

## Unit 24

# Hare Krishna Movement

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### Learning Objectives

After studying this unit you should be able to:

- give the aims of ISKCON;
- provide the History of ISKCON;
- explain modern yoga and chanting;
- the place of Sri Krishna in ISKCON;
- talk about the eight mystical perfections; and
- describe types of devotion and devotee.

## 24.1 Introduction

Hare Rama, Hare Krishna is a highly visible cult since their members sport a shaven head with a top knot, wear saffron dhotis and take out ecstatic progressions in the streets sometimes even the main traffic thoroughfares. Here they beat the tablas and tamboras and chant the 'Hare Krishna' mantra while dancing, singing, and twirling around. This may give the layman an impression that nothing serious is involved. Nothing could be further from the Truth. The Hare Krishna's as ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) is popularly known is a very traditional movement but has been given added colour and spread in the west and east. The Hare Krishna's are strict about their vegetarianism and do not consume alcohol and have high moral standards. They have to live a celibate life with many hours of devotional service to Lord Krishna who is to them the Source of Devotion. The Hare Krishna trust Lord Krishna as God and worship him as such.

Hare Krishna or ISKCON is based on a long lineage of masters who have handed over the succession from master to disciple for a long time. Theirs is thus a *parampara* a tradition of teachers. There are in it four "disciple successions" which are known as *sampradaya*. The Hare Krishna's

belong to the Brahma Sampradaya which it is believed was formed by Lord Krishna himself. In this sampradaya there are many branches and fragments and ISKCON society belongs to the branch set up and founded by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## 24.2 Aims of the Movement

The idea is that all the Vaishava teachings should be passed intact to the main disciple or the new teacher who in turn has the responsibility to teach, develop and transmit the Vaishnava teachings to future generations. A prominent devotee becomes known as an *acharya* who are the main teachers of the sect both actually and theoretically. Some of the main acharyas include:

- 1) Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
- 2) The Six Goswamis of Vrindaban
- 3) Bhakti Siddharta Sarasvati Thakura
- 4) A.C. Bhakti Vedanta Swami Prabhupada

ISKCON stands for the "International Society for Krishna Consciousness", and this was founded in 1966 by Swami Srila Prabhupada. Since 1966 ISKCON has become a world wide society which has 10,000 temples, devotees and a number of 2,50,000 "congregational" devotees. ISKCON is more popularly known as the Hare Krishna movement. ISKCON runs 350 centres, 60 rural communities, 50 schools and 60 restaurants all over the world. It is clear that the scale of the movement is very great as to run all these centres and temples is no mean feat especially since Srila Prabhupada is no more. The main mission of ISKCON which describes itself as a nonsectarian, monotheistic movement is to comprise the well being of society by teaching Krishna consciousness according to the Bhagavad Gita and ancient scriptures. There are in fact seven aims of the movement to which we now turn. The seven aims of ISKCON are:

- 1) firstly to propagate spirituality and spiritual knowledge to society as such. It is to educate people spiritually so that the breakdown in values is balanced out and world peace and unity is achieved once and for all.
- 2) the second part of the goal is to propagate and create Krishna consciousness as this is revealed and indicated in the Bhagavad Gita and Srimad Bhagvatam. We should note that Bhagavad Gita is the basic text which ISKCON subscribes to and teaches from as it is directly related to Sri Krishna.
- 3) thirdly the aim is to create a solidarity among societal members built around the worship of Krishna. Building up the awareness that each member of society is part of Krishna the Godhead and therefore brothers and sisters who should live in peace together in the worship of Krishna.
- 4) the fourth aim of ISKCON is to encourage and teach about the Sankirtana movement which is a group chanting of the name of Krishna. These follow the teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu the teacher of the lineage after Sri Krishna.
- 5) ISKCON also aims to instruct a building which is very large where Krishna lila can be enacted.
- 6) ISKCON teaches a simple and natural life.
- 7) finally to achieve these aims the ISKCON aims to and has published books, magazines, pamphlets etc.

ISKCON believes in the Vaisnava philosophy. It is pointed out that inquiry into the nature of absolute truth is the start of the spiritual life. So far as ISKCON or Hare Ramas are concerned the Supreme Godhead is Krishna. However, it is also recognized that Godhead has different names including the names such as Vishnu, Rama, Jehovah, Buddha, Allah and so on. The main aim of this Gaudhya Vaishavism is to develop love for Godhead the Supreme.

To understand oneself according to this philosophy is to make oneself fit for being spiritual minded. To be spiritual minded self understanding is very important. Without an understanding of the self it is not possible to travel inwards towards the Godhead. However as the tradition points out for this to happen much effort has to be made under the tutelage of the spiritual master who has perfected the art of spiritual knowledge. This, it is pointed out as being a procedure similar to learning anything at all - a master is a must without whom there is no spiritual growth. The group chanting of maha mantra "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare" was popularized by Sri Chaitanya. This mantra is believed to be best for self purification in Kali Yug age. Before we go on we must say a word about the structure of the ISKCON organization. First of all there are the communities who practice the Krishna consciousness in the privacy and security of their homes. The work and life however, in a community are with group chanting, family, gardening and so on.

### 24.3 Structure of ISKCON

On the other hand those members who are attached to temples are undergoing training to function as people who would conduct worship and propagate the faith. That is to say they are clergy and would be involved in ministerial work for ISKCON. There are some people who work to coordinate the ISKCON rural communities programmes. Now, in 1970 Swami Prabhupada convened a General Body Commission (GBC) to help manage the expansion of ISKCON. Before leaving his body in 1977 Srila Prabhupada has already requested that after his death the governing and decision making powers be handed over to this GBC. Thus, it is the GBC which is responsible for ISKCON's plans, strategies on how they are to fulfill the seven point charter of goals mentioned earlier. The methods for arriving at a consensus do involve the right to vote democratically and consultations with the important people in the Temples and so on.

Another part of the ISKCON structure is what is called the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT). Srila Prabhupada was a tireless writer and in about 12 years he produced 70 volumes of works. These were mostly translations of Sanskrit treatises and copious commentaries on them. This trust was established in 1972 and is today among the worlds largest publishers and distributors books on Indian Philosophy and religion. Till the present the BBT has published over 500 million books and magazines in over 60 languages. This gives us an idea of the scale of ISKCON's operations. The structure is simple yet effective. The power of Srila Prabhupada thus now vests in the GBC and the responsibility for missionary work rests with the clergy which also under training. All important decisions are proposed in the GBC. Where there is any contentious issue democratic voting is necessary and is taken recourse to. We must not undermine however, the role of the community groups in rural areas. These are in many ways the backbone of the entire movement because the chants and Krishna consciousness is very effective in a quiet atmosphere in a rural setting. As such the rural communities become the invisible hand of the movement while urban communities are more visible in the ISKCON.

## 24.4 History of ISKCON

Before we proceed further it is important to know something of the history of ISKCON. The international society of Krishna consciousness was promulgated by Srila Prabhupada in 1966. The philosophy of this movement is that of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition. This is basically a tradition of devotion or Bhakti based on the wisdom of Bhagavad Gita and Srimad Bhagvatam. As regards the theoretical and ideological constructs of ISKCON these were presented and codified by the 15<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and saint Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu along with the six goswamis of Vrindaban.

The devotees regard Sri Chaitanya as a full and total reincarnation of Lord Sri Krishna. Sri Chaitanya built up the Bhakti movement greatly and the Bhakti movement flourished all over India. He was a great complier of sacred literature and under his personal guidance many hundreds of sacred books and literature were compiled. These were connected with the philosophy of Krishna. The line of Sri Chaitanya and the six swamis of Vrindaban stretches down to Srila. The 19<sup>th</sup> century theologian Bhaktivinada brought Krishna consciousness in the modern world. His son Bhaktisiddharta Sarasvati Goswami became the guru of Srila and entrusted him with spreading Krishna consciousness.

ISKCON's is basically an Indian philosophical orientation and in order to indicate this the specifically directed ideas involved in it are distinctly Hindu. We then take as our point of departure some frequently asked questions and their answers according to the ISKCON's view point. This will help us build up a base for further explorations into what ISKCON stands for and how it has interpreted the Bhakti element of Hinduism which is associated with it.

The questions to which Hare Krishna gives the answer include,

- 1) Why do negative things happen to good people?
- 2) What is karma?
- 3) Can bad karma be reduced through meditation?
- 4) How can I do my duties if everything is predestined?
- 5) Is everything already determined by God?
- 6) Is everything predetermined?
- 7) Why does not God control our senses?
- 8) Will Bhakti take us back to Godhead?
- 9) If God is merciful why did he create evil?
- 10) If we go to heaven will we ever return?
- 11) Do we have control over our desires and thoughts?
- 12) How can we have faith in God?
- 13) What is the position of ISKCON with the respect to Jesus Chirst?
- 14) Is animal sacrifice valid?
- 15) If we do not follow Krishna consciousness is our life a waste?
- 16) How to recognize a spiritually realized master?
- 17) How can we identify a person who has seen the Truth?

- 18) Can all self realized persons be a master?
- 19) Are only acharyas representations of God?
- 20) When and how does a devotee feel the necessity of a living spiritual master?
- 21) Is the relationship between disciple and guru eternal?
- 22) Does true love exist in this world?

Such and many similar questions are frequently asked questions. The document does not record the answers but it is obvious that a study of the tenets of the yoga of Krishna consciousness will allow us to answer these questions for ourselves as students. Towards the fulfillment of this and we will provide the exposition of ISKCON on the philosophy and sociology of living in this world. A study of that will answer all these and similar questions.

## 24.5 Modern Yoga: Yoga as Chanting

In the Gita Sri Krishna outlines a method of yoga which is called ashtanga yoga as it has several parts to it. It has eight parts to it and one must sit in a certain posture, observe dietary restrictions, control the inflow and outflow of the breath. The yogi must concentrate on the heart chakra after completely stilling down the mind. One must concentrate on Vishnu as sitting in the heart. Astanga yoga system demands very many preconditions and one has to develop first of all a sense control apart from many other regulations and then as mentioned there is breath control and thought control. Then, only is it possible to visualize Vishnu as seated in the heart. When Arjun heard Sri Krishna expound this form of yoga he was taken aback and was quite frankly skeptical about his ability to follow the eightfold path of ashtanga yoga and told Sri Krishna that the yoga he was expounding was impossible to perform. Not only were the restrictions and rules difficult the very practice of asana or posture takes years to perfect. Without a perfected asana it is difficult to practice all the exercises for control of senses and breath so that concentration and meditation can be attained.

### Box 24.1 Ashtanga Yoga

Srila Prabhupada points out that in reality the eightfold path of ashtanga yoga is not impractical. Srila Prabhupada points out that were the astanga system of yoga really impractical then Sri Krishna would not have described and propagated the same. Thus, according to Srila ashtanga yoga appears to be impractical although it is not really so. It is pointed out by Srila that what is easy and practical for one person/man could very well be an impossibility for someone one else. It is all a matter of relativity. In this particular discourse in the Gita as elsewhere Arjun is the common man with his share of problems and responsibilities. He cannot afford to cut himself off from society and sit down and meditate in isolation in a cave or the jungle.

Arjun as Srila points out is not a scholar or a mendicant. He is fighting in the Mahabharata battle and is doing his duty as a warrior and has many problems on a day to day basis and that's why the eightfold system of astanga yoga is not practical for him.

Astanga yoga is impractical for the common or the ordinary man. However, it is or can be practical for the renunciant who has left his responsibilities of family and the household behind and can meditate uninterruptedly. Thus, Srila asks the question that although the system of astanga yoga is

relevant who can practice it in the present age? Though Arjuna was a warrior and from a royal lineage he couldn't conceive of doing the astanga system of meditation. How much less so the common man? Srila is quite categorical in this judgement and points out that if the system is attempted only failure can result. This is the reason why Arjun finds himself unable to accept the astanga yoga. It is clear that the ordinary man cannot go out into the jungles or caves and sit practicing this yoga in the Age of Kaliyuga. The Kaliyuga has created cut throat competition in every field of endeavour and seeks to throttle the spiritual in man. In every field there is contention and conflict. In the age of Kali to even sit down legs folded is a difficult feat let alone the various requirements of an astanga yogi. As Srila says "The present age is characterized by a bitter struggle for a short duration of life in which the bliss of the Lord is never realized." Srila points out as Kaliyuga will progress the span of life will get even shorter and man's struggle to survive will get even more intense and humiliating. The good qualities of heart and mind will also get scarce and compassion be a mere word in the dictionary.

Srila points out that in the Kaliyuga most people are not serious about self realization even if the method is easy to let alone methods that are difficult. The method is difficult (astanga yoga) not only in terms of the activities it refers to but also because it demands many gymnastic feats which are not possible to accomplish for the common man. Thus Srila is concerned with the salvation of the ordinary man who is unable to latch on to anything which is out of the ordinary. How can the common man be approached by an uncommon method. It became obvious to Srila that the system of astanga yoga was not suitable to the common man. If Arjuna a most extraordinary warrior found that he could not cope with the various requirements of detachment and length of duration for realization then obviously it is a system meant for very few people who had the most extraordinary abilities. Srila points out that the time span of human life is reducing from the Sat yuga to the Dwapar yuga to Treta yuga and so on as such the sixty or seventy years assigned to man in the Kali yuga is not sufficient to struggle with astanga yoga for the goal of self-realization. Srila says humorously that even though Arjuna had a thousand years to live he felt astanga yoga as impossible to perform. Arjuna had better facilities but he refused to accept this yoga. In history Srila points out there is no record of Arjuna ever having used this yoga. As such this system is practically impossible in the present age of Kali. Some rare individual may arise and make use of this yoga but this is not generally the case. Srila points out if this was the case five thousand years ago what must be the condition now in this Age, in the present day. He feels that all attempts to popularize this system in the present day through various schools and societies are futile.

Now we have pointed out adequately that astanga yoga system is impractical, the bhakti yoga system is recommended for the present age. It does not require more than a genuine interest in spirituality and no special preconditions. Even those without education or training can join in the chants of the Kirtan. Thus, Srila points out that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has announced that only bhakti yoga is practical in Kaliyuga. The means of deliverance in Kali yuga is chanting the name of Hari. Srila points out that the effect of chanting is felt immediately as the person begins the chants. Any other yoga method does not produce such good results. In other systems it is difficult to know whether one is progressing or not but in chanting we can tell we are making progress. It is a yoga system through the means of which a person can find liberation with relative ease in this very life itself. The restless mind always flits from one fancy to another and is extremely restless. The chant of the Hare

Krishna quietens down the mind and makes it steady for devotion. The chant automatically fixes the mind on Hari and the yoga system attains its goal quickly. This is very beneficial since the name of Krishna and chanting it quickly leads to Krishna consciousness. What is important to note is that this Krishna consciousness requires constant chanting and practice in chanting. As has been said "one has to concentrate the mind steadily and constantly on the form of Vishnu". Thus, it is a question of 'chant and be happy'. In the words of George Harrison the la Beatle who was a member of ISKCON we can quote:

Everybody is looking for Krishna  
Some don't realize  
That they are, but they are  
KRISHNA is GOD  
The source of all that exists  
The cause of all that is  
Or ever will be  
As God is unlimited  
HE has many names  
Allah- Buddha - Jehovah - Rama:  
All are KRISHNA, all are ONE  
Be serving GOD through  
Each thought word and DEED  
And by chanting this Holy Names  
The devotee quickly develops God-consciousness  
By chanting  
*Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna*  
*Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare*  
*Hare Rama, Hare Rama*  
*Rama Rama, Hare Hare*  
One inevitably arrives as KRISHNA Consciousness (The point of the pudding is in He eating!)

With this we end this section on the necessity and efficacy of chanting for liberation in Kali yuga.

## 24.6 Srila on Lord Krishna

ISKCON is visible for its public devotional chants and shaven headed dhoti clad dances. However, there is a serious social ideology and philosophy behind the actions of the devotees. They are celebrating Krishna the Supreme Godhead, in song and dance. Let us see what Swami Prabhupada has to say about Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna he says is the Supreme Absolute Truth. Srila points out that in his exposition of the Sankya Philosophy Kapila the atheist could not find god in the elements of nature. He examined each one and found that God was not in them. When Kapila could not uncover the unmanifested soul in the basic elemental structure he concluded

that god did not exist. However, in the Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna rules out this atheist philosophy and its position that the unmanifested soul is non-existent. He establishes that all material elements are well within his control. (Gita 7.4).

#### Box 24.2 Devotion to Krishna

Srila Asks who is Lord Krishna and what is his original form. He feels we should know all about Lord Krishna's glories so that an urge to worship him arises in us and we become his ardent devotees. For this a great deal of information and zeal is required as well as discussion of the great philosophical truths which is what strengthens the mind and makes it razor sharp. It is only when one is steeped in the knowledge of Sri Krishna that he or she can be devotional to Him. While Kapila retarded spiritual progress with his atheism and non recognition of God Lord Sri Krishna revealed the Truth for all time to come. He pointed out to Arjun that he is the source of both the material and the spiritual. He pointed out to Arjun that he is the source of both the origin and the dissolution of both physical and the spiritual universe.

Srila feels that this has to be understood for the science of devotional service if this truth is understood a deep love for the Father and Mother of creation Sri Krishna arises. Now, Srila points out that Lord Krishna is the supreme male Godhead and therefore, there will automatically be His female counterpart to complement him.

The Supreme Person Lord Krishna is not subservient to Prakriti or Nature. Srila points out thinking about Nature is not enough we must ask "Who's Nature is it?" That is to say Nature has to belong, it cannot exist without someone or something to whose authority it is under. It cannot exist on its own. Srila notes that Prakriti is the same as sakti and sakti cannot exist in a purposeless state. Thus if we can latch on to the secret of nature we will be able to seek out our origins because sakti too must belong to its owner, the reason for the existence of sakti itself. Thus the search for the understanding of sakti is actually a search for the innermost self. Srila points out that Upanishads and similar Vedic scriptures state that Brahman is the Absolute Truth, and possessor of vast multifarious energies. Brahman is believed by Srila to be the "effulgence" of Krishna's body. This means that for Srila Lord Krishna is beyond the Brahman and Brahman itself is part of Him. That is why he is regarded as the Supreme Godhead. Lord Krishna is defined as "indivisible, infinite, limitless, truth." The main energy that parades the universe is called Brahman and this covers anything and everything that is possible to conceive. Every conservable power, creativity or intelligence is in this state of pulsating powerful energy which is never reduced and never depleted. It is a state of completeness in which all creation plays a part but the Lord is supreme is his bliss in his security and warmth of Sakti's womb. Srila points out that the materialists are unable to conceive the wonder of the lord. Similarly, those who are fond of spinning out theories regarding the origin of the universe are themselves confused greatly deluded. For these people to conceive of an All Powerful Godhead is incomprehensible and they are unable to register the power and the glory of the Lord. Both these types of people Srila points out are in a sad spiritual condition and it is Lord Krishna himself who has revealed the Truth about Himself in Bhagavad Gita. All being creatures are a product of the Lord Himself, they are a part of His spiritual energy and are superior to those creations which are material and cannot move think and so on. However, this does not mean that the living creatures are in any way on the same level as the one who has created them. We should not forget that while the creatures have been born due to the spiritual power of the Lord they are not equal to Him.



### Reflection and Action 24.1

Observe the worship at an ISKCON temple. Make note on the salient points in your notebook.

According to Srila the Jiva principle is setting and keeping everything in motion. The jivas try to overpower nature and to use it in many ways giving way to a multifarious creation. The fact is if the jivas did not operate on the material world these world be no progress. It is only when energy vivifies and transforms material powers that they are able to yield dividends. As Srila puts it very succinctly "matter cannot organize itself".

It is clear then from the foregoing that there is some super Energy some super Sakti which is controlling and running the universe with its vast planetary systems all running together in relative harmony. How do seeds sprout or the geyser water come out of the earth? The mountains and valleys with their vegetation, flower and fruit are all such as to give a clear inkling that there is a Supreme Organizing Intelligence and this is Lord Krishna. He is the master of all Realities and the only Divine Reality in the world. However, it must be stressed that matter itself is inert and incapable of creation. It is dead and has nothing beyond a binding energy is it.

## 24.7 Devotion and Surrender

Sri Krishna Srila tells us is that the jivas are a superior energy which are the forces that exploit the mankind nature. The power of the jiva deriving from the Lord Krishna it does not have hardly anything in common with material nature, and energy. This is just, Srila points out, just as the marine creatures have little to do with land. Srila points out that the close affinity between the material and the spiritual is in fact an illusion and imaginary. The jivas born of spiritual energy have a tendency to always try and control material energy. In fact this attempt to control and direct material energy led to the creation of the atomic bomb and its throwing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, to control nuclear energies negative effects is not wholly possible and this shows that when the jivas forget the Lord and begin to think of themselves as the Lord grievous actions result. This is the result of the ego of the material and is not connected with spirituality at all.

However, all energy can be used in the service of the Lord Krishna especially in the performance of sacrifice. In fact sacrifice itself is the basic premise of right karma where the results are not coveted but the worship is coveted. Srila points out that in the Vishnu Purana these are described 3 types of energies. These are

- 1) the spiritual potency
- 2) the living creatures and entities
- 3) ignorance

This spiritual potency we find all goodness and wisdom and truth and beauty and all that is good resides in it. It is the source of all that is wonderful and happy and in fact is the real nature of the saints and great souls. On the other hand the living entities and creatures are such that they are not able to discern the reality and in trying to do so they tend to become perplexed and confused. The energy of ignorance also reigns widely in the world of men which makes them do things which they would otherwise not do. The anomic elements in society which lead to conflict and the various local, regional and international levels are the result of

ignorance. We find that it is due to ignorance that the world is in turmoil and misery. Thus it is the chanting of the name of Krishna and the Hare Rama mantra which lead out of ignorance and towards light. Thus will mean that the confusion of the individual will recede and he will become a capable devotee who will work in the spiritual light of the Supreme and away from the dark forces of evil.

Everything in the world is an interaction between spirit and matter. It is an interaction between the Lords superior spiritual energy and the Lords inferior material energy. The material energy is known as the "field of activity", also called 'kshetra' and the energy of the spiritual is called "knower of the actually field" or the Kshetra-jhana. All life is a product of the interaction of the 'field' and the 'knower of the field'. That is, it is an interaction of the kshetra and kshetrajhana. Both these energies are controlled by the supreme Godhead Lord Krishna. He is to be recognized as the ultimate controller of all action and interaction. He is the ultimate cause of the creation, maintenance, and annihilation of the universe. This has been explained as Srila points out in the Gita itself. It is pointed out that all life has its source in inferior and superior energies. Yet the Lord is both the origin and the dissolution of all living things. Lord Krishna tells Arjun that he is the Greatest Truth beyond which there is nothing. The Lord points out that everything rests on him "as pearls and strung on a thread." Thus we must acknowledge the Lord for what He is: the master of our destiny and the ruler over life and death.

Srila points out that Sri Chaitanya was of the insight that the Lord and his energies are both one and different. According to Srila Prabhupada the deepest and most secret Truth is that Lord Krishna is the Supreme Absolute Truth. If we do not perceive this Truth then we will be classified as materialists who have blind sensual cravings. Lord Krishna explains this in the Gita when he points out that deluded by goodness, passion and ignorance the world lives in confusion and does not know the Lord who is beyond goodness, passions, and ignorance. He also points out that to go beyond delusion is very difficult. The only method in fact to do this is surrender to the Lord Krishna. The Vedas also point out this Truth that the Lord is Perfect and there can be no increase or decrease in the energy of the Lord. The Vedas say that only the complete can produce something that is complete. As such the Vedas say that the Lord remains whole even though the whole of creation emanates from him and is supported by him. Whatever is produced of the complete whole is also complete in itself. Thus no matter what is produced by the Lord he remains in "complete balance" and there is no disturbance, in the cosmic mind.

The path of devotion is a difficult one and has in its way many by lanes. Maya the Lord's power of Illusion fools everyone at every turn of the road and makes them fall on the path. The way out of this conundrum is surrender to Lord Krishna for only then will he accept us and guide us back to the Godhead. Not surrendering to the Lord is a gross sin. Thus it is only the science of Krishna Consciousness that can release the world from the hands that are forcing the world into an ever tighter situation so far as lasting world peace is concerned. The chanting of Krishna's mantra will certainly change all this quickly and completely.

Srila has pointed out that the path of Pantanjali which has eight parts to it and yogi's following this path master it until they are immersed in deep consciousness or Samadhi. In their drive for the goal of perfection they are able to withstand the worst of all privations and difficulties. When they finally emerge from their trials and tribulations they have mastered a state of consciousness which cannot be disturbed by any outward changes in condition and fortune. Srila says that in this perfect condition nothing

is fearful not even death. Lord Krishna says about such yogis that it has been recorded that they are (Bhagavad Gita 6.22).

Being thus, he never departs from the truth

And on gaining this he feels there is no greater gain

Established in such a situation, he is never shaken

Even in the middle of the greatest problem, or difficulty.

## 24.8 The Eight Mystical Perfections

Talking of this verse Srila says that when the spirit is detached and one is established in Samadhi then the spiritual self is perceived and the yogi perceives the intense bliss of Brahman as is it were absorbing the yogi. He becomes the possessor of what Srila calls "eight mystic perfections". That is he develops supernatural and mystical powers due to his spiritual practice. The eight mystic perfections are told by lord Krishna in the Srimad Bagavatam (11.15.4-5). They are given here to indicate the kind of mystic cosmology is believed in by the Hare Krishnas.

- 1) The first of the eight mystic perfections is called *anima* and comprises becoming smaller than the smallest. This is not only a physical quality or power but also implies that attribute of humility where the self is placed last before the self of others.
- 2) The second mystic perfection is *mahima* or becoming greater than the greatest. Again this not just a physical power but also the capacity of he sage to tower over ordinary men due to the depth and clarity of their wisdom.
- 3) The third mystic perfection is *Loghima* or becoming lighter than the lightest. Again this not just an ability to walk over water but to embody a personality which is very unobtrusive as Jung would put it has hardly the trace of a shadow, and is therefore very light and buoyant in its mood and temperament. As we are seeing these powers develop through the spiritual practice of Patanjali yoga.
- 4) The next mystic perfection is that of *prapti* that is of acquiring anything that one desires. This again comprises not only of being able to get or materialize anything they desire. It also refers to the fact that the yogi can get anything he desires but he desires nothing and thus has all he wants, his wants being satisfied and under his control.
- 5) The fifth mystic perfection is that of *prakama* in which any object can be enjoyed. This is a very real mental power but is also refers to the fact that the yogi has the power of concentration and imagination which becomes acute in such accomplished yogis.
- 6) The next perfection which the yogi develops is called *isita* or the ability to manipulate *maya* itself and create cities and palaces in the field of conscious reality. On the other hand it means that such a yogi understands the lures of *maya* and is not trapped in them. *Maya* is a power that keep even the best of yogis in its thralls and prevents their spiritual progress.
- 7) The next mystic perfection of the Patanjali yogis is called *vasita* which implies the yogi has gone beyond *sattva* *rajas* and *tamas* and is established in his *dhyana*. Having overcome these three material modes the yogi is not trapped in the relatives of good and bad and develops objectivity of perception.

- 8) The last of the siddhis or yogis power that the yogi gets from Patanjali yoga is the ability to obtain anything from anywhere. Here although the question of the ability to materialize is obvious it is also pertinent to note that the psyche is what is the arena of power and the yogi is after spiritual realization. As such, these kinds of power are usually not used.

#### Reflection and Action 24.2

Talk to ISKCON devotees about mystical perfections. Are they at all common? Write down in your notebook.

These powers are the products of his yogic practice and this has often led to some yogis who have mastered one to more mystic perfections or siddhis to pretend they have mastered the rest of them as well, and it may well be pointed out that such impatience and restlessness are impediments to Samadhi.

On the other hand for the Karma yogi such siddhi are impediments to Samadhi. The karma yogis mind remains fixed on service to Lord Krishna. He is constantly chanting the mantra of Hare Krishna in his mind. Doing this his mind and heart remain fixed on the goal and Srila says he is always in Samadhi, which is the ultimate goal as it unites us with Krishna consciousness. Being in Krishna consciousness his bliss is supreme and cannot be described and is inconceivable.

Srila feels that Patanjali yoga as a path does not measure up to the devotional chanting and service of Lord Sri Krishna. However, Srila is quick to point out that no work on the spiritual path is lost and that one gains by every effort. The yogi may not reach his goal in one lifetime but he is sure to reach it in a future life. All the karma and spiritual progress will be accumulated and accredited to the next life. However, when a materialistic person dies his wealth is all left behind and he does not have a spiritual bank balance. It all becomes "null and void". As concerns the Hare Krishna devotee his deeds are beyond the level of mind and body. His is a Krishna consciousness which transcends all others and makes for a happy journey back to the God head Sri Krishna who is the common goal.

At this point we must discuss devotional service to the lord. When a man works he usually has some selfish goal in mind and hopes for many rewards. But this is not the work which can be called devotional or sacrificial. If a man works devoting everything to Lord Sri Krishna then his work will not carry the germs of future Karma and his acts will transcend matter. The man of sacrifice is such that he does nothing unthinkingly and always dedicates each and every action to the Lord. By doing this he is attaining proximity to the Lord and is washing himself clean. If a man thinks "I will work and become rich" this is not an act of transcendence or sacrifice. This is simply a selfish goal and has personal motives and as such is an action which does not have much spiritual worth. Thus Srila says that we must following Sri Krishna's advice dedicate everything to Him from the smallest to the greatest actions. If a man say "Everything I do, every breath I take is devoted and offered to Sri Krishna" then this attitude is called the attitude of sacrifice. From the attitude of sacrifice flows the action of spirituality that is true and pure. Such a person is dear not only to God but to all his near and dear ones. Sri Krishna warns his devotees that nothing is possible in this world without spiritualized action. Thus it is said in the Gita that the person who works devotedly and is a pure person who controls his mind and senses. Such a person is never entangled in work even while he is working why? This is simply because he is sacrificing everything and every action to the Lord.

On the other hand is the person who is inclined to enjoy the pleasures of the senses and to gratify them. The spirit of such people starts to fall into lower and lower forms of consciousness; and each action of theirs binds them to their bad karma more and more. This is not a case of the Lord favouring or not favouring certain souls but a consequences of the Laws of nature. Those who are struggling against material things and sensations constantly strengthen their spirit for Moksha the ultimate merging into the pure soul of Brahman whose very core is Sri Krishna himself. Thus to forget God while living in this world is no less than a calamity because this means that a person is doomed from the start. Sacrifice requires god awareness and god consciousness. The Bhagavad Gita (5.14) points out that the spirit in this body is not responsible for creating activities. He does not make people act nor does he create the fruits that accrue to action. All these things are done by the modes of nature acting upon each other.

## 24.9 Types of Devotion an Devotees

We may point out there are various types of action and various types of people. They may be divided into

- 1) Sattvic guna
- 2) rajasic guna
- 3) tamasic guna

The people of the Sattvic guna have purity of purpose and are god fearing people. They do not want to fight and compete for every little thing. They also don't want to claim superiority of thought or action. They are not proud and vain. Such people of humble and pure disposition are such that they always strive for Sri Krishna and always dedicate their action to Him.

The rajasi are the hedonists and the tamasic guru people are lazy, indolent and slothful. How then can such people hope to attain peace of mind and salvation? To clarify all these points Krishna says that a man must be a karma yogi. A man who acts for the sake of doing good actions while at the same time renouncing the fruits of such action. Krishna says that (Bhagavad Gita 5.29).

Those in full consciousness of Me, Knowing Me to be the ultimate receiver of all sacrifices and austerity

Supreme Lord of all planets

The well wisher of all living beings

Attains spiritual peace.

Thus is becomes clear that action that is rajasic or tamasic is strictly to be avoided by the devotees of Sri Krishna. The rajasic man in who the guna of all intoxication, pleasure, thrills and gluttony are predominant can never conceive of dedicating his life to the good of the people and the best of humanity. However, it is true as we pointed out there are different types of people with different types of dispositions. Krishna consciousness is also not possible for those people who are not willing to put in any effort to improve their lot and face life as it comes and do their best in the name of the Lord. Thus yoga which means union with the Lord is possible only after withdrawing from the world and meditation before taking action. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita (6.1)

A person who is not attached

To the outcomes of his work

Who works with renunciation

Is a true mystic

Not he who lights no fire

Or performs no duty

The karma yogi knows it is due to the Lord that he is acting and that it is the three material modes that act and interact upon each other. Therefore, he renounces the actions he does by dedicating them to the Lord. His mind is always on Lord Krishna and the mantra of Hare Krishna always raises his Krishna consciousness. As such he is always in a clear calm and relaxed mood and is always cheerful. His Krishna consciousness has recalled that the Lord shines equally on everyone just like the sun who gives his rays to everyone without discrimination. They the real karma-yogis are the true devotees of the Lord. They have through their ceaseless and untiring efforts dedicated everything, even their bodies to the Lord what to say of mind and spirit. They have in fact attained perfection. In such a state they develop supernatural powers and abilities to understand.

We now cover Srila Prabhupada views on devotion to the Lord as per his interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita. According to Srila the message of the Gita is very simple and easy to understand. According to him the message of the Gita is such that there is no room for alternative interpretations or understanding. That is to say the message of the Gita, according to Srila, is universal and not applicable to some one country or a local context. So also the devotees of the Lord are spread out all over the world and not restricted to one country alone. These devotees are according to Srila a class apart and form a superior spiritual fraternity of those who follow the teachings of Sri Krishna. Thus, as Srila notes "God is not the monopoly of any particular group" or class. The message of the Gita is a universal message to each and every soul and can be followed by each and every soul also. Lord Krishna has unequivocally declared this in Bhagavad Gita (9.2) that through worship of the Lord even the minority and weaker sections of the society can gain liberation.

Srila is at pains to point out that certain portions of the Gita are deliberately interpreted in a capricious manner especially the teaching regarding caste divisions. According to Bhagavad Gita (4.13) Lord Krishna points out that the various division of labour is created from material conditions. He points out that the four divisions of society are also created by Him. Srila points out that there are four divisions of society according to the Gita and there are:

- 1) Intellectuals
- 2) Administrators
- 3) Merchants
- 4) Labourers

These divisions of labour should not says Srila, be determined by birth but by merit.

This is the same as when one becomes a high official by merit and not by birth right alone. In the world of three modes of material nature (rajas, tamas, sattva) social classes have always had a presence. As such Srila points out that birth should not be the criteria to determine caste or class. The four classes he says were created according to the qualification of a person. Srila points out that just as some essential services like that of medicine and doctors are available in all country similarly the four classes (as Srila refers to these divisions) of men are to be found in all

cultures. As things exist today the son of a doctor may not become a doctor; similarly the son of an administrator may not become an administrator. In a similar way the offspring of the four classes of men does not imply that the future of these children is fixed permanently and automatically as their parents. Thus, the whole notion of caste is questioned by Srila so far as its usual interpretation is concerned. We should not feel that caste exists in one country or what that caste should imply. The divisions of society as promulgated by Gita are the same everywhere in the world and in all countries. Srila is critical of the hereditary approach to caste where in each caste the only option to the progeny was the same occupation as the parents or the father. This 'restricts' the Indian culture and is a very narrow minded approach to the four classes of man. Srila feels much harm has been done by this and notes that the proper propagation of brahmanical culture would have benefited the world greatly.

Srila points out that varanashrama-dharma, which is what comprises the four spiritual orders and the four spiritual classes is binodal: it is either demoniac or transcendental. The two are diametrically opposed to each other. The social divisions are universal. Srila points out that a person with scriptural knowledge can pinpoint and discuss the four classes. Thus the four classes are seen everywhere and in all societies. The intellectual is present in all societies and makes the ideological climate of the society in which he or she is working. On him or her depends on the direction in which the society is going to go. The administrator too is present in each society and sees to it that all aspects of society interact and go together. That there are, no injustice administration and inequities in distribution. So also the merchant is in all societies not just the Indian subcontinent and ensures the smooth running of trade and business. The labourer too, is present in all societies and helps to construct buildings, dig trenches, and take up the physical maintenance of the society and its various material artifacts. Thus, it is a gross mistake to think that "brahmanas and the other three castes" exist only in India. The scriptures have pronounced that in Kalyuga everyone is born a Sudra. It is then the merit alone which counts.

We must note here that what Srila is giving to us is what may be termed as a transcendental view of caste in which the country specific nature of the phenomena is called to question. However, it is better as sociologists to keep in mind that the caste or jati reality still exists in India. We can talk about caste but we must distinguish it from varna. Thus, there are only four varnas or classes but there are thousands of castes or jatis which exist in India both rural and urban which are the basis of major decisions like marriage.

## 24.10 Conclusion

The situation can then be aptly described as one where the wandering souls, according to karma find better or worse situations facing them. In Sri Caitanya-charitamrta (Madhya 19.151) the Lord says, that it is according to their various types of karma the living entities are moving around in the creation of the Lord. Some of these souls get an elevated consciousness and in others the consciousness gets dimmed. Of many millions of these wandering souls only those who are fortunate get in touch with a real spiritual master by the grace of Lord Krishna. By the mercy of the spiritual master and the Lord the seed of devotion is available in the Bhagavad Gita. It is the duty of everyone to render him loving devotional service. In doing this all the other subsidiary duties are also subsumed.

## 24.11 Further Reading

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