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# THE JOURNEY TO PREMA

~ A Course in the Science of Bhakti-Yoga

Lesson 1

**Please Chant:**

**Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa - Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare**  
**Hare Rāma Hare Rāma - Rāma Rāma Hare Hare**

+ Huh-ray (Huh like hut); Krish-nuh (nuh like nut); Rā-muh (like drama)

## IN THIS LESSON:

- The Vedas – Sanskrit
- Quoting Scriptures – Reading with the Heart
- Prema – Bhakti-yoga – Faith – Religion
- God's Names – Science
- A Story of Four Friends
- God's Eternal Rules – Looking Ahead
- Glossary
- Correspondence Course
- Initial Questionnaire

By the way ....

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**His Divine Grace**

**Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja**  
 (Affectionately called Śrīla Gurudeva)



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## THE JOURNEY TO PREMA – LESSON 1

Dear servant of God,

Please allow us to humbly offer our respects to you. We are all eternal servants of God and therefore worthy of respect. Based on this fact, we will begin each lesson of this course by addressing you as God's servant and humbly offering our respects to you. Along with being God's servants, we consider ourselves to be your servant as well. As your servant, we wish to do whatever we can to help you along on your journey toward pure love for God.

All of us who serve within the International Pure Bhakti Yoga Society (IPBYS) Prison Outreach Program want to welcome you to our group and to thank you for contacting us. Preaching about the science of bhakti-yoga spreads love and affection for God and all of His creations. Spreading this love is the most important aspect of the IPBYS mission. We are glad you are allowing us the opportunity to share our love, God's love, and His teachings with you.

**Vedas**

The teachings that this course rely upon are not simply based upon ideas created by mankind. They are based upon ancient scriptures that were first written down some 5,000 years ago by a saintly scholar. God inspired him to put these teachings into written form, and instructed him from within as to what was to be taught. For these reasons they are known to contain the purest spiritual truths.

These scriptures are known as the **Veda**. + **Vay-duh**. The word Veda means **“the total of all knowledge.”** Of course they do not contain every piece of information known to man, but they do contain the most important information we need. These truths will allow us to map out our journey to pure love of God. **Note: The “+” sign is used as a pronunciation identifier.**

**Sanskrit**

These scriptures were originally written in **Sanskrit**, which is a **very unique and profound ancient language**. Sanskrit is the language of the Vedas, and although most of us are not familiar with it, we're going to introduce quite a few Sanskrit words to you in this course, and we ask you to sincerely try to learn them. While some of them are terms that you may have heard before, like “karma” and “yoga,” the true meanings of these words may be quite different from what you thought. We'll also be sharing these words with you because there are no English words that express the same deep meanings as many Sanskrit words do.

The first few times these words are used we will give you an English definition and try to help you with pronunciation. We hope that over time, you'll become so familiar with them that they will become part of your vocabulary.

We understand that it will be a challenge to learn these words, but if you look at the subtitle to this course, “A Course in the Science of Bhakti-Yoga,” you should be able to see why it is so important, both for us to use these words, and for you to learn them as well.

Bhakti-yoga is a science (later in this lesson we will discuss why it is referred to in this way) and thus, like every other science, it has its own unique vocabulary. For example, we cannot study biology without understanding words like “cell” and “organism,” and we cannot study meteorology without words like “cumulus” and “atmosphere.”

Even simple terms that are used in most every science must be learned, for they convey very specific meanings in short and simple ways. For example, if we are in a laboratory and we want to refer to the various items we will use there, we can't simply use terms like, “glass thing,” as this term is too general and could refer to many different objects. On the other hand, having to say, “cylindrical glass vessel with the pouring lip,” or “small glass plate on which specimens for the microscope can be mounted” in order to identify objects

would get rather cumbersome. This is why terms like “beaker” and “slide” are used, even though their use requires us to learn their meanings.

Similarly, there are Sanskrit words which we must use so that we can refer to specific aspects of the science of bhakti-yoga without having to give lengthy descriptions over and over again. For example, there is a Sanskrit word **rāga** + **rā-guh** (like **rod-gum**) which refers to **“an unquenchable, love-filled thirst that causes one's entire consciousness to become absorbed in the object of one's affection.”** No other term conveys this exact meaning, and to write out this definition each time we want to discuss this taste would not be reasonable. Therefore, if we want to become serious students of bhakti-yoga, we must learn some of the words that are included in it. (+ note, the letters “uh” are used to indicate the short “u” sound, as in “up”, in order to distinguish it from the other “u” sounds, as in “push” or “rule”)

Also, when we call objects, “glass things,” in a laboratory, we create problems because we do not know which object is being referred to. Similarly, using general terms to study bhakti-yoga creates problems. The word “love” is a very general word. In the science of bhakti-yoga there are several words, such as **rāga**, that not only mean love, but refer to very specific aspects of love, and, in order to understand exactly what is being spoken of, these specific terms must be used.

Therefore, we ask you to happily and enthusiastically accept the challenges of learning these words, and we ask you to make a special effort to learn the Sanskrit terms we will introduce so that you can improve your ability to properly absorb the truths we will share. Also, since these lessons will be spaced out to arrive about once a month, you should have plenty of time to learn the words in each lesson before a new one arrives. If you do this you will be able to confidently move forward and you will avoid becoming confused when these words appear again.

Also, in order to help you learn these words, we'll include a glossary at the end of each lesson that contains most of the Sanskrit words we've introduced that month. You can use these glossaries both as a study aide and as an easy reference source, should you come across a word in a later lesson whose meaning has slipped your memory.

Learning these words is very important because it will be difficult to follow these lessons if you don't recognize and understand them. So, we ask you to please put forth whatever effort it takes to study and learn the vocabulary of bhakti-yoga, the most valuable and important of all the sciences.

**Other Related Materials**

Along with the collection of books known as the Vedas, there are other books and lectures which our teachings are drawn from. These books have been written by saintly scholars who possessed highly advanced spiritual understandings. Although the titles of some of these books, along with the names of their authors will be given at times, the main purpose of this course is to focus on the teachings of these books, rather than the specific source of each teaching, so you do not need to focus too much on the names of these sources. And yet, we still wanted to provide them to you in order to show you that the quotes we use come from these very important texts and authorities.

When you do see a name or a book title given as a reference source you should know that, unless we speak more about this person or book, or include this term in the glossary, you will not need to learn this term in order to follow the teachings of this course.

These additional books and lectures form a large part of this course and we will frequently use quotes from them. Whenever we do this, we will *make the quoted words distinct with italic font, and sometimes bolded italics, or bolded italics with underlines, to show emphasis!*

**Staple** In addition to the use of *italics*, we've added a bar on the left margin of all paragraphs "*which contain quotes*," as seen below. In this way, you can easily locate these quotes for study and review.

We will use these quotes because, as this course will demonstrate, the words of these great teachers are especially important in our study of bhakti-yoga. The value of these quotes is explained as follows.

*The actions and words of the saintly souls are, in and of themselves, authoritative texts. What is scripture? The experiences and the teachings of the exalted saintly souls are scriptures. Their explanations of the scriptures and the examples they set by their behavior contain the true and unbiased meanings of the scriptures and they are to be recognized as the sacred authorities.*

- Nārada Muni (Introduced in lesson 11)

In Lessons 2 and 3 we will begin to introduce you to these saintly souls and we will tell you what qualities they possess. In Lesson 5 we will provide you with a fairly extensive list of many of the great teacher's, whose words we will rely on throughout this course.

In Lesson 5, each of these saintly souls will be given a number that relates to their order of appearance in that lesson, and, in order to help you earn who these great personalities are, and the roles they have played in delivering the science of bhakti-yoga to us, we will be using those same numbers whenever we use a quote from one of them. For example, if we quote Śrīla Gurudeva + Shree-luh Goo-roo-dave, we will immediately follow his name with a reference to this, enclosed in parenthesis, i.e. (33).

If a personality is discussed in more detail in one of our lessons, we may also mention that, as we did above with Nārada Muni, the speaker of the last quote, who you will meet in Lesson 11.

Therefore, we ask you to be sure to keep Lesson 5, as it will assist you in becoming familiar with these saintly souls.

In addition to providing you with references to those who provided us with most of the quotes we will use, we will also be introducing you to some of the specific books they have written. The goals of all of these books are the same, to help us understand spiritual truths. As with the other referenced sources, we will usually provide you with the names of these books, however unless one is spoken of in detail or mentioned in a glossary, you will not need to learn the names of these books.

### Quoting Other Scriptures

Throughout this course you will also find that we will occasionally quote from some of the other great scriptures of the world. We do this to point out the similarities and the unity that exists amongst these texts.

In doing so, we are also aware that all scriptures can be interpreted in various ways. Therefore we understand that not everyone will agree with the way we have used any given quote, and thus we apologize in advance to anyone who disagrees with the way we have used a quote. Our purpose is not to create controversy or to take any position that will upset any of our readers, it is simply, as we said, to show that many of the teachings of the Vedas are directly in line with those given by other authorities as well. And, just as we have done with the Vedas, we may occasionally quote the learned and saintly souls who follow other paths as well.

As an example of one such unifying quote, we will sight this from the Holy Bible, King James Version. (hereafter KJV)

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. (II Tim 3.16)*

While some might wish to interpret this quote referring only to the Christian scriptures, we take a wider view of God's

guiding nature, as is evidenced in this quote from a great saintly soul in our religious tradition.

*Following in the footsteps of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu + Shree Chie-tun-yuh Muh-hā-prub-hoo (see Lesson 3), we are trying to convince everyone that devotional service to the Lord is enjoined in every scripture. If a person is religious, he must accept the supreme authority of the Lord, become His devotee, and try to love Him. This is the real principle of religion. It does not matter if one is Christian, Muslim, or whatever. He simply must accept the sublime position of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and render service to Him. It is not a question of being Christian, Muslim, or Hindu. One should be purely religious and freed from all these material designations. In this way one can learn the art of devotional service. This argument appeals to all intelligent men, and consequently the Kṛṣṇa + Krish-nuh Consciousness Movement is gaining ground throughout the world. Due to our solid logic and scientific presentation Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's prediction that Kṛṣṇa consciousness will spread to every town and village throughout the world is gradually being realized. (Śrīla Prabhupāda (31) (Lessons 5 and 6), Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya 25.20, Purport)*

**NOTE:** As used in this quote, both "devotional service" and "Kṛṣṇa Consciousness" refer to the practice of bhakti-yoga.

So our position is that all scriptures are ultimately aimed at the same thing, engaging us in the love-drenched relationship with the Lord that is based on serving Him, and we will present all of these various quotes in order to show this unifying feature of the world's various scriptures.

### In One Ear and...Into the Heart

By combining two of the ideas that we've already shared with you, we're now going to tell you about a very important teaching regarding the way we are to study the science of bhakti-yoga.

We've told you that the words of saintly souls should be accepted as authoritative, and we've mentioned that love is an important subject that we will be dealing with in this course. We will now share the instructions that one of these saintly souls, Śrīla Gurudeva (32) (Lessons 2 and 5) has given us about how we are to absorb the knowledge of the Vedas.

In Lesson 14 we will discuss this teaching in more detail, but we also wanted to share it with you now, at the very outset of this course, so that you can begin to understand that the truths we will present are not meant to simply become more information for you to store in your brain. These truths are meant to be kept in, and experienced by – the heart.

Śrīla Gurudeva tells us:

*If you read something (of a spiritual nature), you should get absorbed in it, having the attitude that, 'I am serving this sacred text, and I am taking all these instructions in my heart.' We should not read superficially, hearing with one ear and letting it out the other.*

*There is a very beautiful story which illustrates this point. In India there was once a king named Vikramāditya + (mād like modern). He had so many 'jewels' —his counselors— nine court jewels. All nine were highly learned, but among them Kalidāsa + (dās like wāsp) was supremely intelligent. One day a person looking like a madman came (into the king's assembly, he was) holding a skull in his hand. He was quite naked and very dirty. He came in the counsel and put that skull on the desk, saying, 'I have heard there are many intelligent jewels in your court. Let them come here and test whether the person whose skull I have placed here was intelligent or a fool and a rascal.'*

*Eight jewels were there, very learned persons, participating in the King's council, but none of them were able to reply. Only the skull was there, nothing else, so how could they test it? Then that madman began to laugh and said, "You are all bogus foolish persons with no sense. I had heard this, and now I have found out*

that it is true. So I am going.” And he took the skull, preparing to leave. In the meantime, Kalidāsa came. The King requested the madman, “Oh, wait a little. Another one of my counselors is coming, and he will answer your question.”

That person put the skull on the desk again, and Kalidāsa came. This same question was asked of Kalidāsa, who then took a long coconut stick, made of very fine, long strands used for sweeping and went to the skull. He put the stick in one ear and it came out the other side, through the other ear. Then he said, “Your question is answered. Do you understand?”

“Oh, you should clarify more,” the king said. “I do not understand.”

Kalidāsa explained, “If anything comes in one ear and goes out the other, that person is surely foolish. And if something goes in one ear and does not come out the other, but instead goes into the heart, then he is surely a very intelligent person. Thus, from his skull, we can understand that this dead person was very foolish.”

**If we hear so many things but do not take them into the heart, if we do not cultivate all these teachings, then we are like a foolish person and we cannot develop our pure love for the Supreme Lord (Kṛṣṇa-prema)...So don't merely take these teachings in one ear and let them go out the other, but keep them in your heart and follow them.**

This teaching is also given in the Holy Bible where we find it expressed in this way:

*My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.* (Proverbs 4.20-21 KJV)

So we can see that this important point is universally recognized, and thus, as this course progresses we ask you to always keep both this teaching and the other truths we will share, in your heart, for, as the next few sections will begin to explain, the goal of this course lies within the heart as well.

### **Prema**

As you may have noticed, the title and subtitle of this course contain three Sanskrit words, so, before we go any further let's discover the meaning of one of those words. The title of this course is “The Journey to Prema.” + **praim**, like **aim**, or **pray-muh**.

+ **Note:** When a Sanskrit words ends with a final “a” sound it is sometimes pronounced and sometimes not, such as with Śrīla Gurudeva above, where the final “a” is not pronounced. When either pronunciation is used, we will give both. When one pronunciation is almost always used we will give only one. In next month's lesson we will provide more details on Sanskrit and we will include a complete pronunciation guide.

**The purpose of this course is to take you on a journey that will lead you to prema.** As this course progresses, we will give detailed explanations of what prema is and how we can develop it, but for now we'll just share a couple of simple definitions with you. First, you can just think of **prema** as **pure love of God**. We will show you why **developing this pure love for God is the ultimate goal of human life**. Second, you can think of prema as **an inclination of the heart that causes one to have a strong desire to serve the Lord**.

**Lord Jesus Christ** also expressed love for God as being our topmost goal. When he was asked to explain “the greatest commandment in the law” he said:

**Jesus said unto him; Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.** (Matt. 22:37-38 KJV)

Those who travel the path to prema, and attain it, reach a level of spirituality where they are no longer affected by the sufferings that usually go along with living in the material worlds. They live lives filled with peace, satisfaction, spiritual understandings, loving awareness, and bliss. **Prema**

**is not a product of the material senses. It is an entirely spiritual experience.**

In order to attain prema, we must journey beyond the material limitations that most of us believe we are constrained by. We feel sure that as we present you with an understanding of what prema is, you'll agree that a life focused on, and filled with a pure love of God can produce the benefits spoken of above, and you'll become convinced that prema is the ultimate goal of life.

When we are first introduced to the idea of prema, most of us do not understand it, do not accept that it is the goal of life, and, even if it is that goal, we think, “How could I ever achieve such a lofty goal? It seems so distant, so far from what my heart currently feels.” If you felt that way, then we have a teaching from the Vedas that will be very comforting to you.

### **A Journey**

**Prema, the purest and most fulfilling experience that you can ever have, is eternally established in your heart.** It is not something you have to look outside of yourself to find, for it cannot be gained from another source. So you may ask, “If it's here, right inside my heart, why do I have to go on a journey to find it, and why don't I feel it or know it exists?”

To answer the first question, we will tell you that the journey to prema is a journey unlike any journey that you may have taken before. Most journeys are directed by our senses. The tongue wants to taste some ice cream so we journey to the supermarket. The ears want to hear the latest song so we journey to our radio. Our journeys are aimed toward things outside ourselves; **the journey to prema is inward**. We learn to develop and rely upon our spiritual senses and we travel into the mind, our hearts, and our consciousness to discover the precious treasure of prema that is buried within us.

This statement, that our prema is “buried within us” is the answer to the other questions: Why don't we feel prema or know it exists if it's something that's eternally established in our hearts. If it's there, what is it buried with?

### **The Start of Material Life; the Burying of Our Prema**

There was a time where time didn't exist. In a borderland existence between the spiritual and material worlds, where there was no past or present, only the now, each of us was given a choice. Did we want to turn our hearts and consciousness toward God, and exist to serve Him and give Him pleasure, or did we want to turn away from Him and try to become servants of our own pleasures?

We all chose to serve ourselves, and, from that moment on, we lost our ability to feel our prema and to be aware of its existence. **Prema became buried within us by illusions of who we are and by our own desires to try to enjoy ourselves separately from God.** These illusions and desires keep us from experiencing prema, and they can be thought of as the dirt under which our blissful state of existence is buried.

This moment, when we turned away from the Lord, is discussed in these next two quotes, both of which were spoken by Śrīla Gurudeva (32) (Lessons 2 and 5). In the first quote he tells us how our turning away from the Lord has led us to face the harsh realities of old age and impending death. Although most of us do not wish to think about such things, a true spiritual guide will never hesitate to discuss such realities, especially if he feels that he may be able to help us accept the dire situations we are in, and thus impel us to do something to rectify them. **Śrīla Gurudeva** says:

**All of us in this world have turned away from the Lord (Kṛṣṇa). Whether we accept it or not, it is true. Although we are suffering terribly we do not realize it. Why not? We have drunk such a large quantity of the alcohol of the illusions of this world (Māyā +like mop/yacht), that we have become**

**Staple** *completely mad; in that madness we think we are very happy. You should know that one day you will have to give up your bodies and all that you have collected in this world. One day you will surely have to be old. Old age is very eagerly waiting to embrace you and none of you can escape it.* (Lecture: Published in “Guru-devatātmā.”)

In his next quote we find that, by turning away from the Lord, we have become entrapped in two separate types of confinement, and we find these traps referred to in a way that is very appropriate in a course designed for inmates. Śrīla Gurudeva says:

*When we first departed from the Lord (Kṛṣṇa); when we first forgot Him, the illusions of this world (māyā) came at once and attacked us and put us in their jail. What is this jail? It is the body and the mind. Actually there are two jails, one within the other. The material body is the outer jail and the subtle body is the inner jail. [since we are trapped in these jails,] we have been suffering and enjoying from time immemorial (ibid) NOTE: ibid means that this quote is from same reference as used for the previous quotation.*

When we look at the perimeter of any jail or prison we will see two sets of razor wire fences. Perhaps, from now on, when you see these you can relate them to the other two, much more formidable barriers that entrap our souls in the prison house of this world. In Lesson 4 we will devote some time to explaining the exact make-up of these two jails.

The illusions and desires which entrap us will also be discussed in future lessons. Along with those discussions we will show you how God, out of His infinite kindness and glorious mercy has made it possible for us to uncover the prema that is buried within each and every one of us, from the most saintly to the most sinful.

### We Can Awaken Prema

The same verse from the Vedas that tells us that prema is eternally situated in our hearts, also tells us that **when the heart is purified by hearing about God and chanting His names, prema will naturally awaken.** To awaken this love we must journey within ourselves.

**From the moment we turned away from God’s service we became prisoners in the worlds of illusion and material desires.** Our souls are entrapped within bodies that lead us to believe we are experiencing pain, anger, frustration and a countless number of other undesirable things. These unpleasant things have arisen because our true nature is asleep in a nighttime of illusions. We are convinced that these illusions are the realities of what life is made of.

### Awakening From the Nightmare of Illusions

When we fall asleep and experience a nightmare, no matter how frightening or terrible it may be, we are relieved of its fears and horrors when we wake up and realize it was only a dream. This material world of suffering is real, it is not a dream, but as you progress in your journey to prema you’ll be able to awaken the love that is in your heart and the miseries of this world will begin to disappear, just as the horrors of a nightmare disappear when we awaken from it.

### To Know Him is To Love Him

There is an old song that contains a few lines that are well suited to this course. The song is talking about loving and it says, **“To know, know, know him, is to love, love, love him, and we do, and we do, and we do.”** For most of us, it’s very hard to love someone that we do not know. We have designed this course to help you to get to know God. The Vedas contain vivid descriptions of His qualities, His activities, what He looks like, and how He interacts with us. Experience tells us that once you get to know Him you won’t be able to help yourself from loving Him. **Hearing about God will awaken the prema that lies in your heart.**

### The Value and Importance of Hearing

Hearing about the Lord can also be accomplished by doing such things as reading the scriptures, the words of saintly souls, and other literatures, such as this course, that describe truths related to awakening our prema.

**Jesus Christ** recognized the value of hearing when he said:

**Take heed what you hear...and unto you that hear shall more be given.** (Mark 4:24 KJV)

The saintly souls who speak on the Vedas have clearly stated this truth as well. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī (29) (Lesson 5) tells us:

**It is imperative that one hears about the Lord and what He ordains. Only then can one speak about the Lord and what He ordains.** (Gaura Vihita Kīrtana)

**It is therefore necessary to constantly engage in hearing about the Lord and His names, forms, qualities, and activities, so that we do not end up deprived of the service of the Lord.** (Periodical: “Rays of the Harmonist,” Issue 21)

As this course progresses we will discuss various aspects of hearing about the Lord with you, but we wanted to share its importance with you early-on as well, because hearing plays a very critical role in following the path of bhakti-yoga.

### The Journey Requires Daily Effort

Unfortunately for all of us, the illusions and material desires, the dirt that buried our prema, has been building up, layer upon layer, for years upon years, lifetime after lifetime, and awakening from our illusory dreams is seldom as easy as having someone give us a shake on the shoulder or setting an alarm clock. It is for this reason that we say **we must go on a journey to prema, a journey where we must awaken each day with the desire to take at least one more step toward the goal.** The exact practices which the Vedas recommend to help us reach our goal will be discussed throughout this course.

Whenever we go on a journey we are wise to select the best means of travel that will take us from where we are to where we want to go. For instance, if we only need to go from the couch in the living room to the refrigerator in the kitchen, well, our feet will probably suffice. Clearly there is no room in the house to take off and land a jumbo jet. On the other hand it would be pretty tough to walk from London to New York. For that journey the jumbo jet would be more suited to our needs.

### The Vedas Give Us The Means

The Vedas are unique. They do not just pinpoint the goal of our journey, they also give detailed descriptions of a means to reach our goal and they provide specific details about how we can recognize the various levels we will pass through during the awakening of our prema. By being aware of these levels, we are able to see and judge for ourselves if the process we have chosen is moving us toward our goal.

### The Means is Bhakti-Yoga

The Vedas tell us that the best means to reach the goal of prema is to practice **bhakti-yoga. + b-huk-tee yoga.** Since this course is based on the science of bhakti-yoga, it will be discussed in great detail in upcoming lessons.

**+ Note:** The b-h sound found in bhakti is not used in English, except where it occurs in a combination of words such as “grab hold”, but it is a common combination in Sanskrit. If you practice it a little you can get used to it quite easily.

### The First Step is Faith

Let’s go back to our journey analogy and imagine that we are setting out on a long journey. We have therefore decided that the jumbo jet is the best means of travel. Before we ever get on board the plane we must take a step on our journey. The first step we must take is not a physical step. It takes place entirely within the mind, our heart, and the intelligence. **The first step we must take is a step of faith.** If we don’t have faith that the plane which we are going to board is capable of flying miles and miles across great distances then we would never choose it as a means to reach our goal. In fact, if we did not have faith that our goal could be reached by some means we might never begin at all.

In order to set out on the journey to prema we must also have some faith. We must find a means of clearing away the dirt that covers over the prema in our hearts. Once we find out about a process that will awaken this sleeping love, we have to put some faith into that process. **We have to honestly, sincerely, and faithfully put forth the effort it takes to practice the prescribed techniques.** We have to perform experiments in the science of bhakti-yoga, for in this way we can board the flight that will carry us across the ocean of material sufferings and bring us safely to our spiritual destination.

This same idea, that action is a necessary part of making progress was expressed by **Lord Buddha** in this way:

*Though he often recites the sacred texts, if he does not act accordingly he is like a person who counts another's wealth. He will have no share in the fruits of the holy life.* (The Dhammapada Verse 19)

The necessity of acting on what we learn will be an ongoing focus of this course.

### Faith

As mentioned earlier, there are certain Sanskrit words that do not directly translate into simple English words. The Sanskrit word that is usually translated as faith is just such a word. In English, the word faith is often associated with a blind belief. This type of faith is not built upon any solid basis. However, it is not this type of faith that is conveyed by the Sanskrit word, nor is it the type of faith that we will be concerned with when we use that term throughout this course. The faith that we want you to develop and experience is of a much deeper nature.

The Vedas are designed to help us reach the Lord. With this in mind, the saintly scholars have determined that the Sanskrit word that is translated as faith refers to two types of faith. Possession of either one of these types of faith will allow you to take the first step on your journey to prema.

### You Have Faith

The first type of **faith** is defined as **an honest-hearted faith in God's existence that causes us, by our own free will, to make an attempt to reach the Lord.** The fact that you are reading this indicates that you already possess this type of faith. You contacted us of your own free will. If you did not have honest-hearted faith in God's existence, it is very unlikely that you would have written to us and by doing so you have shown that you are reaching out to Him.

If you agree that you possess this type of faith, then you are to be congratulated, for this **faith is all you need to make the first step on the journey to prema.** If you feel that you lack one of these aspects of faith, do not despair, persevere. As you continue to expose yourself to the teachings of this course, faith may develop. God is very merciful. When He sees someone sincerely seeking Him, there is every chance that He will intervene in their lives, or their hearts, in order to provide whatever they need to help them succeed on their journey to prema.

### Faith in the Vedas

The second type of **faith** that can act as an assistant in taking the first step toward prema is **faith in the Vedas.** Since most of you are probably unfamiliar with the Vedas, this type of faith may take some time to develop. However, as you continue to expose the mind and intelligence to the teachings of the Vedas, we believe you'll become convinced that the knowledge they contain is vast, clear, and dependable. The spiritual understandings presented in the Vedas have earned the respect, trust, and praises of many of the greatest minds in history. They are likely to earn your faith in them too. As this course progresses, we will share many word-for-word quotes from the Vedas with you, this will allow you to judge for yourself if they are worthy of your faith.

### Religion Defined

Before we go any further in our discussion of the things this course is designed to do or the means which we suggest you use to reach pure love for God, we should mention some of the things

that we are not trying to do. **This course is not designed to "convert" you to become a follower of any specific "religion."** In fact, there is no Sanskrit word that simply and directly translates as religion. The Sanskrit word that is often translated as religion will be discussed in great detail later, but for now, suffice it to say that we are not concerned with what religion you follow.

As a matter of fact, even within the English language the exact meaning of the word religion can be difficult to pin down. In Webster's, New Twentieth Century Dictionary, Unabridged, there are seven definitions of the word religion. When there is more than one definition for a word, the various definitions are usually listed from the one most commonly used to the least. In this case, it is not until we reach the seventh and final English definition of religion that we find a definition most similar to the concept of religion taught in the Vedas.

This shows us that what the Vedas consider to be religion is the least common concept in English usage. This definition of **religion is, "A state of mind or way of expressing love for or trust in God, and one's will and effort to act according to the will of God."** This definition addresses several of the aspects we have already mentioned as being part of our journey to prema, and it also addresses further steps that we will cover in future lessons. It speaks of love for God (prema), trust in Him (faith), and effort to act according to His will. That effort will be the practice of bhakti-yoga. In addition, the word religion comes from a **Latin root "religare"** which means **"to bind together again."** Later, we will show how this root meaning is very similar to the meaning of the word yoga.

**For the purposes of this course, we will consider religion to be a means of getting to know God in a way that will allow us to develop a loving relationship with Him.** It is this development of love for God that the saintly scholars determined to be the true test of any "religion." If the set of beliefs and practices that you are currently following is allowing you to get to know God and develop love for Him, then you are progressing toward life's ultimate goal. If it is not, or even if it is, but you are still willing to take an open-minded look at another system specifically designed to awaken the love we all have for the Lord, then you would be wise to continue to look into the science of bhakti-yoga.

### This Course is Not Meant to "Convert" You

We are not asking you to abandon your religion and convert to Hinduism. You may remain a Christian, a follower of the Islamic faith, or any other faith. What we are requesting you to do is perform some experiments in the science of bhakti-yoga and see if they help you to increase your knowledge about God and your love for Him. If they do, then we hope you'll be encouraged to put a dedicated effort into your experiments, and that you'll also begin to develop some faith in the Vedas, since they are the source of the science of bhakti-yoga.

In this next quote, one of our greatest teachers discusses the fact that converting people from one faith to another is not our goal, and in doing so he also discusses the test for any religion that we discussed above. **Śrīla Prabhupāda** says:

*And do not think that this movement is a proselytizing movement from Christian to Hindu, or Hindu to...No. **You're a Christian, Hindu, Jew, or Muhammadan. It doesn't matter. Our process is that if you are ready to perfect your human form of life then try to develop your dormant love of Godhead. That is perfection of life. That is perfection of life. You may profess any type of religion – then just test whether your religion is perfect or you are perfect, whether you have developed your love for God more than any other love. We have distributed our love to so many things. When all those loves will be simply concentrated on God, that is perfection of life. Love is there, but because we do not know, because we have forgotten our relationship with God, we are imposing our love on dogs. That has become our disease. So we have to transfer our love from so many dogs to God.***



**Staple** *That is the perfection of life. And we are not teaching any particular type of religion. We are simply teaching that you love God.* (Lecture – Boston, 3 Apr 1969)

This same principle, that the goal of religion, love for God, is non-sectarian also applies to the many names that He is called upon by, as our next section will discuss.

### God's Names

God is not Hindu, Christian, Jewish, or Muslim. God is one. He has been given many, many names. In fact, He has been called by an uncountable number of names, according to the circumstances of His appearance, the language of the times, and a multitude of other variables, and He will be called by more names in the future.

The multitude of God's names is confirmed in both the Vedas and Holy Qurān, and in other scriptures as well. In the Vedas, we have the statement of the Lord Himself, which He made during His most recent visit to this planet. (See Lesson 3) When speaking about His names, *the Lord Himself has said that God has innumerable names.* (Śrī Śikṣātaka, 2)

In the Holy Qurān we find, *"To Allah belong the most beautiful names."* (S.7 A.180) And in commentary we find, *"The beautiful names of Allah are many."* (2322 A.Yusuf Ali)

This multitude of names is only logical, and we can understand by our own experiences how this must be true. Say, for example, we have a very tall, slender, bald-headed, Caucasian man from Chicago whose name is Ronald Joseph Smith and who works as a baker. Everyone in prison is familiar with the use of nicknames. Using just his given name this man could be called Ronald, Joseph, R.J., Ron, Ronny, Joe, etc. If we take his physical attributes into consideration, he could well be called Stretch, String Bean, Cue Ball, etc. He could also go by Chicago or Chi-Town or even Baker Man. In olden days it was common for a person's name to reflect their job, as in Shepherd, Baker, or Smith (blacksmith).

So, without much effort we've shown an example of how a man could easily have as many as 13 names. Of course, you could translate these same names into different languages and multiply the total many times. On top of that, this is a man with one form and a few qualities, and look at how many names he could have. God has an unlimited number of forms, many, many qualities, and He performs countless activities. He has also been addressed in every language that was ever spoken. So God also has many names.

The example we gave above, of how a man's qualities can help to create his different names is also spoken of in the commentary to the following verse from **the Holy Qurān**. And we can also note that both the verse and the commentary confirm the teaching that God has many names.

*Call upon Allah or call upon Rahmān. By whatever name ye call upon Him (it is well): for to Him belong the most beautiful names.* (S.17 A.110)

*Allah can be invoked, either by His simple name, which includes all attributes, or by one of His names implying the attributes by which we are trying to explain His nature to our limited understanding. Rahmān describes one of the attributes of Allah – His grace and mercy... (2321 A.Yusuf Ali)*

The Vedas also discuss various types of names for the Lord. Names such as "The Creator," "The Controller of the Universe" and "The Lord who lies within the heart" (The Supersoul) relate to the qualities He displays in the temporary material worlds, and thus they are considered to be secondary to those names which refer to His forms and qualities always present in both the spiritual and material worlds. These primary names possess all of the potencies of the forms to which they refer and anyone who learns and chants these names is considered to be most fortunate. Throughout this course we will give you some of the names He is referred to in the Vedas and explain their significance.

### The Power of God's Name

The science of bhakti-yoga focuses a great deal of attention on

calling out the names of God; this same tradition is one you may be familiar with. The Holy Qurān lists many names for God and some followers of Islam repeat His names while counting on a string of beads. **The Holy Bible** also gives God's name a great deal of significance in both the Old and New Testaments. It states,

*"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered."* (Joel 2:32) And the New Testament proclaims, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Romans 10:13)

Some sects of Buddhism also place great emphasis on both the calling out of God's names and the power of this process. **Ippen, a Japanese Master**, says this:

*For one who is absorbed in the name of Buddha, which is above time, there is a rebirth which knows neither beginning nor end.*

And the **Chinese Master, Tao Ch'ao** says:

*The devotee must utter without interruption the name of Buddha with one sole thought, leaving no room for anything else, and then he is sure to be reborn in the presence of Buddha.*

Calling upon the name of the Lord as a means of reaching out to Him makes perfect sense. What better way could there be to get His attention.

### When You Hear Your Name

Just imagine yourself being in the crowd at a concert of your favorite group. You're right up near the front of the crowd, jammed in and surrounded by screaming fans. The band's speakers are blaring at full volume in front of you, and you are doing your best to dance and sing along. The mind is very captivated by all of these things and you're basically just feeling grand and having a slam-up good time. Then suddenly, you don't know from where, and you don't know from who, but someone calls out your name loud enough for you to hear it.

Even in this extreme set of circumstances, where your mind is fully engaged in listening to something else, hearing your name will immediately get your attention. Your name is likely to block out all of the other input from your senses, while the mind asks questions like: Who was that? Where are they? What do they want? These questions will quickly dominate your consciousness.

### God is Busy

So God is a pretty busy Person. Through His expansions and His powers He is creating, maintaining, and annihilating countless material bodies and the universes they exist in. At the same time, He is accepting worship and service on countless spiritual planets. While all of this is going on He is also engaged in an innumerable variety of activities with His purest friends and associates. And yet, the instant we call out any one of His limitless names, He will hear us and focus some of His boundless attention on us. Of course, since He can also read all of our thoughts, we will get His attention even if we just think of one of His names.

### God Has Caller I.D.

God is aware of everything. When He hears you call or even think of His name, He does not have to ask: "Who was that?" Or: "Where are they?" Or even: "What do they want?" He immediately knows all of these things.

The means of calling out God's names and the significance of this practice will be discussed repeatedly and in great detail throughout this course. For now it is enough to understand and accept that God knows each of His names and that He will hear the cries of all those who call out to Him, no matter what their religion is or which of His names they use.

### Vedic Names for God are not Superior

All of us within the IPBYS are followers of a certain set of teachings. We all have personal experience that the methods we will suggest you to follow have helped us, and countless other individuals as well, to learn more about God, to know Him better, and to increase our love for Him. If we were not convinced that

the specific methods of the science that we teach were especially beneficial and effective, then we never would have become inspired enough to put together this course in order to try to share this science with you. Therefore, when we recommend certain names of God for you to use when calling out to Him, it is not because we consider these names to be superior to a name you may choose to call Him by, we are only passing along the teachings of our scriptures.

We also ask you to please accept and understand that we never think of ourselves as superior to you. We have all made mistakes and are still continuing to make mistakes. We come to you as servants. Our desire is to share methods of developing your love for God and to do so from a humble position.

These are troubled times that we live in. Our scriptures have made it very clear that the methods we will prescribe are the most recommended and beneficial practices for this degraded age. We hope that as you progress in studying these lessons, and in practicing the methods which they teach you, you'll become convinced that these techniques are sound and effective, regardless of the age, sex, race, nationality, or religion of the practitioner.

Several of the last few truths that we shared with you, relating to the commonality amongst religions and the universality of God's names are all discussed, and delivered to us in the following words of Śrīla Gurudeva.

#### **There is Only One Family**

*All of us are in the family of one God. It is not that there is one God in America, another in England, and still another in India. The Christians, Muslims, and Hindus are not worshipping different Gods. The names Allah, Brahma, Jehovah, Kṛṣṇa, and Yahweh refer to the same God, called by different names according to different languages and cultures.*

*If we love the same one God, why do we quarrel? We quarrel because we don't know what real love is. If we have true love and affection for the one Supreme Lord, we will naturally love each other. There is a saying, "God is love and love is God." And in Indian Vedic culture there is a saying, "All should be happy,"...*

*In this universe there is only one God, and He is not Russian, English, German, or Spanish. He knows all languages without difficulty, but there is actually no need of knowing them. There is only one real language in the entire world, and that language is called love. Eyes can speak that language, ears and hands can speak and understand it, and a glowing face can tell everything. God is one, and He is the embodiment of love. Kṛṣṇa is the original name of God, given in the ancient Vedas, and it means, "the all-attractive reservoir of pleasure." All other names, like Supersoul (a form of God that resides in the hearts of all), Buddha, Allah, and God, are included within Him...*

*We are all children of the Supreme Lord, who is the personification of the supreme happiness and the reservoir of supreme happiness for all others. We are part and parcel of that Happiness...*

*We must not quarrel with those of other religious faiths. The one true religion of all souls is love, and that religion is one without a second. We should love God and also each other, and in this way people can live happily in this world.*

The truth is that there is only one God was also taught by Jesus Christ, when he said:

*Hear O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord* (MARK 12.29-31 KJV)

The teaching that there is only one God is also found in **The Holy Qurān**, where it says:

*Allah is He, than whom there is no other God.* (S.59 A.22)

And the other part of Śrīla Gurudeva's teachings from above, that we are all one family, is also reflected in **The Holy Qurān**, when it says:

*Mankind was but one nation.* (S.10 A.19)

*All mankind was created one, and Allah's message to mankind is in essence one, the message of unity and truth. But as*

*selfishness and egoism got hold of man, certain differences sprang up between individuals, races, and nations...* (1406 A. Yusuf Ali)

As we can see, the core teachings of all faiths are one, and, hopefully, for most of us they can be easily accepted, even if we are unable to fully grasp them and live by them.

There are however, some teachings in the Vedas which may be new and even unusual to many of us, in the next short section we'll discuss how we can work through these truths as they are presented to us.

#### **A Lack of Faith or Understanding is Normal**

Some of you may find that various practices of the science that we are going to teach you about are an unusual way to develop love for God. For this reason it may be difficult for you to develop faith in these practices. We understand this. It's okay for you to feel that way. **The Vedas specifically state that even without full faith in or understanding of the science of bhakti-yoga, it can be effective nonetheless.**

#### **Learning Requires Effort**

This journey, like any other in life will require you to put forth some effort toward reaching your goal. If you wish to gain an understanding of any other type of science, whether it is biology or chemistry, you have to devote time and effort to your studies. Similarly, if you want to gain an understanding of the science of bhakti-yoga, you need to become a serious student. Many of the concepts we present may seem farfetched or be entirely unfamiliar to you; we know this because the same thing was true for most of us at one time. However, we found that when we put forth a sincere effort to study and understand these teachings, there were very few concepts that could not be grasped.

We also need to point out that it is not solely the academic understanding of ideas, or the memorization of certain words, that are the most important aspects of this course. We hope that by giving you knowledge of the subjects covered in this course you'll become convinced of the value and validity of these teachings. This should then allow you to develop faith in the course. We believe that this faith will encourage and inspire you, not only to continue to study the lessons, but also to put some time and effort into the suggested practices, for **it is only through the application of these techniques that you'll be able to make an honest assessment of the value of this course.**

#### **The Proof is in the Taste**

A man may know that a tornado is coming his way, but if he does not put that knowledge into practice, and take shelter from the storm, he will likely be caught up in the cyclone. Similarly, **we may understand that the illusions of the material worlds are dangerous, but if we don't protect ourselves from them by taking shelter of God, through the process He has recommended, then we will surely be caught up in a cycle of material births and deaths.**

We are humbly asking you to please try the methods presented in this course. It is said that the proof of the pudding is in the taste. If you'll accept the possibility that love of God is the ultimate goal of life, and follow the methods we present, then you'll be able to try the pudding to see if you like the taste. Try these techniques; see for yourself if they make your life sweeter.

#### **Bhakti-Yoga**

The subtitle of "The Journey to Prema" is "A Course in the Science of Bhakti-Yoga." Each of the two Sanskrit words used in this subtitle, bhakti and yoga, have definitions that carry a great depth of meaning. We will do our best to give you the basic meaning of these words. However, as with prema, it may only be through the passage of time, and through personal experiences of what these terms represent, that you'll fully grasp the deeper levels of spiritual truths that these words convey.

#### **What Yoga Is**

Since the word yoga is more widely used, and likely to be familiar to you, we will discuss it first. **Yoga literally means "to yoke,"** as in the way a bull is attached to a cart. However,



**Staple** through the subtle shades of this meaning it also means “**to link up to**” or “**to connect with.**” For the purpose of our course, **yoga** will mean “**a spiritual discipline designed to connect us with God.**”

With this definition in mind we can see how the meaning of yoga is similar to the Latin word for religion, which meant, “to bind together again.” In yoga, we will be trying to bind our consciousness and our hearts to God. So in that way, yoga is a form of religion.

We are not just interested in connecting with God as a concept or as a mystical unknowable being. Bhakti-yoga is designed to help us establish an actual relationship with a personal God, whom we can know, love, and interact with, just as we would any other person who we have great affection for. That is the goal of the yoga that we will introduce you to in this course.

There are various other types of yoga as well. Each of them have their own name, their own set of practices, and their own ideas as to which aspect of God one should seek to connect with. Over time we will discuss some of the other bona fide yoga systems with you, and we will tell you how some of them can be used as stepping stones on our journey to prema, but this course’s main focus will be on bhakti-yoga.

### What Yoga Is Not

**All bona fide yoga systems are designed by God and the only goal of these systems is to help us connect with Him.** Any yoga system that does not seek to accomplish this goal is bogus and does not even deserve to be called yoga. These bogus systems are usually nothing more than the inventions of people who are looking to fool the public. This is often done to make money, obtain some followers, or acquire some fame. There are many “yoga classes” one can enroll in that charge a fee to teach various types of stretching, exercise, breathing techniques, or meditation. These classes are usually designed to make you feel healthier, more peaceful, or more beautiful. Since these classes focus on the material mind and body, which are temporary things, there is no chance of gaining any permanent value from these classes. As Śrīla Gurudeva pointed out, the unavoidable realities of old age and death will separate you from whatever gains you had obtained.

The process of bhakti-yoga is given for free. If someone tries to collect a fee to teach you bhakti-yoga, they are a bogus teacher. **Bhakti-yoga does not focus on the temporary material mind and body; in fact, it teaches you to withdraw your attention from them. Since bhakti-yoga focuses on the eternal soul and its relationship with God, the gains that are achieved through following its practices are permanent and will not be lost,** even when the time comes for the soul to leave the material body behind.

### Bhakti

The Sanskrit word **bhakti** comes from a root word that means “**to serve.**” Therefore, the primary meaning of the word **bhakti** is “**to render service.**” Since this course focuses on serving God we will use **bhakti** to indicate **serving God by performing acts which are aimed at, and exclusively designed to benefit the Lord.** To qualify as **bhakti** these acts must also be **carried out with a favorable and voluntary spirit.** If we serve someone only because we are forced to do so or because circumstances require it, or if we do so in an angry spirit, that type of service is not **bhakti**.

### Bhakti-Yoga

When we combine **bhakti** with **yoga**, and speak of **bhakti-yoga** we refer to **serving God by voluntarily engaging in a spiritual discipline where every act is performed with a favorable mood toward Him and for His benefit, with the only goal being to connect with Him via a relationship that is based entirely on serving Him with love-drenched emotions.**

It may seem like we have used a lot of words to describe **bhakti-yoga**, however, it would have been difficult to do it with any less. This definition clearly illustrates how it can be hard to

put the deep concepts conveyed by Sanskrit words into simple English terms. They must be explained rather than simply translated. If you study the meaning of **bhakti-yoga** given in **bold print** above, you should be able to grasp its depth & significance and understand why practicing it would be of value to you.

In later lessons we will share other definitions for **bhakti**, including that which is given for the topmost style of **bhakti**, and, in doing so, we will expand upon this basic definition, thus further showing you how difficult it is to convey the truths of **bhakti** in simple English terms.

### Science

In the subtitle of this course we refer to **bhakti-yoga** as a science. One of the meanings of **science** is **a process wherein a theory is put forth which states that by following a certain set of procedures a predictable and consistent result can be reached.** The theory of the science of **bhakti-yoga** is that by practicing the procedures it recommends you’ll begin to cleanse your heart of material desires, clear the mind of illusions, and start to awaken your love for God. By practicing these procedures you’ll be conducting the experiments involved and it will be up to you, to determine for yourself, whether or not the predicted results have been obtained.

We do not expect you to go on practicing on blind faith. What we humbly request you to do is try the experiment, follow the practices we recommend, and taste the pudding to find out if you experience the sweetness of love of God. If you do taste this sweetness, you’ll never again need to ask for, or rely on, anyone else’s opinion as to whether or not **bhakti-yoga** works. There will be no way to convince you that your own experiences are not valid confirmations of the effectiveness of **bhakti-yoga**.

The word **science** comes from a Latin word which means “**to know,**” thus its root meaning is similar to the meaning of Veda. Based upon this Latin root there is another definition for **science**. The dictionary gives it as, “**knowledge that is classified and made available in the search for truth.**”

**Bhakti-yoga** includes learning about the spiritual knowledge contained in the Vedas. This knowledge is classified into various books and subjects in order to help you search for truths about the characteristics of the soul, the various types of yoga, the relationships between the soul, God, and the energy that supports and sustains the worlds of material illusions, as well as many more diverse and interesting topics. **Possession of these profound spiritual truths will open up the mind and increase your intelligence.** These beneficial aspects of acquiring this knowledge will also be accompanied by such symptoms as a lessening of anxiety, clearer thinking, and awareness that you are making progress in your spiritual life. Experiencing these benefits will be another way that you’ll begin to taste the sweetness of **bhakti-yoga**.

### Science Gives Truths

**Bhakti-yoga** is a science. In fact, it is the most important science of all. The core teachings of **bhakti-yoga** are easy to understand and the basic practices are simple to perform. We hope that each and every lesson will contain something that will benefit you. However, we also understand that some of the more complex teachings may not be for everyone. Still, we will provide them for those who want to gain as much spiritual understanding as they can.

### Sharing Truths with Others

The more we learn about spiritual truths, the more we will be able to share those truths with others. By telling others what we have learned, and what we have experienced about developing love for God, we engage ourselves in preaching about the effectiveness of **bhakti-yoga**. This preaching is actually a very important part of the process in and of itself. One is blessed with the Lord’s mercy and receives great spiritual benefit by sharing the message of **bhakti-yoga** with others.

### Love Comes From the Heart

For those of you who do not consider yourselves to be the

scholarly type, or those who may feel that this course will go over your head, we wish to tell you this – **relax. Love of God can be attained without a great deal of study or memorization.** Some basic understandings are necessary, but an honest and sincere heart is a more important requirement. The Vedas tell us that **if we are unable to devote our love to God, we will never understand Him**, no matter how many books we read.

For those of you who may feel that you could never understand how to reach God, there is still great hope. In what is considered to be one of, if not the most important sections of the Vedas, **The Supreme Lord** tells us,

*To those who worship Me with love and yearn for My eternal association, I give that spiritual knowledge by which they will attain Me.* (Bhagavad-Gītā 10.10)

If we sincerely practice the basic tenets of bhakti-yoga, we can attain our ultimate goal of prema. The basic truths we need to achieve this goal will be given to us by God when He sees our sincere efforts to serve Him with love.

Ultimately, **prema is only available by the mercy of God, or the mercy of His devotees.** When we use this term, **devotee**, we refer to **people who, through the practice of bhakti-yoga, have dedicated their lives and souls to God's service.** When the Lord or His devotees become aware of our efforts to connect with Him through a loving relationship, they will bestow the gift of prema to us, even if we are not Vedic scholars.

### Mercy

**The fact that you are reading this lesson shows that the mercy that leads to love of God has already started to influence your life.** The vast majority of people go through their entire life, in fact, through many, many lives, without ever starting to try to understand the soul and its eternal relationship with God. We should all feel very blessed to be receiving God's mercy and we should thank Him for it each day.

### We Will Do All We Can To Help You

We hope to be able to do all that we can to help you on your journey to prema. Our ministry is still in the growing process. If our resources will allow it to happen, we plan to continue sending you the lessons in this course, provide you with a pen pal if you would like to have one, mail you books on occasion, & increase your understanding through our correspondence course.

We want you to see all of these things as proof of the fact that **you are being presented with a profound and golden opportunity to end the miseries that accompany our struggles for existence in the material worlds.** We will do our best to reach out to you. We ask you to please take our hand, so that we will be able to assist you.

### Knowledge vs. Understanding

The spiritual knowledge that you gain through these lessons has value, but, **if you fail to put this knowledge and the processes of bhakti-yoga into practice, then it is a sure sign that you do not truly understand this knowledge.** There is a difference between having knowledge and understanding that knowledge, just as we discussed earlier with the example of the man who knew about the inbound tornado. If he knew it was coming but did not understand what that meant and how to use that knowledge, his knowledge would be useless to him.

What we hope to do with this course is to provide you with knowledge and practices that allow you to develop understandings of spiritual truths.

### The Value of Review

For most of us, **the more we expose ourselves to knowledge, the greater the chance that we will understand it.** With this in mind, we ask you to expose yourself to these lessons as often as possible. They are not designed to be read over once or twice and then thrown away. We ask you to review each lesson regularly, daily if possible, at least until the next lesson arrives. It only takes about 45 minutes to an hour to read over these lessons. For some it might work best to set aside a certain time each day for review, for others, random times may work best. Of course you may also

review it in short spurts throughout the day. Maybe you can keep it in your pocket, or portions of it, so that you can break it out whenever you have a few spare minutes, like when waiting for an appointment. Others may prefer to highlight, underline, or take some notes on the sections of a lesson that have the greatest impact on them, so that they can focus on those sections when they review the lessons.

The most important thing is not how, when, or where you review them, it is just that you do so as often as possible. It is likely that there will be times where you find something you overlooked, or failed to understand the first few times you studied a lesson, which will become clear to you on review. **Just try to stay in contact with the teachings every day.** Some days you may just want to spend a little time thinking about the teachings, or weighing the effect they are having on you, that's okay too. We know that using the mind in these ways will help keep you on the path of bhakti-yoga.

### Repetition

At times there may be portions of the lessons that seem repetitive. We are aware of this and we consider it to be a beneficial thing. Sometimes it may be because a teaching is being presented from a different perspective. Sometimes it may be because a certain teaching is part of a broader teaching that we needed to lay the foundation for, then, when we present the broader teaching, we may repeat the earlier one in its proper context. And sometimes, it may just be that a teaching is such a critical part of bhakti-yoga that it occurs again and again. In any case, there is no aspect of the science of bhakti-yoga that does not have value; even if a teaching appears repeatedly, it should never be seen as a negative thing. Within the original Vedic scriptures, there are also examples of these types of repetition.

As you progress in your understandings and insights on the journey to prema, you may even find that a teaching takes on an entirely new meaning even though it is presented exactly as it had been before. We ask you to simply absorb each teaching to the best of your ability each time it comes along, even if that means absorbing it again and again.

### Review

Thus far in this lesson we have spoken about practicing the procedures of bhakti-yoga, but we haven't gone into much detail as to what those practices are. We did mention that spreading the message of bhakti-yoga was one of its practices, but we don't expect there to be many of you who are ready to do that. Although, if you do wish to share anything you have learned with others, or pass along our address, we encourage you to do so.

We have passed along some knowledge to you. We explained the meanings of the Sanskrit words in the title and subtitle of our course, talked about where we draw our teachings from, and explained why we consider bhakti-yoga to be a science. We also showed how translating Sanskrit into English can be a difficult task.

In a teaching that we plan to expand on we told you of the importance of taking the truths we will present to you into your heart. This is another reason that we should review and meditate upon these truths, for they will be of little use if we simply let them go in one ear and out the other.

In a paragraph that may have sounded like it came from a science fiction story, we spoke of a time where time did not exist, of a borderland place in the now, where we lost our awareness of the prema that eternally exists in our hearts. And in this section we also shared two quotes from Śrīla Gurudeva, one of which spoke about the two jails that keep us trapped in this world of illusions. Do you remember what those two jails are?

We told you that by turning away from God, and seeking to enjoy separately from Him, we entered a prison of misery, but then we also shared the good news that there was a way to awaken from that nightmare. With lyrics from an old song we said that by knowing God you learn to love Him and we promised to tell you many things about Him. We then explained

**Staple** how faith is the first step on your journey to prema and we gave you a reason to believe that you have already taken that first step. We also mentioned faith in the Vedas and that even though you may not possess this type of faith now, you'll hopefully develop it in time.

We spent some time discussing the fact that although all of us in the IPBYS are fully committed to a set of beliefs based on the Vedic teachings, our goal is not to convert you to our religion. We feel the true test of any religion is whether practicing its tenets increases your love for God and our experience is that bhakti-yoga does this, which is why we are inspired to share its tenets with you.

The conclusion that God has many names and the effectiveness of getting someone's attention, regardless of how busy they are, by calling their name was presented to you. We also mentioned that calling out God's name is part of the practice of bhakti-yoga.

We have tried to convey our desire to humbly serve you and we have assured you that even without full faith in or understanding of the science of bhakti-yoga, you can still taste its sweetness if you sincerely conduct the experiment of trying its recommended practices.

While discussing what yoga is, we also told you what it is not. We did this solely because the word yoga has been so misused and we wanted to separate the yoga we teach from the bogus yoga systems that are so prevalent these days. Bhakti-yoga rises above other yoga systems because it is aimed at an eternal goal.

**When we give you the definitions of words, we put them in boldface type.** We do this so you can find them with ease. We want you to study these definitions, and meditate on them a bit. We ask you to give special attention to the definition of bhakti-yoga. Then, before you check the box on the questionnaire that indicates you want to receive more lessons, we want you to decide if your heart tells you that bhakti-yoga is something that you are sincerely interested in learning more about.

Be honest with yourself and with us. Hundreds of millions of people practice bhakti-yoga in this world today. But is it for you? If you're still not sure but you are interested and want to receive more lessons then check the "yes" box. We'll be glad to send the next lesson to you.

If you do decide to continue this course, then you should definitely refer back to the definition of bhakti (which can be found in the glossary at the end of this lesson) and meditate on it, for it is usually only when we become fully convinced that bhakti-yoga is for us, that prema begins to awaken in our hearts and our journey toward obtaining it becomes the most joyful adventure we have ever taken.

We spoke of the value of knowledge, but we also told you that you need not worry if you are not the scholarly type, because God has assured us that **if we worship Him with love and the desire to be with Him, He will give us the knowledge that will allow us to reach Him.**

We touched on a teaching that we will go into in great detail later on, the power of the mercy of God and His devotees in helping us on our journey to prema.

The value of reviewing these lessons was pointed out, and we asked you to do so in whatever way best suited you. We also mentioned the repetitiveness of some teachings, while explaining that this is not to be viewed as a negative thing.

Now we'll finish with a few more teachings and we'll tell you a little about what lies ahead. When you review the story that we're going to share, about the man with four friends, hopefully you'll pay close attention to what these friends represent and you'll be able to identify with the story and why we say it has meaning.

#### **God's Eternal Rules**

Now that we've reviewed the lesson so far, we are going to give you the teaching that God Himself has determined to be the most important of all spiritual teachings. It is the teaching upon which all other teachings are based.

The Vedas contain many rules designed to regulate our lives in

such a way that we can make spiritual advancement & hopefully escape from the cycle of material births and deaths. Some of these rules tell us things that we must always do, some tell us things we must never do, and some tell us about things that may benefit us or be detrimental to us, but they leave it up to us to decide whether we want to follow these suggestions or not. There are also rules that apply to some of us and not to others, and are based on things such as our age or position in society.

Rising above all of these rules are two eternal rules that are meant for all of us. God tells us that all other scriptural rules should be servants of these rules. In other words, if following one of the other rules requires us to break one of these two supreme rules then that rule is to be abandoned. These rules can be followed at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. They are simple to understand, but not always so easy to follow.

#### **Always Remember God**

**The first rule is to always remember God. The second rule is to never forget Him.** Remembering God is, of course, one of the most important ways of practicing bhakti-yoga.

So for the time being, & until your next lesson arrives, we ask you to try to follow these two rules to the best of your ability. You may remember Him in any way that helps you to do so.

You can repeat whatever name you know Him by, in your head or out loud. You may choose to join us in repeating the names at the bottom of these pages. (See '+' at the middle of the cover page for a pronunciation guide) These names will be discussed in great detail, later in this course. They are considered to be the most powerful set of names we can use to call out to God.

You can think of Him when you see a beautiful sunset, a rainbow, or when you hear the chirping of a bird, knowing that He is the master artist behind all beauty and the greatest musician of all. And of course you should always remember Him and thank Him before you eat, for He provided the rains, the soil, and the sun that supplies all of our foods.

In the Vedas, one of God's great devotees asks God to tell him some of the ways that God manifests His wonders and how He can be remembered. **God tells His devotee that He can be remembered as the sun, the moon, the mind, the ocean, the thunderbolt, the lion, the wind, the shark, springtime, victory, adventure, strength, punishment, morality, silence, wisdom, time, and even death.** God tells His devotee that this is just a small list of His unlimited wonders. So we can see, by His own instructions, that there is an unlimited number of ways we can remember Him.

The importance of both remembering and never forgetting the Lord is spoken of throughout the great scriptures. In **the Holy Qur'an** we find:

*O ye who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. If any act thus, surely they are losers.* (S.63 A.9)

**The Holy Bible** speaks specifically of trusting in the power of remembering the Lord's name, saying:

*We will rejoice in our salvation and in the name of our God we will set up banners... Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.* (Psalms 20.5, 7)

And, in the most widely read of the Vedic texts, **the Supreme Lord** gives us His personal instructions, telling us:

*Always think of me and become My devotee. Worship Me and offer your respects to me. Thus you will come to me without fail...* (Bhagavad-Gītā 18.65)

**Although God is always within you, when you remember Him you grab His attention and increase His presence in your life.** By using the mind to remember God, we also begin to practice controlling it, which is one of the most valuable things we need to learn to do. In upcoming lessons we will talk about the importance of controlling the mind.

So again, we ask you to **please remember to remember God** as often as you can, **and to never forget Him as well.** By

carrying out this simple practice, you'll have begun your experiments with the science of bhakti-yoga. By learning to always remember God, by seeing Him everywhere, and in everything, we truly begin to purify our hearts.

### Looking Ahead

In upcoming lessons of this course we will be presenting a very wide variety of subjects to you. Next month, we will begin to talk about a system of instruction that the Vedas tell us we should all take advantage of. In this system, we learn to rely on the instructions of those who have both studied and practiced the science of bhakti-yoga and we put our faith and trust into the fact that they will be reliable guides as we travel along on our journey to prema.

For those of you who may have first heard about this course when you saw a flyer that was posted somewhere at your facility, we wish to assure you that all of the subjects mentioned on those flyers will definitely be covered as this course moves forward. As a matter of fact, some of those topics have been discussed here in Lesson 1.

In Lesson 3, we will introduce you to a personality that will begin to answer the very complex question of, **"Who is God?"** In Lessons 4 and 6, we will go into quite a bit of detail on the subject of the mind, and over time we will answer the question, **"Is the mind your friend or your enemy?"**

One thing that you are likely to notice about almost all of the subjects that we will be covering is that we will come back to them time and time again, especially during the first year of this course. There are several reasons that we will do this. The first one is that gaining an understanding of some of the most basic spiritual truths that the science of bhakti-yoga is built upon will provide you with a much greater chance of grasping the more advanced teachings as well, much in the same way that a person cannot understand the higher teachings of the science of mathematics until he can add and subtract.

Another reason that some subjects will appear many times is because they are extremely deep and complex, and it would therefore be impossible to fully cover them in a single lesson.

By Lessons 7 and 8, we will have introduced you to the two most important personalities in all of the Vedas. Then, as time goes on we will slowly but surely move the focus of this course away from the basic teachings and philosophy of this science to focus more and more on getting to know, know, know Them, and to love, love, love Them.

We've certainly got a lot in store for you. We hope that you'll find each and every lesson to be both enjoyable and educational. The science of bhakti-yoga is the most important of all the sciences. Taking the time to gain the knowledge related to this science will help you develop your faith in it, **but ultimately this science will not have the full effect that God designed it to have on your life until you begin to actively practice the processes it recommends.**

Therefore, the most important focus this course will have as it moves ahead will be to provide you with the ways to practice the science of bhakti-yoga and to encourage you to begin to conduct experiments in this science in your own life.

### A Story With a Meaning

Before we close out this lesson we want to share a little story with you. The teachings in this story are true. The names have been omitted to protect the innocent.

This story will relate some of the truths that we will be covering in this course. We have already mentioned a few of these, and we'll be covering them all as time goes on. This is a simple story that has a great depth of meaning. The main subject may be a bit grim, but at times it is only by discussing and facing harsh realities that we are able to shine the light of knowledge into the darker subjects of life.

This story does not disclose the deepest levels of spiritual truths concerning the subjects it presents. These higher levels of understanding will be presented in later lessons, especially

Lesson 4. Still, for an introductory lesson, it passes along some very valid points for you to begin to ponder.

So bear with us as we tell you our story. It's all about...

### A Man With Four Friends

There once was a rich man who had four friends.

**His first friend** was very good to him. He had known this friend forever. This friend was very loyal and he personally cared for this man's life and for the lives of his second and fourth friend as well. This **friend loved the rich man more than the other friends did.** And, even though this man was rich, his first friend never asked him for anything.

Unfortunately, the rich man never paid any attention to all the things this friend did for him. In fact, he totally ignored and neglected this friend.

The rich man's relationship with **his second friend** was entirely different. Of all his friends, **he loved this one the most, even though his second friend would sometimes give him a great deal of trouble.** This friend was very fickle. At times he would help the rich man do the things he needed to get done, but at other times he couldn't be counted on at all.

Another big difference was that **the second friend was constantly asking for things.** He only wanted the best of whatever it was that struck his fancy at any given time.

One moment he may want to listen to music on the rich man's expensive equipment, and the next he may want to eat a fine meal or smoke the highest quality of cigar. Some things he wanted were not good for the health of the rich man, but the rich man always let him have his way.

He bought this friend the nicest clothes he could find and did whatever it took to give them pleasure, no matter what the cost.

He also loved **his third friend**, but for different reasons. **He was very proud to possess a friend as beautiful as this friend.** This was the type of friend that everyone would love to be seen with, so he would do all he could to show this friend to others.

His only real problem with his third friend was this: since so many other people wanted to have friends like that, he was always in a great amount of anxiety, due to fear that he would lose this friend or that someone else would take this friend away from him.

His relationship with **his fourth friend** was also very special and he loved this friend very much. **This friend was always there for him when he needed someone, even when he faced some troubles in his life.** If he did something wrong this friend would forgive him and he could talk with this friend in ways that he wasn't able to with his other friends.

When the man thought about all the friends he had, he felt happy and content.

Then one day the man's lavish lifestyle caught up with him. Mainly because of the things he indulged in to keep his second friend happy, the man became seriously ill. His second friend was really giving him a lot of trouble.

When he visited his doctor, he was given some terrible news. The rich man was going to die.

This news shocked and disturbed him greatly. He thought to himself, "For now I have four wonderful friends, but when I die I will be all alone. Oh, how lonely I will be!"

He called his second friend. "I always loved you the most," he said. "Even though my early demise is mainly your fault, I am not upset with you. I have always given you whatever you wanted. Now that I am dying, will you come with me and keep me company?"

"Impossible!" he replied. "I will stay with you right to the end, but then I will leave you immediately and you will never see me again."

This answer turned his heart to stone.

He then spoke with his third friend and he sadly said to her, "I was always so proud of you. Showing you off to everyone meant so much to me. I was so happy just to call you 'mine.' Will you

**Staple** follow me into the grave so that I won't be lonely?" "Of course not!" she laughed. I never actually belonged to you in the first place. I may not even wait till you're gone to leave. To tell you the truth, I'm already spending time with your doctor. You can be sure that someone else will have me once you're gone."

Her answer hurt him so much that even though his heart was hard as stone, it was still broken in two.

With little hope left he contacted his fourth friend. "My dear friend," was how he began, "you have always comforted me when I was down. Will you now come with me so that you can be there for me when I'm gone?"

"I honestly wish that I could," his friend said. "I do still love you, but I love others as well, so, since I don't really know where you're going, I think I'll just stay with them."

His stony, broken heart was now crushed to pieces.

Even though he had completely forgotten about his first friend, this friend came to the crying man's bedside and said, "I'll go with you. I've always been with you, even when you turned your back on me, and I'll always be with you."

Wiping away his tears, the rich man looked up at his friend. His friend looked terrible. Because the man had never cared for his first friend in any way, his friend appeared to be skinny and sickly, and he wore only rags.

The rich man wanted to say something, but death was at his door. In a state of total remorse he cried out, "Oh why did I not love you! You are the only true friend I've ever had. Oh now I wish I had turned to you when I had the chance."

### **In Truth, Everyone Has Four Friends**

**The second friend is our material body.** No matter how nicely we dress, or how much pleasure we give it, it will still make more demands. It will be there for us when it's healthy, but it will fail us and cause us pain and troubles when it is not. And it will be impossible to take it with us at death.

**The third friend we have is our material possessions and wealth.** All "ownership" is an illusion. Some things will leave us while we still live, but all will pass away when we die.

**The fourth friend we have is our family and friends.** They may truly love us, even to the point of wishing to go with us, but we will leave them behind when we move on.

**The first friend is the great friend that we all should learn to love the most. This friend, the Lord, will never depart. No matter how we neglect Him, He will not flee.**

Fulfilling our material desires by giving the body pleasures and accumulating possessions is to live a life of illusions. These things cannot help us. We must cultivate our spiritual life now. We must journey toward, and connect ourselves with someone who will always be there for us. We must dedicate our lives to the greatest and truest of friends.

Now that you know what the four friends represent, you should go back and read the story again. See if you understand how these analogies apply to the descriptions given for each friend. For example, do you see why the third friend was already spending time with the rich man's doctor? Check out these types of statements and try to grasp all of the reasons why this is a story with meaning.

### **Closing**

Since you requested this course, we're going to automatically send you the first four lessons, and we will do our best to get the next lesson to you in about a month. However, we are still working toward developing and expanding our prison program so it could be a little longer. We ask that you please be patient with us and put your focus on God.

We hope that you enjoyed this lesson, found it to be understandable, feel like studying it was time well spent, and most of all, we hope that you have gained some valuable knowledge and a closer connection with God. Please study this lesson and try to realize the value of the truths that it presents.

**We also ask you to please save these lessons for review in**

**the future** as we may refer you back to past lessons at times. If, due to limited space, or for any other reason, you cannot keep these lessons, then perhaps you can **take notes of the bold sections** and any other information that interests you most.

These lessons are also available on the internet. If you are released from prison and wish to keep up with this course, you'll be able to do so. If, as your release date nears, you are so involved with bhakti-yoga that you would like to seek out and associate with the devotees upon your release, you'll also be able to find out about groups of devotees in your area.

Thank you for your time, your assistance, your interest in our program, and for allowing us to serve you as we try to assist you on your journey to life's ultimate goal, pure love of God.

**May God bless you with His mercy,  
and may you always remember Him.  
We are, the servants of God's servants,  
The International Pure Bhakti Yoga Society  
Prison Outreach Program**

### **The Journey to Prema – Correspondence Course**

Those of you who wish to engage in formal studies may do so by participating in our correspondence course. This aspect of our course is optional. Should you choose not to participate, you may still use the questions we provide in your personal studies.

Using a separate sheet of paper, you should answer these questions to the best of your ability. Some of the answers will be found in the lessons, others are meant to be answered according to your own understandings or experiences.

You may write as much or as little as you choose and you may skip any question that you cannot or do not wish to answer. We will not be "grading" your answers as "right" or "wrong". We simply wish to provide you with a way to review and reflect upon the teachings in this course.

You may mail your answers to us as often as you choose. If you wish to send them monthly, that is fine, or if you prefer to send them every two or three months, that is okay too. Although our staff is limited, we will do our best to respond to your mailings, to share any comments we have on your progress, and to offer help and suggestions each time we hear from you.

If possible, please include a self-addressed envelope, and, if you can afford it, you may put a stamp on it as well. We will greatly appreciate it if you are able to do these things as they assist our staff and help us with the costs of providing our services to you and other inmates. If you cannot afford to send a return envelope or a stamp, don't worry, you will still receive responses from us and any certificates you earn.

At the end of the first and second year you will receive a certificate noting your accomplishments, and then, when you complete the course, a certificate of achievement.

We encourage you to participate in this additional aspect of our course as we believe it may assist you in your progress on the journey to prema. We also encourage you to include any of your own questions or comments, either about the lessons, the correspondence course, or any other aspects of bhakti-yoga that you wish to inquire about. As we said at the very outset, we consider ourselves to be your servants, and we wish to do all we can to help you uncover the prema that lies in your heart.

### **Mailing Information**

After you have completed the initial questionnaire, please promptly return it to us at the P.O. Box address listed there.

Please note that we do use 2 addresses. Our Durham team handles the lesson mailings and tracking, but for all follow-up letters, anything regarding the correspondence course, as well as where you can write to request books or a pen pal, please contact our Alachua team. We also value personal messages and if you would like to share other info or stories of your spiritual growth, please feel free to do so.

### **Glossary**

**Bhakti:** to render service; serving God by performing acts which



are exclusively designed to benefit Him.

**Bhakti-yoga:** serving God by voluntarily engaging in a spiritual discipline where every act is performed with a favorable mood toward Him and for His benefit, with the only goal being to connect with Him via a relationship that is based entirely on serving Him with love-drenched emotions.

**Māyā:** illusion; the world of illusions; the temporary material worlds

**Prema:** pure love of God

**Rāga:** an unquenchable love-filled thirst that causes one's entire consciousness to become absorbed in the object or person of one's affection

**Sanskrit:** a very unique and profound ancient language; the language that the Vedas were originally spoken in

**Veda:** the total of all knowledge; refers to those scriptures which give in-depth information on God and on connecting with Him through various yoga systems

**Yoga:** literally "to yoke"; to link up; to connect with; a spiritual discipline designed to connect us with God

### The Journey to Prema Course Begins

Feb 10, 2013 was a special day for IPBYS. Our team members travelled to Jagannatha Purī, India, to Śrīla Gurudeva's room. This is a powerful location, as it was the place where our most beloved Śrīla Gurudeva left this physical world to return to God and perform his eternal services. It also overlooks the same ocean where Lord Caitanya (Lesson 3) performed his pastimes.

This date also marks the anniversary of Śrīla Gurudeva's appearance in our world, and was again an auspicious date, as it now marks the continuance of his teachings with the launch of the Journey to Prema course. In celebration, a garland was placed upon him, and the first lesson, the prison program flyers, and our course website were humbly offered to him.



## The Journey to Prema Correspondence Course Lesson 1

Staple

1. What are the Vedas?
2. What is Sanskrit?
3. What is prema?
4. Why do you want to complete your journey to prema?
5. Where will you go to find your prema?
6. What directs most of our journey?
7. Name the factors that hide our prema?
8. How do we purify our hearts and uncover our prema?
9. What is the best means to reach the goal of prema?
10. What is the first step on the journey to prema?
11. What are the two types of faith found in this lesson?
12. Do you feel that you possess either of these types of faith?
13. If you answered, "Yes", to question 12; which type of faith do you possess? Can you give an example from your life that show that you possess this type of faith?
14. If you answered, "No", to question 12; would you like to develop these types of faith?
15. When we use the word "religion" in this course; what are we referring to?
16. What do the saintly scholars consider to be the true test of any religion? Do you agree with them? Why?
17. Which religion knows God's name?
18. Do you have more than one name? Does it make sense to you that God has more than one name?
19. Do you accept the fact that God hears everyone who calls out to Him, no matter what name they use?
20. Can you name two factors that will help you grasp the deep spiritual truths conveyed by some Sanskrit words?
21. What does "yoga" mean? Have you ever done any yoga?
22. What is bhakti-yoga designed to help us do?
23. What does "bhakti" mean?
24. In general, how does one perform bhakti-yoga?
25. Can you say a little about why bhakti-yoga is a science?
26. What is God's formula for gaining the knowledge we need to attain Him?
27. What do we mean by "a devotee"?
28. What is the difference between knowledge and understanding?
29. Can you say something about why you should review these lessons many times?
30. Why will we be repeating certain teachings in these lessons?
31. What are the two most important rules in the Vedas?
32. Can you name a few ways that you can follow these rules?
33. What will following these two rules do for you?
34. For you, what was the most important thing you learned from this lesson? Why did you pick this particular teaching?

When you have completed as many questions as you would like to answer, you may send them as well as any questions or comments you have, to the following address, or, if you prefer, you may mail them after completing another lesson or two.

**IPBYS Prison Outreach  
13400 NW 140 St. #1502  
Alachua, FL 32615-6185**

Note: Now that you have requested this course, we will send the first four lessons. With Lesson 4, we will ask you if you wish to continue the course. We humbly ask you to please study these four lessons with an open mind and to honestly decide if you wish to continue on your journey to prema.



## Initial Questionnaire

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name, Middle Initial, Last Name

### International Pure Bhakti Yoga Society Prison Outreach Program

\*Please read Lesson 1 before completing questionnaire and please print all answers as neatly as you can.

The purpose of this questionnaire is for us to gather as much information as necessary to provide you with the best assistance that we possibly can. All questions are optional; you may answer as many or as few as you wish. However, with more information we will be able to serve you better. All of your information will be kept confidential. It will only be made available to those members of the prison program who require access to it in order to serve your needs.

Your answers will also help us customize our program to meet the future needs of those we serve. In addition, they help us ensure that our limited resources are used in the most effective way, thus keeping our costs down and allowing us to serve more inmates. For all of these reasons, we ask you to please provide as much information as you can.

Your name, inmate number, housing, and address just as they must appear on all mailings to you.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gender: \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Education Level: \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Expected  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Release Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

If you need more space to answer any question, you may include another sheet.

1. How long have you been in prison? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Have you been in prison before? If yes, how many times and for how many total years? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your religious background? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How did you find out about our prison program? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is it that you are hoping our program can provide you with? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What concepts or teachings of yoga or Hinduism are you familiar with? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. From what sources did you gain the above understandings? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. If you already have any books on these subjects, please list them by title and author so that we do not send duplicates. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

After having read the first lesson of our “Journey to Prema” course:

9. If you wish to continue receiving lessons and help, YOU MUST WRITE AND ASK US FOR:

- (1) Continue to get the lessons
- (2) Any penpal to be assigned for you to help
- (3) Any specific books that you like to receive

**Note:** If you do not write to us separately to us, you won’t receive any further lessons. You will receive newsletters.

10. Did you find the first lesson to be of value to you? Yes[ ] No[ ] \_\_\_\_\_

11. Was it presented on a level that you could understand? Yes[ ] No[ ] \_\_\_\_\_

12. If you are interested in receiving above help or materials, then please provide us with **detailed** information as to what you can receive, because institutional rules vary greatly. Include such information as: how many books you can receive at one time, hard back or paperback, number of photocopies or pictures allowed, stapled or not, carrier restrictions, etc. Having items returned due to mailing mistakes is costly. Please help us avoid unnecessary costs by providing us with complete mailing instructions.

13. Are you able to receive music or books or lectures on CD or DVD? Yes[ ] No[ ] If yes, be sure to include any extra instructions for mailing them. \_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you have any other comments on this questionnaire, the information you have provided, or the lesson we have sent that you feel may aid us in assisting you better? \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this questionnaire after your first reading of Lesson 1 in “The Journey to Prema” course so that we may serve you better. Please ensure you send this to our Durham team at the address below.

Please send this filled Questionnaire to:		Please send letter to continue and all answers to Lessons to:	
IPBYS Prison Outreach P.O. Box 52724 Durham, NC 27717		IPBYS Prison Outreach 13400 NW 140 St. #1502 Alachua, FL 32615-6185	