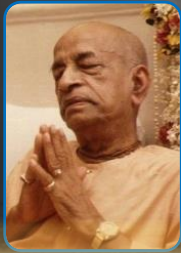


Freedom Newsletter



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

ISKCON Prison Ministry / September 2023

PO Box 2676
Alachua, FL 32616

SIMPLY CREATING PROBLEMS

This conversation between Srila Prabhupada and some American disciples took place in Surat, India, on December 21, 1970.

Srila Prabhupada: In your country there is a welfare department. The expenditure is increasing.

Disciple: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: That means the social structure is very bad. Otherwise, the natural procedure is that everyone should be self-independent.

Disciple: But what can the state do? Should the state just leave the people alone?

Srila Prabhupada: No. The state should make the citizens so nicely developed in their Krishna consciousness that they will be self-dependent, self-satisfied. That is the ideal of civilization.

Disciple: But America is very far from that.

Srila Prabhupada: Therefore it is not advanced, although they are very proud of their advancement. This is not a sign of advancement. Not very long ago, say about two hundred years, there was a big zamindar [landholder]. He was known as king in Krishnanagar. He was very charitably disposed, so he went to a *brahmana* – a greatly learned scholar – and asked him, “Can I help



you in any way?” And the *brahmana* replied, “No, I don’t require your help. I am quite satisfied.”

The zamindar asked, “How are you satisfied?”

The *brahmana* said, “Oh, my students bring some rice, so my wife boils that. And I have got this tamarind tree. I take some leaves and prepare some juice out of it. That is sufficient.” You have perhaps heard of Canakya Pandita. He was the greatest politician. He was prime minister of India. But he was living in a cottage and just giving instructions. So that is India’s Vedic civilization. Everyone is satisfied, self-sufficient.

And now, in your country, to work you have to go to an office fifty miles away. And because you have to take this trouble, Krishna has provided you with cars. You are thinking, “I am advanced.” You don’t think, “Although I have got a car, I have to go fifty miles from my home.” This is illusion. You are thinking, “I am advanced. I am happy. I have got this car.” This is illusion.

Yes, [my disciple] Gaurasundara was going to work [to maintain a temple in Hawaii], and he was driving fifty miles to Honolulu.

The poor fellow had to rise early in the morning, and he had to hurry greatly. Therefore I advised, “Gaurasundara, better you give up this job. Just depend on Krishna.” So he has given it up.

What is this? Going fifty miles by motorcycle or motor car – how tedious it is. But still they are satisfied: “We are advanced.” And because they have many cars, there is always that [imitates a traffic noise] wherever I go.

Disciple: And more problems come after that.

Srila Prabhupada: Wherever you go – [makes a traffic noise again]. Up in the sky [makes an airplane noise]. And then digging [makes a jackhammer noise]. Is it not so? Don’t you feel botheration? But they are thinking, “America is very much advanced in machines.” And

when that garbage truck comes . . . [makes appropriate noise]. So many sounds are going on, always. Of course, you have got very nice cities, nice roads everywhere. But you have created so many troubles. In the news there was the story of a lady who became a patient. She became

mad from all these sounds. And I think they are thinking very seriously how to stop all these sounds. Is that so?

Disciple: Especially the airplanes. They make such a tremendous sound that they break windows.

Srila Prabhupada: I am staying with Shambhu in Bombay. When an airplane comes over the top of the house, it is just like a thunderbolt.

So this is called illusion. We are creating a civilization which is very painful, but we are thinking that we are advanced. This is illusion. We are simply creating problems, and still we are thinking that we are advanced. But from another point of view, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* says there is no problem. *Tasyaiva hetoh prayateta kovido na labhyate yad bhramatam upary adha?*. You



simply try for Krishna consciousness. And how shall I live? The answer is: *tal labhyate dukkhavad anyatah sukham*. You don’t aspire for miseries, but they come upon you; they are forced upon you. Similarly, happiness will also be forced upon you, whatever you are destined to receive. So don’t try for getting happiness or avoiding distress. Happiness and distress will go on. You

simply try for Krishna consciousness, which without your trying will never be achieved. You have to voluntarily try for Krishna consciousness, revive it.

Therefore Lord Krishna says, *sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam sharanam vraja* [Simply surrender unto Me]. . . Krishna can force you to become Krishna conscious. But He doesn’t do that. He doesn’t interfere with your independence. He simply says, “Do it.” Therefore you have to try for Krishna consciousness, not for other things.

Other things are already there. For the birds and beasts there is no problem for eating. Why should you have a problem? A prisoner has no eating problem. The government supplies what he needs. He only has the problem that he should not be a criminal. That is his problem. He should try for that: “I shall never again become a criminal.” That is the real activity. It is not that in the prison he has to worry, “What shall I eat?” No, eating is already there. Even if you are a prisoner, the government has supplied food. Similarly, God has supplied everyone with eatables, even cats and dogs. Why not you? You have created your own problem. The real problem is how to develop Krishna consciousness.

Disciple: These problems will take care of themselves if people develop Krishna consciousness?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. 🌸



A Near-Death Experience

THE HOLY NAME IS BOUNDLESSLY POTENT (article slightly shortened)

by Ananda Vrindavani Devi Dasi

It happened in January 2020 while we were living here in Mayapur. Let me clarify that I was perfectly healthy and had no plans of dying anytime soon. In fact, during that time, there was a devotee in the Mayapur hospital whom I volunteered to take care of. I thought I could serve her and gain some experience in how to face death properly, experience that might be useful for me in 20-30 years... I had no idea that on my scheduled day of duty, I would find myself unconscious in the adjacent room, needing the Holy Name myself.

But as it turned out, death can come quite unexpectedly, even when we are in good health and not anticipating it. During those days, I experienced a great deal of stress, which led to illness. For several days, I suffered from vomiting and couldn't eat or drink. After three days, the electrolyte levels in my blood dropped drastically, causing excruciating pain and frequent loss of consciousness. I found myself in a state where all systems in my body were shutting down: my heart couldn't pump blood, the digestive system stopped, toxins entered my blood, and my lungs struggled to breathe. I was gasping for breath, writhing in pain, and unable to think as the toxins affected my brain. I was in complete panic, realizing that this might be the end. Dimly, through a thick haze, I remembered that I needed to call for someone, say something, but due to my brain not functioning, I couldn't recall whom to call. Those were dreadful hours, oscillating between unbearable pain and losing consciousness.

I had been practicing Krishna consciousness for 23 years. Many times, I preached to my students about the importance of remembering Krishna at the time of death. We discussed how to die properly, and I was confident that when my time came, I would simply focus my mind on Krishna. However, it turned out to be not as easy as I thought!

Unfortunately, throughout my life, I hadn't put in the effort to chant the Holy Name attentively. Often, I chanted while multitasking, feeling too busy with preaching and various services, assuming that someday, miraculously, due to my service, I would develop a taste for the Holy Name. But it didn't happen that way. In the moment of death, I realized that my inattentive chanting had let me down.

We might think that we can intellectually remember Krishna since we sometimes do it

during our lifetime. However, as my experience showed me, during death, our intellect shuts down, and only our mind remains. We can't forcefully think of something; rather, our mind takes us to what was most dear to us during our life, what we considered our refuge. So, after 23 years of spiritual practice, at the moment of death, I panicked, and my mind was filled with thoughts of my mother, not Krishna. I recalled how she provided comfort during my childhood illnesses, and in those moments, when I regained consciousness, I simply called out for my mom, completely forgetting about the Lord. Somewhere deep in my consciousness, I knew I needed to call someone else, but due to the overwhelming pain, I couldn't remember who to call or what to say.

At that moment, the doctors informed me that I was on the verge of death and could pass away at any moment. The news was relayed to devotees in Kazakhstan, where a Sunday program was taking place. Fearing for my life, the compassionate devotees started a three-hour kirtan, praying to Krishna to help me. Through their prayers, Krishna showered His mercy upon me. The Holy Name is not confined by material space, and their kirtan in Kazakhstan reached me in the hospital in Ranaghat in this way:

Once again, I regained consciousness and let out a cry or a moan due to the intense pain. At that moment, an Indian nurse leaned over me and sternly said, 'Why are you crying? Just chant Hare Krishna!'

As I later found out after recovering, this nurse was a Muslim, and she even refused to accept books by Srila Prabhupada from me when I was discharged from the hospital. When I asked her why she advised me to chant Hare Krishna in the intensive care unit, she simply shrugged and said, 'I don't know.'

Somehow, hearing the words 'Hare Krishna' from her lips brought immense relief. I finally remembered what to chant at the time of death. Gathering all my strength, I attempted to chant 'Hare Krishna,' but unfortunately, all my muscles, including those for speech, were



completely paralyzed, and I could only murmur incomprehensibly. I couldn't properly chant 'Hare Krishna!' This threw me into despair, and tears streamed from my eyes as I writhed on the bed, surrounded by tubes and hoses.

Then I heard the voice of a doctor addressing the nurse,



asking who I was. She replied, 'She is from ISKCON.' And then, miraculously, the doctor sat down next to me and started singing, 'He

Krishna, Karuna Sindhu, Dina Bandhu Jagat Pathe, Gopisha, Gopika Kanta, Radha Kanta Namastute!' and then he began chanting 'Hare Krishna.'

Thus, the kirtan of devotees in Kazakhstan manifested itself for me through him in the hospital in Ranaghat. Feeling immense gratitude towards this person, as well as profound remorse for my foolish life and offensive chanting, I left my body.

I was fearful because I realized I had failed the test completely. I thought to myself, 'What a fool I have been to treat the Holy Name so superficially throughout my life.'

I scolded myself! And at that moment, I suddenly saw my Deities whom I had been worshiping for 23 years: Jagannath, Baladeva, and Subhadra. Baladeva and Subhadra were in the distance, and I could only vaguely see their silhouettes. But Lord Jagannath stood very close and was vividly visible. Suddenly, I saw that all the Deities of Lord Jagannath were actually one Lord manifested in multiple forms. Then I saw Him in a human-like form. It was Lord Jagannath, but at the same time, He was Krishna Himself. He had arms and legs, a beautiful figure, and a straight posture. His skin was as blue as the flax flower, and His face was very attractive, with huge eyes and a mysterious soft smile. He didn't say anything, but suddenly, He showed me my entire life from the moment I joined ISKCON and began practicing Krishna consciousness. My whole life passed before my eyes like a movie reel, and I saw that during this entire movie, while I played various roles, Lord Jagannath stood by my side, invisible to my material eyes. At that moment, I was in shock, realizing that Krishna never left me for a moment since I started chanting His name. He was always there, protecting me in dangerous situations when I felt alone and overwhelmed by my problems.

When I began preaching to Muslims in my country, their religious leaders threatened to behead me and pursued me relentlessly. Eventually, they left me alone, and I thought I had managed to hide from them, but it turns out that Jagannath protected me from their attacks. Several times, I faced the possibility of imprisonment for preaching in scientific circles, and I was dying of fear, thinking that Krishna had abandoned me and that it was the end for me. But in the end, they left me as well, and as I later learned, all the officials involved in my case were dismissed from their positions.

And this was also the protection of Lord Jagannath! One night, a maniac attacked me, but suddenly, a massive woman emerged from the darkness and chased him away with loud cries. It was also Krishna's protection. Another time, when I was facing imprisonment again, I cried in fear all night. Lord Jagannath appeared in my dream and showed me that everything would be fine. And it turned out to be true. Reflecting on my entire life unfolding before me, I understood that Lord Krishna never abandons His devotees, no matter the circumstances we face due to our past sins. Even when we feel utterly alone, helpless, and defenseless, Krishna always stands by our side, protecting us in ways unseen.

Moreover, Krishna revealed the most important aspect of my life while the tape of my existence was playing: He showed me that the most significant moments were the kirtans in which I participated. It was astonishing because I saw in detail every kirtan in which I chanted throughout my life, even those with only 3-4 devotees.



He didn't show me what I considered important material events, but rather what was important to Him and to me as a soul: **THE JOINT CHANTING OF THE HOLY NAMES.** During each kirtan, streams of radiant energy in gold, blue,

and pink hues rose from the chanting devotees and reached the heavens, filling the entire universe. It was strange how even small kirtans performed by a small group of devotees possessed such incredible power. The Holy Name is boundlessly potent, and our attempts to chant it are so dear to Krishna!

Observing my life from this alternative reality left me in complete awe and bliss. Then, it all ended. I returned to my body to, like Ajamila, receive another chance - a

chance to approach the Holy Name of the Lord differently.

Perhaps, by the mercy of Krishna and His devotees, all my anarthas and material consciousness will be purified by the power of the Holy Name of Krishna, and I will learn to chant sincerely and purely.

Now, I would like to express my gratitude to my spiritual teacher, Shrila Shivarama Swami, for his numerous instructions and lectures on the Holy Name;

to Janmastami Prabhu for inspiring me daily to chant attentively and sincerely; to Jivanath Prabhu and the devotees of Harinama for the daily opportunity to participate in sankirtan; to the spiritual teachers in ISKCON, who glorify the Holy Name and narrate Krishna katha; and, most importantly, to Srila Prabhupada, who bestowed the greatest mercy upon the fallen souls. Hare Krishna! 🌸

Excerpts from inmates letters

I've been praying and doing japa daily, observing Ekadashi and also not eating cooked leafy vegetables for this month. I feel awesome thanks to our Lord Krsna who through the grace of Srila Prabhupada and all devotees have transformed this poor soul into a person who is willing to submit to God finally and stop my subhuman ways. I have been doing [chanting] japa at different times and it has is difficult sometimes when it's late, so I definitely have to start getting up at 4 AM to complete japa by 5 AM or a bit later then go to work. Upendra has sent me plenty of books to keep me busy for a while and I enjoy the pastimes of Krsna and His devotees. I get to talk to the chaplains (both Christian) and a Jewish Rabbi about my faith and little by little they seem to understand where I'm coming from. Krsna seems to be touching their hearts. I have faith in Krsna consciousness growing in this place. I have been fine, following Srila Prabhupada's spiritual instruction and getting the blessing of being able to perform devotional service to Govinda.

Jose A. —Fairton, New Jersey

I'm very appreciative of all she has provided me with in terms of books, magazines, newsletters, and printouts. I have everything nicely organized and labeled for easy study. I'm doing my best to incorporate all that I'm learning, and I still have previous religious ideologies that tend to color my thinking process when I read something revelatory. All I ask is for patience as I evolve into a new understanding filled with many new paradigms that are challenging my thinking.

I finally received my property slips just now! I'll probably be picking up the books on Monday or Tuesday at the latest. I'm ever so grateful for all she is doing to assist me resource-wise to help me incorporate Krishna Consciousness into my daily life.

Oh, I'm using the cut-up pencil technique outlined in the "Alternatives for Japa Beads" she sent me. [That

method consists of cutting up pencils in 108 small pieces, then hollowing up the centers; the pieces are then strung on a string.] As long as the length is no longer than 40" (inches) and we don't wear it on the yard, it's allowed as part of our religious property.

One last thing: I'm having issues receiving devotional pictures that display Lord Caitanya or Lord Nityananda because the mail officer mistakes them for females with what appears to be bare chests! [Note: this issue arises once in a while in the prison system] Can you believe that! If these pictures get sent to me, then the back of the picture needs to have the name and clearly state that it is a male devotee/deity, or it will be withheld from me. Thanks.

Victor R. — Kingman, Arizona

Hello, my name is Javaughn and I am so grateful for the books that I have received from you all. Initially my brother introduced me to Krsna consciousness, but I never had any books to study and apply the knowledge from. Besides, they don't have any of these types of books here in this prison library which is unfortunate because I believe everyone should be able to attain this knowledge and the secrets to life. You guys have changed my life for the better and I am forever in your debt. What I have realized so far since chanting at least once a day is that the response from chanting is in this form of bliss, or spiritual happiness, which is a much higher taste than anything in this material world. The more I do it the more I don't want to stop because I feel so at peace and no longer feel any stress or anxiety, just pure happiness.

I am still learning more as I study the books I've received, and I will read them over again for better understanding. I am deeply grateful for all that you guys have done for me.

Javaugh S. —Malone, Florida

First, I would like to thank you for your previous donation to our library. The materials have been put to good use. Second, the Eastern Religious Class here is flourishing, due in no small part to your generosity. Word has spread about our brotherhood and positive energy!

Daniel F. —Tennessee Colony, TX

Just a quick note to say hi and to touch base with you.....you know I like to keep you updated....smile. So it seems they have seen the error of their ways smile...I filed the paperwork for the informal grievance and the chaplain denied it so then I filed a formal and he stated the same things.....sooooo smile!! I appealed it and sent it to the chaplaincy dept. in central office for further review -and I received it back approved.....yay! So we have our service time back on the weekly chaplaincy calendar and are allowed to meet again! Krishna truly went ahead of the paperwork and whispered the error in someone's important ear.....smile! There are many struggles we endure and obstacles in our path! Krsna is so wonderful, and I am devoted



solely to serving Him so any stress or dilemmas I must go through I will gladly and with a pure heart! It has not been easy trying to keep our group on track with the different beliefs. Example: for prasadam.....we go by what I have been taught.....I never use any utensils or dishes etc. that have been used by anyone else....I never offer anything to Krsna that I am not

certain is pure or that I did not personally prepare (better to offer water)... We pray and offer the food to Krsna then we partake. Also in this program (Faith and Character) we must do mentoring.....they usually pair you with a volunteer of your religious faith to do our mentoring.....since we don't have a volunteer yet the ladies either have to wait in hopes of someone coming

to volunteer for us or are forced to mentor with someone affiliated with another religion and let's be honest, that usually doesn't work because they spend the entire six mandatory sessions trying to convert you and tell you you're going to die and go to hell.....I even had one mentor tell me my belief was an evil fairy tale.....the prejudice is unacceptable.....but a fact.

Kimberly S. —Ocala, Florida



Gold Nugget !

Prabhupada: We are thinking that "We shall be protected by my these soldiers. I have got my sons, grandsons, my grandfather, my father-in-law, my brother-in-law, my so many society, friendship and love." Everyone is thinking like that. "My nation, my community, my philosophy, my politics." No. Nothing can save you. They are all temporary. They come and go. One who is too much attached to this society, friendship, and love, he is pramatta. Pramatta means crazy, madman. He does not see. Although he is seeing that "My father has died. When I was a child, my father was giving me protection. Now my father has gone away. Who is giving me protection? Is my father alive to give me protection? Who is giving me protection? My mother was giving me protection. Now who is giving me protection? I was in family, my sons, my daughters, my wife, but I left them. Now who is giving me protection?" And actually Krsna gives you protection always. Not your society, friendship, and love. They will be finished. As your father is finished, as your grandfather is finished, similarly, your son, grandson will be finished. None of them will be able to give you protection. Only Krsna will be giving you protection. Therefore you surrender to Krsna.

Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 1.26–27 – July 21, 1973, London

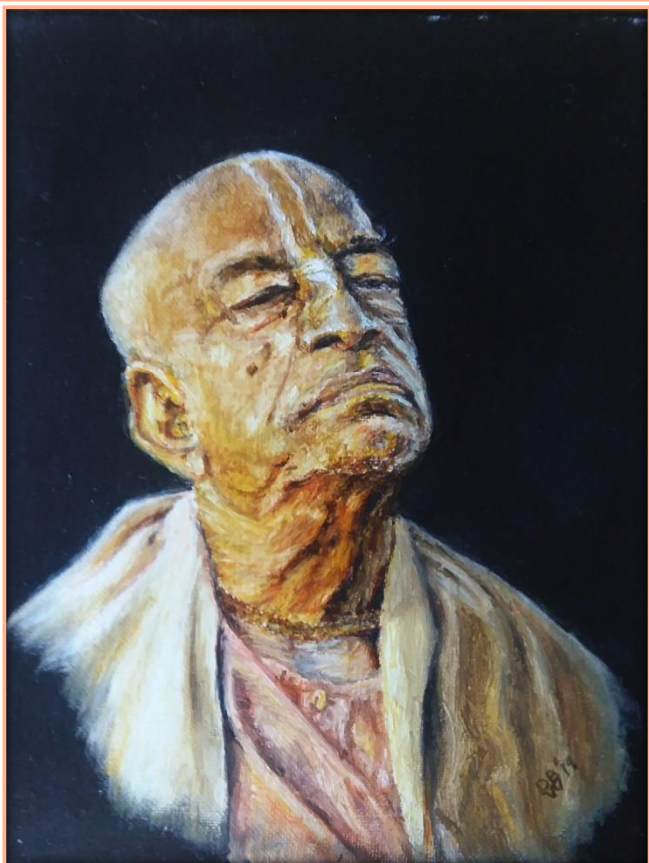
Hindu/Sindhu

Sometimes Indians both inside and outside of India think that we are preaching the Hindu religion, but actually we are not. One will not find the word Hindu in the Bhagavad-gita. Indeed, there is no such word as Hindu in the entire Vedic literature. This word has been introduced by the Muslims from provinces next to India, such as Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and Persia. There is a river called Sindhu bordering the northwestern provinces of India, and since the Muslims there could not pronounce Sindhu properly, they instead called the river Hindu, and the inhabitants of this tract of land they called Hindus. In India, according to the Vedic language, the Europeans are called mlecchas or yavanas. Similarly, Hindu is a name given by the Muslims.

From Science of Self-Realization, Chapter 3, "Hindu Cult or Divine Culture?"

Inmate Artwork!

RIGHT: Drawing of Śrīla Prabhupāda, by inmate David Burkman —



LEFT: Drawing of Radha-Krishna, by inmate Burl Dees — Florida



Nectar of the Holy Name

Simply by chanting the Holy Name of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord considers, “Because this man has chanted My Holy Name, My duty is to give him protection.”
—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.49, purport



Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare

So of all the names, two names are very important: Rama and Kṛṣṇa. Therefore in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, the Rama and Kṛṣṇa are there, and Kṛṣṇa’s potency, Hare. So in the śāstras [scriptures] it is said that one thousand names of Vishnu (...) is equal to one name Rama. And three times chanting the name of Rama is equal to one " Kṛṣṇa." Therefore we should take advantage to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Lecture —West Virginia, September 1st, 1972



UNSUNG HEROES

JAGADISANANDA DAS SERVES PRABHUPADA’S BOOKS FOR 45 YEARS

Article from ISKCON NEWS

What has kept the International Society for Krishna consciousness going for 56 years now, “systematically propagating spiritual knowledge to society at large” as Srila Prabhupada wrote when incorporating the movement in 1966?

Much has been down to the steady efforts of quietly dedicated devotees, doing their services day in and day out for decades – the pujaris, the teachers, the mothers, the cooks, the cleaners, the maintenance workers, the accountants, the book editors, the congregational preachers. It’s important to celebrate and appreciate these devotees who have given so much of their lives to Srila Prabhupada’s mission.

One of these dedicated soldiers of Prabhupada’s is Jagadisananda Das, who has facilitated the service of book distributors and worked in the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust’s (BBT) mail order department at ISKCON Los Angeles for an incredible forty-seven years now.

Born in 1952 and growing up in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Jagadisananda lost his father, a World War II veteran, to cancer at two years old. With his mother

suffering from mental illness and alcoholism, he was brought up by his grandparents.

“They were both born around the turn of the 20th century,” he recalls. “So it was like I wasn’t really growing up in the ’60s – I didn’t take part in any of the counterculture stuff that was going on. I was a conservative and studious kind of person; I played in the band and did really well in school.”

Although he had high grades and was accepted into the University of Minnesota engineering school, the transition from a small school in the suburbs to one with 40,000 students proved too much for Jagadisananda, and he dropped out after a year.

Soon after, in December 1972, at the age of twenty, he found himself drafted into the US Army. One of the last draftees of the Vietnam War era, he missed the war by a hair. Still, the experience – he served as an MP, guarding the stockade – wasn’t easy for the sensitive young man. “It was bad enough having those drill sergeants cursing you day in and day out,” he says. “I thought I was in hell.”

But a ray of light appeared when a friend in the army who was part of the counterculture movement told him about the Bhagavad-gita. "I'm reading this far out book," he said. "You gotta check it out!"

It was the beginning of his journey.

While visiting home during breaks in his term of military service, Jagadisananda met ISKCON devotees at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport (which Srila Prabhupada once said should be renamed O'Hare Krishna airport) and received several Back to Godhead magazines.

At first he simply left the BTGs on his bookshelf without reading them. But even that, he is convinced, had an effect. "I'm proof positive that if you get Prabhupada's books and just keep them on your shelf – you don't toss them – then you gradually become pious, so you can understand what Prabhupada is saying," he explains.

A few months after leaving the army, Jagadisananda picked up an issue of Back to Godhead and began reading. As soon as he did, things began to happen fast. He found the early purple abridged edition of Prabhupada's Bhagavad-gita As It Is in his local library, began corresponding with Swarup Das in the BBT mail order department in Los Angeles, read the entire Krsna book, and started cooking vegetarian meals and chanting.

Jagadisananda didn't consider himself a religious person but was attracted to Prabhupada's presentation of Krishna consciousness as a science. "I thought religion was just some social club, and I wasn't interested," he says. "But Prabhupada gave us the essence of Dharma – that the inseparable quality of a living entity is to serve – and a framework in which to do that."

About six weeks after starting to read, Jagadisananda got into his car one night without telling anyone and drove across the country to Los Angeles to join the ISKCON temple on Watseka Avenue.

Arriving right in the middle of the 1975 Christmas book distribution marathon, being placed in the ashram and waking up at 3:30 in the morning, was an intense experience for Jagadisananda.

"I was like, "Wait a minute, I thought I just got *out* of the army!" he laughs.

Initiated by Srila Prabhupada in 1976, Jagadisananda didn't find it in his nature to do street book distribution. "I'm an analyst and mathematician," he says, joking. "I don't want to be at the forefront of anything." But from the very beginning, he felt comfortable supporting and facilitating the service, explaining, "If I wasn't in the

middle of book distribution, I wouldn't feel right."

For nearly twenty years after joining ISKCON, Jagadisananda was "the sankirtan devotees' servant" at the Los Angeles temple. He learned how to fix cars and maintained the book distributors' vehicles. He worked in the book room, ordered books from the BBT, and loaded the sankirtan devotees' cars

with books. He also organized a team who stocked lockers one could rent at the airport terminals with books, so that they were ready for the book distributors when they went out every morning.

On the day in 1977 when it was announced that Srila Prabhupada had left this world and the devotees were plunged into grief, it was in the book room that Jagadisananda found solace.

"I felt the most connection with Prabhupada being with his books," he says.

Jagadisananda even married a book distributor, Karuna Dharini Dasi, whom he met in 1985, and who is now a regular contributor to Back to Godhead magazine. The couple have one daughter, Gaura Sundari. Jagadisa continues to be impressed by his wife's ability to distribute books on the street.

"I find it terrifying to go out and meet people, whereas she's completely in her element. Sometimes I go with her, and I'm just like, 'Oh my God, who *is* this person?'" he chuckles, agreeing that opposites attract and complement each other.

Jagadisananda sees maintaining a good, lasting marriage as one of his services to Prabhupada. From 1994 to this day, for the past twenty-six years, he has also managed the LA BBT mail order department. That has included processing both wholesale and small orders of Srila Prabhupada's books, arranging for shipping, and organizing the devotees doing the warehouse work and answering phones.

In the early days of his BBT service in the mid-1990s, Jagadisananda also used his computer savvy to install a network in the BBT offices and get everything



ABOVE: Jagadisananda and his wife Karuna Dharini Dasi distribute books at the Los Angeles Rathayatra.

computerized and everyone online. He played a major role in establishing the first ISKCON page on the Internet, harekrishna.com, in 1995, at a time when he says people would respond to talk of the World Wide Web with “the worldwide *what?*” He also helped establish the LA temple audio broadcast in 2002.

Today, Jagadisananda continues to be part of the backbone of the Los Angeles Bhaktivedanta Book Trust branch along with trustee Svavasa Das, accountant Sura Das and production manager Arcita Das.

Despite the pandemic, he still feels very enlivened in his service and explains that book distribution has only increased.

“There’s a lot happening here,” he says. “You would think that with Covid things would have slowed down, but the past year was 12 per cent bigger than the year prior. The sankirtan devotees are so incredible how they can adjust to any situation. And what they’ve done in 2020 is nothing short of amazing.”

For his part, Jagadisananda says he simply tries to be a servant and facilitator of the devotees. He overcomes challenges in his service by “trying to be expert at what I’m doing” and using “intelligence and organization,” as

Srila Prabhupada advised Giriraja Swami when asked how the movement would continue after he had gone.

He stays inspired by listening to Srila Prabhupada’s classes and reading his books, chanting the Sri Narasimha Pranam Mantra every night before going to sleep, and associating with devotees. He also tries to stay in the present moment and not be depressed about the past or worried about the future.

“If you can do that, and add the Hare Krishna mantra, you can actually be relatively peaceful, even in the midst of the big chaos that we’re in right now,” he says. “It’s an art.”

Feeling extremely fortunate to be doing the service he’s doing, Jagadisananda says it’s a miracle he’s still here after forty-four years.

Despite his fascinating life and considerable contributions and achievements, he’s humbly self-deprecating.

“I’m not a very interesting person,” he says. “My life is pretty mundane. I like it though. I like being part of Srila Prabhupada’s sankirtan army. I don’t care that I’m just a cog. A cog is good.” 🌸



Calendar



AUGUST 2023

- 20 Aug - Disappearance Day of Sri Raghunandan Thakura
- 20 Aug - Disappearance Day of Sri Vamsidasa Babaji
- 27 Aug - **Pavitropana Ekadashi**
- 28 Aug - Disappearance Day of Srila Rupa Goswami
- 28 Aug - Disappearance Day of Sri Gauridasa Pandita
- 31 Aug - **Appearance Day of Lord Balarama**

SEPTEMBER 2023

- 01 Sept - Second Month of Caturmasya Begins
- 01 Sept - Srila Prabhupada’s Departure for the USA
- 07 Sept - **Sri Krsna Janmastami - Appearance of Lord Krishna**
- 08 Sept - **Appearance Day of Srila Prabhupada**
- 20 Sept - Srimati Sita Thakurani Appearance Day
- 23 Sept - **Radhastami : Appearance of Srimati Radharani**
- 26 Sept - **Parsva Ekadashi**
- 26 Sept - **Appearance of Sri Vamana Deva**
- 26 Sept - Appearance Day of Sri Jiva Goswami

27 Sept - Appearance Day of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura (fast till noon)

- 28 Sept - Disappearance Day of Srila Haridasa Thakura
- 29 Sept - Acceptance of Sannyasa by Srila Prabhupada
- 30 Sept - Third Month of Caturmasya Begins

OCTOBER 2023

- 05 Oct - Srila Prabhupada’s arrival in the USA
- 10 Oct - **Indira Ekadasi**
- 24 Oct - Ramacandra Vijayotsava (Lord Rama’s victory over the demon Ravana)
- 24 Oct - Appearance Day of Sri Madhvacharya
- 25 Oct - **Pasankusa Ekadashi**
- 26 Oct - Disappearance Day of Srila Raghunatha Dasa Goswami
- 26 Oct - Disappearance Day of Srila Raghunatha Bhatta Goswami
- 26 Oct - Disappearance Day of Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Goswami
- 28 Oct - Disappearance Day of Sri Murari Gupta
- 29 Oct - Fourth Month of Caturmasya Begins

