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THE ROOF OF THE DHARMA HOUSE: SANATANA DHARMA

Sanatana dharma is what connects us with “above”. It describes how to take up and strengthen our eternal relationship to the Lord.

We live in a world that we all must leave at some point (a fact we often tend to forget, busying ourselves with our plans). Once in a discussion, Yamarāja, the Lord of death, asks Yudhiṣṭhira, “What is the most astonishing thing is in this world?” Yudhiṣṭhira replies, “The most wonderful thing is that although every day innumerable creatures go to the abode of death still everyone thinks himself to be immortal.” We fail to see the obvious because we are preoccupied with our attachments.

You will make a huge mistake if you only base your life on *deha* and *mano dharma* (the *dharma* of body and mind). Both body and mind are

not who you are, and endeavors directed towards them can never touch you, the soul. Therefore, besides following *deha* and *mano dharma*, you should follow *atma dharma*, or *sanatana dharma*, the *dharma* of the soul. It is the most essential dimension of life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed it like this: “We must find out the essential part of a living being which is always companion with him. That part of constant companion of the living being is his eternal quality, and the eternal part of the living being’s quality is his eternal religion. When Sanātana Gosvāmī asked Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu about the *svārūpa*—we have already discussed about the *svārūpa* of every living being—*svārūpa* or real constitution of the living being, the Lord replied that the constitutional position of the living being is to render service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (Lecture on the *Bhagavad-gītā* Introduction, New York, February 19-20, 1966)

There are different ways of making *sanatana dharma* come alive—chanting, associating with devotees, reading holy scriptures or making prayers.

One powerful way of breathing energy into one’s *sanatana dharma* is by reflecting about one’s mortality. A Cāṇakya Paṇḍita quote that Śrīla Prabhupāda often quoted is, “A wise man should live, but always keeping death in front of his eyes.” The only permanent thing that stays with us when we leave this world is *sanatana dharma*—this is the real value in life.

Please remember the death meditation we did at the end of our seminar. What was your answer to the question “Is there anything I should be doing that I am not doing at the moment?” What did you decide to concretely change? How did it work out?

