

Krishna Consciousness: A Yoga System

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Abstract: Yoga is the way that connects us with the Supreme or it is the connecting link between the soul and the Super soul, the Supreme and the living creatures. Lord Krishna is that Supreme, the Personality of Godhead. As being the ultimate object of yoga, Krishna is 'yogesvara', master of yoga. There are many different types of yoga. Yoga is the system or the means to understand Krishna. So, Krishna consciousness is the best type of yoga. This system was described by Krishna to Arjuna in the Srimadbhagavad-gita. It is the best because it can be practiced by anyone who has developed attachment for Krishna. Another reason is that it is a kind of direct attachment which is called 'bhakti'. It is called a devotional service. One engaged in devotional service as Krishna's friend or His servant or His parent or His lover, is Krishna conscious. The only qualification for practicing this yoga system is submission to Him and to have faith on His mercy. It is not a sentimental speculation but a great science preached and taught by Krishna Himself in the *Srimadbhagavad-gita*. The present paper is going to focus on the excellence of Krishna consciousness as a yoga system with its goal, its relationship with life, and on Krishna consciousness as a source of absolute knowledge.

Keywords: Yoga, submission, faith, bhakti-yoga, absolute knowledge.

Yoga is the means by which the soul is connected with the super soul or the supreme with the living creatures. In the scriptures it is said that Lord Krishna is that Supreme, the Personality of Godhead. So Krishna is the ultimate object of yoga. Lord Krishna says:

*"sarva- bhuta-stham-atmanam sarva-bhutani catmani
iksate yoga-yuktatma sarvatra sama-darsanah"*¹

("A true yogi observes me in all things and sees every being in me..." – translation by self)

Therefore, Krishna consciousness is to practice a kind of yoga. One may try to understand God by mental speculations, but it is not possible to understand Him as He is, because our senses are limited and He is unlimited. But if one becomes submissive and offers service to the Lord, begins to know Him. Service begins with the tongue. By tongue if one can chant "Hare Krishna" and eat 'prasadam' or spiritual food, Krishna reveals Himself before him. However, faith and devotion are needed in Krishna con-

sciousness to understand God. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said:
“*jīber swarup hoy krishner nitya dasa*”².

(“Every living creature is an eternal servant of Lord Krishna”... translation by self)

So everyone has a relationship with God but we have forgotten it. This Krishna consciousness or devotional service is the means to remember that relationship, thereby re-establishing it firmly. That is why Krishna consciousness is a science, not a sentimental speculation. It is based on the lessons of the Bhagavad-gita, the Vedas, the *Srimadbhagavatam* and the *Brahmasutra*. It is a reality. Srila Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON says:

“Krishna is universal. The goal of this yoga system is to improve the world condition. Our original consciousness is Krishna consciousness which is to be revived, thus improving our material condition of life. The first thing of yoga is to control the senses but in Krishna consciousness one has to apply the senses unto the service of the Lord. Yoga means to know oneself, to know that he is a pure soul, not the material body. It is this self-realization that frees us from all sufferings and troubles of life. The chanting of the ‘*Hare Krishna mahamantra*’ is the easiest method of self-realization and thus, the easiest method of understanding God, which is a call for the Lord and His energy. Another method is taking ‘*prasadam*’ or spiritual food. These methods can bring the fruit of happiness, purity, perfection and absolute knowledge.”³

The Aim of Yoga:

In this material world everyone is suffering and everyone is trying to get out of this suffering in any field of action. In the political field, in the social or national field, in the economic field or in any field of society, everyone is trying to get rid of misery. Either individually or collectively everyone is suffering. The cause of this suffering is the material body and the aim of yoga is to get out of this material body and to be situated in the spiritual body. The soul is free and ever-existing but the body is non-existing. As the soul has accepted a non-existing body, we suffer. This is also not a permanent condition. This bodily conditional stage of the pure soul is a degraded condition. When a person dies, we say “Oh, he is gone!”

Actually the dead man's body is lying and it means that the body is not the man. The real man or the soul is gone. So this body is changed to another body. Body is ever-changing-- for example, a childhood body is changed to a youthful body but the soul does not undergo any change:

“*nityah sarva-gatah sthanur acalo yam sanatanaḥ*”⁴

(“This individual soul is everlasting, omnipresent, unchangeable, immovable and eternal”....translation by self)

Yoga is the process of getting out of this material embodiment. We are repeating birth and death, which is the cause of our miseries. If we want to

end our miseries, first we have to accept this reality mentioned in our scriptures.

The object of yoga is to enquire and to know one, to know that I am not a body but the pure soul. The body is born of the parents but the soul has no beginning and no ending. The *Srimadbgavad-gita* says that the soul is a part and a parcel of God who is eternal and full of bliss and knowledge. As a part of the Supreme, we are also endowed with partial blissfulness, eternity and knowledge. Human beings are the most intelligent of all living creatures but they are engaged in four things-- eating, sleeping, mating and defending, and are thus misusing their intellect.

Yoga is to link ourselves to the Supreme and to thus get out of the conditional state of life. The object of yoga is to remember that eternal link with the Supreme. Unless we develop Krishna consciousness, we cannot get out of this material body. This is the greatest necessity of human beings. This Krishna consciousness is the solution to the problems of life. Moreover, this God consciousness is there within us and so it is not artificial or implemented. This process is spiritual and it does not require any material qualifications. Krishna says to Arjuna:

"... *tasam brahma mahad yonir aham bija-pradah pita...*"⁵

("There are many different forms and many different species of life. But I am their father..." Translation by self)

So Krishna consciousness is universal. Lord Krishna claims himself to be the father of the humans as well as the non-humans. So, according to the *Srimadbhagavad-gita* Krishna is not only the religious God or the father of the Hindus but also of everyone all over the world. He does not belong to a particular sect of people. A person who is advanced in Krishna consciousness can only realize universal brotherhood because he feels that if Krishna is the father of all, a tree is his brother, a bull is his brother, a European, and an African is his brother. This is the real universal brotherhood and the real humanity. A Krishna conscious person is benevolent to all. So unless there is full Krishna consciousness, there cannot be any improvement of the world condition.

The 'Hare Krishna Mahamantra' and an Ideal Life:

Man is a rational being. Human beings have a special reasoning power which is to inquire, to ask--"Who am I and why am I suffering"? Actually animals also have reasoning power but cannot ask why they are suffering, nor to remedy the suffering. A human being with an awakened reasoning power should ask "*Who is God and what is my relationship with Him*"? In the *Vedanta-sutra* it is called "*brahma jigyasa*". This form of life is meant for asking this question. In the *Brihadaryanyak Upanisada* it is said "Aham Brahmasmi" or "I am Brahma, I am spirit soul." A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the Founder of ISKCON, says:

“You have to not only realize that you are not matter, but you have to engage yourself in the activities of Brahma or to engage yourself in the spiritual world. And that spiritual world means to be working in Krishna consciousness which is the ideal human life.”⁶

So understanding Krishna is not very easy but at the same time it is also the easiest if one follows this path of Krishna consciousness prescribed by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Lord Chaitanya introduced the chanting of “*Hare Krishna Mahamantra*” mentioned in *Padma-purana*. According to him, this is the easiest method of self-realization in this age. Srila Prabhupada says: “Krishna is not different from His name because He is absolute. Originally we are all already connected with Krishna but we have simply forgotten this. This process of chanting is to evoke your remembrance of Krishna”.⁷

Therefore “*Hare Krishna Mahamantra*” is a transcendental sound vibration, the chanting of which is the sublime method for reviving our transcendental consciousness. As we are actually spirit souls, we are all Krishna conscious entities but due to our association with ‘*maya*’ or illusion, we are trying to be lords of material nature, though the opposite is true. Krishna consciousness is original natural energy of living beings. As soon as we hear this transcendental vibration, that consciousness is revived. This chanting is a spiritual call for the Lord and His energy for the protection of the conditioned soul, just like a child's call for his mother. Lord Chaitanya says: “*iha haite - sarbasiddhi haibe sabar...*”⁸

Krishna Consciousness—a Source of Absolute Knowledge:

It is a reality that our senses have limited power and they are imperfect also. Imperfect senses can't grasp perfect knowledge. Mental speculation and manipulation of the senses can't reach the Almighty. In the *Upanisads* it is stated that one who has firm faith in God and in God's representatives, all the Vedic knowledge will be revealed to him. The teacher must be a representative of Krishna, a devotee and the student must be like Arjuna. Then only Krishna consciousness study will be perfect. Engaging of the senses in the service of the Lord is needed and if it is done perfectly, Krishna will reveal Himself to His devotees. Lord Krishna is saying in the *Srimadbhagavad-gita*:

“.... bhavisyani ca bhutani veda na kascana..”⁹

(“No one knows me, even the wisest ones”...self-translation)

Srila Prabhupada said: “If you want to be free and want life eternal with bliss and knowledge, there is the way—the process of Krishna consciousness...Just become submissive and acknowledge that you are limited and subordinate to material nature and to God. God is always ready to reveal; you just become Krishna conscious”.¹⁰

The *Srimadbhagavad-gita* and the *Srimadbhagabatam* are the sound incarnations of Krishna and the milk of Vedic knowledge too. As a child is fed best by his mother, similarly this milk of Vedic knowledge is best learnt by a realized soul, a pure devotee who only knows this science of God.

Thus, Krishna is the supreme object of yoga and reservoir of all transcendental knowledge and pleasure.

Endnotes

1. (Srimadbhagavad-gita, 6/29).
2. (Sri Chaitanya- charitamrita, Madhyalila, 20/108)
3. (Teachings of Lord Chaitanya, ch-1,p-10)
4. (Srimadbhagavad-gita, 2/24).
5. (Srimadbhagavad-gita, 14/4).
6. (The Perfection of Yoga, page-12)
7. (Beyond Birth and Death, page 15)
8. (Sri Chaitanya Bhagavat, 9/56)
9. (Srimadbhagavad-gita: 7/26).
10. (The Perfection of Yoga, Page-20).

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