



Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International School



Founder-Acarya A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
The Magazine of BGIS | 2011-12

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Contents

School Song	02
Directors' Message	03
Letters	04
School Events 2011-12	05
Brilliant Performers	06
Students Diary	07
The Goal of Education	08
The Benefits of Mastering the Mind	09
Spiritual English	10
Education means Character Building	11
Time Management	12
The Transcendental Mridanga	13
Panchjanya	14
Investing into Future	15
The most Munificent	16
Deliverance of Sri Prakashananda Sarsvati	17

Vasanti Rasa

(Amorous Pastimes in the Spring)

vṛndāvana ramya-sthāna divya-ciñtāmaṇi-dhāma
ratana-mandira manohara
abṛta kālindī-nīre rāja-haṁsa keli kare
tāhe śobhe kanaka-kamala

tāra madhye hema-pīṭha aṣṭa-dale beṣṭita
aṣṭa-dale pradhānā nāyikā
tāra madhye ratnāsane ba'si āchen dui-jane
śyāma-saṅge sundarī rādhikā

o-rūpa-lābaṇya-rāśi amiya pariche khasi
hāsyā-parihāsa-sambhāṣaṇe
narottama-dāsa kaya nitya-lilā sukha-maya
sadāi sphurūka mora mane

Narottama Das Thakura

The beautiful place known as Vāndāvana is a transcendental abode in the spiritual world and is made entirely of divine touchstones. There are many beautiful temples made out of jewels, and swans known as rāja-haṁsa play in the waters of the River Yamunā, which flows through that transcendental land. In the water of that divine river there is a beautiful golden lotus of a hundred petals.

In the midst of that lotus, there is a golden platform surrounded by eight petals. Situated upon those eight petals are the principal sakhés, headed by Lalitā and Viçākhā. On that golden platform, the Divine Couple sit upon a jewelled throne. In the company of Lord Çyāma sits the beautiful Rādhikā.

The beauty and sweetness of Çré Rādhā and Govinda's forms during Their talks, which are filled with smiles and laughter, is emanating showers of nectar. Narottama dāsa says: "May these eternal pastimes, filled with transcendental joy, be ever manifest in my heart."

Dear Students, Parents and Well wishers



Hare Krishna. This issue of BGIS annual magazine will update you regarding the various student activities that took place during last one year as well as achievements of our students.

I am happy to announce that our students have brought laurels for the school by showing excellent academic performance at the board examinations of Standards X and XII in 2012. I am sure that these students will strive hard to achieve professional excellence further and will one day occupy important positions of responsibility in the society. I wish that these students will carry the impressions of the Krishna conscious culture with them to mold themselves into persons of character and will perpetuate the message of Lord Krishna to world at large.

It is a moment of pride to let you know that BGIS publishing house has brought out Samskrit text books for standards VI, VII, and VIII. This is a complete in-house effort where each topic have been derived based on Bhagavata teachings. Interested persons can download these copies from our web-site. We hope to bring our more such in-house publications.

Because of causeless mercy of Srila Prabhupada, a historic milestone has been achieved by acquiring approximately 100 acres of land for the relocation of our Gurukula and Temple Goshala. It seems that the new place is associated with the pastimes of killing of Aghasura. I appeal to all our well-wishers to come forward with generous spirit to build a world-class gurukula infrastructure for our kids. I also solicit your advice and guidance in this regard.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

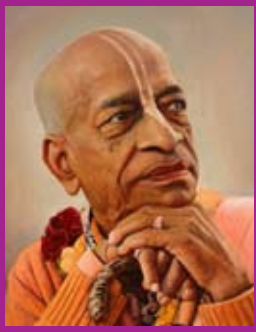
Lila Purusottama dasa

"Education means to lead the people gradually to Krsna consciousness. "

Srila Prabhupada

Lecture SB 1.3.20 Los Angeles 1972

FROM 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 work.

So you can try 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 purpose. 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-abiding, 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 Satsvarupa Das Goswami Maharaj (71-12-17)

FROM GBC



Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. The world today is bereft of men of character and competence, both spiritually and materially. This training is required from the very beginning of student age when the child is most receptive. However as Srila Prabhupad wanted, the children

need to be dealt with love, for them to grow naturally. So imparting the knowledge, training, spiritual culture, making them imbibe the moral and ethical values based on scriptures, while at the same time giving them love so that they would look forward to the education and training should be the main goal of our Gurukula. Then we can fulfill the dream of Srila Prabhupad of creating model citizens.

I am happy that this year the Gurukula has reached the maximum capacity of 250 students. The Gurukula is looking for expansion in the new building. The present Vrindavana Gurukula under the able guidance and leadership of HG Lila Purushottama Prabhu and his team has been working hard to this end and I wish them all success in their divine endeavor

Your well wisher in service of Srila Prabhupad,

Gopal Krishna Goswami

(GBC & BBT Trustee)



Dear Staff Members,



Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupad.

If I were asked to name the one thing which is most important to the success of any endeavor, I would answer without hesitation, good people. Good people make the difference.

Vaisnavas are good people. A Vaisnava is para dukha dukhi, unable to tolerate the sufferings of others and always ready to work for the benefit of the distressed. My observations of you and your work at the Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International School have confirmed for me that this definition is aptly applied to you all. The continued success of your efforts in ISKCON Education shows you to be as hard working, self-sacrificing and caring as any group of Vaisnavas in the service of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupad.

Because you are good people you patiently provide for every need of your students.

Because you are good people you tolerate personal inconvenience to train your students in the highest standards of spiritual conduct and character.

Because you are good people you cooperate to fulfill Srila Prabhupad's desire for gurukula.

Your service is not easy, and the rewards are not always immediately apparent. Therefore, I want to let you and the entire ISKCON society know that your efforts are making a difference.

You are making a difference in the lives of your students.

You are making a difference in the lives of those who come in contact with your students.

You are making a difference in the public perception of Srila Prabhupad's gurukula concept.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for your service.

Sesa Das
GBC Minister of Education Development

FROM EX-STUDENTS

I think I should thank you for keeping me in Gurukula. Now that there are so many changes in my life, I feel that there is always one person with me and that is Krishna and by holding on to Him my life will become sublime. Thank you very much.

Nanda Gopal,
BGIS Graduate 2006, MP

I feel I am one of the luckiest persons in the world, because I was able to live 8 years as a Gurukula Student.

Gopinath Bhadra
BGIS Graduate 2006, Belgium

Today I feel very proud to have been a part of Srila Prabhupad's School. Here I got a through understanding of both the worlds. I am very thankful.

Saurabh Maheshwari
BGIS Graduate 2006, Delhi

Everything that I learnt while a student at BGIS, has some practical value in my life today. From the austerity to the unity and teamwork as well as the simplicity. It instilled in me the values with which I am living and hope to live a life full of KC and virtue and to give more to humanity."

Jagdish
BGIS graduate 06

The Goal of Education

Dr. Lila Purusottama Das

Seers in the past advocated of an education that helps one to attain freedom from nescience. In fact, a gifted individual with no morals is a threat to the society. Of late, the primary objectives have been to impart skills that will help our kids to make a career. We teach history to enable students to understand human behavior. Science is taught to understand the physical world. Mathematics is taught to quantify the world around us. We use the language to describe the world. Human creativity is nurtured through arts and culture. In spite of all our endeavors, we have failed to create people of character. This article will critically look at the model of education as imparted worldwide today.



Plan for the Future

The school going kids today will be retiring around 2080AD. The school going kids of 1940s who are now retired from their active professional life didn't anticipate many emerging issues such as global warming, complex health issues, a global population explosion and other environmental and social issues. It is very difficult to predict the state of the world in the next 10 years, what to speak of the world in 2080? In this sense any education curriculum will not be able to take into account of all situations for which an individual can be trained.

The kids today have become iKids due to the information explosion. Although they have access to information of the whole world through the fancy gadgets like i-phones and tablets, they have little experience of the real-world. Recently, a teacher of the school where my daughter studies

informed that most kids answered that milk is available in shops when asked who gives us milk. It is a systemic failure that has lead to our kids adapting to more of self-centric views.

The success of science and the corresponding technological advancement has mostly influenced the present pattern of education in schools and Universities. It is worthwhile to go back to the history of modern science & technology that has dictated the present schooling system.

Impact of Technology

1st	The Industrial Revolution (Britain)	1770-1800
2nd	The Age of Steam and Railways (Britain, spreading to Europe and the USA)	1830-1850
3rd	The Age of Steel, Electricity and Heavy Engineering (Germany and USA overtake Britain)	1860-1900
4th	The Age of Oil, Synthetics and Mass Production (USA, spreading to Europe)	1930-1970
5th	The Age of Information and Telecommunications (USA, spreading to Europe and Asia)	1980 onwards

Table 1: Five Major Technological Transformations

As Perez [1] has enumerated five major technological transformations as shown in Table 1, the focus of education has been primarily to sustain city life. As a result out-flux from villages into cities have increased in a proportion that city population worldwide has overtaken village population in 2007 according to IBM research. Since the time of the industrial revolution in 18th century, many people have been displaced from their land and are forced to work in crowded city factories. Thus the population shifted from villages to the cities. Strong family ties, self sufficiency and the right to occupy land are replaced with uncertain tenancy of land, dependency on trade and a weakening of the family unit.

The family unit is even more vulnerable today with soaring divorce rates. The rate of teenage suicides has increased manifold. Most people of the society are either heavily mortgaged to banks or paying high rents. Not many years ago, Indian villages used to be self-sufficient. No one can be self-sufficient in a world governed by free trade as few capitalists own most of the resources.

Advances in technology are not equitably shared within society. People with money have more opportunity to acquire technology, which enables them to acquire even more wealth. For example, John D. Rockefeller, the richest ever businessman in American history, owned a significant part of the country's GDP, because of his monopoly over the

oil industry. In India also a major portion of GDP is owned by a few business groups like the Ambanis and Birlas. Power and wealth are intrinsically tied together. Moreover war has been and will continue to be the driving force for technology and innovation.

It seems thus the entire education set-up worldwide is sacrificing our children to serve a few capitalists and factories dedicated to produce defense products.

Genetically Modified Seeds and Animals



A great threat to the world is imposed by a few individuals who want to control all the world's food and textiles through genetically modified (GM) seeds and animals. Genetically modified crops that are dependent on pesticides contaminate organic and heritage seeds that have sustained people for thousands of years. GM is a tax on everyone because a patent will be on every seed and seeds are made to be sterile the following year. The greedy corporations and individuals that want control over our food, water and land, do not care about the irreversible damage to the environment. These modern developments are not highlighted in school curriculum. Rather, in a camouflage manner, kids are trained in genetics such that they can be used by such unscrupulous individuals at a later date.

Where Lies the Problem?

The 17th century scientific revolution shifted science from a focus on understanding nature, or wisdom, to a focus on manipulating nature, i.e. power. Science's emphasis on manipulating nature leads it inevitably to manipulate people.

In the name of science, a lot of misconceptions are being propagated to mislead people in general and youth in particular. One can refer Science's First Mistake [2] for many illusions in the name of science. It is not that scientific

methodologies were non-existent during the pre-modern era. Rather science was embedded into living styles in ancient India to make people follow the path of simple living and high thinking. For example, the Indian broom is so designed that it can clean the floor while not killing the ants and other insects. The modern day vacuum cleaner cleans the floor but also kills ants and other insects by sucking them in.

Scientific Concepts in Veda

In the Vedas there are many amazing scientific propositions. For example Lord Brahma's life span is declared to be 311 trillion 40 billion years – a very large number even in the modern astronomical time scale. The diameter of the universe in Srimad Bhagavatam is stated to be 4 billion miles and unit of time is calculated as a measure of atomic vibration (Maitreya's teaching to Vidura). Vedic cosmology provides models that can be used to predict lunar and solar eclipses as well as planetary positions.

There is a historical narration in Srimad Bhagavatam in which Kardama Muni travelled in a space-ship across the universe with his wife Devahuti. Kardama's space-mansion had a lake in which the artificial swans were so real that real swans hugged them. Nuclear weapons were used in Mahabharata battle. There is a wonderful narration in Vishnu Purana where Markendeya Rsi contemplates on infinity: if ONLY one jiva is delivered to the spiritual world over one kalpa (one kalpa is 4.3 million years), even then infinite jivas must have returned back to Godhead. How is it that this material creation still has infinite jivas?



It will be prudent to present such scientific concepts in our education curriculum – not in a dogmatic style – rather to help our kids to challenge their scientific creativity. This will help our kids in two ways. Since Vedic literature like Srimad Bhagavatm emphasizes on Absolute devotion to Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, students will imbibe top-most characters. When these students are blessed to encode the

scientific concepts given in these literatures, then such a science will bring in synergy among all aspects of creation – from all forms of living entities to natural creations such as hills, forests and rivers. It is possible that such a science will inspire people to adopt a life of minimal needs while contemplating on the goal of life such as nature of spirit and matter.

The Need of the Hour

Science includes science of spirit and science of matter [3]. Science of matter should be pursued as a sub-goal of the science of spirit. All living beings have a symbiotic relationship with each other and there is a science to lead a life in harmony and synergy. All forms of knowledge spring from the Absolute Person [3]. Thus in all ages, the society adopted a science based on the level of spiritual values.

The animal and plant kingdom need to be preserved and expanded so also water resources such as rivers, lakes and ponds. Instead of pushing everybody to urban-centric life, villages have to be protected through sustainable cow protection, organic farming, natural water harvesting, and energy management. Knowledge generation is a key component to achieve these objectives.

These days all goshalas run in charity and are not economically viable. Science of cow-protection should develop a complementary use of cow-products in terms of dairy items, medicine and energy while allowing cows to have enough grazing lands. Given present scenario of environmental crisis, scientific methodologies should be developed to make organic farming economically sustainable. Health care system needs to be developed primarily based on reforming the life-styles.

Conclusion

Learned circles have positively concluded that the infallible purpose of the advancement of knowledge, namely austerities, study of the Vedas, sacrifice, chanting of hymns and charity, culminates in the transcendental descriptions of the Lord, who is defined in choice poetry. SB 1.5.22

Srila Prabhupada writes in purport [4]:

Human intellect is developed for advancement of learning in art, science, philosophy, physics, chemistry, psychology, economics, politics, etc. By culture of such knowledge the human society can attain perfection of life. This perfection of life culminates in the realization of the Supreme Being, Krishna.

Thus it is important to recognize that all forms of education

must enlighten an individual in some aspect of the Absolute Truth. To this end, educational skills such as science, language and art must be developed to keep a healthy balance of city and village life while maintaining a synergy with nature and environment. However, the emphasis must remain in building theistic characters of our kids. Thus it is a challenge for educationists to develop such a model so that the world can embrace this concept one day. This implies that our kids when graduated from such schoolings will accept social, scientific and global responsibilities with a mission – to create a conducive environment for all sections to accept Bhagavata principles. That will make Srila Prabhupada certainly very happy.



About the Author

He is currently Director of the school. He has worked as a faculty member in IIT, Kanpur, University of Ulster, UK, BITS Pilani, BI Mumbai, and ETH, Zurich. He has published more than 120 papers in various international and national journals as well as conference proceedings. He is determined to strive hard to bring this school to a level of international repute in terms of academic performance and real-life skills.

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School Events 2011 - 2012

BGIS is a school with a difference. It was founded by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada, founder-acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). The primary objective of BGIS is to transform children into refined, cultured and civilized gentle persons having a strong value system as the basis of all the activities they perform. Thus, efforts are made to educate children through a strong academic program while engaging them in various festivals and events as well so as to impart values and life skills. Some of the major events and festivals of the past year are reported in this article.

BGIS organizes many festivals and competitions which involve music, dramas, group discussions, presentations, and debates. The scriptures say that Lord Krishna and His devotees celebrate a festival every day in the spiritual abode of Vrindavan. It is for this reason that in Vrindavan there is always a festive mood, and devotees celebrate by dressing up, singing, dancing and feasting.

Savijnanam



The first event in the academic year 2011-2012 was Savijnanam, a science fest. This event was celebrated in the month of May. The whole school was transformed into a museum exhibiting science posters related to the theme.

The purpose of this program was to show that BGIS is just not strong in culture, discipline, and Krishna consciousness, but that the students in this school also excel in science and technological subjects. More than 12 schools and 260 students participated in this program. Prof. Awasthi from Agra, the chief speaker at the culminating program, spoke on science and its everyday application. It was a full week of events wherein talks about Newton, Srimad Bhagavatam and Bhagavad-gita could be heard simultaneously. The origin of the universe was heatedly debated by participants from both Christian and Muslim communities. Needless to say, our Krishna conscious viewpoint was actively and eloquently expressed by our boys, and their input was received with great fascination by all.



Balaram Jayanti and Jhulan Yatra

On 7th August, BGIS celebrated our annual Honey Pot festival, an old tradition of Vraja. Lord Krishna in His childhood lila used to steal butter from the houses of the gopis and then break their pots after that. The celebration of this festival helps to remember the pot-breaking pastimes of young Krishna and Balaram. Amongst the various pots containing butter, ghee, curd, milk, flowers, biscuits, and rasgullas, the one filled with honey was the last one to be made because honey is the favorite treat of Lord Balaram. After preparing the pots, one by one the boys came to participate in the fun. They were blindfolded and given a long stick with which they had three chances to hit the clay pot hanging over their heads. Some of them succeeded, while others lost, but all had a sticky-sweet good time.



One of the most popular events in Vrindavan is the celebration of Jhulan Yatra, the Radha-Krishna swing festival. On 10th August, BGIS celebrated this function in Sri Krishna Balaram Mandir, the ISKCON Vrindavan temple next to the school. Sri Sri Radha Shyamasundar's swing was decorated by senior students with love and devotion, and then all of the students came to offer flower petals and personal prayers. The boys then lovingly made Their Lordships swing while other students chanted the Hare Krishna mahamantra. A few junior boys also got to help distribute mahaprasadam sweets to the long queue of guests who had come to swing the deities that day. Later in the week, on the day of Balaram Jayanti, the boys participated in all of the temple programs beginning with mangala-arati and on through darshan arati, the special abhishek of chota Sri Sri Krishna Balaram, and the wonderful mahaprasadam feast in Sri Krishna Balaram temple's prasadam hall.

Independence Day



Independence Day in any country is a moment of pride and glory. This national festival was also celebrated by BGIS on 15th August. We held a special flag-raising ceremony at assembly time, and our vice-principal, HG Radhakanta prabhu, presided over the hoisting of the national flag. Sushmit Rastogi of Grade 10 then gave a short speech prepared by Sanskrit teacher, Balaram Kripa prabhu. In this speech, he explained the Sanskrit meaning of Svatantrata Divas (Independence Day); sva means oneself and tantrata means expansion. Everyone is bound by external energy of Lord Krishna, so without understanding the Lord, there can be no freedom for anyone. The deeply philosophical talk bestowed a contemplative mood over the assembled teachers, students, and staff members. At the end of the program, students distributed mahaprasadam sweets to everyone.

Janmashtami and Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa Puja



The Janmashtami celebrations of Vrindavan, the place where Lord Krishna spent His childhood, are famous all over the world. Lord Krishna's appearance day festivities make for the most awaited festival of the year at BGIS. As students, teachers and staff members all commented afterwards, no one had ever enjoyed a Janmashtami like this year's before. The diverse cultural program of student- and teacher-made dramas on different pastimes of Krishna, mridanga demonstrations, and musical performances, all in the beautiful atmosphere of creative decorations and a long list of senior Vaishnavas in attendance combined to make the program a memorable one in the history of BGIS. The real surprises were the Kaliya Naag dance and a drama on Govardhan Hill pastimes by the students. It was amazing

to see how well students performed and how seriously they had rehearsed this drama. Ashram teacher Sanjay Rathore wrote and directed this fantastic performance with the help of many senior students. The chief guest of this program was Mr. Viplab Rej from the Bengal School of Arts, who had come to inaugurate the collaboration between his institute and BGIS for its art diploma program. Earlier in the day in fact, artistically-minded students had exhibited their talents in an intra-school painting competition in which the theme was, appropriately, Radha-Krishna lila. Many of the students participated in the late-night abhisheka of Sri Sri Radha Krishna, Sri Gopalji and Sri Giriraj before concluding the program with fireworks, a surprise interactive sound and light performance by Grade 12 boys, and a sumptuous mahaprasadam feast just after midnight.



The day after Janmastami is celebrated as Nandotsava, the day Nanda Maharaja celebrated the birth of his son Krishna. In our ISKCON movement, this day commemorates the divine appearance of our founder-acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada. The boys went to the temple and offered garlands to Srila Prabhupada during the morning guru-puja function. They then came back to school to hold their own celebration and glorification of Srila Prabhupada. Many shared beautiful offerings they had written expressing their gratitude to and love for Srila Prabhupada. At the end of the program, everyone offered pushpanjali and honored a grand feast.

Radhashtami and Shri Ram Vijayotsava

Shortly following the appearance of Lord Krishna is the appearance of His pleasure potency, Srimati Radharani, the

queen of Vraja. As per BGIS tradition, the senior students of BGIS did kirtan all night in Ladli Lalji temple, Barsana



in great anticipation of the early morning abhishek at four AM which celebrates the divine appearance of Srimati Radharani each year. After the abhishek ceremony, the boys returned to Vrindavana to join in the festivities at our own Sri Krishna Balaram Mandir - a grand abhisheka of Sri Sri Radha Shyamasundara, ecstatic kirtans, special lectures, and a delicious mahaprasadam feast. The last festival of the season before the month of Kartik was the Dussehra festival. A huge effigy of Ravana was made at the goshala grounds.



There was an ecstatic kirtan followed by some short talks by senior devotees. Then came the burning of the effigy of Ravana symbolizing the killing of the Ravana in our hearts, and signifying the victory of virtue over vice as well.

Kartik Celebrations

One of the most auspicious festivals in Vrindavan is the celebration of Kartik month. Many festivals related to

the pastimes of Krishna or His devotees occur during this month: Rasa-lila, Diwali, Govardhana Puja, the appearance of Radha-kund, and the disappearance festival of Srila Prabhupada. The students of BGIS also celebrated the Kartik month with great enthusiasm this past year. Every evening, the students offered ghee lamps to Lord Krishna while singing the Damodarastaka prayers. In this month, the boys also got the chance to hear from eminent Vaisnavas from all over the world like HG Vaiyasaki prabhu, HG Radheshyam prabhu, HH Bhakti Rasamrita Swami maharaja and HH Gopal Krishna Goswami. BGIS also celebrated the 33rd anniversary of the disappearance of ISKCON's founder-acharya A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada on the 30th of November. A colourful drama was presented by the students in the Gopastami festival at Bhaktivdanta goshala. On the last day of the month of Kartik, the students visited some other local temples of Vrindavan as well.



Gita Jayanti

Gita Jayanti, the advent day of Bhagavad-gita, was yet another memorable occasion. Grade 11 boys exquisitely decorated the stage and pandal area, and other students made a garland of small handwritten cards with Bhagavad-gita verses that encircled the central courtyard of the school. HH Navayogendra Swami maharaja came especially to distribute Bhagavad-gita to the children. The most important program of the event was the recitation of the entire Bhagavad-Gita by the student community. Each class had been assigned a chapter to learn and recite at the event, and it was fascinating to see how most of these young students had memorized their entire chapters. After the morning's



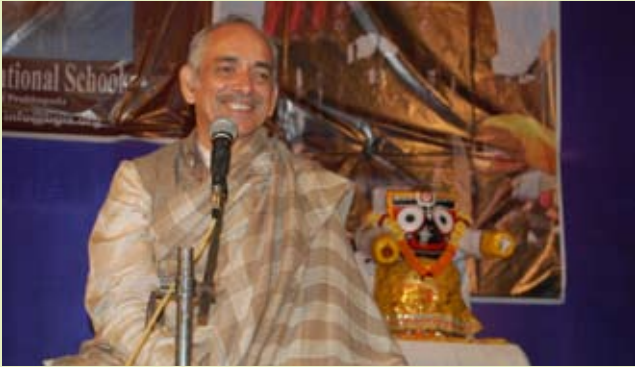
recitation, everyone honored an Ekadasi feast. The program concluded with an exciting quiz competition in the evening organized by Nitya Mukunda das. The weekend prior to Gita Jayanti, a book distribution competition was also organized in which the boys went to different places in Vrindavan and Mathura to distribute Bhagavad-gita.

Puri Trip

In the month of December, all of the senior and middle school students visited Jagannath Puri together. It was an educational trip full of fun for all. Every day, the boys visited important locations in Puri like Tota Gopinath temple and the Gambhira where Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu spent so many years of His life, and heard various pastimes related to the places from their teachers. The boys also participated in different cultural programs and an ecstatic group sankirtana was organized every evening.

The most significant event of this tour was when His Majesty Gajapati Dibya Singh Deb Maharaj, the king of Utkala, graced our cultural program held on 12th December 2011. The program was also attended by over 400 students from local schools in Puri. Our students performed a drama called





“King Prataprudra Receives the Mercy of Lord Caitanya”. The king gave a speech which was full of appreciation for the gurukula system of education. He in fact urged the government to promote this system of education.

Sports Day

BGIS celebrated its Annual Sports Day 2012 on 24th December. Sports Day is surely one of the most awaited events for all students. Everyone enthusiastically donned their new sports attire and went off to their four major teams which had been named after holy places in Vraja such as Vrindavan, Govardhan, Nandagram, and Barsana. All 270 students had an opportunity to show their sporting spirit. HG Vaishnava das, part of the ISKCON Vrindavana management team, was the chief guest of this event. The sporting competitions were actively competed as each contestant tried valiantly to outplay the others. The junior section events included races, kabaddi, and a 100m sprint, while the senior section challenged each other in



athletic events like the discus throw, shot put, long and high jump, sprinting, and team events such as football, kabaddi, handball, volleyball, table tennis, badminton, cricket, and a BGIS original, the Tug-of-Peace. The events concluded with a prize distribution ceremony.

Republic Day



BGIS celebrated Republic Day on 26th January, 2012 with patriotic fervor. The celebrations of this national festival began with the hoisting of the flag of India; after which, our vice-principal, HG Radhakanta das, addressed the students asking them to become responsible, Krishna-conscious citizens of the country by developing their devotion to the Lord, and their dedication to Srila Prabhupada’s sankirtana movement. The short program was studded with student speeches and the choral singing of the national anthem. The day’s festivities concluded with the distribution of delicious mahaprasadam laddoos. Later in the day, the boys had special sports events. Later that day, a team of students led by the world-renowned mridanga master, Sriman Bablu das, performed a scintillating mridanga demonstration to a gathering of more than two thousand devotees at a farm house in Vrijvasan, Gurgaon.

Nityananda Trayodasi and Gaura Purnima

Nityanada Trayodasi, the appearance day of Lord Nityananda



was celebrated in a grand manner on 5th February 2012 at BGIS. The program started with the mangalacharan (auspicious invocation) followed by traditional Gaudiya Vaisnava bhajans led by our own Bablu das. Senior devotees from our local ISKCON Vrindavana community then spoke briefly about the glories of Sri Nityananda Prabhu, narrating some wonderful pastimes of Lord Nityananda. The students from 6th Grade performed a very moving drama on the childhood pastimes of Nityananda Prabhu. At the end of the festival, there was an abhisheka and puja of the boys' own Garua Nitai deities, then an offering was made and arati was performed for the pleasure of Lord Nityananda. Ekadasi prasadam was served to all. Everyone enjoyed this auspicious festival.

The academic year 2011-2012 concluded with the celebration of Gaura Purnima on 8th March 2012. This very special Gaudiya Vaisnava holiday is the appearance day of Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the most munificent incarnation of Lord Sri Krsna Himself Who appeared in West Bengal just over five hundred years ago. The festivities included an ecstatic kirtana, some interactive cultural programs, and a final maha-abhishek of the boy's Gaura Nitai deities.

The sweet memories of these festivals and special events will definitely be cherished by the BGIS students throughout their lives.



Awards 2011-2012

1. Overall champion school at Savijanam, BGIS Vrindavan, 3 May to 7 May 2011
2. Winner of 18 medals and the champion's trophy in the district level swimming competition, 2011
3. Winner of the 2nd prize at the Fomra School's annual debate competition, 2011
4. Winner of the 2nd prize in a working model competition organized by Society for Awareness of Vital Resources of Environment (SAVE), Mathura on 4th February 2012
5. Topper in the UP Zone, Camel All India Color Contest, 2011
6. Winner of Kala Gaurav Award from the Student Development Society in National Handwriting and Color contest, 2011



*Brilliant
Performance by
the students of
BGIS*

ISC & ICSE 2011-12

Well, it is indeed a matter of pride & honor for everyone at Bhaktivedanta Gurukul as Divay Garg of 12th grade brought glory to Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International School by getting the highest in the District by procuring 94% overall and 100% in Maths and 99% in Environmental Education. Guru Sharan Agrawal yet another student of 12th grade scored 100% in Maths. Similarly the result of ICSE examination 2011-12 has been equally encouraging. Krishna Mittal of 10th grade topped the school with 92.6% closely followed by Naman Shrivastava with 92.40%. Overall 18% students have scored 90% and above in the ISC & ICSE examination respectively.

19th May 2012 was an evening of joy and happiness for everyone at Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International School with 100% result for both ISC & ICSE examination 2011-12. The school principal Leela Purshottam Das along with the vice principal Radhakanta Das and all the other academic teachers wish all the students Best of Luck for their future. May they continue to grow both academically and spiritually. Hare Krishna!

Hare Krishna.



Divay Garg



Sharan Kumar Agrawal



Krishna Mittal



Naman Srivastava





*śrī-prahrāda uvāca
kaumāra ācaret prājño
dharmān bhāgavatān iha
durlabham mānuṣam janma
tad apy adhruvam arthadam*

“Prahāda Mahārāja said: One who is sufficiently intelligent should use the human form of body from the very beginning of life — in other words, from the tender age of childhood — to practice the activities of devotional service, giving up all other engagements. The human body is most rarely achieved, and although temporary like other bodies, it is meaningful because in human life one can perform devotional service. Even a slight amount of sincere devotional service can give one complete perfection” (SB 7.6.1).

Many people in this world think that their sons should become doctors, engineers, or lawyers. Every parent respects holy people, saints and sadhus, but they never want their sons to become holy people. Parents think that spiritual activities should be done when one becomes old, and has no work to do. This idea, however, is just not true. Students should be given spiritual training from their very childhood.

I have one question to ask everyone who thinks that spiritual activities are all works of old age: will they be able to do bhajan when they won't be able to see properly? Or hear properly? Or even able to walk? When instead of having



the vigor of youth, they'll be caught in the many varieties of diseases that plague the elderly; will they still find the strength to dance and chant? I don't think in such conditions one can chant the holy names of the Lord in clear, pure consciousness.



Krsna Consciousness Should be Practiced from Childhood

*by Naman Srivatsava
Grade 10*

People leave spiritual activities for their old age, but what if they wait to learn to eat or to walk for their old age, too? Everything needs practice to become perfect, and that practice should begin in childhood. It is not that suddenly a miracle will occur and someone will instantly take up spiritual activities in the most perfect way.

There are many examples from sastras wherein small children have attained the lotus feet of Krsna. We hear stories of Dhruva Maharaja and Prahlada Maharaja. They were both only five years old when the Supreme Lord delivered them. Prahlada Maharaja taught his friends in gurukula how for many births they had been playing, eating, and sleeping, but that this time, they had got human births, and that they ought to try to get liberated in this very lifetime. One cannot count on doing bhajan in his old age if he spends his youth busy with material pursuits, and ends up old and fighting the diseases that natural befall the aging. The only stage of life truly fit for spiritual activities is that of childhood.

To get liberated, we just need to remember the Lord's name at the time of death. But, as this name doesn't just come automatically to one's mind, we need to practice this process of hearing about the Lord, chanting His holy name, and remembering Him throughout our whole lives. Therefore, we should engage in devotional service from our very childhoods, and reap not only material benefits, but ultimately gain our desired goal, which is Krsna prema.

It is our consciousness which makes everything good or bad in this world.

Knowledge is the greatest power on the earth. If that knowledge is in the heart of an impure person, a person with poor consciousness, he will certainly use that knowledge to cause pollution, contamination, and agony in the world. Such agony can be seen in society today because of the presence of people of poor consciousness.

Utilizing Everything in the Service of the Supreme

by *Krishna Das*

Grade 10



But, if the same knowledge is within the heart of someone with divine consciousness, he will utilize every bit of that knowledge in the loving service of the Supreme. This type of renunciation is taught in Bhagavad-gita.

Renunciation does not mean to give up the things of this world, but to use them in the spirit of devotion.

Material World

Subham Dharewa – Grade 11

World - a mixture
Having two pictures,
Where lie good and bad,
One is happy and other is sad.

World - a terrible mess
Where all wear a different dress;
It's like a game,
Who wins it, acquires fame.

World - full of trouble
Hard to recognize and full of struggle;
Where to turn and where to go
Are the queries whose answers no one knows?

World - an unknown mystery
Sometimes filled with sadness
Where some are joyful,
And others are not too cool.

World - an unknown mystery
With an elaborate history;
In this place many get confused,
That is why it is said to be obtuse.

World - for someone a hell,
And for others, heaven as well;
The place where there are many cures,
It is our one and only world.

Our thoughts, our dreams

Dhruv Singhal – Grade 9

We are gurukula boys,
Not toys
Our aspirations are really high,
None of us can say that without a sigh.

Our dreams are our goals
Which make us realize that we are souls;
We like to do bhakti,
And Krishna gives us shakti.

We gain knowledge of the spiritual world,
But don't forget the material
Physics, chemistry, and bio are our main
But Bhagavad-gita is our essence.

Our dreams are of God
Who is the All Above;
We like to dream of Him
And we think of Him always.

Spirit is Soul

Mihir Bajaj – Grade 9

In this modern world,
Our spiritual knowledge is blurred;
Everyone wants to become a nerd,
To get his daily curd

We are up to date
Because we think it's our fate
We will go to heaven's gate,
As we have spiritual faith

We are soul - that we know,
Back to Godhead, let us go
The positions and prestige will not go
'Cause it will be your last show.

Krishna is always right,
That's why He is so bright;
Back to Godhead, that's our goal,
You think you can take back your soul?

The Lotus Feet

Sri Balaram Das, Grade 12

O Krsna!

The glories of Thy lotus feet are inexplicable;
Worship able by the demigods,
Where the damsels of Vraja reside,
The splendor of which is constantly chanted by Ananta
Sesa,
And meditated upon by the creator and the destroyer
Where the goddess of fortune implores to abide,
Please accept my humble obeisance unto them.

O Govinda!

By getting the touch of Thy lotus feet ,
Yamuna rose to the side
And the mighty saktasura got killed;
And did not they deliver the barbarous serpent?
As Yamuna,
They were dwarflike yet beautiful
And gigantic enough to measure the immeasurable worlds;
Please accept my humble obeisance unto them.

O Rama!

The lotus feet, the source of the Ganges,
Baptized as the lotus feet,
And yet softer which walked through the forests
And the padukas which they adorned,
Ruled Thy kingdom in Thy absence;
The feet so glorious and potent, by the touch of which
A stone got transformed into the beautiful women
Ceaselessly worshiped by mother Sita;
Please accept my humble obeisance unto them.

O Madhava!

The lotus feet are endowed with all the Lordly symbols
And from them emanates all the radiance of the three
worlds,
Ruminating about them makes all fear vanish
The epitome of all the auspiciousness;
Please accept my humble obeisance unto them.



Offerings to Srila Prabhupada

Kartik Tyagi – Grade 7

A Small Prayer to Your Lotus Feet
From the bowers of Vrindavana
To the Bowery slums
You smuggled the fruits of love of God,
And gave them freely to everyone

Your name, fame and pastimes
Became sweeter than a chew
Your sublime instructions, born of love,
And kindly left by you

Please bless me with surrender
To the sweet will of God,
That I may return back home
And serve you purely, Srila Prabhupada!

The Captain of My Ship

Somehow we have fallen and left our sweet home
Where Radha and Krsna and all Their friends roam
To come to a world that is ghastly and cold,
Where death is awaiting us when grow old;
We're lost in this ocean so gigantic, so vast
With rough, stormy weather the eternal forecast
But by your kind mercy and unlimited grace,
You came to save us from this horrible place;
The ship known as BGIS was constructed by you
And built to facilitate an innumerable crew
The maps you brought bear the bhagavat name,

As first taught by Krsna – they're exactly the same;
The perfect captain example you always display,
So now, Srila Prabhupada, to you I must pray
Please keep me as your servant and train me to row
And please take me with you wherever you go.

A Poem

Krishna Kanhaiya Bajaj – Grade 7

All in this universe, animate or inanimate
Is owned and controlled by the Lord;
Only accept what is allotted to you,
And never endeavour to hoard;
This is the only alternative for man
And if he continues to work this way,
By the laws of karma, he's never bound
And for hundreds of years he may stay

My Precious Moments

Gagandeep Wadhwa – Grade 8

The ocean shone silvery in the sun
It seemed to be a lot of fun
Running through the waves
Jumping in the waters
Without any worries
Without any bothers

Playing on the yellow sand
Walking with my parents
Hand in hand
Making sand castles
And collecting shells
Adoring the big beautiful shells
These are my very precious moments
No one can erase these moments
I will keep them a secret
In a little corner of my heart

I Believe

Anoop Maini – Grade 9

I believe in Krsna
I believe in kirtans
I believe in His teachings
I believe in His kathas
I believe in His service
I believe in this body given to us
I believe in His pastimes
And I believe in chanting
because I take things as if
I were a minute away from death.

Our Class

Ayush _____ - Grade 8

Forty-three of us
We don't make a fuss
We're all dressed up in yellow
And our class is very bright
We hardly trouble our teacher
That is our important feature
We stay together with good manners
Because we have to become good in our futures

Nature Speaks the Glory of God

Sangeeta Roy – Class Teacher, Grade 10

Nature speaks the glory of God
Ravines, hills, steeps and rocks
Woods that are lovely dark and deep
The sun, the moon, the stars that peep
The sunbeam, the whirlpool, the oceanic currents,
The storms, the hurricanes, and nature's torrents
The snowfalls, the floods, the hailstones and rain
Adorn the plateaus, hills and plains
The eruption of a volcano, the flow of magma
The wreckage in a landslide – damage, trauma
The birds, the worms, the flora and fauna
The splendid peacock, the wicked hyena
The rainbow, the mist and the radiant dew drops
The orchards, harvests and bountiful crops
Krishna, Your entity reveals the splendour, the aesthetic,
ecstatic glamour
Nothing is magnificent
Without You, Lord
Your richness, your symphony creates concord.



Ten Benefits of Mastering the Mind

Radheshyam Das



*uddhared ātmanātmānā
nātmānam avasādayet
ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur
ātmaiva ripur ātmanā*

“One must deliver himself with the help of his mind, and not degrade himself. The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well” (BG 6.5).

What is value education?

At school, and afterwards at college, you learn about solids, liquids, and gases – their physical and chemical properties and more. You also study history and geography to know something about the earth that you are living in. Later, students may choose to specialise in science, commerce, engineering or medicine, and deepen their studies of the material body, the material world and topics like financial transactions.



When Srila Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON, spoke before students and faculty members at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the first question he raised was, “Where is the technological department which is investigating the difference between a dead man and a living man?” When a man dies, something is lost. Where is the technology to replace it?

Unfortunately, in most modern-day schools, though material knowledge is taught all the time, there is no knowledge about the real person, the soul. Complete knowledge means knowing about matter, spirit, and the controller of both—God. Who are you? Why are you suffering? Who is God? How do we pray to God and perform meditation? How can we bring out the innate qualities of the soul such as love, peace, serenity, joy, kindness, truthfulness, honesty, and integrity while giving up bad tendencies like greed, pride, and anger?

In the Bhagavad-gita, Lord Sri Krishna speaks about divine and demoniac aspects. We all have two sides in our heart – a divine side and a demoniac side. If one invokes the divine side by the cultivation of values, one can become like a devata, or an angel. Conversely, if one invokes the demoniac side by studying only material subjects and learning nothing about spiritual knowledge, then one will inevitably become a demon. India is the land of Rishi-putras, or children of great saints, but now these same people are becoming like rakshasas, or demoniac beings due to their negligence of traditional values, spiritual culture and a regulated lifestyle.



A Story

Before you grow up, you should pick up as many values as possible for your own good. An ancient story tells about three merchants crossing a desert. One dark night of Amavasya, they heard the voice of an angel in the darkness. The voice said, "Pick up stones and then continue walking without stopping. In the morning, at daylight you will be both glad and sorry." The three merchants obeyed the order. When the sun rose in the morning, they looked into their bags and discovered that what they had picked up was not rocks at all, but in fact precious stones. They then understood the words, "you will be both glad and sorry." They were glad that they were rich, but at the same time, they were sorry they had not picked up more stones. In our school days, we may lose the chances that come our way. If you are intelligent, you will pick up these values, precious stones, as they come to you. The more you pick up, the happier you will be in the future. As the old adage goes, what you weave now, you will wear later.

Ten Benefits of Value Education and Mastering the Mind

1. Living in harmony with God and nature

The holy scriptures are similar to the manual that comes with a machine. We can know what is right, what is wrong, what is good for our health, and what is bad for it, what will give long-term satisfaction, and what yields only a short-term pleasure from reading scripture, just as we can understand how to make the most of our new machine by carefully examining the instructions in the manual. By following the good instructions in the

scriptures, one can live a happy life. Those who break the laws of God and scriptures will logically have to suffer. One who smokes suffers from lung cancer, for example; just as one who drinks liquor suffers from liver problems, one who commits sins gets bad reactions, and one who eats junk food ends up with an upset stomach.

2. Behaving in a way that brings happiness to us and to others

A scientist with character, love for God and mankind, and a strong sense of values creates life-saving drugs while another atheistic scientist invents a bomb that destroy entire cities, and causes pain and deformities even in future generations. Atheists who do not know the goal of life only bring pain to all other living beings. They act in ways that demonstrate how their only skill is to destroy life and cause harm to other living beings. Atheists may feel omnipotent, but in truth, they have no ability to give life.



3. Behaving appropriately in the many difficult situations that we find ourselves in

As the old cliché goes, life is surely not always a bed of roses. In the epic Mahabharata, we read how the virtuous Pandavas were tortured by Duryodhana and his associates in various ways. The Pandavas were fed poison, put in a house made of shellac to be burnt alive, stripped of all their wealth and banished to the forest; their wife was publicly shamed and, as a final insult, the Pandavas' kingdom was not duly returned in time. Still, the Pandavas always remained virtuous, patient and

happily situated in every reversal, depending exclusively on the divine support of Sri Krishna.

We all know how some of the world's richest men commit suicide when faced with the possibility of financial ruin. Many people who own multinational companies, and reside in luxurious facilities, when suddenly, their wealth is taken away from them, may end up choosing suicide. Value education teaches us how to be courageous and composed even when confronted with the most challenging trials and gives us strategies to employ to help us tackle the situations of life.

4. Being steady despite the changing tides of good and bad

Beauty, good education, a high birth, wealth – all can make one too proud and lead one to act in ways that will harm those who do not possess these privileges. Queen Kunti explains how these privileges, or opulences, make one so proud that one cannot call out the name of the Lord fervently. Cultivating values teaches us that these opulences are gifts of God awarded to us in this life, but they are all temporary and will pass away with time. Thus, learning values makes one sober, rational and cool-headed.

5. Living and letting others live

Dictators like Adolf Hitler, the ruler of the German empire, misuse their power by taking away land and money that belongs to others, and torturing and killing millions of people under their administration (such as the persecuted Jews in Hitler's time) by putting them in gas chambers and other similarly heinous acts. Hitler's usurpation of power caused the Second World War in the Western world, and brought about the death of countless innocent citizens. At the end, in desperation, Hitler committed suicide in acknowledgement of his defeat. Thus, we see how power gained without values will not come to one's rescue at the time of death.

Great kings like Lord Rama (during His Rama-rajya), King Yudhistira, King Arjuna, King Parikshit, King Rantidev, King Ambarish, King Yadu, King Nimi and many others were called Raja-rishis. On the one hand,

they were able protectors of the people at large, the cows, the brahmanas, the elderly, and women. On the other hand, these kings were saintly in nature, and were thus pure representatives of God, nara-deva. They were controlled in their minds and senses, and lived only to serve the people; not to enjoy the property of others. These kings were all guided by the values they had been taught by their gurus based on the scriptures given by God.



6. Laying a foundation of habits, skills and character development that brings peace and happiness

The education you receive at school or college can be compared to a beautiful bungalow. Value education is the foundation on which this house is built. If the foundation is strong and sturdy, the house will stand solidly and for a long time to come. Somebody may say, "We need only to make a beautiful house which others will come to see. What is the need of building something underground? There is no need to construct a foundation no one will visit that requires so much extra time and money." But such thinking is foolish because without a proper foundation, the building – be it a simple residence or a whole skyscraper - will collapse to the ground. Similarly, without investing our time in cultivating a foundation of habits, skills and character development, no one can expect to become peaceful or happy in life.

7. Recognizing that the glories of India lie in her Vedic heritage

In the early 1990s, the American government began to

conduct research into why Japanese businesses were so much more successful than American businesses even though the Americans had better schools and more facilities. Stanford University spent millions of dollars researching this phenomenon. The results of the study revealed that business success had more to do with the Japanese mentality than the American abundance of technology and facilities. Japanese companies were built on values like teamwork, relationships and, especially, character development. Subsequently, American business schools began teaching a philosophy of management that explains how success is about 20% technique and 80% values. Current management research in fact shows that we may get the hands and the head of a person to work, but we can get the heart of a person only by instilling in our training programs the desire to live a life of values, and to inspire others to do the same.

Therefore, cultures with very deep spiritual roots like India have a competitive advantage which is being realised even by present-day management gurus in their attempts to find solutions to organisational problems. Nowadays, many experts take inspiration from traditional Indian ethics and spiritual wisdom.



Some five thousand years ago, India had an ancient cultural heritage of the gurukula. Sri Rama and Sri Krishna Themselves also went to gurukulas for Their education. What were boys taught in these ancient gurukulas? Through spiritual insights, the guru guided his pupils to identify their value systems, and to function

based on those values. Young boys were taught the art of self-management so that when they would later take up the reins of their kingdoms, they would know how to rule with responsibility and commitment; motivating and inspiring their subjects through their own examples.

8. Learning self-discipline for self-development

What would happen in a garden if every plant grew as it liked without being trimmed or tended? There would be no beauty in such a wild tangle of weeds. Similarly at school, each student is like a plant to be trained and shaped by values in order to achieve his true beauty and success. Have you ever seen a chariot drawn by five horses all running hither and thither? That is how one without self-control lives, allowing his senses to go astray according to their demands. The result of such a lack of discipline is that one suffers from greed, anger, envy, laziness, overeating, oversleeping, pride, and other defects.

For example, one who is not taught values may not know how to spend money. He therefore sees no limit to buying things. There is of course a difference between needs and wants. A need is a necessity, while a want is simply a luxury. There are so many advertisements in the market that may encourage us to buy useless things. If one lives by values, one will not be allured by such things. Students who do not live by values spend an enormous amount of money on movies, parties, hotels, rubbish magazines and cheap novels; thereby wasting their valuable money. Instead, the money could be spent on buying valuable things or even on offerings to spiritual charities.

9. Becoming responsible and cheerful

Can anyone always do whatever he likes? Say, for example when a boy always wants to play cricket all day and skip school – is this possible? Or can that same willful fellow just keep watching TV and ignore his books, forgetting the exams which will be held the next day? Value education teaches one how to be cheerful, tolerant, enthusiastic and responsible in order to satisfactorily fulfil one's duties in life. Look at great

personalities like Gandhi, or Socrates. These men are considered great souls because they lived by values and achieved glory in the pages of history.

10. Being loved by all

If you are cheerful, people feel good when they are with you. If you are honest, sincere, respectful and affectionate, others will love to become your friends. Nobody likes a cheater or an arrogant person. Value education helps you to acquire these qualities without difficulties.

One who lives by values and not by dishonesty, manipulation or slyness has nothing to fear in this world. When you flatter a person to his face, and badmouth him to his back, your conscience will keep troubling you. But if you live by the pure values of honesty and respect, such duplicity will never be a part of your behaviour. Thus, besides possessing peace of mind within oneself, one will be loved by all. One will have no enemies like the ajata shatru, Yudhisthira Maharaja.



"The most important thing however is to see that somehow or other the children are always engaged in some kind of Krsna conscious activity, then they will naturally develop a taste for it and think it great fun even to work very hard for."

Srila Prabhupada

72-01-00 Letter: Svati



Some thoughts on a new meaning of the ESP acronym, and the use of a global language in a spiritual school

**Jaya Dayini Devi Dasi,
English Program Coordinator**

In the field of English language teaching (ELT), there are different types of English that students learn: English for academic purposes (EAP) in order to survive at university, or English for specific purposes (ESP) to learn the language of a particular job or project. But for a devotee, ESP can take on a different meaning: English for spiritual purposes; students learning English to become preachers in Lord Chaitanya's sankirtana movement, and take the chanting of the Hare Krsna mahamantra, Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Hare Hare, around the globe. This kind of ESP is ultimately the most beneficial of all.

It is a well-known and fondly-told anecdote; how upon meeting his spiritual master as a student, SP immediately received the instruction that would shape his whole life. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta saw the potential in young Abhay Charan De, and instantly encouraged him to preach in English, "You're an educated young man! You should preach the message of Lord Chaitanya in English!" Why? What was so important about English and preaching? Well, Lord Chaitanya had greatly emphasized the importance of spreading His sankirtana message all over the world, and in order to do this, preachers had to become able to communicate with the peoples of the world. Bengali (the language of the region) and Sanskrit (the language of scholars of the age) were wonderful, elegant tongues full of deep meaning and poetry, but they were not universal. In truth, Bengali

was only spoken in the state of Bengal, and practically no one except university literati outside of India had even the faintest knowledge of Sanskrit. How could the sankirtana message reach a wider population without translation? And what better language to use for this translation than that of the exiting imperialist power?

English in Srila Prabhupada's time was still a prestige language in India – families with some money would try their best to have their children educated in the language, knowing that their futures would be smoother and more lucrative were they able to use the respected code of the British. Gandhi himself employed English as a means to transmit his non-cooperation/ resistance mission to the multilingual peoples of India – there were no other languages that all states had in common, and in the tense social climate of state/local cultural pride that gradually developed, it was strategic at best to maintain neutrality by using a language that belonged to the outsiders (to no one, in a sense) instead of choosing a "state-owned" tongue that would emotionally bind one to the people and culture of that region.

And so it began – the use of English as the link language, the lingua franca that allowed one to seamlessly traverse borders and boundaries, to associate with anyone while identifying with no one. Gandhi after all was certainly not a supporter of British culture, nor would anyone confuse his linguistic choice with any kind of political allegiance. The language was simply a means to an end – a way to communicate with

a vast number of people. And, philosophically, the oneness of a code that is beyond the strictures of cultural specificity and ethnic identifications is in a sense similar to the principle of samata, or equanimity, practiced by true devotees:

*ihaiva tair jitah sargo
yesam samye sthitam manah
nirdosam hi samam brahma
tasmad brahmani te sthitah*

“Those whose minds are established in sameness and equanimity have already conquered the conditions of birth and death. They are flawless like Brahman, and thus they are already situated in Brahman” (BG 5.19).

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta too saw the value of using English for its samata nature. He needed a way to take his mission out of the limited Bengali/ Sanskrit-scholar context, and help it to extend to the rest of the world; especially to the Western world that so many people sought to emulate. He could see far into the future, and knew that what the Westerners did was always going to be an example for others. If they could be swayed from empty material pursuits, they would in turn be able to influence those in other parts of the world towards spiritual life, and thereby make the vision of a worldwide sankirtana movement a reality. For this very reason, in fact, his father, Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur, had sent an early edition of his Sri Chaitanya: His life and precepts to English-speaking McGill University in Canada, hoping to instigate a dialogue between Western professors and his followers back in India. That nothing came of this exploratory attempt is only confirmation of the necessity of the personal touch; that an empowered being, a riveting personality had to be there live and in person to convey the message not only through his words, but through the sound of his voice and expressions in his eyes. After all, “...when a pure devotee speaks, his words act upon the hearts of the audience... when a realized soul who is engaged in the service of the Lord is speaking, he has the potency to inject spiritual life within the audience” (NOD 133). There had to be a person able to take the message and make it palatable to Westerners by bringing it alive in terms they could easily grasp. Such a



personality came two generations later in the form of Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada was the quintessential English speaker, a man of his times who instinctively knew how to play with language. British-educated, and of solid upper middle-class Gaudiya Vaisnava stock, SP was raised in a multilingual, broad-minded environment that made it easy for him to appreciate and adapt to the social and cultural diversity he would soon find himself a part of. Arriving in the West at an age when most people find it extremely difficult to communicate with those younger than themselves, Srila Prabhupada quickly surrounded himself not only with youth, but with a kind of youth that had absolutely no connection with his own younger days. Finding a common ground with these people proved practically automatic for him, though, as he intuitively came up with ways to commune with his new audience.

ISKCON's early devotees were usually well-educated and from middle-class families like Srila Prabhupada's, but very differently from his, their families had given them virtually no knowledge of spiritual principles, nor had they been able to guide them beyond their eighteenth years. Young Americans in the sixties left home as teenagers and rapidly distanced themselves from their roots; living as vagrants, their homes became the streets they populated, and their language changed as radically as their habitations had. No longer was it fine to use the tones and terminologies they had learned in their expensive upbringings – now a new, looser, more fluid code was adopted, one that effortlessly

melled to suit their days. Just as their clothes took on more vibrant colors and wider shapes, so too did their words and the vivid baggy sacks they clothed their sinewy young bodies in matched the flowing verbiage that issued from their mouths.

Srila Prabhupada understood this language somehow, and communicated actively with these young people in a way that they could instantly comprehend. He knew inherently what they wanted to hear, and how they had to hear it in order to be able to internalize it and improve their lives:

*anudvega-karam vakyam
satyam priya-hitam ca yat
svadhyayabhyasanam caiva
van-mayam tapa ucyate*

“Austerity of speech consists in speaking words that are truthful, pleasing, beneficial, and not agitating to others, and also in regularly reciting Vedic literature” (BG 17.15). In the purport to this verse, it is explained how the teacher gives instructions to his students, but knows how not to instruct those who are not his students so as not to “agitate their minds” – an apt description of Srila Prabhupada’s sensitive verbal adaptation of his message to suit the tender ears and individualistic hearts of the naïve seekers he encountered. The salient linguistic concept here is that of pragmatics, or the modification of one’s language use to fit the situation. From Srila Prabhupada’s linguistic dexterity came a new kind of English his young followers readily snatched up, and the devotee-speak that is second-nature to an ISKCON member today was born.

Primarily, Srila Prabhupada spoke of Krsna, as a pure devotee does, and he did so in English, an English that reached the world. He took what was his inheritance as a product of a nation in flux, and made it the method with which he could satisfy his spiritual master’s mission. It is for this reason that ISKCON today continues to communicate in this now-global tongue, and to encourage students in its schools to develop their own mastery of the language.

Yes, with English, our children can find good material

situations, and can become financially secure more easily than if they only know their local idiom. But ours is not a material motivation; English is not for material success alone. Actually, the purists in our tradition frown on any sort of material ambitions as they inevitably take one away from the ultimate goal of life, which is to reconnect with the Lord in His Supreme abode.

*etavan sankhya-yogabhyam
sva-dharma-parinisthaya
janma-labhah parah pumsam
ante narayana-smrtih*

“The highest perfection of human life achieved either by complete knowledge of matter and spirit, by practice of mystic powers, or by perfect discharge of occupational duty, is to remember the Personality of Godhead at the end of life” (SB 2.1.6).



The time and energy (and money, of course) spent on becoming someone in the material world is obviously time, energy, and money that could be spent on spiritual activities – activities which yield eternal results instead of the temporary relief from suffering (likened to the gasps of air one sucks in while drowning) that is the nature of this material realm.

So, why stress English if our goals are spiritual? Well, for the same reasons that Srila Prabhupada stressed English: in order to communicate with the world. Who better than a young person to go off and be an ambassador from Vrindavana,

Lord Krsna's birthplace and the topmost spiritual site on the planet, in today's centers of education and work? As the acarya (spiritual leader) teaches fundamentally by example, so too can our spiritually-minded English-speaking youth communicate the best of our tradition through the sparkling



example of their own healthy, Krsna-conscious lives. The use of a global language only shows their mental freshness, their bright, innovative flexibility, and ability to exchange with the world.

A caveat to this promotion of English is of course that one's acquisition of a global language should never happen at the expense of knowledge of and fluency in local tongues. The emphasis here is not on monolingualism at all – it is essential for young people to be fluent users of a variety of languages, and in fact, much of our internationally-savvy ISKCON youth has this skill covered. Any major festival today sees devotees from all over the world coming together to glorify the Lord in a colorful mixture of languages and styles. Few events happen only in English nowadays, and in fact, the recent expansion of ISKCON's traditional Gaura Mandala Parikrama troupes into four large parties by language (Hindi, English, Bengali, and Russian) is evidence of the recognition of the importance of a multilingual society.

Becoming multilingual, though, happens by adding a language to one's inventory, and by developing one's proficiency in that language to be able to successfully exchange in it and grow. Competent speakers of many tongues, following in the footsteps of Srila Prabhupada,

young people will become better able to share their spiritual knowledge with the world. So, let us continue to encourage our youth to become adept users of the global tongue, and to become inspired users of it as well, so that they will find new ways to transmit this sankirtana movement to the international community they inhabit.



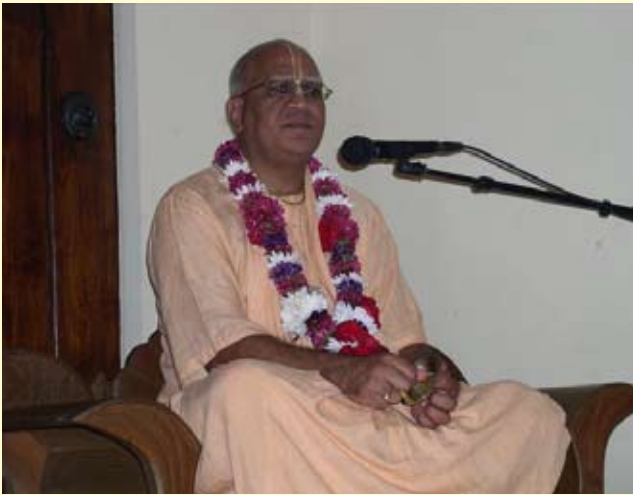
About the Author

Jaya Dayini Devi Dasi is a graduate from Georgia State University and also served as English program coordinator at BGIS. She has been associated with ISKCON for nearly 20 years.



Education Means Character Building

HH Atmanivedana Swami



Traditional education in Vedic times meant learning under a spiritual master. This is why we have gurukula where the young students learn the science of Vedic scriptures under the guidance of informed teachers. In these modern times, along with traditional subjects, we need to teach regular subjects studied all over the world as well. This form of instruction will give a complete, holistic education and help the student to become a first class person. This system was introduced by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in our Krsna consciousness movement.

In order to know who this education is for, we have to know who we are - animals or humans.

The scriptures explain that just because we have been granted a human body does not mean that we are humans. This information will be known by our activities. Vedic scriptures teach us that all living entities are engaged in four fundamental activities: eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. If a human simply performs these activities, he is not living as a true human; he can indeed be considered a polished animal.

So how we act determines which category we belong to. To be a human being, first and for most, one must ask who one is. Once you can answer this question, then you can understand that you are a human being. Now, you can ask the most important question which is mentioned in the Vedanta sutra. The first aphorism of the Vedanta sutra says, athato brahama jignasa, or therefore one must inquire into the subject matter of the Supreme Lord and His creation. The Vedanta sutra starts with a statement which begins with “therefore”, which assumes that the person has reached the stage of human being. Only when we come to this stage can we begin to think of education.

Education means character building, as mentioned in scriptures like Srimad Bhagavatam and Bhagavad-gita. In the Srimad Bhagavatam, we learn that this human birth is very rare to get:



Figure 1: Human baby



Figure 2: Animal baby

*labdhvā su-durlabham idam' bahu-sambhavānte
mānuṣyam artha-dam anityam apīha dhīrah
tūrṇam' yateta na pated anu-mṛtyu yāvan
niḥśreyasāya viṣayaḥ khalu sarvataḥ syāt*

“After many, many births and deaths one achieves the rare human form of life, which, although temporary, affords one the opportunity to attain the highest perfection. Thus a sober human being should quickly endeavor for the ultimate perfection of life as long as his body, which is always subject to death, has not fallen down and died. After all, sense gratification is available even in the most abominable species of life, whereas Kṛṣṇa consciousness is possible only for a human being” (SB 11.9.29). This human body gives us the ability to differentiate between right and wrong; the power of discretion and discrimination. The gurukula system teaches students these sound facts, and helps them build their characters and develop a solid foundation as human beings. Just as the foundation of a building is very important to make sure that the building does not collapse, similarly, when the students are taught good, sound scripturally-based knowledge at a young age, they can then build strong characters. Good character and firm morals are the basics of Vedic education.

Bhagavad-gita describes two natures; one divine and the other demoniac.

BG 18.42 on the divine nature: “Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom and religiousness—these are the natural qualities by which the brahmanas work.”

BG 16.4 on the demoniac nature: “Pride, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness and ignorance—these qualities belong to those of demoniac nature, O son of Prtha.”



Figure 3: Bad apple with good apples

From this information, we can understand how important it is to mold one's nature so that good qualities develop; qualities which will make one a person of good character. Even only one bad quality can spoil a person. As the old saying goes, one bad apple can spoil the rest.

Bad company will corrupt the good morals of a person, so it is important to give young people an opportunity to surround themselves with positive association.



Figure 4: Good and bad association together

Schools should teach and cultivate high morals so that students can develop good characters. Good morals are very important, and can help one avoid acting immorally. The bad qualities of lust, greed and anger arise from immoral qualities, which are also influenced by the three modes of material nature, namely ignorance, passion and goodness. This situation develops from the food we eat, the place in which we stay and, of course, the company we keep.

Again in the Bhagavad-gita, it is stated:

*yad yad acarati sresthas
tat tad evetaro janaù
sa yat pramanam kurute
lokas tad anuvartate*

“Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues” (BG 3.21).

Both qualified students and qualified teachers of high morals are equally important; this is the formula of a true gurukula education system. Hare Krishna







Time Management

HH Bhaktivasudeva Swami

Today's youth, students, pupils, and the people in general are bogged down with the huge challenges of managing their time and getting their jobs done in good time. Frustration sets in, as not all the tasks that were planned for the day get done. There is a need for the elders to help, but those who are themselves victims cannot guide their subordinates. Therefore, out of compassion for the human beings, the head of the Varnashrama institution – the sanniyasi – comes to teach the fallen souls of Kali Yuga the paramount importance of time management.

“If time is not properly managed it would result in anxiety, frustration stress and ill health”, said the Hare Krishna pandit, His Holiness Bhakti Vasudeva Swami, a doctoral researcher in Leadership and Organizational Change, at a special workshop with the youth on Time Management.

Addressing a cross section of the community of Phoenix, north of Durban, held at the New Jagannatha Puri Mandir, His Holiness Bhakti Vasudeva Swami began his address with a verse from Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 11, Text 32:

*sri-bhagavan uvaca
kalo 'smi loka-kshaya-krit pravridhdho
lokan samahartum iha pravrittah
rite 'pi tvam na bhavishyanti sarve
ye 'vasthitah pratyanyakeshu yodhah*

TRANSLATION

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Time I am, the great destroyer of the worlds, and I have come here to destroy all people. With the exception of you [the Pandavas], all the soldiers here on both sides will be slain.

PURPORT

Although Arjuna knew that Krishna was his friend and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he was puzzled by the various forms exhibited by Krishna. Therefore he asked further about the actual mission of this devastating force. It is written in the Vedas that the Supreme Truth destroys everything, even the brahmanas. As stated in the Katha Upanishad (1.2.25),

*yasya brahma ca ksatram ca
ubhe bhavata odanam
mityur yasyopasecanam
ka itthi veda yatra sam*

Eventually all the brahmanas, kshatriyas and everyone else are devoured like a meal by the Supreme. This form of the Supreme Lord is the all-devouring giant, and here Krishna presents Himself in that form of all-devouring time. Except for a few Pandavas, everyone who was present on that battlefield would be devoured by Him. Arjuna was not in favor of the fight, and he thought it was better not to fight; then there would be no frustration. In reply, the Lord is saying that even if he did not fight, every one of them would be destroyed, for that was His plan. If Arjuna stopped fighting, they would die in another way. Death could not be checked, even if he did not fight. In fact, they were already dead. Time is destruction, and all manifestations are to be vanquished by the desire of the Supreme Lord. That is the law of nature.

As Maharaja warned, “death cannot be checked.” Thus, time has to be managed properly, during one's lifetime. Time management is so important, Maharaja pointed out, that “in the University, at the PhD level in management, in the USA, a month is devoted to time management at the foundation level.”

Maharaja advised, “Integrate circular duties with devotional activities. In Mathematics, there is a section called Calculus, which involves integration; students run away from it because it is difficult. “

“Always plan a weekly schedule. In our daily lives, it takes almost 8 hours for work, and 6 hours for sleep, which leaves us with 10 hours. Hence, we have to be cognizant of our environment. If you are not spiritual, you cannot manage time.”

“In Vaisnava spirituality, Srila Prabhupada gave a structure to follow. If one follows this morning programme, then one’s prescribed duties for the day would be a breeze to accomplish. Your day would also be extremely joyful. Always prioritize what is the most essential duty or activity that has to be done. Time management means utilizing the 24 hours a day for a purpose, productively.”

“It is also important to have a time table that must be executed. Plan, prioritize, and then execute it. Go to bed on time. Srila Prabhupada slept for 2 to 3 hours at most, just to carry out his devotional activities of writing so many books, managing ISKCON worldwide, and taking care of so many things, including personally training disciples. He was the perfect role model of being completely regulated and managing time in the service of the Lord.”

“Give quality time to your family; it is important,” he continued. During a japa session recently in the USA, he recalled, a father’s 4 year old child came to sit on his lap. The father removed the child without consideration – and that, he warned, is called emotional child abuse. “It is better to wake up,” he advised, “before the child and finish your rounds and before you go out to work.”

Maharaja also recommended, “The best time to rest is between 10 & 12 PM after a hard day of work. The body recuperates exceptionally well. If you go to bed at 9 PM it would be easy to rise at 4 AM. Also important is what you eat and when you eat. If you eat at 9 PM and go to bed at 9 PM, you will suffer from indigestion and would be ill the next day. Eat early so that the food is digested before going to bed.”

As the famous expression goes, “do not throw the baby with the bath water.”

Maharaja continued, “We have so many hours left. We have to attend to our needs, meet our children and spouse, etc. Children run into problems because they do not have a time

table to chant, study, engage in spiritual recreation, etc. Where is the protection from the illusionary energy? It is critical that we lead by example. In the story of Aditi, time matters caused Hiranyaksa and Hiranyakasipu to be born. Conception took place at the wrong time and demons were born. Time is Krishna’s energy. To use time profitably, we need to increase our devotional activity.”

“Follow a regulated life. Without that, no one will be happy. Do not abuse time. Nowadays it is tough times, and there are many challenges.”



“In Detroit, recently I was travelling with a medical student doctor, who asked ‘Maharaja, can I ask you a question?’ Yes. ‘I have no time for chanting!’ My response was, ‘I know so many other doctors chanting and working a full day. How many hours do you read before getting tired?’ He said, ‘3 to 4 hours.’ ‘Thereafter what do you do?’ He said, ‘I take a break and chill out by a walk.’ I said, ‘Then take your bead bag for japa walk. Your chanting can be done.’ The doctor was happy with the advice. It is therefore extremely important to target the young people, the students and pupils. They are so easily attracted to the illusionary energy of material nature and forget the goal of life. Hence not only time is wasted but their entire life.”

“Break things down: there are economic and social responsibilities. Then what about spiritual responsibility?”

“The biggest dacoit or rogue of time is surfing the internet, website after website, clocking 28 hours a week. People are fired from their jobs because the work is not done. Another thief of time is watching TV – in the US everyone has their

own TV in their bedrooms; the family is already broken up; they are just hanging out.”

“If someone bounces into you while busy with your tasks, you must deal with them with compassion. If you are busy, indicate to that person you will call them back. Better to write it down – get a small note book. If you forget to call them, then they will say you are a liar.”

“The other thieves of time are the media, television, movies, games, newspapers, magazines, and now cell phones. All this is ‘killing’ time, as hang-out after work. Rather, time is killing us.”

“Procrastination is another thief of time – sitting on the telephone for 2 hours. Quality chanting of the Hare Krishna maha-mantra takes us 2 hours; we are left with 6 hours. The 6 hours are quickly evaporated with traveling time, eating, evacuating, socializing, sports, family engagements, and clubs, and so on.”

“The best way to manage time is to be regulated like Srila Prabhupada, who kept strictly to his plan: prescribed rounds of japa of Hare Krishna maha-mantra, morning walks, greetings, morning and afternoon class, taking care of Krishna Consciousness business, receiving guests, lunch, massage, interviews, travelling the globe 12 times, writing in the early hours of the morning, training his disciples, and opening temples, farms, schools, restaurants, goshalas, BBT, Back to Godhead Magazine, and holding pandal and Ratha Yatra Festivals.”

As Chanakya Pandit said, “Not one single moment of life can be regained for millions of gold coins. Therefore what greater loss is there than time spent fruitlessly?”

Hare Krishna



About the Author

His Holiness Bhakti Vasudeva Swami joined ISKCON, Nigeria, in 1984 as a disciple of His Holiness Bhakti Tirtha Swami. He holds a master's degree in Philosophy and Education with a major in Critical and Creative Thinking (CACT) from AICCACOI/Montclair State University, New Jersey, USA. He is a scholar of international repute and presents papers at major international conferences across the globe. Some of his publications include Presidency and requital epistemology; Endogenous and exogenous factors affecting probity in governance; Vedantic views on cultural transformation: A stimulus for socio-political stability; Organizational and sociological factors affecting societal norms: Lessons from an oriental culture; Rape: Sonic therapy to the rescue; Panacea for matrimonial failures: A guide for transforming relationships between men and women; Traditional practice affecting the emancipation and empowerment of women in Nigeria. He accepted sanyasa initiation in year 2009 from His Holiness Jayapataka Swami.

"If we are to reach real peace in this world... we shall have to begin with children."

Mahatma Gandhi

The Essence of Archanam

**HG Mukunda-Datta Das,
ISKCON Vrindavana Head Pujari**

Srila Rupa Gosvami explained that taking shelter of the spiritual master is the first anga, or limb, of devotional life. Under the guidance of Sri Guru, we perform bhagavad-viddhi, the process of hearing and chanting about the Lord, and pancaratrika-viddhi, worshipping the Lord according to rules and regulations. The worship of the Lord is also known as pancanga-puja, a fivefold process of worship; namely, 1) abhigaman, preparing oneself to approach the Lord through internal and external purification, 2) upadan, collecting all the paraphernalia required in the worship of the Lord, which must be of first-class quality, 3) yoga, linking oneself with the Lord by chanting mantras and thus becoming firmly situated on the spiritual platform in order to be able to serve the Lord, 4) ijya, actual worship of the Lord with up to 64 upacaras or articles; an engagement that extends from early morning till late night, of which the sodasopacara-puja, or bathing ceremony, and the sringar seva, dressing and decorating the Lord, are the most important, and finally, 5)svadhyaya, studying the scriptures, and performing sadhana, especially chanting the Holy Names, which is the yuga dharma, acar, pracar, in order to have the proper consciousness to be able to worship the Lord properly. The worship of the Lord is also known as nitya-seva, a daily, constant service of the Lord according to His eternal pastimes in aprakat-lila, which is in fact also known as nitya-lila, or astakaliya-lila, the eightfold daily pastimes that occur throughout the day and night in Goloka Vrindavan, or Sveta-dvipa, Navadvipa, respectively.

According to one's purity, devotional status, and realizations, a devotee may be categorized as first class, second class, or third class; be he a preacher or a pujari, all are ultimately servants of the Lord. When preachers and pujaris are first class devotees, then their seva, archanam is first class as well. Such superior service is achieved by the mercy of Sri Guru, who is the empowered representative of the Lord,

a follower of Sri Rupa Gosvami, and the most intimate associate of kali yuga avatar, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Lord Chaitanya established the yuga dharma of chanting the Holy Names, and came to give Vraja-bhakti, following the footsteps of the ragatmikabhaktas of Vraja, and especially unnatojjvalbhava, gopibhava. More important than the external offering of items, uparacas, in archanam is the proper mood, or concept, of bhava with love, bhakti, or priti, which has to be there. This mood is one the Lord is anxious to accept, and He is therefore also addressed as bhava grahi Janardana. Service in this vein is therefore the real seva, true service to the Lord. The arca-vigraha is non-different from the Lord in the heart, Who is then also in the Holy Names, and Svayam Bhagavan Sri Krishna in Goloka Vrindavan, or Svayam Bhagavan Sri Krishna Chaitanya in Sri Navadvipa, respectively.

So, the pujari always takes shelter of Sri Guru while executing his seva, and through the manner in which he lives his life as well. Although the first class devotee-pujari is always properly situated on the transcendental platform, he nevertheless remains in a humble state of mind; feeling unqualified for the seva he has somehow been allowed to perform, and at the end of his seva, he meekly begs forgiveness for any offences committed towards the Lord or His devotees. That, in a few words, is the essence of archanam. In order to be able to properly understand the process, one must approach Sri Guru, who is absorbed in the seva of the Lord, and then, under the Guru's guidance and with his blessings, one should engage in practical seva to the Lord. Only then will one be able to realize the sublime arcana-paddhati. Hare Krishna.



H.G. Mukund Datta Prabhu was born in raised in Switzerland. In search of the absolute truth he visited Vrindavan and joined ISKCON Vrindavan in 1980. He is serving as a head pujari in Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Temple since last 24 years. He also served as a teacher in Gurukula for 2 years.

The Transcendental Mridanga in Lord Chaitanya's Sankirtana

Bablu Das

Introduction

Glories of the Holy Name – Sankirtana

Indian classical music has a spiritual origin. Lord Krishna has always been glorified in stories and songs through kirtana and bhajana. In Padma Purana, on being asked by Srila Narada about His permanent place of residence, Sri Krishna replies,

*Naham tisthami vaikunthe yoginanam hridayesu va
Yatra gayanti mad-bhakah tatra tisthami narada*

“My dear Narada, actually I do not reside in My abode, Vaikuntha, nor do I reside within the hearts of the yogis, but I reside in that place where My pure devotees sing My glories in ecstatic kirtana.”

Lord Caitanya explains the glories of Harinama Sankirtana as follows:

*Ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam
Sreya-kairava-candrika-vitaranam vidyavadhu jivanam
Anandambudhi-varadhanam-pratipadam purnamrita
svadanam
Sarvatma-snapanam param vijayate sri-krishna-
sankirtanam*

(Siksamrtam-1)



Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes in his song Jiva jago,

*Enechi ausadhi maya nasi bara lagi'
hari-nama-maha-mantra lao tumi magi'*



“I have brought the medicine for destroying the illusion of Maya. Now pray for this hari-nama maha-mantra and take it.” We are severely infected by material disease, and the hari-nama maha-mantra is the medicine. The proper ways to take this medicine of the holy name are twofold. One way is the japa meditation, soft chanting counted on beads, and the other is kirtana, loud chanting to a melody or song. Japa and kirtana are equally important. Both are the means to develop pure bhakti as prescribed by Krishna. Kirtana in its pure sense describes Krishna’s pastimes during rasa-lila. Kirtana accompanied with musical instruments, such as mridanga, karatalas, gong, vina, tambura and sitar, is an

easy and powerful meditation for remembering Krishna's pastimes.

Importance of Mridanga in Lord Caitanya's Sankirtana

The mridanga is essential to a good kirtana. Caitanya Mahaprabhu's sankirtana on the streets of Navadvipa is described as follows:

mridanga-karatala sankirtana-mahadhvani
'hari' 'hari'— dhvani vina anya nahi suni

"When the sankirtana movement thus started, no one in Navadvipa could hear any sound other than the words 'Hari! Hari!' and the beating of the mridanga and clashing of karatalas." (Cc. adi. 17.123)

Music produced by the mridanga and karatalas invokes mohini sakti, the potency of enchantment, which intoxicates the mind. The sound of the mridanga creates auspiciousness, just like the sound of the conchshell. Inauspiciousness cannot remain wherever the mridanga and karatalas resound. By hearing the perfect sound of the mridanga, all the jivas, such as animals, birds, and trees, are liberated. The sound of the mridanga reaches the three planetary systems: Svarga, Martya, and Patala.

In Saranagati (suddha-bhakata 4), Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes, "My mind ever longs for the opportunity to hear the music of the mridanga, and my heart dances in ecstasy whenever I hear the kind of kirtana established by Lord Gauracandra." In the perfect system of Lord Gauracandra, which is beyond the defects of this world, both the performance and the learning processes make one Krishna consciousness. The Hare Krishna Maha-mantra is the sound manifestation of Their Lordship Sri Sri Radha-Krishna and the mantras of the mridanga are engaged in their service. Srimati Radharani as the feminine sound serves Sri Krishna, the masculine essence, and in doing so, she expands her countless maidservants, manifesting as talas and ragas, to increase Her Lord's pleasure beyond limites. Hence, it is wonderful play of transcendental emotions. Sri Sri Radha Krishna reveal Themselves in the exquisite environment of Their loving entourage.

Srila Prabhupada and Mridanga

Through the inspiration, enthusiasm, and mercy of our spiritual preceptor, Srila Prabhupada, the joy of playing and singing traditional Vaisnava music has been brought to the Western world and has been experienced by thousands of people. It is relevant here to quote Srila Prabhupada, who, by citing events from his own life as a child, stressed the very importance of Bhagavata philosophy and Kirtana in regards to Gurukula education.

In Srila Prabhupada's childhood, his father, Gour Mohan De, hired a professional mridanga player to teach him the standard rhythms for accompanying kirtana. His mother was skeptical about the use of teaching such a young child to play the mridanga? It is not important. But Gour Mohan dreamed of a son who would grow up singing bhajana, playing mridanga, and speaking on srimad-Bhagavatam. When Abhay sat down to play the mridanga, even with his arms stretched out as far as he could, his small hands would barely reach the drumheads on either side of the drum. Still, he eagerly learned.



Srila Prabhupada instructs "So we should now organize in such a way that there shall be nice kirtana and attempt for selling our publications. My Guru Maharaja indicated that the mrdanga and the press are the mediums of our missionary propaganda activities, and we shall follow His path in the same way. We must have large quantities of mrdangas for vibrating in different parts of the world and we must distribute our literature also." (Letter to Brahmananda—January 30, 1969)

A devotee is expert; so we must, indeed become experts. It is therefore imperative, in the light of the above quotes, that we become especially experts in two fields: teaching the Srimad Bhagavatam and performing Kirtana.

Mridanga: from Sri Krishna lila to the present form

In Krishna Lila, Lalita sakhi was playing Mridangam. But it was different in shape than that of the modern mridanga. It was little longer and had a wooden barrel. Also its small head was bigger in size than that of the modern mridanga.

This kind of drum as used in Krishna Lila resembles more with the Pakhowaj and dholak currently popular in North India. But Mridangam is very popular in South India. One can see there a culture of Mridangam. This kind of mridangam or drum in Krishna Lila was mostly used for dancing. In South India also, it is used for the very same purpose.

Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu brought a transferred form of the Mridangam, which is made of clay. He gave it the name – “Sri khol”. This is a transcendental name mixed with the devotion and love of Krishna. In Bengali, sri means beauty and khol means empty box. Hence, Sri-khol means a beautiful empty box. Lord Caitanya has very mercifully given us the service to fill it up with the Holy names of Krishna, by performing Sankirtana with the Sri-khol. This is an easy and great opportunity to develop love for Krishna. But for this, we have to practice to produce a proper sound from the Sri-khol.

The heart of Krishna melts when the devotees perform Harinama Sankirtana with the Sri-khol. Every part of Sri-khol conveys a very deep meaning. Sri-khol has 32 straps - why? Why not 31 or 33? The reason is that it is mixed

with the Holy name of Krishna. These 32 straps represent the 32 syllables of the Hare Krishna Mahamantra covering the entire Sri-khol.

Lord Gauranga has specifically mentioned the sizes of the small and the big heads of the Sri-khol. He has also mentioned about the proper size of the Sri-khol. So everything, including the size, shape and the playing technique, has been systematized and standardized by Mahaprabhu very scientifically so as to produce a perfect sound for the pleasure of Sri Krishna.

Externally it may appear to be a simple instrument, but actually it is a highly devotional instrument. Whoever listens to the proper sound of Sri-khol is liberated and can go back to Godhead.

*Koli yuge sri krishna Caitanya Avatar
Khelibar prabandhe koila Khol karatals*

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is an incarnation of Sri Sri Radha and Krishna. He appears in kali yuga for preaching the Harinama Sankirtana with instruments of Sri-khol and karatals.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura says,

*Tathai tathai bajala khol,ghana ghana tahe jhajera rol
Preme dhala dhala sonara anga, carane nupura baje.*

The mridangas resounded “tathai, tathai”, the karatals chimed in time, and Lord Gauranga’s footbells jingled as His golden form swayed gracefully in the ecstatic love of God.

The Original Gaudiya Tradition

Lord Caitanya

Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu is very merciful. He gave us his original kirtana knowledge and taught us how to use the original kirtana for Krishna. We can see in Mahaprabhu’s time, in Srivas angina, how the Lord did ecstatic kirtana with his associates. During the kirtana, the devotees used to get unconscious by chanting the holy name of Krishna and were floating in the ocean of Krishna prema. The rhythm played there was very special and perfect, according to the specific melodies, on certain times of the day, and according



to the moods of Sri Radha and Krishna. This style of kirtana has been recommended by Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura under the title Garanhati kirtana.

Lord Gauranga has scientifically systematized the process of kirtana. During that time, Navadvipa was full of Mayavadi Brahmins and Kali worshippers who were averse to hearing the Harinama Sankirtana. Even the ministers tried to stop the Sankirtana and used to punish heavily the devotees who were found chanting Hare Krishna. But eventually, by the mercy and preaching of Lord Gauranga, they understood who is Lord Caitanya and Sri Krishna, and accepted the process of Harinama Sankirtana. The ministers also gave open permission to have Harinama processions on the streets.

Lord Gauranga is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself and hence is all powerful and all merciful. He taught by His personal example – how to be humble, how to serve Krishna and what is the proper way to perform Sankirtana. He taught that in the age of Kali, the only path for success of the human life and to go back to Godhead is Harinama Sankirtana.

*harer nama harer nama, harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nasty eva nasty eva, nasty eva gatir anyatha*

Narottama Dasa Thakura

About four hundred years ago, in the village named Kheturi, Narottama Dasa Thakura appeared as the son of the king Krishnananda Datta. From his childhood, he was a very different boy as he was always absorbed in thinking about Krishna, serve for krishna chanting for krishna singing for krishna.

As a young boy, he came to Sri Vrindavan Dham in search of spiritual master. There he met with Srinivas Acarya and Shyamanada. All three young boys went to Srila Jiva Goswami. Narottama was initiated by Lokanatha Goswami, an associate of Lord Chaitanya.

Narottama Dasa has written first class songs glorifying the pastimes of Lord Caitanya. His bhajans are very important for Gaudiya Vaishnavas to know how to do proper service and how to love krishna. Narottama dasa has written two famous books - prema bhakti chandrika and prathana.

After Sri Chaitanya, Narottama again flooded the whole Bengal with the ocean of Krishna prema, the ocean of Harinama Sankirtana. Narottama was very eager to write many unmanifested songs of Lord Caitanya in the form of a book.

He wanted to systematize the Nama Kirtana as taught by Lord Gauranga and wanted to give it the form of a bonafide music sampradaya. He invited all the kirtana groups to participate in a kirtana performance festival in the Kheturi



Garerhati Paragana of Rajasahi district, on the occasion of Sri Gaura Purnima. The books Bhakti ratnakara and Narottama dasa vilas vividly describe about the life of Srila Narottama as well as the Kheturi festival. In this festival, musicians from different parts of Bangladesh and India came to perform kirtana. Musicians from each sampradaya made kirtana performances one after the other.

Narottama started his performance with a high class of kirtana named Goura Chandrika, with Hatuti mantras. It was an excellent performance which astounded everyone present there. No one had heard before such a sweet and melodic style of Kirtana. All the pundits and acaryas assembled there recognized this style and gave it the title Garanhati sampradaya.

This is a very rigorous and pure way of doing Sankirtana. Today, very few people learn and know about this style and it is on the verge of getting extinct.

Syamananda Dasa

Syamananda manifested another form of kirtana – Reneti kirtana which was titled after the Reneti paragana of Midinapore district. The melodies and structure of this

style of kirtana are comparable to the traditional Hindustani thumari style, which is well known all over India. For a long time, Reneti kirtana remained provincial and was later revitalized by the followers of Srinivas Acarya in the form of Manoharashahi kirtana.

Srinivas Acarya

Srinivas acarya appeared in the house of a pious brahmana named Gangadhar Bhattacharya and his wife Laxmipriya, in a small village called Chakhandi, on the eastern bank of the Ganges. He was one of the most important teachers in the generation immediately following Lord Caitanya. He is chiefly remembered as the illustrious disciple of Gopal Bhatta Goswami and Jiva Goswami. His achievements include leading the first book distribution party in the history of the Vaishnavism, converting Birhambir, the powerful king of Vishnupur, into a Vaishnava, and originating the manoharashahi style of kirtana. He developed elaborate techniques for manjuri—sadhana and co-organized the Kheturi Gaur Purnima festival along with Narottama Dasa Thakura, Shyamanada and thousands of Vaishnavas.



Tradition today

With the advancement of the Kali yuga, the Vedic knowledge is quickly being eroded. Many important traditions are fading day by day. Unfortunately, the GaudiyaVaishnava music tradition given to us by the exalted saints like Narottama Dasa Thakura, Srinivas Acarya and others is no exception.

The traditional forms of kirtana, as taught by our acaryas, in the line of Lord Gauranga, are now very rare and hardly

anyone is using or learning them. There can be several reasons for this. The forms are very rigorous and one needs to have a lot of patience and sadhana in order to imbibe this knowledge. For the want of sincerity, this great wealth is gradually disappearing.

The Need to Preserve

There are no hard and fast rules to chant the Holy names and for most of the devotees, all that we can do is to chant to the best of our capacity with some basic musical skills and a few rough mridanga beats. However, we can observe that the current standard of our kirtana is often rajasic and still requires a lot of improvement in order to preach in the refined or the aristocratic social circles. Even though the holy name alone is sufficient to purify the audience, still, when we preach we must also attract the minds of the conditioned souls to the best of our efforts.

Srila Prabhupada comments, “The Bhagavata cult is preached also through the art of music and dance as it was done by Lord Caitanya. I am just thinking of introducing the very same system.” (Letter to Sumati Morarjee—New York, 27 October, 1965) “Of course, chanting Hare Krishna does not require any artificial artistic sense, but still, if the procedure is presented rhythmically, then the people may be attracted more by the transcendental music”.(Letter to Upendra—1 June, 1968)

There are many avenues of course, either in Indian or in western music, that we could explore in order to improve our musical standards, but if we are interested to put energy in this direction, then it is best to stick to the system given by our acaryas themselves. There is no other style which can so perfectly express the intimate mellows of Krishna bhakti as the melodies and rhythms that they have revealed. Vaishnava Acaryas have invested a great deal of effort and care to preserve this transcendental treasure by parampara. But unfortunately, now this parampara is being lost.

Mridanga playing is a great service to please Krishna and His devotees and an immense support for one’s own spiritual life. For many years, when I was traveling with a kirtana party throughout India, I met with Vaishnavas from different schools and movements. All their mahatmas and

all their philosophical books stress the importance of bona fide kirtana. Following the tradition system is a universal principle.

Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International school has a plan to preserve this kirtana culture. After some time BGIS is going to establish a music college. It will be service of Krishna where students from all over the world will be able to learn the bonafide traditions of Gaudiya Vaisnava Kirtana.

How to preserve the tradition

Approaching a Bonafide Guru

In previous times the knowledge of learning to play the mridanga was passed on from guru to disciple by word and by demonstration. Whether learning from a book or directly from a guru, the student has to invest a significant amount of patience and work. Because nothing has been written down previously, we have already lost many tala, especially the long and variegated rhythms that describe Krishna's beautiful rasa-lila.

The mridanga is a transcendental instrument, and one should learn to play according to the genuine and proper method from a guru. This supreme standard of music does not appear by chance. Like the gong and the karatalas, the mridanga has to be played according to specific mantras and rhythms. Kirtana is a great presentation to Krishna. Therefore we have to use the mridanga very carefully, and sing very carefully, and for that it is necessary to learn from a bona fide teacher who knows his subject.

Do not Concoct

To make up beats on the mridanga is improper. Many people play tabla or dholaka beats on the mridanga, but the mridanga has its own specific beats and mantras. The Muslims created the tabla. It is not a GauṇīyaVaiṣṇava instrument, and it is not descending from an authentic spiritual sampradaya. Although it has a highly elevated system of beats, it cannot compare to the mridanga. The dholoka, a wooden drum of similar size and form as the mridanga, is popular nowadays in India. It also is not a classical instrument and does not have any standard system of beats.

Some people wrongly think that mridanga is an ordinary instrument. On the tabla, the maximum length of a tala (rhythm) is sixteen matra (beats), whereas on the mridanga, the tala can be much longer. Some are twenty-eight, forty-four, ninety-six or even one-hundred-and-four matra long. The long tala structures, together with the words of the songs, tell of Krishna's pastimes.



This knowledge can only be learnt from an experienced teacher. To play speculative beats on the mridanga, without learning from a guru, can spoil the kirtana. If you want honey, go to the bees. I therefore encourage everyone to learn from a qualified teacher. He can give you the nectar of pure, sweet Vedic music, because he relishes it himself. Under the guru's guidance and by regular practice, you will learn to play nicely. Progress takes time, and patience is important. To grow a tree you have to water it daily and in this way gradually it develops. Eventually, it gives fruits, and you can taste the nectar of the fruit. Learning is like watering a tree: the daily offering of water is your regular practice. Learning from the mouth of the guru is called guru-mukha-vidya. This is the perfect method of entering the mysteries of the mridanga.

Some Mridanga lessons

Approaching the instrument

In Sri Gaura Mandala Bhumi, everybody calls it with the name Sri-khol, not a Mridanga. This is out of their great respect for the Sri-khol because they know that it is a very auspicious and special instrument. It is very dear to Lord Krishna. So before touching the Sri-khol, one must pray by

chanting certain mantra for offering obeisances to Sri khol, and then start playing proper bols on Sri-khol. There are very strict instructions in the department of music by the Vaishnava authorities that until one learns to play proper bols, one must not be allowed to touch and play one's own speculative bols on Sri-khol.

To learn and play Sri-khol, one must understand the philosophy about Sri-khol. It is not for banging or to make a big noise like an orchestra. Lord Caitanya brought Sri-khol to give us a nice service to please Krishna by performing Harinama Sankirtana. Vibrations of Sri-khol sound makes everybody enjoy ecstatically the Holy names of the supreme personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna.

Proper Pronunciation



Like Vedic mantras, mridanga mantras are transcendental sound vibrations. They have to be pronounced properly in order to achieve their full effect. They are written in the Bengali language.

Don't Compel by Force

The mridanga is a powerful instrument, not only in fired-up kirtanas, but also in mellow kirtanas and bhajanas. You don't need great force for producing a loud, dynamic sound. On the contrary, if you invest too much muscle power, your hands will become stiff, and the sound will be hard and bereft of volume. How long can you play in that way? Such "dynamic" players engage the whole body to bang wildly on the mridanga and leave the kirtana exhausted before it has barely started. Good technique means you can play uninterrupted for hours even at high speeds. Playing the

mridanga is a matter of technique, not of force.

Have you ever seen a whip artist in a circus? With a loud crack, his whip tears up small pieces of paper or even thin wooden boards from a distance of many yards, without hitting the hand of the person holding the target. All this the artist can do with the movement of two fingers. This is possible by technique, not by force. The power has to be concentrated precisely on one point to produce the maximum effect.

The same applies to the mridanga. By long, uninterrupted practice, make your hands loose and whip-like. You must start by playing very slowly, concentrating on the proper movement of the hands. Then gradually your stroke will become strong and clear.

Let Your Hands Swing

Music means you must have rhythm, and rhythm on the mridanga means using swinging movements. Consider a clock. By investing a little energy to wind up the spring, it can go for many hours, clicking rhythmically and moving the hand over the clock face. How is it possible? The mechanism of the clock preserves the energy of the spring.

The same principle can be applied to the mridanga. If your hands swing to and fro, according to the rhythm of the mantra, they can preserve the energy of one stroke for the next one. In your consciousness you must perceive all the strokes of a mantra as a unit. An important point is the way the hands move after each stroke, because the fading movement of one stroke is the rising movement of the next one. If you keep this point in mind, you will feel your hands start to swing as you play faster. You need less energy to keep moving when the energy is preserved in the swinging motion. Then, playing becomes pleasurable. To come to this level of playing requires concentration and feeling— and constant practice.

Playing Mridanga as Yoga

Playing the mridanga is considered a type of yoga practice. A daily quota of 30 minutes or more is very beneficial for general health and specifically for improving concentration. Since the whole body is engaged and one has to sit properly,

not only the arms and hands are trained but also the legs and spine. One learns to breathe deeply and properly, and the mind automatically becomes clear and happy.

Preparing to sit for Practice

Before you sit for practice, you should wash your hand nicely. Wash your mouth also nicely in order to speak the proper pronunciation of the mantras. Sit straight, do not hang on the wall. One has to have a separate dress for practice. Mridanga is very auspicious instrument as it represents Lord Balarama. Therefore do not practice in the same dress in which you sleep or go bath room. During the playing of Mridanga, initially, please try to chant the beat at the same time so the later you will have no difficulty to play Mridanga and at same time singing the kirtana.

Morning is the best time for practice, especially before 10 am. Before touching the Mridanga, you should chant the Mridanga prayer.

Learning by Surrendering to Krishna

Learning or playing Sri-khol is completely spiritual. Therefore, without the mercy of Sri Sri Nityananda and Sri Sri Gaurachandra, it is not possible to learn it.

You should have desire to learn Sri-khol for Krishna and not to become a professional musician. Of course, when you learn for Krishna, Krishna gives you more and more benediction to become a very good player and hence you can play much better than other professional musicians.

Here the essential thing is Bhakti. Bhakti means surrender to the Lord. In Bhakti –yoga, until we surrender, it is very difficult to obtain or understand the transcendental knowledge. We can see this in the example of Draupadi in the Mahabharata:

When Duhshasana was pulling the sari from Draupadi in front of the whole Guru-varga-kripacariya, Dronacariya, Bhishma dev, and so on, she was praying to Lord Krishna with one hand raised to Him, and the other holding on to her sari. Krishna watched the helpless Draupadi, quietly saying to Himself that until she fully surrenders, how can He protect her. Finally, when Draupadi's sari had only one round left around her body, she loudly prayed to Lord

Krishna with both hands raised, "Hey Madhusudana! please protect your devotee. I am yours." Upon hearing Draupadi's prayers, Krishna then said that now He can provide her with unlimited sari and protect her because she has fully surrendered to Him.



Without humility and surrender, it is very difficult to enjoy the real rasa. If you learn for Krishna, then Krishna will think about you, but in order to get Krishna's mercy, you have to follow the process. Cleanliness, discipline, regular practice, aiming at the target and thinking about the subject help you to gradually improve. Eventually, even if you had previously played speculative mantras, all the darkness will go away. When, by your real practice, the sun will arise in the heart, you will never like to play any beat without order. This is called the power of Bhakti. Therefore in Caitanya Caritamrita it is said,

*krishna surya sama maya haya andhakara
yaha krishna taha nahi mayar adhikar*

When you understand the real system of practice, you will see all your previous speculation beats disappear. Because of Bhakti, you would really want to learn for Krishna and preserve this knowledge.

Conclusion

My desire is to try to serve the devotees by presenting and preserving this valuable knowledge. I invite the devotees to become happy by playing the mridanga. In this way, they will please Krishna and help in fulfilling Srila Prabhupada's desire to attract the people of the world to the holy name by means of beautiful and pure kirtana.

It is my request to all parents to please engage their children in learning Mridanga in their free time, rather than sending them to play where they become disturbed in the mind. They should go to a qualified Mridanga teacher. By practicing Mridanga, they will be able to improve their health, character and devotion.

8 to 10 years of age is the best time to start learning. If they start young, their hands will become very strong and their playing will be sweet like nectar, and they will have great taste and eagerness to continue to practice.

About the Author



Bablu Dasa was born in 1967 in Godrumadvipa, one of the nine islands of Sri Navadvipa Dhama. His father was

a Gaudiya Vaisnava in the line of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura and a renowned Gaudiya Vaisnava musician. Bablu started learning mridanga at the age of six from his father. Then he moved to live with Sri Radhacaran Dasa Babaji Maharaja, one of the greatest musicians of his time. He learned from him for twelve years. During this time he performed strict sadhana and traveled throughout India performing kirtana. At the age of nineteen, he moved back to his parents' home and began learning from his second guru Jagadbandhu Ustad. He learnt padavali-kirtana, the topmost musical system, which describes the eternal lilas of Radha and Krishna through long, elaborate songs and mantras, under the guidance of Haridasa Babaji Maharaj.

He taught in ISKCON Mayapur gurukula. His mission was to preserve and transmit the knowledge he had inherited from his teachers by training willing and eager young students. He trained a Gurukula kirtana band that regularly took part in successful programs, including the yearly Calcutta Ratha-yatra festivals. He tirelessly trained more than 300 students, in the pure style of Gaudiya Vaishnava music, and it was mainly by his endeavor that the Mayapura project became renowned for its high standard of kirtana. Since many years, he has been teaching mridanga at the ISKCON Gurukula in Vrindavana, where he is a source of inspiration for the young Vaishnavas who are eager to take up the pure Vedic system of mridanga playing.

"If you ever think you're too small to be effective, you've never been in bed with a mosquito!"

Wendy Lesko

Panchjanya

Roheeth Gupta,
Director-Patron of Education Project



Srila Prabhupada had a great desire: he wanted to help Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. This mission was bestowed on Srila Prabhupada directly by his spiritual master. In a class given in Durban, South Africa in 1975, Srila Prabhupada explained:

“Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu, He inaugurated this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, that people in this age are no more interested in their value of life. They are in darkness. Therefore Vaisnava, under the instruction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, should go door to door, country to country, town to town, and preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness for their benefit. He said: *pṛithivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma*. Caitanya Mahāprabhu desired that on the surface of the globe, as many towns and villages are there, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should be spread” (Lecture on SB 1.7.2-4).

Lord Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s prediction began revealing itself when Srila Prabhupada went to New York in 1965 to found and later spread his movement throughout the whole world. Vedic missionary Srila Prabhupada established 108 temples internationally in just twelve years of time; since then, the ISKCON movement has grown to more than 600 centers in every corner of the world. That the conditioned soul be engaged in the service of the Lord is in fact the principal desire of a true devotee. Sometimes the Lord comes Himself to re-establish religious activities, while at other times, He simply sends His associates to spread His glories and engage the living entities in devotional life. Those empowered associates shower their mercy on everyone without discrimination. They glorify the Lord and inspire others to dedicate themselves to spiritual activities regardless of the obstacles they may encounter.

Following in the footsteps of our most beloved Srila Prabhupada, BGIS’s team of Patron of Education servants has initiated a parallel project called Panchjanya, the conch shell of Kṛṣṇa. The team’s goal is to communicate the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness among the staff, students and faculty members of India’s corporate, engineering, and management colleges in order to establish a spiritual and ethical environment for these people. Panchjanya conducts courses on topics relevant to today’s business and academic communities such as stress and time management, conflict resolution, and more. Using scriptures like Srimad Bhagavatam, Bhagavad-gita, the Christian Bible, and even Islam’s Quran, the team seeks to give a sense of the true essence of life to students, professors and management professionals in a modern, palatable, thought-provoking manner.

Feedback from recent seminars at local colleges has been favorable and encouraging. Several participants have even adopted the basics of spiritual life, and have found that by adding spiritual practices to their work routine, they can now deal with the pressures of their jobs and studies in a more positive way. The Panchjanya servants look forward to continuing their speaking engagements with greater frequency in the upcoming year.

Investing Into The Future Through First Class Education

Yadunandana Swami

Recently I read a news article in which the writer discussed how Brazil is one of the emerging world potencies. The article, however, analyzed also some of its shortcomings: in order to achieve a sustainable position as an established world potency, Brazil needs to multiply at least eight times its investments and prioritization of education. China was mentioned as an example of a world potency that is successfully expanding its influence through systematic education, and Brazil would do well in following China's example in order to consolidate its growing influence.

As an ISKCON leading member concerned with education, when I read this article, I could not avoid reflecting on ISKCON's need to increase its educational development. Education is essential both for material and spiritual purposes. Srila Prabhupada explains in his books the crucial role of education. In commenting on Sri Krishna's teachings concerned with preserving spiritual legacy through the guru-parampara, Srila Prabhupada writes:

“Human life is meant for cultivation of spiritual knowledge, in eternal relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the executive heads of all states and all planets are obliged to impart this lesson to the citizens by education, culture and devotion. In other words, the executive heads of all states are intended to spread the science of Krishna consciousness so that the people may take advantage of this great science and pursue a successful path, utilizing the opportunity of the human form of life”.

(Bhagavad Gita, 4.1, purport)

Education, therefore, stands as the best process to preserve, nurture, and disseminate knowledge and values among human beings. When education is poor within a community or society, it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to preserve the essential cultural values of such a community. In this regard, Prabhupada writes:



Birth in a family of yogis or transcendentalists—those with great wisdom—is praised herein because the child born in such a family receives a spiritual impetus from the very beginning of his life. It is especially the case in the acarya or gosvami families. Such families are very learned and devoted by tradition and training, and thus they become spiritual masters. In India there are many such acarya families, but they have now degenerated due to insufficient education and training. (Bhagavad Gita 6.42, purport)

Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for ISKCON to establish an effective educational system for its members and for other people in order to preserve and disseminate the legacy of the sampradaya, and to integrate its principles in every practical aspect of life.

Less than a year after arriving in America, in mid-1966, Prabhupada established his first ISKCON centre in New York City. The articles of incorporation that he wrote show what he wanted to achieve. Systematic spiritual education is mentioned in the first of the seven purposes of ISKCON, included in the document of incorporation:

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.

Prabhupada also saw that knowledge and science become complete when they are used to glorify God. (Srimad Bhagavatam 1.5.22, purport). Therefore he encouraged some of his disciples to become educated in regular educational institutions and to develop educational programmes both for children and adults to that end. Prabhupada foresaw that systematic education would qualify his followers to successfully perform missionary work and to take the responsibilities of leadership within ISKCON and in society at large.

Therefore, the importance of Krishna conscious educational projects such as the Vrindavan Bhaktivedanta Gurukula & International School cannot be overemphasized. Such educational institutes lay the foundation for a prosperous future in the lives of students and of those who meet them. Moreover, Krishna conscious quality education contributes to the welfare of humanity by preserving and disseminating higher values, which are very much needed in the present critical times.

About the Author

H.H Yadunandana Swami — principal of Bhaktivedanta College, teacher, and spiritual counselor — is a sannyasi

(monk, religious mendicant) in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). He has been studying and practicing Caitanya Vaishnavism since 1977. Presently, his main services in ISKCON are focused on systematic God-centered education by developing educational initiatives and by teaching courses on Bhagavad Gita, Srimad Bhagavatam (Bhagavata Purana), and other subjects. He is convinced that such education is the best way to improve the lives of individuals, develop communities, and, ultimately, better the world. Apart from his services in education, he is also active in interreligious dialogue and lectures on the philosophy and culture of Krishna consciousness in many countries around the world.



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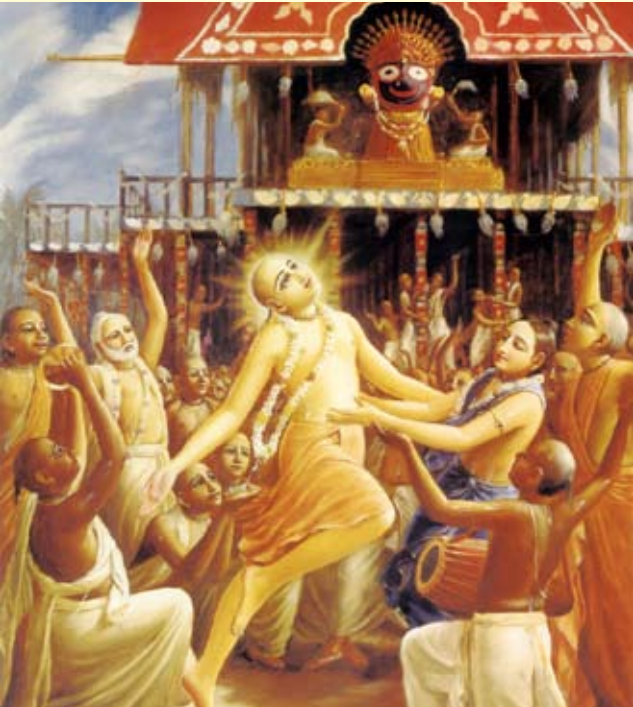


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The Most Munificent

Radhakanta Das,
BGIS Vice Principal



In the history of mankind, there have been many great personalities who have dedicated themselves to the service of others. Throughout their lives, these individuals have performed activities for the benefit of human society; activities that stand in distinct contrast to those of the general populace who strive only to satisfy their own sense gratification, or at best, to benefit their family members.

There are different categories of these persons such as philanthropists, social reformers, and missionaries, to name a few. Some are famous for curing material diseases while others are recognized for taking care of the poor and destitute. Mother Teresa is well-known for her selfless service to the most downtrodden slum-dwellers suffering from leprosy in the streets of Kolkata. John D. Rockefeller, the first American to amass a billion-dollar fortune, donated a major portion of his fortune to foundations that had a significant effect on medicine, education and scientific

research. His funding helped to eradicate hookworm disease. Bill Gates has so far given away over \$28 billion to charity for the improvement of healthcare and similar programs in developing countries.

There have been many great social reformers and freedom fighters like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela who have risked their lives for a higher cause. Jesus Christ, the son of God, preached the gospel of his father and always wished well for everyone. Although he was crucified for his missionary activities, he prayed to God to forgive the crucifiers. Similarly, Prophet Muhammad preached to the most barbarian class of men. He had to teach them the most fundamental moral principles that a human being must have.

But, if one analyzes the history of mankind carefully, one will come to the conclusion that of all of these great humanitarians, no one has been more merciful and benevolent than Shri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His followers. The activities of other benevolent persons are mostly based on the bodily platform, whereas the activities of Lord Caitanya are on the platform of the eternal soul:

*çré-kânëa-caitanya-dayä karaha vicära
vicära karite citte päbe camatkära*

“Let the logicians compare all the results of other humanitarian work with the merciful activities of Lord Caitanya. If their judgment is impartial, they will understand that no other humanitarian activities can surpass those of Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu” (CC, Adi-lila, 8.15).

According to the Vedic scriptures, He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna Himself, who has appeared in the form of His devotee. Nonetheless, even if one considers Him simply to be a saintly person, there is no harm.

Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in this world in 1486 at Mayapur, District of Nadia, in West Bengal. He was popularly known as Nimai Pandit during his school days. He was a genius in the fields of nyaya (logic) and vyakarana (grammar) in Nadia, the hub of learning in India that time. When He was a teenager, He defeated the great digvijai Keshava Kashmiri, one of the greatest scholars of India at that time. He then started the sankirtana movement,

or the congregational chanting of the Holy Names, all over Bengal. He had millions of followers, including the kazi or magistrate of the district. Although He had very loving widowed mother and a young, beautiful wife, He renounced His comfortable family life to become a sannyasi, or travelling mendicant, at the age of 24 years for the benefit of the entire humanity.

After taking sannyasa, Shri Caitanya Mahaprabhu travelled throughout the entire land of India preaching the process of bhakti yoga through the congregational chanting of the Holy Names of Krishna, also known as the sankirtana movement. Whenever He passed through a village, the entire village would be enchanted by His beauty and love for Krishna and, thus inspired, they would all take up the process of devotional service. These villagers would later go to other villages and teach everyone the process of sankirtana. In this way, Lord Caitanya preached the process of bhakti yoga in every part of the country.

The process taught by Mahaprabhu is not meant to give some temporary happiness in the form of political freedom, food, or shelter, but instead to permanently liberate one from the bondage of this world. He gave the highest form of medicine in the form of the Hare Krishna mahamantra to permanently relieve all living entities from the pangs of birth, death, old age and disease.

Another great contribution of Lord Caitanya is that He made the process of bhakti accessible to everybody irrespective of caste or creed. Thus, He uprooted the deeply ingrained caste system prevalent in India at that time; according to which only the elite class of people could consider themselves qualified to worship God. Mahaprabhu also saved the society from the damaging philosophy of mayavada, or impersonalism. He defeated many famous impersonalists in philosophical debates and converted them into devotees. A most notable historical event is in fact the acceptance of the process of bhakti by Prakasananda Saraswati, a very famous mayavadi or impersonalist from Varanasi. Saraswati had thousands of followers, and these people too became bhakti yogis as did their guru. Not only did Lord Caitanya deliver human beings, but He also delivered animals and plants during His famous journey through the Jharikand forest.

During the last 18 years of His manifested pastimes, Lord Caitanya stayed at Jagannath Puri. There He made the king of Utkala, Prataprudra, become a great devotee of Krishna while also preaching to many learned scholars like Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. Simply by seeing His beautiful dancing form during the Rathayatra celebration at Jagannath Puri, millions of conditioned souls were liberated.



A person is considered munificent, generous or merciful if he gives a great treasure to a person who doesn't deserve it. For example, sometimes a teacher may mercifully give some grace marks to pass a student. However, if the teacher gives 100% to a student who deserves 20% or less, then he is certainly considered to be very munificent. The residents of Kali Yuga are engrossed in darkest ignorance and they perform the worst sinful activities. On the other hand, Lord Caitanya has made the process of bhakti accessible to the most fallen souls of Kali Yuga. The process of bhakti is the highest spiritual path according to the Vedic scriptures. In fact it said that it is rare to find a pure devotee even among millions of liberated persons. (SB 6.14.5) But now with the causeless mercy of Lord Caitanya freely flowing, pure devotion is possible for all.

Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu has given the opportunity to the most fallen people to attain to the highest spiritual benediction of love of God. Theoretical knowledge of love of God can be found in many places and in many scriptures, but what that love of Godhead actually is, and how it is developed has been taught only by the personal example of Lord Caitanya. This is the unique gift He gave the world. More specifically, He revealed to the entire world that the highest and most intimate form of love of Godhead is found

in the residents of Vrindavana. That is why Rupa Goswami offered the following prayers at the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya:

*namo mahā-vadānyāya kāñḥā-prema-pradāya te
kāñḥāya kāñḥā-caitanya-nāmne gaura-tviṇe namaḥ*

(CC, Madhya-lila, 19.53)

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord Çré Kāñḥā Caitanya, who is more magnanimous than any other avatāra, even Kāñḥā Himself, because He is bestowing freely what no one else has ever given—pure love of Kāñḥā.”

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabu also empowered His associates and followers to preach in different parts of the country. Lord Nityananda, one of His chief associates, successfully introduced the sankirtana movement in the entire province of Bengal. The six goswamis of Vrindavan, headed by Sri Rupa and Sri Sanatana, were among His chief followers. They have made an immense contribution to human society by writing books that establish the authority of Vedic scriptures and that confirm how devotional service to Radha and Krishna is the highest goal that a living entity can aspire to. The six goswamis also revealed to the world the sacred realm of Vrindavan by discovering many of the lost sites of the pastimes of Krishna. Saint Tukaram was also inspired by Lord Caitanya and played a major role in spreading the bhakti movement in the Western parts of India.

There were many other stalwart followers of Lord Caitanya who have demonstrated the highest level of compassion for all living beings. Srila Prabhupada explains how, “In the Western countries, Christians believe that Lord Jesus Christ, their spiritual master, appeared in order to eradicate all the sins of his disciples.... however, we find Çré Vāsudeva Datta Ōhākura and Çréla Haridāsa Ōhākura to be many millions of times more advanced even when compared with Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ relieved only his followers from all sinful reactions, but Vāsudeva Datta is here prepared to accept the sins of everyone in the universe. So the comparative position of Vāsudeva Datta is millions of times better than that of Lord Jesus Christ. A Vaiñḥava is so liberal that he is prepared to risk everything to rescue the conditioned souls from material existence. Çréla Vāsudeva

Datta Ōhākura is universal love itself, for he was willing to sacrifice everything and fully engage in the service of the Supreme Lord”

“Lord Jesus Christ certainly finished the sinful reactions of his followers by his mercy, but that does not mean he completely delivered them from the pangs of material existence. A person may be relieved from sins once, but it is a practice among Christians to confess sins and yet commit them again. By getting freed from sins and again engaging in them, one cannot attain freedom from the pangs of material existence. A diseased person may go to a physician for relief, but after he leaves the hospital he may again be infected due to his unclean habits. Thus material existence continues. Çréla Vāsudeva Datta wanted to completely relieve the conditioned souls from material existence so that they would no longer have an opportunity to commit sinful acts. This is the significant difference between Çréla Vāsudeva Datta and Lord Jesus Christ.... Vāsudeva Datta’s example is unique within this world” (CC, Madhya-lila, 15.163).

In recent times, Srila Prabhupada displayed a similar mood of compassion. At the age of 70, he travelled to the US to fulfill the prediction of Lord Caitanya that, “the Holy Names will spread to every town and village of the world.” He travelled alone, and without any kind of financial or political support, but once there in New York city, he performed the seemingly impossible task of converting the hippies of those years into dedicated Vaisnavas. In the beginning, Srila Prabhupada’s preaching took place in the most degraded neighborhood of New York, the Bowery. “The smell of that place was something like the combined smell of urine, beer and vomit,”(Goswami). One of his early followers, in a drug-induced state, once even threatened to kill him. However, Srila Prabhupada had firm faith in the mercy of Lord Caitanya, and tirelessly continued distributing love of God through the chanting of the Hare Krishna mahamantra. The rest is history.

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Deliverance of Sri Prakashananda Saraswati

Rohit Gupta



*yadā hi dharmasya
glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmasya
tadātmānam' srjāmy aham*

Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion — at that time I descend Myself (BG 4.7).

Lord Sri Krishna made this statement in Bhagavad-gita, which is one of the sacred scriptures of the followers of sanatan dharma. Throughout history, different incarnations of Lord Vishnu such as Lord Narsimha, Lord Ramachandra, Lord Varaha, and Lord Buddha descended to uplift the degraded standard of human society. In fact, Sukadeva Gosvami explains in the 12th Canto of the Srimad Bhagavatam that religion, truthfulness, cleanliness, tolerance, mercy, duration of life, physical strength, and memory will all diminish day by day because of the powerful influence of the age of Kali.

Lord Buddha appeared in the beginning of Kali Yuga. He preached a particular form of nonviolence that decried even the animal sacrifices sanctioned in the Vedas. At the time when Lord Buddha appeared, the people in general were atheistic and ate almost exclusively animal flesh. On the

excuse of Vedic sacrifice, practically every place was turned into a slaughterhouse, and unrestricted animal-killing was prevalent. Lord Buddha preached that the tenets of the Vedas were wrong, and that there were serious adverse psychological effects incurred by animal-killing. Less intelligent men of the age of Kali who had no faith in God followed His teachings, and for the time being, they were trained in moral discipline and nonviolence, the preliminary steps for proceeding further on the path of God realization.

Later, when there was peace in society, in pursuance to the instructions of Lord Sri Krishna, Lord Siva came as Shankaracarya to re-establish the scriptures. His purpose was still however to misguide people by teaching His impersonal, mayavada philosophy. Meanwhile, in other parts of the world, Christianity and Islam were born, and rapidly spread all over the world. Now was the time to establish the yuga dharma, the spiritual practice for this age of Kali: harinama sankirtana, and indeed, Lord Sri Krishna Himself soon incarnated in the form of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to establish His sankirtana movement.

At the time of Mahaprabhu here in India, the main challenge for a devotee of the Lord was to defeat the practitioners of Mayavada philosophy because these scholars were the most influential and most respected amongst educated people. Most brahmanas would spend their time reading grammar, philosophy, or logics, and very few people were interested in following the path of bhakti-yoga, or the science of devotion. To change this situation the Lord, Who at that time was known as the great scholar Nimai Pandit, gave up His academic pursuits, and took diksa, spiritual initiation, after which He was known as Sri Krishna Caitanya. The Lord then dedicated Himself to the public chanting of the Lord's holy names. In order to further inspire people to follow His example, leaving behind His family, Sri Krishna Caitanya took sannyasa. As a Vaishnava sannyasi, He wanted people to develop their awareness of the sweetness

of pure devotional service and to abandon the dry logicians and philosophers. After taking sannyasa, Mahaprabhu left on pilgrimage and to preach the process of bhakti-yoga and harinam sankirtana. On His way, the Lord converted many Mayavadis, convincing them to take up devotional life. The Lord is always merciful to His devotees, but His love and affection for all human being is the same, just like clouds that shower water equally on land and on the sea.

One of the places Mahaprabhu visited was Kasi, and there He met a very famous scholar, Sri Prakashananda Sarasvati, the head of the Mayavadis. The conversation between Prakashananda Sarasvati and Mahaprabhu is well known among Vaishnavas. The glories of the Lord of the universe had begun spreading all over the world, and His activities were influencing not only ordinary people, but also great scholars. When people heard that a great scholar, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, whose teachings were followed by the members of all other Vedic schools of that time, had rejected the injunctions of logics and speculative philosophy in order to follow the practices of bhakti yoga after meeting Sriman Mahaprabhu, they were really surprised. When Prakashananda Sarasvati heard this news, he instantly adopted the siddhanta of Mahaprabhu. Although he was a great intellectual of that time, his heart was soft and pure. He wrote a sloka and sent it to Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu via a devotee from Gaudiya-desh who was traveling to Jagannath Puri. In this sloka, Prakashananda Sarasvati wrote about the place where Manikarnika kund and Bhagavati Bhagirathi, who destroy (remove) all sins and difficulties, and who make tumultuous sounds, are situated; where the Lord of the Lords, Bhagavan Shulapani (Lord Siva) himself is bestowing to those who have left their bodies the jewel of liberation, which is jnana, which awards moksha, or liberation. It is astonishing that foolish persons are giving up that Surapuri, which is situated on the most pure path of moksha, liberation and are wandering here and there like animals on this planet.

The Gaudiya devotee handed over the letter to Mahaprabhu, and after hearing the name of Sri Prakashananda Sarasvati, the Lord became very happy. With great respect, He opened the letter and then smiled after reading it. With bliss on His face, Mahaprabhu looked at Sarvabhauma and Svarup

Damodar as if He wanted to appreciate and share the moment with His associates. One of the names of Mahaprabhu is in fact Adosa-darsi, one who never sees fault in anyone. This name was given to Him by Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya in his 108 names of Sriman Mahaprabhu. The Lord promptly asked one of His associates to help Him write back to Prakashananda, and in this reply, the Lord said, “O friend, why are you not doing bhajan (worship) of the lotus feet of Krishna, the giver of liberation? In other words, remember the lotus feet, from Whose sweat Manikarnika was created, from the water of Whose feet Bhagavati Bhagirathi was manifested. Kasipati Bhagavan Visvanath (Lord Siva) himself is His other half, and in the city of Kasi, His name is delivering the living entities from the cycle of birth and death.”

After receiving the letter, Prakashananda immediately replied to Mahaprabhu, writing, “Visvamitra, Parashar, and others like them who are great sages were living for thousands of years on air, eating only dry leaves. In this way, they performed severe austerities, but still simply by seeing the enchanting, lotus-like face of a woman, they were bewildered. If this is the case of great Maharsis, great sages, who were engaged in performing sense controlling austerities, then if for those who are daily eating very nice rice, milk, yogurt, ghee and preparations made from these items how is it possible to control the senses? Then it must also possible for Vindhya-chal mountain to swim on the top of the ocean. In other words, actually by eating these foodstuffs, it is not possible to control the senses.”



After reading the verse, without saying a word Mahaprabhu handed over the letter to Svarup Damodar. Svarup Damodar got angry and wanted to respond in kind, but Mahaprabhu said, "This is an abuse, and you can only reply to an abuse by abusing the person back. A noble devotee never abuses anyone." How can The Lord Hari who instructs His followers to be humbler and more tolerant than grass and trees reply to such message? But devotees of Lord cannot tolerate blasphemy of their Lord.

Svarup Damodar immediately wrote him back with this dilemma: "the powerful lion eats the flesh of pigs and elephants for its sustenance, still he mates only once a year (some say that lions actually mate only once in their lifetimes). On the other hand, the pigeon eats only the top part of ordinary grass and small pebbles and other small particles of food just enough to maintain its life, but nevertheless, it enjoys sex life daily. In truth, there is no other bird as lusty as the pigeon which mates several times a day. If being lusty depends on the intake of food, please explain the reason for this disharmony."

No one knows what the reaction of Prakashananda was upon reading such a reply, nor is there a documented description of his reply to that letter. Meanwhile, even after being stopped by Mahaprabhu, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya left to defeat Prakashananda Sarasvati, but instead came back defeated by those logicians. The Bhattacharya did not say a word of what had happened, but Mahaprabhu understood and smiled as he knew what was soon going to happen to all of them.

Mahaprabhu left for Vrindavan, but He knew that the time to change the heart of His devotees was not far off. Mahaprabhu later returned, and purposely made arrangements to stay in Varanasi. Two of the associates of Sriman Mahaprabhu, Tapan Mishra and Chandrashekhar Acarya, were feeling very sorry about the strong criticism Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu had received. The devotees got together and begged Mahaprabhu to meet the Mayavada sannyasis.

"We have been mortified by hearing unfavorable criticisms from the Mayavadi sannyasis against You," they informed Lord Caitanya. "Indeed, it has become intolerable for us." They requested the Lord to do something to stop

these criticisms. While they were discussing this subject, a brahmana came to Lord Caitanya, and invited Him to his home. The Lord took this opportunity and accepted the brahmana's invitation as a way to meet the Mayavadi sannyasis.



Actually, this invitation was an arrangement made by the Lord Himself. The brahmana who had invited the Lord knew that Mahaprabhu did not usually accept invitations, but still, he was very eager to have Him bless his home.

The very next day, Lord Caitanya went to see the sannyasis. He offered His obeisance to all of them, and sat next to the place where everyone was washing their feet. Prakashananda Sarasvati saw the Lord and was attracted by His beauty.

"My dear Sir, why are You sitting in that filthy place?" he asked. "Please come and sit with us."

"Oh, I belong to an inferior sect of sannyasis," Lord Caitanya replied. "Therefore I think that I should not sit with you. Let Me remain down here."

Prakashananda was surprised to hear such a thing from such a learned man, and he actually took the Lord's hand

and requested Him to please come and sit with him. When Lord Caitanya finally seated Himself amongst the others, Prakashananda Sarasvati said, "You belong to our Shankara sect, and You are living in Benares — so why don't You mix with us? What is the reason? Another thing — You are a sannyasi and are supposed to be engaged simply in the study of Vedanta, but we see that instead You are always engaged in chanting, dancing and playing music. What is the reason? These are the activities of emotional, sentimental people, but You are a qualified sannyasi. Why not engage in the study of Vedanta? By Your effulgence, it appears to us that You are just like the Supreme Narayana, the Personality of Godhead, but by Your behavior, You appear to be otherwise. So we are curious to know why You act in this way."

In truth, Mahaprabhu behaved in this way in order to be noticed by the Mayavadis. Now was the time when He was about to change the lives of all those people who were wasting their lives reading philosophies other than that of pure devotional service to the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna.

First, Mahaprabhu explained that His guru had called Him a fool and instructed Him only to chant the holy name of the Lord. He continued, "A person who is completely ignorant of the science of God cannot be considered learned. More or less, everyone who is not in Krishna consciousness is subject to foolishness. Sometimes we display our foolishness by accepting someone who is barely educated as a spiritual master. It is our duty to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose lotus feet are worshiped by all the Vedas. One who does not understand Him and is proud of a false understanding of Vedanta is actually a fool. Understanding the Vedanta-sutra by academic knowledge never enables one to understand the value of the transcendental vibration. People who are entangled in academic knowledge are conditioned souls who are confused by the facts of "I", "mine" and "my" understanding. Consequently, they are unable to detach their minds from the external energy. When a person actually attains transcendental knowledge, he becomes free from the duality of external (material) and internal (spiritual) energy; thereby engaging fully in the transcendental loving service of the Supreme Lord."

In glorification of the holy name of the Lord, Mahaprabhu explained how a person who has been properly initiated

by a bona fide spiritual master and is engaged in chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare gradually becomes freed from the conception of "I" and "mine,"



and becomes attached to the Lord's transcendental loving service in one of the five transcendental relationships. The Lord further informed Prakashananda Sarasvati that His spiritual master had taught Him that Srimad Bhagavatam is the actual commentary on Vedanta-sutra, as stated in Srimad Bhagavatam itself by Vyasadeva, the author of Vedanta-sutra.

When Lord Caitanya chanted the Hare Krishna mantra, He declared that the mantra could at once deliver a conditioned soul from material contamination. Mahaprabhu taught how in this age of Kali, there is no alternative to chanting this maha-mantra. It is stated that the essence of all Vedic literature is the chanting of this holy name of Krishna: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Lord Caitanya also told Prakashananda Sarasvati, "In order to convince Me about this essential fact of Vedic knowledge, My spiritual master taught Me a verse from Brahma-naradiya Purana [38.126]:

*harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

"In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the holy name of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way."

Lord Caitanya also said that His spiritual master had told Him: "It is very good that You have attained such a perfect stage of love of Godhead. Because of Your attainment, I am very much obliged to You." The father becomes more enlivened when he sees his son advance beyond himself. Similarly, the spiritual master takes more pleasure seeing his disciple advance than in advancing himself. Thus, Lord Caitanya's spiritual master blessed Him, telling Him to "dance, sing, propagate this sankirtan movement, and by instructing people about Krishna, try to deliver them from nescience." Lord Caitanya's spiritual master also taught Him the verse from Srimad Bhagavatam which states, "A person who is constantly engaged in devotional service to Krishna and who chants His holy name becomes so transcendently attached to the chanting that his heart becomes softened without extraneous endeavor. When this happens, he exhibits transcendental ecstasies and sometimes laughs, sometimes cries, sings and dances — not exactly in an artistic way, but just like a madman" (TLC 19).

After Lord Caitanya explained the Vedanta-sutra by directly interpreting the verses, the chief disciple of Prakashananda Sarasvati stood up in the assembly and began to praise Lord Caitanya as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Narayana. He not only very much appreciated the explanation of Vedanta-sutra by Lord Caitanya, but he stated publicly that the direct explanation of the Upanisads and Vedanta-sutra was, "so pleasing that we forget ourselves and forget that we belong to the Mayavadi sect. Thus it is herein admitted that Shankracharya's explanations of the Upanisads and Vedanta-sutra are all imaginary. We may sometimes accept such imaginary explanations for the sake of sectarian feuds, but actually such explanations do not satisfy us. It is not that one becomes free from material entanglements simply by accepting the order of sannyasa."

The student of Prakashananda summarized the explanations of Lord Caitanya and concluded, "We have practically given up the path of spiritual realization. We simply engage in nonsensical talk. Mayavadi philosophers who are serious about attaining benediction should engage in the devotional service of Krishna, but instead they take pleasure in useless argument only. We hereby admit that the explanation of Shankracarya hides the actual import of Vedic literature.

Only the explanation given by Caitanya is acceptable. All other interpretations are useless (TLC 21)."

gopāla govinda rāma śrī-madhusūdana

When the Lord sang in this way, chanting and dancing, thousands of people gathered around Him, and when the Lord chanted, they roared. The vibration was so tumultuous that Prakashananda Sarasvati, who was sitting nearby, immediately joined the crowd with his disciples. As soon as he saw the beautiful body of Lord Caitanya and the Lord dancing with His associates, Prakashananda Sarasvati also joined and began to sing: "Hari! Hari!" All the inhabitants of Benares were struck with wonder upon seeing the ecstatic dancing of Lord Caitanya. However, Lord Caitanya checked His continuous ecstasy and stopped dancing when He saw the Mayavadi sannyasis. As soon as the Lord stopped chanting and dancing, Prakashananda Sarasvati fell at His feet. Trying to stop him, Lord Caitanya said, "Oh, you are the spiritual master of the whole world, jagad-guru, and I am not even equal to your disciples. You should therefore not worship an inferior like Me. You are exactly like the Supreme Brahman, and if I allow you to fall down at My feet, I will commit a very great offense. Although you have no vision of duality, for the sake of teaching the people in general you should not do this."

And that is how the Lord performed His pastimes with His devotee, Sriman Prakashananda Sarasvati, and the other sannyasis and blessed them all with pure devotional attachment towards Lord Krishna.











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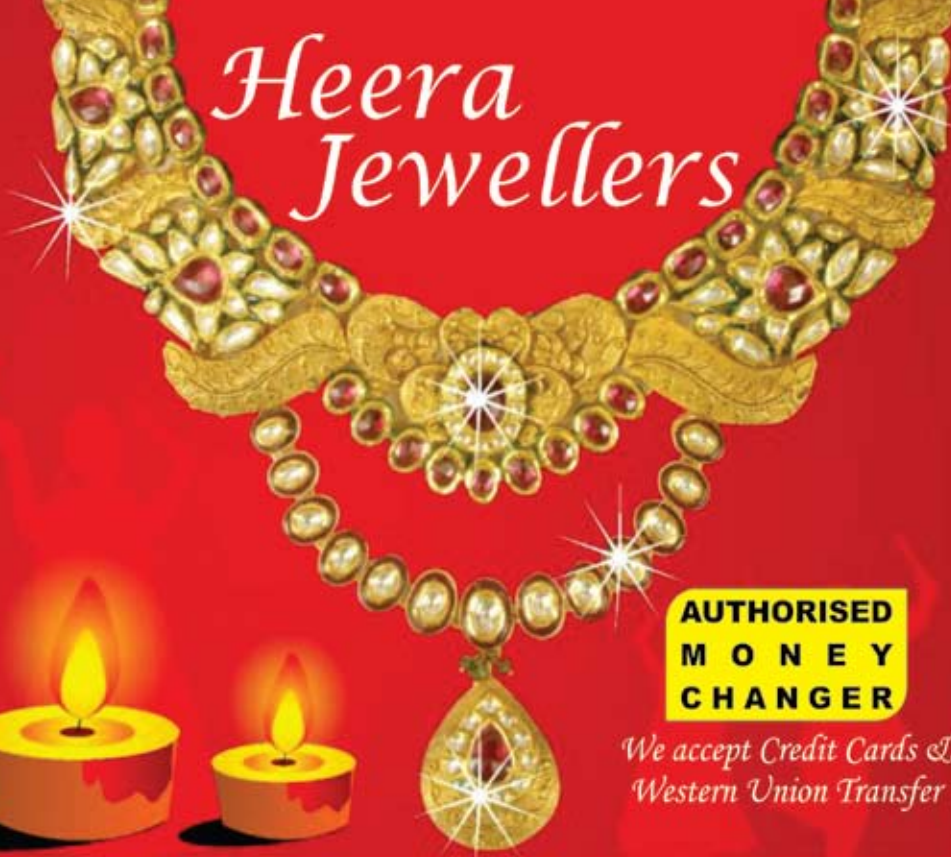
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