

ISKCON Prison Ministry / AUGUST 2020 PO Box 2676 Alachua, FL 32615

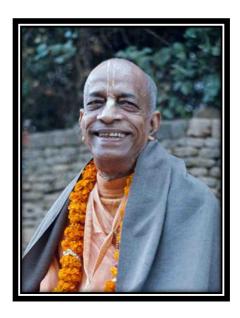
VEDIC PROOF FOR THE SOUL

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and an Indian doctor took place in September 1973 at the Hare Krishna center in London.

Doctor: Can you scientifically prove that the soul exists? I mean, is it purely a matter of belief? Or . . . **Srila Prabhupada:** No, it is a scientific fact. Our science is perfect, because we are receiving knowledge from the perfect source, Krishna. And modern so-called science is imperfect, because the scientists' knowledge is received from imperfect sources. However great a scientist you may be, you have to admit that your senses are imperfect.

Doctor: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: So, imperfect senses can give only imperfect knowledge. What you are calling scientific knowledge is bogus, because the men who have produced that knowledge are imperfect. How can you expect perfect knowledge from an imperfect person? **Doctor:** It's a question of degree.



Srila Prabhupada: My point is that if you are unable to give perfect knowledge, what is the use of taking knowledge from you?

Doctor: Yes, I accept that view. But how do you prove that the soul exists?

Srila Prabhupada: You take information from the perfect source, Krishna, or from Krishna's representative, who repeats the words of Krishna. That is our process of proof. Evam paramparapraptam: "Transcendental knowledge must be received in disciplic succession." We don't accept knowledge from a rascal; we accept knowledge from Krishna, the Supreme. I may be a rascal, but because I am receiving knowledge from the perfect source and repeating that, whatever I say is perfect. A child may be ignorant—he does not know what is what—but because he has learned that a certain article is called "table," when he says, "Father, this is a table," his words are perfect. Similarly, if you hear from the perfect person and believe that, then your knowledge is perfect. Krishna says tatha dehantara-praptih: "After death the spirit soul enters another material body." We accept it. We don't require proof from a so-called scientist, who's imperfect.



Doctor: So the question of belief comes first. **Srila Prabhupada:** It is not belief: it is fact. **Doctor:** Yes, but how do you prove that fact? **Srila Prabhupada:** That Krishna says so is proof. **Doctor:** [very sarcastically] "It has been said by

Krishna." But . . .

Srila Prabhupada: That is our Vedic proof. Whenever we say something, we immediately quote from the Vedic literature to support it. This is our process of proof, which is just like that in the law court. When a lawyer is arguing in court, he must quote from previous judgments. Then his argument will be accepted by the judge as legal proof. Similarly, as soon as we say something, we immediately support it by quoting from the Vedic literature. That is the way of proof in spiritual matters. Otherwise, what are the scriptures for? If they

are merely products of mental speculation, what is the use of these books?

Of course, the Vedic literature also presents the Absolute Truth with all logic and reasoning. For example, in the Bhagavad-gita (2.13) Krishna says,

dehino 'smin yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanam jara tatha dehantara-praptir dhiras tatra na muhyati

"The soul is changing his body from childhood to youth and from youth to old age. Similarly, the soul enters another body at death." Where is the illogical presentation? This is scientific. For an intelligent man, this is scientific proof. And if he's still dull-headed, what can be done?

Doctor: But the soul is invisible. How can you be so sure it exists?

Srila Prabhupada: Just because something is invisible doesn't mean we can't know it exists. The subtle body of mind, intelligence, and ego is also invisible to you, but you know that the subtle body is there. We have two kinds of bodies: a gross body of earth, water, fire, air, and ether, and a subtle body of mind, intelligence, and ego. You can see the body of earth, water, and so on, but can you see the subtle body? Can you see the mind? Can you see the intelligence? Yet everyone knows you have a mind and I have a mind.

Doctor: These are something abstract, you know. **Srila Prabhupada:** No, not abstract. They are subtle matter, that's all. You simply have no eyes to see them. **Doctor:** Well, at present we have three methods for studying the intelligence—

Srila Prabhupada: Anyway, you accept that the subtle body exists even though you cannot see it. That is my point. Similarly, the soul exists even though you cannot see it. The soul is covered by the subtle and the gross bodies. What is known as death is the annihilation of the gross body. The subtle body remains and carries the soul to a place where he can again grow another material body just suitable for fulfilling the desires of his mind.

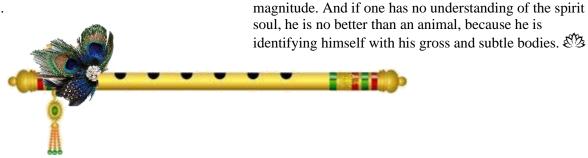
English guest: You mean the subtle body and the soul are the same thing?

Srila Prabhupada: No, the soul is different from the subtle body. The soul is finer than intelligence. These things are all explained in the *Bhagavad-gita* (3.42):

> indrivani parany ahur indriyebhyah param manah manasas tu para buddhir vo buddheh paratas tu sah

First of all, in the gross understanding, we are aware of only the senses of the body. Those who are like animals think that the senses are all in all. They do not understand that the senses are controlled by the mind. If one's mind is distorted, then his senses cannot work; he

is a madman. So the controller of the senses is the mind. And above the mind is the intelligence. And above the intelligence is the soul.



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 KŖŞŅA CONSCIOUSNESS

Drawn to Kṛṣṇa

By Bhakta Gary G.—Inmate from Salem, Oregon

It was Berkeley, California, December 1989; I was seventeen years old and helping my aunt with her business and the seasonal sales boom. It was there on Telegraph Avenue, just blocks from the Stuart Street temple, that I first met devotees. At first I had as many questions about what their bright blue drum was made of and why they were dressed like they were, as I did about the books they carried. After a brief conversation they invited me to the Sunday program at the temple. I was none too thrilled that even though I had a handbill detailing exactly where the temple was and when I planned to be there, my aunt was about as ready to let me run off to the Krishna temple as she was to let me go hang out with the winos and dope fiends in the red light district. So, needless to say, I didn't find out what a "halavah-good-time-Sunday-feast" and darshan were that December. But I got a taste of another sort of nectar: Param Guru's (Srila Prabhupada's) books.

I came away from my first meeting with ISKCON devotees with copies of the *Science of Self-Realization* and *The Higher Taste* for not much more than I spent daily on espresso. I was already vegetarian

but *The Higher Taste* broadened my horizons and Srila Prabhupada blew my mind with *The Science of Self-Realization*. I'd never read anything like it. When I got home, my mother pointed out that she had the *Krishna Book* in her bookshelf. I thumbed through this Kṛṣṇa *Book* but it was too surreal for me at seventeen. However, I drank in *The Science of Self-Realization* and loved it.

We cannot see even the mind and intelligence, so how

can we see the soul? But the soul has his existence, his



I continued to meet devotees all across America for the next few years while I did my Vagabond thing. Quite like the "gypsies, tramps, and thieves" Cher once sang of, my friends and I made it our quest to see as many Grateful Dead concerts as possible, and we never failed to run into devotees who always shared with us at least Prabhupada's books. Though it was only when I was going to college in Eugene, Oregon, that I first actually spent time with devotees – both at the temple and simply around town. But despite feeling drawn to Krishna Consciousness like a salmon is drawn to its birthplace, I was hesitant. I didn't want to take initiation until I knew I could keep the vows and not disgrace my guru. I feel embarrassed to have known devotees as long as I have and still lived like I have. Yet if it weren't for all my mistakes, I wouldn't have made the advancement I have. And while I know I'm hardly advanced, I'm not the same person I once was. I feel much like a fly who still has an attraction for its familiar dung pile but prefers the company of its honeybee friends—sipping sweet nectar with them—than spending time at the dung pile with other flies. One of my best friends in this world lives exactly two blocks from the Berkeley temple. When I lived there with her I went to mangala arati most mornings, Sunday programs, chanted16 rounds a day, and things were good.



But alas, I dragged my heels and put up such resistance that Krishna just kept giving me what I wanted. Eventually I let my foolish desires send me to prison for auto theft, robbery, and drug charges. And for that I feel very stupid because I love singing bhajans and kirtans and I've known tremendous bliss in Krishna Consciousness. I knew better. The worst crime I ever committed was forgetting God.

I was raised in a somewhat open-minded Christian household, the second of four children. My father was a Master Chief in the Navy. It was my mother, the English teacher, who was the free-thinking, open-minded one (she actually went to the temple with me one Sunday when she was visiting me before she died). I went to Catholic school in the late 70's and early 80's, when we lived in Japan, because English was my only language. However, I was brought up in the Baptist church and made to attend Sunday services until the 11th grade. Although I'd realized that there are very few Christians like Francis of Assisi and many more like Jimmy Swaggart [involved in scandals], I didn't eloquently talk my way out of it.

I got a weekend job at a grocery store. Though my parents were mostly concerned with teaching me the value of a dollar and the importance of hard work, I am my mother's son and I had access to her bookshelves. I wandered through her books for most of my high school years. It was Jack Kerouac's *Dharma Bums* that got me to read the *Dhammapada* of the Buddha, which led me to a little book by Eknath Easwaran called *The Mantram Handbook*, as well as Christopher Isherwood's biography of his guru before Alan Watts shifted my view to the East for real. And once the kindling wood was burning, I met ISKCON devotees who heaved logs on the fire that still burns today.

I was rudderless and adrift and reeling out of control after my mother and my little sister died. I needed something, Drugs and beautiful women weren't genuinely making me feel better. It was a cool, grey spring morning when I realized the magnitude of things I'd been pondering. I stepped out onto the porch and opened Bhagavad-Gita to chapter two. After ruminating some time on the concept of not lamenting for the living or the dead, and the soul's journey from body to body, I started to get lost in thoughts and memories of my mom and my sister. It was then that a devotee strolled up, said hello, and introduced himself before adding something like, "I notice you're reading Bhagavad-Gita." We spent the rest of the morning talking about everything from Bhagavad-gita to Bob Dylan, to big losses, to bhakti. I know, there are people out there who'll say it was coincidence; after all I lived two blocks from an ISKCON temple. But I believe otherwise; devotees walked by quite regularly, often while I read the Gita. And though I'd spoken to devotees at the University and on the avenue, no one had ever stopped at my house before. I knew right then, knew it in my bones, that this Krishna I'd been doubting and dodging, while feeling simultaneously attracted to Him, for so long, was as real and tangible, and omnipresent as oxygen. It was shortly thereafter that I began going to the temple.

I remember the first time I walked in. My paisley purple corduroys and my Peruvian sweater stood out like psychedelic Day-Glo in the Louvre. And though I wasn't physically dirty, I felt like an unwashed peasant who'd just stepped into the throne

room of a king. I don't know exactly what I expected. I didn't think I'd be thrown out but I had rehearsed how I would answer when asked, "Why have you come here?" The warm welcome and subsequent explanation of what was going on was a pleasant surprise to say the least. Everyone was so gracious and kind to me. The music in the temple setting hooked me. I felt something so powerful, I can't begin to explain it with these clumsy word symbols. I remember thinking, "Why did I wait so long to come?"



At the end of the discourse I felt almost like I was being asked directly, "Any questions?" But I wasn't ready to speak. I was still soaking it all in; the music, the undeniable Truth, the logic, the science of it all. By the end of the evening I felt more at home than I could recall having ever felt.

One of the hugest obstacles I've had to deal with is my unwillingness to "take the plunge" and jump into something other than the comfortable and familiar. I tend to put a toe in, then sit on the edge and splash my legs in the water before easing in; not often do I just dive in with abandon. I'm reminded of a quote from W.H. Auden, "We would rather be ruined than changed."

I owe a great debt to the devotees of ISKON Prison Ministry all over America for essentially telling me, "Come on in, the water is fine," and encouraging me to do what I've known for years (somewhere deep inside) I'd eventually do—fully immerse myself in Krishna Consciousness. Thanks to ISKCON Prison Ministry, I have a copy of Bhagavad-Gita As It Is and many other books. I regularly receive Back to Godhead magazine, and though my view is often obscured by prison bars, inside my cell I have photos of the Deities, from Berkeley to Boston, and Moundsville to Mayapur.

If not for the kindness for everyone at ISKCON Prison Ministry and the local devotees who came in for kirtan in the penitentiary chapel, prisoners like myself would be hard pressed to taste the nectar of Krishna Consciousness behind these steel bars and concrete walls. I'd like to express my gratitude to everyone who continues to help me in my journey. Hare Krishna!



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.

Book Distribution Stories!

Follow the Leader By Nityananda Rama Dasa —Lithuania

e went to a construction site to distribute books. We found five Russian workers in a hut, preparing for lunch.

"Hello, I have something for you," I said. Experience told me I had only a small chance of success. They seemed to be waiting for someone else. Still, I put my set of books on their small table. But under the weight, their lunches started to fall to the floor.

"Get out of here!" they shouted.

Then their leader came in with two bottles of vodka (they can't imagine having lunch without it), and all the workers started to shout joyfully. I was the only morose one.

"What are you doing here? Get out!" shouted the brigade leader when he saw me in the smoky room.

They all looked at me angrily. Only by the Lord's mercy was I able to pacify them, and they agreed to listen to my presentation for five minutes. It wasn't my best performance. And although I tried hard, their eyes still looked the same after several minutes.

"Wait a minute," said the brigade leader suddenly, as he pointed to one of the books in the pile.

The workers awakened from their dreams and looked at the books.

"What is this book?" the leader asked.

The other men seemed curious now.

I went through the books until I reached Bhagavad-gita As It Is.

"Yes, this is the same book!" said the leader, as if he had found an old lost friend.

"The same book!" he said. "Oh, I have it at home!" My confidence jumped.

But then he shook his head.

"Such a difficult book," he said. "Very difficult." My confidence started to sink.

"It's hard to believe, guys," he told the men, "but I tried my best for four months and still couldn't understand anything. Then I had my vacation. I decided to go for several months, and I took this



book with me. Instead of completely wasting my time, I tried to study the book. You can't imagine every word in this book is like nectar. So much realization. So much truth. You must take the sets for yourself, and I'll take a set for my family." "But we'll never be able to understand them," protested one of the workers.

"That doesn't matter," the chief said. "Maybe you are fools, but your children will read the books, and they'll thank you. They'll appreciate them." Turning toward me he said, "Thank you very much. You are doing very important work."

"You Saved My Life" By Haripada Dasa—Spain

walked over to a man sitting in the driver's seat of a parked car and handed him a copy of *The Science of Self-Realization*. As he looked at the beautiful photograph of Srila Prabhupada on the cover, I spoke to him about the book and about the chanting of Hare Krsna.



On the seat beside him I noticed a large knife, some whisky bottles, and what appeared to be a package of illegal drugs. The man accepted the book and left. I went on with my service.

A half an hour later he returned and asked to speak with me urgently.

"It's a life or death situation," he said.
I sat in the car with him, and he told his story.
"At the moment you first saw me," he said, "I was going straight to kill someone who owed me money and was refusing to pay me."

He showed me the knife.

"I was going to get intoxicated so I could get up the courage to kill him. But I don't know what happened. I saw the monk on the cover of this book and chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa song you taught me, and suddenly someone is telling me from inside, "Forget about the money. Don't kill him." He was clearly moved.

"I just came to thank you, because you saved my life."

I told him to thank Lord Kṛṣṇa, who was telling him from within to forget the money and the murder.

We became good friends, and I invited him to visit the temple and to go deep into the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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 before you see your submission in the

Excerpts from inmates' letters

You also spoke about the mind's resistance to chanting 16 rounds. I see that happening to me even in this cell alone. Nowhere to go and nothing else to do and still the mind would rather do something "else". I see now the mind is like this stranger that is there. Just there. And if you don't keep an eye on him and remain vigilant against the mental projections he weaves, you will get caught up in his recklessness, chasing illusions and replaying the past like a broken record. I only want to do service now. For what else is this human birth for? To chase sense pleasures? It is to help humanity grow in honesty, dignity, righteousness and God consciousness.

Robert C.—Malone, New York

I've searched deeply within many religions for the ancient wisdom that lies within their scriptures and traditions, looking for the answers that many fear to know; "Who is the true creator?", "What is our true purpose?", "How did we come into existence?", "What happens after the body dies?, etc. I am one of the seekers of truth. Here I can feel my place in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I can feel my full potential coming to the fullness of its purpose. But I know I will need study and experience to complete my balance.

Carlos P. —Helena, Georgia

I'm currently in a maximum security prison. My name is Casey Adams. I am housed in a special management unit where no books or magazines are allowed but the guy next door to my cell as a subscription to "Back to Godhead" magazine. I don't know where or how he got them, but I've never been moved like that by words in my life. I'm currently not eating meat and chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Some of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's words have inspired me in a special way.

Casey A. —Bishopville, SC

What a privilege to obtain these BTGs. I pour over the words avidly and I now put some of the illustrations on my wall. I am adorning a corner for an altar. Thank you.

Kathleen M. — Peterborough, England

Once I surrendered and did what the Lord told me to do in BG 18.66, I discovered Lord Kṛṣṇa will take away whatever negative "feeling" I experience. And I continue to learn that I'm part and parcel of Him—that He is the enjoyer, that I'm actually His—Brahman, Paramatma, Bhagavan—and the more I understand this, the more equipoised I become which is absolutely critical in an environment like

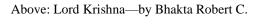
this [in prison]. I just pray that Lord Caitanya will bless me, when I get to my "final" prison, with the presence of another prison bhakta whom I may offer humble obeisances to. I'm still working on being "silent"—that is only speaking when I can lead the conversation to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Taming the tongue is a tough one—but I'm leaps and bounds better than I was two years ago. I've finished the

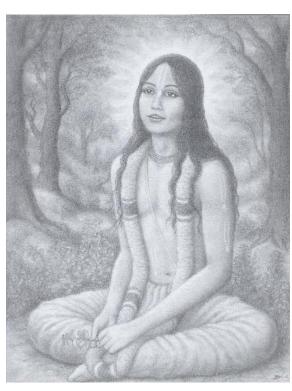
summary of the CC and I'm just amazed. I'm reading it again (and I'm sure I will many times) and I read each night after chanting. And its nectar is so delicious and sweet, hearing about Lord Caitanya is so glorious and transcendental, it makes me so happy and fills me with so much gratitude that I'm a part of His movement. Haribol!

Richard C. —San Bernardine, CA









Above: Lord Caitanya—by Bhakta Brian B.

New Vrindaban Holds Small Rural Rathayatra with COVID-19 Restrictions

By: Madhava Smullen for ISKCON News on July 24, 2020



Jagannatha Baladeva & Subhadra are worshipped on their gorgeous open-air temple

tarting in 1973, residents of New Vrindaban, West Virginia, held their own small rural Rathayatra festival on the farm, a sweet event with Lord Jagannath riding a succession of different charmingly rustic makeshift carts.

In the early 2000s, Malati Devi, one of the organizers of San Francisco's 1967 Rathayatra — the first outside India — commissioned a proper traditional chariot and the festival grew in popularity within the community.

Then in 2016, the Rathayatra became a public annual event in the nearby city of Wheeling, reaching out to the local people and drawing devotees from neighboring cities.

With Wheeling Rathayatra this year canceled due to COVID-19, however, devotees returned to something closer to their early inhouse rural Rathayatra, albeit with restrictions for health and safety amid the pandemic.

Rathayatra is a reunion celebration, with Their Lordships Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra returning to Their devotees after a two-week "sick" leave, and being taken on a pleasure ride in Their chariot. Similarly, this year's New Vrindaban Rathayatra on July 8th was a reunion of sorts for residents, who had been separated from each other due to COVID-19 lockdown.

The event was organized by Malati Devi Dasi, Sachimata Dasi, and Madri Dasi. With Coronavirus safety in mind all elements of the Rathayatra took place outside, with devotees wearing masks, social distancing, and donning gloves when distributing prasadam. In addition, devotees did not pull the chariot together with ropes as is tradition, but instead met Their Lordships' vehicle in different separate smaller groups at different parts of the 1,500-acre New Vrindaban property.

The "chariot" was Gopisa Dasa's Dodge Ram pick-up, upon which Tattva-Darshan Dasa had skillfully crafted a gorgeous altar, decorated by Jayasri Dasi and Srimati Nrsinghalaksmi Dasi to look like a beautiful open-air temple.

In a small procession consisting of the chariot-truck along with several devotees' cars, Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra visited six different spots across New Vrindaban.

Beginning at the temple parking lot, they went on to the Ghee Factory by Big Wheeling Creek; Prabhupada's Palace of Gold; Rupanuga Dasa's home; Sudhanu Dasa's home; and "Mystic Valley" in Talavan.



Devotees greet Their Lordships at one of the stops throughout New Vrindaban

Outside each location, devotees were waiting to greet the Lord. At two stops, an arati ceremony was also performed.

In addition, pre-packed prasadam was distributed to the devotees at each stop. Prepared by expert temple cooks Samardha Krsna and Ananga Manjari, it included a delicious pasta salad made with basil from New Vrindaban gardens, green beans grown in New Vrindaban gardens, and paneer made with milk from New Vrindaban cows, along with strawberry halava.



Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra tour New Vrindaban with several devotees' cars in procession

Co-organizer Sachimata Dasi called the event "very healing" and said, "It's a very heavy time. So that day was so ecstatic and transcendental. Everybody was just so happy. I

think it was just what the doctor ordered, as far as a healing offering to the Lord."

An article published on New Vrindaban's website summed it up: "In this festival, there was an outpouring of devotion – from the devotees to the Lord, from the Lord to the devotees, and from the devotees to each other – which was incredibly rejuvenating. Although the temple, the center of our community, had been in lockdown for months, Lord Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subhadra are so merciful that if you can't come to see Them, They will come to see you! And this is exactly what They did.

"Travelling to every area of the property, They graced the whole community with Their affectionate glances, and as each devotee stepped forward with heartfelt offerings, there was a wonderful exchange of love which could be felt by all."



AUGUST 2020

- 03 Aug 2020 Jhulan Yatra Ends
- 03 Aug 2020 Appearance Day of Lord Balarama
- 04 Aug 2020 Second Month of Caturmasya Begins
- 04 Aug 2020 Srila Prabhupada's Departure for the USA
- 12 Aug 2020 Sri Krsna Janmastami
- 13 Aug 2020 Appearance Day of Srila Prabhupada
- 15 Aug 2020 Annada EKADASI
- 23 Aug 2020 Srimati Sita Thakurani Appearance Day
- 24 Aug 2020 Lalita Sasti : Appearance of Sri Lalita Devi
- 26 Aug 2020 Radhastami : Appearance of Srimati Radharani
- 29 Aug 2020 Parsva EKADASI
- 30 Aug 2020 Sri Vamana Dwadashi : Appearance of Sri Vamana Deva
- 30 Aug 2020 Appearance Day of Sri Jiva Goswami
- 31 Aug 2020 Appearance Day of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

SEPTEMBER 2020

- 01 Sept 2020 Ananta Caturdasi Vrata : Appearance Day of Padmanabha
- 01 Sept 2020 Disappearance Day of Srila Haridasa Thakura
- 02 Sept 2020 Acceptance of Sannyasa by Srila Prabhupada
- 03 Sept 2020 Third Month of Caturmasya Begins (fasting from milk)
- 09 Sept 2020 Srila Prabhupada's arrival in the USA
- 14 Sept 2020 Indira EKADASI
- 27 Sept 2020 Padmini EKADASI

