

Spiritual happiness – spiritual bliss, is built around five different spiritual activities:

1. The first is connecting to God, also called sadhana or worship.
2. The second is associating with spiritually minded people, which is called sangha.
3. The third is cultivating spiritual maturity, which is called shiksha.
4. The fourth is using your talents and abilities which God gave you to serve the Lord, which is called seva.
5. The last is to spread it to other people, called sankirtan.

So we're on the first of those five purposes of life: Centering our life on God. Prabhupada, the founder Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) says in his commentaries to the Bhagavad-Gita (or the Song of God), that you are meant to experience life as a thrill at every moment. Sometimes we have ecstatic, euphoric moments and we just feel absolutely spiritual. We don't feel that we are of this world at all but we can't sustain that feeling. It is very hard for us and we only feel that way infrequently. Some of us can count the decades before we get the tough or moment like that. But in fact, we are meant to experience life as a thrill at every single moment, not occasionally or infrequently. If you are not experiencing life as a thrill at every moment, then you are not in the right spiritual health.

There are five characteristics of the kind of happiness that is achieved through centring life on God.

1. It is unconditional. There is no condition like a snowstorm or earthquake that can dampen the condition of enthusiasm. Because it is not conditional, it is not external, it is internal.
2. It is unlimited from a quantitative point of view. There is no end to the happiness.
3. It is unshakable.
4. It is unearned.
5. It is an unending. It is eternal.

So here is unshakeable pleasure.

We read in the Krishna Book, there are many devotees of Krishna. Krishna is a name for God and just like Jesus Christ appeared 2,000 years ago and was on the planet for 32 years as the son of God, and his job was to canvass people to go back home, back to Godhead – don't waste your time, loitering in this material world; similarly, God himself comes from time to time in order to deliver the same message – “I want you back!” You're suffering! We miss you. Please come back home, back to Godhead.” So Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, descended on this planet 5000 years ago, and he was on the planet for 125 years. There were many devotees who descended with Krishna, and who was associated with Krishna. The common nature between those devotees was that they were very confident in Krishna, almost cocky. They knew that they had Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead watching their back, and they were working on his behalf. That combination makes for unshakability. They say “I'm standing right here, I am not budging, because there is no more powerful person than the one in my corner.”

Rukmini was betrothed due to a political arrangement to Sisupala. Rukmini's brother, Rukmi, did not like Krishna and to spite him, he arranged Rukmini's marriage to Sisupala, who was kind of an atheist. So Rukmini wrote Krishna a letter saying “please, come steal me away. My father really wants me to marry you, but doesn't want to go against his eldest son, so is going along with my brother's wishes. She wrote a letter to Krishna in secret, asking him to take her away, just like the lion takes from the jackals. These were big kings – Sisupala and Bhisma They were big kings of the day, and Rukmini described Krishna as a lion compared to jackals. On the day of the wedding she was dressed so beautifully. She is in fact, Radha-Rani, the eternal consort of Krishna. No other woman compares to her beauty. She was so beautiful that big strong warriors were falling off their horses - marvelling at her beauty, but she had not a single thought for any of them because her faith and love in Krishna was unshakable. She did not even have a wisp of a thought of what it would be like to be with any of them. Not a wisp of a thought, because she knew that Krishna is the

Supreme Personality of Godhead, and whatever qualities anyone else exhibits come originally from Him. So she was walking very slowly, because she was just a little 16-year-old girl in the middle of all these great warriors. She was praying to Krishna to come and save her and sure enough Krishna comes and takes her away in his chariot. A running fight ensues, all the way from Hastinapur to Krishna's city of Dwaraka 800 miles away. All the Kings chased after them on horses. Krishna's horse is running, and Krishna's holding Rukmini and he tells her, "I bet you didn't think I would make it." He is very cool. So if you have someone like that as a patron, or rabbi, or as a friend, or as a husband, would you even consider going with anyone else? No, you would be unshakable.

Ravana was a very powerful demon, and his city was the present day Sri Lanka, which means beautiful golden city. It harks back to the time when Ravana was the king of Lanka and he was so victorious in battle that the whole city was paved in gold. At that time, Krishna was incarnated as Rama and his wife was Sita. Sita was Rukmini's incarnation. Ravana was celebrated as a might warrior across the three worlds. When Ravana raised his eyebrows, the demigods trembled with fear. Ravana had defeated all the powerful demigods and he had the scars on his chest to prove it. He was dashing and debonair, he had money and all the ladies loved him. He kidnapped Sita and had her captivity for about 11 months until Rama crossed the ocean with an army. Even though she was in a situation where Ravana was making constant advances at her and everyone around her were singing praises of him all the time and not of Rama or Krishna, she did not once even remotely consider the option of surrendering to Ravana. In fact, this is what she says, in anger to Ravana (Rakshasa) "I have taken a vow to be faithful to Rama, who is unshakable as a great mountain, as powerful as Indra, as wise as Brihaspati. I cannot be swerved from Rama's service. He is always true and virtuous to his word, and he will never abandon his devoted servant. I belong to that Rama who is like a mighty lion who destroys his enemies with ease and speed.

How have you Ravana, a jackal, been as brazen as to covet me?" Again, we see the example of a lion versus a jackal.

Another example relates to one of Krishna's queens, Satyabhama. She had heard of the parijata flower that exists mainly in the heavenly planets. It does not exist on the Earth planet. She wanted not just the parijata flower, she wanted the tree. Krishna said "Indra the King of the heavenly planets will not allow us to take a tree from the heavens." He asked Indra, "Can we take the parijata tree to Dwaraka?" And Indra said no. It is only for the heavenly planets - they are not meant for earth. Satyabhama pleaded to Krishna, knowing it would mean war. So Krishna rode Garuda to Indra Loka and took the parijata tree. Indra chased them on an elephant, but he was defeated by Krishna. Unshakable? I don't think so. When your Lord is unshakable, you tend to also be unshakable in his service. Krishna appeared in the Yadu (Jewish) dynasty, and that dynasty was very powerful. The members of the Yadu dynasty always thought of Krishna as their cousin, as their brother, as a friend - and they became completely fearless in every respect. Their feet would trample over the Sudharma assembly house, which the best demigods deserved but which was taken away from them. Those who are directly servitors of the Lord are protected by the Lord from all fearfulness, and they also enjoy the best of things, even if they are forcibly accumulated. The Lord is equal in behavior to all living beings, but He is partial to His pure devotees, being very affectionate toward them¹.

During the Kurukshetra war, which is described in the great epic, The Mahabharata, Arjuna had vowed to kill Jayadratha by the end of the day's battle, else Arjuna would commit suicide. The spies on the other side heard this, and they arranged their army of 4 million soldiers in such a way as to protect Jayadratha till sunset. They placed the army in the needle formation. They formed a wall of soldiers in the army that tapered and tapered till it was at a point, and at the back was Jayadratha. That needle formation was 49 miles long. So Duryodhana and the Kauravas thought

¹ [SB 1.14.38]

that as long as they kept Jayadratha alive till after sunset, they would get rid of the most powerful warrior on the planet earth and they were celebrating. Krishna and Arjuna had to go through 49 miles and 4 million soldiers to get to Jayadratha, and the sun was about to set. There were three minutes to sunset when they were still about a mile away, and they were not going to make it to Jayadratha in time but Krishna is unshakable in the protection of his devotees. He caused, by his mystic yogic powers, a premature sunset. He caused an illusion whereby the sun appeared to dip below the horizon. At this point Duryodhana and the Kauravas relaxed their guard and celebrated, thinking that the sun had gone down and Jayadratha was safe. They were thinking that Arjuna would now commit suicide, so they all relaxed their guard. At this point, Krishna took the illusion of sunset away and there were 30 seconds left of sunlight. He asked Arjuna to kill Jayadratha, and Arjuna killed him and then there was a sunset again. Jayadratha's father had extracted a boon some time ago that anyone who causes his son's head to hit the ground, that person's head would explode in 1000 pieces. Understandably, everyone was afraid to kill Jayadratha because they knew of this boon. So Krishna advised Arjuna to shoot the arrow in such a way that it took Jayadratha's head off and landed it on Jayadratha father's lap. Due to the shock of this, Jayadratha's father dropped the head on the floor and as a result, his father's head burst into 1000 pieces.

Krishna is undeterred in the protection of his devotees. Do you think that if the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who can go to that extent of even compromising his own so-called "integrity" to protect his devotees that you have anything to worry about if you are a devotee of Krishna? Would you even consider any other option? Would you not be unshakable in your devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead? This is a verse from the Bhagavad-Gita which describes that kind of unshakable happiness:

sukham ātyantikam yat tad

buddhi-grāhyam atīndriyam

vetti yatra na caivāyaṁ
sthitaś calati tattvataḥ
yaṁ labdhvā cāparaṁ lābhaṁ
manyate nādhikaṁ tataḥ
yasmin sthito na duḥkhena
guruṇāpi vicālyate

[BG 6.20-23]

sukham atyantikam yat tad buddhi-grahyam atindriyam, it says that “happiness is transcendental.” Most of us have never experienced anything remotely similar to this kind of happiness: of being completely calm, completely satisfied, feeling completely secure. If you really believe that God is protecting us and he has the whole world in his hands you would never have another sleepless night. You would never be plagued by worry. If you worship that Lord, you would never worry. If you worry, then you are not experiencing the kind of happiness that I am talking about here. It is such a great, foundational type of happiness that it is said, “yam labdhva caparam labham”, that “those who achieve that state of dependence upon the Lord, they cannot be budged from that state even in the midst of the greatest calamity.” Those devoted persons are thinking even in the midst of greatest calamity, that due to my past sinful activities, much worse should have happened to me but what is currently happening is just a token. The Lord is just giving me a small token of what I actually have coming to me. They are not budged, Yashmin stitha hi dukhena- dukha means *miseries*, stitha means *budged*. They are not even budged in the midst of miseries so great they would completely break and shatter lesser people. Prabhupada said, during World War II, the ladies in Germany would go to the church and pray for the sons and husbands and fathers to come back from the war fields. When they did not come back alive from the war they lost faith in God

and became atheists. So ask yourself this question, if you consider yourself a person of faith, is it a manly or womanly faith, or is it a wimpy faith? Is it a faith that gets budged when things do not go as you want them to? Or is it an unshakable faith? And that is the characteristic of spiritual happiness; it is unshakable.

Another story is of Sukanya. She was a young girl. Once when she was out with her father the King, she saw a hole in the ground and there seemed to be something glowing in the hole. Being an innocent girl she took a piece of straw and pierced it out of curiosity. It turns out that the glowing orb was one of the eyes of a very great muni - Chayavana Muni, who was doing great austerities for the last hundred years or so. He was buried under the ground and she had just poked his eye. She didn't know what she was doing. As a result of this, all the soldiers became constipated. Having realized her mistake, Sukanya admitted her error. She could have lied and not said anything but she had great integrity. She belonged to a glorious culture based on dharma, on following God given laws and duties. She had an inner commitment and happiness that were unshakeable. If you have the grit to tell the truth, even knowing that telling the truth is going to give you trouble, that is real unconditional happiness. She told the truth even though it might get her into trouble. She said that it might have been the poking that I did. The king said let's go check it out and they found the sage with a bloody eye. The king said, "I'm so sorry." Great sages in those days could destroy a whole nation by their ill will. So to appease the anger of the muni the King promised his daughter in marriage to the muni. Now, the muni had been underground for hundreds of years, and as such, he did not exactly look like the groom of one's choice. He was probably wrinkled, very old, and very undesirable as a groom. He was the last person one would dream of as their ideal husband, but Sukanya was a devotee of Krishna and her happiness was unconditional. Her happiness came from within, and her happiness also stemmed from doing her dharma, her duty. When she saw that it was in her power to rectify the mistake and relieve all the

soldiers and her father from the suffering, she agreed to the marriage. She was more than happy to do that. She also realized that this was a very powerful muni. She was chaste, kind, honest, unselfish, responsible, and high in moral standards. Through sincerity and training, she freed herself from pride, envy, anger, false ego, low self-esteem, and other shortcomings. Sukanya's priority was to somehow make her family life God conscious and successful.

The muni was not only old, but also cranky and she served him with sweet words and to the best of her ability, even when and he was very ornery. She never let on that any of this bothered her; she did her duty quite happily. In due course of time, he became very attached to her. The secret of being a good wife is to be in charge while letting the man think he is in charge. Eventually he came to love her so much that he wanted a parenting with her. He wanted to make her happy. He recognized that no young girl could be happy with him. So, he made a deal with the twin Aswins, who were like the demigod physicians. He offered them something in return from his Mystic power if they could give him youth; if they could give him long lasting youth, for hundreds and thousands of years. The twins Aswins agreed to give him youth, but they had not seen Sukanya as yet. When they saw Sukanya, they decided that she was so beautiful, so pure, so chaste and so desirable, that they wanted her. They took the old man to this mystic body of water, and they all came out looking very young and very beautiful - and they all looked the same. They all came to Sukanya and they asked her to choose which one of them she liked the best. The twins were hoping she would choose them because she was so perfect in every way and so pure. She could have chosen them because her husband was mortal and they were semi-divine, but she was committed to doing her duty and not interested in changing this unlimited, unshakable, unconditional happiness. She noticed the garlands that they were all wearing around their neck. She noticed that on two of these personalities these garlands were unfaded and they were starting to get faded on one of them. She said, "I choose him. That is my husband."

So, that is why those who have unshakable attachment to the Lord are the Lord's favourites. The Lord loves to do favours for his devotees. This is most natural. If there is a powerful person, and there are people serving him, then he wants to thank them. If they said no, we just like doing the service he will find some way to reward them. Similarly, the Lord will find some way to reward his devotees: spiritually, mentality, intellectually, and physically. Do you think those devotees are ever going to even consider for a moment attaching themselves to someone else? Not for even a moment! And here is a verse from the Srimad Bhagavatam: Aatmanan ramas², Rama is a Sanskrit word to describe someone who is completely happy. He is happy 24 hours of the day, experiencing life as a thrill at every moment. He is getting his satisfaction from his eternal spiritual self, from his soul, from his relationship with God so it is an altogether different level of happiness than what we conditioned souls are used to in this material world. It says that many self realized souls who have lost their interest in material things, discarding those things as garbage or trash, they sit around and discuss the pastimes of Krishna, Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita. They believe that discussing the pastimes of Krishna are on a different level of happiness altogether because these pastimes are eternal. Krishna himself is unlimited and unshakable and great liberated souls who have absolutely no interest in this material world- they sit down and espouse and embrace the pastimes of Krishna; the unlimited transcendental qualities of Lord Krishna, especially in so much as how he loves to protect and support his devotees. Those are the most secure servants, who are fixed up at the Lotus feet of Krishna. In the introduction to the Bhagavad-Gita, Srila Prabhupada writes that the central figure of creation and enjoyment is the Supreme Lord and the living entities are meant to be co-operators; by cooperation they enjoy. By living independently, we are beating our head against the wall. When we cooperate with the Lord we really begin to enjoy. The relation is like that of the master and the servant - if the master is fully satisfied, then the servant is satisfied. The tendency to become the creator and the tendency to enjoy the material world are also there in

² [SB 1.7.10]

the living entities because these tendencies are there in the Supreme Lord. We have a choice. God is the creator, he is the supreme enjoyer. We are created in his image. We are of the same quality as God. He is eternal, full of bliss, and full of knowledge; as are we. The difference is that He is great and we are small. He is in fact, the creator and the enjoyer and we are not. But because we are from him, we have the tendency to think of ourselves as the creator and the enjoyer. We have the potential to surrender in love and devotion to He who is actually the creator and the enjoyer. If we try to exercise our independent attitude, we become frustrated because constitutionally we are not meant to enjoy separate from God. Constitutionally we are eternal servants of the Lord, and when we attach ourselves to him with love and devotion, and then our enjoyment becomes unlimited. The first step to doing that - the first step to attaching ourselves in loving devotion to the lotus feet of the Lord, is to use one's tongue to say the names of the Lord,

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

Along with that you use your ears to hear the name of the Lord,

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

And if while you hearing and saying the names of the Lord, you can use your eyes to see the beautiful deity form of the Lord while you are chanting,

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

And in addition, you can smell the beautiful incense and flowers that have been offered to the Lord while chanting,

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

And then you can also use your tactile senses for clapping or for playing musical instruments, for chanting on beads while chanting,

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare