



# The 7 Maxims for Soul Happiness

HOW TO UNLEASH YOUR INNER BLISS

PAUL RODNEY TURNER

The **7** Maxims for  
Soul Happiness

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## Dedication

I dedicate this book to my very first spiritual mentor, Jeff Cassells. I grew up with Jeff in the poor neighborhood of Whalan, a small town in Sydney's Western suburbs. Jeff and I were both curious boys, and during our early teenage years we took a liking to astronomy and spent many nights studying the stars and philosophizing about the meaning of life. It was Jeff who first pointed me in the right direction when my inquisitiveness led me to ask questions about God. Jeff introduced me to the mystic teachings of India, where I first learned about reincarnation, karma and the real purpose of human life. Jeff was also there when I first experimented with psychedelic drugs and had my first out-of-body experience. If not for Jeff, I don't know what my life would have become, but his sharp and piercing intelligence helped me make decisions early on in life that I believe served me well, and for that, I am forever grateful.



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# Introduction

Happiness is something we all look for, whether in food, sex, entertainment, relationships, children, career, hobbies or sleep. Happiness drives us, and indeed it defines the quality of our life. One may have immense wealth but if they are not happy, then mostly, they have failed in life.

Without happiness, life loses its value and so with the apparent decrease in satisfaction, we are seeing an increase in suicide all around the world.

In a world where mental and physical stimuli are in abundance, it seems inconceivable that anyone could be unhappy. Surely, everyone can find some form of happiness, but alas, many, many people fail and live their lives sad and exasperated; or hope against hope for some sliver of joy to appear over the horizon of their destiny.

Happiness is the nature of the spirit, as stated in the Vedanta-sutras: *anandamayo 'bhyāsāt* —“the soul, is by nature full of joy.”

However, due to misidentifying our true self with matter, we lose touch with this natural blissful state and identify with the pain and suffering of a physical form.

When a soul is entrapped by a material body, it at once identifies with physical relationships and forgets its true identity as a spiritual being. This false ego, influenced by the modes

of material nature further entraps the soul in a web of karmic actions and reactions.

While the mind is the instrument for feeling, the intelligence has a deliberative function and can help us navigate our way through the mire of materialism. The intelligent person, therefore, can attain release from the illusion of material existence by the proper use of intelligence.

Vedic scholar and my spiritual mentor, Srila Prabhupada once wrote:

“An intelligent person can detect the awkward position of material existence and thus begin to inquire as to what he is, why he is subjected to different kinds of miseries, and how to get rid of all miseries, and thus, by good association, an advanced intelligent person can turn towards the better life of self-realization.”

The “modes material nature” are subtle forces that influence our behavior as well as every aspect of our physical, mental, and emotional experience. The Sanskrit term for these forces is *guna*, “rope,” and the Gita explains how they pull us to act in various ways, even against our better judgment. These “ropes of influence” appear in three ways: *sattva* (goodness), *raja* (passion), and *tamas* (ignorance).

The effects of the *sattva-guna*, the mode of goodness, are seen when an atmosphere of peace, serenity, and harmony prevails in our environment and within our mind. The mode of passion or *raja-guna* rears its ugly head when we feel an overwhelming, insatiable desire for mortal things, striving for more, and when we feel persistently dissatisfied. *Tamo-guna*, the mode of ignorance, is indicated when a person feels lazy, depressed, or unmotivated and also when they are intoxicated or mentally unstable.

Srila Prabhupada believed that the most critical component for success in self-realization is to learn from great sages and saints who will “slacken the soul’s attachment for matter.” Thus a person can gradually rid themselves of the illusion of matter and false ego and be “promoted to the real life of eternity, knowledge and bliss.”

In fact, association with such great souls is considered the “only auspicious activity” in this material world.

What I propose to do in this book is to pass on to you what I have learned from saintly mentors and present their wisdom in a palatable, pragmatic and non-sectarian manner.

The purpose of this book is two-fold:

- 1) I would like you to embrace these 7 Maxims for Soul Happiness as a fundamental part of your new worldview;
- 2) I want you to assert these truths in words and actions, through affirmation and exercising them in your relationships with others.

In other words, to get the most out of this book, you will have to put these 7 Maxims of Soul Happiness to the test, and I trust you will.

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# Maxim 1

## The Human Body is a Blessing

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*"Everyone should consider his body as a priceless gift from one whom he loves above all, a marvellous work of art, of indescribable beauty, and mystery beyond human conception, and so delicate that a word, a breath, a look, nay, a thought may injure it."*  
– Nikola Tesla

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### The Material Energies

There are two ways of looking at this world we live in; one is to see it as just a random assortment of physical elements with no meaning behind the cause and effects we experience. One would thus conclude that we are a body that is born, eats, poops, gets sick, falls in love, grows old and eventually dies, becoming food for worms or ash.

The other way to view this world is through eyes anointed with devotion to an intelligent Designer, whose divine spiritual energies have expanded to accommodate souls having a physical experience in response to their desire to be independent Overlords. As a soul, this physical experience is offered as a sort of training ground for evolving our consciousness and providing us an opportunity to be the "master of our domain," until such time that we awaken to our true nature as interdependent souls

created for the purpose of pure loving exchange and devotional servitude.

For the most part, we are all being programmed through education and society to embrace the first paradigm – to buckle down on studying the nature of this physical world without consideration for the essence, or spirit, that animates it.

According to the teachings of Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, this material world comprises eight gross and subtle energies: earth, water, fire, air, ether are the gross elements that make up everything we can experience with our senses, and then there are three subtle elements: mind, intelligence, and false ego. Each proceeding element is superior to the former. In other words, the false ego is more delicate and superior to the intelligence, and the intelligence is superior to the mind, and the mind is superior to the gross material elements.

Everything we experience in this mundane world is a combination of these eight elements.

## The Superior Nature

Above these eight physical energies, however, is the superior spiritual energy of the soul. This superior energy is transcendental to the material senses; however, under the spell of illusion, misguided souls are trying to exploit the resources of these inferior material energies.

Besides these, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is another, superior energy of Mine, which comprises the living entities who are exploiting the resources of this material, inferior nature.<sup>1</sup>

*Bhagavad-Gita* scholar and guru, Srila Prabhupada comments:

While exploiting the gross and subtle inferior energy (matter), the superior energy (the living entity)

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<sup>1</sup> *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is*, verse 7.5 (BBT)

forgets his real spiritual mind and intelligence. This forgetfulness is due to the influence of matter upon the living entity. But when the living entity becomes free from the influence of the illusory material energy, he attains the stage called *mukti*, or liberation. The false ego, under the influence of material illusion, thinks, "I am matter, and material acquisitions are mine."

It is critical, therefore, that you understand your higher nature as a soul and that the real "you" that animates this material form has originated from the superior spiritual energy. Your material body is just a temporary vehicle to facilitate learning experiences and expression until such time that it becomes uninhabitable and you are forced to leave it and enter another material form according to your desire and karma.

## **You Get What You Desire And Deserve**

The concept of karma is part of the ancient teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita* but has now become common vernacular in modern culture, with musicians such as John Lennon singing songs like *Instant Karma*. The oversimplification of karma, however, with such comments like, "it is like the law of physics, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction," have just led to the confusion surrounding it, with many wondering how on earth can a loving God allow bad things to happen to good people?

What we need to understand here is that karma is not an equal and opposite reaction. Instead, it is an extremely complex harmonizing mechanism of material nature with multiple layers of cause and effect. Let me explain with a fictitious scenario...

Tommy decided one day to buy himself a new suit. He had done his research and found that the best place to buy it would be Chi Long's Discount Fashion store in downtown New York. He learned that the



owner, Mr. Chi Long offered special deals to the first customer on a full moon day.

Tomorrow just happened to be a full moon day, and so Tommy set the clock for 6 am so that he could catch the early morning express train and be at the store by 7:30 am. He surmised that the store opened at 8 am, so being 30 minutes early would be perfect.

As planned, Tommy was up bright and early at 6 am. He showered, dressed and took a quick breakfast before running to the bus stop to catch the train. Everything was going smoothly, until ten minutes into the ride the bus got a flat tire. Rather than wait for the driver to change it, Tommy raced out the bus and started running to the train station. The express train was leaving at 6:40. Tommy was panting heavily as he darted around other early morning commuters, each one focused on their destination for what looked like schools of fish moving every which way in unison.

Tommy arrived at the station at 6:35 am, just in time to catch the train but then scrambled to find the right change to purchase his ticket. He got in line at the ticket counter but each minute that went by seemed like an eternity. By the time Tommy reached the counter it was 6:39, he silently berated himself for not planning and purchasing a day pass yesterday. He finally got his ticket but missed the train. It was now 6:41. The next train would depart at 7:05. He could still make it before the store opened but now may not be the first customer.

As he waited for the next train, Tommy studied the other people at the station. One young woman looked European and was carrying a large red backpack. She looked exhausted and confused. Tommy

approached her. "Hello, do you need some help?" The young lady's eyes lit up and replied, "Why, yes, if you don't mind?" "Sure," said Tommy, "how can I help you." "Well, I need to get downtown to catch a bus to Washington DC to see my dying grandmother, but I injured my back last night, and this backpack is nearly impossible for me to carry now. Could you help me carry it to the bus stop?" "Well, sure, but what station are you getting off? Tommy probed. "I get off at 33<sup>rd</sup> street," the young woman answered. "Hmm, well I need to get off at 14<sup>th</sup> street, so that is a bit early for me," said Tommy. "It's ok, I understand. Don't worry; I'll manage somehow," she offered back. "No, no, I insist," Tommy responded. "I think your business today is way more important than mine." "Oh, you are so kind. Thank you. It means a lot to me," she said sincerely. "May I ask, what is your business today?" she inquired. "Oh, nothing big, just that I wanted to purchase a new suit at this place where I could get a discount today," he said dismissively. "A new suit?" she responded with eagerness, as her eyebrows raised. "Yes, why?" "Well, it just so happens that my grandmother is the mother of Hugo Boss, the fashion icon," she said excitedly. "No, way," said Tommy. "Seriously?" "Yes, and I am sure I can help you get your new suit."

So you can see where this story goes. The point here is that along Tommy's journey that morning he had multiple decisions to make and each one of them led him down a specific karmic path that not only impacted him but every other person he encountered. And every other person that morning had to make just as many, if not more, decisions as they proceeded to their destination.

Every action, set in motion another chain of actions and in turn impacted, negatively or positively, another action in a veritable sea of actions and reactions. The young lady had her

own story of how she happened to be standing at that particular spot on the train platform at that specific time when Tommy came down the stairs. And with hundreds of other people also on the platform, what was it that made her stand out in Tommy's scanning the crowd?

Furthermore, what prompted Tommy even to ask her if she needed help? Tommy would typically not do this, but that morning he felt compelled to do so. Why? Was there another 'player' involved? Who or what was prompting Tommy? Certainly, we could surmise that Tommy's decision that morning is a product of the thousands of other experiences he had had in the past. He had witnessed unconditional kindness. He had read about it, seen it in movies and so he knew how important it was. But why today? Why that mysterious girl on the platform?

You see, trying to formulate karma into a concise one-line statement is futile. The reality is, karma is Nature's urge to find balance while also fulfilling the desires of every one of us according to what we deserve at that particular time.

Most importantly, only if that thing we desired facilitated our life path and the life path of all those we had to interact with along the way. It's an incredibly complex system of justifying actions and reactions while serving to meet the individual needs of each participant. To suggest karma is anything but the work of a Supreme Intelligence is ludicrous.

## **What Is My Life Path?**

Every birth we take has been designed to facilitate a particular life experience so that we can spiritually evolve. In other words, there is no such thing as evolution of species, there is only evolution of consciousness, with the various species we animate as souls, being vehicles for that spiritual evolution.

Whether we realize it or not, we did have a say in the parents we ended up with and this also is related to the kind of experience we desired to have in this current body.

Our life path or destiny is something that we either discover

or waste years of our life denying. In numerology, the life path is described as our destiny number. We can understand what ours is by adding up the total number of our birthday. For example, my birthday is 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1963. So my total number is  $4 + 1+1+1+9+6+3 = 25 (2+5) = 7$ .

But I am not just a destiny 7. I am a Day number 4 with a destiny 7. The combination of both the day and the total number is important in understanding the kind of 7 I am.

People that have a destiny of 7 can be philosophical if living positively, or have a victim mentality if living negatively. They are generally humanitarian, teachers, philosophers, and interested in mystical subjects; they enjoy serving and making sacrifices; they are “hands-on” people and prefer to learn by experience rather than being told what to do. They often struggle to practice what they preach to others. However, with my day number 4, I am inclined to the pragmatic side of the 7 path, leading to an interest in sports, health, and humanity and a unique ability to make the mystical understandable – distilling esoteric subjects and making them digestible, practical and believable.

Every number has its positive and debilitating qualities, and since both 4 and 7 are on the earth plane of the Numerology chart, a 4/7 living negatively, would be materialistic, miserly, and attached.

A major focus of my life thus far has been my work with my charity, Food for Life Global [www.ffl.org](http://www.ffl.org) whose mission is to teach spiritual equality through the unconditional act of liberally distributing plant-based meals that have been prepared with loving intention. An extension of this mission has been my book, *FOOD YOGA – Nourishing Body, Mind & Soul* which focused on demystifying the spiritual act of offering food to God and explaining how through developing a more respectful and devotional attitude towards food, anyone, regardless of their situation, can nourish their body, mind, and soul. Here again, we have the positive influence of 4 = health and wellness with 7 = mysticism and philosophy.

The bottom line here is that understanding your life path can

be extremely helpful in guiding your life and career decisions. Sadly, too many people ignore the predictive sciences and prefer to just “go with the flow” like ships at sea without a rudder.

Knowing “what makes you tick” and what gets you excited is crucial for leading a successful life. And so I urge you to calculate your day and destiny numbers now and learn about the positive and debilitating qualities of each and what might be the most suitable life path for you. I will explain more about the quality of each number later in this book.

## Human Life Is A Blessing

According to the 5000-year old Vedic scriptures<sup>2</sup> of India, each soul migrates through millions of different life forms before reaching the human form. These same Vedic scriptures state that there are apparently 8.4 million different species of life on earth (mainstream science estimates 8.7 million<sup>2</sup>) and most souls will transmigrate through each and every kind of species before reaching the human form. Of course, there is no way to actually prove this. We just have to accept the fact that within each and every body a soul is present animating that life form and each one of them has their unique evolution story.

Someone has to be a pig; someone has to be a cockroach, yes? If we are to accept the notion that God is all good and fair, then it makes perfect sense that each and every one of us has transmigrated through each life form on our journey to enlightenment. You may find it very difficult to imagine yourself in the body of another species, but keep in mind that along with a physical form, the soul is given a certain mentality, intelligence, and consciousness that is perfectly suited for that particular physical form.

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<sup>2</sup> About 8.7 million (give or take 1.3 million) is the new, estimated total number of species on Earth -- the most precise calculation ever offered -- with 6.5 million species on land and 2.2 million in oceans. Announced by the *Census of Marine Life*, the figure is based on a new analytical technique.

The human form is indeed a wonderful blessing as it is only in the human form that we can actually start to grasp the magnitude of life and the amazing opportunities afforded those in the human form.

According to the Vedas, it is in the human form that the soul has the capacity to understand the difference between spirit and matter and to investigate the mysteries of life itself. Whereas other life forms can experience happiness, peace and the joy of companionship, it is only in the human form that we can understand what these experiences mean and how each and every decision we make can either entangle us or free us from physical bondage.

## **We Are In The Minority**

According to the latest statistics, as of this writing, there is an estimated 7.6 billion humans on earth. That seems like a lot but when you consider that according to The World Conservation Union, there are 1.73 million other species, and when you multiply the actual number within each species, humans are really just a tiny portion of the incredibly diverse earth plane we all live on.

Then of course, there is the spiritual realm.

“How can we measure those numbers?” you might ask. We can’t, but what we can do is accept what the great sages and saints have described in the various spiritual literatures of the world, and that is, that the spiritual realm is where the majority of life exists. According to the Vedas, the entire material creation is like a small dark cloud in the spiritual sky. In other words, every living being, sky scrapper, city, country, planet, galaxy and universe within this material creation is but a small cloud in the entire spiritual sky.

Perspective like this can be a real buzz kill. When we stop to think about it, that tiny ant that is moving across the floor of your apartment is no less significant than us humans going about our daily affairs. For the ant, your footsteps will appear to be like thunder and your shadow like a dark cloud covering the sun. In

the same way, from the perspective of higher beings, humans going about their business are no more significant than an ant.

As long as we fail to recognize the tremendous advantage and spiritual opportunity we have as humans, we will never achieve spiritual fulfilment.

## The Amazing Human Machine

The human body is an absolute marvel of creation.

In an article titled *"Dissecting Darwinism,"* Doctor Joseph Kuhn of the Baylor University Medical Center pointed out serious flaws in Darwinian evolution by asserting that life could not possibly have come from chemicals, since DNA code absolutely required input from outside of nature.

He then addressed Darwinism's failure to account for the uncompromising architecture of cellular systems, especially within the human form. As a medical doctor, Kuhn understands the interdependent nature of biochemical systems that preserve and regulate all parts of the body, and that the human body contains an inflexible system in which its essential parts and biochemicals **must exist all at once** for the body to function, which challenges any notion of a single cell organisms mutating into more complex life forms.

Another biochemist, Michael Behe called these uncompromising architectures of cellular systems "irreducibly complex." In other words, removing a single core part from one of these systems stops the entire system from working, thus confirming that each system was initially built with all of its parts intact. "There is no way that these systems could have evolved over time. They were perfectly structured from the beginning," he suggests.

This is exactly what Creationist would expect to see, rather than nature accidentally constructing living systems bit-by-bit over vast stretches of time—as Darwinian proponents maintain.

Kuhn cited the work of another medical doctor, Geoffrey Simmons, who pointed out that these interdependent biochemical



systems also require regulation. For example, just as a person would die without their heart, they would also die without the vital blood biochemical haemoglobin. Similarly, a heart that beats too fast or too slow would be just as lethal as having no heart at all, and a body that produces too much or too little haemoglobin would be equally lethal. Thus, the systems that regulate haemoglobin and heartbeats must also have been present from the beginning.

Virtually every aspect of human physiology has regulatory elements, developmental components and feedback loops that require the service of thousands of interacting genes. Thus, Kuhn asserts, “the human body represents an irreducibly complex system on a cellular and an organ/system basis.”

Darwin’s evolution theory has no proven explanation for the origin of just one irreducibly complex system, what to speak of the millions interdependent networks of irreducible systems that comprise the human body.

According to Kuhn, to transform another creature into a human “would require far more than could be expected from random mutation and natural selection.” However, a perfectly constructed, self-regulating life form is exactly what an all-wise divine Creator would make.

## **DNA Instructions**

For most people, DNA is a mystery and something that is discussed solely in the laboratory by biologists or forensic scientists or a long forgotten topic they learned about in high school. However, DNA is something we should all understand, for the simple reason that DNA, and specifically the genetic code that manages your DNA, has a major influence on the kind of person you are and the opportunities you are afforded in life. Let me explain...

DNA instructions or the genetic code that manages your DNA are extremely complex in nature. It is estimated that it would take something like 100 pages of DNA instructions to manage just one cell in your body! The human body has an estimated 37.2 trillion



cells so the genetic code to program all the cells in just one human body is beyond astronomical and clearly points to the fingerprint of a divine Creator.

DNA is theorized as a kind of micro supercomputer as it has to re-create the entire human genome within the very first mother cell, which means every cell mitosis isn't exactly the same but is ordained chronologically to complete the stages of cell life before life begins as a baby. Indeed, even the sperm cell has a kind of consciousness to enable it to compete with other sperms to find the egg of the mother. All cell nucleuses have their own consciousness with preordained DNA codes intact. The strangest mystery is why the 37.2 trillion cells that make up a human body die off once the human body expires. It's as if the soul that was formerly hosting that body ("the landlord," if you will) has left the premises and so by occupation law, all the "residents" of that body (cells) have to evacuate and be transferred to a new building (another life form).

Each cell is animated by a soul and so this transmigration is no different than the soul of a human reincarnating to another human or animal form, based on their karma and desire. In the case of cells, however, it is purely a karmic play as the soul evolves in awareness taking on different forms.

## How Many Cells Are In Your Body?

Each cell has a life span of from a few days to a lifetime. While red blood cells live for about four months, white blood cells live on average more than a year. Skin cells live about two to three weeks, while colon cells die off after about four days. Sperm cells have a life span of only about three days, while brain cells typically last an entire lifetime.

As each cell dies, they are being replaced by a new cell fully-loaded with its own set of specific DNA instructions for that functioning of that cell, as well as the entire genome of the body.

Most human cells carry 2 copies of the genome and are known as diploid cells. One copy comes from each of your parents, so

they aren't identical, but similar. However, sperm and egg cells only carry one copy of the genome and are known as haploid cells. During fertilization the 2 cells merge their copies and make a diploid zygote. At the chromosomal level, humans have 23 chromosomes, so a diploid cell has 2 copies of each so a total of 46 chromosomes.

As the body matures, cells are dying off and being replaced all the time, so it's not clear where the popular myth began that cells are renewed every seven years. I remember hearing this when I was a monk as many of my teachers would claim as such to prove how the body is changing while the soul remains constant. I just accepted this as a fact but it turns out the cell lifecycle is much more variegated.

Naturally, cells cannot communicate to us to help us unravel this mystery. Certainly we can look through a microscope and count off the number of cells in particular organs but this method is far from practical. While some types of cells are easy to spot, others weave themselves up into obscurity. Even if you could count ten cells each second, it would take you tens of thousands of years to finish counting the number of cells in one human body, what to speak of the challenge of chopping a body up into tiny patches for microscopic viewing.

The closest estimate for the total number of cells in a human body came from a study published in *Annals of Human Biology*, entitled rather appropriately, "*An Estimation of the Number of Cells in the Human Body.*"

The authors – a team of scientists from Italy, Greece, and Spain looked back over scientific journals and books from the past two centuries and found many estimates that presented a huge disparity, from 5 billion to 200 million trillion cells. What was more surprising was that none of these previous reports offered an explanation for how they came up with the estimate. It was all just conjecture and yet these were official scientific journals!

If it's not feasibly possible to count all the cells in a human body, how can scientists estimate the total? One method proposed

is to take the average weight of a cell, which is approximately 1 nanogram and multiply that by body weight. For the average adult man weighing 70 kilograms, a simple calculation would lead us to conclude that his body is made up of about 70 trillion cells.

It's also possible to make an estimation based on the volume of cells. So if we take for example the average volume of a mammal cell, estimated at 4 billionth of a cubic centimetre, then we would conclude that this same 70kg male contains 15 trillion cells. Now that's quite a disparity but what makes matters worse is that the cells that pack our bodies are not lined up in a uniform way. Cells come in different sizes and densities. If, for example, you used the density of red blood cells to estimate the total, your total number would be even higher – a staggering 724 trillion cells – because red blood cells are packed very tightly. Skin cells, on the other hand, are so spread out that they'd give you a measly total of just 35 billion cells.

So the authors of the above mentioned paper set out to calculate the number of cells in the body by breaking it down by organs and cell types. They tallied the volume and density of cells in the intestines, gallbladders, liver, joints, and bone marrow, etc., and then came up with estimates for the total number of each kind of cell. For example, they estimated that we have just 2 billion heart muscle cells and 50 billion fat cells. By adding up all the numbers they arrived at 37.2 trillion cells.

Whether the actual number is 37.2 trillion or 200 trillion, both numbers are astronomical and should help us appreciate just how complex this human body is. If, as I mentioned earlier, it requires something like 100 pages of genetic code to instruct just one cell in our body to perform its particular function, then we're talking about a genetic instruction manual for the entire human body of  $37.2 \text{ trillion} \times 100$  or 3,720,000,000,000,000 printed pages of text, or a book that would scale to 2,201,704,545 miles high! Another way to visualize this is that this distance would cover 3 visits to Jupiter and back. And so the fact that Darwinian philosophers

and scientists have the audacity to suggest that the human body evolved through random events is utterly absurd.

## **Super Human Powers**

The human body has its limits but often those limits are created by our minds. The fact is, the bar for “human limits” is being raised all the time. Just think of the Olympics of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century compared to today’s Olympics. The same applies to every sporting event on the planet. Human capacity and abilities are constantly improving. However, there are times when even non-athletic people excel way beyond their normal physical abilities when under extreme stress. For example, a father pulling off a car door to save his child from burning. So what makes this happen? What is that thing that seemingly turns ordinary people into super humans?

That something is the body’s fear response. When people find themselves under intense pressure, say for example a high-level competition or an emergency, the mental creation of fear unleashes reserves of energy that normally remain inaccessible. Granted, everyone feels and reacts to fear differently, for it is the seed of our fight or flight response. In those cases, where a person chooses to fight, they can often become superhuman in their response.

This acute stress response of the body is triggered by the body’s sympathetic nervous system which releases hormones to help a person deal with a threat full on or to flee to safety.

The adrenal gland dumps cortisol and adrenaline into the blood stream. Blood pressure surges and the heart races, delivering oxygen and energy to the muscles. It’s the biological equivalent of slamming your foot on the gas pedal and pushing extra fuel through the carburettor.

After the threat is gone, it can take between 20 to 60 minutes for the body to return to its pre-arousal levels.

Vladimir Zatsiorsky, a professor of kinesiology at Penn State suggests that there is a huge difference between the force that our

muscles are able to theoretically apply, which he calls “absolute strength,” and the maximum force that they can generate through the conscious exertion of will, which he calls “maximal strength.” For example, an ordinary person, might be able to summon about 65 percent of their absolute power in a training session, while a trained weightlifter can exceed 80 percent and even higher when under extreme competitive conditions like the Olympics or the *World’s Strongest Man* events, which he describes as “competitive maximum strength.” It’s important to note that these parameters are not fixed numbers—the more intense the competition, the higher the numbers can go, as the brain’s fear response increasingly eliminates any limitation against performance.

In fact, these “super human levels” are somewhat contagious in high level sporting events. When Michael Phelps won the 100-meter butterfly in 50.58 seconds at the 2008 Olympics, breaking the previous Olympic record, three of the other seven swimmers who finished after him also came in ahead of the previous record.

But there’s a limit to how fast and how strong fear can make us. Zatsiorsky’s work suggests that while fear can indeed stimulate someone to approach their absolute power levels, there’s no way they will exceed it. A woman who can lift 100 pounds at the gym might be able to lift 135 pounds in a frenzy of maternal fear, suggests Zatsiorsky, but she’s never going to be able to lift a 3,000-pound car off of a trapped child.

The mechanisms by which the body is able to summon greater reserves of power are still under investigation, but many believe it may be related to analgesia, or the body’s ability to temporarily shut down pain and thus be able to push beyond our usual limits. When you’re at the gym, straining to complete the last rep of an exercise, it’s hard to imagine your muscles having the capacity to work any harder than they already are as your body’s production of lactic acid goes into overdrive, releasing an excess of hydrogen ions into your muscles. When there is an excessive build-up of these ions it inhibits muscle contraction which then leads to the burning sensation we all experience.

But under intense pressure—whether it's an Olympic competition, a child trapped inside a burning car, or an attacking dog—we experience a total absence of pain without loss of consciousness and are able to do seemingly superhuman things that are impossible to replicate afterwards.

## **What Is Consciousness?**

The world of consciousness research is big business. The currently accepted definition<sup>3</sup> of consciousness is:

“the state of being aware of oneself and the environment. It is associated with wakefulness, responsiveness and arousal. Consciousness is typically measured by verbal reports about experience. Related areas of interest are those functions that are thought to operate without consciousness, such as blind sight and subliminal perception.

As you can see, for mainstream science, consciousness is still looked upon as something that results from a unique set of physical circumstances and elements.

However, scientists all over the world have had to rethink what consciousness is from a biological perspective, when it was revealed in a research page published on *The Lancet*<sup>4</sup> that a French man had lived a relatively normal, healthy life - despite having lost 90 percent of his brain!

Most scientists believe that the physical source of consciousness is found in the brain, but this man's example begged the questions: how can he be lacking the majority of his neurons and yet still be aware of himself and his surroundings? What is more amazing is that he did not realize he had any neurological damage until the time of the examinations back in 2007 when he visited the

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<sup>3</sup> Definition of consciousness taken from Nature.com

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://bit.ly/2PYssAL>

doctor complaining of mild weakness in his left leg. Later, brain scans revealed that his skull was mostly filled with fluid, leaving just a thin outer layer of actual brain tissue. The majority of the man's brain had slowly eroded away over the course of 30 years by the build-up of fluid in the brain, a condition known as hydrocephalus that he had been diagnosed with as a child.

But despite his condition, the man wasn't mentally disabled, although he had a low IQ of 75, he was working happily as a civil servant and was married with two children.

Examples like this challenge our understanding of consciousness. "Any theory of consciousness has to be able to explain why a person like that, who's missing 90 percent of his neurons, still exhibits normal behaviour," asked Axel Cleeremans, a cognitive psychologist from the Université Libre de Bruxelles in Belgium.

However, Cleeremans and other scientists studying this case are sticking to their guns and claiming that even though the man's remaining brain was only tiny, the neurons left over were able to still generate a theory about themselves, which means the man remained conscious of his actions.

According to the Vedas, however, consciousness is a symptom of the presence of a soul and rather than being a condition borne out of material circumstances, it is the innate quality of the soul which is having to filter its experience through layers of mental conditioning, false ego and processing that experience through the medium of a brain.

Granted, this man's capacity to understand his experience was limited and this is confirmed by his low IQ, however, he was conscious and fully aware of his material identity and interactions.

As the soul transmigrates through different bodies it must contend with a certain set of senses and mental conditioning suited to that physical form. However, once the soul enters a human form, it has the most perfect set of circumstances and mentality for self-realization, simply because the human form is the closest facsimile to our original spiritual form.



In Genesis 1:26 it is stated: "Let us make man in our image, **in our likeness.**"<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, humanity is unique among all God's creations.

## **The Gift Of The Human Form**

Our senses are inferior in their knowledge-acquiring capacity compared to animals and insects and yet we have the greatest opportunity for spiritual advancement. How so?

Only in the human form do we have the ability to understand the true nature of this material world and to question our existence.

Furthermore, only in the human form can we understand the nature of suffering and the lessons contained within those experiences. If our sole focus in life is to enjoy there are far better life forms to facilitate that, whereas in the human form we have to undergo all kinds of suffering to enjoy even the most basic pleasurable experiences. Take for example, eating, whereas an animal like a cow can happily chew on grass, a human must either work to earn money to pay for food or make the effort to till the field and grow food from seed to plant. Then there is the example of sex, whereas a male human must go through various mating rituals, and often spend lots of money to court his desired mate, a pigeon will happily have sex up to 50-times a day with multiple partners! Similarly, whereas we humans must comply with taxation, incur debt to acquire a home, etc., an animal will happily sleep under a tree. In more ways than one, we can clearly see that the human species is challenged just to make ends meet, which lends credence to the claim of saints and sages that human life is not meant solely for sensual enjoyment but rather for self-realization so that one can escape the bonds of a physical form altogether.

Consider the fact that there are 4 fundamental activities of every animal – eating, sleeping, mating, and defending.

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<sup>5</sup> New International Version (NIV)



If as humans, we do not strive for more than this than what distinguishes us from other animals?

The gift of human birth is one of the three blessings of life. There are innumerable life forms in the creation but only a small minority are humans. Sadly, however, the majority of humans lead an animal existence and are asleep to the full potential of their humanity, sleepwalking through their daily lives mechanically until they chance upon a saint who implores them to awaken! The second blessing of human life is when the desire for liberation from physical bondage takes root in a person after they wake up to the fact of their spiritual nature. The third gift is the opportunity to come under the grace of a saint and evolve spiritually under their guidance.

The most natural way to cultivate this higher awareness is through meditation and acts of unconditional service to others. It is by such acts that one's consciousness is naturally shifted to the higher frequency of soul, wherein one begins to see the spiritual equality and interdependence of all beings.

Of course, history has shown that humans have used various herbs and medicinal plants, like psilocybin mushrooms, peyote and the vine leaves that make up *Ayahuasca*, a traditional indigenous drink of the Amazonian and Andean peoples of South America, to also expand their consciousness. However, it should be noted that all of these hallucinogenic experiences last but a few hours and only serve to inspire people to change their perspective on life. Eventually, one has to do the manual work of expanding their consciousness and living to the full potential of their higher self in order to escape the bondage of rebirth.

All of these things are uniquely human and to miss out on this opportunity would be the greatest travesty.

## **AFFIRMATION 1**

I am an eternal spirit soul and my human form is a blessing that has been gifted to me. I value and cherish the amazing opportunity this human form affords me for self-realization.

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