

The Spiritual Scientist

An ezine for those who think!

Pizza Prasad ?



Question: Some temple-prasad stalls serve pizza, calling it “*pizza prasad*.” Isn’t it offensive to use the holy Sanskrit word “*prasad*”, referring as it does to the sacred mercy of the Lord, with modern western fast food items like pizza?

Answer: The words “*pizza prasad*”, far from being an offense, are a tribute to the universality and inclusiveness of the Lord’s mercy. Let’s see how.

The Vedic wisdom-tradition has an exoteric or external cultural form and an esoteric or internal spiritual essence. *Prasad*, being an integral part of the Vedic wisdom-tradition, refers both to an external cultural form and an internal spiritual essence. The external cultural form of *prasad* is the morsel of traditional sweet food distributed at the end of a religious ceremony of worship.

But these traditional sweet food items don’t have a monopoly on the word “*prasad*.” The Vedic attitude reminds us that whatever food we eat – even if it be vegetarian – involves some violence invariably, as in harvesting the crops or plucking the trees. How can we avoid the karmic reactions from this unavoidable violence? The *Bhagavad-gita* (3.13) provides the way out: if we offer all that we eat to the Lord, then by his mercy, he purifies the food and makes it not only karma-free but also spiritually surcharged. Therefore, the *Gita* recommends that our entire meal should be *prasad* and that, in our own long-term interests, we shouldn’t eat anything that is not *prasad*. To facilitate us in thus sanctifying our diet, the Lord mercifully promises in the *Bhagavad-gita* (9.26) that he accepts even items as frugal as a .



Therefore, the word “*prasad*” in its essence represents a universal spiritual principle: any vegetarian food item that is sanctified by offering to the Lord becomes transubstantiated, spiritualized, by his mercy, into *prasad*. Thus, from this inclusive Vedic perspective, even the bread received during the Christian ritual of the Eucharist is a manifestation of the spiritual principle of *prasad*, albeit in a different cultural form.

Similarly, pizza is also a variant cultural form of that principle of *prasad*. For those whose stable or favored food is pizza, the Lord does not deprive them of his mercy just because their cultural food differs from the food that is traditionally offered to him in Vedic culture. For all such people, he accepts the foods familiar and appealing to them – including pizza – and transforms them into *prasad*.



Therefore, let us not restrict the universal Vedic spirituality to specific cultural forms. Instead, let us appreciate the magnanimity of the Lord who is the source and the basis of Vedic spirituality, and also appreciate the multifarious cultural forms in which he is extending his spiritual mercy to one and all.

