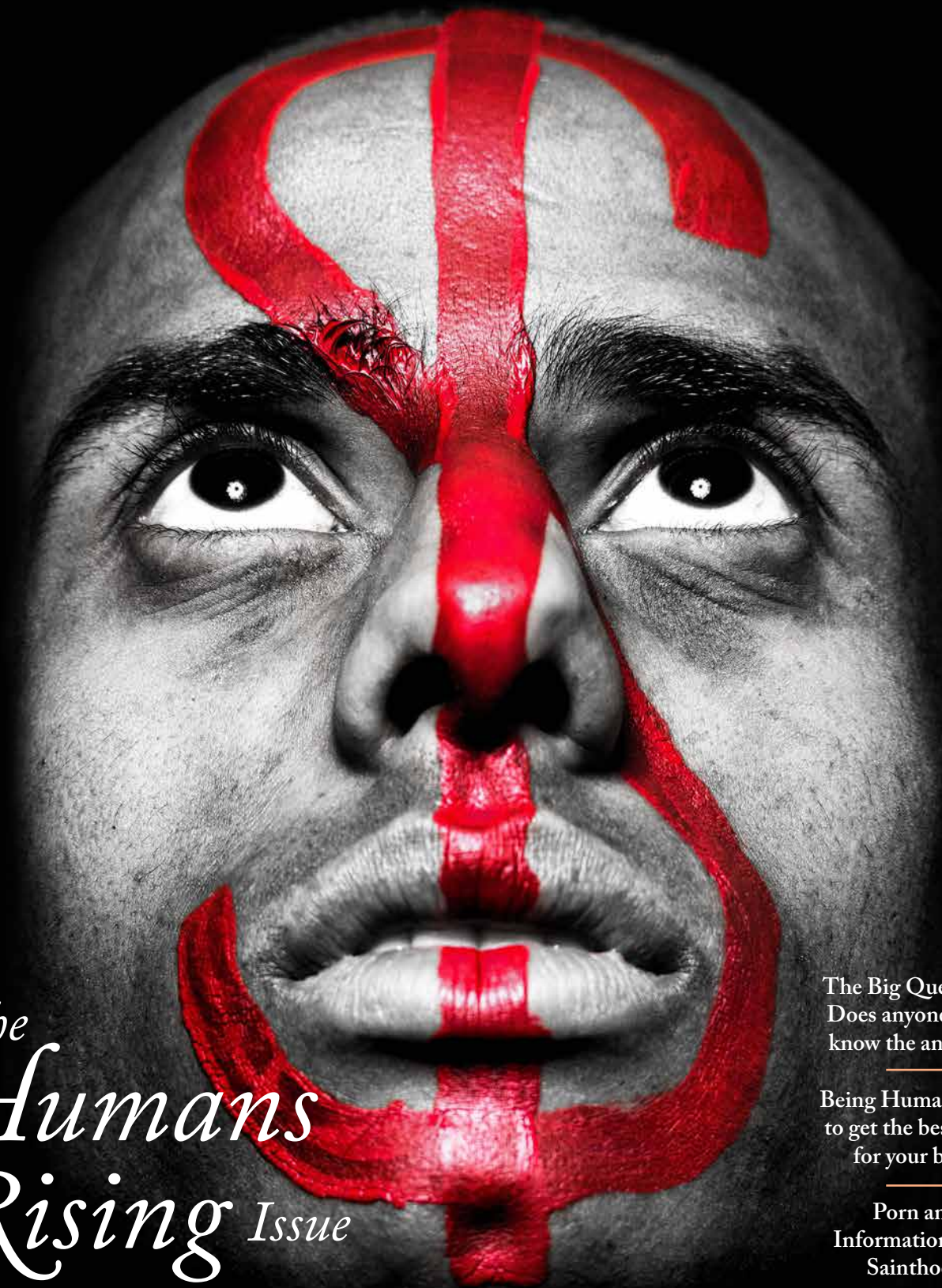


ENOUGH!

CULTURE FILE / SPIRIT MATTERS

JOIN THE EVOLUTION

INSPIRE-ME-YOGI / ACTIVIST

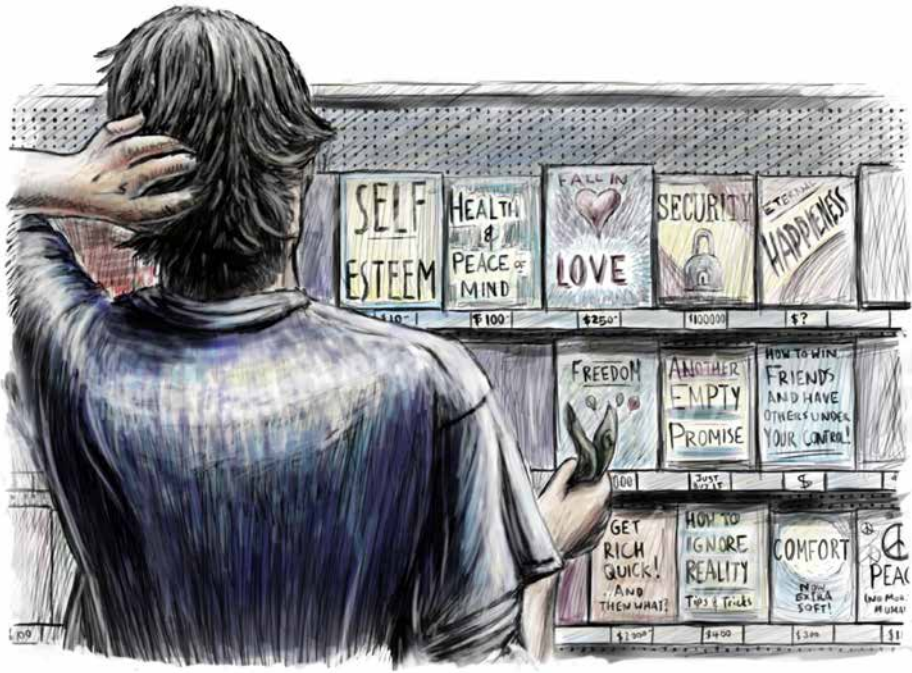


*The
Humans
Rising Issue*

The Big Questions.
Does anyone really
know the answers?

Being Human. How
to get the best bang
for your buck

Porn and
Information-Age
Sainthood



Dear Reader

The world seems to be right there for the taking and you have been told how to take your share of the spoils: work hard, party hard then munch off a slice of consumer heaven. Peace and satisfaction will then be yours.

But hang on. Stop! You have a gnawing sense that something's not quite right with the show. The earth's ecology is in tatters, ethnic and racial conflicts abound, nuclear weapons keep getting stockpiled, and the stress-o-meter of humans all over the world keeps on climbing.

But then again, let's get real. Let's ask: Can tiny little you and I do anything about any of this?

Yes, we can. This issue of *Enough!* tells how.

It all begins by asking the right questions. As Devamrita Swami writes in his article, "Ask Me No Questions, I Tell You No Lies":

"Our problem is that we lack the ability and knowledge for asking questions that benefit both our real self, the spirit soul, and society. Perfect questions can uplift the whole world, as can do their answers."

So yes, please don't be satisfied with the status quo and the societal pressure that tells you to just shut up and fall in line with the "work, buy, consume, die" agenda that is designed to extract your life-force for things that have no real pleasure or spiritual benefit. Allow *Enough!* to inspire the "seeker" in you. In this issue, our contributors examine a host of current issues through the lens of ancient yoga wisdom. We hope that their words will inspire you to try and be the change you wish to see in the world.

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Avatar

Knowledge From a Higher Dimension

Contributor Damodara Krishna

Modern society claims to have a firmer grasp on knowledge than past civilisations. We are proud to have access to and control over a vast amount of information—a luxury defining the Information Age. Yet, despite the best scientific attempts, genuine knowledge has escaped us.

The enlightened sages of bygone ages explain that the senses are imperfect—and information gathered through the senses is also imperfect, whether enhanced by technology or not. Humanity’s only hope, therefore, is to access the source of genuine wisdom: the Avatar or the Supreme Conscious Being.

Genuine Spiritual Knowledge

Genuine knowledge is essential to solving the enigmatic questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose in life? This knowledge is about understanding matter and spirit, and the source of both. Such knowledge is not the result of experiments; it is heard from the Avatar, the Supreme Conscious Being, who is the source of all energies and beyond human deficiencies. The Avatar is the origin of everything and is the original seed of genuine spiritual knowledge, just as the manufacturer of a television is also the source of information on how it works.

Experimental attempts at answering these existential questions have provided no satisfactory results, no resolute conclusions. Instead, today we see a mass proliferation of technological innovations, all meant to make life easier. But you may have noticed how many of these “life enhancing” technologies have also increased the rate at which we destroy the environment. Distracted by the pursuit of wealth to purchase the latest devices, we fail to see the need for genuine spiritual knowledge.

Can there be any real happiness and peace for a species that doesn’t know the answers to these crucial questions? There can’t be. As American biologist Edward O. Wilson explains:

“If all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that

existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos.”

Lacking genuine spiritual knowledge, we have become less than insects, dysfunctional mammals, confused as to what we are meant for as we rapidly destroy our habitat, planet Earth.

Practically, we don’t know what we are doing. If we could at least acknowledge this, then that would be a step forward to finding real meaning. As Socrates said, *To know, is to know that you know nothing. That is the meaning of true knowledge.*

Objective Enlightenment?

Scientists embrace empiricism as the foremost way to discover reality. Enhancing their sense perception with technology, they think that scientific objectivity—verifiable observation through the senses—will help us understand the origins of life and the universe, and reality in its entirety.

For example, to see an object that is very far away, we use a telescope, and to see a very small object, we use a microscope. These instruments empower the human eye to perceive that which is normally nebulous.

To understand the past, scientists investigate rocks in the earth and interpret these as records of antiquity. Using methods such as carbon dating, they can try to understand what era an artefact or skeleton is from.

The results of such scientific research are published in text books, and taught in schools and universities. Students are expected to accept these findings with faith that the empirical scientists have provided the most vivid understandings of reality—their conclusions are indeed “real knowledge,” confirmed by authority.

But time and time again we see that one scientist contradicts another, and as a result we must completely overhaul our supposed understanding of reality. “That knowledge wasn’t so perfect after all,” we admit. Any honest scientist will not deny the fundamental limitations of empiricism.

>>

The idea of a higher dimension, or higher reality, seems pretty fantastic. “Do I really believe such things exist?” you may ask. But scientists themselves propose higher dimensional phenomena. For example, Albert Einstein and the Kaluza-Klein theory discuss “supergravity” and “supersymmetry” in fourth and fifth dimensions.

These limitations imposed by the senses are recognised in the wisdom texts of India. Here, great sages explain that as minute conscious beings in this world of matter, humans have four flaws that inhibit them from independently acquiring authentic knowledge:

1. We commit mistakes.
2. We are easily illusioned.
3. We are prone to cheat others.
4. Our senses are imperfect.

One such sage, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, explains the fourth flaw:

The process of receiving knowledge through direct perception has no value, because our senses are all imperfect. For example, to us the sun looks like a small disk, but in fact it is many times larger than the Earth. So, what is the value of our direct perception through our eyes? We have so many senses through which we can experience knowledge—the eyes, the ears, the nose, and so on—but because these senses are imperfect, whatever knowledge we get by exercising these senses is also imperfect. Because scientists try to understand things by exercising their imperfect senses, their conclusions are always imperfect. (May 2, 1973, Los Angeles.)

Empirical research is what the sages call the path of *ascending knowledge*. They call it such because the finite conscious being, with all its flaws and limitations, is trying to ascend to the heights of flawless wisdom without the help of the infallible Avatar. Authentic spiritual knowledge comes from the perfect source.

The bhakti-yoga texts describe the ascending method of acquiring knowledge as an ambiguous path that leads to confusion—one that provides half-truths at best.

Higher Dimensional Knowledge

“If these flaws are there, then how do these sages acquire knowledge?” you may logically probe.

Having long given up on empiricism, sages adopt the path less common—that of descending knowledge.

The yoga texts of India come from a timeless body of knowledge called the Vedas. The Vedas impart knowledge relevant to human civilisation such as agriculture,

economics, politics, medicine, and—most revered by the wise—the science of consciousness. Because its knowledge descends from a higher dimension via an Avatar or Supreme Conscious Being, the Vedas are above the four flaws of minute conscious beings. Indeed, the word “Avatar” means “*one who descends*.”

The Supreme Conscious Being is antithetic in nature to the minute conscious beings of this world. He is never subject to the defects of imperfect senses: cheating, illusion, and committing mistakes. What is the Avatar’s mission? To present and explain genuine knowledge to human society.

Naturally, for the Supreme Person to impart extraordinary knowledge, the students receiving the knowledge must be extraordinarily qualified. They must not change what they hear. Because the knowledge is already perfect, there is no need to embellish it with one’s own ideas. Absorbing what they have heard, and genuinely applying the knowledge in their life, students are then qualified to relay this knowledge to others. In this way, the knowledge remains intact.

We can see this universal system of education in our society. For example, at university, a qualified professor imparts knowledge to students, who eagerly record the discourse. Students who qualify can then become professors and teach others accordingly. Similarly, the Supreme Person speaks, the student eagerly records and applies the wisdom, and may become qualified to share its message.

Sounds simple. But the process is not so easy. Not everyone can become a university professor, and similarly, not everyone is able to fulfil the role of passing on such authentic wisdom.

But it is by this descending path that perfect knowledge from a higher dimension infiltrates this world.

The idea of a higher dimension, or higher reality, seems pretty fantastic. “Do I really believe such things exist?” you may ask. But scientists themselves propose higher dimensional phenomena. For example, Albert Einstein and the Kaluza-Klein theory discuss “supergravity” and “supersymmetry” in fourth and fifth dimensions. Why are such scientific theories acceptable? And what layman understands them?



Contributing artist
Kardama Kapila

Descending to the world of matter, the Supreme Being offers the greatest gift of genuine knowledge so that anyone may comprehend the energies comprising reality, and the source of those energies.

Only a small portion of the population will ever seriously consider such lofty concepts—while the rest of us rarely flirt with such theories.

Do you want to experience the fourth dimension?

Well, now you can. French mathematician Étienne Ghys claims, “I live in dimension four.” Ghys is also educating others how to live in “dimension four” by teaching them to visualise four dimensions. “You have to practise,” he says. “I’ve been thinking in dimension four for thirty years now.”

If scientists propose that things are higher dimensional, then what is wrong with the Vedas doing so?

Straight From the Source’s Mouth

Descending to the world of matter, the Supreme Being offers the greatest gift of genuine knowledge so that anyone may comprehend the energies comprising reality, and the source of those energies. Happily, the Avatar distributes this knowledge and offers a method for verifying his hypothesis.

Sages expert in Avatar science say Krishna is the Avatari—one from whom all the Avatars emanate.

Descending from the higher dimension, the realm of no anxiety, Krishna appeared on Earth and spoke the essence of the Vedas, the Bhagavad Gita.

Without understanding Krishna as the Avatari, one cannot appreciate Bhagavad Gita’s paramount importance. At least, hypothetically, we should accept Krishna as the Supreme Conscious Being, aloof from empirical glitches.

Sagaciously, Srila Prabhupada writes: “. . . if Krishna is accepted as an ordinary conditioned soul in individual consciousness, then His Bhagavad Gita has no valueA common man with all the four defects of human frailty is unable to teach that which is worth hearing. The Gita is above such literature. No mundane book compares with it. When one accepts Krishna as an ordinary man, the Gita loses all importance.” (Bhagavad Gita, 2.12, commentary.)

No hypothesis is complete without an experiment. Krishna invites his readers not to remain theoretical. As British philosopher and noble laureate Bertrand Russell said:

“What is wanted is not the will to believe, but the will to find out, which is the exact opposite.”

Comprehensive spiritual wisdom may sound too good to be true. Certainly, empirical knowledge has its place—much of the knowledge in the Vedas can be verified through empirical means because it has practical application in the world of matter.

But with a process to verify the authenticity of spiritual knowledge, why complain? What can scepticism accomplish here?

The path of descending knowledge will be accessible to those who humbly admit their existential frailties as minute conscious beings subject to the four flaws: imperfect senses, cheating, illusion, and the tendency to commit mistakes. Such clarity of our existential situation is the first step in acquiring real knowledge. Such a person can reason that perfect knowledge comes from the perfect source. Any other conclusion is simply mythology.

Bhagavad Gita answers the questions as to who we are, why we’re here, and what our purpose is. When we live in the light of this genuine knowledge, we can experience firsthand, a higher sense of peace and happiness. This knowledge is potential we can realise through its application. 🌸



Damodara Krishna holds a degree in moving graphics from the Waikato Institute of Technology, New Zealand. In 2007, when he was twenty, Damodara Krishna took an interest in life’s deeper issues and began studying the yoga teachings of Vedic India. He enjoys sharing this invaluable knowledge with others.



BUSY OUTSIDE, DISCONNECTED INSIDE

Transforming Your Inner Reality

Contributor **Rasayatra**

Why do we always want to know what others are up to? Why do we constantly check for posts on social media, follow people, and “friend” people on Facebook and Instagram?

We crave real connection. From day one, as a newborn, we seek relationships with others. But if we are all looking for connection, why do we come into this world with nothing and leave this world with nothing?

Well, perhaps that’s not completely true.

Inner Reality Matters Most

We all experience both an inner and outer life. While modern society is more interested in what happens on the outside, a whole lot more is going on inside us. We each experience a rich internal environment in which our views and perceptions of the world are formed.

Our childhood is a crucial time for forming our internal reality, because certain beliefs about others, our environment, and ourselves are first created. Therapist Judith Beck explains that people’s “most central or core beliefs are understandings that are so fundamental and deep that they often do not articulate them, even to themselves.” Interestingly, these influences begin before we are even born.

When we begin life in the womb, genetics dictate how we are put together, and this is a blueprint for how we develop.

During pregnancy, what our mother is exposed to further influences our development. Research demonstrates that good nutrition affects the growing fetus positively. Unfortunately, arguments, stress, and exposure to violence impact negatively.

Once born, the first three years of life are the most critical for how our brain develops—these early years set the scene for how we will view and interact with our world.

As we age, pathways in our brain that connect an emotional state with a pattern of behaviour can develop into automatic habits. For example, if you smoke when you are feeling stressed, it is more likely that you will automatically reach for a cigarette when you are experiencing stress.

Genetics, our early environment, and experience all have an immense effect on the meaning we attribute to things. By the time we have traversed the teenage years and transitioned into adulthood, we have some pretty established ways of thinking, behaving, and relating to others.

Our inner reality affects our outer experiences, yet the modern lifestyle, fascinated with external, superficial needs, is disconnected from the demands of this internal reality. Underestimating the importance of a healthy internal environment can make us vulnerable to depression, an epidemic estimated to affect an astounding 350 million people globally. The World Mental Health Survey, conducted in seventeen countries, found that on average, about one in twenty people reported having an episode of depression in the previous year.

Millennial Mayhem

Millennials, who have grown up in the internet age, have an inner reality that is defined by social media and the entertainment industry, which portray images of happy, upbeat, attractive people enjoying life in extravagant ways. Companies make billions of dollars exploiting social media’s influence on our self-image and desire to look like someone in an Instagrammed selfie.

Despite all this external campaigning for a better digital version of ourselves, the realities of day-to-day existence demonstrate something different. Fractured relationships, loneliness, lack of connection, disrupted communities, financial restrictions, study and career

“Nothing sears the soul more achingly than the sense that we are ALONE.”

pressures, long commutes to work—accompanied by the constant chatter of our buzzing minds—unsettle even the most pragmatic people.

Social researcher Hugh Macky comments, “The price of modern life is depression and loneliness,” and, “Nothing sears the soul more achingly than the sense that we are alone.” How do we bridge the gap between how life “should” be and how life actually is?

We might try to get drunk or high, or shop till we drop, to deal with depression, anxiety, or the frustration caused by these day-to-day realities. We may consider changing our career, partner, or neighbourhood. We may travel, get a pet, try mindfulness, hypnotherapy, cognitive therapy, yoga, or exercise. Certainly, some of these techniques are effective in alleviating mental distress, to an extent. But are we simply seeking external solutions to an internal issue? Have we taken the time to attend to our inner environmental needs?

Missing the Self, Missing the Point

While some techniques can assist us with clearing our thoughts and becoming more aware of our internal processes, such practices don’t address our innate need for genuine connection.

Statistics suggest that many people use mental health services to access a friendly, confidential person in whom to confide. Because of a breakdown in local communities, family structures, decreased contact with or lack of extended family, and the reduced quality of friendships, at times we can feel that we have no one to talk to.

We inherently seek a sense of community, relationships with like-minded souls, and at the deepest level—a reconnection with the Supreme Spiritual Source of all.

In the preface to the spiritual encyclopedia of ancient wisdom, *Srimad Bhagavatam*, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada notes:

“Human society, at the present moment, is not in the darkness of oblivion. It has made rapid progress in the fields of material comforts, education, and economic development throughout the entire world. But there is a pinprick somewhere in the social body at large,

and therefore, there are large-scale quarrels, even over less important issues. There is need of a clue as to how humanity can become one in peace, friendship, and prosperity with a common cause. *Srimad Bhagavatam* will fill this need, for it is a cultural presentation for the respiritualization of the entire human society.”

As the pushings of modern life barely allow time for thought, depression and anxiety are symptomatic of a deeper, spiritual need. A lack of spiritual connection is at the root of why we neglect to address our internal environment. The analogy of a bird in a golden cage portrays this neglect: We spend so much time caring for the cage—admiring its beauty, how the sunlight reflects on it, polishing it—that we pay no attention to the poor bird inside. Similarly, we are so obsessed with our external selves, our mental chatter, and our social and financial obligations, that we often lose touch with the essence of ourselves—the enduring, nonmaterial self beyond our temporary body and mind.

As Abraham Maslow stated when he established “self-actualisation” at the top rung of his hierarchy of human needs: “The self only finds its actualisation in giving itself to some higher goal outside oneself, in altruism and spirituality.”

How to Reconnect

A truly magnanimous personality, Srila Prabhupada selflessly endured many hardships to bring this knowledge of spirituality to the Western world. Witnessing a society that takes great pride in technological sophistication, Prabhupada could see through this veneer to the disconnected souls within.

To address this core spiritual need, Srila Prabhupada introduced the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra (Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare), a call to the Supreme Source of everything—Krishna. The mantra can be chanted through the ancient spiritual practices of group mantra meditation performed with music (*kirtan*), and personal mantra meditation (*japa*).

Connection through mantra meditation provides a shared experience of tangible spiritual realisation. Chanting the Hare Krishna mantra meets the need for



genuine connection to something bigger than the sum total of our thoughts, worries, and temporary anxieties. In this way, you can gradually revive a deep connection to the Supreme.

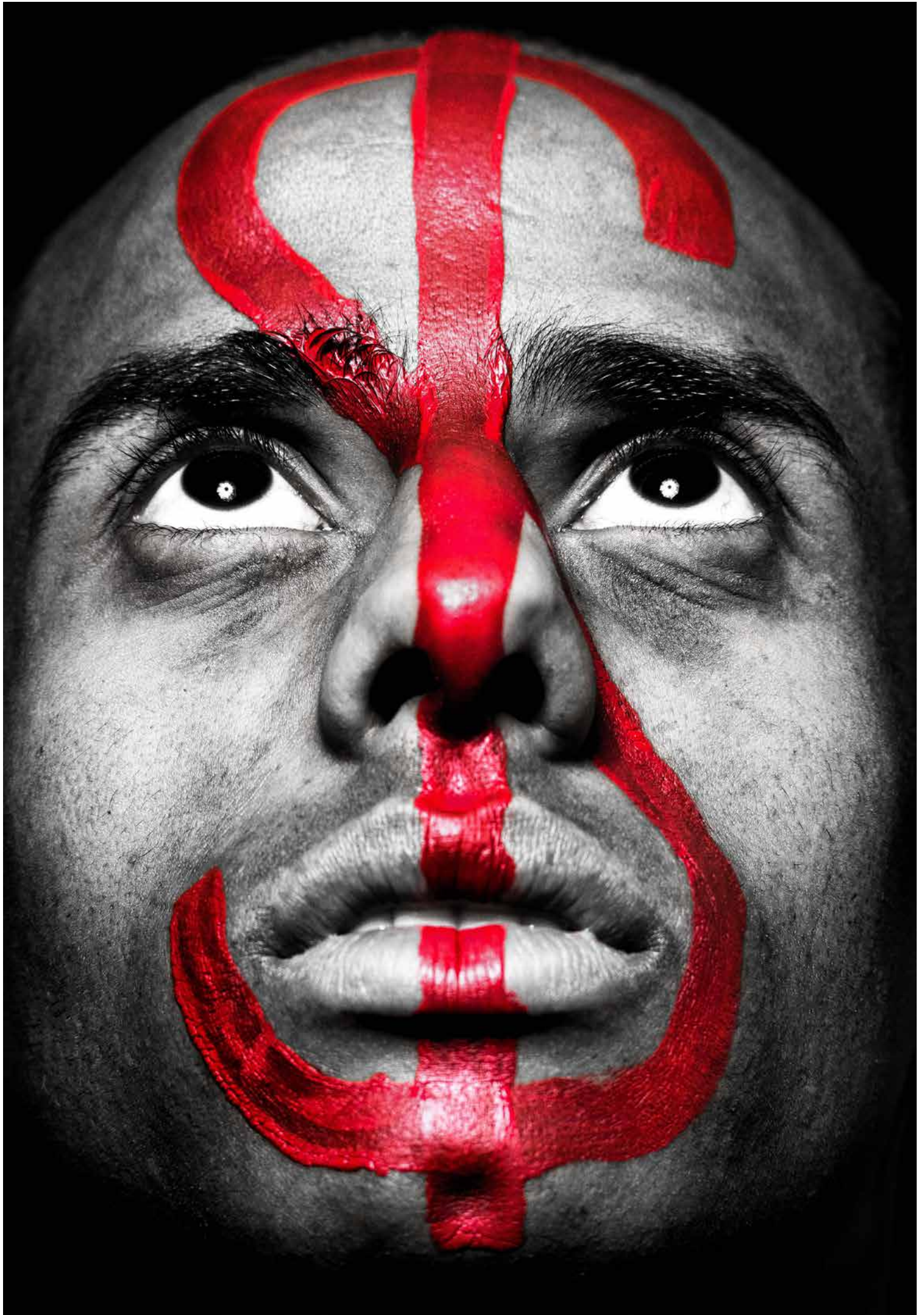
Such meditation practice is applicable for those in any condition of life, with any array of early childhood experiences, or any number of “mind chatter” complaints or issues.

Srila Prabhupada once quipped, “Chant and be happy.” There are many layers to this instruction. On the most superficial level, the repetition of the mantra is said to be soothing for the mind. But as we progress, there is so much more to be experienced, more than simply the alleviation of mental distress. Sages of old assure us that we will experience true bliss and spiritual enlightenment as a direct result of dedicated mantra meditation. In the modern context, thousands of people worldwide relay stories of positive life changes from attempting even a little mantra meditation. Transcending material concepts such as race, religion, gender, and socio-economic status, the Hare Krishna mantra connects people all over the world.

It’s not quite true that we come into this world with nothing. Neither is it true that we leave the world with nothing. True, we will depart this world with no external belongings, but we will still be experiencing our inner lives—our thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. At this final stage, any efforts we made towards our self-actualisation will prove to be our real wealth. Why? Because death is the ultimate equaliser: Immune to material considerations, our internal state will be our acute reality. If, at the time of death, our internal reality is connected to Krishna, the Ultimate Reality, then we can regain what is rightfully ours: a life free from limiting material conditions. 🌸



Rasayatra is a social worker and cognitive behavioural therapist, deeply interested in connecting with the Divine through meditation and bhakti-yoga. Inspired by nature, Rasayatra and her husband run a cow sanctuary north of Auckland, surrounded by established native forest and fresh water springs.



Being Human, Bang for Your Buck

Human Intelligence. Use It Wisely.

Contributor Mahavan

Could there be anything worse than not getting enough “bang for your buck”? Hell no! As we devotedly surf the net for sacred product reviews, trusted comparisons, and precious price-beating info, we are sure that meaning, peace, and fulfilment will follow as we speed toward the goal of life, one purchase at a time. But could it be that today, in the wonderful Information Age, we know everything except what we really need to know?

A quick look at the news headlines on any day of the week certainly gives some food for thought, and reaffirms for the yogi the message of the ancient yoga culture to humanity: “Ignore the essential questions and your inner and outer world will be chaotic, despite so much scientific and technological advancement. Indeed, you could not make a greater mistake than to consider something more important than your own enlightenment.”

Who, or what, are we, beyond the superficial layers of body and mind? Why are we here, beyond reproducing our genes? What should we be doing beyond the activities we share with the beasts in the field and forest? And what is real pleasure, beyond temporary sensual titillation? Out of the box of contemporary social conditioning, the bhakti-yoga texts explain that human intelligence is meant for asking and answering these questions as our number one priority. Why? Not simply to avoid inner and outer chaos, but for an even higher purpose. The preliminary bhakti text, Bhagavad Gita, informs us that the human form of life is specifically and exclusively designed to attain pleasure beyond matter, time, and space. Such pleasure, in which one understands that there is none higher, is attained only by proper use of human intelligence.

But hang on, what about the well-worn “ignorance is bliss” mantra? It was the great Western thinker Socrates who said “the unexamined life is not worth living,” but are we not determined to prove him wrong? For the vast majority today, the well-drilled response may be: “Who am I? Not sure, but I could sure use some more money!” Another Western thinker, Oscar Wilde, opined that “a cynic is one who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing,” but perhaps many

would consider Wilde the actual cynic for coming up with this definition. Illuminating this situation, bhakti texts like Srimad Bhagavatam provide the best “bang for the buck” in terms of human worldview and life-style options, by urging us to seriously consider what human intelligence is actually meant for.

The following question begins the journey: If humanity was to try to distinguish itself as a species, what would be the criteria? All species eat, sleep, reproduce, and defend themselves, and also equate the satisfaction of such needs as “happiness,” but is there a specific trait which unmistakably distinguishes humans from other species? Instinctively we may reply, “We are more intelligent.” But how? Sure, our furry, feathered and scaly brothers and sisters lack Facebook, smartphones, free-market democracies and fast-paced consumerism, but they also lack chronic health conditions, drug and

Intelligence, as it is commonly defined, is “the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills.” But what type of knowledge and skills actually distinguish us from other species?

alcohol dependency, economic recessions, car accidents, suicide bombers, the need for psychotherapists, and the responsibility for climate destabilisation and impending ecological disaster—which are just a few of the medals pinned exclusively on the chest of humanity.

Intelligence, as it is commonly defined, is “the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills.” But what type of knowledge and skills actually distinguish us from other species? The yogi would ask, “Is the power of human intelligence actually being used for anything higher than the achievement of basic animal goals?” Looking at the activities we share with other life forms, we also see that they are often far more organised, cooperative, and less destructive than we two-legged heads of the food chain. While “advanced”

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Bhakti texts point out that there is actually no notable difference between humans and animals, unless the human being makes a serious attempt at higher consciousness.

contemporary humans have become the only species in history to destroy their own habitat (and that of many other innocent species in the process), tiny creatures like ants and bees have social organisation and economic cohesion that humanity can only dream of.

Bhakti texts point out that there is actually no notable difference between humans and animals, unless the human being makes a serious attempt at higher consciousness. Again, it was Wilde who observed that “man is the rational animal.” Expanding on this observation, graduate bhakti text Srimad Bhagavatam gives it practical application, explaining that a truly intelligent human being, while properly taking care of the needs of the body and mind, only endeavours for pleasure beyond temporariness, knowing that whatever happiness one is predestined to experience by karma cannot be avoided or increased, and that such a budget standard of pleasure is also freely and automatically available in all species of life.

In other words, human beings have the in-built potential, due to the facility of our developed intelligence, to attain pleasure free from the limitations of beginnings and endings, and such an endeavour is the only real criteria for human status. Failing to use this potential for the purpose that it was intended, it is misused in the pursuit of transient gratification which is freely available in any type of body, human or animal. And consequently, because human intelligence *is* far more powerful than that of other species, when misused the reactions are also epic, hence the deluge of ever-increasing individual, social, economic, political, and ecological woes that bombard the nightly TV news enthusiast.

The Sanskrit word *Aryan* is used in yoga literature to define human beings and distinguish them from other species. The term means “those who are advancing.” Today, of course, we are generally pretty chuffed with the rampage of apparent human progress that has spurred up in the 200 years since the Industrial Revolution, usually equating it with the advancement of science, technology, and a more convenient way of life. But does such progress equate to a higher quality of life? Has it led to an increase in the depth of our personal understanding and relationships? Has it created unity and harmony between human beings, other

species, and our environment? Has it led to genuine human happiness and fulfilment? Statistics say no.

For example, in the United States, the number of people experiencing a regular and frequent feeling of loneliness has risen from 11 to 20 percent of the population in the 1970s and ‘80s to between 40 and 45 percent in 2010. In New Zealand, although those under thirty are the most connected via text messaging and social media, they are also the loneliest of any age group. The consumption of antidepressants has nearly doubled in European Union countries since 2000.

Acknowledging the crisis, the World Health Organisation (WHO) released a report in 2014 entitled “Preventing suicide: a global imperative,” the first report of its kind. WHO also estimated that 804,000 suicide deaths occurred worldwide in 2012, although they believe the actual number is much higher due to under-reporting. For every person who commits suicide, there are twenty or more who make an attempt. Globally, suicide is the second leading cause of death among those aged fifteen to twenty-nine. The twentieth century has also been the most war-ravaged and violent century in recent human history. More than 140 wars have been fought since the formation of the United Nations in 1945, and three times more people have died in wars of the twentieth century than in the entire history of warfare between A.D. 1 and 1899. Our present version of “advancement,” it seems, comes at quite a price.

Bhakti texts affirm that when a person makes serious inquiries into happiness beyond animal propensities and actually takes up authentic yoga technologies, which connect him or her to pleasure that has no beginning or end, he or she can then be classified as *Aryan*, or “human.” Such an individual knows and feels the practical benefits of real human advancement. Deeply concerned with real “bang for the buck,” the fortunate soul, even in this time of mass forgetfulness of the purpose of human intelligence, seeks the company of like-minded others and dynamically strives for and achieves higher consciousness. Free from the tendency to exploit other living beings, fortified and inspired by inner peace, genuine meaning, compassion for all species, and pure happiness, he or she, not simply satisfied with personal success, is also dedicated to assisting others on the path to maximum human potential. In this way, the empathic activist-yogi urges one and all, “Please don’t make that greatest of mistakes - you have the potential for and right to the best pleasure.” 🌸



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.



Alien Visit

Will the real scientist please stand up?

Contributor Gauranga Prema



Dr. Howard Dire paced along the sterile corridor, his strides wide and determined. His white knuckles clasped a silver-coloured clipboard, now his only possession, having deposited his keys, wallet, and identification badge at the security desk. As he walked, his gaze remained locked on the solid steel door at the end of the path.

On the other side of that door was the greatest scientific discovery ever to occur. Greater than splitting the atom, greater than any space mission, greater even than the LHC (Large Hadron Collider) verifying the existence of the Higgs boson. What remained between Dr. Dire and the greatest scientific encounter known to man was one last security door.

Dr. Howard Dire was about to meet an extraterrestrial.

It was impossible to comprehend his good fortune. An *alien* had made contact with Earth. First making contact via a message received at the Arecibo Observatory radio telescope in Puerto Rico, the alien had requested a meeting with a scientific dignitary. The alien had sent a transmission in four different Earth languages, proving that it had already done its research.

A secret discussion amongst leading governments ensued, and the scientific community was notified on a need-to-know basis. Dr. Dire, a physicist who was also an adviser to his government's military research and development, had been one of the few notified. With great pride and courage, he had volunteered to be the first to communicate with the alien and the government had accepted.

He had been given his orders: reveal nothing confidential about our military capabilities (the boys in office were always worried about that one), gain as much as you can from the conversation, and assess whether the alien could be trusted to meet government officials, discuss relations, and, if possible, trade.

"Bugger their trade," thought Dr. Dire. "This is about science."

Dr. Dire arrived at the steel doors and waited patiently. A buzzing noise indicated the CCTV cameras focusing on him. He stiffened as they scanned him for facial recognition. He heard the air-pressure valve release on the locking system, and slowly the doors opened.



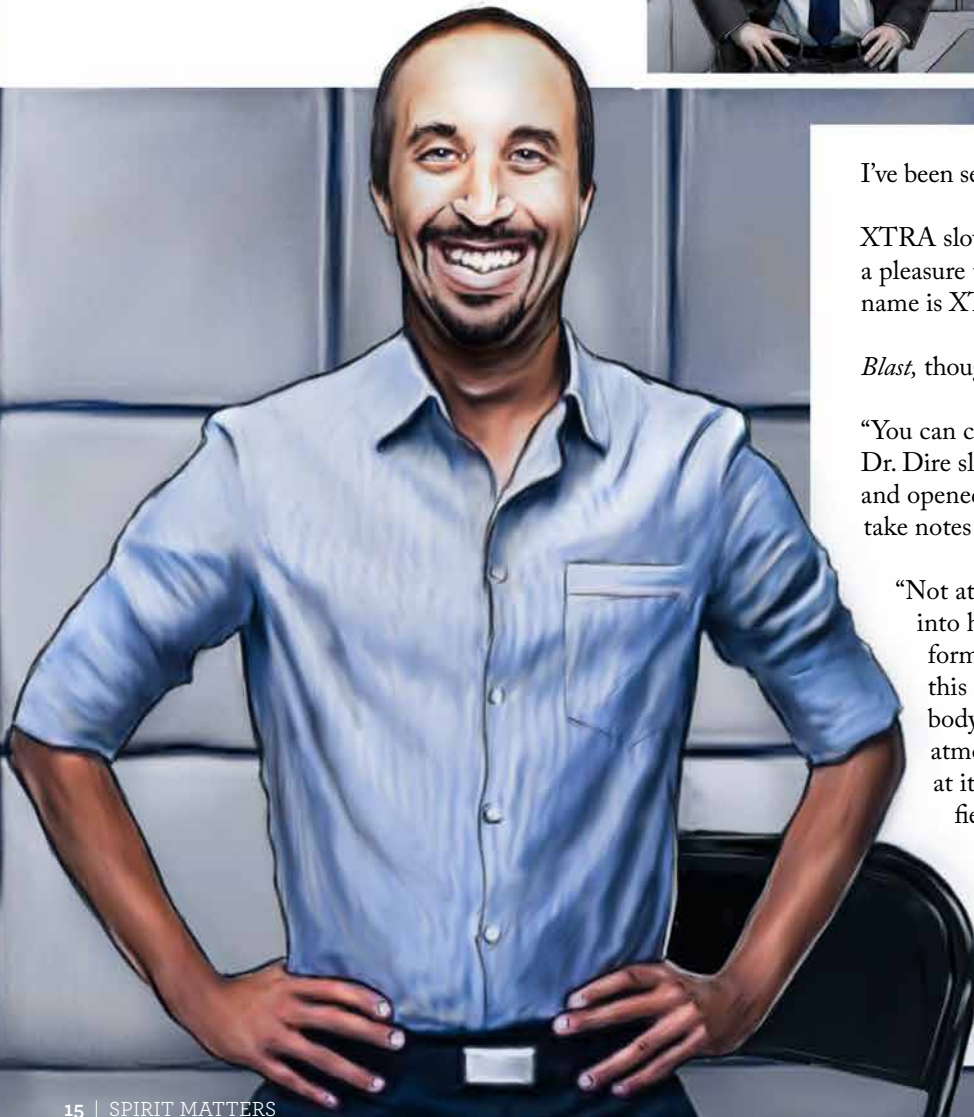
Dr. Dire paused for the doors to completely part before he began walking into the room. He could feel the tips of his hands and feet tingle. He'd been nervous about important meetings before, but never anything like *this*.

The doors opened to reveal a small chamber with white padded walls. White lights shone down onto a long steel table bolted to the floor, with two plastic chairs at either end. One was empty, in the other sat the alien.

The alien had revealed in his communication that he was on a scouting mission to Earth from one of the nearest stars, Alpha Centauri. One of the technicians at the radio telescope base had called him an Extra Terrestrial Roaming Agent, or XTRA, and the name had stuck. Dr. Dire knew he would have to bite his tongue from calling it XTRA during the meeting.

Dr. Dire observed an alien surprisingly human. It appeared to be male, about 30–40 years of age, and Caucasian. Dr. Dire suppressed his disappointment as he entered the room.

Taking slow, careful steps to stand beside the table, Dr. Dire spoke first. "Welcome to Earth. I am Doctor Howard S. Dire, physicist and cosmologist."



I've been selected as the scientific dignitary you requested."

XTRA slowly rose to his feet, smiling as he stood. "It's a pleasure to meet you Doctor Howard S. Dire. My name is XTRA."

Blast, thought Dr. Dire, *he's been reading our correspondences.*

"You can call me Howard. Please tell me about yourself." Dr. Dire slowly lowered himself into the remaining chair and opened his clipboard on the desk. "Do you mind if I take notes while we talk?"

"Not at all, Howard," replied XTRA, as he crouched into his chair. "Firstly, you should know that this form you see is not my actual form. I am piloting this from my ship, which remains in orbit. This body was genetically engineered for your planet's atmosphere to allow us to communicate, though at its core it is all holographically projected energy fields, and, unfortunately, the whole unit has a short life expectancy."

"Fascinating. Your culture must be very advanced indeed, to be able to create life."

XTRA paused and tilted his head slightly. Speaking slowly, he replied, "Create life?"

"Why yes, you have genetically engineered a living organism, an *alien* organism of your own species at that, which enables you to visit other planets in a body suitable to that atmosphere."

"I have done nothing more than incubate living cells genetically encoded to multiply into a specific predetermined form. A mother of any species on your planet does the exact same thing. Surely you agree that there is a difference between generating a body and creating life?"

Howard considered the statement briefly before chuckling, "XTRA, certainly you are not suggesting that life is separate from matter?"

XTRA gave a short nod. "Howard, certainly you are not suggesting that matter is the source of life?" The two stared at each other with blank expressions momentarily until XTRA continued, "Are you genuinely speaking as the scientific dignitary of Earth, Howard?"

Dr. Dire couldn't help but note the tone in XTRA's voice. "I am a professor emeritus with three PhDs. I am certainly qualified to speak on behalf of the scientific body of Earth."

"Is it also the opinion of the scientific body of Earth that matter is the source of life?"

Dr. Dire rolled his eyes and exclaimed, "XTRA, this is our planet's first known encounter with a species that has come from another planet. Surely you have not travelled all this way to discuss the nature of consciousness?"

XTRA leaned back into his chair. "I have contacted your planet because we have come to understand that your scientists plan to send a probe to our solar system called Starshot. We understand the final design and construct of this probe is still pending, and, once launched, it will take twenty years before it will even reach our star system, and five more years before you receive the data the probe will collect."

Dr. Dire dropped his pen onto the pad and leaned back into his chair, his hand slowly rising to cup his jaw. Extending a finger, he lightly stroked his grey mustache. "Go on."



"Rather than sitting idly while you designed and implemented your research, my planet thought it best to make contact with yours to discern if it was worth establishing open communication. Given your previous statement, if you are speaking on behalf of the scientific body of Earth, I do not consider open communication with your planet encouraging."

"And what, pray tell, makes you say that?"

XTRA folded his hands at his lap and fixed his gaze on Dr. Dire. "First, please explain to me Howard, your belief that matter is the source of life."

Dr. Dire chuckled as he replied, "XTRA you have got to be joking."

XTRA's face remained grave. "I assure you I am not."

Dr. Dire leaned forward over the steel table, cupping his hands together as he spoke. "My planet's scientific community conducts controlled experiments to establish facts. Not one of these controlled experiments has revealed an iota of consciousness separate from matter. It is simply a dream. And I must say that it surprises me your planet values such a fantasy."

XTRA's face remained stern. "I'm sorry Howard, but you have not actually answered my question. I am cognisant of your planet's method of experiment. Perhaps I should rephrase my question to extract a more detailed answer."

>>



XTRA leaned forward and smiled slightly as he continued. “With reference to your comment that matter is the source of life, please explain the difference between a body which was living, but is now dead.”

Dr. Dire paused as he considered the question. XTRA’s smile receded as he filled the silence. “Molecularly, there is no difference. All the materials that constituted the body are still complete, and yet the subjective observer, the Life within the body, is not present. This phenomenon can be observed by any intelligent organism on your planet including the members of your scientific community.”

Dr. Dire tilted his head slightly as he considered XTRA’s statement. Leaning back, he slowly raised his arms to cross at his chest. “Please get to your point, XTRA.”

“The exploration of science is the pursuit to understand the relationship between the observer, the living consciousness residing within the body, and the observed universe around it. Your simplistic reduction of life to nothing but matter fails to address the subjective experience of the individual.”

XTRA tilted his head in line with Dr. Dire’s. “If you presume that science can only be applied to observe the interaction of matter with matter, then your experiments will never reveal the cause for a child’s favourite colour, or a scientist’s love for opera.”

Dr. Dire cleared his voice and steadied his nerves. “I do not see what this has to do with opening a channel of communication between our two planets.”

“We have observed over recent decades that your scientific research has not been fueled by a motivation to understand life but, on the contrary, to explain life away in the pursuit of exploiting matter.” XTRA gave a small smile and continued, “If your life is nothing but matter, and matter is under my control to experiment, then it’s a short leap in logic to say that your life is under my control.”

“Now see here, XTRA!” Dr. Dire exclaimed, his arms dropping to the table. “The nature of our research...”

“Is not wanted on my planet,” XTRA interjected, his smile disappearing. “Your science is damaging your planet because of your wilful neglect of the true nature of life. Life is greater than matter, and cannot be analysed by one of your controlled experiments because it is simply not under your control.”

XTRA leaned forward: “Dr. Howard S. Dire, the citizens of my planet, every single species, are not interested in becoming a controlled experiment, nor do we want you to exploit our planet as you do your own. Please turn your gaze elsewhere.” XTRA’s small smile returned to his face. “I would suggest you begin by turning your scientific eye inwards.”

Dr. Dire’s jaw dropped as he endeavoured to process XTRA’s statements. Gathering his thoughts as quickly as he could, he stammered, “XTRA, what are you saying?”

XTRA stood up quickly. Standing erect, his arms flushed tight at his side, he exclaimed: “I apologise, Howard, this genetically engineered body has a short life expectancy. I trust that we will never see each other again.”

Suddenly the body dropped to the floor, causing Dr. Dire to rise quickly to his feet. Even from his standing position he could conclude there were no signs of life. 🌸



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.



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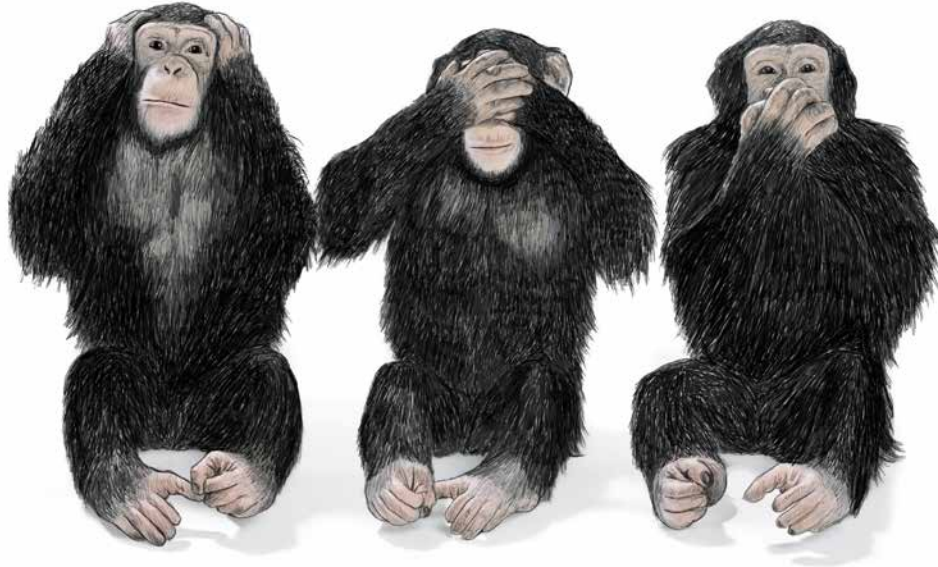
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Ask Me No Questions, I Tell You No Lies

The big questions. Does anyone really know the answers?

Contributor Devamrita Swami

“If there’s one thing I know, it’s that no one knows. . . . I mean, really, . . . no one knows anything for certain. . . .”

Allow me to try and convince you that a monstrous exasperation has swallowed up your life. Deep within, you are frustrated, disappointed with the major dramas, the huge questions in life. These unsatisfied “big-issue” questions are a ghost haunting us, rattling our cage—as much as we try to ignore the ignorance and its effects.

You see, what’s happened is that indirectly we’ve actually signed on as true believers. Clinging to a popular faith, we surrender to a belief that no one really knows the deepest answers to life, so there’s no point in even thinking about the questions.

We religiously submit to just “living life”—getting on with it, seeing what happens—feeling what comes down the pipe. After all, we can only really know that . . . stuff happens, right?

No One Knows

I can tell you about an Auckland girl who was fortunate enough to begin the path of bhakti-yoga, Krishna consciousness, at sixteen. Experienced yogis would say that such an early start indicates she probably is picking up from where she left off in her previous life.

While at secondary school she would question her teachers: “What is the Self? “What is the Ultimate Source?” “What came before any Big Bang?” “Have I lived before and will I live again?”

Her teachers sympathetically replied: “You’re asking these questions because you are a teenager. When you get older and more mature, you’ll realise that such enquiries serve no useful purpose. You’ll simply settle, like all of us do, for living out your life, trying as much as possible to shape it your way.”

Not only do school teachers, shaping our formative years, dutifully preach this “know that no one knows” gospel, but even so-called spiritual books push it.

For example, best-selling New-Age authors such as Thomas Moore can lavish you with daydreams, pipe-dreams, and sky-high pies: “The soul doesn’t want explanations. It wants constant rumination, new answers, interpretations without end, never a final solution to anything. *We never have to have the answers. That’s again the illusion.* The soul doesn’t need that. It can live with ambiguity.”

Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers

Reaching up, however, to the ancient classic yoga texts, particularly the bhakti wisdom, we find they’re

all about asking perfect questions and getting perfect answers. For instance:

“O sages, I have been justly questioned by you. Your questions are worthy because they relate to Lord Krishna and so are of relevance to the world’s welfare. Only questions of this sort are capable of completely satisfying the self.” (Srimad Bhagavatam 1.2.5)

The Srimad Bhagavatam is the expansive graduate study to the prime yoga text Bhagavad Gita. Both, specialising in the yoga of ultimate connection, are storehouses of the most necessary and precious knowledge. And both present us with questions that are as important as their answers.



We spend our waking hours enquiring all about the most temporary and insubstantial affairs—just as the birds in the trees chirp about where is food and reproductive opportunity. Because our questioning is shallow, our lives are terrifyingly superficial, lightweight, skin-deep.

Normally we might think, “All I need are the answers, that’s all I want—let’s get straight to the bottom line, cut to the chase.” But no, on the spiritual platform, on the Krishna conscious plane, the questions are equally as crucial and informative as the answers.

Perfect questions stimulate our appetite for climbing higher, focusing our attention. Perfect answers resolve our issues, filling our head and heart with essential, comprehensive knowledge of the nonmaterial. As the bhakti texts say, “Only questions of this sort are capable of completely satisfying the self.”

Our genuine fulfilment depends on the type of questions we ask. Do a twenty-four hour self-study; keep track of every question you ask during the day and night, no matter how trivial.

You’ll see we indeed can’t live without questioning, but we spend our waking hours enquiring all about the

most temporary and insubstantial affairs—just as the birds in the trees chirp about where is food and reproductive opportunity. Because our questioning is shallow, our lives are terrifyingly superficial, lightweight, skin-deep.

Break Out of Illusion

Our problem is that we lack the ability and knowledge for asking questions that benefit both our real self, the spirit soul, and society. Perfect questions can uplift the whole world, as can do their answers.

We’ve been shafted. Material society has convinced us that asking the big questions is pointless—an exercise in futility. You should just get on with your life—keep yourself busy, intoxicated, and why not both? Live in the moment, embrace the present, lust right now. After all, no one knows the overall, full picture of existence, and our life is just like a temporary blip on a radar screen, appearing and disappearing.

Please consider how society has programmed us to live as if there is no point in trying to solve the mystery of existence—that searching won’t pay the bills. After all is said and done, we’re just a random assemblage of matter here within a cosmos that’s just another random conglomeration of matter.

Maybe, however, you think there’s a bit of spirituality to you, inexplicably thrown into the material mix. So while pushing on with the daily agenda of pleasing the senses, you try not to hurt too many people. Maybe you are even non-carnivorous, out of compassion for animals. Hey, beyond that, who knows? Remember, no one really knows!

The bhakti texts and applied spiritual technology urge us out of our stupor, by spotlighting the pinnacle of enquiry:

“My dear King, your question is glorious because it is very beneficial to all kinds of people. The answer to this question is the prime subject matter for hearing, and it is approved by all transcendentalists.” (Srimad Bhagavatam 2.1.1)

In a true human civilisation, questions and answers leading to Krishna, the unlimitedly all-attractive source of pleasure, are celebrated as the greatest assets. 🌸



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.

Have you ever asked, what's the most amazing thing in the world?

Is it the beauty of nature, a meaningful connection, Egyptian pyramids, or simply the miracle of life itself?

Once, a great king was asked this very question. Closing his eyes in deep contemplation, the king responded:

"The most amazing thing is that although at every moment countless living beings meet with death, everyone still believes that *they* will never die."

This illusion is so powerful that indeed many people never stop to seriously consider the facts: our bodies take birth, age, suffer disease, and ultimately die.

Given this reality, is it really intelligent to strive for happiness through material manipulation?

Even the few who achieve their material dreams, excel in meaningful careers, and enjoy economic success and family life ultimately only set themselves up for incredible suffering. Ironically, the more attached we become to our material acquisitions, the more anguish we will experience. Imagine the pain of being ripped away from all the objects of our affection at death . . .

Careful now, we don't want you thinking about life too deeply!

If everyone stopped to ponder these essential topics, who would be left to continue the vital activities of modern life? Who would be left to waste money in malls, cheer on sports teams, or pursue alcohol-fuelled hook-ups in seedy nightclubs?

Society's Veil

By concealing many of life's miseries from public view, society expertly maintains the illusion that everything is okay. For example, because New Zealand's healthcare system is relatively robust, most medical emergencies are treated in hospitals. As such, rarely does anyone, except medical staff, confront life and death scenarios capable of stimulating deep reflection.

I'm not suggesting that we turf sick patients onto the streets for general inspection. But since so many unpleasant events are minimised or removed from the public domain, so easily are we lulled to sleep. Complacently smug, we slumber in false confidence. Slurping down a mochaccino, we muse that life's just fine. When asked how we are, we confidently reply with Kiwi classics such as "All good, bro," "A box of birds," "Sweet as," and "She'll be right, mate."

But will she?

By indulging in such artificial optimism, we set ourselves up for a very rude awakening. When the curtains of illusion are suddenly pulled back, what will we do then?

Accident and Emergency

One Sunday afternoon an elderly lady arrives at the hospital, followed by a stream of concerned relatives. Painkillers haven't helped the mild lower back pain she has suffered for 24 hours.

Picking up her notes, I call Mrs. Brown in for consultation. I take a careful history, perform a thorough physical examination, and order initial investigations. I arrive at a provisional diagnosis of renal colic (pain due to kidney stones). Satisfied with the initial management of the case, I order a confirmatory CT scan and confidently head to the canteen.



Crunch Time

Part One: A Tale From the Emergency Room

Contributor Caitanya Vihara

It's been a long shift and I'm looking forward to a bite to eat. Unpacking my rucksack, I take out my lunchbox filled with tasty Krishna food. Lunchtime at last! Better late than never! But as soon as I sit down and lift my fork, the inevitable happens. My pager goes off:

"Beep, beep, beep! Emergency! Emergency! Report to resuscitation immediately!"

Abandoning my lunchbox, I race back to the department. A nurse meets me. "You won't believe what that scan showed, doctor. Please come quickly!"

Arriving in the resuscitation suite, I bring up the CT image on the computer. The scan shows that Mrs. Brown does not have a kidney stone. She has a rapidly rupturing abdominal aortic aneurysm, commonly referred to as a "Triple A" in medical circles.

AAA

The large artery that curves down from the heart and supplies most of the body with blood is called the aorta. After passing through the thorax, the artery traverses the abdominal region, supplying essential organs with oxygen-rich blood. Although still a primary artery, at this point, the diameter of the abdominal aorta typically measures about **2cm** in an average adult. But Mrs. Brown's measured **10cm** and was about to rupture! Needless to say, the odds of surviving a ruptured aorta are next to nil.

We were in a race against the clock. At any moment the vessel could burst leading to circulatory collapse (shock) and imminent cardiac arrest. Preparing Mrs. Brown for resuscitation, my colleagues inserted drips, suspended bags of fluids, and drew up adrenaline

We tottered on the brink of life and death. The veil of illusion had been raised, exposing the grim reality of this temporary, material world.

injections while I called the surgical team. The patient's only chance of survival now lay in prompt surgical intervention.

Moments later, the doors swung open and in strode Mr. Jones—a tall, middle-aged Scot with piercing blue eyes. Shaking my hand, he thanked me for the referral before approaching Mrs. Brown and her family. Expressionless, Mr. Jones spoke as follows:

"Hello Mrs. Brown. My name is Mr. Jones and I'm the consultant vascular surgeon on call today. Your scan shows that your aorta is rupturing and could burst at any moment. In some cases we can repair or replace the damaged vessel but your case is so severe that even if we had a prosthetic long enough to replace the aneurysm (which we don't) the operation would take at least ten hours. Given your age and general health, you would never survive such an operation. As such, there is no question of us attempting to intervene surgically today. You probably have only minutes left to live. I'm sorry we can't help you. Goodbye."

Mr. Jones swept out as quickly as he had entered. Sometimes it is said that silence can be deafening or that you can cut an atmosphere with a knife. Never before had these clichés been so palpable. The devastating news had plunged everyone into an ocean of shock.

Unveiling

This was one of the most intense moments I had ever experienced. Medical staff, the patient, and her relatives were all absorbed in trying to comprehend the heavy, unpalatable truth.

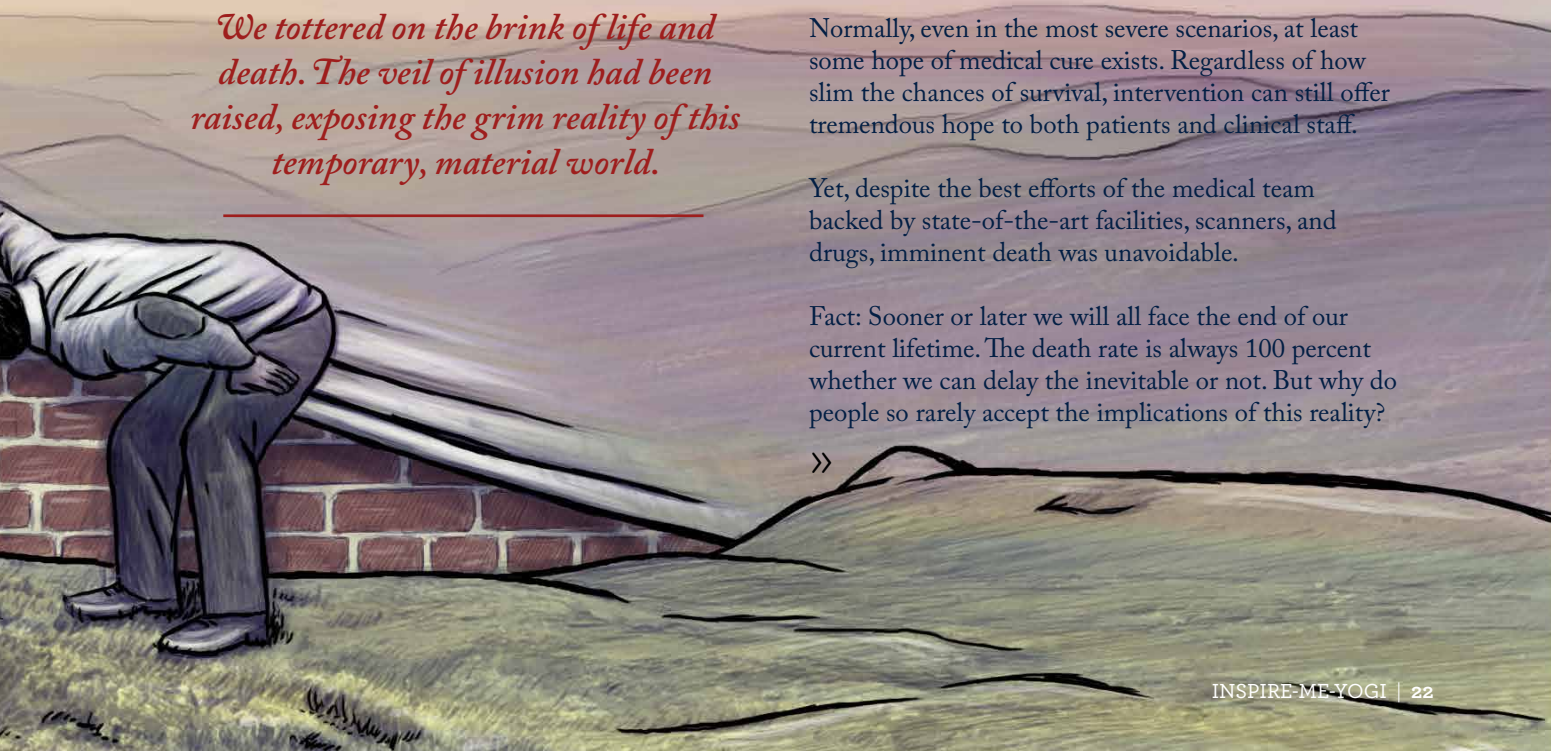
We tottered on the brink of life and death. The veil of illusion had been raised, exposing the grim reality of this temporary, material world.

Normally, even in the most severe scenarios, at least some hope of medical cure exists. Regardless of how slim the chances of survival, intervention can still offer tremendous hope to both patients and clinical staff.

Yet, despite the best efforts of the medical team backed by state-of-the-art facilities, scanners, and drugs, imminent death was unavoidable.

Fact: Sooner or later we will all face the end of our current lifetime. The death rate is always 100 percent whether we can delay the inevitable or not. But why do people so rarely accept the implications of this reality?

>>



Now, no one could do anything to prevent Mrs. Brown from leaving her body and everyone openly knew it. We were stunned, crushed by the ruthless brutality of nature. Time froze. Suspended in animation, no one moved or even breathed.

Finally, Mrs. Brown's pitiful voice broke the long silence.

"But I don't *feel* like I'm dying!"

What could anyone say?

A Cup of Tea

After another millennium of anguished silence, a young nurse stepped forward. Inspired to at least offer something and break the ice, she asked Mrs. Brown:

"Do you fancy a cup of tea, love?"

I couldn't believe my ears . . .

This lady is about to die and all you can offer is a cup of tea? I thought, amazed to hear such a mundane suggestion at such a crucial moment.

As if the nurse's question was the cue for the curtain of illusion to fall back down, another nurse then suggested "popping the radio on to hear some nice songs," and suddenly everyone began acting as if nothing had happened and everything was fine. I felt the collective realisation we had just experienced shatter into a thousand pieces. Busying themselves with futile, routine tasks, the clinical team returned to normal activities, seemingly forgetting the powerful insights offered to them only moments before.

Mrs. Brown passed away over a cup of tea and biscuits a short while later.

Inwardly, the case continued to affect me deeply. What shocked me most was not the open admission of our inability to help Mrs. Brown physically, but the ignorance of how to help Mrs. Brown spiritually. The lack of medical options should have prompted an increased level of care for the soul, the eternal source of consciousness, who was still within the body of Mrs. Brown at that point. Instead, lacking knowledge of what actually happens at the time of death, everyone simply reverted to the superficial mode of "everything's okay."

Knowledge, Freedom, and Happiness

Without genuine spiritual knowledge and insight, most living beings leave this world miserable and afraid. People often ask me why a doctor would become a monk. In response, I have to explain that I have seen too many people leave their bodies in ignorance. Physical medical aid does not help the eternal

soul within the body. Monks also care for people, but on a much deeper level. By helping and guiding people to understand who they are, what they are part of, and how to act in relation to the source of existence, Krishna, the disease of material existence is destroyed at its root.

As Krishna explains in his initial advice in Bhagavad Gita:

"Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you . . . nor in the future shall any of us cease to be." (2.12)

"As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this perishable body, from childhood to youth to old age, the eternal soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change." (2.13)

Death, the soul's exit from the temporary material body, is sure to come. The particular disease or circumstance that forces us, the spirit soul within, to leave the physical body is, in the highest sense, irrelevant. What makes all the difference, however, is knowledge. Fear implies ignorance. Those who know their spiritual identity, scientifically convinced of their separate and continued existence apart from the body, do not lament at the time of death. Instead, advanced practitioners of Krishna consciousness see it as a time to rejoice. At long last, the qualified soul is liberated from the miserable conditions and limitations of material life. This is why Krishna confirms that the greatest wealth a person can achieve is not physical health or longevity, but spiritual understanding.

Krishna also states:

"In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge. Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism. And one who has become accomplished in the practice of Krishna consciousness enjoys this knowledge within himself in due course of time." (Bhagavad Gita 4.38)

Real human culture should expose, rather than conceal, just how much unnecessary suffering the soul undergoes, imprisoned within the material body; individual and collective spiritual resuscitation is the greatest need of the day. Indeed, the ultimate medical intervention is that which revives our spiritual identity and eternal loving relationship with Krishna, the Supreme Soul. In this way, the expert spiritual doctor offers unlimited happiness to his patients.

What could be better than that? 🌸

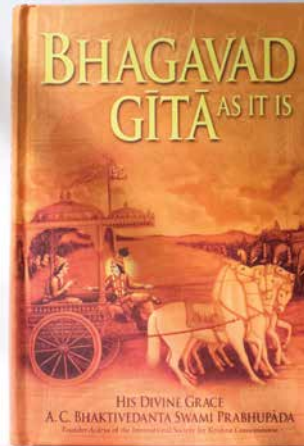


Bhakti yogi and medical doctor, Caitanya Vihara, moved to NZ from the UK eight years ago. Caitanya's interest in spirituality was ignited by his first visit to India in 2006, when he ventured into the Himalayas. From 2010-2016 he lived as a monk, dedicating himself to the study and practice of Krishna consciousness. He relishes sharing spiritual knowledge with others.

ENOUGH! recommends...

The Teachings of His Divine Grace
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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



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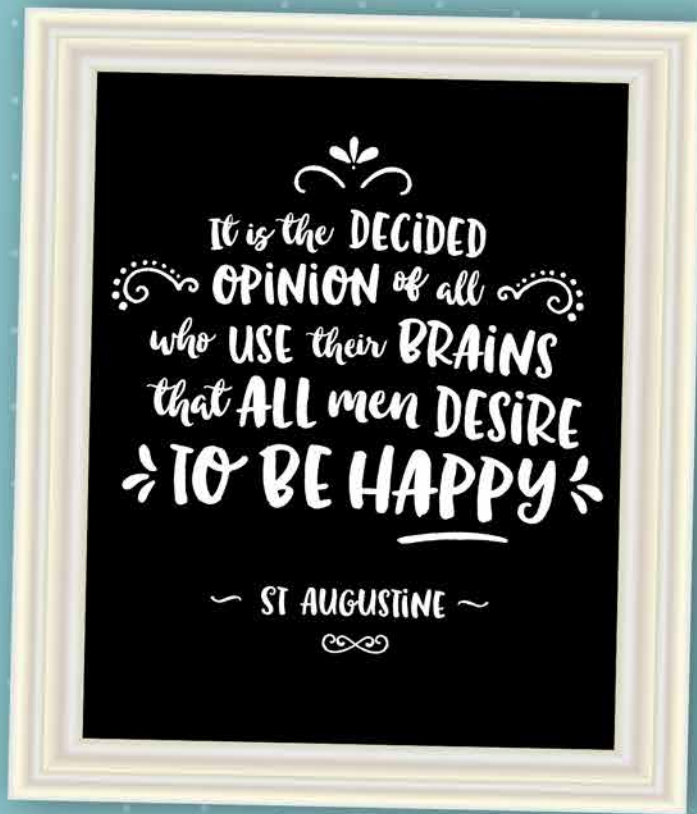
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~ PORN & ~ INFORMATION-AGE = Sainthood =

Contributor Sachi Dulal





It all started so innocently.

In our final school year, we decided to gift a friend a pornographic DVD for his birthday. Visiting a shop in the oldest market in town, we secured the gift, a deluxe-quality product imported straight from palm-lined sunny southern California.

This was urban India in the 1990s, when teenagers couldn't go hunting for entertainment on the back of the mighty beast known as "broadband." Indian teenage salvation, at the time, lay squarely in the hands of the American adult entertainment industry.

The industry didn't disappoint. It's not a hard job making a petty, genital-worshipping world appear attractive when your clientele is afflicted with a deadly combination of curiosity and lust, the job is made much easier.

A New Threat to Virility

Pornographic material shows up in human cultures throughout recorded history. But the *quality* and *quantity* of pornography in twenty-first century human culture puts us in unprecedented territory. And this is what unprecedented looks like:

- Every second, there are approximately 28,258 internet users viewing pornography.
- Every day, there are approximately 116,000 online searches for child pornography.
- Americans rent more than 800 million pornographic videos and DVDs every year (about one in five of all rented movies is porn), and the 11,000 porn films shot annually far outpaces Hollywood's yearly slate of 400.¹

¹These statistics are taken from the 2010 The Social Costs of Pornography report. The use of porn has in the last six years steadily grown.

This porn inundation has bequeathed a social legacy. A legacy that celebrates humiliating women and children, and normalising sexual aggression. *The Social Costs of Pornography: A Statement of Findings and Recommendations*, a multidisciplinary, academic report sponsored by the Princeton University-based Witherspoon Institute, explores the devastating social impact of this legacy. The American Psychiatric Association has also released diagnostic guidelines that identify pornography addiction as a form of "hypersexual disorder" deserving serious study and treatment.

But an entirely unexpected enemy has launched the latest attack on porn: the very group the porn industry has so diligently served. In a delicate twist of irony, large numbers of internet-age men who grew up with free and unlimited access to online pornography are sexually dysfunctional, and they are blaming the porn industry for their woe.

"Porn and the Threat to Virility," a feature article in the April 2016 issue of *Time* magazine, discusses this latest addition to the list of human crises. Technically called *porn-induced erectile dysfunction* (PIED), it is supposed that regular users of porn have their brains moulded in such a way that they can no longer be stimulated by real persons but only by pornographic fantasies.

Just when you think that the world can't get any madder, it always does.

Sex Education: The Kind You Won't Get in School

Having begun with porn, we inevitably end up with sex.

The secular West, via popular media, champions the idea that in a world stripped of cultural idiosyncrasies and religious zealots, sexual expression can, and *should*, be freed from all restraints save one: all parties involved should consent to the joyride.

All things considered, I should have swallowed this idea. But events dictated otherwise. At an age when my brain was still outgrowing its adolescent synapses, I stumbled upon some timeless spiritual wisdom.

The body, genuine spiritualists assert, delivers a ton of pain. If you can't yet validate this fact through your own experience, then visit your local hospital.

»

True, the body does deliver some good times. But compared to the ton of pain it can dish out, it gives only a pinch of pleasure. It would be one thing if the body's ratio of pleasure to pain remained constant. But it doesn't.

We inhabit a world where everyone and everything bows down to the rule of *kala-chakra* (the wheel of time). As the *kala-chakra* revolves, and our bodies dwindle and deteriorate, the pinch of pleasure we derive from our body grows smaller. Meanwhile, ulcers grow, joints stiffen, heart beats falter, kidneys fail, and cancers ravage.

Calmly accepting that the revolving wheel of time sabotages our pleasure-pursuit, do we renounce the hunt for sensual gratification? Of course not. The power of conditioning doesn't allow us to. Through his experiments with dogs, Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov has alerted moderns about this power. Whenever he gave food to his dogs, he also rang a bell. After repeating this a number of times, he rang the bell on its own. The bell, on its own, now caused the dogs to salivate.

Just as Pavlov conditioned his dogs to associate food with the sound of a bell, decades of trying to seek pleasure through the body conditions us to associate the pleasure-pursuit with the body. This conditioning *locks* us into chewing what has already been thoroughly chewed. Injected with Botox, invigorated by Viagra, and instigated by sex shops, we continue the struggle to squeeze out precious drops of gratification from the body.

The struggle ends both badly and bitterly. Our bodies, broken by the mighty assault of time, and wrenched from our objects of desire, face death - uncertain, exhausted, and torn by the regret that *only if* we had played the game differently, that prized jewel of satisfaction would have been ours.

The Logic of Abstinence

In my early twenties, inspired by spiritual wisdom, I intuited that abstinence was the key to freedom from suffering. A few years later, while studying the spiritual classic Srimad Bhagavatam, I discovered the argument that confirmed my intuition.

The Bhagavatam tells us that we are eternal spiritual beings. But influenced by ignorance, we identify with our ever-changing mortal body instead. The consequence: we think that by experiencing pleasurable bodily sensations *we* will be happy. Consequently, we dive head-long into carnal delights.



True, the body does deliver some good times. But compared to the ton of pain it can dish out, it gives only a pinch of pleasure.

The more we enjoy carnal delights, the more we become locked into pursuing fleeting pleasurable bodily sensations. The more we pursue fleeting bodily sensations, the more we reinforce the illusion that our body is a source of pleasure.

And the more we reinforce the illusion that our body is a source of pleasure, the more we are unwilling to face reality: the body delivers much more pain than pleasure. Consequently, when old age and death comes knocking on our door, we are not just unprepared—we are terrified. Totally unaware of our eternal spiritual identity, all we are aware of is our dying, decaying, and deteriorating body.

This leads the Bhagavatam to deliver some sobering advice:

Restrict indulgence in sex. Invest your time in **rediscovering** your eternal spiritual identity instead.

In a society predominated by calm, contemplative logic, this advice is well received. In a society obsessed with stormy, irrational carnality, it isn't.

No, Abstinence is Not Equal to Repression

Knowing *why* we should restrict our indulgence in sex is one thing. Knowing *how* to restrict our indulgence in sex is another.

Is stoic and strenuous effort sufficient to transcend the storm of sexual desire? Throughout my late teens, it certainly wasn't. History shows that hormonally driven teenagers are not the only ones who are tossed about by the waves of sexual desire. Even ascetics are often overcome by the storm of irrational passions.

Seeing no way to prevent myself from becoming a victim of irrational carnality, I became increasingly despondent and desperate. I began to pray for some guidance, some light, some wisdom.

The universe responded by offering a benediction: I received the books of the celebrated spiritual visionary A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. In his Bhagavad Gita As It Is (3.37), Srila Prabhupada offers this unique insight into the origin of lust:

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When a living entity comes in contact with the material creation, his eternal love for Krishna is transformed into lust.

Echoing a distinguished lineage of exemplary bhakti-yogis, Srila Prabhupada tells us that it is futile to try to negate the energy of lust because it is integral to whom we are. We are eternal spiritual beings who have an irrevocable loving relationship with Krishna, the Supreme Spiritual Being. But the nature of love is that it is freely given. Thus, the rebellious living entities who desire to seek pleasure outside of their eternal loving relationship with the Supreme are allowed to do so. They are placed in a state of spiritual amnesia (*maya*), in temporary material machines (bodies), in the material reality.

Maya erases our memory of our eternal spiritual identity and influences us to identify with our temporary material bodies. The consequence: our original love for the Supreme distortedly manifests through the screen of the material body as lust—the desire to control and enjoy matter.

Seeking to fulfil our lust, we continue to transmigrate from one body to another, rotating in *samsara*—the cycle of repeated birth and death. We can break free from this cycle not by denying lust, but by renovating the pure form of lust. Therefore, instead of trying to *repress* the energy of lust, bhakti-yoga offers the education and the technology to *transform* lust back into the real thing: the love Supreme.

human body
like a JUNCTION
use its desire
MINDLESS
SUAL
ification
← EXISTS



with our
DESIRE for
enlightenment



Humans Rising

In the human body, which is like a junction, we get an unprecedented opportunity to enter the bhakti university. A junction is where two or more things meet or join. The human body is like a junction because its desire for mindless sensual gratification co-exists with our desire for enlightenment.

This unique status of the human body results in a battle between irrational carnality and rational wisdom, and this battle is recorded in every human culture. Saints in the bhakti tradition say that this battle is in fact the battle to transform lust into love of God. They claim that human energy finds its intended purpose when we enter this battlefield. In the premier bhakti text, *Srimad Bhagavatam* (1.5.19), the spiritual luminary Narada reveals why:

“Even though a bhakti-yogi sometimes falls under the sway of lust, she certainly does not undergo material existence like others, because a person who has once tasted the unsurpassable happiness of Krishna consciousness can do nothing but remember that ecstasy again and again.”

Even the undergraduates in bhakti-yoga, Narada tells us, can access the most rarefied form of non-material happiness: the happiness of reviving our relationship with Krishna. Experiencing an iota of this happiness forever alters our vision of the happiness menu. We begin to see gratification derived from the material body and mind for what it is: stale and sterile.

Protected by the guardians of secular society, the porn merchants of the world are working hard to ensure that we remain stuck firmly in the zone of the stale and the sterile; to ensure that we continue worshipping dying, decaying material bodies as the fount of pleasure. This global porn assault has obscured the light of reason and has sabotaged the great human quest to access nonmaterial happiness.

Sheltered and transformed by bhakti knowledge and practice, a global community of spiritual warriors have recovered from this assault, and regained their existential right to experience spiritual pleasure—pleasure immune to the ravages of time. They are inviting us to join their party.

For the sake of happiness, I hope you will. 🌸



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.

Glowering hotly, the flight attendant's professional demeanor turns to disgust. "I'm not speaking Russian! I'm speaking Ukrainian, the real language of my own country!" he angrily dismisses me.

The passengers on this flight to Kiev are mostly Ukrainian nationals, so it's only natural that the flight attendant would greet me using his native tongue. Forgetting the painful ethnic and political strife rupturing this country, I had carelessly replied in English that I understand very little Russian. Perhaps this is a common mistake for American visitors to Eastern Europe.

Who can blame the attendant for his frustration? How would he know of an alternative to disliking or fearing people from other countries? Xenophobia is increasing all over the world. As refugees from war-torn African and Middle Eastern countries migrate throughout Europe, anti-immigrant opposition arises. Fear of terrorism can evolve into nationalist extremism, repeating the volatile

tensions that preceded the First and Second World Wars. Searching for a better tomorrow, few people can recognise that no amount of material development or legislation will resolve the political and ethnic conflicts of today. At their root is an individual and collective misunderstanding of who we really are.

The Root of Ignorance

According to the wisdom of bhakti-yoga, the original science of consciousness, the disease of ignorance arises from misidentifying with a short-lived human body. This false identification separates our peoples and nations. We first become attached to our physical body, to our family, then to our community or nation—seeing our nation as distinct from others. Some may identify with humanity in general, but even this type of broad-minded humanism still perpetuates the same hallucination, the illusion that we are these temporary material identities and that everything related to these bodies is ours. But bhakti

ART BY ARI ALEXANDER FOLMAN

knowledge offers the understanding that our true identity is beyond any social or nationalistic notion—we are all nonmaterial beings of an unending, spiritual nature.

Within this lifetime, we travel from one bodily phase to another, traversing a child's body, an adolescent body, a middle-aged body, then finally an old body. Just as the flags of nations change with each recycled revolution or fresh political upheaval, so too does the cultural banner of a physical body change from one ethnicity to another when its term is inevitably exhausted. According to bhakti-yoga knowledge, death is the portal to another birth, in the next body.

Real Solutions for Real World Problems

The flight attendant's frustration brought back fond memories of my previous visit to Ukraine. The many Krishna conscious, bhakti-yoga practitioners there inspired me with great hope and encouragement.

Visiting Crimea in 2013, my wife and I joined a week-long bhakti-yoga festival. Thirteen thousand joyful Hare Krishnas from the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) had gathered at a seaside town to join in *kirtan* (the shared experience of mantra meditation), to dance, feast, and participate in a celebration of community that transcends ethnic and political disputes. There we witnessed spiritual technology in action, as people of diverse cultures came together to communicate openly about real-world problems and solutions. Spiritual seekers from Europe, including five thousand from Russia, were also among the throngs invigorated by the most mature and comprehensive knowledge in society, the knowledge of bhakti.

However, the festivities contrasted starkly with the scenes of violence and protest that began in Kiev only one month later. The conflict in Ukraine escalated into the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and war in the eastern half of Ukraine. To this day, the ethnic battles

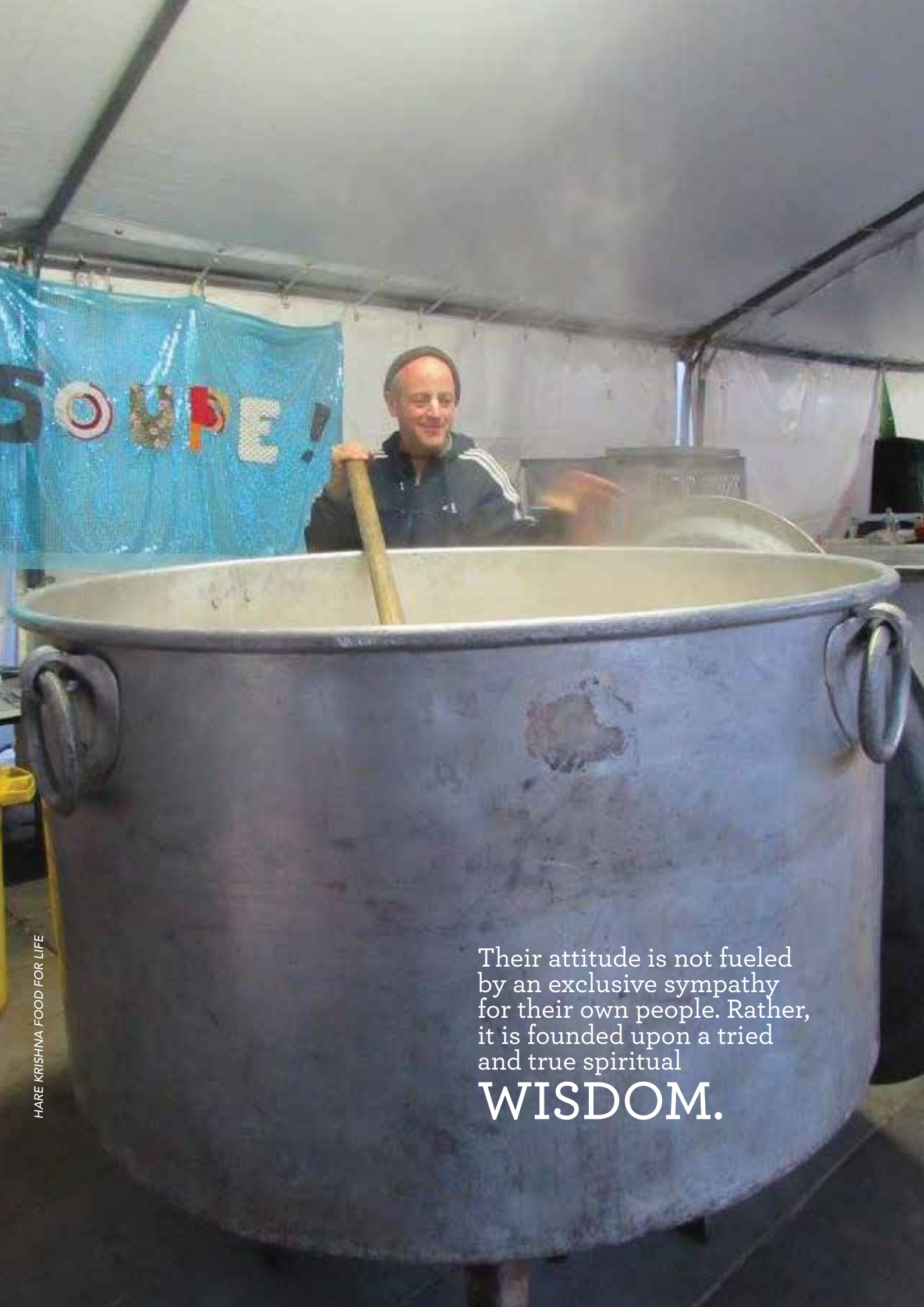
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WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS

Go Beyond Artificial Unity with an Ultimate Act of Peace

Contributor Yashodeva





HARE KRISHNA FOOD FOR LIFE

Their attitude is not fueled by an exclusive sympathy for their own people. Rather, it is founded upon a tried and true spiritual

WISDOM.

To recognize the universal brotherhood of all living beings as the most prominent social reality is the symptom of genuine spiritual understanding.

continue, resulting in more than nine thousand deaths and 1.4 million internally displaced Ukrainians. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), by the end of 2014, conflict and violence forced 38 million people worldwide to flee their homes.

Although the warring has devastated the eastern half of the country, and unsettled troubled families and innocent civilians, Ukraine is still a hotbed of bhakti culture. The bhakti-yogis living in the warzone have responded by opening a branch of the world's largest non-profit vegetarian food relief charity and building a shelter for refugees.

The attitude of the Ukrainian Hare Krishnas is not fueled by an exclusive sympathy for their own people. Rather, it is founded upon a tried and true spiritual wisdom.

Common Foe or Common Friend?

How does bhakti knowledge resolve the ethnic strife that fractures societies worldwide? The bhakti-yoga texts present a science of consciousness with universal application, even in the field of sociology and politics. The Bhagavad Gita, the most comprehensive of these texts, helps us understand the quality and inevitable outcome of people's social policies, by analysing their knowledge. Here, Krishna, the Supreme Being, says that we gain the most wholesome knowledge when we see an undivided spiritual nature in all living beings, even though they may be categorised according to different races, nationalities—or even species. Conversely, the knowledge that causes a person to see a different type of living being in every different body is the knowledge that breeds quarrel and contempt. (B.G. 18.21)

Politicians often think that a common foe can unite their nation, but Bhagavad Gita goes far beyond such artificial unity. Krishna says in the Gita, “A person attains peace by understanding Me to be the well-wishing friend of all living beings.” (5.29) From the greatest common friend comes the greatest unity. This is the practice and lasting contribution of bhakti-yoga: to share allegiance with the central hub of all existence, the Absolute Reality, and origin of consciousness, Krishna.

Bhakti is a culture of knowledge that teaches us not just to tolerate the racial, religious, or political differences

among communities, but rather to see that these differences are superficial and temporary. To recognise the universal brotherhood of all living beings as the most prominent social reality is the symptom of genuine spiritual understanding—and that understanding is the most dire need for the next generation of this world's leaders. We need a generation of thoughtful people who are solution-focused, who can analyse human problems and comprehend that those problems are never really solved on the same materialistic level that gave rise to them.

The knowledge of bhakti or Krishna consciousness can provide real peace. Lacking a class of leaders who can uplift the people with applied spiritual knowledge, we're fated to watch the same old dramas replayed on the world stage—with no hope for a second act, or even an intermission. We'll see societies rise to prominence—capturing the world's attention—then bluster, stumble, and fall victim to the same crippling tragedies as their predecessors. Restructuring and revolution, autocracy and democracy, charismatic leaders and disparaging despots will come and go like passing seasons while the climate of ignorance remains unresolved.

The next act of the human drama will be a chorus of spiritually progressive people. Their contribution to the peace and welfare of the world is the genuine wisdom that drives away the illusion of trivial disparity. The Hare Krishnas are working tirelessly to make that wisdom culture available to everyone. Let's take advantage of this wisdom and help dissolve the prejudice dividing the world. 🌸



Yashodeva is an American expat with a background in culinary arts and has recently studied Ayurveda. He has spent several years learning about bhakti-yoga, in New Zealand and abroad. Now in Australia, he makes a living on good food and conversation.

Self-Enhancement

Our real self doesn't need enhancement

Contributor Giselle

We often hear the saying, “the older the wiser” or “old age brings realised knowledge,” but are greying hair, wrinkles, frown lines and worn-out skin really the qualifications of wisdom? Everyday, things wear out. Computer software, food, clothes, smartphones, music, furniture, homes, and gardens – all become outdated after some time. It’s only natural that our material bodies wear out too. Yet, everywhere we look, messages to “enhance” our body bombard us. “Hide” this part, “flaunt” another, “cover” this, and “replace” that. Knowing we are aging, why do we strive to hide the natural effects of time? Where is the wisdom in that? We’re all getting older, but are we really getting any wiser? What if we could enhance not our short-lived body, but our consciousness? Let’s talk self-enhancement.

Self-Enhancement Effect

Psychologists describe the *self-enhancement effect* as the tendency for people to deprecate memories of their former selves to enhance their present appearance. For example, if someone shows me a picture of myself from three years ago and then a recent picture from three weeks ago, I am more likely to degrade the older version so that my current self is less affected. We may also experience the self-enhancement effect when we put others down, so as to promote ourselves more. But, according to psychologists, when we do this, we put ourselves down as well.

In a study by psychologists Michael Ross and Anne Wilson, a group of middle-aged participants were asked to rate their social skills, common sense, and self-confidence levels on a timeline.¹ The results indicated that participants considered their skills were steadily improving with age, and their skill set was superior to that of their peers. In another experiment, the researchers manipulated the level at which people would criticise their former selves by describing the same point in time as either recent or far away. The more distant a memory of our self appears, the more comfortable we are at putting down that self.

Always seeking to feel satisfied with our personal achievements, we pull memories of success closer to the present and push failure away, constantly manipulating our memory of time.

Not only do we assign failure to the past, we simultaneously pull personal glories and achievements towards the present. In another experiment, students reflected on a course from the previous semester, in which they received their best grade, and a course in which they

received their worst grade.² On a scale from “feels like yesterday” to “feels far away,” most participants rated the course in which they received their best grade as feeling significantly closer to the present than the course with their worst grade, despite all the courses having taken place in the same semester.

Always seeking to feel satisfied with our personal achievements, we pull memories of success closer to the present and push failure away, constantly manipulating our memory of time.

Activating our Potential

Memories are extremely prone to defect, social influence, and degradation over time. But in the case of our own self, skill sets, and personal experiences, wouldn’t we expect our memories to be the most reliable? Why would we lie about, or to, our own self? Then again, why would we want to think we are degrading with time, or merely remaining constant? Perhaps the illusion of the ever-enhancing self reflects a core desire in everyone – the desire for self-realisation.

The dictionary defines self-realisation as the “fulfilment of one’s potential.” No one can deny that every person on the planet wants to achieve in life, and feel some success and happiness. To “self-realise” means to become the best version of our “self” we can possibly be. People try to realise this potential in so many ways—through sports, academia, social media, social gatherings, creative arts, music, or a career, but achieving highly in some area or another requires knowledge of who we are and what we’re good at. We must know where our potential lies. This means understanding the real self.

How can we identify our unique potential? Are we all born with an equal chance of becoming a famous athlete, musician, or scientist, or are some people naturally more gifted than others? Bhakti-yoga science teaches that although one person may be gifted by birth with certain talents or skills, and another may develop

qualities by practice and determination, all these unique attributes relate only to the type of body and mind we are born with. The real self, bhakti experts say, is not limited by the shortcomings of the material body and mind. It is not subject to memory distortions, bodily limitations, mental discomforts, or even time. The real self, as disclosed in the prime yoga text Bhagavad Gita, is eternal:

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

A person’s self-potential is equally as powerful as another’s self-potential, because the soul is not limited by any material conditions. Every embodied soul has an equal potential to be self-realised—the only difference lies in our determination and sincerity to realise it.

Bhakti-yoga is the study and practice of realising the soul’s potential. Because real societal advancement requires compassion for the soul, this full self-realisation provides the highest welfare for society. In *The Journey of Self-Discovery*, compassion is discussed in a conversation between His Divine Grace A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder and teacher of bhakti-yoga in the West, and Dr. Gregory Benford, an associate professor of physics at the University of California at Irvine. Srila Prabhupada says:



“There are so many departments of knowledge: the medical study of the body, the psychological study of the mind, and ultimately spiritual, transcendental knowledge. The body and mind are simply the coverings of the spirit soul, just as this shirt and coat are coverings for your body. If you simply take care of the shirt and coat and neglect the person who is covered by this shirt and coat, do you think that this is advancement of knowledge?... the central point is *self-knowledge, the knowledge of the soul.*”

The dictionary definition of self-realisation is not wrong, but realising our true potential requires real knowledge of the soul. So how can we get this realised knowledge? Perform a Google search? What are the more authentic and practical ways to understand this knowledge?

Sound Shapes Our Consciousness

Real knowledge is evidenced by actions, and the bhakti-yoga practice emphasises knowledge in action. The first step to understanding the true self is through the powerful method of sound. Just as music can change our mood, sound shapes our consciousness too, and consciousness is the symptom of the soul. In this modern age, bhakti wisdom texts recommend chanting the Hare Krishna “maha” mantra, literally the great or powerful mantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. This spiritual sound not only uncovers the true self, but also connects one’s consciousness with the Supreme Consciousness, Krishna.

Real self-realisation begins when we attempt to reconnect with Krishna, the Supreme Person. Hearing the Hare Krishna mantra is the simplest way to rekindle this lost connection dormant within us. By the power of sound, our material existence transforms into a higher reality, and we begin to realise that the soul’s real nature is eternal, blissful, and full of

knowledge. But we cannot realise this with our own faculties. Although we are tiny parts of the unlimited Supreme Whole, and qualitatively the same, we are not the same in quantity and are therefore subject to illusion. As studies of memory demonstrate, our body and mind are limited.

Real self-satisfaction does not require deprecating our former self, or distorting time and memories. We can enhance our current self simply and practically, using the tool of knowledge relayed by bhakti-yoga experts over thousands of years. And, unlike skills we may acquire or talents we may possess, the spiritual skills we gain in bhakti can never be lost nor can they degrade over time, as verified in the Bhagavad Gita:

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

The most dangerous type of fear is not achieving complete satisfaction in our human bodies before we die. But those who are entirely self-realised do not have such a fear, because they are at peace within themselves. Bhakti-yoga steps beyond just this lifetime and gives eternal benefit to the eternal soul. So, with nothing to lose and so much to gain, why not enter the spiritual laboratory and discover your real potential? 🌸

1. Wilson, A.E., & Ross, M. (2001). From chump to champ: People’s appraisals of their earlier and current selves. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80, 572–584.

2. Ross, M., & Wilson, A.E. (2002). It feels like yesterday: Self-esteem, valence of personal past experiences, and judgments of subjective distance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 792–803.



Giselle holds a degree in English literature and psychology. She is enthusiastic and excited about the art, science, and culture of bhakti-yoga. Being creative and inspiring others is what Giselle enjoys most about her immersion in the bhakti world.

Age of Intolerance

The ability to tolerate is the measure of true greatness.

Contributor **Hriman Krishna**

Ever heard a hothead yell cuss words at a bad driver?

Is your amped-up evangelist a target for the middle finger?

Or maybe you were brown-eyed by bare buttocks while strolling the beach?

Whatever the provocation, you probably cannot count the number of times you had to exercise a little tolerance in your life.

What drives you to kick someone in the teeth?

Is it the colour of their skin, a devotion they profess, their economic viability, or just plain old bias and bigotry?

I knew an Indian boy at school called Raj whom

kids labelled the “curry-muncher.” Being a minority amongst rugby jocks and Catholics, bullies ambushed him as they yanked down his pants and beat him pell-mell to the ground. One day it got too much for Raj – at age seventeen he hung himself.

The fact is, whether you think you’re perfect or not, others will have to tolerate your faults. Cute platitudes such as “treat your neighbour as you would like to be treated” are nice. But if you consider the world’s violent history and present social discord, it appears that tolerating your neighbour is not so simple.

Is our society producing a generation who cannot tolerate even the slightest prodding?

Are humans evolving into primates who lack self-control and serenity?

World teacher and scholar His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada points out:

“Small lamps may be agitated by a slight breeze, but the greatest lamp or the greatest illuminating source, the sun, is never moved, even by the greatest hurricane. One’s greatness has to be estimated by one’s ability to tolerate provoking situations.”
(*Krishna, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, chapter 89)

According to ancient yoga texts of India, tolerance is a qualifying characteristic for being human—a virtue lost in times where all we are taught is to live easy like Sunday mornings. It’s all part of being modern—we are to horde possessions and make life cosy, and if life is all about acquiring

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Contributing artist
Ramadas



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Bhagavad-gita 17.8

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*We can fake many things
in this world, but we
cannot fake tolerance.*



comforts, then where is the need for tolerance? Yet this world isn't meant for luxury; it is infected with three kinds of material misery:

1) **Inconvenience arising from other living entities** like the in-laws you wished were dead, or the acute sting of a bloodsucker, or perhaps neighbours who are raucous at midnight;

2) **Inconvenience arising from natural calamities** such as Hurricane Hermine or Typhoon Koppu, and the earthquake that levelled Christchurch;

3) **Inconvenience arising from our body and mind** such as illness, aches and pains, anxiety and depression—now an epidemic in the First World.

Moreover, as time takes its toll, the ultimate inconvenience forces death – as it rips apart everything we sweat for.

We live in a world of faults where tolerance must be cultivated by practising austerity, the voluntary acceptance of inconvenience for a higher purpose. And the greatest purpose? Self-realisation: achieving that divine experience beyond the confines of our material body and mind. Through applied spiritual technology, we can develop our consciousness to the highest level of perception, where the heart is purified, and, attaining eternal blissful life, a person transcends even material happiness.

Srila Prabhupada writes:

“Every human being is meant simply for this austerity and for no other business, because by penance only can one realize his self; and self-realization, not sense gratification, is the business of human life . . . By austerity only

can one get the profit of human life, and not by a polished civilization of animal life.” (Srimad Bhagavatam, 2.9.6 commentary.)

We are accustomed to accepting austerity for material benefits: exotic edibles, a soft spot to sleep, a picturesque house and a perfect mate, what a wildlife pursuit!

When I was seventeen I would wake up at 3.00am and bike five kilometres to work, five days a week. I worked eight-hour shifts, striving through wind and rain, cold and heat—slaving away in a New World bakery to buy a black Honda Civic. Some days I peed blood from exertion, but I thought it was worth the sweat—all to impress the chicks. But the one girl I hooked up with was so hard to please, I felt like punching my car in and kicking her off the front seat! Obviously she did not appreciate what a young guy had to go through to take her out.

The yogis point out, why not endure austerity for a greater benefit—a nonmaterial benefit?

While consumer marketing seeks to invoke illusions of pleasure in an atmosphere of tribulation the sages demonstrate how austerity helps us detach from this world of transitory sensations.

We gain tolerance when we understand that we are not this body, which is composed of matter. Understanding our spiritual identity apart from the

body gives us the capacity to tolerate material interactions. You will see everything in the right perspective, because matter is nonpermanent and such fluctuations are trifling.

Krishna, the master of the yoga system, gives an analysis of successful enlightenment:

1) The ecstasy where one is situated in boundless nonmaterial happiness, perceived by refined sense perception.

2) Being fixed in this transcendental consciousness, and realising no greater gain, such a person is never affected by material illusions.

3) Freed from all miseries, they are never disturbed amongst any agitation.

Taking to the process of enlightenment is requisite if we desire peace and freedom from life's turbulence. Self-realised masters are grounded in their identity as nonmaterial beings of eternity, knowledge, and bliss. Hence, for them, tolerating is easy.

We can fake many things in this world, but we cannot fake tolerance. 🌸



At nineteen years when Hriman 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.

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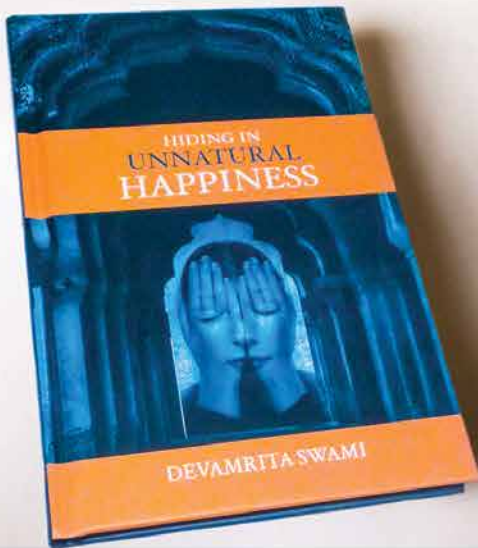


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