

"Perfection of Yoga" by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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Chapter One

Yoga as Rejected by Arjuna

There have been many yoga systems popularized in the Western world, especially in this century, but none of them have actually taught the perfection of yoga. In the Bhagavad-gita, Sri Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, teaches Arjuna directly the perfection of yoga. If we actually want to participate in the perfection of the yoga system, in Bhagavad-gita we will find the authoritative statements of the Supreme Person.

It is certainly remarkable that the perfection of yoga was taught in the middle of a battlefield. It was taught to Arjuna, the warrior, just before Arjuna was to engage in a fratricidal battle. Out of sentiment, Arjuna was thinking, "Why should I fight against my own kinsmen?" That reluctance to fight was due to Arjuna's illusion, and just to eradicate that illusion, Sri Krsna spoke the Bhagavad-gita to him. One can just imagine how little time must have elapsed while Bhagavad-gita was being spoken. All the warriors on both sides were poised to fight, so there was very little time indeed--at the utmost, one hour. Within this one hour, the whole Bhagavad-gita was discussed, and Sri Krsna set forth the perfection of all yoga systems to His friend Arjuna. At the end of this great discourse, Arjuna set aside his misgivings and fought.

However, within the discourse, when Arjuna heard the explanation of the meditational system of yoga--how to sit down, how to keep the body

straight, how to keep the eyes half-closed and how to gaze at the tip of the nose without diverting one's attention, all this being conducted in a secluded place, alone--he replied,

yo 'yam yogas tvaya proktah
samyena madhusudana
etasyaham na pasyami
cancalatvat sthitim sthiram

"O Madhusudana, the system of yoga which You have summarized appears impractical and unendurable to me, for the mind is restless and unsteady." (Bg. 6.33) This is important. We must always remember that we are in a material circumstance wherein at every moment our mind is subject to agitation. Actually we are not in a very comfortable situation. We are always thinking that by changing our situation we will overcome our mental agitation, and we are always thinking that when we reach a certain point, all mental agitations will disappear. But it is the nature of the material world that we cannot be free from anxiety. Our dilemma is that we are always trying to make a solution to our problems, but this universe is so designed that these solutions never come.

Not being a cheater, being very frank and open, Arjuna tells Krsna that the system of yoga which He has described is not possible for him to execute. In speaking to Krsna, it is significant that Arjuna addresses Him as Madhusudana, indicating that the Lord is the killer of the demon Madhu. It is notable that God's names are innumerable, for He is often named according to His activities. Indeed, God has innumerable names because He has innumerable activities. We are only parts of God, and we cannot even remember how many activities we have engaged in from our childhood to the present. The eternal God is unlimited, and since His activities are also unlimited, He has unlimited names, of which Krsna is the chief. Then why is Arjuna addressing Him as Madhusudana when, being Krsna's friend, he could address Him directly as Krsna? The answer is that Arjuna considers his mind to be like a great demon, such as the demon Madhu. If it were possible for Krsna to kill the demon called the mind, then Arjuna would be able to attain the perfection of yoga. "My mind is much stronger than this demon Madhu," Arjuna is saying. "Please, if You could kill him, then it would be possible for me to execute this yoga system." Even the mind of a great man like Arjuna is always agitated. As Arjuna himself says,

cancalam hi manah krsna
pramathi bala vad drdham
tasyaham nigraham manye
vayor iva suduskaram

"for the mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate and very strong, O Krsna, and to subdue it is, it seems to me, more difficult than controlling the wind." (Bg. 6.34)

It is indeed a fact that the mind is always telling us to go here, go there, do this, do that--it is always telling us which way to turn. Thus the sum and substance of the yoga system is to control the agitated mind. In the meditational yoga system the mind is controlled by focusing on the Supersoul--that is the whole purpose of yoga. But Arjuna says

that controlling this mind is more difficult than stopping the wind from blowing. One can imagine a man stretching out his arms trying to stop a hurricane. Are we to assume that Arjuna is simply not sufficiently qualified to control his mind? The actual fact is that we cannot begin to understand the immense qualifications of Arjuna. After all, he was a personal friend of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is a highly elevated position and is one that cannot be at all attained by one without great qualifications. In addition to this, Arjuna was renowned as a great warrior and administrator. He was such an intelligent man that he could understand Bhagavad-gita within one hour, whereas at the present moment great scholars cannot even understand it in the course of a lifetime. Yet Arjuna was thinking that controlling the mind was simply not possible for him. Are we then to assume that what was impossible for Arjuna in a more advanced age is possible for us in this degenerate age? We should not for one moment think that we are in Arjuna's category. We are a thousand times inferior.

Moreover, there is no record of Arjuna's having executed the yoga system at any time. Yet Arjuna was praised by Krsna as the only man worthy of understanding Bhagavad-gita. What was Arjuna's great qualification? Sri Krsna says, "You are My devotee. You are My very dear friend." Despite this qualification, Arjuna refused to execute the meditational yoga system described by Sri Krsna. What then are we to conclude? Are we to despair the mind's ever being controlled? No, it can be controlled, and the process is this Krsna consciousness. The mind must be fixed always in Krsna. Insofar as the mind is absorbed in Krsna, it has attained the perfection of yoga.

Now when we turn to the Srimad-Bhagavatam, in the Twelfth Canto we find Sukadeva Gosvami telling Maharaja Pariksit that in the golden age, the Satya-yuga, people were living for one hundred thousand years, and at that time, when advanced living entities lived for such lengths of time, it was possible to execute this meditational system of yoga. But what was achieved in the Satya-yuga by this meditational process, and in the following yuga, the Treta-yuga, by the offering of great sacrifices, and in the next yuga, the Dvapara-yuga, by temple worship, would be achieved at the present time, in this Kali-yuga, by simply chanting the names of God, hari-kirtana, Hare Krsna. So from authoritative sources we learn that this chanting of Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare is the embodiment of the perfection of yoga for this age.

Today we have great difficulties living fifty or sixty years. A man may live at the utmost eighty or a hundred years. In addition, these brief years are always fraught with anxiety, with difficulties due to circumstances of war, pestilence, famine and so many other disturbances. We're also not very intelligent, and, at the same time, we're unfortunate. These are the characteristics of man living in Kali-yuga, a degraded age. So properly speaking, we can never attain success in this meditational yoga system described by Krsna. At the utmost we can only gratify our personal whims by some pseudoadaptation of this system. Thus people are paying money to attend some classes in gymnastic exercises and deep-breathing, and they're happy if they think they can lengthen their lifetimes by a few years or enjoy better sex life. But we must understand that this is not the actual yoga system. In this age that meditational system cannot be properly executed. Instead, all of the perfections of that system can be realized through bhakti-yoga, the

sublime process of Krsna consciousness, specifically mantra-yoga, the glorification of Sri Krsna through the chanting of Hare Krsna. That is recommended in Vedic scriptures and is introduced by great authorities like Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Indeed, the Bhagavad-gita proclaims that the mahatmas, the great souls, are always chanting the glories of the Lord. If one wants to be a mahatma in terms of the Vedic literature, in terms of Bhagavad-gita and in terms of the great authorities, then one has to adopt this process of Krsna consciousness and of chanting Hare Krsna. But if we're content at making a show of meditation by sitting very straight in lotus position and going into a trance like some sort of performer, then that is a different thing. But we should understand that such show-bottle performances have nothing to do with the actual perfection of yoga. The material disease cannot be cured by artificial medicine. We have to take the real cure straight from Krsna.

Chapter Two

Yoga as Work in Devotion

We have heard the names of so many different yogas and yogis, but in Bhagavad-gita Krsna says that the actual yogi is he who has surrendered himself "fully unto Me." Krsna proclaims that there is no difference between renunciation (sannyasa) and yoga.

yam sannyasam iti prahur
yogam tam viddhi pandava
na hy asannyasta-sankalpo
yogi bha vati kascana

"What is called renunciation is the same as yoga, or linking oneself with the Supreme; for no one can become a yogi unless he renounces the desire for sense gratification." (Bg. 6.2)

In Bhagavad-gita there are three basic types of yoga delineated-- karma-yoga, jnana-yoga and bhakti-yoga. The systems of yoga may be likened to a staircase. Someone may be on the first step, someone may be halfway up, or someone may be on the top step. When one is elevated to certain levels, he is known as a karma-yogi, jnana-yogi, etc. In all cases, the service to the Supreme Lord is the same. It is a difference in elevation only. Thus Sri Krsna tells Arjuna that he must understand that renunciation (sannyasa) and yoga are the same, because without being freed from desire and sense gratification one can become neither a yogi nor a sannyasi.

There are some yogis who perform yoga for a profit, but that is not real yoga. Everything must be engaged in the service of the Lord. Whatever we do as an ordinary worker or as a sannyasi or as a yogi or as a philosopher must be done in Krsna consciousness. When we are absorbed in the thought of serving Krsna and when we act in that consciousness, we can become real sannyasis and real yogis. For those who are taking the first step up the staircase of the yoga system, there is work. One should not think that simply because he is beginning yoga he should stop working. In Bhagavad-gita Krsna asks Arjuna to become a yogi, but He never tells him to cease from fighting. Quite the contrary. Of course,

one may ask how a person may be a yogi and at the same time a warrior. Our conception of yoga practice is that of sitting very straight, with legs crossed and eyes half-closed, staring at the tip of our nose and concentrating in this way in a lonely place. So how is it that Krsna is asking Arjuna to become a yogi and at the same time participate in a ghastly civil war? That is the mystery of Bhagavad-gita: one can remain a fighting man and at the same time be the highest yogi, the highest sannyasi. How is this possible? In Krsna consciousness. One simply has to fight for Krsna, work for Krsna, eat for Krsna, sleep for Krsna and dedicate all activities to Krsna. In this way one becomes the highest yogi and the highest sannyasi. That is the secret.

In the Sixth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita, Sri Krsna instructs Arjuna how to perform meditational yoga, but Arjuna rejects this as too difficult. How then is Arjuna considered to be a great yogi? Although Krsna saw that Arjuna was rejecting the meditational system, He proclaimed Arjuna to be the highest yogi because "You are always thinking of Me." Thinking of Krsna is the essence of all yoga systems--of the hatha, karma, jnana, bhakti or any other system of yoga, sacrifice or charity. All the recommended activities for spiritual realization end in Krsna consciousness, in thinking always of Krsna. The actual perfection of human life lies in being always Krsna conscious and always being aware of Krsna while performing all types of activities.

In the preliminary stage one is advised to always work for Krsna. One must be always searching out some duty or some engagement, for it is a bad policy to remain idle even for a second. When one actually becomes advanced through such engagements, then he may not work physically, but he is always engaged within by constantly thinking of Krsna. In the preliminary stage, however, one is always advised to engage one's senses in the service of Krsna. There are a variety of activities one can perform in serving Krsna. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness is intended to help direct aspirant devotees in these activities. For those working in Krsna consciousness, there are simply not enough hours in the day to serve Krsna. There are always activities, engagements both day and night, which the student of Krsna consciousness performs joyfully. That is the stage of real happiness--constant engagement for Krsna and spreading Krsna consciousness around the world. In the material world one may become very tired if he works all the time, but if one works in Krsna consciousness, he can chant Hare Krsna and engage in devotional service twenty-four hours a day and never get tired. But if we vibrate some mundane vibration, then we soon become exhausted. There is no question of becoming tired on the spiritual platform. The spiritual platform is absolute. In the material world everyone is working for sense gratification. The profits of one's labor in the material world are used to gratify one's senses. But a real yogi does not desire such fruits. He has no desire other than Krsna, and Krsna is already there.

Chapter Three

Yoga as Meditation on Krsna

In India there are sacred places where yogis go to meditate in solitude, as prescribed in Bhagavad-gita. Traditionally, yoga cannot be executed in a public place, but insofar as kirtana--mantra-yoga, or the yoga of chanting the Hare Krsna mantra: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare--is concerned, the more people present, the better. When Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu was performing kirtana in India some five hundred years ago, He organized in each group sixteen people to lead the chanting, and thousands of people chanted with them. This participation in kirtana, in the public chanting of the names and glories of God, is very possible and is actually easy in this age; but as far as the meditational process of yoga is concerned, that is very difficult. It is specifically stated in Bhagavad-gita that to perform meditational yoga one should go to a secluded and holy place. In other words, it is necessary to leave home. In this age of overpopulation it is not always possible to find a secluded place, but this is not necessary in bhakti-yoga.

In the bhakti-yoga system there are nine different processes: hearing, chanting, remembering, serving, worshiping the Deity in the temple, praying, carrying out orders, serving Krsna as a friend and sacrificing for Him. Out of these, sravanam kirtanam, hearing and chanting, are considered the most important. At a public kirtana one person can chant Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, while a group listens, and at the end of the mantra, the group can respond, and in this way there is a reciprocation of hearing and chanting. This can easily be performed in one's own home, with a small group of friends or with many people in a large public place. One may attempt to practice meditational yoga in a large city or in a society, but one must understand that this is one's own concoction and is not the method recommended in Bhagavad-gita.

The whole process of the yoga system is to purify oneself. And what is this purification? Purification ensues upon the realization of one's actual identity. Purification is realizing that "I am pure spirit--I am not this matter." Due to material contact, we are identifying ourselves with matter, and we are thinking, "I am this body." But in order to perform real yoga one must realize his constitutional position as being distinct from matter. The purpose of seeking out a secluded place and executing the meditational process is to come to this understanding. It is not possible to come to this understanding if one executes the process improperly. In any case, this is the consideration of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu:

harer nama harer nama
harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nasty eva nasty eva
nasty eva gatir anyatha

"In this age of quarrel and disagreement [Kali-yuga], there is no other way of spiritual realization but this chanting of the names. There is no other way, there is no other way, there is no other way."

It is generally thought, at least in the Western world, that the yoga system involves meditating on the void. But the Vedic literatures do not recommend meditating on any void. Rather, the Vedas maintain that yoga means meditation on Visnu, and this is also maintained in Bhagavad-gita. In many yoga societies we find that people sit cross-legged and

very straight, then close their eyes to meditate, and so fifty percent of them go to sleep, because when we close our eyes and have no subject matter for contemplation, we simply go to sleep. Of course, this is not recommended by Sri Krsna in Bhagavad-gita. One must sit very straight, and the eyes be only half-closed, gazing at the tip of one's nose. If one does not follow the instructions, the result will be sleep and nothing more. Sometimes, of course, meditation goes on when one is sleeping, but this is not the recommended process for the execution of yoga. Thus, to keep oneself awake Krsna advises that one always keep the tip of the nose visible. In addition, one must be always undisturbed. If the mind is agitated or if there is a great deal of activity going on, one will not be able to concentrate. In meditational yoga one must also be devoid of fear. There is no question of fear when one enters spiritual life. And one must also be brahmachari, completely free from sex life. Nor can there be any demands on one meditating in this way. When there are no demands, and one executes this system properly, then he can control his mind. After one has met all the requirements for meditation, he must transfer his whole thought to Krsna, or Visnu. It is not that one is to transfer his thought to vacancy. Thus Krsna says that one absorbed in the meditational yoga system is "always thinking of Me."

The yogi obviously has to go through a great deal of difficulty to purify the atma (mind, body and soul), but it is a fact that this can be done most effectively in this age simply by the chanting of Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Why is this? Because this transcendental sound vibration is nondifferent from Krsna. When we chant His name with devotion, then Krsna is with us, and when Krsna is with us, then what is the possibility of remaining impure? Consequently, one absorbed in Krsna consciousness, in chanting the names of Krsna and serving Him always, receives the benefit of the highest form of yoga. The advantage is that he doesn't have to take all the trouble of the meditational process. That is the beauty of Krsna consciousness.

In yoga it is necessary to control all of the senses, and when all the senses are controlled, the mind must be engaged in thinking of Visnu. One becomes peaceful after thus conquering material life.

jitatmanah prasantasya
paramatma samahitah

"for one who has conquered the mind, the Supersoul is already reached, for he has attained tranquillity." (Bg. 6.7) This material world has been likened to a great forest fire. As in the forest, fire may automatically take place, so in this material world, although we may try to live peacefully, there is always a great conflagration. It is not possible to live in peace anywhere in the material world. But for one who is transcendently situated--either by the meditational yoga system or by the empirical philosophical method or by bhakti-yoga--peace is possible. All forms of yoga are meant for transcendental life, but the method of chanting is especially effective in this age. Kirtana may go on for hours, and one may not feel tired, but it is difficult to sit in lotus position perfectly still for more than a few minutes. Yet regardless of the process, once the fire of material life is extinguished, one does not simply experience what is called impersonal void. Rather, as Krsna tells Arjuna, one enters into the supreme abode.

yunjann evam sadatmanam
yogi niyata-manasah
santim nirvana-paramam
mat-samstham adhigacchati

"By meditating in this manner, always controlling the body, mind and activities, the mystic transcendentalist attains to the kingdom of God through cessation of material existence." (Bg. 6.15) Krsna's abode is not void. It is like an establishment, and in an establishment there is a variety of engagements. The successful yogi actually attains to the kingdom of God, where there is spiritual variegatedness. The yoga processes are simply ways to elevate oneself to enter into that abode. Actually we belong to that abode, but being forgetful, we are put in this material world. Just as a madman becomes crazy and is put into a lunatic asylum, so we, losing sight of our spiritual identity, become crazy and are put into this material world. Thus the material world is a sort of lunatic asylum, and we can easily notice that nothing is done very sanely here. Our real business is to get out and enter into the kingdom of God. In Bhagavad-gita Krsna gives information of this kingdom and also gives instructions about His position and our position--of what He is and what we are. All the information necessary is set forth in Bhagavad-gita, and a sane man will take advantage of this knowledge.

Chapter Four

Yoga as Body and Mind Control

Throughout Bhagavad-gita, Krsna was encouraging Arjuna to fight, for he was a warrior, and fighting was his duty. Although Krsna delineates the meditational yoga system in the Sixth Chapter, He does not stress it or encourage Arjuna to pursue it as his path. Krsna admits that this meditational process is very difficult:

sri-bhaga van uvaca
asamsayam maha-baho
mano durnigraham calam
abhyasena tu kaunteya
vairagyena ca grhyate

"The Blessed Lord said: O mighty-armed son of Kunti, it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by constant practice and by detachment." (Bg. 6.35) Here Krsna emphasizes practice and renunciation as ways to control the mind. But what is that renunciation? Today it is hardly possible for us to renounce anything, for we are so habituated to such a variety of material sense pleasures. Despite leading a life of uncontrolled sense indulgence, we attend yoga classes and expect to attain success. There are so many rules and regulations involved in the proper execution of yoga, and most of us can hardly give up a simple habit like smoking. In His discourse on the meditational yoga system, Krsna proclaims that yoga cannot be properly performed by one who eats too much or eats too

little. One who starves himself cannot properly perform yoga. Nor can the person who eats more than required. The eating process should be moderate, just enough to keep body and soul together; it should not be for the enjoyment of the tongue. When palatable dishes come before us, we are accustomed to take not just one of the preparations but two, three and four--and upwards. Our tongue is never satisfied. But it is not unusual in India to see a yogi take only a small spoonful of rice a day and nothing more. Nor can one execute the meditational yoga system if one sleeps too much or does not sleep sufficiently. Krsna does not say that there is such a thing as dreamless sleep. As soon as we go to sleep, we will have a dream, although we may not remember it. In the Gita Krsna cautions that one who dreams too much while sleeping cannot properly execute yoga. One should not sleep more than six hours daily. Nor can one infected by insomnia, who cannot sleep at night, successfully execute yoga, for the body must be kept fit. Thus Krsna outlines so many requirements for disciplining the body. All these requirements, however, can essentially be broken down into four basic rules: no illicit sexual connection, no intoxication, no meat-eating and no gambling. These are the four minimum regulations for the execution of any yoga system. And in this age who can refrain from these activities? We have to test ourselves accordingly to ascertain our success in yoga execution.

yogi yunjita satatam
atmanam rahasi sthitah
ekaki yata-cittatma
nirasir aparigraha

" A transcendentalist should always try to concentrate his mind on the Supreme Self; he should live alone in a secluded place and should always carefully control his mind. He should be free from desires and feelings of possessiveness." (Bg. 6.10) from this verse we can understand that it is the duty of the yogi to always remain alone. Meditational yoga cannot be performed in an assembly, at least not according to Bhagavad-gita. In the meditational system it is not possible to concentrate the mind upon the Supersoul except in a secluded place. In India, there are still many yogis who assemble at the Kumba Mela. Generally they are in seclusion, but on rare occasions they come to attend special functions. In India there are still thousands of yogis and sages, and every twelve years or so they meet in particular holy places--Allahabad, etc.--just as in America they have businessmen's conventions. The yogi, in addition to living in a secluded place, should also be free from desires and should not think that he is performing yoga to achieve some material powers. Nor should he accept gifts or favors from people. If he is properly executing this meditational yoga, he stays alone in the jungles, forests or mountains and avoids society altogether. At all times he must be convinced for whom he has become a yogi. He does not consider himself alone because at all times the Paramatma--Supersoul--is with him. from this we can see that in modern civilization it is indeed very difficult to execute this meditational form of yoga properly. Contemporary civilization in this age of Kali has actually made it impossible for us to be alone, to be desireless and to be possessionless.

The method of executing meditational yoga is further explained in considerable detail by Krsna to Arjuna. Sri Krsna says,

sucrau dese pratisthapyā
sthīram asanam atmanah
naty-ucchritam nati-nīcam
cailajina-kusottaram
tatraikagram manah krtva
yata-cittendriya-kriyah
upa visyasane yunjyad
yogam atma-visuddhaye

"To practice yoga, one should go to a secluded place and should lay kusa grass on the ground and then cover it with a deerskin and a soft cloth. The seat should be neither too high nor too low and should be situated in a sacred place. The yogi should then sit on it very firmly and should practice yoga by controlling the mind and the senses, purifying the heart and fixing the mind on one point." (Bg. 6.11-12) Generally yogis sit on tigerskin or deerskin because reptiles will not crawl on such skins to disturb their meditations. It seems that in God's creation there is a use for everything. Every grass and herb has its use and serves some function, although we may not know what it is. So in Bhagavad-gita Krsna has made some provision whereby the yogi doesn't have to worry about snakes. Having acquired a good sitting place in a secluded environment, the yogi begins to purify the atma--body, mind and soul. The yogi should not think, "Now I will try to achieve some wonderful powers." Sometimes yogis do attain certain siddhis, or powers, but these are not the purpose of yoga, and real yogis do not exhibit them. The real yogi thinks, "I am now contaminated by this material atmosphere, so now I must purify myself."

We can quickly see that controlling the mind and body is not such an easy thing and that we cannot control them as easily as we can go to the store and purchase something. But Krsna indicates that these rules can be easily followed when we are in Krsna consciousness.

Of course everyone is motivated by sex life, but sex life is not actually discouraged. We have this material body, and as long as we have it, sex desire will be there. Similarly, as long as we have the body, we must eat to maintain it, and we must sleep in order to give it rest. We cannot expect to negate these activities, but the Vedic literatures do give us guidelines for regulation in eating, sleeping, mating, etc. If we at all expect success in the yoga system, we cannot allow our unbridled senses to take us down the paths of sense objects; therefore guidelines are set up. Lord Sri Krsna is advising that the mind can be controlled through regulation. If we do not regulate our activities, our mind will be more and more agitated. It is not that activities are to be stopped, but regulated by the mind always engaged in Krsna consciousness. Being always engaged in some activity connected with Krsna is actual samadhi. It is not that when one is in samadhi he doesn't eat, work, sleep or enjoy himself in any way. Rather, samadhi can be defined as executing regulated activities while absorbed in the thought of Krsna.

asamyatatmana yogo
dusprapa iti me matih

vasyatmana tu yatata
sakyo 'vaptum upayatah

"for one whose mind is unbridled," Krsna further says, "self-realization is difficult work." (Bg. 6.36) Anyone knows that an unbridled horse is dangerous to ride. He can go in any direction at any speed, and his rider is likely to come to some harm. Insofar as the mind is unbridled, Krsna agrees with Arjuna that the yoga system is very difficult work indeed. "But," Krsna adds, "he whose mind is controlled and strives by right means is assured of success. That is My judgment." (Bg. 6.36) What is meant by "strives by right means"? One has to try to follow the four basic regulative principles as mentioned and execute his activities absorbed in Krsna consciousness.

If one wants to engage in yoga at home, then he has to make certain that his other engagements are moderate. He cannot spend long hours of the day working hard to simply earn a livelihood. One should work very moderately, eat very moderately, gratify the senses very moderately and keep his life as free from anxiety as possible. In this way practice of yoga may be successful.

What is the sign by which we can tell that one has attained perfection in yoga? Krsna indicates that one is situated in yoga when his consciousness is completely under his control.

yada viniyatam cittam
atmany evavatisthate
nisprah sarva-kamebhyo
yukta ity ucyate tada

"When the yogi, by practice of yoga, disciplines his mental activities and becomes situated in Transcendence--devoid of all material desires--he is said to have attained yoga." (Bg. 6.18) One who has attained yoga is not dependent on the dictations of his mind; rather, the mind comes under his control. Nor is the mind put out or extinguished, for it is the business of the yogi to think of Krsna, or Visnu, always. The yogi cannot allow his mind to go out. This may sound very difficult, but it is possible in Krsna consciousness. When one is always engaged in Krsna consciousness, in the service of Krsna, then how is it possible for the mind to wander away from Krsna? In the service of Krsna, the mind is automatically controlled.

Nor should the yogi have any desire for material sense gratification. If one is in Krsna consciousness, he has no desire other than Krsna. It is not possible to become desireless. The desire for sense gratification must be overcome by the process of purification, but desire for Krsna should be cultivated. It is simply that we have to transfer the desire. There is no question of killing desire, for desire is the constant companion of the living entity. Krsna consciousness is the process by which one purifies his desires; instead of desiring so many things for sense gratification, one simply desires things for the service of Krsna. For example, we may desire palatable food, but instead of preparing foodstuffs for ourselves, we can prepare them for Krsna and offer them to Him. It is not that the action is different, but there is a transfer of consciousness from thinking of acting for my senses to thinking of acting for Krsna. We may prepare nice milk products, vegetables, grains, fruits and other vegetarian dishes for Krsna and

then offer them to Him, praying, "This material body is a lump of ignorance and the senses are a network of paths leading to death. Of all the senses the tongue is the most voracious and difficult to control. It is very difficult to conquer the tongue in this world; therefore Sri Krsna has given us this nice prasada, spiritual food, to conquer the tongue. So let us take this prasada to our full satisfaction and glorify Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha and Krsna and in love call for the help of Lord Caitanya and Nityananda Prabhu." In this way our karma is sacrificed, for from the very beginning we are thinking that the food is being offered to Krsna. We should have no personal desires for the food. Krsna is so merciful, however, that he gives us the food to eat. In this way our desire is fulfilled. When one has molded his life in such a way--dovetailing his desires to Krsna's--then it is to be understood that he has attained perfection in yoga. Simply breathing deeply and doing some exercises is not yoga as far as Bhagavad-gita is concerned. A whole purification of consciousness is required.

In the execution of yoga, it is very important that the mind is not agitated.

yatha dipo nivata-stho
nengate sopama smrta
yogino yata-cittasya
yunjato yogam atmanah

"As a lamp in a windless place does not waver, so the transcendentalist, whose mind is controlled, remains always steady in his meditation on the transcendent self." (Bg. 6.19) When a candle is in a windless place, its flame remains straight and does not waver. The mind, like the flame, is susceptible to so many material desires that with the slightest agitation it will move. A little movement of the mind can change the whole consciousness. Therefore in India one seriously practicing yoga traditionally remained brahmacari, or celibate. There are two kinds of brahmacari: one is completely celibate and the other is grhastha-brahmacari, that is to say he has a wife, he does not associate with any other woman, and his relations with his own wife are strictly regulated. In this way, either by complete celibacy or restricted sex life, one's mind is kept from being agitated. Yet when one takes a vow to remain a complete celibate, his mind may still be agitated by sexual desire; therefore in India those practicing the traditional yoga under strict vows of celibacy are not allowed to sit alone even with a mother, sister or daughter. The mind is so fickle that the slightest suggestion can create havoc.

The yogi should have his mind trained in such a way that as soon as his mind wanders from meditation on Visnu, he drags it back again. This requires a great deal of practice. One must come to know that his real happiness is in experiencing the pleasure of his transcendental senses, not the material senses. Senses are not to be sacrificed, and desires are not to be sacrificed, but there are both desires and sense satisfaction in the spiritual sphere. Real happiness is transcendental to material, sensual experience. If one is not convinced of this, he will surely be agitated and will fall down. One should therefore know that the happiness he is trying to derive from material senses is not really happiness.

Those who are actually yogis truly enjoy, but how do they enjoy? Ramante yogino 'nante--their enjoyment is unlimited, that unlimited enjoyment is real happiness, and such happiness is spiritual, not material. This is the real meaning of Rama, as in the chant Hare Rama. Rama means enjoyment through spiritual life. Spiritual life is all pleasure, and Krsna is all pleasure. We do not have to sacrifice pleasure, but we do have to enjoy it properly. A diseased man cannot enjoy life; his enjoyment of life is a false enjoyment. But when he is cured and is healthy, then he is able to enjoy. Similarly, as long as we are in the material conception of life, we are not actually enjoying ourselves but are simply becoming more and more entangled in material nature. If a sick man is not supposed to eat, his eating unrestrictedly actually kills him. Similarly, the more we increase material enjoyment, the more we become entangled in this world, and the more difficult it becomes to get free from the material entrapment. All of the systems of yoga are meant to disentangle the conditioned soul from this entrapment, to transfer him from the false enjoyment of material things to the actual enjoyment of Krsna consciousness. Sri Krsna says,

yatroparamate cittam
 niruddham yoga-sevaya
 yatra caivatmanatmanam
 pasyann atmani tusyati
 sukham atyantikam yat tad
 buddhi-grahyam atindriyam
 vetti yatra na caivayam
 sthitas calati tattvatah
 yam labdhva caparam labham
 manyate nadhikam tatah
 yasmin sthito na dukkhena
 gurunapi vicalyate
 tam vidyad dukkha-samyoga-
 viyogam yoga-samjnitam

"In the stage of perfection called trance, or samadhi, one's mind is completely restrained from material mental activities by practice of yoga. This is characterized by one's ability to see the self by the pure mind and to relish and rejoice in the self. In that joyous state, one is situated in boundless transcendental happiness and enjoys himself through transcendental senses. Established thus, one never departs from the truth, and upon gaining this he thinks there is no greater gain. Being situated in such a position, one is never shaken, even in the midst of greatest difficulty. This indeed is actual freedom from all miseries arising from material contact." (Bg. 6.20-23) One form of yoga may be difficult and another may be easy, but in all cases one must purify his existence to the conception of Krsna conscious enjoyment. Then one will be happy.

yada hi nendriyarthesu
 na karmasv anusajjate
 sarva-sankalpa-sannyasi
 yogarudhas tadocyate
 uddhared atmanatmanam
 natmanam a vasadayet

atmaiva hy atmano bandhur
atmaiva ripur atmanah

"A person is said to have attained to yoga when, having renounced all material desires, he neither acts for sense gratification nor engages in fruitive activities. A man must elevate himself by his own mind, not degrade himself. The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well." (Bg. 6.4-5) We have to raise ourselves to the spiritual standard by ourselves. In this sense I am my own friend and I am my own enemy. The opportunity is ours. There is a very nice verse by Canakya Pandita: "No one is anyone's friend, no one is anyone's enemy. It is only by behavior that one can understand who is his friend and who is his enemy." No one is born our enemy, and no one is born our friend. These roles are determined by mutual behavior. As we have dealings with others in ordinary affairs, in the same way the individual has dealings with himself. I may act as my own friend or as an enemy. As a friend, I can understand my position as spirit soul and, seeing that somehow or other I have come into contact with material nature, try to get free from material entanglement by acting in such a way as to disentangle myself. In this case I am my friend. But if even after getting this opportunity I do not take it, then I should be considered my own worst enemy.

bandhur atmatmanas tasya
yenatmaivatmana jitah
anatmanas tu satrutve
vartetatmaiva satruvat

"for he who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his very mind will be the greatest enemy." (Bg. 6.6) How is it possible for one to become his own friend? This is explained here. Atma means "mind," "body" and "soul." When we speak of atma, insofar as we are in the bodily conception, we refer to the body. However, when we transcend the bodily conception and rise to the mental platform, atma refers to the mind. But actually when we are situated on the truly spiritual platform, then atma refers to the soul. In actuality we are pure spirit. In this way, according to one's spiritual development, the meaning of the word atma differs. As far as the Nirukti Vedic dictionary is concerned, atma refers to body, mind and soul. However, in this verse of Bhagavad-gita, atma refers to mind.

If, through yoga, the mind can be trained, then the mind is our friend. But if the mind is left untrained, then there is no possibility of leading a successful life. For one who has no idea of spiritual life, the mind is the enemy. If one thinks that he is simply the body, his mind will not be working for his benefit; it will simply be acting to serve the gross body and to further condition the living entity and entrap him in material nature. If, however, one understands one's position as spirit soul apart from the body, the mind can be a liberating factor. In itself, the mind has nothing to do; it is simply waiting to be trained, and it is best trained through association. Desire is the function of the mind, and one desires according to his association; so if the mind is to act as friend, there must be good association.

"Perfection of Yoga" by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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The best association is a sadhu, that is, a Krsna conscious person or one who is striving for spiritual realization. There are those who are striving for temporary things (asat). Matter and the body are temporary, and if one only engages himself for bodily pleasure, he is conditioned by temporary things. But if he engages himself in self-realization, then he is engaged in something permanent (sat). Obviously if one is intelligent he will associate with those who are trying to elevate themselves to the platform of self-realization through one of the various forms of yoga. The result will be that those who are sadhu, or realized, will be able to sever his attachment to material association. This is the great advantage of good association. for instance, Krsna speaks Bhagavad-gita to Arjuna just to cut off his attachment to this material affection. Because Arjuna is attracted to things that are impeding the execution of his own duty, Krsna severs these things. To cut something, a sharp instrument is required; and to cut the mind from its attachments, sharp words are often required. The sadhu or teacher shows no mercy in using sharp words to sever the student's mind from material attractions. By speaking the truth uncompromisingly, he is able to sever the bondage. for example, at the very beginning of Bhagavad-gita Krsna speaks sharply to Arjuna by telling him that although he speaks like a learned man, he is actually fool number one. If we actually want detachment from this material world, we should be prepared to accept such cutting words from the spiritual master. Compromise and flattery have no effect where strong words are required.

In Bhagavad-gita the material conception of life is condemned in so many places. One who thinks the country in which he is born is worshipable, or one who goes to holy places and yet ignores the sadhus there, is likened unto an ass. As an enemy is always thinking of doing

harm, so the untrained mind will drag one deeper and deeper into material entanglement. Conditioned souls struggle very hard with the mind and with the other senses. Since the mind directs the other senses, it is of utmost importance to make the mind the friend.

jitatmanah prasantasya
paramatma samahitah
sitosna-sukha-duhkhesu
tatha manapamanayoh

"For one who has conquered the mind, the Supersoul is already reached, for he has attained tranquillity. To such a man happiness and distress, heat and cold, honor and dishonor are all the same." (Bg. 6.7) By training the mind, one actually attains tranquillity, for the mind is always dragging us over nonpermanent things, just as an unbridled horse will pull a chariot on a perilous course. Although we are permanent and eternal, somehow or other we have become attracted to nonpermanent things. But the mind can be easily trained if it is simply fixed on Krsna. Just as a fort is safe when it is defended by a great general, if Krsna is placed in the fort of the mind, there will be no possibility of the enemy's entering. Material education, wealth and power will not help one to control the mind. A great devotee prays, "When will I be able to think of You constantly? My mind is always dragging me about, but as soon as I am able to fix my mind on the lotus feet of Krsna, it becomes clear." When the mind is clear, it is possible to meditate on the Supersoul. The Paramatma, or Supersoul, is always seated within the heart along with the individual soul. The yoga system involves concentrating the mind and focusing it on the Paramatma, or Supersoul, seated within the heart. The previously quoted verse from Bhagavad-gita indicates that one who has conquered the mind and has overcome all attachment to nonpermanent things can be absorbed in thought of the Paramatma. One so absorbed becomes free from all duality and false designations.

Chapter Five

Yoga as Freedom from Duality and Designation

This material world is a world of duality--at one moment we are subjected to the heat of the summer season and at the next moment the cold of winter. Or at one moment we're happy and at the next moment distressed. At one moment honored, at the next dishonored. In the material world of duality, it is impossible to understand one thing without understanding its opposite. It is not possible to understand what honor is unless I understand dishonor. Similarly, I cannot understand what misery is if I have never tasted happiness. Nor can I understand what happiness is unless I have tasted misery. One has to transcend such dualities, but as long as this body is here these dualities will be here also. Insofar as one strives to get out of bodily conceptions--not out of the body but out of bodily conceptions--one has to learn to tolerate such dualities. In the Second Chapter of Bhagavad-gita Krsna informs Arjuna that the duality of distress and happiness is

due to the body alone. It's like a skin disease, or skin itch. Just because there is itching, one should not be mad after it to scratch it. We should not go mad or give up our duty just because mosquitoes bite us. There are so many dualities one has to tolerate, but if the mind is fixed in Krsna consciousness, all these dualities will seem insignificant.

How is it one can tolerate such dualities?

jnana-vijnana-trptatma
kuta-stho vijitendriyah
yukta ity ucyate yogi
sama-lostrasma-kancanah

"A person is said to be established in self-realization and is called a yogi (or mystic) when he is fully satisfied by virtue of acquired knowledge and realization. Such a person is situated in transcendence and is self-controlled. He sees everything--whether it be pebbles, stones or gold--as the same." (Bg. 6.8) Jnana means theoretical knowledge, and vijnana refers to practical knowledge. For instance, a science student has to study theoretical scientific conceptions as well as applied science. Theoretical knowledge alone will not help. One has to be able to also apply this knowledge. Similarly, in yoga one should have not only theoretical knowledge but practical knowledge. Simply understanding "I am not this body" and at the same time acting in a nonsensical way will not help. There are so many societies where the members seriously discuss Vedanta philosophy while smoking and drinking and enjoying a sensual life. It will not help if one only has knowledge theoretically. This knowledge must be demonstrated. One who truly understands "I am not this body" will actually reduce his bodily necessities to a minimum. When one increases the demands of the body while thinking "I am not this body," then of what use is that knowledge? A person can only be satisfied when there is jnana and vijnana side by side.

When a person is situated on the practical level of spiritual realization, it should be understood he is actually situated in yoga. It is not that one should continue to attend yoga classes and yet remain the same throughout his life; there must be practical realization. And what is the sign of that practical realization? The mind will be calm and quiet and no longer agitated by the attraction of the material world. Thus self-controlled, one is not attracted by the material glitter, and he sees everything--pebbles, stones or gold--as the same. In the material civilization, so much paraphernalia is produced just to satisfy the senses. These things are produced under the banner of material advancement. He who is situated in yoga sees such paraphernalia as just so much rubbish in the street. Moreover,

suhrn-mitravy-udasina-
madhyastha-dvesya-bandhusu
sadhusv api ca papesu
sama-buddhir visisyate

"A person is said to be still further advanced when he regards all--the honest well-wisher, friends and enemies, the envious, the pious, the sinner and those who are indifferent and impartial--with an equal

mind." (Bg. 6.9) There are different kinds of friends. There is suhrt, who is by nature a well-wisher and is always desiring one's welfare. Mitra refers to an ordinary friend, and udasina is one who is neutral. In this material world someone may be my well-wisher, friend or neither friend nor enemy but neutral. Someone else may serve as a mediator between me and my enemies, and in this verse he is called madhya-stha. One may also see someone as pious and another as sinful according to his own calculations. But when he is situated in transcendence, all of these--friends, enemies or whatever--cease to exist. When one becomes actually learned, he does not see any enemy or any friend because in actuality "no one is my enemy, no one is my friend, no one is my father, no one is my mother, etc." We are all simply living entities playing on a stage in the dress of father, mother, children, friend, enemy, sinner and saint, etc. It is like a great drama with so many characters playing their parts. However, on the stage a person may be an enemy or whatever, but off the stage all the actors are friends. Similarly, with these bodies we are playing on the stage of material nature, and we attach so many designations to one another. I may be thinking, "This is my son," but in actuality I cannot beget any son. It is not possible. At the utmost I can only beget a body. It is not within any man's power to beget a living entity. Merely by sexual intercourse a living entity cannot be begotten. The living entity must be placed in the emulsification of secretions. This is the verdict of Srimad-Bhagavatam. Thus all the multifarious relationships between bodies are just so much stage play. One who is actually realized and has actually attained yoga no longer sees these bodily distinctions.

Chapter Six

The Fate of the Unsuccessful Yogi

It is not that Bhagavad-gita rejects the meditational yoga process; it recognizes it as a bona fide method, but it further indicates that it is not possible in this age. Thus the subject in the Sixth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita is quickly dropped by Sri Krsna and Arjuna. Arjuna next asks,

ayatih sraddhayopeto
 yogac calita-manasah
 aprapya yoga-samsiddhim
 kam gatim krsna gacchati

"What is the destination of the man of faith who does not persevere, who in the beginning takes to the process of self-realization but who later desists due to worldly-mindedness and thus does not attain perfection in mysticism?" (Bg. 6.37) In other words, he is asking what becomes of the unsuccessful yogi, or the person who attempts to perform yoga but somehow desists and does not succeed. It is something like a student who does not get his degree because he drops out of school. Elsewhere in the Gita, Sri Krsna points out to Arjuna that out of many men, few strive for perfection, and out of those who strive for perfection, only a few succeed. So Arjuna is inquiring after the vast

number of failures. Even if a man has faith and strives for perfection in the yoga system, Arjuna points out that he may not attain this perfection due to "worldly-mindedness."

kaccin nobhaya-vibhrastas
chinnabhram iva nasyati
apratistho maha-baho
vimudho brahmanah pathi

"O mighty-armed Krsna," Arjuna continues, "does not such a man, being deviated from the path of Transcendence, perish like a riven cloud, with no position in any sphere?" (Bg. 6.38) When a cloud is torn apart by the wind, it does not mend back together again.

etan me samsayam krsna
chettum arhasy asesatah
tvad-anyah samsayasyasya
chetta na hy upapadyate

"This is my doubt, O Krsna, and I ask You to dispel it completely. But for Yourself, no one is to be found who can destroy this doubt." (Bg. 6.39) Arjuna is asking this question about the fate of the unsuccessful yogi so that in the future people would not be discouraged. By a yogi, Arjuna is referring to the hatha-yogi, jnana-yogi and bhakti-yogi; it is not that meditation is the only form of yoga. The meditator, the philosopher and the devotee are all to be considered yogis. Arjuna is questioning for all those who are attempting to become successful transcendentalists. And how does Sri Krsna answer him?

sri-bhagavan uvaca
artha naiveha namutra
vinasas tasya vidyate
na hi kalyana-krt kascid
durgatim tata gacchati

Here, as in many other places throughout the Gita, Sri Krsna is referred to as Bhagavan. This is another of the Lord's innumerable names. Bhagavan indicates that Krsna is the proprietor of six opulences: He possesses all beauty, all wealth, all power, all fame, all knowledge and all renunciation. Living entities partake of these opulences in finite degrees. One may be famous in a family, in a town, in a country or on one planet, but no one is famous throughout the creation, as is Sri Krsna. The leaders of the world may be famous for a few years only, but Lord Sri Krsna appeared five thousand years ago and is still being worshiped. So one who possesses all six of these opulences in completeness is considered to be God. In Bhagavad-gita Krsna speaks to Arjuna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and as such it is to be understood that He has complete knowledge. Bhagavad-gita was imparted to the sun-god and to Arjuna by Krsna, but nowhere is it mentioned that Bhagavad-gita was imparted to Krsna. Why? Complete knowledge means that He knows everything that is to be known. This is an attribute of God alone. Being that Krsna knows everything, Arjuna is putting this question to Him about the fate of the unsuccessful yogi. There is no possibility for Arjuna to research the truth. He simply has to receive

the truth from the complete source, and this is the system of disciplic succession. Krsna is complete, and the knowledge that comes from Krsna is also complete. If Arjuna receives this complete knowledge and we receive it from Arjuna as it was spoken to him, then we also receive complete knowledge. And what is this knowledge? "The Blessed Lord said: Son of Prtha, a transcendentalist engaged in auspicious activities does not meet with destruction either in this world or in the spiritual world; one who does good, My friend, is never overcome by evil." (Bg. 6.40) Here Krsna indicates that the very striving for yoga perfection is a most auspicious attempt. When one attempts something so auspicious, he is never degraded.

Actually Arjuna is asking a very appropriate and intelligent question. It is not unusual for one to fall down from the platform of devotional service. Sometimes a neophyte devotee does not keep the rules and regulations. Sometimes he yields to intoxication or is trapped by some feminine attractions. These are impediments on the path of yoga perfection. But Sri Krsna gives an encouraging answer, for He tells Arjuna that even if one sincerely cultivates only one-percent worth of spiritual knowledge, he will never fall down into the material whirlpool. That is due to the sincerity of his effort. It should always be understood that we are weak and that the material energy is very strong. To adopt spiritual life is more or less to declare war against the material energy. The material energy is trying to entrap the conditioned soul as much as possible, and when the conditioned soul tries to get out of her clutches by spiritual advancement of knowledge, material nature becomes more stringent and vigorous in her efforts to test how much the aspiring spiritualist is sincere. The material energy, or maya, will then offer more allurements.

In this regard, there is the story of Visvamitra Muni, a great king, a ksatriya, who renounced his kingdom and took to the yoga process in order to become more spiritually advanced. At that time the meditational yoga process was possible to execute. Visvamitra Muni meditated so intently that Indra, the King of heaven, noticed him and thought, "This man is trying to occupy my post." The heavenly planets are also material, and there is competition--no businessman wants another businessman to exceed him. Fearing that Visvamitra Muni would actually depose him, Indra sent one heavenly society girl, named Menaka, to allure him sexually. Menaka was naturally very beautiful, and she was intent on disrupting the muni's meditations. Indeed, he became aware of her feminine presence upon hearing the sound of her bangles, and he immediately looked up from his meditation, saw her, and became captivated by her beauty. As a result, the beautiful girl Sakuntala was born by their conjugation. When Sakuntala was born, Visvamitra lamented: "Oh, I was just trying to cultivate spiritual knowledge, and again I have been entrapped." He was about to flee when Menaka brought his beautiful daughter before him and chastised him. Despite her pleading, Visvamitra resolved to leave anyway.

Thus there is every chance of failure on the yogic path; even a great sage like Visvamitra Muni can fall down due to material allurements. Although the muni fell for the time being, he again resolved to go on with the yoga process, and this should be our resolve. Krsna informs us that such failures should not be cause for despair. There is the famous proverb that "failure is the pillar of success." In the spiritual life especially, failure is not discouraging. Krsna very

clearly states that even if there is failure, there is no loss either in this world or in the next. One who takes to this auspicious line of spiritual culture is never completely vanquished.

Now what actually happens to the unsuccessful spiritualist? Sri Krsna specifically explains,

prapya punya-krtam lokan
usitva sasvatih samah
sucinam srimatam gehe
yoga-bhrasto 'bhijayate
athava yoginam eva
kule bhavati dhimatam
etad dhi durlabhataram
loke janma yad idrsam

"The unsuccessful yogi, after many, many years of enjoyment on the planets of the pious living entities, is born into a family of righteous people, or into a family of rich aristocracy. Or he takes his birth in a family of transcendentalists who are surely great in wisdom. Verily, such a birth is rare in this world." (Bg. 6.41-42) There are many planets in the universe, and on the higher planets there are greater comforts, the duration of life is longer, and the inhabitants are more religious and godly. Since it is said that six months on earth is equal to one day on the higher planets, the unsuccessful yogi stays on these higher planets for many, many years. Vedic literatures describe their lifetimes as lasting ten thousand years. So even if one is a failure, he is promoted to these higher planets. But one cannot remain there perpetually. When the fruits or the results of one's pious activities expire, he has to return to earth. Yet even upon returning to this planet, the unsuccessful yogi meets with fortunate circumstances, for he takes his birth in either a very rich family or a pious one.

Generally, according to the law of karma, if one enacts pious deeds, he is rewarded in the next life by birth into a very aristocratic family or into a very wealthy family, or he becomes a great scholar, or he is born very beautiful. In any case, those who sincerely begin spiritual life are guaranteed human birth in the next life--not only human birth, but birth into either a very pious or a very wealthy family. Thus one with such a good birth should understand that his fortune is due to his previous pious activities and to God's grace. These facilities are given by the Lord, who is always willing to give us the means to attain Him. Krsna simply wants to see that we are sincere. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam it is stated that every particular person has his own duty in life, regardless of his position and regardless of his society. If, however, he gives up his prescribed duty and somehow--either out of sentiment or association or craziness or whatever--takes shelter of Krsna, and if, due to his immaturity, he falls from the devotional path, still there is no loss for him. On the other hand, if a person executes his duties perfectly but does not approach God, then what does he earn? His life is indeed without benefit. But a person who has approached Krsna is better situated, even though he may fall down from the yogic platform.

Krsna further indicates that of all good families to be born into--families of successful merchants or philosophers or meditators--the best is the family of yogis. One who takes birth in a very rich family may be

misled. It is normal for a man who is given great riches to try to enjoy those riches; thus rich men's sons often become drunkards or prostitute hunters. Similarly, one who takes birth in a pious family or in a brahminical family often becomes very puffed up and proud, thinking, "I am a brahmana; I am a pious man." There is chance of degradation in both rich and pious families, but one who takes birth in a family of yogis or of devotees has a much better chance of cultivating again that spiritual life from which he has fallen. Krsna tells Arjuna,

tatra tam buddhi-samyogam
labhate paurva-dehikam
yatate ca tato bhuyah
samsiddhau kuru-nandana

"On taking such a birth, he again revives the divine consciousness of his previous life, and he tries to make further progress in order to achieve complete success, O son of Kuru." (Bg. 6.43)

Being born in a family of those who execute yoga or devotional service, one remembers his spiritual activities executed in his previous life. Anyone who takes to Krsna consciousness seriously is not an ordinary person; he must have taken to the same process in his previous life. Why is this?

purvabhyasena tenaiva
hriyate hy avaso 'pi sah

"By virtue of the divine consciousness of his previous life, he automatically becomes attracted to the yogic principles--even without seeking them." (Bg. 6.44) In the material world, we have experience that we do not carry our assets from one life to another. I may have millions of dollars in the bank, but as soon as my body is finished, my bank balance is also. At death, the bank balance does not go with me; it remains in the bank to be enjoyed by somebody else. This is not the case with spiritual culture. Even if one enacts a very small amount on the spiritual platform, he takes that with him to his next life, and he picks up again from that point.

When one picks up this knowledge that was interrupted, he should know that he should now finish the balance and complete the yogic process. One should not take the chance of finishing up the process in another birth but should resolve to finish it in this life. We should be determined in this way: "Somehow or other in my last life, I did not finish my spiritual cultivation. Now Krsna has given me another opportunity, so let me finish it up in this life." Thus after leaving this body one will not again take birth in this material world, where birth, old age, disease and death are omnipresent, but will return to Krsna. One who takes shelter under the lotus feet of Krsna sees this material world simply as a place of danger. For one who takes to spiritual culture, this material world is actually unfit. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati used to say, "This place is not fit for a gentleman." Once one has approached Krsna and has attempted to make spiritual progress, Krsna, who is situated within the heart, begins to give directions. In the Gita, Sri Krsna says that for one who wants to remember Him, He gives remembrance, and for one who wants to forget Him, He allows him to forget.

Chapter Seven

Yoga as Reestablishing Relations with Krsna

We have heard many times of the yoga system. The yoga system is approved by Bhagavad-gita, but the yoga system in Bhagavad-gita is especially meant for purification. The aim is threefold: to control the senses, to purify activities and to link oneself to Krsna in a reciprocal relationship.

The Absolute Truth is realized in three stages: impersonal Brahman, localized Paramatma (Supersoul) and ultimately Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In the final analysis, the Supreme Absolute Truth is a person. Simultaneously He is the all-pervading Supersoul within the hearts of all living entities and within the core of all atoms, and He is the brahmajyoti, or the effulgence of spiritual light, as well. Bhagavan Sri Krsna is full of all opulence as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but at the same time He is full of all renunciation. In the material world we find that one who has much opulence is not very much inclined to give it up, but Krsna is not like this. He can renounce everything and remain complete in Himself.

When we read or study Bhagavad-gita under a bona fide spiritual master we should not think that the spiritual master is presenting his own opinions. It is not he who is speaking. He is just an instrument. The real speaker is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is both within and without. At the beginning of His discourse on the yoga system in the Sixth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita, Sri Krsna says,

anasritah karma-phalam
karyam karma karoti yah
sa sannyasi ca yogi ca
na niragnir na cakriyah

"One who is unattached to the fruits of his work and who works as he is obligated is in the renounced order of life, and he is the true mystic; not he who lights no fire and performs no work." (Bg. 6.1) Everyone is working and expecting some result. One may ask, What is the purpose of working if no result is expected? A remuneration or salary is always demanded by the worker. But here Krsna indicates that one can work out of a sense of duty alone, not expecting the results of his activities. If one works in this way, then he is actually a sannyasi; he is in the renounced order of life.

According to Vedic culture, there are four stages of life: brahmacari, grhastha, vanaprastha and sannyasa. Brahmacari is student life devoted to training in spiritual understanding. Grhastha life is married householder life. Then upon reaching the approximate age of fifty, one may take the vanaprastha order--that is, he leaves his home and children and travels with his wife to holy places of pilgrimage. finally he gives up both wife and children and remains alone to cultivate Krsna consciousness, and that stage is called sannyasa, or the renounced order of life. Yet Krsna indicates that for a sannyasi, renunciation is not all. In addition, there must be some duty. What then

is the duty for a sannyasi, for one who has renounced family life and no longer has material obligations? His duty is a most responsible one; it is to work for Krsna. Moreover, this is the real duty for everyone in all stages of life.

In everyone's life there are two duties: one is to serve the illusion, and the other is to serve the reality. When one serves the reality, he is a real sannyasi. And when one serves the illusion, he is deluded by maya. One has to understand, however, that he is in all circumstances forced to serve. Either he serves the illusion or the reality. The constitutional position of the living entity is to be a servant, not a master. One may think that he is the master, but he is actually a servant. When one has a family he may think that he is the master of his wife, or his children, or his home, business and so on, but that is all false. One is actually the servant of his wife, of his children and of his business. The president may be considered the master of the country, but actually he is the servant of the country. Our position is always as servant--either as servant of the illusion or as servant of God. If, however, we remain the servant of the illusion, then our life is wasted. Of course everyone is thinking that he is not a servant, that he is working only for himself. Although the fruits of his labor are transient and illusory, they force him to become a servant of illusion, or a servant of his own senses. But when one awakens to his transcendental senses and actually becomes situated in knowledge, he then becomes a servant of the reality. When one comes to the platform of knowledge, he understands that in all circumstances he is a servant. Since it is not possible for him to be master, he is much better situated serving the reality instead of the illusion. When one becomes aware of this, he attains the platform of real knowledge. By sannyasa, the renounced order of life, we refer to one who has come to this platform. Sannyasa is a question of realization, not social status.

It is the duty of everyone to become Krsna conscious and to serve the cause of Krsna. When one actually realizes this he becomes a mahatma, or a great soul. In Bhagavad-gita Krsna says that after many births, when one comes to the platform of real knowledge, he "surrenders unto Me." Why is this? Vasudevah sarvam iti. The wise man realizes that "Vasudeva [Krsna] is everything." However, Krsna says that such a great soul is rarely found. Why is this? If an intelligent person comes to understand that the ultimate goal of life is to surrender unto Krsna, why should he hesitate? Why not surrender immediately? What is the point in waiting for so many births? When one comes to that point of surrender, he becomes a real sannyasi. Krsna never forces anyone to surrender unto Him. Surrender is a result of love, transcendental love. Where there is force and where there is no freedom, there can be no love. When a mother loves a child, she is not forced to do so, nor does she do so out of expectation of some salary or remuneration.

Similarly, we can love the Supreme Lord in so many ways--we can love Him as master, as friend, as child or as husband. There are five basic rasas, or relationships, in which we are eternally related to God. When we are actually in the liberated stage of knowledge, we can understand that our relationship with the Lord is in a particular rasa. That platform is called svarupa-siddhi, or real self-realization. Everyone has an eternal relationship with the Lord, either as master and servant, friend and friend, parent and child, husband and wife, or lover and beloved. These relationships are eternally present. The whole

process of spiritual realization and the actual perfection of yoga is to revive our consciousness of this relationship. At present our relationship with the Supreme Lord is pervertedly reflected in this material world. In the material world, the relationship between master and servant is based on money or force or exploitation. There is no question of service out of love. The relationship between master and servant, pervertedly reflected, continues only for so long as the master can pay the servant. As soon as the payment stops, the relationship also stops. Similarly, in the material world there may be a relationship between friends, but as soon as there is a slight disagreement, the friendship breaks, and the friend becomes an enemy. When there is a difference of opinion between son and parents, the son leaves home, and the relationship is severed. The same with husband and wife; a slight difference of opinion, and there is divorce.

No relationship in this material world is actual or eternal. We must always remember that these ephemeral relationships are simply perverted reflections of that eternal relationship we have with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We have experience that the reflection of an object in a glass is not real. It may appear real, but when we go to touch it we find that there is only glass. We must come to understand that these relationships as friend, parent, child, master, servant, husband, wife or lover are simply reflections of that relationship we have with God. When we come to this platform of understanding, then we are perfect in knowledge. When that knowledge comes, we begin to understand that we are servants of Krsna and that we have an eternal love relationship with Him.

In this love relationship there is no question of remuneration, but of course remuneration is there, and it is much greater than whatever we earn here through the rendering of service. There is no limit to Sri Krsna's remuneration. In this connection there is the story of Bali Maharaja, a very powerful king who conquered a number of planets. The denizens of the heavenly planets appealed to the Supreme Lord to save them, for they had been conquered by the demoniac king, Bali Maharaja. Upon hearing their pleas, Sri Krsna took the shape of a dwarf brahmana boy and approached Bali Maharaja, saying, "My dear king, I would like something from you. You are a great monarch and are renowned for giving in charity to the brahmanas, so would you give Me something?"

Bali Maharaja said, "I will give You what You want."

"I simply want whatever land I can cover in three steps," the boy said.

"Oh, is that all?" the king replied. "And what will You do with such a small piece of land?"

"Though it may be small, it will suffice Me," the boy smiled.

Bali Maharaja agreed, and the boy-dwarf took two steps and covered the entire universe. He then asked Bali Maharaja where He was going to take His third step, and Bali Maharaja, understanding that the Supreme Lord was showing him His favor, replied, "My dear Lord, I have now lost everything. I have no other property, but I do have my head. Would You so kindly step there?"

Lord Sri Krsna was then very much pleased with Bali Maharaja, and He asked, "What would you like from Me?"

"I never expected anything from You," Bali Maharaja said. "But I understand that You wanted something from me, and now I have offered You everything."

"Yes," the Lord said, "but from My side I have something for you. I shall remain always as an order-carrier servant in your court." In this way the Lord became Bali Maharaja's doorman, and that was his return. If we offer something to the Lord, it is returned millions of times. But we should not expect this. The Lord is always eager to return the service of His servant. Whoever thinks that the service of the Lord is actually his duty is perfect in knowledge and has attained the perfection of yoga.

Chapter Eight

The Perfection of Yoga

It is a fact, therefore, that in the progress of the living entity toward the perfection of yoga, birth in a family of yogis or devotees is a great boon, for such a birth gives one special impetus.

prayatnad yatamanas tu
yogi samsuddha-kilbisah
aneka-janma-samsiddhas
tato yati param gatim

"But when the yogi engages himself with sincere endeavor in making further progress, being washed of all contaminations, then ultimately, after many, many births of practice, he attains the supreme goal." (Bg. 6.45) When one is finally freed from all contaminations, he attains the supreme perfection of the yoga system--Krsna consciousness. Absorption in Krsna is the perfect stage, as Krsna Himself confirms:

bahunam janmanam ante
jnana van mam prapadyate
vasudevah sarvam iti
sa mahatma sudurlabhah

"After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare." (Bg. 7.19) Thus after many lifetimes of executing pious activities, when one becomes freed from all contaminations arising from illusory dualities, he engages in the transcendental service of the Lord. Sri Krsna concludes His discourse on this subject in this way:

yoginam api sarvesam
mad-gatenantaratmana
sraddhavan bhajate yo mam
sa me yukatatamo matah

"And of all yogis, he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all." (Bg. 6.47)

It therefore follows that the culmination of all yogas lies in bhakti-yoga, the rendering of devotional service unto Krsna. Actually,

all of the yogas delineated in Bhagavad-gita end on this note, for Krsna is the ultimate destination of all the yoga systems. from the beginning of karma-yoga to the end of bhakti-yoga is a long way to self-realization. Karma-yoga, without fruitive results, is the beginning of this path. When karma-yoga increases in knowledge and renunciation, the stage is called jnana-yoga, or the yoga of knowledge. When jnana-yoga increases in meditation on the Supersoul by different physical processes, and the mind is on Him, it is called astanga-yoga. And, when one surpasses astanga-yoga and comes to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna, that is called bhakti-yoga, the culmination. factually, bhakti-yoga is the ultimate goal, but to analyze bhakti-yoga minutely one has to understand the other processes. The yogi who is progressive is therefore on the true path to eternal good fortune. One who sticks to a particular point and does not make further progress is called by that particular name--karma-yogi, jnana-yogi, dhyana-yogi, raja-yogi, hatha-yogi, etc.--but if one is fortunate enough to come to the point of bhakti-yoga, Krsna consciousness, it is to be understood that he has surpassed all the other yoga systems.

Krsna consciousness is the last link in the yogic chain, the link that binds us to the Supreme Person, Lord Sri Krsna. Without this final link, the chain is practically useless. Those who are truly interested in the perfection of the yoga process should immediately take to Krsna consciousness by chanting Hare Krsna, understanding Bhagavad-gita, and rendering service to Krsna through this society for Krsna consciousness and thereby surpass all other systems and attain the ultimate goal of all yoga-- love of Krsna.

"Perfection of Yoga" by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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