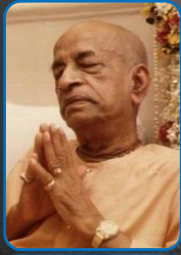


# Freedom Newsletter



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

ISKCON Prison Ministry / **OCTOBER 2020**

PO Box 2676  
Alachua, FL 32615

## **A DELUXE EDITION OF ANIMAL LIFE**

*The following conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and a Life Member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness took place in August 1976 on an early-morning walk in Hyderabad, India.*

**Life Member:** What is your view on birth control by contraception?

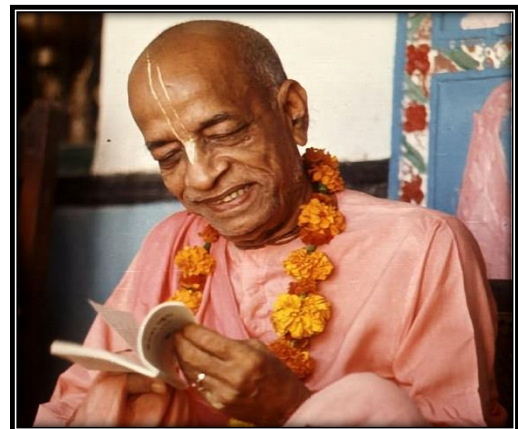
**Srila Prabhupada:** That is the most sinful activity. Birth control should be done by restraining sex.

**LM:** That is one way.

**Srila Prabhupada:** That is the only way approved in the *shastra* [scriptures]. All other ways are sinful.

**LM:** But people are committing sinful activities like contraception and abortion. What will happen to them?

**Srila Prabhupada:** They will suffer. Those who are killing children in the womb will themselves be killed. They will enter into a mother's womb and be killed. They will be punished, tit for tat. But that they do not know. These rascals have no education about the laws of nature. They're acting very independently, but Krishna says in the *Bhagavadgita* [3.27], *ahankara-vimudhatma*



*kartaham iti manyate:* Those who think they can act independently of nature are *vimudhas*, rascals. They will be punished by the laws of nature, just like a thief who defies the laws of the government.

**LM:** What is the qualification of someone fit to have children?

**Srila Prabhupada:** The husband and wife should not have a child unless they can take full responsibility for saving him from the repetition of birth and death. That is the shastric injunction. In the material world everyone is rotating in the cycle of birth and death, transmigrating from one body to another (*tatha dehantara-praptih*). And after many millions of years, one gets the chance to become a human being. Now, in this life, one can stop birth and death. That is Vedic culture—learning how to conquer the process of repeated birth and death (*punar-janma-jaya*). But that is possible only in human life. So the parents' duty is to train their children in such a way that their present birth is their last. And that training is Krishna consciousness.

Unfortunately, people are ignorant of this science. So both parents and children are staying in the cycle of birth and death and wasting the opportunity of having a human body. This is modern civilization. People do not know this science; they are kept in darkness. Their so-called education is useless, because they do not learn what the destination of life is.

Practically speaking, there is no education. The modern so-called education teaches you how to eat nicely, how to sleep nicely, how to have sex nicely, and how to defend nicely. And that is the business of the animals. They know how to eat, how to sleep, how to have sex, and how to defend. So the extra intelligence of the human being is making a deluxe edition of eating, sleeping, sex, and defense. The modern civilization is a deluxe edition of animal life. That's all.

**LM:** But many people would insist that the material progress of present-day society makes life worthwhile.

**Srila Prabhupada:** What will you do with your material progress at the time of death? Suppose you have a big bank balance, a nice house, good friends. At any moment death can come and kick you out. What can you do? As death, Krishna will come one day and take everything you have. Finished. And He may make you a dog. Now bark. How can you stop it? You have practiced how to bark in the legislative assembly. Now become a dog and go on barking-yow, yow, yow! This is going on.

No one knows the purpose of life. As Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita* [16.8], *asatyam apratishtham te jagad ahur anishvaram*. People are claiming this world is false

(*asatyam*), there is no cause (*apratishtham*), there is no God (*anishvaram*). So the modern civilization denies God, yet it is still trying to mitigate the miseries of life. But *Bhagavad-gita* proposes that first of all you should try to understand what your real misery is. Do you know what the real misery of your life is? What is the misery of your life?

**LM:** The misery of life is to live without divine knowledge.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. The real misery of life is that although you are an eternal soul, with no birth or death, you are suffering repeated birth and death of the body. Therefore birth and death are your real miseries. This is knowledge.

But people have no brain to understand these things. Krishna clearly says, *na jayate mriyate va* [Bg. 2.20]: "For the soul there is neither birth nor death." But the rascals never think, "Why am I suffering birth? Why am I dying?" Where is their education? They are struggling to get free of misery, but they don't know what their actual misery is. They foolishly engage in the struggle for existence and hope for the survival of the fittest.

**LM:** The theory of the survival of the fittest may be applicable in our case because *fit* means?

**Srila Prabhupada:** *Fit* means "not getting another material body." That is being fit, because as soon as you get another material body you must suffer. People are mad, working day and night, but they are acting adversely to their own interest. You already have a body that is causing you suffering, and by your karma, your fruitive work, you are creating another body. And as soon as you get another material body, you'll have to suffer, whether you become a king or a dog.

People have no brain to solve this problem, although there is a solution. *Tyaktva deham punar janma naiti mam eti* [Bg. 4.9]: Krishna says in *Bhagavad-gita* that if you understand Him in truth, you can get out of the cycle of birth and death and go back to Godhead—no more birth and death.

So you have become our Life Member. Try to broadcast the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gita*. That is the meaning of membership. Everything is there in *Bhagavad-gita*. Thoroughly study *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. Understand the philosophy of Krishna consciousness, apply it in your own life, and try to spread it among your friends. 🌸



## Need Books or Prayer Beads?

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- 1) Tell us if you can receive hardbound books and how many at a time.
- 2) Please make sure that you are allowed to receive any of the material you request.
- 3) Tell us if the material need to be sent directly to you or through your chaplain and if you need an authorization form.

## HOW I CAME TO KRṢṂA CONSCIOUSNESS

### I AM CURRENTLY AWAITING TRIAL FOR A CAPITAL DEATH PENALTY CASE

By Bhakta Ben

Allow me to share with you how I came to become a bhakta. I am sitting in a cell, awaiting trial for a capital death penalty case. And in all honesty, I may very well spend the rest of my life on Death Row. But that does not hold the anxiety for me that it once did. Allow me to share with you what changed in my thinking.



In 2006, a friend of mine in the Arizona State Prison System sent me a Prisoner's Resource List, and as I looked it over I saw an address for ISKCON Prison Ministry [IPM]. For some reason I was attracted to it, but I did not know why. As I look back, I can tell you that Kṛṣṇa attracted me, as He is all-attractive!

The first thing I learned was that I was not this body, but that I was a spirit soul (Bhagavad Gita 2.13). I was like, "Whoa! This is some far out stuff, man!" But the more I thought about it, it started to make sense. Kṛṣṇa was dissipating this illusion that was darkening my eyes. I came to the conclusion eventually that if once I am done with this body, I would move on to another

one. What is the point of allowing myself to become so distressed over facing what I was facing? So my first lesson was that I am not this body. What a revelation!

I flipped through the Gita, reading things that caught my interest. This verse jumped out at me like a flashing star: "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear." Wow! "Do not fear." Kṛṣṇa tells me that He would deliver me from all of my sinful reactions. But He also told me that I should surrender



unto Him. And as we all know, surrendering ourselves to anyone is not the easiest of things to do. It was a fearful thing to do – surrender all of my convict pride, and bow down to God. But He knows that it is hard. He said, "ma sucah". Do not fear or worry. And that is what I was doing, fearful of letting someone else run my life. But hey, where is the need for the fear, I wasn't running it well at all! I ran it into the ground. Kṛṣṇa knew that, so He said, "ma sucah"! Where is the fear?

I am now chanting 15 rounds of the maha mantra, and will be bumping it up one more very shortly. Where's the fear? I surrendered it to Kṛṣṇa. Why? Because the Supreme Personality of Godhead told me, "ma sucah"! I am no longer at the helm of my life. Lord Kṛṣṇa is running it. I won't lie to you and say it is all gravy, no; maya tries to trip me up from time to time. I am relying upon Lord Kṛṣṇa to give me the strength. And you know what? He is giving it to me. And I use it to do devotional service. Why? Because I love Him! I came across a beautiful prayer that Lord Caitanya prayed.



Allow me to share it and it will touch your heart! "I know no One but Kṛṣṇa as my Lord, and He shall remain so even if He handles me roughly by His embrace, or makes me broken-hearted by not being present before me. He is completely free to do anything and everything, for He is always my worshipful Lord, unconditionally." (Sri Siksastaka, verse 8)

Man! Doesn't that prick your heart? I want to be able to lay claim to this prayer some day! Unconditionally!!! Can you feel the love there? No matter how I live or die, I want to be able to glorify Kṛṣṇa through all the happiness and joy and through all the aches and pains. All I want to do is serve Kṛṣṇa no matter what! **Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.** As you read these 16 words with me, I thank you for the kirtan!

I thank you for taking the time to read this. It is all true! After all, Kṛṣṇa is Truth! We are part and parcel of Him. I ask you not to just take it lightly, this ISKCON, also known as the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement, is Lord Kṛṣṇa reaching out to you. Won't you come home with me? Come on, let's go back home to Godhead. Ma sucah. 🌸

**Would you like to see your STORY and/or ARTWORK in the *Freedom Newsletter*?**

If, yes, write the **story** of how you came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Write in your own words, using simple language. Stories should be only about 2 to 3 handwritten pages (or 1 to 2 typed pages).

We also encourage all of you to **draw** topics about Kṛṣṇa, whether you are known as an "artist" or not. With Kṛṣṇa artwork, what is most important is your desire to please Kṛṣṇa.

Send your story and/or your artwork to: **ISKCON Prison Ministry, PO Box 2676, Alachua, FL 32616**

And **please** write "MY STORY", or "ARTWORK" on the back of the envelope.

**Please be patient:** due to the high volume of mail, it may take a few months to see your submission in the newsletter.

**IMPORTANT: IF YOU TRANSFER to a new unit/address:**

Subscriptions to the ***Back to Godhead*** magazine (BTG) are sponsored by the Prison Ministry (IPM), NOT by the BTG Office. So if you have a change of address, please write to IPM, at the address below, to inform us. Please write "**CHANGE OF ADDRESS**" on the outside of the envelope so we can process it immediately. Thank you.

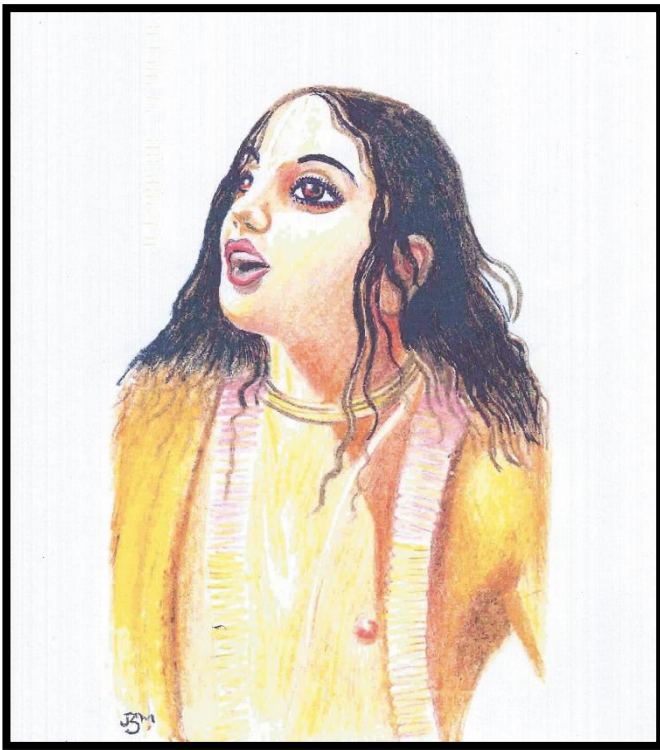
**ISKCON Prison Ministry, PO Box 2676, Alachua, FL 32616**

The same is goes for the ***Freedom Newsletter*** (FN). When newsletters are returned we can only assume that the inmate has been released from prison and his/her name is deleted from our mailing list. To make sure you continue receiving the newsletter be sure to notify us of your change of address at the above address.

# Artwork!



**Lord Nrsimha takes Prahlad Maharaja's hand.**  
By Bhakta Andy, inmate in Petersburg, Virginia



**Lord Caitanya**  
By Bhakta Gerald S., inmate in Sheridan, Illinois



# Book Distribution Stories!

## CANDIDATES FOR MERCY

compiled by Navina Nirada Dasa

HERE ARE SOME experiences and realizations of devotees who give people Kṛṣṇa consciousness through Srila Prabhupada's books.

### BIG CHANGE FOR A BIG WOMAN

Another devotee and I and were distributing books in Lithuanian villages. In Darbenai, one of the larger villages, I was going to homes that were not much more than huts. I wondered how people could survive in such places. Hardly anyone was interested in the books.

Kṛṣṇa finally brought me to a big house with several good cars in the driveway. I met the son of the owner, and he liked the



books but didn't have money and suggested I find his mother. So I shouted "Mistress!" as is usual in such villages. The mistress showed her face in the door. She was a huge women, and I felt very meek in her presence. "My son was joking," she said. "None of us needs Kṛṣṇa. And you look suspicious."

I convinced her to let me into the house, but she again said, "We don't need Kṛṣṇa."

She finally decided to get rid of me by taking one book. The next day I went to the high school. First I met the sports teacher. I told her what the books were about, and she enthusiastically introduced me to other teachers. We gradually made it to the library, and I put the whole set of books in front of the librarian.

"Ha!" she exclaimed. "I've been searching for these books everywhere. How much does the set cost?"

The books are expensive for Lithuania, but the librarian didn't want to lose her chance, so she took us to the director's office.

The director seemed very liberal and said, "Ah, Kṛṣṇa." He told the teachers, "Decide yourself. If you like them, go to the accountant. She's responsible for finances."

When the director mentioned the accountant's name, everyone fell silent. I understood there would be problems.

The librarian, the teachers, and I anxiously made our way to the accountant's office. I knocked at the door, opened it and there stood the same huge woman I had met the day before.

"What are these drunkards doing here?" she shouted. "I already bought a book just out of compassion."

Trying to be firm, I put the whole set on the table in front of her, with the twenty or so teachers gathered around me.

"We don't need these books! Do you understand? And how dare you come here!"

The teachers tried to pacify her.

"We need these books. Let's ..."

"No, we don't need these books! The school doesn't have the money!"



The director looked through the door, mumbled, "So, girls, decide," and quickly disappeared.

"We won't take these books!" decided the accountant.

But then one teacher said, "I'll take this one," and she took a book from the pile.

"I'll take this," said another.

After a minute there were no books left on the table.

The shocked accountant shouted, "Put them back! We don't have money." Then, after a pause, "Well, maybe it is possible. Let's try. Okay, I'll accept responsibility."

She opened the safe, counted the money, and gave it to me.

Some teachers took books for themselves, and the accountant sat looking at the set in front of her. I thought I should give her something, so I had Mukunda,

our driver, bring in a postcard of Mother Yasoda holding baby Kṛṣṇa.

"This is very old and divine," I said. "Please meditate on them; they will protect you from all troubles."

The teachers gathered around to see what it was.

"Oh, they'll steal it!" exclaimed the accountant. "I'll take it home. Thank you very much." 🌸

**Nityananda-Rama Dasa, Russia**

### UNKEMPT CUSTOMER

I was distributing books near the subway in Vladivostok when an unkempt man came up to me and asked about the books. He said he very much wanted to get the Bhagavad-gita but had no money.

"He looks like a bum," I thought. "He's just going to bother me."

Although he asked me questions and kept saying how much he wanted the Bhagavad-gita, I had already decided not to give it to him for free.

But Kṛṣṇa had His own plan. A man ran past us and lost a wad of money. The beggar saw the money, picked it up, and ran after the man to return it to him. But the man had vanished. "Now this beggar will buy vodka and sausage," I thought.

I was wrong. He came back with the money and bought a Bhagavad-gita. 🌸

**Śrutadeva Dasa, Russia**



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Hare Kṛṣṇa. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare

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## Excerpts from inmates' letters

Dear Devotees,

Please accept our humble obeisances, All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

We are in receipt of your blessing and exceedingly humbled by your spirit of generosity. Thank you for your graciousness by exhibiting the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the contribution of the Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta book set; the greatest literary gem of India. The Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta is the crown jewel addition to the Eastern Religion library. We are aspiring devotees and your gift of the Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta [to the Chapel Library] with its instructive value will enrich our practice and assist us in our service. You have set the perfect example in following Srila Prabhupada's foremost decreed, "distribute my books." By faithfully following Srila Prabhupada's instructions, you are helping in the spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to those who are the most misfortunate and in great need of this spiritual science. Srila Prabhupada must be very proud of you and more than pleased with your commitment to service. Our sincere appreciation and we thank you for the gift of the Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta book set. We offer our prayers for the continue blessings and mercy of Srila Prabhupada and Lord Kṛṣṇa to be upon this ministry and upon every

devotee dedicated to the sankirtan mission-JAYA! In His service, your humble servants, the Devotees of the Eastern Religion Service.

**Bhakta Daniel,  
Bhakta Charlee,  
Bhakta Brian,  
Bhakta Rolan,  
Tennessee Colony, Texas**

Dear folks at ISKCON Prison Ministry: I am currently serving a life sentence here at Santa Rosa Prison and I have already done over 16 years of incarceration. The



experiences in prison can be quite stressful and sometimes traumatizing. I'm currently in a wheelchair and have disability issues that I'm trying to rehabilitate myself with physical therapy, yoga stretches and poses,

etc. I like yoga but I've come to realize that an important part of my practice is missing. I'm a novice but what I feel is missing is the spiritual aspect of yoga, or the essence of its core. So I looked in my prisoner resource list and found you folks. You caught my attention with your ad about living a Godly, peaceful and joy-filled life no matter what my circumstances are. I very much would like your help to study and practice of Bhakti-yoga so I can better cope with the adversities of prison life.

**David E.**  
**Milton, Florida**

I have read all these books and have gained insight on many things. The first thing I learned was from the Bhagavad-Gītā and who Krishna was in the Scripture. Krishna was more than what some people might say. I learned that Krishna is so loving and merciful to his devotees that his mercy is infinite. I also learned that there is no reason to feel sorry for the living or the dead, as it is said in the Bhagavad-Gītā 2:11. Life and death are not worthy to lament over. The words of Sri Krishna explain this so beautifully. I was always blind to the concept of reincarnation. I never realized how much reincarnation (as well as karma) explains so much about the world. So, I have made the decision to accept a spiritual master, to study the Vedas, and to accept Krishna Consciousness in my life! I truly wish to receive as much spiritual knowledge as possible. The Gauḍīya Vaisnava school has impressed me and touched me so much that I must learn more about it. I want to become a sincere devotee of Krishna... Please help me! Thank you.

**James B.**  
**Ridgeville, South Carolina**

Yes, I know it has been several months since my previous letter to you and I was wanting to have this next communication from me as a "free" man. However, as you can already see, it isn't meant to be; on July 31<sup>st</sup> I was

rejected for parole. So it will be sometime between late '21 and early '22 before I am again considered.



What's done is done. Therefore I continue to do all that I can to enlighten others about Kṛṣṇa katha. I am facilitating [a minimum of] one weekly meditation class (approx. 45 minutes of music and videos from YouTube) and 2 religious classes, also weekly. The meditation class, being that it does not require participants to convert, has an average attendants of 13, which is very nice (10% of the population on my cell block). Ki Jaya Srila Prabhupada!

**David R.**  
**Pine Bluff, Arkansas**

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## HOW RIVER THE YAMUNA CLEANED HERSELF IN 60 DAYS OF CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN

**T**wo months of the Coronavirus lockdown have done what successive governments could not do in 25 years with over ₹ 5,000 crore at their disposal-clean up the Yamuna river.

As industrial activity halted and other commercial activities slowed during the lockdown, the Yamuna river cleaned herself, allowing numerous Indian and migratory birds to flock to her waters. One can now see Indian and migratory birds, such as Grey Heron, Ibis and Storks feasting on fish, which too can be seen swimming in the river's clearer waters.



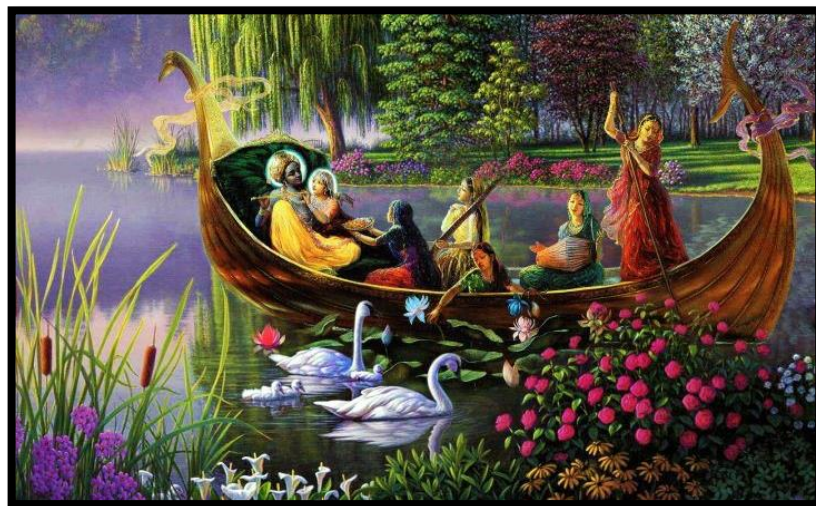
"I have been associated with the Yamuna Action Plan since the year 2000 and I have never seen the river this clean. The level of pollution reduces further and her water becomes clearer near Etawah; here the water from the Chambal river further dilutes the pollution. I am amazed at the effect the lockdown has had on all rivers," said Dr Rajeev Chauhan, a conservation officer with the Wildlife Institute of India-Dehradun, who has been studying the Yamuna river for the past 30 years.

Almost 1,400 km in length, the Yamuna flows through seven states where industrial units discharge their effluents, mostly untreated, into it. Between Haryana's Panipat and Delhi alone, over 300 units of industrial discharge is released into the Yamuna, making her the country's most polluted river. The river picks up 80 per cent of its pollutants at Delhi, Agra and Mathura.

A finding by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee shows that in Delhi, compared to the pre-lockdown days, the river is now cleaner by around 33%. Additionally, the committee found that the water improved further downstream near Mathura.

"The river has cleaned herself using her own biological capacity. Now, state governments need to ensure that industrial waste is not dumped into it again," said Diwan Singh, an environmental conservationist who has been working for the revival of water bodies in Delhi, especially the Yamuna river.

Days after the country went into lockdown, unexpected visuals of cleaner rivers, blue skies and snow-capped peaks of Himalayas seen from various points became viral on the internet, highlighting the detrimental effect of human activity on the environment. 🌸



ABOVE: Lord Kṛṣṇa's boat pastime on the river Yamuna, with the gopis

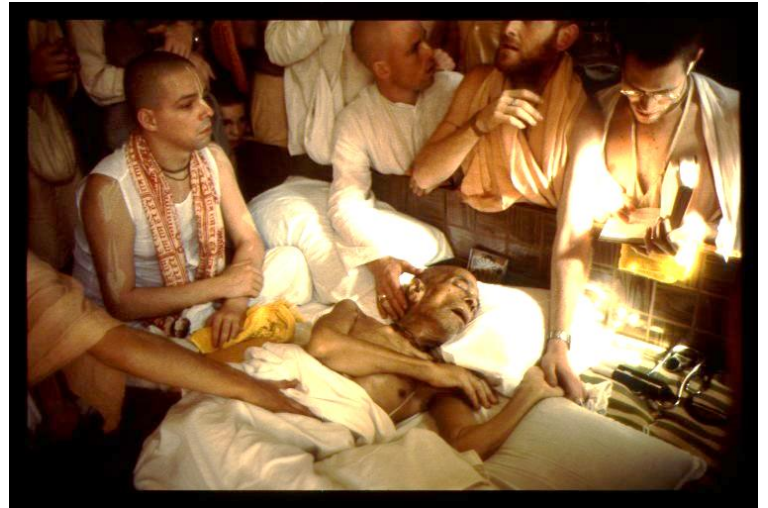
# Calendar

## OCTOBER 2020

- 13 Oct 2020 - **Parama Ekadasi**  
26 Oct 2020 - Ramacandra Vijayotsava (*festival honoring the victory of Lord Ramachandra over the demon Ravana*)  
26 Oct 2020 - Appearance Day of Sri Madhvacharya  
27 Oct 2020 - **Pasankusa Ekadasi**  
28 Oct 2020 - Disappearance Day of Srila Raghunatha Dasa Goswami  
28 Oct 2020 - Disappearance Day of Srila Raghunatha Bhatta Goswami  
28 Oct 2020 - Disappearance Day of Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Goswami  
31 Oct 2020 - Sri Krsna Saradiya Rasayatra  
31 Oct 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Murari Gupta

## NOVEMBER 2020

- 01 Nov 2020 - **Fourth Month of Caturmasya Begins**  
05 Nov 2020 - Disappearance Day of Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura  
09 Nov 2020 - Appearance Day of Radha Kunda, Snana Dana  
09 Nov 2020 - Bahulastami  
10 Nov 2020 - Appearance Day of Virabhadra  
11 Nov 2020 - **Rama Ekadasi**  
15 Nov 2020 - Dipa Dana, Dipavali, (Kali Puja)  
16 Nov 2020 - Bali Daityaraja Puja  
16 Nov 2020 - Appearance Day of Rasikananda  
16 Nov 2020 - **Govardhana Puja, Go Puja, or Go-krda**  
17 Nov 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Vasudeva Ghosh  
18 Nov 2020 - **Disappearance Day of Srila Prabhupada**  
22 Nov 2020 - Gopastami, Gosthastami  
22 Nov 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Gadadhara Dasa Goswami  
22 Nov 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Dhananjaya Pandita  
22 Nov 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Srinivasa Acharya  
23 Nov 2020 - Jagaddhatri Puja  
25 Nov 2020 - Disappearance Day of Srila Gaura Kisora Dasa Babaji Maharaja  
25 Nov 2020 - Bhisma Pancaka  
26 Nov 2020 - **Utthana Mahadvadashi (Ekadasi)**  
29 Nov 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Bhugarbha Goswami  
29 Nov 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Kasisvara Pandita  
30 Nov 2020 - Krsna Rasayatra  
30 Nov 2020 - Tulasi-Saligram Vivaha  
30 Nov 2020 - Appearance Day of Sri Nimbarkacharya  
30 Nov 2020 - **Last Day of Caturmasya**



ABOVE: Srila Prabhupada, just before leaving his body, surrounded by his disciples.