

Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

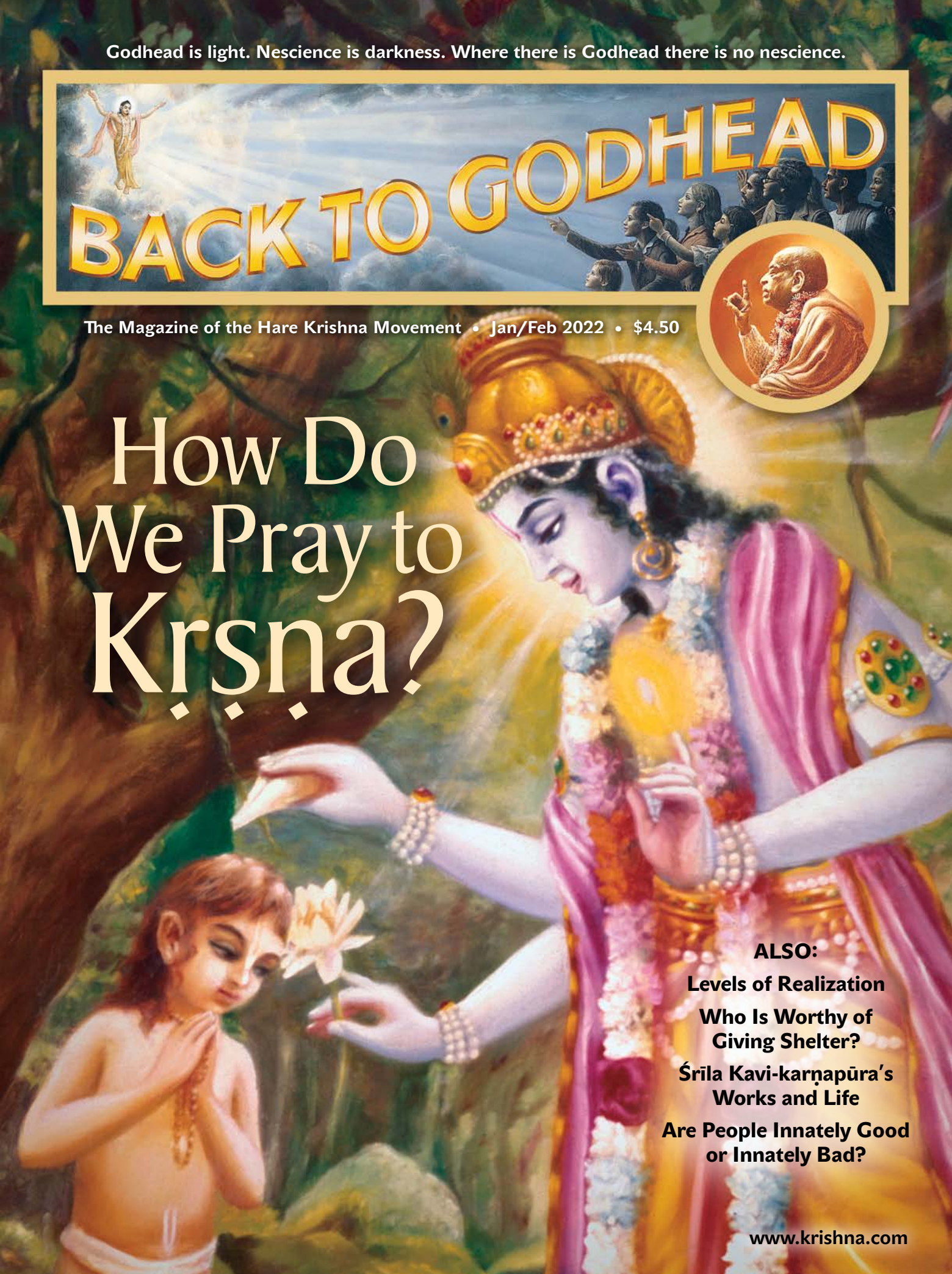
BACK TO GODHEAD



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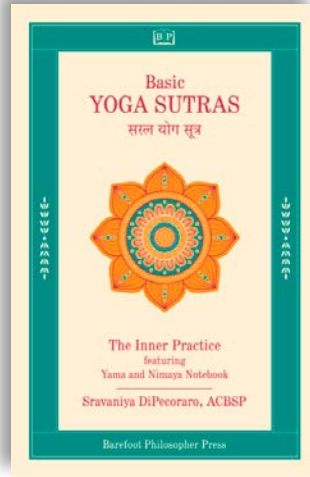
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Mind Waves

Excerpted from Basic Yoga Sutras – The Inner Practice. Copyright © 2019 by Sravaniya DiPecoraro. Published by Barefoot Philosopher Press (an imprint of L&K Company, Hong Kong). Available in paperback, Kindle and ePub on Amazon.com. This excerpt retains the book's style for Sanskrit words and other considerations.

Author's overview: This book is for seriously inquisitive yoga students, written in their own language. In contrast with the volumes of literature already available regarding the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali, the book provides keys for understanding the essential metaphysical and spiritual teachings of yoga, thus enabling the reader to overcome the problems of life and ultimately attain the wholeness of self-realization.



by Śravaṇīya Devī Dāsī

A look at the five vṛttis of the mind discussed in Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras.

pramāṇa viparyaya

Vṛttis

I.5. vṛttayaḥ pañcatayyaḥ kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ

“There are five varieties of mind waves, which are either miserable or non-miserable.”

In material consciousness, non-miserable is mistaken for happiness. Think about that. According to what Patañjali is noting here, there is no happiness in the material world, only intermittent non-misery. This somewhat harsh reality is confirmed in many places in both Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam wherein these miseries (kleśa) are classified into three categories:

- adhyātmika – miseries pertaining to the body and mind
- adhibhautika – miseries pertaining to the difficulties imposed by society, community, nation and other living entities

- adhidaivika – miseries inflicted upon us by natural disturbances from earthquakes, famines, droughts, floods, epidemics

These are the threefold miseries of material existence.

“Actually the living entity does not take birth nor does he die, but he has to fight with the stringent laws of material nature throughout the entire span of his lifetime. He must also face different kinds of miserable conditions. Despite all this, the living entity, due to illusion, thinks that he is well situated in sense gratification.” – SB 4.27.16, Purport

In his younger days my spiritual master Śrīla Prabhupāda was a follower of Mahātmā Gandhi. Many years after Gandhi’s assassination he wrote:

vikalpa nidrā smṛti

“Material plans for material happiness have no value, but under the spell of the illusory energy we consider them extremely valuable. There were many politicians, social reformers and philosophers who died very miserably, without deriving any practical value from their material plans. Therefore, a sane and sensible man never desires to work hard under the conditions of threefold miseries, only to die in disappointment.”

– SB 7.13.31, Purport

“So we cannot violate the laws of God, or dharma. Then we’ll be punished. The punishment is there, awaiting, by the laws of nature. Daivī hy eṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā (BG 7.14). The laws of nature are to punish you. So long you are not Krishna conscious, the laws of nature will go on punishing you – three kinds of miserable conditions: adhyātmika, adhibhautika, adhidaivika. This is the law. Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ (BG 3.27). You are thinking independent, but that is not the fact. We are dependent, completely dependent on the laws of nature. And laws of nature means laws of God.”

– Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, Vrindavan, September 4, 1975

kvacic ca śīta-vātādy-
anekādhidaivika-bhautikātmīyānām
daśānām pratinivāraṇe ’kalpo
duranta-cintayā viṣaṅga āste.

“Being unable to protect himself from the threefold miseries of material existence, the conditioned soul becomes very morose and lives a life of lamentation. These threefold miseries are miseries suffered by mental calamity at the hands of the demigods [such as freezing wind and scorching heat], miseries offered by other living entities, and miseries arising from the mind and body themselves.”

– SB 5.14.25

It may be worth noting that, at the time of this writing, journalism seems focused on bringing misery to the forefront of our attention. The

decades-old mantra goes “If it bleeds, it leads.” Fomenting fear and directing derision are part and parcel of the media’s business of herding the masses this way and that. So much money is involved. And make no mistake, their influence is overwhelming.

“Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.”
–Napoleon Bonaparte

Which brings us to our next subject of interest in our journey of understanding.

Knowledge ~ Real and Unreal

I.6. pramāṇa viparyaya vikalpa nidrā
smṛtayaḥ

These mind waves are categorized as

- Accurate cognition (pramāṇa)
- Erroneous knowledge (viparyaya)
- Imagination (vikalpa)
- Sleep (nidrā)
- Memory (smṛti)

I.7. pratyakṣa-anumāna-āgamāḥ
pramāṇāni

“Correct knowledge is direct, inferred or proven as factual.”

Correct knowledge is based on three kinds of proof:

1. Direct perception
2. Logical inference or deduction based on a correct premise
3. Testimony from authoritative sacred scripture (śāstra) or realized persons (sādhu)

Since the senses are imperfect, one’s knowledge is correspondingly affected. This is why more than one witness is preferable for corroboration in any proper investigation. In the same way, identifying a correct

premise requires verification. Rational deduction based on a wrong assumption can lead to mistakes, bad policy, chaos and failure.

The most reliable source of real knowledge is the third option – often referred to as guru, śāstra and sādhu. What is spoken by the spiritual master is revealed in holy scripture, handed down in an unbroken line of teachers and supported by other sages. This is the best process of verification, the lens for seeing things as they are.

I.8. viparyayo mithyā-jñānam-
atadrūpa pratiṣṭham

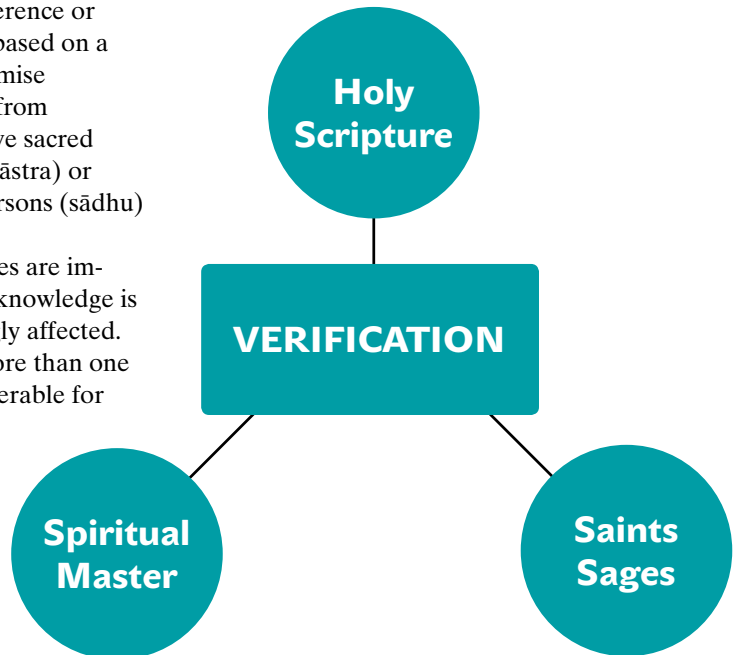
“Illusory or erroneous knowledge is based on non-fact or the non-real.”

Viparyaya is something that has become more familiar lately. George Orwell’s dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* presented a country named Oceania with its official motto:

“War is Peace
“Freedom is Slavery
“Ignorance is Strength”

In other words, misinformation that is 180 degrees opposite of the truth is viparyaya.

I.9 śabda-jñāna-anupātī vastu-śūnyo
vikalpaḥ



“Verbal knowledge devoid of substance is fancy or imagination.”

Vikalpa includes gossip, hearsay, popular superstitions, myths, propaganda, slander & lying. For example:

As Mark Twain pointed out, “There are lies, damned lies, and statistics.” Lies and damned lies are speculations including phrases such as

- Perhaps. . .
- Maybe in the future. . .
- Experts say there might be reason to expect. . . ? Don’t you think . . . everybody knows that . . . I’m sure you would agree that. . .
- Inappropriate comparisons with little in common.
- Adjectives that give a compelling impression (bias)

Statistics:

- Polling data
- Predictions made by “experts” using numbers, intended to bolster a specious and otherwise unsupported theory

Creating specific thought waves in the population induces certain behavior. If the leadership is virtuous and good then the impressions made will be beneficial and uplifting. Unfortunately that is not the case in post-modern society, where those with the highest salaries make their money “helping” others who are suffering – after implementing policies and promoting habits that have caused much of the suffering in the first place.

“Nearly every theme or image that crosses your path in daily life was put there for a reason, often by an interest who paid a lot of money to place it there.” – Sharyl Attkisson, *The Smear*

And so Edgar Allan Poe’s advice is helpful: “Believe only half of what you see and nothing that you hear.” Having grown up in the 1950s, I remember it well.

I.10. abhāva-pratyaya-ālabhanā
tamo-vṛttir-nidra

“Sleep is the non-deliberate absence of thought-waves or knowledge.”

This is self-explanatory, although it may be worth noting that some living entities influenced by the mode of ignorance prefer to remain asleep rather than deal with the inconvenient demands of time and space.

I.11. anu-bhūta-viṣaya-asampramoṣaḥ
smṛtiḥ

“Memory is the unmodified recollection of words and experiences.”

Unmodified is the key word in this sūtra. In my experience, the older

One must be able to sort through the pop-up windows in the mind, find the ones that are true and relevant and close the others.

one gets the more difficult it seems to avoid modifications to remembrances, hence the expression “If memory serves me well.” The line between smṛti and vikalpa is thin indeed.

It will be seen from the foregoing that not all vṛttis or thought waves in the mind are reliable. Indeed, four out of the five listed are not. Think about that for a moment. This is why intelligent discrimination (buddhi) is so important; one must be able to sort through the pop-up windows in the mind, find the ones that are true and relevant and close the others. Buddhi can be awakened through yama niyama, the inner practice of yoga – cultivation of the mode of goodness. In passion and ignorance the desires and urges of the mind and body predominate consciousness, circumventing and eventually shutting down the function of intelligence. Vastuyāthātmyajñānāvarakam viparyaya-jñāna-janakam tamaḥ: under the spell of ignorance, one cannot understand a thing as it is. He may even be a famous yoga teacher and speak utter nonsense, such as “one cannot actually practice yama and

niyama, only āsana and prāṇāyama.” And some will nod their heads, smile and calmly carry on.

Success or failure at elevating consciousness depends on yama and niyama – that is, voluntarily accepting and regularly practicing certain restraints on one’s own actions and behavior. Such discipline is self-imposed, difficult at first but gradually becomes habit. When practiced under the direction of a bona fide ācārya (one who teaches by his example) this results in spiritual realization and extraordinary character, which manifests in this way:

“Humility, pridelessness, nonviolence, tolerance, simplicity, approach-

ing a bona fide spiritual master, cleanliness, steadiness and self-control; renunciation of the objects of sense gratification, absence of false ego, the perception of the evil of birth, death, old age and disease; nonattachment to children, wife, home and the rest, and evenmindedness amid pleasant and unpleasant events; constant and unalloyed devotion to Me, resorting to solitary places, detachment from the general mass of people; accepting the importance of self-realization, and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth – all these I thus declare to be knowledge, and what is contrary to these is ignorance.”

– Lord Śrī Krishna, BG 13.8–12 ❀

Śravaṇīya Devī Dāsī was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1971. She was instrumental in getting Bhagavad-gītā As It Is translated into Chinese. She has taught hatha yoga in the Far East since 1983 and in the early 90s was the first professional yoga teacher in Hong Kong. Learn more about her on her website, BarefootPhilosopher.press, or on her Facebook page, Barefoot Philosopher.