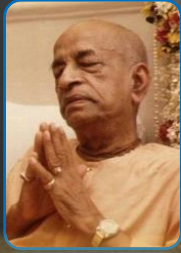


Freedom Newsletter



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

ISKCON Prison Ministry / March 2022

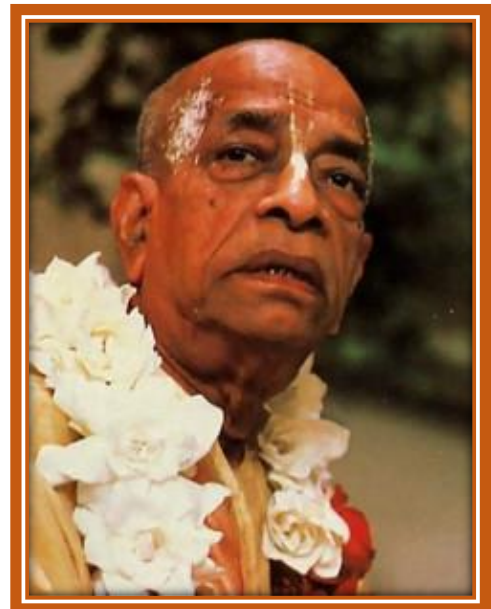
PO Box 2676
Alachua, FL 32616

SEX AND SUFFERING

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 January 1974 at Venice Beach, California.

Devotee: Srila Prabhupada, here in California the divorce rate is nearly 50%. Why do you think that is so?

Srila Prabhupada: In India there is a saying that he who is married laments and he who is not married also laments. The married man laments, “Why did I marry? I could have remained free.” And he who is not married laments, “Oh, why didn’t I accept a wife? I would have been happy.” [Laughter.] By sex one begets a child, and as soon as there is a child there is suffering. The child suffers, and the parents also suffer to take care of him. But again they have another child. Therefore it is said in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* [7.9.45], *trpyanti neha krpana bahu-duhkha-bhajah*. In connection with this child-producing there is so much difficulty and trouble, but although one *knows* that, one again does the same thing. Sex is the main happiness in this material world. That is the main happiness, and it is very abominable.



What is this happiness? *Kanduyanena karayor iva duhkha-duhkham*. It is like the rubbing of two hands together to relieve an itch. Sex produces so many bad results, but still one is not satisfied. Now there are contraceptives, abortion—so many things. *Maya* [illusion] is so strong; she says, “Yes, do this and be implicated.”



Therefore the *Bhagavatam* says, *kandutivan manasijam visaheta dhirah*. A man who is

dhira, sober and sane, tolerates this itching sensation of sex desire. One who can tolerate the itching sensation saves so much trouble, but one who cannot is immediately implicated. Whether illicit or legitimate, sex is trouble.

Devotee: Srila Prabhupada, this is the first time we’ve walked this way. Everything looks different and new.

Srila Prabhupada: [Laughs.] This is material life. We are wandering sometimes this way, sometimes that way, and we are thinking, “Oh, this is new.” *Brahmanda bhramite*: we are wandering all over the universe trying to find out something new. But nothing is new: everything is old.

When a man becomes old, he generally thinks, “Oh, this life is so troublesome.” So he is allowed to change to a new body, a child’s body. The child is taken care of, and he thinks, “Now I’ve got such a comfortable life.” But again he becomes old and disgusted. So, Krsna is so kind: “All right,” He says, “change your body.” This is *punah punas carvita-carvananam*, chewing the chewed. Krsna gives the living entity many facilities: “All right, become a tree. All right, become a serpent. All right, become a demigod. All right, become a king. Become a cobbler. Go to the heavenly planets. Go to the hellish planets.” There are so many varieties of life, but in all of them the living entity is packed up in this material world. He’s looking for freedom, but he does not know that freedom is available only under the shelter of Krsna. That he will not accept.

Seeing the suffering in this material world, the Mayavadis [impersonalists] want to make life variety-less (*nirvisesa*) and the Buddhists want to make it zero (*sunyavadi*). But neither proposition is possible. You may remain variety-less for some time, but again you will want varieties. Big, big *sannyasis* [renunciants]

preach so much about *brahma satyam jagan mithya* [“The impersonal Absolute is true; this universe is false”], but again they come down from Brahman to do political and social work. They cannot remain in Brahman for long, so they have to accept this material variety, because variety is the mother of enjoyment. Therefore, our proposition is this: Come to the real variety, Krsna consciousness. Then your life will be successful.

Devotee: Most people are trying to enjoy so much in this life that they don’t even think about the next life.

Srila Prabhupada: They do not know what the next life is, so they make it zero. They say, “There is no next life,” and in that way they are satisfied. When a rabbit sees some danger it closes its eyes and thinks there is no danger. These rascals are like that. It is all ignorance.

Devotee: There is a philosophy called stoicism, which says that since life is meant for suffering, one should just become very sturdy and suffer a great deal.

Srila Prabhupada: So, their idea is that one who can suffer without any protest—he is a first-class man.



Believing in such a philosophy means that one does not know how to *stop* suffering. One class of philosophers says that suffering cannot be dismissed and therefore we must be strong to tolerate it. And another class of philosophers says that since life is full of suffering, we should make life zero. But neither class has any information that there is real life where there is no suffering. That is Krsna consciousness. There is *life*, but no suffering. *Anandamayo bhyasat*: simply bliss. Dancing, eating, and chanting, with no suffering. Would anybody refuse that? Is there any such fool?

Devotee: People deny that such a life exists.

Srila Prabhupada: But suppose there is such a life, where you can

simply dance, eat, and live happily for eternity. Would you not like to accept it?

Devotee: Anyone would like to accept it. But people think it doesn’t exist.

Srila Prabhupada: So our first proposition should be that there is a life like this—only happiness, with no suffering. Everyone will say, “Yes, I would like it.” They will accept it. Unfortunately, because people have been cheated again and again, they think that this is another cheating. Therefore, preaching Krsna consciousness

means to convince people that there is a life full of happiness, with no suffering.

Devotee: What will convince them that we are not cheating, also?

Srila Prabhupada: Invite them to come to our temple and see our devotees. We are chanting, dancing, and eating nicely. This is practical proof.



THE THREE ASPECTS OF THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH

By Mitrasena Dasa

A few years ago, I ran a social experiment, reading Srimad-Bhagavatam with a group of Winston Salem suburbanites.

A retired nurse asked me to explain the three aspects of the Absolute Truth described in chapter two.

“It’s very technical.” I said, hoping to rush past it.

“Are you sure you want to get into this? There are some stories ahead that I’d like you to hear.”

“Yes, I’m curious and these words don’t make any sense to me. I can’t even pronounce them.”

I looked at the others in the group, all of them were over sixty, some in their seventies, suburban southern seniors.

“Do y’all want to hear this too?”

They nodded, holding their blue copies of the First Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam in their laps.

“Yeah, this looks interesting.” The oldest in the group said. “I’d like to hear about it.” She was a Buddhist.

I pondered how to make this relevant to our little group of nurses, bank tellers and Buddhists.

“OK, let’s try.” I took a deep breath. I needed a new approach for this audience. Something they could experience.

“Some of you have had spiritual experiences, a visitation by something powerful...” I looked to Rebecca, the nurse. She nodded. “...a feeling that all

is well, that all is peaceful. There is nothing to worry about, you are surrounded by a powerful, friendly, and unlimited energy.”

Rebecca closed her eyes, meditating on the experience she described a week earlier.

Devotee: But doesn’t one have to be purified before one can realize these things?

Srila Prabhupada: No. We say, “Come and chant Hare Krsna with us; you’ll become purified. We don’t want anything from you. We shall give you food—we shall give you everything. Simply come and chant with us.” This is our message. 🌸



“You’ve had a glimpse of it.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“Yes, we all have.”

“We’ve gotten a glimpse, so imagine if you could hold that. To stay there...by practice.” The group looked thoughtful. They’d all experienced something like this. “Yoga is meant to take you there. By discipline and practice you can stay for longer and longer periods, until..., you’re always there.”

“That sounds wonderful.” The Buddhist said.

“Yes it is. And that’s called **Brahman** realization. That’s the first stage of realization. But there’s more...”

My audience looked startled.

“When you’re in that stage for some time, you’ll notice a voice, a voice of wisdom, something beyond you. You’re not alone. The source of all energy has a voice and IT’S TALKING TO YOU, giving you wisdom.”

“I’m getting goose bumps!”

“I had no idea...”

“Yes, it’s a paradigm shift. There’s a personality behind this powerful energy and you’ve attracted its attention, it’s speaking to you. This is the second stage of realization, called **Paramatma**. But there’s more.” I said,

“Are you ready for this?”

“Yes, please.”

Sofas are designed for relaxing, but no one relaxed, they leaned forward clutching their books.

“What happens next?”



ABOVE: Paramatma: the feature of Lord Kṛṣṇa situated in the heart of all living entities.

“Alright, here we go. But I warn you. This is another paradigm shift.”

They urged me on.

“Do you remember when you were a child, how you thought the world revolved around you? Your parents and grandparents loved you so much, you thought that all they did was wait for you to call them on the phone or come to visit. It wasn’t until you grew up that you learned they have other friends, a life outside of your circle. You learned to see them as complete and social humans. This is what Bhagavan realization is about. That voice that’s been speaking to you has a personality, has a set of close friends, and shares deep secrets with them.”

My Buddhist friend said, “That’s beautiful.”

“There is a lot going on in that realm.” I continued, “**Bhagavan** realization gets you into that circle, and that is the target of this book, the Srimad-Bhagavatam.”

“I’m glad I asked about this.” Rebecca said.

“So am I, it was as if someone else were speaking through me. I’ve never described it like this before.”

“Maybe you’re in that second stage...”

“It looks as if we’ve all reached some stage.”

“Yes, we’ve all felt something today.”

“And we’re only on the first canto. There are eleven more to go. Shall we continue our reading?” 🌸



NEWS FROM UKRAINE

The following is a quick report sent on March 6th. from two of devotees in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

We would like to present you a short report on devotional service in the region and the city of Kharkiv.

Due to the difficult situation in Ukraine, it was decided to put the large Deities Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai in Kharkiv to rest. Now all the services are taken by the small Deities. Services are held during the hours outside the curfew. Many devotees have left the city and some have left the country. A few brave devotees have stayed and continue Srila Prabhupada's mission.

Due to frequent bombardments, the civilian



population stuck in the subway stations and basements of residential buildings needs care and hot prasadam. Devotees try to get bhoga (uncooked ingredients), cook, offer to the Deities, and distribute prasadam to people. Everyday an average of 700 portions of hot kitri (preparation of rice, beans, and vegetables) or soup, drink, bread, and sweet balls are served. We also distribute Srila Prabhupada's books and chant the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra. People are singing: "Hare Krishna-are our saviors!" Thank you so much for the blessings and the prayers, it's priceless!!!

Your servants, Paramasundara das, Ananda-kishori devi dasi 🌸

MORE NEWS

We want to tearfully ask all the devotees to please pray for the protection of the Vaishnavas of Mariupol Ukraine. The city has been completely blockaded for about eight days —there is no electricity, water, heat, or communications. All areas of the city are continuously being bombed day and night. Civilians are also being killed —all without exception — looting is already flourishing there —people are in a panic.

At the moment, we know of four places where devotees are sheltering together:

- Place 1. Has about 20 devotees holed up including 5 children.
- Place 2. Has 12 devotees, 7 of them small children.
- Place 3. Devotees are worshipping the temple Deities there, how many devotees there is unknown.
- Place 4. The number of devotees there is unknown but there are small children.

That's not all —just what we know.

People are dying of cold and hunger; the temperature in the houses is the same as on the street. For the last three days there has been no connection at all, so there is no information —absolutely all communication channels are cut off and the city is badly damaged.

Many of the Mariupol devotees have done a lot for Srila Prabhupada's mission. The few messages that were miraculously received from them three days ago were appeals for help from the matajis (mothers) with children.

We bow down before you and beg devotees to pray for them. Please forward this prayer to others.

We need an urgent evacuation. We need an evacuation corridor.



ISKCON NEWS REPORT (summary) By Anuttama dasa, on March 7, 2022

Events in Ukraine are changing daily, if not by the hour. Here are updates that ISKCON News has confirmed.

KYIV TEMPLE REFILLS WITH DEVOTEES

It was previously reported that many devotee families and temple residents in Kyiv left the city for safer locations in the county or to other cities further to the west. Earlier reports were that only a handful of devotees were living in the temple, but that has all changed. Niranjana Swami confirmed to ISKCON News that other devotee families have moved into the Kyiv temple from various parts of the city. *“Many of these families live in high-rise apartments that are unsafe now. The temple is more protected and has two floors underground that can serve as an air defense shelter,”* he said. *“Also, the devotees were lonely and needing association. In the temple, they’re having kirtan and hearing about Krishna together.”* About 50 devotees have moved into the temple building.

HUNGARIAN FFL EXPANDS TO SIX SITES AND 2,000 MEALS DAILY

Food for Life in Hungary is distributing food (*prasadam*) at six locations across the country in

response to the Ukrainian crisis. Two locations are in Budapest, two locations at the Ukrainian border and two new locations are in the city of Debrechen near the Romanian border. Between 1,500 and 2,000 meals are being fed daily to refugees, according to Chaitanya Charan, administrator for the Hungarian yatra. *“We were feeding Indian students at the train stations for several days,”* he said, *“but most of the students have continued on to other locations.”* He noted that in recent days the refugees seem to be a ‘new wave’. *“The earlier throngs of people were those who lived close to the border, or who had family members they were seeking out. The ones we are seeing now are more desperate. They are coming from long distances, and many aren’t sure where they are going.”*

ISKCON EUROPE ESTABLISHES A COORDINATOR OF RELIEF

The ISKCON European Regional Governing Body (RGB) has selected Sukanti Radha dasi to coordinate their efforts to assist Krishna devotees fleeing the

conflict in Ukraine and helping them relocate to other ISKCON communities. Sukanti, who is based in the UK, said, “*The first priority is to establish how many devotees each ISKCON temple in Europe can take in. Then we’ll help connect devotee refugees with those temples and support their relocations with information, contacts, and logistical and financial support.*”

ISKCON TEMPLES RECEIVING DEVOTEE REFUGEES

It is estimated that there are 4,000 initiated ISKCON devotees in Ukraine and that ISKCON’s congregation has 20,000 members. (Source: Niranjana Swami, GBC, who notes that the Ukrainian Summer Festival draws 14,000 devotees, all but 1,000 of whom are Ukrainians.) To date, only 300 ISKCON members are known to have left the country and sought refuge at ISKCON temples. March 7 in the morning, during a daily zoom call with European Communications leaders, it was reported that approximately 200 Ukrainians are being sheltered by ISKCON temple communities in Poland; 30 Ukrainian devotees are in Hungary; 12 are in Slovakia; 15 are in Czech Republic, and 3 are in Romania. “As is reported in the media, like most of the refugees, devotee refugees are primarily women and children,” reported Trilokatma dasa, Zonal

Supervisor in Czech Republic and Slovenia. As the conflict intensifies, more devotee refugees are expected.

HARE KRISHNA FOOD RELIEF PICKS UP IN UKRAINE—UK TRUCK ON JOURNEY TO HELP

Since the conflict began, ISKCON devotees in the Donetsk region have continued their food relief program, *Food for Life*, without stopping. In addition, other temples in Ukraine are now sharing prasadam (sanctified vegetarian food) with thousands suffering from the Ukrainian crisis. Niranjana Swami, ISKCON GBC for Ukraine, informed us that 1,000 hot meals a day are being distributed to those in need in Dnipro, and 500 hot meals per day are being distributed in Kharkiv. Parasuram dasa, director of the UK’s Food for All program, is traveling with a small support team in a customized van with a commercial kitchen, extra-large pots, and an intense desire to cross the border into Ukraine to help the victims of the conflict with hot prasadam meals. Just minutes ago it was reported that Parasuram has arrived in Poland and will be cooking in the city of Przemysl, near the train station. He has received permission from the local government and will start feeding on 600-800 people daily. 🌸



Book Distribution Stories!

THE LONG REACHING EFFECTS OF DEVOTEE ASSOCIATION

By Vraja Vihari Dasa

It was the fall of 1984, and our party had been distributing books at the State Fairgrounds in Tampa, Florida, all day. We parked our van in a Days Inn parking lot for the night. Our party of five brahmacharis (celibate students) was fast asleep in the van when we heard a loud voice over a megaphone:

“Alright in there! Come out slowly with your hands raised!”

I looked out the window and was shocked to see the van surrounded by twelve police cars and about thirty officers with their guns drawn! We emerged from the van squinting from the bright flashlights



burning our eyes. The officers began to frisk each one of us, though we were dressed only in gamshas (cloth tied around the waist).

“What are you doing here?” the officer in charge demanded.

“We’re distributing love of God in the form of books,” I explained.

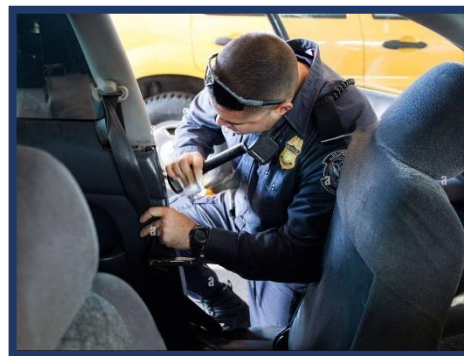
“Prove it!”

I opened the van doors, thinking perhaps this was all a dream. I reached into one of the boxes, pulled out a Bhagavad-gita, and handed it to the officer in charge. He intently inspected the book, then me, then the book again, until finally he broke the silence, declaring, “All glories to Srila Prabhupada!” I was flabbergasted, as

were his gun-toting subordinates and all my van mates. At this point I was sure I was dreaming! The officer in charge then cheerfully explained: "I used to go to the University of Florida and regularly ate the Krishna Lunch on campus. You practically put me through college. I even stayed two days at the temple!" Turning to his associates, he declared, "These are great books, and you should all buy one." On his order the officers began reaching for their wallets. About 80% of them took books. We made almost \$300! Our new friend then apologized for disrupting our sleep. He explained that earlier that night a gun store had been robbed, and the description of the getaway vehicle exactly matched our van. I don't think any of us slept again that night. It was certainly a most bizarre experience we went through. But thanks to prasadam distribution, it turned into a great sankirtan success story.

Another time, in the summer of 1991 we went to Toronto to do book distribution. We stayed at the temple and did a marathon for almost a month in downtown Toronto on Yonge Street, a great spot for sankirtan in the summer. After the marathon we were on our way back into the US near Buffalo when we got

stopped at the border by the US officials. An officer demanded to see the contents of our van. We opened the back and he started poking around inside.



When he came upon a shelf that held some of the books we would use for personal reading, he pulled out a *Nectar of Devotion* and shouted to the other border officials, "Hey guys, come over here! This is the *Nectar of Devotion*!" The way he said this, they must have thought he'd found the greatest treasure on earth. The customs agent then told us he used to go to the temple in Buffalo in 1969 and had once met Srila Prabhupada there and heard him give a lecture. He asked if he could give a donation for the *Nectar of Devotion* and gave us \$50. He told us he often would tell his colleagues about the time he spent with the Krishnas and Srila Prabhupada. ❀



KICKED BY THE LORD —By Malati Devi Dasi

Years ago, in Utrecht, Holland. our lives were saved by Gaura Nitai and the arrival of the police and their dogs. Had it not occurred, I'd not be writing this now. We had purchased a kerosene camping heater the day before and finally, looked forward to a warm night's sleep in what was called the coldest winter in 53 years. We tightly closed the windows and doors of the van in ignorant bliss. Sometime in the early morning, in a dream, our traveling Gaura-Nitai deities appeared to me and kicked me in the side, demanding "Get up! Get up! It's time for Mangala arati!" I woke up but couldn't



move, but eventually, being next to the door, I was finally able to open it and fell out on the ground which now had snow on it. I began yelling at the others, "Wake up! Get up! Something is wrong!" Suddenly, our van was surrounded by serious Dutch police with guns and dogs! No one on

our party was Dutch so communication was difficult but then one of the policemen spoke English. We were woozy, wobbly, with severe headaches and the policeman had us go to a hospital where it was determined that we almost died due to lack of oxygen; the heater had eaten up all the oxygen because we had not left a crack in the window for air to circulate...something mentioned in the heater directions that none of us could read as they were in Dutch and German.

As it turns out, my choice of our overnight camping site was a police dog training area, which I didn't know since I couldn't read the signage. It just looked like a small forest on the outskirts of town. The police had showed up with their dogs to go through training exercises when they came upon us. At the time, there were serious problems with terrorists in Holland and they initially thought that we could be Surinamese terrorists, until we emerged from the van, disheveled and dazed. They were blessed to take darshan of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu. And in addition, we ended up doing really "big" that day [distributed lots of books], in spite of a late start. Thank you, Gauranga Mahaprabhu for saving us! ❀

Excerpts from inmates' letters

Back in April of 2016, Sridhara Syama Das, a volunteer who drives 2 ½ hours from Dallas, Texas just to come see us, introduced this science and ISKCON to us. (I had no idea that my life was about to be turned completely upside down and outside in). I was highly skeptical, at first, about the philosophy. This was due to past spiritual promises and personal experiences with religion and the followers of religion. We were given beads, mantra cards, and told to chant 16 rounds [of the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra]. It came with an added promise that, "I would take off like a rocket." I tried chanting. I didn't take to it. The idea of chanting seemed downright made up of fantasy stuff and someone's highly active imagination. Chanting felt really weird and just so damned awkward. It took me all day—literally—to complete two whole rounds! I struggled all summer to chant. I'm an avid reader. I was captivated by the philosophy. Never before had I read information on the soul, much less the size of the soul. Sridhara had brought boxes of books. I took all of them. Sridhara even had ISKCON Prison Ministry to donate the sets of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* to our chapel library. I was reading the biography of Srial Prabhupāda titled, *Every Town and Village*, that caught my attention, in regard to the mantra. At a consortium that consisted of a panel of gurus and sages representing different lineages of teachings, all were all defeated by Srila Prabhupada's young American disciples. The disciples defeated the panel in performing kirtan. I then realized the potency of the maha mantra. This was on December 26, 2016. I surrendered my life to Kṛṣṇa and Srila Prabhupāda. I committed to chanting 16 rounds. I had also been practicing the four regulative principles. Now going on three years, beads are looking well-worn. I'm up to twenty rounds. I get up around 3:30ish AM so I can be with Kṛṣṇa and practice japa. It takes about two hours and twenty minutes for me to complete my japa of twenty rounds.

I feel so complete and so very satisfied with myself, with others, and now I have a peace and an understanding of Kṛṣṇa (God). I no longer live in a chaotic state of mind. No longer being a prisoner to my thoughts. I experience a state of happiness. I sleep well now. All of this is only by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. I know that I'm blessed and of the rare prisoner who has the support of an ISKCON volunteer, I'm in lifetimes of debt to Srila Prabhupāda.



ABOVE: When the soul (the passenger sitting on the chariot of the body) lets the mind (the driver) take control of the senses (the horses), the senses become out of control and the soul is then in a very dangerous situation.

In closing, I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation for your service to us in the providing of books and materials. Your kindness as well as mercy has made an impact upon me and the Godbrothers here. Addictions, cycles of abuse, anger, hopelessness are no longer driving the men who have seriously engaged in the practice and teaching. We talk about where we were and where we are at now. It is a miracle – nothing short of a miracle to have an honest and real change in the thinking along with an understanding. These books that you helped placing in our hands, gave us the science that brought the change that we had been wanting.

Bhakta Charles B. — Tennessee Colony, Texas

Actually, [for meal replacements] we're served all three meals of the day at the dinner meal. We take the food back to our cells and break the fast at the appropriate time. The wonderful thing is food service **and** the chapel know how absolutely important it is and now everyone asks, "What's the Holy day THIS time?" and I have a chance to teach them about our saints, sages, and customs. Jay Gopal! Jai Sri Ram! Jai Prabhupāda! How grateful I am to Srila Prabhupāda for his mercy of bringing us this most wonderful dharma. Can you just imagine being without it? I would be empty, cold, and hopeless. Krishna Consciousness gives us all such hope filled with sat-chit-ananda! Haribol!

Krishna Kirtan Dasa — Petersburg, Virginia

Hare Krishna! Very cool that you add my letter in the Freedom Newsletter this month. Like we say in Spanish, "Que Guafiao". Thank you so much. I want to update about my spiritual progress. Since I stopped the nonsense of eating meat, this is now my life: I wake up at 3:10 AM, clean my teeth, drink 40 oz of water (I drink it in between the rounds of the mantra), and chant twenty rounds (till 5am). then I have breakfast and then I go to

the dorm study, from 6 am to 8 am, then take a nap. At 1030 AM I start to work out 2500/jumping jacks, 1500squads, 600 pushups, 600sit ups. If they open the yard I do 17 laps jogging nonstop and, if they give more time, I do 21 laps nonstop and chant in the yard 1 round to thank Krishna for His

mercy to give in me the strength to run. and between every count 10am/3pm/6pm/10pm, I chant three rounds. [I chant 32 chants every day] Every BTG magazine that I receive I read it at least three times, back-to-back, and put it in a large envelope with the newsletter and send it to my sister Clarissa and she reads it with my mom and my kids and also my kids are chanting with my mom. I feel good in my heart every day because if I leave this body I know I am going with Krishna I know every day when I wake up that I am giving my best. What can be

better than that? Thank you so much Ms. Bhakta-latā Dasi for your help and motivation. I wish you know how much happiness I have in my heart when I see that Krishna is using me to encourage more people to do what is right because eat meat is not right at all. Love and respect. Always your servant
Bhakta Eloy M. — Wewahitchka, Florida



WHO IS LORD CAITANYA MAHAPRABHU?

Caitanya Mahaprabhu (pronounced Chai-ta-nya ma-ha-pra-boo) is the pioneer of a great social and religious movement that began in India about 500 years ago in Bengal, India, and that has directly and indirectly influenced the subsequent course of religious and philosophical thinking not only in India but throughout the world.

The word *caitanya* means “living force,” *carita* means “character,” and *amṛta* means “immortal.”

Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya’s influence has spread all over the world due to the efforts of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder Acārya (spiritual guide) of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Vedic texts state that Lord Chaitanya is the Supreme Person, Krishna, appearing as His own worshiper. He is the combined form of Krishna and Krishna's most dear devotee, Srimati Radharani. He came to experience the love She feels for Him, and to show by example how to fully surrender to Krishna.

He exhibited symptoms of love of God to the highest degree and emphasized chanting the holy names of Krishna as the best means to attain love of God.

Although Lord Chaitanya Himself never declared that He was Krishna, the Vedic literature reveals that He was. The Bhagavatam, for instance, not only identifies Lord Chaitanya but also describes His mission:



krishna-varnam tvishakrishnam
 sangopangastra-parshadam
 yajnaih sankirtana-prayair
 yajanti hi sumedhasah

“In the age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the name of Krishna. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Krishna Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons, and confidential companions.” [SB 11.5.32]

The specific mission of Lord Caitanya was, by both example and precept, to distribute the religion (dharma) specifically ordained for this age, the chanting of the holy names of God. Historically Lord Caitanya may be described as a Bengali saint, but His mercy is not intended merely for the Bengalis. It is for the entire world. He even predicted that the chanting of the name of Krishna would one day be

known in every city, town, and village in the world. The chanting of the holy names of God as delivered by Lord Caitanya is not only an easy practice, but it is also the topmost method for achieving spiritual perfection. No one but the Supreme Lord Himself could distribute the highest form of devotional service, and thus Lord Krishna Himself appeared as a devotee. That is Lord Caitanya.

Lord Caitanya is Lord Krishna in His most merciful feature. He came to save the most fallen (the souls in kali-yuga). Therefore, even if one doesn't understand Lord Caitanya's identity as the Supreme Lord but accepts Him as a saintly person or as a social reformer and philosopher, one can still derive the highest benefit by chanting the names of God. Without knowing anything at all about Lord Chaitanya, people throughout the world have enthusiastically participated in Lord Caitanya's sankirtan movement of chanting, dancing, and partaking of spiritual food (prasadam). Through the growing Hare Krishna movement, Lord Caitanya's prediction is quickly coming to pass, and the holy name

of Krishna is known everywhere. The day will soon come when knowledge and appreciation of Lord Caitanya will also become widespread, because whoever chants Hare Krishna becomes Lord Caitanya's follower, and He then enlightens the devotee from within, revealing the highest transcendental knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna Caitanya. **Gaura-Purnima**, the appearance day of Lord Caitanya, is celebrated throughout the world. You can celebrate it by chanting extra rounds, kirtans, reading more, giving a book, or sharing prasadam, and/or thinking more about Lord Caitanya, begging for His mercy. 🌸

Calendar

MARCH 2022

- 01 Mar 2022 - Siva Ratri (Lord Siva is honored as the topmost Vaisnava "vaishnavanam yatha shambhuh" **SB 12.13.16**)
- 03 Mar 2022 - Disappearance Day of Srila Jagannatha Dasa Babaji
- 03 Mar 2022 - Disappearance Day of Sri Rasikananda
- 06 Mar 2022 - Appearance Day of Sri Purusottama Dasa Thakura
- 14 Mar 2022 - **Amalaki Vrata Ekadashi**
- 15 Mar 2022 - Disappearance of Sri Madhavendra Puri
- 18 Mar 2022 - **GAURA PURNIMA** (Appearance of Lord Caitanya)
- 19 Mar 2022 - Festival of Jagannatha Misra (the father of Lord Caitanya)
- 25 Mar 2022 - Appearance Day of Sri Srivasa Pandita
- 28 Mar 2022 - **Papamochani Ekadashi**
- 29 Mar 2022 - Disappearance Day of Sri Govinda Ghosh

APRIL 2022

- 06 April 2022 - Appearance Day of Sri Ramanujacharya
- 10 April 2022 - **Rama Navami** (appearance day of Lord Rama)
- 13 April 2022 - **Kamada Ekadashi**
- 13 April 2022 - Damanaka Ropana Dvadasi
- 14 April 2022 - Beginning of Salagrama and Tulasi Jala Dana
- 16 April 2022 - Sri Balarama Rasayatra
- 16 April 2022 - Sri Krishna Vasanta Rasa
- 16 April 2022 - Appearance Day of Sri Vamsivadananda Thakura
- 16 April 2022 - Appearance Day of Sri Syamananda Prabhu
- 23 April 2022 - Disappearance Day of Sri Abhirama Thakura
- 25 April 2022 - Disappearance Day of Srila Vrndavana Dasa Thakura
- 26 April 2022 - **Varuthini Ekadashi**
- 26 April 2022 - Appearance Day of Sri Gadadhara Pandita



ABOVE: The same way Lord Krishna has a rasa dance with the gopis, Lord Balarama also has a springtime rasa dance with the cowherd girls. The rasa dance can **never** be compared to the mundane dancing of boys and girls in this material world.

RIGHT: Lord Ramacandra (Rama) is a powerful incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as an ideal king. He appeared in the Treta-yuga, more than two million years ago.

