

# ENOUGH!

CONSCIOUS LIVING  
PHILOSOPHY & SCIENCE  
YOGA PSYCHOLOGY  
FILM & FICTION

JOIN THE EVOLUTION



## Live a Life You Will Remember

Why having it all isn't enough

## Unity in Diversity

Christchurch shootings: combat hate with higher knowledge

## Rescuing Tomorrow

Climate change urges kids to fight intergenerational tyranny





*Special thanks to Shruti-cari for copy editing assistance and Vishnu-maya and Jo Silcock for proofreading.*

## Dear Reader

**Near the end of my two-month visit to India, the thought of leaving creates a hollow feeling in my stomach. A tightness ascends from my chest to my throat, like the way you feel when saying an inevitable goodbye to someone dear to you. I'm riding in a rickshaw to Rajapur, near Mayapur, West Bengal, on my way to visit the temple of Jagannath (Lord of the Universe) one last time. Mayapur is a sacred place where many bhakti practitioners and pilgrims visit from countries all over the world.**

Time has slowed, and the pace is easy as we turn onto the village route. Entering vine covered forest, we leave the busy main road behind us. Soon the honking traffic and street vendors disappear into the dust. Late afternoon sunlight seeps through the upper canopy, creating a misty, primordial atmosphere. Grazing cows raise their heads, curious to see who approaches. A farmer herds goats down the road. In a clearing, some children kick a ball around while a kingfisher sits on a flimsy power line observing a few women who fetch spring water from a nearby well.

Villagers stare at me, the white-skinned stranger. I feel uncomfortable, but I've grown a little used to it. They are fascinated to see a non-Indian interested in this sacred place. But I'm only one of millions of bhakti practitioners who visit every year. And, I have to admit, I stare back at the locals too. I realise every person here understands something that we in the First World generally do not. They understand that we are all eternal spiritual beings inhabiting temporary material bodies, and therefore the self continues beyond this lifetime. Just as in our digital age many young children can intuitively navigate an iPad screen, similarly, the people here know that the true self is enduring. Possessing an inherent awareness of their insignificant place in the cosmos, they know there is a nonmaterial reality beyond this world, and a supreme personal source of everything.

Because such enlightened people understand our existence in this world is temporary and therefore like a dream, they do not take this dream world seriously—after all, it's all just fleeting phantasmagoria. Why bother to pursue objects of desire that exist only in a dream? How can this endeavour satisfy us? As C.S. Lewis said, "If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world." The ancient spiritual science of bhakti-yoga explains that the only way we can gain a clear vision of reality is to awaken from the

dream or illusion that we can be happy with temporary matter—an illusion that in our consumerist societies so prodigally covers our consciousness.

When I think of home, back in New Zealand, I think of beautiful beaches, bush, fresh air, and wildlife. Tui and ruru. Kauri and kowhai. But despite our reputation as clean and green Aotearoa, we Kiwis aren't immune to an economy-driven consumerist lifestyle. A lifestyle that is destroying our natural environment and polluting our inner environment. Home is also Auckland traffic jams, long work hours, high rent and mortgage rates, and a predefined cardboard cut-out life that nobody really subscribes to but everybody thinks—yes, this will make me happy. The house, the car, the bach, the career, or the new partner will be enough for me; it's all I need to make me happy. Home is also a place of statistics: high depression and suicide rates. This is an issue our contributor Kadiravan addresses in "Live a Life You Will Remember."

Now, more than ever, after the recent Christchurch mosque tragedy, New Zealanders seek answers to the most pressing and important questions that have followed the largest mass shooting ever to occur in New Zealand: How does this intense hatred come about? Why do persons commit such horrific acts? Addressing deep-rooted concerns underlying the tragedy, this issue's editorial discusses a distorted self-concept and how it can lead to a distorted worldview, disharmony, and hatred. The timeless teachings of the prime yoga text Bhagavad Gita send a message of unity in diversity, pinpointing the common spiritual nature of all people, regardless of external identity.

The Gita extends this vision of equality and respect to all species inhabiting the earth. On the same day as the Christchurch mosque shootings, tens of thousands of school students took part in demonstrations all around New Zealand as part of the international School Strike 4 Climate campaign in an effort to convince governments to confront global warming. In his article "Rescuing Tomorrow," monk, teacher, and spiritual activist Devamrita Swami addresses our young generation's concern for their future, pointing to the illuminating teachings of a bold and fearless five-year-old yogi. These insights evoke the same question raised by the School Strike campaign: Are our leaders committing nothing less than intergenerational tyranny? As the international speaker and activist Duane Elgin probed: "When will humanity express its moral outrage that it is wrong to devastate an entire planet for countless generations to come, just to satisfy the consumer desires of a fraction of humanity for a single lifetime?"

This issue of *Enough!* emphasises that we *do* have a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy. This is the desire for loving connection and for something that will fill our lives with meaning. A real loving connection with the supreme source of everything is tangible and lasting. The more we take steps to gain knowledge of the supreme connection that has always existed, the more we can connect with others in a deep, genuine, and compassionate way, and the more we will be able to live in harmony with our planet. *Enough!* offers this opportunity to tap into the bhakti world of Krishna consciousness—where life is flooded with meaning. Sit back and let our articles and stories give you a glimpse of that other world. Who knows, you might like it!

**Manada**  
Senior editor



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## Editorial:

# Unity **IN** Diversity

Christchurch shootings prompt questions about self-concept

**Like the rest of New Zealand, we, at *Enough!* are deeply saddened and shocked by the toxic violence perpetrated in Christchurch. Our heartfelt sympathy and condolences go out to those directly affected by the shootings.**

On the morning of 16 March 2019, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern concluded her address to the country with the statement: “While the nation grapples with a form of grief and anger that we have not experienced before, we are seeking answers.”

Indeed, we are.

New Zealanders have been asking questions about how the twenty-eight-year-old Australian-born gunman who carried out the attack in Christchurch, was able to enter the country and undertake this act of terror.

But amongst the abundance of questions that have followed the tragedy, the most prominent is: *Why* did he carry out this act of terror?

The gunman’s 74-page manifesto, in which he tries to justify his murderous assault on Muslim worshippers during Friday prayers in Christchurch, has since been banned. The ruling to ban the manifesto was part of the prime minister’s wider strategy to undermine the perpetrator’s attempts to gain global notoriety. Jacinda Ardern has pledged never to utter his name publicly, and to press platforms like Facebook to deny access worldwide to the manifesto as well as the seventeen minutes of video that was livestreamed by the gunman during the attacks.

In keeping with this spirit, *Enough!* editors do not wish to dwell on the “beliefs” which led the gunman to carry out his atrocities. However, we do believe it is in our readers’ best interest to note, like analysts across the globe have done, that the gunman was a victim of a thriving online ideological structure that tries to recruit and radicalise young white men to save “Western civilisation” from an “invasion” by immigrants. This ideology aggressively promotes white supremacy: a vision of the world that proclaims white people to be intrinsically superior to other ethnicities. Political scientist Jean-Yves Camus, for example, has pointed out the gunman was first and foremost a hardcore white supremacist.

In light of this, it is tempting to see the Christchurch attack entirely as a direct consequence of the ideology of white supremacy. But as New York Times columnist David Leonhardt warns:

“Drawing a direct line from the purveyors of hateful rhetoric to any specific hate crime is usually impossible. And it’s usually a mistake to try. The motive for these crimes . . . is typically a stew of mental illness, personal anger and mixed-up ideology.”

Leonhardt is spot on. History shows that humans are adept at (mis)using *any* ideology to justify expressing hatred toward a particular group of people. That being said, it is also hard to ignore the self-evident reality that ideas motivate, inspire, and energise people. That is, ideas have consequences.

Put more precisely, our conception of ultimate identity matters. Because it is not humanly possible to live in an



**Just as it is deeply irrational to hate a person because she does not wear the same dress as I do, it is also deeply irrational to hate other living beings simply because they have a different material body or dress from mine.**

intellectual vacuum, we all have some conception of who we ultimately are. And because humans are finite, dependent, contingent beings, we inevitably look outside ourselves for our ultimate identity. In doing so, we look to define our identity in relationship to something greater than us.

Our conception of this greater reality that we are part of is our conception of the divine. We define ourselves by our relationship to the divine, however we define divinity. Therefore, we could say that every concept of identity is based on a relationship to some god. For white supremacists that god is the god of the “white race.” But when we conceptualise our identity in relation to a particular race or religion, we inevitably get stuck in an “us and them” mentality, a mentality that sows the seeds of division, disunity, and discord.

If we are serious about countering the “us and them” rhetoric increasingly prevalent in the world, we need to look for ideas advocating unity in diversity. At *Enough!* we believe that bhakti texts like the Bhagavad Gita and the Shrimad Bhagavatam provide a rich repository of ideas that can foster unity in diversity.

The core idea animating these texts is simple: all living beings are spiritual souls inhabiting different material bodies which are like different dresses. Just as it is deeply irrational to hate persons because they do not wear the same dress as I do, it is also deeply irrational to hate other living beings simply because they have a different material body or dress from mine. The Gita explains:

“As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.” (2.22)

The Gita perspective of reality is that our actions in this life create our karmic account. This karmic account determines the type of material body we get in our next life. We may now be in a white, male body, but at the time of death we are transferred to another body, which won’t necessarily be white or male. Moreover, if we have trashed our karmic account by engaging in harmful and

malicious activities, we will certainly devolve to subhuman species.

From this perspective, it is sheer ignorance to exalt the identity linked to our current temporary material body. This does not imply that our identity forged from race or ethnicity is irrelevant. It simply means that our racial or ethnic identity may have relative value but it isn’t ultimately important. What is ultimately important is to recognise that in spite of obvious differences in gender and ethnicity, all human beings are spiritually one.

The bhakti texts therefore urge us to seek our ultimate transcendent identity, an identity that goes beyond gender, race, ethnicity, and even religious affiliation. In speaking of this ultimate transcendent identity, bhakti texts promote their second core idea: there is one ultimate personal source of all that exists.

Bhakti texts say our ultimate transcendent identity is in relationship to this supreme person. All of bhakti practice—bhakti-yoga—is geared toward reviving our ultimate transcendent identity. When we experience *that* eternal spiritual identity, then we are no longer shackled by the ignorance that forces us to identify with this temporary mortal frame. Once we attain this state of pure consciousness, we are freed from the cycle of repeated birth and death—samsara.

Indeed, bhakti wisdom affirms that in pure consciousness, we see all living beings as members of a single divine family originating from the Supreme Person, in such pure consciousness we spontaneously show compassion toward all living beings. Now, more than ever, we need to strive to develop authentic spiritual consciousness and practice universal compassion.

**The editors.**



# ANCIENT ALIENS

Do we have space brothers and sisters?

Contributor **Damodara Krishna**

Do we have space brothers and sisters?

**Long before sci-fi made its entrance, the Vedic books (aka the Vedas or Hindu books) of ancient India claimed a universe teeming with extraterrestrial activity. The Vedas describe a cosmos full of intelligent life with technologies that make the latest iPhone look rather quaint.**

American author, Steven J. Rosen, explains in his book *The Jedi in the Lotus* how George Lucas's Star Wars saga is influenced by Vedic traditional texts, Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Although he never specifically mentions these books, George Lucas says in interviews that he has “drawn from ‘Hindu mythology.’”

As it is said, the secret to creativity is knowing how to hide your sources.

Most famous of the Vedic texts is the Bhagavad Gita, which is a section of the great epic *Mahabharata*. Even a casual reader of this text quickly concludes that its author supposes a universe full of diverse life forms. The Gita describes that conscious life pervades the whole galaxy.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, author of the widely read Bhagavad Gita As It Is, explains in his commentary that living entities are all-pervading (*sarva-gata* in Sanskrit) throughout the entire universe:

They live on the land, in the water, in the air, within the earth and even within fire. The belief that they are sterilized in fire is not acceptable, because it is clearly stated here that the soul cannot be burned by fire. Therefore, there is no doubt that there are living entities also in the sun planet with suitable bodies to live there. If the sun globe is uninhabited, then the word *sarva-gata* (living everywhere) becomes meaningless. (2.24 commentary)

In the fourth chapter of Bhagavad Gita, Krishna—the orator—explains that he once spoke this knowledge to Vivasvan, the chief living entity of the sun.

Hindu space fantasy?

Skeptics may thumb their nose at the idea of life on the sun. Others maintain an open mind.

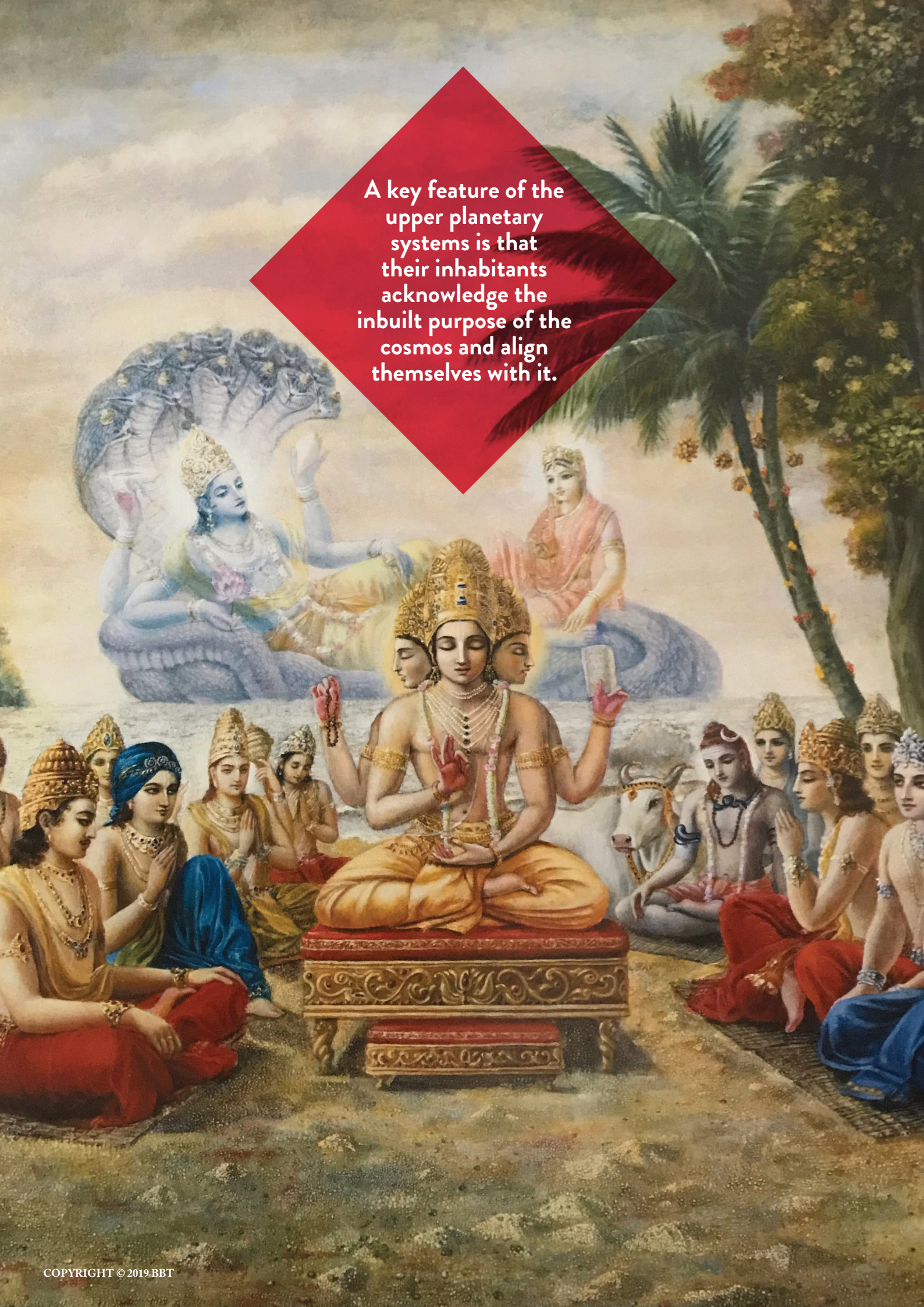
Scientists have now discovered that places once deemed uninhabitable by conscious life have been housing extremophiles—organisms that thrive in physically or geochemically extreme conditions that are detrimental to most terrestrial life.

Take, for instance, thermophiles—a type of extremophile that survives at very hot temperatures such as heat resistant bacteria discovered in the 1960s in hot springs at Yellowstone National Park in the United States. These bacteria are said to thrive in temperatures of 70°C.

Anything bigger than bacteria?



A key feature of the upper planetary systems is that their inhabitants acknowledge the inbuilt purpose of the cosmos and align themselves with it.





Indeed, Evan Carson, a biologist at the University of New Mexico, has been involved in studying pupfish—found in the Americas and Caribbean. Carson believes some pupfish could be considered extremophiles. He justifies this claim by explaining that pupfish live in boiling temperatures ranging from 100 - 144°C.

How hot is the sun?

According to modern science, Vivaswan would be existing in temperatures of 5,600°C at the sun's surface, and up to 15,000,000°C at its centre.

Dare we consider that the Vedic idea of conscious life existing everywhere, even in the unimaginable habitat of the sun, is not so farfetched?

Certainly a stretch for the imagination, but still, what was once thought impossible—for life to exist in such extreme temperatures—has become a reality. A discovery that has brought “fantasy” closer to fact.

### Alien worlds

Are we alone in the vastness of space?

Shrimad Bhagavatam, the graduate study of Bhagavad Gita, discloses to its readers a universe abundant with life. Detailed beyond imagination the text describes three levels of planetary systems—lower, middle, and higher—full of varying species.

The Vedic text, *Vishnu Purana*, goes as far as saying there are 8,400,000 species of life—400,000 of which are human or at least anthropomorphic. The Vedas detail the atmosphere of each planetary system and their inhabitants' qualities.

Interestingly enough, Earth is situated in the middle planetary systems, which are mediocre in standards of living.

Higher realms are home to beings with powerful physical forms, who possess greater intelligence, beauty, and technologies than that experienced on middle Earth.

The residents of upper planetary systems enjoy a standard of material happiness thousands of times greater than that of the middle worlds. But despite this, a key feature of the upper planetary systems is that their inhabitants acknowledge the inbuilt purpose of the cosmos and align themselves with it. That purpose is called *dharmā*. The great sages and other enlightened beings who live there concern themselves with the wellbeing of the universe.

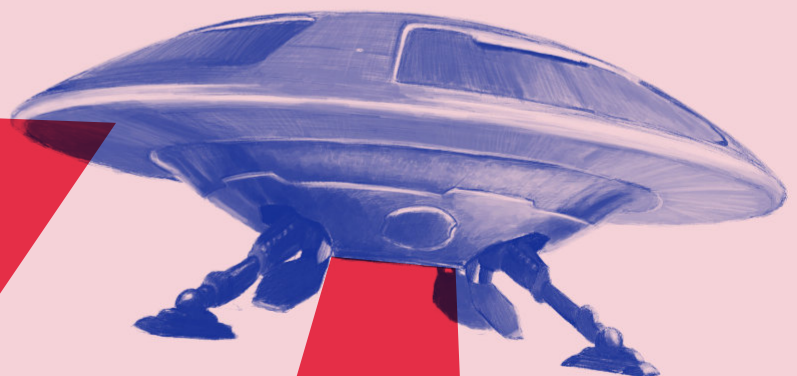
The lower planetary systems are also home to powerful entities, who possess great strength, beauty, and technologies. Sensual happiness their main aim, these entities enjoy a standard of material pleasure even greater than that of the higher systems.

But do academics support such lofty concepts?

Author and professor in mathematics, Richard L. Thompson, explains, “My purpose in writing my book *Alien Identities* was to show that there is evidence for the existence of inhabited higher-dimensional realms. There is no need to doubt the reality of these things, since there is evidence for their existence even apart from the Bhagavatam.”

Celebrated scientist Stephen Hawking doesn't rule out the probability of galactic entities. In the documentary *Stephen Hawking's Favourite Places*, he warns against the possible dangers of space invaders: “One day, we might receive a

**“Meeting an advanced civilisation could be like Native Americans encountering Columbus. That didn't turn out So well.”**



signal from a planet like this (Gliese 832c), but we should be wary of answering back. Meeting an advanced civilisation could be like Native Americans encountering Columbus. That didn't turn out so well.”

### UFOs and aliens: a part of everyday life

While the Guardian recently reported a decrease in UFO (Unidentified Flying Object) sighting reports since 2014, it informs readers of a renewed interest in the phenomenon. United States Congress and the Pentagon investigate reports of more compelling sightings and consider their links to extraterrestrial visits to Earth.

For example, the Guardian reported in 2018 that the Senate Armed Services Committee were investigating an incident where two navy pilots filmed fast-moving unidentified objects.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of 2017, the Washington Post published an article describing former navy pilot, Commander David Fravor's encounter with a UFO after the Pentagon had revealed, for the first time, a program that had been funded from 2007 - 2012 for studying UFOs.

Fravor, the commanding officer of a Navy squadron at the time, said he saw a flying object about the size of his plane that looked like a Tic Tac after a break in a routine training mission. The object moved rapidly and unlike any other thing he had ever seen in the air. He has not forgotten it since . . . “Something not from the earth,” he said.<sup>2</sup>

On 3 May 2013, at the National Press Club in Washington D.C., in the presence of six American congressmen and other high ranking individuals, the Canadian engineer and politician Paul Hellyer spoke openly about his conviction that aliens are not only real but are here—working with the US government.

Hellyer is well known for unifying the Canadian Navy, air force, and army into a single organisation, known as the Canadian Forces.<sup>3</sup>

Interest and reports of UFOs linked to visits from extraterrestrial life may fluctuate, and you may consider the claims of politicians and military personnel absurd or wild, but as far as the Vedas are concerned, UFOs and alien

activity have always been a routine part of life. Nothing out of the ordinary for the earthlings of the Vedic age—close encounters were commonplace.

For example, in the tenth canto of Shrimad Bhagavatam, readers discover that Krishna's own kingdom, Dwaraka, was besieged by an airship (*Vimana* in Sanskrit) which in a most uncanny way resembles descriptions of modern UFO sightings.

The Bhagavatam describes the sighting of an airship long before the Wright brothers invented the airplane:

At one moment the magic airship built by Maya Danava appeared in many identical forms, and the next moment it was again only one. Sometimes it was visible, and sometimes not. Thus, Salva's opponents could never be sure where it was.

From one moment to the next the Saubha airship appeared on the earth, in the sky, on a mountain peak or in the water. Like a whirling, flaming baton, it never remained in any one place. (10.76.21-22)

Interesting, yes?

The medieval Bengali text Chaitanya Charitamrita describes how Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, an avatar of Krishna, experienced frequent visitations from other worldly beings.

The author, renowned Bengali saint, Krishna dasa Kaviraja, explains:

People from the three worlds used to come visit Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Anyone who saw Him received the transcendental treasure of love for Krishna.

The inhabitants of the seven higher planetary systems—including the demigods, the Gandharvas and the Kinnaras—and the inhabitants of the seven lower planetary systems [Patalaloka], including the demons and serpentine living entities, all visited Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the dress of human beings.

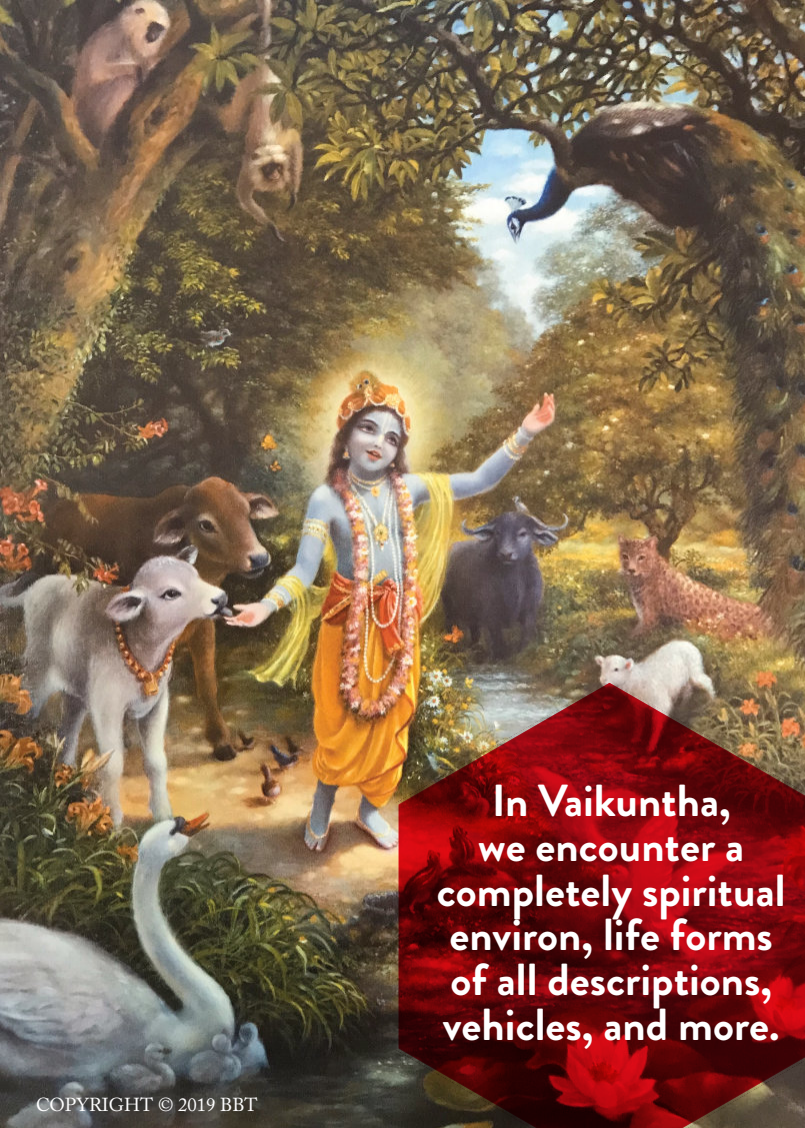
Dressed in different ways, people from the seven islands and nine khandas visited Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. (Antya-lila 9.7-9)

### Encounters of the nonmaterial kind

The descriptions of cosmic worlds and their inhabitants is certainly a fascinating read. Still, however noteworthy the Vedas' disclosure of UFO and alien phenomena is,

**The greatest  
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is actually an alien,  
or a visitor from the  
super-terrestrial  
world of Vaikuntha.**





**In Vaikuntha,  
we encounter a  
completely spiritual  
environ, life forms  
of all descriptions,  
vehicles, and more.**

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ultimately the reader is directed beyond the extraterrestrial worlds.

The Krishna literatures —Bhagavad Gita, Shrimad Bhagavatam, and Chaitanya Charitamrita—all specialise in “encounters of the nonmaterial kind.”

The Vedas draw the reader in with its breathtaking descriptions of Vedic cosmology, but their actual goal is to urge you to shoot above the stars to the spiritual realm. Called Vaikuntha, the very name of this spiritual terrain suggests a place of no anxiety.

The greatest conspiracy, the Vedas challenge, is that every one of us is actually an alien, or a visitor from the super-terrestrial world of Vaikuntha. The greatest treasure trove of knowledge revealed by the Vedas is the processes of bhakti-yoga—spiritual techniques for realising and experiencing your non-terrestrial self, which is not physical or chemical.

The Vedas deem self-realisation as the highest human achievement—the zenith of human existence which allows one re-entry into the Vaikuntha planets.

Furthermore, the books explain there is a direct route or a scenic route to Vaikuntha. The scenic route is a step-by-step elevation through the higher realms of the cosmos for those that fancy a bit of sightseeing. However, the direct route takes us straight from middle Earth to Vaikuntha—a course chosen by those who cannot wait, even for cosmic scenery.

In Vaikuntha, we encounter a completely spiritual environ, life forms of all descriptions, vehicles, and more. “Spiritual” here refers to the eternal and blissful. No birth, death, old age, or disease, associated with material, terrestrial, and even extraterrestrial habitations.

Since the bygone Vedic age to the present age of turmoil, UFOs and aliens have been a part of our earthly existence. Once again, the Sanskrit literature prods us to query, are we as well informed as past civilisations?

Proving to be of timeless relevance, the Vedas present fresh and reliable insights to the terrestrial, extraterrestrial, and beyond.

Don’t wait for world governments to disclose their UFO and alien files—start reading these Vedic books today and discover for yourself how life naturally pervades the entire galaxy.

There is somebody out there.

1. “UFO sightings may be falling but congress is still paying attention,” The Guardian, 15 October, 2018.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/oct/15/ufo-sightings-may-be-falling-but-congress-is-still-paying-attention>
2. “Former Navy pilot describes UFO encounter studied by secret Pentagon program,” The Washington Post, 18 December, 2017.  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/12/18/former-navy-pilot-describes-encounter-with-ufo-studied-by-secret-pentagon-program/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.5c6ef301b007](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/12/18/former-navy-pilot-describes-encounter-with-ufo-studied-by-secret-pentagon-program/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.5c6ef301b007)
3. Steven Greer—an American retired medical doctor—has gathered more than 120 hours of video testimony and a wide range of documents and quotes from high-ranking government and military officials from all over the world. They all say that there is genuine evidence for UFOs and extraterrestrial contact. Included in Greer’s ever-increasing list of witnesses are astronaut Gordon Cooper and Paul Hellyer, the former Canadian Minister of Defense. Greer has presented a snapshot of his work in the documentary *Unacknowledged*, released in 2017.



Damodara Krishna holds a degree in moving graphics from the Waikato Institute of Technology, New Zealand. In 2007, when he was twenty, Damodara Krishna took an interest in life’s deeper issues and began studying the yoga teachings of ancient India. He enjoys sharing this invaluable knowledge with others.



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# Killing Time

TIME IS MONEY. SPEND IT WISELY.

Contributor Mahavan







Contributing Photographic Artist Mahavan

**There are many amazing things in this world, but what do you think is the most amazing?**

How about the latest iPhone? Or Trump's presidency? The invention of synthetic marijuana? Or perhaps humanity becoming the only species in recorded history to destroy its own habitat? These are all genuine jaw-droppers, but consider this eye-opening answer found in the bhakti-yoga texts of ancient India:

“As a mass of clouds does not know the powerful influence of the wind, a person engaged in material consciousness does not know the powerful strength of the time factor, by which he is being carried.” (Shrimad Bhagavatam 3.30.1)



Contributing Artist Muchukunda

**The most amazing thing in the world is that although everyone understands that time will catch them in the form of death, we don't act on that understanding.**

Let me illustrate this phenomenon by recounting a short history. Once, a king was asked one hundred questions with the stipulation that he must answer every question correctly in order to save his life and that of his four brothers. How did he do? Amazingly, he gave the right answer to all one hundred questions and both he and his brothers were saved. But his answer to the question “What is the most amazing thing in the world?” could transform our life and even save the planet:

“The most amazing thing in the world is that although everyone understands that time will catch them in the form of death, we don't act on that understanding.”

The king observed that although we all know we will die, and in fact could die at any moment, we don't live our lives that way. Of course, we'll say “Hey buddy, I'm no fool. I know I'm going to die!”

But do we?



**We live our lives as if “it won’t happen to me,” or at least, “not now.”**



## Are you experienced?

This title to my favourite Jimi Hendrix album reminds me of the king’s observation; although we all know death will knock on our door, we choose to live as if it never will.

Have you ever been on a flight when the turbulence got really bad? If so, I’m sure you noticed a striking contrast in passenger behaviour before and after. Before the drama, it’s business as usual: passengers flick through an in-flight magazine, watch a movie, take a nap, order a drink or a meal, sure that in a few short minutes or hours, they will touch down safely and be on their way. But once the turbulence begins, that feeling of solace is quickly replaced with anxiety, and on really bad flights, terror.

I’m sure if you have been on one of those flights, you felt the intense stab of fear in the pit of your stomach as the plane lurched up and down, side to side. Not knowing how long the frightening episode was going to last, or even if it was going to end safely, you may have cried, or even prayed or desperately told your dear ones, “I love you.” But why the change in behaviour?

After all, we all know we are going to die. Right?

This example illustrates what is, according to the bhakti-yoga wisdom, the world’s most truly amazing phenomenon: Every human being understands theoretically that his or

her life will end. History has shown us a 100 percent fatality rate, yet we live our lives as if “It won’t happen to me,” or at least, “Not now.”

It is only when we are forced by circumstances outside of our control to face our own mortality that we actually start to comprehend that death is a reality and we begin to behave accordingly.

## No time to kill time

Have you ever considered that, besides our birth, death is the single most significant experience we will have in this life? The demise of our present body means an abrupt and complete disconnection from all the relationships, assets, skills, prestige, and learning that we have struggled to acquire. It means an end to all that we associate with our bodily identity. It also means, for most, a journey into an unknown future. This begs the obvious question: “Why, unless we are forced to confront it, are we not concerned about our own death?”

One reason is that we have no time to be. Consumerism promises widespread peace and happiness: make money, climb the ladder of success, and struggle to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of relationships and possessions. *This* is what all our time is meant for.



## Charged up on social media and mobile mania, we just have no time to kill time.

Overwhelmed by the deluge of work-buy-consume propaganda, bamboozled by the one body, one life, one opportunity doctrine, most of us are far too busy to consider that everything we try so hard to achieve will be taken away by time. Charged up on social networking and smartphone mania, we just have no time to kill time.

### Living for the now

Another enemy of deep thinking today is the superficially tasty “Just be in the moment” pill. It would be rare to find an individual brave enough to challenge this one. Yet, this mantra does not apply in many situations, even to its most die-hard supporter.

Let’s take the example of renting a house. When our landlord gives us notice that we will have to move on, do we simply wait for the inevitable eviction because we don’t want to disturb “living for the now”? No. We make plans for where we are going before it happens because we understand that planning for the future is in our own self-interest.

For the same reason, we may give up the late Friday night thrills to study for that big exam or work overtime to show our boss we’re serious about upward mobility in our career. Assembling an earthquake kit, putting oil in our car, adding to a savings account, and brushing our teeth are a few more everyday examples of how we sensibly make plans today for tomorrow. But why is our prudent forward planning capacity limited to just this life?

Shouldn’t we also plan for the ultimate eviction: death?

## You only live once

Another reason we’re not concerned about time’s effect is that we, as nonmaterial beings, never actually expire. Intuitively understanding this, we therefore live as if we are not going to die because, well, we actually never do. Prime bhakti-yoga journal Bhagavad Gita explains:

“For the soul, there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.” (Bhagavad Gita 2.20)

In other words, we never die. Awesome! So why sweat it? The catch is that although the real self, because of its nonmaterial constitution, is never actually affected by time, the body it temporarily resides in, animates and identifies with, is.

And, because we misunderstand the body to be the self and the material realm to be our home, the spirit soul experiences the unnatural phenomenon of birth and death despite being unborn and immortal, and in this way suffers unnecessarily, life after life.

## Time to spend

What is the most amazing thing in the world? How about winning the lottery? Wouldn’t that be great? We could have whatever we want, right? Actually, statistics show that most lottery winners, although peaking the happiness metre just after their big win, end up back where they were on happiness indicators within the span of around three months. Some even end up more miserable than before they got lucky and curse the day the wealth entered their lives.

Stats aside, even if we had all the money in the world, we could not buy back one second of our lives. In other words, our time in this human body, the only truly priceless asset we have, is by far our most valuable resource. How we utilise that resource is of course up to us. Concerned with our welfare, however, the wise urge us to begin by asking ourselves the following question:

“Am I killing time or is it the other way around?”

It’s a good question, isn’t it?



Mahavan has been practising and teaching bhakti-yoga in New Zealand since 1997. He has an interest in photography and a special taste for fusing music with mantra meditation. If you’re in Wellington you can catch him often leading kirtan at Bhakti Lounge.



# LIVE a LIFE you will REMEMBER



## DJ Avicii's life and lyrics have a message for us all

Contributor Kadhiraavan

"One life, one shot, make it count." That's the motto of our age, I thought, as I contemplated the slogan plastered across the back of a tour bus from my apartment window. "Live a life you will remember..." the Swedish DJ Avicii's song lyric echoes the same message. But is that enough? Is it even the real goal?

I bring this question up now because I have been very sad to follow the death of DJ Avicii, the talented musician who appeared to have it all, but who suicided in April 2018 at only twenty-eight.

How deceptive the external appearance of another person's life can be. He was physically attractive, had model girlfriends, made millions of dollars, and was famed for all his musical and performance talent. He lived in a glamorous mansion constructed of glass, complete with an infinity-edge pool, and overlooking the glittering lights of that most famous city Los Angeles. What more could you want or need to be happy?

Perhaps the more ironic point was that Avicii's music was renowned for making people happy, with its optimistic hooks, euphoric drops, and captivating messages. Many comments on his music videos on YouTube after his death expressed this sentiment: "I used to listen to your music to make me happy, but when I listen to it now I just feel depressed . . . since you have taken your life." Avicii's tragic death shows something is wrong with our current conceptions of what brings happiness and success.





Like a fish out of water, nothing else suffices... Only when thrown back into its natural ocean habitat is the fish satisfied.

Contributing Photographic Artist **Mahavan**

Not that he appeared to be so invested in the fantasy of material happiness himself.

His transparency and his honesty about his struggles with a so-called enviable life attracted me to his story. He was open about his battle with alcohol, stress, and anxiety. Drinking would give him the confidence and courage he needed to perform before sometimes hundreds of thousands of fans in mammoth arenas with explosive light shows and special effects. Ironically, many said it was Avicii's music that initiated mainstream appeal for electronic dance music and this meant they *could* pack out huge arenas with tons of fans. But eventually, crippled by anxiety about doing shows, he could not continue and finally retired from touring in 2016 at age twenty-six.

Avicii revealed openly what so many are afraid to admit—our attempts at happiness often leave us frustrated and empty. He commented in an interview with *Rolling Stone* in 2017: “The one thing that kept me from stopping [touring as a DJ] was that I felt weird—why . . . can't I enjoy this like all the other DJs? But I'm starting to realize that a lot of the DJs who look excited at every show have the same thoughts.” And in *True Stories*, a gritty documentary about his touring days, he describes, “At first you get a kick out of it, like jumping out of a plane.” But then what? Yep, you can adapt to material happiness even when it comes on the mega scale.

### Ever felt “I don't belong here?”

Why is having it all not enough? Avicii's understanding that material success does not equal happiness, mirrors the conclusions of yoga philosophy. Simply put, we are meant for a much higher purpose: our own enlightenment. Not for attaining external, material goals. These can't satisfy the inner self, which instead needs nonmaterial sources of pleasure to be fulfilled.



Contributing Artist **Baladeva Nitai**





Like a fish out of water, nothing else suffices—all the luxuries that money can buy, all the attention and worship we can give it, can't make the fish comfortable. Only when thrown back into its natural ocean habitat is the fish satisfied. In the same way, only in an environment of nonmaterial sources of pleasure can the deep self be peaceful and happy.

Following Avicii's death, his family released this memorial statement (published in *Rolling Stone*, 26 April 2018):

Our beloved Tim was a seeker, a fragile artistic soul searching for answers to existential questions. An over-achieving perfectionist who traveled and worked hard at a pace that led to extreme stress. When he stopped touring, he wanted to find a balance in life to be happy and be able to do what he loved most—music. He really struggled with thoughts about Meaning, Life, Happiness. He could not go on any longer.

He wanted to find peace.

Tim was not made for the business machine he found himself in; he was a sensitive guy who loved his fans but shunned the spotlight.

Tim, you will forever be loved and sadly missed.

The person you were and your music will keep your memory alive.

I would hope that we *all* search for answers to existential questions, and—with all due respect to Avicii's family at a devastating time—that it isn't just the "fragile artistic soul" who grapples with "thoughts about Meaning, Life, and Happiness."

STOP THE WORLD  
I want to get off  
I'M SICK FROM  
THE RIDE.

Shouldn't we all wonder why life is so difficult, so meaningless, and so empty, despite the materialistic propaganda? Some of us can't take the senseless grind, and some just soldier on thinking they can take it until a crisis happens, or until they finally have to face the impending doom at natural death's door. I myself couldn't take it. My friends even told me that I was one of those "fragile ones" and that they were stronger for fighting through the pain, taking hit after hit. But if a house is on fire or a ship is going down, I feel it's time to get out, my friends. I bolted at twenty-one.

I could finally escape because I was fortunate enough to discover the portal to make that exit: genuine spiritual knowledge. Without this, suicide can seem like the best solution. Stop the world; I want to get off. I'm sick from

the ride. But what if there is a totally different way to ride life that doesn't make you sick but makes you well? What if our present ride is not ultimately the real ride, and we are supposed to be doing something else, somewhere else? Who told us that the hunt for this brand of temporary and ultimately disappointing happiness is all there is to life and that there is no higher reality?

### Beyond the daily grind

The perspective of the bhakti-yoga science affirms and applauds Avicii's searching and his concerns. The wisdom advises, "*Athato brahma jijñasa*": Having attained this rare human form, as a spiritual being now is the time to inquire about the truth—who are you really beyond this temporary body, mind, and life, and what greater total reality are you part of? The big questions.

And how can we find the answers to such big questions? The famous bhakti texts, starting with Bhagavad Gita, are designed to nourish the seeker. These texts invite you into the reality beyond what life *seems* to be about.

And, Why would that knowledge apply to all of us? you might ask. Aren't we supposed to create our *own* meaning and happiness in life?

The bhakti-yoga science, (and the whole of the yoga tradition) explains that a higher cosmic intelligence already knows us and knows how we work—how everything works. We are not independent random occurrences of personality; we are all composed and directed by the laws of nature coming from that intelligence that governs everything in reality. Dig down deep enough and we all have the same basic existential issues and roots as each other.

Isn't it time to find out the meaning of our lives and our real purpose, beyond material goals like wealth, beauty, popularity, and status? Because these don't cut it—their flavour is fleeting. So many of us know this, or find out pretty quick, but just don't know what to do instead. Some choose for now to keep fighting the fight, thinking they just haven't tried hard enough.

### Conscious awareness does not end

The yoga wisdom reminds us again and again that pursuit of material success gives only temporary and inferior pleasure and that human life is really meant for pursuing our enlightenment, and then helping others do the same. That's where real happiness lives. We don't want another precious person to waste his or her valuable life without some genuine nonmaterial knowledge and experience to guide the search for purpose. I feel sad that Avicii had not yet uncovered such knowledge to solace his soul, as he rightfully ached for real meaning and happiness.

RIP everyone writes—but how will a tortured soul rest in peace? Unfortunately, suicide offers no end to our conscious awareness. As consciousness, we continue to live in a different body and environment according to our karma, or past action. Instead, we need to know the true art of peacefulness. We are a part of the whole, but what or who is the whole? And what is our relationship with that supreme whole? Underneath inevitable mental and physical difficulties, that relationship is what we are missing—that lack of connection and purpose leaves the gap that becomes anxiety, stress, loneliness, substance dependence, and lack of meaning. A sense of cosmic dislocation.

My hope is that one day, one lifetime, as soon as possible, after finding comprehensive spiritual knowledge and dynamic spiritual experience, Avicii (and all of us) can truly rest in peace. Since the real self continues beyond the death of this particular body, that is still entirely possible for Avicii.

*One who is not connected with the Supreme [in Krishna consciousness] can have neither transcendental intelligence nor a steady mind, without which there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be any happiness without peace? (Bhagavad Gita 2.66)*



Khadiravan has been practising bhakti-yoga since 1997. Within that time she studied for a doctorate in Indovedic psychology—psychology as described in the ancient yoga tradition. She conducts yoga psychology workshops and leads kirtan nights (mantra and music meditation) at Bhakti Lounge, Wellington.



# RESCUING TOMORROW

HEROIC KIDS STRIKE BACK

Contributor Devamrita Swami





It's 3:23 in the morning  
and I'm awake  
because my great great grandchildren  
won't let me sleep  
my great great grandchildren  
ask me in dreams  
what did you do while the planet was plundered?  
what did you do when the earth was unraveling?<sup>1</sup>

—Drew Dellinger, poet.

"Why the jam this time of day!" Fearing for my event at the University of Melbourne, I appealed to the anxious driver—as if an explanation would levitate the car over the bottleneck. The unexpected gridlock did, however, grant me more time to contemplate the assigned topic of my talk: "Yoga, meditation, and heroism."

Then we saw them: throngs of kids everywhere. Thousands of them—marching in the street, halting traffic, startling bystanders. Jolted and baffled, the business-as-usual central city succumbed to this boisterous sea of young ones holding high waves of colourfully creative placards and banners:

Climate Change Is Worse Than Homework

Don't be a Fossil Fool

Save Our Planet

The Climate Is Changing—Why Aren't We?

Ten minutes late for my university presentation, I hurried to the front of a packed lecture hall—the waiting crowd abuzz with enthusiasm for the youngsters' protest. They saw the kids as valiant crusaders—venerated in Aussie lore as "battlers."

Agreeing, I proposed to the university students that the kids' gutsiness could drive us deeper, into the all-encompassing valour of bhakti-yoga and its heroes. Hearing about a perfected child-yogi who incited his schoolmates against materialism—surely that would raise the bar for lionheartedness.

Can a mere five-year-old stand up to an extraordinarily brutish father? The bhakti-yoga texts tell of an ancient tyrant ruthlessly wielding power and terror—on a mass scale that makes today's malefic leaders appear trivial. His young son, however, was the model of gentleness, sense-control, and yogic smarts.

### Confronting reality: destiny's children

Though the campus in Melbourne was lively that day, the primary and secondary schools throughout the nation were unusually quiet. An estimated 15,000 preteen and

**Defying an order by the  
prime minister to stay in  
class, the youth demanded  
an end to climate inaction.  
The inheritors of tomorrow  
wanted their voices  
heard today.**

teenage students, from more than two hundred schools had skipped class to amass on the streets.

Defying an order by the prime minister to stay in class, the youth demanded an end to climate inaction. The inheritors of tomorrow wanted their voices heard today. They "get it." They know the most severe consequences of future environmental havoc will hit their generation. Their baby, "Strike 4 Climate Action," has now merged into an international movement. More of the marchers' provoking placards:

System Change, Not Climate Change

Don't Burn Our Future

The Sea Level Is Rising--So Are We

There are No Jobs on a Dead Planet

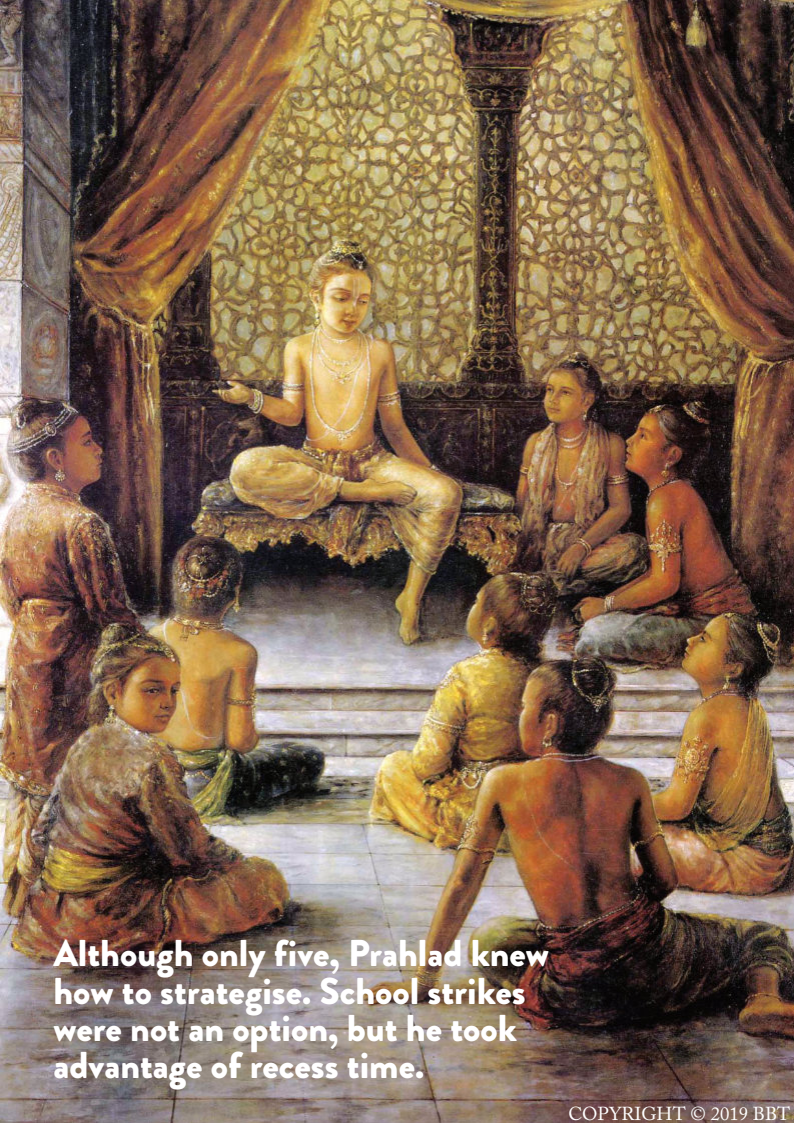
Their nation hit by historic wild fires, unprecedented floods, and record droughts, no wonder the kids campaigned to capture the government's attention. Some kindergarten-age children, although living in normally farmable parts of Australia, have never even seen rain in their life.

Top level federal government officials quickly condemned the nationwide protest, instructing the kids to stick to their classes and trust environmental issues to their politicians. But parents supporting the march countered that their children are indeed getting stuck into their studies—which happen to include what science says about the climate crisis.

The next generation sounded off with renowned Australian aplomb: "The prime minister says we should return to our classes; we say, only if he comes with us—to study ecology."

"If the prime minister wants children to stop acting like a parliament, then maybe Parliament should stop acting like children." Another sign taunted the federal crew of government ministers: "I've seen better cabinets at IKEA."





**Although only five, Prahlad knew how to strategise. School strikes were not an option, but he took advantage of recess time.**

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Rich in natural resources, Australia is the world's biggest exporter of coal, and second for liquefied natural gas. No doubt the government's resources minister felt entitled to offer the juvenile marchers his vision for the environment and their future:

"I want kids to be at school to learn about how you build a mine, how you do geology, how you drill for oil and gas . . . these are the type of things that excite young children."

Outdoing the resources minister, other government leaders launched the ultimate counterattack: the fearsome sugary snack stratagem. "Instead of skipping school to protest, if you kids are really worried about lowering emissions, then, for two months, you should swear off ice-cream!"

### **Sifting the rubble: where is humanity?**

The incomparable yoga text *Shrimad Bhagavatam* presents an in-depth account of the pre-eminent child activist, Prahlad. Although his father embraced materialism and hedonism to the extreme, the spiritually gifted little boy radiated divine knowledge and transcendental qualities—he was truly conscious of Krishna, yoga's ultimate goal.

At first, naturally, the iron-fisted tyrant did love his boy. But upon discovering Prahlad's intense nonmaterial focus, the despot raged endlessly, even plotting to kill his own son. Finally, rather than murder, he settled on education, as the most practical solution.

His plan was for special tutors to reformat Prahlad's intelligence—erasing all his spiritual aspirations and installing materialistic determination. The child, once secularly single-minded, would become his family's future hope for expanding the depraved dynasty's economic power, political control, resource exploitation, and sensual indulgence.

**From the earliest age possible, even in tender childhood, someone genuinely intelligent begins bhakti-yoga, the science of the ultimate connection.**

Although only five, Prahlad knew how to strategise. School strikes were not an option, but he took advantage of recess time. While the teachers relaxed during break, the students would play outside. Ignoring his schoolmates' request to sport with them, Prahlad gathered them together to give his own lessons.

The children, setting aside their playthings, surrounded Prahlad, their hearts and eyes fixed on him, earnestly ready to hear. Relishing the precocious child-yogi's radiance, they showered him with affection and respect.

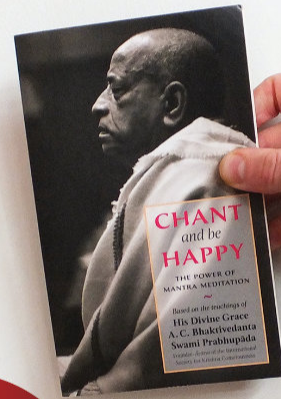
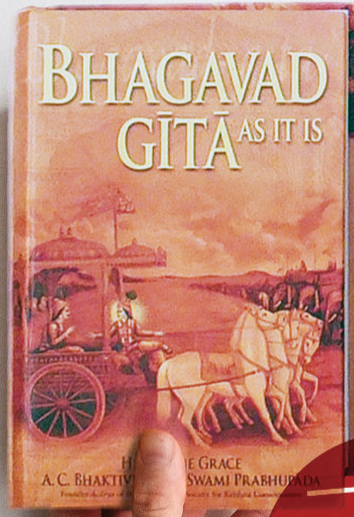
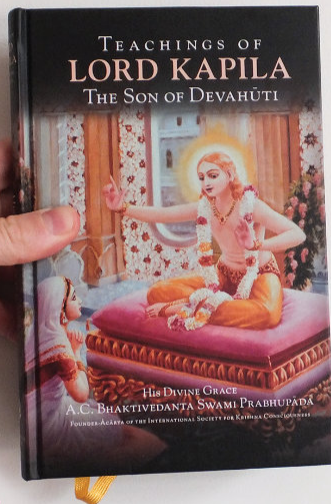
Smiling upon them, Prahlad knew that their materialistic upbringing and education was distorting their life, blocking the path to real happiness. As their peer, while teaching them, he could lovingly laugh at them.

Because of childish innocence, Prahlad's friends were not yet steeped in the zealous materialism of their fathers. Therefore, Prahlad, desiring their greatest welfare, saw the opportunity and seized it. He began instructing them in the futility of their family's hallucinogenic brand of human progress and civilisation. Always kind-hearted, he addressed his little friends with sweet yet profound words:

"From the earliest age possible, even in tender childhood, someone genuinely intelligent begins bhakti-yoga, the science of the ultimate connection. The human body, a rare asset in nature, bestows upon its owner a special mandate. Although temporary like other material bodies, the human form is uniquely valuable, because it



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awards the special gift of fully developed consciousness. That unique capability has only one main purpose: self-realization, enlightenment.” (Shrimad Bhagavatam 7.6.1)

Even more challenging, cutting to the heart of humanity’s 24/7 problems, Prahlad urged his schoolmates to cast off the economic mania their parents feverishly embraced:

“The fanatical emphasis on economic growth, for the sake of magnifying material happiness and gratification, must be abandoned. Such a distorted prioritization leads to a tragic wastage of human time and energy. Beyond a temporary, superficial gain, where is the actual substantial benefit—essential profit that will endure? Better aim for bhakti consciousness, the spiritual lifestyle of the Love Supreme. Worshipping economic growth yields absolutely no comparable benefits.” (Srimad Bhagavatam 7.6.4)

Think of Prahlad whenever you hear the motto “Be the change you want to see in the world.” Even as a child, Prahlad exemplified the complete holistic transformation required for rescuing the planet. “Activism is my rent for living on the planet,” said the American literary luminary Alice Walker. Although from childhood a perfected yogi and meditator in devotion, Prahlad demonstrated the most essential and universal activism.

“O my little friends, fellow sons of the depraved! In material existence, even those apparently advanced in education like to consider, “These resources are almost exclusively mine—what may remain can be for the

others.’ Like uneducated canines and felines, they focus on fulfilling wants and needs according to their restrictive material conception of family, community, nation, and bloc of nations. Bewildered, unable to assimilate spiritual knowledge, they submerge deeper into ignorance.” (Shrimad Bhagavatam 7.6.16)

After the sudden violent death of his brutally oppressive father, Prahlad would inaugurate a new regime, fulfilling the people’s ordinary needs while facilitating their gradual progress beyond bodily and mental demands. He knew that the high road to transcendence must begin with ending the exploitation of nature and stopping the unnecessary suffering of all living beings.

His legacy famous in yoga circles, Prahlad’s system of spiritual governance is important for everyone today, especially leaders. To hope we can achieve the correction and rejuvenation of the planet, we need at least shades of his superlative combination: bhakti-yoga mystic, transcendental philosopher, and chief executive.

<sup>1</sup>From the poem “Hieroglyphic Stairway.” Drew Dellinger, *Love Letter to the Milky Way* (Whitecloud Press, 2011)



Devamrita Swami is an international speaker, author, Yale graduate, and monk. Travelling extensively on every inhabited continent of the planet, he has been sharing the path of bhakti-yoga with others for over forty years. He advocates spiritually based economics, sustainability, and environmentalism. When he is not travelling, he calls New Zealand home.



# Bhakti

An encounter with post-nirvana love.

Contributor **Sachi Dulal**

In the face of death and devastation, does love have any meaning?

I would spend pensive teenage minutes grappling with this question. I would ponder how we live by love and longing, only to fade away like autumnal frost, leaving our loved ones to struggle with a casket of memories and the anguish of loss.

This existential unease continued to afflict me during my first year at university, where I encountered Buddhism and immersed myself in its teachings.

## Diving into Buddhism

The goal of Buddhism is straightforward: to help us reach a state where we don't experience any suffering. Buddhist teachings begin by pinpointing the cause of *dukkha* (Sanskrit for suffering). They describe a sequence of twelve interdependent factors that constitute the cause-and-effect process of suffering.<sup>1</sup>

*Avidya* (ignorance) about the true nature of reality is the first and vital link on this twelve-fold causal chain of suffering. Ignorance drags us down and embeds us into material existence: where we crave for and strive to experience pleasurable sensations and avoid painful ones. In the process, we act with body, speech, and mind to create the karma that forces us to be reborn in one mortal body after another. In this way, we remain trapped in the cycle of rebirth and death, experiencing the inevitable lamentation and sorrow that accompanies old age, disease, and death.

How do we free ourselves from this cycle of *samsara*, the cycle of repeated birth and death?

The Buddhist answer: eliminate the cause and you will eliminate the effect. That is, if ignorance about the true nature of reality is the first link in the twelve-fold causal chain of suffering, by eliminating ignorance, we eliminate the entire twelve-fold network of suffering and our entanglement in the cycle of rebirth and death.

To help us eradicate ignorance Buddha famously taught the Noble Eightfold Path. Buddhism teaches that by

treading this path we awaken to the true nature of reality and our innate Buddha nature to finally achieve *nirvana*—the summum bonum destination of the Eightfold Path.

The word *vana* means *blowing* (of wind, tide, or fire). *Nirvana* means *without vana*, and within Buddhist tradition, it is interpreted to mean the "blowing out" or extinction of the "three fires" of passion (*raga*), aversion (*dvesha*) and ignorance (*avidya*). When these *fires* are completely extinguished, we gain release from the cycle of rebirth and enter the state of nirvana: a state free from all suffering.

## Doubting Buddhism

The more I delved into Buddhist teachings the more they validated my longing for transcendence. Yet, although I admired the pragmatic and rational nature of Buddhist teachings, a persistent doubt assailed me.

If I had the potential to experience Buddha nature or nirvana, then why was I not experiencing that state now? In Buddhism, the answer to this question is that the origin of my suffering—my entrapment in the cycle of rebirth and death—is due to ignorance. But this answer begs the question: Why have I come under the influence of ignorance?

If ignorance is currently obscuring our pristine awareness of reality and causing countless sentient beings to rotate in the wheel of *samsara*, then it implies that ignorance has power over us. It implies the existence of a power greater than us: a power controlling us.

Why does this power of ignorance exist and who or what caused this all-pervading power to come into existence? I could find no satisfactory answers to these questions in Buddhism. Not only was the Buddha famously silent about questions regarding ultimate origins, he was silent about serious metaphysical questions as well.

Along with my intellect, my heart raised another cloud of doubt about Buddhist teachings. As with matters of the heart, I couldn't quite articulate this doubt till much later in my life. But when I watched the Academy Award-winning martial arts film *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, this doubt bubbled up to the surface of my consciousness.

In the final scenes of this film, the accomplished swordsman Li Mu Bai, fatally poisoned by a dart thrown by his mortal enemy, lies dying in the arms of Yu Shu Lien, a female warrior. Over the course of their lives, Mu Bai and Shu Lien had developed romantic feelings for each other, but they never acknowledged or acted on them. The following dialogue occurs just before Li Mu Bai is about to die:

Li: My life is departing. I've only one breath left.





*Contributing Artist Kardami Kapila*

**Does the state of nirvana  
allow for what we desire  
most—loving exchanges  
between persons?**

**To this question, Buddhism  
offers no clear answer.**





We may create an identity where we say: “I am Kiwi, I am a socialist, I like rock music, I am vegan, I am a mother, and I am a pacifist,” but all these labels that constitute this “I” are subject to change with the passing of time.



Yu: Use your last bit of strength to meditate. Free yourself from this world as you've been taught. Let your soul rise to eternity with your last breath. Don't waste it on me.

Li: I've already wasted my whole life. I want to tell you with my remaining strength, that I love you, I always have. I'll drift next to you every day as a ghost just to be with you. Even if I was banished to the darkest place, my love will keep me from being a lonely spirit.

Pardon the romance-heavy movie script. But Li Mu Bai's inner conflict raises a compelling question: Does the promise of an eternal state free from suffering override the promise of loving exchanges in a world full of suffering? More specifically, does the state of nirvana allow for what we desire most—loving exchanges between persons?

To this question, Buddhism offers no clear answer.

### Inspired by Bhagavad Gita

After four years of studying different Buddhist texts and listening to different Buddhist teachers, I admired Buddhism enough to identify as a Buddhist, yet, I couldn't place my confidence completely in the Buddhist goal of nirvana. At this time, merged in a state of simultaneous confusion and introspection, I found the *Bhagavad Gita As It Is*, or more accurately, the Gita found me.

I discovered remarkable parallels between the Gita's teachings and many Buddhist teachings. With Buddhism, the Gita agreed that all phenomena in this *material* reality are *shunya* or empty; all phenomena arise and exist in dependence upon other phenomena. However, the Gita says that the principle of emptiness does not apply in the spiritual reality. In the spiritual reality, everything is self-existent and sentient.

The medieval Tibetan Buddhist yogi Dombipa also argued that emptiness only applies to material reality. He held that "whereas a critique from the point of view of emptiness seems to erase the conventional world from existence, further contemplation will show that there is an extraordinary world left over after the critique, a sacred world full of nonconventional beings and things."<sup>2</sup>

The Gita specifically and directly points to this sacred world of nonconventional beings and things. Just as in Buddhism, the Gita teaches that there is no independent self to be found within bodily or mental content. What we usually call "I" is merely the conglomeration of ever-changing, interdependent physical and psychological designations. Put differently, we may create an identity where we say: "I am Kiwi, I am a socialist, I like rock music, I am vegan, I am a mother, and I am a pacifist," but all these labels that constitute this "I" are subject to change

with the passing of time. Even if some of these labels do not change during our lifetime, at the time of death, with the disintegration of the body, all these designations that we have set up around our body will disintegrate as well.

In this way, the Gita lucidly differentiates temporary bodily and mental designations from the authentic self. The Gita distinguishes what is *not* the self only to help pave the way to understand what *is* the transcendent spiritual self: an idea also enunciated in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* belonging to the *Mahāyāna* Buddhist tradition. The sutra states:

If the non-eternal is made away with [in nirvana], what there remains must be the Eternal; if there is no more any sorrow, what there remains must be Bliss; if there is no more any non-Self, what exists there must be the Self; if there is no longer anything that is impure, what there is must be the Pure.<sup>3</sup>

Many sutras of the *Mahāyāna* Buddhist tradition likewise describe a real, permanent self in all sentient beings.<sup>4</sup> They describe that this permanent self is beyond egoistic greed and grasping—it is the very opposite of the selfish ego. This genuine, eternal self is precisely our Buddha-nature, which enables sentient beings to become fully enlightened or Buddhas. Indeed, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* describes ultimate nirvana<sup>5</sup> as the realm of the eternal true self of the Buddha.

But this leads us straight back to the question that vexed me in my Buddhist studies. If I have the potential to awaken to my Buddha-nature and attain ultimate nirvana, then why am I under the influence of ignorance?

Significantly, I found that the Gita does address this question. In doing so, the Gita also introduced me to *bhakti*: post-nirvana love.

### Bhakti: post-nirvana love

In the Gita, Krishna describes himself as the eternal, self-existent, Supreme Person from whom everything emanates. That is, both unconscious matter and conscious beings come from Krishna.

The Gita says that all conscious beings are infinitesimal parts of the Supreme Conscious Being, Krishna. All conscious beings are qualitatively one with Krishna; but Krishna, the Supreme Conscious Being, being the source and sustainer of all that exists, is infinitely greater in power.

In our pure state, we relate to Krishna in a reciprocal relationship of ever-increasing love. But love can only exist when it is freely given. By misusing our choice-capacity, we can choose to turn away from our eternal loving relationship with Krishna and embark on an agenda to



control and enjoy separate from Krishna. Krishna manifests innumerable material universes to accommodate those rebellious conscious beings who choose to do so.

But to successfully carry out the experiment of life independent from the Supreme, we need to forget our true identity and our relationship with the Supreme. Therefore, the material realm is governed by *maya*: Krishna's energy of ignorance. *Maya* exists to facilitate our attempt to experience an illusion—an existence separate from the Supreme. Under the influence of *maya*, we enter a state of spiritual amnesia where we forget our eternal spiritual identity in joyful relationship to the Supreme Person. In this state of forgetfulness, we try to seek pleasure in material reality, a reality dominated by *kala* or time, another of Krishna's energies.

When we desire to seek pleasure in a reality dominated by time, we are inevitably and perpetually frustrated. Repeatedly born into mortal bodies and then being forced to give them up, we eventually tire of the quest to enjoy transient stuff and set our sights on nirvana: liberation from all existential suffering.

Krishna acknowledges this desire for nirvana as the legitimate longing of any rational human being. Five times in the Gita, Krishna gives nirvana as a spiritual goal and in the first four instances he qualifies it as *brahma-nirvana*.

The term *nirvana* implies a process of negation; a state where all lust, selfish material desire, and ignorance have been negated. But after all that negation, what remains? Krishna's term *brahma-nirvana* tells us what. After extinguishing the fire of material desire and ignorance, we regain awareness of *brahman*: our eternal, unchanging, blissful, spiritual self.

Once awakened to our transcendent, eternal self (our Buddha-nature), we are equipped to see that same transcendent self in all living beings. This vision of spiritual equality invokes our compassion for all beings—this vision of spiritual equality is the prerequisite for genuine peace, both individually and globally.

Amazingly, the Gita clarifies that *brahma-nirvana* is not the culmination of spiritual evolution. Rather, after regaining awareness of our true eternal self, we begin to revive awareness of our relationship with our ultimate source: Krishna. The Gita clarifies that as infinitesimal spiritual beings originating from the Supreme, we are irrevocably and lovingly related to the Supreme. But encased within material bodies and enveloped by ignorance, our original love for the Supreme displays as the desire to selfishly exploit other beings and things.

*Brahma-nirvana* is the first step in removing our existential ignorance and reawakening to our spiritual nature. In

*brahma-nirvana* we experience indescribable peace and heightened kindness (*maitri* or *metta* in Buddhist terminology) toward all living beings.

But the Gita teaches that beyond *brahma-nirvana* is our original state of *bhakti*—a state where the spiritual self is gifted back what she had lost—her eternal, unwavering loving relationship with the supreme person. The Gita makes clear that Krishna is the *all-inclusive* Supreme Person,<sup>6</sup> meaning that all beings come from and are included within Krishna, and so, when we revive our love for Krishna, this love includes deep compassion for all beings.

The Gita reassures us that our desire for loving exchanges with other persons need not be extinguished. Indeed, it cannot, for it is our essence. We cannot eliminate our desire for personal loving exchanges but we can elevate it to its original spiritual position. To help us do this, the Gita teaches us how to reawaken our eternal *bhakti*: our original pure consciousness.

Krishna brings those who have revived their inherent *bhakti* back to his inconceivable eternal realm, where they again become situated in their eternal spiritual form and personhood, and delight in dynamic loving exchanges with him. And to help us rekindle our innate *bhakti*—*post-nirvana love*—Krishna spoke the wondrous Gita.

The Gita's message captivated both my intellect and my heart, and if you allow it, my dear readers, the Gita will captivate you too.

1. The entire twelve-fold sequence is known in Buddhist tradition as the *twelve links of dependent origination* or the *twelve nidanas*. Here, I have presented a summary of the process.

2. Robin Kornman, "On This You Can Rely (As Time Goes By)," *Shambhala Sun* 9, no. 4, (March 2001): 77-79.

3. Kosho Yamamoto, *Mahayanism: A Critical Exposition of the Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, (Karibunko, Tokyo) 107-108, 1975.

4. These sutras have come to be known as the *Tathagatagarbha* sutras.

5. In Buddhism, there is a distinction between nirvana, which can be attained during one's lifetime, and ultimate nirvana (*parinirvana*). The term *parinirvana* is used to refer to *nirvana-after-death*, which occurs upon the death of the body of someone who has attained *nirvana* during his or her lifetime. It implies a final and complete release from *samsara*.

6. See *Bhagavad Gita As It Is* (7.4-7, 9.4-5, and 10.8).



Sachi Dulal first read *Bhagavad Gita As It Is* in 2005, while completing a masters degree in environmental science. Finding Krishna's teachings rational and relevant, he took up the practice of *bhakti-yoga* soon after. He loves to write about the intersect of life, philosophy, and Krishna knowledge.



# TELL YOUR (SLIGHTLY ALTERNATIVE) MATES



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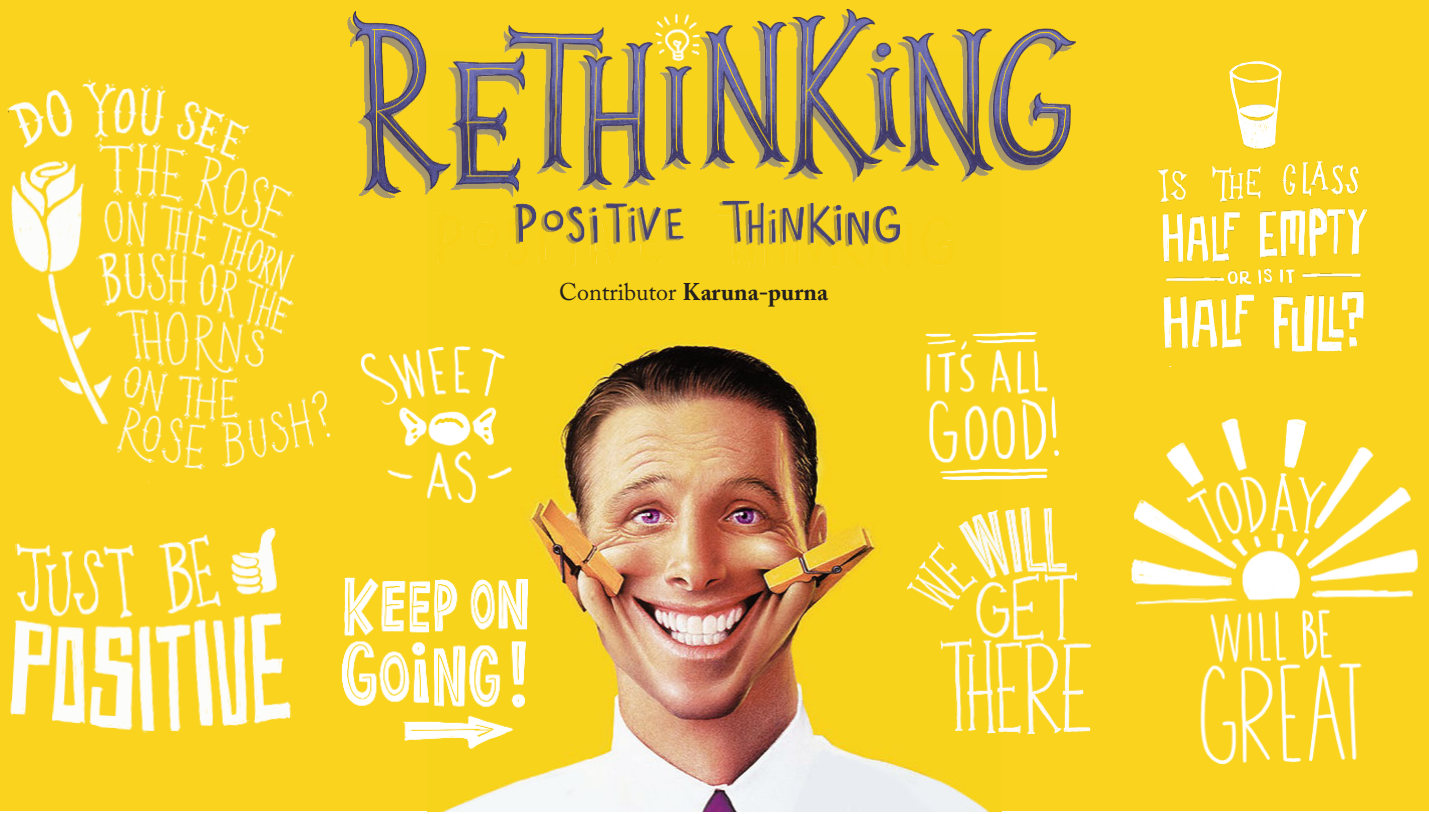
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**“The fundamental negative thinking is thinking that happiness is to be found only in matter.”<sup>1</sup>**

- Chaitanya Charan

Rhiannon wishes she could turn away from watching the news, like many of us who find it depressing. “We now live in dark, depressing, God-awful times,”<sup>2</sup> she writes, regretting that it is not an option for a journalist to stop watching the news. A little piece of good news such as the discovery of a new dinosaur species keeps Rhiannon going through the gloom. Such positive news is her go-to shelter from the bad news.

No doubt, positive psychology and optimistic attitudes can enrich our inner world and control the impact of seemingly endless bad news in the troubled times we live. But is this outlook a progressive solution or just a mental escape?

Applying her logic, Rhiannon writes, “The cognitive behavioural therapy technique of countering, which involves contradicting a negative thought with opposing evidence, can, with practice, become an automatic reflex. So while Pope Francis might claim that ‘the Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth’, I could equally say: ‘Well, that might be, but in Ramsbottom, near Bury, a woman called Mary Bell just celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday by flying a plane over her care home. The glow from that should, I hope, get me through the winter.’”<sup>3</sup>

A positive attitude, as shown by Mary, helps us see opportunities rather than obstacles.

Do you see the rose on the thorn bush or do you complain about the thorns on the rose bush?

Is the glass half empty or is it half full?

Can the power of positive thinking create substantial solutions to real problems in life?

If we apply this way of thinking rigidly and without thought, we may prevent ourselves from finding solutions. Let’s say we get lost while driving in Auckland because we have been viewing a map of Wellington. Although a positive attitude may prevent us from feeling discouraged, “Just be positive! Keep on going! We will get there!” that attitude may also prevent us from asking the fundamental question we need to ask to help us find our way: “Could my map be wrong?”

**The niggling anxiety deep down when you’re in that perfect moment with the perfect person doing what you love the most, reminds you - it won’t last.**

In the same vein, the bhakti-yogi would suggest that we ask ourselves about how we are navigating our lives in our complex situations: “Could my map of *reality* be wrong?” In the language of the Bhagavad Gita (described as a map of how to become free of the material context), this would translate into asking: “Am I *sat* or *asat*? Am I material or am I spiritual? Temporary or eternal?” And how does Krishna (one of the names describing the Supreme all-attractive personality, the source of both matter and spirit) respond? He says, “You are an eternal being, trapped in a

## By giving matter monopoly over our conceptions of happiness, we lock ourselves in a doomed pursuit – seeking the lasting in the fleeting.

temporary body in a temporary world. The problem is that you identify with matter. If you think that you are matter, you have the wrong map of life.”

We long for a life full of love and positive experiences. And when they are present we want them to never end – we want eternal happiness. Gita wisdom explains that this longing comes from our spiritual core: the eternal soul, which longs for eternal fulfilment. Material reality, being perishable, is incapable of living up to our expectations of happiness.

We all know that matter cannot satisfy us. Not deeply, truly, fully. How long will the pleasure from that newly acquired suit or dress last? Does the latest iPhone model make you feel that yours is lacking something? The niggling anxiety deep down when you're in that perfect moment with the perfect person doing what you love the most, reminds you it won't last. By giving matter monopoly over our conceptions of happiness, we lock ourselves in a doomed pursuit—seeking the lasting in the fleeting.

When we recognise the nonmaterial dimension to life, we take positive thinking to a higher level. Only then can we use positive thinking as a tool to transform our inner world, for good. Otherwise, how much can positive thinking really help in the face of life's most testing circumstances such as the sudden death of a loved one or the news of a terminal illness? At these times we may use a positive attitude to reduce mental suffering, but inevitable death will present a brutal reality and rip everything away.

### Positive connections

Changing our map of reality to one that explains both matter and spirit will give us a clearer, more complete picture of the intricacies of life. It will help us understand who we are, what we are meant to be doing and why we sometimes enjoy and sometimes suffer. By gaining knowledge and experience of our spiritual self we can address and fulfill our deeper needs. What the soul really needs is a complete understanding of reality, lasting loving relationships, ever increasing happiness, and real security—the lack of fear in the face of temporariness. Fulfilling these needs, we can truly raise ourselves to a new level of positivity. One that is not shaken by external turmoil.

To experience eternity even while living in the world of temporariness sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it? But Krishna explains it is possible, with yoga. Yoga means connectivity. In this age of smart phones and Wi-Fi, we



may feel constantly connected—and that we have never been more connected throughout history. But our connections tend to be superficial. In yoga—or more specifically in bhakti-yoga, a crucial connection is established with Krishna, our original source.

This connection between the individual soul and Krishna is one of love and devotion. By engaging our intelligence and emotions in the scientific process of bhakti-yoga we access a deeper level of happiness and satisfaction, beyond that gained from material experiences. Inspired by higher spiritual happiness, we therefore use material things without being enamoured by them. In this way, we not only think positively about reality, we connect to the positive nonmaterial reality. No matter what life throws at us, the strength and vision gained from being connected to that higher reality empowers us to deal with it from a place of true positivity.

Are you satisfied with the odd piece of good news or do you want to go deeper? True positivity begins with asking yourself, do you have the right map for life?

1. Caitanya Charan *Gita Wisdom Through Quotes* 6 May 2018

2. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/06/good-news-glow-why-im-searching-for-positive-stories-in-these-dark-times>


3. Ibid



Karuna-purna was born in Sweden and trained as a horse-riding instructor. Now she teaches bhakti-yoga philosophy and meditation in Wellington, New Zealand. She works in the natural health field and has an interest in Ayurvedic medicine and positive psychology. She loves gardening and connecting with nature.



# THE YOGA OF HARRY POTTER AND YOUR LAST DAY AS A MUGGLE



Contributor **Abeer Saha**



Readers of Harry Potter everywhere will fondly recall J.K. Rowling's memorable opening sentence: "Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much." We all try so hard to be normal. We spend much of our time trying to fit-in; wearing everyone else's clothes, listening to everyone else's music, hanging out at everyone else's favorite spots, ad nauseam. Let's face it, there's an obsessively-conformist, magically-numb muggle in us all. Being different, even a little odd, is a nightmare of Dursleyan proportions that most of us know (and fear) all too well. The magical world, however, has no room for such muggle-mindedness, and neither does the world of yoga.

The Harry Potter series starts off with a dreary glimpse into the life of the Dursleys—muggles of a caliber that "didn't approve of imagination." For a children's book, this first chapter is a penetrating commentary on the existentially-paralyzing monotony of a modern, mundane existence, to which both J.K. Rowling and yoga wisdom offer us an alternative.

Most muggles are satisfied to believe that what they cannot see does not exist. In a society where everyone is conditioned to turn a blind eye to things mysterious and inexplicable, in the name of "rationality" and the search for "progress," is it any wonder that all that is magical about life remains largely invisible to the consumption-frenzied and overstimulated masses? But witches and wizards, as well as yogis, are keenly aware of a world beyond the veil of anti-muggle charms and *maya* (the Sanskrit term for an illusory attribution of permanence to the temporary things of our world.) Daring to stray down the road less traveled, both yogis and magicians, seek out a realm beyond the ordinary and the visible, and strive to reach the fullest potential of the awakened, magical self.

Witches and wizards rise above the rigmarole of daily life through magic, and yogis transcend it through mysticism. What a witch achieves through magical blood, a yogini achieves through meditation. What for a wizard is a spell or a curse, for a yogi is a mantra or a *siddhi* (mystic perfection). Witches and wizards employ wands to conduct magic, whereas yoga practitioners use meditation beads. For every magical creature in Harry's world, there is a mystical being in the yogic universe. For every divination teacher like Professor Trelawney, there is a fraud astrologer in the garb of a yogi... the parallels and comparisons between the world of yoga and the world of magic abound. But every Potter fan knows that what makes the books magical is hardly a product of charms and potions. Love is at the heart of Rowling's epic, and this too the books share with the philosophy of yoga.

Rowling has peered into her own heart and found what lies at the core of all hearts: a desire to love and be loved. The wholeheartedly loving and trusting relationships that Harry builds with Ron, Hermione, Hagrid, and Dumbledore, lie at the core of the books. And it is these heartfelt connections that keep us

going back to them over and over again. Those who have entered into the mysteries of the yoga teachings have discovered that yoga is a process of preparing the heart for exactly such relationships. Cultivating such meaningful connections and a deep sense of belonging—not only with other yogis but with all of reality—is an essential theme of mystical yoga practice.

Arguably the most influential person in Harry's life is Albus Dumbledore, his teacher, guide, and inspiration. Dumbledore's role in Harry's life is very similar to the role of a guru in the life of a yogi. A guru is a teacher of yogic wisdom who belongs to a lineage of teachers who have dedicated their lives to passing on the ways and secrets of yoga to their students. The relationship of a guru and a disciple mirrors Harry's connection with Dumbledore. It is one based not simply on learning, but on love and trust. There comes a time in the life of every yogi when they must embark on a search for their true guru, their very own Dumbledore.

In one sense, the Harry Potter saga begins and ends with unconditional love and an act of selfless sacrifice—first his mother's and then his own—which empowers Harry to

vanquish Voldemort. Even in this magical struggle for victory against the dark arts, we find a yogic parallel. As Harry had to defeat Voldemort, every yoga practitioner must overcome the tyranny of *maya*—the root of the dark arts and the veil of selfish desire that corrupts and contorts a clear vision of reality. And like it was for Harry, only an all-embracing, selfless love can free a yogi from the darkness of *maya* and uplift them into an enlightened vision of reality.

**As Harry had to defeat Voldemort, every yoga practitioner must overcome the tyranny of *maya*—the root of the dark arts and the veil of selfish desire that corrupts and contorts a clear vision of reality.**

These parallels between the world of magic and the world of yoga are neither arbitrary nor coincidental. Harry Potter's world has captivated so many millions around the world, for the same reasons that make the world of yoga so fascinating. Harry Potter, like all great fiction, is not an escape from the real world, but like the mirror of Erised, a clear lens into the deepest desires of the human heart—the final frontier of yogic thought. My understanding of yoga wisdom has benefitted greatly from growing up with Harry, Ron, and Hermione, while yoga wisdom itself has empowered me not to lose touch with the magic in our own worlds, even after the Harry Potter series has come to an end.

So, dear friends and Potter fans everywhere, when will you finally bid farewell to muggledom and enter the magical world of yoga wisdom?



Abeer is a PhD candidate in history at the University of Virginia. He grew up in India but migrated to the United States for his studies, and has been there since. An avid reader of yoga philosophy, Abeer has been practising bhakti-yoga for almost a decade. His academic interests are in science technology studies, history of capitalism, and all-things animals and environment.



# NIGHT TERROR

CAT'S KEEPING YOU  
UP AT NIGHT?

Contributor Sankirtana-yoga



Contributing Artist Sankirtana-yoga

I watched him intently. His swirling, swaying mass danced across my room. He had a massive frame, maybe 300 kilograms of orange and black. A regal cat, that terrific tiger. Tucked beneath my covers, I could easily have said to myself, "Don't worry, it's just a trick of the eye, a vision conjured by the mind. It's just some orange light."

Except it wasn't. He breathed in strongly as someone would when smelling a snack. And that was me; wasn't it? Yet he had never eaten me. Every morning I woke up intact with only an intense fear gripping my mind if I sensed he'd been there. He leapt forward.

"Why are you hiding?" asked the tiger. Was I supposed to respond to this creature, who was sure to devour me if I only but peaked out from beneath the sheets?

"What good will come from your hiding?" he asked. "I won't go away." "You will go away," I wanted to say. "Because you too must be afraid. Of something."

"Fear is an interesting feeling, isn't it?" he asked. He could hear my thoughts! Even my mind was not safe from him. I wondered why my parents didn't hear him moving around. Wouldn't someone feel the weight of 700 pounds pouncing into a room? I took the courage to look at him. If I didn't speak, he may consider me rude, and become angry, I thought.

"I'm not afraid." I said finally.

"Not afraid?" He growled, unimpressed with my lie. "Then why do you hide?"

"I'm trying to sleep!" I wished I could die.

"I shall show you the nature of your fear," the tiger said with a hint of bravado in his thick, raspy voice. I hesitated, and, almost falling into a frightened trance, was about to slip back under my sheets when—

"COME OUTSIDE!" he roared. As if whipped by a circus master, I tore off my covers, and sat up in bed; a zapping gasp seized my breath.

**"Fear is a way of protecting ourselves. We cannot control fear."**

He inched even closer, his wet, bumpy nose touching mine. "Now we meet," whispered the tiger. "So, since you cannot die, why are you afraid?" My fear doubling, I couldn't comprehend his question. I wanted to sob. I wanted to bolt from the room to my parents and crawl into their bed. But I knew I couldn't do that. If I did, he would surely get angry and chase me, and if he didn't catch me, then he would intercept me when I reached the room, and he would eat my parents too. I couldn't let myself be the cause of their death. I would rather die than let him be happy.

"You should consider that I have not killed or attacked you yet," he said.

"So, if you answer my question, I will go away."

Surges of anger, bewilderment, and fear writhed within me all directed at this colossal creature. How could I trust him; but what other choice did I have?

"So you have decided, I presume?" His words lacerated my thoughts. I shivered.

"Yes," I said, my teeth clenched. "Please repeat your question."

"Since you cannot die, why are you afraid?" he repeated.

I cleared my throat. I began, my words like ice fragments frosting my tongue, "Fear is a way to protect ourselves. We cannot control fear. It arises spontaneously. It indicates impending danger. It is a means for self-preservation. It is—"

"That's not the answer to my question!" he bellowed, clawing his front legs onto my bed and looming above me. I instinctively retreated. Much to my chagrin, I did start to cry now. I scrunched into myself despite feeling stupid about doing it.

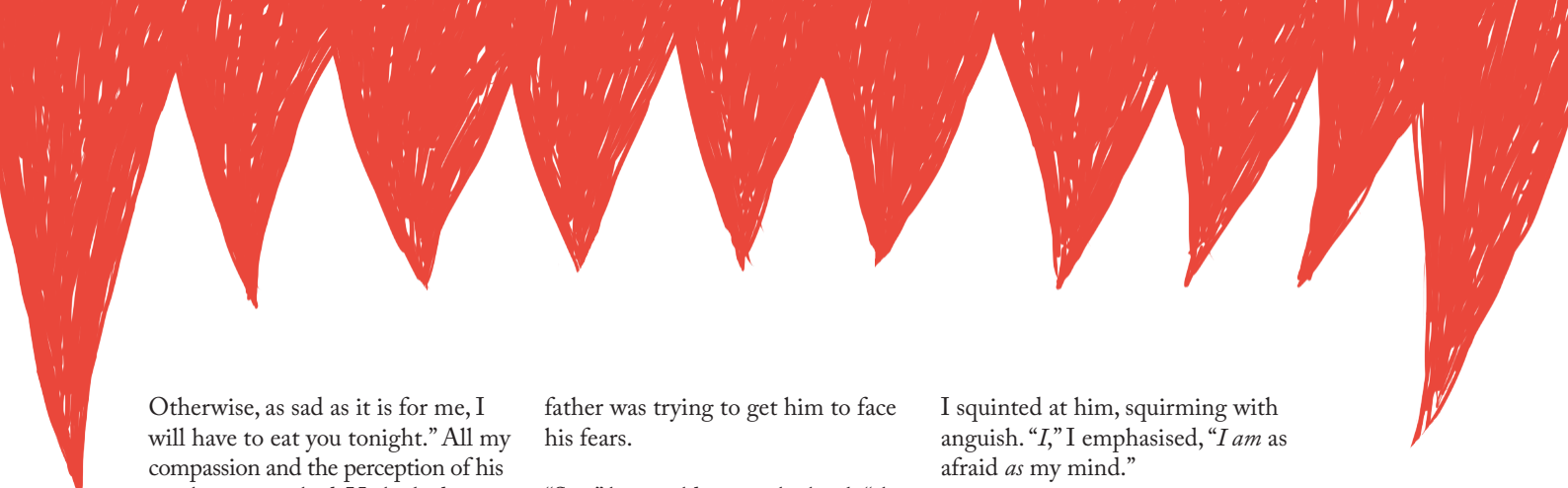
"I don't know!" I sobbed. "Please go away!" I don't know how long I cried before I heard something incredible. Looking up to trace out the source of the sound, I was shocked to see that it came from the tiger himself. He was crying along with me, as if just a reflection of my image. I suddenly felt compassion for him. I don't know why. But I did.

"You cannot understand," he said softly. "I ask you to think deeply and answer my question once more."









Otherwise, as sad as it is for me, I will have to eat you tonight." All my compassion and the perception of his gentleness vanished. He looked sinister once more. I *had* to answer him. "I *can* die. I am afraid because I *can* die. Your question is unfair. You assume I already know something about immortality. As far as I know, I can die. I am mortal." Time was running out. I knew he would eat me any moment now. I wasn't getting anywhere with his riddles. Closing my eyes, I wondered if something could happen, something wonderful or divine. I thought of my parents, my little brother, and my pet cat.

## I closed my eyes once more, again resisting an outpour of tears.

My body stilled. I remembered a book I'd read as a young child. It was about a boy who was always afraid of going to the zoo because he would tremble at the mere sight of the big cats there. At night, he would dream of the lions, tigers, and panthers chasing him in the jungle, and just before he was about to be eaten he would wake up. I never really liked the story because I thought his father was stupid to keep taking him to the zoo even though this boy would all but pee his pants in terror! Now, however, I thought perhaps his

father was trying to get him to face his fears.

"See," he would say in the book "the lions, my dear son, in their cages. All except one! The one from your dream, but here, in daytime, unseen!"

The tiger shifted his weight, clearly waiting for me to speak.

"I guess I'm afraid because you're a t-t-tiger," I stammered, "and in this book I read as a kid this boy is afraid—"

The tiger growled, unimpressed with my beginning. "Come on, you're going to give me an answer based on a children's book?"

"Books can have answers," I snapped back. Nodding, he gazed at me coolly. I told him the story about the boy. I continued, "I realise, only now, that the cause of this boy's fear was his mind. He was thinking that the zoo animals would eat him; but none of that was actually happening. Because he so strongly believed in whatever his mind showed him, he was afraid. And what his mind showed him was scary."

"So the boy was afraid because of his mind?" I nodded. I could feel my gut sinking. I knew what he would say next.

"Very good. But please go on."

Wanting to jump out the window, but mustering up all my patience, I spoke again. "He was afraid—"

"He?" the tiger queried. "Who are we talking about here, little girl?"

I squinted at him, squirming with anguish. "I," I emphasised, "*I am* as afraid *as* my mind."


"Hmm," he backed off, "Very interesting. Continue."

"Because I *think* I am my mind. My mind is like a little person thinking that you will eat me or hurt me. And although my mind is a separate entity from the real me, (because it's 'my' mind) I think I *am* my mind and that everything my mind presents is the real deal. Therefore, I am afraid."

The tiger heard me intently, but as soon as I finished he immediately spoke up, "Very good, dear child. You have answered the second part of the question but have entirely ignored the first. Please go further." I closed my eyes once more, again resisting an outpour of tears. I prayed to whatever higher power there might be that I could just leave my body and go somewhere else. *Leave my body*. Wow. *If this is my body*, then who am *I*? I gulped.

"Well, about that, 'since you cannot die' thing, it depends which 'you' you're referring to. Or rather, which 'I'."

The tiger raised his orange and black striped brows. *LET ME FINISH!* I wanted to yell. "What I mean to say is," I continued, "If it is the 'I' that is this body and this mind," I pointed to my face and then my head, "then that *I* can certainly die. Being made of all sorts of earthly chemicals, this body and mind is already kind of dead. What animates them is the soul. And that soul, *I*, cannot die. It's not possible."







**“Books can have answers. You just have to pick the right ones.”**

“How do you know?” asked the tiger. I looked down. All I could come up with this time was a meagre, sentimental response.

“Because I can feel it. I feel a distant *déjà vu* mixed with infinity, as if I should exist forever, in happiness. Yet thinking myself as my body and mind, I vanish, intermittently, in unhappiness. But I don’t know why.” Would these be my uncelebrated last words? I DON’T KNOW WHY! I couldn’t answer his question.

I saw his furry clawed paw coming to me, but instead of a sharp slashing, a gentle thud brushed my hand. I looked up. He was balancing a book in his palm.

“You were right, dear child,” he said. “Books *can* have answers. You just have to pick the right ones.” I took the book. *He wasn’t eating me!* “You did answer my question the best way

you could,” the tiger said. “But perhaps this will help you go deeper. Open it up.”

“What is this?” My voice ignited like a snuffed candle, revived.

“It’s an extraordinary conversation. Even more exciting than ours,” he chuckled. Even I laughed at that. I opened the orange book with the black lettering and quietly read to myself:

*Fear arises when living beings misidentify themselves as material bodies because of absorption in the external, illusory energy of the Supreme. When the living beings thus turn away from the Supreme, they also forget their own constitutional positions as loving servants of the Supreme. This bewildering, fearful condition is effected by the potency of illusion, called māyā. Therefore, intelligent people should engage unflinchingly in the unconditional devotional service of the Supreme, under the guidance of an able spiritual teacher, whom they should accept as their guide and as their very life and soul.\**

Bemused, yet soothed, I looked up to ask the tiger to elaborate on this only to find him gone. I sat in silence. Then at last my door creaked open,

and my chubby tabby meowed her way to the foot of my bed.

“Did you have a nightmare too?” I asked her. She leapt and nestled herself on my lap, purring. “You don’t seem as if you’ve had a nightmare,” I giggled. I looked at the book and then at the open window. The sun’s rays had begun to fleck the night sky in bursts of orange and yellow over the deep black. “Neither did I.” And although I hadn’t slept the whole night, I didn’t feel tired at all. Quite the opposite. I felt as one would when waking up after a long sleep.

\*From Shrimad Bhagavatam (11.2.37)



Sankirtan-yoga has been practising bhakti-yoga since she was seventeen. Originally born in India and raised in Canada, she now lives in Wellington, New Zealand where she volunteers at Bhakti Lounge. Writer, graphic designer, and globe-trekker, Sankirtan-yoga has studied the ancient yoga texts eight times and counting (and still can’t get enough!) She hopes her stories and articles inspire and assist readers’ inner transformations.



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**DONATION \$**  
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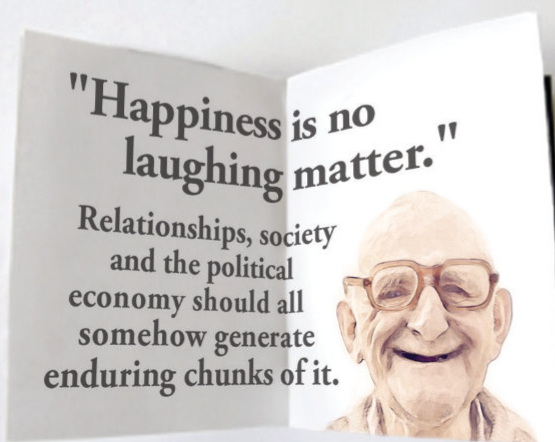
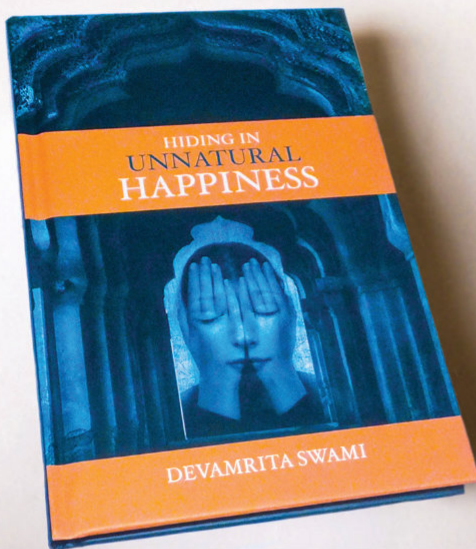
**5.45PM**

\$10 FOR YOGA AT 5PM  
\$10 AFTER 6.15PM

**1/175 VIVIAN STREET**  
**BHAKTILOUNGE.ORG.NZ**







The twenty-first century has set off a gold rush to explain and attain happiness: that elusive subjective state. Do genetics, circumstances and willpower (or the lack of it) limit our attempts at happiness? They need not. *Hiding in Unnatural Happiness* tells you how.

## HIDING IN UNNATURAL HAPPINESS



Is the hunt for sustainable contentment just **confusion** - a kaleidoscope of **diverse illusion?**



Drawing upon the ancient yoga science of the self, *Hiding in Unnatural Happiness* probes our contemporary approach to fulfillment and progress, and recommends another road, less traveled but timeless.

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