

"Sri Isopanisad" by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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Introduction

"Teachings of the Vedas"

[Delivered as a lecture by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada on October 6, 1969, at Conway Hall, London, England.]

Ladies and gentlemen, today's subject matter is the teachings of the Vedas. What are the Vedas? The Sanskrit verbal root of veda can be interpreted variously, but the purpose is finally one. Veda means knowledge. Any knowledge you accept is veda, for the teachings of the Vedas are the original knowledge. In the conditioned state, our knowledge is subjected to many deficiencies. The difference between a conditioned soul and a liberated soul is that the conditioned soul has four kinds of defects. The first defect is that he must commit mistakes. For example, in our country, Mahatma Gandhi was considered to be a very great personality, but he committed many mistakes. Even at the last stage of his life, his assistant warned, "Mahatma Gandhi, don't go to the New Delhi meeting. I have some friends, and I have heard there is danger." But he did not hear. He persisted on going and was killed. Even great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, President Kennedy--there are so many of them--make mistakes. To err is human. This is one defect of the conditioned soul.

Another defect: to be illusioned. Illusion means to accept something which is not: maya. Maya means what is not. Everyone is accepting the body as the self. If I ask you what you are, you will say, "I am Mr. John; I am a rich man; I am this, I am that." All these are bodily identifications. But you are not this body. This is illusion.

The third defect is the cheating propensity. Everyone has the propensity to cheat others. Although a person is fool number one, he poses himself as very intelligent. Although it is already pointed out that he is in illusion and makes mistakes, he will theorize: "I think this is this, this is this." But he does not even know his own position. He writes books of philosophy, although he is defective. That is his disease. That is cheating.

Lastly, our senses are imperfect. We are very proud of our eyes. Often, someone will challenge, "can you show me God?" But do you have the eyes to see God? You will never see if you haven't the eyes. If immediately the room becomes dark, you cannot even see your hands. So what power do you have to see? We cannot, therefore, expect knowledge (veda) with these imperfect senses. With all these deficiencies, in conditioned life, we cannot give perfect knowledge to anyone. Nor are we ourselves perfect. Therefore we accept the Vedas as they are.

You may call the Vedas Hindu, but Hindu is a foreign name. We are not Hindus. Our real identification is varnasrama. Varnasrama denotes the followers of the Vedas, those who accept the human society in eight divisions of varna and asrama. There are four divisions of society and four divisions of spiritual life. This is called varnasrama. It is stated in the Bhagavad-gita, "These divisions are everywhere because they are created by God." The divisions of society are brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya, sudra. Brahmana refers to the very intelligent class of men, those who know what is Brahman. Similarly, the ksatriyas, the administrator group, are the next intelligent class of men. Then the vaisyas, the mercantile group. These natural classifications are found everywhere. This is the Vedic principle, and we accept it. Vedic principles are accepted as axiomatic truth, for there cannot be any mistake. That is acceptance. For instance, in India, cow dung is accepted as pure, and yet cow dung is the stool of an animal. In one place you'll find the Vedic injunction that if you touch stool, you have to take a bath immediately. But in another place it is said that the stool of a cow is pure. If you smear cow dung in an impure place that place becomes pure. With our ordinary sense we can argue, "This is contradictory." Actually, it is contradictory from the ordinary point of view, but it is not false. It is fact. In Calcutta, a very prominent scientist and doctor analyzed cow dung and found that it contains all antiseptic properties.

In India if one person tells another, "You must do this," the other party may say, "What do you mean? Is this a Vedic injunction that I have to follow you without any argument?" Vedic injunctions cannot be interpreted. But ultimately, if you carefully study why these injunctions are there, you will find that they are all correct.

The Vedas are not compilations of human knowledge. Vedic knowledge comes from the spiritual world, from Lord Krsna. Another name for the Vedas is sruti. Sruti refers to that knowledge which is acquired by hearing. It is not experimental knowledge. Sruti is considered to be like a mother. We take so much knowledge from our mother. For example, if you want to know who your father is, who can answer you? Your mother. If the mother says, "Here is your father," you have to accept it. It is not possible to experiment to find out whether he is your father. Similarly, if you want to know something beyond your experience, beyond your experimental knowledge, beyond the activities of the senses, then you have to accept Vedas. There is no question of experimenting. It has

already been experimented. It is already settled. The version of the mother, for instance, has to be accepted as truth. There is no other way.

The Vedas are considered to be the mother, and Brahma is called the grandfather, the forefather, because he was the first to be instructed in the Vedic knowledge. In the beginning the first living creature was Brahma. He received this Vedic knowledge and imparted it to Narada and other disciples and sons, and they also distributed it to their disciples. In this way, the Vedic knowledge comes down by disciplic succession. It is also confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita, that Vedic knowledge is understood in this way. If you make experimental endeavor, you come to the same conclusion, but just to save time you should accept. If you want to know who your father is and if you accept your mother as authority, then whatever she says can be accepted without argument. There are three kinds of evidences: *pratyaksa*, *anumana* and *sabda*. *Pratyaksa* means direct. Direct evidence is not very good because our senses are not perfect. We are seeing the sun daily, and it appears to us just like a small disc, but it is actually far, far larger than many planets. Of what value is this seeing? Therefore we have to read books; then we can understand about the sun. So direct experience is not perfect. Then there is inductive knowledge: "It may be like this," hypothesis. For instance, Darwin's theory says it may be like this, it may be like that, but that is not science. That is a suggestion, and it is also not perfect. But if you receive the knowledge from the authoritative sources, that is perfect. If you receive a program guide from the radio station authorities, you accept it. You don't deny it; you don't have to make an experiment because it is received from the authoritative sources.

Vedic knowledge is called *sabda-pramana*. Another name is *sruti*. *Sruti* means that this knowledge has to be received simply by aural reception. The Vedas instruct that in order to understand transcendental knowledge, we have to hear from the authority. Transcendental knowledge is knowledge from beyond this universe. Within this universe is material knowledge, and beyond this universe is transcendental knowledge. We cannot even go to the end of the universe, so how can we go to the spiritual world? Thus to acquire full knowledge is impossible.

There is a spiritual sky. There is another nature that is beyond manifestation and non-manifestation. But how will you know that there is a sky where the planets and inhabitants are eternal? All this knowledge is there, but how will you make experiments? It is not possible. Therefore you have to take the assistance of the Vedas. This is called Vedic knowledge. In our Krsna consciousness movement, we are accepting knowledge from the highest authority, Krsna. Krsna is accepted as the highest authority by all classes of men. I am speaking first of the two classes of transcendentalists. One class of transcendentalist is called impersonalist, *Mayavadi*. They are generally known as Vedantists, led by Sankaracarya. And there is another class of transcendentalists, called *Vaisnavas*, like Ramanujacarya, Madhvacharya, Visnusvami. Both the Sankara-sampradaya and the Vaisnava-sampradaya have accepted Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Sankaracarya is supposed to be an impersonalist who preached impersonalism, impersonal Brahman, but it is a fact that he is a covered personalist. In his commentary on the Bhagavad-gita he wrote: "Narayana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is beyond this cosmic manifestation." And then again he confirmed, "That

Supreme Personality of Godhead, Narayana, is Krsna. He has come as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva." He particularly mentioned the names of His father and mother. So Krsna is accepted as the Supreme Personality of Godhead by all transcendentalists. There is no doubt about it. Our source of knowledge in Krsna consciousness is directly from Krsna, Bhagavad-gita. We have published Bhagavad-gita As It Is because we accept Krsna as He is speaking without any interpretation. That is Vedic knowledge. Since the Vedic knowledge is pure, we accept it. Whatever Krsna says, we accept. This is Krsna consciousness. That saves much time. If you accept the right authority or the source of knowledge, then you save much time. For example, there are two systems of knowledge in the material world, inductive and deductive. From deductive, you accept that man is mortal. Your father says man is mortal, your sister says man is mortal, everyone says man is mortal--but you do not experiment. You accept it as fact that man is mortal. If you want to research to find out whether man is mortal, you have to study each and every man, and you may come to think that there may be some man who is not dying, but you have not seen him yet. So in this way your researching will never be finished. This process is called in Sanskrit, aroha, the ascending process. If you want to attain knowledge by any personal endeavor, by exercising your imperfect senses, you will never come to the right conclusions. That is not possible.

There is a statement in Brahma-samhita: Just ride on the airplane which runs at the speed of mind. Our material airplanes can run 2,000 miles per hour, but what is the speed of mind? You are sitting at home, you immediately think of India, say 10,000 miles away, and at once it is in your home. Your mind has gone there. The mind-speed is so swift. Therefore it is stated, "If you travel at this speed for millions of years, you'll find that the spiritual sky is unlimited." It is not possible even to approach it. Therefore, the Vedic injunction is that one must approach--the word "compulsory" is used--a bona fide spiritual master, a guru. And what is the qualification of a spiritual master? He has rightly heard the Vedic message from the right source. Otherwise he is not bona fide. He must practically be firmly established in Brahman. These are the two qualities. This Krsna consciousness movement is completely authorized from Vedic principles. In the Bhagavad-gita Krsna says, "The actual aim of Vedic research is to find out Krsna." In the Brahma-samhita it is also stated, "Krsna, Govinda, has innumerable forms, but they are all one." They are not like our forms, which are fallible. His form is infallible. My form has a beginning, but His form has no beginning. It is ananta. And His form--so many multiforms--has no end. My form is sitting here and not in my apartment. You are sitting there and not in your apartment. But Krsna can be anywhere at one time. He can sit down in Goloka Vrndavana, and at the same time He is everywhere, all-pervading. He is original, the oldest, but whenever you look at a picture of Krsna you'll find a young boy fifteen or twenty years old. You will never find an old man. You have seen pictures of Krsna as a charioteer from the Bhagavad-gita. At that time He was not less than one hundred years old. He had great-grandchildren, but He looked just like a boy. Krsna, God, never becomes old. That is His supreme power. And if you want to search out Krsna by studying the Vedic literature, then you will be baffled. It may be possible, but it is very difficult. But you can very easily learn about Him from His devotee. His

devotee can deliver Him to you: "Here He is, take Him." That is the potency of Krsna's devotees.

Originally there was only one Veda, and there was no necessity of reading it. People were so intelligent and had such sharp memories that by once hearing from the lips of the spiritual master they would understand. They would immediately grasp the whole purport. But 5,000 years ago Vyasadeva put the Vedas in writing for the people in this age, Kali-yuga. He knew that eventually the people would be short-lived, their memories would be very poor and their intelligence would not be very sharp. "Therefore, let me teach this Vedic knowledge in writing." He divided the Vedas into four: Rg, Sama, Atharva, and Yajur. Then he gave the charge of these Vedas to his different disciples. He then thought of the less intelligent class of men, stri, sudra and dvija-bandhu. He considered the woman class and sudra class (worker class) and dvija-bandhu. Dvija-bandhu refers to those who are born in a high family but who are not properly qualified. A man born in the family of a brahmana, who is not qualified as a brahmana, is called dvija-bandhu. For these persons, he compiled Mahabharata, called the history of India, and the eighteen Puranas. These are all Vedic literatures: the Puranas, the Mahabharata, the four Vedas, and the Upanisads. The Upanisads are part of the Vedas. Then Vyasadeva summarized all Vedic knowledge for scholars and philosophers in what is called the Vedanta-sutra. This is the last word of the Vedas. Vyasadeva personally wrote Vedanta-sutra under the instructions of Narada, his guru-maharaja, spiritual master, but still he was not satisfied. That is a long story, described in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. Vedavyasa was not very satisfied even after compiling many Puranas, Upanisads, and even after Vedanta-sutra. Then his spiritual master, Narada, instructed him, "You explain Vedanta." Vedanta means ultimate knowledge, and the ultimate knowledge is Krsna. Krsna says that throughout all the Vedas one has to understand Krsna. Vedanta-krd veda-vid eva caham. Krsna says, "I am the compiler of Vedanta, and I am the knower of the Vedas." Therefore the ultimate objective is Krsna. That is explained in all the Vaisnava commentaries on Vedanta philosophy. We Gaudiya Vaisnavas have our commentary on Vedanta philosophy, called Govinda-bhasya by Baladeva Vidyabhusana. Similarly, Ramanujacarya has a commentary, and Madhvacharya has one. The version of Sankaracarya is not the only commentary. There are many Vedanta commentaries, but because the Vaisnavas did not present the first Vedanta commentary, people are under the wrong impression that Sankaracarya's is the only Vedanta commentary. Besides that, Vyasadeva himself wrote the perfect Vedanta commentary, Srimad-Bhagavatam. Srimad-Bhagavatam also begins with the first words of the Vedanta-sutra: janmady asya yatah. And that janmady asya yatah is fully explained in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Vedanta-sutra simply hints at what is Brahman, the Absolute Truth: "The Absolute Truth is that from whom everything emanates." This is a summary, but it is explained in detail in Srimad-Bhagavatam. If everything is emanating from the Absolute Truth, then what is the nature of the Absolute Truth? That is explained in Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Absolute Truth must be consciousness. He is self-effulgent (svarat). We develop our consciousness and knowledge by receiving knowledge from others, but for Him it is said that He is self-effulgent. The whole summary of Vedic knowledge is the Vedanta-sutra, and the Vedanta-sutra is explained by the writer himself in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. We finally request those who are actually after Vedic

knowledge to try to understand the explanation of all Vedic knowledge from Srimad-Bhagavatam and the Bhagavad-gita.

Invocation

om purnam adah purnam idam
purnat purnam udacyate
purnasya purnam adaya
purnam evavasisyate

om--the complete whole; purnam--perfectly complete; adah--that; purnam--perfectly complete; idam--this phenomenal world; purnat--from the all-perfect; purnam--complete unit; udacyate--is produced; purnasya--of the complete whole; purnam--completely, all; adaya--having been taken away; purnam--the complete balance; eva--even; avasisyate--is remaining.

TRANSLATION

The Personality of Godhead is perfect and complete, and because He is completely perfect, all emanations from Him, such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped as complete wholes. Whatever is produced of the complete whole is also complete in itself. Because He is the complete whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance.

PURPORT

The complete whole, or the Supreme Absolute Truth, is the complete Personality of Godhead. Realization of impersonal Brahman or of Paramatma, the Supersoul, is incomplete realization of the Absolute Complete. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is sac-cid-ananda-vigraha, and impersonal Brahman realization is the realization of His sat feature, or His aspect of eternity, and Paramatma or Supersoul realization is the realization of His sat and cit features, His aspects of eternity and knowledge. Realization of the Personality of Godhead, however, is realization of all the transcendental features--sat, cit and ananda, bliss. When one realizes the Supreme Person, he realizes these aspects in complete form (vigraha). Thus the complete whole is not formless. If He were formless, or if He were any less than His creation in any way, He could not be complete. The complete whole must contain everything both within and beyond our experience, otherwise He cannot be complete.

The complete whole, the Personality of Godhead, has immense potencies, all of which are as complete as He is. Thus this phenomenal or material world is also complete in itself. The twenty-four elements of which this material universe is a temporary manifestation are arranged to produce everything necessary for the maintenance and subsistence of this universe. No other unit in the universe need make an extraneous effort to try to maintain the universe. The universe functions on its own time scale, which is fixed by the energy of the complete whole, and when that time schedule is complete, this temporary manifestation will be annihilated by the complete arrangement of the complete.

All facilities are given to the complete units (namely the living beings) to enable them to realize the complete whole. All forms of incompleteness are experienced due to incomplete knowledge of the complete whole. The human form of life is a complete manifestation of the consciousness of the living being, and it is obtained after evolving through death. If the living entity does not realize his completeness within the complete whole in this human life, which is blessed with full consciousness, he loses the chance to realize his completeness and is again put into the evolutionary cycle by the law of material nature.

Because we do not know that there is complete arrangement in nature for our maintenance, we make efforts to utilize the resources of nature to create a so-called complete life of sense enjoyment. Because the living entity cannot enjoy the life of the senses without being dovetailed to the complete whole, the misleading life of sense enjoyment is considered illusion. The hand of a body is a complete unit only as long as it is attached to the complete body. When the hand is severed from the body, it may appear like a hand, but it actually has none of the potencies of a hand. Similarly, living beings are parts and parcels of the complete whole, and if they are severed from the complete whole, the illusory representation of completeness cannot fully satisfy them.

The completeness of human life can only be realized when one engages in the service of the complete whole. All services in this world--whether social, political, communal, international or even interplanetary--will remain incomplete until they are dovetailed with the complete whole. When everything is dovetailed with the complete whole, the attached parts and parcels also become complete in themselves.

TEXT 1

isavasyam idam sarvam
yat kinca jagatyam jagat
tena tyaktena bhunjitha
ma grdhah kasya svid dhanam

isa- by the Lord; avasyam--controlled; idam--this; sarvam--all; yat kinca--whatever; jagatyam--within the universe; jagat--all that is animate or inanimate; tena--by Him; tyaktena--set apart quota; bhunjithah--you should accept; ma--do not; grdhah--endeavor to gain; kasya svit--of anyone else; dhanam--the wealth.

TRANSLATION

Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong.

PURPORT

Vedic knowledge is infallible because it comes down through the perfect disciplic succession of spiritual masters beginning with the Lord Himself. The first word of Vedic knowledge was spoken by the Lord Himself, and it is being received from transcendental sources. The words

spoken by the Lord are called *apauruseya*, which indicates that they are not delivered by any mundane person. A living being who lives in the mundane world has four defects: (1) He is certain to commit mistakes; (2) he is subject to illusion; (3) he has a propensity to cheat others, and (4) his senses are imperfect. Being conditioned by these four imperfections, one cannot deliver perfect information of all-pervading knowledge. The Vedas are not produced by such imperfect creatures. Vedic knowledge was originally imparted into the heart of Brahma, the first created living being, and Brahma in his turn disseminated this knowledge to his sons and disciples, who have handed down the process through history.

Since the Lord is *purnam*, or all-perfect, there is no possibility of His being subjected to the laws of material nature; however, the living entities and inanimate objects are both controlled by the laws of nature and ultimately by the Lord's potency. This *Isopanisd* is part of the *Yajur Veda*, and consequently it contains information concerning the proprietorship of all things existing within the universe.

This is confirmed in the Seventh Chapter of *Bhagavad-gita* where *para* and *apara prakrti* are discussed (Bg. 7.4-5). The elements of nature--earth, fire, water, air, ether, mind, intelligence and ego--all belong to the inferior or material energy of the Lord, whereas the living being, the organic energy, is the *para prakrti* (superior energy) of the Lord. Both of the *prakrtis*, or energies, are emanations from the Lord, and ultimately He is the controller of everything that exists. There is nothing in the universe that does not belong either to the *para* or the *apara prakrti*; therefore everything is the property of the Supreme Being.

The Supreme Being, the Absolute Personality of Godhead, is a complete person, and He has complete and perfect intelligence to adjust everything by means of His different potencies. The Supreme Being is often compared to fire, and everything organic and inorganic is compared to the heat and light of that fire. Just as fire distributes energy in the form of heat and light, the Lord displays His energy in different ways. He thus remains the ultimate controller, sustainer and dictator of everything. He is the knower of everything and the benefactor of everyone. He is full of all inconceivable potencies: power, wealth, fame, beauty, knowledge and renunciation.

One should therefore be intelligent enough to know that but for the Lord no one is a proprietor of anything. One should accept only those things which are set aside by the Lord as his quota. The cow, for instance, gives milk, but she does not drink that milk; she eats grass and grain, and her milk is designated as food for human beings. Such is the arrangement of the Lord, and we should be satisfied with those things which He has kindly set aside for us, and we should always consider to whom those things we possess actually belong.

A house, for instance, is made of earth, wood, stone, iron, cement and so many other material things, and if we think in terms of *Sri Isopanisd*, we must know that we cannot produce any of these materials ourselves. We can simply bring them together and transform them into different shapes by our labor. A laborer cannot claim to be a proprietor of a thing just because he has worked hard to manufacture it.

In modern society there is always a great quarrel between the laborers and the capitalists. This quarrel has taken an international shape, and the world is endangered. Men face one another in enmity and

snarl just like cats and dogs. Sri Isopanisad cannot give advice to the cats and dogs, but it can deliver the message of Godhead to man through the bona fide acaryas (holy teachers). The human race should take the Vedic wisdom of Isopanisad and not quarrel over material possessions. One must be satisfied by whatever privileges are given to him by the mercy of the Lord. There can be no peace if the communists or capitalists or any other party claims proprietorship over the resources of nature, which are entirely the property of the Lord. The capitalists cannot curb the communists simply by political maneuvering, nor can the communists defeat the capitalists simply by fighting for stolen bread. If they do not recognize the proprietorship of the Supreme personality of Godhead, all the property which they claim to be their own is stolen. Consequently they will be liable to punishment by the laws of nature. Nuclear bombs are in the hands of both communists and capitalists, and if both do not recognize the proprietorship of the Supreme Lord, it is certain that these bombs will ultimately ruin both parties. Thus in order to save themselves and bring peace to the world, both parties must follow the instructions of Sri Isopanisad.

Human beings are not meant to quarrel like cats and dogs. They must be intelligent enough to realize the importance and aim of human life. The Vedic literatures are compiled for humanity and not for cats and dogs. Cats and dogs can kill other animals for food without incurring sin, but if a man kills an animal for the satisfaction of his uncontrolled taste buds, he is responsible for breaking the laws of nature. Consequently he must be punished.

The standard of life for human beings cannot be applied to animals. The tiger does not eat rice, wheat or drink cow's milk because he has been given food in the shape of animal flesh. There are many animals and birds that are either vegetarian or carnivorous, but none of them transgress the laws of nature as these laws have been ordained by the will of God. Animals, birds, reptiles and other lower life forms strictly adhere to the laws of nature; therefore there is no question of sin for them, nor are the Vedic instructions meant for them. Human life alone is a life of responsibility.

It is wrong to consider that simply by becoming a vegetarian one can avoid transgressing the laws of nature. Vegetables also have life. It is nature's law that one living being is meant to feed another. Thus one should not be proud of being a strict vegetarian; the point is to recognize the Supreme Lord. Animals do not have developed consciousness by which to recognize the Lord, but a human being is sufficiently intelligent to take lessons from Vedic literatures and thereby know how the laws of nature are working and derive profit out of such knowledge. If a man neglects the instructions of the Vedic literatures, his life becomes very risky. A human being is therefore required to recognize the authority of the Supreme Lord. He must be a devotee of the Lord, offer everything to the Lord's service and partake only of the remnants of food offered to the Lord. This will enable him to discharge his duty properly. In Bhagavad-gita the Lord directly states that He accepts vegetarian food from the hands of a pure devotee (Bg. 9.26). Therefore a human being should not only become a strict vegetarian but should also become a devotee of the Lord and offer the Lord all his food. Then only should one partake of prasada, or mercy of God. A devotee who can act in this consciousness can properly discharge the duty of human life. Those who do not offer their food to the Lord actually eat sin and subject

themselves to various types of distress which are results of sin (Bg. 3.13).

The root of sin is deliberate disobedience to the laws of nature through disregarding the proprietorship of the Lord. Disobedience to the laws of nature or the order of the Lord brings ruin to a human being. If one is sober, knows the laws of nature and is not influenced by unnecessary attachment or aversion, he is sure to be recognized by the Lord, and he is sure to become eligible to go back to Godhead, back to the eternal home.

TEXT 2

kurvann eveha karmani
jijivisec chatam samah
evam tvayi nanyatheto 'sti
na karma lipyate nare

kurvan--doing continuously; eva--thus; iha--during this span of life; karmani--work; jijiviset--one should desire to live; satam--one hundred; samah--years; evam--so living; tvayi--unto you; na--no; anyatha--alternative; itah--from this path; asti--there is; na--not; karma--work; lipyate--can be bound; nare--unto a man.

TRANSLATION

One may aspire to live for hundreds of years if he continuously goes on working in that way, for that sort of work will not bind him to the law of karma. There is no alternative to this way for man.

PURPORT

No one wants to die, and everyone wants to live as long as he can drag on. This tendency is not only visible individually but also collectively in the community, society and nation. There is a hard struggle for life by all kinds of living entities, and the Vedas say that this is quite natural. The living being is eternal by nature, but due to his bondage in material existence he has to change his body over and over. This process is called the transmigration of the soul, and this transmigration is due to karma-bandhana, or bondage to one's work. The living entity has to work for his livelihood because that is the law of material nature, and if he does not act according to his prescribed duties, he transgresses the law of nature and binds himself more and more to the cycle of birth and death.

Other life forms are also subject to the cycle of birth and death, but when the living entity attains a human life, he gets a chance to get free from the law of karma. Karma, akarma and vikarma are very clearly described in Bhagavad-gita. Actions which are performed in terms of one's prescribed duties, as mentioned in the revealed scriptures, are called karma. Actions which free one from the cycle of birth and death are called akarma. And actions which are performed by the misuse of one's freedom and which direct one to the lower life forms are called vikarma. Of these three types of action, that which frees one from the bondage to karma is preferred by intelligent men. Ordinary men wish to perform good works in order to be recognized and achieve some higher

status of life in this world or in heaven, but more advanced men want to be free altogether from the actions and reactions of work. Intelligent men well know that both good and bad works equally bind one to the material miseries. Consequently they seek that work which will free them from the reactions of both good and bad work.

The instructions of Sri Isopanisad are more elaborately explained in Bhagavad-gita, sometimes called Gitopanisad, the cream of all the Upanisads. In Bhagavad-gita the Personality of Godhead says that one cannot attain the state of naiskarma or akarma without executing the prescribed duties mentioned in Vedic literatures (Bg. 3.9-16). The Vedas can regulate the working energy of a human being in such a way that one can gradually realize the authority of the Supreme Being. When one realizes the authority of the Personality of Godhead, it is to be understood that he has attained the stage of positive knowledge. On this purified stage the modes of nature--namely goodness, passion and ignorance--cannot act, and one is enabled to work on the basis of naiskarma. Such work does not bind one to the cycle of birth and death.

Factually no one has to do anything more than render devotional service to the Lord. However, in the lower stages of life one cannot immediately adopt the activities of devotional service, nor can one completely stop fruitive work. A conditioned soul is accustomed to working for sense gratification, for his own selfish interest, immediate or extended. An ordinary man works for his own sense enjoyment, and when this principle of sense enjoyment is extended to include his society, nation or humanity in general, it assumes various attractive names such as altruism, socialism, communism, nationalism, humanitarianism, etc. These "isms" are certainly very attractive forms of karma-bandhana (work which binds), but the Vedic instruction of Isopanisad is that if one actually wants to live for any of the above "isms," he should make them God-centered. There is no harm in becoming a family man, or an altruist, socialist, communist, nationalist, or humanitarian provided that one executes his activities in relation with isavasya, the God-centered conception.

Bhagavad-gita states (Bg. 2.40) that God-centered activities are so valuable that just a few of them can save a person from the greatest danger. The greatest danger of life is the danger of gliding down again into the evolutionary cycle of birth and death. If some way or another a man misses the spiritual opportunity afforded by his human form of life and falls down again into the evolutionary cycle, he must be considered most unfortunate. Due to his defective senses, a foolish man cannot see that this is happening. Consequently Sri Isopanisad advises us to exert our energy in the spirit of isavasya. Being so engaged in that spirit, we may wish to live for many, many years; otherwise a long life in itself has no value. A tree lives for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years, but there is no point in living a long time like trees, or breathing like bellows, or begetting children like hogs and dogs, or eating like a camel. A humble God-centered life is more valuable than a colossal hoax of a life dedicated to godless altruism or socialism.

When altruistic activities are executed in the spirit of Sri Isopanisad, they become a form of karma-yoga. Such activities are recommended in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 18.5-9), for they guarantee their executor protection from the dangers of sliding down into the evolutionary process of birth and death. Even though such God-centered activities may be half-finished, they are still good for the executor

because they will guarantee him a human form in his next birth. In this way one can have another chance to improve his position on the path of liberation.

TEXT 3

asurya nama te loka
andhena tamasavrtah
tams te pretyabhigacchanti
ye ke catma-hano janah

asuryah--meant for the asuras; nama--famous by the name; te--those; lokah--planets; andhena--by ignorance; tamasa--by darkness; avrtah--covered; tan--those planets; te--they; pretya--after death; abhigacchanti--enter into; ye--anyone; ke--everyone; ca--and; atma-hanah--the killers of the soul; janah--persons.

TRANSLATION

The killer of the soul, whoever he may be, must enter into the planets known as the worlds of the faithless, full of darkness and ignorance.

PURPORT

A human life is distinguished from animal life due to its heavy responsibilities. Those who are cognizant of these responsibilities and who work in that spirit are called suras (godly persons), and those who are neglectful of these responsibilities or who have no information of them are called asuras (demons). These two types of human beings are found all over the universe. In the Rg Veda it is stated that the suras always aim at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord Visnu and act accordingly. Their ways are as illuminated as the path of the sun.

Intelligent human beings must always remember that this particular bodily form is obtained after an evolution of many millions of years and after long transmigration. This material world is sometimes compared to an ocean, and this human body is compared with a solid boat designed especially to cross this ocean. The Vedic scriptures and the acaryas, or saintly teachers, are compared to expert boatmen, and the facilities of the human body are compared to favorable breezes which help the boat ply smoothly to its desired destination. If, with all these facilities, a person does not fully utilize his life for self-realization, he must be considered atma-ha, a killer of the soul. Sri Isopanisad gives warning in clear terms that the killer of the soul is destined to enter into the darkest region of ignorance to suffer perpetually.

There are swine, dogs, camels, asses, etc., whose economic necessities are just as important as ours, but the economic problems of these animals are only solved under nasty and unpleasant conditions. The human being is given all facilities for a comfortable life by the laws of nature because the human form of life is more important and valuable than animal life. Why does man have a better life than the swine and other animals? Why is he a highly placed servant given all facilities rather than an ordinary clerk? The answer is that a highly placed officer has to discharge duties of a higher nature; a human being has

higher duties to perform than animals who are always engaged in simply feeding their hungry stomachs. Yet modern soul-killing civilization has only increased the problems of a hungry stomach. When we approach a polished animal in the form of modern civilized man and ask him what his business is, he will say that he simply wants to work to satisfy his stomach and that there is no need for self-realization. The laws of nature are so cruel, however, that despite his eagerness to work hard for his stomach, he is always threatened by the question of unemployment.

We are given this human form of life not to work hard like asses and swine, but to attain the highest perfection of life. If we do not care for self-realization, the laws of nature force us to work very hard, even though we may not want to do so. Human beings in this age have been forced to work hard like the asses and bulls that pull carts. Some of the regions where the asuras are sent to work are revealed in this verse of Sri Isopanisad. If a man fails to discharge his duties as a human being, he is forced to transmigrate to the asurya planets and take birth in degraded species of life to work hard in ignorance and darkness.

In Bhagavad-gita it is stated (Bg. 6.41-43) that a man who enters upon the path of self-realization but does not complete the process, despite having sincerely tried for it, is given a chance to appear in a family of suci or srimat. The word suci indicates a spiritually advanced brahmana, and srimat indicates a vaisya, a member of the mercantile community. This indicates that the person who fails to realize his relation with God is given a better chance to cultivate self-realization due to his sincere efforts in his previous lives. If even a fallen candidate is given a chance to take birth in a respectable and noble family, one can hardly imagine the status of one who has achieved success. By simply attempting to realize God, one is guaranteed of birth in a wealthy or aristocratic family. However, one who does not even make an attempt, who wants to be covered by illusion, who is too materialistic and attached to material enjoyment, must enter into the darkest regions of hell, as confirmed in all Vedic literatures. Such materialistic asuras sometimes make a show of religion, but their ultimate aim is material prosperity. Bhagavad-gita rebukes such men (Bg. 16.17-18), for they are considered great only on the strength of deception and are empowered by the votes of the ignorant and by their own material wealth. Such asuras, devoid of self-realization and knowledge of isavasya, the Lord, are certain to enter into the darkest regions.

The conclusion is that as human beings we are not meant for simply solving economic problems on a tottering platform but for solving all the problems of the material life into which we have been placed by the laws of nature.

TEXT 4

anejad ekam manaso javiyo
nainad deva apnuvan purvam arsat
tad dhavato 'nyan atyeti tisthat
tasminn apo matarisva dadhati

anejat--fixed; ekam--one; manasah--than the mind; javiyah--more swift;
na--not; enat--this Supreme Lord; devah--the demigods like Indra, etc.;
apnuvan--can approach; purvam--in front; arsat--moving quickly; tat--He;
dhavatah--those who are running; anyan--others; atyeti--surpasses;
tisthat--remaining in one place; tasmin--in Him; apah--rain; matarisva--
the gods who control the wind and rain; dadhati--supply.

TRANSLATION

Although fixed in His abode, the Personality of Godhead is swifter than the mind and can overcome all others running. The powerful demigods cannot approach Him. Although in one place, He controls those who supply the air and rain. He surpasses all in excellence.

PURPORT

The Supreme Lord, who is the Absolute personality of Godhead, cannot be known by mental speculation even by the greatest philosopher. He can be known only by His devotees through His mercy. In Brahma-samhita it is stated that even if a nondevotee philosopher travels at the speed of mind for hundreds of years, he will still find the Absolute Truth far, far away from him. As described in the Isopanisad, the Absolute Personality of Godhead has His transcendental abode, known as Krsnaloka, where He remains and engages in His pastimes. Yet by His inconceivable potencies He can simultaneously reach every part of His creative energy. In the Visnu Purana, His potencies are compared with the heat and light which emanate from fire. Although situated in one place, a fire can distribute its light and heat all over; similarly, the Absolute personality of Godhead, although fixed in His transcendental abode, can diffuse His different energies everywhere.

Although His energies are innumerable, they can be divided into three principal categories: the internal potency, the marginal potency and the external potency. There are hundreds and millions of subheadings to each of these categories. The dominating demigods who are empowered to control and administer natural phenomena such as air, light, rain, etc., are all classified within the marginal potency of the Absolute person. Living beings, including humans, are also products of the Lord's marginal potency. The material world is the creation of the Lord's external potency, and the spiritual sky or kingdom of God is the manifestation of His internal potency.

Thus the different energies of the Lord are present everywhere through His different potencies. Although there is no difference between the Lord and His energies, one should not wrongly consider that the Supreme Lord is distributed everywhere impersonally or that He loses His personal existence. Men are accustomed to reach conclusions according to their capacity to understand, but the Supreme Lord is not subject to our limited capacity for understanding. It is for this reason that the Upanisads warn us that no one can approach the Lord by his own limited potency.

In Bhagavad-gita the Lord says (Bg. 10.2) that not even the great rsis and suras can know Him. And what to speak of the asuras, who are not even qualified to understand the ways of the Lord? This fourth mantra very clearly suggests that the Absolute Truth is ultimately the

Absolute person; otherwise there would have been no need to mention so much variegatedness in support of His personal features.

Although they have all the symptoms of the Lord Himself, the individual parts and parcels of the Lord's potencies have limited spheres of activity and are therefore all limited. The parts and parcels are never equal to the whole; therefore they cannot appreciate the Lord's full potency. Under the influence of material nature, foolish and ignorant living beings who are but parts and parcels of the Lord try to conjecture about the Lord's transcendental position. Sri Isopanisad warns of the futility in trying to establish the identity of the Lord through mental speculation. One should try to learn of transcendence from a superior source like the Vedas, which already contain knowledge of transcendence.

Every part of the complete whole is endowed with some particular energy to act. When that part forgets his particular activities, he is considered to be in maya, illusion. Thus from the very beginning Sri Isopanisad warns us to be very careful to play the part designated for us by the Lord. This does not mean that the individual soul has no initiative of his own. Because he is part and parcel of the Lord, he must partake of the initiative of the Lord as well. When one properly utilizes his initiative or active nature with intelligence, understanding that everything is the Lord's potency, he can revive his original consciousness, which was lost due to association with maya, the external energy.

All power is obtained from the Lord; therefore each particular power must be utilized to execute the will of the Lord and not otherwise. The Lord can be known by one who has adopted a submissive attitude. Perfect knowledge means knowing the Lord in all His features, knowing His potencies and knowing how these potencies work by His will. These matters are exclusively described by the Lord in Bhagavad-gita, which is the essence of all the Upanisads.

TEXT 5

tad ejati tan naijati
tad dure tad v antike
tad antar asya sarvasya
tad u sarvasyasya bahyatah

tat--this Supreme Lord; ejati--walks; tat--He; na--not; ejati--walks;
tat--He; dure--far away; tat--He; u--also; antike--very near; tat--He;
antah--within; asya--of this; sarvasya--of all; tat--He; u--also;
sarvasya--of all; asya--of this; bahyatah--external to.

TRANSLATION

The Supreme Lord walks and does not walk. He is far away, but He is very near as well. He is within everything, and yet He is outside of everything.

PURPORT

Here is an explanation of the Supreme Lord's transcendental activities as executed by His inconceivable potencies. Contradictions

are given here by way of proving the inconceivable potencies of the Lord. He walks, and He does not walk. Such a contradiction serves to indicate the inconceivable power of God. With our limited fund of knowledge, we cannot make accommodations for such contradictions; we can only conceive of the Lord in terms of our limited powers of understanding. The impersonalist philosophers of the Mayavada school accept only the Lord's impersonal activities and reject His personal feature. The Bhagavata school, however, accepts the Lord as both personal and impersonal. The bhagavatas also accept His inconceivable potencies, for without them there can be no meaning to the words "Supreme Lord."

We should not take it for granted that just because we cannot see God with our eyes the Lord does not have a personal existence. Sri Isopanisad refutes this argument by warning us that the Lord is far away but very near also. The abode of the Lord is beyond the material sky, and we have no means to measure even this material sky. If the material sky extends so far, then what to speak of the spiritual sky which is altogether beyond it? That the spiritual sky is situated far, far away from the material universe is also confirmed in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 15.6). But despite the Lord's being so far away, He can at once, within less than a second, descend before us with a speed swifter than the mind or the wind. He can also walk so swiftly that no one can surpass Him. This has already been described in the previous verse.

Yet when the personality of Godhead comes before us, we neglect Him. Such foolish negligence is condemned by the Lord in Bhagavad-gita, wherein the Lord says that the foolish deride Him when they consider Him to be a mortal being (Bg. 9.11). He is not a mortal being, nor does He come before us with a body produced of material nature. There are many so-called scholars who contend that the Lord descends in a body made of matter, just like an ordinary living being. Not knowing His inconceivable power, such foolish men place the Lord on a level equal to that of ordinary men.

Because He is full of inconceivable potencies, God can accept our service through any sort of medium, and He can convert His different potencies according to His own will. Nonbelievers argue that the Lord cannot incarnate Himself at all, and if He does He descends in a form of material energy. This argument is nullified if we accept the inconceivable potencies of the Lord to be realities. Even if the Lord appears before us in the form of material energy, it is quite possible for Him to convert this material energy into spiritual energy. Since the source of the energies is one and the same, the energies can be utilized according to the will of their source. For example, the Lord can appear in the arca-vigraha--that is, in the form of Deities supposedly made of earth, stone or wood. These forms, although engraved from wood, stone or other matter, are not idols as the iconoclasts contend.

In our present state of imperfect material existence, we cannot see the Supreme Lord due to imperfect vision. Yet those devotees who want to see Him by means of material vision are favored by the Lord, who appears in a so-called material form to accept His devotee's service. One should not think that such devotees, who are in the lowest stage of devotional service, are worshiping an idol. They are factually worshiping the Lord, who has agreed to appear before them in an approachable way. Nor is the arca form fashioned according to the whims of the worshiper. It is

eternally existent with all its paraphernalia. This can be actually felt by a sincere devotee, but not by an atheist.

In Bhagavad-gita (Bg.4.11) the Lord indicates that He relates to His devotee in terms of the devotee's surrender. He reserves the right not to expose Himself to anyone and everyone but to those souls who are surrendered unto Him. Thus for the surrendered soul He is always within reach, whereas for the unsundered soul He is far, far away and cannot be approached.

In this connection the words saguna (with qualities) and nirguna (without qualities), words occurring often in revealed scriptures, are very important. The word saguna does not imply that the Lord becomes subject to the laws of material nature when He appears, although He has perceivable qualities and appears in material form. For Him there is no difference between the material and spiritual energies because He is the source of all energies. As the controller of all energies, He cannot at any time be under their influence as we are. The material energy works according to His direction; therefore He can use that energy for His purpose without ever being influenced by any of the qualities of that energy. Nor does the Lord become a formless entity at any time, for ultimately He is the eternal form, the primeval Lord. His impersonal aspect, or Brahman effulgence, is but the glow of His personal rays, just as the sun's rays are the glow of the sun-god.

When the child saint Prahlada Maharaja was in the presence of his atheist father, his father asked him, "Where is your God?" When Prahlada replied that God resides everywhere, the father angrily asked whether his God was within one of the pillars of the palace, and the child said yes. The atheist immediately shattered the pillar in front of him to pieces, and the Lord instantly appeared as Nrsimha, the half-man, half-lion incarnation, and killed the atheist king. Thus the Lord is within everything, and He creates everything by His different energies. Through His inconceivable powers He can appear at any place in order to favor His sincere devotee. Lord Nrsimha appeared from within the pillar not by the order of the atheist king but by the wish of His devotee Prahlada. An atheist cannot order the Lord to appear, but the Lord will appear anywhere and everywhere to show mercy to His devotee. Bhagavad-gita similarly states (Bg. 4.8) that the Lord appears to vanquish nonbelievers and protect believers. Of course the Lord has sufficient energies and agents who can vanquish atheists, but it is pleasing for Him to personally favor a devotee. Therefore He descends as an incarnation. Actually He descends only to favor His devotees and not for any other purpose.

In Brahma-samhita it is said that Govinda, the primeval Lord, enters everything by His plenary portion. He enters the universe as well as all the atoms of the universe. He is outside of everything in His virat form, and He is within everything as antaryami. As antaryami He witnesses everything that is going on, and He awards us the results of our actions as karma-phala. We ourselves may forget what we have done in previous lives, but because the Lord witnesses our actions, the results of our actions are always there, and we have to undergo the reactions nonetheless.

The fact is that there is nothing but God within and without. Everything is manifested by His different energies, just as heat and light emanate from fire, and in this way there is a oneness amongst the diverse energies. Although there is oneness, the Lord in His personal

form still enjoys all that is enjoyable to the senses of the minuscule part and parcel living entities.

TEXT 6

yas tu sarvani bhutany
atmany evanupasyati
sarva-bhutesu catmanam
tato na vijugupsate

yah--he who; tu--but; sarvani--all; bhutani--living entities; atmani--in relation with the Supreme Lord; eva--only; anupasyati--observes in a systematic way; sarva-bhutesu--in every living being; ca--and; atmanam--the Supersoul; tatah--thereafter; na--not; vijugupsate--hates anyone.

TRANSLATION

He who sees everything in relation to the Supreme Lord, who sees all entities as His parts and parcels and who sees the Supreme Lord within everything, never hates anything nor any being.

PURPORT

This is a description of the maha-bhagavata, the great personality who sees everything in relation to the Supreme personality of Godhead. There are three stages to realization of the Supreme Lord's presence. The kanistha-adhikari is in the lower stage of realization. He goes to one place of worship, such as a temple, church or mosque, according to his religious faith, and worships there according to scriptural injunctions. Such a devotee considers the Lord to be present at the place of worship and nowhere else. He cannot ascertain who is in what position in devotional service, nor can he tell who has realized the Supreme Lord. Such devotees follow the routine formulas and sometimes quarrel amongst themselves, considering one type of devotion better than another. These kanistha-adhikaris are actually materialistic devotees who are simply trying to transcend the material boundaries in order to reach the spiritual plane.

Those who have attained the second stage of realization are called madhyama-adhikaris. These devotees observe four principles, which are: (1) They see, first of all, the Supreme Lord. (2) They see next the devotees of the Lord. (3) They see the innocent, who have no knowledge of the Lord. (4) They see the atheists who have no faith in the Lord and who hate those in devotional service. The madhyama-adhikari behaves differently according to circumstances. He adores the Lord, considering Him to be the object of love, and he makes friends with those who are in devotional service. He tries to awaken the dormant love of God in the hearts of the innocent, but he does not approach the atheists who deride the very name of the Lord.

In the third stage of realization is the uttama-adhikari, who sees everything in relation to the Supreme Lord. Such a devotee does not discriminate between an atheist and a theist but sees everyone as part and parcel of God. He knows that there is no difference between a vastly learned brahmana and a dog in the street because both of them are of the Lord, although they are embodied differently according to the qualities

of material nature. He sees that the brahmana particle of the Supreme Lord has not misused his little independence given him by the Lord and that the dog particle has misused his independence and is therefore punished by the laws of nature by being encaged in an ignorant form. Not considering the respective actions of the brahmana and the dog, the *uttama-adhikari* tries to do good to both. Such a learned devotee is not misled by material bodies but is attracted by the spiritual spark within the respective entities.

Those who imitate an *uttama-adhikari* by flaunting a sense of oneness or fellowship but who behave on the bodily platform are actually false philanthropists. The conception of universal brotherhood must be learned from an *uttama-adhikari* and not from a foolish person who does not properly understand the individual soul and the Supersoul expansion of the Supreme Lord who dwells everywhere.

It is clearly mentioned in this sixth mantra that one should observe, or see. This means that one must follow the previous *acarya*, the perfected teacher. *Anupasyati* is the exact Sanskrit word used in this connection. *Pasyati* means to observe. This does not mean that one should try to see things as he does with the naked eye. Due to material defects, the naked eye cannot see anything properly. One cannot see properly unless he has heard from a superior source, and the highest source is the Vedic wisdom which is spoken by the Lord Himself. Vedic truths are coming in disciplic succession from the Lord to Brahma, from Brahma to Narada, from Narada to Vyasa, and from Vyasa to many other disciples. Formerly there was no need to record the messages of the Vedas because people in earlier ages were more intelligent and had sharper memories. They could follow instructions simply by hearing once from the mouth of a bona fide spiritual master.

At present there are many commentaries on the revealed scriptures, but most of them are not in the line of disciplic succession coming from Srila Vyasadeva, who originally taught the Vedic wisdom. The final, most perfect and sublime work of Srila Vyasadeva is *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, which is the authorized commentary on the *Vedanta-sutra*. There is also *Bhagavad-gita*, which is spoken by the Lord Himself and which was recorded by Vyasadeva. These are the most important revealed scriptures, and any commentary which contradicts the principles of the *Gita* or *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is unauthorized. There is complete agreement amongst the *Upanisads*, *Vedanta*, the Vedas, *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and no one should try to reach any conclusion about the Vedas without receiving instructions from members of Vyasadeva's disciplic succession, or at least from those who believe in the personality of Godhead and His diverse energies.

According to *Bhagavad-gita* (Bg. 6.9), only one who is already on the liberated platform can become an *uttama-adhikari* devotee and see every living being as his own brother. This vision cannot be had by politicians who are always after some material gain. When one imitates the symptoms of an *uttama-adhikari*, he may serve his outward body for the purpose of fame or material reward, but he does not serve the spirit soul. Such an imitator can have no information of the spiritual world. The *uttama-adhikari* sees the living entity's spirit soul and serves him as spirit. Thus the material aspect is automatically served.

yasmin sarvani bhutany
atmaivabhud vijanatah
tatra ko mohah kah soka
ekatvam anupasyatah

yasmin--in the situation; sarvani--all; bhutani--living entities; atma--the spiritual spark; eva--only; abhut--exist as; vijanatah--of one who knows; tatra--therein; kah--what; mohah--illusion; kah--what; sokah--anxiety; ekatvam--oneness in quality; anupasyatah--of one who sees through authority, or one who sees constantly like that.

TRANSLATION

One who always sees all living entities as spiritual sparks, in quality one with the Lord, becomes a true knower of things. What, then, can be illusion or anxiety for him?

PURPORT

But for the madhyama-adhikari and uttama-adhikari discussed above, no one can correctly see the spiritual position of a living being. The living entities are qualitatively one with the Supreme Lord, just as the sparks of a fire are qualitatively one with the nature of fire. Yet sparks are not fire as far as quantity is concerned, for the quantity of heat and light present in the sparks is not equal to that in fire. The maha-bhagavata, the great devotee, sees oneness in the sense that he sees everything as the energy of the Supreme Lord. Since there is no difference between the energy and the energetic, there is the sense of oneness. Although heat and light from the analytical point of view are different from fire, there is no meaning to the word "fire" without heat and light. But in synthesis, heat, light and fire are all the same.

The Sanskrit words ekatvam anupasyatah indicate that one should see the unity of all living entities from the viewpoint of revealed scriptures. The individual sparks of the supreme whole possess almost eighty percent of the known qualities of the whole, but they are not quantitatively equal to the Supreme Lord. These qualities are present in minute quantity, for the living entity is but a minute part and parcel of the supreme whole. To use another simile, the quantity of salt present in a drop is never comparable to the quantity of salt present in the complete ocean, but the salt present in the drop is qualitatively equal in chemical composition to all the salt present in the ocean. If the individual living being were equal to the Supreme Lord both qualitatively and quantitatively, there would be no question of his being under the influence of material energy. In the previous mantras it has already been discussed that no living being--not even the powerful demigods--can surpass the Supreme Being in any respect; therefore ekatvam does not mean that a living being is equal in all respects to the Supreme Lord. It does, however, indicate that in a broader sense there is one interest, just as in a family the interest of all members is one, or in a nation the national interest is one, although there are many different individual citizens. The living entities are all parts and parcels of the same supreme family, and the interest of the Supreme Being and that of the parts and parcels is not different. Every living being is the son of the Supreme Being. As stated in Bhagavad-gita (Bg.

14.3-4), all living creatures throughout the universe--including birds, reptiles, ants, aquatics, trees and so on--are emanations of the marginal potency of the Supreme Lord. Therefore all of them belong to the family of the Supreme Being. There is no clash of interest in spiritual life.

The spiritual entities are meant for enjoyment. By nature and constitution, every living being--including the Supreme Lord and each part and parcel--is meant for eternal enjoyment. The living beings who are encaged in the material tabernacle are constantly seeking enjoyment, but they are seeking it on the wrong platform. Apart from this material world, there is the spiritual platform where the Supreme Being enjoys Himself with His innumerable associates. On that platform there is no trace of material qualities, and therefore that platform is called nirguna. On the nirguna platform there is never a clash over the object of enjoyment. Here in the material world there is always a clash between different individual beings because here the proper center of enjoyment is missed. The real center of enjoyment is the Supreme Lord, who is the center of the sublime and spiritual rasa dance. We are all meant to join Him and enjoy life with one transcendental interest and without any clash. That is the high platform of spiritual interest, and as soon as one realizes this perfect form of oneness, there can be no question of illusion or lamentation.

A godless civilization arises from maya, or illusion, and the result of such a civilization is lamentation. A godless civilization, such as that sponsored by the modern politicians, is always full of anxieties; that is the law of nature. As stated in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 7.14), no one but those who surrender at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord can surpass the stringent laws of nature. Thus if we wish to get rid of all sorts of illusion and anxiety and create unity out of all diverse interests, we must bring God into all our activities.

The results of our activities must be used to serve the interest of the Lord, and not for any other purpose. Only by serving the Lord's interest can we perceive the atma-bhuta interest mentioned herein. The atma-bhuta interest mentioned in this mantra and the brahma-bhuta interest mentioned in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 18.54) are one and the same. The supreme atma, or soul, is the Lord Himself, and the minute atma is the living entity. The supreme atma or Paramatma alone maintains all the individual minute beings, for the Supreme Lord wants to derive pleasure out of their affection. The father extends himself through his children and maintains them in order to derive pleasure. If the children are obedient to the father's will, family affairs will run smoothly with one interest and a pleasing atmosphere. The same situation is transcendently arranged in the absolute family of the Parabrahman, the supreme spirit.

The Parabrahman is as much a person as the individual entities. Neither the Lord nor the living entities are impersonal. Such transcendental personalities are full of transcendental bliss, knowledge and eternal life. That is the real position of spiritual existence, and as soon as one is fully cognizant of this transcendental position, he at once surrenders unto the lotus feet of the Supreme Being, Sri Krsna. But such a mahatma, great soul, is very rarely seen because such transcendental realization is achieved only after many, many births (Bg. 7.19). Once attained, however, there is no longer any illusion or distress or the miseries of material existence or birth and death, which

are all experienced in our present life. That is the information we receive from this mantra of Sri Isopanisad.

TEXT 8

sa paryagac chukram akayam avranam
asnaviram suddham apapa-viddham
kavir manisi paribhuh svayambhur
yathatathyato 'rthan vyadadhac chasvatibhyah samabhyah

sah--that person; paryagat--must know in fact; sukram--the omnipotent; akayam--unembodied; avranam--without reproach; asnaviram--without veins; suddham--antiseptic; apapa-viddham--prophylactic; kavir--omniscient; manisi--philosopher; paribhuh--the greatest of all; svayambhur--self-sufficient; yathatathyatah--just in pursuance of; arthan--desirables; vyadadhat--awards; sasvatibhyah--immemorial; samabhyah--time.

TRANSLATION

Such a person must factually know the greatest of all, who is unembodied, omniscient, beyond reproach, without veins, pure and uncontaminated, the self-sufficient philosopher who has been fulfilling everyone's desire since time immemorial.

PURPORT

This description of the transcendental and eternal form of the Absolute personality of Godhead indicates that the Supreme Lord is not formless. He has His own transcendental form, which is not at all similar to the forms of the mundane world. The forms of the living entities in this world are embodied in material nature, and they work like any material machine. The anatomy of a material body must have a mechanical construction with veins and so forth, but the transcendental body of the Supreme Lord has nothing like veins. It is clearly stated here that He is unembodied, which means that there is no difference between His body and soul. Nor does He accept a body according to the law of nature, as we do. In the material conception of bodily life, the soul is different from the gross embodiment and subtle mind. However, the Supreme Lord is apart from any such compartmentalized arrangement. There is no difference between His body and mind. He is the complete whole, and His mind, body and He Himself are all one and the same.

In Brahma-samhita there is a similar description of the Supreme Lord. He is described there as sac-cid-ananda-vigraha, which means that He is the eternal form fully representing transcendental existence, knowledge and bliss. The Vedic literatures clearly state that He has a completely different kind of body; thus He is sometimes described as formless. This formlessness means that He has no form like ours and that He is devoid of a form which we can perceive. In Brahma-samhita it is further stated that the Lord can do anything and everything with any one of the parts of His body. It is said there that with each and every one of the parts of His body, He can do the work of the other senses. This means that the Lord can walk with His hands, accept things with His legs, see with His hands and feet, eat with His eyes, etc. In the sruti mantras it is also said that although the Lord has no hands and legs

like us, He has a different type of hands and legs by which He can accept all that we offer Him and run faster than anyone. These points are confirmed in this eighth mantra through the use of words like sukram (omnipotent).

The Lord's worshipable form (arca-vigraha), which is installed in temples by authorized acaryas who have realized the Lord in terms of Mantra Seven, is also nondifferent from the original form of the Lord. The Lord's original form is that of Sri Krsna, and Sri Krsna expands Himself into an unlimited number of forms like Baladeva, Rama, Nrsimha, Varaha, etc. All of these forms are one and the same Personality of Godhead.

Similarly, the arca-vigraha which is worshiped in temples is also an expanded form of the Lord. By worshiping the arca-vigraha, one can at once approach the Lord, who accepts the service of a devotee by His omnipotent energy. The arca-vigraha of the Lord descends upon the request of the acaryas, the holy teachers, and works exactly in the original way of the Lord by virtue of the Lord's omnipotent energy. Foolish people who have no knowledge of Sri Isopanisad or of any of the other sruti mantras consider the arca-vigraha, which is worshiped by pure devotees, to be made of material elements. This form may be seen as material by the imperfect eyes of foolish people or kanistha-adhikaris, but such people do not know that the Lord, being omnipotent and omniscient, can transform matter into spirit and spirit into matter as He desires.

In Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 9.11-12) the Lord regrets the fallen condition of men with little knowledge who regard the body of the Lord as material just because the Lord descends like a man into this world. Such poorly informed persons do not know the omnipotence of the Lord. Thus the Lord does not manifest Himself in full to the mental speculators. He can be appreciated only in proportion to one's surrender to Him. The fallen condition of the living entities is due entirely to forgetfulness of their relationship with God.

In this mantra, as well as in many other Vedic mantras, it is clearly stated that the Lord has been supplying goods to the living entity from time immemorial. The living being desires something, and the Lord supplies the object of that desire in proportion to one's qualification. If a man wants to be a high court judge, he must not only acquire the necessary qualifications, but he must also acquire the consent of the authority who can award the title of high court judge. The qualifications in themselves are not sufficient in order for one to occupy the post. The post itself must be awarded by some superior authority. Similarly, the Lord awards enjoyment to living entities in proportion to their qualifications. In other words, they are awarded according to the law of karma. The qualifications in themselves are not sufficient to enable one to receive awards. The mercy of the Lord is also required.

Ordinarily the living being does not know what to ask from the Lord nor which post to seek. When the living being comes to know his constitutional position, however, he asks to be accepted into the transcendental association of the Lord in order to render transcendental loving service unto Him. Unfortunately, living beings under the influence of material nature ask for many other things, and their mentality is described in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 2.41) as divided or splayed intelligence. Spiritual intelligence is one, but mundane intelligence is

diverse. In Srimad-Bhagavatam it is stated that those who are captivated by the temporary beauties of the external energy forget the real aim of life, which is to go back to Godhead. Forgetting this, one tries to adjust things by various plans and programs, but this is like chewing that which has already been chewed. Nonetheless, the Lord is so kind that He allows the forgetful living entity to continue in this way without interference. If a living being wants to go to hell, the Lord allows him to do so without interference, and if he wants to go back home, back to Godhead, the Lord helps him.

God is described here as paribhuh, the greatest of all. No one is greater than or equal to Him. Other living beings are described here as beggars who ask goods from the Lord. The Lord supplies the things desired by the living entities. If the entities were equal to the Lord in potency, or if they were omnipotent or omniscient, there would be no question of their begging from the Lord, even for so-called liberation. Real liberation means going back to Godhead. Liberation as conceived by an impersonalist is a myth, and begging for sense gratification has to continue eternally unless the beggar comes to his spiritual senses and realizes his constitutional position.

Only the Supreme Lord is self-sufficient. When Lord Krsna appeared on earth 5,000 years ago, He displayed His full manifestation as the Personality of Godhead through His various activities. In His childhood He killed many powerful demons, and there was no question of His having acquired such power through any extraneous endeavor. He lifted Govardhana Hill without even practicing weight lifting. He danced with the gopis without social restriction and without reproach. Although the gopis approached Him with feelings of amorous love, the relationship between the gopis and Lord Krsna has been worshiped even by Lord Caitanya, who was a strict sannyasi and rigid follower of disciplinary regulations. Sri Isopanisad also describes the Lord as suddham (antiseptic) and apapa-viddham (prophylactic), or pure and uncontaminated. He is antiseptic in the sense that even an impure thing can become purified just by touching Him. The word prophylactic refers to the power of His association. As mentioned in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 9.30-31), a devotee may appear to be suduracara, not well behaved, in the beginning, but he should be accepted as pure because he is on the right path. This is due to the prophylactic nature of the Lord's association. The Lord is also apapa-viddham because sin cannot touch Him. Even if He acts in a way which appears to be sinful, such actions are all good, for there is no question of His being affected by sin. Because in all circumstances He is suddham, most purified, He is often compared to the sun. The sun exacts moisture from many untouchable places on the earth, yet it remains pure. In fact, it purifies obnoxious things by virtue of its sterilizing powers. If the sun, which is a material object, is so powerful, then we can hardly begin to imagine the purity and strength of the all-powerful Lord.

TEXT 9

andham tamah pravisanti
ye 'vidyam upasate
tato bhuya iva te tamo
ya u vidyayam ratah

andham--gross ignorance; tamah--darkness; pravisaniti--enter into; ye--those who; avidyam--nescience; upasate--worship; tatah--than that; bhuyah--still more; iva--like; te--they; tamah--darkness; ye--those who; u--also; vidyayam--in the culture of knowledge; ratah--engaged.

TRANSLATION

Those who engage in the culture of nescient activities shall enter into the darkest region of ignorance. Worse still are those engaged in the culture of so-called knowledge.

PURPORT

This mantra offers a comparative study of vidya and avidya. Avidya, or ignorance, is undoubtedly dangerous, but vidya, or knowledge, is even more dangerous when mistaken or misguided. This mantra of Sri Isopanisad is even more applicable today than at any other time. Modern civilization has advanced considerably in the field of mass education, but the result is that people are more unhappy than ever before because of the stress placed on material advancement to the exclusion of the most important part of life, the spiritual aspect.

As far as vidya is concerned, the first mantra has explained very clearly that the Supreme Lord is the proprietor of everything and that forgetfulness of this fact is called ignorance. The more a man forgets this fact of life, the more he is in darkness. In view of this, a godless civilization directed toward the so-called advancement of education is more dangerous than a civilization in which the masses of people are less materially advanced.

Of the different classes of men--karmis, jnanis and yogis--the karmis are those who are engaged in the activities of sense gratification. Almost 99.9 percent of the people in modern civilization are engaged in the activities of sense gratification under the flags of industrialism, economic development, altruism, political activism and so on. Yet all these activities are more or less based on satisfaction of the senses to the exclusion of the kind of God consciousness described in the first mantra.

In the language of Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 7.15), people who are engaged in gross sense gratification are mudhas--asses. The ass is a symbol of stupidity. Those who simply engage in the profitless pursuit of sense gratification are worshiping avidya, according to Sri Isopanisad. Those who play the role of helping this sort of civilization in the name of educational advancement are actually doing more harm than those who are on the platform of gross sense gratification. Advancement of learning by a godless people is as dangerous as a valuable jewel on the hood of a cobra. A cobra decorated with a valuable jewel is more dangerous than one not decorated. In Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya, the advancement of education by a godless people is compared to decorations on a dead body. In India, as in many other countries, some people follow the custom of leading a procession with a decorated dead body for the pleasure of the lamenting relatives. In the same sense, modern civilization is a patchwork of activities meant to cover the perpetual miseries of material existence. Such activities are aimed toward sense gratification, but above the senses is the mind, and above the mind is the intelligence, and above the intelligence there is the soul. Thus the

aim of real education should be self-realization, realization of the spiritual values of the soul. Any education which does not lead to such realization must be considered avidya, or nescience. By the culture of such nescience, one goes down to the darkest region of ignorance.

According to the Vedas, mistaken mundane educators are known as (1) veda-vada-rata, (2) mayayapahrta-jnana, (3) asuram bhavam asrita, and (4) naradhama. Those who are veda-vada-rata pose themselves as very learned in Vedic literature, but unfortunately they are completely diverted from the purpose of the Vedas. In Bhagavad-gita it is said (Bg. 15.18-20) that the Vedic goal is to know the Personality of Godhead, but these veda-vada-rata men are not at all interested in the personality of Godhead. On the contrary, they are fascinated by such fruitive results as the attainment of heaven, etc.

As stated in Mantra One, we should know that the personality of Godhead is the proprietor of everything and that we must be satisfied with our allotted portions of the necessities of life. The purpose of all Vedic literature is to awaken this God consciousness in the forgetful living being, and this same purpose is presented in various ways in the different scriptures of the world for the understanding of a foolish mankind. Thus the ultimate purpose of all religions is to bring one back to Godhead.

But the veda-vada-rata people, instead of realizing the purport of the Vedas, take it for granted that side issues such as the attainment of heavenly pleasure for sense gratification--the lust for which causes their material bondage in the first place--are the ultimate end of the Vedas. Such people misguide others by misinterpreting Vedic literature. Sometimes they even condemn the Puranas, which are authentic Vedic explanations for laymen. The veda-vada-ratas give their own explanations of the Vedas, neglecting the authority of great teachers (acaryas). They also tend to raise some unscrupulous person from amongst themselves and flaunt him as the leading exponent of Vedic knowledge. Such men are especially condemned in this mantra by the very appropriate Sanskrit word vidya-rata. Vidya means veda because the Veda is the origin of knowledge, and rata means engaged. Vidya-rata thus means "engaged in the study of the Vedas." The so-called vidya-ratas are condemned herein because they do not know the actual purpose of the Vedas due to their disobeying the acaryas. Such veda-vada-ratas are accustomed to finding meanings in every word of the Vedas to suit their own purposes. They do not know that Vedic literature is not a collection of ordinary books and cannot be understood but through the chain of disciplic succession.

One must approach a bona fide spiritual master in order to understand the transcendental message of the Vedas. That is the direction of Katha Upanisad. These veda-vada-rata people, however, have their own acarya, who is not in the chain of transcendental succession. Thus they progress into the darkest region of ignorance by misinterpreting Vedic literature. They even fall further into ignorance than those who have no knowledge of the Vedas at all.

The mayayapahrta-jnana class of men are self-made "gods." Such men think that they themselves are God and that there is no need to worship any other God. They will agree to worship an ordinary man if he happens to be rich, but they will never worship the personality of Godhead. Such men, unable to recognize their own foolishness, never consider how it is that God can be entrapped by illusion. If God were ever entrapped by illusion, illusion would be more powerful than God. Such men say that

God is all-powerful, but they do not consider that if He is all-powerful there is no possibility of His being overpowered by illusion. These self-made gods cannot answer all these questions very clearly; they are simply satisfied to have become God themselves.

"Sri Isopanisad" by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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TEXT 10

anyad evahur vidyaya
anyad ahur avidyaya
iti susruma dhiranam
ye nas tad vicacaksire

anyat--different; eva--certainly; ahuh--said; vidyaya--by culture of knowledge; anyat--different; ahuh--said; avidyaya--by culture of nescience; iti--thus; susruma--I heard; dhiranam--from the sober; ye--who; nah--to us; tat--that; vicacaksire--explained.

TRANSLATION

The wise have explained that one result is derived from the culture of knowledge and that a different result is obtained from the culture of nescience.

PURPORT

As advised in the Thirteenth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 13.8-12), one should culture knowledge in the following way:

(1) One should himself become a perfect gentleman and learn to give proper respect to others.

(2) One should not pose himself as a religionist simply for name and fame.

(3) One should not become a source of anxiety to others by the actions of his body, by the thoughts of his mind, or by his words.

(4) One should learn forbearance even in the face of provocation from others.

(5) One should learn to avoid duplicity in his dealings with others.

(6) One should search out a bona fide spiritual master who can lead him gradually to the stage of spiritual realization, and one must submit himself to such a spiritual master, render him service, and ask relevant questions.

(7) In order to approach the platform of self-realization, one must follow the regulative principles enjoined in the revealed scriptures.

(8) One must be fixed in the tenets of the revealed scriptures.

(9) One should completely refrain from practices which are detrimental to the interest of self-realization.

(10) One should not accept more than he requires for the maintenance of the body.

(11) One should not falsely identify himself with the gross material body nor consider those who are related to his body to be his own.

(12) One should always remember that as long as he has a material body he must face the miseries of repeated birth, old age, disease and death. There is no use in making plans to get rid of these miseries of the material body. The best course is to find out the means by which one may regain his spiritual identity.

(13) One should not be attached to more than the necessities of life required for spiritual advancement.

(14) One should not be more attached to wife, children and home than the revealed scriptures ordain.

(15) One should not be happy or distressed over desirables and undesirables created by the mind.

(16) One should become an unalloyed devotee of the personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna, and serve Him with rapt attention.

(17) One should develop a liking for residence in a secluded place with a calm and quiet atmosphere favorable for spiritual culture, and one should avoid congested places where nondevotees congregate.

(18) One should become a scientist or philosopher and conduct research into spiritual knowledge, recognizing that spiritual knowledge is permanent whereas material knowledge ends with the death of the body.

These eighteen items combine to form a gradual process by which real knowledge can be developed. But for these, all other methods are considered to be in the category of nescience. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, a great acarya, maintained that all forms of material knowledge are merely external features of the illusory energy and that by culturing them one becomes no better than an ass. This same principle is found in Sri Isopanisad. By advancement of material knowledge, modern man is simply being converted into an ass. Some materialistic politicians in spiritual guise decry the present system of civilization as satanic, but unfortunately they do not care about the culture of real

knowledge as it is described in Bhagavad-gita. Thus they cannot change the satanic situation.

In the modern setup, even a boy thinks himself self-sufficient and pays no respect to elderly men. Due to the wrong type of education being imparted in our universities, boys all over the world have caused elderly people headaches. Thus Sri Isopanisad very strongly warns that the culture of nescience is different from that of knowledge. The universities are, so to speak, centers of nescience only; consequently scientists are busy discovering lethal weapons to wipe out the existence of other countries. University students today are not given instructions in the regulative principles of brahmacharya nor in the spiritual process of life. Nor do they have any faith in any scriptural injunctions. Religious principles are taught for the sake of name and fame only and not for the sake of practical action. Thus there is animosity not only in social and political fields but in the field of religion as well.

Nationalism and chauvinism have developed in different parts of the world due to the cultivation of nescience by the general people. No one considers that this tiny earth is just a lump of matter floating in immeasurable space along with many other lumps. In comparison to the vastness of space, these material lumps are like dust particles in air. Because God has kindly made these lumps of matter complete in themselves, they are perfectly equipped with all necessities for floating in space. The drivers of our spaceships may be very proud of their achievements, but they do not consider the supreme driver of these greater, more gigantic spaceships called planets.

There are innumerable suns and innumerable planetary systems also. As the infinitesimal parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord, we small creatures are trying to dominate these unlimited planets. Thus we take repeated birth and death and are generally frustrated by old age and disease. The span of human life is scheduled for about a hundred years, although it is gradually decreasing to twenty or thirty years. Thanks to the culture of nescience, befooled men have created their own nations within these planets in order to grasp more effectively sense enjoyment for these few years. Such foolish people are drawing up various plans to render national demarcations as perfect as possible. This is ultimately ridiculous. For this purpose each and every nation has become a source of anxiety for others. More than fifty percent of a nation's energy is devoted to defense measures and thus spoiled. No one cares for the cultivation of knowledge, yet people are falsely proud of being advanced in both material and spiritual knowledge.

Sri Isopanisad warns us of this faulty type of education, and Bhagavad-gita gives instructions as to the development of real knowledge. In this mantra there is a hint that the instructions of vidya (knowledge) must be acquired from a dhira. A dhira is one who is not disturbed by material illusion. No one can be undisturbed unless he is perfectly spiritually realized, at which time one neither hankers nor laments for anything. A dhira realizes that the material body and mind which he has acquired by chance through material association are but foreign elements; therefore he simply makes the best use of a bad bargain.

The material body and mind are bad bargains for the spiritual living entity. The living entity has actual functions in the living spiritual world, but this material world is dead. As long as the living spiritual sparks manipulate the dead lumps of matter, the dead world

appears to be a living world. Actually it is the living souls, the parts and parcels of the Supreme Living being, who move the world. The dhiras are those who have come to know all these facts by hearing of them from superior authorities. The dhiras realize this knowledge by following the regulative principles.

To follow the regulative principles, one must take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master. The transcendental message and regulative principles come down from the spiritual master to the disciple. Such knowledge does not come in the hazardous way of nescient education. One can become a dhira only by submissively hearing the messages of the personality of Godhead. The perfect disciple must be like Arjuna, and the spiritual master must be as good as the Lord Himself. This is the process of learning vidya (knowledge) from the dhira, the undisturbed.

An adhira (one who has not undergone the training of a dhira) cannot be an instructive leader. Modern politicians who pose themselves as dhiras are actually adhiras, and one cannot expect perfect knowledge from them. They are simply busy seeing to their own remuneration in dollars and cents. How, then, can they lead the mass of people to the right path of self-realization? Thus one must hear submissively from the dhira in order to attain actual education.

TEXT 11

vidyam cavidyam ca yas
tad vedobhayam saha
avidyaya mrtyum tirtva
vidyayamrtam asnute

vidyam--knowledge in fact; ca--and; avidyam--nescience; ca--and; yah--a person who; tat--that; veda--knows; ubhayam--both; saha--simultaneously; avidyaya--by culture of nescience; mrtyum--repeated death; tirtva--transcending; vidyaya--by culture of knowledge; amrtam--deathlessness; asnute--enjoys.

TRANSLATION

Only one who can learn the process of nescience and that of transcendental knowledge side by side can transcend the influence of repeated birth and death and enjoy the full blessing of immortality.

PURPORT

Since the creation of the material world, everyone has been trying to attain a permanent life, but the law of nature is so cruel that no one has been able to avoid the hand of death. It is an actual fact that no one wants to die. Nor does anyone want to become old or diseased. The law of nature, however, does not allot anyone immunity from death, old age, or disease. Nor has the advancement of material knowledge solved these problems. Material science can discover the nuclear bomb to accelerate the process of death, but it cannot discover anything that can protect man from the cruel hands of disease, old age and death.

From the Puranas we learn of the activities of Hiranyakasipu, a king who was very much advanced materially. Wanting to conquer death by his material acquisitions and the strength of his nescience, he

underwent a type of meditation so severe that the inhabitants of all the planetary systems became disturbed by his mystic powers. He forced the creator of the universe, the demigod Brahma, to come down to him. He then asked Brahma for the benediction of amara, by which one does not die. Brahma said that he could not award the benediction because even he, the material creator who rules all planets, is not amara. As confirmed in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 8.17), Brahma lives a long time, but that does not mean he doesn't have to die.

Hiranya means gold, and kasipu means soft bed. This gentleman was interested in these two things--money and women--and he wanted to enjoy them by becoming immortal. He asked Brahma many questions indirectly in hopes of fulfilling his desire to become an amara. Since Brahma told him that he could not grant the gift of immortality, Hiranyakasipu requested that he not be killed by any man, animal, god or any other living being within the categories of the 8,400,000 species. He also requested that he not die on land, in the air or in the water or by any weapon whatsoever. In this way Hiranyakasipu foolishly thought that these guarantees would save him from death. Ultimately, however, although Brahma granted him all these benedictions, he was killed by the Personality of Godhead in the form of Nrsimha, a half-lion half-man, and no weapon was used to kill him, for he was killed by the nails of the Lord. Nor was he killed on the land, in the air or in the water, for he was killed on the lap of that wonderful living being who was beyond his conception.

The whole point here is that even Hiranyakasipu, the most powerful of materialists, could not become deathless by his various plans. What, then, can be accomplished by the tiny Hiranyakasipus of today, whose plans are throttled from moment to moment?

Sri Isopanisad instructs us not to make one-sided attempts to win the struggle for existence. Everyone is struggling hard for existence, but the laws of material nature are so hard and fast that they do not allow anyone to surpass them. In order to attain a permanent life, one must be prepared to go back to Godhead.

The process by which one goes back to Godhead is a different branch of knowledge, and it has to be learned from revealed Vedic scriptures such as the Upanisads, Vedanta-sutra, Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam, etc. To become happy in this life and attain a permanent blissful life after leaving this material body, one must take to this sacred literature and obtain transcendental knowledge. The conditioned living being has forgotten his eternal relationship with God, and he has mistakenly accepted the temporary place of birth as all-in-all. The Lord has kindly delivered the above-mentioned scriptures in India and other scriptures in other countries to remind the forgetful human being that his home is not here in this material world. The living being is a spiritual entity, and he can only be happy by returning to his spiritual home.

The personality of Godhead sends His bona fide servants from His kingdom to propagate this message by which one can return to Godhead, and sometimes the Lord comes Himself to do this work. Since all living beings are His beloved sons, His parts and parcels, God is more sorry than we ourselves to see the sufferings which we are constantly undergoing in this material condition. The miseries of this material world serve to indirectly remind us of our incompatibility with dead matter. Intelligent living entities generally take note of these

reminders and engage themselves in the culture of vidya, or transcendental knowledge. Human life is the best opportunity for the culture of spiritual knowledge, and a human being who does not take advantage of this opportunity is called a naradhama, the lowest of human beings.

The path of avidya, or advancement of material knowledge for sense gratification, is the path of repeated birth and death. As he exists spiritually, the living entity has no birth or death. Birth and death apply to the outward covering of the spirit soul, the body. Death is compared to the taking off and birth to the putting on of outward garments. Foolish human beings who are grossly absorbed in the culture of avidya, nescience, do not mind this cruel process. Being enamored by the beauty of illusory energy, they undergo the same things repeatedly and do not learn any lessons from the laws of nature.

The culture of vidya, or transcendental knowledge, is essential for the human being. Sense enjoyment in the diseased material condition must be restricted as far as possible. Unrestricted sense enjoyment in this bodily condition is the path of ignorance and death. The living entities are not without spiritual senses; every living being in his original, spiritual form has all the senses, which are now material, being covered by the body and mind. Activities of the material senses are perverted reflections of spiritual pastimes. In its diseased condition, the spirit soul engages in material activities under the material covering. Real sense enjoyment is possible only when the disease of materialism is removed. In our real spiritual form, free from all material contamination, pure enjoyment of the senses is possible. The aim of human life should not be perverted sense enjoyment; one should be eager to cure the material disease. Aggravation of the material disease is no sign of knowledge, but a sign of avidya, ignorance. A fever must not be increased from 105 degrees to 107 degrees for good health but should be reduced to the normal 98.6. That should be the aim of human life. The modern trend of material civilization is to increase the temperature of the feverish material condition, which has reached the point of 107 degrees in the form of atomic energy. Meanwhile the foolish politicians are crying that at any moment the world may go to hell. That is the result of the advancement of material knowledge and the neglect of the most important kind of life, the culture of spiritual knowledge. Sri Isopanisad herein warns that we must not follow this dangerous path which leads to death. On the contrary, we must develop the culture of spiritual knowledge so that we may become completely free from the cruel hands of death.

This does not mean that all activities for the maintenance of the body should be stopped. There is no question of stopping activities, just as there is no question of wiping out one's temperature altogether when trying to recover from a disease. "To make the best use of a bad bargain" is the appropriate expression. The culture of spiritual knowledge necessitates the help of this body and mind; therefore maintenance of the body and mind is required if we are to reach our goal. The normal temperature should be maintained at 98.6 degrees, and the great sages and saints of India have attempted to do this by a balanced program of spiritual and material knowledge. They never allow the misuse of human intelligence for diseased sense gratification.

Human activities diseased by a tendency toward sense gratification have been regulated in the Vedas under the principles of salvation. This

system employs religion, economic development, sense gratification and salvation, but at the present moment people have no interest in religion or salvation. They have only one aim in life--sense gratification--and in order to fulfill this end they make plans for economic development. Misguided men think that religion should be maintained because it contributes to economic development, which is required for sense gratification. Thus in order to guarantee further sense gratification after death, in heaven, there is some system of religious observance. This, however, is not the purpose of salvation. The path of religion is actually for self-realization, and economic development is required just to maintain the body in a sound healthy condition. A man should lead a healthy life with a sound mind just to realize vidya, true knowledge, which is the aim of human life. This life is not meant for working like an ass or for culturing avidya for sense gratification.

The path of vidya is most perfectly presented in Srimad-Bhagavatam, which directs a human being to utilize his life to inquire into the Absolute Truth. The Absolute Truth is realized step by step as Brahman, Paramatma and finally Bhagavan, the personality of Godhead. The Absolute Truth is realized by the broadminded man who has attained knowledge and detachment by following the eighteen principles of Bhagavad-gita described in the purport to Mantra Ten. The central purpose of these eighteen principles is the attainment of transcendental devotional service to the Personality of Godhead. Therefore all classes of men are encouraged to learn the art of devotional service to the Lord. The guaranteed path to the aim of vidya is described by Sri Rupa Gosvami in his Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu, which we have presented in English as The Nectar of Devotion. The culture of vidya is summarized by the Srimad-Bhagavatam in the following words:

tasmad ekena manasa
bhagavan satvatam patih
srotavyah kirtitavyas ca
dhyeyah pujyas ca nityada

"Therefore devotees should constantly hear about, glorify, remember and worship the personality of Godhead [Bhagavan], who is their protector." (SB. 1.2.14)

Unless religion, economic development, and sense gratification aim toward the attainment of devotional service to the Lord, they are all simply different forms of nescience, as Sri Isopanisad indicates in the following mantras. To culture vidya in this age, one must always hear, chant and worship with concentrated attention aimed at the personality of Godhead, who is the Lord of the transcendentalists.

TEXT 12

andham tamah pravisanti
ye 'sambhutim upasate
tato bhuya iva te tamo
yau sambhutyam ratah

andham--ignorance; tamah--darkness; pravisanti--enter into; ye--those who; asambhutim--demigods; upasate--worship; tatah--than that; bhuyah--

still more; iva--like that; te--those; tamah--darkness; ye--who; u--
also; sambhutyam--in the Absolute; ratah--engaged.

TRANSLATION

Those who are engaged in the worship of demigods enter into the darkest region of ignorance, and still more so do the worshipers of the impersonal Absolute.

PURPORT

The Sanskrit word asambhuti refers to those who have no independent existence. Sambhuti is the Absolute personality of Godhead, who is absolutely independent of everything. In Bhagavad-gita, the Absolute personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna, states:

na me viduh sura-ganah
prabhavam na maharsayah
aham adir hi devanam
maharsinam ca sarvasah

"Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin, for in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and the sages." (Bg. 10.2) Thus Krsna is the origin of the powers delegated to demigods, great sages and mystics. Although they are endowed with great powers, it is very difficult for them to know how Krsna Himself appears by His own internal potency in the form of a man.

All philosophers and great rsis, or mystics, try to distinguish the Absolute from the relative by their tiny brain power. This can only help them reach the point of negating relativity without realizing any positive trace of the Absolute. Definition of the Absolute by negation is not complete. Such negative definitions lead one to create a concept of his own; thus one imagines that the Absolute must be formless and without qualities. Negative qualities are simply the reversals of positive qualities and are therefore also relative. By conceiving of the Absolute in this way one can at the utmost reach the impersonal effulgence of God, known as Brahman, but he cannot make further progress to Bhagavan, the personality of Godhead.

Such mental speculators do not know that Krsna is the Absolute personality of Godhead, that the impersonal Brahman is the glaring effulgence of His transcendental body and that Paramatma, the Supersoul, is His all-pervading representation. Nor do they know that Krsna has His eternal form with its transcendental qualities of eternal bliss and knowledge. The dependent demigods and great sages imperfectly consider Him to be a powerful demigod, and they consider the Brahman effulgence to be the Absolute Truth. Krsna's devotees who surrender unto Him in unalloyed devotion, however, can know that He is the Absolute person and that everything emanates from Him. Such devotees continuously render loving service unto Krsna, the fountainhead of everything.

In Bhagavad-gita it is also said (Bg. 7.20) that only bewildered persons, driven by a strong desire for sense gratification, worship the demigods for the satisfaction of temporary problems. Temporary relief from certain difficulties by the greatness of some demigod is a solution sought only by the unintelligent. Since the living being is materially

entangled, he has to be relieved from material bondage entirely to attain permanent relief on the spiritual plane where eternal bliss, life and knowledge exist. It is also stated in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 7.23) that the worshipers of the demigods can go to the planets of the demigods. The moon worshipers can go to the moon, the sun worshipers to the sun, etc. Modern scientists are now venturing to the moon with the help of rockets, but this is not really a new attempt. With their advanced consciousness, human beings are naturally inclined to travel in outer space and to reach other planets--either by spaceships, mystic powers or demigod worship. In the Vedic scriptures, it is said that one can reach other planets by any one of these three ways, but the most common way is by worshiping the demigod presiding over that particular planet. However, all planets in the material universe are temporary residences; the only permanent planets are the Vaikunthalokas. These are found in the spiritual sky, and the personality of Godhead Himself dominates them. As stated in Bhagavad-gita:

abrahma-bhuvanal lokah
punar avartino 'rjuna
mam upetya tu kaunteya
punar janma na vidyate

"From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains My abode, O son of Kunti, never takes birth again."
(Bg. 8.16)

Sri Isopanisad points out that one remains in the darkest region of the universe by hovering over the material planets by one means or another. The whole universe is covered by the gigantic material elements, just as a coconut is covered by a husk. Since its covering is airtight, the darkness within is dense, and therefore suns and moons are required for illumination. Outside the universe is the vast and unlimited brahmajyoti expansion which is filled with Vaikunthalokas. The highest planet in the brahmajyoti is the Krsnaloka, or Goloka Vrndavana, where the Supreme personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna Himself, resides. Lord Sri Krsna never leaves this Krsnaloka. Although He dwells there with His eternal associates, He is omnipresent throughout the complete material and spiritual cosmic manifestations. This fact has already been explained in Mantra Four. The Lord is present everywhere, just like the sun, yet He is situated in one place, just as the sun is situated in its own undeviating orbit.

The problems of life cannot be solved simply by going to the moon. There are many pseudo-worshipers who become religionists only for the sake of name and fame. Such pseudo-religionists do not wish to get out of this universe and reach the spiritual sky. They only want to maintain the status quo in the material world under the garb of worshiping the Lord. The atheists and impersonalists lead such foolish pseudo-religionists into the darkest regions by preaching the cult of atheism. The atheist directly denies the existence of the Supreme personality of Godhead, and the impersonalists support the atheists by stressing the impersonal aspect of the Supreme Lord. Thus far we have not come across any mantra in Sri Isopanisad in which the Supreme personality of Godhead is denied. It is said that He can run faster than anyone. Those who are running after other planets are certainly persons, and if the Lord can

run faster than all of them, how can He be considered impersonal? The impersonal conception of the Supreme Lord is another form of ignorance arising from an imperfect conception of the Absolute Truth.

The ignorant pseudo-religionists and the manufacturers of so-called incarnations who directly violate the Vedic injunctions are liable to enter into the darkest region of the universe because they mislead those who follow them. These impersonalists generally pose themselves as incarnations of God to the foolish who have no knowledge of Vedic wisdom. If such foolish men have any knowledge at all, it is more dangerous in their hands than ignorance itself. Such impersonalists do not even worship the demigods according to the scriptural recommendations. In the scriptures there are recommendations for worshiping demigods under certain circumstances, but at the same time these scriptures state that there is normally no need for this. In Bhagavad-gita it is clearly stated (Bg. 7.23) that the results derived from worshiping the demigods are not permanent. Since the entire material universe is not permanent, whatever is achieved within the darkness of material existence is also impermanent. The question is how to obtain real and permanent life.

The Lord states that as soon as one reaches Him by devotional service--which is the one and only way to approach the personality of Godhead--one attains complete freedom from the bondage of birth and death. In other words, the path of salvation from the material clutches fully depends on the principles of knowledge and detachment. The pseudo-religionists have neither knowledge nor detachment from material affairs, for most of them want to live in the golden shackles of material bondage under the shadow of altruistic and philanthropic activities and in the guise of religious principles. By a false display of religious sentiments, they present a show of devotional service while indulging in all sorts of immoral activities. In this way they pass as spiritual masters and devotees of God. Such violators of religious principles have no respect for the authoritative acaryas, the holy teachers in the strict disciplic succession. To mislead the people in general, they themselves become so-called acaryas, but do not even follow the principles of the acaryas.

These rogues are the most dangerous elements in human society. Because there is no religious government, they escape punishment by the law of the state. They cannot, however, escape the law of the Supreme, who has clearly declared in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 16.19-20) that envious demons in the garb of religious propagandists shall be thrown into the darkest regions of hell. Sri Isopanisad confirms that these pseudo-religionists are heading toward the most obnoxious place in the universe after the completion of their spiritual master business, which they conduct simply for sense gratification.

TEXT 13

anyad evahuh sambhavat
anyad ahur asambhavat
iti susruma dhiranam
ye nas tad vicacaksire

anyat--different; eva--certainly; ahuh--it is said; sambhavat--by
worshiping the Supreme Lord, the cause of all causes; anyat--different;

ahuh--it is said; asambhavat--by worshiping what is not the Supreme;
iti--thus; susruma--I heard it; dhiranam--from the undisturbed
authorities; ye--who; nah--unto us; tat--about that subject matter;
vicacaksire--perfectly explained.

TRANSLATION

It is said that one result is obtained by worshiping the supreme cause of all causes and that another result is obtained by worshiping that which is not supreme. All this is heard from the undisturbed authorities who clearly explained it.

PURPORT

The system of hearing from undisturbed authorities is approved in this mantra. Unless one hears from a bona fide acarya, who is never disturbed about the changes of the material world, one cannot have the real key to transcendental knowledge. The bona fide spiritual master, who has also heard the sruti mantras, or Vedic knowledge, from his undisturbed acarya, never manufactures or presents anything which is not mentioned in the Vedic literatures. In Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 9.25) it is clearly said that those who worship the pitrs, or forefathers, attain the planets of the forefathers. Similarly, the gross materialists who make plans to remain here again attain this world, and the devotees of the Lord, who worship none but Lord Krsna, the supreme cause of all causes, reach Him in His abode in the spiritual sky.

Here also in Sri Isopanisad it is verified that different results are achieved by different modes of worship. If we worship the Supreme Lord, we will certainly reach Him in His eternal abode, and if we worship demigods like the sun-god and moon-god, we can reach their respective planets without a doubt. And if we wish to remain on this wretched planet with our planning commissions and our stop-gap political adjustments, we can certainly do that also.

Nowhere in authentic scriptures is it said that one will ultimately reach the same goal by doing anything or worshiping anyone. Such foolish theories are offered by self-made masters who have no connection with the parampara, the bona fide system of disciplic succession. The bona fide spiritual master cannot say that all paths lead to the same goal and that anyone can attain this goal by his own mode of worship of the demigods or of the Supreme or whatever. For a common man it is very easy to understand that a person can reach his destination only when he has purchased a ticket for that destination. A person who has purchased a ticket for Calcutta can reach Calcutta, but not Bombay. However, temporary so-called masters say that any and all tickets can take one to the supreme goal. Such mundane and compromising offers attract many foolish creatures who become puffed up with their manufactured methods of spiritual realization. The Vedic instructions, however, do not uphold them. Unless one has received knowledge from the bona fide spiritual master who is in the recognized line of disciplic succession, he cannot have the real thing as it is. Krsna tells Arjuna in Bhagavad-gita:

evam parampara-praptam
imam rajarsayo viduh
sa kaleneha mahata

yogo nastah parantapa

"This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. But in course of time the succession was broken, and therefore the science as it is appears to be lost." (Bg. 4.2)

When Lord Sri Krsna was present on this earth, the bhakti-yoga principles which had been defined in Bhagavad-gita had become distorted; therefore the Lord had to reestablish the disciplic system beginning with Arjuna, who was the most confidential friend and devotee of the Lord. The Lord clearly told Arjuna (Bg. 4.3) that it was because he was His devotee and friend that the principles of Bhagavad-gita were understandable to him. In other words, no one can understand the Gita who is not a devotee and friend of the Lord. This also means that only one who follows the path of Arjuna can understand Bhagavad-gita.

At the present moment there are many interpreters and translators of this sublime dialogue who really have no knowledge of Lord Krsna's instructions to Arjuna. Such interpreters explain the verses of Bhagavad-gita in their own way and postulate all sorts of rubbish in the name of scripture. Such interpreters believe neither in Sri Krsna nor in His eternal abode. How, then, can they explain Bhagavad-gita?

The Gita clearly says (Bg. 7.20) that only those who have lost their sense worship the demigods. Krsna ultimately advises (Bg. 18.66) that one give up all other ways and modes of worship and fully surrender unto Him only. Only those who are cleansed of all sinful reactions can have such unflinching faith in the Supreme Lord. Others will continue hovering on the material platform with their paltry ways of worship and thus will be misled from the real path under the false impression that all paths lead to the same goal.

In this mantra the word sambhavat, by worship of the supreme cause, is very significant. Lord Krsna is the original Personality of Godhead, and everything that exists has emanated from Him. In Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 10.8) the Lord explains that He is the creator of everyone, including Brahma, Visnu and Siva. Because these three principal deities of the material world are created by the Lord, the Lord is the creator of all that exists in the material and spiritual worlds. In the Atharva Veda it is similarly said that He who existed before the creation of Brahma and who enlightened Brahma with Vedic knowledge is Lord Sri Krsna. "The Supreme person desired to create living entities, and thus Narayana created all living beings. From Narayana, Brahma was born. Narayana created all the Prajapatis. Narayana created Indra. Narayana created the eight Vasus. Narayana created the eleven Rudras. Narayana created the twelve Adityas." Since Narayana is the plenary manifestation of Lord Krsna, Narayana and Krsna are one and the same. There are also later readings which state that the same Supreme Lord is the son of Devaki. Sri Krsna's childhood with Devaki and Vasudeva and His identity with Narayana have also been accepted and confirmed by Sripada Sankaracarya, even though Sankara does not belong to the Vaisnava or personalist cult. The Atharva Veda also states: "Only Narayana existed in the beginning when neither Brahma nor Siva, nor fire, nor water, nor stars, nor sun, nor moon existed. The Lord does not remain alone but creates as He desires." It is stated in the Moksa-dharma: "I created the Prajapatis and the Rudras. They do not have complete knowledge of Me because they are covered by My illusory energy." It is also stated in Varaha Purana:

"Narayana is the Supreme personality of Godhead, and from Him the four-headed Brahma was manifested, as well as Rudra, who later became omniscient."

Thus all Vedic literature confirms that Narayana, or Krsna, is the cause of all causes. In Brahma-samhita also it is said that the Supreme Lord is Sri Krsna, Govinda, the delight of every living being and the primeval cause of all causes. The really learned person knows this from evidence given by the great sages and the Vedas. Thus the learned man decides to worship Lord Krsna as all in all.

Persons are called budha, or really learned, when they fasten themselves to the worship of Krsna only. This conviction is established when one hears the transcendental message from the undisturbed acarya with faith and love. One who has no faith in or love for Lord Krsna cannot be convinced of this simple truth. Those who are faithless are described in Bhagavad-gita as mudhas, fools or asses (Bg. 9.11). It is said that the mudhas deride the Personality of Godhead because they do not have complete knowledge from the undisturbed acarya. One who is disturbed by the whirlpool of material energy is not qualified to become an acarya.

Before hearing Bhagavad-gita, Arjuna was disturbed by the material whirlpool, by his affection for his family, society and community. Thus Arjuna wanted to become a philanthropic, nonviolent man of the world. However, when he became budha by hearing the Vedic knowledge of Bhagavad-gita from the Supreme person, he changed his decision and became a worshiper of Lord Sri Krsna, who had Himself designed the Battle of Kuruksetra. Arjuna worshiped the Lord by fighting with his so-called relatives. In this way he became a pure devotee of the Lord. Such accomplishments are possible only when one worships the real Krsna and not some fabricated "Krsna" invented by foolish men who are without knowledge of the intricacies of the science of Krsna described in Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam.

According to Vedanta-sutra, sambhuta is the source of birth and sustenance as well as the reservoir that remains after annihilation. The Srimad-Bhagavatam, the natural commentary upon Vedanta-sutra by the same author, maintains that the source of all emanations is not like a dead stone but is abhijna, or fully conscious. The primeval Lord Sri Krsna also says in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 7.26) that He is fully conscious of past, present and future and that no one, including demigods such as Siva and Brahma, knows Him fully. Certainly those who are disturbed by the tides of material existence cannot know Him fully. Half-educated spiritual masters try to make some compromise by making the mass of humanity the object of worship, but they do not know that such worship is not possible nor that the masses are not perfect. Their attempt is something like pouring water on the leaves of a tree instead of the root. The natural process is to pour water on the root, but today's disturbed leaders are more attached to the leaves. Despite their perpetually watering the leaves, everything is drying up for want of nourishment.

Sri Isopanisad advises us to pour water on the root, the source of all germination. Worship of the mass of humanity by rendering bodily service which can never be perfect is less important than service to the soul. The soul is the root that generates different types of bodies according to the law of karma, material reaction. To serve human beings by medical aid, social help and educational facilities while at the same

time cutting the throats of poor animals in slaughterhouses is not really valid service to living beings.

The living being is perpetually suffering in different types of bodies from the material miseries of birth, old age, disease and death. The human form of life offers one a chance to get out of this entanglement simply by reestablishing the lost relationship between the living entity and the Supreme Lord. The Lord comes personally to teach this philosophy of surrender unto the Supreme, the sambhuta. Real service to humanity is rendered when one teaches surrender to and worship of the Supreme Lord with full love and energy. That is the instruction of Sri Isopanisad in this mantra.

The simple way to worship the Supreme Lord in this age of disturbance is to hear and chant about His great activities. The mental speculators, however, think that the activities of the Lord are imaginary; therefore they refrain from hearing of them and invent some word jugglery without substance to divert the attention of the innocent masses of people. Instead of hearing of the activities of Lord Krsna, they advertise themselves by inducing their followers to sing about pseudo-spiritual masters. In modern times the number of such pretenders has increased considerably, and it has become a problem for the pure devotees of the Lord to save the masses of people from the unholy propaganda of these pretenders and pseudo-incarnations.

The Upanisads indirectly draw our attention to the primeval Lord Sri Krsna, but Bhagavad-gita, which is the summary of all the Upanisads, directly points to Sri Krsna. By hearing about Krsna as He is in Bhagavad-gita or Srimad-Bhagavatam, one's mind is gradually cleansed of all contaminated things. Srimad-Bhagavatam says: "By hearing of the activities of the Lord, one draws the attention of the Lord towards His devotee. Thus the Lord, being situated in the heart of every living being, helps the devotee by giving him proper directions." Bhagavad-gita also confirms this (Bg. 10.10).

The Lord's inner direction cleanses the heart of the devotee of all contamination produced by the material modes of passion and ignorance. Nondevotees are under the sway of passion and ignorance. One who is in passion cannot become detached from material hankering, and one in ignorance cannot know what he is nor what the Lord is. Thus when one is in passion or ignorance, there is no chance for self-realization, however much one may play the part of a religionist. For a devotee, the modes of passion and ignorance are removed by the grace of the Lord. In this way the devotee becomes situated in the quality of goodness, the sign of a perfect brahmana. Everyone and anyone can qualify as a brahmana provided he follows the path of devotional service under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. Srimad-Bhagavatam (2.4.18) also says:

kirata-hunandhra-pulinda-pulkasa
abhira-sumbha yavanah khasadayah
ye 'nye ca papa yad-apasrayasrayah
sudhyanti tasmai prabhavisnave namah

"Any lowborn living entity can be purified by the guidance of a pure devotee of the Lord, for the Lord is extraordinarily powerful."

When one attains brahminical qualifications, he becomes happy and enthusiastic to render devotional service to the Lord. Automatically the

science of God is unveiled before him. By knowing the science of God, one gradually becomes freed from material attachments, and one's doubtful mind becomes crystal clear by the grace of the Lord. When one attains this stage, he can become a liberated soul and see the Lord in every step of life. This is the perfection of sambhavat, as described in this mantra.

TEXT 14

sambhutim ca vinasam ca
yas tad vedobhayam saha
vinasena mrtyum tirtva
sambhutyamrtam asnute

sambhutim--the eternal personality of Godhead, His transcendental name, form, pastimes, qualities and paraphernalia, the variegatedness of His abode, etc.; ca--and; vinasam--the temporary material manifestation of demigods, men, animals, etc., with their false names, fame, etc.; ca--also; yah--one who; tat--that; veda--knows; ubhayam--both; saha--along with; vinasena--with everything liable to be vanquished; mrtyum--death; tirtva--surpassing; sambhutyam--in the eternal kingdom of God; amrtam--deathlessness; asnute--enjoys.

TRANSLATION

One should know perfectly the personality of Godhead and His transcendental name, as well as the temporary material creation with its temporary demigods, men and animals. When one knows these, he surpasses death and the ephemeral cosmic manifestation with it, and in the eternal kingdom of God he enjoys his eternal life of bliss and knowledge.

PURPORT

By its so-called advancement of knowledge, human civilization has created many material things, including spaceships and atomic energy. Yet it has failed to create freedom from birth, old age, disease and death. Whenever an intelligent man raises the question of these miseries before a so-called scientist, the scientist very cleverly replies that material science is progressing and that it will ultimately be possible to render man deathless and ageless. Such answers prove the scientists' gross ignorance of material nature. In material nature, everything is under the stringent laws of matter and must pass through six stages of transformation: birth, growth, maintenance, transformation, deterioration and finally death. Nothing that is in contact with material nature can be beyond these six laws of transformation; therefore no one--whether demigod, man, animal or tree--can survive forever in the material world.

The duration of life may vary according to species. Lord Brahma, the chief living being within this material universe, may live for millions and millions of years, while a minute germ may live for some hours only. But that does not matter. No one in the material world can survive eternally. Things are born or created under certain conditions, they stay for some time, and, if they continue to live, they grow, procreate, gradually dwindle and finally vanish. According to these

laws, even the Brahmas, of which there are millions in different universes, are all liable to death either today or tomorrow. Therefore the entire material universe is called Mrtyuloka, the place of death.

Material scientists and politicians are trying to make this place deathless because they have no information of the deathless spiritual nature. This is due to their ignorance of Vedic literature, which is full of knowledge of mature transcendental experience. Unfortunately modern man is averse to receiving knowledge from the Vedas, Puranas and other scriptures.

From Visnu Purana (V.P. 6.7.61) we receive information that Lord Visnu, the Personality of Godhead, possesses different energies, known as para (superior) and apara or avidya (inferior energy). The material energy in which we are presently entangled is called the avidya or inferior energy. The material creation is made possible by this energy. Yet there is another, a superior energy called the para-sakti, which is different from this material inferior energy. That superior energy constitutes the eternal or deathless creation of the Lord. (Bg. 8.20)

All the material planets--upper, lower and intermediate, including the sun, moon and Venus--are scattered throughout the universe. These planets exist only during the lifetime of Brahma. Some lower planets, however, are vanquished after the end of one day of Brahma and are again created during the next day of Brahma. On the upper planets, time is calculated differently. One of our years is only equal to twenty-four hours, or one day and night, on many of the upper planets. The four ages of earth years according to the time scale of the upper planets. Such a length of time multiplied by one thousand constitutes one day of Brahma, and one night of Brahma is the same. Such days and nights accumulate into months and years, and Brahma lives for one hundred such years. At the end of Brahma's life, the complete universal manifestation is vanquished.

Those living beings who reside in the sun and on the moon, as well as those in the Martyaloka system--which includes this earth and many planets below it--are all merged into the waters of devastation during the night of Brahma. During this time no living beings or species remain manifest, although spiritually they continue to exist. This unmanifested stage is called avyakta. Again, when the entire universe is vanquished at the end of Brahma's lifetime, there is another avyakta state. However, beyond these two unmanifested states is a spiritual atmosphere or nature. There is a great number of spiritual planets in this atmosphere, and these planets exist eternally, even when all the planets within this material universe are vanquished. The cosmic manifestation within the jurisdiction of the various Brahmas is but a display of one-fourth of the energy of the Lord. This is the inferior energy. Beyond the jurisdiction of Brahma is the spiritual nature, which is called tri-pad-vibhuti, three-fourths of the Lord's energy. This is the superior energy, or para-prakrti.

The predominating Supreme person residing within the spiritual nature is Lord Sri Krsna. As confirmed in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 8.22), He can be approached only by unalloyed devotional service and not by the processes of jnana (philosophy), yoga (mysticism), or karma (fruitive work). The karmis, or fruitive workers, can elevate themselves to the Svargaloka planets, which include the sun and moon. Jnanis and yogis can attain still higher planets, such as Brahmaloaka, and when they become still more qualified through devotional service, they are allowed to

enter into the spiritual nature, either the illuminating cosmic atmosphere of the spiritual sky (Brahman) or the Vaikuntha planets, according to their qualification. It is certain, however, that no one can enter into the spiritual Vaikuntha planets without being trained in devotional service.

On the material planets, everyone from Brahma down to the ant is trying to lord it over material nature, and this is the material disease. As long as this material disease continues, the living entity has to undergo the process of bodily change. Whether he takes the form of a man, demigod or animal, he ultimately has to endure an unmanifested condition during the two devastations--the devastation of the night of Brahma and the devastation at the end of Brahma's life. If we want to put an end to this process of repeated birth and death, as well as the concomitant factors of old age and disease, we must try to enter the spiritual planets. Lord Krsna in His plenary expansions dominates each and every one of these planets.

No one can dominate Krsna. It is the conditioned soul who tries to dominate material nature and is instead subjected to the laws of material nature and the sufferings of repeated birth and death. The Lord comes here to reestablish the principles of religion, and the basic principle is the development of an attitude of surrender to Him. This is the Lord's last instruction in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 18.66), but foolish men have tactfully misinterpreted this prime teaching and have misled the masses of people in diverse ways. People have been urged to open hospitals but not to educate themselves to enter into the spiritual kingdom by devotional service. They have been taught to take interest only in temporary relief work, which can never bring real happiness to the living entity. They start varieties of public and semi-governmental institutions to tackle the devastating power of nature, but they don't know how to pacify insurmountable nature. Many men are advertised as great scholars of Bhagavad-gita, but they overlook the Gita's message by which material nature can be pacified. Powerful nature can only be pacified by the awakening of God consciousness, as clearly pointed out in Bhagavad-gita. (Bg. 7.14)

In this mantra Sri Isopanisad teaches that one must know both sambhuti (the Personality of Godhead) and vinasa (the temporary material manifestation) perfectly, side by side. By knowing the temporary material manifestation alone, one cannot save anything, for in the course of nature there is devastation at every moment. No one can be saved from these devastations by opening hospitals. One can be saved only by complete knowledge of the eternal life of bliss and awareness. The whole Vedic scheme is meant to educate men in this art of attaining eternal life. People are often misguided by temporary attractive things based on sense gratification, but service rendered to the objects of the senses is both misleading and degrading.

We must therefore save our fellow man in the right way. There is no question of liking or disliking the truth. It is there. If we want to be saved from repeated birth and death, we must take to the devotional service of the Lord. There can be no compromise, for this is a matter of necessity.

satyasyapihitam mukham
tat tvam pusann apavnu
satya-dharmaya drstaye

hiranmayena--by a golden effulgence; patrena--by dazzling covering;
satyasya--of the Supreme Truth; apihitam--covered; mukham--the face;
tat--that covering; tvam--Yourself; pusan--O sustainer; apavnu--kindly
remove; satya--pure; dharmaya--unto the devotee; drstaye--for
exhibiting.

TRANSLATION

O my Lord, sustainer of all that lives, Your real face is covered
by Your dazzling effulgence. Please remove that covering and exhibit
Yourself to Your pure devotee.

PURPORT

In Bhagavad-gita, the Lord explains His personal rays
(brahmajyoti), the dazzling effulgence of His personal form, in this
way:

brahmano hi pratisthaham
amrtasyavyayasya ca
sasvatasya ca dharmasya
sukhasyaikantikasya ca

"And I am the basis of the impersonal Brahman, which is the
constitutional position of ultimate happiness, and which is immortal,
imperishable and eternal." (Bg. 14.27)

Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan are three aspects of the same
Absolute Truth. Brahman is the aspect most easily perceived by the
beginner. Paramatma, the Supersoul, is realized by those who have
further progressed, and Bhagavan realization is the ultimate realization
of the Absolute Truth. This is confirmed in Bhagavad-gita, where the
Lord says that He is the ultimate concept of the Absolute Truth, the
source of the brahmajyoti as well as the all-pervading Paramatma. In
Bhagavad-gita Krsna says that He is the ultimate reservoir of the
brahmajyoti, the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth, and that
there is no need to explain His unlimited potencies.

atha va bahunaitena
kim jnatena tavarjuna
vistabhyaham idam krtsnam
ekamsena sthito jagat

"But what need is there, Arjuna, for all this detailed knowledge?
With a single fragment of Myself I pervade and support this entire
universe." (Bg. 10.42) Thus by His one plenary expansion, the all-
pervading Paramatma, the Lord maintains the complete material cosmic
creation. He also maintains all manifestations in the spiritual world as
well; therefore in the sruti mantra of Sri Isopanisad, the Lord is
addressed as pusan, the ultimate maintainer.

The personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna, is always in transcendental bliss (anandamayo 'bhyasat). When He was present at Vrndavana in India 5,000 years ago, He always remained in transcendental bliss, even from the beginning of His childhood pastimes. The killing of varieties of demons--such as Agha, Baka, Putana and Pralamba--were but pleasure excursions for Him. In the village of Vrndavana He enjoyed Himself with His mother, brother and friends, and when He played the role of a naughty butter thief, all His associates enjoyed celestial bliss by His stealing. The Lord's fame as a butter thief is not reproachable, for by stealing butter the Lord gave pleasure to His pure devotees. Everything that was performed by the Lord at Vrndavana was performed for the pleasure of His associates there. The Lord created these pastimes to attract the dry speculators and the acrobats of the so-called hatha-yoga system who had come to find the Absolute Truth.

Of the childhood play between the Lord and His playmates, the cowherd boys, Sukadeva Gosvami said in Srimad-Bhagavatam:

ittham satam brahma-sukhanubhutyā
dasyam gatanam para-daivatena
mayasritanam nara-darakena
sakam vijahruh krta-punya-punjah

"The Personality of Godhead, who is perceived as the impersonal, blissful Brahman, who is worshiped as the Supreme Lord by the devotees, and who is considered an ordinary human being by the mundane, played with the cowherd boys, who had attained their position after accumulating many pious activities." (SB. 10.12.11)

Thus the Lord is always engaged in transcendental loving activities with His spiritual associates in the various relationships of santa (neutrality), dasya (servitorship), sakhya (friendship), vatsalya (paternal affection), and madhurya (conjugal love).

Since it is said that the Lord never leaves Vrndavana-dhama, one may ask how He manages the affairs of the creation. This is answered in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 13.14): The Lord pervades the entire material creation by His plenary part known as the purusa incarnation. Although the Lord personally has nothing to do with material creation, maintenance and destruction, He causes all these things to be done by His plenary expansion, the Paramatma or Supersoul. Every living entity is known as atma, soul, and the principal atma who controls them all is Paramatma, the Supersoul.

This system of God realization is a great science. The materialists can only analyze and meditate on the twenty-four factors of the material creation, for they have very little information of the purusa, the Lord. The impersonal transcendentalists are simply bewildered by the glaring effulgence of the brahmajyoti. If one wants to see the Absolute Truth in full, he has to penetrate beyond the twenty-four material elements and the glaring effulgence as well. Sri Isopanisad points towards this direction, praying for the removal of the hiranmaya-patra, the dazzling covering. Unless this covering is removed so one can perceive the personality of Godhead as He is, factual realization of the Absolute Truth can never be attained.

The Paramatma feature of the Personality of Godhead is one of three plenary expansions, collectively called visnu-tattva. The visnu-tattva within the universe (one of the three principal deities--Brahma, Visnu

and Siva) is known as the Ksirodakasayi Visnu. He is the all-pervading Paramatma in each and every individual living entity. The Garbhodakasayi Visnu is the collective Supersoul within all living entities. Beyond these two is the Karanodakasayi Visnu lying in the causal ocean. He is the creator of all universes. The yoga system teaches the serious student to meet the visnu-tattvas after overcoming the twenty-four material elements of the cosmic creation. The culture of empiric philosophy helps one realize the impersonal brahmajyoti, which is the glaring effulgence of the transcendental body of Lord Sri Krsna. This is confirmed in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 14.27) as well as Brahma-samhita (5.40):

yasya prabha prabhavato jagad-anda-koti-
kotisv asesavasadhadivibhuti-bhinna
tadbrahmaniskalam anantam asesabhutam
govindam adipurusam tam aham bhajami

"In the millions and millions of universes, there are innumerable planets, and each and every one of them is different from the others by its cosmic constitution. All of these planets are situated in a corner of the brahmajyoti. This brahmajyoti is but the personal rays of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whom I worship." This mantra from Brahma-samhita is spoken from the platform of factual realization of the Absolute Truth, and the sruti mantra of Sri Isopanisad confirms this mantra as a process of realization. It is a simple prayer to the Lord to remove the brahmajyoti so that one can see His real face.

Perfect knowledge means knowing Krsna as the root of Brahman. The root of Brahman is Lord Sri Krsna, and in scriptures such as Srimad-Bhagavatam the science of Krsna is perfectly elaborated. In Srimad-Bhagavatam, the author, Srila Vyasadeva, has established that the Supreme Truth is described as Brahman, Paramatma or Bhagavan according to one's realization of Him. Srila Vyasadeva never states that the Supreme Truth is a jiva, an ordinary living entity. The living entity should never be considered the all-powerful Supreme Truth. If he were, there would be no need for the living entity to pray to the Lord to remove His dazzling cover so that the living entity can see His real form.

The conclusion is that in the absence of spiritually potent manifestations of the Supreme Truth, the impersonal Brahman is realized. Similarly, when one realizes the material potencies of the Lord, having little or no information of the spiritual potency, he attains Paramatma realization. Thus both Brahman and Paramatma realization of the Absolute Truth are partial realizations. However, when one realizes the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna, in full potency after the removal of the hiranmaya-patra, he realizes vasudevah sarvam iti: Lord Sri Krsna, known as Vasudeva, is everything--Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan. He is Bhagavan, the root, and Brahman and Paramatma are His branches.

In Bhagavad-gita there is a comparative analysis of the three types of transcendentalists, the worshipers of the impersonal Brahman (jnani), the worshipers of the Paramatma feature (yogi), and the devotees of Lord Sri Krsna (bhakta). It is stated in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 6.46-47) that amongst all types of transcendentalists, he who is a jnani, who has cultivated Vedic knowledge, is supreme. Yet the yogis are still greater than the jnanis and far superior to fruitive workers as well. And amongst all yogis, he who constantly serves the Lord with all

his energies is the topmost. In summary, a philosopher is better than a laboring man, and a mystic is superior to a philosopher. And of all the mystic yogis, he who follows bhakti-yoga, constantly engaged in the service of the Lord, is the highest. Sri Isopanisad directs us toward this perfection.

TEXT 16

pusann ekarse yama surya prajapatya
vyuha rasmin samuha tejo
yat te rupam kalyanatamam tat te pasyami
yo 'sav asau purusah so 'ham asmi

pusan--O maintainer; ekarse--the primeval philosopher; yama--the regulating principal; surya--the destination of the suris (great devotees); prajapatya--the well-wisher of the prajapatis (progenitors of mankind); vyuha--kindly remove; rasmin--the rays; samuha--kindly withdraw; tejah--effulgence; yat--so that; te--Your; rupam--form; kalyana-tamam--most auspicious; tat--that; te--Your; pasyami--I may see; yah--one who is; asau--like the sun; asau--that; purusah--personality of Godhead; sah--myself; aham--I; asmi--am.

TRANSLATION

O my Lord, O primeval philosopher, maintainer of the universe, O regulating principle, destination of the pure devotees, well-wisher of the progenitors of mankind--please remove the effulgence of Your transcendental rays so that I can see Your form of bliss. You are the eternal Supreme Personality of Godhead, like unto the sun, as am I.

PURPORT

The sun and its rays are one and the same qualitatively. Similarly, the Lord and the living entities are one and the same in quality. The sun is one, but the molecules of the sun's rays are innumerable. The sun's rays constitute part of the sun, and the sun and its rays conjointly constitute the complete sun. Within the sun itself resides the sun-god, and similarly within the supreme spiritual planet, Goloka Vrndavana, from which the brahmajyoti effulgence is emanating, resides the eternal Lord, as verified by Brahma-samhita:

cintamani-prakara-sadmasu kalpa-vrksa-
laksavrtesu surabhir abhipalayantam
laksmi-sahasra-sata-sambhrama-sevyamanam
govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami

"I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, the first progenitor, who is tending the cows, fulfilling all desires in abodes filled with spiritual gems, surrounded by millions of wish-fulfilling trees, always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds of thousands of Laksmis, or goddesses of fortune." (Bs. 5.29)

The brahmajyoti is also described in Brahma-samhita, where it is said that the brahmajyoti is the rays emanating from that supreme spiritual planet, Goloka Vrndavana, just as the sun's rays emanate from

the sun globe. Until one surpasses the glare of the brahmajyoti, he cannot receive information of the land of the Lord. Being blinded by the dazzling brahmajyoti, the impersonalist philosopher can neither realize the factual abode of the Lord nor His transcendental form. Limited by their poor fund of knowledge, such impersonalist thinkers cannot understand the all-blissful transcendental form of Lord Krsna. In this prayer, therefore, Sri Isopanisad petitions the Lord to remove the effulgent rays of the brahmajyoti so that the pure devotee can see His all-blissful transcendental form.

By realizing the impersonal brahmajyoti, one experiences the auspicious aspect of the Supreme, and by realizing the Paramatma, or all-pervading feature of the Supreme, one experiences an even more auspicious enlightenment. By meeting the personality of Godhead Himself face to face, the devotee experiences the most auspicious feature of the Supreme. Since He is addressed as the primeval philosopher and maintainer and well-wisher of the universe, the Supreme Truth cannot be considered impersonal. This is the verdict of Sri Isopanisad. The word pusan (maintainer) is especially significant, for although the Lord maintains all beings, He specifically maintains His devotees. After surpassing the impersonal brahmajyoti and seeing the personal aspect of the Lord and His most auspicious eternal form, the devotee realizes the Absolute Truth in full.

In Bhagavat-sandarbha, Srila Jiva Gosvami states: "The complete conception of the Absolute Truth is realized in the personality of Godhead because He is almighty and possesses full transcendental potencies. The full potency of the Absolute Truth is not realized in the brahmajyoti; therefore Brahman realization is only partial realization of the Personality of Godhead. O learned sages, the first letter of the word Bhagavan is twice significant: first in the sense of 'one who fully maintains,' and second in the sense of 'guardian.' The second letter (ga) means guide, leader or creator. The letter va indicates that every being lives in Him and that He also lives in every being. In other words, the transcendental sound Bhagavan represents infinite knowledge, potency, energy, opulence, strength and influence--all without a tinge of material inebriety."

The Lord fully maintains His unalloyed devotees, and He guides them progressively on the path of devotional perfection. As the leader of His devotees, He ultimately awards the desired results of devotional service by giving Himself to them. The devotees of the Lord see the Lord eye to eye by the causeless mercy of the Lord; thus the Lord helps His devotees reach the supermost spiritual planet, Goloka Vrndavana. Being the creator, He can bestow all necessary qualifications upon His devotee so that the devotee can ultimately reach Him. The Lord is the cause of all causes, and since there is nothing that caused Him, He is the original cause. Consequently He enjoys His own Self by manifesting His own internal potency. The external potency is not exactly manifested by Himself, for He expands Himself as the purusas, and it is in these forms that He maintains the features of the material manifestation. By such expansions, He creates, maintains and annihilates the cosmic manifestation.

The living entities are also differentiated expansions of the Lord's Self, and because some of them desire to be lords and imitate the Supreme Lord, He allows them to enter into the cosmic creation with the option to fully utilize their propensity to lord it over nature. Due to

the presence of His parts and parcels, the living entities, the entire phenomenal world is stirred into action and reaction. Thus the living entities are given full facilities to lord it over material nature, but the ultimate controller is the Lord Himself in His plenary feature as Paramatma, the Supersoul, which is one of the purusas.

Thus there is a gulf of difference between the living entity (atma) and the controlling Lord (Paramatma), the soul and the Supersoul. Paramatma is the controller, and atma is the controlled; therefore they cannot exist on the same level. Because the Paramatma fully cooperates with the atma, He is known as the constant companion of the living being.

The all-pervading feature of the Lord--which exists in all circumstances of waking and sleeping as well as in potential states and from which the jiva-sakti (living force) is generated as both conditioned and liberated souls--is known as Brahman. Since the Lord is the origin of both Paramatma and Brahman, He is the origin of all living entities and all else that exists. One who knows this engages himself at once in the devotional service of the Lord. Such a pure and fully cognizant devotee of the Lord is fully attached to Him in heart and soul, and whenever such a devotee assembles with similar devotees, they have no engagement but the glorification of the Lord's transcendental activities. Those who are not as perfect as the pure devotees and those who have realized only the Brahman or Paramatma features of the Lord cannot appreciate the activities of the perfect devotees. The Lord always helps the pure devotees by imparting necessary knowledge within their hearts; thus by His special favor all the darkness of ignorance is dissipated. The speculative philosophers and yogis cannot imagine this because they more or less depend on their own strength. As stated in Katha Upanisad, the Lord can be known only by those whom He favors, and not by anyone else. Such special favors are bestowed upon His pure devotees only. Sri Isopanisad thus points to the favor of the Lord, which is beyond the purview of the brahmajyoti.

TEXT 17

vayur anilam amrtam
athedam bhasmantam sariram
om krato smara krtam smara
krato smara krtam smara

vayuh--air of life; anilam--total reservoir of air; amrtam--
indestructible; atha--now; idam--this; bhasmantam--after being turned to
ashes; sariram--body; om--O Lord; krato--the enjoyer of all sacrifices;
smara--please remember; krtam--all that has been done by me; smara--
please remember; krato--the supreme beneficiary; smara--please remember;
krtam--all that I have done for You; smara--please remember.

TRANSLATION

Let this temporary body be burnt to ashes, and let the air of life be merged with the totality of air. Now, O my Lord, please remember all my sacrifices, and, because You are the ultimate beneficiary, please remember all that I have done for You.

PURPORT

This temporary material body is certainly a foreign dress. In Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 2.13, 18.30) it is clearly said that after the destruction of the material body the living entity is not annihilated, nor does he lose his identity. The identity of the living entity is never impersonal or formless; on the contrary, it is the material dress that is formless and which takes a shape according to the form of the indestructible person. No living entity is originally formless, as is wrongly thought by those with a poor fund of knowledge. This mantra verifies the fact that the living entity exists after the annihilation of the material body.

In the material world, material nature displays wonderful workmanship by creating different varieties of bodies for the living beings in accordance to their propensities for sense gratification. The living entity who wants to taste stool is given a material body which is quite suitable for eating stool--that of a hog. Similarly, one who wants to eat meat is given the body of a tiger by which he can live by enjoying the blood of other animals and eating their flesh. Because the shape of his teeth is different, the human being is not meant for eating stool or flesh, nor does he have any desire to taste stool, even in the most aboriginal state. Human teeth are so made that they can chew and cut fruit and vegetables, and two canine teeth are also given so that one can eat flesh.

The material bodies of all animals and men are foreign to the living entity. They change according to the living entity's desire for sense gratification. In the cycle of evolution, the living entity changes bodies one after another. When the world was full of water, the living entity took an aquatic form. Then he passed from vegetable life to worm life, from worm life to bird life, from bird life to animal life, and from animal life into the human form. The highest developed form is this human form when it is possessed of a full sense of spiritual knowledge. The highest development of one's spiritual sense is described in this mantra: One should give up this material body, which will be turned to ashes, and allow the air of life to merge into the eternal reservoir of air. The living being's activities are performed within the body through the movements of different kinds of air, known in summary as prana-vayu. The yogis generally study to control the airs of the body. The soul is supposed to rise from one circle of air to another until it rises to the brahma-randhra, the highest circle. From that point the perfect yogi can transfer himself to any desired planet. The process is to give up one material body and then enter into another, but the highest perfection of such changes is possible only when the living entity is able to give up the material body altogether, as suggested in this mantra. He may then enter into the spiritual atmosphere where he can develop a completely different type of body--a spiritual body which never has to meet death or change.

In the material world material nature forces one to change his body due to his different desires for sense gratification. These desires are represented in the various species of life from germs to the most perfected material bodies--those of Brahma and the demigods. All of these living entities have bodies composed of matter in different shapes. The intelligent man sees oneness not in the variety of the bodies but in the spiritual identity. The spiritual spark which is the

part and parcel of the Supreme Lord is the same whether he is in a body of a hog or in the body of a demigod. The living entity takes on different bodies according to his pious and vicious activities. The human body is highly developed and has full consciousness. According to the Vedic scriptures, the most perfect man surrenders unto the Lord after many, many lifetimes of culturing knowledge. The culture of knowledge reaches perfection only when the knower comes to the point of surrendering unto the Supreme Lord, Vasudeva. Yet even after attaining knowledge of one's spiritual identity, if one does not come to the point of knowing that the living entities are eternal parts and parcels of the whole and can never become the whole, one has to fall down again into the material atmosphere. Indeed, one must fall down even if he has become one with the brahmajyoti.

The brahmajyoti emanating from the transcendental body of the Lord is full of spiritual sparks that are individual entities with the full sense of existence. Sometimes these living entities want to become enjoyers of the senses, and therefore they are placed in the material world to become false lords under the dictation of the senses. The desire for lordship is the material disease of the living being, for under the spell of sense enjoyment he transmigrates through the various bodies manifested in the material world. Becoming one with the brahmajyoti does not represent mature knowledge. Only by surrendering unto the Lord completely and developing one's sense of spiritual service does one reach the highest perfectional stage.

In this mantra the living entity prays to enter the spiritual kingdom of God after relinquishing his material body and material air. The devotee prays to the Lord to remember his activities and the sacrifices he has performed before his material body is turned into ashes. This prayer is made at the time of death with full consciousness of one's past deeds and of the ultimate goal. One who is completely under the rule of material nature remembers the heinous activities performed during the existence of his material body and consequently gets another material body after death. Bhagavad-gita confirms this truth:

yam yam vapi smaran bhavam
tyajaty ante kalevaram
tam tam evaiti kaunteya
sada tad-bhava-bhavitah

"Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail." (Bg. 8.6) Thus the mind carries the propensities of the dying animal into the next life.

Unlike the simple animals, who have no developed mind, the human being can remember the activities of his passing life like dreams at night; therefore his mind remains surcharged with material desires, and consequently he cannot enter into the spiritual kingdom with a spiritual body. However, the devotees develop a sense of love for Godhead by practicing devotional service to the Lord. Even if a devotee does not remember his godly service at the time of death, the Lord does not forget him. This prayer is given to remind the Lord of the devotee's sacrifices, but even if there is no such reminder, the Lord does not forget the devotional service of His pure devotee.

The Lord clearly describes His intimate relationship with His devotees in Bhagavad-gita: "Even if one commits the most abominable actions, if he is engaged in devotional service, he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated. He quickly becomes righteous and attains lasting peace. O son of Kunti, declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes. O son of Prtha, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth--women, vaisyas [merchants] as well as sudras [workers]--can approach the supreme destination. How much greater then are the brahmanas, the righteous, the devotees and saintly kings who in this temporary miserable world engage in loving service unto Me. Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, offer obeisances and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me." (Bg. 9.30-34)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura explains these verses in this way: "One should accept a devotee who is on the right path of the saints, even though such a devotee may seem to be of loose character. One should try to understand the real purport of the words 'loose character.' A conditioned soul has to act for double functions--namely for the maintenance of the body and again for self-realization. Social status, mental development, cleanliness, austerity, nourishment and the struggle for existence are all for the maintenance of the body. The self-realization part of one's activities is executed in one's occupation as a devotee of the Lord, and one performs action in that connection also. These two different functions parallel one another because a conditioned soul cannot give up the maintenance of his body. The proportion of activities for maintenance of the body decreases, however, in proportion to the increase in devotional service. As long as the proportion of devotional service does not come to the right point, there is a chance for an occasional exhibition of worldliness, but it should be noted that such worldliness cannot continue for any length of time because, by the grace of the Lord, such imperfections will come to an end very shortly. Therefore the path of devotional service is the only right path. If one is on the right path, even an occasional occurrence of worldliness does not hamper one in the advancement of self-realization."

The facilities of devotional service are denied the impersonalists because they are attached to the brahmajyoti feature of the Lord. As suggested in the previous mantras, they cannot penetrate the brahmajyoti because they do not believe in the personality of Godhead. Their business is mostly concerned with semantics, the jugglery of words and mental creations. Consequently the impersonalists pursue a fruitless labor, as confirmed in the Twelfth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 12.5).

All the facilities suggested in this mantra can be easily obtained by constant contact with the personal feature of the Absolute Truth. Devotional service to the Lord consists essentially of nine transcendental activities performed by the devotee: (1) hearing about the Lord, (2) glorifying the Lord, (3) remembering the Lord, (4) serving the lotus feet of the Lord, (5) worshiping the Lord, (6) offering prayers to the Lord, (7) serving the Lord. (8) enjoying friendly association with the Lord, and (9) surrendering everything unto the Lord. These nine principles of devotional service--taken altogether or one by one--can help a devotee to remain constantly in touch with God. In this way at the end of life it is easy for the devotee to remember the Lord. By adopting only one of these nine principles, it was possible for the following renowned devotees of the Lord to achieve the highest

perfection: (1) By hearing, Maharaja Pariksit, the hero of Srimad-Bhagavatam, attained the desired result. (2) Just by glorifying the Lord, Sukadeva Gosvami, the speaker of Srimad-Bhagavatam, attained his perfection. (3) By praying, Akrura attained the desired result. (4) By remembering, Prahlada Maharaja attained the desired result. (5) By worshiping, Prthu Maharaja attained perfection. (6) By serving the lotus feet of the Lord, the goddess of fortune, Laksmi, attained perfection. (7) By rendering personal service to the Lord, Hanuman attained the desired result. (8) Through his friendship with the Lord, Arjuna attained the desired result. (9) By surrendering everything that he had, Maharaja Bali attained the desired result.

Actually the explanation of this mantra and of practically all the mantras of the Vedic hymns is summarized in the Vedanta-sutras and properly explained in Srimad-Bhagavatam. Srimad-Bhagavatam is the mature fruit of the Vedic tree of wisdom. In Srimad-Bhagavatam this particular mantra is explained in the questions and answers between Maharaja Pariksit and Sukadeva Gosvami at the very beginning of their meeting. Hearing and chanting of the science of God is the basic principle of devotional life. The complete Bhagavatam was heard by Maharaja Pariksit and chanted by Sukadeva Gosvami. Maharaja Pariksit inquired from Sukadeva because Sukadeva was a greater spiritual master than any great yogi or transcendentalist of his time.

Maharaja Pariksit's main question was: "What is the duty of every man, specifically at the time of death?" Sukadeva Gosvami answered:

tasmad bharata sarvatma
bhagavan isvaro harih
srotavyah kirtitavyas ca
smartavyas cecchatabhayam

"Everyone who is desirous of being free from all anxieties should always hear about, glorify and remember the Personality of Godhead, who is the supreme director of everything, the extinguisher of all difficulties and the Supersoul of all living entities." (SB. 2.1.5)

So-called human society is generally engaged at night in sleeping and having sex and during the daytime in earning as much money as possible or else in shopping for family maintenance. People have very little time to talk about the Personality of Godhead or to inquire about Him. They have dismissed God's existence in so many ways, primarily by declaring Him to be impersonal, that is, without sense perception. However, in Vedic literature--whether the Upanisads, Vedanta-sutras, Bhagavad-gita or Srimad-Bhagavatam--it is declared that the Lord is a sentient being and is supreme over all other living entities. His glorious activities are identical with Himself. One should therefore not indulge in hearing and speaking of the activities of worldly politicians and so-called big men in society--activities which are all rubbish--but should mold his life in such a way that he can engage in godly activities without wasting a second. Sri Isopanisad directs us towards such godly activities.

Unless one is accustomed to devotional practice, what will he remember at the time of death when the body is dislocated, and how can he pray to the almighty Lord to remember his sacrifices? Sacrifice means denying the interest of the senses. One has to learn this art by

employing the senses in the service of the Lord during one's lifetime.
One can utilize the results of such practice at the time of death.

TEXT 18

agne naya supatha raye asman
visvani deva vayunani vidvan
yuyodhy asmaḥ juhuranam eno
bhuyistham te nama uktim vidhema

agne--O my Lord, powerful like the fire; naya--kindly lead; supatha--by
the right path; raye--for reaching You; asman--us; visvani--all; deva--O
my Lord; vayunani--actions; vidvan--the knower; yuyodhi--kindly remove;
asmat--from us; juhuranam--all hindrances on the path; enah--all vices;
bhuyistham--most numerous; te--unto You; namah uktim--words of
obeisance; vidhema--I do.

TRANSLATION

O my Lord, powerful as fire, omnipotent one, now I offer You all
obeisances and fall on the ground at Your feet. O my Lord, please lead
me on the right path to reach You, and, since You know all that I have
done in the past, please free me from the reactions to my past sins so
that there will be no hindrance to my progress.

PURPORT

By surrendering and praying for the causeless mercy of the Lord,
the devotee can progress on the path of complete self-realization. The
Lord is addressed as fire because He can burn anything into ashes,
including the sins of the surrendered soul. As described in the previous
mantras, the real or ultimate aspect of the Absolute is His feature as
the personality of Godhead. His impersonal brahmajyoti feature is a
dazzling covering over His face. Fruitive activities, or the karma-kanda
path of self-realization is the lowest stage in this endeavor. As soon
as such activities even slightly deviate from the regulative principles
of the Vedas, they are transformed into vikarma, or acts against the
interest of the actor. Such vikarma is enacted by the illusioned living
entity simply for sense gratification, and thus such activities become
hindrances on the path of self-realization.

Self-realization is possible in the human form of species or forms
of life, of which the human form, qualified by brahminical culture,
presents the only chance to obtain knowledge of transcendence.
Brahminical culture includes truthfulness, sense control, forbearance,
simplicity, full knowledge and full faith in God. It is not that one
simply becomes proud of his high parentage. To be a son of a brahmana is
a chance to become a brahmana, just as being the son of a big man
affords one a chance to become a big man. However, such a birthright is
not everything, for one still has to attain the brahminical
qualifications for himself. As soon as one becomes proud of his birth as
the son of a brahmana and neglects to acquire the qualifications of a
real brahmana, he at once becomes degraded and falls from the path of
self-realization. Thus his life mission as a human being is defeated.

In Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 6.41-42) we are assured by the Lord that the yoga-bhrastas, or souls fallen from the path of self-realization, are given a chance to rectify themselves by taking birth either in the families of good brahmanas or in the families of rich merchants. Such births afford higher chances for self-realization. If these chances are misused due to illusion, one loses the good opportunity of human life afforded by the almighty Lord.

The regulative principles are such that one who follows them is promoted from the platform of fruitive activities to the platform of transcendental knowledge. After many, many births, and after attaining the platform of transcendental knowledge, one becomes perfect when he surrenders unto the Lord. This is the general procedure. But one who surrenders at the very beginning, as recommended in this mantra, at once surpasses all stages simply by adopting the devotional attitude. As stated in Bhagavad-gita (Bg. 18.66), the Lord at once takes charge of such a surrendered soul and frees him from the reactions to his sinful acts. There are many sinful reactions involved in karma-kanda activities, and in jnana-kanda, the path of philosophical development, the number of such sinful activities is less. However, in devotional service to the Lord, the path of bhakti, there is practically no chance of incurring sinful reactions. One who is a devotee of the Lord attains all the good qualifications of the Lord Himself, what to speak of the qualifications of a brahmana. A devotee automatically attains the qualifications of an expert brahmana authorized to perform sacrifices, even though the devotee may not have taken his birth in a brahmana family. Such is the omnipotence of the Lord. He can make a man born in a brahmana family as degraded as a lowborn dog-eater, and he can also make a lowborn dog-eater superior to a qualified brahmana simply on the strength of devotional service.

Since the omnipotent Lord is situated within the heart of everyone, He can give directions to His sincere devotees by which they can attain the right path. Such directions are especially offered to the devotee even if he desires something else. As far as others are concerned, God gives sanction to the doer only at the risk of the doer. In the case of a devotee, however, the Lord directs him in such a way that he never acts wrongly. In Srimad-Bhagavatam it is said:

sva-pada-mulam bhajatah priyasya
tyaktanya-bhavasya harih paresah
vikarma yac cotpatitam kathancid
dhunoti sarvam hrdis sannivistah

"The Lord is so kind to His devotee that even though the devotee sometimes falls into the entanglement of vikarma--acts against the Vedic directions--the Lord at once rectifies the mistakes within the heart of a devotee. This is because the devotees are very dear to the Lord." (SB. 11.5.42)

In this mantra the devotee prays to the Lord to rectify him from within his heart. To err is human. A conditioned soul is very often apt to commit mistakes, and the only remedial measure to take against such unknown sins is to give oneself up to the lotus feet of the Lord so that He may guide. The Lord takes charge of fully surrendered souls; thus all problems are solved simply by surrendering oneself unto the Lord and acting in terms of the Lord's directions. Such directions are given to

the sincere devotee in two ways. One is by way of the saints, scriptures and spiritual master; and the other is by way of the Lord Himself, who resides within the heart of everyone. Thus the devotee is protected in all respects.

Vedic knowledge is transcendental and cannot be understood by mundane educational procedures. One can understand the Vedic mantras only by the grace of the Lord and the spiritual master. If one takes shelter of a bona fide spiritual master, it is to be understood that he has obtained the grace of the Lord. The Lord appears as the spiritual master for the devotee. Thus the spiritual master, the Vedic injunctions, and the Lord Himself from within all guide the devotee in full strength. Thus there is no chance for a devotee to fall again into the maya of material illusion. The devotee, thus protected all around, is sure to reach the ultimate destination of perfection. The entire process is hinted at in this mantra, and Srimad-Bhagavatam (SB. 1.2.17-20) explains it further.

Hearing and chanting of the glories of the Lord are in themselves acts of piety. The Lord wants everyone to hear and chant because He is the well-wisher of all living entities. By hearing and chanting of the glories of the Lord, one becomes cleansed of all undesirable things, and his devotion becomes fixed upon the Lord. At this stage the devotee acquires the brahminical qualifications, and the resultant reactions of the lower modes of nature (passion and ignorance) completely vanish. The devotee becomes fully enlightened by virtue of his devotional service, and thus he comes to know the path of the Lord and the way to attain Him. As all doubts diminish, one becomes a pure devotee.

Thus end the Bhaktivedanta Purports to Sri Isopanisad, the knowledge that brings one nearer to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna.

"Sri Isopanisad" by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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