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THE JOURNEY TO PREMA

~ A Course in the Science of Bhakti-Yoga ~

Lesson 12

Please Chant:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa - Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma - Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

IN THIS LESSON:

- Translating the Vedas - The Root of Sin
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- Samadhi and Its Symptoms
- Though One, He is Three - Though Three, He is One
- The Stairways to Prema
- The Stairway to Realizations
- Nāma-tattva + Meditations on Nāma-tattva

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His Divine Grace

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja
(Affectionately called Śrīla Gurudeva)

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THE JOURNEY TO PREMA – LESSON 12

Dear servant of God,

Please accept our sincere respects as we bow down and offer them to you. All Glories to Śrīla Gurudeva!

Welcome back to our journey. We've really got a lot in store for you this month, so let's get right to it.

In parts of this lesson we'll be sharing quite a few quotes from the Gītā with you, so we're going to start out with a short section on translating the Vedic writings.

We'll follow that with one of our favorite subjects: controlling the mind. We'll discuss this topic as it relates to sinful acts and we'll explore some of the tools we can use to bring the mind under the control of the intelligence.

We'll examine how it is that the Lord can present Himself in three aspects, while still remaining one, and we'll talk about how people approach these different aspects, as well as the various rewards they'll receive for their efforts.

Then we'll present some teachings on various stairways that we will need to climb as we walk the path of bhakti.

Finally, we'll close out this lesson with some teachings on the Holy Names and some meditations you can use to help you understand and "realize" the tattvas they represent.

As always, we thank you for joining us as we walk along together on our journey to prema.

Translating the Vedas – What do They Really Say?

As we've explained, translating the Vedas into English, or any other language for that matter, can be a difficult task. One of the reasons this is true is that many Sanskrit writings describe things that are totally foreign to this material world. Most languages are built upon words used to describe things that we can experience in the here and now, with our material senses. Sanskrit writings often focus on things that are not only unperceivable to the senses, but inconceivable to the mind as well.

Another trouble we can face in a quest to find an accurate translation is the fact that some translators will interpret these writings to suit their own agenda or to support their own views on what the Vedas are really trying to teach us. We're going to discuss this topic later in this lesson. We hope our comments there will convince you that only those who follow the bhakti path are qualified to convey their real meanings.

As far as the translations we will use in this course, we want to tell you this: they are not intended to be word-for-word translations. What we did intend to do was to help you understand the teachings they convey. We have therefore tried to present them in simple, readable ways. At times this involves rearranging the order of the words within a statement, or even the wording itself.

Therefore, if you compare these translations, word-for-word, with other translations, they will not match up. However, even translations done by such great gurus as Śrīla Gurudeva and Śrīla Prabhupāda will also differ in wording.

We have chosen to present translations in a way that we believe will be of the most benefit to you. In order to do this we will, at times, even include explanations within the translations – these will be indicated by (words in brackets). We have in no way tried to change the original meanings.

The Root of Sin

When we discussed the mind in Lesson 9 we told you that it is known to be at the root of all evil. Since that is truly the case, does it also stand to reason that the mind is at the root of all sin? Let's take a look at what the Vedas tell us about the answer to this interesting question.

Evil, as we spoke of it, refers to the committing of sinful acts. We cannot commit such acts unless the mind decides we should do so, therefore, the mind is at the root of these actions. However, there is still more to be considered before we determine the root of sin. This is because the mind's decisions rely on the

information it receives, so, in order to find the root of sin, we must look at the source of the information it receives.

In the Gītā, Arjuna specifically addresses the subject of the cause of sin in one of his questions to the Lord. We're going to share the verses that deal with this subject with you, and then we'll go back and discuss what is said.

In order to help you understand what is said we want to say a little something about a Sanskrit word that we have already shared with you. The word is **kāma +kā-muh** (kā like cot). Although translated in various ways, one of the most common English words used is **lust**.

When we hear the word "lust" many of us are likely to think that the term in some way relates to sexual acts or desires. The Sanskrit word kāma does not generally carry this meaning, although, in certain cases, it can be used that way.

When we translate kāma as "lust," in this course, we will be referring to the desires of any of our material senses to enjoy "pleasure." We put the word pleasure in quotation marks because we want to point out that what one man may consider pleasure (i.e. eating hot foods) another may consider pain. So pleasure is a very relative term.

Therefore, when we use the word lust we will be referring to a desire to obtain whatever it may be that any given person feels will bring him pleasure, no matter what it is he seeks or what sense he will use to enjoy that "object." All desires to give pleasure to the senses are included in the word lust.

We also put the word "object" in quotes. This is because we want to point out that we use this word to mean anything, which gives any sense pleasure. This will include things that we might not normally think of as objects, such as sounds that give pleasure to the senses. Of course it also includes those things that produce the sounds, such as a radio or CD player. We will refer to all of these pleasure providing things as "sense objects."

Now that you know what we mean by kāma we will use both this term, and the word lust interchangeably so that you will become used to both terms.

At the start of their exchange about the cause of sin, Arjuna asks Lord Kṛṣṇa a question. He asks, "**O Kṛṣṇa, what is it that seems to forcibly compel a man to engage in sinful acts, even though he may not have wanted to do so?**" (BG 3.36)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa then answered him. "**It is kāma which causes one to sin. When these desires cannot be fulfilled they can lead to anger. These lusts can devour our self-control. They are extremely strong and hard to suppress.**"

"**These lusts are a great enemy of the jīva. Just as fire is covered by smoke, a mirror by dust, and an embryo by the womb, man's ability to think properly can be covered over, in varying degrees, by his lusts.**"

"**In the material worlds, kāma is the jīvas eternal enemy. It can cover a man's knowledge, and it burns like a fire that cannot be put out. The senses, the mind, and the intelligence are where kāma dwells. Through these, lust covers the knowledge that allows a man to think properly, thus he becomes completely bewildered.**"

"**Therefore, O Arjuna, from the very beginning of his spiritual life a man must learn to control his senses, so that he will be able to slay these ferocious desires, for lust destroys one's wisdom and one's ability to understand spiritual truths related to Me.**"

"**You should know that the soul is superior to the intelligence, a steady intelligence is superior to the mind, and a controlled mind is superior to the senses. Thus you must use a steady intelligence, that is connected to and working on behalf of the soul, to control the mind. In that way you will be able to control the senses and slay this formidable enemy which attacks in the form of lusts.**" (BG 3.37-43)

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These statements of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are full of deeper teachings, and we will come back to cover some of them shortly, but before we do, let's continue with our original inquiry on the root of sin.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has told Arjuna that it is kāma, lust, our desires to obtain sense objects, which cause us to sin. So now, the next question we need to ask in our search for the root of sin is this: what causes kāma to arise?

Before you read on, stop and think about that question for a moment. Based on what we've presented so far, can you guess what causes these desires to arise? Can you remember any of the teachings that we've shared on this topic?

Some of you may have guessed that kāma is caused by saṁskāras. If that was your guess, it was a good one. Saṁskāras can definitely play a role in our desires. In fact the Gītā even tells us that **from the very beginning of their material existence all jīvas are in a state of delusion. We are all bewildered by the dualities that arise in our consciousness. These dualities arise because we are attracted to sense objects that give us pleasure, and we are averse to those objects that cause us distress. (BG 7.27)**

So these type of inborn desires, which change based upon our experiences, and form into saṁskāras can be related to sinful acts, but Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us there is more to this picture.

You may recall our discussion of a man, born in a desert, who had never seen a beach or a banana, we spoke of him when we discussed attachments, and we said that having never seen or heard of these things he would be unable to develop an attachment to them. This same line of reasoning is perfectly reflected in another of Lord Kṛṣṇa's statements.

In this statement Lord Kṛṣṇa is describing the symptoms of a man with a steady intelligence. He tells Arjuna, **“When one focuses the mind on a sense object, he develops an attachment to that object. From that attachment kāma arises, and when that lust cannot be fulfilled it leads to anger. An angry man becomes confused and thus he forgets the teachings of the Vedas. (Or whatever instructions on proper behavior he has been exposed to) Having lost his memory of these teachings his intelligence is destroyed, and he loses his spiritual direction in life. When this happens he falls into the ocean of material existence.” (BG 2.62-63)**

If we analyze this statement we will find the root of sin and we will also find the role that the mind plays in our sinful acts.

In the Gītā quotes that we shared earlier, Śrī Kṛṣṇa started out His answer with a simple, direct statement about the cause of sin. He said kāma, our lusts, cause us to sin. If we look at the statement just above we will find that He tells us that kāma arises from attachments, and that allowing the mind to focus on sense objects causes these attachments.

Thus, after a full scale analysis, we arrive at root of sin, and some of you may have seen this coming, the root of sin is an uncontrolled mind. It is not the sense objects themselves that cause us to sin. (It is not the barely dressed person or the cold beer on the table). It is not the senses themselves, which focus on those objects. (There is no need to pluck out the eyes if they offend thee.)

Sins arise when an uncontrolled mind allows a sense to focus on an object that, if brought into contact with that sense, would give “pleasure” to the person involved.

Avoiding Sins – Answers Within an Answer

We know we've already spent a good bit of time discussing the fact that we need to control the mind, and we know we've spoken quite a bit about the best ways to do that (hint- the two best ways start with a “bh” and a “ch”). Still, because of the fact that we cannot succeed in life unless we gain control of the mind, it's a topic we should be anxious to explore.

So let's go back and look at Lord Kṛṣṇa's answer as to what

causes us to sin. Let's also look at His answer to Arjuna's question about the symptoms of one with a steady intelligence, to see if there may be answers within those answers, to the question: How can we avoid sinful acts?

To answer Arjuna's question about sin, the Lord wasted no time at all. He told his friend that Kāma is at the root of sin. He also tells him that these lusts are a great enemy that is extremely strong and hard to suppress. Knowing this, we should try to figure out a way to check these desires as early as possible, for that will provide us with our best chance at defeating these enemies. Did the Lord provide us with any hints at how we can do that? Let's take a look and see.

The next thing He tells us is that our ability to think straight can be covered over by these lusts. He uses three examples, to point out that this covering over can take place to varying degrees. Let's examine this aspect of His answer to see if helps us figure out a solution.

First, He compares lusts to the smoke of a fire. Although a fire may be covered by smoke, it can still perform its function. Similarly, when our consciousness is only slightly covered over by kāma, we are still able to engage in spiritual activities, which is our true function. We can still practice bhakti-yoga and gain understandings of tattvas.

At this level, if we build the strength of our spiritual forces through sincere daily efforts, we have an excellent chance of defeating the enemy of an uncontrolled mind.

At the next level, depicted as a mirror covered by dust, the function of the mirror is severely impaired. Similarly, when we give in to our lusts and allow them to grow in strength we lose our desire and our ability to practice bhakti.

The longer we remain at this level, the more daily battles the enemy will win, and eventual, just like looking into a filthy mirror, we will no longer be able to see ourselves as God's servants, or, even worse, we will not be able to see God's existence at all. When this happens people become either agnostic, someone who does not deny God, but who doubts His existence, or else we become an atheist, someone who is fully convinced that there is no God.

In these states, by the mercy of the Lord or His devotees, we may still come into contact with the activities of bhakti, but any acts we perform will be unintentionally done, leaving room for only slight advancement, and giving us little chance of gaining any spiritual understandings.

The next example the Lord gives, the embryo in the womb, represents a fully covered over jīva. In this state one is totally driven and controlled by his lusts. Those who remain in this position will take birth as plants, where they will have no ability to make any conscious choices about their existence or activities.

Knowing about these levels of consciousness can help us recognize where we are situated, and keep us aware of the fact that if we are not careful, our situation can get much worse. A wise person will use this knowledge and awareness as an impetus to work on removing these coverings, but still, this teaching does not quite provide us with an answer as to how we can do this work of controlling the mind.

The next thing Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us is that these lusts burn like a fire that cannot be put out. This teaching, when properly understood, will keep us from committing a mistake that many people fall victim to when it comes to controlling their lusts.

Often times we may think, “If I just give my senses what they want they will become satisfied and stop wanting things.” In the long run, this strategy will never work.

A fire cannot be put out by putting more fuel into it. In fact, it will only grow larger, and more out of control, until it reaches a point where it cannot be put out.

Similarly, if we give in to our desires for sense pleasure, and simply try to fulfill them, one, after another, after another, they

will only grow stronger and more difficult to control. We may be able to satisfy them for a very short period of time, if we smoke the cigarette we crave, or eat the bowl of ice cream we desire, we may satisfy the lust temporarily, but it will return.

We will actually just want the next cigarette or sweet that much more, and, knowing they've won out before, the senses will feel sure that they'll win out again, so they'll just keep nagging the mind until they get their way.

So in this instruction, by telling us that we can never control our lusts by giving in to them, Lord Kṛṣṇa does give us a hint of how to avoid our sins. However, simply not doing something is usually less effective than doing something, so let's look a little further into our subject.

The next teaching the Lord shares with us is that our lusts reside in the senses, the mind, and the intelligence, and, that it is through these aspects of our temporary vehicles that kāma covers our knowledge. He also tells us that we must try to control our lusts from the very beginning of our spiritual lives because these desires can destroy our ability to gain spiritual understandings.

Knowing these truths can also benefit us. Being aware of the places that our lusts reside can allow us to use proper consideration and caution when we feel a desire for something, because we can analyze, and target, just exactly how this lust is working on us. The fact that lusts reside within the intelligence is a point we are wise to take note of. Just because we can come up with "logical" reasons to satisfy a desire, does not mean that it is wise to do so.

If we have any doubts about why it is that we need to control our lusts, this teaching provides us with, what should be, plenty of reason to keep kāma in check. Losing our ability to gain understandings about the Lord, and other spiritual truths, is a devastating blow that none of us can afford to suffer.

We now know where the enemy lies and the danger he poses, but still we don't really have an initial plan of attack. Let's continue to examine the Lord's teachings to see if we can come up with one.

The last instruction that He gives us on the cause of sin is of great assistance. He teaches us about the hierarchy of our thoughts and desires, in other words, He provides us with the chain of command that we can use to gain control of our lives. Knowing which aspects of ourselves have superior rank, can allow us to set up our forces in a way that will give us the ability to defend against the enemies attacks.

Within this teaching the Lord tells us about a tool we possess, that, if properly used, will be the most effective weapon we have to defeat the enemy. From what we've told you so far, a controlled mind would probably seem to be that tool, but this teaching will allow us an even deeper understanding into exactly how we can control that mind, based upon the chain of command that He teaches us about.

The tool we need to use to gain total control of both the mind and the senses is a steady intelligence, one that is connected with our eternal soul, and acting on its best interests.

The Lord tells us that a steady intelligence is superior to both the mind and the senses, thus it can give orders to, and control, these wild and potentially dangerous adversaries. You should remember this: When we told you that the mind can be our greatest enemy, we also told you that it can be a great friend. With a steady intelligence we can insure that the mind works for us, instead of against us.

In this regard we can look back to the story of Jagāi and Mādhāi from last month's lesson. Until they received the mercy of Prabhu Nityānanda and Śrī Caitanya their uncontrolled minds were their greatest enemies, and thus, they were the enemies of all of the town's residents. Once they came under the shelter of the Lord, and began practicing bhakti-yoga, they attained steady intelligences, which then took command of the mind, turning the

mind into great friends, and, consequently, they became friends of all of the town's residents.

A steady intelligence will not only provide us with personal benefits, it will also benefit everyone we come into contact with.

Later in this lesson we're going to share the Lord's description of one who possesses a steady intelligence, and we'll talk about how we can work to develop those traits. But, before we move on let's see if the knowledge of the weapon we need to use, can be further developed, so that we can understand where and when to apply its force properly.

If we combine this knowledge with what the Lord taught us about how kāma forms, we should be able to develop an effective battle plan.

In the two verses where He teaches us about the formation of our lusts, He describes a chain of events that ends with a fall into the ocean of material sufferings. Knowing we don't want our lives to continue to end in that way, let's take a look out how He tells us this journey starts. If we can find a way to keep ourselves from taking that first step, then we can definitely protect ourselves from that final fall.

The first step takes place when the mind focuses on a sense object. When this happens it begins to contemplate the "pleasures" that object could provide and it becomes attached to those pleasures, and then, in fairly short order, we develop lusts for those objects.

Let's take a closer look at that first step to see if we can discover the best means to defend against it.

The Sanskrit word that we have translated as "focus," comes from the same Sanskrit root as the word for "to meditate." So, when we speak of focusing on a sense object we mean to seriously contemplate the pleasures that object will bring. Although this term implies much more than just a passing thought, we should also be on the lookout for them as well, because our focus must begin somewhere.

Knowing that the root of sin is lusts, the root of lusts are attachments, and the root of attachments is a mind left to focus on a sense object, actually leads us to a simple to express, but often difficult to perform solution:

DO NOT ALLOW THE MIND TO FOCUS ON OBJECTS THAT GIVE PLEASURE TO THE SENSES

If we can accomplish this goal we will not develop any new attachments and our lusts will be greatly reduced. We all have attachments which we must break, this is a topic we've already discussed, but we must do all that we can to prevent new ones from forming. If we fail to do this, our journey to prema may well consist of one step forward and two steps back, until finally the fire of our lusts become so strong that they consume our spiritual understandings and burn our bridges to prema.

Of course we also have lusts we've already developed. The same analogy we just used about creating new attachments applies to both creating new lusts and feeding our old ones. This is a subject that were going to focus on in the next section of this lesson, where we look at a some simple, real life situations to see if they can help us understand how we can keep the mind from focusing on sense objects.

STOP the Senses – FOCUS the Mind

Picture yourself at the beach. The reason you've gone down to the shore is to have a little quiet time, to relax, to unwind. You're sitting near the water's edge while you listen to the soothing sound of the waves. You've got the mind engaged in some positive spiritual thoughts.

You may be reflecting on the journey your soul is on, as you contemplate your recent activities, or weighing the way you've been acting and the decisions you've been making, in order to evaluate your spiritual status. You're thinking about the progress you've made, and the setbacks you've had; or just quietly

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chanting japa as you focus on the Holy Names.

The sound of laughter draws your attention, so you look down the beach. There you see, headed your way, several people of the sex you are attracted to, all having extremely beautiful bodies, and all wearing next to nothing at all. The huge smiles on their faces and the continuing laughter complete this very attractive scene.

A moment ago, the flame of the mind was burning very steadily, fueled by spiritual thoughts, but now, this input from the senses, has caused its flame to flicker. So what do you do now?

The first thing you must do is remember this: **you** (the soul and the true ego) **can gain control of the mind and senses**. You, the soul, are at the top of the chain of command. You **can** use the intelligence, to control the mind, and you **can** stop the senses in their tracks. You **can** return to the path you were on, and you **can** keep yourself there. You **can** continue your journey toward prema, and, if you can learn to do this, in spite of whatever temptations and obstacles present themselves, you **can** complete that journey. So what do you do?

You look away. The first step to controlling the mind is to stop the wandering senses from focusing on things that give them pleasure. Look at the sky or look at the sea. Look at a seagull, a passing cloud, or, if it works best for you, simply close your eyes. It doesn't matter what system you use, just so long as you do not continue to focus on anything that causes the mind's flame to flicker. If you try this technique, you just might be amazed at how effective it can be.

Once you've stopped the sense of sight from focusing on those lust arousing sights, take control of the mind as well. Although the mind is considered a sense, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us that it is superior to our other senses, which lets us know that it does have powers that must be properly used.

In fact, if left uncontrolled, the pleasure seeking senses, will use the mind's power, to direct our tools of action, to do things to acquire the objects they lust for.

Yet the Lord assures us that the battle is ours to win. Even though kāma is a great, powerful, and formidable enemy, it has no chance in a fight against a steady intelligence that dominates and controls the mind, while defending the soul.

The Lord has warned us that lusts can reside within the intelligence, but this can only take place in an intelligence that is weak. A steady intelligence, that is filled with spiritual understandings, and fully dedicated to keeping the soul on a spiritual path, will simply let any lusts that try to settle there know this: **That there are no rooms available**, either in the intelligence, or in the mind, so they'd best just move on, leave the senses alone, and oh, by the way, could they please shut the door on their way out.

These lesser aspects of our material existence that we must deal with in our travels, the senses, the mind, and even the intelligence, are not part of who we really are. Ultimately, all of their abilities and strengths are drawn from the power house of the soul. And yet, if we fail to maintain control of them, they will gladly allow countless forms of kāma to take up residence, leaving little or no room for spiritual thoughts or activities. This is why it is so important for us to always be aware that we, us, our souls, sit at the top of the chain of command and that we have the God given rights and abilities to direct and control these aspects of our temporary vehicles.

So, after we pull the eyes away from these potential sources of trouble, we must also pull the mind away.

In the Gītā, the Lord tells us that **those who control the pleasure seeking senses, but still allow the mind to focus on sense objects, are not true practitioners of yoga. They are nothing more than hypocrites, who are pretending to be on a spiritual path. (BG 3.6)**

So if we want to truly follow the bhakti path, we must both

stop the senses from focusing on sense objects, and we must make sure that we keep the mind focused on thoughts and activities that will lead us toward our goal.

Now, back to the beach. Instead of locking our eyesight onto those beautiful bodies as they approach, further increasing our attachments and lusts, we must simply turn our focus back inwards and ignore this slight, temporary disturbance. We must refocus the mind and allow its flame to return to the perfectly tapered steady state that it prefers to be in.

If we find that the mind and senses are resisting the commands of the intelligence, if we find them battling to focus on sense objects, if we find them pulling us away from the ocean of prema, and pushing us toward the ocean of material miseries, then we must always remember that we need not fight alone. In such times of trouble we have allies that we can call on for support.

We must call on Śrī guru and then the Pañca-tattva, and we should absorb our consciousness in prayers to them. When we take shelter of them in this way, we add incredible strength to our side of the battle. After having brought these great heroes to our side we call on Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa by chanting the mahā-mantra.

If we do these things with sincerity, we have an excellent chance of stopping the senses and refocusing the mind, thus keeping our temporary vehicles from pushing us into the ocean of material sufferings.

If you doubt that this plan will work, we can only tell you this: it has worked for countless souls. The Vedas are full of stories of success, where jīvas relied on their gurus, or the Lord and His associates, or their own spiritual strength and steady intelligences, to conquer the enemies they faced.

The only way you will know if this system will work for you is to honestly and sincerely try it yourself.

This example, of the bodies on the beach and the means we can use to avoid the troubles that kāma will get us into, applies to every sense and every sense object. Of course not all of the objects that excite our senses can be avoided by a simple turn of the head or closing of the eyes, but the same principle applies.

Some sense object will enter our environment in ways that are difficult to avoid. For example, a neighbor may be cooking a food that we used to "enjoy," but no longer wish to eat. The smell of that food may enter our house and become almost impossible to avoid, without employing drastic measures, such as fleeing our own home, and, there may be times where even that type of option is totally impractical.

When we find our consciousness pestered by these type of unavoidable sense objects, we must learn to tolerate them.

In the Gītā Lord Kṛṣṇa makes it clear that He is aware of the troubles that our senses can give us, and He specifically recommends tolerance as the best means to deal with these temporary disturbances. He also lets us know that if we can keep our consciousness steady and balanced when we face these situations, we become eligible for release from the clutches of māyā. Here is what He says.

“O Arjuna, when the senses come into contact with sense objects, one will experience such things as cold and heat, pleasures and pains. Such experiences are flickering and temporary, and therefore you must learn to tolerate them. That steady minded person who remains unaffected by these experiences, not becoming disturbed by whatever happiness or distress they may bring, is certainly qualified to obtain liberation from material existence.” (BG 2.14-15)

So, when we face unavoidable sense objects, we should be fully aware that any disturbance they may cause is temporary. This knowledge should make it that much easier to tolerate them while they last.

If we sincerely follow the path of bhakti, the day will come where we are so fully unattached to sense pleasures, that no sense object will have enough pull to cause us to focus the senses, or

the mind, on such a temporary, illusory source of pleasure. Until we reach that point we just need to make it our constant practice to stop the senses, and refocus the mind, whenever these objects present themselves to us.

Before we move on, we want to mention another way that we can become exposed to sense objects. The examples we've given so far, the bodies on the beach and the aroma from the neighbors, both depicted ways in which we can unwillingly be exposed to sense objects. In contrast to these situations are the times where we intentionally expose ourselves to these objects.

These willing exposures are usually driven by saṁskāras. In the early stages of our journey to prema the mind will still be full of attachments. Feeling that it wants or needs to focus on some sense objects, it will try to convince our tools of action to go get a magazine, turn on the radio, or in some other way give it and our senses something material to focus on.

We can use the same tools and techniques to fight these urges as well. We can use tolerance, we can pull the mind's thoughts away from these things and refocus it on our spiritual path, and we can call on our best friends and greatest allies for assistance.

When we use these techniques with sincerity and perseverance we will develop a steady intelligence, which will allow us to increase the pace of our advancement in bhakti. It will allow us, our souls, to take full control of our lives. As we assume this commanding position, we can confidently give the order...

Steady as She Goes! Full Speed Ahead

The instructions that the Lord provides us with, through the Vedas, the sādhus, and the gurus are incredibly complete. With all of these teachings to rely upon we are not asked or expected to simply "believe" what we are taught. We are given an extremely complex, deep, and all-encompassing system, and a philosophy that can allow us to gain a fully informed understanding of the goal of life, the path that will take us there, and what we need to do to both get on, and stay on that path.

The teachings we just shared, about the senses, the mind, the intelligence, kāma, and attachments, is a very deep and complete teaching about the root of sin.

Within those teachings we explained the chain of command that we can use to determine the focus of the mind and the senses. As part of this explanation we tried to make it clear that a steady intelligence, that is connected with and working on behalf of our souls, is a tool that we cannot afford to be without in our lives.

This teaching would not be complete if the Lord had not provided us with a description of exactly what it means to have a steady intelligence, and if He did not tell us the things we can do to attain this necessary tool.

Knowing how badly we need a steady intelligence Śrī Kṛṣṇa provided us with a description of what this term means, while speaking the Bhagavad-Gītā.

When describing this state He used a few different Sanskrit terms in reference to what this state is. Some of these terms directly translate as "steady" or "fixed" intelligence. However, there is another Sanskrit term that, although it also carries this same meaning, also conveys an even deeper and more profound conception of what a steady intelligence really involves. This word is **samādhi** + **suh-mād-hi** (mād like modern) (usually pronounced suh-mād-hee).

Although the most direct translation of this word would probably be "**undisturbed**," just like the perfectly steady flame of a sādhus mind, its meaning when it comes to its use in spiritual teachings involves a much greater truth. Later we'll look into that meaning, but first we want to share the more general teachings on what it means to be in a state of samādhi.

When describing the path of bhakti, Lord Caitanya compared it to a creeping vine that can be cultivated until it produces a fruit, and He tells us that the fruit of bhakti is prema. We should keep this statement in mind as we examine Śrī Kṛṣṇa's statements

about samādhi, for samādhi is a state we all must reach as we cultivate this fruit.

In the Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that when one's mind becomes fixed in samādhi he will attain the fruit of yoga. (BG 2.53)

Immediately curious as to what samādhi is, Arjuna asks the Lord, "**What are the symptoms of one whose intelligence is firmly fixed in samādhi?**" (BG 2.54)

The Lord then gives an extensive description of these symptoms. You may recognize some of these statements as being ones that we have shared with you before, but we will gladly repeat them here, putting them into the context in which the Lord made them. Thus, allowing you the chance to review them in their original setting.

The supreme Personality of God, Śrī Bhagavān, Lord Kṛṣṇa, tells Arjuna: "**When a jīva is completely beyond the influence of kāma, immediately giving up all lusts that arise in the mind, and when the mind is completely satisfied because he is experiencing the qualities of his soul, (eternity, awareness/knowledge, and bliss) he is known as a man of steady intelligence.**"

"One who is not disturbed by the three types of misery - those arising from the mind or body, those arising from his dealings with other jīvas, and those arising from nature (earthquakes, etc.) and who does not become elated when pleasurable situations arise, who is not attached to material things, (except those related to his service to Śrī guru) and who remains free from fear and anger, he is called a sage of steady intelligence."

"One who is unaffected by every situation that arises in regards to his material body and its relationships, be they favorable or unfavorable, neither becoming joyous, nor upset, is a man of fixed intelligence." (This includes such things as the type of food available to him, the way others feel about him or treat him, and becoming overly affectionate or developing distaste toward things related to his body, such as one's spouse, parents, or children. It also includes being unaffected by the situations such people may face.)

"When one completely withdraws his senses from all sense objects, just as a tortoise withdraws his limbs into his shell, he is said to be of fixed intelligence. However, one who withdraws his senses in this way, but still maintains a taste for sense objects is not truly of steady intelligence. One reaches this stage only when no such tastes remain. One loses these tastes by becoming aware and experiencing an even higher taste." (When one reaches this stage all of his thoughts and actions are focused on things related to this superior flavor.)

"O Arjuna, when the senses become agitated they can steal away the focus of the mind. This can even happen to one who is trying to control it. Therefore one should control the senses by keeping them focused on the practices of bhakti-yoga because only one who has total control of the senses can truly be called a man of steady intelligence."

"When one focuses the mind on a sense object, he develops attachment to that object. From that attachment kāma arises, and when that lust cannot be fulfilled it leads to anger. An angry man becomes confused and thus he forgets the teachings of the Vedas. (Or whatever instructions on proper behavior he has been exposed to.) Having lost his memory of these teachings his intelligence is destroyed and he loses his spiritual direction in life. When this happens he falls into the ocean of material existence."

"A man with controlled senses becomes free from both improper attachments and unnecessary detachment. Thus he remains in a joyful state where he can properly enjoy sense objects." (Such as food that was prepared for the Lord's enjoyment and then offered to Him, or the sound of voices

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singing beautiful songs to glorify the Lord, or the smiles, hugs, and laughter of his family members, who he maintains a balanced and proper relationship with.)

“When one of steady intelligence attains this state of joyfulness, all his miseries disappear. In this state he is able to totally fix his intelligence on attaining his desired goal.”

“One whose mind is uncontrolled cannot bring his intelligence to a level where he will be able to understand the science of the soul. Such a man will also be unable to properly meditate on the Supreme Lord. Without performing such meditation he cannot attain peace, and without peace; how can he be happy?”

“If a man does not maintain control of his intelligence, and he allows the mind to focus on sense objects, his intelligence will be easily swept away. Just as a boat is easily swept away by a strong wind.”

“Thoughts and activities that enliven a man of steady intelligence (such as engaging in the practices of bhakti) are like night for the common man.” (In other words, he is asleep to them, he has no interest in them). **“Whereas the things that enliven the common man (such a seeking out and enjoying sense objects) are like night for the man in samādhi.”**

“Countless rivers continuously flow into the ocean, and yet it remains undisturbed. In the same way, various sense objects will always present themselves to the senses and the mind, but the man of steady intelligence will not be disturbed by them.”

“Only a man such as this can attain real peace, for it is unavailable to those who maintain their desires to fulfill their lusts.”

“Only he who abandons his lusts, who goes through life without any desires to give pleasure to his senses, who overcomes his false ego, and who understands that he cannot possess any material object, and thus, has no desire to do so, can attain peace.”

“O Arjuna, one whose intelligence is fixed in this way is situated in a state of spiritual consciousness. Because he has risen beyond the influences of the mind and senses he can no longer be bewildered. One who is situated in this spiritual state at the time of death will be freed from the material existence.” (BG 2.55-72)

This is Lord Kṛṣṇa’s explanation of the symptoms of one who is situated in samādhi. Although we could easily spend the rest of this lesson analyzing and discussing these statements, we do not intend to do so. And yet, there are a few points that we would like to give a bit of attention to. As far as the rest of these statements go, we ask you to take your time reading, rereading, and studying them, and that you do your best to absorb these teachings, and make yourself aware of them, so that you can train your consciousness to put them into practice.

The first statement we want to examine is the one where Kṛṣṇa says that a man in samādhi no longer has any taste for sense objects because he is aware of, and experiences a higher taste.

In order to be able to present two learning points regarding this statement, we first need to take a small detour, so that we can share some background information on some of the various yogic paths, which all strive for different types of higher tastes.

Though One, He is Three - Though Three, He is One

In our last lesson we took a good long look at the Lord’s acintya-śakti, His power to create and do things that are inconceivable to our limited minds. For most of us, some of the subject matter in this section may fall into that category as well.

Although the Lord exists in an unlimited number of ways, all of His expansions can be put in to one of three categories, depending upon which of the Lord’s energies, which of His śaktis, they emanate from.

The first of these energies is called His “internal” energy.

Because this energy can never be affected by any material feature it is also known as His “spiritual” energy, and other names as well. In a previous lesson we referred to this energy as His personal energy.

The second of His energies, although also spiritual, can come under the influence of māyā. This energy is known as His “marginal” energy. All jīvas are composed of this marginal energy. That is why some of us are trapped by her illusions.

The third energy of the Lord is known as His “external” energy. This is māyā-śakti, the energy that creates these illusions, and the energy that all material objects are made up of.

In this way, by classifying His three energies, we can say, that although the Lord is one, He is three, and, although the Lord is three, He is one.

But this particular “three-in-one” aspect of the Lord is not the subject this section is meant to focus on. This information simply provides you with a foundation for the next set of truths.

The Lord’s spiritual/internal energy also exists in one, a “one-in-three” way.

The absolutely supreme form of the Lord is His Bhagavān form. His two-handed form that He exhibits as Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boy of Vṛndāvana, is the source of His spiritual energy.

Along with this form, He manifests as a formless energy that is known as **Brahma + Bruh-muh**. This **formless aspect of the Lord** is actually nothing more than the effulgence that emanates from His Bhagavān form, much in the same way that sunlight is nothing more than an emanation from the sun.

The third way in which the Lord’s internal energy manifests is as **a form of the Lord that exists within every jīva in the material worlds**. The most commonly used English term for these expansions of the Lord is the “Supersoul.” Although a full discussion on the Supersoul is subject matter for another lesson, we will share some of these teachings with you so that we can carry on with the subject of higher tastes.

When we introduced you to the term “jīva” we told you that this term represented more than just the more general term, “soul.” There is however a term for the “soul” and this term is used to indicate **the spark of purely spiritual consciousness that contains all the energy and makes up the essence of who we really are**. This Sanskrit word is **ātmā** (āt like cot, mā like mom). This same word can also be used to mean other things, such as the mind, the material body, or even the senses, depending on how it is used.

One reason we shared this word with you is because you are likely to run across it in other literature based on the Vedas. We also introduced it because the word ātmā is part of the Vedic word for the Supersoul, which is yet another Sanskrit word you may well see again.

The Sanskrit word for **the Supersoul** is **Paramātmā + Puh-ruh-mat-mā**. The Sanskrit word **Parama + Puh-rum** means **supreme or greatest**, thus the **Paramātmā is the Supreme Soul, God Himself, in one of His many forms**.

We’re going to use the word Paramātmā so that you can become familiar with it, and we will use its English equivalent, the Supersoul as well.

Within every jīva lies his ātmā. In a human, this ātmā resides in the heart. Accompanying our ātmā is the Supersoul. The Supersoul stays with us during our entire stay in the material worlds. It rides along as a witness to all our actions, as a bestower of rewards, and in most cases, as a guide.

The relationship between our soul and Paramātmā is compared to two birds sitting next to each other on a branch of a tree. While we, the jīva, goes through life after life in a very active way, experiencing so many things, as we seek out sense objects and engage in eating, mating, and defending ourselves, along with so many other activities, the Supersoul merely sits there and witnesses what we go through. Also, when situations arise where

we are due to receive some reward for proper acts that we have performed; it is the Supersoul who then makes the arrangements to ensure that we receive those benefits.

For most jīvas, Paramātmā also acts a guide, working as “the little voice within.” For jīvas inhabiting animal bodies the Supersoul provides them with their “instincts.” For those dwelling in human forms, the level of communication between the jīva and Paramātmā can vary greatly. For those who have no interest in spiritual life, who either take God for granted, ignore Him, or deny His existence, the voice of the Supersoul may remain almost silent. For those who try to connect with the Lord, His voice will become louder, in direct proportion to their commitment to serve the Lord. Someone like Śrīla Gurudeva becomes so connected with the Lord that he can literally receive direct communication and guidance from Paramātmā at all times.

In the Gītā, the Lord tells us that **the Supersoul, being seated in everyone’s heart, is the source of remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. (BG 15.15)** Knowing this fact should help us to understand how He acts as our guide.

For the vast majority of individuals, the Supersoul exists as a four armed, Vishnu form of the Lord. However, for certain individuals, whose consciousness's are focused only on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and who are fully attached to that most beautiful two armed form, the Supersoul can exist in that form.

Just to mention a few more things about the Lord’s Brahma aspect, in the Gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us that **although Brahma, the Lord’s formless energy, is situated everywhere, pervading the entire universe, this aspect of the Lord is always subordinate to and dependent upon His personal form. (BG 13.13-14)**

Like ātmā, Brahma also has many meanings. Again these depend on how it is used in context. These meanings include spirit, the jīva, and the Supreme Lord. Referring back to the idea of varied translations in the Gītā, we can see how these multiple meanings allow a translator to interpret the Sanskrit in ways that best suit the teachings that he wants to present.

When discussing the word “Brahma,” Lord Caitanya, whom we can surely accept as the ultimate authority on any subject, tells us that although this word always represents the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Lord, its direct meaning is the Lord’s impersonal aspect. To avoid confusion, whenever we use the term Brahma in this course, it will always refer to the featureless, impersonal aspect of the Lord.

Although both Brahma and Paramātmā are in fact “God,” both are parts of the complete whole, whereas **Bhagavān is the complete whole.**

Looking back to the title of this section, and its opening paragraph, we hope you can now see that the Lord is indeed three-in-one and one-in-three, and why we mentioned that this teaching may fall into the under the Lord’s acintya-śakti. Though Lord Kṛṣṇa is one, He manifests as Bhagavān, the all-inclusive, supreme personal form of the Lord; as Paramātmā, the Supersoul, witness, rewarder, and guide within every jīva in the material world; and as Brahma, His formless impersonal feature.

Having shared these teachings with you, we can now go back to our discussion on the higher taste than can help us to overcome our lusts.

What Flavor Would You Like?

One of the reasons that we all need a guru is because of the many paths that exist on the Vedic map. In the final analysis, with careful study, it becomes extremely clear that the only goal worth striving for is prema, and the only way to achieve that goal is by following the path of bhakti, and yet, for a variety of reasons, one can find a guru who will recommend and teach you to follow almost every path that exists within the Vedas, and many false paths as well. Although this subject is much too large for this lesson we will expand on it a bit.

For many different reasons, some historical, some

philosophical, and some that are probably inconceivable to us, the Lord has established a variety of paths that lead to different tastes. The flavors these paths lead to are preferred by various types of people, depending upon the level of spiritual advancement they are at.

For those who are fully attached to the pleasures of the senses the Vedas contain paths that lead to the heavenly material planets, where one can experience these pleasures with great ease. In fact the majority of the original books of the Vedas deal with these paths.

For those who have risen above these purely material goals there are paths that focus of Paramātmā, on Brahma, and on various personal forms of the Lord.

The potential rewards, the flavors that are available, and the tastes one can experience, both during his travels on these paths and upon reaching his goal can be similar, mixed, or entirely different, again based on various factors.

For example, each of these higher paths will recommend ways to overcome our lusts, some tastier and easier to perform, others more bitter and difficult to follow. And yet, parts of the rewards one will receive for overcoming kāma, no matter how one reaches that goal, will be very similar, as they will include contentment and a controlled mind, at least for a while.

These type of rewards are included within the category of higher tastes. We may not yet understand why this is so, but it is true. Having spent countless lives seeking out and “enjoying” the “pleasures” of the senses, it may be hard to understand how being completely free of any desire to do that, would taste better than fulfilling those desires, but it would.

Beyond the higher tastes we can experience through having a controlled mind and a steady intelligence lie even sweeter tastes that come as we connect with the various aspects of the Lord. These flavors are millions and billions of times greater than anything we can ever experience with our material senses.

Earlier, we shared Lord Kṛṣṇa’s statement that these higher tastes are experienced by one with a steady intelligence. We also shared that such a man’s thoughts and attachments become focused on this superior flavor.

At another point, just a bit later in the Lord’s instructions, He tells us that a man in samādhi attains a joyful state, and that being in this state will allow him to totally fix his intelligence on his desired goal.

These two teachings; that his thoughts become focused on this higher taste, and that his intelligence becomes fixed on his desired goal; are basically the same, and they both directly relate to the topic we inserted, the Lord, as one, in three aspects. That is why we inserted those teachings. Now that you know about these three aspects of the Lord, we can explain how those higher tastes can be different, depending on our spiritual goals.

The reason we decided to spend so much time on developing and discussing this subject, is because there are many unfortunate jīvas who have been misled by gurus from these other paths. Without knowing any better, they are led into believing that the tastes and experiences they can have while striving for and reaching Paramātmā, and/or Brahma, are the highest tastes and the best experiences available. Because we are aware of the fact that these type of false gurus and misleading teachings are quite prevalent, even in the prison system, we felt that it was our duty to cover this subject, in order to steer any of you who may have been misled by these false teachings, back toward the path recommended by the Lord Himself, bhakti-yoga.

Another reason for keeping you clear of these paths is that the saṁskāras that can be created by following them can be among the most deeply imbedded, and difficult to overcome. On the chance that any of you, the inmates that we humbly serve, were being subjected to teachings, or following practices that would create these saṁskāras, we felt we had a duty to do all we could

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to protect you from these dangerous paths.

Time and time again the Vedas make it clear that a direct loving relationship, based on serving Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Their blooming youth forms, in the rural village of Vṛndāvana, is the most rewarding of all experiences, providing both the greatest variety and sweetest, most pleasurable flavors available anywhere. They also make it clear **that the only eternal relationships we can have with the Lord are those that exist in the Vaikuṅṭhalokas**, with Kṛṣṇaloka being the topmost of those planets.

In addition to this, the Vedas give us many examples of the fact that these other paths are much more dangerous than the path of bhakti, because they are more difficult to follow, and therefore, more difficult to complete. And because while one may fall away from the bhakti path, the gains he made are permanent, so if he resumes his travels, he will pick up where he left off, whereas one who falls away from these other paths, not only loses the progress he made, but he may fall deeper into the material ocean, finding himself farther away from its shore than when he began his misplaced efforts.

On the yogic path that is generally followed in order to gain a connection with Paramātmā one can attain a certain level of happiness and peace, which is one of the main selling points for those who teach this path. The techniques they tell you to practice are designed to calm the mind and control the senses, but both of these admirable goals are to be reached mainly withdrawing the senses from their objects of pleasure, and by withdrawing thoughts from the mind.

Although aspects of this technique were mentioned by Lord Kṛṣṇa when He described the symptoms of samādhi, (remember the turtle, withdrawing his limbs into his shell) ultimately that is not the goal of bhakti-yoga. Bhakti-yoga, as we have pointed out, is more interested in using ones senses, by engaging them in the Lord's service.

The jīva is naturally a very active creature. It best expresses its true character through action. To artificially try to suppress its active tendency is like trying to stop the waves of the ocean.

In the Gītā, the Lord tells us that **action is better than inaction**. He makes this teaching clear by pointing out the fact that **if we refrain from action we will not even be able to maintain the health and life of the material body. (BG 3.8)**

Although these material bodies are not part of what we are really made of, they are still valuable tools that the Lord has loaned us, and we must maintain them so that we can provide ourselves with the best possible opportunities to make spiritual progress in this life.

The same concept holds true with the mind. While some may teach that the best way to control the mind is to stop all thoughts, a wiser guru will teach us the much easier system, where we control the mind by shifting the focus of our thoughts from sense objects to our service to Śrī guru, and to the Names, forms, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Those who teach paths designed to connect the jīva with the Supersoul may recommend focusing the mind on the Paramātmā, which is one form of the Lord, but, there is a serious flaw in this goal because the relationship that the jīva has with the Supersoul is a temporary one. Jīvas who reach the Vaikuṅṭhalokas do not have Supersouls. They are so spiritually pure that they no longer need a witness or a guide, and they have already attained the top level of rewards. Having reached this exalted state the jīva leaves the Paramātmā behind in the material worlds.

If we leave the material body while focused on Paramātmā, we may or may not receive eternal benefits. If we were using this technique as part of a practice aimed at "merging" with the Lord, we will eventually fall back into the material worlds (see below). But if we were recognizing Paramātmā as a form of the Supreme Lord, we can attain one of the Vaikuṅṭhalokas. However the

loving exchanges of our relationship with the Lord will remain highly restrained due to our focus on His almightiness.

There are many examples in the Vedas of great sages who tried to control their senses and mind by restraining them from sense objects. Although many of them practiced this technique for many years, they fell from their paths when their senses became agitated. Some of these same sages then attained success, after they switched their style of practice to bhakti-yoga, where they engaged their senses in the service of the Lord rather than trying to withdraw them from all activity. For all of these reasons, the path of trying to withdraw the senses, while trying to concentrate the mind on the Supersoul, is inferior to bhakti-yoga.

The great devotee Nārada Muni, the intergalactic travelling preacher who took on the form of Śrīvās in the Pañca-tattva, teaches that all other paths are incomplete and insignificant when compared to bhakti.

The path used by those who seek to connect with Brahma is generally based upon the yoga of knowledge. By studying and analyzing everything, these practitioners follow a path that involves determining "not this, not this." In other words, by eliminating all material considerations, they hope to arrive at an understanding of what is left, which they feel must be the highest spiritual reality.

Some teachers will mix in various aspects of the path generally used to connect with Paramātmā with this type of path, creating their own hybrid paths. These may contain withdraw of the senses, study of "not this, not this," and meditation on Brahma, or any combination of these paths.

Unfortunately these teachers are not actually fully informed of all of the Vedic conclusions. If they were, they would understand that even if they complete these difficult paths, the results they achieve will be temporary. The Vedas tell us that even those who do succeed in achieving a connection with Brahma will eventually fall into the material ocean again because they have neglected to worship the Lord's lotus feet. In other words they have disrespected the Lord, by failing to recognize and honor His highest form, which is His personal form.

The tastes one experiences by connecting with Paramātmā or Brahma are higher than those that can be tasted through material senses, but if we ignore the Lord's personal form, and focus our practices on these other flavors, our practices will be wasted efforts. It is only by practicing bhakti, aimed at developing prema and connecting us with the Lord's personal form, that we can attain an eternal love-drenched relationship with the sweet aspect of the Lord on the planet of Kṛṣṇaloka.

While instructing us on the symptoms of a steady intelligence, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us that we should control the senses by engaging them in bhakti-yoga. In keeping with our policy to always be honest with you, we want to tell you that the word bhakti does not actually appear in the original Sanskrit verse. Our gurus have entered this meaning in order to give us a better understanding of what is taught.

This type of translation is exactly what we were referring to in our section on translating the Vedas. These type of translations are fully accepted by Vedic authorities, and this particular translation is an excellent example of why these more meaningful translations are both more accurate and entirely appropriate.

Later in the Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, on two separate occasions, that **the ONLY way to actually know and understand Him and all of the tattvas related to Him is through the practice of pure bhakti, bhakti unmixed with other practices. (BG 11.54/18.55)** In these statements the word bhakti is used.

If any of you are familiar with the law, you will have heard of the legal concept of "controlling cases". These cases establish precedent, legal principles that can later be relied on, as they are considered to be settled and confirmed law.

In much the same way, the great sādhus and gurus are well aware of all of the established principles of the Vedas. When they include the word “bhakti” in their description of a steady intelligence, this is because they are aware of the “controlling verses” that clearly establish bhakti as the only means we can use to gain a full understanding of spiritual truths. Therefore, by adding bhakti to this description, they have in no way changed the meaning, they have only given us a more complete understanding, by mercifully including and pointing us toward these higher truths.

On the other hand, if we become exposed to translations that point us away from bhakti, we are wise to consider that these translators were most likely not practicing bhakti themselves, therefore, based up the Lords own words, in these “controlling verses” (BG 11.54 and 18.55) they themselves cannot possibly have a full understanding of the truth.

For these reasons we are wise to study and trust only those translations that are done by sādhus and gurus who are full time practitioners of bhakti-yoga.

We hope this clarifies these points, answers any questions you may have, and eliminates any concerns that may arise regarding both the superior nature of the bhakti-path and the various way in which the Vedas are translated and interpreted. To make our point on the superiority of the bhakti path even clearer, we now introduce you to our next section on the word samādhi, and the various ways this term has been used and interpreted by followers of these different paths.

Samādhi-Beyond the Basics

As we told you earlier, the Sanskrit word “samādhi” can be translated, in its most basic way, as “undisturbed.” After reading Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s in depth description of the symptoms of someone in samādhi we’re sure you can see why we said that defining this word simply as “undisturbed” definitely fails to convey its full meaning.

Practitioners of various paths will have their own understandings of both the meaning of samādhi and the best way to attain this state. One of the major points of contention will usually be centered on exactly what one should focus the mind on, both in his attempts to reach this state, and upon attaining it.

Many of those who desire to connect with the Lord’s Brahma aspect will try to focus the mind on “nothing.” Of course, due to the active nature of the mind, this is an extremely difficult thing to do. Those who try to teach this method may use terms like, “Find the space between your thoughts, and go there, for that is where peace is found,” or “You must quiet the mind, when the mind is silent, you will know peace.”

As we’ve explained, the mind is just a material tool that is really nothing more than a watered down, dim reflection, of the pure consciousness. And, like the mind, the nature of that consciousness is to always be active. It is this consciousness that is part of who we really are. It is this consciousness that provides the energy to keep the material body functioning on all of the levels that we are not “consciously” aware of. If this consciousness we’re to take a break and become silent or inactive, the material body would “die,” as it would stop breathing and its heart would stop beating.

Clearly, we do not want to stop this consciousness, and in the same way, there is no need to silence the mind.

As jīvas we are comprised of three ingredients; eternity, awareness, and bliss. It is this awareness that drives the mind and causes it to thrive on thought, not on silence.

To support these statements we rely upon the highest authority, the Lord Himself. The superiority of the bhakti path, as well as the pitfalls of the path to Brahma are fully clarified in the Gītā, when Arjuna, seeking an understanding of this very topic, asks the following question.

“Based upon Your earlier explanations, there are devotees

who, endowed with niṣṭhā (strong faith and firm determination) constantly worship You in Your two armed, original form; while others, who place their faith in Your impersonal aspect, are determined to focus on Brahma. Of these two, who has superior knowledge of the science of yoga?” (BG 12.1)

In explaining this verse our gurus tell us that Arjuna wanted the Lord Himself to clarify which practice provided the best means for him to know and reach the Lord. In Lesson 1, one of the definitions we gave you for the word faith was based upon an honest desire to reach out to the Lord. In Lesson 2 we congratulated you because, the fact that you had asked to receive more lessons, confirmed that you had this type of faith.

Since you have a desire to reach out to Him, His answer to this question should be of great interest to you, because the Lord Himself will tell us the best way to do so.

Lord Kṛṣṇa answered, **“Those yogīs whose faith is not based upon any material considerations, and who fix the mind on my original two armed form, constantly worshipping Me with exclusive, one-pointed devotion, are the best among all of those who try to know the science of yoga. That is my conclusive opinion.” (BG 12.2)**

The Lord then explains that, **since all of His aspects are ultimately part of who He is, even those who focus on Brahma also attain Him.** This does not mean they attain His personal form, it simply means they attain an aspect of Him because He is three-in-one, and one-in-three.

However, in addition to focusing on Brahma, the Lord also states that **those who desire to reach Him by this path must also control all of their senses, maintain an equal vision (a steady intelligence) in all situations, and be engaged in activities that will benefit all jīvas, if they wish to reach Him by this path. (Last two paragraphs. (BG 12.3-4)**

The Lord then says, **“Those whose minds are attached to My impersonal feature experience great difficulty in their practices because a jīva who is embodied in a material form will find it very hard to conceive of, and focus on the mind on, something that is formless, devoid of any attributes or variety, and entirely beyond the perception of the knowledge acquiring senses.” (BG 12.5)**

In explaining this verse our gurus point out that the function of the jīvas is to serve the Lord, and our nature is to love, and to be engaged in a loving relationship with Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Those who focus on connecting with Brahma are ignoring, and in fact doing all they can to do away with these essential qualities of who they really are. This is another reason that their efforts are senseless and will ultimately result in unhappiness, as they leave these essential aspects of themselves unattended to.

The final results achieved by these two sets of practitioners are entirely different. Those who focus on connecting with Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, in Their personal forms, can develop a variety of eternal, love filled relationships, based on serving and pleasing the Divine Couple. Whereas, those who achieve success in connecting with Brahma will simply “exist.” They will reside in a spiritual dimension, un-harassed by the illusions of māyā and material sufferings, but there will be no variety there, and no interactions of any kind, either with other jīvas or with the Lord or His associates. After some stay in this dimension they will again fall into the clutches of māyā where they will be forced to take on a material body and be subjected to material sufferings because of their having neglected the Lord’s personal form.

The Lord then makes a statement which further clarifies that those who focus on His personal form have a superior understanding of yoga. After stating the difficulties associated with focusing on Brahma, He gives quite a different outlook for those who focus on His personal form.

The Lord tells us, **“Those who dedicate everything they do**

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to attaining Me (in My personal feature), those who are always engaged in meditations that exclusively focus on Me, and who worship Me alone, to them I award swift deliverance from the ocean of birth and death.” (BG 12.6-7)

While the Lord specifically stated that the path to Brahma is difficult, and while its rewards are temporary, in another section of the Gītā the Lord tells us that quite the opposite is true on the path of bhakti, aimed at connecting with His personal form.

He tells us, “A yogī who is daily engaged in the practice of always remembering Me with single minded focus, who is not attracted to any other path, and who does not strive to achieve any other goal, can easily attain Me. The great souls who attain Me (in My personal two armed form), do not take another material birth in the ocean of misery, for they have attained the highest perfection.” (BG 8.14-15)

With these statements the Lord fully expresses the ease and superiority of the path focused on His personal form.

Those who focus on Brahma consider the state of samādhi to be a thought free state, where one meditates on nothing, or in the alternative, perhaps a state of silent meditation on a formless, featureless, un-manifest, inconceivable aspect of the Lord.

In contrast to this, those who are devotees, the bhaktas, the followers of the teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa / Lord Caitanya, the Vedas, and the true gurus, consider **samādhi** to be **a state where the true function of the jīva is fulfilled. In this state one’s entire consciousness, the intelligence, the mind, and the knowledge acquiring senses are all fully absorbed in focusing on the Names, forms, qualities, associates, and activities of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, while the tools of action are engaged in serving Śrī guru and giving pleasure the Divine Couple.**

Although it will take patience, perseverance, enthusiasm, confidence and practice to reach this state, it **can** be reached.

We would also like you to take note of one small but interesting point about this course. If you look at the description of what a bhakta considers samādhi to be, you will find that, although this is the highest state we can achieve, it fully matches up with the only real practice we asked you to perform all the way back in Lesson 1, which is, as we’ve also told you, the most important rule, and the true test of all our practices, **always remember God**, in essence, **that is samādhi**. So from the very start of this course, and in every lesson we send you, we will be encouraging you to attain this perfected state of consciousness.

Since Arjuna’s question only dealt with comparing the path to Brahma with the path to the Lord’s personal form, we have also focused mainly on those two paths, but we would still like to make a comment on the samādhi of those focused on Paramātmā as well. Those on this path consider samādhi to be a state where the senses are totally withdrawn from their objects and the mind is fully absorbed in focusing on the Supersoul. As we explained earlier, since we cannot have an eternal relationship with this witness, the final results of this type of samādhi will also fail to result in allowing the jīva to fulfill his highest function of lovingly serving the Divine Couple.

All of these truths should be enough to help you understand why, although we should strive for a state of samādhi, our desire should be to go beyond the basic state of being “undisturbed.” While we should all want a steady intelligence and an un-flickering flame for the mind, if we are wise, we will steady our intelligence by focusing it on the personalities and pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and we will feed this flame with the fuel we gather as we walk the path of bhakti-yoga.

Climbing the Stairways to Prema

Our journey to Prema involves climbing many stairways, all at the same time.

We’ve already begun to tell you about the most central of these stairways. This is the one that includes the nine steps to prema,

beginnings with faith. We hope you know the steps by now: associating with sādhus, engaging in bhakti practices, removing the obstacles in our path, and attaining niṣṭhā. At niṣṭhā our practices are firmly established, our faith is secure, and we are absolutely determined to do what we need to do to make progress on our journey, every single day.

In Lesson 9 we also briefly discussed the final four steps that we must take. These are ruci (taste), āśakti (attachment), bhāva (the awakening of spiritual emotions), and finally prema (pure, single pointed, love for Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa).

This nine step stairway can also be looked at in another way, wherein it becomes just a three step process. This stairway is based upon the awakening and unfoldment of our spiritual feelings. On this stairway, the first seven steps of the nine step process are all undertaken on the first step. On this first step we may be pulled by the heart to some slight degree, but we are mainly driven by the intellect and the mind. We know we should, and we know we must engage in our practices, so we do so, but our true spiritual emotions are not yet awakened. This is the sādhana-bhakti stage of our development.

At step two, which corresponds to step eight on the central stairway, our emotions awaken and we become driven by the heart. Actually the changes that take as we come to this level are difficult to describe in words, “driven by the heart” is just our meager attempt to express something that is not easily done. This is not quite as drastic of a step as it may sound either, because there is some gradual development of these emotions. In most cases, the awakening of our bhāva is not an instantaneous event. Yet there is usually a fairly short period of time where these emotions rise rapidly, and we finally reach this stage.

The final step in this three step process takes place when prema fully blossoms in our hearts. Although we have not yet told you this, there are escalating levels of prema as well. We will move through, and experience, the varieties of moods contained in prema, all on this level.

So this three step stairway involves the stage of practice, sādhana-bhakti; the stage where our love first begin to awaken, bhāva-bhakti; and the stage where we reach our destination, prema-bhakti.

Another stairway we should try to climb involves advancing from a beginner, to an intermediate, to an advanced practitioner of bhakti. Moving up these steps involves many different aspects of our spiritual life, and we may move along more quickly in one area and more slowly in another. The sādhus have pointed out three primary areas of consideration that we can look at in judging our progress on this stairway. They are: our level of faith, our knowledge of the Vedas, and our relationship with the Holy Names. We’re going to save an in depth discussion of these steps for the future, however we do want to share a few things about this last consideration, our relationship with the Holy Names. We’ve decided to discuss this particular subject because we’ll be focusing on the Names later in this lesson as well.

As far as the Holy Names go, one is considered to be on the beginner level if he has said the Holy Names even one time, with at least a slight bit of faith in Them. At the intermediate level, one chants the Holy Names constantly; and at the advanced stage, other people can be induced to chant the Holy Names simply by seeing this elevated practitioner.

The final stairway that we will introduce, will lead us directly into our topic for the final sections in this lesson. It involves the various steps we must climb during the development of our spiritual realizations.

This word “realization” and what it represents is an essential aspect of how we progress toward full blossomed prema, So much so, that we will devote our next section to discussing what we mean by this term.

We’ve already mentioned some of the steps in this stairway of

realizations, but we've never expressed them in those terms, and brought them together as a separate teaching, at least not in the way that we are about to present to you.

So let's step away from this discussion on stairways in general and step up to our next topic...

The Stairway to Realizations

What is a "realization"? In some ways this word will be used to represent, what could be thought of as an advanced understanding. When we use the term "understanding," as you surely know by now, we refer to reaching a point where you intellectually grasp a teaching and that knowledge causes you to act accordingly.

When we use the term "realization" we wish to convey both of these meanings and something deeper as well. When we "realize" something, we understand it, and our heart is changed as well.

When we understand something we may change our activities because we "know" it is the proper thing to do, but we may not yet "feel" like making this change. For example, we may be able to stop smoking cigarettes if we understand that we should not smoke, and yet a craving for cigarette may remain. If we come to a where we "realize" we do not want to smoke we will lose both the taste for and the desire to smoke.

Of course, as we mentioned, the true nature of realizations can be hard to describe, so please do your best to work with us, and our feeble attempts to convey its meaning to you.

When it comes to describing spiritual realizations the task can become even more difficult because many of these realizations will involve topics that we at one time found to be inconceivable. Therefore, using inconceivable subject matter for examples presents its own set of difficulties. So please, just bear with us.

The basic meaning of a realization could perhaps best be described by saying that we begin to "feel" or "experience" a truth. While knowledge and understandings deal with the mind and the intelligence, realizations come from the heart. If we understand that we should worship Śrī guru, we will do so, but we may have to rely on the intelligence to drive our actions. Once we have a realizations of our need to worship Śrī guru, we will feel a desire to do so, and our worship will come from our hearts, instead of from our heads.

Another example we can use relates to the fact that Lord Kṛṣṇa is His name. For most of us this is an inconceivable truth. When we come to a point where this truth becomes an established fact in the mind, the intelligence, and in our hearts, when we can fully grasp this with every aspect of our entire consciousness we have realized this truth.

Will this realization affect our behavior? Maybe; maybe not.

If we were already at the intermediate level of chanting, where, by having understood the teachings of the Vedas, we were constantly chanting the Holy Names, then that particular activity may not change, but others may.

However, because of the change of heart that these realizations involve, the experiences we have while we chant, or even when we hear the Names, will definitely change. When we realize that the Names in the mahā-mantra are Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa we will experience an entirely new dimension, a new reality, actually, we will be able to enter into the only true reality there is.

Of course for most of us, at least for now, both this teaching and this example are inconceivable, which only goes to further show the point we made earlier about the difficulty of explaining this term. If you want to intellectually grasp what we are trying to convey, or to understand, or even to realize these truths, but you feel at a loss to do so, then we suggest you seek the shelter of Śrīla Gurudeva, and the Pañca-tattva, for by their mercy, all tattvas can be known, understood, and realized.

We'd like you to go back and review just the final statement of the last paragraph.

We asked you to do this because we're going to use that

statement to segue into a tiny bit of review, on a couple of subjects, and then we'll tie those topics into our discussion on realizations.

After giving you some very general information in Lesson 1, we immediately spent most of Lesson 2, and later, a good bit of Lesson 8 on the subject of taking shelter of Śrī guru, and on other aspects of guru-tattva. We did this because understanding, and then realizing, the importance of Śrī guru's role, is an essential aspect of our progress up each and every one of the bhakti stairways. In truth, we have very little, if any, chance of making progress without at least an understanding of guru-tattva. In other words, until the knowledge that we've given you about the need to take shelter of Śrī guru causes you to bow down to him, to make offerings to him, to seek his guidance and mercy, and to pray to him at least three times a day – your chances of making a lot of progress on your journey are very small.

Along with this understanding, we must also come to understand, and then realize, the critical role that the Pañca-tattva plays in our progress towards prema. It was in our attempt to help you understand this truth that we chose to dedicate most of Lessons 3 and 11 explaining these personalities to you.

If we can understand at least these two teachings, the significance of Śrī guru and the Pañca-tattva, and if we can incorporate the changes in our behavior that are caused by these understandings, into our daily lives, then we will put ourselves into an excellent position to gain other understandings and realizations as well.

As an addition to this statement, let's return to the subject of stairways for just a moment. Although we spoke of them as individual stairways, and although we introduced them as if they were individual aspects of our journey, and although in some ways they are, they are also, in many ways, very interconnected. For example, we just mentioned how possessing an understanding of guru-tattva is essential on all these stairways. And yet, since they have their individual aspects as well, it is possible to climb them at different rates of speed. One devotee may have great faith, but lack knowledge of scripture, while another may be a true scholar of scripture but still be fairly short on faith.

We should keep this fact in mind as we learn more about these stairways, and as we learn more about how we are to behave toward other devotees, based upon their various levels of advancement.

As we come to understand, or begin to have some realizations on guru-tattva, & the role that Lord Caitanya plays in our progression, we can then move into the tattvas related to the Divine Couple, Their Names, forms, qualities, associates, and pastimes, which will include the places where these activities take place. When we refer to the places of Their activities we do not simply mean the village of Vṛndavāna, but we also mean specific places within that village.

Our goal in designing this course is the same as the goal of a guru who has more direct contact with his followers, to lead you to prema. Our task is somewhat complicated by the fact that we are unable to send each of you a large collection of books. To try to explain every tattva and to lead you through these books, one monthly lesson at a time would take years, and years, and years.

Working within these limitations, what we have tried to do is select some of the most fundamental, foundational truths, as well as some of the most essential practices, and combine these two basic ingredients into a course that will allow you to both begin your journey to prema and make progress on it as well.

In a personalized setting a guru may present some teachings to one student and different set, or level of teachings, to another. We do not have that option. Hopefully, if you have a pen pal, you will be able to receive answers to more specific, individualized questions that arise. But, as far as this course goes, we will just

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have to do our best to lead you toward your goal with the resources we have and the system that we've developed.

For these reasons, there is no way for us to be sure that you are advancing at a pace where it is proper for us to reveal certain teachings. While many teachings are designed for everyone, some teachings would generally be reserved for devotees who had shown some advancement on the various stairways of bhakti. For example, when we explained our dilemma, we told you that the teachings of the Gītā are not to be given to those who lack devotion, whose senses are uncontrolled, or who are envious of the Lord. And yet, with no practical way for us to judge these things, we decided to do our best to help you become qualified, and then, trusting in the kṛpā-śakti of Śrīla Gurudeva and the Pañca-tattva, to proceed with sharing the teachings that can lead you to prema.

In the next two sections we will share many teachings on the Holy Names, again these are teachings that one should be qualified to receive, lest both the recipient and the teacher become offenders. But we will share these teachings, hoping that you have become qualified to receive them, while also asking you to please remember all we have said about the serious nature of making offenses.

Returning to the topic of realizations, our gurus have shown us that, when it comes to the types of meditations that we should do, as we work toward realizations, there is a pattern that we should follow. Along with following this pattern, it is recommended that we try not to move forward too quickly. It best suits our chances of proper development to stay at each level until we at least have some understandings of those meditations, before we move ahead.

That is why, after giving you the Śrī guru meditations in Lesson 8, we asked you to focus on those for at least the next two months, and that may not be long enough for many of us. Although we cannot judge your individual progress, we are still willing to move ahead, and to present you with some more topics for meditation in this lesson. This is not to say you must move to these meditations. In fact, we recommend that you never give up meditations on guru-tattva; however, after starting your japa in that way you may, if you feel you are ready, you can also begin to incorporate these new meditations as well.

There is never a need to move ahead. All of these meditations are so pure, and on such a high level, that if you were to leave your material body behind while focused on any of these topics, from Śrī guru, to the Pañca-tattva, to the Names, or the forms, or the qualities, or the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, you would surely escape the prison-house of māyā. And yet, as you do progress, and as you have realizations of these truths, there is a gradually developing level of taste, from sweet, to sweeter, to sweetest.

There are no hard and fast rules that we can share with you on what it takes to qualify for new meditations. If there were to be one criterion that we would point out as being the most important one, it would be the one we've mentioned to you before, greed. It is good to develop a strong desire to learn more and advance. True spiritual greed is of inconceivable value, but still, please be honest with yourself, and do a bit of self-analysis, and self-regulation, when it comes to taking on new levels of meditation.

We'd also like to share a comment or two about the mood of separation. Starting even before Lord Caitanya's times, this mood has been shown to be the most effective means, of developing the emotions that will lead us to prema. In fact, as we mentioned, separation is one of the moods of prema. We do not expect you to realize this mood toward Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa right away, especially considering the fact that you still know so little about Them. But still, as you learn more, this is a mood you should continue to cultivate. You can also work to develop this mood toward Śrī

guru as well. This mood is such a significant part of the way that the followers of Lord Caitanya chant their japa, that one of our gurus says the mood of separation is the only mood we need to practice and develop in order to attain perfection.

As we close out this section on realizations, we want to point out this fact: Since realizations involve the heart, and since prema lies there as well, these realizations are actually nothing more than glimpses of various aspects of our final goal. When we fully uncover our prema we will have full realization of all truths, from guru-tattva, to Pañca-tattva, to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-tattva, which will include realizations of all of the steps along the way, Their Names, forms, qualities, and pastimes as well.

All of these realizations already lie within us. It is just a question of awakening them. To awaken them, we should follow the pattern that we have been given by the sādhus – we should take shelter of Śrī guru, then the Pañca-tattva, and then the Holy Names and Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

We've done our best to design our course in a way that will instill this pattern into your practices. So far we've given you some knowledge about Śrī guru, and some prayers you can use in your meditations on the role he must play in our lives. We've also shared some Pañca-tattva – tattvas and asked you to incorporate them into your practices.

We are now going to share some information on nāma-tattva, the spiritual truths about the Holy Names. We do so in hopes that you all have at least the beginnings of a foundation that is built of faith, and that you all have awakened at least a bit of devotion for the Lord.

With no real way for us to judge if you are ready, all we can say is, we hope you are-because-ready or not... here They come.

Nāma-Tattva

It is a proven historical fact that many modern words in many languages, descend from Sanskrit words and roots. Some of these words were adopted into other ancient tongues, like Latin or Greek, and then into more modern languages, like German or Italian, before finding their way into the English language. Recognizing these types of words can be difficult, unless one studies the changes that were made at each step along the way.

However, there are some words where the link to Sanskrit is clear. An excellent example of this is found in the English word "**name**," which comes from the Sanskrit word **nāma + nām, or nā-muh** (nām like mom), this link is clear because both nāma and name have the exact same meaning.

When we speak of nāma-tattva, we mean all of the spiritual truths involving the Holy Names. Although this subject is vast, we will do our best to present some of the most prominent aspects of these truths.

We have already shared some of these teachings with you. We told you that the name "Kṛṣṇa" is Kṛṣṇa. We also spoke of the fact that saying just one Holy Name erases all of the reaction one would otherwise face for his past sinful acts, no matter how the Name is spoken (excepting of course any sin committed with the intention of using the Names to eradicate it).

Another nāma-tattva is that our actions affect different Names, in different ways. We explained this when we told you that the Names of Prabhu Nityānanda and Lord Caitanya do not accept the offences that the Names of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa do.

Different names also carry different potencies, for example, the Name "Kṛṣṇa" is more potent than the Name "Vishnu."

In our final section of this lesson we're going to be sharing more truths about the Names with you. We ask you to use these statements in the same way you used the ones about Śrī guru in Lesson 8. We want you to incorporate these truths in to your japa meditations. Read a statement at least ten times, then meditate on that truth while you chant some japa, or, you can do this independently of your japa chanting as well. By studying, repeating, and meditating on these truths we will bring them into

our consciousness, allowing us a chance to understand them, and, if we are blessed by the mercy of Śrī guru or the Lord, these truths will awaken in our hearts, allowing us to realize and experience them.

For those of you who are willing to do so, it is also very beneficial to memorize these truths. (Great topics for a pocket aide!)

Meditations on Nāma-tattva

Before we share this list of meditations with you, we want to share two truths. First, since Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Name is the Lord, the Names, just like the Lord, have unlimited glories. And second, just like the glories of the Lord, many of the glories of the Names are inconceivable to most of us. However, even if we are unable to grasp these truths, we must always be aware of the first teaching below, and we should remember this truth whenever we meditate on nāma-tattva.

One final note: we've decided to put these truths into the first person tense because, by learning and meditating on them in that way, they will become positive affirmations as well.

If I doubt the powers and glories of the Holy Names, even after learning so many truths about Them, I will never achieve the goal of my chanting. (The goal being prema)

The Name Kṛṣṇa belongs to the most attractive person, who both gives and enjoys the highest pleasures.

The Name Hara belongs to Śrī Rādhā, because She captures Kṛṣṇa's heart. When I call to Her I will call "Hare!"

The Name Rama means "the enjoyer." It belongs to He who enjoys pastimes with Śrī Rādhā.

At all times I must fill my mouth with the Holy Names. I will not allow a day, an hour, or even a moment to pass without chanting the Holy Names.

If I take shelter of the Holy Names, my heart will become purified and my life will be meaningful, all my miseries will disappear, all my obstacles will be destroyed, and I will attain supreme peace.

I can conquer all the senses, as well as the six enemies (kāma, anger, material greed, illusion, madness, and envy) by chanting the Holy Names.

If I chant the Holy Names I will be freed from all my sins.

Even when I am troubled by hunger, thirst, or other difficulties, I will chant the Holy Names. When I do this the Lord will be very satisfied.

The only source of real wealth is the chanting of the Holy Names.

The Holy Names award all spiritual good fortune, including the goal of life. They are complete, pure and completely beyond the influence of māyā.

There is no need to engage in many different types of practices. I will simply take shelter of the Holy Names and purify my consciousness.

My heart is burning in a fire of sense desires, I will chant the Holy Names and They will enter the core of my heart, and cool my soul with a shower of nectar.

The Holy Names contain all of the Lord's śaktis. They are an ocean of the sweetest of sweet tastes. When all of the obstacles that prevent me from purely chanting the Names are removed, then I will become truly happy.

Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are worshipped just by saying the mahā-mantra. Nothing extra is required.

If I continually chant the Holy Names with faith, the prema in my heart will awaken. I will also come to understand the goal of life and the process that leads to it.

The Holy Names will deliver the entire world from māyā's grip. **Śrī Kṛṣṇa has descended** in the form of the Holy Names.

Those who worship Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, by performing sankīrtana, are known to possess the highest intelligence.

The proper way to worship Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in this degraded

age is to chant the Holy Names.

All perfections will be attained by one who chants the Names purely.

If I commit offenses to the Holy Names my chanting will not bear fruit.

The mahā-mantra is perfect in every respect. If I doubt its potency my chanting will be unsuccessful and I will face constant misery.

The worst of sinners can become a devotee by chanting the Holy Names.

No religious practice is equal to chanting the Holy Names.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa IS His Holy Name. The Name is as powerful as God Himself.

Everything negative flees from the Holy Names, including all anārthas.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is attracted to those who chant His Names, and He awards them with His mercy.

The most perfect beings all chant the Holy Names.

The most perfect shelter and the greatest protector are the Holy Names.

All humans are qualified to chant the Holy Names. No one is prohibited.

I will easily escape māyā's prison if I faithfully chant the Holy Names.

Review and Closing

Well we've come to the end of yet another lesson, and, as always, we thank you for being here with us.

We started out this lesson by telling you that the translations from the Vedas that we will use in these lessons are designed to convey the essence of what is being taught, as opposed to being word-for-word translations.

We then took a long look at the causes of sin. We spoke of kāma, or lust, which is a desire to attain and enjoy objects that give our material senses, pleasure, and we showed you that Lord Kṛṣṇa tells us that kāma is the root cause of sin.

We went on with this topic to further reveal how these lusts arise when we allow the senses to focus on the objects that give them pleasure, and we showed how we can, avoid these lusts, and thus sin, by controlling the senses and focusing them toward the Lord and away from material sense objects.

The next topic was "samādhi", a "fixed mind", or a "steady intelligence". We gave you Lord Kṛṣṇa's definition of this mental state and we talked about how different teachers will claim that samādhi should be attained by focusing on either the impersonal aspect of the Lord, Brahma, or on the Supersoul, the Paramātmā, and we showed why both of these other schools of thought are inferior to focusing the mind on the personal aspects of the Lord, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

We followed that with a basic discussion on the stairways that we must climb on our journey to prema, and then we closed out this month's lesson with two sections on nāma-tattva.

In the first of these we discussed some general truths on the Holy Names, and in the second we gave you some meditations on the Names that you can use in your practices, either during japa or at other times as well.

Our final comment this month is one we've shared with many times: Bhakti-yoga is built on practice. We can "learn" everything in these lessons, but if we fail to begin to do such things as chant the mahā-mantra, our journey to prema will be a very difficult one.

You are always in our prayers and we hope that you begin to understand all of the truths of the Holy Names of the Lord.

We pray that you begin to climb all of the stairways to prema.

**We are, the servant of God's servants,
The IPBYS Prison Preaching Program
All Glories to Śrīla Gurudeva!**

Correspondence CourseLesson 12

1. Define kāma —Give both the one-word translation and a more complete meaning.
2. What are “sense objects”?
3. Kṛṣṇa tells us the cause of sin in a short and direct way. What does He say it is?
4. Where does our lusts reside?
5. What effect does kāma have on wisdom?
6. Where do the dualities that delude us arise from?
7. After analyzing Kṛṣṇa’s statements, what is it that causes us to sin?
8. What are the two best ways to control the mind?
9. What is meant by, “kāma burns like fire”?
10. Can we always trust our intelligence to help us avoid sin? Why did you give this answer?
11. What is the first step in avoiding sin?
12. In Gītā verse 3.6, Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks of “hypocrites” what does He mean by this term?
13. Who should we call on to assist us in our battles against the senses?
14. Name a common quality of all sense objects.
15. Define samādhi.
16. Look over Kṛṣṇa’s description of a steady intelligence, then say a few words about the difficulty of maintaining at least of these symptoms.
17. Name the three energies of the Lord and how He appears in each of these energies.
18. Name the three ways that Kṛṣṇa’s spiritual energy manifests.
19. What two Sanskrit terms are used in the word “Paramātma”? Tell what these terms mean.
20. Does the example of the turtle withdrawing his limbs into his shell do a good job of expressing the bhakti-path? Give two reasons to support your answer.
21. Do we have an eternal relationship with Paramātma? Explain your answer.
22. Name at least two drawbacks in the path of focusing on Brahma.
23. What qualification must one have to fully understand the Vedas? Who determined this standard?
24. Do devotees try to silence the mind? Why?
25. Give two reasons why the path that focuses on the Lord’s personal form is the topmost path.
26. Name all the steps on the nine step stairway to prema.
27. What is a “realization”?
28. At what point should we give up our meditations on Sī guru?
29. What pattern for our meditations have the sādhus given us?
30. Is all name of the Lord equally potent?
31. Which of the meditations on nāma-tattva did you find to be most valuable in your quest to realize these truths? Give at least two, and tell why.
32. Did using these meditations help you to grasp these truths? Explain your answer.
33. For you personally, what was the most important teaching in this lesson; and why did you choose that particular teaching?

You may formally participate in this course by sending your answers to our Alachua team (see address—on page 1), or you may use these questions for self-study.