

*Sanatan Dharma - The power
of boundless love*

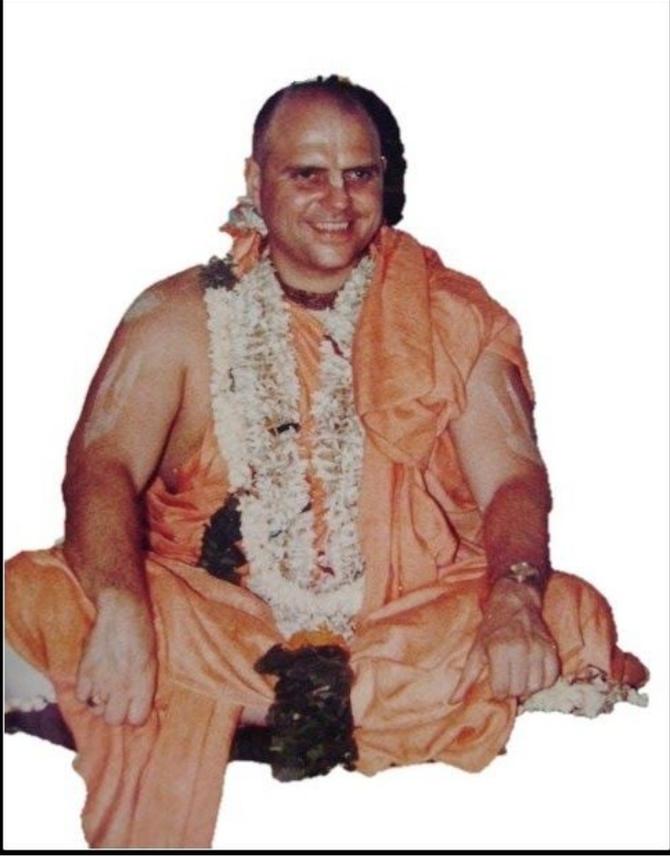
by

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Dedication



*Nama om vishnu-padaya Krishna-preshthaya
bhu-tale*

*Srimate Jayapataka Svamin iti namine
Nama acharya Padaya, Nitai Kripa Pradayine*

*Gaur Katha Dhama-udaya, Nagara Grama
Tarine*

We dedicate this book and its contents to our beloved spiritual master, HH Jayapataka Swami Guru Maharaja, whose blessings have empowered us ineligible fools to tread the path of bhakti. His Holiness has shown us how to love and engage oneself completely in the service of Sri Krishna. An intimate associate of the Lord, he relentlessly executes his great services, not caring a bit for his advanced age or his difficult physical condition. His exemplary mood and instructions have been instrumental in us sustaining our spiritual lives. We hanker for his blessings and hope he accepts the offerings of us insignificant servants.

About the Author

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They are also the founders of www.thegaudiyatresasuresofbengal.com, a very popular website dedicated to the service of the Supreme Lord and His devotees. Diptiman Gaurahari das and Diptimayi Vishnupriya devi dasi are actively engaged in teaching the glories of Sanatan Dharma worldwide. Their authored books and contribution in this field have been well received and appreciated by the practitioners of Sanatan Dharma all over the world.

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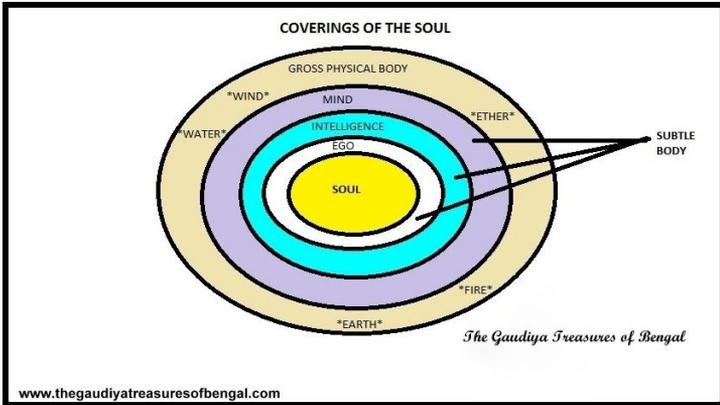
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Spirituality, Spiritual Knowledge and why it is important



So, what is the meaning of spirituality ?

The English Dictionary defines the word “spiritual” as “Relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things”.

Now before we delve deeper into this topic, it is essential for all of us to understand as to who we actually are? The answer to this question will help us make sense of life, in the first place, and lead us to the gradual understanding of

what truly is the goal of it. In other words, the more we discuss and brainstorm on our own identity, the more clarity it shall provide to logically deduce as to what we are essentially searching for.

Spiritual Knowledge - Are we our Bodies ?

For instance, according to one popular school of thought, human beings and in fact all living beings, are nothing but a lump of flesh and blood. They argue that our activities of thinking, willing and feeling arise out of complex interactions between matter.

However, we are practically yet to conceive a robot in any of our science labs, that successfully demonstrates any symptoms of creativity, inspiration or love - the elementary functions of our conscious selves. So though there is no proof to this theory, it is still nonetheless a theory, and is widely accepted and endorsed by many.

It is worthwhile mentioning over here, that a cell, which is the basic constituent of a human body, has a definite life span, and once a

particular cell dies, it is replaced by another. In this way, it is believed that over a span of 7 years, all the cells that constitute the physical body of a person, are completely replaced by the new ones. So in effect, a person receives a new body every 7 years. Now if someone identifies himself with his own body, then he should be considered dead in the next seven years, as he gets physically replaced, or should we say, it is he who is completely replaced. Hence going by this chain of logic, a person should be considered a completely different individual, after a span of seven years. And the new individual, seven years older, would be a different person with different sets of qualities, nature, acumen and consciousness who would have nothing to do with the person who he had just replaced. Going further on this, a person shouldn't be sentenced for any crime, for more than seven years, as it would implicate that a different individual would have to suffer for the misdeeds he has not committed (it was committed by someone he has replaced). Another implication of this philosophy, might be the inclusion of an expiry date of seven years, to the academic degrees. So Doctors, engineers, singers, etc need to prove their qualification

periodically at a gap of seven years, as the new person might not be born as qualified as the person he had just replaced.

As strange as these might seem, it is exactly the kind of scenario we would have in our hands, if we were our bodies. I hope after deeply considering the above points, we now realize that we are not just a lump of flesh and blood, that our physical bodies are made up of. Instead, our identity remains elsewhere, far subtler than the gross material covering that encapsulates us.

So just to summarize the point that we were trying to drive home - We possess our bodies, that are made up of gross matter, but we are not our bodies. We see through our eyes ; but we are not our eyes. We remain constant, unchanged and living in the midst of the various changes that keep occurring to this material world and the body of matter that we so dearly possess.

So, where does our identity actually lie ? Who really are we ?

How to explain the consciousness of a person, in certain cases, who is lying unconscious in a state of coma ? How to explain past life

memories ? How to explain OBEs (out of body experiences) or NDEs (Near Death experiences). One who's interested to get a list of these cases, can look up a very well-known book called '[Into the Unknown](#)' published by the Reader's Digest in 1981. So, now if we are ready to look beyond this world of dead matter, let us try to dig in a bit further.

Looking beyond - Is Spirituality important ?

The Vedic literatures, which are the oldest man-written scriptures present in this world, give us some much needed insight on this subject. The Vedic scriptures, composed mainly in sanskrit, and which encompasses a huge volume of texts and manuscripts, provide a detailed analysis and a first hand experience of significant historical events, with a purpose to teach us the science of life. The vedic culture is still prevalent in certain parts of India even today, where the daily lifestyle of people and their values are in harmony with the conclusions of the vedas.

The first aphorism of the Vedanta Sutra (that reveals the method to understand the Vedic knowledge) , states '*athato brahma jijnasa*' - Now one should inquire about Brahman - The absolute truth, the transcendental, spiritual nature.

According to the Vedas, human life is very precious, for it is in this human birth that one can enquire into the ultimate truth, the reality and purpose of one's existence. We would like to hence congratulate you because you are interested in investigating the details of subjects, whose very discussion makes our lives meaningful and worthy.

The knowledge enunciated by the vedic scriptures is often referred to as [Sanatan Dharma](#), or eternal truth - that which is universal, non-sectarian, and does not change with the effects of time, place and circumstance.

The Vedas teach us that not only humans but all living beings are essentially spirit souls.

These spiritual entities are entrapped within a body made of gross and subtle matter. The gross covering which constitutes the external

physical body, consists of gross material elements like - earth, water, fire, wind and ether. Underneath this gross body lies a subtle covering consisting of subtle elements - the mind, intelligence and ego with the intelligence being subtler than the mind, and ego being the subtlest.

Mind, Intelligence and Ego :

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injured after which you can hardly walk, anymore. The gross body is clearly not in the best of shapes anymore to continue with the game, but it cannot take the decision on its own. So it looks up to the mind for a direction. The emotional mind understands that you are in a lot of pain and so decides to quit the game. But then your intelligence steps in. It logically proves to your mind, that if you quit at this stage, the team will practically be helpless. And it is after all the final match of the tournament, and only a few more minutes are left to play. So it is wise to continue playing with the injury, as with you on the field, the team has a better chance of winning.

Similar interactions occur with students before their exams. The mind gets tired of studying for long hours and almost always wants to take a break and enjoy - maybe by watching Tv or some movies. But, good students, having strong intelligence control the demands of their minds, and continue studying, keeping in view the bigger picture.

Hence we find that the subtler the element the stronger it is; the greater is its power to control.

Thus intelligence is stronger than the mind,
which in turn is stronger than the senses.

The ego comes into the picture, giving us the
identity of who we think we are. It is the
subtlest layer of our coverings and is the key
factor which determines the kind of logic the
Intelligence applies and the decisions it
subsequently makes.

For example, if a person considers, life to be
nothing but a combination of chemicals (dead
matter), then he might not hesitate to cheat or
even kill, a fellow human being for his own
selfish interests - for there is no harm in this (as
per his logic), as the other person he is
cheating/murdering is also just a lump of
chemicals. He might as well conclude that his
actions are no different to just another chemical
reaction.

A selfish person, who considers material
consumption to be the ultimate goal of life,
might disregard the interests of others, or their
well-being while conducting his own business.

On the other hand, a soldier, who considers his
duty above all else, might quite readily agree to

sacrifice his own life, for the protection of his countrymen.

So it all depends on how we actually visualize ourselves, to be who we are, and this is what which constitutes our ego.

The spiritual identity :

So we see that though we can sometimes practically experience and feel the presence of our body, mind, intelligence and ego, we are hardly aware of our spiritual identity. According to the vedas, the real goal of life, is to realize that we are neither our body, mind, intelligence nor should we identify ourselves with any false ego. Instead, we have to understand that we are actually spirit souls and have nothing to do with this temporary, ever changing world of matter which is characterised by birth, disease, old age and death. The soul is eternal, and ever existing. The soul can neither be cut with a sword, nor moistened with water or be burnt with fire. At the time of death, just as a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly, the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old

and useless ones. The objective of our lives should be to align our ego (true ego) to our spiritual identity and utilize the body, mind and intelligence to focus upon and nourish our actual needs (the needs of the soul).

Spiritual Knowledge - The needs of the Soul :

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If one studies the Vedic science deeply, one comes to realize the real cravings of the soul. The soul craves for one thing, and one thing only - love. The soul is always searching to re-establish the loving relationship it once possessed with God, who is the Supersoul.

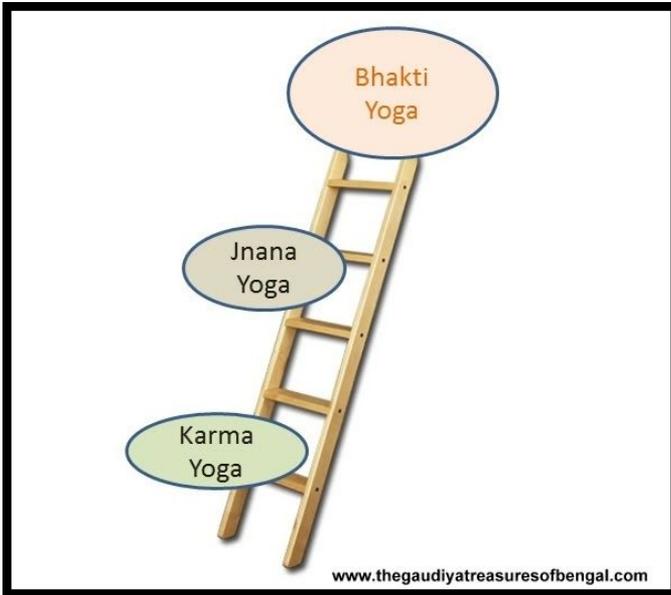
And the role of spirituality is to revive this deep dormant relationship between the soul and the supersoul. This process of uniting the soul and the supersoul is also known as Yoga.

If we study the world around us deeply, we would not find anyone who is not serving someone else. The father serves the son, the son serves his father, the wife serves his husband, the doctor serves his patients, the king serves his subjects, and so on. If someone has no one to serve, then he/she keeps a pet in his/her house and serves it. Thus, all of us are bound to serve, because by nature, the soul is a servant of the Lord, and service is a natural characteristic of the soul. The service attitude that the soul possesses towards the supersoul, is not based on any obligation, but is instead built on a foundation of a loving relationship.

But the living entities, due to the intoxicating influence of the grandeur of matter, are forgetful of their original spiritual identities. And due to a lack of awareness, they generally end up identifying themselves with either one of the gross or subtle material coverings, that leads to a puffed up false ego. Such a misguided person, then attempts to rediscover the loving relationship it once possessed with the Supreme Lord, within the purview of matter, and thus gets entangled with material possessions. But in the process, neither he gets satisfied, nor the person/s he is serving gets fully satisfied- due to the misdirected nature of such service, which should be directed towards the Supreme Lord instead.

The relationships that we have with each other in this world should be thus based on appreciating our true spiritual identities and be motivated with a spirit of helping one another meet the needs of our soul.

Yoga as explained in the Bhagavad Gita



What is Yoga? What are the different kinds of Yoga? Does the Bhagavad Gita say anything on this? From the previous chapter, we now understand the deep desires of the soul and its eternal connection with the supersoul. We understand how these fundamental hankerings of the soul are the very objectives that we try to achieve through the various avenues of this

world; albeit unsuccessfully. Hence, we shall now discuss the proper processes which have been well documented in the ancient Vedic scriptures, that guide us to achieve this much elusive fulfillment missing in our lives- by satisfying the desires of the Soul. The process of uniting the soul and the Supersoul is also known as Yoga.

The [Bhagavad Gita](#) is considered to be one of the most sacred books in this world. It comprises seven hundred verses spoken by Sri Krishna, the Supreme Lord Himself, who had descended in this world about 5000 years ago, to give us a taste of His sweet eternal pastimes. The Bhagavad Gita encompasses the conversation between Sri Krishna and His friend Arjuna, in the middle of a battlefield, at a time when Arjuna was thoroughly disillusioned and confused as to what was his duty.

Sri Krishna, first of all, apprised Arjuna of the reality of our existence. All of us, including the various other life forms that exist, are spiritual beings, entrapped in a material body. The soul can neither be destroyed by any weapon, nor be damaged by water, fire or wind. The soul or the

spirit, neither takes birth, nor does he ever suffer death. Instead, the soul goes through a process of transmigration, from one body to the next, in the quest of attaining perfection. The soul finally attains a stage of perfection when it is able to rekindle its lost relationship with the Supreme. Thus Lord Krishna taught Arjuna ,how the so-called happiness and grief, success and failure, relationships, hankering for name, fame and prosperity ,etc associated with this world, are actually based out of the assumption that we are our bodies. Forgetting our eternal identity, we try to build our identities based out of the temporary objects of this material world, and suffer in the process. Instead, we should align our engagements and relationships, in a way to suit our actual (eternal) objective - to perfect our existence. In other words we should stop acting on a bodily platform, and start acting on a spiritual platform. The process of Yoga helps us achieve this objective and enables us to harmonize our actions with our actual spiritual mission.

The Yoga ladder

Karma Yoga :

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something that applies to all creatures who want a way out of their material entanglement.

Jnana Yoga:

Sri Krishna then continues that better than the process of Karma Yoga (non-fruitive action) described above, is the process of performing actions equipped with transcendental knowledge of the Supreme (**Jnana Yoga**). In order to help Arjuna get a taste of this higher knowledge, Krishna then explains to him, His own Supreme Position - how both He and Arjuna have taken several births before, but the difference between them is that though He remembers all of His previous births and activities, Arjuna does not. Sri Krishna reveals to Arjuna, that He Himself descends millennium after millennium, whenever and wherever there is a decline in the religious practices, in order to annihilate the miscreants and deliver the pious, and to subsequently re-establish the religious principles. Sri Krishna further informs Arjuna how the different modes of material nature (modes of goodness, passion and ignorance) and the different types of work

associated with these particular natures (administrators, businessmen, laborers) , have been actually created by Him, to suit the different desires of the various living entities. But though He is the creator of this system, yet He remains completely unaffected and un-entangled by these modes of nature. Arjuna then learns how the great men of the past have perfected their lives, by performing their actions arming themselves with the sword of this transcendental knowledge about the Supreme Lord (Lord Krishna). Such a knowledgeable worker, whose every endeavour is devoid of sense gratification, is never bound up by the reactions of his work. Such a person, equipped with the weapon of Jnana (transcendental knowledge), is always satisfied and independent ,although engaged in all kinds of undertakings.

After hearing Lord Krishna's instructions on both Karma (performing action) and the importance of Jnana (Transcendental knowledge) , Arjuna got perplexed. He became confused as he found the path of action and cultivating knowledge to be contradictory to each other. Arjuna therefore inquired, whether renunciation of work or work in devotion -

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Dhyana Yoga:

Lord Krishna then went even one step further and explained to Arjuna the very essence of

Yoga - to focus one's mind and consciousness unto His lotus feet. He explained that a person who is elevated in Yoga, neither acts for sense gratification nor engages himself in fruitive activities (instead he dedicates the fruits of his work unto the Supreme). He explained that one who is regulated in his habits of eating, sleeping, recreation and work is qualified to practice yoga and can mitigate all material pains in the process (*Yuktahara viharasya yukta cestasya karmasu, Yukta svanavabodhasya yogo bhavati dukha ha*)

By constantly controlling one's mind, withdrawing it from the objects of sense enjoyment, and proceeding with utmost determination and faith, one must fix his consciousness upon the Supreme Lord, and thereby ultimately attain the highest perfection of transcendental happiness.

As a lamp doesn't waver in a windless place, similarly, a yogi always remains steady meditating upon the Supreme.

And what is the consciousness of such a yogi ?

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*tasyaham nigraham manye
vayor iva su duskaram
(Bhagavad Gita - 6.34)*

To this Sri Krishna replied, that the task of controlling one's mind was indeed very difficult indeed, but it could be achieved by suitable practice and detachment.

Arjuna then enquired about the fate of an unsuccessful yogi, to which Sri Krishna replied that - The unsuccessful yogi, after many many years of enjoyment in the higher planets, takes birth in a family of righteous people or into a family of rich aristocracy. Or else he takes birth in a family of yogis, who are great in wisdom, and receiving their association, he revives the divine consciousness from his previous life and automatically becomes attracted to the yogic principles. Such an inquisitive transcendentalist, striving for yoga, stands always above the ritualistic principles of the scriptures. A yogi, after many many births of practice, being washed of all contamination, ultimately attains the supreme goal. Hence Lord Krishna here declares that there is never a loss for one who walks the spiritual path endeavouring to attain

the Supreme truth. Even if he does not achieve the ultimate goal in his current lifetime, he continues exactly from where he left off, in his subsequent birth.

But who is the greatest of all the Yogis ? What are the activities of one who is the most intimately united with the Supreme Lord in Yoga ?

Bhakti Yoga:

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(devotee) ,is the most intimately united with Him in yoga and the highest of all.

*Yoginaam api sarvesam mad gatenantar
atmana*

*Sradhavan bhajate yo mam ,sa me yuktatamo
matah
(BG 6.47)*

The process of Karma Yoga slowly leads one to enter the domain of transcendental knowledge. Performing work equipped with higher knowledge, gradually situates one in transcendence, liberating him from the bondages of material nature. Controlling his mind & senses, and by suitable practice and detachment, such a transcendentalist is able to successfully meditate upon the Supreme Lord ,who is the cause of all and everything that is, and thereby he further advances in his spiritual life. But the culmination of all the yogic processes of Karma, Jnana and Dhyana is to ultimately reestablish the loving relationship with the Supreme Lord and render loving devotional service unto Him, as confirmed by the Lord in Bhagavad Gita. Such a Yogi, who serves the Supreme with Bhakti (unalloyed

Love), is the most intimately united with Him in yoga, and is the highest of all the yogis. The devotees (bhaktas) of the Lord are hence residing on the highest platform of yoga, and are unleashing themselves to realize the ultimate treasures of love of God - and are enroute to achieving the complete perfection of their lives.

What is Sanatan Dharma?



Dharma is often interpreted as “duty,” “religion” or “religious duty” and yet its definition is more profound, defying the concise English translation. The word 'Dharma' originates from the Sanskrit root “*dhri*,” which means “to sustain.” Another correlated meaning of 'Dharma' is 'that which is indispensable and fundamental to something'. The word ‘Sanatan’ translates to ‘eternal’ and the phrase ‘Sanatan Dharma’ alludes to that which is eternally integral to a living entity. That which is

‘Sanatan’ does not have either a beginning or an end. Likewise, ‘Sanatan Dharma’ is timeless, non-sectarian and not limited by any boundaries. Religion conveys the idea of faith, and faith of a person may change. But ‘Sanatan Dharma’ is that which cannot be changed. For instance liquidity cannot be taken away from water, nor can heat be taken away from fire.

Eternal Nature (Sanatan Dharma) vs Temporary Nature (Naimittika Dharma)

The eternal characteristics or nature (svabhava) of an entity (Vastu) is its Sanatan Dharma.

When an entity comes into existence, it is created along with an original fundamental nature. Later, due to circumstances, when this entity comes in contact with other entities, it might develop a change in its nature. Over time, this changed or acquired nature (naimittika dharma) becomes firmly established and accompanies the entity just like its original eternal nature (Sanatan Dharma). But this acquired nature should not be mistaken as the original nature of the entity. These changed

characteristics of the concerned entity (vastu)
are called ‘nisarga’.



For example, water is an entity, and liquidity is its eternal nature (Sanatan Dharm). But when this same water is frozen into solid ice, then its liquidity is no more apparent. Instead, the solidity of ice becomes its acquired characteristics (naimittika dharm). But the ‘nisarga’ or acquired nature of an entity is never permanent. It arises due to a temporary circumstance and when the circumstance changes, the entity regains its original nature.

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