

## TEXT 14

श्रीश्रुतय ऊचुः

जय जय जह्यजामजित दोषगृभीतगुणां  
त्वमसि यदात्मना समवरुद्धसमस्तभगः  
अगजगदोकसामखिलशक्त्यवबोधक ते  
क्वचिदजयात्मना च चरतोऽनुचरेन्निगमः

*śrī-śrutaya ūcuḥ*

*jaya jaya jahy ajām ajita doṣa-gṛbhīta-guṇām  
tvam asi yad ātmanā samavaruddha-samasta-bhagaḥ  
aga-jagad-okasām akhila-śakty-avabodhaka te  
kvacid ajayātmanā ca carato 'nucaren nigamaḥ*

*śrī-śrutayaḥ ūcuḥ*—the Vedas said; *jayajaya*—victory to You, victory to You; *jahi*—please defeat; *ajām*—the eternal illusory potency of Māyā; *ajita*—O unconquerable one; *doṣa*—to create discrepancies; *gṛbhīta*—who has assumed; *guṇām*—the qualities of matter; *tvam*—You; *asi*—are; *yat*—because; *ātmanā*—in Your original status; *samavaruddha*—complete; *samasta*—in all; *bhagaḥ*—opulences; *aga*—nonmoving; *jagat*—and moving; *okasām*—of those who possess material bodies; *akhila*—of all; *śakti*—the energies; *avabodhaka*—O You who awaken; *te*—You; *kvacit*—sometimes; *ajayā*—with Your material energy; *ātmanā*—and with Your internal, spiritual energy; *ca*—also; *carataḥ*—engaging; *anucaret*—can appreciate; *nigamaḥ*—the Vedas.

**The śrutis said:** Victory, victory to You, O unconquerable one! By Your very nature You are perfectly full in all opulences; therefore please defeat the eternal power of illusion, who assumes control over the modes of nature to create difficulties for conditioned souls. O You who awaken all the energies of the moving and nonmoving embodied beings, sometimes the Vedas can recognize You as You sport with Your material and spiritual potencies.

According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, the twenty-eight verses of the prayers of the personified Vedas (Texts 14-41) represent the opinions of each of the twenty-eight major śrutis. These chief Upaniṣads and other śrutis

concern themselves with various approaches to the Absolute Truth, and among them those *śrutis* are supreme which emphasize pure, unalloyed devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The *Upaniṣads* direct our attention to the Personality of Godhead by first negating what is distinct from Him and then defining some of His important characteristics.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī interprets the first words of this prayer, *jaya jaya*, to mean "please reveal Your superexcellence." The word *jaya* is repeated out of either reverence or joy.

"How should I reveal My excellence?" the Lord might ask.

The *śrutis* answer by requesting Him to mercifully destroy the ignorance of all living beings and attract them to His lotus feet.

The Lord says, "But Māyā, who imposes ignorance on the *jīvas*, is full of good qualities [*gr̥bhīta-guṇām*]. Why should I oppose her?"

"Yes," the *Vedas* answer, "but she has taken on the three modes of nature to bewilder the conditioned souls and make them falsely identify with their material bodies. Her modes of goodness, passion and ignorance, moreover, are tainted [*doṣa-gr̥bhīta*] because You are not manifest in their presence."

The *śrutis* go on to address the Lord as *ajita*, implying that "only You cannot be conquered by Māyā, whereas others, like Brahmā, are defeated by their own faults."

The Lord responds, "But what proof do you have that she cannot conquer Me?"

"The proof lies in the fact that in Your original state You have already realized the perfection of all opulences."

At this point the Lord might object that merely destroying the ignorance of the *jīvas* will not suffice to bring them to His lotus feet, since the *jīva* soul, even after his ignorance is dispelled, cannot attain the Lord without engaging in devotional service. As the Lord states in His own words, *bhaktyāham ekayā grāhyaḥ*: "I am attainable only through devotional service." (SB 11.14.21)

To this objection the *śrutis* reply, "My Lord, O You who awaken all energies, after creating the intelligence and senses of the living entities, You inspire them to work hard and enjoy the fruits of their labor. In addition, by Your mercy You awaken their ability to pursue the

progressive paths of knowledge, mystic *yoga* and devotional service, allowing them to advance toward You in Your aspects of Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān, respectively. And when *jñāna*, *yoga* and *bhakti* mature, You empower the living beings to directly realize You in each of Your three aspects."

If the Lord were to ask for authoritative evidence to support this statement by the personified *Vedas*, they humbly reply, "We ourselves are the evidence. On some occasions—such as now, the time of creation—You consort with Your external, Māyā potency, whereas You are always present with Your internal energy. It is at times such as the present, when Your activity is outwardly manifest, that we, the *Vedas*, can recognize You in Your play."

Thus endowed with authority by their personal association with the Supreme Lord, the *śrutis* promulgate the processes of *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga* and *bhakti* as various means for the conditioned souls to employ their intelligence, senses, mind and vitality in search of the Absolute Truth. In many places the *Vedas* glorify the transcendental, personal qualities of the Supreme. The following verse appears in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.11), the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad* (Uttara 97), and the *Brahma Upaniṣad* (4.1):

*eko devaḥ sarva-bhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ  
sarva-vyāpī sarva-bhūtāntarātmā  
karmādhyakṣaḥ sarva-bhūtādhivāsaḥ  
sākṣī cetāḥ kevalo nirguṇaś ca*

"The one Supreme Lord lives hidden inside all created things. He pervades all matter and sits within the hearts of all living beings. As the indwelling Supersoul, He supervises their material activities. Thus, while having no material qualities Himself, He is the unique witness and giver of consciousness.

The Supreme's personal qualities are further described in the following quotations from the *Upaniṣads*: *Yaḥ sarva-jñāḥ sa sarva-vid yasya jñāna-mayaṁ tapaḥ*. "He who is all-knowing, from whom the potency of all knowledge comes—He is the wisest of all" (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.1.9); *sarvasya vaśī sarvasyeśānaḥ*: "He is the Lord and controller of everyone"

(*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.22); and *yaḥ pṛthivyām tiṣṭhan pṛthivyā āntaro yaṁ pṛthivī na veda*: "He who resides within the earth and pervades it, whom the earth does not know." (*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.7.3)

The Lord's role in creation is mentioned in many statements of the *śruti*. The *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.2.4) states, *so 'kāmayata bahu syām*: "He desired, 'I will become many.' " "The phrase *so 'kāmayata* ("He desired") here implies that the Lord's personality is eternal, for even prior to the creation the Absolute Truth experienced desire, and desire is an attribute unique to persons. The *Aitareya Upaniṣad* (3.11) similarly states, *sa aikṣata tat-tejo 'sṛjata*: "He saw, and His power sent forth the creation." Here the word *tat-tejaḥ* refers to the Lord's partial expansion Mahā-Viṣṇu, who glances upon Māyā and thus manifests the material creation. Or *tat-tejaḥ* may refer to the Lord's impersonal Brahman feature, His potency of all-pervasive, eternal existence. As described in *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.40),

*yasya prabhā prabhavato jagad-aṇḍa-koṭi-  
koṭiṣv aśeṣa-vasudhādi-vibhūti-bhinnam  
tad brahma niṣkalam anantam aśeṣa-bhūtaṁ  
govindam ādi-ṣuruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*

"I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is endowed with great power. The glowing effulgence of His transcendental form is the impersonal Brahman, which is absolute, complete and unlimited and which displays the varieties of countless planets, with their different opulences, in millions and millions of universes."

In summing up this verse, Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*jaya jayājita jahy aga-jaṅgamā-  
vṛtim ajām upanīta-mṛṣā-guṇām  
na hi bhavantam ṛte prabhavanty amī  
nigama-gīta-guṇārṇavatā tava*

"All glories, all glories to You, O unconquerable one! Please defeat the influence of Your eternal Māyā, who covers all moving and nonmoving

creatures and who rules over the modes of illusion. Without Your influence, all these Vedic *mantras* would be powerless to sing of You as the ocean of transcendental qualities."

### TEXT 15

बृहदुपलब्धमेतदवयन्त्यवशेषतया  
यत उदयास्तमयौ विकृतेर्मृदि वाविकृतात्  
अत ऋषयो दधुस्त्वयि मनोवचनाचरितं  
कथमयथा भवन्ति भुवि दत्तपदानि नृणाम्

*bṛhad upalabdham etad avayanty avaśeṣatayā  
yata udayāstam-ayau vikṛter mṛdi vāvikṛtāt  
ata ṛṣayo dadhus tvayi mano-vacanācaritaṁ*

*katham ayathā bhavanti bhuvi datta-padāni nṛṇām*

*bṛhat*—as the Supreme; *upalabdham*—perceived; *etat*—this (world); *avayanti*—they consider; *avaśeṣatayā*—in terms of its being the all-pervading foundation of existence; *yataḥ*—since; *udaya*—the generation; *astam-ayau*—and dissolution; *vikṛteḥ*—of a transformation; *mṛdi*—of clay; *vā*—as if; *avikṛtāt*—(the Supreme itself) not being subject to transformation; *ataḥ*—therefore; *ṛṣayaḥ*—the sages (who compiled the Vedic *mantras*); *dadhuḥ*—placed; *tvayi*—in You; *manaḥ*—their minds; *vacana*—words; *ācaritaṁ*—and actions; *katham*—how; *ayathā*—not as they are; *bhavanti*—become; *bhuvi*—upon the ground; *datta*—placed; *padāni*—the steps; *nṛṇām*—of men.

This perceivable world is identified with the Supreme because the Supreme Brahman is the ultimate foundation of all existence, remaining unchanged as all created things are generated from it and at last dissolved into it, just as clay remains unchanged by the products made from it and again merged with it. Thus it is toward You alone that the Vedic sages direct all their thoughts, words and acts. After all, how can the footsteps of men fail to touch the earth on which they live?

There may be some doubt as to whether the Vedic *mantras* are unanimous when identifying the Supreme Personality of Godhead. After all, some *mantras* state, *indro yāto 'vasitasya rājā*: "Indra is the

King of all moving and nonmoving beings" (*R̥g Veda* 1.32.15), while others say, *agnir mūrdhā divaḥ*: "Agni is the chief of the heavens," and yet other *mantras* point to different deities as the Absolute. It would seem, then, that the *Vedas* present a polytheistic world view.

Answering this doubt, the *Vedas* themselves explain in this verse that there can be only one source of universal creation, called Brahman or Bṛhat, "the greatest," which is the singular truth underlying and pervading all existence. No finite deity like Indra or Agni can fulfill this unique role, nor would the *śrutis* be so ignorant as to propose such an idea. As indicated here by the word *tvayi*, Lord Viṣṇu alone is the Absolute Truth. Indra and other demigods may be glorified in various ways, but they possess only those powers Lord Śrī Viṣṇu has granted them.

The Vedic sages understand that this entire world—including Indra, Agni, and everything else perceivable by the eyes, ears and other senses—is identical with the one Supreme Truth, the Personality of Godhead, who is called Bṛhat, "the greatest," because He is *avaśeṣa*, "the ultimate substance that remains." From the Lord everything expands at creation, and into Him everything dissolves at annihilation. He exists before and after the material manifestation as the constant basis, known to philosophers as the "ingredient cause," *upādāna*. Despite the fact that countless manifestations emanate from Him, the Supreme Lord exists eternally unchanged—an idea the *śrutis* specifically emphasize here with the word *avikṛtāt*.

The words *mṛdi vā* ("as in the case of clay") allude to a famous analogy spoken by Udālaka to his son Śvetaketu in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.4.1): *vācārambhanam vikāro nāmadheyam mṛttikety eva satyam*. "The objects of the material world exist merely as names, transformations defined by language, whereas the ingredient cause, like the clay from which pots are made, is the actual reality." A mass of clay is the ingredient cause of various pots, statues and so on, but the clay itself remains in its essence unchanged. Eventually, the pots and other objects will be destroyed and return to the clay from which they came. Similarly, the Supreme Lord is the total ingredient cause, yet He remains eternally untouched by transformation. This is the purport of the statement *sarvam khalv idam brahma*: "Everything is Brahman."

(Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.14.1) Wondering at this mystery, the great devotee Gajendra prayed,

*namo namas te 'khila-kāraṇāya  
niṣkāraṇāyādbhuta-kāraṇāya*

"Obeisances again and again to You, the source of all creation. You are the inconceivable cause of all causes, and of You there is no other cause."  
(SB 8.3.15)

*Prakṛti*, material nature, is often considered the ingredient cause of creation, in Western science as well as in the *Vedas*. This does not contradict the higher fact of the Supreme Lord's being the final cause, since *prakṛti* is His energy, and is herself subject to change. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.24.19), Lord Kṛṣṇa says,

*prakṛtir yasyopādānam  
ādhāraḥ puruṣaḥ paraḥ  
sato 'bhivyañjakaḥ kālo  
brahma tat tritayaṁ tv aham*

"The material universe is real, having *prakṛti* as its original ingredient and final state. Lord Mahā-Viṣṇu is the resting place of nature, which becomes manifest by the power of time. Thus nature, the almighty Viṣṇu and time are not different from Me, the Supreme Absolute Truth."

*Prakṛti*, however, undergoes transformation, while her Lord, the supreme *puruṣa*, does not. *Prakṛti* is the Personality of Godhead's external energy, but He has another energy—His internal energy—which is *svarūpa-bhūtā*, nondifferent from His very essence. The Lord's internal energy, like Himself, is never subject to material change.

Therefore the *mantras* of the *Vedas*, along with the *ṛṣis* who have received these *mantras* in meditation and transmitted them for the benefit of mankind, direct their attention primarily toward the Personality of Godhead. The Vedic sages direct the activities of their mind and words—that is to say, the inner as well as the literal meaning (*abhidhā-vṛtti*) of their utterances—first of all toward Him, and only secondarily toward separated transformations of *prakṛti*, such as Indra and other demigods.

Just as a man's footsteps, whether placed on mud, stone or bricks, cannot fail to touch the surface of the earth, so whatever the *Vedas* discuss within the realm of material generation, they relate to the Absolute Truth. Mundane literature describes limited phenomena, disregarding the relation of its subjects to the total reality, but the *Vedas* always focus their perfect vision on the Supreme. As the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* affirms in its statements *mṛttikety eva satyam and sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma*, reality is understood properly when everything is seen to be dependent on Brahman, the Absolute, for its existence. Brahman alone is real, not because nothing we see in this world is real, but because Brahman is the absolute, final cause of everything. Thus the word *satyam*, as used in the phrase *mṛttikety eva satyam*, has been defined in another context as "ingredient cause" by no less an authority than Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself:

*yad upādāya pūrvas tu  
bhāvo vikurute param  
ādir anto yadā yasya  
tat satyam abhidhīyate*

"A material object, itself composed of an essential ingredient, creates another material object through transformation. In this way one created object becomes the cause and basis of another created object. A particular thing may be called real in that it possesses the basic nature of another object that constitutes its cause and original state." (SB 11.24.18)

Explaining the word *Brahman*, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*, "The word *Brahman* indicates the greatest of all and the maintainer of everything. The impersonalists are attracted by the greatness of the sky, but because of their poor fund of knowledge they are not attracted by the greatness of Kṛṣṇa. In our practical life, however, we are attracted by the greatness of a person and not by the greatness of a big mountain. Actually the term *Brahman* actually applies to Kṛṣṇa only; therefore in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna admitted that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Parabrahman, or the supreme rest of everything.

"Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Brahman because of His unlimited knowledge unlimited potencies, unlimited strength, unlimited influence, unlimited

beauty and unlimited renunciation. Therefore the word *Brahman* can be applied to Kṛṣṇa only. Arjuna affirms that because the impersonal Brahman is the effulgence emanating as rays of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental body, Kṛṣṇa is the Parabrahman. Everything is resting on Brahman, but Brahman itself is resting on Kṛṣṇa. Therefore Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate Brahman, or Parabrahman. The material elements are accepted as inferior energies of Kṛṣṇa because by their interaction the cosmic manifestation takes place, rests on Kṛṣṇa, and after dissolution again enters into the body of Kṛṣṇa as His subtle energy. Kṛṣṇa is therefore the cause of both manifestation and dissolution."

In summary, Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*druhiṇa-vahni-ravīndra-mukhāmarā  
jagad idam na bhavet pṛthag utthitam  
bahu-mukhair aṇi mantra-gaṇair ajas  
tvam uru-mūrtir ato vinigadyase*

"The demigods, headed by Śiva, Agni, Sūrya and Indra, and indeed all beings in the universe, do not come into existence independently of You. The *mantras* of the *Vedas*, though they speak from various viewpoints, all speak about You, the unborn Lord appearing in numerous forms."

#### TEXT 16

इति तव सूरयस्त्र्यधिपतेऽखिललोकमल-  
क्षपणकथामृताब्धिमवगाह्य तपांसि जहुः  
किमुत पुनः स्वधामविधुताशयकालगुणाः  
परम भजन्ति ये पदमजस्रसुखानुभवम्

*iti tava sūrayas try-adhipate 'khila-loka-mala-  
kṣapaṇa-kathāmṛtābdhim avagāhya tapāṁsi jahuh  
kim uta punaḥ sva-dhāma-vidhutāśaya-kāla-guṇāḥ  
parama bhajanti ye padam ajasra-sukhānubhavam*

*iti*—thus; *tava*—Your; *sūrayaḥ*—wise saints; *tri*—of the three (planetary systems of the universe, or the three modes of nature); *adhipate*—O

master; *akhila*—of all; *loka*—the worlds; *mala*—the contamination; *kṣapaṇa*—which eradicates; *kathā*—of discussions; *amṛta*—nectar; *abdhim*—into the ocean; *avagāhya*—by diving deeply; *tapāmsi*—their troubles; *jahuḥ*—have given up; *kim uta*—what to speak; *punaḥ*—moreover; *sva*—their own; *dhāma*—by the power; *vidhuta*—dispelled; *āśaya*—of their minds; *kāla*—and of time; *guṇāḥ*—the (undesirable) qualities; *parama*—O supreme one; *bhajanti*—worship; *ye*—who; *padam*—Your true nature; *ajasra*—uninterrupted; *sukha*—of happiness; *anubhavam*—(in which there is) experience.

**Therefore, O master of the three worlds, the wise get rid of all misery by diving deep into the nectarean ocean of topics about You, which washes away all the contamination of the universe. Then what to speak of those who, having by spiritual strength rid their minds of bad habits and freed themselves from time, are able to worship Your true nature, O supreme one, finding within it uninterrupted bliss?**

According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, in the previous verse those *śrutis* whose presentation of the Supreme Truth may seem impersonal clarified their true purpose. Now, in the present verse, those who focus exclusively on the divine Personality of Godhead, who speak of His transcendental pastimes, take their turn in praising Him.

Because all the *Vedas* declare the supremacy of the Personality of Godhead as the cause of all causes, discriminating persons should take to His worship. By diving into the ocean of His glories, intelligent devotees help dispel the distress of all souls and loosen their own burning attachment to materialistic life. These advancing devotees gradually give up all material attachment and lose any interest they once had in the troublesome austerities of *karma*, *jñāna* and *yoga*.

Beyond these devotees are the *sūris*, connoisseurs of spiritual truth, who honor the nectarean ocean of the Supreme Lord's glories by immersing themselves fully within it. These mature devotees of the Supreme Lord achieve unimaginable perfection. The Lord, reciprocating their sincere endeavors, empowers them to realize Him in His personal form.

Remembering with rapture the Lord's intimate pastimes and entourage, they are automatically freed from the last subtle traces of mental contamination and from sensitivity to the unavoidable pains of disease

and old age.

Referring to the purifying power of devotional service, the *śrutis* say, *tad yathā puṣkara-palāśa āpo na śliṣyante evam evaṁ-vidi pāpaṁ karma na śliṣyate*: "Just as water does not adhere to a lotus leaf, so sinful activities do not adhere to one who knows the truth in this way." The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (14.7.28), *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* (3.12.9.8), *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.4.28) and *Baudhāyana-dharma-śāstra* (2.6.11.30) all concur: *na karmaṇā lipyate pāpakena*. "One thus avoids becoming tainted by sinful activity."

The *Ṛg Veda* (1.154.1) refers to the Supreme Lord's pastimes as follows: *viṣṇor nu kaṁ vīryāṇi pravocaṁ yaḥ pāṛthivāni vimame rajāmsi*. "Only he may fully enunciate the heroic deeds of Lord Viṣṇu who can count all the particles of dust in the world." Many *śruti-mantras* glorify devotional service to the Lord, such as *eko vaśī sarva-go ye 'nubhajanti dhīrās/ teṣāṁ sukhaṁ śāśvataṁ netareṣāṁ*: "He is the one omnipresent Lord and controller; only those wise souls who worship Him obtain eternal happiness, not anyone else."

In this connection Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*sakala-veda-gaṇerita-sad-guṇas  
tvam iti sarva-manīṣi-janā ratāḥ  
tvayi subhadra-guṇa-śravaṇādibhis  
tava pada-smaraṇena gata-klamāḥ*

"Because all the *Vedas* describe Your transcendental qualities, all thoughtful persons are attracted to hearing and chanting about Your all-auspicious qualities. Thus by remembering Your lotus feet, they are freed from material distress."

### TEXT 17

*दृतय इव श्वसन्त्यसुभृतो यदि तेऽनुविधा  
महदहमादयोऽण्डमसृजन् यदनुग्रहतः  
पुरुषविधोऽन्वयोऽत्र चरमोऽन्नमयादिषु यः  
सदसतः परं त्वमथ यदेष्ववशेषमृतम्*

*dṛtaya iva śvasanty asu-bhṛto yadi te 'nuvidhā  
mahad-aham-ādayo 'ṅdam aṣṛjan yad-anugrahataḥ  
puruṣa-vidho 'nvayo 'tra caramo 'nna-mayādiṣu yaḥ  
sad-asataḥ param tvam atha yad eṣv avaśeṣam ṛtam*

*dṛtayaḥ*—bellows; *iva*—as if; *śvasanti*—they breathe; *asu-bhṛtaḥ*—alive; *yadi*—if; *te*—Your; *anuvīdhāḥ*—faithful followers; *mahat*—the total material energy; *aham*—false ego; *ādayaḥ*—and the other elements of creation; *aṅdam*—the universal egg; *aṣṛjan*—produced; *yat*—whose; *anugrahataḥ*—by the mercy; *puruṣa*—of the living entity; *vidhaḥ*—according to the particular forms; *anvayaḥ*—whose entrance; *atra*—among these; *caramaḥ*—the ultimate; *anna-maya-ādiṣu*—among the manifestations known as *anna-maya* and so on; *yaḥ*—who; *sat-asataḥ*—from gross and subtle matter; *param*—distinct; *tvam*—You; *atha*—and furthermore; *yat*—which; *eṣu*—among these; *avaśeṣam*—underlying; *ṛtam*—the reality.

**Only if they become Your faithful followers are those who breathe actually alive, otherwise their breathing is like that of a bellows. It is by Your mercy alone that the elements, beginning with the *mahat-tattva* and false ego, created the egg of this universe. Among the manifestations known as *anna-maya* and so forth, You are the ultimate one, entering within the material coverings along with the living entity and assuming the same forms as those he takes. Distinct from the gross and subtle material manifestations, You are the reality underlying them all.**

Life is without purpose for one who remains ignorant of his most well-wishing benefactor and thus fails to worship Him. Such a person's breathing is no better than the breathing of a blacksmith's bellows. The gift of human life is a fortunate opportunity for the conditioned soul, but by turning away from his Lord, the living being commits spiritual suicide.

In the words of Śrī Īśopaniṣad (3),

*asuryā nāma te lokā  
andhena tamasāvṛtāḥ  
tāms te pretyābhigacchanti  
ye ke cātma-hano janāḥ*

"The killer of the soul, whoever he may be, must enter into the planets known as the worlds of the faithless, full of darkness and ignorance." *Asuryāḥ* means "to be obtained by demons," and demons are persons who have no devotion for the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu. This definition is stated in the *Agni Purāṇa*:

*dvau bhūta-sargau loke 'smin  
daiva āsura eva ca  
viṣṇu-bhakti-para daiva  
āsuras tad-viparyayaḥ  
[Bg. 16.6]*

"There are two kinds of created beings in this world, godly and demoniac. Those dedicated to the devotional service of Lord Viṣṇu are godly, and those opposed to such service are demoniac."

Similarly, the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.4.15) states, *na cedavedīn mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ. . . ye tad vidur amṛtās te bhavanty athetare duḥkham evopayanti*: "If one does not come to know the Supreme, he must suffer utter destruction.... Those who realize the Supreme become immortal, but others inevitably suffer." A person must revive his Kṛṣṇa consciousness to be relieved of the suffering caused by ignorance, but the process by which this is done need not be difficult, as Lord Kṛṣṇa assures us in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.34):

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto  
mad-yājī mām namaskuru  
mām evaiṣyasi yuktvaivam  
ātmānaṁ mat-paraṇyaṇaḥ*

"Engage your mind in always thinking of Me, become My devotee, offer obeisances to Me and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me." Despite disqualifications and weaknesses, one need only willingly become *anuvīdha*, the Supreme Lord's trusting and trustworthy servant. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (2.2.13) proclaims,

*nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām  
eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān*

*taṁ pīṭha-gaṁ ye 'nupaśyanti dhīrās  
teṣāṁ śāntiḥ śāśvatī netareṣāṁ*

"Among all the eternal, conscious beings, there is one who supplies the needs of everyone else. The wise souls who worship Him in His abode attain everlasting peace. Others cannot."

What is alive, and what is dead? The bodies and minds of materialistic nondevotees seem to display the symptoms of life, but this appearance is deceptive. Actually, the conditioned soul has little control over his own bodily existence. Against his will, he has to excrete waste, get sick from time to time, and eventually age and die. And in his mind he unwillingly suffers anger, hankering and lamentation. Lord Kṛṣṇa describes this situation as *yantrārūḍhāni māyayā* (Bg. 18.61), riding helplessly as a passenger in a mechanical vehicle. The soul undoubtedly is alive, and irrevocably so, but in his ignorance that inner life is covered and forgotten. In its place, the automation of the external mind and body carries out the dictates of the modes of nature, which force one to act in a way altogether irrelevant to the dormant needs of the soul. Calling out to the forgetful prisoners of illusion, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (2.5) urges,

*śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrā  
ā ye dhāmāni divyāni tasthuḥ*

"All you sons of immortality, hear, you who once resided in the divine kingdom!"

So, on the one hand, what is normally viewed as living—the material body—is in actuality a dead machine being manipulated by the modes of nature. And on the other hand, what the materialist condescendingly views as inert matter meant for exploitation is in its unknown essence connected with a living intelligence vastly more potent than his own. The Vedic civilization recognizes the intelligence behind nature as belonging to demigods who preside over the various elements, and ultimately to the Supreme Lord Himself. Matter, after all, cannot act coherently without the impulse and guidance of a living force. As Kṛṣṇa states in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.10),

*mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ  
sūyate sa-carācaram  
hetunānena kaunteya  
jagad viparivartate*

"This material nature, which is one of My energies, is working under My direction, O son of Kuntī, producing all moving and nonmoving beings. Under its rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again."

In the beginning of creation, Lord Mahā-Viṣṇu glanced at the dormant material nature, *prakṛti*. Thus awakened, the subtle *prakṛti* began to evolve into more concrete forms: first the *mahat*; then false ego in conjunction with each of *prakṛti*'s three modes; and gradually the various material elements, including intelligence, mind, the senses and the five physical elements with their presiding demigods. Even after becoming separately manifested, however, the deities responsible for the various elements could not work together to produce the perceptible world until Lord Viṣṇu, by His special mercy, once more intervened. This is described in the Third Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.5.38-39):

*ete devāḥ kalā viṣṇoḥ  
kāla-māyāṁśa-liṅgināḥ  
nānātvāt sva-kriyānīśāḥ  
procuḥ prāñjalayo vibhum*

*devā ūcuḥ  
nanāma te deva padāravindam  
praṇanna-tāpopaśamātapatram  
yan-mūla-ketā yatayo 'ñjasoru-  
saṁsāra-duḥkham bahir utkṣipanti*

"The controlling deities of these physical elements are empowered expansions of Lord Viṣṇu. They are embodied by eternal time under the external energy, and they are His parts and parcels. Because they were entrusted with different functions of universal duties and were unable to perform them, they offered fascinating prayers to the Lord. The

demigods said, 'O Lord, Your lotus feet are like an umbrella for the surrendered souls, protecting them from all the miseries of material existence. All the sages under that shelter throw off all material miseries. We therefore offer our respectful obeisances unto Your lotus feet.'"

Hearing the prayers of the assembled demigods of the elements, the Supreme Lord then showed His favor (SB 3.6.1-3):

*iti tāsām sva-śaktīnām  
satīnām asametya saḥ  
prasupta-loka-tantrāṇām  
niśāmya gatim īśvaraḥ*

*kāla-samjñām tadā devīm  
bibhrac chaktim urukramaḥ  
trayaviṁśati tattvānām  
gaṇam yugapad āviśat*

*so 'nupraviṣṭo bhagavāṁś  
ceṣṭā-rūpeṇa taṁ gaṇam  
bhinnam saṁyojayām āsa  
suptam karma prabodhayan*

"The Lord thus heard about the suspension of the progressive creative functions of the universe due to the noncombination of His potencies, such as the *mahat-tattva*. The Supreme Powerful Lord then simultaneously entered into the twenty-three elements with the goddess Kālī, His external energy, who alone amalgamates all the different elements. Thus when the Personality of Godhead entered into the elements by His energy, all the living entities were enlivened into different activities, just as one is engaged in his work after awakening from sleep."

In *Kṛṣṇa*, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the five levels of ego covering the self: "Within the body there are five different departments of existence, known as *anna-maya*, *prāṇa-maya*, *mano-maya*, *vijñāna-maya*, and at last *ānanda-maya*. [These are enumerated in the *Brahmānanda-vallī* of the

*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.] In the beginning of life, every living entity is food conscious. A child or an animal is satisfied only by getting nice food. This stage of consciousness, in which the goal is to eat sumptuously, is called *anna-maya*. *Anna* means 'food.' After this one lives in the consciousness of being alive. If one can continue his life without being attacked or destroyed, one thinks himself happy. This stage is called *prāṇa-maya*, or consciousness of one's existence. After this stage, when one is situated on the mental platform, that consciousness is called *mano-maya*. The material civilization is primarily situated in these three stages—*annamaya*, *prāṇa-maya* and *mano-maya*. The first concern of civilized persons is economic development, the next concern is defense against being annihilated, and the next consciousness is mental speculation, the philosophical approach to the values of life.

"If by the evolutionary process of philosophical life one happens to reach to the platform of intellectual life and understands that he is not this material body, but is a spirit soul, one is situated in the *vijñāna-maya* stage. Then by evolution of spiritual life he comes to understand the Supreme Lord, or the Supreme Soul. When one develops his relationship with Him and executes devotional service, that stage of life is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the *ānanda-maya* stage. *Ānanda-maya* is the blissful life of knowledge and eternity. As it is said in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, *ānanda-mayo 'bhyāsāt*. The Supreme Brahman and the subordinate Brahman, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the living entities, are both joyful by nature. As long as the living entities are situated in the lower four stages of life—*anna-maya*, *prāṇa-maya*, *mano-maya* and *vijñāna-maya*—they are considered to be in the material condition of life, but as soon as one reaches the stage of *ānanda-maya* he becomes a liberated soul. This *ānanda-maya* stage is explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā* as the *brahma-bhūta* stage. There it is said that in the *brahma-bhūta* [SB 4.30.20] stage of life there is no anxiety and no hankering. This stage begins when one becomes equally disposed toward all living entities, and it then expands to the stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, in which one hankers to render service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This hankering for advancement in devotional service is not the same as hankering for sense gratification in material existence. In other words, hankering remains in spiritual life, but it

becomes purified. When our senses are purified, they become freed from all material stages, namely *anna-maya*, *prāṇa-maya*, *mano-maya* and *vijñāna-maya*, and they become situated in the highest stage—*ānanda-maya*, or blissful life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"The Māyāvādī philosophers consider *ānanda-maya* to be the state of being merged in the Supreme. To them, *ānanda-maya* means that the Supersoul and the individual soul become one. But the real fact is that oneness does not mean merging into the Supreme and losing one's own individual existence. Merging into the spiritual existence is the living entity's realization of qualitative oneness with the Supreme Lord in His eternity and knowledge aspects. But the actual *ānanda-maya* (blissful) stage is obtained when one is engaged in devotional service. That is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *mad-bhaktim labhate parām* [Bg. 18.54]. The *brahma-bhūta ānanda-maya* stage is complete only when there is the exchange of love between the Supreme and the subordinate living entities. Unless one comes to this *ānanda-maya* stage of life, his breathing is like the breathing of a bellows in a blacksmith's shop, his duration of life is like that of a tree, and he is no better than the lower animals like the camels, hogs and dogs."

In accompanying the *jīva* within the coverings of Māyā, the Paramātmā is not bound by karmic entanglement as the *jīva* is. Rather, the Supreme Soul's connection with these coverings is like the apparent connection between the moon and some tree branches it is seen through. The Supersoul is *sad-asataḥ param*, always transcendental to the subtle and gross manifestations of *anna-maya* and so on, although He enters among them as the sanctioning witness of all activities. As their final cause, the Supersoul is in one sense identical with the manifest products of creation, but in His original identity (*svarūpa*) He remains distinct. In this second sense He is the *ānanda-maya* alone, the last of the five *kośas*. Therefore the *śrutis* address Him here as *avaśeṣam*, the residual essence. This is also expressed in the text of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.7): *raso vai saḥ*. Within His personal essence, the Supreme Lord enjoys *rasa*, the reciprocation of the mellows of devotional service, and integral to the play of *rasas* is the participation of realized *jīvas*. *Raso vai saḥ, rasam hy evāyam labdhvānandī bhavati*: "He is the embodiment of *rasa*, and the *jīva* who realizes this *rasa* becomes fully ecstatic." Or in the words of the

personified *Vedas* praying in this verse, the Supersoul is *ṛtam*, which Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī interprets as here meaning "realized by great sages."

In the opinion of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī, the last word of all authoritative scripture (*sarvāntima-śruti*) is contained in the aphorism *raso vai saḥ*, which is demonstrably a reference to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the infinitely expanding embodiment of divine pleasure (*sarva-bṛhattamānanda*). The *Gopāla-tāpanī śruti* (Uttara 96) states, *yo 'sau jāgrat-svapna-suṣuptim atītya turyātīto gopālaḥ*: "Lord Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd, transcends not only the material consciousness of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep, but also the fourth realm of pure, spiritual awareness." The *ānanda-maya* Supersoul is simply an aspect of the primeval Lord Govinda, as declared by Him, *viṣṭabhyāham idaṁ kṛtsnam ekāṁśena sthito jagat*: "With a single fragment of Myself I pervade and support this entire universe." (Bg. 10.42)

The *śrutis* thus tactfully assert that even among the various personal forms of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa is supreme. Understanding this, Nārada Muni will later offer obeisances to Lord Kṛṣṇa in the words *namas tasmāi bhagavate kṛṣṇāyāmala-kīrtaye* (Text 46), even though He is standing in front of Lord Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī concludes his comments on this verse by praying,

*nara-vapuḥ pratipādya yadi tvayi  
śravaṇa-varṇana-saṁsmaraṇādibhiḥ  
nara-hare na bhajanti nṛṇām idaṁ  
dṛti-vad ucchvasitaṁ viphalam tataḥ*

"O Lord Narahari, persons who have attained this human form live uselessly, merely breathing like bellows, if they fail to worship You by hearing about You, chanting Your glories, remembering You and performing the other devotional practices."

### TEXT 18

उदरमुपासते य ऋषिवर्त्मसु कूर्पदृशः  
परिसरपद्धतिं हृदयमारुणयो दहरम्  
तत उदगादनन्त तव धाम शिरः परमं

## पुनरिह यत्समेत्य न पतन्ति कृतान्तमुखे

*udaram upāsate ya ṛṣi-vartmasu kūrpa-dṛśaḥ  
parisara-paddhatim hṛdayam āruṇayo daharam  
tata udagād ananta tava dhāma śiraḥ paramam  
punar iha yat sametya na patanti kṛtānta-mukhe*

*udaram*—the abdomen; *upāsate*—worship; *ye*—who; *ṛṣi*—of sages; *vartmasu*—according to the standard methods; *kūrpa*—gross; *dṛśaḥ*—their vision; *parisara*—from which all the prāṇic channels emanate; *paddhatim*—the node; *hṛdayam*—the heart; *āruṇayaḥ*—the Āruṇi sages; *daharam*—subtle; *tataḥ*—thence; *udagāt*—(the soul) rises up; *ananta*—O unlimited Lord; *tava*—Your; *dhāma*—place of appearance; *śiraḥ*—to the head; *paramam*—the highest destination; *punaḥ*—again; *iha*—into this world; *yat*—which; *sametya*—reaching; *na patanti*—they do not fall down; *kṛta-anta*—of death; *mukhe*—into the mouth.

Among the followers of the methods set forth by great sages, those with less refined vision worship the Supreme as present in the region of the abdomen, while the Āruṇis worship Him as present in the heart, in the subtle center from which all the prāṇic channels emanate. From there, O unlimited Lord, these worshipers raise their consciousness upward to the top of the head, where they can perceive You directly. Then, passing through the top of the head toward the supreme destination, they reach that place from which they will never again fall to this world, into the mouth of death.

Here the *śrutis* who teach meditational *yoga* glorify the Personality of Godhead. The various processes of *yoga* are for the most part gradual and full of opportunities for distraction. Authentic methods of *yoga*, nonetheless, all aim at meditation on the Supersoul (Paramātmā), whose primary residence is in the region of the heart, alongside the *jīva* soul. This manifestation of Paramātmā in the heart is very subtle and difficult to perceive (*daharam*), and thus only advanced *yogīs* can realize Him there.

Neophyte meditators often practice focusing on the Supersoul's secondary presence in one of the lower centers of vital energy, such as

the *mūlādhāra-cakra*, at the base of the spine, the *svādhiṣṭhāna-cakra*, in the area of the navel, or the *maṇipūra-cakra*, in the abdomen. Lord Kṛṣṇa refers to His expansion as Paramātmā in the abdominal *cakra* as follows:

*aham vaiśvānaro bhūtvā  
prāṇinam deham āsthitaḥ  
prāṇāpāna-samāyuktaḥ  
pacāmy annam catur-vidham*

"I am the fire of digestion in the bodies of all living entities, and I join with the air of life, outgoing and incoming, to digest the four kinds of food." (Bg. 15.14) Lord Vaiśvānara presides over digestion and in general bestows the capacity of mobility on animals, humans and demigods. In the judgment of the *śrutis* speaking this verse, those who limit their meditation to this form of the Lord are less intelligent, *kūrpa-dṛśaḥ*, meaning literally "having eyes clouded by dust."

The superior *yogīs* known as *Āruṇis*, on the other hand, worship the Supersoul in His form as the indwelling companion of the *jīva* in the heart, the Lord who endows His dependent with the power of knowledge and inspires him with all varieties of practical intelligence. And just as the physical heart is the center of blood circulation, so the subtle heart —*cakra* is the crossroads of numerous channels of *prāṇa*, called *nāḍīs*, which extend outward to all parts of the body. When these passageways have been sufficiently purified, the *Āruṇi yogīs* can leave the heart region and go upward to the *cakra* at the roof of the brain. *Yogīs* who leave their bodies through this *cakra*, the *brahma-randhra*, go directly to the kingdom of God, from which they need never return to be reborn. Thus even the unsure process of meditational *yoga* can bear the fruit of pure devotion if it is followed perfectly.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura cites several *śruti-mantras* that echo the words of this verse: *udaram brahmeti śārkarākṣā upāsate  
hṛdayam brahmeti āruṇayo brahmā haivaitā ita ūrdhvaṁ tv evodasarpāt  
tac-chiro 'śrayate*. "Those whose vision is clouded identify Brahman with the abdomen, while the *Āruṇis* worship Brahman in the heart. One who is truly Brahman-realized travels upward from the heart to take shelter

of the Lord who is manifested at the top of the head."

*śataṁ caikā ca hṛdayasya nāḍyas  
tāsāṁ mūrdhānam abhiniḥṣṛtaikā  
tayordhvam āyann amṛtatvam eti  
viśvaññ anyā utkramaṇe bhavanti*

"There are one hundred and one subtle prāṇic channels emanating from the heart. One of these—the *suṣumṇā*—extends to the top of the head. By passing up through this channel, one transcends death. The other channels lead in all directions, to various kinds of rebirth." (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.6.6)

The *Upaniṣads* refer repeatedly to the indwelling Paramātmā. Śrī Śvetāśvatara *Upaniṣad* (3.12-13) describes Him as follows:

*mahān prabhur vai puruṣaḥ  
sattvasyaīṣa pravartakaḥ  
su-nirmalām imām prāptim  
īśāno jyotir avyayaḥ*

*aṅguṣṭha-mātraḥ puruṣo 'ntar-ātmā  
sadā janānām hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ  
hṛdā manīṣā manasābhikṣpto  
ya etad vidur amṛtās te bhavanti*

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead becomes the Puruṣa to initiate the expansion of this cosmos. He is the perfectly pure goal that yogīs strive to reach, the effulgent and infallible ultimate controller. Measuring the size of a thumb, the Puruṣa is always present as the Supersoul within the hearts of all living beings. By exercising proper intelligence, one can realize Him within the heart; those who learn this method will gain immortality. "

In conclusion, Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*udarādiṣu yaḥ puṁsām  
cintito muni-vartmabhiḥ  
hanti mṛtyu-bhayam devo*

"Let us worship the Supreme Lord, who resides in the heart. When mortal beings think of Him by the standard procedures established by great sages, meditating upon Him in His expansions in the abdomen and other regions of the body, the Lord reciprocates by destroying all fear of death."

**TEXT 19**

स्वकृतविचित्रयोनिषु विशन्निव हेतुतया  
तरतमतश्चकास्स्यनलवत्स्वकृतानुकृतिः  
अथ वितथास्वमूष्ववितथां तव धाम समं  
विरजधियोऽनुयन्त्यभिविपण्यव एकरसम्

*sva-kṛta-vicitra-yoniṣu viśann iva hetutayā  
taratamataś cakāssy anala-vat svakṛtānukṛtiḥ  
atha vitathāsv amūṣv avitathām tava dhāma samam  
viraja-dhiyo 'nuyanty abhiviṣṇyava eka-rasam*

*sva*—by Yourself; *kṛta*—created; *vicitra*—variegated; *yoniṣu*—within the species of life; *viśan*—entering; *iva*—apparently; *hetutayā*—as their motivation; *taratamataḥ*—according to hierarchies; *cakāssi*—You become visible; *anala-vat*—like fire; *sva*—Your own; *kṛta*—creation; *anukṛtiḥ*—imitating; *atha*—therefore; *vitathāsu*—unreal; *amūṣu*—among these (various species); *avitatham*—not unreal; *tava*—Your; *dhāma*—manifestation; *samam*—undifferentiated; *viraja*—spotless; *dhiyaḥ*—whose minds; *anuyanti*—understand; *abhiviṣṇyavaḥ*—those who are free from all material entanglements (*paṇa*); *eka-rasam*—unchanging.

Apparently entering among the variegated species of living beings You have created, You inspire them to act, manifesting Yourself according to their higher and lower positions, just as fire manifests differently according to the shape of what it burns. Therefore those of spotless intelligence, who are altogether free from material attachments, realize Your undifferentiated, unchanging Self to be the permanent reality

**among all these impermanent life forms.**

Hearing these prayers of the personified *Vedas*, in which the *śrutis* describe the Supersoul as entering countless varieties of material bodies, a critic may question how the Supreme can do this without becoming limited. Indeed, proponents of Advaita philosophy see no essential distinction between the Supreme Soul and His creation. In the impersonalists' conception, the Absolute has inexplicably gotten itself entrapped by illusion and has thus become first a personal God and then the demigods, humans, animals, plants and finally matter. Śaṅkarācārya and his followers take great pains to cite Vedic evidence to support this theory of how illusion is imposed on the Absolute. But speaking for themselves, the *Vedas* here answer this objection and refuse to lend their authority to Māyāvāda impersonalism.

The process of creation is technically called *ṣṛṣṭi*, "sending forth." The Supreme Lord sends forth His variegated energies, and these partake of His nature while remaining distinct from Him. This fact is expressed in the true Vedic philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, the inconceivable, simultaneous oneness and difference of the Supreme Lord and His energies. Thus although each of the multitude of individual souls is a distinct entity, all souls consist of the same spiritual substance as the Supreme. Since they partake of the Supreme Lord's spiritual essence, the *jīvas* are unborn and eternal, just as He is. Lord Kṛṣṇa, speaking to Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, confirms this:

*na tv evāhaṁ jātu nāsaṁ  
na tvaṁ neme janādhipāḥ  
na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ  
sarve vayam ataḥ param*

"Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be." (Bg. 2.12) Material creation is a special arrangement for those *jīvas* who choose to separate themselves from the Supreme Lord's service, and thus the creation involves producing an imitation world where they can try to be independent.

After creating the many species of material life, the Supreme Lord

expands into His own creation as the Supersoul in order to provide the intelligence and inspiration every living being needs for his day-to-day existence. As stated in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.6.2), *tat sṛṣṭvā tad evānuṣṛāviṣat*: "After creating this world, He then entered within it." The Lord enters the material world, however, without forming any binding connection to it; this the *śrutis* here declare by the phrase *viśann iva*, "only seeming to enter." *Taratamataś cakāssi* means that the Paramātmā enters the body of every living being, from the great demigod Brahmā down to the insignificant germ, and exhibits differing degrees of His potency according to each soul's capacity for enlightenment. *Analavat sva-kṛtānukṛtiḥ*: Just as fire ignited in several objects burns according to the different forms of those objects, so the Supreme Soul, entering the bodies of all living creatures, illuminates the consciousness of each conditioned soul according to his individual capacity.

Even in the midst of material creation and destruction, the Lord of all creatures remains eternally unchanged, as expressed here by the word *eka-rasam*. In other words, the Lord eternally maintains His personal form of immeasurable, unalloyed spiritual pleasure. The rare living beings who completely (*abhitas*) disengage themselves from material dealings, or *paṇa* (thereby becoming *abhiviṣṇavaḥ*), come to know the Supreme Lord as He is. Every intelligent person should follow the example of these great souls and beg from them the chance to also be engaged in the Supreme Lord's devotional service.

This prayer is recited by *śrutis* whose mood is similar to that expressed in the following *mantra* of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.11):

*eko devaḥ sarva-bhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ  
sarva-vyāpī sarva-bhūtāntarātmā  
karmādhyakṣaḥ sarva-bhūtādhivāsaḥ  
sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇaś ca*

"The one Supreme Lord lives hidden inside all created things. He pervades all matter and sits within the hearts of all living beings. As the indwelling Supersoul, He supervises their material activities. Thus, while having no material qualities Himself, He is the unique witness and giver

of consciousness."

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī submits his own prayer:

*sva-nirmiteṣu kāryeṣu  
tāratamya-vivarjitam  
sarvānususyūta-san-mātraṁ  
bhagavantaṁ bhajāmahe*

"Let us worship the Supreme Lord, who enters the products of His own creation yet remains aloof from their superior and inferior material gradations. He is the pure, undifferentiated existence pervading everything."

### TEXT 20

**स्वकृतपुरेष्वमीष्वबहिरन्तरसंवरणं  
तव पुरुषं वदन्त्यखिलशक्तिधृतोऽशकृतम्  
इति नृगतिं विविच्य कवयो निगमावपनं  
भवत उपासतेऽङ्घ्रिमभवम्भुवि विश्वसिताः**

*sva-kṛta-pureṣv amīṣv abahir-antara-saṁvaraṇaṁ  
tava puruṣaṁ vadanty akhila-śakti-dhṛto 'mśa-kṛtam  
iti nṛ-gatiṁ vivicya kavayo nigamāvapaṇaṁ  
bhavata upāsate 'ṅghrim abhavam bhuvi viśvasitāḥ*

*sva*—by himself; *kṛta*—created; *pureṣu*—in the bodies; *amīṣu*—these; *abahiḥ*—not externally; *antara*—or internally; *saṁvaraṇaṁ*—whose factual envelopment; *tava*—Your; *puruṣaṁ*—living entity; *vadanti*—(the *Vedas*) say; *akhila*—of all; *śakti*—energies; *dhṛtaḥ*—of the possessor; *aṁśa*—as the expansion; *kṛtam*—manifested; *iti*—in this manner; *nṛ*—of the living entity; *gatiṁ*—the status; *vivicya*—ascertaining; *kavayaḥ*—learned sages; *nigama*—of the *Vedas*; *āvapaṇaṁ*—the field in which all offerings are sown; *bhavataḥ*—Your; *upāsate*—they worship; *aṅghrim*—the feet; *abhavam*—which cause the cessation of material existence; *bhuvi*—on the earth; *viśvasitāḥ*—having developed faith.

**The individual living entity, while inhabiting the material bodies he has created for himself by his *karma*, actually remains uncovered by either**

gross or subtle matter. This is so because, as the *Vedas* describe, he is part and parcel of You, the possessor of all potencies. Having determined this to be the status of the living entity, learned sages become imbued with faith and worship Your lotus feet, to which all Vedic sacrifices in this world are offered, and which are the source of liberation.

Not only does the Supreme Lord remain totally uncontaminated when He resides within the material bodies of the conditioned souls, but even the infinitesimal *jīva* souls are never directly touched by the coverings of ignorance and lust they acquire while passing through repeated cycles of birth and death. Thus the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (3.10.5) proclaims, *sa yaś cāyaṁ puruṣe yaś cāsāv āditye sa ekaḥ*: "The soul of the embodied living being is one with Him who stands within the sun. " Similarly, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.8.7) teaches, *tat tvam asi*: "You are nondifferent from that Supreme Truth."

In this prayer, the personified *Vedas* refer to the finite enjoyer of material bodies (the *jīva* soul) as an expansion of the transcendental reservoir of all potencies, the Supreme Lord. The term *aṁśa-kṛtam*, "made as His portion," must be properly understood, however, in this context. The *jīva* is not created at any time, nor is he the same kind of expansion of the Lord as the omnipotent *viṣṇu-tattva* expansions. The Supreme Soul is the proper object of all worship, and the subordinate *jīva* soul is meant to be His worshiper. The Supreme Lord enacts His pastimes by showing Himself in innumerable aspects of His personality, whereas the *jīva* is forced to change bodies whenever his accumulated karmic reactions so dictate. According to *Śrī Nārada Pañcarātra*,

*yat taṭa-stham tu cid-rūpaṁ  
sva-saṁvedyād vinirgatam  
rañjitaṁ guṇa-rāgeṇa  
sa jīva iti kathyate*

"The marginal potency, who is spiritual by nature, who emanates from the self-cognizant *saṁvit* energy, and who becomes tainted by his attachment to the modes of material nature, is called the *jīva*."

Although the *jīva* soul is also an expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa, he is distinguished from Kṛṣṇa's independent Viṣṇu expansions by his

constitutional position on the margin between spirit and matter. As the *Mahāvarāha Purāṇa* explains,

*svāmśaś cātha vibhinnāmśa  
iti dvidhā śa iṣyate  
amśino yat tu sāmarnyaṁ  
yat-svarūpaṁ yathā sthitiḥ*

*tad eva nāṇu-mātro 'pi  
bhedaṁ svāmśāmśinoḥ kvacit  
vibhinnāmśo 'lpa-śaktiḥ syāt  
kiñcit sāmarnya-mātra-yuk*

"The Supreme Lord is known in two ways: in terms of His plenary expansions and His separated expansions. Between the plenary expansions and Their source of expansion there is never any essential difference in terms of either Their capabilities, forms or situations. The separated expansions, on the other hand, possess only minute potency, being endowed only to a small extent with the Lord's powers."

The conditioned soul in this world appears as if covered by matter, internally as well as externally. Externally, gross matter surrounds him in the forms of his body and environment, while internally desire and aversion impinge upon his consciousness. But from the transcendental perspective of realized sages, both kinds of material covering are insubstantial. By logically eliminating all material identities, which are misconceptions based on the soul's gross and subtle coverings, a thoughtful person can determine that the soul is nothing material. Rather, he is a pure spark of divine spirit, a servant of the Supreme Godhead. Understanding this, one should worship the Supreme Lord's lotus feet; such worship is the fully bloomed flower of the tree of Vedic rituals. One's realization of the splendor of the Lord's lotus feet, gradually nourished by the offering of Vedic sacrifices, automatically bears the fruits of liberation from material existence and irrevocable faith in the Lord's mercy. One can accomplish all this while still living in the material world. As Lord Kṛṣṇa states in the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad* (Uttara 47),

mathurā-maṇḍale yas tu  
jambūdvīpe sthito 'tha vā  
yo 'rcayet pratimāṁ prati  
sa me priyataro bhuvi

"One who worships Me in My Deity form while living in the district of Mathurā or, indeed, anywhere in Jambūdvīpa, becomes most dear to Me in this world."

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

tvad-amśasya mameśāna  
tvan-māyā-kṛta-bandhanam  
tvad-aṅghri-sevām ādiśya  
parānanda nivartaya

"My Lord, please free me, Your partial expansion, from the bondage created by Your Māyā. Please do this, O abode of supreme bliss, by directing me to the service of Your feet."

### TEXT 21

दुरवगमात्मतत्त्वनिगमाय तवात्ततनोश्चरितमहामृताब्धिपरिवर्तपरिश्रमणाः  
न परिलषन्ति केचिदपवर्गमपीश्वर ते चरणसरोजहंसकुलसङ्गविसृष्टगृहाः

duravagamātma-tattva-nigamāya tavātta-tanoś carita-mahāmṛtābdhi-  
parivarta-paraśramaṇāḥ  
na parilaṣanti kecid apavargam apīśvara te caraṇa-saroja-haṁsa-kula-  
saṅga-visṛṣṭa-gṛhāḥ

*duravagama*—difficult to understand; *ātma*—of the self; *tattva*—the truth; *nigamāya*—in order to propagate; *tava*—of You; *ātta*—who have assumed; *tanoḥ*—Your personal forms; *carita*—of the pastimes; *mahā*—vast; *amṛta*—of nectar; *abdhi*—in the ocean; *parivarta*—by diving; *paraśramaṇāḥ*—who have been relieved of fatigue; *na parilaṣanti*—do not wish for; *kecit*—a few persons; *apavargam*—liberation; *api*—even; *īśvara*—O Lord; *te*—Your; *caraṇa*—at the feet; *saroja*—lotus; *haṁsa*—of swans; *kula*—with the community; *saṅga*—because of association; *visṛṣṭa*—abandoned; *gṛhāḥ*—whose homes.

**My Lord, some fortunate souls have gotten relief from the fatigue of material life by diving into the vast nectar ocean of Your pastimes, which You enact when You manifest Your personal forms to propagate the unfathomable science of the self. These rare souls, indifferent even to liberation, renounce the happiness of home and family because of their association with devotees who are like flocks of swans enjoying at the lotus of Your feet.**

Ritualistic *brāhmaṇas* (*smārtas*) and impersonalists (*Māyāvādīs*) always try to relegate the process of *bhakti-yoga* to a relative or minor role. They say that devotion to the Personality of Godhead is for sentimental persons who lack the maturity to observe strict rituals or pursue the rigorous culture of knowledge.

In this verse, however, the personified *Vedas* most emphatically declare the superexcellence of devotional service, clearly identifying it with *ātma-tattva*, the science of the self that impersonalists so proudly claim as their own domain. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī here defines *ātma-tattva* as the confidential mystery of the Supreme Lord's personal forms, qualities and pastimes. He also gives a second meaning for the phrase *ātta-tanoḥ*. Instead of meaning "who assumes various bodies," the phrase can also mean "He who attracts everyone to His transcendental body."

The pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His various expansions and incarnations are an unfathomable ocean of enjoyment. When a person comes to the point of complete exhaustion in his materialistic pursuits—whether he has been searching after material success or some impersonal notion of spiritual annihilation—he can gain relief by submerging himself in this nectar. As Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī explains in his textbook on the science of *bhakti-yoga*, *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (rendered into English by Śrīla Prabhupāda as *The Nectar of Devotion*), one who tastes even a single drop of this vast ocean will forever lose all desire for anything else.

Giving an alternative interpretation of the word *parīśramaṇāḥ*, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī comments that although the devotees of the Lord become fatigued after repeatedly diving into the endless waves and undercurrents in the ocean of the Lord's pleasure pastimes, these devotees never desire any happiness other than the Lord's service, even

the happiness of liberation. Rather, their very fatigue becomes pleasure for them, just as the fatigue produced by sex indulgence is pleasurable to those addicted to sex. The Supreme Lord's pure devotees become enthused by hearing the charming narrations of His pastimes and feel impelled to dance, sing, shout out loud, kick their heels together, faint, sob and run about like madmen. Thus they become too absorbed in ecstasy to notice any bodily discomfort.

Pure Vaiṣṇavas do not want even liberation, what to speak of other desirable goals, such as an exalted position as ruler of the heavenly planets. This degree of exclusive dedication is admittedly only rarely achieved in this world, as the *śrutis* speaking this verse indicate by the word *kecit* ("a few"). Not only do pure devotees abandon their hankering for future gain, but they also lose all their attraction for what they already possess—the common comforts of home and family life. The association of saintly Vaiṣṇavas—the disciplic succession of masters, disciples and granddisciples—becomes for them their real family, filled with swanlike personalities like Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī. These great personalities always drink the sweet nectar of service to the Supreme Lord's lotus feet.

Many *mantras* of the *Upaniṣads* and other *śrutis* openly declare devotional service to be superior to liberation itself. In the words of the *Nṛsiṃha-pūrva-tāpanī Upaniṣad*, *yaṁ sarve vedā namanti mumukṣavo brahma-vādinaś ca*: "To Him all the *Vedas*, all seekers of liberation and all students of the Absolute Truth offer their obeisances." Commenting on this *mantra*, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya admits, *muktā api līlayā vighrahaṁ kṛtvā bhajanti*: "Even liberated souls take pleasure in establishing the Supreme Lord's Deity and worshiping Him." The great rival of Ācārya Śaṅkara, Śrīla Madhvācārya Ānandatīrtha, cites his own favorite *śruti-mantras* in this regard, such as *muktā hy etam upāsate, muktānām api bhaktir hi paramānanda-rūpiṇī*: "Even those who are liberated worship Him, and even for them devotional service is the embodiment of supreme bliss"; and *amṛtasya dhārā bahudhā dohamānam/ caraṇam no loka su-dhitām dadhātu/ om tat sat*: "May His feet, which bountifully pour forth floods of nectar, bestow wisdom upon us who are living in this world."

In summary, Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*tvat-kathāmr̥ta-pāthodhau  
viharanto mahā-mudaḥ  
kurvanti kṛtinaḥ keci  
catur-vargaṁ tṛṇopamam*

"Those rare, fortunate souls who derive great delight by sporting in the nectar ocean of topics about You consider the four great goals of life [religiosity, economic development, sense gratification and liberation] to be no more important than a blade of grass."

**TEXT 22**

**त्वदनुपथं कुलायमिदमात्मसुहृत्प्रियवच्च  
चरति तथोन्मुखे त्वयि हिते प्रिय आत्मनि च  
न बत रमन्त्यहो असदुपासनयात्महनो  
यदनुशया भ्रमन्त्युरुभये कुशरीरभृतः**

*tvad-anupatham kulāyam idam ātma-suhṛt-priya-vac  
carati tathonmukhe tvayi hite priya ātmani ca  
na bata ramanty aho asad-upāsanayātma-hano  
yad-anuśayā bhramanty uru-bhaye ku-śarīra-bhṛtaḥ*

*tvat—You; anupatham—useful for serving; kulāyam—body; idam—this; ātma—self; suhṛt—friend; priya—and beloved; vat—as; carati—acts; tathā—nevertheless; unmukhe—who are favorably disposed; tvayi—in You; hite—who are helpful; priye—who are affectionate; ātmani—who are their very Self; ca—and; na—not; bata—alas; ramanti—they take pleasure; aho—ah; asat—of the unreal; upāsanayā—by worship; ātma—themselves; hanaḥ—killing; yat—in which (worship of the unreal); anuśayāḥ—whose persistent desires; bhramanti—they wander; uru—greatly; bhaye—in the fearful (material existence); ku—degraded; śarīra—bodies; bhṛtaḥ—carrying.*

**When this human body is used for Your devotional service, it acts as one's self, friend and beloved. But unfortunately, although You always show mercy to the conditioned souls and affectionately help them in every way, and although You are their true Self, people in general fail to**

**delight in You. Instead they commit spiritual suicide by worshipping illusion. Alas, because they persistently hope for success in their devotion to the unreal, they continue to wander about this greatly fearful world, assuming various degraded bodies.**

The *Vedas* have strong words for those who choose to remain in illusion rather than serve the all-merciful Personality of Godhead. The *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.15) states, *ārāmam asya paśyanti na taṁ paśyati kaścana. na taṁ vidātha ya imā jajānānyad yuṣmākam antaram babhūva. nīhāreṇa prāvṛtā jalpyā cāsu-tr̥pa uktha-sāsaś caranti*: "Everyone can see the place where the Lord manifested Himself in this world for His own pleasure, but still no one sees Him. None of you know Him who generated all these living beings, and thus there is a great difference between your vision and His. Covered by the fog of illusion, you performers of Vedic rituals indulge in useless talk and live only to gratify your senses."

The Supreme Lord pervades this universe, as He says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.4), *mayā tataṁ idaṁ sarvaṁ jagat*. Nothing in this world, not even the most insignificant clay pot or shred of cloth, is devoid of the presence of the Personality of Godhead. But because He keeps Himself invisible to envious eyes (*avyakta-mūrtinā*), materialists are misled by His material energy and think that the source of material creation is a combination of atoms and physical forces.

Displaying their compassion for such foolish materialists, the personified *Vedas* advise them in this prayer to remember the real purpose for which they exist: to serve the Lord, their greatest well-wisher, with loving devotion. The human body is the ideal facility for reviving one's spiritual consciousness; its organs—*ears, tongue, eyes and so on*—are quite suitable for hearing about the Lord, chanting His glories, worshipping Him and performing all the other essential aspects of devotional service.

One's material body is destined to remain intact for only a short time, and so it is called *kulāyam*, subject to "dissolving into the earth" (*kau liyate*). Nonetheless, if properly utilized it can be one's best friend. When one is immersed in material consciousness, however, the body becomes a false friend, distracting the bewildered living entity from his true self-interest. Persons too much infatuated with their own bodies and those of

their spouses, children, pets and so on are in fact misdirecting their devotion to the worship of illusion, *asad-upāsanā*. In this way, as the *śrutis* state here, such people commit spiritual suicide, insuring future punishment for failing to carry out the higher responsibilities of human existence. As the *Īśopaniṣad* (3) declares,

*asuryā nāma te lokā  
andhena tamasāvṛtāḥ  
tāms te pretyābhigacchanti  
ye ke cātma-hano janāḥ*

"The killer of the soul, whoever he may be, must enter into the planets known as the worlds of the faithless, full of darkness and ignorance."

Those who are overly attached to sense gratification, or who worship the impermanent in the form of false, materialistic scriptures and philosophies, maintain desires that carry them into more degraded bodies in each successive life. Since they are entrapped in the perpetually rotating cycle of *saṁsāra*, their only hope for salvation is getting a chance to hear the merciful instructions spoken by the Supreme Lord's devotees.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*tvayy ātmani jagan-nāthe  
man-mano ramatām iha  
kadā mamedṛśaṁ janma  
mānuṣaṁ sambhaviṣyati*

"When will I receive a human birth in which my mind may take pleasure in You, who are the Supreme Soul and Lord of the universe?"

### TEXT 23

निभृतमरुन्मनोऽक्षदृढयोगयुजो हृदि यन्  
मुनय उपासते तदरयोऽपि ययुः स्मरणात्  
स्त्रिय उरगेन्द्रभोगभुजदण्डविषक्तधियो  
वयमपि ते समाः समदृशोऽङ्घ्रिसरोजसुधाः

nibhṛta-marun-mano-'kṣa-dṛḍha-yoga-yujo hṛdi yan  
 munaya upāsate tad arayo 'pi yayuḥ smaraṇāt  
 striya uragendra-bhoga-bhuja-daṇḍa-viṣakta-dhiyo  
 vayam api te samāḥ sama-dṛśo 'ṅghri-saroja-sudhāḥ

*nibhṛta*—brought under control; *marut*—with breathing; *manaḥ*—mind; *akṣa*—and senses; *dṛḍha-yoga*—in steadfast yoga; *yujah*—engaged; *hṛdi*—in the heart; *yat*—which; *munayaḥ*—sages; *upāsate*—worship; *tat*—that; *arayaḥ*—enemies; *api*—also; *yayuḥ*—attained; *smaraṇāt*—by remembering; *striyaḥ*—women; *uraga-indra*—of lordly serpents; *bhoga*—(like) the bodies; *bhuja*—whose arms; *daṇḍa*—rodlike; *viṣakta*—attracted; *dhiyaḥ*—whose minds; *vayam*—we; *api*—also; *te*—to You; *samāḥ*—equal; *sama*—equal; *dṛśaḥ*—whose vision; *aṅghri*—of the feet; *saroja*—lotuslike; *sudhāḥ*—(relishing) the nectar.

**Simply by constantly thinking of Him, the enemies of the Lord attained the same Supreme Truth whom sages fixed in yoga worship by controlling their breath, mind and senses. Similarly, we śrutis, who generally see You as all-pervading, will achieve the same nectar from Your lotus feet that Your consorts are able to relish because of their loving attraction to Your mighty, serpentine arms, for You look upon us and Your consorts in the same way.**

According to Ācārya Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, the few *śrutis*—such as the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad*—who identify the cowherd boy Kṛṣṇa with absolute Brahman in its highest aspect had so far been patiently waiting for their turn to speak. But after hearing the other *śrutis* offer prayers openly glorifying the Lord's personality, these intimate *śrutis* could no longer contain themselves, and so they spoke out of turn in this verse. Followers of the path of mystic yoga subdue their senses and minds by practicing breath control and severe austerities. If they succeed in thoroughly purifying themselves by this regimen, they may eventually begin to realize the Paramātmā, the personal form of Brahman within the heart. And if they continue this meditation without deviation for a long time, they may in the end come to the point of true God consciousness. But the same objective achieved in this difficult and uncertain way was also attained by the demons who were killed by Lord Kṛṣṇa during His pastimes on the earth. Obsessed with enmity toward

Him, demons like Kāmsa and Śiśupāla quickly obtained the perfection of liberation simply by His killing them.

Speaking for themselves, however, the personified *Vedas* here state that they would prefer to develop love of Godhead by learning to emulate the favorable surrender of Lord Kṛṣṇa's confidential devotees, especially the young *gopīs* of Vraja. Though they appeared to be simple women attracted conjugally to the Lord's physical beauty and strength, the goddesses of Vraja exhibited the highest perfection of meditation. The *śrutis* wish to become just like them.

In this regard, Lord Brahmā relates the following historical account in the supplement to the *Bṛhad-vāmana Purāṇa*:

*brahmānanda-mayo loko  
vyāpī vaikuṅṭha-samjñitaḥ  
tal-loka-vāsī tatra-sthaiḥ  
stuto vedaiḥ parāt-paraḥ*

"The infinite world of spiritual bliss is called Vaikuṅṭha. There the Supreme Truth lives, being glorified by the personified *Vedas*, who are also present there."

*ciraṁ stutvā tatas tuṣṭaḥ  
parokṣaṁ prāha tān girā  
tuṣṭo 'smi brūta bho prājñā  
varaṁ yaṁ manasepsitam*

"Once, after the *Vedas* had elaborately praised Him, the Lord felt especially satisfied and spoke to them in a voice whose source remained invisible: 'My dear sages, I am very satisfied with you. Please ask of Me some benediction that you secretly desire.'"

*śrutaya ūcuḥ  
yathā tal-loka-vāsinyaḥ  
kāma-tattvena gopikāḥ  
bhajanti ramaṇaṁ matvā  
cikīrṣājani nas tathā*

"The *śrutis* replied, 'We have developed the desire to become like the cowherd women of the mortal world who, inspired by lust, worship You in the mood of a lover.' "

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
durlabho durghaṭaś caiva  
yuṣmākaṁ sa manorathaḥ  
mayānumoditaḥ samyak  
satyo bhavitum arhati*

"The Lord then said, 'This desire of Yours is difficult to fulfill. Indeed, it is almost impossible. But since I am sanctioning it, your wish must inevitably come true.' "

*āgāmini viriñcau tu  
jāte sṛṣṭy-artham udite  
kalpaṁ sāraśvataṁ prāpya  
vraje goṇyo bhaviṣyatha*

" 'When the next Brahmā takes birth to faithfully execute his duties of creation, and when the day of his life called the Sārasvata-kalpa arrives, you will all appear in Vraja as *gopīs*.' "

*pṛthivyām bhārata kṣetre  
māthure mama maṇḍale  
vṛndāvane bhaviṣyāmi  
preyān vo rāsa-maṇḍale*

" 'On the earth, in the land of Bhārata, in My own district of Mathurā, in the forest of Vṛndāvana, I will become your beloved in the circle of the *rāsa* dance.' "

*jāra-dharmaṇa su-snehaṁ  
su-dṛḍhaṁ sarvato 'dhikam  
mayi samprāpya sarve 'pi  
kṛta-kṛtyā bhaviṣyatha*

" 'Thus obtaining Me as your paramour, you will all gain the most exalted

and steadfast pure love for Me, and in this way you will fulfill all your ambitions.' "

*brahmovāca*  
*śrutvaitac cintayantyas tā*  
*rūpaṁ bhagavataś ciram*  
*ukta-kālaṁ samāsādyā*  
*gopyo bhūtvā hariṁ gatāḥ*

"Lord Brahmā said: After hearing these words, the *śrutis* meditated on the Personality of Godhead's beauty for a long time. When the designated time ultimately arrived, they became *gopīs* and obtained the association of Kṛṣṇa."

A similar account can be found in the *Sṛṣṭi-khaṇḍa* of the *Padma Purāṇa*, which describes how the *Gāyatrī mantra* also became a *gopī*. Regarding the development of *bhakti*, Lord Kṛṣṇa further states in the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad* (Uttara 4), *apūtaḥ pūto bhavati yaṁ mām smṛtvā, avratī vratī bhavati yaṁ mām smṛtvā, niṣkāmaḥ sa-kāmo bhavati yaṁ mām smṛtvā, aśrotrī śrotrī bhavati yaṁ mām smṛtvā*: "By remembering Me, one who is impure becomes pure. By remembering Me, one who follows no vows becomes a strict follower of vows. By remembering Me, one who is desireless develops desires [to serve Me]. By remembering Me, one who has studied no Vedic *mantras* becomes an expert knower of the *Vedas*."

The *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.5.6) refers to the gradual steps in the process of becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious: *ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ*. "It is the Self which must be observed, heard about, thought of and meditated upon with fixed concentration." The idea here is that one should realize the Supreme Self as directly visible in His full personality by the following means: First one should hear the instructions of a qualified representative of the *Paramātmā* and take the words of such a spiritual master into one's heart by offering him humble service and striving in all ways to please him. One should then ponder the divine message of the spiritual master continuously, with the aim of dispelling all one's doubts and misconceptions. Then one can proceed to meditate on the Supreme Lord's lotus feet with total conviction and

determination.

So-called *jñānīs* may think that the *Upaniṣads* praise *nirviśeṣa* (impersonal) realization of the Supreme as more complete and final than *sa-viśeṣa* (personal) worship of the Supreme Godhead. All honest Vaiṣṇavas, however, join in adhering to the devotional service of the Supreme Lord, always meditating with pleasure on His infinitely wonderful, variegated spiritual qualities. In the words of the *śruti-mantras*, *yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas/ tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svām*: "To that person whom the Supreme Soul chooses, He becomes attainable. To that person the Supreme Soul reveals His personal form." (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.2.23 and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 3.2.3) Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī concludes with the prayer,

*carāṇa-smaraṇam premṇā  
tava deva su-durlabham  
yathā kathañcid nṛ-hare  
mama bhūyād ahar-niśam*

"O Lord, loving remembrance of Your lotus feet is very rarely achieved. Please, O Nṛhari, somehow arrange for me to have that remembrance day and night."

#### TEXT 24

क इह नु वेद बतावरजन्मलयोऽग्रसरं  
यत उदगादृषिर्यमनु देवगणा उभये  
तर्हि न सन्न चासदुभयं न च कालजवः  
किमपि न तत्र शास्त्रमवकृष्य शयीत यदा

*ka iha nu veda batāvara-janma-layo 'gra-saram  
yata udagād ṛṣir yam anu deva-gaṇā ubhaye  
tarhi na san na cāsad ubhayam na ca kāla-javaḥ  
kim api na tatra śāstram avakṛṣya śayīta yadā*

*kaḥ*—who; *iha*—in this world; *nu*—indeed; *veda*—knows; *bata*—ah; *avara*—recent; *janma*—whose birth; *layaḥ*—and annihilation; *agra-saram*—who came first; *yataḥ*—from whom; *udagāt*—arose; *ṛṣiḥ*—the

learned sage, Brahmā; *yam anu*—following whom (Brahmā); *deva-gaṇāḥ*—the groups of demigods; *ubhaye*—both (those who control the senses and those who live in the regions above the heavenly planets); *tarhi*—at that time; *na*—no; *sat*—gross matter; *na*—no; *ca*—also; *asat*—subtle matter; *ubhayam*—that which is comprised of both (namely, the material bodies); *na ca*—nor; *kāla*—of time; *javaḥ*—the flow; *kim api na*—none at all; *tatra*—there; *śāstram*—authoritative scripture; *avakṛṣya*—withdrawing; *śayīta*—(the Supreme Lord) lies down; *yadā*—when.

**Everyone in this world has recently been born and will soon die. So how can anyone here know Him who existed prior to everything else and who gave rise to the first learned sage, Brahmā, and all subsequent demigods, both lesser and greater? When He lies down and withdraws everything within Himself, nothing else remains—no gross or subtle matter or bodies composed of these, no force of time or revealed scripture.**

Here the *śrutis* express the difficulty of knowing the Supreme. Devotional service, or *bhakti-yoga*, as described in these prayers of the personified *Vedas*, is the surest and easiest path to knowledge of the Lord and to liberation. In comparison, the philosophic search for knowledge, known as *jñāna-yoga*, is very difficult, favored though it is by those who are disgusted with material life but still unwilling to surrender to the Lord. As long as the finite soul remains envious of the Lord's supremacy, the Lord does not reveal Himself. As He states in *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.25),

*nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya  
yoga-māyā-samāvṛtaḥ  
mūḍho 'yam nābhijānāti  
loko mām ajam avyayam*

"I am never manifest to the foolish and unintelligent. For them I am covered by My internal potency, and therefore they do not know that I am unborn and infallible." And in the words of Lord Brahmā,

*pañthās tu koṭi-śata-vatsara-sampragamyō  
vāyor athāpi manaso muni-ṭuṅgavānām  
so 'py asti yat-prapada-simny avicintya-tattve  
govindam ādi-ṭuruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*

"I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, only the tip of the toe of whose lotus feet is approached by the *yogīs*, who aspire after the transcendental and betake themselves to *prāṇāyāma* by drilling the respiration; or by the *jñānīs*, who search out the undifferentiated Brahman by the process of elimination of the mundane, extending over thousands of millions of years." (Bs. 5.34)

Brahmā, the first-born living being in this universe, is also the foremost sage. He is born from Lord Nārāyaṇa, and from him appear the hosts of demigods, including both the controllers of earthly activities and the rulers of heaven. All these powerful and intelligent beings are relatively recent productions of the Lord's creative energy. As the first speaker of the *Vedas*, Lord Brahmā should know their purport at least as well as any other authority, but even he knows the Personality of Godhead only to a limited extent. As *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states (1.3.35), *veda-guhyāni hṛt-pateḥ*: "The Lord of the heart hides Himself deep within the confidential recesses of the Vedic sound." If Brahmā and the demigods born from him cannot easily know the Supreme Lord, how then can mere mortals expect success in their independent pursuit of knowledge?

As long as this creation lasts, living beings face many obstacles on the path of knowledge. Because of identifying themselves with their material coverings, consisting of body, mind and ego, they acquire all sorts of prejudices and misconceptions. Even if they have the divine scripture to guide them and the opportunity to execute the prescribed methods of *karma*, *jñāna* and *yoga*, the conditioned souls have but little power for gaining knowledge of the Absolute. And when the time of annihilation comes, the Vedic scriptures and their regulative injunctions become unmanifest, leaving the dormant *jīvas* completely in darkness. Therefore we should abandon our futile endeavors for knowledge without devotion and simply surrender ourselves to the Supreme Lord's mercy, heeding the advice of Lord Brahmā:

*jñāne prayāsam udapāsya namanta eva  
jīvanti san-mukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām  
sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gataṁ tanu-vān-manobhiḥ  
ye prāyaśo jita jito 'py asi tais tri-lokyām*

"Those who, even while remaining situated in their established social positions, throw away the process of speculative knowledge and with their body, words and mind offer all respects to descriptions of Your personality and activities, dedicating their lives to these narrations, which are vibrated by You personally and by Your pure devotees, certainly conquer Your Lordship, although You are otherwise unconquerable by anyone within the three worlds." (SB 10.14.3)

In this regard, the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.4.1) refers to the Supreme as *yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*, "where words cease, and where the mind cannot reach. " *The Īśopaniṣad* (4) states,

*anejad ekaṁ manaso javīyo  
naitad devā āpnuvan pūrvam arśat  
tad dhāvato 'nyān atyeti tiṣṭhat  
tasmin apo mātariśvā dadhāti*

"Although fixed in His abode, the Personality of Godhead is more swift than the mind and can overcome all others running. The powerful demigods cannot approach Him. Although in one place, He controls those who supply the air and rain. He surpasses all in excellence." And in the *Ṛg Veda* (3.54.5) we find this *mantra*:

*ko 'ddhā veda ka iha pravocat  
kuta āyātāḥ kuta iyaṁ viṣṛṣṭiḥ  
arvāg devā visarjanenā-  
thā ko veda yata ā babhūva*

"Who in this world actually knows, and who can explain, whence this creation has come? The demigods, after all, are younger than the creation. Who, then, can tell whence this world has come into being?" Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī thus prays,

*kvāhaṁ buddhy-ādi-saṁruddhaḥ  
kva ca bhūman mahas tava  
dīna-bandho dayā-sindho  
bhaktiṁ me nṛ-hare diśa*

"What am I, a being entrapped by the material coverings of worldly intelligence and so on? And what are Your glories by comparison, O almighty one? O friend of the fallen, O ocean of mercy, Lord Nṛhari, please bless me with Your devotional service."

### TEXT 25

जनिमसतः सतो मृतिमुतात्मनि ये च भिदां  
विपणमृतं स्मरन्त्युपदिशन्ति त आरुपितैः  
त्रिगुणमयः पुमानिति भिदा यदबोधकृता  
त्वयि न ततः परत्र स भवेदवबोधरसे

*janim asataḥ sato mṛtim utātmani ye ca bhidāṁ  
vipaṇam ṛtaṁ smaranty upadiśanti ta ārupitaiḥ  
tri-guṇa-mayaḥ pumān iti bhidā yad abodha-kṛtā  
tvayi na tataḥ paratra sa bhaved avabodha-rase*

*janim*—creation; *asataḥ*—of the manifest world (from atoms); *sataḥ*—of that which is eternal; *mṛtim*—destruction; *uta*—also; *ātmani*—in the soul; *ye*—who; *ca*—and; *bhidām*—duality; *vipaṇam*—mundane business; *ṛtam*—real; *smaranti*—declare authoritatively; *upadiśanti*—teach; *te*—they; *ārupitaiḥ*—in terms of illusions imposed on reality; *tri*—three; *guṇa*—of the material modes; *mayāḥ*—composed; *pumān*—the living entity; *iti*—thus; *bhidā*—dualistic conception; *yat*—which; *abodha*—by ignorance; *kṛtā*—created; *tvayi*—in You; *na*—not; *tataḥ*—to such; *paratra*—transcendental; *saḥ*—that (ignorance); *bhaved*—can exist; *avabodha*—total consciousness; *rase*—whose composition.

Supposed authorities who declare that matter is the origin of existence, that the permanent qualities of the soul can be destroyed, that the self is compounded of separate aspects of spirit and matter, or that material transactions constitute reality—all such authorities base their teachings on mistaken ideas that hide the truth. The dualistic conception that the living entity is produced from the three modes of nature is simply a product of ignorance. Such a conception has no real basis in You, for You are transcendental to all illusion and always enjoy perfect, total awareness.

The true position of the Supreme Personality is a sublime mystery, as is also the dependent position of the *jīva* soul. Most thinkers are mistaken in one way or another about these truths, since there are countless varieties of false designation that can cover the soul and create illusion. Foolish conditioned souls submit to obvious delusions, but the illusory power of Māyā can easily subvert the intelligence of even the most sophisticated philosophers and mystics. Thus there are always divergent schools of thought propounding conflicting theories concerning basic principles of truth.

In traditional Indian philosophy, the followers of Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Mīmāṃsā philosophies all have their own erroneous ideas, which the personified *Vedas* point out in this prayer. The Vaiśeṣikas say that the visible universe is created from an original stock of atoms (*janim asataḥ*). As Kaṇāda Ṛṣi's *Vaiśeṣika-sūtras* (7.1.20) state, *nityam parimaṇḍalam*: "That which is of the smallest size, the atom, is eternal." Kaṇāda and his followers also postulate eternity for other, nonatomic entities, including the souls who become embodied, and even a Supreme Soul. But in Vaiśeṣika cosmology the souls and the Supersoul play only token roles in the atomic production of the universe. Śrīla Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa criticizes this position in his *Vedānta-sūtras* (2.2.12): *ubhayathāpi na karmātas tad-abhāvaḥ*. According to this *sūtra*, one cannot claim that, at the time of creation, atoms first combine together because they are impelled by some karmic impulse adhering in the atoms themselves, since atoms by themselves, in their primeval state before combining into complex objects, have no ethical responsibility that might lead them to acquire pious and sinful reactions. Nor can the initial combination of atoms be explained as a result of the residual *karma* of the living entities who lie dormant prior to creation, since these reactions are each *jīva*'s own and cannot be transferred from them even to other *jīvas*, what to speak of inert atoms.

Alternatively, the phrase *janim asataḥ* can be taken to allude to the Yoga philosophy of Patañjali Ṛṣi, inasmuch as his *Yoga-sūtras* teach one how to achieve the transcendental status of Brahmanhood by a mechanical process of exercise and meditation. Patañjali's *yoga* method is here called *asat* because it ignores the essential aspect of devotion—surrender to the will of the Supreme Person. As Lord Kṛṣṇa states in

*Bhagavad-gītā* (17.28),

*aśraddhayā hutam dattam  
tapas taptam kṛtam ca yat  
asad ity ucyate pārtha  
na ca tat pretya no iha*

"Anything done as sacrifice, charity or penance without faith in the Supreme, O son of Pṛthā, is impermanent. It is called *asad* and is useless both in this life and in the next."

The *Yoga-sūtras* acknowledge the Personality of Godhead in an oblique way, but only as a helper whom the advancing *yogī* can utilize. *Īśvara-praṇidhānād vā*: "Devotional meditation on God is yet another means of achieving concentration." (*Yoga-sūtra* 1.23) In contrast, Bādarāyaṇa Vedavyāsa's philosophy of Vedānta emphasizes devotional service not only as the primary means to liberation but also as identical with liberation itself. *Ā-prāyaṇāt tatrāpi hi dṛṣṭam*: "Worship of the Lord continues up to the point of liberation, and indeed goes on in the liberated state also, as the *Vedas* reveal." (*Vedānta-sūtra* 4.1.12) Gautama Rṣi, in his *Nyāya-sutras*, proposes that one can attain liberation by negating both illusion and unhappiness: *duḥkha-janma-pravṛtti-doṣa-mithyā-jñānānām uttarottarāpāye tad-anantarābhāvād apavargaḥ*. "By successively dispelling false conceptions, bad character, entangling action, rebirth and misery—the disappearance of one of these allowing the disappearance of the next—one can achieve final liberation." (*Nyāya-sutra* 1.1.2) But since Nyāya philosophers believe that awareness is not an essential quality of the soul, they teach that a liberated soul has no consciousness. The Nyāya idea of liberation thus puts the soul in the condition of a dead stone. This attempt by the Nyāya philosophers to kill the soul's innate consciousness is here called *sato mṛtim* by the personified *Vedas*. But the *Vedānta-sūtra* (2.3.17) unequivocally states, *jñō 'ta eva*: "The *jīva* soul is always a knower." Although the soul is in truth both conscious and active, the proponents of Sāṅkhya philosophy wrongly separate these two functions of the living force (*ātmani ye ca bhidām*), ascribing consciousness to the soul (*puruṣa*) and activity to material nature (*prakṛti*). According to the

Sāṅkhya-kārikā (19-20),

*tasmāc ca viparyāsāt  
siddham sākṣitvaṃ puruṣasya  
kaivalyaṃ madhya-sthyaṃ  
draṣṭṛtvam akarṭṛ-bhāvaś ca*

"Thus, since the apparent differences between *puruṣas* are only superficial (being due to the various modes of nature that cover them), the *puruṣa*'s true status is proven to be that of a witness, characterized by his separateness, his passive indifference, his status of being an observer, and his inactivity."

*tasmāt tat-saṃyogād  
acetanaṃ cetanā-vad iva liṅgam  
guṇa-karṭṛtve 'pi tathā  
karṭeva bhavaty udāsīnaḥ*

"Thus, by contact with the soul, the unconscious subtle body seems to be conscious, while the soul appears to be the doer although he is aloof from the activity of nature's modes."

Śrīla Vyāsadeva refutes this idea in the section of the *Vedānta-sūtra* (2.3.31-39) that begins, *kartā śāstrārtha-vattvāt*: "The *jīva* soul must be a performer of actions, because the injunctions of scripture must have some purpose." Ācārya Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, in his *Govinda-bhāṣya*, explains: "The *jīva*, not the modes of nature, is the doer. Why? Because the injunctions of scripture must have some purpose (*śāstrārtha-vattvāt*). For example, such scriptural injunctions as *svarga-kāmo yajeta* ('One who desires to attain to heaven should perform ritual sacrifice') and *ātmānam eva lokam upāsīta* (*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.15: 'One should worship with the aim of attaining the spiritual kingdom') are meaningful only if a conscious doer exists. If the modes of nature were the doer, these statements would serve no purpose. After all, scriptural injunctions engage the living entity in performing prescribed actions by convincing him that he can act to bring about certain enjoyable results. Such a mentality cannot be aroused in the inert modes of nature."

Jaimini Rṣi, in his *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā-sūtras*, presents material work and its

results as the whole of reality (*vipaṇam ṛtam*). He and later proponents of Karma-mīmāṃsā philosophy teach that material existence is endless—that there is no liberation. For them the cycle of *karma* is perpetual, and the best one can aim for is higher birth among the demigods. Therefore, they say, the whole purpose of the *Vedas* is to engage human beings in rituals for creating good *karma*, and consequently the mature soul's prime responsibility is to ascertain the exact meaning of the *Vedas'* sacrificial injunctions and to execute them. *Codanā-lakṣaṇo 'rtho dharmah*: "Duty is that which is indicated by the injunctions of the *Vedas*." (*Pūrva-mīmāṃsā-sūtra* 1.1.2)

The *Vedānta-sūtra*, however—especially in the fourth chapter, which deals with life's ultimate goal—elaborately describes the soul's potential for achieving liberation from birth and death, while it subordinates ritual sacrifice to the role of helping one become qualified to receive spiritual knowledge. As stated there (*Vedānta-sūtra* 4.1.16), *agnihotrādi tu tat-kāryāyaiva tad-darśanāt*: "The Agnihotra and other Vedic sacrifices are meant only for producing knowledge, as the statements of the *Vedas* show." And the very last words of the *Vedānta-sūtra* (4.4.22) proclaim, *anāvṛttiḥ śabdāt*: "The liberated soul never returns to this world, as promised by the revealed scripture."

Thus the fallacious conclusions of the speculative philosophers prove that even great scholars and sages are often bewildered by the misuse of their own God—given intelligence. As the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (1.2.5) says,

*avidyāyām antare vartamānāḥ  
svayaṁ dhīrāḥ paṇḍitam-manyamānāḥ  
jaṅghanyamānāḥ pariyanti mūḍhā  
andhenaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ*

"Caught in the grip of ignorance, self-proclaimed experts consider themselves learned authorities. They wander about this world befooled, like the blind leading the blind."

Of the six orthodox philosophies of Vedic tradition—Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta—only the Vedānta of Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa is free of error, and even that only as properly explained by the bona fide Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*. Each of the six schools,

nonetheless, makes some practical contribution to Vedic education: atheistic Sāṅkhya explains the evolution of natural elements from subtle to gross, Patañjali's *yoga* describes the eightfold method of meditation, Nyāya sets forth the techniques of logic, Vaiśeṣika considers the basic metaphysical categories of reality, and Mīmāṃsā establishes the standard tools of scriptural interpretation. Apart from these six, there are also the more deviant philosophies of the Buddhists, Jains and Cārvākas, whose theories of voidism and materialism deny the spiritual integrity of the eternal soul.

Ultimately, the only perfectly reliable source of knowledge is God Himself. The Personality of Godhead is *avabodha-rasa*, the infinite reservoir of unfailing vision. To those who depend on Him with absolute conviction, He grants the divine eye of knowledge. Others, following their own speculative theories, must grope for the truth through the obscuring curtain of *Māyā*. Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*mithyā-tarka-śukarkaśerita-mahā-vādāndhakārāntara-  
bhrāmyan-manda-mater amanda-mahimāms tvad-jñāna-vartmāspḥuṭam  
śrīman mādharma vāmana tri-nayana śrī-śaṅkara śrī-pate  
govindeti mudā vadan madhu-pate muktaḥ kadā syām aham*

"For the bewildered soul wandering within the darkness of those exalted philosophies promoted by the harsh methods of false logic, the path of true knowledge of You, O Lord of magnificent glory, remains invisible. O Lord of Madhu, husband of the goddess of fortune, when will I become liberated by joyfully chanting Your names—Mādhava, Vāmana, Trinayana, Śrī Śaṅkara, Śrīpati and Govinda?"

### TEXT 26

**सदिव मनस्त्रिवृत्वयि विभात्यसदामनुजात्  
सदभिमृशन्त्यशेषमिदमात्मतयात्मविदः  
न हि विकृतिं त्यजन्ति कनकस्य तदात्मतया  
स्वकृतमनुप्रविष्टमिदमात्मतयावसितम्**

*sad iva manas tri-vṛt tvayi vibhāty asad ā-manujāt*

*sad abhimṛśanty aśeṣam idam ātmatayātma-vidaḥ  
na hi vikṛtim tyajanti kanakasya tad-ātmatayā  
sva-kṛtam anupraviṣtam idam ātmatayāvasitam*

*sat*—real; *iva*—as if; *manaḥ*—the mind (and its manifestations); *tri-vṛt*—threefold (by the modes of material nature); *tvayi*—in You; *vibhāti*—appears; *asat*—unreal; *ā-manujāt*—extending to the human beings; *sat*—as real; *abhimṛśanti*—they consider; *aśeṣam*—entire; *idam*—this (world); *ātmatayā*—as nondifferent from the Self; *ātma-vidaḥ*—the knowers of the Self; *na*—not; *hi*—indeed; *vikṛtim*—the transformations; *tyajanti*—reject; *kanakasya*—of gold; *tad-ātmatayā*—inasmuch as they are nondifferent from it; *sva*—by Himself; *kṛtam*—created; *anupraviṣtam*—and entered; *idam*—this; *ātmatayā*—as nondifferent from Himself; *avasitam*—ascertained.

**The three modes of material nature comprise everything in this world—from the simplest phenomena to the complex human body. Although these phenomena appear real, they are only a false reflection of the spiritual reality, being a superimposition of the mind upon You. Still, those who know the Supreme Self consider the entire material creation to be real inasmuch as it is nondifferent from the Self. Just as things made of gold are indeed not to be rejected, since their substance is actual gold, so this world is undoubtedly nondifferent from the Lord who created it and then entered within it.**

In one sense the visible world is real (*sat*), while in another it is not (*asat*). The substance of this universe is solid fact, being the Lord's external energy, but the forms that Māyā imposes on this substance are only temporary. And because material forms are temporary manifestations, those who consider them permanent are in illusion. Impersonalistic scholars, however, misinterpret this division of *sat* and *asat*; denying commonsense reality, they declare that not only material form but also material substance is unreal, and they confuse their own spiritual essence with that of the Absolute Whole. A Māyāvādī philosopher would take the words spoken by the personified *Vedas* in the preceding prayer—*tri-guṇa-mayaḥ pumān iti bhidā*—as negating any distinction between the Paramātmā and the *jīva* soul. He would claim that since the *jīva*'s material embodiment is an ephemeral display of the

three modes of nature, when the *jīva*'s ignorance is destroyed by knowledge, he becomes the *Paramātmā*, the Supreme Soul; bondage, liberation and the manifest world are all unreal creations of ignorance. In response to such ideas, the *Vedas* here clarify the factual relationship between *sat* and *asat*.

In the *śruti* literature we find this statement: *asato 'dhimano 'sṛjyata, manaḥ prajāpatiḥ asṛjat, prajāpatiḥ prajā asṛjat, tad vā idam manasy eva paramam pratiṣṭhitam yad idam kim ca.* "The supreme mind was originally created from *asat*. This mind created *Prajāpati*, and *Prajāpati* created all living beings. Thus mind alone is the ultimate foundation of everything that exists in this world." Although impersonalists might misread this to mean that all manifest existence is based on the unreality of illusion (*asat*), the apparently contrary use of the word *asat* in this passage actually refers to the original cause, the Supreme Godhead, because He is transcendental to material existence (*sat*). The logic of the *Vedānta-sūtra* (2.1.17) corroborates this interpretation while denying the wrong interpretation of the impersonalists: *asad-vyapadeśān neti cen na dharmāntareṇa vākya-śeṣāt.* "If one objects that the material world and its source cannot be of one substance because the world has been called unreal, we reply, 'No, because the statement that Brahman is *asat* makes sense in terms of His having qualities distinct from those of the creation.' " Thus the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.7.1) declares, *asad vā idam agra āsīt:* "In the beginning of this creation, only *asat* was present."

In the opinion of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, the word *adhimanaḥ* in the passage quoted above refers to the ruler of the aggregate mind of the universe, Lord Aniruddha, who appears as a plenary expansion of Śrī Nārāyaṇa when the latter desires to create. *Prajāpati* is *Brahmā*, the father of all other created beings. This is described in the *Mahā-nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* (1.4): *atha punar eva nārāyaṇaḥ so 'nyam kāmam manasā dhyāyet. tasya dhyānāntaḥ-sthasya lalanāt svedo 'patat. tā imā pratatāpa tāsu tejo hiraṇmayam aṇḍam tatra brahmā catur-mukho 'jāyata.* "Then Lord Nārāyaṇa meditated upon another desire of His, and as He pondered, a drop of perspiration fell from His forehead. All the material creations evolved from the fermentation of this drop. Therein the fiery, golden egg of the universe appeared, and within that globe four-headed *Brahmā* took his birth."

When a particular object is manufactured, it appears as a transformation of its ingredient cause, as in the case of jewelry made from gold. Persons who want gold will not reject gold earrings or necklaces, since these items are still gold, despite their modification. True *jñānīs* see in this mundane example an analogy to the different—yet—nondifferent relationship of the Puruṣa and His emanations, both material and spiritual. Thus this transcendental knowledge frees them from the bondage of illusion, for they can then see the Lord throughout His creation.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*yat sattvataḥ sadā bhāti  
jagad etad asat svataḥ  
sad-ābhāsam asaty asmin  
bhagavantaṁ bhajāma tam*

"Let us worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by virtue of whose substantial existence this created world seems to exist perpetually, although it is essentially insubstantial. As the Supersoul, He constitutes the representation of the real within this unreality."

### TEXT 27

तव परि ये चरन्त्यखिलसत्त्वनिकेततया  
त उत पदाक्रमन्त्यविगणय्य शिरो निर्ऋतेः  
परिवयसे पशूनिव गिरा विबुधानपि तांस्  
त्वयि कृतसौहृदाः खलु पुनन्ति न ये विमुखाः

*tava pari ye caranty akhila-sattva-niketatayā  
ta uta padākramanty avigaṇayya śiro nirṛteḥ  
parivayase paśūn iva girā vibudhān api tāṁs  
tvayi kṛta-sauhṛdāḥ khalu punanti na ye vimukhāḥ*

*tava*—You; *pari ye caranti*—who worship; *akhila*—of all; *sattva*—created entities; *niketatayā*—as the shelter; *te*—they; *uta*—simply; *padā*—with their feet; *ākramanti*—step upon; *avigaṇayya*—disregarding; *śiraḥ*—the head; *nirṛteḥ*—of Death; *parivayase*—You tie up; *paśūn iva*—like

animals; *girā*—with Your words (of the *Vedas*); *vibudhān*—wise; *api*—even; *tān*—them; *tvayi*—to whom; *kṛta*—those who have made; *sauhṛdāḥ*—friendship; *khalu*—indeed; *punanti*—purify; *na*—not; *ye*—who; *vimukhāḥ*—inimical.

**The devotees who worship You as the shelter of all beings disregard Death and place their feet on his head. But with the words of the *Vedas* You bind the nondevotees like animals, though they be vastly learned scholars. It is Your affectionate devotees who can purify themselves and others, not those who are inimical to You.**

The personified *Vedas* have now set aside the erroneous philosophies of several contending schools: the *asad-utpatti-vāda* of the Vaiśeṣikas, who presume a material source of creation; the *sad-vināśa-vāda* of the Naiyāyikas, who would deprive the liberated soul of consciousness; the *saguṇatva-bheda-vāda* of the Sāṅkhyas, who isolate the soul from all his apparent qualities; the *viṣaṇa-vāda* of the Mīmāṃsakas, who condemn the soul to eternal involvement in the mundane commerce of *karma*; and the *vivarta-vāda* of the Māyāvādīs, who denigrate the soul's real life in this world as a hallucination. Having rejected all these ideas, the personified *Vedas* now present the philosophy of devotional service, *paricaryā-vāda*.

The Vaiṣṇavas who accept this philosophy teach that the *jīva* soul is an atomic particle of spiritual personality who possesses minute knowledge, is not independent and has no material qualities. Being minute, he is prone to come under the control of the material energy, where he suffers the pains of material life. He can end his suffering and regain the shelter of the Supreme Lord's divine, internal energy only by rendering devotional service to the Lord, not by engaging in fruitive work, mental speculation or any other process.

As Lord Kṛṣṇa says in His own words,

*bhaktyāham ekayā grāhyaḥ  
śraddhayātmā priyaḥ satām  
bhaktiḥ punāti man-niṣṭhā  
śva-pākān api sambhavāt*

"Only by practicing unalloyed devotional service with full faith in Me

can one obtain Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I am naturally dear to My devotees, who take Me as the only goal of their loving service. By engaging in such pure devotional service, even the dog-eaters can purify themselves from the contamination of their low birth." (SB 11.14.21)

Devotees of the Personality of Godhead worship Him as the shelter (*niketa*) of everything that exists (*akhila-sattva*). Moreover, these Vaiṣṇava devotees themselves can be called *akhila-sattva-niketa* in the sense that their abode and shelter is the philosophic truth of the reality (*sattvam*) of both the material and spiritual worlds. Thus Śrīpāda Madhvācārya, in his *Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣya*, quotes the *śruti-mantra*: *satyaṁ hy evedaṁ viśvam asṛjata*. "He created this world as real." And the Seventh Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.1.11) refers to the Supreme Lord as *pradhāna-pumbhyāṁ naradeva satya-kṛt*, "the creator of a real universe of matter and living entities."

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura points out yet another, more confidential, meaning of *akhila-sattva-niketa*: that the Supreme Lord's personal abodes are in no way *khila*, or imperfect, and so are called Vaikuṅṭha, the realms free of anxiety and restriction. Vaiṣṇavas whose devotional service the Lord has kindly accepted are so sure of His protection that they no longer fear death, which becomes for them just another easy step on the way back to their eternal home.

But are only devotees of the Supreme Lord eligible for liberation from the fear of death? Why are all other mystics and learned scholars disqualified? Here the *śrutis* answer: "Anyone who is *vimukha*, who has not turned his face toward the Lord with hopeful expectation of His mercy, is bound up in illusion by the same words of the *Vedas* that enlighten the surrendered devotees." The *Vedas* themselves warn, *tasya vāk-tantir nāmāni dāmāni. tasyedaṁ vācā tanyā nāmabhir dāmabhiḥ sarvaṁ sitam*: "The threads of this transcendental sound form a string of sacred names, but also a set of binding ropes. With the rope of their injunctions, the *Vedas* tie up this entire world, leaving all beings fettered by false designations."

The reality of the soul and Supersoul is *aṅaparokṣa*, perceivable, but only to one with transcendental vision. Philosophers whose hearts are impure

mistakenly presume that this truth is instead *parokṣa*, that it can only be speculated upon and never experienced directly. The knowledge of such thinkers may help them dispel certain doubts and misconceptions about the lesser aspects of reality, but it is useless for transcending material illusion and approaching the Absolute Truth. As a general rule, only the devotees who faithfully render loving service unto the Supreme Lord up to the point of complete purification receive His grace in the form of *aparokṣa-jñāna*, direct realization of His greatness and wonderful compassion. The Personality of Godhead is of course free to award His mercy even to the undeserving, as He does when He personally kills offensive demons, but He is much less inclined to bless Māyāvādīs and other atheistic philosophers.

One should not think, however, that the devotees of Viṣṇu are ignorant because they may not be expert in philosophic analysis and argument. The soul's perfect realization is to be gained not through his own efforts at mental speculation but by receiving the Lord's favor. This we hear from Vedic authority (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.2.23 and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 3.2.3):

*nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo  
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena  
yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas  
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām*

"This Supreme Self cannot be reached by argumentation, or by applying one's independent brain power, or by studying many scriptures. Rather, he alone can achieve the Self whom the Self chooses to favor. To that person the Self reveals His own true, personal form."

Elsewhere the *śruti* describes the devotee's success: *dehānte devaḥ param brahma tārakam vyacaṣṭe*. "At the end of this body's life, the sanctified soul perceives the Supreme Lord just as clearly as if seeing the stars in the sky." And in its last statement, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.23) offers this encouragement to aspiring Vaiṣṇavas:

*yasya deve parā bhaktir  
yathā deve tathā gurau  
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ*

*prakāśante mahātmanah*  
[ŚU 16.23]

"Unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed."

In this regard Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī cites other verses of Śrī Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (4.7-8 and 4.13):

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*lyasya deve parā bhaktir  
yathā deve tathā gurau  
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ  
prakāśante mahātmanah*

"Unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed." (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23)

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi  
na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ  
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau  
svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*

"No one can understand Kṛṣṇa as He is by the blunt material senses. But He reveals Himself to the devotees, being pleased with them for their transcendental loving service unto Him." (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.234)

*bhaktyā mām abhijānāti  
yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ  
tato mām tattvato jñātvā  
viśate tad-anantaram*

"One can understand the Supreme Personality as He is only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of the Supreme Lord by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God." These are Vedic instructions. One must have full faith in the words of

*juṣṭam yadā paśyaty anyam īsam  
asya mahimānam iti vīta-śokaḥ*

*ṛco 'kṣare pare vyoman  
yasmin devā adhi viśve niṣeduḥ  
yas taṁ veda kim ṛcā kariṣyati  
ya it tad vidus ta ime samāsate*

"The Supreme Lord is He who is referred to by the *mantras* of the *Ṛg Veda*, who resides in the topmost, eternal sky, and who elevates His saintly devotees to share that same position. One who has developed pure love for Him and realizes His uniqueness then appreciates His glories and is freed from sorrow. What further good can the *Ṛg mantras* bestow on one who knows that Supreme Lord? All who come to know Him achieve the supreme destination."

*yo vedānām adhipo  
yasmiḥ lokā adhiśrītāḥ  
ya īso 'sya dvīpadaś catuṣpadas  
tasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema*

"To Him who is the master of all the *Vedas*, in whom all planets rest, who is the Lord of all known creatures, both the two-legged and the four-legged—to Him, the Personality of Godhead, we offer our worship with oblations of ghee."

Referring to those who desire liberation, Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*tapantu tāpaiḥ prapatantu parvatād  
aṭantu tīrthāni paṭhantu cāgamān  
yajantu yāgair vivadantu vādair*

---

the spiritual master and similar faith in the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then the real knowledge of *ātmā* and *Paramātmā* and the distinction between matter and spirit will be automatically revealed. This *ātma-tattva*, or spiritual knowledge, will be revealed within the core of a devotee's heart because of his having taken shelter of the lotus feet of a *mahājana* such as Prahlāda Mahārāja.

*harim vina naiva mṛtim taranti*

"Let them suffer austerities, throw themselves from mountaintops, travel to holy places, study the scriptures, worship with fire sacrifices and argue various philosophies, but without Lord Hari they will never cross beyond death."

**TEXT 28**

त्वमकरणः स्वराडखिलकारकशक्तिधरस्  
तव बलिमुद्रहन्ति समदन्त्यजयानिमिषाः  
वर्षभुजोऽखिलक्षितिपतेरिव विश्वसृजो  
विदधति यत्र ये त्वधिकृता भवतश्चकिताः

*tvam akaraṇaḥ sva-rāḍ akhila-kāraka-śakti-dharas  
tava balim udvahanti samadanty ajayānimiṣāḥ  
varṣa-bhujo 'khila-kṣiti-pater iva viśva-sṛjo  
vidadhati yatra ye tv adhikṛtā bhavataś cakitāḥ*

*tvam*—You; *akaraṇaḥ*—devoid of material senses; *sva-rāḍ*—self-effulgent; *akhila*—of all; *kāraka*—sensory functions; *śakti*—of the potencies; *dharah*—the maintainer; *tava*—Your; *balim*—tribute; *udvahanti*—carry; *samadanti*—and partake of; *ajayā*—along with material nature; *animiṣāḥ*—the demigods; *varṣa*—of districts of a kingdom; *bhujaḥ*—the rulers; *akhila*—entire; *kṣiti*—of the land; *pateḥ*—of the lord; *iva*—as if; *viśva*—of the universe; *sṛjaḥ*—the creators; *vidadhati*—execute; *yatra*—in which; *ye*—they; *tu*—indeed; *adhikṛtā*—assigned; *bhavataḥ*—of You; *cakitāḥ*—afraid.

Though You have no material senses, You are the self-effulgent sustainer of everyone's sensory powers. The demigods and material nature herself offer You tribute, while also enjoying the tribute offered them by their worshipers, just as subordinate rulers of various districts in a kingdom offer tribute to their lord, the ultimate proprietor of the land, while also enjoying the tribute paid them by their own subjects. In this way the universal creators faithfully execute their assigned services out of fear of You.

All intelligent living beings should acknowledge the sovereignty of the Lord and willingly engage in devotional service to Him. Such is the consensus of the personified *Vedas*. But Lord Nārāyaṇa, while hearing these prayers, may have reasonably asked, "Since I also have a bodily form with sense organs and limbs, am I not just another doer and enjoyer? Especially since as the Supersoul in every being's heart I supervise countless organs and limbs, how am I not implicated in the sum total of everyone's sense gratification?" "No," the assembled *śrutis* here rejoin, "You have no material senses, yet You are the absolute controller of all." As expressed in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (3.18),

*apāṇi-pādo javano grahītā  
paśyaty acakṣuḥ sa śṛṇoty akarṇaḥ  
sa vetti vedyam na ca tasya vettā  
tam āhur agryam puruṣam purāṇam*

"He has no feet or hands, yet He is the swiftest runner and can grasp anything. Though without eyes or ears, He sees and hears. Nobody knows Him, yet He is the knower and the object of knowledge. Sages describe Him as the supreme, original Personality of Godhead."

The hands, feet, eyes and ears of the Supreme Person are not like those of an ordinary, conditioned soul, which are derived from false ego, a material substance. Rather, the Lord's transcendently beautiful features are direct manifestations of His internal nature. Thus, unlike the soul and body of conditioned living beings, the Lord and His bodily form are identical in all respects. Moreover, His lotus hands, lotus feet, lotus eyes and other limbs are not restricted in their functions. Śrī Brahmā, the Lord's first creature, glorifies Him on this account:

*angāni yasya sakalendriya-vṛttimanti  
paśyanti pānti kalayanti ciraṁ jaganti  
ānanda-cinmaya-sad-ujjala-vigrahasya  
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*

"I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, whose transcendental form is full of bliss, truth and substantiality and thus emanates the most dazzling splendor. Each of the limbs of that transcendental figure possesses in

itself the full-fledged functions of all the organs, and He eternally sees, maintains and manifests the infinite universes, both spiritual and material." (Bs. 5.32)

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī gives an alternative explanation of the phrase *akhila-śakti-dhara*: The power that the Supreme Lord maintains within Himself is *akhila*, free from the limitations of all that is *khila*, or inferior and insignificant. He energizes the living being's senses, as described by the *Kena Upaniṣad* (1.2): *śrotrasya śrotram manaso mano yad vāco ha vācam*. "He is the ear's ear, the mind's mind, and the voice's capacity of speech." And the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.8) declares,

*na tasya kāryaṁ karaṇaṁ ca vidyate  
na tat-samaś cābhyadhikaś ca dṛśyate  
parāsyā śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate  
svābhāvīkī jñāna-bala-kriyā ca  
[Cc. Madhya 13.65, purport]*

"He has no material work to perform. nor any material senses with which to perform it. No one can be found who is equal to or greater than Him. From the *Vedas* we hear how that Supreme Lord possesses multifarious energies—the potencies of knowledge, strength and action—each of which acts autonomously."

Indra and the other demigods who rule over mortal beings are themselves servants of the Personality of Godhead, as are their superiors—Brahmā and his sons, the secondary creators. All of these great gods and sages worship the Supreme Lord by performing their respective services of managing the universe and providing religious guidance for mankind.

The powerful controllers of the universe submit themselves in fearful reverence to the supreme controller, Lord Śrī Viṣṇu. As the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.8.1) states,

*bhīṣāsmād vātaḥ pavate  
bhīṣād eti sūryaḥ  
bhīṣāsmād agniś cendraś ca  
mṛtyur dhāvati pañcamaḥ*

"Out of fear of Him, the wind blows. Out fear of Him, the sun moves and Agni and Indra execute their duties. And death, the fifth of their number, races along out of fear of Him."

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*anindriyo 'pi yo devaḥ  
sarva-kāraka-śakti-dhṛk  
sarva-jñāḥ sarva-kartā ca  
sarva-sevyaṁ namāmi tam*

"The Supreme Lord has no material senses, yet He controls every living entity's sensory functions. He is the knower of everything, the ultimate performer of all action, and everyone's proper object of devotional service. I offer my obeisances to Him."

### TEXT 29

**स्थिरचरजातयः स्युरजयोत्थनिमित्तयुजो  
विहर उदीक्षया यदि परस्य विमुक्त ततः  
न हि परमस्य कश्चिदपरो न परश्च भवेद्  
वियत इवापदस्य तव शून्यतुलां दधतः**

*sthira-cara-jātayaḥ syur ajayottha-nimitta-yujo  
vihara udīkṣayā yadi parasya vimukta tataḥ  
na hi paramasya kaścīd aparo na paraś ca bhaved  
viyata ivāpadasya tava śūnya-tulāṁ dadhataḥ*

*sthira*—stationary; *cara*—and moving; *jātayaḥ*—species of life; *syuḥ*—become manifest; *ajayā*—with the material energy; *uttha*—awakened; *nimitta*—their motivations for activity (and the subtle bodies activated by such); *yujaḥ*—assuming; *viharaḥ*—sport; *udīkṣayā*—by Your brief glance; *yadi*—if; *parasya*—of Him who is aloof; *vimukta*—O eternally liberated one; *tataḥ*—from her; *na*—not; *hi*—indeed; *paramasya*—for the supreme; *kaścīd*—anyone; *aparaḥ*—not foreign; *na*—nor; *paraḥ*—foreign; *ca*—also; *bhaved*—can be; *viyataḥ*—for the ethereal sky; *iva*—as if; *apadasya*—which has no perceptible qualities; *tava*—for You; *śūnya*—to a void; *tulām*—a resemblance; *dadhataḥ*—who take on.

O eternally liberated, transcendental Lord, Your material energy causes the various moving and nonmoving species of life to appear by activating their material desires, but only when and if You sport with her by briefly glancing at her. You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, see no one as an intimate friend and no one as a stranger, just as the ethereal sky has no connection with perceptible qualities. In this sense You resemble a void.

Not only are living beings totally dependent on the all-powerful, independent Lord for their maintenance and welfare, but even the very fact of their embodied existence is due only to His exceptional mercy. The Personality of Godhead has no interest in material affairs, since He has nothing to gain from the petty pleasures of this world and is altogether free from any contamination of envy or lust. He is exclusively involved in confidential, loving pastimes with His pure devotees in the internal realm of His spiritual energies. Therefore the only reason He ever turns to the business of material creation is to help draw lost souls back into this inner circle of eternal enjoyment.

To attempt a life separate from the Lord, rebellious souls must be provided with suitable bodies and an illusory environment in which to act out their fantasies of independence. The merciful Lord agrees to let them learn in their own way, and so He glances at Mahā-Māyā, His energy of material creation. Simply by this glance, she is awakened and makes all required arrangements on His behalf. She and her helpers manufacture countless varieties of gross and subtle bodies of demigods, humans, animals and so on, along with countless situations in heavenly and hellish worlds—all just to give the conditioned souls the exact facilities they desire and deserve.

While the uninformed may blame God for the suffering of His creatures, a sincere student of the Vedic literature will come to appreciate the Supreme Lord's equal concern for each soul. Since He has nothing to lose or gain, there is no reason for Him to distinguish between friends and opponents. We may choose to oppose Him and make all endeavors to forget Him, but He never forgets us, nor does He ever stop providing us with all our necessities, along with His unseen guidance.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

tvad-ikṣaṇa-vaśa-kśobha-  
māyā-bodhita-karmabhiḥ  
jatān saṁsarataḥ khinnān  
nṛ-hare pāhi naḥ pitaḥ

"O Father, O Lord appearing as half man, half lion, please save those who have been born into the endless cycle of birth and death. These souls are distressed by their karmic entanglement, which Māyā awakened when Your glance excited her to activity."

TEXT 30

अपरिमिता ध्रुवास्तनुभृतो यदि सर्वगतास्  
तर्हि न शास्यतेति नियमो ध्रुव नेतरथा  
अजनि च यन्मयं तदविमुच्य नियन्तृ भवेत्  
सममनुजानतां यदमतं मतदुष्टतया

aparimitā dhruvās tanu-bhṛto yadi sarva-gatās  
tarhi na śāsyateti niyamo dhruva netarathā  
ajani ca yan-mayaṁ tad avimucya niyantṛ bhavet  
samam anujānatām yad amataṁ mata-duṣṭatayā

*aparimitāḥ*—countless; *dhruvāḥ*—permanent; *tanu-bhṛtaḥ*—the embodied living entities; *yadi*—if; *sarva-gatāḥ*—omnipresent; *tarhi*—then; *na*—not; *śāsyatā*—sovereignty; *iti*—such; *niyamaḥ*—rule; *dhruva*—O unchanging one; *na*—not; *itarathā*—otherwise; *ajani*—was generated; *ca*—and; *yat-mayaṁ*—from whose substance; *tat*—from that; *avimucya*—not separating itself; *niyantṛ*—regulator; *bhavet*—must be; *samam*—equally present; *anujānatām*—of those who supposedly know; *yat*—which; *amataṁ*—misunderstood; *mata*—of what is known; *duṣṭatayā*—because of the imperfection.

If the countless living entities were all-pervading and possessed forms that never changed, You could not possibly be their absolute ruler, O immutable one. But since they are Your localized expansions and their forms are subject to change, You do control them. Indeed, that which supplies the ingredients for the generation of something is necessarily its

**controller because a product never exists apart from its ingredient cause. It is simply illusion for someone to think that he knows the Supreme Lord, who is equally present in each of His expansions, since whatever knowledge one gains by material means must be imperfect.**

Because the conditioned soul cannot directly understand the Supreme, the *Vedas* commonly refer to that Supreme Truth in such impersonal terms as Brahman and *om tat sat*. If an ordinary scholar presumes to know the confidential meaning of these symbolic references, he should be rejected as an imposter. In the words of *Śrī Kena Upaniṣad* (2.1), *yadi manyase su-vedeti dabhram evāpi nūnaṁ tvaṁ vettha brahmaṇo rūpaṁ, yad asya tvaṁ yad asya deveṣu*: "If you think you know Brahman well, then your knowledge is very meager. If you think you can identify Brahman's form from among the demigods, indeed you know but little." And again,

*yasyāmataṁ tasya mataṁ  
mataṁ yasya na veda saḥ  
avijñātaṁ vijānatām  
vijñātam avijānatām*

"Whoever denies having any opinion of his own about the Supreme Truth is correct in his opinion, whereas one who has his own opinion about the Supreme does not know Him. He is unknown to those who claim to know Him, and can only be known by those who do not claim to know Him." (*Kena Upaniṣad* 2.3)

Ācārya Śrīdhara Svāmī gives the following explanation of this verse: Many philosophers have studied the mysteries of life from various perspectives and have formed widely differing theories. The Advaita Māyāvādīs, for example, propose that there is only one living being and one power of illusion (*avidyā*) that covers him, producing the appearance of plurality. But this hypothesis leads to the absurd conclusion that when any one living being becomes liberated, everyone obtains liberation. If, on the other hand, there are many *avidyās* to cover the one living being, each *avidyā* will cover only some part of him, and we would have to talk about his becoming partly liberated at particular times while his other parts remain in bondage. This is also obviously

absurd. Thus the plurality of living beings is an unavoidable conclusion. Furthermore, there are other theoreticians, namely the proponents of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, who claim that the *jīva* soul is infinite in size. If souls were infinitesimal, these scholars argue, they would not pervade their own bodies, whereas if they were of medium size they would be divisible into parts and thus could not be eternal, at least according to the axioms of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika metaphysics. But if the numerous eternal *jīva* souls are each infinitely large, how could they be covered by any power of bondage, whether belonging to *avidyā* or to the Supreme Lord Himself? According to this theory, there can be no illusion for the soul, no limitations from which to be liberated. The infinite souls must eternally remain as they are, without change. This would mean that the souls would all be equal to God, since He would have no scope for controlling these all-pervading, unchanging rivals.

The Vedic *śruti-mantras*, which affirm unequivocally the mastery of the Lord over the individual souls, cannot be validly contradicted. A true philosopher must accept the statements of *śruti* as reliable authority on all matters they touch. Certainly in numerous places the Vedic literatures contrast the Supreme Lord's perpetual, unchanging oneness with the ever-changing embodiments of living beings caught up in the cycle of birth and death.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*antar-yantā sarva-lokasya gītaḥ  
śrutyā yuktyā caivam evāvaseyaḥ  
yaḥ sarva-jñāḥ sarva-śaktir nṛṣimhaḥ  
śrīmantaṁ taṁ cetasaivāvalambe*

"In my heart I take shelter of Him who is glorified as the inner controller of all the worlds, and whom the *Vedas* ascertain in truth through logical reasoning. He is Nṛṣimha, the omniscient and omnipotent Lord of the goddess of fortune."

### TEXT 31

न घटत उद्भवः प्रकृतिपुरुषयोरजयोर्  
उभययुजा भवन्त्यसुभृतो जलबुद्बुदवत्

त्वयि त इमे ततो विविधनामगुणैः परमे  
सरित इवार्णवे मधुनि लिल्युरशेषरसाः

*na ghaṭata udbhavaḥ prakṛti-pūruṣayor ajayor  
ubhaya-yujā bhavanty asu-bhṛto jala-budbuda-vat  
tvayi ta ime tato vividha-nāma-guṇaiḥ parame  
sarita ivārṇave madhuni lilyur aśeṣa-rasāḥ*

*na ghaṭate*—does not happen; *udbhavaḥ*—the generation; *prakṛti*—of material nature; *pūruṣayoḥ*—and of the soul who is her enjoyer; *ajayoḥ*—who are unborn; *ubhaya*—of both; *yujā*—by the combination; *bhavanti*—come into being; *asu-bhṛtaḥ*—living bodies; *jala*—on water; *budbuda*—bubbles; *vat*—like; *tvayi*—in You; *te ime*—these (living beings); *tataḥ*—therefore; *vividha*—various; *nāma*—with names; *guṇaiḥ*—and qualities; *parame*—in the Supreme; *saritaḥ*—rivers; *iva*—as; *arṇave*—within the ocean; *madhuni*—in honey; *lilyuḥ*—become merged; *aśeṣa*—all; *rasāḥ*—flavors.

**Neither material nature nor the soul who tries to enjoy her are ever born, yet living bodies come into being when these two combine, just as bubbles form where water meets the air. And just as rivers merge into the ocean or the nectar from many different flowers blends into honey, so all these conditioned beings eventually merge back into You, the Supreme, along with their various names and qualities.**

Without proper spiritual guidance, one may misunderstand the *Vedas'* description of the living entities emanating from the Lord to mean that they have come into being in this process and will eventually pass again into nonexistence. But if the living entities were to thus have only temporary existence, then when one of them would die his remaining *karma* would simply vanish without being used up, and when a soul would be born he would appear with unaccountable *karma* he had done nothing to earn. Furthermore, a living being's liberation would amount to the total eradication of his identity and being.

The truth is, however, that the soul's essence is one with Brahman's, just as the small portion of space contained within the walls of a clay pot is one in essence with the all-expanding sky. And like the making and

breaking of a pot, the "birth" of an individual soul consists of his first becoming covered by a material body, and his "death," or liberation, consists of the destruction of his gross and subtle bodies once and for all. Certainly such "birth" and "death" take place only by the mercy of the Supreme Lord.

The combination of material nature and her controller that produces the numerous conditioned beings in material creation is likened here to the combination of water and air that produces countless bubbles of foam on the surface of the sea. Just as the efficient cause, air, impels the ingredient cause, water, to form itself into bubbles, so by His glance the Supreme Puruṣa inspires *prakṛti* to transform herself into the array of material elements and the innumerable material forms manifest from those elements. *Prakṛti* thus serves as the *upādāna-kāraṇa*, or ingredient cause, of creation. In the ultimate issue, however, since she is also an expansion of the Supreme Lord, it is the Lord alone who is the ingredient cause as well as the efficient cause. This is as stated in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.2.1), *tasmād vā etasmād ātmana ākāśaḥ sambhūtaḥ*: "From this Supreme Soul the ether evolved," and so *'kāmayata bahu syāṃ prajāyeya*: "He desired, 'Let Me become many by expanding into progeny.' "

The individual *jīva* souls are not created when "born" from the Supreme Lord and *prakṛti*, nor are they destroyed when they "merge" back into the Lord, rejoining Him in the pleasure pastimes of His eternal kingdom. And in the same way as the infinitesimal *jīvas* can appear to undergo birth and death without any factual change, the Supreme Lord can send forth and withdraw His emanations without Himself undergoing any transformation. Thus the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.5.14) affirms, *avināśi vāre 'yam ātmā*: "This *ātmā* is indeed indestructible"—a statement that can be applied to both the Supreme Soul and the subordinate *jīva* soul.

As explained by Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī, the dissolution of the living being's material condition occurs in two ways, partial and complete. Partial dissolution occurs when the soul experiences dreamless sleep, when he leaves his body and when all souls reenter the body of Mahā-Viṣṇu at the time of universal annihilation. These different types of dissolution are like the mixing of nectar brought by bees from different

kinds of flowers. The different flavors of nectar represent the dormant individual karmic reactions of each living entity, which still exist but cannot easily be distinguished from one another. In contrast, the ultimate dissolution of the soul's material condition is his liberation from *samsāra*, which is like the flowing of rivers into the ocean. As the waters from different rivers merge together after entering the ocean and become indistinguishable from one another, so the false material designations of the *jīvas* are given up at the time of liberation and all the liberated *jīvas* once again become equally situated as servants of the Supreme Lord.

The *Upaniṣads* describe these dissolutions as follows: *yathā saumya madhu madhu-kṛto nistiṣṭhanti nānātyayānām vṛkṣānām rasān samavahāram ekatām saṅgayanti. te yathā tatra na vivekaṁ labhante amuṣyāhaṁ vṛkṣasya raso 'smy amuṣyāham raso 'smīty evam eva khalu saumyemāḥ sarvāḥ prajāḥ sati sampadya na viduḥ sati sampadyāmahe*: "My dear boy this [partial dissolution] resembles what happens when honeybees collect honey by extracting the nectar from the flowers of various kinds of trees and merge it all into a single mixture. Just as the mixed nectars cannot distinguish, 'I am the juice of such-and-such a flower,' or 'I am the juice of another flower,' so, dear boy, when all these living entities merge together they cannot consciously think, 'Now we have merged together.' " (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.9.1-2)

*yathā nadyaḥ syandamānāḥ samudre  
'staṁ gacchanti nāma-rūpe vihāya  
tathā vidvān nāma-rūpād vimuktaḥ  
parāt-param puruṣam upaiti divyam*

"As rivers flow to their dissolution in the sea, giving up their names and forms at their destination, so the wise man who becomes free from material names and forms attains to the Supreme Absolute, the wonderful Personality of Godhead." (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 3.2.8)

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*yasminn udyad-vilayam api yad bhāti viśvaṁ layādau  
jīvoṣṭam guru-karuṇayā kevalātmāvabodhe  
atyantāntam vrajati sahasā sindhu-vat sindhu-madhye*

*madhye cittam tri-bhuvana-gurum bhāvaye tam nṛ-siṃham*

"The Supreme Lord is self-effulgently omniscient. By His great mercy, this universe, which is subject to repeated creation and destruction, remains present within Him after merging back into Him along with the living entities at the time of cosmic dissolution. This total withdrawal of the universal manifestation occurs suddenly, like the flowing of a river into the ocean. Within the core of my heart I meditate upon that master of the three worlds, Lord Nṛsiṃha."

**TEXT 32**

नृषु तव मयया भ्रमममीष्ववगत्य भृशं  
त्वयि सुधियोऽभवे दधति भावमनुप्रभवम्  
कथमनुवर्ततां भवभयं तव यद् भ्रुकुटिः  
सृजति मुहुस्त्रिनेमिरभवच्छरणेषु भयम्

*nṛṣu tava mayayā bhramam amīṣv avagatya bhṛśam  
tvayi su-dhiyo 'bhava dadhati bhāvam anuprabhavam  
katham anuvartatām bhava-bhayam tava yat bhru-kuṭiḥ  
sṛjati muhus tri-nemir abhava-charaṇeṣu bhayam*

*nṛṣu*—among humans; *tava*—Your; *māyayā*—by the illusory energy; *bhramam*—bewilderment; *amīṣu*—among these; *avagatya*—understanding; *bhṛśam*—fervent; *tvayi*—unto You; *su-dhiyaḥ*—those who are wise; *abhava*—unto the source of liberation; *dadhati*—render; *bhāvam*—loving service; *anuprabhavam*—potent; *katham*—how; *anuvartatām*—for those who follow You faithfully; *bhava*—of material life; *bhayam*—fear; *tava*—Your; *yat*—since; *bhru*—of the eyebrows; *kuṭiḥ*—the furrowing; *sṛjati*—creates; *muhuḥ*—repeatedly; *tri-nemiḥ*—three-rimmed (in the three phases of time, namely past, present and future); *a*—not; *bhavat*—from You; *śaraṇeṣu*—for those who take shelter; *bhayam*—fear.

The wise souls who understand how Your Māyā deludes all human beings render potent loving service to You, who are the source of liberation from birth and death. How, indeed, can fear of material life affect Your faithful

**servants? On the other hand, Your furrowing eyebrows—the triple-rimmed wheel of time—repeatedly terrify those who refuse to take shelter of You.**

The *Vedas* reveal their most cherished secret—devotional service to the Personality of Godhead—only to those who are tired of material illusion, which is based on a false sense of independence from the Lord. The *Vājasaneyī-saṁhitā* (32.11) of the *White Yajur Veda* contains the following *mantra*:

*parītya bhūtāni parītya lokān  
parītya sarvāḥ pradiśo diśaś ca  
upasthāya prathama-jāmṛtasyā-  
tmanātmānam abhisamviveśa*

"After passing beyond all the species of life, all the planetary systems and all the limits of space in all directions, one approaches the original Soul of immortality. Then one receives the opportunity to enter permanently into His domain and worship Him with personal service."

The proponents of various contending materialistic philosophies may consider themselves very wise, but they are in fact all deluded by the Supreme Lord's *Māyā*. *Vaiṣṇavas* recognize this pattern of general delusion and submit themselves to the Supreme Lord in the devotional moods of servitude, friendship and so on. Instead of the heat and strife of philosophical quarrel, the pure *Vaiṣṇavas* experience only delight at every moment, because the object of their love is He who brings an end to material entanglement. And the devotees of Lord *Viṣṇu* enjoy constant pleasure not only in this life but in future lives. In whatever births they take, they enjoy loving reciprocations with the Lord. Thus the sincere *Vaiṣṇava* prays,

*nātha yoni-sahasreṣu  
yeṣu yeṣu bhramāmy aham  
tatra tatrācyutā bhaktir  
acyutāstu dṛḍhā tvayi*

"Wherever I may wander, O master, among thousands of species of life, in each situation may I have firmly fixed devotion to You, O *Acyuta*."

(Viṣṇu Purāṇa)

Some philosophers will question how the Vaiṣṇavas can overcome their material entrapment without thorough analytic knowledge of the entities *tvam* ("you," the *jīva*) and *tat* ("that," the Supreme), and without developing a sufficient hatred of material life. The personified *Vedas* here answer that there is no chance of material illusion continuing to act on devotees of the Lord because even in the earliest stages of devotional service all fear and attachment are removed by the Lord's grace.

Time is the root cause of all fear in this world. Indeed, with its three divisions of past, present and future it creates terror at the prospect of impending disease, death and hellish suffering—but only for those who have failed to obtain shelter at the feet of the Supreme Lord. As the Lord Himself says in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (*Laṅkā-khaṇḍa* 18.33),

*sakṛd eva praṇanno yas  
tavāsmīti ca yācate  
abhayaṁ sarvadā tasmai  
dadāmy etad vrataṁ mama*

"To whomever even once surrenders to Me, pleading 'I am Yours,' I give eternal fearlessness. This is my solemn vow." Furthermore, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.14) the Lord says,

*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī  
mama māyā duratyayā  
mām eva ye prapadyante  
māyām etāṁ taranti te*

"This divine energy of Mine consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it."

Vaiṣṇavas do not like to waste their time in prolonged and fruitless wrangling over dry philosophic subjects. They would rather worship the Personality of Godhead than quarrel with philosophical adversaries. The Vaiṣṇavas' understanding concurs with the essential message of revealed

scripture. These devotees' conception of the Supreme Absolute Truth as the infinite ocean of personality and loving pastimes in His worshipable forms of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and other divine manifestations, and their conception of themselves as His eternal servants, amount to the perfect conclusion of Vedānta philosophy in terms of the entities *tat* and *tvam*. The Personality of Godhead and His emanations, such as the *jīva* souls, are simultaneously different and nondifferent, just like the sun and its expanding rays. There are more *jīvas* than anyone can count, and each of them is eternally alive with consciousness, as the *śrutis* confirm: *nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām*. (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 5.13 and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.13) When they are sent forth from the body of Mahā-Viṣṇu at the beginning of material creation, the *jīvas* are all equal in the sense that they are all atomic particles of the Lord's marginal energy. But according to their differing conditions, they divide into four groups: Some are covered by ignorance, which obscures their vision like a cloud. Others become liberated from ignorance through a combination of knowledge and devotion. A third group of souls become endowed with pure devotion, with a slight mixture of desire for speculative knowledge and fruitive activity. Those souls attain purified bodies composed of perfect knowledge and bliss with which they can engage in the Lord's service. Finally, there are those who are devoid of any connection with ignorance; these are the Lord's eternal associates. The marginal position of the *jīva* soul is described in the *Nārada Pañcarātra*:

*yat taṭa-sthaṁ tu cid-rūpaṁ  
sva-saṁvedyād vinirgatam  
rañjitaṁ guṇa-rāgeṇa  
sa jīva iti kathyate*

"The *taṭa-stha* potency should be understood as emanating from the Lord's *saṁvit* [knowledge] energy. This emanation, called the *jīva*, becomes conditioned by the qualities of material nature." Because the minute *jīva* lives within the margin between the Lord's external, illusory potency, *Māyā*, and His internal, spiritual potency, *cit*, the *jīva* is called *taṭa-stha*, "marginal." When he earns liberation by cultivating devotion

to the Lord, however, he comes completely under the shelter of the Lord's internal potency, and at that time he is no longer tainted by the modes of material nature. Lord Kṛṣṇa confirms this in *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.26):

*mām ca yo 'vyabhicāreṇa  
bhakti-yogena sevate  
sa guṇān samatīyaitān  
brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*

"One who engages in full devotional service, unfailing in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman."

The object of the soul's worship is realized in three aspects: Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān. Impersonal Brahman is like the radiant effulgence of the sun; the Supersoul, or Paramātmā, is like the sun globe; and the Personality of Godhead, Bhagavān, is like the presiding deity within the sun, complemented by his elaborate entourage and paraphernalia. Or, to cite another analogy, travelers approaching a city from a distance cannot at first distinguish its features but rather see something vaguely shining ahead of them. As they come closer, they may discern a few of the taller buildings. Then, when they are sufficiently close, they will see the city as it is—a bustling metropolis with many citizens, residences, public buildings, highways and parks. In the same way, persons inclined to impersonal meditation may at best gain some realization of the Supreme Lord's effulgence (Brahman), those who approach closer can learn to see Him as the Lord in the heart (Paramātmā), and those who come very close can know Him in His full personality (Bhagavān).

In summary, Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*samsāra-cakra-krakacair vidīrṇam  
udīrṇa-nānā-bhava-tāpa-taptam  
kathañcid āpannam iha prapannam  
tvam uddhara śrī-nṛhare nṛ-lokam*

"O Śrī Nṛhari, please deliver those human beings who have suffered all

kinds of torments and been ripped apart by the sharp edge of *samsāra's* wheel but who have now somehow found You and are surrendering themselves unto You."

### TEXT 33

विजितहृषीकवायुभिरदान्तमनस्तुरगं  
य इह यतन्ति यन्तुमतिलोलमुपायखिदः  
व्यसनशतान्विताः समवहाय गुरोश्चरणं  
वणिज इवाज सन्त्यकृतकर्णधरा जलधौ

*vijita-hṛṣīka-vāyubhir adānta-manas tura-gam  
ya iha yatanti yantum ati-lolam upāya-khidaḥ  
vyasana-śatānvitāḥ samavahāya guroś caraṇam  
vaṇija ivāja santy akṛta-karṇa-dharā jaladhau*

*vijita*—conquered; *hṛṣīka*—with senses; *vāyubhiḥ*—and vital air; *adānta*—not brought under control; *manaḥ*—the mind; *tura-gam*—(which is like) a horse; *ye*—those who; *iha*—in this world; *yatanti*—endeavor; *yantum*—to regulate; *ati*—very; *lolam*—unsteady; *upāya*—by their various methods of cultivation; *khidaḥ*—distressed; *vyasana*—disturbances; *śata*—by hundreds; *anvitāḥ*—joined; *samavahāya*—abandoning; *guroḥ*—of the spiritual master; *caraṇam*—the feet; *vaṇijaḥ*—merchants; *iva*—as if; *aja*—O unborn one; *santi*—they are; *akṛta*—having not taken; *karṇa-dharāḥ*—a helmsman; *jala-dhau*—on the ocean.

**The mind is like an impetuous horse that even persons who have regulated their senses and breath cannot control. Those in this world who try to tame the uncontrolled mind, but who abandon the feet of their spiritual master, encounter hundreds of obstacles in their cultivation of various distressful practices. O unborn Lord, they are like merchants on a boat in the ocean who have failed to employ a helmsman.**

To become qualified to attain love of Godhead, the mature fruit of liberation, one must first subdue the rebellious material mind. Though difficult, this can be achieved when a person replaces his addictions to sense gratification with a taste for the higher pleasures of spiritual life. But only by the favor of the representative of Godhead, the spiritual

master, can one gain this higher taste.

The spiritual master opens the eyes of the disciple to the wonders of the transcendental realm, as indicated in the Gāyatrī prayers by the seed *mantra* of divine knowledge, *aiṁ*.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.2.12) states,

*tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet  
samiṭ-pāṇiḥ śrotriyam brahma-niṣṭham*

"To understand these things properly, one must humbly approach, with firewood in hand, a spiritual master who is learned in the *Vedas* and firmly devoted to the Absolute Truth." And the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (2.9) declares,

*naiṣā tarkeṇa matir āpaneyā  
proktānyenaiva su-jñānāya preṣṭha*

"This realization, my dear boy, cannot be acquired by logic. It must be spoken by an exceptionally qualified spiritual master to a knowledgeable disciple."

Non-Vaiṣṇavas often disregard the importance of surrendering to a spiritual master who stands in an authorized line of disciplic succession. Relying instead on their own abilities, proud *yogīs* and *jñānīs* exhibit their apparent success to impress the world, but their glory is but temporary:

*yuñjānānām abhaktānām  
prāṇāyāmādibhir manaḥ  
akṣīṇa-vāsanām rājan  
dṛśyate punar utthitam*

"The minds of nondevotees who engage in such practices as *prāṇāyāma* are not fully cleansed of material desires. Thus, O King, material desires are again seen to arise in their minds." (SB 10.51.60)

On the other hand a humble, steadfast devotee of Lord Viṣṇu and of the Vaiṣṇavas is assured of easy victory over the stubborn mind. He need not concern himself with performing the eightfold system of *yoga* or taking

other such measures to keep his mind steady. *Sarvaṁ caitad gurau bhaktyā puruṣo hy añjasā jayet*: "A person can easily obtain all these goals simply by being devoted to his spiritual master." Otherwise, a nondevotee may conquer his senses and vital air and still fail to tame his mind, which will continue to run wild like an unbroken horse. He will suffer unending anxiety over the troublesome execution of various spiritual practices, and in the end he will remain just as lost in the vast material ocean as he ever was. The analogy given here is very appropriate: A group of merchants who hastily enter upon a sea voyage with expectations of great profit, but who fail to hire a competent helmsman for their boat, will simply experience great difficulty. The *Bhāgavatam* declares the importance of the bona fide spiritual master in many places such as this verse from the Eleventh Canto (20.17):

*nṛ-deham ādyam su-labhaṁ su-durlabhaṁ  
plavaṁ su-kalpaṁ guru-karṇa-dhāram  
mayānukūlena nabhasvateritaṁ  
pumān bhavābdhiṁ na taret sa ātma-hā*

"The human body, which can award all benefit in life is automatically obtained by the laws of nature, although it is a very rare achievement. This human body can be compared to a perfectly constructed boat having the spiritual master as the captain and the instructions of the Personality of Godhead as favorable winds impelling it on its course. Considering all these advantages, a human being who does not utilize his human life to cross the ocean of material existence must be considered the killer of his own soul." Therefore the first business of one who takes human life seriously is to find out a spiritual master who can guide him in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*yadā parānanda-guro bhavat-pade  
padaṁ mano me bhagaval labheta  
tadā nirastākhila-sādhana-śramaḥ  
śrayeya saukhyaṁ bhavataḥ kṛpātaḥ*

"O transcendently blissful *guru*, when my mind finally achieves a place at your lotus feet, all the tiresome labor of my spiritual practices will be finished, and by your mercy I will experience the greatest happiness."

### TEXT 34

स्वजनसुतात्मदारधनधामधरासुरथैस्  
त्वयि सति किं नृणाम्श्रयत आत्मनि सर्वरसे  
इति सदजानतां मिथुनतो रतये चरतां  
सुखयति को न्विह स्वविहते स्वनिरस्तभगे

*svajana-sutātma-dāra-dhana-dhāma-dharāsu-rathais*  
*tvayi sati kiṁ nṛṇām śrayata ātmani sarva-rase*  
*iti sad ajānatām mithunato rataye caratām*  
*sukhayati ko nv iha sva-vihate sva-nirasta-bhage*

*svajana*—with servants; *suta*—children; *ātma*—body; *dāra*—wife; *dhana*—money; *dhāma*—home; *dharā*—land; *asu*—vitality; *rathaiḥ*—and vehicles; *tvayi*—when You; *sati*—have become; *kiṁ*—what (use); *nṛṇām*—for human beings; *śrayataḥ*—who are taking shelter; *ātmani*—their very Self; *sarva-rase*—the embodiment of all pleasures; *iti*—thus; *sat*—the truth; *ajānatām*—for those who fail to appreciate; *mithunataḥ*—from sexual combinations; *rataye*—for sensual indulgence; *caratām*—carrying on; *sukhayati*—gives happiness; *kaḥ*—what; *nu*—at all; *iha*—in this (world); *sva*—by its very nature; *vihate*—which is subject to destruction; *sva*—by its very nature; *nirasta*—which is devoid; *bhage*—of any essence.

To those persons who take shelter of You, You reveal Yourself as the Supersoul, the embodiment of all transcendental pleasure. What further use have such devotees for their servants, children or bodies, their wives, money or houses, their land, good health or conveyances? And for those who fail to appreciate the truth about You and go on pursuing the pleasures of sex, what could there be in this entire world—a place inherently doomed to destruction and devoid of significance—that could give them real happiness?

Devotional service to Lord Viṣṇu is considered pure when one's sole

desire is to please the Lord. Situated in that perfect consciousness, a Vaiṣṇava has no further interest in wordly gains and is thus excused from any obligation to perform ritual sacrifices and follow austere practices of *yoga*. As the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.2.12) states,

*parīkṣya lokān karma-citān brāhmaṇo  
nirvedam āyān nāsty akṛtaḥ kṛtena*

"When a *brāhmaṇa* recognizes that elevation to the heavenly planets is merely another accumulation of *karma*, he becomes renounced and is no longer corrupted by his actions." The *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka* (4.4.9) and *Kaṭha* (6.14) *Upaniṣads* confirm,

*yadā sarve pramucyante  
kāma ye 'sya hṛdi śritāḥ  
atha martyo 'mṛto bhavaty  
atra brahma samaśnute*

"When a person completely gives up all the sinful desires he is harboring in his heart, he exchanges mortality for eternal spiritual life and attains real pleasure in the Absolute Truth." And the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad* (Pūrva 15) concludes, *bhaktir asya bhajanam tad ihāmutropādhi-nairāsyenāmuṣmin manaḥ-kalpanam etad eva naiṣkarmyam*. "Devotional service is the process of worshiping the Supreme Lord. It consists of fixing one's mind upon Him by becoming disinterested in all material designations, both in this life and the next. This indeed, is true renunciation."

The items the *śrutis* mention here are all measures of worldly success: *svajanāḥ*, servants; *ātmā*, a beautiful body; *sutāḥ*, children to be proud of; *dārāḥ*, an attractive and competent spouse; *dhanam*, financial assets; *dhāma*, a prestigious residence; *dharā*, holdings of land; *asavaḥ*, health and strength; and *rathāḥ*, cars and other vehicles that display one's status. But one who has begun to experience the ecstasy of devotional service loses all attraction for these things, since he finds real satisfaction in the Supreme Lord, the reservoir of all pleasure, who enjoys by sharing His own pleasures with His servitors.

We are each free to choose the course of our life: we can either dedicate

our body, mind, words, talents and wealth to the glory of God, or else we can ignore Him and struggle instead for our personal happiness. The second path leads to a life of slavery to sex and ambition, in which the soul never feels real satisfaction but instead suffers continually.

Vaiṣṇavas are distressed to see materialists suffering in this way, and so they always strive to enlighten them.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*bhajato hi bhavān sākṣāt  
paramānanda-cid-dhanaḥ  
ātmaiva kim ataḥ kṛtyaṁ  
tuccha-dāra-sutādibhiḥ*

"For those who worship You, You become their very Self, their spiritual treasure of topmost bliss. What further use have they for mundane wives, children and so forth?"

### TEXT 35

भुवि पुरुपुण्यतीर्थसदनान्यृषयो विमदास्  
त उत भवत्पदाम्बुजहृदोऽघभिदङ्घ्रिजलाः  
दधति सकृन्मनस्त्वयि य आत्मनि नित्यसुखे  
न पुनरुपासते पुरुषसारहरावसथान्

*bhuvi puru-ṣuṇya-tīrtha-sadanāny ṛṣayo vimadās  
ta uta bhavat-padāmbuja-hṛdo 'gha-bhid-aṅghri-jalāḥ  
dadhati sakṛn manas tvayi ya ātmani nitya-sukhe  
na punar upāsate puruṣa-sāra-harāvasathān*

*bhuvi*—on the earth; *puru*—greatly; *ṣuṇya*—pious; *tīrtha*—places of pilgrimage; *sadanāni*—and personal abodes of the Supreme Lord; *ṛṣayaḥ*—sages; *vimadaḥ*—free from false pride; *te*—they; *uta*—indeed; *bhavat*—Your; *pada*—feet; *ambuja*—lotus; *hṛdaḥ*—in whose hearts; *gha*—sins; *bhit*—which destroys; *aṅghri*—(having bathed) whose feet; *jalāḥ*—the water; *dadhati*—turn; *sakṛt*—even once; *manaḥ*—their minds; *tvayi*—toward You; *ye*—who; *ātmani*—toward the Supreme Soul; *nitya*—always; *sukhe*—who is happy; *na punaḥ*—never again; *upāsate*—they

worship; *puruṣa*—of a man; *sāra*—the essential qualities; *hara*—which steal way; *āvasathān*—their mundane homes.

**Sages free from false pride live on this earth by frequenting the sacred pilgrimage sites and those places where the Supreme Lord displayed His pastimes. Because such devotees keep Your lotus feet within their hearts, the water that washes their feet destroys all sins. Anyone who even once turns his mind toward You, the ever-blissful Soul of all existence, no longer dedicates himself to serving family life at home, which simply robs a man of his good qualities.**

The qualification of an aspiring sage is that he has learned about the Absolute Truth from standard authorities and developed a sober mood of renunciation. To develop his capacity for discriminating the important from the unimportant, such a person often wanders from one holy site to another, taking advantage of the association of great souls who frequent or reside in these places. If, in the course of his travels, the aspiring sage can begin to realize the Supreme Lord's lotus feet in the core of his heart he will be released from the illusion of false ego and from the painful bondage of lust, envy and greed. Though he may still go to places of pilgrimage to bathe away his sins, the now purified sage has the power to sanctify others with the water that washes his feet and with the realized instructions he imparts. Such a sage is described by the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (2.2.9)

*bhidyate hṛdaya-granthiś  
chidyante sarva-saṁśayāḥ  
kṣīyante cāsya karmāṇi  
tasmin dr̥ṣṭe parāvare*

"The knot in the heart is pierced, all misgivings are cut to pieces, and the chain of fruitive actions is terminated when one sees the Supreme Lord everywhere, within all superior and inferior beings." To sages who have reached this stage, the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.2.11) thus pays homage: *namaḥ paramarṣibhyaḥ, namaḥ paramarṣibhyaḥ*. "Obeisances to the topmost sages, obeisances to the topmost sages!"

Putting aside the affectionate company of wives, children, friends and

followers, saintly Vaiṣṇavas travel to the holy *dhāmas* where the Supreme Lord's worship can be most successfully prosecuted—places such as Vṛndāvana, Māyāpura and Jagannātha Purī, or anywhere else where sincere devotees of Lord Viṣṇu congregate. Even those Vaiṣṇavas who have not taken *sannyāsa* and still live at home or in their *guru's āśrama*, but who have once tasted just a drop of the sublime pleasure of devotional service, will also have little inclination to meditate on the pleasures of a materialistic family life, which robs a person of his discretion, determination, sobriety, tolerance and peace of mind. Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*muñcann aṅga tad aṅga-saṅgam aniśaṁ tvām eva sañcintayan  
santaḥ santi yato yato gata-madās tān āśramān āvasan  
nityaṁ tan-mukha-ṣaṅkajād vigaḥita-tvat-ṣuṅya-gāthāmṛta-  
srotaḥ-samplava-sampluto nara-hare na syām ahaṁ deha-bhṛt*

"My dear Lord, when I will give up all sense gratification and engage incessantly in meditating upon You, and when I will take up residence in the hermitages of saintly devotees free from false pride, then I will become fully immersed in the inundation of nectar pouring from the devotees' lotus mouths as they chant sacred narrations about You. And then, O Lord Narahari, I will never again have to take a material body."

### TEXT 36

सत इदं उत्थितं सदिति चेन्ननु तर्कहतं  
व्यभिचरति क्व च क्व च मृषा न तथोभययुक्  
व्यवहतये विकल्प इषितोऽन्धपरम्परया  
भ्रमयति भारती त उरुवृत्तिभिरुक्थजडान्

*sata idam utthitam sad iti cen nanu tarka-hatam  
vyabharati kva ca kva ca mṛṣā na tathobhaya-yuk  
vyavahṛtaye vikalpa iṣito 'ndha-paramparayā  
bhramayati bhāratī ta uru-vṛttibhir uktha-jadān*

*sataḥ*—from that which is permanent; *idam*—this (universe); *utthitam*—arisen; *sat*—permanent; *iti*—thus; *cet*—if (someone proposes); *nanu*

—certainly; *tarka*—by logical contradiction; *hatam*—refuted; *vyabhicarati*—it is inconsistent; *kva ca*—in some cases; *kva ca*—in other cases; *mṛṣā*—illusion; *na*—not; *tathā*—so; *ubhaya*—of both (the real and illusion); *yuk*—the conjunction; *vyavahṛtaye*—for the sake of ordinary affairs; *vikalpaḥ*—an imaginary situation; *iṣitaḥ*—desired; *andha*—of blind men; *paramparayā*—by a succession; *bhramayati*—bewilder; *bhāratī*—the words of wisdom; *te*—Your; *uru*—numerous; *vṛttibhiḥ*—with their semantic functions; *uktha*—by ritual utterances; *jadān*—dulled.

**It may be proposed that this world is permanently real because it is generated from the permanent reality, but such an argument is subject to logical refutation. Sometimes, indeed, the apparent nondifference of a cause and its effect fails to prove true, and at other times the product of something real is illusory. Furthermore, this world cannot be permanently real, for it partakes of the natures of not only the absolute reality but also the illusion disguising that reality. Actually, the visible forms of this world are just an imaginary arrangement resorted to by a succession of ignorant persons in order to facilitate their material affairs. With their various meanings and implications, the learned words of Your *Vedas* bewilder all persons whose minds have been dulled by hearing the incantations of sacrificial rituals.**

According to Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, the *Upaniṣads* teach that this created world is real but temporary. This is the understanding that devotees of Lord Viṣṇu adhere to. But there are also materialistic philosophers, like the proponents of Jaimini Ṛṣi's Karma mīmāṃsā, who claim that this world is the only reality and exists eternally. For Jaimini, the cycle of karmic action and reaction is perpetual, with no possibility of liberation into a different, transcendental realm. This viewpoint, however, is shown to be fallacious by a careful examination of the Upaniṣadic *mantras*, which contain many descriptions of a higher, spiritual existence. For example, *sad eva saumyedaṃ agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam*: "My dear boy, the Absolute Truth alone existed prior to this creation, one without a second." (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.1) Also, *vijñānam ānandaṃ brahma*: "The supreme reality is divine knowledge and bliss." (*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.9.34)

In this prayer of the personified *Vedas*, the materialists' argument is summed up in the words *sata idam utthitam sat*: "The visible world is permanently real because it is generated from the permanent reality." In general, this argument goes, that which is produced from a certain thing is composed of that thing. For example, earrings and other ornaments made from gold share gold's substance. Thus, the Mīmāṃsā logicians conclude, since the world as we know it is a manifestation of an eternal reality, it is also eternally real. But the Sanskrit ablative expression *sataḥ*, "from the eternal reality," implies a definite separation of cause and effect. Therefore, what is created from *sat*, the permanent reality, must be significantly different from it—in other words, temporary. In this way the argument of the materialists is flawed because it proves just the opposite of what it is intended to prove (*tarka-hatam*), namely that the world as we know it is all that exists, that it is eternal, and that there is no separate, transcendental reality.

In defense, the Mīmāṃsakas may claim that they are not trying to prove nondifference *per se*, but rather trying to disprove the possibility of difference, or in other words, the possibility of any reality separate from the known world. This attempt to support the Mīmāṃsā argument is easily refuted by the phrase *vyabhicarati kva ca*: that is to say, there are counterexamples that deviate from the general rule. Sometimes, indeed, the source is very different from what it produces, as in the case of a man and his young son, or of a hammer and the destruction of a clay pot. But, the Mīmāṃsakas reply, the creation of the universe is not the same kind of causation as your counterexamples: the father and the hammer are only efficient causes, whereas the *sat* is also this universe's ingredient cause. This reply is anticipated by the words *kva ca mṛṣā* ("and sometimes the effect is illusory"). In the case of the false perception of a snake where there is a rope on the ground, the rope is the snake—illusion's ingredient cause, differing in many respects from the imagined snake, most obviously in its being real.

The Mīmāṃsakas once more rejoin: But the ingredient cause of the illusory snake is not just the rope by itself: it is the rope plus the observer's ignorance (*avidyā*). Since *avidyā* is not a substance, the snake it produces is called an illusion. Yet the same is true, the personified *Vedas* reply, in the case of the universe's creation from *sat* in

conjunction with ignorance (*tathobhaya-yuk*); here the unreal element of illusion, *Māyā*, is the living beings' misconception that their own bodies and other changing material forms are permanent.

But, rejoin the *Mīmāṃsakas*, our experience of this world is valid because the things we experience are useful for practical activity. If our experience were not valid, we could never be sure that our perceptions corresponded to the facts. We would be like a man who, despite exhaustive examination, would still have to suspect that a rope might be a snake. No, the *śrutis* here answer, the temporary configurations of matter are nonetheless an illusory imitation of the eternal spiritual reality, cleverly concocted to fulfill the conditioned living entities' desire for material activity (*vyavahṛtaye vikalpa iṣitaḥ*). The illusion of this world's permanence is sustained by a succession of blind men who learn the materialistic idea from their predecessors and pass on this illusion to their descendants. Anyone can see that an illusion often continues by the momentum of lingering mental impressions, even when its basis is no longer present. Thus throughout history blind philosophers have misled other blind men by convincing them of the absurd idea that they can reach perfection by engaging in mundane rituals. Foolish people may be willing to exchange counterfeit coins among one another, but a wise man knows that such money is useless for the practical business of buying food, medicine and other necessities. And if given in charity, counterfeit money will earn no pious credit.

But, say the *Mīmāṃsakas*, how can the sincere performer of Vedic rituals be a deluded fool, since the *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas* of the Vedic scriptures establish that the fruits of *karma* are eternal? For example, *akṣayyaṃ ha vai cāturmāsya-yājinaḥ su-kṛtaṃ bhavati*: "For one who observes the *Cāturmāsya* vows there arises inexhaustible good *karma*," and *apāma somam amṛta babhūma*: "We have drunk the *soma* and become immortal." (*Ṛg Veda* 8.43.3)

The *śrutis* reply by pointing out that the Personality of Godhead's learned words, comprising the *Vedas*, bewilder those whose weak intelligence has been crushed by the weight of too much faith in *karma*. The specific word used here is *uru-vṛttibhiḥ*, which indicates that the Vedic *mantras*, with their confusing variety of meanings in the semantic modes of *gauṇa*, *lakṣaṇā* and so on, protect their sublime mysteries from

all but those who have faith in Lord Viṣṇu. The *Vedas* do not truly mean to say in their injunctions that the fruits of *karma* are eternal, but only indirectly describe in metaphors the praiseworthiness of regulated sacrifices. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* states in no uncertain terms that the results of ritual *karma* are impermanent: *tad yatheha karma-cito lokaḥ kṣīyate evam evāmutra puṇya-cito lokaḥ kṣīyate*. "Just as whatever benefit one works hard to attain in this world is eventually depleted, so whatever life one earns for oneself in the next world by his piety will also eventually end." (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.1.16) According to the testimony of numerous *śruti-mantras*, the entire material universe is but a temporary emanation of the Supreme Truth; the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, for one, says:

*yathorṇa-nābhiḥ sṛjate grhṇate ca  
yathā pṛthivyām oṣadhayaḥ sambhavanti  
yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśa-lomāni  
tathākṣarāt sambhavatīha viśvam*

"As a web is expanded and withdrawn by a spider, as plants grow from the earth, and as hair grows from a living person's head and body, so this universe is generated from the inexhaustible Supreme." (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.1.7)

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*udbhūtaṁ bhavataḥ sato 'pi bhuvanāṁ san naiva sarpaḥ srajaḥ  
kurvat kāryaṁ apīha kūta-kanakaṁ vedo 'pi naivaṁ paraḥ  
advaitaṁ tava sat paraṁ tu paramānandaṁ padaṁ tan mudā  
vande sundaram indirānuta hare mā muñca mām ānatam*

"Although this world has arisen from You, who are the very substance of reality, it is not eternally real. The illusory snake appearing from a rope is not permanent reality, nor are the transformations produced from gold. The *Vedas* never say that they are. The actual, transcendental, nondual reality is Your supremely blissful personal kingdom. To that beautiful abode I offer my obeisances. O Lord Hari, to whom Goddess Indirā always bows down, I also bow to You. Therefore please never release me."

### TEXT 37

न यदिदमग्र आस न भविष्यदतो निधनाद्  
अनु मितमन्तरा त्वयि विभाति मृषैकरसे  
अत उपमीयते द्रविणजातिविकल्पपथैर्  
वितथमनोविलासमृतमित्यवयन्त्यबुधाः

*na yad idam agra āsa na bhaviṣyad ato nidhanād  
anu mitam antarā tvayi vibhāti mṛṣaika-rase  
ata upamīyate draviṇa-jāti-vikalpa-pathair  
vitatha-mano-vilāsam ṛtam ity avayanty abudhāḥ*

*na*—not; *yat*—because; *idam*—this (universe); *agre*—in the beginning; *āsa*—existed; *na bhaviṣyat*—it will not exist; *ataḥ*—hence; *nidhanāt anu*—after its annihilation; *mitam*—deduced; *antarā*—in the meantime; *tvayi*—within You; *vibhāti*—it appears; *mṛṣā*—false; *ekarase*—whose experience of spiritual ecstasy is unchanging; *ataḥ*—thus; *upamīyate*—it is understood by comparison; *draviṇa*—of material substance; *jāti*—in the categories; *vikalpa*—of the transformations; *pathaiḥ*—with the varieties; *vitatha*—contrary to fact; *manaḥ*—of the mind; *vilāsam*—fantasy; *ṛtam*—real; *iti*—so; *avayanti*—think; *abudhāḥ*—the unintelligent.

Since this universe did not exist prior to its creation and will no longer exist after its annihilation, we conclude that in the interim it is nothing more than a manifestation imagined to be visible within You, whose spiritual enjoyment never changes. We liken this universe to the transformation of various material substances into diverse forms. Certainly those who believe that this figment of the imagination is substantially real are less intelligent.

Having thus defeated all attempts of the ritualists to prove the substantial reality of material creation, the personified *Vedas* now present positive evidence to the contrary—that this world is unreal in that it is temporary. Before the creation of the universe and after its dissolution, only the spiritual reality of the Supreme Lord, along with His abode and entourage, continue to exist. The *śrutis* confirm this:

*ātmā va idam eka evāgra āsīt.* "Prior to the creation of this universe, only the Self existed." (*Aitareya Upaniṣad* 1.1) *Nāsad āsīn no sad āsīt tadānīm:* "At that time neither the subtle nor the gross aspects of matter were present." (*R̥g Veda* 10.129.1)

One can understand the relativity of creation by an analogy. When basic materials like clay and metal are processed and shaped into various products, the created objects exist separately from the clay and metal only in name and form. The basic substance remains unchanged. Similarly, when the energies of the Supreme Lord are transformed into the known things of this world, these things exist separately from Him only in name and form. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.1.4-6), the sage Udālaka explains a similar analogy to his son: *yathā saumyaikena mṛtpiṇḍena sarvaṁ mṛn-mayaṁ vijñātam syād vācārambhaṇaṁ vikāro nāmadheyam mṛttikety eva satyam.* "For example, my dear boy, by understanding a single lump of clay one can understand everything made from clay. The existence of transformed products is only a creation of language, a matter of assigning designations: the clay alone is real." In conclusion, there is no convincing evidence that the things of this world are eternal or substantial, while there is overwhelming evidence that they are temporary and conditioned by false designations. Therefore only the ignorant can take the imaginary permutations of matter to be real.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*mukuta-kuṇḍala-kaṅkaṇa-kiṅkiṇī-  
pariṇataṁ kanakaṁ paramārthataḥ  
mahad-ahaṅkṛti-kha-pramukhaṁ tathā  
nara-harer na paraṁ paramārthataḥ*

"Transformations of gold such as crowns, earrings, bangles and ankle bells are not ultimately separate from gold itself. Similarly, the material elements-headed by the *mahat*, false ego and ether-are not ultimately separate from Lord Narahari."

### TEXT 38

स यदजया त्वजामनुशयीत गुणांश्च जुषन्

भजति सरूपतां तदनु मृत्युमपेतभगः  
त्वमुत जहासि तामहिरिव त्वचमात्तभगो  
महासि महीयसेऽष्टगुणितेऽपरिमेयभगः

*sa yad ajayā tv ajām anuśayīta guṇāṁś ca juṣan  
bhajati sarūpatām tad anu mṛtyum apeta-bhagaḥ  
tvam uta jahāsi tām ahir iva tvacam ātta-bhago  
mahasi mahīyase 'ṣṭa-guṇite 'parimeya-bhagaḥ*

*saḥ*—he (the individual living entity); *yat*—because; *ajayā*—by the influence of the material energy; *tu*—but; *ajām*—that material energy; *anuśayīta*—lies down next to; *guṇān*—her qualities; *ca*—and; *juṣan*—assuming; *bhajati*—he takes on; *sa-rūpatām*—forms resembling (the qualities of nature); *tat-anu*—following that; *mṛtyum*—death; *apeta*—deprived; *bhagaḥ*—of his assets; *tvam*—You; *uta*—on the other hand; *jahāsi*—leave aside; *tām*—her (the material energy); *ahir*—a snake; *iva*—as if; *tvacam*—its (old, discarded) skin; *ātta-bhagaḥ*—endowed with all assets; *mahasi*—in Your spiritual powers; *mahīyase*—You are glorified; *aṣṭa-guṇite*—eightfold; *aparimeya*—unlimited; *bhagaḥ*—whose greatness.

**The illusory material nature attracts the minute living entity to embrace her, and as a result he assumes forms composed of her qualities. Subsequently, he loses all his spiritual qualities and must undergo repeated deaths. You, however, avoid the material energy in the same way that a snake abandons its old skin. Glorious in Your possession of eight mystic perfections, You enjoy unlimited opulences.**

Although the *jīva* is pure spirit, qualitatively equal with the Supreme Lord, he is prone to being degraded by embracing the ignorance of material illusion. When he becomes entranced by the allurements of *Māyā*, he accepts bodies and senses that are designed to let him indulge in forgetfulness. Produced from the raw material of *Māyā*'s three modes—goodness, passion and nescience—these bodies envelop the spirit soul in varieties of unhappiness, culminating in death and rebirth.

The Supreme Soul and the individual soul share the same spiritual nature, but the Supreme Soul cannot be entrapped by ignorance like His

infinitesimal companion. Smoke may engulf the glow of a small molten sphere of copper, covering its light in darkness, but the vast globe of the sun will never suffer the same kind of eclipse. Māyā, after all, is the Personality of Godhead's faithful maidservant, the outward expansion of His internal, Yogamāyā potency. *Śrī Nārada Pañcarātra* thus states, in a conversation between Śruti and Vidyā,

*asyā āvarika-śaktir  
mahā-māyākhileśvarī  
yayā mugdham jagat sarvam  
sarve dehābhimāninaḥ*

"The covering potency derived from her is Mahā-māyā, the regulator of everything material. The entire universe becomes bewildered by her, and thus every living being falsely identifies with his material body."

Just as a snake casts aside his old skin, knowing that it is not part of his essential identity, so the Supreme Lord always avoids His external, material energy. There is no insufficiency or limit to any of His eightfold mystic opulences, consisting of *aṇimā* (the power to become infinitesimal), *mahimā* (the ability to become infinitely large) and so on. Therefore, the shadow of material darkness has no scope for entering the domain of His unequaled, resplendent glories.

For the sake of those whose realization of spiritual life is only gradually awakening, the *Upaniṣads* sometimes speak in general terms of *ātmā* or Brahman, not openly distinguishing the difference between the superior and inferior souls, the *Paramātmā* and *jīvātma*. But often enough they describe this duality in unequivocal terms:

*dvā suṣarṇā sayujā sakhāyā  
samānam vṛkṣam pariśasvajāte  
tayoṛ anyah pippalam svādv atty  
anaśnann anyo 'bhicākaśīti*

"Two companion birds sit together in the shelter of the same *pippala* tree. One of them is relishing the taste of the tree's berries, while the other refrains from eating and instead watches over His friend."

(*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 4.6) In this analogy the two birds are the soul

and the Supersoul, the tree is the body, and the taste of the berries are the varieties of sense pleasure.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*nṛtyantī tava vīkṣaṇāṅgaṇa-gatā kāla-svabhāvādibhir  
bhāvān sattva-rajās-tamo-guṇa-mayān unmīlayantī bahūn  
mām ākramya padā śīrasya ati-bharaṁ sammardayanty āturaṁ  
māyā te śaraṇaṁ gato 'smi nṛ-hare tvām eva tām vārāya*

"The glance You cast upon Your consort comprises time, the material propensities of the living entities, and so on. This glance dances upon her face, thus awakening the multitude of created entities, who take birth in the modes of goodness, passion and ignorance. O Lord Nṛhari, Your Māyā has put her foot on my head and is pressing down extremely hard, causing me great distress. Now I have come to You for shelter. Please make her desist."

### TEXT 39

यदि न समुद्धरन्ति यतयो हृदि कामजटा  
दुरधिगमोऽसतां हृदि गतोऽस्मृतकण्ठमणिः  
असुतृपयोगिनामुभयतोऽप्यसुखं भगवन्  
अनपगतान्तकादनधिरूढपदाद्भवतः

*yadi na samuddharanti yatayo hṛdi kāma-jatā  
duradhigamo 'satām hṛdi gato 'smṛta-kaṇṭha-maṇiḥ  
asu-tṛpa-yoginām ubhayato 'py asukhaṁ bhagavann  
anapagatāntakād anadhirūḍha-padād bhavataḥ*

*yadi*—if; *na samuddharanti*—they do not uproot; *yatayaḥ*—persons in the renounced order of life; *hṛdi*—in their hearts; *kāma*—of material desire; *jatāḥ*—the traces; *duradhigamaḥ*—impossible to be realized; *asatām*—for the impure; *hṛdi*—in the heart; *gataḥ*—having entered; *asmṛta*—forgotten; *kaṇṭha*—on one's neck; *maṇiḥ*—a jewel; *asu*—their life airs; *tṛpa*—who gratify; *yoginām*—for practitioners of *yoga*; *ubhayataḥ*—in both (worlds); *api*—even; *asukham*—unhappiness; *bhagavan*—O Personality of Godhead; *anapagata*—not gone away;

*antakāt*—from death; *anadhirūḍha*—unobtained; *padāt*—whose kingdom; *bhavataḥ*—from You.

**Members of the renounced order who fail to uproot the last traces of material desire in their hearts remain impure, and thus You do not allow them to understand You. Although You are present within their hearts, for them You are like a jewel worn around the neck of a man who has totally forgotten it is there. O Lord, those who practice *yoga* only for sense gratification must suffer punishment both in this life and the next: from death, who will not release them, and from You, whose kingdom they cannot reach.**

A mere show of renunciation is not sufficient to gain a person entrance into the kingdom of God. One must undergo a thorough change of heart, symptomized by a complete lack of interest in the self-destructive habits of sense gratification, both gross and subtle. Not only must the true sage refrain from even thinking of illicit sex, meat-eating, intoxication and gambling, but he must also give up his desires for reputation and position. All together these demands add up to a formidable challenge but the fruits of true renunciation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are well worth a lifetime of endeavor.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.2.2) confirms the statements of this verse: *kāmān yaḥ kāmāyate manyamānaḥ sa karmabhir jāyate tatra tatra*. "Even a thoughtful renunciant, if he maintains any worldly desires will be forced by his karmic reactions to take birth again and again in various circumstances." Philosophers and *yogīs* work hard to become free from birth and death, but because they are unwilling to surrender their proud independence, their meditations are devoid of devotion to the Supreme Lord, and thus they fall short of the perfection of renunciation—pure love of God. This pure love is the only goal of a sincere Vaiṣṇava, and therefore he must vigilantly resist the natural temptations of profit, adoration and distinction, and also the impulse to merge into an all consuming impersonal oblivion. As Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī states in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.1.11),

*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam  
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam*

*ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-  
śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*  
[Cc. Madhya 19.167]

"When first-class devotional service develops, one must be devoid of all material desires, knowledge obtained by monistic philosophy, and fruitive action. The devotee must constantly serve Kṛṣṇa favorably, as Kṛṣṇa desires.

For those who undergo rigorous *yoga* discipline only to please their senses, prolonged suffering is inevitable. Hunger, disease, the degeneration of old age, injury from accident, violence from others—these are a few of the limitless varieties of suffering one can experience to varying degrees in this world. And ultimately, death awaits, followed by painful punishment for sinful activities. Especially those who have freely indulged in sensual enjoyments at the cost of others' lives can expect punishment so severe it is unimaginable. But the greatest pain of material existence is not misfortune in this life or being sent to hell after death: it is the emptiness of having forgotten one's eternal relationship with the Personality of Godhead.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*dambha-nyāsa-miṣeṇa vañcita-janam bhogaika-cintāturam  
sammuhyantam ahar-niśam viracitodyoga-klamair ākulam  
ājñā-laṅghinam ajñam ajña-janatā-sammānanāsan-madam  
dīnānātha dayā-nidhāna paramānanda prabho pāhi mām*

"The hypocrite who cheats himself by a pretense of renunciation thinks only of sense enjoyment and thus suffers constantly. Bewildered day and night, he is overwhelmed by the exhausting endeavors he contrives for himself. This fool disobeys Your laws and is corrupted by greed for respect from other fools. O protector of the fallen, O bestower of mercy, O supremely blissful master, please save that person, myself."

#### TEXT 40

**त्वद्वगमी न वेत्ति भवदुत्थशुभाशुभयोर्  
गुणविगुणान्वयांस्तर्हि देहभृतां च गिरः**

## अनुयुगमन्वहं सगुण गीतपरम्परया श्रवणभृतो यतस्त्वमपवर्गगतिर्मनुजैः

*tvad avagamī na vetti bhavad-uttha-śubhāśubhayor  
guṇa-viguṇānvayāms tarhi deha-bhṛtām ca giraḥ  
anu-yugam anv-aham sa-guṇa gīta-paramparayā  
śravaṇa-bhṛto yatas tvam apavarga-gatir manu-jaiḥ*

*tvat*—You; *avagamī*—one who understands; *na vetti*—does not pay regard; *bhavad*—from You; *uttha*—rising; *śubha-aśubhayoḥ*—of the auspiciousness and inauspiciousness; *guṇa-viguṇa*—of good and bad; *anvayān*—to the attributions; *tarhi*—consequently; *deha-bhṛtām*—of embodied living beings; *ca*—also; *giraḥ*—the words; *anu-yugam*—in every age; *anu-aham*—every day; *sa-guṇa*—O You who are endowed with qualities; *gīta*—of recitation; *paramparayā*—by the chain of succession; *śravaṇa*—through hearing; *bhṛtaḥ*—carried; *yataḥ*—because of this; *tvam*—You; *apavarga*—of liberation; *gatiḥ*—the ultimate goal; *manujaiḥ*—by human beings, descendants of Manu.

**When a person realizes You, he no longer cares about his good and bad fortune arising from past pious and sinful acts, since it is You alone who control this good and bad fortune. Such a realized devotee also disregards what ordinary living beings say about him. Every day he fills his ears with Your glories, which are recited in each age by the unbroken succession of Manu's descendants, and thus You become his ultimate salvation.**

Text 39 clearly states that impersonalistic renunciants will continue to suffer birth after birth. One may ask if this suffering is justified, since a renunciant's status should exempt him from suffering, whether or not he has a devotional attitude. As the *śruti-mantra* states, *eṣa nityo mahimā brāhmaṇasya na karmaṇā vardhate no kanīyān*: "The perpetual glory of a *brāhmaṇa* is never increased or diminished as a result of any of his activities." (*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.28) To counter the objection thus raised, the personified *Vedas* offer this prayer.

Impersonalistic *jñānīs* and *yogīs* do not qualify for full relief from the reactions of *karma*—a privilege reserved only for those who are *tvad-avagamī*, pure devotees constantly engaged in hearing and chanting

topics concerning the Personality of Godhead. The devotees hold firm to the Supreme Lord's lotus feet by their unrelenting Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and so they need not strictly adhere to the ritual commands and prohibitions of the *Vedas*. They can fearlessly ignore the apparent good and bad reactions of the work they do only for the Supreme Lord's pleasure, and they can equally ignore whatever others may say about them, whether praise or condemnation. A humble Vaiṣṇava absorbed in the pleasure of *saṅkīrtana*, glorification of the Lord, pays little heed to praise of himself, which he assumes mistaken, and happily accepts all criticism, which he deems appropriate. One receives the authorized chanting of the Supreme Lord's glories by faithfully hearing from "the sons of Manu," the disciplic succession of saintly Vaiṣṇavas coming down through the ages. These sages emulate well the example of Svāyambhuva Manu, the forefather of mankind:

*ayāta-yāmās tasyāsan  
yāmāḥ svāntara-yāpanāḥ  
śṛṇvato dhyāyato viṣṇoḥ  
kurvato bruvataḥ kathāḥ*

"Although Svāyambhuva's life gradually came to an end, his long life, consisting of a *manv-antara* era, was not spent in vain, since he always engaged in hearing, contemplating, writing down and chanting the pastimes of the Lord." (SB 3.22.35)

Even if a neophyte devotee falls from the standards of proper behavior by the force of his past bad habits, the all-merciful Lord will not reject him. As Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa states,

*tair ahaṁ pūjanīyo vai  
bhadrakṛṣṇa-nivāsibhiḥ  
tad-dharma-gati-hīnā ye  
tasyām mayi parāyaṇāḥ*

*kalinā grasitā ye vai  
tesām tasyām avasthiḥ  
yathā tvaṁ saha putraiś ca  
yathā rudro gaṇaiḥ saha*

*yathā śrīyābhiyukto 'ham  
tathā bhakto mama priyaḥ*

"For those who live in Bhadrakṛṣṇa [the district of Mathurā], I am the object of all worship. Even if the residents of that place fail to properly cultivate the religious principles that one should observe in the holy land, they still become devoted to Me just by virtue of living there. Even if Kali [the present age of quarrel] has them in his grip, they still get credit for living in this place. My devotee who lives in Mathurā is just as dear to Me as you [Brahmā] and your sons—Rudra and his followers—and Goddess Śrī and My own self."

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*avagamam tava me diśa mādharma  
sphurati yan na sukhāsukha-saṅgamaḥ  
śravaṇa-varṇana-bhāvam athāpi vā  
na hi bhavāmi yathā vidhi-kiṅkaraḥ*

"O Mādhava, please let Me understand You so that I will no longer experience the entanglement of material pleasure and pain. Or else, just as good, please give me a taste for hearing and chanting about You. In that way I will no longer be a slave to ritual injunctions."

#### TEXT 41

**द्युपतय एव ते न ययुरन्तमनन्ततया  
त्वमपि यदन्तराण्डनिचया ननु सावरणाः  
ख इव रजांसि वान्ति वयसा सह यच्छ्रुतयस्  
त्वयि हि फलन्त्यतन्निरसनेन भवन्निधनाः**

*dyu-pataya eva te na yayur antam anantatayā  
tvam api yad-antarāṇḍa-nicayā nanu sāvaraṇāḥ  
kha iva rajāṁsi vānti vayasā saha yac chrutayas  
tvayi hi phalanty atan-nirasane bhavan-nidhanāḥ*

*dyu*—of heaven; *patayaḥ*—the masters; *eva*—even; *te*—Your; *na yayuḥ*—cannot reach; *antam*—the end; *anantatayā*—because of being

unlimited; *tvam*—You; *āpi*—even; *yat*—whom; *antara*—within; *aṇḍa*—of universes; *nicayāḥ*—multitudes; *nanu*—indeed; *sa*—along with; *āvaranāḥ*—their outer shells; *khe*—in the sky; *iva*—as; *rajāmsi*—particles of dust; *vānti*—blow about; *vayasā saha*—with the wheel of time; *yat*—because; *śrutayaḥ*—the *Vedas*; *tvayi*—in You; *hi*—indeed; *phalanti*—bear fruit; *atat*—of that which is distinct from the Absolute Truth; *nirasanena*—by the elimination; *bhavat*—in You; *nidhanāḥ*—whose ultimate conclusion.

**Because You are unlimited, neither the lords of heaven nor even You Yourself can ever reach the end of Your glories. The countless universes, each enveloped in its shell, are compelled by the wheel of time to wander within You, like particles of dust blowing about in the sky. The *śrutis*, following their method of eliminating everything separate from the Supreme, become successful by revealing You as their final conclusion.**

Now, in their last prayer, the personified *Vedas* draw the conclusion that all *śrutis*, by their various literal and metaphorical references, ultimately describe the Supreme Personality of Godhead's identity, personal qualities and powers. The *Upaniṣads* glorify Him without end: *yad ūrdhvaṁ gārgi divo yad arvāk pṛthivyā yad antarā dyāvā-pṛthivī ime yad bhūtaṁ bhavac ca bhaviṣyac ca*. "My dear daughter of Garga, His greatness encompasses everything above us in heaven, everything below the surface of the earth, everything in between heaven and earth, and everything that has ever existed, exists now or will ever exist." (*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.8.4)

To illuminate the meaning of this final prayer by the *śrutis*, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura presents the following conversation between Lord Nārāyaṇa and the personified *Vedas*: The *Vedas* said, "Lord Brahmā and the other rulers of the heavenly planets have not yet reached the end of Your glories. What can we do, then, since we are insignificant in comparison to these great demigods?"

Lord Nārāyaṇa replied, "No, you *śrutis* are gifted with more sublime vision than the demigods who rule this universe. You will be able to reach the end of My glories if you do not stop now."

"But even You cannot find Your own limit!"

"If that is the case, what do you mean when you call Me omniscient and

omnipotent?"

"We conclude that You possess these features from the very fact that You are limitless. Certainly if one is ignorant of something that does not even exist, like a rabbit's horn, that does not detract from his omniscience, and if one fails to find such a nonentity, that does not limit his omnipotence. You are so vast that multitudes of universes float within You. Each of these universes is surrounded by seven shells composed of the material elements and each of these concentric shells is ten times larger than the one within it. Although we can never fully describe the truth about You, we perfect our existence by declaring that You are the true topic of the *Vedas*."

"But why do you seem dissatisfied?"

"Because in the *Vedas* Śrīla Vyāsadeva has described the transcendental existence of Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān only briefly. When he saw the need to elaborate on his description of the Supreme, he chose to concentrate on the subject of Brahman, the impersonal aspect of the Supreme known as *tat* ("that") explaining Brahman by negating whatever is different from it. Just as in a field where a chest of jewels has been accidentally spilled the jewels can be recovered by removing unwanted stones, twigs and refuse, so within the visible realm of Māyā and her creations the Absolute Truth can be found by a process of elimination. Since we *Vedas* cannot possibly enumerate every material category, individual entity, quality and motion in the universe from the beginning to the end of time and since the truth concerning Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān would still remain untouched even if we described all these things and then discarded them, by this means of investigation we never expect to reach a final definition of You. Only by Your mercy can we make some attempt to approach You, the supremely inaccessible Absolute Truth."

There are many statements of *śruti* that carry on the work of *atan-nirasanam*, the process of distinguishing the Supreme from everything inferior. The *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (3.8.8), for example, states, *asthūlam anaṇu ahrasvam adīrgham alohitam asneham acchāyam atamo 'vāyv anākāśam asaṅgam arasam agandham acakṣuṣkam aśrotram agamano 'tejaskam aprāṇam asukham amātram anantaram abāhyam*. "It is neither big nor small, short nor long, hot nor cool, in shadow nor in

darkness. Nor is it the wind or the ether. It is not in contact with anything, and it has no taste, smell, eyes, ears, motion, potency, life air, pleasure, measurement, inside or outside. "The *Kena Upaniṣad* (3) declares, *anyad eva tad veditād atho aviditād adhi*: "Brahman is distinct from what is known and also from what is yet to be known. " And the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (2.14) says, *anyatra dharmād anyatrādharmād anyatrāsmāt kṛtākṛtāt*: "Brahman is outside the scope of religion and irreligion, pious and impious action."

According to the rules of linguistics and logic, a negation cannot be unbounded: there must be some positive counterpart of which it is the negation. In the case of the *Vedas*' exhaustive *atan-nirasanam*, their denial that anything material is absolutely real, the counterpart is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī prays,

*dyu-patayo vidur antam ananta te  
na ca bhavān na giraḥ śruti-maulayaḥ  
tvayi phalanti yato nama ity ato  
jaya jayeti bhaje tava tat-padam*

"The gods of heaven do not know Your limit, O endless Lord, and even You do not know it. Because the transcendental words of the topmost *śrutis* become fruitful by revealing You, I offer You my obeisances. Thus I worship You as the Absolute Truth, saying 'All glories to You! All glories to You!'"