

ANANTA SATSANG • SACRED TEXTS

सत्संग-मुक्ताहार

Satsaṅga Mukṭāhāra

A Garland of Pearls from Satsang



Swami Ramsukhdas

*Nine Discourses on Reality, Practice, Divine Grace,
Life, Death, and Scriptural Harmony*

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*Nine Discourses on Reality, Practice, Divine Grace, Life, Death,
and Scriptural Harmony*

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This is a fresh, complete English reading edition translated paragraph by paragraph from the locked 81-scan Hindi source. The authentic title leaf, imprint, publisher's note, printed contents, and all authored pages 5-78 are preserved. The front cover and two closing publisher catalogues are recorded in the source map but are not treated as translation paragraphs.

Across nine discourses, Swami Ramsukhdas moves from direct experience of Reality and practical counsel through desire, service, bhakti, divine līlā, mortality, and scriptural harmony. The oral satsang voice, analogies, repetitions, and every printed scripture gloss are preserved.

Reader's Orientation

Readers seeking practice-oriented guidance may begin with *Priceless Counsel for Seekers* or *The Highest Good through the Spirit of Giving*. The eighth discourse contains historical religious claims about suicide and satī; these are translated as the author's views, not presented as medical or safety guidance. Anyone in immediate danger or considering self-harm should contact local emergency services or a crisis helpline now.

Terminology Guide

Sat is enduring Reality and *asat* the non-enduring or unreal. *Kāmanā* is worldly desire; true *āvaśyakatā* is the soul's need for the Supreme. *Bhagavān* is retained where the personal divine name matters, *bhakti* is devotion, *līlā* divine play, and *satsaṅga* holy company or the living fellowship of truth.

Title, Imprint, Publisher's Note, and Contents

Book no. 861

Om. Reverence to the Supreme Self.

tvam eva mātā ca pitā tvam eva
tvam eva bandhuś ca sakhā tvam eva |
tvam eva vidyā draviṇaṁ tvam eva
tvam eva sarvaṁ mama deva-deva ||

You alone are my mother, and You alone my father; You alone are my kinsman, and You alone my friend. You alone are knowledge, and You alone are wealth; You alone are everything to me, O God of gods.

Swami Ramsukhdas

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Śrī Hari.

A Humble Submission

This book, *Satsaṅga Muktāhāra*, is presented in service to lovers of satsang. It gathers nine writings by our revered Swamiji Maharaj. We ask readers to wear this *muktāhāra* - this garland of pearls - in the heart, to assimilate it inwardly, and, by directly realizing Reality, to bring their human life to fulfillment.

- Publisher



Śrī Hari.

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Direct Experience of Reality

Śrī Hari.

That which is, is beautiful forever; that which is not can never be beautiful. What is not appears before the eyes, while That which is remains unseen.

How extraordinary it is that the Supreme Self is, yet remains unseen, while the world is not, yet appears! The reason is that every faculty of seeing available to us belongs to the world. Our senses and inner instrument - mind and intellect - are made of the same substance as the world. They can therefore show us only the world; how could they show us the Supreme Self? The senses, mind, and intellect are parts of prakṛti. How could a part of prakṛti perceive the Reality beyond prakṛti? The Supreme Reality beyond prakṛti can be seen only by oneself - by the self itself - because the self is a part of the Supreme Self. The point is that the body, senses, mind, intellect, and world are one in nature: perishable and insentient. The self and the Supreme Self are one in nature: imperishable and conscious. Consider whether the body, senses, mind, and intellect have an essential unity with the Supreme Self. They certainly do not. How, then, could the Supreme Self be seen or attained through them? That is impossible. If we see through the self, the Supreme Self will be seen; if we see through the body, the world will be seen. Through that which abides, the abiding alone is seen; through that which changes, the changing alone is seen.

Consider how the Supreme Self is seen through the self. Every person experiences their own existence - their being - in the form “I am.” In “I am,” “I” belongs to prakṛti, while “am” belongs to the Supreme Self. Thus “I” belongs with “is not,” whereas “am” belongs

with “is.” The distinction between “am” and “is” arises only because of I-ness. If I-ness were no more, “am” would no longer remain; only “is” would remain. The point is that the existence within oneself - one’s very being - really belongs to the Supreme Self. That being is of itself, naturally, and equally complete everywhere.

Our error is that we see the world in the Supreme Self, whereas we ought to see the Supreme Self in the world. It is right to see “is” within “is not,” but it is a mistake to see “is not” within “is,” because the Supreme Self is and the world is not. The Gītā therefore says:

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम्।
वनिश्च्यत्स्ववनिश्च्यन्तं यः पश्यति स
पश्यति॥

samaṁ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṁ parameśvaram |
vinaiśchyatsv avinaiśyantaṁ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ||

“The one who sees the Supreme Lord dwelling equally in all beings - the Imperishable within the perishing - truly sees.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 13.27)

The author’s printed gloss reads: “The one who sees the Supreme Self, imperishable and equally present within all perishing beings, is the one who truly sees.”

There is no moment in which the world does not change. Change upon change is its very nature. The Supreme Self, however, does not change. Whether the world remains or is destroyed, the Supreme Self remains eternally and continuously just as It is, without the least alteration. The world never stays even for a moment, and the Supreme Self never ceases even for a moment. Therefore, one who looks past the changing and perishable world and sees the ever-abiding, imperishable Supreme Self truly sees: “The one who

sees the Imperishable within the perishing truly sees.” But one who does not see the Supreme Self and instead sees the world does not truly see:

योऽन्यथा सन्तमात्मानमन्यथा प्रतपिद्यते। कतिन न कृतं पापं चैरेणात्मापहारिणः॥

yo 'nyathā santam ātmānam anyathā pratipadyate |

kin tena na kṛtaṁ pāpaṁ coreṇātmāpahāriṇā ||

“One who misconceives the Self as other than It truly is - what sin has that thief, who steals away the Self, not committed?”

(Mahābhārata, Udyoga Parva 42.37)

The author’s printed gloss reads: “Though the Self is of one kind - imperishable - one who takes it to be of another kind - the perishable body - is a self-destroying thief. What sin has such a person not committed? In other words, that person has committed every sin.”

When the body changes, for example, we do not see ourselves as changing. How greatly the body has changed from childhood until today, yet we say, “I am the same person I was in childhood.” The body changed, place changed, time changed, objects changed, companions changed, circumstances changed, condition changed, and actions changed; yet although everything changed, the self did not. Country, time, and other conditions altered, but no alteration occurred in oneself. In the same way, however much the world may change, the Supreme Self remains exactly as It is. Differences of objects, persons, and actions do not produce a difference in Reality. Our gaze should remain fixed on that Supreme Reality. A merchant, for example, buys and sells coal, but keeps his attention on the money: “This much money has come in.” The merchandise changes,

but money remains money. In the same way, even while conducting all our dealings, our gaze should remain upon the Supreme Self.

This is the principle: that which does not exist at the beginning and the end does not exist in the present either; that which exists at the beginning and the end exists in the present as well. The world did not exist before and will not remain afterward; therefore, the world is not. The Supreme Self existed before and will remain afterward; therefore, the Supreme Self alone is. Those who take the world as real say that the Supreme Self does not exist at all, while those who see the Supreme Self as Reality say that the world does not exist at all! The “is-ness” that appears in the world is only a glimpse of that Supreme Self. When a snake appears in a rope, for example, the “is-ness” actually belongs to the rope, not to the snake; yet the rope’s “is-ness” appears in the snake. In the same way, “is-ness” belongs to the Supreme Self, not to the world, but the Supreme Self’s “is-ness” appears as the world within the world. Gram flour is bland, but when sugar is added, the *boondi* made from it tastes sweet. That sweetness really belongs to the sugar, not to the gram flour. In the same way, the “is-ness” appearing in the world does not belong to the world; it belongs only to the Supreme Self.

From the standpoint of Bhakti-yoga, the entire world is indeed the very form of the Supreme Self. Bhagavān says:

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्कञ्चिदस्ति

mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti

“There is nothing whatsoever higher than Me.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 7.7)

The author's printed gloss reads: "Apart from Me, there is not even the slightest other cause or effect in this world."

वासुदेवः सर्वम्

vāsudevaḥ sarvam

"Vāsudeva is all."

(Bhagavad Gītā 7.19)

The author's printed gloss reads: "Everything is the Supreme Self alone."

सदसच्चाहम्

sad asac cāham

"I am both the Real and the unreal."

(Bhagavad Gītā 9.19)

The author's printed gloss reads: "I alone am both *sat* and *asat*."

मनसा वचसा दृष्ट्या गृह्यतेऽन्यैरपीन्द्रियैः। अहमेव न मत्तोऽन्यदति
बुध्यध्वमञ्जसा॥

manasā vacasā dṛṣṭyā grhyate 'nyair apīndriyaiḥ |

aham eva na matto 'nyad iti budhyadhvam añjasā ||

"Whatever is apprehended by the mind, speech, sight, or the other senses is I alone. Understand directly that nothing exists apart from Me."

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.13.24)

The author's printed gloss reads: "Whatever objects, such as sound, are grasped by the mind, speech, sight, or the other senses are all I alone. Therefore, apart from Me there is nothing else. Quickly understand this principle through careful reflection, accept it, and realize it directly."

There are many differing schools concerning the Supreme Self - dualism, nondualism, dualistic nondualism, qualified nondualism, and others - but "everything is the Supreme Self alone" is the supreme principle. Every school is encompassed within it. Seekers often feel, "If someone would only tell us the essential, profound, and finest truth about the Supreme Self, we could attain the Supreme Self quickly." That essential, profound, and finest truth - the special distillation and conclusion of everything - is this: there is only the Supreme Self, through and through. "I" too am the Supreme Self, "you" too are the Supreme Self, "this" too is the Supreme Self, and "that" too is the Supreme Self. In other words, there is nothing apart from the Supreme Self.

Now the question arises: how is everything the Supreme Self? There is lower prakṛti, there is higher prakṛti, and there is the Supreme Self, Lord of both the higher and lower. Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect, and ego - these eight constitute the lower, changing prakṛti. The embodied living being is the higher, unchanging prakṛti. Because both lower and higher prakṛti are the nature of the Supreme Self, they are inseparable from the Supreme Self; neither has an independent existence apart from It. The body is one with lower prakṛti, while the embodied self is one with higher prakṛti. Since not even the slightest independent existence remains apart from the Supreme Self, everything - from the grossest earth to the subtlest ego - is the Supreme Self alone. Thus, when the Gītā describes lower nature, higher nature, and Vāsudeva, or the

perishable, the imperishable, and the Supreme Person, its purport is to declare them one, not three.

Now the question arises: how can one directly realize that “everything is the Supreme Self alone”? Although the world has no independent existence, the individual being has bestowed independent existence upon it: “O mighty-armed one, by this living nature the world is sustained” (Bhagavad Gītā 7.5). The principal reason for investing the world with existence is the mentality of seeking enjoyment. Because of the individual being’s pleasure-seeking mentality, the Supreme Self begins to appear to that being as the insentient world, and the individual being itself becomes identified with the world. Thus, the pleasure-seeking mentality is the particular obstacle to direct realization of the Supreme Reality.

The question then arises: how is this pleasure-seeking mentality destroyed? There are three principal means of erasing it: Karma-yoga, Jñāna-yoga, and Bhakti-yoga.

Authorial footnote:

त्रभिर्गुणमयैर्भावैरेभिः सर्वमदि जगत्। मोहति नाभजिनातमिमैर्भ्यः परमव्ययम्॥

tribhir guṇamayair bhāvair ebhiḥ sarvam idaṁ jagat |

mohitaṁ nābhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam ||

“Deluded by these states constituted of the three guṇas, this entire world does not know Me, who am beyond them and imperishable.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 7.13)

The author's printed gloss reads: "Deluded by these three guṇa-formed states, the whole world - every living being - does not know Me, the Imperishable beyond these guṇas."

Through Karma-yoga, the pleasure-seeking mentality can be erased with ease. Since the whole creation is made of the five elements, it is one. Just as a single body has many limbs, all bodies are the many limbs of one creation. A person deals appropriately and differently with the several limbs of their body, yet equally desires the well-being and good of every limb and does not wish pain or harm upon any of them. In the same way, while dealing appropriately with every being, a seeker should equally cherish the happiness and welfare of all and should wish pain or harm upon none. A mother's heart is more intent on relieving her child's pain than on relieving her own. A seeker should likewise be especially intent on relieving another's pain. When one has the intention of giving happiness to others, one's own pleasure-seeking mentality disappears of itself.

Authorial footnote:

आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन। सुखं वा यदवा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः॥

ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yo 'rjuna |

sukham vā yadi vā duḥkham sa yogī paramo mataḥ ||

"O Arjuna, the yogī who, by comparison with oneself, sees the same everywhere, whether in happiness or in suffering, is regarded as supreme."

(Bhagavad Gītā 6.32)

The author's printed gloss reads: "O Arjuna! One who, by comparison with one's own body, sees oneself equally everywhere,

and likewise sees happiness and suffering as equal, is regarded as the highest yogī.”

In Jñāna-yoga, the pleasure-seeking mentality is destroyed through discerning reflection. Thirst, for example, has no independent existence apart from water; thirst is itself of the nature of water. In the same way, attachment to pleasure has no independent existence apart from the world; attachment to worldly pleasure, or the pleasure-seeking mentality, is itself of the nature of the world. Just as thirst for water causes a person pain while water itself does not, attachment to the world’s pleasure causes pain while the world itself does not. Therefore attachment to pleasure is the chief cause of all suffering, ruin, faults, and sins. By reflecting in this way, the mentality of seeking enjoyment in the world disappears.

In Bhakti-yoga, the seeker should firmly accept that “everything is Bhagavān alone,” because this is how things truly are. Once it is accepted, direct realization will come of itself. The more intense the pain of not yet having that realization, the sooner it will come. If Bhagavān alone is present in every form, why do I not see Him? If the mother is here, why does she not take me into her lap? When such anguish awakens, the pleasure-seeking mentality is very quickly destroyed and the Supreme Self is directly realized. Yet the pain that this pleasure-seeking mentality has not disappeared must be greater than all the pleasure one has taken through contact with the world.

If a seeker has an intense longing to erase the pleasure-seeking mentality, yet experiences personal helplessness in doing so, and at the same time trusts that this weakness can be removed only by the grace-power of almighty Bhagavān, then in that condition the seeker becomes a devotee and takes wholehearted refuge in

Bhagavān. Once wholly turned toward Bhagavān, prayer and a cry to Him arise spontaneously from within. Through them, the pleasure-seeking mentality is easily erased, and one directly realizes that nothing exists apart from the one Supreme Self.

The Ever-Attained Supreme Reality

The Supreme Reality is eternally and continuously present just as It is. Even to say that It is eternally and continuously present actually assumes the reality of time. In truth, time has no existence. Existence belongs only to the Supreme Reality. It is by virtue of Its existence that the body and world - which are unreal, which “are not” - appear to exist:

जासु सत्यता ते जड माया। भास सत्य इव मोह सहाया॥

jāsu satyatā teṁ jaṛa māyā |

bhāsa satya iva moha sahāyā ||

“By the truth of Him, insentient māyā, aided by delusion, appears as if real.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Bālakāṇḍa 117.4, as printed)

Without reflection, it appears that we are living - that the body is growing. With a little reflection, however, it becomes perfectly evident that the body is continually dying. In fact, it is not merely “dying”; it is nothing but dying! The Gītā says, “The unreal has no being” - *nāsato vidyate bhāvaḥ* (2.16). When a tree appears to have been born, for example, in reality it has not been born: the seed died, and that alone was called the tree’s birth. Leaving one condition is death; attaining the next condition is birth. No condition remains forever. Thus, in the current of birth and death, what predominates is dying and dying alone. The world that appears as objects, persons, actions, powers, abilities, and so forth is undergoing eternal and continuous separation - nonbeing. This separation does not stop for even a moment. Just as the current of the Ganges flows ceaselessly toward the ocean, the current of the

world flows ceaselessly toward nonbeing, toward dissolution. Every body is continually moving into death. It takes time for us to say so, but the dying itself takes no time! The world is therefore called “the ocean of the world of death” - *mṛtyu-saṁsāra-sāgarāt* (Bhagavad Gītā 12.7).

Within this dying and dying alone, an immortal Reality is of itself and naturally present as “is.” It is never absent in any condition: “The Real never ceases to be” - *nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ* (Bhagavad Gītā 2.16). We are to attain that immortal Reality and become separate from dying. In truth, That which is to be attained is already attained, while that from which we must become separate is already separate.

Becoming separate from that which “is not” is also called yoga: “Know as yoga the severance from union with suffering” - *taṁ vidyād duḥkha-saṁyoga-viyogaṁ yoga-saṁjñitam* (Bhagavad Gītā 6.23). Becoming absorbed in That which “is” is also called yoga: “Equanimity is called yoga” - *samatvaṁ yoga ucyate* (Bhagavad Gītā 2.48). Bhagavān says that by His grace you will cross over every obstacle: “With your mind fixed on Me, by My grace you will cross all difficulties” - *mac-cittaḥ sarva-durgāṇi mat-prasādāt tariṣyasi* (Bhagavad Gītā 18.58); and by His grace you will attain the eternal, imperishable state: “By My grace one attains the eternal, imperishable state” - *mat-prasādād avāpnoti śāśvataṁ padam avyayam* (Bhagavad Gītā 18.56). Thus crossing over is yoga, and attaining is also yoga. Only attraction to perishable pleasure obstructs it. The pleasure will not remain, but greed for it will bring about our fall. We must relinquish this greed for pleasure. Our abiding in Reality is then already established, of itself and naturally.

The Supreme Self is of itself and naturally complete in everyone. It is eternally attained, attained of itself, attained by nature. No exertion, labor, or personal striving is required to attain It; exertion is needed to obtain an object of the world. "To attain the Supreme Self, I will have to exert myself, labor, perform difficult austerities, devote time, achieve a spiritual accomplishment, ask someone, or study" - we have erected many obstacles of this kind. Because of them, we remain deprived of attainment of the Supreme Self. Attaining a worldly object lies in the future, but how could attainment of That which is eternally attained, self-attained, and natural lie in the future? We have taken what is unattained to be attained - this alone obstructs realization of the eternally attained. This alone is the covering, the veil, because of which the eternally attained remains unseen.

That which is, is beautiful forever; that which is not can never be beautiful. What is not appears before the eyes, while That which is remains unseen.

In truth, "is" is not covered; our vision alone becomes covered. To deny "is" by granting existence to "is not" is itself the covering. When "is not" is no longer believed, "is" is realized of itself.

By seeing that which is continually passing away - that which "is not" - our abiding in "is" proves to be already established; it does not have to be produced. When the perishable is seen as perishable, our abiding in the Imperishable is of itself and natural. We do know that the perishable is perishable, but we do not give this knowledge importance. Now we have only to give it importance. Suppose a man is standing while several people walk past him. Asked how many people passed, he says that ten people went by, one after another. This proves that the one who says, "Ten people passed,"

did not himself go anywhere; he remained standing there. If he too had gone, who would say that ten people had passed? In the same way, the knower that the world is passing away at every moment has gone nowhere. Knowledge of “is not” arises only from “is”; “is not” cannot know “is not.” Therefore, when attention remains upon the fact that the body and world are continually passing away, one abides spontaneously in one’s true nature without any further reflection. What need is there in this for hearing, reflection, deep contemplation, samādhi, or the like? There is no place, no time, no object, no person, no circumstance, no condition, no event, and no action: when attention rests here, samādhi is spontaneous. The point is this: if you wish to see “is,” look at “is not.” By continuing to see “is not,” one comes of oneself to abide in “is.”

Here is a subtle point: by trying to see “is,” pure “is” will not be seen; yet when “is not” is seen precisely as “is not,” pure “is” will be seen. If we employ mind and intellect - a mental modification - in order to see “is,” then this modification remains mingled with “is.” But when “is not” is seen as “is not,” the mental modification too passes into “is not,” and pure “is” remains. When rubbish is swept away, for example, the broom is set aside along with it and the house remains. The point is that if we contemplate with the mind and determine with the intellect that “the Supreme Self is complete in all,” our relationship with the mental modification will remain. But if we see the world as nonbeing - “the world is separating from us at every moment” - our relationship with both the world and the mental modification will be severed, and the pure Supreme Reality, which is Being, will remain of itself. Therefore, in attaining the Supreme Self, the negative method is primary, because what must fundamentally be negated is the world, whose nature is nonbeing.

Negate the world, and direct realization of the eternally attained Supreme Self will arise of itself and naturally.

In truth, knowledge concerns only “is not.” There is no knowledge of “is,” because “is” remains of itself. To take “is not” as “is” is ignorance; to know “is not” as “is not” is knowledge. As soon as knowledge arises, “is not” disappears and “is” remains. A seeker should therefore remain naturally awake and alert at all times to the fact that the world is not. In a traditional household, for example, both sons and daughters are born. When a son is born, there is a spontaneous understanding that he will remain in that household; when a daughter is born, there is a spontaneous understanding that she will not remain there. No practice is required for this understanding. In the same way, the knowledge that the body and world are passing away at every moment should remain spontaneously present.

Just as the settled understanding within the household is that the daughter will go to her own marital home and will not remain here, it should be settled within us that the world will go and will not remain here. Why be attached to what is leaving? Offer this daughter-like world to Bhagavān, for no bridegroom as worthy as Bhagavān can be found. Our highest good is then established of itself. In truth, the world belongs in relationship with Bhagavān, because it is Bhagavān’s own lower prakṛti. We ourselves regarded it as separate from Bhagavān and then bound ourselves in relationship with it: “O mighty-armed one, by this living nature the world is sustained” - *jīva-bhūtāṁ mahā-bāho yayedam dhāryate jagat* (Bhagavad Gītā 7.5).

Authorial footnote:

भूमरिपोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धरिव च। अहंकार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरिष्टधा॥

bhūmir āpo 'nalo vāyuḥ kham mano buddhir eva ca |

ahankāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā ||

“Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect, and ego: thus is My prakṛti divided eightfold.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 7.4)

The author’s printed gloss reads: “Earth, water, fire, air, and space - these five great elements - together with mind, intellect, and ego constitute My lower prakṛti in its eight divisions.”

Without taking “is not” to be “is,” no person can pursue enjoyment or accumulation. Without taking nonbeing as being, no one can commit wrongdoing or sin. Every evil arises only by granting existence to nonbeing. Therefore, taking “is not” as “is” is the root cause of every fault, every sorrow, and every demonic quality. Granting reality to the unreal is the fundamental fault from which all faults arise. We ourselves granted existence to the unreal; therefore, we ourselves must erase it. When the unreal’s independent existence is erased, the Reality that is *sat* will not have to be brought into being. It will instead be realized of itself and naturally, because it has been present all along.

Priceless Counsel for Seekers

A seeker who wishes to follow the path of Karma-yoga should first accept, “I am a yogī.” One who wishes to follow the path of Jñāna-yoga should first form the conviction, “I am an inquirer into Truth.” One who wishes to follow the path of Bhakti-yoga should first accept, “I am a devotee.” The point is that a seeker should practise as a yogī, an inquirer, or a devotee.

One who practises as a yogī should not be satisfied until yoga - equanimity - is attained. “Yoga” means equanimity: “Equanimity is called yoga” (Bhagavad Gītā 2.48). Pairs of opposites such as attraction and aversion, elation and grief, obstruct one from becoming a yogī. A seeker’s aim should therefore be to erase attraction and aversion. Actions are performed with either of two aims: to obtain their fruit or to relinquish their fruit. One who acts to obtain the fruit is a worker bound to action; one who acts to relinquish the fruit is a Karma-yogī. A practitioner of Karma-yoga should therefore resolve from the outset, “I am a yogī; acting to obtain fruit is not my aim.” Relinquishing attachment to results in this way, one should continue to perform one’s duty. Whatever favorable or unfavorable circumstance appears should be put to right use, not consumed as an experience. Becoming happy or unhappy, pleased or displeased, is to consume a circumstance. Serving others in favorable circumstances and relinquishing the desire for pleasure in unfavorable circumstances is to put them to right use. When used rightly, both favorable and unfavorable circumstances become means for erasing attraction and aversion.

Authorial footnote:

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर। असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः॥

tasmā asaktaḥ satataṁ kāryaṁ karma samācara |
asakto hy ācāraṁ karma param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ ||

“Therefore, always perform the action that ought to be done, without attachment; for by acting without attachment, a person attains the Supreme.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 3.19)

All action is related to the “other,” not to the Self. The reason is that the Self - oneself - is never absent. Because there is no lack in the Self, the Self needs nothing. When nothing is needed, action for oneself cannot arise at all. Moreover, the instruments by which actions are performed belong to prakṛti. Because the Self has no relationship with prakṛti, there can be no obligation upon the Self to do anything for itself. A person who acts for oneself therefore becomes bound by actions: “This world is bound by action other than action done for sacrifice” (Bhagavad Gītā 3.9). One who does nothing for oneself and performs every action only for others becomes free from the bondage of action: “All action of one who acts for sacrifice is wholly dissolved” (Bhagavad Gītā 4.23). Acting for others without desire is called “action for sacrifice.” In the end, one who acts for sacrifice attains yoga as the nectar remaining from sacrifice:

यज्वशषिटाशनिः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः।

yajña-śiṣṭāśinaḥ santo mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ |

“The virtuous who partake of what remains from sacrifice are freed from every fault.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 3.13)

यज्जशषिटामृतभुजो यान्ति ब्रह्म सनातनम्।

yajña-śiṣṭāmṛta-bhujo yānti brahma sanātanam |

“Those who partake of the nectar remaining from sacrifice attain the eternal Brahman.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 4.31)

“I am a yogī; I am an inquirer; I am a devotee; I am a seeker”: this is not the seeker’s gross body but the body of inner orientation. The gross body is not a yogī, an inquirer, or a devotee. If from the very beginning the seeker develops the orientation, “I do not belong to worldly life; I am a seeker,” spiritual practice will advance with great force. At a wedding, for example, once a young man becomes the bridegroom, even his manner of walking changes, because the thought “I am the bridegroom” has entered his sense of self. In the same way, “I am a seeker” should enter a seeker’s sense of self. If “I am a worldly person” remains settled there, worldly activity will go splendidly, but spiritual practice will not. Whatever enters one’s sense of self becomes very easy to do. It is therefore essential for a seeker to transform this sense of self. The practice of one who does not practise as a servant, inquirer, or devotee is not wasted, but it does not reach fulfillment in the present. Practise, therefore, with the conviction: “I am a seeker; I am a Karma-yogī; I am a Jñāna-yogī; or I am a Bhakti-yogī.”

Authorial footnote: Even the world’s finest work ultimately proves inferior.

Another name for Karma-yoga is service. A practitioner of Karma-yoga should therefore bring “I am a servant” into one’s sense of self. From this sense of self will arise the understanding:

“My work is to serve; wanting something is not my work.” This is a special principle for every seeker: I am to take nothing from the world; I am not to become selfish or pleasure-seeking; I do not exist to take pleasure from the world. One who wants pleasure is not a servant. Whatever kind of seeker one may be, one must bid farewell to pleasure from the outset. A seeker’s work is spiritual practice, not the consumption of pleasure. One who lives for enjoyment is not a seeker. The enjoyer becomes ill, not a yogī. Such a person must suffer and can never escape suffering.

Authorial footnote:

सेवक सुख चह मान भखिरी। व्यसनी धन सुभ गतिबिचिरी॥ लोभी जसु चह चार
गुमानी। नभ दुहद्विध चहत ए प्रानी॥

*sevaka sukha caha māna bhikhārī | byasanī dhana subha gati
bibhicārī ||*

lobhī jasu caha cāra gumānī | nabha duhi dūdha cahata e prānī ||

“A servant who seeks comfort, a beggar who seeks honor; an addict who seeks wealth, an adulterer who seeks an auspicious end; a greedy person who seeks fame, and an arrogant one who seeks the four aims of life - these creatures desire to milk the sky.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Araṇyakāṇḍa 17.8, as printed)

A servant is one who serves at all times. Eating is service; attending to bodily needs and bathing is service; washing clothes is service; conducting business is service. Whatever one does, one does with the spirit of service. This becomes possible only when “I am nothing but a servant” remains within. If “I am a human being,” “I am a brāhmaṇa,” “I am a merchant,” “I am a householder,” “I am a renunciant,” or similar identities come first, while “I am a servant”

comes afterward, Karma-yoga will not flourish. In a Karma-yogī, “I am a servant” should come first and “I am a human being” and other such identities later. Likewise, “I am a devotee,” “I am an inquirer,” or “I am a seeker” should come first. Just as the sense “I am a brāhmaṇa” remains continually awake in a brāhmaṇa, “I am a seeker” should remain continually awake in a seeker. When this happens, identification as a human being and identification with the body disappear. “I am a human being” is the human body made of the five elements; “I am a seeker - a servant, inquirer, or devotee” is the body of inner orientation. When this inner body becomes primary, spiritual practice continues without interruption.

A Karma-yogī serves all three bodies: gross, subtle, and causal. Not allowing the body to become pleasure-seeking, lazy, or inactive is service of the gross body. Not dwelling upon sense objects, but contemplating the happiness and welfare of all, is service of the subtle body. Entering samādhi, remaining unwaveringly firm in one’s principle, and not being shaken from one’s resolve for the highest good is service of the causal body. Not regarding the activity of the gross body, the thought of the subtle body, or the steadiness of the causal body as “mine” or “for me” is service of each. The gross body is one with the gross world, the subtle body with the subtle world, and the causal body with the causal world. It is therefore a grave error to regard the body as separate from the world. To regard the body and world as “mine” and “for me” is deeply harmful. One who thinks this way cannot become a seeker even if a lifetime passes. A Karma-yogī should therefore understand, “I belong to the world, and I am here to serve the world.”

Here is an illustration. People commonly say that money comes to money, because those who possess money can use it to start new enterprises and earn still more. Hearing that money comes to

money, a man walked through the market, jingling a one-rupee coin in his hand. A heap of rupees lay in a shop, and as he jingled his coin, it flew from his hand and landed upon the heap. He protested, “What is this? Money is supposed to come to money!” The shopkeeper replied, “Yes, money has indeed come to money. Your rupee is small, while the heap of rupees is large. Will the small go to the large, or the large to the small? The small naturally goes to the large.” In the same way, the world is not for the body; rather, the body is for the world. The world is not for us; rather, we are for the world. A seeker therefore carries the inner resolve, “May I be of use to the world.”

A seeker may purify I-ness, erase I-ness, or transform I-ness. The Karma-yogī purifies it, the Jñāna-yogī erases it, and the Bhakti-yogī transforms it. A person can therefore practise Karma-yoga and Bhakti-yoga even while the pride of doership remains. Jñāna-yoga, however, cannot be practised while the pride of doership remains. One may learn teachings about knowledge, but fulfillment will not come. In Karma-yoga and Bhakti-yoga, desire is erased first and ego afterward. In Jñāna-yoga, ego is erased first and desire then disappears of itself. Karma-yoga and Bhakti-yoga can therefore proceed while egoity remains, but Jñāna-yoga cannot. With ego still present, the path of Jñāna-yoga is difficult: “The goal of the Unmanifest is attained with difficulty by those identified with the body” - *avyaktā hi gatir duḥkham dehavadbhir avāpyate* (Bhagavad Gītā 12.5). When ego has been erased, the path proceeds with ease: “One readily enjoys the infinite happiness of contact with Brahman” - *sukhena brahma-saṁsparśam atyantam sukham aśnute* (Bhagavad Gītā 6.28). But one who continues to indulge in enjoyment and pleasure, to act from greed, accumulate money, and

pursue luxury cannot attain fulfillment in any yoga. Such a person cannot even become a seeker, much less attain perfection.

A devotee does not erase I-ness, or ego, but transforms it. Transforming I-ness is very easy. When a young woman marries, for example, the I-ness expressed in “I am an unmarried daughter” changes with ease. A devotee similarly transforms I-ness: “I do not belong to the world; I belong to Bhagavān.” Transforming I-ness is both easy and excellent. Through this transformation, one becomes absorbed in spiritual practice, and fulfillment comes naturally of itself.

The first understanding a seeker should have is this: indulging in luxury and tending the body for its own sake is not my work. Bhagavān has already made provision for the body’s maintenance. Provision exists from Bhagavān for sustenance, not for indulging in pleasure, hoarding, or becoming a millionaire or multimillionaire. Milk comes into a mother’s breasts before the child is born. When Bhagavān has provided for life’s sustenance, why not engage in worship? Although every human being is responsible for devotion to Bhagavān, the elderly, widows, and renunciants carry a special responsibility. What work do these three have apart from worship of Bhagavān? The human body is not given for indulging in pleasure, taking ease, or seeking favorable conditions:

एहं तिन कर फल बषिय न भाई। स्वर्गउ स्वल्प अंत दुखदाई॥ नर तनु पाइ बषियँ मन देहीं। पलटि सुधा ते सठ बषि लेहीं॥

*ehi tana kara phala biṣaya na bhāi | svargau svalpa anta
dukhadāi ||*

*nara tanu pāi biṣayaṁ mana dehīm | palaṭi sudhā te saṭha biṣa
lehīm ||*

“Sense pleasure is not the fruit of this body, dear one; even heaven is brief and ends in sorrow. Fools who gain a human body and give their minds to sense objects exchange nectar for poison.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarakāṇḍa 44.1, as printed)

One who seeks comfort, luxury, honor, and praise cannot be a seeker; such a person is an enjoyer. Seeking honor and praise is itself enjoyment, because honor belongs to the body and praise to one's name, not to oneself, the Self. Even after death, a person wants praise: “Let a few books be produced, or let some building be erected, so that people remember me.” In Marwari this is called “a little song and a little wall” - a memorial in verse or brick. A seeker, however, should remain far from honor, praise, fame, and renown: “One whose praise stings like a scorpion has a wife like a serpent.” The seeker is to attain the Supreme Self. Even attaining higher realms such as heaven is not a seeker's work, for “heaven too is brief and ends in sorrow.” Bhagavān says:

न पारमेष्ठ्यं न महेन्द्रधिष्ण्यं न सार्वभौमं न रसाधपित्यम् । योगसद्धिधीरपुनर्भवं
वा मय्यर्पितात्मेच्छति मद्वनिन्यत्॥

*na pārameṣṭhyam na mahendra-dhiṣṇyam na sārva-bhaumam na
rasādhipatyam |*

*na yoga-siddhīr apunar-bhavam vā mayy arpitātmecchati mad
vinānyat ||*

“One who has offered the self to Me desires neither Brahmā's station, nor Indra's abode, nor sovereignty over the earth, nor dominion over the lower realms, nor yogic powers, nor even freedom from rebirth - nothing apart from Me.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.14.14)

The author's printed gloss reads: "The devotee who has offered the self to Me desires, apart from Me, neither Brahmā's station, Indra's station, sovereignty over the entire earth, rule over realms such as Pātāla, all the attainments of yoga, nor even liberation."

Many people are disposed to serve only where they will receive honor and praise. They cannot work without recognition and applause. When something good is accomplished, they say, "We did it"; when the work goes wrong, they blame others. How can those with such a disposition attain the highest good? "I did every good thing" is Kaikeyī's disposition; "Others did every good thing" is Rāma's disposition. Kaikeyī says:

तात बात मैं सकल सँवारी। भे मंथरा सहाय बचिारी॥ कछुक काज बधिबीच बगिरेउ।
भूपतिसुरपतिपुर पगु धारेउ॥

tāta bāta main sakala saṁvārī | bhe mantharā sahāya bicārī ||
kachuka kāja bidhi bīca bigāreu | bhūpati surapati pura pagu
dhāreu ||

"My son, I arranged everything; poor Mantharā became my helper. Fate spoiled only a little of the plan in between: the king departed for Indra's city."

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa 160.1, as printed)

Rāma, by contrast, says:

गुर बसषिट कुलपूज्य हमारे। इन्ह की कृपाँ दनुज रन मारे॥ ए सब सखा सुनहु मुनिमेरे।
भए समर सागर कहँ बेरे॥ मम हति लागजिन्म इन्ह हारे। भरतहु ते मोहिअधिकि पआरे॥

gura basiṣṭa kula-pūjya hamāre | inha ki kṛpām danuja rana
māre ||

*e saba sakhā sunahu muni mere | bhae samara sāgara kahan
bere ||*

*mama hita lāgi janma inha hāre | bharatahu te mohi adhika piāre
||*

“Our venerable family preceptor is Guru Vasiṣṭha; by his grace the demons were slain in battle. Hear me, sage: all these are my companions, boats upon the ocean of war. For my sake they staked their lives; they are dearer to me even than Bharata.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarakāṇḍa 8.3-4, as printed)

It is therefore improper for a seeker to work with the aim of gaining honor, praise, comfort, or ease.

Whichever path a seeker adopts, one should remain firmly devoted to it. Whether happiness or suffering comes, whether there is praise or criticism, one should pay it no heed. Whatever hardship or adverse circumstance comes does so solely for our spiritual advancement. There is a secret here. When our practice is proceeding well, yet in the course of it we begin to enjoy a little pleasure and grow proud - “I have become a fine seeker” - Bhagavān sends an adverse circumstance. But when we become excessively distressed, Bhagavān sends favorable conditions again. By sending favor and adversity from time to time, Bhagavān continually keeps us alert and protects us.

A person becomes a seeker by reflecting, “I am to take nothing; I am only to give and give.” If the seeker is a servant, then in the course of serving, pride in being a servant will disappear. The servant will no longer remain; service alone will remain. Becoming the very form of service, one will become one with the One served - that is, one will attain the Supreme Self. Likewise, if the seeker is an inquirer, pride

in being an inquirer will disappear and inquiry alone will remain. As soon as pure inquiry alone remains, inquiry will be fulfilled - direct knowledge of Reality will arise. In the same way, if the seeker is a devotee, pride in being a devotee will no longer remain and one will become the very form of bhakti. Every action performed will then be bhakti alone - done for Bhagavān. Becoming the very form of bhakti, the devotee will become inseparable from Bhagavān.

Desire and True Need

Bhagavān says in the Gītā, “The eternal living being in this world is a part of Me alone” - *mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ* (15.7). The body contains something of both mother and father, but the self does not contain a part of both the Supreme Self and prakṛti; it is a pure part of the Supreme Self alone: “a part of Me alone.” The living self is therefore of the same nature as the Supreme Self whose part it is. Goswami Tulsidas says, “The living being is an imperishable part of the Lord - conscious, stainless, and by nature a treasury of happiness” - *īśvara aṁsa jīva abināsī, cetana amala sahaja sukhārāsī* (Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarakāṇḍa 117.1). Yet even such a part of the Supreme Self falls under māyā’s sway - “it came under māyā’s control, O Lord” - and begins drawing toward itself the mind and senses that abide in prakṛti, regarding them as “mine” and “for me”: “It draws the senses, with the mind as the sixth, which abide in prakṛti” - *manaḥ-śaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛti-sthāni karṣati* (Bhagavad Gītā 15.7). We are parts of the Supreme Self and abide in the Supreme Self; the body is a part of prakṛti and abides in prakṛti. What a tremendous error it is that, although abiding in the Supreme Self, we take ourselves to abide in the body. A part of prakṛti remains in prakṛti, yet although we are parts of the Supreme Self, we cease to abide knowingly in the Supreme Self and instead settle into the gross, subtle, and causal bodies, all products of prakṛti. Only by grasping prakṛti is the living being called a “part” of the Supreme Self. If prakṛti is not grasped, it is not a part but the Supreme Self - Brahman - directly:

परमात्मेति चाप्युक्तो देहेऽस्मिन्पुरुषः परः॥ *paramātmēti cāpy ukto dehe ’smiṇ puruṣaḥ paraḥ* || “The Supreme Person in this body is also called the Supreme Self.” (Bhagavad Gītā 13.22)

अनादित्वान्निर्गुणत्वात् परमात्मायमव्ययः। *anāditvān nirguṇatvāt paramātmāyam avyayaḥ* | “Being beginningless and beyond the guṇas, this Supreme Self is imperishable.” (Bhagavad Gītā 13.31)

By grasping prakṛti, the living being developed both desire for the world and desire for the Supreme Self. When prakṛti’s insentient aspect predominates, desire for the world arises; when the conscious aspect belonging to the Supreme Self predominates, desire for the Supreme Self arises. Desire for the world is *kāmanā*; desire for the Supreme Self is true need. This need may also be called longing for liberation, inquiry into Reality, or thirst for divine love. True need is fulfilled, but no one’s worldly desire ever has been, ever will be, or ever can be fully satisfied. Read history or scriptures such as the Bhāgavata: you will find no person whose every desire was fulfilled. Desire can only be relinquished, never fulfilled. The world is momentary and perishes at every moment; how could desire for it be fulfilled? Because we assume a relationship with the body and world, we perceive a deficiency in ourselves. Only attainment of the Supreme Self will fill it. Even if we gained sovereignty over the three worlds, heaven and other realms, or countless universes, our true need would remain unfulfilled. Neither worldly desire nor true need would be fulfilled, because whatever was acquired would accrue only to the body, not to us - the self. How could an insentient object reach the conscious? A part of the Supreme Self needs the Supreme Self alone. “May I be liberated; may I attain the highest good; may I know Reality; may I become free of every sorrow; may I receive boundless bliss; may I receive divine love”: all these belong to the self’s true need. Worldly desire can only be relinquished, while true need never has been, never will be, and never can be relinquished. It can only be fulfilled. In every saint and great soul, worldly desires were relinquished and

true need was fulfilled. The Gītā therefore places immense emphasis upon relinquishing desire.

Authorial footnote: Everyone experiences that some desires are fulfilled while others are not. This proves that a desire's fulfillment or nonfulfillment does not depend upon the desire itself, but upon an ordering principle - the fruit of previous action.

The distinction between worldly desire and true need arose at the very point where the living being grasped the aspect of prakṛti. If it lets go of prakṛti, desire will be relinquished and true need fulfilled. As soon as relationship with insentience is severed, desires are destroyed and the Supreme Self is attained of itself, because the Supreme Self is eternally and continuously present everywhere. Worldly desire alone obstructs attainment of the Supreme Self. Only because desire is retained does true need - attainment of the Supreme Self - remain unfulfilled. Many practitioners strive to fulfill spiritual need in the same manner that they strive to fulfill worldly desire. They seek to attain the conscious through the insentient, the Supreme Self through body, senses, mind, and intellect. But the principle is that the conscious cannot be attained through the insentient; that is impossible. The conscious is attained only by relinquishing the insentient.

It is a law that relinquishing desires fulfills true need. We are free to relinquish desire. No desire remains continuously within anyone; desires arise and perish. True need, however, continues. If we seek existence, we seek eternal existence; if knowledge, infinite knowledge; if happiness, infinite happiness. This need for Being-Consciousness-Bliss remains continuously within us. Yet we grasp the desire that does not last and pay no attention to the need that does. This is our error.

If we relinquish desires, the Supreme Self will be attained; or if we attain the Supreme Self, desires will be relinquished. The Gītā calls both “yoga”:

तं वदियाद्दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम्। *taṁ vidyād duḥkha-saṁyoga-viyogaṁ yoga-saṁjñitam* | “Know as yoga that severance from union with suffering.” (Bhagavad Gītā 6.23)

The author’s printed gloss reads: “That in which union with sorrows is severed should be known by the name yoga.”

समत्वं योग उच्यते। *samatvaṁ yoga ucyate* | “Equanimity is called yoga.” (Bhagavad Gītā 2.48)

Thus relinquishing insentience is yoga, and abiding in pure consciousness is also yoga. The assumed relationship with the sorrowful world is “union with suffering.” Because the world is the dwelling place of sorrows, it is called “the abode of suffering, impermanent” - *duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam* (Bhagavad Gītā 8.15). Just as books are found in a library, clothes in a clothing store, and food in a dining hall, only suffering upon suffering is found in the abode of suffering. Not even happiness is found there, much less bliss. In the Supreme Self, however, there is bliss upon bliss: “Having attained which, one regards no other gain as greater” - *yaṁ labdhvā cāparaṁ lābhaṁ manyate nādhikaṁ tataḥ* (Bhagavad Gītā 6.22). We need precisely such boundless bliss, and this human birth was given for fulfillment of that need.

Even if a person continued to be born and die for endless time, true need would not disappear and no worldly desire would endure. In childhood one desires toys; on growing older one desires money; then one desires spouse, children, honor, praise, and so on. No desire remains; it continually changes. True need, however, neither

disappears nor changes. Karma-yoga, Jñāna-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Dhyāna-yoga, and other disciplines exist to fulfill that need.

It is not that true need will be fulfilled if we abandon the household, money, or the body. It is fulfilled by relinquishing desire for them. That household, money, body, honor, and praise should remain forever is impossible. Desire for the impossible can never be fulfilled. We will die while desiring and remain caught in the round of birth and death. Desire will never be fully satisfied and true need will never be relinquished. Desire is connected with the insentient body and its object is perishable; true need is connected with the conscious self and its object is imperishable. Relinquish desire and yoga is fulfilled: “severance from union with suffering.” Fulfill true need and yoga is fulfilled: “equanimity is called yoga.” Relinquishment of insentience and attainment of equanimity are both yoga. Relinquishing insentience brings attainment of consciousness; attaining consciousness relinquishes insentience. The two can never remain together.

Suppose a jar is full of water. It appears that two tasks must be done: empty the jar and fill it with space. In reality there are not two tasks but only one - emptying the jar. Remove the water and space fills it of itself. In the same way, relinquishing desire for the world and fulfilling the need for the Supreme Self are not two tasks. Relinquish worldly desire and the need for the Supreme Self will be fulfilled of itself. The Supreme Self appears unattained only because of desire for the world.

There are only three realities in question: the living being, the world, and the Supreme Self. What is the living being? I am the living being. What is the world? What appears before us is the world. What is the Supreme Self? The Lord of both living being and

world is the Supreme Self. Living being and world can be investigated; the Supreme Self is not an object of investigation but of trust. Investigation concerns that about which we know something and do not know something. It cannot proceed regarding That about which we know nothing; there, trust alone operates. Therefore, through discernment we are to relinquish the world, and through reverent trust we are to accept the Supreme Self. No one is dependent upon another in relinquishing insentience, because it is alien to one's nature.

At most, a seeker applies the mind to the Supreme Self. Yet mind is an insentient part of prakṛti, while the Supreme Self is conscious. How could mind be applied to the Supreme Self? The insentient can attach only to the insentient; how could it attach to the conscious? In reality, the conscious self applies itself to the Supreme Self, not the mind. The living being naturally becomes absorbed wherever its mind is absorbed. By applying the mind to the world, it became absorbed in the world. When it applies the mind to the Supreme Self, the mind itself does not attach to the Supreme Self; the self becomes absorbed in the Supreme Self. By withdrawing the mind from the world and applying it to the Supreme Self, the mind dissolves and ceases. Bhagavān says in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam:

वषियान् ध्यायतश्चतितं वषियेषु वषिज्जते। मामनुस्मरतश्चतितं मय्येव प्रवलीयते॥

viṣayān dhyāyataś cittam viṣayeṣu viṣajjate |

mām anusmarataś cittam mayy eva pravaliyate ||

“The mind of one who contemplates sense objects becomes entangled in those objects; the mind of one who remembers Me dissolves in Me alone.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.14.27)

The author's printed gloss adds: "The mind no longer retains an independent existence."

Fulfillment of worldly desire lies in the future; fulfillment of true need does not. Worldly objects are not present always and everywhere, while the Supreme Self is present always and everywhere. Even if this is not directly experienced, close your eyes and accept with blind trust that the Supreme Self is present everywhere: "Within and without all beings, unmoving and moving" - *bahir antaś ca bhūtānām acaram caram eva ca* (Bhagavad Gītā 13.15). The author's gloss reads: "The Supreme Self completely pervades the outside and inside of every being and is Itself present as all moving and unmoving beings." By continuing to see the Supreme Self everywhere, at every time, in every object, person, action, condition, and circumstance, desire will be destroyed and true need fulfilled.

The body and world belong to the same order: "Earth, water, fire, space, and air: of these five the exceedingly lowly body is composed" - *chiti jala pāvaka gagana samīrā, pañca racita ati adhama sarīrā* (Rāmacaritamānasa, Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa 11.2). The body does not remain with us for even a moment; it is continually abandoning us. Bhagavān, however, continually dwells in our heart: "established in the heart of all" - *hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam* (Bhagavad Gītā 13.17); "I am seated in the heart of all" - *sarvasya cāham hṛdi sanniviṣṭaḥ* (15.15); "O Arjuna, the Lord dwells in the heart-region of all beings" - *īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati* (18.61). That which we must relinquish is continually relinquishing us, while That which we must attain is continually attained.

We need relinquish only two desires: indulging in enjoyment and accumulating possessions. These two alone particularly obstruct

attainment of the Supreme Self. Enjoyments, accumulations, and objects are already being relinquished of themselves. Childhood passed; youth too will pass, old age will pass, people will go, and objects will go. We have only to relinquish desire for them and refuse to accept them as ours. The Supreme Self, by contrast, remains continually with us and does not depend upon our acceptance or rejection. Whether we believe in the Supreme Self or not, It is; whether we accept It or reject It, It is. The world depends upon our acceptance or rejection. Accept the world and it is; reject it and it is not. If the world did not depend upon human acceptance and rejection, no one could ever become unattached to the world or become a renunciant. The world is continually separating, while the Supreme Self never separates. We need only relinquish desire for the world and feel our need for the Supreme Self. Relinquishment of the world and attainment of the Supreme Self are then already accomplished.

No one has the power to keep the body and world with oneself, or to remain with them. Neither can we remain with them nor can they remain with us, because they are not ours. No pleasure of the world remains forever, because that pleasure is not ours. Desire for it will have to be relinquished.

We ourselves have granted existence to the world: “by which this world is sustained” - *yayedam dhāryate jagat* (Bhagavad Gītā 7.5). In reality, the world has no being: “The unreal has no being” - *nāsato vidyate bhāvaḥ* (2.16). The world does not remain for even a moment. We imagine that we are living, but in reality we are dying. Suppose our total lifespan is eighty years and twenty have passed. Our remaining lifespan is no longer eighty years but sixty. We think we have grown twenty years older, but in truth our remaining life has grown smaller. As life passes, death draws nearer. To the extent

that years have passed, we have already died. We must therefore let go of what is continually leaving and attain That which is continually present.

We have stubbornly resolved, “We will grasp the world and never let go.” Bhagavān has likewise resolved, “I will make them release it; I will not let it remain.” We grasp childhood, and Bhagavān does not let it remain. We grasp youth, old age, wealth, or health, and He does not let any of them remain. We keep grasping new things, while Bhagavān keeps releasing them from our hands. This is Bhagavān’s immense compassion. Through action He calls us: “Do not become entangled in the world; come toward Me.” If we cease grasping the world, we will receive boundless bliss. Whenever peace comes to us, it will come only from relinquishing desires: “From renunciation, peace follows immediately” - *tyāgāc chāntir anantaram* (Bhagavad Gītā 12.12).

Serving others makes relinquishment of desire very easy. Desires disappear through service of the poor, people with disabilities, the sick, children, widows, cows, and others in need. A renunciant once said, “After I was married, I was given a mango one day, but I gave it to my wife. Then this thought arose within me: I could have eaten the mango myself, so why did I give it to her instead? I learned from this that by bringing happiness to others, desire for one’s own happiness disappears.” This is called Karma-yoga.

Desire for the world arises from giving primacy to the body. Through discerning reflection, therefore, desire is easily erased by using the body to serve others and bring them happiness. Creation itself is formed so that by sustaining one another and serving, beings attain the highest good: “Nourishing one another, you shall attain the highest good” - *parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyāḥ param*

avāpsyatha (Bhagavad Gītā 3.11). The body was born from the world, nourished by the world, educated by the world, lives in the world, and dissolves into the world. It has no independent existence apart from the world. Honestly offer the body received from the world back into service of the world. Do everything only for the world's welfare. Think only of the good of all and cherish only their welfare, without also desiring personal comfort, honor, praise, or convenience. Then the Supreme Self will be attained: "Those devoted to the welfare of all beings attain Me alone" - *te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ* (Bhagavad Gītā 12.4).

Not causing anyone pain is an even higher service than bringing others happiness. Bringing happiness renders limited service; not causing pain renders limitless service. Doing good produces goodness on the surface, while refraining from evil causes goodness to sprout from within. Three observances are essential for wholly relinquishing evil:

1. Do not regard anyone as bad.
2. Do not wish harm upon anyone.
3. Do not do harm to anyone.

By wholly relinquishing evil in this way, our true need will be fulfilled and human life will reach fulfillment.

Through reflection, directly recognize that the body is not my true nature. Our body today is not what it was in childhood, and what it is today it will not remain, yet we ourselves are the same as in childhood. The body changed, but we did not. The body is therefore not our companion. We continue, while the body does not; it continually disappears. Giving importance to this discernment

brings knowledge of Reality - fulfillment of true need. This is called Jñāna-yoga.

When one's own power cannot erase desires or fulfill true need, and the seeker trusts that Bhagavān alone is one's own and that only by His power can true need be fulfilled, the seeker becomes anguished, cries to Bhagavān, and prays. By crying to Bhagavān, desires disappear. This is called Bhakti-yoga.

Only by granting reality and importance to the world and forming a relationship with it did the unattained world begin to appear attained, while the attained Supreme Reality began to appear unattained. This gave rise both to desire for the world and to desire for the Supreme Self - true need. Through Karma-yoga, Jñāna-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, or any other discipline, the seeker must therefore erase desire for the world entirely. As soon as worldly desire is wholly erased, the world will retain no reality, importance, or relationship, and the eternally attained Supreme Self, of whom we are parts, will be directly realized. Nothing will then remain to be done, known, or attained; human birth will have reached its complete fulfillment.

The Highest Good through the Spirit of Giving

The Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā says:

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमर्दिं ततम्। स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सद्धिं विन्दति
मानवः॥

yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānāṃ yena sarvam idaṃ tatam |

sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ ||

“By worshiping through one’s own work That from whom all beings proceed and by whom all this is pervaded, a human being attains perfection.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 18.46)

The author’s printed gloss reads: “By worshiping, through one’s own action, the Supreme Self from whom all beings act and by whom this whole world is pervaded, a human being attains fulfillment.”

All beings arise and act from the Supreme Self. The Supreme Self is complete everywhere: “All this world is pervaded by Me in My unmanifest form” - *mayā tatam idaṃ sarvaṃ jagad avyakta-mūrtinā* (Bhagavad Gītā 9.4). Whatever action a seeker performs, one should hold the inner orientation, “I am worshiping that Supreme Self alone.” Dealing with another person is worship of the Supreme Self; speaking with another person is worship of the Supreme Self. By worshiping in this way, one attains the highest good. What an easy and simple discipline this is!

The one Supreme Self has appeared in many forms. The One is present as the many, and within the many It remains One. We are to worship only that Supreme Self and do nothing else. Men should worship Bhagavān through their work, and women through theirs. Men who conduct business or perform salaried work should do it solely as worship of Bhagavān. Women who cook, raise children, or manage household tasks should do it solely as worship of Bhagavān. Bhagavān Himself has appeared before us in these many forms. What greater good fortune could there be than serving Bhagavān directly?

Service performed with a desire to receive something is not worship of Bhagavān. When an object is desired, its apparent reality and importance enter and occupy us. The desire to take thus brings insentience into us; the desire to give removes insentience and reveals consciousness. When a person becomes a seeker, it is not in order to take but solely to give. Only one who does not wish to take anything from anyone even in a dream, but wishes only to give and give, is a seeker. Where taking and giving both coexist, there is the knot binding consciousness and matter, the cause of birth and death. One who seeks deliverance and wishes to be freed from this knot should stop taking and begin giving. Even where something must be received, it should be received in order to give or to please another, not for oneself. One who takes pleasure is not a seeker but an enjoyer. The enjoyer falls, becomes ill, grows insentient, and becomes dependent. Thus one who takes is an enjoyer; one who gives is a yogī.

No one is greater than Bhagavān, because He only gives and gives. More than that, He has given Himself completely, eternally, and equally to everyone: “I am seated in the heart of all” - *sarvasya cāham hr̥di sanniviṣṭaḥ* (Bhagavad Gītā 15.15). He has no

deficiency, never has had one, never will, and never can; yet to please His devotee He receives. He takes the gopīs' butter only for their happiness. A seeker should therefore sustain only the spirit of giving: How may everyone be happy? How may all find ease? How may all prosper? How may all attain the highest good? How may all be joyful? How may everyone be pleased? Such inner intentions serve the whole world.

Although inner intention appears ordinary and outward action appears great, in reality the intention is exceedingly great and the action very small. Even if millions upon millions of rupees are spent, the action remains limited; the spirit of service can be limitless. Through the limitless, the Limitless - the Supreme Self - is attained. The limitless cannot be attained through the limited.

Service is primary in Karma-yoga. Karma-yoga removes not only impurity but all defects - impurity, distraction, and veiling - completely, and knowledge of Reality arises. If that same service is performed as worship of Bhagavān, bhakti is attained. Knowledge and bhakti are not higher and lower, yet bhakti possesses a special relish and joy not manifest in knowledge. Knowledge is not devoid of excellence, but love is hidden within it; in bhakti, love is manifest.

Taking destroys the object and causes one's own fall. When a pleasure-seeking person takes food, the food is destroyed and the person falls. One accepts oneself as dependent upon food and, by giving food greater importance, diminishes one's own dignity. This is the fall. Food destroys one's hunger and capacity to eat; we call the inability to eat any more "satisfaction." In the same way, one who takes clothing wears it out; one who takes honor and praise uses them up; one who takes respect exhausts it and falls. The giver,

however, serves another, brings the object to fulfillment, and rises. The giver necessarily rises and does not remain low; the taker remains low. The giver's hand is above and the receiver's hand below.

There are three: servant, service, and the one served. As service continues and pride in being the servant disappears, the servant becomes service and dissolves into the One served. When pride disappears, service alone remains. Goswami Tulsidas composed the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and how greatly society is now served through it. Goswami Tulsidas himself has appeared before us in the form of service. The *Rāmāyaṇa* is his very form, and in that form he serves everyone. He no longer retains an independent existence apart from the One he served - the Supreme Self.

On the path of knowledge, when pride in being an inquirer disappears, inquiry alone remains and knowledge of Reality arises. As long as an inquirer remains who says, "I am an inquirer," knowledge of Reality does not arise. As soon as that identity disappears, knowledge of Reality is immediate. No guru is needed at that point, because in truth knowledge of Reality does not come into being; it already is. Whatever arises will perish, and whatever is born must be destroyed. Knowledge is eternal, not something produced and destroyed. We simply call the disappearance of ignorance the arising of knowledge. The sun rises but is not born; likewise, knowledge dawns - it becomes manifest. The Supreme Self, whose nature is knowledge, dwells in everyone's heart:

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसः परमुच्यते। ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदसि र्वस्य
वर्षितम्॥

jyotiṣām api taj jyotis tamasah param ucyate |

jñānaṁ jñeyam jñāna-gamyam hr̥di sarvasya viṣṭhitam ||

“That is the Light even of all lights and is said to be beyond darkness. It is knowledge, the object of knowledge, and That which is reached through knowledge; It is established in the heart of all.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 13.17)

The author’s printed gloss reads: “The Supreme Self is the Light of every light and is said to be utterly beyond ignorance. It is knowledge itself, That which is to be known, That which is attained through the whole body of spiritual means called knowledge, and It dwells in everyone’s heart.”

It remains unmanifest only because of our ignorance: “Though the changeless Lord is present in the heart, all beings in the world remain wretched and afflicted” - *asa prabhu hr̥dayam achata abikārī, sakala jīva jaga dīna dukhārī* (Rāmacaritamānasa, Bālakāṇḍa 23.4). The moment ignorance disappears, knowledge of Reality is present exactly as it always was.

While living as a householder, one can very easily worship Bhagavān through one’s actions. Practising amid community is superior to practising in solitude. One who can practise amid community can also practise in solitude; one who practises only in solitude cannot necessarily practise amid community - that weakness remains. The author says bluntly that one who abandons the household merely to become a renunciant is cowardly: the coward flees, the warrior does not. The warrior’s practice advances swiftly. This is why excellent saints have arisen among householders.

त्यागी सोभा जगत में, करता है सब कोय। हरयि गृहस्थी सन्तका, भेदी वरिला होय॥

tyāgī sobhā jagata meṁ, karatā hai saba koya |

hariyā gr̥hasthī santa kā, bhedī viralā hoyā ||

“Everyone in the world celebrates the renunciant’s glory; rare is the discerning one who recognizes the householder saint.”

Everyone knows and praises a renunciant saint’s greatness, but few recognize the greatness of the hidden saint who lives as a householder. While remaining in the household, therefore, serve others and bring them happiness and ease. Cherish the welfare of all: may everyone be happy, may all be free of illness, may all attain the highest good, and may no one suffer even slightly:

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु नरिमयाः। सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद्
दुःखभाग्भवेत्॥

sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ sarve santu nirāmayāḥ |

sarve bhadraṇi paśyantu mā kaścid duḥkha-bhāg bhavet ||

“May all be happy; may all be free of illness. May all behold what is auspicious; may no one partake of suffering.”

For one whose nature is to work for the welfare of others, nothing - knowledge, dispassion, bhakti, or love - remains difficult to attain:

परहति बस जनिह के मन माहीं। तनिह कहूँ जग दुर्लभ कछु नाहीं॥

parahita basa jinha ke mana māhīm |

tinha kahūṁ jaga durlabha kachu nāhīm ||

“For those whose minds are wholly devoted to the welfare of others, nothing in the world is difficult to attain.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Aranyakāṇḍa 31.5, as printed)

In service, inner intention matters, not the object. Because the spirit of service can be limitless, it brings the highest good; because the object is limited, it cannot. A gentleman used to say to Bhagavān, “Maharaj! You already sustain everyone. Please make me a small instrument too, so I may render a little service. Then I will attain the highest good for free!” In truth, no one can pay the price of the highest good; no one possesses its price. To give oneself - that alone is its price.

Every human being is eligible to worship Bhagavān through action. Animals and birds cannot consciously render service. We may receive service from them - fruit, flowers, leaves, and wood from trees, milk from animals - but they cannot intentionally give these to us. Only a human being can give. Human beings are so extraordinary that they can give to themselves, to the world, and to Bhagavān: they can attain their own highest good, serve the world, and please Bhagavān. One who serves does not need the world; the world needs that person. Bhagavān too hungers for inner feeling and therefore longs for love. We have received this excellent human body. It is no ordinary thing but a tremendous gift from Bhagavān. The Lord, who loves without cause, mercifully gives a human body:

कबहुँक करकिरुना नर देही। देत ईस बनि हेतु सनेही॥

kabahuṅka kari karunā nara dehī |

deta īsa binu hetu sanehī ||

“Sometimes, in compassion, the Lord who loves without cause grants a human body.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarakāṇḍa 44.3, as printed)

Having received such a human body, begin now to give and give. Taking is animality; giving is humanity. As soon as a person begins to give, one becomes a seeker. When nothing but giving remains, one becomes fulfilled and becomes like Bhagavān:

हेतु रहति जग जुग उपकारी। तुम्ह तुम्हार सेवक असुरारी॥

hetu rahita jaga juga upakārī |

tumha tumhāra sevaka asurārī ||

“Without cause, in every age, You benefit the world; and so do Your servants, O foe of the demons.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarakāṇḍa 47.3, as printed)

Divine sage Nārada says:

तस्मस्तिज्जने भेदाभावात्। *tasmīns taj-jane bhedābhāvāt* | “Because there is no difference between Him and His devotee.”

(Nārada Bhakti Sūtra 41)

यतस्तदीयाः। *yatas tadīyāḥ* | “Because devotees belong to Him.”

(Nārada Bhakti Sūtra 72)



The Divine Distinctiveness of Bhakti

A discipline in which one's own effort is primary is of the world; one in which refuge in Bhagavān is primary is beyond the world. Karma-yoga and Jñāna-yoga are worldly disciplines because personal effort is primary in them. Bhagavān therefore says, "Let one lift oneself by oneself" - *uddhared ātmanātmānam* (Bhagavad Gītā 6.5). Bhakti-yoga, by contrast, is beyond the world because relationship with Bhagavān is primary. Bhagavān therefore says, "I am their deliverer" - *teṣāṃ ahaṁ samuddhartā* (Bhagavad Gītā 12.7). Relationship with Bhagavān makes everything divine and beyond the world; without it, everything remains merely worldly.

In a worldly discipline, world and individual being are primary because both appear directly before us as "this world is" and "I am." In the discipline beyond the world, Bhagavān is primary because He is not directly perceptible to us. Both kinds of discipline require discerning reflection and reverent trust; yet discerning reflection predominates in the worldly discipline, while reverent trust predominates in the divine. The world and oneself require inquiry; Bhagavān requires trust.

Inquiry is needed where we know something but do not know everything - where our knowledge is incomplete. We know of the world and ourselves that "the world is" and "I am," yet we do not fully and truly know what the world is, what I am, or what their essential nature is. World and individual being are therefore subjects of inquiry.

Trust is needed regarding that of which we know nothing and which is wholly unknown to us. We know nothing of Bhagavān as an object; Bhagavān is therefore the subject of trust. We can trust that

“Bhagavān is,” but cannot investigate “what He is like” through reasoning and argument. A human being is free to accept or reject Bhagavān.

We do not place trust in what we directly see or know, because it is already before us. Trust concerns what we have not seen or known directly, but have heard and accepted. We did not witness or independently know our parents at our birth; we heard and accepted who they are. We regard them as ours only upon trust. In the same way, we accept Bhagavān after hearing of Him from scripture or saints. They say that Bhagavān is ours, is within us, is present now, is all-knowing, the friend of all, all-powerful, and without a second. Our work is to trust this, and we are free to trust or not.

We can attain Bhagavān, but cannot encompass Him in description, thought, or meditation. We can attain Him because we are His parts. No word, epithet, argument, or analogy in any worldly language can express Bhagavān’s full glory. Bhagavān is utterly beyond the world. We can accept Him on the testimony of scriptures and saints, but cannot know Him as an object. He can be known only through trust and His grace; no other means exists.

In truth, no one can live without trusting something. If a person does not trust Bhagavān, that person will trust either oneself or the world. If, while trusting oneself, one takes the body as one’s true nature, every fault arises: “All faults become manifest in one who identifies with the body.” Trust in body and world is profoundly destructive. The living being is bound in birth and death solely because it trusts body and world; there is no other cause. Applying analytical thought to Bhagavān is likewise profoundly harmful, because one makes Bhagavān an object of intellect and learns mere

words without attaining anything. Learned knowledge then produces pride and turns one away from Bhagavān, causing one's fall.

Authorial footnote 1:

सोइ जानइ जेहि देहु जनाई। जानत तुम्हहि तुम्हहि होइ जाई॥ तुम्हरहि कृपाँ तुम्हहि
रघुनंदन। जानहि भगत भगत उर चंदन॥

soi jānai jehi dehu janāi | jānata tumhahi tumhahi hoi jāi ||

*tumharihi kṛpām tumhahi raghunandana | jānahin bhagata
bhagata ura candana ||*

“Only the one to whom You make Yourself known knows You; knowing You, one becomes one with You. Only by Your grace do devotees know You, O Raghunandana, sandalwood adorning devotees' hearts.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa 127.2, as printed)

Authorial footnote 2: If a person identifies oneself with the body and trusts it, the result is the same as trusting the world, because body and world are one. If one understands oneself as pure existence and trusts that, the result is the same as trusting the Supreme Self, because one's own existence and the Supreme Self's existence are one.

Trusting the world gives rise to every fault. Trust in objects gives rise to greed; trust in a person - a body - gives rise to deluded attachment. Trust in circumstances produces pride - “I am very wealthy; I hold a high position” - or abjectness - “I possess nothing; I am terribly unfortunate.” Trust in a state of life produces limitation - “I am a child; I am young.” No one wishes to become faulty, yet by trusting the perishable, one necessarily becomes faulty

despite oneself. Trust in the perishable is the single fault from which limitless faults arise.

A person experiences the change and disappearance of place, time, object, person, action, event, circumstance, and condition. To trust them nonetheless is blind faith. Trust itself is blind: it has no eyes, and where sight exists, trust is unnecessary. Why “trust” what is directly seen? Blind faith means refusing to take a thing as it appears and believing it to be otherwise. The world is visibly changing and perishing, yet trusting it is blind faith. Faith opposed to discernment is blind faith. Its result is to mistake unrighteousness for righteousness and the inverted for the upright; to take dependence for freedom, pettiness for greatness, and downfall for ascent. As a part of Bhagavān, the person is inherently great; through trust in the world one becomes subordinate and small, yet regards this as greatness. All the sorrow, anguish, ruin, birth, and death occurring in the world arise from trust in the world.

Authorial footnote:

अधर्मं धर्ममतिरिया मन्यते तमसावृता। सर्वार्थान्वपिरीतांश्च बुद्धिः सा पार्थ तामसी॥

adharmam dharmam iti yā manyate tamasāvṛtā |

sarvārthān viparītāṁś ca buddhiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī ||

“The intellect veiled in darkness that regards unrighteousness as righteousness and understands all things inversely is tāmasic, O Pārtha.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 18.32)

A person thinks, “If I acquire wealth, I will become important.” One with little wealth is called a “small party,” one with much wealth a “big party.” Then wealth alone has become big; the person has been humiliated. If someone regards oneself as great because of wealth, wealth is great and the person small. If because of office, the office is great and the person small. If because of disciples, the disciples are great and the person small. If one thinks, “Many people honor me, so I am great,” the people who grant honor are great and oneself small. If one is great because one is a brāhmaṇa, the caste is great and oneself small; if because one is a renunciant, the āśrama is great; if because one is a minister, the ministry is great. Whatever - strength, learning, honor, respect, praise - makes a person regard oneself as great becomes great, while the person becomes small. Yet even after becoming small, one imagines oneself great. Through relationship with the perishable one loses awareness: how could another object make me great? Though oneself imperishable and unchanging, one locates one’s progress and greatness in the perishable and changing. How astonishing. To regard oneself as great through worldly things is in truth humiliation, downfall, dependence, disgrace, and pettiness.

A person becomes dependent upon whatever one desires. The one who desires becomes small and the desired object great. Desire for Bhagavān, however, makes one great - one’s true greatness becomes manifest. Bhagavān is great and therefore makes others great; the world is petty and therefore makes others petty.

Prakṛti and its products, body and world, are “other.” One who uses the other to regard oneself as great becomes dependent upon the other. Bhagavān, however, is *svakīya* - one’s own. To be under the care of one who is one’s own is not dependence. When one’s mother is truly one’s own, for example, living under her care is a virtue, not

a fault; people praise a person as devoted to mother or father, rather than condemning the person as the mother's slave. From the body's standpoint, parents are senior to us. From the standpoint of essential nature, Bhagavān is our own. Reliance upon Bhagavān is therefore not dependence but the root and special means of freedom. Yet one who regards the world or even Bhagavān as one's own merely from desire to receive pleasure becomes dependent. One who desires pleasure can never be free, because pleasure cannot be consumed without becoming subject to the "other" - the body.

Taking the other as one's own is the root of dependence. As long as we regard the body as ours, dependence can never disappear. It will not disappear even when one body is lost: the body - the "other" - will continue changing, while dependence remains. The body will not stay and dependence will not cease. Nor is it correct to say that bodily aid is necessary for liberation. How could what is dependent be the means to freedom? How could freedom be attained through dependence? The body does not aid attainment of liberation, knowledge of Reality, or love; severing relationship with the body does. Relinquishment means relinquishing egoity and possessiveness regarding the body. Bondage arises from egoity and possessiveness, not from the body itself. Liberation is impossible while granting the body reality and importance and calling it one's own. Give the body food, water, and clothing as needed, but do not form a relationship with it and become a receiver of these things. The giver is master; the receiver is slave. One who serves the body is not dependent; one who wants something from it is. Service elevates, while desire to receive causes one's fall.

The world makes others dependent; Bhagavān never makes anyone dependent upon Him, but makes each one His equal and His friend.

Sugrīva lived for enjoyment, Vibhīṣaṇa was a seeker, and Niṣādarāja was accomplished, yet Bhagavān made all three His friends. He made none His disciple or subordinate. Bhagavān regards the living being as His friend. The Upaniṣads say:

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिस्रवजाते।

dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā samānam vṛkṣam pariśasvajāte |

“Two beautiful-winged birds, united companions, embrace the same tree.”

(Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.1.1; Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 4.6, as printed)

No one else can make another equal in the way Bhagavān does. Others make someone equal by giving possessions; Bhagavān gives Himself and thereby makes the other His equal. A king who wished to make someone equal might give half his kingdom; he would not give the entire kingdom and become the recipient’s servant. Bhagavān, however, gives Himself and becomes the devotee’s servant:

“I am the servant of devotees; devotees are the crown-jewel upon my head.”

अहं भक्तपराधीनो ह्यस्वतन्त्र इव द्वजि। *aham bhakta-parādhīno hy asvatantra iva dvija |* “O twice-born one, I am wholly subject to My devotees, as though not independent.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 9.4.63, excerpt)

Just as love makes a mother subject to her child, love makes Bhagavān subject to His devotee. Bhagavān’s nature is: “As people take refuge in Me, so do I respond to them” - *ye yathā mām prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham* (Bhagavad Gītā 4.11).

Whoever becomes subject to Bhagavān finds Bhagavān subject to them; He makes that person greatest of all.

“Coal will not become white though a hundred maunds of soap be applied.” Even that much soap cannot cleanse coal, but place it in fire and it begins to glow, because it became black only upon separation from fire. Draw a line with glowing coal and the mark is black again, because that trace has separated from fire. Likewise, the living being became dark and petty only by separation from Bhagavān. Restore relationship with Bhagavān and it begins to shine. Apart from Bhagavān, the living being may regard itself as immeasurably great or become lord of the three worlds or countless universes, yet remains the smallest of the small, slave to the three worlds. Become Bhagavān’s servant and it becomes greatest of the great - from human to Divine. Association with the perishable humiliates the imperishable living being; dignity comes only through union with the Imperishable.

Only Bhagavān and His devotees make others great:

हेतु रहति जग जुग उपकारी। तुम्ह तुम्हार सेवक असुरारी॥ स्वार्थ मीत सकल जग माहीं।
सपनेहुँ प्रभु परमारथ नाहीं॥

hetu rahita jaga juga upakārī | tumha tumhāra sevaka asurārī ||
svāratha mīta sakala jaga māhīm | sapanehuṁ prabhu
paramāratha nāhīm ||

“Without cause, in every age, You benefit the world, and so do Your servants, O foe of demons. Everywhere in the world friendship is self-interested; in You, Lord, there is not even a dream of self-interest.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarakāṇḍa 47.3, as printed)

Both are great in themselves and therefore make others great, never small. Only the small make another small; only the dependent make another dependent. The world cannot make anyone great. Refuge in the world makes one small; refuge and relationship with Bhagavān makes one great: “Serving the Great makes one great, as Vāmana’s arm became vast; Tulsidas says that by the Great One’s majesty, that staff spanned the cosmos.”

True saints do not, from their side, seek to make anyone their disciple. The philosopher’s stone turns iron into gold but not into another philosopher’s stone; a saint makes another like oneself: “Know the great difference between the philosopher’s stone and the saint: one turns iron into gold; the other makes another equal to oneself.”

Becoming the disciple of such a true saint is not slavery but devotion to the guru. Such a devoted disciple becomes a teacher of the world. But if a saint thinks, “I have so many disciples, therefore I am great,” or desires to make others personal disciples, that person is in truth a servant of disciples, not a guru. A true guru is not dependent upon disciples, does not regard oneself as great because of them, and does not subordinate them. This nature too comes from Bhagavān.

A person becomes great only through trust in Bhagavān. Trust placed anywhere apart from Bhagavān brings humiliation upon humiliation. The world is not worthy of trust; it should either be served or relinquished through discernment.

A Karma-yogī accepts the world as real and selflessly employs the world’s own objects in service of the world. A Jñāna-yogī accepts only the Self as real and, through discernment, severs relationship

with the body and realizes nonattachment. Both attain liberation. Even those who practise Karma-yoga or Jñāna-yoga without accepting God attain liberation and freedom from dependence. Bhakti - love - however, is attained only by accepting God as real. In liberation, relationship with the world breaks; in bhakti, relationship with Bhagavān is joined.

Karma-yoga and Jñāna-yoga have the same result (Bhagavad Gītā 5.4-5): freedom from birth and death, all suffering, and dependence. Liberation brings cessation of the world but no positive attainment. Bhakti-yoga brings both cessation of the world and attainment of the Supreme Self and divine love. In liberation the living being experiences spiritual relish; in love it becomes a giver of that relish and gives joy even to Bhagavān. Bhagavān, whose nature is knowledge, does not hunger for knowledge; He thirsts for love: “The One does not delight alone” - *ekākī na ramate* (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.3, as printed). When love is attained, the loving devotee brings satisfaction even to Bhagavān. Yet this power too comes from Bhagavān, not independently from the devotee. If someone worships the Ganges with Ganges water, the distinction belongs to the Ganges, not the worshiper. Likewise, the devotee satisfies Bhagavān’s thirst only with love given by Bhagavān.

Bhagavān has given human beings three powers: the power to act, the power to know, and the power to trust. He has not given the power to acquire, so no worldly object is ever truly acquired or can be. The world does not remain for a moment but changes continually; how could it be acquired? If it were truly acquired, it would never separate and we would be satisfied forever. No one is ever satisfied by the world; thirst only increases: “As gain increases, greed increases” - *jimi pratilābha lobha adhikāi*

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Aranyakāṇḍa 36.5, as printed). A person mistakenly calls exhaustion from enjoyment satisfaction. When one loses the capacity to eat any more, that fatigue or incapacity is called satisfaction, yet hunger returns because it was not true fulfillment. Only the Supreme Self is truly attained - once and forever. In truth, the Supreme Self is eternally attained by all; only the illusion of nonattainment disappears.

By using the powers of action and knowing rightly, one can sever relationship with body and world and awaken to one's true nature. By rightly using the power of trust, one also attains divine love along with this severance and awakening. Though worldly disciplines - Karma-yoga and Jñāna-yoga - concern what the human practitioner does, trust in Bhagavān causes Bhagavān to do both the seeker's work, liberation, and His own work, granting vision and love (Bhagavad Gītā 10.10-11).

Authorial footnote:

मम दरसन फल परम अनूपा। जीव पाव नजि सहज सरूपा॥ *mama darasana phala parama anūpā | jīva pāva nija sahaja sarūpā* ||

“The incomparable supreme fruit of seeing Me is that the living being attains its own natural true form.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Aranyakāṇḍa 36.5, as printed)

The author adds that “the living being attains its natural true form” is the fruit of Karma-yoga and Jñāna-yoga.

Consider a person locked inside a house in a walled city. Leaving the house lies within the person's power; leaving the city wall does not, but lies in the king's power. The king can open the gate of the wall and the door of the person's house, or break them if they will not

open. Bhagavān likewise does all the devotee's work - both what the devotee ought to do and what belongs to Bhagavān. Discerning reflection fulfills only the worldly discipline; trust fulfills both worldly and divine disciplines. The power of trust is therefore greater and more extraordinary than the powers of action and discernment.

Neither body, mind, intellect, nor vital energy is ours; nor are the contemplation, meditation, and samādhi performed through them. By refusing to regard the "other" - gross, subtle, and causal body - as one's own, a person becomes free and dependence disappears completely. In freedom one becomes eligible for divine love, because the dependent do not love but cling in deluded attachment. Love is not attained through the other but through relinquishing the other and through the One who is truly one's own. Yet by Bhagavān's grace, love may be attained even before liberation. When the devotee trusts that Bhagavān alone is one's own, love for Him arises. Love is not attained by strength, austerity, ability, or the like, but by regarding Bhagavān as one's own. Anything obtained through strength or austerity would be worth less than those means; if a goal were produced by a means, it would be smaller than the means. No method of attaining love exists apart from regarding Bhagavān as one's own. Bhagavān looks at the devotee's intimate belonging, not whether the devotee is bound or liberated.

When a child cries for its mother, she does not inspect the child's ability, strength, or learning; she sees the child's belonging and takes it into her lap. When a devotee, dissatisfied with the present condition and anguished by dependence, cries to Bhagavān, He bestows His love. Not regarding body and world as one's own fulfills the worldly discipline; regarding Bhagavān as one's own fulfills the divine discipline.

Authorial footnote:

रहतनि प्रभु चति चूक कएि की। करत सुरतसिय बार हएि की॥ *rahati na prabhu cita cūka kie kī | karata surati saya bāra hie kī ||*

“The Lord does not keep a fault in His mind, but remembers a heart’s goodness a hundred times.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Bālakāṇḍa 29.3, as printed)

Seekers who desire liberation and regard liberation alone as supreme cannot attain love - bhakti - or even understand its teaching. Just as a selfish person’s vision does not turn toward another’s welfare, one devoted only to worldly disciplines cannot turn toward divine love and lacks the capacity to understand its Reality. Only one with the inner impressions of bhakti, firm trust in Bhagavān, refuge in His grace, and no contempt for bhakti, devotee, or Bhagavān can understand love. If such a seeker becomes liberated, liberation does not satisfy. Bhagavān then graciously makes the unbroken relish of liberation seem pale and bestows the infinite relish of love. If from the beginning the seeker firmly trusts Bhagavān and claims intimate belonging with Him, Bhagavān graciously bestows both liberation and bhakti - divine love.

The Principle of Divine Līlā

Action, spontaneous activity, and divine līlā may look alike, yet are utterly distinct. What is performed with the pride of doership and yields favorable or unfavorable fruit is *karma*, action. What is not performed with the pride of doership and does not yield fruit is spontaneous activity, such as breathing or the opening and closing of the eyes. Activity that is free from both doership and desire for fruit and is at once divine and beneficial to the whole world is *līlā*. Worldly people perform karma, liberated persons engage in spontaneous activity, and Bhagavān manifests līlā:

लोकवत्तु लीलाकैवल्यम्। *lokavat tu līlā-kaivalyam* |

“But as in the world, it is sheer play.”

(Brahma Sūtra 2.1.33)

The author’s printed gloss reads: “Bhagavān’s acts, such as creating the universe, are nothing but līlā, like the conduct of realized great souls in the world.”

Every act of Bhagavān, from smallest to greatest, is līlā. Though in līlā He acts like an ordinary human being, He remains untouched. His līlā is divine: “My birth and action are divine” - *janma karma ca me divyam* (Bhagavad Gītā 4.9). This divinity is distinct even from the gods’ divinity. The gods’ divinity is relative to human beings and therefore limited; Bhagavān’s divinity is absolute and limitless. The actions of liberated, realized, God-loving great souls are divine too, yet even they are not equal to divine līlā. Bhagavān’s apparently ordinary worldly līlā is supremely beyond the world. His Rāsa-līlā appears worldly, for example, yet reading and hearing it destroys a seeker’s lustful tendency.

Authorial footnote 1: “Though I am the maker of that - the creation and so on - know Me, the imperishable Supreme Lord, as the nondoer” - *tasya kartāram api mām viddhy akartāram avyayam* (Bhagavad Gītā 4.13).

Authorial footnote 2: “Actions do not taint Me, for I have no longing for their fruit” - *na mām karmāṇi limpanti na me karma-phale sprhā* (Bhagavad Gītā 4.14).

Authorial footnote 3:

वकि्रीडति व्रजवधूभरिदिं च वषिणोः श्रद्धान्वतिऽनुशृणुयादथ वर्णयेद् यः। भक्ती
परां भगवत्प्रतलिभ्य कामं हृद्रोगमाश्वपहनीत्यचरिण धीरः॥

*vikrīḍitam vraja-vadhūbhir idam ca viṣṇoḥ śraddhānvito
'nuśṛṇuyād atha varṇayed yaḥ |*

*bhaktim parām bhagavati pratilabhya kāmam hṛd-rogam āśv
apahinoty acireṇa dhīraḥ ||*

“A steady person who faithfully and repeatedly hears and recounts Viṣṇu’s play with the women of Vraja attains supreme bhakti for Bhagavān and swiftly casts off lust, the heart’s disease.”

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.33.40)

The author’s printed gloss addresses Parīkṣit and explains that this conscious Rāsa-play brings supreme devotion at Bhagavān’s feet and destroys lust forever.

This universe is Bhagavān’s primordial avatāra: “The Puruṣa is the first avatāra of the Supreme” - *ādyo 'vatāraḥ puruṣaḥ parasya* (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 2.6.41). Bhagavān Himself has appeared as the universe. Because of attachment to enjoyment, however, the living being refuses to accept the world as Bhagavān’s form and

instead sustains it as a perishable world: “O mighty-armed one, by this living nature the world is sustained” - *jīva-bhūtāṁ mahā-bāho yayedam dhāryate jagat* (Bhagavad Gītā 7.5). To erase this conception, the seeker should accept that whatever is seen is Bhagavān’s form and whatever happens is His līlā. Then the universe will no longer remain merely “world,” and one will realize that nothing exists apart from Bhagavān. The world will vanish as world, and Bhagavān alone will remain. When every object and person is regarded as Bhagavān’s form and every activity as His līlā, attachment to enjoyment, attraction, and aversion cannot remain. With pleasure-attachment destroyed, the activities that once appeared worldly will appear as divine līlā, and divine love will arise where attachment once stood.

A seeker should accept that whatever form Bhagavān assumes, His līlā corresponds to that form. When He assumes the *arcāvatāra*, the consecrated image, He performs the līlā of remaining unmoving like an image. If He did not remain unmoving, how would it remain the form of arcā? Bhagavān assumed the forms of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, and also of Fish, Tortoise, Boar, and others. His līlā corresponded to each form: as Varāha He played as a boar, and as Vāmana as a celibate brāhmaṇa.

Authorial footnote: Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells the sage Uttānka:

धर्मसंरक्षणार्थाय धर्मसंस्थापनाय च। तैस्तैर्वेषैश्च रूपैश्च त्रिषु लोकेषु भार्गव॥

dharma-saṁrakṣaṇārthāya dharma-saṁsthāpanāya ca |

tais tair veṣaiś ca rūpaiś ca triṣu lokeṣu bhārgava ||

“For protecting and establishing dharma, O Bhārgava, I assume those various forms and guises throughout the three worlds.”

(Mahābhārata, Āśvamedhika Parva 54.13-14, as printed)

यदा त्वहं देवयोनौ वर्तामि भृगुनन्दन। तदाहं देववत् सर्वमाचरामि संशयः॥ यदा
गन्धर्वयोनौ वा वर्तामि भृगुनन्दन। तदा गन्धर्ववत् सर्वमाचरामि संशयः॥
नागयोनौ यदा चैव तदा वर्तामि नागवत्। यक्षराक्षसयोऽन्योऽस्तु यथावद्
वचिराम्यहम्॥

yadā tv ahaṁ deva-yonau vartāmi bhṛgu-nandana |
tadāhaṁ devavat sarvam ācarāmi na saṁśayaḥ ||
yadā gandharva-yonau vā vartāmi bhṛgu-nandana |
tadā gandharvat sarvam ācarāmi na saṁśayaḥ ||
nāga-yonau yadā caiva tadā vartāmi nāgavat |
yakṣa-rākṣasa-yonyos tu yathāvad vicarāmy aham ||

“When I appear among gods, O descendant of Bhṛgu, I conduct Myself entirely as a god; of this there is no doubt. When I appear among gandharvas, My conduct is entirely that of a gandharva. When born among nāgas, I act as a nāga; appearing among yakṣas and rākṣasas, I conduct Myself according to their ways.”

(Mahābhārata, Āśvamedhika Parva 54.17-19, as printed)

Reading and hearing divine līlā purifies the inner instrument, erases attachment to the world, and awakens love for Bhagavān. Śiva, Brahmā, the sages Sanaka and his brothers, divine sage Nārada, and other embodiments of knowledge become absorbed in love by singing and hearing Bhagavān’s līlās. Places where Bhagavān descends and performs līlā become so sacred that dwelling there with reverence and love brings a person the highest good. This is because Bhagavān descends and enacts līlā solely for the highest good of living beings: “O king, Bhagavān manifests for

humanity’s supreme welfare” - *nṛṇāṃ niḥśreyasārthāya vyaktir
bhagavato nṛpa* (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.29.14).

Accidental and Untimely Death

There is “accidental death,” and there is what the author calls “untimely death.” Because people do not know the distinction, they call accidental death untimely even when it is not. The author therefore considers it necessary to distinguish them.

If someone does not wish to die but dies suddenly - in an accident, by falling from a building, snakebite, drowning, lightning, earthquake, or another such event - this is “accidental death.”

If a person deliberately dies by suicide - through hanging, poison, a train, jumping from a roof or into a river, or another method - the author calls this “untimely death.”

Within the author’s theology, accidental death occurs only when the lifespan allotted by past karma is complete; suicide may occur while life remains. He presents suicide not as allotted karma but as a new and grave wrong, carrying the moral burden of taking a human life and severe consequence hereafter. Bhagavān has mercifully given the human body for attainment of Him and one’s deliverance; the author therefore calls destroying this rare body by suicide a very grave sin.

Authorial footnote:

बड़े भाग मानुष तनु पावा। सुर दुर्लभ सब ग्रंथन्हि गावा॥ साधन धाम मोच्छ कर
द्वारा। पाइ न जेहि पिरलोक सँवारा॥

*baṛe bhāga mānuṣa tanu pāvā | sura durlabha saba granthahi
gāvā ||*

*sādhana dhāma moccha kara dvārā | pāi na jehiṁ paraloka
saṁvārā ||*

“By great fortune the human body is attained, difficult even for gods to obtain, as all scriptures proclaim. It is the abode of spiritual practice and gateway to liberation; one who receives it yet does not prepare for the life beyond has squandered it.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarakāṇḍa 43.4, as printed)

The author says that a person sometimes survives a suicide attempt because that life remains connected with another being's allotted karma. For example, if the person is to have a child in the future, the future child's karma may prevent death; likewise if some special work or intense experience of pleasure or suffering is still to come. Yet, in the author's moral account, the intention alone still incurs the wrong of attempting to take a human life, with grave suffering as its result. He compares it to firing at a judge and missing: punishment follows because the intent was to kill.

The author describes terrible suffering and regret at the point of death, when the person wishes to escape what has been done but can no longer do so. He therefore urges that however severe calamity, sorrow, or humiliation may be, one should never wish for suicide. A painful circumstance arising from earlier action cannot be escaped through self-harm; that would only add a new harmful act. Enduring the painful circumstance, he says, exhausts past wrongdoing and purifies.

Authorial footnote:

आकर चारलिच्छ चौरासी। जोनभ्रमत यह जीव अबनिासी॥ फरित सदा माया कर
पूरे। काल कर्म सुभाव गुन घेरा॥ कबहुँक करकिरुना नर देही। देत ईस बनि हेतु सनेही॥

ākara cārī laccha caurāsī | joni bhramata yaha jīva abināśī ||

phirata sadā māyā kara prerā | kāla karma subhāva guna gherā

||

kabahuṁka kari karunā nara dehī | deta īsa binu hetu sanehī ||

“This imperishable living being wanders through 8.4 million forms of birth, driven by māyā and encircled by time, action, nature, and the guṇas. Sometimes, in compassion, the Lord who loves without cause grants a human body.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarakāṇḍa 44.2-3, as printed)

No circumstance remains forever. Neither happiness nor suffering lasts always. Sunrise followed by sunset, and sunset by sunrise, is nature’s law. One should therefore not panic when painful circumstances come:

सुखं च दुःखं च भवाभवौ च लाभालाभौ मरणं जीवति च। पर्यायतः सर्वमवाप्नुवन्ति
तस्माद् धीरो नैव हृष्येन् शोचेत्॥

*sukhaṁ ca duḥkhaṁ ca bhavābhavau ca lābhālābhau maraṇaṁ
jīvitam ca |*

*paryāyataḥ sarvam avāpnvanti tasmād dhīro naiva hṛṣyen na
śocet ||*

“Happiness and suffering, arising and passing, gain and loss, death and life come to everyone by turns. The steadfast should therefore neither exult nor grieve.”

(Mahābhārata, Śānti Parva 25.31, as printed)

यद्भाव्यं तद्भवत्येव यद्भाव्यं न तद्भवेत्। इति निश्चितिबुद्धीनां न चिन्ता बाधते
क्वचित्॥

yad bhāvyaṁ tad bhavaty eva yad abhāvyaṁ na tad bhavet |

iti niścita-buddhīnāṁ na cintā bādgate kvacit ||

“What is to occur certainly occurs; what is not to occur does not. Those firmly convinced of this are never troubled by anxiety.”

(Nārada Purāṇa, Pūrvabhāga 37.47, as printed)

Authorial footnote:

अवश्यमेव भोक्तव्यं कृतं कर्म शुभाशुभम्। नाभुक्तं क्षीयते कर्म
जन्मकोटिशितैरपि॥

avaśyam eva bhoktavyaṁ kṛtaṁ karma śubhāśubham |

nābhuktaṁ kṣīyate karma janma-koṭi-śatair api ||

“The fruit of one’s good or harmful action must be experienced. Unexperienced action is not exhausted even through hundreds of millions of births.”

When receiving Bhagavān’s *caraṇāmṛta*, water sanctified at His feet, this verse is recited:

अकालमृत्युहरणं सर्वव्याधविनाशनम्। विष्णोः पादोदकं पीत्वा पुनर्जन्म न वदियते॥

akāla-mṛtyu-haraṇaṁ sarva-vyādhi-vināśanam |

viṣṇoḥ pādodakam pītvā punar janma na vidyate ||

“Drinking the water from Viṣṇu’s feet removes untimely death and destroys all illness; there is no further birth.”

The author’s printed gloss interprets “untimely death” here as destructive thinking, and urges regular reception of *caraṇāmṛta* so such self-destructive thought does not arise. He identifies Ganges water with the water of Viṣṇu’s feet and recommends keeping it at home and receiving it morning and evening.

If one person kills another, the author classifies the victim's death as accidental but the killer's act as a new wrong bearing severe consequence. Within his account, allotted karma does not specify death at a particular person's hands. A person whose lifespan is complete may die by many causes; one who kills needlessly becomes the instrument and incurs the wrong. He compares it to a court ordering execution at ten o'clock: if an enemy seizes the condemned person from the appointed executioners and kills him at that hour, the killer cannot claim to have done the state's work. The order was given to the executioners, not to him, and he too will be punished.

The author states that a person may give part of one's lifespan to another, but only one who has realized the Supreme Reality possesses this authority. Just as only a legal adult may dispose of personal property, the authority to give one's lifespan arises only with knowledge of Reality. Until realization, attainment of the Supreme Self, and liberation while living, a person remains spiritually a minor and cannot give life to another. Bhagavān gave life for one's highest good; it should therefore be used for one's own and others' welfare, not destroyed.

He recounts a traditional story of a saint in Rajasthan whose mother was also realized. When his end approached, she gave him half her remaining life and he revived; later mother and son died together. Thus, he says, only one established in the Supreme Reality can give life, and only when giver, receiver, and Bhagavān all will it. One person's will alone is insufficient.

Sage Dadhici gave up his life for the gods' welfare and, in the author's account, incurred no wrong because he was spiritually empowered. The *Rāmāyaṇa* says:

समरथ कहूँ नहदोषु गोसाईं। रबपिावक सुरसरकी नाई॥

samaratha kahum̐ nahim̐ doṣu gosāim̐ |

rabi pāvaka surasari kī nāim̐ ||

“No fault adheres to the truly powerful, Lord, as with the sun, fire, and the heavenly Ganges.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Bālakāṇḍa 69.4, as printed)

The sun draws up impure things from the earth and makes them pure through its rays; therefore it is powerful. Fire burns and purifies sandalwood and corpse alike; therefore it is powerful. If polluted drain water enters the Ganges, the river purifies it; therefore the Ganges is powerful. “Truly powerful” means that which empowers the powerless, purifies the impure, sanctifies the unholy, and itself remains pure and holy exactly as it is. One who weakens another is demonic. A wealthy person is not thereby powerful but may be enslaved by wealth and deserving of compassion. One with great physical strength or high office may likewise be enslaved by strength, position, and authority. The apparent power belongs not to the person but to the wealth, office, authority, strength, or state temporarily received, all of which will separate. To regard oneself as powerful through acquired things is dishonest.

The author next presents a traditional theological claim about *satī*. He says that a woman who becomes *satī* does not incur the wrong of suicide because, in his account, she does not deliberately burn herself or destroy her lifespan, but relinquishes it. He distinguishes this from ordinary intentional self-harm and says that when *sat*, spiritual truth or power, arises within her, she may burn without external fire and without pain.

He then reports as factual a contemporary story from Iknaura village in Hardoi district. A young woman staying with her maternal uncle learned that her husband had died and asked to be taken to him. When her uncle said the body would already have been cremated and refused her declaration that she would become *satī*, she placed a finger upon a lamp and it allegedly burned like a candle. She warned that the house would burn if she were prevented, extinguished the burning finger against a wall, and went outside beneath a peepal tree. When no one provided wood, she prayed to the sun for fire; the author reports that her body ignited and burned there. Villagers said they witnessed it. He adds that Karpatri Maharaj saw black marks upon the wall and scorched peepal leaves, and that an investigator from Gita Press's *Kalyāṇa* department, including Muslim witnesses in the village, affirmed the account.

The author gives a second traditional account concerning a noblewoman of Dudhor village in Rajasthan. When her husband died, he says, *sat* arose within her. Because the region was under British rule, people feared the authorities and refused to allow *satī*. After bathing and adorning herself, she reportedly broke down a barred door despite two men bracing it, walked toward the cremation ground while bowing at every temple, and approached her husband's burning body. The men present threw a large cloth over her, caught her, and carried her home. She remained for ten days in the household shrine and later heard a seven-day Bhāgavata discourse from the author. She told him that during those ten days a light remained with her and then gradually rose away.

The author concludes that, in his religious understanding, *satī* is not deliberate but occurs when *sat* arises within a person, and that words, blessings, or curses uttered then come true. He says people

immersed in worldly life cannot understand such religious and spiritual matters, just as a farmer who does not know aviation cannot build an airplane. He closes with the saying: “What can a laborer of *māyā* know of devotion?”

The Harm of Scriptural Disputes

People often raise many doubts about certain passages found in scripture, and some create great disputes around them. Scripture contains many kinds of teaching; it is impossible that every statement should conform to our mind or doctrine. Some passages may be interpolations, but who can decide which are and which are not? Such judgment is impossible and lies beyond ordinary human intellect. Not every scriptural statement can be understood by everyone. When a passage exceeds our understanding, it is therefore improper to refuse to recognize our own limitation and hastily declare the passage wrong.

Those proud of their cleverness create disputes. Those who do not pride themselves on understanding, and who recognize a limitation in their understanding rather than a defect in scripture, do not. Such people may later come to understand the passage. Scriptural dispute benefits neither us nor others, neither now nor in the outcome. Instead, it may produce loss of trust in scripture and deprive people of its priceless and beneficial teachings.

Truth cannot be finally determined from historical narrative alone. We cannot fully know society's circumstances at the time, who acted or spoke in which conditions, or why. Good historical examples may guide us, but obligations and prohibitions determine conduct. For what should and should not be done, the author advises treating scriptural injunction and prohibition rather than historical narrative as the authority. Bhagavān says in the Gītā:

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितिं। ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमहिरहसि॥

tasmāc chāstram pramāṇam te kāryākārya-vyavasthitau |
jñātvā śāstra-vidhānoktam karma kartum ihārhasi ||

“Therefore scripture is your authority in determining what ought and ought not to be done. Knowing what is declared by scriptural rule, you should act here accordingly.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 16.24)

Injunction is stronger than historical example, and prohibition stronger even than injunction. Entering scriptural dispute is not a seeker’s work; if one becomes absorbed in it, when will one practise? Those who seek their highest good and in whom reverent trust predominates do not enter such disputes. Judging scripture is difficult; attaining one’s highest good is easy. A person can quench thirst from a lake but cannot consume the whole lake. Likewise, one can attain the highest good through scriptural teachings but cannot understand and adjudicate every statement. Even great scholars and teachers have not settled them. For a seeker, avoiding the dispute is best. Attempting a final judgment brings no benefit and wastes time. Who today possesses so much time, knowledge, intelligence, power, and competence? Saints have therefore rightly said:

जड चेतन गुण दोषमय बसिंव कीन्ह करतार। संत हंस गुण गहहपिय परहिरबिारबिकार॥

jaṛa cetana guṇa doṣamaya bisva kīnha karatāra |
santa haṁsa guṇa gahahiṁ paya parihari bāri bikāra ||

“The Creator made the world of conscious and insentient, full of virtues and faults. Swanlike saints take the milk of virtue and leave the water of defect.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Bālakāṇḍa 6, as printed)

तेरे भावे जो करौ, भला बुरा संसार। ‘नारायन’ तू बैठिके, अपनौ भुवन बुहार॥

tere bhāve jo karau, bhalā burā saṁsāra |

nārāyana tū baiṭhi ke, apanau bhuvana buhāra ||

“Let the world do whatever pleases it, good or bad; Narayan, sit down and sweep clean your own dwelling.”

Bhagavān calls the tangle of scriptural testimony *śruti-vipratipatti*, the apparent conflict of what has been heard. If a passage seems interpolated or exceeds our understanding, removing it is therefore an unauthorized act that can cause great harm. A seeker should avoid scriptural dispute, act upon what appears undisputed, and leave aside what appears disputed. In an examination, a clever student answers undisputed questions first and considers disputed ones later. Sitting first with the disputed questions will consume the allotted time and cause failure.

If one meets an experienced saint or great soul, shaping one’s life according to that person’s direction is best. Even great saints’ statements sometimes differ because each speaks what is needed in a particular circumstance. Adopt what is undisputed among their teachings: repetition of the Divine Name, remembrance of Bhagavān, service, relinquishment of evil, and doing no harm to anyone are undisputed disciplines to be observed at all times.

Authorial footnote 1:

श्रुतविप्रतिपन्ना ते यदा स्थास्यति निश्चला। समाधावचला बुद्धसितदा योगमवाप्स्यसि॥

śruti-vipratipannā te yadā sthāsyati niścalā |

samādhāv acalā buddhis tadā yogam avāpsyasi ||

“When your intellect, bewildered by conflicting teachings, stands unmoving and steady in samādhi, then you will attain yoga.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 2.53)

Authorial footnote 2:

वेदः स्मृतिः सदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रयितात्मनः। एतच्चतुर्वर्धिं प्राहुः साक्षाद् धर्मस्य लक्षणम्॥

vedaḥ smṛtiḥ sadācāraḥ svasya ca priyam ātmanah |

etac caturvidham prāhuḥ sākṣād dharmasya lakṣaṇam ||

“Veda, remembered tradition, the conduct of the good, and what is inwardly approved: these four are declared direct marks of dharma.”

(Manusmṛti 2.12)

The author’s printed gloss qualifies inward approval as arising from desirelessness and concern for the welfare of all beings.

Scripture describes many deities and ways of worship because human beings do not share identical dispositions, reverent trust, or capacities. Different proportions of sattva, rajas, and tamas produce different inclinations, forms of faith, and abilities; forms of worship therefore differ. Everyone’s hunger is one and satisfaction one, yet differing tastes produce different foods. Likewise, the pain of not attaining the Reality worshiped and the joy of attaining It are one in all, though preferences in worship differ. The Reality worshiped is one. Diversity within unity and unity within diversity is a distinctive feature of Hindu culture. A body has many limbs yet remains one; the deities worshiped are many, yet the Reality of worship is one.

Although there are many worshiped deities, a seeker's fidelity should rest in one. Worshiping many without one-pointed devotion prevents fulfillment. Scripture therefore presents whichever deity or sacred place it is describing as supreme, so that a person's fidelity may be one. If the seeker does not regard the chosen goal as supreme, practice will not mature.

A traditionally devoted wife honors everyone through her relationship with her husband, yet her fidelity rests in him. Likewise, a householder may worship and honor all deities on their appointed festivals while giving one-pointed fidelity to one. Some begin worship of many gods and goddesses, then fear that leaving the others to worship one alone will anger them and bring harm. The author rejects this fear: when the aim is the highest good and the spirit desireless, worshiping one will not anger the others because the Reality worshiped is fundamentally one. Worshiping many does not easily fulfill even worldly desire. A seeker should therefore have one chosen form of the Divine.

यं शैवाः समुपासते शिवि इति ब्रह्मेति वेदान्तनि बौद्धा बुद्ध इति प्रमाणपटवः कर्तेति
नैयायिकाः। अर्हन्त्यथ जैनशासनरताः कर्मेति मीमांसकाः सोऽयं नो वदिधातु
वाञ्छतिफलं त्रैलोक्यनाथो हरिः॥

*yam śaivāḥ samupāsate śiva iti brahmeti vedāntino
bauddhā buddha iti pramāṇa-ṣaṭavaḥ karteti naiyāyikāḥ |
arhann ity atha jaina-śāsana-ratāḥ karmeti mīmāṃsakāḥ
so 'yam no vidadhātu vāñchita-phalam trailokya-nātho hariḥ ||*

“Śaivas worship Him as Śiva, Vedāntins as Brahman, Buddhists as Buddha, skilled logicians as the Creator, followers of the Jaina teaching as the Arhat, and Mīmāṃsakas as karma. May that Hari, Lord of the three worlds, grant us the desired fruit.”

(Hanumannāṭaka 1.3, as printed)

त्रयी सांख्यं योगः पशुपतमितं वैष्णवमतिप्रभन्नि प्रस्थाने परमदिमदः पथ्यमतिचि।
रुचीनां वैचित्र्यादृजुकुटलिनानापथजुषां नृणामेको गम्यस्त्वमसि पियसामर्णव इव॥

*trayī sāṅkhyam yogaḥ paśupati-matam vaiṣṇavam iti
prabhinne prasthāne param idam adaḥ pathyam iti ca |
rucīnām vaicitryād ṛju-kuṭila-nānā-patha-juṣām
nṛṇām eko gamyas tvam asi piyasām arṇava iva ||*

“The threefold Veda, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, the doctrine of Paśupati, and Vaiṣṇava teaching are differing paths, each declared best and beneficial. Because tastes vary, people travel many straight and winding ways; yet You alone are the one destination, as the ocean is for all waters.”

(Śivamahimna Stotra 7, as printed)

The author’s printed gloss explains that just as all rivers, following straight or winding courses, ultimately reach the ocean, adherents of the many Vedic and philosophical paths ultimately reach the one Lord.

आकाशात्पतति तोयं यथा गच्छतिसागरम्। सर्वदेवनमस्कारः केशवं प्रतगिच्छति॥

*ākāśāt patitam toyam yathā gacchati sāgaram |
sarva-deva-namaskāraḥ keśavam pratigacchati ||*

“As water fallen from the sky goes to the ocean, every salutation offered to the gods reaches Keśava.”

(Laugākṣi Smṛti, as printed)

