

The *GITA*
In 3 - D

Confidential,
More Confidential,
And Most Confidential Knowledge
In the
Bhagavad-Gita

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The *Gita* in 3-D

Overview

Spoken by Lord Krishna Himself, the *Bhagavad-gita* is the complete science of the soul, the complete science of the relationship with the Supreme. It has been preserved, passed down, and reverently studied for over 5,000 years, and is now widely published in many languages and distributed to millions around the world.

Yet the knowledge contained in the *Gita* is still called “confidential.” Why?

For one thing, many more millions still do not have this knowledge.

But Krishna says in 4.3 (that means Chapter 4, text 3) that only friends and devotees can understand His teachings. Why does He say that? One may argue that a person who is neither friend nor devotee can still learn about the soul. Further, he or she can learn from some other source, or even figure some of it out by observation of life and death and by deep thought.

The answer is that there is knowledge still deeper than confidential. Krishna speaks also of more confidential knowledge, and finally of the most confidential knowledge of all, the king of all secrets. One can get one’s hands on confidential knowledge, but not on knowledge that is more confidential, and especially not on knowledge that is most confidential of all. Most confidential usually indicates a carefully guarded secret, and this most confidential knowledge which Krishna speaks is, He indicates, carefully guarded from all but friends and devotees.

So what does it mean to be a friend? Friendship is a relationship between persons. We must be willing to accept that Krishna is a real person, not an abstract symbol. And friends respect one another, so we must respect and accept His words, including when He tells us who He is. When He tells us He is the source of all that is, the maintainer, and the ultimate shelter, we must believe Him – which answers the next question: What does it mean to be a devotee? The first requirement is that one must accept that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The problem is that even with the best of intentions it is hard, even impossible, to be directly a friend or a devotee of someone one has not met directly. Why should we believe Krishna is a real person, or believe Krishna’s words? Why should we accept Him as God? The truth is we cannot do it, not without the help of one who actually is a friend and devotee of Krishna. This person will be one who does know Krishna directly, and one whom we can know directly – a linking person, a spiritual master, a pure devotee of

Krishna come down to us. Such a person is His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who has brought us this authentic translation of the *Bhagavad-gita*, and whose purports carry to us the teachings of all the great pure devotees throughout history. Whoever did not have the good fortune to directly meet Srila Prabhupada while he was among us can still meet him not only in his writings but also in those who did meet him. The visible effect of Prabhupada's presence upon them is proof of his spiritual potency, and, ultimately, proof of Krishna.

By becoming willing to be the friend and devotee of one who is a friend and devotee of Krishna, one can himself become a friend and devotee of Krishna.

Finally, how is this knowledge so well guarded? In this way: One who is neither friend nor devotee will not accept Krishna's words as He has said them, but will automatically interpret them to mean something more congenial to his own idea of things. In fact, Krishna may, by His own illusory power, keep such a person entrapped in illusion (read 16.13-20). To this person, the real meaning of the *Gita* will not be revealed though he may read it, even many times.

This being said, now let us proceed in faith that Krishna is a real person and is the Supreme Personality of Godhead whose words can be trusted directly, and let us examine this confidential, more confidential, and most confidential knowledge.

Krishna's Words

In 9.1 Krishna uses the word *guhyatamam*, (most confidential knowledge), and in 9.2 He says *raja guhyam* (king of confidential knowledge.) In these two verses He is introducing His deepest teachings. Then in 18.63 He says *guhyad guhyataram* (knowledge that is more confidential than confidential knowledge) and in 18.64 He says *sarva-guhyataman* (the most confidential of all). These two verses mark the summary of His deepest teachings.

In these places, Srila Prabhupada in his purports has defined confidential, more confidential, and most confidential knowledge. But what is interesting is that he explains a little differently in each place, so let's take a look.

Knowledge of the Soul

In the purport of 9.2, Prabhupada says "confidential knowledge" means "understanding the difference between the soul and the body." People commonly do not know what a soul is, or if it really exists; therefore, a description actually given by the Lord is confidential.

Prabhupada does not directly say the words "more confidential knowledge" here is this purport, but between his definition of confidential knowledge and his definition of most

confidential knowledge, he points out the fact that the soul has activities, and then goes on with a discussion of the activity of performing devotional service to the Lord. This kind of activity, he says, is so purifying that one can immediately feel the result and make spiritual progress. Thus, more confidential knowledge would mean the soul's activities, especially in relationship to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (It certainly appears true that knowledge of devotional service is far more rare -- more confidential -- in this world than simple knowledge of the existence of the soul.)

Then, when Prabhupada speaks of "most confidential knowledge," he says this means "the activities of the soul in the spiritual world." Elsewhere in the *Gita*, as will be shown, a distinction is made between devotional service in practice and pure devotional service. One who is performing pure devotional service is doing the same things as are being done in the spiritual world; that is, he is already in the spiritual world even while still in this world. (9.14: "these great souls perpetually worship Me in devotion.") This kind of knowledge, about activities in the spiritual world, simply cannot be found in the material world except as learned from a pure devotee of the Lord.

So in a nutshell, confidential knowledge of the soul is knowledge of the soul's existence. More confidential knowledge of the soul is knowledge of the soul's activities in relation to the Lord, and most confidential knowledge of the soul is knowledge of the soul's activities in the spiritual world, or pure devotional service.

Knowledge of God

But in the purport of 18.64, Prabhupada explains that confidential knowledge is "knowledge of Brahman," which is defined in the *Gita* as the all-pervasive, impersonal aspect of God. More confidential knowledge is "knowledge of the Supersoul within everyone's heart," defined as the localized personal presence of the Lord. And most confidential knowledge is "just surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead." In the next purport (of 18.65) Prabhupada takes care to stress that this means Krishna Himself, "the original form of Godhead," who is the basis of impersonal Brahman and of whom the Supersoul is a mere fragment. (See 14.27, and also 10.42 and the first sentence of its purport.) Therefore, these are the three levels of knowledge of God: impersonal, localized personal, and original person.

Knowledge of the Deepening Relationship

In the purport of 9.1, Prabhupada says the knowledge described in Chapters 2 and 3 is called confidential. Chapters 7 and 8, he says, go deeper; they are more specifically related to devotional service and are called more confidential. But Chapter 9 deals with pure devotion and is therefore most confidential.

If we read these chapters carefully, we can compare their relative depths and get an idea of what Prabhupada is talking about.

The topics of Chapters 2 and 3 are basically the following: the spirit soul as distinct from matter, doing one's duty for one's own benefit, doing one's duty without attachment for the results and offering the results to the Lord, and, finally, the idea, just the abstract idea, that one should do devotional service to the Lord.

In Chapter 7, Krishna begins to introduce Himself as the object – the origin, the maintainer, the shelter, and the goal. Some of His personal sweetness begins to be felt. In Chapter 8, Krishna describes how He should be remembered and meditated upon as transcendental, and how one should practice devotional service to Him in order to transcend the miseries of material life, especially the cycle of birth and death.

And in Chapter 9, Krishna tells how a person who performs pure devotional service to Him is very dear to Him.

There is a famous analogy comparing devotional service to a jar of honey. The point is that one can speculate for years about the taste of honey, but one cannot know the actual taste until one opens the jar and tries a spoonful.

Devotional service is mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, but impersonally, as from a distance. In Chapters 7 and 8, the jar is opened and the honey is tasted. But in Chapter 9, one dives into the honey and becomes covered with it: not only is one's devotion total, but Krishna is won over, becomes the Friend, and offers personal protection.

To sum up Prabhupada's explanation of confidential, more confidential, and most confidential knowledge in the *Gita*: the 9.2 purport describes three levels of knowledge of the soul, the 18.64 and 65 purports describe three levels of knowledge of God, and the 9.1 purport describes three levels of knowledge of the relationship between the soul and God.

Next we can examine more thoroughly what the *Gita* says about each level of knowledge.

See for yourself

In case you did not look up the verses as you read, here they are again plus a few more. The purports (commentaries) are as important as the verses themselves, so when reading each verse, please read the purport that goes with it.

4.3 (only friends and devotees)

16.13 – 20 (demonic mentality and destiny)

9.1

9.2

18.63 – 65

9.14 (perpetual worship)

14.27 (Brahman)

10.42 (Supersoul)

Chapters 2 and 3 (especially 2.48 – 49)

Chapters 7 and 8 (especially 7.6 – 8, 8.14 – 16, and 8.20 – 21)

Chapter 9 (especially 9.29 – 31)

I. Confidential Knowledge

Confidential Knowledge of the Soul

What is the Soul?

Arjuna's first question to Krishna is, "What should I do?" But Krishna's first answer is not about what to do, but about what the soul is. Without knowing about the soul, Arjuna would not be able to understand any further instructions. Nor would we be able to understand any further instructions without understanding about the eternal soul. Therefore *Bhagavad-gita* begins with an explanation about the eternity of the soul, in 2.12-30.

Reading this, we see that the soul is eternally existing, is spirit, is unchanging, is indestructible and undamageable, and is different from the temporary body.

Reading carefully, we can see clear answers to certain prevailing ideas.

One idea that enjoys popularity is that the soul, or whatever it is that has that quality of soul-ness, is something that developed out of the body. 2.12 confronts that idea immediately: "Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor any of these kings." We all know that there certainly was a time when our bodies did not exist. Therefore, the soul did not develop out of the body, because it already existed before the body did. 2.20 repeats the same point.

Another idea is that one is a body and has a soul, and therefore one can only live one lifetime, after which one's soul will be placed somewhere eternally. But 2.22 tells how the soul changes bodies like someone putting on a new garment after throwing away the old one. So not only did we exist before this body, but we have had many bodies, and we existed before all of them, and will continue to exist in the same active state in the future.

Another popular idea is that when one is liberated from illusion, one will realize one's true identity as God and will give up individual identity and merge with the one-ness of God. This is also refuted in 2.12 as we have seen – the individual soul always existed and will always exist – and in 2.16 where Krishna says that the soul never changes. Losing individuality and merging with a one-ness would be a change, and if the soul never changes, then the soul will never merge with God.

Of course, there is always the idea that the so-called soul is just the body, and there is no such thing as spirit, and when this life is over, that's it. Obviously, Krishna is speaking against this idea, especially in 2.16 & 18, where He specifically compares the eternal quality of the soul to the very different temporary quality of the body.

Since Krishna has given such a precise definition of the soul, it can be concluded that homemade philosophies and opinions have been rendered obsolete.

Inferior and Superior Energies

Prabhupada has given Chapters 2 and 3 as examples of confidential knowledge, but such discussions are by no means limited to those chapters. And in some places, levels of knowledge overlap. Don't be confused; it doesn't matter. It depends on the angle of vision at any given time. The point is to understand the concepts.

Lord Krishna returns to the theme of the difference between the soul and the body in Chapter 7, text 4 and 5.

In 7.4, He describes the material elements in a little detail, as earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence, and false ego. The first 5 of the above are roughly comparable to solid, liquid, combustion and electricity, gas, and space. The last 3 are more subtle, not perceivable by our 5 senses but nevertheless included among His "separated material energies." This means that mind, intelligence, and false ego (false identification of self as the body) are actually subtle material elements, and not spiritual in nature.

In the next verse, the 8 material elements are contrasted with the eternal souls, called "living entities." Throughout the *Gita* the term "living entities" refers to embodied souls in the material world – in other words, eternal spirit souls in material bodies. Here, Krishna calls living entities His superior energy, making the 8 material elements His inferior energy.

In the purport, Prabhupada says the living entities are called superior energy because they are equal in quality with Him – that is, they are also spiritual. But, he says, they are never equal in quantity of power. Being the same in quality as the Supreme Controller, the living entities also want to be controllers, and try to exploit His inferior energy. But they cannot do it successfully because of their minute size. Instead of controlling it, they are controlled by it. These spirit souls wind up in illusion, thinking they are matter.

So now we see that not only is the soul eternal, spiritual, indestructible and individual, we also see that the soul is the same as God in quality but different in quantity and prone to be controlled by inferior substance.

Eternality of Both Energies

Zooming ahead to Chapter 13, we see in Text 2 that the soul is the "knower of the field," and the "field" is the body, which Prabhupada describes as being made of senses.

In 13.20-22, the situation of the soul is described further. Surprisingly, we see that both the inferior material energy and the superior spirit soul are eternal energies. The body, then, is a temporary form of an eternally existing, and always changing, substance, and the soul, which never changes, simply comes into contact with one or another of these changing forms at different times. The problem is the soul identifies with whichever of these forms it has been placed into at any given time. By his own attachment to something inferior, he causes his own suffering and enjoyment. Trying to enjoy (trying to exploit), the soul is following this inferior energy and is “meeting with good and evil among various species.”

The soul thinks he is the doer, but this is just more illusion: The material energy is doing everything by its own laws. (This is in Text 30.)

Related to Krishna

In 15.7, the exact relationship between God and the soul is defined. Krishna says, “The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts.” Thus we see that knowledge of the soul is not complete until it is said that the soul is related (not should be related but is related) to Krishna, that it is related eternally whether the soul knows it or not.

Material Nature

If the soul is described as different from matter, or material nature, the inferior energy of the Lord, then the inferior energy itself should also be described. We have already seen the temporariness of the forms of this material energy in Chapter 2, the eight elements listed in 7.4, and the eternal existence of this energy in 13.20. In 7.14 Krishna confirms that what we call dull matter – because it does not have consciousness in its own right – is nevertheless Krishna’s divine energy.

Chapter 14 describes that the material energy comes in 3 modes or qualities: goodness, passion, and ignorance, which influence the conditioned soul in different ways.

And in 9.10 Krishna tells us that the material energy is working under His direction. 15.1-11 describes the endless complexity of bewilderment for the soul who is enchanted by the material energy.

It is Krishna’s own divine energy, working perfectly under his direction, vast and perfectly able to overpower us tiny little souls who are foolishly rebellious and therefore not working under either His direction or His protection. Ultimately, there is no hope but to surrender to Krishna, as stated in 7.14 referred to above and more completely in 18.57-62.

Confidential Knowledge of God

Brahman: Within everything and Above Everything

Now we have seen that confidential knowledge of the soul is knowledge of the soul's spiritual existence, contrasted with matter. The first level of knowledge of God, called Brahman, is similar. It is knowledge of the existence of God as spirit compared to matter. In his level, there is as yet little or no understanding of God as a person.

Krishna first begins speaking of Himself in Chapter 7, Texts 6-7, as the Supreme Absolute Truth, the source of everything and upon whom everything rests. Then, in the very next text, He begins to describe Himself – not exactly as a person just yet, though He is visibly and obviously a person talking to Arjuna, but as the essence of everything. In the purport, Prabhupada explains that God can be perceived by His all-pervading impersonal presence within His diverse energies. Krishna continues this impersonal description of Himself through Text 11, then wraps it up in 12 and 13 by returning to the point that He is above everything. Thus, though He is both within everything and above everything in His impersonal feature, we understand now that He can be perceived in a preliminary way in the essential qualities of things we see around us.

Again in 15.12-14, Krishna speaks in the “voice” of impersonal Brahman.

And in 12.3 and 14.27 He describes that impersonal, all pervasive aspect of Himself: “unmanifested, beyond the senses, all-pervading, inconceivable, unchanging, fixed and immovable,” and “immortal, imperishable, eternal, and the constitutional position of ultimate happiness.”

Qualities of One Who Has Realized Brahman

One can perceive this presence in things, but actual realization of Brahman gives certain qualities to a soul. Such a soul becomes steady on the transcendental platform and is flawless (5.19). He sees living entities not as their different material bodies but as all being of the same spiritual quality (13.31). His activities are described in 18.53, and in 18.54 he is described as being fully joyful and undisturbed, and equally disposed toward all.

The Source of Brahman

Some believe that Brahman is the topmost truth about God, and that Krishna is a form that somehow materialized, somehow pulled itself together for a purpose out of this formless stratum of impersonal existence. But according to the *Gita* that is incorrect.

The reverse is true. The Supreme Absolute Truth, the highest truth about God, is that He is a Person, from Whom Brahman comes. In 13.13 Krishna speaks of Brahman as “beginningless and subordinate to Me,” and in 14.27 He says He is “the basis of the impersonal Brahman.”

To summarize, in the beginning of God realization one comes to know that God is spirit, not matter, and can be somewhat perceived in the essence of things. Such realization, when mature, makes one undisturbed and happy. And Krishna is the source of this Brahman.

Confidential Knowledge of the Relationship

Duty as Sacrifice

And what of confidential knowledge of the relationship between the soul and God?

Back in Chapter 2, Krishna at first seems to be intent on simply convincing Arjuna to do his duty (fight in the war) and to do it for the practical reason that Arjuna will benefit most by such a course of action (2.2&3).

Arjuna cannot accept (2.4&5), but finally he gives up trying to figure it all out by himself (2.6) and surrenders to Krishna with his question of what to do (2.7).

Of course, Krishna, as explained earlier, responds instead by describing the eternal soul and the temporary body, laying a solid foundation upon which to build His further teaching and ultimately to give His highest conclusion.

Next, Krishna returns to the same practical advice that Arjuna should do his duty for his own benefit (2.31 – 37). But this is only preliminary to the real instruction coming up, on what to do in the context of what should be one’s relationship with the Supreme. That instruction first appears in 2.38: “Do thou fight for the sake of fighting, without considering happiness or distress, loss or gain, victory or defeat...” Krishna presents as the benefit of such an attitude that one will not incur sin. (One of Arjuna’s fears was that fighting, which means killing, would be sinful.)

The instruction is again stated in 2.48 & 49. These two verses are, in fact, an instant summary of all Krishna’s teachings and the conclusion: “Perform your duty equipoised, O Arjuna, abandoning all attachment to success or failure. Such equanimity is called yoga.” (Elsewhere yoga is defined as linking with the Supreme.) “Keep all abominable activities far distant by devotional service, and in that consciousness surrender unto the Lord.”

The problem is that the summary is a little too instant for Arjuna. He does not catch the conclusion (surrender in devotional service). Consequently, after Krishna says a little more about both the freedom from sinful reactions one can experience and the kind of divine consciousness that can result from the approach He has recommended, Arjuna can only ask how to recognize a person in such divine consciousness, instead of how to become such a person (2.54).

Ever wise and patient, Krishna sees that Arjuna has missed His point, and slows down for His friend. He answers the question – this person is one who has given up desire for sense gratification and is satisfied in the self alone (2.55) – and in so answering He takes the opportunity to elaborate on detachment from one’s senses. Detachment from senses is essential anyway for following His instruction, and is based on knowledge that one is a soul and not the body that contains those senses (2.56-72).

From this, Krishna gradually, and more painstakingly than before, brings the whole discussion back to His point, which he again states clearly in 3.9. Work, he says, must be done as a sacrifice for Vishnu, or God: “Perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction.” He elaborates more, and then again restates His instruction in 3.30: “Therefore, O Arjuna, surrendering all your works unto Me, with full knowledge of Me, without desires for profit, with no claim to proprietorship, and free from lethargy, fight.”

In summary, then, in Chapters 2 and 3, Krishna tells Arjuna to do his duty without attachment, and offer the results to the Lord. He speaks of devotional service, but in this level He is talking about *karma-yoga*. *Karma* means reactions to material actions, but it also means those material actions themselves, and here in this context it especially means material duties. (One ends up with a particular set of material duties in this lifetime because of one’s previous material activities, all of which is *karma*.) *Yoga* means to link with the Supreme. Therefore, *karma-yoga* is a beginning level of devotional service, that one should do one’s material duty (to which one is still attached due to his identification with the body) but do it without attachment to the results, such as reward or payment, instead of doing it to reap those results, and offer up those results as a devotional sacrifice. In this way, one can even use one’s identification with the body and associated duties as a way to begin to link with God in a relationship. Prabhupada has often called it “dovetailing one’s propensities in Krishna’s service.” A dovetail joint is one that very strongly joins two different pieces of wood as one unit. Here, material consciousness and spiritual consciousness are strongly joined in spiritual purpose.

An Impersonal Distance

Prabhupada says that confidential knowledge of God is knowledge of impersonal Brahman, and he says that confidential knowledge of the relationship is that found in Chapters 2 & 3, which recommend *karma-yoga* or beginning level devotional service to a vaguely personal idea of God. This is not really a contradiction because, in essence, the second point here is a little impersonal as well. This devotional service is described as if

from a distance, as a duty, a *should*, and as an intellectual concept. In all of Chapter 2, Krishna has not (except in 2.61 briefly) presented Himself as the object of this devotional service, nor has He even presented Himself as God. In 2.12, He just lumps Himself in with all the eternal souls. (“Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor any of these kings...”) In 2.49 He says, “Surrender unto the Lord” with no mention that He is the Lord. Likewise in 3.9 He says, “Work performed as a sacrifice for Vishnu” without mentioning that Vishnu is an expansion of Himself. In 3.30 He does say, “Surrendering all your works unto Me” but again He does not elaborate on His own position for the rest of the Chapter. When God speaks of Himself mostly in third person, the feeling is still on the impersonal level.

The main thrust is to differentiate spirit from matter. Soul is spirit, God is spirit. Body is matter, senses are matter. One should use one’s body to act in spiritual consciousness, detached from that body with its senses, for God Who is spirit. A foundation of transcendental knowledge is needed in order to actually practice doing one’s work without attachment. And such practice is needed, in turn, in order to realize such transcendental knowledge.

Thus, not only Chapters 2 & 3, but also 4 & 5, and, in a sense, most of “Chapter 6, are about confidential knowledge. The sequence is the following: In Chapter 2, Krishna first gives fundamental transcendental knowledge, then tells Arjuna to act on it (do his duty without attachment). In Chapter 3 He explains work without attachment in more detail, and in Chapter 4 tells how such work leads one to realize transcendental knowledge. In Chapter 5 He describes what it is like to have realized transcendental knowledge. And in Chapter 6 is the natural consequence: meditation on the object of transcendental knowledge. That leads right up to entering devotional service, or more confidential knowledge, beginning in Chapter 7.

See For Yourself

Knowledge of the soul (and of material nature):

2.12 – 30

7.4 & 5, 7.14

9.10

13.2, 13.20 – 22, 13.30

15.1 – 11 (especially 7)

18.57 – 62

Knowledge of God:

5.19

7.6 & 7, 7.8 – 11, 7.12 & 13

12.3 & 4

13.13, 13.31

14.27

15.12 – 14

18.51 – 54

Knowledge of the relationship:

2.2 – 5, 2.7, 2.38, 2.48 & 49, 2.54 & 55, 2.56 – 72

3.9, 3.30

6.27 – 30, 6.47

Yoga Ladder:

3.19

4.30, 33, 38

5.16 – 18

6.3 & purport, 6.47 & purport

7.1 & purport

II. More Confidential Knowledge

The Soul's Activities

The Real Taste

After explaining to Arjuna in six chapters about the difference between spirit and matter, ways of acting on that knowledge, and the results of realizing that knowledge, Krishna shifts gears as He moves into Chapter 7.

Called the *bhakti-yoga* section of the *Gita*, the middle six chapters (7-12) deal specifically with *bhakti* or devotional service to the Lord. Prabhupada says in the 6.47 purport, "Yoga actually means bhakti-yoga; all other yogas are progressions toward the destination of bhakti-yoga."

Now Krishna begins to reveal Himself more personally, as Himself the source, the support, and the shelter of all. He begins to introduce the taste of Himself quite literally, as if speaking directly to the senses, "I am the taste of water..."(7.8)

This taste can only be known by actual performance of devotional service. No more just theory. No more intellectual distance. That figurative jar of honey is opened, the experience is for real, and Krishna Himself is the center. Krishna Himself is the honey! There is no such thing as devotional service that does not contain, touch, and taste the sweetness of that person Krishna. Never mind the fact that He is now revealing Himself quite gradually, beginning with His impersonal aspect of Brahman, which, in this same passage, was previously discussed as just confidential knowledge. He is just being a little cautious. Like any person, He reveals Himself a little at a time, as we shall see.

To know that devotional service has not only an object but also a taste, and that that object, Who is Krishna the Person, is Himself the quality of that taste, is much more confidential knowledge than simply to know that one is an eternal spirit soul, and that God exists, and that one *should* perform some activities called devotional service. This, then, is what Prabhupada calls "more confidential knowledge."

The Soul in Relationship with God

Previously, confidential knowledge was discussed in three categories: knowledge of the soul, knowledge of God, and knowledge of the relationship between the two. But now we find it is no longer possible to discuss knowledge of the soul separately from knowledge of the relationship because more confidential knowledge of the soul means knowledge of

the soul's activities performed in relationship to God. In other words, the soul is drawing closer to God.

But how does the soul draw closer to God? Of what activities do we speak when we talk of activities of devotional service? It is time now to enter more deeply into the mystery!

The First Step of Devotional Service

The last verse of Chapter 6 sets the direction for Chapter 7 – one should always think of Krishna. Then in 7.1, the first definite instruction is given as to how to always think of Krishna. And what is that instruction? “Now hear,” Krishna says, “Now hear from Me.”

This is very significant. Prabhupada explains in the purport of this text that there are 9 processes of devotional service (we'll go over them in upcoming pages) and the first of these processes is hearing. All others depend upon hearing. If one does not hear about God, how can one serve Him?

Actually this is not the first time this first instruction is given. Back in 4.34 Krishna told Arjuna to inquire submissively from a self-realized spiritual master. The obvious implication is that he should hear the answers.

Simply hearing about the Supreme Personality of Godhead and our relationship to Him is counted as devotional service. It is in itself enough to enable the soul to taste the sweetness of the object of devotional service: Lord Krishna the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.

Involving the Senses

There is an intriguing definition of devotional service given by Srila Prabhupada elsewhere in his writings (in his translation of *Caitanya Caritamrta*, Madhya Lila 20.125). There he says, “Devotional service, or sense activity for the satisfaction of the Lord...” In fact, this definition is very intriguing when we examine Chapter 7 of the *Gita*, texts 8-11, in which Krishna suddenly makes a series of 14 statements of what He is – actually examples of ways He can be known. What is so interesting is that six of those statements specifically involve the five senses – those same senses that we were previously told to detach from!

But now listen. First is the already quoted, “I am the taste of water.” Then come “...(I am) the light of the sun and the moon... I am the sound in ether...I am the original fragrance of the earth, and I am the heat in fire...” culminating in the most unexpected statement, “I am sex life which is not contrary to religious principles...” Remember Krishna has just told Arjuna “Now hear.” The first use of hearing as a form of devotional service, hearing about God, tells us how to know Him through our senses.

The Highest Goal

Devotional service is experiential, not theoretical, and it involves the use of our senses – but only for the sake of Krishna’s satisfaction. Using our senses for our own satisfaction only perpetuates our bondage to the material world, as we have already been taught in Chapters 2 and 3.

The Vedic scriptures of India do provide methods of worship for those who seek to improve their stay in this material world. Krishna refers to such worship and the resulting temporary pleasures and destinations in texts 20-23 of this seventh chapter.

But He has already pointed out a higher choice in 7.12-14. There is something above the modes of material nature. “Deluded by the three modes (goodness, passion, and ignorance), the whole world does not know Me, who am above the modes and inexhaustible.” (text 13). That word “inexhaustible” must be very attractive to one wearied by the continual struggle for frustratingly exhaustible material results. Next, in text 14, He gives direct hope to that weary soul: “This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it.” Rebellion against God is exhausting. It is against overwhelming odds and also against the soul’s spiritual nature. Surrender is a great relief because the way then becomes easy and natural.

Krishna says it a little more clearly in text 18: “...Being engaged in My transcendental service, he is sure to attain Me, the highest and most perfect goal.”

This brings us to texts 20 – 23, referred to three paragraphs ago, where Krishna compares the destinations of materialistic worshipers (who worship dependent, delegated controllers of material affairs in the universe) with the destinations of those who worship Him. In text 23 He says: “Those who worship the demigods go to the planets of the demigods, but My devotees ultimately reach My supreme planet.” Prabhupada reminds us in the purport that the planets of the demigods are within this material world, and in Chapter 8, coming up in our discussion, Krishna tells us where His own planet is located. (It is not in this material world.)

Chapter 7 ends with the statement that one who is fully in Krishna consciousness “can understand and know Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, even at the time of death.”

When you think about it, that is not as easy as it sounds. There are not so many pleasant ways to die; the time of death can be very traumatic with violence or overwhelming illness. Therefore, in the first two verses in Chapter 8, Arjuna asks a series of questions, culminating in, “How can those engaged in devotional service know You at the time of death?” It is an important question.

It is so important that even before answering, Krishna first restates His point, along with the reason why it is so important: “Whoever at the end of his life quits his body,

remembering Me alone, at once attains My nature... Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail.” (8.5 & 6)

We create our destiny by our consciousness at the moment of death – and we create our consciousness at the moment of death by the way we live our lives. Therefore, when Krishna does answer Arjuna’s question, He gives practical advice about remembering on a daily basis. One should, He says, always practice thinking of Him internally while externally carrying out one’s prescribed duties. And how should one think of Him? One should think of His form, and do so constantly, and, He suggests, one should think of who He is and of how amazing He is: “... who knows everything, who is the oldest, who is the controller, who is smaller than the smallest, who is the maintainer of everything, who is beyond all material conception, who is inconceivable, and who is always a person. He is luminous like the sun, and He is transcendental, beyond this material nature.” (8.9).

There follows some discussion of a particular yogic practice, with the point always being again the importance of remembering Krishna at the time of death. It is this remembering of Krishna, and not the particular type of yoga practice, which determines the success of the yogi’s life. And success, Krishna says in text 13, means the yogi “will certainly reach the spiritual planets.”

The topic in this eighth chapter is the leaving of the material world and going to the spiritual world, but in the next text, it is as if Krishna cannot help slipping in a hint of His deepest desire, which is the most confidential knowledge and which He has not really led up to just yet: “For one who always remembers Me without deviation, I am easy to obtain, O son of Prtha, because of his constant engagement in devotional service.” (8.14) Krishna wants to be won over – but maybe He did not exactly intend to say so just yet because in the next verse He recovers His focus on destinations: “After attaining Me, the great souls, who are yogis in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection.” (8.15)

Then from text 16 through 19, the exact nature of the material world’s temporariness is described: it is cyclical. There is repeated birth and death, and there is repeated creation and destruction. But Krishna has a supreme abode. It exists above the miseries of the material world, above the cycles of birth and death, of creation and destruction. It is unchanging and unaffected by any material influence. It is the supreme destination, and once one attains it, one never returns to this material world. That eternal spiritual world is the destination of one who practices remembering Krishna through life and therefore succeeds in remembering Krishna at the time of death (8.20 & 21).

One last thing. Krishna takes trouble to explain how yogis can choose their destination (to leave the material world forever or to return to it) by choosing their time of death. Sounds difficult? No problem, He assures Arjuna, for “although the devotees know these two paths, they are never bewildered... Simply by performing devotional service, he (the devotee) attains all these, and at the end he reaches the supreme eternal abode.” (8.27 & 8.28). In other words, the devotee simply serves Krishna and depends upon Him.

Elaborate yogic practices are not needed. Just do devotional service and Krishna takes care of the rest.

In summary so far, in Chapters 7 and 8, which Prabhupada has called “more confidential knowledge,” Krishna introduces: 1) the object, 2) the experiential quality, and 3) the resulting destination, of devotional service. Krishna contrasts: 1) the misery of the material world with the transcendental quality of the spiritual world, 2) the cyclic patterns of the temporary material world with the eternality and unchangeability of the spiritual world, and 3) the destinations of the materially attached with the destination of the devotees. And Krishna tells how to practice devotional service – by hearing about Him and practicing to remember Him always – so that the desired result can be achieved: to remember Krishna at the time of death and leave this world of birth and death for the eternal supreme abode of Krishna.

Nine Processes of Devotional Service

It was mentioned that hearing about Krishna is the first of nine processes of devotional service. Now is a good time to look at those nine processes.

This list first appears in the Seventh Canto of the scripture called *Srimad Bhagavatam*, and Prabhupada quotes the verse in Sanskrit near the end of his Introduction to the *Gita*:

*Sravanam kirtanam visno
Smaranam pada-sevanam
arcanam vandanam dasyam
sakhyam atma-nivedanam*

He did not directly translate it then, but he did do so, in at least two purports, later in the *Gita*. In the purport to 9.1 he says: “...pure devotional service, which consists of nine different activities: hearing, chanting, remembering, serving, worshiping, praying, obeying, maintaining friendship, and surrendering everything. By practice of these nine elements of devotional service, one is elevated to pure spiritual consciousness, Krishna consciousness.”

Also in the middle of the purport of 11.55 he says: “As indicated by the word *mad-bhaktah*, he fully engages in devotional service, specifically the nine processes of devotional engagement: hearing, chanting, remembering, worshiping, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, offering prayers, carrying out the orders of the Lord, making friends with Him, and surrendering everything to Him. Once can engage in all nine devotional processes, or eight, or seven, or at least in one, and that will surely make one perfect.”

To examine each one of these nine processes in full would be a whole essay in itself, but we can look at a few points.

The word *kirtanam*, translated “chanting,” actually covers chanting the holy names musically and congregationally, or in private meditation, as well as speaking or teaching about Krishna and in general glorifying Him.

The words *sevanam* and *dasyam* both mean “service” but in different senses. *Sevanam* means doing activities of service, or, as *pada-sevanam*, “serving the lotus feet of the Lord,” it means coming to the point of placing oneself in an attitude of service, or in a subordinate position to the Lord. *Dasyam* means “obeying” or “carrying out the orders of the Lord.” A *dasa* is one whose very identity is “servant,” and is at the beck and call of the master, doing whatever needs to be done.

Arcanam is another kind of active service, called here “worship” by Srila Prabhupada. It means specifically activities in relation to worship of the Deity in the temple. This idea may give some people a problem in their minds, but the object is to practice treating the Lord as a person. Krishna has form, He has feelings, He has spiritual senses. He is also everywhere, so He is already within any piece of wood, metal, or stone because in His impersonal feature and as His localized personal presence in every atom (to be discussed, coming up), He already pervades all of His creation. But when the Deity is carved according to scriptural injunctions and installed in the temple according to scriptural injunctions, Krishna is asked to be present, and agrees to be present, in a special personal way in the Deity form to receive our practice of personal devotional service. Thus food, bath, dress, decoration, and ceremonial honors are offered to the Deity on a regular basis, just as if a king were in residence, and otherwise ordinary activities such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, decorating, flower arranging, etc., become activities of devotional service. Anyone who has participated in such activities knows that those activities become mysteriously more delightful due to their transcendental purpose. *Arcanam* is a very concrete way to use our material senses in practice of “devotional service, or sense activity for the satisfaction of the Lord.”

Two Levels of Devotional Service

That word “practice” is worth looking at again. Back to the purport of 9.1 as quoted above, “pure devotional service, which consists of nine different activities... by practice of these nine elements of devotional service one is elevated to pure spiritual consciousness, Krishna consciousness.” Here it can be plainly seen that there is pure devotional service, and there is practice devotional service that makes one pure. Both levels consist of the same nine processes.

Krishna Himself distinguishes two levels in Chapter 12, appropriately titled “Devotional Service.”

The chapter begins with Arjuna asking Krishna if it is better to worship the all-pervading impersonal Brahman feature, or to worship the personal feature, Krishna Himself, who is standing before Arjuna. Arjuna is, Prabhupada points out, just looking for confirmation of his position because he is attached to his friend Krishna the person. Krishna declares

once and for all that yes, it is better to worship Him. He says in text 4 and 5 that worship of His impersonal feature is very difficult. Prabhupada continues the idea in the purport, saying, “One should know for certain that this unmanifested realization is against the nature of his spiritual blissful self,” and it is “troublesome,” with the risk of failure.

By contrast, Krishna says in 12.6 - 7 that the path of direct personal devotion to Him is swift and sure. Then in text 8 He gives the instruction to engage in pure devotion: “Just fix your mind upon Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and engage all your intelligence in Me. Thus you will live in Me always, without a doubt.”

The trouble is, who can fix his mind upon Krishna? Who can engage all his intelligence in Krishna, and live in Krishna always? Distractions and material desires come by the thousands! Most of the time, we may feel we are lucky to remember Krishna now and then. In the beginning of spiritual life, we are still under the influence of the three modes of material nature, and we may remain in the beginning stages for many years.

That’s all right; Krishna knows this. Therefore, in Text 9 He says: “If you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then follow the regulative principles of *bhakti-yoga*. In this way develop a desire to attain Me.” There it is. Krishna is saying Himself what Prabhupada has just said, quoted above. There is pure devotional service, and there is practice devotional service that makes one pure.

Prabhupada gives a simple and brief description of the regulative principles of *bhakti-yoga* in the last paragraph of the purport to 12.9. They are essentially the same thing as the nine processes described above. They are called regulative principles because they are regulated by guidelines from scripture and from the spiritual master. No one is left having to guess how to do them effectively.

In fact, Krishna is so desirous of giving everyone a fair chance that He does not stop here. He knows that for various reasons, many cannot perform these regulative principles of *bhakti-yoga*, so in text 10-12, He gives alternative instructions in descending order, so that those who need to may start with doing their duty without attachment and offering the results, or just practicing detachment from the results, or seeking transcendental knowledge or practicing meditation in some way. Krishna does not want to exclude anyone from the hope of someday attaining him.

Now back to the idea of two levels of devotional service. Krishna specifically describes these two levels in two other verses, which do not appear together but which read like a sequence.

14.26: “One who engages in full devotional service, unflinching in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman.”

18.54: “One who is thus transcendently situated at one realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything.

He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me.”

Notice that in 14.26 the word used is “full,” not “pure.” If we can get to the point where our devotional service is full and unflinching, we become liberated from the modes of material nature. When we are thus liberated, we are on a certain level, from which actual pure devotion becomes possible, as seen in 18.54.

This leads right to the most confidential knowledge. But before going there, we must first discuss more confidential knowledge of God.

More Confidential Knowledge of God

The Lord in the Heart

“Yet in this body there is another, a transcendental enjoyer, who is the Lord, the supreme proprietor, who exists as the overseer and permitter, and who is known as the Supersoul.” (13.23)

We are being invited even more deeply now into this great mystery. "Come inside," Krishna seems to be saying, "and really feel the presence of the Lord in your heart."

It isn't the first time He has described this localized personal aspect of Himself. At the beginning of this chapter Arjuna, wanting to solidify his foundation of knowledge, puts forward a request to hear more about "nature and the enjoyer, the field and the knower of the field, and knowledge and the object of knowledge." The enjoyer he means is the living entity, whose intention it is to enjoy material nature.

In 13.2 Krishna begins His response to Arjuna's request. First He defines the “field” as the body and the “knower of the field” as the one who knows the body -- in other words, the soul who occupies the body, as a player might occupy a field in which he can play. This is basic soul-and-body stuff which He has already explained in Chapter 2. Next, in 13.3, He proclaims, "And I am the knower in all bodies." He is just making an outline now; He'll elaborate a bit later. Then, in texts 4-7 He recaps the elements of this field of activities, and in texts 8-12 He defines knowledge. In this brief definition it is clear that knowledge means spiritual knowledge only, knowledge of reality and of qualities from a spiritual point of view. All else, He says, is simply ignorance.

That much being said, Krishna now, with obvious relish, dives deeply into the topic of most importance to Him at this point, the "object of knowledge." "I shall now explain the knowable, knowing which you will taste the eternal. Brahman, the spirit, beginningless and subordinate to Me, lies beyond the cause and effect of this material world." (13.13)

It is interesting that in the purport Prabhupada says, “Now He begins to explain the knowable, first the soul and then the Supersoul.” We have learned the term Brahman as the all-pervasive impersonal aspect of God, but a quick check with the glossary confirms that the word has more than one meaning. Here it indicates whatever is spiritual rather than material. That includes the soul, which is also eternal, spirit, beginningless, subordinate to Krishna, and actually beyond the cause and effect of this material world (in spite of illusory attachments to the world.)

But especially in this text, the word Brahman also introduces the Supersoul who is also beginningless and subordinate to Krishna. This is borne out in the purport and in the next few texts, 14-18, ending with, “He is situated in everyone's heart.” These 5 verses are very beautiful in themselves, managing to express both the mysteriousness and the specific-ness of the Supersoul:

“Everywhere are His hands and legs, His eyes, heads and faces, and He has ears everywhere. In this way the Supersoul exists, pervading everything.

“The Supersoul is the original source of all senses, yet He is without senses. He is unattached, although He is the maintainer of all living beings. He transcends the modes of nature, and at the same time He is the master of all the modes of material nature.

“The Supreme Truth exists outside and inside of all living beings, the moving and the nonmoving. Because He is subtle, He is beyond the power of the material senses to see or to know. Although far, far away, He is also near to all.

“Although the Supersoul appears to be divided among all beings, He is never divided. He is situated as one. Although He is the maintainer of every living entity, it is to be understood that He devours and develops all.

“He is the source of light in all luminous objects. He is beyond the darkness of matter and is unmanifested. He is knowledge, He is the object of knowledge, and He is the goal of knowledge. He is situated in everyone’s heart.” (13.14 – 18)

In the next 4 verses, Krishna goes back a little to reiterate and refine knowledge of the relationship between the soul and material nature, as we have already discussed in the previous chapter of this study, just to make sure it is perfectly clear.

Only now does He speak the words quoted in the beginning of this section, “Yet in this body there is another...” It is as if He is not quite satisfied yet with the description He gave in texts 14 – 18. Beautiful though it was, it may still seem distant, intellectual. He wants to bring it home. In this body there is another! In your body there is another, another person! He is the one who oversees your activities; He is the one who permits you to do whatever you do. He is in fact the one who safeguards your free will because otherwise the soul is simply controlled by material nature. How could the soul act on any free-will choice at all without the Permitter’s help?

When Krishna says, “He is near to all,” He means near to you, in your own heart. “One who understands will not take birth again...” (13.24) In text 25 He shows that anyone can perceive the Supersoul, no matter what their level of spiritual awareness, whether they practice *karma-yoga*, *jnana-yoga*, or *dhyana-yoga* (that is, by working without fruitive desires, by cultivation of knowledge, or by meditation.) Even, in text 26, if people only hear about Him and are not particularly on a spiritual path they can still begin to worship Him.

Finally, there is the important point that the Supersoul is the “transcendental enjoyer.” The tiny soul sometimes enjoys but also suffers, being caught in material nature. But the Supersoul’s enjoyment never ends and never even depends on anything material because He is transcendental, above material nature. Thus we should see the difference between Him and ourselves.

Seeing Paramatma – What He Looks Like!

Even before Chapter 13, Krishna has mentioned His feature as Supersoul many times in many ways, without specifically defining Him.

Supersoul is within every atom. Supersoul is also within the heart of every living entity.

In 8.9, when Krishna advises Arjuna how to think of Him, He says “...who is smaller than the smallest...” and Prabhupada in the purport identifies this as the Supersoul.: “The living entity is one ten-thousandth part of the tip of a hair” – (the scriptural description of the size of the soul) – “but the Lord is so inconceivably small that He enters into the heart of this particle. Therefore He is called smaller than the smallest. As the Supreme, He can enter into the atom and into the heart of the smallest and control him as the Supersoul.” Previously, Prabhupada has said in the 4.11 purport, “Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is partially realized in His impersonal *brahmajyoti* effulgence” – (the impersonal aspect of Brahman sometimes called the great light; *jyoti* means light) – “and as the all-pervading Supersoul dwelling within everything, including the particles of atoms.”

In 6.14, Krishna has advised that “one should meditate upon Me within the heart and make Me the ultimate goal of life.” In 6.29 He says, “A true yogi observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the same Supreme Lord, everywhere.” In the next text’s purport Prabhupada writes, “In the case of the yogi who sees the Lord as Paramatma within the heart...such a yogi turns into a pure devotee and cannot bear to live for a moment without seeing the Lord within himself.” And then Krishna says next, “Such a yogi, who engages in the worshipful service of the Supersoul, knowing that I and the Supersoul are one, remains always in Me in all circumstances.”

In the *Gita* there is no description of what the Paramatma looks like, but there are several descriptions in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* by those great yogis and pure devotees who have seen. These descriptions are quite detailed accounts portraying His exquisite beauty. One may read them in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* in the following places:

Canto 2, Chapter 2, texts 8 – 11, a concise summary description of Supersoul.
Canto 3, Chapter 28, texts 13 – 33, where the incarnation of the Lord known as Kapila is instructing His mother about spiritual science; this description is in more detail.
Canto 4, Chapter 24, texts 45 – 52, spoken by Lord Siva, glorifying the Lord as Supersoul.

The *Gita* does feature an illustration of this form of Supersoul as seen by a yogi in meditation. Briefly, it is said that Paramatma has four arms, a youthful dark bluish complexion, lotus petal shaped eyes, smiling mouth, black curling hair, gold jewelry, shimmering yellow garments, flower garland, and crown or helmet, and is holding four real, symbolic items in His very real four hands: conchshell, disc, club, and lotus flower.

We are invited to meditate on Him. Even though at present we cannot actually see Him, meditation on paintings or mental images of Him is perfectly valid and very helpful.

What He Does in the Heart!

In Chapter 13, Krishna calls the Paramatma the “overseer and permitter.” Way back in Chapter 2, Prabhupada quotes, in his purport to text 22, a metaphor from the Vedic Upanishads, which compares the minute soul and the unlimited Supersoul in one body to two birds in a tree. One bird is busy eating the fruits of the tree, while the other bird is aloof from such greedy activity and is simply watching. Prabhupada translates: “Although the two birds are in the same tree, the eating bird is fully engrossed with anxiety and moroseness as the enjoyer of the fruits of the tree” – (some fruits are sweet and some are bitter, symbolizing karmic reaction to material activities) – “But if in some way or other he turns his face to his friend who is the Lord and knows His glories – at once the suffering bird becomes free from all anxieties.”

In Chapter 10, texts 10 & 11, we see that the Lord in the heart gives special help to His devotees. “To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.”

He says the same in 15.15: “I am seated in everyone’s heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness.” But wait a minute! Forgetfulness? Why would He give forgetfulness? But He does just that! Earlier in this essay it was stated that the Supersoul is the protector of free will. If eternal spiritual souls want to forget God they must have some help, since the Lord is everywhere, so God helps them forget. Similarly, if they could remember all their past lives – and horrible deaths! – the

memories would be too overwhelming and would inhibit the still-existing desire to enjoy material nature.

And when memory is needed, whether to remember one's past material desires that may still lurk deep in the subconscious and still be unfulfilled, or to remember one's eternal relationship with the Lord, then memory is given. And when knowledge is needed it is given. In countless ways the Supersoul is helping the living entity, whether he wants to forget God or remember God. Supersoul is the true friend, absolutely no matter what.

In 18.61 Krishna says, "The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine made of the material energy."

Then in 18.62 Krishna says, "Surrender unto Him utterly. By His grace you will attain transcendental peace and the supreme and eternal abode." Here, it is clear that the Supersoul is acting as spiritual master within; this surrender is to His guidance, and His guidance gets you to the supreme destination which is Krishna's abode. In other words, Supersoul guides us to Krishna. In 18.63, Krishna identifies this as "still more confidential knowledge."

In his book *The Science of Self-Realization*, Srila Prabhupada states, "From without, the devotee is helped by the spiritual master, the bona-fide representative of Krishna, and from within the Lord helps the devotee as *Caitya guru*, being situated in the heart of everyone. *Caitya* means heart. So the Supersoul is the spiritual master in the heart, and this is the actual purpose of the eternal friend of the soul, the Supersoul.

See for Yourself

Devotional Service

4.34

6.47

7.1, 8 – 11, 12 – 14, 18, 20 - 23, 30

8.1 & 2, 5 & 6, 9, 13 – 15, 20 & 21, 27 & 28

9.1 & purport

11.55 & purport

12.1 - 12

14.26

18.54

Supersoul

2.22 & purport

4.11 & purport

6.14, 29, 30 & purport

8.9

10.10 & 11

Chapter 13

15.15

118.61 - 63

Also

Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya 20.125

Srimad Bhagavatam 2.2.8 – 11, 3.28.13 – 33, 4.24.45 – 52

III. Most Confidential Knowledge

Pure Devotion

In the Eternal Spiritual World

Srila Prabhupada writes in the purport of 9.1 that the most confidential knowledge of all is about pure unalloyed devotion to Krishna, which, he says, is described in Chapter 9. In the 9.2 purport he says most confidential knowledge is about the soul's activities in the eternal spiritual world, and in the 18.64 purport he says it means to "just surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

Pure devotion to Krishna and surrendering to Krishna are the same thing as the soul's activities in the eternal spiritual world. As was stated earlier, the pure devotee is participating in the activities of the spiritual world even while living on planet Earth. Krishna says, "Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion." (9.14)

We can note a couple of things in the above verse. One thing is that "endeavoring" is something that belongs to this material world, and the other thing is that "perpetual" belongs in the eternal spiritual world. Nothing in this material world can be actually "perpetual" because death will always interrupt. So this text shows the overlapping of the material and spiritual worlds in the experience of the pure devotee. Prabhupada has offered confirmation in 2.72 purport: "One who is situated in Krishna consciousness has certainly already entered into the Kingdom of God."

Krishna Slips Some Previews

In Chapter 6:

Here Krishna is involved in a description of the rigorous requirements of true meditation, building up to His definition of success in such a practice: self-realization, transcendental happiness, freedom from material reactions and from material contamination, and finally, the ability to see Him. “A true yogi observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me,” He says. “Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the same Supreme Lord, everywhere.” (6.29)

The purport identifies the level of knowledge in this verse as that of Supersoul or Paramatma, or, in other words, as more confidential than the surrounding context.

But in the next verse, Krishna goes even deeper. Almost before we know it, Krishna is saying, “For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me.” (6.30) This is most confidential. Not only does the devotee see the Lord in everything, but he also sees everything in the Lord, Who, as Bhagavan, is the source of all, including both Brahman and Paramatma. Not only does the devotee never forget Krishna, but Krishna also never forgets the devotee. As proof that this is most confidential, Prabhupada dives deeply into the topic of pure devotion in the purport, and ends up quoting a verse from the *Brahma-samhita*: “I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is always seen by the devotee whose eyes are anointed with the pulp of love. He is seen in His eternal form of Syamasundara, situated within the heart of the devotee.” Both Govinda and Syamasundara are names of Krishna in the spiritual world, and that is how the pure devotee sees Him in his heart.

All this is in the middle of a discussion on meditational yoga practice, before the flow of conversation has even progressed to more confidential knowledge, let alone most confidential knowledge. Arjuna is still at the stage of struggling with the idea of the requirements of meditational yoga, and in fact he becomes dismayed and insecure knowing he cannot meet those requirements! He has to ask about failure, more or less missing Krishna’s hints of more intimate knowledge – he also missed Krishna’s instant conclusion in Chapter 2 if you will remember – and Krishna has to reassure and encourage him.

But the last verse in Chapter 6, text 6.47, reveals clearly that it is not the frightening rigors of meditational yoga (which Arjuna has rejected as too difficult) that matters to Krishna. What Krishna really cares about is what He says here: “And of all yogis, the one with great faith who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me – he is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all.” With this sentence Krishna prepares to introduce the next level, officially, in context and according to the logical progression of the discussion. His very next sentence is 7.1, in which he tells Arjuna to “hear,” which is the first of nine processes of *bhakti* or devotional service, and which has already been discussed in the section on more confidential knowledge. And of course more confidential is not the

highest, not yet; it is just the process that gets us to the highest which is most confidential.

In Chapter 7, another preview:

Krishna gives another hint of most confidential knowledge in Chapter 7, in the middle of a more-confidential level discussion on the types of persons who are willing to begin rendering devotional service to Him. Suddenly He says: “Of these, the one who is in full knowledge and who is always engaged in pure devotional service is the best. For I am very dear to him, and he is very dear to Me. All these devotees are undoubtedly magnanimous souls, but he who is situated in knowledge of Me I consider to be just like My own self. Being engaged in My transcendental service, he is sure to attain Me, the highest and most perfect goal. After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare.” (7.17, 18, 19)

Then again, after this preview of pure devotion and surrender, Krishna returns to the intermediate more-confidential level, speaking now about the destination of those who practice devotional service.

There is also a preview in Chapter 8, text 14, which was mentioned already in the discussion on more confidential knowledge.

Deepest of Secrets

Krishna Officially Introduces Most Confidential Knowledge

These previews in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 are hints, appearing rather out of order in the progression of the conversation, as if Krishna can't quite wait to tell His secret! It is not until Chapter 9 that the natural evolution of the conversation between Him and Arjuna actually arrives at most confidential knowledge.

In fact, in 9.1 Krishna says, “I shall impart to you this most confidential knowledge,” just as if He has not already done so! And in 9.2 He continues to prepare Arjuna for the unfoldment of this secret of secrets.

Krishna Conquered

And what is this secret of secrets? Creating a sense of mystery, Krishna takes the entire chapter to gradually reveal the essence of all knowledge, starting with text 4. There are many wonderful statements in this chapter, but they can be more or less grouped under two headings: 1) verses about Krishna as the source of everything, 2) verses about the

pure devotees' love for Krishna (for example 9.14 "Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion") and 3) verses about Krishna's love for His pure devotees (especially 9.22 "But those who always worship Me with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form – to them I carry what they lack, and I preserve what they have.")

Here in 9.22 we see clearly at last Krishna's secret: Krishna can be won over. Elusive, aloof, mysterious Krishna can be conquered by pure love. Conquered, He goes out of His way to protect and even to cover for any lack on the part of His pure devotee. And whatever is offered to Him in love, no matter how simple, He will accept. (9.26)

In text 29 He says, "I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all." So far this is confidential and more confidential. This is in fact what we have always expected of God. But then Krishna confides, "But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to Him." Now He is speaking most confidentially. This friendship is the pure love He seeks from us, and that we all seek, consciously or unconsciously. This friendship is higher and deeper than religion, higher and deeper than our usual ideas of the relationship between God and man.

Krishna Reveals Himself

This friendship with the Original Person, Bhagavan Sri Krishna, is most confidential. Krishna does not wish to reveal Himself to the rebellious inhabitants of this world, who are envious toward Him to one degree or another, trying to be enjoyers and controllers. Not that He does not want us, no! He wants us, so He accompanies us as Supersoul, sends the spiritual master to us, and arranges for scriptures to study and for processes of devotional service to practice. But still He does not easily reveal Himself until we have given up our envy and our independent ideas. Even to Arjuna, His pure devotee and eternal associate who is nonenvious but temporarily just a little covered by illusion, Krishna reveals the truth of who He is only gradually, starting in Chapter 7 with His impersonal feature and then His localized personal feature, both of which pervade and support the entire universe. Only now, in Chapter 9 and in Chapter 10, is He revealing Himself as Bhagavan who can be won over by pure devotion.

The Deepest Secret Is Not What We Thought It Was

In Chapter 11, Arjuna has become more secure in his knowledge and is now desirous of seeing exactly how Krishna has pervaded the universe. As if asking to be shown the deepest secret, he asks to actually see this invisible, impersonal aspect of Krishna. Krishna gives him divine eyes (11.8) and shows him an awesome, unlimited, stupendous, and terrifying vision of Himself in a way that Arjuna has never known Him. Undone, ungrounded, bewildered, and very frightened, Arjuna asks the awesome Lord who He is.

“Time I am, the great destroyer of the worlds,” is Krishna’s reply in 11.32, “and I have come here to destroy all people.” He tells Arjuna, “Get up and fight... (for you) can be but an instrument...” (11.33)

Overwhelmed, the quaking Arjuna offers praises and fearfully apologizes for his past familiarities. Then he humbly requests to again see the Lord’s personal form. Immediately, and with understanding and compassion, Krishna complies, reassuring His friend and appearing before Arjuna first as His four-armed majestic expansion Vishnu, which is the same as Supersoul, and finally, to Arjuna’s great relief, as Himself, the dear intimate friend of Arjuna.

It turns out, as Krishna makes sure to emphasize, that the deepest secret is not, as we may have always imagined, this terrifying, normally invisible all-pervasive presence, which calls Itself Time and acts as Death. The deepest secret is instead the beautiful humanlike, human-sized form of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, which can only be seen by pure devotion:

:”The form you are seeing with your transcendental eyes cannot be understood simply by studying the Vedas, nor by undergoing serious penances, nor by charity, nor by worship. It is not by these means that one can see Me as I am.

“My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing here before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding.” (11.53 & 54)

Arjuna is still seeing with the transcendental eyes Krishna has given him, and he is now seeing more than the physically visible form of Krishna as He appeared then to the ordinary residents of planet Earth, demon and devotee alike, who saw through their physical eyeballs and optic nerves. Arjuna is seeing Krishna with “eyes anointed with the pulp of love” as was quoted from the *Brahma-Samhita*. He is seeing the full force of Krishna’s transcendental beauty.

We can see now how Krishna has revealed Himself only very cautiously and very gradually, and only in response to Arjuna’s pure love. He remains the Supreme Controller; He easily, effortlessly protects Himself from the envious eyes of ordinary fallen souls, cloaking Himself first in the illusions of the material energy, then still in His impersonal aspect and by His localized personal presence. There is no way around this cloak, no way to cheat, no short cut or alternative to find this most secret, most dear Person who is the ultimate object of love and the ultimate source of everything, but by the total surrender of pure love, which alone conquers Him. When He is conquered, which He desires to be, He then feels obligated by that love to reveal Himself.

Becoming a Pure Devotee

Stages of Advancement

Previously we have seen, in Chapter 12, that there are 2 levels of devotional service: one is the level of practice, for those who are not liberated from the influence of material nature, and the other is pure devotional service, for those who are liberated.. (And both consist of the same activities.) We saw this also in 14.26, about practicing full devotional service and coming to the level of Brahman (equivalent to liberation) and in 18.54, about being on the Brahman platform and in that state doing pure devotional service.

In the second half of Chapter 12, verses 13 – 20, that pure devotee is described.

But how can we as individuals know where we are at on this path of advancement? What are the stages really like? Is it just practice, practice, practice, then *boom!* and suddenly, purity?

Actually, the speaking of two levels of *bhakti* is a summarization of the detailed steps. Krishna in the *Gita* does not specifically delineate those steps, though He implies them, but they are delineated in other places, especially in books by the disciples of His most recent appearance as Lord Chaitanya (who disguised Himself as a devotee of Himself.) And Srila Prabhupada quotes from these books.

In the purport to text 4.10 he quotes two Sanskrit verses from *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*, by Srila Rupa Goswami. These two verses are definitive, containing the precise word for each step, and now we shall take a detailed look at those words and at Prabhupada's translation. One may read the actual Sanskrit verses in the *Gita*, but the stages are the following, as Prabhupada has translated the verses in that same purport:

The first step of the spiritual path is *sraddha*, a word that means faith. As Prabhupada puts it here, "In the beginning one must have a preliminary desire for self-realization." So we can understand that faith means believing it is possible, and thus desiring it.

Then comes *sadhu-sanga*, "the stage of trying to associate with persons who are spiritually elevated." (These persons are called *sadhus*.) In this stage the prospective devotee begins to learn the philosophy from the more experienced devotees, and becomes gradually attracted to the next stage.

The next is *bhajana-kriya*, which is when "one becomes initiated by an elevated spiritual master, and under his instruction the neophyte devotee begins the process of devotional service." In this stage, one learns the rules and regulations, gives up external sinful activities, and learns how to perform some of the 9 kinds of *bhakti*, such as hearing and chanting, Deity worship, etc.

Then, *anartha-nivrtti*: “By execution of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one becomes free from all material attachment.” This is the long, slow purification process. *Anarthas* are unwanted things. They include not only what we usually think of as material attachments – being attached to temporary objects of the senses – but also deeply rooted sinful tendencies and in fact all negative things such as fear, anger, envy, etc., and even psychological complications. Most of these things are buried deep in the heart or subconscious and surface one or two at a time to be cleared, or prayed about. One way or the other, they are naturally dissolved and removed in due course if the devotee is sincere and serious.

When almost all the *anarthas* are gone one arrives at the stage called *nistha*, or “steadiness in self-realization.” It was those *anarthas* that caused the unsteadiness, creating vulnerability to the modes of nature, particularly the modes of passion and ignorance. At *nistha*, undisturbed in the mode of goodness, one can be liberated from the influence of the modes and will thus naturally become steady on the transcendental platform. This was also called the Brahman platform in the two related verses 14.26 and 18.54.

(In his Introduction to the *Gita*, Prabhupada lists 5 kinds of relationships with Krishna. The first he calls being “a devotee in a passive state.” Elsewhere he calls it “neutrality.” From this neutral relationship the other 4 develop, and this neutral relationship starts at the stage of *nistha*. This is confirmed near the end of the first chapter of Prabhupada’s book *The Teachings of Lord Caitanya*.)

Having attained such a platform of steady transcendental realization, one next “acquires a taste,” or *ruci*. This taste is much more than a liking or preference for devotional service. It has been described as an immense relishment of the activities of devotional service, and it develops when the transcendental neutral appreciation of Krishna matures into an urge to render transcendental service. It has nothing to do with the fact that one may have been practicing the external activities of *bhakti* all along. We are talking internal service on the spiritual platform now.

(The second of the 5 kinds of relationships, which Prabhupada calls “a devotee in an active state,” or “servitorship,” starts here.)

The next stage, *asakti*, or “attachment for Krishna consciousness,” means that one’s taste – or attachment – to the activities of devotional service is changed to attachment for the person who is being served, namely Krishna. Now the remembrance of Krishna is spontaneous and naturally constant.

(The last 3 of the 5 kinds of relationships, that is, friendship, parental, and conjugal, can only at this level begin to manifest in the advancing devotee’s feelings. Now the devotee will be able to meditate according to his actual constitutional relationship with Krishna, and by so meditating he will be able to enter more deeply into that role. But unless one is at this level, a liberated soul unaffected by the modes of nature and with a spontaneous impulse to serve Krishna at every second, one should not try to figure out what that

relationship is. That relationship does indeed lie dormant within already, like genetic codes in a seed, but as long as we are influenced by the modes of nature, our ideas of our place in the spiritual world will also be influenced by those same modes. For example, just because one is in a male human body and, say, likes cows or likes wrestling, it does not mean he is meant to be a cowherd boy friend of Krishna. It is good to know about this stage of *asakti* or attachment as something to aspire to, but meanwhile it is best to be patient and simply concentrate on our practice *bhakti* and our purification.)

The next stage is *bhava*, or “the preliminary stage of transcendental love of God.” Now the devotee begins to feel the spiritual emotions of his relationship with Krishna. Externally, there may be ecstatic symptoms such as tears, goose bumps, fainting, etc.

Then, finally, the ultimate goal, *prema*, “real love for God... the highest perfectional stage of life.”

In his book Nectar of Devotion, at the end of Chapter 19, Prabhupada writes again of these stages of advancement, only in somewhat different words. Here the last 4 stages, *ruci*, *asakti*, *bhava*, and *prema*, are summed up in the following way: “he develops a transcendental taste for devotional service, then attachment, then ecstasies, then in the last stage there is pure love of Godhead.”

Incidentally, one may also read, at the end of the last purport in Chapter 8, another rendition of these steps or stages, this time in regard to making spiritual advancement in the study of *Bhagavad-Gita*. And, in the purport of text 10.9, one may read of these same stages yet again, this time in allegorical form as a seed that grows into a plant which continues to grow and grow and finally reaches the spiritual world and produces fruit. This allegorical plant, of course, is “the devotional creeper.”

Most of us are still under the influence of material nature, trying to kick this sin or that habit or the other attitude, still knocked down or around by events perceived as “good” or “bad” in this world, or trying to practice being a little more steady in our devotional activities, and digging deep to uncover *anarthas* in our hearts. It helps to know what is to come on the path ahead. It helps us to be humble and honest with ourselves – no, I see I don’t have pure love for God yet, though I am on that path – and it gives us the courage and hope to keep going – no, what I feel now isn’t all there is; there is more and I will get there some day. And we will get there, if we just keep on with faith, sincerity, and determination.

Surrender

Pure love is the same as total surrender. Prabhupada writes in the purport to 18.64 that most confidential knowledge means surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Surrender means more than, OK, I give up, don’t shoot, I’ll do what you say.

In 18.62 Arjuna is advised to surrender to Supersoul because “by His grace you will attain transcendental peace and the supreme and eternal abode.” In this verse surrender indicates surrendering to the guide or *guru* – as Supersoul is the *guru* in the heart – but in 18.66 surrender comes up again. Krishna says, “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me.”

This is the ultimate surrender of pure love. It has a name in Sanskrit: *sharanagati*. *Sharana* means shelter, and *gati* means goal. Here Prabhupada quotes a verse from another scripture, called *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, in which this *sharanagati* is described in 6 steps. The Sanskrit is there, and a loose translation follows, but for a clear listing of the 6 steps of surrender one can read the songs of Bhaktivinoda Thakura.

Simply put, the 6 steps are: 1) humility before Krishna, 2) dedication of oneself to Krishna, 3) accepting Krishna as one’s only maintainer, 4) accepting Krishna as one’s only protector, 5) accepting only those things which are favorable for pure devotion, and 6) rejecting those things which are unfavorable for pure devotion.

Bhaktivinode Thakura, the father of Prabhupada’s spiritual master and an important personality in the line of disciplic succession, has written a series of songs about the struggles to surrender and finally about the success of real surrender and the glories of purely chanting the holy names.

4 Nutshell Verses of the *Gita*

We have seen so far in this chapter of our study: the intimate reciprocal relationship of love between Krishna and His pure devotees, a review of 2 levels of *bhakti*, a more detailed analysis of the stages of advancement, a glimpse of the 5 kinds of eternal relationships with Krishna, and the 6 steps of surrender. This kind of scrutiny helps us to get our questions answered and our confusions straightened out so that we can begin to grasp the idea.

But there is also a summary of all of this in the *Gita*. This summary is found in the tenth chapter, texts 8 – 11, which are referred to as “the 4 nutshell verses.” They are:

“I am the source of all material and spiritual worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.

“The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me.

“To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.

“To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.”

These 4 verses are the essence of all the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. If one understands no more than these 4 verses one understands the meaning of the *Gita*.

A Little Review of Confidential, More Confidential, and Most Confidential Knowledge of God

In the second half of Chapter 15, there is a neatly expressed little sequence of verses giving a perfect example of Krishna speaking in the voices of all 3 aspects of Himself. It will be a good idea to look at these verses as a review.

15.12 – 14: “The splendor of the sun, which dissipates the darkness of this whole world, comes from Me. And the splendor of the moon and the splendor of fire are also from Me.

“I enter into each planet, and by My energy they stay in orbit. I become the moon and thereby supply the juice of life to all vegetables.

“I am the fire of digestion in the bodies of all living entities, and I join with the air of life, outgoing and incoming, to digest the four kinds of foodstuff.”

Splendor and fire are not a person, so this is the “voice” of impersonal Brahman.

15.15 & 17: “I am seated in everyone’s heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness...

“...the greatest living personality, the Supreme Soul, the imperishable Lord Himself, who has entered the three worlds and is maintaining them.”

A person sits down, and the greatest living personality who has entered the 3 worlds is the Supersoul. Prabhupada has confirmed the same in his purports.

15.19 & 20: “Whoever knows Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, without doubting, is the knower of everything. He therefore engages himself in full devotional service to Me, O son of Bharata.

“This is the most confidential part of the Vedic scriptures, O sinless one, and it is disclosed now by Me. Whoever understands this will become wise, and his endeavors will know perfection.”

Whoever knows Supersoul still may not know the source of Supersoul, but whoever knows Bhagavan, or Krishna the Supreme Personality of Godhead, knows the most confidential knowledge. He knows everything then. This is Krishna's own voice, and there is nothing and no one higher.

Krishna Is Calling Us to Him

Before wrapping up this study there is one more observation this writer desires to make.

There are exactly 700 verses in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Many of them are Krishna speaking of Himself as the source, the support, the focus, and the goal, the object of love, devotion, and surrender. Many verses, but how many? One day this writer sat down to count exactly how many times Krishna says "I," "Me," or "Mine," presenting Himself as the source, support, focus, object, goal. Ordinary times such as "I will now explain such and such" were not counted.

It turned out that out of 700 verses, in a full 168 of them Krishna is saying "I," "Me," or "Mine." 168 verses (plus or minus a few, perhaps, depending on the judgment of the counter) out of 700 is 24%, nearly one-fourth of the entire *Gita*!

Whether He is speaking as Brahman, as Paramatma, or as Bhagavan, Krishna Himself contains all aspects of Himself, and ultimately all these voices are simply Krishna, calling us to Him. Again and again He calls us to Himself, calls us to realize that He is the source, the support, the shelter, and the most dear Friend, and that there is nothing else.

Each of us is as near and dear to Him, and as unforgotten, as an only child. He is almost on His knees, almost begging us to just turn to Him.

Knowledge means knowing Krishna, and knowing ourselves to be Krishna's servitors, and the goal of knowledge means loving Krishna. That is Krishna's message in the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

See For Yourself

Most confidential knowledge

2.72

6.229 & 30, 6.47

7.17 – 19

8.14

9.1 & 2, 4, 14, 22, 26, 29

10.8 – 11, esp. 9 purport

11.8, 32 & 33, 53 & 54

Becoming a pure devotee

4.10 purport

12.2, 6 - 8, 13 – 20

18.62, 66

Comparing all three levels

15.12 – 14, 15 & 17, 19 & 20

The whole *Gita*, all 700 verses

Also

Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 19

The songs of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura

Appendix A: Three Sections of the *Gita*

The *Gita* can be divided into three equal sections.

The first six chapters are the *karma-yoga* section. Why just *karma-yoga*, one may ask, when other kinds of *yoga* are also discussed? The answer lies in understanding *karma-yoga* in a yet broader sense. *Karma* means activities in the material world, and *yoga* means to link with the Supreme. So in this sense, *karma-yoga* means whatever activities people of different types may engage in for the purpose of linking with the Supreme.

Working at one's duty is activity for some people, but studying is also an activity for the studious-minded, and different types of meditation and *yoga* processes are also activities for those who are so inclined. As Krishna puts it in 4.32, after listing a variety of types of sacrifices and meditation methods, "All these different types of sacrifice are approved by the Vedas, and all of them are born of different types of work." Whenever Krishna speaks of work, He is referring to material duties according to one's psycho-physical nature and situation in life, or, in Sanskrit, *karma*. Therefore, all types of *yoga* can in one sense be lumped under *karma-yoga*, since they are activities done in the material world, hopefully for the purpose of linking with the Supreme.

The middle six chapters, like the filling of a sandwich protected by bread on each side, is the most important section, and the most nutritious and tasty part. This is the *bhakti-yoga* section. It contains the highest percentage of Krishna's I-Me-Mine statements, revealing Himself and calling us to Him in devotional service.

A specific review of these six chapters: Chapter 7 introduces *bhakti* as using the senses to know Krishna. Chapter 8 tells the result of practicing *bhakti*, which is attaining the eternal abode of Krishna. Chapter 9 reveals that Krishna is won over by pure devotion. Chapter 10 contains the four nutshell verses. Chapter 11 is a grand vision that culminates in seeing Krishna's humanlike form as the highest and deepest secret, and Chapter 12 is about devotional service at different levels and what a pure devotee is like.

The final six chapters, beginning with Chapter 13, analyzing the body, soul, and Supersoul, are basically knowledge in greater detail just for the sake of getting all the facts right. This third section is the *jnana-yoga* section.

Of course, Chapter 1 introduces the situation, Chapter 2 summarizes the *Gita* ahead of time, and Chapter 18 summarizes from the end.

The purport of 18.1 is a nice overview of the *Gita* according to these three sections. In this purport Prabhupada states that in all three sections devotional service is discussed. That is true, especially when we understand that karma-yoga is the beginning of *bhakti-yoga*, as it is the beginning of doing activities for Krishna's sake instead of our own. *Karma-yoga* is a type of *bhakti-yoga*. Thus Prabhupada can say that the first six chapters are about *bhakti-yoga*, the second six chapters are about pure *bhakti-yoga*, and the last six chapters are about "knowledge, renunciation, ...and devotional service." This is the vision of the pure devotee, to cut to the essence and see that it is all about nothing else but devotional service.

Appendix B: Three Great Riches of Life

We have been studying the *Gita* according to the terms Krishna Himself used in the *Gita*: confidential, more confidential, and most confidential knowledge, or *guhyam*, *guhyataram*, and *guhyatamam*.

There are three other Sanskrit terms for divisions of knowledge. These divisions are similar, and related in some ways, to the divisions we have been studying. These three other terms were also spoken by Krishna, but in His appearance as Lord Caitanya, playing the role of a devotee of Krishna and speaking to His disciple Sanatana only five hundred years ago.

The terms are *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana*.

Sambandha means knowledge of the definitions and the relationships involved.

Abhidheya means knowledge of the process.

Prayojana means knowledge of the goal.

Any complex activity requires knowledge of the terms and relationships, of the process, and of the goal. Even cooking, even baseball requires the three kinds of knowledge. Spiritual science, which is what the Bhagavad-Gita is, also contains these kinds of knowledge.

As Lord Caitanya explains, *sambandha* is “information about the living entity’s eternal relationship with Krishna.” *Abhidheya*, He says, is “the living entity’s understanding of this relationship and acting accordingly... Devotional service, or sense activity for the satisfaction of the Lord, is called *abhidheya* because it can develop one’s original love of Godhead.” And *prayojana*, He says, is “returning home, back to Godhead... the goal of life... the living entity’s topmost interest and greatest wealth... the platform of transcendental loving service to the Lord.” (*Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya* 20.124 & 125)

In the *Gita* the terms are defined in great detail. As Prabhupada writes in his Introduction, the *Gita* has five topics: *Isvara* (God the Controller), *jiva* (the individual soul), *prakrti* (material nature), *kala* (time), and *karma* (activities). The relationships between these topics are carefully defined. The process of spiritual life, of practicing yoga and especially *bhakti-yoga* is explained. And the goal is stated: total surrender to the Supreme Lord in pure love and devotion.

Two verses in particular exemplify these three kinds of knowledge in the *Gita*.

In 13.35 the three terms are self-evident: “Those who see with eyes of knowledge the difference between the body and the knower of the body, and can also understand the process of liberation from bondage in material nature, attain to the supreme goal.” Prabhupada in the purport simply makes the idea a more complete summary of what has been said in this chapter by including the Supersoul in the picture.

The verse 15.15 is a little harder to understand without Prabhupada’s help. In it, Krishna says: “...By all the Vedas I am to be known. Indeed, I am the compiler of Vedanta, and I am the knower of the Vedas.”

Prabhupada explains in the purport, “Why does He present the Vedic knowledge for understanding? Because a living entity individually needs to understand Krishna.” In other words, Krishna is Himself the object of the Vedas, the literatures of spiritual knowledge. This is *sambandha*, knowledge of terms and relationships, knowledge of Krishna and of our relationship with Him.

Then Prabhupada goes on to say, “By performance of Vedic rituals, discussion of Vedic philosophy, and worship of the Lord in devotional service, He is attained.” It is a little hard to see for sure, but it appears from Prabhupada’s explanation that the middle part of Krishna’s sentence, “I am the compiler of Vedanta,” suggests *abhidheya*, or some mention of the fact that Krishna in the Vedas has provided us with the process.

Then Prabhupada says, “The ultimate goal is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” Krishna is the person behind it all, the mastermind “knower of the Vedas” and who is Himself the goal of those Vedas. This is *prayojana*.

Prabhupada repeats the whole scheme for clarity: “By understanding Vedic literature, one can understand his relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by performing the different processes one can approach Him, and at the end one can attain the supreme goal, which is no other than the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In this verse the purpose of the Vedas, the understanding of the Vedas, and the goal of the Vedas are clearly defined.

I will end with another quote from Lord Caitanya, who is defining *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana* all in the mood of most confidential knowledge:

*veda-sastre-kahe sambandha,
abhidheya, prayojana
krsna, krsna-bhakti, prema –
tina maha-dhana*

“In the Vedic literature, Krishna is the central point of attraction, and His service is our activity. To attain the platform of love of Krishna is life’s ultimate goal. Therefore,

Krishna, Krishna's service, and love of Krishna are the three great riches of life."
(*Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya* 20.143)

Simply put: the relationship is with Krishna, the process is service to Krishna, and the goal is love of Krishna: Krishna, Krishna *bhakti*, and Krishna *prema*.