

ISKCON Prison Ministry / December 2024 PO Box 2676 Alachua, FL 32616

SEEING GOD

This discussion between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and a reporter took place at ISKCON's center in Melbourne, Australia.

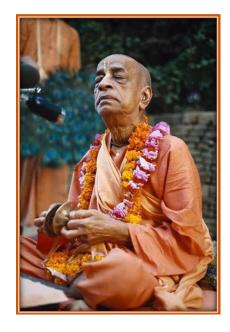
Interviewer: Your Divine Grace, is the purpose of human life to realize God? Srila Prabhupada: Yes—that is the only purpose. Interviewer: Srila Prabhupada, have you realized God? Srila Prabhupada: What do you think? What is your opinion?

Interviewer: I can't say.

Srila Prabhupada: Then if I say yes, what will you have understood? If you are not expert, then even if I say, "Yes, I am God-realized," how will you take it? If you do not know what God-realization is, then how can you ask this question, and how will you be satisfied by the answer? Therefore, you should not ask this question. It has no value—unless, of course, you are prepared to accept whatever answer I give. Are you prepared?

Interviewer: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: Then it is all right. I am seeing God every moment. [Pause] But unless you are prepared to take the answer, you should not ask such questions.



Interviewer: Your Divine Grace, is meditation a means to realize God?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Meditation is one means, but you cannot meditate now, because you do not know

what God is. So how will you meditate? If you do not know what God is, upon whom will you meditate? First of all, you must know. We know God—Krsna and Krsna says, *man-mana bhava mad-bhaktah:* "Always think of Me." So we meditate upon Krsna. That is

perfect meditation, because meditation means to think of God. But if you do not know what God is, how can you think of Him? **Interviewer:** It is written in many scriptures that God is light. **Srila Prabhupada:** God is everything. God is darkness, also. We say that God is that person from whom everything comes. So light comes from God, and darkness also comes from God. **Interviewer:** Do you think that meditation is a way to see God inside yourself?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. That is the description of meditation. Dhyanavasthita tad-gatena manasa pasyanti yam yoginah: by concentrating his mind, the yogi tries to see God within. So you

must know what God is. Consider our ISKCON institution, for example. My disciples know what God is, so they can think of God. But if you have no idea of God, how will you think of Him?

Interviewer: This path of devotional *yoga, bhaktiyoga*—is this the path for the present age? **Srila Prabhupada:** Yes, *bhakti-yoga is* the real *yoga*. You'll find that when the *yoga* system is described in *Bhagavad-gita*, the Lord says, "The first-class *yogi* is he who is always thinking of Me, Krsna, within himself." So our students are being taught to think of Krsna always, twenty-four hours a day, without stopping. That is first-class *yoga*.

Interviewer: If you are to think about something, you first have to see it. Do you show your devotees Krsna? **Srila Prabhupada:** Oh, yes. Certainly.

Interviewer: Then what ... well ... what is Krsna? What does He look like?

Srila Prabhupada: See—here is Krsna.

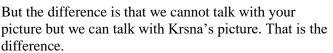
Interviewer: But that's a painting.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, it is a painting. But suppose a painting of you were there. Could I not say, "Here is Mr. such-and-such"?

Interviewer: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: Then what is the wrong there? Is your picture not yourself? Interviewer: Yes, it is.

Srila Prabhupada: Similarly, this is Krsna's painting.



Interviewer: But still, somebody must have seen Krsna to actually paint Him.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. When Krsna was present on this earth, so many people saw Him. And since then, there have been so many temples of Krsna's Deity, Krsna's form. The same form described in the Vedic literature appeared personally, and the devotees made statues. These forms of Krsna are being worshiped regularly. There are thousands and thousands of Krsna temples.

Interviewer: But has anybody actually seen Krsna? Srila Prabhupada: Yes, yes—just as your father has seen your grandfather. You may not have seen him, but your father can describe him—"My father was like this." What is the difficulty? Devotee: He asked if anyone *now*

has seen Krsna.

Srila Prabhupada: How can one see Him now? One has to see through the *parampara*, the disciplic succession. You have not seen your grandfather, so how do you know who he was?

Interviewer: Your parents tell you.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. So you have to receive knowledge about God from the authorities, from the *parampara*.

Interviewer: But supposedly Krsna is eternal, so surely He exists today.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, Krsna is existing. At night the sun is existing, but you have no eyes to see it. That does not mean the sun does not exist. It is your deficiency—you cannot see.

Interviewer: So we need divine sight?

Srila Prabhupada: You require qualification. Krsna is always existing, but you require the qualification to see Him. That is described in the Vedic scriptures.

Premanjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena santah sadaiva hrdayesu vilokayanti: those who are saintly persons in ecstatic love with Krsna can see Him always, twentyfour hours a day. That is not very difficult to understand. If you love someone, you see him always. Is it not so? You need the qualification of love. Then Krsna will be visible twenty-four hours a day and talk with you. So you have to qualify yourself to hear Krsna, to see Krsna. But Krsna is always present.



EXCERPT from the INTRODUCTION to the KRSNA BOOK

By A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

(The illustrations are of different pastimes contained in the Kṛṣṇa Book)

Kṛṣṇa Himself has explained in the Bhagavad-gītā that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Whenever there are discrepancies in the regulative principles of man's religious life and a prominence of irreligious activities, He appears on this earthly planet. In other words, when Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared, there was a necessity of minimizing the load of sinful activities

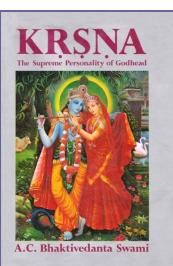


accumulated on this planet, or in this universe.

Kṛṣṇa actually appears to demonstrate His Vṛndāvana [pronounced *vrin-da-van*]pastimes and to attract the fortunate conditioned souls and invite them back home, back to Godhead. The killing of the demons was simultaneous to His Vṛndāvana activities and was carried out only by the Viṣṇu portion of Kṛṣṇa.

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Eighth Chapter, 20th verse, it is stated that there is another eternal nature, the spiritual sky, which is transcendental to this manifested and nonmanifested matter. The manifested world can be seen in the form of many stars and planetary systems, such as the sun, moon, etc., but beyond this there is a nonmanifested portion which is not approachable to anyone in this body. And beyond that nonmanifested matter there is the spiritual kingdom. That kingdom is described in the Bhagavad-gītā as supreme and eternal. It is never annihilated. This material nature is subjected to repeated creation and annihilation. But that part, the spiritual nature, remains as it is, eternally.

The supreme abode of the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is also described in the Brahmā-saṁhitā as the



abode of cintāmaņi. That abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa known as Goloka Vṛndāvana is full of palaces made of touchstone. There the trees are called desire trees, and the cows are called surabhi. The Lord is served there by hundreds and thousands of goddesses of fortune. His name is Govinda, the Primeval Lord, and He is the cause of all causes. There the Lord plays His flute, His eyes are like lotus petals, and the color of His body is like that of a beautiful cloud. On His head is a peacock feather. He is so attractive that He excels thousands of Cupids.

The family in which Kṛṣṇa appeared is called the Yadu dynasty. Whenever the Supreme Personality of Godhead appears, He generally appears in a kṣatriya [warrior] family because He has to establish religious



principles or the life of righteousness. The kṣatriya family is the protector of the human race, according to the Vedic system. Actually, the Supreme Personality of Godhead does not belong to any dynasty of this material world, but the family in which the Supreme Personality of Godhead appears becomes famous, by His grace. For example, sandalwood is produced in the states of Malaya. Sandalwood has its own qualifications apart from Malaya, but because, accidentally, this wood



is mainly produced in the states of Malaya, it is known as Malayan sandalwood. Similarly, Krsna the Supreme Personality of Godhead belongs to everyone, but just as the sun rises from the east, although there are other directions from which it could rise, so, by His own choice, the Lord appears in a particular family, and that family becomes famous.

When Krsna appears,

all His plenary expansions also appear with Him. Kṛṣṇa appeared along with Balarāma (Baladeva), who is known as His elder brother. This is very vividly described in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam--specifically, the Tenth Canto--and the basis of this book will be Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

The pastimes of the Lord are generally heard and relished by liberated souls. Those who are conditioned souls are interested in reading fictional stories of the material activities of some common man. And yet, the descriptions of the pastimes of Lord Krsna are so

attractive that they are relishable for all classes of men. There are three classes of men in this world. One class consists of liberated souls, another consists of those who are trying to be liberated, and the third consists of materialistic men. Whether one is liberated or is trying to be liberated, or is even grossly materialistic, the pastimes of Lord Krsna are worth studying.

Liberated souls have no interest in materialistic activities. The impersonalist theory that after liberation one becomes inactive and needs hear nothing does not prove that a liberated person is actually inactive. A living soul cannot be inactive. He is either active in the

conditioned state or in the liberated state. A diseased person, for example, is also active, but his activities are

all painful. The same person, when freed from the diseased condition, is still active, but in the healthy condition the activities are full of pleasure. Similarly, the impersonalists manage to get freed from the diseased conditional activities, but they have no information of activities in the healthy condition. Those who are actually liberated and in full knowledge take to hearing the activities of Kṛṣṇa; such engagement is pure spiritual activity.

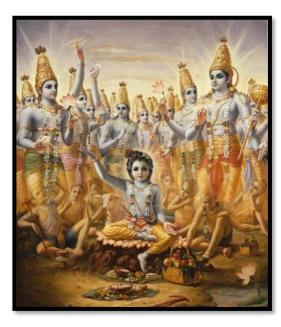
It is essential for persons who are actually liberated to hear about the pastimes of Krsna. That is the supreme

relishable subject matter for one in the liberated state. Also, if persons who are trying to be liberated hear such narrations then their path of liberation becomes very clear.

Kṛṣṇa-kathā [topics about Kṛṣṇa] means narrations about Kṛṣṇa. There are two Kṛṣṇa-kathās:



narrations spoken by Kṛṣṇa and narrations spoken about Kṛṣṇa. Bhagavad-gītā is the narration or the philosophy or the science of God, spoken by Kṛṣṇa Himself.



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the narration about the activities and transcendental pastimes of Krsna. Both are Krsna-kathā. It is the order of Lord Caitanya that Krsna-kathā should be spread all over the world, because if the conditioned souls, suffering under the pangs of material existence, take to Krsna-kathā, then their path of liberation will be open and clear. The purpose of presenting this book is primarily to induce people to understand Krsna or Krsnakathā, because thereby they can become freed from material bondage.

Kṛṣṇa will be appealing to the

liberated souls and to persons who are trying to be liberated, as well as to the gross, conditioned materialist. According to the statement of Mahārāja Parīkşit, who heard about Kṛṣṇa from Śukadeva

Gosvāmī, Krsna-kathā is equally applicable to every human being, in whatever condition of life he is in. Everyone will appreciate it to the highest magnitude. But Mahārāja Parīksit also warned that persons who are simply engaged in killing animals and in killing themselves may not be very much attracted to Krsna-kathā. In other words, ordinary persons who are following the regulative



moral principles of scriptures, no matter in what condition they are found, will certainly be attracted, but not persons who are killing themselves. The exact word used in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is paśughna, which means killing animals or killing oneself. Persons who

are not selfrealized and who are not interested in spiritual realization are killing themselves; they are committing suicide. Because this human form of life is especially meant



for self-realization, by neglecting this important part of his activities, one simply wastes his time like the animals. So he is pasughna. The other meaning of the word refers to those who are actually killing animals. This means persons who are animal eaters (even dog eaters), and they are all engaged in killing animals in so many ways, such as hunting, opening slaughterhouses, etc. Such persons cannot be interested in Kṛṣṇa-kathā.

King Parīksit was especially interested in hearing Kṛṣṇa-kathā because he knew that his forefathers and particularly his grandfather, Arjuna, were victorious in the great battle of Kuruksetra only because of Kṛṣṇa. We may also take this material world as a battlefield of Kuruksetra. Everyone is struggling hard for existence in this battlefield, and at every step there is danger. According to Mahārāja Parīkṣit, the battlefield of Kurukṣetra was just like a vast ocean full of dangerous animals. His

grandfather Arjuna had to fight with such great heroes as Bhīşma, Droņa, Karņa, and many others who were not ordinary fighters. Such warriors have been compared to the timingila fish in the ocean. The timingila fish can very easily swallow up big whales. The great fighters on the battlefield of Kurukşetra could swallow many, many Arjunas very easily, but simply due to Kṛṣṇa's mercy, Arjuna was able to kill all of them. Just as one can cross with no exertion over the little pit of water contained in the hoofprint of a calf, so Arjuna, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, was able to very easily jump over the ocean of the battle of Kuruksetra.

Mahārāja Parīksit very much appreciated Kṛṣṇa's activities for many other reasons. Not only was his grandfather saved by Kṛṣṇa, but he himself also was saved by Kṛṣṇa. At the end of the battle of Kurukṣetra, all the members of the



Kuru dynasty, both the sons and grandsons on the side of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, as well as those on the side of the Pāṇḍavas, died in the fighting. Except the five Pāṇḍava brothers, everyone died on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. Mahārāja Parīkṣit was at that time within the womb of his mother. His father, Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna, also died on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, and so Mahārāja Parīkṣit was a posthumous child. When he was in the womb of his mother, a brahmāstra weapon was released by Aśvatthāmā to kill



the child. When Parīkṣit Mahārāja's mother, Uttarā, approached Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, seeing the danger of abortion, entered her womb as the Supersoul and saved Mahārāja Parīkṣit. Mahārāja Parīkṣit's other name is Viṣṇurāta because he was saved by Lord Viṣṇu Himself while still within the womb. Thus everyone, in any condition of life, should be interested in hearing about Kṛṣṇa and His activities because He is the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead. He is all-pervading; He is living within everyone's heart,



and He is living as His universal form. And yet, as described in the Bhagavad-gītā, He appears as He is in the human society just to invite everyone to His transcendental abode, back to home, back to Godhead. Everyone should be interested in knowing about Krsna,

and this book is presented with this purpose: that people may know about Kṛṣṇa and be perfectly benefited in this human form of life.

This narration was presented by Śukadeva Gosvāmī when Mahārāja Parīkṣit was prepared to give up his body, fasting on the bank of the Ganges. In order to assure Śukadeva Gosvāmī that by hearing Kṛṣṇa-kathā he would not feel tired, Mahārāja Parīkṣit expressed himself very frankly: "Hunger and thirst may give trouble to ordinary persons or to me, but the topics of Kṛṣṇa are so nice that one can continue to hear about them without feeling tired because such hearing situates one in the transcendental position." It is understood

that one must be very fortunate to hear about Kṛṣṇa-kathā seriously, like Mahārāja Parīkṣit. He was especially intent on the subject matter because he was expecting death at any moment. Every one of us should be conscious of death at every moment. This life is not at all assured; at any time one can die. It does not matter whether one is a young man or an old man. So before death takes place, we must be fully Kṛṣṇa conscious.

At the point of his death, King Parīksit was hearing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam from Śukadeva Gosvāmī. When King Parīksit expressed his

untiring desire to hear about Krsna, Śukadeva Gosvāmī was very pleased. Śukadeva was the greatest of all Bhāgavata reciters, and thus he began to speak about Krsna's pastimes, which destroy all inauspiciousness in this age of Kali. Śukadeva Gosvāmī thanked the King

for his eagerness to hear about Krsna, and he encouraged him by saying, "My dear King, your intelligence is very keen because you are so eager to hear about the pastimes of Krsna." He informed Mahārāja Parīksit that hearing and chanting of the pastimes of Krsna are so auspicious that the processes purifies the three varieties of men involved: he who recites the transcendental topics of Krsna, he who hears such topics, and he who inquires about Him. These pastimes are just like the Ganges water which flows from the toe of Lord Vișnu: they purify the three worlds, the upper, middle and lower planetary systems.

Excerpts from inmates' letters

I Know Nothing if I Don't Read Srila Prabhupada's Book

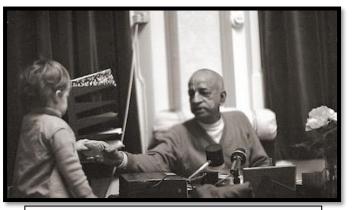
By Mark M. —Huttonsville, West Virginia

Never in my life have I experienced love as that which Srila Prabhupada has put in his purports. Ever since I was a child, books have always been my constant friend. When I had no one else, there was always a book there for me. It was not until I read *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* that I really found a true friend, and it is in the friend that I have found in Srila Prabhupada's books that all of my hopes and dreams lay.

Srila Prabhupada spent his precious time and life to give us the greatest books that anyone could have

ever written. There are no books comparable. These books alone can purify our lives and help to change us from the worst of mankind to the greatest of all people. All that one must do is honor Srila Prabhupada by spending one's time and life in reading and studying these most wonderful books that he has given us. Srila Prabhupada stressed the importance of distributing his books. He knew the

importance of his books and he cared enough for all mankind; he desired for everyone to read his books. It is not enough for us to only read his books, to truly honor Srila Prabhupada one must distribute his books and make the beauty of his books known all over the world. Srila Prabhupada's books can save mankind because his books are the friends of the world



ABOVE: Śrīla Prabhupāda giving a sweet to little Sarasvati.

Every time I read from Srila Prabhupada's books, I realize that I don't really know anything.

Everything worth knowing is in Srila Prabhupada's books and until I know these books, I know nothing, It is not enough to read these books; I need to learn to live my life by these books. I am uncertain if I am actually willing to do this. I know that this is what I need to do with my life, yet it is so hard to surrender my life and do what I know to be right. I know that I must take shelter of Guru and Krishna and completely surrender with full sincerity. I want to be able to surrender myself, yet I still hold on to material life, regardless of the misery the material life causes, I still hold on to it.

It is Srila Prabhupada's books that have done everything to attract new inmates to Krishna Consciousness. It is only because of Srila Prabhupada's books and the IPM devotees have sent these books to us, that's why prisoners are showing interest in Krishna Consciousness. All of us prisoners are indebted to Srila Prabhupada and to the IPM devotees. I have been so lucky in my life to have the association of IPM devotees and have Srila Prabhupada's books, and receiving letters of encouragement from devotees has given me purpose in life. My whole life has been purposeless and very dark before receiving the mercy from Srila Prabhupada.

I have been continuing to reread Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita [Śrīla Prabhupāda's biography], this is my all-time favorite book. Through Srila Prabhupada's Lilamrita, we are given access to Srila Prabhupāda

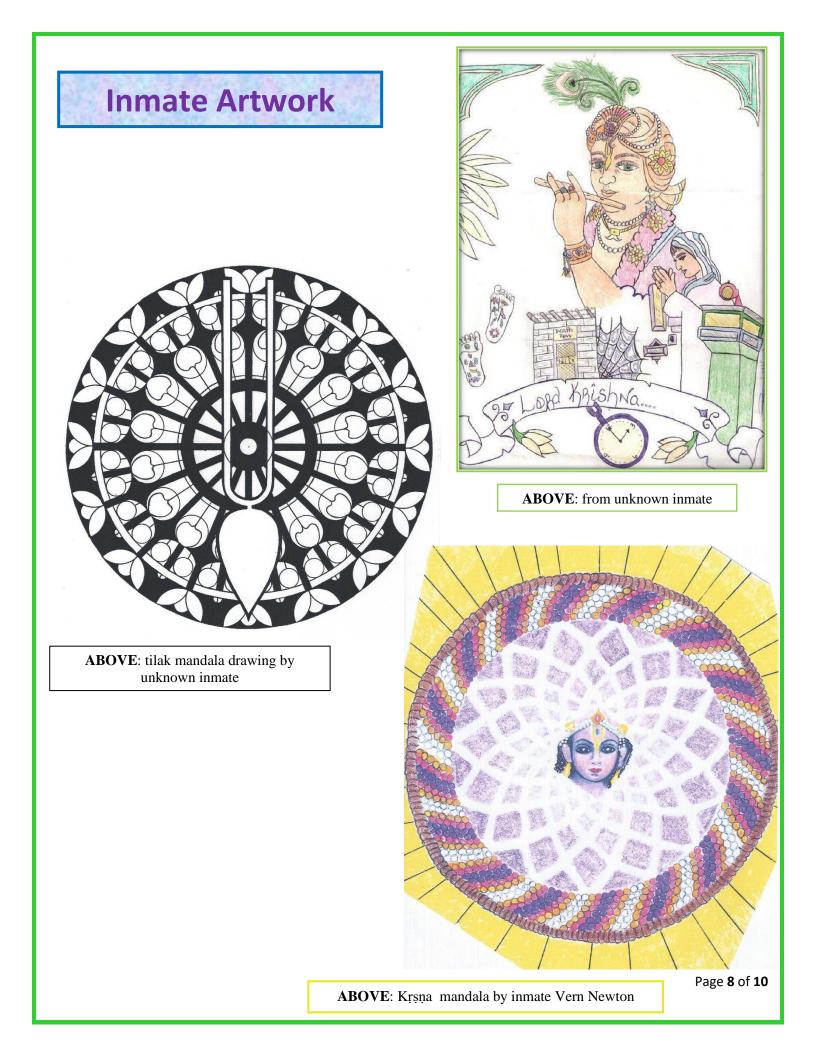
and in learning of Srila Prabhupada we automatically learn of Krishna. We must follow the example of young Sarswati [first child born in ISKCON]; Who has Krishna? "Srila Prabhupada has Krishna!"

In the book it is described that Saraswati had been given an expensive silver murti (statue) of Krishna. Srila Prabhupada felt she was too young to have this

expensive murti and wished to replace it with another one. Unable to find the murti, young Sarswati burst into the room crying that Krishna was gone. In playing with the young child, Srila Prabhupada asked her if Krishna was under the cushion; she picked up the cushion to look. He then asked her if Krishna was on the shelf and she ran to look at it. "Saraswati's anxiety had become heightened to the point of tears. One of the devotees hinted. Saraswati, where is Krishna? Who has Krishna? Saraswati's eyes widened. She exclaimed, 'Prabhupada has Krishna!' and she rushed up to Prabhupada, convinced that he was holding Krishna; and Prabhupada reached behind his seat and pulled out a small Krishna murti, similar to the silver Krishna he had taken from her." (Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita, book 5, chapter 2, page 61).

It is just so hard for me to make a bad situation into something for the good service of Krishna. I need to re-learn how to see things and to see the world. I don't know how to view everything from the Krishna Conscious perspective. I don't know how to make Srila Prabhupada's books my entire life. I read Srila Prabhupada's books daily as much as I can, I just don't know how to implement these books as my life. 都多





Book Distribution Stories!

Jacek — By Geeta Bhandari

Jacek initially walked past me as I made an effort to catch his attention, just as we were concluding

our book distribution for the evening on Southampton High Street [London].

Surprisingly, moments later, he turned back, inquiring about what I was offering. Curiously, he mentioned that an internal voice prompted him, saying, "just turn around and go back."

As I handed him the Bhagavad-Gita, he immediately flipped it over and read the blurb at the back. To my astonishment, he kissed the Gita and then exclaimed, "How did this book find me!?"

Touched by the profound insights, he shared with

enthusiasm that what he had just read encapsulated precisely what his soul has been searching for. Reading out the exact paragraph in awe, he told me how it harmonizes perfectly with his beliefs: "The Bhagavad-Gita is an ancient text that describes how to transform one's work into yoga and provides disciplines that allow one to experience God in all things."

Jacek narrated a challenging journey, having endured a stroke 1.5 years ago that rendered him paralyzed for six months, accompanied by a loss of



speech, two heart attacks, and a cancer diagnosis. Against the odds, he has triumphed over cancer,

> left the hospital four months ago, and is now able to walk and talk, although he is still in the gradual process of recovering from temporary memory loss.

At 41 years old, Jacek, a former professional skydiving instructor, deep-sea diving specialist, and army veteran, expressed that despite his past accomplishments, they now hold no significance or meaning for him anymore.

Jacek disclosed that he is entirely alone, with no family and friends. In pursuit of hope and a deeper understanding of life's purpose, Jacek revealed a profound desire to

contribute to the well-being of humanity, aspiring to lead a life immersed in goodness and kindness.

Jacek parted with a beautiful declaration referring to Srila Prabhupada as his "invisible secret friend" who will guide him in life. It left me in amazement. As we left the streets, my heart melted as the reality hit me...Srila Prabhupada truly is engaging with these souls on the streets, silently impacting and transforming the trajectory of their lives. 🖄





DECEMBER 2024

- 11 Dec 2024 Advent of Srimad Bhagavat-Gita
- 11 Dec 2024 Moksada Mahadvadashi
- 15 Dec 2024 Katvavani Vrata Ends
- 19 Dec 2024 Disappearance Day of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura
- 26 Dec 2024 Saphala Ekadasi

JANUARY 2025

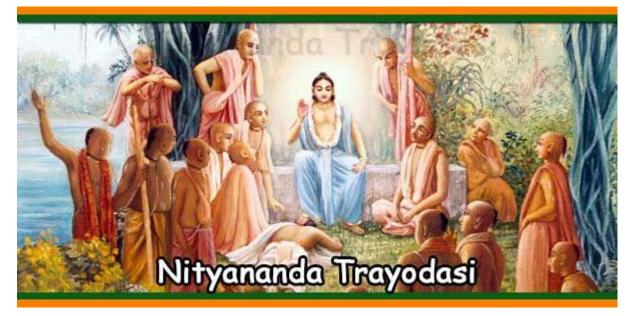
- 02 Jan 2025 Appearance Day of Jīva Goswami and Jagadisa Pandita
- 09 Jan 2025 Putrada Mahadvadashi
- 18 Jan 2025 Disappearance Day of Ramacandra Kaviraja & Appearance Day of Gopala Bhatta Goswami
- 19 Jan 2025 Disappearance Day of Jayadeva Goswami
- 20 Jan 2025 Disappearance Day of Locana Dasa Thakura
- 25 Jan 2025 Sat-tila Ekadasi

FEBRUARY 2025

02 Feb 2025 - Appearance Day of Pundarika Vidyanidhi, Raghunandana Thakur, Rabhunatha Dasa Goswami, and Visupriya Devi.

Disappearance Day of Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura.

- 04 Feb 2025 Appearance Day of Advaita Acarya
- 06 Feb 2025 -Disappearance Day of Madhvacarya
- 07 Feb 2025 -Disappearance Day of Ramanujacarva
- 08 Feb 2025 -Bhaimi Ekadasi -Fast till noon for the appearance of Lord Varaha (on Feb. 9th)
- 09 Feb 2025 Appearance Day of Lord Varaha
- 10 Feb 2025 Appearance Day of Lord Nityananda (Nityananda Trayodasi)
- 12 Feb 2025 Appearance Day of Narottama Dasa Thakura
- 17 Feb 2025 Appearance Day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura
- 23 Feb 2025 -Vijava Ekadasi
- 24 Feb 2025 -Disappearance Day of Isvara Puri
- 28 Feb 2025 -Disappearance Day of Jagannatha Dasa Babaji and Rasikananda Thakura



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