

ENOUGH!

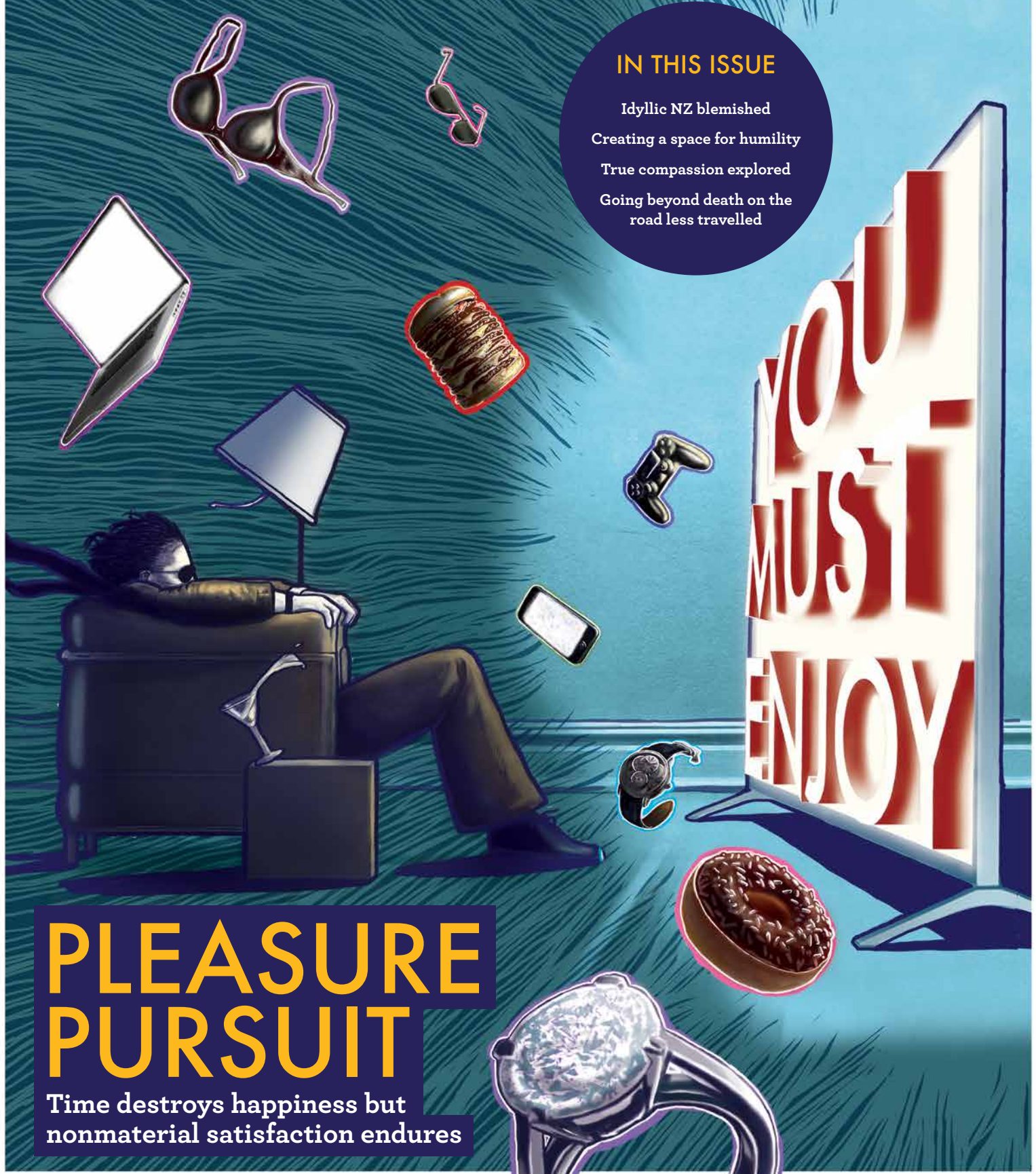
CULTURE FILE / SPIRIT MATTERS

JOIN THE EVOLUTION

INSPIRE-ME-YOGI / ACTIVIST

IN THIS ISSUE

- Idyllic NZ blemished
- Creating a space for humility
- True compassion explored
- Going beyond death on the road less travelled



PLEASURE PURSUIT

Time destroys happiness but nonmaterial satisfaction endures



DEAR READER

Recently, I gave birth to a beautiful little girl. Her arrival has taught me a lot of things. I am now looking at the world in a totally different way, through new eyes and experiences. I observe her discovering her new environment as she studies each new face closely, and adopts it as her friend. Specifically, being a parent is teaching me to become more giving, patient, present, and aware of the things I do and say. Any of you who have children will know what an amazingly transformative experience it is to become a parent. The role also comes with extraordinary responsibility, as my values, activities, and behaviour will play a significant role in my child's development. I feel extremely grateful for being given such a precious gift. In addition to this, I'm learning to appreciate the little things I used to take for granted, like sleeping, eating a hot meal, and the importance of the support that comes from living in a community filled with wonderful family and friends.

So what does all of this have to do with the magazine?

I encourage you to read this magazine in the same way a newborn approaches the world. Fresh, open to learning, innocent and inquisitive. Some of these articles will present ideas in a way that you might not have thought about before, like the article "Search for Pleasure" challenges conventional attempts at enjoyment. Who knows, you might find answers to the very questions that have perplexed you, or take away something that you took for granted, but which, if seen through the curious eyes of a child, provides a fresh angle of vision.

**"When an inquisitive person comes to understand this knowledge, he has nothing further to know. After all, one who has drunk the most palatable nectar cannot remain thirsty."
(Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.29.32)**

When readers approach the topics in these articles, they learn more than what any material education or ordinary information can offer. It could change your life—I know it certainly has changed mine.

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OUR SHARED ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IS IN THE TOO HARD BASKET, AND WE ALL KNOW IT.





IS THE SOUL ECO FRIENDLY?

Could an identity crisis be at the root of an environmental crisis?

Writer Krishnananda

When I spotted a bumper sticker stating in bold green letters: “Well... at least the war on the environment is going well,” I found myself not knowing whether to laugh or cry. This clever use of facetiousness reminds us to reflect on the growing risks of today’s economy-centric world. There is money to be made, technology to advance, and the terrorist to fight. Who on earth wants to think about environmental issues? Rather than acting as a rallying cry for all the great thinkers and philosophers of our time, it seems the more that the world’s environmental problems come to the forefront of news reports, the more assertively we bury our heads deep beneath the sand. Our shared environmental crisis is in the too hard basket, and we all know it. It’s easier that way. Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule. Some rare persons devote their lives to help—and they should be commended for their sincere endeavours. But the question I would like to put forward is this: Are we equipped with the right knowledge to understand the root cause of the environmental issue, let alone solve it?

If we try to reflect for a moment on how we humans interact with nature, somewhere along the line we must accept that human greed is an underlying problem to the “the climate” issue. This issue is a big problem and it appears a little too hot to handle for most. Should I mention billion dollar profits in oil or gas industries here? But hang on a minute, we need petrol right? Hmmm here is a paradox. So, what to do? Albert Einstein once said that a problem cannot be solved by the same consciousness that created it. Einstein rather wisely encourages us to elevate, not

degrade our consciousness, if we at all want to alleviate our problems. If we adopt this ethos, we will become part of the solution.

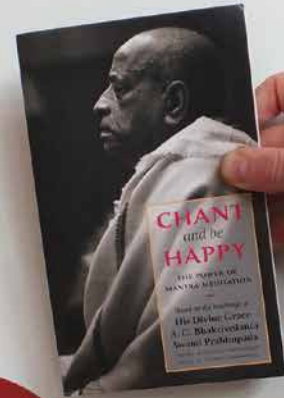
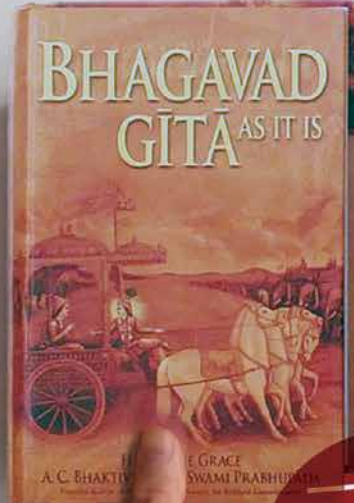
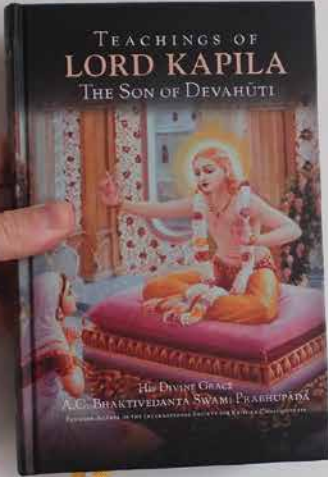
In helping us to understand our macro-level predicaments, first we require focus on the micro level. After all, the whole is the sum total of its parts. At this point we can turn toward ancient knowledge for assistance. The timeless Vedic knowledge has for me been the greatest discovery. Contained within its encyclopedic depths, a wealth of wisdom and enlightenment has helped me in my personal search for reason in an age of folly. In ancient times, they lived a little more sustainably than today.

As a first step, Vedic knowledge asks that we correctly identify the self. In the prime yoga text, Bhagavad-gita As It Is (translated by the renowned scholar in Vedic knowledge, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada) Krishna says:

“That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy the imperishable soul.” (2.17)

Krishna goes on to explain how the real identity of the living being is actually nonmaterial and that consciousness is the symptom of the nonmaterial self. We could accept or reject this as belief, however, Krishna presents the methodology by which we can verify this knowledge scientifically and objectively. By practically applying this knowledge we will gradually recall our original blissful nature and purpose in life.

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PROBLEM.

Bewildered by a powerful illusion (that is, thinking oneself as the physical body) we think ourselves to be the “suit” we currently and temporarily reside in. Therefore we assume that gratifying the senses of our temporary fallible bodies is paramount. This is the primary mistake and problem from which all other mistakes and problems arise. Krishna elaborates in Bhagavad-gita that distinguishing between the superior conscious nature and the inferior material nature is of great importance in understanding the reason why humans are so apt to exploit our surroundings:

“There is a superior energy of mine, which comprises the living entities who are exploiting the resources of this material, inferior nature in attempting to extract happiness by manipulating matter.” (7.5)

Vedic knowledge advises that neither unlimited amounts of material objects nor limitless variations thereof will ever be able to fully satisfy us, the nonmaterial self.

When we take from the environment to build rockets, nuclear weapons, way too many plastic trinkets, highways, factories, and more, we have to ask, why? The insatiable fervour for materialistic expansion, aimed at satisfying a false material identity, sooner or later renders the environment exploited and abused, the climate corrupted, species extinct, the rivers and seas polluted. Does it need to be this way? To maintain body and soul together, we only need a little water, food and shelter, and our friends and family around us. In a simple, spiritually focused environment, a person only takes from Mother Nature the necessities of life.

What lies at the heart of the environmental crisis is in actuality an identity crisis. An upward shift in

consciousness is paramount. Satisfaction in the real self, the imperishable spirit soul, inspires a desire to give to others the same sense of inner contentedness that comes through living a more genuine, natural existence. Consequently, shifting the pursuit of happiness from an external, materialistic one to an internal spiritual one purifies our subconscious desire to want to exploit everything around us.

Environmental degradation is a by-product of a materialistic, capitalistic, and selfish existence that no one is satisfied with anyway. Lacking genuine knowledge, we continue our pleasure pursuit, hoping against hope that somehow everything will work out. Sensing the inner emptiness of a life devoid of real soul food, the tendency is to again and again want those things that lack the satisfaction X-factor. This is greed. How far will we go?

Enough. What we need is more and more wisdom, not more and more economic development. You’ve made it. Welcome to the cutting edge of environmentalism—a soul-searching journey that rewards one with the best realisations: understanding the real self. In this way, ultimately, you will find real answers and real solutions. The soul by nature is eco-friendly. We just need to rediscover ourselves. 🌸



Krishnananda is a bhakti-yoga practitioner and kirtan enthusiast. He has an MA degree in environmental studies and a BA in international relations. Currently working in risk management, Krishnananda spends his time doing anything from fighting fires to making new friends over a warm plate of delicious Krishna food!

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Bhagavad-gita 17.8

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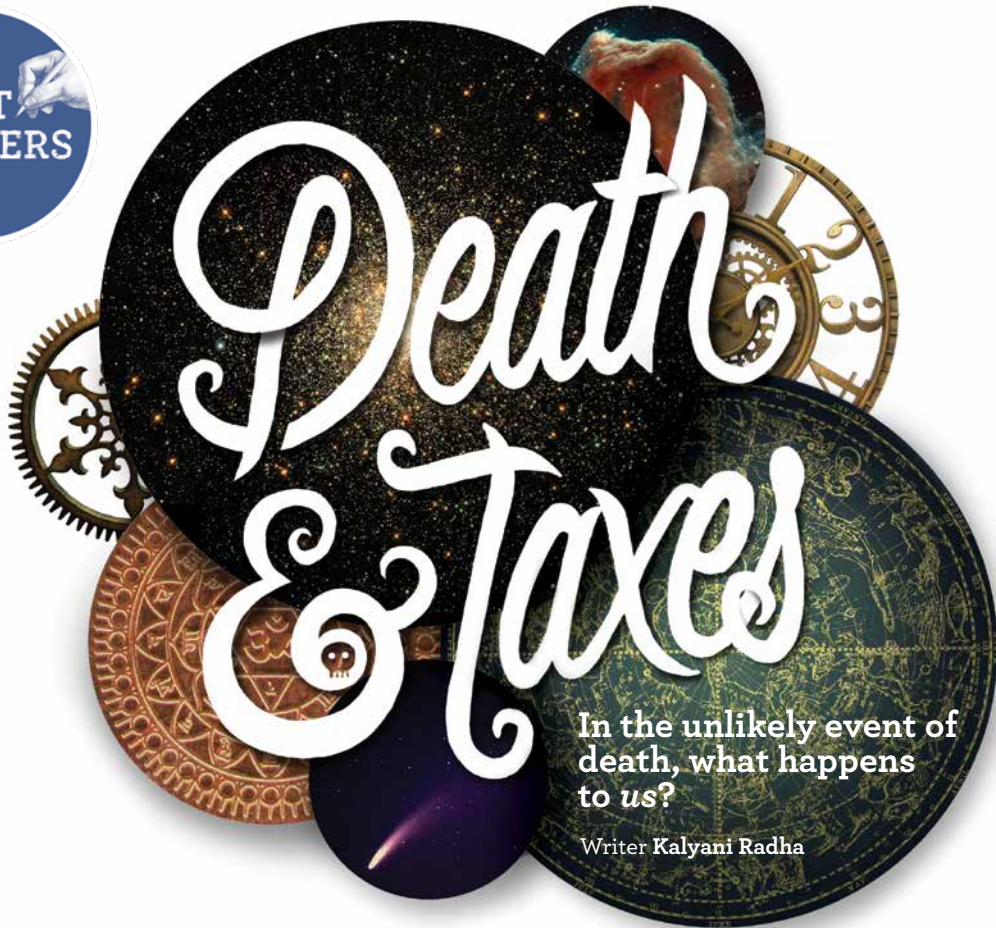
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FOOD



In the unlikely event of death, what happens to us?

Writer Kalyani Radha

“In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes” wrote Benjamin Franklin in a letter dated 1789. Death is defined as the end of the life of a person or organism. But while it is inevitable, is death actually the end or is there more to us than a random accumulation of chemicals with a shelf life of mere decades? A sane, intelligent person would question why a being so complicated, with the ability to think about and question the meaning of life, would be wasted on one lifetime. When considering this question, two paths spring to mind. One path describes an abrupt end with a fall into oblivion or the belief that one must spend an eternity in heaven or hell, and the other path describes that a person’s existence extends beyond this lifetime into eternity.

The Western world does not encourage people to explore life beyond the current body. The mind of the Western thinker usually bounces over the idea of the permanence of the soul like a stone skimming on a lake and landing firmly in the empirical and observable. Exploration is limited to what is within the purview of the mind and senses without any considerations of the very obvious limitation and imperfections of such scientific tools. But despite this majority opinion, a number of great thinkers, politicians, authors, artists, scientists, and politicians have broken the mold and strived to seek knowledge beyond tangibility.

The nineteenth century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer stated: “Were an Asiatic to ask me for a definition of Europe, I should be forced to answer him: It is that part of the world which is haunted by the

incredible delusion that man was created out of nothing and that his present birth is his first entrance into life.”¹

Plato had a view of death that many scholars posited was taken from mystic religions such as Orphism or from ancient India. We are pure souls who fell from the absolute reality because of sensual desire and on entering this world we acquire a human body. He stated that the highest human body was that of a philosopher because he sought after true knowledge and through this knowledge a person could return to the absolute reality. By becoming entangled in material desires, a person in a human form could be degraded to the animal species and this type of species is determined by the type of transgression committed.

The concept of reincarnation is also known within Judaism and Christianity (although this was practically wiped from the texts when the Byzantine emperor Justinian banned the teaching of the pre-existence of the soul from the Roman Catholic church).

The Zohar (one of the principal Cabalist texts) states: “The souls must re-enter the absolute substance whence they have emerged. But to accomplish this, they must develop all the perfections, the germ of which is planted in them; and if they have not fulfilled this condition in one life, they must commence another, a third, and so forth, until they have acquired the condition which fits them for a reunion with God.”

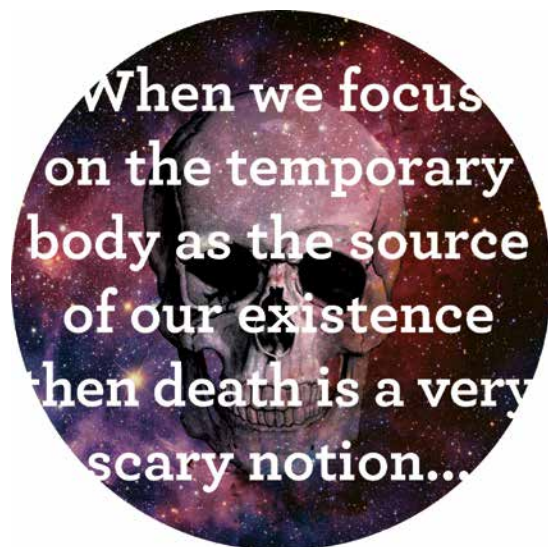
The Bhagavad-gita teaches that “As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth

to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.” (2.13)

We can empirically see that within this lifetime alone our bodies have gone through many changes. We don't look how we did when we were in a baby's body, and science will tell us that every cell in the body is replaced every seven years, yet we are still the same person inside.

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

The gross material body is considered as significant as a piece of clothing. Just as we do not feel anxiety when taking off our sweater at the end of the night, knowing we will put a clean one on the next morning, we should not become distressed at the end of this physical body, because we will be awarded a new one in the next life.



Radha Prasada, a good friend of mine who has been practising bhakti-yoga for over ten years, shared with me her memories of her childhood experiences of death in her family. She shared how these early perceptions of death were influenced largely by her catholic upbringing. Heaven was a better place that people went to when they died. Her first experience came at the sudden death of a close relative. Being such a young child, her parents were reluctant to let her see the body, to be in contact with such a tangible piece of evidence of death, but she persisted, and they relented. She described looking at the body of her cousin. It looked like him but she could sense that he wasn't there anymore; the part of him that made him himself no longer remained.

When we focus on the temporary body as the source of our existence then death is a very scary notion, especially when getting it wrong results in an eternity of hell. Having the understanding that life continues beyond the end of this physical body allows us to see it as less important than the soul, and therefore death is like changing an old, worn sweater for a new one.

Life looked at as a “one time only” event seems like pointless wandering on this planet, performing actions

that have no ultimate reason or benefit. Why do anything if everything ends at death? Even if we see our actions as helping the next generation, what is the point if that aid will only be of use within another pointless existence?

So what is another way we can look at life that doesn't throw us into a state of nihilistic depression?

The Vedic outlook sees life as more than just a one-episode event. It teaches that the actions we perform in this lifetime influence what will happen to us in the next, and the actions we performed in previous lives have directly shaped our present situation. Our physical body, our mind, our tendencies and impressions, and even our families are all results of the subtle and intricate science of *karma*. From this vantage point death is defined as the “annihilation of the present body.”² The physical and gross elements are the only things that come with a shelf life.

The Bhagavad-gita, which presents the ABCs of yoga knowledge, teaches: “For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. It has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. It is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. It is not slain when the body is slain.” (BG 2.20)

My friend shared that when she learnt about the Vedic perspective of life and death and began practising a bhakti-yoga lifestyle (yoga of the heart and intelligence) she was amazed at the depth of knowledge available to her. She stated that knowledge of karma created an immediate shift in her consciousness and markedly changed her outlook and way of being so much that even those who weren't aware of her new practice could sense a positive change.

Looking at life from the Vedic vantage point can give a different outlook on our purpose in the “grand plan.” The yoga knowledge teaches that the true self is eternal. So while the physical body will one day be gone, who we are remains. We are actually unceasing, ageless, and as the Bhagavad-gita says, naturally full of “eternal, knowledge, and bliss.” Gaining knowledge from the yoga science and acting on it will make life truly meaningful, not only for the brief blip of this body, but for eternity. 🌸

1. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Vol.2, chap. 15 quoted in A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Coming Back: The Science of Reincarnation* (Australia: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1984), 1.
2. A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Krsna: The Supreme Personality of Godhead* (India: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1996), 12.



Kalyani Radha has been exploring bhakti-yoga for the past three years. She holds a Bachelor of Education degree in early childhood education and a graduate Diploma of Arts in English literature. She draws inspiration from studying yoga philosophy and chilling out in kirtan. Kalyani Radha loves to cook, and you can always find her elbow deep in flour!



ILLUSTRATOR RAMDAS

Making Space for Humility

Writer Sitapati

I'm on my knees on the floor of a temple in Guayaquil, on the tropical coast of Ecuador. It's well past midnight, and the other residents of the temple sleep fitfully in the heat. The temple windows lost their panes years ago and through them dust from the street and late-night salsa music from the building across the way float languidly in the humid air. The cotton cloth of my robes, drenched in sweat, clings to me. My throbbing skin is an angry reminder of the equatorial sun's effect on fair skin, and hot water scalds my hands as I scrub the marble tiles.

What do you think of when you hear the word "humility"? The quality is lauded in spiritual traditions around the world and across time, but in contrast, "humiliation" and "being humbled" do not sound attractive—at least, not to me!

As a spiritual practitioner, I struggled for years to understand what humility is, and how to develop it, but I became frustrated. Every time I thought I was becoming humble, shortly afterwards I would become "the most humble"—proud of how humble I had become in relation to others—and everything would fall apart: "*Why the hell is everyone else sleeping while I'm here washing this floor? Obviously they think they are too good for this! What kind of sadhakas (spiritual practitioners) are they?*" Washing the temple floor after the late night

festival became yet another experiment in the laboratory of spiritual practice, where what showed up under the microscope was my Midas-touch ability to transform literally anything into an ego trip.

Humility was elusive, and eventually I gave up—and that is when it found me. I was looking for what humility was, and the reason I couldn't find it is because humility is not a thing—it is a space: a not-thing.

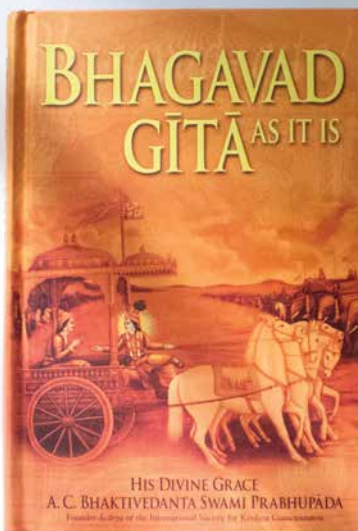
Humility shows up in the clearing created by the absence of the opinion "*I am better than others.*" If the opinion "*I am better than others*" is present, then humility has no space to show up. You can try as hard as you want to "become humble"—pour as many affirmations, practices, and "fake it till you make it" behaviours in there as you like—but as long as you are putting them on top of "*I am better than others,*" they will simply become more evidence for why you are superior to others: "*Why can't they be as humble as I am? What's wrong with them?*" When illness is present, even healthy food can be poisonous. Similarly, when the opinion "*I am better than others*" is present, even spiritual practices can produce evidence for this subversive idea. The more you do, the "better" you become. It's like pouring petrol on a fire.

»»

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When doubts haunt me,
when disappointments
stare me in the face, and
I see not one ray of hope
on the horizon, I turn to
Bhagavad-gita and find
a verse to comfort me;
and I immediately begin
to smile in the midst of
overwhelming sorrow.

– MAHATMA GANDHI



«

Furthermore, “*I am not worthy*” is in itself not humility. Great personalities, recognised for their humility, have expressed opinions such as these. An extreme example is Krishna das, a sixteenth century Bengali poet, who laments: “*I am lower than the worm in stool.*” Imitating this position can indicate either low self-esteem (which is not humility), or a form of sadism: the opinion “*I am not worthy*” on top of “*I am better than others*” equals: “*I’m worthless—and you, you’re less than worthless!*”

Imitating the outward expressions of humility has as much utility as imitating the sounds of a woman in labour. The imitation might *sound* the same, but the result it produces in life is radically different.

Instead of looking for what to put in—how to become humble—look for what to *take out*. When the opinion that “*I am better than others*” is absent, a space is created, and in the clearing of that space, a life with humility can show up.

And why develop humility? The Wikipedia article on humility says: “*Humility is variously seen as the act or posture of lowering oneself in relation to others, or conversely, having a clear perspective and respect for one’s place in context.*” True humility is not an act or merely a posture—it’s the removal of the opinion “*I am better than others*” that externally may appear as

lowering oneself in relation to others. However, it’s the second meaning, having clear understanding of one’s place, that reveals how humility brings clarity and power to life: “*Having a clear perspective and respect for one’s place in context.*” The article goes on to say: “*The concept of **humility** addresses intrinsic self-worth, relationships and socialization as well as perspective.*”

C.S. Lewis famously said: “*Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.*” Having a clear perspective on intrinsic self-worth means getting yourself out of the way: you’re fine with yourself (intrinsic self-worth) and the transparency of that (clear perspective) creates a space that allows you to fulfil on what you are committed to in your relationships and in life.

We can create that space in our relationships and conversations by taking something out. You can look to see where a relationship is constrained, or disconnected, and see what you can take out. The first step in taking it out is simply to recognise that it is there. Self-righteousness and indignation are usually the camouflage for something that you can take out. Look underneath those to find a place where you are being right and making someone or something else wrong. The second step is to take responsibility for it.

Look for what it is that you can take responsibility for, and take it out by apologising unreservedly for it. “*Unreservedly*” means without subtly shifting the blame to circumstances, or saying “*that’s just how I am.*” It means taking responsibility for the impact on the other person and saying: “*I am sorry. That’s not what I am committed to.*”

The Srimad Bhagavatam, a primary Krishna text, describes a historical encounter between King Ambarisha and the great sage Durvasa. The sage Durvasa visits King Ambarisha while the King is observing a spiritual practice involving fasting. To complete his practice King Ambarisha needs to break his fast. However, Vedic custom dictates that he should not break his fast until his guest has been properly received and fed.

“*What’s the big deal?*” you might say. In Vedic culture honouring a guest is a big deal—even more so an *unexpected* guest. King Ambarisha is fully aware of this, and he is also aware of his commitment to break his fast *right now*. The King decides to break his fast by drinking a little water. In this way he thinks he can simultaneously honour both his guest Durvasa and his commitment to his spiritual practice.

In this account of King Ambarisha and the sage Durvasa, King Ambarisha faced the dilemma of a person who is up to big things in life—the choice between Great Option A and Great Option B (in King Ambarisha’s case it was Lost Opportunity A—breaking a fast—and Lost Opportunity B—honouring his guest). The readers of Enough! Magazine are up for a big life, and they are going to face significant life choices—more than “*go out to the movies*” versus “*stay home and watch TV.*” The stakes were high for Ambarisha, so he got coaching from someone else, to get an outside perspective. The solution his coach came up with honoured both of his commitments to the fast and to his guest. When we are faced with an



A Sym Citycom scooter, an angry Audi driver and a crushed foot. Chandidas shares his insights after a collision on Auckland's busy western motorway.

I thought I had it all figured out.

My wife and I were living in South Auckland, but I was working in the CBD, twenty kilometres away from home. I was horrified at the prospect of buying an expensive car, paying for insurance, registration and maintenance, then, every week, paying for fuel and parking. Parking in Auckland city costs seventy dollars per week. Fuel is another seventy dollars, more or less, depending on the type of car. And have you seen the traffic on the southern motorway in the morning and evening? It is a continuous traffic jam, taking as long as one and a half hours to get into town. No way!

Then there is the train. It takes you straight into the city, without needing to worry about parking. So far so good. However, you need to first get to the train station, a twenty-minute walk, then you need to wait for a perpetually late train to arrive, another ten minutes on a good

day. After that, you need to endure thirty-five minutes sitting on a crowded train with a bunch of depressed looking people.

The train eventually arrives at Britomart station, then you must walk another ten minutes to the workplace. Altogether it takes an hour and fifteen minutes to get to work. Oh, and you need to pay fifty-six dollars per week for the privilege. Catching the train would certainly be better than driving a car, but still, a huge chunk of my day would be spent commuting.

So, what to do? I thought I was smart—I knew just the thing: a scooter. Not a piddly little sewing machine on wheels, but a big 300cc scooter weighing two hundred kilograms. This scooter is basically a motorcycle with an automatic transmission (CVT) and a more comfortable feet-forward riding position. It's a bike powerful enough to travel on the motorway; a bike that is more fuel efficient than even the most efficient car (fuel costs me twelve dollars

per week); a bike that gets free parking in various locations all over the city; a bike that can ride between the lanes to bypass the continuous Auckland traffic jam; a bike that can get me to work in thirty-five minutes flat, no matter how bad the traffic. It was the perfect transport solution.

Before long, I had completed a motorcycle driving test and bought myself a used Sym Citycom 300i for 3,500 dollars. It is such a nice scooter, cheap to purchase, has lots of storage space, and it's fast, reliable, and stable at high speeds. What could possibly go wrong? And did I mention motorbikes get free parking in town? Great!

So, there I was, riding into town each day, rain or shine. When the traffic slowed, I would pull right in between the lanes and bypass the queue, a practice known as "lane splitting." Splitting is perfectly legal

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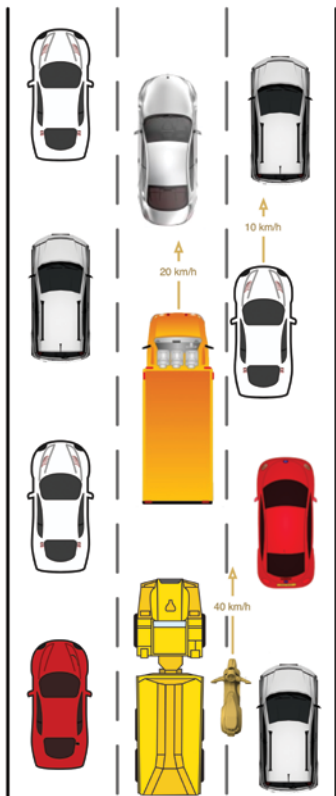
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in New Zealand, as long as drivers do it safely and responsibly—you don't go too much faster than the surrounding traffic and you pull back into the lane once the traffic is going forty kilometres per hour or faster. Splitting also helps a driver to avoid one of the most common types of motorcycle accidents, being rear-ended by a car.

I was happy and content, having conquered the Auckland traffic, until one day on my way to work, something unfortunate happened.



The lanes of traffic on the motorway were moving at different speeds and I was lane splitting between the fast and middle lanes. As I was riding, a gap between a truck and car closed up quickly because of the speed differential. I saw the gap close up just five metres in front of me. I grabbed for the brake, but it was too late. I came up between an impossibly tight gap. While braking, I tried to swerve left slightly to avoid smashing into the car, but I overcorrected and got my handlebars entangled in the side of the truck. By that time my speed had slowed sufficiently so that the truck was now travelling faster than I was, and he drove off, raking the side of my bike and throwing me off balance. Before I knew what was going on, I fell left into the middle lane,



right into the path of another truck. My shoulder slammed into the asphalt, my bike entangling itself with my leg as it skidded to a halt. The driver slammed on his brakes and stopped with a few metres between his truck and me.

A few seconds later, shocked and dazed, while I was trying to take in what had happened, the driver of the truck rushed to my aid. I opened my helmet visor, disentangled my foot from my bike, and stood up, with his help. Miraculously, I seemed to be unharmed—or so I thought.

Meanwhile, the driver of the car I had narrowly missed got out and inspected his vehicle, seemingly unconcerned with my well-being. He was driving a flawlessly gleaming Audi sports car. As I fell to the side my tires must have clipped the Audi, making a black scuff mark on the side door. The owner, an older man, kept angrily pointing at the scuff mark. I was thinking:

“I nearly died here, and you are worried about some minor damage to your car?” It’s crazy how some people are so entangled in a materialistic illusion—an illusion that convinces them they are nondifferent from their car; the car is them, the car is supreme, the car is holy. But my head was in too much of a jumble to express my thoughts. I just shrugged my shoulders and ignored the man.

Meanwhile, the friendly truck driver had lifted my bike up and was offering it to me. I looked it over and saw no obvious damage. I hit the starter button and the engine came to life. “Hmm,” I thought, “that could have been bad, but perhaps I can just continue on to work. No need to call the police. The scuff mark hardly qualifies as damage. Great!”

So I thanked the truck driver, continuing to ignore the irrationally angry man, and drove off. However, within a minute, my

left foot started to hurt. I ignored it for a while, but it was getting worse and worse by the second. In increasing distress, I took the next exit, turned around and headed back home.

As I pulled into my street, I was chanting to myself, “Hare Krishna, just keep it together; Hare Krishna, almost there, Hare Krishna, just a few more metres.” In acute pain, I parked the scooter, pulled off my helmet, and collapsed onto the floor, sobbing, as my concerned wife came running, holding my one-year-old son.

“That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul.”

(Bhagavad-gita 2.17)

Some minutes later, I collected myself enough to explain what had happened, and my wife took me to the hospital in her car.

Many X-rays later, the diagnosis was a severely bruised foot, but with no obvious bone damage. A nurse encased my foot in a cast, and I was discharged later that day.

A week later, I went into the clinic to get some more X-rays. The doctor, examining my foot and seeing severe bruises, told me that I probably had Lisfranc tendon injury and that I would need an operation to reattach a severed tendon. I might never gain full use of my foot again. He ordered a CT-scan to confirm exactly how bad the tendon damage might be.

I was shocked. “Oh no! What will I do? I’ll never be able to walk properly. Let alone run. But I love running. How can the world be so cruel? I’m ruined!”

My wife calmed me down and gently reminded me of the basics of Krishna

conscious teachings. “Remember, you are not the body,” she said. “You are not your foot. The foot may be damaged, but the eternal soul that is your consciousness is not harmed and cannot be harmed.”

“That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul.” (Bhagavad-gita 2.17)

“For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. It has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. It is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. It is not slain when the body is slain.” (B.G. 2.20)

“It is said that the soul is invisible, inconceivable and immutable. Knowing this, you should not grieve for the body.” (B.G. 2.25)

Hearing this, I said to my wife, “Oh, right, of course! I remember reading these Bhagavad-gita verses many times. Yes, I actually have nothing to worry about. I’m so lucky to be married to a wise lady who can remind me of such things.” I was actually just as much in illusion as the angry Audi driver. He thought he was his car, and I thought I was my foot. Both of our conceptions were silly.

So, I accompanied my wife home, at peace with my plight.

Another week passed. I had the CT-scan and was waiting in the doctor’s office for the diagnosis. I felt quite content with my situation, happy to accept whatever my condition might be.

The doctor called me in and showed me a 3D model of my foot, courtesy of the scan. The image showed a previously undiagnosed chipped ankle bone and fractured sesamoid bone, but no tendon damage. The two fractures would heal by themselves within the next six weeks. No operation was necessary.

I was wearing full motorcycle armour when I crashed: a helmet, armoured jacket, pants, gloves, and boots. The German Sas-Tec armour pads in my jacket protected my shoulder completely. It was not even sore. The boots (Sidi brand—aptly similar to the Sanskrit word *siddhi*, which refers to a mystic power acquired by long practice

of yoga) saved my foot from more serious damage. My foot would have been ripped open, if I had not been wearing an armoured shoe. Within a month I could walk again and within two months I was fully recovered.

I’m still riding my scooter to work. It’s just too convenient to give up. I am, however, much more careful when lane splitting, always watching the lanes for possible gaps that might suddenly close up.

Today, gazing down at my foot, I still remember the crash. I am most happy to recall how the accident helped me practically realise that my body is not the be-all and end-all of my life. With such a conviction, any hardship can be endured, and any misery is diminished. Studying the Bhagavad-gita has taught me that my body is a wonderful machine, but nothing more. It is a vehicle that I can use to get my soul, my consciousness, into its rightful home beyond this material world, into Krishna consciousness.

“By thus engaging in devotional service to the Lord, great sages or devotees free themselves from the results of work in the material world. In this way they become free from the cycle of birth and death and attain the state beyond all miseries.” (B.G. 2.51)

“For one thus satisfied [in Krishna consciousness], the threefold miseries of material existence [miseries caused by other living beings, natural forces, and one’s own mind] exist no longer; in such satisfied consciousness, one’s intelligence is soon well established.” (B.G. 2.65)

I consider myself fortunate to have had an opportunity to realise the significance of these verses. If freedom from misery can be obtained, even in this life, with knowledge of the Krishna conscious teachings, then certainly, with a lifetime to practice, such a state of being is achievable in the next life. 🌸



Chandidas has been practising the art and science of bhakti-yoga for thirteen years. He holds a PhD in computer science and has a keen interest in all topics scientific and spiritual. His favourite bhakti literature is *Krishna* book, as it combines intricate spiritual subject matter with heartwarming stories. You can follow and contact him via his blog at: www.deltaflow.com



The Search for Pleasure

A UNIVERSAL QUEST

Writer Chaitanya Vihara



IT'S TIME TO ENJOY, TIME TO ENJOY!

DON'T BE SHY, DON'T BE COY,

YOUNG OR OLD, GIRL OR BOY,

ALL MUST ENJOY; YOU MUST ENJOY!

The urge to locate and secure pleasure underpins everything we do. Whether grossly sensual, emotional, or intellectual, every activity is inspired by the conscious or subconscious hope for pleasure. Sometimes our desires are exhibited crudely, and sometimes they emerge under the guise of polished sophistication. In any case, I aim to explore this essential subject and inspire you to become more adept at pleasure hunting.

In 2009, lured by the promise of a better work/life balance, great climate, and outdoor lifestyle, I moved to New Zealand from the UK. Inspired by a sense of adventure, one of the first things I did was a sky dive. After all, what better way could a group of friends celebrate arriving on the other side of the world?

I remember the anticipation and excitement we felt on arriving at the centre, early one spring morning. After listening to the instructors, we harnessed up. It was cold but clear, and the beautiful blue sky looked inviting. The sunlight sparkled. A slight frost crunched underfoot, as we crossed the airfield.

When the tiny plane took off, I exchanged nervous smiles with my companions, all fellow medics. As we gazed out of the windows, appreciating the beauty of Lake Taupo, I started to ask myself what I was doing. Naturally, my intelligence started to question whether throwing myself out of a plane at 15,000 feet, albeit strapped to a supposedly competent instructor, was really the best of ideas! Still, it was too late to turn back now. The rather exorbitant, nonrefundable ticket had been purchased. Bracing myself, I prepared for action.

As we climbed higher and higher, the temperature began to plummet. Soon, the air thinned, and we required oxygen masks. Although externally together, I realised we were all alone now. If one of us had difficulty during the jump, what could anyone else do? Extending this realisation further, I contemplated how, ultimately, we all have to take responsibility for our own lives. As it is often said, we enter and leave this world alone, regardless of the social and communal situations we create in between.

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**DESPITE THESE COMMON,
ULTIMATELY DISSATISFYING
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CONTINUE THE ROBOTIC AND
REPETITIVE SEARCH FOR
MATERIAL PLEASURE**

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A sudden tap on the shoulder snapped me out of my philosophising. The time to jump had come! After final instructions from our leader, the sliding door was unlatched. As the door flung open, the full impact of what we were about to do hit me. My body tensed as I prepared to override every natural instinct. Boom, boom, boom; my heart thudded with each beat. After a quick thumbs up, my friend Ed and his co-jumper moved into position. In the blink of an eye, they were gone, suddenly disappearing from the ledge. A few seconds later, Natalie jumped. Now it was my turn.

Frank, my jump buddy, winked at me as we shifted to the ledge. The view from the open door blew my mind. I could not comprehend what was happening. Time froze. Taking a deep breath, I realised that my only option was to surrender to fate.

Somehow or other, letting go both mentally and physically, I committed, and out we leapt. Whilst rapidly accelerating, I arched into the dive position. The hiss of the cold air was deafening, and my mind couldn't keep up with what my senses were experiencing. Instinctively, I expected the fall to break at any moment; but it didn't. This was free fall. After a few seconds, I came to and roared out in exhilaration.

Sixty seconds later, Frank pulled on the parachute. Unfurling, it broke our descent with a yank. As we slowed, I peacefully watched the beautiful scenery, surrounded by the other jumpers above and below. Serene and expansive, Lake Taupo sparkled in the sun. On the horizon, snow capped mountains invoked a sense of wonder. After five minutes of gliding through the air, we touched down and it was all over.

Once untangled from the parachute and gear, I caught up with my friends. Embracing, we congratulated each other with shouts of "Awesome, yeah, yeehaa!" and we recounted our experiences.

So how did I feel now, after such a powerful experience?

Despite the extended camaraderie and back slapping, as the buzz of the jump wore off, I began to feel more and more empty. "Now what?" The question echoed in my mind. I was hit with the realisation that although exciting, such external, temporary activities can never truly satisfy us on a deeper, more meaningful level.

Herein lies the problem with conventional attempts at enjoyment.

Despite endeavouring for and indeed sometimes achieving peak material experiences, be they romantic, sporting, artistic, academic, professional, or otherwise, the taste soon fades. Because such successes are temporary, we are quickly left feeling empty and deflated. Indeed, by definition, the very term "material" describes objects and scenarios governed and limited by time and space, including our own bodies and minds. In other words, anticlimax is inevitable with material experiences; what goes up must come down.

Even if the object of our desire is not prematurely ripped away, time wears everything down. The exciting new partner, car, job, or house soon appears humdrum. Indeed, we may well arrange to remove ourselves from the very same situation we were previously desperate to acquire.

We desire significant pleasure and reciprocation from others, yet we find only repeated frustration every time we try for conventional, material happiness. What a conundrum!

Despite these common, ultimately dissatisfying experiences, the influence of Western culture is so great that it impels us to continue the robotic and repetitive search for material pleasure. The propaganda, both internal (stemming from our own misconceptions about life) and social is overwhelming. Indeed, the advertising industry is expert at exploiting the pandemic disease known as "empty heart syndrome." Whilst desperately groping around for happiness, we are easily manipulated into believing that buying anything, from socks to helicopter blades, will bring real happiness.

So what do we do after becoming frustrated with external, material enjoyment?

Sadly, many people become cynical and depressed, cultivating a sour grapes mentality. Grumpily criticising everything and everyone, they stumble through life, only just keeping it together. They can only survive by taking various intoxicants, which help them to temporarily forget the painful nature of their existence. Indeed, some people become so frustrated with the repeated failure to find happiness, that they bitterly renounce the world, abandoning society for a life of seclusion.

Others dust themselves down and reassess, taking the opportunity to table deep philosophical enquiries:

- **Why are we burdened with this innate desire to experience substantial pleasure?**
- **Where does this drive for pleasure come from?**
- **What is my real identity?**
- **Am I a product of matter or something else?**

It is often at times like these, when we are philosophically checkmated, that the ancient yoga texts of India can save the day.

Key books such as Bhagavad-gita explain that our core identity is spiritual, not material. Furthermore, we learn that when in a healthy state, the soul naturally experiences eternal bliss and knowledge. As such, our desire to experience ever-fresh delight is the hankering of the real self, the soul. If we were just the sum total of a bunch of atoms, why should we care about happiness?

Although a good start, simply theoretically understanding this foundational knowledge does not solve all our problems. Subsequent questions arise. If we are indeed entitled to enjoy real pleasure as spirit souls, why then do we run into brick walls when trying to enjoy? Why are there so many stumbling blocks and limitations? Despite the overwhelming pressures and expectations we place on ourselves to squeeze out at least a few drops of happiness, our attempts so often end in tears and lamentation.

So how do we solve this happiness riddle, which sages have wrestled with since ancient times?

Firstly, let us examine the nature of our identity and that of the world around us, in greater detail.

As Krishna explains in Bhagavad-gita (7.4-5):

“Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence, and false ego—all together these eight constitute my separated material energies.”

“Besides these, there is another, superior energy of mine, which comprises the living beings who are exploiting the resources of this material, inferior nature.”

Although our identity is that of superior energy, or spirit soul, we are currently encased by inferior matter, namely our bodies and minds, consisting of the above-mentioned, grossly classified elements. Unfortunately, these gross elements are governed by strict laws of time, space and deterioration. As such, utilising our material bodies and minds to exploit material resources will never help us, as spirit souls, to achieve the ever-increasing pleasure we demand.

Krishna consolidates this understanding of our current existential position:

“Know that whatever you see in existence, both moving and nonmoving, is only a combination of the field of activities [body] and the knower of the field [the soul, us!]” (B.G. 13.27)

Through this illuminating analysis, Krishna is pushing us to seriously consider our real self-interest. As spirit souls, if we don't *act* in accord with our real identity, how can we expect to be happy?

Of course, having been systematically trained to seek satisfaction through matter, this knowledge certainly challenges our deeply ingrained conditioning. To advance further, firstly, we have to accept that we are actually not so expert at knowing what will make us happy. Naturally,

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So how do we solve this happiness riddle, which sages have wrestled with since ancient times?



this may pain our false egos; typically we like to profile our so-called expertise at material enjoyment. Underneath all the bravado, however, even the most expert materialists are riddled with insecurity and envy, worrying that others are enjoying more than they are.

Fortunately, Krishna doesn't simply leave us with theoretical knowledge. Bhagavad-gita is also a book of action. Therefore, Krishna clearly delineates the practical path of spiritual activity, which culminates in the re-establishment of the full knowledge, pleasure, and freedom we all aspire for.

In the fifth chapter of Bhagavad-gita, entitled "Action in Krishna Consciousness," Krishna summarises:

"An intelligent person is not attracted to material sense pleasure but is always in trance, enjoying the pleasure within. In this way, the self-realized person enjoys unlimited happiness, for he concentrates on the Supreme." (5.21)

Achieving this unlimited happiness is the birth right of all human beings. A real human civilisation recognises this and instead of corrupting and exploiting its members, equips them with the tools and training required to achieve self-realisation.

A sincere and steady chanter of Hare Krishna will emerge from the deadly cocoon of material absorption, flying high into the spiritual sky of unlimited pleasure.

In this day and age, the prime technique for self-realisation is mantra meditation, the focused chanting of spiritual sound. The Sanskrit word *mantra* means to free or liberate the mind. The beauty of this practice is that it can be done anytime, anyplace, by anyone. It can be performed as a reflective, individual meditation using beads (*japa*) or in a group, accompanied by music and dancing (*kirtan*). It is not based on belief or a blind hope in some vague future benefit after death. A complete beginner can immediately experience the deepest spiritual bliss whilst also benefiting from reduced stress, better sleep, improved concentration, and many other advantages. So powerful is this chanting, that many athletes, musicians, business executives, and academics maintain a daily practice to enhance professional performance.

Of all mantras, the chanting of the *maha-mantra* (most powerful mantra) is universally recommended for those wanting to make rapid spiritual progress:

**HARE KRISHNA, HARE KRISHNA,
KRISHNA KRISHNA, HARE HARE,
HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA,
RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE**

The *maha-mantra* is a spiritual call, which petitions the energetic Source and his energy, **Hare**, to help us respiritualise

our lives. **Krishna** and **Rama** are primeval names for the Supreme Person who possesses all energies, meaning *all attractive one* and *source of all pleasure* respectively. The perfect effect of chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra is the complete reorientation of our consciousness. Before long, a sincere and steady chanter of Hare Krishna will emerge from the deadly cocoon of material absorption, flying high into the spiritual sky of unlimited pleasure. For cultured souls, who relish ducking and diving in the eternal, spiritual atmosphere through chanting Hare Krishna, no parachutes are required. As Krishna assures in Bhagavad-gita:

"After attaining me, the great souls, who are yogis in devotion, never fall down again to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection." (8.15)

As Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the most famous teacher of mantra meditation stated:

"This chanting enables us to taste the pleasure for which we are always anxious."

So instead of resorting to drink, drugs, unhealthy relationships, and life endangering extreme sports, why not take up a daily practice of chanting Hare Krishna? Initially, beginners may simply dedicate five or ten minutes a day. After a month, the practitioner may then objectively assess the value of the chanting. As a teacher of mantra meditation, I have never experienced anyone being disappointed after making this small effort; everyone feels benefited. Indeed, the vast majority spontaneously elects to increase their practice, being delighted with the effects.

To conclude, this process of chanting Hare Krishna is so sublime that Yamunacarya, a great saint and practitioner of chanting Hare Krishna, commented:

"Since my mind has been engaged in chanting Hare Krishna and I have been enjoying an ever-new pleasure in this way, whenever I think of material pleasures I turn away and spit at the thought."

Here we see the elevated position that an expert chanter of Hare Krishna enjoys. Knowing what is what, he can easily reject superficial material pleasure, skillfully avoiding the sources of frustration. This is not due to dry, sour grapes renunciation. His strength of character is established on the basis of constantly tasting the intoxicating, exquisite, ever-increasing, and complete pleasure contained within the *maha-mantra*.

So why not give the Hare Krishna mantra a chance?

It might just be what you're looking for. 🌸



Bhakti monk and qualified medical doctor, Chaitanya Vihara, moved to NZ from the UK six years ago. Chaitanya's interest in spirituality was ignited by his first visit to India in 2006, when he ventured deep into the Himalayas after completing studies in tropical medicine. He relishes sharing spiritual knowledge with others and leads mantra meditation workshops at Auckland University.

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GOODBYE MAISEY

Milk, meat and mothers. A road trip through New Zealand's picturesque North Island is not what it seems.

Writer **Sruti-cari**

The sun was beginning to rise, bright and clear, into the cloudless sky, as we loaded our cases into the car that morning; it was a perfect day for a road trip. My husband and I were excited to be driving from Auckland to Wellington on that spring day. Spending eight or nine hours in the car was not a problem for us; the spectacularly diverse New Zealand scenery on the state highway always made it an enjoyable trip.

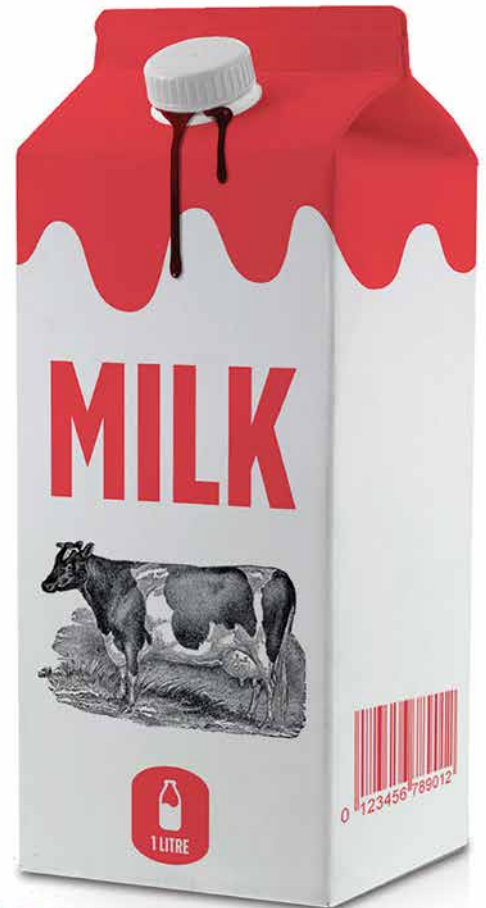
We whizzed southward on the motorway, enjoying our freedom, as we watched the northbound commuter traffic crawling into Auckland city. Humming along to stereo music, we descended the Bombay Hills and entered the misty Waikato region. Through the fog we glimpsed dairy cows plodding home to their paddocks from the milking sheds. We drove on, and, as the mist lifted, the Waikato revealed to us the fresh, lush spring growth it is famous for.

Mid-morning and we paused to paddle our feet in the crisp, cool, and beautifully clear waters of Lake Taupo. The sun sparkled magically on the water, and ducks waddled up to see if we had anything for them to eat.

Our ears popped as we wound up through the bush and onto the Central Plateau. The hardy alpine plants growing in this wild landscape gave evidence of the harsh climate. Snow still sat in shady corners, despite the spring sunshine. The mountains themselves rose majestically off the plain, still cloaked with snow, like three ancient sentinels guarding the region. To marvel at their beauty, we stopped in Waiouru and munched on tasty home-made vegetarian quiche. Despite the brilliant sunshine, a chilly breeze had sprung up, which cooled our faces and hands.

Continuing on, we entered the Rangitikei region with its flat-topped hills and steep ravines. Fluffy white sheep dotted the steep green hillsides, in picture-postcard fashion.

By mid-afternoon the long, straight roads of the fertile Manawatu plains stretched out ahead of us. Small towns and



serene farms drifted past, and making good time, we decided to get out and stretch our legs. We pulled over, but as soon as we opened our doors, a freezing wind bit at us and convinced us to stay in the car.

Up ahead, in a roadside paddock, stood a cow. She appeared to have a wet plastic bag attached to her backside. We both looked more carefully and realised that she had just given birth, and what we could see was the afterbirth. We looked at each other. Both of us were eager to witness the first few moments of a new life and the loving bond develop between mother and calf.

My husband eased the car forward, and sure enough, we could see the beautiful newborn calf on the ground next to its mother. Its soft white coat had been licked clean, and now it was trying to stand. We smiled as we watched it struggling to gather its long spindly legs beneath it and rise. It almost managed the task then collapsed to the ground again. Its large brown eyes looked around as it rested, gathering its strength to try again. Another attempt, and it succeeded! We cheered from the car, eagerly waiting to see it take its first drink of milk from its mother.

However, we were soon startled to detect a desperate energy in the air, not the sweet loving vibe we expected. Something didn't seem right. Then the mother cow moved abruptly, knocking her new calf to the ground. She seemed distracted, even disturbed, not looking at her tiny baby. She picked at



175 vivian st
wellington



live drama



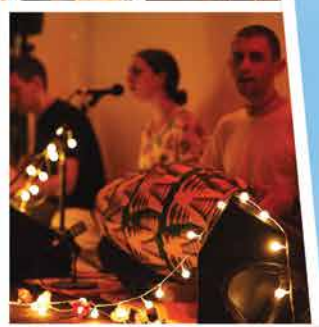
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kirtan



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cooking classes



retreats



friends



Bhakti
Lounge
the heart of
yoga



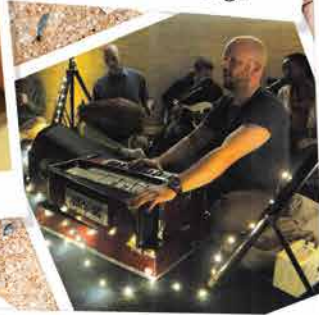
timeless knowledge



amazing dessert



amazing dinner



woofing



lifestyle



easy meditation



themed workshops



catering



intriguing discussion



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fun



drumming





the grass with her teeth, pretending to eat but not really able to, while her offspring again gathered its strength to stand. I felt uneasy; it really didn't seem natural for a mother to be so inattentive to her baby.

We continued to watch as the calf wobbled to its feet again. This time its mother gave an anguished "MOO," and walked deliberately away from it. She swung her head violently up and down, from side to side; she was obviously extremely distressed, perhaps in pain. My heart went out to her. It was odd watching the pastoral scene fade from idyllic to horrifying, as the cow's agony increased. And her calf, abandoned several metres from its mother, appeared bewildered too. I could see there was a problem, but I could not understand what it was.

My husband was also confused by the cow's behaviour. We got out of the car and walked to the fence, trying to figure out what the problem was. The cow swung her head toward us, the whites of her eyes showing her torment, as she seemed to plead with us, begging us to somehow relieve her of her emotional agony.

"Is she afraid of us?" I wondered aloud.

"Maybe she's had a difficult birth and isn't able to bond with the calf." My husband suggested.

I contemplated the situation more carefully, realising that it was very likely the farmer would soon come and take the calf away, as is standard practice in commercial dairy farming.

What new mother would not be in anguish in such a situation? The intense emotional bond between mother and baby is natural and obvious with any living being. It is nature's miraculous way of making sure the infant creature is cared for in its extremely vulnerable newborn state. I stood stunned for a moment as this realisation took hold.

"Perhaps she knows," I whispered, horrified. "Perhaps she knows that her new baby will be taken from her soon and possibly killed—and she can't let herself become attached to it."

He nodded quietly, "It does seem a possible explanation."

We stood there powerless, the cold wind whipping at our clothing, wishing we could somehow change this situation, or at least comfort this mother. We could do nothing—and there was no comfort for her.

Eventually we drove on, in silence. As we continued on the long straight roads, I began to consider the facts I had always known but had chosen to ignore. For a cow to give milk, she must have a calf. On all dairy farms, the calves are removed from their mothers soon after birth. This is very distressing for the cow (indeed, any mother feels extreme distress when separated from her newborn). Male calves are sent to be killed for their meat, and while some females are raised to adulthood (without their mothers), they are fed a cocktail of powdered milk, hormones, and antibiotics. As soon as they are old enough to join the herd, they are mated (for 80 percent of cows this is done by artificial insemination). They are milked heavily, which is emotionally stressful and hard on their bodies. Every year this cycle is repeated. If they fail to become pregnant, or if their milk production drops a little

or they become ill, they are immediately sent to be killed for their meat. Most New Zealand cows do not live past their eighth year, a fraction of their natural life span of around twenty-five years.

What is the cause of this horrible cycle of pain and death? I had to confront myself with the obvious answer. It's the consumer who drives this cycle—that's me! I knew I would never be able to relish the taste of cheese or yoghurt again, after seeing the face of that mother cow. How could I enjoy the sweet creamy taste of milk or butter, knowing the torment its production causes another living being?

The lush and beautiful countryside continued to roll past, but now, appearing stained with blood, it seemed to speak a different message. I could see all around me, evidence of the human tendency to exploit. Our desires urge us to act, and we strive to fulfil them, without concern for the implications of our actions. We enjoy the taste of meat and dairy, so we buy it from the supermarket in sterile packaging. It is so easy to ignore the suffering of another living being, when it is not directly present before us. And it's so carefully hidden by the advertising industry.

Gradually, we started to discuss what we had seen and its consequences. The conclusions crashed in on our consciousness, like the waves we watched as they pounded on the rocks of the Kapiti Coast.

"I want to DO something about this!" I said. "How can I be peaceful, being part of a cruel cycle that causes a mother to suffer like that?"

The sky began to glow with golden light as the sun sank lower over the outer suburbs of Wellington.

"I've heard that you can buy milk from farms where cows and their calves are loved and cared for all their natural lives," my husband volunteered. "It's called *ahimsa* milk."

"Really! That sounds wonderful!" I replied. Then I thought, "What happens to the bull calves though?"

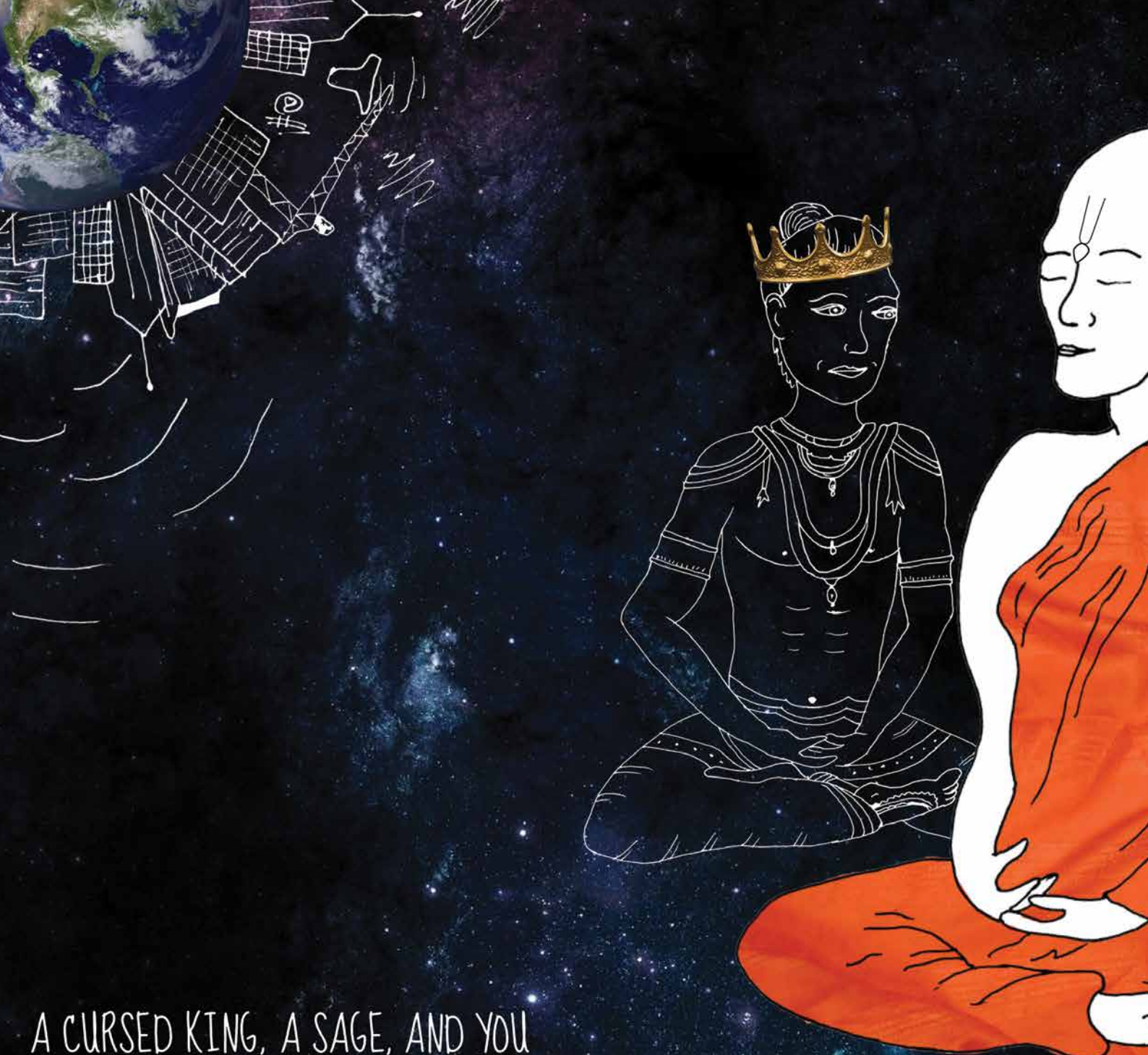
"According to the article I read, they are raised and trained in the traditional way to plow the land and pull carts—to do the work tractors do now. Apparently bulls enjoy the work, just as dogs enjoy herding sheep."

"Oh I'd love to see a farm like that! The whole herd happily maintained. Let's see if we can find a farm like that in New Zealand!" I cried, with new determination, as we finally arrived home.

Getting out of the car, we watched the sun slip fluidly below the horizon. 🌸



Sruti-cari is a true-blue kiwi girl, who loves all things natural and is deeply concerned about social and environmental issues. She holds a BSc in computer science and has been joyfully practising bhakti-yoga for sixteen years. Sruti-cari likes sharing with others what she has learned on her journey so far.



A CURSED KING, A SAGE, AND YOU

Long ago, great sages of the world gathered to discuss how to benefit the people of our time. They could foresee our situation: technologically brilliant but spiritually dull. "What will become of them, of this planet, without spiritual insight?" they worried.

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TRASHED!

The science of real love performs a rescue operation.

Writer Munjaranya

I had just crossed the lights on Queen Street when I saw him from the corner of my eye. Having seen him umpteenth times before, I instinctively knew what he was going to do. Shivers ran up my spine. Although I have seen him do the same thing numerous times, I still experience the same intense revulsion every time.

Let me introduce you to this man. For the sake of context, I am going to call him Mr. Trasher. If you are a Queen Street regular, then you know Mr. Trasher. Beginning at the bottom of the street, he walks from one rubbish bin to another. He does at least four rounds a day, each time doing the same thing. He stops at a bin, peers in, puts his hand in and digs around. He shuffles the contents, removes some, and inspects his findings, sometimes by taking a bite of whatever he has found. If the morsel is not to his

taste, he spits it back in the rubbish and throws the rotting remnant back. If his scavenging has been successful, then, grunting, he devours the delectable scrap.

The first time I ever saw this man, I thought to myself, what a life to live, going from one rubbish bin to another. Then, I dug into myself and realised that in some ways my life is not much different to his. In fact, I realised that I might be even worse. I might just be like that piece of garbage he has picked up from the bin and perhaps spat back in. Come to think of it, I think I switch roles between these two—either doing the trashing or being trashed.

In my late teens, out of an impelling desire for acceptance, love, and security, I would enter one relationship after the other, and each time I'd play the same game. If I didn't stand up to his expectations, I would be discarded, or if he didn't stand

up to my expectations, he would be discarded. And both parties then continued the scavenging, just as Mr. Trasher on Queen Street takes a bite of some refuse from the rubbish bin and if it's not to his taste, spits it out and moves on to another bin.

If I am in a rubbish bin, I definitely want to be rescued. But what type of a rescue operation will really help me? A fancy-job rescue operation? Honestly, how secure is the job market? A holiday? Holidays must come to an end too. A perfect-partner rescue operation? Really, just to be chewed on and thrown out again?

I came across a book entitled *Prabhupada: He Built a House in Which the Whole World Can Live*. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, a Vedic scholar and a revered monk, is not only respected as the world's most prominent contemporary authority on

bhakti-yoga but is also very well known for bringing it to the West. The more I read about his worldwide distribution of a spiritual lifestyle in Krishna consciousness, the more I become convinced of his authenticity. He did not make any distinction—he saw everyone with equal vision. He acted to help everyone despite their qualification. He didn't spit anyone out; he welcomed everyone with open arms, giving real love and care. Such qualities are characteristic of a genuine spiritual authority, as elucidated below:

“Gentle, tolerant, peaceful, magnanimous, grave, sweet in words and very sober in endeavour, respectful to everyone, and works for the benefit of all, diplomacy, envy and jealousy are unknown to his heart.”

(Caitanaya-caritamrta, Adi 8.55-8.56)

When I see the Trasher on Queen Street, I quiver. Immediately one of Srila Prabhupada's commentaries from the quintessential encyclopaedia of yoga wisdom, Srimad-Bhagvatam, crosses my mind:

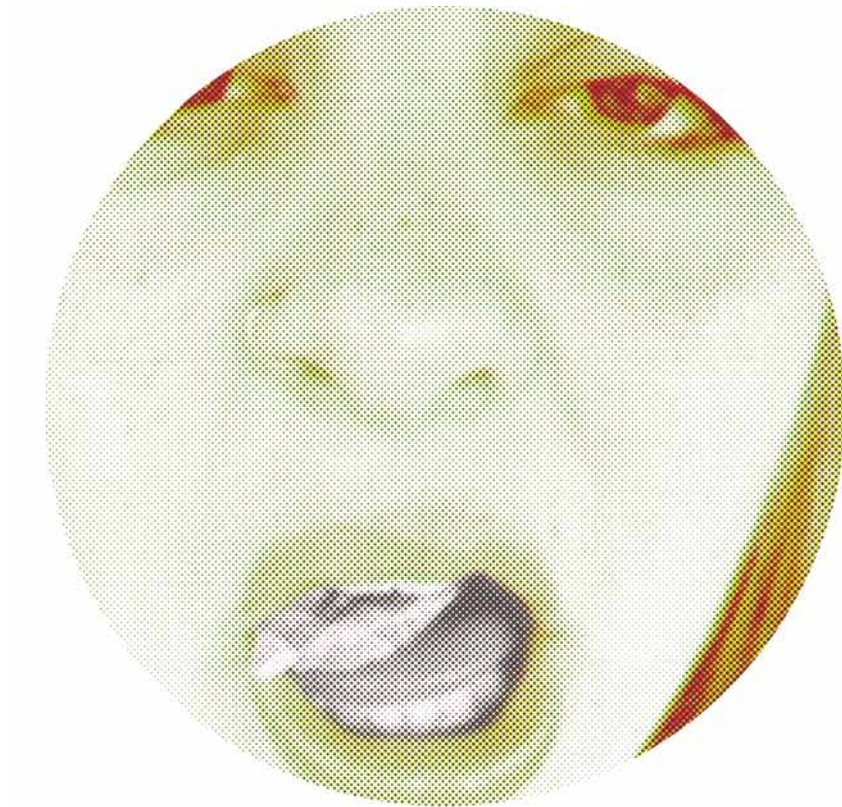
“It is called chewing the chewed. If somebody chewed the sugarcane, took out the juice, and if the remnants were thrown away, what will you get by chewing again those remnants? We may discover many ways to squeeze the juice out of the sugarcane, but the result is the same.”

(Srimad-Bhagvatam 7.5.30)

I am amazed at how this verse encapsulates what Mr. Trasher and I have been doing for a long time. The Trasher, going from one bin to another, is chewing what has already been chewed by others. In going from one relationship to another, I am playing the same game over and over again, trying to find the love and security that I have failed to find in previous ones. Fearing, but hoping nonetheless, that next time I will be lovingly accepted without reservations. But as Srila Prabhupada further comments on this subject:

“Those who try to adjust material conditions are said to be chewing the chewed. No one has been able to adjust material conditions, but life after life, generation after generation, people try and repeatedly fail.”

I am glad I'm finding my way out of this lose-lose, chewing/being chewed game. Rather than digging for love and satisfaction in the rubbish bin of external, temporary, and disappointing relationships, I am



ADJUSTING MATERIAL CONDITIONS— CHEWING THE CHEWED?

building my eternal and perfectly reciprocal relationship with Krishna, the supreme source of loving relationships—under the expert guidance of my spiritual teacher. As the above quote continues:

“Unless one is properly trained by a *mahat*—a *mahatma*, or great soul—there is no possibility of one's understanding Krishna and his devotional service.”

I'm grateful to Srila Prabhupada for his rescue operation, for bringing me

bhakti-yoga, the science of real love. Having been rescued, and practising a Krishna conscious lifestyle in a society of truly nurturing relationships, I am gradually able to let go of my insecurities and my fear of being exploited. 🌿



Munjaranya is pursuing her PhD in communication studies, and holds master's degrees in management (marketing) and communication studies, and a bachelor's degree in engineering (electronics and telecommunications). She loves the simple things in life: conversations and laughter. Munjaranya enjoys singing and dancing her heart out in kirtans, her shelter for joy and peace.

LOST IN THE COSMOS

Drowning in shallow relationships

Writer Devamrita Swami

DISCONNECTION

"The hand of a body is a complete unit only as long as it is attached to the complete body. When the hand is severed from the body, it may appear like a hand, but it actually has none of the potencies of a hand. Similarly, living beings are part and parcel of the Complete Whole, and if they are severed from the Complete Whole, the illusory representation of completeness cannot fully satisfy them."



ARTIST ALEXEY DREVA

*I'm driftin', driftin'
Like a ship out on the sea
You know I've got nobody
In the whole world to care for me*

*If my baby would only take me back again
Yes, I know I'm a good for nothin'
But at least I'd have one friend*

*Listen to me, honey
I gave you all my money
Now tell me, what more can I do?
You're such a sugary little girl
But I know you'll never be true*

Old blues songs may go out of style, but they never die. The “Driftin’ Blues,” a classic since 1945, highlights personal loneliness: to have loved and lost.

Tossed aside by the apple of his eye, the crushed male ego agonises over his vanished opportunity for conquest. His constant craving for being babied crashes to ground zero of reality. “Yes, she’s sweet, but like a honey bee, she stung . . .”

HOW CAN YOU MEND A BROKEN HEART?

In today’s culture of party hardily and hookup mightily, some men or women decide they can no longer keep up the pace, in the frantic hedonistic race. Burned out, the young woman especially may start longing for “more understanding” and “more of my own space.” Differences magnify, the fork in the road looming just ahead.

She’ll find someone else, more suitable for her current state of ever fluctuating emotions and mind. Meanwhile, the ex-partner, left flesh-hungry and ego devastated, can’t handle the rejection. A predator denied his prey, he sinks into depression—until he can score again, riding high, he thinks.

The wounds from relationship breakdowns are so excruciating, they become a prime cause for suicide. “Look at me—without her, I’m not half the man I used to be. Livin’ life is not worthwhile . . .”

Neuroscientists say that the human brain treats relationship rejection similar to how it processes physical hurts. A broken heart feels the same, to the brain, as a broken arm. That means, to ease the pain of both social repudiation and physical injury, the brain activates the same neurochemical response.





Men are much more likely than women to take their own life—a puzzle intriguing social researchers for generations. In countries with the highest number of suicides, the male rate exceeds the female by as high as six times. But it is equally true that women are around three times more likely than men to attempt taking their own life.

The difference, psychologists say, is that a female suicide attempt is often a form of SOS, a desperate cry for attention and help. Actually aiming to provoke an immediate response, ladies generally don't choose the most efficient and sure methods for ending their own life. Their attempt often simply remains just that—an attempt. Men, however, don't mess around. Sad to say, they generally don't disclose their decision to anyone. Therefore, undeterred by intervention, they follow through.

Let's look at the United States as an example. Of the 30,000 people who commit suicide each year, 80 percent are men. Overall, males terminate themselves at rates four times higher than females. Yet, certain age groups of men are even more vulnerable. As the elderly years progress, the ratio increases to nearly eighteen times more men killing themselves than women do.

Material Man has a problem, yes. But let's not dump all the blame on him. Irrespective of our gender and its particular issues, the fundamental problem of material existence dominates us all.

Regardless of how much we embed ourselves in another person's temporary body and mind, we cannot solve our underlying problem: ultimate disconnectivity.

Beyond gender differences, beyond social and romantic relationships, even beyond the cosmos, is the ultimate root of our existential crisis. We are neglecting the original source, the Supreme Complete Whole. No matter the size and type of our physical body, we are tiny spiritual

particles, housed within. Regardless of how much we embed ourselves in another person's temporary body and mind, we cannot solve our underlying problem: ultimate disconnectivity.

THE REAL SELF: LOST AND FOUND

Thanks to the bhakti-yoga wisdom culture, we can go much deeper than ordinary psychological and social knowledge. A graduate bhakti text explains:

“When one deviates from his original spiritual consciousness, he loses the capacity to remember his previous position or recognize his present one. When remembrance is lost, all knowledge acquired is based on a false foundation. When this occurs, learned scholars consider that the soul is lost.” (Srimad Bhagavatam 4.22.31)

When we fall asleep, we forget ourselves. Dreams swallow us. In the same way, lost in the material dreamlike mirage, we lose our remembrance of our permanent identity...

The bhakti sages, since ancient times, teach that “lost soul” means not that our real self has disappeared, but that our essential awareness of our spiritual self has vanished. Although materially expert or awesome, we build our life's lessons and experiences on quicksand. Indeed, society and cohorts may crown us a veritable mover and shaker—but meanwhile, the havoc of illusion has disrupted the crucial knowledge of our eternal spiritual identity.

Consequently, struggling, battling to function in what we have labelled “the real world,” we can't recall our original spiritual status and activities, or grasp comprehensively the magnitude of our present slumber.

When we fall asleep, we forget ourselves. Dreams swallow us. In the same way, lost in the material dreamlike mirage, we lose our remem-

brance of our permanent identity as spiritual parts of Krishna, the Supreme Enjoyer.

Mistaking the incomputable cosmic shadow known as material existence to be the essence, blinded to my identity as pure spiritual soul, part of the Supreme Spiritual Whole, day and night, in effect, I base my life on seeing pink elephants. Really—our predicament is that distorted!

I am hallucinating that I am severed, amputated, functioning on my own. Misconstruing the self both as disconnected and as matter, next I feel artificially empowered to exploit—to varying degrees of refinement or ruthlessness—the earth's resources and living beings.

We call this futile crusade “progress”—often hailing it as “the advancement of civilisation.”

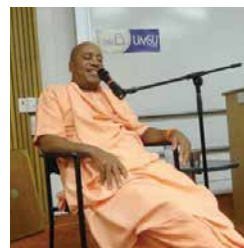
SONIC THERAPY

To counteract the impenetrable fog of individual and mass illusion, the bhakti texts, the pinnacle of the yoga system, prescribe spiritual sound.

As an alarm clock wakes us from the dream world and initiates our daily routine, similarly the Krishna mantra rouses us and impels our breakout from material consciousness.

The highest goal of yoga is to reconnect our spoke to the ultimate hub. All the spokes, the living entities, radiate from that supreme hub, the central point of infinite personal attractiveness known as Krishna. By connecting to other persons via that Supreme Source, then we can flourish in truly fulfilling and meaningful personal relationships.

The same old blues and the brand new blahs disappear in personal bonds based on mutual nonmaterial nourishment. Try it: partners and friends in enlightenment, journeying together for pure consciousness. 🌸



Devamrita Swami is an international speaker, author, Yale graduate, and monk. Travelling extensively on every continent of the planet, he has been sharing the path of bhakti-yoga with others for over forty years. He advocates spiritually based economics, sustainability, and environmentalism. When he is not travelling, he calls New Zealand home.



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Widening the Circle of Compassion

WHY LIMIT OUR COMPASSION TO GIVING CHARITY IN A CRISIS?

Writer **Justine Payton**

For those striving to align their lives to the bearings of a moral compass, the pursuit of a life filled with compassion often factors into the agenda. Compassion is a quality heralded by those who sing the praises of great saints and personalities, and it is a virtue that directly prompts us to see beyond an egocentric view of the world. Recognising this benevolent desire of the human being, Albert Einstein once wrote, “Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.”

Yet, in today’s world, the circle of compassion is shrinking to the point of nonexistence. Rather than follow the wise words of Albert Einstein, we have come to seek freedom in the form of material acquisitions and achievements. A self-proclaimed world of consumers, we promote the capitalist creed of efficiency and profitability over more “soft-hearted” sentiments, believing in the potency of money and power to bring our dreams of happiness to fruition.

Often it is only when disaster strikes, when the suffering is right before our eyes or is being relayed to us by the rich and famous, that we acknowledge our desire to act with compassion. At these times we may donate to an organisation bringing aid to tsunami victims or drop spare dollars into the jingling cup of a homeless man. We feel a surge of happiness with such an act, enlivened by our good deed. But then, the day goes on, and

the suffering that we were so affected by moments before fades rapidly, as we indulge our minds and senses in a world meant to entertain and distract. Even these small acts of charity, if prompted too often in a short period of time—as appears to be the case these days with a seemingly incessant stream of natural disasters—create a phenomenon called “compassion fatigue,” wherein we are just too tired of being compassionate to give or care anymore. I am afraid to ask, but when did compassion become a finite resource?

My circle of compassion was incredibly small, given the vast number of living creatures that I coexist with.

I’m one of the many, perhaps, who claim compassion as a virtue. For years, my interest has been in how to help others—specifically women and children in the war zones of central Africa—to rise above their circumstances in a sustainable manner. My compassion was long-term, not merely motivated

by the sentiments of popular organisations or sudden crises, and I believed it to be true and pure. Yet, while coming from a place of genuine concern, I have realised my motivation was not true or pure compassion. My compassion was limited—to those of a certain race, a certain circumstance, a certain gender and species. I lacked compassion for the druggie on the streets in Chicago, for the girl who could not control her weight, for the animals that suffered in the animal food industry, and even for the spiders in my bedroom that I mercilessly killed out of fear. My circle of compassion was incredibly small, given the vast number of living creatures that I coexist with.

When compassion is viewed in this manner, as an all-encompassing concern and love for the entire spectrum of living entities and the whole of nature, its absence is easily noted. On a daily basis, individuals spend and consume in quantities that could feed entire families, if not great swathes of population. In pursuit of this consumption, forests and ecosystems are destroyed, animals are slaughtered, health is neglected and humans are enslaved in new and creative ways. Failing to view all living beings with compassion, wars are fought indiscriminately over apparent differences and in quests for power and resources. The dearth of compassion, if we take the time to look, is abundantly clear.





In a world of perceived differences, escalating a frantic scramble to the top, how can we realise true, pure compassion, let alone act upon it in our daily lives? My change of heart came in understanding what compassion meant as explained in the Bhagavad-gita, an ancient Indian text that delineates the practice of bhakti-yoga. According to the text, all living beings are by nature eternal souls, part and parcel of the Supreme Soul, Krishna, who confirms:

“The living beings in this conditioned world are my eternal fragmental parts.” (B.G. 15.7).

Different in quantity but the same in quality—as a minute part of a complete whole—all living beings, including plants and animals, are recognised as eternal souls who are merely encased in a temporary, material body.

Through genuine practice of bhakti-yoga, the Bhagavad-gita promises that we can come to a transcendental stage of realisation and compassion, as “The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, [wise person] a cow, an elephant, and a dog...” (B.G. 5.18) To see every living entity in terms of its individual soul, with a connection to Krishna, rather than its external form is the vision that practising bhakti-yoga bequeaths to us—a vision that allows the most pure and true form of compassion to manifest itself.

While some of us may nod our heads upon reading this, having considered such a possibility before, its practical application has a much greater effect on our reality than we might think. Consider this: every year over 56 billion farm animals are killed worldwide in the animal-production industry, a figure that would be significantly higher if it included marine life. Similarly, according to the World Wildlife Fund, between 46-58 thousand square miles of forest is destroyed each year—much of it for the purpose of grazing beef cattle—creating irreparable damage to the world’s environment and species. Are we willing, or even able, to exercise the compassion Bhagavad-gita is expounding, one that would involve seeing all living entities with equal vision, as spirit souls? If we truly came to understand that all creatures have an individual and eternal soul, could we participate in their causeless slaughter?

The price of not doing so is high. To take one example, as a worldwide population, our consumption of animal food products is increasing at an alarming rate and with dire consequences. According to a UN Food and Agriculture Organization report (2006), livestock production is a top contributor to environmental degradation, causing water pollution, air pollution, land depletion and climate change above and beyond the impact of the notorious fossil fuels we all fear. Professional estimates of the external costs (a measurement of expenses related to producing or consuming a good that is not reflected in the good’s price and is instead passed on to third

Coming to understand and practise true and pure compassion is therefore of the utmost importance in today’s world, not only for our individual well-being, but for that of the planet and all its inhabitants as well.



parties) of animal-based food products such as meat, fish, and eggs totals over 414 billion dollars for the United States alone, mostly in the sectors of health and the environment. One can only wonder at the extraordinary figure that would represent the external costs on a worldwide scale.

While these numbers may seem prodigious, the proclaimed cost to our souls is equally, if not more, severe. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, a renowned practitioner of bhakti-yoga who brought

the practice to the West in the 1960s, comments that “Every living creature is a son of the Supreme Lord, and he does not tolerate even an ant being killed. One has to pay for it. So indulgence in animal killing for the taste of the tongue is the grossest kind of ignorance.” (B.G. 14.16 commentary). By participating either passively or actively in the killing of other living beings, we are tainting our souls through unnecessary killing and decreasing our capacity to be merciful and compassionate in our daily lives. And we will pay a high price for our indifference, either in this life or in the next.

Coming to understand and practise true and pure compassion is therefore of the utmost importance in today’s world, not only for our individual well-being, but for that of the planet and all its inhabitants as well. It will take change—in our interactions, our consumption patterns, and even in our perceptions of who we are, who we share this world with and what our purpose is. Yet, if we extend the potency of our love and concern to the greatest circle of recipients possible, this will, according to the Bhagavad-gita (and Albert Einstein) free us from the constraints that currently bind us to bouts of unhappiness and distress. We will be able to practise compassion without fatigue.

The Bhagavad-gita further promises that as we practise bhakti-yoga, seeking to attain the realisations of the humble sages by reviving a relationship with and understanding the Supreme Soul, not only will we achieve this equal vision and level of compassion, but we will also experience transcendental bliss and happiness. The little surge of happiness you feel when you act on your compassionate nature for just a moment will increase exponentially when you see the world as a community of individual souls, all deserving of your love and concern, and all connected to the Supreme Soul, Krishna. 🌸



Justine holds degrees in economics and international studies and has recently begun to explore the science of bhakti-yoga during her New Zealand travels. While buried in books or exploring nature’s beauty, she is determined to seek solutions to the world’s woes by utilising a blend of academic and spiritual knowledge.



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WOMAN & MAN

Writer Urjesvari



Is life a mere moment, a fragment in time
With everyone lost in their own paradigm?
No supreme—life simply awakens from dust
No better cause other than lust?

Woman and man try to unite
It's all so attractive at the very first sight...

Woman's dream

Caring, understanding and romantic is he
He's charming and listens to me attentively
Fulfilling my needs is his priority
And he said he'd stay with me for eternity

I was scheming for ages so that he could be mine
To stop other women, I cut the phone line
He had a girlfriend—but she was a tart
So I thought up a plan to pull them apart.
Now, I really love fashion, my skimpy dress did the trick
A smile and a glance and he gave her the flick
Now he's all mine, no one stands in the way
And he tells me he loves me everyday!
In time we will have a big family
With a car and a house overlooking the sea...

Man's dream

I must act like a lion hunting its prey
And strike at the right time to have it my way
That gorgeous body, the way that it shakes
She's going to be mine, whatever it takes
My mind is reeling—when will it be?
Inside I am begging, say yes to me!
I'll have sizzling hot passion—when I command
She'll be a microwave oven on my demand
They call me the stallion 'cause I'm quick on the draw
So don't hold me back baby—I can only want more!

Woman's reality

He never listens to me, as if my feelings aren't real
He doesn't understand at all how I feel!
When I tell him my problems, he gets angry at me
He doesn't sympathise—he'd rather watch the T.V
He gave me one kid—but I wanted three
He only thinks of himself—but what about me?
I had to work really hard to make him my man
But it's all going wrong. This wasn't my plan!

Man's reality

Everything was advancing in perfect flow
Then she talked of commitment—oh God, hell no!
She moved in, and I fell for it, much to my disgust
I'm so sick of the talking—I just want the lust!
She tells me I don't listen—then she gets all uptight
But didn't I solve all her problems, when we turned out the light?
"I think we should marry," she had said to me
Passion has befooled me—how do I break free?
I had to walk down the aisle with this "girl of my dreams,"
But I never did realise how a baby screams
How mortgage interest rates never seems to fall
How working hard doesn't pay off at all!
Some years have now passed and I've had it to here
Her constant fighting and nagging has filled me with fear.

Woman and man

Enough is Enough—it was all a mistake
I think that it's time that we separate
After all that experience, we should have it sussed
That this love—it's not love—it simply is lust.
When opposite minds get together, quarrel comes fast
And "love" based on beauty never can last. 🌸



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