

Impersonal Doubts vs Personal Truth

— from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru*

1. My dear mind, why do you have all these skeptical doubts? You despise the material world just to justify your merging into Brahman, but you are afraid to worship Hari, the Lord of ecstatic love, for fear of perceiving your own eternal spiritual form.
2. This fear is due to your thinking that everything is made of Brahman. You imagine that if you were to meditate on your eternal spiritual form, then sometime later you may become confused by forms, thinking them to be made of the material energy. Therefore you are convinced that the Absolute is without any form, spotlessly pure, all-pervading, eternal and devoid of tangibility.
3. And now, swayed under the influence of this non-ecstatic philosophy, your blissful spiritual nature has not entered your heart. Therefore your so-called impersonal Brahman realization has actually short-changed you from your true ecstasy, and thus you simply remain in want of true love. Renouncing this logical jugglery, just take shelter of beautiful moon-like Kṛṣṇa Candra, Who is the ecstatic manifestation of supreme bliss.
4. In comparison to the impersonal Brahman, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s original personal form is composed of eternity, knowledge and bliss. He is the reservoir of pleasure and sweetness for all living entities. He is the complete form of beauty at all places and at all times. These are some of His special, wonderful characteristics. None of these wonderful qualities can be found in the impersonal Brahman.
5. Therefore I now declare that the Brahman effulgence is actually the transcendental effulgence of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s body; it is His extremely vast and extensive aura. He Who is the Brahman, and above that, the Para-brahman, is the original form of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa, for whom Bhaktivinoda has love and affection.



The Poison of *Māyāvāda* Philosophy

— from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru*

1. Oh my dear mind, just see what calamity has befallen me now! My soul is captured in a perverted delirium due to *māyā*’s cruel tyrannical treatment, which burns me with material miseries just like fire. And with a hope of becoming freed from all this. . .
2. I took to the path of non-dual *māyāvāda* philosophy, which finishes all of *māyā*’s troubles when one merges with the “oneness”. Thus drinking poison, I have successfully become rid of the disturbing delirium of *māyā*. But just see what an unfortunate mishap has arisen now! Although the difficulties caused by the material world have been eradicated, my life is now being vanquished by the burning poison of that deadly *māyāvāda* philosophy.
3. By thinking “I am only spirit”, one certainly burns up any attachment to the material body. But is that the final remedy, oh mind, my dear brother? Certainly it is good that the disturbance of material tribulations has been relieved, but the so-called “medicine” of the *māyāvāda* philosophy has now become an unwanted burden, another trouble all over again. So now tell me where will you get the medicine to cure this “medicine”?
4. These two dangers, namely the nasty troubles given by *māyā*, and the poisonous burden of *māyāvāda* philosophy, can be relieved completely by taking the nice medicine prescribed by the devotee-physicians. And that ecstatic prescription is to drink and relish the immortal nectar of *hari-nāma* at the divine lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

My Foolish Impersonalism

— from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura's *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru*

1. Oh brothers! Why does my rascal mind desire to merge into the Brahman effulgence? How astonishing it is! And to whom shall I admit it? My dear mind, please tell me why you want to merge yourself with that Supreme Brahman, considering it to be the most worshipable thing?
2. A drop of water certainly has the qualities of the ocean, but is obviously not the ocean itself in quantity. A small dwarf cannot possibly touch the moon, despite his best intentions. And a handful of dust can never assume that it has become a mountain. Alas! Alas! Such a pitiful position is foolishly upheld by those who advocate the philosophy of merging into the Lord's bodily effulgence! The only profit from such doctrines is that it will make one become offensive towards the Lord, which will hinder one from attaining the supreme objective of devotion.
3. Renouncing this mischievous mentality of trying to artificially merge, my dear mind, just purify your existence and start searching for the process of getting real love for Kṛṣṇa. If you would just try to understand the statements of the revealed scriptures, you will find that all the conceptions like *sāyujya* (oneness with the Lord), and *nirvāṇa* (the highest blissful absorption) are actually different features which are automatically achieved by devotion, for these benefits accompany the process of service to the Lord.
4. Statements like “*tat-tvam-asi*” (you belong to Kṛṣṇa) are fully permeated with real tangible love for Kṛṣṇa, and meditating on such Vedic statements helps the aspiring devotee to ultimately attain the shelter of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Then one will gain residence in Kṛṣṇa's transcendental abode of Vṛndāvana, which is completely pervaded with supreme, undivided bliss. Thus one will come to know the original personal form of Para-brahman, who is situated far beyond the impersonal Brahman effulgence.
5. The network of transcendental rays emanating from His body forms the splendrous light known as the Brahman effulgence, which is powerful enough to amaze the entire collection of material universes. If any of the conditioned souls desire to become content by merging into that glowing light, then that would be just like being satisfied at night with the glow of lightning bugs in the absence of the sun. The insignificant light emitted by such insects will certainly never serve as a replacement for the radiant sun, and similarly the devotee of Kṛṣṇa is never content to merge with the Brahman effulgence, which is very feeble in comparison to the Lord's original form of bliss.
6. If ever there is dawning of one's good fortune, then one will see Vṛndāvana shining beckoningly before his very eyes due to taking complete shelter of the virtuous devotees and spiritual masters. Then, becoming irresistibly attracted by Kṛṣṇa, one runs and chases after Him (the Para-brahman). Thus he simply leaves aside the insignificant realization of merging with the Brahman effulgence, for he gets completely overwhelmed by the slightest contact with Kṛṣṇa's transcendental mellows.
7. Discuss and deliberate on this, my friends, and make your life successful just like the great sages such as Śukadeva, Nārada, Vyāsa and others, who all gave up Brahman realization by becoming attracted to Kṛṣṇa, and then this servant Bhaktivinoda will hold onto your feet.