

BRAHMANA TEST

by H.H.Suhotra Swami

PART ONE: ACARA (Behavior)

- A. What did Lord Caitanya say the singlemost basic acara of a Vaisnava is?
- B. What are the two essential rules and regulations (which include all other rules and regulations) according to the Padma Purana?
- C. During Srila Prabhupada's visit to Visakhapatnam in South India (described in Srila Prabhupada Lilamrta), he made a comment to his disciples about what a Vaisnava is. It concerned a principle of behavior that clearly distinguishes the devotee from a nondevotee. What is that principle?
- D. Why is rising early and attending Mangala aratika important? [Note: one way to answer this pertains to the devotee's spiritual health, and another way pertains to the devotee's relationship with the Lord. Answer both ways.]
- E. How many times daily (at least) should a brahmana bathe?
- F. After "even drinking water" [quote by Srila Prabhupada], what to speak of after eating, what should a brahmana do?
- G. The answers to the following three questions are in Srila Prabhupada's books. What is the threefold vision of an educated and cultured man according to Canakya Pandita? What does Canakya say about a man's associating with women other than his wife? How does the sage Yajnavalkya define "brahmacarya"?
- H. A devotee is chanting japa while circumambulating the temple. He is holding both hands behind his body, resting his beadbag against his lower back (below the waist) while he chants, and is keeping the right side of his body to the temple. What is he doing wrong?
- I. What do the psychological processes of thinking, feeling and willing have to do with controlling sex desire?

PART TWO: PRACARA (Preaching)

- A. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati said that a preacher requires only one qualification. What is it?
- B. Explain why "preaching is the essence" of ISKCON.
- C. What role does a devotee's observance of the rules and regulations play in his preaching?
- D. When Lord Caitanya converted the Mayavadi sannyasis in Varanasi, He displayed a Vaisnava quality that made them become friendly to Him. What was it?

PART THREE: VICARA (Understanding Vaisnava Philosophy and Refuting Opposing Views)

1) THE THREE MODES OF MATERIAL NATURE

- A. Why are the modes of passion and ignorance considered so

inauspicious? How is consciousness affected by these modes? What sorts of behavior patterns arise from them? What next-life destinations they lead the soul to?

B. How can a person born of lower modes of nature be elevated to the mode of goodness?

C. What must one do to become fixed in goodness (that is, never fall down from goodness)?

D. What is the difference between material goodness and transcendental goodness?

2) THREE FEATURES OF THE ABSOLUTE

A. Please define Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan and explain how they are related to each other.

B. What kinds of transcendentalists understand the Supreme in each of these different ways?

C. If, as Srimad Bhagavatam 1.2.11 states, the three features of the Absolute are nondifferent (advayam), how can it be that the Brahman-realized soul still does not know Bhagavan?

D. Great devotees like Arjuna and Mother Yasoda are intimately connected with Bhagavan, but it is also said that they are not great philosophers. Does this mean they do not know about the Brahman or Paramatma features? Give examples from Krsna's pastimes to support your answer to this question.

3) THE PERSONALITY OF GODHEAD IS THE FORM OF COMPLETE EXISTENCE

A. Srila Prabhupada writes in the first sentence of his introduction to Canto One of Srimad Bhagavatam that there is a difference between the conceptions of "God" and "Absolute Truth." What does he mean by this?

B. If Krsna has form, how can He be the Absolute Truth, the totality of existence? Because in our experience, form limits a thing and separates it from everything else.

C. Give three examples of how it can be practically realized that Krsna is present within His energies.

4) THE LORD AND HIS ENERGIES

A. If everything emanates from Krsna, even the material nature and the conditioned souls, how can He be transcendental? Or, to phrase this question in another way, if Krsna is all-good, and He is the origin of everything and all-powerful, why is there evil in this world?

B. There is a class of Vedantists who say that if the Absolute Truth is non-material and the only reality, then sense objects, senses and the living entities must be nonexistent. Who are these Vedantists, and who is the acarya they follow? Name a non-Vedic philosophy that has greatly influenced these so-called Vedantists.

C. What follows are summaries of five other explanations of Vedanta philosophy about the Lord and His energies:

i) The Personality of Godhead is forever distinct from the material energy and the jivas. Because they are ever-subordinate to Him, matter and jiva can never be one with Him.

ii) The Personality of Godhead is always one without a second, yet He manifests differences from His person like a snake manifests coils, which are one with yet different from the snake's body.

iii) The Personality of Godhead has different qualities that

together constitute His all-inclusive Self. Among these qualities are the material nature and the living entity.

iv) The Personality of Godhead is the source of inconceivable potencies which are one with and yet different from Him, just as the sun and sunshine are one and different at the same time. Therefore neither the jiva or matter are different from Krsna, and yet nothing is Krsna save and accept His own divine Self, which is the source of everything else.

v) The Personality of Godhead is completely pure and the only reality. That which appears to be impure and different from Him is unreal, being only the result of wrong understanding.

Match these five statements to the following philosophical schools listed below. The main purpose of this exercise is to see if you can distinguish Lord Caitanya's philosophy from the others. You will get a passing mark on this question if you can do that much. If you mismatch Lord Caitanya's philosophy to a different summary statement, you will not get credit for answering this question even if you correctly match other philosophies to their proper summary statements.

- a) Suddha-advaita (Purified Oneness), the teaching of Visnuswami and Vallabhacarya.
- b) Dvaita-advaita (Difference in Oneness), the teaching of Nimbarkacarya.
- c) Acintya-bheda-abheda Tattva (Inconceivable Simultaneous Oneness and Difference), the teaching of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.
- d) Dvaita (Difference), the teaching of Madhvacharya.
- e) Visistha-advaita (Qualified Oneness), the teaching of Ramanujacharya.

D. In a morning walk conversation, Srila Prabhupada explained that matter as we know it really does not exist. Because it is Krsna's energy, it is actually spiritual. A devotee asked, "If everything is spirit, why do we then distinguish the soul from the material body?" Srila Prabhupada answered, "There are different varieties of spirit. We are not Mayavadis." Explain this statement by His Divine Grace. How and why does spirit - the sat-cit-ananda potency of the Lord - display the opposite qualities (asat-acit-nirananda) by which we know it as matter? Give a material example of one energy that can show two opposite effects that might help someone understand this mysterious property of spirit. [Note: such an example is given by Srila Prabhupada in his books.] Is there a way we can actually see matter as spirit?

5) PHILOSOPHICAL DISPUTATION

A. "We do not need to postulate the existence of an eternal God beyond matter. It is enough to say 'the material energy itself is eternal.'" Refute this.

B. "Ultimate reality consists of two energies called prakriti and purusa, or matter and souls. All the forms within this material world arise from the spontaneous combination of material elements, which also generates all activity. The souls do nothing except throw the light of awareness upon matter. The soul is liberated only by his own effort. He must simply get free of the three modes that bind him to material bodies life after life. Then he'll be ever-situated in self-awareness." What is this philosophy called, and what is wrong with it?

C. "By knowing clay, one automatically knows all things made of clay (pots, plates, cups, vases, and even foodstuff, which is just a transformation of clay). The difference between these things is due only to name and form, which are meaningless. Similarly, one who knows impersonal Brahman is the knower of all. The names and forms which cover Brahman are illusion." Refute this.

D. "The god of my religion is truly merciful, for he promises to save my soul if I just believe in him and nothing more. But Krsna demands that mankind work for salvation through devotional service. This is not real mercy. This is not the unconditional love of the supreme for the fallen souls." Refute this.

E. "Just as light rays shining through a lens focus to a point so hot that a fire is started, so the flamelike self arises by the focusing of desire. When desire is extinguished, the self is also extinguished." Refute this.

F. "The holy name of Krsna is all-powerful because it is Krsna Himself. Just as Krsna purified the lusty Kubja by His embrace, so the holy name purifies all who hear it, even if they are lusty and sinful. It is therefore useless to ask someone who chants the holy name to follow regulative principles. The name itself delivers the chanter. One who disciplines his senses by rules and regulations actually has no faith that the holy name is nondifferent from Krsna. Therefore the God-intoxicated saints who preach the holy name never follow regulative principles. They are empowered by the name alone, and they may also deliver lusty women by their divine embrace." Refute this.

PART FOUR: UPACARA (Deity worship)

A. What is the difference between Deity worship and idol worship?

B. We live in the Kali age; why do devotees worship the Deity if the yuga-dharma is nama-sankirtana?

C. What result should a devotee desire from his worship of the Deity? Answer this question with scriptural references.

D. Explain in your own words the offensive mood of Deity worship that Lord Kapila condemns in Srimad Bhagavatam. How can a devotee insure that he doesn't fall into this wrong attitude?

E. What did Srila Prabhupada say are the two most important requirements in Deity worship?

F. Whom must we worship before we may worship Sri-Sri-Radha-Krsna? Why?