

Thirty-one Days to Salvation on the Vedic Path

Put together with commentary
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This booklet is based on some of the essential verses of the *Bhagavad-gita* and clearly helps show how easy and simple this path can be. By taking one lesson a day and adding the recommended principles and characteristics to your life, by the end of 31 days, as long as you do not give up the spiritual principles you have accepted, you will have most everything you need to reach salvation, or *moksha* as it is called in Sanskrit, which means liberation from material existence through enlightenment. That is the main point: do not give up the spiritual assets that you have acquired for spiritual liberation through these instructions. This booklet is meant for free distribution for the advancement of Santana-dharma, the eternal and universal spiritual path meant for everyone. Please email or send this booklet to all who may be able to use it, distribute it, or be assisted by it.

All verses that are included are taken from the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* by Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

This HTML version of this booklet, along with much more spiritual information, is freely available from the website: <http://stephenknapp.info> or www.stephen-knapp.com.

A formatted version of this booklet in Microsoft Word, which can be used for mass printing or reformatting for one's own needs, is also available and can be emailed to you by emailing your request to: Srinandan@aol.com.

Introduction

Some of the greatest spiritual books in the world and deepest spiritual instructions are those in the Vedic literature. And the essence of the Vedic path, which many also call Hinduism, are the *Upanishads*, the *Vedanta Sutras*, and especially the *Bhagavad-gita*. The *Bhagavad-gita* contains the most important teachings of Lord Krishna and the foundation of Vedic wisdom. Therefore, we will take

some of the essential verses from the *Bhagavad-gita* and show a 31-day course of action that leads to salvation, or *moksha* as it is called in Sanskrit. This means liberation from material existence which takes us back to the Kingdom of God. This path is for anyone, and will certainly lead you to a new and exciting life.

As you proceed through this booklet you will see how God is your friend who cares about you and wants you to understand this knowledge about your spiritual identity and your eternal, loving relationship with Him.

Sometimes in this world you may have felt hopeless, depressed, or overwhelmed with the sorrow that is often seen in this troubled land, or even unsure of yourself and what path you should take. But God wants you to rise up out of that mindset of darkness and come back to Him. And you can do that in this life, right now. In understanding and pursuing the Vedic path of spirituality, I wanted to show how simple yet deep and profound it can be. So this booklet will help inspire and guide you through a progressive month of reflection and advancement to spiritual liberation.

By following these simple instructions for the next 31 days, one lesson each day, you will be relieved of so much confusion about life and will attain a high level of peace and clarity. You will see that reaching God is not difficult. This can and will change your life. It is simple, easy, and requires no money. You can do it alone, or with friends and family. Reviving your connection with the loving God Krishna will be a most fulfilling experience. It can fill the emptiness in your life.

Lord Krishna has always been your friend, waiting for you to turn toward Him. And now is your chance to reawaken your awareness of your true spiritual nature and how you are always connected with Him. This is your destiny. This is what your life was meant for. And now is your chance to open the door to that rare and special destiny. This is God's message to you just as He spoke this message to Arjuna, another friend of His in the *Bhagavad-gita*. You simply have to be open to the message.

If you have questions as you go through this booklet, then ask the person who gave this to you, or go to your local temple, or write to us through our email. We will do whatever we can to help you. Remember, you are not alone. We are all friends and equal in the vision of God.

Use this short booklet to start your daily morning meditations or prayers, or quiet times of reflection. Take a day to contemplate each point and to make the necessary change for spiritual progress. This does not mean that merely by reading this you will attain liberation, but if you add the attributes or activities that are suggested in the verses, and seriously keep them in your life and continue practicing them, then by the time you finish this course you will have most everything you need to attain *moksha*. Also, get a copy of the *Bhagavad-gita*, if you do not already have one, to continue your studies and spiritual advancement. Use this booklet as often as you want for introspection on yourself and to see how far you have progressed, or to continue your steady advancement toward liberation from material existence and your return to the spiritual world. You will see that the spiritual strata is much closer than you think.

DAY ONE: BEGINNING YOUR NEW LIFE

“In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear.” (*Bg.2.40*)

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One of the most important things to understand is that a little progress on the spiritual path is eternal. It stays with you forever. It is not like material or bodily development that lasts a short time, or, if you're lucky, as long as you keep your body. For example, you may work so hard saving money for a nice vacation, but however pleasant or adventurous your trip may be, your money will be spent afterwards and when you return you will have to start saving your money again.

Or you may study for a great career, and even get started working in the field of your choice, only to find that as the world changes, your occupation is no longer needed so much. Or you get laid off from your job. Then you have to start something new.

Or you may have had a most pleasant life, surrounded by wife and family, living in a beautiful house and so on, but then the time comes when you get old and sickly and then you die, forcing you to leave everything you had. No one wants this, but this is the nature of material existence, where change is the only constant, whether it is wanted or not. It is forced on you.

However, whatever spiritual advancement you make never dwindles, nor changes or becomes lost. Even if you make only a little advancement in your life, it stays with you to be picked up and added to in your next life. Plus, it will naturally keep you moving forward lifetime after lifetime. That way after death you will not enter any dark areas or hellish situations. You are protected. And where we go after death is a foremost concern of many people as they get old and decrepit. But no such fear need exist for one who follows this spiritual path.

DAY TWO: WHY BE ABSORBED IN GOD?

“Being freed from attachment, fear and anger, being fully absorbed in Me and taking refuge in Me, many, many persons in the past became purified by knowledge of Me—and thus they all attained transcendental love for Me.” (*Bg.4.10*)

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While beginning the path of spiritual knowledge, a person may wonder what is so special about it. Why try to be absorbed in God? Does it actually work? But herein Lord Krishna explains that this process is not new. There have been numerous persons in the past who have been successful. Of course, we may hear of the *acharyas* and spiritual teachers who have attained success and who have provided their teachings for others. But there are so many simple people who have been successful and returned to the spiritual domain that we have never heard of at all. And you may be next.

So we should have no doubt that if we really want to attain success on the path, this process of genuine spiritual knowledge and devotion to God is the easiest and most direct, which will be explained further as we move through this course. This knowledge and process will help you to understand God. By such insights and realizations many, many people have attained such spiritual fortune. Therefore, we need to pick up our enthusiasm to move forward knowing that we are following a path that many others have already traveled to the ultimate success in life.

DAY THREE: HAVE FAITH AND KEEP WALKING IN THE LIGHT

“But ignorant and faithless persons who doubt the revealed scriptures do not attain God consciousness. For the doubting soul there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next.” (*Bg.4.40*)

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The start of something new always requires faith, no matter whether it is starting a new job, moving to a new location, getting married, etc. We have to have faith that it will work to our benefit. But in this case we know that by pursuing the spiritual path, it will make positive differences and improvements in our life, in our consciousness, and even in the world. This is the long-term goal and award--attaining God consciousness.

Of course, as it is said in the above verse, for those who have no faith and who doubt the advice in words of God in the revealed scriptures attain neither God consciousness nor real happiness. The point is that happiness itself must come from within. There is no external or bodily activity that will bring happiness if you do not already have some joy in your heart. Naturally, some

bodily activities may bring some pleasure, excitement or thrills, but they will not invoke a deep feeling of fulfillment if they do not affect you on a higher spiritual level. In fact, most bodily acts simply give you something to do while time slips away. They are like diversionary tactics that keep your mind and body occupied while time goes by.

Naturally, we do have to expect that there will be those who doubt the revealed scriptures or the instructions of God. But we have to look at them with sympathy because experience has shown many times that individuals who are dedicated to that which gives little else but temporary pleasure are often left with feeling less than fulfilled. They may even be disappointed, cynical or even lost in life, though they may not admit it. So we do not want to take such a road.

However, while traveling and walking in the light of spiritual awareness means that whatever you do will bring higher and deeper levels of joy and happiness. As we continue to walk the spiritual path, everything will get clearer. The point is that beauty and happiness are already within you. You are a creation of the source of all beauty and joy. The spiritual path merely reveals the inner and spiritual you, and relieves you of the mistake of identifying with the excess complications or illusory drama that goes on around us. This sort of experience increases our faith since it is the result of our dedication and witnessing what can happen in our own life by taking these instructions seriously.

DAY FOUR: TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE, THE WAY TO PEACE AND CLARITY

“In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge. Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism. And one who has achieved this enjoys the self within himself in due course of time.” (*Bg.4.38*)

“The sages, knowing Me as the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attain peace from the pangs of material miseries.” (*Bg.5.29*)

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Knowledge is the essence of power, the motivator for change and development. And spiritual knowledge is from the power of light. It can put you in touch with your higher Self up to the point of perceiving the existence of the Supreme, if used properly.

Knowledge is also the awareness of the purpose of life. And the above verses point out that the wise sages who know that the ultimate purpose is to understand our spiritual identity and God, attain the supreme peace, and engage all their activities for progressing toward that goal. This is to uncover ourselves from the illusion or *maya*, which hides the reality of our spiritual essence. This is one of the main things that spiritual knowledge can do for us.

Therefore, following in the footsteps of the sages, we can enter the sublime peace by utilizing transcendental knowledge to perceive our real self and to understand the ultimate goal of life. Then we can enjoy our higher selves that are within this body, and deeper than the mind, and eternally connected with the Supreme Being. This perception is what actually reveals the true purpose of human existence and brings peace from the complexities of material life.

This is the importance of cultivating our understanding of transcendental knowledge and its difference from material knowledge and education. Real education is not merely a matter of gaining some craft or skill, like becoming an artist, or car mechanic, or even a doctor or computer technician. Real education is that which unveils who we are and what is the spiritual dimension. This is what shows how this material life of ours is only a lightning flash when compared to the eternity of our soul's existence. That is what we need to perceive. That is why it is said:

“This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed.” (*Bg.9.2*)

DAY FIVE: WHY THIS KNOWLEDGE IS GIVEN TO YOU

“This very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend; therefore you can understand the transcendental mystery of this science.” (*Bg.4.3*)

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One thing for sure is that if you are here reading this, *you are alive*. And if you are alive, then you are here for a purpose. You are special. You are not an accident. You are a spiritual being in a material body. You are a product of God’s intention. You are a spiritual part of God and have every chance of regaining that awareness and realization. When we raise our awareness above the level of ordinary activities, free from mental and sensual influences, then we can get a glimpse of that reality which makes it clear that we are spiritual in nature, above all the mundane things that go on all around us. The reality is that you are actually connected directly to God, if you can only be aware of it.

Furthermore, as a spiritual being, you are always connected with God. That never changes. You only need to fully awaken this awareness to understand the comfort and loving exchange that is possible between you and God. And God provides full facility for the living beings to awaken to this awareness by providing books that contain His message, such as *Bhagavad-gita*, or gurus and teachers who can show the way. The Lord can also provide you the impetus to search out this knowledge by providing inspiration from within, as the Supersoul.

In any case, God is your friend. He is concerned for you, and that is why you are being presented with this knowledge in this booklet. It is all God’s arrangement for your upliftment. If you use this properly, the reciprocation between you and God will increase. Your relationship with God will become more apparent and your natural position as God’s devotee will be revealed, and the transcendental mystery will become unveiled. Therefore, it is God’s concern for you that you now have been given this opportunity.

DAY SIX: LEARNING SPIRITUAL TRUTH GIVES PROPER UNDERSTANDING

“And when you have thus learned the truth, you will know that all living beings are but part of Me—that they are in Me, and are mine.” (*Bg.4.35*)

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As you continue with this path of devotion to God and your study of His instructions, not only will your own relationship with God be rekindled and gradually revealed, but you will also see how all other entities are also spiritual beings, though forgetful of this since they are in varieties of material species of life. And the human form provides the best facility in the way of intelligence to analyze and discern our spiritual identity. And since all creatures are also spiritual in essence, they are also parts and parcels of God. They all belong to God. In fact, everything is but a display of the energy of God. In this consciousness you will see that actually God is everywhere. What is not God? Thus, you will never feel alone because all beings are parts of God and all things are but the energy of God.

Furthermore, in this vision of spiritual truth you will see how everything is balanced. The material creation comes from an initial cause, which comes from God. And everything that happens to us is also based on the process of actions and reactions, or cause and effect. This is called the law of karma. Thus, nothing happens without a reason.

Yet, those who are without such a spiritual perception cannot understand all this. In fact, they may challenge or even insult the spiritual perspective. Thus, they are affected by and remain stuck in their own foolishness. In this way, they stay helpless to do anything but put all their energy into making

the most of this one life because this is all they see. Plus, they are ignorant of what lies beyond. That is why Lord Krishna explains:

“The endeavoring transcendentalist, who is situated in self-realization, can see all this clearly. But those who are not situated in self-realization cannot see what is taking place, though they may try to.” (Bg.15.11)

DAY SEVEN: FOLLOW THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

“The yogis, abandoning attachment, act with body, mind, intelligence, and even with the senses, only for the purpose of purification.” (Bg.5.11)

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As you progress in your spiritual purification and realizations, you will see how to use all aspects of your life toward your spiritual progress. So from the time you get up, to taking care of your children and family, or going to work, dealing with others, even eating and sleeping, can all be done in a way that adds to your spiritual development. All activities can provide lessons to learn and give insights into our connection with God and all His parts and parcels. Or it may also give insights into the futility of pursuing sensual delights which will emphasize the need to continue our spiritual advancement. In this way, we will remain motivated to use the body like a tool, along with the mind and intelligence, for purification in our transcendental existence.

By acting in this manner, for the real purpose of life, we will continue to have deeper and deeper realizations. As we develop, then in the not far too distant future, we will be assured of liberation from mundane vision and material existence, and return to the kingdom of God. As Lord Krishna describes:

“Those who are free from anger and all material desires, who are self-realized, self-disciplined and constantly endeavoring for perfection, are assured of liberation in the Supreme in the very near future.” (Bg.5.26)

DAY EIGHT: BE DILIGENT ON THE PATH

“From whatever and wherever the mind wanders due to its flickering and unsteady nature, one must certainly withdraw it and bring it back under the control of the Self. The yogi whose mind is fixed on Me verily attains the highest happiness. By virtue of his identity with Brahman, he is liberated; his mind is peaceful, his passions are quieted, and he is freed from sin.” (Bg.6.26-27)

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Naturally, treading the spiritual path may not always be easy. We have been so conditioned to the material lifestyle that there may be times when we must tolerate the unnecessary urges of the senses, or suffer the mood swings of the mind, or even be exposed to demands and wants of others around us. All these may affect us in certain ways, or make us consider compromising our spiritual standards, regulations or practice as they pull us this way or that. But we must simply keep trying and never give up. It's as simple as that. When we see ourselves getting off-track, we simply pull ourselves back. When our mind wanders off in the wrong direction, then we must use the intelligence and pull it back where it belongs.

We should never get discouraged and never get depressed or think that the process will not work. There are already so many others who have succeeded before us. You must simply step back and witness how the material energy works, or how the mind reacts to various situations. Then

remember how you are the spirit and not the mind. So you have to keep working at controlling the mind, which merely takes practice over the long-term. How well you control the mind indicates how much you are advancing. In time, with spiritual advancement, the mind will not be so restless or attracted to materialistic activities. It will simply lose interest.

So how you control the mind is simply how you engage it. The more you read the spiritual and Vedic books, or associate with others to discuss spiritual topics and the activities of God, or meditate and chant God's holy names, the more of a positive impact they will make on the mind. Then the more purified it becomes, and, naturally, our lives become more peaceful. As we become freer from bodily attachment, we are also less attracted to questionable or debilitating desires, habits and activities. This is what paves the way for our mind to remain fixed on God, without swings and shifts, and attain the greatest happiness.

DAY NINE: KEEP ADDING HIGHER QUALITIES TO YOUR CHARACTER

“Humility, pridelessness, nonviolence, tolerance, simplicity, approaching a genuine spiritual master, cleanliness, steadiness and self-control; renunciation of the objects of sense gratification, absence of false ego, the perception of the evil of birth, death, old age and disease; nonattachment to children, wife, home and the rest, and even-mindedness amid pleasant and unpleasant events; constant and unalloyed devotion to Me, resorting to solitary places, detachment from the general mass of people; accepting the importance of self-realization, and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth—all these I thus declare to be knowledge, and what is contrary to these is ignorance.” (Bg.13.8-12)

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We must always be aware of the need for constant improvement in our character, and for adding qualities that serve our purpose. The above verses list a number of such qualities that we need to consider and see how best we can add them to our character.

To sum up a few of these, humility is to see ourselves as spiritual sparks that are no different than any other of the innumerable souls spread throughout the creation. This leads to loss of pride, tolerance of any situation, and following a simple lifestyle. Nonviolence means to be kind and understanding in body, mind and words. Ultimately nonviolence means to relieve people of their suffering by giving them spiritual knowledge so they can rise above the bodily platform. This also leads to the renunciation of objects for gratifying the senses. Cleanliness is next to godliness, as it is said. So we should strive to be clean in both body and mind.

False ego means to identify with the temporary body, which is not our real self. Absence of false ego means to see yourself as the spirit soul that merely occupies the body, like being in a container, or the driver of a vehicle. Then all forms of bodily distinctions, whether it is beauty, intelligence, strength, riches, etc., will not weigh us down with false ego and pride.

Perception of the evil in birth, death, old age and disease means to recognize the disturbance or unnaturalness that this causes for us. We naturally have goals, but this cycle of birth and death disrupts everything and is the opposite of our eternal nature. Nonattachment to our children, wife, home and the rest means to recognize that though you may interact with them and have responsibilities for them, nonetheless they belong to God. They are not entirely yours but have been given by God and actually belong to God. So you have to act in a godly way in your concern and love for them, and train them in God-consciousness as well. If you are married or have children, you must accept those responsibilities. Nonattachment does not mean that you use spiritual life as an excuse to give up your responsibilities to your dependents. That would be the exact opposite to what is spiritual life. Spiritual life means you become the most responsible. Seeing your family and possessions in the right frame of mind leads you to even-mindedness amid pleasant and unpleasant events. This is necessary.

This is what leads to constant and unalloyed devotion to God, and the desire to remain in a situation, whether it is solitary places or remaining aloof from the materialistic mass of society, wherein it is most accommodating for continuing your process of self-realization. All of these qualities is what Krishna declares to be knowledge, which is uplifting. Contrary to these principles is darkness, which drags one further into ignorance and the continuation of one's material existence. As Lord Krishna says:

“Fearlessness, purification of one's existence, cultivation of spiritual knowledge. Charity, self-control, performance of sacrifice, study of the *Vedas*, austerity and simplicity; nonviolence, truthfulness, freedom from anger; renunciation, tranquility, aversion to faultfinding, compassion and freedom from covetousness; gentleness, modesty and steady determination; vigor, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, freedom from envy and the passion for honor—these transcendental qualities, O son of Bharata, belong to godly men endowed with divine nature.” (*Bg.16.1-3*)

DAY TEN: ACCEPT A PROPER SPIRITUAL TEACHER

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.” (*Bg.4.34*)

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One thing we need to understand is that to make sure we are always going in the right direction, or whenever we have questions, or when there are problems to sort out while traveling the spiritual road, it is not always enough to depend on a book. But you need a spiritual teacher, a guru whom you can approach for guidance. A genuine guru can help in making sure we remain on the right path.

Sometimes people feel there is no need for a guru. But in this material world, we are all born in varying degrees of darkness. It takes a spiritual teacher to pull us out of the illusion. And no matter how a person acquires spiritual knowledge, whether it is through this booklet, or through a friend or some other way, it can all be traced back to a spiritual teacher somewhere. So accepting a proper guru or teacher is important. Only by being humble enough to accept spiritual knowledge from without can we become qualified to receive such knowledge from within.

A guru is one who should be in a proper *sampradaya* or chain of disciplic succession, and his teachings must also be in accordance with what the scripture verifies, and with what other advanced *sadhus* or devotees teach. This is the unique system of checks and balances that is used in the Vedic system. It is not that just anyone can claim to be a guru and say anything he likes. But the guru, scripture and sages must all corroborate each other to make sure people are not fooled or improperly instructed. If a guru says something that is not established in scripture, or is not advocated or approved by other knowledgeable sages, then his authority may be called into question. So following these checks a person can verify that he is following rightly.

Once a proper teacher is found, then you must approach him submissively. You cannot order him to give spiritual knowledge, which is rare to find anyway. In exchange for the guidance and instruction, traditionally it is expected that you offer some service in exchange, or some *dakshina*, which is an offering of money. This also purifies the time you spent making the money that is offered. A spiritually realized and experienced guru can guide you because he is accepting you to follow in his footsteps to the same spiritual reality that he has already entered. However, one needs to be careful because such a soul is very rare, and if we might find such a person, we should take it most seriously. As Lord Krishna explains:

“Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth.” (*Bg.7.3*)

DAY ELEVEN: ADJUSTING YOUR DIET FOR HIGHER AWARENESS

“If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it.” (Bg.9.26)

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This verse shows a few things. First it shows how simple the worship of God can be. Often times it seems expected that Vedic or Hindu rituals cost much money, especially those performed in the temples. Sometimes when we visit certain temples in India the priests try to force us into engaging in a ritual and then ask for a large offering of money, *dakshina*. However, we should not feel forced to make extravagant offerings or pay a priest large amounts of money if we have no such facility. Devotional service is not meant to be a business, but a means of offering our love to God. Without that even the most opulent offerings do not gain much favor in the eyes of God. If we have much love and devotion, that is the biggest asset even if our offering is simple. Such a modest offering filled with love and devotion is more than acceptable to Lord Krishna.

So we can certainly worship God by going to the temple, seeing the Deity, saying our prayers, and provide a little offering according to our capacity. Or we may simply have a Deity or a picture or symbol at home and offer a little something there. Of course, if we do have plenty of funds, then we can even help build a temple if we want, or sponsor a huge festival or something else. The point is that it must be a sign of our love and devotion to be accepted.

The second thing this verse shows is that God asks for items which cause no harm to others. He asks for no blood offerings or for the meat of slaughtered animals. Thus, as He outlines here, we offer nice flowers, fruits, grains, or sumptuous vegetable preparations. Similarly, after the items are offered, we accept the remnants of such offerings as *prasada*, known as His mercy on us. Because we partake of such sacred food that has been offered to God, we also make great spiritual advancement. The *prasada* purifies our minds and bodies.

There have already been experiments that show how praying over food will subtly change its molecular structure in a positive way. So when we prepare food in the proper consciousness, with the intent of offering it to God, in the form of His Deity or picture, with prayers and worship, then we can imagine how much more the food changes and becomes purified.

Furthermore, if we are serious about making spiritual advancement, we do not want to put things in our body which depletes our energy, our health, or lowers our vibration, thoughts and consciousness. So a few things that will do that are tobacco, intoxicants like drugs or alcohol, as well as meat. Meat is a product of violence since the animal has to be killed. No entity wants to be killed. So this kind of violence enters your system when you eat the meat. It lowers your consciousness and sensitivity to the point where you may no longer perceive anything wrong with killing the lives of animals so you can satisfy your tongue. This, of course, does not take into consideration how many drugs are put into the bodies of livestock which are bred to be butchered, nor the conditions in which they are slaughtered. But if you are sincere about raising your own consciousness, and keeping yourself free from the karma of contributing to the violence of unnecessary killing, then you should consider these points and adjust your intake of foods accordingly and at least take to the vegetarian diet. In other words, we do not want to cause harm to others or ourselves, so we do not partake in eating things that will do that, or that will cause resistance to our spiritual progress. And the meat diet is not difficult to give up when we have experienced the higher taste of what can be done with delicious vegetable preparations.

DAY TWELVE: YOU ARE NOT YOUR BODY

“Those with the vision of eternity can see that the soul is transcendental, eternal, and beyond the modes of nature. Despite contact with the material body, O Arjuna, the soul neither does anything nor is entangled.” (Bg.13.32)

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In spiritual training, perhaps the single most important point to understand is that you are not your body. You are the soul within it. The soul is completely transcendental to the body, and does not come under the same designations that we give to the body. It does not belong to a certain family name or ethnic group. The soul is not Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, etc. It is also not American, Indian, Russian, Chinese, Pakistani, or anything else. According to the *Upanishads* it is also not happy, sad, frustrated or content, nor does it imagine anything but what it ought to imagine. It does not take birth, grow, change or die. It may be in the body, and we may think we are the body due to false ego, but we have the freedom to think whatever we like.

There is a saying that anything that is temporary or changes is not the eternal truth. We have to go beyond what is temporary to get a glimpse of what is real and true. And the soul exists in that field of eternity that is completely beyond the mind, body and senses.

Only with genuine spiritual vision can we see our real identity, beyond the body, beyond all of material nature. The soul is never entangled in the material energy or actions, nor does it engage in such. It is only the body and our bodily desires which keep us bound up in material nature. It is only by thinking we are these bodies which keeps us in the bodily existence. This is why it is so important to pursue spiritual life and rise above the mental and bodily dictates that limit our perception of our spiritual identity. That is where we can reach our full potential, beyond the limitations that are forced on us by our absorption in material existence. The more spiritual we become, the more we can perceive the spiritual level of reality.

DAY THIRTEEN: YOU ARE ETERNAL

The Blessed Lord said: “While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor the dead. 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.2.11-12)

“For the soul there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.” (Bg.2.20)

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Once we truly understand that we, as spirit souls, are eternal, our whole attitude changes. Death can be a great fear for many individuals, but death is only a change of bodies, like a change of clothes. The soul never dies, so there is also no need to unnecessarily lament or grieve for those who have died. Naturally we may miss them but they have gone elsewhere just as we will when our time comes.

If we are spiritually prepared, then there will be nothing to fear from death. Actually, for those advanced souls, they can rise above the body enough to where they can actually perceive what lies beyond death. They can see it. Thus, they know where they will go, according to their level of consciousness. It is like dying now but leaving later. So there is nothing to fear. This is one of the goals of human life, if a person can do it.

So the point to understand is that we are eternal and that birth and death are only appearances on the material plane. Like an actor who enters a stage and plays a part in a costume until it is time to exit the stage and be reminded of who we really are. Ultimately, since we are already eternal beings, entering that spiritual dimension is the real goal of life.

DAY FOURTEEN: BECOMING FREE FROM BODILY DESIRES

“The nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.” (Bg.2.14)

“Before giving up this present body, if one is able to tolerate the urges of the material senses and check the force of desire and anger, he is a yogi and is happy in this world.” (Bg.5.23)

* * *

Once we understand our eternal nature, which is beyond the body, we should become decreasingly influenced or motivated by bodily desires. Such desires and the pleasures we want to attain for the body are themselves temporary. They have a beginning and an end. Thus, happiness of this sort comes and goes, like the winter and summer seasons. If you don't like the weather, wait a while and it will change. Similarly, no matter whether you are happy or sad, in due time it will change. It is automatic. Sadness is followed by happiness which may again be followed by moments of sadness. Material nature provides the changes that make this happen.

However, such changes are recognized through the mind's interpretation of them. The senses detect various sensations and the mind judges whether it is agreeable or not. Then the mind develops certain moods based on the external conditions with which it is dealing. That is why this is called the mental platform.

As we can see, a person who is engaged in chasing after all their desires is often preoccupied with the superficialities of life. Like a drug addict always chasing after his next high, he is completely obsessed with it and so much of his endeavor is wasted for such temporary thrills. He gets no rest. So much time, energy and money is spent, and he is still not truly happy, though he may feel satisfied for only short periods of time.

In the same way, a person chasing after material desires or ways to satisfy the mind and senses loses so much energy and time, yet remains absorbed in the anticipation and hope for finding happiness, but in the guise of sensual or mental pleasure. This is not real contentment or fulfillment. Thus, genuine happiness eludes such a person. This is why it is said that, in order to be happy, it is better for a person to tolerate the dictates of the senses rather than giving into all of them. It is like the ocean that receives the waters from so many rivers, yet remains steady in spite of so much input.

One problem with trying to please the mind is that the mental platform is very flickering, and the mood of the mind is always changing. In other words, what was satisfying at one moment becomes boring or distasteful later. So the mind is always changing its wants. And the more you give it, the more it hankers. The more it will tell you how much it needs. Lust is a relentless master. It is like a fire being fed with gasoline. The more you feed it, the more it will consume.

So the point is that as we become free from the bodily conception of life by knowing we are actually the eternal soul within this temporary body, we will also become free from the bodily influence and sensual or mental urges and desires. The more we can do that, the more we can be happy in this world, and the easier it will be for our spiritual pursuits.

DAY FIFTEEN: ATTAINING SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

“A person in divine consciousness, although engaged in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving about, sleeping, and breathing, always knows within himself that he actually does nothing at all. Because while speaking, evacuating, receiving, opening or closing his eyes, he always

knows that only the material senses are engaged with their objects and that he is aloof from them.” (Bg.5.8-9)

“The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].” (Bg.5.18)

* * *

Here is a description of one who has attained divine consciousness. Such a person knows he or she is a spirit soul within the body. In divine consciousness you do not just know it but you can see it. You can see how your body performs so many actions, but you, as a spiritual being, are still different from those activities.

Without divine consciousness, people often forget that they are spiritual beings and think their real identity is the body. With that state of mind, they become quite enthused and motivated to give pleasure and all kinds of care to the body. That becomes their primary goal in life. But that also brings fear when they get older and closer to death. What will they do then? What will they do when they lose their possessions and that which gives their mind and senses the most pleasure? What will be their reasons for living then?

Yet those in divine consciousness can see that the body is merely a vehicle in which we are riding. And not only are we spiritual beings covered in material forms, but so are all the other living entities in this material world. Thus, such a person can see that a sophisticated human being, or a cow, an elephant, or cats and dogs, birds, insects, plants, etc., are also different forms which exhibit life, consciousness, which is the symptom of the soul within. Therefore, a person in divine consciousness displays respect for and is friendly toward all living beings. He can see that they are all parts and parcels of God. This is how the devotee, who is equal to a topmost yogi, sees the Lord everywhere and is thus never lost to God. As Lord Krishna explains elsewhere:

“A true yogi observes Me in all beings, and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized man sees Me everywhere. For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me. The yogi who knows that I and the Supersoul within all creatures are one worships Me and remains always in Me in all circumstances.” (Bg.6.29-31)

DAY SIXTEEN: THERE IS LIFE AFTER DEATH

“As the embodied soul continually passes in this body from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change.” (Bg.2.13)

“As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.” (Bg.2.22)

* * *

As we can see, our body changes as we grow. It produces new cells, changes shape, we get taller, and then after middle age when we have stopped growing upward we often start growing outward. We first have a baby’s body, then a child’s, then a young person’s body, and later an old body. So the body may be healthy, fit and athletic while young, but sickly, wrinkled and slow while old. However, the person inside the old body may still have the same desires or ambitions of a youth, but no longer has a body that can do the things he wants to do. So we are witnesses of the changes that the body goes through. This means we are inside yet different from the body we inhabit. Similarly, as our body changes in this life, we change bodies at the time of death. Yet, if we realize our difference from the material vehicle, we can be free of bewilderment or distress when we are forced to give up the present form. This is compared to changing clothes. Naturally, if we are eternal, as previously established, our existence does not stop with the death of the body. It goes on. If we are aware of our spiritual identity at the time of death, then such a change will not bewilder us.

However, what we do in this life will determine what kind of body we will get in the next. The Earth planet is like a portal that allows us to enter into any of the other dimensions that exist. By our actions and thoughts, which are forms of meditation, we develop a particular type of consciousness. That consciousness at the time of death will take us to the form of existence that is most suitable for us. And one thing that has a strong impression on shaping our consciousness is the type of worship we do. That is why Lord Krishna explains the best thing we should do:

“Those who worship the demigods will take birth among the demigods; those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth among such beings; those who worship ancestors go to the ancestors; and those who worship Me will live with Me.” (*Bg.9.25*)

DAY SEVENTEEN: GETTING THE HIGHER TASTE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

“The embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for it remains. But ceasing such engagement by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness.” (*Bg.2.59*)

* * *

It is not enough to merely repress our sensual desires or urges. You may be able to do that for some time, but at some point they may come out in some other form, possibly as anger, violence, or basic discontent or frustration. This is also unhealthy as is trying to satisfy all of your desires, which is not so easy either, as previously explained.

After you begin to realize your eternal nature and become increasingly free from bodily desires, the only way you can completely rise above the urges of the senses is by connecting with the spiritual strata and experiencing the higher taste of transcendental bliss.

Such bliss, which is intrinsic to the soul, is awakened when one revives the soul's original status as a servant of God. This bliss is tasted in the mood of servitude, which is the natural, constitutional position of the soul.

In the material world we are always serving something. It may be our spouse, children, employer, the government, or our mind and senses. We may not even want to serve, but are forced to do so. We are naturally engaged in serving. Of course, when we serve those we love, there is happiness in that. But the deeper happiness of the soul is reached when we dovetail our serving propensity and need to love toward the Supreme Being. He is the Supreme Lover, and the ultimate reciprocation and bliss can be attained when we direct our need to serve and love toward God. That is when we experience the higher taste from the spiritual platform that far outweighs the pleasure we get from sense enjoyment. For those who have reached this higher bliss, serving the senses will appear like a waste of time.

So as one increasingly experiences spiritual happiness, such a person's concern for pleasant surroundings and facilities will also decrease. This does not mean that the person will simply stop caring about his living conditions, but he becomes more detached and has less regard for such things. He is naturally happier with whatever comes along. He is more easily content with simpler arrangements and is happier with the freedom for pursuing spiritual life. However, as one experiences this, such a person will understand the real value of it and will also want to share this and give to others the means for attaining spiritual bliss of their own. As more people get connected to this higher taste, it can indeed spread to change the whole world. That is certainly something worth working for.

DAY EIGHTEEN: GOD REWARDS YOU ACCORDING TO YOUR DEEDS

“All of them—as they surrender unto Me—I reward accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Pritha.” (*Bg.4.11*)

* * *

As previously pointed out, we are rewarded with certain results according to what we do in life. And according to our level of surrender and approach to God, He reveals Himself to us.

Naturally, everything we see is a display of God’s energies. Thus, no matter whether it is rocks or gold, ghosts or demigods, the effulgent Brahman or Krishna himself, we are all interacting with different levels of Krishna’s energy. And we will get the degree of reciprocation that is available on that level. But when we focus our attention directly on Krishna, He rewards us according to the degree of our approach to Him and the love we have developed.

In this way, the purer and more intent we become, the more He rewards us with higher levels of insight and revelation of our relationship with Him. And those people who want to stay far away certainly are given the free will to remain far away from Krishna, at least in appearances and in their way of thinking. Otherwise, Lord Krishna is never far away from anyone or anything. Out of His causeless mercy He remains next to everyone and is the basis of everything as the Supersoul, Paramatma, in everyone’s heart. Thus, Krishna rewards everyone equally, according to the degree of their desire to be with Him and understand Him.

DAY NINETEEN: OFFERING SERVICE TO GOD BRINGS FREEDOM

“Work done as an offering to Vishnu has to be performed, otherwise work binds one to this material world. Therefore, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain unattached and free from bondage.” (*Bg.3.9*)

“One who works in devotion, who is a pure soul, and who controls his mind and senses, is dear to everyone, and everyone is dear to him. Though always working, such a man is never entangled.” (*Bg.5.7*)

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

* * *

Here in these verses we see how a person gets the results of his or her actions. Work done selfishly, for one’s own pleasure or development, without considering its affects on others or the consequences, will certainly bind one to this material world. This describes the process of accumulating karma, which must be worked out through as many lifetimes as is necessary to arrive at a complete balance of all one’s actions. Practically speaking, however, to arrive at such a balance is impossible without incorporating the spiritual path into our life. All activities will have some degree of fault in them, which will entail karma and future births, which may be pleasant or miserable, heavenly or hellish.

So the only way we can become free from this karmic cycle of repeated births and deaths is to learn how to begin engaging in the service of the Lord. This consists of the genuine spiritual activities that nullify all of our karma, both good and bad. That is the way to be unentangled or get free from being bound to the ups and downs of material existence. Offering our service or the results of our activities to the Lord is the path to freedom.

DAY TWENTY: HOW TO SERVE GOD

“O son of Kunti [Arjuna], all that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering to Me.” (Bg.9.27)

“Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, offer obeisances and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me.” (Bg.9.34)

“Acts of sacrifice, charity and penance are not to be given up but should be performed. Indeed, sacrifice, charity and penance purify even the great souls.” (Bg.18.5)

“In all activities just depend upon Me and work always under My protection. In such devotional service, be fully conscious of Me. If you become conscious of Me, you will pass over all the obstacles of conditional life by My grace.” (Bg.18.57-58)

“Of vibrations I am the transcendental om. Of sacrifices I am the chanting of the holy names [japa].” (Bg.10.25)

“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.” (Bg.7.14)

“Because you are My very dear friend, I am speaking to you the most confidential part of knowledge. Hear this from Me, for it is for your benefit. Always think of Me and become My devotee. Worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend. Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” (Bg.18.64-66)

* * *

The above verses provide the formula for how best to serve God in a way that God most appreciates. It is said that you should not try to see God but act in such a way that God will see you. Then He will reveal Himself to you. So how do you act in that way? These verses make it easy to understand how to set aside some time each day to devote yourself to God. This is especially effective in the early morning. That is the most peaceful time of the day, the most powerful, and when the mind is the most receptive. At that time, whatever you do is most likely to carry the positive impressions with you throughout the day. Just taking some time for reflection, meditation and worship toward the Supreme is itself an act of sacrifice for spiritual progress.

So this is how we learn to dedicate as much as we can as an offering to God, whether it is all we do, all we eat, all austerities or hardships we perform to become spiritualized. The point is to do it as a means of pleasing God. Even our job and the time we spend working becomes spiritualized when we do it as a means of offering the results for the devotional service to Lord Krishna.

You can go to the temple to do your worship, or stay at home and study the scripture, meditate, or also chant the holy names [japa]. As is mentioned in these verses, Krishna is the sacrifice of chanting His holy names. This means He appears within the sound vibration of His holy names, which can be perceived by one who properly chants them. The best mantra for doing this is the Hare Krishna mantra, which is Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

The main thing is to engage the mind in thinking of God. In this way, things like acts of sacrificing your time or giving charity to your local temple can be done as an offering to the Lord which spiritually purifies a person. Then throughout the day, depend on God and be conscious of Him as much as practically possible.

It is said that by remembering God even hell can be like heaven, and by forgetting God even heaven can become like hell. So by being always conscious of God, we can pass over so many obstacles. Knowing how to become conscious of God is the most confidential part of spiritual knowledge. And the essence of that is to always think of God by some means or other and never forget Him, as well as worship Him and offer your activities to Him, as He explains in the above verses. If we take this and give up all other forms of religion and simply concentrate on this process of thinking of the Lord, and in this way surrender to Him, we will certainly come to Him. This is His promise to us. Thus, there is no reason to fear. If we follow this process, we will be delivered.

DAY TWENTY-ONE: DEVOTIONAL SERVICE TO GOD BRINGS MOKSHA–SALVATION

“A person who accepts the path of devotional service is not bereft of the results derived from studying the Vedas, performing austere sacrifices, giving charity or pursuing philosophical and fruitive activities. At the end he reaches the supreme abode.” (Bg.8.28)

“My dear Arjuna, one who is engaged in My pure devotional service, free from the contamination of previous activities and from mental speculation, who is friendly to every living entity, certainly comes to Me.” (Bg.11.55)

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

“That abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by electricity. One who reaches it never returns to this material world.” (Bg.15.6)

* * *

Again we need to realize the special nature of devotional service to Lord Krishna. It is the epitome of spiritual understanding. This is Vedanta, the end of all Vedic study. By reaching this conclusion, the results of all other processes are included, whether it be studying the Vedas, doing intense austerities, giving charity to altruistic purposes, or attaining whatever else that is offered by any other religion. It is indeed the culmination of all religious practice and inquiry. It is that which all other philosophical research and religious pursuits eventually lead. But you are being given it now.

Devotional service is the process of using the material body and engaging it in the direct service of the Lord. It purifies us of all karma and activities. It is the means of engaging in the same devotional service that goes on by those already liberated and serving God in the spiritual world. Thus, by following this system we will certainly attain the Supreme abode of the Lord, and, thus, never return to the material worlds. There is no goal or purpose higher than this.

DAY TWENTY-TWO: WHAT IF I CANNOT DO IT RIGHT?

“Just fix your mind upon Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and engage all your intelligence in Me. Thus you will live in Me always, without a doubt. My dear Arjuna, if you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then follow the regulated principles of bhakti-yoga. In this way you will develop a desire to attain to Me. If you cannot practice the regulations of bhakti-yoga, then just try to work for Me, because by working for Me you will come to the perfect stage. If, however, you are unable to work in this consciousness, then try to act giving up all results of your work and try to be self-situated. If you cannot take to this practice, then engage yourself in the cultivation of knowledge. Better than knowledge, however, is meditation, and better than meditation is renunciation of the fruits of action, for by such renunciation one can attain peace of mind.” (Bg.12.8-12)

* * *

At times we may have doubts that we will be successful on the spiritual path, or we may feel that we may not be able to continue because of various reasons or obstacles. Or maybe we think our mind simply gives us too much trouble.

Do not be troubled. Here in these verses Lord Krishna gives the solutions. The best way is to fix the mind and intelligence on Him by any means available. But if that cannot be done at times, then there are other recommended things you can do to help control the mind, or stay focused and work toward the essential goal. So simply take up whatever level is best for you, as described above. Then work up the ladder of spiritual success of always remembering God. There is no pressure, and, as previously explained, whatever progress you make is eternal and helps to keep you moving forward.

Here Lord Krishna simply explains that the best position is to fix the mind and intelligence in various ways on Him. If you cannot do that so easily, then observe the principles of bhakti-yoga since the process will help you increase your thoughts and affection towards God. If that cannot be done, then dedicating one's work and activities to God will also help. If you cannot adopt that attitude, then you can also offer the results of your work to God and remain free from greed. Or you can learn spiritual knowledge about the position of God, His activities and personality, along with the nature of your own spiritual identity. Or you can simply meditate on the Deity form of the Lord and the descriptions of His pastimes, or even give up the fruits or results of your actions. This can be done by doing service in the temple or to your Deity of God, and so on. Of course, a person can do all of these at different times, since they all assist in our spiritual development and the attainment of God consciousness. Thus, the Vedic path of spiritual progress is most flexible and broad in scope, and allows someone to approach God from any position in life.

There may also be some people who may not have any inclination for spiritual practice. For them, it just does not grab their interest. Nonetheless, they may simply hear about the Lord from others and still worship the Supreme Being as best they can. Because they merely accept advice and instructions from spiritual authorities and observe the worship of the Lord, either at home or in the temples, they can also reach success on this path of devotional service. As Lord Krishna explains:

“There are those who, although not conversant in spiritual knowledge, begin to worship the Supreme Person upon hearing about Him from others. Because of their tendency to hear from authorities, they also transcend the path of birth and death.” (Bg.13.26)

So, decide which of these you wish to do and make them a regular part of your spiritual practice.

DAY TWENTY-THREE: EVEN IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE, YOU ARE SAVED

“Even if you are considered to be the most sinful of all sinners, when you are situated in the boat of transcendental knowledge, you will be able to cross over the ocean of miseries.” (Bg.4.36)

“Even if one commits the most abominable actions, if he is engaged in devotional service, he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated. He or she quickly becomes righteous and attains lasting peace. O son of Kunti [Arjuna], declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes.” (Bg.9.30-31)

* * *

All right, so what if you make a mistake along the way? Or what if you made so many mistakes or sinful activities before accepting this path? Some people may wonder if they have a chance? But do not let things like this make you depressed, upset or ready to give up. I have already explained that whatever you can do gives eternal benefit. So feeling like quitting is just another temporary mood of an unfriendly mind. We have to control this and stay focused on the goal, which is attained over the long-term with faithful and steady progress. However, it can also be attained immediately, depending on how sincere we are.

As Lord Krishna says here, even if we have been the worst of sinners, if we accept this path and enter the boat of spiritual knowledge and follow it sincerely, we become purified of our previous acts and can cross this ocean of material existence to the spiritual domain.

Even if one is on this path yet for some reason makes some mistakes, if he or she is apologetic for them and continues to seriously engage in devotional service, then one will still be rightly situated. He will again become purified of such mistakes. Of course, this does not mean that you make a plan to engage in questionable activities while thinking you will again become freed from the reactions of them by your devotional service. That will not work. You will still be held accountable. In fact, to think that you can engage in sinful activities and then be free from the reactions by the performance of devotional service is offensive. And too much of such nonsense spoils your spiritual service. But those who are serious and enthusiastic about spiritual life and try their best, despite some

mistakes along the way, can take courage because Lord Krishna explains that His devotee never perishes. He is always protected, and at the time of death he or she can reach the spiritual abode.

DAY TWENTY-FOUR: UNDERSTANDING THE DIVINE NATURE OF GOD

“Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, and a predominant rise of irreligion—at that time I descend Myself. In order to deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I advent Myself millennium after millennium. One who knows this transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode.” (Bg.4.7-9)

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

* * *

These verses describe the importance of understanding the divine nature of God. God is always the source of all spiritual and material worlds and, therefore, never comes under control of His own creation. Thus, He can enter and exit it at will. And He does so to protect *dharma* and the spiritual path for the benefit of the masses. However, if He has His representatives or pure devotees present to protect and preserve His instructions and the path of *dharma*, then that is just as good as His personal presence. Society can still take advantage of it, which is essential.

This is why Lord Krishna comes to deliver the pious. But He also comes to annihilate the miscreants. So this also means that there may be times when drastic measures must be taken to protect the *dharma* if it is threatened by others who want to damage or alter it, or make it extinct. So Krishna’s representatives must also be able to stand up for what is right and do what is necessary if there are those who want to destroy the *dharma*.

As Sri Krishna explains, by understanding His divine nature and the reasons for His appearance in this world, we do not take birth in this material creation again. Such wise persons, knowing that the Lord is the origination of everything, certainly engage in the devotional service to the Lord with all their hearts.

DAY TWENTY-FIVE: UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF THE LORD

“Of all that is material and all that is spiritual in this world, know for certain that I am both its origin and dissolution. There is no Truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me as pearls are strung on a thread.” (Bg.7.6-7)

“Those who know Me as the Supreme Lord, as the governing principle of the material manifestation, who know Me as the one underlying all the demigods and as the one sustaining all sacrifices, can, with steadfast mind, understand and know Me even at the time of death.” (Bg.7.30)

“Those who are not deluded, the great souls, are under the protection of the divine nature. They are fully engaged in devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible.” (Bg.9.13)

“I am the father of this universe, the mother, the support, and the grandsire. I am the object of knowledge, the purifier and the syllable om. I am also the *Rig*, the *Sama* and the *Yajur* [Vedas]. I am the goal, the sustainer, the master, the witness, the abode, the refuge and the most dear friend. I am

the creation and the annihilation, the basis of everything, the resting place and the eternal seed.”
(Bg.9.17-18)

“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.” (Bg.18.55)

* * *

These verses will help us to further understand the power and position of the Supreme Being. Read them and meditate on them. It is only through the devotional attitude by which one can understand God, and is the cause of reciprocation between the Lord and His devotee. This love is what brings the Lord to reveal Himself to His devotee. And even those of us who may not be completely pure but are sincere can still get a glimpse of this exchange and how the Lord reveals Himself to us. Remember, sincerity is the essence of purity. With that, God can give you whatever else you need.

The point is to understand and focus your mind on God, especially at the time of death. By doing that, it is certain one will enter the kingdom of God, and leave this material world hundreds of times faster than a rocket traveling through the sky. Even now, as a devotee, when sitting quietly thinking of God, we should feel ourselves zooming out of this material world. Understanding the knowledge in these verses is all that it takes. So read them again. As we absorb this information and engage in devotion to God, we come under the influence and protection of the divine nature. This helps move us forward in our comprehension of our eternal relationship with God. As we absorb our consciousness in devotion toward the Lord, we can certainly enter into the kingdom of God.

DAY TWENTY-SIX: STAYING CLOSE TO GOD

“And of all yogis, he who abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all.” (Bg.6.47)

“To those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. Out of compassion for them, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.” (Bg.10.10-11)

“The Blessed Lord said: He whose mind is fixed on My personal form, always engaged in worshiping Me with great and transcendental faith, is considered by Me to be most perfect.” (Bg.12.2)

“One who is not envious but who is a kind friend to all living entities, who does not think himself a proprietor, who is free from false ego and equal both in happiness and distress, who is always satisfied and engaged in devotional service with determination and whose mind and intelligence are in agreement with Me—he is very dear to Me.” (Bg.12.13-14)

“One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipoised in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always free from contamination, always silent and satisfied with anything, who doesn’t care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and engaged in devotional service, is very dear to Me.” (Bg.12.18-19)

* * *

In these verses we learn the qualities and characteristics and even some of the behavior of a person who is dear to the Lord. We can go over these verses repeatedly to remind ourselves of what we need to attain that position. It is actually not so difficult. It is simply a matter of incorporating the previous points that have been outlined in this course. Then, as instructed above, we focus on abiding in the Lord with great faith, worshiping Him in transcendental loving service, being devoted to Him in love, and concentrating on His personal form as Lord Krishna.

We are always very dear to the Lord, but especially when we see all situations and all living beings equally with spiritual vision and are engaged in His service as much as our time allows. The more we can remember the Lord, the more He reciprocates and give us additional insights of knowledge that destroys the darkness of ignorance which holds us back from progressing spiritually.

Thus, we approach ever closer to Him. And the more we try to get close to God, the closer He gets to us. So with God's help and our sincere desire, we remain close to Him.

DAY TWENTY-SEVEN: TOLERATING THOSE WHO DON'T CARE FOR GOD

“Those miscreants who are grossly foolish, lowest among mankind, whose knowledge is stolen by illusion, or who partake of the atheistic nature of demons, do not surrender unto Me.” (Bg.7.15)

“I am never manifest to the foolish and unintelligent. For them I am covered by My eternal creative potency [*yoga-maya*]; and so the deluded world knows Me not, who am unborn and infallible.” (Bg.7.25)

“Fools deride Me when I descend in the human form. They do not know My transcendental nature and My supreme dominion over all that be.” (Bg.9.11)

“Arrogance, pride, anger, conceit, harshness and ignorance—these qualities belong to those of demonic nature, O son of Pritha” (Bg.16.4)

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Naturally, while living in this material world we will come in contact with those who are not inclined toward religious or spiritual practice. Maybe they believe in God but just are not so interested. This can be tolerated. And generally they may not ridicule religious practice. So, some of these people may still be engaged in small amounts of service to God or discussions about God, but not much else should be expected from them. However, I have seen a few of such people change and later become strong devotees. But you have to approach them very carefully.

Others, however, may be outright atheists who want nothing to do with anything that deals with God. You might say that atheists are merely those who have no faith because they are spiritually inexperienced. They are like children that have little or no background but may say anything without proper education or investigation. Of course, this is the material creation where everyone has the freedom to believe what they like. But in the above verses it is described that their lack of faith is due to foolishness, illusion, or because of sinful or demonic activities and attitudes. Those who are covered by darkness due to wicked motivations never surrender to the Lord or engage in devotional service. If they appear to do so, it is for ulterior motives and desires. But such people are especially demonic if they deride religion or God, or are harsh and insulting to those engaged in the service of God. Such people will never understand the Supreme Being, nor will God reveal Himself to them, except in the form of the final lesson of death. Then they will be forced to submit to the power of God that causes their body to shut down and kicks them into a different situation.

In any case, such a person should be avoided. It is not that we want to try to engage him in discussions about spiritual topics or try to persuade them toward accepting spiritual reality. It may only make them disturbed and give them more opportunity to make offenses to us and to God. We do not need to try to make their karma any worse than it is. And we do not give our reasons and purpose over to the contradiction of foolish men. So we merely remain polite to such persons, wish them well, smile and keep walking.

However, if we are bold enough, we may prepare some nice food, sweets or something anyone will like, offer it to the Deity or picture of God which then makes it *prasada*, sacred food. Then we can offer some of it to our atheistic or demonic acquaintances. Of course, we do not tell them it is *prasada*. We just offer it as a friend. In any way that people may come in contact with spiritual substance, it has its affect. Like fire, whether you understand it or not it will burn if you touch it. Similarly, genuine spirituality in any form always produces positive results.

DAY TWENTY-EIGHT: YOUR SPECIAL POSITION AS GOD'S DEVOTEE

“After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare.” (Bg.7.19)

“Four kinds of pious men render devotional service unto Me—the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute... All these devotees are undoubtedly magnanimous souls, but he who is situated in knowledge of Me I consider verily to dwell in Me. Being engaged in My transcendental service, he attains Me.” (Bg.7.16, 18)

“Intelligent persons who are endeavoring for liberation from old age and death take refuge in Me in devotional service.” (Bg.7.29)

“Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion.” (Bg.9.14)

“I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all. But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him.” (Bg.9.29)

“He who follows this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engages himself with faith, making Me the supreme goal, is very, very dear to Me.” (Bg.12.20)

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Now we can see how special is the position of being a devotee of the Lord. It is very rare to attain. One gets the opportunity to be a devotee in only two ways: 1) You have to qualify yourself after many lifetimes of pursuing the spiritual path, or 2) you receive and intelligently accept the mercy of another pure devotee, which itself is the merciful arrangement of God. The people who become devotees of God, engaged in His devotional service in various ways, are described here by Lord Krishna as great souls, a friend to Him, and very, very dear to Him. So when a person is regarded by God in such a way, their position is secure. In this situation all we have to do is keep following the spiritual path of devotion and entrance into the spiritual domain after death is guaranteed. However, on this platform we only pray to be an instrument of God, to do the will of God, and be channels through which comes peace and spiritual knowledge. So if He calls us to go back home to the spiritual worlds, that will be the greatest day of our lives. Yet, if He wants us to stay in this material creation to do something else, then we readily accept that as well. If our consciousness is spiritualized, then it does not matter where we are, because we see God everywhere and we remain close to Him. Our very being is spiritually surcharged. Thus, in any situation, we are already home. We are already in the spiritual domain because that is what we perceive when our consciousness is saturated with transcendental frequency.

DAY TWENTY-NINE: BE GREAT BY BEING AN EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS

“Whatever action is performed by a great man, common men follow in his footsteps. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.” (Bg.3.21)

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If being a devotee is a rare position as previously established, then we should not feel proud. We surrender to God to humble ourselves to reach a higher point, a higher and clearer connection to God. This does not mean that we become so humble that we are the doormat for everyone else, or get easily pushed around. But we free ourselves from the complex details of life by knowing that if we do God's will, and connect with His intent, then that energy can flow through us to reach others. To be a good servant of God we must also be a reflection of God's unconditional love for us. We must be a vehicle through which God's love can come through to reach everyone else. We see everyone else as part of God's family. That is true greatness.

We are all born sensitive, but the details of life often desensitize us. We can not allow life to do that to us. We have to remain aware of others' feelings, pain, and needs and be able to respond to that in a humane and spiritual way. We have to remember that the more we help or assist others, the more we also help ourselves. We have to do that because we are the ones who need the help. This attitude will keep us humble as well as focused on what is our real purpose, and empowered to keep in mind our own spiritual position as the devotee of God. We have to remember that if we love God, we will also love all of His energy and His innumerable parts and parcels.

So we need to see the example of what should be done. We may become great teachers or not. Being great and being popular are two different things. And being popular without being truly great can be very dangerous. That has brought about the end of many people. If you are popular but not great, then when you fall, everyone will be watching everything that happens to you. So we need to be great in the essential spiritual standards, no matter whether anyone else notices or not. We have to set the example. That itself is often the best way to teach. As these standards are presented, others will follow and accept the example you have set. Or they will at least respect it.

There is an old saying that the world never knows its greatest men. It is better to be like that than to think you are great and infallible, and then become popular only to later fall down from your position and cause others to become disturbed by having their faith crushed.

So be a great devotee by being humble yet strong, being kind and merciful yet firm, and by being loving but fair and equal. And most of all, be an instrument and representative of God that all can view with respect and admiration.

DAY THIRTY: BEING DELIVERED AT THE TIME OF DEATH

“He who meditates on the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his mind constantly engaged in remembering Me, undeviated from the path, he, O Partha [Arjuna], is sure to reach Me.” (*Bg.8.8*)

“For one who remembers Me without deviation, I am easy to obtain, O son of Pritha [Arjuna], because of his constant engagement in devotional service. After attaining Me, the great souls, who are yogis in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection. From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode never takes birth again.” (*Bg.8.14-16*)

“Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state will be attained without fail.” (*Bg.8.6*) “And whoever, at the time of death, quits his body remembering Me alone, at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt.” (*Bg.8.5*)

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Lord Krishna says here that all of the planets in this material world are places of misery. This is not our real home nor where we are meant to be. It is all temporary wherein we undergo the continual drama of repeated birth and death. How many times is enough? So we should not be overly attached to anything in this creation when we leave this body.

So as we pursue this spiritual path and make progress, it becomes increasingly easier to think of God. And those that do will certainly find it easy to think of God at the time of their death. The only reason why people cannot think of the Supreme when they are leaving the body is because they do not practice during life. This is the purpose of the spiritual path, to give you that practice. Otherwise, people may occupy themselves with a million other things but leave out what is most important. Thus, at the time of death their consciousness dwells on those other things. In fact, in any yoga system or religion, this is the ultimate goal—to be able to think or meditate on God at the moment one leaves the body. This allows one to return to God and leave this material existence behind.

As stated in the above verses, whatever our state of consciousness is at the time of death, we take that with us into our next life. In fact, what we are thinking of when we leave this body directs us toward our next existence. So it is very important to attain the right level of consciousness by the time

we die, and to easily be thinking of the right thoughts and objects at the moment of death. Those who think of Lord Krishna at that time certainly attain His nature and reach His spiritual abode. Once one has attained the spiritual planets, birth in the material worlds never takes place again.

DAY THIRTY-ONE: SHARING THIS MESSAGE

“For one who explains this supreme secret to the devotees, devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear. And I declare that he who studies this sacred conversation worships Me by his intelligence. And one who listens with faith and without envy becomes free from sinful reaction and attains to the planets where the pious dwell.” (Bg.18.68-71)

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Here we can understand how powerful are the words and instructions of Lord Krishna. Simply reading the *Bhagavad-gita*, the conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, is a form of worship and meditation that utilizes one’s intelligence. This itself is part of the process of purifying our consciousness. Merely listening with faith cleanses one of the reactions to numerous sinful activities and allows that person to enter the heavenly planets of the pious. Therefore, reading *Bhagavad-gita* on a regular basis should be done. Setting up functions for the benefit of the general mass of people for reading and explaining *Bhagavad-gita* should also be encouraged. It will certainly spread a positive energy and spiritually charge the atmosphere in the community, especially for all who participate.

Lord Krishna also explains that those who spread and explain this message to others will certainly attain devotional service. Actually, such activity is direct service to God by spreading His message. And Krishna also says that there is no servant of His who is more dear than one who engages in this service. Some servants take great risks going all over the world to deliver this message to the people in general. So we can only imagine how much affection Krishna has for them. By looking at the world’s present condition and all the crime, war and quarrel that is going on, we can understand the need in society to be uplifted and to rise to a higher level of cooperation and peace, then we can also agree that the whole world would be greatly benefitted by hearing the Lord’s instructions. Therefore, we should make a point to share this spiritual knowledge with those around us. As we provide the means for the success of others, our own success is also guaranteed.

By following these points that are presented from the *Bhagavad-gita*, you can see how easy it is to practice this essence of the Vedic path and be assured of success. You only need to be serious, faithful, and sincere. Associate with other like-minded people and devotees, and add the principles outlined herein to your lives. You will quickly begin to see a difference in your life, your attitude, your interactions with others, and in your own relationship with God. I also wish you all success.

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