

BHAKTI YOGA

THE
ALL-ATTRACTIVE
DIVINITY

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SCIENCE
OF KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS



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OF KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

ŚRĪ ŚRĪ GURU GAURĀNGAU JAYATAḤ

THE ALL-ATTRACTIVE DIVINITY

Text Viśākhā devī dāsī

Layout & Design Sudevī dāsī, Ānanda Kṛṣṇa Prabhu

Artwork Devapriya devī dāsī

Editor Suvāsini devī dāsī

First edition: 2024 1000 copies

Second edition: 2025 Digital print with KDP

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ISBN 9798303529533

*Published on the holy appearance day of our beloved Śrī Gurudev,
His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Deva-Goswāmī, 17 December 2024.*

Dedicated to thirsty truth-seekers everywhere

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Preface

Who am I? Why am I here? What is the true goal of life? What happens after death? These are some of the fundamental questions which every thoughtful individual has asked at some point in their life.

The ancient Vedas of India offer a systematic exposition of these subjects which is of unprecedented depth, clarity, and detail. While discussing various conceptions of the goal and various paths of progress, the final Vedic text, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, presents the teachings of Krishna-bhakti, or devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the lovable Personality of Godhead, as the highest attainment.

The All-Attractive Divinity offers a simple introduction to these teachings. We pray it may satisfy the enquiry of all travellers on the path of truth.



THE EMBODIMENT OF LOVE & AFFECTION

ŚRĪLA BHAKTI SUNDAR GOVINDA
DEV-GOSWĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJ



THE GUARDIAN OF DEVOTION

ŚRĪLA BHAKTI RAKṢAK ŚRĪDHAR
DEV-GOSWĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJ

“WE HAVE COME HERE TO GIVE
SOMETHING OF THE ESSENCE OF
WHAT IS ALREADY PRESENT IN
YOUR HEART.”

ŚRĪLA GOVINDA MAHĀRĀJ

“IF ONCE WE CAN MEET OUR
SOUL, THEN A DIAMETRICAL
CHANGE COMES IN OUR LIFE.

AT THAT TIME, WE WILL BE
ASTONISHED TO REALISE,

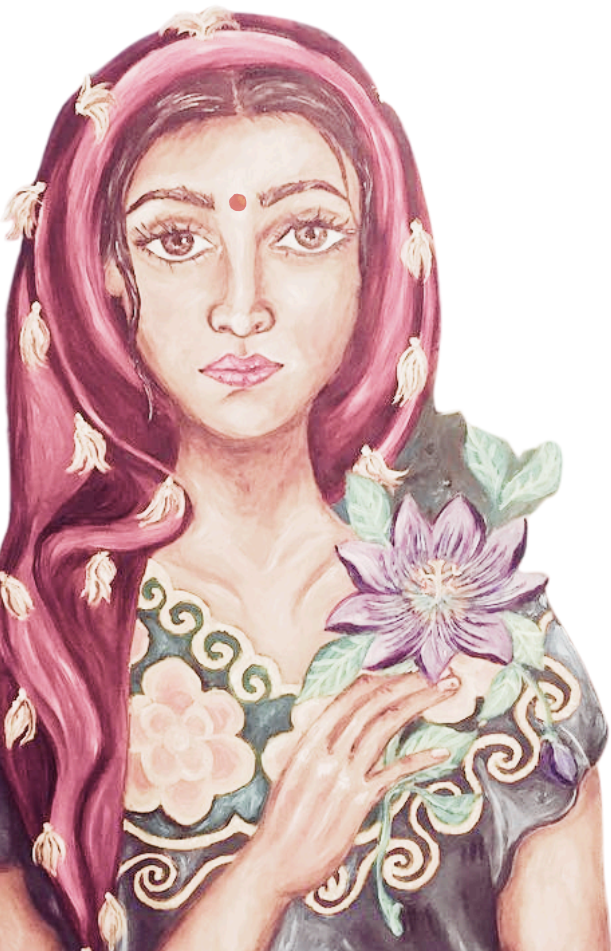
‘OH, SUCH A HIGHLY
QUALIFIED THING IS HERE
WITHIN ME!

WHAT A WONDERFUL
EXISTENCE I HAVE! IN
REALITY I AM SOUL, AND THE
NATURE OF THE SOUL IS SO
NOBLE, SO HIGH, SO GOOD.’”

ŚRĪLA ŚRĪDHAR MAHĀRĀJ

PART I.

Who am I?



The Search for Truth

We live in a world of partial truths. Who and what we identify with is generally based on a combination of environmental factors: appearance, race, nationality, culture, economic status, gender, and so on. By the movement of time, society, and our own inner thought, the relevance of these conceptions of identity may change radically at different periods in our lives. Furthermore, by the very nature of this circumstantial truth that we identify with, we are often in conflict with one another. The question may arise, is there one permanent truth which is relevant to us all, at all times and in all circumstances? Is there a stable plane of absolute truth which we can grasp hold of? Or is our life to be ruled by nothing more than a jumble of temporary, relative truths?

Limited Senses

In our search for truth the first stumbling block is that our senses are extremely limited. It is a known scientific fact that humans perceive less than 0.1 percent of the total electromagnetic spectrum. Many animals perceive a much broader range of light and sound than we can. Dolphins, for example, can hear a vastly broader spectrum of frequencies and owls have clear vision in the darkness of night. If we hope to approach a plane that is imperceptible to our physical senses, we will naturally feel the need to seek out guidance from a higher source.

The Ancient Veda

Throughout the ages, seekers of spiritual knowledge have found unsurpassed quality, detail, and nourishment in the Vedic scriptures of ancient India. The renowned scholar Max Muller commented, “If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions, I should point to India.”¹

1. *India: What Can It Teach Us?* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), 24.

The existence of the subtle spirit and life beyond death is a truth affirmed by many religions and philosophical systems. None, however, elaborate upon the topic with such clear and systematic detail as is found in the Veda. The nature of the soul and the coverings that obscure it at present, and the process of the soul's transmigration as well as its means of liberation, are all discussed at length.

The Science of the Self

In *Bhagavad-gītā*, the famous Vedic treatise on yoga, it is described that there are eight layers which cover the soul in its conditioned state.

**bhūmir āpo 'nalo vāyuḥ kham mano buddhir eva cha
ahankāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā**

(7.4)

“Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence, and ego are the eight divisions of My material energy in this world.”

Earlier in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.42) there is a helpful verse which guides us to identify these different layers within ourselves:

**indriyāṇi parāṇy ahur indriyebhyaḥ param manah
manasas tu parā buddhir buddher yaḥ paratas tu saḥ**

“It is said by the wise that the senses are superior to matter, the mind is superior to the senses, and the intelligence is superior to the mind; and the soul is superior to even the intelligence.”

If we simply sit quietly with ourselves and try to detect the different urges and tendencies which play out in our consciousness, we will recognise the distinction between each.

On the lowest level is gross matter which is an object to our senses. The various sense objects represent stimuli to the most superficial layer of our existence—the senses of touch, taste, smell, sound, and sight. The senses are just like blind instruments which collect information from our immediate environment.

After collecting this information, the senses deliver it to the mind, which represents the seat of all sense experience. The information collected by the senses, however, may or may not register, depending on how ‘mindful’ we are at the moment that the information is deposited. For example, we may sometimes experience

that if we are intensely absorbed in a particular thought process, emotional state, or simply an activity of some kind, we do not register heat or cold, certain sounds, and so on. Someone may shout our name but because our mind is absorbed elsewhere, it won't register.

The mind's main function is purely binary: to accept or reject based on individual likes or dislikes. The mind likes to make distinctions between friends and enemies, to dictate our diet based upon what is pleasing or displeasing, and so on. The mind is concerned with instant gratification.

Superior to the mind is the intellect, which has the power of discernment. The intellect has the ability to reason and analyse. The intellect is capable of impartial analysis and can appreciate finer points. The intellect may advise a course of action which is not agreeable to the mind, but is in the interest of our long-term benefit or for the greater good. The intellect will encourage a lifestyle and diet which is healthy and beneficial for us, although not necessarily offering immediate pleasure to the senses.

Most subtle and insidious of the material layers which cover the soul is the ego, *ahankāra*. Because it is so subtle it is very difficult to identify within us. The *ahankāra* is concerned with conceptions of ‘I’, ‘me’ and ‘mine’. “I am American, African, Chinese, French, Indian, Japanese, Mexican. I am rich, poor, intelligent, stupid, beautiful, ugly. I am a politician, bus driver, actor, model, teacher. I have worked very hard, have created this, have built that, did this, done that. And because I have done this, this belongs to *me* and is *mine*.” It is the ego which is responsible for all these conceptions of identity and ownership. In reality, these conceptions of ‘I’ have no firm footing because they are temporary and have no connection with our identity as eternal spirit souls. Furthermore, as finite beings of limited power, all we can actually do is *will* for any particular action to take place. Whether or not that actually manifests depends on whether the environment, our own faculties, and ultimately the divine sanction, cooperate with that will.

This ego creates various filters which distort and prejudice our view of the environment and the various

circumstances which surround us. We also tend to group with those who have similar world views, which reinforces these filters.

In the scripture *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* a helpful analogy is given which explains the relationship between the soul and its various coverings in the conditioned state.

**na rarājoḍupaś chhanna sva-jyotsnā-rājitair ghanaiḥ
aham-matyā bhāsitayā sva-bhāsā puruṣo yathā**

(10.20.19)

“During the rainy season the moon was prevented from appearing directly by the covering of the clouds, which were themselves illumined by the moon’s rays. Similarly, the living being in material existence is prevented from appearing directly by the covering of the ego, which is itself illumined by the consciousness of the pure soul.”

It is quite a curious situation that we find ourselves in: we cannot see the soul because it is obscured by these material layers, and yet at the same time we can only experience the reality of these layers because of the illuminating and activating presence of the soul in the background.

The Bewilderment Factor

There is another factor that is key to understanding our predicament at present: the sheath of illusion, or *māyā*, which bewilders us and obscures our vision. Because of this energy, we are satisfied with a very meagre conception of happiness and do not have a clear perception of our actual condition. As an extreme example: worms living in stool feel relatively satisfied with their circumstances. Similarly, although we are eternal souls and have the potential of a life of unending, infinite bliss, we happily settle for the limited, temporary, and troublesome joys of the senses.

Māyā has another function which further challenges us: to divert us from our spiritual goal. Even if we have a spiritual awakening and try to move towards our higher prospect, the illusory energy of *māyā* will send a diversion to take us away from the path. This may seem cruel but it is actually a test to strengthen our spiritual resolve.

The Nature of the Soul

Once we can get past the obstacle course of the illusory environment, we will come in touch with the glorious nature of our own soul. It is said that the *ātmā* (soul) is composed of three elements—*sat*, *chit*, and *ānanda*, or eternity, consciousness, and bliss. The *ātmā* also has the faculties of willing, thinking, and feeling. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.20) it is further described,

**na jāyate mriyate vā kadāchin
nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yaṁ purāṇo
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre**

“The soul is neither born nor dies; it has neither been nor will it be created, because it is unborn and eternal. It is ever-youthful, yet ancient. It is not destroyed when the body is destroyed.”

How does death fit into all of this? That fearsome, destructive, and all-powerful force which has baffled humankind since time immemorial is compared to a simple change in dress in *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.22).

**vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni gr̥hṇāti naro 'parāṇi
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāny
anyāni samyāti navāni dehī**

“As a person adopts new garments, discarding those that are old and worn, similarly, the soul continues to adopt new bodies, leaving those that are old and useless.”

Now that we have understood our identity as soul, how can that actually be realised? By what process and what mode of life can that be awakened? Furthermore, how does this fit in to the greater order of things? Is there something greater than ourselves in our spiritual state? If we achieve liberation from mundanity, what is our purpose and natural function as spirit souls? Let's say we're liberated—then what?



“IN THE MUNDANE PLANE,
EVERY UNIT WANTS TO EXPLOIT
THE ENVIRONMENT, WHEREAS
IN THE PLANE OF DEDICATION
EVERY UNIT WANTS TO SERVE
THE ENVIRONMENT; THE REAL
KEY TO THE LIFE OF THAT
PLANE IS TO SERVE THE CENTRE.
WE ARE LIVING IN AN ORGANIC
WHOLE, SO EVERY POINT MUST
BE TRUE TO
THE ORGANIC CENTRE.”

ŚRĪLA ŚRĪDHAR MAHĀRĀJ

PART 2.

The Way



The Failure of Selfishness

If we make an impartial analysis of the different ideals of life presented to us by society and religion, we will observe that there are three main modes of living. The most common and widespread is that of selfishness and exploitation. This is something that pervades our ordinary day-to-day lives of seeking higher and higher levels of comfort and enjoyment, but it is also a major motivating factor in spiritual practice. Think about it: “Oh God, please help me win the lottery”; “Please give me the partner of my dreams”; “Please help me pass my exams”; “Please give me a Mercedes-Benz”.

These statements may not even sound strange because we are so conditioned by this way of thinking. So, let’s deconstruct this mentality. First of all, this whole approach is based on one faulty premise: that we are at the centre of the universe and everything revolves around us. This just isn’t the case. We live in an

organic, interconnected whole. It's an ecosystem. Any organism which prioritises one unit over another is an unhealthy one. If one entity acts solely for its own good, other entities will suffer. In a society that encourages individual success, the triumph of one can only be at the expense of others. In such a society, everyone naturally has clashing goals and there will inevitably be friction to varying degrees. When 'I', 'me', and 'mine' is the modus operandi of a society, there will be conflict and the most extreme expression of that is all-out war.

The Law of Karma

Newton said it best: to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. In a system that prioritises success of the individual over that of the collective, there must be a regulating force to make sure things don't get out of hand. To fulfil this need in our societies we establish morals and codes of conduct, and form laws and governing bodies to enforce them. But Nature has her own regulating force, and that is what's called the law of karma. Simply put, when we choose to act

independently out of our own interest, we become responsible for the consequences of our actions. Why? Because we are acting outside of the welfare of the Whole. If we act in the interest of a higher entity, however, that entity will take full responsibility for our action. Even common society applies this principle across different spheres of life. The law of karma thus only becomes activated when we act in a spirit of selfishness, or in any way that is in friction with the Whole.

As a side note, we can mention here transmigration and rebirth: in order to fulfil the complex web of our karma, we need to take birth again and again in different species and planes of life, sometimes experiencing joy, sometimes sorrow.

Taking all of this into consideration, it is logical to conclude that the pursuit of selfish enjoyment is not sustainable and only leads to unhappy consequences.

The Dryness of Renunciation

Realising that a life of mundane enjoyment is *a)* based on the faulty premise of misidentification with the body and *b)* full of negative consequences, there are those who turn to renunciation. “I will reject the body and all associated pleasures and take refuge in my identity as spirit.” “Since desire is the source of all trouble I will reject desire and enter the void.” There are various schools of thought that form different ideologies based on this conception, and strive for either *mokṣa*, liberation, or *nirvāṇa*, extinction.

If we deconstruct this approach, however, we will again find that it is not sustainable. First of all, renunciation is a reactive mode of being. “I gorged myself on pizza and now I’m going to fast.” Renunciation does not reflect a wholesome and integrated way of interacting with our environment. Secondly, even if our renunciation is not reactive and is based solely on appreciation for our nature as spirit, it is ultimately dry and does not fulfil our need for *rasa*, or ecstatic joy.

raso vai saḥ

rasam hy evāyam labdhvānandī bhavati

(Taittirīya Upaniṣad: 2.7)

“The Spirit is of the nature of rasa, and only by attaining rasa does one become joyful.”

Ānanda, joy, is a component of the soul, and by nature we also seek a greater source of that joy outside of ourselves. In our conditioned state we direct that search to the finite objects of enjoyment around us, but this inevitably frustrates us because the thirst of spirit can never be fulfilled by matter.

A Happy, Wholesome Life of Dedication

We can see clues pointing to the natural and happy order of things in the natural environment and cycles that surround us. If we observe how an ecosystem runs, we see that it consists of so many units making their individual contribution for the good of the Whole. If we look at a healthy body, we see that it operates as an organism with the contribution of various interdependent parts working together harmoniously for

T H E A L L - A T T R A C T I V E D I V I N I T Y

their common wellbeing.

The environment is not to be exploited or renounced, but it is to be approached in a spirit of dedication. It is only in such a life of dedication that all our needs and wants are harmoniously fulfilled. Desire is not to be rejected, but simply redirected. Beauty, love, pleasure, and joy are not to be sought after in a selfish spirit, nor to be renounced, but they are to be appreciated and served in connection with their divine source. We will experience a radical change in our lives when we approach our environment in this spirit of dedication. When we recognise a higher centre than ourselves, live in a spirit of offering, and move in consonance with the higher purpose and flow of the environment, we enter a plane of absolute harmony.



“WHEN THE SUPREME IS FAR
AWAY AND HIS QUALITIES
CANNOT BE SEEN, HE IS
KNOWN AS THE EFFULGENT
IMPERSONAL BRAHMAN. WHEN
HE ENTERS THE HEART AND
STANDS BEFORE ONE’S EYES HE
IS KNOWN AS KRISHNA.”

ŚRĪLA BHAKTIVINOD ṬHĀKUR

PART 3.

The Goal



Three Conceptions of the Absolute

So I get that I am an eternal soul, I get that my natural function is to serve and to love, but this is all still a little vague. And what is this Centre anyway? Who or what is this supreme entity that I am supposed to dedicate myself to?

The Vedas describe three main conceptions of the Absolute: Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavān.

Greater than the Greatest

yasya prabhā prabhavato jagad-aṅḍa-koṭi-
koṭiṣv aśeṣa-vasudhādi vibhūti-bhinnaṃ
tad brahma niṣkalam anantaṃ aśeṣa-bhūtaṃ
govindam ādi-puruṣaṃ tam ahaṃ bhajāmi

(Śrī Brahma-saṃhitā: 5.40)

“I serve Govinda, the original Lord, whose illustrious bodily effulgence is the origin of the indivisible, inconceivable, and unlimited Brahman, within which innumerable universes filled with

unlimitedly variegated creations and opulences exist.”

The first phase of the Absolute which is discussed most widely in the Vedas is known as Brahman. *Bṛhatvāt bṛmhaṇatvāt iti brahma*: that which is the greatest and is always becoming greater is Brahman. Brahman is an impersonal manifestation of the Divine which is formless and without distinct characteristics or qualities. Brahman can be conceived of as an expansive, conscious light which encompasses everything in existence. Everything is floating within Brahman.

The Supreme Soul

**upadraṣṭānumantā cha bhartā bhoktā maheśvara
paramātmēti chāpy ukto dehe ’smin puruṣaḥ para
(Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā: 13.23)**

“The Supreme Person—the witness, sanctioner, support, guardian, and almighty Lord within this body, is known as Paramātmā, the Supersoul.”

The second phase of the Absolute described in the Veda is Paramātmā, or ‘supreme soul’. As Brahman is bigger than the biggest, so Paramātmā is smaller than the

smallest. As Brahman is all-encompassing, so Paramātmā is all-penetrating.

Paramātmā is present within every atom and also resides within the heart of every living entity as a sustaining life force. Paramātmā also acts as a witness of all the activity of each soul and is involved in dispensing the karma of every living being.

Paramātmā may be considered more developed than Brahman because Paramātmā has a distinct form. However, Paramātmā does not have much personality and so our intrinsic need for loving exchange cannot be satisfied in connection with this manifestation of the Absolute.

God the Person

**aiśvaryasya samagrasya vīryasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ
jñāna-vairāgyayoś chaiva ṣaṅṅāṁ bhaga itīṅana**

(Viṣṇu-purāṇa: 6.5.47)

“He who is full with all the six opulences of wealth, power, fame beauty, knowledge, and renunciation is known as Bhagavān, the Supreme Lord.”

And then we come to Bhagavān: God the person, a manifestation of the Absolute with whom we can have a loving relationship. One of the significant points about Bhagavān is that there is the presence of both the male aspect of the Divinity—*śaktimān*—as well as the female aspect—*śakti*. They are worshipped as two parts of one whole. Bhagavān is God enriched by His Śakti and in full possession of all good qualities.

Bhagavān is not limited to one being. The Vedas describe many manifestations of the Supreme Being as Bhagavān: Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇ, Rāma, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, and Paraśurām, to name but a few. However, according to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the concluding Vedic text, amongst all these different forms of Bhagavān, there is also Svayam Bhagavān, the original Bhagavān and source of all other Bhagavāns: Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of love and play.

The All-Attractive Divinity

Kṛṣṇa's special quality is that He is supremely attractive. One meaning of the word Kṛṣṇa is 'to attract' (*ākaraṣaṇa kare*) and 'give joy' (*ānanda dāna*). This is a revolutionary

conception of God-worship.

At the highest level, Kṛṣṇa is worshipped out of spontaneous attraction of the heart. Kṛṣṇa's closest devotees do not worship Him with the awareness that He is God; rather they adore Him, love Him, and serve Him simply because He is so irresistibly attractive (*bhajanīya-guṇa-viśiṣṭa*).

The Human-Like Play of the Sweet Absolute

kṛṣṇera yateka khelā, sarvottama nara-lilā,
 nara-vapu tāhāra svarūpa
 gopa-veśa, veṇu-kara, nava-kiśora, naṭa-vara,
 nara-lilāra haya anurūpa
 kṛṣṇera madhura rūpa, śuna, sanātana
 ye rūpera eka kaṇa, dubāya saba tribhuvana,
 sarva prāṇī kare ākarṣaṇa

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta: 2.21.101–102)

“The best of all of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes are His human-like Pastimes. His human-like form is His original form. His cowherd-boy dress, flute-playing, adolescence, and superb dancing perfectly suit His human-like Pastimes. Please hear of Kṛṣṇa’s charming form! One drop of its beauty floods the whole of the three worlds

and attracts every living entity within them.”

Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* (divine play) is bewildering. Rather than appearing in an overtly god-like position, He poses as an ordinary young boy living in a rural village of dairy farmers. Rather than emanating power and majesty, Kṛṣṇa appears as a charming, unassuming and playful boy who is surrounded by parents, friends, relatives, and lovers. According to conventional logic this may be difficult to understand. According to the science of love and relationships and the nature of joy and fulfilment, however, Kṛṣṇa makes perfect sense. With Kṛṣṇa's divinity hidden and eclipsed by His beauty and charm, love is able to have its full expression. Otherwise, love and intimacy are inhibited by awe and reverence.

It may seem odd that God would have parents, since logically speaking, as the supreme being, He could not have any origin or cause beyond Himself. Yet if we appreciate this as a posing, made in order to expand the variety and intensity of loving relationships, the set-up makes perfect sense.

T H E G O A L

We are accustomed to the notion of ‘God the father’, an almighty being who cares for us and provides for all our needs. If we examine this conception more closely, we will see that it relegates God to a position on the circumference: we are in the centre, enjoying God’s bounty, while He tends to our every whim from the sidelines.

In the Kṛṣṇa conception of divinity, this is all flipped around. Here, God is in the centre and just positioned so as to be able to enjoy the greatest spectrum of loving relationships at the greatest degree of intensity. In the posture of a beautiful adolescent youth, Kṛṣṇa is surrounded on all sides by guardians, siblings, friends, and lovers and is thus able to satisfy both Himself and His beloved devotees to the utmost.

If we can appreciate love, and not power, as the supreme force in existence, then Kṛṣṇa’s *aprākṛta-līlā*, human-like play, makes perfect sense.



“SOUND VIBRATION CAN
WORK MIRACLES; SOUND
HAS THE HIGHEST
CAPTURING POTENCY.
SOUND CAN MAKE OR MAR.
IT CAN DO ANYTHING; IT
HAS SUCH INTRINSIC
CAPACITY. IT COMES FROM
THE SUBTLEMOST PLANE,
BEYOND THE ETHER.”

ŚRĪLA ŚRĪDHAR MAHĀRĀJ

PART 4.

*Liberation
through sound*



The Age of Quarrel

The Vedas describe that the mundane world moves continually through a cycle of creation, maintenance, and destruction. During the extent of any period of existence, there is additionally a cycle of four revolving ages that move from more evolved to more degraded conditions. According to the nature and capacity of the people in any given age, the Vedas prescribe an appropriate practice.

At present, the Vedas tell us, we are near the beginning of the final, and most degraded age: Kali Yuga, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy. Because of the degenerate, distracting, and polluted nature of this age, the Vedas prescribe the most simple and accessible of all spiritual practices: glorifying and calling upon the Divine through the medium of sound.

**kaler doṣa-nidhe rājann
asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ
kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya
mukta-saṅgaḥ param vrajet**

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: 12.3.51)

“Although this age of Kali is an ocean of faults, it has one great quality: simply through chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, one can become liberated from material bondage and attain the supreme destination.”

Kīrtan: Sacred Chanting

Of the nine practices described as being the most helpful to the cultivation of bhakti, devotion, kīrtan is considered to be supreme. In particular the *mahāmantra* or supreme mantra expressing a prayer to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the divine feminine and masculine moieties, is of great value:

**hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa, kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma, rāma rāma hare hare**

Kīrtan is a natural, joyful expression of praise and loving appreciation for our divine source, from which

all the beauty, wonder, and glory of this world has manifested. Kīrtan is unique in that it does not require any special knowledge or ability and also transcends caste, creed, and culture, or any other designations drawn from this limited world. Kīrtan brings persons of vastly differing backgrounds together in expressing their mutual appreciation for the Divine.

Golden Gift of the Golden Lord

**ānanda-lilāmaya-vigrahāya
hemābha-divya-chchhavi-sundarāya
tasmai mahāprema-rasa-pradāya
chaitanyachandrāya namo namaste**

(Śrī Chaitanya-chandrāmṛta)

“To the embodiment of ecstatic Pastimes, to the divine, splendorous golden personification of beauty, to the giver of the nectar of the highest divine love, to the moon Śrī Chaitanya, I bow again and again.”

The modern-day Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was inaugurated by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, who appeared around 500 years ago in West Bengal, India.

Known to some as a saint, and others as a social revolutionary, members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement recognise Lord Chaitanya as a descent of the original divinity, Kṛṣṇa Himself, under the influence of His divine feminine potency Śrī Rādhā. With a great spirit of magnanimity, Śrī Chaitanya travelled widely throughout India spreading the practice of kīrtan. Disregarding the social caste system of India, Lord Chaitanya embraced all under the banner of divine love.

While the Vedas widely discuss the subjects of *dharma* (duty or piety), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (pleasure), and *mokṣa* (liberation) as the four ends of human existence, Chaitanyadev pointed out a fifth end of life also discussed in the Veda, which represents the ultimate need of every soul, even in and beyond the liberated state: *prema*, divine love. We are told that *prema* is actually inherent to every soul, and through devotional practice and saintly association, it will gradually manifest.

Of special note is a short composition known as Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam, which Śrī Chaitanya personally penned, expounding upon the nature and glories of kīrtan.

**cheto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam
śreyah-kairava-chandrikā-vitaranam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-wardhanam prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam
sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam**

(Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam: verse 1)

“The holy name of Kṛṣṇa cleanses the mirror of the heart and extinguishes the fire of misery in the forest of birth and death. As the evening lotus blooms in the moon’s cooling rays the heart begins to blossom in the nectar of the Name. And at last the soul awakens to its real inner treasure—a life of love with Kṛṣṇa. Again and again tasting nectar the soul dives and surfaces in the ever-increasing ocean of ecstatic joy. All phases of the self of which we may conceive are fully satisfied and purified and at last conquered by the all-auspicious influence of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.”



“HERE IS LOVE, AFFECTION,
BEAUTY, CHARM, ECSTASY AND
ETERNITY. THAT DIVINE NAME
IS PUSHING YOUR DOOR: OPEN
YOUR DOOR AND RECEIVE
THAT DIVINE NAME IN YOUR
HEART.”

ŚRĪLA GOVINDA MAHĀRĀJ



SRI CHAITANYA SARASWAT MATH



THE HOME OF PURE DEVOTION

The mission Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh was founded in 1942 by Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj in Śrī Nabadwīp Dhām, West Bengal, India, the holy birthplace of Lord Chaitanya. Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj was a pre-eminent disciple of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur, the great spiritual revolutionary who brought about a renaissance of Lord Chaitanya's movement in India in the early 1900s.

Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāj, known for his profound scriptural knowledge, authentic spiritual nature, and deep intelligence, began his mission with the vision of providing a sanctuary for those earnestly seeking truth at the highest level, free from any



charm for worldly attainments or adulterated spiritual conceptions.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj's beloved disciple and associate was the exalted Śrīla Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswāmī Mahārāj. Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj joined his guru's ashram as a seventeen-year-old boy in 1947, and it was he who realised Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj's vision and later went on to expand the mission and spread its glories.

Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāj Prabhupād, the great pioneer of the Krishna consciousness movement in the West and founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, was a close associate of both Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj and Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj. On one occasion Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj publicly remarked that he considered Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj to be his *śikṣā-guru* (instructing guru) and Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj his dearest son.

In 1986, two years before Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj's departure from this world, he firmly established Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj as his illustrious successor. During the 1990s and early 2000s Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj travelled extensively across the globe and thousands of persons from all walks of life, attracted by his potent spiritual presence and deeply loving nature, came to him for connection and shelter.

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj left this world in 2010. His divine legacy continues today through his devoted followers, his talks, and his books.

Further reading

Some of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's books

Affectionate Guidance

Dignity of the Divine Servitor

Divine Guidance

The Divine Servitor

Golden Reflections

In Search of the Original Source

Religion of the Heart

Revealed Truth

Some of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj's books

The Golden Volcano of Divine Love

Heart and Halo

Home Comfort

Inner Fulfilment

Loving Search for the Lost Servant

Search for Sri Krishna, Reality the Beautiful

Subjective Evolution — The Play of the Sweet Absolute

Sri Guru & His Grace

Further links

For more information on the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, our gurus, and our worldwide community, please visit:

govindanet.com

introductory content

premadharma.org

articles and an online library

gaudiyadarshan.com

online bookstore and articles

scsmath.com

official website of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh

*For further enquiries please contact **jayasri.org@gmail.com***



The All-Attractive Divinity is by Viśākhā devī dāsī, a brahmachārīṇī (celibate monk) disciple of Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj. Viśākhā grew up in a Vaishnava family in the West and later moved to India where she lived for ten years hearing and serving under Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj's divine guidance. Viśākhā currently travels the world sharing the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

“THE INNERMOST HANKERING OF
EVERY LIVING SOUL IS FOR
BEAUTY, LOVE, AFFECTION, AND
HARMONY; NOT FOR POWER,
KNOWLEDGE, OR ANYTHING
ELSE. THIS IS THE DIAGNOSIS OF
THE WHOLE CREATION IN TIME
AND SPACE: THEIR COMMON
CAUSE IS ONE.”

ŚRĪLA ŚRĪDHAR MAHĀRĀJ

