

Finding Our Real Spiritual Identity

By Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji

First of all, we need to realize that we cannot know what the purpose of life is, or what we should do with this existence, if we do not know who and what we are. For example, when Arjuna was hesitant to engage in battle with those who had mistreated his family and usurped his rightful claim to his kingdom, Lord Krishna told Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-gita* (Bg.2.11-13) that though he seemed to be speaking like a learned philosopher, the truth of the matter was that Arjuna did not understand that the wise lament neither for the living nor the dead. This was because there was never a time when Lord Krishna did not exist, nor Arjuna, nor any of the kings that were on the battlefield. And regardless of whatever might happen in the immediate future, there is never a time when any of them will cease to be. One can see that as the embodied soul passes through this life from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at the time of death. Those who realize this and know their spiritual identity are not bewildered by such a change.

Out of all the philosophical understanding that the Vedic texts provide, this is one of the most important of all. An essential part of understanding spiritual knowledge, and an important part of the teachings of Lord Krishna, is that we realize our spiritual identity. Why it is suggested that we become detached from the world, or our body, or to see beyond the influence of the illusory energy makes no sense until we perceive that we are spiritual beings in a temporary material form. That is the key to spiritual advancement. Without understanding this main point, there is really little more we can truly comprehend or penetrate within the realm of spiritual knowledge and realization.

So now let us learn what Lord Krishna says about it. Remember, this is the heart or the essential spiritual teaching that He has given us, and does not include all of the other numerous verses found in the Vedic texts in which He explains this topic. And neither does it, nor can it, include the other innumerable verses that have filled the Vedic texts as given by other prominent personalities or *avatars* of God that further elaborate on this same subject. There are so many portions of the Vedic literature that go into details about our spiritual identity and how to perceive it that it lends credence to the fact that there is no other scripture in the world that deals so extensively in allowing the individual to understand one's spiritual identity to the depth that the Vedic literature does.



Lord Krishna goes on to explain that a person should know that which pervades the body through consciousness or awareness is indestructible. “No one is able to destroy the imperishable soul. It is the body only of the indestructible, immeasurable and eternal living entity that is subject to being destroyed. He who thinks that the living being can kill someone or is killed does not know this reality. One who is in spiritual knowledge understands that the Self neither kills nor can be killed. For the soul there is never birth nor death. Nor having once been does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying, and primeval. He does not die when the body is slain. Therefore, how can a person who knows that the soul is indestructible, unborn, eternal and immutable, kill anyone or cause anyone to kill?”¹

“Just as a person puts on new garments when the old ones need replacing, similarly the soul accepts new bodies and gives up the old and useless ones.”²

“The soul can never be cut into pieces by any weapon, burned, nor moistened by water or withered by the wind. The soul is unbreakable and insoluble, neither can it be burned nor dried. The soul is everlasting, all-pervading, unchangeable, immovable, and eternally the same. It is said that the soul is invisible, inconceivable, immutable, and unchangeable. In this way, there is no need to grieve for the body.”³

“He who dwells in the body is eternal and can never be slain. Therefore, you need not grieve for any creature [since all beings are, in essence, spirit souls].⁴ And when you have thus learned the truth, you will know that all living beings are but part of Me, and that they are in Me and are Mine.”⁵

Since all living beings are but spirit souls, then Krishna explains that a person is even more advanced in spiritual knowledge when he views all beings with an equal mind. It does not matter whether they are honest well-wishers, or are friends, pious, or if they are envious or act like enemies, or sinners, or even if they are merely indifferent and impartial.⁶

Nonetheless, it is not easy to understand the nature of the soul from a materialistic point of view. Lord Krishna says, “Some look on the soul as amazing, some describe him as amazing, and some hear of him as amazing, while others even after hearing about him cannot understand him at all.”⁷

It should be known that the living beings are without beginning, and whatever transformations they undergo, such as changes of body, are caused by the interactions of the material energy. It is nature that is the cause of all material activities, changes, and arrangements, while the living entity within the body is experiencing the various sufferings and enjoyments caused by such changes within this world.⁸

Krishna describes the predicament of the embodied living entities like so: The living entities in this material world of conditional life are in fact My eternal, fragmented parts. But due to the conditioned life [in which the living being forgets his real spiritual identity], they struggle very hard with the six senses, which include the mind.⁹ There are two

classes of beings, those who are fallible and those who are infallible. In the material world every entity is fallible, while in the spiritual world the living beings are all infallible [meaning not subject to the spiritual forgetfulness found in material existence].¹⁰

Lord Krishna goes on to explain: The reality to be perceived is that the material activities are performed by the body, which is created from the material energy, while the Self does nothing. When such a sensible person ceases to see different identities, caused by different material bodies, he attains the conception of Brahman, the Absolute. Thus he sees that beings, spirit souls, are expanded everywhere. With such a spiritual vision a person can see that the soul is transcendental and eternal, completely beyond the modes of nature. Even within the material body the soul is never entangled, just as the sky does not actually mix with anything, but is all-pervading due to its subtle nature. In this way, the soul is also in the body but is not mixed with it. As the sun illuminates the universe, so the soul within the body illuminates the entire body with consciousness. One who can knowingly see the difference between the body and the soul within it, and can understand the process of liberating the soul from this bondage, attains the supreme goal of life.¹¹

THE LIVING BEING IN MATERIAL EXISTENCE

By Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji

Lord Krishna explains to Uddhava that the subtle and gross material bodies are created by material nature, which are the Lord's expanded potencies. But material existence occurs when the living entity falsely accepts the qualities of the gross and subtle bodies [physical form, mind and intelligence] as being his true nature. Such an illusory state can be destroyed only by real knowledge [which is transcendental to the material environment].¹³

Lord Krishna in His expansion as Lord Anantadeva said to King Chitraketu, "When a living being thinks himself different from Me and forgets his spiritual identity of qualitative oneness with Me in eternity, knowledge and bliss, then his material, conditional life begins. In other words, instead of identifying his interest with Mine, he becomes interested in his own bodily concerns and expansions like his wife, children, and material possessions. In this way, by the influence of his actions, his material existence continues, life after life, and death after death."¹²

The living being in material nature follows the ways of material existence due to his association with the material energy, such as the modes of nature. Thus, [taking the unnecessary changes of life, such as birth and death, as the normal course of events] he meets with the good and evil reactions amongst various species of life.¹⁴

However, as the Lord says in His form as Kapiladeva, when the living being is unaffected by the fluctuating modes of material nature, and remains unchanged and

free (detached) from proprietorship, he stays separate from the reactions of the modes and, even when in a material body, remains independent just as the sun stays aloof from its reflection on the water. When the living entity is under the spell of material nature and false ego, thinking he is the material body, he becomes absorbed in material activities. Then, by the influence of the false ego, he thinks he is the proprietor of so many things. Because of his association with the material modes of nature [and the materialistic level of consciousness], the conditioned soul transmigrates into different species of life in higher and lower situations. Until he is relieved from these material activities [and conceptions of life], he must accept this condition because of his faulty work and consciousness. Realistically, the living being is transcendental to material existence, but because of his desire to control material nature to suite his own wishes, his material existence continues, and he is affected by so many disadvantages, like in a dream. Therefore, it is the duty of every conditioned soul to engage his polluted consciousness in serious devotional service to the Lord with detachment for material results. Thus his mind and consciousness will be under full control [and will become purified].¹⁵

Lord Vishnu further explained to King Prithu that one who is advanced in intelligence and eager to perform welfare activities for others is considered best among human beings. An advanced human being is never malicious to others. Those with advanced intelligence are always conscious that the material body is different from the soul. If someone who is advanced because of executing the instruction of the previous spiritual masters is carried away by the influence of material energy, then all of his advancement is considered a waste of time. Those who are in full knowledge of the bodily conception of life, and who know that bodily desires are the results of being influenced by the illusion, do not become addicted to the body and its pleasures. A highly learned person who has no attachment to the body will not be affected by the products of material energy, such as house, home, wife, children, or wealth. The individual soul is one, pure, and non-material. It is the reservoir of all good qualities, and transcendental to the body and mind. When one is situated in My loving service without motive for material gains, he gradually becomes very satisfied within.¹⁶

This is because the soul becomes naturally engaged in his real occupational service. When the soul can engage in the service that is natural to him, rather than being forced to serve and feed the demands of the temporary material body, which can give only fleeting feelings of pleasure, then the soul easily becomes very happy.

It is only due to the contact with the soul that one's vital breath, intelligence, mind, and body are functional. It is only due to contact with the soul that our friends, wife, and children are dear to us. Therefore, what object can be more dear than one's own self?¹⁷ In this way we can recognize that it is actually the soul in everyone that is dear to us, and not merely the body, which will one day be lost.

As Lord Balarama explained to Rukmini, the material body, which has a beginning and end, is composed of the physical elements, along with the senses and modes of nature. The body, which is imposed on the soul by material ignorance, causes one to

experience the cycle of birth and death. In actuality, the soul is like the sun, which never comes in contact with, nor separates from, the sense of sight and what is seen. Similarly the soul never undergoes contact with or separation from the insubstantial, material objects. Such transformations as birth are undergone by the body but never the soul, just as changes are seen for the moon's phases, but never occur for the moon itself, though the new moon day may be called the "death" of the moon. So as a sleeping person sees himself undergoing changes within the illusion of a dream, one who is unintelligent undergoes material existence in the same way. Therefore, with transcendental knowledge you can dispel the grief and confusion that is weakening your mind.¹⁸

Just as fire, which burns and illuminates, is different from firewood which is what is burned to give illumination, similarly the soul, the seer within the body, is separate from the material body. Thus the spirit soul and the material body have different characteristics.¹⁹

Lord Krishna goes on to tell Uddhava that the living entity, called the *jīva*, is part and parcel of Him, but due to ignorance the conditioned souls have been suffering in material bondage since time immemorial. But by knowledge, they can be liberated. Both the individual spirit souls and the eternally liberated Supreme Lord is within the material body. It is as if by chance two birds have made a nest together in the same tree--the body. Of these two birds, who are friends, one is eating the fruits of the tree, whereas the other who is in a superior position does not eat. The bird who does not eat is the Supreme Lord, who perfectly understands His own position and that of the *jīva*, the eating bird. The *jīva* soul, however, does not understand himself or the Lord. He is covered by ignorance and eternally conditioned, whereas the superior bird, the Supreme Lord, is eternally liberated. One who is enlightened in spiritual realization sees himself as transcendental to the body, although living within one, just as a person who has awakened from a dream no longer identifies with the body in the dream. Nonetheless, a foolish person will think that he is the body, just as a dreamer continues to identify with the dream as long as he is not awoken from it. An enlightened person who is free from the contamination of material or bodily desires does not consider himself to be the performer of those bodily activities. He knows it is only the senses that come in contact with any sense objects.²⁰

How a person falls into material consciousness is more thoroughly explained. Lord Krishna says that a person without proper intelligence will first identify himself with the temporary body and mind. Then when such a false understanding manifests within one's consciousness, material passion pervades the mind, which motivates one into activities that actually cause suffering. Once the mind, though naturally fixed in goodness, becomes polluted with passion, it absorbs itself in thinking and planning the means for material advancement. Thus, such a person becomes burdened with innumerable and unnecessary material desires. One who does not control the mind and senses comes under their influence for more material desires. Thus, he is bewildered by strong waves of passion for gaining the fruits of material activities, although seeing clearly that the results are often future unhappiness. Although a learned person may be

bewildered in such a way, he should carefully bring the mind under control. By seeing how he has been influenced by material desires based on the modes of nature, he does not lose himself in attachments.²¹

Naturally, the mind has a tendency to enter into engagement with the material sense objects, and the sense objects enter into the mind; but these are all merely designations that cover the spirit soul, which is actually My part and parcel.²²

Understand that those states of existence that appear to have a separate existence from Me, the Supreme Lord, actually have no real existence. They merely create the illusion of separation from Me, the Absolute Truth, just as someone in a dream imagines different activities and rewards. In the same way, because of confusingly perceiving a separation from God, the materially conditioned living being performs fruitive activity thinking them to be the means for future rewards and arrangements [which will satisfy his mind and body]. While awake the living being enjoys the temporary characteristics of the body and mind. While dreaming he enjoys similar activities within the mind. When in deep dreamless sleep all such experiences merge into ignorance, and he is aware of nothing. The point of this is to understand that within all three states of consciousness the living being is above them, or separate in identity and remains the same. With such an understanding, he can become the controller of his senses [and does not become attached to the temporary material sense objects of this world].²³

In this way, by understanding the unique position of the Absolute Truth through discriminating logic, one should expertly refute one's own mental misidentification with matter and cut asunder all doubts about one's own identity. One should thereafter avoid all lusty activities of the material senses by attaining the natural ecstasy from one's own soul or spiritual identity. The conclusion is that the material body, which is merely made of material elements like earth, air, fire, and water, is not the true self; nor are the senses or the mind, nor are the elements or the controllers of such elements, like the demigods. Neither is one's intelligence, material consciousness, nor one's ego. All of these simply exist within the realm of temporary matter.²⁴ The soul within the body is self-luminous and separate from the gross material body and subtle body. It remains fixed within the changing material existence, just as the ethereal sky. In this way, the soul has no end and is beyond any material comparison.²⁵

SEEING THE SPIRITUAL UNITY BETWEEN US

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As the Supreme says in the ancient Vedic text of *Bhagavad-gita* (6.30): "To him who sees Me in everything and everything in Me, I am never lost, and he is not lost to Me."

To begin seeing how things really are, and to recognize the Divinity in each of us, we have to start adjusting our consciousness. This takes place by being trained in spiritual

knowledge and by the practice of yoga which purifies the mind. When the mind becomes purified and the false ego no longer influences our vision, we become sensible people. As the *Bhagavad-gita* (13.31-32) says, when a sensible man ceases to see different identities due to different material bodies, he attains the spiritual conception. Those with the vision of eternity see that the soul is transcendental, eternal, and beyond the modes of nature. Despite being within the material body, the soul is above material contact.

If we can understand this information properly or deeply enough, we would not only understand our true spiritual identity, but also see the spiritual unity we share with all other beings. The essence of this perception has been related in the ancient Vedic texts, as we find in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (6.11) which states, "He is the one God hidden in all beings, all pervading, the self within all beings, watching over all worlds, dwelling in all beings, the witness, the perceiver." If one can truly understand this and become enlightened in this way, he will see that he is a part of the Supreme Reality and realize his union with all beings. Within that enlightenment one can reach Divine Love. This love is based on the spiritual oneness and harmony between all beings, which is sublime. It is a source of spiritual bliss. It is a love based not on bodily relations or mutual attraction, but it is based on being one in spirit, beyond the temporary nature of the body. This is the love for which everyone searches, from which springs forth peace, harmony, and unity, of which all other kinds of love are mere reflections. This state of being is reached only through spirituality. Therefore, a life without spirituality is a life incomplete. All have the need to fill their souls with spirituality, the presence of God, in order to feel fullness, peace, contentment, and unity.

As the son is a part and parcel of the father, similarly, we are all individual parts of the Supreme Spiritual Father. In fact, the whole creation displays different energies that are expansions of the Supreme Energetic. Thus, there is diversity within the variegated material energy which expands from the Supreme Being. These expansions manifest in millions of species of life, as explained in the Vedic literature. Therefore, although we are in different material bodies, we are all expansions of the same spiritual energy. This is oneness and unity in diversity. On the spiritual platform, which is absolute, we are all the same. We are all spiritual beings, servants of the Supreme Being, undergoing life in the material creation. That is real unity. This perception is the perfection of the spiritually conscious person. He sees all living entities as reflections of the One, the Supreme Being. Thus, in a broad sense, there is one interest only amongst us all. Spiritually there is no clash.

We are all but small reflections of the Supreme Consciousness. When we put the greater whole above ourselves, and realize that we all contribute to the condition of this planet, then uniting with a common cause and with that Supreme Consciousness will be easy.

This planet does not allow us to be isolated, like individual islands. We all must work together and interface with others on some level. One lesson that this school of life on this planet forces us to learn is that when we come together willingly to communicate,

with a positive purpose, or to pray together, and to unite for the good of the whole, then harmony and peace can exist. That peace forms and manifests when we focus on our spiritual nature, which brings between us our unity in the Supreme. Making this the center of our existence will easily bring peace, unity, and harmony in this world because it brings in the spiritual vibration that emanates from the Supreme. That vibration is one of spiritual love. It is all that is eternal. All else is temporary. Therefore, focusing on and using our energy on temporary emotions such as envy, jealousy, and anger, will only keep us far away from the Supreme, and from reaching any peace or unity between us.

We have to recognize how similar we are in order to expand our heart toward others we may have previously rejected. This is how love and understanding can dissolve the boundaries that keep us stifled as a society and individuals, and keep us from entering higher dimensions of consciousness. There is no other way to grow spiritually. A lack of love for each other reflects a lack of love for God.

When we think in spiritual consciousness, we do not recognize others by their differences. We see our similarities. This is easy when we think in terms of being sons and daughters of the same Supreme Father. We all belong to the One. Only in this way can there be universal love among all living entities. Only in this way can we begin to think that we are all related to each other. Once we establish our relationship with the Supreme, then we can establish our true relationship with everyone else. Our spiritual nature is eternal, and our spiritual relation with the Supreme is eternal. Therefore, our spiritual relationship with each other is also eternal. It is not subject to time and circumstances. This central point has to be established in order for there to be universal peace, brotherhood, equality, and unity in the world.

In essence, we are all consciousness in material forms. Consciousness cannot be destroyed. It is the essence of God in each of us. We are all spiritual beings, reflections of the Divine. We are not our bodies, our cultures, or our minds and bodies. We are all divine souls on a wondrous journey through Truth and back to Truth. We have all manifested from God, the Supreme Truth, and we are all evolving back to God. As the *Manu-samhita*(12.125) relates, "Thus, he who by means of Self sees the self in all created things, after attaining equality with all, enters into Brahman [the spiritual atmosphere], the highest place." That is the ultimate goal.

THE REINCARNATION OF THE SOUL

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First of all He explains in the *Bhagavad-gita* (2.13) that, "As the embodied soul continually passes in this body from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change... As a person puts on new garments, giving up the old ones, similarly the soul takes on new material bodies giving up the old and useless ones."²⁶

Since the soul is eternal but, in most cases in the material world, waiting to discover the way of liberation, the living being undergoes the continuation of the cycles of birth and death. So how this takes place is extensively explained in the numerous branches of the Vedic literature, but here it is summed up by Lord Krishna.

So the continuation of life in new bodies after death is as natural as changing clothes. There is no need to mourn the body's demise when a person dies, although we may miss that person, for he or she will continue on in another form, like a change of outfit.

Lord Krishna goes on to relate: "It is said that the soul is invisible, inconceivable, immutable, and unchangeable. Knowing this, you should not grieve for the body. If, however, you think the soul is perpetually born and always dies, still you have no reason to lament. For one who has taken birth, death is certain; and for one who is dead, birth is certain. Therefore you should not lament."²⁷

In this way, we can understand that lamenting for the temporary body is a sign of misunderstanding the reality of the situation. In actuality, the soul is our real identity and we are merely taking up residence in a material body for a short length of time. As we progress through life we develop a type of consciousness, depending on our activities and habitual thought patterns and desires. This consciousness is tested at the time of death and perceived by what we are thinking of and our state of being when we are forced to give up this body. As Lord Krishna explains, "Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail."²⁸ Thus, our consciousness takes us into the next form of existence according to what we deserve and desire.

"The living entity in the material world carries his different conceptions of life from one body to another as the air carries aromas. Thus taking another gross body, the living being obtains a certain type of ear, tongue, nose, and sense of touch, which are grouped about the mind. He thus enjoys a particular set of sense objects."²⁹ So the final level of consciousness that a person develops in this life will provide him the means of acquiring the correct kind of body in the next life, with a certain set of senses, such as ear, nose, tongue, and sense of touch, so that he can live, enjoy, experience, or suffer in a certain way, and in the proper species that will accommodate such desires and consciousness. As it is said, out of love, hate or fear an embodied soul focuses his or her mind on something, and when done in such a way at the time of death, the person will attain the form that is being concentrated upon without fail. This is all based on what he is most attracted to, or what you could say he is meditating on, at the time of death. Furthermore, a person forms a type of karma according to his good or bad activities. This governs what a person deserves in his next life in terms of good or bad circumstances. But not everyone can apprehend how this process takes place.

"The foolish cannot understand," Krishna explains, "how a living entity can quit his body, nor can they understand what sort of body he enjoys under the spell of the modes of nature. But one whose eyes are trained in knowledge can see all this. The endeavoring transcendentalist, who is situated in self-realization, can clearly see this. But those who

are not situated in self-realization cannot see what is taking place, though they may try to.”³⁰

“As long as the living being forgets his spiritual identity and perceives separate states of existence within the modes of material nature, he will be forced to take birth in various forms of existence in numerous varieties of experience.”³¹

“The unintelligent person in a material body, which has been created by his previous karma, as a result of his various activities, thinks that he is the one who performs or is responsible for everything he does. However, bewildered by his false ego, or his thinking that he is the body, the foolish person is caught by the reactions of all of his activities, and thus he is carried along by the interactions of the modes of nature [which push and pull him to act in various ways]. An enlightened person, however, who is fixed in detachment to the body [seeing himself as a spiritual being who is merely inside the body], will engage his body in all kinds of functions, whether sitting, standing, bathing, seeing, touching, eating, etc., and is never entangled by them. He remains as a witness to all that he does and does not get caught in such activities like the deluded person.”³²

“In this way, the conditioned soul has been accepting material bodies since time immemorial. These bodies are like great trees that sustain one’s material existence. Just as a tree produces blossoms and then bears fruit, similarly the material body produces various activities which bear fruit in the form of reactions for which the living being is accountable.”³³

This accountability is called karma, and as Lord Krishna further explains, “The material body moves according to the control of a higher destiny. Therefore, the living entity must live in such a body, along with the mind and senses, as long as one’s karma is in effect. But a self-realized soul who knows the absolute reality, and is situated in the perfect stage of yoga, never surrenders to the demands of the body, knowing it to be just like a form seen in a dream.”³⁴

In conclusion, Lord Krishna explains the whole process of reincarnation as follows: The materialistic mind is shaped by the reactions to fruitive work. Because of the desires held within, it travels from one body to another. Because of false identity, the spirit soul follows along with it. Bound by its karma, or reactions to fruitive work [which instills the strength in its habitual thought patterns], the mind always dwells on the objects for which the senses hanker, both those of this world and those that he has heard about which he hopes to acquire in the next. As a result, the mind appears to come into being and then suffer annihilation with the loss of the body. Thus it loses its ability to perceive past and future (lives). When the living being is released from this body and enters the next, which is a product of his karma, he immediately becomes absorbed in the new circumstances of pleasure and pain, and completely forgets the previous body. The complete forgetfulness of the previous material existence is called death. Birth is merely a living being’s total identification with the new body, as if accepting the experience of a dream as reality. Thus, a person thinks that he is only now coming into being, just as a dreamer forgets all of his previous dreams once he starts a new one. As the mind

begins to accept the identity of a new body, it also begins to interpret the various levels of good or bad experiences that seem to affect it in this new life.³⁵

Because of the swift nature of time, material bodies are always undergoing creation and annihilation. But the subtle nature of time makes this imperceptible. Such different transformations take place just like those seen in the current of a river with ever-new water entering the area while the old moves away. Or like the stages exhibited by the light from a candle, such a flame emanates innumerable rays, all of which exhibit constant cycles of creation, transition, and elimination. Yet a foolish person says this is the light of the lamp, or this is the water of the river. Similarly, the material body is in constant transformation, yet those deluded by time think that at each moment the body is their real identity. In the same way, a living being does not actually take birth with a body, nor does he die. He is immortal. Only by illusion does it appear that a person is born and dies. Impregnation, gestation, birth, infancy, childhood, youth, middle age, old age, and death are the nine ages of the body. It is due to ignorance from material association that one identifies oneself with both positive and negative circumstances, even though the Self is different from the body. However, if one is fortunate, he can give up such a conception.³⁶

A person can understand the likelihood of dying as well as rebirth by observing the death of one's own father or grandfather, or the birth of one's son. Thus, a person can be free from these dualities of life by understanding this realistically, and recognizing that the witness to one's birth and death, or one's own Self, is separate from the body. Yet, an unintelligent person will become completely bewildered by material nature if he fails to differentiate himself from it. Thus, he sinks deeper into the cycle of material existence. Due to his fruitive activities, a conditioned soul may come in contact with the mode of goodness and take birth among the demigods or wise men. Through the mode of passion he becomes a human being, or even a demon. And through the mode of ignorance he appears within the ghostly or animal species. Ultimately, the material life and experience of sensual pleasure is actually false. It is similar to a tree appearing to be quivering when its reflection is viewed on agitated water, or as if the earth is moving when one turns his eyes around in circles. It is a false impression, like that seen in a dream. In truth, the impermanent material existence does not stop for one who is engrossed in thinking about it, although it lacks reality. Therefore, one should not try to enjoy the temporary happiness that comes from the objects of the senses. Such an illusion based on the dualistic nature of the material energy will keep one from realizing the soul. Thus, even if one is insulted, ridiculed, or neglected by evil men, or even repeatedly beaten, tied up, or spat or urinated on by ignorant people, one who wishes to attain the highest goal of life should tolerate such difficulties and by intelligence keep oneself safely on the spiritual path.³⁷

Hinduism & Yoga Predates Christianity: The Archeological Proof

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Not far from the Buddhist site of Sanchi in Central India, we take a 45-minute ride on the very bumpy road to Vidisha or Besnagar where we find the Heliodorus column, locally known as the Khamb Baba pillar. This was erected by Heliodorus, the Greek ambassador to India in 113 B.C. Heliodorus was sent to the court of King Bhagabhadra by Antialkidas, the Greek king of Taxila. The kingdom of Taxila was part of the Bactrian region in northwest India, which had been conquered by Alexander the Great in 325 BC. By the time of Antialkidas, the area under Greek rule included what is now Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Punjab.

Sometimes there are comments and even controversies amongst those who are less informed regarding whether Christianity or Hinduism (Vedic culture) came first. Some people point out that the devotional elements within the Vedic tradition, especially in regard to the Bhakti movements, must have come from Christianity first and then appeared in the Vedic Vaishnava tradition, the followers of which exhibit much love and devotion to Lord Krishna and Vishnu and His other incarnations. But this idea, that Vedic culture came from Christianity, which some Christian preachers try to use, could not be further from the truth. And if they do not look closer at the facts of history, then they will only look like envious fools. The fact is that there is an archeological proof that the Vaishnava tradition of devotion to Lord Vishnu existed many years prior to the appearance of Christianity.

Heliodorus writes on the stone pillar the time it was erected and the fact that he had converted to Vaishnavism, or the worship of Lord Vishnu. The inscription on the column, as published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, says:

"This Garuda column of Vasudeva (Vishnu), the god of gods, was erected here by Heliodorus, a worshiper of Vishnu, the son of Dion, and an inhabitant of Taxila, who came as Greek ambassador from the Great King Antialkidas to King Kasiputra Bhagabhadra, the Savior, then reigning prosperously in the fourteenth year of his kingship. Three important precepts when practiced lead to heaven: self-restraint, charity, conscientiousness."

This shows that Heliodorus had become a worshiper of Vishnu and was well versed in the texts and ways pertaining to this religion. It can only be guessed how many other Greeks became converted to Vaishnava Hinduism if such a notable ambassador did. This conclusively shows the Greek appreciation for India and its philosophy.

It was General Alexander Cunningham who was doing an archeological survey in 1877 who first took notice of the significance of the column. However, he did not attend to the inscription that was on it because it was covered with vermilion. This was because the pilgrims who worshiped had a custom to smear the column with vermilion.

It was only in January of 1901 when a Mr. Lake uncovered the paint from what he thought was some lettering. Once the ancient Brahmi text was translated, the historical significance of the column became ever more apparent.

The British Sanskritists, due to their superior views of themselves, had developed the idea that much of the Vedic traditions and legends of Lord Krishna had to have been incorporated from the Bible and the stories of Jesus. However, this Heliodorus column was the archeological discovery that proved to the disappointed British that knowledge of Krishna and the Vaishnava tradition predated Christianity by at least 200 years. The column indicated that the Indians did not adopt legends of Christ to put in their *Puranas* to be used for the stories of Krishna as the British had hypothesized since this gave proof that knowledge of Krishna predated Jesus by almost 200 years.

Another point to consider is that if a Greek official was so impressed with the philosophy of Vaishnavism that he converted to it in 200 B.C., then it means that Vaishnavism and the element of spiritual devotion to God, as found in the bhakti tradition, had to have been developed several hundred years if not several thousand years earlier in order for it to have developed to a stage wherein the Greeks were so much impressed by it. So this is a serious historical site to see. The Heliodorus column also indicates that the Vedic tradition accepted converts at that time. Only after the difficulties between Hindus and Muslims was there a hesitancy on the part of Hindus to accept converts to the Vedic tradition.

This evidence further shows that Greece was but a part of Vedic culture and repeated what it and its philosophers had learned from the Vedic sages rather than being a source of the higher levels of philosophy as some people think. Furthermore, this evidence bears witness to the fact that the Christian tradition and its main element of devotion or bhakti to God was found in Vedic culture long before it appeared within the confines of Christianity. In fact, much of the deeper spiritual philosophy in Christianity is but a repeat of what had been previously established and much more deeply developed in the older Vedic tradition. So to fathom the deeper aspects of the different levels of devotion to God, one can investigate the Vedic and Vaishnava tradition to learn the finer details.

[For more evidence and analysis of this, see my articles, "[Christianity and The Yoga Teachings Within It](#)," "[Ruprajhi Taught Bhakti-yoga](#)," and "[Yoga Teaches Chanting God's Names](#)."]

Below are two views of the Heliodurus Column as found in Vidisha, India from the author's collection who personally visited the place in August of 1990. The left view is the complete column, while on the right we see a close up of the inscription.

The Antiquity of Krishna

By Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji

"The Beshnagar record testifies to the proselytizing zeal of the Bhagavatas in the pre-Christian centuries, and shows that their religion was excellent enough to capture the hearts of cultured Greeks, and catholic enough to admit them into its fold."

Presently, Heliodorus is the earliest Westerner on record who actually converted to Vaisnavism. Moreover, many reputable scholars, like Dr. A. L Basham and Dr. Thomas Hopkins, declare that Heliodorus was not the only Greek to convert. Dr. Hopkins, Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at Franklin and Marshall college, says, "Heliodorus was presumably not the only foreigner who was converted to Vaisnava devotional practices (although he might have been the only one to erect a column, at least one that is still extant). Certainly there must have been many other." The Vedic religion saw itself as universal and welcomed all peoples into its embrace. As Raychaudhari writes:

The Mora Well and Ghosundi Inscriptions, additional archeological discoveries, tell us that the rich and complex Vaisnava conception of the Godhead and full expansions of the Godhead into the material universes were already well established in the first two centuries before Christ. The *Srimad Bhagavatam* says, that when the original Godhead, or Krishna, appears on the earthly plane, the Godhead always is accompanied by



various complete expansions of the Godhead, who both possess the full potency of the Godhead and are worshipable. *The Srimad Bhagavatam* states, "Lord Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, along with Balarama, played like a human being, and so masked, he performed many superhuman acts." His divine Grace By Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji explains the system of divine expansion:

... Balarama and Krsna are original forms of the Lord... Krsna... is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and Balarama is the first plenary manifestation of the Lord. From Balarama the first phalanx of the plenary expansions, Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Aniruddha and Pradyumna, expands. Lord Sri Krsna is Vasudeva, and Balarama is Sankarsana.

Seven miles west of Mathura in the small and unimposing village of Mora, General Cunningham made another vital find regarding the historicity of Vaisnavism. In 1882, on the terrace of an ancient well, he discovered a large stone slab filled with inscriptions. Although more than half of the writing had already peeled away on the right side, the remainder was legible. It was transcribed, and a facsimile of the inscription was published in the Archaeological Survey of India's *Annual Report*. The message was clear. Not only was Krishna worshiped in the centuries before Christ, but also His expansions or associates, especially "the five heroes of the Vrishni Clan." Scholarly research makes evident that these five are Krishna (Vasudeva), Balarama (Sankarshana), Pradyumna, Samba, and Aniruddha.

In 1908, a Dr. Vogel had the Mora Well slab removed to the Mathura Museum and tried to tamper with the translations of the inscriptions in order to throw the Vedic religion into a bad light. However, because the contents of the inscriptions had already been published authoritatively and were well known in academic circles, Dr. Vogel's efforts at creating disinformation failed. The complex theology, metaphysics, and cosmology of Sanatana Dharma and Vaisnavism definitely existed in an advanced state centuries before Christ. The Mora Well inscription is an important archeological proof of this historical fact.

In the village of Ghosundi in the Chitor district of Rajasthan is found the Ghosundi Inscription, which largely duplicates the message of the Mora Well Inscription. Kaviraja Shyamala Dasa first brought this evidence to light in *The Journal of the Bengal Asiatic Society*. Today, the inscription can be inspected in the Victoria Hall Museum in Udaipur.

The surviving part of this inscription relevant to this chapter reads as follows:

[this] railing of stone for the purposes of worship is [caused to be made] in the Narayana-compound, [dedicated] to the Blessed Ones [bhagavabhyam] Samkarshana and Vasudeva, the gods...

The inscription is in a form of Sanskrit script called Northern Brahmi script, which dates the inscription as being from the second century BC in either the late Maurya or early Sunga periods. An almost identical inscription also was uncovered nearby and is called

the Hathi-vada Inscription. These inscriptions also dispel the myth that Krishna was only revered by the *ksatriya*, or administrative-warrior, class of India, the class Krishna had appeared in. According to K. P. Jayaswal of the Archaeological Survey of India, these inscriptions demonstrate that brahmins, the priestly and intellectual class, also worshiped Krishna as the "Lord of all," and thus Vaisnavism was entrenched in the entire Indian society.

The same point is made in the famous Nanaghat Cave Inscription in the modern state of Maharashtra, where Vasudeva and Sankarshana (or Krishna and Balarama) are included in an invocation of a brahmin. Additionally, Raychaudhuri reports:

The Nanaghat Inscription shows further that the Bhagavata [Vaisnava] religion was no longer confined to Northern India, but had spread to the south and had captured the hearts of the sturdy people of Maharashtra. From Maharashtra it was destined to spread to the Tamil country and then flow back with renewed vigour to the remotest corners of the Hindu world.

On epigraphical grounds, this inscription is dated conclusively as coming from the second half of the first century BC.

Krsna, Agathocles coin,

Ai Khanoum, Afghanistan, 2nd century B.C.



A lot of numismatic evidence also corroborates the antiquity of Krishna. For instance, excavations at Ai-Khanum, along the border of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, conducted by P. Bernard and a French archeological expedition, unearthed six rectangular bronze coins issued by the Indo-Greek ruler Agathocles (180?-?165 BC). The coins had script written in both Greek and Brahmi and, most interestingly, show an image of Vishnu, or Vasudeva, carrying a Chakra and a pear-shaped vase, or conchshell, which are two of the four main sacred symbols of God in Vaisnavism. Many other finds of ancient coins also prove the antiquity of Krishna worship in India.

Balarama, Agathocles coin,

Ai Khanoum, Afghanistan, 2nd century B.C.



To summarize, today the weight of empirical evidence proves that Krishna and Vaisnavism predate Christianity. Numerous literary, archeological, and numismatic sources build an unassailable case. Nevertheless, Vaisnavism and Christianity still show amazing similarities. In the chauvinistic and sectarian atmosphere of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these similarities led most Western scholars to adopt the now discredited "borrowing theory." But these attitudes did more than distort the truth. In the twentieth century they directly led to two world wars of unprecedented ferocity and destruction. Therefore, sensitive and caring people perceive these attitudes as being obsolete, and, instead of clinging to them, more intelligent people now seek the path of unity. Even in religion, one of the key contemporary attitudes is the ecumenical spirit, the desire to emphasize more our similarities with other peoples, nations, and religions rather than our differences.

If Westerners can drop their defenses and look at Vaisnavism with ecumenical eyes, they will see a religion and a philosophy which undoubtedly through the Greeks helped to shape the soul of Western civilization itself and its largest religion, Christianity. Rather than being shocked by the similarities, we ought to rejoice in them. From at least our vantage point and in light of all the material presented in this book and from other sources, it is obvious to us that Christians and Vaisnavas are worshiping the same original Godhead and are seeking salvation and solace from that Godhead through the same transcendental, personal loving relationship.

Hindu Culture is the Parent of Humanity

By Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji

Since there is but one ultimate source of everything, all human activity started from that divine beginning. And activity means thought and speech. As the Vedic texts explain, the original language was Sanskrit, as taught by the Supreme Himself. We find that even the 1951 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica (P. 70, Vol 13) describes that some scholars gave up attempts to explain the origin of language and have fallen back to the religious explanation that the first language was given by God to man.

The title of this page may seem like a bold statement, but there is some very interesting evidence to consider. As we established in the chapter on the creation of the material world, when the Supreme Being created the universe He also provided the Vedic knowledge and terminology by which humanity could live peacefully as well as advance spiritually. Even the Bible (*Genesis 11:1*) describes how originally during pre-Christian times, "the whole earth was of one language and one speech." And, as we can see from the evidence in the previous chapters, that language was Sanskrit.

Theologians in general agree that despite diverse scriptures and tales of various people experiencing or hearing the voice of God, the immanent Divinity is One. Even physicists agree that the ultimate source of all elements has to be one. History too began from a single point. This means that the origination of the universe as well as the beginning of mankind was a purposeful and arranged event. It was not a chance encounter, a random, freakish, or spontaneous beginning, but an expansion from the Absolute Truth.

Some people, however, feel that ancient man was able to only slowly develop a language of his own. This is thought to have started from grunts and noises like animals until it somehow shaped into the different languages we find today. So does that mean that babies will also develop some kind of language of their own if they are given enough time and not taught one? As described in P. N. Oak's book, *World Vedic Heritage* (p. 130), the 16th century Moghul emperor, Akbar, had also questioned this. Being in such a position of authority, he was able to indulge in a heartless experiment. He ordered several infant children to be taken away from their mothers and be confined to a house. No one was permitted to speak anything to the children, even when clothed and fed. The result was that they all grew to be dumb adults. They could speak no language at all. Neither did they develop any form of communication between themselves. Therefore, the idea that man will eventually educate himself or even develop a language on his own is mistaken. All knowledge must be given by a superior, which is exactly what the Vedic literature says happened at the beginning of time. The Vedic references explain that human civilization began by the arrangement of the Supreme. Man was given an original consciousness by which he had knowledge of the Sanskrit language and was guided by Vedic information, as taught by Lord Brahma and the numerous sages that followed. Thus, the ancient Vedic culture is the primordial culture of the whole world and not exclusive to India, Arabia, or Sumeria. It is universal.

The philosopher and researcher Edward Pococke also wrote about this conclusion in his book *India in Greece* (page 251). He states: "Sir William Jones concluded that the Hindus had an immemorial antiquity with the old Persians, Ethiopians and Egyptians, the Phoenicians, Greeks and Tuscans, the Scythians or Goths, and the Celts, the Chinese, Japanese and Peruvians." The observance of this global connection between India and the rest of the world is actually an indication that the whole world was once under the influence of the Vedic culture. Thus, it was India who nurtured the rest of the world with her wisdom and Vedic knowledge.

Pococke continues in this vein in his observation: "Now the whole of the society of Greece, civil and military, must strike one as being eminently Asiatic, much of it

specially Indian. . . I shall demonstrate that these evidences were but the attendant tokens of Indian colonization with its corresponding religion and language. I shall exhibit dynasties disappearing from India, western India, to appear again in Greece, clans who fought upon the plains of Troy." Therefore, since Greece is supposed to be the origins of European culture, and since Greece displays much of the same culture as India, we can say that the pre-Christian culture of Europe was Vedic.

In fact, it may be the case that without the connection with India, Greece may not have been a major contributor to the advancement of Europe. Godfrey Higgins writes in his book *The Celtic Druids* (p. 112), "In science the Greeks were pygmies. What would they have known of science if their Platos and Pythagorases had not traveled into the East! In science and real learning they were inferior to the Orientals [Indians], and were the greatest liars upon earth. They willfully mis-stated everything or they foolishly confounded everything."

William Durant, author of the 10-volume *Story of Civilization*, wrote, "India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of European languages. She was the mother of our philosophy. . . of our mathematics. . . of the ideals embodied in Christianity. . . of self-government and democracy. . . Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all."

Interestingly, Sir Isaac Tailor, the author of *The Origins of the Aryans*, wrote in a similar way (page 1), "Adelung, the father of comparative philosophy. . . placed the cradle of mankind in the valley of Kashmir, which he identified with paradise. To Adelung we owe the opinion, which has prevailed so widely, that since the human race originated in the East, most westerly nations, the Iberians and Celts, must have been the first to leave the parent."

As explained in *World Vedic Heritage* (p. 115), this is also the conclusion of Mr. B. C. Chhabra, who is the ex-Assistant Director General of Archeology under the British administration in India. He writes, "I do not want to go deep into the larger question of the theory of evolution which is today at the base of archeological interpretations, but I must need say that the history of Indian civilization begins with knowledge and not barbarism. The kind of knowledge that has been preserved therein has stood the test of time and is still unsurpassed in certain respects. It believes in an evolution of limited extent only and that for a definite period of time in the history of man's life as also in that of a nation. To base the entire history of mankind, down to the present-day, on the ape-man and the archeological ages of Paleolithic, Neolithic, Bronze and Iron is a travesty of facts. Even in the present age of great scientific achievements the ape-man cannot produce the homosapiens, obviously because they are two different species. Recent archeologists have proved abundantly that these ages have no meaning because different cultural ages are found in different regions, and that sometimes they co-existed in the same region which cannot be explained on the basis of the theory of evolution." Thus, regardless of the classifications made by archeologists about the ancient history of mankind, as confirmed by the prehistoric records of the Vedic literature, India was the

center from where spread the intellectually superior Vedic culture, and is, therefore, the source of humanity's spiritual heritage.

The Preface of Vol. VI of *Indian Antiquities* (pp 11-13) also points one in this same direction: "The Hindu religion probably spread over the whole earth; there are signs of it in every system of worship. . . the arithmetic, astronomy, astrology, the holidays, games, names of the stars, and figures of constellations, the language of the different nations bear the strongest marks of the same origin."

The discerning and honest Christian author Godfrey Higgins wrote in his book, *The Celtic Druids* (p. 61), about the basis of all human civilization originating from India and the Vedic culture. "The peninsula of India would be one of the first peopled countries, and its inhabitants would have all the habits of progenitors of man before the flood in as much perfection or more than any other nation. . . In short, whatever learning man possessed before his dispersion. . . may be expected to be found here; and of this Hindustan affords innumerable traces. . . notwithstanding all. . . the fruitless efforts of our priests to disguise it."

The above quotes would indicate that the Vedic culture was a global faith, a world influence. This may be given further credence in the remarks of Ctesias, the Greek writer (as found in *Historical Researches*, Vol. II, p.220), "The Hindus were as numerous as all the other nations put together."

This is further corroborated in Dr.Rupak Nath's *World Hindu Heritage* (p. 705) in which he presents evidence that, "In pre-Christian times the temples of Vedic Deities such as Vishnu, Shiva, the Mother goddess, Rama, Hanuman, and Krishna used to abound in all regions of the world. Evidence of this is found in the works of ancient authors such as Megasthenes, Strabo, and Herodotus. All those names are of Vedic origin, too. The term Megasthenes is Megh-Sthan-eesh, i.e. the Lord of the Region of the clouds. The name Herodotus is Hari-dootus, i.e. Messenger of [Hari] God."

Albert J. Edmonds, in his book *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*, also explains that, "Strabo considered all Asia as far as India to be consecrated to Bacchus where Hercules and Bacchus are called Kings of the East. The last religions of Babylon and Egypt were born there. Even the Greeks and the Romans were debtors thereto for the cult of Bacchus and Mithras."

Bacchus refers to Bakesh or Tryambakesh, Shiva. Hercules refers to Hari-culeesh, Lord Krishna. They were known as Kings or supreme deities of the East. Since the religions of Babylon and Egypt were born in Asia, and Greeks and Romans observed a similar version of the Bacchus cult and one of Mithras, the sun, it is obvious the whole world followed, or was influenced by, Vedic culture. The reason is that all of these deities can be traced back to India, or are directly Vedic deities. From this information we can begin to understand that Vedic culture was a cause of worldwide unity, or the parent culture of all humanity.



In *World History* (p. 135), Dr. Rupak Nath also explains that Shiva was worshiped all over the world, even in the Vatican. The word *vatican* comes from the Sanskrit word *vatica*, which means a bower or sylvan hermitage. He explains that even the premises of the Vatican have many Shiva emblems buried in their walls and cellars. Many such emblems have been dug up in other parts of Italy as well. And some of those found in the Vatican are still preserved in the Vatican's Etruscan museum.

Another point is that the original worship of the Mother Goddess can be traced back to India. Whether this Goddess is called Ma, Uma, Mata, Amba, Shakti, Durga, Bhagavati, Parameshvari, Kali, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Astarte, Venus, Ceres, Mother Mary, Mariamma, Madonna, Notre Dame, etc., it can be traced to the Vedic culture where such worship originated.