

# The Eternal Function of the Soul

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Nitya-dharma

Shrimad Bhaktivedanta Narayan Goswami Maharaj



Lecture spoken originally in Hindi by His Divine Grace Shrimad Bhaktivedanta Narayan Goswami Maharaja, in India, 1964.  
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## About the author

**P**aramahamsa Shrila Bhaktivedanta Narayan Goswami Maharaj was born near the banks of the sacred river Ganges, in Bihar, India, 1921. At an early age, he renounced family life and surrendered his life completely at the lotus feet of his spiritual master, Om Vishnupada Paramahamsa Shrimad Bhakti Pragyan Keshav Maharaj, and to the service of the God. In this way he imbibed the intrinsic secrets of spiritual knowledge in his heart.

For more than forty years he traveled throughout India teaching this transcendental knowledge, and in 1996 he traveled to Western countries to also transmit this sublime spiritual wisdom to all the souls of this world.

He has translated more than ninety sacred texts from Sanskrit and Bengali into Hindi, and more than sixty books into English, illuminating them with his own commentaries. Many of these books have been translated by his followers into the many mayor languages of the world.

He is one of the foremost exponents of the ancient wisdom and transcendental knowledge of India in this era, and was awarded with the title “Spiritual Preceptor of this Age” due to his profound spiritual realization, his immaculate erudition in Vedic literature and Gaudiya Vaishnava scriptures, and his invaluable help in the restoration of India’s ancient, sacred temples and holy places of pilgrimage.

In his advanced age, his only interest in traveling the globe is to awaken the latent spiritual consciousness of those who approach him. By his causeless mercy and his inconceivable spiritual power, he is enlightening the conditioned souls about their eternal spiritual identity, giving them divine vision of the transcendental spiritual plane and bestowing upon them the highest form of love of God.

*The first annual function of  
Shri Indraprastha Gaudiya Temple (1964)*



Standing and speaking this lecture: Shri Shrimad Bhaktivedanta Narayan Maharaj, sitting on the left side: Shrimad Bhakti-Saranga Maharaj, sitting in the center: Shrimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj, sitting on the right: Srimad Bhaktisaurabha Bhaktisar Maharaj.

## Preface

**I**n this book we are presenting a lecture given by India's most prominent spiritual leader and exponent of Vedic knowledge in present times, Shrila Bhaktivedanta Narayan Goswami Maharaj. In this lecture, he presents very important points from the invaluable masterpiece *Jaiva-dharma – The Function of the Soul* by Shrila Bhaktivinod Thakur, another prominent spiritual preceptor, from the nineteenth century.

Herein, Shrila Narayan Maharaj briefly explains the nature of the soul, the eternal occupation of the soul, the temporary religious and occupational duties performed in this world, the supreme goal of all living entities, and most importantly, the process to attain that goal. He also quotes as evidence many different ancient sacred texts from the Vedas, and expertly extracts the essence of all knowledge.

This lecture was spoken in New Delhi, India, in 1964. It was originally spoken in Hindi, in a great assembly of about one thousand people, who were celebrating the annual function of the Indraprastha Gaudiya Math temple. Afterwards, this lecture was published, first in the Hindi language in a magazine called *Bhagavat-patrika* and later translated into English for the magazine *Rays of The Harmonist*.

It has since been carefully adapted to facilitate readers who are new to Sanskrit terminology and to the Vaishnava lineage.

I pray that this book reaches the hands of the sincere souls who are yearning for higher knowledge and deep spiritual truth, and that by reading this text they will begin their journey toward real transcendental love. I also pray that my divine master, Paramahamsa Om Vishnupada Shrila Bhaktivedanta Narayan Goswami Maharaj, be pleased with our attempt to distribute this lecture around the world and thus enlighten us. In this way, we, all, may advance in realization of the eternal function of our soul.



## The story of Indra and Veerohan

The Sanskrit words *nitya-dharma* (eternal, inherent spiritual function) automatically presuppose a performer of that function. This is due to the inseparable connection between the spiritual function itself and its practitioner. The example is given of the inseparable relationship between water and liquidity or between fire and warmth.

Before considering the inborn religion, or inherent occupational duty (*dharma*) of any entity, it is essential to first reflect on the fundamental truth of that entity. Thus, first we consider the truth regarding “I”.

The *Chandogya Upanishad* narrates the history of Indra and Veerohan by which this fundamental principle of the soul can easily be understood.

At the beginning of the golden age, millions of years ago, the entire universe was divided into two camps: the demigods and the demons. The head of the demon party was King Veerohan, and the leader of the demigods was Lord Indra. They rivaled for the attainment of unparalleled happiness and enjoyment. Thus, bearing envy and spite towards each other, they approached the father of the universe, Lord Brahma and asked him how they could fulfill their desires.

Lord Brahma said, “One can easily attain all the enjoyment available in all the worlds and can satisfy one’s every desire when one knows the soul. That soul is free from sin, old age, death, lamentation, hunger, and desire, and his every endeavor and resolve is truthful and just.”

To realize the soul, both Indra and Veerohan resided with Brahma and practiced celibacy for thirty-two years. They then prayed to Lord Brahma to tell them about the soul. Lord Brahma said, “That person (self) you are now seeing with your eyes is the soul, and he is fearless and immortal.”

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<sup>1</sup> *Dharma* is the natural function and characteristic of a thing; that which cannot be separated from its nature.

They enquired further, “Is the soul that person (self) seen in water or in a mirror?”

Lord Brahma told them to look into separate clay pots filled with water. He asked them, “What do you see?”

Upon seeing their reflections in the water they said, “O Lord, we see the whole soul just as it is, from the hair on his head down to his toenails.”

Lord Brahma then asked them to cut their nails and hair and decorate themselves with ornaments. He again requested them to look into the clay pots. “Now what do you see?”

“We see that the two persons in these reflections have also been cleaned and decorated in very beautiful clothes and ornaments, just as we have; and thus they resemble us perfectly.”

Lord Brahma said, “This is the soul and he is fearless and immortal.” Hearing this Indra and Virochan departed with satisfied hearts.

Upon reaching the abode of the demons, Veerochan, who now understood the body to be the soul and the object of worship and service, declared: “O demons, he who worships his body as the soul attains this world as well as the upper planets. All his desires are fulfilled and he attains full enjoyment.”

But Indra deliberated upon Lord Brahma’s words on his journey home: “This body takes birth, dies, undergoes transformations, is subject to disease and so forth. How, then, can this be the immortal soul, who is without birth, death, distress and fear?”

Although halfway home, Indra now returned to Lord Brahma and told him about his doubt. Lord Brahma made Indra live in celibacy for another thirty-two years and then said to him, “That person who is understood to be “I” within a dream is the soul, and he is fearless and immortal.”

Hearing this, Indra left with a peaceful heart, but upon his journey home he again began to reflect: “When someone is awake, his body may be blind, yet in a dream his body will not be blind. Someone’s body may be diseased, yet in a dream that person may remain free

from disease. But suppose that within a dream, the person identified with as the self is beaten or killed. He still fears and cries, and upon awakening, that ‘self’ ceases to exist. Thus, the form seen in a dream cannot in fact be the soul.”

Thinking like this Indra returned to Lord Brahma. After practicing celibacy for another thirty-two years, Lord Brahma instructed him as follows: “The soul lies in that state of deep sleep, where there is no vision or even the experience of dreaming.”

But as before, Indra began to contemplate Lord Brahma’s words on his way home.

“In the condition of deep sleep,” he thought, “there is no understanding of who one is, nor is anyone else being perceived. This condition is therefore a type of annihilation.”

Thinking this way, Indra returned to Lord Brahma once again. This time, after five years of celibacy, Lord Brahma instructed him anew.

“Indra, the physical body, which is naturally subject to death, is only the abode of the soul. The soul is attached to the body, just as a horse or bull remains harnessed to a cart. In reality it is the person who has desires, such as ‘I shall look,’ who is the soul. For this task there are senses, like the eyes. He who desires ‘I shall speak’ is the soul, and for the act of speaking there is the tongue. He who wills ‘I shall hear’ is the soul, and for the act of hearing there are ears. He who desires to think is the soul, and the mind carries out that thinking for him.”

From this true history it is clear that the soul has three abodes, just as a peanut has three elements (the shell, the skin and the nut itself).

The soul’s abodes are:

- The gross body consisting of five mundane elements (air, fire, earth, water and ether).
- The subtle body (mind, intelligence and false-ego), which possesses a semblance of consciousness.
- The pure body of the soul, which is composed of the three spiritual potencies, namely *sat-chit-ananda*: pure eternal existence (*sat*),

all knowledge or cognizance (*cheet*), and complete spiritual bliss (*ananda*).

Each of these bodies has its own separate occupational function, religion or *dharma*.

The gross and subtle bodies are both impermanent, thus their respective functions are also temporary. The soul, however, is eternal and everlasting. This is the established doctrine in all the Vedic scriptures<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the function of this soul is indeed the eternal function, or the eternal religion of the soul. It is also called Vedic *dharma*, or *bhagavat-dharma*.

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<sup>2</sup> The word “Veda” means perfect knowledge. Although this transcendental knowledge is eternal, it was recorded in Sanskrit language about five thousand years ago in India, to avoid losing it. Sanskrit is the mother of Latin, Greek, Germanic tongues, Persian, etc. This knowledge was originally imparted by Lord Krishna, who transmitted it to Brahma, the first created being, and continues being transmitted in a disciplic succession of eternally liberated beings until this present day. This is the lineage of perfected spiritual masters and disciples. Therefore, this knowledge remains intact. The Vedanta is the final conclusion of Vedic knowledge and the Upanishads are the last portion of the Vedas.

## The soul's true and acquired natures

The word *dharma* should be understood. It is formed from the root syllable *dhri*, which means *dharana*, “to retain” or “to possess.” Therefore, *dharma* means “that which is retained.” The permanent nature or quality that is retained by a being is that being’s eternal religion, or *dharma*. When, by the desire of the Lord, any being is created, that being’s eternal nature also becomes evident simultaneously.

This nature, or quality, is that being’s eternal occupation or religion. If a transformation later takes place within that entity, incidentally or because of any connection with another object, then that entity’s eternally present nature becomes transformed or distorted. Gradually the distorted nature becomes steady and it appears to be eternal and pure like his previous nature. Yet this transformed nature is not his actual nature. This nature is called “acquired nature” (*nisarga*) and it is temporary.

This acquired nature takes prominence over a person’s true nature, and begins to assert its own identity as the ‘real’ nature. Water is a substance whose nature, or *dharma*, is fluidity; but when water solidifies into ice, its nature, i.e. fluidity, also transforms and becomes hardness. This quality of hardness has become the distorted nature of the water and it now acts in place of the water’s true nature of fluidity.

This distorted nature, however, is not permanent; it is temporary. Because it has come about by some cause or force, when this force is removed, the acquired nature itself is removed and the true nature manifests once more, just as ice again becomes liquid when placed near heat.



## *The nature of the infinitesimal soul*

**T**o understand this subject of the soul properly it is essential to understand the fundamental truth and eternal nature of the soul. By this knowledge one can very easily understand the eternal and temporary function of the living entities.

God – the creator, maintainer and annihilator of the universe, the origin of all and the cause of all causes – is the undifferentiated Absolute Truth. He is not formless or devoid of features; these are only His partial manifestations. In reality He possesses a transcendental personal form. He is the inconceivable possessor of all power and He is endowed with six opulences: all beauty, all fame, all wealth, all strength, all knowledge, and all renunciation.

By the influence of His inconceivable potency, which makes the impossible possible, the Supreme Truth, Lord Krishna, manifests in four aspects. Shrila Jeeva Goswami states:

The Absolute Truth is one. His unique characteristic is that He is endowed with inconceivable potency, through which He always manifests in four ways:

- His original personal form.
- His personal splendor, including His abode and His eternal associates, expansions and incarnations .
- The individual spirit souls.
- The material energy.

These four features, respectively, can be compared to:

- The interior of the sun planet.
- The surface of the sun globe.

- The atomic particles within the sun's rays, emanating from this surface.
- The remote reflection of the sun.

Shrila Jeeva Goswami further states that if we compare Krishna, the complete conscious entity, to the sun, then the individual spirit souls may be compared to the localized particles of light in the sun's rays.

The rays of the sun cannot be independent from the sun planet, neither can we consider a ray alone, to be the sun, but rather, part of the sun. In the same way, the infinitesimal spiritual conscious souls, which are compared to the atomic particles of light in the rays of the sun, cannot be independent from God, as they are part of Him. Nor can one soul be addressed as God, but rather as an infinitesimal part and parcel of Him.

The description of the individual soul's eternal identity is found in *Bhagavad-gita* (15.7):

“The eternal individual souls in this material world are certainly My separated parts and parcels.”

It is found in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (2.1.20):

“Innumerable souls emanate from the Supreme Being just as tiny sparks emanate from a fire.”

The *Shvetasvatara Upanishad* (5.9) states:

“One should know that the soul is the size of one ten-thousandth of the tip of a hair.”

It is also found in *Chaitanya Charitamrita: Madhya-lila* 20.109:

“.....like a molecular particle of sunshine or fire.”

These quotes confirm that the soul is the separated part of the transformation of God's marginal potency.

The *Shvetasvatara Upanishad* (6.8) states:

“That supreme potency of God alone manifests as numerous potencies of which three are prominent, namely:

- The internal potency of God (*cheet-shakti*) by which His transcendental pastimes manifest in the spiritual planets.
- The marginal potency of God (*tatastha shakti*) by which unlimited infinitesimal souls or living entities are manifested.
- The external potency of God (*bahiranga shakti or maya shakti*) by which the illusory and temporary material universes are manifested.

By the Lord's desire, the marginal potency of God (the living entities), being situated between the spiritual potency and the material potency, manifests innumerable insignificant, atomic conscious souls. These souls are spiritual entities by nature and are capable of wandering throughout the spiritual or the material worlds. For this reason, this potency is known as the marginal potency, and the souls themselves are called, "souls who are marginal by nature".



## *The relationship between God and the living entity*

**T**here is an aphorism from Vedanta-sutra that says: “Krishna (God) and His potency are non-different from each other.” Therefore Krishna and the transformation of His potency, the souls, or living entities, are also non-different from each other.

But this oneness is only from the perspective of their being equal as spiritually conscious beings.

Krishna (God), however, is the complete conscious being and the master of the material deluding energy (*maya*), (which is the energy that influences all the living entities to accept the false egotism of being independent enjoyers of this material world). The souls, however, are atomically conscious. Because of their marginal nature, the souls are capable of coming under the control of the deluding illusory material energy (*maya*) even in their pure state as spiritually conscious beings. Krishna, God, is the possessor of all power and the souls are devoid of power. Thus there is an eternal difference between God, and the souls or living entities.

From the philosophical perspective, this difference and non-difference is beyond human intelligence, and is therefore called the doctrine of inconceivable difference and non-difference. Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the original Lord Himself, completely harmonized the contextual doctrines of the Vedas with those of the previous Vaishnava spiritual masters. He took the doctrines of Shri Ramanuja Acarya, Shri Madhvacarya, Shri Visnuswami and Shri Nimbaditya Acarya and revealed their synthesis: the doctrine of inconceivable difference and non-difference, which is the universal, absolute understanding of the Vedas.

Thus, God is the source of all expansions, and the souls are His separated parts and parcels. God is the attractor and the souls are the attracted. Krishna is the object of service and the living entities are the performers of service. Service to the completely conscious being, Shri Krishna, is the real nature of the atomic conscious souls.

This service is indeed called transcendental religion of unalloyed love for God. Thus, this service to God, this love for God, is the eternal function or religion, of the soul. “The constitutional nature of the soul is to be an eternal servant of Krishna” (*Chaitanya Charitamrita Madhya-lila 20.108*).

But if that soul, whose nature is marginal and who is atomically conscious, becomes adverse to the service of God, then God’s deluding material potency (*maya*) covers that pure soul’s atomic, conscious nature with the subtle and gross material bodies. This material deluding potency (*maya*) thus causes these souls to habitually wander throughout the eight million, four hundred-thousand species of life.

When the souls are reinstated in their service to God, they are released from their bodies imposed by the deluding material potency. As long as the soul fails in his inclination to serve God, he will continue to be scorched by the threefold miseries, those caused by our own mind and body, those caused by other living entities, and by the material nature and demigods.

At this time the soul’s pure spiritual form is covered by the curtains of material illusion, and his eternal nature, is also covered, or perverted. This perverted nature is the soul’s occasional function, just as water becomes solid when transformed into ice.

This temporary religion is of many types according to the time, place and recipient.

## Divisions of religion

*A*ll the varieties of *dharma*, (occupational religious duty) in this world can be divided into three general categories:

- Impermanent religion, which does not accept the existence of the Lord and the eternality of the soul.
- Circumstantial religion, which accepts the eternality of the Lord and the souls, but only prescribes temporary means to attain the Lord's mercy.
- Eternal religion (*nitya dharma*), which endeavors by the means of pure love and devotion to obtain service to God.

“Eternal religion is one, not two or many. Different countries, classes, races and languages identify it by various names; but they cannot change the inherent constitutional function of the soul. The unadulterated spiritual love that the infinitesimal entity (the soul) has for the Infinite Entity (God) is the only eternal religion of all living entities. This is the supreme occupation of all souls.”

(*Jaiva dharma*, Shrila Bhaktivinode Thakur)

In India this inherent eternal constitutional position or religion is presented as *vaishnava-dharma*. *Vaishnava-dharma* is eternal and the highest ideal of supreme religion. In the performance of occasionally prescribed duties there is no direct execution of eternal religion. Rather it aims at it indirectly; thus it is of very little use.

Those processes that make up temporary religions are devoid of the eternal occupation of the soul and are described as the function of animals. They are fit to be rejected.

*Hitopadesha* (25) states:

“Human beings are equal to animals in the matter of eating, sleeping, fearing and mating. Yet the quality of religion is unique to human beings. Without spiritual life, humans are no better than animals.”

That religion in which the nature of the self (the soul) is not cultivated; in which endeavors are made to increase eating, sleeping, mating and defending; and in which enjoyment of the temporary sense objects is supported as the ultimate objective of human life, is the religion, or occupation, of animals. In this so-called religion, it is in fact completely impossible to escape all sorrow and attain pure happiness, which is the goal of human life.

Therefore, it has been stated in the *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* (11.3.18):

“All men in this world are inclined to perform material activities for the purpose of becoming liberated from sorrow and attaining happiness. But the opposite results are seen. In other words, sorrow is not dispelled and happiness is not attained.”

For this reason the *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* (11.9.29) gives the highest instruction for all people of the world:

“After wandering throughout 8,400,000 species of life one achieves the rare human form of life. This human life, which is no doubt temporary, gives a person a chance to attain that which of the most value. It is for this reason that a sober person does not waste a single moment and constantly strives for their ultimate welfare, until their body, which must inevitably face death, has not ceased to exist.”

Some persons accept reward seeking activities (*karma*), others accept knowledge of the impersonal aspect of God to attain liberation or salvation (*gyan*), while others accept meditation (*yoga*) to be the means to attain ultimate prosperity.

But this is refuted in *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* (1.5.12):

“Even pure knowledge, which is the direct practice to obtain liberation, has no beauty if it is devoid of devotion to the personal aspect of God. How then can selfless action, which is not offered to God, and fruitive action, which is always inauspicious in both its practice and perfection, be beautiful?”

*Shrimad-Bhagavatam* (11.14.20) further states:

“O Uddhav, meditation, study of the Vedas, austerity and giving in charity cannot overpower Me as does intense devotion (*bhakti*) performed solely for Me.”

The meaning of this verse is that pure devotion to God is the only means by which one can attain his ultimate benefit. This instruction is also given in the reveled scriptures:

“It is devotion (*bhakti*) that reveals God to the souls. That Supreme Person is controlled by this devotion only.”

Therefore, *bhakti*, or pure transcendental devotion, is superior to all other practices and is the eternal religion of the soul.

In *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* (11.14.21) Krishna, the original Supreme Lord, also says:

“I can be attained by pure devotion (*bhakti*) alone.”



## The nature and science of transcendental devotion

**W**hat is the form of pure love and devotion?  
The *Sandilya-sutra* states:

“Pure devotion is supreme attachment or love, for the Lord. Moreover, since it has the propensity to control the Supreme Controller, its nature is immortal.”

Shrila Rupa Goswami describes the intrinsic nature of devotion or *bhakti* as follows (*Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu* 1.1.11):

“Pure devotional service, is the cultivation of activities that are meant exclusively for the pleasure of the Supreme Original Lord, Shri Krishna – in other words, the uninterrupted flow of service to God performed through all endeavors of body, mind and speech, and through the expression of various spiritual sentiments. It is not covered by knowledge of the impersonal aspect of God to attain liberation or salvation, activities who seek reward, meditation, or austerities; and it is completely free from all desires other than the aspiration to bring happiness to the Supreme Lord.”

Devotion has two stages: (1) the stage of practice and (2) the stage of perfection.

Eternally perfect love for Krishna (God) is called *prema-bhakti*, and it is the soul’s only eternal religion.

This devotion in the stage of perfection, although eternally perfect, remains covered in those souls who have fallen into materialism. When a person in this covered state attempts to uncover this love for God,

he starts to practice devotion with his senses. This practice of devotion is also eternal religion, yet it is the immature state of eternal religion, whereas the devotion in the stage of perfection is said to be the fully matured and ripened state of eternal religion. Thus, although eternal religion is one, it has two stages.

The practice of devotion is also of two types: (1) regulated devotion, (2) spontaneous devotion (*raganuga bhakti*).

Until a spontaneous attachment and taste for God appears in the heart of a practitioner, he follows the regulative activities and rules prescribed in the sacred revealed scriptures.

In this way, by observing the discipline of and regulations of the Vedic scriptures, he engages in devotion to God. By contrast, one is engaged in spontaneous devotional practice when a spontaneous attachment and taste arises in the heart; when, without regard for the rules and regulations of the scriptures, one becomes intensely eager to possess the moods of the eternal associates of the Lord in Vraja (the topmost spiritual planet), who are full of love and attachment for Him; and when one performs devotional practices to follow in the footsteps of those eternal associates of the Lord.

## The glories of chanting the sacred names of God (sankirtan)

**G**enerally there are sixty-four limbs of this devotional practice or *bhakti*. After taking shelter of the lotus feet of the pure and bona fide spiritual master, the prominent limbs of devotion are:

- 1) Hearing, 2) chanting, and 3) remembering the names, qualities, forms, attributes, character and pastimes of the Lord,
- 4) serving His lotus feet, 5) offering prayers, 6) worshiping Him, 7) rendering Him service, 8) making friendship with Him, and 9) completely offering Him one's very self.

Of the sixty-four limbs of devotion, the nine mentioned above are prominent. Of these nine limbs of devotion, the three limbs of hearing, chanting and remembering are superior to the others; and of these three, chanting His pure transcendental names is supreme. All the limbs of devotion (*bhakti*) are fully included in the chanting of the pure names of God.

According to fundamental philosophical truths, God and God's names are non-different from each other. The glories of the transcendental names of God are found in profusion throughout all the sacred texts of India. Especially in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the chanting of the pure names of God is the sole religion, or refuge.

The *Brihan-naradiya Purana* states:

“In this dark age of Iron, Kali-yuga, there is no other method, no other process, no other way than chanting the names of God, the names of God, the names of God.”

*Shrimad-Bhagavatam* (6.3.22) also states that chanting of the pure names of the Lord, is the only supreme occupation, or religion, of the living beings:

“Only the worship of God, performed through chanting the holy names, is called *bhakti-yoga*. This alone is the supreme religion for the living entities.”

Indeed, in this material world, the recognized and supreme religion for all humanity is the transcendental devotion unto The Supreme Lord (*bhakti yoga*). This devotion (*bhakti*) begins with the chanting of the sacred names of God.

## The development from faith to love for God

The sequential progression of the cultivation of eternal religion is revealed by Shrimati Rupa Goswami. This given sequence, surely unparalleled and most wonderful in this world, is as follows (*Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*, Eastern Division 4.11):

- (1) Faith (*shraddha*): In the beginning, faith in devotion will arise in a very fortunate person due to the accumulated result of transcendental pious activities of many previous life times. This faith is the seed of the *bhakti* creeper, or the creeper of devotion.
- (2) Association with transcendental saints (*sadhu sanga*): Thereafter comes the association of saintly Vaishnavas and most importantly, the association of the self realized spiritual master, who is transcendently situated and free from all faults and impurities in the heart. The spiritual master will give the student the powerful sacred sound vibration of the pure names of God (*hari-nam*), and other powerful *mantras*.
- (3) Spiritual practices and meditations (*bhajana kreeya*): Under the guidance of these self-realized and empowered saints, one performs spiritual meditations of devotional service such as hearing, chanting and remembering the names, form, qualities, attributes and pastimes of the Lord.
- (4) Destruction of all our unwanted desires and misgivings of the heart (*anartha neevriti*): As a result of performing these devotional practices, all the unwanted desires and impurities in the heart that prevent advancement in the path of devotion are destroyed.

(5) Firm faith in spiritual practices (*neeshta*): One thus attains firm faith and constant stability in the practices of devotion.

(6) Transcendental spiritual taste (*ruchi*): After this, a transcendental taste is attained. When this real spiritual taste awakens, the attraction for spiritual matters, such as hearing, chanting, meditating, and other spiritual practices, exceed the attraction one may have for any other type of material or mundane activity.

(7) Deep attachment (*asakti*): This refers especially to attachment to the Lord and His eternal associates. This happens when a relish for spiritual practices leads one to have a deep and direct attachment to the object of one's spiritual practices, the Supreme Lord, Krishna.

(8) Spiritual love (*bhav*): At last one attains a sprout of pure love for the Lord. This is compared to a ray from the sun of pure, transcendental love for God. [In this stage of devotion, *bhav*, the essence of the internal potency of the Lord, which consists of pure cognizance and spiritual bliss, is transmitted to the heart of the practitioner from the heart of one of God's eternal associates who is present on this planet. Thereafter, one realizes within the heart the eleven transcendental emotions of the eternal spiritual body,<sup>3</sup> like one's eternal relationship with God, eternal age, name, form, group, dress, residence, specific instruction, exclusive service etc. This is called the perfection of one's eternal spiritual

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<sup>3</sup> Every living entity has an eternal spiritual body and relationship with God but is now latent in seed form. This eternal relationship is called *rasa* in Sanskrit. There are four main relationships with God in the highest spiritual planet, called Vraja-Vrindavan. These relationships are: (1) servitude mixed with friendship, (2) pure friendship, (3) parental love and (4) conjugal love. The living entity is enlightened by the divine grace of the Vaishnava Saints through the medium of transcendental sound, called *mantra*. Thereafter the eternal spiritual body is awakened and gradually one will be able to see it reflected in the mirror of the heart. Only a genuine *guru*, or self-realized spiritual master, from the highest level will be able to give these internal realizations in the heart of his student, otherwise not.

body (*svarupa-siddhi*) (Shrila Bhaktivinode Thakur, *The Function of the Soul – Jaiva-dharma*.)]

(9) Pure love for God (*prema*): When the fully matured state of spiritual emotion called *bhav* becomes condensed, it is called *prema*, pure transcendental love for God. [When one attains realization of one's eternal spiritual body on the level of *bhav*, one leaves the gross material physical body and enters into one of the material universes<sup>4</sup> where Lord Krishna (God) is manifesting His eternal pastimes. At this point, one takes birth in the womb of an eternal associate of the Lord. One does not receive a material body, but a completely spiritual and transcendental body composed of eternal existence, pure knowledge and spiritual bliss (*sat-cheet-ananda*). Then, one will have to perfect all the different levels of *prema* (pure love) before entering the eternal spiritual abode. When this is completed it is called *vastu-siddhi*. Thereafter, one will enter the unmanifested eternal spiritual abode of God, called Vraja-Vrindavan, which is far beyond the material jurisdiction (Shrila Bhaktivinode Thakur - *The Function of the Soul - Jaiva-dharma*).]

This pure transcendental love for God alone is the eternal religion of all living entities.

This is also the teaching of the Supreme Lord Himself, Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. It is the most confidential, established subject matter in all the Vedic scriptures (Veda, Vedanta, Upanishads, and Puranas).

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4 When Lord Krishna (God) concludes His pastimes in one universe, immediately He enters into another universe. In this way, He eternally manifests His pastimes in the material universes. Simultaneously, He is forever enjoying transcendental pastimes in His eternal spiritual abode with His eternal associates. This is the highest spiritual planet and is called Vraja-Vrindavan. This planet is beyond the material cosmos and universes and is existing eternally, with pure transcendental knowledge and consciousness and complete spiritual bliss.



## True religion and cheating religions

*Q*n the world today the majority of religions are, in the words of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* “cheating religions.” *Shri Chaitanya-bhagavat* also states:

“All worldly ideas that go by the name of religion are, according to *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, nothing more than a deception.”

Temporary religion is that religion in which prayer for bread and butter is the highest form of worship of the Lord; in which one changes his moral conduct from that of a Hindu to that of a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Christian and a Hindu once again; and in which one attempts to rid oneself of bodily diseases, considering his body to be his soul (self) and his soul to be the Lord. Feeding the people rice and beans, with the misconception that they are poor; constructing hospitals and godless educational centers believing this to be the topmost service to God; thinking that the eternal occupation of the soul, temporary occupation and all other varieties of religion are one; neglecting the eternal occupation of the soul and propagating secularism; sacrificing harmless animals and birds in the name of love for the world; and serving man and nation, are all temporary religions, or *dharma*s.

None of these activities ever brings permanent welfare to the world. However, if we consider eternal religion to be like a temple – in other words, to be our highest objective – we may accept these other religions or *dharma*s partially, but only as steps to reach this temple of eternal religion. Wherever these other religions contradict, cover, or dominate the eternal occupation of the soul, *nitya-dharma*, they should be

completely abandoned. Morality, humanity, or worldly love that is devoid of the eternal function of the soul is meaningless and unworthy of any glorification. The real objective and only purpose of humanity and morality is to attain pure love for God.

If there is just one true performer of this eternal function of the soul, who keeps the fire of the chanting of the holy names of God ablaze, then his nation, class and society can never be ruined – even after that nation is oppressed and kept dependent by another country and has had its treasures looted, its scriptures burned to ashes, and its culture and prosperity destroyed. This chanting of the names of God:

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna  
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare  
Hare Rama Hare Rama  
Rama Rama Hare Hare

makes possible the eternal welfare of the world and of one's country, society, class and self.

I complete my lecture by repeating the final instruction of Lord Krishna, the founder of religion (*dharma*), as found in the *Bhagavad Gita* (18.66):

“Abandon all varieties of prescribed religious rituals and take full shelter of Me. I will deliver you from all your sinful reactions, do not worry.”



Pure Love for God



## The Rasa Dance (*Rasa Leela*)

Observing the night *kumuda* lotus flowers opening due to the presence of the unbroken disk of the full moon, which resembled the face of the goddess of fortune decorated with new red vermillion powder, and seeing the gentle rays of the moon coloring the forest, Lord Krishna sweetly played on His flute, stealing the minds of the lovely girls with charming eyes.

Thereafter, Lord Krishna, the protector of the cows, commenced the *rasa* dance with the gopees, the best jewels amongst women. Feeling very satisfied, the damsels stood amongst each other, binding their arms together.

The *rasa* dance festival started; The beautiful damsels made a circle which was decorated by the master of *yoga* Lord Krishna. He then entered between each pair of damsels and very near their side held their necks. Meanwhile, the inhabitants of the heavenly planets with their wives crowded the sky with hundreds of celestial airplanes being very eager to see the extraordinary *rasa* dance, thus they were carried away by their minds.

Kettledrums resounded while a rain of flowers showered down from the sky, and the chief of the inhabitants of the heavenly planets with their wives sang the immaculate glories of Lord Krishna.

There was a loud sound in the circle of the *rasa* dance aroused by the armlets, ankle bells and waist bells of the young damsels who were dancing with their beloved Krishna.

Therein, Krishna, the Supreme Person, was shinning brilliantly with them, appearing like a great effulgent sapphire in the middle of golden jewels.

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