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Spiritual Discussions and Discourses with Swami Nikhilanand of JKP Radha Madhav Dham

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Table of Contents

Part 1: Questions and Answers

What is the goal of human life?.....	2
Why liberation is not good for us	2
Supreme God.....	3
Difference between Vedic <i>mantras</i> and Vaishnav <i>mantras</i>	3
How many different types of knowledge are there?.....	4
What is <i>brahm gyan</i> and what is its importance.....	4
Meditation and remembrance.....	4
What are the rules for meditation?.....	4
Meeting God face to face.....	5
<i>Karm yog</i> and <i>karm sanyas</i>	5
God can be known and experienced.....	5
<i>Karm</i> and <i>Bhism Pitamah</i>	5
Purpose of creation.....	6
Personal and impersonal forms of God.....	7
Three forms of Almighty God.....	8
Relationship between soul to God, and soul to soul.....	9

Path of the <i>Gopis</i>	9
Daily sadhana at home.....	10
Ways to enliven devotional service to God.....	10
Humbless and tears of devotion.....	11
Why do we do wrong actions?.....	11
Free Will.....	12
Maintaining Detachment.....	12
The mind of humans and other beings.....	13
Why do we dream?.....	13
After Death.....	14
God realization is not possible without a Guru.....	14
Miscellaneous.....	15

Part 2: Speeches

All religions are not the same.....	15
Devotional philosophy of the Gita and Upnishads.....	17

Part 3: Jagadguru Kripaluji Maharaj, Swami Nikhilanand & JKP Radha Madhav Dham

Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj.....	17
Swami Nikhilanand.....	18
JKP Radha Madhav Dham.....	18

Part 4: Additional Resources

Official websites and blogs.....	18
Join Swami Nikhilanand on facebook.....	18

Part 1: Questions and Answers

(Compiled from Swami Nikhilanand's
facebook page)

I. What is the goal of human life?

The answer to this question is very simple. The purpose of human life is to attain God. Every human desires happiness, and only God is perfect happiness. Every soul naturally desires happiness because he is eternally related to God, Who Himself is perfect happiness. For a deeper explanation on this topic, please see the first chapter of the book by Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji

II) Why should one not seek liberation and why it is not good for us?

The reason for not desiring liberation can be understood in several ways:

1) We all want perfect happiness. Liberation is a state of no experience, or absolute peace. This means that you are not experiencing any pain or any happiness. We attain such a state every night in deep dreamless sleep. While in that state we do not experience anything. Only when we awaken or when we start dreaming do we start experiencing pleasure and pain again. A state of no experience that extends forever and ever is the state of liberation. So liberation is undesirable because it is not a state of happiness, it is a state of no experience. However, if you attain God in His personal form (*sakar brahm*) then you get to experience Divine happiness, which is perfect and unlimited and you are also free from pain.

2) In the state of liberation, the soul loses its personal identity and merges into formless God (absolute non-dual state). The soul still continues to exist, but has no personal identity because the body and mind are destroyed forever and only the soul remains. Without a body or mind, the soul has no means of experiencing anything, not the world nor God. So even though the soul has merged into God, there is no experience of God or even any self awareness that you exist. So liberation is undesirable because you remain bereft of any experience of God. However, if you attain God in His personal form, then you receive Divine mind, body and senses with which you can experience God. You can see God, touch God, hear God, etc. You are not separate from God, but at the same time, there is a duality which allows you to experience God and God's Bliss. You enter into God's Divine abode and stay there forever.

3) The Bliss of liberation is called *brahmanand*. This is the Bliss of formless God which is unlimited, but which is unexperienceable once you merge into God. The Bliss of Radha Krishn is called *premanand*. This is the Bliss of Divine love. It is said to be uncountable times greater than the Bliss of formless God. Liberation is undesirable because if you get liberation, you remain bereft of *premanand* forever.

4) If you attain *premanand*, it includes liberation. You are automatically liberated from *maya* and the cycle of birth and death when you attain God's love.

III) Some say Shiv is supreme. Some say Krishn is supreme. Which one is true?

All the forms of God are complete and absolute internally. They are all one. However, there is a difference in the extent of the powers a particular form of God manifests externally. Shiv is a form of almighty God. He is said to be *ansh*, or a part of Krishn, because it is only in Krishn's form that all the Divine powers are manifested to the full extent. That is why Krishn is called *poornatam purushottam brahm*, or absolute supreme God.

IV) What is the difference between Vedic *mantra* and Vaishnav *mantra*?

Technically, *vaishnav* means anyone worshiping Krishn, Ram, or Vishnu. So a *vaishnav* mantra is a *mantra* related to Krishn, Ram, or Vishnu. Such a *mantra* could be from the Vedas. For

instance, the *mantra* 'Hare Ram Hare Ram Ram Ram Hare Hare, Hare Krishn Hare Krishn Krishn Krishn Hare Hare' is a *mantra* from our Vedas. However, since it has the names of Krishn, Ram, and Vishnu in it, so it would be considered a *vaishnav mantra*. There are many such examples.

One should not worry about which *mantra* is better or more powerful than another. The power of a *mantra* comes from the fact that God's name is in the *mantra*, and all names of God are equally powerful. God is in all of His names. In fact you can repeat any name of God and get the same benefit you would from a *mantra*. In either case, the power of the name remains dormant for the person who is repeating the name or *mantra* mechanically. The power of the name is enlivened by our loving remembrance of the one Whose name we are taking. In other words, whether we are singing God's name or repeating a *mantra*, the real benefit is only received when we join our mind with God. The internal remembrance of God enlivens the power of the name in the heart, and the result is that the bliss of the name can start to be experienced. The bliss of the name is unlimited, but this is only fully experienced by a Saint. A devotee experiences it to the extent of his heart purification.

God has unlimited names. Which name should be remembered? As mentioned above, God and all of His names are one. God is synonymous with His name. So you should remember the name of the form of God Whom you wish to attain. Keep in mind that a *mantra* is not meant to give you worldly benefit. If you are taking any name of God or repeating any *mantra*, it should be with the goal of experiencing the bliss of the name and purifying your heart.

There is a very detailed section on how to take God's name and the meaning of repeating a *mantra* in "The Science of Devotion, Divine Love and Grace". This book can be ordered on <http://shop.jkp.org>.

V) How many different types of knowledge are there?

There are mainly two kinds of *gyan* (knowledge): theoretical and experiential. Experiential knowledge is also of two types: *atm gyan* (knowledge of the soul) and *brahm gyan* (knowledge of God).

VI) What is *brahm gyan* and what is its importance?

B*rahm gyan* is the knowledge of God which is only received by surrendering to God, not through any practice. *Atm gyan* can be attained by following the path of *gyan*, but *brahm gyan* can only be attained through *bhakti*. When you surrender to God through *bhakti* and He Graces you, then you receive His Divine knowledge. That knowledge is unlimited. In other words, when you know God, you know everything.

VII) What is the relation between meditation and memory?

I am guessing that by memory you mean my use of the word 'remembrance'. Remembrance means the same as '*smaran*'. It means when you think about someone or you remember them in your heart. Thinking about Radha Krishn and Their *leelas* is remembrance or *smaran*. That is the form of meditation you do on the path of *bhakti*.

VIII) What are the rules for meditation?

On the path of *bhakti* there are no restrictions of time or place for meditation. You can meditate anytime, anyplace. There is also no required posture for meditation. The only requirement is that you should be remembering Radha Krishn.

IX) I have heard that a person gets to meet God face to face 7 times in his life. How true is this?

The truth is that even if we met God face to face, we would not recognize His Divinity. He is omnipresent, yet we are unable to see Him. He resides in our heart, yet we do not experience Him. In uncountable lifetimes, we have seen Him uncountable times during his descension on the earth planet. Yet not once have we recognized Him. That is why we must do devotion to purify our heart. Upon complete heart purification, God will Grace you. With His Grace, you will receive a Divine mind and senses. Then you will be able to see Him, know Him, and experience Him.

X) Please explain the meaning of "*Sanyaas ka keval sankalp karne se hi karmayogi sanyaasi ban jaata hai aur bina karma ke sanyaas bhi pramaanit nahi hota,atah tatvatah dono ek hi hai.*"

The gist of this is that neither the *karm yogi* nor the *karm sanyasi* has attachment in the world. Thus from inside, both are the same. Outwardly, the *karm yogi* is physically involved in worldly life (but his attachment is in God), whereas the *karm sanyasi* is not involved in worldly life (and he is attached to God). Outwardly, their physical actions differ, but inwardly they are the same. Thus, it is said that in reality, *karm yog* and *karm sanyas* are one and the same, because the outcome of both are the same (God realization).

XI) Please explain this too: "*Satya ko keval jaana jata hai, anubhav kiya jata hai uspar charchaa aur bhaashya nahi kiya jata hai..*".

The meaning of this is that God (*satya* or Divine Truth) can be known and experienced. This is possible through His Grace when a soul surrenders to Him. However, even the one who has known and experienced God cannot describe Him and through that description give the experience of God to another. To experience God, you yourself have to surrender and receive His Grace, not just hear or read the description by someone else. The descriptions in our scriptures are only meant to show us the path to God and develop our desire to meet God. They cannot give someone the experience just by reading them.

XII) As told to us we get results only according to our thoughts and intentions and not based on physical karmas that we do. Because in spiritual world only intentions are noted. Though generally I am convinced with this but there is one incident which confuses me. When Bhism Pitamah used arrow to lift the snake from the way, he was made to jump off where he got stuck on a tree with thorns and that is why he had to spend his 6 months on arrow bed (in Mahabharata). Why did he suffer this when he never had intent of throwing the snake to the tree with thorns, he was just trying to remove it from the way.

Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj explains in his speeches that we do not get the result of our physical doings, but rather of the intention or attachment of our mind. This is very important to understand for a person practicing *bhakti*. One should not think that the physical act of doing *arti*, *puja*, *kirtan*, *jap*, *path*, etc. is considered *bhakti*. Only the loving remembrance of God is considered *bhakti*. So sitting and doing *kirtan* while remembering God is considered *bhakti*. Doing *kirtan* with our voice, but having our mind in the world is not considered *bhakti*. So we will get the result of our mental attachment, not of our physical doings.

In the field of good and bad actions as well, the motivation of the mind is prime and the physical act is secondary. Therefore, intentionally harming someone is a grave sin. However, causing harm to someone unintentionally is also a sin; it is just not considered as serious. This is why our scriptures recommend giving 10% of our income in charity, just to balance out the sins we commit unknowingly (like stepping on insects when we walk, etc).

In the case of Bhishm *pitamah* we also have to consider one other thing. He is a Divine personality who is beyond *maya* and *karm*. Everything that he does is not considered *karm*, it is considered *leela*. *Leelas* are pre-planned Divine events which take place on the earth planet with the will of God. So we cannot apply the same material rules to those Divine events.

XIII) What is the purpose of creation? Why does Krishna create Jagat and Prakriti? Maya is the aadhin of Krishna, but what purpose does Maya serve in the world? Why was Maya created (assuming Maya was created, and is not eternal)? And why are human souls made to spend one or more lifetimes in Jagat?

Maya is Krishn's power and is eternal. Just like Krishn is eternal, *maya* is eternal. Souls are also eternal. These are the 3 eternal existences (*tattva*): God, souls and *maya*. Both the souls and *maya* are *adheen* to Krishn (dependant on Him). Krishn gives life to the souls, thus they are dependent to Him. *Maya* is a lifeless and mindless power (*jad shakti*), so it can only function as long as Krishn keeps it activated. Krishn never created *maya* or the souls; all the three are eternal existences. Souls and *maya* exist dependently on Krishn, and Krishn is supreme and is absolutely independent.

Maya is an eternally existing power, but cannot create the world on its own. *Maya* exists in a dormant, absolutely subtle, abstract seed form. God has to activate *maya*, then *maya* evolves into more and gross forms of energy until particles and physical matter appear, and the galaxies take shape. It is a step by step process which is initiated by God and which proceeds according to the inherent characteristics of the mayic energy. In this way, the universe is manifested out of the original mayic energy (also called *prakriti*) and continues to exist in this visible physical form for uncountable trillions of years. This is called *srishti*. When God removes His power from *maya*, then the *mayic* world dissolves back into its subtle unmanifested form. This is called *pralaya*. This cycle of manifestation and dissolution of the *mayic* world is an eternal cycle. It never began, and it will never end. It has happened unlimited times and will continue to happen.

The souls are also eternal and unlimited in number. No new souls are ever created and souls cannot be destroyed, so the number of souls is constant, but unlimited. Unlimited souls are attaining God every second, yet there are always unlimited souls remaining in the *mayic* world. The souls who have attained God remain with God in the Divine world. The Divine world is

omnipresent and is not affected by the *srishti* and *pralaya* of the *mayic* world. The ultimate goal of a soul is to attain God and stay with Him in the Divine world. The souls who have not attained God are unlimited in number and reside since eternity in the *mayic* world. They are under the bondage of *maya*. During *srishti*, those souls under *maya* can try to attain God. This is the purpose of creation, because during *pralaya*, the souls under *maya* are inactive and have no chance to attain God. Therefore God activates *maya* and produces the universe (*jagat*) so that souls get a chance to attain Him.

Souls have existed since eternity, so every soul has had unlimited births in the *mayic* world. One should not question that, "Why has God put us in this world?" God never put us here. We have been souls under *maya* since eternity. We never began, and our *mayic* bondage never began. It is natural and eternal, but it can be broken by surrendering to God. This is why God performs the *srishti*, to give us a chance to surrender to Him and attain Him. We were never with God; if we had been, we would be with Him now. God realization is forever, so if we had been with Him, we could not have come under the bondage of *maya*. Since we are under *maya* now, it means that we have been under *maya* since eternity. So we have to attain Him. Once we attain Him, we will stay forever with Him in the Divine world.

One should also not question that, "Why doesn't God just give us God realization and take us to His Divine world? Why does he make us take birth in the material world and demand that we surrender to Him?" God is omnipresent. He is also inside our heart. He is inside our soul. So He is with us all the time. There is nowhere to go to find Him, but in order to experience Him, we have to surrender to Him. God is Bliss and He is omnipresent, so we are literally swimming in the ocean of Bliss; but we are not able to taste that Bliss. It is like we are dying of thirst and we find ourselves swimming in an ocean of fresh water. All we have to do is open our mouth and the water will pour in and quench our thirst; but we are keeping our mouth sealed tightly. Similarly, God is already with us and is already Gracing us, but we have to open our heart to receive His Grace. This is the meaning of surrender. This is all we have to do to experience Him. There is no delay from His side.

One may ask, "Why doesn't God make us surrender to Him?". God is all-powerful, but He also follows rules. One of those rules is that each individual soul has free will. God honors our free will. He guides us through the scriptures and by sending His Saints on the earth planet, but He does not control our actions.

One may ask, "Why did God create suffering in the world?" God did not create suffering. Good and bad are inherent qualities of *maya*. God never created *maya*, so God never created good and bad. Good and bad are eternally existing as inborn qualities of *maya*. Thus, when the *mayic* energy evolves into the form of the universe (during *srishti*), the good and bad qualities of *maya* manifest in every facet of the world. When the *mayic* energy dissolves, the good and bad qualities also become dormant and are no longer seen. During *srishti*, the souls under *maya* experience pleasure and pain due to the fluctuation of these good and bad qualities in the world and in their own mind. However, the pleasure and pain that come to an individual are not random. It is all determined according to the soul's good and bad actions of previous lifetimes. Once a soul attains God, he is not affected by the fluctuations of this world, and no longer experiences worldly pleasure or pain, even while living in the world. God is perfect, so the God realized soul living in the world experiences only Divine Bliss in his mind.

XIV) I was discussing SBG Ch. 2 with my colleague and we were discussing the eternal nature of the soul and the material nature of the body.

My colleague remarked that this being the case, the *jivatma* is essentially formless. He asked if formlessness should also not be an attribute of Krishna, the Supreme Soul. I was unable to provide an adequate answer, except that in our system we worship Krishn as *Sagun-Saakaar Brahm*. Can you please clarify further?

The soul is *anu* or infinitesimal *chit*. This means that soul is a Divine energy which is infinitely small. Because soul is infinitesimal, it is formless and spot-existent (existing only at one place at one time). Soul is called *jeev*. '*Jeev*' means that which gives life to the body it inhabits. Soul is also called *atma*. '*Atma*' means that which pervades. Soul pervades the entire body which it inhabits. God is *vibhu* or unlimited *chit*. This means that God alive, sentient, aware, has a Divine mind, and is omnipresent. He is called *maha chetan* because He gives life to all the souls. He is also called *parmatma* because He pervades the entire universe and resides within all the souls. Thus, He is called the Soul of all the souls, or the supreme Soul. It should not be inferred by this that Krishn is like a soul. The word *atma* is used for God because He "pervades". Whereas a soul only pervades the body it currently inhabits, Krishn pervades the entire universe as well as all the souls. He Himself is beyond the universe and is fully independent. The souls are all dependent on Krishn because He gives life to them.

The Vedas state that God is simultaneously *sakar* (with form) and *nirakar* (without form): '*dve vao brahmano roope moortanchaivamoortancha*'. Krishn is omnipresent in both His *sakar* and *nirakar* aspects. Vedas also state that the formless aspect of God is dependently established in the personal form (*sakar*): '*purusham brahm yonim*'. Gita also states the same: '*brahmano hi pratishthaham*'. Krishn says, "The *nirakar brahm* is established in Me." It is something like how sunlight emanates from the sun. The sun is *sakar*, and sunlight is *nirakar*. The *nirakar* sunlight is dependently established in the *sakar* sun, because it emanates from the sun and cannot exist without the sun. Similarly, *nirakar brahm* has been described as the effulgence of Krishn's Divine body. However, both Krishn and His effulgence (*nirakar brahm*) are omnipresent.

To understand more about how God can have a personal form, you should read the 10th chapter of "Prem Ras Siddhant", entitled "Nirakar-Sakar Brahm". "Prem Ras Siddhant" is the first book written by Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj. In it he explains all the main issues of *Sanatan Dharm* in a beautiful logic. The everyday examples he incorporates make it understandable to people from all different backgrounds and learning. To order this book online, click on the following link: <http://shop.jkp.org/books.html#PhilosophyBooksInHindi>.

XV) In one of your lectures, you have said that there are 3 main forms of the Almighty - Vishnu, Shiva, and Durga. Isn't the third main form of the Almighty Brahma? I thought Durga was a part of Shivji. Can you kindly clarify my confusion?

This is a very good question and a common misconception. Brahma is actually a celestial god (note that it is written with a small or lower case 'g'). He is a *devta*, not *bhagwan*. *Devtas* or celestial gods are under *maya*, which means their abode is temporary and is destroyed when the universe is dissolved. Supreme God (big or upper case 'G') or *bhagwan*'s abode is beyond *maya*, Divine and eternal, so it is not affected by the dissolution of the universe. If someone worships a celestial god (like Brahma, Indra, Vayu, Agni, Varun, Kuber, etc.), they go to the abode of that celestial god. But they don't stay forever. They return to this world and take birth again. If someone worships any form of supreme God (like Krishn, Ram, Vishnu, Shiv, Durga, Ganesh, Kartikeya,

Kali, Gauri, Amba, Lakchmi, Saraswati, Parvati, Hanuman, etc.) then they go to the supreme Divine abode of God which is beyond *maya* and they stay there forever, never to be reborn in this world under the bondage of *maya*.

To address your questions directly, yes Shiv and Durga (or Parvati) are one. Durga is *shakti* and Shiv is *shaktiman* (the base in which the power resides). The three main almighty forms of God are Vishnu, Shiv and Durga, because all the other almighty forms are affiliated to them. Lakchmi and Saraswati are affiliated to Vishnu; Ganesh, Kartikeya and Hanuman are affiliated to Shiv; and Kali, Gauri, Amba, etc. are affiliated forms of Durga. So all those forms are Divine and almighty, but Vishnu, Shiv and Durga are considered main. Beyond the almighty forms of God (and including Them and all Their powers) are the loving forms of God Krishn and Ram (which included Radha and Sita).

So where does Brahma come in and why do we talk about Vishnu, Shiv and Brahma? In the creation of the universe, Krishn's almighty power, Maha Vishnu of Vaikunth abode, creates the whole universe and becomes omnipresent in it. The universe is endless. In the endless universe, uncountable number of planetary systems, or *brahmandas* are created (a *brahmand* includes an earth planet with its sun and other planets, and a corresponding *swarg* (celestial abode) and *narak* (hellish abode). In every one of those *brahmandas*, God Vishnu and God Shiv take *avatar* in order to manage the affairs of that planetary system. In every *brahmand* there is also a Brahma who is assigned to be the creator of that *brahmand*. He creates with the power given to him by supreme God. Vishnu maintains the *brahmand* and Shiv destroys it in the end. These are the three governors of a *brahmand*. Both Vishnu and Shiv are *avatars* of God from the Divine world. Their abodes in this *brahmand* are also Divine, like embassies of the Divine abode, here in the material plane. Brahma's abode is the topmost celestial abode, and Brahma himself is not a form of supreme God, he is a celestial god.

To review, Brahma is one of the three governors of a *brahmand*, along with Vishnu and Shiv. However, Vishnu and Shiv are forms of supreme Divine God, and Brahma is a celestial god.

XVI) *Jivatma's* relation with God is like '*balak* and *palak*' what should be the relation between *jivatma* to *jivatma*?

The relationship between souls is that we are all brothers and sisters in the true sense because we all have the same Divine mother and father (Radha Krishn). However, the attachment of our mind should only be for Radha and Krishn because that will result in attaining Them and going beyond *maya*. If we attach our mind to any of our brothers and sisters who are bound by *maya*, that will increase our material bondage and result in rebirth. Like all the waves on the ocean are related eternally to the ocean. They originate from the ocean, are established in the ocean and return to the ocean. The individual waves may meet up with each other (like the individual souls on this earth), but that meeting is only temporary. The relation of the wave to the ocean is permanent (like the relation of the souls to God).

XVII What path did the *gopis* follow before they were *gopis*, to be *gopis*

The path is called *raganuga bhakti*. *Raganuga bhakti* means loving Krishn with one

of 4 relational feelings (*bhao*). The 4 *bhao* are called:

- 1) *daysa bhao*: loving Krishn as your master and you are His servant
- 2) *sakhya bhao*: loving Krishn as your friend
- 3) *vatsalya bhao*: loving Krishn as your son and you are His mother or father
- 4) *madhurya bhao*: loving Krishn as your beloved

Each one is progressively sweeter and closer. The sweetest and closest relationship you can have with Krishn is *madhurya bhao*. Someone who loves Krishn with *madhurya bhao* becomes a *gopi* after God realization. The different Saints are classified according to their relationship with Krishn. The *gopis* are considered the topmost Saints because their relationship is the closest of all. Any soul can become a *gopi* by loving Krishn as their Divine beloved. The process of heart purification through such *raganuga bhakti* in order to attain God realization is described in detail in our publications “The Science of Devotion, Divine Love and Grace” and “Prem Ras Siddhant”, available online at <http://shop.jkp.org>.

XVIII) I live away from from an *ashram* / centre of Kripalu Maharaj and need some help with daily *sadhana*. Can you please advise a recommended course of *sadhana* for a devotee to practice at home and advance in *Bhakti* to Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha-Krishna?

Doing *sadhana* or devotion is like a medicine which should be taken every day. What follows is the prescribed *sadhana* as taught by Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj for devotees to practice at home. We should take some time every day to sit in a quiet place and remember Radha Krishn. We can think of Their name, form, virtues, *leelas*, abodes or Divine associates. It should be a live, living remembrance of Them, believing that They are really right there in front of you. This loving remembrance of Them is called *roop dhyana*. While doing *roop dhyana*, we should sing or listen to some chanting. Doing the chanting blocks out external distractions and helps the mind to focus. Such loving remembrance with chanting helps to develop affinity for Radha Krishn which means the devotee may gradually experience a growing feeling of closeness with Radha Krishn (this is called *bhao bhakti*). The devotee should long for the love and vision of Radha Krishn and shed tears to meet Them, but should not ask Them for any worldly thing. This process of devotion gradually purifies the heart. At the completion of your *sadhana*, when the heart is fully purified, a true Saint can Grace you with the Divine vision and Divine love of Radha Krishn.

XIX) What are some of the ways to enliven devotional service to God?

Devotional service means service to a Saint. Although it is our ultimate goal to be able to serve Radha Krishn personally in Their Divine abode, that is only possible when we meet Them, which happens after God realization. Until then, the true Saint who is one with Radha Krishn, and who represents Them on the earth planet, accepts the service of the souls on behalf of Radha Krishn. Thus, during the devotional period, we serve Radha Krishn by serving Their Saint.

The benefit of such service is received immediately in the form of heart purification, which brings us closer to our goal of God realization. Service to a true Saint improves the humbleness of the devotee and develops a connection between him and his Master which becomes a channel for receiving more of his Grace. This Grace takes the form of loving feelings for Radha Krishn in the heart of the devotee. One should remember that if a Saint accepts our service, it only shows his greatness, like a king accepting a gift of a few pennies from a beggar. The Saint does not benefit

from our service, but nonetheless accepts our service because we benefit from getting the chance to serve.

Devotional service is said to be of three kinds: *tan*, *man*, *dhan* (physical, mental and financial service). Physical service means offering any service to the Saint or his mission that we perform with our physical body. Mental service is performed simply by thinking positively about the Saint. Financial service means offering any financial support for the Saint's mission. All three are considered devotional service and lead to the same benefit. Out of the three, the most important and the one that can be practiced all the time is mental service; maintaining a feeling of surrender and having positive thoughts about the Saint is the most important form of service. Physical and financial service are meant to help us improve our mental surrender.

This is the secret of service and surrender which has been described in beautiful detail in the book "The Science of Devotion, Divine Love and Grace" which is available at <http://shop.jkp.org>.

XX) How to control tears in front of people? Or what should you say when someone asks you what happened?

When tears come in devotion it is a positive sign. Tears are the indication that our heart is truly longing for the vision of Radha Krishn. Tears indicate that the heart is being purified. However, because vanity is deeply engrained in the human mind, what often happens is that when tears come, we think to ourselves, "I'm a good devotee because I have tears."

When such vanity rises, it suppresses the humbleness which was the basis for receiving the tears in the first place. Sometimes we even think, "I wonder if anyone notices me crying tears for Krishn (so they can see what a good devotee I am)." It is for this reason that, although tears are a positive sign, Shree Kripaluji Maharaj advises devotees to try their utmost to restrain the tears when they are in the company of other people (*gopaniyam gopaniyam gopaniyam prayatnatah*). Despite the effort to hide our tears, if someone notices, then we can divert the attention away from our devotion by saying that we have allergies or a cold or something in our eye.

XXI) Sometimes we know what we are doing is wrong, yet we do it anyway. Why is it so?

Arjun asked this very same to Krishn at the conclusion of the 3rd chapter of the Gita. Krishn told him it is because of *kam* (desire) and *krodh* (anger). If our desire for something is strong enough, we will do a wrong action to get that thing, even though we know it is wrong. If our anger is strong enough, we will do a wrong action, even though we know it is wrong. Due to the effect of *kam* and *krodh*, although it is wrong, we don't care and we decide to do it anyway.

Krishn also told Arjun that *kam* and *krodh* are inherent in a material mind. Our mind is made of *maya*. *Maya* has three qualities: *sattva*, *raj*, and *tam* (good, selfish and bad). *Kam* and *krodh* are natural manifestations of *rajogun*. Thus, as long you have a material mind (a mind made of *mayic* energy), those three qualities of *maya* will remain. As long as those three qualities of *maya* remain, *kam* and *krodh* will remain. *Kam* and *krodh* can only be completely eliminated by eliminating *maya*, and *maya* can only be eliminated with God's Grace. So to eliminate *kam* and *krodh*, we must do *bhakti* to receive God's Grace. *Bhakti* is the only permanent cure for *kam* and

krodh.

When a soul becomes completely surrendered to God, through God's Grace the effect of *maya* is eliminated on that soul. That soul is liberated from *maya*, which means that the material nature of his mind is eliminated, along with *kam* and *krodh*. Along the way to God realization, the more *bhakti* we do, the more surrendered we become and the more Grace we receive. Thus on the path of *bhakti*, *kam* and *krodh* are gradually reduced as the mind purifies. It is a gradual process which culminates in God realization.

XXII) I have heard in the discourses that God has given us the 'free will' to love Him. The *karm* of surrendering to God has to be done by us, and when we do our part, only then God will grace us with attaining Him. With this explanation of 'free will' how can we say that God knows everything that will happen in the future?

Your understanding of the correlation between free will, surrender and Grace are correct. God knows all those things which are destined to happen in the future. These things are destined to happen as the outcome of the souls' past lives' *karm*. However, not everything is destined, that is how we have free will. Free will means we decide what to think, say and do. That is in our hands, so God only knows what we are going to do when we actually do it. Otherwise, if even our actions were destined, what would be the point of having free will? Becoming surrendered to God is an act of free will, so God does not know if and when a soul is going to surrender to Him. That is why He is always watching us every second, so the moment a soul becomes surrendered, He appears before that soul and Graces him.

XXIII) Swamiji, may I know what is Kripaluji's guidelines for a student in today's scenario of unavoidable vulgarity, corruption and strong mind-diverting temptations?

Shree Kripaluji Maharaj always tells people that they should detach their mind from the world and attach it to Krishn. This applies to all people, regardless of age or living situation. It is true that the association of the people around us has a strong potential to affect our thinking. I understand that it is difficult when you are surrounded by people who do not share the same values as you and try overtly to influence you to adopt the same habits they have. In fact, sometimes it might seem like the whole world is trying to divert our mind towards materiality. Everything, from TV and movies to magazines to billboards to music all tell us that what matters is material indulgence.

In order to live in such a situation and remain firm in one's spiritual beliefs and lifestyle, a strong foundation of *tattva gyan* (spiritual understanding) is essential. Such knowledge must be kept fresh in the mind by daily review of the most important points related to our life in the world, the aim of our existence, and our relationship with God. That is why it is so valuable to be able to watch the speeches of Kripaluji Maharaj on TV Asia and Aaj Tak everyday. If one does not have access to these channels, reading and re-reading his book "Prem Ras Siddhant" can help us to keep our *tattva gyan* strong. In addition, seeking out the association of other spiritually minded people by going to your local temple regularly or by attending one of our local weekly *satsangs* is a

good way to maintain your connection to your spiritual center. Practicing daily *sadhana* according to the instructions of Kripaluji Maharaj helps you to experience more closeness with Radha Krishn, and that also gives you more mental strength and stability to be able to withstand outside influences. Out of these things I have suggested, try one or use all of them in order to develop yourself spiritually and be able to live the life you want.

One should also remember that being young is not an excuse to forget about God and indulge in the world. Often, people give the excuse that they are young, so they're just going to enjoy the world for now, and they'll think about God when they're older. Prahlad told his young friends that they should start devotion to God immediately, at their early age, because there is no telling how long a person will live.

We should keep in mind that everything we eat and drink affects the quality of our mind and helps or hinders our spiritual progress. Eating non-vegetarian food, and using drugs and alcohol develops the *tamas* quality of the mind, which pollutes our mind and obscures our connection with God. Eating healthy vegetarian food and leading an active and disciplined life develops the *sattvic* quality of our mind, which encourages clarity of thinking and improves our ability to experience our relationship with God.

XXIX) Do the life forms other than human have *man*? What is *bhog yoni* & *karm yoni*?

Yes, other life forms have *man* (mind). When the soul leaves the body, the mind and senses (*indriya*) go with it to the next birth (Gita chapter 15, verse 7 and 8). So wherever the soul goes, mind and senses go with it. Whatever species a soul is born into, the mind and senses are there. However, depending on the type of birth received, the mind and senses function at a certain level. For instance, since the brain of an animal is less developed, even though they have a mind, it cannot function at a high level of intelligence. Even though a plant has a mind and senses, the only active senses are touch and a very faint sense of hearing (according to Bhagwatam). Except in rare circumstances, a person cannot remember any specific memories from his past lives because they are kept in the subconscious levels of the mind and are inaccessible to the conscious mind (just like memories from your early life are more difficult to access than memories from yesterday because they are "farther from the surface" of your mind).

Bhog yoni and *karm yoni* refer to whether a certain species is given the right to perform fruitative actions or not. '*Yoni*' means species. *Bhog yoni* means the souls born in that life form undergo pleasure and suffering according to the actions they performed the last time they were human, but they don't get to perform any new actions. This applies to all life forms other than human. Whatever actions they do are not counted as *karm* and they will receive no future consequence for their actions. The term *karm yoni* applies only to the human life form and indicates that as a human, a soul is held responsible for all of his actions and will receive the fruit of those actions in his next life. It is because of this that only human beings have the opportunity to attain God.

XXX) Why do we dream?

Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj says that we should not try to infer any kind of message or meaning from our dreams. They are like incoherent ramblings of our subconscious mind. Most often, we dream about whatever we are attached to and whatever we thought about the

most during the day. Although dreams can feel very real, we should not use them as "guidance" in our life or even try to remember them.

If someone has a devotional dream (meaning you dream about God or about anything related to God), that is a sign that you are developing more attachment to God, which is a good thing. However, it is not a message from God or a vision of God. It is your subconscious mind thinking about God.

XXXI) What happens to a human after his death?
Is he reborn again in form of human or some other form?

A soul in a human body can be born in any species after his death. It depends on his *karm*. Being born human is a very special opportunity given to us by God so that we can try to attain Him. If we do not use our human birth for this purpose, then we may be reborn into any species in our next life according to our *karm*. A common misconception is that once a soul is born as a human, he can never be born in the lower species again. In fact we have been born as human uncountable times in the past. Since we didn't use our human birth to attain God, we were reborn in the lower species each time. After many births in the lower species, God gives another chance to a soul to be born as human. This has happened to us unlimited number of times.

XXXII) Can one accept Lord Krishn as his Guru and do sadhana?
As he is also a Jagadguru, can a person realize God if he accepts Shyam Sundar as his guru? While following the guidelines of his saints i.e. Kripaluji Maharaj?

God realization is not possible without a Guru. Shree Krishn Himself has said this in the Gita (chapter 4, verse 34); the Upnishads, Puranas and Ramayan all make similar statements. It would be like trying to get a PhD without the help of a professor. That Guru must be someone whom we can see, talk to and relate to. We should be able to ask them questions and clear our confusions. They will tell us the path so we know how to live our life for God realization.

Krishn helps us by sending a Guru into our life. The Guru helps us to purify our mind through proper bhakti. Once our mind is fully purified and we become surrendered, then Krishn comes to us. (*Harihin bhav shuddh jan tohin patit bhav pyare*; explanation of the difference between God and Guru from the kirtan "Jayati Guruvar" by Shree Kripaluji Maharaj). It is through the Grace of the Guru that we receive the Divine vision of Krishn (*Guru mile kripa Rijhavar, Guru kripa mile sarkar*; from the kirtan "Guru charan kamal balihar" by Shree Kripaluji Maharaj). So ignoring the Grace of the Saint and asking Krishn to help you is like the person who is searching for his spectacles when they are hanging on a string around his neck.

One should also know that we not only need to follow the instructions of the Saint for how to do devotions, we also need to open a channel in our heart to receive the Saint's Grace. This is done by surrendering (internally) to the Saint. This allows us to receive the Grace of the Saint, which will redeem past spiritual transgressions and open us to experience *bhao* in our devotion to Radha Krishn. This is the real devotion. Otherwise, it is like a dry practice of devotion, with no real feelings of affinity. Thus, we see that not only following the teachings of the Guru, but an internal feeling of surrender in order to receive his Grace is required to proceed on the path of bhakti.

XXXIII) Miscellaneous Questions

Vedic mantra ke baad Vaishnav mantra ka jaap karte hai to saadhak ka nuksaan to nahi hai? Mantra and mala jo hame pehle mile the, unka kya karna chahiye? Vaishnav mantra and vedic mantra dono k niyam me kya fark hota hai? Sadhu and Saint me kya fark hai? kya saadhak ki paatrataa dekhkar use mantra diya jata hai?

Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj teaches that you must purify your mind by doing *roop dhyān* (loving remembrance) of Radha Krishn. Whether you use a *mantra* to help you in your remembrance, or you just chant a name of God, or you listen to *kirtan* to help with your remembrance, the only thing that matters is that you remember Radha Krishn. So he does not give any importance to the use of *mantra*, and he himself does not give any *mantra*. He simply teaches how to do remembrance (*roop dhyān*).

Just because you have taken a *mantra* from another Guru does not mean that you are bound to keep following that for your whole life. If there is something else which is going to give you more benefit, then you can change your spiritual practice and no one is going to punish you. Some people feel a kind of psychological bondage that because they have taken *mantra* from someone, they cannot try anything else for their whole life. This is not correct. In fact, this is one reason that *mantra dikcha* is so popular, because it creates a kind of psychological bondage. My advice to you is to study the teachings of Kripaluji Maharaj and understand more deeply what the path of *bhakti* is, what a true Guru is, and how a Guru Graces his devotees. I would recommend reading any of his books, which can be ordered online at <http://shop.jkp.org>. Also, his speeches come on TV Asia here in America every morning, and on Aaj Tak every evening. If you are in India, the Aaj Tak broadcast is at 6:30am daily.

Regarding the question about the difference between a *sadhu* and a Saint, in general we use the term *sadhu* for someone who lives a renounced life dedicated to God (like the words *baba* and *sanyasi*). When we use these terms in general conversation, we are referring to the lifestyle of the person. They may or may not be God realized. The word Saint refers to someone who is God realized. The Saint may live the life of a *sadhu/sanyasi* (like Shukdeo, Narad, etc.), or of a *grihasthi* (like Janak, Prahlad, Dhruv, Ambarish, etc.).

Part 2: Speeches

All Religions Are Not the Same

“Let us be very clear and forthright about our heritage: Hinduism has a profound depth and unique features not available in other faiths”

One goal we often hear voiced by the Hindu community in America is to preserve the authenticity of the teachings of Hinduism and pass that heritage on to future generations. There is a statement many of us make which undermines these efforts. We often say, "All religions are the same." Why do we say it? Sometimes we don't want to offend anyone. This is a safe, politically correct, fallback position. Sometimes, not knowing the intricacies of Hinduism, we fail to recognize its uniqueness and greatness. If Hinduism were the same as all other religions, then why would we

care if our children convert to other religions? Why would we organize conferences to preserve our essential teachings and develop better ways of teaching them to our kids? If Hinduism were the same as all other religions, then why would I, who was not raised Hindu, have chosen Hinduism over other religions?

It is true that there cannot be two Gods. There cannot be a separate Hindu God, a separate Christian God, a separate Muslim God, a separate Jewish God, etc. Our Vedas state, "*Ekamevadvitiam brahm nehananasti kinchan*," "God is one and absolute. There can be no other." So whoever is worshiping God, anywhere in this universe, is worshiping the same God. And all theistic religions agree on certain general characteristics of God. God is perfection, absolute divinity, omnipresent, all-knowing, all powerful, blissful, etc. This is the extent of the description available in other religions, but not in Hinduism. The Sanskrit scriptures of Hinduism reveal the knowledge of God on a much deeper level. This is both what makes Hinduism great and also what makes it more challenging to comprehend.

Some Hindus complain that it is so easy for the members of other religions to summarize the teachings of their religion. It is easy to summarize general and superficial knowledge. But the depth, scope and detail of Hinduism require more skill and training to understand, distill and communicate to others. Clearly it is important to have a qualified teacher. Anyone can teach finger-painting, but it takes someone with a PhD to teach nuclear physics. Hinduism must be learned from someone with not only theoretical understanding, but with practical experience of God.

The word God is a general term. It is vague and non-specific, like the word fruit. Fruit is abstract, because fruit does not exist as such. Bananas exist; apples exist; mangoes exist. If I ask you to describe what fruit looks like, you cannot, because fruit is a general term. You could only describe the appearance of a mango or an apple--a specific fruit. Similarly, the description of God in other religions is non-specific and general. What does God look like? You cannot tell me, because God is just an abstract term. However, in Hinduism we have the specific description of God's form and personal names. He is Krishna, He is Ram, He is Vishnu, He is Siva, She is Durga, etc. We know what He looks like, and we know what His Divine personality is like.

Supreme God has uncountable Divine powers. When most of them are dormant or inactive, then God is formless and is referred to by the term Brahman. When more of His powers are active, God has form, and is referred to by the term *Paramatma*. This is almighty God, Whose three main forms are Vishnu, Shiv and Durga. Krishna says in the Gita, "*Ye yatha mam prapadyante tanstathaiva bhajamyaham*." In other words, "I come to you in whatever form you worship Me." Hinduism not only incorporates the concepts of God of other religions but also reconciles the apparent differences in the various descriptions, all the while providing an unmatched depth and elegance in the description of God.

Hinduism is also unique in saying that God can be experienced, and, in fact, that is the ultimate goal of a soul. This was one of the most compelling factors for me in my decision to adopt Hinduism. Not only does Hinduism answer all of my intellectual questions, but it clearly states that you can meet God in person. Now who wouldn't want to do that? However, if you don't have the full description of God, then how will you find Him? It would be like someone coming from India and landing at JFK in New York and asking the people he sees, "Have you seen my friend? Where is my friend? I want to meet him." They would ask, "What does your friend look like? Do you have a picture of him? What is his name? Where does he live?" The man answers that he only knows that his friend moved to America 20 years ago, but he does not remember what he looks like, nor does

he have a picture of him. People will think him insane because he may search all over America for his whole life and never have any chance of finding his friend. Similarly, without a proper description of God, how could we hope to find Him? Hinduism provides such a detailed description of God, which is like providing the photograph and the address of the man's friend. Now all the man has to do is follow the path to reach his friend. This path, known as the path of God realization, is also described in Hinduism.

There are many more such points which illustrate the greatness of Hinduism. So remember, although there are similarities between Hinduism and the other religions of the world, and as Hindus we respect all religions, nonetheless, there are features of Hinduism which are not found in other religions and which make Hinduism great.

The Devotional Philosophy Of The Gita And Upnishads

The Sanskrit scriptures of Sanatan Dharm are a fully coordinated system of spiritual knowledge whose aim is to guide the souls to their ultimate good. Among all of these scriptures, three hold prime importance: the Upnishads, the Gita and the Bhagwatam. The Upnishads give the knowledge of supreme God and teach that a soul has to desire God; they also briefly indicate the path to God.

The Gita is the essence of all of these Upnishads. The knowledge of God is scattered throughout 1,180 Upnishads. The Gita, said by Bhagwan Krishn, consolidates the Divine philosophy of all those Upnishads and gives a clear and precise understanding of several important topics:

- 1) There are three eternal *tattvas* (existences): God, the souls, and *maya*. All three of these have existed for ever and will continue to exist forever.
- 2) The soul is our true identity, not the physical body. The soul remains unaffected by the changes which we experience through our physical body, like birth, maturing, aging and death. The soul can never die. When this body dies, the soul takes another body.
- 3) This world has a nature to produce situations which are both pleasing and displeasing to our senses; to produce situations which give us both comfort and pain, hope and disappointment. These two situations follow one another in an endless cycle. This is the eternal nature of this *mayic* manifestation; it will never change. Thus, we must learn to accept the dual nature of physical existence and remain calm in all the situations. Someone who can do this is eligible to become God realized.
- 4) Following the path of God realization while living in the world is called *karm yog*. To do this, a person has to decide that the attainment of God is the first priority of his life, and then he simply fulfills his other duties in the world in a detached and efficient manner, with the feeling that his beloved God is always with him. This is called offering all of your actions to God, and this is *karm yog*.
- 5) Upon the perfection of *karm yog*, a person becomes qualified to receive the Divine vision of God. Arjun received this in the eleventh chapter. When Krishn Graced him with Divine

eyesight, Arjun saw in Krishn's body what had been described in the Upanishads: that God has a Divine personal form, and within that form He is holding the whole universe, and with that form He is omnipresent in the universe, yet He can also be seen at one place, at one time. This is a very important philosophy which is made clear by the Gita.

6) In the end, Krishn concludes His teachings in the Gita by revealing "the secret of all the secrets" to Arjun: that if any soul comes to Krishn wholeheartedly, it is His promise that that soul will reside with Him forever. If a soul leaves all of his prideful efforts in the world and takes refuge in Krishn alone, Krishn releases that soul from the bondage of *maya* and gives him whatever he wants in the Divine world: either absolute liberation, or the Divine vision, or Divine love. Thus ends the philosophy of the Gita.

It is said that where the Gita ends, the Bhagwatam begins. The Gita ends with selfless devotion to God (*bhakti*) and the Bhagwatam explains the real form of *bhakti*, how it is practiced and what are the indications of true *bhakti*. Thus, the scriptures of Sanatan Dharm are arranged in a Divine style to systematically guide the souls toward the ultimate goal of God realization.

However, all of the scriptures advise that if a soul wants to receive the real benefit of this scriptural knowledge, then he should seek the help of a God-realized Saint who can explain the true meaning of these Divine scriptures and impart a practical experience of *bhakti*. The true Spiritual Master, who is one with God, has the ability to teach the process of devotion and to Grace the devotee with relational affinity for God. These devotional feelings purify the heart and ultimately qualify a soul to receive the Divine vision and Divine love of God.

Part 3: Jagadguru Kripaluji Maharaj, Swami

Nikhilanand & JKP Radha Madhav Dham

Jagadguru Shree

Kripaluji Maharaj

A Divine breeze permeated the entire brahmand on the Sharat Poornima night of October, 1922, when Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj appeared in Mangarh village (near Allahabad, India) in a most respectable *brahman* family. From the very first day he delighted the hearts of everyone around him with his sweet smile and serene look. Kripaluji Maharaj is lovingly called Maharajji by his devotees. While showering Braj ras all the time, Shree Maharajji has produced immense devotional literature and material: songs, *kirtans*, couplets etc. Shree Maharajji has also delivered thousands of enthralling discourses which reveal the authentic Divine knowledge of the path to God. His speeches are on TV daily in India as well as in the USA.

Swami Nikhilanand

Swami Nikhilanand is a *sanyasi* teacher of JKP Radha Madhav Dham *ashram*, a beautiful temple and ashram on 200 acres near Austin, Texas. Born in Canada, he worked for many years as a professional wilderness guide in the remote regions of British Columbia. He took his first solo trip into the wilderness at the age of 16. At the age of 17, he left for New Zealand and Australia, where he toured on mountain bike for a year. Underlying his spirit of adventure was a deep spiritual longing. His life-long search led him to India, where he met Jagadguru Shree Kripalu Ji Maharaj, our beloved Shree Maharajji.

Under the guidance of Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj, he studied *Sanskrit* scriptures, meditation and devotional music, and found the inner fulfillment he had been seeking.

He was given the renounced order of *sanyas*, and with the blessings of Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj, he leads chanting meditation and offers talks and workshops throughout North America. He effortlessly bridges the gap between East and West and gives us practical insight into how to improve our everyday life, inspiring us to awaken our inner spiritual potential.

JKP Radha Madhav Dham

JKP Radha Madhav Dham is the main U.S. center of Jagadguru Kripalu Parishat. With the Gracious blessing of Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj (Shree Maharajji), Radha Madhav Dham was established in 1990. Over 50,000 visitors from both Indian and Western communities participate annually in Radha Madhav Dham's devotional teachings, religious programs, youth programs and celebrations.

The temple and *ashram* complex of Radha Madhav Dham is situated on a beautiful 200-acre property. Designed as a representation of the holy land of Braj in India where Shree Radha Rani and Shree Krishn appeared about 5,000 years ago, all the important holy places of Braj like Govardhan, Radha Kund, Prem Sarovar, Shyam Kutu and Mor Kutu are represented in Radha Madhav Dham where the natural stream, named Kalindi, represents the Yamuna river of Vrindaban.

Part 4: Additional Resources

Official Websites

www.JKP.org Jagadguru Kripalu Parishat – worldwide mission of
Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj

www.RadhaMadhavDham.org – Official website for Radha Madhav Dham

www.SwamiNikhilanand.com – Blog for Swami Nikhilanand

www.JKPHouston.org – JKP Radha Madhav Dham Houston Chapter
& 24 Hour Online Radio

shop.JKP.org – Online devotional book and dvd store

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