

Sunday Lecture given by H.H. Suhotra Swami on Bhagavad-gita 9.25, recorded on 26th May 1991 in Oslo

Title: Hungry ghosts

Hare Krishna! Today we will read something from Bhagavad-gita, from the 9th chapter, text 25 and then try to explain it. So the verse reads:

yanti deva-vrata devan
pitrn yanti pitr-vratah
bhutani yanti bhutejya
yanti mad-yajino pi mam

And this means: „**Those who worship the demigods, will take birth among the demigods, those who worship the ancestors, go to the ancestors, those who worship ghosts and spirits, will take birth among such beings and those who worship Me, will live with Me.**“

Purport: If one has any desire to go to the moon, the sun or any other planet, one can attain the desired destination by following specific Vedic principles recommended for that purpose, such as the process technically known as darsa-paurnamasi. These are vividly described in the fruitive activities portion of the Vedas, which recommends a specific worship of demigods situated on different heavenly planets. Similarly one can attain the Pita planets by performing the specific yajna. Similarly one can go to many ghostly planets and become a Yaksa, Raksasa or Pisaca. Pisaca worship is called „black arts“ or „black magic“. There are many men who practise this black art and they think that it is spiritualism, but such activities are completely materialistic. Similarly a pure devotee who worships the Supreme Personality of Godhead only, achieves the planets of Vaikuntha and Krishnaloka without a doubt. It is very easy to understand through this important verse that if by simply worshipping the demigods one can achieve the heavenly planets or by worshipping the Pitas achieve the Pita planet or by practising the black arts achieve the ghostly planets, why can the pure devotee not achieve the planet of Krishna or Visnu? Unfortunately many people have no information of these sublime planets where Krishna and Visnu live and because they do not know of them they fall down. Even the impersonalist fall down from the brahmajyoti. The Krishna consciousness movement is therefore distributing sublime information to the entire human society to the effect that by simply chanting the Hare Krishna mantra one can become perfect in this life and go back home, back to Godhead.

Lecture: So how Srila Prabhupada writes in his explanation on this verse, this is a very very important verse in the Bhagavad-gita. Today around the world, the western world especially, there are many people who believe we are entering into what is called New Age. The kind of age of spiritual enlightenment and we see that there are many paths which come about, people are following different methods, paths, modes of worship or modes of belief or philosophy or meditation or yoga or something else. Different teachings are there. So a common idea that is shared among many people is that it doesn't matter what you do, you can worship this god or that god, or as Krishna is explaining here – there is also worship of ancestors. This is not so much known in the west any more, although it used to be in the Europe and also worship of ghosts: Bhutas, Pretas, Pisacas, Yaksas, Raksasas, there are different kinds of ghostly beings.

So people think that it doesn't matter what you do, you come to the same conclusion, the same goal. But here Krishna, Who is called Yogesvara, the master of all systems of yoga, He is saying that that

is not true. He is clearly saying here: depending on what you do, you will get a particular result. So one who worships the devas will go to the devas. Devas means that in this universe there are some very nice planets, higher planets, populated by very powerful beings, whose names are also mentioned in the Vedas, like Indra, Chandra, Surya, Varuna and they are the controllers of elements. Controllers of elemental phenomenon or cosmic phenomenon. Like Indra controls the rain and the lightning and Varuna controls the currence of the ocean and Surya controls the sunshine and Chandra is the deity of the moon so as such he is providing sustenance for the growth and vegetables. Vegetables become succulent and juicy because of the influence of the moon. And there are many many other elemental deities or demigods. So this form of worship is also well known around the world, even in Europe. Previously, before Christianity became prominent, they were worshiping many different kinds of gods.

So Krishna is saying: If you pick one of these gods and worship him, then you may go to him in the next life. The mind becomes fixed on that personality and then in the next life, with the death of this body, the soul and the subtle body, the mental body, become transferred into that place, that planet and one gets appropriate body. For instance if you worship the sun you can take your next birth on the sun, you simply need a body of fire. So one can get a body of fire. That is not a problem. And if we worship ghosts... Now worshiping ghosts today has become very popular. We don't see much worship of demigods or worship of ancestors but we see a lot of ghost worship. Some people don't know that it is ghost worship, unfortunately. But there is very very much worship of ghosts going on in the name of New Age, alternative phenomenon, this and that, mysticism...

I have here a book, very interesting book. I want to read just a short section from it. It is a book called „Hungry Ghosts“. I have found it very interesting. It is written by Canadian reporter named Joe Fisher. And he has written many books. He is actually quite known author in New Age ground, he has written a lot of books on reincarnation. He is convinced believer in reincarnation. So he investigates many things that are going on in the New Age movements. One of this book is about something called „chanelling“. I don't know if you have heard of this here but the channelling is something like seance, mediumship, where a person, a medium, becomes taken over by some entity who speaks what is supposed to be higher knowledge and this entity can also bring in other entities, many other of these beings and they claim to be guides of the persons in the seance. You know, some entity comes in and introduces himself: „I am your guide, guide of this person.“ And another one says: „And I am your guide.“ And then the people in the seance they believe this and they listen what the entities have to say and the entities gradually start to direct their lives. And everyone is thinking: this is for the good, because these are higher beings, more realized beings.

So Joe Fisher got involved in this and he met his guide, the spirit, the woman named Philippa, who lived in Greece, or this was her claim anyway, that she lived in Greece about 200 years ago. And in a former life Joe Fisher was living with her, so he has supposedly been taking more births but she was remaining in disincarnate state and from her position she was protecting him and so on. So he believed this but then he began to investigate into deeper and then he found out that everything that this Philippa entity and all the other entities or guides of other people, everything they were saying was a pack of lies. So he was wondering why. And so he was investigating, reading many things and he concluded that these entities are ghosts, as described here: Pisacas, Yaksas, Raksasas, Pretas. The title of this book „Hungry Ghosts“ is a translation of the sanskrt word Preta.

So Preta is a ghostly...a ghost, what is a ghost? Ghost simply means a human being who became so much absorbed in this body, in the pleasures of this body that when he died he couldn't leave the body. The body is dead so this ghost in the subtle body, means the mental body, he is just hanging around. And still trying to enjoy the same things. But because in the mental body you don't have the senses where you can enjoy the same things, so these Pretas they may stay in the same house that that person lived in and they always give trouble, they are inauspicious creatures. Anyone else comes in the house, they may hear some mysterious knocking, walking upstairs and strange things like that...lights coming on and off...(laughing)...Simply what it is that the person who lived here previously he is trying to assert himself: Wait! I am the one who owns this house. What are you doing here? (laughing)...So these are Pretas, they are always causing trouble and they are always looking to take over. And invade the being. Because they don't have a body, they want to enjoy sensual pleasures so they look for someone

who is a little weak in mind and they try to take him over so that they can enjoy through his body.

So this Joe Fisher discovered that this is what is going on in the seances. Simply the Pretas and other kinds of ghosts are coming and speaking through the medium and trying to get control over the people who are attending, so that they can just enjoy through their bodies. So this Joe Fisher then he...this experience kind of shook him very deeply, it woke him up a little bit. Because formerly he has been accepting everything in this New Age movements, everything is the same, everything is very good, everything is leading to higher consciousness, but this experience made him think: no, some things are bad. Some things are not good.

So I just want to read one thing, very appropriate, very relevant to our message of Krishna consciousness. He says...this is actually in the last chapter, the last chapter is called "The challenge of consciousness". And we would say "The challenge of Krishna consciousness". (laughing)...So he writes: "True spiritual development is achieved neither by dependency nor by lapsing into unconsciousness. True spiritual development rises to the challenge of consciousness by demanding self discipline, effort of the will and as much awareness as possible. When all this set and done, there is no shortcut to nirvana. But in this narcissistic age..." Narcissism means...that is a character from Greek mythology – Narcissus. He was a person who just spend all day by the bank of a pool looking into the water at his own reflection because he thought himself to be very handsome, very good looking. So he just would look at his beautiful face all day (laughing)...So a person who is very self-absorbed, very much absorbed in himself, he is called narcissistic. So he is saying that this is a Narcissistic age.

"...in this narcissistic age of instant gratification...this word is something you often hear among devotees because Srila Prabhupada used to talk about sense gratification...so in this age of instant gratification and swift solutions the great deception of chaneling is that we make ghosts...(break)" ...loving this incarnates – he means the ghosts, the ghosts will lead us to Enlightenment, we just have to surrender to them. The big E – by that he means the big enlightenment – the big E is just around the corner and anyway didn't you know? We are God. (laughing).. So this is the message. He has been very sarcastic in telling us what is the message of many of these New Age movements. Actually his conclusion that we are God, that is very very important to understand because that is at the bottom of so many of these so called spiritual teachings. That ultimately there is no other God except you. This is a high of narcissism. If I think I am God then I think everyone else is just here for me, my pleasure, my enjoyment. God is a master, if I am the master that means you are my servants. (laughing) And if I am God than there is really not much I have to do in the way of self-discipline, striving for enlightenment or higher consciousness because I am already the goal. I am the goal. So I just have to think about myself all day and night. And then I am God conscious. So this type of attitude is actually laziness. And then this leads one to be very easily misled. So one in his laziness thinks: I can just listen to ghosts and spirits and they will help me.

But as Krishna says here, what help will one get from worshiping ghosts and spirits? One will simply become a ghost or spirit himself in the next life. Therefore Krishna is advising us that we develop our consciousness to the maximum. These demigods or ancestors or ghosts, they actually represent different levels of consciousness. Actually it means different kind of body. For a ghost has what is called sukshmarira, just the mind, disembodied mind. The demigod has much more powerful kind of subtle body, a mystic body. Demigods are very very powerful. So when one gets this kind of body then he can do many many amazing, mystical things. But there is even something higher than that.

As Srila Prabhupada mentions in the purport, he speaks of those who realized the brahmajyoti, the impersonalists. The impersonalists give up all conception of body altogether, even subtle body and they just live in undeveloped spiritual state. Pure spiritual state but it is not developed. Therefore we call it impersonal. They realize themselves as eternal spark of consciousness. And thus they float in the brahmajyoti, which means the divine light, light of Brahman. This is the brilliant spiritual light which is emanating from Krishna's transcendental body. So they become like a spark floating in that. Many mystics speak of this experience, seeing the clear light or the white light. So this is even a higher understanding or higher realization than the demigod and to reach this requires very much discipline. Actually one has to control over completely all sexual and mental functions and desires and simply become situated in pure consciousness without any contact with matter. And that is very very difficult. But then there is something

even beyond this. Because as I said, this Brahman realization or brahmajyoti realization that is the realization of the undeveloped soul. But the soul can develop further. Develop transcendental personality. A transcendental body, pure spiritual body. And that body is meant for serving Krishna, having a loving relationship with Krishna. So this is the goal of bhakti-yoga, the yoga of devotion, which we practise in the Krishna consciousness movement.

So to attain this it is explained... So this state of Krishna consciousness developing the spiritual body and eternally loving and serving Krishna, this is called the position of ananda cinmaya rasa. It is state of pure transcendental extasy. But how to realize it? One must have very very pure consciousness ananda cinmaya rasa matayh manah su, manah means the mind or the consciousness, it must be su, su means very nice or very pure. And then when the mind becomes very pure, the consciousness becomes very very clear then one can remember his original identity which is actually we are all originally - associates of Krishna or lovers of Krishna, servants of Krishna. This is the original identity of the soul. But we have forgotten that due to having fallen into maya, this material illusion. So purifying the consciousness means ultimately to remember who I really am and remember who is Krishna and remember the relationship. So when one remembers this then he crosses over the material world. Tribhuvana, tribhuvana means the three worlds. There is heaven, there is Earth and there are the lower worlds. And in the lower worlds we find these ghosts and spirits, also demons and all kinds of bizzare entities. And on the Earth we find human beings. And in heaven we find the demigods. So these are three worlds which comprise the universe. This is very attractive, very absorbing, very mysterious. People spend their whole lives just studying this universe. And they still cannot come to the end of understanding. But actually it is all maya. It is all illusion. Or we should say it is like a shadow of the reality. All of the phenomenon, all of the wonderful things we see here, they are only temporary so they are like shadows. One Greek philosopher, Socrates, he said the same thing. This world is just like a shadow. So what is the use? When one is seeing a beautiful shadow or silhouette and becomes fascinated in that? But why not reality? That is only the shadow. If shadow is so beautiful, what about the reality? So perceiving this reality, the original form of things that is the goal of Krishna consciousness.

So how to achieve that goal? Actually it has been made very very simple. Srila Prabhupada explains here: "The Krishna consciousness movement is therefore distributing sublime information to the entire human society to the effect that simply by chanting the Hare Krishna mantra one can become perfect in this life and go back home, back to Godhead." Now Srila Prabhupada says that the problem is that many people today they don't have information about Krishna. They don't know who is Krishna. But the Krishna consciousness movement is giving everyone Krishna in the form of the Hare Krishna mantra. Because this is the wonderful mystery that this name Krishna and Krishna Himself are not different. The scriptures say they are not different. The name of Krishna is pure transcendental energy. In the purism (?) of this world is the sound vibration, this is how we may understand it when we hear it with our ears, or this is just some sound. There is Hare Krishna, there is other sounds, Coca-cola or...And we may think these are just different sounds. But there is big difference. Because the name Coca-cola is different from the taste of Coca-cola. You can chant Coca-cola, Coca-cola, Coca-cola, Coca-cola all you want and you will never get your mouth full of Coke. But if you chant Hare Krishna, and you keep chanting and you chant seriously fixing your mind on that vibration, then you will start to feel very quickly an increase of extasy.

Now Krishna he has one name, XXX, that means the former of all extasy. See so Krishna is filled with extasy, therefore Srila Prabhupada would say He is a reservoir of all pleasure. To be in association with Krishna means to always feel transcendental extasy. If we chant Hare Krishna and we are feeling transcendental bliss, we can know we are coming into Krishna's association. So you associate Krishna, with Krishna directly, by means of the name of Krishna. We may say: "Well I don't know so much about Krishna and there are so many books about Krishna, just like in our ISKCON movement we have so many books, so many volumes of Srimad Bhagavatam and Caitanya-caritamrta and this Bhagavad-gita and Nectar of Devotion. So many books of knowledge about Krishna". So someone is seeing all these books: „Well, you see, I have to learn about Krishna but so much to read“. Or you begin by chanting, just chant Hare Krishna. And you immediately come in contact with Krishna. And actually one can realize everything simply through the mantra. It is stated that all the Vedic knowledge is contained within these 16 syllables. So what is a problem to chant? It is very very easy. One simply has to do it.

And by this chanting than one is raised up to the transcendental platform. This is very important. We want to make spiritual progress. At least many people today who are investigating this New Age phenomenon they say: „I am looking for spiritual progress. I am looking to improve myself“. So the best improvement is to come to your actual platform of existence which is the transcendental platform, which is beyond this physical body which is simply a place of birth, old age, disease and death. That is the physical ground. And we may think that our physical body, when we are young especially, we may think: “Oh no, it is very nice”, just like Narcissis. Looking into mirror and culming our hair, admiring ourself that they are so nice. But that body unfortunately will grow old, will get diseased and will die. And if we spend our whole life just to be attached to this body than we have to get another one and maybe the next one won't be so nice. Maybe it will have six legs instead of two legs or something like that. It could be on this planet, there are many six legged in insects.

Then above the bodily platform there is the mental platform but this again is not very good, as I explained already that the ghosts also live on the mental platform and they are suffering like anything. So to be a ghost means to always be unsatisfied. That is why they are trying to hunt others because they want to taste food and so many things they want to do. But they cannot because they don't have body to do it. So they are feeling hunger and thirst and sexual desire and all these things but they have no outlet for it so that is driving them crazy so therefore they are hunting other people. “Give me your body”. This is also very desperate state of existence. And then even on the heavenly planets, the heavenly worlds. It is a very nice place from the materialistic point of view, very easy life, very much sense enjoyment, very great power but still it is temporary. The demigods they also die. Ultimately their planets are also destroyed. This universe is dissolved after long long time. It merges back into the body of Mahavisnu.

So developing oneself means really to develop beyond the bodily conception, the mental conception, even the heavenly conception. And to come to the transcendental understanding. That I am a spirit soul, I am eternal, I am full of knowledge, I am full of bliss and I am a servant of Krishna. So this is a great study. But as I said it is made very easy, simply by this chanting of Hare Krishna mahamantra. And also it is made easy in another way when we take Krishna prasadam, which you will be served next. This is the next item, we bring up the foodstuff that has been offered to Lord Krishna. It is very tasty, very satisfying but it is spiritual because Krishna has accepted it and He has entered into it and then when we eat it we become purified. So the bhakti-yoga process is very much centered on the tongue, because we are very much centered on the tongue. Tongue is described to be very voracious and uncontrolable sense of the body. So yoga means to control the senses and the center of these senses, the most powerful of these senses is the tongue. The tongue likes to taste things and tongue likes to talk all day. So here we have two processes of bhakti-yoga for the tongue: taste Krishna prasadam and chant Hare Krishna. And in this way consciousness becomes raised to the spiritual platform. It is not difficult thing to do but the difficulty is just to do it. The difficulty is to stop doing other things which are just nonsense and start doing this thing. Chanting Hare Krishna, taking Krishna prasadam and engaging in Krishna's service. Engaging the senses and mind in Krishna's service. So anyway, this is the beginning: the Hare Krishna mantra and Krishna prasadam. So we would like to invite everyone to please participate in this simple program. So as I said prasadam will be served next. You may have some question, if you like you can ask it now. I'll try to answer any questions.

Question: You said that this Krishna movement that it not belongs to the New Age movement at all...

Answer: Well, Krishna consciousness movement is very much “all age movement” or maybe we should say “eternal age movement” (laughing) It is thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of years old. It goes actually back to Brahma himself, the creator of the universe. He got the power to create this universe by becoming Krishna conscious first of all. He set down in meditation for 4 billion 300 million years on his lotus, lotus like planet and then he realized Krishna within the heart and Krishna gave him the Vedas, the Vedic knowledge and with this knowledge he was able to create this universe and populate it with all the different beings. And even before Brahma, even before this universe, you see Krishna consciousness is eternally going on in the spiritual world. So this New Age, what they call New Age, if they mean by that something new...well, Krishna consciousness is not something new. Srila Prabhupada always used to insist on this point: it is not something new, it is not recent invention. It is actually the sanatana dharma, the eternal dharma of all living beings to serve and love Krishna. So there is definitely

distinction. We don't consider ourselves to be a part of any New Age or this age or that age (laughing).

If you want to talk about age this is the age of Kali (laughing). The Veda says this is the age of Kali, the age of spiritual darkness. So in this age of darkness there is a nice comparison. You see when there is dark outside and then you see a glow-worm, this little fire-fly that makes a little light than you may think: "Oh, here is light!" And you may follow this. But what good would that light do you? It is such a little sparkling light in a night. What good would it do you? It would only mislead you. If you would follow it you can see it but you can't see anything else. (laughing) So you follow this light, maybe you drop off the side of the mountain if you follow this light. (laughing) So what good would such light do? So there are many, you know, coming out in this age, many so called teachers and yogis and gurus and what have you. And they are giving some little light but that light doesn't do anyone any good. So Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Lord Caitanya, He is compared to the moon. Gaurachandra, the golden moon. So in the darkness of night if the full moon comes out and shines then you can see, then you can see where you are, you can make your way through the darkness and come to your home and be safe. So the chanting of Hare Krishna is given by Lord Gaurachandra, by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to give real light to the human being. So this Krishna consciousness movement has therefore nothing to do with so many other glow-worm type teachings. Allright, thank you very much!

Hare Krishna!