

# ENOUGH!

CULTURE FILE / SPIRIT MATTERS

JOIN THE EVOLUTION

INSPIRE-ME-YOGI / ACTIVIST

## TIRED OF GENERATING YOUR OWN PURPOSE?

WAKE UP FROM THE DREAM

CRACK!!

### IN THIS ISSUE

Cyber-junkies, lonely hearts and yoga technology

How to make the ultimate connection

#### Meditation

Going beyond the fad to the real thing

FOLLOWING MY OWN PATH BROTHER!!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!





# DEAR READER

Growing up, we seek meaning to our existence—meaning beyond the instant gratification our society perpetuates. Many people discern that another car, house, partner, drink, holiday, or smartphone is not going to answer our longing for happiness and inner fulfilment.

Beatles star John Lennon once said:

*When I was five years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up and I wrote down "Happy." They told me that I did not understand the assignment, and I told them that they didn't understand life.*

Later, Lennon discovered the jewel of Eastern philosophy—Krishna consciousness, and for some time

chanted the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* (great mantra). Like John, we may recognise that a deeper quest for happiness drives our life. But as we grow older, we realise that our search for happiness has become increasingly complex. Now, more people suffer depression than ever, as they continue to squeeze some fleeting satisfaction from things outside themselves. Tired of generating our own purpose in pursuit of happiness, we may try to understand life and our place in the cosmos.

In this issue we hope to share access to a lasting happiness and satisfaction that comes from a higher source within. Our contributors explore topics such as the goal of meditation beyond just stress relief and financial gain, finding genuine connection amid social media mayhem, and career advice for the searching soul.

If you long to understand the ultimate purpose of life and align yourself with this purpose in a powerful yet practical way, Enough! Magazine is for you.



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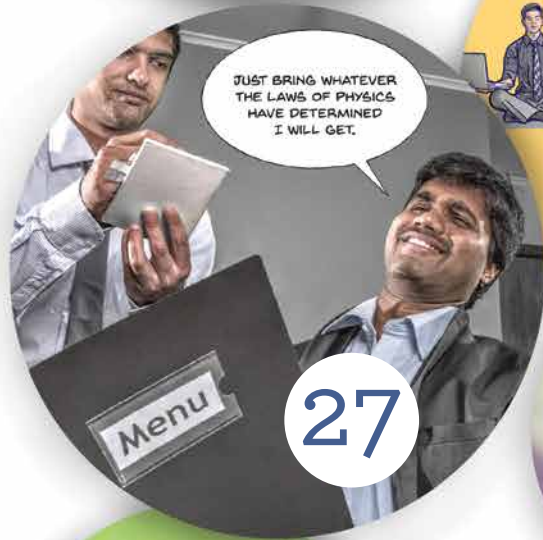
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# CAREER ADVICE from the HEART

Apply Within

Contributor Jiva Maya



## Dearest Soul,

**I am writing to give you some friendly advice. I would never want to interfere with your plans, but I care for you and have been sending you hints for a long time about the direction of your life. So I just wanted to call on you to take up this wonderful opportunity to live a life less ordinary, as a bhakti-yoga specialist. In this new role, you can make real change in the world! Being a bhakti specialist is not something you learn about in school, so let me tell you more about it.**

First things first. Before starting your spiritual career, *You must first look after You.* This means you have to water your own garden, so to speak. Everybody knows this on principle, but these days I've observed fewer and fewer people giving their true self any *thought*, let alone time or action. For most, even giving attention to their bodies and minds takes enormous effort, what to speak of addressing their spiritual needs. This is mostly because so few people actually know what that true self is, yet. So how can they care for and respect it? Therefore, our company mission promotes, first and foremost, spiritual education, for both employees and society at large.

This education is the best investment you can make for yourself and your career. Just think of it as the university for the soul. But instead of plugging numbers into spreadsheets and writing long essays, you're developing strong personal qualities and learning to access your eternal spiritual identity. It's not as overwhelming as it sounds; it just means cleaning up any destructive habits, developing some better ones and learning to do most of the things you usually do in your daily life with

full attention and heart. For example, cooking a meal. Because you do it with thoughts of the Supreme Spiritual Being, you do it to the very best of your ability. Such endeavour is a total win-win for your individual consciousness and for everybody's palates. Seriously! This is not a joke, and this process is not a waste of time.



I know you love that phrase "Be the change you want to see in the world." But are you going to leave it at that? As just a Tweet or a cute tattoo? Or do you want life to reflect true, lasting change?



This is exactly what your society needs. I know you have seen and wondered about the world and its inhabitants; you've wondered how you are going to save the planet, how you will sustain strong relationships, how people will ever become less selfish. I'm telling you straight: nothing else will make a difference except a *change in consciousness*. Greed, selfish desires, and envy are the root causes of all these social issues.





"Foods dear to those in the mode of goodness increase the duration of life, purify one's existence and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction."

Bhagavad-gita 17.8

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← I know you love that phrase “Be the change you want to see in the world.” But are you going to leave it at that? As just a Tweet or a cute tattoo? Or do you want your life and that of others to reflect true, enduring change? Just following your whims and then justifying them in your mind is not really going to cut it. That’s just what everyone else is doing according to the values and ideas they have been told or picked up along the way. You’re bigger and better than just another individual exploiting the earth and its resources, animate and inanimate, to get your way. Remember, if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. Again, I tell you this because I love you, absolutely and unconditionally, and I can’t bear to see your talents wasted and your heart unfulfilled any longer.



Spirituality is not just for weekends or for twenty minutes a day. It’s a way of living—a spiritual culture. A culture based on knowledge and wisdom.



I know that embarking on a nonmaterial career is different, which can be a bit scary. But we both know you’ve got a good brain, and a big heart, and this knowledge and its application is both sustainable and satisfying for both. Spirituality is not just for weekends or for twenty minutes a day. It’s a way of living—a spiritual culture.

• A culture based on knowledge and wisdom. It’s not a culture from a place in a travel brochure or in an intrepid journey on the Discovery channel. But it is alive all over the world and you can be a part of this culture where people respect one another, and where every action is one of love and upliftment. It’s a culture where everybody has a significant role to play. It is not restrictive but gives structure to a world that is falling apart, its purpose to build towards spiritual goals. It is community unified by timeless spiritual principles, working with compassion and the common goal of sharing inner peace and happiness with others.

• I really want you to be a part of it. You and everyone else will benefit from your brave, bold decision. Just think: **[Insert Your Name], Spiritual Warrior.** This is your calling. I look forward to hearing from you.

• Your greatest friend and well-wisher,  
Living in your heart,  
Supersoul. 🌸



Jiva Maya developed a taste for travel in her childhood, hopping between the United States and the United Kingdom, where she now lives in Cardiff, Wales. Upon finishing college she took a “gap year,” which unexpectedly lasted four years and led her to Australia and New Zealand. Her adventures and questions led her to bhakti-yoga, which she continues to pursue along with other interests including writing, reading, dance, and music.



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# YOUR PURPOSE IN THE COSMIC JUNGLE

Contributor Hriman Krishna

ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT, GENTLY DOWN THE STREAM. MERRIL





Y, MERRILY, MERRILY, MERRILY, LIFE IS BUT A DREAM.

**Enough! Stop for a moment and breathe a sigh of relief. Break the day-to-day grind to consider your minute position as a resident of this cosmos. You manifested into existence within the barest instant—a tiny speck of time in comparison to the history of this universe. The quest to find your place and discover relevance can seem like a monumental joke. Could there be an essential purpose for you in this macrocosmic web of matter?**

Existentialists such as Sartre and Kierkegaard tackle this issue by presenting two questions: Does existence precede essence, or does essence precede existence? In other words:

- 1) The universe is randomly generated and created with no inherent meaning, leaving it for you to define and substantiate your own significance in a purposeless world.
- 2) The universe is systematically generated and has a fundamental meaning, and it's your objective to realign yourself to that original purpose.

Consciously or not, most people live their lives according to the former proposition. Popular scientific theories will reinforce this notion by proclaiming the world to be but a random occurrence, originating from a loud noise in some cold and dense part of the universe, where chance itself haphazardly gave birth to the foundation of existence.

Scientists declare that 96 percent of the universe is composed of dark matter and energy that no one can see, detect, or comprehend; still, they claim the universe to be but an arbitrary phenomenon, despite being baffled by its very fabric. In any case, whether you can believe this empirical gospel or not, you're left to assume you are the generator of your own purpose, in a universe of apparently no purpose, and to struggle to find meaning in a meaningless world.

As the saying goes, "life is just like a dream"—the world is unreal, with no foundation or intelligent designer in control. For this reason, life is conveniently an individualistic embarkation on an imaginary quest, as society applauds you forward deeming your attempt courageous. Although you say life is a dream, you still try to enjoy that fantasy. Boldly trekking where no person has gone before, your quest for purpose is expressed through work, study, travel, relationships, sports and all kinds of concoctions your mind can muster.

Moreover, we attach great emphasis on living the dream, but fail to see the destination of our bravado—being bedazzled the same way an insect summersaults into fiery oblivion. We witness individuals and society collapse under the weight of our proud attempt to crown ourselves with this burden of being a purpose-generator. The pressure of time slowly crushes our venture, as the scourges of disease, debility, and death become the reality. Our struggle for existence will only contribute to increasing mental illness and depression, which are quickly becoming the foremost problems in the modern world. Research shows that despite technological and economic advancement, more people than ever are becoming destitute. We become deluded, fatigued and defeated while intoxication becomes







our solace. As the moments go by, we see life is but a useless passion, a laborious endeavour, chasing a dreamlike purpose that is bound to end in dissolution.

It may appear difficult to accept our insignificance in creating our own purpose, but perhaps the scientific credo may put our presumptions into perspective. Astrophysicists will illustrate our precarious position as a dwindling entity on an insignificant planet orbiting a single sun—that is one of some 200 billion stars in the colossal swirl of matter that makes up the galaxy. Our galaxy is just one of an estimated several hundred billion such structures in the known perceivable universe, a volume that currently expands in all directions for more than 270,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 miles.

# YOU MAY VIGOROUSLY TRY TO CLAIM MEANING FOR YOURSELF IN THIS COSMIC JUNGLE, BUT SIMULTANEOUSLY WITHER IN FEELINGS OF LONELINESS

As said by world travelling monk and author Devamrita Swami: "We are too tiny to generate our own purpose and by trying to do so, we create our suffering. And if life is ultimately meaningless, what does it matter if you really live a driven purposeful life or a haphazard, chaotic one? We all return to cosmic stardust anyway."

Enlightened sages propose that there is a purpose in this world and it is our duty to realign ourselves to that inherent purpose. That purpose is love. Your heart is parched like a desert and you seek to fulfill its demands for nourishment and reciprocation. You may vigorously try to claim meaning for yourself in this cosmic jungle, but simultaneously wither in feelings of loneliness and isolation. We can even imagine propriety over the entire world but evidently agonise due to want of real love and devotion.

Let us consider that before the beginning of time there was only life or a primordial consciousness, and from that primordial entity came all material elements and beings of diversity. Logically, it makes more sense that life would come from life. For example, from a woman comes a child and from the seed of a tree comes another tree; indeed, we are still awaiting the day to witness dead matter manifest life.

Opposed to the theory of a primordial material cause for existence, the ancient yoga texts of India recognise the pop notion that "the universe is love." This can be given some credence, but to go deeper into the subject and its meaning, it can be said that love has three principal aspects:

- 1) Personhood
- 2) Attraction
- 3) Pleasure

Love implies personalities. Without personality there can be no reciprocation, therefore, love will have no medium for expression. Dull matter cannot emanate love. Furthermore, if there is no attraction and pleasure in love, then affectionate attachment and connection cannot manifest for the object of love. Evidently, love implies the exquisite personality who is the reservoir of all attractiveness and pleasure. That exquisite personality who is the goal of the yoga system and realised by pre-eminent masters of enlightenment is Krishna .

The yoga texts explain that the source of the cosmos and all energies is a supreme absolute person who is both within and without our experience, otherwise that primordial personality could not be absolute. Krishna is that source. From Krishna, the original seed of existence, comes all beautiful and glorious creations. These are only a fragment of his magnificent and diverse energies. (Bhagavad-gita 10.41).

So, to find your purpose in this cosmic jungle means to find Krishna, and to connect with that source through love and devotion is the highest mystic attainment of the yoga system. Nonmaterial scientists can systematically prescribe a lifestyle of yogic disciplines to elevate your consciousness to the utmost level of perception, and with your senses, you can experience the source of all attraction and pleasure.

We all crave pleasure. What's the use of a purpose in this world if it is devoid of pleasure that comes from a genuine love—love that fills the heart with nonmaterial bliss? Realigning yourself to this original purpose of love is the real meaning to your bold struggle in life. There is no need to generate your own meaning in this universe. To recognise that you are a tiny part means you have a connection to the whole, and being an infinitesimal part of Krishna, you already have a purpose to your existence.

So, you can choose to keep your breath of relief and reflect on your delicate situation in this world. Before you dive back into the daily monotony, ask yourself—how long will it take before the burdensome weight of our fabricated purpose in this universe flattens us into oblivion? 🌸



At nineteen years when Hrیمان Krishna was a third-year tertiary student and a student of the NZ School of Philosophy, he came across the ancient yoga texts of India. He fell in love with that timeless wisdom and has been a practising monk of the bhakti tradition ever since. He studies under his teacher and mentor Devamrita Swami.

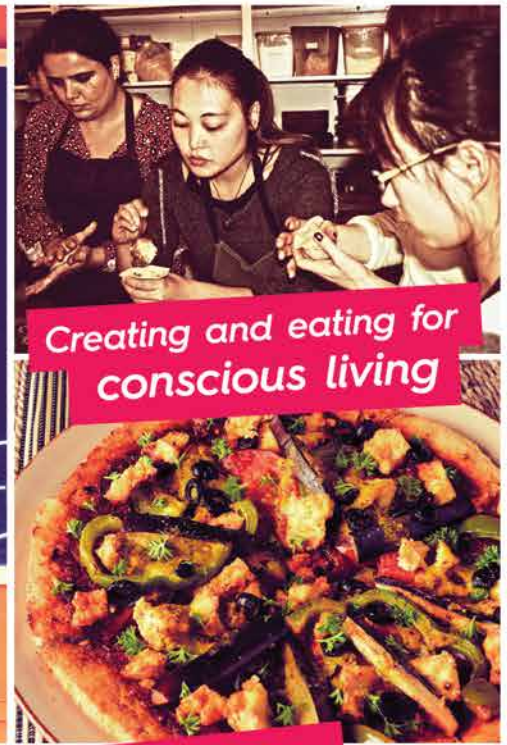


What we got up to this week...



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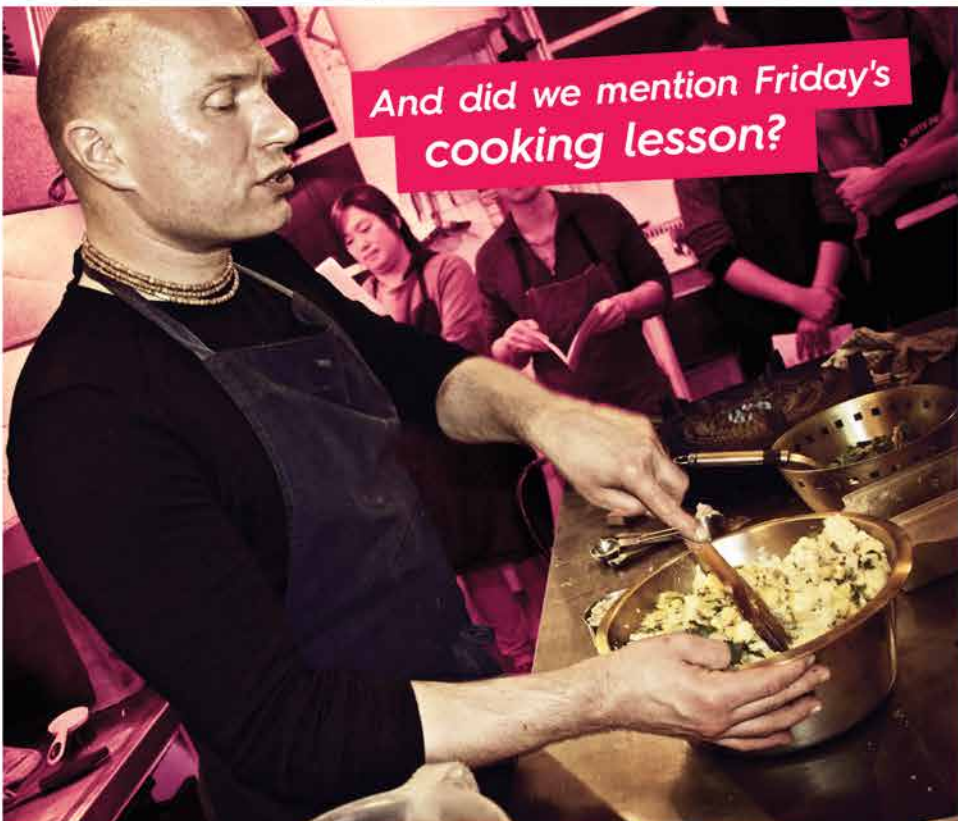
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# IS THAT YOGA?

Why our body-obsessed culture misses out on the real thing.

Contributor **Prema Yogi**

**“Look in the mirror. Look at yourself.” Our teacher, in sports-bra and hotpants, directs the sweating heap of bodies flushed red in the ultra-heated room. I don’t often practise hot yoga, but once a year (usually in winter) I get the idea that it will help my body loosen up and shake off its winter stiffness. I forget that this style of class is a draw for gym-junkie yoga obsessives. It’s something about the look on their face—the intensity of their focus on their own reflection—that gives them away.**

Across from me, a stocky man in glasses practises on his tiger-skin-print towel, which of course matches his tiger-skin Speedos. It’s my friend Josh, and he’s loving it. “This is awesome,” he says to me between poses. He has just signed up for a sixty-day challenge, where he has committed to attend at least one class per day for sixty days. I couldn’t commit to even six days. The heat is getting to me, and despite my decade of teaching and practising yoga, I start to struggle. My body isn’t used to being subjected to the extreme heat; halfway through the class I have to stop and lie down, and my ego doesn’t fail to notice.

As I lie there, I wonder how different this experience of yoga is from how it was originally practised. I have read stories about great bearded yogis in the Himalayas who lived to be hundreds of years old, who didn’t eat or drink, sustained solely by sunlight. But what about the less extreme, everyday yogis from ancient India, and what was yoga for them? “Get up and finish the class with us, all of you on the floor,” says the teacher. I close my eyes and continue to lie on my yoga mat.

Bikram Choudhary (the founder and guru of Bikram Yoga) calls his heated studios “torture chambers,” and I don’t disagree. The self-proclaimed creator of hot yoga is famous for his ego, and, expectedly, he is proud of this. He focuses on the physical

benefits of yoga postures (or *yogasanas* in Sanskrit), such as the increased flexibility, toning, strengthening, cleansing, and even healing effects of the practice. This physical focus is common among the new wave of yoga classes being held in gyms and hot yoga studios that cater to people’s desire for physical improvement and self-mastery. As a result of this predominantly physical focus, *yogasanas* have become isolated from the other seven limbs described in Patanjali’s *Ashtanga Yoga Sutras* (not to be confused with the brand of yoga known as Ashtanga).

Other foundational limbs—such as *yama* and *niyama*, which guide the moral behaviour and spiritual stability of the yogi—have been excluded. The word “yoga” is now synonymous with *yogasanas*, and this fact is confirmed by the schedule of the annual World Yoga Sports Championship: there aren’t any meditation competitions being held as part of the championship. Can this wholly physical practice still be called *yogasanas*? Can this limited focus achieve the goals of yoga when B.K.S. Iyengar, one of the forefathers of modern yoga, describes the practice of *yogasanas* without the support of *yama* and *niyama* as mere acrobatics?

*Yogasanas* were designed to refine the body, but the refinement was not intended to end there. Their practice was originally devised to prepare a yogi’s body to sit for long periods in meditation, and this intention is evident in their name: in Sanskrit, *asana* literally means “seat.” And not just any seat will suffice. The *Bhagavad-gita*, a five-thousand-year-old text from India, dictates that the seat should be “firm and clean, not too high or too low, and covered with kusha grass, a deerskin, and a cloth.” Quite specific.

The *Bhagavad-gita* further elaborates on the ideal conditions for the yogi, explaining that they should reside alone in a



secluded space, free from desire, and devoid of possessions. A much later and detailed yoga text, *The Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, written by Swami Svātmarāma in the fifteenth century, describes that the seat should be kept in a hut with a small door, free from filth and insects, and plastered well with cow dung. Thankfully, since cow dung and deerskins aren't so easy to come by, these details are presented as suggestions rather than necessities. However, the intention is clear: sit.

In Patanjali's *Ashtanga Yoga Sūtras*, written not long after the Bhagavad-gīta, he describes the term "yoga" as the "cessation of fluctuating consciousness." I love this phrase, and I'm often tempted to begin teaching my yoga classes by announcing, "And now we begin the cessation of our fluctuating consciousnesses." Patanjali details the means to attaining this state in eight not-so-easy steps: ethical disciplines, rules of conduct, posture, breathing techniques, sense withdrawal, concentration, meditation, and spiritual stillness.

While Patanjali does not mention specifically what the yogi should sit on during these practices, he extends the purpose of *yogasanas* beyond the physical, defining them as "perfect firmness of body, steadiness of intelligence, and benevolence of spirit." Within Patanjali's eight-limbed yoga tree, *yogasanas* are foundational and support progress through the subsequent limbs: a firm body allows for continual sitting; continual sitting enables the yogi to practise breathing techniques; practising breath control supports the withdrawal of the senses from external objects; and withdrawal of the senses supports the inner progression from concentration, through meditation, to complete absorption or spiritual stillness. The *yogasanas*, therefore, aren't the goal but are a tool for attaining still consciousness.

## In a body-obsessed culture, it makes sense to contain *yogasanas* to their physical aspect, but should we still call this "yoga"?

But what about *yama* and *niyama* and how do they transform a physical practice into a spiritual one? *Yama* consists of five moral imperatives to guide the yogi in becoming a morally refined beacon of purity: nonviolence, truthfulness, non-stealing, chastity, and non-coveting. These can be simplified to don't kill, don't lie, don't steal, be chaste, and don't hoard unnecessary things. However, nonviolence (the "don't kill" imperative) includes vegetarianism, which can be a deal-breaker for many aspiring yogis. Thankfully, chastity can refer to committing yourself to one relationship, which means that you can be a yogi and have a partner and kids—you don't have to live like a monk.

The *niyama* comprise five individual disciplines that cultivate a spiritual refinement: cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study of the self, and dedication to the Lord. Being clean in mind and body, content, and even austere, is relatively simple, but study of the self and dedication to the Lord require a more philosophical approach. The self and the Lord that *niyama*

refers to are known in Sanskrit as the *atma* and *paramatma*, respectively. Within the stillness that is *samadhi*, the yogi endeavours to purify the gross and subtle layers that obscure the realisation of the real self, the soul or *atma*.

This *atma* is considered to be different from the body and mind and is described as eternal, full of knowledge and bliss. The word "yoga" literally means "union," which refers to the union between this *atma* and the *paramatma*. When the yogi discovers the *atma* and *paramatma* within, or the soul and the Lord, it is called sight of the soul, and this discovery is the purpose of yoga, as conceived by Patanjali's *Ashtanga Yoga*.

With this awareness of the spiritual goal of yoga, it is easy to understand how the current trend focuses on yoga as a physical practice. Religion is a dirty word in contemporary society, and performing *yogasanas* as a religious practice is not as attractive to the yoga market, nor is it as tangible, as their physical application. In a body-obsessed culture, it makes sense to contain *yogasanas* to their physical aspect, but should we still call this "yoga"? Of course, regular practice of *yogasanas* still offers physical benefits and refinement similar to acrobatics, but what of the inner progression, the attempt to extend beyond the temporary, egoistic self?

Yoga, according to the traditional definition, is a means of holistic self-improvement—one that benefits the practitioner physically, intellectually, and spiritually—which contrasts starkly with the popular and lucrative practice common today: the former is a means of disrupting ego; the latter reifies it. Sure, yoga needs to adapt to suit modern culture—not too many people in Australia or New Zealand would be keen to line their yoga-hut with cow dung as Swami Svātmarāma recommends—but if the practice has changed to the point where the purpose behind it has been lost, can we still call it yoga?

As the other students get up from their mats and begin to leave the room, I start to get a glimpse of my real yogi. His eyes open, adjusting to the predawn light that gives shape to his simple hut. He hasn't been sleeping but has spent the night in meditation, conscious and lost within. He uncrosses his legs and leaves his kusha-grass seat, which is covered with deerskin and a cloth. By lamplight, he prepares an offering of fruits, flowers, water, and incense for his Lord, ringing a small brass bell as he chants Sanskrit mantras of worship in front of a simple altar. As the sun spreads light on his hut's cow-dung and mud-brick walls, my yogi, dressed only in a loincloth, walks to a nearby stream to bathe, preparing his body for his daily practice of *yogasanas*.

"Wasn't that awesome?" asks Josh, as he rolls up his sweaty mat, snapping me out of my reverie. "Yeah, it was an experience," I reply. 🌿



Prema is an aspiring bhakti and hatha yogi who lives in Brisbane, Australia. When he isn't writing or practising yoga, he spends his time experimenting in the kitchen or playing in the garden. He dreams of building an eco-house, surrounded by a lush food forest for his family.









# AM I EVIL?

**HEAVY METAL AND HEAVY MATTERS:  
MATERIALISM IS THE NEW RELIGION.**

Contributor **Mahavan**

**“Yes I am!” we pilgrims screamed at the top of our lungs. Time: early 1993. Place: Mount Smart Supertop, Auckland. Event: Metallica. The most famous heavy metal band in the world had finally graced God’s own.**

I had never heard the original version of the Diamond Head song “Am I Evil?” which, although popular in metal circles in the United Kingdom upon its release there in 1980, only achieved international prominence after Metallica covered it as a B-side on their “Creeping Death” single in 1984. The chorus runs:

“Am I evil? Yes, I am.  
Am I evil? I am man, yes I am.”

**METALLICA AND DIAMOND HEAD WERE IN ONE SENSE RIGHT. THE BLAME GAME HUMAN BEINGS ARE SO USED TO PLAYING IS A RESULT OF OUR UNIQUE EXPERTISE AT SELF-DECEPTION.**

Like many small town Kiwi teenagers in the early '90s, I was drawn to the heavy metal scene. Its dynamics—fast, intense and powerful, sheltered me, and I felt safe in this scene, solaced. Unlike many other parts of the world, growing up in “God’s own” meant that there was never any lack of the basics—food, shelter and clothing. But there was no lack of loneliness either, or desire for meaning and real fulfilment, and metal “filled the gap” for me, or, at least, understood it.

It was not until my mid-twenties when, after broadening my group of friends, I started to venture into previously taboo realms of music: grunge, electronic, flamenco, jazz, and classical

to name a few. From then on metal started to take more of a back seat on my playlist, although still essential. But from my early teens up until then, practically 24/7, both my days and nights were filled with the sonic assaults of metal gods like Metallica, Pantera, Slayer, and Megadeth. They were angry at the world, and so were we. And rightly so. But who was really to blame for the way the world was? And were they or we really part of the solution?

But first things first. Before we get to the solution, did we really understand the problem? According to the essential bhakti yoga text Bhagavad-gita, Metallica and Diamond Head were in one sense right. The blame game human beings are so used to playing is simply a result of our unique expertise at self-deception. “When you point the finger at someone else, there are three pointing back at you,” as the familiar saying goes. Honest introspection is certainly tough today, but the genuine seeker knows that it is also the beginning of any real solution, big or small, individual or collective. In the words of Bhagavad-gita:

“Those lacking self-knowledge truly believe that the acquisition of temporary pleasures for the body and mind is life’s ultimate goal, and thus, until the end of life, their anxiety cannot be measured.” (Bhagavad-gita 16.12)

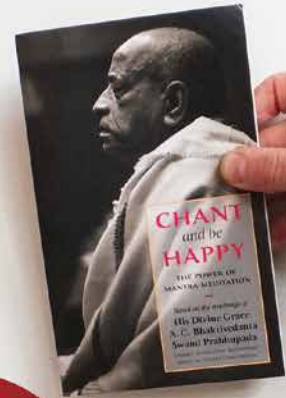
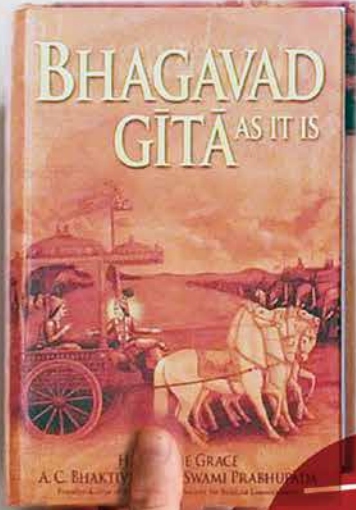
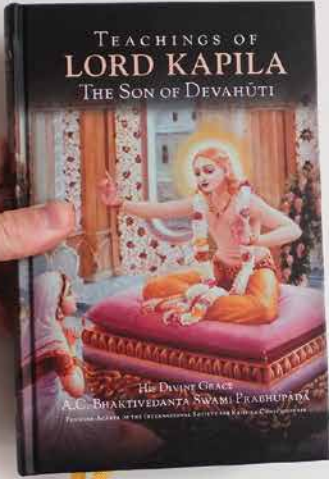
Here is the elephant in the room. When we pursue gratification based on a lack of self-knowledge, we simultaneously sign up for the inevitable result: a deep existential frustration. We then subsequently embark on another misdirected quest, to nail down “the culprit,” of such disappointment.

Unfortunately, this belief in the existence of genuine satisfaction through transitory means has now been institutionalised as the new world religion. In other words, even though the word “religion” has practically no meaning today, especially down under, and many would indeed feel insulted if referred





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← to as “religious,” it is actually more alive and well than ever, although in a somewhat clandestine “secular” way. How so?

Gross materialism, based on the beliefs and world view expressed above, and as taught in schools and universities worldwide, is booming like never before. Based on such dogma, and pushed on by a “work, buy, consume and die” culture, it is indeed the world’s fastest growing religion with more dedicated “true believers” than any other.

So, am I evil?

**JUST AS WE CAN WAKE UP FROM A DREAM, WE CAN ALSO WAKE UP FROM THE ILLUSION OF TEMPORARY IDENTIFICATION, AND ALL THE CONTRADICTION AND CONFUSION IT BRINGS.**

Fortunately, as Bhagavad-gita reveals, our “evil streak” is only assumed because of our contact with matter—the material coverings of the body, mind, and temporary atmosphere—exactly as a person assumes identities other than one’s own under the influence of a dream. And just as we can wake up from a dream, we can also wake up from the illusion of temporary identification, and all the contradiction and confusion it brings. How? How does one normally wake up from a dream? By sound.

The sound of our alarm clock in the morning reminds us that whatever we were taking so seriously while asleep, regardless of its power to absorb us in animated visions and vivid

experiences of pleasure and pain, was nothing more than a temporary illusion, a powerful yet ultimately insubstantial creation of our own mind. Similarly, mantra (sound) meditation, the most recommended process of self-realisation for this time and place, is a wake-up call to all genuine solution and pleasure seekers.

Although I have not seriously listened to metal for many years, the message of some of its big guns still resonates with me. However, without genuine knowledge of the problem and solution at the deepest level, at the root, even the most sincere attempts at relief from the struggles, stresses and strains of contemporary life are, at best, nice sentiments.

Let us take responsibility for our role in the problems of the world by connecting our tongues and ears to “the sound of reality,” the maha-mantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. In this way, we can be an authentic part of the solution by showing a real and ever-increasing transformation in our lives, the reduction of the materialistic mentality and lifestyle. 🌸



Mahavan has been practising and teaching bhakti-yoga in New Zealand since 1997. He has an interest in photography and a special taste for fusing music with mantra meditation. If you’re in Wellington you can catch him often leading kirtan at Bhakti Lounge.





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# CYBERSPACE, OUTERSPACE, & INNERSPACE

CONNECTING YOU WITH A HIGHER PURPOSE.

Contributor Sankirtana Yoga

**“Human beings are social animals,” my grandfather used to say. He meant, “You can’t just keep to yourself all the time; go out there and play with kids your age!” Fast forward a few years and we find that the meaning of the term “social” has transformed into something much more intricate than just describing the basic human need for companionship. Rather, when paired with the word “media,” “social” has become a mega-entity, providing connection on local and global scales.**

## **MEDIA MAYHEM**

Everyone needs an online presence because, without it, you are essentially signing yourself up to fizzle into the online ethers of no man’s land. The pressure is on. If you want to be an authentic, current, popular, or smart individual you need a social identity, and you need to do what everybody else is doing with that social identity. It seems as if all social outlets lure us into the depths of cyber-consciousness, rather than consciousness of the real self. The media dictates our actions, reactions, fashions, and the people we should like or dislike. Everyone has their favourite stars, their most watched TV shows, their best-looking brands. Everywhere you turn there is a link to this and a promotion about that. In fact, social media itself has become a megabrand, because if you’re not online, whether you’re a person or a business, you’re well behind the times, and therefore unlikely to get any substantial attention.

You may argue, however, that the prevalence of varied social outlets has given us all a drive to accomplish more, to get organised, and to meaningfully instigate change. But, how has a consumer-focused online culture shaped society’s priorities for change, particularly that of the younger generation?

In the nineteenth century, young women protested for equal rights at a higher education, but today you’ll find, at

least in North America, that the same age group of girls spend time planning, promoting, and performing a massive protest against not having a high school dress code that restricts how much (or how little) clothing girls can wear at school, simply because the boys don’t have the same restrictions. Similarly, prior to the internet marketplace, buying something involved a conscious, calculated observance of a product’s value and its contribution to a person’s daily life. Today it involves one click and a few seconds wait—and even that is too damn much, right? Even just looking not too far back from today, if you wanted to spend time with someone you would have physically walked to that person, going out into the tangible world, instead of Skyping in and screen sharing a Youtube-uploaded rom-com. You would, therefore, have had a far greater range of physical and psychological experiences leading up to the interaction, over a longer period of time.

**Although we are ultraconnected in our social feed, our hearts hunger for the personal touch, the intimate, inner-relationship between one emotional being and another.**

Instead of instigating meaningful change, saving time and improving health and relationships, we are bogged down by the social and consumerist demands of the media machine, causing an inner mayhem of stress and loneliness we all know too well. Too absorbed in the problems of celebrities, we are hardly aware of our own. Too caught up in the next big thing—whether a product, an album, or a person—we have no clue of the biggest need in our life.





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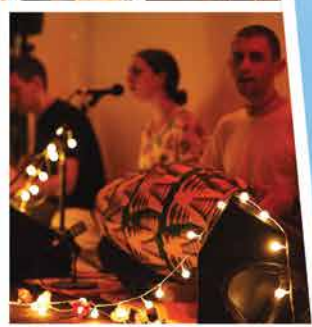


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yoga



kirtan



live music



think



play



cooking classes



retreats



friends



timeless knowledge

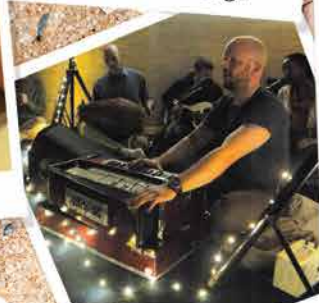
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Being encumbered by a bombardment of social alerts that feed a regurgitated, reconstructed identity, the thoughtful person may question: what is the purpose? How much of my time, my existence, goes into the cyber universe, crunched within its flickering pixels, never to return again?

### LONELINESS: ONLINE MATRIX TO ESCAPE THE OFFLINE UNREALITY

Despite the unstoppable surge of social media, people are more anti-social and apathetic than ever before. But on an internal level, the loneliness epidemic is spreading like wildfire. Recently, *Time* Magazine published an article warning that loneliness might just be the next big public health debacle because this “disease” ups the mortality rate by 26 percent, and social isolation does that by 29-32 percent. Last year, Britain was voted the loneliness capital of Europe, despite the fact that just the year before, social networking had skyrocketed in the nation. This finding supports a 2014 study by the University of Michigan, which revealed that extended usage of Facebook leads to lower life-satisfaction. Indeed, although we are ultraconnected in our social feed, our hearts hunger for the personal touch, the intimate, interrelationship between one emotional being and another.



**The social hemisphere has become a magic mirror where we can artificially impose our want-to-be reality.**

The online “matrix”—the cyberspace that pulls us into its world of links, hyperlinks, advertisements, videos, profiles and so on—may be a world of connection, but because such connection is not expanding from our true self it lacks the power to give us real peace and happiness. The social hemisphere has instead become a magic mirror where we can artificially impose our want-to-be reality and thus revel in our own illusory misconceptions. For example, there was the young girl in the United States who posted a series of happy,

upbeat messages on her social stream, but in the privacy of her room attempted to end her life. Conversely, many suicide threats posted online go unnoticed and are not acted upon, leading to the inevitable. Identity theft and fake profiles are a whole other can of worms.

But even in our general, day-to-day lives, we are unable to really be “offline.” The temptation to check the phone one last time before bed is too much. The urge to respond to one last email is overpowering. The desire to post one more picture is nearly head-spinning. In fact, recent research by the University of Glasgow showed that teens’ obsession with social media is affecting their sleep and thus their schoolwork, as they wake up in the night to check for new tweets and messages on social media.

In the Bhagavad-gita, the timeless text of applied spiritual technology, Krishna explains that those who are resolute in purpose have one-focused intelligence. This type of intelligence is not many-branched, running after various endeavours. But again, we need to focus our intelligence upon what purpose?

### CYBERSPACE, OUTERSPACE, AND INNER SPACE

As humans, social animals, or living beings, we have the innate desire not just to connect with others, but also understand how we connect with ourselves and the universe at large. In today’s technologically super-powered age, we are busy stylising our online space, our internet identity, and our social media structure, but we have little knowledge of our inner space or our eternal identity.

Identity can be seen in two ways. Identity is relative and grows from a simple statement like, “My name is Sankirtana” to, “I’m twenty years old, born in India, raised in Canada, living in New Zealand,” and so on. Relative identity encompasses our physical nature, our biological make-up, our psychological tendencies, and our inner propensities. But identity can also be seen as absolute. This has nothing to do with the body or the mind. Now one may easily understand that we are not this body—a preliminary level of knowledge to be achieved in spiritual science—but to understand that we are also not this mind is another ball game. The yoga texts explain that the spirit soul is a unit of consciousness qualitatively distinct from matter (which includes the elements earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence, and the false ego, or misconceived identity). The soul, who we really are, is innately drawn to and linked with the Supreme Consciousness, but because of the misuse of its minute independence, the soul desires to control and enjoy outside of the Supreme Consciousness. Thus, it is enveloped in matter, bound by the illusion of an existence separate from the Supreme Consciousness.

The wise might wonder, is there any way out? In a world where we are desperately trying to connect and share on a deeper and more meaningful level, who is truly aiming to realise that ultimate connection?

The advanced bhakti-yoga encyclopedia *Srimad-Bhagavatam* explains that “the misconception of self-identity can be diminished gradually” (3.7.12) by the process of realising our absolute identity in relation with the Supreme Person.





ART CONTRIBUTORS BALADEVA NITAI & SEVAKA VATSALA

Social media may be all about connection, but the word “yoga,” which we throw around to refer to downward dogs, flash yoga mats, tight-fitting yoga pants, and the advancing Lululemon culture, in its Sanskrit core means “the ultimate connection” or to link up, or even further, to *meet* via that process with the Supreme, the Divine, or Krishna.

We can understand this ultimate connection in the conception of our absolute identity as a nonmaterial part of the Supreme Person, or the Supersoul.

### HIGHEST CONNECTION — IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE?

In the preface of another advanced text of the bhakti tradition, the *Nectar of Devotion*, renowned bhakti monk and scholar His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada states: “Our loving propensity expands just as a vibration of light or air expands, but we do not know where it ends.”

Are our flailing attempts at virtual connection just an expression of our innate narcissistic nature or is there more to such superficial attempts at companionship and reciprocation? This quotation from the aforementioned text expresses a beautiful, magnificent truth. We are creatures of love and we are for love. Love and connection go hand in hand. To love means we love someone, an individual, and there can be no love if there is no connection. Thus, caught within the trappings of our material aspirations and misconceived realities, we are running on the social media track, attempting to squeeze out some ephemeral connection to satisfy our need for love.

Krishna, the source of our consciousness, clarifies: “The living entities in this conditioned world are my eternal, fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind.” (Bhagavad-gita 15:7)

Many processes are given to connect with the Supreme Person and invoke our own spiritual identity, doing away with the misconception of our perceived personality. Of all the methods, the sages of the bhakti tradition, who teach by personal example, including the most prominent one within recent history, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, recommend the process of mantra meditation as paramount in these times. The maha-mantra: **Hare Krishna Hare Krishna / Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama / Rama Rama Hare Hare** is the technology capable of delivering the chanter into the realms of clear reality, where our nature to love and be loved is fully realised.

When we are connected with the source of all love, of all connection, all other connections are immediately had, and there is no question of mayhem, loneliness, or even self-realisation. In our fast-paced, technology-infused culture we depend on social media to fuel our choices and aid our lifestyle, thus posing as high-class members of an advanced civilisation. However, in the highest state of spiritual advancement, the spiritualist participates in the connection of souls, not devices, and thus his or her dependency is centred on a reciprocal, loving reality, rather than impersonal, avaricious illusions. 🌸



Sankirtana-yoga has been a practitioner of the bhakti science for three years. She enjoys sharing her experiences and realisations with others through her writings, workshops and art.





CULTURE  
FILE

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER MAHAVAN

## MIRROR REFLECTIONS

Sruti reflects on the impact of time.

Contributor **Sruti-cari**

**The bathroom lock slides across with a satisfying click, and a sigh escapes me as I begin to wind down. I'm relieved to be alone for a few minutes after a busy day of work, then taking the kids to hockey practice.**

I smile at my reflection in the mirror. Not too bad, still a bit of life in the old girl yet! I fluff my hair and pull a cheeky pout—just to prove I've still got what it takes. Then I chuckle at my vanity.

The cooling make-up remover I smear over my eyes makes blotches and smudges. The image looks zombielike. Again I laugh—it takes so little to destroy the mirage of attractiveness.

A rinse with water, a rub of a towel and the naked truth is revealed. Time is starting to take its toll. A grey hair peeks through here and there, my skin is not so supple anymore, and a few soft lines border the eyes and forehead. Not so bad, I try to convince myself, it could be worse.







## 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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I am reminded of something my grandmother once said before she passed away. Her affectionate eyes looking at me from her face with its myriad of soft crinkles, she said, "I remember being young—I used to run and dance, full of energy." She waved her hand, swollen and painful with arthritis, "I still want to run and dance, but my body won't let me." I was puzzled, so she tried to explain, "I am still the same person with the same desires." I could not understand; to me it seemed she had always been old.

I miss her.

I wonder where she has gone. I hope she can run and dance now.

Perhaps one day I will look as she did. So many changes have taken place—but somehow I remain the same. I am the same person, despite the never-ending changes reflected in the mirror. I think I am beginning to understand what Granny meant.

**Time changes everything. My face changes, my mind changes, my aspirations change. Nothing stays the same - but I am still me!**

Time changes everything! My face changes, my mind changes, my aspirations change. Nothing stays the same—but I am still me! Aren't I? It seems I am witness to it all, like watching a movie in which I am the principal actor.

I think about the monk I met the other day, in a random encounter on the street. Odd to meet a monk on Cuba Street, but he was a cheerful, friendly guy. He showed me a book with a picture showing the soul moving through different phases of life in one body and then continuing on to another body after death. "We are just passing through," he said. It fascinated me. Perhaps I should find the time to read that book.

The soul . . . I look deep into my reflected eyes. Perhaps they hold the answer. The eyes are a window to the soul they say. Is that what I am? The eternal witness watching the movie?

A loud banging on the door interrupts my reprieve. The real world has not forgotten me. I shrug off my thoughts and scramble to finish my grooming. 🌸



I smile, remembering the eight-year-old who, upon inspecting my face carefully, exclaimed, "You're lucky—you've got twinkle wrinkles!" I managed to bite my tongue and smile through my teeth at the girl. I wanted to snap back, "YOU will have 'twinkle wrinkles' yourself one day!"

It's interesting how our idea of beauty changes with time. I remember at her age wishing I had buck teeth! I would carefully arrange my lips so my two front teeth stuck out. I also thought freckles were cool! Now the mental image makes me cringe.

Later as a teenager, I would pose in the mirror, hoping someone would hire me to be a model, or realise my talent as a movie star. I spent hours on end fretting about every pimple and experimenting with make-up and hair-dos. More realistic goals of career, travel, love and family developed as I traversed my twenties.

Brushing my teeth now, I wonder at all the changes. That child's face has gone, along with its childish ideas. So has the teen face with all its dreams and insecurities. The youthful face with its dreamy aspirations has faded into the mature face that stares back at me from the mirror now. It's a little tired, a little battle weary, but continuing to strive to fulfill the elusive dream. What will happen to it?



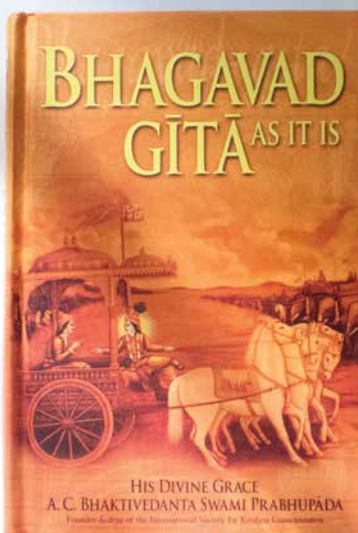
Sruti-cari is a true-blue kiwi girl, who loves all things natural and is deeply concerned about social and environmental issues. She holds a BSc in computer science and has been joyfully practising bhakti-yoga for sixteen years. Sruti-cari likes sharing with others what she has learned on her journey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



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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





# HELP! MEDITATION MADNESS



Contributor **Devamrita Swami**

*Waiting by a window  
Feeling down and blue  
All because I haven't heard from you . . .  
And then my mama said . . .*

"How are you going to get respect—when you haven't begun to meditate yet!"

Stalking you, the meditation evangelists apparently have incarnated everywhere. At the workplace, boardroom, yoga class, university campus, family get-together, and even church event—the meditation crusaders are ready to redeem you.

Late at night, while you're sleeping, the mindfulness priests come creeping . . .

Concentrate on a candle flame.

Stare at a wall.

Visualise the greatest light and the darkest night.

Make up a sound and repeat it attentively twenty minutes, twice daily: "Coca-Pepsi, Coca-Pepsi."

Focus upon dissolving your mind.

Melt away into the null and void.

What—uninterested? Not even curious? Which one are you—Neanderthal or flat-earther?

The meditation boom, in all its flavours, has mushroomed throughout the First World. Even at the recent World

Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the attending C.E.O. mighty grey-hairs and global financial elites could opt for an early morning guided meditation session.

The prime motivator for the meditation and mindfulness upsurge is obvious: stress overload—at home, on the job, in our personal affairs. The global economic uncertainty drags on while anxiety at the workplace intensifies yearly. For both managers and their staff, the nonstop pressure mounts: produce profit or get out.

Seeking relief through relationships? Yes, social bonding has traditionally served as the natural balm for the wounded human psyche. But now it offers little of the old-fashioned duration of solace and support. Tension, fear, and competitiveness pervade friendships and even romance. Whom can you depend on for long?

## MEDITATION—SAVE US!

Interviewing researchers, teachers, and practitioners of meditation will provide you heaps of attractive reasons why the fad should sweep you away. Improved relaxation, health, productivity, and, yes, that required selling point—better sex—what stressed-to-the-max contemporary human can refuse?

But the non-believers, the skeptics, are striking back. They retort that none of the touted benefits are unique to meditation. Indeed, these infidels assert that any benefit a meditation practice bestows, you can score through other, quite ordinary activities.



For example, last year the scientific publication JAMA Internal Medicine analysed forty-seven trials of various meditation practices and concluded: “We found no evidence that meditation programs were better than any active treatment (i.e., drugs, exercise and other behavioral therapies).”

We all certainly want to reduce stress. Fine, say the scientific naysayers. Laboratory researchers of meditation’s effects agree that indeed it can help alleviate anxiety—to some degree. But, they point out, so can pharmaceuticals, sleep, and exercise.

And as the popular health website WebMD.com duly recommends, when anxiety abounds, you can always reach for “old faithful”—that usual physical tonic, sex. Somehow, some way, squeeze out a few precious minutes of meaning, purpose, and peace in life.

What about mindfulness training? If not a ten-day silent retreat, then, at least, give a weekend version a go? No talking allowed—just focus on your incoming and outgoing breath. Hour after hour, all day, just

## THE EVERYDAY REALITY IS THAT EVERYONE IS MEDITATING ON SOMETHING. MONEY, LUST, SUCCESSES, SETBACKS, THE SHARE MARKET REAL ESTATE, GREED, ENVY, PRICES—SOMETHING IS ALWAYS ON THE MIND.

observe the fluctuations in your mind. Then work hard to separate actual perceptions from the extraneous colouring the mind adds to them. Wish and hope for the mind to empty. The ultimate goal? Become . . . the Great Nothingness?

The everyday reality is that everyone is meditating on something. Money, lust, successes, setbacks, the share market, real estate, greed, envy, prices—something is always on the mind. Therefore, in sorting through our life, the real culprit we need to finger is meditation on matter.

Whether candle, wall, breath, body, or mind, our focusing on matter, its many material arrangements and its occupations, cannot help us. Where are the meditation experts who get that right? Truly, people should be fully sceptical about the usual blind alleys presented as meditation.

## BEYOND NOTHINGNESS

The genuine transcendental process of meditation, as delineated in Bhagavad-gita and its allied texts—authoritative and time-tested—begins with focusing on you as different from your body and mind.

That authentic process then culminates in focusing on your identity as a nonmaterial entity, a spiritual part of the supreme spiritual whole. Just as we can’t separate the sunbeam from the sun, similarly we, as energy, cannot be separated from the supreme energetic source.

Krishna, also known as Yogeshvara, the ultimate master of the yoga and meditation system, is described in the classic yoga texts as life’s ultimate goal. In Bhagavad-gita, Krishna’s explanations cut to the root of our existential crisis, the original cause of our chronic stress, lifetime after lifetime:

“You living entities are certainly my spiritual parts, always, eternally. You belong to me, but you have become trapped and embedded in the temporary material atmosphere; therefore you are stressed and struggling in a temporary body, with temporary senses, including the mind.” (15.7)

Being spiritual particles of Krishna means that we share all his qualities, but to a tiny degree, just as an ocean drop shares the ocean’s saltiness, but only minutely.

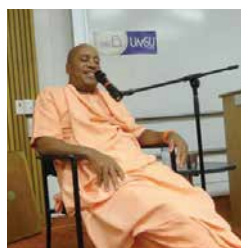
Because we are spiritually so small, we become bewildered by the energy of illusion and then mistakenly conclude that we cannot meditate on Krishna because he has a name, form, qualities and activities. We rush to the judgement that anything with personal characteristics must be material.

Although everyone is meditating on something, material or not, the pinnacle of the spiritual meditation system is to fix the mind on the all-spiritual name, form, qualities, and activities of Krishna.

Here’s a priceless gem of information: The incentive for understanding the science of Krishna is beyond comparison. As Krishna guarantees in Bhagavad-gita (4.9):

“Whoever correctly comprehends the transcendental nature of my appearance and my activities in this world does not, upon departing the body, take another birth in this material world. Instead, such a perfect meditator attains my eternal abode.”

The more we discover the actual goal of meditation, the more successful and progressive our lifestyle becomes. 🌿



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.





# IN THE NAME OF SCIENCE





CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER MAHAVAN

JUST BRING WHATEVER THE LAWS OF PHYSICS HAVE DETERMINED I WILL GET.



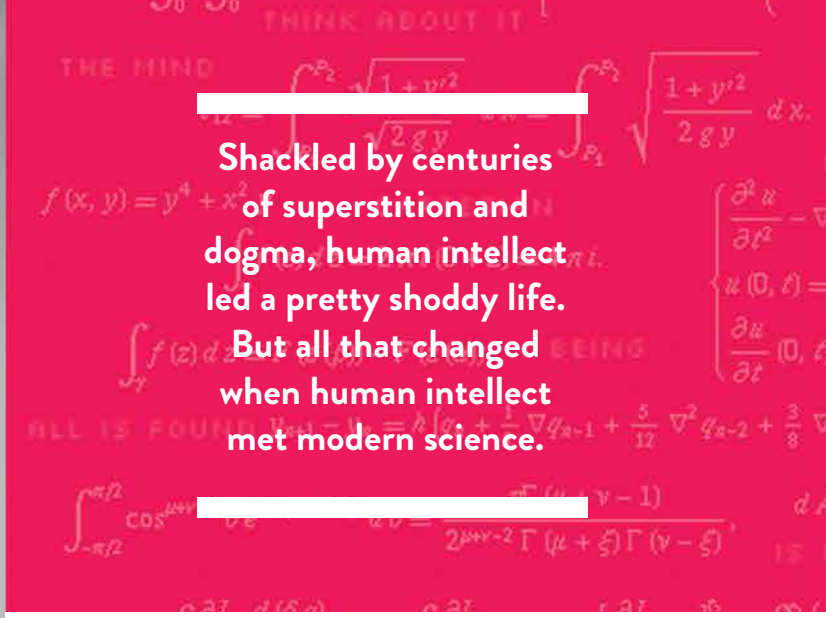
PROMOTING MATERIALISM IN THE NAME OF SCIENCE IS NOT JUST IRRATIONAL. IT'S A CRIME.

Contributor Sachi Dulal

“Beliefs concerning the ultimate purposes and meaning of life and the accompanying worldview perspectives that mold beliefs of right and wrong are critically dependent . . . on concepts regarding the conscious self.”  
-Roger Sperry<sup>1</sup>

### THE HALO

Humanity has never had it so good—a current of conviction that flows in the world at large. Technological sophistication has played its part in swelling this current. I cannot imagine living without my toaster.

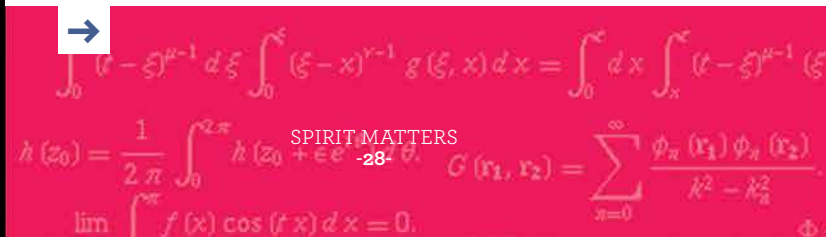


Shackled by centuries of superstition and dogma, human intellect led a pretty shoddy life. But all that changed when human intellect met modern science.

For the good things that we have and the better things that are yet to come, we owe it all, of course, to the triumph of the human intellect. Shackled by centuries of superstition and dogma, human intellect led a pretty shoddy life. But all that changed when human intellect met modern science. The encounter left human intellect wondering how he had survived without it for so long. Many modern scientists themselves wondered the same. They amicably reached the conclusion that human intellect had suffered immeasurably because of the undue reverence he had paid religion. That mistake should be wiped out, once and for all.

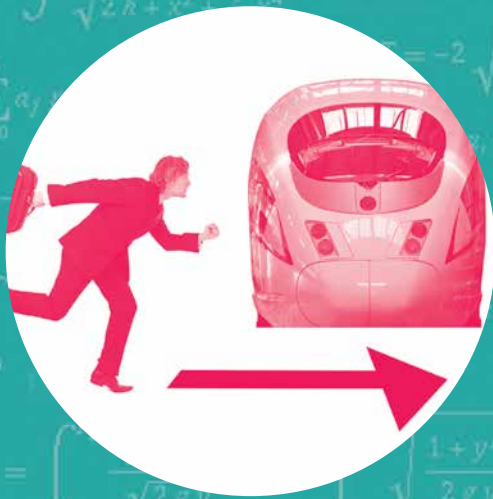
“Science and religion cannot be reconciled,” wrote Oxford professor of chemistry Peter Atkins, “and humanity should begin to appreciate the power of its child, and to beat off all attempts at compromise. Religion has failed, and its failures should stand exposed. Science with its currently successful pursuit of universal competence through the identification of the minimal, the supreme delight of the intellect, should be acknowledged king.”<sup>2</sup>

As we ascend the steep stairway of science-inspired secularism, shrugging off the rituals and rigmaroles of religious traditions, which no one understands, or cares to understand, humanity radiates the halo of increased well-being and “universal competence.” For those who cannot see this halo, it can only mean one thing: nature has inflicted them with the cataract of ingratitude.



SPIRIT MATTERS





Is there a mathematical equation that will precisely predict when Robert, the millionaire banker, drowning in a fog of unidentified melancholy, will decide to take his life by jumping into the path of an onrushing subway train?



## THE SUPREME DELIGHT OF THE INTELLECT

Part of the appeal of modern science is its perceived explanatory power. Stephen Hawking, a physicist by vocation, is a modern master dedicated to conveying this appeal to the masses. Part of his appeal is convincing lesser intellects that science is a good thing. Not only is it a good thing, but it is the only thing that is good at all.

*The Grand Design*, Hawking's 2010 offering, continues to spread the good cheer about science. Hawking writes: "The fact that we human beings—who are ourselves mere collections of fundamental particles of nature—have come close to an understanding of the laws governing us and our Universe is a great triumph."<sup>3</sup> When Hawking writes about "we human beings" he is referring to the community of physicists. They, after all, have given themselves over to understanding in detail the laws that govern us and our Universe, and it is the brand of physics that Hawking assiduously promotes.

The light that science offers, the light that Hawking offers at least, has two aspects to it.

First, it closes the case on the question of self-identity.

Q: Who am I?

A: You are a mere collection of fundamental particles of nature.

Second, it offers explanations of how you and I, those "fundamental particles of nature" behave.

Q: Does science have elegant mathematical equations that can predict everything about you and me?

A: Certainly it does. If not "everything" about you and me, then, at least, close enough to everything.

The inquisitive teenager, afflicted with a severe case of existential anxiety, looking to science as the great torchbearer, can now rest appeased. His gnawing sense of unease calmed, he is assured that science can dissipate the clouds of ignorance that hover on his horizon.

## THE LAWS THAT GOVERN US

A law in the physical sciences is as good as its predictive power. Science, as Hawking and his admirers repeatedly remind us, deals squarely with the "physical stuff." But is life composed solely of "physical stuff?" If it is, then physicists should be able to accurately predict what we will do and when we will do it.

Is there a mathematical equation that will precisely predict when Percy the cat, impelled by a sudden attack of boredom, will abandon himself to the law of gravity and somersault to the ground from the roof of a three storey building?

Is there a mathematical equation that will precisely predict when Jane, peeved at her husband's repeated inability to read her mind, will chuck a superbly aimed saucer at the guy's head?

Is there a mathematical equation that will precisely predict when Robert, the millionaire banker, drowning in a fog of unidentified melancholy, will decide to take his life by jumping into the path of an onrushing subway train?

The questions can be easily multiplied. If there are mathematical equations dealing with these routine occurrences of life, then the community of physicists are extremely cruel not to share them with mere mortals. If there are no mathematical equations dealing with these routine occurrences of life, then life is more than what mathematical equations, or Hawking, for that matter, can conceive of.

## CHAOS AMIDST THE FUNDAMENTAL PARTICLES

That thought you hold so dear, well, where does it come from? Scientists such as Hawking have suggested that all our convictions and actions are the consequence of physical operations, "the behaviour of a vast assembly of nerve-cells,"<sup>4</sup> which are ultimately "mere collections of fundamental particles of nature."<sup>5</sup>

Those fundamental particles of nature can't seem to make up their mind. They seem to revel in producing contradictory



convictions. Deprived of the resources of mathematical physics, mullahs in Afghanistan for example, have quite different convictions about reality than those offered by scientific materialists. Are their brains composed of *different* fundamental particles of nature? If yes, then may we know what the difference is? If not, then why do the *same* fundamental particles of nature offer different convictions?

Psychologists will respond that the environment also has a role to play, their ode to the perpetual tension between nature versus nurture. But this response entirely misses the point. The environment may very well have a role to play. But the thought: *I have low self-esteem and that is why no one loves me*; where does that come from? What is the *source* of this thought? If it has its source in the environment, then which part of the environment are we talking about: The apple trees surrounding my residence or the metal pipes underneath my bathroom sink? The entire weight of human experience tells us: Thoughts come from persons. Scientific orthodoxy sheds more light: A thought process is “a series of brain states—a series of physical configurations of matter—each causing the next in accordance with the deterministic laws that govern the interactions of physical objects.”<sup>6</sup>

Thoughts emerge from our brains just as sweat emerges from our glands or as digestive juice emerges from our stomach.

When digestive juices emerge from our stomachs, are they reasonable or are they not?

Come on, silly, you say. They are neither. They are just biological facts.

By the same token, when thoughts emerge from our brains, are they reasonable or are they not?

Come on, silly, you say. They are neither. They are just biological facts.

Does this include the thought I am merely a collection of fundamental particles of nature? Of course, it does. And so we find, as with all secular theories, a theory that sets up a definition of truth that refutes itself.

The claim that the digestive juices emerging from our stomach have the ring of *truth* to them is absurd. It is just a biological fact, a consequence of physical objects and laws. If our thoughts are also biological facts, a consequence of physical objects and laws, then how can they be rational or irrational? They can't. The very category of rationality dissolves into meaninglessness. Materialism, as reputed American philosopher Alvin Plantinga has pointed out in his book *Warrant and Proper Function*, undermines the very reason needed to construct, understand or be convinced about any kind of truth, including scientific ones.

“For, not only does it relegate our experiences of beauty, moral obligation, and religious encounter to the epiphenomenal scrap-heap,” physicist John Polkinghorne has reasonably observed, but “it also destroys rationality. Thought is replaced by electro-chemical neural events. Two such events cannot confront each other in rational discourse. They are neither right nor wrong. They simply happen...The very assertions of the reductionist himself are nothing but blips in the

neural network of his brain. The world of rational discourse dissolves into the absurd chatter of firing synapses. Quite frankly, that cannot be right and none of us believes it to be so.”

The only way a worldview can explain the world of experience is by using reason. If the worldview happens to discredit reason it shoots itself in the foot. It self-destructs. This is exactly why the view of standard materialism, the view endorsed by Hawking, is as dogmatic as it is deniable.

## THE DISCREET CHARMS OF NIHILISM

On occasions when the rest of humanity entertains notions of ultimate purpose and meaning, the scientific establishment can be seen to be shaking their heads in barely concealed amusement. Having transcended such naiveté, they have long since dispensed with such longings.

Biologist and historian of science, William B. Provine, witness to how and when the universe came into existence, confirms: “The universe cares nothing for us and we have no ultimate meaning in life.”<sup>8</sup> Atheist John Gray, giddy with scientific enlightenment, reveals the obvious: “Human life has no more meaning than the life of slime mould.”<sup>9</sup> Animated by the purpose of proving himself purposeless, the physicist Steven Weinberg, claims that he was the “more-or-less farcical outcome of a chain of accidents reaching back to the first three minutes,”<sup>10</sup> and “The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it seems pointless.” These declarations resonate strongly with Hawking. When confronted by the question of the meaning of it all, he has offered similar pearls of wisdom.

At this point, lesser mortals are allowed to question: What exactly have scientific materialists been able to comprehend that allows such declarations?

Who am I? Why am I here? Why do I act the way I do? Where do I go from here?

To such questions that have long occupied the recesses of human hearts, Hawking and his brand of all-knowing physicalist science has nothing of interest to offer. As is often the case, someone is bold enough to say this out loud. In his 2012 book, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False*, the prominent atheistic philosopher Thomas Nagel, has done this admirable service:

“Consciousness is the most conspicuous obstacle to a comprehensive naturalism that relies only on the resources of physical science. The existence of consciousness seems to imply that the physical description of the universe, in spite of its richness and explanatory power, is only part of the truth, and that the natural order is far less austere than it would be if physics and chemistry accounted for everything. If we take this problem seriously, and follow out its implications, it threatens to unravel the entire naturalistic world picture.”<sup>11</sup>

Despite his commitment to atheism, Nagel is brave enough to state the obvious. The real question is: Come on guys, how can you get away with this?

What makes sentient beings sentient? What is the difference between a sentient being and a corpse? How does life emerge





from fundamental particles of matter? And why? What are the physical forces, laws and constants that can accurately predict the occurrence of death, divorce and disagreement?

If physicalist science does offer stunning revelations to such questions, then what are we waiting for? Give us the answers, the evidence, the proof, the laboratory demonstration.

To which, Hawking simply looks away. Disappointing, you bet. Bold architects of universal physical “theories of everything” are fully aware that their theories cannot be experienced through experiment, prompting Harvard physicist Howard Georgi to depict modern theoretical physics as “recreational mathematical theology.”<sup>12</sup>



**A true opium of the people is a belief in nothingness after death—the huge solace of thinking that for our betrayals, greed, cowardice, murders, we are not going to be judged.**

The pretensions of science-inspired omniscience, the pretensions repeatedly displayed by men and women of Hawking’s persuasion, the pretensions now sacrosanct in secondary school curriculums all over the world, have a crucial role to play in the contemporary economy of belief. They are, like caffeinated beverages, the indispensable mood-enhancer of secular culture. Life without them, like life without caffeine, is hardly imaginable.

Reducing the significance of human life to slime mould or reducing reason and truth to the absurd chatter of fundamental particles in the brain, is not the true liberation offered by the guardians of intellectual progress. Polish Nobel Laureate Czeslaw Milosz offers genuine insight into the feast that is *really* on offer: “A true opium of the people is a belief in nothingness after death—the huge solace of thinking that for our betrayals, greed, cowardice, murders, we are not going to be judged.”<sup>13</sup>

“Real progress,” writes Krishna scholar and monk Devamrita Swami, “begins when we become conscious that we are accountable for our consciousness . . . If the movements of matter in the environment cause such precise reactions, what about the movements of the most crucial ingredient in the ecosystem—consciousness? . . . Who are the scholars who have catalogued the consequences of consciousness in its affairs with matter?”<sup>14</sup> Human beings, Krishna reveals in his Bhagavad-gita, fall under the sway of the cosmic reality of *karma*; that means reaction to every action, not just the ones we casually choose to weigh and consider.

Fundamental particles of nature have yet to be observed losing sleep over worrying about the consequences of their actions. Human beings have. A cure for insomnia has been made long available. All you need to do is believe. If recreational mathematical theology works as well as opium in inducing the belief, then why quibble over the details? There is much to be gained in embracing the discreet charms of nihilism. Ask Hawking. He can tell you all about it. 🌸

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Sachi Dulal first read Bhagavad-gita As It Is in 2005, while completing a masters degree in environmental science. Finding Krishna’s teachings rational and relevant, he took up the practice of bhakti-yoga soon after. He loves to write about the intersect of life, philosophy and Krishna knowledge.



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There are the stories others tell us,  
the ones we tell others,  
and those we tell ourselves.  
But what do these stories tell us  
about who we really are?

Contributor **Gauranga Prema**

# Keeping it Real

**When I was in high school I had a good friend for telling a great story. She was just the type of person who was always in the right spot at the right time to see the action. She would go away for the weekend and return with tales of police raids at her friend's party, shark sightings in the waters off Victoria's coastline, alcohol poisoning and drug overdoses.**

As the years passed and we got to know each other better, she revealed more about her life from before we met. Initially, we met in Year 10, when she had just changed schools. Later she told us how she had fallen pregnant and had to change schools to escape the talk of her classmates. Her son had been left with relatives outside the city. Occasionally she got to visit him on weekends.

It was years later and I was in another city when news reached me that her son had died. By the time I returned I found her to be well nurtured by our friendship group. Her partner at the time had offered her full support, allowing her to leave her job and be financially supported by him while she received counselling and grieved.

The day it was confirmed that my friend was a pathological liar was, I admit, a great shock. Her partner had been paying for counselling for the mother of a child who had never been born. A whole life had been fabricated and we had accepted it on faith, blindly assuming that people don't lie about these sorts of things: deaths and drug overdoses, abusive relationships, and estranged children.

For the sake of accepting a good story we had accepted so many fallacies and when confronted with reality we understood that

we simply had never questioned whether it was possible she could be lying. Why would someone lie about something so serious? Why would someone affect the lives of so many people, emotionally involve caring people into a world that was simply fantasy, in pursuit of her own agenda?

From this experience, I began to perceive that there were so many things in life I accepted as real simply because they were based on a good story. If there is a small amount of evidence that could prove a part of the story then it must be true. With that small amount of truth, I can adjust so much of my life accordingly. Eventually, I'll prove it as fact, right?

We can accept that many of the stories we collect as children cave quickly under the pressures of adolescent life. The cotton beard of Santa Claus begins to fray while the tooth fairy files for bankruptcy. However, I've realised that we don't so much grow out of accepting good stories so much as we simply change the stories we accept.

Take for example, the marketing strategy "planned obsolescence," which aims to convince consumers to throw away perfectly working products and replace them with slightly updated products because of a change in style. In this process a manufacturer will redesign a working product in order to create a new fashion so that those who don't need a new product will still buy one, thereby generating sales. Those who need the product will buy it regardless; those who don't need it are sold a story: the product you have is old, time for a new one.

Many people will happily purchase a reasonably good story in their pursuit of pleasure. It seems perfectly natural to undertake a quest for happiness. My experience with my



friend forced me to ask: Why are people so willing to undergo great difficulty, even undertake so much stress and hardship, pursuing a good story that promises pleasure but delivers heartache?

**Rather than blindly accepting stories for the pleasure of the tale, I wanted to find happiness that could be derived from something honest and real.**

So I immediately began a quest to discover if there was any happiness in the truth. Rather than blindly accepting stories for the pleasure of the tale, I wanted to find the happiness that could be derived from something honest and real. My journey finally led me to the Bhagavad-gita, a yoga text of antiquity.

Though Bhagavad-gita is a timeless classic, it still shines light on the stories we calmly accept in our modern world. One of these stories is the belief that we are lacking as individuals, and to fill the void we simply need: {insert spouse}, {insert holiday}, {insert better home in a better country with a better job}. However, when we consider all these stories we can perceive an underlying theme:

Become Happy by Giving Pleasure to your Body.

A fallacy that permeates every story in recent history is that we can obtain the greatest satisfaction through the body's senses. Unlike in previous ages, this is the only offer for satisfaction provided to people of today. In the Bhagavad-gita, Krishna, the Supreme Source of Happiness, clarifies this misconception in his presentation of the Absolute Truth to Arjuna:

“An intelligent person does not take part in the sources of misery, which are due to contact with the material senses . . . Such pleasures have a beginning and an end, and so the wise do not delight in them.” (5.22)

The pleasures of the body have a beginning and an end, yet people struggle tirelessly to maintain temporary situations as though they were eternal. To accept that we can give permanence to the impermanent is to accept a fallacy, even if it is sugar coated with the possibility of attaining the greatest happiness as a result.

Fortunately, Krishna is not arguing against the pursuit of happiness. Rather, he advises that we should understand who it is that is experiencing that happiness. To understand this, we must first realise we are not our physical bodies.

It's so much easier to accept that real happiness can be derived from giving pleasure to the body because, when the pleasure begins to fade, the solution is to simply find something

else to do with the body. As many people in today's society are discovering, this solution is not only dissatisfying but also distressful, as they hop from one temporary pleasure to another with no lasting fulfilment.

But how could experiencing temporary sensory pleasure cause distress? Isn't this a contradiction? Take this simple example: A person is driving a car, and while driving, the driver starts to feel hungry. To relieve his hunger, he decides to fill up the car with petrol. While the driver is certainly the controller of the car, the relationship is not so close that to meet the needs of one will meet the needs of the other. As Krishna explains in the last chapter of Bhagavad-gita:

“The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, and is directing the wanderings of all living beings, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.” (18.61)

The body is compared to a machine and the real living force is considered the driver. While there might be many individuals in the world who are very attached to their cars, all would probably consider it ludicrous to fill the engine with fuel when their body feels hunger. However, Krishna explains that this is synonymous with the pursuit of material sensory pleasure. While the desires of the body have been met, the needs of the living being for real peace and fulfilment have not. The longer people go without fulfilment, the more stressful their life can become.

We should not consider that the danger lies in the pursuit of happiness itself. Krishna does not deny the pursuit of happiness but simply redirects it to be received by the real self, the living force within the body. Unlike many quick fixes with no tangible results, or dreamlike scenarios that never manifest, Krishna, in the Bhagavad-gita, provides the process for unlocking real, sustainable happiness. By outlining a pathway leading to the real living self that drives the body, Krishna offers an opportunity to live the happiness each person is seeking.

Thankfully, there is no expectation that the reader of Bhagavad-gita simply believes in Krishna's words with no direct experience. Rather than a theoretical concept with afterlife rewards, Krishna offers a genuine experience of the self through realisation. By participating in the techniques offered in Bhagavad-gita, the reader is offered an experience that is everlasting and joyfully performed.

Certainly one of those joys is that we have nothing to lose. No one is expected to run to the mountains or turn their backs on society. Krishna's only request is that we conduct this journey honestly and objectively, to endeavour until the end and not settle for the temporary. The truth can be very revealing. 🌿



Gauranga Prema graduated in English and Philosophy from La Trobe University in Melbourne. Currently he lives as a monk studying and sharing the science of bhakti-yoga.





So God, vhot seemz to be ze problem?

I'M CONFUSED ABOUT MY IDENTITY...


CULTURE  
FILE

# GOD HAS MANY NAMES

DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL PATHS REVEAL DIFFERENT DEGREES OF THE SAME TRUTH.

Contributor Justine Payton





There was a time in my life when all I knew was Christianity as it was practiced in my church, a small church in a small, suburban, overwhelmingly white town. I knew only the God that was preached about to me at Sunday school, and I thought everyone celebrated Easter and Christmas as I did. But that all changed on 11 September 2001 when I was sitting with my mom watching the twin towers of the World Trade Center repeatedly crumble to the ground on TV and heard the words “Muslim” and “Islam” for the first time. My nine-year-old mind grew confused and angry, and I began to cry, screaming, “I hate them! I hate them!” I had no concept of what *them* was, except that they were different, believed in something different, and although only a few out of over a billion had perpetrated a terrible act of violence, it was somehow enough to qualify *them* as well as *their God* as worthy of my hatred.

## HOW COULD PEOPLE THINK THAT *THEIR* GOD WAS BETTER THAN SOMEONE *ELSE’S* GOD?

This mindset quickly dissipated in the aftermath of the attack, as I began to question the God that I had learned about and look into the God or gods that other religions discussed. How could there be so much variation? How could people think that *their* God was better than someone *else’s* God? I became uncomfortable, disturbed by the diversity, violence, and apparent lack of cohesion between the many religions of the world. I reasoned that there was no way only one of them could be right, and all the others wrong. Therefore, I assumed, they must all be wrong. And up until recently, I had never seriously looked into the possibility that they may all, to some degree, be right.

The world is filled with a diversity of religious beliefs or faiths, although Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism undeniably claim the top positions in terms of membership.

Knowing this diversity existed, I needed to understand how it came about, and whether or not the differences that society so blatantly emphasizes reflects real or concocted divisions in belief and practice.

When I began to casually explore bhakti-yoga, I was naturally suspicious. I was exposed to names in an ancient language, names that I had never heard before, such as Krishna, Rama, and Hare. Although I identified as an atheist at the time, bhakti-yoga was explained to me as a science, a process of realization that people could apply in their daily life and then experience the results. I wasn’t being asked to believe in God—rather, I was being prompted to try to find and verify his existence through a gradual process that ultimately would result in my unlimited happiness. It was a sweet enough offer that I was willing to, at least, explore the possibility.

As my studies of bhakti-yoga continued, the pieces of the puzzle that had overwhelmed me as a young girl started to fit together. I read about the unlimited energies, forms and names of God. God could not be confined to a single name—rather, according to time, place and circumstance, different aspects of the same God are manifested. In the Bhagavad-gita (4.11), Krishna states, “As all surrender unto me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows my path in all respects . . .” So, God, Krishna, Allah, Yahweh, Buddha, Jehovah and infinite other names, and the purpose of all these different manifestations and the spiritual practices they invoke is to attain a greater connection to, and love of, God. The differing levels of realization form the different understandings of God around the world, depending on the purity of the consciousness of those receiving God’s guidance. Therefore, rather than seeing a world perpetuated by unconquerable differences, I finally began to see a ubiquitous harmony.

Growing up in the United States, I am no stranger to witnessing acts of religious discrimination and violence. The country has created an environment of fear and hatred for those who are different, one that in recent years especially surrounds those who identify as Muslim. Yet, as with most scenarios of prejudice, the fear and hatred is based on a pervasive ignorance of Islam and a failure to pursue a discourse based on similarities rather than differences. In an increasingly globalized world, wouldn’t it be better to find commonalities to expand on, rather than differences to fight about?

In 2012, the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life released a study of more than 130 countries that revealed 5.8 billion people around the world identify with a religious group, or around 84 percent of the world’s population. Yet, despite the unity of identifying as religious, distrust, fear, hatred and violence seem to dictate the majority of inter-religious affairs that I have witnessed and studied throughout my life. Facing this phenomenon, bhakti-yoga provided me a unifying factor.

Srimad-Bhagavatam, one of the classic yoga texts, says, “As rivers born from the mountains and filled by the rain flow from all sides into the sea, so do all these paths in the end reach You” (10.40.10). For one willing to explore







**RATHER THAN SEEING A WORLD PERPETUATED BY UNCONQUERABLE DIFFERENCES, I FINALLY BEGAN TO SEE A UBIQUITOUS HARMONY.**

the diverse spectrum of religious and spiritual manifestations, different levels of the same truth are revealed across the many scriptures, with the more comprehensive paths providing more complete realizations. Delving into the texts, similarities become more apparent than differences, with the commonality of morality, emphasizing compassion, tolerance, mercy, truthfulness and love.

In the Bible (Col. 3:12-314), it states, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Similarly, the Quran (90:12-17) reveals, "And what will explain to you what the steep path is? It is the freeing of a (slave) from bondage or giving of food in a day of famine to an orphan relative, or to a needy in distress. Then will he be of those who believe, enjoin fortitude and encourage kindness and compassion." In the Bhagavad-gita (16.1), it is stated, "purification of one's existence; cultivation of spiritual knowledge; charity; self-control; performance of sacrifice; study of the Vedas; austerity; simplicity; nonviolence; truthfulness; freedom from anger; renunciation; tranquility; aversion to faultfinding; compassion for all living beings; freedom from covetousness; gentleness; modesty; steady determination; vigor; forgiveness; fortitude; cleanliness; and freedom from envy and from the passion for honor—these transcendental qualities...belong to godly men endowed with divine nature."

Although these quotes seek to highlight the similarities in moral values between just a few familiar scriptures, the core or essence of religious and spiritual practices is universal and goes well beyond mere morality. Read truly, scriptures prompt an individual to live a life striving for a higher purpose, a purpose based on love that will bring one closer to God. If practiced purely, without mundane interpretation or speculation, all of these paths can eventually lead a person to a higher spiritual consciousness. Yet, we disregard the high standards and purity of the scriptures. Polluted by egotism, lust, envy, and greed, the aspects of love and compassion that pervade the pages of holy scriptures have been lost in terms of practical application. We are identifying as religious or spiritual, but too often failing to follow the guidelines for the realization of what that means.

This is where the final piece of the puzzle that has baffled me for over a decade finally falls into place. In a lecture by Bhakti Tirtha Swami, a monk in the bhakti-yoga tradition, he states, "The Vedic scriptures [such as Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam] are the oldest scriptures, therefore, they help to make a person a better Christian, a better Muslim, a better Hindu and when one becomes better, perfect, he no longer considers himself of any specific, demarcated distinction, but he considers himself as a servant of God." The essence of any spiritual practice is to, therefore, go beyond mundane designations such as "Hindu," "Muslim," "black" or "white," and realize that we are all spirit souls, minute particles eternally in relationship with the Supreme Consciousness. The Vedic scriptures are the core of bhakti-yoga, and understanding their relevance to other religious and spiritual traditions allowed me to overcome whatever differences I saw in terms of practice. I realized that all of the religions were seeking the same goal of re-establishing a lost relationship with God, and bhakti-yoga is merely the most effective, practical way available to attain it in this modern age.

Defined as love and devotion, bhakti-yoga is a science that shows the benefits of developing love of God, and, consequently, love for all living beings. It overcomes the boundaries we have concocted based on race, culture, religion, and nationality. It does not change one's religious or spiritual affiliation, but rather enhances it by providing techniques that will allow one to overcome the envy, greed, and ego that are so difficult to disentangle from. While I am still on the path of trying to understand God, I no longer see it as a choice between one name of God and another, between one right God and a plethora of wrong ones. Like the threads of a spider's web, they are all connected in a beautiful pattern with love of God and all living beings at the center, and bhakti-yoga provides a universal process for attaining that goal. 🌸



Holding degrees in international relations and economics, Justine 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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5pm

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deep discussions

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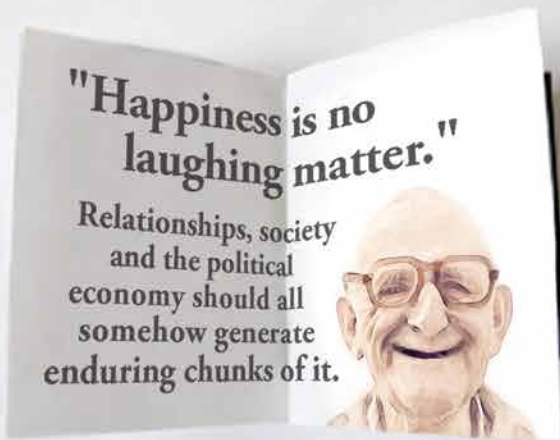
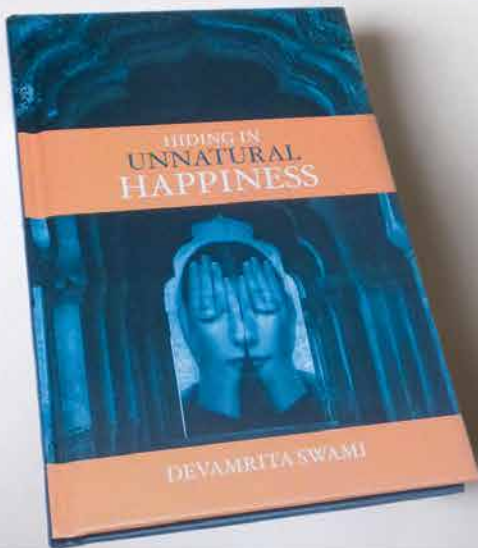
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