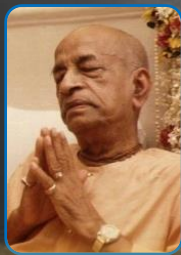


# Freedom Newsletter



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

## ISKCON Prison Ministry / APRIL 2020

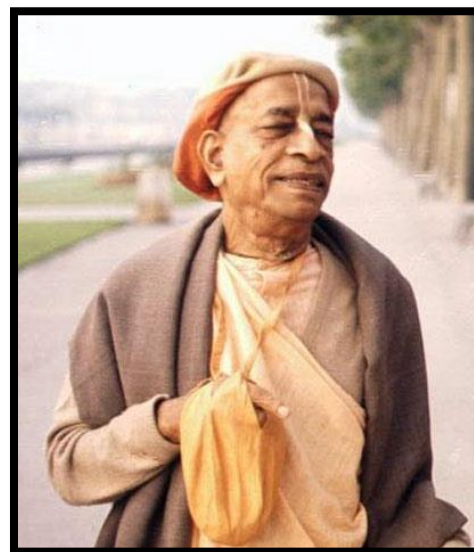
PO Box 2676  
Alachua, FL 32615

### RESPONSIBILITY DEFINED

*The following conversation between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and some of his disciples took place in August 1975 on an early-morning walk in Paris.*

**Disciple:** Srila Prabhupada, many people say that because we have quit college or a job to become Krishna conscious, we are irresponsible.

**Srila Prabhupada:** We are not irresponsible. But we are in such a position that we have passed all material responsibilities. This is stated in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* [11.5.41]: *devarshi-bhutapta-nrinam pitrinam na kinkaro nayam rini cha rajan*. "One who has fully surrendered to Krishna no longer has any responsibility to demigods, great sages, relatives, society—anyone." As long as you are not Krishna conscious, you have a responsibility to all these persons. But one who has taken to Krishna consciousness without any reservation—he has no material duties, no material responsibility. This is the statement of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Our only responsibility is to serve Krishna.



**Disciple:** So, Srila Prabhupada, when you told the guest last night that she should give up her responsibilities...?

**Srila Prabhupada:** And take to Krishna consciousness. Not that you give up all responsibilities and do nothing.

First take to Krishna consciousness. Give up something, take something. Then it is all right.

**Disciple:** Srila Prabhupada, when you speak of taking care of our responsibilities for Krishna, doesn't that also have a material aspect to it? For instance, in our movement parents must also bring up their children, take care of them, train them to read and write, and so on.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. But why are we taking care of the children? Just to make them Krishna conscious. This is our responsibility in Krishna consciousness. We should think, "Here is my child. Let me make him Krishna conscious." This is why we are taking so much care to train our children in the *gurukulas* [Krishna conscious schools]. We are not irresponsible.

**Disciple:** So when we say that we have finished all material responsibilities by surrendering to Krishna, that doesn't mean we've abandoned execution of duty?

**Srila Prabhupada:** No. Who says that?

**Disciple:** Well, some people say that we've taken to Krishna consciousness and now we've given up all our social duties.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Spreading Krishna consciousness is the main social duty. This is the main duty of the human form of life. Krishna says, *sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam sharanam vraja*: "Give up all other duties and just surrender to Me." So we have surrendered to Krishna, and we are taking responsibility for pushing forward the Krishna consciousness movement. I am an old man, yet I am traveling all over the world, thrice in a year. Who else would take such a responsibility? In Krishna consciousness we have greater responsibility. It is just like when you become a big officer in the government: you become overburdened with responsibility.

Fulfilling material responsibilities is useless. Simply a waste of time. Here in Krishna consciousness is real responsibility. I explained this to the guest last night. Even if you take responsibility, what can you do? You cannot do anything. Suppose your son is diseased. He is suffering, and you have taken responsibility for seeing that he is cured. You have brought a good physician, you have brought good medicine—everything. But in spite of all your efforts, your son dies. Then what is the value of your responsibility? Actually, you cannot do anything. So what is the use of saying, "I am responsible"? *Andha yathandhair upaniyamanah*. One blind man says, "I take responsibility. All of you other blind men—follow me." So what is the use of such responsibility? Both the leader and his followers will simply fall into a

ditch. Similarly, the leaders of all the nations in the world are saying, "Follow me. I am responsible. I will bring peace." But as soon as there is a war, thousands and thousands will be killed. Where is the leaders' responsibility? As soon as one atom bomb is dropped, many thousands will be finished. Where is the leaders' responsibility? They cannot bring peace. They can make a monument: "This soldier has died. This soldier has died." But they cannot save the people from death.

**Disciple:** But these people say that we devotees also must die. Everyone must die.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes, but we die to live forever. *Tyaktva deham punar janma naiti*. This is our last death.


**Disciple:** Then they will say, "How do you know?"

**Srila Prabhupada:** Become my student; then you will also know. Therefore there is a Vedic injunction: *tad vijñanartham sa gurum evabhigachchet*. Because you are a fool, a rascal, you must approach a guru. That is the only way to know the Absolute Truth. Otherwise there is no possibility of knowing about eternal life; you will remain foolish forever and suffer.

**Disciple:** So, how do you define the word responsibility in Krishna consciousness?

**Srila Prabhupada:** You have this human form of life: realize God. This is responsibility. Otherwise, you are finished. Your only responsibility is to understand God. Vedic culture is meant for understanding God. In the past many, many kings left everything and went to the forest to realize God. Bharata Maharaja, after whom India is called Bharata-varsha, was the emperor of this planet thousands of years ago. At the age of twenty-four he left everything to realize God. This is Vedic culture. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had a very nice position as a *grihastha* [householder]. He had a beautiful wife, an affectionate mother, good friends. He belonged to a *brahmana* family. He was a learned scholar—everything first class. He was God Himself, yet He left everything just to teach us the process of realizing God. This is Vedic culture. So, you asked me, "What is the definition of responsibility?" Do you understand what responsibility is?

**Disciple:** We have this human life; we must realize God.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes—nine words. We define the whole of responsibility in nine words. Let the rascals understand it. 



## Need Books or Prayer Beads?

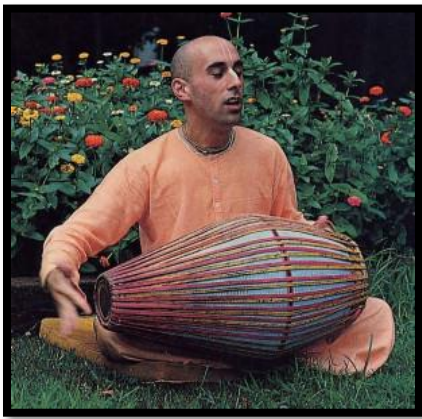
Requests for books, beads or other material should be sent to **your devotee pen pal**. If you **do not** have a pen pal, you can send your requests to: ISKCON Prison Ministry, PO Box 2676, Alachua, FL 32616

- 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 KRṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

### *A young man's search for identity takes him from crisis to Kṛṣṇa.*

by Amrtamsa Dasa



I grew up in Connecticut in the fifties and sixties. Always “the observer,” dissatisfied with the status quo, I saw my parents’ lifestyle as boring and futile. They had to bear the burdens of clothes for the kids, schooling for the kids, toys for the kids, and lip from the kids, and their only reward was a yearly summer vacation. I understood that there had to be more to life than this, so I began investigating my inner potential without depending on the established social order.

I also became disillusioned with my religious training as a Catholic—no one seemed to have solid philosophical convictions. One Sunday, for instance, I was on my way to a softball game, but before I could get out the door my mother stopped me: “Aren’t you going to Mass?”

“Well,” I replied, “the purpose of Mass is to love your neighbor as you love God. So how can I reject my friends now?”

Mother made no philosophical retort, and that was the end of my going to Mass.

My two brothers entered the priesthood, but they lost heart. They didn’t find the purity of thought, word, and deed they were looking for. To me, the philosophy that God put us here for a specific purpose appeared unrealizable; no guide or teacher exemplified that higher purpose.

As for “higher education,” I saw the colleges as training grounds for a kind of life I had already rejected. I couldn’t accept such a process of so-called learning.

My life, therefore, became less a scrutiny of people and ideals and more a search for beauty in nature. Having read books by Rachel Carson, Tom Wolfe, Herman Hesse, and Carlos Castenada (whose drug-induced visions were, to me, boring phantasmagoria), I decided to get firsthand realizations from practical experience. I resented the much-advertised culture of gross materialism, symptomized by industrial pollution and hellish factories that corroded people’s enthusiasm for striving for anything beyond the basic necessities and the crassest kind of sense pleasures. In search of an older, more natural culture, I frequented art museums, and thus I developed the desire to use photography and painting to capture delicate moments of the fleeting seasons and record the artistry etched on nature by time. I wanted to show the beauty of nature to people who, sunk in the rut of work-a-day existence, never explored the world.

I enrolled in the Rhode Island School of Photography and became absorbed in nature. In the mountains and at the sea shore, I saw the extremes that living creatures undergo to survive—from lichen gripping boulders high in the cold, wind-swept mountains to the gasping sand-fleas flailing their legs to uncover themselves from the sand dropped on them

by the pounding waves of the ocean. I felt fortunate not to be trapped in such horrible conditions of life.

But upon returning to the city, I would see that people had willingly placed themselves in similar extreme situations. With the unspoiled beauty of nature only a few hours' drive away, people foolishly packed themselves together in the physically and mentally polluted atmosphere of the city. I grew disgusted with the prevailing alienation and unhappiness in society and with how people were being taught to accept this crippled condition as normal.

My desire to accomplish something for society and for myself intensified as I came to realize that in practically no time at all, compared with eternity, my life would end.

But what could I do? All occupations seemed to end ultimately in death. Choosing an occupation meant assuming a certain false identity and becoming entangled in a great endeavor to artificially push myself forward as a certain sort of person. Becoming a photographer or an artist wouldn't solve the problem of death any more than becoming a doctor, lawyer, or movie actor would. The doctor may refuse to die, but surgery and drugs can't hold back the white sheet being drawn over the cadaver. The lawyer may dig up some appeal from his vast library, but when his time comes he'll be helplessly ushered out of the courtroom of life. And the actor may play the role of a powerful man, but in his final act his make-up will streak as sweat pours off his feverish dying body.

\* \* \*

After I'd finished photography school and been employed in a photo shop for a couple of years, I came to the conclusion that my intelligence and creativity were being suffocated. So I arranged that my employer lay me off. I passed a winter alone in a cottage on Cape Cod, recording nature with my paintbrush and camera. How pleasant this simple life was: eating vegetarian foods, breathing fresh air, seeing the sparkling ocean and clear sky, and hearing the sounds of wildlife. But as I painted or clicked away from sunrise to sunset, through sunshine and snow and fog, alone in my cottage, I began to feel a little unsettled without a culture to identify with.

On a visit to Boston I met Larry Burrows, a friend of a friend. We were reading the same book on vegetarianism. One morning, as we shared breakfast, he explained to me that I was not my body but an eternal spirit soul. A little while later he left for Hawaii, to live on a Hare Kṛṣṇa farm.

I wrote to him and he sent me a copy of **Bhagavad-gita As It Is**, by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. As I read this book I felt that God

had heard all my intimate prayers and was now revealing to me His highest teachings. All my scattered thoughts about life were assembled, clarified, and given a meaningful direction by the mystically familiar teachings of the *Bhagavad-gita*. It contained the most complete and intellectually satisfying philosophy I had ever read. My mind was doing backward somersaults.

Between letters to Larry, I visited Manhattan, where my brother Tony was studying to be a mortician. While he was at school I walked to Washington Square Park. A flat-bed truck with a colorful canopy pulled up to the perimeter of the park. It was full of Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees, and one of them (Kapindra dasa) offered me a BACK TO GODHEAD magazine. One article was by a mathematician with a Ph.D.; I was impressed to see that what I'd read in the *Bhagavad-gita* wasn't simply sentimental; it was scientific.

In his last letter Larry had suggested I might like the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in Boston. So the following weekend I attended the Sunday program there.

A devotee greeted me at the front door amid inundating clouds of frankincense. Within the temple, shaven-headed men prayed, sang, danced with arms upraised, and played drums and cymbals. Later a devotee spoke on the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and I asked some questions. During the feast I politely declined most of the cooked dishes, since I was accustomed to raw foods. I spent the night and attended the morning services, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on beads for the first time.

Back in Connecticut, I was surprised to find an unabridged edition of *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* in the public library. Larry had sent me the abridged version, which I found fascinating, but I found the unabridged edition even more interesting and I read it day and night for a week until I finished it. During that week, my aunt passed away suddenly, and the firsthand experience I gained of people's emotions during the ritualistic funeral helped me understand Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings in the *Gita* about "mourning for that which is not worthy of grief." On this verse Srila Prabhupada comments, "The body is born and is destined to be vanquished today or tomorrow; therefore the body is not as important as the soul. One who knows this is actually learned, and for him there is no cause for lamentation, regardless of the condition of the material body."

Chapter by chapter, *Bhagavad-gita* broke down my misconceptions about what I thought I might be and helped me understand that in reality I am an eternal servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Here was the most special of all occupations. Kṛṣṇa was in fact God, and my real

identity in life was to be His eternal loving servant. One evening as I sat alone on my living room floor reading the *Bhagavad-gita*, I felt inspired. Setting aside the *Gita*, I lay down on the floor, stared at the ceiling and, feeling protected, prayed, “Kṛṣṇa, I am Yours. Do with me as You like.”

The following weekend I visited the Boston temple again. I met Aja dasa, the temple president, and asked him if I could join the Hare Kṛṣṇa society and help spread the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the benefit of all suffering souls.



He allowed me to stay, and I have never left, for I’ve experienced the higher pleasure—a pleasure one automatically feels by serving Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord. Just as a fish is satisfied only in water, or the hand functions only after feeding the stomach, the spirit soul can enjoy the topmost pleasure only by serving Kṛṣṇa with devotion. The knowledge contained in Srila Prabhupada’s books—*Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, and others—can reawaken one’s transcendental love for Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, intelligent people should seriously hear and propagate the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness contained in these books, for that knowledge will destroy the pangs of material existence and bring them eternal happiness. 🌸

## POEM CORNER

### CAN A SOUL JUST BE

We navigate through fields  
of Maya’s Illusory web,  
all our own making.

What a fool I am  
to think I can control anything MY WAY

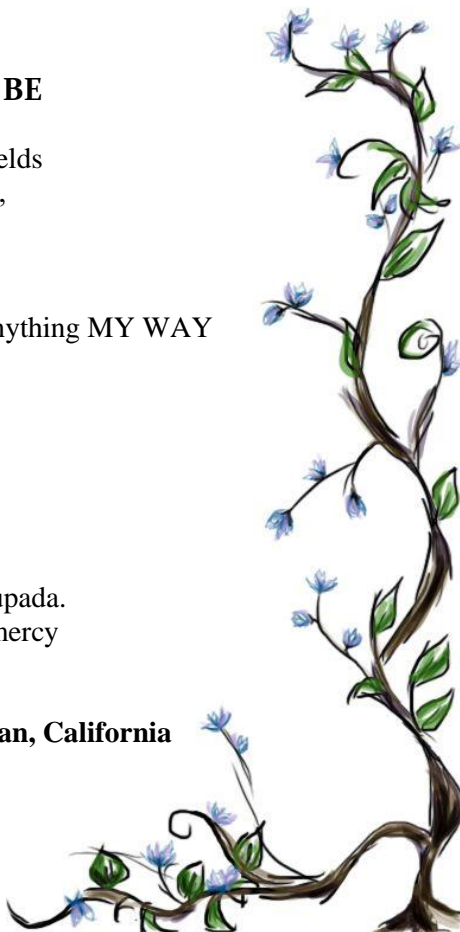
I’m an idiot!

Amazed I’ve not lost  
my mind as of yet.  
This world is nuts!

Thank you Srila Prabhupada.  
Your instructions and mercy  
is the only cure.

I love you.

**Kalki Wirth—Corcoran, California**



### WHY DO WE DO THE THINGS WE DO?

Why do we do the things we do?  
Why do we choose suffering instead of You?  
Our love, our life, our very essence,  
Why don't we yearn for Your presence?  
With causeless love You dwell within our heart  
And yet day by day we feel as if we are apart  
My God, my God, what am I doing here?  
but watching and waiting for You to appear.  
Then there You are in Your names with love,  
not far away in the clouds above.  
But here, right here in this very mantra.  
Made of the names of You, my sweet Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare  
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

**Justin W.—Abilene, Texas**

# Inmate Art!



Lord Nrsimhadeva, by Kalki dasa—in California



Lord Nrsimhadeva, by Ferril M.

## Excerpts from inmates' letters

I read the BG and I feel good for the first time in my life. Eight months ago, I borrowed a *Bhagavad- Gita* from a friend to pass some time and a fundamental change happened when I started chanting and studying. Shortly after, I stopped eating meat. I didn't tell my family for about three months until my 94 year old grandmother, on prison visitation, told me I look so much better lately, healthier. Kṛṣṇa is my goal. I've never served God in my life until I found y'all. Y'all through the many books y'all sent have given me knowledge to render devotional service to KRSNA. It even hurts me to see people eat meat. Cheese and milk are such a blessing and people slaughter the ones who give them to us. People who used to be scared of me exhorting violence towards them now say I've completely changed. People say something has happened to this used-to-be hateful, hardened, violent

convict. I'm now a peacemaker amongst the inmates and a protector of the weak. I, nor family, nor others, cannot believe the change that has taken place. I just want to serve and love KRSNA.

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

*[The following is a description of a program the inmates hold on the yard]*

I was astounded that ALL the bhaktas took our commitment for Wednesday study on the yard seriously, as everyone was there and ready to participate. The only difficulty was they were having an amplified rap contest on the basketball pavilion and instead of the small yard, where there was the most inmates congregating, we had to go by the volleyball court where the noise from the rap contest wasn't as loud. There were still inmates that could hear us going around the track and benefitting from

the Holy Name. We had kartals and guitars and an acoustic bass for instruments. It was record heat that day but there was a gentle breeze and the sun was setting so it wasn't too intense. The kirtan sounded wonderful, everyone singing loud and people noticing and stopping to listen. An interesting thing happened. A grasshopper flew next to the group at the start of the kirtan and we commented that there was an auspicious grasshopper. Right after the kirtan ended, it flew away. And we thought, "There was a spirit soul that was headed for a much higher form after it is done with its current one." We studied 18:66 from the Gita and after our sanga was finished, the Lord rewarded us with the most stunning sunset, as if He were pleased with our seva. The group was so enthused by the yard study and kirtan, they suggested we do it more than once a week. We'll see. For now, Wednesday 6 PM seems to fit everyone's schedule. Next Wednesday, if they're not doing the rap contest, we will have it in a spot where many more inmates congregate and therefore turn more people on to the Holy Name. It was all pretty awesome. Our group has donated a lot of material to the group of the other facility (Low) because they had nothing and they have some of Prabhupada's books, a few murtis, and other devotional items like BTGs etc. Hope all is well. Full dandavats, your servant,  
**Krishna Kirtan das**  
**Petersburg, Virginia**

Someone here gave me the Jul/Aug BTG. It is very moving and reading it eased my mind. I don't have any funds nor do I have anyone who can help me with money. My family lost their home and everything they owned in a fire last year. Since reading BTG I've been longing to read more and get to know Krishna. I want to be close to Krishna and serve Him any way I can. This prison though has no books, newsletters, packets or magazines about the Vedic techniques of spiritual life. The Vedic culture or anything to help one remember and

serve Sri Kṛṣṇa. Please if you can send me any books, magazines, or papers to help me serve and better know Krishna. Respectfully,

**Gideo G.**  
**Techachapi, California**

My name is Wesley and I am currently incarcerated. I came across an issue of BTG and decided to write to find out more information on the Hare Krishna movement and perhaps get answers to the many questions I have been searching for since childhood. I studied several different areas but still the answers elude me. I welcome any and all information you may send me. I am unable to purchase anything because I am exiled from my family due to my actions in the past. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. I have so many questions that need answered but I will wait for a reply before asking them. I look forward to your correspondence. Many blessings.

**Wesley V.**  
**Marianna Arkansas**

Hare Kṛṣṇa. I received the beautiful Kṛṣṇa art calendar and BTG last night. Thank you so much. The beauty of Kṛṣṇa in any form is so awesome. ☺ Life is very good. I stay focused. I always continue on the road with our Lord, strictly, though easily, follow our four principles along with love, compassion, empathy and purpose. My life is finally peaceful and fulfilling. Haribol! You've been an awesome teacher and friend. I greatly appreciate you and your service to Srila Prabhupada. Thank you very much prabhu.

Your servant,

**Kalki das**  
**Corcoran CA**



## Book Distribution Stories!

### CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

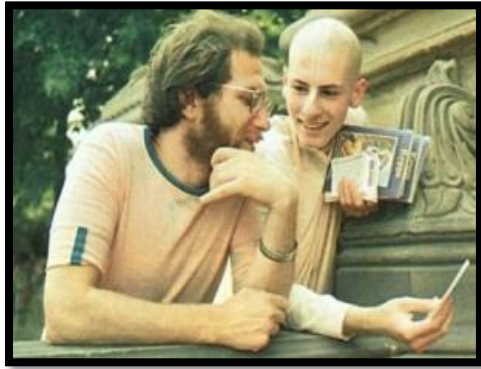
by Vanamali Dasa

*From apprehension to confidence to bliss a devotee's first day distributing Srila Prabhupada's books.*

Being a devotee of Kṛṣṇa and a follower of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada brings

with it certain responsibilities: rising early, bathing regularly, maintaining regulative principles (including abstinence from meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling), and of course daily chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra. But as well as these basic principles

of spiritual life. Srila Prabhupada's followers have inherited a great mission, a mission that has been handed down throughout the millennia in our line of disciplic succession. That mission, which epitomizes the mercy and compassion of Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotees, is the respiritualization of a godless society.



Srila Prabhupada showed by his own example how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he left countless instructions on how to do it. Most important, he told us that his books translations of Vedic literature with his commentary could revolutionize human thought. He encouraged his followers to distribute his books profusely in order to redirect people's attention from materialistic endeavors to spiritual life, or service to the Supreme Lord, Sri Kṛṣṇa.

Desiring to assist in Srila Prabhupada's mission, I find myself on a cold and blustery winter morning in Sydney rather nervously picking up a box of books and making my way to the van and the awaiting devotees. This is my first attempt to distribute Srila Prabhupada's books, and my mind is a kaleidoscope of thoughts and emotions as I take my place in the back with the other men.

There is Bhakta Richard, a strong but gentle young man from Tonga. He left the simple life of his tropical-island home and came to Australia looking for the pleasures of a technologically advanced society. He found only frustrated and disappointed persons who had all the modern conveniences but had lost touch with their spiritual dimension. Then one day he read one of Srila Prabhupada's books and found Kṛṣṇa, the reservoir of all pleasure.

Then there's Bhakta Brett, a fresh-faced university student who found the answers to the really important questions of life at the Hare Kṛṣṇa club on campus. Now, with freshly shaven head and rosy cheeks, he looks like the picture of innocence and vitality.

Our driver and party leader is Kṛtagama dasa from Germany. He was traveling around the world when he stumbled upon a Hare Kṛṣṇa restaurant, and his spiritual life began.

I settle back to chant on my beads as we wind through the early-morning traffic. Praying for strength and purity of purpose, I find solace from the pangs of apprehension I'm feeling on my first day with the book-selling team. In a somber state of mind, I reflect on the present condition of "humanity" a strangely alien term when compared with the activities I know are going on around me: abortion, drug abuse, prostitution, murder, rape, cow slaughter, and so on. It's a civilization gone awry, forgetful of its spiritual identity and its responsibility to obey the laws of God, spiraling downward into the dark abyss of atheistic, materialistic doom.

I remember the words of Srila Suta Gosvāmī in the Srimad-Bhagavatam: *"This Bhagavata Purana is as brilliant as the sun, and it has arisen just after the departure of Lord Kṛṣṇa to His own abode, accompanied by religion, knowledge, etc. Persons who have lost their vision due to the dense darkness of ignorance in the age of Kali shall get light from this Purana."* Fortified by this knowledge, I wait peacefully as we park the van. I then set off with humble confidence and determination.

Sam is a barber who, for the last forty years, has conversed with clients on every conceivable topic. His conclusion: "God don't exist. Science and hard work that's the answer to all our world problems these days. It helped us in the past, and it will help us in the future. We don't need any belief in God."

He likes me, though, because I'm smiling and I seem to be working hard. So I get a chance to explain to him that although science has made many changes in the world, it hasn't eradicated the problems of birth, death, old age, and disease. We suffer from these problems today just as others did in the past, and we will continue to suffer from them into the future. Though scientists claim they'll solve these problems in time, they never will, because science can't change the powerful laws of God that control the universe.

I show him the Bhagavad-gita and explain how it gives real scientific knowledge for understanding our eternal, spiritual nature, and how our suffering is due only to misidentification with the body as the self. I explain that actions on the spiritual platform don't create bad reactions, and so they reduce our suffering. This can be confirmed, I explain, by anyone who seriously practices spiritual life.

He likes the philosophy but doesn't buy a Gita. He takes a *Back to Godhead* magazine, though, and an invitation to our restaurant. He says he'll bring his wife along for a "fancy Hare Kṛṣṇa meal." As I leave, he waves and wishes me well in my endeavor.



Sally and Joan are bank tellers. I find them two floors up in their morning tea room. I introduce myself and the books. Joan tells me she's had a long interest in vegetarian cooking, and she takes a cookbook and starts to look through it. Sally's father has an interest in reincarnation, and Sally is full of questions as she leafs through the Bhagavad-gita. They are pleased to meet a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee, and they inquire at length into the way devotees live.

Eventually Joan decides our cookbook is just what she needs to revitalize her diet, and Sally is convinced that the Gita is the most authoritative book on reincarnation. They each buy a book and agree to come to our next Sunday Feast.

Down the street I enter a locksmith shop. The two men behind the counter are a little shocked to see a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee, complete with shaved head and robes, right there in their premises. I tell them I'm presenting Bhagavad-gita, the oldest and most comprehensive spiritual guide known to man. It contains complete information on the soul, God, karma, and reincarnation.

They look more stunned now and begin to slowly shake their heads, indicating that they have no real interest in such things. Before I can counter with our vegetarian cookbook which strikes a little closer to home with most people, a voice from behind me says. "What's that you said about reincarnation?" I turn around and see a small man in his late fifties sitting on an old safe in the corner. I show him the Bhagavad-gita and explain some of the sublime knowledge contained within it, especially that pertaining to the transmigration of the soul from one body to another.

He is extremely interested and asks me to walk outside with him. We exit, passing the two storekeepers, who are still staring blankly in shocked disbelief. He tells me that last year he suffered a major stroke and was taken to the hospital, where the doctors worked for several hours to keep his heart beating. On three occasions during that time, he felt himself to be floating in the room, looking down on the scene of doctors and nurses trying to revive his malfunctioning body.

This profound experience started him on a voyage of discovery, to unearth the true nature of the self. So far his questions had not met with satisfactory answers, but now, in the presence of the glowing knowledge of the Gita, he is feeling that his journey in search of the truth has ended. Obviously experiencing great emotional relief, he buys a copy of the Gita and gives me his name and address. I promise to visit, and we sit and talk until it's time for me to go back to the van.

As we drive back to the temple, we relate our experiences. We are all happy, feeling satisfaction in our small attempt to fulfill Srila Prabhupada's pure desire to eradicate nescience from human society.

Yes, being a devotee of Kṛṣṇa brings responsibility, but that responsibility brings transcendental bliss, which is not available in even the most exalted material posts. When a devotee goes to sleep at night, he is not plagued by memories of a trouble-filled day. Rather, he is filled with great confidence in his chosen mission of life. And he knows there can be only one thing better than the day he has just spent and that's tomorrow. 🌸

### **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.

### **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.

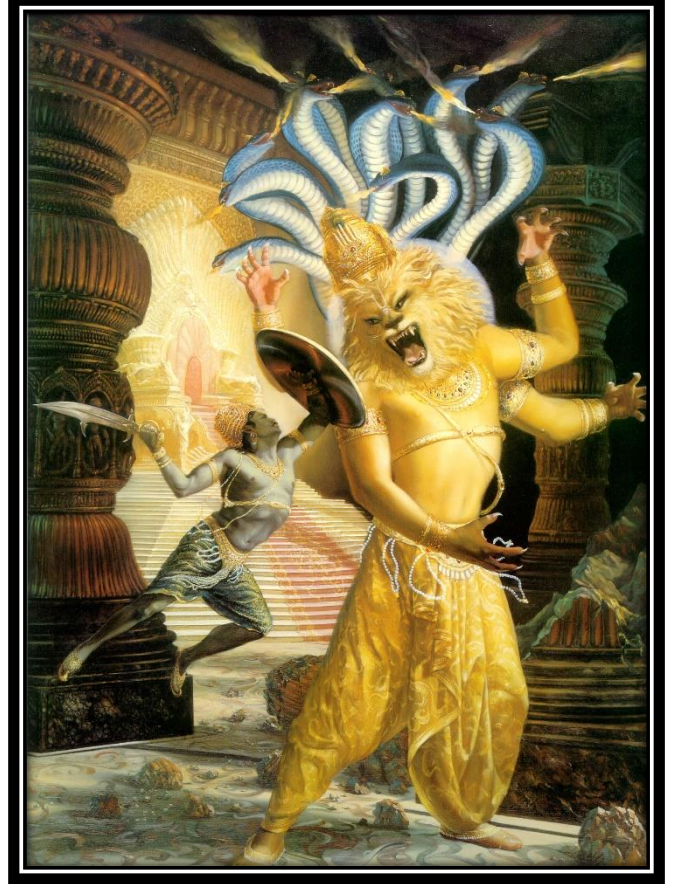
# Calendar

## 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 Tritya – Candana Yatra Starts  
28 April 2020 - Appearance Day of Sri Sankaracharya

## May 2020

- 02 May 2020 - Appearance Day of Srimati Sita Devi  
02 May 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Madhu Pandita  
02 May 2020 - Appearance Day of Srimati Jahnava Devi  
04 May 2020 - **Mohini Ekadashi**  
05 May 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Jayananda Prabhu  
06 May 2020 - **Narasimha Caturdasi – Appearance of Lord Narasimhadeva**  
07 May 2020 - Krishna Phula Dola, Salila Vihara  
07 May 2020 - Buddha Purnima – Appearance Day of Lord Buddha  
07 May 2020 - Appearance Day of Sri Madhavendra Puri  
07 May 2020 - Appearance Day of Sri Srinivasa Acharya  
07 May 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Paramesvari Dasa Thakura  
12 May 2020 - Disappearance Day of Sri Ramananda Raya  
18 May 2020 - **Apara Ekadashi**  
19 May 2020 - Appearance Day of Srila Vrndavana Dasa Thakura



**Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare**  
**Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare**