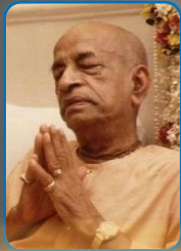


Freedom Newsletter



Dedicated to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

ISKCON Prison Ministry / May 2026

PO Box 2676
Alachua, FL 32616

PRABHUPADA SPEAKS OUT — Why do you say God is a word?

This is an exchange that took place in Paris on June 15, 1974, between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, two priests, and two Christian scholars. As we join the discussion, a newly arrived American student launches into his philosophy of “All is light.”

Srila Prabhupada: So there is only one path: surrender to God. Do all of you accept this?

Student: I think that each man finds his own way.

Srila Prabhupada: No. no. Do you accept this principle – that God is great and we are all subordinate to Him?

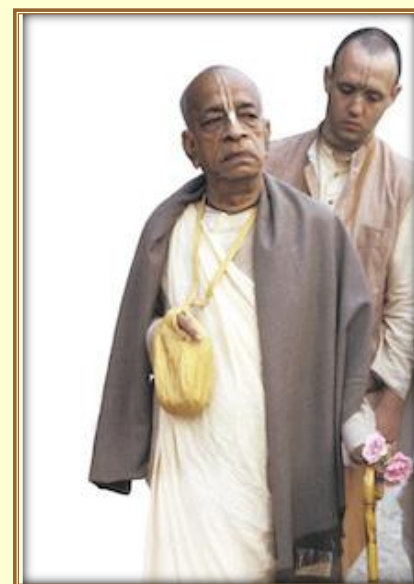
Student: My principle is the light – that there is only the light. If some people wish to call it God, they can call it God. God for me is just a word. It’s a word no one can understand.

Srila Prabhupada: Simply you understand.

Student: I understand the light.

Srila Prabhupada: No. You think you understand God, or the ultimate truth. You say, definitely, “God is a word.” That means you think you understand the ultimate truth, or God.

Student: No.



Srila Prabhupada: Then why do you say, “God is a word”?

Student: I say God is only a word and that’s why I cannot speak of God, because it’s a word and it cannot be explained.

Srila Prabhupada: But you are using words, and you are explaining. Why do you speak these contradictory things?

Student: No. I say that I cannot speak of God because God is a word.

Srila Prabhupada: Now you are saying you do not know what God is. First of all, accept that you do not know.

Student: It is light. I speak of the light.

Srila Prabhupada: Now again you are saying you know God. You are speaking in both ways: that you do not know and that you do know. Sometimes you say you do not know, sometimes you say you do know.

Student: No, no, no.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Disciple: Yes. And in the end you say you do know. You’ve decided that God or the ultimate truth is simply light. So when you say “All is light,” actually you’re claiming you do know God.

Student (with hand on heart): I believe in what I feel here, and that is God for me.

Srila Prabhupada: That means that at other times, when you feel something else, that is God.

Student (still with hand on heart): I feel the light here.

Srila Prabhupada: You can feel the light anywhere.

Student: Light is this table, this floor. Light is everything.

Srila Prabhupada: That’s all right. Then why do you say you do not know God? You know God: in His preliminary feature, as the all-pervasive light.

Student: Because for me, God is merely a word. How can you explain God with a word? What is God? Explain to me what is God.

Srila Prabhupada (to a disciple): Talk with him. He’ll simply waste my time.

Student: If you can explain to me what is God, I would appreciate it.

Srila Prabhupada: [To the disciple:] Just go and take him. [To the student:] You go and he’ll explain to you. Please.

Student: He cannot explain to me.



Srila Prabhupada: Then you go away. Please. What can I do? I cannot waste time.

Student: If you cannot explain to me what is God . . .

Srila Prabhupada: But you know everything. What can I explain? You know everything. [The student leaves.]

Madame Devi: Your Divine Grace, are there certain qualities that make some people more receptive toward the divine and other people less receptive?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. That I have explained: *sattva-guna*, *rajo-guna*, *tamo-guna*, the modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance. Those who are in goodness – they can understand the divine very easily. Those who are in passion – they have got difficulty. And those who are covered by ignorance – they cannot understand.

Madame Devi: Is this degree of covering a question of one’s physical body? Is it hormones or a chemical state – that some people are more covered by ignorance than others?

Srila Prabhupada: “Covered” means dirty things in the heart. That’s all. Just as the sun is covered by the cloud.

Madame Devi: So by repeating the mantra, the name of God, your heart becomes more . . .

Srila Prabhupada: You become purified.

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, you often give the example that the heart is a mirror. And the more we polish the mirror by chanting Krsna’s names, the more we become enlightened.

Madame Devi: Therefore we have to repeat the name of God every day, many times.

Srila Prabhupada: Hmm. Yes.

Madame Devi: Your Divine Grace, I would like to know about the problem of death: what happens at the time of death.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. You have to prepare yourself. Just as in a dream we think about what we have done previously, similarly we are preparing our mental condition at the time of death by what we are doing in our daily life.

Madame Devi: I see. And would it be true, in a sense, that our thoughts are more important than our actions?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Thoughts are the subtle action.

Madame Devi: So, in other words, our thoughts begin the action, and they also determine the action?

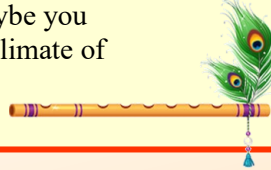
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Therefore we give thoughts beyond your present thoughts. From the authoritative Vedic scriptures. For example, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* describes Lord Buddha, in his youth, seeing the elderly and thinking, “In old age I’ll be crippled like that? I am also going to be like that? No. What is the value?” Then he began meditation so that

he could escape the material world, this cycle of old age, disease, death, and rebirth.

As he studied the *Vedas*, he understood that by bad karma one becomes subjected to material tribulation. And most of the bad karma, he thought, is on account of our malice, starting from our practice of killing animals. So he wanted to stop this. That is Buddha's first teaching. *Sadaya-hridaya darshita-pashu-ghatam* – "Stop animal killing."

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, as you recall, here in Paris last year a man came to meet you – the president of the Court of Paris. He was supposed to be a Buddhist, and yet he said to you, "In the climate of India, maybe you can get away with not eating meat. But in the climate of the West, we must eat meat."

Srila Prabhupada: That is rascaldom. He's a first-class rascal. Therefore the conclusion is, these religious and social leaders are rascals. If they want to be saved from their rascal position, this is the only method. Krishna consciousness. Genuine God consciousness. Otherwise, how can they be saved from the cycle of rebirth and death? They are *atma-hana* – "self-killing." Suicidal. If you cut your own throat, who can save you? So these so-called followers of Lord Jesus or Lord Buddha who actually do not follow – they're all rascals. We don't hate anyone. We want to raise them. But actually, they're all rascals. 🌸



WANT BOOKS and other material?

When requesting books, please specify if you are allowed hardbound or only softbound, and how many books you can receive at a time.

Also, many institutions have transitioned to an electronic mailing system, though some still allow physical books of a religious nature. However, some institutions only allow books from a place like Amazon. So please do your research so we don't send material that ends up being returned; it is very costly for our little prison ministry.

Thank you!

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOUR STUDY OF THE BHAGAVAD-GITA As It Is

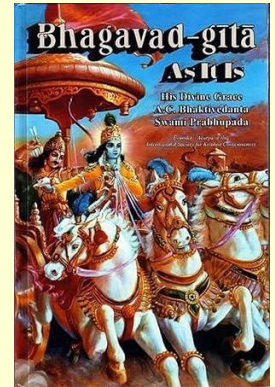
CHAPTER 2: Contents of the Gita Summarized

Suggested texts to memorize in English and, if possible, in Sanskrit as well:

2.11, 2.13, 2.14, 2.20, 2.40, 2.59

Questions:

1. What does Sanjaya say was Arjuna's physical and mental condition after seeing all the warriors on the battlefield?
2. Why does Sanjaya address Lord Krishna as Madhusudana?
3. What was Lord Krishna's reaction to Arjuna's refusal to fight?
4. Why does Krishna address Arjuna as "O son of Pritha"?
5. Why does Krishna tell Arjuna not to give in to this humiliating impotence?
6. Why does Krishna address Arjuna as "O killer of the enemy"?
7. What was Arjuna's response to Krishna's criticism?
8. Why does Arjuna say that Bhishma and Drona are worthy of his worship?
9. Why does Arjuna address Krishna as "O killer of enemies" and "O killer of Madhu" in verse 4?
10. Why is Arjuna reluctant to take up arms against Bhishma and Drona?
11. What are Arjuna's perplexities before he surrendered and accepted Krishna as his spiritual master?
12. Why does Krishna smile when Arjuna surrenders unto Him and accepts Him as his spiritual master?



13. Why does Sanjaya address Dhritarashtra as “O descendant of Bharata”?
14. Why does Lord Krishna chastise Arjuna, after accepting him as His disciple?
15. What was the first instruction Krishna gave to Arjuna after accepting him as His disciple?
16. What journey does the soul take in one’s body, and what happens to it at death?
17. Why is it that we humans feel happiness and pain?
18. Why does Lord Krishna address Arjuna as “O son of Kunti” and “O scion of Bharata” in verse 14?
19. What qualities should one possess to be eligible for liberation?
20. Why does Krishna address Arjuna as “O best among men” in verse 15?
21. What do the “seers of the truth” (those in knowledge) say about the material body and the spirit soul?
22. List at least 10 qualities of the soul.
23. After listing the qualities of the soul, why does Krishna tell Arjuna not to lament and to do his duty?
24. What is the religious duty of a kshatriya, and why does Lord Krishna call Arjuna “O mighty-armed”?
25. What does Krishna say about the “amazing soul”?
26. What does Krishna say Arjuna should do, considering that he is a kshatriya?
27. Why does Krishna address Arjuna as “O Partha” and say that a kshatriya should be happy that a fighting opportunity has come unsought?
28. What does Krishna say would happen to Arjuna, should he not fight?
29. What is Krishna’s final verdict to Arjuna, and why does He call Arjuna “O son of Kunti”?
30. According to Lord Krishna, how should Arjuna fight?
31. After analytically explaining and encouraging Arjuna to fight, how else will the Lord now explain Arjuna should do his duty?
32. Why does Krishna again address Arjuna as “O son of Pritha”?
33. What is the consequence for one who works as he should, without attachment, to the fruits of his actions?
34. What is the mindset and goal of those who follow the path of working without attachment for results?
35. What is the mindset of those who do not follow this prescribed way of working without attachment for the results?
36. Why does the Lord address Arjuna as “O beloved child of the Kurus in verse 41”?
37. What does Krishna say about men who are attracted to the Vedas and the activities recommended therein for elevation to heavenly planets?
38. What does Krishna say is the mental state of those who are too attached to sense enjoyment and material opulence?
39. What does Krishna say about the Vedas, and what advice does He give Arjuna regarding them?
40. What does Krishna say is the purpose of the Vedas?
41. What does Krishna say about work, the results obtained from such actions, and attitude to one’s duty?
42. What does Krishna say to Arjuna about doing one’s duty equipoised and working without attachment?
43. How should one keep away from horrific (sinful) activities?
44. What does Krishna say about people who want to enjoy the fruits of their labor?
45. Why does Lord Krishna address Arjuna as “O Dhananjaya” in verse 49?
46. How can one rid oneself of both good and bad reactions in this life?
47. Who adopted this devotional service, and what is the consequence for one who follows this process?
48. Why does Krishna use the metaphor of a dense forest of delusion to describe Arjuna’s mental state?
49. Why does Krishna say that Arjuna was disturbed by the flowery language of the Vedas, and how can he attain divine consciousness?
50. What are the first five questions Arjuna asks after accepting Krishna as his spiritual master?
51. What is Krishna’s answer to Arjuna’s first question?
52. What does the Lord say is the mental state of one who is a slave of steady mind?
53. How does the sage of a steady mind react to good or evil in the material world?

54. How should one control one's senses, and what analogy does Krishna give in this regard?
55. How should one restrict the "embodied soul" from sense enjoyment?
56. How strong are the senses?
57. Who is a man of steady intelligence?
58. How does one get attached to the sense objects, and what are the consequences?
59. How can one obtain the complete mercy of the Lord?
60. How is one able to overcome the threefold miseries of material life?
61. What is the ramification for one not connected with the Supreme?
62. How can the senses steal a person's intelligence?
63. What does Lord Krishna say about one who has restrained one's senses from their objects, and why does he call Arjuna "O mighty-armed"?
64. How does Krishna describe the self-controlled and those who are not?
65. What does Lord Krishna say about a Krishna conscious devotee and how he handles the constant bombardment of material desires?
66. What type of person can achieve real peace?
67. How can a person enter into the Kingdom of God?

Book Distribution Stories!

Learning How to Live —Gurushakti Dasi

Today in Leeds, Michael, 85 years of age, walked over to our book table inquisitive about the Bhagavad Gita. He told me he wants to understand the origins of humanity, the depth of civilization & where we all truly come from.

Michael explained that whilst he had never heard of the Bhagavad Gita, he became intrigued when I shared that it is originally transcribed from Sanskrit, the oldest language. He said that over the years he has come across Sanskrit & always had an underlying desire to know more about the language & its history, although he never really had the opportunity or time to explore it. He told me he never married. He wanted to make his fortune first & settle later, but life moved differently. He didn't make the wealth he dreamed of & neither did he end up getting married, yet he said he carries no regrets. He also shared that he has not watched television for 30 years & only owns three computers & a radio. Michael worked as an electrical engineer specialising in electric motor control. His life has been a journey of learning & now he is quietly questioning the motor of the human body...the soul & the nature of our existence.



Michael asked me, "Do we actually have a soul? Does it really exist? If so, where does it go when we pass away?" I told Michael it was beautiful to see that he has lived a simple life & continues to have a searching

mind. I answered his questions & his heart seemed even more open.

I placed the Bhagavad Gita in his hands & the moment he held it, something softened in him. He said, "I have been looking for answers for so long. Maybe this will help me understand where we come from."

It really is never too late. Not for any soul. Not for the seeker at any age. Even moments before death, it is never too late.

As Michael left wrapped in his orange saffron coat, he looked like a wandering sage rediscovering the purpose of life. Michael, may the Bhagavad Gita penetrate your heart, & may that precise engineering mind now guide you on the most important journey of all...the journey of the soul. The journey home, back to Godhead! 🌸

Excerpts from inmates' letters

Thank you for sending the books I requested. I do receive the Freedom Newsletter every month and in full color [scanned unto an electronic tablet]. I am also receiving a subscription to Back to Godhead magazine as well. I am diligently, and patiently, studying the Srimad-Bhagavatam one volume at a time. They are voluminous works and have much information to digest. I do highly value the resources I have and read them patiently and studiously. Also, Edovo has all of Srila Prabhupada's books available on our personal tablets. So I am never without instruction.

Hare Krishna!

Victor R. - Phoenix, Arizona

I came across your newsletter and am very interested in the Teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. I have found words of encouragement in His writing and was inquiring if you could be so kind as to send me some literature, in particular the Bhagavad-gita or anything you recommend. Thank you very much. I hope to hear from you soon.

John-Luke P. —Malone, New York

The books I have received are definitely helping progress and begin a new path of inquiry and experience for many people here. We have been reflecting and working daily or realizing the sloka of BG 18.65: *“Always think of Me and become My devotee. Worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus, you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend.”*

I'm reminded of a statement of Prabhupada wherein he said to someone to cut out all the nonsense and simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. How appropriate for the inmates here, myself foremost. I'm hoping to advance further in Kṛṣṇa consciousness completely immersing myself in the literature of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. I loan the books out to anyone interested and have passed your address on to a few inmates as well as gave some information out to a few gentlemen going home. Thank you all for your help and services.

Donald H. —Conneaut, Ohio

My name is Joshua. I'm currently incarcerated in Illinois. I have recently discovered Kṛṣṇa on my Edovo tablet and I'm interested in learning more about Kṛṣṇa. I'm very drawn to this. I have been chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa daily and reading all that is on the tablet. Any

information to help me further my studies would be great. Thank you.

Joshua P. —East St. Louis, Illinois

I am shocked and saddened by how much violence surrounds me. It is found in the words people speak, such as putting each other down —us versus them— and just general conversation of dominating over another being. This is not just because I am in federal prison either, as I see on the television, the telephone with family and friends, and in the video games the guys play on their tablets.

I am struggling to not take in this darkness any more than I have to and catch myself redirecting my thoughts and trying to correct my speech. I find that the more I chant and read/understand, the more I am recognizing this violence and darkness and the more I want Kṛṣṇa's light. It is not easy at all, but I keep trying.

When I am feeling down and realize it is my attachment to family, the past, and what, according to society, I have lost, I find my reading, especially the Bhagavad-gita, reminds me that societies' bombardment of what life should be is not a path that will bring lasting relief and I should not lament because I gained and not lost by not having such material entanglements. Still, the material attachment and society's constant bombardment of it in my situation means I have to be vigilant and not partake in this drug just because others are —plus, look how unhappy they are. No, only true relief from it all is surrendering to Kṛṣṇa and begging His mercy. For me, it is a daily struggle to do this, but I am a fighter and will not give up. If I do, only darkness awaits and I am tired of myself and others being in pain because of it.

I need to read more spiritual material and less materialistic stuff, especially novels. I know they are not beneficial to my spiritual advancement, yet they are like a drug that is hard to quit. Yet nobody who has done major changes has ever said that change is easy. I am struggling right now to chant mindfully, without letting in all the distractions around me. I am trying to chant my japa rounds more in the early morning, if possible, but I need to put in more effort in my rounds and correct my wandering monkey mind more often. Only after realizing how much of this darkness I let in did I finally realize my foolishness and sought the light of Kṛṣṇa by reading Srila Prabhupada's books and delving deeper into the Bhagavad-gita, because even though I understand it on an intellectual level,

embracing the teachings and following them are not the same things.

I have come to realize that I want to help bring light into this world. I want to dedicate the rest of this life to such endeavors and spiritual advancement not just for myself but for others too.

I read to remember that the more I devote my time to the spiritual, the more at peace I find myself, and Kṛṣṇa definitely eases my burdens when I turn towards Him. Yet, I am still a foolish wayward child at times and forget. Thankfully, I am at least reminded in various ways, and I come to my sense—or away from them—and back to what really matters.

I am surrounded by noise in here, with few ways to get away from it. Yet, I have come to realize that if instead

of taking it in, I play a game where I pretend it is all white noise in the background, then my mind will begin to believe it is so and I can change the sounds to the spiritual by reading, chanting, and listening to bhajans on my tablet. It is really just dependent on which I want to partake in; the materialistic or the spiritual and which of these I want to pay attention to and which I want to ignore. I have ignored the spiritual for too much and I paid too much attention to the false promises of the materialistic offerings of this society. In doing so I have experienced a lot of pain and caused a lot of pain; neither of which I wanted to do. This is darkness that can only be fought through the spiritual light of Kṛṣṇa and now realize this thanks to Srila Prabhupada and his followers who taught me Kṛṣṇa's mercy is available even to one as fallen as I am.

David B. —Danbury, Connecticut



Excerpts from the book **Mind it!** by Chaitanya Charan Dasa

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE MIND?

“The mind is a universe and can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.” — John Milton

“What made me do that?” We may get this question when we impulsively do something undesirable. Intuitively, we sometimes sense that something within us pushes us to do wrong things. This intuition is echoed in many of the world's wisdom-traditions. Some traditions refer to the inner inimical force as the bad dog; others, as the Devil; and still others, as an inner demon. The Bhagavad-gita (03.37) identifies it as our own selfish desire. Such desires are stored as impressions in our mind. So, the mind often acts like an inner enemy, impelling us towards self-defeating actions.

The Gita, however, gives a clear understanding of the mind, placing it at an intermediate level within a three-level model of the self:

1. **The gross material body** is the visible body that we feed and dress, and normally identify ourselves with.
2. **The subtle material body** is the mechanism that interfaces between the soul and the gross material body. It includes the mind and the intelligence.
3. **The spiritual self** is the soul, the essence of who we are. It is the source of consciousness,

which radiates through the subtle material body to the gross material body.

Whereas some thought systems conflate the mind and the soul, Gita wisdom clearly differentiates the two: the soul is the root of consciousness, whereas the mind is the route of consciousness. The mind is the medium through which the soul interacts with the body and the world outside. The soul is conscious, whereas the mind, being material, is not – it merely reflects the soul's consciousness.

Channel of distraction

To better understand how the mind shapes the soul-body interaction, let's consider a metaphor given in an important philosophical treatise in the Gita wisdom-tradition, “The soul is the passenger in the chariot of the material body, and intelligence is the charioteer. The mind is the reins, and the senses are the horses. The self is thus the enjoyer or sufferer in the association of the mind and senses. So it is understood by great thinkers.”



When the horses are unrestrained, they pull the reins towards tempting roadside objects. Similarly, when the senses are unrestrained, they pull the mind towards alluring worldly objects. In the chariot, the charioteer needs to be in control – not the horses. Similarly, our intelligence needs to be in control of our decisions – not our senses. Just as the charioteer uses the reins to control the horses, similarly the intelligence uses the mind to control the senses. Just as the reins group the horses together, the mind integrates the impressions coming from the senses, as the Gita (15.09) indicates. Thus, it channels the often-distracting signals coming from the senses.

Source of distraction

The mind also creates its own disruptive signals. For example, we sometimes suddenly get some distracting desires or worries without being provoked by any external sensual trigger – such distractions come from the mind.

To understand how the mind distracts, let's use a computer metaphor. We can compare the body to the hardware, the mind to the software and the soul to the user. Stored in the mind are impressions of past pleasant and unpleasant experiences. These impressions condition it to certain patterns of functioning that over time become its default script. This script determines its ideas of what needs to be done for getting pleasure or avoiding trouble.

Unfortunately, much of this script is distorted and distorting. The mind imagines pleasures where there are none or exaggerates insignificant pleasures till they seem irresistible. And it imagines problems where there are none or exaggerates inconsequential problems till they seem insurmountable. By thus distracting our attention from important tasks to unimportant or even unnecessary ones, the mind drains our energy.

That's why we can't just outsource our tasks to the mind and expect them to be done. We need to mind the mind, that is, we need to act as hands-on monitors, terminating those thought processes that take our consciousness in unwanted directions. Pertinently, the Bhagavad-gita (06.26) urges us to use our intelligence to restrain and refocus the mind whenever it wanders. To better understand how the mind dissipates our energy in false alarms, let's consider another metaphor.

The distracting companion

Significantly, the same verse states that the mind can, when controlled, be our best friend. This implies that we can control the mind.

To understand how we can control the mind, we need to remember that the mind can never take the steering

wheel from us. The body is like a car and the soul, the driver. In our bodily car, we are always in the driver's seat.

The mind is our default traveling partner sitting permanently next to us. It frequently proposes ideas of where we should travel and fabricates images of the pleasures that await us there. By its propositions and fabrications, it prompts, prods, pushes, pinches and punches us to fulfill its wanderlust. However, it cannot usurp us from the driver's seat. So, it can only impel us – never compel us. That is, though the mind can push us, it can't force us. We have the power to not just neglect it, but also counter and silence it.

Countering the mind, however, is not easy. That's because the mind doesn't just persuade us to obey it – it also makes us believe that its voice is our voice. The mind subtly and sinisterly causes us to misidentify with it.

To understand how it effects such misidentification, we can compare it to a ventriloquist.

The ventriloquist

Ventriloquism is the art of projecting one's voice so that it seems to come from another source, say, a dummy. Those unaware of ventriloquism mistakenly think that the inanimate dummy is speaking, but those aware can figure out what's actually happening.

The mind is like a most crafty ventriloquist. While ordinary ventriloquists may perform a show for us to see, the mind makes us its show. Ordinary ventriloquists may project their voices to inanimate objects for entertaining onlookers, but the mind projects its voice onto us and makes us believe that its voice is our voice. Because we are often unaware of the mind's insidious tactics, we fall prey to its ventriloquism and act out its selfish desires, assuming that they are our desires. Only later when the short-lived pleasure of acting out ends and the consequences start registering do we ask in dismay: "Why did I do that?" How do we protect ourselves from the mind's deceitful ventriloquism? By stopping the mind when it is speaking in the second person ("You do this and enjoy") and not letting it take on the first person voice ("I want to do this and enjoy"). To understand this, let's explore the ventriloquism metaphor further.

When ventriloquists make a dummy speak, they have to be present somewhere nearby; the voice can't be projected over long distances. If onlookers are informed and alert, they can, as soon as they hear the dummy speaking, look around, spot the ventriloquist and say, "That's you speaking." By thus catching the ventriloquism in the act, they can avoid getting deluded.

Similarly, the mind has to be in our vicinity before it can make us misidentify with it. Of course, ontologically speaking, the mind is always in our vicinity; it exists inside us. But functionally speaking, the mind is not always aroused and active with its nefarious schemes; it's not always a ventriloquist in the act.

When the mind becomes captivated by some unhealthy fancy and wants us to act it out, it initially has to speak in the second person: "Why don't you do that? You will enjoy it. You need a break; you need some fun." At this stage, we sense that something within us is prompting us towards some unwholesome indulgence. Though the voice may be insistent, we are still aware that it is different from us; the mind is still speaking in the second person.

However, if we listen to the proposals of the mind, we give it the chance to cast its ventriloquistic spell on us. With frightening swiftness, it projects its voice on us. Soon, sometimes in a matter of moments, the mind starts speaking in the first person: "I want to enjoy that." But because we have been taken in by its ventriloquism, we no longer realize that it is the mind speaking; we mistake its voice to be our own. Once we take ownership of the mind's desires, then all our inner safeguards crumble and we end up doing something foolish or self-destructive.

The trajectory to self-destruction

The Bhagavad-gita (02.61-62) delineates eight stages in the trajectory to self-destruction. Let's understand these using an example of how a recovering alcoholic may relapse:

1. **Contemplation** (dhyayato): The alcoholic starts considering the prospect of drinking: "Look at that – doesn't that look good?"
2. **Attraction** (sanga): He starts feeling that a drink will be enjoyable: "It's nice – you can relax and enjoy."
3. **Obsession** (kama): He starts feeling strongly infatuated by it: "I want it – and want it now."
4. **Irritation** (krodha): He starts feeling irritated at anything that stops him from getting it: "Who can stop me from doing what I want?"
5. **Delusion** (sammoha): He gets completely confused about what is good and what is bad: "I don't need anyone's advice – I know what to do."
6. **Oblivion** (smriti-bhramashad): He forgets the hangover, the bondage and the misery that

alcohol has caused in the past: "There's so much pleasure here – why should I not enjoy?"

7. **Stupefaction** (buddhi-nasho): He loses his intellectual capacity to discern before acting and decides to act on the spur of the moment: "I am going to drink right now."
8. **Destruction** (pranashyati): He falls headlong into a relapse and wallows in it till he wakes up with an awful headache and throws up in the washroom.

In the stages of contemplation and attraction, the mind's voice keeps getting louder and more demanding. But it is still speaking in the second person: "Why don't you enjoy that? It looks promising." From the stage of obsession, however, the mind starts speaking in the first person. We start identifying with its desire and thereafter start feeling angry at whatever obstacle blocks us: "Who can stop me from enjoying?" Hereafter, the mind's ventriloquism makes a complete fool out of us; we cast aside our intelligence and binge, and thus get ourselves into trouble.

To protect ourselves, we need to be alert and catch the mind when it is speaking in the second person: "Ah! That's the mind speaking. I am not going to listen to it." Though the mind may still push us, just by disowning it we can win a major part of the battle. And we can win the battle fully if we immediately focus on something engaging, illuminating, empowering. Once we get engrossed in something constructive, the mind's destructive proposals can no longer allure us. Being starved of our attention, it is eventually forced to fall back, whimpering and defeated.

Thus, to mind the mind, we need to:

- Distance ourselves from the mind, and
- Distance the real situation from the mind's distorted depiction.

Some ways to do this distancing are: deep breathing, meditating, journal-writing, praying, consulting spiritual guides and, most importantly, chanting the holy names. Chanting easily and readily connects our consciousness with Krishna. Because He is supremely attractive, connection with him raises our awareness to a higher, spiritual level of reality, thereby automatically distancing it from the mind.

By thus minding the mind, we can calmly and intelligently determine the best way to respond to whatever situation life sends our way – and thus grow in our realization of our eternal spiritual identity. 🌸

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna / Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

Hare Rama Hare Rama / Rama Rama Hare Hare

Calendar

APRIL 2026

- 09 April 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Abhirama Thakura
12 April 2026 - Disappearance Day of Srila Vrndavana Dasa Thakura
13 April 2026 - **Varuthini Ekadashi**
17 April 2026 - Appearance Day of Sri Gadadhara Pandita
25 April 2026 - Appearance Day of Srimati Sita Devi (wife of Lord Rama)
25 April 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Madhu Pandita
25 April 2026 - Appearance Day of Srimati Jahnava Devi (wife of Lord Nityananda)
27 April 2026 - **Mohini Ekadasi**
29 April 2026 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Jayananda Prabhu**
(Prabhupada's pure disciple)
30 April 2026 - **Narasimha Caturdasi – Appearance of Lord Narasimhadeva**

MAY 2026

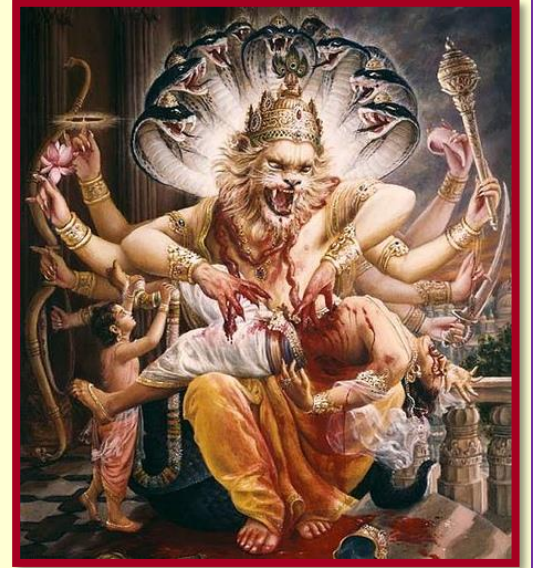
- 01 May 2026 - Appearance Day of Sri Madhavendra Puri
01 May 2026 - Appearance Day of Sri Srinivasa Acharya
01 May 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Paramesvari Dasa Thakura
07 May 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Ramananda Raya
13 May 2026 - **Apara Ekadasi**
14 May 2026 - Appearance Day of Srila Vrndavana Dasa Thakura
27 May 2026 - **Padmini Ekadashi**

JUNE 2026

- 11 June 2026 – **Parama Ekadashi**
24 June 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Baladeva Vidyabhusana
25 June 2026 - **Pandava Nirjala Ekadashi --EXPLAIN**
29 June 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Mukunda Datta
29 June 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Sridhara Pandita
30 June 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Syamananda Prabhu

JULY 2026

- 05 July 2026 - Appearance Day of Sri Vakresvara Pandita
10 July 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Srivasa Pandita
11 July 2026 - **Yogini Ekadasi**
14 July 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Gadadhara Pandita
14 July 2026 - **Disappearance Day of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura**
15 July 2026 - Gundica Marjana – Lord Caitanya cleanses the Gundica temple
16 July 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Svarupa Damodara Goswami
16 July 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Sivananda Sena
19 July 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sri Vakresvara Pandita
25 July 2026 - **Sayana Ekadashi**
29 July 2026 - Disappearance Day of Sanatana Goswami
30 July 2026 - First Month of Caturmasya Begins



The Lord appears with two purposes:

- Paritranya sadhunam: to give protection and rescue the devotees,
- vinasaya ca dushkritam: to kill the demons.

The fourth incarnation of the Lord is Lord Nrsimha. He appeared to save His pure devotee, Prahlada Maharaja, who was then a five-years-old boy and who was being tortured by his atheistic father, Hiranyakashipu. Prahlad's only "fault" was that he was a devotee of Krishna.