

# *The Spiritual Scientist*

An ezine for those who think!

## *Escapeway or Expressway ?*

**Question:** People often turn to spirituality when they become frustrated with material life. Doesn't this prove that spirituality is an escape-way for those without the guts to face life's challenges?

**Answer:** Material frustration can be an impetus for practicing spirituality, but it is neither sufficient nor necessary.



Let's analyze these three correlations between material frustration and spirituality.



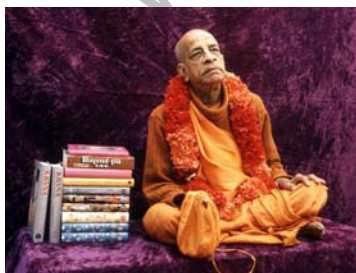
**1. Possible Impetus:** In the *Bhagavad-gita* (7.16), Lord Krishna mentions the distressed or frustrated as one of the four categories of people who take up spiritual practices.

These people think of spirituality as a kind of shock-absorber to withstand the blows of worldly failures. If they diligently try spiritual practices like prayerful chanting of the holy names, these practices will indeed serve as effective shock-absorbers.



**2. Insufficient Impetus:** But those who treat spirituality as a shock-absorber often give up their practices once the shock goes away. At least till the next shock comes along. To be steady in one's spiritual practices, one needs the conviction that there's something higher to life than the over-glamorized pursuit of pleasures and treasures, positions and possessions. For many people, such conviction comes only when they achieve a much-coveted material goal – and experience it to be a disappointing anti-climax: the pleasure turns out to be not even a fraction of the promise. Then they start enquiring about the way to a higher happiness and thus adopt devotional service to God, Krishna, with resolution.

**3. Unnecessary Impetus:** in addition to being frustrated due to material failure and being disappointed with material success, there's a third way, a much easier way to arrive at spirituality: association with saintly people having this conviction. These saintly people share their words of wisdom that analyze and expose the futility inherent in all material pursuits. They also demonstrate by their own examples the joy inherent in spiritual life, in a life devoted to spiritual service to God and all his children. Real spiritual life involves connecting with the source of all joy, love and wisdom, God, Krishna and sharing that connection with everyone.



A sterling example of such a modern-day saint is Srila Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON. At the advanced age of 69, when most people sink into inactivity and oblivion, he left the sacred abode of Vrindavana to circum-navigate the globe 14 times, establish 108 temples, write 70 books and inspire millions to seek and share spiritual love. Through his life and teachings, he demonstrates that spirituality is not an escape-way from pain, but an express-way to happiness. And that expressway opens not due to material frustration, but due to the guidance and grace coming through saintly association.

