

THE SPIRITUAL SCIENTIST

A Cyber Magazine for Those Who Think

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Happy New Year

As the world enters a New Year, we wish all of you, our esteemed readers, a very "Happy New Year!" As spiritual scientists, let us discuss how we can go further than just wishing; what we can do to make this wish transform into a reality. Let us first analyze this greeting "Happy New Year!" from the perspective of science.

TIME - WHAT IS IT?

Let's begin with the word "Year". A year is a unit for measuring time. And what is time? Though the reality of time, especially in the form of its effect on us, is undeniable, time is one among the many fundamental truths of life that defy scientific definition. Be that as it may, we measure time by the movement of the cosmic bodies. As per current scientific understanding, one year is the time in which the earth completes one revolution around the sun. For an object orbiting continuously in a circular path, no point on the orbit can be considered special. So scientifically there's nothing "New" about the new year; the earth is going to continue in its same old path!

WHAT'S NEW?

All of us have an inherent attraction for something new. Have you ever thought why? Is it not because the old is, in some way or the other, unsatisfactory? The old lifestyle, the old relationships, the old job - all these leave us feeling incomplete and unfulfilled. And the fond hope is that the new will change that "same old story".

But really what's going to be actually new in our lives? People change their externals to "make things better". But from a scientific viewpoint, everything is just atoms! And all that causes the astounding variety seen with our eyes is the sub-microscopic variations in the atomic and molecular structures, such as a different number of electrons orbiting within the atom of a particular element. Now what is the most dramatically "new" thing that a person can do? Most likely, get a new girlfriend! But that just means getting someone whose skin pigments have a slightly different atomic arrangement! (Talks about personality are, after all, "unscientific"! So changing the atomic arrangement around you (new house, new car, new job, new spouse and the like) or the atomic arrangement inside you (mundane "new year resolutions") and hoping that that will make the "new" year "happy" is not a very realistic hope.

THE HAPPINESS PARADOX

And what about "Happy"? Happiness is another fundamental reality of life that is beyond the realm of science. For the reductionistic scientists, pleasure or pain is nothing more than certain C fibers or Delta fibers firing in certain parts of the body. (Refer to the earlier issue "The Invisible Pilot") So they postulate "non-existence of happiness" theories to win Nobel prizes in order to ultimately become happy!

IS SCIENCE EVERYTHING?

You know very well that the sweet greeting "Happy New Year!" is often expressed with genuine good wishes. Do you think it has no meaning? The current scientific understanding certainly strips this greeting (and in fact all greetings and even life at large) of all meaning.

Anyway, can everything in life be "scientific" ? Would a chemist give his wife a Bunsen burner as a wedding gift? If a neurologist found that his wife was upset with him, would he do a brain scan to find out what was wrong?

The point is simple: neither is life just a bunch of atoms and molecules nor is a sentient human being just an ultra-super computer.

PARADIGM SHIFT

Let us now ascend to a realm higher than that portrayed by science.

The Vedic wisdom explains that each one of us is a sentient, eternal and blissful spiritual personality having inherently the nature of befriending and loving God and all living beings. The Vedic scriptures also wish us a genuinely felt "Happy New Year." In fact, they wish that every *moment* of our life be *happy* and *new*. Not only that, they go much further and delineate a practical process by which this wish can be transformed into a reality. Let's investigate.

The Vedas agree with the common understanding that to become happy something new has to be done. But the understanding of *new* as given in the Vedic wisdom is significantly different from the general understanding.

EXPLORE THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

The Vedic scriptures explain that all living beings eat, mate, sleep and defend. In fact, the subhuman beings do nothing but these four activities. And modern man is also doing just these four activities, although in a sophisticated way. Even the entire gamut of scientific advancement is impelled by these four fundamental drives. Unbelievable? Let's see how.

The first thing that man did after unraveling the mysteries of the atom is to use the atomic bomb; defending in the most horrendous form seen in the contemporary times. The result of the advent of the information age is the internet, which is mostly an international network of gossip about pornography; that's mating in its grossest form. The leaps in genetic engineering have mostly been actuated by the desire for better meat & other foodstuffs; is that anything higher than eating? Dunlop beds, nowadays water beds and what not; they are all obviously for sleeping. So a little thought will reveal how all the "advanced" activities done by the modern man eventually boil down to eating, sleeping, mating and defending. And there's nothing new in them, no matter how we do them externally. The Bhagavatam describes this in graphic terms: *punah punas carvita carvananam* "Chewing the chewed,"

The human being however is meant not to live the same old life of eating, sleeping, mating and defending; he is meant to something that is radically *new*. And that brings us to the realm of spirituality. A hog cannot understand the difference between its body and soul; a human being can. A dog cannot worship God or practice mantra meditation; a human being can. And spirituality is not just a different ability that a human has; it is his birthright, due to his possessing a higher intelligence that accompanies the human body.

Therefore the Vedic scriptures encourage us to sublimate our attraction for the new by directing it to the realm of spirit. *athato brahma jijnasa* The first aphorism of the Vedanta-sutra is a clarion call to all its readers: "Therefore inquire about the higher dimensions of life." It is quite surprising to see a book starting with the word 'therefore'. The implication is, "Now, O spirit soul, who has acquired a human body, cease from the animal business of eating, sleeping, mating and defending. Now you are endowed with a higher intelligence in the human form. Therefore inquire about the higher truths of life."

THE REAL HAPPY NEW YEAR

And this higher enquiry is not fruitless armchair speculation. The answers to it constitute a practical way of life which bestows upon the seeker unlimited happiness from the spiritual stratum. And this is in fact the Vedic mission: *sarve janah sukhino bhavantu* -- Let everyone be happy-not superficially and temporarily by success in the rat race for sense gratification, but deeply and eternally by absorption in loving service to God.

Spiritual life culminates in the development of love of God. Love of God, the Universal Father, precipitates love for all living beings as one's own brothers. This selfless love completely satisfies the self and also makes the lover of God the topmost welfare worker for all living beings.

Love of God is our original and real nature, but due to prolonged & excessive contact with matter, it has become completely obscured and is now misdirected towards various material objects. All genuine spiritual practices are meant to revive this love of God, which is presently dormant in our hearts. And God being infinite is eternally new (*nitya navanavayamana*) and so loving Him is an eternally new and happy experience. Thus revival of our love of God is the ultimate fruition of the wish "Happy New Year!"

Please continue with us as we explore the higher dimensions of life.

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Dedicated to

His Divine Grace A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada,

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