



Home Deity Worship Course

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.21.7-27



ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry

ŚB 11.21.7

*deśa-kālādi-bhāvānām
vastūnām mama sattama
guṇa-doṣau vidhīyete
niyamārtham hi karmaṇām*

Translation

O saintly Uddhava, in order to restrict materialistic activities, I have established that which is proper and improper among all material things, including time, space and all physical objects.

Purport

The word *niyamārtham* (“in order to restrict”) is significant in this verse. A conditioned soul falsely identifies with his material senses and thus considers anything giving immediate satisfaction to the body to be good and anything inconvenient or disturbing to be bad. By higher intelligence, however, one recognizes long-term self-interest and danger. For example, medicine may be immediately bitter, but by calculating one’s long-term interest one accepts the bitter medicine to cure a disease that is not immediately troublesome but ultimately fatal. Similarly, Vedic literature restricts the sinful propensities of human beings by establishing what is proper and what is improper among all the objects and activities of the material world. Because everyone must eat, the *Vedas* prescribe foods in the mode of goodness and not those which are sinful, such as meat, fish and eggs. Similarly, one is advised to live in a peaceful and pious community and not in association with sinful persons, nor in an unclean or turbulent environment. By designating and restricting the exploitation of the material world, Vedic knowledge gradually brings a conditioned soul to the platform of material goodness. At that stage one becomes eligible to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead and enter the transcendental stage of life. It should be remembered that such mere eligibility does not constitute actual qualification; without Kṛṣṇa consciousness mere mundane piety can never qualify a conditioned soul to go back home, back to Godhead. Within this world we are all infected by false pride, which must be diminished through submission to the Vedic injunctions. One who is completely engaged in the loving service of the Lord need not adopt these preliminary methods, for he directly contacts the Personality of Godhead through the spontaneous process of surrender. In the previous verse the Lord explained why Vedic literatures assign different values to the bodies of



different living entities, and here the Lord explains the Vedic value system in regard to the material objects that interact with these bodies.

ŚB 11.21.8

*akṛṣṇa-sāro deśānām
abrahmaṇyo 'sucir bhavet
kṛṣṇa-sāro 'py asauvīra-
kīkaṭāsaṁskṛterīṇam*

Translation

Among places, those bereft of the spotted antelope, those devoid of devotion to the brāhmaṇas, those possessing spotted antelopes but bereft of respectable men, provinces like Kīkaṭa and places where cleanliness and purificatory rites are neglected, where meat-eaters are prominent or where the earth is barren, are all considered to be contaminated lands.

Purport

The word *kṛṣṇa-sāra* refers to the spotted antelope, whose hide is used by *brahmacārīs* while residing in the *āśrama* of the spiritual master. *Brahmacārīs* never hunt in the forest, but rather accept skins from those animals already deceased. The skin of the black or spotted antelope is also used as a garment by those receiving instruction in the execution of Vedic sacrifice. Therefore, since sacrifice cannot be properly performed in areas bereft of such creatures, these places are impure. Furthermore, although the inhabitants of a particular place may be expert in performing fruitive activities and ritualistic sacrifices, if they are inimical to the devotional service of the Lord, such a place is also polluted. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains that previously the provinces of Bihar and Bengal were bereft of devotional service to the Lord and were considered impure. Then great Vaiṣṇavas such as Jayadeva appeared in these territories, converting them into holy places.

The word *asauvīra* indicates those places without *suvīras*, respectable saintly persons. Ordinarily, a person who obeys the state laws is considered a respectable citizen. In the same way, one who strictly obeys the law of God is considered to be a cultured or decent man, *suvīra*. The place where such intelligent persons reside is called *sauvīram*. Kīkaṭa refers to the modern state of Bihar, which traditionally has been known as a territory of uncivilized men. Even in such provinces, however,



any place where saintly persons gather is considered to be holy. On the other hand, a province of generally respectable persons is immediately polluted by the presence of sinful men. *Asamṣkṛta* indicates lack of external cleanliness, as well as the absence of purificatory ceremonies for internal cleanliness. Śrīla Madhvācārya quotes from the *Skanda Purāṇa* as follows: “Religious persons should reside within an eight-mile radius of rivers, oceans, mountains, hermitages, forests, spiritual cities or places where the *śālagrāma-śilā* is found. All other places should be considered *kīkaṭa*, or contaminated. But if even in such contaminated places black and spotted antelopes are found, one may reside there as long as sinful persons are not also present. Even if sinful persons are present, if the civil power rests with respectable authorities, one may remain. Similarly, one may dwell wherever the Deity of Viṣṇu is duly installed and worshiped.”

The Lord here elaborates upon the theme of piety and sin, which are based on purity and impurity. Thus pure and contaminated places of residence are described here.

ŚB 11.21.9

*karmaṇyo guṇavān kālo
dravyataḥ svata eva vā
yato nivartate karma
sa doṣo 'karmakaḥ smṛtaḥ*

Translation

A specific time is considered pure when it is appropriate, either by its own nature or through achievement of suitable paraphernalia, for the performance of one's prescribed duty. That time which impedes the performance of one's duty is considered impure.

Purport

Having discussed pure and impure places, the Lord now discusses different qualities of time. Certain times, such as the *brāhma-muhūrta*, the last few hours before sunrise, are always auspicious for spiritual advancement. Other times, not auspicious in themselves, become so by achievement of material prosperity that facilitates one's mission in life.

Political, social or economic disturbances that obstruct the execution of one's religious duties are considered inauspicious times. Similarly, a woman is



considered contaminated just after childbirth or during her menstrual period. She cannot perform ordinary religious activities at such times, which are therefore inauspicious and impure. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains that the most auspicious of all times is the moment one achieves the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one neglects the loving service of the Lord, being carried away by sense gratification, he is certainly living in most inauspicious times. Therefore that moment in which one achieves the association of the Supreme Lord or the Lord's pure devotee is the most auspicious time, whereas the moment of losing such association is most inauspicious. In other words, the perfection of life is simply Kṛṣṇa consciousness, by which one transcends the dualities of time and space caused by the three modes of material nature.

ŚB 11.21.10

*dravyasya śuddhy-aśuddhī ca
dravyeṇa vacanena ca
saṁskāreṇātha kālena
mahatvālpatayātha vā*

Translation

An object's purity or impurity is established by application of another object, by words, by rituals, by the effects of time or according to relative magnitude.

Purport

Cloth is purified by application of clean water and contaminated by application of urine. The words of a saintly *brāhmaṇa* are pure, but the sound vibration of a materialistic person is contaminated by lust and envy. A saintly devotee explains actual purity to others, whereas a nondevotee makes false propaganda that leads innocent people to commit polluted, sinful activities. Pure rituals are those meant for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord, while materialistic ceremonies are those that lead their followers into materialistic and demoniac activities. The word *saṁskāreṇa* also indicates that the purity or impurity of a particular object is ascertained according to the regulations of ritualistic performances. For example, a flower to be offered to the Deity must be purified with water. Flowers or food cannot be offered to the Deity, however, if they have been contaminated by being smelled or tasted before the offering. The word *kālena* indicates that certain substances are purified by time and others contaminated by time. Rainwater, for



example, is considered pure after ten days' time, and after three days in cases of emergency. On the other hand, certain foods decay in time and thus become impure. *Mahatva* indicates that great bodies of water do not become contaminated, and *alpatayā* means that a small amount of water can easily become polluted or stagnant. In the same way, a great soul is not polluted by occasional contact with materialistic persons, whereas one whose devotion to God is very small is easily carried away and put into doubt by bad association. In terms of combination with other substances, and in terms of speech, ritual, time and magnitude, the purity and impurity of all objects can be ascertained.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura remarks that impure or decayed food is certainly forbidden for normal persons but is permissible for those who have no other means of subsistence.

ŚB 11.21.11

*śaktyāśaktyātha vā buddhyā
samṛddhyā ca yad ātmane
aghaṁ kurvanti hi yathā
deśāvasthānusārataḥ*

Translation

Impure things may or may not impose sinful reactions upon a person, depending on that person's strength or weakness, intelligence, wealth, location and physical condition.

Purport

The Lord has described the purity and impurity of different places, times and material objects. According to the laws of nature, that which is impure contaminates a particular person in accordance with that person's situation, as described here. For example, on certain occasions, such as a solar eclipse or just after childbirth, one must restrict the intake of food according to ritualistic injunctions. One who is physically weak, however, may eat without being considered impious. Ordinary persons consider the ten days following childbirth to be most auspicious, whereas one who is learned knows that this period is actually impure. Ignorance of the law does not save one from being punished, but one who consciously commits sinful activities is considered most fallen. Concerning opulence (*samṛddhi*), worn-out, dirty clothing or a messy residence are considered



impure for a rich man but acceptable for one who is poor. The word *deśa* indicates that in a safe and peaceful place one is obligated to strictly perform religious rituals, whereas in a dangerous or chaotic situation one may be excused for occasional negligence of secondary principles. One who is physically healthy must offer obeisances to the Deities, attend religious functions and execute his prescribed duties, but a young child or sickly person may be excused from such activities, as indicated by the word *avasthā*. Ultimately, as Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī states:

*anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-
śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*

“One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa favorably and without desire for material profit or gain through fruitive activities or philosophical speculation. That is called pure devotional service.” (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.11) One should accept everything which is favorable for the devotional service of Lord Kṛṣṇa and reject whatever is unfavorable. One must learn the process of serving God from the bona fide spiritual master and thus always maintain one’s existence pure and free from anxiety. In general, however, when considering the relative purity and impurity of material things, all of the above-mentioned factors must be calculated.

ŚB 11.21.12

*dhānya-dārv-asthi-tantūnām
rasa-taijasa-carmaṇām
kāla-vāyva-agni-mṛt-toyaiḥ
pārthivānām yutāyutaiḥ*

Translation

Various objects such as grains, wooden utensils, things made of bone, thread, liquids, objects derived from fire, skins and earthy objects are all purified by time, by the wind, by fire, by earth and by water, either separately or in combination.



Purport

The word *kāla*, or “time,” is mentioned here, since all purificatory processes take place within time.

ŚB 11.21.13

*amedhya-liptam yad yena
gandha-lepam vyapohati
bhajate prakṛtiṁ tasya
tac chaucam tāvad iṣyate*

Translation

A particular purifying agent is considered appropriate when its application removes the bad odor or dirty covering of some contaminated object and makes it resume its original nature.

Purport

Furniture, kitchen utensils, clothing and other objects are purified by application of abrasion, alkali, acid, water and so on. One thereby removes the bad fragrance or impure coating of such objects, restoring them to their original clean appearance.

ŚB 11.21.14

*snāna-dāna-tapo-’vasthā-
vīrya-saṁskāra-karmabhiḥ
mat-smṛtyā cātmanaḥ śaucam
śuddhaḥ karmācared dvijaḥ*

Translation

The self can be cleansed by bathing, charity, austerity, age, personal strength, purificatory rituals, prescribed duties and, above all, by remembrance of Me.



The brāhmaṇa and other twice-born men should be duly purified before performing their specific activities.

Purport

The word *avasthā* indicates that when boys and girls are young they are kept pure by youthful innocence and that as they grow up they are kept pure through proper education and engagement. By one's individual potency one should avoid sinful activities and the association of those inclined toward sense gratification. The word *karma* here refers to prescribed duties, such as worshiping the spiritual master and the Deity, chanting the Gāyatrī *mantra* three times daily and accepting spiritual initiation. The prescribed duties of the *varṇāśrama* system automatically purify one from the covering of false ego by dovetailing one's bodily designation in appropriate religious activities. There are specific duties for *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, *śūdras*, *brahmacārīs*, *gṛhasthas*, *vānaprasthas* and *sannyāsīs*, as described previously in this canto by the Lord Himself. The most significant word here is *mat-smṛtyā* ("by remembrance of Me"). Ultimately, one cannot avoid the infection of illusion through any process except Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The three modes of nature perpetually interact, and one must sometimes fall into the mode of ignorance and sometimes rise to the mode of goodness, uselessly rotating within the kingdom of illusion. But by Kṛṣṇa consciousness, remembrance of the Personality of Godhead, one can actually uproot one's tendency to act against the will of the Absolute Truth. Then one becomes freed from the clutches of *māyā* and goes back home, back to Godhead. As stated in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*:

*apavitraḥ pavitro vā
sarvāvasthām gato 'pi vā
yaḥ smaret puṇḍarīkākṣam
sa bāhyābhyantare śuciḥ*

“Whether one is pure or contaminated, and regardless of one's external situation, simply by remembering the lotus-eyed Personality of Godhead one can internally and externally cleanse one's existence.”

Lord Caitanya recommended that we constantly remember the Supreme Lord by chanting His holy names, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. This sublime process is essential for every human actually desirous of purifying his existence.



ŚB 11.21.15

*mantrasya ca parijñānam
karma-śuddhir mad-arpaṇam
dharmah sampadyate ṣaḍbhir
adharmas tu viparyayah*

Translation

A mantra is purified when chanted with proper knowledge, and one's work is purified when offered to Me. Thus by purification of the place, time, substance, doer, mantras and work, one becomes religious, and by negligence of these six items one is considered irreligious.

Purport

One receives a *mantra* from the mouth of a bona fide spiritual master, who instructs the disciple in the method, meaning and ultimate purpose of the *mantra*. The bona fide spiritual master in this age gives his disciple the *mahā-mantra*, or holy names of God, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. One who chants this *mantra*, considering himself to be the eternal servant of the Lord, gradually learns to chant offenselessly and by such purified chanting quickly achieves the highest perfection of life. The Lord here summarizes His discussion of purity and impurity, which manifest ultimately in religious and irreligious life.

ŚB 11.21.16

*kvacid guṇo 'pi doṣaḥ syād
doṣo 'pi vidhinā guṇaḥ
guṇa-doṣārtha-niyamas
tad-bhidām eva bādhate*



Translation

Sometimes piety becomes sin, and sometimes what is ordinarily sin becomes piety on the strength of Vedic injunctions. Such special rules in effect eradicate the clear distinction between piety and sin.

Purport

The Lord clearly explains here that material piety and sin are always relative considerations. For example, if a neighbor's house is on fire and one chops a hole in the roof so that the trapped family may escape, one is considered to be a pious hero because of the dangerous condition. In normal conditions, however, if one chops a hole in his neighbor's roof or breaks the neighbor's windows, he is considered a criminal. Similarly, one who abandons one's wife and children is certainly irresponsible and thoughtless. If one takes *sannyāsa*, however, and remains fixed on a higher spiritual platform, he is considered to be a most saintly person. Piety and sin therefore depend upon particular circumstances and are at times difficult to distinguish.

According to Śrīla Madhvācārya, persons above the age of fourteen are considered capable of distinguishing between good and bad and are thus responsible for their pious and sinful activities. Animals, on the other hand, being merged in ignorance, cannot be blamed for their offenses or praised for their so-called good qualities, which all arise ultimately from ignorance. Human beings who act like animals, with the idea that one should not feel any guilt but should do whatever one likes, will certainly take birth as animals absorbed in ignorance. And there are other foolish people who, observing the relativity of material piety and sin, conclude that there is no absolute good. It should be understood, however, that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is absolutely good because it involves complete obedience to the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose goodness is eternal and absolute. Those who are inclined to study material piety and sin ultimately experience frustration due to the relativity and variability of the subject matter. One should therefore come to the transcendental platform of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which is valid and perfect in all circumstances.

ŚB 11.21.17

*samāna-karmācaraṇaṁ
patitānāṁ na pātakam*



*autpattiko guṇaḥ saṅgo
na śayānaḥ pataty adhaḥ*

Translation

The same activities that would degrade an elevated person do not cause falldown for those who are already fallen. Indeed, one who is lying on the ground cannot possibly fall further. The material association that is dictated by one's own nature is considered a good quality.

Purport

The Lord here further describes the ambiguity in ascertaining material piety and sin. Although intimate association with women is most abominable for a renounced *sannyāsī*, the same association is pious for a householder, who is ordered by Vedic injunction to approach his wife at the suitable time for procreation. Similarly, a *brāhmaṇa* who drinks liquor is considered to be committing a most abominable act, whereas a *śūdra*, a low-class man, who can moderate his drinking is considered to be self-controlled. Piety and sin on the material level are thus relative considerations. Any member of society, however, who receives *dīkṣā*, initiation into the chanting of the Lord's holy names, must strictly obey the four regulative principles: no eating of meat, fish or eggs, no illicit sex, no intoxication and no gambling. A spiritually initiated person neglecting these principles will certainly fall from his elevated position of liberation.

ŚB 11.21.18

*yato yato nivarteta
vimucyeta tatas tataḥ
eṣa dharmo nṛṇāṁ kṣemaḥ
śoka-moha-bhayāpahaḥ*

Translation

By refraining from a particular sinful or materialistic activity, one becomes freed from its bondage. Such renunciation is the basis of religious and auspicious life for human beings and drives away all suffering, illusion and fear.



Purport

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Antya 6.220) it is stated:

*mahāprabhura bhakta-gaṇera vairāgya pradhāna
yāhā dekhi' prīta hana gaura-bhagavān*

“Renunciation is the basic principle sustaining the lives of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s devotees. Seeing this renunciation, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is extremely satisfied.”

Because of false ego one considers oneself to be the proprietor and enjoyer of one’s activities. Actually, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, is the proprietor and enjoyer of our activities; recognition of this fact in Kṛṣṇa consciousness leads one to real renunciation. Every human being should perform his prescribed duty as an offering to the Supreme Lord. Then there will be no possibility of material entanglement. Lord Kṛṣṇa clearly explains in *Bhagavad-gītā* that prescribed duties performed as an offering to the Lord award liberation from material bondage. Sinful activities cannot be offered to the Lord but must be given up altogether. In effect, the distinction between piety and sin is made so that the living entities will become pious and eligible to surrender to the Supreme Lord. As explained in *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.28):

*yeṣāṁ tv anta-gataṁ pāpaṁ
janānāṁ puṇya-karmaṇām
te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā
bhajante mām dṛḍha-vratāḥ*

“Persons who have acted piously in previous lives and in this life, whose sinful actions are completely eradicated and who are freed from the duality of delusion, engage themselves in My service with determination.”

By thorough piety one’s life becomes auspicious and freed from lamentation, illusion and fear, and one can then take to the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

ŚB 11.21.19

*viṣayeṣu guṇādhyāsāt
puṁsaḥ saṅgas tato bhavet
saṅgāt tatra bhavet kāmāḥ
kāmād eva kalir nṛṇām*



Translation

One who accepts material sense objects as desirable certainly becomes attached to them. From such attachment lust arises, and this lust creates quarrel among men.

Purport

The actual goal of human life should not be material sense gratification, for it is the basis of conflict in human society. Although the Vedic literature sometimes sanctions sense gratification, the ultimate purpose of the *Vedas* is renunciation, since Vedic culture cannot possibly recommend anything that disturbs human life. A lusty person is easily angered and becomes inimical to anyone frustrating his lusty desires. Since his sex desire can never be satisfied, a lusty person ultimately becomes frustrated with his own sex partner, and thus a “love-hate” relationship develops. A lusty person considers himself to be the enjoyer of God’s creation and is therefore full of pride and false prestige. The lusty, proud person will not be attracted to the process of humble submission at the lotus feet of the bona fide spiritual master. Attraction to illicit sex is thus the direct enemy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which depends upon humble submission to the representative of the Supreme Lord. Lord Kṛṣṇa also states in *Bhagavad-gītā* that desire for illicit sex is the all-devouring, sinful enemy of this world.

Because modern society sanctions unrestricted mixing of men and women, its citizens cannot possibly achieve peace; rather, the regulation of conflict becomes the basis of social survival. This is the symptom of an ignorant society falsely accepting the material body as the highest good, as described here by the words *viṣayeṣu guṇādhyāsāt*. One who is too affectionate to his own body will inevitably be seized by sex desire.

ŚB 11.21.20

*kaler durviśahaḥ krodhas
tamas tam anuvartate
tamasā grasyate puṁsaś
cetanā vyāpinī drutam*



Translation

From quarrel arises intolerable anger, followed by the darkness of ignorance. This ignorance quickly overtakes a man's broad intelligence.

Purport

The desire for material association arises from one's propensity to deny that everything is God's energy. Falsely imagining material sense objects to be separate from the Supreme Lord, one desires to enjoy them; such desire gives rise to conflict and quarrel in human society. This conflict inevitably gives rise to great anger, which makes human beings become foolish and destructive. Thus the actual goal of human life is quickly forgotten.

ŚB 11.21.21

*tayā virahitaḥ sādho
jantuḥ śūnyāya kalpate
tato 'sya svārtha-vibhramśo
mūrcchitasya mṛtasya ca*

Translation

O saintly Uddhava, a person bereft of real intelligence is considered to have lost everything. Deviated from the actual purpose of his life, he becomes dull, just like a dead person.

Purport

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so vital and essential that one who has deviated from this progressive path of self-realization is considered to be virtually unconscious, or like a dead person. Since every living entity is part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, anyone who falsely identifies with the external body is actually unconscious of his real position. Thus it is stated, *śūnyāya kalpate*: pursuing that which has no factual existence, he is devoid of any tangible progress or benefit in life. One whose consciousness is absorbed in the nonexistent becomes himself practically nonexistent. In this way, the eternal living entities become fallen, lost in the ocean of material existence, and it is only by the special mercy of the pure devotees of the Lord that they can be rescued. The Lord's devotees therefore instruct the fallen



people to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. By this process our real consciousness and life can be quickly revived.

ŚB 11.21.22

*viṣayābhiniveśena
nātmānaṁ veda nāparam
vṛkṣa jīvikayā jīvan
vyartham bhastreva yaḥ śvasan*

Translation

Because of absorption in sense gratification, one cannot recognize himself or others. Living uselessly in ignorance like a tree, one is merely breathing just like a bellows.

Purport

Just as trees, having no means of defending themselves, are always being cut down, similarly, the conditioned souls are constantly being cut down by the cruel laws of nature, which impose innumerable miseries culminating in sudden death. Although foolish people think they are helping themselves and others, they actually do not know their own identity, nor the identities of their so-called friends and relatives. Absorbed in gratifying the senses of the external body, they spend their lives uselessly, without spiritual profit. This useless lifestyle can be transformed into a perfect life simply by chanting the holy names of God in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as recommended by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

ŚB 11.21.23

*phala-śrutir iyaṁ nṛṇāṁ
na śreyo rocanam param
śreyo-vivakṣayā proktaṁ
yathā bhaiṣajya-rocanam*



Translation

Those statements of scripture promising fruitive rewards 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.

Purport

In the previous verse Lord Kṛṣṇa stated that persons absorbed in sense gratification certainly deviate from the real purpose of human life. But since the *Vedas* themselves promise heavenly sense gratification as the result of sacrifice and austerity, how can such promotion to heaven be considered a deviation from the goal of life? The Lord here explains that the fruitive rewards offered in religious scriptures are merely inducements, like candy that is used to induce a child to take medicine. It is actually the medicine that is beneficial, and not the candy. Similarly, in fruitive sacrifices it is the worship of Lord Viṣṇu that is beneficial, not the fruitive reward itself. According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, those professing fruitive rewards to be the ultimate goal of religious scripture are certainly less intelligent fools inimical to the purpose of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Lord desires that all conditioned souls be purified and come back home, back to Godhead, for an eternal life of bliss and knowledge. One who opposes the Lord's purpose in the name of religiosity is certainly bewildered about the purpose of life.

ŚB 11.21.24

*utpattyaiva hi kāmeṣu
prāṇeṣu sva-janeṣu ca
āśakta-manaso martyā
ātmano 'nārtha-hetuṣu*

Translation

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.



Purport

Our attachment to the material body and the bodies of family and friends inevitably leads to unbearable anxiety and suffering. The mind absorbed in the bodily concept of life cannot possibly advance in self-realization, and thus one's hope for an eternal life of bliss and knowledge is defeated by the objects of one's so-called affection. Activities performed in ignorance are beneficial neither for oneself nor others, just as the charitable activities one may perform in a dream bestow no tangible benefit on real people. The conditioned soul is dreaming of a world separate from God, but any advancement experienced in this dream world is merely hallucination. The Lord states in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *sarva-loka-maheśvaram*: He is the supreme enjoyer and Lord of all planets and worlds. Only by Kṛṣṇa consciousness, recognition of the supremacy of God, can one make actual progress in life.

ŚB 11.21.25

*natān aviduṣaḥ svārtham
bhrāmyato vṛjinādhvani
katham yuñjyāt punas teṣu
tāms tamo viśato budhaḥ*

Translation

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?

Purport

Materialistic persons are not prepared to renounce society, friendship and love, which are all based on sex indulgence, to instead take to a life of renunciation and self-realization. In order to bring such foolish persons under the canopy of Vedic injunctions, the *Vedas* promise innumerable material rewards, even promotion to heavenly planets, to those who faithfully execute the Vedic injunctions. As explained by the Lord, such rewards are like the candy offered to a child, who then faithfully takes his medicine. Material enjoyment is certainly the cause of suffering, since all enjoyable objects are subject to destruction along with the so-



called enjoyer. Material life is simply painful and full of anxiety, frustration and lamentation. We become agitated by seeing a so-called enjoyable object, such as the naked body of a woman, a beautiful residence, a sumptuous tray of food or the expansion of our own prestige, but actually such imagined happiness is simply the intense expectation of a satisfaction that never comes. One remains perpetually frustrated in material existence, and the more one tries to enjoy, the more one's frustration increases. Therefore, the Vedic knowledge, which aims at ultimate peace and happiness on the spiritual platform, cannot possibly authorize the materialistic way of life. Material rewards are employed by the *Vedas* merely as inducements for the conditioned soul to take the medicine, submission to the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu, through various types of sacrifice. Those who are *veda-vāda-rata* claim that religious scriptures are meant to facilitate sense gratification in the ignorance of conditioned life. The true goal of religion, however, is spiritual liberation, in which material sense gratification ceases to exist. The darkness of bodily attachment cannot exist in the effulgent light of spiritual knowledge. In the ocean of spiritual bliss, the anxiety-ridden apparent pleasure of this world vanishes completely. The true meaning of *veda*, or perfect knowledge, is to surrender to the Supreme Lord in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness for an eternal life of bliss and knowledge as the Lord's faithful servant.

ŚB 11.21.26

*evam vyavasitaṁ kecid
avijñāya kubuddhayaḥ
phala-śrutim kusumitām
na veda-jñā vadanti hi*

Translation

Persons with perverted intelligence do not understand this actual purpose of Vedic knowledge and instead propagate as the highest Vedic truth the flowery statements of the Vedas that promise material rewards. Those in actual knowledge of the Vedas never speak in that way.

Purport

The followers of the *karma-mīmāṃsā* philosophy declare that there is no eternal kingdom of God beyond this universe and that one should therefore become a professional performer of Vedic rituals in order to keep oneself in a material



heavenly planet. As explained by the Lord to Śrī Uddhava in a previous chapter, there is no actual happiness in the material world, since one will inevitably rotate throughout the various planetary environments stretching from heaven to hell and thus always be disturbed within the material atmosphere. Although the doctor may give a child candy-covered medicine, one who urges the child to eat the candy and throw away the medicine is certainly a great fool. In the same way, the flowery statements of the *Vedas* describing heavenly enjoyment do not award the real fruit of Vedic knowledge but merely supply decorative blossoms of sense gratification. As stated in the *Vedas* (*R̥g Veda* 1.22.20), *tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padaṁ sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ*. Even the demigods, who are permanent residents of heaven, are always looking to the eternal abode of the Supreme Lord. Foolish people who admire the standard of living in material heaven should therefore note that the demigods themselves are devotees of the Supreme Lord. One should not become a bogus propagator of so-called Vedic knowledge but should take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and make a genuine solution to the problem of progressing in life.

ŚB 11.21.27

*kāminaḥ kṛpaṇā lubdhāḥ
puṣpeṣu phala-buddhayaḥ
agni-mugdhā dhūma-tāntāḥ
svaṁ lokaṁ na vidanti te*

Translation

Those who are full of lust, avarice and greed mistake mere flowers to be the actual fruit of life. Bewildered by the glare of fire and suffocated by its smoke, they cannot recognize their own true identity.

Purport

Those attached to female association become proud separatists; desiring everything for their personal gratification and that of their lady friends, they become greedy misers, full of anxiety and envy. Such unfortunate persons mistake the flowery statements of the *Vedas* to be the highest perfection of life. The word *agni-mugdhāḥ*, “bewildered by fire,” indicates that such persons consider Vedic fire sacrifices awarding material benefit to be the highest religious truth, and thus they merge into ignorance. Fire produces smoke, which obscures one’s vision. Similarly, the path of fruitive fire sacrifices is cloudy and obscure, without clear



understanding of the spirit soul. The Lord here clearly states that fruitive religionists cannot understand their actual spiritual identity, nor do they realize the genuine shelter of the spirit soul in the kingdom of God.

Lord Kṛṣṇa states in *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.15), *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*: all Vedic knowledge is actually meant to lead one to pure love of Godhead. Lord Kṛṣṇa is certainly the Absolute Truth, and to love Him is the ultimate purpose of our existence. The Vedic knowledge patiently tries to bring the conditioned soul to this perfection of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.