



PREFACE



India is an ancient religious country where several religious scriptures are in usage. Numerous religious assemblies and programs abound in this country. Despite this, why are wrong principles, lawlessness and atheism on rise in India?—This indicates lack of spiritual knowledge.

To the common person this simple question is very significant. There is an urgent need to address this problem effectively. Here, in our country, numerous religious literatures are available. In the modern age, many religious scholars have written various commentaries on the Gita and other Vedic scriptures. Many so-called gurus and preachers have mushroomed. However, the sad fact is that these preachers have set aside the factual import of these scriptures and have instead propounded their own ideas in their writings. For example, the ultimate teaching of Bhagavad-gītā is very clearly revealed therein: we should surrender fully unto Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, which is the duty of every living entity. The Supreme Lord's utmost devotee and friend, Arjuna, has played the role of a conditioned living entity bound by material nature. By directing His instructions to Arjuna, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has bestowed the knowledge of Bhagavad-gītā to liberate living entities like us who are bound by material nature. In the conclusion of Gītā, He has stated—

sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ
 śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ
 iṣṭo'si me dṛḍham iti
 tato vakṣyāmi te hitam

“Because you are My very dear friend, I am speaking to you My supreme instruction, the most confidential knowledge of all. Hear this from Me, for it is for your benefit.”

Having told this to Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa presents His supreme instruction.

In the next two verses, He explains the highest knowledge of how one can surrender himself fully:

man-manā bhava mad-bhakto
 mad-yājī mām namaskuru
 mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te
 pratijāne priyo 'si me

“Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend.”

sarva-dharmān parityajya
 mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
 ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo
 mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ

“Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.”

After describing the different systems of yoga, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa states at the end: yathecchasi tathā kuru, “O Arjuna, now you act in the way you think is right.” (Bg 18.63) Arjuna fully accepted all the instructions of the Lord as a bona fide disciple and surrendered himself fully to the Lord.

Without diminishing the personal independence of Arjuna, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has entrusted Arjuna with the responsibility of making the decision. And as an intelligent disciple, Arjuna spoke, kariṣye vacanaṁ tava, “I will do whatever You say. I will carry out Your instructions.” From Arjuna’s example, we can learn that the ultimate result of attaining the wisdom of the Gita is to fully surrender unto the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

At the very end of Bhagavad-gītā, Sanjaya, the disciple of Vyāsadeva, after reciting everything to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, informed him of his conclusion:

yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo
 yatra pārtho dhanur-dharaḥ
 tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir
 dhruvā nītir matir mama (Bg 18.78)

Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, the master of all mystics, and wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there will also certainly be opulence, victory, extraordinary power, and morality. That is my opinion.

From this it is very clear that surrender unto the lotus feet of the Lord alone will lead the living entity to his supreme benefit.

However we can see that many of the so-called preachers and gurus today misinterpret the Bhagavad-gītā, reject the process of absolute surrender unto the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and speak out various viewpoints to fulfil their own agendas. For instance, some describe the Supreme Absolute Truth as being formless. Some say that in reality (historically), the five Pandavas or Kurukshetra did not exist and that the five senses are the five Pandavas. In the opinion of some, the goal of the Gita is to surrender to one's motherland, or nation or the demigods. Some others say, "I am God, surrender unto me", etc.

But how can the propaganda and presentation of such distorted interpretations of the Gita which divert one away from the prime objective of Bhagavad-Gita factually benefit our country? Therefore despite the preaching of Bhagavad-Gita to a great extent in India, there is large scale confusion in the country. In the past, devotees and great spiritual masters (ācāryas) obtained their knowledge through bona fide disciplic successions, and composed pure commentaries on the scriptures and saved the population from falling down to material bondage and made them favorable to devotional service of the Supreme Lord. Our duty is to follow the teachings of the great ācāryas on pure devotional service. Only then will our lives be successful.

Presently commentaries on the Bhagavad-Gita are being composed and published by political leaders, materialistic philosophers or professional writers. But those commentaries are filled with their self-concocted interpretations and as a result even though those commentaries are well-received, yet the population is deprived of the factual teaching of Gita and is becoming averse to the Personality of Godhead. Not only in India, but in many countries across the world, the Gita has been published in English with such deluding interpretations. And even after studying those writings, not even one person has become a pure devotee of the Lord.

Due to the unbounded mercy of the Lord, an epoch-making member of the Brahma-Mādhva-Gaudiya Sampradāya, the founder-ācārya of ISKCON, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda, following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas, has composed an English translation and commentary on the Gita entitled Bhagavad-Gita As It Is. This edition has been translated into more than hundred different languages, and has enlightened

millions of readers. These readers, having understood the real message of the Bhagavad-gītā, have made their lives successful by taking up devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. This edition of the Gita has stirred a spiritual revolution throughout the world, has uplifted its readers to become civilised, cultured and absorbed in devotional service (Kṛṣṇa-bhakti). This edition has liberated its readers from self-destructive habits such as illicit behavior, meat-eating, intoxication, gambling, etc., and presents the grand Vedic teaching, *vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*, “the entire world is just one family”. This edition of the Gita has taught people simple living and led the confused and misled students and youths to the path of proper spiritual life. Thus this edition of the Gītā, along with directions on how to attain the highest goal of life (pure love of Kṛṣṇa), it has taught millions of readers how to practically carry on their daily lives spiritually and thus has contributed immensely to the welfare of society. Moreover even scientists are now attracted to the Bhagavad-gītā.

During the last thirty years, under the auspices of ISKCON, this Gita with Srila Prabhupāda’s commentary has been translated into more than a hundred languages and more than 420,000,000 copies has been printed, and spread throughout the world. Many people in our country think, “We know everything. So what is there to read?” Thus, by considering oneself as all-knowing, or by confining oneself within the boundaries of sectarian religious groups, or by lack of true knowledge of the Gītā, even now many persons are ignorant about how to attain factual knowledge of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa or devotional service to Him. Thus, even after attaining birth in this pious land of India, many are deprived of pure love of Godhead preached by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. (Just as people living close to a train station often fail to come on time to get on a train!)

It is easy to infer the dark future of this country by seeing how the educated students and youths of today’s society are misled and confused. Not only the youth, every person needs to obtain knowledge of the Gita and lead his life accordingly. This ‘Gita Study Course’ has been started in order to give the knowledge of Bhagavad-Gita as it is and the highest conclusions of the Gita to every person.

By the unlimited mercy of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the blessings of Srila Prabhupāda, and the inspiration of our revered spiritual master, we are trying to propagate and spread the teachings

of the Gita through this ‘Gita Correspondence Study Course’ and the Gita seminars. Through this course, a preliminary understanding of the philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita has been given along with refutation of the misinterpretations and confusing interpretations of the Gītā. Besides this, by revealing the Gita as it is, social, political and economic problems of society can be resolved and thus a healthy society can be built and simultaneously everyone can attain love of Godhead by traversing the path shown by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Our study course aims at helping people traverse this path easily. Through this study course, even while busy in domestic affairs, a person can become acquainted with this great philosophy, be inspired to apply the teachings of the Gita in one’s personal life and can enter into a worldwide and great family.

All over the world and even in India, nowadays the interest of young and intelligent people in Bhagavad-Gita is gradually increasing. Thousands of school and college students are being trained in the philosophy of Gita by the Youth Forum of ISKCON Pune and Mumbai. Many are engineering and medical students. There are B. Techs and M. Techs too.

On the occasion of Srila Prabhupāda’s Centennial Celebrations, despite several obstacles, more than a thousand schools in West Bengal instituted examinations on the life and teachings of Srila Prabhupada. About 6 lakh students participated in them. Since the last few years, ‘Uttishthata Jagrata’ Student Conferences have been organized successfully. A Jagrata Chatra Samaj has been inaugurated to unify interested students and provide them regulated Vedic teachings. We hope that all of these programs will help us make the future of students bright and do good to the general public too.

We invite people from all walks of life who desire to do good to society—teachers, students, professors, lawyers, politicians, journalists, physicians, intellectuals—to come and acquaint themselves with the factual knowledge of the supreme science of the Bhagavad-gītā. This knowledge is revolutionary. True, modern technology and science can give us some happiness, but within this flickering life filled with old age and death, it is just like a drop of water in the desert. When man becomes uncivilized, this technology becomes the cause of his destruction. The Gita will certainly deliver everlasting happiness and solve all the problems of the civilisation.

Lastly, this ‘Gita course’ based on Srila Prabhupāda’s Bhagavad-

Gita As It Is is being published with the help of Śrī Govardhana Gopāla dāsa, Sripāda Murāri Gupta Prabhu, Śrī Ānandavardhana Prabhu and other devotees of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. To them I express my deep gratitude and thanks on behalf of ISKCON Māyāpur's Preaching Division.

Bhakti Puruṣottama Swāmī
Director, Preaching Division,
ISKCON Śrī Dham Māyāpur

Special features of this edition

- The compilation of this book is completely based on the original text 'Bhagavad-Gita As It Is' by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda.
- The original text contains the Sanskrit ślokas, synonyms to each Sanskrit word of each śloka, a translation of each śloka, and a commentary or purport to each śloka. Students enrolling in Grade 2 of the Gita course will use this priceless text as their textbook. This compilation is a simple and easy summary of the original text. In this compilation the original slokas are not given; a simple translation is given herewith. The Purport portions of this book are simplified condensations of Srila Prabhupāda's purports in the original text.
- After studying this book meant for Grade 1, if students study the original text for Grade 2, they will have a thorough understanding of the teachings of the Gitā. For this purpose a set of three guidebooks for the original text have been included within the syllabus.
- All answers to the exercises in this book are within the book. After studying each chapter, the student should provide the answers. There is no need to submit the answers to us.

Manglacarana

AUSPICIOUS INVOCATION

om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā
 cakṣur unmīlitam yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ
 śrī-caitanya-mano-'bhīṣtam sthāpitam yena bhū-tale
 svayam rūpaḥ kadā mahyam dadāti sva-padāntikam

I was born in the darkest ignorance, and my spiritual master opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisances unto him. When will Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, who has established within this material world the mission to fulfill the desire of Lord Caitanya, give me shelter under his lotus feet?

vande 'ham śrī-guroḥ śrī-yuta-pada-kamalam śrī-gurūn vaiṣṇavāms ca
 śrī-rūpam sāgrajātam saha-gaṇa-raghunāthānvitam tam sa-jīvam
 sādvaitem sāvadhūtam parijana-sahitam kṛṣṇa-caitanya-devam
 śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-pādān saha-gaṇa-lalitā-śrī-viśākhānvitāms ca

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master and unto the feet of all Vaiṣṇavas. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī along with his elder brother Sanātana Gosvāmī, as well as Raghunātha Dāsa and Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. I offer my respectful obeisances to Lord Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda along with Advaita Ācārya, Gadādhara, Śrīvāsa, and other associates. I offer my respectful obeisances to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa along with Their associates Śrī Lalitā and Viśākhā.

he kṛṣṇa karuṇā-sindho dīna-bandho jagat-pate
 gopeśa gopikā-kānta rādhā-kānta namo 'stu te

O my dear Kṛṣṇa, ocean of mercy, You are the friend of the distressed and the source of creation. You are the master of the cowherd men and the lover of the gopīs, especially Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. I offer my respectful obeisances unto You.

tapta-kāñcana-gaurāṅgi rādhe vṛndāvaneśvari
vṛṣabhānu-sute devi praṇamāmi hari-priye

I offer my respects to Rādhārāṅī, whose bodily complexion is like molten gold and who is the Queen of Vṛndāvana. You are the daughter of King Vṛṣabhānu, and You are very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

vāñchā-kalpatarubhyaś ca kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca
patitānām pāvanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ

I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Lord. They can fulfill the desires of everyone, just like desire trees, and they are full of compassion for the fallen souls.

śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda
śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda

I offer my obeisances to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Prabhu Nityānanda, Śrī Advaita, Gadādhara, Śrīvāsa and all others in the line of devotion.

HARE KṚṢṆA HARE KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA HARE RĀMA RĀMA RĀMA HARE HARE



INTRODUCTION

Why should I study Bhagavad-Gita ?

There is a need for knowledge in human society. Therefore there are unlimited schools, colleges, universities and research institutions all over the world. Their purpose is advancement of human society, and through these institutions there has been immense progress in scientific knowledge. Despite such progress, why is there so much chaos and instability in human society? Why is man not happy, society not peaceful?

True knowledge is required for healthy life and proper civilization. Such knowledge is for humans, not for animals, because human life has a special purpose. Animals seek happiness only through eating, sleeping, mating and defending. But no human being can be fully satisfied merely by indulging in these animalistic activities, because the purpose of human life is higher—to realize the Personality of Godhead. It is this higher purpose of life which distinguishes men from animals.

All of us are victims of the four miseries of material existence: birth, death, old age and disease. Even scientists, philosophers and leaders are not free from these sufferings. Is it possible to be free from these four fundamental problems of life with the assistance of material knowledge from schools, colleges and other research institutions? Material knowledge only teaches us how to enhance our sense enjoyment, nothing more. Through this knowledge, we learn to exploit material nature and simply enjoy the resources of material nature. But as a result, the propensity to enjoy this world is increasing in human society, which is seen as unhealthy competition, greed, dissatisfaction and the forest fire of war. Every person's life is full of sorrow, loneliness, hopelessness and dissatisfaction.

Today we see that every country is out to destroy every other country, and to the best of its ability spending unimaginable amounts of money to manufacture weapons of mass destruction. Behind all this is modern society's civilized man. Is this, fighting like cats and dogs, the purpose of precious human life and civiliza-

tion? This so-called knowledge founded on the concept of sensual enjoyment that is taught in schools and colleges cannot factually elevate human civilization. The unhealthy, unbridled materialism cannot prevent the decay of morality. It cannot give real peace and happiness to human life. Rather, the dangerous competition for sense gratification puts the entire civilization into trouble.

The so-called developed countries of the world, even though extremely advanced in material knowledge, are heading towards destruction. Increasing crime, divorce, mental illness, violence, drug addiction, depression and suicide—all these are destroying the societies of the “developed” countries and leading them towards their ruin. The entire world is following these very countries. In this way, a God-averse demoniac civilization is formed in the world which is turning man into an animal devoid of spiritual understanding.

Material knowledge is not sufficient for the factual progress of human civilization. Only spiritual knowledge provided in the Vedic scriptures can fill the incompleteness of material knowledge. This is not just a theory. This is not merely an opinion of an idealistic philosopher. This knowledge is the ultimate truth, an eternal, everlasting, endless truth. It is perfect and devoid of mistakes. The Bhagavad-Gita is the condensed essence of all Vedic scriptures.

The Bhagavad-Gita is not for a particular sect or segment of society. It is for every human being in the world, in fact for every living entity in the universe. By studying the Bhagavad-gītā, every man in the world can realize the meaning and purpose of life. Becoming free from the dangerous instability, anxiety and unhealthy state of materialistic life, he can quickly attain a naturally happy and satisfied life. When this knowledge is applied in society, materialism’s strong oppression and waves of destruction can gradually diminish, and the world can factually progress—shining forth brilliantly with qualities of self-control, peace and prosperity.

How to understand the Bhagavad-gītā?

If one has to gain a proper understanding of the Bhagavad-gītā, one has to accept whatever the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa has spoken, without changing them, and accept them as they are. One should

not attempt to change the message of the Bhagavad-Gita with one's own mentally concocted interpretation. Countless learned men have written commentaries on the Bhagavad-Gita only to display their learning to the ignorant man. But after reading their commentaries, not even a single person has become a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Study of such misinterpretations is not only fruitless, but also destructive to spiritual life.

No one can obtain proper knowledge by dint of his own opinions or imagination. The knowledge of the Bhagavad-Gita has come down to us from Lord Kṛṣṇa through the disciplic succession. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself bestowed the knowledge of the Gita to a person, who spoke it again to a person, who also bestowed it to another person. This is known as paramparā (disciplic succession). The knowledge of Absolute Truth thus descends through this process of disciplic succession. The Lord has described this in the fourth chapter of the Gītā. Any knowledge obtained outside the disciplic succession is merely a subjective opinion or an imagination. Therefore it is appropriate to obtain pure divine knowledge from a proper disciplic succession.

Besides this, Lord Kṛṣṇa has stated that only a devotee who has surrendered unto Him can understand Him—*bhaktyā mām abhijānāti*—no one else. Therefore, in order to obtain proper knowledge of the Gītā, one has to listen from a person who is a pure and unalloyed devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is spending his life according to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's directions, and who has received this knowledge through the disciplic succession. Besides this, one should have firm faith; one should not be constantly doubtful due to inflated ego. Therefore the Lord told the heroic Arjuna, *śraddhāvān labhate jñānam* (Bg 4.39) and *saṁśayātmā vinaśyati* (Bg 4.40): only those who are faithful can gain knowledge while the doubtful fall down from spiritual life, taking birth in subhuman species. Therefore one should not study the Gita from his own personal viewpoint, but like Arjuna, one should try to understand the message of Gita with faith and humility.

The knowledge of the Bhagavad-Gita is eternal, perfect and beyond mistakes because it is complete and given by the Lord Himself. The senses of the conditioned living entity are always covered by

illusion, full of errors and limited. Therefore the thinking, imagination and mental concoction of the conditioned living entity, however attractive it may be, is actually not complete. Four defects are always there in the conditioned living entity:

1. Bhrama (the tendency to commit mistakes)
2. Pramāda (the tendency to be illusioned)
3. Vipralipsā (the tendency to cheat) and
4. Karaṇāpāṭava (imperfect senses)

Every conditioned living entity has these defects. Therefore no man's mental speculative opinions constitute eternal and perfect knowledge. But the Lord Himself is the personification of knowledge. He transcends all illusions of material nature as well as imperfections and limits. Therefore whatever knowledge He bestows, is for all time and place, supremely perfect and complete. This knowledge has been imparted in the Bhagavad-gītā. The Bhagavad-gita is the nectarean essence of all Vedas and Upaniṣads.

Five fundamental truths of Bhagavad-gītā

The Bhagavad-Gita discusses the following five fundamental truths:

- (1) The Supreme Lord
- (2) The living entity
- (3) Material nature
- (4) Karma and
- (5) Time

We can discuss these in brief here.

(1) The Supreme Lord

aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate

“I am the source of all that is material and all that is spiritual in this cosmic manifestation. Everything emanates from me.” (Bg 10.8)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead (Bhagavān), the Supreme Brahman (Para-brahman), the Supersoul (Paramātmā), or Śrī Kṛṣṇa—whatever name He be addressed as, is the ultimate source of everything, the cause of all causes, and the supreme person.

He is *asamordhva*, that is, there is no one equal to or greater than Him. He is the supreme well-wisher, and controller of all. He is the foundation or shelter of the all-pervading *brahmajyoti*. He is the Lord and enjoyer of the entire material and spiritual world. He is the eternal, everlasting and primeval person. He is perfect and independent. All the demigods are merely His order-carriers. He is the source of all *Avatāras*. The Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa is spiritual and the Supreme conscious entity. He completely knows about every living entity, every object and even every atom in this cosmic manifestation. Moreover, whenever He descends into this material creation for a specific purpose, His consciousness does not at any time become affected by the modes of material nature. Everything existing within the material and spiritual worlds is related to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The *yogīs* realize Him as the Supersoul who resides within all entities. The *jñānīs* realize Him as the impersonal Brahman. But His pure devotees see Him in His complete feature as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the form of *sac-cid-ānanda* (eternity, knowledge and bliss).

(2) Jīva: The Living Entity

mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke jīva-bhutaḥ sanātanaḥ

“The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts. ” (Bg 15.7)

Every man, tree or creature—whoever has life or soul—is called living entity. The living entity is the fragmental part and parcel of the Supreme Lord—eternally. Therefore the soul is qualitatively one with the Supreme Lord. The soul, like the Supreme Lord, is eternal, full of knowledge and blissful, just like a minute spark is similar to a large fire. But soul is quantitatively different from the Supreme Lord. The Lord is perfect, complete and independent while the soul is minute (*aṇu*), fragmental and dependent.

There is an unbreakable relationship between the soul and the Lord. Every soul is constitutionally the servitor of the Supreme Lord, an eternal servant of the Lord. As Śrī Caitanya Mahaprabhu has stated, *jīvera svarūpa haya—kṛṣṇera nitya-dāsa*, “The constitutional position of the living entity is that it is an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa”. When the living entity forgets Kṛṣṇa’s service and wants to be Lord

himself, and wishes to enjoy the material world, he falls into this miserable material world. Here, in accordance with his karma and desires, he obtains material bodies, one after another, and rotates endlessly within the cycle of birth and death. But when he surrenders unto the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa and engages in devotional service, then his consciousness is again released from this contamination of material existence. As a result of unalloyed devotional service without any material motivation, one experiences spiritual bliss. This position can only be reached when he practices bhakti-yoga through regulated hearing and chanting of the holy names of the Lord, because the holy names of the Supreme Lord are spiritual and non-different from Him. Finally having attained pure consciousness or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he is established in his eternal spiritual identity and at the end of this life, he returns back to Godhead, back to the Lord's abode.

(3) Prakṛti: Nature

mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sa-carācaram

“This material nature is working under My direction, producing all moving and unmoving beings.” (Bg 9.10)

There are two types of nature: Parā or superior spiritual nature, and aparā or inferior material nature. Both these natures, spiritual as well as material, are potencies of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The material nature is Kṛṣṇa's external māyā potency. Material nature consists of the three modes—goodness, passion and ignorance—and eight elements—earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego. Through the agency of the material nature, this variegated material world containing the material bodies of the living entities, etc., is manifested. This material universe is temporary and destructible. It is created, and under the influence of the time factor, is annihilated during the mahā-pralaya. Then it is created again. The material world is, therefore, not imaginary or false, it is real, but temporary. The material body, a product of the inferior potency of the Lord, is destructible, temporary, but the spirit soul, a product of the superior potency of the Lord, is everlasting and imperishable.

Due to forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa, the living entity becomes entangled

by material nature. The conditioned soul then becomes controlled by the three modes of material nature. In this way, it becomes covered by the dense illusion of *māyā* or ignorance. But when the living entity surrenders unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa and engages in *bhakti-yoga*, then spiritual knowledge is awakened in him. This fire of spiritual knowledge burns up the contamination born of the three modes of material nature. The living entity then regains his pure spiritual status free from the modes of material nature. Thus, through the mercy of the Lord, he becomes capable of easily crossing over the insurmountable material nature consisting of the three modes, and becomes freed from the material bondage.

(4) Karma: Work

yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ

Work done as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu has to be performed; otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. (Bg 3.9)

The living entity is constitutionally a spirit soul and an eternal servant of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Every living entity is endowed with minute free will. When he misuses his free will, he desires to be Lord and enjoyer like Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As a result, he falls into this material world which is like a prison or a reformatory. Here, he tries to lord it over the resources of material nature and enjoy them through his material body. Due to this, he engages in *karma*, work. Work done to fulfil such material desires is called *fruitive work* (*sakāma-karma*). Every activity yields some fruit, some result. By doing any activity, the living entity is obliged to experience the fruits of that activity. This is known as the bondage of *karma*. Pious activities lead to attainment of the happiness of the heavenly planets, etc., and sinful activities lead to misery. Each living entity receives a specific body according to his previous work. In this way, enjoying and suffering of the fruits of action continues for endless time, until the living entity seeks shelter of the Supreme Lord. Through *bhakti-yoga*, the living entity engages himself in the service of the Supreme Lord and performs works to please the Lord. Such action is not for one's personal sense gratification, rather it is an endeavor to gratify the spiritual senses of the Supreme Lord. Such devotional work is called *niškāma-karma*. As a result of this loving devotional service, our

consciousness becomes pure and the reactions of millions of lives is nullified. Gradually, the living entity can realize himself to be the eternal servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa; he is quickly released from material bondage and is established in his eternal identity.

(5) Time

aham evāksayaḥ kālaḥ

“I am also inexhaustible time.” (Bg 10.33)

kālo ‘smi loka-kṣaya-kṛt pravṛddho

“Time I am, the great destroyer of the worlds.” (Bg 11.32)

Time is also an energy of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Under the influence of the time factor, all the different activities of the material world are accomplished through the interactions of the three modes of material nature. Time acts as the catalyst for the different changes that take place in every material object. By the influence of time, the living entity’s body is changing at every instant and is ultimately destroyed. Similarly, the material world is manifested, maintained and destroyed. The influence of time factor is only in the material world. Time has no influence on the nonmaterial spiritual abode of the Lord.

The abode of the Supreme Lord

yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramam mama

“Those who reach the supreme abode of Mine never return to this material world.” (Bg 15.6)

There are millions of material universes. This is called the material manifestation. All the planets of this material manifestation are filled with the miseries of repeated birth, death, old age and disease. Actually this material world is extremely miserable, like a dark dungeon. This is a hospital or reformatory for conditioned souls who are averse to serving Kṛṣṇa. The Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa through the medium of this material world has provided us with facilities to fulfil our desires for material enjoyment. He wishes that we understand that this temporary world is filled with the unavoidable pangs of material existence. He has called this material

world, duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam, “it is temporary and miserable”. We are eternal, fragmental parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord. We are constitutionally nonmaterial, spiritual, like the Supreme Lord. Therefore our eternal abode is the transcendental spiritual world, the residence of the Supreme Lord. This temporary world filled with miseries is not our eternal shelter. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa desires that every conditioned soul, by engaging in devotional service to the Lord, should purify his consciousness and return to Him in His abode. (tad dhāma paramam mama) (Bg 15.6). The Lord is eternally manifest in His own identity in the association of His innumerable pure devotees in His abode.

Having gone to that divine planet, one does not have to return to this material world. The abode of the Lord is not under the control of the inferior material energy, it is under the control of the superior spiritual energy. In that world known as Vaikuṅṭha, there is nothing lacking or incomplete. It is completely free from the influence of time factor. There is no past or future. Everything is eternally present. That spiritual planet is self-illuminated; there is no need of illumination from the sun or the moon there. (na tad bhāsayate sūryo na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ (Bg. 15.6). In the abode of the Lord, there is nothing called old age, disease or death. There, life is eternal and full of knowledge and bliss. The ultimate goal of human life is to get free from this miserable bondage of material existence by practicing bhakti-yoga, and to return to our eternal residence, the eternal spiritual abode of the Lord and to engage eternally in His service.

The excellence of Bhakti-yoga

In the Bhagavad-gītā, different types of yoga, such as karma-yoga, jnana-yoga, dhyana-yoga, bhakti-yoga, etc., have been discussed in order to realize the Supreme Lord; but in every chapter Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has emphasized that bhakti-yoga is the best. Factually, all yogas ultimately results into bhakti-yoga. Through other yogas one can realize the Supreme Lord only partially. Moreover, these yogas are extremely difficult to perform. The Lord Himself also has stated this, ‘kleśo ‘dhikataras teṣām’ (Bg 12. 15). Bhakti-yoga gives one full realization of the Lord. It is very easy and full of bliss.

‘Bhakti’ is an eternal function of every living entity, residing perpetually in their hearts. It cannot be artificially imposed. By the artificial force of emotions, bhakti can never be obtained.

Every living entity is constitutionally an eternal servitor of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The Lord has a spiritual and sweet relationship with every living entity. Bhakti-yoga is the process of awakening that relationship. There are nine limbs of devotional service such as hearing about Kṛṣṇa, chanting about Him, remembering Him etc. When one surrenders unto the Supreme Lord and engages in these processes, one can quickly experience transcendental happiness. Gradually, in this way, one can become fully Kṛṣṇa conscious. At the time of death, by the mercy of the Lord, we can return to Lord Kṛṣṇa and attain our eternal original identity. This cannot be attained by any worldly dharma. Therefore the ultimate teaching of the Bhagavad-gītā is to surrender unto Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa wholeheartedly with unalloyed devotion. At the end of the Bhagavad-gītā, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has given His ultimate advice to Arjuna : *Sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja* “Give up all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. ”

Sanātana-dharma

Dharma refers to essential characteristic, that which cannot be changed. The dharma of water is liquidity. The dharma of ice is coldness. The dharma of fire is heat and light. Then what is the dharma of the living entity? The dharma of every living entity is to love and serve the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The natural function of the part is to serve the whole. The function of service is not superimposed on the living entity. Just as liquidity is characteristic of water, similarly service to the Supreme Lord is the natural characteristic of the living entity. The service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is the eternal occupation of every living entity. Having fallen into this material world, a living entity can reside in the body of a tree or a dog, or in the body an American or Russian human being, or in a body of a Hindu or a Christian. But there is no change in its fundamental constitutional position. Therefore the dharma taught in the Vedas is the eternal dharma or sanātana-dharma. The meaning of sanātana is “eternal”, “beginningless” and “everlasting”. Sanātana-dharma is not the creation of any human being; it is neither a blind fanatical

belief nor an opinion. It has been directly given by the Supreme Lord Himself (dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam). In the Bhagavad-gītā, regardless of caste, religion or class, the science of this eternal dharma of all living entities has been discussed. The teachings of Bhagavad-Gita are therefore eternal and universal. It is equally applicable to all living entities.

The ultimate objective of human life

All of us observe that everyone is endeavouring to obtain a high position and material opulence. Everyone wants to become a doctor or an engineer. But have we come to this world to become doctors or engineers? What is the prime objective of this precious human life? By working very hard, one may become a doctor or an engineer or even a great social leader. But along with death everything become insignificant. Everything we have achieved is destroyed. After that one has to enter into another material body and suffer the miseries of birth, old age, disease and death and be entangled in the hard struggle for existence. In this way, worldly miseries and sorrows continue ceaselessly.

Factually, the highest goal of life is attainment of self-realization and God-realization, by which there is permanent cessation of the miseries of material life. The ultimate objective of life is to practice devotional service, awaken our dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and return back to Godhead. As a result, all miseries and troubles are alleviated forever.

If we take a fish out of water, it cannot be happy even for a moment despite our various endeavors. Similarly, in this miserable world no one is actually happy. Everyone is tormented by worry, anxiety and misery. Therefore, not being dazzled by the glitter of the external world, we should become sober and determined in the pursuit of attaining the prime goal of life. We should also perform the greatest welfare for others by bringing them in contact with spiritual knowledge. Also, especially as Indians, our special duty is to give this elevated spiritual knowledge to all the residents of the world and bring about true auspiciousness to the entire humanity.

The glory of Bhagavad-gītā

The words of Bhagavad-Gita have directly emanated from the mouth of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. Therefore by reading and studying the Bhagavad-Gita one can be completely purified and be liberated from all sins and material contamination. It is impossible for a busy person of this modern age to study many scriptures. The Bhagavad-Gita is the essence of all Vedic scriptures. Therefore, just by attentively studying the Bhagavad-gītā, one can attain the supreme perfection of life. It has been stated in the Gītā-māhātmya(4):

**gītā su-gītā kartavyā kim anyaiḥ śāstra-vistaraiḥ
yā svayaṁ padmanābhasya mukha-padmād viniḥṣṛtā**

“Because Bhagavad-gītā is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one need not read any other Vedic literature.” If one regularly hears and propagates the Bhagavad-Gita with deep devotion and sincerity, our inherent devotional service will naturally manifest.

In this present day, people are very much eager to have one scripture, one God, one religion, and one occupation. The Bhagavad-Gita can fulfil such a need. It has been stated in the Gītā-māhātmya(7):

**ekam śāstram devakī-putra-gītam
eko devo devakī-putra eva
eko mantras tasya nāmāni yāni
karmāpy ekam tasya devasya sevā
(Gita Mahatmya -7)**

Therefore, ekam śāstram devakī-putra-gītam: let there be one scripture only, one common scripture for the whole world-Bhagavad-gītā. Eko devo devakī-putra eva: let there be one God for the whole world-Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Eko mantras tasya nāmāni: and one hymn, one mantra, one prayer—the chanting of His name—

**Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.**

Karmāpy ekam tasya devasya sevā: and let there be one work only—the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.