Dimensions of God and Evil
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The Moral Universe and Vaiñëava Philosophy

nétir asmi jigéñatäm

"Of those who seek victory I am morality." (*Bhagavad-gétä* 10.38)

Introduction

We experience ourselves subject to conditions imposed by nature. We experience ourselves subject to laws, natural and man-made, that govern our

interaction with other living entities. Finally we experience ourselves subject to the disposition of our bodies and minds. In short, matter shapes life into these three dimensions of experience, which in Sanskrit are termed *ädhidaivika, ädhibhautika* and *ädhyätmika.* Western philosophy calls them the macrocosm, mesocosm and microcosm. The first is the vast, all-enveloping natural universe. The second is the "middle" (*meso*) universe of our relations with other sentient beings. The third is a private universe known inwardly by each individual. The Vedic teachings point to a transcendental dimension experienced by the soul liberated from the powers of matter.

But were it not for our values, what sense could we make of these dimensions of experience? Experience is but a moment-by-moment presentment of choices in the world and in ourselves. In making choices, we rely on our values. In this book I propose five dimensions of value.** The first is the dimension of sensory value. This is "the school of hard knocks." Once as a boy I put my hand into the back of a radio and received a shock. After that, I was leery of handling electronic equipment. We might call the experience of an electric shock "a matter of fact." Within the dimension of sensory value we also experience "matters of taste"—for example, that I prefer strawberries over gooseberries. Often matters of taste are more important to people than matters of fact. It is a matter of fact that cigarette smoking is injurious to health, yet millions of people value the taste of cigarettes over the fact that they are smoking themselves into an early grave. Sensory value—the dimension of facts and tastes—is surpassed by the dimension of intuitive value. Here we find the conscience. In serving my sensory values, I may hurt another person. His suffering troubles my conscience. Despite my success in sense gratification, I still feel I've done wrong. Also from the intuitive dimension come hunches like, "I think I can trust this person," or "This doesn't feel right to me." Beyond this is the dimension of rational value. Here we decide things by calling upon values we've learned from authorities: parents, teachers, sacred scriptures, legal, ethical and moral codes. In other words, the logic of law decides right from wrong, correcting if necessary our sensory and intuitive feelings. Then there is the dimension of spiritual (or idealistic) value. Spirit wants liberation from evil: sin, corruption and enslavement to materialism. The senses, intuition, and even the laws of reason may tremble at the call to overturn evil, because that could mean a death sentence. But high ideals take command of persons with strong spirit: we know well the stories of brave men and women who embraced martyrdom for the cause of freedom. At last there is the dimension of devotional value. Out of love and devotion for another, a person may let the values of the senses, intuition and reason go unheeded. For love, one may even ignore the ideal of liberation so dear to the spirit.

We judge three kinds of experience by five kinds of value. The words "good" and "evil" indicate what our judgements are ultimately about. For example, in the devotional dimension of value, many possible objects of love can be

considered: mother, father, the family dog, the girl next door, a Hollywood film star, a pop music idol, V.I. Lenin, the goddess Athena, Church of the SubGenius messiah J.R. "Bob" Dobbs, and so on. Which of these objects of devotion are really good?

Even a simple question like this seems to many people to have no certain answer. They find the interplay between the dimensions of experience and the dimensions of value baffling in complexity and instability. People use the word "good" so lightly, but when asked to pin down what it means, often they either come up empty-handed or reach for equally vague generalities like "love," "truth" and "beauty."

This book defines goodness as virtue. Coming from Latin *virtus* which translates as "strength", the word virtue indicates a healthy, wholesome and chaste relationship to the world, other living entities and one's own self. It is the mission of every human being to perfect his or her virtue. Perfect virtue is the soul's victory over the powers of matter, which threaten to delude the soul into identifying with the material body, its lusts and its hatreds. Perfect virtue ushers the victorious soul into the dimension of transcendental experience, and attracts the mercy of the supremely virtuous Original Person. In the following verse, Lord Viñëu praises the virtues of His pure devotee, King Påthu.

varaà ca mat kaïcana mänavendra
våëéñva te 'haà guëa-çéla-yantritaù
nähaà makhair vai sulabhas tapobhir
yogena vä yat sama-citta-varté

> **My dear King, I am very captivated by your elevated qualities and excellent behavior, and thus I am very favorably inclined toward you. You may therefore ask from Me any benediction you like. One who does not possess elevated qualities and behavior cannot possibly achieve My favor simply by performance of sacrifices, severe austerities or mystic yoga. But I always remain equipoised in the heart of one who is also equipoised in all circumstances.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **4.20.16**)

"Evil," opposed to virtue, means vice. It is a state of spiritual weakness in which the soul, fallen from the grace of the Lord, comes under the strict control of matter. An evil person's attitude toward the world, living entities and the self is unhealthy and impure.

The phrase "dimensions of good and evil" is summarized by the term "the moral universe." What I am driving at here is that we cannot divorce morality from the objective nature of the world. By way of the dimensions of experience and value, we measure good and evil. These measurements indicate a cosmic moral order, no less than measurements of length, breadth and width indicate the shape and size of the room I am in.

One often hears the argument that the moral order is merely a private state of mind, not a state of the universe. For example, one person of puritanical mentality may estimate the disease AIDS to be good, since it forces moderation on licentious people. Another person of humanistic mentality may estimate AIDS a great evil. But in fact, goes the argument, AIDS is coldly indifferent to notions of good and evil. So too is the universe as a whole. In reply, it must be admitted that my private estimate of the good and evil of events around me may be wrong, just as my private estimate of the shape and size of my room may be wrong. But that my estimates are wrong *does not mean that the universe is without a moral dimension*—just as it does not mean that my room is without shape and size.

As much as mankind is able to accurately calibrate the facts of the world on a true scale of moral value, that much can we know the moral universe as an objective fact. Today, scientists try to fit the facts of the world to reductionism—a value-neutral simplicity believed to be at the heart of nature's complexity. But prior to the seventeenth century, civilized people worldwide associated macro-, meso-, and microcosmic phenomena with values that begin with absolute good at the top of the scale, descending to total evil at the bottom. And so it was that the science of classical and medieval Europe, upholding the moral dimension of the universe, tried to account for things by assigning them a grade of moral worth.

From the *Padma Puräëa* we get the Vedic scale of universal morality.

dvau bhüta-sargau loke 'smin
daiva äsura eva ca
viñëu-bhaktaù småto daiva
äsuras tad-viparyayaù

Throughout the universe, there are but two classes of living beings—the godly (*devas*) and the demonic (*asuras*). The godly are devoted to Viñëu, the Supreme Person, who is opposed by the demonic.

As made clear in the next quotation, it is very difficult for a human being lacking high moral qualifications to perceive the *devas* who dwell in higher cosmic dimensions. This means *virtue expands one's perception of the universe.* Vice reduces it. As was noted earlier, King Påthu was perfectly virtuous by dint of being a pure devotee of the Supreme Lord. He was therefore fully cognizant of the moral dimension of the universe and the extraordinary beings who dwell there—for example the four Kumäras, to whom Påthu spoke this verse:

aho äcaritaà kià me
maìgalaà maìgaläyanäù
yasya vo darçanaà hy äséd
durdarçänää ca yogibhiù

> **My dear great sages, auspiciousness personified, it is very difficult for even the mystic *yogés* to see you. Indeed, you are very rarely seen. I do not know what kind of pious activity I performed for you to grace me by appearing before me without difficulty.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **4.22.7**)

King Påthu is an example of a person utterly devoted to Viñëu. That person is called a Vaiñëava. The Sanskrit word *vaiñëava* means "like Viñëu." Hence, like Viñëu, the Vaiñëavas are lustrous with transcendental virtue, which is termed *çuddha-sattva* (pure goodness). Vaiñëava philosophy is the body of knowledge that emanates from Viñëu as the purely sattvic portion of the Vedic scriptures. The pure sattvic texts are those uncontaminated by *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (ignorance).

The term "Vedic" is as important to the understanding of this book as is the term Vaiñëava. "Vedic" comes to the English language from the Sanskrit word *veda* (knowledge). Some scholars regard as Vedic only four orders of ancient Indian literature: *Saàhitä*, *Brähmaëa*, *Äraëyaka* and *Upaniñad.* The *Saàhitä* is comprised of the *Vedas* known as *Åg*, *Säma*, *Yajur* and *Atharva.* These texts contain *mantras* for ritualistic sacrifices, as well as adorations to various deities. The *brähmaëas* are prose texts about sacrifice. The *äraëyakas* are teachings for retired sacrificial priests who have left city life for the peaceful forest. The *Upaniñads* point to Brahman, the supreme transcendence. This, say some scholars, is the limit of texts that can be called Vedic. On the contrary, the Vaiñëavas include *Bhagavad-gétä* and *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* as Vedic also. This inclusion is not unsupported by Vedic evidence. *Chändogya Upaniñad* 7.1.2 declares the *Itihäsas* (histories like the *Mahäbhärata* , which contains the *Bhagavad-gétä)* and the *Puräëas* (ancient narratives like the *Çrémad-Bhägavatam)* to be the fifth *Veda* (*itihäsa-puräëaà païcamaà vedänäà vedam)*. The *äcäryas* (great authorities of Vedic learning) have long upheld this understanding. For example, Rämänujäcärya in *Vedärtha-saìgraha* 216 advises: *itihäsa-puräëayoù vedopabåàhanayoh*—"the *Itihäsas* and *Puräëas*, which seek to augment the *Vedas*, embody the same truth." This book, *Dimensions of Good and Evil* , accepts as Vedic all scriptures so designated by the *äcäryas* .

Another point important to mention here is that Vaiñëavas reject the theory, promoted by a good number of modern scholars, that the *Vedas* were written by "Aryan invaders" who conquered India some two thousand years before Christ. I'll not say more about that here except that there is no support for such an idea anywhere in the Vedic scriptures. A few recent publications that contest with historical evidence the Aryan invasion theory are mentioned in the notes that follow this introduction.** Tied to the Aryan invasion theory is a system of dating the Vedic scriptures. This too Vaiñëavas reject. From the scriptures themselves we learn that the *Saàhitä*, *Brähmaëas*, *Äraëyakas*, *Upaniñads*, *Puräëas* and *Itihäsas* were handed down by an ancient oral tradition extending millions of

years into the past. Five thousand years ago the sage Vyäsadeva wrote these scriptures down in the Sanskrit language.

I have no claim of being a pure Vaiñëava myself. But I am a disciple of a pure Vaiñëava—my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupäda. My duty is to represent the philosophy he taught me. It is said to become a real philosopher, one must learn when to stop philosophizing. Philosophy shows us what logically follows from fundamental principles. *But philosophy cannot show us what fundamental principles follow from logic.* Principles can only be established by authority, not by mental speculation. Inevitably, in any school of thought, the progress of logic we call "philosophizing" conforms to principles that were dictated by an authority. The authority behind the logic of this book is Çréla Prabhupäda.

"To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts," said a wise man of recent times, "but to so love wisdom as to live according to its dictates."** This means that philosophy is to be demonstrated, not just thought, read or talked.

Rather than to fruitlessly doubt, we are to apply our intelligence to the Vedic path so as to attain the fruit it leads to. The fruit of the *Vedas* is the only goal of the Vaiñëava. *Vedaiç ca sarvair aham eva vedyaù*, as Lord Kåñëa declares in *Bhagavad-gétä* 15.15: "By all the *Vedas* I am to be known." The Lord personally guided many great devotees to the goal glorified by the Vedic scriptures. The pure devotees guided by Çré Kåñëa are our guides.

As a disciple morally bound to the authority of my spiritual master, it is self-evident to me that Kåñëa is God and His teachings are unquestionable. But "self-evident" does not mean "something obvious to everybody right now." The 1996 edition of the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* defines "self-evident propositions" as those that can be seen to be true *once one fully understands them.*** To understand Vaiñëava philosophy fully, one's consciousness must be illuminated by the light of pure goodness. In that light—the light of the Supreme Self—the propositions of this book are self-evident.

In this book I present Vaiñëava philosophy in two parts. The first is "The Vedic Context," the second "The Modern Context." There are those who say, "In Vedic culture, or Hinduism, many other gods are worshiped besides Viñëu or Kåñëa—for example, Çiva, Durgä and Gaëeça. Furthermore, the Vedic conclusion (*Vedänta*) goes beyond worship altogether, to the philosophy of the ultimate oneness of all beings in nameless, formless Brahman. Yet you Vaiñëavas say the *Vedas* mean to teach pure devotion to Kåñëa as the final goal. That is sectarian." Part One answers them. Others say, "In the West, we have what we call an ethico-empirical principle. It tells us that it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything on insufficient evidence. Both the science and morality of the modern West conform to this principle. Thus it is wrong, scientifically speaking, to believe in any reality beyond the physical cosmos. It is

wrong, morally speaking, to believe in any good beyond physical pleasure and any evil beyond physical pain. You Vaiñëavas do not hold to this principle. That is sectarian." Part Two answers them.

I've included in both parts a good deal of evidence drawn from non-Vaiñëava academic sources. I do not endorse this evidence as conveying the same quality of knowledge as Vedic sources. It does, I hope, offer a plausible account of the decline of moral values in our age. The Vedic evidence I cite is our guide away from total moral collapse.

Let me close this introduction with a few words about my spiritual master and the spiritual fellowship he founded, the International Society for Kåñëa Consciousness (ISKCON). In 1965, at seventy years of age, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupäda arrived in the United States from India. His humble mission was to implant in the West a root of the great movement of Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu, the Golden Avatära who took birth in Bengal 500 years ago to revive the eternal teachings of loving devotional service to Lord Kåñëa. Çré Caitanya's movement is compared to a great banyan tree. A single banyan tree can expand itself to appear like an entire forest grove. How? By lowering new roots from branches that spread out from the central trunk. These new roots harden into new trunks, which support the spreading of new branches, which again lower newer roots. The central trunk is Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu. Çréla Prabhupäda is a mighty branch that grew across the ocean, lowering a root in New York City. Within a short time that root hardened into a new trunk that supported the spread of branches to other cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, Montreal and Buffalo. Branches soon spread across the North Atlantic to London, Hamburg, Amsterdam and Paris. In 1971, the year I joined ISKCON, Çréla Prabhupäda even implanted a root in Moscow. By then Hare Kåñëa temples flourished on every continent.

The great tree of Lord Caitanya's movement offers humanity the chance to cultivate *sadäcära.* The word *sadäcära* means "pure behavior," a life in which the body, mind and words are dedicated to the Lord, a life free of the sinful habits of sexual promiscuity, intoxication, gambling and meat-eating. These sinful habits are called *duräcära.* Lord Caitanya once remarked to Öhäkura Haridäsa** that the people of the present age engage only in *duräcära.* Reassuring Him, Haridäsa answered: *nämäbhäsa haite haya saàsärera kñaya*—"Even a faint light from the holy name of the Lord can eradicate all the reactions of sinful life." As the light of the holy names Hare Kåñëa, Hare Kåñëa, Kåñëa Kåñëa, Hare Hare/Hare Räma, Hare Räma, Räma Räma, Hare Hare floods the world, the eyes of even the most fallen souls can be opened to the sinless path back home, back to Godhead. The proof is self-evident in the worldwide community of Çréla Prabhupäda's followers. Many persons in the West previously sunk in *duräcära* now practice a standard of *sadäcära* that even traditional *brähmaëa* communities in India find hard to match. Çréla Prabhupäda wrote in 1971:

> Our process is simple and practically experimented everywhere. Simply by vibrating the Hare Kåñëa *mahä-mantra* daily one advances to the stage of *sadäcära* or good habits, and when he is pure in consciousness by devotional service, he advances to the stage of ecstatic love of Kåñëa. We should always pray to Lord Caitanya simply to be engaged in His confidential service by chanting Hare Kåñëa *mantra* always. That will purify us and give the strength needed to infuse others with Kåñëa consciousness.**

Containing four chapters, this section is an overview of the basic issues: God, the spirit souls, matter, the three modes of material nature, the problem of good and evil, *karma*, time, free will, how the soul fell into the universe, sin, piety, pure devotion, fruitive work, moral knowledge, and primary and secondary religion.

Chapter One,
The Best of All Possible Worlds?

In *Bhagavad-gétä* 15.7, Çré Kåñëa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, declares that all spirit souls, even those struggling with the material mind and senses, are eternally parts and particles of His transcendental Self. Then in 15.16 He speaks of two classes of souls—those fallen into the material world, and those liberated in the spiritual world.

dväv imau puruñau loke
kñaraç cäkñara eva ca
kñaraù sarväëi bhütäni
küöa-stho 'kñara ucyate

> **There are two classes of beings, the fallible and the infallible. In the material world every living entity is fallible, and in the spiritual world every living entity is called infallible.**

In 13.22, He says that the fallen souls undergo repeated births and deaths. The soul moves from body to body pursuing the enjoyment of matter in three modes** (*tri-guëa*). These modes are goodness, passion and ignorance; like pathways rumored to lead to desirable goals, the three modes entice the desire of the living entity lost in material existence. When the soul commits himself to these paths, good and evil advent. This pair of opposites, good and evil, forges the destiny of all living entities birth after birth.

puruñaù prakåti-stho hi
bhuìkte prakåti-jän guëän
käraëaà guëa-saìgo 'sya
sad-asad-yoni-janmasu

The living entity in material nature thus follows the ways of life, enjoying the three modes of nature. This is due to his association with that material nature. Thus he meets with good and evil among various species.

According to the mode in which they try to enjoy matter, the fallible living entities schedule their future destiny. *Bhagavad-gétä* 14.18 explains the process.

ürdhvaà gacchanti sattva-sthä
madhye tiñöhanti räjasäù
jaghanya-guëa-våtti-sthä
adho gacchanti tämasäù

Those situated in the mode of goodness gradually go upward to the higher planets; those in the mode of passion live on the earthly planets; and those in the abominable mode of ignorance go down to the hellish worlds.

Thus heaven, earth and hell are stations through which souls riding the circuit of repeated birth and death move. No station is permanent. The path of one mode eventually joins the paths of the other two; thus the "good" of heaven eventually leads to the "evil" of hell. The entire universe is subject to time and must at last pass out of existence. From the beginning to the end of the cosmic manifestation, most souls rotate countless times throughout the *tri-loka* (three divisions of heavenly, earthly and hellish worlds).

Western Judaeo-Christian theology has long been weighed down by a so-called "problem of evil." Sometimes it is said that in the East this problem is eased by certain strengths of the Vedic philosophy. An eminent scholar, writing in a special issue of the magazine *Time,*** explains.

> Why would a good God allow evil in the world? This problem, one that Judeo-Christian man had created for himself by his belief, has haunted Western thought for millennia. It is plainly a by-product of ethical monotheism—"a trilemma" created by the three indisputable qualities of an all-knowing, all-powerful and all-benevolent God...Not until the 18th century did Leibniz give a name to this troublesome problem—Theodicy, from the Greek *theos* (God) and *dike* (Justice)...This question has not equally troubled people everywhere. Religions in the East have provided plausible theological explanations for divine punishment and retribution in the concept of *karma* (the accumulation of debts from earlier lives) and the work of Kälé and other destructive divinities.

Atheists presume evil to be unjustified. This rules out, in their minds, the possibility of a God who is perfect (meaning all-wise, all-powerful and all-good). Theists presume evil to be justified. They argue that God neither created evil at His whim, nor is He powerless to stop it. A defense of theodicy—the justness of God—requires a sound explanation of how evil is part of God's plan for everyone's ultimate good. The Vaiñëava philosophy has three contributions to make here. The first is that evil is the consequence of one's desire in connection with material nature. The second is that material nature has two aspects: one that binds us (thus giving rise to evil), and one that releases us (thus ending evil). The third is that the medium of our bondage is our own desire. Under the thrall of desire, we pursue material objects that we are convinced are good. We flee other objects we fear are evil. But all the while, the soul is transcendental to matter. The light of transcendental knowledge reveals the duality of good and evil to be an illusion of blind desire.

As should be clear from *Bhagavad-gétä* 13.22, fallible souls meet with good and evil not at the whim of God or any deity. Good and evil take form as the consequence of our actions (*karma*) of trying to enjoy matter. *Bhagavad-gétä* 9.10 states that this matter we hope to enjoy is Lord Kåñëa's *prakåti*, His feminine creative energy. The whole universe is deluded by her modes, says 7.13. Busy trying to satisfy themselves in goodness, passion and ignorance, the fallen souls have lost consciousness of the real desirable object, the Lord who is beyond the modes as the inexhaustible source of both spirit and matter. The fallen souls seek their desirables within the microcosm, mesocosm and macrocosm, which are nothing other than appearances of the modes. The values they use to judge these desirables—sensory, intuitive, rational, idealistic and devotional—are likewise pervaded by the three modes.

Bhagavad-gétä 15.2 says that the modes nourish our material identity—the karmic body—the way water nourishes a tree. Another useful example, one that I shall develop here over several paragraphs, is that the modes power the movement of the body, and direct that movement from beginning to end, just as electrified rails power and direct the movement of a subway train from the beginning to the end of its journey.

In its simplest sense, the word *karma* means the work of a human being. And "human being" is just a material designation. The human body is a machine that works as designed by nature, states *Bhagavad-gétä* 18.61. So it follows that the soul is not the doer of work—the three modes are. The soul is entangled in the *karma* (work) of the modes simply out of desire to enjoy these modes. The modes do the *karma*, and the soul "takes" that *karma* by desire. I "take" a ride on a subway train out of a desire to get downtown. The subway system is doing all the work (*karma*), but I identify with that work: "I'm going downtown." In fact the train is going downtown; I'm just sitting in my seat.

To make sense of "the law of *karma*," we need to understand the terms *prärabdha*, *aprärabdha* and *kriyamäëa. Prärabdha-karma* is the result we

experience now of work done in previous lives. It is manifest as our present status in the greater universe (the macrocosm), as our present status among other creatures (the mesocosm) and as the present status of our body and mind (the microcosm). If these are auspicious, it means we are enjoying the result of past pious activity. If they are mixed—partly good and partly bad—that is the result of past passionate work. If they are thoroughly inauspicious, we are suffering past ignorant work. *Aprärabdha-karma* is the stock of potential reactions that are yet unmanifest. From this unlimited stock of *karma*-seeds, fruits (future bodies) will develop endlessly.

In the midst of the condition we have created for ourselves by our previous work, we act from moment to moment and so create newer and newer reactions that are constantly added to the stock of *aprärabdha-karma.* This work we do now is called *kriyamäëa-karma.* Again, it is not really "our" doing; it is done by the three modes, as confirmed in *Bhagavad-gétä* 3.27. We falsely identify ourselves with that work, and so are forced by that same identification to accept its reactions which will appear in time.

The soul in the human form of life does have the power to choose what activities he "takes." That choice is between spiritual and material activities. Choosing matter, the soul loses the power of choice and is tied up and dragged away by the modes (the word *guëa* means "rope" as well as "mode" or "quality"). To choose spiritual activities means to choose to obey God, who is Acyuta, the topmost infallible person. Linkage with Lord Acyuta frees the soul from the ropes of matter. The Vaiñëava answer to the debate between "free will" philosophers and "determinist" philosophers is that the soul enjoys free will in obedience to God. But free will has a special meaning. It does not mean freedom to do whatever one likes. It means will that is free of the control of matter. One who does not obey God is captured by the three modes, which determine his destiny for inestimable births.

> **The living entity by nature has minute independence to choose his own good or bad fortune, but when he forgets his supreme master, the Personality of Godhead, he gives himself up unto the modes of material nature. Being influenced by the modes of material nature, he identifies himself with the body and, for the interest of the body, becomes attached to various activities. Sometimes he is undetr the influence of the mode of ignorance, sometimes the mode of passion and sometimes the mode of goodness. The living entity thus gets different types of bodies under the modes of material nature.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **4.29.26-27**)

The soul taking a body was compared to a commuter taking a subway train. Any karmic body, even that of a resident of heaven, must at different stages in the journey of life run the route laid down by each of the three modes. The journey begins on the route of passion (birth from sexual combination). It

transfers to the route of goodness (maturation), and ends on the route of ignorance (disease, old age, death). By her modes, Prakåti—the mother-goddess of the materially embodied souls—bears, develops and devours her own children. She is the powerful Kälé described in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.6.2 (*käla-saïjïäà tadä devéà bibhrac-chaktim urukramaù*). "The hand of God" that people often say inexorably guided them to success or failure is in truth the hand of Kälé. As per the subway example, Kälé holds authority over the rail system: the routing and running times. She draws power for the rails from Käla (the deity of time), which emanates from Lord Kåñëa like electricity emanates from a powerhouse. Without the powerhouse, the subway could not run; still, the powerhouse is not to be held responsible for where and when the subway runs.

> **The Supreme Personality of Godhead, by His inconceivable supreme energy, time, causes the interaction of the three modes of material nature, and thus varieties of energy become manifest. It appears that He is acting, but He is not the actor. He is killing, but He is not the killer. Thus it is understood that only by His inconceivable power is everything happening.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **4.11.18**)

Theodicy, "the attempt to understand the relationship of the God to a cosmos that suffers,"** remains an intractable problem as long as we do not admit that it is madness for the spirit soul to seek happiness in the material world.

yadä na paçyaty ayathä guëehäà
svärthe pramattaù sahasä vipaççit
gata-småtir vindati tatra täpän
äsädya maithunyam agäram aïjaù

> **Even though one may be very learned and wise, he is mad if he does not understand that the endeavor for sense gratification is a useless waste of time. Being forgetful of his own interest, he tries to be happy in the material world, centering his interests around his home, which is based on sexual intercourse and which brings him all kinds of material miseries. In this way one is no better than a foolish animal.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **5.5.7**)

It is a common enough fact of life that a person strongly attracted to sense gratification is at risk of falling into criminal activity like prostitution and theft, for which the state imposes a prison sentence. For all those attracted by *mäyä*—the illusion that matter is enjoyable by the spirit soul—the entire material world is a prison. Reward and punishment are meted out according to the good behavior and misbehavior of the inmates. This is to prepare them for release into the free society of liberated souls. Thus the "good" and "evil" we experience here are not ultimate. Beyond them, liberation beckons. Who is eligible for liberation? Those souls who have learned to be neither attracted to nor disappointed by matter.

Such indifference is an automatic feature of Kåñëa consciousness. Kåñëa consciousness is cultivated through contact with *sädhus* (devotees of Kåñëa) and *çästra* (the Vedic scriptures). When Prakåti is satisfied that an inmate is Kåñëa conscious, she liberates him from *mäyä.*

sädhu-çästra-kåpäya yadi kåñëonmukha haya
sei jéva nistare, mäyä tähäre chäòaya

> **If the conditioned soul becomes Kåñëa conscious by the mercy of saintly persons who voluntarily preach scriptural injunctions and help him to become Kåñëa conscious, the conditioned soul is liberated from the clutches of *mäyä*, who gives him up.** (*Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, **Madhya* 20.120)

Souls released from repeated birth and death are transferred to the association of Lord Kåñëa in the spiritual world. From here, they never fall down again.

mäm upetya punar janma
duùkhälayam açäçvatam
näpnuvanti mahätmänaù
saàsiddhià paramää gatäù

> After attaining Me, the great souls, who are yogés in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection. (*Bhagavad-gétä* 8.15)

The inventor of the term "theodicy," G.W. Leibniz (1646-1716), conceived of the problem of evil as one wholly of *this* world, the realm of material nature—a world he called "the best of all possible worlds."** According to Vaiñëava philosophy, only a soul in spiritual ignorance accepts the duality of mundane life as the best of all possible worlds. *Bhagavad-gétä* 2.57 states that when a person is situated in perfect awareness of the existence that is truly the best—*spiritual existence*—the good and evil of the material world do not touch him. In this connection, the S*arvajïä sükta*, quoted by Jéva Gosvämé** in his *Bhagavat-sandarbha*, instructs us:

hlädinyä samvid äçliñöaù
sac-cid-änanda éçvaraù
svävidyä saàvåto jévaù
saëkleça nikäräkaraù

> **The Supreme Lord is full of eternity, knowledge and bliss. He is always embraced in the spiritual world by His divine energies called *hlädiné* (the ecstatic potency) and *saàvit* (the omniscient potency). In the material world, the individual soul (*jéva*) experiences many sufferings, being covered by his own ignorance.**

Once we understand karmic embodiment to be the fallen, ignorant state of the soul, it becomes clear how easily living entities who *seem to be good* can be overwhelmed by evil. As good as they might try to be, their attraction to impermanent happiness and their disinclination to get free of the bondage of embodied life insures that they will meet with evil. *Bhagavad-gétä* 14.10 warns that material goodness is not a firm position at all. By his impulsive attachment to sense enjoyment, a soul willingly moves from goodness to passion to ignorance.

We have, from *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* Canto Four, an unmistakable illustration of this in Dakña, a denizen of heaven. In the assembly of demigods, Dakña outshone all others, so graced was he by sattvic qualities. Regrettably, he felt himself very powerful, a symptom of passion. His passion turned to ignorance, impelling him to show haughty disrespect for the great Lord Çiva. And ignorance, in the form of the furious demon Vérabhadra who avenged the insult to Çiva, was Dakña's downfall.

In contrast, from *Bhagavad-gétä* 5.21 we learn that liberated souls enjoy an inner spiritual happiness unlimitedly superior to the fleeting psychosensory experiences proffered by the modes. The soul who relishes his or her higher spiritual nature even while living within the material body is called *jévan-mukta.* The *jévan-mukta* uses the body only in the service of God. Deriving complete happiness from the Lord's personal association, such a soul is not attracted to the good, passionate and ignorant pleasures displayed by the external material nature.

éhä yasya harer däsye
karmaëä manasä girä
nikhiläsv apy avasthäsu
jévan-muktaù sa ucyate

> **Regardless of one's circumstances, if one fully engages his activities, mind and words in the devotional service of the Lord, he should be understood to be a liberated person.** (*Bhakti-rasämåta-sindhu* 1.2.187)

"Regardless of one's circumstances" means that a *jévan-mukta* is fixed in loving service to the Lord whether in heaven or hell (the *ädhidaivika* condition), whether other living entities are agreeable or not (the *ädhibhautika* condition), and whether the body and mind are nicely disposed or not (the *ädhyätmika* condition).** These three conditions are products of the three modes of nature; the *jévan-mukta* knows "I am transcendental to them."

The senses of the *jévan-mukta* act only for Kåñëa's sake. He is intuitively detached from whatever attractions or repulsions the universe has on offer. For the reason of the Lord's pleasure, and for the reason that ordinary people must be led on the path back to Godhead, all the *jévan-mukta* does in life conforms to scriptural laws. He constantly tries keep himself free from selfish material desires

so that the supremely pure Lord will be satisfied with his devotional endeavors. Always thinking of Kåñëa within his heart, the *jévan-mukta* relishes the nectarean bliss of love of God.

Thus the sensory, intuitive, rational, spiritual and devotional values of the liberated soul are ever centered on Kåñëa. For further elaboration, the reader may consult *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 9.4.18-27, where the excellent qualities of Mahäräja Ambaréña are described. In contrast to Dakña, King Ambaréña remained the hearty well-wisher of even his so-called rival, the *yogé* Durväsä. Though the envious Durväsä tried to kill Ambaréña with a curse, the king was undisturbed, protected as he was under the loving shelter of the Supreme Lord. The fiery Sudarçana disc, the personal weapon of Viñëu, pursued the *yogé* all around the universe for a whole year. At last the Lord advised Durväsä that unless Ambaréña forgave him for his offense he would never be free of His fire-disk. When Durväsä humbly returned to the king, Ambaréña welcomed him as a friend and assured him that he had taken no offense whatsoever at the *yogé's* behavior. His anxiety had only been for Durväsä's safety during his year-long flight from Sudarçana. By his magnanimous conduct, the liberated Ambaréña was never touched by the influence of the three modes.

Chapter Two,
The Fall From Beyond Time

karmaëaù puruñaù kärta
çubhasyäpy açubhasya ca
svaphalam tadupäçnati
katham kartä svid éçvaraù

Human beings perform good and evil *karma*; they experience the fruits of their own actions. How can the Lord be held responsible? (*Mahäbhärata* 3.181.5)

With this one verse, the previous chapter is summarized. Is the problem of theodicy now dispelled? Not quite. Granted that by the law of *karma* a fallen soul must suffer and enjoy in various species, there still remains at least one doubt very bothersome to Western scholars: at what point does the evil of karmic embodiment begin?** *Vedänta-sütra* replies that *karma* is *anädi* (it has no beginning).** In response a scholar opines, "That *karma* is beginningless is not at all satisfying."** He thinks that if *Vedänta* teaches the evil of *karmic* bondage to be an ultimate fact, then this teaching is just a stumbling block to deeper inquiry into what stands behind that evil. However, *Vedänta-sütra* does not assume beginningless *karma* to be the ultimate fact—the *why*—behind the fallen

state of the soul. That would be the logic of saying the soul is bound because the soul is bound.

True, in *Vedänta* philosophy, *karma*, like the passage of time, is not traced to a certain instant of origin before which there was no *karma* and no time. This is why *Vedänta* calls *karma* and time *anädi*, beginningless. Still, that these are perpetual facts does not mean they are ultimate facts. "*Karma* is beginningless" is not the answer to the question we need to ask: why is a particular soul classed as fallible?** Or in other words, why is *this one* susceptible to bondage by *karma* and time, and *that one* not? This is a question answerable only beyond *karma* and time—on the spiritual platform, where the soul's eternal identity is rooted. Madhväcärya, the great Vaiñëava Vedantist,** points out in his *Dvädaça Stotra* 3.6 that *karma*, ignorance, time, the modes of nature and so on are not ultimate because they are insentient. Therefore they depend upon something else.**

That "something else" is, according to Çréla Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa, the internal spiritual potency of Kåñëa,** known by the names *acintya-prakåti* (inconceivable nature) and *svarüpa-çakti* (the potency of the Lord Himself). It is here that we are faced with an ultimate fact of Vaiñëava philosophy: beyond our perception of the external, material *prakåti*, there is a transcendental *prakåti.* In the ultimate analysis, there is really only one *prakåti*, which is the Divine Nature of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But She is perceived in different ways according to the level of consciousness of the perceiver. Materialists worship Her as goddess Kälé. Her true and original form is as the Supreme Soul, Lord Kåñëa, perceives Her: as Çrématé Rädhäräëé, whose love for Kåñëa is so deep that even He marvels at its mystery.

Baladeva writes in his *Vedänta* commentary that a function of this transcendental *prakåti* is to distinguish souls who genuinely love the Lord from those who do not. The divine substance of God's personal form is revealed by *prakåti* to the former. But she shows only a shadow or reflection (*äbhäsa*) of the Lord to the latter (*premnä gocare 'pi pratyaktvam na héyate tasya svarüpa-çakti-våttitvät prema nihéneñu tväbhäsarüpenaiva vyaktiù*).**

Baladeva asserts that the internal potency covers the souls devoid of *prema* (love of God) with two veils: *svarüpa-ävärika* (bewilderment about the eternal forms of the Lord and His parts and particles, the spirit souls) and *guëa-ävärika* (entanglement in the three modes of nature).** The liberated soul is ever free of these two coverings. Yet still he is fully aware of, and indeed dwells in, the material realm. Indeed he dwells in all realms, material and spiritual. However, the liberated soul is ever-free of illusion by the might of his *vidyä* (spiritual knowledge): *vidyäyä tat-tad-ävåtti parikñayän muktas tad-anubhävams tiñöhatéti na kiïcid ünam*. The bound souls experience various pleasures and pains in different bodies.** But the original form of any and all souls, liberated or conditioned, remains essentially the same (*svarüpa sämye*).

Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura confirms** that the original spiritual form of the embodied soul is hidden beneath two kinds of covering. One covering is constituted of the subtle elements of mind, intelligence and false ego. The other is constituted of the gross elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether.

bhagavänera yo mata ekaöi svarüpavigraha äcche. jévera tadrüpa ciddeha nityarüpe ärhe. sei cit deha vaikuëöha dhäme prakäçita thäke. jadajagate baddha haiyä tähä duiöé ävaraëe lukkäita äche. sarvaprathama ävaraëa öéra näma lingävaraëa.

> **As God has His Svarüpa Vigraha (transcendental form), the *jéva* (soul) has his eternal *cid-deha* (spiritual body). This spiritual body is manifested in the Kingdom of God, Vaikuëöha-dhäma. But when bound in the material world, it is hidden by two coverings. The first is known as *liìga*, the subtle body.** (*Çré Caitanya-sikñämåtam* part 5, chapter 3)

jévera ciddehera prathamävaraëa liìgadeha. evam dvitiyävaraëa sthüladeha.

> The first covering of the living entity's *cid-deha* is the subtle body. The second covering is the physical body. (Ibid.)

Now, a statement of Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa was cited to the effect that the spiritual nature separates the souls devoid of *kåñëa-premä* (love of Kåñëa) from the souls blessed with it. But why does one soul love God and another not? This question is cleared up by Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura in *Prema Pradépa*. The fall of the soul under the twofold bodily covering is due to him shifting his attachment from the superior object of love—Lord Kåñëa—to something inferior. In short, the fall of the *jéva* is decided by the soul's own choice.

ätmä anurägé tajjanyai baddha. ätmä upayukta viñaya haite. cyuta haiyä itara viçaye anuräga kare. tajjanyai ätmatarpana sudüravarté. haoyäya sutaräm indriya tarpaëai. prabala haiyä uöhe.

> The soul is always in love or attached. Therefore the conditioned soul who falls down from his proper position develops love or attachment for some other, inferior, object. For this reason there is hardly any possibility of self-satisfaction, and therefore material sense gratification becomes prominent.

How can we conceive of a soul becoming attached to something inferior, falling into the material world, and yet not losing his Vaikuëöha form? There is a useful example. Picture a child of one or two years of age nestled in the arms of her mother. It is a clear summer night, and mother carries her little daughter out on the balcony for a look at the full moon. The child reaches for the moon and then whimpers in frustration. Mother whispers soothingly, “My little dear, do you want to hold the moon in your hand? Don't cry, I'll help you.” Mother takes from her pocket a small round cosmetic mirror and puts it in the palm of the child's

hand, guiding the wrist so that the reflection of the moon is captured in the mirror's face. The illusion is complete: the child now holds the moon in her hand. Wide-eyed in fascination, the little girl forgets herself and her mother, fully entranced by the "moon" in her small fingers.

Just as the child never leaves the mother's arms, so too the soul never leaves his constitutional position as part and particle of Kåñëa. But the soul can forget that position when its desire is drawn into illusion, just as the child forgot herself and her mother. This example suggests that a forgetful soul is immature, and that his sojourn in the material world is (from the standpoint of *citkäla* or spiritual time) just a moment of inattention.

If the *jéva* falls into the material world by a particular act of choice, why is his *karma* (work to gratify his senses) said to be *anädi* or beginningless? Ought not *karma* better be marked from the moment of his fall? Again in *Çré Caitanya-sikñämåtam* 5.3, the Öhäkura gives the answer.

> *jaòabaddhä haile jéva jaòéya käle. praveça kariyä bhüta bhaviñyad vartamäna rüpa. trikäla sevaka haiyä sukadukhera äçraya hana. jaòakäla citkäla haite niùsåta. haoyäya citkälera anäditva prayukta jévera. jaòéya karmera ädi ye bhagavadvaimukhya. tähä jaòakalera pürva haite äsiteche. ata eva jaòakälera sambandhe taöastha vicäre. karmamüla jaòakälera pürvastha. baliyä karmake anädi balä haiyäche.*
>
> The bound *jéva* entering material time is subject to past, future and present. As the servant of *trikäla* (threefold time) he experiences pleasure and pain. Material time originates from spiritual time (*citkäla*). It is because *citkäla* has no beginning that the origin of the *jéva's karma*, or his aversion to the Lord, precedes material time. Thus *karma* is said to be beginningless. Therefore the verdict on material time is that the root of *karma* lies prior to that time. And so it is said *karma* is *anädi*.

In *Prema Pradépa*, Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura gives solid assurance that the fallen soul's original form as a resident of the spiritual world remains intact even while he is within material existence. But his sense of identity is transformed into the material mind.

> *jaòabaddhä haiyä jéva nija vaikuëöha svarüpa. haite vicchinna hana näi. vaikuëöha svarüpa baddhävasthäya jaòasaìga krama. jaòa dharmera gläniśamyuktä haiyä manorüpe pariëata haiyäche. tathäpi ätma dharmera viccheda haya näi.*
>
> Although conditioned by material nature, the living entity is not cut off from his own Vaikuëöha form. Due to his association with the contaminated material atmosphere, the conditioned living entity's spiritual identity is transformed as the mind. Still, one is not separated from his constitutional nature.

What does it mean that the spiritual identity of the living entity is transformed as the mind? *Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Madhya* 20.108, states that the soul is *kåñëera taöasthä-çakti:* "the marginal energy of Lord Kåñëa." The word *taöasthä* (marginal) indicates that the soul is poised on the borderline of choice between Kåñëa consciousness and *mäyä,* material consciousness. If the soul chooses *mäyä,* then the power of choice—an essential component of individual identity—is transferred to the material mind. In other words, the soul is stupefied by contact with the illusory energy and becomes a deactivated observer; the mind, a subtle material "lens" through which the soul observes the gross body and its sense objects, does the accepting and rejecting (*saìkalpa-vikalpa*).** In making choices, the mind relies on *buddhi* (intelligence), the bank of rational and intuitive knowledge provided by the Supersoul (Paramätmä). The Supersoul is the expansion of Kåñëa who dwells within the heart alongside the soul. Supplying *buddhi*, the Lord assists the helpless soul's efforts to fulfill his desires.

Suppose I am very thirsty and there is no water at hand. But I do find a bottle of a liquid that appears very inviting to my senses. My mind starts to accept it: "Yes, drink." As I lift the bottle to my mouth, I see it has a label. The meaning of the symbols (letters and numbers) on the label is not apparent to my senses; to understand them requires a rational intellect. My mind draws from the *buddhi* the understanding that the label warns this bottle contains poison. Instantly my mind rejects the thought of drinking from it.

Earlier it was mentioned that the mind and intelligence are two aspects of the *liìgadeha* or subtle body. The third aspect is the *ahaìkära* or false ego. This is the sense of wrong (i.e. material) identity the soul must take on in order to have the self-assurance to attempt to control and enjoy matter. *Buddhi* is made available to the mind in conformance with the false ego. Suppose I have the false ego of a grown man. The *buddhi* available to me will be different from that available to a soul whose *ahaìkära* identifies with the body of a small child, or a dog, cat or worm.

All of us, many times in our lives, have come face-to-face with a "microcosmic" moral conflict that rages deep within ourselves. It seems as if the *buddhi* and *ahaìkara* pull the mind in opposite directions. Suppose I am in a public garden. In the grass I find a wallet stuffed with cash. The *ahaìkära* surcharges my mind with possessiveness: "Take that wallet, now it belongs to you." The *buddhi*, on the other hand, warns my mind that touching the wallet will bring trouble from the law. Knowledge of law, like knowledge of the label on the bottle, comes from the rational side of *buddhi*. There is also an intuitive side. If, not heeding reason, I pocket the wallet, the intuitive side of *buddhi* kicks in with feelings of guilt.

There is a traditional belief that every human being has a good angel on one shoulder and a bad angel on the other. The good angel whispers decent thoughts into the mind. The bad angel, of course, whispers indecent thoughts.

Thus our private moral struggle is summed up. But we need to know that this struggle is going on in the darkness of ignorance of transcendental morality. Vaisnava philosophy sheds light on the workings of mind, *buddhi* and *ahaìkara* so that we can see that outside our limited human notions of right and wrong is a higher order of value. Whether I sneak off with the wallet or leave it in the grass, in either case I am under the sway of false ego. I am thinking only of myself. Is the wallet mine to pocket? No. Is it mine to abandon in the grass? No. It belongs to someone else. I should therefore take the wallet under my temporary protection until I find the owner. Similarly, my material body belongs to Kåñëa. He has placed it in my care. I have neither the right to enjoy this body nor deny it. My only duty is to engage it in the service of He who gave the body and will take it away. Enjoying the body or neglecting it means the *buddhi* and *ahaìkara* have conspired to entrap my mind in selfishness.

The imagery of the two angels is simplistic. More apt is the saying, "The lives of the best of us are spent in choosing between evils." In some people the *buddhi* takes the side of the amoral *ahaìkära*. Such people find nothing wrong with criminal behavior. Their *buddhi* is happy to devise illegal and immoral schemes to satisfy their selfishness. These people are judged "evil" by society, for it seems they function under toxic regulative principles: "Might makes right," "Your pain is my pleasure," "What's mine is mine and what's yours is mine too." In other people, the *ahaìkära* takes the side of the moralistic *buddhi*. Esteeming themselves as upright, law-abiding citizens, they are proud to have never committed a crime. Such people are judged "good" in society.

In the final analysis, however, any soul who chooses *mäyä* instead of Kåñëa, and who therefore undergoes the transformation of identity imposed by the mind, intelligence and false ego, falls into evil. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.20.26 gives the actual regulative principle of the soul—to remain fixed in the transcendental position.

sve sve 'dhikäre yä niñöhä
sa guëaù parikértitaù
karmaëäà jäty-açuddhänäm
anena niyamaù kåtaù
guëa-doña-vidhänena
saìgänäà tyäjanecchayä

It is firmly declared that the steady adherence of transcendentalists to their respective spiritual positions constitutes real piety and that sin occurs when a transcendentalist neglects his prescribed duty. One who adopts this standard of piety and sin, sincerely desiring to give up all past association with sense gratification, is able to subdue materialistic activities, which are by nature impure.

Sve sve 'dhikäre (one's own position) is the spirit soul's original identity as an associate of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the spiritual world. Any deviation from this identity is the fallen condition. It may be asked how it is possible for a soul in his own natural position as an associate of the Lord to deviate. The answer is: by overstepping his natural position. He does that when he assumes himself equal to the Lord in all respects. In his *Govinda-bhäñya* commentary to *Vedänta-sütra* 3.2.20, Çréla Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa points out the eternal difference between the Lord and His parts and particles.

> *paramätmä vibhuù prakåti dharmair asampåktaù svatantraç ca*
> *tadaàçakäs tu aëavaù prakåti dharma yoginaù paratanträç ceti.*

> **The Supreme Soul is the greatest. He is independent and is never limited though He accepts material qualities [for instance in His *såñöi-kartä* pastime of creating, maintaining and annihilating the material universes]. The individual spirit souls, however, are very small. By accepting material qualities, they put themselves under severe limitations.**

Souls who accept material qualities in the false belief that they, like Kåñëa, are lords over matter, are those whom the Lord calls fallible. The infallible souls, those replete with love of Godhead, are never limited by material qualities even when they enter the material creation, for if they come to the material world, it is to do Kåñëa's will.

Though there is a tremendous difference between the liberated and conditioned states, the souls in both share an irreducible commonality: each has an essential individual identity. That individuality is evident in higher and lower situations of life, whether it be conditioned life or liberated life. Baladeva elaborates in *Prameya-ratnävalé* 5.1.

> *atha jévänäm täratamyam*
> *aëu-caitanya-rüpatva-*
> *jïänitvädya-viçeñataù*
> *sämye satyapi jévänäm*
> *täratamyaà ca sädhanät*

> **In both their conditioned and liberated states, the *jévas* are situated in higher and lower grades. Although all living entities are equally conscious and possess knowledge to the limit of the capacity of an individual soul, they nevertheless manifest that original spiritual nature in varying degrees. The extent to which that original nature is uncovered is determined by their purity and devotion to the Supreme Lord.**

In *Çré Caitanya-sikñämåtam* 5.3, Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura delineates five grades of human life. These mark the transition from the conditioned to the liberated states, culminating in pure devotion. The Vaiñëava conception of moral

development is evident in these grades. The lowest is *nitisünya jévana*, or a life devoid of morality. *Kevala-naitika jévana* comes next, a life of morality but nothing more. The third grade is *seçvarä naitika jévana*, a moral life with belief in God. Higher still is *sädhana-bhakta jévana*, a life of regulated devotion to the Lord. The fifth and highest grade is *bhäva-bhakta jévana*, a life of ecstatic devotion to Kåñëa. The means by which the final two grades are achieved is indicated by Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu in *Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Antya* 4.70-71:

> Among the ways of *sädhana-bhakti* or regulated devotion, the nine prescribed methods are the best, for these processes have great potency to deliver Kåñëa and ecstatic love for Him. [The nine prescribed methods are: to hear about Kåñëa, to chant His holy name, to remember Him, to serve His lotus feet, to perform worship of the Deity, to offer prayers to Him, to execute His mission, to become the Lord's friend, and to surrender everything to Him.]
>
> Of the nine processes of devotional service, the most important is to always chant the holy name of the Lord. If one does so, avoiding offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of Godhead.

A fallible soul regains his infallibility by the means of *bhakti* (devotion to Kåñëa). The nine methods of *bhakti* culminate in the constant chanting of the holy name—Hare Kåñëa, Hare Kåñëa, Kåñëa Kåñëa, Hare Hare/Hare Räma, Hare Räma, Räma Räma, Hare Hare—which awards the most valuable treasure of the soul: *kåñëa-premä*, pure love for Kåñëa.

Some lingering questions may be raised. If the soul originally fell from a transcendental relationship with Kåñëa, and is now supposed to revive that relationship once again, would that not merely be the closing of a circle? What would keep the soul from moving around this circle again and again—leaving Kåñëa and returning to Him over and over without end? Wouldn't this be the ultimate wheel of dissatisfaction, the one that turns many other, lesser wheels: of the repeated creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe; of repeated birth and death?

The answer to these doubts is evident in the following prayer that was offered by Vedic *brähmaëas* to the Supreme Lord during a sacrifice performed in ancient times by King Näbhi.

> **All of life's goals and opulences are directly, self-sufficiently, unceasingly and unlimitedly increasing in You at every moment. Indeed, You are unlimited enjoyment and blissful existence itself. As far as we are concerned, O Lord, we are always after material enjoyment. You do not need all these sacrificial arrangements, but they are meant for us so that we may be benedicted by Your Lordship. All these sacrifices are**

performed for our fruitive results, and they are not actually needed by You. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **5.3.8**)

It is not merely that Kåñëa is *a* goal of life, or even the *highest* goal of life. To argue that way would imply that there are goals other than Him; even though they might be inferior, other goals still might offer some desirables that we'd miss in Kåñëa's direct association. For example, most people would agree that to take an important post in government service is a higher goal of life than to remain down on the old farm where one was born. Still, even a government minister gets homesick and must return from time to time to see the humble place of his origins. One might try to extend this example to the process of developing of love of God: even if I attain Kåñëa's transcendental abode, I might still come to miss life in the material world. But the *brähmaëas* ruled such an argument out. They said that all of life's goals, whatever we may be attracted to, are eternally sheltered in Lord Kåñëa. He alone is the true object of our desire.

The *brähmaëas* said further that the unlimited bliss of Kåñëa's divine being is unceasingly and unlimitedly expanding. Thus the soul's return to Kåñëa is not like mountaineer's climb of a mesa (a flat-topped hill with cliff-like sides). One does not arrive at a barren level ground after an arduous upward effort. One is not left with nothing to do except stroll around and survey the world below—and then climb down again.

The *brähmaëas* admitted that their interest was separate from the Lord. Their Vedic sacrifice would not add to His happiness. Rather, they wanted to take happiness from the Lord. They were involved in what is termed "fruitive activities," or works bearing fruits enjoyed by the material senses of the worker. Fruitive work leads to future births in material bodies. Devotional service is work enjoyed by the transcendental senses of the Lord. This work leads to an eternal loving relationship with Çré Kåñëa. The Vedic *brähmaëas* presented themselves to the Lord as expert in ritualistic sacrifices but inexpert in the affairs of pure devotion. It needs to be marked here that the Supreme Lord was personally standing before these *brähmaëas* in the sacrificial arena of Mahäräja Näbhi. They were fortunate enough to see Him directly. But they regretted that they did not know more than to ask Him for material benedictions. They could not take *transcendental* advantage of His association. This means that "knowing" God or even "seeing" Him is not necessarily the same as loving Him.

There is another prayer, this one offered by the demigods to the Lord when He personally appeared to bless their effort to defeat the demon Våträsura. They praised the Lord's pure devotees, for devotees alone know the secret of how to love Kåñëa and thus taste the unlimited and ever-increasing bliss of His association.

Therefore, O killer of the Madhu demon, incessant transcendental bliss flows in the minds of those who have even once tasted but a drop of the nectar from the ocean of

Your glories. Such exalted devotees forget the tiny reflection of so-called material happiness produced from the material senses of sight and sound. Free from all desires, such devotees are the real friends of all living entities. Offering their minds unto You and enjoying transcendental bliss, they are expert in achieving the real goal of life. O Lord, You are the soul and dear friend of such devotees, who never need return to this material world. How could they give up engagement in Your devotional service? (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **6.9.39**)

Sometimes people question why the devotees focus only upon Kåñëa. Are they not neglecting the people of this world? This verse gives the answer. The people of this world are seeking happiness, but will never find it in matter. Therefore the devotees are their real friends, for they alone know where real happiness is to be found. Only by *kåñëa-premä* is one freed from birth and death; *kåñëa-premä* is availed only by the divine grace of those devotees who drink from the ocean of nectar that is pure Kåñëa consciousness.

Chapter Three,
For Goodness' Sake

We have seen that when souls turn away from Kåñëa, they meet good and evil: a pair of opposites encompassing all material experience. Yet it would be incorrect to assume from this that *sattva-guëa*, the mode of goodness, is no more valuable than *rajo-guëa* and *tamo-guëa*, which display qualities that typify evil. "From the mode of goodness, real knowledge develops," Lord Kåñëa says in *Bhagavad-gétä* 14.17, "from the mode of passion, greed develops, and from the mode of ignorance develop foolishness, madness and illusion."

Real knowledge—what is it? And how does it appear from the mode of goodness? This Kåñëa explains to Uddhava.**

yadätmany arpitaà cittaà
çäntaà sattvopabåàhitam
dharmaà jïänaà sa vairägyam
aiçvaryaà cäbhipadyate

When one's peaceful consciousness, strengthened by the mode of goodness, is fixed on the Personality of Godhead, one achieves religiosity, knowledge, detachment and opulence. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **11.19.25**)

Knowledge *(jïäna*) is one of four harvests to be reaped from the cultivation of goodness. The others are *dharma* (religion), *vairägya* (renunciation), and *aiçvarya* (opulence). In verse 27, Kåñëa defines religion as those principles of faith that lead to His devotional service. What principles are these? From *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.17.24, we learn they are austerity, cleanliness,

truthfulness and mercy, the four legs of *dharma*. Knowledge is awareness that reveals Kåñëa's all-pervading presence.Knowledge is awareness that reveals His all-pervading presence. Renunciation is complete disinterest in the objects of material sense gratification. Opulence is the eight perfections of *yoga*.** Kåñëa says that to reap the full harvest of goodness, one must fix his or her consciousness on Him. He goes on to say that one who focuses consciousness on material things reaps a quite different harvest.

yad arpitaà tad vikalpe
indriyaiù paridhävati
rajas-valaà cäsan-niñöhaà
cittaà viddhi viparyayam

> **When consciousness is fixed on the material body, home and other, similar objects of sense gratification, one spends one's life chasing after material objects with the help of the senses. Consciousness, thus powerfully affected by the mode of passion, becomes dedicated to impermanent things, and in this way irreligion, ignorance, attachment and wretchedness arise.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **11.19.26**)

Not thinking of Kåñëa drops the mind from goodness into passion. The fourfold harvests of this mode are *adharma* (irreligion), *tamaù* (the mode of ignorance), *räga* (material attachment), and *däridryaà* (poverty).** These verses spoken by Kåñëa to Uddhava teach us that the cultivation of goodness yields the harvest of Kåñëa consciousness. "Cultivating" and "just passing through" goodness are not the same. One who just passes through goodness with a mind aimed at body-based pleasures can harvest nothing auspicious from goodness.

Lord Kapiladeva, an incarnation of God and a great authority of Vedic knowledge, says that when consciousness is firmly fixed on Kåñëa, it achieves an extraordinary level of goodness defined as *yat tat sattva-guëaà svacchaà çäntaà bhagavataù padam:* "that state of clarity (*svacchaà*) and peace (çä*ntaà*) in which God is understood." (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.26.21) Kapiladeva calls this godly state of mind *vasudeva*. Väsudeva is a name of Viñëu, the Supersoul, which means "He who dwells everywhere." The mind unclouded by ignorance and passion shines with the pristine goodness of Çré Viñëu Himself. Through the immaculate lens of a pure mind, the presence of the Lord in the heart and in all things outside is directly perceived. The transcendental dimension of His divine nature is seen to encompass the microcosmic, mesocosmic and macrocosmic

dimensions of material nature. The four harvests of goodness are understood to be sheltered in nothing material, just in Him alone. *Bhagavad-gétä* 7.14 says *vasudeva* consciousness is rarely achieved. After dedicating many lifetimes to the cultivation of Vedic knowledge, an introspective sage may at last realize that Kåñëa is everything.

Çrémad-Bhägavatam 7.13.48 states that the Supersoul gives intelligence (*buddhi*) according to one's capacity for understanding. To those whose capacity is limited to bodily affairs, the Lord gives materialistic *buddhi*. The Supersoul blesses the transcendentalist with pure *buddhi* that lifts the psychosensory veil covering the smiling four-armed form of Väsudeva who graces the lotus-throne of the heart. The transcendentalist who realizes Viñëu in the heart is never misled. Upon the demise of the body, the learned sage in *vasudeva* goodness remains in unbroken consciousness of the Lord, beyond birth and death.

Vasudeva-sattva removes the darkness of false ego (*ahaìkära*), which is a feature of the mode of ignorance that perverts ordinary *buddhi* and binds the soul to matter. A mind free of false ego knows Çré Viñëu, the Supersoul, to be like a brilliant fire, and the individual souls to be like sparks within that fire. As we learn from *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 2.5.24, the darkness of false ego gives shape to a kind of self-centered goodness called *vaikärikä,* also called *sättvikä-ahaìkära.*** *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 10.88.3 says this mundane goodness is associated with Lord Çiva (there are also *räjasa-* and *tamasa-ahaìkära*; Çiva governs them all). He is the aspect of Käla (time) joined to the black goddess Kälé that electrifies the three modes of nature. In the dense gloom of false ego, Çiva's goodness looks bright, the way a single spark looks bright in the black of night. But just as one spark cannot dispel the night, so *vaikärikä-sattva*, the goodness of Çiva, does not dispel the ignorance of the bodily conception. Quite apart from this, the goodness of Viñëu rises like the sun to reveal the pristine transcendental identity of all souls in relationship with the Supreme Soul. Such is the mature, fully liberating knowledge that develops from cultivation of *vasudeva* goodness.

This book, *Dimensions of Good and Evil*, is focused on morality. How does morality fit with the four ends of goodness sheltered in Viñëu? In *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.20.5, Uddhava defines morality as *guëa-doña-bhidä-dåñöir*, "seeing the difference between piety and sin." Differentiating between piety and sin is governed by *nigama*—the Vedic scriptures given by Lord Kåñëa. Uddhava asserts that true morality can have no other basis than this. Thus morality is a feature of Vedic knowledge, which is one of the four harvests of goodness.

Nigama (scriptural knowledge) schools a person in seeing Lord Väsudeva everywhere even at the immature body-based stage of goodness. *Nigama* illuminates the dimension of rational value, wherein it is logically established beyond a reasonable doubt that Väsudeva is everything. Consider for a moment modern education. In school, students develop their reasoning powers through basic training in science. With the eye of scientific reason they learn to "see" the

sun as tremendously bigger than the earth, even though their blunt physical eyes tell them the sun is much smaller. Similarly, through the eye of scriptural reason (*çästra-cakñuñä*), we can see beyond physical impressions to the metaphysical presence of God everywhere in the macrocosm, mesocosm and microcosm. Logically, then, we should satisfy Him by good conduct in these spheres. The fallen soul must learn from a Kåñëa conscious spiritual master (the *äcärya*, "one who teaches by example") how to behave in the presence of the Lord.

> **O great Supreme Lord, offensive persons whose internal vision has been too affected by external materialistic activities cannot see Your lotus feet, but they are seen by Your pure devotees, whose one and only aim is to transcendentally enjoy Your activities.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **3.5.45**)

Närada Muni says in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 7.15.25 that one must cultivate mundane goodness to defeat passion and ignorance, and then rise above body-based goodness to the *çuddha-sattva* (or *vasudeva)* platform. "All this can be automatically done if one engages in the service of the spiritual master with faith and devotion," he concludes. "In this way one can conquer the influence of the modes of nature." The first step to transcendence is learning the difference between good behavior and bad as taught by the spiritual master.**

Offensive behavior begins when a fallen soul foolishly imitates God: "monkey see, monkey do." Assuming for myself the role of supreme controller and enjoyer, I find it "justifiable" to subject the living entities around me to the whims of my desire. By committing offenses in this way to other living entities, my mind is clouded to the presence of the Lord in their hearts. A mind so clouded develops intense bodily attachments, pride, envy, and hostility.

dviñantaù parä-käyeñu
svätmänaà harim éçvaram
måtake sänubandhe 'smin
baddha-snehäù patanty adhaù

> **The conditioned souls become completely bound in affection to their own corpselike material bodies and their relatives and paraphernalia. In such a proud and foolish state, the conditioned souls envy other living entities as well as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, who resides in the hearts of all beings. Thus enviously offending others, the conditioned souls gradually fall down into hell.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **11.5.15**)

Inoffensiveness to others is the lifeblood of Vedic civilization. "Non-violence, truthfulness, honesty, desire for the happiness and welfare of all others and freedom from lust, anger and greed constitute duties for all members of society,"

Lord Kåñëa tells Uddhava in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.17.21. Westerners have their similar Golden Rule of universal morality: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."**

Inoffensiveness is a natural consequence of both external *nigama* and internal *vasudeva* knowledge, as well as pure devotion to the Lord. The good student of a spiritual master (by adherence to scriptural reason), the Supersoul-realized meditator (by *vasudeva* knowledge) and the pure devotee (by loving attachment to Kåñëa) honor God's presence in all beings.

One may ask, "How can anybody live in this world and not commit offenses to other beings? We all have to eat. If I am a vegetarian, I still take the life of other creatures. Even if I am careful to eat only spoiled fruits and vegetables (which clearly have no life in them), the fact that these foods are spoiled means that they are infested with micro-organisms which I inadvertently eat and kill." This question is answered in *Bhagavad-gétä* 4.24. One who knows the Lord's presence everywhere engages in *brahmärpaëaà*, or the dedication of all actions to Him. The act of offering, the person making the offering, and the ingredients so offered (the living entities associated with the food offering, for example) are freed from karmic reaction because of being accepted by Kåñëa. This is called *brahma-karma* or spiritual activity. It is no offense but the greatest kindness to engage living entities in *brahma-karma*, which liberates them from the cycle of repeated birth and death.

Ignorant souls tend to show kindness only to their blood relations. But even this kindness, steeped as it is in bodily attachment, is of no lasting help to anyone. Familial "love" simply inflames envy. One family circle envies neighboring families. One community envies neighboring communities. One nation envies neighboring nations. Envy gives vent to offensiveness. Where there is offensiveness, there is no goodness, pure devotion, real knowledge nor morality. There is only animalistic rivalry at the cost of all finer qualities. When human beings lose their finer qualities, they descend into hell. The antidote is the awareness of the presence of the Lord in everything, which dispels envy and offensiveness.

yas tu sarväëi bhütäny
ätmany evänupaçyati
sarva-bhüteñu cätmänaà
tato na vijugupsate

> **He who sees everything in relation to the Supreme Lord, who sees all entities as His parts and parcels and who sees the Supreme Lord within everything, never hates anything nor any being.** (*Çré Éçopaniñad* 7)

Inoffensiveness is good. Morality cannot exist without it. However, for a devotee it is not good enough to merely *not* envy and hate others. He takes

morality beyond goodness to *paropakära*, transcendental welfare work that reconnects the fallen souls to Kåñëa.** Çré Prahläda Mahäräja prays:**

svasty astu viçvasya khalaù prasédatäà
dhyäyantu bhütäni çivaà mitho dhiyä
manaç ca bhadraà bhajatäd adhokñaje
äveçyatäà no matir apy ahaituké

> **May there be good fortune throughout the universe, and may all envious persons be pacified. May all living entities become calm by practicing *bhakti-yoga*, for by accepting devotional service they will think of each other's welfare. Therefore let us all engage in the service of the supreme transcendence, Lord Çré Kåñëa, and always remain absorbed in thought of Him.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **5.18.9**)

The sattvic person adheres to good and shuns evil, but a pure devotee like Çré Prahläda can bring good forth from evil. He was born as the son of Hiraëyakaçipu, the evil king of the demons who held the universe in his iron grip. Therefore the inborn nature of his senses and instincts, as well as his association at home, were not disposed to goodness. He was only a small boy with almost no education in scriptural matters. Yet by the grace of his spiritual master, he saw the Lord's presence everywhere. Even more, his love for God was so strong that it drew Him out before everyone's view. This is the pure devotional dimension of value, in which the true object of everyone's love is revealed. Prahläda's father—who had tried repeatedly to kill his small son—was liberated by the Lord's own hand. Thus evil was not merely avoided, nor even just defeated. It was completely purified by the power of pure devotion. The harvest of goodness (knowledge and morality), though certainly beneficial, is not the final end of the Vaiñëava. The Lord's divine person—where goodness begins—is the final end.

The material mode of goodness can be compared to a big modern airport, where I go to board an intercontinental flight. If I let myself be captivated by the gleaming airport conveniences—the duty-free shops, the restaurants and the cinema—and miss my flight, then I've missed the whole point of going to the airport. The airport is not my final destination. Similarly, to become Kåñëa conscious, it is advisable to move to goodness from ignorance and passion. But goodness is not my final destination. If instead of flying I become attached to the first-class facilities available in the *sattva-guëa*—religion, knowledge, morality, austerity and opulence—separately from Kåñëa, then I am in *sättvikä-ahaìkära*. When Kåñëa is forgotten, the troubled gloom of passion and ignorance gradually shrouds the four facilities of goodness. Mundane goodness, given time, becomes evil. To carry the airport analogy further, the flight itself may be compared to *vasudeva-sattva* or transcendental goodness. As consciousness rises to transcendence, it delights in an all-inclusive vista of the energies of

Godhead, just as an airline passenger delights in observing vast reaches of the globe from the heights of the stratosphere. In *vasudeva* consciousness, there is no turning back to passion and ignorance. The arrival of the soul at Kåñëa's personal abode spells the journey's end.

Chapter Four,
Gauëa-dharma and Mukhya-dharma

Entering the airport (cultivating goodness) is termed *gauëa-dharma* or secondary religion, and flying in an airliner to one's destination (going back home, back to Godhead) is termed *mukhya-dharma*, or primary religion. In the first chapter of Part One of *Çré Caitanya-sikñämåtam*,** Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura makes clear the distinction between *gauëa-dharma* (secondary religion) and *mukhya-dharma* (primary religion).

> According to *gauëa-dharma* or secondary religion, one should discriminate between good deeds (*puëya*) and evil deeds (*päpa*). Such morality is not to be rejected. Nor does it quit the soul [when he is liberated]. But once the soul attains the pure state of freedom from the three modes of nature, this morality undergoes a transformation. It becomes a principle of *mukhya-dharma* or the primary religion of the soul. With the soul's fall into material life, his primary religion was distorted. From the distortion of primary religion, the morality of secondary religion was born. But by the process of transforming *gauëa-dharma* [towards perfection], *mukhya-dharma* becomes gradually manifest. *Gauëa-dharma* is the religion of souls who, though still associating with material nature, are refined enough to want to discriminate between good and evil deeds. Furthermore, they define good and evil with scriptural reference to *éçvara*, the controller of material nature. In terms of the fivefold gradation of human beings presented in Chapter Two, *gauëa-dharma* is practiced by persons at the third grade, who combine morality with faith in God. We may call this piety.

How may a person transform piety into perfection? By devoting his moral and religious duties to the Supreme Lord alone. For example, in *Bhagavad-gétä* Lord Kåñëa instructs Arjuna to completely surrender his *gauëa-dharma* as a righteous warrior to His personal service.

Now what is the difference between surrendering one's *dharma* to Kåñëa, and merely adhering to external moral and religious codes out of faith in God? The difference is that for a devotee of Kåñëa there can be *no good deed other than serving Kåñëa* and *no bad deed other than not serving Kåñëa.* At the

beginning of *Bhagavad-gétä*, Arjuna took the role of a pious moralist who feared the offenses he might commit by fighting the Kurukñetra war for Kåñëa's sake. But at the end of *Bhagavad-gétä*, as Arjuna rode into battle with Lord Kåñëa at the reins of his chariot, the narrator Saïjaya declares that the Lord and his pure devotee are always accompanied by true *nété* or morality.

By dedicating his *dharma* to Kåñëa's service alone, the devotee moves from the third grade (piety) through the fourth grade (regulated devotional service) to the perfectional fifth grade of pure devotional service in ecstatic love of God. The fourth and fifth grades are *mukhya-dharma* because they connect the soul with the Lord. In the fourth grade the soul regulates his activities so as to always receive Kåñëa's mercy, as *Bhagavad-gétä* 2.64 stipulates: "A person free from all attachment and aversion and able to control his senses through regulative principles of freedom can obtain the complete mercy of the Lord." In the fifth grade the devotee achieves love of Kåñëa by purely chanting the Lord's holy name, as *Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Ädi* 8.26, reveals: "Simply chanting the Hare Kåñëa *mahä-mantra* without offenses vanquishes all sinful activities. Thus pure devotional service, which is the cause of love of Godhead, becomes manifest."

The attention of the Kåñëa conscious devotee turns forever away from embodied sense enjoyment. Thus his actions *must* be moral and religious, since out of love for Kåñëa he abandons the perverted love for bodily relations, which nurtures enviousness and offensiveness.** A devotee also goes beyond the ends of goodness: religion, knowledge, renunciation and opulence. Absorbed in Kåñëa consciousness, he transcends the duality of good and evil.

na mayy ekänta-bhaktänäà
guëa-doñodbhavä guëäù
sädhünäà sama-cittänäà
buddheù param upeyuñäm

> **Material piety and sin, which arise from the good and evil of this world, cannot exist within My unalloyed devotees, who, being free from material hankering, maintain steady spiritual consciousness in all circumstances. Indeed, such devotees have achieved Me, the Supreme Lord, who am beyond anything that can be conceived by material intelligence.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **11.20.36**)

Çréla Bhaktivinoda Thakura stated above that *mukhya-dharma* (the primary religion of the soul) is distorted in the fallen material existence. He added that the morality of *gauna-dharma* (secondary religion) took birth from that distortion. These are themes of a verse spoken by Çré Prahläda Mahäräja to his young schoolmates, the sons of the demons.

Nothing is unobtainable for devotees who have satisfied the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the cause of all causes, the original source of everything. The Lord is the reservoir of unlimited spiritual qualities. For devotees, therefore, who are transcendental to the modes of material nature, what is the use of following the principles of religion, economic development, sense gratification and liberation, which are all automatically obtainable under the influence of the modes of nature? We devotees always glorify the lotus feet of the Lord, and therefore we need not ask for anything in terms of *dharma, kama, artha* and *moksa*.
(*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **7.6.25**)

Prahläda differentiates between directly satisfying the Supreme Lord, and following the principles of *dharma-adayaù*, the four-fold progress of secondary religion. The moral codes of secondary *dharma* lead to economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*käma*) and liberation (*mokña*). All four are *guna-vyatikarat*, "due to the actions of the modes of material nature." Prahlada makes clear that pure devotees do not endeavor for the stages of *dharma-adayaù* because devotees have no interest apart from the glorification of the lotus feet of the Lord. *So to endeavor for progress in* dharma, artha, kama *and* moksa *is to distort* mukhya-dharma*, the primary religion of the soul.* Repeating the words of His spiritual master Isvara Puri, Çré Caitanya Mahaprabhu taught:

kåñëa-viñayaka premä—parama puruñärtha
yära äge tåëa-tulya cäri puruñärtha

Religiosity, economic development, sense gratification and liberation are known as the four goals of life, but before love of Godhead, the fifth and highest goal, these appear as insignificant as straw in the street.
(*Çré Caitanya-caritamåta Ädi* **7.84**)

Secondary religion is concerned with the problems of embodied life. *Artha*, *käma* and *mokña* expand from *gauna-dharma* as secondary solutions to these problems. Especially when people enter household life, they find themselves beset by a myriad of problems and challenges: the birth of children, the demands of the workplace, lamentation, illusion, fear of future dangers, anxiety about how to increase happiness and minimize distress, the creeping up of old age, disease and death. To meet these difficulties, people certainly need to live in a society regulated by moral principles that encourage piety and discourage impiety. This is *dharma*. They certainly need profit earned by honest means. This

is *artha*. They certainly need to eat, sleep, mate and protect their households. This is *käma*. And they certainly need to find final release from sins incurred in the course of their working lives. This is *mokña*. Is it not irresponsible to preach in such a manner as to turn people away from these goals?

Mukhya-dharma does not exactly turn people away from the four goals; it turns them into *Kåñëa-bhaktas*. Faith in Kåñëa is defined as the conviction that simply by rendering service to Him, all lesser goals will be automatically accomplished.

'çraddhä'-çabde—viçväsa kahe sudåòha niçcaya
kåñëe bhakti kaile sarva-karma kåta haya

By rendering transcendental loving service to Kåñëa, one automatically performs all subsidiary activities. This confident, firm faith, favorable to the discharge of devotional service, is called *sraddha*. (*Çré Caitanya-caritamåta Madhya* 22.62)

Çré Bilvamangala Öhäkura expresses this faith in *Kåñëa-karnamrta* 107:

bhaktis tvayi sthiratara bhagavan yadi syad
daivena nah phalati divya-kisora-murtih
muktih svayam mukulitanjali sevate'sman
dharmartha-kama-gatayah samaya-pratiksah

> If I am engaged in devotional service unto You, my dear Lord, then very easily can I perceive Your presence everywhere. And as far as liberation is concerned, I think that liberation stands at my door with folded hands, waiting to serve me—and all material conveniences of *dharma* [religiosity], *artha* [economic development] and *käma* [sense gratification] stand with her.

Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura mentioned a process of transforming *gauna- dharma* towards perfection by which *mukhya-dharma* gradually becomes manifest. I alluded to this process already. The example of Arjuna was mentioned. He surrendered his *gauna-dharma* of fighting to Lord Kåñëa at Kuruksetra. This process is called *daivi-varnasrama-dharma*—the transcendental Vedic social system.

It turns out that what Western philosophers call "the moral universe" is the cosmic form of *varnasrama*. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* describes the universe as being governed by the Supreme Lord from His abode in the spiritual world. His instruments of control are the three modes of nature. These modes award all living entities here with different qualities, different names and different forms. For example, human society is graded according to four *varnas* or orders: *brähmaëas* (teachers), *kñatriya* (administrators), *vaiñyas* (farmers, merchants) and *çudras* (the working class).** For all these orders a type of activity is established as religious and moral (*dharma*), and a type of activity is established

as irreligious and immoral (*adharma*). *Dharma* is enjoined in the Vedas, and *adharma* is contrary to Vedic injunctions. The Vedas are the words of the Supreme Lord Himself.** They are thus not different from Him. In his *Bhägavatam* commentary, Madhväcärya writes that the Vedic principles should therefore be understood to be Vaisnava principles.

Daivi-varnasrama-dharma is Vedic *dharma* understood as Vaiñëavism. It is the meeting point of *gauna-dharma* and *mukhya-dharma*. It is *varnasrama* in the transcendental mode of *vasudeva-sattva*, where Viñëu is known by liberated sages to be everything.

väsudeva-parä vedä
väsudeva-parä makhäù
väsudeva-parä yoga
väsudeva-paräù kriyäù

väsudeva-paraà jïänaà
väsudeva-paraà tapaù
väsudeva-paro dharmo
väsudeva-parä gatiù

In the revealed scriptures, the ultimate object of knowledge is Çré Kåñëa, the Personality of Godhead. The purpose of performing sacrifice is to please Him. *Yoga* is for realizing Him. All fruitive activities are ultimately rewarded by Him only. He is supreme knowledge, and all severe austerities are performed to know Him. Religion [*dharma*] is rendering loving service unto Him. He is the supreme goal of life. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.2.28-29)

The moral law governing *daivi-varnasrama-dharma*, which was enforced by saintly Vedic kings of yore, is laid down in *Çré Içopanisad*. *Çréla Prabhupäda explains this Vedic moral order in his purport to *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 4.22.45:

> When monarchy ruled throughout the world, the monarch was actually directed by a board of *brähmaëas* and saintly persons. The king, as the administrator of the state, executed his duties as a servant of the *brahmanas.* It was not that the kings or *brähmaëas* were dictators, nor did they consider themselves proprietors of the state. The kings were also well versed in Vedic literatures and thus were familiar with the injunction of *Çré Iñopanisad*: *isavasyam idam sarvam*—everything that exists belongs to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In *Bhagavad-gitä* Lord Kåñëa also claims that He is the proprietor of all planetary systems (*sarva-loka-mahesvaram*). Since this is the case, no one can claim to be proprietor of the state. The king, president or head of the state should always remember that he is not the proprietor but the servant.

Speaking in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 5.1.16, Brahma affirms that even *jivan-muktas* or persons liberated within the body do not transgress Vedic law, for they know it to be the order of the Lord. Brahma adds that such liberated souls perceive the duality of happiness and distress to be a dream—this duality, of course, being what the materialists regard as good and evil "in fact." And so while working with the body as per Vedic regulation, *jivan-muktas* remain indifferent to happiness and distress. Their work therefore does not create future bodies under the laws of *karma*. If happiness and distress are just a dream in *daivi-varnasrama*, then what motivates the work of society? *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.2.13 replies:

ataù pumbhir dvija-çreñöhä
varëäçrama-vibhägaçaù
svanuñöhitasya dharmasya
saàsiddhir hari-toñaëam

O best among the twice-born, it is therefore concluded that the highest perfection one can achieve by discharging the duties prescribed for one's own occupation according to caste divisions and orders of life is to please the Personality of Godhead.

However, it is not expected that everyone working within *daivi-varnasrama* will be on the platform of topmost perfection. Besides the *suddha-* Vaiñëavas, the pure devotees, there are the *vaisnava-praya*, "the almost Vaiñëavas," who serve the Lord but work to some degree under the sway of bodily happiness and distress. Lord Caitanya says of the *vaisnava-praya*, *yadyadi brahmanya kare brahmanera sahaya*: "They give charity to the *brähmaëas* and help them greatly."** Thus the *vaisnava-praya* engage in pious works that are like those prescribed in secondary religious scriptures. Yet in *daivi-varnasrama* such works please the Lord because they constitute service to His pure devotees. By serving liberated devotees, the *vaisnava-praya* are purified and gradually rise to devotional service in liberation.

"*Varnasrama-dharma*, the system of four spiritual orders and four social orders of life, is of two kinds: demoniac and transcendental," writes Çréla Prabhupäda in *Renunciation Through Wisdom*. "They have nothing in common." That which is demoniac leads to hell. When does *varnasrama* lead to hell?

cäri varëäçramé yadi kåñëa nähi bhaje
svakarma karite se raurave paòi' maje

The followers of the *varëäñrama* institution accept the regulative principles of the four social orders [*brähmaëa*, *kñatriya*, *vaiñya* and *çudra*] and four spiritual orders [*brähmacarya*, *gåhastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*]. However, if one carries out the regulative principles of these orders but does not render transcendental service to Kåñëa, he

falls into the hellish condition of material life. (*Çré Caitanya-caritamåta Madhya* **22.26**)

If the Vedic principles are actually Vaisnava principles, how is it possible for *varnasrama-dharmis* to neglect devotional service to the Lord even as they carry out their prescribed duties? We find the answer to this question in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 6.3.25. There are two classes of sages who in ancient time compiled the Vedic scriptures. One class is called *mahajana*. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 6.3.20 lists twelve *mahäjanas* who are the authorities for *Mukhya-dharma*, worship of the Lord. They are Svayambhu, Narada, Sambhu, Kumara, Kapila, Manu, Prahläda, Janaka, Bhiñma, Bäli, Vaiyasaki or Çukadeva Gosvämi, and Yämaräja.)

The *mahajanas* are great devotees among the Vedic sages; but another class of sages is bewildered by *maya*. For example, some conceive of God, the source of Vedic knowledge, as nameless, formless, impersonal, and one with everything. Their intelligence is dulled by flowery Vedic *mantras* that encourage rituals geared to material progress in terms of *dharma*, *artha*, *käma* and *moksa*.

Stalwart Vaiñëavas conclude that only one philosophy issues from the mouths of all kinds argumentative sages who espouse apparently conflicting doctrines under such names as *karma-mimamsa*, *brahmavidya*, *nirvisesavada*, *advaita-vedanta* and so on. That one philosophy is *mäyäväda*, which means "the teaching of *maya**" At the heart of *mayavada* in all its forms lurks the crazy notion "I am God", which the Mayavadis preach is sanctioned by the Vedas under the aphorism *aham brahmasmi*. But as we saw in Chapter Two, the delusion that I am God is the spiritual falldown of the soul. This falldown, says Bhaktivinoda, distorts *mukhya-dharma*. Out of that distortion the body-based morality of *gauna-dharma* was born. Moral codes like "thou shalt not kill, steal, lie, nor commit adultery" are needed only in a world of souls gone mad. The real purpose of *gauna-dharma* is to tame and train the maddened souls so that they can respectfully hear about *mukhya-dharma*.

But some ancient schools of Vedic philosophy disconnected *gauna-dharma* from *mukhya-dharma*. Sages of these schools amplified the dry, technical details of complex rituals, abstract metaphysics and elaborate codes of behavior. They glorified elevation to higher material planets and salvation in *kaivalya* (oneness). They never challenged the inner delusion of "I am God" that is the foundation of material existence. The best we can say about the teachings of such sages is that they offer all the tiny human gods something else to do besides devouring one another. But this is at the cost of the higher taste of pure devotional service. *Gauna-dharma* so disconnected from *mukhya-dharma* ends in the c*atur-varga*, the four-fold goal of mundane life.

The *catur-varga* attracts *karmis* (fruitive workers) and *jnanis* (speculative philosophers). The *karmis* go for *dharma-artha-kama* and the *jnanis* go for *moksa*. They strive for their desired goals by meshing Vedic rituals with the mechanical functions of the three modes of material nature. In the ultimate analysis this scheme of *dharma* is atheistic. *prabhu kahe—mayavadi krsne aparadhi*: Lord Caitanya condemned the Mayavadis as being offenders against Lord Kåñëa.** The scriptures warn that by evading the shelter of Kåñëa's lotus feet, and seeking shelter in the *catur-varga*, the gains of the *karmis* and *jnanis* in *varnasrama-dharma* are temporary. The material nature they surrender to raises them to goodness, where at most they may taste a crumb of the harvest of *dharma*, *jnana*, *vairagya* and *aisvarya*. Then the same material nature plunges them down into a hellish life of ignorance.

Three classes of devotees are evident within *daivi-varnasrama*. The *vaisnava-praya* ("almost Vaiñëavas") are *kanistha-adhikaris* or third-class devotees.** Those *kanisthas* who are not very conversant with higher Vaiñëava regulative principles work within *daivi-varnasrama* on the level of *sesvara naitika jivana*, a moral life with faith in the Supreme Lord. By being charitable to advanced devotees and thus getting their mercy, these *kanisthas* can be raised to *sadhana-bhakta jivana*, a life of regulated devotion to the Lord. Here they are initiated as *vaiñëava-brähmaëas** into *arcana-vidhi*, worship of the Deity. Gradually they mature into middle-class Vaiñëavas (*madhyama-adhikaris*) who go out to preach to the *kanisthas*, as well as to the materialistic *karmis* and *jnanis* who adhere to Vedic morality without faith in Kåñëa (*kevala-naitika jivana*), and even to the immoral, unregulated people (*nitisunya-jivana*). At the highest stage are the *uttama-adhikaris* (first-class devotees) who, being liberated within the body, are on the level of *bhava-bhakta jivana*, a life of ecstatic devotion to Kåñëa.

A final difference must be noted between transcendental *varëäñrama* and material *varnasrama*. In the first, a person's duty within the system is learned at the lotus feet of the *vaiñëava-guru* (Kåñëa conscious spiritual master). That is why in *Bhagavad-gitä* 2.7 Arjuna begged that Lord Kåñëa become his spiritual master. Arjuna was confused about his duty—not in the technical sense of how to fight, but about *why* to fight. The "why" was answered by Kåñëa in His teachings on *buddhi-yoga*, the yoga of higher intelligence. As Çréla Prabhupäda explains in *Renunciation Through Wisdom*, *buddhi* received from *Bhagavad-gitä* transforms our material propensities for karma and *jnana* into transcendental *bhakti-yoga*. By higher intelligence one comes to know what his proper position within the four *varnas* and the three classes of devotees is, and what in these positions his particular service to Kåñëa is. But in material *varëäñrama*, the so-called gurus promote *karma* and *jnana* as being superior to *bhakti-yoga*. Thus all prescribed duties within this version of *varëäñrama* remain mundane, befitting the Mayavadi philosophy of *brahma-satya jagan mithya*: the impersonal absolute

is true, and all in this universe—including the Vedic social system—is false. Following the conventions of the animal world, the Mayavadi gurus determine by birth alone a person's position within the *varnas*. "As the offspring of a cow is always a cow," so the unintelligent Mayavadis think, "the offspring of a *brähmaëa** is always a *brähmaëa**" But Lord Kåñëa teaches that placement in the *varnas* is determined by the qualifications of a person's work (*guna-karma*). Kåñëa does not mention birth as a qualification at all. The placement of a doctor in society is never made on the basis of his being the son of a doctor. Only by proven ability is he qualified. Thus the social order taught by the Mayavadis is but *jati-vyavastha*, a hereditary caste system. It is has nothing in common with *daivi-varnasrama-dharma* taught in *Bhagavad-gétä*.

Containing six chapters, this section argues that there are two basic moral systems: one that involves the soul's relation to matter, and the other that involves the soul's relation to God. The soul's essential nature is to serve or worship. Worship of matter puts the soul under the laws of the moral universe. Worship of God frees the soul from matter.

Chapter Five,
Vidhi: Codes of Dharmic Law

As seen in the preceding two chapters, the Sanskrit word *dharma* is commonly translated as "religion." But religion as we know it in the modern world usually does not reflect the depth of the Vedic sense of *dharma.* More than mere faith, the word *dharma* signifies the natural characteristic of a thing. The word could well be translated as "final cause," to take a term from Western philosophy. A final cause is the reason why a thing exists, or in other words the purpose intended for the thing by its creator. For example, the final cause-the dharma-of a house is to give shelter to people. A house uninhabitable by humans is adharma.

There are two dharmas incumbent upon human beings: *gauëa* (secondary) and *mukhya* (primary). Humans have two *dharmas* because they are spirit souls encased in bodies of matter. They therefore simultaneously have a spiritual and a material program. In his purport to *Bhagavad-gétä* 9.30, Srila Prabhupada explains:

As for protecting the body or abiding by the rules of society and state, certainly there are different activities, even for the devotees, in connection with the conditional life, and such activities are called conditional. Besides these, the

living entity who is fully conscious of his spiritual nature and is engaged in Kåñëa consciousness, or the devotional service of the Lord, has activities which are called transcendental.

Mukhya-dharma, the spiritual program of worshiping Kåñëa, is eternal. At all times, in all places, and in all circumstances, *mukhya-dharma* is the reason for the spirit soul's very existence. In *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.7, Çré Kåñëa indicates *gauëa-dharma* to be the program for things that are defined by *deça* and *käla*, or place and time. Our gross and subtle bodies are so defined. Thus a wide range of duties fall upon these bodies according to the time of day and season, and location in space. The reason for *gauëa-dharma*, Kåñëa declares, is *niyamärthaà hi karmaëäm:* the restriction of materialistic activities. He gives a fuller explanation in verses 24 and 25.

> Simply by material birth, human beings become attached within their minds to personal sense gratification, long duration of life, sense activities, bodily strength, sexual potency and friends and family. Their minds are thus absorbed in that which defeats their actual self-interest. Those ignorant of their real self-interest are wandering on the path of material existence, gradually heading toward darkness. Why would the *Vedas* further encourage them in sense gratification if they, although foolish, submissively pay heed to Vedic injunctions?

Here it is clear: persons whose minds are infected by materialism are ignorant of their actual self-interest. Actual self-interest is the target of *mukhya-dharma.* So that the actual self-interest of common people may not be defeated, *gauëa-dharma* enacts Vedic codes of civilized behavior to check their descent into the depths of animalistic consciousness, where the possibility of spiritual progress is lost. Kåñëa warns that outside the standards of Vedic culture, dirtiness, dishonesty, thievery, faithlessness, useless quarrel, lust, anger and hankering are prominent.**

Because *gauëa-dharma* regulates material affairs, it is bound to the bodily conception. Thus even though it protects *mukhya-dharma*, it may turn out to be an obstacle to *mukhya-dharma*. When is it an obstacle? When in the name of lesser scriptural codes that govern his temporary bodily affairs, a person fails to follow the higher codes of his eternal self-purpose. Though he piously defends his neglect of Kåñëa's direct service by claiming to be "too busy" with other prescribed duties, his real interest is in the fruitive rewards of secondary religion: health, wealth, sensual enjoyment, power, prestige, entrance in heaven after death, salvation, and so on.

"Those statements of scripture promising fruitive rewards," Lord Kåñëa says in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.23, "do not prescribe the ultimate good for men but are merely enticements for executing beneficial religious duties, like promises

of candy spoken to induce a child to take beneficial medicine." Öhäkura Bhaktivinoda offers this elaboration.**

> There are two kinds of *vidhi*, or Vedic codes of moral conduct: primary (*mukhya*) and secondary (*gauëa*). When one aims to satisfy the Supreme Lord, the *vidhi* that directly and without hindrances leads to that goal is known as *mukhya* or primary *vidhi.* And the *vidhi* that gradually, with interruptions, approaches the highest goal is called secondary or *gauëa-vidhi*. An example will help clarify this point. The Vedic injunction (*vidhi*) to bathe early in the morning keeps the body cool, clean and healthy. It also helps calm the mind. An undisturbed mind makes religious activities, or worship of the Supreme Lord, easy to perform. However, keeping a cool and healthy body—an immediate result of early morning bath—does not guarantee attainment of the prime goal (worship of the Supreme Lord) directly and without hindrances. Thus the prime goal of human life cannot be achieved simply by taking early morning baths. Between the two Vedic injunctions of taking early morning baths and worshiping the Lord are several intervening stages, each offering different results. Therefore if the direct path leading to the ultimate goal is allowed to be hindered by intermediate goals, then deviation and even abandonment of the path is possible. (*Çré Caitanya-sikñämåtam* 1.1)

Worship of the Lord is the ultimate fruit of *vidhi*. This fruit is transcendental, beyond the good and evil of this material world. But the intervening fruit, the "candy"—as per the example above, the cleansing and cooling down of the body that gives relief from physical ills—is merely "good." This sense of "good" is calculated in terms of its immediate value to the senses. We feel a bath good because it rids the body of the evil of grime, discomfort and affliction.

Now, a good bodily feeling is not the only intervening fruit to emerge from the bathing *vidhi*. There is the fruit of social respectability. When I rise early to bathe, I earn the approval of my neighbors as an adherent of religious and hygienic codes. They respect me as "good." If I don't bathe, they disrespect me as "bad." There is also the fruit of destiny. One may bathe in a holy place to wash off his past sins and acquire "good *karma*". Indeed, there are scriptural statements that glorify bathing in holy places (*térthas*) as opening the way to heaven after this life.** Neglecting purificatory baths may open the way to hell.

The three intervening "goods" noted above are sought by people fixed in three conceptions of mundane self-interest: *ädhyätmika*, *ädhibhautika* and *ädhidaivika*, respectively. The first is self-interest in relationship to the subtle and gross body, the second is self-interest in relationship to other living entities, the third is self-interest in relationship to destiny (*daiva*). Each "good" obtained by bathing presents an opportunity to enjoy one of these self-interests; or, since the *ädhyätmika*, *ädhibhautika* and *ädhidaivika* conceptions are features of the three

guëas, each "good" presents an opportunity to enjoy the modes of nature in the name of righteous behavior.

The difficulty here is that the three conceptions of self-interest are inherently miserable for the soul. Why? Because they are merely *self-serving.* They fall short of our eternal self-purpose as *servants of Kåñëa.* Thus they awaken no ultimate happiness within the spirit soul. They are called *tapa-traya*, threefold suffering. That is not to say that the subtle and gross body, society, and destiny do not make available a degree of pleasure. But at the same time they play host to insurmountable miseries like birth, death, disease and old age that undermine the pleasures of body, society and destiny. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.1.2 condemns as *kaitava* (cheating) any *dharma* that advocates self-interest in terms of the *tapa-traya.* Real *dharma* is defined as that which uproots the *tapa-traya*. That uprooting, as confirmed next, is accomplished by aiming all prescribed duties at only one final fruit: devotional service to Kåñëa.

etat saàsücitaà brahmas
täpa-traya-cikitsitam
yad éçvare bhagavati
karma brahmaëi bhävitam

> **O brähmaëa Vyäsadeva, it is decided by the learned that the best remedial measure for removing the threefold miseries is to dedicate one's activities to the service of the Supreme Lord Personality of Godhead [Çré Kåñëa].** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **1.5.32**)

Chapter Six,
Brahminical Goodness and Devotional Goodness

The previous chapter stated that *gauëa-dharma* enacts Vedic codes of civilized behavior to check the descent of humanity into the depths of animalistic consciousness where the possibility of spiritual progress is lost. Unless they follow the standards of Vedic culture, people become dirty, dishonest, thieving, unfaithful, quarrelsome, lusty, angry and unsatisfied. But what if a devotee is not competent to execute all the standard Vedic duties? Will he or she fall into animalism? The answer is that the complete dedication of whatever service he or she is capable of doing—as long as that service pleases Kåñëa—is sufficient to raise that devotee to the status of a transcendental associate of the Lord, far above the material mode of goodness.

Once, during the time Lord Kåñëa displayed His boyhood pastimes on earth five thousand years ago, some *brähmaëa* priests began a fire sacrifice known as

Äìgirasa, which is performed by those desirous of reaching heaven in the next life. Kåñëa, His brother Balaräma and Their friends, the cowherd boys of Våndävana village, were in the forest nearby. The two Lords' companions confided that they were very hungry. Since those *brähmaëas* had arranged for nice foodstuffs to be offered in the sacrifice, Kåñëa told His friends to beg charity from the priests in the name of His brother and He Himself. Demigods like Brahmä and Çiva are also worshiped in Vedic rituals. But ultimately sacrifice is supposed to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whom the *Vedas* address as Yajïa, the Lord of Sacrifice. Though Kåñëa and Balaräma play with Their friends as if They were ordinary village boys, They are equally Lord Yajïa.

The boys did as Kåñëa advised. But the *brähmaëas* did not so much as speak a word in reply. Intent as they were on exploiting the potency of the mode of goodness for their own ends, these proud *brähmaëas* took the cowherd boys' request to be impudent. They thought of Kåñëa and Balaräma as commoners, and themselves as learned, expert and aristocratic gods on earth. The priests had lost sight of the fact that the Vedic scriptures thoroughly regulate every aspect of sacrifice—the place, the time, the paraphernalia, the *mantras*, the rituals, the priests, the fires, the demigods, the performer, the offering and the desirable results—just so that the Lord will be satisfied. All these ingredients achieve their perfection only in His service.

When the boys went back to Kåñëa and told Him they'd been refused, He laughed. Then He sent them to the priests' homes. The wives of the *brähmaëas* were most affectionate to Kåñëa. Hearing of His desire, they were ecstatic. With great eagerness they prepared large pots of fine foodstuffs and personally brought them before the Lord, whom they found standing in the midst of the forest sweetly smiling while He twirled a lotus flower in His hand, lilies decorating His beautiful ears. Kåñëa thanked the women most kindly, assured them that their continual service to Him would yield them all protection and perfection, and then sent them home.

The *brähmaëas* took note of their wives' spiritual transformation in Kåñëa's company. They condemned themselves for having neglected the chance to serve the Lord. All they had heretofore considered "good"—their high birth, their vow of celibacy, their learning, their expertise in sacrifice—they now saw to be hellish. The *brähmaëas* admitted that their wives—who'd not received ceremonial initiation from a spiritual master, nor had been trained in the *äçrama* of a *guru*, nor had performed austerities, nor had sought the spirit-self through analytical study, nor had undergone formalities of purification, nor had executed ritualistic duties—*had* achieved the favor of the ultimate destination of true transcendentalists, while they themselves were stuck in secondary religious affairs. While they hoped Kåñëa would forgive them, these *brähmaëas* did not go to Him to apologize personally. They feared that the demonic King Kaàsa—who was sworn to kill Kåñëa and His associates—would kill them.

Vaiñëava philosophy distinguishes between pure or spiritual goodness, termed *çuddha-sattva* or *vasudeva-sattva*, and mundane goodness. This narrative renders that difference crystal clear. Assured of the Supreme Lord's shelter, the humble *brähmaëa* women found they had nothing to fear, while their priestly husbands, despite their mastery of the sattvic *vidhis*, remained fearful. Fear, as Närada Muni explains in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 7.15.43-44, is symptomatic of passion and ignorance. Mundane goodness is tinged by the other modes; hence fear, pride, anger and so on taint the character of persons who, though elevated in breeding and culture, are not fixed in devotional service. Goodness is considered mundane inasmuch as a person considered good is a complacent enjoyer of his or her position in the material world.

Çrémad-Bhägavatam 7.7.51-52 asserts that one cannot satisfy the Lord by becoming a perfect *brähmaëa*, a demigod or a great saint, nor by becoming perfectly good in etiquette or vast learning. None of these qualifications can awaken the pleasure of the Lord. Nor do charity, austerity, sacrifice, cleanliness or vows satisfy the Lord. The Lord is pleased only if one has unflinching, unalloyed devotion to Him. Without sincere devotional service, everything is simply a show. In Ç*reyo-nirëaya* 3.3-4, Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura writes:

> *rüpa vinä alaëkäre kibä çobha e-saàsäre. périti-vihéna guëe kåñëa nä tuñite päri. bänarér alaëkär çobhä nähi hoy tä'r. kåñëa-prem vinä tathä guëe na ädara kori.*
>
> If ornaments are worn by one completely devoid of beauty, then do they appear beautiful in this world? Similarly, one is nqot able to satisfy Lord Kåñëa by showing refined qualities if he is devoid of love for Him.
>
> As there is not much beauty to an ornament worn on the body of a female monkey, in the same way I do not hold in very high esteem refined qualities if they are devoid of love for Kåñëa.

The narrative of the *brähmaëas* and their wives illustrates the choice human beings face between attraction to the *guëas* and attraction to the Supreme Person. The former leads to further bondage by duality (seen in the *brähmaëas*' case as their fear for their personal safety), the latter to liberation.

> *cetaù khalv asya bandhäya*
> *muktaye cätmano matam*
> *guëeñu saktaà bandhäya*
> *rataà vä puàsi muktaye*
>
> **The stage in which the consciousness of the living entity is attracted by the three modes of material nature is called conditional life. But when that same consciousness is attached to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one is**

situated in the consciousness of liberation. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **3.25.15**)

Chapter Seven,
Satan Looking Good

The modes of nature are attractive because they offer apparent solutions—apart from full surrender to Kåñëa—to the problem of having a material body, to wit: how can I increase my happiness and at the same time free myself from physical distress? The *gauëa-dharmé* thinks the answer is to adhere to the rules of pious embodied life. But whatever bodily happiness we achieve remains inseparably linked to suffering. *Mahäbhärata* (7.15.20 and 50) explains:

na hi paçyämi jévantam
loke kaçcid ahiàsäya
sattvaiù sattväni jévanti
durbalair balavattaraù

For I do not see any embodied soul living who causes no harm to others. All creatures live one at the cost of another, the stronger off the weaker.

nätyantaguëaväm kaçcin
na käpy atyantanirguëaù
ubhayam sarvakaryeñu
dåñyate sadhv asädhu ca

Nothing is perfectly good, and nothing is entirely without merit. In all actions, both good and bad are seen.

Similarly, *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.3.18 states:

karmäëy ärabhamäëäëäà
duùkha-hatyai sukhäya ca
paçyet päka-viparyäsaà
mithuné-käriëäà näëäm

Accepting the roles of male and female in human society, the conditioned souls unite in sexual relationships. Thus they constantly make material endeavors to eliminate their unhappiness and unlimitedly increase their pleasure. But one should see that they inevitably achieve exactly the opposite result. In other words, their happiness inevitably vanishes, and as they grow older their material discomfort increases.

From the very beginning of creation, the duality of good and evil has pervaded embodied life all over the universe. This is confirmed by *Manu-saàhitä* 1.26, a verse that describes the Lord's act of cosmic creation.

karmaëäm ca vivekärthaà
dharmädharman vyavecayat
dvandvair ayojayat cemäù
sukha-dukhädibhiù prajäù

> To distinguish actions (*karma*), the Lord separated piety from impiety, and He caused the living entities to be affected by pairs [of opposites] such as pain and pleasure.

The language is unmistakable. Piety and impiety (*dharmädharma*) are two sides of the coin of karmic bondage. Having come under the law of *karma* by his desire to enjoy matter, a soul is eternally conditioned (*nitya-baddha*) by duality. This means he struggles, birth after birth, with pairs of opposite conditions crowding him on all sides: good versus evil, pain versus pleasure, attraction versus repulsion, rich versus poor, life versus death, heaven versus hell, and countless more. This state of affairs is precisely what is meant by "bewilderment by duality" (*dvandva-mohena*) in *Bhagavad-gétä* 7.27.

When *gauëa-dharma* is executed only to promote the up side of embodied life and counteract the down side, it is not real *dharma* at all. It is *dharmädharma:* piety that circles round the hub of selfishness back to impiety for want of a spiritual end. We may recall from Chapter Three Lord Kåñëa's definition of *dharma* in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.19.27: *dharmo mad-bhakti-kåt prokto*—"Real *dharma* leads one to My devotional service." Kåñëa offers souls the human form of life along with the Vedic regulative principles as their doorway to spiritual life. But if a soul spends the entire human life struggling with duality, he will fail to pass through the doorway to transcendence.

Kåñëa says the secondary Vedic regulative principles are meant for those who still hunger to enjoy this world, whose taste for hearing and chanting His glories has not yet awakened.** Such *gauna-vidhi* is aimed at suppressing the sinful reactions incurred through sense enjoyment. In and of itself it has no spiritual significance. It is just a feature of material existence. Still, it has a higher purpose. The Lord intends it to engender world-weariness in the mind. One weary of material affairs is then encouraged by the Vedas to renounce sense enjoyment and take up devotional service to the Lord. If one does not, he or she wastes the human birth. Devahüti nicely sums all this up in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.23.56**:

neha yat karma dharmäya
na virägäya kalpate

na tértha-pada-seväyai
jévann api måto hi saù

Anyone whose work is not meant to elevate him to religious life, anyone whose religious ritualistic performances do not raise him to renunciation, and anyone situated in renunciation that does not lead him to devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, must be considered dead, although he is breathing.

Thus wrestling with the duality of piety and sin at the cost of devotional service to the Lord is a formidable obstacle to spiritual progress. It might be helpful here to note that the meaning of the word "obstacle" is close to the original sense of the Hebrew word *satan*.** People who invest their brief human existence in the struggle with duality are obstructed in their spiritual understanding by Satan—the *satan* of attraction to the sweet fruits of good deeds, and the *satan* of avoidance of the bitter fruits of bad deeds. This duality just turns the wheel of birth and death.

That is why *Chändogya Upaniñad* 8.4.1 dismisses both piety (*sukåta*) and impiety (*duñkåta*) as evil (*papämäna*). The *ätmä* or spiritual self, this verse explains, is distinct from any material condition—day, night, old age, death, suffering, and even good deeds and bad. All of these are inauspicious when viewed from the transcendental position (*naitam setumahorätre tarato na jarä na måtyurna çoko na sukåtam na duñkåtam päpamänaù*). Similarly, *Mahäbhärata* 12.318.44 calls upon us to disregard moral duality: *tyaja dharmamadharmam ca ubhe satyanrte tyaja,* "give up religion, irreligion and both truth and falsehood."

But this is not a call to give oneself over to unregulated conduct. A life of morality combined with faith in God (*seçvarä naitika jévana*) offers more hope for spiritual development than a life of non-religious morality (*kevala naitika jévana*), which in turn is better than a life of immorality (*nitisünya jévana*). The first is good, the second passionate and the last ignorant. But when good is an obstacle to the best—a life of pure devotional service to Kåñëa—that "good" is satanic.

No, a devotee never subverts the moral codes of goodness. He or she transforms them. How? By leaving aside the three conceptions of mundane self-interest (*ädhyätmika*, *ädhibhautika* and *ädhidaivika*). Mundane selfishness, or *ahaìkära* (false ego), is the root of the duality of good and evil.** The only way to cross beyond that selfishness, the *locus standi* of body-based *dharmädharma*, is to act on behalf of Kåñëa's interests rather than one's own interests. Thus Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura prays:

bhakativinoda nähi jäne dharmädharma
bhakti-anuküla tära hau saba karma

> Bhaktivinoda knows neither religion nor irreligion. He simply prays that all his activities be conducive for pure devotion to you. (*Bhakti-anuküla-mätra Karyera Svékara* 1.9, from *Çaraëägati*)

Yet in *Bhagavad-gétä* 4.7-8, two verses oft-quoted in Vaiñëava circles, Lord Kåñëa says He personally descends into the material universe when there is a decline of *dharma* and a rise of *adharma*. His mission is to deliver the pious and annihilate the miscreants. Hence it would appear that God is not neutral; He takes the side of *dharma* against *adharma.* Does this not mean He involves Himself in the very dualistic *dharmädharma* that His devotees eschew?

There is no contradiction here for one who knows the difference between the transcendental *dharma* taught personally by the Lord, and the body-based, dualistic *dharmädharma* that is customary in the material world. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 6.3.19 separates the two in the clearest way:

dharmaà tu säkñäd bhagavat-praëétaà
na vai vidur åñayo näpi deväù
na siddha-mukhyä asurä manuñyäù
kuto nu vidyädhara-cäraëädayaù

> **Real religious principles (*dharma*) are enacted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although fully situated in the mode of goodness, even the great *åñis* who occupy the topmost planets cannot ascertain the real religious principles, nor can the demigods or the leaders of Siddhaloka, to say nothing of the *asuras*, ordinary human beings, Vidyädharas and Cäraëas.**

The qualities of the material modes are given voice through the teachings of great sages, demigods, Siddhas, demons, Vidyädharas, Cäraëas and human beings. Thus goodness, passion and ignorance become the themes of religion, philosophy, morality, jurisprudence and literature, which in turn exhort souls to take shelter of different regions of the universe where specific material qualities predominate. By knowing these regions, and by knowing the forms of life that dwell in them, one can know the moral shape of the macrocosm.

The universe is divided into fourteen regions. The earthly region, wherein human beings dwell, is called Bhürloka. Above this is the Bhuvaù-loka, where entities who are *antarikña-sthanah* (denizens of outer space) and *madhyama-sthanah* (denizens of planets between earth and heaven) dwell. Included are the Yakñas, chief of whom is Kuvera, the treasurer of the demigods; the Kinnaras and Kimpuruñas, whose looks combine human and animal features; Räkñasas, fearsome man-eaters with black magical powers; Vidyädharas, angelic beings who fly in the sky without vehicles; Gandharvas, celestial musicians who subtly inspire earthly musicians; Apsaräs, lovely dancing girls who consort with the Gandharvas and other handsome residents of heaven; Cäraëas and Siddhas, who

are naturally endowed with all mystic powers; ghosts (*pretas*, *piçäcas*, *bhütagaëas*, etc.); and many other kinds of supernatural entities (Uragas, Patagas, Niçäcaras, etc.). Above Bhuvaù-loka is Svargaloka, the heaven of the *karma-devatäs*, or the thirty-three million demigods who were raised to heaven by pious *karma* performed in previous human births. *Sarve puruñakärena mänusyad devatäm gatäù*, states *Mahäbhärata* 13.6.14: "all, by human effort, went from human status to demigod status." And *Mahäbhärata* 12.250.38 asserts: *sarve devä martya sanjïä-viçiñöäù*—"All these demigods become human beings when the fruit of their good *karma* is exhausted." The regions of Bhür (earth), Bhuvaù (outer space) and Svarga (heaven) are tinged by the mode of passion, as Çréla Prabhupäda explained in a *Bhagavad-gétä* lecture in Bombay on 24 March 1974.

Above this passionate realm is the realm of goodness, where the great *åñis* (sages) reside. This realm includes the Maharloka (region of the *åñi* Bhågu); Janaloka (region of the *manasä-munis*, the mental sons of Brahmä); Tapaloka (region of the Vairäja sages); and Satyaloka (region of Brahmä, Kñérodakaçäyé Viñëu and Çiva, each of whom directs one of the three modes of material nature).

Below the earthly Bhürloka is a sevenfold realm known as Bila-svarga (the underworld heaven), where ignorance predominates and sunlight never penetrates. The first region is Atala. It is ruled by a demonic scientist named Bala who is a master of 96 magical arts. The residents of Atala seek happiness through intoxication and sexual excess. The second region is Vitala, an abode of Häöakeçvära—an expansion of Çiva—and his consort Bhavänédevé. The third region is Sutala, ruled by Bali. Though born among the demons, he is a pure devotee of the Lord. The fourth region is Talätala, where Maya Dänava lives, the preceptor of all black magicians. The fifth region is Mahätala, the abode of the Kadrüdevatäs, a brood of many-headed serpents born of Kadrü, wife of Kaçyapa Muni. Despite their extreme ferocity, they always live in fear of Garuòa. The sixth region is Rasätala, inhabited by the Daitya and the Dänava demons who, being very envious of the demigods, sometimes mount military campaigns against the Svargaloka. At the very bottom is Pätäla. Here reside the Nägaloka-adhipatis, the lords of all serpentine demons. They bear effulgent jewels in their multiple heads that mysteriously illuminate the entire Bila-svarga realm.

Beneath Bila-svarga is Pitåloka, the personal abode of Yama. This is a heavenly place associated with Soma, the moon-god. Near Pitåloka is Narakaloka, where sinners suffer hellish torments. Below this is the cosmic ocean known as Garbhodaka.

All these classes of embodied living perceive and conceive the purpose of life (*dharma*) differently according to time, place and the way their minds are influenced by *buddhi* and *ahaìkära.* Some formulate *dharma* to be the increase of material prosperity. Others formulate *dharma* to be liberation from the anxiety that follows material prosperity. (These two paths of *gauëa-dharma*, called

karma-märga and *jïäna-märga*, will be more fully explained in Chapters Twelve and Thirteen). Those who are pious among these classes of beings establish their ideas of *dharma* on the strength of Vedic directives. Those who are impious establish them upon their own whims.

Far removed from the ideas of these mundane authorities, the devotees state the aim of their *dharma* thus:

karmabhir bhrämyamäëänäà
yatra kväpéçvarecchayä
maìgaläcaritair dänai
ratir naù kåñëa éçvare

Wherever we wander in the material universe under the influence of *karma* by the will of the Lord, may our auspicious activities cause our attraction to Lord Kåñëa to increase. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **10.47.66**)

It so happens that mundane authorities become obstacles on the path of the devotees. King Kaàsa was an extreme example of this. His sister Devaké and her husband Vasudeva were pure devotees of the Lord. Life after life the only aim of their excellent moral and religious conduct was to have the Supreme Lord as their son. In their previous two births they had also been husband and wife, and in each of these lifetimes the Lord had accepted them as His parents, first in His incarnation as Påçnigarbha and then as Vämana. But now King Kaàsa locked Vasudeva and Devaké in prison, intending to kill Kåñëa as soon as He was born. Kaàsa was satanic: his purpose was to block the loving attraction between the Lord and His devotees out of fear of a prophecy that Kåñëa, once He took birth, would kill him. But such foolish satans don't realize that the trouble they make for His devotees insures that Kåñëa *will* appear:

sva-çänta-rüpeñv itaraiù sva-rüpair
abhyardyamäneñv anukampitätmä
parävareço mahad-aàça-yukto
hy ajo 'pi jäto bhagaván yathägniù

The Personality of Godhead, the all-compassionate controller of both the spiritual and material creations, is unborn, but when there is friction between His peaceful devotees and persons who are in the material modes of nature, He takes birth just like fire, accompanied by the *mahat-tattva.* (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **3.2.15**)

Kaàsa was an "evil satan," or (to use the Sanskrit term) a *duñkåtina*, a person of merit who works for material elevation and liberation from distress *in defiance of scriptural injunction.* Slain by the divine hand of the Lord, Kaàsa was released from his *karma.* Passing beyond the cycle of birth and death, his soul merged into the dazzling effulgence that shines forth from Çré Kåñëa's body. There are

many miscreants like Kaàsa who are totally opposed to the Lord. Yet they impudently pose as teachers of *dharma.* Kåñëa comes to destroy them—but by doing so, He liberates them. Chapter Sixteen will offer the demon Hiraëyakaçipu as an example.

Quite apart from demons like Kaàsa, there are "good satans" (*sukåtinas*), meritorious persons who work for material elevation and liberation from distress *in accordance with scriptural injunctions.* They too may become obstacles on the path of pure devotion. But because they are pious, Kåñëa deals with them differently than He does demons like Kaàsa. The demigod Indra, whom we shall meet in Chapter Nine, was an example of a "good satan." Because "good satans" do not adamantly oppose surrender to the Lord, Kåñëa delivers them from illusion. As we shall see in the next chapter, even Arjuna, who is much more than just a pious soul, since he is an eternal associate of the Lord, was delivered from his imperfect ideas of *dharma* by Kåñëa's grace.

Real *dharma* is that personally enacted by Bhagavän, the Supreme Person. He descends to show by His own example how the various duties of human life are to be carried out in a natural, wholesome way that satisfies Him. This happy combination of *mukhya-dharma* (service to the Lord) and *gauëa-dharma* (fulfillment of worldly responsibilities) is called *sanätana-dharma*, "the eternal religion." Any *dharma* formulated by some mundane authority that contradicts *sanätana-dharma* stands to be corrected by the Lord. When does another *dharma* oppose Kåñëa's *dharma*? When it teaches "good" to be something other than the Lord's satisfaction. The Lord is not miserly; His satisfaction accommodates the well-being of everyone. Only those too attached to satanic ways find difficulty in dedicating their lives to the Lord's devotional service.

ko 'ti-prayäso 'sura-bälakä harer
upäsane sve hådi chidravat sataù
svasyätmanaù sakhyur açeña-dehinää
sämänyataù kià viñayopapädanaiù

> **O my friends, sons of the *asuras*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His Supersoul feature always exists within the cores of the hearts of all living entities. Indeed, He is the well-wisher and friend of all living entities, and there is no difficulty in worshiping the Lord. Why, then, should people not engage in His devotional service? Why are they so addicted to unnecessarily producing artificial paraphernalia for sense gratification?** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **7.7.38**)

When the Supreme Lord comes into this universe to remove the obstruction of *dharmädharma* (good and evil satanism), His appearance is called *avatära.* The word *avatära* means "He who descends"; it is said that there are as many *avatäras* as waves in the ocean, but the Vedic scriptures name those whose mission is to deliver the world from false authorities. *Matsya Puräëa* 285.67 lists

ten: Matsya, Kürma, Varäha, Nåsiàha, Vämana, Paraçuräma, Rämacandra, Kåñëa, Buddha and Kalki. Of these, Lord Kåñëa is the *püréävatära*, the complete appearance of God in whom all other *avatäras* are contained.

In Canto Eleven, Chapter Five, of *Çrémad-Bhägavatam*, Karabhäjana Muni speaks of four *avatäras*, one for each of the four *yugas* (world epochs). These *yuga-avatäras* establish the *vidhi* (method) of how mankind should worship the Lord as the conditions of each epoch permit. In the first age, Satya-yuga, the Lord descends in a white form to teach meditation upon Himself. He is known by the name Haàsa. In the second age, Tretä-yuga, the Lord descends in a reddish form to teach how to satisfy the Lord through Vedic sacrifice. He is known by the name Yajïa. In the third age, Dväpara-yuga, the Lord descends in a dark blue form to teach worship of Himself with reverential devotion. He is known by the name Väsudeva. Çré Kåñëa personally assumed this Väsudeva role five thousand years ago. In the fourth age, Kali-yuga, the Lord descends in a lustrous golden form to teach *saìkértana*, the congregational chanting of the holy names of Kåñëa. Sage Karabhäjana does not name the Kali-yuga *avatära* of the Lord apart from calling Him Mahäpuruña, the greatest personality. Only five hundred years ago, that greatest of persons appeared in India as Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu. We can all associate with Him even now by associating with the holy names He Himself chants constantly. Indeed, the holy names are themselves *avatäras* of Kåñëa.

kali-käle näma-rüpe kåñëa-avatära
näma haite haya sarva-jagat-nistära

> **In this age of Kali, the holy name of the Lord, the Hare Kåñëa *mahä-mantra*, is the incarnation of Lord Kåñëa. Simply by chanting the holy name, one associates with the Lord directly. Anyone who does this is certainly delivered.** (*Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Ädi* **17.22**)

The *avatäras* of the Lord are not under the laws of *karma.* The paths they lay down in each age lead souls out of the cycle of birth and death back home, back to Godhead. The inner secret of the *dharma* taught by the Lord in any age is *rati*, which means attraction. One should become attracted to the Lord by way of the message He teaches. Otherwise *dharma* is a waste of time.

dharmaù svanuñöhitaù puàsäà
viñvaksena-kathäsu yaù
notpädayed yadi ratià
çrama eva hi kevalam

> **The occupational activities (*dharma*) a man performs according to his own position are only so much useless labor if they do not provoke attraction for the message of the Personality of Godhead.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **1.2.8**)

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the happiness we achieve in this world remains inseparably linked to suffering. In any region of the universe—whether good, passionate or ignorant—unwanted distress intrudes. Such distress is *karma-vipäka*, the painful results of our past sinful acts that mature in their own time, even after many years or lifetimes, even in the midst of the complacent joys of the present moment.

Human life is especially subject to hardships of fate on the personal level (old age, loneliness, uncertainty, depression, disease, death); on the social level (injustice, corruption, exploitation, violence); on the environmental level (earthquake, hurricane, plague, famine, drought). For one faced by such adversity, there is cold comfort in knowing "I deserve it." It is human nature to seek a solution. In this, we are faced with a choice.

On the one hand, satanic solutions are offered by the authorities posted in the different regions (good, passionate, ignorant) of the moral universe. Some solutions are pious. Others are impious. But all are satanic, because they obstruct the real goal of life. *Dharmädharma* makes the insurmountable struggle with duality look "good"—but the struggle with duality *is the very cause of all our problems.*

On the other hand, the real solution is to leave behind body-based conceptions of good and evil and to follow without condition the *dharma* personally taught by the Lord. One is thus recognized by Him as His devotee. He rewards His devotees with the shelter of His lotus feet. All-powerful time, who agitates all embodied living entities by lust, distress and anger, and who at last dissolves the entire universe along with all of its so-called authorities, does not interfere with souls sheltered at the Lord's lotus feet.

yatra nirviñöam araëaà
kåtänto näbhimanyate
viçvaà vidhvaàsayan vérya-
çaurya-visphürjita-bhruvä

> **Simply by expansion of His eyebrows, invincible time personified can immediately vanquish the entire universe. However, formidable time does not approach the devotee who has taken complete shelter at Your lotus feet.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **4.24.56**)

Chapter Eight,
Abandon All Dharma

That God's personal desire is for the duality of piety and impiety (*dharmädharma*) to give way to unconditional devotion to Him is the lesson of *Bhagavad-gétä.* The *Gétä* opens with the pious grievances that Arjuna uttered just before the start of the Kurukñetra war.** Belonging to the *kñatriya* caste of warriors, Arjuna's *gauëa-dharma* was the Vedic code of chivalry. Bound by that code to defend his blood relations, he doubted the morality of the war that Kåñëa wanted him to wage, as it pitted him against members of his own family.

> Sin will overcome us if we slay such aggressors. Therefore it is not proper for us to kill the sons of Dhåtaräñöra and our friends. What should we gain, O Kåñëa, husband of the goddess of fortune, and how could we be happy by killing our own kinsmen? O Janärdana, although these men, their hearts overtaken by greed, see no fault in killing one's family or quarreling with friends, why should we, who can see the crime in destroying a family, engage in these acts of sin? (*Bhagavad-gétä* 1.36-38)

Arjuna was a member of one of four varëas (social orders) that, together with four äçramas (orders of spiritual advancement), make up the Vedic social system. The varëas are brähmaëa (teachers of Vedic knowledge), kñatriya (royalty), vaiçya (farmers and merchants) and çüdra (laborers, craftsmen, artisans, entertainers: the serving class). These social orders are said to be situated on the head, chest, belly, and legs of the Mahäpuruña, the Lord's mesocosmic form of pure goodness. The äçramas are brahmacarya (celibate students), gåhastha (householders), vänaprastha (retirees) and sannyäsa (renunciates).

The Lord's mesocosmic moral order is called *varëäçrama-dharma.* It engages human beings according to *guëa-karma*, the modes that influence their conduct. *Brähmaëas*, being inclined to good conduct, are given engagements that call for peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, learning, realization, religiousness. *Kñatriyas*, being inclined to good-passionate conduct, are given engagements that call for heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and leadership. *Vaiçyas*, being inclined to passionate-ignorant conduct, are engaged in caring for cows and bulls, tilling the land and doing business. *Çüdras*, being inclined to ignorant conduct, are engaged in labor and menial service. The *brähmaëas* lead the rest, not by force but by knowledge. Thus goodness is the most respected and influential mode in *varëäçrama-dharma.* When everyone emulates brahminical conduct, this naturally makes for a stable, well-maintained and highly moral society. Each *varëa* is regulated by its *sva-dharma* or specific religious duty. *Brähmaëas* have three compulsory duties: studying the *Vedas*, worshiping the Deity form of the Lord and giving charity. To maintain themselves, *brähmaëas* may also teach, engage others in Deity worship and receive charity. The *kñatriyas* have the same duties as the *brähmaëas* except that they are not

allowed to receive charity. They are to maintain themselves by collecting taxes, charging customs duties and levying fines—but in return *kñatriyas* must protect the subjects who pay them these dues. In the course of protecting the citizenry, the warrior class is sometimes obliged to enter battle.

Kñatriya warfare is governed by an intricate code of honor that transforms the ugly business of human combat into a sacrifice. The idea is to limit the occasions of warfare by binding it tightly to religious principles. The Vedic culture holds scripturally-prescribed military battle to be "non-violent violence," akin to the "injury" done to a patient's body by a surgeon as he excises a malignant tumor. Restricting warfare is a challenge modern man finds too daunting. Since the end of the Vietnam war in 1975, no year has gone by without fifty full-scale military conflicts being fought in various parts of the world.** Arjuna thought the Kurukñetra war was unrighteous because the main combatants were all of the same clan. He was so stricken by anguish that he was ready to reject his *sva-dharma* and live by begging. The questions that he raised in the beginning of *Bhagavad-gétä* were, in essence: "What is the ultimate law that determines *sva-dharma*, or what I as a warrior should do?"

Many people—for example, followers of the present-day Hindu caste system, and modern scholars of Indology—argue that the ultimate law that governs *sva-dharma* is *karma.* On this view, the reactions to the deeds of his past lives determined what Arjuna had to do at Kurukñetra. Some scriptural texts seem to confirm this view. *Mahäbhärata* 3.200.31 holds that a person's good or bad condition, including the high or low *varëa* into which he is born, is the result of *karma.* Other verses identify *karma* alone as responsible for all a person does, whether right or wrong.

na hy eva kartä puruñaù
karmaëoù çubhapäpayoù
asvatantro hi puruñaù
käryate daruyäntravat

> **Indeed, a person does nothing, neither good nor bad. Like a wooden doll, he acts without any will or volition.** (*Mahäbhärata* 5.156.14)

The theory that "*karma* is the ultimate law of *sva-dharma*" is rejected in *Bhagavad-gétä*, which points out that the *cätur-varëa* (four *varëas*) were created by Lord Çré Kåñëa, not by *karma* (*Bhagavad-gétä* 4.13). Kåñëa created *varëäçrama-dharma* so that human beings could perform their duties *for His sake*—not for the sake of working out their *karma*—and thus be liberated from the chain of action and reaction (*Bhagavad-gétä* 3.9, 3.31, 18.46). *Karma* overtakes those who are foolish (*vimüòhätmä*), who are lost to their non-material identity, who think they are the doers and thus are attached to the work of the physical body (*Bhagavad-gétä* 3.27, 3.29, 5.12). While it is true that the soul is always the non-doer—that is, he is spiritual by nature and thus ever

above the actions and reactions of material *karma* (*Bhagavad-gétä* 13.32)—it is not true that an embodied person can shake off *karma* just by willpower (*Bhagavad-gétä* 3.5). One can, however, renounce the fruits of his work. So doing, he becomes free of *karma*, since sacrificing the fruits of work for the sake of the Lord, instead of enjoying them selfishly, breaks the chain of reaction that leads to the next birth (*Bhagavad-gétä* 3.9, 3.19, 3.31, 18.11, 18.12). The one regulative principle governing the specific duty of all *varëas* is that the fruits of *sva-dharma* are to be renounced in Kåñëa consciousness:

tasmät sarveñu käleñu
mäm anusmara yudhya ca
mayy arpita-mano-buddhir
mäm evaiñyasy asaàçayaù

> **Therefore, Arjuna, you should always think of Me in the form of Kåñëa and at the same time carry out your prescribed duty of fighting. With your activities dedicated to Me and your mind and intelligence fixed on Me, you will attain Me without doubt.** (*Bhagavad-gétä* **8.7**)

In reply to Arjuna's moralistic objections against his duty of fighting, Kåñëa said that it was Arjuna's own selfishness, not the war, that was the problem. Selfishness was apparent in his attachment to lesser fruits like the future happiness of his kinsmen. Kåñëa reminded Arjuna straight away that he was lamenting for something not worthy of grief, since all who are born into this world must die. At the end of *Bhagavad-gétä*, Lord Kåñëa urged Arjuna to give up selfish, body-based *dharma* and accept only His order and protection as the real religion.

sarva-dharmän parityajya
mäm ekaà çaraëaà vraja
ahaà tväà sarva-päpebhyo
mokñayiñyämi mä çucaù

> **Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.** (*Bhagavad-gétä* **18.66**)

In his commentary, Çréla Prabhupäda states that this single verse is Kåñëa's own summary of the entire *Bhagavad-gétä.*** Indeed, we find the same message appearing again and again in previous chapters of the book.

> **Therefore, O Arjuna, surrendering all your works unto Me, with full knowledge of Me, without desires for profit, with no claims to proprietorship, and free from lethargy, fight.** (*Bhagavad-gétä* **3.30**)

> **In this way you will be freed from bondage to work and its good and evil results. With your mind fixed on Me in this**

principle of renunciation, you will be liberated and come to Me. (*Bhagavad-gétä* **9.8**)

O son of Påthä, those who are not deluded, the great souls, are under the protection of the divine nature. They are fully engaged in devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible. (*Bhagavad-gétä* **9.13**)

Those who worship Me, giving up all their activities unto Me and being devoted to Me without deviation, engaged in devotional service and always meditating upon Me, having fixed their minds upon Me, O son of Påthä—for them I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death. (*Bhagavad-gétä* **12.6-7**)

At the close of the *Gétä*, Arjuna surrendered to Kåñëa. This is *mukhya-dharma*, and by that *dharma* Arjuna tasted the nectarean fruit of Kåñëa's personal association during the ensuing battle. His *mukhya-dharma* was manifest in his execution of the *sva-dharma* of a warrior *together with Kåñëa*, with Kåñëa as the driver of his war chariot. Yet the *Vedas* (*Çvetäçvatara Upaniñad* 6.8) assert, *na tasya käryaà karaëaà ca vidyate:* "The Supreme Being has nothing to do." Why did the Supreme Being, who is aloof from worldly activity (*karma*), take up the reins of his devotee's chariot? The answer is given by Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa in *Siddhänta-ratna* 1.39:

bhaktau khalu bhagaväàn svayam eva vaçé bhüya tiñöhati tämarasakoña madhupa iva.

A devotee's service attracts the Supreme Lord and captivates Him, just as a bee is encased within a flower.

Even in the midst of a calamitous battlefield situation, the Lord's willing captivation by the loving service of His devotee was, is, and remains auspicious for all living entities. By the Lord's personal presence, the war, as wrong as it might have appeared to Arjuna in the beginning, was transformed into a great sacrifice that liberated from the cycle of birth and death all soldiers who fell. Even today, five thousand years later, simply by hearing about Kåñëa's presence at Kurukñetra, countless faithful devotees are purified of their material attachments, enlightened by transcendental knowledge, and uplifted to Kåñëa consciousness.

But is it reasonable for God—who is neutral in the midst of all duality—to take a side in a military conflict? Now, before we apply reason to the Lord's activities, we must know the difference between worldly reason and transcendental reason. People who stick to the first are called *bahirmukha-jana*** (worldly-minded philosophers). In particular, one type of *bahirmukha-jana*** predictably raises

so-called reasonable doubts about Çré Kåñëa's personal involvement at Kurukñetra.

This type of *bahirmukha-jana* is the impersonalist (*nirviçeñavädé*). To him, a "reasonable God" is an impersonal essence: in the language of the *Upaniñads*, Brahman. From the background, as an impassive principle of oneness and goodness, Brahman radiates order and harmony into the world. Evil, on this view, is really nothing**—it is only the *absence* of oneness, goodness, order and harmony. And so it follows that if Brahman really manifested its presence at Kurukñetra, the conflict there ought not to have happened at all. It would be resolved automatically without God taking sides, with no personal effort, no fighting, no winning and losing. Let there be oneness. Then everyone is the winner.

Now, in considering the "reasonability" of the impersonalist viewpoint, we ought not to forget that *reason* means "a cause." The impersonalist can't give a reason for the miseries of the material world. Where does suffering come from? And conflict? And confusion? If God is all-good and *every*thing is in reality one with Him, then evil arises from *no*thing. That would mean the material world as we know it, which is full of suffering, conflict and confusion, doesn't exist at all. A philosophy that says the evil of this world stands on no ground at all is hardly reasonable.

Vaiñëava philosophy teaches that the material world of conflicting differences is a shadow or reflection of an original, transcendental variety harmoniously centered around the Supreme Person. Since the source of the world of differences is true, the world cannot be utterly false. It *is* temporary. Because the world is temporary it cannot satisfy the eternal soul. Thus the evil of this world—which is the lack of eternal spiritual satisfaction—is real. That the world is populated with unsatisfied souls is the reason for all conflicts and differences. Therefore Kåñëa descends into this world to defeat that evil by displaying His personal transcendental variety, the mother of transcendental enjoyment.

The impersonalists fail to understand His transcendental variety because they invest their intellects in the struggle to negate material variety in favor of impersonal oneness. Unless one understands transcendental variety, he cannot understand the blissful pastimes of the Lord. He cannot understand the non-material happiness shared by the Lord and His devotee as they rode together into battle. He views the entire event as a product of *karma*.

Now, *Bhagavad-gétä* 3.27 explains *karma* to be activity that arises out of the cyclical change of the three modes of nature. Under the influence of the false ego, the bewildered soul identifies with that activity. But in truth he does nothing at all, because he is always different from matter. The impersonalist thinks that Arjuna and Kåñëa were likewise identifying with, and thus were bound by, the actions and reactions of material nature. However, in *Bhagavad-gétä* 7.12, Kåñëa says that while goodness, passion and ignorance originate in Him, He is aloof

from them. In 7.4 and 5 He distinguishes between the material *prakåti* which acts separately (*bhinna*) from Him, and His personal *prakåti* which is *parä*, transcendental to matter. All souls belong to that spiritual *prakåti.* But as stated in *Bhagavad-gétä* 9.13, only the great souls (*mahätmäs*), the pure devotees, come under the protection of that divine *prakåti*. Under that protection, their only business is to render devotional service to the Lord. In *Bhagavad-gétä* 14.26, Kåñëa states that one who renders Him pure devotional service transcends the three modes of nature.

Bhagavad-gétä reveals the method by which a soul, even while still embodied, is reinstated in the original divine activity beyond the universal moral law of *guëa-karma.* Material activity is that which is provoked by the impulses of the senses and mind. Though he continues to use the body and mind, the devotee is undisturbed by these impulses. His activities are motivated by loving devotion for Kåñëa. After giving up the body at the time of death, the devotee does not take birth again within the moral universe but is transferred to the infallible realm of pure spirit—Kåñëa's personal abode.

Chapter Nine,
Destiny, Karma and Worship

What is destiny? Is it the same as *karma*, human effort? Some persons find a great deal of difference between the two. King Triçaìku, frustrated in his struggles to attain heaven, lamented:** *daivam eva paraà manye pauruñam tu nirarthakam*—"In my opinion, destiny is all-powerful and human effort is futile." (*Rämäyaëa* 6.98.23)

He used the word *daiva*, often translated as "destiny." *Daiva* is related both in meaning and etymology to "divination." It refers to powers that decide man's fate: the demigods (devas), the insurmountable material energy (daiva-maya), and ultimately the supreme controller, the God of gods (devadeva), Lord Kåñëa. Does daiva determine karma or does karma determine daiva? About *karma*, Çré Kåñëa says, *gahanä karmano gatiù*—"the intricacies of *karma* are very difficult to understand" (*Bhagavad-gétä* 4.17), and *kavayo 'py atra mohitäù*—"even the intelligent are bewildered in understanding *karma*" (*Bhagavad-gétä* 14.16). The reactions of *karma* stored up for us in the future (*aprärabdha-karma*) are called *adåñöa*, "unforeseen." Again we may ask: What is the connection between unforeseen karmic reactions and the higher control of *daiva*?

Çrémad-Bhägavatam 3.31.1 clears up the confusion: *karmaëä daiva-netreëa jantur dehopapattaye*—"Under supervision of the Supreme Lord (*daiva*) and according to the result of his work (*karma*), the living entity, the soul, obtains a

body." A conditioned soul cannot foresee how and when he will quit the present body, nor what sort of body awaits him in the next life. Destiny seems to us accidental. The Lord, and the Lord alone, knows all that is in store, past, present and future, for every living entity in the universe.

There are some who, for the sake of their material preservation and improvement, are curious to tap into His exacting knowledge of *karma.* They are fools who want to use *daiva* in the service of ignorance. Kåñëa's omniscience is the soul's light of freedom from karmic bondage. Eyes opened to that light see directly the secret teaching of the *Vedas:* that everything in threefold time—past, present and future—is a dream (*bhütaà bhavad bhaviñyac ca suptaà sarva-raho-rahaù*, from *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 4.29.2). *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.29.5 elaborates:

> **My dear Lord, You are just like the sun, for You illuminate the darkness of the conditional life of the living entities. Because their eyes of knowledge are not open, they are sleeping eternally in that darkness without Your shelter, and therefore they are falsely engaged by the actions and reactions of their material activities, and they appear to be very fatigued.**

Worship of the Supreme Lord opens our eyes to our original non-material identity beyond the dream displayed within *rajo-guëa* (which creates the dream of this body), *sattva-guëa* (which maintains the dream of this body), and *tamo-guëa* (which destroys the dream of this body). The secondary Vedic injunctions (*gauëa-vidhi*) belong to that dream, since they enunciate the law of the three modes. Whatever is ruled by these modes lacks the liberating light of Kåñëa consciousness.

> **Neither the three modes of material nature [*sattva-guëa*, *rajo-guëa* and *tamo-guëa*], nor the predominating deities controlling these three modes, nor the five gross elements, nor the mind, nor the demigods nor the human beings can understand Your Lordship, for they are all subjected to birth and annihilation. Considering this, the spiritually advanced have taken to devotional service. Such wise men hardly bother with Vedic study. Instead, they engage themselves in practical devotional service.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **7.9.49**)

Neglecting the primary injunction (*mukhya-vidhi*) to worship the Lord who yields liberation from material existence, a sleeping soul worships material controllers who are subject to creation and destruction under the three modes. He dreams of taking command of his destiny with the help of these controllers, that he might intercept life's delights before his rivals see them coming. In the same way he hopes to neutralize or avoid the evil that lies in wait for him in the future. He finds solace in such statements as this, from *Yajnavalkya-småti* 1.307:

grahädhénä narendräëä
ucchrayaù paöanäni ca
bhäväbhävau ca jagatas
tasmät püjyatamä grahäù

The rise and fall of kings, the existence and non-existence of the universe, are determined by planetary influences. The planets are thus most worshipable.

This alludes to astrology. Because it indicates future destiny, astrology is said to be the eye among Vedic sciences. Scripture does indeed say the worship of planets gives *daivopaghätänäm* or protection against the strokes of fate. (*Viñëudharmottära Puräëa* 1.105.14) The true sense of such statements is revealed in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam.*

graharkñatärämayam ädhidaivikaà
päpäpahaà mantra-kåtää tri-kälam
namasyataù smarato vä tri-kälaà
naçyeta tat-kälajam äçu päpam

The body of the Supreme Lord, Viñëu, which forms the Çiçumära-cakra [the stellar form of the Lord that shelters the celestial Gaìgä or Milky Way], is the resting place of all the demigods and all the stars and planets. One who chants this *mantra* to worship that Supreme Person three times a day—morning, noon and evening—will surely be freed from all sinful reactions. If one simply offers his obeisances to this form or remembers this form three times a day, all his recent sinful activities will be destroyed. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **5.23.9**)

The *mantra* referred to is *namo jyotir-lokäya käläyanäyänimiñäà pataye mahä-puruñäyäbhidhémahéti:* "O Lord who has assumed the form of time! O resting place of all the planets moving in different orbits! O master of all demigods, O Supreme Person, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You and meditate upon You." (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 5.23.8) This is again is *mukhya-dharma*, where the secondary scriptural directives find their shelter in the worship of the Supreme Person.

Divination—astrology, the worship of controlling planets, and other methods of prognostication—can open our eyes to destiny, but Lord Kåñëa says that the materialist who employs such methods is trying to see within a dense fog (*yathä néhära-cakñuñaù;* from *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.28). Even using the eye of Vedic knowledge he remains blind to his real self-interest because his consciousness is clouded by the duality of yearning for future happiness and fearing future distress. He misses the presence of the Lord in everything. He ignores the purpose of the Lord for everything. Asleep to clear consciousness, he

hankers and laments within the dream-state thrown up by the three modes. The controllers he worships are but products of that dream.

yajante sättvikä devän
yakña-rakñäàsi räjasäù
pretän bhüta-gaëääç cänye
yajante tämasä janäù

Men in the mode of goodness worship the demigods; those in the mode of passion worship the demons; and those in the mode of ignorance worship ghosts and spirits. (*Bhagavad-gétä* **17.4**)

In his *Gétä Bhäñya* commentary on the above verse, Çréla Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa writes:** *käryabhedena sattvikädi bhedam präpaïcayati yajanta iti,* "In this verse that begins with the word *yajanta* (worship), one mode is distinguished from another on the basis of different acts of worship." Baladeva's commentary goes on to tell us that worshipers of demigods lack proper spiritual understanding. The faith of such worshipers, conditioned as it is by the mode of goodness, obliges them to serve deities like the Vasus and the Rudras. Then there are people who worship Yakñas and Räkñasas like Kuvera (the treasurer of heaven) and Niråti (a fierce, inauspicious goddess of the southwest with a black complexion and golden hair who holds an iron noose). These worshipers are in the mode of passion. And those who worship *pretas* (spirits of the departed) and *bhütagaëas* (other kinds of subtle entities) are in the mode of ignorance. Sometimes members of the twice-born castes—*brähmaëas* (priests) and *kñatriyas* (kings) who are "once-born" from the womb and "twice-born" by spiritual initiation—neglect their religious duties (*svadharma*). Such neglectful *brähmaëas* receive the airy bodies of a type of fire-mouthed demon called Ultkamukha, while neglectful *kñatriyas* take birth as a type of demon called Kaöapütanä. And so this verse (*Bhagavad-gétä* 17.4) depicts those who, due to laziness in their observance of the actual Vedic *vidhi* (the corpus of rules given to humans for their perfection), are put by their materialistic inclinations into one of the three modes. Of course, by the potency of contact with genuine Vedic knowledge, they can rise above their materialistic inclinations and come to the factual Vedic level.

Note it well: according to Çréla Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa, if a high-class *brähmaëa* neglects the actual Vedic *vidhi*—the *mukhya-vidhi* of worship of Kåñëa—he risks degradation to the status of a demon, even though he follows the *vidhi* of demigod worship. Why? Because by worshiping demigods, one comes under the control of the modes of nature. The demigod worshiper is attracted by the comforts of mundane goodness: an easygoing existence in this life, and after death, admission into the pleasure gardens of heaven, where the *devas* indulge in the intoxicating *soma* beverage and the voluptuous embraces of celestial damsels. The great soul Sanat-kumära warns that this sort of attraction

is the ignorance at the heart of material goodness.** This ignorance is a trapdoor to the downfall of the soul.

Good deeds may promote both a Vaiñëava and a demigod worshiper to the same high material status. But the devotee has no personal interest in such promotion, seeing it as just another phase of passing time. Knowing sense pleasures to be the entrapment of illusion, the devotee remains aloof from them wherever they may appear, in heaven, earth or elsewhere.

> **We accept as blessings different states of higher life, distinguishing them from lower states of life, but we should know that such distinctions exist only in relation to the interchange of the modes of material nature. Actually these states of life have no permanent existence, for all of them will be destroyed by the supreme controller.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **4.22.36**)

Worshipers of material controllers—demigods, ancestors and ghosts—try to shape their destinies through that worship. Behind their prayers and offerings, they calculate how to enjoy the supernatural realms in which the material controllers dwell.

yänti deva-vratä devän
pitèn yänti pitå-vratäù
bhütäni yänti bhütejyä
yänti mad-yäjino 'pi mäm

> **Those who worship the demigods will take birth among the demigods; those who worship the ancestors go to the ancestors; those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth among such beings; and those who worship Me will live with Me.** (*Bhagavad-gétä* **9.25**)

Now here the Lord assures Arjuna that one who worships demigods is destined to take birth among them. But to Uddhava He points out that a person bound by the three modes must always fear unforeseen destruction of his material arrangement no matter what position he earns for himself.** Actually, materialists must fear the Supreme Lord, for their destiny unfolds as He apprehends, not according to their vision of the future,** fogged as it is by their schemes and anxieties.

For example, the demigod worshiper anticipates rising to heaven *immediately* after a life spent in service of the demigods. He does not know that the demigods may punish him by pushing him down into a lower birth for some unintended offense he committed while serving them. Take for instance the pious King Någa. Strongly desiring to become a demigod in heaven, he rigidly adhered to the *vidhi* of goodness his whole life long. As it turned out, because of one inadvertent offense in the course of his many good works, his next birth was

tamasic, not sattvic. Yamaräja, the demigod of death, punished Någa to become a lizard. He had to live out that lowly life in a well before he could he be born among the demigods. Fortunately he was rescued from his lizard birth by the personal favor of Lord Kåñëa.

Even after one ascends from human to demigod life, the modes may unexpectedly shift again to push one back down into a degraded body. Not long after he took birth among the Gandharva demigods, Vijaya was cursed by Kuvera. His youthful celestial body was suddenly transformed into the grotesque shape of a demon called Pralambäsura. He was fortunate to be liberated by Lord Balaräma. Even Indra, the king of the demigods, suddenly dropped into the body of a hog due to the curse of sage Äìgirasa. As the Lord makes clear in *Bhagavad-gétä* 8.16:

äbrahma-bhuvanäl lokäù
punar ävartino 'rjuna
mäm upetya tu kaunteya
punar janma na vidyate

> **From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode, O son of Kunté, never takes birth again.**

Secondary scriptures glorify the heightened sensual pleasures abundantly available in the heavenly worlds. But these good planets are subject to the evil of cataclysmic destruction. *Jitvä sudurjayaà måtyum amåtatväya mää bhaja*, orders the Supreme Lord: "Conquer insurmountable death. Worship Me for eternal life." (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.24.38) This is the fundamental rule (*vidhi*) of worship. Therefore Lord Kåñëa declares the worship of deities other than Himself to be a violation of that *vidhi*.

ye 'py anya-devatä-bhaktä
yajante çraddhayänvitäù
te 'pi mäm eva kaunteya
yajanty avidhi-pürvakam

> **Those who are devotees of other gods and who worship them with faith actually worship only Me, O son of Kunté, but they do so in a wrong way (*avidhi-pürvakam:* in a way that contravenes *vidhi*).** (*Bhagavad-gétä* **9.23**)

As we have seen, the Lord warns that the intricacies of *karma* are very difficult to understand. But actually we *can* predict our destiny. It is measurable on the balance of worship. Worship of Kåñëa frees us from material destiny altogether and ushers us into His eternal association. If we worship demigods, demons, ancestors, ghosts, or controlling planets, one thing is sure: we must take birth again and again as determined by the changing modes of nature.

When Lord Kåñëa was personally present upon the earth five thousand years ago, He requested His father Nanda Mahäräja to not perform the Indra-*yajïa* (sacrifice to Indra, king of the demigods). Surprised to hear this from his son, who was then "only" a boy, Nanda Mahäräja explained that Indra is celebrated in the *Vedas* as the controller of rainfall. As farmers, Nanda and the villagers of Våndävana were dependent upon Indra's provision. To neglect the worship of this demigod would be a break with tradition that would thwart success in *dharma*, *artha* and *käma*—piety, economic development and material enjoyment.

Kåñëa replied that the universe with its demigods, demons and human beings is a manifestation of conditioned nature. All that happens in the cosmos is impelled by the changing modes of goodness, passion and ignorance. Even the demigods are subject to the cyclical change of the modes. They are powerless to alter the machinery of universal events. The residents of Våndävana should therefore worship only that upon which they *really* depend—the great Govardhana Hill, which provides them with nice grass for their cows, clear ponds of fresh water, fruits, roots and medicinal herbs. The Lord revealed Govardhana Hill to be a Deity form of His very self. The villagers of Våndävana offered their humble obeisances to Govardhana, understanding that in reality they depended upon Him only. Thus Kåñëa alone, not some demigod, is to be worshiped.

Indra was angered at this apparent break with Vedic tradition. He retaliated by attempting to drown Våndävana in torrential rains. Lord Kåñëa sheltered all the residents and their animals underneath Govardhana Hill, which He held aloft for seven days with the little finger of His left hand. Chastened and ashamed, Indra descended from heaven to Våndävana and surrendered to Lord Kåñëa as the factual controller of all.

This event, described in Chapter Twenty-five of the Tenth Canto of *Çrémad-Bhägavatam*, demonstrates the primacy of *mukhya-dharma* over *gauëa-dharma. Gauëa-dharma* is supposed to regulate the material desires of the living beings by holding them to "good" and away from "evil." Material desires mean selfish desires, desires that are disconnected from the Supreme Person and aimed at the enjoyment of the material world. The demigods manage the functions of the material senses. Some Vedic scriptures advise the materialist to worship these demigods in return for the gratification of his desires. In *Bhagavad-gétä* 3.12, Lord Kåñëa makes clear that this is a *moral* principle: *tair dattän apradäyaibhyo yo bhuìkte stena eva saù*—"one who enjoys the gifts of the demigods without making offerings to them is certainly a thief." However, *mukhya-dharma* transcends the macrocosmic moral law of demigod worship. As Kåñëa declares in *Bhagavad-gétä* 5.29, He is the only enjoyer of sacrifice and austerity. All planets and their presiding deities are actually ruled by Him alone. He is the true benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities.

Though it is in goodness, demigod worship cannot purify the heart of further attraction to the modes. Indeed such worship tends to provoke even more material desires, because a little success in such worship incites greed for more

success. As desires increase, the heart of the demigod worshiper is polluted by the lower modes of passion and ignorance. He degrades to worshiping demons and ghosts, thus preparing his next birth among such beings. Truly, demigod worship is *dharmädharma: dharma* that leads to *adharma.*

It is not "sectarian exclusiveness" that impels a Vaiñëava to eschew the demigods, demons and ghosts for the worship of Çré Kåñëa alone. The fact is that worship of Kåñëa, alone among all forms of worship, purifies the heart of material desires. And this is why the real Vedic *vidhi*—the *mukhya-vidhi*—directs human beings to worship Him exclusively, for only that worship raises the soul to the liberated status of an eternal servant of the Supreme Lord.

çåëvatää gåëatää véryäëy
uddämäni harer muhuù
yathä sujätayä bhaktyä
çuddhyen nätmä vratädibhiù

> **One who constantly hears and chants the holy name of the Lord and hears and chants about His activities can very easily attain the platform of pure devotional service, which can cleanse the dirt from one's heart. One cannot achieve such purification merely by observing vows and performing Vedic ritualistic ceremonies.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **6.3.32**)

Another lesson demonstrated by the Govardhana pastime is that Lord Kåñëa remains the shelter of His devotees in the midst of the reverses of destiny. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, *daiva* (destiny) may indicate material nature or the controlling demigods. Sometimes nature and higher controllers seem to conspire against devotees. The clear example is Indra's flooding the Våndävana villagers. That is *ädhidaivika-kleça*, misery imposed by *daiva.* Sometimes society seems to conspire against devotees. Jesus Christ was crucified; Çréla Haridäsa Öhäkura was whipped. That is *ädhibhautika-kleça*, misery imposed by other living beings. Sometimes a devotee is struck by physical or mental infirmity. The *brähmaëa* Väsudeva, a great soul who lived in South India during the period of Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu's visit there, suffered from leprosy. That is *ädhyätmika-kleça*, misery imposed by one's own body and mind. But throughout these misfortunes, all these great devotees remained unshaken in their God consciousness; indeed, by the grace of the Lord, they triumphed.

Because a devotee is detached from the body and mind, society and the world, and because he or she perceives the hand of the supreme *daiva* (Çré Kåñëa) behind everything, there is nothing to lament from so-called reverses of fortune, which are obstacles, not to liberation in Kåñëa consciousness, but only to sense gratification.

puàso 'yaà saàsåter hetur
asantoño 'rtha-kämayoù

yadåcchayopapannena
santoño muktaye småtaù

Material existence causes discontent in regard to fulfilling one's lusty desires and achieving more and more money. This is the cause for the continuation of material life, which is full of repeated birth and death. But one who is satisfied by that which is obtained by destiny is fit for liberation from this material existence. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **8.19.25**)

In the midst of tribulation, the devotee maintains complete trust that the Lord is managing the backlog of karmic reactions so as to bring His servant closer and closer to the shelter of His lotus feet. The devotee's patient dependence upon the Lord in all circumstances moves the heart of the compassionate Lord to deliver His steadfast servant from the cycle of repeated birth and death.

tat te ´nukampää susamékñamäëo
bhuïjäna evätma-kåtaà vipäkam
håd-väg-vapurbhir vidadhan namas te
jéveta yo mukti-pade sa däya-bhäk

My dear Lord, one who constantly waits for Your causeless mercy to be bestowed upon him and who goes on suffering the reactions of his past misdeeds, offering You respectful obeisances from the core of his heart, is surely eligible for liberation, for it has become his rightful claim. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **10.14.8**)

It is not blind faith that sustains the devotee's trust in Lord Kåñëa's management of karmic reactions. Blind faith is the false hope that God (or demigods or benign stars) will haul fabulous treasures from out of the wine-dark sea of destiny and deposit them at my door. When instead God sends suffering, that kind of faith is threatened. The trust of a devotee is sustained by spiritual knowledge. Reverses of fortune are understood to be golden opportunities for letting go of this temporary world in the calm, lucid awareness that I am not matter, but eternal spirit. To lament over one's material setbacks, and on the contrary to exult over one's material advantages, is just ignorance.

tomära seväya, duùkha hoya jato,
se-o to´ parama sukha
sevä-sukha-duùkha, parama sampada,
näçaye avidyä-duùkha

Troubles encountered in your service shall be the cause of great happiness, for in Your devotional service joy and sorrow are equally great riches. Both destroy the misery of ignorance. (*Ätma-nivedana* 8.4, by Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura, from *Çaraëägati*)

Chapter Ten,
Substitute Gods

Many people today disavow any kind of religion. They completely reject faith in God, demigods, demons and unseen spirits. They perform no worship in accordance with any ritualistic tradition. But in fact, no human being is completely disconnected from worship. Worship is, after all, a synonym for service. No one can deny that he or she renders regular service to the senses, the mind, friends and relatives, society, the call of nature, and so on. The aim of all this service is satisfaction. Thus the quality of our *karma*—our attempt to enjoy the modes of nature—is easily understood by the kind of worship or service we perform in order to fulfill our desires.

In truth, Kåñëa is the reservoir of the satisfaction that we seek in our service. Thus we always seek to serve Him. In his *Vedänta-syamantaka* 3.11, Çréla Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa states that this is the inescapable position of the spirit soul.

> *sa ca jévo bhagavad-däso mantavyaù däsabhüto harer eva nänyasyaiva kadäcaneti pädmät.*

The *jéva* should be understood as a servant of the Lord, "as a servant of Hari, and indeed never in any other way," as *Padma Puräëa* confirms.

Every living entity is always a servant of Kåñëa. That is the supreme value of life; all other values proceed from it. We value liberation only because Kåñëa, our Lord, is eternally free. We value reason and intuition because He grants them to us from within the heart to guide us in our service. We value our senses because they engage us in service.

The question remains whether a given living entity is a *devoted* servant of Kåñëa, or His indirect servant devoted to some inferior product of His material energy. In any case, since everybody always *serves* someone or something, everybody always *worships* someone or something. The great souls always worship Çré Vigraha, the Deity form of Lord Kåñëa on the temple altar.** Service to the Deity busies the devotees' minds and senses in the satisfaction of Kåñëa's desire. This nurtures loving remembrance of His divine form at the time of death. Those who remember Him at death go to Him.

As Närada Muni makes clear in his "Instructions for Civilized Human Beings" (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam*, Canto Seven, Chapter Fifteen), the moral principles of pure Vedic culture are centered around Deity worship. The Deity is served by offerings of *muni-annaà*, foods suitable for saintly persons, which precludes the use of meat, fish or eggs. Offered foods (*prasädam*) are to be distributed

liberally to all living entities: the demigods, saintly persons, forefathers and people in general. The servant of the Deity must give up envy of other living entities—Närada says this is the foremost moral principle. Therefore animal sacrifice is to be shunned. The senses are to be controlled in spiritual knowledge. The servant of the Deity must avoid five kinds of false *dharma:* 1) *vidharma*, or irreligion that contradicts the regulative principles of real *dharma*; 2) *parä-dharma*, hypocritical religion; 3) *upadharma*, religion invented by opponents of the Vedic scriptures; 4) *chala-dharma*, misinterpretation of *dharma*; and 5) *äbhäsa-dharma*, lax, half-hearted imitation of *dharma.*

For people inclined to the immoral ways of *vidharma*, *parä-dharma*, *upadharma*, *chala-dharma* and *äbhäsa-dharma*, there are other modes of worship. As we have seen from the *Gétä*, those who worship entities other than Kåñëa are entitled to go to those entities after death. They do not attain the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

From Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura we learn that there are five kinds of "not-Kåñëa" worship.** These five encompass all kinds of worldly-minded faiths, even those that are completely irreligious. First there is worship of physical matter and powerful natural phenomena. Next is the worship of some vague idea of power beyond physical matter. Third comes the worship of demigods that are figured to be helpful along the way to liberation from matter. Then there is the worship of an unseen, internal deity. The fifth kind of worship is that of ordinary living entities.

Primitive religions—in which people worship elemental potencies visible as fire, mountains, rivers, trees, lightning, the planets visible in the night sky, and so on—belong to the first category. According to Çréla Prabhupäda, in this lowest stage, people ("the scientists also") try to realize the power of matter.** Thus modern scientists, fascinated as they are with nature's possibilities (or "potentia," to borrow a word from the mouth of an eminent physicist), are from the Vedic viewpoint classifiable as primitive religionists.** Another example of primitive religion is *bhauma-ijya*, worship of the land in which one was born (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 10.84.13).** Yet another is ghost worship. In religions like Tantra (India), Voudun (Haiti) and Umbanda (Brazil), ghosts are worshiped** as elusive powers of the natural world that cause useful changes in physical reality.

To the second category belong people who, after deep study of matter, are left with the intuitive sense that the powers of nature are rooted in something indeterminate beyond matter. For example, there are influential scientists who suggest that recent discoveries oblige us to keep our minds open to the possibility of "some 'vital force' different from the forces in physics."** The impersonalist philosophers (*nirviçeñavädés*) are convinced of the existence of such a force. They turn away from the forms and features of matter to worship an abstract metaphysical entity devoid of form: the impersonal Brahman, a monistic divinity behind all life. But such worship turns out to be a kind of subtle materialism (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 10.2.32).** The soul and God are eternally

persons. Both have eternal spiritual forms. Out of disappointment with temporary material forms, the impersonalist tries to negate form altogether and conceive of Truth as a void instead. But the negation of form brings to mind the same negated form, as will be immediately clear to anyone who is told to not think of a blue-eyed Polar bear for the next thirty seconds. An impersonalist philosopher's inherent personal nature holds him to the realm of forms—*material* forms—due to his not having purified his consciousness through devotional service.

In the third category are worshipers of demigods. The demigods personally manage natural phenomena. Sürya manages solar energy, Agni manages fire, Indra manages thunder and rainfall. These beings are called *devas* because they dwell in the higher realm of light.** The Western religious tradition (which begins with Zoroastrianism and includes Judaism, Christianity and Islam),** honors a celestial hierarchy of angels said to rule the forces of nature and bless the pious with protection, knowledge, powers and abilities. Conversely, the lower realm of darkness is ruled

by beings called *asuras* in the *Vedas* and demons (*daimones*) in the Western tradition. Because the *asuras* are just as powerful as the *devas*, they are said to be almost indistinguishable from them**—thus the *asuras* may also be classified as a kind of (fallen) demigod** or angel. In India there are many temples where people worship graven images of *devas* and *asuras.* Sophisticated people, who disdain such worship because it is aimed at petty material advantages, seek liberation via a method of demigod worship called *païcopäsanä* (worship of five deities). Like the *nirviçeñavädés*, these people consider the Divine to be ultimately formless. But they admit that the mental negation of form is problematic. Instead they worship five forms, each supposed to be a step toward formless oneness. These five are Durgä (Mother Nature), Gaëeça (the elephant-headed son of Durgä), Sürya, Çiva and Viñëu. The verdict of *Bhagavad-gétä* 9.23 is that the worship of demigods *instead* of the worship of the transcendental form of Kåñëa is false (*avidhi-pürvaka*). The demigods are worshipable only as representatives of Kåñëa's authority, not as authorities unto themselves. But people take them to be independent lords in the hope that such deities will aid them in their exploitation of, or emancipation from, material nature. *Devas* do award the intervening fruits of religious and moral conduct, but they cannot award the final fruit, love of God.

Mystic *yoga* falls into the fourth category. *Yogés* worship an imaginary inner *éçvara* (Lord) like that formulated by the sage Pataïjali in his *Yoga-sütra*.** He supposed this yogic deity to be omniscient (though lacking omnipotence and omnipresence) and free of *väsanäs* or karmic influences. Çréla Prabhupäda refers to this deity as the "philosophized Viñëu."** The Viñëu-worshipers in categories three and four are not Vaiñëavas. Their worship is not motivated by pure devotion, but by *bhukti-käma* (the demands of the senses), *mukti-käma* (the demand for relief from the demands of the senses), and *siddhi-käma* (the demand for mystic powers). For them, God is an order-supplier, not an object of

unconditional love. Many modern people who know nothing about *yoga* accept the mind, its reasoning power and intuition as their inner "spiritual" guide. This too fits the fourth category of worship.

Those who imagine the *guru* or spiritual master to be directly the Supreme Being belong to worshipers of a fifth category. Vaiñëavas worship the spiritual master as a liberated soul, a saintly teacher who serves as the transparent media through whom the Lord instructs the world in devotional service. It is offensive to worship the *guru* as God rather than as a servant of God. Similarly, there are those who worship their own selves as absolute. This is called *ahaà grahopäsanä.* Finally, any person devoted not to God but to the service of the senses of an ordinary living entity—for example, a lover devoted to serving the senses of his beloved, a child devoted to serving the senses of her pet animal, or me devoted to serving my own senses—is a worshiper in the fifth category. Whom we'd rather serve than God is our rather absurd god.

Souls who worship or serve in these five ways are bound to the cycle of birth and death. They must rotate through the species of demigods, demons, ghosts, human beings and lower forms of life like animals and plants. Why does this delusive fivefold worship appear in the first place? The answer is that the Lord provides it in accordance with the deluded faith of souls intent on enjoying the intervening fruits of *gauëa-dharma* as if they were the final fruit of *mukhya-dharma*. This is clearly indicated in *Bhagavad-gétä* 7.20-21, where Lord Kåñëa says:

kämais tais tair håta-jïänäù
prapadyante 'nya-devatäù
taà taà niyamam ästhäya
prakåtyä niyatäù svayä

Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures.

yo yo yäà yäà tanuà bhaktaù
çraddhayärcitum icchati
tasya tasyäcaläà çraddhäà
täm eva vidadhämy aham

I am in everyone's heart as the Supersoul. As soon as one desires to worship some demigod, I make his faith steady so that he can devote himself to that particular deity.

Manu Saàhitä 2.3 similarly states,** "Lust (*käma*) is at the root of a worldly soul's intention. Within that intention appear sacrifices, vows, regulations and *dharmas*." Such sacrifices and so on are produced from the modes of material nature. Camasa Muni, speaking in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* Canto Eleven Chapter Five, points out that the intention (*saìkalpa*) of materialistic religionists is horrible

(*ghora*). They want to worship women for fornication, butcher animals in bloody sacrifices, and guzzle "holy" wine. Such degradations are forbidden to worshipers of Çré Vigraha, the Deity of Kåñëa. Thus lusty religionists take to other modes of worship where these bestial pleasures are allowed.

The lusty soul gains faith in such modes of worship with the help of the Lord in the heart. Yet this type of faith is deluded. If such faith is made steady by the Lord, has He not then deceived that soul? Has He not enslaved that soul in false modes of worship? The Vaiñëava philosophy answers no. The soul is "not like a forcibly taken slave whose actions are not dependent upon his own desires. Even though the actions of the soul depend on the desire of the Lord, they are born of the desire of the soul."**

When a soul desires to satisfy himself apart from the Lord, then by the desire of the Lord that soul comes under the control of His external *prakåti*. Instead of worshiping Kåñëa, that soul strives for satisfaction through worship of *mäyä* or illusion in the form of 1) physical power; 2) metaphysical power; 3) the demigods; 4) an imaginary inner deity; and 5) ordinary living entities. For enthusiasm in these engagements, the living entity depends upon inspiration given by the Lord from within the heart. But in giving that inspiration, the Lord's desire is different from that of the soul. A Vedic *mantra* compares the body to a tree, and the soul and Supersoul to two birds within the tree.** One bird, the soul, desires to taste the sweet and bitter fruits of that tree and thus suffers and enjoys in duality. The other bird, the Supersoul, desires that the tasting bird learn by experience the emptiness of duality. When at last the soul renounces the tasting of the fruits of the tree, he turns his attention to the Supersoul and is freed from his enslavement.

Containing four chapters, this section argues that goodness is a natural characteristic of all living beings. Evil appears wherever that goodness is covered by ignorance. Being contrary to our original nature, evil has dire consequences in this world and the next.

Chapter Eleven,
The Natural Virtues of the Soul

Good and evil, we have seen, are a duality into which a spirit soul plunges as soon as he turns away from Kåñëa and accepts a material body. Why is one living entity inclined to virtue, while another is inclined to vice?

The English word "virtue" stems from the Latin *virtus*, which means "prowess" (the Sanskrit *vérya* has the same meaning). Thus virtue conveys a

sense of great moral strength, like that embodied by a valiant, righteous warrior. In the classical Western philosophy of olden times, there were four (and later seven) cardinal virtues.** Modern Western philosophy—which is generally atheistic—has small regard for virtue.**

The Sanskrit language terms the virtues—that is, good moral qualities—as *puëyas*. In *Çré Caitanya Sikñämåtam* 2.2, Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura divides the *puëyas* into two categories: *svarüpa-gata puëya* (natural virtues) and *sambandha-gata puëya* (relative virtues). There are seven items in the first category.

nyäya—justice
dayä—mercy
satya—truthfulness
pavitratä—pure character
maitré—friendliness toward other living entities
ärjava—honesty
préti—loving kindness

Öhäkura Bhaktivinoda does not mention any items from the second category, the relative virtues. He notes only that good qualities apart from the seven natural virtues develop from the soul's relation with matter (ä*ra samasta puëyai sambandha-gata ye hetu tähara jivera jaòa sambandha vasataù utpanna hayache*).

From this it seems justified to link the term "relative virtue" to terms like *instrumental goodness*, *technical goodness*, *beneficial goodness* and *hedonic goodness*, which are used in Western moral philosophy. Instrumental goodness refers to the excellence a person shows while doing something most people do: "She is good with children." Technical goodness refers to the excellence a person shows while doing something only skilled people do: "He is a good artist." Beneficial goodness refers to the favorable influence one person has on another: "Fortunately my mother taught me good manners." Hedonic goodness refers to the pleasure one person gives others: "He is good fun," or "She is good-looking." *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.8.26 mentions four body-based, temporary virtues: birth in a good family; wealth; education; and physical beauty. The Öhäkura's conclusion about relative virtues is: *siddhävasthäya tähädera prayojana näi*, "At the stage of spiritual perfection, they are not required."

In contrast, he has this to say about the seven natural virtues:

> *thädigake ei janya svarüpa-gata puëya bali ye hetu ei sakala puëya jivera svarüpake äçraya kariyä sarva käle tähära alaìkära svarüpa thake baddhävasthäna kiyat parimäne sthüla haiyä puëya nama präpta haya ei mätra.*

> These virtues are sheltered in the nature of the spirit soul and are ever his ornaments. Present, though crudely so, even while the soul is bound to matter, they are called his virtues.

Now, if *every* spirit soul is naturally just, merciful, truthful and so on, it needs to be explained why so many living entities show so little of these qualities in their activities. The answer has to do with their situation in the three modes of nature. Let material existence be envisioned as a very deep pool. The uppermost region of the water, nearest the surface, is illuminated by daylight. Deeper, the water becomes dim. Finally, at the very bottom, the water is totally dark. Here we have a metaphor of the three modes of nature—goodness at the upper level of the material pool, passion in the middle, and ignorance at the bottom. A body plunging into the pool, though it disappears into the darkest depths, will rise upward by virtue of its natural quality. As the diver passes upward into the dimly-lit middle region, a vague silhouette of his form emerges. Here at the middle depth he can tell the upper region of the pool from the lower region—light above, darkness below. As he floats into the region of light and at last breaks the surface, many of the details of his personal form are clearly revealed, though still within the watery environment.

Similarly, though the spirit soul may sink into the lowest stage of ignorance, he gradually ascends through the gradient species of life, life after life, until he reaches the human form at the middle depth.** Here the virtues of the soul crudely emerge from the murk, and here the light of goodness is distinguishable from the darkness of evil.** The human species is said to be situated in passion, between the demigods above and the hellish creatures below.** When a human being follows the principles of Vedic culture, he or she rises to the clear and luminous mode of goodness.** Here, in brahminical life, the natural virtues of the soul can be seen to a considerable degree, though still in association with matter. It is just as when the body of a diver, rising to the surface of a pool, becomes visible, though not completely.

And when friends at the edge of the pool grasp the diver's hand and pull him out of the water, it is comparable to the soul's rescue from the modes of nature by the Lord and His devotees.** It is only then that the form of the spirit soul as a liberated, all-blissful associate of the Lord is fully revealed. The *jéva* cannot pull himself out of material existence by his own strength, even if he has cultivated well his virtuous essence.

jévo jïäna-yogyo 'pi çravaëädimän api na svaçaktyä bhagavantaà paçyati.

> The *jéva*, even if eligible for spiritual knowledge, even if learned and cultured, cannot see the Lord by his own power. (*Tattvapradépa* 3.2.23, by Trivikrama Paëòita)**

Now, what sort of life does a person lead who exhibits the natural virtues of justice, mercy, truthfulness, pure character, friendliness, honesty, and loving

kindness? Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura lists ten activities that are indicative of these virtues.**

paropakära—looking out for others' welfare
gurujanasevä—rendering service to superiors
däna—offering charity
ätithya—offering hospitality
pävitrya—sinless conduct
mahotsava—observing festive celebrations
vrata—performing penances
paçupälana—caring for animals, especially cows
jagadvåddhi—increasing the population (proper family life)
nyäyäcaraëa—integrity in all dealings

Contrasting these seven natural virtues are seven vices that are *svarüpavirodhi*, or opposed to the pure form of the spirit soul. These vices are listed in *Çré Caitanya Sikñämåtam* 2.2 as:

dveña—envy
anyäya—injustice
mithyä—falsity
cittavibhrama—derangement of the mind
niñöhuratä—harshness
krüräta—spitefulness
lämpatya—debauchery.

In 2.5, Öhäkura Bhaktivinoda expands the list of vices to include *hiàsä* (violence), *kauöilya* (crookedness), *gurvavajïa* (disrespect of the *guru* and other superiors), *svartha sarvasvata* (selfishness), *apavitrya* (impurity), *asistacara* (impoliteness), *jagannasa-kärya* (works of destruction). From *Bhagavad-gétä* 16.4 we have as *asura-sampat* or demonic qualities pride, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness and ignorance.

Virtue is manifest in pious activities (welfare work, serving superiors, charity and so on). Similarly, vice is manifest in seven kinds of abominable activities.

steya—stealing
talparohäna—adultery
brahma-hatyä—killing a *brähmaëa*
bhrüëa-hatyä—abortion
çüräpänam—drinking alcohol
duñkåtäsya karmaëaù punaù punaù sevä—performing sins over and over
pätäke ëértodyämiti—lying to hide one's sins

Vedic authorities say there are other sins included within or equal to these seven: *pitr-hatya* (killing one's own father); *matr-hatya* (killing one's own mother); *acarya-hatya* (killing one's own spiritual master); *go-ghnah* (killing of cows); and *dyutam* (gambling). (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 6.13.8, 1.17.38) That

person who bases his livelihood upon this list of sinful acts is condemned by *Çré Iñopanisad* 3 as an *atma-hana*—a killer of his own soul. Such a person can have no spiritual life. Hence, a show of religious or moral piety by one unrepentent in his dedication to these sins is but a farce.

That vice is *svarüpavirodhi* (opposed to the pure form of the spirit soul) means that being evil, it obscures the natural virtues of the soul. Refer again to the analogy of the pool. The soul was compared to a diver who disappears into the pool's darkest depths. But like a diver, the soul's nature is to rise up from ignorance to the light, where goodness glows with spiritual awareness. Yet there are some souls who, in opposition to the light, lurk in the darkness from which they never rise. They are called *asuras* or demons.

Chapter Twelve,
Näraké-Buddhi: Hellish Intelligence

Why do the demons not rise again from the depths of ignorance? Lord Kåñëa's own answer is that He holds them down.

> **Those who are envious and mischievous, who are the lowest among men, I perpetually cast into the ocean of material existence, into various demoniac species of life.**
>
> **Attaining repeated birth amongst the species of demoniac life, O son of Kunté, such persons can never approach Me. Gradually they sink down to the most abominable type of existence.** (*Bhagavad-gétä* **16.19-20**)

The Lord dwells in the hearts of all living beings, even the demons. He oversees and grants permission to all kinds of desire, including desires that lead to the lowest depths of hell. Yet He does not share in that abomination.

narake 'pi vasann iço
näsau duùkha-bhug ucyate
nécéccataiva duùkhäder
bhoga ity abhidhéyate
näsau nécéccatam yäti
paçyaty eva prabhutvataù

> **The Lord is not a sufferer even if He stays in hell. Indeed the experience of suffering is called lowness. He does not become low. Indeed by His Lordship He keeps watch.** (*Bhagavat-tantra*, cited in *Brahmä-sütra Bhäñya* 3.1.17 by Madhväcärya)

In hell, heaven and everywhere in between, yesterday, today and tomorrow, the Supersoul watches every living entity from within the innermost core of the heart. Thus there is no question of a blameless person being accidentally sucked into the whirlpool of degradation. Each soul receives the karmic consequences of his or her desire as supervised by Çré Kåñëa in the heart. Our great problem is controlling our desires. In the dark labyrinth of *karma*, who among human beings is safe from being stupefied by a sudden upsurge of desire and stumbling headlong into the pit?

But the Lord offers us a safe path. *Svalpam apy asya dharmasya träyate mahato bhayät*—"Even a little advancement on this path of *dharma*," promises Kåñëa in *Bhagavad-gétä* 2.40, "saves one from the most dangerous fear." On the path of *dharma,* we take steps to purify our human intelligence (*buddhi*) of material contamination so that we can understand God.

aho-rätraiç chidyamänaà
buddhväyur bhaya-vepathuù
mukta-saìgaù paraà buddhvä
niréha upaçämyati

> **Knowing that one's duration of life is being cut down by the passing of days and nights, one should be shaken by fear. In this way, giving up all material attachment and desire, one understands the Supreme Lord and achieves perfect peace.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **11.20.16**)

Here the phrase "giving up all material attachment" is a rendering of the Sanskrit *mukta-saìga*, which also means "liberated association." As Çréla Prabhupäda used to say, s*at-saìgän mukta-duù-saìgaù:*** "The more you associate with *sat*, with the devotees, the more you become liberated." In *Bhagavad-gétä* 10.9-11, Lord Kåñëa makes it plain that He personally gives the *buddhi* that dispels all darkness to those persons who associate blissfully with His devotees, joining with them in glorification of the Lord. Elsewhere He assures us that though one may be the most sinful of all sinners, once the soul is situated in the boat of transcendental knowledge, the ocean of miseries is sure to be crossed. (*Bhagavad-gétä* 4.36)

Opposed to this pure *buddhi* is *näraké-buddhi*, which means "hellish intelligence". This is *buddhi* polluted by *ahaìkära* (false ego) to the worst possible degree. *Padma Puräëa* explains:

arcye viñëau çilä-dhér guruñu nara-matir
vaiñëave jäti-buddhir... çri-viñëur nämni mantre
sakala-kaluña-he çabde-sämänya buddhir...
yasya vä näraké saù

One who considers the *arcä-mürti* (the worshipable Deity of Lord Viñëu) to be stone, the spiritual master to be an ordinary human being,

a Vaiñëava to belong to a particular caste, and the *mantra* of the holy name of Viñëu to be a material vibration, is possessed of hellish intelligence.

Here four means of *mukta-saìga* are mentioned: the Vaiñëava, the spiritual master, the Deity and the holy name. A fifth is the incarnation of the Lord as the *bhägavata* scripture. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 2.8.5)** All five are *avatäras:* appearances of the Lord within the purview of our conditioned sense perception. The Deity, the holy name and the *bhägavata* scripture are incarnations of God Himself, while the Vaiñëava and the spiritual master are incarnations of His mercy in the human form. Though they are evident to our faulty senses, they are free of faults. Any imperfections we may see in these five are like the mud and foam seen in the river Ganges. In spite of these "impurities," the Ganges is *brahma-drava,* transcendental. The Deity, the holy name, the *bhägavata* scripture, the spiritual master and the Vaiñëava are *apräkåta*, not material. Were it not for their merciful descent into our field of awareness, we would remain forever cut off from transcendence.

In *Bhagavad-gétä* 9.11 Lord Kåñëa speaks of those who blaspheme His direct personal descent into this world as *müòhas* (foolish people). This epithet applies as much to those who would deride His appearance as the Deity, the holy name, the scripture, the spiritual master and the devotee. The Lord takes blasphemy of these to be blasphemy of Himself. In the next verse (9.12) Kåñëa declares that such fools enter the embrace of the demonic nature *because they are attracted to it.*

> **Those who are thus bewildered are attracted by demonic and atheistic views. In that deluded condition, their hopes for liberation, their fruitive activities, and their culture of knowledge are all defeated.**

In the preceding chapter, the spiritual qualities of the soul were said to be readily evident in the mode of goodness. Similarly, the transcendental nature of the Deity, the holy name, the *bhägavata* scripture, the spiritual master and the Vaiñëava are readily evident in an environment that is *bhakti-anuküla*, favorable to the execution of devotional service. This is the environment of goodness, as confirmed in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.2.20 by the words *mukta-saìgasya jäyate:* "transcendental association becomes effective" in the absence of passion, ignorance and lust.

Goodness is the state of material existence in closest proximity to the Supreme Lord. Conditioned souls revive their relationship of service to Him in that ambience. Indeed, the *sattva-guëa*—with its transcendental knowledge, moral and religious principles, demigods, sages and their celestial abodes—is the halo emanating from the divine form Çré Viñëu. Thus *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.2.23 states:

sattvaà rajas tama iti prakåter guëäs tair
yuktaù paraù puruña eka ihäsya dhatte
sthity-ädaye hari-viriïci-hareti saàjïäù
çreyääsi tatra khalu sattva-tanor nåëää syuù

> **The transcendental Personality of Godhead is indirectly associated with the three modes of material nature, namely passion, goodness and ignorance, and just for the material world's creation, maintenance and destruction He accepts the three qualitative forms of Brahmä, Viñëu and Çiva.**** Of these three, all human beings can derive ultimate benefit from Viñëu, the form of the quality of goodness.

Viñëu, who is Kåñëa's own form of pure goodness that pervades the whole universe, is called the Puruña (Cosmic Person). *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 7.2.11 relates that Çré Viñëu is visibly apparent to human beings as the Vedic culture—the culture of the moral universe.

viñëur dvija-kriyä-mülo
yajïo dharmamayaù pumän
devarñi-pitå-bhütänää
dharmasya ca paräyaëam

> **The root of the Vedic culture of the twice-born (the *brähmaëas* and the *kñatriyas*) is Lord Viñëu, who is *yajïa* (sacrifice personified) and *dharma-maya* (the reservoir of all religious principles). The *devarñis* (the great sages among the demigods headed by Brahmä), the *pitås* (forefathers), the *bhütas* (ordinary living entities), and their occupational duties are sheltered in Him.**

The real purpose of creation is to offer a chance to the fallen souls to revive their loving relationship to Kåñëa. To that end His expansion, Çré Viñëu, personally sustains the culture of goodness that facilitates this revival: *varëäçrama-dharma.* In the midst of this sattvic social order, a Vaiñëava is "like Viñëu"—a person who transcends this world altogether. How is that? Just as Çré Viñëu creates duties of goodness only for the transcendental satisfaction of Lord Kåñëa, so also a devotee aims to satisfy Lord Kåñëa by his or her execution of those occupational duties.

> **O best among the twice-born, it is therefore concluded that the highest perfection one can achieve by discharging the duties prescribed for one's own occupation according to caste divisions and orders of life is to please the Personality of Godhead.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **1.2.13**)

Karmés (fruitive workers) and *jïänés* (philosophical speculators) also participate in Vedic culture, but the Vaiñëavas are distinguished from them.

Devotees perform the ten virtuous activities (*paropakära, gurujanasevä, däna, ätithya* and so on) for Kåñëa's pleasure, in accordance with His personal directives in *Bhagavad-gétä* and *Çrémad-Bhägavatam.* The offering of these activities to Him transforms the *sattva-guëa* of *varëäçrama-dharma* to the *vasudeva-sattva* of pure transcendence. In other words, matter (*prakåti*) accepted by the Lord becomes transcendental (*apräkåta*).

Take for example the offering of foodstuffs. Vaiñëavas select sattvic foods (milk, grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts and sugar) so as to prepare and offer them to the Lord as He prescribes in *Bhagavad-gétä* 3.13. In accepting, the Lord arrests the influence of passion and ignorance clinging to the material substance of the offering. Thus the goodness of these foods becomes, by the offering process, completely pure. Material goodness is divided from transcendental goodness by the slight touch of the two lower modes; hence a vegetarian who does not offer his food to Kåñëa consumes "good" food that is pervaded by the subtle seeds of passionate and ignorant desire. These will take root in the heart and grow into powerful material desires.

In *Bhagavad-gétä* 9.26, the Lord specifies that He accepts sattvic items offered with *bhakti. Bhakti* is inseparable from remembrance of Him (*man-manä bhava mad-bhakto*—"thinking of Me, become My devotee").** In all they do, the devotees remember the Lord. The *karmés* and *jïänés* execute duties similar to the *bhaktas.* Instead of remembering Kåñëa, *karmés* remember the material profit of their work. *Jïänés* remember that this profit is not eternal. However, to think positively or negatively about material profit will not protect us from the upsurge of uncontrollable desires. Thus real *dharma*—that which Kåñëa says will save us from the most dangerous type of fear—is *bhakti-dharma.*

The means by which the devotees remember Kåñëa are the Deity, the holy name, the scripture, the spiritual master and the association of other devotees. These five purify the mind of the dirt of passion and ignorance and cut through the darkness of false ego. The whole point of the Vedic culture of goodness is to cleanse the mind so that the presence of the Lord is revealed. The awareness of Kåñëa everywhere is real knowledge and intelligence. As Mahädeva Lord Çiva explains:

sattvaà viçuddhaà vasudeva-çabditaà
yad éyate tatra pumän apävåtaù
sattve ca tasmin bhagaván väsudevo
hy adhokñajo me namasä vidhéyate

The condition of pure goodness [*çuddha-sattva*], in which the Supreme Personality of Godhead appears uncovered, is called *vasudeva*. In that pure state the Supreme Godhead, who is beyond the material senses and who is known as Väsudeva, is perceived by my mind. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **4.3.23**)

The devotional method of cleaning the mind culminates in *ätmä-nivedana*, "dedication of the self" to the Lord's service. *Karmés* and *jïänés* are more concerned with *ätmä-prayojana*, "the needs of the self." Though *karmés* and *jïänés* go through the motions of devotion—that is, they render ritualistic service to the Lord—the thought foremost in their minds is: "What's in it for me?" Religious works conceived in this way form but a spark of goodness within the endless black night of false ego. The thought foremost in the minds of the devotees is:** *ätma-nivedana-bhäva håde dåòha roy hasti-snäna sama jeno khanika nä hoy*—"May the mood of self-surrender to the Supreme Lord firmly remain fixed in my heart, and not prove to be like the momentary cleanliness of an elephant after a bath." This conception joins the soul to Kåñëa, who arises in the heart like the sun to destroy the darkness of false ego.

The Lord established His *varëäçrama* culture for the welfare of all. He engages non-devotees (*karmés* and *jïänés*) in that culture just to offer them a chance to associate with devotees. But the engagements that explicitly attract non-devotees are *bhakti-pratiküla*, unfavorable to devotional service. While these engagements certainly lead *karmés* and *jïänés* to the purifying *mukta-saìga* of worship of the Deity, chanting the holy name, hearing the sacred scriptures, and serving the *guru* and Vaiñëavas, the *pratiküla* nature of these engagements returns them again to material affairs. Thus *karmés* and *jïänés* are like elephants who, after taking a river-bath, return to the shore to throw dirt over themselves. The *bhakti-pratiküla* engagements are mentioned by Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura in *Çreyo-nirëaya* 1.2 (from *Gétävalé*):

yoga-yäga-tapo-dhyän, sannyäsädi brahma-jïän,
nänä-känòa-rüpe jéver bandhana-käraëa hoy

> **Mystic *yoga*, performance of Vedic sacrifices, severe austerities, impersonal meditation, assuming the *sannyäsa* order so as to quit the world, cultivating knowledge of the impersonal Brahman—these appear to be various spiritual paths, but they are causes of the soul's further bondage to this world.****

Followers of these paths come under the sway of various sages, demigods, demons, human beings, Siddhas, Cäraëas, Vidyädharas and so on, all who put forward opinions about the ultimate goal of life. Taking to heart the *dharma-çästras* (religious scriptures) that emanate from such authorities only aggravates the false ego. *Dämbhikä mäninaù päpä vihasanty acyuta-priyän,* says Camasa Muni about the materialistic followers of secondary scriptures: "Deceitful, overly proud, and sinful in their behavior, they mock the devotees who are dear to Lord Acyuta." (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.5.7) It is offensive to be haughty and condescending toward *mukta-saìga*—the Deity form of Lord Kåñëa, His holy name, His scriptural teachings and His devotees. In the offensive heart, material desires flourish without limit.

Since the light of goodness is intended to raise us to *mukta-saìga*, that person who surrenders to *pratiküla* association will gradually find that light repellent. Even though *pratiküla* religionists take outward benefit from the touch of that light—for instance, by attaining a high position in the *varëäçrama* society—since they inwardly hate Kåñëa, they prefer darkness at last.** From the core of their hearts, the Lord fulfills their desire by pushing them back down into ignorance, vice and hellish life.

At the time Lord Caitanya Mahäprabhu displayed His pastimes on earth, a young, handsome *brähmaëa* by the name of Gopäla Cakravarté held the post of tax collector at a place called Cändapura. Once Öhäkura Haridäsa, a close associate of Lord Caitanya, came to bless that town for some days. Haridäsa was born in a lowly Muslim family, but was so strongly attached to the chanting of the Hare Kåñëa *mahä-mantra* that Lord Caitanya declared him *nämäcärya*, "the teacher of the holy name." The leaders of the Cändapura *brähmaëa* community were delighted by Haridäsa's visit and invited him to explain the chanting of the *mahä-mantra* at a *sabhä* or assembly of learned scholars. Gopäla Cakravarté attended also.

Citing many scriptural quotations, Haridäsa proved that *mukti* (liberation from birth and death) is only an initial benefit of chanting, obtainable by just a slight glimpse of the glory of the holy name. The actual perfection of chanting is pure love of Godhead. Gopäla Cakravarté was incensed to hear Haridäsa say that liberation is effortlessly attained by a beginning chanter. He argued that liberation requires *brahma-jïäna* (knowledge of the impersonal Absolute) that may take millions of births to perfect...and even then one might not be liberated.

When Haridäsa countered that his case rested on the unambiguous testimony of scripture, Gopäla Cakravarté threatened to cut off his nose. The other *brähmaëas* warned Gopäla that by daring to make such a hideous remark, he had committed a grievous offense against a great soul. Within three days Gopäla Cakravarté contracted leprosy. His own beautifully-shaped nose, fingers and toes were ravaged by the disease and dropped off.

yadyapi haridäsa viprera doña nä la-ilä
tathäpi éçvara täre phala bhuïjäilä

> **Although Haridäsa Öhäkura, as a Vaiñëava, did not take seriously the *brähmaëa's* offense, the Supreme Personality of Godhead could not tolerate it, and thus He made the *brähmaëa* suffer the consequences.** (*Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Madhya* **3.212**)

Why do "good" people deride Lord Kåñëa, His Deity form, His holy name, His scripture and His devotees? Attached to the lesser fruits of religion, they stick doggedly to materialistic modes of worship. Because such worship does not purify the heart, their intelligence is infected by lust, anger, greed, madness, illusion and envy—the six enemies of spiritual progress. When the Lord and His

pure devotees appear in this world to teach *mukhya-dharma*, these enemies rise up brandishing the weapons of hellish intelligence: *nästikyaväda* (atheism), *sandehaväda* (skepticism), *jaòaväda* (physicalism), *anätmäväda* (the doctrine of no soul) and *nirviçeñaväda* (the doctrine that God has no form).**

In opposition to *bhakti-dharma*, *näraké-buddhi* propounds a worldly morality that, as Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura explains, is never intended to lead people's thoughts to God; though it may appear nice in some respects, such morality cannot yield the factual success of human life.** People possessed of hellish intelligence stand in the way of goodness (*satkäryera vyäghäta karaëa*). They falsely pose as holy men (*phalgu vairägés*) to mislead others from the path of goodness. They preach sinfulness in the name of religion (*dharmera näme asadäcära pravatana*). They promote needless warfare (*anyäya yuddha*). And they lay waste to human life and the resources of nature (*apacaya*). Can there be any wonder why Lord Kåñëa pushes such miscreants down into hell?

Chapter Thirteen,
The Moral Universe and Beyond

Padma Puräëa (as cited by Madhväcärya in his *Brahmä-sütra Bhäñya* 3.1.23) states:

näräyaëa-prasädena
samiddha-jïäna-cakñuñä
atyanta-duùkha-samlénän
niùçesa-sukha-varjitän
nityam eva tathäbhütan
vimiçrämç ca ganän bahün
nirastäçeña-duhkhääs ca
nityänandaikabhäginaù
apaçyat trivédhän brahma
çäksäd eva cätur-mukhaù

His eyes alight with knowledge by the grace of the Supreme Lord, the four-faced Brahmä saw three groups of living entities: 1) those eternally situated in utter suffering, completely deprived of happiness; 2) those who partake in eternal bliss, entirely without suffering; and 3) many classes in between.

In the political vocabulary of recent years, backward countries were said to belong to the Third World, a figurative realm lower in status than the First World of capitalist nations and Second World of socialist nations. Thousands of years

ago, the term "third world" (*trétéyäm sthänaà*) was applied by Vedic sages** to the backward class of sinful living entities fallen into the realm of *adharma* (irreligion), where spiritual knowledge and pious deeds are lacking. The group of living entities Brahmä saw to be *atyanta-duùkha*, or completely miserable, belongs to this third world. That group is described by Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa as follows.

> *tataç ca ye vidyayä devayäne pathi nädhikåöa näpi karmaëä pitåyäne teñämeva kñudrajantünäm damça maçakädi asakådävåtténäm trtéyaù panthäù tenäsau loka na sampüryata iti.*
>
> **Because they lack spiritual knowledge they cannot take the path of liberation (*deva-yäna*). Because their *karma* is impious they cannot take the path of sacrificial elevation (*pitå-yäna*). They become tiny creatures like mosquitoes and insects, and so inhabit the third world. Thus the other worlds never become full to overflowing.** (from *Govinda-bhäñya* 3.1.19)

Lord Kapiladeva, an incarnation of God and a great authority of Vedic knowledge, points to one conspicuous cause for the sinking of souls from the human form into the third world: unrestricted sex indulgence (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.30.28). Lord Kåñëa identifies sexual lust as the all-devouring sinful enemy of the world (*Bhagavad-gétä* 3.37). He says that *bhoga* (sense gratification in this life) is the *duùkha-yoni* (the source of all suffering in future births) (*Bhagavad-gétä* 5.22). Bhartrhari, a learned scholar and poet, composed a verse that luridly sketches the fate of a soul enslaved by the sexual impulse:

> *kñudha kñamo jérëa çravaëa rahita pucchavikalaù*
> *çunimänveti çva madana vasato darpita eva*
>
> **A dog hungry and emaciated, deaf and missing his tail, is compelled by Madana (Cupid, the demigod of erotic desire) to chase a bitch.**

The tragic irony is that living entities pursue sex in the name of pleasure. The notion is that sex is pleasurable is the greatest illusion in the ocean of illusions that is *maya.* Because sex so strongly binds the soul to the perishable body, it is actually the greatest misery. The more materialistic a living entity is, the more he or she is carried away by sex. The more carried away he or she is by sex, the more that living entity is destined for birth in the third world.

The Vedic culture is designed to elevate the soul from the third world of abject suffering upward through the stages of mixed happiness and distress to the perfection of *nityänanda* (eternal bliss) at last. The process begins with the regulation of the senses—particularly with respect to sexuality.

In the above quotation by Baladeva, two Vedic paths of elevation are mentioned: *pitå-yäna* and *deva-yäna.* The *pitå-yäna* is the *karma-märga*, the path of fruitive activities. Here the *karmé* begins the regulation of his or her

senses by *yajïa* or sacrifice. The *deva-yäna* is the *jïäna-märga*, the path of knowledge. Here the *jïäné* cultivates an understanding of the self as non-material by deep study of the *Upaniñads* (the *Vedänta* scriptures). The *pitå-yäna* and *deva-yäna* are taught in Vedic scriptures as secondary methods (*gauëa-vidhis*) for raising the soul to the mode of goodness.

The *Kauñétaké Brähmaëa Upaniñad* 1.2-3 depicts the *pitå* and *deva* paths as being joined at the moon,** which is the gateway to the pleasures of heaven. Thus the *pitå-yäna* carries souls from the third world of suffering up to the lunar heaven, from where the *deva-yäna* carries them further to Agniloka, Väyuloka, Ädityaloka, Indraloka, Prajäpatiloka and finally Brahmaloka, the highest position in the material cosmos. Brahmä saw along the entire length of these two paths the middle group of living entities. Though they are above unrelenting suffering, they have not achieved eternal bliss. This middle group of souls are divided into many classes. *Mahäbhärata* 7.315.30 describes the *deva-yäna* and *pitå-yäna* paths as extending from the realm of Viñëu (goodness) down to the lowest realm (ignorance).**

The *pitå-yäna* is followed by *gåhasthas* (householders). It licenses them to utilize sexuality in *jagadvåddhi*-increasing the population by way of religious family life. Devotees also accept householder life under Vedic regulation, but as explained in Chapter Four, from that position they serve Kåñëa, knowing that He alone is their protector and provider. The householders on the *pitr-yana* depend upon the *pitrs* or departed ancestors now situated as *karma-devatas*, residents of heaven by dint of good karma.

It is said: *baddha-daçäya jéver anitya bhoga-maya phala-präptir anuñöhänake karma-märga*—"The *karma-märga* is about obtaining temporary benefits that are enjoyed by souls bound to matter."** The question of liberation from matter dawns upon the *karma-märgés* as they come to realize that, in due course of time, all the benefits of their path are lost. In *Bhagavad-gétä* 9.21, Lord Kåñëa says of the *karma-märgés:*

> **When they have thus enjoyed vast heavenly sense pleasure and the results of their pious activities are exhausted, they return to this mortal planet again. In this way, those who seek sense enjoyment by adhering to the principles of the three *Vedas* achieve only repeated birth and death.**

Karma-märgés who grow weary of being recycled between heaven and earth turn to the *deva-yäna* so as to attain a fixed situation. But to walk the *deva-yäna* or *jïäna-märga*, one must renounce household life. The method is laid out in the seventh chapter of *Chändogya Upaniñad.* The *jïäné* must have faith in the Supreme Truth (*Satyam*). He must nurture that faith by rational reflection on the *Vedänta* scriptures. He must be firm and steady in sense control (*brahmacarya*). *Chändogya* defines *brahmacarya* as that sacrifice and worship which is perfected through celibacy, silence, fasting, and living in a solitary place. Departing this

body and rising upward by the rays of the sun, the *brahmacärés* enter Brahmaloka, which is flooded with the effulgence of spiritual knowledge. The lives of the residents there extend to the very limit of universal time.

Now, those who follow the paths of *karma* and *jïäna* are ever troubled by one difficulty—a difficulty that entraps them in the middle group of souls who, while not completely miserable, fall short of perfect happiness. That difficulty is *ätmä-prayojana*, the idea that the goal at the end of the path is to serve one's own self.

Karmés think to serve one's own self is to satisfy worldly desires (*icchä*) in this life and in heaven. But this generates in their hearts an envy of the nonmaterial identity of the *ätmä* or spirit self. Matter cannot satisfy the spirit self; yet the *karmés* avidly focus their desires on matter in painful neglect of their spiritual well-being. In spite of all their efforts to do good so as to win heavenly rewards, soul-envy forces the *karmés* to do harm to themselves and to others. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 4.23.28 confirms:

sa vaïcito batätma-dhruk
kåcchreëa mahatä bhuvi
labdhväpavargyaà mänuñyaà
viñayeñu viñajjate

> **Any person who engages himself within this material world in performing activities that necessitate great struggle, and who, after obtaining a human form of life—which is a chance to attain liberation from miseries—undertakes the difficult tasks of fruitive activities, must be considered to be cheated and envious of his own self.**

The *jïänés* think *ätmä-prayojana*—the self-serving goal—is the utter extirpation of desire (*icchä*) and its twin, envy (*dveña*), by mastery of Upaniñadic philosophy. But the *Upaniñads* themselves warn that philosophical speculation is not sufficient to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

näyam ätmä pravacanena labhyo
na medhayä na bahudhä çrutena
yam evaiña våëute tena labhyas
tasyaiña ätmä vivåëute tanuà sväm

This verse, from *Kaöha Upaniñad* 2.23 and *Muëòaka Upaniñad* 3.2.3, warns that the Supreme Lord is not attainable through *pravacana*, philosophical erudition; nor through *medhä*, intellectualism; nor through *bahu-çruti*, the study of many scriptures. It is He alone who decides to whom He will reveal His transcendental form.

Like the *karmés*, the *jïänés* worship a Deity of the Mahapurusa (the Lord's universal form, invoked though Vedic *mantras* and fire offerings) in the course of

their sacrificial rituals. But as Çréla Bhaktisiddhänta Sarasvaté Öhäkura explains in his introduction to *Präkåta-rasa Çata-düñiëé: naçvaratä tyäga koriyä prädeçika anitya phala tyäga koriyä nirbheda-brahmänusandhänake jïäna-märga*-" The *jïäna-märga* is about renouncing the impermanent, and letting go of interests related to the family, community, nation, and so on. On this path the search is for Brahman with no diversity."

"Brahman with no diversity" means a God devoid of name, form, qualities, activities and loving relationships. The *karmés* seek to enjoy the mundane names, forms, qualities, activities and relationships made apparent by their physical senses; the *jïänés* seek to negate that same diversity by philosophy. They think that what remains after negating diversity is the Supreme. But this way of seeking the Supreme is not *bhakti.* Kåñëa is the supreme reservoir of eternal, unlimited and fully nectarean diversity that, being transcendental, can neither be enjoyed by the gross senses nor negated by the subtle mind. This diversity is approachable only by the *bhakti-märga. Sevya-vastu kåñëer anuküla anuçélanake bhakti-märga bole:* "The *bhakti-märga*," Çréla Bhaktisiddhänta makes clear, "is about cultivating activities that are favorable to the service of the real object of service, Çré Kåñëa."**

Sevya-vastu kåñëer means that Lord Kåñëa is the paramount object of love in the devotional dimension. Devotion is the master value of the Vaiñëavas. The other values—sensory, intuitive, rational, and spiritual—are controlled by *bhakti.* On the *karma-märga*, the sensory dimension is the master value. Thus *karmés* play the focus of their devotion across a pantheon of demigods according to the needs of the senses. On the *jïäna-märga*, the spiritual or idealistic dimension is the master value. Thus the *jïänés* worship to liberate themselves from all control—certainly not to give themselves over to the control of *bhakti.*

Çré Jayatértha** writes: *na bhakti-rahitäradhanenäpi brahma vyaktékastum çakyate*—"It is not possible to make Brahman manifest by worship without *bhakti*." As long as one pursues the goals of the *jïäna-märga,* the form of Brahman must remain unmanifest (*avyakta*), or impersonal. *Bhagavad-gétä* 12.5 says that attachment to the *avyakta* conception brings much trouble to those who are embodied. To fix their minds on an unclear conception, the *jïänés* are obliged to suppress their senses and erase from their minds of all perceptions and memories of physical sound, touch, form, taste and smell. For want of the superior taste of the beautiful form of Brahman—the all-attractive Çré Kåñëa—this *çuñka-jïäna* (dry knowledge) and *çuñka-vairägya* (dry renunciation) is ever-threatened by the inferior taste of lust. Lust plagues anyone who exalts a lesser dimension of value over devotion, or who exalts another object of devotion over the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Çrémad-Bhägavatam 9.6.52 relates the lament of Saubhari Muni, a *yogé* so dedicated to liberation that he made his *äçrama* at the bottom of a lake so as to be free from all temptations of *mäyä.* Nonetheless, lust pierced his heart when he witnessed the sexual acts of fish in the deep water all around him.

> In the beginning I was alone and engaged in performing the austerities of mystic *yoga*, but later, because of the association of fish engaged in sex, I desired to marry. Then I became the husband of fifty wives, and in each of them I begot one hundred sons, and thus my family increased to five thousand members. By the influence of the modes of material nature, I became fallen and thought that I would be happy in material life. Thus there is no end to my material desires for enjoyment, in this life and the next.

This is eloquent testimony as to why the *jïäna-märgés* are included in the middle category of souls who partake in happiness mixed with distress. Someone may object that the *jïäna-märga* is supposed to be the path to liberation. Why do Vaiñëavas not respect it as the way to *nityänanda* (eternal bliss)? Well, Gopäla Cakravarté, himself a *jïäné*, admitted that one may spend millions of lives in pursuit of absolute knowledge, and even after having learned it may yet not be liberated.** In any case, the liberation achieved by the *jïänés* is not the same as that achieved by the devotees. It is identical to that achieved by demons whom the Supreme Lord kills when He descends into the material world. Kåñëa absorbs both jïänés and demons into His all-pervading eternal effulgence (*brahmajyoti*), where there are neither material nor spiritual activities, only

the blinding glare of the mystic opulence of the Supreme Lord. The *karmis* are envious of their own spirit selves and thus bury the soul under a mountain of laborious acquisitions. The *jnanis*, who aim at freeing their spirit selves, are like the demons in their envy of the Supreme

Lord. Both demons and *jnanis* want to become God. And so God obligingly makes them one with His impersonal feature. *kaivalyam narakayate*: a devotee regards impersonal oneness as hellish, for there is no possibility of service to the transcendental senses of the all-beautiful Supreme Person.

siddha-lokas tu tamasaù
päre yatra vasanti hi
siddhä brahma-sukhe magnä
daityäç ca hariëä hatäù

> **In Siddhaloka [Brahmaloka] there live two kinds of living entities—those who are killed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead due to their having been demons in their previous lives and those who are very fond of enjoying the impersonal effulgence of the Lord** (*Brahmäëòa Puräëa*).

Karmés and *jïänés* are united in the opinion that the goal of life is separate from Kåñëa. The sense of *ätmä-nivedana* (surrendering oneself to the plan of Lord, come what may) does not appeal to them. Though they worship the Deity, they

seek not Him but His blessing to enjoy the moral universe and the Brahman effulgence in which the universe is suspended and by which it gets its splendor. But all that—this universe we live in along with millions and millions of other universes sparkling within Brahman like tiny bubbles in seltzer water—comes from Kåñëa alone.

koöé koöé brahmäëòe ye brahmera vibhüti
sei brahma govindera haya aìga-känti

> **The opulences of the impersonal Brahman are spread throughout the millions and millions of universes. That Brahman is but the bodily effulgence of Govinda.** (*Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Ädi* **2.15**)

Like the *karmés and jïänés*, the irreligious *adharmés* aspire to enjoy the opulences of material creation. At least the *gauëa-dharmés* worship the Supreme Lord so as to be blessed by those opulences. The *adharmés* worship their own independent efforts, decrying the idea that material opulences are God-given. In total hatred of Lord Kåñëa, the demonic King Kaàsa proclaimed:**

eña manuñako yatro
mänuñair eva sädhyate
çrüyatäm yena daivam hi
madhidhaiù pratihanyate
mantra-grämaiù suvihitair
auñadhaiç ca suyojitaiù
yatnena canukülena
daivam apy anuvartate

> **This human effort is indeed performed by human beings. Listen—by these efforts of mine even destiny will be thwarted. By many well-recited *mantras*, suitable herbs and apt endeavors, even destiny can be made to comply.** (*Harivaàça* 47.6-7)

Hesitant to utterly surrender themselves to Kåñëa, the *karmés and jïänés* can be degraded. If by stubborn attachment to nondevotional goals they take to worldly-minded philosophy and worship, giving up the pure culture of worship of the Supreme Lord, they can slip below *seçvarä naitika jévana* (morality with faith in God) to *kevala-naitika jévana*, atheistic morality, or worse still to *nitisünya jévana*, a life of immoral atheism. That person who—after having earned on the path of *gauëa-dharma* the status of a *kåtina* (one who has performed meritorious work)—turns his great merit to atheistic activities, is called a *duñkåtina* (miscreant). From *Bhagavad-gétä* 7.15 we learn how to recognize the *duñkåtinas* in human society. They show themselves to be *asuras* (demons), *mäyayäpahåta-jïänés* (materialistic intellectuals), *narädhamas* (persons of wholly

mundane culture), or *müòhas* (dull workers with no elevating interests whatsoever).

At death that merit can check the *duñkåtina* from falling abruptly into the beastly third world. Instead, as *Bhagavad-gétä* 7.15 indicates, the *duñkåtina* may be born again in the human species, but among *asuras* (demons), *mäyayäpahåta-jïänés* (materialistic intellectuals), *narädhamas* (persons of wholly mundane culture), or *müòhas* (dull workers with no elevating interests whatsoever).

An *asura* is defined as *suravirodhi*, a being of intelligence and power who does not agree with the *suras* or demigods.** The *suras* are ever-firm in their devotion to Lord Viñëu: *oà tad viñëoù paramaà padaà sadä paçyanti sürayaù*—"Lord Viñëu, who is beyond this world, is sought by the *suras*." (*Åg Veda* 1.22.20) But as *Padma Puräëa* makes clear, *äsuras tad viparyaya*, "Viñëu is opposed by the *asuras*."

In ancient times, so the *Vedas* report, the *asuras* were once equals of the *suras* in every way.** But their disdain for serving anyone other than their own selves grew so strong that it polluted their performance of Vedic *dharma.* Verse 26 of *Mahäbhärata* 7.221 tells us that the demons used to be firm adherents of *dharma: asureñvavasam pürvaà satyadharmanibandhanä.* They followed *svargamärga*, the pathway to heaven (verse 28), they gave charity, they performed sacrifices, they worshiped *guru* and gods, and they showed hospitality to learned *brähmaëas* (verse 29). But in time lust and anger covered these virtues. *Mahäbhärata* 3.92.6 says that during a period of history known as the Deva-yuga, the *asuras* became distinct from the demigods at the moment they abandoned *dharma.* Lakñmé (the goddess of good fortune) left them, and Alakñmé (the goddess of misfortune) became their constant companion (verse 9). Verse 10 states:

tän alakñmé samäviñtän
darpopahatacetasaù
daiteyän dänaväàs caiva
kalir apy äviçat tataù

Kali entered the demons, whose minds were afflicted with pride and who were surrounded by Alakñmé.

Kali (a male personage, never to be confused with goddess Kälé) is quarrel personified. His family lineage is described in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 4.8.2-3—it begins with Brahmä, the creator, and soon comes under the shelter of Niråti, the goddess of the southwest who is associated with untimely death, difficulty, poverty and infertility. Kali consorted with his own sister, Durukti (Harsh Speech), and begot in her two children, Bhaya (Fear) and Måtyu (Death). Beside quarrel, Kali brings with him irreligion, greed, falsehood, robbery, incivility, treachery, misfortune, cheating, and vanity. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.17.32) By his superior skill as an agent of suffering, Kali became the leader of the *asuras* as

much as Brahmä is the leader of the demigods by his superior Vedic knowledge** (*asuraù kali-prayanta evaà duùkhottarottaräù kalir duùkhädhikas teñu te'py eva brahmavad ganaù*).

Kali is ever on the lookout for discrepancies in a person's execution of *dharma.* When, for example, the pious King Nala forgot to wash his feet after going to the toilet,**17 and then sipped water and performed his *sandhyä* rituals, Kali entered his body and pulled him down to ruination. After a terrible struggle Nala at last got free of Kali's clutches and recovered his former status, but those who deliberately abandon *dharma*—the demons, in other words—willingly follow Kali into the moral abyss.

The archetypical *mleccha*—an uncivilized person of abominable culture—this Kali has his own age, Kali-yuga, a time when *mlecchas* overtake the earth.** That age began five thousand years ago. During his *yuga* Kali has permission from the Supreme Lord to promote immorality everywhere. The history of how Kali came to get this license is as follows.

In *Bhaviñya Puräëa,** *Pratisarga Parva* 4, Süta Gosvämé relates that in olden times a king named Pradyota performed a *mleccha-yajïa* to avenge the death of his father Kñemaka. Kñemaka was slain by *mlecchas*, who are untouchable due to their extreme sinfulness. For that reason he had fallen into hell. His promotion to heaven was possible only if his son cast the tribes of *mlecchas* into the sacred fire. And so Pradyota made a tremendous offering of countless *mlecchas* from various tribes—the Haras, the Hüëas, the Barbaras, the Gurumdas, the Çakas, the Khasas, the Yavanas, the Pallavas, the Romajas, the island people and people from China, etc. All of them were transported by *mantras* chanted by expert *brähmaëas* to Pradyota's huge fire *kunda.* There they burned to ashes. As a result, Kñemaka went to heaven and Pradyota became famous everywhere as *mleccha-hanta*, the destroyer of *mlecchas.* After ten thousand years, Pradyota passed away and his son Vedaván inherited the throne.

And so the earthly *mleccha* population was practically extinguished.** Kali and his wife, desiring the welfare of his race, worshiped Lord Viñëu. The Lord appeared and assured Kali that he would have his own *yuga* (age). During this period lasting 432,000 years, all of Kali's desires would be satisfied. When Kali asked how the population of *mlecchas* would increase in preparation for his age, the Lord indicated that a man named Adama and his wife Havyavati would spawn a new class of untouchables when the time was right.**

Vedaván, the son of Pradyota, ruled for two thousand years. His son Sunanda ruled for as many years as his father, but he died without having any son. After the demise of this royal dynasty that was so dangerous to the *mlecchas*, the Aryan countries became weaker. The time was ripe for the *mleccha* countries to grow stronger.

Adama lived with his wife in a great forest. Both were pious souls. Nearby grew a *päpa-våkña* or a sinful tree. Kali came there and assumed the form a

serpent. He enticed Adama to eat the *päpa-våkña* fruit. After that, Havyavati became pregnant and gave birth to *mlecchas.* The sinful population spawned by Adama and Havyavati gradually increased in number**. By nature, *mlecchas* are addicted to illicit sex—in other words, sex that is indulged in for the purpose of gratifying the senses rather than the procreation of good children. In Vedic culture, sexuality was governed by the *garbhädäna-saàskära*, by which a husband and wife begot children in a sattvic atmosphere. Children born of illicit sex are infected by *rajo-guëa* and *tamo-guëa.* They are called *varëa-saìkara*, or undesirable progeny. Their natural inclination is to overturn social traditions by acts of immorality, criminality and violence.

By the time of Lord Kåñëa's appearance on earth some five thousand years ago, the *mleccha* population was large enough for an untouchable king named Kälayavana to muster a large army that attacked the Lord's city at Dvärakä. Kälayavana was burned to ashes by the glance of the devotee Mucukunda.

Viñëu Puräëa 4.24.115 states:

yasmin kåñëo divaà yätas tasmin eva tadähani pratipannaà kali-yugam.

The day and the moment when Lord Kåñëa left for His divine abode, the Age of Kali was established on earth.

The exact date is 20 February 3102 BC. After Kåñëa departed the world, the saintly grandson of Arjuna, Mahäräja Parékñit, forcibly prevented Kali from killing a cow and a bull. Parékñit forbade Kali to dwell anywhere in his kingdom save in those places where gambling, intoxication, illicit sex, animal slaughter and the hoarding of gold transpire. Because Parékñit's rule was so virtuous, Kali could find no such place. He entered the body of an impetuous young *brähmaëa* named Çåìgi and induced him to curse the king to die of snakebite. Though Parékñit, a pure devotee of the Lord, was powerful enough to counteract the curse, he accepted it as the Lord's will and died gloriously, fully absorbed in the nectar of Çréla Çukadeva Gosvämé's recitation of *Çrémad-Bhägavatam.* After Parékñit's departure, the symptoms of Kali spread unchecked, and the world was overtaken by sinful human beings.

In Kali-yuga, the modes of passion and ignorance defeat goodness. Thus people born in this age do not naturally rise to goodness as they did in ancient times. That is because Vedic civilization withers away while *mleccha* society flourishes everywhere. *Varëäçrama-dharma* deteriorates to a caste system based on birth, not qualification. The *karma-märga* and *jïäna-märga* are no longer practicable. Yet beyond these, the path of eternal bliss remains open. Even now a person can ascend to the final group of beings seen by Brahmä, those he saw as *nityänanda* (eternally blissful). This is confirmed in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 12.3.51:

kaler doña-nidhe räjann
asti hy eko mahän guëaù
kértanäd eva kåñëasya
mukta-saìgaù paraà vrajet

> **One can be elevated to transcendence (*paraà vrajet*), beyond even the mode of goodness, simply by chanting the Hare Kåñëa *mantra.* It is the special advantage of this fallen age (*kaler doña-nidhe*) that simply by chanting the Hare Kåñëa *mahä-mantra* one can become purified of all material contamination** (*mukta-saìga*).

It was noted that of the three groups seen by Brahmä, the *adharmés*—the irreligious living entities who cheat themselves of happiness by unrestricted sexual indulgence—dwell in a condemned third world. The *gauëa-dharmés* who restrict their senses dwell along a path that stretches from the earth to the moon and from the moon to Brahmaloka. Where do the eternally blissful *mukhya-dharmés* dwell? Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura answers in *Çré Nämäñöaka* 1.4 (*Gétävalé*):

caudda bhuvana mäha, deva-nara-dänava,
bhäga jäìkara balaván
näma-rasa-péyuña, pibo-i anukñana,
choòata karama-geyän

> **Within the fourteen worlds,**** those demigods, men and demons whose fortune is very great, perpetually drink the nectar of the sweet mellows of the holy name of Çré Kåñëa, casting aside the paths of *karma* and *jïäna.*

Thus the eternally blissful pure devotees of the Lord can be found in any situation—high class or low, married or renounced, good (born among *devas*) or evil (born among *asuras*). But in reality they are apart from all situations in this material creation. Wherever the devotees may seem to be from the point of view of conditioned sense perception, they actually dwell in *sva-dhäma*, in the abode of the Supreme Lord. The Lord's presence is all-pervading. The entire universe is a display of His *çakti*, the divine energy. Every nook and cranny of the creation rests within His power and His power alone.

ye caiva sättvikä bhävä
räjasäs tämasäç ca ye
matta eveti tän viddhi
na tv ahaà teñu te mayi

> **Know that all states of being—be they of goodness, passion or ignorance—are manifested by My energy. I am, in one sense, everything, but I am independent. I am not under the modes**

of material nature, for they, on the contrary, are within Me. (*Bhagavad-gétä* **7.12**)

In *Viñëu Puräëa* 6.7.61, the phrase *viñëu-çaktiù parä proktä* means that the energy of the Lord is *parä*, transcendental. The same energy, when beheld by those engaged in *avidyä-karma* (ignorant labor), is called *mäyä.* Çréla Prabhupäda explains:

> It is stated...that the material energy acts in varieties of material bodies, just as fire burns differently in different wood according to the size and quality of the wood. In the case of devotees the same energy is transformed into spiritual energy; this is possible because the energy is originally spiritual, not material. As it is said, *viñëu-çaktiù parä proktä.* The original energy inspires a devotee, and thus he engages all his bodily limbs in the service of the Lord. The same energy, as external potency, engages the ordinary nondevotees in material activities for sense enjoyment. We should mark the difference between *mäyä* and *sva-dhäma*—for devotees the *sva-dhäma* acts, whereas in the case of nondevotees the *mäyä* energy acts. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 4.9.7, Purport)

Thus the binding of living entities to different bodily activities is only *mäyä*, an illusion of wrong identification, like the illusion of mistaking the unsteady reflection of the moon cast upon the sea to be the moon itself. In reality, the Lord's *çakti* binds the living entities to Him alone. The *Vatsa-çruti* has this to say** about Kåñëa's *çakti* seen as She really is:

sarväyatanä sarva-kälä sarvecchä na baddha bandhakä saiñä prakåtir avikåtiù.

> **She is everywhere at all times. Everything depends upon Her will. She is not bound, but She binds the *jévas*. She is the unchanging Divine Nature.**

Baddhatvaà sarva-jévänääà, "there is bondage for all *jévas*", Madhva writes,** "and it is certainly eternal." To be bound, he explains further, is to be dependent upon the Supreme Lord. The souls who do not see their dependence are bound to suffer the *tapa-traya*, the threefold sufferings. The souls who do see it are free of suffering—but never free of their tie to the Lord. *Chändogya Upaniñad* 7.8.2 gives the example of a bird fastened by a string to a peg. As long as the bird struggles to fly in all directions, the string binds it to suffering. When at last the bird settles down upon the peg, calmly accepting its position as a pet, the string binds it to its true shelter. The string represents the one Divine Nature—the insurmountable *çakti* of the Lord—which is perceived by untamed *jévas* as a restraint and by tamed *jévas* as their security. Tamed *jévas*, fully surrendered to the Lord, are actually in goodness—the transcendental, nonmaterial goodness of *bhakti*, pure devotional service. Untamed *jévas* are of two types: those in

passion, straining vainly against the string; and those in ignorance who, exhausted by their struggles, dangle limply from the string. There is only one Independent Entity, and that is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Çré Kåñëa.

Now, it was stated previously that *karmés* and *jïänés* worship the Deity of the Lord. Why do the Vaiñëavas deny this worship is *bhakti?* Närada Muni, who among Vedic sages is celebrated for his teachings on pure devotional service,** says of *bhakti: sä tv asmin parama-prema-rüpä*—"It manifests as the most elevated, pure love for God." What is the evidence of pure love of God? *Näradas tu tad-arpitäkhiläcäratä tad-vismaraëe parama-vyäkulateti*—"Närada says that devotional service is the offering of one's every act to the Supreme, and the experience of extreme distress in forgetting Him." The worship of the *karmés* and *jïänés* is not directed to the Lord's transcendental form as He is the spiritual world. They serve His temporary reflected cosmic form, which is the actual "moral universe"—meaning that it displays the positions of all souls bound by the three modes of nature in a grand interplanetary hierarchy of merit. The *karmis* and *jnanis* aim for high positions within that hierarchy as demigods and sages. But that aim keeps their hearts separate from Kåñëa. They want something other than humble service to His lotus feet. Thus despite their ritualistic worship, they are always in danger of forgetting His lotus feet. On the other hand, when Arjuna noticed *his* self-interest had come in conflict with Kåñëa's interest, he greatly regretted it and submitted himself to the Lord. He did not take shelter of his own ideas. He declared himself Kåñëa's disciple and begged Him for transcendental knowledge. This is *bhakti.*

Çréla Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa points out one clear characteristic that distinguishes the devotees from others: *ity evaà smaraëaçravanakértana-lakñanair bhajanaiù sudhäpänair iva tuñyanti tathaiva teñv eva ramante ca yuvati smita-kaöäkñädiñv iva yuvänaù*—"Thus they are satisfied by the nectar of remembering the Lord while hearing and chanting His glories, just as a young man delights in the smile, beautiful glances, etc., of a young girl." (*Gétä Bhäñya* 10.9) If the devotee can be said to have a self-interest, this is it—an interest in the Supreme Self that wings the devotee out of the reach of lust into the sheltering embrace of ecstatic love of Kåñëa. This is called *prayojana-siddhi*, or the perfection of real self-interest.** The efforts of the *karmés* and *jïänés*, busy as they are with forcibly restraining or negating lust while offering no more than a ritualistic nod to the Supreme Lord, never arrive at *prayojana-siddhi.*

Eagerness to delight in the hearing, chanting and remembrance of the Lord makes the devotee dear to Kåñëa, so dear that, at the time the devotee gives up the body, the Lord personally comes to wherever he or she may be within the cosmos—among the demigods, demons, human beings or even lower creatures like elephants.** Kåñëa carries that devotee to His transcendental realm of Vaikuëöha, in the spiritual sky beyond birth and death. In Vaikuëöha, the

ultimate object of attraction, even for the many expanded forms of God and Their consorts, is the transcendental form of Lord Çré Kåñëa.

> **The beauty of Kåñëa's body is so attractive that it attracts not only the demigods and other living entities within this material world but the personalities of the spiritual sky as well, including the Näräyaëas, who are expansions of Kåñëa's personality. The minds of the Näräyaëas are thus attracted by the beauty of Kåñëa's body. In addition, the goddesses of fortune [Lakñmés]—who are wives of the Näräyaëas and are the women described in the *Vedas* as most chaste—are also attracted by the wonderful beauty of Kåñëa.** (*Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Madhya* **21.106**)

Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa notes that the devotee departs to the supreme abode via a different path than the *deva-yäna* of the *jïänés* seeking elevation to Brahmaloka.** So although Kåñëa is the attractive principle behind Vedic *dharma*, those who take to the *deva-yäna* and *pitå-yäna* follow that attraction to destinations other than the Lord Himself. These paths have their origin in Kåñëa but they do not lead to Kåñëa. Only the process that Lord Kåñëa personally comes to give leads to Him.

> **Therefore one who desires freedom from material bondage should adopt the process of chanting and glorifying the name, fame, form and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, at whose feet all the holy places stand. One cannot derive the proper benefit from other methods, such as pious atonement, speculative knowledge, and meditation in mystic *yoga*, because even after following such methods one takes to fruitive activities again, unable to control his mind, which is contaminated by the base qualities of nature, namely passion and ignorance.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 6.2.46)

Chapter Fourteen,
The Value of the Human Form

yaù präpya mänuñaà lokaà
mukti-dväram apävåtam
gåheñu khaga-vat saktas
tam ärüòha-cyutaà viduù

> **The doors of liberation are opened wide to one who has achieved human life. But if a human being simply devotes**

himself to family life like the foolish bird in this story, then he is to be considered as one who has climbed to a high place only to trip and fall down. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **11.7.74**)

The story hinted at is of a male pigeon who returned to his nest to discover that a hunter had caught his wife and babies in a net. Abandoning all hope, the bird flew purposefully into the same net, sacrificing a life he considered useless. A creature like a bird cannot find a purpose for itself beyond slaking its physical desires and working hard to maintain family relationships. In contrast, the human form is called *mukti-dväram*, the doorway to liberation from physical desires and family relationships. Lord Kåñëa confirms that all human beings, even those classed as fallen, can pass through the portals of liberation *if they just surrender unto Him.*

mäà hi pärtha vyapäçritya
ye 'pi syuù päpa-yonayaù
striyo vaiçyäs tathä çüdräs
te 'pi yänti paräà gatià

O son of Påthä, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth—women, *vaiçyas* [merchants] and *çüdras* [workers]—can attain the supreme destination.

kià punar brähmaëäù puëyä
bhaktä räjarñayas tathä
anityam asukhaà lokam
imaà präpya bhajasva mäm

How much more this is so of the righteous *brähmaëas*, the devotees and the saintly kings. Therefore, having come to this temporary, miserable world, engage in loving service unto Me. (*Bhagavad-gétä* **9.32-33**)

Human birth is rare, and rarer still is the human being who achieves liberation. *Garuòa Puräëa* 2.49.13 counts 8,400,000 *yonis* or physical forms into which the soul may be born, and warns: *na mänuñam vinänyatra tattvajïänantu labhyate*—except in the human form, *tattva-jïäna* or knowledge of the truth is practically unavailable. *Gatvä tu yoni prabhäväni daitya sahasrasaù siddhimupaiti jévaù*, advises *Mahäbhärata* 12.271.34: "After thousands of births in different species, a living entity may get the chance to achieve *siddhi*, spiritual emancipation."

Unfortunately, almost all the people of this Age of Kali exhibit the characteristics of *mlecchas*. Hardly any serious inclination to liberate themselves from matter is found in them. I*tas tato väçana-päna-väsaù-snäna-vyaväyonmukha-jéva-lokam:*"[In Kali-yuga] humanity is inclined to eat, drink, reside, bathe and enjoy sex any way they like." (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.16.22). One whose actions are determined only by the impulses of the senses is an

animal. Stupefied by the physical drives of eating, sleeping, sex and self-defense, animals can't discern their ultimate welfare. Like the male pigeon, they easily fall into a trap. Western civilization is the trap of modern animalistic mankind. Çréla Prabhupäda said the aim of Western culture is to make the human body "tigerlike strong."** But tigers have been almost completely wiped out by big game hunters. Similarly, when we human beings set as our goal of life the development of our bodies to ferocious capacity, we are hunted down by material nature. "Therefore you'll find revolution, war, in the Western part of the world," said Çréla Prabhupäda. "They are being shot by the laws of nature."

For all his scientific advancement, modern man has discovered no way to save himself from punishment by the laws of nature. His strong inclination to animalistic behavior has rendered him a moral illiterate. In place of *veda*—real knowledge—he has only meager sense impressions to guide him. His is an oyster's-eye view of the moral universe. (An oyster, dear reader, lives inside a shell at the bottom of the ocean. What will an oyster understand about the origin and purpose of the universe?) How modern man sees his place in the universe can be gleaned from a widely-used textbook on moral philosophy:**

> The universe is some 16 billion years old—that is the time elapsed since the "big bang"—and the earth itself was formed about 4.6 billion years ago. The evolution of life on the planet was a slow process, guided not by design but (largely) by random mutation and natural selection. The first humans appeared quite recently. ...But no sooner did our ancestors arrive than they began to think of themselves as the most important things in all creation. ...We now know better. We now know that we exist by evolutionary accident, as one species among many..."The life of a man," [Scottish philosopher David Hume] wrote, "is of no greater importance to the universe than that of an oyster." But he also recognized that our lives are important to *us.* We are creatures with desires, needs, plans, and hopes; and even if "the universe" does not care about those things, we do.

While it is true that recent trends in science raise questions about these assumptions,** the mindset of Western civilization is firm in the faith that the value of life is only what *we* make of it. The prophet of our time is Friedrich Nietzsche. His ethic was: "There are no moral phenomena at all, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena."** Translated into practical life, this ethic turns out to mean that modern man accepts no definite right or wrong *above and beyond the needs of the body.* Since the fulfillment of bodily needs is the only value he is confident of, modern man concludes that the public good can be best served by an industry of sense gratification. With the tools of high technology, an industry was erected that in fact is an incarnation of cold evil—a blood-spattered colossus that shrieks and clatters through a chilly desert of artificial "industreality," crushing the lives out of millions of innocent creatures.

The first symptom of Kali-yuga is the cold-blooded mass slaughter of cows and bulls by degraded, irresponsible persons who pose as leaders of society.** In Vedic culture, the cow is respected as one of seven kinds of mothers.** The bull represents Dharma, the demigod of religious principles.** His four legs are cleanliness, austerity, truthfulness and mercy. To kill these gentle animals, gifts of God unto mankind, is a terrible sin.** Yet nowadays dining on the flesh of cows and bulls is a sign of civilized respectability.

> Beef eating, in most countries, is a form of privilege, a visible sign of wealth and status. Among nations, entrance into the beef club represents power and, from a geopolitical perspective, is every bit as significant in determining a nation's status in the world as the number of its tanks and ships or the rise of its industrial output.**

The world's leading industrial nation, the United States, slaughters one hundred thousand cows every twenty-four hours. Each seven days 91 percent of American households purchase beef.** Ray Kroc (1902-1984), the Henry Ford of beef restaurateurs,** developed the McDonald's hamburger chain into a global empire that now spans 114 countries. "I speak of faith in McDonald's as if it were a religion," Kroc once remarked. "And without meaning any offense to the Holy Trinity, the Koran, or the Torah, that's exactly the way I think of it." In the United States he maneuvered to get his restaurants built near suburban churches because his most lucrative clientele were families coming out of Sunday services. One can truly say Mr. Kroc purloined the halo of religion and set it over the grotesque head of cold evil. Today, in any given month, more Americans enter McDonald's restaurants than enter all the churches in the USA.

The murderous pollution rots both the body of man and his moral character. Health experts warn that meat-eaters are at significantly greater risk than vegetarians of dying from cancer and heart disease.** Each year the meat industry wastes millions of tons of grains that could feed the world's poor. These grains needlessly fatten livestock—which can just as well live on grass—so that killers can reap greater and greater profits in rich countries.

Insidious is this cold evil, a creeping shadow that falls across the heart of man, perverting his outward vision so that where ravenous ghouls bolt down charred hunks of their mother's flesh, he sees a jolly family table.

> Cold evil is evil inflicted from a distance; evil concealed by layer upon layer of technological and institutional garb...It is evil that cannot be felt because of its impersonal nature. To suggest that a person is committing an evil act by...consuming a hamburger might appear strange, even ludicrous, to most people. Even if the facts were to be made explicit and incontrovertible, the trail of evil mapped out with painstaking detail, it is unlikely that many in society could muster up the same sense of outrage that they might extend to incidences of hot

evil—an armed robbery, a rape, the deliberate torture of a neighborhood dog.**

In 1960, the American pharmaceutical company Searle brought the birth control pill to market. This event sparked off a world-wide "sexual revolution." It is estimated that at this moment sixty million women are taking the pill;** at some time in their lives, almost 90 percent of Western women indulge in sex while "protected" by contraceptives. Truth be told, this is an ongoing medical experiment upon the female body, the deadly results of which receive little media attention. Nobel laureate Frederick Robbins, addressing a meeting of the American Association of Medical Colleges, admitted (and excused) the hazard this experiment represents when he said, "the dangers of overpopulation are so great that we may have to use certain techniques of conception control that may entail considerable risk to the individual woman." In the fifties, such grim forecasts about "the dangers of overpopulation" were a media staple; since then, scientists have come round to admit that the global increase of the number of people does not in itself endanger civilization.** Yet in the meantime millions of women remain at risk from the pill.

What risk? From the Vedic standpoint, people who use contraceptives are at risk of being reborn in "the third world" for violating the *dharma* of *jagadvåddhi*, increasing the population by religious family life.** One could argue that we can't very well expect Western people to perceive *that* risk, since mostly they do not know and do not accept Vedic *dharma.* But the word *dharma* does not translate as "some irrelevant set of rules invented by ancient priests of a far-away land." The word actually means "the natural characteristic of a thing." Excessive sex indulgence is an abuse of the human form, the doorway to liberation. Abuse of the human form is *adharma* or self-destruction. We do not need to wait for the next life to perceive that *adharma* is self-destructive. Destruction is upon us now, in the present body (*ädhyätmika*), in our society (*ädhibhautika*) and in nature (*ädhidaivika*).

Medical science admits that the pill increases a woman's chances of disability or death from blood clots, heart attacks, cancer, hardening of the arteries, high blood pressure, and other health dangers. Psychotherapist Sherril Sellman argues "the long-term effects from artificially altering a woman's hormonal and reproductive life bode ill for the health not only of the women themselves but also of future generations"—which reminds us of Vedic predictions that the future of Kali-yuga will see the stunting of human bodily strength, height and duration of life. We all know well one health tragedy the pill-induced sexual revolution made possible: AIDS, which was completely unforeseen in the sixties. Another incurable venereal disease, one that is a serious threat to babies at their birth, is genital herpes, which infects a half a million Americans each year.** The sexually-transmitted organism *Chlamydia trachomatis* infects two million new victims each year, mostly women between fifteen and nineteen years of age. It can cause sterility. Studies show that women who have sex with multiple

partners could be up to two thousand times more at risk of contracting cervical cancer than those who do not. Each year more babies are born with birth defects caused by sexually transmitted diseases than all the children stricken with polio in the decade of the fifties. These are just a few samples of the *ädhyätmika* miseries associated with illicit sex.

Just as meat-eating erodes not only the physical but also the moral health of society, so too does loose sexuality. "A lot depends on marriage," writes William Kilpatrick, a professor of moral education at Boston College,**

> …not least the moral health of a society. And marriage, as we are once again coming to understand, depends to a large extent on a code of chastity outside of marriage. With the coming of the sexual revolution, men began to flee their homes in droves, leaving women with the children, with double the work, and with little time or energy to provide discipline or moral guidance.

Such are the *ädhibhautika* consequences of illicit sex. In August 1998, an American television broadcast about the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky scandal reported that eighty percent of all marriages are hit by adultery. Seventy percent of husbands cheat, and fifty to sixty percent of wives cheat. Fifty percent of first marriages—that is, between partners who were never married before—end in failure. Sixty-five percent of second marriages fail. Eighty percent of third marriages fail.

Illicit sex results in "accidental babies" or what *Bhagavad-gétä* 1.42 calls *varëa-saìkara*, unwanted progeny. Children spawned from *adharma* are hell-bent on destruction. It is estimated that each month, American high school students commit 525,000 crimes involving violence or the threat of violence.** About 135,000 students carry guns to school daily. In the last thirty years, suicides among young people rose three hundred percent. One in seven teenagers admit to having tried to kill themselves.

The steady erosion of sexual morals in society is to be expected, given that a megabusiness with earnings of ten billion dollars per year blatantly promotes sexual whimsy among the people:** the pornography industry. "The U.S. adult-film industry," reports the magazine *Premiere*,** "centered in the San Fernando Valley just over the mountains from Hollywood, is a way larger and more efficient moneymaking machine than is theatrical mainstream American cinema." In March 1998, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Hollywood handed out the coveted "Oscar" trophies after judging three hundred seventy five feature films released in the year previous. In January 1998, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, the *Adult Video News* magazine (AVN) held its fifteenth annual pornographic film awards ceremony. AVN handed out its own Oscar-like trophies after judging *four thousand* dirty movies made the previous year! Each film was an average of ninety minutes in length; it would take a year and three months of non-stop viewing for one person to see them all.

The New Harvard Guide to Psychiatry (1988) presented a great deal of evidence showing sexual freedom

> …by no means leads to great pleasures, freedom, and openness; more meaningful relationship between the sexes; or exhilarating relief from stifling inhibitions. Clinical experience has shown that the new permissiveness has often led to empty relationships, feelings of self-contempt and worthlessness.**

In the ancient world, this sort of deep-rooted unhappiness, this "inner shadow" that "darkens the seat of reason," was diagnosed as madness.** The old Greek word *melankholia* (literally translated as "black bile" and transposed into English as melancholia, "severe depression") meant a fit of insanity. Melancholia afflicts large sections of society, especially the sexually "free" youth. It is admitted in a report on modern stress:

> What isn't natural is going crazy—for sadness to linger on into debilitating depression, for anxiety to grow chronic and paralyzing. These are largely diseases of modernity.**

Sages of old recognized "going crazy" as the prelude to mass destruction. *Quem deus vult perdere, dementat prius*, goes a Latin phrase—"Whom God would destroy, He first makes mad." Even up to the Middle Ages, Europeans held the influence of Saturn (called "the black star" and "the planet of tears") to be responsible for melancholia. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* similarly describes Saturn as an evil star associated with earthquakes, fire and other *ädhidaivika* calamities.

Following on the heels of excessive sex indulgence, melancholia is the herald of natural disaster. And natural disaster is surely upon us. Experts warn that we've lost control of public health safeguards.** The door is open to world-wide epidemics of killer diseases. Right now twenty million people are refugees, many living in dire health conditions. Some environmental scientists foresee that rising ocean waters will flood coastal cities with a century. They say the atmosphere will soon be unbreathable, being poisoned by carbon dioxide and methane produced by industry.

Çrémad-Bhägavatam 1.17.38 lists, along with meat-eating and illicit sex, two other destructive *adharmas:* intoxication (*pänam*) and gambling (*dyütaà*, which includes frivolous sports). The alcohol and tobacco industries are responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people each year. In the United States, boys and girls start drinking at an average age of 12.3 years.** More than half of male high school students get drunk once a month by the time they are eighteen. Two out of five get drunk once a week. From 1975 to 1985, the number of twelve-year-old girls who smoke increased by ten times. Six out of ten high school students say they have used illegal drugs. Gamblers and sports fans are no less addicts who yearly squander astronomical sums of money. So why don't world leaders curb this growing catastrophe by banning alcohol, tobacco,

drugs, the gaming industry, birth control pills, pornography, and cow slaughter?** "The benefits outweigh the risks," they answer. Yes, in Kali-yuga, when the world is ruled by *mlecchas*, it is considered most beneficial to be able to eat, drink and have sex any way you like, whatever the risk.

Now, one could reply here that medical doctors are busy exploring ways to counteract the health risks of modern life. But this is just a vain attempt to fight off the reactions of *adharma* with yet more adharmic actions. In 1995 a Hong Kong newspaper reported that in China aborted foetuses can be bought as a health food item for a few dollars at private clinics.** Chinese doctors recommend they be prepared as a soup, claiming them good for the skin and kidneys. One doctor said she'd eaten 100 in the last six months, and swore that the best are first-born males from young women. Is it far-fetched to expect that Western doctors may soon likewise recommend foetus soup to their patients?

A creed is evident in these efforts to enjoy no matter what the cost. It is the creed of offense against Mother Nature. "We war with Nature," wrote Thomas Carlyle** about the Industrial Revolution of the early eighteen-hundreds, "and, by our resistless engines, come off always victorious, and loaded with spoils." Offense is the essence of all demonic belief systems. For ages, demonic philosophers and scientists have placed the blame for the troubles of the human condition not upon the past misdeeds of humanity, but upon nature. That ancient creed of the demons finds latter-day expression in these words of a popular science book.**

> Mankind, after all, was a product of nature, and nature worked not by intelligent planning and conscious design but by the worst kind of trial-and-error blundering...There was no inherent reason why [people] had to suffer *pain*, for example...It's hard to imagine that human engineers could be any clumsier or messier than that old slattern Dame Nature.

And so human industry aims at correcting the alleged mistakes of nature by making the world a better place for people to eat, drink, have sex, and live in. But the plan behind nature—God's nature, Kåñëa's nature—is for we human beings to learn that this material world is *not* our happy home, and that we have a *greater* calling than just doing whatever we like to gratify our senses.

In ages long past, soon after the creation, ambitious demons launched a rebellion against the plan of nature. Brahmä, the creator, gave these original demons as their share of sacrifice the powers of darkness and illusion (black magic),** so that they could, in a pretentious, deceptive and finally self-destructive way, defy the true purpose of creation. Black magic is a particularly delusive feature of the lowest order of worship (i.e. worship of matter). Though demons brusquely reject faith in God, their twisted instincts compel them to worship darkness and illusion—which are phenomena of the mode of ignorance—to gain powers over nature. Industrial technology is merely a recent

appearance of this ancient, demonic belief system. Arthur C. Clarke, author of *2001—A Space Odyssey* and the inventor of the telecommunications satellite, is often quoted as saying "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."**

In the West, "establishment" religious traditions like Judaeo-Christianity, long opposed to the diabolic, have made their peace with the industrial assault on nature. Compromise with the creed of the demons is a far cry from the humble and austere beginnings of Western faith. In *Celebration of Discipline*, Christian theologian Richard J. Foster comments:**

> In a culture where the landscape is dotted with shrines to the Golden Arches and an assortment of Pizza Temples, fasting seems out of place, out of step with the times. In fact, fasting has been in general disrepute both in and outside the Church for many years. For example, in my research I could not find a single book published on the subject of Christian fasting from 1861 to 1954, a period of nearly one hundred years...There is no way to escape the force of Jesus' words...He made it clear that he expected his disciples to fast after he was gone...Christ both upheld the Discipline of fasting and anticipated that his followers would do it...Where are the people today who will respond to the call of Christ?

"Religion" that accedes to the offensive, sybaritic ways of Kali is repellent to Dharma personified. Such "religion" is actually Adharma, evil religion. Kavi-karëapüra, a great poet among the Vaiñëavas, wrote a drama entitled *Çré Caitanya-candrodaya*** in which Adharma, the enemy of Dharma, defends Kali thusly:

saucäcära-tapaù-kñama-sama-damaiù särdhaà vivekädibhiù
sämantair api yena dharma-nåpatir nirmülam unmülitah
ye dåñöyaiva punanti te 'pi sahasaivändhé-kåtas tat-priyä
yenaikena mayä sa yasya vaña-gaù so 'yaà kalir nindyate

> **You have insulted Kali, who has me (Adharma) as his faithful servant. The monarch called Dharma (Religion), along with his soldiers called purity, good conduct, austerity, tolerance, equanimity, self-control, discrimination and other virtues, are all uprooted by Kali. All that is dear to Religion, all which with a glance purifies, is blinded by the sight of Kali.**

In this grim age, whom may we call a genuinely religious person? This question can be answered by a look at one's personal qualities. A true follower of *dharma* stands upon the same four principles that the bull of Dharma stands: truthfulness, cleanliness, austerity and mercy. He marches with the soldiers of Dharma who personify all the good qualities so abundantly evident in great

spiritual masters. By sincerely following a follower of *dharma,* one rises to the light of sattvic existence, where the natural virtues of the soul become apparent.

If one follows in the footsteps of Kali instead of a qualified teacher of *dharma*, he becomes an enemy of virtue and a friend of vice. Kali resides wherever people eat meat, gamble, take intoxicants, hoard wealth and enjoy sex in violation of the laws that govern procreation. Such behavior is called *kapüyacaraëä*, "stinking conduct,"** for it is repellent to Dharma. However, *kapüyacaraëä* does attract the ominous interest of a fearsome expansion of Dharma.

Vedic literature reveals that Dharma, religion personified, is expanded as Yama.** The name Yama is explicated thus:** *prajyäàyamanam yaman*—"Yama, the controller of mankind." He is also known as Dharmaräja, the ruler of religious principles; as Kälajïa, the knower of time; as Kåtjïa, the knower of action; as Daëòapäëi, holder of the rod of punishment; as Virüpäkña, having fearful eyes; as Päçahasta, holder of the noose; and as Måtyu, Death.

When a soul leaves the dying human body, his good and evil *karma* transports him to Yamaräja for judgement.** What one sees at that time is described in *Garuòa Puräëa* 2.5.147-149.

tataç taträçu raktäkñaà
bhinnäïjanacayopamam
mrtyukäläntakädinäà
madhye paçyati vai yamam
damñöräkarälavadanam
bhåkuöé däruräkåtim
virüpair bhéñaëair vaktrair
våtaà vyädhiçataiù prabhum
daëòäsakta mahäbähum
päçahastam çubhairavam
tan nirdiñöäm tato jantur
gatià yäti çubhäçubham

There, very soon [after his death], in the presence of Death and Time personified, the departed soul beholds Yama of fierce aspect, whose eyes are red, whose body is black as soot, whose jaws are ferocious, whose frown is severe. Yama's willing slaves are hundreds of personified diseases, ugly with frightening features. He holds a rod of iron and a noose. As he decides, the departed soul attains a good or evil state.

Yamaräja rules Naraka, the region of hell, where evil-doers are punished.

dine dine tu narake
pacyante dahyatenyataù

çéryate bhidyate 'nyatra
cüryate klidyate 'nyataù
kvathyate dépyate 'nyatra
tatha vätahato 'nyatah
ekaà dinaà vansaçatam
pramäëam narake bhavet

Daily in Naraka, sinners are cooked, burnt, torn, broken, pounded, immersed, boiled, heated, and blasted by winds. A day in hell is equal to one hundred years of mortal life.

Who are these unfortunates? They who wasted their precious human form of life only in rapacious pursuit of selfish interests.

icchati çaté sahasram sahasré lakñaméhate kartum
lakçädhipaté räjyam räjäpi sakalämdharäm labdhum
cakradharo 'pi suratvaà surabhäve sakalasurapatir bhavitum
surapatir ürdhvagatitvaà tathäpi na nivartate tåñëä

tåñëayä cäbhibhütas tu
narakaà pratipadyate
tåñëa muktäs tu ye kecit
svargaväsam labhanti te

A man who has a hundred [silver pieces] craves for a thousand. A man who has a thousand, yearns for a hundred thousand. A man who has a hundred thousand wishes to rule a kingdom. A man who rules a kingdom wants to become an emperor. An emperor wants to become a demigod. If he gets that, he then wants to rule over all the demigods. Even upon getting that, his thirst for power is not satiated. A person afflicted by such selfish cravings falls into hell. Those who are freed of excessive cravings secure for themselves a residence in heaven.

Of particular note in these verses (*Garuòa Puräëa* 2.12.13-15) is the sense in which heaven and hell are linked. The desire to become a ruler in heaven is said to be fueled by the same selfish desire on which one stumbles and falls into hell. At the same time it is said a place in heaven can be secured by desirelessness.

This might seem confusing. When is the desire for heaven hellish, and why are those who have no desire for heaven raised there? *Bhagavad-gétä* 2.42-43 tells of men of small knowledge who proclaim themselves followers of the *Vedas*, who say there is nothing more to the *Vedas* than rituals for winning the heavenly world, a good birth, power and so on. Such persons are indeed full of desires, and the *Vedas* dangle heaven in front of their eyes as the object of their desires. But one who accepts Vedic direction, even in lust for celestial pleasures, comes in contact with learned *brähmaëas* and Vaiñëavas who are the leaders of Vedic culture. That culture obliges one to listen respectfully while saintly teachers

expose the folly of trying to satisfy desires by fruitive rituals. Desires are satisfied only when the heart is purified, and the heart is purified by saintly association. A heart so purified, detached from material position and attached to the association of learned devotees, is itself heaven. Thus the whole point of Vedic *dharma* is to create an opportunity for people with desires to cleanse their hearts by serving the desireless.

> **By regular service to the *brähmaëas* and Vaiñëavas, one can clear the dirt from his heart and thus enjoy supreme peace and liberation from material attachment and be satisfied. In this world there is no fruitive activity superior to serving the *brähmaëa* class, for this can bring pleasure to the demigods, for whom the many sacrifices are recommended.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **1.21.40**)

In the present age, regrettably, people take lessons from Kali, not saintly teachers. *Adhamaù kalir uddiñöaù*, writes Çrépad Madhväcärya: "Kali enters as false knowledge, vice and material desire."** Kali teaches sacrifice to lust in place of sacrifice to God, corruption in place of morality and devotion, and false knowledge in place of Vedic knowledge.**

False knowledge, vice and material desire are the portals to hell. Indeed, hell rises through these portals to join us right here on earth. As noted earlier, Yamaräja is surrounded by hundreds of fierce-visaged personifications of disease. From hell they strike the bodies and minds of millions of people on earth. In any period of history some common diseases inevitably trouble mankind. But Kali-yuga is a time when uncommonly hellish pathologies flourish, particularly *cittavibhrama*—derangement of the mind—which, as we learned in Chapter Eleven, is symptomatic of vice.

But as usual, "it's worth the risk." Industry pumps out newer and newer creature comforts to help us mask the stress, guilt and despair we face each day. People gaze blankly past the shambles of their inner lives, their minds at play with trivia. "As things fell apart," goes a popular song, "nobody paid much attention." This "ignore-ance" is the central theme of a disturbing recent novel entitled *American Psycho.*** Patrick, a wealthy, good-looking, charming and intelligent psychopathic murderer, works on Wall Street by day and butchers people by night. While dining with friends at expensive restaurants, he sometimes tries to open up about the evil side of his life. It goes right by them. His friends can't focus. They are too taken up with what they themselves have to say—about the menu, clothes, money, and other restaurants; about television, drugs, sex, and celebrities; about electronic gadgets, fitness clubs, tanning salons and people they hate; about cigars, fashion magazines, videos, and Broadway musicals; about who has the most stylish business card; about colleagues they recognize across the room who turn out to be people they don't know; about a news report that cavemen had more fiber in their diet than we do.

Paçyann api na paçyati, this is called—"seeing but not seeing."** While one of the herd is beheaded right before their eyes, goats gaze on vacantly, chewing their cud. In the same way, millions of people go about their daily business in banal tolerance of newer and newer depravity within and all around.** When a preacher warns them that according to scripture their destruction is imminent, they blandly reply, "That is clearly his right to have that opinion, and we just hope he is wrong."** Misled by false knowledge, vice and material desire, not seeing their own destruction as it stares them in the face, their lives are no better than those of animals. And after being punished by Yamaräja, animals they will become. *Garuòa Puräëa* 2.3.80-82:

tataù sarveñu nistérëaù
päpé tiryaktvam añnute
kåmi kéöa pataìgeñu
sthävaraikaçapheñu ca
gatvä vana gajädhyeñu
goñvañu tathaiva ca
kharo 'çvo 'çvataro gauraù
çarabhaççamaré tathä
ete caikaçaphäù ñaö ca
çråëu païcanakhänataù
anyäsu bahupäpäsu
duùkhadäsu ca yoniñu

Having passed through the punishments of Yamaräja, the sinner is reborn as a worm, a germ, a fly, a one-hoofed creature, a wild elephant, a cow, an ass, a horse, a buffalo, a *çarabha*, a *camaré*, a six-hoofed animal, or one having five nails. In these and other sinful, miserable species, he takes birth.

In spite of all the faults of Kali-yuga, the Vedic seers long ago determined this age to be worshipable among the four *yugas.*** For in Kali-yuga, the most merciful *avatära* of the Supreme Lord appears to teach the easiest and yet most powerful *dharma* of all. Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura writes (*Gétävalé, Çré Godruma-candra-bhajana-upadeça* 8):

kali-kukkura-mudgara-bhäva-dharaà
hari-näma-mahauñadha-däna-param
patitärta-dayärdra-su-mürti-dharaà
bhaja godruma-känana-kuïja-vidhum

Lord Caitanya Mahäprabhu is like a powerful hammer that smashes the sin and oppression of the mad dog of Kali-yuga, and He is absorbed in distributing the holy name of Kåñëa, which is the great medicine for release from material existence. His transcendental form is beautiful, and His heart

full of compassion for the suffering, fallen souls of this world. Just worship Lord Caitanya, the moon of the forest groves of Godruàa.

In *Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Antya* 20.13-14, we learn:

saìkértana haite päpa-saàsära-näçana
citta-çuddhi, sarva-bhakti-sädhana-udgama

By performing congregational chanting of the Hare Kåñëa *mantra*, one can destroy the sinful condition of material existence, purify the unclean heart and awaken all varieties of devotional service.

kåñëa-premodgama, premämåta-äsvädana
kåñëa-präpti, sevämåta-samudre majjana

The result of chanting is that one awakens his love for Kåñëa and tastes transcendental bliss. Ultimately, one attains the association of Kåñëa and engages in His devotional service, as if immersing himself in a great ocean of love.

These truths were demonstrated for all to see five hundred years ago, when Lord Caitanya personally rescued two extremely degraded *brähmaëa* brothers named Jagäi and Mädhäi from their sinfulness by inducing them to participate in *saìkértana* at His house. There, with His associates Nityänanda, Advaita, Gadädhara, Çrévasa and many other pure devotees, the Lord danced and chanted the holy names Hare Kåñëa, Hare Kåñëa, Kåñëa Kåñëa, Hare Hare/Hare Räma, Hare Räma, Räma Räma, Hare Hare, flooding the hearts of Jagäi and Mädhäi with love of Kåñëa. Until that day these two had been drunkards, robbers, murderers and rapists. Now, having vowed to never sin again, they raised their arms above their heads and joined in the glorification of the holy names. Thereafter they were celebrated throughout the universe as the foremost of saintly persons.

Since Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu is none other than the Supreme Lord Çré Kåñëa Himself, the demigods, in their own heavenly forms, daily attended His earthly pastimes to render Him service. They could not be seen by ordinary people without the Lord's permission. In *Çré Caitanya-bhägavata, Madhya* 14, Çré Våndävana däsa Öhäkura provides us with an account of the reaction of these cosmic controllers after they witnessed the deliverance of Jagäi and Mädhäi.**

Våndävana däsa relates that Yamaräja, the God of death, was also a daily visitor and witness to Lord Caitanya's pastimes. The lord of death asked his assistant Citragupta, who keeps record of the virtuous and sinful activities of human beings: "What is the extent of the sin that these two, Jagäi and Mädhäi, have committed, and what does it mean to exonerate them?"

Citragupta replied, "O Yamaräja, why pursue this matter? It is futile! If my assistant scribes were to try to write down for you the sins of these two, they would not finish even after a month. You could listen to many millions of their sins, yet much, much more would await your hearing. Unable to cope with the voluminous amount of the sins of Jagäi and Mädhäi, my scribes feel harassed."

Citragupta continued, "My having to keep track of the sins they commit forced me to the brink of complete exhaustion. The bottomless pits where these records are kept will bear witness to our plight: these two have brought my scribes and I to tears. But now, just see—Lord Caitanya has absorbed the immense mountain of Jagäi and Mädhäi's sins with the greatest of ease. Kindly permit me to cast their records into the ocean."

Yamaräja had never before heard of such compassion as that shown to Jagäi and Mädhäi on this day. Yamaräja is an elevated Vaiñëava. He is the embodiment of religious principles, fully acquainted with the teachings of *Çrémad-Bhägavatam*. As he listened to Citragupta speak in this way, he went into a trance of love of Kåñëa and dropped unconscious inside his chariot. Greatly concerned, Citragupta and his assistants tried to pick him up. They were unable to control the flow of his tears.

The other demigods, returning from their daily attendance at the Lord's pastimes, were jubilantly performing *kértana.* Çiva, Brahmä, Ananta Çeña, Närada Muni and other great personalities thrilled from an ever-fresh joy as they praised how the boundless mercy of Lord Caitanya delivered Jagäi and Mädhäi, the worst of all sinners.

When they noticed that Yamaräja's chariot had halted, they paused. Then they saw Yamaräja unconscious. Astonished to see him in this condition, they inquired the cause. Citragupta explained to them the reason. Looking carefully, Çiva and Brahmä perceived the symptoms of ecstatic love of Kåñëa in Yamaräja. They commenced a loud *kértana*, singing right into his ears. The *kértana* revived Yamaräja's consciousness; as soon as he found himself, he got up and began dancing like a madman. The *kértana* reached a crescendo while Yamaräja, son of the Sun God, matched it with his wild dancing. Enthused by Yamaräja's dancing, the demigods joined in with him. Çiva, Närada Muni and everyone else were drawn in by his love of Godhead. These are very confidential matters. One day the *Vedas* will reveal these activities of the demigods.

Dharmaräja (Yamaräja), now freed of all shyness and completely intoxicated by love of Kåñëa, lost himself in the movements of dance. as he remembered the pastimes of Lord Caitanya he cried out, "All glories to the Lord, the most munificent friend of the fallen souls!" The movements of his limbs were accompanied by ecstatic symptoms. As he thought of the Lord, he wept. Seeing Yamaräja in this state, the hearts of his assistants and companions overflowed with joy. Citragupta is a devotee very attached to the lotus feet of Kåñëa, so he

joined in the chanting and dancing without restraint. Soon all were rolling on the ground.

In *Çré Caitanya-candrodaya* 1.81, Kali admits defeat by Lord Caitanya's deliverance of Jagäi and Mädhäi. In 1.44, he warns his friend Adharma: *mama karmääi kåntati*—"He [Lord Caitanya] has cut my work to pieces." And when Adharma unhappily asks where he should go in such a state of affairs, Kali replies that the only place left for him is among those who blaspheme Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu.

Saìkértana, the congregational chanting of the Lord's holy names, is the only religious process validated by the Vedic scriptures for the present age.** Thus it is called the *yuga-dharma.* It is Lord Caitanya's will that *saìkértana* inundate the world, as He Himself declares in *Çré Caitanya-bhägavata:*

påthivéte äche yata nagarädi gräma
sarvatra pracära haibe mora näma

In every city, town and village of the world, the holy names of the Lord will be preached.

The natural virtues—justice, mercy, truthfulness and so on—are evident in their fullness only under the shelter of Lord Caitanya's *saìkértana* movement. Wherever in the world virtue might be lacking, it is easily restored and perfected by Vaiñëava-dharma.** At the same time, sin cannot remain where the holy name is uttered. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 6.2.15 declares that even if one chants the holy name indirectly (that is, by enunciating the Lord's name while aiming it at a different object, as people do when they call devotees "the Krishnas"); or chants in jest; or chants for musical entertainment; or chants derisively—still, *açeñägha-haraà*, one's sinful life is neutralized. Thus, as the chanting of Hare Kåñëa, Hare Kåñëa, Kåñëa Kåñëa, Hare Hare/Hare Räma, Hare Räma, Räma Räma, Hare Hare spreads through the world, virtue blossoms while sin withers.

Finally, in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 6.3.29, Yamaräja instructs his fearsome associates, the Yamadütas, to bring to him for punishment only those sinful persons who do not use their tongues to chant the holy names, who do not remember even once the lotus feet of Kåñëa, whose heads never bow down before the Lord, and who do not perform their life duties for the satisfaction of Viñëu.

Containing two chapters, this section compares and contrasts Vaiñëava-dharma with the Western religious tradition. Despite the fact that its origin is Vedic, Western religion suffers from retrograde morality.

Chapter Fifteen,
Dharma-çéla

As we have seen, even accidental chanting of the holy name of Kåñëa easily delivers the most sinful person from the punishment of Yamaräja. This chapter investigates the perfect morality that flowers forth in a person committed wholeheartedly to chanting. This perfect morality is explained by Lord Kåñëa in *Bhagavad-gétä*, Chapter Twelve.

Straight away it might be asked what relevance any talk of idealized conduct might have in our gritty, down-to-earth world, where "cool" means being shallow, sullen, self-obsessed, sexually absorbed, emotionally numb, relentlessly materialistic and contemptuous of authority. Maybe it's not a pretty sight, but that's the way people *are;* why bang and whimper about a lofty purity that can never be?

The Vaiñëava answer is that it is human nature to want to transcend human nature. As we shall see, even a dedicated atheist defends the "transcendent purpose" of morality. The difficulty is that people don't have enough moral strength—in a word, virtue—to transcend the degrading influence of Kali-yuga. This chapter will discuss not only *what* perfect morality is, but *how* people can acquire the virtue needed to live it.

In the Sanskrit language, a perfectly moral person is called *dharma-çéla. Çéla* means discipline; one who is solidly disciplined in the rules and regulations laid down by scripture is *dharma-çéla.* A perfectly *immoral* person is called *adharma-çéla*, one who solidly opposes *dharma.*

But which scripture presents perfect *dharma?* There are different sacred texts in the world, and often one is found to sanction conduct that another condemns. Is Hindu morality the perfect *dharma?* What about Buddhist *dharma*, Christian *dharma*, Muslim *dharma? Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.2.34 gives this answer:

ye vai bhagavatä proktä
upäyä hy ätma-labdhaye
aïjaù puàsäm aviduñäà
viddhi bhägavatän hi tän

Even ignorant living entities can very easily come to know the Supreme Lord if they adopt those means prescribed by the Supreme Lord Himself. The process recommended by the Lord is to be known as *bhägavata-dharma*, or devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Perfect *dharma*, then, is *bhägavata-dharma*, the religion and morality that Bhagavän, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, personally teaches. God is not a

Hindu, Buddhist, Christian or Muslim. Each of these religions has something to say *about* God, but what does God have to say about *Himself?* Five thousand years ago at Kurukñetra, He displayed His universal form, revealing that all the objects of worship promoted by various religious texts—Brahmä, Çiva, the demigods, sages, celestial serpents and all living entities—are sustained within His divine Self (*Bhagavad-gétä* 11.15). He gave this order to Arjuna and every being within the universe:

sarva-dharmän parityajya
mäm ekaà çaraëaà vraja
ahaà tväà sarva-päpebhyo
mokñayiñyämi mä çucaù

> **Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.** (*Bhagavad-gétä* **18.66**)

Does that mean that in the name of loving Kåñëa we should let go of all moral commandments? Never. It does mean, though, that there are moral commandments that specifically please Kåñëa. In Chapter Twelve of the *Gétä*, the Lord makes these clear, calling them *dharmämåta*, "imperishable *dharma*" or "nectarean *dharma*."

> **One who is not envious but is a kind friend to all living entities, who does not think himself a proprietor and is free from false ego, who is equal in both happiness and distress, who is tolerant, always satisfied, self-controlled, and engaged in devotional service with determination, his mind and intelligence fixed on Me—such a devotee of Mine is very dear to Me.**
>
> **He for whom no one is put into difficulty and who is not disturbed by anyone, who is equipoised in happiness and distress, fear and anxiety, is very dear to Me.**
>
> **My devotee who is not dependent on the ordinary course of activities, who is pure, expert, without cares, free from all pains, and not striving for some result, is very dear to Me.**
>
> **One who neither rejoices nor grieves, who neither laments nor desires, and who renounces both auspicious [good] and inauspicious [evil] things—such a devotee is very dear to Me.**
>
> **One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipoised in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always free from contaminating association, always silent and satisfied with anything, who doesn't care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and**

who is engaged in devotional service—such a person is very dear to Me.

Those who follow this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engage themselves with faith, making Me the supreme goal, are very, very dear to Me. (*Bhagavad-gétä* **12.13-20**)

All these rules can be condensed into just six principles of surrender.

änukülyasya saìkalpaù
prätikülyasya varjanam
rakñiñyatéti viçväso
goptåtve varanaà tathä
ätma-nikñepa-kärpaëye
ñaò-vidhä çaraëägatiù

Accepting those things favorable to devotional service, rejecting unfavorable things, being convinced of Kåñëa's protection, keeping the Lord as one's only guardian and master, giving oneself over to the Lord completely, and remaining ever meek and humble—these are the six aspects of full surrender. (*Hari-bhakti-viläsa* 11.676)

And these six can be condensed into just two.

smartavyaù satataà viñëur
vismartavyo na jätucit
sarve vidhi-niñedhäù syur
etayor eva kiìkaräù

The Supreme Person should be remembered always and never forgotten. All the rules and prohibitions mentioned in the *çästras* should be the servants of these two principles. (From *Padma-puräëa*, cited in *Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Madhya* 22.113)

In the condensation of these rules, nothing is lost. To always remember Kåñëa and never forget Him *means* to accept everything favorable for His service, to reject everything unfavorable, to place oneself under His protection and no other, to be the property of the Lord and in that position remain always meek and humble. And, in turn, to accept everything favorable to Kåñëa's service *means* to be a kind friend to all living entities, to accept whatever the Lord sends to be one's satisfaction, to be self-controlled with mind and intelligence firmly set on Kåñëa, to be determined in one's service to the Lord, to be pure, to be expert, and to be fixed in knowledge. To reject everything unfavorable *means* to remain aloof from envy, proprietorship, false ego, worry, personal aches and pains, personal interests, exultation and depression, hankering and lamentation, good and evil, impure association, and attachment to a particular place of residence. To place oneself under the protection of the Lord

and no other *means* to be undisturbed by anyone, to be free of fear and anxiety, to not depend on the ordinary course of activities, and to be equal to friends and enemies. To be the property of the Lord and in that position remain always meek and humble *means* to be equal in happiness and distress, to be tolerant, to put no one into difficulty, and to be equipoised in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, fame and infamy.

Çrémad-Bhägavatam 12.2.1 declares that the present age robs human beings of their moral and religious fiber:

tataç cänu-dinaà dharmaù
satyaà çaucaà kñamä dayä
kälena balinä räjan
naìkñyaty äyur balaà småtiù

In the Kali-yuga [the present age of quarrel and hypocrisy] the following things will diminish: religion, truthfulness, cleanliness, mercy, duration of life, bodily strength, and memory.

How then, can people surrender to Kåñëa—which requires they be religious, truthful, clean and kind for Kåñëa's satisfaction—when this age we live in drains those very assets away to nearly nothing? Five hundred years ago, Lord Kåñëa descended again as Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu** to show us *how* to surrender to Kåñëa despite the disqualification of birth in Kali-yuga. Lord Caitanya taught one method of surrender in two stages. The one method is the chanting of the Hare Kåñëa *mahä-mantra* in the company of devotees. This forces the mind to always think of Kåñëa and never forget Him; from this, all the assets of *dharmämåta*—imperishable *dharma* as taught by the Lord in *Bhagavad-gétä*—gradually manifest. The two stages of the method of chanting are 1) practice and 2) ecstasy.

At the practice stage (*sädhana*), one vows to abstain from meat-eating, illicit sex, gambling and intoxication—four sinful habits in which Kali is directly sheltered. One replaces bad habits with regulated devotional service: keeping company with devotees of Kåñëa, accepting a spiritual master, rising early, bathing at least twice a day, attending temple services for the Deity in the morning and evening, daily hearing and reading of *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* and *Bhagavad-gétä*, partaking only in food offered to the Deity, chanting the Hare Kåñëa *mahä-mantra* a fixed number of times on beads, regularly performing *saìkértana* (congregational chanting of Hare Kåñëa with musical instruments), helping the propagation of Kåñëa consciousness throughout the world, and so on. *Sadhana-bhakti* counts as primary religion (*mukhya-dharma*) because it cultivates the fourfold harvest of goodness (*dharma, jnana, vairagya* and *aisvarya*) through regulated service to the Supreme Lord, and not by secondary religious processes such as ritualistic sacrifice, atonement for sins, and severe austerity.

At the ecstatic stage (*bhäva-bhakti*), the principles of *sädhana* are outwardly maintained, while the devotee relishes the nectar of inner spiritual exchange with Kåñëa. This relish arises from hearing about Kåñëa, chanting His holy name, and remembering Him with *räga* (pure emotional attachment).

The *sädhana* and *bhäva* stages of surrender lead to *prema-bhakti*, pure devotional service in love of Godhead, which is displayed by Kåñëa's personal associates in the spiritual world. After giving up his or her material body, the soul in love of God is transferred from the material universe to the company of these eternally liberated devotees in Goloka, the place of Kåñëa's *lélä* or divine pastimes, which He partakes only with His loving servants, friends, parents and consorts.

The entire process has been summarized in *Çré Caitanya-caritämåta*, *Antya* 20.13-14. It is the *yuga-dharma*, the only practical means to achieve pure love of God in our present age.

saìkértana haite päpa-saàsära-näçana
citta-çuddhi, sarva-bhakti-sädhana-udgama

By performing congregational chanting of the Hare Kåñëa *mantra*, one can destroy the sinful condition of material existence, purify the unclean heart and awaken all varieties of devotional service.

kåñëa-premodgama, premämåta-äsvädana
kåñëa-präpti, sevämåta-samudre majjana

The result of chanting is that one awakens his love for Kåñëa and tastes transcendental bliss. Ultimately, one attains the association of Kåñëa and engages in His devotional service, as if immersing himself in a great ocean of love.

There are a few questions of great interest to both members and observers of the Kåñëa consciousness movement: "What happens to a devotee who deviates from the *dharma-sila* (moral discipline) of pure devotional service? Can he be rectified, or is he forever condemned?" The complete answer is succinctly rendered by Satsvarupa dasa Gosvami on pages 122-3 of his 1990 book, *Prabhupäda Appreciation*.

When a disciple misbehaves, he loses the guru's mercy. So if one claims that he is loyal, but at the same time misbehaves, isn't that offensive? It can be said, though, that not all misbehavior is considered an offense by the spiritual master. The *Bhagavad-gétä* states that even if one commits the most abominable acts, if he is actually engaged in devotional service, he is to be considered saintly because he is rightly situated. Sometimes due to past habits, a devotee may

misbehave, but he is rightly situated if he remains on the path of bhakti. Accidental falldowns can be forgiven by the guru and therefore by Kåñëa. It is not necessary in Kåñëa consciousness to perform separate atonement for one's offenses. If one sincerely expresses regret and then tries to rectify by avoiding further falldowns or offensiveness, the merciful spiritual master will forgive us.

Here the distinction between misbehavior and offense should be noted with care. An offense (*aparadha*) in devotional life is a far more severe transgression than misbehavior that goes against the moral codes that regulate ordinary life. An offense displeases the spiritual master and Lord Kåñëa. Such an offense, if serious enough, can block progress on the path of *bhakti* for many lifetimes. A detailed account of the offenses in devotional life is outside the scope of this book, though Chapter Twelve presented five of the worst offenses as items of hellish mentality (*naraki-buddhi*). Offenses are actually not violations of *gauna-vidhi*, which includes moral law. They are violations of *mukhya-vidhi*, the law that governs worship of the Lord. Still, the most dangerous offenses lead to moral turpitude. Such offenses pollute the heart; a polluted heart is host to uncontrollable lust, anger and greed, which are the gates of hell; these uncontrollable urges force one to commit sinful acts that entangle the soul in karma. By shunning offenses from the very beginning and by strictly adhering to the regulative principles of Kåñëa consciousness, one is safeguarded from moral turpitude.

Even for one who shuns offenses, the material world is a treacherous place. Thus a devotee may get into trouble by innocently overstepping secondary moral and religious codes that guide the behavior of conditioned souls. Such "misbehavior" may offend human and demigod society. But it does not offend the Supreme Lord and the pure devotees. This was confirmed when Lord Kåñëa's father, Nanda Maharaja, took a dip in the river at the wrong hour, thus offending the night watchmen of Varuna, the demigod of the waters. To punish him, they carried Nanda off to Varuna's undersea palace. When Sri Kåñëa arrived there soon afterward, Varuna released His father and personally apologized to the Lord for the unmannerly conduct of his guards.

Sometimes due to habit and association a devotee misbehaves, though not with the intention of doing evil. Gopinatha Pattanayaka, a soul surrendered to Lord Caitanya, was a tax collector for the royal government of Orissa. In the company of his family, his habit was to be somewhat careless with the revenue he collected. And so it came to pass that the prince accused Gopinatha of misappropriating funds. He was arrested and could have been executed had he not been saved by his firm faith in Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Then there are devotees who misbehave because of strong material desires. This type of devotee is called *anyakami*, "one who desires something other than

service to the lotus feet of the Lord." The spiritual master and Kåñëa are kindly disposed to help the *anyakami* who, even if just for sense gratification, depends on the Lord. The *anyakami* is compared to a foolish child who puts something dirty in his mouth. Such conduct is offensive, but not deliberately so, as this devotee is *murkhi*, simply a fool. The parents (the guru and Kåñëa) take away that dirty thing and replace it with a sweetmeat—meaning that the *anyakami's* misbehavior is corrected, the contaminated hankerings are cleansed from his heart, and he is sheltered under the Lord's nectarean lotus feet.

In ordinary society, a person found guilty of immoral behavior must atone for his sins by paying a fine or serving a jail sentence. But no such atonement alleviates an offense in Vaisnava society. Offenses are excused by the mercy of guru, Kåñëa and the *sadhus* when the offender satisfies them by his re-dedication to pure devotional service. When a devotee's offenses are so forgiven, it is then an offense for another devotee to continue criticizing that devotee for his previous offenses. Serious devotees are very cautious about offenses to Vaisnavas. They eagerly seek forgiveness for any inadvertent *vaisnava-aparadha* they committed or even *thought* they committed. This fear of offenses makes Vaisnava society most gracious, gentle and peaceful.

Vaiñëava philosophy holds morality to be fully dependent upon the service and love of God. In the Western world, moral philosophers have long argued this point with Judaeo-Christian theologians. The theologians put forward two reasons why morality must depend on religion.** One is *The Divine Command Theory*, and the other is *The Theory of Natural Law.*

The first argues that ethics is not a matter of personal feelings or custom. Right is commanded by God and wrong is forbidden by Him. It is in everyone's interest to follow God's moral directives, because one day we shall be judged by Him.

The moral philosophers retort that the Divine Command Theory makes right and wrong arbitrary. Truthfulness, for example, is only better than lying because God commanded "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Had He ordered "Thou shalt bear false witness," then truthfulness would be sinful. They argue further that the Divine Command Theory separates goodness from God: if the theory is true then God is not good Himself; "good" is only what God tells us to do. But if religion binds us to arbitrary rules—"Do this, not that, and don't ask why, because God so wills it"—then religion is merely blind faith. Furthermore, how can religion be good if it holds us to a God who is not good in Himself? Religion therefore ought to be based on a standard of right and wrong that is independent of God's will.

Many Western theologians have come to accept this refutation of the Divine Command Theory. But if we divide the definition of good and evil from God's will, then what does it mean to obey God? If humanity has the moral authority to decide what is good and evil, then the codes of religion are subject to human

opinion. God himself becomes a creation of man's mind. As Kai Nielsen asserts in *Ethics Without God* (1990) 77, "our very concept of God seems, in an essential part at least, a logical product of our moral categories." He means to say that human morality makes religion possible, not vice versa. Nielsen concludes (86) about the Divine Command Theory, "Children follow rules blindly, but do we want to be children all our lives? Is it really hubris or arrogance or sin on our part to wish for a life where we make our own decisions, where we follow the rules we do because we see the *point* of them, and where we need not crucify our intellects by believing in some transcendent purpose whose very intelligibility is seriously in question?"

What is unintelligible to the Vaiñëava is Nielsen's suggestion that moral categories (values) can be separated from a transcendent purpose. Elsewhere (140) Nielsen, an atheist, confesses his faith that moral values are *a priori*—that is, they are "before the world", remaining true for all possible worlds.** Clearly he assigns moral values to the sphere of the transcendent, though he may not agree with my use of that word. The definition of *transcendent* is "to exist above and independent of." It seems impossible to deny that moral values have a transcendent purpose since they tell *how people ought to be*, not how they actually are in this material world.

My guess is Nielsen would not deny that moral values have a purpose that, logically speaking, must be assigned to the category "transcendent." His problem is really with "a transcendent purpose *whose very intelligibility is seriously in question."* By that he means a religious purpose. A Vaiñëava will readily agree that there are religious purposes that are unintelligible. Chapter Ten listed five kinds of false *dharma.* Even the Vedic paths of *karma* and *jïäna* are unintelligible, since they lead to goals that do not actually satisfy the soul. But this does not make non-religious moral purposes any more intelligible. Nielsen (191) is prepared to admit that he, too, is one of the "dreamers of the absolute" who envisions mankind living under a moral code that arises from faith in "a truly human society without exploitation and degradation in which all human beings will flourish." He defends his dream by arguing that it "is still far less utopian, and far less fantastical, than the hope for 'another world' where we will go 'by and by.'" Yet Nielsen confesses (186) that "with people I very much care for and who care for me, I certainly do not want to die. I should very much like to go on living forever."

His wistful remark, "I should very much like to go on living forever," is commanded by Nielsen's inner spiritual nature. If even an atheist admits it is good to live forever, there can be no doubt a commandment to live forever is good. That commandment is given voice in the Vedic scriptures.

> The Vedic injunction is *asato mä jyotir gama:* everyone should give up the platform of temporary existence and approach the eternal platform. The soul is eternal, and topics concerning the eternal soul are actually knowledge. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 7.5.5, Purport)

Lord Kåñëa enacts the Vedic *dharma* that brings souls to the *realization of* (not just the *belief in*) the eternal platform. Why should we realize the eternal platform? That we may meet there, in love, the Lord and His associates. This highest *dharma*—by which the soul comes into personal touch with Bhagavän (God) and the *bhägavatas* (His liberated devotees)—is *bhägavata-dharma*, the religion of God realization.** The transcendent purpose of the divine command of *bhägavata-dharma* is absolutely good. It ushers one into eternal life with persons the soul very much cares for, and whom very much care for the soul. Even an atheist admits he wants that.

The Western theologians' formulation of the Divine Command Theory seems to overlook the obvious goodness of He who commands us to ascend to the eternal platform. The one who is competent to give such an order is alone the Supreme Good, for *this* command is outside human moral possibilities. The goodness of eternal life is achieved only by the goodness of He who gives the command to join Him in eternal life. The theologians seem to want to invest all their argumentative force in just one word: "command." Their sense of "divine" hardly conveys He who is the Heart of the hearts of those expert in the affairs of spiritual love. The Commander of the theologians seems a stern autocrat; it is not easy to find good in a remote, demanding deity whose ultimate identity is that of a judge. Kåñëa's command, "Come to Me forever, My dear spirit soul," is saturated in the divine goodness of His loving nature. When a lover calls his beloved to him for pleasure, she does not pause to ask herself how he can be good and yet order her around like that. The "command" is her invitation to bliss.

The Theory of Natural Law is the second argument offered by Western theologians trying to prove that morality depends on religion. They consider it more important than the Divine Command Theory. It asserts there is a moral value to everything in the universe. The laws of nature not only describe how things are, they specify how they ought to be as well. For example, natural law ordains sex as the means of reproduction. Hence to use sex for other purposes is unnatural. The logic here is that moral judgements are natural, not supernatural. We have little or no need to rely upon a divine command revealed in scripture. God gave mankind the gift of reason; He created the universe according to rational laws that are discoverable by the intellect; hence God wants man to use his brain to bring his conduct in line with the moral universe. A moral life is a life of reason.

The most influential exponent of the Theory of Natural Law is the medieval Catholic philosopher Thomas Aquinas, whose ideas we shall meet again in Part Two of this book. Here I will mention only that when Aquinas wrote in his *Summa Theologica*, "To disparage the dictate of reason is equivalent to condemning the command of God,"** he opened the door to secular (i.e. non-religious) morality, or what Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura calls *kevala-naitika jévana*, a life that aims no higher than *nété* (ethics).

It may seem pious to assume that the dictates of reason are the direct commands of God, but granting the human mind such autonomy can turn reason against God. What if reason pronounces the idea of God to be unreasonable? Can the Theory of Natural Law refute reason? Not lightly. The theory was devised by reason, not by scripture. And reason, according to Aquinas, has greater authority than scripture. Proud reason soon turned fickle. Dallying with the "facts" of modern science, it came to disdain religion as a vestigial appendage, like the human tonsils or appendix, which may without loss be severed from the parent body.

Vaiñëava philosophy offers a different perspective on natural law. Western theologians mean natural law to be the law of material nature; but the Vaiñëavas view material nature to be an outgrowth of spiritual nature.

sattvaà rajas tama iti
nirguëasya guëäs trayaù
sthiti-sarga-nirodheñu
gåhétä mäyayä vibhoù

> **The Supreme Lord is pure spiritual form, transcendental to all material qualities, yet for the sake of the creation of the material world and its maintenance and annihilation, He accepts through His external energy the material modes of nature called goodness, passion and ignorance.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **2.5.18**)

Therefore the root of natural law (*dharma*) is the purely spiritual law of spontaneous love of God, which is independent from the considerations of right and wrong prominent in this world.

sei gopé-bhävämåte yäìra lobha haya
veda-dharma-loka tyaji' se kåñëe bhajaya

> **One who is attracted by that ecstatic love of the *gopés* does not care about the regulative principles of Vedic life or popular opinion. Rather, he completely surrenders unto Kåñëa and renders service unto Him.** (*Çré Caitanya-caritämåta*, *Madhya* **8.220**)

bhälo-manda nähi jäni sevä mätro kori

> **I know neither good nor bad. I merely serve.** (*Ätma-nivedana* 5.5 by Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura, from *Çaraëägati)*

The *gopés* are transcendental embodiments of Kåñëa's spiritual nature. Their forms are of inconceivably perfect feminine beauty. They reside in the spiritual realm of Goloka Våndävana, where the Lord enjoys their company in amorous pastimes. The hearts of the *gopés* are eternally bound to Kåñëa by infinite love. Lord Caitanya Mahäprabhu is Himself in one person both Çré Kåñëa and the

original and foremost *gopé*, Çrématé Rädhäräëé. His radiant golden form is surcharged with the ecstatic emotions of Their intimate loving exchange. By way of chanting Hare Kåñëa, which He personally introduced into this world, He binds fallen souls with the ropes of *bhäva* (ecstatic love), which are far, far stronger than the ropes of the regulations of morality, religion and even *sädhana-bhakti.*

visåjati hådayaà na yasya säkñäd
dharir avaçäbhihito 'py aghaugha-näçaù
praëaya-rasanayä dhåtäìghri-padmaù
sa bhavati bhägavata-pradhäna uktaù

> **Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who destroys everything inauspicious for His devotees, does not leave the hearts of His devotees even if they remember Him and chant about Him inattentively. This is because the rope of love always binds the Lord within the devotees' hearts. Such devotees should be accepted as most elevated.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **11.2.55**)

Love of Kåñëa is potentially present within the hearts of all living entities. It is the ultimate law of nature, of which all other laws are servants. This indwelling love needs only to be awakened; the method of awakening is hearing and chanting about Kåñëa.

nitya-siddha kåñëa-prema 'sädhya' kabhu naya
çravaëädi-çuddha-citte karaye udaya

> **Pure love for Kåñëa is eternally established in the hearts of living entities. It is not something to be gained from another source. When the heart is purified by hearing and chanting, the living entity naturally awakens.** (*Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Madhya* **22.107**)

In the materially conditioned life of the soul, love of Kåñëa is perverted into bodily attachments. Here sexual affairs are topmost. Moral values become operative within the dimension of human reason to keep sex "reasonable"—that is, moderated and socially decent. Unfortunately, "the senses are so strong and impetuous," Lord Kåñëa warns Arjuna in *Bhagavad-gétä* 2.60, "that they forcibly carry away the mind even of a man of discrimination who is endeavoring to control them." The most politically powerful man on this planet, the President of the United States, stood before the public humiliated by lust. "What can repression accomplish?" asks Kåñëa.

But the conclusion is not that rules and regulations governing sexual conduct are to be rejected. *Niyamya bharatarñabha päpmänaà prajahi hy enaà*, orders Lord Kåñëa in *Bhagavad-gétä* 3.42: "O son of Bharata, curb this sinfulness by regulating the senses." The conclusion is that while rules spell out on the blackboard of human reason the limits of sexuality, human reason alone is not

strong enough to defeat lust. In *Bhagavad-gétä* 2.59, Kåñëa says that only by *paraà dåñövä*—"experiencing far superior things"—can the embodied soul give up the lower taste for sense pleasures and be fixed with a clear mind in the regulative principles.

Vaiñëava philosophy agrees with the theologians of the Theory of Natural Law that the moral universe is orchestrated according to a body of laws that can be understood by human reason. But because material nature has its origin in the transcendental spiritual nature, Vaiñëava philosophy does not agree that human reason can grasp natural law only from physical sense data. Our reasoning must be trained in the supersensory information revealed in the Vedic scriptures. Then we shall be able to understand for what reasons we are punishable in the moral universe.

At this point one may ask, "But it was said that human reason is not strong enough to contain lust. So knowing the laws of the moral universe taught in the Vedic scriptures is not sufficient to stop the sinful acts for which people are punished by Yamaräja. What, then, is the use of learning these laws? Isn't it enough to tell us that we should rise to the spiritual platform of loving God, and by that love experience the higher bliss that naturally turns us away from inferior material pleasures? Why must the scriptures threaten us with punishment? Trembling at the prospect of facing Yamaräja still won't rid us of the lust that forces us to break the laws in the first place."

The answer is that the development of love of Kåñëa is inseparable from love of His parts and parcels, the living entities. In *Bhagavad-gétä* 4.34, Lord Kåñëa advises Arjuna that one becomes conscious of Him via knowledge imparted by a spiritual master who sees the truth of Kåñëa. In the next verse, He describes that truth:

> **Having obtained real knowledge from a self-realized soul, you will never fall again into such illusion, for by this knowledge you will see that all living beings are but part of the Supreme, or, in other words, that they are Mine.**

But it is not that just knowing all souls are part of Him makes the world aright. Çré Kåñëa makes clear in *Bhagavad-gétä* 15.7 that while the living entities of this world are His parts and particles, they are struggling within their gross and subtle material bodies. Therefore in 18.69 He declares that there is no servant more dear, nor can there be one more dear to Him, than the one who preaches His message for their deliverance. Such a preacher is moved at heart by compassion for their struggles *because he knows well the laws of nature and the punishment that awaits those who break them.* Thus Mahäräja Parékñit asked his spiritual master in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 6.1.6:

> **O greatly fortunate and opulent Çukadeva Gosvämé, now kindly tell me how human beings may be saved from having to enter hellish conditions in which they suffer terrible pains.**

A Vaiñëava is *parä-duùkha-duùkhé*; in other words, by his own advancement in Kåñëa consciousness he knows no personal suffering, yet he feels pain knowing the suffering of others. Thus he wants to learn precisely how to save them. Consider for a moment professional rescue workers, such as those who staff a crash rescue team at a modern airport. Their effectiveness depends upon their knowledge. They have to know the structure of the various kinds of passenger aircraft in service at the airport. They have to know how to administer emergency treatment to seriously injured crash victims. They have to know how to deal with hysterical or disoriented passengers. They have to know how to avoid becoming victims themselves of fire, explosion or smoke inhalation.

Similarly, a Vaiñëava is not only moved to help fallen souls by knowledge of their predicament in the moral universe, but his effectiveness in delivering them depends upon that knowledge. Cheap pseudo-Vaiñëavas (*sahajiyäs*) think it can all be accomplished by sentiment only; but a foolish person who rushes into the midst of a disaster area can easily end up doing far more harm than good. He is not trained to recognize and handle the many perils that can instantly arise.

> A pure devotee is always transcendentally situated because of executing nine different processes of *bhakti-yoga* (*çravaëaà kértanaà viñëoù smaraëaà päda-sevanam arcanaà vandanaà däsyaà sakhyam ätma-nivedanam*). Thus situated in devotional service, a devotee, although in the material world, is not in the material world. Yet a devotee always fears, "Because I am associated with the material world, so many contaminations affect me." Therefore he is always alert in fear, which gradually diminishes his material association. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 10.2.8, Purport)

This is one reason why a devotee, though transcendental, scrupulously adheres to *dharma* and is thus known as *dharma-çéla.* Another reason is to set the proper example for others to follow: *yad yad ächarati çreñöhas tat tad evetaro janaù*—"Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow." (*Bhagavad-gétä* 3.21) It is not enough to rescue fallen souls; they must be trained to never fall again, and for this, example is the best teacher.

Finally, as explained earlier in this chapter, a devotee adheres to *dharma* because the Lord has expressly declared that doing so makes one very, very dear to Him. A devotee's sensory values, or "matters of taste" (likes and dislikes), follow Lord Kåñëa exactly as the tastes of a lover follow the beloved.

tomära icchäya mora indriya-cälanä
çravana, darçana, ghräna, bhojana-väsanä

> **The exercising of my senses—hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, touching—is done according to Your desire.** (Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura, *Ätma-nivedana* 5.6, from *Çaraëägati*)

The devotee's intuition is finely-tuned to the Lord's service.

ei-rüpe sarva-våtti ära sarva-bhäva
tuwä anuküla hoye labhuka prabhäva

In this way may all of my propensities and emotions obtain dignity and glory by being favorable to you. (*Bhakti-anuküla-mätra Käryera Svékara* 1.7, from *Çaraëägati*)

The devotee keeps the values of the mind and intelligence (reason, knowledge) in firm obedience to the laws of devotional service.

jähä kichu bhakti-pratiküla boli' jäni
tyajibo jatane tähä, e niçcoya väné

I vow to completely shun WHATEVER I know to contradict pure devotion. This I strongly promise. (*Bhakti-pratiküla-bhäva Varjanäìgékära* 2.8, from *Çaraëägati*)

The value the devotee places on his personal liberation is entirely subordinate to the will of the Lord.

dokha vicära-i, tuìhu danòa deobi,
häma bhoga korabuì saàsär
karato gatägati, bhakata-jana-saìge,
mati rohu caraëe tohär

After judging my sins, You should punish me, for I deserve to suffer the pangs of rebirth in this world. I only pray that, as I wander through repeated births and deaths, my mind may ever dwell at Your lotus feet in the company of Vaiñëavas. (*Ätma-nivedana* 2.3, from *Çaraëägati*)

The master value ruling all other values is devotion, and the supreme object of devotion is Lord Kåñëa. A devotee wants more than even liberation to be accepted by Kåñëa as His eternal servant.

kéöa-janma hau yathä tuyä däsa
bahir-mukha brahma-janme nähi äça

May I be born again even as a worm, as long as I remain Your devotee. I have no desire to be born as a Brahmä averse to you. (*Ätma-nivedana* 3.5, from *Çaraëägati*)

Chapter Sixteen,
The Vedic Root of the Western Religious Tradition

In any standard religion, including the great faiths of the West, elements of *karma*, *jïäna* and *bhakti* can be found. When these three are not kept separate but are allowed to commingle, that is called *viddhä-bhakti*, polluted devotion. The *viddhä-bhaktas* worship God—unquestionably an act of devotion—but the goal of their worship is influenced by the *karmé* and *jïäné* ideals of salvation: "heaven" and "liberation." On the path of *çuddha-bhakti*, pure devotion, these imperfect goals drop away.**

anyäbhiläñitä-çünyaà
jïäna-karmädy-anävåtam
änuküleyna kåñëänu-
çélanaà bhaktir uttamä

> **One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord Kåñëa favorably, without the ambitions cultivated by *jïäna* and *karma.* That is called pure devotional service.** (*Bhakti-rasämåta-sindhu* 1.1.11)

A quotation in Chapter One argued that "the problem of evil" was largely one of the Western religious tradition. Let us see why. While it is true the *karmé's* ambition for heaven is evident in Hinduism and Buddhism, the *jïäné's* ambition—salvation through negation of the illusory personal self—is the final goal of these Eastern religions. Hindus believe that after negation something remains: the impersonal Brahman, which they conceive of as an ultimate light (*paraà jyoti*) and an eternal root sound (*aum*). Buddhists believe that after negation nothing remains but emptiness.

In the Western religious tradition, the final goal, salvation, is equated with entry into heaven. The Western picture of salvation is traced through history by scholar Henry Corbin to the pre-Biblical "paradise of Yima"** described in the Zoroastrian scriptures of Persia (ancient Iran), the oldest religious texts of the Western tradition. Yima, a form of the name Yama, was said to be the ruler of an underworld heaven.** Just as Yama is the son of the sun-god Vivasvat, so Yima is the son of Vivanghant. We saw in a previous chapter quotations from *Garuòa Puräëa* depicting Yama as a fearsome judge and punisher of sinful souls. But there are verses in *Mahäbhärata* that describe Yama's *sabhä* (assembly palace, where he associates with his companions) as heavenly. Yamaräja is designated in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 5.26.6 as Pitå-räja, the king of the Pitås (the departed ancestors, who are pious *karma-märgés* enjoying their heavenly reward).

While the *karma-märga* is unarguably prominent in the Western tradition, I do not mean to suggest that *bhakti* is entirely lacking. Great souls were undoubtedly sent by God to turn the attention of Western people away from their hopes for heavenly reward to selfless loving service to God. Thus we find in the Old and New Testaments:

Have you never learned that love of the world is enmity to God? Whoever chooses to be the world's friend, makes himself God's enemy. (James 4:4)

Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. (II Corinthians 11:14)

Stand up to the devil and he will turn and run. Come close to God and He will come close you. (James 4:8)

In heaven the angels do always behold the face of my heavenly Father. (Matthew 18:10)

As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the Living God. (Psalms 42:1,2)

Whoever wants to be great must be your servant…like the Son he did not come to be served but to serve. (Matthew 20:27-28)

Offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. (Hebrews 13:15)

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

Yet a Western religious authority of the present day admits:

> We are an indulgent people in a selfish age. Even as Christians we do not celebrate discipline, whether physical, intellectual, social, or spiritual.**

Why are pious Westerners held back from the pure celebration of the *bhakti* discipline so clearly evident in their own tradition? From the Vedic perspective, it seems there is a historical explanation. The explanation in brief is that *transcending the body-based duality of good and evil has never been an option in Western religion*, which has its root in an ancient distortion of the Vedic path of fruitive activities (*karma-märga*). While *karma-märga*, the path of fruitive work, is certainly a doctrine taught by the *Vedas*, it is not an end itself. *Karma* yields no eternal gain. Its good and bad fruits are strung together by time to form an endless chain of duality, a "carrot and stick" combination that drives the living entity ever onward in the cycle of birth and death.

karmaëä jäyate jantu karmaëaiva praléyate
sukham duùkham bhayam çokam karmaëaiva prapadyate

A living entity takes birth by *karma.* He passes away by *karma.* His *karma* brings about happiness, suffering, fear and misery. (*Brahma-vaivarta Puräëa* 2.24.17)

Jïäna-märga, the path taught by the *Upaniñads*, attempts to throw off the bondage of this chain of duality by knowledge of the self as transcendental to the "good" and "bad" we perceive in matter. *Hanti karma subhasubham:* "Annihilate *karma*, good and bad!" cries *Maitri Upaniñad* 6.20. The same scripture (6.7) advises how *karma* may be uprooted: *vijïänam käryakäraëa-karmanirmuktam*—through "transcendental knowledge free of both the cause and effect of *karma.*" Human beings should learn to 1) live aloof from desires (the cause), and 2) live aloof from sensory and mental happiness and distress (the effect). Thus duality is to be negated by asceticism and the insight that all is one. We find in the Western religious tradition no strong *jïäna* revolution like in India, where around AD 600 the impersonalist Çaìkaräcärya popularized his philosophy of "the world of duality is false—absolute oneness is true."

Yes, the West has been host to upsurges of theistic devotion. But the element of *bhakti* was never systematically separated from the ancient Western version of the doctrine of fruitive work. Because body-based duality was rarely questioned, devotion in the West gravitated toward heavenly material happiness and away from renunciation. This is why modern religion is trapped by self-indulgence.

To see how this came to be, I shall now follow the trail of history. Between the Western religious tradition and Vedic *dharma* there is an ancient nexus, or link. But it is a link that divides as well as connects, like a locked door between two rooms for which the key was long ago lost. History holds the key; in the next section, titled The Zoroastrian Nexus, history will give that key back to us.

A word of caution: the reader may find this section too laborious. If so, kindly jump ahead to the seven summary conclusions at the end of this section. And a word about the method of the Zoroastrian section: I will bring Vedic testimony, which I esteem, together with the testimony of modern historians of religious antiquity, which I do not esteem (though that does not mean I reject *a priori* all that historians have to say). One reason I do not esteem the historians' testimony is that the story they tell is a fickle one. For example, today they tell a different story of how the Old Testament came to be than did the historians of a hundred years ago...a story so very different that in 1884 a man killed himself because evidence he gathered that supports *today's* story was rejected as a hoax by the historians of his own time.** Another reason I do not esteem the historians is that their stories are colored by the interpretations of "schools of thought": the nature myth school of Max Mueller; the anthropo-ethnological school of Durkheim, Spencer and Frazer; the psychological school of Freud and Jung; to mention a few. These interpretations reflect modern attitudes of skepticism, atheism, materialism, evolutionism and so on. I readily admit I take a risk in touching the Western historical narrative. Still, because it is accepted in the West, and because in key areas it can be shown to agree with the Vedic version, I shall employ that narrative to give force to a venerable maxim of logic: *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus traditum est*—what was handed down *at all times*, *in all places* and *by all persons*, we ought to believe.

Vedic India and the ancient West shared a common cultural base. A. Seidenberg, a historian of mathematics, has shown that the geometry used in building the Egyptian pyramids and the Mesopotamian citadels was derived from Vedic mathematics.** The Oxford scholar M.L. West has tracked core ideas of ancient Greek and Middle Eastern philosophy back to the *Vedas*.** At one point, though, something that India *rejected* took hold in the West: Zoroastrianism. Here we find both the tie that binds the Western religious tradition and the Vedic heritage, as well as the point at which they departed from one another.

Zoroastrianism is an ancient doctrine of dualism propagated in Persia (now called Iran, from the Sanskrit *aryan*) at some unknown date by the prophet Zarathushtra. As a religious faith Zoroastrianism is almost extinct. But its concept of dualism lives on in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.** The teaching of Zarathushtra was not unknown in ancient India either. He is named Jarutha in several passages of the *Åg Veda.* However, these references are not flattering. *Åg Veda* 7.9.6 indicates that Jarutha was opposed by the sage Vasiñöha.**

In the Zoroastrian scripture called *Zend Avesta*, Vasiñöha is named Vahishtha.** He is said to be a person of harmful intellect who opposed Zarathushtra. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 6.18.5-6 states that Vasiñöha was fathered by the demigods Varuëa and Mitra; 9.1.13 confirms that he was a worshiper of Varuëa. *Åg Veda,* Mandala Seven, has much to say about Vasiñöha's devotion to Varuëa. Scholars opine that Vasiñöha and Zarathushtra were both priests of Varuëa, who is called Asura-mäyä in the *Åg Veda.* It appears that a rivalry broke out between the two.

The name Zoroaster is a variant of Zarathushtra;** similarly, in the Vedic scriptures Jarutha is also called Jarasabdha. *Bhaviñya Puräëa* chapters 139-140 present an extensive account of the background of Maga Jarasabdha. The word *maga* refers to a dynasty of priests of whom Jarasabdha was a progenitor. In ancient Iran, the hereditary priestly caste was called the Magi. Jarasabdha was born in the family line of *véra äditya*, "the powerful Aditya" (sun-god). The Vedic scriptures list twelve Adityas (sons of Aditi, the mother of the demigods). They are the twelve spokes of the *käla-cakra*, the wheel of time. *Chändogya Upaniñad* 3.8.1 proclaims Varuëa as their chief. In successive months of the year each of these twelve takes his turn in piloting the solar chariot across the sky. It would appear that the lineage of Jarasabdha (Jarutha, Zarathushtra) begins from Varuëa, leader of the Vedic solar deities. The sun, like Varuëa, is called Asura (from *asün rati*, "he who gives life or rejuvenates"); because Varuëa is very powerful, and because he measured out the sky (as does the sun), he is called *mäyä*—hence the title Asura-mäyä fits both demigods. Varuëa is called Asura also because he commands a host of demonic undersea creatures. (Lord Kåñëa killed one of these *asuras* named Saìkhäsura; another *asura* of Varuëa arrested Nanda Mahäräja, Kåñëa's father, as he bathed in the Yamunä River.) In the

Zoroastrian *Zend Avesta* the name of the worshipable deity of Zarathushtra is Ahura-mazda (Wise Lord), which matches Varuëa's title Asura-mäyä.

In *Bhaviñya Puräëa*, Vyäsadeva tells Samba that Jarasabdha's descendents, the Magas (Magi), follow scriptures that are reversed in sense from the *Vedas* (*ta eva viparitas tu tesam vedah prakirtitaù*). Indeed, *Zend Avesta* presents the "daevas" as demons and the "ahuras" as good spirits.** Vyäsadeva says that the Magas are attached to the performance of fire sacrifices. Even today the small remnant of the Magi—the Parsi community in India—is known as "fire-venerating."** It appears from the *Bhaviñya Puräëa* that due to an offense committed by his mother, Jarasabdha's birth was not very respectable. He and his lineage became "black sheep" among the Vedic priesthood. Yet Jarasabdha was always favored by the sun-god, and in return he placed himself fully under the protection of this deity. The Zoroastrian scriptures (Korshed Yasht 4) do indeed prescribe worship of the sun:**

> He who offers up a sacrifice unto the undying, shining, swift-horsed Sun—to withstand darkness, to withstand the Daevas born of darkness, to withstand the robbers and bandits, to withstand the Yatus and Pairikas, to withstand death that creeps in unseen—offers it up to Ahura-mazda, offers it up to the Amesha-spentas, offers it up to his own soul. He rejoices all the heavenly and worldly Yazatas, who offers up a sacrifice unto the undying, shining, swift-horsed Sun.

It is in this special allegiance to Varuëa as a solar deity that the Vedic root of Zoroastrian dualism can be discerned. As one of the Adityas, Varuëa is a close companion of another Aditya, Mitra. *Åg Veda* 10.37.1 states that the sun is the eye of Mitra-Varuëa. (The followers of Zarathushtra regarded Mitra—as Mithra—to be one with Ahura-mazda, since Mithra was the light of the Wise Lord.) Mitra-Varuëa together are the all-seeing keepers of *dharma.* Of the two, mankind has more to fear from Varuëa. A hymn in *Atharva-veda* 1.14 is addressed to *varuëo yamo va* (Varuëa or Yama), linking Varuëa to Yamaräja, the judge of the dead and punisher of the sinful. Though Mitra-Varuëa are equals in upholding universal law and order, *Taittiréya Saàhitä* identifies Mitra with the law of the day and Varuëa with the law of the night. Though at night the eye of the sun is closed, Varuëa, with his thousand eyes or spies, observes the acts men do under cover of darkness. Here, then, emerges a dualism. Mitra (which means friendship), the daytime witness, is kinder than Varuëa (binder), the nighttime witness—*mitro hi krüraà varuëam çäntam karoti*, says the *Taittiréya Saàhitä:* "Mitra pacifies the cruel Varuëa."

It is curious how Zoroastrianism amplified this dualism. In the Vedic version, Asura-mäyä Varuëa, lord of the waters, dwells in the depths of the cosmic Garbhodaka ocean, far below the earth. Yama's underworld heaven and hell are very near that ocean; in the matter of chastising the sinful, Yama and Varuëa are closely allied. In the Zoroastrian version, Ahura-mazda (Varuëa) is the lord of

light who gave his servant Yima an underworld kingdom called Vara, a realm that, while dark to human eyes, is mystically illuminated. In the Vedic version, Mitra-Varuëa are a pair of demigods who in ancient times served the Supreme Lord as a team by supervising the realms of light and darkness. In the Zoroastrian version, Varuëa *is* the supreme lord. Mitra is his light. The mantle of darkness (evil) is worn by an unceasing enemy of Ahura-mazda named Angra Mainyu or Ahriman. It appears that Angra Mainyu is the Vedic Äìgirasa (Båhaspati), spiritual master of the *devas* and a great foe of Çukräcärya, the spiritual master of the *asuras.* From *Mahäbhärata* 1.66.54-55 we learn that Varuëa took the daughter of Çukräcärya, named Varuni, as his first wife.

In the Vedic version, the powers of light and darkness or good and evil are not ultimate. By taking them to be ultimate, and moreover by reversing them (portraying the *asuras* as good and the *devas* as evil), Zarathushtra twisted the Supreme Lord's purpose for the cosmos that is administered on His behalf by such agents as Varuëa, Yama and Båhaspati. Zoroastrianism was a revolutionary departure from Vedic philosophy.

> A revolution in the history of concepts occurred in Iran...with the teachings of Zarathushtra, who laid the basis for the first thoroughly dualist religion. Zarathushtra's revelation was that evil is not a manifestation of the divine at all; rather it proceeds from a wholly separate principle....The dualism of Zoroastrianism...is overt; that of Judaism and Christianity is much more covert, but it exists, and it exists at least in large part owing to Iranian influence....All posit a God who is independent, powerful and good, but whose power is to a degree limited by another principle, force, or void.**

Professor Norman Cohn heads an influential school of thought among historians of religion. In his opinion, the teachings of Zarathushtra are the source of apocalypticism—the belief in a final cataclysmic war between God's army of angels and the devil's army of demons. In Zoroastrianism, this war was expected to be sparked by the appearance of a Saoshyant or messiah who would prevail against the forces of evil, resurrect the dead and establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

An important movement within Zoroastrianism was Zurvanism, which became the Persian state religion during the fourth century BC. *Zurvan* in the Avestan language means "time"; scholars note the similarity between the Zurvan deity and the Vedic Käla, who in Vaiñëava philosophy is a reflection of the Supreme Lord as well as His agent of creation, maintenance and destruction. Käla powers the cosmic wheel of time (*käla-cakra*) upon which the effulgent chariot of Sürya (the sun-god) moves through the heavens, illuminating the universe and marking the passage of hours, days and years.

In *Omens of Millenium*, Harold Bloom, following Cohn's line of thought, claims on pages 7-8 that Zurvanism was assimilated into Judaism. Thus the Jews came

to equate Zurvan with Yahweh. Citing Henry Corbin, Bloom says Zurvanism lives on today in the Iranian Shi'ite form of Islam. Damian Thompson, on page 28 of *The End of Time* (1996), suggests that Zurvanism influenced John of Patmos, author of the New Testament Book of Revelation.

On page 32 of *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (1971), Oxford scholar M.L. West cites testimony by an ancient Greek that the Magi taught that Zurvan (Time) divided the cosmos into realms of light and dark, or good and evil. West, then showing the Vedic parallel, cites the *Maitri Upaniñad* Chapter Six. Here, God (Brahman) is said to have *two* forms—one of time, the other timeless. That which existed even before the sun is timeless. Timeless, transcendental Brahman cannot be divided into parts (i.e. light and dark, good and evil), hence He is ever non-dual. But the Brahman that began with the sun—time—is divided into parts. Living entities are born in time, they grow in time, and die in time. This Brahman of time has the sun (Sürya) as its self. One should revere Sürya as being synonymous with time. The correspondence between the Vedic Sürya and the Persian Zurvan is thus quite clear.

Seven conclusions rest on the evidence of the foregoing section.

1) In ancient times, one Jarutha, Jarasabdha, Zarathushtra or Zoroaster, the founding priest of the Magas or Magi clan, departed from the Vedic tradition. Western historians believe that Judaeo-Christianity and Islam share principles derived from his teaching, called Zoroastrianism, the predominate religion of pre-Islamic Iran.

2) The deviation of Zoroastrianism was that it *accepted only the Brahman of time (the sun), leaving aside the timeless Brahman: Kåñëa.* The Supreme Lord was identified with the sun-god, specifically the Aditya Varuëa, who is known in the *Vedas* as Asura-mäyä and in the Zoroastrian scriptures as Ahura-mazda.

3) The *Vedas* teach that Varuëa is teamed with Mitra to uphold the law of *dharma* within the realms the sun divides (light and darkness). Here *dharma* means religious fruitive works that yield *artha* (wealth) and *käma* (sense enjoyment) on earth and in heaven. Varuëa is associated with Yama, the judge of the dead. Yama's abode is the place of reward and punishment for good and evil *karma.*

4) If, as the Zoroastrians believed, Asura-mäyä Varuëa is all-good, then he is not all-powerful. The fact that he must protect *dharma* with a watchful eye indicates that evil is capable of opposing his order. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam*, Canto Ten, relates that a demon named Bhaumäsura bested Varuëa in combat; thus sometimes evil gets the upper hand).

5) Scholars who specialize in the history of the Western religious tradition believe "Zarathushtra was the first person to put forward the

idea of an absolute principle of evil, whose personification, Angra Manyu or Ahriman, is the first real Devil in world religion. Although the two principles are entirely independent, they clash, and in the fullness of time the good spirit will inevitably prevail over the evil one."**

6) The apocalyptic End of Time envisioned by Judaeo-Christianity and Islam is believed by historians to have been devised by "Zoroaster, originally a priest of the traditional religion, [who] spoke of a coming transformation known as 'the making wonderful,' in which there would be a universal bodily resurrection. This would be followed by a great assembly, in which all people would be judged. The wicked would be destroyed, while the righteous would become immortal. In the new world, young people are forever fifteen years old, and the mature remain at the age of forty.** But this is not a reversion to the original paradise; nothing in the past approaches its perfection. It is the End of Time."**

7) Those who await this End of Time expect to achieve eternal life in a resurrected body of glorified matter on a celestial earth cleansed of all evil. They expect, as human beings, to be "above even the gods, or at least their equal."

From historian Jeffrey Burton Russell comes one more key element of the Zoroastrian faith that needs to be mentioned: "Indeed, celibacy was regarded as a sin (as was any asceticism), a vice of immoderation, a refusal to use the things of this world for the purposes that the God intended."** Celibacy—which is highly respected in Vedic religious culture—is likewise a sin in Judaism and Islam. It *was* a discipline important to early Christianity. But reformed Christianity has discarded it entirely, heeding Martin Luther's admonition that:

> The state of celibacy is the greatest enemy that faith has; it never comes to the aid of spiritual things, but—more frequently than not—struggles against the divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God. (Table Talk CCCCXCI)

That Zoroastrianism regarded celibacy and all asceticism as sinful returns us to the premise that launched our survey of the historical foundation of Western religion: "transcending duality has never been an option in Western religion, rooted as it is in an ancient distortion of the Vedic path of fruitive activities (*karma-märga*)." The *karma-märga* is concerned with what is termed *tri-varga*, or *dharma-artha-käma* (religious piety, economic development and bodily happiness). Householders pursue these principles in the course of their productive lives. But the Vedic path takes mankind further, to the *varga* (principle) of *mokña*, liberation. This *varga* is the goal of the *jïäna-märga*, tread by those who have passed from *gåhastha-äçrama* (household life) to *sannyäsa-äçrama* (renunciation).** The *jïäna-märgé* aims to pass over the time-defined duality of good and evil to the timeless absolute, beyond birth and death. The

Praçna Upaniñad 1.9 advises the *jïäna-märgé* that he must renounce *iñöäpürta*—Vedic sacrifices (*iñöä*) and charitable work (*pürta*)—for it is by *iñöäpürta* that the soul remains bound to the cycle of birth and death. *Båhad-äraëyaka Upaniñad* 4.4.7 states that one achieves immortality in the timeless Brahman upon the departure of all material desire—*sarve pramucyante kämäù.* This anticipates the cessation of sexual attraction, which is the foundation of all other desires.**

The pure *bhakti-märga* begins here, with the transference of the soul's attraction from dead material forms to the divine ecstatic Form of all forms, the all-attractive Çré Kåñëa.** Pure loving attraction to Kåñëa is called *rasa.* It is reflected in this world of time as our attraction to material forms. That reflected attraction powers our *karma. Taittiréya Upaniñad* 2.7 explains:

> *raso vai saù. rasaà hy eväyaà labdhvänandé bhavati. ko hy evänyat kaù pränyät yad eña äkäça änando na syät eña hy eñänandayäti.*
>
> **The supreme truth is *rasa.* The *jéva* becomes blissful on attaining this *rasa.* Who would work with the body and *präëa* (sensory powers) if this blissful form did not exist? He gives bliss to all.**

Though *rasa* impels fruitive work, fruitive work does not permit the soul the pure, eternal taste of rasa. This is because fruitive work, by definition, brings one no farther than to the enjoyment of temporary material fruits. Even when fruitive work is governed by scriptural direction, it yields only ephemeral enjoyment in the heavenly spheres of the material universe.

Whether on earth or in heaven, the *sine qua non* of material enjoyment is sex. Sexual attraction is a perversion of attraction to Kåñëa. To achieve personal association with Kåñëa, this attraction must be purified.

> *tenätmanätmänam upaiti çäntam*
> *änandam änandamayo 'vasäne*
> *etää gatià bhägavatéà gato yaù*
> *sa vai punar neha viñajjate 'ìga*
>
> **Only the purified soul can attain the perfection of associating with the Personality of Godhead in complete bliss and satisfaction in his constitutional state. Whoever is able to renovate such devotional perfection is never again attracted by this material world, and he never returns.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **2.2.31**)

Time is the irresistible force that pulls living beings together in sexual relationships all over the universe. The same time factor brings them distress and separation. Ultimately, time dissolves the entire cosmic manifestation. Thus sexual attraction is inseparable from fear of destruction.

stré-puà-prasaìga etädåk
sarvatra träsam-ävahaù
apéçvaräëää kim uta
grämyasya gåha-cetasaù

The attraction between man and woman, or male and female, always exists everywhere, making everyone always fearful. Such feelings are present even among the controllers like Brahmä and Çiva and is the cause of fear for them, what to speak of others who are attached to household life in this material world. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **9.11.17**)

Vedic *dharma* is termed *sanätana-dharma* (eternal religion). It leads the worshiper from the Brahman of time—the universal form of the Lord, in which demigods like Brahmä, Çiva, Varuëa, Yama, Båhaspati and the sun-god Sürya are stationed as departmental heads—to timeless Brahman: Parambrahman Çré Kåñëa. Parambrahman is achieved when the soul, purified of sexual attraction, dives into the *rasa*-ocean of Kåñëa's holy name, form, qualities, pastimes and His loving relationships with His pure devotees in the timeless realm of Goloka.

The conviction that religion is *tri-varga*—encompassing piety (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*) and bodily happiness (*käma*), with no scope for liberation from time-bound attraction to the body and material sense objects—is demonic. This is clear from *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* Canto Seven, Chapter Five, where the *brähmaëas* in the employ of the demon Hiraëyakaçipu are depicted as teaching only *tri-varga.* When Hiraëyakaçipu suspected these *brähmaëas* of schooling his young son Prahläda in Viñëu-bhakti, he angrily rebuked them. They assured the demon they'd taught Prahläda no such thing; apparently, the boy's devotion to Kåñëa was spontaneous. Hiraëyakaçipu then decided to kill his own son. But in the end Hiraëyakaçipu was destroyed by Lord Nåsiàhadeva, the half-man, half-lion incarnation of Kåñëa. Lord Nåsiàhadeva installed Prahläda as the crown jewel of his dynasty, though his teachers had mocked him as a "cinder." Prahläda is the best example of *dharma-çéla*; Hiraëyakaçipu the best example of *adharma-çéla.*

Nowadays thoughtful people regret the lack of discipline in modern culture. They would do well to consider Lord Kåñëa's instruction to Arjuna (*Bhagavad-gétä* 2.62-63), in which the total breakdown of discipline is traced to contemplation of the objects of the senses.

While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises. From anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one falls down again into the material pool.

Because the *karma* philosophy begins with the contemplation of sense objects, it ends in the breakdown of all spheres of human endeavor—physical, intellectual, social, and religious. The *karma* philosophy was, is, and remains the main root of materialistic culture. Part Two of this book will consider the consequences of that philosophy in the modern world.

Part Two: The Western Context

Chapter Seventeen, If All is One, Then What is Bad?

> This new model of the universe...stimulates boundless desires, yet it recompenses them only with a lax and smothering blank. The result is that the desires themselves seem far more absorbing than the infinite universe that induces them ....the human imagination... may actually seek to overwhelm space-time and physical reality altogether...belittling them with the grander infinitude of desire itself, and with a form of desire that may prove self-centering and abasing.**

The "new model of the universe" referred to in this quotation is the reductionist model. What is reductionism? Suppose a nosy, gossipy type inquires about someone who is close to you:** "But tell me what he or she is *really* like." You give your charitable answer, but this person insists, "No, I mean *really* like." Suddenly the meaning of the question is clear: "What is the very *worst* thing you can say about this person that is true, or true enough?" This is reductionism, and for the past several centuries it has directed all fronts of intellectual life.

Reductionists assert that the golden road to truth can be trod by breaking all things down to their simplest parts. The word "simple" is freighted with implications of "nonreligious", "physical", "uniform", "utilitarian", "unemotional", "amoral"—in short, impersonal.

Reductionism stimulates our desires by persuading us that there is no God to tell us what we may or may not do. The world just *is*, and therefore it is ours for the taking. At the same time, in the name of simplicity, reductionism strips the world of value and goodness. Yet we still continue to sense value and goodness all around us. From where do these qualities come? Reductionism says they come from the human mind. Wrongly we've read our subjective mental ideals into blank, unfeeling nature. But fortunately we have science to tell us what nature is *really* like. British philosopher A. N. Whitehead makes this clear in a remarkable paragraph:**

> Nature gets credit which should in truth be reserved for ourselves: the rose for its scent; the nightingale for his song; and the sun for his radiance. The poets are entirely mistaken. They should address their lyrics to themselves, and should turn them into odes of self-congratulation on the excellency of the human mind. Nature is a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colorless, merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly.

There can be no real correlation between what people desire and what such a model of the universe has to offer, so devastating is it in its indifference to human interests. And so people of the modern age look for fulfillment not in the world of dull, uniform simplicity but in the world of imagination. If we accept that everything attractive in matter is actually created by our minds, then it is quite logical that the world in which we need to live exists between our ears and nowhere else. This, the world of imagination, is the world of progress, the world we hope will come. Everything there is constantly made and remade in the image of the new: new knowledge, new technology, new lifestyles, new trends, new art, new music, new ways of enjoying sex...a Brave New World snatched from the void by human ingenuity. As long ago as 1930, the "mental wiring" needed to generate this sort of world—a world ever in formation, where the past no longer counts—was mapped by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers, in these few sentences from *Man in the Modern Age:*

> Our reason tells us that every new cognition implies further possibilities. Reality does not exist as such, but has to be grasped by a cognition which is an active seizure.... All things are put to the question and as far as possible transformed.**

The faith in a world to come is, as we saw in the last chapter, a key theme of Western religion. But the modern version of this faith does not submit to a God or a Devil. It exalts human imagination and human desire over everything else. Jaspers defines the new credo thus:

> Assuming ourselves capable of adopting the outlook of a deity contemplating our existence from without, we can construct an image of the whole.

We assume ourselves capable of the detached, objective, God's-eye view of human existence by dint of scientific progress. Since within God all is one, we assume the old duality of good and evil will reduce to oneness as soon as we fill in all the details of absolute human knowledge. However, when we are so bold as to "assume" that everything reduces to human knowledge alone, we risk making an ASS out of U and ME.

Before the assumptions of reductionism invaded the Western mind, whatever existed in the universe was understood to be irreducibly good or evil. Early New Testament theologians used the terms *arche* (Greek) or *principium* (Latin) to

designate the order by which every created being was assigned a place on one side or other of a cosmic moral battleground. On one hand was God's own hier*arch*y of seraphim, cherubim, virtues, powers, *arch*angels, etc. (The word *hieros* means "holy"; thus a hierarchy is a holy order). Satan and his demons, the fallen angels, were in an*arch*y or defiance of *arche* (in other words, Satan was pitted against God's rule; the prefix *an* in the word anarchy means "against", and *archos* means "ruler"). The mass of humanity was divided between the hierarchy of God and the anarchy of Satan.

Traditional theology said that this conflict began soon after creation. At first all powers served God alone, and all was good. Then He made Adam, the original man. God so loved Adam that He wanted him raised above the rest of His creation. God ordered the angels to honor him. Some did and some, regarding Adam as weak and puny, refused. It was here the proud Satan led the split away from the hierarchy of submission to God. Later on Adam fell from his high position, having been seduced by the same Satan who envied and despised him. Man's lot ever after was to be torn between sin and holiness. The Western moral universe was a process of creation, fall, conflict, damnation and redemption.

This model of the universe still holds sway over the minds of faithful Christians, Jews and Muslims. Being Zoroastrian in origin it resembles, and yet differs significantly from, the Vedic model. In the latter, the closure of the division between the demigods and demons is not a simple matter of one side winning, the other side losing. How can that be when the Vedas say that *both* sides are in the illusion of duality? By fighting one another, one side inadvertently helps the other awaken from that illusion. For example, the demons become a threat particularly at times when the demigods are besotted by their heavenly pomp and circumstance. At one time the monarch of heaven Indra, under the sway of self-importance, offended the sage Durväsä Muni. In return Durväsä cursed the demigods who, as a result, faltered in combat with the demons. Indra and his allies withdrew from battle to humbly follow Brahmä in prayers of supplication to Lord Viñëu. The Lord was pleased upon the demigods now that they sincerely yearned for the shelter of His lotus feet. By His grace the demigods later defeated the demons. In their defeat, some demons make spiritual advancement. For example, after he lost his empire, the *asura* King Bali completely surrendered to Vämanadeva (an incarnation of Viñëu) to become His foremost devotee. The soul of Våträsura, a powerful general of the demons, was transferred to the eternal abode of the Lord when he died in battle at the hand of Indra. In that abode, far beyond the reach of illusion, the conflict between the *devas* and *asuras* is forever reconciled:

pravartate yatra rajas tamas tayoù
sattvaà ca miçraà na ca käla-vikramaù
na yatra mäyä kim utäpare harer
anuvratä yatra suräsurärcitäù

> **In that personal abode of the Lord, the material modes of ignorance and passion do not prevail, nor is there any of their influence in goodness. There is no predominance of the influence of time, so what to speak of the illusory, external energy; it cannot enter that region. Without discrimination, both the demigods and the demons worship the Lord as devotees.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **2.9.10**)

The demigods and demons of the Vedic moral universe can, by transcending the modes of nature and entering the supreme abode, find an end to their age-old conflict; failing that, neither side wins ultimate victory. Both meet destruction in the *pralaya*, the cosmic cataclysm. For the angels and devils of the Western or Zoroastrian model, cessation of hostilities is unthinkable. Dualism is absolute. There is no higher abode of transcendence. There is only the material world, and until the world is at last won or lost, angels and devils remain locked in combat. The reductionist smells a theological trick behind this implacable strife. With sly disparagement he asks, "What is this moral universe taught by Western theologians *really* like?" The answer he finds is, "It is just a big burden of guilt of being fallen that we've been forced to carry by priests, rabbis, and mullahs for far too long."

As we shall shortly see in detail, the Western moral schema is indeed swept along by the tide of man's *guilt* (the shame and fear of his fall) and his *hope* for relief from that guilt. From the Vaiñëava point of view, morality that floats upon guilt and hope is to be rejected as unfavorable for spiritual progress. Moral law must rest upon the solid ground of duty. As philosopher Kelly Nicholson puts it, "the moral law is practically knowable insofar as we may know our duty."** One should know and adhere to duty with a mind steadied against the waves of hope and fear. Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura remarks:**

> Fear and hope are contemptible. When the intelligence of the *sädhaka* [the devotee on the path of practice] develops, he gradually leaves aside fear and hope. He follows scripture out of a sense of duty alone. That sense of duty may not be abandoned until loving attraction for Kåñëa arises in the heart.

What is duty? In the Western religious tradition, people were made to fear and loathe the evil of their fallen state even as they remained largely perplexed as to what specific evil acts God wanted them to shun, and what specific good acts He wanted performed. For example, today the Judaeo-Christian world is rent by a raging debate over abortion. The question, "Did God appoint mankind with a duty to protect the fertilized human ovum?", has never been answerable by Western religious authorities with a single, clear, unmistakable voice.

> In fact, the idea that the foetus is a human being "from the moment of conception" is a relatively new idea, even within the Christian church. St. Thomas Aquinas held that an embryo does not have a soul

until several weeks into the pregnancy. Aquinas accepted Aristotle's view that the soul is the "substantial form" of man. We need not go into this somewhat technical notion, except to note that one consequence is that one cannot have a human soul until one's body has a recognizable human shape.**

In the end notes of the previous chapter, we saw that Church authorities long debated the question of what the "person" is who will be resurrected on Judgement Day: is he or she a physical human body, or a non-material soul? The abortion debate centers on the same question as it concerns the *beginning* rather than the *end* of human existence. At the heart of the confusion is the materialism of the Zoroastrian model of the universe, which holds that life develops *within* matter to perfection—when, at the End of Time, the evil aspect of matter is forever destroyed, leaving only the good. There is no scope for contemplating life transcendental to matter. Thus Western religious authorities have always found questions about the difference between body and soul extremely challenging. It was much easier for them to assert that man, who bears the guilt of Adam's fall, should just do what he is told. Abraham did not ask "Why?" when God commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac. But as we shall learn from the following account of European history, priestly enforcement of such blind faith merely cultured the growth of demonic immorality.

For a long time in the West, priests and rabbis controlled their flocks by whipping them with guilt. They thundered that human beings carried in their blood the guilt of the first couple, Adam and Eve, who followed the Serpent into anarchy. Adam and Eve were said to be guilty in two senses: of disobeying God, and of being possessed by a terrible ambition to become "like gods" in knowledge. As punishment, God cast them out of Eden, His earthly paradise. Now Adam had to toil for a living. Eve had to suffer when giving birth; even worse (especially in the eyes of modern feminists), she had to serve her husband as an inferior. Since Eve had obeyed a serpent instead of God, all women to come would find snakes loathsome. God had created Adam and Eve with perfect bodies and minds; now, after their banishment, they had to age and die, as would all their descendents.

Each of the three mainstream Western religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—is grounded in the belief of Adam's fall. Each developed a *doctrine of guilt* from this and other accounts of the rebellion of God's creatures against His rule.** Since the Latin Christian doctrine of guilt has had the most powerful influence on modern civilization, I shall summarize that next.

In the early Roman Catholic Church, the most influential exposition of the Christian doctrine of guilt came from Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430). He argued that Adam's fall robbed mankind of free will. Thus every man born is a servant of the Devil in the form of lust. Having lost our power of choice, we are no better than beasts, as proven by lust's inescapable control over the human

organs. Only when one attains sainthood by the grace of Christ can one be free of lust, free of the Devil, free of Adam's guilt, and free to serve God. For the vast majority of ordinary Christians not blessed by saintliness, life was a constant threat of demonic temptation. The only hope was desperate, unflagging loyalty to the institution of the Roman Catholic Church.

Augustine's influence was such that for more than a thousand years until the time of the Reformation, good Christians stood guard against their own sensory experiences as being "of the world, the flesh and the devil." A Christian was supposed to control bodily urges by prayer, fasting and self-denial. These measures were in the main poorly executed. For example, total abstinence from meat and alcohol was never encouraged by the Church; rather, indulgence was the norm. Meat and alcohol are heavily tamasic. A diet that permits the entry of such things into the mouth gives force to the tamasic urges of lust, anger and greed in the body.

And so, in the thirteenth century, Church authorities recorded that many Christians were throwing off the Augustinian burden of guilt and giving in totally to forbidden sense pleasures. To discipline his flock, Pope Gregory IX launched the tyrannical Inquisition. The next century saw the rise of the Flagellants who whipped themselves bloody in the streets, frenzied as they were by a sinfulness that clung to them no matter what redemptive measures they took. In the fifteenth century, many thousands of Europeans came to the conclusion that the road to salvation shown by the Church was too narrow, steep and strewn by stumbling blocks. These hopeless souls, seeing themselves too sinful to be saved, took to witchcraft and Satanism—partly to defy Church authority, and partly because these "alternative religions" encouraged carnal pleasures unburdened by guilt.

The Reformers of the sixteenth century (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and others) were revolted by—and so revolted against—the Church's powerful institutionalized hierarchy. They argued it had no support in the pages of the Bible. They cried out for freedom in the Word of God from priest-enforced guilt, superstition and resignation. Thoughtful Europeans, hoping Christianity would now be rid of the harsher consequences of the Augustinian doctrine of Adam's original sin, were soon dismayed to discover that the shedding of the Catholic snakeskin revealed a Protestant snake beneath. The Protestants seemed just as unrelenting as the Catholics in laying down "guilt trips" upon the populace: witch-hunts, heresy trials and public burning of supposed enemies of Christ.

In disgust, some intellectuals sought freedom from guilt in a different direction, one that led away from the Bible. And so modern philosophy was born. In the seventeenth century philosophers allied themselves with science. The hope of science was to make reality controllable by reducing it to physics and mathematics.

With various "rational" and "empirical" arguments, philosophers attacked the moralistic Judaeo-Christian model of the universe. In the nineteenth century, the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer arrived at a position of utmost opposition to Augustine. He argued that the only universal process is the thrusting into existence of a Godless blind will. Since this primeval will knows no good or evil, there is no moral basis to reality. One who believes in a moral basis is merely confusing himself with cosmic events—in other words, he is befooled by anthropomorphism. Another German philosopher of the same century, Friedrich Nietzsche, opined that sexual sin and guilt were caused by the Christian religion, not by Adam's deviation from God.** "Christianity gave Eros poison to drink: he did not die of it but degenerated—into vice." About the moral universe, Nietzsche said, "There is no devil and no hell. Thy soul will be dead even sooner than thy body: fear therefore, nothing any more!"

Sigmund Freud was electrified by the revolutionary opposition to religion that Schopenhauer and Nietzche unleashed. He latched on to the idea of human will as blind and primitive, and the idea of Judaeo-Christian morality as poison. From this background he brought forth a "science" he called psychoanalysis, probably the most successful modern attack ever on the traditional Western conception of the moral universe. Freud believed that God, guilt and the whole of theology were but a product of a hidden realm of the mind (or brain) he called the unconscious. The unconscious was a kind of psychic dungeon where a person locked up his or her natural longings. The longings, tortured by powerful mental constructs like "The Father" (God), cried out from the unconscious; these anguished cries appeared in the conscious mind as dreams, fantasies, sudden bursts of intense emotion as well as all forms of morality, religious belief and behavior. These creations of the mind did not constitute a report on the real situation of the outside world. The mind, a product of matter, made reports on the condition of the brain and body, pretty much the way blood pressure reports the condition of the cardiovascular system. Freud's conclusion was that nobody is morally responsible for anything he thinks, says or does. There are no answers for questions of meaning and value. "The moment a man questions the meaning and value of life," wrote Freud, "he is sick, since objectively neither has any existence."**

Scientists, in the meantime, were working to succeed where Adam and Eve failed: to disobey the rule of God, and to become like gods in knowledge.

> Indeed, the folly of tempting God and the fates had always been a primary theme in world literature: Adam and Eve, Oedipus, Prometheus, Faust, Ahab—all of them went up against the gods and then got damned to hell for their arrogance.... In their own eyes, at least, all they [the modern scientists] were doing was using science in the ordinary way, to gain control over nature and improve the lot of humanity...Wasn't this what scientists had always done? Wasn't this what they were *supposed* to do?**

Scientists could even think themselves as sainted, since they were just carrying on the tradition of early Christians. Christ's teachings *demythologized* and *granted power* over nature, a nature that ignorant pagans worshiped as gods like Dionysus, Apollo, Persephone and Aphrodite. Around AD 200, the Christian Tatian had said: "We are superior to destiny."** "We do not follow the guidance of destiny; rather, we reject those [the nature gods] who established it." As the scientists saw it, Tatian's was but an early expression of their very desire to overthrow natural destiny and become *more than human.*

> The irony of it all was that it wouldn't be *religion* that would give us this ability; we wouldn't be getting it from the supernatural, or from voices out of the crypt. Rather, we'd gain that ability simply through the normal and ordinary progress of science. Just plain science would give us the ability to surpass our old selves, leaving behind our crass materialism and all the rest of that excess baggage.**

In anticipation of this Brave New World they supposed waited just around the corner, philosophers and scientists reduced to emptiness both the natural universe and the wonder/anxiety that human beings long felt about their place in that universe. What, then, was left? Only human imagination. Paul Auster, in his 1989 novel *Moon Palace*, gives eloquent voice to the modern "mind-is-all-there-is" doctrine:

> All that bloody silence and emptiness. You try to find your bearings in it, but it's too big, the dimensions are too monstrous, and eventually, I don't know how else to put it, eventually it just stops being there. There's no world, no land, no nothing. It just comes down to that...in the end it's all a figment. The only place you exist is in your head.**

The standard twentieth-century model of the cosmos is "meaningless, random, moving in no planned or discernible direction."** There's no world, no land, no nothing. We people exist in our heads. Our heads tell us we are "a set of radio waves (some would naturally add, 'But what remarkable radio waves!')"** The solace of thinking oneself to be a set of radio waves is that there is nothing left to be guilty about. Morality, religion, sin and hell mean absolutely zero. Despite that, even in our present secular (i. e. nonreligious) era, our lives are smothered by a bloated, ever-growing corpus of laws. Secular prohibitions now include:

> littering, slogging across the grass of certain public parks, money-laundering, serving drinks to the inebriated, watering one's lawn whenever one likes, unlicensed peddling, ... swimming where one pleases, gassing enemy troops to death in war, spitting, ...whaling, unrestricted smoking, ...firing workers without notice, ...hiking across privately owned land, ...keeping odd animals as pets (such as tigers, giraffes and crocodiles), selling certain sorts of pornography (however pornography is defined), drinking alcohol at any age, traveling without

> a passport, killing wolves, ...unrestricted parking of cars, racial and other types of discrimination, allowing noxious fumes to pour from fireplaces and factories, ...marrying at any age, operating unlicensed motor vehicles, ...spanking children (a serious crime in several countries), operating unlicensed radio and television stations, murdering praying mantises, refusing to wear seat belts in cars and importing unlicensed plants....The spectacle of entire societies spending all of their waking hours bustling, seething, groaning, harrumphing and carping their way through the law courts is by no means any longer outlandish.**

Ecco homo, "Behold the man"—the new god. The old God was a lawmaker who gave Moses ten commandments. The new god has commandments to give too. But don't forget, this is a radio-wave god who rules an absurd universe. We can't expect his definition of duty to be all that profound. And don't forget, the new god is one with us all. He must himself make, enforce and obey his own laws.

In the United States alone, the new god imposes 150,000 new laws and two million new regulations upon himself *each year.* In Minneapolis, Minnesota, the new god is forbidden to drive a red automobile. In California, he shouldn't peel an orange in a hotel room. On Sunday in Louisiana, he can be arrested for whistling. He can be put in jail for a night or two in Dunn, North Carolina, for snoring loudly enough to disturb his neighbors. Whenever the new god looks unhappy in Pocatello, Idaho, he breaks the law. The irony is obvious: modern philosophy and science promised us freedom from the guilt of Adam, but now "every product in one's home...from its tables and chairs to its toothpaste, smoke detectors and mattresses, has become the repository of an invisible cache of guilt-provoking laws."** Another irony is that as laws multiply, it is less and less apparent that they are guided by universal, common-sense values. Legislation and law enforcement appear more the servants of economic development, class politics, social trends, naive fads, power-seeking, and downright moral blindness.

The effort to banish good and evil from the Western model of the universe *is reducing that model to an amoral chaos.* Western man has tried to bring order to that chaos by multiplying the number of his laws a thousandfold and more beyond the ten commanded to Moses. But what significance and potency can laws have in a world squeezed dry of meaning? It is not surprising that more and more people perceive as merely bothersome their inhibitions and guilt about breaking such laws. The "reality" is that I live in my head, you live in yours, man. My life is my fantasy. Why should I care about your rules?

These days, anybody who still feels guilty about what he or she does is considered weak. And so the hero—"the good guy" depicted in books, films, television and music—asserts his power by breaking all the rules without a

second thought. He is "a rebel without a cause." The popular music genre called "gangsta (gangster) rap" is entirely devoted to portraying cold, deliberate criminality as heroism. America loves gangsta rap, it has been said, because it releases the nation from guilt. The refrain of one song exhorts the listener to "Kill, kill, kill/Murder, murder, murder."

Murderers are now heroes, while the traditional guardians of law, order and morality—the police, government and ecclesiastical authorities—are routinely portrayed as despotic, sneaking, corrupt and hypocritical. They represent the evil of encroachment of our unalienable right to personal freedom. Thus lawbreaking is good, lawmaking is evil. This state of affairs prompts a question. What is the difference between this view of good and evil and that of the psychopath?

> The psychopath is a rebel, a religious disobeyer of prevailing codes and standards...a rebel without a cause, an agitator without a slogan, a revolutionary without a program; in other words, his rebelliousness is aimed to achieve goals satisfactory to him alone; he is incapable of exertions for the sake of others. All his efforts, under no matter what guise, represent investments designed to satisfy his immediate wishes and desires.**

What comes to mind when you hear the word *psychopath* or its synonym *sociopath*? Do you think of a raving, drooling lunatic? That is a mistake. Yes, psychiatry does consider psychopaths mentally disturbed. But it reports that many psychopaths appear charming and intelligent; they often rise to high positions within business, politics and sales—areas where they can manipulate others. More sensationally, some descend into crimes most foul, violent and cruel. The unifying factor in all cases is that the psychopath lacks a moral compass. Writes forensic psychiatrist Ronald Markman, psychopaths**

> …are hedonistic, emotionally immature, selfish, impulsive, and devious. Their goals are often quite primitive, and usually are centered on power and pleasure. [They] tend to consider other people only as objects to be exploited, avoided, or neutralized.

Emotional immaturity, primitive goals, and the exploitation of people as objects, are undeniably prominent today, even in the highest circles. Martin Walker, in *The Cold War And the Making of the Modern World* (1993), presents these eye-opening vignettes of twentieth-century men of power.

> The head of [the U. S. Air Force's] Strategic Air Command, General Tommy Powers, was famous for laughing off the effects of nuclear radiation on genetic mutations with the quip: "Nobody has yet proved to me that two heads aren't better than one." General Powers had little time for the civilian nuclear theorists who talked of counter-force strategies, deliberately avoiding Soviet cities and attacking only their missile bases. "Restraint? Why are you so concerned with saving their

> lives. The whole idea is to kill the bastards," he shouted at Rand's William Kaufmann during one briefing. "At the end of the war, if there are two Americans and one Russian, we win." (pp. 166-7)

Walker cites Shmuel Mikunis, the leader of the Israeli Communist Party, who recorded a conversation in the Kremlin between Red China's Mao Tse-tung and Palmiro Togliatti, an Italian communist.

> Togliatti then asked him: "But what would become of Italy as a result of such a war?" Mao Tse-tung looked at him in a thoughtful way and replied, quite coolly, "But who told you that Italy must survive? Three hundred million Chinese will be left, and that will be enough for the human race to continue." (p. 126)

Another forensic psychiatrist, Dr. Robert D. Hare,** believes that "our society is moving in the direction of permitting, reinforcing, and in some instances actually valuing some of the traits…symptomatic of psychopathy…traits such as impulsivity, irresponsibility, lack of remorse".

> Today the psychopath appears to be everywhere among us, and we must ask ourselves some important questions. Why is our fascination with psychopathy growing—in our movies, on television, in our mass market books and magazines? Why are more and more crimes of violence being committed by young people? ...The public's fascination with the smooth con artist and the cold-blooded killer, unbounded by the dictates of society and conscience, has never been stronger.

Dr. Hare sees a strong resemblance between key elements of psychopathy and the "sacred principles" of New Age philosophies, namely: to be "rooted completely in the present" and to "be unable to resist a good opportunity." From a book about the origin of the New Age movement,** a few more items of similarity are evident: "self-deification", "anarchism", "breaking all boundaries", "you create your own reality." Of course, an important difference should be mentioned too. New Agers do try to reach out to their fellow men with positive emotions like love and compassion. Psychopathic emotional life is stunted and uncharitable, directed by lust, anger and greed. But if, as some New Agers strongly assert, God is oneness—if *everyone* and *everything* is God—then who or what is bad? By this logic, Mother Teresa and Charles Manson are the same.

Western man's two-thousand-year struggle with the inherited sin of Adam's extreme ambition to become a god has, for many people today, ended in the complete repudiation of the Zoroastrian concept of a cosmos divided between God and the Devil. Adam and Eve were not "guilty" for trying to become like gods themselves, since all of us *are* God. To know ourselves as God means to belittle the traditional division between good and evil, since all is one. In this "knowledge" of our God-ness, we expand our selfish desire until...what? Until we

totally abase ourselves, reverting once again to our helpless, pathetic human condition.

I see a strong parallel between the modeling, in the West, of an amoral universe in the imagination, and the Indian method of tantrism—a method that has pride of place in some New Age circles. The Tantras are scriptures that teach confidential knowledge concerning the worship of the Lord and certain demigods. Vaiñëava Tantras are sattvic. But there are tamasic Tantras followed by worshipers of destructive features of *prakåti*: Kälé, the three-eyed, sharp-fanged goddess garlanded with severed human heads and bedecked with a skirt made from forearms and hands; Chinnamastä, who cuts off her own head and, holding that head in her hand, drinks the blood spurting from her neck-stump; Bhairavé, a fiercely beautiful, sexually aggressive goddess who is fond of eating corpses; and Mätaëgé, who enjoys all things untouchable—cat flesh, the heads of animals chopped off in sacrifices, clothes worn by people as they died, and sex with unknown, low-class men.

The parallel is self-deification. The tamasic tantric deifies himself by imagining he has become one with the goddess as she re-creates the universe in her own image. Since the re-created universe is pervaded by the goddess, all is now holy. To break through the duality of good and evil that impedes knowledge of the holiness of everything, the tantric partakes, in the name of the goddess, of *païca makara*, five pollutants: meat, fish, wine, contaminated grains and sex with a woman who is not one's wife. Some tantrics meditate while holding their own stool in one hand and fragrant sandalwood paste in the other. The goal is to perceive the essential sameness of both. Others sit in mediation upon corpses. Such are the wretched affairs of would-be human gods.

The early Church suppressed a number of heretical Christian sects collectively known as the Barbelognostics who practiced very similar self-degrading rituals.** Barbelo was the name of a female deity in the eighth heaven who presided over the creation of the universe. The Barbelognostics ("those in knowledge of Barbelo") re-enacted her pastimes by engaging in sexual debauchery. The amorality of the Barbelognostics proceeded from a model of the universe quite different from that endorsed by mainstream Christianity.

But as we have seen, the dualistic mainstream model, with its heavy emphasis on the collective guilt of mankind, has been largely superseded by a new model that in no way discourages the kind of depravity the early Church stamped out. In this model, the universe in and of itself makes little or no sense. The sense of things is determined by human desire. Apart from the purposes we impose upon it, the world seems just a void with an idiot's grin on its face.

The traditional religious view is that the world was shaped by laws independent from my self. To satisfy my desires in relation to the world, I am obliged to conform to the laws that govern the world, or suffer consequences. This is essentially the Vedic teaching—for every act of desire in relation to

matter, a karmic debt must be paid or suffering will follow. The new model, however, takes the universe to be the *subject*, not the object. The universe is no different from the self who perceives it. All is one. Each human being becomes the divine incarnation of solipsism (the philosophical theory that the self is the only reality).

Human desire shall no longer feast on "objects"—since there are no objects, only the self—but on *imagination*: the imagination that I am God and the world is my creation. If I am not satisfied with my world, I can simply re-create it at will and do whatever I like in it, as do the tantric goddesses. Living out this new model of reality, one participates in a monstrous vision of everyone and everything as fragile images that have no other function than to serve the all-consuming desire of a psychopathic god—my own self. This is a god of the moment, not of eternity; a god that lives for the next opportunity of selfish gratification, not for the benefit of others; a god that welcomes death as a respite from the infinite tedium of solipsistic existence.

Vaiñëava philosophy maintains that the dualistic, moral model of the universe, while not the ultimate truth, is still not an absurdity. It is wrong to belittle it as such. Goodness *does* bring us closer to God, and evil *does* remove us from Him. Still, the moral universe is the realm of time. To achieve the direct, timeless association of the Lord, one must get free of the attraction of the modes of material nature. We remain gripped by these modes inasmuch as we think our purpose is to enjoy nature—even the celestial nature of the demigods and angels. As long as the duty of the soul is defined within the realm of time, desire—the perversion of our original love of God—is destined to grow beyond the bounds of any possible material satisfaction, even that available in heaven. This is a lesson the Vaiñëavas see in the Biblical tale of Adam and Eve, a lesson which it seems most Judaeo-Christians overlook. Though Adam and Eve dwelt in paradise, *still they were not satisfied* because their desire for happiness was focused on the secondary delights of Eden, not the primary delights of love of God. Because they were not satisfied, they could be seduced by the caprice of trying to take the place of God.

But tasting the delights of love of God is not easy for souls fallen into the material world. Thus our initial relationship with Him is one of duty. All human duties are to be subsumed under the primary duty of service to the Lord, rendered without fear of loss and hope for material reward. "Without fear and hope" means without undue concern for the profit and dispossession that accrue with the passage of time. This service situates us in pure goodness (*çuddha-sattva*), which means goodness without the attachment to enjoy goodness. Pure goodness is the threshold of God consciousness. Here our desires are tamed, purified and gradually transformed to desires of divine love. As love dawns, the Lord most mercifully invites the soul into His personal association.

But if we give up our duty to God, our desires bolt past the boundaries of goodness, which protect the soul in the material world from sinful reactions.

They leap into the jungle of passion and ignorance, hellbent for wild gratification. Under the influence of these modes, the soul loses his good sense of the moral law, which is actually a sense of love for all other souls. What remains of his good sense is only the guilty fear of punishment. Guilt does restrain desires, but this is not the voluntary self-restraint born out of loving regard for others. Because guilt is spiritually blind, and because it eats away at our sense of self-worth, it can be easily exploited by would-be gods—materialistic leaders who seek to control society by the multiplication of unenlightened laws. When guilt at last becomes unbearable, it degrades into the psychopathic wrath of persons who claim themselves God by dint of lawless rebellion. At this stage, the most senseless, wicked, and threatening feature of nature captures the soul. A society in the grip of tamasic nature personified by goddesses such as Kälé is slated for swift rot and destruction.

Chapter Eighteen,
The "Factual" Universe: A Reduction to the Absurd

We've glanced at the history of the Western model of the moral universe from its Zoroastrian beginnings to its reductionist "all-is-one" version. The previous chapter noted that the advancement of science contributed much to this so-called progress. The present chapter looks at the scientific search for "facts." This search can do nothing else than reduce the object of its study—the observable universe—to absurdity.

The dictionary defines reductionism as a "procedure or theory that reduces complex data or phenomena to simple terms." A critic of this method of understanding the world demands to know:**

> Why should the world be simple? Who made that decision? Who imposed it? There is no answer, for nowhere can we find such a guarantee.

To presuppose that all reality is uniformly simple has less to do with proven knowledge and more to do with a

> …belief that whatever was real must be subject to the laws which were observed to operate in the physical world—that it must work, in short, like a machine. As Sir Arthur Eddington has put it, "...science was disposed, as soon as it scented a piece of mechanism, to exclaim 'here we are getting to bedrock. This is what things should resolve themselves into. This is ultimate reality.'"**

Sniffing out the mechanical simplicity underlying nature is nothing other than sniffing out the prediction and control of events in nature. It is less a way of

knowing the purpose of nature itself than a way to impose human will upon nature. We must ask ourselves whether manipulation of material nature really raises human knowledge in any fundamental way beyond the level of lower creatures, many of whom manipulate nature more expertly in some respects than we. Half a century ago, an article published in the *Atlantic Monthly*** laid the blame for the death of spiritual vision in the West at the door of the reductionist creed.

> ...inquiry into purposes is useless for what science aims at: namely, the prediction and control of events. To predict an eclipse, what you have to know is not its purpose but its causes. Hence science from the seventeenth century onward became an exclusively an inquiry into [mechanistic] causes...It is this which has killed...the essence of the religious vision itself, which is the faith that there is a plan and purpose in the world, that the world is a moral order, that in the end all things are for the best.

The past three hundred years were very good for the reductionists. By their "factual" model of the universe, they managed to capture the popular imagination. That model breaks down to three principles: 1) matter is the only form of reality; 2) the conception of the mechanical is the only kind of law; and 3) evolution is an automatically determined process that, at a certain stage of development, threw up consciousness as an effect of material combination. The old, "merely religious" model of the universe is widely frowned upon. To hold the fundamental cosmic law to be moral and not mechanical is, the reductionists argue, intolerant. This argument gets color and drama by the invocation of The Horrors of the Past: the Inquisition, for example, or the witch trials of Salem. The supposedly "factual" worldview claims to be value-neutral. It consigns moral judgements to the non-scientific sphere of imperfect human opinion. That is a Good Thing because while it leaves people the individual freedom to choose their own moral menus in life, it does not permit them to impose their beliefs on others. Society as a whole is to be governed by principles of factual knowledge. The more society moves away from the religious model of the world to the factual model, the safer we will all be from theocratic fundamentalism imposed by a narrow-minded priesthood.

The word "factual" comes from the Latin *facio*, "to make or do." Thus a fact is *what has been made or done.* It is a product of the work of our senses—our seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. Facts are therefore "practical." Reductionism *reduces* the whole world to man-made facts: observations made by human senses and calculations made by human minds. In contrast, scriptural revelation about the purpose of the world is God-made.

From the standpoint of facts, religious values seem less practical and thus less real. Why should a certain kind of food—beef, for example—be judged as sinful? *Factually* beef, like food of any kind, nourishes the body. And so in the

modern world the value of practicality (something that works) takes the lead over the values of faith and morality. "Can" supersedes "should." So many cows run loose in India, and beef *can* be eaten—why *should* poor Hindus go hungry when the rice crop fails? Contraceptives *can* prevent pregnancy—why *should* we fear the consequences of sex? Abortions *can* be performed, women *can* do the work of men, aerial bombs *can* be dropped. Whether these things *should* happen or not are worries *outside* factual knowledge. Anyway, goes the argument, whether we like them or not, these things are happening now. That, we are told, is progress.

"Progress" translates into the language of facts as *a more effective way of doing things.* Almost daily more effective solutions arrive for how things *can* be done, incarnated as man-made machinery. The more effective way to cook incarnated as the microwave oven; the more effective way to reckon incarnated as the computer; the more effective way to travel incarnated as the airplane. The appearance of these mechanical deities is jubilantly hailed by millions of people. But it is as if these deities emanate an opiate fog that deadens inquiry into the *purpose* of increased effectivity—*why* is such machinery good. For modern people, "The supreme question," as Karl Jaspers wrote, "is what 'the time demands'."** What's the point of asking any other question? Whatever is "factually" needful, time is revealing right now.

> Time...takes on a specific moral dimension. Future time is good, past time bad. We move from this inadequate past into this bright future. Since progress is seen to be happening and is regarded as a virtue, the past comes to be understood as an underdeveloped realm, an impoverished Africa of memory and the imagination, useful only as a staging post for the future.**

Most people who believe in an evolving technological future miss the irony that "factual knowledge" can *only* be knowledge of the past. When we look up at the night sky, we do not see the stars *as they are* but *as they were.* It takes time for their light to reach our eyes. According to modern cosmology, the light of many of the stars we see now may be several thousand years old. Some of them may have exploded centuries ago. Though their light continues to stream to earth, they are no longer really there. The "factual" sun that brightens our eyes is always eight minutes in the past. No one on earth has ever seen the "real" sun. A slight time lag divides us from even the nearest objects of our perception. This "factual" world of human sensory experience is the *phenomenal* world—a world that has already changed by the time we know it.

Thus the phenomenal world, the world of facts, is a world of secondary, dead *information.* The world that is, the primary living *reality*, we never know. Facts, far from being "the whole truth," are just signals conveyed by the network of our senses.

Compare a human being to a spider. A spider has rather limited powers of sight, hearing and smell. But it is blessed with an acute sense of touch. Thus its knowledge of the world comes largely by way of the network of its web. Just by feeling the movement of something in the network, the spider can judge with great accuracy how far off and how big it is. The web cannot, however, inform the spider about the world beyond the network. Even about things caught within the network, the spider receives only information useful for practical ends. For example, the web does not convey the color of a thing. Similarly, there are limits to the quantity and quality of information the network of human sense perception can convey. The edge of the universe remains totally outside our informational reach, despite sophisticated modern instrumentation. Even about things near at hand, our senses permit only restricted information. For example, a dog whistle is knowable to human senses only in a limited way. Though we can see it and touch it, it emits a sound outside the perceptual dimension of our ears. According to the Vedic scriptures, there is a higher reality, beyond our human awareness, to every object of our perception.

Vaiñëava philosophy finds the network of sensory knowledge to be riddled by four defects: imperfection, error, illusion and cheating. Likewise, scientists are forced to admit that our senses are incapable of grasping the reality of the world around us, since the closer we try to get to the objects we perceive, the more unreal our sense data about these objects becomes. I am typing these words on a laptop computer. This computer appears to my senses to be a solid object of definite characteristics. But as I come closer to this computer via the method physicists employ to examine atomic and subatomic structures, I find it to be "an indefinite quantum field" or "a cloud of potentia" or "a random flux of energy."** It remains a scientific mystery why the nebulous state of the computer's micro-elemental existence presents itself moment after moment to my senses as an object of certain shape, size, color and texture. If I take quantum physics as my guide, then the "fact" of this computer I am using right now is just a creation of my senses. It does not really exist.

Now, this does not mean the computer is *really* a random flux of energy. That notion, like the form of the computer my senses perceive, is "factual" in the sense that it is *man-made.* The world as a chaos of zips and blips is an idea *manufactured* in the minds of scientists. Actually, quantum theory says that the only thing we can know about material objects is our attempt to know them. That attempt results in the "facts" of quantum physics, which *we cannot determine as having reality*.**

To summarize this critique of reductionism so far: from the seventeenth century onward, science aimed to reduce the universe to matter, mechanical law and evolution at the expense of the moral and religious sense of life; the reductionist universe is a construct of man-made facts; facts, being practical, are supposedly more real than moral and religious values; the improvement of facts (things made by men) is supposedly progress; because progress comes with

time, future time is supposedly good, past time bad; ironically, all facts (*facta* = that which is made) belong to the past as soon as they are perceived, since with the senses we never perceive things as they are right now; thus facts are not reality but only information that turns out to be far from complete; even science admits that what is known to the human senses and mind is different—perhaps totally different—from reality. The logical conclusion of all this? Since facts cannot bring us in touch with reality, progress in facts is progress in illusion.

In charity to the hard-working men and women of science, we might agree that that they offer a useful account of how *some*, but certainly not *all*, phenomena take place. For instance, they reduced a bird's flight down to the laws of physics. Mechanically applying those laws, they invented the airplane. The swift transportation of people and goods over great distances by high-powered winged machines does indeed represent a kind of progress over earlier modes of transport. But that doesn't change the fact that mechanistic reductionism cannot help us progress in knowing *why* the world exists. However, many modern scientists believe that the purpose of the world taught by religion is obsolete, and that it is left to them to fill the gap. More than fifty years ago, British philosopher C. E. M. Joad observed:**

> …today scientists trespass into the territory of religion and proceed to make statements about the "why" of things for which their science gives them no authority. For the concern of science is with "hows" not with "whys".

Now, at the turn of the twenty-first century, many scientists are straggling back out of the desert of mechanistic "whys" to the oasis of spiritual "whys". By bitter experience, these men and women know that it is no less absurd to seek a convincing purpose for the world in reductionism than it is to seek water in a mirage. But on the whole, science remains doggedly atheistic, though lately less cocksure of itself. Writes physics professor Lee Smolin in a recent issue of *Time* magazine:

> Reflecting on this [the problem of reducing the "why" of the universe down to a mechanistic cause] has made many scientists turn to mysticism or religion. But I prefer to search for a rational, scientific understanding of this puzzle. The revolution we are engaged in involves throwing out the view that the universe was made by a god—some grand puppeteer or master weaver. Instead, the universe can be understood as having constructed itself according to physical laws...**

Smolin's defense of atheistic science ushers us into the darkness at the heart of the reductionist conception of progress. The goal of life is figured to be the continual invention of more effective ways of doing things *because everything started with the invention of the universe by the universe itself.* Mankind is but a cog in the great machinery of cosmic invention.

Smolin believes that the physical law compelling this progress of invention is evolution. It is via the "law" (actually just the theory) of evolution that scientists propose to define the *why*, the moral purpose of existence. What is evolutionary good? The impulse to actions that aid physical survival and social order. What is evolutionary evil? The impulse to actions that end in physical destruction and social disorder. This is termed *the naturalistic reduction of value*,** that there is ultimately nothing more to human morality than a group of compulsions which are basically akin to those of an ant-hill".** Smolin again:**

> If this theory [of the self-invented universe] is true, it means that we live in a benign universe, one that is hospitable to life because it shares some characteristics with living things. It also means that we live with each other in a world all of us create. The principles of justice, law and equal rights are not imposed from outside; they are made by us as an evolving system called human society.

Here Smolin tips his hat to the supposed moral dimension of time when he tells us that morality—justice, law and equal rights—*evolved* out of the works of mankind. To scientists like Smolin, evolution is the cornucopia of all good things, even human virtue. As long as things continue to evolve, they are bound to get better. Thus evolution—time's flow as a blessing—turns out to be the closest thing the reductionists have to a God.** For scientists like Smolin, evolution is not only the *how* of creation, but the *why* also.

In order to give credence to Smolin's case for evolutionary morality, one must buy into his covert redefinition of science as an atheistic religion. Science, as defined in the seventeenth century, has typically been concerned with showing *how* events occur in nature by modeling those events mechanically. Take the example of eclipses, mentioned in a previous quotation. We can credit scientists for having constructed models that demonstrate their theory of how the earth orbits the sun and the moon orbits the earth. Such models can, on a small scale, mechanically reproduce eclipses. Thus scientists can claim that model to be a fact, because it "makes" eclipses. But there is no model that demonstrates how the universe invented itself. There is no model that demonstrates how life arose from the laws of physics. There is no model that demonstrates how life in the "benign universe" will get better and better in the future. These notions are articles of a quasi-religious faith. They are certainly not articles of *facta*—"that which is made." Writing in the same issue of *Time* as Smolin, Sir John Maddox has this to say about the "facts" at the back of evolutionary theory.**

> How did life begin? The natural answer is that living things emerged spontaneously from the chemicals present in warm, shallow waters on the early Earth. But what chemicals? And what more complicated chemicals emerged from that primordial soup with the ability to reproduce themselves and evolve by some kind of Darwinian process? No one yet knows.

No one knows how life appeared from chemicals, nor what these living chemicals were, nor how they evolved as Darwin theorized. To "talk" of how such events happened, science must "walk" the physics that made them happen. As Ernest Rutherford, who discovered the nucleus of the atom, said: "All science is either physics or stamp collecting." Darwin's theory of evolution is supposed to walk with the physics of three hundred years ago—the "classical physics" of Sir Isaac Newton.** Newton, as we learn from physics professor Michio Kaku, modeled the universe after the image of a clock.

> The Newtonian vision held that the universe was a gigantic clock, wound at the beginning of time and ticking ever since because it obeyed Newton's three laws of motion.

The point I wish to make here is very basic. I feel no need to devise complex arguments against evolutionary theory because that theory cannot walk alone. Either it walks with physics or it doesn't walk as serious science at all. If the physics behind Darwin's theory won't demonstrate evolution "in fact," then the theory goes nowhere. The Darwinists have not provided us with a small-scale clockwork model of the cosmos out of which species of artificial intelligent life automatically evolve. Furthermore, the Newtonian concept of the universe as a clock has lost its scientific validity. The following quotations sum it up:

> In 1905 Albert Einstein published four papers. All four were revolutionary...Newton was overthrown.
>
> Without question, the new experiments on radiation showed that the foundations of Newtonian physics was crumbling.
>
> Quantum theory demolished, once and for all, the Newtonian dream.
>
> Quantum theory, in fact, turned Einstein on his head. In almost every sense of the word, quantum theory is the opposite of Einstein's theory.... Thus the two theories are hostile opposites.

Newton developed his classical physics in the seventeenth century. Two centuries later, Charles Darwin devised his theory of evolution upon Newtonian foundations. In the early twentieth century, those foundations were overthrown by Einstein's theory of relativity. Relativity was soon followed by quantum physics, which developed out of experiments with radiation. This theory relegated the Newtonian picture of the universe to the status of "a dream." Leading quantum theoreticians like Werner Heisenberg were openly doubtful of Darwin's ploy of appealing to Newtonian physics to explain life.** They were also doubtful of Einstein's theory. And even within the quantum school, rival GUTs (Grand Unified Theories) and TOEs (Theories of Everything) clash.

More and more thinkers now conclude that this "evolution" of physical theory—from classical to relativity to quantum—represents not the progress, but rather the decline, of science.**

> Some observers contend that these unconfirmable, far-fetched theories are signs of science's vitality and boundless possibilities. I see them as signs of science's desperation and terminal illness.
>
> The key problem is that, if hugely successful theories can be found to be wrong and "truths" can be found to be false, what can possibly be the real nature of the form of knowledge we call science? Why is it successful and why should we believe it?

Yet quantum mechanics, relativity and classical physics remain equally important to modern scientists—less because they bring us nearer to how life arose in the universe, more because *they work* very well within the realm of human affairs. If not for quantum physics, we could not produce television sets, radios, stereo sound systems, computers, nor any modern electronic equipment. Without Einsteinian relativity, we could not harness atomic energy. Without classical physics, we could have no automobiles, trains, airplanes, rockets nor the rest of the machines that hasten our movement through time and space. And *that* is why the switch from the Western religious model of the universe to the reductionist model is supposed to be good. The reductionist model *works.* It yields human progress. But again, this is "progress" in nothing other than *facta*, "that which is made." The bright shining hope is that what science makes for us 1) expands human powers, 2) brings the materials and laws of nature more under human control, 3) extends the duration of human life and 4) makes that life happier.**

These four exceedingly optimistic claims, formulated by a scientist in the eighteenth century, make up the standard definition of progress even today. Fired by these promises of a better future, great minds labored hard to bring nature under human control. Yet, in the final analysis, they were forced by the same nature to admit that the whole enterprise of progress is useless. Charles Darwin wrote in his *Autobiography:***

> Believing as I do that man in the distant future will be a far more perfect creature than he now is, it is an intolerable thought that he and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such long-continued progress.

When Darwin wrote these words in the nineteenth century, people were at least confident that, with the aid of science, the human race would continue to progress as long as the universe could support life. The twentieth century dashed these hopes, showing science to be a clear and present danger to human survival. In the two world wars and the cold war that followed, technology vastly multiplied the killing efficiency of modern weaponry, pushing civilization and, it was feared, all life on Earth to the verge of destruction.

How could a doctrine like reductionism, which leads to such absurd contradictions, be so influential as to shake the religious faith of the West? Well,

reductionism did not simply appear out of nowhere. It had three thousand years of momentum behind it. Scholars of our time trace the roots of reductionism back to a change in human consciousness that resulted from social upheaval in the ancient kingdoms of Egypt and the Mesopotamian Near East. These civilizations, like Vedic India, had long been *ritual societies.* "Ritual" is a word that comes to us from the Vedic term *åta* (the real), which points to the higher cosmic and moral order, beyond human comprehension. Through ritual, societies of antiquity participated in the great universal sacrifice the demigods offer to the Supreme. With the start of Kali-yuga, five thousand years ago, ritual society gradually stagnated. Around one thousand years BC, a new order emerged in Egypt and Mesopotamia. At that time the stronger independent interests of artisans, craftsmen, farmers and traders wore down the older social norms that had been held together by the knowledge and power of priests and kings, who derived their authority from the divine past.

> Egypt and the Near East...gave rise to a new society which sprang into existence out of the ruined shell of the old. The new society brought with it new technology related to new perceptions of the cosmos. It required new ideas, because it was based on trade and, in part, on free labor. While reliance on authority may suit a priesthood, it is a poor guide for an enterprising trader or craftsman. Instead, the merchant had to learn by observing the world around him—the winds and tides. And the free craftsmen learned by changing nature, by experimenting with new materials and methods.**

Why did the priests and kings of these societies lose their power? In the age of Kali, the two *varëas* of leadership—the *brähmaëas* and the *kñatriyas*—fall down due to the growth of materialism in the hearts of all men. The same increase of materialism raised the two lower orders—the *vaiçyas* (farmers and merchants) and *çüdras* (craftsmen, artisans and workers) to exaggerated prominence. Sattvic culture declined, opening the way for the ascendance of sinful *mleccha* culture. This destabilized society and promoted quarrel.

It is thus evident that the trend toward mechanistic reductionism was historically nourished by the social preponderance of the *vaiçya* and *çüdra* mentality and the social instability of post-*varëäçrama* society. The first Western attempt to philosophically reduce the world to simplicity began in Ionia. In this area of the eastern shore of the Aegean sea, Greeks established cities that embodied Kali-yuga philosophy and social values.

> By 700 BC the Ionian trading cities...had thrown off the earlier subordination to the great landowners of mainland Greece. They established new societies of traders, craftsmen, and freeholding peasants—the first limited attempts at democracies and republics. They needed new ideas to run such new societies—the old gods were outmoded...Around 580 BC Thales, a native of the trading and textile

> center Miletus, first asserted that the world was formed by natural processes which could be *observed* in the world... While Bronze Age priests had seen an unchanging society ruled by the unchanging cycles of the seasons, the Ionians saw a society in the midst of convulsive changes as aristocratic landholders, merchants, artisans, and peasants battled for power. Heraclitus concluded that the universe was in constant flux, like a fire, ever changing...Anaxagoras, a native of Ionia and later a friend of the Athenian leader Pericles, derived his theory of origins from close observation of nature...whirlpools, the glowing hot metal of the blacksmith's forge, the distant light of merchants' signal fires.**

Ritual society was a sacred tradition revealed to man by demigods and sages. Ritual progress was the fourfold reward of *dharma* (religiosity), *artha* (material prosperity), *käma* (sensual enjoyment) and *mokña* (liberation from material existence). The early Ionian reductionist society was based not on godly revelation but on human sensory observation of the physical world. Progress was calculated in terms of *artha* and *käma.* What became of *dharma* and *mokña*, which extend the human mind toward goals beyond sense perception? The *vaiçya* system of values reduced that subject matter to numbers.

> Anything could be reduced to abstract numbers: the value of a pot, a jar of oil, a plot of land, a slave, could all be expressed by exact numbers of coins, as could the wealth and worth of any citizen. Numbers seemed to have magical powers.... To Pythagoras the pure relationship of numbers in arithmetic and geometry are the changeless reality behind the shifting appearances of the sensible world. In contrast to the Ionians, Pythagoras taught that reality can be known not through sensory observation, but only through pure reason, which can investigate the abstract mathematical forms that rule the world.**

Early Greek philosophy, a sort of protophysics, was born in Ionia around 580 BC from observation of phenomena. Soon afterward, Pythagoras of Croton added the abstract dimension of numbers. Then Plato of Athens elaborated upon the moral dimension of Pythagorean idealism. While there is much in Platonic morality a student of Vedic knowledge can agree with, moral values *taught by God* had no place in Plato's system. His values were *discoveries*, made (*facta* again) by the intelligence. They depended upon reason, not revelation.

> Moral truths, thinks Plato, are timeless and beyond the happenstance of human opinion or social structure. They are likeqwise objectively real and like other such truths, such as those of mathematics, are discoverable by the intelligence.... [Moral truths are] not a god, nor [are they] the creation or commandment of a god.**

Plato was sure about the eternality of the individual soul, less sure about spiritual personality. At least he believed every soul to be the very form of life

itself. As such, the soul belongs to the transcendent realm of eternal pure forms.** Souls down in the phenomenal world can sustain purity by reason, the link to the realm of true forms. The reasoning soul exhibits three virtues: wisdom, courage and temperance. An impure, unreasoning soul is deficient in the three virtues. That deficiency is evident in the vices of ignorance, cowardice and intemperance. So although on one hand Plato was reluctant to affix morality to a personal God, on the other he insisted it is fixed in an eternal Good beyond the world of matter.

Aristotle, Plato's most prominent disciple, brought goodness down to earth by dispensing with his teacher's idea of a transcendent realm of forms that projects ideal virtue into the phenomenal world.** While more or less agreeing with his teacher that the soul is pure form and excellence of character, Aristotle argued that the soul is inseparable from its body. Goodness, likewise, is inseparable from particular good things. When the body vanishes, so does the soul. When a good thing vanishes, so does its goodness. On one key point Plato and Aristotle agreed: that matter is moved by the soul.

The Christian doctrine that said a soul without a material body cannot act was much closer to Aristotle's soul-concept than Plato's. But unlike Aristotle, the Judaeo-Christian scriptures had almost nothing to say about cosmology and physics. Aristotle's writings elaborately described the universe as a system of fifty-five concentric spheres whose rotation accounted for the movements of the sun, moon, stars and planets. Translated into Latin in the Middle Ages, his model of the cosmos had a deep impact upon Church scholars, starved as they were for this kind of information. In AD 1266, the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas officially wed Aristotelian philosophy with Catholic theology. The Theory of Everything of its time, this work was an awesome intellectual monument to both the protoscience of the ancient Greeks and the moral authority of Jesus Christ, just as the soaring cathedral of Chartres—completed while Aquinas was alive—was a synthesis of the two in architecture (figures of Pythagoras and Aristotle were carved into the stonework).

But the Thomist model of reality—"Thomist" was the label given to Aquinas's thought—was pregnant with the seeds of its own destruction. One seed was Aquinas's admission that some portions of the Bible are not the literal truth. Another seed was the high degree to which the model depended upon the power of human reason. A third seed was the physicality of the model: Aristotle proposed that the upper spheres of the universe were made of "pure matter"—an immaculate, unchanging crystalline solid. But he rejected the Platonic position that the real form of the world exists in a higher dimension of consciousness. It followed from Aristotle's physics that the higher spheres—for example, "the eternal pearl" of the moon—could be rendered humanly visible just by discovering a way to get close enough to see them. A fourth seed was the humanism of the model: within creation, the earth was positioned at the privileged center, and among earthly creatures, the human race had the only

role in God's plan. A fifth seed was the conceit that the model explained all there is to know. Each was a seed of *facta*—a "truth" made by man, not God.

Even though there were significant features of the Thomist model that echoed Vedic knowledge—for example, that the universe is morally constituted, and that of the many heavenly planets, the moon is the nearest—the seeds of its self-destruction began fructifying in 1604. That was the year Galileo Galilei established the "fact" that a *nova* (new star) flared into being in the constellation Serpentarius. This contradicted the Thomist model, which said stars are permanent fixtures of an unchanging heaven where nothing new could happen. In 1609 Galileo looked at the moon through a telescope. He found that the Thomist lunar heaven was not a fact: he could not "make it out" in his eyepiece. Fact was, the moon looked very much like earth. Fact was, the surface of the moon reflected earthlight. To Galileo, that meant that the earth, shining like the other planets, is not special.

Looking elsewhere through his eyepiece, Galileo discovered more facts: Jupiter is encircled by moons; the sun, not the earth, is the center of the solar system; countless stars are invisible to the naked eye. By dropping objects from the Tower of Pisa, Galileo demonstrated mistakes in Thomist physics.

Now, the Aristotelian "facts" of the Thomist model were tied together by Christian logic. The tremendous weight of new facts discovered by Galileo could not be supported by that logic. Thus Galileo set about assembling a new, non-theistic logic for his facts. Suppressed by the Church, Galileo died before he could complete it. Sir Isaac Newton labored through his life to finish the model, which I've termed the mechanistic reductionist model. This model 1) reduced reality to the base concerns of *vaiçyas* and *çüdras*, namely numerical value and physical work, 2) was cool to the belief (shared by Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas) that matter is moved by spirit, 3) was warm to the belief that mechanical forces move matter.

If matter is moved by spirit, it is then fair to say that matter has a moral dimension. Most religions teach that souls are promoted or degraded according to what they do with matter; they also teach that certain kinds of matter are sanctified by God. When they utilize sanctified matter (holy water, for example), souls are blessed. The blessing emanates not from the molecules of the holy water—these being no different from the molecules of sewer water—but from the holy spirit that moves the foundations of the material world: the three modes of creation, maintenance and destruction. God acts through earth, water, fire, air and ether (sound) to deliver people from sinful life, and to inspire their hearts with loving attraction to Him.

On the other hand, if matter is moved only by mechanical forces, it would be fair to say it has no moral quality whatsoever. Newton allowed a role for God only in the beginning, when He set the mechanism of the cosmos into motion. God faded from the scene after that initial divine push, and mechanics just

carried on. If this is the case, then water is always just water. The only ethics at play in a mechanistic universe are the ethics of physical survival.

As they worked with Newton's model of the universe, scientists realized it was not really complete. They continued to discover newer and newer facts. To survive, Newton's model had to absorb these facts and grow with them. In the nineteenth century it absorbed the electromagnetic field theory of Faraday and Maxwell. That wasn't easy, as field theory pointed to a level of reality unknown to Newton, beyond mechanical relations. Then, as noted before, the facts of radioactivity, discovered in the early twentieth century, swelled the model to the bursting point. It split, amoeba-like, into mutually hostile variants of itself: the classical variant, the Einsteinian variant, and the quantum variant. Because all three work well in terms of *vaiçya-çüdra* values, Kali-yuga brains are perplexed as to which variant represents reality as it is.

What the variant models really represent is *mäyä*, the illusory feature of *prakåti.* The word *prakåti* means "abundant activity"—certainly, *prakåti* works! But it works to hold materialistic living entities fast within the grip of the three modes of nature. Çré Prahläda Mahäräja explains in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 7.9.20:

yasmin yato yarhi yena ca yasya yasmäd
yasmai yathä yad uta yas tv aparaù paro vä
bhävaù karoti vikaroti påthak svabhävaù
saïcoditas tad akhilaà bhavataù svarüpam

> **My dear Lord, everyone in this material world is under the modes of material nature, being influenced by goodness, passion and ignorance. Everyone—from the greatest personality, Lord Brahmä, down to the small ant—works under the influence of these modes. Therefore everyone in this material world is influenced by Your energy. The cause for which they work, the place where they work, the time when they work, the matter due to which they work, the goal of life they have considered final, and the process for obtaining this goal—all are nothing but manifestations of Your energy. Indeed, since the energy and energetic are identical, all of them are but manifestations of You.**

His body and mind working puppet-like under the direction of the modes, a living entity is passed from the controlling hand of creation (*rajo-guëa*) to sustenance (*sattva-guëa*) to destruction (*tamo-guëa*). After death he is handed back to creation to receive the next body. This cycle revolves life after life until the whole universe comes to an end. Hopes for progressive evolution to a perfect status of material life are insane. A soul's only real hope is for deliverance from the cycle of the modes, by the Divine Grace emanating through the veil of matter.

Now, there are facts of perception that seem to contradict the Vedic description of the material world. We've seen how the Thomist model of the universe fell by the wayside of history after the telescope "proved" it not factual. Well, truth be told, the *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* locates the earth, moon and sun in positions very different from the modern astronomical standard. Is this cause to doubt the *Bhägavatam*? If it is, then it is also cause to doubt the moral dimension of the universe taught by the *Bhägavatam.* It is cause to neglect the regulative principles and indulge the whims of the senses.

The Vaiñëava scriptures tell us the material energy is Lord Kåñëa's *ädhära-çakti* or all-accommodating energy.** She accommodates the lusty desires of the materialistic living entities by presenting herself as exploitable matter. They perceive her as exploitable according to the particular range of their cognitive and motor senses.

Earlier the example of a spider and its web was given. The *ädhära-çakti* accommodates the spider's desires by providing it a "factual world" which the poor creature can perceive and control. If the spider's worldview could be rendered into English, there is little doubt the average person would find it to be bizarre mythology, fiction, or lunacy. Our own world of human facts is no less bizarre to the demigods.

Beyond these worlds of facts populated by creatures lusty for sense gratification, there is the real form of the world. This is the dharmic or moral form, seen by those living entities who know nature's primary purpose. That primary purpose is to accommodate the Lord's plan for the reformation of His wayward parts and parcels. The dharmic form is presented in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam*,** which states:

> Kåñëa consciousness means constantly associating with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in such a mental state that the devotee can observe the cosmic manifestation exactly as the Supreme Personality of Godhead does. Such observation is not always possible, but it becomes manifest exactly like the dark planet known as Rahu, which is observed in the presence of the full moon. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 4.29.69)

At Kurukñetra five thousand years ago, Kåñëa revealed His *visvarüpa* (the form of the entire universe) to His constant companion Arjuna. An opportunity like Arjuna had—to directly observe the universe exactly as Kåñëa sees it—is very rare. But all of us can take advantage of an indirect method that allies human reason with scriptural revelation. This method is explained by an analogy. During a full lunar eclipse, the halo around the moon allows us an indirect perception of a darkness that blots out the lunar disc. It is indirect because our eyes cannot tell us what is blotting out the moon. At least we can tell from the soft halo that the moon is masked by something passing in front of it. The Vedic scriptures tell us this shadowy mask is Rahu, a demonic planet that otherwise

cannot be seen. Similarly, the moonlike light of reason guided by scripture permits us to indirectly perceive the material universe as a mask of the spiritual world.

A mechanistic reductionist will argue that what eclipses the moon is not a mysterious demonic planet but the shadow of the earth. The difference between the mechanistic view and the Vedic is a question of what is known as "the scale of observation."** For example, if we are asked to say with the unaided eye what we see when we look at an even mix of two powders—white flour and finely-ground charcoal—we will say we see a gray powder. But if we are able to observe that gray powder through a microscope, we will suddenly understand *it does not exist.* The microscopic scale of observation reveals countless white and black particles.

On the mechanist's "factual" (man-made) scale of observation, it is certainly logical to say the darkness eclipsing the moon is just the shadow of the earth. But on the Vedic scale, the scale of God-made observation, mechanistic facts vanish, just as the fact of the gray powder vanishes when it is observed through a microscope. On the Vedic scale, cosmic events are seen to be the interrelation of two potencies (spirit and matter) of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Çré Kåñëa. The moral dimension is defined by the three qualities of that interrelation: goodness, passion, and ignorance.

The moral dimension of the cosmos is determinable by purification of consciousness, not by sensory inspection or mental speculation. Purification entails detaching consciousness from the exploitation of matter aimed at physical sense pleasure, and attaching consciousness to the employment of matter in Kåñëa's service.

Chapter Nineteen,
Virtue Versus Sentiment

The previous two chapters surveyed the wilderness of reductionism that modern civilization has become. Yet even here, amid the ruins of the Western model of the moral universe, human consciousness remains linked to the moral dimension. Because of that link, the virtues that lie deep in the heart of mankind still struggle to assert themselves. The modern struggle of virtue against emptiness is the theme of a recent feature film entitled *Mullholland Falls*, a thriller set in the year 1954.**

The lead character, police detective Max Hoover, opens an investigation into the mysterious death of a young woman. He discovers that she "knew too much" about a secret test of the effects of atomic radiation upon military personnel.

Soon Hoover is convinced she was murdered. His prime suspect is General Timms, the commander of the high-security base where the test was run. The general first tries to persuade the detective that the loss of the woman's life doesn't matter in a quantum universe. He asks Hoover if he knows that the atom, apart from a few tiny fragments of matter, is mostly empty space. Expanding the logic of atomic theory, the general argues that since the entire universe is made up of atoms,

> …everything we see and touch, in fact the very floor beneath us, is made up of almost completely empty space. The only reason we don't fall through it is because these tiny particles of matter are just whirling about at such speed that they give us the illusion of solidity.

Guessing the card Timms is about to play, Hoover dryly comments, "Then we're just empty space ourselves." "Exactly! Exactly!" enthuses the general. He suggests that by understanding the true nature of this emptiness, a man can tap unlimited power.

> And these tiny particles of matter, which are so small that no one has ever seen them—never—they contain enough energy to blow up this house, an entire city, every person on earth. Now *that* is inconceivable!

Hoover remarks that he doesn't think about these things, his reason being that "I probably see too much: people dead before their time." With this ironic turn of words, he hints that though the general presumes reductionism to be the most effective way to truth, the doctrine actually sees too little. Reductionism can't account for the difference between right and wrong, a difference so objective and tangible that Timms can't shake it off even after convincing himself that all is really just empty space. (Hoover will later discover that Timms is dying of cancer, the "blowback" of his own experiment.)

Still trying to pull the teeth of the detective's investigation, the general cynically invokes Nietzche's moral relativism—the view that so-called justice reduces to the business of the strong sacrificing the weak, or the many sacrificing the few, for the sake of the power structure. He argues that it is a cornerstone of civilization, war, religion and democracy that some people have to be put to death before their time—"A hundred die so that a thousand may live." Slyly, Timms suggests that the detective has himself taken lives against the law for the purpose of safeguarding the social order...and that this is the *real* and *only* law. "We're not so different, you and I," he purrs. Though Hoover has indeed brutally punished a number of gangsters without bringing them to trial, the fallacy of Tim's argument is not lost to him. "That girl never hurt anybody," he retorts.

The general's line of thought is not a Hollywood screenwriter's concoction. It does indeed express the ascendant "value" of the twentieth century, namely

> …the reductionist philosophy in which a king is just a man and a queen just a woman, and a man and a woman but naked apes...all we have are laws supported only by their own terrors and individuals each immured in their private spheres and private interests.**

Such philosophy springs from reason that is severed from the moral convictions that move a normal human heart. As it has been said, insanity does not mean losing your reason. It means losing everything else except your reason. In particular, the general's reason has lost all regard for justice.

Make no mistake: justice (*nyäya*) is certainly reasonable.** *It is sanely reasonable.* It is sane because it is not dead to issues of innocence, guilt, extenuating circumstances, punishment and clemency. To investigate and weigh these issues (a meaningless task for someone who thinks people are just empty space), justice employs reason. The whole process is an act of honoring the moral law. The moral law is not reducible to private interests backed up by terror, like the law of the jungle. C.E.M. Joad states the case for the moral law with depth and precision:**

> The universe, then, contains "good", "right" and "ought" as independent factors in its fundamental make-up. To say that these factors are independent means that they are not merely *in*, or projections *of* our minds, but exist apart from us and are noted and responded to by our minds. The universe, then, is a moral universe.

As an advocate of Vedic knowledge, I must add a qualification to Joad's lucid words: only a person in the mode of goodness can perceive the moral universe clearly enough to administer justice fairly. "Fairly" means *in accordance with the law of the moral universe*—that law encoded in the Vedic scriptures.

The general was insane inasmuch as he viewed the universe as *nothing more* than empty space dotted here and there by spinning particles of matter, each harboring inconceivable energy. It therefore seemed "reasonable" to him that the detective's concern for justice was but an illusion fogging the clarity of a cosmos devoid of meaning other than power. In such a universe, the only law is the Nietzschean formula of good as "All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man" versus bad as "All that proceeds from weakness."**

What is this jewel of justice that sparkles within the breast of a sane man or woman? It is a virtue that decorates the soul. Like the detective in the film, *nyäya* (justice) has a mission in this world. It naturally seeks to protect, defend and avenge its innocent fellow-virtues *dayä* (compassion for life), *maitré* (friendliness toward other living beings) and *préti* (loving kindness). In a society that lacks a clear sense of justice, these fine and fair sentiments are misjudged as "idealistic," "feminine," "childish," or "weak." Actually these sentiments are brahminical. And since every soul is Brahman (spiritual in nature), they inevitably

strike a chord somewhere deep in us all, whatever our cultural upbringing may be.

In *A Goddess in the Stones*, a travel book by Norman Lewis, the author tells of villagers in India catching fish in wicker baskets and transferring them alive to tins filled with water.

> These were being examined by a pretty and expensively-dressed little girl, who I was to learn had never seen a live fish before. "And what will they do with them?" she asked her father. "They will eat them," he told her. She seemed to turn pale with horror, and was on the verge of tears. The father explained smilingly, "She is very gentle by nature. You see, we are Brahmins. We do not eat living things."

Çréla Prabhupäda told of witnessing a very similar reaction in a young boy born in a family of meat-eaters.**

> I have seen with my own eyes in Calcutta: one hotel man was cutting the throat of a chicken. He half-cut it. The half-dead chicken was jumping like this, and the man was laughing. His little son, he was crying. I have seen it. He was crying. Because he's innocent child, he could not tolerate. He was crying. And the father was saying, "Why you are crying? Why you are crying? It is very nice."

Many a youngster will be of one mind with the two Indian children. Spontaneously, without benefit of an education in moral philosophy, the young and innocent are horrified by cruelty to animals, lewdness, the willful destruction of nature, and similar evil acts. This is strong evidence that "good" and "evil" are objective values readily perceived (however naively) by an uncorrupted mind. For a few years at least, many children are insulated from corrupting habits and corrupting association. Unfortunately, in an unjust society, the virtues of *dayä*, *maitré* and *préti* are not systematically taught, protected, defended and avenged for very long. As children grow, their tender, innocent virtues invariably dry up as their hearts freeze in the harsh arctic atmosphere of crass materialism.

Liquidity remains ever a potential of water, even when it is frozen. Similarly, virtue remains ever a potential of life itself. No doubt, virtue is more apparent in one living being, less in another, just as intelligence is more apparent in one than another. But that all life is pervaded with the *potential* for virtue and intelligence irreducibly differentiates life from matter. Then what is life? The answer of Vaiñëava philosophy is that life is spiritual. Virtue is rooted in the eternal soul that animates each living being—human, animal, vegetable and microbe. Sometimes even the hearts of animals blossom with compassion and love for other species. Captive bears and gorillas have befriended kittens. A mother cat adopted an orphaned owl-chick as her baby. A lioness disdained to eat meat from birth, choosing to live her life as a vegetarian.

The three delicate virtues of *dayä*, *maitré* and *préti* need a powerful safeguard. This is supposed to be justice; justice, in its turn, must be allied with the three noble virtues of *satya* (truthfulness), *pavitratä* (pure character) and *ärjava* (honesty). In the absence of that alliance, justice will be misguided in its mission of protecting, defending and avenging mercy, friendliness and loving kindness. An example of how justice devoid of truth precipitates more injustice is manifest in the influential Western doctrine that equates the soul with the human form. That doctrine is *asat*, untrue. But in the West, justice is allied with it. For example, because the *asat* doctrine holds that before a foetus develops recognizable human features it has no human soul, abortion is protected by law, at least in the first few weeks of pregnancy. The same doctrine is used to justify animal slaughter: it can't be a sin to kill animals since they don't look human and therefore have no souls. Nothing could be further from *sat*, the spiritual truth at the core of the heart. When justice is not informed by *sat*, it gradually goes insane. Thus the general's notion of justice as the soulless aggrandizement of power that ruthlessly crushes underfoot the weak and outnumbered is utterly psychopathic.

Some people say the times they are a-changin': we are passing out of the ice age of the general's ultra-rational nihilism and entering a warm and cozy era of heightened sensitivity to love and life. Recent years have seen the promotion in Western society of what scholars term "the idyllic imagination." This idyllic imagination is hailed by many people as the emerging consciousness of a New Age. It is defined as the type of imagination that gives free play to fantasy and feeling. From fantasy and feeling, so it is hoped, virtue will be reborn. William Kilpatrick elaborates:**

> The idyllic imagination wants to escape from the harsh realities of ordinary life, either to a dream world, or to nature, or to a more primitive life. It follows mood rather than conscience, and rejects conventional morality in favor of a natural morality that will, it believes, emerge spontaneously in the absence of cultural restraints. When the idyllic imagination takes a spiritual turn, as it often does, it prefers a spirituality without morality or dogma.

"The idyllic imagination," concludes Kilpatrick, "is not unlike a child's imagination." As we have seen, children spontaneously value compassion, friendliness and loving kindness; now, with the popularization of the idyllic imagination, an increasing number of adults affect the same "pure" sentiments. But as noted, such sentiments, as fine as they might be, are meant to be perfected by suitable knowledge, upbringing and practice. It is self-delusion for a killer of innocent creatures to imagine himself to be a kind and gentle person.

The idyllic imagination shies away from a rigorous definition of goodness. It expects virtue to flow from *freedom* rather than *the discipline of character.* Thus the idyllic imagination is sentimental, not perfectional. This sentimental

formulation of morality acquired its ideological voice in the writings of the Swiss-French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who sparked an eighteenth-century revolution in European thought known as Romanticism.**

Romanticism was a reaction to the so-called Enlightenment Project, which was a seventeenth and eighteenth century French school of rationalism. Rationalism means any doctrine that teaches the supremacy of the human intellect over all other considerations. The French *philosophes* of the Enlightenment—Diderot, d'Alembert, La Mettrie, Condillac, Helvetius, d'Holbach, Turgot and Condorcet, among others—propagated an ideology of "the rational society" that is the precursor of twentieth-century technocracy. William Kilpatrick relates how romanticism arose to challenge the Enlightenment Project:**

> There was a limit to people's appetite for science, abstraction, and impersonal reason. When the limit was reached, a revolt set in. We now call it Romanticism. The Romantic movement rediscovered art, mystery, and irrationality. And it rediscovered emotions. In fact, it elevated emotion to a position it had never before held in the history of thought. And with this new emphasis on the emotional self came a whole new way of defining morality.

Similarly, the 1960s began with manned space flights that proclaimed to the world the triumph of scientific rationalism. Unexpectedly—during the trauma that followed the Kennedy assassination, while the body count in Vietnam mounted—the sixties were rent by an explosion of idyllic imagination. The blast radiated a shock wave of "pure" (read: undisciplined) sentiment that crashed against the soaring ice-cathedral of "pure" (read: scientific) reason. Though it failed to tumble the cathedral, the wave of sentiment did flood its interior. Barriers of racism and sexism were left in splinters. The gilded altars of wealth, power and intellectual pretension were heaved about. The wave left behind a trove of "new" values that the explosion had dredged up from the underground. These values were the remnant of Rousseau's Romantic ideology, which itself had been buried by the wave of hard science, high technology, heavy industry, cut-throat materialism, mass annihilation and grim ideological confrontation that had swept over the face of the globe since the early 1900s.

Rousseau believed that human beings are at heart innocent. They naturally love justice and harmony. The urban structure of civilization—which encourages competition and the ownership of private property—corrupted us. Rousseau marked the path away from citified ruination by his maxim "To thine own self be true." This translates well into such modern pearls of wisdom as "Do your own thing," "Hang loose," "Get in touch with your inner child," "What feels right is right," and "Get back to nature."

Rousseau paid lip service to the virtues of compassion, friendliness and loving kindness, but his own character was undisciplined and shockingly deficient in truthfulness, purity and honesty. Other philosophers of his time, who were

sympathetic at first to his message, soon soured as they came to know the dark side of Rousseau's personality. Hume and Voltaire dismissed Rousseau as a monster.** Diderot called him "deceitful, vain as Satan, ungrateful, cruel, hypocritical and full of malice." A woman with whom Rousseau was intimate summed him up as "an interesting madman."

The last forty years of the twentieth century have seen any number of interesting madmen who proclaimed a new dawn of peace, love, universal harmony and spirituality. Like Rousseau, these rollicking visionaries of the new romanticism too often turned out to be Pied Pipers who marched the naive into a moral wasteland. In that wasteland, demons lurked.

> The idyllic imagination lacks a tragic sense, and as a result it is more easily defeated by tragedy. Last year's Romantic idealist turns out to be this year's suicide. And because the Romantic is essentially naive about evil, he is less resistant to it. As a result, the idyllic imagination, upon encountering boredom, frustration, or temptation, sometimes evolves into..."the diabolic imagination."
>
> ...in the late sixties and the subsequent decade the popular imagination was captured by an idyllic vision. During that time, millions of young people turned away from the work ethic and immersed themselves in a world of idyllic dreams...As with previous idyllic flings, however, this one quickly developed a dark side. What began as a vision of Edenic innocence soon evolved into something else. If youngsters of the sixties were wearing flowers in their hair, many youngsters of the next generation were wearing spikes instead of flowers, and listening to a music preoccupied with themes of hopelessness, destruction, suicide, Satanism, and sexual mutilation.**

For centuries the "progress" of Western civilization has run a zigzag course as it bounced between the roadside barriers of passionate hubris and ignorant nihilism—or as they are also called, *eros* and *thanatos*: the lust for life and the death wish. First the West caromed off the hubris of scientific achievement; then it ploughed into the nihilism of mechanized warfare. On the rebound it hit the hubris of romanticism; then it shot across into the nihilism of wanton depravity. This zigzag path marks the soul's confused struggle in the grip of the two lower modes of material nature, *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (ignorance).

In Vedic culture, the natural virtues of the soul—justice, mercy, friendliness, loving kindness, truthfulness, honesty and pure character—are made tangible in society by a set practice of virtuous duties. Just as a person's musical virtuosity is built and polished by regular practice with a musical instrument, similarly there are regular moral practices that build and polish virtuous character. These practices constitute *varëäçrama-dharma*, the sattvic social order. When *varëäçrama-dharma* is observed for the satisfaction of Lord Kåñëa, it yields spiritual perfection.

varëäçramavatää dharma
eña äcära-lakñaëaù
sa eva mad-bhakti-yuto
niùçreyasa-karaù paraù

Those who are followers of this *varëäçrama* system accept religious principles according to authorized traditions of proper conduct. When such *varëäçrama* duties are dedicated to Me in loving service, they award the supreme perfection of life. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **11.18.47**)

In comparison, passionate and ignorant Western culture does not know what is to be done and what is not to be done to cultivate spiritual perfection. That is because the focus of Western culture is the body, not the soul. As previous chapters explained in detail, the bodily identity is the playing field of duality. Duality means the opposite pairs of perception and conception—pleasure versus pain, for example—that crowd around the fallen soul, entrapping him life after life).

Consider again rationalism and romanticism. *Apparently* they are opposites at war with one another. But in the end, the rhetoric of their conflict is a grand illusion. Rationalism and romanticism are factually partners. As functions of the lower modes, they are united by a common theme: disdain for the authorized tradition of goodness. This disdain is itself a Western tradition, the history of which was traced in the preceding chapter. It is a legacy of the ascendancy in Kali-yuga of materialistic *vaiçya* and *çüdra* values over the sacred knowledge of ancient priests and kings.

As a guest on a television program in Amsterdam, I had a dialogue with a person who embraced unreservedly the romantic ideal of the Noble Savage. He had been born and raised in Los Angeles, but gradually grew disappointed with American materialism. On a journey to India and Africa, he found his true calling and took the name Le Baba. His appearance was, to say the least, interesting to behold. For clothing, he wore the red and black robes of an Indian tantric priest. Plus, he was decorated in a way that suggested his passage through some sort of arduous African initiation ceremony: his earlobes were pierced and stretched to accommodate massive earrings, and his lips were similarly stretched around big ivory disks. I was therefore amazed to hear from his mouth the kind of anti-Vedic rationalist arguments that on other occasions I'd heard from bespectacled college professors dressed in suit and tie. It was Le Baba's contention that the Vedic civilization was but an old form of colonialism brought to India by light-skinned Aryan invaders whose purpose was to subjugate the dark-skinned indigenous people. Vedic knowledge, like all knowledge, falls short of reality. What is reality? Le Baba said it is the *çakti* (power) that pervades everything. Only the indigenous ("native" or "primitive") people of the world are in tune with

this *çakti*. One way they stay connected is by eating the flesh and blood of animals. Thus, in Le Baba's opinion, a vegetarian is out of touch with reality. He asserted that since Bill Clinton was a man of power, he had the right to sexually use Monica Lewinsky and other women.

Replying, I pointed out that *çakti* is a person—a goddess who displays the creative and destructive energy of the Supreme Lord. We tiny souls are under her power. If we misuse her energy, she will punish us. Le Baba's response was, "So what?" Nietzsche had the same cavalier attitude toward sin and punishment: "Live dangerously. Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius."** The sad figure of General Timms, obsessed with the power of the atom even as cancer ravaged his body, seems to me an accurate illustration of Le Baba's philosophy.

Nowadays a General Timms would be a hopeless public relations disaster. His era was the aggressively rationalistic 1950s. Since the romantic sixties, military authority figures have fallen from favor. By their very existence, generals seem a threat to our peace and freedom. Yet the general's doctrine can be imposed in a non-threatening way—indeed, an *inviting* way—that promises comfort and security for all. This socially acceptable form of Tim's philosophy is called "scientific liberalism." It is the present-day fusion of rationalism and romanticism that, having overcome Marxism-Leninism in the former Soviet bloc countries, now overshadows the whole world.

Scientific liberalism is a term coined by British journalist Bryan Appleyard. He defines it as the "enforced neutrality" of modern culture, which tells us "we must remove ourselves from values in order to understand them."** This is just the sort of rationalist-scientific logic that General Timms tried to feed the detective: Cool down, don't let the death of one woman disturb your equilibrium; after all, people are really just empty space; some people inevitably have to kill others—you do it yourself in your work and so do I; that's just the way the world is, and there's no more value to it than that. At the same time, the liberal or romantic aspect of scientific liberalism works on our sentiments so that we not only think but *feel* it is best to live our lives disconnected from eternal, transcendent virtues and values. In the excerpts that follow, Appleyard lays out for our inspection the emotional appeal—and the consequent moral danger—of the liberal-scientific project.

> Because [scientific liberalism] offers no truth, no guiding light and no path, it can tell the individual nothing about his place or purpose in the world. In practice this is seen as liberalism's great, shining virtue, for it is the one way of avoiding what the liberal sees as the horrors of the past.
>
> Liberal history says that societies that did tell the individual who he was, what he was for and precisely how he should behave have almost invariably been cruel and destructive. Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia were the great recent European examples...People

> suffered and died for their national religious or moral differences...Liberalism, institutionalized tolerance, would seem to be the only way of constructing a stable society that would sustain rather than oppress such a healthy plurality. This is the key defense of liberalism's refusal to be spiritually committed...But, sound as that defense is, it does not end the debate...For, as I have said, science is not neutral, it invades any private certainties we may establish as a defense against the bland noncommittal world of liberalism. It saps our energy...Tolerance becomes apathy because tolerance in itself does not logically represent a positive virtue or goal. So a tolerant society can easily decline into a society that cares nothing for its own sustenance and continuity. The fact that democracies constantly seem to have a crisis in their schools is important—it is a symptom of crucial uncertainty about what there is to teach, about whether there is anything to teach.
>
> At the heart of this spiritual problem lies the lack of a sense of self. Just as scientific liberalism holds back from the moral or the transcendent, so it also holds back from providing the individual with an awareness of his place in the world. On the maps provided by science we find everything except ourselves.**

"Decadence arises", concludes Appleyard, "from the obvious failure of liberalism to transmit any value other than bland tolerance."** In 1998, a group of British and American researchers profiled the cult of bland tolerance in an provocative book entitled *Faking It—The Sentimentalization of Modern Society.* The central thesis is that modern society is a colossal fraud rendered tolerable by an ethos of creepy niceness that, like perfume, masks the rot. A "sentimental fascism" controls public opinion by "a hammerlock on all the caring cliches." People have become "empathy-junkies" who wallow in a great hot tub of self-indulgent emotions even as they listlessly hand their lives over to:

> fake schools that spoil rather than teach children; fake religions in which a new commandment, "feel good," has replaced traditional moral codes; a fake social policy based on the evasion of personal responsibility; a fake political system that takes taxes from the people and gives back gestures and poses; fake counselors and therapists who pretend all pain can be hugged away; a fake environmental program that adds to pollution; a fake news media that manipulates its audience through emotional blackmail by promoting feeling over thinking, fake love that is really just a form of politics; faked feelings, whereby virtues like compassion, friendship and kindliness are imitated at opportune moments and then spat out like mouthwash; fake justice that decides guilt and innocence not by deep feelings about the violation of moral principles, but by how people today feel

about moral principles. In other words, there's no justice—there's just us.

Some arguments put forward in *Faking It*—particularly those in Chapter Nine that concern the growing popularity of vegetarianism—I don't agree with. But on the whole, the book scores impressive points with its insights. The following passage summarizes a great deal of what I have been trying to impart in this chapter.**

> Modern societies face rising crime rates, falling standards in schools, family collapse and widespread confusion about morals and manners. Despite our enormous economic success, something has gone wrong. Two diagnoses are common. One blames bad ideas, theories and policies. The other blames interests and structures and the way society is organized. But really the source of the problem is neither of these. It is something much more basic than organization, funding or precise policies; more fundamental even than ideologies and philosophies. Sentimentality is a feeling, or rather a distortion of a feeling, deep in the psyche of western civilization.

The Greek word *psyche* means "soul." There are indeed feelings deep within the soul: feelings for justice, mercy, friendliness, loving kindness, truth, honesty and pure character. These are the natural virtues of the soul. In a society based on the principles of goodness, these feelings link us to the moral universe. The virtues resonate sympathetically with the divine law that marks out the fate of the soul. *They are feelings of spiritual value.* Unfortunately, the program of scientific liberalism is to bury the soul under the bodily conception. It waters the virtues down into mere body-based sentiments *that are contrary to spiritual values.* The combination of soulless rationalism and sentimental romanticism is ugly and dangerous. It simultaneously degrades man and desensitizes him to his degradation...indeed, through perverted sensitivities, he comes to relish the taste of his own dissolution.

> In the desert I saw a creature, naked, bestial, Who,
> squatting upon the ground, Held his heart in his hands And
> ate of it. I said, "Is it good, friend?" "It is bitter, bitter," he
> answered. "But I like it Because it is bitter, And because it
> is my heart."
>
> (From Stephen Crane's *Black Riders III*)

Chapter Twenty,
Failed Hopes and Foolish Fantasies

The virtues of justice, mercy, truthfulness, pure character, friendliness, honesty and loving kindness, smothered in Kali-yuga under heavy layers of passion and ignorance, seek an outlet. They struggle to reach the cessation of all anxiety—which means a perfectional state of human interaction with the universe, other living entities, and our own bodies and minds. These three ideals, like the primary colors yellow, red and blue, are bright paints stirred up by the inner artist of prophetic imagination—ideals lending light and life to that artist's visionary masterpiece: a Utopia or a New Eden that, so it has long been hoped in the West, will come into being at some glorious moment of future time.

The conception of time as a moral agent pushing mankind toward a heaven on earth is, I think, really the essence of what I mean when I use terms like "Western mentality," "Western culture" and "Western civilization."1 This curious faith in the moral progress of time was noted in Chapter Eighteen in connection with science, particularly the theory of evolution. The same notion exists in Western political philosophy. It is called *The Philosophy of History*, the title of a book G.W.F. Hegel published in 1832. Therein he wrote: "The History of the World is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom."

I ask the reader to note carefully that the root of this faith is neither philosophy nor science. The root is the very *religion* of the West. At its deepest, that root is Zoroastrianism. As you will remember from Chapter Sixteen, in ancient times Zarathushtra or Jarutha conceived of the coming triumph of good over evil that would remake Earth into Heaven and mankind into gods. All this will be enacted by the appearance of a messiah. In Judaeo-Christian scriptures, the elements of Zarathushtra's prophecy are presented as an *apocalypse* ("revelation") from God. Thus down through the history of Western civilization, notes Norman Cohn,**

> Again and again one comes across the same weird, apocalyptic atmosphere, hints of some gigantic final battle in which the demonic hosts will be eliminated, the world released from the strangling octopus, a new age brought to birth.

There is no doubt that the apocalypse exerted an extremely powerful influence upon religious, political and cultural trends in the West. The influence remains even in the present "secular" (non-religious) period.** The influence was no less even in overtly anti-religious societies like Nazi Germany and Communist Russia.

In his book *The End of Time—Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millenium*, Damian Thompson shows that Hitler's Nazi movement owed a great deal of its mass appeal to a traditional Christian interpretation of the apocalypse.** The source of this tradition is the influential medieval mystic Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202), who advised Richard the Lionheart during the Crusades. Joachim interpreted the apocalypse as teaching about three great ages of history: the Age of the Father, the Age of the Son, and the Age of the Spirit. He imagined

that each of the three Christian conceptions of God that make up the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—inspire their own historical era. He told Richard that the world is passing from the Age of the Son into the Age of the Spirit.

Joachim's vision flourished in the fertile ground of the collective European imagination. Through the centuries it gave rise to a chain of apocalyptic movements, each claiming to represent the coming *novus ordo* (New Order) that Joachim foresaw would totally purge and reform society. (In evidence of the influence of these movements, the words *Novus Ordo Seculorum*—"New World Order"—are inscribed on the Great Seal of the United States of America. President Bush proclaimed the 1991 Gulf War to be a battle for the victory of the New World Order.) As stated in the New Testament Book of Revelations, the new order is to last for a thousand years. The long-standing European hope for a third age in which perfect order shall flourish over the whole world was put to effective use by Adolf Hitler. He proclaimed himself the Fuehrer (Leader) of a path of revived virtue—"obedience, endeavor, honesty, order, cleanliness, sobriety, truthfulness, sacrifice, and love of the Fatherland." At the end of this path glowed his *Neue Ordnung* (New Order) for Germany and the world: the thousand-year *Dritte Reich* (Third Reign).

Similarly, Thompson links the legendary mass appeal of Marxist Communism, so influential until just ten years ago, to a vision from the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament. Daniel envisaged four empires that spanned the Jewish world-era called "the Great Year." He saw periods of disorder marking the transition of one empire to the next. Karl Marx similarly divided history into four stages of society divided by periods of social upheaval. The first stage, "primitive communism," corresponds to the Garden of Eden. The second, "private ownership," corresponds to the Fall. The third, "capitalism and imperialism," corresponds to the Last Days. In this stage, "the proletariat" (the working class) assume the role of the Chosen People, the Jews; or in the Christian version, the faithful saved by the Blood of the Lamb, Jesus. The fourth and final stage of society according to Karl Marx is "the socialist revolution," which corresponds to the Last Battle (or as per the Christian notion of the end of the world-era, the Second Coming). Marx predicted the final stage would be established by "a dictatorship of the proletariat;" gradually, the dictatorial aspect of the working-class state would wither away into Edenic "true communism." In this formulation of two steps to perfection, Marx paralleled the Book of Revelations. It foresees the Apocalypse in two steps. The first is the return of Christ and his saints, who will rule the earth for one thousand years. The second step is the final defeat of the Antichrist. When all possibility of evil is at last vanquished, a permanent, infallible Eden—a New Order of Heaven and Earth—will be made manifest by God.

Well-known world events have completely discredited the Nazi and Communist versions of the New Eden. To read the history of these two movements is to taste the bittersweet fruit of the Western world's deeply-rooted

moral ambiguity. Communism and Nazism sprang from the agonies of Judaeo-Christianity like Athena sprang from the aching head of Zeus: shouting in triumph, armed with formidable weapons, bright-eyed, beautiful and energetic. Rapidly attracting millions to their ranks, Communism and Nazism surged forward to put an end to all evil in the world. But these movements themselves turned out to be icons of the darkest evil of our modern age.

Still, the hope for a revolutionary remaking of the world into paradise has not lost its enchantment. As we approach "Y2K" (Year 2000), that old Joachimite fever is once again sweeping the West. "Pre-millennial Tension" (PMT) is how today's pundits christen the fever. In a droll commentary on PMT that appears on page 41 of the *The Fortean Times Book of Unconventional Wisdom* (1999), Ted Harrison writes:

> There is a camera set up in a secret location which is permanently focused on the blocked-in Golden Gate in the wall of old Jerusalem. Pictures from the camera are available on a website, and anyone on the Internet will be able to watch when the day arrives and the gate miraculously opens, the Mount of Olives splits in two and the promised Messiah arrives.
>
> Whether this will be the Messiah's first visit to the Holy City or his second coming is currently the subject of major disagreement between orthodox Jews and fundamentalist Christians. Both groups, however, agree that something extraordinary is about to happen.
>
> What matters to someone with PMT is that portents are everywhere. One Texan Elvis fan, who has already been to heaven in a vision, preaches that Elvis is the true Messiah. Elvis died on 16 August 1977, and 16 + 8+ 1977 = 2001. Could that be the year of the apocalypse?

All the excitement about the year 2000 (or 2001) just warms up once more the apocalyptic hopes and fears that past generations focused on earlier dates. Looking through a few books on Western history, I find that the triumphant arrival of the New Order was predicted for the years 1000, 1033, 1186, 1260, 1300, 1420, 1534, 1651, 1657, 1701, 1843, 1900, 1954, 1982, 1988 and 1994.

Dates come and go, the prophets of the apocalypse fail to show, but the West continues to dream of a remade world in which the lion shall lie down with the lamb. That dream is the secret fuel behind the success of Walt Disney's "Magic Kingdom" theme parks in California, Florida, France and Japan. In arguing this, I am developing a line of thought suggested by Oxford historian Felipe Fernandez-Armesto.**

> The representative monument of our times—which will summon us to the minds of future generations the way the pyramids stand for ancient Egypt or the Parthenon for classical Greece—is Michael Graves' Disney Building in Burbank, California. Here an evocation of

> Hadrian's Mausoleum is kitted with Mickey's ears. The atlantes who support the pediment depict Snow White's Seven Dwarves. Pride of place is given to Dopey.

Dr. Fernandez-Armesto further suggests that Disneyland is a New Eden for those people suffering from modern anxiety, which is the anxiety of uncertainty. In former times, when most people in the West were certain that the Bible is true, their anxiety was that they might fall victim to the cunning of Satan and thus be cast into hell when the New Order arrives. Nowadays faith in Biblical revelation is much weaker—one reason being that again and again the predicted New Order failed to materialize. Will the Messiah ever come to deliver us from evil? Is our world really held captive by Satan? Are we sensible to go on believing in Biblical prophecy? Is time leading mankind to good or to evil? What *are* good and evil anyway? Such uncertainty breeds anxiety. Disneyland offers the masses an escape from that anxiety into a New Eden—*a Rodent Eden*—of sheer muddle.

> We live in a Mickey Mouse world in which images flicker with the speed of animation and confusion is treated as a good. The result is a crisis of values undermined, certainties discarded and fears excited. Trapped in 'future shock' by the fear of unprecedented, uncontrollable change, refugees scurry into muddle.

This muddle is the "magic" of confused images. Thus Disneyland is called "The Magic Kingdom." Before Disneyland, we imaged a mouse as a kind of low, disease-carrying vermin...something nasty and even threatening. After Disneyland, we image a mouse as a kind of messiah, a divine being who brings joy to the whole world. The magic of Disneyland helps us tolerate—even to enjoy—the overthrow of our preconceptions of good and evil. It is the magic kingdom of the gospel of scientific liberalism.

In 1998, novelist and newspaper columnist Carl Hiaasen published a darkly humorous expose of the Disney Eden entitled *Team Rodent—How Disney Devours the World.* In the following deft passage, he zoom-lenses our minds into the very middle of the muddle.

> Disney is so good at being good that it manifests an evil: so uniformly efficient and courteous, so dependably clean and conscientious, so unfailingly *entertaining* that it's unreal, and therefore is an agent of pure wickedness.**

In other words, the Rodent Eden is a sentimental fake. It masks with a creepy niceness the unpleasant truths of our material world—for example, that the business of rodents is to secretly devour everything edible in sight. By artificially covering up evil, the Rodent Eden is in fact evil. It immerses us in an unrelentingly "good" entertainment environment that blinds our eyes to the evil of birth, death, disease and old age. The human body is meant to be a door to

liberation from these material miseries. Without our knowing it, the Rodent Eden nibbles away at the very purpose of human existence.

Nature is a textbook of moral instruction. Human beings are meant to gauge the worth of their culture against that textbook. It is evil for people to degrade into "dirty rats," "greedy pigs," "lazy dogs," "lusty goats," "naked jaybirds," "silly ducks" "slippery eels," "sly foxes," "scaredy-cats." Scientific liberalism discourages this moral view of nature. It seeks to equate "good" human behavior with that of laboratory mice. In the Rodent Eden, this confusion of human and animal natures is made complete by sentimentalization. Where once children were encouraged to follow the role models of saintly persons, now they have cartoon animals as role models. Kids wistfully dream, "Wouldn't it be great to just live happily ever after with the mice and the ducks?"

I want to make clear that I have no particular ax to grind with the Disney entertainment empire. Disneyland is but one symbol of scientific liberalism...a very useful symbol for my purposes, as it is so well-known. The Rodent Eden is not just to be found on Disney property in California, Florida, France and Japan. It is an "ideal" (actually just a fantasy) that Western society as a whole is currently working toward—the ideal of an earthly paradise where magic, sentiment and sense gratification are more important than virtue.

In former times one of the great aims of Christianity was to inculcate seven cardinal virtues in society: faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, temperance and courage. Simultaneously seven cardinal vices were to be resisted: pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony and lust. The *novus ordo* was promised as the final reward for virtuous people and the final punishment for vicious people. Canakya Paëòita, a celebrated Indian teacher of moral principles, observed that a vicious person is a beast more dangerous than a venomous serpent. Therefore the goal of any society worthy of being called "civilized" has to be the defeat of this Beast Within.

A *fake* civilization fakes virtue with the magic of confused images. It douses vice with the perfume of sentimentality to give it the smell of virtue. The New Order of such a civilization is just a never-never land where we all pretend that the Beast Within is really just a huge but cuddly mouse. This is quite a change from the old apocalyptic vision of the final overthrow of the Beast.

Why is the West embracing an ethic of fakery? As we saw in Chapter Seventeen, the Christian program for social virtue was pressed on people with the great weight of Augustine's doctrine of guilt. Therefore people rebelled against it. In time, innumerable secular philosophers took up the question of how society might be perfected. One of the most influential ideas to emerge is called the *social contract theory*.

The social contract theory conceived of a society held together not by Christian virtue but by common interest. This theory *elevated common interest to the status of the most important human virtue*—as if by common interest

alone, a New Order would prevail on earth. Opposed to this virtue is the beastly "war of all against all" (untamed selfishness).

The French sociologist Denis Dudos offers an unsettling insight into the way leading nations of the West, especially the United States, hope to achieve victory for the "virtue" of common interest over the vice of beastly selfishness. The "new cosmology" of science is the inspiration for planners who

> …imagine how the laws of man's animal nature (*"homo homini lupus"* ["man, the wolf to man"]) could be used toward a productive end by channeling their energy into a conventional institution...As a sublimated animal force, the conventional will thus become the instrument for making man artificial and for rebuilding him as peaceful.**

Dudos is saying that the goal of today's social contract project is to engage science and technology in manufacturing a class of fake human beings. "Fake" means people who are social automatons, who cooperate as smoothly and precisely as do ants or bees. This sort of future is standard fare in science fiction. The film *Gattaca,* released in 1998, envisioned the world in a few years time ruled by a class called the Valids, who are born from test-tubes. In Valid society, the age-old human struggle between virtue and vice is bypassed by genetic engineering. Valids are designed to perform their duties with total social mindfulness. But that's no virtue—at least, not as the word is traditionally understood.

"No virtue" really means "no power of soul." Scientific liberalism cannot permit "soul," which is an absolute, non-material conception of the self, to define human nature. Such a self-conception is non-negotiable and thus contrary to the common interest. The social contract project intends to engage the laws of matter to rebuild *humankind* (the beastly child of nature red in tooth and claw) as *robotkind* (the soulless child of science). For people who are not happy with the prospect of being rebuilt as robots, there is a Mickey Mouse version of the social contract project that redraws people as characters in a grand cartoon of life.

Dudos argues persuasively that the effort to get human beasts to live and work together within an artificial, hi-tech environment simply cooks up paranoia and aggression to the boiling point. Instead of remaking man as a gentle robot or cartoon character, the social contract project remakes him as a werewolf—an apparently civilized man or woman who may at any time abruptly change into a monster and commit the most vile crimes. The artifice of civility gives the werewolf a disguise to move about undetected. Since everybody is potentially a werewolf, who can be trusted?

> Anywhere, at any time, a creature displaying the instincts of a beast may suddenly appear.** To make matters worse, innocent children will be lured to follow it, for the beast may take the form of a

> neighbor or a trusted friend. And if you suspect your neighbor is a beast, then he must also suspect you...So people act as if they were being observed, and at the same time they keep an eye on what is going on around them. Because of their mutual presumptions of guilt about each other, people create a sort of diffuse totalitarianism, mutual surveillance, and general state of anxiety. Signs posted on their front lawns warn potential burglars that "Citizens are watching you."...The system works well, and therefore represents the general interests. Peddlers of real or fictional televised terror become rich and maintain the climate of insecurity, reaping maximum profit for all institutions that live off fear: the police, the justice system, industry, and the weapons and security trade...we are really afraid. We really believe that we cannot let our children walk to the school bus alone. There are so many crazy people, drug addicts, and derelicts around. ...We forget the causes of these chains of events. In fact, only one thing is present in our minds: that dark feelings of hatred have been awakened all around us. You feel the same hatred mounting within you. You may still be a liberal antiracist democrat, but now you keep a can of mace in your pocket and your father's army pistol in the glove compartment of your car...Of course, you would never go beyond legitimate self-defense, but you know that behind your middle-class, responsible appearance as a family man or woman there is a werewolf in you, just waiting for the right time and place to get out and finally have some fun.

The hearts of people forced to live in such a society burn for "the day when Mickey Mouse is painted on the sides of bomber planes flying over Dresden, Hiroshima, Hanoi, Mogadishu, or Sarajevo."** On that day the liberal-scientific mouseman gleefully rips off the mask of civility and—to cite Carl Hiaasen again—"devours the world." The same high technology that is supposed to rebuild man as peaceful becomes Mickey Wolfman's instrument of mass destruction.

In this chapter I have tried as briefly as possible to show that the particular Western hope for the triumph of good over evil is unrealized and unrealizable. It began as a religious faith. It has atheistic variants like Communism. All are doomed to failure because the hope that drives them seeks its fulfillment in the bodily conception. True, the hope itself is originally spiritual: it represents the yearning of the soul's virtues for freedom from the darkness of ignorance and vice. But it is a hope that has been long misled by wrong teachings. There is a sense of urgency in the world today that the human race is in trouble and needs guidance—but not from the Western religious tradition, nor Western philosophy, nor Western science, nor Western political ideologies. These failed us. Where do we turn now?

Chapter Twenty-One,
Blind Mania

April 1954, the Oak Park suburb of Chicago. Mrs Dorothy Martin, housewife, is experimenting with a form of channeling known as automatic writing. She receives a message from an unseen entity who says his name is Sananda.**

Now, from the Vedic scriptures we know of a group of four perfect celibate sages called the Catuùsana (four Sanas). They reside on the Janaloka planet and can travel freely through outer space. Their names are Sanaka, Sanätana, Sanandana and Sanat. Though very ancient, they always appear as *kumäras* or small boys. It seems that Mrs Martin believed her Sananda was one of these Kumäras, since seven years later, after moving to California, she founded the Association of Sananda and Sanat-kumära.

Sananda told Mrs Martin he was from the planet Clarion. This planet, he revealed, "is a beautiful place to live. We have weather—snow and rain. We adjust our bodies to the temperature." The diet there was "the bread of increase." At one time Sananda lived on Earth also—when he incarnated as Jesus Christ.

Sananda belonged to the Guardians, a group of spiritual beings from Clarion and other higher planets like Cerus and Creton. The Guardians were professors in "the school of the universe" known as the Losolo. Selecting Dorothy Martin as their pupil on Earth, the Guardians invested in her a knowledge "of the light of the Creator" that she was to pass on to all people. This light would bring about a new order.

> It is ignorance of the Universal Laws that makes all the misery of the Earth. We see and know that you struggle in darkness and want to bring real light, for yours is the only planet that has war and hatred...We feel no sadness but are interested in the progress of the people of your Earth. Why? We are all brothers. Need I say more?...Surely there is light and it shall be revealed to you. You are coming to the end of the age of darkness.

In the months that followed, a small group of faithful, eager to heed the Clarion call, gathered round Mrs Martin. Through her they learned that the Guardians dwelt not only on distant planets but in a higher vibratory dimension, finer than the density of human thought. To receive the teachings of the Guardians, Earthlings must "be still of the five senses" and put aside thinking. "Direct knowledge" or "inner knowing" was to manifest through belief in the words of the Creator or the Father. Students of this knowledge should stop smoking and eating meat, as these habits confined them to a lower density.

Reincarnation was a key principle of the teaching, as was the recurrence of great ages in time.

Sananda and the Guardians soon revealed a grand moral drama of universal history. It leaves the reader wondering if Hollywood mogul George Lucas (creator of the *Star Wars* series) was also among Mrs Martin's circle of listeners. Once, long ages ago on the planet Car, the population divided into two factions: "the scientists" led by Lucifer, and "the people who followed the Light" of God and Christ's teachings. The Luciferian scientists of that bygone age developed a weapon called the *alcetope*, something similar to the atomic bomb, and with it they managed to blow the planet Car into pieces. This produced an enormous disturbance throughout the cosmos that almost resulted in total chaos. The forces of Light retreated to other planets such as Clarion, Uranus and Ceres, where they regrouped and considered their next strategy. At the same time, Lucifer led his troops to Earth. Now, in our time, the cycle of the past is beginning anew. Unless the people of earth listen to the still voice of the Creator, planet Earth may soon be doomed as was planet Car.

In August Sananda began transmitting warnings of a coming cataclysm. The face of the earth would be violently altered on 21 December 1954. At the first light of dawn (about seven o'clock in the morning), a terrible rumbling would be heard everywhere as the ground heaved, toppling buildings. The waters of the Great Lakes next to Chicago would rise in a terrific wave to engulf the city. Millions of people around the world would perish; their souls would be transferred to planets appropriate to their spiritual development. In September, a major Chicago newspaper carried a two-column story headlined: PROPHECY FROM PLANET. CLARION CALL TO CITY: FLEE THAT FLOOD. IT'LL SWAMP US ON DEC. 21, OUTER SPACE TELLS SUBURBANITE.

As the Last Days counted down, Dorothy Martin and her circle of *sibets* (the Losolo term for "students") prepared themselves to board a flying saucer that was to be sent for them by the Guardians shortly before the catastrophe hit Earth. Each *sibet* was given a blank piece of paper and an envelope with a postage stamp affixed, and was told that these amounted to a passport needed to enter the spacecraft. In strict privacy each *sibet* was told the password: "I left my hat at home." Some were assigned a seat number. They were warned that metal items, including zippers, could not be brought aboard, since these would burn during the flight.

On December 16, Mrs Martin and her associate Dr Charles Laughead—who held a leading status among the *sibets* because he tracked down footprints that a visitor from Venus left in the sands of the California desert—met with thirty members of a flying saucer club at a restaurant. The club was eager to hear in detail about the coming events of the 21st. Laughead told them:

> I think I can say to you—and it's no secret—that spacemen have said they are here for a purpose and one of these purposes is to remove

> certain of their own people from the earth. Now, you don't know who they are. Jack over here may be a spaceman for all I know. He probably is. You don't know it either. You don't know yourself...Now we don't know who we really are..."Know you not that ye are God?" You never thought yourself that way, but that's what you are, Gods in the making.

On Friday 17 December, Mrs Martin received a telephone call from a man who told her he was Captain Video from outer space (Captain Video was the hero of a popular weekly science-fiction television program that would be broadcast that evening). The man informed Dorothy that a flying saucer would land for her at four o'clock that afternoon. The message was taken seriously; the *sibets* eagerly gathered at Dorothy's house to receive the Captain with all honors. When the saucer failed to show, the group decided it had all been only a practice session. They turned on the television to carefully watch the Captain Video program for coded messages. None were detected.

At midnight Dorothy received notice that a flying saucer was on the way. The *sibets* waited outside in the winter weather until three in the morning. Again no spaceship showed. Mrs Martin called them in after she received a second message announcing that this had been yet another test. The next day five young men knocked at the door. They announced themselves as "the boys from Clarion." One of them claimed to be Sananda. Some of the *sibets* suspected that the five were just neighborhood pranksters. But Mrs Martin and Dr Laughead were firmly convinced that the boys actually were from Planet Clarion. In a private meeting with Dorothy, the boys told her that all her prophecies were false. She remained impressed by their superhuman personalities, their strength and intelligence. She had no doubt they were saucer pilots come to test her. After the five left, she held a meeting with the *sibets*. Some were in a state of ecstasy: real spacemen had at last visited! No matter what the boys from Clarion might have said, their very appearance confirmed Dorothy's prophecy. Others muttered that the boys were just college kids out having some fun.

At ten o'clock in the morning on Monday, 20 December, Mrs Martin received an ethereal message asserting the final pickup time: exactly on the coming midnight, seven hours before the cataclysm. Great relief and joy flooded the assembly. As midnight approached, the *sibets* tremblingly prepared themselves, removing all metal from their apparel. But as the clock rolled on past midnight, nothing happened. In the early hours of the morning, a new message announced a miracle: Dorothy Martin's husband, a skeptic who had taken rest before nine o'clock, would die in his sleep and be resurrected. Three times *sibets* checked his bedroom to see if he had died. He continued to sleep normally. At 2:30 AM, Sananda advised the *sibets* to take a coffee break. Finally at 4:45 a message came through Dorothy announcing that the saucer pickup as well as the coming end of the world had been called off by God.

The press and television reports were full of mockery. Dr Laughead's family forced him to undergo a sanity hearing. Though his examiners found him of sound mental health, he remained undeterred in his quest to make contact with "the boys upstairs" (his term for the spacemen from higher worlds). Most of the other *sibets* drifted away. Dorothy Martin fled Chicago, fearing that she might be apprehended by the law and confined to an asylum. She took the name Sister Thedra and propagated the lessons of her *kumäras* to a host of new faithful in South America, California and Arizona. She predicted that a messiah, born on Earth in 1963, would reveal himself to the world in 1975. In 1992 she died, her faith unbroken, still awaiting the descent of a luminous flying saucer from Planet Clarion.

After the failed prophecy of 1954, one may wonder how anyone again could take seriously messages received from entities like the so-called Sananda. But it goes without saying that channeling—mind-to-mind communication with beings who claim themselves to be God, angels, Vedic sages, and so on—enjoys even more popularity today in the Western world than it did in Dorothy's time, almost fifty years ago.

At the close of the previous chapter I asked where the West should turn for spiritual knowledge. The answer from many sides these days is: "It's all happening in the ethereal realm!" The information Mrs Martin received out of the ether is certainly intriguing. Therein we find the key elements of Zoroastrian dualism, so compelling to those deeply conditioned by *karma* ideology: angels and devils waging interplanetary warfare in an age-old struggle for control of the cosmos; planet Earth scheduled to be shaken up by a great day of judgement; a messiah just now coming; a New World Order to emerge from the chaos of the Last Days.

Mixed in with Zoroastrian dualism we find transcendent Vedic themes: that great sages live on worlds superior to Earth; that they impart knowledge from a subtler dimension; that after death people take birth on other planets according to their *karma*; that human life is meant to be perfected by transcendental knowledge. There is the *jïäna-märga* ideology that we are all God spoken by a man who said we don't know who we are. (Quite a contradiction, but let's move on).

In this chapter we will inquire into the nature of the experience that a Dorothy or anyone might have of messages from the ether. Should an adherent of Vedic knowledge give credence to such a message just because it coincides in some way with *çästric* testimony? We shall ask why such an "esoteric experience" ignites the sort of absolute conviction that Mrs Martin evinced. She *knew* that Sananda was a great sage from a higher cosmic plane. She preached his message boldly, bearing the taunts and jeers of a hostile world.

Similarly, a good number of intelligent people *know* that space aliens are busily abducting an incredible number of Earthlings. One estimate has it that

more than three million people were whizzed away by flying saucers out of the United States alone. Many people *know* that a secret world government is manipulating our lives. One does not have to look very far these days to meet someone who *knows* some externally unverifiable "higher truth" or other. It may be that a lot of these people are just misled by their imperfect senses, or by crafty hoaxers—maybe they've mistaken weather balloons for flying saucers or were tricked by men dressed up as creatures from another world. That sort of "local" self-delusion and hoaxing won't be our concern.

Our concern is the global experience of "strange phenomena" touching the lives of untold millions of people, and the strong convictions that come with this experience. The *global experience of the strange* and the *conviction that it means something extraordinary* is pulling more and more away educated people from the "public sphere" of scientific liberalism.** Political scientist Jodi Dean explains:

> The idea of the public sphere brings with it presumptions about truth, discussion, and consensus. Debate in such a sphere, for example, requires that everyone accept the same conception of reality. Everyone has to agree on what the facts look like...Thus, the liberal public is preserved and protected by the bracketing of certain ways of thinking or points of view.**
>
> Confrontation with a story of flying saucers or alien abduction pushes us to one side or another: Is it real? Do we believe? The alien seduces us into a critical assessment of our criteria for truth: How do we determine what real is? What do we believe? The claim to truth and its challenge to our practices for establishing it are what enable the alien to function as an icon of postmodern anxieties...The alien marks the radical strangeness and unknowability increasingly part of contemporary life.**

This is a comment on the state of the Western mind at the juncture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Something "alien" (from Latin *alius,* "the Other," also a name of Satan) is making itself felt in our collective consciousness. But this strange state of mind—which challenges the public sphere or *consensus reality*—is not new. It has manifested repeatedly in the history of Western civilization. It was known to the ancient Greeks. They gave this state of mind a name—*mania*—a word that has carried over unchanged into the English language.

Actually, the Greek word *mania* has its basis in the Sanskrit *manaç*, "mind." The origin of *manaç* is explained in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.1.4. The Supreme Lord in His feature as Aniruddha (the Supersoul) is *manomaya*, the creator of the mind. In this verse He is also named *çabda-yonim,* which means "the source of the Vedic sound." The transcendental Vedic sound pervades the *präëa* (life force of the entire universe) as well as the minds and the senses of all living entities.

Our ordinary thoughts and words are distorted, fragmental echoes of this deep, primordial spiritual vibration. Lord Kåñëa declares that He personally establishes this sound within all living entities (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.37).

Now, it may seem uncharitable for me to link the word mania to an "other" or "alien" state of mind that challenges the public sphere. Am I suggesting that people in that state of mind are insane? Insanity is only one sense of the word mania. In *Phaedrus,* Plato states that there are two kinds of *mania*: one he calls *nosemata*, "from human ills"—which obviously refers to insanity—and another he calls *exallage*, "from a divine release from accustomed habits."

Let's be clear about this: the second kind of mania is not caused by human illness like brain disease; it is actually divinely inspired. Recall again that the Lord of the Heart is *manomaya*, the Mind-maker. But does this mean that "divine mania" must necessarily be auspicious? This is a question that has troubled Western thinkers from the very beginning. It turns out to be another feature of the problem of good and evil.

In 1995, Princeton University Press published a scholarly examination of this question entitled *Whom Gods Destroy,* written by Ruth Padel. In Chapter Twenty ("Divine Double Bind"), she relates that *theos* and *daimon* were the two main Greek words for "god." "The same god, therefore, may be called *theos* and *daimon* at different moments." *Theos* is closely related to the Latin *deus* and the Sanskrit *deva.* The word *daimon* (obviously the source of the English "demon") is formed from the Greek *daio*, "I divide." Hence a demonic state of mind divides a man against God and against himself *even though that state of mind is God-inspired.*

Mania means a human mind possessed by a spirit that is "alien" or other than human. Hesiod (800 BC) is the earliest Greek poet known by name. His verses laid the mental foundation of Greek civilization and in turn of Western civilization. He *knew* that he composed his lyrics with a mind possessed by demigoddesses known as the Muses. But they warned him: "We know how to say many false things which seem true and to sing truly when we wish."** Thus the foundations of Western culture are traceable to a state of mind not unlike Dorothy's. We see that state of so-called divine mania was from the very beginning fraught with ambiguity: it might be truth-revealing or it might be full of lies; it might be good or it might be evil.

Today, Christians often take comfort in the notion that this ambiguity was solved when their religion replaced Greco-Roman "paganism." But in fact *theos/daimon* dualisms trouble the Christian world no less than they did the pagan world. Joan of Arc (1412-1431) heard inner voices she *knew* to be angels telling her to fight against the English crown's claim on France. At first the French Catholic authorities sided with her. Later her country's Inquisitor General convicted her of heresy. After the verdict, she herself denounced the voices as false. But soon again she returned to their shelter. Her last words, spoken as she

was being burned at the stake, were: "Yes, my voices were of God; my voices have not deceived me." Witch, madwoman or saint? At last the Church came round to her side, though a bit late to save her life. In 1920, Pope Benedict XV conferred sainthood upon Joan of Arc .

The ambiguity of divine mania led some Christians to believe that "good and evil are God's right hand and left." For a person in spiritual ecstasy, both are holy. A heretical Christian sect called the Adamites (active in Europe for more than a thousand years) taught its followers to be "good" ascetics until they reached spiritual perfection. Thereafter, like Adam and Eve in the garden, they could do anything they wanted without sinning. In the 1400s it was recorded of the Adamites:

> Wandering through the forests and hills, some of them fell into such an insanity that men and women threw off their clothes and went naked...From the same madness they supposed that they were not sinning if they had intercourse with one another.**

This sounds so very modern! In the last half century or so the notion that strange consciousness and throwing off norms of decency are ways to holiness has gained enormous appeal. In 1956, the New York bohemian celebrity Allen Ginsberg published *Howl,* a poem that achieved immediate notoriety because of its advocacy of promiscuous sexuality, intoxication, and suicidal madness. It ended with a vision of a beatnik heaven on earth ("Holy the groaning saxophone! Holy the bop apocalypse! Holy the jazzbands marijuana hipsters peace peyote pipes & drums!"). Ginsberg styled the self-destructiveness of the hippies as a kind of martyrdom to cosmic truth ("angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night"). Following Ginsberg's Muse, untold thousands of young people tried to make that connection by burning out their brains in drug-induced mania.

Tracing out the ancient tradition of divine mania and the spell it casts over Western civilization, Padel finds that the Greeks knew of drugs (*pharmaka*) that made men mad. In *Macbeth* Shakespeare mentions a plant (the insane root) that could inflict strange visions. So in glorifying modern dopeheads as "angelheads," Ginsberg spoke from the ambiguous heart of the old mania-tradition. The Greeks knew spirit-possession was induced by sexual abandon, music, dance, poetic meter, lyric and language. And they knew about the other-than-human transformations that these brought about in a person. Padel writes:

> Madness has a nonhuman cause, and nonhuman effects. Both the maddening demon and the maddened person are nonhuman. Daemonic causes of madness may be part animal...They have a human form and outline, marred by nonhuman attributes: wings, snakes, dog heads, talons, claws. So does their victim: human invaded, damaged by nonhuman...he himself looks like "one of the

> *nerteroi* (lower people, the dead)." His hair is wild: like snake locks of Erinyes. Like them, he "glares terribly."**

Youthful examples of snake-locked walking dead, eyes aglitter from intoxicants and mad music, their minds in another world, are quite common on the streets of Western cities. The image of maniacs possessed by demons whose forms are at once human and animal brings us back to the Beast Within discussed in the previous chapter.

Divine mania as defined by Plato is a spirit of emancipation or alienation from the conventional world. This spirit is morally ambiguous because its goal is to break free. The question remains: break free *how?* Dorothy's spirit "Sananda" instructed the *sibets* to refrain from eating meat so as to get free of the lower density of human thought and connect with the ancient heavenly order of interplanetary sages. In the West, vegetarians have long been considered revolutionaries, possibly even dangerous ones (during the Middle Ages vegetarians were considered heretics punishable by death**). Renunciation, at the high end of the moral spectrum, is a time-honored strategy of breaking out of the stifling public sphere. At the opposite end of the moral spectrum, the spirit of mania moved the Adamites of old and the hippies of late to indulge in wild, orgiastic behavior in *demon*stration of their freedom from the public sphere.**

Padel writes that in linking mania with the supernatural (the divine and/or demonic),

> Plato turned a new corner. The *Phaedrus* implies that most people in the fourth century [BC] think madness is shameful. But in suggesting that for those in the know there are better ways of thinking about it, [Plato] freed European imagination to value madness.**

I would like to add that Western imagination periodically comes to a point of intense frustration with the "reality-brackets" imposed by Western civilization. These brackets are basically the mode of passion. Mania is valued as a state of mind free from these brackets. But there are two ways the mind gets out of passion: "up" (toward goodness) and "down" (toward ignorance). The problem is that the Western imagination is not clear about the difference between the two. "Good" just means "getting out." The point is just to reach a state of mind that is "other" than conventional reality. Whether a mind goes "out" upwardly or downwardly is of much less importance: "Whatever turns you on, man."

You'll recall from the previous chapter that in Christianity, the virtues were faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, temperance and courage. These seven defined goodness. They were opposed by the vices of pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony and lust. These seven defined evil. In Christian cosmology, man was positioned between virtue and vice. Thus he had two ways out of his human condition: up or down. With the rise of reductionism, this moral distinction was cast aside. Even before reductionism the distinction was at best blurred, since

standard Christian doctrine maintained a unity between soul and body, and standard Christian conduct included meat-eating and intoxication. But reductionism utterly denied the objective existence of vice and virtue. The only reality was matter. As Harlow Shapley, Harvard professor of astronomy, used to say: "In the beginning was the Word, it has been piously recorded; and I might venture that the word was hydrogen gas." In such a worldview as this, what passes for virtue is the common interest—which simply means group animalism: eating, sleeping, sex and self-defense in a herd instead of on one's own against all others. Common interest comprises the reality-brackets of post-Christian Western society.

Hence Plato's definition of *exallage* mania (divine madness) becomes a "countervirtue" that powerfully challenges the prevailing virtue of common interest. As an old song goes, "We gotta get outta this place." But without a deeper knowledge of virtue and the real shelter of virtue—the soul and ultimately the Supreme Soul—mania is blind. Blind mania, as in the case of Dorothy Martin, is at best misleading. At its worst, it produces people like serial killer David (Son of Sam) Berkowitz, who received ethereal messages from an entity named Sam who claimed to be a two thousand year old spirit occupying the body of a neighbor's dog. Sam ordered his "son" (David) to make human sacrifices for his pleasure. Showing as much dedication to Sam as did Dorothy to Sananda, David got himself a gun. The rest is history.

Vaiñëava philosophy distinguishes between blind mania and real divine, or transcendental, madness. The former is termed *bäula* in the Bengali language. *Bäula* in turn comes from the Sanskrit *vätula.* In *Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Ädi-lélä* 12.49, Çréla Prabhupäda translates *bäuliyä* as "one who does not know what is right." The *bäuliyäs* are regularly inspired by experiences, convictions and enthusiasms that appear divine. Vaiñëava elements are undeniably manifest in the mania of the *bäuliyäs.* Ethereal messages from Lord Kåñëa, Çrématé Rädhäräëé, and departed saints and sages, feature prominently as proofs of a *bäuliyä's* holiness. But side-by-side all this, the *bäuliyäs* often indulge in tamasic activities like drinking wine, eating fish, smoking marijuana and illicit sex. Exactly as did the Adamites, the *bäuliyäs* think such affairs, when enjoyed in "ecstasy," are pure.

Even if there are no tamasic affairs, the *bäuliyäs* do not know what is right. They put all emphasis on mania: immediate experiences of so-called ecstasy, sensations that transport them out of commonplace reality. Because that is the bent of their desire, Lord Manomaya in the core of their hearts "makes their minds" glimpse the extraordinary—perhaps ethereal messages that partially or pervertedly convey Vedic knowledge; perhaps mystical visions; perhaps soaring emotional thrills; but whatever they may be, these experiences are cheap, ephemeral, and delusive. Çréla Bhaktisiddhänta Sarasvaté Öhäkura states in his *Präkåta-rasa Çata-düñiëé*:

siddhänta-alasa jana anartha to' chäòe nä

A person lazy in philosophical truth cannot cross over the obstacles of his material conditioning.

sädhanera pürve keha bhäväìkura päya nä

No one can ever experience the beginning of genuine spiritual ecstasy without first following the rules and regulations set down in the revealed scriptures.

kåtrima panthäya näme rasodaya haya nä

By employing pretentious means, no one can ever force transcendental *rasa* to appear in the holy name.

jaòa-sattä vartamäne cit kabhu haya nä

The transcendental consciousness of the spiritual world is never manifest in the mundane material condition.

mahäjana-patha chäòi' navya-pathe dhäya nä

Those on the path of the great souls never break away to follow a "new" path.

The "path of the great souls" (*mahäjana-patha*) is the pure and original way a human being is to receive the transcendental Vedic sound. Lord Kåñëa calls that sound *su-durbodhaà,* "very difficult to comprehend" (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.36). One must take instruction in Vedic sound from a spiritual master whose intelligence is illuminated by perfect comprehension. The Lord explains:

anädy-avidyä-yuktasya
puruñasyätma-vedanam
svato na sambhaväd anyas
tattva-jïo jïäna-do bhavet

Because a person who has been covered by ignorance since time immemorial is not capable of effecting his own self-realization, there must be some other personality who is in factual knowledge of the Absolute Truth and can impart this knowledge to him. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **11.22.10**)

Çré Kåñëa says those who neglect the path of the *veda-jïaù*, "those in full knowledge of the Vedas," yet who approach the Vedas in their own way, are *ku-buddhayaù* or "having perverted intelligence" (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.26). In the next verse He says that these people exhibit no virtues. Rather, their ornaments are lust, avarice and greed. They mistake mere appearances to be the ultimate fruit. They can never know their true identity as pure spirit soul. Their mistake, as Çréla Bhaktisiddhänta Sarasvaté puts it in *Präkåta-rasa Çata-düñiëé*, is to climb the tree, grasp the unripe fruits and forcibly pull them off—meaning that they try to take Vedic knowledge by storm.

The conclusion is: whatever gain such maniacs derive from their own path of knowledge will pass away in due course. And in due course, following the time-driven cycle of the material modes, they will come to take pleasure in the degraded affairs of the beasts.

Quite distinct from *bäula*, genuine divine madness is termed *divyonmäda.*

divyonmäde aiche haya, ki ihä vismaya
adhirüòha-bhäve divyonmäda-praläpa haya

> **Such is the state of transcendental madness. Why is it difficult to understand? When one is highly elevated in love of Kåñëa, he becomes transcendentally mad and talks like a madman.** (*Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Ädi* **14.15**)

But such ecstatic talks of the Lord's confidential pastimes are not marketplace discussions. This verse is in reference to Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu, who revealed His divine madness to only a small circle of highly-realized devotees. Although He is Himself the Supreme Lord, He did not allow less-realized devotees to participate in these discussions, knowing that misunderstandings would take root in their minds.

açakta komala-çraddhe rasa-kathä bole nä
anadhikärére rase adhikära deya nä

> A devotee should never speak on the topics of divine *rasa* to one who has weak, pliable faith. A devotee should never attempt to bestow the qualification for *rasa* upon one who is unqualified to receive it.

näma kåpä nä korile lélä çunä jäya nä

> **Without first receiving the mercy of the holy name, one should never listen to recitations of Kåñëa's confidential pastimes.** (*Präkåta-rasa Çata-düñiëé*)

Lord Caitanya Mahäprabhu's mission to the world is not to make esoteric topics public but to broadcast the holy names: Hare Kåñëa, Hare Kåñëa, Kåñëa Kåñëa, Hare Hare/Hare Räma, Hare Räma, Räma Räma, Hare Hare. Following in His footsteps, a bona fide spiritual master teaches the bhakti-yoga *system to the public at large so that they can cross over their material conditioning and achieve the complete mercy of the holy name. The process is nicely summarized in* Çrémad-Bhägavatam 4.21.32:

vinirdhutäçeña-mano-malaù pumän
asaìga-vijïäna-viçeña-véryavän
yad-aìghri-müle kåta-ketanaù punar
na saàsåtià kleça-vahää prapadyate

When a devotee takes shelter at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he is completely cleansed of all misunderstanding or mental speculation, and he manifests renunciation. This is possible only when one is strengthened by practicing *bhakti-yoga.* Once having taken shelter at the root of the lotus feet of the Lord, a devotee never comes back to this material existence, which is full of the threefold miseries.

In the first line we find the term mano-mala*, which means "the dirt accumulated in the mind," or "the tendency to speculate."* Mano-mala *must be thoroughly eradicated. How can we know that the mind is becoming purified? This is answered in the second line with the word* asaìga*, which means "disgusted by material association." Pure consciousness wants pure association. It can no longer stand the so-called pleasures of material association. This is not a state of blind mania, of just wanting "out" no matter how. The words* vijïäna *and* viçeña *negate that misconception.* Vijïäna *means "scientific" and* viçeña *means "in particular."* Bhakti-yoga *is a scientific process that particularly attends to all the details of purifying consciousness. The process is described as* véryavän*, which means "full of potency." Now, since the Sanskrit* vérya *and the Latin virtus are related, it is not improper to interpret* véryavän *as meaning "full of virtue." When the* bhakti *process is scientifically executed in all particulars, the natural virtues of the soul manifest with great power, carrying the devotee beyond the scope of material association.** This is possible for one who has no other shelter than the lotus feet of the Lord, which means the shelter of the Lord's pure devotees who are eternally sheltered at His lotus feet. The devotee so sheltered is never again deceived by his or her mind. That devotee is freed from the three modes of nature and never takes birth in this material world again.*

sevopakaraëa karëe nä çunile haya nä
jaòopakaraëa dehe lélä çonä jaya nä

If one does not hear the proper details of the devotional science from the spiritual master in disciplic succession, then genuine service to the Lord can never be performed. One absorbed in the various material ingredients of the bodily concept of life will never be able to hear of the Lord's transcendental pastimes. (*Präkåta-rasa Çata-düñiëé*)

Chapter Twenty-Two,
We Are All Really Looking For Kåñëa

In Chapter Thirteen of *Çrémad-Bhägavatam*, Canto One, the great soul Närada Muni imparts the conclusive Vaiñëava explanation of good and evil. Speaking to King Yudhiñöhira, he says that we should not lament for anyone in this world, for whatever happens is under the control of the Supreme Lord. Living beings and their leaders, seeking protection from life's evils, carry on with various kinds of worship or service. But their relationships with one another—both in friendship and in enmity—are set up and then dispersed by the one Lord of all.

A cow is secured by a rope through her nose. Similarly, human beings are bound within a network of Vedic hymns. This network is composed of the orders spoken by the Supreme Lord to all conditioned souls. No one can break loose from these divine laws and their consequences. The Lord's authority is absolute: the living beings of this world are but chess pieces arrayed by Him upon a playing board. At the end of the game, He removes them all.

Närada uses the words *yat manyase*—"Even though you think"—to indicate that these living beings indulge in the mania of mental speculation in the hope of freeing themselves from the control of divine law. Some try to understand an ultimate eternal principle. Others take solace in the notion that everything is temporary. Still others try to conceive of existence as a combination of the eternal and the temporary. In any case, says Närada, the sense of loss we feel when our attachments are overcome by time is due to illusory affection and nothing more.

Anxiety is caused by ignorance of the self. In that ignorance we feel sentiments for poor, helpless creatures who seem to depend upon us for their existence. Such sentimentality should be given up. The fact is that our bodies and the bodies of our so-called dependents are made of material elements that are always under the control of *käla* (time), *karma* (action and reaction), and *guëa* (the three modes of nature). The laws of nature ordain that one form of embodied life is food for other forms: those who are devoid of hands are prey for those who have hands. Those devoid of legs are prey for the four-legged. The weak are the subsistence of the strong.

All of this is a variegated display of the energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In truth He is one without a second. He is everywhere, both within and without. Therefore in all circumstances we should look to Him only. His *käla-rüpa* (form of all-devouring time) is a guise He assumes to destroy the envious.

Sanat-kumära—the *real* Sanat-kumära—speaking in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 4.22.27, says the gulf that separates the individual self from the Supreme Person is exactly like a dream. When one awakens from a dream, one sees clearly that there is no difference between the dream and one's own self. In other words, the idea that this world and its "good" and "evil" features constitute an objective, real barrier that separates us from Kåñëa is a subjective hallucination. It exists only because of our selfish desires. Sanat-kumära says that when these are

burned away, then *naivätmano bahir antar vicañöe*—"The difference between internal activity and external activity disappears." The operative word here is *vicañöe* ("acting" or "seeing"); the meaning is elucidated in other *Bhägavatam* verses.

kñetrajïa etä manaso vibhütér
jévasya mäyä-racitasya nityäù
ävirhitäù kväpi tirohitäç ca
çuddho vicañöe hy aviçuddha-kartuù

The individual soul bereft of Kåñëa consciousness has many ideas and activities created in the mind by the external energy. They have been existing from time immemorial. Sometimes they are manifest in the wakening state and in the dream state, but during deep sleep [unconsciousness] or trance, they disappear. A person who is liberated in this life [*jévan-mukta*] can see all these things vividly. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **5.11.12**)

Here the word *vicañöe* means the vision of a liberated soul (*jévan-mukta*). He can see that in the absence of Kåñëa consciousness, a soul thinks the only reality is the external material manifestation appearing in the wakeful and dream states. The illusory nature of this external manifestation is betrayed when it disappears in deep sleep and trance. Like the conditioned souls, the liberated souls also see the external material manifestation, but they see it from the standpoint of internal vision, knowing themselves different from it.

But what did Sanat-kumära mean when he said that the difference between internal and external vision disappears? That is explained in the next verse. A liberated soul sees Kåñëa everywhere. The external vision is simply a darkening of Kåñëa consciousness. Matter appears in that darkness as a mistaken perception of His energy; there is really no material world as such.** Everything is Kåñëa. The ever-blissful liberated soul sees Him always, and sees that the conditioned souls are missing Him only because they are in the darkness of ignorance.

na yasya cittaà bahir-artha-vibhramaà
tamo-guhäyäà ca viçuddham äviçat
yad-bhakti-yogänugåhétam aïjasä
munir vicañöe nanu tatra te gatim

The devotee whose heart has been completely cleansed by the process of devotional service and who is favored by Bhaktidevi does not become bewildered by the external energy, which is just like a dark well. Being completely cleansed of all material contamination in this way, a devotee

is able to understand very happily Your name, fame, form, activities, etc. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **4.24.59**)

All this is nicely summarized in a prayer offered by the demigods in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 6.9.37:

sama-viñama-maténäà matam anusarasi yathä rajju-khaëòaù sarpädi-dhiyäm

A rope causes fear for a bewildered person who considers it a snake, but not for a person with proper intelligence who knows it to be only a rope. Similarly, You, as the Supersoul in everyone's heart, inspire fear or fearlessness according to one's intelligence, but in You there is no duality.

Those who perceive the "snake"—that is, the external material manifestation, full of fears for the conditioned souls—are under three modes of nature. The *brähmaëas* are in the mode of goodness. They know well the network of Vedic laws that bind all conditioned souls. They know well how to utilize the Vedic hymns for material satisfaction. However, if by the enjoyment of the goodness of Vedic *dharma,* one becomes opposed to the Lord, that person is evil.

na tasya kaçcit tapasä vidyayä vä
na yoga-véryeëa manéñayä vä
naivärtha-dharmaiù parataù svato vä
kåtaà vihantuà tanu-bhåd vibhüyät

One cannot avoid the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, not by the strength of severe austerities, an exalted Vedic education, or the power of mystic yoga, physical prowess or intellectual activities. Nor can one use his power of religion, his material opulence or any other means, either by himself or with the help of others, to defy the orders of the Supreme Lord. That is not possible for any living being, from Brahmä down to the ant. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **5.1.12**)

If one so attempts to oppose the Lord, he is pulled down into the darkness of passion and ignorance where distorted and reversed *dharmas* make their appearance. In this condition of life, "good" and "evil" are practically meaningless. Living entities trapped in that darkness still try to achieve good for themselves, though in ways that are self-defeating. The cosmic manifestation of the three modes is what is meant by the term "the moral universe."

sattvaà rajas tama iti
tisraù sura-nå-närakäù
taträpy ekaikaço räjan
bhidyante gatayas tridhä
yadaikaikataro 'nyäbhyäà
sva-bhäva upahanyate

According to the different modes of material nature—the mode of goodness, the mode of passion and the mode of darkness—there are different living creatures, who are known as demigods, human beings and hellish living entities. O King, even a particular mode of nature, being mixed with the other two, is divided into three, and thus each kind of living creature is influenced by the other modes and acquires its habits also. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **2.10.41**)

The three qualities of goodness, passion and ignorance have nothing to do with the pure and original nature of the living entity, whether he be classified as a *brähmaëa* or demigod, human being or infernal demon.

sattvaà rajas tama iti
prakåter nätmano guëäù
tatra säkñiëam ätmänaà
yo veda sa na badhyate

One who knows that the three qualities—goodness, passion and ignorance—are not qualities of the soul but qualities of material nature, and who knows that the pure soul is simply an observer of the actions and reactions of these qualities, should be understood to be a liberated person. He is not bound by these qualities. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **6.12.15**)

The pure devotee, free from the material qualities of the moral universe, achieves the transcendental qualities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

sa tadaivätmanätmänaà
niùsaìgaà sama-darçanam
heyopädeya-rahitam
ärüòhaà padam ékñate

Because of his transcendental intelligence, the pure devotee is equipoised in his vision and sees himself to be uncontaminated by matter. He does not see anything as superior or inferior, and he feels himself elevated to the transcendental platform of being equal in qualities with the Supreme Person. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **3.32.25**)

A devotee living within the moral universe is not concerned with the material religious principles that control conditioned souls. By strength of his excellent qualities (virtues) he is able attain anything within the three worlds, but his only desire is to serve the lotus feet of Kåñëa. That desire is the key to liberation from the moral code of the material world.

ko nv éça te päda-saroja-bhäjäà
sudurlabho 'rtheñu caturñv apéha

tathäpi nähaà pravåëomi bhüman
bhavat-padämbhoja-niñevaëotsukaù

O my Lord, devotees who engage in the transcendental loving service of Your lotus feet have no difficulty in achieving anything within the realm of the four principles of religiosity, economic development, sense gratification and liberation. But, O great one, as far as I am concerned, I have preferred only to engage in the loving service of Your lotus feet. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **3.4.15**)

A pure devotee is not even interested in a liberated position in the spiritual world.

sälokya-särñöi-sämépya-
särüpyaikatvam apy uta
déyamänaà na gåhëanti
vinä mat-sevanaà janäù

A pure devotee does not accept any kind of liberation—*sälokya* (residence in a spiritual planet), *särñöi* (divine opulence), *sämépya* (association with the Lord as an equal), *särüpya* (a transcendental form like the Lord's) or *ekatva* (merging into the Lord's spiritual effulgence)—even though they are offered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **3.29.13**)

What is the reason for a pure devotee's complete lack of interest in the goodness of both matter and spirit? It is because his attraction knows no other object than the person of the Lord Himself.

yathä bhrämyaty ayo Brahman
svayam äkarña-sannidhau
tathä me bhidyate cetaç
cakra-päëer yadåcchayä

O *brähmaëas*, as iron attracted by a magnetic stone moves automatically toward the magnet, my consciousness, having been changed by His will, is attracted by Lord Viñëu, who carries a disc in His hand. Thus I have no independence. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **7.5.14**)

However, it is wrong to conclude that this overwhelming attraction to Kåñëa is an escape from moral responsibility and compassion for the plight of suffering souls. Rather, this attraction is the perfection of sentiment for the welfare of other living entities.

väg gadgadä dravate yasya cittaà
rudaty abhékñëaà hasati kvacic ca

vilajja udgäyati nåtyate ca
mad-bhakti-yukto bhuvanaà punäti

A devotee whose speech is sometimes choked up, whose heart melts, who cries continually and sometimes laughs, who feels ashamed and cries out loudly and then dances—a devotee thus fixed in loving service to Me purifies the entire universe. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **11.14.24**)

Such purification is due to the direct presence of the all-pure Supreme Lord within the consciousness of His loving devotee. The Lord is Himself the eternal form of perfect morality and religiosity. The immoral and irreligious cannot stand before Him.

jayati jana-niväso devaké-janma-vädo
yadu-vara-pariñat svair dorbhir asyann adharmam
sthira-cara-våjina-ghnaù su-smita-çré-mukhena
vraja-pura-vanitänää vardhayan käma-devam

Lord Çré Kåñëa is He who is known as Jana-niväsa, the ultimate resort of all living entities, and who is also known as Devaké-nandana or Yaçodä-nandana, the son of Devaké and Yaçodä. He is the guide of the Yadu dynasty, and with His mighty arms He kills everything inauspicious, as well as every man who is impious. By His presence He destroys all things inauspicious for all living entities, moving and inert. His blissful smiling face always increases the lusty desires of the *gopés* of Våndävana. May He be all glorious and happy! (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **10.90.48**)

Because all living entities are sheltered in Kåñëa, we all share in the blissful nature of His personality. It is due to this common blissful nature that we are inclined to be as free and independent as He is. The previous verse glorifies His amorous pastimes with the *gopés.* Some foolish persons think that Kåñëa's free behavior with so many beautiful young girls means He is debauched. Truth be told, absolute morality is sheltered in Him—the irrevocable law that since He is God, everything belongs to Him and is meant for His pleasure. And it is in this absolute morality that absolute freedom is found.

Kåñëa's eternal consort, Çrématé Rädhäräëé, embodies all that satisfies Kåñëa's desires. In the mood of a lovestruck woman, She has this to say about Çré Kåñëa's free affairs with Her:

kuöila premä ageyäna, nähi jäne sthänästhäna,
bhäla-manda näre vicärite
krüra çaöhera guëa-òore, häte-gale bändhi' more,
räkhiyäche, näri' ukäçite

By nature loving affairs are very crooked. They are not entered with sufficient knowledge, nor do they consider whether a place is suitable or not, nor do they look forward to the results. By the ropes of His good qualities, Kåñëa, who is so unkind, has bound My neck and hands, and I am unable to get relief. (*Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Madhya* **2.21**)

In the realm of divine emotions exchanged between Rädhä and Kåñëa, there are no formal rules and regulations. Çrématé Rädhäräëé says She cannot restrain Her behavior with Kåñëa—She is bound by the neck and hands. Yet Her one millionth-millionth part is the goddess Kälé, the powerful material energy that tightly binds countless living entities with the three modes. How has Rädhäräëé, the root source of Durgä's awesome power, become so helpless? She says that Kåñëa's excellent qualities defeat her. But this defeat is simultaneously Her triumph. That bondage is Her freedom, for She is bound in the intimacy of conjugal love to God Himself. And so she freely enjoys His auspicious association in ways that no one else—not even Brahmä, not even Lakñmé, the goddess of fortune—can.

viracitäbhayaà våñëi-dhürya te
caraëam éyuñäà saàsåter bhayät
kara-saroruhaà känta käma-daà
çirasi dhehi naù çré-kara-graham

O best of the Våñëis, Your lotuslike hand, which holds the hand of the goddess of fortune, grants fearlessness to those who approach your feet out of fear of material existence. O lover, please place that wish-fulfilling lotus hand on our heads. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **10.31.5**)

praëata-käma-daà padmajärcitaà
dharaëi-maëòanaà dhyeyam äpadi
caraëa-paìkajaà çantamaà ca te
ramaëa naù staneñv arpayädhi-han

Your lotus feet, which are worshiped by Lord Brahmä, fulfill the desires of all who bow down to them. They are the ornament of the earth, they give the highest satisfaction, and in times of danger they are the appropriate object of meditation. O lover, O destroyer of anxiety, please put those lotus feet upon our breasts. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **10.31.13**)

surata-vardhanaà çoka-näçanaà
svarita-veëunä suñöhu cumbitam
itara-räga-vismäraëaà nåëäà
vitara véra nas te 'dharämåtam

> **O hero, kindly distribute to us the nectar of Your lips, which enhances conjugal pleasures and vanquishes grief. That nectar is thoroughly relished by Your vibrating flute and makes people forget any other attachment.** (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* **10.31.14**)

Materialistic culture is just the opposite of this. Whereas the pure devotees led by Çrématé Rädhäääé achieve "freedom through bondage" in Kåñëa consciousness, materialistic people led by the goddess Kälé achieve "bondage through freedom" in *mäyä* consciousness. Their insurmountable difficulty is that by turning away from Kåñëa, they have turned away from *rasa,* the genuine taste of spiritual bliss enjoyed by the liberated souls sheltered at His lotus feet. The aim of material society is to generate *rasa* artificially. But as that is impossible, this aim is the root of all evil. The thirst for *rasa* drives the nondevotees into sinfulness, which threatens the very existence of society. Thus the government, trying to protect society, is forced to impose more and more restrictions on the citizens. This only encourages their criminality. Thus modern civilization is caught in a downward spiral into deeper and deeper levels of hellishness.

> The ramifications of the law, its complications, its apparently motiveless interference with private lives have lead to its widespread evasion; and the more it is avoided the less it is respected. This is nowhere so evident as it is in large cities where the violation of certain laws and many moral conventions is an accepted part of everyday life, where the man that violates them can point to a thousand others who do so too, where the anonymity and perhaps the loneliness and frustration of existence are emphasized by the impersonality of large business organizations and factories and by the restless competition for a place in the sun. All these things tend to condition men to accept crime not as an evil but as a means of getting what they want quickly and as an escape from routine and boredom. The family, the church, the club, and other traditional forms of social control are associated with the tired and aimless regularity of older, pitiable or contemptible lives and so lose their hold on their unruly members who look to more exciting means of satisfying a need for stimulation. Drink and drugs and speed and sex are exciting and so is crime and in cities the opportunities for crime are extensive...**

This, as good a description of hell as one can find anywhere, happens to be a description of "the free world" of urban capitalism. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 7.9.43 calls the taste that impels people to live in such a hell *mäyä-sukha,* which literally means "illusory happiness" (drink and drugs and speed and sex); Çréla Prabhupäda once translated *mäyä-sukha* as "humbug civilization." In the midst of this hell, Lord Kåñëa has kindly descended in the form of His holy name, which puts out the fire of material desire and directly reveals the taste for which

we are always anxious. The chanting of the holy names—Hare Kåñëa, Hare Kåñëa, Kåñëa Kåñëa, Hare Hare/Hare Räma, Hare Räma, Räma Räma, Hare Hare—is the proven method for bringing forth the incandescent virtues of the spirit self, thus reversing the downward spiral into which millions of unfortunates are being sucked at every moment.