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BHAKTIVEDANTA GURUKULA AND INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

ANNUAL MAGAZINE | BGIS | 2016-2017



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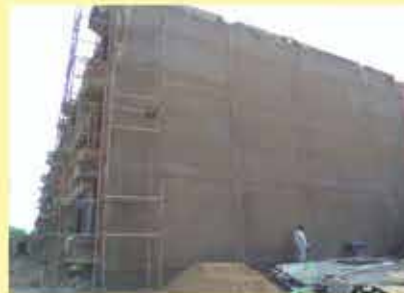
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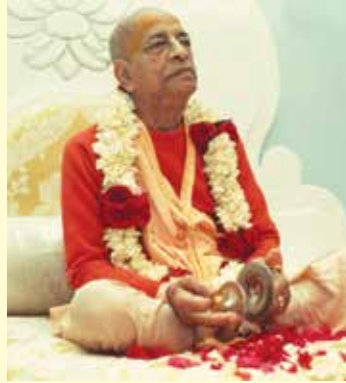
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MESSAGE BY THE FOUNDER- ACHARYA



His Divine Grace

A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI SRILA PRABHUPADA

I am especially pleased to know that your Gurukula project is going forward nicely.

I consider that this is one of our most important projects, because people in general are only suffering due to poor fund of knowledge. So if we have facility to give them the right knowledge of how to make an end to suffering condition of life, then we shall be performing the highest type of welfare activity.

So you can carry on this point to convince rich businessmen, educators, politicians etc. to help us push forward this gurukul system for guiding their young children on the right path to becoming sober, upright citizens. You can inform them that if they give us proper facilities then we can save all the young people of their country from the worst danger.

People are always willing to give anything for educational purposes. They think that if their children get the right knowledge then they will become very successful in life and that is their concern, so they sacrifice everything for good educational cause. Now their children are all becoming hippies, and they do not want so much technology and knowledge which gives them no real satisfaction, so they are losing all interest in education and only they want to enjoy life, that's all. But if such children are given practical guidance on the transcendental platform, above the bodily and mental conception of life, then they will develop into perfect citizens- moral, honest, hard-working, law-biding, clean, faithful to home and country, like that. That is the unmatched success of our Krishna consciousness schooling system.

So you introduce it nicely, so that the country's leaders will see something very nice and come to our assistance.

-Letter to Satsvarup Das Goswami Maharaj (17-12-1971)

MESSAGE BY GBC AND BBT TRUSTEE



HH GOPAL KRISHNA GOSWAMI MAHARAJ

Bhaktivendanta Gurukul and International School is a school with a difference. At the present location, which is next to the Krishna Balaram temple, we can only accommodate about 300 students maximum. Parents from all over the world have been requesting us to move to a bigger location. We are happy to inform you that we have acquired 60 acres of land near Ajhai, which is 3 km from the national highway connecting Delhi to Mathura, only for quality education.

The children are going to get the best education in a very conducive, eco-friendly environment. We earnestly want to request all of you to please help in developing this project. This is a project with a difference and this project will produce children with good spiritual education, good character and will be a great help to the society and humanity at large. Hare Krishna.

Your well wisher in service of Srila Prabhuapada,
Gopal Krishna Goswami

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



LILA PURUSOTTAMA DASA

Dear students, parents and well-wishers

Our team lead by Radhakant Das is working hard to finish the new campus so that the present Gurukula can get its new home sometime in 2018. The new home is named as Vrindaranyam. The road from the highway to the new campus has been completed – it just takes 5-10 minutes to reach Vrindaranyam from the National Highway near Jait Village. The campus boundary is complete so also the academic building. The hostel structure is ready and the finishing work is continuing. The temple foundation is also complete. We request for your prayers and support so that this project is completed in time.

In the academic front, our students are doing exceedingly well. The Principal, Harikesh Prabhu and his team are striving hard to improve the academic standard. This year, two of our students got admitted to the prestigious University, BITS Pilani. One student got admission in NIT Kurukshetra while another student took admission in IIIT Allahabad. One more student got admission in National Defense Academy.

I am happy to share with you that our students are graduating with flying colors. In 2016, four science students – Sanchit, Krishna Murari, Abhishek and Gaurav scored above 90% in grade 12 board examination. In grade 10 board examination, three science students scored above 90% while two commerce students also scored above 90%.

In 2017, Arjun and Devavrat jointly topped the Mathura Zone in 12th grade board examination in science with the score of 94.5%. Four students in Grade 10 board examination in science also scored more than 90%. I congratulate all our students who worked hard to perform well. My appreciations are due for all our teachers who cared for these students.

We were able to organize two beautiful spiritual retreats for our students in Rishikesh and Chitrakoot – the full report is there in this magazine. These retreats are meant to inculcate the spiritual character in our boys. Our endeavor will be to organize such retreats more for our students and teachers so that we will be able to fulfill the vision of our Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada - to incubate men of complete (Krishna Conscious) character who will be able to lead the society in many fields.

“Learn Gita”, the Bhagavad Gita correspondence course, is another initiative to bring parents of our students into ambits of holistic spiritual education. In this way BGIS family will closely embrace both students and parents with an eternal umbilical cord of Lord Krishna’s instructions as given in Bhagavad Gita. I request more parents to join this program to make it successful.

With the abled guidance of our GBC HH Gopal Krishna Maharaja, we are striving hard to take this school to a greater height for which I humbly acknowledge the self-less contributions of our teachers and staff. Not the least, I thank Raghunath Prabhu for putting commendable effort to bring out this edition of the school magazine.

Hare Krishna

Lila Purusottama Dasa
(Professor, IIT Kanpur)

Srila Prabhupada Speaks

Dharma and The Modern World
By His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupada

(The following article was first published in Bengali in The Gaudiya, November 11th, 1949)

In relation to dharma, the Vaisnava acarya Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura Mahasaya, has written in his book Sri Caitanya-siksamrta as follows –

Upon examining the historical records of all types of people around the world, it becomes obvious that faith in God is man's common and constant characteristic. Uncivilised forest tribals survive, like animals, on animal flesh, but they also worship the sun, the moon, huge mountains, large rivers and tall trees as their benefactors and controllers. Why do they do this? Though the soul is extremely bound up, his faith in the Lord, his natural quality as a spirit soul, will gradually manifest to the degree that the material covering is weakened. However, when man becomes civilised and takes to various types of knowledge and education, his faith becomes more covered due to materialistic logic. Then atheism, or worse, voidism, takes hold of his mind.

Of the various kinds of dharma existing in this world, almost all of them aim to preach and establish belief in God. Varying endeavors of acaryas depending on time, place and circumstances, can be observed, but it can be ascertained that all of them preach dharma with the main aim of establishing a connection with the Lord.

When we speak of the modern world we mean the progressive scientific world. In that modern

scientific world, educated people are taking great care to come to a common understanding about the origins of dharma.

To begin to understand dharma scientifically we must first look at our scripture, the Gita. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna has specially discussed the three fundamental principles of tattva in the second chapter of the Gita, namely body, mind and consciousness. Earth, air, fire, ether and water – these are the five gross elements, and mind, intelligence, and false-ego – these are the three subtle elements and altogether these eight elements are considered as inferior material nature. The conscious element is the living entity which is indestructible, inexhaustible, eternal, permanent and even when the aged body and mind gets destroyed it continues to exist – this topic has been discussed in the Gita. Before we discuss the development of various types of sadhana for aspirants such as karma, jnana, yoga, bhakti etc. it is especially important to discuss the process mentioned in Gita in relation to consciousness. Without doing so, it is not possible to come to any scientific understanding or conclusion on dharma. In this world, whatever dead matter or living characteristics are present in different elements such as that which is conscious and unconscious, beasts and birds, human beings or demons, each

one of them has a unique dharma. To discuss this in detail will require a great deal of time. But whatever we generally understand about theism or the 'belief in God' found within dharma, is the final word in the evolution of consciousness. Covered, shrunken, budding, blooming and fully bloomed – among the observed progressive evolution of consciousness, the last three stages (namely budding, blooming and fully bloomed) are only observed in human beings. At the fully bloomed stage of consciousness, belief in God observed at that stage is to be regarded as dharma.

The gist of such types of discussion regarding our relation with the Lord has been told in a very universal language in Srimad Bhagavad-gita. Every living entity is connected to God on the platform of consciousness. That is clearly spelled out by the Lord in the Gita:

mama yonir mahad brahma tasmin garbham
dadhamyham
sambhavah sarva-bhutanam tato bhavati bhārata

sarva-yonisu kaunteya murtayah sambhavanti yah
tasam brahma mahad yonir aham bija-pradah pita

“O Bharata, the vast expanse of material nature is My womb which I impregnate and wherefrom all living beings manifest. O son of Kunti, all forms of life that are born in this world are ultimately born from the great womb of material nature, and I and the seed-giving father.” (Gita 14.3-4)

The foundational reality of material nature is the womb of the mother of the universe. The entire creation comes into existence when the seed of consciousness fertilises the womb of material nature. If material nature could have given birth to consciousness by herself, then the seed-giving father, the Supreme Lord, could have been dispensed with. But that is not possible. Consciousness is beyond the realm of the eight mundane elements of material nature, namely earth, air, ether, fire, water, mind, intelligence and false ego. Therefore there is no way that the paternal relationship of the Lord with consciousness can be discarded. From this angle the Lord is the Primeval Father of all

living entities and material nature is the mother. This is the original purpose of dharma. In the Gita, Bhagavan Sri Kṛṣṇa has clearly stated this point in another place.

mamaivamsa jiva-loke jiva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manāḥ-saṣṭhānīndriyāni prakṛti-sthāni karsati

“The living beings of this world are My eternal particles. These living beings struggle with the five senses and the mind, which is the sixth sense within.” (Gita 15.7)

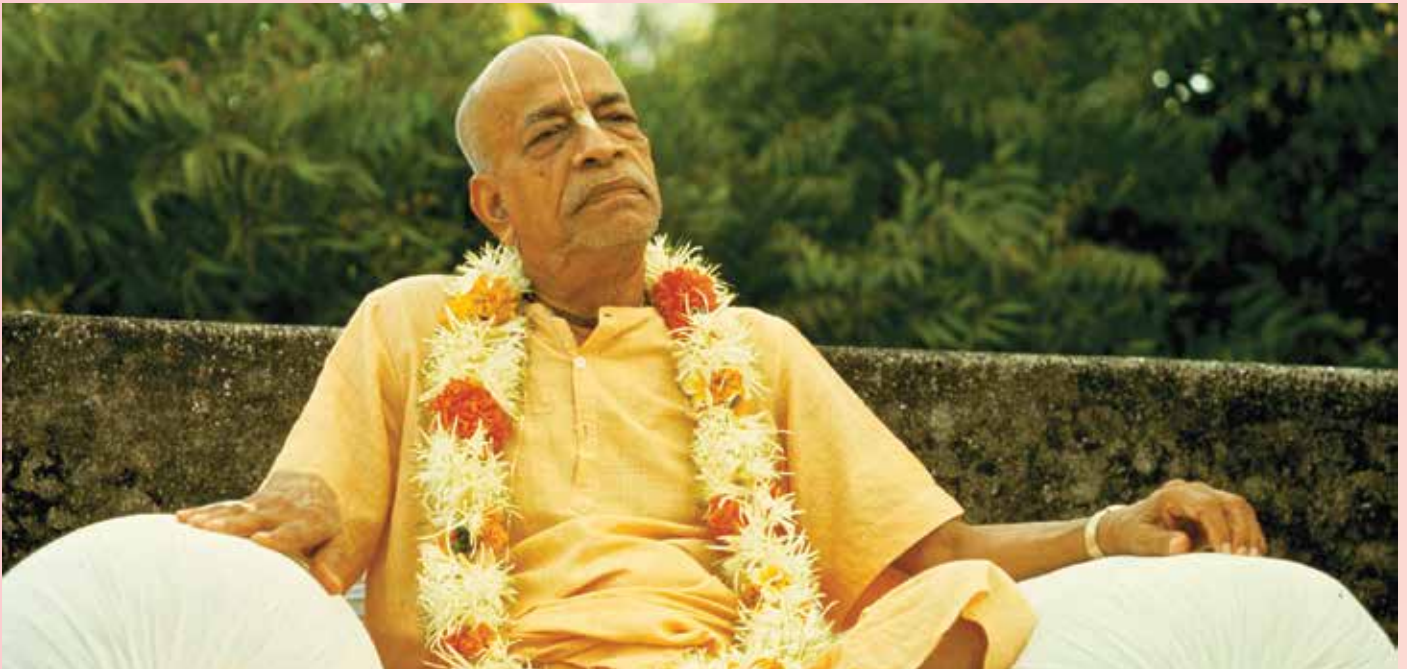
Therefore, in spite of the living beings being part and parcel of the Lord and being of the same spiritual nature, the fact is that they have fallen into the misery of birth, death, old age, and disease within material nature and have been struggling intensely from time immemorial, transmigrating from one body to another, tightly bonded by the mind and six material senses which is the very cause of the living being's aversion to dharma. To deliver the living beings from such a miserable state and establish their constitutional position of being eternally liberated, the Lord descends in every age to reestablish the path of dharma (dharma-samsthapanarthaya). Sometimes He personally comes and sometimes His saktavyesa-avatara comes. Therefore we should understand the term 'real dharma' to refer to the path of reestablishing the eternal relation of the living being with the Lord by delivering him from his previous condition of irreligiosity when he was entangled in material nature.

The manner in which civilisation has advanced in the modern world means that whatever dharma was established during the Middle Ages or before that – although being suitable for that particular time and place – they cannot attract the people of the modern scientific world with their expertise pertaining to the dharma of the body and mind. The people of the scientific world are all enthusiastic to understand what is the mula-tattva (the primary principal). Therefore it is necessary to discuss the fact that consciousness is the main principal of dharma.

The conception that after death or upon leaving the body, the living entity's bondage comes to an

end is not true. Depending on his karma the living being again gets a gross body and after due course of time, he again gives up that material body. When one travels from one body to another, the material desires and habits developed in relation to that particular body are carried to the next body. When the gross body is given up, the living entity travels after taking shelter of the subtle body in the form of mind, intelligence and false-ego, and during the time of death, that particular subtle body

on the path of dharma. In spite of being expert in material knowledge, scholars whose minds are not purified, or who are attached to bodily dharma or mental dharma, fail to understand the real misery of the living entities due to a lack of sufficient experience in spiritual subject matter. The dharma they try to establish does not diagnose the root cause, hence it is affected by material degradation and becomes useless rubbish in this world. In this way dharma decreases and materialistic scholars



carries the key to receiving a good or a bad body just like the wind carries a good smell or a bad smell. According to one's particular desire, again one receives another gross body. In relation to this there are various considerations pertaining to the mode of goodness, passion and ignorance which are present. According to the particular gross body one receives – for example, a human body, a tiger's body or a demigod body, the suitable external sense organs of hearing, sight, touch, taste, smell, etc. are given on the basis of that particular form. On the basis of previous conditioning, the mind again starts serving those things pertaining to matter and forgets its connection to the Supreme Lord.

Those who are dedicated to pure knowledge understand this predicament and come to the conclusion that the entangled position of the living entity is very miserable, thus they endeavor to establish the dharma of consciousness in order that living beings of this world are again established

cannot properly understand topics related to eternal dharma.

If we continue to remain busy with dharma pertaining to the body and mind in the company of the progressive civilised people of this modern world, we will never be able to achieve equality. When we come under the spell of bodily dharma, some of us think ourselves to be Hindus, some as Muslims, some as brahmanas, some as sudras, some as Bengalis, some as Biharis, some as Indians, some as English, some as men, some as women, some as humans, some as animals, etc. and thus differences arise. Under the spell of mental dharma people have formed many sectarian groups, some claiming themselves to be Congress members, some as belonging to a league, some as socialists etc. But Bhagavad-gita says that those who are true scholars are all sama-darsi (having equal spiritual vision). For example:

vidya-vinaya-sampanne brahmane gavi hastini
suni caiva sva-pake ca panditah sama-darsinah

“A wise man sees a learned and humble brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog, a lowborn person and all other living beings as equal.” (Gita 5.18)

The very last instruction of the Gita is to accept bhagavata-dharma and abandon dharma based on the platform of the body and mind. That type of bhagavata-dharma is meant for jnanis who have developed transcendental qualities. It rejects any form of discrimination on the basis of gross bodily differences of superior, medium and inferior forms and embraces an equal vision, irrespective of different bodies such as that of an elevated brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog or a candala (outcaste).

Therefore, establishing proper dharma and bringing about universal equality, which modern progressive cultured society is endeavoring to establish, is never under the purview of bodily dharma or mental dharma. That is the dharma of the soul, or the dharma of consciousness. In order to establish that dharma of consciousness in the modern world Srimad Bhagavad-gita has given ample instructions about what needs to be done. Nowadays in many conferences and meetings, many respectable and highly educated people assemble together and cultivate hopes of establishing an egalitarian and universal dharma which is in synchrony with the modern world. This can be solved very effectively mostly through the Srimad Bhagavad-gita and especially the Srimad Bhagavata.

The dharma instructed in Srimad Bhagavata is meant for people who are free from envy (nirmatsara). People who are engaged in bodily and mental dharma can never be non-envious. In their case, it should be understood that envy itself is their dharma. Thus, when envy is present, there is no question of establishing equality. There is always the presence of envy in the sub-religious goals of dharma, artha, kama and moksha. Therefore, these four paths of dharma will never be able to provide any real solution. If one does not develop compassion upon seeing the sorrows of others,

without understanding the root cause of the living entity's misery, one will never be able to properly estimate the value of eternal dharma. That which delivers us from the threefold miseries and shows us the ultimate reality is the ultimate dharma of the living entity. That is why Suta Gosvami has said in the Srimad Bhagavata:

sa vai pumsam paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhoksaje
ahaituky apratihata yayatma suprasidati

“The supreme dharma for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self.” (Bhag. 1.2.6)

dharmah svanusthitah pumsam visvaksena-kathasu
yah

notpadayed yadi ratim srama eva hi kevalam

“Dharma, executed by men, regardless of occupation, is only so much useless labor if it does not provoke attraction for the message of the Supreme Lord.” (Bhag. 1.2.8)

Therefore, in order to establish the non-envious causeless bhagavata-dharma, it is essential that the intelligent people of this world endeavor to analyse and discover a new approach to present that eternal ancient method of preaching sanatana-dharma. Within the entire world Bharata-varsa is the greatest place of dharma. and within India Bengal is the best. Sri Caitanya-deva, the deliverer in Kali-yuga, appeared within the Bengali community. It is essential that we analyse how He preached Srimad Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavata in a very pristine and transcendental method in order to preach Bhagavata-dharma in a non-envious fashion.

sri-krsna-caitanya-daya karaha vicara
vicara karite citte pabe camatkara

“Please take into consideration the mercy of Sri Krsna Caitanya. If you do so, you will find it to be most wonderful.” (Cc. Adi 8.15)



03

NEW PROJECT UPDATE



VRINDARANYAM

Upcoming New Campus for Bhaktivedanta Gurukula & International School

Imagine a place in the lap of Mother Nature, full of trees, imbued with divinity, free from city traffic and commotion, where one can get fresh air, pure water, pure organic food and pure milk! Such a place is called 'VRINDARANYAM'- *the divine forest.*

When BGIS was founded in 1976 by Srila Prabhupada, its location in Vrindavan near the ISKCON Krishna Balram temple was ideal for a school as it was away from the rustle and bustle of the town. One could hear the chirping sound of peacocks and other birds in the morning. However, situation has drastically changed over the last 40 years. Currently, one can hear only the honking of the vehicles and it becomes difficult for the students to focus on studies. A big market has developed around the temple and thousands of visitors visit the temple every day. It is no longer very safe and conducive place for the children to study.

Since 2011, the Director and Senior Management had been thinking about shifting the present school campus to bigger piece of land, slightly away from the town, with better facilities for educating the children in a more open and eco-friendly environment. Finally, in the year 2012, by the mercy of Krishna, ISKCON acquired 60 acres of land near NH-2 for construction of the new campus for Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International School (BGIS).

It took a while to acquire the entire land and obtain the necessary approvals for construction from local authorities. The construction work in the new campus finally begun with the auspicious Bhumi Pujan (ground breaking) ceremony in the presence of HH Gopal Krishna Maharaj and the then honourable PWD Minister of UP, Shri Shivpal Yadav on *16th May, 2015.*



■ PWD Minister of UP, Shri Shivpal Yadav on 16th May, 2015.

With the blessings of Guru and Gauranga, inspite of many obstacles and difficulties, a lot of progress has been made since then.

The New Road from National Highway (NH-2)

During the Bhumi Pujan ceremony, the honourable PWD Minister Shri Shivpal Yadav had promised to build a new road to connect the new campus with the National Highway. Thus, a new exclusive road of 3 KM length named 'Bhaktivedanta Gurukula Marg' has been constructed by the state PWD department to connect the new campus to National Highway. It now takes only 20 minutes to reach the new campus from ISKCON temple in Vrindavan. The new road is a big boon for the campus.



■ Constructed Bhaktivedanta Gurukula Marg

The Status of the Construction Work

The master plan of entire campus has been proposed by a famous Mumbai based architect Rajesh Bulsara. The master plan consists of academic building, hostel building, temple and vedic cultural center, spiritual retreat center, faculty housing, pond, swimming pool, flower gardens, orchards and many sports facilities.

In the first phase of the project, a large academic building and a hostel building are being constructed. Foundation work for the temple building has been completed. Landscaping work and the development of sports facilities are in progress. A dedicated team of engineers, managers and other staff is engaged in executing the construction work under the leadership of Madhusudan Mukunda Das, (MBA from IITK).



■ UP Gov. Sanctioned Road



■ Master Plan of entire campus

The Boundary

For providing better security to children, a strong concrete boundary wall has been erected for the entire 60 acres of land. Special security guards and gun men have been appointed in the three gates of campus to provide all round clock safety to the students and campus residents. *100 solar street lights* have been installed along the boundary for all night lighting and security.



■ Front View of Krishna Avanti Bhavan (Aug, 2017)



■ 10 feet height boundary of the entire campus



■ Interior Snap Shot of Science Lab

The Academic Building - Krishna Avanti Bhavan

This building will be the center of learning for the gurukula boys. It comprises of all the modern amenities and state-of-the art Laboratories. Special focus is given towards well-ventilated classrooms, labs and seminar halls which do need artificial lights during the day time. The building is provided with the UPVC sliding windows which are sound and weather proof. Heat insulation in summers has been taken care of by using eco friendly AAC blocks which has five times less thermal conductivity than traditional bricks. The superstructure of the 60,000 sq.ft. academic building has been completed and the finishing work is in its final stages.



■ Proposed 3-D view of Krishna Avanti Bhavan

The Hostel Building - Nityananda Kutir



■ Proposed 3-D view of Nityananda Kutir

This building will be the living place for the future leaders of the world. The focus is to create living space in such a way to cultivate a sense of cooperation and brotherhood among the students. Nityananda Kutir will have open lush green courtyard and surrounding to bring boys closer to nature. The superstructure of the hostel building with an area of 40,000 sq.ft. has been completed.



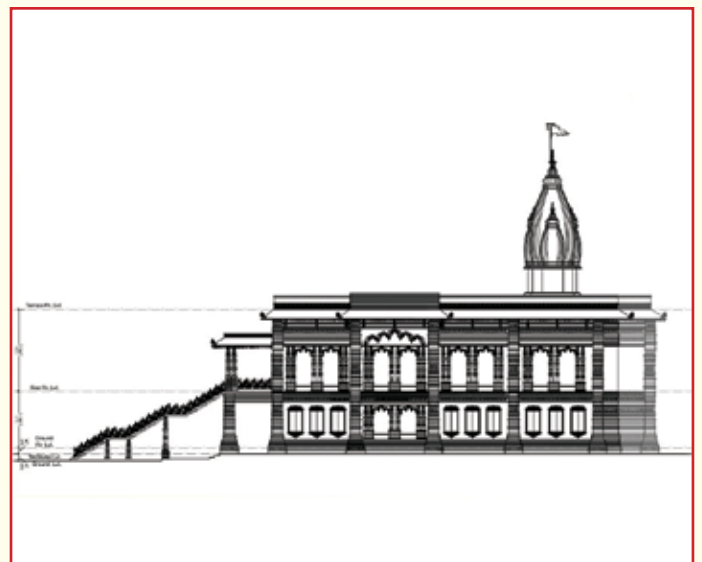
■ Nirman Subharambh of hostel



■ Current status of Nityananda Kutir (Aug, 2017)

The Temple

Temple work has been started in April month of this year. Foundation work for the temple building has been completed. To retain the legacy of ISKON Vrindavan temple we will have Sri Sri Krishna Balaram deities in the campus. This place is famous because Krishna killed the snake demon Aghasura in this land. We will have beautiful dioramas to depict these beautiful pastimes.



■ Temple elevation design

The Natural Cow-based farming

One of the important objectives to shift gurukula to larger piece of land is to grow our own food. Unfortunately, most of the kids from urban background have no idea about how food grains and vegetables are grown. Some kids think that milk is produced in the super market!

The kids in the new campus will themselves serve in the fields and take care of cows. They will then understand the value of food and be grateful to Krishna for providing mankind with food grains and milk. Currently, all the grains and milk requirements of students are being supplied from the new campus. Primary food grains such as wheat and rice have been produced upto 120 quintals and 100 quintals per annum respectively. Sufficient organic cow fodder is produced to feed the cows properly for better health.



■ Cows enjoying sweet grass in the fields



■ Organic farming led by HG Srinivasa Das



■ BGIS boys learning to collect their own food

The Landscaping And Plantation of Trees

Vrindaranyam literally means forest of Tulsi plants. So the new campus is being made as green as possible. The 12 forests of Vraja are being recreated. A botanical garden will be developed where the students of BGIS and also nearby schools will learn about the various species of plants and understand the value of preserving flora and fauna. They will also learn the spiritual importance of different kinds of trees and their connection with Krishna's pastimes.



■ Neem plantation along the boundary

The Vocational Training and Skill Development Center

The new campus has the facilities for imparting vocational training and skill development to village youth through courses in green energy, holistic health care, agro-science, art and culture. Complete free skill education shall be provided under PMKVY scheme of Government of India to the local youths. Currently local youths are being imparted training in I.T, tailoring and solar technology.



■ Orientation program for local village boys



■ Delegates from RITES with Mr. Rakesh Uberoi



■ Massive prasad distribution to labourers working in the construction site

Other Eco-friendly Features

The new campus of BGIS will be completely eco-friendly with features such as the center for organic farming, rain water harvesting, bio-gas and solar based green energy. 100 Solar street lights have been installed in the site as a big stepping stone in making Vrindaranyam a green campus. A special Soil Bio Technology (SBT - an alternate to traditional STP model) will be a unique feature of the campus. The objective is to make a zero-discharge and low carbon footprint campus.



■ Solar street lights spread in the entire campus



■ Maha Harinam sankirtana during Gaura Purnima Festival



■ Regular Harinam Samkirtan in new campus initiated by BGIS director HG Lila Purushottam Das

The Village Outreach Program

The villagers are being polluted by the influence of intoxication and other bad habits. Thus regular extensive outreach programs are being conducted to create awareness among people for healthy way of thinking and living. Free prasadam is distributed on a regular basis. Awareness among farmers for organic farming is being carried out through free workshops. The farmers see the organic farming that is being done in house and are getting inspired. Free Bhagavad Gitas are being distributed to educate the villagers about human values and to inspire them to follow the teachings of Lord Krishna.



■ Regular Harinam Samkirtan in new campus by Gurukula boys

MAYAPUR GURUKULIS invoking auspiciousness in Vrindavan Gurukula

A shanti yajna was performed by Mayapur gurukulis at the site under the guidance of Raghunath Das. It was an overwhelming experience to see the young kids chanting Vedic mantras expertly for the success of the gurukula project.



■ Mayapur Gurukulis performing yajna

The Funding Partners

We are very grateful to all the individuals and organizations that have funded this project. Many PSUs and private organizations have funded this project under 'Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)'. Some of the organizations who have supported this project are RITES, NTPC, ONGC, KEI Industries Ltd, TCIL, Motherson Group etc. With their continuing support, we are expecting to complete the first phase of this project by April, 2018. We are very grateful to Shri Rakesh Oberoi ji who has been instrumental in getting CSR funding for this project



■ NTPC sponsored Lab Area



■ ONGC officials' Visit to the Campus

Encouragement and Support from The ISKCON Community

Devotees across the globe have shown their sincere support for the development of project. Radhakant Das and his other team members have visited various places in India and abroad including London, Kenya, UAE, and Singapore etc.

Some of the most prominent donors for this project are as follows:

- Piyush Goyal , Delhi
- Mira Goyal, Delhi
- Shri Pulin Gandhi, Kenya
- Shri Kalapi Jani, UK
- Shri Bimal Kantaria, UK
- Shri R.K Taneja, Delhi

HG Dwarkanath Das (Deepak Bansal), a chartered accountant from Mumbai is taking active interest in the project. Along with arranging for funds, he has roped in a very good architect, Mr. Rajesh Bulsara. The new architect is giving a face-lift to the entire project.



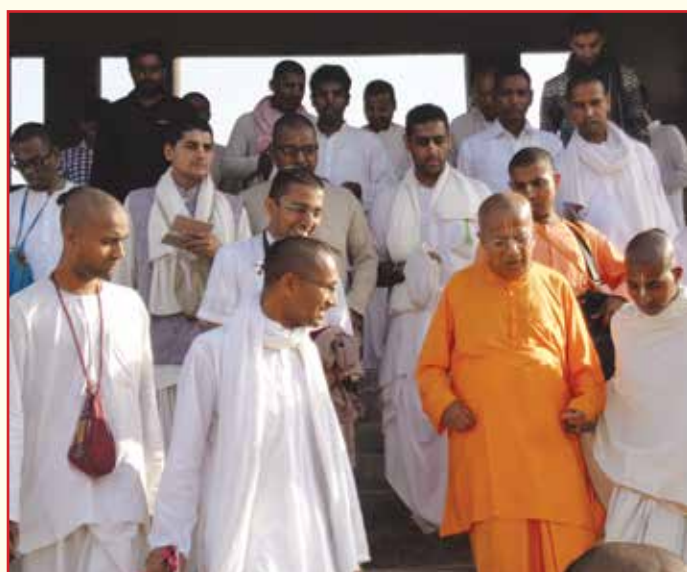
■ HG Lila Purushottam prabhu along with Gurukula project team members

Blessings and support from senior leaders of ISKCON

The new campus site has been frequently blessed by the senior ISKCON leaders, devotees and well wishers. In April, 2017, we were blessed by the visit of HH Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaja, (GBC and BBT Trustee). He has been the main inspiration for the project. He stayed at the site for three hours and shared his future vision for the campus. He was glad to see the progress of the work.



■ HH Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaj with Vrindavan temple President HG Panchgauda Prabhu and other senior Vaishnavas



■ HH Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaj along with construction team

Some of the distinguished guests who have visited the new campus were ISKCON Education Minister HG Sesa Prabhu, HH Sachinandan Swami, HH Lokanath Swami, HH Bhakti Rasamrita Swami, HH Kadamba Kanana Swami, HG Devaki Nandan prabhu, HG Suradas prabhu, HG Mahamantra prabhu, HG Basughosh prabhu, HG Sankhadhari prabhu, and HH Bhakti Brihat Bhagavat Swami. We are grateful to them for giving their invaluable time and guidance for the project.

We are hoping to inaugurate the first phase of the project in April, 2018. We wish and pray that by the continued support of our well-wishers, donors and by the blessings of all the devotees, we will be able to meet this target.



■ We are grateful to our donors, well wishers and supporters from all over the world for your support and blessings (All snapshots were taken during different events organized in new campus)



TOP BOARD RESULTS

The Students of BGIS have performed exceptionally well in the ICSE & ISC 2017 Examinations.

The Council for the Indian Secondary Certificate of Education (CISCE) released their final exam results on 29th May, 2017. Bhaktivedanta Gurukula & International School (BGIS) students have secured 100% Pass percentage. Following are some of the highlights of their achievements.

- Arjun Yaduvanshi & Devvrat Wagle of Grade-12 together topped in the Mathura District scoring 94.5%.
- Govinda Das stood second with an aggregate of 93.25%. He also qualified for IIT-Mains exam this year.
- Kapil Mawai of Grade-10 topped ICSE with an aggregate of 94.80% followed by Harsh Gupta with 93.40% and Akash Lohkna with 92.40%.
- In ICSE, 5 students scored 99 out of 100 in Computer Applications
- In ISC, Arjun Yaduvanshi scored 99 out of 100 in Mathematics

The results have been remarkably good this year. All credit goes to the sincere efforts by students and teachers. Students at BGIS are excelling in academics while at the same time continue to develop spiritual character in line with our vision to create leaders of the society with character and competence.

Special guidance for NSTSE

This year, BGIS has started special guidance sessions for National Science Talent Search Examination (NSTSE) conducted by Unified Council across grades 2-10. This

is an effort to nurture scientific talent among qualified students by expert teachers. This year, 80 students participated in this examination conducted in February 2017. Separate training sessions, practice problems and model tests are included in this initiative.

Competitive Exam Selections »

- Milind Singh of class 12 has been selected for the National Defense Academy for the 17/18 academic year. He will be joining training in July 2017. His father Yogesh Yadav is a sports teacher in Gurukula for the last 15 years. The school takes pride and wishes him all success in his future endeavor.
- 3 of our students Aditya, Chirag and Ankit qualified for Medical Entrance Examination.
- 8 of our students of Grade-12 selected in IIT-JEE (Mains)
- 2 of our students Sanchit Lakra and Shantanu Mishra selected in IIT-JEE (Advanced)

Learning Bhagavad Gita Verses

In BGIS, students are trained in learning verses from Srimad Bhagavad Gita. Many of our students have memorized all verses from selected chapters of Bhagavad Gita. One student, Purushottam has memorized all 700 verses from Bhagavad Gita. He was awarded with Bhaktivedanta Ratna by the school.



■ Union Minister Sri Dharmendra Pradhan with greeting cards offered by students

UNION MINISTER

Sri Dharmendra Pradhan Visits BGIS

On 6th March, 2016 Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, the Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gases, visited ISKCON temple and the Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International School (BGIS) in Vrindavan. He very much appreciated our efforts for building the new campus of BGIS in 60 acres of

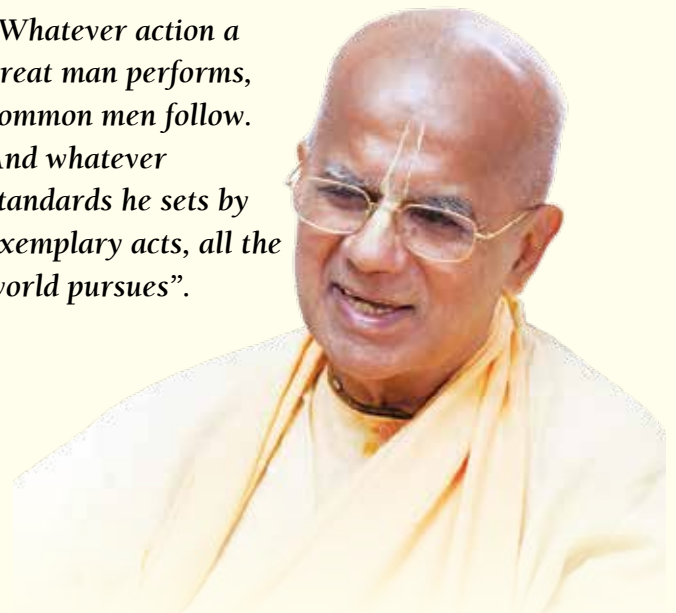
land which will also include facilities for vocational training and skill development in village youth through courses in Green Energy, Holistic Health Care, Agro-Science etc. He promised to help us for this noble cause.

are proficient with exemplary character as desired by Srila Prabhupad. He spoke to the teachers to maintain the ideal behavior and inculcate vaishnava culture among the students. Maharaj gave emphasis on the importance of child protection and induced everyone to abide by the CPO guidelines. He also gave an update on the construction progress of the new upcoming gurukul campus. He appreciated the efforts made by new project team for fund-raising and construction under the guidance of Radhakant Das. He expressed his heart felt gratitude to the school Principal Harikesh prabhu for sacrificing his lucrative career to join full-time in gurukul. He persuaded all the teachers to chant 16 rounds nicely and read Bhagavad Gita everyday . He concluded his address by quoting the Bhagavad Gita verse,

HH Gopal Krishna Goswami Visits BGIS

H.H. Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaj, disciple of Srila Prabhupada and a very senior spiritual leader and GBC of ISKCON, visited the Bhaktivedanta Gurukul and International School in Vrindavan. He was gracefully received with a kirtan by the students and teachers. The small children prepared the greeting cards and offered it to Maharaj. During his speech, he encouraged and inspired the teachers and new project members to continue serving in Gurukul with full dedication. He motivates everyone to keep the balance between spiritual education and material education to create children who

“Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues”.



05

EVENTS AT BGIS

BGIS Students Participates in World Peace Day

The Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International School (BGIS) participated in the World Peace Day event which was held on March 17, 2017. Punitama Das, the organizer of Sanatana Dharma “One Love Revolution” and “Drum Dance Pray” organization came to Vrindavan to continue promoting his world peace campaign. He was inspired by

Srila Prabhupada and he travels around as the servant of world peace carrying the divine message of



K r i s h n a Bhakti or pure love of God to attain genuine peace and cruelty-free planet. He

brought 198 international flags representing each nation to participate and unite for a better world. The gurukula students hoisted the flags and marched through the beautiful garden of Mathura Vrindavan Trust (MVT) and joined the call to end all wars, hunger, malnutrition, starvation and homelessness.



■ Students holding flags of 198 countries



■ BGIS Principal delivering message of peace during the peace parade

Cleaning of Vrindavan Parikrama Marg

With an aim to promote the Government of India “Swacch Bharat Abhiyan”, the students of Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International School joined hands with ‘Friends of Vrindavan’ to clean the Parikrama Marg of Vrindavan on the occasion of the Republic Day, 26th January 2016. The three hours long cleanliness drive began from the Raman Reti police chowki amid the Kirtan performed by a section of the students. More than sixty students wearing gloves picked up plastic, papers, leaf-plates and other trashes. The garbage was collected in the rickshaws and mini-trucks of Friends of Vrindavan (FoV). The volunteers from FoV helped the students to clean the big heaps of garbage.



■ BGIS Students cleaning Sridham Vrindavan.

The students were divided into three groups. The younger students picked up the plastics and garbage while the senior students cleaned the road with brooms and brushes. A group of students educated the people to keep Vrindavan clean by not littering in the open street. They also asked the ‘chai-wallas’ to replace the plastic cups with the ‘kulladhs’. A unique way of awareness campaign was adopted, as the students performed Kirtan with mridanga before pointing out to the people not to throw the garbage in the open. Wherever they found garbage they performed kirtan loudly to attract people’s attention. Then they asked people to keep Vrindavan clean. The garbage heaps were simultaneously cleaned by another group.

The cleanliness drive ended at Kalidah, where all the groups assembled at the Samadhi of Shri Prabodhananda Saraswati. HG Tamal Krishna

Das Brahmachari from the Imlitala Mahaprabhu Mandir gave discourse on the significance of cleaning Vrindavan. Shri Tamal Krishna Das told the students, *“You are fortunate to get the opportunity of serving Shri Dham Vrindavan. Shri Prabodhananda Saraswati Pada has glorified Vrindavan in the several books written by him. Shri Shyamananda Prabhu found the anklet of Radha Rani while cleaning Shri Dham Vrindavan. ‘Gundicha Marjan’, the cleaning of the Gundicha Mandir was a favorite pastime of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.”*

Radha Kanta Das, Sriman Yogesh Yadav and many other teachers of the BGIS also participated in the ‘Swachh Abhiyan’. Environment activists Sriman Jagannath Poddar, Sriman Ajay Das, Sriman Akhilesh Chaturvedi and the Friends of Vrindavan volunteers were also present during the cleanliness drive.

Farewell Ceremony Of Graduating Students

On Thursday, March 2, 2017, a brilliant ceremony was held to celebrate the graduation of students from Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International School (BGIS) in Vrindavan. The occasion was graced by the presence of ISKCON Vrindavan temple president, Panchagauda prabhu. During his speech, he advised the students to carry on with all the values they have learnt throughout the years of studying in Vrindavan. Deena Bandhu prabhu was delighted to witness the loving exchanges between the students and teachers.

The certificates were awarded by HH Bhakti Marga Swami, HG Malati devi dasi and HG Mahadevi mataji. In his address, Bhakti Marga Swami congratulated the students and wished them with great success on their next journey. Mahadevi mataji reminded the students to keep in their hearts the message of Bhagavad-Gita with them, and she glorified the school system for upholding the teachings of Bhagavad-Gita as the essential point of education.

Expressing her appreciation for the students, Malati mataji reminded the newly graduates about their significant role and responsibility in pushing forward the movement of Srila Prabhupad.

The most touching part was when the students and teachers shared their reflections. Every time a student spoke about their experiences in the school, the teachers couldn't help crying and when the teachers gave their speeches, the students burst out in tears too. It depicts the mood of loving vaisnava relationship between students and teachers. Some of the parents expressed their gratitude to the school for improving the behavior of their sons.

The graduates offered an ecstatic kirtan of gratitude to their teachers, parents, and community members. The program ended with pasta, ice cream, sweet rice and so many mouth-watering preparations.

Let us bless all the students to always remain in the mood of service to Srila Prabhupada and their lives dedicated to his divine mission.



■ Graduating Students of 2017



■ HH Bhakti Marg Swami & HG Malati Mataji handing over certificates to graduating students



■ HH Bhakti Marg Swami leading ecstatic Kirtan along with graduating students

Grade 10 Students Seek Blessings before Board Examinations

The students of 10th grade began their board preparation by honoring the Deities with Maha Abhishek on 4th March 2017. Students enthusiastically organized a nice abhishek for their beloved ashram Deities Sri Sri Gaura Nitai on that day. Teachers were invited to grace the occasion. The program began as usual as per Gurukula tradition with kirtan followed by colorful abhishek with milk, curd, honey, sugar syrup and various colorful fruit juices.



■ Aarti Ceremony following Abhishekam of their Lordships Sri Sri Gaura Nitai

Special Yajna For Lord Narasimha Dev

The students and staff members joined together to perform Narasimha yajna for invoking auspiciousness. The Principal Harikesh Prabhu, Radhakant prabhu, Vice-Principal Lila Govind Prabhu, Sharad Bihari Prabhu and other staff members participated in the Yajna. The fire sacrifice was conducted by Raghunath prabhu who is taking care of Patron of Education department which facilitates the academics of the students from under privileged families.

The ceremony started with the invocation of auspicious mantras followed by recitation of verses from Bhagavad Gita. It was followed by Purush Sukta Homa, 108 names of Lord Narasimhadev with Udichya Karma. At the end, the Varuna Kalasha was circulated around with ecstatic kirtan led by the student Krishna Chandra Sinha.

The most amazing part was the appearance of the figure of Lord Narasimha Deva in the fire during the Purna Ahuti (final offering).

Seeking the mercy of Guru Gauranga and Krishna, we also need the blessings of all the vaishnavas and senior devotees.



■ Final Offerings during the Narasimha Yajna



ANNUAL SPORTS DAY

BGIS celebrated its annual sports day with active participation of all the students from grade 2 to 12 on 26th and 27th November, 2016.

Students were divided into four different groups named Vrindavan, Nandgaon, Barsana and Govardhan.

Students had been carrying on their preparations for almost a month before under the supervision of sports trainer Mr. Yogesh Yadav and his assistant Mr. Gaur Goswami. Primary graders between 2nd to 6th standard participated in games like Kho-Kho, Kabaddi, Football and 100 meters spoon race. The senior classes marked their participation in 100 meters race, shot-put, high jump, long-jump, and discuss throw.

Captain Ajay, Ashish, Pratyaksh and Naveen from teams Barsana, Govardhan, Nandgaon, and Vrindavan respectively, were amongst the winners. All the winners were awarded with medals.

The school awarded Devavrata Waghle, a class 12 student, “student of the year” award.

Like every year, Gurukula concluded the sports day celebrations successfully by the grace of Srila Prabhupada and Lord Krishna.

BGIS Wins the District Level Inter-school Swimming Competition

BGIS School students were declared winners in the inter-school swimming competition organized by Ramanlal Shorewala School in Mathura. BGIS has been winning this competition for last 13 years.

Parikshit, Mohan, Milind, Ajay were awarded gold medal. Jatin and Chaitanya won silver medal.

Chaitanya, Milind, Jatin and Ajay acquired gold medal in relay race. Congratulations to all the winners and their trainee Mr. Yogesh Yadav.



06

FESTIVALS AT BGIS



Sri Krishna Janmashtami 2016

“Krishna has given something extraordinary to everyone and to serve Krishna with one’s extraordinary talent means successful life”- Srila Prabhupada in a letter to Sukadeva, March 17, 1973.

One of the most eagerly awaited festivals in our gurukula, Sri Krishna Janmashtami, is an occasion of a happy display of talents by students across all grades for the pleasure of the Lord. What ordinary schools would call as their annual day, gurukula celebrates Janmashtami to welcome the ‘birth’ of Lord Krishna. In doing so, they welcome Him in their hearts since each of them is fully engaged in activities that help them remember the Supreme Lord and His pastimes. These activities range from making flower garlands for the Lord to reading or hearing from the Krishna book, to managing the cultural events and being a part of the cultural events such as dance and drama that display Lord’s pastimes.

This year was no different and the family of BGIS, with their unique talents, came together to offer their best to their Lord with devotion in their hearts on this most auspicious day. All students of gurukula were awake

at 3:45 am to attend the mangalarathi ceremony at the Krishna Baram temple. The enthusiasm in the air was evident and contagious. Students and teachers chanted their japa in a meditative mood, looking forward to all the excitement and celebration.

The environment of the gurukula was simply Krishna conscious with reading of Krishna book going on in some classrooms or students rehearsing their roles for the big show to be held in the evening. Students of primary grades started their Krishna conscious engagement by making flower garlands for the deities of different ashrams or dormitories of our school.

Students of middle school, under the guidance of their teachers, were sincerely discussing and distributing various services among themselves since they were involved in the hospitality related services such as receiving the guests, taking care of their footwear, serving juice and water and finally serving the big prasadam feast to thousands of odd guests.

Grade 12 students, who were in charge of the entire event, decided to keep the theme of decorating the school as 'Birth of Krishna'. Accordingly they had given the look of Kamsa's prison to the school with prison like fences put around the courtyard and our security staff being dressed as guards of Kamsa with turbans on their heads and spears in their hands! They had meticulously planned the evening, carefully sharing their responsibilities. Those who were good at art were in charge of the stage decoration and the general aesthetics of the school while those who were good at music had formed their wonderful choir or kirtana group and yet those who had good public speaking skills had taken the responsibility of anchoring the evening program. Every group of students, guided by their teachers, was eager to put their best and please the Lord.

And when the evening came, bright faces adorned with Vaishnava tilaks gathered in the assembly area which was now equipped to welcome the deities of all ashrams as well as guests who were eagerly waiting to participate in the celebrations. Beautiful invocation prayers and the Hare Krishna maha mantra was led by our music teacher, Srikant prabhu and his team of students.

“Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. In Kali-yuga, if this Vedic maha-mantra is chanted regularly and heard regularly by the devotional process of shraavanam kirtanam, it will purify all societies, and thus humanity will be happy both materially and spiritually.”- Srila Prabhupada in S.B 4.18.14

This was followed by a dance performance by primary graders. This dance called the Gotipua, was originally introduced by Ramananda Raya, an intimate associate of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, for the pleasure of Lord Jagannath. In our school we have initiated a proper training of this dance under the guidance of Sri Bishwanath prabhu, a traditional dance teacher from Orissa. Gotipua dance performed by the primary graders of our gurukula was much appreciated by many for its elegance and gymnastic expertise.

“Even one hundred years ago in India, all dramatic performances were centered around the superhuman activities of the Supreme Lord. The common people would be verily entertained by the performances of dramas, and yatra parties played wonderfully on the superhuman activities of the Lord, and thus even the



illiterate agriculturist would be a participant in the knowledge of Vedic literature, despite a considerable lack of academic qualifications. Therefore, expert players in drama, dancers, singers, speakers, etc., are required for the spiritual enlightenment of the common man.” –Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.11.20, purport.

When young students presented the sweet pastimes of Lord Krishna like makhan chor lila, Kaliya daman lila and rasa lila through drama and dance, the audience was spell bound. Dressing up our students as cowherd boys was not so difficult and with their naughty looks it was easy to capture the hearts of our audience. However, what was more challenging and which drew huge applause was our boys dressed as cowherd damsels with their beautiful sarees and when they danced the traditional Dandiya with sticks in their hands, the audience could not help but clap to the tunes and cheer!

Students of our Gurukula have always been attracted to

Honey Pot Festival

play the traditional Vaishnava drum called the mridanga, which was one of main instruments of spreading the holy name in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mission. Every year we have a dramatic mridanga recital by boys of middle school where excellent coordination and skill is displayed. They took the interest of audience in mridanga to a different level.

Sweet bhajans and kirtan glorifying the Lord resounded in the background throughout the celebrations. Special guests like HH Janardan Swami Maharaj, HG Pancha Gauda Prabhu and many other wonderful devotees increased the enthusiasm of the students even more by their presence and words. Their blessings and best wishes made all of us feel completely happy.

As midnight approached, a grand bathing ceremony or the abhishekam was organized for our deities and while students chanted the Brahma Samhita verses followed by melodious Hare Krishna kirtan, audience took turns to bathe Their Lordships. To bathe them actually means to purify our own hearts and though most devotees were fasting the whole day from even water, they looked blissful and content just to see the deities being bathed with milk, yogurt, ghee, honey, and a variety of fruit juices. After the abhishekam, the deities were going to be dressed in their new outfits and while we all were waiting to see them we were also waiting with bated breath for the surprise drama which is a unique feature of Gurukula.

The drama was wonderfully directed by Sanjay prabhu with active participation from all the twelfth graders, which displayed the birth of Lord Krishna beginning with the marriage ceremony of Devaki and Vasudeva, the celestial voice warning Kamsa and imprisonment of Devaki and Vasudeva. The drama was a surprise because it was enacted not on the stage but in different areas of the school with special light effects and the audience kept guessing where they had to turn next to see the next act! Exactly at midnight the drama showed the birth of Lord Krishna and all of us who were present could get a glimpse of joy and ecstasy that the residents of Vrindavan had got 5000 years ago! Everyone who was present was singing and dancing welcoming the Lord. The dancing kirtan was concluded with the grand arati for the deities and devotees slowly started moving to grand finale, the prasadam feast!

Truly enough, the entire family of BGIS seemed to have once again invited the Lord in their hearts and rejoiced His appearance.



While it is not unusual in India to celebrate the butter pot festival where a pot full of butter is tied and raised high up for boys to form a pyramid and then break it to taste the nectar inside, the honey pot festival is unique to our gurukula. This festival is celebrated to mark the appearance of Krishna's elder brother Balaram who is very fond of honey. Children of gurukula get so too excited to plan for this festival what to speak of the execution when the whole school is roaring with slogans like 'Dauji ke bhैया, Krishna Kanhaiya!' Boys from each class get an opportunity to break a pot raised high up that has some goodies like candies, toys and sweets. The catch is that whoever gets to hit the pot is blindfolded and also there is every chance of him being covered with cow dung that is also one of the goodies sometimes filled in the pot!! With teachers also participating in breaking the pot, this festival is much loved and cheered.

NARASIMHA CHATURDASHI 2017

The appearance day of Lord Narasimha Dev is an occasion that marks the victory of devotional service over wealth, power and atheistic intelligence. Our students started meditating on the celebration of Narasimha Chaturdashi a week ahead by having discourses every morning during school assembly about the glories of the Lord Narasimhadev. The students were inspired to hear that the Lord protected Prahlad Maharaj and He continues to protect His devotees in recent times too.

We at BGIS celebrated Narasimha Chaturdashi with great pomp and special programs in the evening. Beginning with invocation prayers and kirtan by students, there were two wonderful dramas prepared by the students of BGIS.

One of the dramas, which depicted the entire pastime of Lord Narasimha Deva's appearance was highly applauded for engaging almost 40 students who showed amazing enthusiasm and cooperation. As a result, the drama really brought us to the era of Hiranyakashipu, the atheistic king and Prahlad, the most lovable devotee. Many of us in the audience had goose bumps in the final scene where Lord Narasimha Dev appeared from the pillar and engaged in a fight with Hiranyakashipu. All of us cheered the end of Hiranyakashipu with 'Jai, Jai!'

Students of high school also presented an interesting drama where they depicted the pastime of Narasimha Dev in Gaura leela. The interesting feature of this drama was that it began with a conversation among some teenagers of the present generation who were trying to understand the difference between shastra (Vedic literature) and shastra (weapons). The script of this part of the drama was written by students themselves. They then took us to the times of Mahaprabhu when the ruling Muslim king, also known as the Kazi, started harassing devotees who were involved in singing the holy names of the Lord.



That was the beginning of the next act of the drama. The act, in which Narasimha Deva appeared in the dream of Kazi and chastised him, was very thrilling. The entire school along with the guests then recited Narasimha Kavacha, praying for His protection and then there was a discourse on Lord Narasimha Deva by HH Janardan Swami Maharaj. All the guests, staff and students then partook in the wonderful feast appreciating the wonderful day that was spent entirely in remembering the Lord, just what was taught by Prahlad Maharaj.



RISHIKESH RETREAT 2016

A group of 90 students (grade 9-12) along with 10 teachers started their journey on 30th April 2017 from Vrindavan to Rishikesh for the annual spiritual retreat. On the way, everyone visited Sri Sri Radha Parthasarathi Temple (ISKCON) in East of Kailash, New Delhi. We had a great experience of the Glory of India Vedic Cultural Center depicting the teachings and pastimes from Bhagavad Gita, Ramayan, Mahabharat and Chaitanya Caritamrita. This was a special day as the annual boat festival was being celebrated in the temple. All of us had a great opportunity to participate in the festival.

We arrived in Rishikesh early morning on 1st May and stayed in Gita Bhavan situated on the bank of mother Ganga. The place was surrounded by high mountains on all sides and mother Ganga flowing

in the valley in full grandeur.

The seven-day retreat was filled with extraordinary experiences. Every day we bathed twice in the lap of mother Ganga. Everyone looked forward to it. The retreat was well-planned and we followed a proper schedule. Everyone was up early in the morning at 3:30AM to get ready to attend Mangal Arti at 4:15AM. Staying in Gita Bhavan meant that we had an opportunity to participate in the recitation of Bhagavad Gita and chant prayers every morning from 5-6 AM along with all the residents of Gita Bhavan which was a peaceful experience to begin the day.

After that, we would chant the holy name sitting together in circles which was followed by Hare Krishna Therapy, a technique meant for the



relaxation of the body and mind under the guidance of HG Lila Purushottam Prabhu. This was followed by a class on the glories of Mother Ganga.

Having relished the glories of Mother Ganga, we would take nourishing breakfast prasadam followed by a short rest.

Every morning we visited different significant places in Rishikesh and would return to our ashram around noon for lunch prasadam and rest.

Sometimes we would go for a bath in the holy Ganga which was followed by some interesting activities organized by teachers.

One day, we went hiking to an ancient temple of Lord Garuda located in Garuda Chatti, 6 KM from Gita Bhavan. After that, we went for 2 KM trek up in the mountains to a beautiful waterfall. It was tiring but as soon as we bathed in the cold and clear water of the fall, all fatigue disappeared and everyone felt rejuvenated. It was adventurous and filled with excitement. We came down and had a sweet kirtan sitting around the water flowing down the mountain.

On another day, we were pondering over visiting the ancient temple of Neelkantha Mahadev situated at the top of a hill almost 10 KM high. It was a difficult uphill trekking with narrow and sloppy trails in the mountain. We were wondering if our students would be able to take up this adventure but Lila Purushottam Prabhu inspired everyone and we were on our way the next morning. Everyone reached the temple and had a unique experience of

the journey and a deep sense of achievement. We had darshan of Lord Shiva and breakfast prasadam there, and we started the 10 KM downhill journey back. We reached Gita Bhavan in the afternoon and went for Ganga Bath followed by lunch prasadam and much needed rest. Students said that this was the **most exciting part of the whole trip.**

One day, we visited a temple of Lord Vishnu (Sri Hrishikesh Narayan) also known as Sri Bharat Ji Maharaj. It is the most ancient, most sacred & most famous temple situated at the heart of the city. It is believed that the city's existence came into being with this temple only. In about 789 A.D. on the auspicious day of Basant Panchmi, Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya reinstated the presiding deity in the temple. It is also believed that if any pilgrim on the day of Akshya Tiritiya makes 108 parikarmas (rounds) of Lord Shri Hrishikesh Narayan at this temple and seeks the blessing at His feet (it is the only day when Lord's feet are uncovered), all his wishes will be fulfilled and it is equivalent to the pilgrimage to Badrinath. We performed Harinam Sankirtan and heard about the glories of the temple in the temple complex.

On the following day, we went to Triveni Ghat in the evening to participate in the Ganga Arti. We had a boat ride across the river to reach the other side. This is the most famous and the biggest ghat in Rishikesh. This Maha-Arati is a very grand and auspicious ceremony, which is performed every evening. This was a purifying experience.





CHITRAKOOT

RETREAT 2016

During the time of Vijayadasami, a special retreat was organized in the holy dham of Chitrakoot for students of grade 7-9. A group of 75 students along with 10 teachers began their journey on 7th October by Mahakosal Express from Mathura to Chitrakoot. Chitrakoot means “Picturesque hills” or “Hills with many wonders”. This is the place where the Supreme Personality, Lord Rama along with his consort Mother Sita & his younger brother Lakshman spent eleven & a half years when he was in exile.

The place is situated on the northern spur of Vindhya mountain, amidst lush green forests & sparkling rivers. The holy river Mandakini (not to be confused with the river with the same name situated in the Garhwal Himalayas) flows through the place, adding serene beauty.

We arrived in Chitrakoot on the morning of 8th October and our accommodation was arranged at a guest house provided by Shri Sadguru Seva Sangh Trust.

Having settled in our rooms, we had breakfast prasadam and assembled for the first program where

we were informed of what to expect in the next 7 days. We had a well-organized schedule where we would get up early by 4 AM and get ready for Mangal Arti followed by chanting, sloka memorization and Hare Krishna Therapy, a technique for mind control with the meditation on the holy name.

Every day, we would hear Rama-Katha from Valmiki-Ramayan in the morning and evening, which was very absorbing and enlivening. During the day, we would visit various holy places connected to Lord Rama.

The first day, we heard the pastime of how this great epic Ramayan was compiled by sage Valmiki in detail and followed by the chanting of the holy name.

The next day, we all went for the Parikrama of Kamadgiri Mountain which appears to be in the shape of a bow and it is said that Lord Rama resided on this mountain. It's a 5 KM walk around the mountain. While circumambulating, we came across a place where Lord Bharat came to meet Lord Rama and received his carana-paduka which he carried on his head back to Ayodhya. Further along the way, came a hill on the left side known as Lakshman Pahari, where Lord Lakshman used to guard Lord Rama and Mother Sita.

The next day, we went for having holy bath in the Mandakini River which was very purifying and refreshing. The students always looked forward for Mandakini Bath.

Another day, we went to Hanuman Dhara by hiking uphill for around 1 KM. Hanuman Dhara provides the awe-inspiring scenery of a cascade that falls from the nearby mountains. Though the uphill path was a little bit tiresome, the pictorial beauty of the gleaming waterfall took away all our hardships and the lovely environment enthralled us.

It is believed that this cascade was created to ease the hardship of Hanuman while he returned from Lanka after setting fire to Lanka. Lord Ram pierced an arrow in this mountain, which sprung up water to relieve Shri Hanuman.

The following day, we all went to Gupta Godavari located 18 KM from Ramghat.

The descriptive board at Gupt Godavari says that this cave was formed naturally by water and dates back to nine and half lakh years, That's 950,000 years ago. It is said that in order to have a glimpse of Lord Rama, the Godavari river came here secretly from Trimbakeshwar, Nasik. The Godavari River emerges as a perennial stream from the rocks deep inside this cave, flows down to another cave below and then disappears in the mountain. We went inside the cave filled with knee-level water. It was a special experience.



From there, we went to Sati Anusuya Ashram located 8 Kms from Gupta Godavari. This ashram is situated with green mountains on one side and river Mandakini on the other side. This is the place where Sage Atri and Mother Anusuya performed austerities. Now there is a beautiful temple with various historical pastimes depicted on the walls.

On the last day, we visited Ramghat, where many sages have performed their devotional practices and we visited a temple of Lord Rama on the bank of Mandakini and had a memorable boat ride.

In the afternoons, we had activities like Skits and Sloka Recitation and Quiz on Ramayan.

Every night before we go to sleep, we would have soft Kirtan and Chanting of Ramastakam (Prayers glorifying Lord Rama).

We were blessed having an opportunity to hear from HG Niranjana Prabhu, a senior disciple of Srila Prabhupada. Hearing from Ramayana continued for the whole week both morning and evening. We relished the pastimes from the beginning of Ramayan until the arrival of Lord Rama in Chitrakoot.

Finally, a week of hearing Ram-Katha, Kirtan, Visiting holy places connected to Lord Rama came to an end. It was so absorbing and heart-touching that students wanted to continue there for a few more days. Finally, we arrived at the Chitrakoot Station on 14th evening to board Sampark-Kranti Express to Mathura and we all safely arrived on 15th morning back to BGIS while carrying the sweet and unforgettable memories of this trip.



Parents Gita Retreat 2016

A special two-day Gita Retreat was organized for the Parents of our students on 24-25 December. The purpose was to provide them with an experience of life in harmony with the teachings of Bhagavad Gita. As students of BGIS are trained in a lifestyle based on the teachings of Bhagavad Gita, it would definitely nourish the students if their parents also imbibe the same teachings and provide a similar home environment as they have in BGIS.

The parents arrived and were welcomed and escorted to their place of accommodation arranged by Gurukula.

The retreat started with an enlivening video presentation on the Hare Krishna Movement founded by Srila Prabhupada which is preaching the teachings of Bhagavad Gita throughout the world. This was followed by a questionnaire to be answered by the participating parents to create an awareness regarding what Bhagavad Gita is all about. This allowed parents to open up their hearts and express their views on topics like “Difference between Life and Matter”, “Supreme Goal of Life”, “Cycle of Birth and Death” etc. This was followed by a discussion on each of these topics to help them develop a better and clear understanding of these topics. The

session ended with a sumptuous lunch prasadam which was enjoyed by all the parents.

The retreat continued in the afternoon with a parenting session to equip them with finer parenting skills. In today’s world, successful parenting requires many finer skills and this session was meant to exactly provide that.

Srila Prabhupad said in a lecture that “Please take care of your children and make them perfectly Krishna Conscious. That is very great service”. Raising children is a great responsibility entrusted upon us by Lord Krishna and parents must be Krishna Conscious in order to fulfill this responsibility.

After a short break, the retreat continued with a special interactive session by our Director HG Leela Purushottam Prabhu on the need of spirituality in the current world.

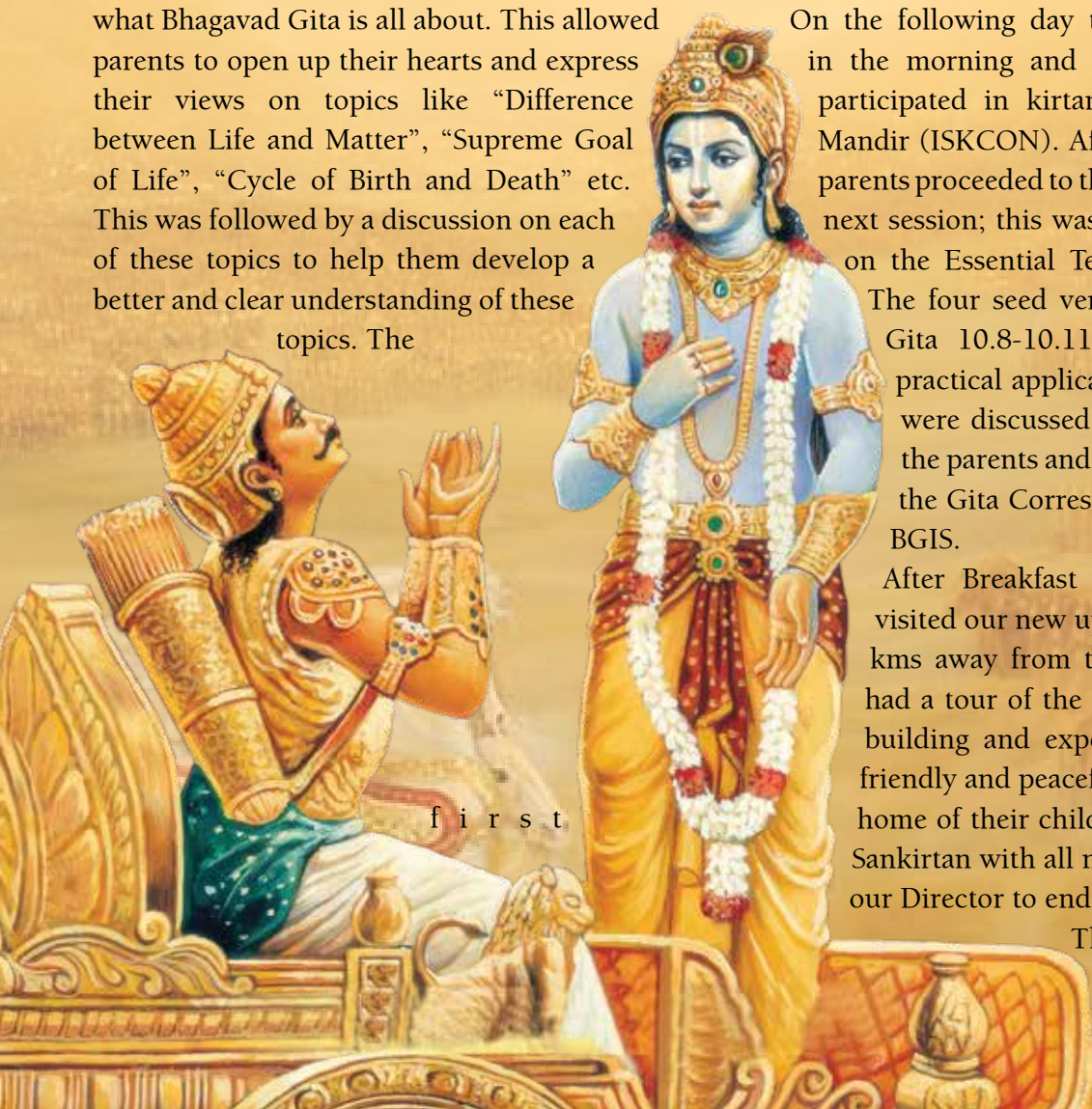
The first day ended with a delicious dinner prasadam in the Gurukula.

On the following day the parents woke up early in the morning and attended Mangal Arti and participated in kirtan at Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir (ISKCON). After the temple program the parents proceeded to the Gurukula Building for the next session; this was facilitated by our Director on the Essential Teachings of Bhagavad Gita.

The four seed verses (Chatur sloki Bhagavad Gita 10.8-10.11) were explained and its practical applications in our day to day life were discussed. It was very enlivening for the parents and many of them registered for the Gita Correspondence course offered by BGIS.

After Breakfast Prasadam, all the parents visited our new upcoming campus located 10 kms away from the current gurukula. They had a tour of the Goshala, the new academic building and experienced the open, nature-friendly and peaceful atmosphere of the future home of their children. They had a wonderful Sankirtan with all new project team along with our Director to end the retreat.

The parents felt enlivened and were very happy. The school will organize more such retreats in the future.





Ekalavya and Arjuna

**By Srila Bhaktisiddhanta
Sarasvati Thakur**

Many people consider Ekalavya's 'guru-bhakti' to be ideal, but there is a unique deliberation concerning this topic.

King Hiranyadhanu's son was named Ekalavya. Ekalavya was, by caste, a nisadha (candala). In order to learn astra-vidya, Prince Ekalavya approached Dronacarya. Because Ekalavya possessed a low class mentality, the acarya refused to initiate him in the teachings of the Dhanur-Veda. However, Ekalavya was determined to learn the martial arts from Dronacarya and went off into the forest. There he constructed an idol of Dronacarya made of clay and by continuously practicing in front of that artificial guru he became very expert in astra-vidya.



Arjuna was Dronacharya's most beloved disciple. The acarya had told Arjuna that none of Dronacharya's disciples would ever be able to excel Arjuna in skill. One day Dronacharya instructed the Kauravas and the Pandavas to leave the royal capital and go to the forest for hunting. As they made their way through the forest, they saw a dog whose mouth had been blocked with seven arrows. Seeing this, they were most astonished. Whoever had shot these arrows was far more expert than the Pandavas. Realizing this, they went in search of that person. Gradually they understood that it was Ekalavya, the son of Hiranyadhanu, who had tested his archery skills on the dog's mouth.

The Pandavas returned to the capital and, approaching Dronacharya, submitted this unusual story to him. With a mood of humility, Arjuna told Dronacharya that it seemed that he had another disciple who was more expert in archery than Arjuna. Dronacharya listened to these words and was surprised. He went with Arjuna into the forest and there they saw Ekalavya continuously shooting arrows like rain, fully absorbed in the science of archery.

Taking the opportunity Dronacharya came forward and approached Ekalavya, and seeing the acarya, Ekalavya immediately offered his prayers at his feet, and with folded hands he introduced himself as his disciple and remained standing. Dronacharya told Ekalavya, "You must give guru-daksina."

Ekalavya replied, "Please tell me – whatever it is, I am ready to give it!"

Then Dronacharya told Ekalavya to cut off his thumb and give him that as his guru-daksina. Ekalavya executed the order of his Gurudeva. Ekalavya did not protest in any way and unhesitatingly executed his guru's instruction.

Initially Ekalavya's guru rejected him because he considered him to be born of a low caste, yet due to his faith in

Dronacharya, he established a clay deity of him and became invincible – thus his guru-bhakti was established as ideal. On the other hand, Arjuna was envious towards Ekalavya, because by his perseverance, Ekalavya had become expert; therefore Ekalavya was ruined by Dronacharya – this is the common opinion.

But this is not the opinion of the devotees, nor is it a true conception. Everything about Bhagavan is supremely true, everything about the principles of devotion are supremely true and everything in relation to the devotee is supremely true. These are the three truths – Bhagavan, bhakti and bhakta. Everything a devotee does is good; everything a non-devotee does is not very good. The non-devotee has many bad qualities because he is not engaged in satisfying the senses of Bhagavan. Those that think that mundane laws are greater than Bhagavan cannot accommodate those words regarding the supreme truth. Such persons are nirvisesavadis (impersonalists) which is to say that they cannot accept the non-differentiated specialty of Bhagavan, bhakti and bhakta.

What was Ekalavya's fault? This analysis is essential. He wore the mask of guru-bhakti, yet he was actually inimical towards his guru. Whether his guru actually considered Ekalavya to be disqualified by his low-birth, or was simply testing him — whatever the reason may be, when his Gurudeva did not wish to teach him the science of warfare, it was Ekalavya's duty to accept his guru's instruction upon his head; but Ekalavya did not accept that. He had the aspiration to become great.

Externally, without a guru, his practices would not have been considered lawful, or he would not be in a favorable position to become great without accepting a guru. To this end, Ekalavya concocted a clay form of his 'guru'. He only did this to attain greatness by learning the Dhanur-veda. In this way, his main intention was to satisfy his own senses. He did not offer himself as a sacrifice to his guru's desire and his own intentions were not sincere. Some may say that ultimately Ekalavya happily accepted the heartless order of his guru without protest, but if we consider this topic deeply and with keen discernment, we can observe that Ekalavya considered mundane morality to be superior to transcendental devotion. When the guru requests something to be given as daksina, then one must offer it to him — it was that sense of morality that inspired him to cut off his thumb. Ekalavya did not offer it with spontaneous devotion. The very nature of bhakti is that it is spontaneous and simple.

If Ekalavya had unmotivated and natural devotion within his heart towards Hari, Guru and Vaisnava, then the guru, Dronacarya, the best of Vaisnavas, Arjuna, and Bhagavan Sri Krsna, would not have been displeased with his behavior. Ekalavya's attempt to learn the Dhanur-veda and his hankering to become great were not accepted by his Gurudeva. Deep within Ekalavya's heart, he desired to try and become greater than Arjuna, the best of Vaisnavas. The aspiration to become greater than the Vaisnavas is not devotion — it is anti-devotional and it is the dharma of the Ativadis (1). According to worldly considerations, the desire to become

great is regarded as good. But the effort to take a subordinate position behind a Vaisnava and the attempt to take shelter of a Vaisnava — that is bhakti. Ekalavya wanted his expertise to be greater than that which could be acquired by learning Vedic sciences directly from a mahanta-guru — Arjuna notified Dronacarya of this. If Arjuna had not mercifully pointed this out, then the victory of impersonalism would have been proclaimed extensively. People would not have approached a mahanta-guru to accept any type of knowledge; they would have desired to create their own contradictory, concocted, clay, lifeless gurus in order to learn various sciences or devotional teachings. In this way, atheistic theories would have been established. Therefore, Arjuna had no envy towards Ekalavya; it was actually his causeless compassion towards Ekalavya and the world.

If Ekalavya had been an honest devotee of his guru, then Krsna would not have killed such a guru-bhakta — He always protects His devotees. But finally Ekalavya was killed by the hand of Krsna. This is how Ekalavya finally met his end (2).

Sri Caitanyadeva has said that we cannot judge devotion simply on the basis of external austerities. The asuras perform penances that even the demigods cannot perform (3). Against the wishes of his guru, Ekalavya wanted to become greater than the Vaisnava. Therefore he was killed by Krsna and attained impersonal liberation. Asuras are always killed by Krsna and the devotees of the Lord are protected by Krsna (4). The proof of this is Hiranyakasipu and Prahlada. Thus we should never attempt to become greater than the Vaisnavas. If we do not wear a mask of guru-bhakti, we will never become impersonalists. This is what the pure devotees have taught in relation to the narrative of Ekalavya. Expertise in performing mundane activities is not guru-bhakti. Taking shelter of the Vaisnavas is actually true devotion.

(From Upakhyane Upadesa, Vol. 2)



50

ISKCON

1966 ♦ 2016



ISKCON-50 GLORIOUS

**By Radhakanta Das &
Lila Govind Das**

“Guess again if you think Bollywood, or Indian writing in English, is the country’s biggest cultural export. You may not come across any of these if you visit Cochabamba in Bolivia or Gaborone in Botswana, what you will find instead is a centre of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) ... It is easy to see where the Krishna movement’s global appeal lies. In the midst of today’s impersonal institutions and vast bureaucratic collectivities, it promises an intimate relationship with a personal god.” (Times of India, editorial on Jan 6, 2006)

Cochabamba in Bolivia is around 10000 miles away from India and is just one example of what ISKCON is doing. Throughout the world there are around 600 centers in more than 100 countries established over the last 50 years. The British Empire at its height was known as “the empire on which the sun never sets” because its expanse around the globe meant that the sun was always shining on at least one of its territories. It took almost two centuries for the British Empire to touch the lives of many people. The sun has now set over the British Empire but the phrase, “the empire on which the sun never sets” is applicable for ISKCON within 50 years of its establishment.

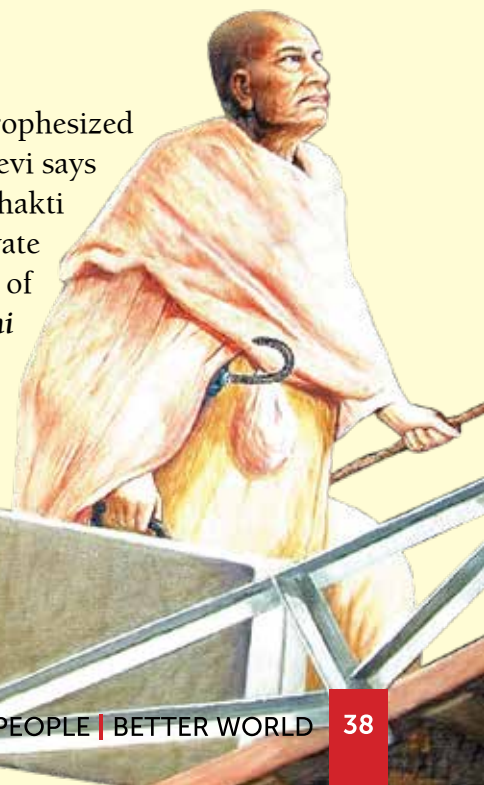


75 YEARS OF SERVICE

The Historic Journey:

It all began with the journey of a 70 year old person. This journey has been prophesized by Vedic scriptures like the Bhagavat Mahatmya in which Srimati Bhakti devi says to Narada muni, **“idam sthanam parityajya videshamgamyatemaya”**. Here bhakti devi is saying “I will leave this country, India, and go abroad!”. The word gamyate means someone will carry Srimati Bhakti devi. The former Prime minister of India, Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee said, *“The voyage of “Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada to the United States in 1965 and the spectacular popularity his movement gained in a very short spell of twelve years must be regarded as one of the greatest spiritual events of the century”*.

In July, 1965, His Divine Grace, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, ventured outside India for the first time to fulfill the order of his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. During his sea voyage, he suffered two severe heart attacks. He reached the shores of America with the equivalent of seven dollars.



The initial years:

After struggling alone in New York City for almost a year, on July 13, 1966, he founded ISKCON as a formally registered society with a small group of young followers. This marked the first time in history that a pure devotee of Krishna had successfully trained non-Indians on foreign soil in the strict disciplines of Vaisnavism, and he did it during the height of the blossoming American hedonistic countercultural movement. He began his public sankirtan in Tompkin square park in New York. He sent followers into the streets of cities and towns everywhere to chant the names of God, and “Hare Krishna” became a household phrase.



Figure- Srila Prabhupad chanting in the Tompkins park

Srila Prabhupada’s extraordinary feats:

1. He sent disciples to London, where in 1969 they recorded the hit single record “The Hare Krishna Mantra” with George Harrison. It became the fastest-selling of all of Apple Corporation’s releases, including those of the Beatles. The record reached #3 in Czechoslovakia and #9 in Britain, and made the top ten in Germany, Japan, Australia, South Africa, Yugoslavia, and many other countries.

2. He formally initiated almost five thousand disciples. These initiates, both men and women, represented a sweeping diversity of nationalities, races, and religious backgrounds.
3. He established 108 Krishna temples on six continents, installed the Deity of Krishna in each center, and trained disciples in the process of Deity worship.
4. He inaugurated the Jagannātha Ratha-yātrā festival in major cities around the globe, in effect bringing the temple to the people.
5. He introduced the Sunday Love Feast and other programs for distributing prasādam (sanctified food). These programs have provided millions of free meals to the public, along with regular university lunches, which still go on today. The famous Steve Jobs (founder of Apple Co.) also used to go to Sunday feasts of ISKCON when he was a youth with no income.
6. He spoke daily on the philosophy of Krishna consciousness, delivering thousands of formal lectures. Over 2,200 were recorded and archived.
7. He conducted many hundreds of informal conversations on the science of Krishna consciousness with disciples, scholars, professors and dignitaries and celebrities like Lal Bhadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Allen Ginsberg, Ravi Shankar, Alice Coltrane, John Lennon, and George Harrison. About 1300 of those conversations are archived.
8. He recorded more than twenty albums of devotional music.
9. He published the monthly magazine Back to Godhead, which he called the backbone of this movement. At the height of its circulation in the mid-seventies, over a million copies per issue were sold.
10. He launched the ISKCON Life Membership Program, which enrolled tens of thousands of members to encourage them to take to the devotional process.
11. He built major temples in Bombay, Hyderabad, and Vrindavana, and founded a spiritual city at Māyāpur. All became international sites of pilgrimage.
12. He established gurukula schools to provide education in the principles of devotional service. He founded the Bhaktivedanta Institute to advance Krishna consciousness within the scientific community, engaging serious academicians in consideration of the science of self-realization.

ISKCON TODAY

13. He formed the Bhaktivedanta Swami Charity Trust to unearth and renovate the holy places of Lord Caitanya's pastimes.
14. He set up farm communities to teach "simple living and high thinking," emphasizing cow protection and dependence on God and nature.
15. He wrote approximately seventy books on the science of Krishna consciousness, sleeping only a few hours a night. Dozens of prominent scholars and educators from leading universities have praised his literary work. The Encyclopedia Britannica proclaimed that his voluminous translations from the original Sanskrit and your lucid commentaries "have astounded literary and academic communities worldwide."
16. He founded the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT) in 1972 to publish books. By 1976, over 55,000,000 pieces of literature had been published in twenty-five languages and distributed in almost every country, making the BBT the world's largest publisher of Indian religious and philosophical texts.
17. He circled the globe fourteen times, visiting twenty-four countries, preaching, inspiring his followers, and making countless public appearances before multitudes of people.
18. He skillfully managed the international society simply through letters and personal meetings, virtually without the use of a telephone. When the devotees wanted to use the telex machine, his quick response was that "it will simply become a gossip machine."



Normally, spiritual Organizations tend to disintegrate and the movement slows down after the departure of its founder. However, ISKCON continues to flourish even after the departure of its founder acharya Srila Prabhupad. There are millions of followers of ISKCON all over the world. The biggest temple of the world is being constructed in Mayapur, the birthplace of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the international headquarters of ISKCON, under the patronage of Mr. Alferd Ford, the great grandson of legendary Henry Ford.



Figure- Mayapur temple under construction

Over the past half-century, ISKCON has established an impressive track record of public service, community activism and charitable work. Its global vegetarian food relief program, for example, has responded to the needs of people all over the world, including victims of the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia and victims of Hurricane Katrina the following year in the United States. Every day 1.2 million school children are fed daily in schools across India by an ISKCON-run food relief program. Bhaktivedanta Hospital, one of nine ISKCON-affiliated hospitals and medical clinics, treated over 200,000 patients this past year.



■ Shri Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaj presents “The Guinness World Records by ISKCON” to the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, in New Delhi on March 18, 2016

The new campus of BGIS is also being developed as a humble offering to Srila Prabhupada on the 50th anniversary of ISKCON. We hope and pray that new BGIS campus will be soon completed to serve the seven purposes for which ISKCON was established fifty years back by His Divine Grace A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Various events were organized in different parts of the world to celebrate the 50th anniversary of ISKCON. On August 13, 2015, ISKCON members from 106 countries participated in a yoga event in Kolkata to get a place in Guinness World Records for “Most Nationalities in a Yoga Lesson”. Leaders from across the world congratulated ISKCON for this achievement.

Seven Purposes of ISKCON

1. To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and to educate all peoples in the techniques of spiritual life in order to check the imbalance of values in life, and to achieve real unity and peace in the world.

2. To propagate a consciousness of Krishna as He is revealed in the Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam.
3. To bring the members of the Society together with each other and nearer to Krishna, and thus to develop the idea within the members and humanity at large that each soul is part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna.
4. To teach and encourage the sankirtan movement, congregational chanting of the holy name of God, and to reveal the teachings of Lord Sri CaitanyaMahaprabhu.
5. To erect for the members, and the Society at large, a holy place of transcendental pastimes, dedicated to the Personality of Godhead.
6. To bring the members closer together for the purpose of teaching a simpler and more natural way of life.
7. With a view towards achieving the aforementioned purposes, to publish and distribute periodicals, magazines, books, and other writings.



MESSAGE BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA,
SHRI NARENDRA MODI

“I am delighted to learn that the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

“Over the last five decades, the journey of ISKCON has been one of selfless service to society.

“The ISKCON family has emerged at the forefront of the quest to create a more peaceful, harmonious and compassionate society. ISKCON’s journey has been a manifestation of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.’ Integration has been at the core of your philosophy.

“ISKCON’s story has been the story of the determination and devotion of lakhs of devotees spread across the world. Inspired by the teachings of Lord Krishna, they spread His message far and wide. The efforts of the ISKCON family in sectors like education, publishing and disaster-relief are commendable.

“On this occasion, I convey my best wishes to the ISKCON family and hope they continue to serve humanity with the same enthusiasm and diligence as they have been doing for the last five decades. May this family of devotees be agents of change in creating a better tomorrow.

Jai Shri Krishna!

“Signed, Narendra Modi

New Delhi

“08 August, 2016”

MESSAGE BY THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF INDIA,

PRANAB MUKHERJEE



राष्ट्रपति

भारत गणतंत्र

PRESIDENT

REPUBLIC OF INDIA

MESSAGE

I am happy to know that the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is celebrating its 50th Anniversary on August 25, 2016, which also happens to be Janmashtami.

The ISKCON movement has few parallels in the world in terms of its rapid global spread, its trans-national, trans-ethnic, and trans-professional appeal, its outward simplicity, and the devotional energy of its followers. It is a tribute to the resolute spirit of the followers of ISKCON, that they have sustained their presence all over the world for so many decades.

I understand the movement today encompasses more than 600 temples, 65 eco-farms and 110 vegetarian restaurants, 10 million visitors yearly; the world’s largest publisher of Vaishnava literature having distributed 516 million books and magazines and the Annamrita Food Relief programme which feeds 1.2 million school children daily.

ISKCON has over the years played an important role in popularizing the noble and eternal message of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, and promoting spiritual harmony. If today the Bhagavad-Gita is printed in millions of copies in scores of Indian languages and distributed all over the world, the credit for this great sacred service goes chiefly to ISKCON. I congratulate ISKCON for its efforts to highlight and propagate the timeless teachings of Lord Krishna across the world. I also pay humble tribute to the contributions of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada who incorporated ISKCON in 1966 and whose teachings continue to resonate in the hearts of Krishna devotees all over the world even today.

I extend my greetings and felicitations to all those associated with the ISKCON and wish them many more years of service to the public.

(Pranab Mukherjee)

New Delhi
August 8, 2016



Message by Prime Minister of United Kingdom

TERESA MAY

Namaste, I am delighted to send my best wishes to everyone at Bhaktivedanta Manor in what is a very special year for all those associated with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). For fifty years since its foundation by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the men and women behind ISKCON have dedicated their lives to the words of Lord Krishna to achieve peace and unity.

ISKCON can be proud that in that time it has grown the world over, setting up over 500 centres and 50 schools.

In celebration of the birth of Lord Krishna, it is wonderful to see so many in the Hindu community flock once again to Bhaktivedanta Manor to be part of the Janmashtami celebrations.

I am delighted to see festivities on such a scale take place, reminding us all of the great number of people from diverse backgrounds throughout this country.

As you gather to celebrate in the beauty of the Manor's surroundings, let me wish you all a spectacular Janmashtami festival, and of course, pay tribute to the thousand and more volunteers who have given their precious time to make this year's festival a memorable one.





Beyond Absolute Zero and Absolute One

By Lila Purusottama Dasa

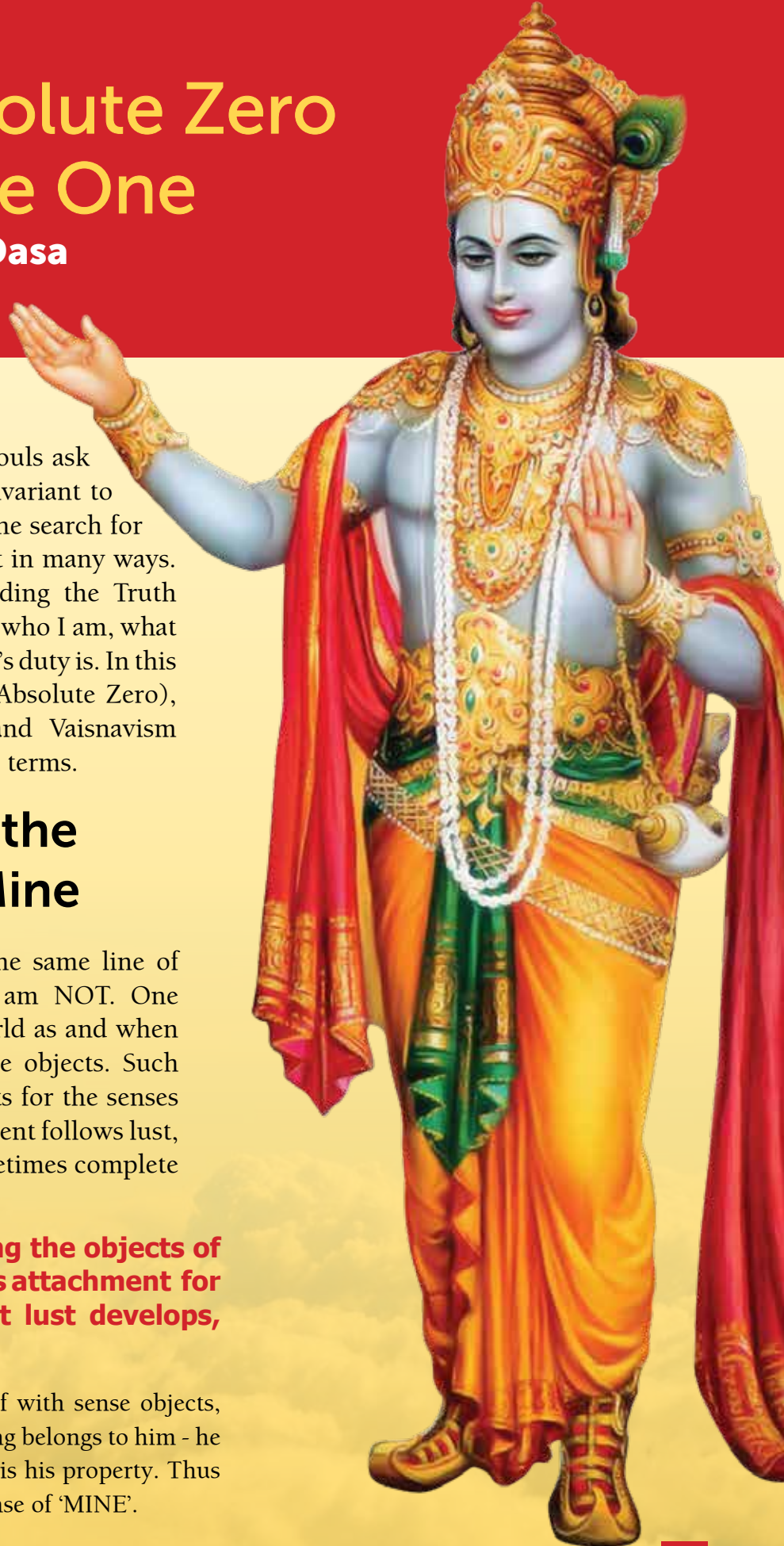
What is Truth? Very few blessed souls ask this question. Truth by nature is invariant to space, time, religion and culture. The search for Truth has led seekers to describe it in many ways. As per Bhagavad Gita, understanding the Truth means understanding who God is, who I am, what nature is, what time is and what one's duty is. In this article, I will dwell on Buddhism (Absolute Zero), Impersonalism (Absolute One) and Vaisnavism (Absolute Person) in philosophical terms.

How to Collapse the Notion of I and Mine

All vedic schools follow almost the same line of reasoning to understand what I am NOT. One perceives and experiences this world as and when senses come in contact with sense objects. Such sense contacts bring in attachments for the sense objects – with that sense of attachment follows lust, anger, loss of intelligence and sometimes complete annihilation.

BG 2.62—While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises.

With the mis-identification of oneself with sense objects, one falls prey to the idea that something belongs to him - he believes that the object of perception is his property. Thus the sense of 'I' comes based on the sense of 'MINE'.



One can observe that this 'I'ness is based on my family, my country, my education, my gender and so forth. This false possessiveness arises fear, lust, greed, illusion, envy and pride in him according to time, place and circumstance. This behavior is equally true for a woodcutter as much as for a king. Thus any spiritual tradition advocates the renunciation of one's possession which will naturally collapse the idea of pseudonym 'I' – a neutral state from where one can fearlessly ask 'who I am'. This is minimally required for one to be called a genuine seeker of Truth.

The World of Suffering and Buddhism

Lord Buddha started with a premise that 'The world is full of suffering' and the same premise is there in the Bhagavad Gita that this world is the place of suffering and temporariness - BG 8.15 'Dukhalayam Asasvatam'.

BG 8.15 "After attaining Me, the great souls, who are yogis in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection."

We know that the soul is eternally full of joy and knowledge. So, what is this suffering actually? Suffering is there because the soul assumes a false or artificial state. We all are conditioned to assume such false states – 'I am beautiful', 'I am rich', 'I am intelligent', 'I am humiliated' and so forth. A conditioned jiva situated in any of these un-natural states is subjected to a constant fear. Whichever state you may go or you try to situate yourself in, that state will always create a fear within you. A professor may fear

his intellectual ability being questioned, a rickshaw puller may fear for his inability to feed his family members sumptuously, a rich man may fear the depletion of his wealth, and a celebrity may fear for his brand value. By simple introspection, one can recognize that every state is infected with fear. As stated in Srimad Bhagavatam:

SB 3.25.41 "The terrible fear of birth and death can never be forsaken by anyone who resorts to any shelter other than Myself, for I am the almighty Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the original source of all creation, and also the Supreme Soul of all souls."

"THE ENEMY IS FEAR.
WE THINK IT IS HATE;
BUT, IT IS
FEAR"



SB 3.25.42 "It is because of My supremacy that the wind blows, out of fear of Me; the sun shines out of fear of Me, and the lord of the clouds, Indra, sends forth showers out of fear of Me. Fire burns out of fear of Me, and death goes about taking its toll out of fear of Me."

By analysis, one recognizes that he is not his thought, he is not his intellect, he is not his wealth, he is not his beauty, nor is he his possessions. Because of the mis-identification of the self with such externals – thought, wealth, beauty and so on – fear catches. And fear is the ultimate form of the suffering in this world.

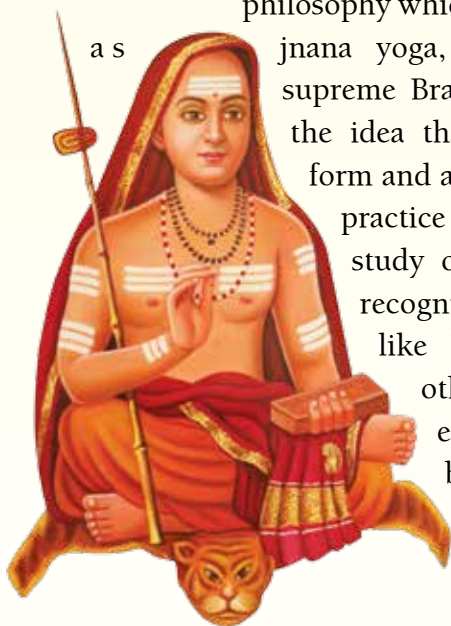
So Lord Buddha taught His followers to purge out all forms of thoughts through meditation. In this logic, the totality of existence must be free from all kinds of thought processes and the consequent sufferings. Given that 'I'ness comes from that what is 'Mine', a Buddhist seriously detaches himself from everything that he may consider his. By annihilating 'Mine',

The concept 'I' also collapses. Thus one enters the region of void. When a practitioner aligns himself to such a concept, he identifies himself to that sense of complete silence which is famously known as Absolute Zero.

This is what is termed as NIRVANA by Lord Buddha - a state where a jiva is completely relieved of material miseries, particularly in the form of lust, greed, anger, pride and illusion. Obviously one feels very light and bliss (negation of miseries - there is no positive bliss). Thus the philosophy of nihilism ends when one loses the so called material 'ness. What is the limitation of Buddhism then? In the process of annihilating all our thought process, we are transported to a state of No Experience - the complete silence. One does not associate with sound, form, touch, smell and taste. Absolute zero means it is a state of complete silence - Nirvana. In Buddhism, Nirvana means reaching the state of absolute zero that means you are not affected by any form of experiences. A sincere buddhist must pursue the complete annihilation of his existence - no activity. For a buddhist, there is no existence. From no existence, comes existence - it doesn't sound like a good argument. If truth is void, what is the necessity of variegated nature of existence? How does experience manifest from zero?

Adi Shankara and Advaita-Vada

From having no experience to having an eternal experience, the Advaita philosophy of Adi Shankaracharya took us a step forward. 'aham brahma asmi' - I eternally exist as a pure state. This philosophy which is popularly known as jnana yoga, rejects diversity of supreme Brahman. It also rejects the idea that the infinity has a form and a personality. By severe practice of austerity and study of Upanisads, a jnani recognizes (can experience like Raman Maharsi and others) that he still exists even in death. But because, the process takes exclusive shelter of intellectual speculation, one falsely identifies himself with oneness of God - I am one with God. 'tattvam asi' - is wrongly interpreted as on perfection one becomes GOD. Historically Absolute One took over the Absolute



Zero - Buddhism was conquered by Advaitavad by the empowered authority - Adi Shankaracharya. Jnana yoga and impersonalists (jnana yogis) have been there since time immemorial - Shukadeva Gosvami, Kumaras, Durvasha and others were great impersonalists before accepting the path of bhakti. In that form, impersonalists realize the brahman aspect of truth. That brahman eternally exists and free from birth, death, old age and disease is the significant contributions to the idea of truth by the jnanis. These jnanis are referred in vedic literature as Brahmavadi. However, the followers of Shankaracharya are called as Mayavada by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as they declare themselves to be God upon attaining so called perfection. How can God be covered by illusion? Although fallacious, Adi Shankaracharya propagated this Mayadava philosophy to establish the path of Veda. Even brahman aspect is very limiting as one has to do the explaining - form comes from form-less, illusion being variegated appears to be superior to Brahman and so forth.

A dhyana yogi goes a step further. Through intense meditation, he recognizes that the supersoul is source of all kinds of information or knowledge that the self perceives (SB 2.2.35).

SB 2.2.35 "The Personality of Godhead Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is in every living being along with the individual soul. And this fact is perceived and hypothesized in our acts of seeing and taking help from the intelligence."

At the state of NIRVANA, they ask this question: 'Wait a moment - I am different from this body, I have no connection with this material elements, who then brings me all these information?' Thus a yogi gets enlightened to see two birds in the same body by following the very strict methods of astanga yoga.

samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno anīśayā śocati muhyamānaḥ / juṣṭaṃ yadā paśyaty anyam īśaṃ asya mahimānam iti vītaśokaḥ // 4.7 // Svetasvatara Upanisad

On the same tree, the individual soul, deluded by forgetfulness of his identity as the servant of Lord Krishna, bewildered by his ego, grieves and sad. But when he recognizes the other as the Lord worshipped by all and His glory, he becomes free from grief.



Absolute Person and Vaisnavism

Absolute Truth is ultimately a person, it is the highest realization and is the core premise on which Vaisnavism is practiced. A pure devotee who is fully surrendered to that Absolute loving person is blessed to realize this highest vedantic conclusion and hence engages himself in the loving devotional service to please that Supreme Person. Lord Krishna happens to be that Absolute Truth and all authorities – Narada, Brhma, Shiva, Vyasa, Adi Shankaracharya, Sri Chaitanya - recognize Him in that way. Lord Krishna is infinite and thus inconceivable. So also

His personality is inconceivable. He can manifest simultaneously at all points of space and time – both material sky and spiritual sky. Nobody can know Him but He can graciously reveal Himself as a relation to a pure Jiva as his father, mother, teacher, master, servant and so forth.

In the introduction to Bhagavad Gita AS IT IS, Srila Prabhupada categorically says that both jnanis and yogis are not eligible to receive Lord Krishna's message as it is. Lord Krishna emphatically declares that Arjuna is His friend and His devotee and thus

He is speaking this most confidential knowledge (the science of relationship with Krishna) to him (Arjuna). Thus Arjuna became a bonafide acharya. A pure devotee or a revealed acharya such as Srila Prabhupada can easily guide us to the platform of our real svarupa that we are eternal servant of Krsna. Before a devotee sadhaka can claim that he is an eternal servant of Krsna, he also needs to annihilate his bodily concept of life. He needs to be completely free from all vices such as lust and greed. Then only he can see everything belongs to Krsna and he is simply a servitor. Interestingly this platform is achieved by simply performing devotional service 24 hours a day without becoming mental about it. While Buddhists, jnanis and yogis perform severe austerities to just come to the platform of no connection with this material world, a sadhaka devotee acts on the same axioms as that of the Absolute Truth without even understanding this subject. Everything is Krishna's and hence everything must be used in His service. That is why the grace of Sri Sri Guru and Krsna are supremely effulgent as all conditioned souls can understand this supremely confidential knowledge with this grace. Srila Prabhupada writes in the purport on **BG 3.42:**

'Lust is reserved within body but it is given vent through senses. However these outlets are not in use when one acts in Krsna Consciousness. In Krsna Consciousness the soul makes direct connection with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. BG 3.42 Purport'

As *Srila Prabhupada* further writes in the purport of **BG 4.25:**

A fruitive worker sacrifices his material possessions to satisfy demigods for greater sense enjoyments. An impersonalist sacrifices his identity to merge with the Supreme. While a Krsna conscious person sacrifices everything for the pleasure of Krsna without losing his individual existence.

It is very important to note that a sadhaka needs to sacrifice everything - time, sleep, energy, activity, body - for the pleasure of Krsna. This is the same message that Lord Kapila gave to mother Devahuti that one needs to perform serious devotional service in order to get rid of material engagement and to get back to one's original Svarupa.

In the purport of **BG 5.7** *Srila Prabhupada* writes: A devotee does not like to hear anything except topics relating Krsna. He does not like to eat anything which is not offered to Krsna. He does not wish to go anywhere if Krsna is not involved.Therefore his senses are controlled.

Thus a sadhaka devotee attains his spiritual svarupa by performing 24 hours devotional service per day starting with the chanting of Hare Krsna Mahamantra. In this process 'I and MINE' do not exist in the axioms of devotional practices so also they do not exist in the state of perfection.

In Absolute Person Exists Absolute Zero and Absolute One

In Absolute Zero, there is no existence and hence there is no need for God in this conception. In Absolute One, there is one eternal existence called Brahman having no form and personality. Even this brahmananda state has no activity. In Absolute Person, the pure existence is a person having unlimited diversity. Sound, touch, form, taste and smell have divine existence. This unlimited and diverse person has unlimited relationships with tiny souls – thus exhibiting His divine opulence which a fully surrendered devotee can realize and relish the nectar of transcendental mellows while rendering loving devotional service.

It becomes very easy to explain the diversity of this ephemeral existence by accepting that Absolute Truth is a personality and His inconceivable personality includes within Him His dwelling place, unlimited devotees, kalpatarus, kamadhenus, Yamuna and other rivers, Govardhana and other hills, and many other opulence beyond our experiences and imaginations. This material world is just a reflection of that spiritual world. There is spiritual sound that is why we have material sound. There is a spiritual form that's why we have here material forms. It is Lord Krishna's internal potency that gives rise to infinite spiritual planets while He manifests infinite material universes through His external potency.

Lord Krishna is one without a second, but when He desires to celebrate His own opulence, He becomes Many. That is His inconceivable personality. We can hear it and appreciate it but we cannot conceive this inconceivable personality. We cannot understand how He manifests unlimited worlds with unlimited variegatedness so effortlessly. His inconceivable persona includes the totality of existence. Hence He is Absolute ONE. Although there are varieties of activities in Him, still He does

not act. He is Prashanta – complete silence. In this sense, He is also Absolute Zero. Hence Buddhists and Impersonalists must take interest in the science of Krishna Consciousness so that they can properly understand what Absolute Zero is and what Absolute One is. Let's take joy in Krishna consciousness and relish the philosophical beauty of Krishna's concept of infinity.





KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS FOR CHILDREN TODAY

By Dr. Uma Wari & Bharat Chandra Dasa

“Krishna Consciousness” or Bhakti-yoga is such a sublime process that ācāryas and scriptures describe that even a child or even a dog can take part in it and progress towards the great journey back home back to Godhead.

In fact, Krishna consciousness should be taken up right from very beginning of life i.e., during childhood days. This crucial growth story of developing a loving relationship with the Supreme Lord should not be missed in a child’s life. In other words, Parents play a very important role in bringing up their children oriented towards self-realization. Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (5.5.18) declares as follows: **gurur na sa syāt sva-jano na sa syāt pitā na sa syāj jananī na sā syāt daivam na tat syān na patīś ca sa syān na mocayed yaḥ samupeta-mṛtyum**

“ One who cannot deliver his dependents from the path of repeated birth and death should never become a spiritual master, a father, a husband, a mother or a worshipable demigod.”

The present day challenges are perhaps ‘severe’ in rearing children in Krishna consciousness. Surveys show that **children are spending half as much time outdoors playing as they did 20 years ago.**¹ Rather, more and more children are getting hung up on screens and becoming ‘screen slaves’. A study in USA reveals that **children of age group, 8-18 years old, spend an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes using entertainment media in a typical day (more than 53 hours a week).**² A recent study by Common Sense Media, a parent advocacy group,



found that 59 percent of parents think that their teens are addicted to mobile devices. Meanwhile, 50 percent of teenagers feel the same way about themselves. On the other hand, a survey shows that over 50 percent of children think that their parents spend too much time with technology than with them.³ These figures are staggering and a worldwide phenomenon!

This can be correlated to another observation that there has been an unprecedented rise in the number of children being diagnosed with mental disorders due to the daily use of media and technology.⁴ Children as low as 0-6 years can show signs of mood disorders, anxiety, depression, schizoid thinking, attention deficit, hyperactivity, autism, dyslexia, delinquency, insomnia, aggression, narcissistic personality disorder, emotional deprivation, victimization, social isolation, cognitive impairment, reduced prosocial behavior, sociopathy, psychopathy, anorexia, obsessive compulsive disorders, etc.⁵ Although many of the mental disorders are in some way hereditary, the lifestyle factors could trigger them very easily. In any case, evidence that the increase in the number of mental health disorders among children has always something to do with the television, computer, the Internet and the Smartphone. These technologies interfere with social, emotional, physical and spiritual development of a child. The screen addiction is something like a moth rushing towards a blazing fire for sense gratification but later getting destroyed by it.⁶

Further, the modern day schooling is not helping the situation. When children reach the age five (or even before) and enter school, the time allowed for free play starts to disappear. Playtime is replaced with play periods and slowly by play-dates, often structured by elders. Modern day schools are cutting down on recess time because of fears of liability and the need to increase time for academics.

With such disappearance of childhood in the 21st century a new era of disturbed society has just begun to appear. This is just the tip of an iceberg. Responsible citizens can indeed recognize this as alarming!

The role of the parents therefore becomes very crucial. Parents affect what children experience

in following ways: by way of giving permission to children to do certain things and to not do certain things; by regulating their time spent on various activities; by influencing the space and location children engage in; by controlling their choice of association to certain extent; and finally, by providing or denying resources to them.

At this juncture, the natural question of parents is: How can we train or guide children in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this modern scenario? The answer is that children need to be guided in their own language. And, the language of children is – to play. This was how Srila Prabhupada wanted.

“Make Vaikuṅṭha. That is my request. **Teach from the very beginning of life.** Just like bāla-kṛīḍā, Bāla-kṛīḍanakaiḥ kṛīḍān. By playing, he’s becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious.... **Just produce a new generation,** just like Parīkṣit Mahārāja. Bāla-kṛīḍanakaiḥ, from very childhood. ..Kṛṣṇa-yoga, (or) **bhakti-yoga, can be practiced even by a child without interfering with his natural propensities...** Without any education, without any knowledge. There is no need of high-grade knowledge or education to understand...It is already there in everyone’s heart...It is not that one has to learn it artificially by some gymnastic. No, natural. Just like the children here, they are also dancing with their parents. They are offering flower, trying to imitate how to chant (mahā mantra). And they are very much pleased. So similarly...**these things (should be)...introduced, kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍā. So some way or other, they should be engaged in kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍā.** It doesn’t matter whether (the child) understands it or not...”

(A.C.Bhaktivedānta Swāmi Prabhupāda, Lecture on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 2.3.14-15, Los Angeles, May 31, 1972).

In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, a very interesting point is made with regards to childhood engagement of a great devotee and a king called Parīkṣit Mahārāja. It is said that even as a child, when King Parīkṣit used to play with toys and dolls or while playing with his childhood friends, he was conscious of Kṛṣṇa always.⁷ In interpreting this interesting statement about King Parīkṣit, Śrīla Jīva Goswāmi provides wonderful insight as follows:



yā yā śrī kṛṣṇasya vṛndāvanādaḥ bālakṛīḍā śrutastī, tat premāveṣena tat sakhyādi bhāvavān tām tāmeva kṛīḍām kṛtavān ityarthah | The descriptions of wonderful varieties of childhood pastimes performed by the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa were heard by young Parīkṣit. Young Parīkṣit would then play all those games to replay the pastimes in the mood of friendship with the Lord due to being overcome by love for the Lord .

–Śrī Jīva Goswāmi in *Krama Sandarbha*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Kṛṣṇa is known as Līlā Puruṣottama or the most playful personality. His wonderful playful pastimes should be described to the children in detail. In this regard, we have come up with a publication called “Kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍā, The Art of Engaging Children’s Playful Attitude”. Indeed it is one of the 64 traditional arts known as “Bala-kṛīḍānakāni”. The publication details around 35 varieties of games played by the Supreme Lord (both free unstructured play and organized games) in sakhya-rasa with His cowherd friends.

This art of engaging children’s playful attitude in Kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍā is to be mastered by the parents and elders in the family. It is the elders in the family who stand to be gained in turn. That gain is eternal, blissful and full of knowledge. Therefore, the parents naturally feel obliged to their children who are advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, just as a spiritual master feels towards his disciple.

The science of bhakti-yoga as propounded by Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmi in *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu* is the most important in this journey. Children are just like flower buds. For them to fully blossom, they need to be nurtured, protected and facilitated in Kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍā. They are not ordinary children.

Smoke-like devotional service (known as bhakti-ābhāsa) is not sufficient although it indicates existence of fire. Only flame-like devotional service can do the job, just like cooking is not possible with smoke but flame.⁸

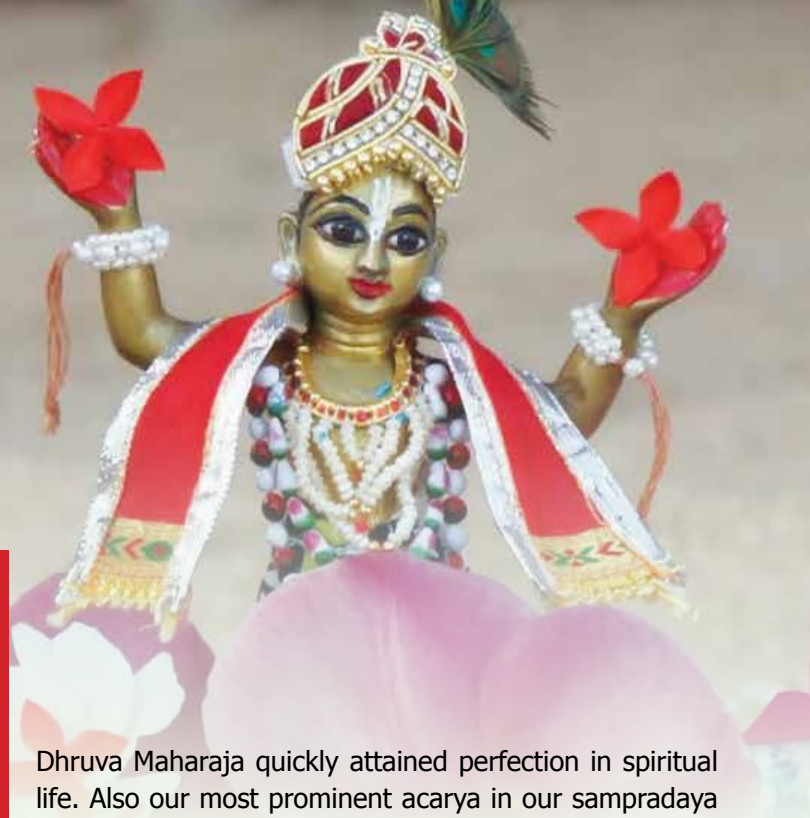
The more the children are engaged in Kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍā, the more the flame of devotional service will increase. The parents should not think that education and love of God are different. They both are the same subject matter.⁹

An integral part of Kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍā is the pastime of grazing the cows. The grazing grounds (gochara-bhūmi) in the forests of vraja are also the playgrounds (kṛīḍābhūmi) for Lord Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd friends. In other words, such an environment is itself a stimulus to arouse sakhya-rasa and madhurya-rasa. Children who also get to graze the calves and take part in Kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍā in open grounds are most fortunate. Parents should very sensitively and carefully provide opportunities to children for such a spiritual engagement. Thus the culture of Kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍā is to bring the Vrindavan atmosphere right into our homes, our locality, our village or city, in our country and ultimately in the whole world. In fact, the whole world is a playground for The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His associates (“kṛīḍārtham ātmana idaṁ tri-jagat kṛtaṁ te”, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 8.22.20).

This culture of Kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍā should be spread everywhere.

May our children be protected from wrong influences! May the Supreme Lord’s pastimes become the object of their life!

1. (Juster et al 2004); (Burdette & Whitaker 2005); (Kuo & Sullivan 2001)
2. Generation M2 – Media in the lives of 8-18 years, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010
3. Kids Competing with Mobile Phones for Parents’ Attention, NYSE: AVG, 2015
4. Dr. Larry Rosen, idisorder, 2011; <http://drlarryrosen.com/2011/03/idisorder/>
5. Alison Parkes, Helen Sweeting et al, Do television and electronic games predict children’s psychosocial adjustment? Arch Dis Child, 2011-301508
6. pralobhitātmā hy upabhoga-buddhyā pataṅga-van naśyati naṣṭa-dṛṣṭiḥ (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11.8.8)
7. sa vai bhāgavato rājā pāṇḍaveyo mahā-rathah, bāla-kṛīḍānakaiḥ kṛīḍan kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍām ya ādāde (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 2.3.15)
8. Śrīla Prabhupāda, Lecture, Bhagavag-gītā, 17.1-3, Honolulu, July 4, 1974
9. na caite pṛitivyutpattiḥ bhinnarūpe eva dvayor api eka viṣayatvāt – (Abhinavagupta, Abhinavabhāratī)



THE IMPORTANCE OF DEITY WORSHIP FOR CHILDREN.

By HG Mukunda Datta Das

Throughout the Vedic literatures, our gaudiya vaisnava literatures, which are the essence of all scriptures, deity worship has been explained as one of the most important limbs of devotional service. Although in the age of Kali the chanting of the holy names is considered most important, without deity worship the neophyte devotee will hardly be able to realize that Krishna Nama and Krishna are non different. Krishna svarupa, the eternal form of Krishna, the **Supreme Personality of Godhead**, has to be approached through a service attitude, seva bhava, seva vritti, and then of course practical service has to be offered. Therefore, to engage the sadhaka in the practical service of the Lord, the acaryas have established the worship of the Lord in the temple, arca vigraha seva. The arca vigraha, also known as arca avatara, is non different from the original form of the Lord. The worship of the deities has to be performed as described in the scriptures, as explained by the Supreme Lord Himself, as Krishna spoke to His dear devotee Uddhava in the Srimad Bhagavatam, or as explained by the devotees of the Lord. Under the guidance of the spiritual master, Sri Guru, the worship has to be performed, according to time, place and circumstances.

The worship of the deities in the temples is most elaborate. At home, or in personal worship of a devotee, the service is simplified, but the principles are the same. Similarly for the children deity worship is very essential. Again referring to the scriptures we can see many examples of great acaryas instructing children in the worship of the Lord. Narada Muni instructed the 5 year old boy, son of a king, who had left to the forest, named Dhruva Maharaja in worshipping the Lord and also told him to chant the mantra **"om namo bhagavate vasudevaya"**. Following the advice of Narada Muni little

Dhruva Maharaja quickly attained perfection in spiritual life. Also our most prominent acarya in our sampradaya Srila Rupa Gosvami instructed his nephew Sri Jiva in worshipping Sri Damodara Krishna.

Although these are examples of great teachers and exalted students we can practically see the results of deity worship of anyone who takes it up seriously. The children are very fond of playing, naturally, which they should do also, but if they are induced to take care of deities, many times just as in play, or as in imitation of the adults they will get the benefit of this simple seva and there will be reciprocation with the Lord, they will become attached to the Lord.

But the teachers, parents, guardians should supervise their service, encourage them to improve the service, perfect the service. Of course at the same time the children should be encouraged to chant the holy names, the maha mantra **"Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, and also they have to regularly hear about Krishna,"** about Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu so that they may get the full result of this worship. And this will make them good devotees of the Lord and also they will be able to perform nicely their academical studies and become good citizens of this world, following also varna ashrama dharma. Therefore in our Bhaktivedanta Gurukula our students are encouraged to worship the Deities and they are also practically doing that very nicely. In the various ashramas in our Gurukula Sri Sri Gaur Nitai are worshiped and also individually those at home they are very nicely engaged in deity worship. It is a great source of inspiration for all and the benefits are unlimited.

In conclusion, deity worship is a must for all sincere persons for perfect development of character and then also to set an example for others to follow. Hare Krishna. OM TAT SAT.



A POEM FOR SRILA PRABHUPADA

Descended from the spiritual sky.

By Kush Thripathi Grade 8

Upon Krsna's mercy did you rely,
You preached your message to all you may,
With Krsna in your heart, you never faced any
defeat.
While you pursued your studies, Gandhi caught your
eye,
India's independence- the British system to decry,
But one day, by the stubbornness of one mate,
You met your Guru Maharaja, as ordained by fate.
You took to heart the words of the great saint,
With full faith, determination and showing no
restrain,
You preached the whole world the divine message
enthusiastically,
Sometimes tired yourself physically.
No one can challenge your divine ability,
And all was accomplished with greatest humility,
All who got your blessings were released from their
bad karma,
And now so many are on the path of Sanatana
dharma.
Your Iskcon family is offering you a spiritual Oasis,
Where Harinaam and the books are the basis,
A prasadam restaurant to inspire the masses,
To chant and hear Bhagvatam classes.
Your glorious movement will expand with love and
trust,
As long as we are free from false ego and lust,
And, your books daily, we faithfully read,
But most importantly is your causeless mercy that
we need.

MY EXPERIENCE OF LIVING IN VRINDAVAN

By Nikunj Papneja, Grade 8

'VRINDAVAN' – I got introduced to this holy and auspicious place when I was just 45 days old. My parents brought me here to seek blessing and love of Shree Thakurji and thus my journey to Shree Vrindavan Dham began. I was even named by my Guruji right at the premises of Shri Thakurji's temple at that time. My parents told me that Guruji selected my name 'Nikunj' as according to him it is the place where Shree Lal Ju and Ladli ju is present every time in 'Nitya Vihar'. So from the early days of my childhood, I was crazy for Vrindavan. I used to hear a lot of pastimes of Shri Thakurji from my parents and grandparents. I used to visit Vrindavan approximately five to six times in a year. And finally a day came, 30th March 2016, when finally due to the mercy of Ladli Ji Maharani, we shifted to Vrindavan. We shifted as I wanted to get religious education, to learn the recitation of Bhagwat Gita and of course to immerse myself in the love of My Lord. Vrindavan is a place where one can relax; feel calm, cool and spiritually ecstatic. In fact, I feel every soul is looking for such a peaceful destination which is attached to God. Vrindavan is a wine which intoxicates us forever. I repeat forever. This place is filled with pure love for Krsna, his gopis and eternal love of Radha Krishna. One can feel that love every moment as long as he lives in VRINDAVAN. Every moment one can feel the existence of Krishna in the atmosphere of Vrindavan. Only Krishna can make a living being happy. Initially I was confused to see people as to how they could become detached from the outer world. But now after living here, I feel different. Life is not the same ever since I came to live here. I have left all those activities that used to keep me engaged for the whole day. As soon as one becomes free here, he starts chanting or listening to lectures. Actually there is no free time here. There is 'Thakur seva' in almost every house that keeps them engaged in one 'arti' to another or in one 'bhoga' to other. Vrindavan actually is a culture in itself. I feel that if we don't have vrindavan in our lives then we are missing out the fun. The culture of Vrindavan is to be Krishna conscious all the time. When you walk on the road, you

can read 'Jai Shri Radhe' written on trees and walls. You can hear devotees chanting Mahamantra everywhere; you can hear 'bhajans' everywhere you go. The banks of river Yamuna and the beautiful peacocks make it the most wonderful place on the earth. The devotion of devotees in VRINDAVAN is ineffable. We see all types of best devotees of Krishna from different 'sampradayas' in Vrindavan. There are many devotees here who have kicked off from the wealth of millions to basic amenities of life for Krishna.

The aim of life should be to be in Vrindavan. The permanent goal of life should be to have Vrindavan consciousness in our lives. VRINDAVAN consciousness is simply to give pleasure to Krishna and not to expect anything in return except the opportunity to serve.

WHY SHOULD I LIVE A DISCIPLINED LIFE?

By Luv Thripathi, Grade 8

Discipline is an important virtue. Life, without discipline is just like a ship without a rudder. It is absolutely necessary for succeeding in life. Discipline refers to orderliness in life which results from our adherence to certain code of conduct prepared by learned people. We observe discipline in nature. The earth and moon revolve around the sun in a disciplined way. As a result, night and day recur after twelve hours. We experience the cycle of seasons on earth, it's all because of discipline. It is essential for us at home, for students it is essential at school or college, for players it is essential in the playground and for soldiers it is essential in the battlefield. A team of experienced players often loose because of lack of discipline. A fearsome battle can be won by a disciplined army. Discipline is very important in a student's life. He must obey his teachers. He must abide by the rules in school. If he violates them, he suffers a great deal in future. Only a disciplined student can achieve success.

Discipline plays an important role in building up a nation. It has good impact on a child's mind too. He passes through different stages of discipline to be able to become a civilized citizen in future. He leads a decent life. Self discipline is very important. Spiritual people practice it to attain the goal of life or Krsna. Self discipline is restraining our unruly desires and ugly impulses. Thus discipline is essential everywhere.

MY REAL HERO UTSTAV

My hero is my father.

By Utstav, Grade 8

Do people talk about him rather;
I can't pay him back ever,
Because he kept us like a loving dear father.
The problems he faced were a lot,
But he continuously fought;
We didn't do very good,
But he did what ever he could.
He suffered a lot,
But then also he never said 'I could not';
He faced problems in his business,
But he always behaves with politeness.
My father was discriminated,
But from his side he remained impartial.
He is a self made man,
And he had all the qualities that a man should have.
Dear children, its just not about my father,
All parents suffer usually or rather,
So do respect your mother and father,
And have a loving family together.

MY MEMORIES WITH TEACHERS

By Prahlad Nimalan, Grade 9

DEAR TEACHERS.....

Like a candle that burns itself to spread light
You gave us the path that was right
By working hard day and night
You gave us the real sight
You have made our lives blossom
With an extra ting of awesome
You gave us the most proper feature
No matter what I will be proud to call you a TEACHER
You are my no.1 preacher
No wonder you are my teachers
You gave me values with lots of laugh and cheer!
I am so happy for you are my teacher
You helped me with many hurdles
And also helped me cross those problems
You are my no.1 there is no doubt
And will always be throughout.



ISKCON POEM

By Mohan Srivastava, Grade 9

It all began with just a few sentences,
His Guru asked him to reduce western grievances.
These words, he carried, in the core of his heart,
Though he faced struggles, he did not fall apart.
Determined he was and his aim was clear,
To deliver the fallen souls, from this sphere.
Began commenting books and printed "Back
to Godhead". He tried everything to make his
message spread.
His efforts were worthy but Indians uninterested,
He thought of going out and makes the western
interested.
He finally got Jaladuta with the help of Morarji,
Thus he left India to show the world his mercy.
The western were perplexed and their lives
distressed,
No culture and no manners could not even be
dressed.
They were looking for happiness, like wanderers
for food, Thus, he had come there, to teach them
ultimate good.
With just a few youngsters, ISKCON came into
being,
With the great ideas, began the historical thing.
People could find real happiness there,
They chanted and danced and overcame their
fears.

Slowly and slowly it further expanded,
And became the only thing that people
demanded.
Day by day beautiful temples came up,
Western world civilized when bad habits, they
gave up.
But he was anxious to spread it further,
He came back to India and preached every
corner.
Food distribution, village preaching and able
speakers he made,
He pulled out everyone from the darkness of
Maya's shade.
He continued writing books for people's
betterment,
He worked hard day and night to spread this
movement.
He finally succeeded in what he dreamt of,
A feeling of satisfaction though the way was
tough.
Christians and Muslims and Hindus were now
free of enmity,
They realized that their purpose was to spread
humanity.
The world was now overjoyed with
transcendental environment,
He brought the world in peace by his
movement.
He did, what no one could in several centuries,
The messenger of God – Bhaktivedanta Swami.



ONE WHO HAS GIVEN THE TOLERANCE POWER?

One who has given the tolerance power
To bear all the odds or adversities of life is
you.

One who has given the courage,
to live alone in this world is you.

One who has given the power,
to discriminate between right and wrong is
you.

One who has given the strength,
to control our senses is you.

One who has given the intelligence,
to ponder or to contemplate is you.

One who has given everlasting internal
happiness,
to remain cool and calm is you.

One who has given the divine knowledge of
Bhagwad Gita,
to put into practice or implement in life is you.
And, at last

One who was, who is and who will always
remain with me is,
you only you my Spiritual Master.

You still exist in this world in the form of your
preaching's and divine songs. We human
beings come and go but you remain
Forever in this world for us and for the coming
generations, to show them the right path.

WHO AM I?

By Animesh, Grade 7

Who am I? Do you know that who are you? Has any one asked you that who are you? Can you answer that? Today I Animesh Singh of class 7th will tell you who are you and who am I? First to tell you about who am I? I will tell you a story; there was a man, one day he went to the park and he met a priest there; he asked, what do you do and who are you? The priest asked how, from the body or from the soul? The man said what are you saying? He said from my body I am a priest from the main side of mine I am a soul and my duty is to serve Krishna the supreme personality of godhead. Then the man also came to know that our body is not permanent but our soul is permanent. The lesson we learn is that your soul has come inside your body for a limited amount of time.



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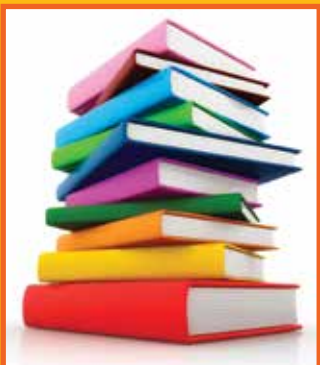
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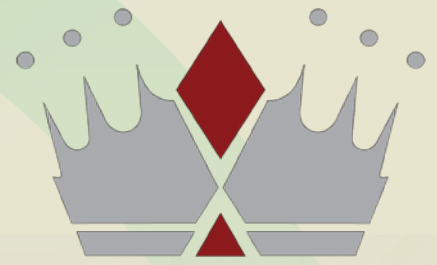
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