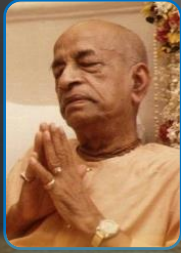


Freedom Newsletter



Dedicated to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder Acarya of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

ISKCON Prison Ministry / December 2021

PO Box 2676
Alachua, FL 32616

ABORTION AND “RABBIT PHILOSOPHY”

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and some of his disciples took place on an early-morning walk in December 1973 at Venice Beach, California.

Devotee: Srila Prabhupada, sometimes we argue that although the laws of nature are very powerful, we can overcome such things as disease and death if we surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa, since He is controlling nature. But skeptics say we can gradually come to control the laws of nature on our own, without God.

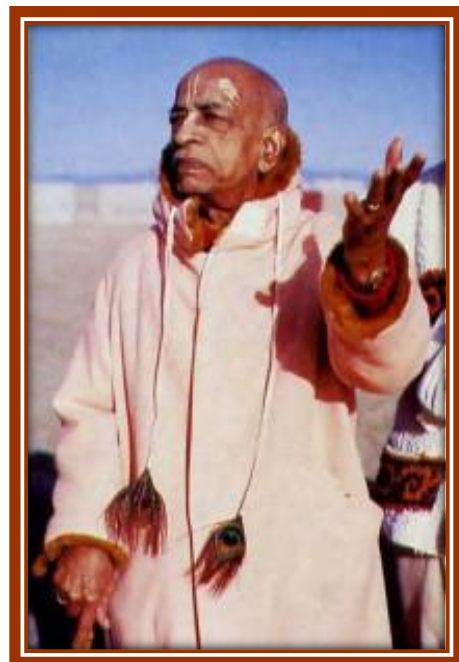
Srila Prabhupada: No, we are forced to accept the laws of nature. How can anyone say he has conquered the laws of nature?

Devotee: Well, the doctors and biologists have conquered so many diseases.

Srila Prabhupada: But people are still becoming diseased. How have the doctors stopped disease?

Devotee: In Africa and India, for instance, they are inoculating everyone against smallpox, and they’ve saved many thousands of children from dying.

Srila Prabhupada: But the children will grow up and get old and die eventually in any case. So death has not been stopped. And besides, why do they bother about



these children? They don't want overpopulation, so logically the doctors should let them die. But the doctors are illogical. On one side they want to check the death of children, and on the other side they recommend the use of contraceptives and kill the children in the womb by abortion. Why? Why are they killing? To check the increase in population. Then when children are dying in another part of the world, why are they anxious to save them?

Devotee: Once the child is born, they want to save him. But when the child is still in the womb they feel they can kill him. They say he is not yet a human being.

Srila Prabhupada: But the child is already born as soon as a woman becomes pregnant. Pregnancy *means*



the child is already born. How can they say there is no child? What is this nonsense? When a woman is pregnant, why do we say she is "with child"? This means the child is already

born. Therefore, I say this abortion business is simply rascaldom.

Devotee: Well, they've rationalized it.

Srila Prabhupada: How?

Devotee: Sometimes they say they're just doing what they feel is best. And of course they deny that there's any such thing as *karma* to punish them later. It seems like they have a kind of "rabbit philosophy." When a rabbit closes his eyes so he doesn't see the wolf bearing down on him, he may actually think he's safe.

Srila Prabhupada: So, the abortionists believe in rabbit philosophy. It is not a man's philosophy. It is rabbit's philosophy, frog's philosophy, ass's philosophy. And they have been described in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (2.3.19): *sva-vid-varahostra-kharaih samstutah purusah pasuh*. The leaders, who often support abortion, are rascals, and they are glorified by another set of rascals and fools—the people in general. Because the whole population is made up of rascals, they elect a rascal as their leader. Then, being dissatisfied, they throw the first rascal out of office and elect *another* rascal. This is called *punah punas carvita-carvananam*: chewing the chewed. The people do not know whom to elect. Therefore they have to be educated to choose a leader who is God conscious, who is actually fit to be a leader. Then they will be happy. Otherwise, they will go on electing one rascal and

rejecting him, electing another rascal and rejecting *him*, and so on.

In America there is a slogan "In God we trust." So, we don't say, "Elect me president." We simply say that the standard for a leader should be that he knows who God is and that he trusts in Him. And if people actually want to know who God is, they can read *Bhagavad-gita*. They should read it with intelligence and try to understand, and then for further progress they may study *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. It is not that we are theorizing. We are taking our information about God from authorized books.

Devotee: In our leaflet about politics, we list the qualifications of a leader. First we say he must follow the four regulative principles: no meat-eating, no illicit sex, no gambling, and no indulging in intoxicants. And the one positive injunction we give is that the leader chant the holy name of the Lord. But someone might argue that these requirements violate the constitutional principle of separation of church and state.

Srila Prabhupada: If you believe in God, why should you have any objection to chanting the holy name of God? If you say, "In God we trust," then you must know the name of God and the address of God. Then you can actually trust Him. And if you don't know these things, then learn them from us. We are giving you God's name, address, qualities—everything. And if you say there is no God, then what is the meaning of "In God we trust"?



Devotee: They have made propaganda to separate church and state, but they've also separated God and country.

Srila Prabhupada: Those who are making this propaganda do not understand what God is. God cannot be separated from anything, because everything *is* God (*maya tatam idam sarvam*). If they study the *Bhagavad-gita* they will understand that God is present everywhere. It is not possible to separate anything from Him. Just as your consciousness is present in every part of your body, so the supreme consciousness, God, is present everywhere in the universe. Krsna says, *vedaham samatitani*: "I know everything that has happened." Unless He is everywhere, how can He know everything? What do you say?

Devotee: This is logical, Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada: How can you separate God from the government? You may reject any so-called church, any so-called religion that agrees, “Yes, God and the state should be separate.” And that is God’s instruction—that we reject such so-called religions. *Sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja:*

“Give up all kinds of so-called religion and simply surrender to Me,” Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gita*. People may say they believe in God, but you can know they are ignorant of what God is when they try to separate God from government. 🌸



HOW I CAME TO KRṢṂA CONSCIOUSNESS

Remember God? —Coming Back to My Eternal Friend

By Bhakti-lata Dasi

After years searching and struggling, she finally found the right place to develop the natural connection she felt with God.

It was the third day in the hospital. The IV was still in my right arm. As I gazed through the window, a few leaves, colored yellow and red by the season, fell from a nearby tree. It was a beautiful fall day in Montréal, Canada. I was twenty, and I was trapped in here. How did it come to this?

I was raised in a middle-class, French Canadian, Catholic family. I went to church ever since I can remember. I recall being at church at the age of four, feeling safe, awed, and in some way, more at home than in my own house.

The presence of God was very natural to me. I used to have conversations with Him before falling asleep, talking to Him like a friend. I would confide, discuss my day, ask questions, and reveal my hopes and fears.

The first time I examined one of Srila Prabhupada's books I was twelve years old. The book was entitled

Easy Journey to Other Planets. Somehow, it found its way to my brother's bookcase, and I browsed through it many times. Although I couldn't figure out what it was all about, I loved gazing at the cover and inside pictures.



In that same period, I went on a field trip with my class to a convent for cloistered nuns. As I entered I was overwhelmed with a feeling of belonging. I loved the seclusion and the prolonged prayer times. I loved the idea of a life dedicated to prayer and contemplation. I would have moved right in, but understandably, my mother was not so inclined to let me make such a life-long commitment at the ripe age of twelve. As an alternative, for the next two years I corresponded with a priest, discussing religious matters.

I began to go to church more often, not only for the usual Sunday mass with my family, but also by myself, at odd times during the week. I would even sometimes

leave school during lunch break to seek the oasis of a nearby church. Determined to live a sin-free life, I visited the confessional often, reciting my list of innocent, harmless "crimes" over and over again.

At fourteen, at a time when most girls my age listened to pop music and worshiped the rock stars of the day, I would spend hours in my room listening to the soundtrack of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, a popular movie at the time. Although I had never seen the movie, I knew all the lyrics by heart and sang them with great feeling, meditating intently on Jesus's life and teachings. But I didn't have any friends to share my passion. Religion is not a popular hobby.



One day, when shopping for ballet shoes downtown with my sister, I heard Hare Krsna devotees on harinam. They were a few blocks away and I could hear a faint *ching-ching-ching* ♪. I had no idea who these people were or what they were doing, but something stirred inside me. I felt intrigued and attracted, but I was far too introverted to go any closer.



FITTING IN

Years passed, and my lack of association with spiritually minded people made me vulnerable to peer pressure, with its unrelenting demands for conformity. Slowly, I started losing touch with my spiritual aspirations and became consumed by my efforts to fit in, to be "cool". Against my better judgment I toyed with drugs, sex, and alcohol. My grades began to suffer, although I managed to keep them afloat thanks to my natural academic nature.

Little by little I started living only for the next thrill, the next smoke, the next party. I developed a whole persona to fit what I thought were people's expectations of me. I forgot myself and, soon enough forgot God as well. My life became bleak, soulless, and unsubstantial.

When I was sixteen and in the midst of senseless pursuits, Krsna reached to me again, this time in the form of a tall *brahmacari* (celibate student) stationed at a subway exit, holding a large tray, and smiling kindly. I reached out to take the sweet he was offering me. Walking quickly away, I took a bite. Wow! The taste exploded in my mouth. I had never tasted anything like that in my life! I was at a total loss to comprehend what I was experiencing, but I knew that something extraordinary was happening. Now, knowing the inconceivable purifying power of *prasadam*, I understand I was having a taste of the Lord Himself. Had I not been so shy I would have turned back and asked the devotee to explain what had just happened to me. Unfortunately, I continued on my way, entangling myself deeper into the complex web of *maya*, the illusory energy of the material world.

At age nineteen I met the man I would spend my life with. As I saw him the first time, I heard a voice say, "To be in love." I was taken aback, not only because I was not given to hearing voices, but also because that day I had decided I would be better off being single. We talked and talked; I felt I had known him forever. Soon after we met, Marc convinced me to stop using drugs. He was a seeker of truth.

At this point I became somewhat attracted by spiritual matters once again. Deplorably, for lack of guidance and discrimination, I read a book from Aurobindo, a famous Indian guru who advocated that we could have complete control over our life. He described how we could send our "grey particles" into the future to shape our upcoming reality. It sounded like a great philosophy to me. As Marc and I wanted to go plant trees in western Canada, I sent my grey particles ahead of us. We hitchhiked across Canada for weeks, bent on our new adventure. We traveled all day and at night pitched our tent among the trees alongside the highway.

In Calgary we applied for a tree-planter job. We were told that since hundreds of young people applied every year, the possibility of employment was slim. Utterly confident in the power of my grey particles, however, I was completely undaunted. We went on to camp in Banff, British Columbia, for a couple of weeks, and then hit the road once more. The first man who gave us a ride happened to be a tree-planting contractor. He hired us on the spot. I was neither surprised nor even remotely grateful; my grey particles had done all the work, hadn't they?

Planting trees was an awesome experience. I was working hard for eight hours a day, alone, in the most wild, remote places. One area we worked in was so

isolated that it could only be reached by helicopter. One time I even came across the skeleton of a moose, and another day I found myself face to face with a bear!

CALLING OUT TO GOD IN THE WILDERNESS

A few weeks of this grueling physical labor brought about unexpected therapeutic results. One afternoon, I became suddenly aware that the chatter of my mind had completely stopped; a sense of peace came over me like



I hadn't known before. I left my tools on the ground and instinctively made my way deeper into the woods. I found a small, crystal-clear brook and sat beside it. For the first time in years I remembered God; I felt like a whole part of me had been locked in the dark and some light was at last filtering through.

A few days later, as I was working under a heavy rain, trudging in deep mud, the veil of illusion that had covered me was mercifully removed and I saw the past few years of my existence for what they really were, with all of their lies, and futility. It was as if my life was passing in front of my mind's eyes for review, and I found it to be very wretched indeed. My heart was filled with sorrow. At that moment, I felt that not only my body, but also my spirit was covered with mud; the setting couldn't have been orchestrated more perfectly. Overwhelmed, I prayed for forgiveness. I didn't know how I would salvage my life or if it was at all possible. In that solitary place, away from an artificial civilization, I silently prayed for help.

Our tree-planting experience over, we returned to Montreal. Although I was unaware of it, our apartment was close by the Hare Krsna temple. One morning, while taking a walk, I saw a devotee on the other side of the street. His robes were slightly floating around him in the breeze, and he seemed to be in and from another world. I would love to be like these people, I thought, not really understanding what I meant by that. I just knew that somehow "these people" seemed oblivious to the turmoil of the world around them, as if gliding above it, whereas I felt tossed by its every

single wave. Once again, I passed up the opportunity to inquire further and kept on walking.

Life went on. I went through the motions, without any real interest in anything or any sense of direction. One day I realized I was pregnant. I was overjoyed by the prospect of having a baby. I remember waiting at the bus stop, talking to my baby, and patting my still flat belly. To my great distress, Marc didn't share my delight in having a child. He was twenty-one, without a career or even a job, and definitely not ready to be a father. I was devastated. Fearing that if I kept our baby he might leave me (yep; I was young and stupid!) and, having **zero** communication skills to discuss the matter properly, I did the unthinkable; against my deepest desire and convictions, I had the baby aborted. (Now I know that my then boyfriend would have never abandoned me but I was coming from a dysfunctional family and had a fear of abandonment.)

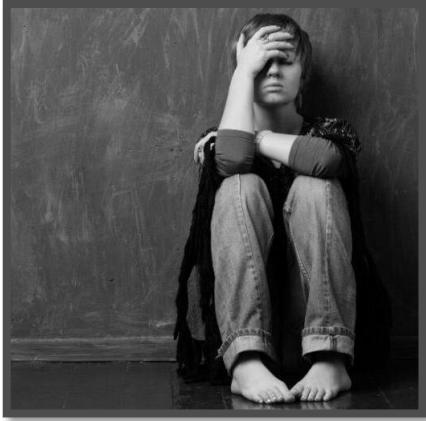
I came back from the clinic feeling utterly empty and in great distress. Although I was told to take complete rest, I furiously and frantically tore up the old linoleum in my bedroom, thus expressing my inner torment the best way I could. As a result of this strenuous work, I developed a serious internal infection and had to be hospitalized for many days, IV and all.



That's when I got it.

I hadn't sent my grey particles to create this tragedy, had I? So if I hadn't created this situation, who or what had? That meant only one thing: I was definitely not in control of my life. This realization hit me hard. If I was not in control, anything could happen at any time. I felt humbled, lost, insecure, and scared.

This was the lowest point of my life. My heart was broken from the loss of my first child, and I became so depressed that I would sit in the corner of my room, smoking one cigarillo after another and cramming chocolate bars into my face. Yet, from the depths of my grief, the memory of Jesus rose up as if from a distant past, bringing me solace and hope. I began imagining



him knocking on my door. I visualized him asking me to follow him, and me stepping outside, leaving everything behind, without even looking back. My old hankering for a religious life was reawakened.

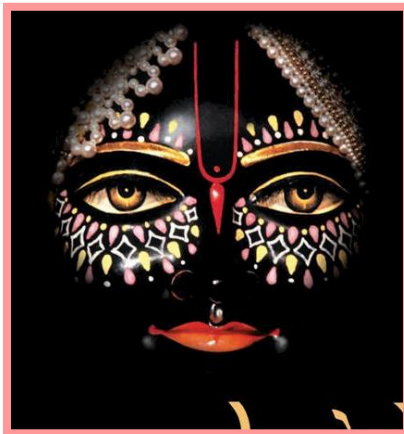
In *Bhagavad-gita* Krsna explains that four kinds of people come to him: those in distress, those in need of money, the inquisitive, and those searching for knowledge of the Absolute. In my case, it was distress that fueled my desire to turn to God once again.

WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN

Two months passed. I somewhat got over my depression but felt disillusioned by the whole show of this world. Nothing seemed attractive. I didn't care much for anything anymore. I started reading some semi-spiritual books that served to tantalize me but were not nearly potent enough to satisfy my inner hunger for the Absolute Truth. I felt myself waiting for something to happen.

One fine afternoon Marc stumbled upon an old friend of his, a friend he had been searching for ever since we had met. As it turned out, this friend had become a Hare Krsna devotee the year before. Marc stayed at the temple for two days and came back to tell me all about it. After hearing his account, I knew this was the chance to change my life I had yearned for, a chance I was determined not to miss. There was no time to lose. Even before visiting the temple I packed my bags. We moved in right away.

Witnessing my first evening *arati* (ceremony to worship the Lord) was a very mystical experience for me. Although there were many deities in the temple, I could only see the deity of Kṛṣṇa; no one and nothing else. My eyes were transfixed on His exquisite face, and I felt Him take over my heart, my life,



ABOVE: The exquisite lotus face of Sri Manohara, in the Montréal temple.

and seep deeply into my soul. The experience seemed to last an eternity. I was finally home.

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS LATER

That was in 1984. Now, almost thirty-eight years later, Krsna's fascinating nature still holds me in its grip. I have learned since that Krsna's deity in Montreal is called *Manohara*, which means "one who steals one's mind." This is what I experienced that first night; Kṛṣṇa stole my heart and mind.

Marc (now Mukunda Dasa) and I got officially married in 1985, and we had two wonderful daughters. We feel blessed in every way.

Do I regret my decision to join Srila Prabhupada's Hare Krsna movement overnight? No. In reality, it was not as sudden as it seems; my cherished desire to give my life over to God had simply been forgotten. Once reminded of it, I couldn't see any reason to deny my path any longer. Also, by then I knew that God's presence was not limited to a particular religion. It didn't matter to me how God was calling me, only that He was calling me.

Over the years, I have served the Lord's deity form, dressing Him, cooking for Him, making garlands and clothes for Him. I have also chanted His name in the streets, my baby daughter on my back, while distributing cookies I had baked so others could have *their* first taste of *prasadam*. I have sent Srila Prabhupada's books to all the prisons of Canada that were willing to accept them, and corresponded with many inmates, sending them books, prayer beads, and letters, encouraging them to take up the chanting of the holy name. I have organized Krsna conscious plays and taken part in a devotee home-school coop. For ten years

I have been a breathwork facilitator, and now, for the last twelve years I have been the director of ISKCON Prison Ministry. I feel very fortunate and undeserving of all the mercy I have received.

Reflecting on my life, I see how Krsna has never deserted me, how He has determinedly followed me through the years, dropping hints of His presence, patiently waiting for me to turn to Him once more, like the most loving friend. I am grateful. 🌸



LIFE of PURE DEVOTEES

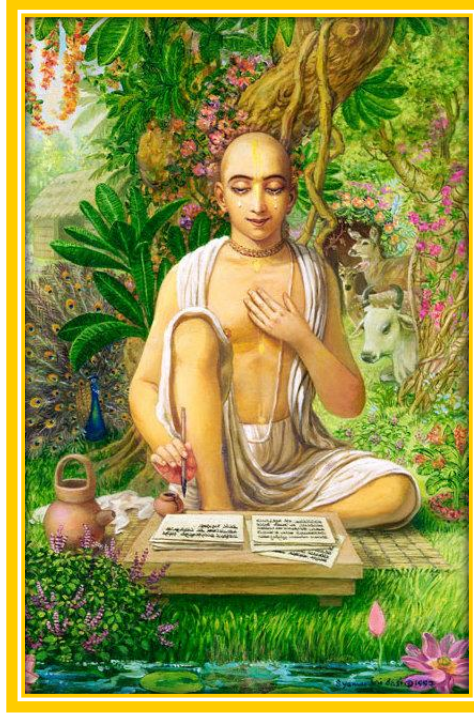
Shrila Jiva Goswami

Shrila Jiva Goswami made his appearance in 1455, Sakabdha (1533 A.D.), on the 12th day of the bright fortnight in the month of Bhadra. He disappeared from view at the age of 85 in 1540 A.D., (Sakabdha, 3rd day of bright fortnight, Pausa).

As a child, Shri Jiva took up the worship of Shri-Shri Rama-Krishna Deities. Carefully decorating Them, and offering bhoga and arati, he served Them attentively. Even when playing, Jiva's games were often connected with Lord Krishna's pastimes.

Shri Jiva studied under the local pandits, becoming proficient in grammar, poetry and rhetoric. Watching the expression of his great intellect, his teachers predicted that he would be a very saintly person. Later in his life, he composed a grammar in Sanskrit for the pleasure of the Lord. This composition described the rules of grammar, which was explained with examples that used the Holy Names of the Lord. Known as Hari-namamrta-vyakarana, this grammar is still current and is prescribed in the syllabus of schools in Bengal.

Once in a dream, Shri Jiva saw that Shri Rama-Krishna had taken the forms of Nitai-Gauranga, and they were dancing. Giving him the dust of Their lotus feet, the Two Lords then disappeared. This wonderful dream greatly consoled Shri Jiva, who was anxious to leave behind his family life and become absorbed full time in serving Nitai-Gauranga. But, being the only son of the family, and in the absence of his father, Jiva was responsible for the care of his mother. When he learned that his father had left his body on the banks of the Ganges, Shri Jiva became extremely saddened. Friends suggested that he go to Navadwipa to bathe himself in the coolness emanating from the lotus feet of Lord Nityananda Prabhu, so that burning grief in his mind and body might be refreshed. As Shri Jiva headed for Navadwipa with a group of pilgrims, Nityananda

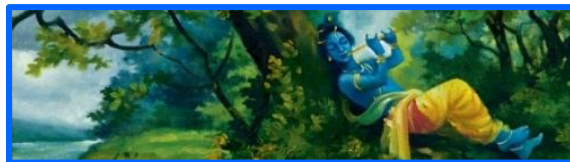


Prabhu also set out for Navadwipa, from Khardaha. Arriving in Navadwipa, at the home of Shrivasa Pandita, Shri Jiva met and fell down at the feet of Nityananda Prabhu.

Shri Jiva enjoyed various pastimes with Nityananda Prabhu, touring the nine islands of Navadwipa and taking darshana of the holy places of the Lord's pastimes. Jiva then traveled to Kashi (Varanasi), where he studied Vedanta under the instruction of Shri Madhusudana Vachaspati, a disciple of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. The conclusions of Vedanta contained in Shrimad-Bhagavatam, as they were given by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya in Puri, had in turn been taught by the Bhattacharya to Madhusudana Vachaspati. Shri Jiva mastered these same conclusions from him.

Shri Jiva later traveled to Vrindavana, where he joined the company of his two uncles, Shri Rupa and Shri Sanatana. Jiva stayed with Shri Rupa, who taught him Shrimad Bhagavatam and gave him mantra initiation. Shri Jiva quickly became conversant with the conclusion of Shrimad Bhagavatam, so Shri Rupa engaged him in proof-reading his Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu. Shri Jiva compiled a commentary on Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu called Durgama sangamani. Later, in 1476 (Sakabda), Shri Sanatana Goswami compiled Shri Vaishnava tosani, a commentary on the tenth canto of Shrimad-Bhagavatam, which Jiva also proofread. Following Sanatana's instruction, in 1500 (Sakabda) Shri Jiva compiled a commentary on the Bhagavatam called Laghu Vaishnava tosani.

While in Vrindavana, Shri Rupa took up the service of Shri Shri Radha-Damodara. According to the Sadhana dipika, this Deity of Damodara was fashioned by Rupa Goswami's own hand for his dear disciple, Shri Jiva. Today, Shri Shri Radha-Damodara are being worshipped in Jaipur, Rajasthan. 🌸



Excerpts from inmates' letters

All these books reinforced what I've learned from my Bhagavad Gita (I study constantly) and I believe Krishna guides me. I hear through his Divine Grace's purports, I read, I pray, I remember. The book that gave me the most new knowledge is the, "Teachings of Queen Kunti".

Bhakti Dasi, I've never been so at peace or felt so close to God, I've never been more happy, especially giving up meat, intoxicants, gambling, sex. I want to learn as much as I can so I may spread this peace and happiness to others in my situation, "without being an offender". I can only think I wish someone could have shown me this path years ago. This path that gives answers to all of life's mysteries, that does not require "blind faith". This movement is perfect for men and women in prison. I used to feel sorry for myself, for my imprisonment, for the loss of wealth and support, the loss of my family. But Krishna has shown me I've lost all that so that I may gain him, because in my arrogance and ignorance I would have never sought the Absolute Truth. I'm at peace and thank God (Krishna) for my loss because the more I lose the more I gain! Hare Krishna

I'm currently in what is called close management at FSP. It's a punishment that is about 2 years of complete isolation, which has helped me find myself and Krishna. But I can't help spreading this message till I get off CM. I got 10-12 more months to go, in this time I would like to get as much knowledge and growth in Krishna consciousness as I can to prepare me to help others find peace.

Thank you, your servant, Louis
Louis DM. —Canon City, Colorado

Lord Krsna is my goal, He is my light and His pastimes are like honey to my existence. Please help me to grow in my love and devotion! I also chant 16 rounds on my japa beads and daily. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare!

Pryce D. —Petersburg, Virginia.

The more I learn and understand Lord Krishna. I feel him in the air and working in my life. I chant the Hare Krishna maha mantra daily and it always seems to bring me calmness. Even though usually it's never quiet, when I start chanting it's like all the other noises seem to disappear. The other day a person approached me

and started asking about Krishna and the Maha mantra. I gave him a few books to read and if he was serious he could write IPM. Since I start learning and gaining knowledge about bringing Lord Krishan into my life. My whole life and perspective have turned upside down. My life used to be a mess of anger and chaos. Now those things are gone due to Lord Krishna. I know I still have a long way to go to learn. I want to teach lost souls about Lord Krsna and what he has done in my life. Lord Krsna and Bhakti Yoga have made my prison sentence easy and possible All glories and respect to Lord Krishna.

Michael L., —Lemming, Texas

Hey! I got your letter. Prison can be very lonely. It's very hostile at this prison, I'm at a Super Max Prison. I got the Bhagavad-Gita and loved it! And Krsna books! Please send me more books! Prison is hostile, it's very disheartening at times! I have been chanting Hare Krsna Maha Mantra. And I'm trying to get on the vegan diet! It's gloomy in Raleigh. I wish I was at an ISKCON Temple, with pretty flowers and images of Krsna!

Michael D. —Raleigh, North Carolina

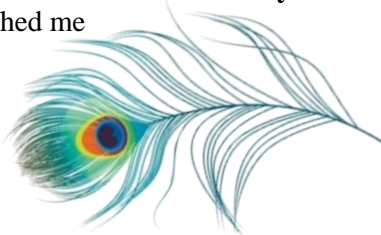
I have been incarcerated for over ten months. I have found this to be the most difficult and stressful time of my life! I am writing today because I am very interested in the book you offer as well as learning and studying Bhakti Yoga. I would love to learn how to find internal peace and joy in this very trying place.

Any material that you are able to send will be greatly appreciated. I cannot change where I am but I can use this time to become more positive and better myself.

Amanda N. —Sinton, Texas

My incarceration has proven to be a difficult and at times, painful experience, my legal circumstance has been a great test of character, but, during this experience I have found a most remarkable treasure, I have found Krishna. Krishna has kindly removed all of the chains which bound me to the material world. During the course of my incarceration, I lost everything I had and everyone I ever knew. I have, however, been introduced to Krishna. I have been seriously studying Krishna consciousness for slightly more than one year now and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Troy P. —Welch, West Virginia



STORIES FROM THE SRIMAD-BHAGAVATAM

Sri Krishna saves Lord Siva from the demon Vṛkāsura — Excerpt from the 88th chapter of the book “Kṛṣṇa”

Once, Lord Śiva, after giving a benediction to a demon named Vṛkāsura, found himself in a very dangerous position.

According to the Vedic principle, when something is offered to the deities to eat, it is offered in a fire, so the demon Vṛkāsura began to offer pieces of his own flesh by cutting it from his body. That is an instance of worship in the mode of ignorance.

On the seventh day, the demon Vṛkāsura foolishly decided that he should cut off his own head and offer it to satisfy Lord Śiva. Lord Śiva became very compassionate and appeared from the fire and, by his touch, healed all of the demon’s injuries and then offered him a benediction. The demon asked for a fearful and abominable boon; sinful persons do not know what sort of benediction should be asked from the deity. Therefore he asked Lord Śiva to bless him that as soon as he would touch anyone’s head, it would immediately crack and the man would die. Demons don’t desire ask things that are beneficial to human society. Lord Śiva felt very sorry that he had assured him whatever benediction he liked.

The demon immediately decided that he would kill Lord Śiva so he approached him to place his hand on his head. Lord Śiva fled from one place to another, but the demon Vṛkāsura continued to chase him. The predominating deities of other planets, such as Brahmā, Indra and Candra, couldn’t save Lord Śiva from the impending danger. At last Lord Śiva approached Lord Viṣṇu (Narayana). To save him, Lord Viṣṇu appeared as a young brahmacārī (student). The shining effulgence emanating from His body attracted the demon Vṛkāsura. Lord Nārāyaṇa (in the form of a brahmacārī) offered His respects to Vṛkāsura just to attract his sympathy and attention and addressed him as follows: “My dear son of Śakuni, you appear very tired, as if coming from a very distant place. What is your purpose? I see that you are fatigued, so I request you to take a little rest. You should not unnecessarily tire your body. Everyone greatly values his body because only with the body can one fulfill all the desires of one’s mind. We should not, therefore, unnecessarily give

trouble to the body.” Any man, especially a demon, takes his body to be very important.

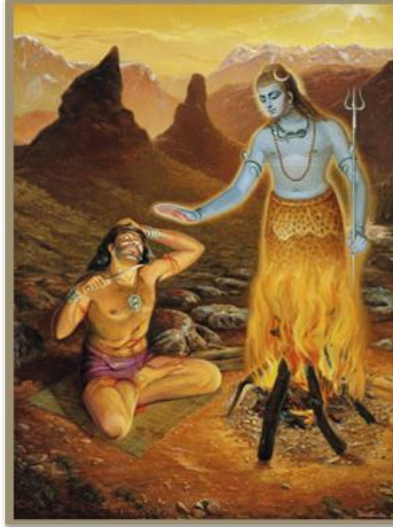
The demon was greatly pacified by these sweet words and at last he disclosed all that had happened in regard to the benediction offered by Lord Śiva.

The Lord replied to the demon as follows: “I Myself cannot believe that Lord Śiva has in truth given you such a benediction. As far as I know, Lord Śiva is not in a sane mental condition. When he had a quarrel with his father-in-law, Dakṣa, he was cursed to become a piśāca (ghost). Thus he has become the leader of the ghosts and hobgoblins. Therefore I cannot put any faith in his words. But if you still have faith in the words of Lord Śiva, my dear King of the demons, then why don’t you make an experiment by putting your hand on your own head? If

the benediction proves false, then you can at once kill this liar, Lord Śiva, so that in the future he will not dare give out false benedictions.”

In this way, by Lord Nārāyaṇa’s sweet words and by covering the demon with His illusory energy, the demon became bewildered, and he actually forgot the power of Lord Śiva and his benediction. He was thus very easily persuaded to put his hand on his own head and, as soon as he did that, his head cracked, as if struck by a thunderbolt, and he immediately died. The demigods from heaven showered flowers on Lord Nārāyaṇa, praising Him with shouts of “All glories!” and they offered their obeisances to the Lord. Thus Lord Viṣṇu in the form of a brahmacārī released Lord Śiva from the impending danger and saved the whole situation.

Lord Nārāyaṇa then told Lord Śiva, “My dear lord, a person who commits an offense to great souls cannot continue to exist. He is vanquished by his own sinful activities, and this is certainly true of this demon, who has committed such an offensive act against you.” Thus by the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, who is transcendental to all material qualities, Lord Śiva was saved from being killed by a demon. 🌸



NOTE FROM MOTHER BHAKTI-LATA

Inmates often ask us why their *Back to Godhead* magazine and *Freedom Newsletter* arrive late. Here's why.

The BTG magazine is printed in India and is often shipped to USA late, especially so since the start of the pandemic. Know that we do our best to get it to you as soon as possible.

As far as the *Freedom Newsletter* is concerned, ever since I had covid this past September (it took weeks for me to be able to do anything), my energy is often low. I try my best to get the newsletter to you at the beginning of each month, but, with all the other tasks that needs attention in the IPM office, I sometimes don't have the stamina to do everything that needs to be done in time, so there's a constant backlog.

So please be patient and rest assured that every IPM volunteer does all he/she can to assist you on your Kṛṣṇa Consciousness journey. Hare Krishna! 🙏

RIGHT: Drawing of Lord Kṛṣṇa —
Narayana B., Portsmouth, Virginia



Calendar

DECEMBER 2021

- 01 Dec 2021 - **Utpanna Ekadashi**
- 01 Dec 2021 - Disappearance Day of Sri Kaliya Kṛṣṇadāsa
- 02 Dec 2021 - Disappearance Day of Sri Saranga Thakura
- 09 Dec 2021 - Odana Sasthi
- 14 Dec 2021 - **Moksada Ekadashi**
- 14 Dec 2021 - Advent of Srimad Bhagavat-Gita
- 19 Dec 2021 - Katyayani Vrata Ends
- 23 Dec 2021 - **Disappearance Day of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura**
- 30 Dec 2021 - **Saphala Ekadasi**
- 30 Dec 2021 - Disappearance Day of Sri Devananda Pandita

JANUARY 2022

- 03 Jan 2022 – Appearance of Locana Dasa Thakura
- 04 Jan 2022 – Disappearance of Jiva Gosvami & Jagadisa Pandita
- 13 Jan 2022 – **Putrada Ekadasi** & Appearance of Jagadisa Pandita
- 14 Jan 2022 - Makara-sankranti
- 22 Jan 2022 – Disappearance of Ramachandra Kaviraja & Appearance of Gopal Bhatta Gosvami
- 23 Jan 2022 – Disappearance of Jayadeva Gosvami
- 24 Jan 2022 – Disappearance of Locana Dasa Thakura
- 28 Jan 2022 – **Sat-tila Ekadasi**

