

The Secret of **The Hindu** Religion
Based on the teachings of
JagadGuru Shri Kripalu Ji Maharaj
Articulation: Chandrashekhar Chiplunkar

What is Religion (Dharm)? This is a very complex question. A precise answer can be given only by God Himself or by a great realized soul (a saint). Therefore, the Ved declare:

आचार्यवान् पुरुषो हि वेद। (Chhandogy Upanishad 6.14.2)

This means: Only a great realized spiritual master can interpret the Ved correctly. understand the Ved from him. It is like five blind men describing an elephant - one says it is like a wall, another like a pillar, and so on. But the only one, who has ability to see, describes the elephant correctly. Similarly, since the Ved are divine, chetan (self powered, self living and life infusing) and non-material speech, the same type of intellect is required to comprehend the exact meaning. Otherwise, instead of understanding, one ends up misunderstanding them. Getting trapped in a web of doubts and ill-doubts leads to disbelief in the Ved and scriptures - something that is clearly happening today.

The Vedic Religion provides rules so that the universe runs effectively and the soul attains its ultimate goal. Therefore, before defining the religion, it is essential to understand why this universe came into existence in the first place.

सोऽकामयत। बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति। स तपोऽतप्यत।

स तपस्तप्त्वा इदं सर्वमसृजत ॥ (Taittiriya Upanishad 2.6)

सोऽकामयत् । बहु स्यां प्रजायेय ॥ (Brihadaranyak Upanishad 1.4.17)

He desired, and universe came into being. It is also said that He performed austerity. What kind of austerity was that? God simply smiled, and the universe was created.

सूर्याचन्द्रमसौ धाता यथापूर्वमकल्पयत् ।

दिवं च पृथिवीं चान्तरिक्षमथो स्वः ॥ (Rigved 10.190.3)

However, God did not create a new universe. He recreated universe exactly as it existed before dissolution. When universe or the world becomes incapable of fulfilling its purpose, dissolution (pralay) occurs. That which continuously slides and changes is called samsar (the world). For example, when from Satya Yug to the end of Kali Yug the moral and spiritual downfall of the world reaches its extreme, God rectifies it and initiates Satya Yug once again.

The same souls with the same mind, the same desires and the same lustful tendencies - God recreates the same universe, not a new one. The verbal root 'srij' means to release or seParte. During the great dissolution, universe was merged in God; He seParted it from Himself and recreated it again, pervading every atom so that each atom works according to the prescribed laws.

आत्मा वा इदमेक एवाग्रे आसीन्नान्यत्किंचन मिषत् ।

स ईच्छत लोकान्नु सृजा इति ॥ (Aitareya Upanishad 1.1.1)

Before the universe, there was only God one and alone. Here the word Ātma is used for God. The entire universe and all

living beings were contained within Him. He alone recreated everything - that is, both the world and the souls. Now the question arises: Did God lack something that He initiated universe to obtain it? Let us first understand who is called Bhagwan (God). About God, it is said -

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते। येन जातानि जीवन्ति।
यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति। तद्विजिज्ञासस्व। तद् ब्रह्मेति॥ (Taittiriya
Upanishad 3.1)

That from which the universe originates, by which it is sustained, and into which it ultimately dissolves - that is God. Seeking to discover what this supreme entity is, Maharshi Bhrigu performed austerities and finally presented his conclusion in the Taittiriya Upanishad:

आनन्दो ब्रह्मेति व्यजानात्। आनन्दाद्भ्येव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते।
आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति। आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्तीति॥(Taittiriya
Upanishad 3.6)

That entity is Ānand (bliss). Bliss itself is Brahm (ब्रह्म) (God). Brahm is that entity which is biggest of all and also makes others big so that they can experience blissful Brahm. From bliss the universe arises; in bliss it is sustained; and into bliss it ultimately dissolves. This means that bliss is another name for God. Bliss (happiness) itself is God, and God Himself is bliss.

लोके नहि स विद्येत यो न राममनुव्रतः॥ (Ramyan, Uttarakanda
94.31)

Every living being in the world seeks happiness alone. No one can desire sorrow, even if one wants to. From beginningless time, all living-beings have been striving only for happiness. Everyone accepts happiness or bliss, which is why efforts are made to attain it. Since bliss is another name for God, the Ramyan states that there can be no living-being in the world who does not accept God - that is, no one can be an atheist.

रसो वै सः। रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वानन्दी भवति॥(Taittiriya Upanishad 2.7)

Brahm Himself is nectar (the essence of bliss). Only upon attaining Him does the soul become filled with bliss.

तमेव विदित्वाऽतिमृत्युमेति। नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय॥(Shvetashvatar Upanishad 3.8)

Only by realizing Him does the soul overcome death; no other way exists. Now the question arises: are Brahm (formless God) and Bhagwan (God with form) one and the same? Then listen - in the Gita, Arjun asked Lord Shri Krishn:

एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते।

ये चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः॥(Gita 12.1)

Among those who worship You in Your personal, manifest form and those who worship the unmanifest, impersonal form, who are superior? The Lord answered this question in detail. The conclusion is that the personal God with form and the impersonal God or formless Brahm are one and the same - there is only a difference in appearance.

द्वै वा वा ब्रह्मणो रूपे। मूर्तं चैवामूर्तं च।

मर्त्यं चामृतं च। स्थितं च यच्च सच्च त्यच्च॥ (Brihadaranyak
Upanishad 2.3.1)

God has two forms: one is the personal form, which appears as an incarnation and is bound by a time frame; that is, God assumes any personal form He wills. In His formless aspect, however, He pervades everything everywhere at all times.

तुज सगुण म्हणो कि निर्गुण रे। सगुण-निर्गुण एकु गोविंदु रे।

तुज आकार म्हाणों की निराकर रे। साकारु-निरुकारु एकु गोविंदु रे॥

(Dyadeshwari 5.36–5.37)

Whether You are called sagun(with attributes) or nirgun(without attributes), the sagun and nirgun are one and the same Govind. Whether You are said to have form or to be formless, the form and the formless are one Govind alone. Thus, the personal God and the impersonal Brahm are both one and same Shri Krishn.

न तस्य प्रतिमा अस्ति यस्य नाम महद्यशः।

हिरण्यगर्भ इत्येष मा मा हिंसीदित्येषा यस्मान् जात इत्येषः॥ (Yajurveda
32.3)

The meaning of this mantra is that there can be no other image of God than God himself. Which means there exists no other entity that can equal God. God is a chetan reality. What is meant by chetan? Chetan is that which is not material, not physical, not illusory (Māyik) and which does not need any outside source for anything including power, life, knowledge, happiness.

Our mind and intellect are capable only of material thinking. Māyā is God's inertial or lifeless power. All visible and invisible material objects, and the sensory pleasures derived from them, are called physical or māyik. We have never experienced chetan bliss directly, nor have we had direct experience of any chetan entity. We do not even know what chetan truly is. The soul (jīv) and God are chetan, yet we do not experience them because all our experience comes through the mind and senses, which are material and therefore incapable of grasping the divine soul and God. Since any picture or idol is material, it cannot be the actual image of the chetan God, nor God Himself. An idol is ultimately stone - eyes, hands, feet, nose, etc. are carved by a sculptor, but it remains stone.

Nevertheless, God pervades the idol, because there is not even a single atom where God is not present. The same God resides in the hearts of all beings. Therefore, He knows that He is being remembered, served, and worshipped through the idol. The idol helps us cultivate devotional sentiment (bhāv). No idol of any particular place is inherently special. The benefits that a home idol provides are no different from those of an idol in a famous temple, because the true benefits are derived from inner love for God (bhāv), regardless of which idol is worshipped. Pilgrimage, therefore, becomes redundant. Engaging in spiritual practice at home is far better than visiting holy places merely to catch a glimpse of an idol. In such places, one may even be disturbed or deceived by rogue individuals instead of experiencing genuine spiritual satisfaction

भावग्राह्यं मनिराख्यं भावाभावकरं शिवम् । (Shvetashvatar Upanishad 5.4)

God, who creates the universe and brings about its dissolution, accepts only the inner love for Him that the mind has. Therefore, while performing idol worship, one must maintain the feeling that one is worshipping the Supreme Lord Himself. Only then does idol worship become resultful. Without this sentiment, an idol or image has no special significance. Just as a person's idol or picture resembles the person's form, similarly God can appear in the form of an idol or image. From this perspective, the idol is an image of God, and the picture too is of God. While meditating on His form, one should feel that God has emerged from the idol or picture and is personally present before you. Then according to your inner feeling (bhāv), enact His divine pastimes. Without bhāv, no benefit is obtained from an idol or image. Bhāv is most important - and bhāv means love. Devotion is practiced through five bhāv in the rising scale of love intimacy are:

शान्तो दास्यं च सख्यं च वासल्यं माधुर्यं एव च ।

एते पञ्च रसा ज्ञेया मुक्तानामपि दैवतः ॥

(Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu, Pūrvavibhāga 2.5)

- 1 . Shānt bhāv or Serene mood - Love of subjects for their king (e.g., the residents of Ayodhya)
- 2 . Dāsy bhāv or Servicing mood - Love of a servant for the master (e.g., Tulsidas)
- 3 . Sakhy bhāv or mood of friendship - Love between friends (e.g., Krishn's cowherd friends)

- 4 . Vātsaly bhāv or Parental mood - Parental love for a child (e.g., Mother Yashoda)
- 5 . Mādhury bhāv or Romantic mood - Love of a girl for her beloved (e.g., the gopis of Vraja)

Among these, Mādhury bhāv is the closest and sweetest. In it, there is no distance between the devotee and God and practitioner has liberty to move to all other bhāv. But a practitioner from lower scale cannot move to higher scale, e.g. a devotee of Dāsy bhāv cannot go in Sakhy, Vātsaly or Mādhury bhāv. To experience the deepest and most intense love nectar, Mādhury bhāv must be adopted. Do not think, “I am a man - how can this be for me?”

बालाग्रशतभागस्य शतधा कल्पितस्य च ।
भागो जीवः स विज्ञेयः स चानन्त्याय कल्पते ॥
नैव स्त्री न पुमान् एष न चैवायं नपुंसकः ।
यद्यच्छरीरमादत्ते तेन तेन स युज्यते ॥
सङ्कल्पनस्पर्शनदृष्टिमोहै-र्गसाम्बुवृष्ट्यात्मविवृद्धिजन्म ।
कर्मानुगान्यनुक्रमेण देहीस्थानेषु रूपाण्यभिसम्प्रपद्यते ॥
(Shvetashvatar Upanishad 5.9–5.11)

The soul is extremely subtle. It is neither female nor male, nor neuter. According to its past actions, whatever body it receives, it is identified accordingly. Female, male, animal, bird, tree - these are merely bodily identities of the soul. One who is a woman today has been a man countless times before, and one who is a man has likewise been a woman many times.

त्वमेव पुरुषो नाथ नान्योऽस्ति जगतीपते ।

स्त्रियः सर्वा समाख्याताः प्रकृतिस्त्वं परः पुमान् ॥(Bhagavata)

तमीश्वराणां परमं महेश्वरं तं देवतानां परमं च दैवतम् ।

पतिं पतीनां परमं परस्ताद् विदाम देवं भुवनेशमीड्यम् ॥(Shvetashvatar
Upanishad 6.7)

God alone is the supreme, powerful man - the sustainer, nourisher, and giver of strength to all. The soul is powerless, like a dependent wife, to whom everything - even life itself - is given by God. He is the husband of even husbands; that is, all souls are of feminine character.

There is abundant sweetness even in Dāsya bhāv (the mood of servitude). Hanuman ji, ever absorbed in serving Lord Ram, drinks limitless bliss. In Sakhy bhāv, the cowherd friends sometimes make Lord Krishn their horse and ride upon Him during play, when the Lord deliberately allows Himself to lose just to delight His friends. In Vātsaly bhāv, Mother Yashoda binds with a mortar the very Krishn before whom even Mahākāl (Great Death God) trembles, and threatens Him with a thin stick. When Krishn, while playing in the mud, smears His whole body with dirt, His mother scolds Him, saying, “It seems you were a pig in your previous birth.” The Lord smiles inwardly, thinking, “Mother is right - during the Varah incarnation, I did become a boar.” These intimate, love-filled exchanges are not found in any of the other incarnations. In Mādhury bhāv , the gopis, under the pretext of offering a little buttermilk, ask Krishn to dance - and He does dance for them. This is the miracle of the love possessed by the gopis.

Here one must understand that all incarnations of God are one and the same. The same Lord who was Ram in Treta Yug

became Krishn in Dvapara Yuga. Sita became Radha; Lakshmana became BalaRam. The maidservants of Sita and the sages of Dandakaranya were reborn as gopis. People often harbour doubts: "I worship Ganesh, Devi, Ram, or Shiv - how can I worship Krishn? Will my chosen deity become displeased?"

एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।(Rigved 1.164.46)

गुणात्मनस्तेऽपि गुणान् विमातुं हितावतारस्य क ईशितेऽस्य ।

कालोपपन्ना हि गुणा न तत्र न नामरूपे गुणजन्मनोऽपि ॥ (Bhagavat 10.14.7)

अवताराः ह्यसंख्येया हरेः सत्त्वनिधेर्द्विजाः ।

यथाविदासिनः कुल्याः सरसः स्युः सहस्रशः ॥(Bhagavat 1.3.26)

The one God is called by many names. He has infinite names, infinite forms, and infinite incarnations. If there were two separate Gods, there could be fear of changing one's chosen deity - but when God is one, the very question of changing one's faith does not arise.

The beauty of Krishn's form, the sweetness of His pastimes, the sweetness of His love, and the sweetness of His flute are not found in any other incarnation. From the perspective of bliss nectar, the Krishn incarnation is supreme. Without hesitation, a devotee of any other form of God may worship that same God in His Krishn form. In fact, to discriminate among the incarnations of God is considered an offense.

If you love God, that love arises only when you see Him as equal to yourself or even smaller than yourself. Mother Yashoda considered God merely her son - she did not see Him as the Lord of countless universes. His friends regarded

Him as their companion, and the gopis saw Him as their beloved.

However, during the stage of spiritual practice (sādhana), along with devotional feeling (bhāṅv), there must certainly remain awareness of God's divine greatness (māhātmy-jñān) - that God is all-pervading, the indwelling soul of all beings (sarva-bhūtāntarātmā), and omniscient (knowing all our thoughts and intentions and dispensing their results). This awareness keeps one constantly alert and prevents wrongdoing. One remains aware that if a wrong act is performed, the Father God seated within will record it and surely administer its painful consequence.

Through māhātmya-jñāna, love for God keeps increasing - provided that love is selfless (niṣkāṁ). And when it becomes impossible to remain even for a moment without Him, when a single instant feels like an age and tears will not stop flowing, then God Himself will come running. But if the love is selfish (sakāṁ), it increases when pleasure comes and decreases when sorrow comes. Pleasure and pain arise solely from one's own actions; blaming God for them is sheer foolishness. God is the inspirer of action, while the soul is the direct doer; therefore, the soul alone experiences the results of its deeds. Regarding the soul, the Ved declare:

स वा एष महानज आत्मा योऽयं विज्ञानमयः प्राणेषु।

(Brihadaranyak Upanishad 4.4.5)

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा सदा जनानां हृदये सन्निविष्टः ।

(Shvetashvatar Upanishad 3.13)

समानो वृक्षे पुरुषो निमग्नोऽनिशया शोचति मुह्यमानः।

(Mundaka Upanishad 2.2.7)

अणोरणीयान्महतो महीयानात्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम्।

(Kathopanishad 1.2.20)

य आत्मनि तिष्ठन् आत्मनोऽन्तरो यमयति... एष त आत्मान्तर्याम्यमृतः॥

(Brihadaranyak Upanishad 3.7.3)

यो योनीषु निहितः तिष्ठत्येकः यो विश्वं भुवनमाविवेश ।

यो देवानां नामधेयानि वेद तस्मै देवाय नमो नमः ॥

(Shvetashvatar Upanishad 5.2)

The soul is subtle, chetan, and blissful. God governs every living being in every species. The soul is free to perform actions, but not free to escape the enforced results. There is no possibility that one performs actions yet does not experience their consequences. God, who is subtler than the subtlest and greater than the greatest, resides in that very heart. The individual soul abides in that Supreme Soul - there is not even the slightest separation. Such is the intimacy of our relationship with God.

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु।

बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च॥(Kathopanishad 1.3.3)

The soul possesses a chariot in the form of the body; the senses are its horses, the mind is the reins, the intellect is the charioteer, and the soul is the passenger seated within the chariot. Just as a charioteer controls the horses through the reins, similarly the intellect, implements its decisions through the mind to drive senses and the body to acquire pleasure. Therefore, it is the intellect - the decision maker - that must first be corrected. To refine the intellect, it must first be supplied with the necessary knowledge: What is the world?

Who is God? What is the soul? What is happiness? How is happiness attained? Why does sorrow arise? What is life? What is death? The mind cannot act contrary to the intellect's decision. Even the most favourite food is rejected when a doctor advises against it, because the intellect has decided that it is harmful. Only when the intellect has correct information can it make correct decisions. Most people live life just as it comes - degrees, diplomas, marriage, children, house, job, business, status, wealth, entertainment, art, skill, glamour, power - and then die one day. They never even realize what life meant or why it was given. That is why acquiring tattva-jñāna (knowledge of ultimate truth) and repeatedly revising it is of utmost importance. Gauranga Mahaprabhu also said -

सिद्धान्त बलिया चित्ते ना कर आलस।

इहा हैते कृष्णे लागे सुदृढ मानस ॥ (Chaitanya Charitamrita)

Do not be careless or lazy regarding philosophical truth. From this very point onward, firmly fix your mind in Krishn.

Do not be negligent in acquiring tattva-jñāna (knowledge of ultimate truth). If one attempts to rely on love alone, that love will collapse amid numerous doubts and suspicions. It is tattva-jñāna that stabilizes the intellect on the divine path. Our wandering through eighty-four lakh species is entirely the work of the intellect. When the intellect decides that happiness lies in worldly attainment, it deprives us of supreme bliss.

तथा फलमवाप्नोति नान्यथा कर्मकृत्क्वचित् ॥ (Manusmriti)

सुखदुःखौ मनुष्याणां यथाकर्मोपभोग्यौ। (Manusmriti)

यथाकर्म यथाश्रुतं एषः आत्मा लोकं प्राप्नोति। (Brihadaranyak

Upanishad 4.4.5)

कर्म प्रधान विश्व रचि राखा,जो जस करइ सो तस फल चाखा।

(Ramcharitmanas)

A living being receives results strictly according to his actions. According to one's own deeds, one experiences happiness and sorrow and attains corresponding destinations of various life forms after the death. Action is performed through the mind. Actions are of three kinds: stored (sañcita), destined(prārabdha), and active(kriyamāṇa). The accumulation of infinite actions from countless births are stored actions (sañcita karm). From this storehouse, a portion is allotted for experience in the present life - these are destined actions (prārabdha karm). Actions performed in the present, whose results are experienced later, are called active actions (kriyamāṇa karm). These are the actions performed according to our free will. It is through active actions that the mind is applied either to the world or to God.

God gives the functional power to the senses, mind, and intellect. But, how that power is used depends upon the individual soul. The combination of mind and intellect is often referred to simply as "mind."

एतज्ज्ञेयं नित्यमेवात्मसंस्थं नातः परं वेदितव्यं हि किञ्चित् ।

भोक्ता भोग्यं प्रेरितारं च मत्वा सर्वं प्रोक्तं त्रिविधं ब्रह्ममेति ॥

(Shvetashvatar Upanishad 1.12)

God is the inspirer (prerak-brahm), the soul is the experiencer (bhokta-brahm), and Māyā - the complete physical universe -

is the object of experience (bhogya-brahm). Though all three are beginningless and endless, the soul and Māyā are not independent - they are under the control of God. The soul experiences Māyā or the enjoying objects through sensual pleasures. God, as the inspirer, provides chetan power to the soul, which in turn is supplied to the mind to function. Without this chetan power, the soul can do nothing. Hence it is said that not even a leaf moves without God's will, that God seated in the heart turns the soul, or that God makes the soul perform virtuous or sinful acts. Yet the chetan power received from God is used by the mind according to its own desires. Therefore, God is regarded as the inspiring doer, and the soul as the direct doer. Consequently, the suffering that arises from karmic results must be experienced by the soul itself through the mind. There is only one path to freedom from suffering - devotion to God.

नाहं आत्मानमाशाय येन भावेन भावयेत्।

तथा भजामि तं भक्तं मयि तद्दर्शनं किल भागवतः ॥(Bhagavat 10.81.6)

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ॥ (Gita 4.11)

God says: In whatever mood, manner, and degree a devotee worships or loves Me, I reciprocate in the same mood, the same manner, and the same degree. If you consider God as your beloved, He will also regard you as His beloved and respond with the same love and behaviour. One experiences the relationship only when the mind becomes pure; for which devotional practices are prescribed.

Devotion itself means love. Love for God is essential because it purifies the mind. Love directed to the world makes the

mind impure. We become like that which we love. Through love, attachment forms, and according to that attachment, our future destination is determined

यान्ति देवव्रता देवान् पितॄन् यान्ति पितृव्रताः।

भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या यान्ति मद्याजिनोऽपि माम्॥ (Gita 9.25)

If you love Me, you will come to Me. One attains whomsoever one worships. If someone loves his father and that father, due to his own actions, becomes a donkey, then the son too will have to become the offspring of a donkey. If you love a sinful (tāmasic) person, then the hell to which that sinner goes, you too will have to go to the same hell. If you love an epicurean (rājasic) person, you will have to wander through the cycle of eighty-four lakh species. If you love a philanthropist pious (sāttvic) person or gods of heaven, you will go to heaven for some time - but afterward, returning to this very mortal world, you will have to become a dog, cat, donkey, and so on.

ते तं भुक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति।

एवं त्रयीधर्ममनुप्रपन्ना गतागतं कामकामा लभन्ते॥ (Gita 9.21)

इष्टापूर्तं मन्यमाना वरिष्ठं नान्यच्छ्रेयो वेदयन्ते प्रमूढाः।

नाकस्य पृष्ठे ते सुकृतेऽनुभूत्वेमं लोकं हीनतरं वा विशन्ति॥

(Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.10)

Those who perform sacrificial and other meritorious acts and consider them supreme are utterly deluded. After enjoying the pleasures of heaven, they must return to the mortal world and enter lower species of existence.

Why do we perform any action at all? Either to attain happiness or to attain God - because the infinite, eternal happiness we seek is God Himself. Happiness and God are not two different entities; we simply fail to understand this. That is why, instead of striving for divine and eternal bliss, we chase material, perishable sensory pleasures. As a result, we are deprived of supreme bliss and continue to suffer birth and death, hell and many other miseries across the eighty-four lakh species. Since when has this pursuit of happiness been going on?

न जायते म्रियते वा विपश्चिन्नायं कुतश्चिन्न बभूव कश्चित्।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे॥
(Kathopanishad 2.18)

The soul is neither born nor does it die. It does not come into existence from any cause, nor is it ever destroyed. The soul is unborn, everpresent, everlasting, indestructible . Even when the body is destroyed, the soul is not destroyed.

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही॥(Gita 2.22)

Just as a person discards worn-out garments and puts on new ones, so the soul discards old bodies and takes on new ones. Death means the abandonment of the body; the soul itself is ageless, imperishable and immortal.

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः॥(Gita 2.16)

That which exists will always exist, and that which does not exist will never come into existence. This means that a reality which truly exists can never be annihilated, and that which has no real existence can never be newly created. Therefore, Brahm (God), the soul, and māyā (everything in the material world) have always existed and will always exist. All three are beginningless and eternal.

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः॥(Gita 15.7)

The living being, called jīv, jīvātmā, or simply ātmā, is My part. To be a part of God means to be a part of bliss. And because the soul is a part of bliss, every living being in the universe seeks bliss alone. This soul is everlasting (sanātan) - it has existed since beginningless time and will continue to exist eternally.

The soul either remains under the influence of māyā and suffers endless misery in pursuit of trivial, perishable pleasures, or it resides in God's divine realm and eternally enjoys the nectar of divine bliss. Do not think that the soul was once united with God and later seParted and fell under the control of māyā. The soul that is presently under māyā has been in this condition from beginningless time. That which has no beginning can have no originating cause.

Whatever material happiness or sorrow we experience is not being given by God. We experience them because we have not understood this universal system at all - we have not gained knowledge of the soul, Brahm, and māyā.

अजा एका लोहितशुक्लकृष्णा बह्वीः प्रजाः सृजमानाः सरूपाः।

अजो ह्येको जुषमाणोऽनुशेते महद्भयं वज्रमुद्यतं यत्र ॥

(Shvetashvatar Upanishad 4.5)

Māyā is composed of the three moral qualities - sattva (superior altruistic), rajas (normal enjoyer), and tamas (lower sinful). It is beginningless and its controller God is also beginningless. The soul too is beginningless. Due to the influence of this māyā, the mind has continued to consider the material world as the source of happiness and, as a result, suffers birth, death, hell and other miseries.

For the soul bound by māyā, there is only one path to liberation from māyā - surrender to God.

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया।

मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥(Gita 7.14)

This makes it clear that māyā is not an illusion but the divine power of God. Only those souls who surrender to God can cross His divine, threefold māyā. What does śaraṇāgati (surrender) mean? Just as a patient seeking to be cured surrenders to a qualified doctor and follows his instructions and medicine, similarly, when a soul realizes that this disease of worldly existence resulting in innumerable pains (māyā-rūpī bhav-rog) cannot be cured without listening to God or a realized saint, it begins to live according to their instructions and attains its goal.

Just as a fake doctor cannot cure an illness, similarly a fake, hypocritical, or deceitful saint is of no use. The saint under whose guidance you wish to walk must have realized God.

Obedience is essential in surrender. There must be complete faith that God is always with us and protects us.

अनुकूल्यस्य संकल्पः प्रतिकूलस्य वर्जनम्।

(Śaraṇāgati-lakṣaṇa, Vaishnava texts)

One should think only in ways favourable to God. In every condition - gain or loss, fame or infamy, honour or dishonour, defeat or victory - one should experience only His grace. If the understanding remains firmly established in the mind that whatever we receive is the result of our own actions, then we will not blame God. We perform actions according to our own desires, why then should we blame God for their results?

A power station supplies electricity. If someone uses that electricity to commit suicide, the fault lies with the person, not with the power station. Similarly, God provides us a facility - He gives us a body, gives us the power to perform actions, and also gives the results of those actions. Through this very facility, countless souls have attained God, many are attaining Him now, and many more will do so in the future.

You suffer only because of your own wrong actions. Until God-realization is attained, the painful cycle of birth and death for the soul will not end. Never think against God nor against great saints; never doubt any of their actions; maintain complete faith in them. To think for and not to think against - these are two primary conditions of surrender. It is with this intent that Shri Krishn said:

संशयात्मा विनश्यति। (Gita 4.40)

Complete confidence in God and the Ved scriptures - this alone is called Shraddha (faith). First comes faith, then hearing instructions from a genuine realized saint, then practical spiritual discipline, then spiritual experience, and then even deeper faith. Through this sequence, one develops complete faith and trust in God; the heart becomes fully purified, and one attains one's ultimate goal. If one does not have faith then Satsang (the true association) will create the faith. Satsang involves reading and listening to correct philosophy of Ved, chanting, form visualization practice (Roop Dhyān) and association of genuine saint.

Do not argue with anyone about spiritual practice. Practices like chanting (kīrtan) are external, but one must keep one's inner mental discipline and spiritual experiences private. Otherwise, people will ridicule you, the mind will become disturbed, ego will increase, and the disease of seeking social approval will drag you back to the same level - or even lower - from where you began. Until lust, anger, and similar defects are completely eradicated and one has attained the vision of the infinitely blissful God, one should not disclose one's spiritual experiences to anyone. Regarding the Guru, Yamarāj explained to Nachiketa:

तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम्॥
(Chandogya Upanishad 6.14.2)

Approach such a Guru with humility - one who has complete knowledge of the Ved and scriptures and who has realized God. If you evaluate according to this criterion, you will not fall into the trap of impostors. Who, other than JagadGuru

Shri Kripalu Ji Maharaj, possesses complete knowledge of the Ved and scriptures? Such a Guru is obtained only by God's grace, and to receive God's grace, one must practice devotion. Once you find the true Guru, what should you do?

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया।

उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः॥(Gita 4.34)

Bow to him with humility. With a sincere desire to know, ask questions and receive knowledge of ultimate truth. Then serve him and attain God. Service is performed through love. When a mother loves her child, she naturally serves him in every way. A newborn child can do nothing and does not apply his own intellect to the mother's work; the mother does everything for him and finds joy in that service. The child is surrendered to the mother; whatever mother does, child never questions. Similarly, we must surrender to God. Then, according to the Gita's statement - योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् (Gita 9.22) - God, like a mother, will bestow divine love and bliss upon us.

Now a question arises: should we surrender like a child, or love God like a mother? The solution is this: loving God purifies the heart, and only when the heart is completely purified does true surrender become possible. Therefore, the beginning must be with love. This love is called practicing devotion (sādhana-bhakti). Where there is love, one gladly spends money (service through wealth), thinks about the beloved (service through the mind), works for the beloved (service through the body), and experiences joy in all of this. Similarly, when you love God by considering Him your

master, friend, child, or beloved, you experience joy in His service. When we love someone, we speak about their form and qualities (kīrtan), we wish to hear about them (shravaṇ), and their thoughts repeatedly arise in the mind (smaraṇ).

Even if there is no love initially, if one serves God or listens to, chants, and remembers His name, form, pastimes, qualities, abode, and philosophical truths, then gradually, by constant contemplation of God, love will arise.

How does a mother come to love her child? When the child enters her womb, the mother begins thinking, “This is mine, this is mine.” From that point onward, this contemplation continues constantly. In the same way, accept God as your own and repeatedly think, “God alone is mine.” Form whatever relationship you wish with God. Give Him whatever name you like. By repeatedly contemplating that God is yours, love for God will naturally arise. Mother Yashoda used to call Shri Krishn, “Kanuvā, Lālā.” Are these names mentioned anywhere in the Ved?

अज्ञो वदति विष्णाय धीरो वदति विष्णवे।

तयोः फलं तु तुल्यं हि भावग्राही जनार्दनः॥ (Chaitanya Bhagavata 1.11.108)

God does not judge language purity or impurity; He only accepts the inner love. Name, language, pronunciation do not matter. Everything is acceptable to Him, provided there is love and a feeling that He is my own.

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।

तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्रामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥ (Gita 9.26)

A leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water - anything is acceptable if it is offered with love. But if there is no love, even fifty-six varieties of food delicacies become tasteless and are rejected.

Understand this clearly: the mind naturally develops love where it is certain that happiness will be obtained. Therefore, when you truly know and accept from within that “I am the soul, and the soul’s divine bliss can be obtained only from the divine God; only God can grant true happiness and only God can end birth, death, and all suffering” - then love for God will flow naturally, without effort.

Knowing and accepting oneself as the soul is the first and most crucial step on the spiritual journey to God.

मूर्खः देहाद्यहंमतिः ॥ (Bhagavat)

When Uddhav asked God, “Who is a fool?”, Lord Krishn replied that the greatest fool is the one who considers himself to be the perishable body. Once a person identifies himself with the body, he begins accumulating wealth and comforts for bodily pleasure, becomes attached to bodily relations, and at death - when everything must be left behind - experiences unbearable sorrow. Trapped in the bondage of karm (deeds), he wanders through the cycle of eighty-four lakh species.

Even though one knows that the body is temporary, out of stupidity one indulges in bodily enjoyment and gets trapped in

suffering and torment - whereas the body should have been used to attain God and thereby gain eternal bliss.

Provide the body with what is necessary to keep it healthy - food, clothing, etc. - but planning the enjoyment from material objects and people is a total mistake. Happiness is God, and God alone is happiness. Knowing this, move to God to attain happiness.

If you wish to attain happiness and avoid suffering, consider yourself the soul, acquire true spiritual knowledge, and remember God. The conviction "I am the imperishable soul, and God alone is mine" becomes firm only through repeated contemplation. Contemplation and remembrance are functions of the mind. God-realization is entirely a matter of the mind; therefore, mental service (mānasī sevā) holds supreme importance. Mental service is regarded as the highest form of service. Service itself is devotion.

सा तु कर्म ज्ञान योगेभ्योऽपि मतिरुत्कृष्टा ॥ (Narada Bhakti Sutra 25)

Bhakti is the work of the mind. Narada says that devotion is superior to rituals (karm), knowledge, and yoga. Bhakti alone is both the means and the goal. In the Skand Puran, there is a story of a poor man who had no money even to offer food in worship; yet he attained God solely through mental service. This clearly establishes the supreme importance of the mind in the spiritual realm. Within the mind, you may create any form of God you wish - fair or dark, tall or short, child, youth, old, man or lion-man.

त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारे ।

त्वं जीर्णो दण्डेन वञ्चसि त्वं जातो भवसि विश्वतोमुखः ॥

(Shvetashvatar Upanishad 4.3)

God becomes woman, man, boy, girl; He even becomes old and walks with a stick. You are free to envision God's form of your choice. If a particular boy or girl form appeals to you, you may imagine Radha-Krishn in that form. Just remember: do not serve a worldly person by mistaking them for God; rather, serve God mentally in that chosen form. Or create the most beautiful form of God in your mind. Bathe Him, dress Him, adorn Him, offer Him food, and perform whatever service your loving relation inspires - all within the mind.

न देशकालानियमः शौचादिरोधात् पुण्डरीकाक्षस्मरणात् ।

अन्तर्बाह्यशुद्धिः स्वयं भवति नित्यं तत् सर्वं निषेधति ॥ (Vishnu

Dharmottara Puran 3.5.38)

In mental devotion (mānasī bhakti), there cannot be any offense at all. There are no restrictions of place, time, situation, bodily purity, caste, age, or gender. You may practice it anywhere - in a temple, a mosque, a tavern, a bathroom, at home, or in a forest. Do not think that one should not remember God in a toilet. Remember Him everywhere - only then can the Gita's instruction of constant remembrance of God be fulfilled. As Tulsidas says:

प्रभु व्यापक सर्वत्र समाना, प्रेम ते प्रकट होई मैं जाना ।

God pervades everything equally everywhere. There is no restriction of time either. Do it anytime - morning, evening,

afternoon, or night. Do it in any posture – sitting anywhere, standing, lying on a bed, after bathing, without bathing for months, before eating, after eating, while eating, or while performing any action. This itself is Karm Yog as taught in the Gita - externally performing actions through the senses while internally remembering Shri Krishn at all times.

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामिवैष्यस्यसंशयम्॥(Gita 8.7)

Therefore, at all times remember Me and perform your duties. With your mind and intellect completely absorbed in Me, you will surely attain Me - without doubt. When the mind and intellect become one hundred percent united with God, God manifests immediately.

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक्।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः॥ (Gita 9.30)

Bhakti is so powerful that it can grant God-realization even to the most sinful person. Extremely sinful people, ascetics, brahmins, shudras, trees, plants, birds like crow (Kakabhushundi) - all can practice devotion. Everyone has equal right to devotion, and this devotion alone can grant God-realization. Do not think, “God cannot be attained by me.” God created this world precisely so that souls may attain Him. He Himself waits - the moment a soul prepares the purified vessel of the heart , I will immediately accept that soul.

अमृतस्य वै पुत्राः। (Shvetashvatar Upanishad 2.5)

सर्वयोनिषु कौन्तेय मूर्तयः सम्भवन्ति याः।

तासां ब्रह्म महद्योनिरहं बीजप्रदः पिता॥ (Gita 14.4)

All of us are children of God. God is our Father. We have full right over His divine inheritance. The only delay lies in the purification of the heart, which happens through remembrance of God.

All the great saints you hear about were once just like us - afflicted by lust, anger, and other faults. Through remembrance of God, they purified their hearts, and God, out of grace, filled them with infinite life, infinite knowledge, and infinite bliss.

Reflect on this: when even a limited material pleasure increases, how overwhelmed the mind becomes - then imagine the joy of serving God, who is infinite spiritual bliss itself. That joy cannot even be imagined.

Divine love-filled service is not attained immediately. To attain such loving service, during the stage of practice one serves the Guru. Remember: the Guru must be shrotriy (fully knowledgeable in Ved and scriptures) and Brahmishth (one who has realized God). Such a Guru, through disciplined effort, purifies the disciple's heart. A fake Guru cannot even see the actual mind - how then can he cleanse it? When the heart is purified, the Guru infuses it with divine love. Then the soul serves God in Golok and experiences boundless divine bliss. Selfless, love-filled service to Shri Krishn solely for His happiness is ultimately established as the final goal of the soul.

The greatest obstacle in love or service is ego. Therefore, Gaurang Mahaprabhu (Sri Chaitany Mahaprabhu), who was an incarnation of Sri Krishn, gave special importance to humility and said -

तृणादपि सुनीचेन तरोरपि सहिष्णुना।

अमानिना मानदेन कीर्तनीयः सदा हरिः॥ (श्रीशिक्षाष्टक 3)

ईश्वरस्याप्यभिमानद्वेषित्वात् दैन्यप्रियत्वाच्च।(Nārada Bhakti Sūtra 27)

God detests ego, arrogance. He does not like pride but cherishes humility and modesty. One should be humbler than grass - when you step on grass, it does not mind, it rises again as if nothing happened. But if someone speaks a single harsh word to us, we flare up immediately. We must not be disturbed. One should be more tolerant than a tree - if you throw stones at a tree, it still gives fruits in return. Likewise, one should not take people's harsh behaviour or bitter words to heart. There should be no ill-will to anyone; even to those who harm us, there should be goodwill. Do not seek respect for yourself; always offer respect to others. With such humility, one should constantly engage in the chanting of ShriHari's Name.

This is not easy. Whenever insult comes, one must repeatedly practice not to feel hurt and not to react. Train the mind and it becomes exactly as it is trained. Explain to the mind that being hurt by someone's words or behaviour brings no benefit - rather, anger, agitation, dejection, depression only cause one's own harm. Under their influence, intellect fails to function properly, impulsive decisions are taken, and further damage follows. The mind becomes restless and begins

wrong negative thinking. The moment wrong thinking begins, it must be cut off. If a chain of thoughts continues, a decision will inevitably follow. If the flow of misdirected thoughts is not stopped, misconceived action is certain. For example, if someone keeps thinking, "I have failed. How will I face people? I will commit suicide, I will commit suicide" - then he cannot escape suicide. To avoid such thoughts, immediately divert the mind elsewhere - contemplate the form of the Lord. After the emotional surge subsides, the mind takes correct decisions. When anger or negative thoughts arise, remain silent for a while.

क्रोधे वाच्यावाच्यं न विजानाति कर्हिचित्।
नाकार्यमस्ति क्रुद्धस्य नवाच्यं विद्यते क्वचित्।।

In anger, the intellect does not work properly. Erroneous decisions are taken, and improper words are spoken. Never take decisions in an agitated state of mind - whether due to anger, greed, praise, or insult. Do not allow success, failure, fame, disgrace, or insult to enter the mind at all. In such situations, first remain quiet, balanced and silent. Do not react at all. With your discriminating intellect, think carefully about what should be done so that no further harm occurs. When anger arises, ask yourself: What is being spoken? Does it make any sense? Why is the other person behaving this way? Is it intentional? Is it an attempt to provoke me? Is there some misunderstanding? Or is there a shortcoming in my own conduct? What should I do now? Thus divert the mind from the situation or the words, and engage it in resolving these questions. You can just ignore. There is no need to react or give your opinion every time. In such circumstances, essentially remember God but do not blame Him nor demand

anything from Him. Anger and similar emotions only bring sorrow; what we seek is happiness.

Wherever a living being senses happiness, the mind becomes attached there. This attachment itself is called love. The method of loving is the same - whether one loves God or someone in this world. But the result of love depends entirely on the beloved whom one loves. Loving a wrong person leads to suffering. Is love itself at fault? No. The beloved whom one loved, betrayed. The fault lies in loving the faulty object. The misplaced love always brings sorrow instead of joy.

Similarly, if someone shows sympathy, be alert immediately - surely he wants to extract something! He wants something from me. Do not trust him. Trusting in the incorrect place will surely bring harm. Therefore, be clever and be cautious in worldly dealings. Do not trust anyone, because you cannot see another's mind nor know his true intention. You can only guess from spoken words and from outward behaviour, nothing more than that. Deception invariably comes from outer good and loving behaviour that hides inner ill-motive. When someone shows love to you, understand that there is some other motive in his mind. At the slightest improper behaviour or demand, be alert.

Deal with worldly people only within limits. Make decisions carefully. Where immediate decision is not absolutely necessary, give yourself time to think. Decide only after considering all aspects. Speak less - only what is necessary. Excessive speech leads to unintended words. If something hurts the other person, conflict arises; they may harbour

enmity and trouble you. Half of one's mental tension disappears simply by speaking less and speaking sweetly.

पेरिले तैसे उगवते, बोलिल्या सारखे उत्तर येते।

मग कर्कश बोलावे, ते काय निमित्त? (Samartha Rāmadās)

As you sow, so you reap; as you speak, so is the response - then what reason is there to speak harshly? Hence, outward behaviour must be proper, but within the mind there should be neither attachment nor hatred for anything or anyone in the world. Where you love, you will receive the result accordingly. Only by loving God will we attain His infinite bliss.

The same rule applies to charity. The outcome of charity depends on where it is given. Charity should be offered only to a deserving recipient. Charity given in the improper place results in suffering and sorrow. In this age (Kali-Yug), charity has great importance.

प्रगट चारि पद धर्म के कलि महुँ एक प्रधान।

जेन केन बिधि दीन्हें दान करइ कल्याण॥ (Ramcharitmanas, बालकाण्ड 7.3)

The four pillars of Religion are truth, compassion, austerity, and charity. In Kali Yug, only charity remains prominent. Whatever way you give charity - whether with good feeling, bad feeling, or even out of shame - it brings welfare. But if your charity is used in sinful acts, then along with the sinner you too will be punished. Charity given to worldly people will cause one to wander through 8.4 million species. Charity

given to sinful people will lead to hell. And charity given to realised true saint will cleanse the heart. Therefore, charity must be given only to the worthy.

दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे ।

देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ॥ (Gita 17.20)

सुपात्रे यत् प्रदीयेत तत् दानमिति शब्दघते ।

अयोग्ये यत् प्रदीयेत तद्दानं निरर्थकं स्मृतम् ॥ (Narad Puran)

Charity should be given only to a worthy recipient.

यावद् भ्रियेत जठरं तावत् स्वत्वं हि देहिनाम् ।

अधिकं योऽभिमन्येत स स्तेनो दण्डमर्हति ॥ (Bhagvat 7.14.8)

A living being has a right only to that much wealth as is required to maintain the body. Whoever considers more than this as his own is a thief and deserves punishment. Therefore, if one possesses wealth beyond necessity, one should give it in charity to a worthy person. And if one does not give charity, then -

अदत्तदानाच्च भवेद्दरिद्रो दारिद्र्यदोषेण करोति पापम् ।

पापप्रभावान्नरकं प्रयाति पुनर्दरिद्रः पुनरेव पापी ॥ (Bhagvat 7.14.9)

By not giving charity, or by giving charity to an unworthy person, one becomes poor. Due to poverty, one commits sinful acts; due to sin, one goes to hell; and again returns to poverty. Again he commits sin, and this cycle continues for many human lives. As it is, after one human life, another human life is given only after many 'kalpas'. One Kalp means 4.32 billion years. So think how harmful it is not to give charity to the worthy recipient. Another aspect of charity is that in

Kali-Yug attachment to wealth is the strongest. And the Lord says -

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान् पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः।

निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति॥ (Gita2.71)

Only one whose mind is not attached to anything in this world attains Me. Charity gradually reduces attachment to wealth. In fact, we spend money where our attachment lies. This attachment itself is called love. But we have already seen the result of loving the world - various kinds of suffering: the suffering of birth and death, and suffering in the eighty-four lakh species including hell. Thus, the result of loving the world is only suffering. Therefore, all Ved and scriptures declare: in the world, perform only your duty; do not love worldly persons or objects. Love only God - that is the devotion (bhakti).

Do not hate or feel enmity to worldly people either. The world judges the love in one's heart only through outward behaviour. External behaviour is called acting or performance. No one can see the love of the heart unless one can see the mind itself. Everyone in the world seeks their own happiness. The world perceives only external conduct. Therefore, maintain good behaviour and outward affection to all.

God does not see external conduct; He sees the love of the heart. Therefore, love God. This means: in the external world, perform acting of love to mother, father, husband, wife, friends, etc., but inwardly establish your true relationship with God and offer Him the real love of your heart. Wisdom lies in

giving each person what is sought by that person. Even the display of outer affection should be limited to the extent that it does not cause spiritual harm. Remain alert, for the suffering that results from our actions must be borne by us alone. Therefore, Naradji has warned -

लोके वेदेषु तदनुकूलाचरणं तद्विरोधिषूदासीनता च॥

Do not perform any social or religious custom that obstructs devotion, but do not argue against it either. Do not give any attention to it - simply ignore it. Even if a devotee abandons worldly and religious customs completely, there is no question of punishment. Tulsidas says:

रामहि केवल प्रेम पियारा। जानि लेहु जो जाननिहारा॥

Whoever wishes to know God, love Him and see the result yourself. Understand that God is attained only through love. No other social customs, religious duties, knowledge, austerities, or vows are required. He further says -

जाके प्रिय न राम-बदैही।

तजिये ताहि कोटि बैरी सम, जद्यपि परम सनेही॥

तज्यो पिता प्रहलाद, बिभीषन बंधु, भरत महतारी।

बलि गुरु तज्यो कंत ब्रज-बनितन्हि, भये मुद-मंगलकारी॥(Vinay Patrika)

See here: did the Gopis abandon their husbands and go to the forest for penance? No. The meaning of abandoning husband or anyone else is that they continued their duties outwardly, but in the mind they did not consider husband or any relative

as their own. They did not give their mind's love to them. Their only relationship was with Sri Krishn. They considered Sri Krishn as their husband, beloved, brother, sister, mother, father, friend - and gave Him their mind's love. In the world, relationships are based on the body, but with God the relationship is formed through the mind, not the body. No one can see the mind, so in the mind you should accept Sri Krishn alone as yours, while outwardly performing worldly duties like gopis did. But when the flute called them to the divine dance play (raas) -

तास्त्यक्त्वा लोकपाशान् आशाः च कुटुम्बिन्यः।

जग्मुः कृष्णान्तिकं प्रेम्णा तत्सर्वस्वं न्यवेदयन्॥(Bhagvat 10.29.11)

The gopis abandoned all social and religious restraints, hopes, and family, and went lovingly to Krishn, offering Him their all. Prahlad abandoned his father, Vibhishan his brother, Bharat his mother, Bali his Guru, and the gopis their husbands. All attained auspiciousness because the renunciation was for God. Renouncing Religion for worldly people leads to hell.

The reason for this is that contact with material objects and material persons contaminates the inner being (the heart). "Contamination" means that material elements fill the heart. True happiness is non-material, non-physical, divine. It means divine is that which is not material. Therefore, the mind must necessarily be emptied of material objects and persons - if not today, then certainly after a thousand births. A mind that has been emptied in this way alone is called a pure mind.

Such a pure mind is first made divine. Then divine power is infused into that divine mind, enabling it to contain divine love. If divine love were poured into a material mind, one would not even be aware of one's bones and ribs - the heat of divine love is so intense. The implication is that if one wishes to move in the divine realm, one must practice replacing contemplation of the material world with contemplation of the divine Lord. This purifies the mind and resolves our problem of eternal happiness. How does one attain that supreme devotion which brings eternal bliss? Nārada explains -

तत्तु विषयत्यागात् सङ्गत्यागाच्च।

अव्यावृत्तभजनात्।

लोकेऽपि भगवद्गुणश्रवणकीर्तनात्।

मुख्यतस्तु महत्कृपयैव भगवद्कृपालेशाद्वा। (Narad Bhakti Sutra 35-38)

That devotion is attained by renouncing material pleasures, renouncing material association, uninterrupted worship, and hearing and chanting the qualities of God. Primarily, devotion is obtained through the grace of great saints or by even a mere fraction of the Lord's mercy.

भक्त्या ह्येव मनुष्याणां निःसङ्गेनार्थदर्शनम्।

भावग्राही जनार्दनः भक्तिमेव गृहीत्वा स्वम्॥ (Bhagvat 11.14.12)

सा त्वस्मिन् परमप्रेमरूपा॥ (Narad Bhakti Sutra 2)

भक्त्याऽहमेकया ग्राह्यः श्रद्धया आत्मा प्रियः सती॥ (Bhagvat 11.14.21)

The Lord says: I am attained only through devotion.

व्याधस्याचरणं ध्रुवस्य च वयो विद्या गजेन्द्रस्य का।

का जातिर्विदुरस्य यादवपतेरुग्रस्य किं पौरुषम्।

कुब्जायाः किमु नाम रूपमधिकं किं तत्सुदाम्नो धनम्।

भक्त्या तुष्यति केवलं न तु गुणैः भक्तिप्रियो माधवः॥ (Hari Bhakti vilas 10.283)

What was the conduct of Vāli? What was Dhruva's age? Was Gajendra (the elephant) a scholar? Was Vidura of a high caste? Was Ugrasena valorous? What beauty did Kubjā possess? What wealth did Sudāmā have? God does not look at wealth, caste, beauty, knowledge, strength, qualities, or skills. He is satisfied only with love. God is pleased with devotion. God can be attained only through love.

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिः यथा देवे तथा गुरौ।

तस्यैते कथिताः अर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः॥ (Shvetashvatar Upanishad 6.23)

As one has devotion to God, so should one have devotion to the Guru. Only then supreme devotion is attained.

भक्तिः परा भवति नैव साध्यते महाभागवतोऽस्य भावः॥ (Bhagvat 11.2.45)

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति।

समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम्॥ (Gita 18.54)

The devotion (love) that we practice to God is called sādhana-bhakti. Its function is only to purify the inner being. Thereafter, by His grace, God uses His own intrinsic divine power to make the mind divine and bestows supreme devotion. God Himself becomes bound by this devotion. When the mind becomes divine, it drinks divine bliss through

divine devotion and remains eternally happy forever in the Lord's abode.

ये के च पृथिव्यामन्तरिक्षे ये दिवि शुभ्रा।

येन देवा ओजसा प्रावृतासो भावेन तद्दधो भवन्ति॥ (Rigved 1.164.39)

The Lord reciprocates in the same measure, in the same way and with the same feeling with which one worships Him. To make this feeling stronger, through mind one must visualize dynamically moving form of God. Create in your mind the most beautiful form of God as you wish. Establish a relationship that you wish with Him through the mind alone. The scriptures describe four principal relationships - accept God as your Master, Friend, Child (Son), or Beloved. Visualize God in the same way as you interact in worldly relationships. Dress Him in garments and ornaments of your choice. Create pastimes of your liking with Him in your mind. Sometimes bring the mood of union, sometimes of separation. Increase your longing to meet Him. Love God exclusively, selflessly, and continuously. Love God alone (exclusive love). Do not ask God for any worldly object or even liberation (selfless love) - ask only for His service and His love, for His happiness. Always contemplate Him (continuous love). For this, you may take the support of an idol or image. There is no need for ritual worship, name recitation (japa), austerities, vows, or yoga. Even more beneficial than idol worship is congregational chanting of God's Name. Whatever practice you adopt, remembrance is essential.

मनेर स्मरण प्राण। (Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu)

अपवित्रः पवित्रो वा सर्वावस्थां गतोऽपि वा।

यः स्मरेत् पुण्डरीकाक्षं स बाह्याभ्यन्तरः शुचिः॥ (Garud Puran)

There are no rules or restrictions for remembrance. Whether pure or impure, in whatever condition one may be - whether having bathed in the Ganges or covered in extreme filth - remembrance of God purifies both body and mind. The scriptures impose no restrictions whatsoever on remembering God. Therefore, remember Him whenever and however you are. Vedavyāsa says -

तस्मात् केनाप्युपायेन मनः कृष्णे निवेशयेत्।

स वै पुंसां परो धर्मो यतो भक्तिरधोक्षजे॥ (Bhagvat)

येन केन प्रकारेण मनो यस्मिन्निवेश्यते।

तद्गुणैः परमाराध्यः पुरुषः प्रकृतेः परः॥ (Bhagwan Kapil)

येन-केन प्रकारेण मनः कृष्णे निवेशयेत्। (Bhakti Ramrit Sindhu)

Adopt any method by which your mind becomes absorbed in God - whether or not it is described in the scriptures. A practitioner once stood in a forest hut, fixing his hair with a broken comb in a cracked mirror, then looked outside to see whether Krishn had come or not. When He did not come, he began to weep. Which scripture prescribes such a practice? Yet God was compelled to grant him His vision. Continuous remembrance purified his heart, and God appeared.

Always remember one principle: anything other than God - His Name, Form, Qualities, Pastimes, Abode, and His saints - if it enters the mind for any reason, will contaminate the mind. Hearing or reading things opposed to God, criticizing the Ved, scriptures, saints, or God, listening to such criticism, disrespect, indulgence in sensual pleasures, doubting God's

actions, interpreting them materially, blaming time, fate, or God, or discriminating among saints based on caste, place, or language - all these are offenses and forms of bad association (kusaṅga). Bad association will eat up your spiritual practice and service. Along with practice, avoiding bad association is extremely essential. During the stage of practice, one should eat, drink, sleep, and speak only as much as necessary. One should not sleep more than six hours. One should consume a sāttvic (simple vegetarian without chilli, spices) diet. Clothing should be in accordance with Indian cultural values. Speak less and speak sweetly. Do not look for others' faults, do not listen to them, and do not engage in slander.

Just as we are, so are all beings - bound by māyā. Lust, anger, greed, hatred, jealousy, hypocrisy - all these faults remain in everyone until God is attained. The person and the fault you contemplate in that person will gradually enter your own mind. Your task is to empty the mind of material objects and persons. If the mind repeatedly goes to some object or person, or develops ill will, place Krishna there - because Krishna pervades everything, inside and outside all beings. Do not be careless. Do not keep saying "I will do it." Begin immediately.

न श्वः श्वमुपासीत को हि पुरुषस्य श्वो वेद ।

अध्रुवं जीवितं लोके न ध्रुवं प्राणधारणम् ॥ (Mahabhrat)

Do not postpone things to tomorrow - who knows what tomorrow holds for a human being? Life in this world is uncertain, and even the breath one holds is not assured. Do not keep saying "tomorrow, tomorrow." Who knows whether

tomorrow will even come? No one knows when the life-breath will depart. Has Yamarāja given any promise? No one knows whether the next moment will even be available or not. Therefore, secure your treasure and afterlife now. Remember God always. By regularly performing chanting (kīrtan), āraṭi, and by listening to, reading, and reflecting upon divine theoretical knowledge, one progresses rapidly in the divine realm.

Merely reading or hearing once is not sufficient. For this very reason, Vedavyāsa formulated the aphorism

“आवृत्तिसकृदुपदेशात्” (Brahma Sūtra 4.1.1) - instruction must be repeated again and again. In Kali-Yug, where the worldly atmosphere is overwhelmingly dominant, divine teachings evaporate from the mind like a drop of water sprinkled on a red-hot iron plate. Yājñavalkya also told Maitreyī -

श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यो मैत्रेयी (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad):

Listen to the teaching, reflect upon it, and practice it. Until God-realization is attained, arrogance and ego should never arise that “I already know everything.” Say “I know” only when that teaching is permanently established in the mind and one’s conduct matches with its meaning. Otherwise, one’s condition will resemble that of a parrot whom a kind man had trained to warn itself - “A hunter is coming from behind; he will spread a net; do not sit on it, or you will be caught.” When the hunter arrived, the parrot kept singing this very warning while sitting on the net. It continued singing the same even

inside the cage. Therefore, only when conduct consistently follows instruction should one believe that one truly knows.

When you have understood that there is no real happiness in the world, then going to some “bābā” (any person) with desires for worldly wealth, children, or possessions is sheer foolishness. Also understand that no bābā can give anything contrary to one’s destiny (prārabdha). Even God Himself does not act against destiny. If that were possible, why would Shri Krishn not have saved Abhimanyu? Why would Śrī Rāma not have saved His father Daśaratha? God does not override His own law.

Since even God does not go against destiny, no bābā (spiritual person) can give something that is not present in one’s destiny. Suppose a fraudulent bābā blesses a hundred people - only a few of them experience fulfilment due to their own destiny. They then believe that the blessing worked. Such publicity keeps the bābā’s business running. Those whose wishes are not fulfilled remain silent. Often, deceitful disciples of such deceitful bābās spread false propaganda and cheat people. Beware of such bābās.

Never go to any bābā for a job, children, wealth, or any other worldly gain. Stay away from tantric bābās as well. Such impostors only exploit people. If you are already visiting such bābās, leave them immediately without hesitation. Do not be afraid - no one can harm you because you have taken refuge in the all-powerful God.

Understand clearly: destiny is the result of actions performed in previous lives, and regarding karm there is an unbreakable rule -

अवश्यमेव भोक्तव्यं कृतं कर्म शुभाशुभम्।

नाभुक्तं क्षीयते कर्म कल्पकोटिशतैरपि ॥ (Brahmvaivart Puran, प्रकृति खंड 37.16)

A living being must inevitably experience the results of the good and bad actions performed by oneself. Also understand that the right to perform new actions (kriyamāṇa karm) exists only in the human life. Even the heavenly gods, though superior in many respects, cannot perform actions for shaping their future or attaining God. All other births are only for experiencing results (bhoga-yoni).

The results of actions performed in the human life are experienced in other births. The human life is both a karm-yoni and a bhoga-yoni. A human being must experience destiny and also shape the future through fresh actions. The fruit of karm never perishes, even after millions of cycles of universe, until it is experienced. One kalpa equals 4.32 billion years. After wandering through lower species for many such kalpas, a human life is attained again. However, in biological instincts, all species are equal.

आहारनिद्राभयमैथुनं च समानमेतत्पशुभिर्नराणाम् ।

धर्मो हि तेषामधिको विशेषो धर्मेण हीनाः पशुभिः समानाः ॥ (Hilopdesh 1.2)

Eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating - humans are no different from animals in these activities. If one does only these in

human life, then no benefit of human life has been gained.

Advantage is gone. As Kabir says

हिरा जनम का मोल था कवडी बदले जाय

A valuable diamond is thrown out for goods worth a penny! In fact, additional damage has been done, because one must go back to lower species and suffer again.

Human life, brings you to the door that opens directly into God's abode Goloka. One fails to realize that human life is the only opportunity to meet God. Sensory pleasures are available even in lower species as well. The pleasure a human derives from eating delicacies is the same pleasure a cow derives from eating green grass. A human is called human only by devotion to God. Otherwise, human and animal are the same. Do not be an animal. Be human.

इह चेदवेदीदथ आत्मानं प्राक् शरीरात् ।

ततः सर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥ (Kathopnisjad 2.3.4)

If love for God is not cultivated in this human life, tremendous loss occurs. After and suffering for billions of years, human life is attained again. And then whether one is again born in India, receives divine knowledge, and practices devotion - there is no guarantee. Therefore, the Ved proclaim

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ॥ (Kathopnishad 1.3.14)

Arise, awake, and attain your supreme goal. Human life is not guaranteed even for a moment. People of all ages die - from newborns to the elderly. Do we know our lifespan? The Ved declare: whenever the value of human life is understood,

immediately begin the process of mind purification. Do not think, "God will not be attained by me." God is already seated within our impure heart; He will manifest as soon as the mind becomes pure.

कौमार आचरेत् प्राज्ञो धर्मान् भागवतानिह ।

दुर्लभं मानुषं जन्म तदप्यध्रुवमार्थदम् ॥ (Bhagvat 7.6.1)

युवैव धर्मशीलः स्यात् अनित्यं खलु जीवितम्।

को हि जानाति कस्याद्य मृत्युकालो भविष्यति॥ (Mahabhrat)

Prahlāda says: begin devotion from childhood. If childhood has passed, begin in youth. In old age, the body will not cooperate, and the mind will be deeply attached to the world - both will obstruct devotion. Hurry - no one knows when Yamarāja (Death God) will issue our ticket. Even in old age, do whatever is possible. Human life is momentary and rare, and once lost, it is not easily regained. Do spiritual practice. Otherwise, wander again through eighty-four lakh species, where living beings survive by consuming one another. You too have endured that suffering of being food many times. If devotion is not practiced in human life, you will have to go there again.

कल करे सो आज कर, आज करे सो अब ।

पलभर में मृत्यु होगी, फिर करेगा कब?

“What can be done tomorrow, do today;

what can be done today, do now. Death happens in just a moment - then when will you do?”

What is to be done? Love God. In fact, contemplation of God through any emotion - lust, anger, fear, affection, or any feeling - purifies the mind.

कामं क्रोधं भयं स्नेहमैक्यं सौहृदमेव च ।

नित्यं हरौ विदधतां न बन्धो न विवर्धनम् ॥ (Bhagvat 11.5.36)

Whenever the pure Lord enters the mind in any way, the mind becomes purified.

कामात् गोप्यो भयात् कंसो द्वेषाच्चैद्यादयो नृपाः ।

सम्बन्धाद्वृष्णयः स्नेहाद्ययं भक्त्या वयं विभो ॥ (Bhagvat 7.1.30)

The gopīs attained Lord Shri Krishn through romantic desire, Karna through fear, Śiśupāla and other kings through hatred, the Pāṇḍavas through affection, and Nārada and other sages through pure devotion. Because their minds were completely united with Krishn, they attained Him. Therefore, we too should turn our emotions to God, so that the mind is purified and the problem of our eternal happiness is solved.

विषयान् ध्यायतश्चित्तं विषयेषु विषज्यते ।

मामनुस्मरतश्चित्तं मय्येव प्रविलीयते ॥ (Bhagvat 11.14.27)

Contemplation alone is everything. If you contemplate worldly pleasures, you will be trapped in the world; and if you contemplate God, you will attain eternal happiness.

ध्यायतः विषयान् पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।

सङ्गात्संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥

क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।

स्मृतिभ्रंशाद्बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥ (Gita 2.62-63)

Contemplation of worldly objects leads only to destruction. Destruction means the attainment of sufferings, which are experienced by wandering through hell and other lower births. The company we keep influences our thinking. Bad association gives rise to bad thoughts, whereas association with a true saint gives rise to thoughts related to God.

तं भ्रंशयामि सम्पद्भ्यो यस्य चेच्छाम्यनुग्रहम् ॥ (Bhagvat 10.27.16)
यस्याहमनुगृह्णामि हरिष्ये तद्भ्रंशं शनैः ।
ततोऽधनं त्यजन्त्यस्य स्वजनाः दुःखदुःखितम् ॥

God says: upon whom I bestow My grace, I take away his wealth and opulence, so that his ego is destroyed. Although this may appear to be misfortune, it is in fact My grace. When a person who once believed everything was going according to his wishes becomes deprived of wealth and prestige, even relatives and close ones turn away from him and neglect him. Then he realizes the truth - that people respected him only because of his opulence. He understands that the world is selfish and that he is merely one living being among countless others. Then he turns to God and attains his true welfare.

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः ।

बन्धाय विषयासक्तं मुक्त्यै निर्विषयं स्मृतम् ॥ (Amritbindu
Uprishad6.34)

The mind alone is the cause of bondage and liberation. And the function of the mind is contemplation and remembrance. Therefore, whatever you do – chanting (kīrtan), name

recitation (japa), worship, idol seeing (darśana) remembrance must be there.

Shri Krishn says:

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः।

तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः॥ (Gita 8.14)

One who remembers Me alone - with exclusive devotion - my name, form, pastimes, qualities, abode, and saints (and not any other deity or human being), and who remembers Me continuously and exclusively, attains Me very easily.

एतावान् साधनं धर्मः सर्वेषां समुदाहृतः।

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं महतां गतेः॥ (Bhagvat 7.5.23)

Among all spiritual practices - hearing, chanting, and remembrance are supreme. Even among these three, remembrance is above all, because it alone purifies the mind. Hearing and chanting are supportive practices, and without remembrance they cannot lead to the ultimate goal. Still, compared to being engrossed by worldly matters, hearing and chanting are certainly beneficial.

न संकीर्तनं यस्य सर्वपापप्रणाशनम्।

प्रणामदुःखशमनं नमामि हरिमादरात्॥ (Bhagvat 6.2.12)

The congregational chanting of God's name destroys all sins and removes all sufferings.

कलियुग केवल नाम अधारा।

सुमिरि सुमिरि नर उतरहि पारा॥ (Ramcharitmanas)

कलिजुग सम जुग आन नहिं जौं नर कर बिस्वास।

गाइ राम गुन गन बिमल भव तर बिनहिं प्रयास॥ (Ramcharitmanas)

If a person has faith, there is no age like Kali-Yug, because in this age, by simply chanting the name, form, pastimes, qualities, and abode of God, one can attain the goal effortlessly.

एहिं कलिकाल न साधन दूजा। जोग जग्य जप तप ब्रत पूजा॥

रामहि सुमिरिअ गाइअ रामहि। संतत सुनिअ राम गुन ग्रामहि॥

(Ramcharitmanas)

In Kali-Yug, yoga, sacrifice, recitation, austerity, vows, and ritual worship will not be effective. Only constant remembrance of God, singing His glories, and listening to His stories is the sole, simple and effective path.

हरेर्नाम हरेर्नाम हरेर्नामैव केवलम्।

कलौ नास्त्येव नास्त्येव नास्त्येव गतिरन्यता॥ (Kalisantanopnishad)

In Kali-Yug, there is only one path to reach God - chanting the name of Hari, chanting the name of Hari, chanting the name of Hari. There is no other path, no other path, no other path.

The Purāṇas also describe deity worship.

देहावयव-विभागेन द्रव्याणामपि विभ्रमान्।

शिलाया धातुरूपायाः चित्रस्य परिचिन्तयेत्॥ (Bhagvat 11.27.12)

According to the features of the deity's form, one should use appropriate offerings, and thoughtfully worship the stone or

metal images or painted pictures. The Bhāgavata also describes nine kinds of image forms, including those mentally conceived. Temples and worship procedures are also described therein. But what is a Purāṇa?

वेदार्थं सारतया ज्ञेयं पुराणं ब्रह्मसम्मितम्॥ (Marsya Puran 53.65)

वेदानां विस्तारकं पुराणम्॥ (Brahmd Puran 1.2.20)

इदं भगवता प्रोक्तं ब्रह्मणेऽहं ब्रवीमि ते ।

वेदानां अर्थोऽयं रहस्यम्॥ (Bhagvat 2.9.31)

The Purāṇas are the essence, meaning and explanation of the Ved and Upaniṣads. In universe, the Purāṇas appeared even before the Ved. Both Ved and Purāṇas are considered beginningless and are also regarded as authored by Vedavyāsa. Therefore, in Sanātana Dharm, both are equally authoritative.

So, God is happiness which is eternal and infinite. He is both personal (with form) and impersonal (without form).

Regarding Lord Shri Krishn, the Bhāgavata declares: “रसतमः॥ परमः॥” the supreme essence of bliss. For Brahm it is said: “रसो वै सः॥” - He is rasa (bliss). But the Mahārāsa performed by Shri Krishn is described as “रसतमः॥ परमः॥” - the highest, ultimate bliss.

ब्रह्मानन्दो भवेदेष चेत्परार्द्धगुणसिद्धः ।

नैति भक्ति-सुखमबोधेः परमाणुतुलमपि॥

(Bhakti Rasamrit Sindhu 1.1.38)

Even if the bliss of Brahm - known as kaivalya-mokṣa or liberation - were multiplied by a hundred quintillion times, it would still not equal even a single atom of the ocean of divine love experienced in devotion. Therefore, to experience this supreme and ultimate bliss, even the great liberated souls (Parmhansa) who had attained Brahm-bliss became trees, creepers, and leaves in the land of Vraja.

But our original question was this: Was there anything that God needed to attain, for which He recreated this universe?

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन॥ (Gita 6.8)

In the Gītā, the Lord says: “O Pārtha, I have nothing whatsoever that needs to be done in the three worlds.”

न तस्य कार्यं करणं च विद्यते। न तस्य समानोऽभ्यधिकश्च दृश्यते।
परास्य शक्तिर्विविधैव श्रूयते। स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च॥ (Shvetashvatar Upnishad 3.22)

God has no need to perform any action - not even creating universe. He doesn't need to do anything. No one is equal to Him, nor is anyone superior to Him. He is supreme. His transcendental (parā) power is inherent and natural, endowed with knowledge, strength, and work power.

Action is performed only when there is something to be attained. God is pūrṇakāma (self-fulfilled) and ātmārāma (self-satisfied). He requires nothing external and nothing remains to be attained by Him. Then when God incarnates and performs innumerable actions, what are they?

They are called līlā. Līlā means divine play or drama. A play has its script ready beforehand, which is why the narratives of all incarnations already exist in the Purāṇ even before the incarnations occur. The most important purpose of incarnation is to make it easy for worldly people to fix their minds on God. People enjoy listening to, reading, or watching stories. The kind of interest, attention and time with which people watch the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, or divine incarnations - whether by reading, hearing, on television, in cinema - how many people could focus that long on form visualization? How many would devote that much time to kīrtan? Even though God has no need to act, He acts out of compassion for the welfare of souls. Performing action without any necessity, solely for the welfare of living beings, is called grace (kṛpā).

God Himself is bliss (Anand). That bliss is eternal, chetan, and endowed with knowledge-power (Chit). He walks, speaks, thinks, and makes decisions; therefore He is called conscious (chetan). Imagine painting with the ink of bliss, filling it with the colours of bliss, and breathing life of bliss into it - that is God, overflowing with bliss. That which is completely saturated in and out with bliss is called God. That bliss has neither beginning nor end - it is beginningless and endless, hence called (Sat). Thus from sat-chit-ānanda, the name Sacchidānanda arises.

As far as existence is concerned, all moving and non-moving beings are under His control. He is the master of all, and all beings - moving and unmoving - are His body-form and His servants.

यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन्। (Rigved 1.164.46)

मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनं तु महेश्वरम्। (Shvetashvatar Upanishad 4.10)

सहजहिं चले सकल जग स्वामी। (Ramcharitmanas, अयोध्याकाण्ड)

Jagannātha is not only the Lord of human beings, but of all moving and non-moving creatures.

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च।

अहंकार इीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा॥

जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत्।

एतद्भिन्नां प्रकृतिं विद्ध्यपरामिति मे पराम्॥ (Gita 7.4-5)

Earth, water, fire, air, mind, intellect, and ego - these nonconscious, lifeless elements are called māyā. Life does not exist in them. Because of the soul, the body, mind etc appear alive. God says that māyā is His aparā (inferior) power, whereas the living being is His parā (superior) power. Aparā means nonconscious, lifeless; parā means chetan, living.

The conclusion is that God is the master of all. Everything seen in this universe - conscious or nonconscious, moving or unmoving - is His power. Word power indicate that these are capable of doing work. Power cannot exist without the possessor of power or without source of energy. Thus God - the source - is present everywhere.

ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्। (Ishopnishad 1)

Everything in this universe is pervaded by God; there is none greater than Him.

जगत्सर्वं शरीरं ते वपुस्ते जगतां पतेः।

भूतग्राममयं विश्वं त्वयि सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम्॥ (Ramyan)

God is the Lord of the universe. The entire world and all beings constitute His body. Everything rests in Him. In the Gītā, Shri Krishn granted Arjun direct vision of this truth through His cosmic form.

बहिरन्तश्च भूतानामचरं चरमेव च। (Gita 13.16)

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति। (Gita 18.61)

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः। (Gita 10.20)

एको देवः सर्वभूतेषु गूढः सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा। (Atharv
Ved10.8.27)

All these statements convey the same truth: God resides in the hearts of all beings; He exists within all and also pervades the external, non-moving universe. He is the master of universe (both living and non-living) . Māyā and the soul are under His control; He is under no one's control. Nothing exists beyond Him. He is supremely independent - capable of doing, not doing, or doing the opposite. He is all-pervading and the master of all, endowed with infinite life, infinite knowledge, and infinite bliss. He has nothing to accomplish and nothing to attain. All moving and non-moving entities function only by His power. So what could such a God possibly gain by creating the universe?

For any action, there must be a purpose. Generally, five things are sought: life, knowledge, freedom, power, and bliss. Among these, bliss is supreme; all other pursuits exist only to obtain happiness. We have seen that God possesses all of these

eternally and infinitely. Then why would such an all-blissful God create this sorrow-filled world?

Śāṅḍilya Muni answers this: the primary cause of God's action is compassion.

मुख्यम् तस्मै कारुण्यम्। (Shandilya Bhakti Sutra 49)

अकारण करुणा सागर। (Ramcharitmanas)

तन्मयायानुयुगं नूनं कारुण्यं च तदात्मनः॥ (Bhagvat 10.14.8)

Lord Shri Krishn's divine pastimes (līlā) was inspired by compassion. Assuming infinite forms, He became one Kṛṣṇ for each gopī and bestowed the nectar of divine rāsa. Rāsa was an expression of divine love, unfolding through dance, forest revelry, and water play. Remember that He needs no one and nothing from outside, still He showered love upon everyone so that we may develop faith that just as the cowherd boys, the gopīs, Mother Yaśodā, and Nanda Bābā received His love, we too can receive it.

God is compassionate without cause. Compassion is His very nature. He is merciful, kind, and gracious. Actions arising from causeless compassion are called grace (kṛpā). Grace is that action which is performed solely for the welfare of another, without expecting anything in return. No one can actually give anything to God, because everything that exists in universe has been created by Him alone. Whatever anyone possesses has been received from God. Therefore, the living being owns nothing that can be offered to God in exchange for life or any other possession.

The conclusion is that God recreated this universe purely out of His own causeless, compassionate nature.

Thus we arrive at the answer: God created the universe out of compassion for our pity condition. What condition? During the great dissolution (mahāpralaya), all living beings were merged within the divine womb of the Lord. They were not experiencing happiness. Being bound only within the causal body, they were unable to do anything to attain happiness.

There are three kinds of bodies. First is the gross body, through which living beings strive for happiness in this world. Second is the subtle body. When we dream, the gross body remains lying on the bed, but the body through which we wander in the dream is the subtle body. The causal body consists solely of desires and lust impressions which God unfolds into subtle body and gross body during the creation of universe. During mahāpralaya, the living beings existed only in the causal body. There were no senses, no mind, no intellect, no gross body - nothing at all. Seeing this, the Lord was moved by compassion, and by His causeless merciful nature, He created the universe.

From this, it also becomes clear that universe was recreated so that all living beings may attain happiness. One may argue that people seek wealth, women, children, and so on. But it must be understood that the pursuit of all these is ultimately for one's own happiness. As the Bhāgavata states

सर्वेषामपि भूतानां नृप स्वात्मैव वल्लभः।

इतरेऽपत्यवित्ताद्यास्तद्वल्लभतयैव हि॥ (Bhagvat 10.84.13)

King, for all living beings, one's own self alone is truly dear. Children, wealth, and other relations are dear only because they are connected to one's own self.

At the beginning of universe, the Lord first revealed Brahmā from His navel. Brahmā himself did not even know where he had come from. Then the Lord revealed the Ved. But Brahmā could not understand the meaning of the Ved either.

Therefore, the Lord entered Brahmā's heart and revealed the meaning of the Ved to him. Only after that did Brahmā begin the work of universe. For now, we need not go into the detailed mechanics of universe creation.

Now, the purpose of universe is that living beings attain happiness. How is this to be achieved? For this, God expounded Religion (Dharm) in the Ved. This means that the purpose of Religion is also to assist living beings in their pursuit of happiness. But what kind of happiness? The worldly happiness we experience? The Ved clearly state that no matter how great worldly happiness may be, it can never satisfy the living being.

यो वै भूमा तत्सुखम्। नाल्पे सुखमस्ति। भूमा तु वा सुखम्।

(Chandogya Upnishad 7.23.1)

True happiness is that which is infinite. Happiness is never finite. Happiness is always infinite. Because it is infinite, sorrow can never overpower it. Happiness is neither limited and nor perishing. In this world, we have never experienced any happiness that does not end. Why is that? Let us understand.

सुखं दुःखं च मर्त्यानां मनोमात्रं समं स्मृतम्। (Bhagvat 11.19.43)

The Bhāgavata declares that happiness and sorrow are merely mental constructs. In other words, the happiness we experience in this world depends entirely on the mind. If the mind assumes that happiness lies in a particular object or person, then the mind experiences happiness from that object or person. In reality, no object or person contains happiness within itself.

चित्तमेव हि संसारस्तत्प्रयत्नेन शोधयेत।

यच्चित्तस्तन्मयो भवति गुह्यमेतत्सनातनम्॥ (Maitrayini upnishad 4.3)

The entire worldly experience - worldly happiness and sorrow - is nothing but the mind. Therefore, worldly happiness is psychological happiness. Therefore, when the state of the mind changes, worldly happiness also disappears.

For example, when someone buys a car for the first time, there is great excitement. The mind experiences happiness. But when the same car becomes old, the excitement disappears. Driving the car becomes a routine task. Moreover, if one's mood is disturbed or if one has to drive unwillingly, the same car becomes a source of discomfort.

If we examine this deeply, we see that before buying the car, the mind repeatedly thought: "There is happiness in a car. My social status will increase. Driving will be enjoyable. I will be able to go wherever and whenever I want." Finally, the intellect made the decision to buy the car in accordance with

the mind's insistence. After purchasing it, the mind obtained the happiness it had already assumed to be in the car. But since happiness was never there in the car, after some time the mind decided that there was no excitement left, and the excitement vanished.

Why does the mind assume happiness in objects or people? Because the mind, intellect, and senses are servants of the soul. The soul is their master and is a part of God. As we have seen earlier, God Himself is bliss - eternal and infinite. Therefore, the soul is a particle of bliss. Consequently, the soul seeks that same eternal and infinite happiness. The mind searches for happiness to fulfil the soul's demand. The mind assumes happiness somewhere because without assuming happiness, it cannot experience happiness at all.

The method by which the mind seeks happiness is this: First, it assumes happiness somewhere and creates a desire to obtain it. Then it performs actions to fulfil that desire. When the desire is fulfilled, it experiences the happiness it had already assumed at that place. If the desire is not fulfilled, the mind experiences sorrow instead.

But the mind does not understand this illusion. It continues to believe that happiness truly exists in the object or person where it initially assumed it. This is why worldly happiness is imaginary - merely a product of the mind's imagination.

The mind is made of māyā. Earth, water, fire, air, mind, intellect, and ego - all are māyā. That is the entire physical world either visible or invisible. Because the mind is of the same nature as the world, it naturally assumes happiness in

material objects. Through the five senses - sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch - it seeks happiness from sense objects. Since beginningless time, the mind has repeatedly assumed happiness in the five sense objects. Due to this constant repetition, the mind's belief has become firm that happiness exists in the world and must be pursued. The intellect also firmly concludes the same. The mind does not realize that this conviction is only the product of its repeated habitual simulations from the infinite past. In this pursuit of happiness, when desires are not fulfilled, sorrow is inevitably experienced.

To remove this misconception that happiness exists in the world, Religion (Hindu Religion) was expounded. While defining Religion, two necessities were considered:

जगतः स्थितिहेतुः प्राणिनां साक्षादभ्युदयनिःश्रेयसहेतुर्यः स धर्मः।

(Shankaracharya)

First, no living being can survive without experiencing happiness—therefore worldly religion (Sharirik dharm) was prescribed. This is also called Varṇāśram-dharm. Its purpose is to keep the world going. Rituals (Dharm), Wealth (Artha), and Satisfaction (Kāma) are considered its attainable goals.

Second, various sufferings and sorrows including that of death cannot be eradicated unless one attains eternal and infinite happiness—therefore Spiritual Religion (Bhāgavata-dharm) was prescribed. This dharm leads to the realization of God.

In worldly religion, ritual action (karm-kāṇḍa) holds importance. Procedure and prescribed rules matter. This

dharm pertains to bodily activities— worship performed with the hands, chanting done with the mouth, recitation of verses, pilgrimage and circumambulation with the feet and seeing the deity with the eyes.

Rituals must be performed strictly according to injunctions; otherwise, instead of happiness, they yield suffering. Duties are prescribed for bodily relationships such as mother, father, son, daughter, husband, and wife. Rules are established for eating and daily conduct. Social norms in the form of various classes (varṇ) are laid down. Work is distributed so that no one has to worry about livelihood and everyone lives without anxiety of survival. Competition for survival is thus avoided.

Varṇ itself is determined by one's previous actions; God does not arbitrarily add or subtract anything. Even in modern society, classes exist—from beggars and labourers to prime ministers, chief ministers, millionaires, and billionaires. If everyone performed the same work, society will not function at all.

If one is consumed by anxiety over livelihood, social prestige, fame, wealth, or glamour, there can be no contemplation of God. And it is only contemplation of God that removes all types of sorrow and grants true happiness. People from any class (varṇ) can contemplate God and attain the supreme, infinite blissful goal. Without God-consciousness, all are essentially the same.

Wordly religion is expounded solely to ensure the orderly functioning of the world. If someone considers themselves superior or inferior based on class (varṇ), what can God do

about it? Scriptures strongly condemn ego and arrogance. The opportunity for God-realization is equal for all, because God-realization is solely a matter of the mind, and everyone possesses the same kind of mind.

Simply by remembering God continuously with exclusive love, one attains Him. A sinner or an ascetic, a child or an old person, a man or a woman, a eunuch, a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, or śūdra, the lame, the blind, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Punjabis, Bengalis, Marathis, Tamils—anyone at all—can remember God and attain Him. Everyone is equally eligible for devotion.

By following this dharm and performing pious acts, one is rewarded with worldly happiness or heavenly pleasures; by committing sin (adharm), punishment is ordained—such as terrible suffering through wandering for billions of years across the eighty-four lakh species, worldly misery, or hellish realms. The primary purpose of this dharm is to ensure that the world runs smoothly, society remains peaceful, relationships remain harmonious, and households are free from conflict. Through adherence to this dharm, the mind attains material happiness and does not become unruly. Such a disciplined mind is easier to engage in the divine realm.

This bodily dharm is called lower dharm (Apar-dharm), in which the living being strives for worldly happiness obtained through dharm, artha, and kāma. While remaining within this dharm, the living being becomes entangled in material pleasure. Instead of renouncing the fruits of action, one becomes attached to them. One becomes attached to relationships—and this attachment is what people call “love.”

Across countless lifetimes, one has had countless mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, husbands, and wives. Relationships last only as long as life lasts. After death, everyone departs according to their own karm to different destinations. In the next birth, new relationships are formed—a new mother, a new father. Where are all those relatives from beginningless time until now?

After death, we will forget the relatives of this very life as well. In every birth, we remain under the same delusion—that these are my relatives. The mind mistakes bodily relations for the soul's true relations. The true relative, the one who remains with us at every moment, in every birth even after the death is God. And we forget Him.

People fail to understand that just as we act only in ways that give us pleasure—meaning happiness—so too everyone acts solely for their own happiness. Whatever object or person gives us happiness, we wish to obtain again and again; attachment arises there, and that attachment is called love. In truth, every mind engages only in those actions from which that very mind derives pleasure. The meaning is straightforward: everyone seeks only their own happiness, because the mind is always in search of pleasure alone. This truth was explained by Yājñavalkya to Maitreyī in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad

न वा अरे मैत्रेयि ! पत्युः कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति । आत्मनस्तु वै कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति ।

न वा अरे, जायायाः कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति, आत्मनस्तु वै कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति।

न वा अरे पुत्रस्य वित्तस्य च कामाय पुत्रो वित्तं वा प्रियं भवति, आत्मनस्तु वै कामाय पुत्रो वित्तं वा प्रियं भवति ।

न वा अरे सर्वस्य कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति, आत्मनस्तु वै कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति॥ (Brihadaranyak Upnishad 2.4.5)

The implication is that a husband, wife, son, or any other relation appears dear only so long as they provide us happiness. No one loves another person for the other person's happiness; rather, one loves because of the happiness one receives from that person. This is because the very basis on which the mind functions is the pleasure obtained from an object or person. Therefore, every action of the mind is performed for one's own happiness alone.

This means that in this world, no one belongs to anyone else. Everyone is striving for their ultimate self-interest—infinite happiness—either through the right means of God-realization or through the wrong means of worldly attainment.

Therefore, do not be misled by anyone's display of love. Do not get entangled in romantic or emotional attachments. If someone speaks grand words and tempts you with promises, be alert. Be clever in worldly dealings. Trust no one blindly. But before God, become utterly simple and innocent—never doubt any of His actions.

If someone shows you respect, understand that they expect something from you. And if someone insults you, understand that it is merely an expression of their inner impurity. Do not become sad over it; do not become angry. Only then is your

victory assured. Otherwise, if someone insults you in order to disturb you and you become disturbed, then their objective is fulfilled—their victory and your defeat.

Hatred or enmity is also a result of the mind's search for pleasure. When someone obstructs our happiness—or when we feel someone is obstructing our happiness—we develop hatred or hostility toward them. Since we cannot see another person's mind, we are often deceived by outward behaviour. This deception occurs only in the pursuit of worldly pleasure. God looks only at the mind. God's law is simple: as much love as you have for God, exactly that much love God has for you—no more and no less.

In lower religion (Apar-dharm), the living being performs actions with the aim of material enjoyment or heavenly pleasure. Because all material pleasures are psychological in nature, they ultimately result only in suffering. It was due to this very entanglement in lower religion that Arjun refused to fight the war. At that moment, Lord Shri Krishn had to declare: "Abandon all religions and take refuge in Me alone." First He said

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत।

तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं च परं गमिष्यसि॥ (Gita 18.61)

Take refuge in Him alone, O Bhārata, with all your being. By His grace you shall attain supreme peace and the eternal abode. Seeing that Arjun was bit perplexed that who is 'Him' when Shri Krishn Himself God? So Shri Krishna disclosed-

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥ (Gita 18.66)

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।

मामेवैष्यसि युक्तवैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ॥ (Gita 9.34)

The Lord affirms: “Abandon all religions (Dharmas) and take refuge in Me alone. I shall free you from all sins and give you a fortune of spiritual wealth.”

He instructs: “Keep your mind fixed on Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer obeisance to Me. By doing so, you will surely attain Me, for you have made Me the supreme goal of your life.”

In essence, the Lord promises complete forgiveness of all sins and instructs the soul to engage constantly in His remembrance, devotion, worship, and surrender. By this path alone, the soul attains its supreme and ultimate goal - infinite bliss, which is none other than God Himself.

This path is called Par-Dharm or Bhāgavata-Dharm. It leads the soul to its final destination - eternal, limitless bliss. This is the spiritual Dharm, concerned not with worldly pleasure, but with the happiness of the soul, or divine bliss.

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।

स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥ (Gita 18.73)

After hearing the entire Bhagavad Gītā, Arjun says to Shri Krishn: “By Your grace, my delusion has been destroyed. I have regained true understanding. I am now free from all doubts and shall act exactly according to Your command.”

This means that Arjun has now become fully surrendered to God. In the first chapter of the Gītā, Arjun was surrendered both to Apar-Dharm (worldly duty) and to God. He was not exclusively surrendered to God. In other words, his surrender was not exclusive (anany). He was a devotee of Apar-Dharm also. According to that worldly Dharm, Arjun argued that killing relatives in war would incur sin, that widows would become immoral, and that society would degrade. Because of these considerations, he refused to obey God's command. But God's condition is clear: surrender must be only to Him, not mixed with anything else. Par-Dharm says:

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव। त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव।
त्वमेव विद्या च द्रविणं त्वमेव। त्वमेव सर्वं मम देव देवः॥ (Skand Puran)

God alone is my mother, father, friend, companion, knowledge, and wealth. The word "alone" (hi) is crucial - it means no one other than God. Whereas bodily Apar-Dharm says मातृदेवो भवः। पितृदेवो भवः। आचार्यदेवो भवः॥ Father, Mother, Teacher like relations are Godly. Arjun feared that killing them will amount to neglecting Apar-Dharm and it would lead to sin and then to hell. But, the Lord instructed him: remove the word "also" and adopt "only". Otherwise, the mind can never become pure. Thus the Lord says again:

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः॥

“Give up all religions (Dharmas) and take refuge in Me alone. Absolving you of all sins, I shall give you a fortune of spiritual wealth.”

This single verse kindles hope even in the heart of the most sinful person. It assures that if surrendered, all sins are forgiven and over and above, eternal bliss is granted. Seeing such a grand offer, he at once sets out on the path of inner purification.

From this verse it becomes absolutely clear that if one wishes to adopt the higher religion (Par dharm), then the lower religion (Apar dharm) must be left aside. Higher religion is related to God realisation whereas the lower religion is about rituals and worldly relations. Understand once again: Apar dharm exists only for the maintenance of worldly order. For those who do not take shelter in Par dharm or bhāgavata dharm, the practice of Apar dharm is compulsory; neglecting it brings punishment. But for those who practice Bhāgavata-Dharm, abandoning Apar-Dharm brings no punishment.

भक्तिः स्वतन्त्रा न हि कंचिदपेक्षते। (Bhagvat)

भक्ति स्वतंत्र सकल सुख खानी। (Ramcharitmanas)

स्मरतव्यः सततं विष्णुर्विस्मर्तव्यो न जातुचित्।

सर्वे विधिनिषेधाः स्युरेतयोरेव किंकराः॥ (Padma Puran)

Vedavyasa says: There is only one injunction - remember God constantly; and only one prohibition - never be forget God. By doing this, other do's and don'ts of the Ved are not binding. If you wish, you may follow them; if you do not wish, you may leave them aside. Devotion (bhakti) is

supremely independent. It does not require any help from other means such as knowledge or action. Bhakti is complete in itself.

स वै पुंसां परो धर्मो यतो भक्तिरधोक्षजे ।

अहैतुक्यप्रतिहता या यायात्मा सुप्रसीदति ॥ (Bhagvat 1.2.6)

Pardharm emphasizes the mind, because in the process of attaining happiness, the mind plays the central role. This Dharm teaches withdrawing the mind from the world and fixing it upon God.

It states that eternal, infinite bliss is attained through the mind itself. The method remains the same - the mind must first accept that true happiness lies in God. Then it will strive for God-realization to attain that happiness.

Until now, the mind has always assumed that happiness lies in the world; therefore, it strives for worldly objects such as wealth, women, luxury, prestige, and power. Because of practice of this assumption from time immemorial, it is now confident that worldly substances—sweets, women, money, and the like—are the very source of happiness. It does not realize that the so-called happiness it experiences is only what it itself assumed in these objects. This conviction is so deep that even on the deathbed, the mind continues to cling to worldly things. Even after dying countless times and suffering from unbearable misery the mind's determination has not changed.

As a result, the soul wanders through the 8.4 million species, including hell, suffering terrible pain. Since infinite, eternal

happiness does not exist in the world, how can it ever be obtained there? Happiness comes, then goes; sorrow follows, then effort is made again; happiness returns, then departs; sorrow comes again—this has been going on since beginningless time.

There is no infinite happiness in the world - so how can it be obtained? Happiness comes, then goes; sorrow comes, effort resumes - this endless drama has continued since time immemorial. It is only you who can stop this torturous cycle for yourself. No one else, including God Himself, can do this for you. You will get full assistance from God and the genuine saint, but you must initiate and continue the action of devotion.

यत् पृथिव्यां व्रीहि यवं हिरण्यं पशवः स्त्रियः ।

नालमेकस्य तत्सर्वम् इति मत्वा शमं व्रजेत् ॥ (Matsya Puran 53.63)

यत् पृथिव्यां व्रीहि-यवं हिरण्यं पशवः स्त्रियः ।

न दुह्यन्ति मनः-प्रीतिं पुंसः काम-हतस्य ते ॥ (Bhagvat 11.9.29)

Even if one person possessed all the grain, gold, animals, and women on earth, his desires would still not be satisfied. Desire only increases. Material pleasures can never fulfil longing. Fulfilling desire is like pouring ghee into fire - it only intensifies it. Fulfilled desire leads to greed; unfulfilled desire leads to anger. Trapped on both sides. True fulfilment comes only through infinite bliss, which exists solely in God, because God Himself is infinite bliss

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽसम्भूतिमुपासते ।

ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ सम्भूत्या रताः ॥ (Ishopnishad 12)

This verse declares that those who worship asambhūti, meaning primordial material nature or māyā - in other words, those who seek happiness in material sense objects - enter into dense darkness, a state of intense suffering.

दुःखत्रयाभिघाताज्जिज्ञासा तदपघातके।

हेतुतोऽव्यपदेशाच्च दृष्टे सापि परैः ॥ (SankhyaDarshan1.1)

Suffering is of three kinds: ādhyātmika (physical and mental suffering), ādhibhautika (suffering caused by other beings), and ādhidaivika (suffering caused by natural or cosmic forces). These include bodily pain, mental stress, fear of death, suffering from heat and cold, humiliation caused by others, and many other forms of distress.

कुत्रापि कोऽपि सुखी तदपि दुःखशबलमिति दुःख पक्षे निःक्षिपन्ते

विवेचकः ॥ (SankhyaDarshan 1.2)

Nowhere, and no one, is completely happy. Every so-called happiness is mixed with suffering. Therefore, all worldly pleasures are merely mental delusions. Every pleasure ultimately leads to sorrow - such as the destruction of pleasurable persons or objects, the universe of unwanted situations, increasing desires, growing greed, anxiety of protection, fear of loss, wandering through 8.4 million species, and torments of hell.

True happiness is that which is completely free from all these defects.

श्रीकृष्ण सूर्य सम, माया होवै अंधकार।

जहाँ सूर्य ताहा नहीं माया अंधकार॥ (Shri Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

Material pleasure is darkness, because it results in severe suffering. God, however, is like the sun of bliss. Before that sun, the darkness of māyā and suffering cannot stand.

The implication is clear: Once God is attained, all forms of suffering are destroyed forever.

The mind will experience true happiness only when it searches for happiness in the realm where happiness actually exists. You may say this sounds very simple. The problem, however, is that the mind has become addicted to worldly pleasure. It does not want to give it up. Therefore, it continues to search for happiness in the material realm - where not even a trace of the happiness it seeks actually exists. So what is the solution? The Lord says:

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलं।

अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते॥ (Gita 6.35)

There is no doubt that the mind is extremely difficult to control. Not only does it refuse to give up worldly pleasure, it is also highly restless. Therefore, controlling it is very hard. Yet, through constant practice (abhyāsa) and detachment (vairāgya), mastery over the mind is possible. Practice means repeatedly engaging the mind in the contemplation of God through His form, His pastimes or whichever way you like. When the mind again and again runs to worldly objects and people, it should be instructed through true knowledge:

"I am the soul; my happiness lies not in the world but in God. At death, the world must be left behind, yet God remains with

me even then. Worldly friends and relatives are selfish—so long as one acts according to their wishes, they remain favorable; on acting contrary to their wishes or when circumstances turn adverse, relationships break. Not only that, conflicts arise, even to the point of violence and killing. Thinking in this way generates detachment from the world."

Detachment has two aspects: there should not be positive or negative attachment to the worldly objects or people. Positive attachment is in form love, affection, likes while negative attachment is in form of hatred, hostility, dislikes. There should be neither attraction nor hatred to worldly objects. Any worldly thought - whether of attraction or of aversion - pollutes the mind. To purify the mind, only pure divine subject matter should be brought into it.

In essence: develop love for God, and be indifferent to the world.

कबीरा खड़ा बजार में माँगे सब की खैर ।
ना काहू सो दोसती ना काहू सो बैर ॥

Saint Kabir says have neither friendship nor enmity with anyone. This is the state of detachment with the world.

By practice and detachment, the mind must be fixed on God. With repeated practice, God will begin to feel as attractive as the world once did. Teach the mind that only God is such a true eternal friend who remains with us all the time even after the death.

"O mind, you fall into sorrow and unhappiness only because you fail to perceive the fountain of joy—God dwelling within

your own heart. He alone is your true relative, your eternal companion. Try loving Him once, as you have loved the world. Then your own compelling experience will inspire you ever more to move speedily to Him.”

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते।
तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्त्यनश्नन्नन्यो अभिचाकशीति॥
(Mundakopnishad 3.1.1)

Within the tree of the body lies the nest of the heart, wherein two birds soul and God reside.

One bird (the soul) eats the fruits of action outcomes (karm-phala) sweet or bitter, while the other bird (God), who is the soul's eternal friend, eats nothing and merely watches.

The meaning is that God sees everything. Nothing is hidden from Him. He protects the soul, provides it with life and delivers results or fruits of past actions without which no one can get anything.

नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानाम्
एको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान्।

(Kthopnishad 2.2.13, Shvetashvatar Upnishad 6.13)

It is God who grants the soul the conscious living power (chetana). Who could be a greater well-wishing friend than God, who does everything solely for our happiness? He keeps account of our actions and delivers us their outcomes. In the mother's womb, He provides us a body according to our past deeds(karm) - so uniquely fashioned that not even two

fingerprints are the same. The mother herself does not even know what is happening within her womb. After birth, God arranges food and nourishment, and through parents He provides whatever is destined for us according to our past deeds. Later in life, wealth and other attainments are also arranged strictly according to one's deeds.

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव। त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव।

त्वमेव विद्या च द्रविणं त्वमेव । त्वमेव सर्वम् मम देव देवः॥ (Skand Puran)

माता रामो मत्पिता रामचन्द्रः।स्वामी रामो मत्सखा रामचन्द्रः।

सर्वस्वं मे रामचन्द्रो दयालुर्। नान्यं जाने नैव जाने न जाने॥ (Ramraksha 31)

God alone is my mother, father, brother, friend, knowledge, and wealth. God alone is everything to me. All my relationships are with Him alone. Other than Him, I know no one - I know no one - I know no one. This repetition emphasizes that all bonds exist only with God.

अहं तावन्महाराजे पितृत्वं नोपलक्षये।

भ्राता भर्ता च बन्धुश्च पिता च मम राघवः॥ (Ramyan, 2.52.21)

Lakṣmaṇa says: "I do not acknowledge King Daśaratha as my father. Raghava (Śrī Rāma) alone is my brother, my master, my relative, my father and my dearest well-wisher." meaning "To Him alone I belong, and in Him alone rests my life."

सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति॥ (Gita 5.29)

One who knows Me as the true friend, benefactor, and well-wisher of all beings attains supreme peace.

माता पिता भ्राता निवासः शरणं सुहृद्गतिर्नारायणः॥ (Subolopnishad)
गतिर्भर्ता प्रभुः साक्षी निवासः शरणं सुहृत्।

प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानं निधानं बीजमव्ययम्॥ (Gita 9.18)

I alone am the ultimate goal (gati), the sustainer (bharta), the Lord (prabhu), the witness who accounts for all actions, the abode in whom all beings reside, the refuge, and the supreme friend (suhrt). I alone am the creator, the source of all beings. I alone am the dissolution, into whom all merge at the end. I am the foundation and support of all. The imperishable seed, from which creation arises—the cause of all causes, itself without cause—that am I.

स्नेहो वैरं यथा मर्त्येषु नान्यत्र क्वचन जायते। (Bhagvat 11.2.42)

सुतदारादिरत्नानि दानशौर्यादिकानि च।

सर्वं नश्यति कालेन कालो हि दुरतिक्रमः ॥ (Bhartuhari Vairagya
Shatak 63)

स्नेहद्वेषौ हि जन्तूनां कारणं दुःखसंग्रहः।

सुतदारगृहेष्वेव स्नेहः सम्पद्यते नृणाम्॥(Mahabhrat – शान्तिपर्व 262.12)

सुतदारगृहक्षेत्रधनानि मोहवशान्मनुजः प्रियमिच्छन्।

खलु पन्थसंगमवदेतद्न हि कस्यचित् शाश्वतमस्ति किञ्चित्॥

(Mahabhrat वनपर्व 174.23)

सुतदारादयः सर्वे मनुष्यस्य न निजा मताः।

स्वार्थपरिवर्तिनो नित्यं पान्थाः सङ्गम इवागताः॥ (Subhashit)

Worldly relationships such as relatives, wealth, etc., will all end. Death will snatch everything away. Why not leave them

now and turn to God? It is foolish to cling to sinking ship. One should not become attached to worldly objects . Affection primarily rests upon son, wife, and home; yet since all these are unstable, they become the cause of accumulated sorrow. When our close one dies, we experience immense grief. The origin of this grief lies in our own foolishness - by ignoring our eternal companion, God, we have mistakenly regarded temporary relations as permanent.

Nothing in this world is lasting. After death, all previous relationships are broken, and in a new birth, new relations are formed. Worldly relationships persist only on the basis of self-interest. They are like travelers meeting at a roadside inn - Arrive, stay for a while and depart. No one can have a permanent relationship with anyone else. Just as travelers meet temporarily, so do living beings stay together momentary. Relationships arise only for a short while due to the results of earlier life's actions (fruits of karm). Come off the notion that they are yours.

ना स्वर्गं नु लोकमव्ययनं न भ्रात्रा न मित्रं न जनः। (Rigved 10.85.44)

In this transient world, there is no happiness, no eternal place, no brother, no friend, no relative. No one belongs to anyone. Every bond of relationships is bound to the perishable body, and therefore transient. All beings, knowingly or unknowingly, strive only for their ultimate self-interest—eternal bliss—whether by the right path of God-realization or by the wrong path of worldly pursuit.

We do not accept this true reality that all human relationships are body-based and not permanent. Saints, who

compassionately unveil this reality, often appear to us as enemies, for we fear they may deprive us of our fleeting pleasures, possessions, or attachments.

But if we govern our intellect by the wisdom of the Ved and scriptures, and act accordingly, our life's purpose of acquiring happiness can be fulfilled. Otherwise, since beginningless time, we have wandered in suffering—and without spiritual awakening, that suffering will continue endlessly.

The conclusion is that the only eternal, soul-based relationship is only with God alone. Establish your relationship with God. In this world, no one truly belongs to anyone. God alone is everyone's unfailing well-wisher - friend, mother, father, relative, beloved, and true companion. Therefore, it is now firmly established that God-realization alone should be made the goal, and one should make efforts for that purpose.

तत्कर्म हरितोषं यत् स बुद्धिः केन वा नयेत्। (Bhagvat 4.29.46)

An intelligent person engages in only those actions which delight God and not anything contrary.

धर्मः स्वनुष्ठितः पुंसां विष्वक्सेनकथासु यः।

नोत्पादयेद्यदि रतिं श्रमेव हि केवलम्॥ (Bhagvat 1.2.8)

If the performance of one's prescribed duties does not generate love for Shri Krishn, then such religious activity is merely labor and is therefore blameworthy.

सो सब करमु धरमु जरि जाऊ। जहँ न राम पद पंकज भाऊ॥

जोगु कुजोगु ग्यानु अग्यानु। जहँ नहिँ राम प्रेम
परधानू॥(Ramcharitmanas)

देवर्षि-भूताप्त-नृणां पितृणां न किंकरो नायं ऋणिच राजन्।
सर्वात्मना यः शरणं शरण्यं गतो मुकुन्दं परिहर्य कर्तम्॥ (Bhagvat
11.5.41)

One who has taken complete shelter of Mukunda (Shri Krishn), the Supreme Soul, automatically repays all debts - to the gods, sages, living beings, relatives, human society, and forefathers. For such a person, no seParte effort is required to repay them. But one who does not practice devotion must perform the Vedic duties prescribed for freeing oneself from these debts.

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु।
मामेवैष्यसि युक्तवैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः॥ (Gita 18.65)
सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः॥ (Gita 18.66)

Keep Me in your mind and think of Me all the time. Be My devotee, offer obeisances to Me and worship Me. When completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me. Leaving all Religions take refuge in Me and only in Me. I will absolve you of all sins and grant you the divine bliss.

आज्ञायैवम् गुणान्दोषान् मयादिष्टानपि स्वकान्।
धर्मान्सन्त्यज्य यः सर्वान्मां भजेत स तु सत्तमः॥ (Bhagvat 11.11.32)

The Lord says that Ved are my orders. But the person who abandons even those duties and is fully devoted to Me alone is the best of all saints.

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।

कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥ (Gita 9.31)

In an instant God is realized (on complete purification of heart). The person becomes a saint in a fraction of moment. Shri Krishn promises solemnly that His devotee never suffers downfall. This guarantee is not given for the karmī (ritualist), jñānī (worshiper of formless God), or yogī (performer of yoga)

न तथा मे प्रियतम आत्मयोनिर्न शङ्करः ।

न च सङ्कर्षणो न श्रीः नैवात्मा च यथा भवान् ॥ (Bhagvat 11.14.15)

Uddhava! Neither Brahmā, nor Śaṅkara, nor Balarāma, nor Lakṣmī, nor even My own Self is as dear to Me as My devotee is.

साधवो हृदयमह्यं साधूनां हृदयं त्वहम् ।

मदन्यत् ते न जानन्ति नाहं तेभ्यो मनागपि ॥ (Bhagvat)

The devotees reside in My heart, and I reside in theirs. They know none other than Me, and I too know none other than them.

मन्निमित्तं कृतं पापम् अपि धर्माय कल्पते ।

माम् अनादृत्य धर्मोऽपि पापं स्यान् मत्प्रभावतः ॥

(Hari Bhakti Vilas 10.311)

God says - An act even if appears sinful becomes righteous when done for Me; and even righteous acts become sinful when performed disregarding Me or abandoning Me.

आलोक्य सर्वशास्त्राणि विचार्य च पुनः पुनः।

इदमेकं सुनिष्पन्नं ध्येयो नारायणो हरिः॥

(Vedvyas)

After repeatedly studying and reflecting upon all the Ved, Upaniṣads, Purāṇas, Smṛtis, philosophies, and scriptures, the final conclusion is this alone - that God-realization is the supreme goal of life. Practice visualization of God through the mind.

न साधयति मां योगो न साङ्ख्यं धर्म उद्धव।

न स्वाध्यायः तपस्त्यागो यथा भक्तिर्ममोर्जिता॥ (Bhagvat 11.14.20)

भक्त्याहमेकया ग्राह्यः श्रद्धयाऽत्मा प्रियः सताम्।

भक्तिः पुनाति मन्निष्ठा श्वपाकानपि संभवात्॥ (Bhagvat 11.14.21)

न वेदाः न च यज्ञानां न दानं न च चेष्टितम्।

हरिभक्तिर्विना नाथ नान्यत् शरणमस्ति मे॥ (Garud Puran2.49.51)

न ज्ञानं न तपो दानं न यज्ञो न च कर्मणा।

प्राप्यते हरिभक्त्या एव नारायणपदं परम्॥ (Skand Puran 1.26)

Neither the Ved, nor sacrifices, nor yoga, nor austerity, nor rituals can accomplish the goal. Without devotion, no other means can lead anyone to the ultimate destination.

Let us now see the dialogue on Dharm between Uddhava and Shri Krishn in the Bhāgavata.

श्रुताः श्रुतय ओ विप्रा नानामतानुसंश्रयाः।

तेषां विकल्पमूलानां धर्माणां निश्चयं वद॥ (Bhagvat 11.3.43)

Uddhava wished to know which path to God is correct because different persons advocate so many different paths that it creates a great confusion among common people.

परत्रेह च मां राजन् नानावादश्रुतं त्वया।

कथं जाति निबध्न्याते मानुषं तद् विदुर्बुधाः॥ (Bhagvat 11.3.44)

Uddhav! There are many spiritual theories in the Hindu religion because people dominated by different natures like sattva (higher qualities of truth, austerity etc.), rajas (legitimate self enjoyment) and tamas (lower qualities) have interpreted the Ved according to their own nature. Thus, numerous doctrines and paths have arisen. But for attaining Me, devotion alone is the one and only path.

कर्मणा मनसा वाचा यः भक्त्या मयि निष्ठितः।

नैत्यकोऽपि समो धर्मो दृश्यते न च कार्यतः॥ (Bhagvat 11.19.20)

Shri Krishn says: There is no Religion superior to performing all actions - through mind, speech, and body - fully dedicated to Me with devotion.

अहैतुकी यद्भवति भक्तिः पुरुषसत्तम।

सैव धर्मः परो नृणां प्रेमलग्नान्तरात्मनाम्॥ (Bhagvat 11.19.21)

Selfless devotion that gives rise to love for Me in the heart is the supreme Religion of human beings.

मद्दर्शनं हि भवति यस्य यत्रोपलभ्यते।

स धर्मः स परो धर्मो मद्भक्तिर्हाखिलात्मना॥ (Bhagvat 11.19.22)

Wherever loving desire for My darshan (desire to see), remembrance, and devotion arise - that alone is supreme Religion. Devotion itself is the highest Religion.

भक्त्या संजायतया भक्त्या बिभ्रत्य उत्कलिकां सताम् ।

भावो भगवतोऽर्थाय न तेऽन्यत्र क्वचिद् रतिः ॥ (Bhagvat)

When the heart is purified through practice devotion (sādhana-bhakti), perfect devotion (siddhā-bhakti) is attained.

भक्तिरेवैनं नयति। भक्तिरेवैनं पश्यति। भक्तिरेवैनं दर्शयति।

भक्तिवशः पुरुषः। भक्तिरेव भूयसी। (शाण्डिल्य भक्ति सूत्र)

Devotion (bhakti) alone leads the soul (jīva) to God. Devotion alone grants direct realization of God. Through devotion alone, God reveals Himself. God is attainable only through devotion, and He is won over only by devotion.

Therefore, devotion is supreme.

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।

तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥ (Gita)

That devotion should be directed only to Shri Krishn. It should not be to any deity, demigod, deamon or human being.

Devotion must be continuous. Merely remembering and chanting for an hour or two and spending the rest of the time absorbed in worldly thoughts will not work. Wherever the mind goes in the world, one must practice seeing Shri Krishn

there. Such devotion must be without any desire of self satisfaction.

This is the kind of love the Gopīs practiced, about whom the Lord declared that the Gopīs are even His Gurus. Their love was of the highest order, so exalted that even Nārada wrote, “यथा ब्रज-गोपिकानाम् (Nārada Bhakti Sūtra 21) ". If there is love for God, it should be like that of the Vraja Gopīs. Why? Because their love was exclusive, selfless, and completely devoid of any kind of demand. They sought only Shri Krishn’s happiness. Not even the faintest trace of desire for own gratification was present in their love. Without any concern for their own happiness, they gave up everything so that Kṛṣṇ remains always happy. While sleeping, walking, eating, drinking, and performing all household duties, they remained immersed in Kṛṣṇ’s remembrance at every moment. Their love cared not a bit about Vedic conventions or social norms. Thus, they rose to the highest state - mahābhāv.

There are ten stages of devotion. First is sādhana bhakti (practice devotion - hearing, chanting, remembrance). Then comes bhāv-bhakti (completely matured practice devotion). Beyond this lie the stages of siddhā bhakti (perfect devotion), which are attained by the grace of God after purification of the heart, wherein God is enslaved. These stages in rising order are: premā-bhakti, sneha-bhakti, māna-bhakti, praṇaya-bhakti, rāga-bhakti, anurāga-bhakti, bhāv-bhakti, and mahābhāv-bhakti.

Kubjā, whose love was motivated by self satisfaction, reached premā-bhakti. The queens of Dvārakā, whose love was a mixture of unselfish and selfish devotion, reached bhāv-bhakti.

The Gopīs, who were completely selfless, attained mahābhāv. Śrī Rādhā alone stands at the supreme summit of love, known as mādanākhyā-mahābhāv. This does not mean there is any lack of bliss in the lower stages. Infinite bliss is already present in premā-bhakti itself; the difference lies in intensity and intoxication. Just as the experience of love between a father and son differs from that between husband and wife, so too the flavors of divine love differ.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu says:

न धनं न जनं न सुन्दरीं कवितां वा जगदीश कामये ।
मम जन्मनि जन्मनीश्वरे भवता भक्तिरहैतुकी त्वयि ॥

I do not desire wealth, followers, or admirers. Nor do I desire beauty, poetry, learning, skills or art. O Lord of the universe! I desire none of these and not even end of the life cycle! Birth after birth, let me have only causeless, selfless devotion unto You.

Therefore, by practice and renunciation, through desireless, exclusive, and continuous love for Shri Krishn, supreme devotion (parā-bhakti) is attained. Devotion alone is the sole path to achieving our ultimate goal. Everyone knows how to love, but one truth must always be borne in the mind - the result of love is determined by the object of love, by the person you love.

If the object of love is fake person, nothing but sorrow and suffering will be attained. If the object of love is worldly person, one will receive only the misery of innumerable

deaths, births and hell . But if the object of love is Shri Krishn, one attains infinite life, infinite knowledge, and infinite bliss.

Love is essentially the same, whether directed to the world or to the divine realm. The object of love is what matters most. Turning love to Shri Krishn is devotion and that alone is what we must accomplish in this human life.