detachment is more difficult than attaching the mind to the activities of Krishna. This is practical because by hearing about Krishna one becomes automatically attached to the Supreme Spirit. This attachment is called Paresanubhuti, spiritual satisfaction.

In verse 6.47 the word "bhajate" is significant. Bhajate has its root in the verb bhaj, which is used when there is need of service. The English word "worship" cannot be used in the same sense as bhaj. Worship means to adore, or to show respect and honor to the worthy one. But service with love and faith is especially meant for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One can avoid worshiping a respectable man or a demigod and may be called discourteous, but one cannot avoid serving the Supreme Lord without being thoroughly condemned. Every living entity is part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and thus every living entity is intended to serve the Supreme Lord by his own constitution. Failing to do this, he falls down.

The culmination of all kinds of yoga practices lies in bhakti-yoga. All other yoga systems are but means to come to the point of bhakti in bhakti-yoga. Yoga actually means bhakti-yoga; all other yoga systems are progressions toward the destination of bhakti-yoga. From the beginning of karma-yoga to the end of bhakti-yoga is a long way to self-realization. Karma-yoga, without fruitive results, is the beginning of this path. When karma-yoga increases in knowledge and renunciation, the stage is called jnana yoga. When jnana-yoga increases in meditation on the Supersoul by different physical processes, and the mind is on Him, it is called astanga-yoga. And when one surpasses the astanga-yoga and comes to the point of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna, it is called bhakti-yoga, the culmination. Factually, bhakti-yoga is the ultimate goal, but to analyze bhakti-yoga minutely one has to understand these other yoga systems. The yogi who is progressive is therefore on the true path of eternal good fortune. One who sticks to a particular point and does not make further progress is called by that particular name: karma-yogi, jnana-yogi or dhyana-yogi, raja-yogi, hatha -yogi etc. If one is fortunate enough to come to the point of bhakti-yoga, it is to be understood that he has surpassed all other yoga systems. Therefore, to become Krishna conscious is the highest stage of yoga, just as, when we speak of the Himalayan, we refer to the world's highest mountains, of which the highest peak, Mount Everest, is considered to be the culmination.

3.6 - Bhakti Yoga

Introduction...

Bhakti-yoga or devotional service is the essence of most contemporary monotheistic faiths. The teachings of Christ and those of The Prophet spoke of a personal God to whom one must direct all glories. It is a message that has been delivered time and time again by many souls who have distinguished themselves as pure devotees of the Lord. Among the more recent souls who played the role of a pure devotee, is Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. The entire life of Caitanya Mahaprabhu was meant to exemplify the merits and practice of devotional service. Mahaprabhu taught us that in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, when intelligence and attention spans are limited, the only way to make spiritual progress is to engage in chanting the Holy Names of the Lord. Reciting the names of God on a rosary and the congregational chanting of hymns glorifying of the Lord's activities are not unique to Vedic traditions. These are practices that are shared by many faiths all over the globe.

Bhakti yoga is a process designed to develop love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Srila Prabhupada often said that the yardstick used to measure the merits of any religion is how much love for the Lord it inspires in the individual. Bhakti yoga is a nine stage process that consists of Sraddha (faith), Sadhu-sanga (association with saints), Bhajana-kriya (worship), Anartha-nivritti (cessation of unwanted activities), Nistha (steadiness in practice), Ruci (taste for devotional service), Asakti (attachment to devotional service), Bhava (intense emotion) and finally Prema (ecstatic love for the Lord). Progress in Bhakti yoga is measured by the amount of "Prema" (ecstatic love for the Lord) that is gained. But the process starts with faith and a desire to hear the word of God.

In this issue we will consider the Lord's directions in the Bhagavad-Gita with regard to Bhakti yoga and its prominence among the different yoga processes.

Summary...

In this issue the Lord first reveals that He is the source of all the spiritual and material worlds and that the wise who know this perfectly engage in His devotional service. In return the Lord seated in everyone's heart delivers the devotee by sharing the knowledge required for liberation. Arjuna then enquires about the universal form of the Lord. The Lord reveals this form by giving Arjuna special vision. Arjuna compares the effulgence of the universal form of the Lord that he sees to hundreds of thousands of suns rising in the sky at once. The Lord then indicates that only by undivided devotional service can the Lord be understood as He is. Arjuna then makes explicit inquiries on the comparative merits of Bhakti yoga and Jnana yoga. The Lord indicates that of the two, Bhakti yoga is better and easier, though both finally reach the same conclusion. And finally the Lord gives Arjuna the most confidential knowledge, the supreme instruction. He asks Arjuna to always think of the Lord, to become His devotee, to worship Him and to offer homage unto Him. The Lord asks Arjuna to abandon all varieties of religion and simply surrender unto the Lord. The Lord indicates that this knowledge can never be understood by those who are not austere, not devoted, or not engaged in devotional service to the Lord.

Srila Prabhupada discusses this revelation by indicating that Bhakti-yoga allows one to attain the Bhagavan (the Supreme Personality of Godhead) realization of the Lord. He then discusses the troublesome nature of Jnana-yoga in a comparative study of Jnana-yoga and Bhakti-yoga. He discourages the practice of Jnana yoga, especially in this age of Kali. He then indicates that Deity worship should never be confused with idol worship. He then discusses the process of Krishna Consciousness and the importance of chanting the Holy names, offering of flowers and food stuff to the Deities and the consumption of food sanctified by God. For those who are unable to engage in the practice of Krishna consciousness, he recommends that they try to help those who are engaged in Krishna Consciousness. And if that is also not possible, he recommends they engage in pious activities such as charity.

Lord Krishna reveals...

I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates for Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts. (BG: 10.8)

The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me. (BG: 10.9)

To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. (BG: 10.10)

To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance. (BG: 10.11)

Arjuna said: By my hearing the instructions You have kindly given me about these most confidential spiritual subjects, my illusion has now been dispelled. (BG: 11.1)

O lotus-eyed one, I have heard from You in detail about the appearance and disappearance of every living entity and have realized Your inexhaustible glories. (BG: 11.2)

O greatest of all personalities, O supreme form, though I see You here before me in Your actual position, as You have described Yourself, I wish to see how You have entered into this cosmic manifestation. I want to see that form of Yours. (BG: 11.3)

If you think that I am able to behold Your cosmic form, O my Lord, O master of all mystic power, then kindly show me that unlimited universal Self. (BG: 11.4)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, O son of Prtha, see now My opulence, hundreds of thousands of varied divine and multicolored forms. (BG: 11.5)

O Arjuna, whatever you wish to see, behold at once in this body of Mine! This universal form can show you whatever you now desire to see and whatever you may want to see in the future. Everything moving and nonmoving - is here completely, in one place. (BG: 11.7)

But you cannot see Me with your present eyes. Therefore I give you divine eyes. Behold My mystic opulence! (BG: 11.8)

If hundreds of thousands of suns were to rise at once into the sky, their radiance might resemble the effulgence of the Supreme Person in that universal form. (BG: 11.12)

At that time Arjuna could see in the universal form of the Lord the unlimited expansions of the universe situated in one place although divided into many, many thousands. (BG: 11.13)

Then, bewildered and astonished, his hair standing on end, Arjuna bowed his head to offer obeisances and with folded hands began to pray to the Supreme Lord. (BG: 11.14)

Arjuna said: My dear Lord Krishna, I see assembled in Your body all the demigods and various other living entities. I see Brahma sitting on the lotus flower, as well as Lord Siva and all the sages and divine serpents. (BG: 11.15)

You are the supreme primal objective. You are the ultimate resting place of all this universe. You are inexhaustible, and You are the oldest. You are the maintainer of the eternal religion, the Personality of Godhead. This is my opinion. (BG: 11.18)

O all -pervading Visnu, seeing You with Your many radiant colors touching the sky, Your gaping mouths, and Your great glowing eyes, my mind is perturbed by fear. I can no longer maintain my steadiness or equilibrium of mind. (BG: 11.24)

Arjuna said: O master of the senses, the world becomes joyful upon hearing Your name, and thus everyone becomes attached to You. Although the perfected beings offer You their respectful homage, the demons are afraid, and they flee here and there. All this is rightly done. (BG: 11.36)

Obeisances to You from the front, from behind and from all sides! O unbounded power, You are the master of limitless might! You are all-pervading, and thus You are everything! (BG: 11.40)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, happily have I shown you, by My internal potency, this supreme universal form within the material world. No one before you has ever seen this primal form, unlimited and full of glaring effulgence. (BG: 11.47)

The form you are seeing with your transcendental eyes cannot be understood simply by studying the Veda, nor by undergoing serious penances, nor by charity, nor by worship. It is not by these means that one can see Me as I am. (BG: 11.53)

My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding. (BG: 11.54)

My dear Arjuna, he who engages in My pure devotional service, free from the contaminations of fruitive activities and mental speculation, he who works for Me, who makes Me the supreme goal of his life, and who is friendly to every living being - he certainly comes to Me. (BG: 11.55)

Arjuna inquired: Which are considered to be more perfect, those who are always properly engaged in Your devotional service or those who worship the impersonal Brahman, the unmanifested? (BG: 12.1)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Those who fix their minds on My personal form and are always engaged in worshiping Me with great and transcendental faith are considered by Me to be the most perfect. (BG: 12.2)

But those who fully worship the unmanifested, that which lies beyond the perception of the senses, that all-pervading, inconceivable, unchanging, fixed and immovable - the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth - by controlling the various senses and being equally disposed to everyone, such persons, engaged in the welfare of all, at last achieve Me. (BG: 12.3-4)

For those whose minds are attached to the unmanifested, impersonal feature of the Supreme, advancement is very troublesome. To make progress in that discipline is always difficult for those who are embodied. (BG: 12.5)

But those who worship Me, giving up all their activities unto Me and being devoted to Me without deviation, engaged in devotional service and always meditating upon Me, having fixed their minds upon Me, O son of prtha - for them I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death. (BG: 12.6-7)

Just fix your mind upon Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and engage all your intelligence in Me. Thus you will live in Me always, without a doubt. (BG: 12.8)

My dear Arjuna, O winner of wealth, if you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then follow the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga. In this way develop a desire to attain Me. (BG: 12.9)

If you cannot practice the regulations of bhakti-yoga, then just try to work for Me, because by working for Me you will come to the perfect stage. (BG: 12.10)

If, however, you are unable to work in this consciousness of Me, then try to act giving up all results of your work and try to be self-situated. (BG: 12.11)

If you cannot take to the practice, then engage yourself in the cultivation of knowledge. Better than knowledge, however, is meditation, and better than meditation is renunciation of the fruits of action, for by such renunciation one can attain peace of mind. (BG: 12.12)

One who is not envious but is a kind friend to all living entities, who does not think himself a proprietor and is free from false ego, who is equal in both happiness and distress, who is tolerant, always satisfied, self-controlled, and engaged in devotional service with determination, his mind and intelligence fixed on Me - such a devotee of Mine is very dear to Me. (BG: 12.13-14)

He for whom no one is put into difficulty and who is not disturbed by anyone, who is equipoised in happiness and distress, fear and anxiety, is dear to Me. (BG: 12.15)

My devotee who is not dependent on the ordinary course of activities, who is a pure, expert, without cares, free from all pains, and not striving for some result, is very dear to Me. (BG: 12.16)

One who neither rejoices nor grieves, who neither laments nor desires, and who renounces both auspicious and inauspicious things - such a devotee is very dear to Me. (BG: 12.17)

One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipoised in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always free from contaminating association, always silent and satisfied with anything, who doesn't care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and who is engaged in devotional service - such a person is very dear to Me. (BG: 12.18-19)

Those who follow this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engage themselves with faith, making Me the supreme goal, are very, very dear to Me. (BG: 12.20)

Because you are My very dear friend, I am speaking to you My supreme instruction, the most confidential knowledge of all. Hear this from Me, for it is for your benefit. (BG: 18.64)

Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend. (BG: 18.65)

Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear. (BG: 18.66)

This confidential knowledge may never be explained to those who are not austere, or devoted, or engaged in devotional service, nor to one who is envious of Me. (BG: 18.67)

For one who explains this supreme secret to the devotees, pure devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me. (BG: 18.68)

There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear. (BG: 18.69)

And I declare that he who studies this sacred conversation of ours worships Me by his intelligence. (BG: 18.70)

And one who listens with faith and without envy becomes free from sinful reactions and attains to the auspicious planets where the pious dwell. (BG: 18.71)

O son of Prtha, O conqueror of wealth, have you heard this with an attentive mind? And are your ignorance and illusions now dispelled? (BG: 18.72)

Arjuna said: My dear Krishna, O infallible one, my illusion is now gone. I have regained my memory by Your mercy. I am now firm and free from doubt and am prepared to act according to Your instructions. (BG: 18.73)

Srila Prabhupada discusses...

Krishna and the Supreme Personality of Godhead are identical. Therefore Lord Krishna is referred to as Bhagavan throughout the Gita. Bhagavan is the ultimate in the Absolute Truth. Absolute Truth is realized in three phases of understanding, namely Brahman, or the impersonal all-pervasive spirit; Paramatma, or the localized aspect of the Supreme within the heart of all living entities; and Bhagavan, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna. The Sanskrit word Bhagavan is explained by the great authority Parasara Muni, the father of Vyasadeva. The Supreme Personality who possesses all riches, all strength, all fame, all beauty, all knowledge and all renunciation is called Bhagavan. Bhakti-yoga is the process of attaining this Bhagavan realization.

There is a common controversy over whether the Supreme Absolute Truth is personal or impersonal. As far as Bhagavad-Gita is concerned, the Absolute Truth is the Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, and this is confirmed in every step. The Supreme Lord can be preliminarily perceived by His different energies, and in this way He is realized impersonally. As the demigod in the sun is a person and is perceived by his all-pervading energy, the sunshine, so the Lord, although in His eternal abode, is perceived by His all-pervading diffusive energies. Attraction for

water depends on the purity of the taste, and this pure taste is one of the energies of the Lord. The impersonalist perceives the presence of the Lord in water by its taste, and the personalist also glorifies the Lord for His kindly supplying tasty water to quench man's thirst. Practically speaking, there is no conflict between personalism and impersonalism. One who knows God knows that the impersonal conception and personal conception are simultaneously present in everything and that there is no contradiction. Therefore Lord Caitanya established His sublime doctrine of simultaneous oneness and difference.

The group of transcendentalists who follow the path of the inconceivable, unmanifested, impersonal feature of the Supreme Lord are called jnana-yogis, and persons who are in full Krishna consciousness, engaged in devotional service to the Lord, are called bhakti-yogis. In BG: 12.5 the difference between jnana-yoga and bhakti-yoga is definitely expressed. The process of jnana-yoga, although ultimately bringing one to the same goal, is very troublesome, whereas the path of bhakti-yoga, the process of being in direct service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is easier and is natural for the embodied soul. The individual soul is embodied since time immemorial. It is very difficult for him to simply theoretically understand that he is not the body. Therefore, the bhakti-yogi accepts the Deity of Krishna as worshipable because there is some bodily conception fixed in the mind, which can thus be applied. Of course, worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His form within the temple is not idol worship. There is evidence in the Vedic literature that worship may be saguna or nirguna - of the Supreme possessing or not possessing attributes. Worship of the Deity in the temple is saguna worship, for the Lord is represented by material qualities. But the form of the Lord, though represented by material qualities such as stone, wood or oil paint, is not actually material. That is the absolute nature of the Supreme Lord.

A crude example may be given here. We may find some mailboxes on the street, and if we post our letters in those boxes, they will naturally go to their destination without difficulty. But any old box, or an imitation which we may find somewhere but which is not authorized by the post office, will not do the work. Similarly, God has an authorized representation in the Deity form, which is called arca-vigraha. This arca-vigraha is an incarnation of the Supreme Lord. God will accept service through that form. The Lord is omnipotent, all-powerful; therefore, by His incarnation as arca-vigraha He can accept the services of the devotee, just to make it convenient for the man in conditioned life.

A living entity is eternally an individual soul, and if he wants to merge into the spiritual whole, he may accomplish the realization of the eternal and knowledgeable aspects of his original nature, but the blissful portion is not realized. By the grace of some devotee, such a transcendentalist, highly learned in the process of jnana-yoga, may come to the point of bhakti-yoga, or devotional service. At that time, long practice in impersonalism also becomes a source of trouble, because he cannot give up the idea. Therefore an embodied soul is always in difficulty with the unmanifest, both at the time of practice and at the time of realization. Every living soul is partially independent, and one should know for certain that this unmanifested realization is against the nature of his spiritual blissful self. One should not take up this process. For every individual living entity the process of Krishna consciousness, which entails full engagement in devotional service, is the best way. If one wants to ignore this devotional service, there is the danger of turning to atheism. Thus the process of centering attention on the unmanifested, the inconceivable, which is beyond the approach of the senses, as already expressed in verse BG: 12.5, should never be encouraged at any time, especially in this age. It is not advised by Lord Krishna.

Bhakti-yoga is the purification of the senses. At the present moment in material existence the senses are always impure, being engaged in sense gratification. But by the practice of bhakti-yoga these senses can become purified, and in the purified state they come directly in contact with the Supreme Lord. In this material existence, I may be engaged in some service to some master, but I don't really lovingly serve my master. I simply serve to get some money. And the master also is not in love; he takes service from me and pays me. So there is no question of love.

But for spiritual life, one must be elevated to the pure stage of love. That stage of love can be achieved by practice of devotional service, performed with the present senses.

This love of God is now in a dormant state in everyone's heart. And, there, love of God is manifested in different ways, but it is contaminated by material association, and that dormant, natural love for Krishna has to be revived. That is the whole process.

To practice the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga one should, under the guidance of an expert spiritual master, follow certain principles: one should rise early in the morning, take bath, enter the temple (or Deity room at home) and offer prayers and chant Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, then collect flowers to offer to the Deity, cook foodstuffs to offer to the Deity, take prasadam (remnants of food offered to the Deity) and so on. There are various rules and regulations which one should follow. And one should constantly hear Bhagavad-Gita and Srimad-Bhagvatam from pure devotees. This practice can help anyone rise to the level of love of God, and then he is sure of his progress into the spiritual kingdom. This practice of bhakti-yoga, under the rules and regulations, with the direction of a spiritual master, will surely bring one to the stage of love of God.

One who is not able even to practice the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga, under the guidance of a spiritual master, can still be drawn to this perfectional stage by working for the Supreme Lord. How to do this work has already been explained in BG: 11.55. One should be sympathetic to the propagation of Krishna consciousness. There are many devotees who are engaged in the propagation of Krishna consciousness, and they require help. So, even if one cannot directly practice the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga, he can try to help such work. Every endeavor requires land, capital, organization and labor. Just as in business one requires a place to stay, some capital to use, some labor and some organization to expand, so the same is required in the service of Krishna. The only difference is that in materialism one works for sense gratification. The same work, however, can be performed for the satisfaction of Krishna, and that is spiritual activity. If one has sufficient money, he can help in building an office or temple for propagating Krishna consciousness. Or he can help with publications. There are various fields of activity, and one should be interested in such activities. If one cannot sacrifice the results of his activities, the same person can still sacrifice some percentage to propagate Krishna consciousness. This voluntary service to the cause of Krishna consciousness will help one to rise to a higher state of love for God, whereupon one becomes perfect.

It may be that one is unable even to sympathize with the activities of Krishna consciousness because of social, familial or religious considerations or because of some other impediments. If one attaches himself directly to the activities of Krishna consciousness, there may be objections from family members, or so many other difficulties. For one who has such a problem, it is advised that he sacrifice the accumulated result of his activities to some good cause. Giving charity to some hospital or some other social institution is also recommended because by the practice of giving up the fruits of one's activities one is sure to purify his mind gradually, and in that purified stage of mind one becomes able to understand Krishna consciousness.

3.7 - Summary

In issues 3.x we started by introducing the modes of nature, the regulative principles and a background on the yoga systems. We then discussed Karma-yoga, Dhyana-yoga and Bhakti-yoga. We also addressed the philosophies of “personalism” and “impersonalism”. We concluded by recognizing pure devotional service or Bhakti-yoga as the final goal of all yoga systems.

4. Conclusion

4.0 - Concluding remarks

Over the last eighteen issues, we have discussed subjects related to those eternal questions on who we are, what our purpose here is and where we should aspire to go from here. The essence of Vedic thought is in fact shared by most monotheistic faiths around the globe. The lingo and dress code may seem different, but the substance of the philosophy is not necessarily irreconcilable. At the heart of this philosophy is the need to develop love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Every other recommended regulation in Vedic philosophy, is in fact aimed at aiding the process of developing this love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In the words of Srila Rupa Gosvami, a preeminent scholar on Vedic philosophy, somehow or other fixing the mind on the Lord is the prime concern - Rules and regulations can come later.

It is important to recognize that every soul is eternally linked to God in one of five ways - passive, active, friendship, parental affection and conjugal love. Before we engage in active God consciousness we are in the passive or dormant state. Once we start the process we are in the active state. When we start interacting with the Lord like Arjuna we are in the friendship state. Mother Yasoda's relation with Krishna is in the mood of parental love and Radha Rani's relationship with the Lord is in conjugal love.

As a concluding summary of the thoughts presented in this series, I would like to offer the following eight versus by Lord Caitanya Mahaprabu that captures the essence and mood of developing love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

1. Glory to the Sri-Krishna-sankirtana (congregational chanting), which cleanses the heart of all the dust accumulated for years and extinguishes the fire of conditional life, of repeated birth and death. This sankirtana movement is the prime benediction for humanity at large because it spreads the rays of the benediction moon. It is a life of all transcendental knowledge. It increases the ocean of transcendental bliss, and it enables us to fully taste the nectar for which we are always anxious.
2. 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. There are not even hard and fast rules for chanting these names. O my Lord, out of kindness You enable us to easily approach You by Your holy names, but I am so unfortunate that I have no attraction for them.
3. One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and should be ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.
4. O almighty Lord, I have no desire to accumulate wealth, nor do I desire beautiful women, nor do I want any number of followers. I only want Your causeless devotional service, birth after birth.
5. O son of Maharaj Nanda [Krishna], I am Your eternal servitor, yet somehow or other I have fallen into the ocean of birth and death. Please pick me up from this ocean of death and place me as one of the atoms at Your lotus feet.
6. O my Lord, when will my eyes be decorated with tears of love flowing constantly when I chant Your holy name? When will my voice choke up, and when will the hairs of my body stand on end at the recitation of Your name?
7. O Govinda! Feeling Your separation, I am considering a moment to be like twelve years or more. Tears are flowing from my eyes like torrents of rain, and I am feeling all vacant in the world in Your absence.
8. I know no one but Krishna (God) as my Lord, and He shall remain so even if He handles me roughly by His embrace or makes me brokenhearted by not being present before me.

He is completely free to do anything and everything for He is always my worshipful Lord, unconditionally.

The sequence of presentation in this series was, in part, motivated by my personal learning experience. Often I had felt that if subjects were addressed in a sequence without making assumptions on prerequisite information, it would have helped expedite my understanding and also help define the focus of my interests. I hope this series addresses that concern to some extent. Even if the depth to which we have discussed different topics leaves much to be desired, I hope the mere headings and overviews of Vedic scriptures will allow one to further their knowledge at a pace that is self-determined.

In conclusion, I offer my profound gratitude and love to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada - Founder Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, for the unmatched gift that he has given humanity.