In Chapter 2, verse 39, Krishna introduces buddhi-yoga as a means to liberation. Modern readers, studying the text with the help of the ācārya's commentaries, can recognise this as a single, integrated path: action guided by spiritual intelligence.

However, Arjuna hears this teaching amid the turmoil of the battlefield. Although Kṛṣṇa clearly instructs him in 2.47–48 to perform his duty without attachment, Arjuna misunderstands 2.49 to mean that *karma* (action) should be replaced by *buddhi-yoga*. He also interprets Kṛṣṇa's description of the *sthita-prajña*, one firmly established in spiritual intelligence, in 2.55–72 as describing a renounced, contemplative life.

Arjuna therefore mistakenly sees *karma-yoga* and *buddhi-yoga* as two separate paths. He understands 2.50 to mean that only *buddhi-yoga* frees one from karmic reactions. This leaves him confused by Kṛṣṇa's instruction to practise *karma-yoga*. If detached action still produces karmic reactions, why should he follow what he regards as the lower path rather than *buddhi-yoga*?

Influenced by these misunderstandings and his own reluctance to fight, Arjuna raises his doubts at the beginning of Chapter 3.

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3.1: Arjuna said (*arjuna uvāca*): *Buddhi-yoga* is a life of spiritual contemplation, which, according to You, is superior to performing one's worldly duties (*jyāyasī cet karmaṇas te*). O Janārdana, why then are You, who always desire the ultimate welfare of Your devotees, asking me to do something that will simply bring me distress (*matā buddhir janārdana*)? Why do You ask me to commit this terrible deed of killing my relatives (*tat kiṁ karmaṇi ghore māṁ*)? O Keśava, You killed the demon Keśī; please therefore destroy this demonic doubt. Since even Brahmā and Śiva obey You, I cannot disregard Your instruction. Please explain why You urge me to fight (*niyojayasi keśava*).

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.1-5, December 20th 1968, Los Angeles

Explanatory note:

Jyāyasī cet karmaṇas te / matā buddhir janārdana: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "O Janārdana …if You think that intelligence is better than fruitive work…" Bhānu Swami

translates it as "...if it is your opinion that intelligence is superior to action, O Janārdana". (1)

In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> *"Arjuna also thought of Kṛṣṇa consciousness or buddhi-yoga, or intelligence in spiritual advancement of knowledge, as something like retirement from active life and the practice of penance and austerity at a secluded place."*

In other words, Arjuna has misunderstood buddhi-yoga to refer to a monastic life spent in devotional practices such as śravaṇam and kīrtanam for the cultivation of transcendental knowledge. As we learned in the previous chapter, he does not realise that buddhi-yoga is a combination of performing one's worldly prescribed duties and regulative devotional practices.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa give two different perspectives on why Arjuna addresses Kṛṣṇa as Janārdana. Viśvanātha suggests Arjuna is censuring Kṛṣṇa. He explains that "ardana" means pain and "jana" means Your own people. In other words, if he follows Kṛṣṇa's instruction to fight, he will be implicated in suffering. (3)

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, however, breaks Janārdana down differently. He says Janārdana means one whom others go to for guidance regarding their ultimate welfare. In other words, he suggests Arjuna refers to Kṛṣṇa as Janārdana as a means of expressing his trust that Kṛṣṇa will guide him properly. (2)

Tad kiṁ karmaṇi ghore māṁ / niyojayasi keśava: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "O Keśava, why do You want to engage me in this ghastly warfare..." Bhānu Swami translates it as "...then why do you engage me in this terrible action, O Keśava?" (1)

Both Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explain that the name Keśava means one who is obeyed by everyone, even Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva. (2, 3) Thus, it seems that Arjuna is acknowledging that he knows he should do what Kṛṣṇa says, but he is bewildered why the Lord is giving him an instruction which he believes will harm him.

In his purport to Bhagavad-gītā 18.1, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives yet another perspective on the name Keśava. There he explains that the name Keśava refers to Kṛṣṇa's pastime of killing the

demon Keśī, and that by addressing Kṛṣṇa in this way, Arjuna is asking Him to destroy the demonic doubts within his heart. (4)

Evidence:

1**:** "Arjuna said: If it is your opinion that intelligence is superior to action, O Janārdana, then why do you engage me in this terrible action, O Keśava?" (Bhānu Swami's translation of Śārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.1)

2: "If You consider that intelligence (*jñāna-buddhi*) directed towards the ātmā is superior to *niṣkāma-karma* (*karmaṇaḥ*), whose goal is to produce *ātma-jñāna*, why do You engage me in terrible actions involving violence? Why do You incite me with words commanding me to fight?.....Janārdana means 'one who is the object of entreaty for those desiring their ultimate benefit'....Keśava means 'one who controls Brahmā and Śiva.'...You, whose instructions cannot be transgressed (since You control even Brahmā and Śiva)..." (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* 3.1 commentary)

3: "O Janārdana, by Your order You are causing pain (*ardana*) to Your own people (*jana*). It is also not possible to avoid following Your order, O Keśava, controller even of Brahmā and Śiva! *Ka* means Brahmā, *īśa* means Śiva, and *va* means *vayase*, 'You control.'" (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā* 3.1 commentary)

4: "Keśī was a most formidable demon who was killed by the Lord; now Arjuna is expecting Kṛṣṇa to kill the demon of doubt." (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.1 purport)

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3.2: So far, You have simply confused me *(buddhiṁ mohayasīva me*). You seem to contradict Yourself, saying one thing and then another (*vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena*). Please tell me clearly exactly what I need to do (*tad ekaṁ vada niścitya*) to liberate myself from the cycle of birth and death (*yena śreyo 'ham āpnuyām*).

Explanatory note:

Vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena / buddhiṁ mohayasīva me: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as "My intelligence is bewildered by / Your equivocal instructions." "Equivocal"—vyāmiśreṇa—captures the ambiguity of meaning that Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explain arises from Kṛṣṇa using the same word to refer to different

topics: sometimes karma-yoga and other times sāṅkhya-yoga, sometimes the practice and other times the goal of one's practice. (1, 2)

Viśvanātha and Baladeva explain that by the addition of the word *iva* to *mohayasi*, Arjuna is indicating that Kṛṣṇa is not intentionally trying to bewilder him. (1, 2)

Tad ekaṁ vada niścitya / yena śreyo 'ham āpnuyām: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Therefore, please tell me decisively / which will be most beneficial for me." Baladeva and Viśvanātha explain Arjuna wants Kṛṣṇa to tell him clearly the one thing he needs to do that will enable him to achieve liberation from the cycle of birth and death. (1, 2)

Evidence:

1: "Then why do you not clearly tell me to engage in activity? You throw me into an ocean of doubt. You bewilder my intelligence by those words which are a mixture of many meanings (*vyāmiśreṇa)*. Though you have mentioned about action (*karmaṇy evādhikāras te)*, you also speak of jñāna, using the words *yoga* in such statements as the following: ... And you speak only of knowledge in such statements as *yadā te moha-kalilām buddhir vyatitariṣyati* ... The word *iva* indicates that your words are not actually filled with many meanings and that it is not your desire to bewilder me, as you are merciful ..." (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā* 3.2 commentary)

2: "A statement concerning intellect, directed towards both sāṅkhya-yoga and karma-yoga, concerning both stopping and engaging the senses, concerning both the goal of practice (sādhya) and the practice (sādhana), is called a mixed statement (vyāmiśra). By that statement, you seem to bewilder my intelligence (mohayasi iva) ... That is the implication of the word iva. Therefore make one statement, without mixture of the two elements." (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* 3.2 commentary)"

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3.3: The Supreme Lord replied (*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*): O virtuous Arjuna, I have just explained the two accepted paths to self-realisation (*loke 'smin dvi-vidhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayānagha*). Those free of material desires can practise jñāna-yoga, which entails renouncing prescribed duties and living a life of renunciation centred on analysing the distinction between the soul and matter (*jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānāṁ*). The other path is

buddhi-yoga, often called karma-yoga, better suited to those who still have material attachments (*karma-yogena yoginām*).

Explanatory note:

Loke 'smin dvi-vidhā niṣṭhā / purā proktā mayānagha: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as "O sinless Arjuna, I have already explained that / there are two classes of men who try to realize the self." Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explain that *purā*, meaning "formerly", refers to Kṛṣṇa's instructions in Chapter 2. (1, 2)

Śrīla Prabhupāda translates the word *anagha* as "sinless", and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa as "spotless intelligence". The question arises as to why Kṛṣṇa addresses Arjuna as "sinless one" in this verse. The answer might be found in Bhagavad-gītā 7.28, wherein Kṛṣṇa says that one who is free of sin can engage in His devotional service with determination. (3) This suggests that Kṛṣṇa is expressing His confidence in Arjuna's ability to follow His instructions once he has properly understood them.

Regarding the phrase *dvi-vidhā niṣṭhā*, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains that it refers to two types of people who are steady in transcendental realisation. One type achieves such steadiness by the process of *jñāna-yoga*, which involves leading a reclusive life of penance and scriptural study. These people were described in Bhagavad-gītā 2.55–72. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that to qualify for practising *jñāna-yoga*, one's heart must be pure. (1, 2)

The other type of person achieves the same steadiness in transcendental realisation by performing one's scripturally prescribed duties for the pleasure of the Lord without any personal motivation—*niṣkāma-karma-yoga*. These people were described in verses such as Bhagavad-gītā 2.47. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains that by engaging in *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, one purifies the heart. (1, 2)

Jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānām: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Some are inclined to understand it by empirical, philosophical speculation…" Empirical learning refers to acquiring knowledge by observing and analysing the world around us, and philosophical speculation suggests developing hypotheses that help make sense of those observations. Sāṅkhya tries to understand the self by a combination of such analysis and hypotheses.

Karma-yogena yoginām: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "and others by devotional service." Here Śrīla Prabhupāda equates *karma-yoga* with devotional service, and in his purport he equates it with *buddhi-yoga*. (1, 2)

"*In the Second Chapter, verse 39, the Lord explained two kinds of procedures—namely sāṅkhya-yoga and karma-yoga, or buddhi-yoga.*"

Often the phrase *bhakti-yoga* is used to refer to devotional service. Thus, one might ask if there is a difference between *buddhi-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga*. The answer is that the term *bhakti-yoga* encompasses the full range of devotional service, from practising the rules and regulations of devotional service—*sādhana-bhakti*—all the way to greater and greater depths of love for Kṛṣṇa—*prema-bhakti*. (4, 5)

Sādhana-bhakti is itself divided into two stages: *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā*. At the stage of *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti*, the practitioner does not yet have spontaneous attraction for Kṛṣṇa and therefore practises devotional service primarily by following the rules and regulations of bhakti. (4) In *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhakti*, the practitioner has developed some spontaneous attraction and follows the devotional mood of one of Kṛṣṇa's eternal associates in Vraja. (6) The basic practices of devotional service, such as *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*, are common to both. *Buddhi-yoga* seems to be another term for *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti*.

Evidence:

1: "The two processes that I have explained are for those qualified for karma and jñāna according to different circumstances. It is not that these people are equally suitable for liberation. … I have explained in the previous chapter two types of qualification: for those engaged in knowledge, who have risen to the state of knowledge by purity of the heart, there is steadiness in jñāna-yoga. … For those who are not able to ascend to the platform of knowledge by a pure heart, there is a means to ascend to that platform. They are fixed or limited to niṣkāma-karma-yoga, activities without desire, offered to me. … Actually, the persons engaged in karma become pure-hearted jñānīs by their actions, and the jñānīs become liberated by bhakti. This is the meaning of all my words." (Śārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.3 commentary)

2: "I, the Lord of all, have in the previous chapter described two types of steadiness, in two types of people, according to the purity or impurity of their consciousness, in terms of their

aspiration for liberation. … That one steadiness has two types: of the jñānīs engaged in jñāna-yoga, and of the yogis engaged in karma-yoga. … The steadiness of such jñānīs by the process of jñāna-yoga, sthita-prajña, has been mentioned in the second chapter, starting with prajahāti yadā kāmān. … Steadiness by karma-yoga of the niṣkāma-karma-yogis was mentioned in such verses as karmaṇy evādhikāras te. … one who desires liberation does not immediately achieve steadiness in jñāna, along with its components, such as stopping the senses, but rather first purifies the heart by karma-yoga with prescribed actions." (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.3 commentary)

3: "Persons who have acted piously in previous lives and in this life and whose sinful actions are completely eradicated are freed from the dualities of delusion, and they engage themselves in My service with determination." (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 7.28)

4: "Now this *sādhana-bhakti,* or practice of devotional service, may also be divided into two parts. The first part is called service according to regulative principles: one has to follow these different regulative principles by the order of the spiritual master or on the strength of authoritative scriptures, and there can be no question of refusal. That is called *vaidhī,* or regulated. One has to do it without argument. Another part of *sādhana-bhakti* is called *rāgānugā*. *Rāgānugā* refers to the point at which, by following the regulative principles, one becomes a little more attached to Kṛṣṇa and executes devotional service out of natural love." (The Nectar of Devotion chapter 2)

5: ""There are ten meanings for the word 'bhakti' ['devotional service']. One is sādhana-bhakti, execution of devotional service according to the regulative principles, and the other nine are varieties of prema-bhakti, ecstatic love of Godhead." (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 24.30)

6: ""The original inhabitants of Vṛndāvana are attached to Kṛṣṇa spontaneously in devotional service. Nothing can compare to such spontaneous devotional service, which is called rāgātmikā bhakti. When a devotee follows in the footsteps of the devotees of Vṛndāvana, his devotional service is called rāgānugā bhakti." (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 22.149)

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3.4: One cannot avoid karmic reactions by renouncing one's prescribed duties (*na karmaṇām anārambhān / naiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣo 'śnute*). Nor does formally accepting the

renounced order of sannyāsa guarantee liberation from the cycle of birth and death (*na ca sannyasanād eva / siddhiṁ samadhigacchati*).

Explanatory note:

Na karmaṇām anārambhān / naiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣo 'śnute: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Not by merely abstaining from work / can one achieve freedom from reaction…" In other words, we do not become free from karmic reactions simply by stopping our prescribed duties.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explain that one must continue performing prescribed duties for as long as the heart is impure. (1, 2) These impurities, such as "lust, desire, hankering, inactivity, foolishness and sleep," are caused by the influence of the modes of passion and ignorance. (3) Baladeva explains that in the next thirteen verses, Kṛṣṇa will teach the importance of performing prescribed duties to purify the heart. (2)

Na ca sannyasanād eva / siddhiṁ samadhigacchati: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "nor by renunciation alone can one attain perfection." According to Baladeva, perfection—*siddhi*—in this context means liberation from the cycle of birth and death. (2) The formal acceptance of *sannyāsa* does not guarantee liberation. One must purify the heart, and this happens by performing prescribed duties, not by renouncing them. Śrīla Prabhupāda adds that one who prematurely accepts *sannyāsa* simply causes a disturbance in society.

Evidence:

1: "By not engaging in activities recommended in the scriptures, one cannot attain *jñāna* (*naiṣkarmyam*). One with an impure heart cannot attain *jñāna* by renunciation of activities recommended in the scriptures (*sannyāsāt*)." (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā* 3.4 commentary)

2: "One with an impure heart should perform prescribed activities for purification of the heart. This is explained in thirteen verses. A person with an impure heart cannot attain steadiness in jñāna or detachment from action in the form of stopping the actions of all the senses (niṣkārmyam), without performing prescribed actions (anarambhan) as part of the cultivation of jñāna. And he also does not attain liberation (siddhim) simply from renouncing those actions." (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* 3.4 commentary)

3: *"The soul's activity becomes adulterated in contact with matter, and as such the diseased activities are expressed in the form of lust, desire, hankering, inactivity, foolishness and sleep. The effect of devotional service becomes manifest by complete elimination of these effects of passion and ignorance." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.19 purport)*

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3.5: Furthermore, the living entity cannot remain inactive for even a moment (*na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api / jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma-kṛt*). Everyone is compelled to act according to the qualities they have acquired from the modes of material nature (*kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma / sarvaḥ prakṛti-jair guṇaiḥ*).

Explanatory note:

Na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api / jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma-kṛt: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as "…no one can refrain from doing something, / not even for a moment." He explains in his purport that the nature of the soul is to be active, and while influenced by the modes of nature, one will engage in materialistic activity. The purpose of prescribed duties is to purify one from this influence.

Kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma / sarvaḥ prakṛti-jair guṇaiḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Everyone is forced to act helplessly / according to the qualities he has acquired from the modes of material nature…" Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains that the likes and dislikes we have acquired from the modes of nature compel us to act even against our will. In other words, while we are still influenced by the modes of nature, we will not be able to refrain from materialistic activity even if we try. (2)The modes of nature influence each living entity according to the impressions carried over from previous lives. (2)

Evidence:

1: "If a person with impure heart renounces prescribed activities, accepting Vedic *karma-sannyāsa*, he reverts to material action, for such a person cannot remain inactive. He cannot remain for even a moment being inactive. … 'By the qualities of such a desire and repulsion (*guṇaiḥ*) arising from his *svabhāva* (*prakṛti-jaiḥ)*, he will perform all action beyond his will (*avaśaḥ)*." (Gītā-bhūṣaṇa 3.5 commentary)

2; “Later it is explained that nature or *svabhāva* means the impressions fixed within the jīva from experiences in successive previous bodies.” (Bhānu Swāmī’s note to *Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* 3.5)

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Arjuna reflects: But I have seen that some people accept sannyāsa, give up their occupational duties and manage to restrain their senses from all activity.

Explanatory note:

This insight into Arjuna’s thinking is based on the commentaries of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.

Evidence:

“‘But we see some such *sannyāsīs*, devoid of actions of the senses, with closed eyes.’ This verse answers.” (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā* 3.6 commentary)

“But it is seen that there are persons who have closed up their senses like the ear, and are therefore devoid of actions of attraction and repulsion.” (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* 3.6 commentary)

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3.6: Kṛṣṇa said: If one externally restrains his senses but continues to contemplate sense gratification (*karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya / ya āste manasā smaran*), he is called a cheater (*mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate*), because he continues to be bewildered by the allure of the sense objects (*indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā*).

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.6-10, December 23rd 1968, Los Angeles

Explanatory note:

Karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya / ya āste manasā smaran: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as “One who restrains the senses of action but whose mind dwells on…” Karmendriyāṇi refers to the five working sense organs, namely speech, hands, feet, anus and genitals. (3) In other words, he restrains his hands from reaching for the sense objects, his legs from going to the sense objects, his speech from speaking about the sense objects and his genitals from engaging with the sense objects. However, his mind (manasā) continues to dwell on (smaran) the sense objects (indriyārthān), as mentioned in the next line.

Indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā / mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…sense objects certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender." Indriyārthān means 'sense objects'. Vimūḍha means 'bewildered' or 'made foolish', and ātmā refers to the person. In other words, the sense objects continue to bewilder the soul by enticing him with the promise of enjoyment. Therefore, according to Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, the cheater continues to dwell on these objects mentally, (1, 2) or, in Śrīla Prabhupāda's words, continues "dwelling within the mind upon sense enjoyment." Such a person is called, ucyate, a pretender, mithyācāraḥ. Viśvanātha uses the word 'a cheater', and Baladeva includes these descriptions: 'imposter', and 'a false performer'. (1, 2)

Evidence:

1: "He who controls the senses of action, such as speech or hands (*karmendriyāṇi*) but remains remembering the objects of the senses under the pretense of meditating, is a cheater (*mithyācāra)*." (*sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.6 commentary*)

2: "The sannyasi is a fool who, stopping his action senses, like the voice, still remembers the objects of the senses, such as sound, by mind pretending to meditate. He is called an impostor. Because of remembering sense objects in the mind in spite of not extending the senses outward, which arise because of impurity in the mind through not performing *niṣkāma-karma*. This ignorant person, attempting to control his attraction to material objects, does not attain *jñāna*, though he aspires for it. He is thus called a false performer, a pretender, having false control of his speech and of his senses. He is a cheater." (*gīta-bhūṣaṇa 3.6 commentary*)

3: "The five working senses: speech, hands, feet, anus and genitals." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.20.13, purport)

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3.7: Arjuna, a householder who regulates his senses in accordance with scriptural injunctions (*yas tv indriyāṇi manasā / niyamyārabhate 'rjuna*) and performs his prescribed duties as niṣkāma-karma-yoga (*karmendriyaiḥ karma-yogam*), without attachment to the

results, is far superior to a sannyāsī who has not yet attained full God-realisation (*asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate*).

Explanatory note:

Yas tv indriyāṇi manasā / niyamyārabhate 'rjuna: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "On the other hand, if a sincere person tries to control the active senses by the mind and begins…" Bhānu Swāmī translates it as "He who, controlling the senses by the mind, aiming for the ātmā, / performs…" (3)

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explain that one who stays in married life and performs his prescribed duties with a pure mind is better situated than a sannyāsī. (1, 2) Viśvanātha refers to a comment by Rāmānuja Ācārya stating that the reason for this is that there is always a possibility that a sannyāsī who has not attained full God realisation will fall down, but the married person is safe from this danger.(1) This theme is further developed in Chapter 5, texts 2–6.

Karmendriyaiḥ karma-yogam / asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…karma-yoga [in Kṛṣṇa consciousness] / without attachment, he is by far superior." Bhānu Swāmī translates it as "…karma-yoga with his active senses, / at the same time being free from attachment to the results, is superior to a person acting prematurely from the position of jñāna." (3)

In other words, a person whose mind is free of material desires but continues to perform his scripturally prescribed duties as a householder is far better than a person who accepts sannyāsa but mentally still harbours material desires.

In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> *"The prime svārtha-gati, or goal of self-interest, is to reach Viṣṇu. The whole institution of varṇa and āśrama is designed to help us reach this goal of life. A householder can also reach this destination by regulated service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."*

The key message is that external renunciation is not essential for spiritual advancement; what is essential is learning how to become free from the mental attachment to sense gratification.

Evidence:

1: "In contrast to this, the householder (not the *sannyāsī)* who performs scriptural

actions (*karma-yogam)* without longing for fruits of his actions (*asakta)* is superior. Rāmānujācārya says in this regard that he is superior to the person practising *jñāna*, because of the impossibility of going astray." (*Sarartha varsini 3.7 commentary*)

2: "On the other hand, the householder who performs his prescribed activities is better. That person is superior, who, devoid of desire for the results (*asakta)*, performs the method (*yogam)* in the form of actions, *karma*, by the action senses with the regulation of those senses by the mind (*manasā)*, which has the intention of realising *ātmā*. He is better than a person acting on the platform of *jñāna*, which is only to be achieved in the future." (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇa 3.7 commentary*)

3: **"**He who, controlling the senses by the mind, aiming for the *ātmā*, performs *karma-yoga* with his active senses, at the same time being free from attachment to the results, is superior to a person acting prematurely from the position of *jñāna*." (Bhānu Swāmī's translation of Gīta-bhūṣaṇa 3.7)

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3.8: Therefore, stick to the duties prescribed for you by scripture (*niyataṁ kuru karma tvaṁ*). This is far better than abandoning them (*karma jyāyo hy akarmaṇaḥ*), as there is no other divinely approved means of supporting yourself (*śarīra-yātrāpi ca te / na prasidhyed akarmaṇaḥ*).

Explanatory note:

Niyataṁ kuru karma tvaṁ / karma jyāyo hy akarmaṇaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Perform your prescribed duty, / for doing so is better than not working." He translates niyatam as "prescribed", Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura translates it as "obligatory" and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa as "necessarily". (1, 2)Thus, duties prescribed for us by scripture are necessary both for our spiritual advancement and for meeting our material needs in a manner approved by God.

Śarīra-yātrāpi ca te / na prasidhyed akarmaṇaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "One cannot even maintain one's physical body / without work." Baladeva points out that the prescribed duty of sannyāsīs is to beg for their food. (2) However, since begging is forbidden for the kṣatriya class, Arjuna should continue performing his own prescribed duties.

Evidence:

1: "Therefore, you should engage in daily obligatory activities such as sandhya vandana (nityam karma). This is better than renunciation of these actions (karma sannyasa). By renunciation of all actions, you will not even be able to maintain your body." (sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.8 commentary)

2: "Therefore, since you have an impure heart, you must necessarily (*niyatam*) perform prescribed activities for purification of the heart. This means, 'Perform these prescribed activities without personal desire.' Performing such activities is better than renouncing all action out of enthusiasm, because the performance of these duties will gradually lead to attainment of *jñāna*, just as steps lead to the top of a staircase.....Because he must maintain the body, purified through *sādhana*, for as long as he lives, even the *jñānī* performs actions such as begging for food. But such begging is not meant for you, a *kṣatriya*." (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* 3.8 commentary)

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Arjuna reflects: But the scriptures say that performing any action, even prescribed duties, binds you to karmic reactions and obliges you to take another material birth.

Explanatory note:

This insight into Arjuna's thinking is based on the commentaries of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.

Evidence:

" 'The *smṛti* scriptures say that one is bound by actions: *karmaṇā badhyate jantuḥ* (*Mahābhārata* 12.24.71). Therefore, I will become bound by performing actions.' " (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā* 3.9 commentary)

" 'But by performing actions, one will become bound up. We hear such statements as *karmaṇā badhyate jantuḥ*: living entities are bound by actions.' " (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* 3.9 commentary)

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3.9: Kṛṣṇa said: Only work not offered as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu's pleasure incurs karmic reactions and thus binds one to this world (*yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra / loko 'yaṁ*

karma-bandhanaḥ). However, if one performs prescribed duties solely to satisfy Viṣṇu, without desiring to enjoy the result, there are no karmic reactions. Therefore, if you want to attain complete liberation from material existence, Arjuna, simply do your prescribed duties for His pleasure (*tad-arthaṁ karma kaunteya / mukta-saṅgaḥ samācara*).

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.9, November 3rd 1973, Delhi

Explanatory note:

Yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra / loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Work done as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu has to be performed; / otherwise work causes bondage in this material world." In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda points out that we must work to sustain our bodies. The prescribed duties of the different varṇas and āśramas enable one to fulfil one's material needs while simultaneously serving Kṛṣṇa. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa points out that even one's prescribed duties can cause material bondage if performed "for the purpose of self-enjoyment". (2) Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that, for work to constitute a sacrifice for Viṣṇu, it must be performed without personal desire. (1)

Tad-arthaṁ karma kaunteya / mukta-saṅgaḥ samācara: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Therefore, O son of Kuntī, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, / and in that way you will always remain free from bondage." Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly stresses that one must perform the work to satisfy Viṣṇu. Viśvanātha and Baladeva further clarify that one must perform the work without personal desires, giving up any desire for personal enjoyment. (1, 2) Viśvanātha points out that "even if I perform actions which are offered to Viṣṇu, if I perform them with desires, then I will still become bound." (1)

Evidence:

1: "'Dharma offered to Viṣṇu without personal desire is called yajña. Persons become bound by karma, by any other actions for any other purpose. Therefore you should perform actions for the perfection of such dharma.' 'But even if I perform actions which are offered to Viṣṇu, if I perform them with desires, then I will still become bound.' 'One should become devoid of the desire for results (mukta-saṅgaḥ). Thus the Lord spoke to Uddhava: 'My dear Uddhava, a person who is situated in his prescribed duty, properly

worshiping by Vedic sacrifices, but not desiring the fruits or results of such worship, will not go to the heavenly planets. Similarly, by not performing forbidden activities, he will not go to hell. One who is situated in his prescribed duty, free from sinful activities and cleansed of material contamination, in this very life obtains transcendental knowledge, or by fortune, devotional service unto me.' Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Canto 11, Chapter 20, Verses 10–11." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.9 commentary)

2: "'Living entities (ayaṁ lokaḥ) are bound by actions (karma-bandhanaḥ) in performing actions for the purpose of self-enjoyment, without intending to please Viṣṇu (yajñārtha anyatra). Therefore perform actions for the pleasure of Viṣṇu (tad-artham). O son of Kuntī, giving up the desire for personal happiness (mukta-saṅgaḥ), worshiping Viṣṇu through sacrifices and other means, by lawfully obtained wealth and maintaining your body with the remnants of the sacrifice, you will not be bound." (Gīta-bhūṣaṇa 3.9 commentary)

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Arjuna reflects: What should I do if I still have some personal desire?

Exaplantory note:
This segue is inspired by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary in which he explains that the next seven verses explain what one should do if one still has material desires.

Evidence:
"Therefore, one with impure heart should perform actions without desire rather than give up action. Now if you cannot be desireless in the actions, then you should still perform actions offered to Viṣṇu with desire rather than give up actions completely. This is explained in seven verses." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.10 commentary)

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3.10: The Lord established the practice of sacrifice at the dawn of time, when He created the celestials and humans (saha-yajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā / purovāca prajāpatiḥ). He instructed that by performing sacrifice, they would both fulfil their material desires

and attain liberation (anena prasaviṣyadhvam / eṣa vo 'stv iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk). Therefore, even if you have some personal desires, you should still offer your work as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu.

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.8–13, May 20th 1966, New York

Explanatory note:

Saha-yajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā / purovāca prajāpatiḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "In the beginning of creation, the Lord of all creatures sent forth generations of men and demigods, along with sacrifices for Viṣṇu, and blessed them by saying,"

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that in this verse Kṛṣṇa teaches that if one cannot perform sacrifice without material desire — *niṣkāma-karma* — then one should nevertheless still perform sacrifice with material desire — *sakāma-karma* — and by doing so, one will both fulfil one's desires and become spiritually purified. (1)

Śrīla Prabhupāda interprets *prajāpatiḥ* as "the Lord of all creatures" to encompass the different perspectives of both Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, who interprets it as Viṣṇu, and Viśvanātha, who interprets it as Lord Brahmā. (1, 2) When we understand that the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu speaks to His creation through Lord Brahmā, we can see that both are correct. (3)

Anena prasaviṣyadhvam / eṣa vo 'stv iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Be thou happy by this yajña [sacrifice] because its performance will bestow upon you everything desirable for living happily and achieving liberation."

In a lecture, he explains that Kṛṣṇa is instructing the Prajāpatis and their descendants that by performing sacrifice to satisfy Viṣṇu, they will become spiritually enlightened — *anena prasaviṣyadhvam* — and have their legitimate material desires fulfilled — *eṣa vo 'stv iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk*. (4)

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says *eṣa vo 'stv iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk* — "the bestower of all desirable things" — refers to the bestower of whatever material enjoyment one desires, while Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa says it refers to the bestower of liberation. Śrīla Prabhupāda integrates both perspectives in his translation. (1, 2)

Evidence:

1: "Now, if you cannot be desireless in your actions, then you should still perform actions

offered to Viṣṇu with desire, rather than give up action completely.....Brahmā created the living beings qualified for offering sacrifice to Viṣṇu and said, 'Increase the population more and more through this dharma, or *yajña*. May this *yajña* bestow all desired enjoyments (*iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk*).'" (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā* 3.10 commentary)

2: "At the beginning of creation (*purā*), the Lord—Yajña, or Viṣṇu—created progeny such as the devas and human beings together with sacrifice.....'May this sacrifice (*eṣa*) offered to Me become the giver of the desired goal of liberation (*iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk*) by supplying bodily maintenance and knowledge of the *ātmā*, which purifies the heart.'" (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* 3.10 commentary)

3: "Lord Viṣṇu is also *ātmeśvara*, the Supersoul in everyone. Under His direction, everything is prompted from within. For example, in the beginning of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam it is stated, *tene brahma hṛdā*: He first educated Lord Brahmā from within." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.7.50 purport)

4: "*Prajāḥ* means the living entities, after being created, they were advised that 'You perform *yajña*, or sacrifice, for the satisfaction of Viṣṇu. That will...' *Anena*, 'By this,' *prasaviṣyadhvam*, 'you increase your enlightenment.' *Prasaviṣyadhvam*. 'And whatever you want, that will be satisfied by this *yajña*.'" (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.8–13, May 20th 1966, New York)

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3.11: : By performing such sacrifices, one satisfies Visnu's representatives, the administrative demigods (*devān bhāvayatānena*). In turn, they fulfil the performer's desires (*te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ*). When both parties satisfy one another (*parasparaṁ bhāvayantaḥ*), the Lord grants them all liberation (*śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha*).

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.11-19, December 27th 1968, Los Angeles

Explanatory note:

Devān bhāvayatānena / te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "The demigods, being pleased by sacrifices, / will also please you..." The demigods are the Lord's empowered servants who reside in different parts of His universal body and administer the universe on His behalf. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that this verse explains how

sacrifice satisfies both the people who perform it and the demigods. (1) Humans satisfy the demigods by performing sacrifice, and in reciprocation they satisfy the performers of sacrifice.

Śrīla Prabhupāda and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explain that a key element of sacrifice is offering pure food to the Lord. By eating the remnants of the sacrifice, one's intelligence is purified, enabling one to understand transcendental knowledge. (2)

Parasparaṁ bhāvayantaḥ / śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "by cooperation between men and demigods, / prosperity will reign for all." Baladeva explains that when everyone involved in the sacrifice is satisfied by its performance, then everyone — both gods and humans — will also attain its highest benefit: liberation. (2)

Evidence:

1; "This verse explains how the yajña yields all desires. By this yajña (*anena)* please the devatās. You make them pleased by the sacrifice; the devatās will also please all of you. *Bhava* indicates perfection in this verse." (Sarartha Varṣiṇī 3.11 commentary)

2: "Viṣṇu also said to the created beings, 'Please the devatās, headed by Indra, who are the limbs of my body, by offering oblations to them, *anena*. May the devatās please you by bestowing benedictions. You and they, being mutually pleased with the pure food, will attain the highest benefit in the form of liberation, *param śreya*. In this regard, pure food is one element for *aṅga* for cultivation of *jñāna*. The *śruti* says, "By pure food one attains pure mind; by pure mind the intelligence becomes fixed. With good intelligence one is free from all obstacles." (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 7.26.2.)" (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇam* 3.11 commentary)

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3.12: By continuing to offer sacrifice to Viṣṇu, you will continue to please the demigods and have all your necessities supplied (*iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā / dāsyante yajña-bhāvitāḥ*). However, if you stop performing sacrifice while continuing to accept their supplies (*tair dattān apradāyaibhyo*), you will be no better than a thief (*yo bhuṅkte stena eva saḥ*) and will thus incur sin. Furthermore, gradually, the demigods will stop providing your necessities.

Explanatory note:

Iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā / dāsyante yajña-bhāvitāḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "In charge of the various necessities of life, the demigods, being satisfied by the performance of yajña [sacrifice], / will supply all necessities to you." The demigods are also spirit souls, eternal servants of Viṣṇu. However, due to past piety, they have been entrusted by the Lord to act as His authorised agents in the material world. Following a system established by the Lord, when someone performs the appropriate sacrifice, the demigods reward him with what he desires.

They are like a company's supply agent. When the customer pays, the agent supplies the goods on behalf of the company. If the customer reliably pays, the company agent is happy to continually supply him with goods. Similarly, according to Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, the demigods continue to supply those who regularly perform sacrifice. (1)

Tair dattān apradāyaibhyo / yo bhuṅkte stena eva saḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as "But he who enjoys such gifts / without offering them to the demigods in return is certainly a thief."

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that in payment for the goods we receive in the form of rain, sunshine, grains, etc., human society is meant to perform five great sacrifices — pañca-mahā-yajña. (2) In the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us what the five sacrifices are and why we need to perform them. (3) He also explains that by the grace of Lord Caitanya all other sacrifices can be replaced by assembling together to hear and chant about Kṛṣṇa:

> "Lord Caitanya, however, inaugurated the easiest performance of *yajña,* namely the *saṅkīrtana-yajña,* which can be performed by anyone in the world who accepts the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Viśvanātha explains that this verse describes the fault of not performing sacrifice: one becomes a thief and is subsequently punished by the Lord's agents. (2) In a lecture Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that as a result, further supplies will be withheld. It is like not paying a company for goods supplied. Soon, the company will refuse to supply any more goods. (4)

Evidence:

1: “These previously created devatās, who are My limbs, will give you more and more desired objects dependent on the performance of sacrifice, which are useful for those desiring liberation (*iṣṭān bhogān*)… Having stolen the devatās’ properties, he nourishes himself by that. As a thief is punished by the king, he deserves to be punished by Yamarāja.” (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* 3.12 commentary)

2: “To make this point clearer, he speaks of the fault of not performing this activity. He who enjoys what is given by the devatās, such as food, through their rain, without giving anything to them through performance of the *pañca-mahā-yajña* and other rites, is a thief.” (Sarartha Varṣiṇī 3.12 commentary)

3; “By offering oblations with ghee, one satisfies the demigods. By studying the *Vedas,* one performs *brahma-yajña,* which satisfies the great sages. Offering libations of water before one’s forefathers is called *pitṛ-yajña*. By offering tribute, one performs *bhūta-yajña*. By properly receiving guests, one performs *nṛ-yajña*.” These are the five *yajñas* that liquidate the five kinds of indebtedness — indebtedness to the demigods, great sages, forefathers, living entities and common men. Therefore one has to perform these five kinds of *yajñas*. But when one takes to the *saṅkīrtana-yajña* (the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*), one does not have to perform any other *yajna.” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 22.141 purport)*

4: “So we are receiving heat from the sun. Similarly, we are receiving rains. Don't you think that we have to pay some tax? That is required. That is enjoined in the Vedic literature. You must. Therefore so many sacrifices are recommended. If you do not offer those sacrifices, then there will be irregularity of rain, irregularity of heat, excessive heat, excessive cold, and people will suffer. This is the process. They do not know it….in due course, the milk supply will be stopped. That is stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. There will be no more milk supply at the end of this Kali-yuga. Three, four things will be stopped—grains, sugar and milk will be stopped….Therefore *yajña* is recommended.” (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.11-19, December 27th 1968, Los Angeles)

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3.13: The need for sacrifice especially applies to the food we eat. Those who prepare food only for themselves (*ye pacanty ātma-kāraṇāt*) suffer sinful reactions (*bhuñjate te tv*

aghaṁ pāpā). However, the Lord's devotees avoid sin (*mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ*) by preparing food acceptable to the Lord and offering it to Him before eating (*yajña-śiṣṭāśinaḥ santo*).

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.9–14, February 6th 1974, Vrndavana

Explanatory note:

Yajña-śiṣṭāśinaḥ santo / mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as "The devotees of the Lord / are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food which is offered first for sacrifice."

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that by performing sacrifice one is released from the reaction to the five kinds of violence we inevitably inflict on other living beings. (1) For example, when we walk, breathe, or cook, we unconsciously kill so many small living entities. According to the laws of God, we are culpable for their murder. (3) Therefore, we must perform sacrifice to cleanse ourselves of the sin. In his purport to Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that devotional activities such as hearing, chanting, remembering and worshipping can themselves be performed as yajñas and that these activities will suffice to purify us: (2)

> *"Therefore, such devotees always perform yajñas in different modes of devotional service, such as śravaṇam, kīrtanam, smaraṇam, arcanam, etc., and these performances of yajñas keep them always aloof from all kinds of contamination of sinful association in the material world."*

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa suggests that devotees only eat what is permitted by Kṛṣṇa and even that they first offer to Him. (2, 4) By these simple practices, one is released from the unavoidable violence involved in preparing and eating food. (1, 2)

Bhuñjate te tv aghaṁ pāpā / ye pacanty ātma-kāraṇāt: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as "Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, / verily eat only sin." Foods not prescribed by scripture or not offered to the Lord implicate us in sinful reactions, (2, 4) as do our other daily activities when not accompanied by devotional sacrifices like hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa. (2, 3) Baladeva explains that sinful reactions create an obstacle to self-realisation. (2)

Evidence:

1: “Those who eat the food remnants of yajñas … become free from all sins caused by the five types of violence to living entities. The five violent actions (*pañca-sūnā*) are described in the *smṛti* … The gṛhastha does not enjoy *svarga* by commission of the five violent actions towards other living entities, caused by using the mortar, grinding stone, the stove, the broom, and water pot. Viṣṇu Smṛti, 59, 19 to 20.” (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.13 commentary)

2: “The devotees (*santah*), who take the remnants to maintain their bodies after worshipping the Lord of all beings, become free from all sins accumulated since beginningless time (*sarva-kilbiṣaih*) … This purification is necessary because the sins create an obstacle to realization of *ātmā*. But those sinful people who cook only for their own nourishment (*ātmā-kāraṇāt*) food which is designated by the Lord for sacrifice … enjoy only sin (*agham*) … Thus it is said that they eat only sin.” (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.13 commentary)

3: “*Pañcasuna* means five kinds of violence. When you take water, there are many small animals round the jug, and you kill them. When you … rub the spices on the mortar and pestle, you kill some germs or small ants and animals. When you set fire, you kill so many. When you walk on the street, you kill so many animals … If you kill consciously or unconsciously, you are responsible for the sinful activity … Therefore in the *śāstra* it is recommended *pañcasuna-yajña*. Because unconsciously we are killing so many animals; therefore the *pañcasuna-yajña* should be performed.” (Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.9–14, February 6th 1974, Vṛndāvana)

4: “Grains, fruits, milk and similar foods are allotted for human consumption … Particularly, a devotee should eat only *prasāda,* or food which is offered to the Personality of Godhead … Innocent foods like grains, vegetables, fruits, flowers and milk preparations are offered to the Lord, and therefore there is no scope for offering foods which are in the modes of passion and ignorance.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.27.8 purport)

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3.14: Food grains are necessary for life (*annād bhavanti bhūtāni*), but they require rain to grow (*parjanyād anna-sambhavaḥ*). Rain depends on sacrifice (*yajñād bhavati parjanyo*), which

requires one to perform prescribed duties (*yajñaḥ karma-samudbhavaḥ*). Therefore, performing prescribed duties is essential for ensuring a continued supply of food grains.

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.14 [with translator], December 27th 1975, Sanand

Explanatory note:

Annād bhavanti bhūtāni / parjanyād anna-sambhavaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "All living bodies subsist on food grains, / which are produced from rains." Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explain that Kṛṣṇa now tells us that sacrifice is necessary to maintain and sustain life. Living beings need food to live and propagate new life. However, without rain, the earth will not produce food. (1, 2)

Yajñād bhavati parjanyo / yajñaḥ karma-samudbhavaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Rains are produced by performance of yajña [sacrifice], / and yajña is born of prescribed duties." In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the production of food requires resources such as sun and rain. These resources are controlled by the Lord's servants, the demigods. When we perform sacrifice, they are pleased and provide the resources we require.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura helps us understand the connection between sacrifice and performance of prescribed duties by reminding us that sacrifice requires a patron who can finance the sacrifice and priests who execute it. (1) The priests' work is to perform the sacrifice, and the patron must carry out his own prescribed work so that he has the capacity to finance the sacrifice. (1)

In the previous era, Dvāpara-yuga, sacrifice took the form of elaborate temple rituals. Today, in Kali-yuga, the prescribed sacrifice is saṅkīrtana-yajña: the congregational glorification of the Lord. (3) In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

"Yajña, specifically the saṅkīrtana-yajña prescribed for this age, must therefore be performed to save us at least from scarcity of food supply."

In a Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that saṅkīrtana-yajña requires funding and organisation. Thus, it is not required that everyone live as a monk. The married community has its own unique contribution to spreading the saṅkīrtana-yajña. They must work responsibly in the world and use their wealth and organisational skills to support the saṅkīrtana-yajña. (3)

Evidence:

1: “One should perform the *yajña* because it causes the cyclic movement in the universe. From food living entities exist, food is the cause of the bodies of the entities, and from food arises the health of the bodies of the living entities, with transformation into semen and blood. The cause of food is rain. By the rain food is produced. The cause of rain is the *yajña*. By people performing *yajña*, the clouds produce sufficient rain. The cause of *yajña* is *karma*, action. The *yajña* is produced from the actions of the priest and the patron.” (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.14 commentary)

2: “Living entities (*bhūtāni*) arise from food such as rice, for the food transforms into semen and blood, which in turn nourishes the body. Food arises from rain (*parjanyāt*). Rain arises from sacrifice. It is said: … ‘The oblation offered in the fire goes to the sun. Rain arises from the sun. From rain arises food, and from food arises the progeny.’ Manusmṛti 3.76.” (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* 3.14 commentary)

3: “The entire Vedic civilization aims at satisfying the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This was possible in … Dvāpara-yuga by worship of the Lord in the temple, and in this Age of Kali one can achieve the same goal by performing *saṅkīrtana-yajña*. Therefore one who has education and wealth must use them to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead by helping the *saṅkīrtana* movement that has already begun … Therefore the wealthy man and the educated man should sacrifice their knowledge and opulence by dedicating them for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord and joining this *saṅkīrtana* movement (*yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ*).” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.14.16 purport)

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3.15: To perform yajña, you must understand your specific duties from the Vedas (*karma brahmodbhavaṁ viddhi*), which manifest through the Supreme Lord's breath and thus represent His authority (*brahmākṣara-samudbhavam*). Although He is present everywhere through His energies, the Lord provides Vedic wisdom to show conditioned souls how to return to Him through the process of sacrifice (*tasmāt sarva-gataṁ brahma nityaṁ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam*).

Explanatory note:

Karma brahmodbhavaṁ viddhi: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as “Regulated activities are

prescribed in the Vedas…" All three ācāryas state that *brahma* refers to the Vedas. (1, 2) *Karma* denotes actions performed for the satisfaction of the Lord. In the purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> *"If we have to work for the satisfaction of the yajña-puruṣa, Viṣṇu, then we must find out the direction of work in Brahman, or the transcendental Vedas."*

In other words, if we want to please Kṛṣṇa, we cannot act whimsically. We must learn from the Vedas how to please Him.

Brahmākṣara-samudbhavam: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "… and the Vedas are directly manifested from the Supreme Personality of Godhead." All three ācāryas note that *akṣara* refers to the Supreme Lord. (1, 2) Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda both specify that the Vedas are manifested through the Lord's breathing. (1)

Tasmāt sarva-gataṁ brahma / nityaṁ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Consequently, the all-pervading Transcendence / is eternally situated in acts of sacrifice." In Chapter 7, texts 4, 5 and 6, the Lord tells us that He pervades everything in existence through His different energies:

> *"Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego – all together these eight constitute My separated material energies. Besides these, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is another, superior energy of Mine, which comprises the living entities who are exploiting the resources of this material, inferior nature. All created beings have their source in these two natures. Of all that is material and all that is spiritual in this world, know for certain that I am both the origin and the dissolution."*

However, the fact that everything in the universe originates from the Lord and He pervades everything does not mean that by associating with the things of this world we can attain His association. Viśvanātha and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explain that the significance of prescribed duties and sacrifice, which come from the Lord's breath, is that we can directly associate with Him by engaging in such acts. (1, 2)

The question may arise: why does the performance of sacrifice enable us to associate with the Lord? Is it because the Vedas come from the Lord's breath? That explanation alone does not satisfy me, since all the universes and everything in them originate from the Lord's

breathing. (3) In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda offers a further explanation of how performing sacrifice enables us to attain the Lord's association. He explains that when we act against the directions of the Vedas, we are sinful:

> *"Anything performed without the direction of the Vedas is called vikarma, or unauthorized or sinful work."*

He adds that the Lord provides the Vedas to enable us to fulfil our desires without committing sin and then return to Him:

> *"After creating or impregnating the conditioned souls into the womb of material nature, He gave His directions in the Vedic wisdom as to how such conditioned souls can return home, back to Godhead. We should always remember that the conditioned souls in material nature are all eager for material enjoyment. But the Vedic directions are so made that one can satisfy one's perverted desires, then return to Godhead, having finished his so-called enjoyment."*

In my own words, I understand that to become qualified to associate with the Lord, we must become sinless. We can achieve this by offering our work as a sacrifice to Him.

Evidence:

1; "The cause of this action is the Veda, (brahma). The actions related to the yajña arise from hearing the statements of the rules enunciated in the Vedas. The cause of the Vedas is Brahman, (akṣaram). As the Vedas arise from the Lord, the śruti says, The Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma and Atharva Vedas are the breathing of the Supreme Lord. Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.10. Therefore the all-pervading, (sarvagata) Lord is present in the yajña. This means that by performance of the yajña one attains the Lord..." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.15 commentary)

2: "Know that action, the performance of the priests, arises from the Vedas, (brahma). Know that the Vedas are the source of their actions. Know that the Brahman, the Vedas, appears from the Supreme Lord, (akṣara). The śruti says: 'The breathing of that great being is the Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma and Atharva Vedas.' Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.10. Since this sacrifice maintains the Lord's created beings and is thus very dear to the Lord, therefore, (tasmāt), the Lord, (brahma), being all-pervading, (sarvagataṁ), is at all

times, (nityam), situated in sacrifice. This means that by that sacrifice one can attain Him. (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.15 commentary)"

3: "While Mahā-Viṣṇu sleeps within the Causal Ocean, innumerable universes are generated along with His breathing. These universes are floating, and they are scattered all over the Causal Ocean. They stay only during the breathing period of Mahā-Viṣṇu." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.5.33 purport)

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3.16: If, instead of following the sacrificial cycle the Lord establishes in the Vedas (evaṁ pravartitaṁ cakraṁ nānuvartayatīha yaḥ), you choose to gratify your senses (aghāyur indriyārāmaḥ), then, Arjuna, you will waste the opportunity this human form of life affords (mogham pārtha sa jīvati).

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.16–17, May 25th 1966, New York

Explanatory note:

Evaṁ pravartitaṁ cakraṁ / nānuvartayatīha yaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "...one who does not follow in human life / the cycle of sacrifice thus established by the Vedas..." The cycle of sacrifice begins with people performing sacrifice. This results in rainfall, which yields food, which nourishes people, who then perform sacrifice. The Vedas, given by the Supreme Lord, teach the correct performance of sacrifice. Thus, ultimately, sacrifice is inaugurated by the Supreme Lord. In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> "One who does not follow such regulations is living a very risky life..."

Aghāyur indriyārāmo / mogham pārtha sa jīvati: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "...certainly leads a life full of sin. Living only for the satisfaction of the senses, / such a person lives in vain." Human life is meant for attaining self-realisation. The Bhagavad-gītā offers three paths to achieve this: karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga and bhakti-yoga. The path of karma-yoga is for those who still have material desires to fulfil. By performing prescribed duties and recommended yajñas, one can satisfy material desires and ultimately attain self-realisation. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this in his purport:

> *"By nature's law, this human form of life is specifically meant for self-realization, in either of the three ways – namely karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga or bhakti-yoga. There is no necessity of rigidly following the performances of the prescribed yajñas for the transcendentalists who are above vice and virtue; but those who are engaged in sense gratification require purification by the above-mentioned cycle of yajña performances. There are different kinds of activities. Those who are not Kṛṣṇa conscious are certainly engaged in sensory consciousness; therefore they need to execute pious work. The yajña system is planned in such a way that sensory conscious persons may satisfy their desires without becoming entangled in the reaction of sense-gratificatory work."*

However, if we take the supplies provided by the demigods without performing the recommended *yajñas*, not only do we fail to attain the goal of human life, self-realisation, but, according to Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, we also entangle ourselves in sinful reactions. (1, 2)

Evidence:

1: "This verse speaks of the sin involved in not performing the sacrifice. He who does not partake in the instituted cycle, moving from beginning to end—from yajña to rain, from rain to food, from food to nourishment of men, from men to performance of yajña, from yajña to rain—with performance of yajña—leads a life full of sin, who will not sink to hell." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.16 commentary)

2: "This verse speaks of the fault in not performing sacrifice. From the Lord arose the Vedas. From the Vedas arose sacrifice. From sacrifice comes rain, and from rain comes food. From the food comes living beings, and from the living beings again comes prescribed action. He who does not follow this cycle as described above, (evam), which supports the whole universe, inaugurated, (pravartitam), by the Supreme Lord, the protector of the progeny, that person who ignores the Lord and his life is thus sinful, (aghayuh), lives completely in vain, (mogham). O son of Pṛthā, that person enjoys sense objects with his senses instead of the remnants of the sacrifice approved by the Lord." (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.16 commentary)

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3.17: However, the Supreme Lord directly guides those whose sole desire is to satisfy Him. Therefore, they are not obliged to perform prescribed occupational duties (*tasya kāryaṁ na vidyate*). These fully self-realised souls take pleasure in serving the Lord (*yas tv ātma-ratir eva syād*) and are completely satisfied by the bliss of hearing about and glorifying Him (*ātma-tṛptaś ca mānavaḥ; ātmany eva ca santuṣṭas*).

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.17–20, May 27th 1966, New York

Explanatory note:

Yas tv ātma-ratir eva syād / ātma-tṛptaś ca mānavaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "But for one who takes pleasure in the Self, / whose human life is one of self-realization..." Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura notes that, having told us in the previous verse that we can perform prescribed duties as a sacrifice even if we have material desires we wish to fulfil, in this verse and the next Kṛṣṇa speaks of one who acts without any personal desire—niṣkāma-karma-yoga. (1) In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda clarifies that this verse is referring to one who is fully satisfied serving Kṛṣṇa:

> *"A person who is fully Kṛṣṇa conscious, and is fully satisfied by his acts in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, no longer has any duty to perform."*

Ātmany eva ca santuṣṭas / tasya kāryaṁ na vidyate: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "and who is satisfied in the Self only, fully satiated – / for him there is no duty." Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa describes the symptoms of one fully satisfied in the Self as follows: he has a higher spiritual taste; he sees his spiritual form and his eight inherent spiritual qualities; he is fully satisfied by his spiritual realisation and thus does not crave any material gratification, not even eating or drinking. He explains that such a position can be attained by first performing niṣkāma-karma, and only such a desireless yogi is no longer obliged to perform prescribed duties or sacrifices. (2) Bhānu Swami delineates the eight qualities of the soul which such a yogī experiences as: sinlessness, deathlessness, absence of grief, hunger and thirst, blissfulness, and immediate satisfaction of all desires. (3) Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport suggests that this yogi is Bhagavan realised, since he is:

> *"...fully confident of his eternal position in relationship with the Supreme. His duty thus becomes self-illuminated by the grace of the Lord, and therefore he no longer has any obligations to the Vedic injunctions."*

In the Srimad Bhagavatam, we learn that the first symptom of attaining such an elevated position is an eagerness to hear about and glorify the Supreme Lord. (4, 5)

Evidence:

1: “It has now been stated that if you cannot be without desires, you can perform actions with desires, but he who reaches the stage of jñāna, because of purity of heart, never does actions out of desire. That is expressed in two verses. Because he is enjoying in the self, is blissful by realization of the bliss of the ātmā, he does not engage at all in the pleasure of material objects, being engaged only in the ātmā, (ātmany eva), he does not have any actions related to the external objects, (tasya kāryaṁ na vidyate).” (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.17 commentary)

2: “That person who has seen the ātmā by ātmā's inherent knowledge, which arises from cleansing the mirror of the heart by *niṣkāma-karma* and by worship of me, as recommended previously by me, is not obliged to do any actions. That is explained in two verses. He who has a taste for ātmā, (ātmā-rati), because he sees his *svarūpa* endowed with eight qualities, such as sinlessness, who is satisfied by the ātmā with its self-manifesting bliss, (ātmā-tṛpta), rather than by food and drink, he who is completely pleased only in that ātmā with those qualities— not in singing and dancing-- need not do any prescribed activity as duty in order to perceive the ātmā, since he is always seeing the ātmā as his very nature.” (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.17 commentary)

3: “According to the Upaniṣads, the ātmā has eight qualities: it is sinless, ageless, deathless, without grief, without hunger, without thirst, blissful, and its desires are instantly fulfilled.” (Bhānu Swami’s note to Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.18)

4: “By serving the servants of the Lord, one gradually gets the quality of such servants, and thus one becomes qualified to hear the glories of God. The eagerness to hear about God is the first qualification of a devotee eligible for entering the kingdom of God.” (Śrimad Bhagavatam 1.2.16 purport)

5: “The tendency to glorify others or hear others must be turned to the real object of glorification — the Supreme Being. And that will bring happiness.” (Śrimad Bhagavatam 1.2.14 purport)

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3.18: Such a self-realised person has no material desires to fulfil through prescribed duties (*naiva tasya kṛtenārtho*). Having already perfectly realised his spiritual nature, he does not obstruct his self-realisation by neglecting prescribed duties (*nākṛteneha kaścana*). Additionally, as he needs nothing from any other living being, he is not obliged to perform prescribed duties to reciprocate their service (*na cāsya sarva-bhūteṣu / kaścid artha-vyapāśrayaḥ*).

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.18-30, December 30th 1968, Los Angeles

Explanatory note:

Naiva tasya kṛtenārtho / nākṛteneha kaścana: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "A self-realised man has no purpose to fulfil in the discharge of his prescribed duties, / nor has he any reason not to perform such work." Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains that the self-realised yogī does not perform duties with the desire to gain anything for himself, and that if he does not perform the prescribed duties, he experiences no obstacles in his spiritual life, since he is already fully self-realised. (1)

Na cāsya sarva-bhūteṣu / kaścid artha-vyapāśrayaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as "Nor has he any need / to depend on any other living being." The ordinary person has legitimate needs that are met within the varṇāśrama system. In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that one's duties in the varṇāśrama system are designed so that everyone's needs are met. (2)

The self-realised person described in 3.18 has no material needs that others must fulfil. Baladeva explains that this is why he has no obligation to anyone, including the demigods. (1) He simply desires to satisfy Kṛṣṇa and depends fully on Kṛṣṇa. This seems to explain why he has no varṇāśrama duty he is obliged to perform.

Evidence:

1: "There is no result, (arthah), by his performance of prescribed actions, (kṛtena), for the purpose of realising the ātmā, and he incurs no obstacles for seeing the ātmā by non-performance of prescribed actions, (akṛtena). For seeing the ātmā, because of his nature, he sees the ātmā already. It is not that he should fear obstacles from the

devatās by neglecting prescribed actions (including devatā worship), and thus attempt to please them by performing prescribed actions, which entails worshipping them." ." (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.18 commentary)

2: "Since the Vedic society is divided into four classes of men — the brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras — their means of livelihood are also mentioned in the scriptures. The brāhmaṇas should live by spreading knowledge and should therefore take contributions from their disciples, whereas a king should give protection to the citizens for their development to the highest standard of life, and he can therefore levy taxes from them; businessmen or mercantile men, because they produce foodstuffs for the whole of society, can take a little profit from this, whereas the śūdras, who cannot work as either brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas or vaiśyas, should give service to the higher classes of society and be provided by them with a supply of the necessities of life." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.50 purport)

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3.19: Whether you are already self-realised and free from material desires, or you aspire to self-realisation, perform your duty without self-interest, simply because it is the Lord's desire (*tasmād asaktaḥ satataṁ / kāryaṁ karma samācara*). For by acting to please the Lord, you will attain His association (*asakto hy ācaran karma / param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ*)..

Explanatory note:

Tasmād asaktaḥ satataṁ / kāryaṁ karma samācara: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Therefore, without being attached to the fruits of activities, / one should act as a matter of duty…" In his purport he writes:

> *"Arjuna is told that he should fight in the Battle of Kurukṣetra for the interest of Kṛṣṇa because Kṛṣṇa wanted him to fight. To be a good man or a nonviolent man is a personal attachment, but to act on behalf of the Supreme is to act without attachment for the result."*

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's perspective is that since Arjuna is already self-realised and does not need to perform prescribed duties for any selfish desire, he should fight as a matter of duty because Kṛṣṇa desires it. (2) Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's perspective is slightly different.

He says Arjuna is not yet liberated but because he has some spiritual intelligence he should fight as a matter of duty to attain liberation. (1) The reader may find that the Reflections on 2.11, 2.15, and 2.16 help harmonise these apparently different perspectives. I have tried to accommodate both perspectives in my rendering of the verse.

Asakto hy ācaran karma / param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "for by working without attachment / one attains the Supreme." Asakto is synonymous with akāma or niṣkāma. All three terms mean without personal motivation, or simply as a matter of duty to please the Supreme Lord. Viśvanātha explains that such niṣkāma-karma-yoga is the means by which one attains transcendental realisation, corresponding to Brahman-realisation. (1) Baladeva explains that niṣkāma-karma-yoga is the means by which to see the self, corresponding to Paramātmā-realisation, (2) and Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that this is the means by which to achieve "the supreme goal of life," suggesting Bhagavān-realisation.

Evidence:

1: "Therefore (*tasmāt*) since you do not have qualification for rising to the platform of *jñāna* and performing actions with desires, it is not suitable for you. Since you have spiritual intelligence, you should perform action without desire. That is explained in this verse. Therefore, you should perform obligatory prescribed actions. By doing this, you will attain liberation (*param*)." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.19)

2: "Since performing prescribed actions is useless for the person who has attained a vision of ātmā, therefore, (*tasmāt*), do these prescribed actions only as duty, (*kāryam*). He who performs those actions without desire for results, (*asakta*), sees that which is different from the body, (*param*), the ātmā, as it truly exists." (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.19 commentary)

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3.20: Consider the example of kings like Janaka, who attained self-realisation through performing their prescribed duties, and continued performing them after attaining self-realisation to set the right example for others (*karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ*). Therefore, you too should do your prescribed duty, if for no other reason than to set the right example for others (*loka-saṅgraham evāpi / sampaśyan kartum arhasi*).

Explanatory note:

Karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim / āsthitā janakādayaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as "Kings such as Janaka / attained perfection solely by performance of prescribed duties." In his purport, he writes that Janaka was already fully self-realised yet performed prescribed duties to set a good example for others. He continually emphasises setting a good example for others as the main reason a self-realised person should perform prescribed duties:

> *"Although one who is situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness may not have any interest in the world, he still works to teach the public how to live and how to act. Experienced persons in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can act in such a way that others will follow, and this is explained in the following verse."*

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura also emphasises the importance of setting the right example for others. (1) He writes that even if Arjuna believes he has already attained transcendental knowledge, he should perform his prescribed duty to set the right example for others. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains that by performing niṣkāma-karma, a Paramātmā-realised devotee (who has seen his own ātmā) will realise everything about the soul's existence. He also says that *karmaṇaiva* includes devotional duties such as *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*. (2)

Loka-saṅgraham evāpi / sampaśyan kartum arhasi: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Therefore, just for the sake of educating the people in general, / you should perform your work." In his commentary, Baladeva mentions the term pariniṣṭhita devotee. (2) He suggests that Kṛṣṇa initially tells Arjuna to perform his prescribed duty to attain full self-realisation. Arjuna, however, objects that he is a pariniṣṭhita devotee and therefore does not rely on the performance of varṇāśrama duties. (3) Kṛṣṇa therefore concludes the verse by saying that Arjuna should nevertheless perform his duty to set the right example for others. The term pariniṣṭhita is one of three terms Baladeva introduces to help the reader understand Kṛṣṇa's teachings in the Bhagavad-gītā. Please refer back to the reflection on Bhagavad-gītā 2.31.

Evidence:

1: "He gives proof of such actions in the first part of the verse. In the second part of the verse, he says that if you think that you are qualified for *jñāna*, even then you should perform action in order to teach the people." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.20 commentary)

2: “In this verse, the Lord gives proof of acting according to duty. Becoming pure in heart by means of prescribed action (*karmana eva*), Janaka and others attained (*āsthitah*) the perfection of seeing their own *ātmā* (*saṁsiddhim*). The word *eva* with *karma na* is used to make the distinction, indicating its excellence rather than indicating complete separateness (as in the use of the word ‘only’). Thus prescribed actions of *karma-yoga* do not exclude hearing and other devotional processes. Some say the word *karma* itself in this context has a more general meaning of hearing and other processes along with performance of sacrifice and other prescribed rites of *karma* instead of prescribed duties. But you have said that when the *sāniṣṭha* devotee attains vision of *ātmā*, there is no performance of action to see *ātmā*. Then why are you giving instructions to perform duties to me when I am fixed in seeing my *ātmā* and Paramātmā, (being a *pariniṣṭhita* devotee)? Yes, you are such a *pariniṣṭhita* devotee, but to teach the common people I give you instructions to perform actions. If both Arjuna and I perform prescribed actions, other people will also perform their prescribed duties. If I did not perform prescribed actions, ignorant people following my example would reject action and fall down. Protecting the people is the result of this type of action.” (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.20 commentary)

3: “*The pariniṣṭhita bhakta directly engages in the devotional processes of hearing and chanting as his main sādhana. He also performs varṇāśrama rules, but without attachment, only to set an example for less advanced persons who do not have strong faith to practise bhakti as their main sādhana.*” (Extract from Bhānu Swami’s Foreword to *Gīta Bhūṣaṇa*)

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3.21: People naturally follow the example of societal leaders, who teach them to follow scriptural injunctions by setting a personal example (*yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas / tat tad evetaro janaḥ*). Those who are not self-realised should emulate their superiors only when scripture sanctions the behaviour (*sa yat pramāṇaṁ kurute / lokas tad anuvartate*).

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.21–25, May 30th 1966, New York

Explanatory note:

Yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas / tat tad evetaro janaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Whatever action a great man performs, / common men follow." Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains in this verse that Kṛṣṇa teaches that people learn by example. (1) Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains that people generally follow the example of the 'greatest' people in society. (2) Śrīla Prabhupāda lists some of these as:

> "*The king or the executive head of a state, the father and the schoolteacher are all considered to be natural leaders of the innocent people in general.*"

Lord Ṛṣabhadeva expands this list to include the husband, the mother and the spiritual master. Baladeva emphasises that one's subordinates will naturally follow the example set by those they look up to. (3)

Sa yat pramāṇaṁ kurute / lokas tad anuvartate: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, / all the world pursues." Baladeva explains that pramāṇa means that lower or inferior people should follow superiors' example only when those actions are supported by scripture. (2) By 'lower' and 'inferior', I understand Baladeva is referring to those who are not yet self-realised. Śrīla Prabhupāda echoes this theme, distinguishing between imitating superiors (anukaraṇa) and following in their footsteps (anusaraṇa), in Bhagavad-gītā 3.24, in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and in many lectures. (4, 5) Thus, subordinates have a personal responsibility to learn the difference between imitating and following in the footsteps.

Evidence:

1: "In this verse, he explains how the people are taught: by following example." (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.21 commentary)

2: "This verse shows the method of instructing the population. Whatever action the greatest person performs, the others (itarah), even the low persons, will follow. Whatever scripture (pramāṇam), the superior person considers in performing his actions (kurute), the lower persons will follow that. Thus the meaning here is that the best actions authorised by scripture should be performed by the inferior person who desires auspiciousness. At the same time, whimsical actions performed by the superior or powerful persons are rejected because though they are performed by the superior, they are not approved by scripture." (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.21 commentary)

3: “One who cannot deliver his dependents from the path of repeated birth and death should never become a spiritual master, a father, a husband, a mother or a worshipable demigod.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.18)

4: “...don't try to imitate Haridāsa Ṭhākura. His stage was different. We cannot imitate. We can simply follow. *Anukaraṇa, anusaraṇa*—there are two Sanskrit words. One is imitation, and one is following the footprints. If one tries to follow the footprints of great personalities, that is very nice, but we cannot imitate. Imitate... Imitation is dangerous. Just like Lord Śiva, he drank an ocean of poison and he kept it on the throat. He did not allow to go down. So therefore his name is Nīlakaṇṭha. It became bluish. His neck is blue. But if somebody imitates Lord Śiva and indulges intoxication, *gāñjā,* he'll go to hell. He is powerful. Somebody says, "Well, Lord Śiva is a smoker, so we can also smoke." No. You cannot imitate. You can simply follow.” (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.6-10, December 23rd 1968, Los Angeles)

5: “The statements of the Lord’s empowered servants are always true, and the acts they perform are exemplary when consistent with those statements. Therefore one who is intelligent should carry out their instructions.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.33.31)

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3.22: Arjuna, since everyone is My servant, I am not obliged even to the demigods to perform any duty (*na me pārthāsti kartavyaṁ / triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana*). As I own everything, I do not need to perform prescribed duties to gain anything (*nānavāptam avāptavyaṁ*). Nevertheless, I still perform the prescribed duties of a kṣatriya (*varta eva ca karmaṇi*).

Explanatory note:

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explain that in the next three verses Kṛṣṇa presents Himself as an example of a perfected being who nevertheless performs prescribed duties to set a good example for others. (1, 2)

Na me pārthāsti kartavyaṁ / triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as “O son of Pṛthā, there is no work prescribed for Me / within all the three planetary systems.” In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda cites Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.7, which states that all the universal

controllers are Kṛṣṇa's servants. He has no obligation to obey any of them; they all obey Him. Thus, He has no obligatory duty anywhere in the universe.

Nānavāptam avāptavyaṁ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Nor am I in want of anything, nor have I a need to obtain anything…" Baladeva points out that everything already belongs to Kṛṣṇa, and Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that everything exists within Kṛṣṇa. (2) Therefore, He does not have to perform any duty to obtain anything.

Varta eva ca karmaṇi: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…and yet I am engaged in prescribed duties." Baladeva and Śrīla Prabhupāda note that only one who wants to achieve something needs to perform prescribed duties. Kṛṣṇa does not want anything, yet He still performs the prescribed duties of a kṣatriya. (2)

Evidence:

1: "In three verses, the Lord uses himself as an example." (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.22 commentary)

2: "Though the superior person is indifferent to the results of action, he should perform actions prescribed by scripture to teach the populace. Making himself an example of this, the Lord speaks in three verses: I, the Lord of all, dedicated to truth, whose every wish is automatically fulfilled, who is filled with bliss, have no duties to perform. However, actions must be performed by other persons desiring results. I, who am the basis of all results, the embodiment of the highest result, am not dependent on action. The Lord then illustrates this: In all the three worlds, whatever result is to be obtained by action is not already unattained by me, since everything is actually mine. Still, I also perform prescribed actions." (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.22 commentary)

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3.23: I, the Supreme Lord, have appeared in the Yadu family to teach proper conduct. If I did not diligently perform the prescribed duties of a kṣatriya (yadi hy ahaṁ na varteyaṁ / jātu karmaṇy atandritaḥ), Arjuna, those who accept My authority would follow My example and neglect their duties (mama vartmānuvartante / manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ).

Explanatory note:

Yadi hy ahaṁ na varteyaṁ / jātu karmaṇy atandritaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "For if

I ever failed to engage / in carefully performing prescribed duties…" In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> *"In order to keep the balance of social tranquillity for progress in spiritual life, there are traditional family usages meant for every civilized man. Although such rules and regulations are for the conditioned souls and not Lord Kṛṣṇa, because He descended to establish the principles of religion He followed the prescribed rules."*

Kṛṣṇa does not need to observe religious or family customs, yet He sets the right example to encourage conditioned souls to behave properly. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Canto 10, Chapter 69, is titled "Nārada Muni Visits Lord Kṛṣṇa's Palaces in Dvārakā". In this chapter, we follow Nārada Muni as he visits each of Kṛṣṇa's palaces and sees the Lord interacting with others as the perfect father, husband, and prince. Such ideal conduct preserves the harmony and peace of society.

Mama vartmānuvartante / manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as "O Pārtha, certainly all men / would follow My path." In his purport, he writes that if Kṛṣṇa did not perform the duties of an ideal householder, common men, who accept Him as "the greatest authority", would likewise neglect their obligations. By 'common men', I understand Śrīla Prabhupāda to mean conditioned souls.

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3.24: If I disregarded scriptural rules and regulations (*na kuryāṁ karma ced aham*), others would follow My example, and society would be ruined (*utsīdeyur ime lokā*). Ignoring scriptural guidance on marriage, people would have children based solely on sexual attraction, and those children, lacking the proper guidance and upbringing, would destroy the peace and stability of society (*saṅkarasya ca kartā syām / upahanyām imāḥ prajāḥ*).

Explanatory note:

Utsīdeyur ime lokā / na kuryāṁ karma ced aham: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as "If I did not perform prescribed duties, / all these worlds would be put to ruination." Both Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explain that if Kṛṣṇa did not follow scriptural injunctions, the rest of society would likewise justify neglecting the scripture's

prohibitions and ordinances. (1, 2) Śrīla Prabhupāda reminds us that we have a responsibility not to imitate great personalities, but to learn how they follow scriptural injunctions. This theme is carried over from Bhagavad-gītā 3.21.

Saṅkarasya ca kartā syām / upahanyām imāḥ prajāḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "I would be the cause of creating unwanted population, / and I would thereby destroy the peace of all living beings." Varṇāśrama society places great importance on raising responsible children, considering this essential to society's long-term health and sustainability. (1, 2) Accordingly, it restricted whom people could marry. Marriages were generally not based on sexual attraction but on shared values and inclinations. (3) Brāhmaṇa men married brāhmaṇa women, making their offspring more likely to be inclined toward study and teaching. Kṣatriya men generally married kṣatriya women, making their offspring more likely to be heroic and inclined toward governing and protecting others. Vaiśya men married vaiśya women, making their offspring more likely to pursue farming, cow protection, banking, and related work. Society's long-term sustainability and harmony began with shaping the next generation, guided by scriptural prohibitions and ordinances concerning marriage. Mixed marriages were sometimes permitted, but even these were carefully regulated. (4, 5) Kṛṣṇa is saying that if people consider it acceptable to disregard scripture, the choice of partner and the calibre of their children will be among the first things to suffer.

How can aspiring devotees apply this principle in Kali Yuga, a time when varṇāśrama practically does not exist? Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that if both husband and wife are devotees, this is sufficient to ensure good progeny. (6) One needs to bear in mind that being a devotee husband or wife means being committed to following the devotional practices Śrīla Prabhupāda gave to married couples in the Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 13.8-12 purport. (7) When children grow up seeing their parents living peacefully together and practising these devotional practices at home, it is much more likely that they will be inclined to follow the same practices.

Evidence:

1: "Taking Me as an example, the people, not performing dharma, would be destroyed. Mixed castes would result. I would be the cause of this. I would pollute the progeny." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā 3.24 commentary)

2: “Then what would happen? If I, the supreme among all, were not to perform actions according to scripture, the people would break the laws (utsīdyeyu-- be destroyed). I would be responsible for producing mixed castes resulting from the destruction of law. I, the protector of the populace, Prajāpati, would cause contamination of the populace (upahanyam), by the mixture of castes.” (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.24commentary)

3: “Man and woman should not be united simply on the consideration of sex life. There are many other considerations, especially character and taste. If the taste and character differ between the man and woman, their combination will be unhappy.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.24.15)

4: “Among the mixed classes, there are two divisions — pratilomaja and anulomaja. If a woman of a high caste marries a man of a lower caste, their union is called pratilo. If a woman of a low caste, however, marries a man of a higher caste, their union is called *anulo.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.11.30 purport)

5: “Anuloma, marriage between a brāhmaṇa and the daughter of a kṣatriya, is permissible, but pratiloma, marriage between a kṣatriya and the daughter of a brāhmaṇa, is not generally allowed.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 9.18.5 purport)

6: “Consequently a boy should marry a girl of the same category. Of course, this is trai-guṇya, a material calculation according to the Vedas, but if the boy and girl are devotees there need be no such considerations. A devotee is transcendental, and therefore in a marriage between devotees, the boy and girl form a very happy combination.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.26 purport)

7: “The best process for making the home pleasant is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If one is in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he can make his home very happy, because this process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very easy. One need only chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, accept the remnants of foodstuffs offered to Kṛṣṇa, have some discussion on books like Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and engage oneself in Deity worship. These four things will make one happy. One should train the members of his family in this way. The family members can sit down morning and evening and chant together Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare." (Bhagavad-gītā 13.8–12 purport)

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3.25: Therefore, O descendant of Bharat, even though the ignorant perform their duties with a desire to enjoy the results (*saktāḥ karmaṇy avidvāṁso / yathā kurvanti bhārata*), the wise should likewise perform their duties to set the right example for others, but without desiring to enjoy the results (*kuryād vidvāṁs tathāsaktaś / cikīrṣur loka-saṅgraham*).

Hear: *(Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.25, December 17th 1975, Hyderabad*

Explanatory note:

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that in this verse, Kṛṣṇa is summarising that even one situated in transcendental knowledge should do his prescribed duties. (1)

Saktāḥ karmaṇy avidvāṁso / yathā kurvanti bhārata: Śrīla Prabhupāda slightly merges these lines as follows: "As the ignorant perform their duties with attachment to results, … may similarly act…" The first line tells us that the ignorant (avidvāṁsaḥ) do prescribed duties because they want to enjoy the results of their work. The second line introduces the comparison: as they act, O descendant of Bharata. The third Sanskrit line completes the comparison.

Who is Kṛṣṇa referring to by the term avidvāṁsaḥ—the ignorant? Śrīla Prabhupāda defines them as 'having a poor fund of knowledge'. (3) From Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 16.7, we can deduce that there are two types of avidvāṁsaḥ. One group does not understand what the scripture states. The second knows scripture well but has no faith in it. (4) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam gives at least two examples of this second type. Hiraṇyakaśipu and Kaṁsa both speak with profound scriptural knowledge, yet they are avidvāṁsaḥ. (5) In other words, an avidvāṁsaḥ, either out of insufficient knowledge of scriptural teachings or insufficient faith in those teachings, believes that the results of their work are the source of happiness.

Kuryād vidvāṁs tathāsaktaś / cikīrṣur loka-saṅgraham: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "the learned may similarly act, but without attachment, / for the sake of leading people on the right path." This verse contrasts the ignorant person, who is full of material desires, with the faithful devotee, whose only desire is to please Kṛṣṇa. The former is sa-kāma, or full of material desires, while the latter is niṣkāma or akāma, both of which mean free from material desires. (6) The ignorant person performs prescribed duties to enjoy their results, whereas the faithful devotee performs the same duties to please the Lord by setting the right example for others.

A *jñānī* is one who has attained Brahman-realisation. Please see the Reflection for 2.11: 'Defining *vipra*, *jñānī*, *vijñānī* and Other Terms' for evidence. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa says that even a *pariniṣṭhita* devotee should perform prescribed duties to set the right example for others. (2) To refresh your understanding of this term, please refer to the Reflection for 2.31: (Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's Terms *sāniṣṭha*, *pariniṣṭhita* and *nirapekṣa*).

Evidence:

1: "He summarizes here that action should be done even by a person established in *jñāna*." (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.25 commentary)

2: "Though you are established in knowledge as a *pariniṣṭhita-bhakta*, perform your duties according to the Vedas for the benefit of the people. That is the import of this verse. Just as ignorant people perform actions with desire for results (*śaktah)*, those in knowledge should perform the same actions but without desire for results (*aśaktah)*. The rest of the sentence is clear." (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.25 commentary)

3: *"Avidvāṁsaḥ, fools, men with poor fund of knowledge…" (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.25, December 17th 1975, Hyderabad*)

4: "…those who do not follow the scriptural injunctions are supposed to be demons. Therefore it is stated here that the demons do not know the scriptural rules, nor do they have any inclination to follow them. Most of them do not know them, and even if some of them know, they have not the tendency to follow them. They have no faith, nor are they willing to act in terms of the Vedic injunctions." (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is16.7 purport)

5: *“After finishing the ritualistic funeral ceremonies of his brother, Hiraṇyakaśipu began speaking to his nephews, quoting from the śāstras about the truth of life. To pacify them, he spoke as follows: “My dear nephews, for heroes to die before the enemy is glorious. According to their different fruitive activities, living entities come together within this material world and are again separated by the laws of nature. We should always know, however, that the spirit soul, which is different from the body, is eternal, inadjustable, pure, all-pervading and aware of everything. When bound by the material energy, the soul takes birth in higher or lower species of life according to varying association and in this way receives various types of bodies in which to suffer or enjoy. One’s affliction by the conditions of material existence is the cause of happiness and distress; there are no other causes, and one should not be aggrieved upon seeing the superficial actions of karma.”” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatamcanto 7, chapter 2 Introduction)* & Kaṁsa’s instructions in Canto 10, Chapter 4, especially verses 19–26

6: “Those engaged in His service are called *sakāma* and *akāma*. Those who approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead with desires for material enjoyment are called *sakāma*, and those devotees who have no material desires for sense gratification but serve the Supreme Lord out of spontaneous love for Him are called *akāma*.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.21.24 purport)

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3.26: A wise person who prioritises the practice of self-realisation should not discourage those still materially attached from performing their worldly duties (*na buddhi-bhedaṁ janayed / ajñānāṁ karma-saṅginām*). Better that he, by his own example, inspires others to recognise their dependence on the Lord for their success and to dedicate the results of their work in the Lord’s service (*joṣayet sarva-karmāṇi / vidvān yuktaḥ samācaran*).

Explanatory note:

Na buddhi-bhedaṁ janayed: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as “So as not to disrupt the minds of… should not induce them to stop work.” Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that such people’s hearts are impure, meaning they have material desires. (1) It is not helpful to tell someone driven by material desires to give up work to perform austerity, penance and study Vedānta.

Ajñānāṁ karma-saṅginām: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "ignorant men attached to the fruitive results of prescribed duties…" The ignorant people mentioned in this verse have faith in the Vedas and in prescribed duties, but they are ignorant because they believe the purpose of the Vedas and prescribed duties is to satisfy their material desires. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa says that if this faith breaks, they will simply lose faith in the Vedas and in the importance of acting dutifully, but not in their material desires. (2)

Joṣayet sarva-karmāṇi: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Rather … he should engage them in all sorts of activities [for the gradual development of Kṛṣṇa consciousness]." In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that performing Vedic rituals and duties gradually purifies the heart of material desires, and when the heart is somewhat purified, faith in devotional service to Kṛṣṇa can awaken. Viśvanātha explains that the learned should encourage the ignorant to "Perform action without desire and become successful." (1) In other words, to do their duties even when they do not receive immediate results, with the assurance that such duties will ultimately lead to success.

Vidvān yuktaḥ samācaran: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "a learned person….by working in the spirit of devotion…" In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> *"Therefore a realized soul in Kṛṣṇa consciousness should not disturb others in their activities or understanding, but he should act by showing how the results of all work can be dedicated to the service of Kṛṣṇa. The learned Kṛṣṇa conscious person may act in such a way that the ignorant person working for sense gratification may learn how to act and how to behave."*

In other words, by his own example he should show others how to always think of Kṛṣṇa while fulfilling their duties with full dependence on the Lord and how to offer the results of their endeavours in the Lord's service. (3, 4, 5)

Evidence:

1: "You should not disturb the minds of those attached to action because their hearts are impure by saying, 'This karma is despicable. Give up action and become successful like me by the practice of *jñāna*.' Instead, one should engage them in action (*joṣayet*) by saying, 'Perform action without desire and become successful.' During those actions, you set an example for others." (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.26 commentary)

2: “Though a person may be fixed in knowledge (*vidvān-- pariniṣṭhita-bhakta*), he should not disturb the intelligence of the ignorant, who out of foolishness have faith in karma (*karma-saṅginām*). He should not disturb the minds of those fixed in karma by saying, ‘What is the use of these duties? Attain success just by *jñāna*, like me.’ Rather, engaging himself in all prescribed actions attentively, performing all the components or aṅgas till completion (*samācaram*), with affection, he should engage the ignorant in all their duties prescribed by scripture (*sarva-karmāṇi joṣayet*). If he disturbs their intelligence, then they will lose faith in performing duties and also will not attain *jñāna*. They will thus lose on both fronts.” (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.26 commentary)

3: “Therefore, Arjuna, you should always think of Me in the form of Kṛṣṇa and at the same time carry out your prescribed duty of fighting. With your activities dedicated to Me and your mind and intelligence fixed on Me, you will attain Me without doubt.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 8.7)

4: “In all activities just depend upon Me and work always under My protection. In such devotional service, be fully conscious of Me.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.57)

5: “Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform – do that, O son of Kuntī, as an offering to Me.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 9.27)

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Arjuna reflects: If both self-realised and conditioned souls perform similar activities, how can they be told apart?

Explanatory note:
This insight into Arjuna’s thinking is based on the commentaries of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.

Evidence:
“The doubt may arise: how does one distinguish a person in knowledge (*vidvān*) from an ignorant person, if the person in knowledge also performs actions? These two verses explain the difference. The ignorant person thinks that he is the performer of all actions, though they are actually carried out entirely by the material senses, which themselves are products of the guṇas (*prakṛteḥ guṇaiḥ*).” (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā* 3.27 commentary)

“Though both persons are equally engaged in action, the difference between the person in knowledge and the person in ignorance is expressed in two verses.” (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.27 commentary)

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3.27: Krsna said: The false ego deceives conditioned souls (*ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā*) into believing that they initiate and carry out activities by their own power (*kartāham iti manyate*). They do not know that material energy, acting through the body, senses, and life airs, and directed by the Supersoul, performs actions (*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ*).

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.27, January 1st 1976, Madras

Explanatory note:

Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni / guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as “of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature.” He appears to merge the meanings of the two lines. The first line of the Sanskrit verse identifies the actor: prakrteh, the material energy. The second line explains that the material energy acts through the modes of nature.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains that whatever the embodied soul does requires the body, the senses, and the life airs. (2) These are all products of the material energy, which operates through three energies known as the modes of nature. The material energy, in turn, depends on the Supersoul for activation. The spirit soul can neither initiate nor complete any task by itself. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura expresses the same idea more simply, saying that all actions depend on the material senses, which develop from the modes of nature. (1)

Ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā / kartāham iti manyate: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as “The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego / thinks himself the doer…” These two lines describe how the conditioned soul thinks. Baladeva explains that false ego influences the conditioned soul to believe he is the material body and that he can act independently. (2) In Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words:

> *“The person in material consciousness is convinced by false ego that he is the doer of everything. He does not know that the mechanism of the body is produced by material nature, which works under the supervision of the Supreme Lord. The materialistic*

person has no knowledge that ultimately he is under the control of Kṛṣṇa. The person in false ego takes all credit for doing everything independently, and that is the symptom of his nescience."

Evidence:

1: "The ignorant person thinks that he is the performer of all the actions, which are actually performed completely by the material senses, which in turn are the products of the guṇas (prakṛteḥ guṇaiḥ)." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.27 commentary)

2: "The person bewildered by false ego thinks that he is the doer of activities. ... He thinks he is the doer of all actions, (*karmāṇi*), whether non-prescribed or prescribed by the Vedas, which are in fact performed by the products, (*guṇe*), of the Lord's *māyā*, *prakṛti*, in the form of the body, senses and *prāṇas*, impelled into action by the Lord. ... Through false ego, a product of *prakṛti*, he becomes bewildered, devoid of knowledge of the self, thinking himself to be a material body. He then thinks that the activities which are accomplished by the Lord and the material body, senses and life airs, are being done only by himself... The doership of the *ātmā* is only made possible by the body, senses and life airs and by the *paramātmā*, who is the activator of all things. The *jīva* is not the only factor. That the *jīva* thinks he is the only doer is a result of bewilderment from false ego." (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.27 commentary)

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3.28: On the other hand, O mighty Arjuna, those who understand these teachings (*tattva-vit tu mahā-bāho*) are convinced that they are spirit souls, distinct from the body, senses and sense objects (*guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ*), which are governed by the modes of nature (*guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta*). They recognise that although trying to enjoy the results of their work may bring brief pleasure, it further entangles them in the many miseries arising from bodily identification. They also understand that the only way to free themselves from bodily identification and realise their eternal blissful nature is to offer everything in the Lord's service. By acting on this correct understanding, they realise their blissful spiritual nature and thus attain complete freedom from all material desires (*iti matvā na sajjate*).

Explanatory note:

Tattva-vit tu mahā-bāho: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "One who is in knowledge of the Absolute Truth…" In his purport, he explains that a tattva-vit is one who has realised his eternal relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead:

> *"According to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, one who knows the Absolute Truth in three different features – namely Brahman, Paramātmā and the Supreme Personality of Godhead – is called tattva-vit, for he knows also his own factual position in relationship with the Supreme."*

Based on this, I initially understood this verse to be referring to the fully self-realised soul who had already realised his eternal relationship with Bhagavān. However, this interpretation made it difficult for me to make sense of this section of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport:

> *"He therefore engages himself in the activities of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and becomes naturally unattached to the activities of the material senses, which are all circumstantial and temporary."*

The Bhagavān-realised soul does not need to become 'naturally unattached to the activities of the material senses'. I concluded this verse is speaking about a tattva-vit in seed form. Śrīla Prabhupāda often explained that the seed of a fruit is the fruit, for it is simply a matter of time before it manifests in its fruit form. I finally inferred that the knowledge in this verse is the seed knowledge all tattva-vits know that enables them to progress through the different stages of self-realisation to full Bhagavān realisation. (3, 4) I have therefore rendered 'tattva-vit' as 'those who have understood these teachings'. The reader may, of course, reasonably arrive at a different conclusion.

Regarding why Kṛṣṇa addresses Arjuna as mahā-bāho, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in a lecture that a great warrior must be strong and determined to defeat his enemies. Similarly, the aspiring transcendentalist must be strong and determined to conquer the demands of the senses for illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating and gambling. (5)

Guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "the differences between work in devotion and work for fruitive results." Work in devotion means dovetailing one's

work into the Lord's service. Work for fruitive results means endeavouring for outcomes intended for one's own enjoyment. According to Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport, when we engage in fruitive work, we receive only 'circumstantial and temporary' rewards, which further entangle us in the material conception of life. Śrīla Prabhupāda calls this an 'awkward position', which I understand to mean fraught with difficulties. However, when we dovetail our work for the Lord's pleasure, we gradually become detached from sensual gratification and realise our eternal, blissful identities as the Lord's part and parcel.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has a different perspective from Śrīla Prabhupāda on guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ. He explains it as 'the divisions of guṇas and actions'. The divisions of the guṇas refer to the modes of goodness, passion and ignorance, and the divisions of karma refer to the functions of the demigods who are in goodness, the senses which are in passion and the sense objects which are in ignorance. He says knowing these distinctions is the defining characteristic of a self-realised soul—a tattva-vit. (1) To the best of my understanding, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa have a similar perspective, which Baladeva expresses slightly differently. He says guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ means that the self-realised soul sees the distinction between himself—the ātmā—and the material body, senses and their actions, which are all the products of the modes. (2) I have tried to incorporate both Śrīla Prabhupāda's perspective and that of Viśvanātha and Baladeva in my unpacking of the verse.

Guṇā guṇeṣu vartante / iti matvā na sajjate: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as "does not engage himself in the senses and sense gratification, / knowing well…" According to the ācāryas, *guṇā guṇeṣu* summarises that the self-realised person fully understands that the modes of nature govern the interaction between the senses and sense objects, that he is a spirit soul completely apart from the senses and their objects, and that by trying to enjoy the results of this interaction, one becomes further entangled. *Iti matvā na sajjate* means that he gives up all attachment to sense gratification.

Evidence:

1: “The intelligent person, however, knows the truth, (tattva-vit), about the divisions of guṇas and actions, (guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ). The divisions of the guṇas are sattva, rajas, and tamas. The divisions of action are divided according to the effects of the guṇas: sattva: senses; rajas: and sense objects; tamas. One who knows the nature of these two is called tattva-vit. The senses, such as the eye, (guṇa), administered by their devatās, are engaged with the sense objects, such as form, (guṇeṣu). The intelligent person is not attached. Knowing this, he thinks, ‘I am not at all the senses nor the sense objects. There is no relation between me and the senses or the sense objects at all.’” (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.28 commentary)

2: “The person in knowledge is not like this. He knows, (*tattva-vit*), that he is different from the senses and from the actions performed by the senses, (*guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ*). That means that he knows he is not a body made of senses, (*guṇa*), and the actions they perform, (*karma*), after considering their differences, (*vibhāga*), from his true self. He knows the real nature of things, (*tattva-vit*), that he is not a material body made of senses or their actions, by considering their respective differences. He knows that the senses, (*guṇa*), inspired by the *devatās*, reveal the sense objects, (*guṇeṣu*), and knows that he is different from the sense objects because of his being the bliss of spiritual consciousness. He does not identify with them by similarity, knowing that he is not the agent for manifesting those sense objects. He consequently has no attachment to them. However, he is attached to the *ātmā*.” (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.28 commentary)

3: “Well... just like when there is a seed sown, the starting is there. Now it grows a tree and there is fruit, there is flowers. The fruit is green now. When it is yellow mango and ripe, you can take. The beginning is when you sow the seed.” (Evening Darśana, August 10th 1976, Tehran)

4: “As soon as you get the seed, you have got the thing, undoubtedly. But you must give time the seed to fructify.” (Room Conversation, December 5th 1976, Hyderabad)

5: “Arjuna is great soldier; therefore he is addressed as *mahā-bāho*. *Bāho*, we have got *bāho*. We have got *bāho*. But Arjuna's *bāho* is different: he can fight with thousands of men alone. We cannot fight even with one man, although we have got this *bāho*.

Therefore he is addressed as *mahā-bāho*. And another meaning is that unless one is very strong in determination, he cannot make any advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He must be a hero. He must be able to fight with the laws of material nature. Just like in our society there are four prohibited principles: no illicit sex life, no intoxication, no meat-eating, no gambling. So especially at the modern age, it is very difficult to give it up unless one is *mahā-bāho*, very strong." (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 10.1–3, March 6th 1973, Calcutta)

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Arjuna reflects:

If the living being's happiness has nothing to do with the material body and the senses, why are people so attached to the sense objects?

Explanatory note:

This insight into Arjuna's thinking is based on the commentaries of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. (1)

Evidence:

1: "If the jīvas are separate from the senses and the sense objects, without relationship to them, then why is it seen that people are attached to the sense objects? This verse answers." (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā* 3.29 commentary)

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3.29: Krsna said: Those who are too lazy to understand the scriptures remain ignorant of these spiritual truths (*tān akṛtsna-vido mandān*). The false ego, a product of the three modes of nature, thus deceives them into identifying with their material bodies (*prakṛter guṇa-sammūḍhāḥ*) and working hard to secure sense gratification (*sajjante guṇa-karmasu*). Spiritually enlightened people should not mentally disturb the ignorant by instructing them to give up their work. Instead, they should engage them in spiritual activities such as hearing about, glorifying, worshipping and serving the Lord in ways that appeal to them (*kṛtsna-vin na vicālayet*).

Explanatory note:

Prakṛter guṇa-sammūḍhāḥ / sajjante guṇa-karmasu: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as

“Bewildered by the modes of material nature, / the ignorant fully engage themselves in material activities and become attached.” Sammūḍhāḥ means thoroughly bewildered, deluded, or greatly confused. In his word-for-word translation, Śrīla Prabhupāda specifies that it means “befooled by material identification”. In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the living being, deluded into identifying with his material body, thinks of himself as male, female, a king, a pauper, etc. He writes:

> *“Persons who are unknowledgeable falsely identify with gross material consciousness and are full of material designations.”*

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa offer additional perspectives. Viśvanātha explains that the reason the living being becomes bewildered is that he is absorbed in the material senses, like a man possessed by a ghost. (1) Baladeva’s commentary helps clarify this point. From his commentary, we understand that the false ego (ahaṅkāra), a product of prakṛti, is like a ghost, and one influenced by false ego is like a person haunted by a ghost. Thus, through false ego, the modes of nature bewilder us into falsely identifying with the various material bodies we inhabit, and we become engrossed in trying to enjoy through the material senses. (2)

Tān akṛtsna-vido mandān / kṛtsna-vin na vicālayet: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this in reverse as “But the wise should not unsettle them, / although these duties are inferior due to the performers’ lack of knowledge.” In his purport he repeats that a mandān is one who lacks spiritual knowledge:

> *“…manda, or a lazy person without understanding of spirit soul.”*

Baladeva specifies that the reason they lack spiritual understanding is that they are too lazy to cultivate it. (2) Śrīla Prabhupāda’s word-for-word translation reinforces this: mandān — lazy to understand self-realisation.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says the learned devotee takes all risks to engage the ignorant in acts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Viśvanātha says the learned devotee engages the ignorant in actions without desire—niṣkāma-karma. According to Viśvanātha, by engaging in such works, the ignorant will gradually lose their preoccupation with sense gratification. (1) Baladeva says that the learned devotee finds appealing ways to draw the ignorant into performing duties

approved by the Vedas. (2) I understand that they are all making a similar point. The devotee will not tell people to give up their jobs, families and sense enjoyment. Instead, he goes to great personal lengths to create enjoyable opportunities for the ignorant to engage in hearing about, glorifying, remembering, worshipping or serving Kṛṣṇa. By engaging in such activities, people's hearts will become purified.

Evidence:

1: "By absorption in the senses made of matter, jīvas become bewildered, just like a man possessed by a ghost thinks himself a ghost. The jīvas absorbed in the senses made of matter think themselves to be the senses. Then they become attached to the sense objects (guṇa-karma-su). The man who knows all (kṛtṣṇavit) does not disturb those who are ignorant. He does not attempt to make them realise that they, as jīvas, are different from the senses, that they are not the senses. Instead, he engages them in action without desire, which will remove the absorption in the senses." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.29 commentary)

2; "Those who are bewildered by false ego (guṇa-samūḍhāh), which is a product of prakṛti, those who think the body to be the self in the manner of a person possessed by a ghost, become attached to the actions of the body and senses (guṇa-karmasu). One who has full knowledge of ātmā (kṛtsna-vit) does not disturb those of little intelligence (akṛtṣṇa-vidah), who are lazy in understanding ātmā (mandān). … Rather, he should desire to arouse their interest in the ātmā through engaging them in a succession of Vedic duties, following their taste for action." (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.29 commentary)

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3.30: Since you have spiritual knowledge, set the right example by acting with awareness of your eternal relationship as My servant, and offer all your work to Me (*mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi / sannyasyādhyātma-cetasā*). Abandon all desires for personal results by remembering you are acting on the order of your master, and do not expect the results of your work to be to your personal liking (*nirāśīr nirmamo bhūtvā*). Set aside all anxiety regarding killing your loved ones, and fight because that is your God-given duty as a kṣatriya (*yudhyasva vigata-jvaraḥ*).

Explanatory note:

Mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi / sannyasyādhyātma-cetasā: Śrīla Prabhupāda merges the translation of these two lines as "…surrendering all your works unto Me, with full knowledge of Me…" Mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi corresponds to "all your works unto Me"; sannyasya corresponds to "surrendering unto Me"; and adhyātma-cetasā corresponds to "with full knowledge of Me". Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura understand adhyātma-cetasā to mean with full knowledge of the ātmā. (1, 2) Since the ātmā is a part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, these different perspectives are easily reconcilable. Cetasā means "by consciousness". I have tried to harmonise the different perspectives of adhyātma-cetasā.

Baladeva explains that Kṛṣṇa is addressing Arjuna as a pariniṣṭhita devotee. (1) This term is explained in my Reflection for 2.31: Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's Terms Saniṣṭha, Pariniṣṭhita and Nirapekṣa. There, I cite H.H. Bhānu Swami's explanation of pariniṣṭhita as follows:

> "*The pariniṣṭhita bhakta directly engages in the devotional processes of hearing and chanting as his main sādhana. He also performs varṇāśrama rules, but without attachment, only to set an example for less advanced persons who do not have strong faith to practise bhakti as their main sādhana.*"

From this comment by Baladeva, I infer that Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna: "You are not an ignorant person; you are a learned transcendentalist. You should act to set the right example for others, just as Kṛṣṇa Himself does and as previous kings like Janaka did."

Nirāśīr nirmamo bhūtvā / yudhyasva vigata-jvaraḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…without desires for profit, with no claims to proprietorship / and free from lethargy, fight." In the first two lines of the verse, Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna to offer all his work to him, fully aware of their relationship. In these last two lines, Kṛṣṇa specifies the essential characteristics of such a worker. The first characteristic is that he is *nirāśīḥ* — without desire for profit. Viśvanātha equates *nirāśīḥ* with *niṣkāma*. (2) A self-realised person has no personal desire. He acts only because Kṛṣṇa desires him to do so. The second characteristic is *nirmamaḥ* — without ownership, or, as Baladeva points out, he doesn't think the outcome of his efforts belongs to him. Śrīla Prabhupāda often associates ownership with the right to enjoy or control something. (3) The third characteristic is that he is *vigata-jvaraḥ*—without lethargy —or, as Baladeva points out, he is reluctant to do his duty for fear of undesirable outcomes, such as the death of

friends and family.(1) If one acts out of material desire, thinks he can control or enjoy the outcome of his work, or is reluctant to act when the outcome is personally undesirable, then he is not offering his work to the Lord with full consciousness of their relationship.

Evidence:

1: "Because of this, you, a *paraniṣṭhita-bhakta*, with knowledge concerning your nature as *ātmā* (*adhyātma-cetasā*), offering (*sannyāsa*) all actions to me, the Supreme Lord, just as a servant offers everything to a king, fight. ...*Adhyātma* is here taken as an *avyayībhāva*, an indeclinable compound, meaning 'in (*ādi*) the *ātmā*'. ... *Adhyātma-cetasā*, 'with consciousness in the *ātmā*.' Devoid of desires for personal results, thinking that you do this only by the order of your master (*nirāśīḥ*), devoid of possessiveness (*nirmamaḥ*), such as 'the results of my actions are for me', having given up the anguish arising from thoughts of killing friends (*vigata-jvara*), Arjuna should fight because that is his duty as a *kṣatriya*." (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.30 commentary)

2: "The word *adhyātma* is here taken as an *avyayī-bhāva* compound, meaning 'related to (*adhyā*) the *ātmā*' rather than meaning the Supreme Soul. The phrase *adhyātma-cetasā* therefore means 'with consciousness fixed in the *ātmā*'. Therefore, offering (*sannyasya*) all works to me, by consciousness fixed in the *ātmā*, rather than in material objects, being without desires for the results, being *niṣkāma*, (*nirāśīh*), devoid of possessiveness in all respects, (*nirmamah*), fight." (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.30 commentary)

3: "Nobody is proprietor. *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam.* Every... Kṛṣṇa says, "I am enjoyer. I am the proprietor." *Sarva-loka-maheśvaram* [Bg. 5.29]. *Mahā-īśvaram. Mahā* means great. We can claim *īśvaram,* controller, but Kṛṣṇa is described as *mahā-īśvaram,* "controller of the controller." That is Kṛṣṇa. Nobody is independently controller." (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 2.9, August 15th 1973, London)

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3.31: Those who have faith in My teachings, and who thus strive to understand and apply them (*ye me matam idaṁ nityam*), will undoubtedly become free from material bondage (*mucyante te 'pi karmabhiḥ*). They may not be able to follow them perfectly straight away, but their faith in My instruction that aspiring transcendentalists must

perform worldly duties in a spirit of service will gradually remove all obstacles to their spiritual success (*anutiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ / śraddhāvanto 'nasūyanto*).

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.31–43, January 1st 1969, Los Angeles

Explanatory note:

Ye me matam idaṁ nityam: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Those ...who ... according to My injunctions ..." Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura make it clear that Kṛṣṇa is referring to the Bhagavad-gītā. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa says that nityam means one should always follow this teaching. (1, 2) Śrīla Prabhupāda suggests that nityam means the Bhagavad-gītā is eternally true and applicable in all circumstances.

> *"The injunction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is the essence of all Vedic wisdom and therefore is eternally true without exception."*

Anutiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ / śraddhāvanto 'nasūyanto : Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "...persons who execute their duties ... and who follow this teaching faithfully, without envy..." In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that even if one cannot yet follow the Lord's eternal injunctions perfectly, having faith in them and sincerely endeavouring to follow them will eventually lead to spiritual perfection.

> *"But an ordinary man with firm faith in the eternal injunctions of the Lord, even though unable to execute such orders, becomes liberated from the bondage of the law of karma. In the beginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one may not fully discharge the injunctions of the Lord, but because one is not resentful of this principle and works sincerely without consideration of defeat and hopelessness, he will surely be promoted to the stage of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness."*

Śrīla Prabhupāda points out that one must have faith in the entirety of Kṛṣṇa's teachings, and in my rendering of the verse, I have tried to capture that meaning in the first sentence. In the second sentence, I try to show what I understand Kṛṣṇa intended to communicate in this particular context: the importance of performing one's prescribed duties, even for those who are spiritually advanced. This point is one Kṛṣṇa has been developing in verses 3.19 to 3.31. Baladeva explains that some people aspiring for liberation regard performing material duties as a fault or a waste of time. (1) I understand that he means Kṛṣṇa is addressing a general

misconception that, to make spiritual progress, one must renounce the duties of a householder and accept sannyāsa.

Mucyante te 'pi karmabhiḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "...become free from the bondage of fruitive actions." Baladeva says that the word api suggests that only those who have faith in Bhagavad-gītā As It Is can attain freedom from material bondage. (1) I understand that faithfully trying to understand Bhagavad-gītā As It Is and doing one's best to follow it without pretension is the only requirement for success. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam echoes the emphasis on faith in Kṛṣṇa's teachings. (3)

Evidence:

1: "This verse indicates the supreme position of this teaching by speaking of the result for those who, following the Lord's teaching, the secret of the Vedas. Only (api) those men who always (nityam) follow my teaching with firm faith (shraddhavantah), without having the feeling that it is a fault for one interested in liberation to participate in useless material actions, which are only a waste of time (anasuyantah), are free from the bondage of action. Api has the sense of limitation (only) in this verse. Another meaning is as follows. Those who follow my teachings, and even those who cannot follow but have faith and also do not disrespect the teachings, even they can be free of the bondage of action. Even though at the present time they cannot follow, by faith in the teachings and lack of envy their obstacles decrease. A little later, by performing the instructions, they become free." (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.31 commentary)

2: "In this verse, the Lord speaks to encourage people to take up His teaching." (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.31 commentary)

3: "Having awakened faith in the narrations of My glories, being disgusted with all material activities, knowing that all sense gratification leads to misery, but still being unable to renounce all sense enjoyment, My devotee should remain happy and worship Me with great faith and conviction. Even though he is sometimes engaged in sense enjoyment, My devotee knows that all sense gratification leads to a miserable result, and he sincerely repents such activities. When an intelligent person engages constantly in worshiping Me through loving devotional service as described by Me, his heart becomes firmly situated in Me. Thus all material desires within the heart are destroyed." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.20.27–29)

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3.32: However, some people, lacking faith in Me, either make no effort to understand My teachings or resent My insistence that aspiring transcendentalists perform their worldly duties (*ye tv etad abhyasūyanto / nānutiṣṭhanti me matam*). Thus, failing to acquire genuine transcendental knowledge, they become misguided by mental speculation, are unsuccessful in their endeavours and descend into hellish conditions of life (*sarva-jñāna-vimūḍhāṁs tān / viddhi naṣṭān acetasaḥ*).

Explanatory note:

Ye tv etad abhyasūyanto: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "But those who, out of envy…." Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa directly links envy to a lack of faith in Kṛṣṇa's teachings. He explains that the Bhagavad-gītā is the secret of the śrutis, presented by the friend of all beings, the Supreme Lord, yet out of envy we minimise its importance. (1) Śrīla Prabhupāda describes this faithlessness as a vacant heart.

Nānutiṣṭhanti me matam: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…disregard these teachings and do not follow them regularly…" A key teaching that recurs throughout the Bhagavad-gītā is that we should regularly hear, discuss, reflect on, and seek to understand Kṛṣṇa's teachings. (3, 4, 5) Unfortunately, many aspiring transcendentalists neglect or minimise this practice.

Sarva-jñāna-vimūḍhāṁs tān: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…are to be considered bereft of all knowledge, befooled…" In his purport, he writes:

> *"A disobedient person, however great he may be, is ignorant of his own self, and of the Supreme Brahman, Paramātmā and the Personality of Godhead, due to a vacant heart."*

If one fails to discuss and seek to understand the Bhagavad-gītā, one will never understand the soul or the Supreme Lord in any of His features: Brahman, Paramātmā or Bhagavān. According to Kṛṣṇa, once we understand Him we will never take birth again (7), but neglecting to understand Him will cause one to fail in all our endeavours. (6) Baladeva adds that a lack of knowledge prevents us from clearly understanding our prescribed duties. (1)

Viddhi naṣṭān acetasaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…and ruined in their endeavours for perfection." All three ācāryas explain that this verse speaks of the problems arising from

neglecting to understand the Bhagavad-gītā. (1, 2) The word naṣṭān means ‘all ruined’ and it occurs again in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam where we learn that failing to cultivate proper knowledge leads us to mental speculation and, consequently, to fall into the lower species of hellish life. (8)

Evidence:

1: “This verse speaks of the fault of not following the instructions. But know that those who do not follow this instruction, the secret of the *śrutis*, presented by the Lord, the friend of all beings, but instead envy it, since they have no faith in it. Know that these people, consequently being ignorant, (*vimūḍhān*), of all knowledge, (*jñāna*), concerning prescribed action and Paramātmā, and consequently being devoid of all discrimination, (*acetasaḥ*), are thus lost, (*naṣṭān*).” (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.32 commentary)

2: “In this verse, the Lord speaks of the bad effects of doing the opposite.” (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.32 commentary)

3: “The Lord therefore says to Arjuna, *tac chṛṇu,* or “Hear from Me.”” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is7.1 purport)”

4: “Discussion of Kṛṣṇa is very potent, and if a fortunate person has such association and tries to assimilate the knowledge, then he will surely make advancement toward spiritual realization.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is9.1 purport)

5: “Their hearts and souls are constantly submerged in Kṛṣṇa, and they take pleasure in discussing Him with other devotees.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is10.9 purport)

6: “…In that deluded condition, their hopes for liberation, their fruitive activities, and their culture of knowledge are all defeated.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.12)

7: “One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is4.9)

8: “*Naṣṭa-prajñaḥ.* The word *prajña* means “perfect knowledge,” and *naṣṭa-prajña* means “one who has no perfect knowledge.” One who does not have perfect knowledge has only mental speculation. By such mental speculation one falls down and down into a hellish condition of life. By transgressing the laws laid down in the *śāstras,* one cannot

become pure in heart. When one's heart is not purified, one acts according to the three material modes of nature." (Śrimad Bhagavatam 4.26.8 purport)

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Arjuna reflects: How could anyone dare to disobey You, who are not only a great king but the Supreme Lord Himself?

Explanatory note:

This insight into Arjuna's thinking is inspired by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentaries. (1, 2)

Evidence:

1: "The scriptures say that there is punishment for those who do not follow the instructions of You, the Lord of all beings. Do they not have fear of You?" (*Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* 3.33 commentary)

2: "Would they not be afraid of not following your instructions, the instructions of the Supreme Lord, or the instructions of the king?" (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.33 commentary)

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3.33: Kṛṣṇa said: Everyone's specific nature has corresponding desires, determined by the combination of the modes of nature governing one's body and mind (*sadṛśaṁ ceṣṭate svasyāḥ*). The modes compel even one who knows the scriptures and the consequences of sinful action to satisfy these desires (*prakṛter jñānavān api*). All beings follow their own nature (*prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni*), and artificial repression cannot overcome its influence (*nigrahaḥ kiṁ karişyati*).

Explanatory note:

Sadṛśaṁ ceṣṭate svasyāḥ / prakṛter jñānavān api: Śrīla Prabhupāda combines these two lines as: "Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes." Sadṛśaṁ ceṣṭate svasyāḥ corresponds to "…acts according to his own nature…", and prakṛter jñānavān api corresponds to "Even a man of knowledge … from the three modes." Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explain that even those who know the difference between right and wrong cannot overcome their sinful nature, vāsanās or habits. (1, 2) Baladeva uses the term vāsanā, which Śrīla Prabhupāda translates as desires. (2, 3) In other words, even knowing that an action is

sinful and that one will suffer as a result cannot prevent one from trying to fulfil the desires of one's sinful nature. Viśvanātha says only the Lord's 'unpredictable mercy' can do that, and Baladeva says only 'saintly association' can free one from sinful inclinations. (1, 2)

Throughout his teachings, Srila Prabhupada synthesises these two perspectives: saintly association is the Lord's unpredictable mercy. (4) One who has thoroughly understood and who embodies Krsna's teachings is guru, and he delivers the Lord's mercy to those who hear from him and try to understand his teachings. (6) The calibre of devotee who embodies the Lord's mercy is the very topmost devotee who has an established relationship with the Lord and is therefore not at all influenced or attracted by the modes of nature. (7) One can receive the Lord's mercy by hearing from him. (6) In summary, without regularly, systematically and attentively hearing the Lord's messages from the topmost devotee, one cannot become purified of one's sinful tendencies. (9) For this reason, Srila Prabhupada left us his books and encouraged us to regularly and carefully study and discuss them. (8) We should note that not all official gurus are embodiments of the Lord's mercy. (5) To be able to discern who is bona fide, we must first qualify ourselves by hearing from the topmost devotee, and by discussing his teachings with devotees who ensure they do not speculate. (10, 11) According to Bhagavad-gītā As It Is we should always cite scriptural evidence for the points we make. (12)

Prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni / nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati: Srila Prabhupada translates this as "…for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish?" The material desires we each have are products of the modes of nature that govern our psycho-physical make-up. As long as we are influenced by these modes, we cannot artificially suppress the impulse to satisfy them.

Evidence:

1: "Those who engage their senses for enjoyment, even if they are intelligent, cannot consider the orders of the king, the Supreme Lord. This is because of their nature.' The Lord explains this in this verse. … Still, even the person of discrimination performs actions which yield a burden of suffering, following his previous sinful habits. Therefore, all follow after their natures. ..But bhakti-yoga, arising from my unpredictable mercy, can deliver even the most sinful persons. As the Skanda Purana says: 'My dear friend

Nārada Muni, you are glorified as a sage among the demigods. By your mercy, even a low-born person like this hunter immediately became ecstatic. This is called bhāva or rati.'" (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.33 commentary)

2: "Even a person who knows the punishment stated in the scriptures (jñānavān) acts according to (sadṛśam) his evil nature, (svasyah prakṛteh)-- his sinful impressions, which have been present since beginningless time. What then to speak of the person who does not even know about the punishments? All people (bhūtāni) follow (yānti) their sinful vāsanās (prakṛtim), even though those desires destroy the very goals they pursue-- artha, dharma, karma, and mokṣa. For a person devoid of association of saintly persons, even if he has knowledge of scripture, what can punishment accomplish? He will not be able to destroy the strong influence of those bad vāsanās. However, by saintly association, he can destroy the sinful vāsanās even if they are very strong. The smṛti says: 'An intelligent person should therefore reject all bad association and instead take up the association of saintly devotees, whose words cut off the excessive attachment of one's mind.' (S*rīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.26.26." (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.33 com means without any material desires." (Lecture on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.6.10, December 12th 1975, Vrndavana)

4: "So therefore *guru* is the cloud. He has taken the mercy from the ocean, or from God, and he pours the mercy. Immediately the fire is exting and you are saved. This is the *saṁsāra-dāvānala-līḍha-loka-trāṇāya kāruṇya-ghanāghanatvam, prāptasya*....One who has received mercy from the Supreme, he can save." (Morning Walk, December 15th 1973, Los Angeles)

5: "Therefore the so-called formal spiritual master and disciple are not facsimiles of Brahmā and Nārada or Nārada and Vyāsa. The relationship between Brahmā and Nārada is reality, while the so-called formality is the relation between the cheater and cheated. It is clearly mentioned herewith that Nārada is not only well-behaved, meek and obedient, but also self-controlled. One who is not self-controlled, specifically in sex life, can become neither a disciple nor a spiritual master." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam2.9.43 purport)

6: “One should take shelter of a pure devotee, who has nothing to do with this material world but is simply engaged in devotional service. By serving him only, one can transcend the qualitative material condition. In this verse it is recommended (*yogeśvara-upāsanayā*) that one serve the lotus feet of the topmost *yogī,* or the devotee. To serve the topmost devotee means to hear from him about the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. To hear the glories of the Supreme Personality of of a pure devotee is to acquire a pious life.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam4.22.22 purport)

7: “A bona fide spiritual master who is fully cognizant of the methods of spiritual science, learned in the spiritual scriptures such as the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Vedānta, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Upaniṣads*, etc., and who is also a realized soul who has made a tangible connection with the Supreme Lord, is the transparent medium by which the willing candidate is led to the path of the Vaikuṇṭhas. The spiritual master must be satisfied in all respects, because simply by his good wishes a candidate can make wonderful progress along the path.” (Easy Journey to Other Planets, chapter 1)

8: “So you European, American students, you take full advantage of this Vedic culture. I am therefore so much laboring hard that we, before my leaving this body, I may give you some books you can enjoy after my death. So utilize it. Utilize it. Read every sloka nicely, try to understand the meaning, discuss amongst yourselves. Nityam bhagavata-sevaya. That is our mission. Nasta-prayesv abhadresu nityam bhagavata-sevaya (SB 1.2.18). Abhadra, we have got so many dirty things within our heart. So these dirty things can be cleansed simply by Krishna consciousness. There is no other method.” (Lecture on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam1.1.1 in London, on July 6th, 1972)

9: “Without hearing sufficiently and properly, no one can make any progress by any of the methods of practice.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam2.2.36 purport)

10: “So to find out a bona fide *guru* is not difficult, provided one is bona fide to search out a *guru*. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, *guru-kṛṣṇa-kṛpāya pāya bhakti-latā-bīja* [Cc. Madhya 19.151]. By the mercy of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa… Because by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa one gets a bona fide *guru,* and by the mercy of bona fide *guru,* one gets Kṛṣṇa. This is the process.” (Lecture on The Nectar of Devotion, October 30th 1972, Vrndavan)

11: "Devotee of Kṛṣṇa, he does not say anything as his own opinion. He never says. What Kṛṣṇa says, he says. He may be not perfect, but what Kṛṣṇa has said, that is perfect. Therefore a pure devotee, who does not say anything beyond which was spoken by Kṛṣṇa, therefore his statement is also without mistake." (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 2.2, August 3rd 1973, London)

12: “The process of speaking in spiritual circles is to say something upheld by the scriptures. One should at once quote from scriptural authority to back up what he is saying. At the same time, such talk should be very pleasurable to the ear. By such discussions, one may derive the highest benefit and elevate human society.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is17.15 purport)

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Arjuna reflects: If the modes of nature determine how one acts, what point is there in scripture prohibiting or prescribing certain actions?

Explanatory note:
This is inspired by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s commentary.

Evidence:
“If the actions of men are completely under the control of their sinful natures, then the positive and negative injunctions of scripture would be useless.” (*Gītā Bhūṣaṇa* 3.34 commentary)

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3.34: Kṛṣṇa said: Each sense has a corresponding sense object (*indriyasyendriyasyārthe*). Impressions carried over from previous lives naturally attract one to certain sense objects and repel one from others (*rāga-dveṣau vyavasthitau*). For example, one may be drawn to associating with another man's wife yet reluctant to hear from saintly devotees and discuss their teachings. One should use one's limited free will to hear regularly from saintly devotees. This purifies one of material attachments and aversions, enabling one to regulate material desires in accordance with scriptural injunctions (*tayor na vaśam āgacchet*). In this way, one gradually becomes free from the influence of attachment and aversion, which would otherwise hinder one’s spiritual progress (*tau hy asya paripanthinau*).

Explanatory note:

In unpacking this verse, I refer to the translation in the original 1972 Macmillan Edition of Bhagavad-gītā As It Is. (1) However, since Hayagriva das, the editor of that version, was inexperienced in Sanskrit and had to rely on other translations, (2) I also consulted His Holiness Bhanu Swami's translation of the verse.

Indriyasyendriyasyārthe / rāga-dveṣau vyavasthitau: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates and merges these two lines as "Attraction and repulsion for sense objects are felt by embodied beings…" Indriyasyendriyasyārthe corresponds to 'for sense objects', and the rest of the sentence corresponds to rāga-dveṣau vyavasthitau. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explain that indriya is repeated twice to indicate that all the senses interact with their respective sense objects. (4, 5) The eyes interact with attractive sights, the nose interacts with attractive aromas, the tongue interacts with attractive tastes, etc. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains that the second line—rāga-dveṣau vyavasthitau—means that the attraction and aversion are firmly fixed. (4) I understand this to mean that we are born with definite attractions and aversions. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura adds that rāga, or attachment, in this context refers to attachment to sense gratification prohibited by scripture, and dveṣa, repulsion, refers to aversion to things prescribed by scripture. (5)

I understand this to mean that at birth, the conditioned soul's senses are programmed to be attracted to some things the scripture prohibits and averse to some things the scripture prescribes. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains that this is due to vāsanās we carry with us. (4) A vāsanā is a material desire we cultivated in previous lives, and we carry the inclination or impression into our current lives. (6, 7) These desires are very difficult to give up because they are part of the nature we are born with.

Tayor na vaśam āgacchet / tau hy asya paripanthinau: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates "…but one should not fall under the control of senses and sense objects because they are stumbling blocks on the path of self-realization."

Srila Prabhupada writes:

> *"These propensities are to be curbed; otherwise they will be stumbling blocks on the path of self-realization. As long as the material body is there, the necessities of the*

material body are allowed, but under rules and regulations. And yet, we should not rely upon the control of such allowances."

Baladeva explains that due to our past conditioning, we are averse to what is good for us and attracted to what is harmful. However, by following the guidance of those scriptures which recommend that we hear from genuine saints, one begins to understand the harm we are doing to ourselves through our choices, and this makes it possible to start changing them. (4) Viśvanātha adds, "one should limit the senses, as much as one is not under the influence of sinful nature arising from past sinful habits." (5) I understand him to mean that, although we may not be able to restrict all our sensory impulses, we should at least use scripture to regulate those of our senses which are less inclined towards sinful actions. In other words, we should not adopt an all-or-nothing attitude but should regulate our senses to the best of our ability and continue to hear from great saints. This brings it back to Srila Prabhupada's comment: "we should not rely upon the control of such allowances." I understand him to mean that, besides trying to regulate our sensory activity according to scripture, we should continually hear from Krsna's pure devotees with the intention of continually purifying ourselves.

My evidence:

1: "Attraction and repulsion for sense objects are felt by embodied beings, but one should not fall under the control of senses and sense objects because they are stumbling blocks on the path of self-realization." (1972 Macmillan Edition version of Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 3.34)

2: "Swamiji finally tires of my consulting him about Bhagavad Gita verses. Just copy the verses from some other translation, he tells me, discarding the whole matter with a wave of his hand. The verses aren't important. There are so many translations, more or less accurate, and the Sanskrit is always there. It's my purports that are important. Concentrate on the purports." (The Hare Krishna Explosion: The Birth of Krishna Consciousness in America, 1966 to 1969, by Hayagriva Das, page 210.)

3: "Attachment and repulsion are firmly fixed in each of the sense objects. Therefore one should not come under control of attachment and repulsion. They are the two obstacles." (His Holiness Bhānu Swami's translation of Bhagavad-gītā, Chapter 3, Text 34.)

4: “Attraction and hatred (*rāga-dveṣau*), pleasure and discomfort to the individual, are fixed firmly (*vyavasthitau*)…. Impressions (*vāsanās*) which have operated since beginningless time give rise to such things as desire to speak to others’ wives, even though it is forbidden in the scriptures….. In a similar way, hatred may develop concerning speaking to saintly persons, which is prescribed in the scriptures….. The scriptures, which direct one to associate with saintly persons, will turn one away from, and make one detest, what is forbidden, even though it is pleasurable to the mind, by making one understand the undesirable consequences of the forbidden act. And they will also make one have attraction for and engage in acts prescribed by scripture by making one understand their favourable results, even though these may be unpleasant to the mind. Thus the positive and negative injunctions of scripture are not useless.” (*Gītā Bhūṣaṇa* 3.34 commentary)

5: “Since rules and restrictions of scripture do not have effect upon those of evil nature, one should limit the senses as much as one is not under the influence of sinful nature arising from past sinful habits. That is described in this verse. The word *indriya* is repeated to indicate each of the sense objects of each of the senses. Attachment (*rāga*) for what is forbidden by scripture, such as giving gifts to others' wives, or seeing or touching their bodies; or repulsion, (*dveṣa*), for what is prescribed by scripture, such as distributing gifts to, serving, seeing and touching the groom, the Brahmin, the holy places and visitors, are firmly fixed (*viṣesena avasthitau*), in all the sense objects, (form, smell, taste, touch and sound). One should not be under the control (*vaśam*) of attachment and repulsion.” (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.34 commentary)

6: “*Vāsanās* or *saṁskāras*, impressions, are the means by which experiences of previous lives stay with the *jīva* life after life. Under certain conditions, the impressions activate, creating memory of previous likes or dislikes. Desires appear, and thus the *jīva* acts. Though *vāsanās* or impressions (also called *svabhāva*) are powerful in instigating the *jīva* to action, they do not make the *jīva* powerless to make choices. The free will of the *jīva* exists alongside the experience of *vāsanās*. This free will enables the *jīva* to choose the advice of scripture over material desires. This, however, takes place through association with devotees.” (H.H. Bhanu Swami’s note to *Gītā Bhūṣaṇa* 3.34 commentary)

7: "*vāsanā-mayaḥ* — consisting predominantly of the remnants of past desires of the living entities" (Srimad Bhagavatam 12.7.12 word for word)

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Arjuna reflects: Kṛṣṇa wants me to perform my prescribed duties without being swayed by attachment or aversion. Yet I do not feel capable of fulfilling the kṣatriya's duty with such detachment. Perhaps I could instead follow the non-violent duties of a brāhmaṇa and support myself by gathering surplus grain from the fields. Since King Janaka and other kṣatriyas previously renounced the world, why would it be wrong for me to do the same?

Explanatory note:
This insight into Arjuna's thinking is based on the commentaries of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. (1, 2, 3)

Evidence:
1: "You have said that we should give up the proclivities of desire and hatred arising from our natures, common to animals, and engage in *dharma* according to scripture. This tendency should disappear with purification of the heart through following the duties of *dharma*. *Dharmas* of both fighting and non-violence are stated in the scriptures. Because I cannot perform fighting devoid of desire and hatred, the *dharma* of non-violence with subsistence by gathering surplus grains is superior to fighting for me....I have heard that Daivarāti and other *kṣatriyas* renounce the world. Therefore, why is non-violence considered the wrong *dharma* for me?" (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.35 commentary)

2: His Holiness Bhānu Svāmī adds a note explaining that Daivarāti is another name for King Janak: "This is another name of King Janak. In old age he renounced. Generally, however, the kṣatriyas take vānaprastha rather than sannyāsa." (His Holiness Bhānu Svāmī's note to Gīta Bhūṣaṇa, 3.35 commentary)

3: "In this verse, the Lord answers those who desire to perform the duties of others such as nonviolence, because it is easy to execute, and also not independent of *dharma*, and because of inability to fight the battle due to attachment and repulsion." (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.35 commentary)

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3.35: Kṛṣṇa said: Everyone should perform their own prescribed duty, even if another's duty seems easier or more virtuous (*śreyān sva-dharmo viguṇaḥ / para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt*). It is better to adhere to one's own duty, even at the cost of life, because it avoids sinful reactions and gradually purifies the heart (*sva-dharme nidhanaṁ śreyaḥ*). Performing another's duty is dangerous because, being prohibited by scripture, it is sinful and leads to suffering (*para-dharmo bhayāvahaḥ*).

Explanatory note:

Śreyān sva-dharmo viguṇaḥ / para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "It is far better to discharge one's prescribed duties, even though faultily, / than another's duties perfectly." Sva-dharmaḥ denotes one's prescribed duties, and in his purport Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that we have two types of prescribed duties: our varṇāśrama duties, determined by our psychophysical characteristics, and our spiritual duties, determined by the bona fide spiritual master. Examples of spiritual duties for temple residents in the renounced āśrama include attending the temple's morning and evening worship programmes. The spiritual duties for married couples, adjusted to the needs of family life, are as follows:

> *"The best process for making the home pleasant is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If one is in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he can make his home very happy, because this process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very easy. One need only chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, accept the remnants of foodstuffs offered to Kṛṣṇa, have some discussion on books like Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and engage oneself in Deity worship. These four things will make one happy. One should train the members of his family in this way. The family members can sit down morning and evening and chant together Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare." (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 13.8–12 purport)*

Śrīla Prabhupāda translates viguṇaḥ as 'faulty'. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains that this includes 'lacking some elements', meaning one cannot perform all the prescribed duties. (1) For example, married couples may not be able to fit all four items Śrīla Prabhupāda recommended into their spiritual practice. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura adds that viguṇaḥ also means the duty itself may contain a faulty element. (2) For example, in married life, we

have to accommodate our children in our home worship, and they may lower the standard of worship. The same faults may also apply to our varṇāśrama duties. Still, despite these faults, Viśvanātha explains that we should stick to our own duties rather than another's, "even if those duties are executed well and are full of good qualities." (2)

The duties of the different varṇas are listed in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Canto 7, Chapter 11, verses 7.11.13–15, and the duties of women are explained in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 7.11.25–28. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Canto 7, Chapter 12, details the duties of the four āśramas. Bhagavad-gītā, Chapter 18, verses 41–44, also contains a brief summary of the duties of the different varṇas:

> *"Brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras are distinguished by the qualities born of their own natures in accordance with the material modes, O chastiser of the enemy. Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom and religiousness – these are the natural qualities by which the brāhmaṇas work. Heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and leadership are the natural qualities of work for the kṣatriyas. Farming, cow protection and business are the natural work for the vaiśyas, and for the śūdras there are labor and service to others."*

Sva-dharme nidhanaṁ śreyaḥ / para-dharmo bhayāvahaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Destruction in the course of performing one's own duty is better than engaging in another's duties, / for to follow another's path is dangerous." He renders nidhanaṁ as destruction, and in his purport he explains that we should adhere to our duties throughout our lives, up to the time of death:

> *"But whether material or spiritual, one should stick to his prescribed duties even up to death, rather than imitate another's prescribed duties."*

Baladeva's and Viśvanātha's explanations of nidhanaṁ suggest that even if fulfilling our duty results in our death, it is better to adhere to it than to abandon it in favour of another's duty. Baladeva explains why it is better to do one's own duty even when it has fewer virtuous traits than another's duty. He says one does not incur sinful reactions by doing one's own duty, whether it relates to one's varṇa or āśrama, even if that duty involves aspects that might

otherwise be considered sinful. Furthermore, doing one's own duty gradually purifies the heart of material attachments and aversions. (1)

Para-dharmaḥ means performing another's duty. Baladeva explains that doing another's duty is prohibited by scripture. Anything prohibited by scripture is sinful and will therefore bring misfortune. That is why it is dangerous—bhayāvahaḥ—to do another's duty. (1) The conclusion is that one should always follow scripture, even if the duties it prescribes seem less savoury or virtuous than those prescribed for another. The theme that doing one's own duty is the safer path recurs in Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.48 and Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.59–60. Viśvanātha cites Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to explain that para-dharmaḥ is one of five types of irreligion. (2) We will examine these religious deviations in the Reflection on this verse. Baladeva explains that only when one is completely purified of the influence of the modes of nature through the performance of prescribed duties is it acceptable to give them up. (1)

Evidence:

1: "Whatever *dharma* is prescribed by the Vedas in terms of *varṇa* and *āśrama*, performed incompletely, lacking some elements, (*viguṇah*), is better than executing a different *dharma*, (*para-dharmāt*), even though it is executed completely with all parts, (*su-anuṣṭhitāt*). For instance, the natural *dharma* of the *brāhmaṇa* is non-violence and that of the *kṣatriya* is fighting. One should not execute *dharma* beyond the sanction of the Vedas. Doing so is like performing the functions of the eye with a different organ. ... The reason why it is better is then stated. It is better to die (*nidhanaṁ*) in the execution of one's own *dharma*. This produces the best results because there is no loss or sin in acting imperfectly, and because in the next life one will be able to execute that *dharma* properly. Performing a different *dharma* causes misfortune for the person (*bhayāvahaḥ*), by creating sin, since it is prohibited in scripture. ...I have heard that Daivarāti (King Janaka) and other *kṣatriyas* renounce the world. Therefore, why is non-violence considered the wrong *dharma* for me? By performing one's prescribed duties in the previous *āśrama*, one decreases desire until one is qualified for renunciation. The person can then practice non-violence because it then becomes his prescribed *dharma*. Thus it is suitable that one who is situated in his own *dharma* can later do this." (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.35 commentary)

2: “In this verse, the Lord answers those who desire to perform the duties of others such as nonviolence, because it is easy to execute, and also not independent of *dharma*, and because of inability to fight the battle due to attachment and repulsion. One should boldly perform one's duties, even though they may have some slight fault. This is better than performing others' duties, even if those duties are executed well and are full of good qualities. The reason is given: destruction in the course of performing one's duty is better. Performing others' duties is dangerous. The seventh canto of the *Bhagavatam* speaks of performing others' duties, *para-dharma*, as irreligion: ‘There are five branches of irreligion, appropriately known as irreligion (*vidharma),* religious principles for which one is unfit (*para-dharma),* pretentious religion (*ābhāsa),* analogical religion (*upadharma)* and cheating religion (*chala-dharma)*. One who is aware of real religious life must abandon these five as irreligious.’ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.15.12.” (*Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* 3.35 commentary)

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3.36: Arjuna said (*arjuna uvāca*): People do not want to sin because they know it leads to suffering. Despite this, O descendant of Vrsni, they sometimes cannot stop themselves (*anicchann api vārṣṇeya / balād iva niyojitaḥ*). What is it that compels one to sin even against one’s better judgment (*atha kena prayukto ’yaṁ / pāpaṁ carati pūruṣaḥ)*?

Hear: Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 3.36-37, February 11th 1973, Melbourne

Explanatory note:

Arjuna uvāca: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as “Arjuna said”. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explain that Arjuna’s question refers to verse 34, where Kṛṣṇa explains that every living being’s senses are pre-programmed with proclivities for sense enjoyment, arising from the impressions of their past lives. (1, 2) Arjuna recognises, however, that one may learn from scripture that acting on these inclinations is sinful and decide to stop. Yet despite one’s better judgement and good intentions, one may still be impelled to act sinfully. He therefore asks what can impel someone to disobey scripture despite their conscious intention not to sin.

Atha kena prayukto ’yaṁ / pāpaṁ carati pūruṣaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as “…by what is one impelled / to sinful acts…” Baladeva explains that Arjuna seeks to understand

what force impels one to sin against one's better judgement and intentions. (1) Śrīla Prabhupāda characterises Arjuna's confusion as follows:

> *"Although the living entity sometimes does not want to act in sin, he is still forced to act."*

Anicchann api vārṣṇeya: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "O descendant of Vṛṣṇi… even unwillingly…" Anicchan means "without desiring". Viśvanātha explains that once someone knows the suffering they will have to endure as a result of committing a sin, they no longer wish to commit that sin. (2) Nevertheless, despite not wanting to sin, they still do. Why is that?

Balād iva niyojitaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…as if engaged by force." Baladeva considers what might impel someone to act against their intention not to sin. (1) Could it be the Lord? He rules this out, as the merciful Lord would not oblige anyone to sin. Could it be one's past impressions? For example, having enjoyed ice cream in a past life, I carry into this life the impression that it is enjoyable. This possibility is dismissed because an unconscious impression cannot override the will of a conscious living entity.

Evidence:

1: "In verse 34, the Lord indicated that desire (*rāga*), such as speaking to others' wives, is firmly fixed in the senses and mind. Arjuna now asks a question concerning this: 'O Kṛṣṇa, born in the Vṛṣṇi dynasty, inspired by what thing (*kena prayukta*) does the *jīva* commit sin? Though he does not want to do it (*anicchan*), knowing that it is forbidden by the scriptures, he does it as if by force (*balād iva*). The desire to engage in sin is produced in the independent person by being subjected to the desire of an instigator. Who is the instigator? Is it the Lord or the *jīva*'s previous impressions (*saṁskāra*)? It cannot be the Lord who inspires a person to do sinful acts, since He is merciful and only plays the role of the witness. Nor can it be impressions, since those are dull, unconscious things.'" (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.36 commentary)

2: "Referring to verse 34 about rāga and dveṣa, in this verse Arjuna asks about the attachment to the objects of the senses, such as enjoyment with others' wives, even though it is forbidden by scripture.

Though without desire to engage in sin because of knowledge of the rules and prohibitions of the scriptures, (anicchan), by what influence (kena prayukta) does one

engage in the act as if by force? This means that the desire for the object strongly arises under the influence of the object's stimuli." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.36 commentary)

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3.37: Kṛṣṇa said (*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*): It is lust only, which becomes anger when frustrated, that compels living entities to sin against their will (*kāma eṣa krodha eṣa*). The mode of passion turns prema into lust (*rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ*), an insatiable, demonic enemy that drives one to act in forbidden ways and to remain entrapped in the material world (*mahāśano mahā-pāpmā / viddhy enam iha vairiṇam*).

Explanatory note:
Śrī-bhagavān uvāca: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "The Supreme Personality of Godhead said..." We will now hear the most authoritative reply to Arjuna's question.

Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "It is lust only... later transformed into wrath..." Prema—a strong love for the Lord that impels us to please Him—is transformed into lust, a powerful impulse for our own gratification.

As I understand it, rāga and dveṣa, attachment and aversion, which Kṛṣṇa mentions in verse 34, refer to specific likes and dislikes programmed into our senses because of preferences we cultivated in previous lives. For example, in a previous life I may have enjoyed eating flesh, so in my current life my palate is conditioned to find flesh tasty.

Rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "...which is born of contact with the material mode of passion..." Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport:

> *"Or, in other words, the sense of love of God becomes transformed into lust, as milk in contact with sour tamarind is transformed into yogurt ... when the service attitude is transformed into the propensity for sense enjoyment, they come under the sway of lust."*

As I understand it, prema—love for Kṛṣṇa—is the force that impels the pure soul to action. When prema comes into contact with the mode of passion, it transforms into lust, which impels us to gratify our material senses as much as possible. (3) Rāga and dveṣa, one's ingrained likes and dislikes, determine how one tries to satisfy lust. However, when kāma reverts to prema—the spontaneous loving desire to please

Kṛṣṇa—rāga and dveṣa no longer pose a problem, because the living entity engages those same innate inclinations in Kṛṣṇa's service rather than using them for personal gratification. Srila Prabhupada writes in his purport:

> *"...lust and wrath, when they are employed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, become our friends instead of our enemies."*

All three ācāryas explain that anger is merely a transformation of lust. (1, 2) It is interesting to note how the analogy of milk transformed into yoghurt is used differently by Śrīla Prabhupāda and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda compares sour tamarind to the mode of passion, milk to prema, and lust to yoghurt. Baladeva uses the same analogy to explain how lust transforms into anger. (1) Lust is comparable to milk, anger to yoghurt, and frustration to acidic culture. These perspectives do not contradict one another.

Śrīla Prabhupāda offers another intriguing insight into anger. It is not only a transformation of lust but also a manifestation of the mode of ignorance. He writes in his purport:

"...when lust is unsatisfied, it turns into wrath; wrath is transformed into illusion, and illusion continues the material existence. ... Wrath is the manifestation of the mode of ignorance... If, therefore, the mode of passion, instead of being degraded into the mode of ignorance..."

I understand this as another way of explaining Kṛṣṇa's point in Chapter 2:

> *"Anger breeds doubt about the relevant scriptural passages. Having lost faith in scriptural restrictions, one loses the ability to distinguish between what is beneficial and what is harmful (krodhād bhavati saṁmohaḥ). Poor choices weaken one's spiritual resolve (sammohāt smṛti-vibhramaḥ). Finally, one loses even the desire for self-realisation (smṛti-bhraṁśād buddhi-nāśo) and returns to a materialistic life, devoid of transcendental knowledge (buddhi-nāśāt praṇaśyati)." (Gita Flow 2.63)*

The mode of ignorance breeds doubt about scripture, erodes our ability to distinguish between what is beneficial and harmful, leads to poor choices, and causes us to abandon the pursuit of transcendental knowledge.

Mahāśano mahā-pāpmā / viddhy enam iha vairiṇam: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "...and which is the all-devouring sinful / enemy of this world." In his purport, he writes:

> *"lust is the greatest enemy of the living entity, and it is lust only which induces the pure living entity to remain entangled in the material world."*

Some enemies can be appeased by giving in to their demands. This is not the case with lust. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa both explain that it is impossible to satisfy lust's demands because it is most voracious. It is an evil demonic (mahā-pāpmā) enemy because it compels us to commit forbidden acts. (1, 2)

Evidence:

1: "The Lord speaks: 'Desire (kāma), for sense objects like sound, caused by previous impressions (vāsanā), instigates the jīva to commit sin, even though the jīva does not want to do it. ...anger is not different from kāma. This kāma, when obstructed by some living being, becomes anger, just as milk becomes yogurt by addition of acidic culture...It arises from the mode of rajas. This means that, with the conquest of raja-guṇa by increase of sattva, kāma can be conquered. One cannot extinguish it by giving it what it wants (dāna):iIt is most voracious (mahāśana). ...it is very evil (mahā-pāpmā). Being very powerful, since it forces one to engage even in forbidden acts by making one lose one's sense of discrimination, know that it is an enemy even in giving in to its demands (iha). ... It should be destroyed .. which will later be described." (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3:37 commentary)

2: "Lust, composed of the desire of the sense objects, impels a man to sin. A man, being urged by lust, engages in sin. This lust, appearing in a different form, becomes visible as anger. This means that lust, being obstructed by someone, transforms into anger. Lust arises from the mode of passion, and from lust in the mode of passion arises anger in the mode of ignorance. ... It is impossible to satisfy the expectations of desire.' .... Lust is a very great demon (mahā-pāpmā).'" (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.37 commentary)

3: "...one who is influenced by the modes of passion... he wants this false enjoyment. ... he wants to squeeze out the energy of the body to enjoy this matter. That is called modes of passion." (Lecture on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.17, March 29th 1967, San Francisco)

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3.38: Lust is an enemy to every conditioned soul in the universe. It affects living beings in three degrees of intensity. In its mildest form, it is compared to smoke covering a fire. A fire covered by smoke is not clearly visible, yet its heat can still burn (*dhūmenāvriyate vahnir*). This describes the human form of life, wherein despite being unaware of one's personal relationship with God, one can still engage in regulated devotional service to Him.

When lust covers a living entity to a moderate degree, it is compared to dust covering a mirror (*yathādarśo malena ca*). Although the mirror remains visible, it can no longer reflect one's image. This describes the condition of animals, which despite exhibiting consciousness, cannot actively serve the Lord.

When lust most intensely envelops a living entity, it is comparable to the womb enveloping an embryo (*yatholbenāvṛto garbhas*). Neither can the embryo move freely, nor is its form apparent within the womb. This describes the condition of immobile species, such as trees. They can neither actively serve the Lord nor is their consciousness apparent.

Thus, as smoke covers fire, dust covers a mirror, and the womb covers an embryo, lust similarly covers living entities to varying degrees (*tathā tenedam āvṛtam*).

Explanatory note:

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains that this verse describes the three degrees of lust's control over a living entity: mild, medium, and intense. (1) Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes that this verse shows lust to be an enemy of all conditioned souls, without exception. (2)

Dhūmenāvriyate vahnir: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "As fire is covered by smoke..." Baladeva and Viśvanātha both note that when smoke covers fire, the fire can still emit heat or burn something, even though it is not clearly visible. (1, 2) I understand this to illustrate that when lust only mildly influences a living being, one can still engage in regulative devotional

service, even though one's awareness of one's eternal loving relationship with the Lord remains obscured.

Yathādarśo malena ca: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…as a mirror is covered by dust…". Baladeva and Viśvanātha explain that the mirror's shape identifies it as such, but dust prevents it from functioning as one. (1, 2) In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> *"The covered mirror is compared to the birds and beasts, and the smoke-covered fire is compared to the human being."*

I understand this to mean that in the human form of life, the living being can engage in regulative devotional service, the soul's natural function. However, in the lower species, although living beings are identifiable as spirit souls by virtue of their consciousness, they cannot consciously engage in devotional service.

Yatholbenāvṛto garbhas: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…or as the embryo is covered by the womb…" Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explain that when lust is most intense, the living entity can neither function according to his nature (i.e., engage in devotional service) nor even be recognised as a conscious soul. (1, 2) Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport:

> *"This stage of living condition can be compared to that of the trees. The trees are also living entities, but they have been put in such a condition of life by such a great exhibition of lust that they are almost void of all consciousness."*

Tathā tenedam āvṛtam: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…the living entity is similarly covered by different degrees of this lust." His purport suggests that lust covers different species to different degrees. The lightest covering of lust is in the human form of life, which thus presents the best opportunity to conquer it. He writes:

> *"By careful handling of the smoke in the fire, fire can be made to blaze. Therefore the human form of life is a chance for the living entity to escape the entanglement of material existence. In the human form of life, one can conquer the enemy, lust, by cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness under able guidance."*

Baladeva explains the coverings of lust in terms of the ability to comprehend spiritual knowledge: "knowledge covered slightly by kama can grasp something of the truth." (1)

Visvanatha explains it in terms of one's awareness that life has a higher purpose. He writes: "When lust is shallow, it is possible to remember the spiritual goals." (2)

I understand these three perspectives to be mutually compatible and enriching. In the human form of life, we can ask, "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" "Why am I forced to suffer?" "What is the purpose of my life?" This is Visvanatha's point. All such questions open the path to remembering the spiritual goals of life. In many places, Srila Prabhupada compared those who do not ask such questions to animals. (3) Furthermore, we can understand the Vedas' answers to those questions to some extent. It is not possible to understand everything about the infinite Lord, but we can understand something. This is Baladeva's point.

Evidence:

1: "Examples of smoke, dust and womb are given to illustrate three stages of kama's influence: slight, medium and intense. The fire covered by smoke is not bright, but is able to perform its function of heating to some degree. The mirror covered with dust cannot receive the reflection because of the disappearance of its clean surface. The embryo covered by the womb cannot stretch its legs, nor can it be perceived. In the same way, knowledge covered slightly by kama can grasp something of truth. Knowledge covered moderately, however, cannot grasp the truth. Knowledge intensely covered by kama cannot function and cannot even be perceived (as knowledge)." (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.38 commentary)

2: "Lust is not just an enemy for some, but an enemy for all. This is explained with examples. The example illustrates various degrees of lust: shallow, deep, and very deep. The fire, though covered by smoke, still performs its function of burning. Because of the disappearance of its natural clarity, the mirror, covered by dust, does not carry out its function of reflecting images properly, though it is known as a mirror by its form, (in spite of the dust covering it). The fetus, covered by the womb, cannot perform its functions of stretching its hands and feet. Its true form cannot be understood within that covering. When lust is shallow, it is possible to remember the spiritual goals. When lust is deep, it is not possible. When it is very deep, one becomes unconscious. In this way, the universe, (idam), is covered by lust." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.38 commentary)

3: “So long one is not spiritually inquisitive, *jijñāsu śreya uttamam,* he is animal, because he has got only these four principles: eating, sleeping, mating and defending. That's all. He must be inquisitive, "What I am? Why I am put into these miseries of life—birth, death, old..., disease? Is there any remedy?" These things should be questioned. Then it is human life. Then it is spiritual life. *Athāto brahma jijñāsā*. This is the beginning of *Vedānta*. *Brahma-jijñāsā:* one should be inquisitive to understand what is Brahman. That is spiritual life.” (Address to Indian Association, May 11th 1969, Columbus)

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3.39: The soul’s transcendental knowledge is obscured by its eternal enemy, avidyā, ignorance (*jñānino nitya-vairiṇā*). It covers the soul’s pure consciousness (*āvṛtaṁ jñānam etena*) and turns the soul’s prema to lust, Arjuna (*kāma-rūpeṇa kaunteya*). Like fire, lust is insatiable and cannot be extinguished by feeding it (*duṣpūreṇānalena ca*).

Explanatory note:

Āvṛtaṁ jñānam etena / jñānino nitya-vairiṇā: Śrīla Prabhupāda’s translation merges the two lines as follows: “Thus the wise living entity’s pure consciousness becomes covered by his eternal enemy…” Āvṛtaṁ jñānam etena means “pure consciousness becomes covered”, and jñānino nitya-vairiṇā means “the wise living entity’s … by his eternal enemy”. The wise living entity’s pure consciousness refers to his realisation of his eternal, loving relationship with the Lord, known as his svarūpa. The living entity’s eternal enemy covers this awareness of one’s svarūpa. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa interprets ‘eternal enemy’ as ‘constant enemy’. (1) I understand this means lust always threatens the soul, both in the soul’s conditioned and liberated state.

To understand how lust threatens the liberated soul, one must recognise that the soul’s vulnerability stems from its origins: the Lord’s marginal energy, taṭastha-śakti:

> *“So that energy is divided into three = material energy, spiritual energy and marginal energy. We are marginal energy. We living entities, we belong to the marginal energy, taṭasthā-śakti. Marginal means we can remain in the material energy or in the spiritual energy.” (Lecture on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.6, July 23rd 1973, London)*

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains in his Jaiva-dharma that as marginal energy, our nature is that we can come under the control of either the material or spiritual energy:

> *"Bābājī: Taṭastha-svarūpa is the eligibility to come under the control of either of the śaktis. Sometimes this shore is submerged in the river because of erosion, and then again it becomes one with the land because the river changes its course. If the jīva looks in the direction of Kṛṣṇa, that is, towards the spiritual world, he is influenced by Kṛṣṇa-śakti. He then enters the spiritual world and serves Bhagavān in his pure conscious spiritual form. However, if he looks towards māyā, he becomes opposed to Kṛṣṇa and is incarcerated by māyā. This dual-faceted nature is called the taṭastha-svarūpa, marginal nature.*
>
> *Rājanātha: Is there any material component in the jīva's original constitution?*
>
> *Bābājī: No. The jīva is created solely from cit-śakti. He can be defeated, that is, covered by māyā, because he is minute by nature and lacks spiritual power, but there is not even a scent of māyā in the jīva's existence."(Jaiva-dharma, Chapter 15, p. 336)*

According to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, ignorance lies outside the material universe and time. It resides in the same region as liberated spirit souls: at the taṭastha junction between matter and spirit. (Please read further down in the section on Kāma-rūpeṇa kaunteya to understand the relationship between ignorance and lust.)

> *"The root of all karmas is the desire to perform karma, and the root cause of this desire is avidyā, ignorance. Avidyā is forgetfulness of the truth: 'I am an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa.' It does not have its origin in mundane time. Rather, it originates at the taṭastha junction of the spiritual and material worlds. That is why karma does not have its beginning in mundane time and is therefore called beginningless." (Jaiva-dharma, Chapter 16, p. 367)*

Thus, even after attaining liberation and returning to Vaikuṇṭha, kāma remains a potential threat. Thus Kṛṣṇa refers to it as the living entity's eternal enemy, vairiṇā. Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms this on many occasions.

> *"But our position is marginal. At any moment, we can fall down. That tendency is there. Therefore we are called marginal. But one... That's like it is very simple to understand.*

Everyone is prone to fall diseased. Is it not? Now, when you are diseased, there is no necessity of finding out the history when you became diseased. You are diseased; make your treatment. That's all. Similarly, we are in the material condition of life. Just go on treating it, and as soon as you are cured, be careful not to fall down again. But there is chance of falling down, again becoming diseased. Not that because you once become cured, and there is no chance of becoming diseased again. There is chance. Therefore we shall be very much careful." (Lecture on Bhagavad Gita 2.62-72 - December 19, 1968, Los Angeles - Bhagavad Gita - PrabhupadaBooks.com)

"So because we are living entity, we are not as powerful as Kṛṣṇa, therefore we may fall down from Vaikuṇṭha at any moment..... So even in the Vaikuṇṭha, if I desire that, "Why shall I serve Kṛṣṇa? Why not become Kṛṣṇa?" I immediately fall down. That is natural. A servant is serving the master, sometimes he may think that, "If I could become the master."" (Conversation, July 8th 1976, Washington D.C.)

One of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, Revatīnandana Dāsa, recalls asking Śrīla Prabhupāda what Kṛṣṇa means when he says in Bhagavad-gītā 8.15 and 15.6 that after attaining the spiritual world, one never returns to the material world. Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that Kṛṣṇa meant that one would 'probably never return', but the possibility is always there because our free will always exists.

Revatīnandana Dāsa's recollection:
"One of my God-brothers said, "Revatinandana, you know what Prabhupada said the other day?" I said, "What?" He said, "Prabhupada said that sometimes, even after going back to Godhead, a soul can fall again." I said, "Are you sure?" (I knew that in the Gita Krishna says, "Having returned to My transcendental abode, one never again returns to this world of miseries.") He said, "You can ask Prabhupada yourself, but that's what he said." When I got a chance, I asked Prabhupada, "Is it true that even after going back to Godhead, a soul sometimes falls again into the material energy?" Prabhupada said, "Yes." I said, "How does that relate with the Gita's statement?" With a wise, meditative smile Prabhupada said, "'Never' means 'practically never.' The soul is Krishna's marginal energy, which means that the soul eternally has the capacity to turn away or to turn toward Krishna. Generally a soul does not fall, but if he did, he

probably wouldn't do it again. However, it is not inconceivable." People say that souls never fall from the spiritual world in the first place, that they fall from somewhere besides Krishna's association. But Prabhupada was definitely speaking about being in Krishna's abode as described in the Bhagavad gita." (Revatīnandana Dāsa remembers Śrīla Prabhupāda)

Kāma-rūpeṇa kaunteya: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…in the form of lust." Lust is the soul's eternal enemy, which covers its original consciousness of its specific relationship with the Lord. In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> *"…lust is the symbol of ignorance by which the living entity is kept within the material world."*

In his Sārārtha-varṣiṇī commentary to 3.39, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura equates ignorance and lust, as follows:

> *"This verse explains that lust is indeed ignorance of the jīva, for it covers the knowledge of the jīva."*

I understand Viśvanātha's point to be that when the living entity forgets that he is Kṛṣṇa's eternal loving servant, his prema manifests as kāma. Śrīla Prabhupāda seems to offer another perspective. I understand him to mean that any lust present in one's consciousness indicates that the jīva is still ignorant of his eternal loving relationship with the Lord. He often says that even a pinch of material desire in one's heart means one is not yet fully self-realised and must therefore continue to take birth in the material world. (3) Lust also manifests as pride and the desire for honour. (4) In his Mādhurya-kādambinī, Viśvanātha characterises one who still expects to be adored by others and given special distinction as being on the sixth level of unsteady devotional service. (5)

Duṣpūreṇānalena ca: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…which is never satisfied and which burns like fire." All three ācāryas explain that the fire analogy shows lust cannot be vanquished by gratifying it. Like fire, lust is insatiable. Feeding it does not extinguish it but makes it more voracious. (1, 2)

Evidence:

1: "This verse clarifies the meaning. The knowledge of the knowing entity, the jīva,

(jñāninām), is covered by its eternal enemy, (nitya-vairiṇā), in the form of lust, (kāma-rūpeṇa). …it is called the constant enemy, (nitya-vairiṇā). Therefore, this means that by all means it should be destroyed. Moreover, it is also like (ca) an unsatisfied fire. Just as it is impossible to satisfy a fire by offerings, kāma cannot be satisfied by enjoyment…Therefore, it is the eternal or constant enemy of everyone." (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.39 commentary)

2: "As supplying butter to a fire does not diminish the fire but instead increases it more and more, the endeavour to stop lusty desires by continual enjoyment can never be successful…." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.39 commentary)

3: "So long I have got a pinch of desire for sense gratification, I will have to take this material body. And as soon as I have got this material body, then all the material miseries are along with it." (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 9.20–22, December 7th 1966, New York)

4: "…*bhakti-yoga* leads to gradual evaporation of the sex desire, which is summarized in three headings, namely *profit, adoration* and *distinction*. All conditioned souls are mad after these different forms of sex desire, and one shall see for himself how much he has been freed from such material hankerings based primarily on the sex desire." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.2.12 purport)

5: "Aniṣṭhitā-bhajana-kriyā (unsteady devotional service) is further divided into six gradations:

- utsāha-mayī (sudden enthusiasm);
- ghana-taralā (sometimes enthusiastic, sometimes lethargic);
- vyūḍha-vikalpā (a stage when doubts assail one's resolve);
- viṣaya-saṅgarā (a stage of internal tug-of-war with material sense enjoyment);
- niyamākṣamā (although one practises regularly, full justice is still not done to the process); and
- taraṅga-raṅgiṇī (attachment to wealth, adoration, distinction, and so on)." (Mādhurya-kādambinī, Second Shower of Nectar, by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura)

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3.40: Through these (*indriyāṇi mano buddhir*), lust maintains its hold over the soul (*asyādhiṣṭhānam ucyate*), causing him to remain forgetful of his eternal relationship with the Lord (*jñānam āvṛtya dehinam*) and thus to mistake sense gratification for the source of happiness (*etair vimohayaty eṣa*).

Explanatory note:

Indriyāṇi mano buddhir / asyādhiṣṭhānam ucyate: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "The senses, the mind and the intelligence / are the sitting places of this lust." Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explain that lust captures these three fortresses: the senses, the mind and the intelligence. (1, 2) Baladeva explains that by conquering these three stations, lust is easily able to overpower the living being. (1) In his commentary on text 41, Viśvanātha adds that lust in each of these fortresses is progressively harder to overcome. In other words, lust in the mind is harder to conquer than lust in the senses, and lust in the intelligence is even harder to overcome. (3)

I understand that lust in the mind is harder to overcome than lust in the senses because, even if one restrains the senses from engaging with the sense objects, it is much harder to stop the mind from doing so. However, at least it is still possible to recognise lust in the mind for what it is. Lust in the intelligence is even harder to conquer because one cannot discern whether what one believes is true. (4, 5)

Etair vimohayaty eṣa / jñānam āvṛtya dehinam: Śrīla Prabhupāda merges the translation of the two lines together as "Through them lust covers the real knowledge of the living entity and bewilders him." Etair vimohayaty eṣa means "Through them lust….bewilders him.", and jñānam āvṛtya dehinam means "…covers the real knowledge of the living entity…" Baladeva explains that the word bewildered—vimohayati—means that one becomes so attracted to sense enjoyment that he loses all interest in self-realisation. Srila Prabhupada echoes this by his statement:

> *"The spirit soul becomes addicted to enjoying the material senses and mistakes this as true happiness."*

Evidence:

1: "Since the enemy, lust, has already gained strongholds, it easily conquers. That is

explained in this verse.
The senses, mind and intelligence become the abodes of lust (adhisthanam); they become the huge fortified cities for manifesting kama, by enjoying the sense objects (by the senses), by the decision (by the mind) and ascertainment (by the intelligence). The sense objects are the citizens of those cities. By material senses, mind and intelligence (etaiḥ), wandering about in search of sense objects, lust thus bewilders the jiva, which should know atma, but which possesses a body made of matter, (dehinam). Bewilderment means that lust makes the jiva disinclined to know atma and inclined to enjoy sense objects." (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.40 commentary)2:

2: "Where is this lust situated? This verse explains: the great fortresses and cities of this enemy, lust, (adhiṣṭhānam), are the senses, mind, and intelligence..." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.40 commentary)

3: “The shelters of lust are the senses, the mind and intelligence, which are increasingly difficult to conquer. The senses may be difficult to control, but they are easier to conquer than the other items.” ((Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.41 commentary)

4: “That intelligence is rajasic which does not understand completely what is dharma and adharma, and which does not understand what is to be done as duty and what is not to be done as duty. That intelligence by which one considers adharma to be dharma and sees all things contrary to the truth is considered tamasic.” (His Holiness Bhānu Swami’s translations of verses 18.31 and 18.32 in Gīta Bhūṣaṇa)

5: “That faith by which one worships the devas or other beings while giving up rules of scripture because of laziness and kleśas should be understood to arise from virtuous and sinful impressions from previous lives (svabhāva-ja) .... They do not have the spiritual intelligence arising from scripture taught by the devotees which will allow them to change those impressions (svabhāva).” (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 17.2 commentary)
“The word kleśa can refer simply to suffering or to the five kleśas: ignorance, attraction, repulsion, egotism and tenacity (abhiniveśa).” (Note by His Holiness Bhānu Swami to Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 17.2 commentary)

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3.41: Therefore, Arjuna, from the very beginning of life, or as soon as one understands the urgency of achieving self-realisation, one should regulate the senses by practising niṣkāma-karma-yoga, which comprises both one's occupational duties and one's spiritual duties prescribed according to one's āśrama (*tasmāt tvam indriyāṇy ādau*). Lust is the impetus for sin. Once the senses are fully controlled, Arjuna (*niyamya bharatarṣabha*), lust is eliminated from one's consciousness (*pāpmānaṁ prajahi hy enam*). As long as there is a trace of lust in one's consciousness, one will remain forgetful of one's spiritual nature and eternal relationship with the Lord (*jñāna-vijñāna-nāśanam*).

Explanatory note:

Tasmāt tvam indriyāṇy ādau / niyamya bharatarṣabha: Śrīla Prabhupāda combines the translation of these two lines as follows: "Therefore, O Arjuna, best of the Bhāratas, in the very beginning ... regulating the senses..." Tasmāt tvam indriyāṇy ādau corresponds to "Therefore, ... in the very beginning ... the senses...", and niyamya bharatarṣabha corresponds to "O Arjuna, best of the Bhāratas... by regulating...". In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda describes ādau—the very beginning—as referring to the beginning of life. He seems to suggest that the best approach to conquering lust is to prevent it from taking hold. He writes:

> *"But if one is educated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness from the very beginning, that natural love of God cannot deteriorate into lust. When love of God deteriorates into lust, it is very difficult to return to the normal condition."*

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura interpret ādau as indicating the order in which lust must be conquered: begin with the senses, which are easier to conquer than the mind and intelligence. (1. 2) Baladeva explains that we can conquer the senses by performing our prescribed duties simply because the Lord desires it: niṣkāma-karma-yoga. (2) They both explain that conquering lust can begin at any stage of life, starting with the senses and progressing to the mind and intelligence. (1, 2) Śrīla Prabhupāda corroborates this in his purport:

> "*Nonetheless, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so powerful that even a late beginner can become a lover of God by following the regulative principles of devotional*

> *service. So, from any stage of life, or from the time of understanding its urgency, one can begin regulating the senses in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, devotional service of the Lord, and turn the lust into love of Godhead – the highest perfectional stage of human life."*

Prescribed duties encompass both one's worldly occupations and one's spiritual practices (sādhana) pertaining to one's āśrama. (3, 4) I understand that by performing our mundane duties, we satisfy our bodily needs piously without inflaming lust, and by practising our prescribed sādhana, we cultivate the spiritual taste and knowledge that enable us to defeat lust in the mind and intelligence. Previously, in chapter 2.39, Krsna referred to the combination of these two types of duties as buddhi yoga.

Pāpmānaṁ prajahi hy enaṁ / jñāna-vijñāna-nāśanam: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "curb this great symbol of sin [lust] .../ and slay this destroyer of knowledge and self-realization." Śrīla Prabhupāda translates prajahi as "curb", but Baladeva and Viśvanātha translate it as "destroy" and "kill". I therefore understand "curb" in Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation to mean killing lust. In a military context, curbing an enemy can mean decisively defeating or eliminating the opponent.

This raises a question. In verse 3.39, lust is described as nitya-vairiṇā—the eternal enemy. In my explanatory note on that verse, I showed that lust originates outside material space and time, in the taṭasthā-śakti. How, then, can it be killed?

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in his purport to Bhagavad-gītā 3.37:

> *"Lust is only the perverted reflection of the love of God which is natural for every living entity. ... When love of God deteriorates into lust, it is very difficult to return to the normal condition. ... one can begin regulating the senses in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, devotional service of the Lord, and turn the lust into love of Godhead – the highest perfectional stage of human life."*

This suggests that one can transform lust into love of God, thereby eliminating lust. Bhaktivinode Thakura's explanations of lust in Jaiva Dharam seem to support this. There he writes that ignorance is the root of material desire:

> "*The root of all karmas is the desire to perform karma, and the root cause of this desire is avidyā, ignorance." (His Holiness Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja's translation of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Jaiva-dharma, Chapter 16, p. 367)*

He further explains that avidyā (ignorance) which covers the infinitesimal spirit souls, is a feature of Kṛṣṇa's eternal energy, Māyā:

> *"Māyā is a śakti of Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has created the material universe through her and has instigated her to purify the jīvas who are averse to Him. Māyā has two aspects: avidyā and pradhāna. Avidyā is related to the jīvas, whereas pradhāna is related to inert matter. The entire inert mundane world has originated from pradhāna, whereas the jīvas' desire to perform material activity originates in avidyā." (His Holiness Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja's translation of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Jaiva-dharma, Chapter 16, p. 367)*

Just as a plant's root exists before the plant develops, avidyā exists before kāma develops. Thus, kāma exists eternally in its latent form as avidyā.

How does the pure soul come under avidyā's control? To answer this, we must understand that Māyā, along with her avidyā feature, exists eternally alongside Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa stands before us in the spiritual world, while Māyā is behind us. As soon as we turn our attention from Kṛṣṇa to Māyā, she covers us with ignorance, and our eternal love of God, prema, becomes perverted into lust, just as milk turns into yoghurt when it comes into contact with an acidic culture.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

> *"So in our back side the māyā is there, although you are in front of Kṛṣṇa. So as soon as you become little slack in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, immediately māyā is ready to capture. Māyā is always going side by side. As Kṛṣṇa is all-pervading, the māyā is also all-pervading. As soon as there is lack of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there is immediately māyā.*
> *kṛṣṇa bhuliya jīva bhoga vāñcha kare / pāśate māyā tāre jāpaṭiyā dhare*
> *[When an individual soul forgets his eternal relationship with God and tries to lord it over the material nature or resources, that condition, that forgetful*

condition, is called māyā, or illusion.]" (Lecture on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.15–17, 19 June 1969, New Vrindaban)

Thus far I have examined in what sense lust is eternal and how it covers the living entity. Now let us discuss what it means to kill lust. My answer to this question is that killing lust means to eliminate it permanently from our existence.

To understand how this is possible, we first have to understand which types of jīvas can and cannot be covered by avidyā.

According to Jaiva-dharma, there are two types of eternally liberated souls: those who are attracted to the Lords aiśvarya, His opulences, and those who are attracted to His sweetness. The liberated jīvas who are attracted to His opulence emanate from Śrī Mūla Saṅkarṣaṇa and are associates of Lord Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha. Those attracted to Kṛṣṇa's sweetness are His associates in Goloka.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains:

> "*Two kinds of jīvas are free from Māyā's control: 1) nitya-mukta, the jīvas who were never under Māyā's control; and 2) baddha-muktas, (the jīvas who were under Māyā's control) those who were once under Māyā's control but are now free. The nitya-mukta jīvas are divided again into two categories: one, aiśvarya-gata, (those who are attracted by Bhagavān's feature of opulence and majesty); and two, mādhurya-gata, (those who are attracted by Bhagavān's feature of sweetness). Those jīvas who are attracted by Bhagavān's aiśvarya are personal associates of Śrī Nārāyaṇa, the Master of Vaikuṇṭha. They are particles of spiritual effulgence emanating from Śrī Mūla Saṅkarṣaṇa, who resides in Vaikuṇṭha. Those who are attracted by Bhagavān's mādhurya are personal associates of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the master of Goloka Vṛndāvana. They are particles of spiritual effulgence manifesting from Śrī Baladeva, who resides in Goloka Vṛndāvana.*" (His Holiness Nārāyaṇa Swami's translation of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Jaiva-dharma, Chapter 17, p. 397)

Therefore, any soul covered by lust must have originated as one of the jīvas who emanated from Śrī Mūla Saṅkarṣaṇa and felt attracted to Kṛṣṇa's aiśvarya. This

attraction renders the soul vulnerable to avidya, which makes it believe it can enjoy that opulence independently of the Lord, thus causing it to fall from Vaikuṇṭha to the material world.

After attaining liberation, depending on the spiritual practices cultivated during sādhana, a jīva can attain three forms of liberation: merging into the impersonal Brahman, attaining Vaikuṇṭha where they are attracted to the Lord's opulence, or becoming attracted to the Lord's sweetness.

Jaiva-dharma explains:

> *"There are three kinds of baddha-mukta jīvas: aiśvarya-gata, (those who are attracted to Bhagavān's features of opulence and majesty); mādhurya-gata, (those who are attracted to Bhagavān's feature of sweetness); and brahmajyoti-gata, (those who are attracted to Bhagavān's impersonal effulgence). Those who are attracted to His opulence during their period of regulated service become eternal associates of Śrī Nārāyaṇa, the master of the spiritual sky, and they achieve sālokya-mukti, (the opulence of residing on His planet). Jīvas who are attracted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweetness during their period of sādhana attain direct service to Him when they are liberated in the eternal abodes of Vṛndāvana and other similar abodes. Jīvas who attempt to merge into the impersonal effulgence during their period of sādhana attain sāyujya-mukti when they are liberated. They merge into His effulgence and are thus completely destroyed in the form of brahma-sāyujya." (His Holiness Nārāyaṇa Swami's translation of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Jaiva-dharma, Chapter 17, p. 397)*

If we attain either of the first two types of liberation, we may again be covered by avidyā and subjected to lust. The only way to permanently eliminate lust is to become attracted to the Lord's sweetness. In this way, avidyā will never again turn our prema into kāma.

This is how I reconcile the idea that lust is eternal, nitya, with Kṛṣṇa's instruction to destroy or kill it, prajahi. Please examine my analysis and evidence and decide for yourself whether you agree or have a different perspective.

Evidence:

"The rule is that by conquering the shelters of the enemy, the enemy can be conquered. The shelters of lust are the senses, the mind and intelligence, which are increasingly difficult to conquer. The senses may be difficult to control, but they are easier to conquer than the other items. Therefore, first the senses should be conquered. .... Kill this ferocious lust (pāpmānam). This means that by restricting the senses, after some time the mind will become freed of lust." ((Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.41 commentary)

2: "This enemy in the form of lust, by means of the senses inclined to material enjoyment, covers the knowledge of the person striving for knowledge of ātma who attempts to do so by stopping the actions of all the senses. Therefore, at the beginning of the dawning of knowledge (adau), after first regulating all the senses by engagement through niṣkāma karma-yoga (niyamya), making them favourable to ātma—you, who possess a body, mind and senses made of matter, destroy, (prajahi) this evil enemy, lust. Do this because this lust covers scriptural knowledge indicating ātma distinct from the body (jñāna), and realisation of that ātma (vijñāna)." (Gīta Bhūṣaṇa 3.41 commentary)

3: "One should therefore discharge his prescribed duties in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness rather than those prescribed for others. Materially, prescribed duties are duties enjoined according to one's psychophysical condition, under the spell of the modes of material nature. Spiritual duties are as ordered by the spiritual master for the transcendental service of Kṛṣṇa." (*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 3.35 purport)

4: "The duties for the *gṛhastha-āśrama* and *brahmacarya-āśrama*, as well as the duties for *sannyāsīs*, are prescribed in the *śāstras*." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.12 introduction)

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Arjuna reflects: Kṛṣṇa says one can control the senses by engaging them in prescribed duties. However, some things, like dreaming, cannot be regulated by scriptural injunctions. Therefore, is it possible to truly conquer lust?

Explanatory note:

This insight into Arjuna's thinking is based on Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's commentary (1). He says some bodily requirements cannot be regulated by scripture. Therefore, lust

might again attack one through such activities. Śrīla Prabhupāda and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's comments give some insight into Baladeva's intention. Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions the mind at the time of dreaming:

> "Bodily action means the functions of the senses, and stopping the senses means stopping all bodily actions. But since the mind is active, then even though the body may be silent and at rest, the mind will act – as it does during dreaming."

One might be able to stop the senses from engaging with sense objects, but it is harder to prevent sensual dreams. Viśvanātha adds that controlling the intelligence is even harder than controlling the mind. This suggests to me that some yogis may control their dreams, but they cannot control their intelligence, which remains active "in a general form" even during deep sleep. I understand that he means the autonomic nervous system, which modern science recognises as controlling the body's unconscious, involuntary functions, including wet dreams. I, therefore, surmise that Viśvanātha is referring to yogis who control the genitals during waking and even during dreaming, but cannot control them during deep sleep, for he has no control over the autonomic nervous system.

Evidence:

1: "You have shown that lust can be destroyed by controlling the senses through inclining them to *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*. This is like water held back by a closed dam. But at the time of performing activities related to the body (while not performing prescribed actions), with the freedom of action for the senses, lust will again revive, like water freed from a dam." (*Gītā Bhūṣaṇa* 3.42 commentary)

2: "But the mind is superior to the senses, as it is even stronger, not being destroyed during dreams when the senses do not function. But compared to the mind, the intelligence in the form of vijñāna is stronger. During deep sleep, even the mind does not function, but the intelligence remains undestroyed, being present in a general form." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.42 commentary)

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3.42: Kṛṣṇa said: Listen to how the soul is more powerful than even the mind and intelligence and can therefore conquer lust. The senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, hands, legs, genitals, rectum and mouth) are superior to the gross body, consisting of dull matter, because although lusty cravings exist in the gross body, only the senses can satisfy them (*indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur*). The mind surpasses the senses because pleasure from sense objects occurs only when the mind is attracted to them (*indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ*). Intelligence is higher still because, without its sanction, the mind cannot pursue its desired pleasures (*manasas tu parā buddhir*). However, the individual infinitesimal spirit soul is superior to intelligence because intelligence cannot pursue material pleasure unless the soul desires it (*yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ*).

Explanatory note:

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explain that in this verse Kṛṣṇa states that because the soul is more powerful than the mind and intelligence, it can fully conquer lust. (1, 2) Baladeva adds that in this and the next verse Kṛṣṇa explains that lust is completely conquered when the soul realises its innate blissful nature. (1) Śrīla Prabhupāda corroborates this in his purport:

> *"If, therefore, the mind is directly engaged in the service of the Lord constantly, then there is no chance that the senses will become engaged in other ways. This mental attitude has already been explained. Paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate. If the mind is engaged in the transcendental service of the Lord, there is no chance of its being engaged in the lower propensities."*

Indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur / indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "The working senses are superior to dull matter; mind is higher than the senses." In many contexts, Śrīla Prabhupāda distinguishes between the knowledge-acquiring senses (jñānendriyas) and the working senses (karmendriyas).

> *"First of all the five senses, knowledge-acquiring senses, jñānendriya; and karmendriya, working senses..." (Lecture on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.1.50, 3 August 1975, Detroit)*

In a Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda lists the knowledge-acquiring senses (jñānendriyas) and the working senses (karmendriyas) as follows:

> *"Through the nose we can smell, by the eyes we can see, by the ears we can hear, and in this way we gather knowledge. Similarly, there are the karmendriyas, the working senses—the hands, legs, genitals, rectum, mouth and so forth."* *(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.11.10, purport)*

The question arises whether in this verse Kṛṣṇa refers only to the karmendriyas or to all the senses. My understanding is that, because he uses the word indriyāṇi in the verse, he means all the senses. I understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's expression "working senses" as a general description intended to highlight the distinction between the inactive gross body, which is dull matter, and all the senses, which are in one sense or another active, whether by gathering knowledge or engaging with the world.

The next question that arises in my mind is why the senses are superior to the body, which is dull matter. In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> *"The senses are different outlets for the activities of lust. Lust is reserved within the body, but it is given vent through the senses. Therefore, the senses are superior to the body as a whole."*

I understand the expression that lust is given vent through the senses to mean that lust is satisfied through the senses. In other words, the body may crave something to eat or drink, but the senses satisfy that craving. The legs walk to the kitchen, the eyes locate the ingredients, the hands gather and prepare them, the mouth eats the preparation, and the tongue tastes it. Thus, the senses are superior to the body because the body depends on the senses to satisfy its cravings.

Similarly, the senses depend on the mind to experience pleasure from the sense objects. For example, eating ghee is pleasurable only when the mind is attracted to ghee. Two people may both eat ghee, but only the one whose mind is attracted to the taste of ghee will experience satisfaction. Therefore, the mind is superior to the senses because the senses' ability to provide satisfaction depends on the mind's attraction to the objects they engage with.

Normally, if Baladeva and Viśvanātha offer perspectives that differ significantly from Śrīla Prabhupāda's and that I find difficult to integrate into my rendering of the verse, I do not include them in the explanatory note. However, I have decided to include their perspectives below, even though I have not integrated them into the verse, so that readers can consider these alternative explanations for themselves.

I have chosen to include their perspectives because Śrīla Prabhupāda only explains why the senses are superior to dull matter, the gross material body. He does not explain why the mind is superior to the senses, the intelligence to the mind, and the soul to the intelligence. To explain these other stages of the hierarchy in my rendering, I have extrapolated from his explanation of superiority in the first instance, using my understanding of his reasoning to infer what he means in the remaining instances.

My approach rests on the understanding that, when direct statements in śāstra do not explain something, it is legitimate to draw inferences based on śāstra. Direct statements are the best evidence and are known as śabda-brahman, while inferences based on śāstra are also accepted as evidence and are known as anumāna. (3) In my rendering, I have used anumāna to build on Śrīla Prabhupāda's explanation of why the senses are superior to dull matter and explain why each successive level in the hierarchy is superior to the one before it.

Baladeva and Viśvanātha, however, offer alternative explanations for why the senses are superior to the gross body, the mind to the senses, the intelligence to the mind, and the soul to the intelligence. These explanations differ from the reasoning I have inferred from Śrīla Prabhupāda's explanation. I have decided not to integrate their perspectives into the verse because I could not fully understand their intent. However, I include them in the explanatory note so the reader can decide for themselves whether they help make better sense of this verse.

Baladeva argues that the senses are superior to the gross body because they survive its destruction. (1) The following example illustrates what I understand Baladeva to mean. Some patients who are clinically dead during surgery are later revived and report having continued to see their own bodies and hear the surgeons while they were clinically dead. This illustrates the distinction between the destruction of the gross body and the

continued functioning of the senses. Viśvanātha offers a different perspective. He argues that the senses are superior to the gross body because they are harder to subdue. To illustrate his point, he cites the example of powerful warriors who can kill others' gross bodies or even tolerate their own gross bodies being killed or injured, yet cannot stop their senses from engaging with the sense objects. (2)

Regarding why the mind is superior to the senses, both Baladeva and Viśvanātha hold a very similar view: the mind is superior to the senses because it continues to act when the senses stop. (1, 2) For example, when sleeping, the senses stop engaging with the sense objects, whereas the mind continues. I do not understand why they identify these criteria as symptoms of superiority. I share their perspectives to illustrate that it is permissible to hold different perspectives, as long as we can support our points with scripture. (4)

Manasas tu parā buddhir: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as '…intelligence is still higher than the mind…' He does not give a specific reason for intelligence's superiority over the mind, so it is reasonable to assume it is for the same reason he gave for the senses' superiority over dull matter: the senses depend on intelligence to determine whether and how they may gratify their attractions. For example, the tongue may be attracted to nicotine, but the intelligence may recognise that smoking is harmful and decide not to indulge that attraction. In this way, intelligence determines whether the senses can gratify their attractions and how they may do so. Baladeva's perspective is similar, but Viśvanātha's is quite different. (1) His reason is as follows: "But compared to the mind, the intelligence in the form of vijñāna is stronger. During deep sleep, even the mind does not function, but the intelligence remains undestroyed, being present in a general form." (2)

I struggled with Viśvanātha's perspective. Finally, I concluded that the function of the mind is to like and dislike, accept and reject. This function stops during deep sleep, when the mind does not think of any sense objects and is therefore neither attracted nor repulsed. The function of the intelligence is to discriminate, comprehend, and remember. (5) I initially understood Viśvanātha's statement to mean that these functions continue even during deep sleep, although we are not conscious of them at the time. The evidence I considered was that if we comprehend something today, go to

sleep, and enter deep sleep, we can still remember what we comprehended when we wake up. I therefore reasoned that intelligence must continue to retain our comprehension during deep sleep.

However, I found an alternative explanation in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which identifies sleep as a function of intelligence. (5) Perhaps this is what Viśvanātha means when he says that intelligence is present in a 'general form' during deep sleep. (2) I do not fully understand why sleep is considered a function of intelligence, but this scriptural statement offers another possible way to understand his point. Either way, according to Viśvanātha, intelligence's ability to function 'in general form' through deep sleep makes it superior to the mind.

Yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "...and he [the soul] is even higher than the intelligence." In his purport, he doesn't give any specific reason why the soul is higher than the intelligence. Therefore, it is reasonable to think it is for the same reason that the senses are superior to dull matter: the body (which is dull matter) craves enjoyment, but it depends on the senses to satisfy that craving. Śrīla Prabhupāda never gives any other reason why one level of the hierarchy is superior to the one before. Therefore, I have used that reason for superiority to explain his perspective that the mind is superior to the senses, and the intelligence is superior to the mind. Using that same logic, it is reasonable to infer that Śrīla Prabhupāda thinks the soul is superior to intelligence because the soul initially desires material enjoyment. If the soul did not desire enjoyment, the intelligence would not discern how to acquire it, the mind would not decide what is enjoyable, the senses would not indulge in it, and there would be no bodily cravings. The pursuit of enjoyment all starts with the desire of the soul.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains the soul's superiority to the intellect as follows:

> *"The jiva, the enjoyer, is superior to the intellect, because it is the very means of enjoyment or experience."* (1)

I understand he means the jīva is superior to the intellect because the jīva actually experiences the satisfaction of enjoying, not the intellect, the mind, the senses, or the gross body.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura gives another perspective. He writes:

> *"But compared to the intelligence, that which is superior in strength because it exists in you even when intelligence is destroyed by the practice of jñāna, is the famous jīvātmā, which is the conqueror of lust."* (2)

I understand that he means the soul is superior to the intelligence because it continues to exist even after material intelligence has been destroyed by transcendental knowledge.

The main part of this explanatory note has focused on exploring why one thing is considered superior to another. I hope it helps the reader to come to their own conclusion.

Evidence:

1: "You have shown that lust can be destroyed by controlling the senses through inclining them to niṣkāma-karma-yoga. This is like water held back by a closed dam. But at the time of performing activities related to the body, (while not performing prescribed actions) with the freedom of action for the senses, lust will again revive, like water freed from a dam. The Lord shows in two verses what He taught before in chapter two, that lust will be completely destroyed by realization of ātma. (Bhagavad-gītā 2.59) *raso 'py asya paraṁ dṛṣṭvā*. The wise say that the senses are superior to the body. There are more subtle and are not destroyed when the gross body perishes. The mind is superior to the senses because the mind sets the senses in motion during the waking state and during sleep the mind remains as a ruler while the senses merge into it. Intelligence is superior to the mind because the mental function of decision, (saṅkalpa), that which is superior to the intelligence is the jīvātmā residing in the body, whose very form is knowledge, (cit-svarūpa). Being realized as distinct from the body, senses, mind and intelligence, it is the cause of complete destruction of lust…." (*Gīta Bhūṣaṇa* 3.42 commentary)

2: "The senses are considered superior, for they cannot be conquered even by a warrior who conquers the ten directions. But the mind is superior to the senses, as it is even stronger, not being destroyed during dreams when the senses do not function. But

compared to the mind, the intelligence in the form of vijñāna is stronger. During deep sleep, even the mind does not function, but the intelligence remains undestroyed, being present in a general form. But compared to the intelligence, that which is superior in strength because it exists in you even when intelligence is destroyed by the practice of jñāna, is the famous jīvātmā, which is the conqueror of lust. After conquering the senses, mind and intelligence, the jīvātmā, which is more powerful than all of them, can conquer lust. It is understood that this is not an impossible task." (Sārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.42 commentary)

3: "If one can give reference from the *Upaniṣads,* then his argument is very strong. *Śabda-pramāṇa*. *Pramāṇa* means evidence. Evidence... If you want to gain in your case... Just like you have to give very nice evidence in a court, similarly, according to Vedic culture, the evidence is *pramāṇa*. *Pramāṇa* means evidence. *Śabda-pramāṇa*. There are three kinds of evidences accepted by the learned scholars in Vedic culture. One evidence is *pratyakṣa*. *Pratyakṣa* means direct perception. Just like I am seeing you, you are seeing me. I am present, you are present. This is direct perception. And there is another evidence, which is called *anumāna*. Suppose in that room, and I am coming just now, I do not know whether any person there is or not. But there is some sound, I can imagine, "Oh, there is somebody." This is called *anumāna*. In logic it is called hypothesis. That is also evidence. If by my bona fide suggestion I can give evidence, that is also accepted. So direct evidence and, what is called, hypothesis, or suggestion evidence. But the strong evidence is *śabda-pramāṇa*. *Śabda, śabda-brahman*. That means *Veda*. If one can give evidence from the quotation of the *Vedas,* then it is..., it *has* to be accepted. Nobody can deny the Vedic evidence. That is the system." (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 2.8-12, November 27th, Los Angeles)

4: *"The process of speaking in spiritual circles is to say something upheld by the scriptures. One should at once quote from scriptural authority to back up what he is saying." (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 17.15, purport)*

5: *"Doubt, misapprehension, correct apprehension, memory and sleep, as determined by their different functions, are said to be the distinct characteristics of intelligence." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.26.30)*

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3.43: Therefore, by properly understanding My teachings, one stops identifying with the body, mind and material intelligence and recognise the soul's superiority. (*evaṁ buddheḥ paraṁ buddhvā*). These teachings free the mind from the influence of the material energy and bring it under the guidance of the spiritual energy (*saṁstabhyātmānam ātmanā*). O powerful Arjuna, although lust is a formidable enemy, this method enables one to overcome its insatiable desire to dominate and enjoy material energy (*jahi śatruṁ mahā-bāho / kāma-rūpaṁ durāsadam*).

Explanatory note:
Both Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explain that Chapter Three teaches that niṣkāma-karma-yoga is the principal practice, through which one gains knowledge of the ātmā. (1, 2) Śrīla Prabhupāda similarly explains:

> *"One may not give up work and prescribed duties all of a sudden; but by gradually developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one can be situated in a transcendental position without being influenced by the material senses and the mind – by steady intelligence directed toward one's pure identity."*

Evaṁ buddheḥ paraṁ buddhvā: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "Thus knowing oneself to be transcendental to the material senses, mind and intelligence..." Śrīla Prabhupāda translates param as transcendental and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura as superior. (2) The word param links this verse to the previous one, where Kṛṣṇa said: yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ, higher than the intelligence is he, the soul. Parataḥ and param are different grammatical forms of the same root word para, which means beyond, higher, supreme or superior.

In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> *"This Third Chapter of the Bhagavad-gītā is conclusively directive to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by knowing oneself as the eternal servitor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, without considering impersonal voidness the ultimate end."*

I understand this to mean that Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to realise his eternal relationship with the Supreme Lord and tells him that the starting point is to understand clearly that he is not the material body, senses, mind, or intelligence, but an eternal spirit soul, and that, as a spirit soul, his happiness comes from serving the Lord. This is the solution Kṛṣṇa suggests to Arjuna's suffering. It is also the solution to the suffering of all living beings. Śrīla Prabhupāda concludes by adding that we should never think the solution to suffering is to annihilate our individual existence, as Buddhists or Mayavadis suggest.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa adds that the word evam indicates Kṛṣṇa's teaching in the Bhagavad-gītā, and he says that the word buddhvā means "realising". (1) This re-emphasises that the method for conquering lust starts with using our intelligence to understand Bhagavad-gita. The word 'realising' is often associated with the Sanskrit word vijñāna. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains vijñāna as follows:

> *"Still, vijñāna means jñāna and viveka. Viveka means personal conviction. That is called vijñāna. Jñāna and vijñāna. One knowledge you get from me, and then you practically apply your consciousness that "Yes, what Prabhupāda has said, it is right." That is called vijñāna. One knowledge, accepting blindly from the authority, that is knowledge. But how it is practically made or done, that understanding is called vijñāna." (Morning Walk, November 1st 1975, Nairobi)*

I understand Śrīla Prabhupāda to distinguish between book knowledge and realised knowledge. One acquires realised knowledge by contemplating book knowledge, resolving one's doubts and confusion, and becoming convinced, so that one's understanding, desires and behaviour increasingly align with the Lord's will.

In summary, I understand Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna that by reflecting on His teachings, one will understand that one's true identity is not the material body, mind, or senses, and how this knowledge should guide one's life decisions. One should resolve doubts by referring to Kṛṣṇa's teachings. By this method, one's thinking and analysis of situations, one's goals and desires, and one's behaviour will eventually align with the Lord's teachings.

Saṁstabhyātmānam ātmanā: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as "…one should steady the mind by deliberate spiritual intelligence [Kṛṣṇa consciousness]." Baladeva explains

this line as follows: “making the mind (atmanam) fixed in that atma of bliss and knowledge, by such discerning intelligence (atmana).” (1) The first reference to ātmānam indicates the mind, and the second reference to ātmanā indicates discerning intelligence. I understand him to mean that when the mind’s choices are consistently guided by spiritually informed intelligence, the mind gradually becomes focused on imbibing transcendental knowledge (jñāna) and realising the soul’s innate bliss, the higher taste Kṛṣṇa refers to in 2.59 as paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate.

I understand deliberate spiritual intelligence (Kṛṣṇa consciousness) to mean using one’s intelligence to deliberate on Kṛṣṇa’s teachings. By doing this, the mind will gradually come to be guided by the Lord’s spiritual energy rather than the material energy. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport:

> *“…by gradually developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one can be situated in a transcendental position without being influenced by the material senses and the mind – by steady intelligence directed toward one’s pure identity.”*

He confirms this again in Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, Chapter 9, where he writes:

> *“Being marginal potency, as soon as the living entity is freed from the control of material nature, he is put under the guidance of the spiritual nature.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 9.14, purport)*

Jahi śatruṁ mahā-bāho / kāma-rūpaṁ durāsadam: Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as “O mighty-armed Arjuna…. thus – by spiritual strength – conquer this insatiable enemy known as lust.” Śatrum means enemy, and the last line qualifies who the enemy is: insatiable lust. Baladeva explains that by addressing Arjuna as mahā-bāho, meaning mighty-armed, Kṛṣṇa is inciting him to conquer this most formidable enemy, lust, just as he previously conquered other enemies. In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> *“Desire for overlording and for sense gratification is the greatest enemy of the conditioned soul; but by the strength of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one can control the material senses, the mind and the intelligence.”*

Here, he defines lust as the desire to control the world around us for our own gratification. He explains that this tendency is very difficult to give up, but that by

understanding Kṛṣṇa's teachings, one will cease to be misled by lust, and one's senses, mind and intelligence will become directed towards Kṛṣṇa's service.

Evidence:

1: "By My teaching (evam), realizing (budhva) that atma, possessing condensed bliss and knowledge, which is distinct from and superior to the intelligence (budhe param), because it sets in motion all material things such as the body, making the mind (atmanam) fixed in that atma of bliss and knowledge, by such discerning intelligence (atmana), destroy the enemy in the form of lust, even though it is difficult to conquer (durasadam). You are mighty-armed to conquer physically. Now you should conquer lust, O mighty-armed Arjun. The third chapter explains that one should principally practice nishkama karma yoga and secondarily jnana yoga, which arises from it, for gaining a vision of the atma." (Gita Bhushana 3.43 commentary)

2: "This verse concludes the topic: understanding that the jīvātma is superior to the intelligence, understanding that it is separate from all coverings, destroy the unconquerable lust by being firm in the self, by the self. This chapter chiefly speaks of niṣkāma karma as a sādhana, and also speaks of jñāna, its goal, in a secondary way." (Śārārtha-varṣiṇī 3.43 commentary)