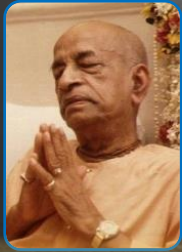


Freedom Newsletter



Dedicated to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder Acarya of ISKCON

ISKCON Prison Ministry / March 2020

PO Box 2676
Alachua, FL 32616

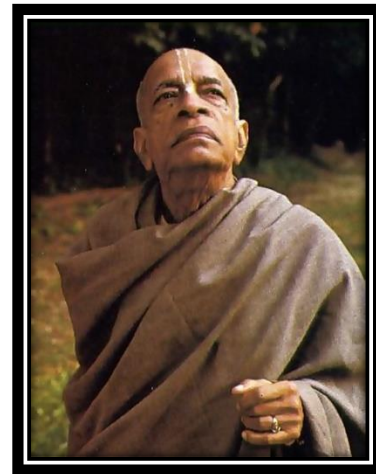
SURRENDERING TO KRISHNA IS REAL INTELLIGENCE

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and some of his disciples took place in January 1974 on an early-morning walk in Hawaii.

Disciple: Materialists think that everything in nature is meant for man, for his exploitation and enjoyment.

Srila Prabhupada: But when there is an arrangement there must be some higher supervision. You call it nature, and we accept that. In *Bhagavad-gita* [3.27] Krishna says, *prakriteh kriyamanani gunaih karmani sarvashah*: "Everything is being done by the direction of *prakriti*, nature." So nature is superior to you. You have to accept this, because you are being directed by nature.

Disciple: The materialists hope to become superior to nature.



Srila Prabhupada: That is rascaldom, foolishness. Krishna says,

*prakriteh kriyamanani
gunaih karmani sarvashah
ahankara-vimudhatma
kartaham iti manyate*

The rascal's actions are all being dictated by nature, but he is thinking, "I am the lord." By self-conceit, he's falsely thinking, "I am controlling nature" or "I shall be able to control nature in the future." This is foolishness. This is rascaldom.

Disciple: The scientists can give so much evidence that they have already achieved partial control over nature. Now we can fly all over the world?

Srila Prabhupada: Partial control means no control.



We are controlled by nature; that you cannot deny. Now, the next question should be. How is nature working?

That Krishna also explains in Bhagavad-gita [9.10]: *mayadhyakshena prakritih suyate sa-caracaram*. "The material nature is working under My supervision." To a small degree, we are also supervising material nature. For example, here is some earth. We can take this earth and make it into bricks and build a skyscraper. It is not that the earth is going to become a skyscraper by itself. A living entity must utilize the earth to build the skyscraper. Another example is an airplane. It is simply a combination of various kinds of matter, but it has to be worked out by the manufacturer and flown by the pilot. Therefore the pilot of the airplane, or the manufacturer, is superior to the airplane itself.

Now, the elements of material nature (earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence, and ego) are working together so nicely, just like a big machine, that anyone can see they are being manipulated by some living entity. And that entity is God, or Krishna. So our position is that we are controlled by the material nature, and the material nature is controlled by Krishna. One who is at all sensible will think, "After all, the Supreme Controller is Krishna, so why not directly come under His control? Why not serve Him directly?" This is good sense.

Disciple: The difference between Krishna's control and that of the material nature seems to be that Krishna is benevolent but the material nature is not.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Material nature is just like a jail superintendent. If you don't care for the laws of the government, the laws of God, then you'll be controlled by the jail superintendent. That's all. You will be

controlled; you cannot be free. This is your constitutional position.

Disciple: We have the choice of being controlled either by love or by force.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. When we decide to be controlled by Krishna, it is out of love for Him. Similarly, you are being controlled by me, but there is no force. You serve me voluntarily, out of love. I am not paying you; still, when I ask you to do something you immediately do it. Why? There is love between us.

Disciple: If a person actually understands the distinction between control by Krishna and control by the material nature, is it possible that he will still choose to be controlled by the material nature?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. He has already made that choice. But he's so foolish that he thinks, "I am now independent of the Supreme Lord." Because he's foolish he cannot understand that he is simply being controlled by an agent of God, the material nature. Although he is controlled at every moment, he is thinking, "I am free." Therefore he is in illusion. Illusion means believing something that is not a fact. So the materialists and so-called scientists who are thinking, "There is no God; we are independent" are simply foolish, childish rascals.

That is why Krishna uses the word *vimudhatma* to describe them. *Vimudhatma* means "befooled rascal."

Disciple: Most people don't think life in the material nature is so bad. They think it's pleasurable. They think they're having fun.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. That is another illusion. Unless one thinks material life is pleasurable, how could he tolerate it? When we see a pig eating stool, we say, "Ughhh!" But unless the pig thinks, "This is pleasurable," how could he eat stool? He is eating the most abominable thing, but he is thinking, "I am enjoying." This is *maya*, illusion.



Disciple: Sometimes when we tell people this life is full of miseries, they say, "What do you mean?"

Srila Prabhupada: That is their foolishness. They cannot distinguish misery from happiness. They are being kicked by material nature, the agent of Krishna. Because they are desiring in various ways to become controllers or enjoyers, they are being offered various types of bodies and suffering repeated birth and death. But because people have no sense, they think this material life is pleasurable. Now, as Americans, you may have so many nice facilities, but you cannot enjoy them. By nature's force you have to change your position. What can you do? Today you may be living in

a nice apartment on the twenty-fourth floor of a skyscraper, and tomorrow you may become a rat in that apartment. It is not in your power to change the laws of nature.

Actually, everyone is being controlled by the material nature at every moment. So an intelligent person asks how to get out of this material nature, how to end the suffering of repeated birth, old age, disease, and death. And Krishna explains how to end this suffering in *Bhagavad-gita* [7.14]: *mam eva ye prapadyante mayam etam taranti te*: "As soon as the rascal surrenders to Me, he is out of the control of My material nature." Surrendering to Krishna is real intelligence.



Need Books or Prayer Beads?

Requests for books, beads or other material should be sent to **your devotee pen pal**. If you **do not** have a pen pal, you can send your requests to: ISKCON Prison Ministry, PO Box 2676, Alachua, FL 32616

- 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) Please let us know if material need to be sent directly to you or through your chaplain.

HOW I CAME TO KRṢṂA CONSCIOUSNESS

SRILA PRABHUPADA HAS SET MY MIND FREE

By Saleem Muhmmaud

Hare Krishna. My name is Saleem Muhmmad and when I first wrote to this address I was in a mess. Loneliness was slowly killing me. I told myself I would end it all soon. I was searching for a painless way. When I received my first letter from you [*we do not know which volunteer he is referring to*], my pain was almost unbearable. All I could feel was an emptiness from the loss of my mother/father and never having any siblings.



Being in and out of group homes and foster homes, I don't even know my real family. I can't buy the things I need to care for myself and my anxiety level was sky high. I read your first letter and then wrote back. Every time I felt lonely I read your letter. Every time I felt down I read your letter. It felt good to be acknowledged. Whenever anxiety would attack me I read your letter. In that way your letter provided me with a weapon to

combat the enemy forces attacking my every senses on every level.

How could I know what was in store for me? Though I didn't know it the war had begun. After few more letters I requested Bhagavad-Gita and you granted my request. Thereupon I was given my marching orders to stand up and fight the enemy forces attacking my mind—like Arjuna I was bewildered by my pain. I started chanting every time I felt knowledge leaving my body.

Bhagavad Gita is now my everyday blessing. I receive this blessing anew each [time] I read any of the pages. In this you saved my life. But much more, on the cover, Arjuna is being lead into war by Krishna. Arjuna stands for us. The war is life, Krishna is controlling the horses. The horses are like the mind they must be controlled by someone who can master them, Krishna can do this very nicely. Arjuna's pain is for people actually going AGAINST Krishna. They have already lost the war and know it not. They are people number among the many who are under the influence of their imagined world. They are influenced by so much *nothingism*. They work very hard but are receiving more *nothingism*! *Nothingism* is a word I made up; this is where I am at with the Bhagavad-Gita As It Is. I have not finished reading it for I must go very slowly.

I have read the Science of Self-Realization; I understand that I was unconscious. There was absence of meaning in my life, emptiness and no worth. Had you not written me I would not be here today writing echoes of my thoughts. And you would not be reading this letter.

You are not alone either. There is a part of me there reading this letter with you.....This is what happened to me.

Before I had Srila Prabhupada's books in my life, my life was haunted by my past, the ghost of loneliness took control of all my senses, and loneliness haunted all my memories. Once the center for all my memories had been taken over by loneliness, senselessness became my companion.

Srila Prabhupada has put an end to the haunting of this body. He has set my mind free from my companion senseless who had taken up residency in my mind, heart and covering of soul. Srila Prabhupada has put eyes in my head, knowledge in my mind and given me life. Before coming into contact with Srila Prabhupada I was dead but Srila Prabhupada has given me a life. Srila Prabhupada has given my life a family. The IPM family is much better than my first family I was born with. Through Srila Prabhupada I was reborn into family of devotees. Thank you Srila Prabhupada. Hare Krishna.



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

We encourage you to write the **story** of how you came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Write in your own words, using simple language. Stories should be only about a page or two.

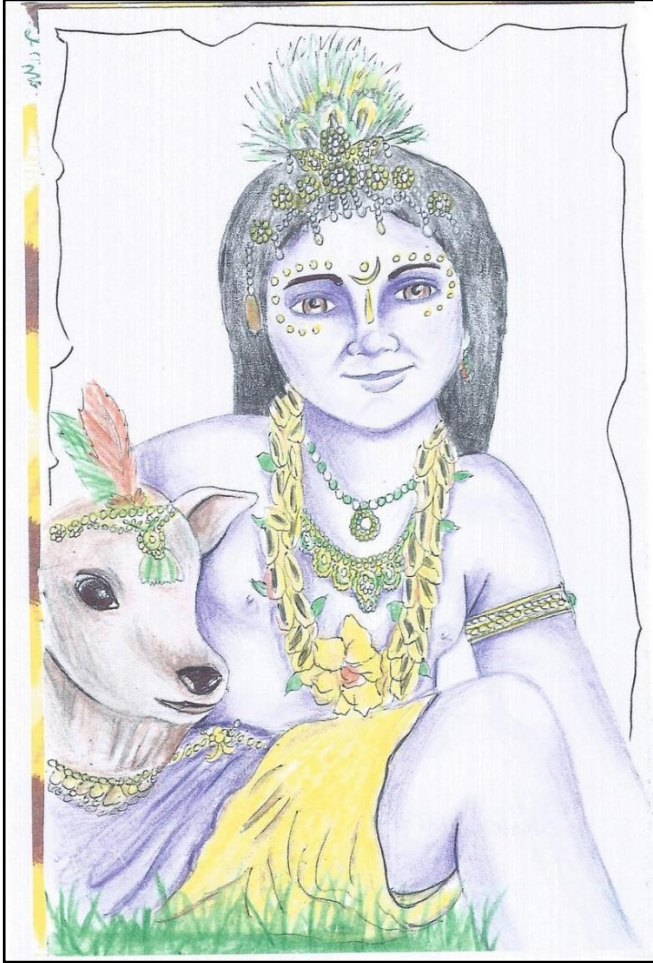
We also encourage all of you to **draw** topics about Kṛṣṇa, whether you are known as a “talented” artist or not. With Kṛṣṇa artwork, what is most important is your desire to please Kṛṣṇa.

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

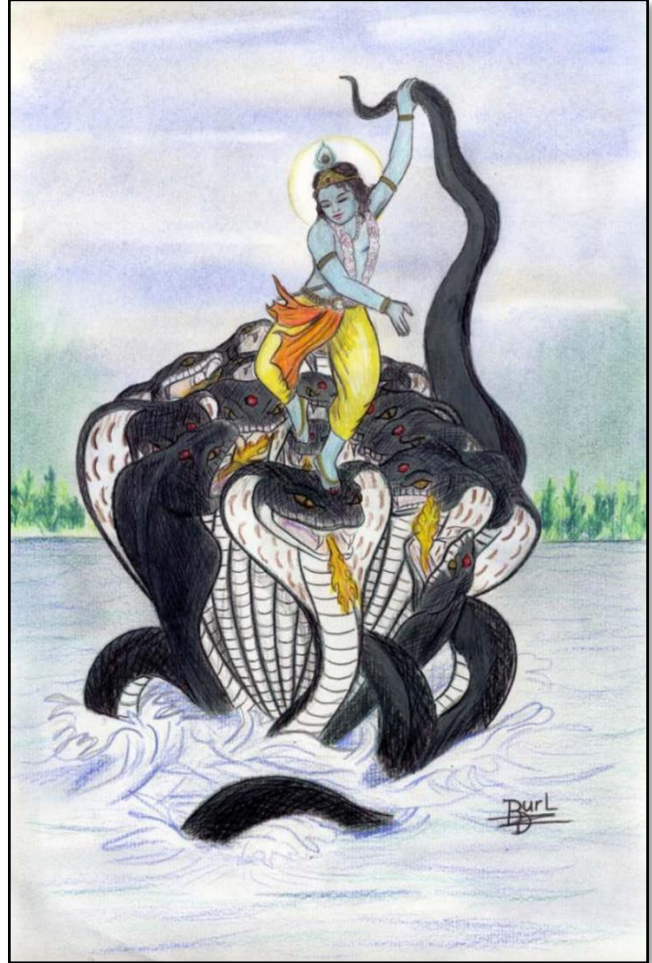
And please write “MY STORY”, or “ARTWORK” on the back of the envelope.

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

Inmate Art!



Kṛṣṇa with His Calf—by Miguel, Inmate from California



Kṛṣṇa fighting Kaliya—by Burl, inmate in Florida

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.

Excerpts from inmates' letters

I am very much enjoying the book *Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa*. Thank you so very much for the opportunity to associate with Srila Prabhupada. When I read it, it is like Prabhupada is talking with me and bringing new and fresh realizations, letting the sun shine bright within my heart, with transcendental knowledge. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Brandon B.
Mayo, Florida

I have been able to share my books with others; some show more sincerity than others. I'm pretty simple minded but I am trying to cultivate that sincerity and share the desire to chant. I just filed a request to allow us to have a weekly program in the prison chapel and have been filing a lot of grievance on our diet and how they are handled. I'm hoping to get something we can offer the Lord. Hare Kṛṣṇa! If Kṛṣṇa decides to give it to us, these people will be powerless to deny it. It's hard for me to talk to the other guys very much because when I talk or think hard about the Lord, I get all teary eyed. What a tender and loving God Lord Kṛṣṇa is. I don't want these guys to think I'm flaky and lose how important the message is, you know?

Thomas L.
Moundsville, WV

The devotees are the prisoners 'connection to the world of Kṛṣṇa. I cannot explain how much letters and material from you all, mean. It serves as a constant reminder to stay steadfast! So again, thank you.

Brian B.
Somerset, Pennsylvania

I can't express how vital BTG is in helping me maintain my sanity in this environment. I set up my makeshift altar on my bed in this 50-men dormitory-style barrack almost daily, time permitting. I line up photos of my spiritual master, Their Lordships Sri-Sri Radha Nila-Madhava, and Baladeva, Subhadra & Jagannatha. Then I lay out copies of 2-3 BTGs, opened to harinam photos or articles, Bhagavad-gita, etc. I rise around 1:30-2:00 am, clean up, and then start on my japa. All the men can see me do this daily, and a few ask questions or sometimes make sarcastic or crude comments behind my back. So be it. Some I can help, some are beyond help!

Bruce K.
Pine Bluff, AR

I used a piece of cloth as a japa mala by tying knots in the cloth; 108 knots. It took me hours to make it, but it beats counting on your fingers.

William B.
Wewahitchka, Florida

I just wanted to take a moment to write and thank you for the issue of Back to Godhead. The first article I read was exactly something I needed to read. I find myself seriously lost and disturbed if I am not constantly reading, thinking about Vaishnava subjects. Lately I've been going through some mental battles, things getting to me. I am so grateful to have all the books I have acquired from you all in IPM. It is my medicine in this diseased environment. Hare Krishna! I enclosed two stamps. I know it's not much but maybe it will help when you mail someone else some "meaning" for this life! Lord Kṛṣṇa bless you all! Forever grateful,

Clayton S.
Milton, Florida

A little update on myself. I have been housed in a dorm with an inmate who had kept a Gita in his locker for years, trying to read it several times but never making it through. Well, he saw me with my copy one day and asked me if I knew anything about the book. I told him yes and now we have discussions about it almost every day. The opportunity to preach on such a regular basis has really enlivened my Kṛṣṇa consciousness and I'm so glad Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai give me these opportunities to preach.

Carl S.
Raiford, Florida

I saw my cell mate change a lot since I introduced him to the Hare Krishna maha mantra. He turned from the excitement of playing card to someone who seriously began to value chanting and he minimized his habit of playing cards. In the evening, in our shared cell, the books you sent us gave us a lot of opportunity to discuss the existence of God. Reading the Bible is too remote to start a serious discussion about the existence of God, but with Prabhupada's books however, it is easy, exciting and engaging. One could say we have *satsanga* [association with devotees] every night and we discuss Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupada's teachings a lot.

GerJan DL



Book Distribution Stories!

PRAYERS ANSWERED

I was on traveling sankirtana during the marathon. I was in Shepperton, two hours north of Melbourne. At one point, not many books were going out, and I was praying for help. Suddenly, a middle-aged lady appeared in front of me, and I introduced myself and offered her a Bhagavad-gita.

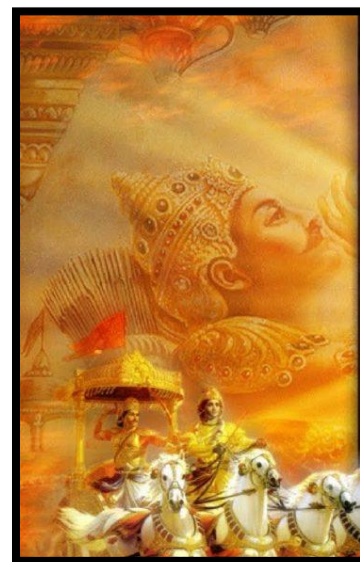
She gracefully accepted the book with a sigh of surprise and excitement and said, "I have to tell you something. A few days ago, I saw a truck full of cows to be slaughtered, and I decided not to eat meat anymore. I had a dream last night. A yogi came and gave me some instructions, and now here you are, a monk, a yogi, in front of me. I practiced yoga a while ago and then stopped. This meeting is the indication that I need to know more about yoga, and now I have the Bhagavad-gita."

She gave nice donation and happily walked away.

One hot afternoon I was in Traralgon, two hours east of Melbourne. I stopped a lady and gave her a Gita. She accepted it and said, "I really need to speak to you. I am going through a bit of a rough patch in my life, and I was thinking that I should read Bhagavad-gita. I went on the internet and found that there are so many editions of the Gita. I was praying to God to give me the right edition. And now here you are, with this authentic edition. Thank you."

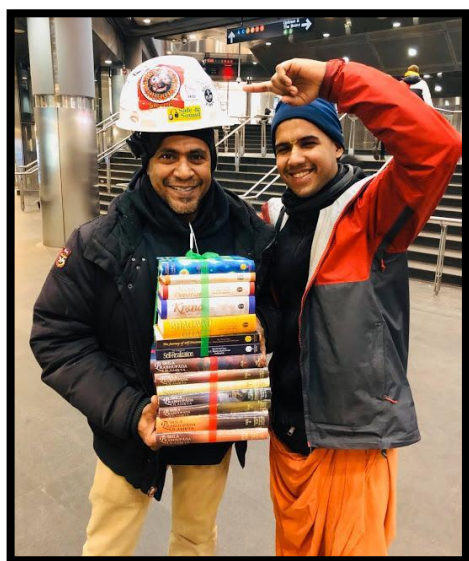
She walked away with a smile of relief.

Gopa Vrndesa Dasa



A CONSTRUCTION WORKER IS INSPIRED BY PRABHUPADA'S BOOKS

Zam, from Brooklyn, ran into the Harinam about a year ago and took some books from us. Since then he's been reading Prabhupada's books and chanting "Hare Krishna" daily. He put a Jagannatha sticker that we had given him on his work helmet for good luck and it's been there for a year now! He's working construction in the area where we've been distributing books for the past week and he's been seeing us regularly. I've been talking to him and planting the seed for him to get a Mahat Tattva [a collection of thirteen books]. He was telling me that he wants to get serious about spiritual life and now that his daughter turned 21 years old he has more time to himself because she's less dependent on him and his wife. He's up to chanting 6 rounds of japa daily and he wants to increase it and become more focused on his Krishna consciousness. He got all the enthusiasm to take up the chanting on his own just from reading Srila Prabhupada's books, it's amazing!

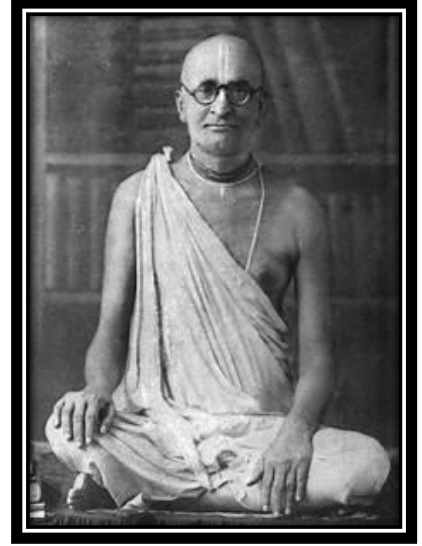


Gopal Champu Dasa

WORDS OF WISDOM BY SRILA BHAKTISIDDHANTA SARASVATI THAKURA

(He is Srila Prabhupada's Spiritual Master. He was called the "Lion Guru" because he was very strong in his preaching)

1. We are put to test and trial in this world. Only those who attend the kirtana of the devotees can succeed.
2. Every spot on earth where discourses on God are held is a place of pilgrimage.
3. Possession of objects not related to Kṛṣṇa is our main malady.
4. Let me not desire anything but the highest good for my worst enemies.
5. As dalliance with the body in luxury increases, so wanes the spirit of service of the Lord.
6. Those favored by God find their paths set by thorns.
7. There is no peace or happiness in our worldly life. Circumstances create turmoil and annoyance.
8. Chant the maha mantra loudly and with attachment. This will drive away inertia, worldly evils and pests.
9. Be indifferent to bazaar gossips, stick firmly to your cherished goals, no lack or impediments of the world will ever stand in your way.
10. Pay due respects to the extroverts of the world, but do not be appreciative of their manners and conduct. They are to be shaken off from your mind.
11. A devotee feels the presence of God everywhere, but one averse to the Lord denies His existence anywhere.
12. You cannot appreciate transcendental matters with the reasoning of the world. It is sheer nonsense to decry them with the measuring stick of your intellect.
13. To recite the name of Sri Kṛṣṇa is bhakti.
14. Life is for the glorification of topics on Hari. If that is stopped, then what need is there to carry on life.
15. Physical illness with Hari-bhajan is preferred to physical fitness without Hari-bhajan.
16. Our span of life on earth is short. Our life will be crowned with success if the body wears out with constant discourses on Hari.
17. We are here on earth not to work as artisans for making big buildings with wood and stone but to work only as messengers for the teachings of Sri Caitanya Deva.
18. A sycophant is neither a guru nor a preacher.
19. To transform the adverse desires of the jivas is the supreme duty of the most merciful. To rescue one person from the stronghold of Mahamaya is an act of superb benevolence, far superior to opening innumerable hospitals.
20. Unless we are devoted to God, secularism shall not leave us.
21. Look within. Amend yourself, rather than pry into the frailties of others.

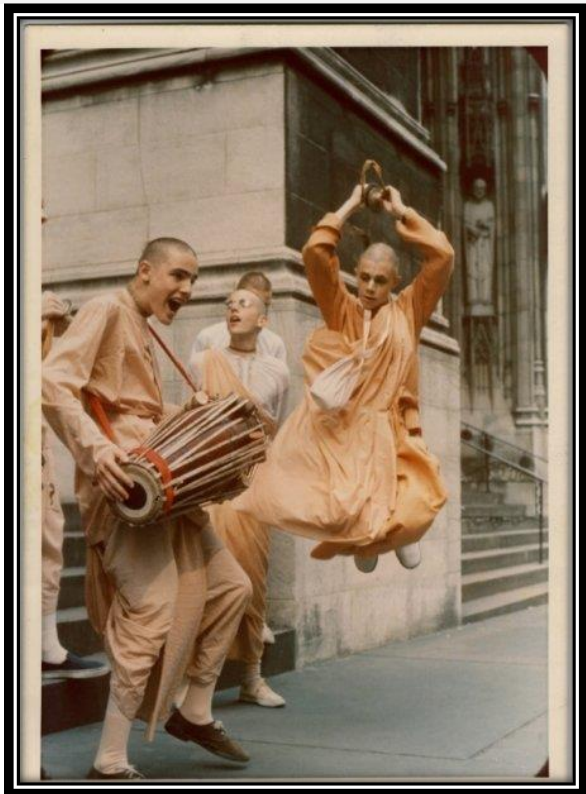


22. In this world of Maya, averse to the Lord, full of trials and tribulations, only patience, humility and respect for others are our friends for Hari-bhajan.

23. The Lord, Gaurasundara, puts His devotees in various difficulties and associations to test their patience and strength of mind. Success depends on their good fortune.

24. When faults in others misguide and delude you – have patience, introspect, find faults in yourself. Know that others cannot harm you unless you harm yourself.

25. I wish that every selfless, tender-hearted person of Gaudiya Math [*Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's Institution*] will be prepared to shed two hundred gallons of blood for the nourishment of the spiritual corpus of every individual of this world.



Devotees get so spiritually enlivened during kirtan that sometimes their feet barely touch the ground!



Calendar

March 2020

- 6 - Amalaki Vrata Ekadasi (fast from grains and beans)
- 7 - Disappearance of Sri Madhavendra Puri
- 9 - **GAURA PURNIMA** (Lord Caitanya's appearance day: fast till moonrise)
- 10 - Festival of Jagannatha Misra
- 16 - Appearance Day of Sri Srivasa Pandita
- 20 - Papamochani Ekadasi (fast from grains and beans)
- 21 - Disappearance Day of Sri Govinda Ghosh
- 29 - Appearance Day of Sri Ramanujacharya



April 2020

- 02 April 2020 – **Appearance of Lord Ramacandra**
- 04 April 2020 - **Kamada Ekadashi**
- 08 April 2020 - Appearance Day of Sri Vamsivadananda Thakura
- 08 April 2020 - Appearance Day of Sri Syamananda Prabhu
- 14 April 2020 - Beginning of Salagrama and Tulasi Jala Dana
- 14 April 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Abhirama Thakura
- 17 April 2020 - Disappearance Day of Srila Vrndavana Dasa Thakura
- 18 April 2020 - **Varuthini Ekadashi**
- 23 April 2020 - Appearance Day of Sri Gadadhara Pandita
- 26 April 2020 - Aksaya Tritiya – Candana Yatra Starts
- 28 April 2020 - Appearance Day of Sri Sankaracharya