

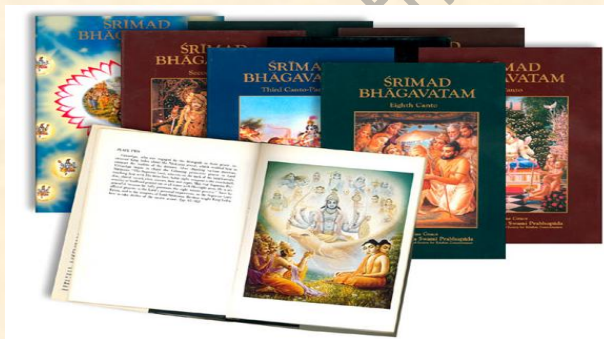
Bound to be Free



Once, a drunk person walking on a roof came dangerously close to the edge. When a wise person warned him, "Stop. Don't move forward," he angrily retorted, "Who are you to stop me? I am free to go wherever I want." Yes, free he was, as he soon found – free to suffer and free to lose his freedom to walk forever.

Restriction is not a depriver of freedom, but a provider of freedom. When a doctor restricts the diet of a patient, that restriction facilitates the patient's quick freedom from disease and provides future freedom to eat properly. If the patient rejects the restrictions, he aggravates his disease. Either he loses his digestive ability permanently and has to perhaps live on soup lifelong, which is a pathetic loss of freedom in eating. Or he may lose his life itself, which is the ultimate loss of freedom.

The sacred Vedic scriptures – and indeed all the religious scriptures – in essence explain that our present material existence is a diseased state of existence. We are eternal spiritual beings, beloved children of God, but are currently restricted to temporal, physical existence due to spiritual amnesia. This original malaise subjects us to mental miseries like stress, anxiety, depression and jealousy as well as physical sufferings like old age, disease and death.



The *Srimad Bhagavatam* (1.17.38) declares illicit sex, gambling, meat-eating and intoxication as four primary anti-spiritual activities. Modern social sciences have discovered how these activities harms us physically, psychologically, economically, ecologically, educationally and socially, as analyzed by

the scholar, Steven Rosen, in his compilation, "*The Regulative Principles of Freedom, A Comprehensive Study*." These physical drives also increase our bodily identification and perpetuate our spiritual forgetfulness, thus making us bereft of our natural spiritual joyfulness.

Those who eschew these soul-defiling pleasures and cure their spiritual amnesia by chanting the names of God, become increasingly free from petty bodily hankerings and lamentations and experience profound devotional happiness even in this life, what to speak of the next. No wonder the founder of ISKCON, Srila Prabhupada, called these restrictions as “the regulative principles of freedom.” The wise who follow them are bound to be free.

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