

Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS
(ISKCON) CELEBRATES ITS 50th ANNIVERSARY

THE HARE KRISHNAS

celebrating 50 years



WHO ARE THE HARE KRISHNAS NOW?

ISKCON's Activities Around the World

THE JOY OF DEVOTION

Festivals, Food, Philosophy, Outreach



THE HARE KRISHNAS celebrating 50 years ... is the official commemorative magazine celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Founder-Acharya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

EDITORIAL PANEL

Executive Editors

Mukunda Goswami
Krishnarupa devi dasi

Project Manager

Bhakta dasa

Design/Layout

Ramprasad dasa

Writers/Editorial advisors

Anuttama dasa, Damodara Pandit dasa

Project Managerial Assistant

Bhakti devi dasi

Main Photographers

Ananta Vrindavan dasa, Trevor Gore
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Pronunciation

Some of the names in this magazine are in the Sanskrit language. For information on how to pronounce these words, see page 64.

Welcome



We are all seekers of one kind or another. We seek happiness, a good bank balance, and a peaceful environment. Some of us find pleasure in family and friends, others via our stock portfolio, acts of charity, a walk by the sea, or reading books by a favorite author.

In whatever way we try to fulfill this drive for happiness, we all share one thing—whatever we seek is elusive. Friends come and go, family members pass away, and finances fluctuate. Our very physical health is subject to decay. We hope for stability, but time marches on!

The wisdom traditions found throughout the world offer some solace. Collectively they inform us that human life is meant for seeking

treasures of a different order, beyond temporary, ordinary pursuits.

The bhakti tradition, or the yoga of devotion, informs us that at our core we seek to love and be loved. Our deepest pleasure comes not from possessing, but from giving—not in controlling, but in sharing. It lies in making meaningful contributions by serving others. Ultimately, it is to know, love, and be loved by the Divine.

The Hare Krishna Movement, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), is a global community connecting to each other, the world around us, and to God through service and the reciprocation of love.

As you will read in this magazine, we do so in varied and practical ways. Krishna devotees are policemen, priests, plumbers, homemakers, professors, doctors, IT professionals, taxi drivers, students, parents, and grandparents.

We come from diverse cultural, ethnic, and

religious backgrounds, but we share in an enthusiasm for life that comes by knowing the happiness that is found within. It is not dependent upon the ordinary course of life's activities, and it continues even after the end of this life.

I hope you enjoy reading this magazine and learning more about ISKCON and the devotional tradition we represent. We welcome you to visit any of our communities, read some of our tradition's great literatures, sample our tasty, sanctified vegetarian food, and join us in experiencing the joy of devotion.

Anuttama dasa
Minister of Communications
Governing Body Chairman
2014/15



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In 1965 an elderly Indian saint began a spiritual revolution. Soon after arriving in the USA, he was tirelessly traveling the globe, giving Vedic wisdom to a world dissatisfied with a life of material acquisition.

By Visakha devi dasi

Master with a Mission

In 1965, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, seventy years old, left his native India for the first time aboard the cargo ship *Jaladuta*. He arrived alone in New York City with a mission to introduce bhakti-yoga, the revolutionary spiritual science of devotional service to Krishna (God). Over the next twelve years he would tirelessly travel, speak and chant Krishna's name in *kirtana* (see page 34 for more on *kirtana*), and write numerous books to broadcast the joy of devotion and Vedic culture.



“

I am impressed with how much the teachings of one man and the spiritual tradition he brought impacted themselves into the lives of so many people.”

— Dr. Harvey Cox, Professor of Divinity, Harvard University

Srila Prabhupada's two seminal classics, his translations and commentaries on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Bhagavad-gita*, form the theological basis of the Hare Krishna movement, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) that he founded.

Scholars worldwide have praised his many books for their erudition and insight into authentic spiritual life. These and Srila Prabhupada's other books form an extensive library of devotional philosophy, helping readers transcend mundane life and awaken their sweet, loving relationship with God.

God & Gurus

Devotional teachings, immortalized in sacred Vedic hymns, have been handed down through millennia by a succession of self-realized teachers.

When John Lennon from The Beatles asked Srila Prabhupada, “How are we to tell who is a true master?” Srila Prabhupada replied, “It is not that you can go to just any spiritual master. He must be a member of a recognized *sampradaya* [lineage of realized teachers], a particular line of disciplic succession.”

A Genuine Holy Man

The potency of Srila Prabhupada's message is due to his resolute loyalty to the teachings of this authentic, unbroken lineage. Dr. Thomas J. Hopkins, Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies at Franklin and Marshall College in the USA, said Srila Prabhupada was “a genuine holy person with enormous integrity and compassion, who had a powerful impact on those who met him. He never claimed authority and respect for himself; what he said and did was always in the name of Krishna.”

Dr. Harvey Cox, Hollis Research Professor of Divinity at Harvard University, said, “When I first met the students of Srila Prabhupada, I can remember thinking how surprised I was, and I



Photo: Bhargava dasa © BBTI

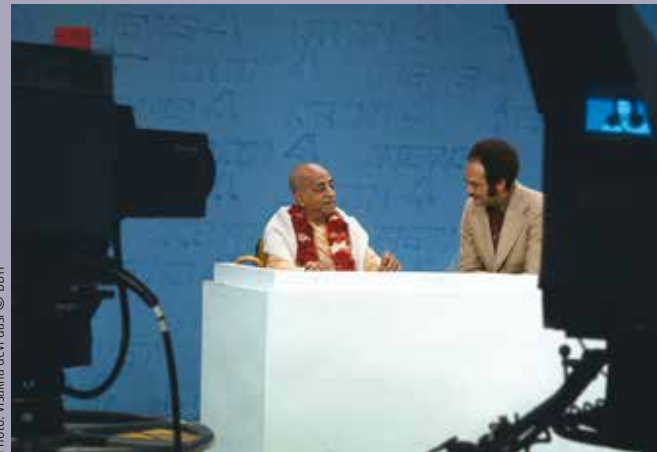


Photo: Visakha devi dasi © BBTI

Left: In eleven years, ISKCON's Founder-Acharya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada circled the planet fourteen times. Pictured here arriving in Sydney, Australia, in the early 1970s. **Top:** Srila Prabhupada met with reporters, clergy, and members of the public wherever he traveled. **Above:** A television interview with Srila Prabhupada in San Francisco, 1975.



wondered what this meant. But as I came to know the [Hare Krishna] movement, I came to find that there was a striking similarity in the essence of what they were teaching and in the original core of Christianity—that is, living simply, not trying to accumulate worldly goods, living with compassion toward all creatures, sharing, loving, and living joyfully.

“I am impressed with how much the teachings of one man and the spiritual tradition he brought impacted themselves into the lives of so many people. In my view Srila Prabhupada’s contribution is a very important and lasting one.”

He also remarked, “Srila Prabhupada is, of course, only one of thousands of teachers. But in another sense, he is one in a thousand—maybe one in a million.”

Before Srila Prabhupada’s passing from this world on 14 November 1977,

ISKCON had grown to a world-wide confederation of more than 100 devotional ashrams, schools, temples, educational institutes, and farming communities. Everyone who has been and will be touched by the far-reaching culture of bhakti owes a tremendous debt to him.

By the efforts of Srila Prabhupada and his followers, for the first time in history this rich theology and lifestyle have been made available to people throughout the world.

Yet despite his international success Srila Prabhupada remained and always felt himself a simple, faithful follower and representative of the sublime tradition of bhakti-yoga. ■

• Visakha dasi is a photographer, filmmaker, and published author. For books by Visakha, please visit www.our-spiritual-journey.com



Photo: © BBTI

Top: In 1971 Srila Prabhupada planted the seed of devotion to Krishna in Moscow. **Above:** In May 1974 Srila Prabhupada met with Cardinal Pignedoli, Pope Paul VI’s secretary. **Right:** Disciples on a morning walk with Srila Prabhupada in Paris, 1974.



Fifty YEARS OF

Achievements

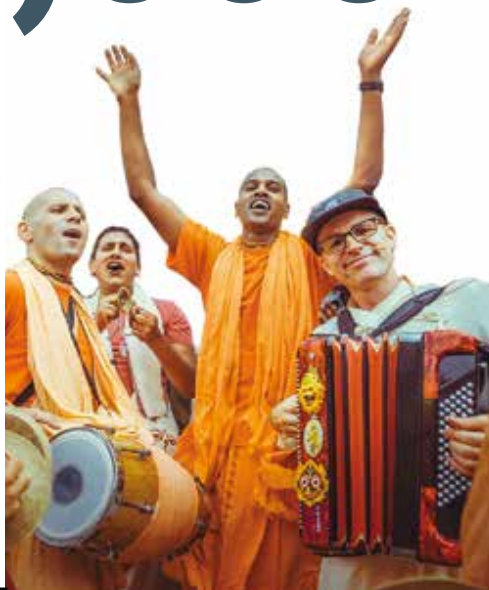
The number of ISKCON centers, temples, schools and colleges worldwide

650



95,000

Since 1966, around 95,000 devotees have taken formal spiritual initiation (clerical vows).



3600

There are 3600 home study/ worship (Bhakti Vriksha) groups worldwide that meet weekly.

516m

The number of books and magazines published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT), and distributed worldwide since 1966.



110

There are 110 Hare Krishna vegetarian restaurants worldwide.



9m

It is estimated that more than nine million people worship at ISKCON temples each year.





3 billion

More than three billion meals of sanctified vegetarian food (*prasadam*) have been distributed globally since 1966.



1.2m

1.2 million meals of sanctified vegetarian food (*prasadam*) are served daily to children in India as part of the ISKCON Food Relief Foundation's 'Midday Meal' or 'Annamrita' program.

65

There are sixty-five ISKCON farms/eco villages globally.



212,992



Bhaktivedanta Hospital in Mumbai, India, one of nine ISKCON affiliated hospitals, medical clinics, eye clinics, and hospices in India, treated 212,992 patients last year.



6000

There are more than 6000 Krishna festivals held around the world every year in ISKCON.

260,000

Padayatra teams have walked 260,000km (161,000 miles) worldwide visiting 52,000 towns and villages in 110 countries.

Padayatra is a Sanskrit word meaning 'festival or pilgrimage on foot.' ISKCON's Founder-Acharya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada introduced the first ISKCON *padayatra* with bullock carts in 1976, in India. Many more followed on all continents, lasting from a few days to several years.

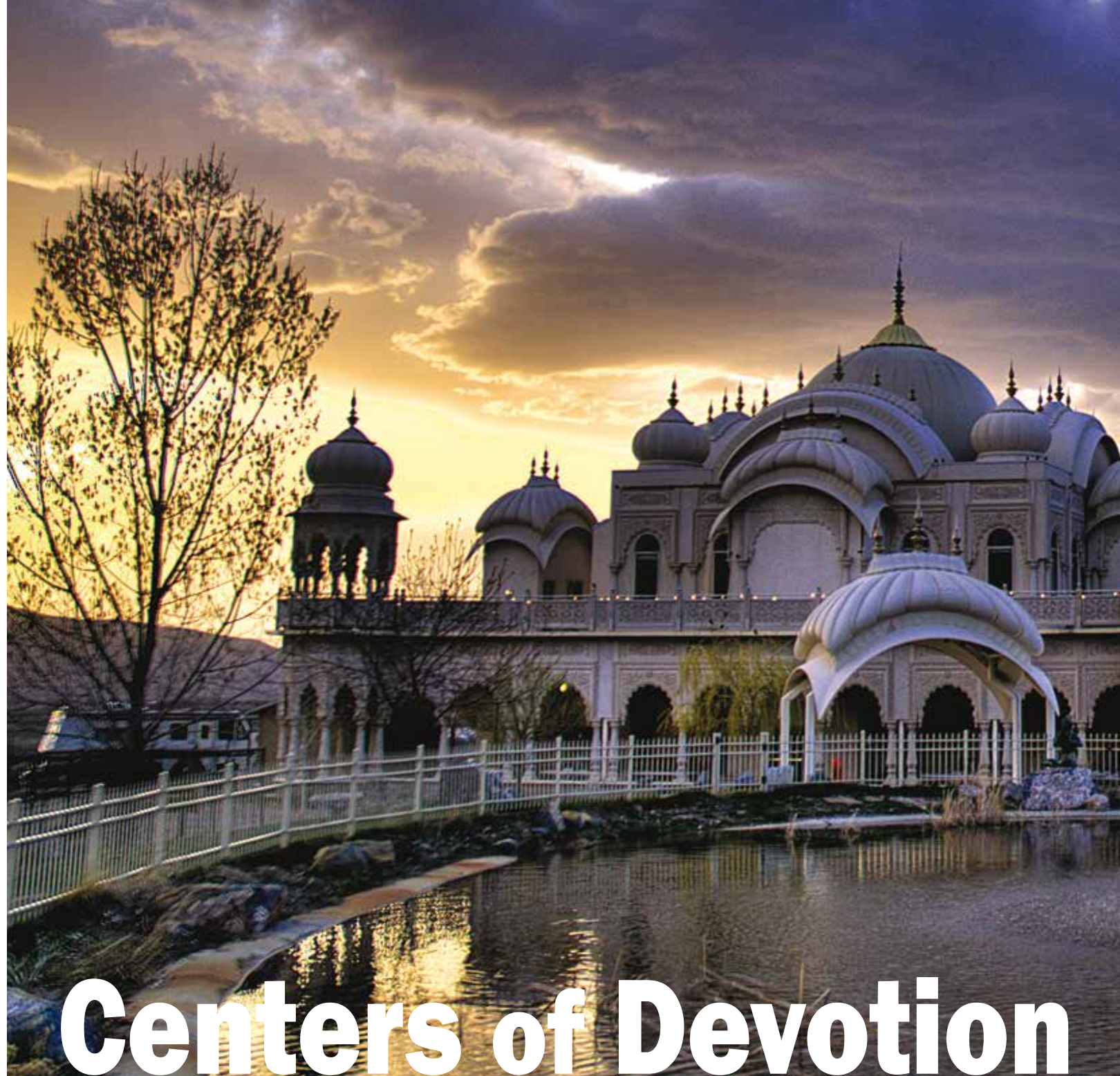
A *padayatra's* purpose is to spread the holy names of God, distribute spiritual literature, promote simple living, high thinking and

cow protection, hold cultural festivals and make friends with all kinds of people at the grassroots level.

One hundred and fifty *padayatra* teams, with approximately 10,000 participants, have walked 260,000km (161,000 miles).

This is almost 6.5 times the Earth's circumference. *Padayatra* Worldwide has visited 52,000 towns and villages in 110 countries since its inception in 1976.





Centers of Devotion

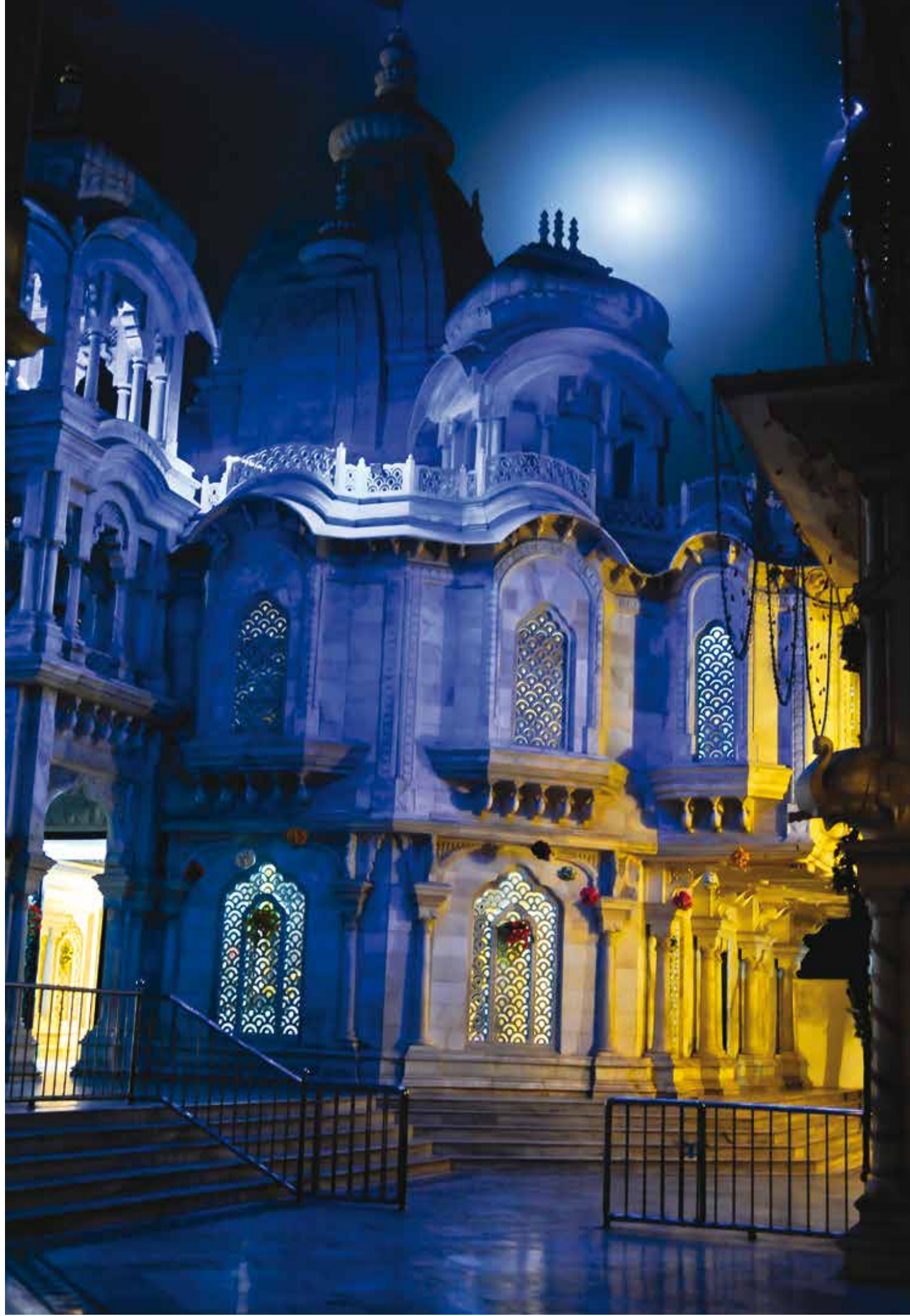
The places of worship or temples pictured here are not simply bricks and mortar, but hubs of devotional activity. They are artistic and spiritual expressions of the joy of devotion—places for spiritual upliftment, education, and culture. We invite you to visit a Krishna temple near you and be inspired by its atmosphere of peace and beauty.





Clockwise from left: Radha Krishna temple in Spanish Fork, Utah, USA; ISKCON temple, Kathmandu, Nepal; Radha Krishna Temple of Devotion and Understanding, Penang, Malaysia; Krishna Balarama temple, Gabarone, Botswana; New Vrindaban, West Virginia, USA; Bhaktivedanta Manor, Hertfordshire, UK.







**Far left: Srila Prabhupada's memorial at Krishna Balarama temple, Vrindavana, India.
Left: ISKCON's Sri Radha Radhanath temple, Durban, South Africa.**



**Center left: Radha Krishna temple, New Delhi, India.
Center above: ISKCON's temple, Nairobi, Kenya.**

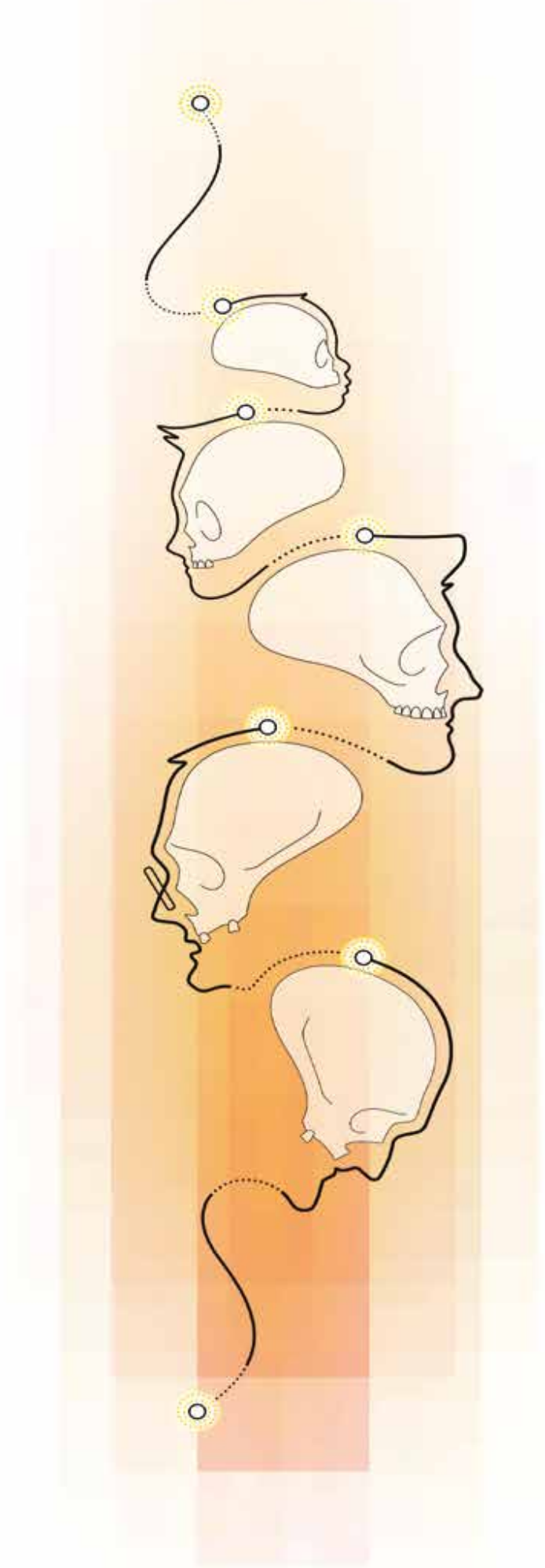


**Left: Interior of the Nova Gokula temple Pindamonhangaba, Brazil.
Above: Exterior of the Nova Gokula temple.**

What We Believe

You've seen the Hare Krishnas chanting and dancing in the street, but what do you really know about them? Mukunda Goswami, one of the earliest members of the movement, fills in the gaps ...

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a worldwide community of devotees, or Vaishnavas, practicing bhakti-yoga, loving service to Krishna. Krishna is a name for God that means 'All-Attractive.' ISKCON is also known as 'the Hare Krishnas,' or the Krishna consciousness movement. It's part of the Vaishnava, or monotheistic, tradition within Hindu culture.



Basic Principles

The following eight principles form the basis of ISKCON's philosophy:

1. By sincerely cultivating spiritual knowledge, we can be free from anxiety and reach a state of pure happiness in this lifetime.

2. We are not our bodies but eternal souls, parts and parcels of God, or Krishna. The soul transmigrates into different bodies according to the consciousness at the time of death. As eternal souls, we are all brothers and sisters, and Krishna is ultimately our common father.

3. Krishna is eternal, all-knowing, omnipresent, all-powerful, and all-attractive. He is the father of all living beings and sustains the entire cosmic creation. He is also known as God the Father, Allah, Buddha, Jehovah, and Yahweh.

4. The Absolute Truth is revealed in the *Vedas*,* the oldest scriptures in the world. The essence of the *Vedas* is found in the *Bhagavad-gita*, a literal record of Krishna's words.

5. We gain spiritual knowledge from a genuine spiritual master.

6. Practicing vegetarianism and offering all our food to God before eating purifies our consciousness, minimizes the violence in the world, and frees us from bad karma, or material reactions.

7. All our actions should be done as offerings to Krishna and not for selfish motives.

8. The best way to attain self-realization and pure love of God in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy is to chant His holy names. The easiest method for most people is to chant the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* or the 'great mantra':

Left: The body changes from youth to old age, but the soul never dies. It takes another body depending on the consciousness at death.

Right: Krishna, or God, in His beautiful two-handed form, plays His divine flute.



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

Chant the Names of God

The *maha-mantra* (above) is composed of three Sanskrit names of the Supreme Being: Hare, Krishna and Rama. Hare addresses the energy of the Lord as the supreme pleasure potency, Radha, who helps us in reaching Krishna, or God. Both Krishna (the All-Attractive) and Rama (the Source of All Pleasure) directly address the Lord.

This chanting comes directly from the spiritual platform, surpassing all lower states of consciousness—sensual, mental, and intellectual. People from all walks of life can experience spiritual and personal fulfilment just by chanting the names of God. This chanting can be done either as an individual practice (*japa*)—chanting quietly on beads as a personal meditation, similar to the recitation of the prayers on a Christian rosary or on Islamic prayer beads—or singing more loudly in a group, which is called *kirtana* (see page 34).

The Essence

The basic concept of ISKCON's philosophy is the understanding that we are not our material bodies, but rather that our true identity is the soul within.

You could say that the Krishna consciousness movement is not exactly a religion, but an educational and cultural system that is open to everyone. Admittedly, the complete philosophy is a detailed one. However, we all like to eat, sing, dance, and make friends! These activities form the main functions of the movement and are performed in a spirit of service to Krishna, or God. ■

* Anything relating to the *Vedas* is referred to as 'Vedic,' a term used throughout this magazine.



Singing in the Streets

Most people around the world have seen and heard Hare Krishna devotees singing Hare Krishna and dancing in the streets—from Leningrad to Tokyo, Sydney to London, New York to Kolkata. This singing of the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* is recommended in the ancient spiritual texts of India as the best way to understand the Divine in this modern age.

Clockwise from left: The nightlights of downtown Tokyo and happy Hare Krishna devotees; youth chanting in the UK; spectators in Tokyo join in the congregational singing of God's holy names; young ladies in colorful saris stand out against the grey skies of Moscow.



**HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA
KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE
HARE RAMA HARE RAMA
RAMA RAMA HARE HARE**



Clockwise from top: An elegant group chanting on a boulevard in Germany; creating a blaze of color, devotees weave through the holiday crowd in Byron Bay, Australia; saffron robes and flying flags entertain onlookers at a fair in Germany; the smile says it all—one of the Hare Krishna devotees during the popular Krishna 'Polish Tour.'

Lessons to Live By

Education is vital to the development of every society.

Recognizing this, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) has established various seats of learning and educational institutions around the world for its members and their children.

By Prana dasa



As ISKCON has matured since its incorporation in 1966, schooling for its children and adult education now have both increased in prominence.

Hare Krishna schools around the globe—from primary to tertiary—have a strong focus on teaching good character and behavior as well as the study of the usual subjects found in mainstream schools. Electives include the performing and fine arts, philosophy, drama, biology, chemistry, and physics.

Recently, an ISKCON-affiliated chain

of primary schools in the UK, the Avanti Schools Trust—which incorporates elements of the Vedic, or Hindu, culture in its educational philosophy and curriculum—has received high commendations from government agencies for its academic excellence.

ISKCON's communities located in Vrindavana, India, and Mayapur, India, have both been long-standing providers of systematic and comprehensive education for both children and adults.



Photo: Parvati devi dasi



Homeschooling

Another educational initiative gaining momentum with Krishna families is homeschooling. Whether in remote areas or big cities, the homeschool network in ISKCON is growing with the assistance of committed parents and other professionals in the field of education. Of course, not all families go this route, but those who do have seen significant academic results.

Most ISKCON temples worldwide conduct Sunday school classes for children ranging from five years of age to late teens. These Sunday schools allow the younger members to learn about spiritual life and the Krishna tradition, while having fun socializing and sharing experiences with their peers.

ISKCON's Adult Education

Adult education, both formal and informal, via seminars and university-linked curricula, is an important part of ISKCON. The systematic study and teaching of the movement's main texts—*Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, *The Nectar of Devotion*, *The Nectar of Instruction*, and *Shri Ishopanishad*—are firmly entrenched as standard benchmarks throughout ISKCON internationally.

There are currently numerous providers of these studies, some of which offer degrees via an online course of study.

These providers have been responsive to the demand and requirements of an evolving ISKCON.



Today, ISKCON Mayapur offers a traditional “heritage approach” to formal education on one campus (Bhaktivedanta Academy) and a Cambridge Examinations stream on another. The heritage approach of education is based on Vedic principles of individualism. ISKCON Mayapur has also developed a National School that caters mostly to the local Bengali community. It is a model of blended holistic education, drawing deeply from cul-

tural roots and also satisfying National Government board affiliation standards.

As far as the under 18-year-olds go, students generally like what they learn, relate well with their instructors, and do well academically in all three types of schools.

In terms of higher education, many devotees now successfully hold doctorate degrees, and ISKCON Hungary and ISKCON Belgium provide university qualification degrees and diplomas.



Clockwise from top: At the Avanti school in the UK, teenagers study in a friendly atmosphere; the Queen and Prince Philip at a performance by Avanti students; classes for adult learners; Hare Krishna school sports days such as this one in Australia still feature old favorites like sack races.

The institutions heading up the systematic study of the many books written by ISKCON's Founder-Acharya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, have been the Vrindavana Institute for Higher Education, the Mayapur Institute, and the Mayapur Academy.

Preserving Gaudiya Traditions

An important new educational effort is the Bhaktivedanta Research Centre. It was established in Kolkata, India, in 2009 to collect, preserve and disseminate the ancient literature of Gaudiya Vaishnavism;* to perform research in

historical Sanskrit and Bengali texts; and to develop an extensive research library.

Many antique scripts on palm leaves and tree slivers from the pre-print era have been discovered or donated and are being preserved for posterity using advanced technology. The research center hosts scholars from around the world, allowing them convenient access to an extensive body of literature and artifacts.

ISKCON & Academia

By Shaunaka Rishi dasa, Director of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies (affiliated with Oxford University)

Young Western men and women taking to Eastern dress and practices was not the most unusual sight in the 1960s, but among them the Hare Krishnas went that extra mile. Here was an almost total transplantation of an orthodox Indian spiritual tradition, and for the few scholars of Indian religious traditions around at that time this was manna from heaven.

Dr. Thomas J. Hopkins, Emeritus Professor Franklin & Marshall College, was one of the first scholars to make contact with ISKCON members. Dr. Hopkins recognized this Gaudiya Vaishnava movement, but found that the devotees were a little unclear about their historical, geographical, and cultural identity. Professor Emeritus Joseph O'Connell (1940–2012), another of the early observers, also found that they were unclear about their roots.

Within a few years, the earliest devotees—many of whom had attended university before they joined ISKCON—started their own inquiries. The Bhaktivedanta Institute was formed, and later the Matsya Project, which was aimed at microfilming Vaishnava literature in India, eventually developing into the Institute of Vaishnava Studies.

An important motivation for ISKCON's engagement with academia arose in the mid-1970s when the movement needed scholars to explain who they were, explanations that now defined the devotees. The relationship between ISKCON and scholars has matured to the point where it is understood in ISKCON that scholarship and devotion are important bedfellows.

Devotee scholars gained tenure at prestigious universities and were awarded major research grants. Perhaps most importantly they are now systematically developing a distinct field of Gaudiya studies, the study of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu* and His movement.

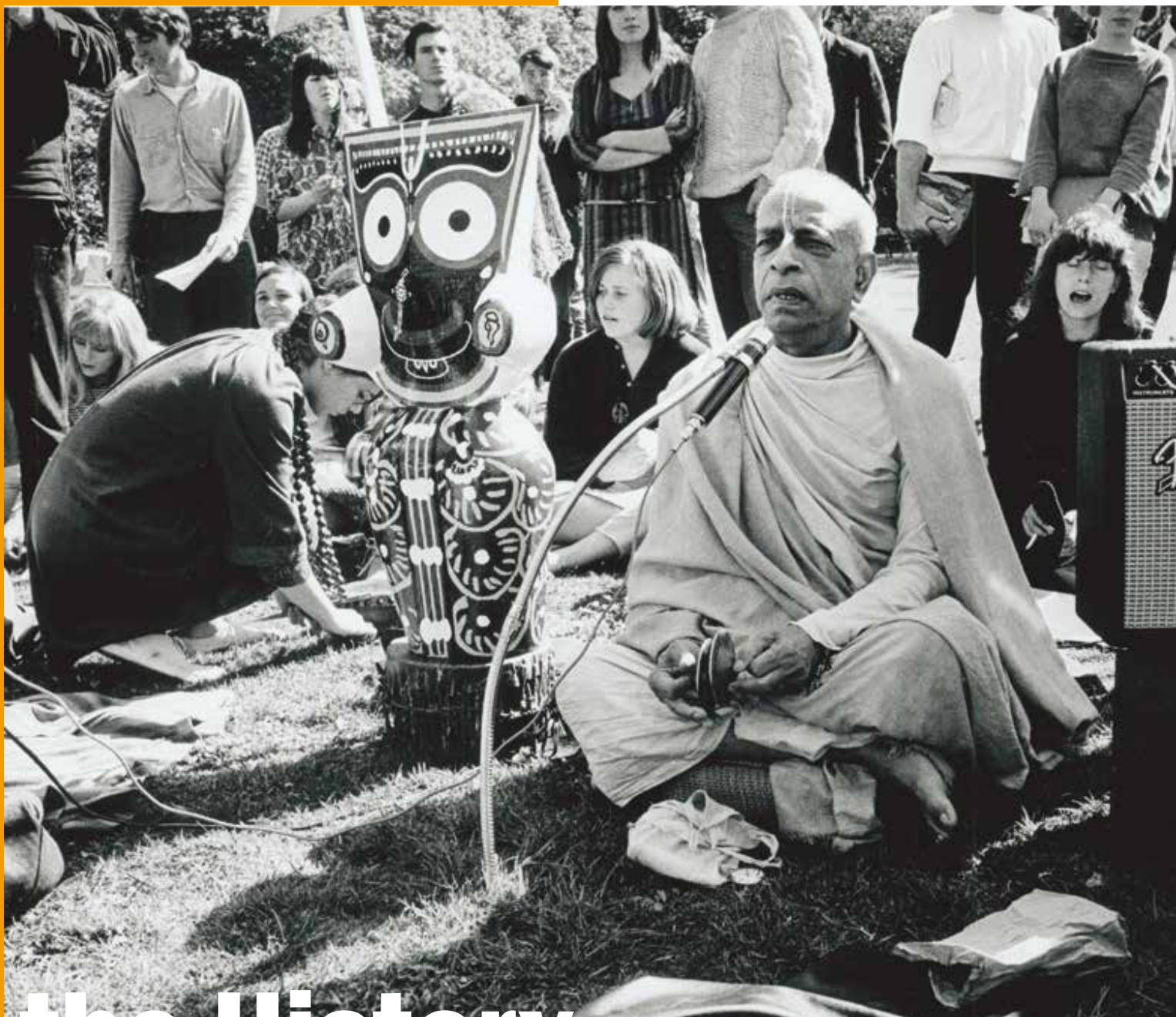
* See page 36 for more on Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.



Professional Development

As well as formal certificate and degree courses, ISKCON provides many adult courses on contemporary topics. This enables members to develop their skills and serve their communities. Courses range from Conflict Resolution and Communication Skills to Leadership. ■

* For more on Gaudiya Vaishnava teachings, see page 20.



the History of a Movement

Is ISKCON a new religion?

Dr. Angela Burt gives an overview of
how the Hare Krishnas began ...

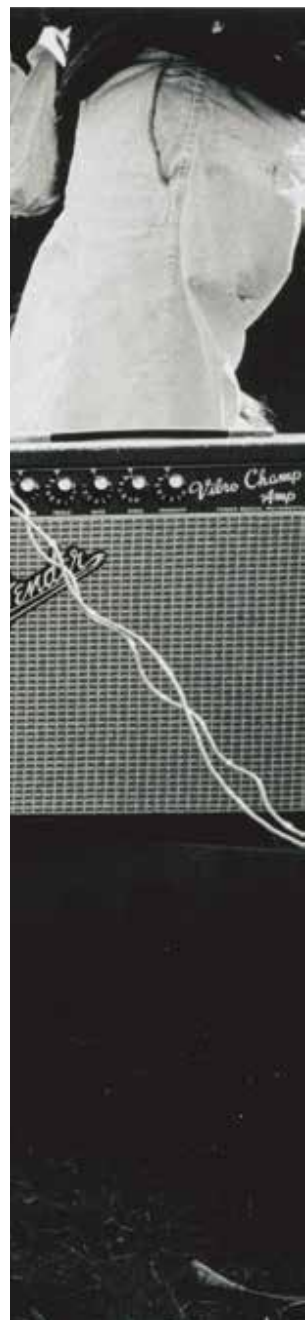


Photo: © BBTI

“

Although only fifty years old as an institution in 2016, ISKCON is part of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition that can be traced back to 15th century Bengal, India.”

Photo: © BBTI



The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was founded in 1966 in New York City by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, later referred to by his followers with the honorific title ‘Srila Prabhupada.’

Srila Prabhupada is part of a succession of gurus in the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya lineage, a religious community within the tradition of Vaishnavas (devotees of Krishna).

This succession of spiritual teachers is vitally important within the tradition because it is considered essential to hear from a guru in order to understand the true meaning and purpose of life.

Although only fifty years old as an institution in 2016, ISKCON is part of this Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition that can be traced back to 15th century Bengal, India. At that time, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is accepted by Gaudiya Vaishnavas as an incarnation of Krishna acting as a devotee, spread love of God by His joyous singing and dancing and pure devotion to Krishna.

Inspired by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, a line of gurus continued until the late 19th century when Bhaktivinoda Thakura revolutionized the dissemination of the teachings of Krishna. (Bhaktivinoda Thakura was a recognized scholar of his time and a highly influential magistrate during the British Raj.) He did this by authoring and mass-

Far left: One of the first Hare Krishna *kirtana* events in the West with Srila Prabhupada in Tompkins Square Park, New York. Left: Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, Srila Prabhupada’s guru, with India’s then British Governor. Below: Bhaktivinoda Thakura, the father of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and one of the great *acharyas* in the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya line.

producing high-quality books that appealed to the intellectuals of Bengal at that time. After his passing in 1914, his son Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura continued his efforts by forming his own preaching mission, the Gaudiya Math, in Bengal in 1920. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was a renunciant and guru of formidable intellect and scholarly accomplishment.

Pathways

Srila Prabhupada was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India, on 1 September 1896. His parents, who were devout devotees of Krishna, named him Abhay Charan De.

Abhay Charan later studied at Scottish Churches’ College in Kolkata. In 1922, he met the great Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and later accepted him as his guru, taking formal initiation from him into the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition in November 1932.

Although Srila Prabhupada’s contact with his guru was infrequent, the relationship was a significant one, and he took his preceptor’s instructions deep within his heart. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati’s most important order to him was to spread the teachings of Krishna in English. By extension, this meant teaching Krishna consciousness—love for Krishna—in the West.

Through his extraordinary success in following the order of his guru, Srila Prabhupada takes his place among other prominent spiritual masters in the lineage of teachers in the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya tradition.

In 1937, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura passed away, leaving his disciples to manage his preaching mission.

After many years of family life, in 1954 Srila Prabhupada accepted the

“

... devotees married, moved out of the ashram environment, had children, and took up jobs in order to support their growing families.”

renounced order and totally dedicated his life to the mission of his guru. In 1959 he formalized that renunciation by accepting the order of *sannyasa*, forsaking the comforts of married life. After many years of preparation, he left India on 13 August 1965 and set sail for the USA with a free passage aboard the steamship *Jaladuta*. After a difficult voyage during which he suffered two heart attacks, he arrived in Boston on 17 September 1965.

Hippies into Happies

Not knowing what to expect, when Srila Prabhupada settled in New York City he came face to face with the famous counter-culture movement of the 1960s. The counter culture offered an alternative to mainstream values, and its participants were known as ‘hippies.’

Disaffected American youths were questioning the material values that formed the basis of mainstream culture and consequently attendance at his classes gradually increased. Although his following was relatively small, Srila Prabhupada formalized his preaching mission by incorporating it as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) on 13 July 1966.

Exponential Growth: 1960s–1970s

In 1966 Srila Prabhupada’s students engaged in their first public chanting (*kirtana*) of the holy names of God, for which Hare Krishna devotees would later become famous worldwide.

With the assistance of his students, Srila Prabhupada rented in New York City, the first location of note being a storefront at 26 Second Avenue in Manhattan.



Photo: Murfiadana © BBT

Above: Srila Prabhupada tirelessly traveled around the world, and with great compassion guided his young disciples in their efforts to serve Krishna and his mission to uplift human society.

After these humble beginnings, the movement’s mission to give Krishna consciousness to Westerners flourished and expanded exponentially from then onward.

ISKCON Press was established in late 1966, with the aim of publishing Srila Prabhupada’s translations of Gaudiya Vaishnava devotional texts.

Responding to an invitation from some of his students, Srila Prabhupada went to San Francisco in 1967 to establish his mission there.

In San Francisco he led the public chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra at the Mantra Rock Dance, a concert organized by his disciples to facilitate this public chanting. The event also featured some of the most popular American rock bands of the day.

In 1968 Srila Prabhupada’s mission spread to the UK, when he sent three married couples to establish a Krishna temple there. Drawing upon a combination of ingenuity, bravado and determination, in 1969 they engineered

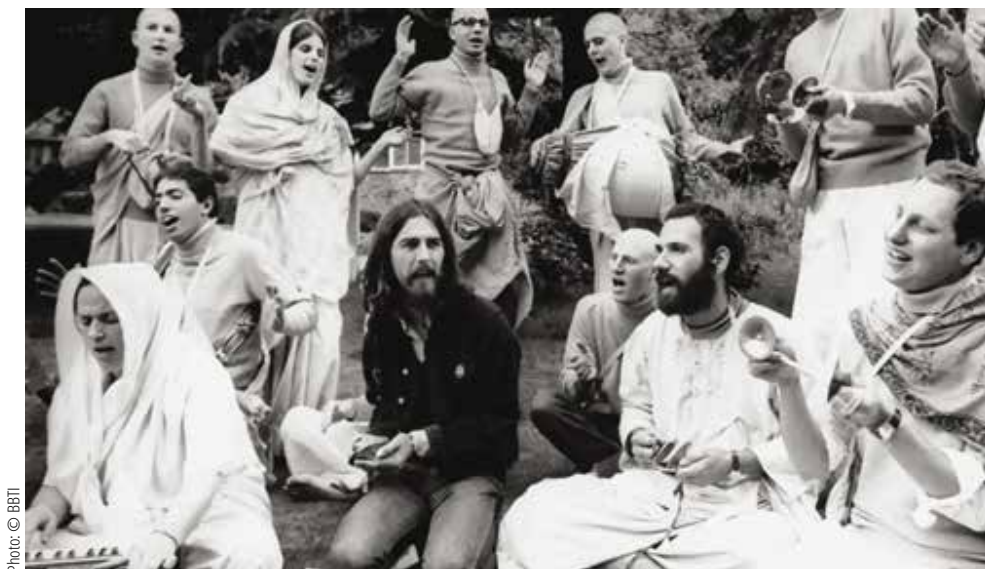
a meeting with The Beatles. Soon after, they recorded chanting the Hare Krishna mantra with The Beatles, which was released by Apple Records. The record sold 70,000 copies on the first day.

Within a few weeks the devotees appeared on the popular TV show *Top of the Pops*, singing the Hare Krishna mantra. ‘The Hare Krishnas,’ as they had come to be known, had become a household name.

In September 1969, Srila Prabhupada visited London to see the progress his disciples had made in establishing the mission there.

At that time he met George Harrison and resided at John Lennon’s country estate, Tittenhurst Park, where he discussed spiritual topics with John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

By the early 1970s Srila Prabhupada had established centers all over the USA and in the UK, Europe, India, other parts of Asia, South America, Australia, and Africa. Most of them included ashrams where full-time



Above: George Harrison of The Beatles chanting Hare Krishna with ISKCON devotees in London, UK.

members could reside in order to serve the mission. By this time, his followers numbered in the hundreds, with most members being in the USA and the UK.

The society now needed a management structure to support it, so Srila Prabhupada assigned a temple president at each center. In July 1970 he found it necessary to form a governing board, which he named the Governing Body Commission (GBC).

This governing body then comprised twelve members who would assist Srila Prabhupada in managing the affairs of ISKCON. In that same month, Srila Prabhupada established the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT), which became ISKCON's in-house publishing entity, producing his commented translations of Vaishnava devotional texts.

Back to India

In 1970 Srila Prabhupada's focus turned to India when he visited his homeland with some disciples, showcasing his success in convincing Westerners to become devotees of Krishna. Two years later, he would

How is ISKCON Managed?

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is governed by a group of senior devotees, men and women, called the Governing Body Commission (GBC).

At the time of writing, the GBC body has thirty-two members who are individually responsible for overseeing the management and spiritual standards of ISKCON centers in assigned geographic regions. The governing body is administered through a GBC executive committee (EC) that consists of a chairperson, and first and second vice chairpersons. These executive posts are held for one-year rotating assignments, after which time the chairperson's term of office expires, the first vice chairperson succeeds the chairperson, and the second vice chairperson succeeds the first vice chairperson. The governing body then elects a new second vice chairperson to join the executive committee each year.

GBC members also supervise specific projects, initiatives, and ministries. Following the instructions of Srila Prabhupada, the GBC body convenes yearly in Mayapur, West Bengal, India, for its Annual General Meeting. They discuss proposals, specific issues, and

projects within ISKCON, and pass resolutions by majority vote.

Often working under the GBC are regional governing bodies (RGBs) comprised of GBC zonal secretaries and additional leaders within the region. RGBs undertake the supervision of ISKCON centers and projects on a region-specific level, such as Europe, South America, and India.

According to Srila Prabhupada's directions, all ISKCON temples are financially independent, yet function under the ecclesiastical management of the GBC. A temple president, who is responsible for carrying out the mission locally manages each ISKCON temple and works toward achieving the goals of ISKCON as outlined by Srila Prabhupada. While working under the supervision of their assigned GBC zonal secretary, temple presidents are encouraged to act with local initiative and are responsible for overseeing all functions of a temple. Moreover, temple presidents have the responsibility of maintaining in their local center ISKCON's spiritual standards as outlined by Srila Prabhupada.



Above: Srila Prabhupada, who was eager for Krishna consciousness to be established in the world's major capitals, is seen here visiting his disciples in London in the late 1960s.

Photo: © BBT

take the first steps in the construction of temples on land that ISKCON had purchased in Mumbai (Bombay) and the holy sites of Vrindavana and Mayapur.

In May 1971, ISKCON signed a contract with the Macmillan Publishing Company to print an unabridged edition of the founder's translation and commentary of the *Bhagavad-gita*, entitled *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*.

A month later Srila Prabhupada visited Russia, and although his stay was tightly regulated by the authorities due to the system of governance there, he was able to discuss Krishna consciousness with at least one academic and one young Russian man who became a disciple. This was a small beginning, but it later expanded into a movement that attracted many thousands of interested spiritual seekers in a country where formalized religious and spiritual practice had been suppressed.

During the 1970s Srila Prabhupada remained very involved in overseeing ISKCON, but he increasingly delegated the society's management to his most capable disciples. This allowed him to work on translating and writing his commentary on the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, a voluminous devotional text of central importance for Vaishnavas.

Recognizing Srila Prabhupada's prominence as a spiritual leader, the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi met with him in August 1975. Also in 1975 he founded the Bhaktivedanta Institute, comprised of disciples who had PhDs in the sciences and other disciplines, with the aim of challenging scientific and intellectual paradigms that negated God's existence.

Preserving the Legacy

On 14 November 1977, Srila Prabhupada passed away in India at the age of 81 and ISKCON was thrown into a deep state of mourning. For many devotees, the thought of ISKCON without their guru was unimaginable. Nevertheless, they took it as their sacred duty to carry on in order to preserve his mission.

Srila Prabhupada had named the GBC as the ultimate managing authority, and that governing body as well as the rest of the managerial structure that he had built since 1965 remained intact. This, along with the dedication of his disciples, ensured that his mission would continue even in his absence. Additionally, in accordance with his wishes, some of his most senior disciples became gurus so that new members could have the benefit of a living guru.

In the 1980s ISKCON transitioned from an ashram-based institution to more community based, as many ISKCON devotees married, moved out of the ashram environment, had children, and took up jobs to support their growing families.

The 1990s saw a further change as more devotees returned to university. Some did this to improve their job prospects and support their families, and others to study the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition academically. The latter change has given rise to a number of educational and academic initiatives in ISKCON, which have facilitated devotees wishing to study and teach the tradition academically.

These initiatives include the founding in 1997 of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, which is now a recognised independent center of Oxford University, and Bhaktivedanta College in Belgium, which confers accredited degrees to its students.

Other initiatives include ISKCON Communications, which now serves as an interface between ISKCON and the media, organises interfaith forums, and addresses issues of religious freedom among other things.

These later developments are just a few highlights of the many activities that have been taking place in ISKCON, some of which are covered in this magazine.

The Pivotal Person

It is in large part because of the organizational structure that Srila Prabhupada set up, his commitment to high spiritual and moral standards, as well as the efforts of his followers to keep him in the center that have ensured that the mission he began has not only survived, but also flourished. ■

• Dr Angela Burt (Arya devi dasi) is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies.



The Next Generation

Manorama dasa, ISKCON's Minister for Youth, talks to Bhakti devi dasi about how young people are bringing Krishna into their lives.

Bhakti devi dasi (BDD): How does the next generation of young adults, who were raised as Hare Krishnas, feel about the movement?

Manorama dasa (MD): Imparting your values, beliefs, and practices to your children takes time, love, and patience. There's no guarantee they'll do as you do. Some youth explore other paths, but for the most part, they end up maintaining their ties to the family of Krishna devotees.

BDD: Would they raise their own children to be Hare Krishnas?

MD: I recently filmed a documentary about a Hare Krishna school. There were many third-generation children attending whose grandparents had joined ISKCON and whose parents were raised in the movement. I interviewed parents who had a real passion about the place. So, yes, a lot of next-generation parents want to give their kids a Krishna upbringing.

BDD: How do you inspire youth in their faith? I've heard about the youth bus tours...

MD: My wife, Jaya Sri Radhe devi dasi, and I volunteer with ISKCON Youth Ministry to organize adventure camps during the

summer and winter holidays. We take buses with 50 youth, aged between 17–25, traveling across the USA, Canada and Mexico, visiting temples, nature spots, and religious festivals. In addition to sight-seeing and outdoor adventures, the youth engage in service projects and put on festivals. This gives them a real sense of accomplishment. At the end of the day, they'd be like, "We did it! That was awesome!"

In Mexico, the youth put on a play about the *Bhagavad-gita*, our main philosophical text. Afterwards, a hotel owner insisted on buying 200 copies of the book to put in each of his rooms. It's at times like these we realize we have something special.

BDD: How do next generation young adults integrate into the world, and yet maintain their identity?

MD: We're seeing confident young Krishna devotees who've grown up in the movement find their place in the world. Some are drawn to spiritual vocations as yoga teachers, or temple managers and priests, while others pursue careers as doctors, business managers, IT administrators,

teachers, lawyers, builders, while maintaining their Krishna practices. A dentist friend of mine performs his daily *japa* meditation while commuting to work. With his schedule and three kids, it's the best he can do.

BDD: Do the younger Krishnas share their beliefs with peers in the secular world?

MD: Certainly they do. Some youth run Yoga Clubs at universities to share meditation, yoga, and vegetarian cooking classes with fellow students and faculty. Just setting a good example for others can be a powerful way to share your beliefs. People are fascinated by our alternative lifestyle, Sanskrit names and exotic music, and want to learn more.

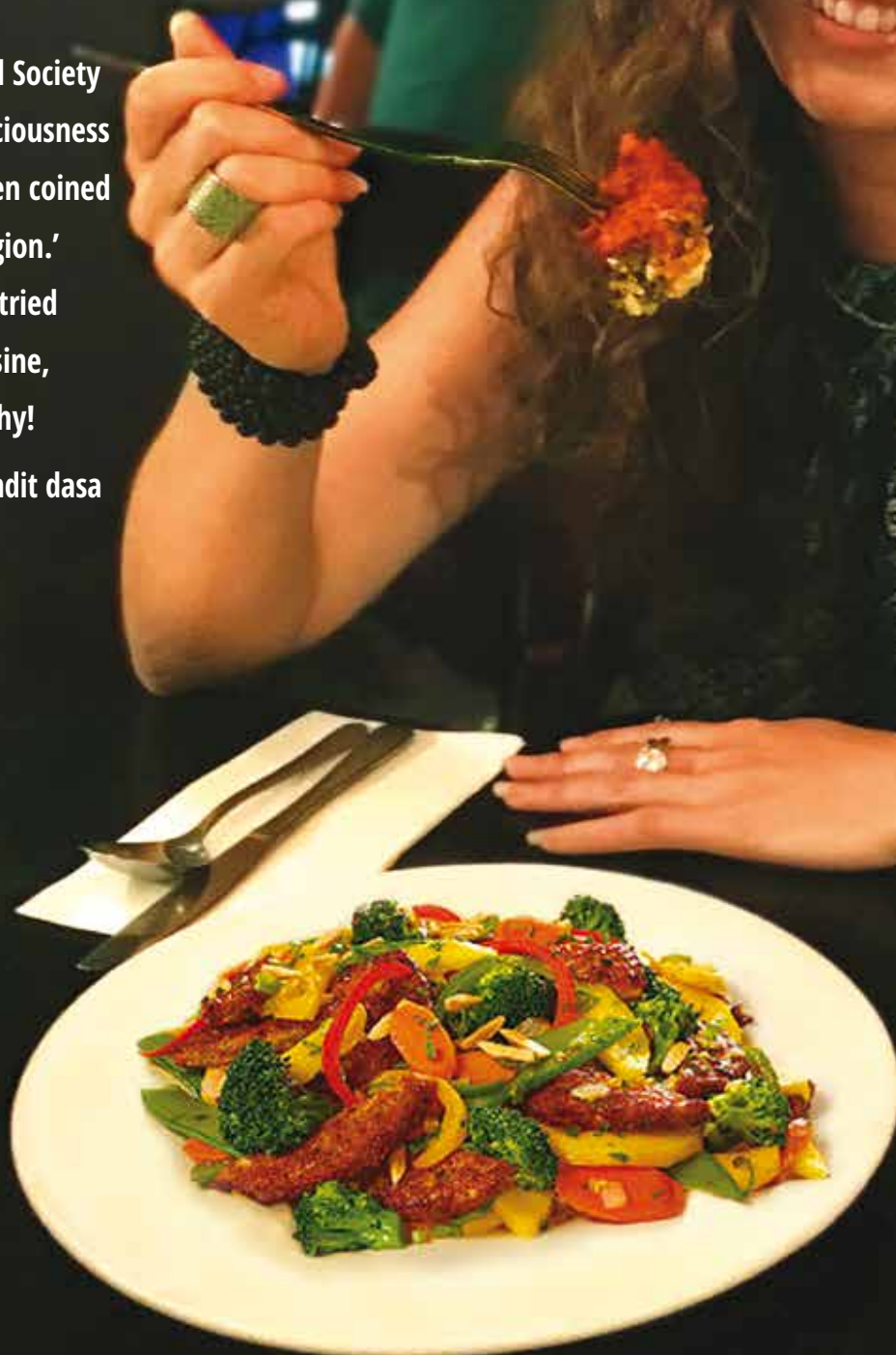
BDD: As the younger generation matures, will they continue to be involved in the movement?


MD: They already are. They serve on temple management boards, give donations, help organize festivals. Looking ahead to the next 50 years, we'll have thousands of Hare Krishna professionals who have a wealth of life experience, giving back to society at large and to ISKCON in ways we can't imagine. ■

A Festival of Food

The International Society
for Krishna Consciousness
(ISKCON) has been coined
'the Kitchen Religion.'
If you have ever tried
Hare Krishna cuisine,
you will know why!

By Damodara Pandit dasa





His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, ISKCON's Founder-*Acharya*, was an exceptional cook and a very gracious, welcoming host.

Many of his early followers in New York City's Lower East Side describe Srila Prabhupada's cooking as one of the first things that attracted them to him in their spiritual search. In his first storefront temple and ashram, Srila Prabhupada trained his young disciples not only in the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gita*, but also in the art of cooking delectable vegetarian meals.

Srila Prabhupada used his excellent culinary skills to make delicious preparations for the pleasure of Krishna and the young seekers visiting the temple. By eating this sanctified food (known in Sanskrit as *prasadam* or 'God's mercy'), they became further attracted to bhakti-yoga, or the science of devotion to Krishna.

Needless to say, everyone enjoyed those cooking lessons—especially the final test of tasting! The way Srila Prabhupada exposed his young students to the devotional art of cooking was as important for many as was the meditative chanting and deep philosophy he taught.

As ISKCON expanded, Srila Prabhupada encouraged his disciples to continue cooking and distributing *prasadam*. Today, the movement he founded has grown to a worldwide network of hundreds of communities and projects that together provide millions of sanctified vegetarian meals each year.

Where to Go

Hare Krishna food is available at temples, Krishna restaurants, catering venues, and the movement's free food outlets all over the world. Beneficiaries range from patrons of ISKCON's fine vegetarian restaurants, to spiritual seekers attending the Sunday Feast at a local Krishna temple, to the poor and homeless who receive nutritious, free *prasadam* meals from Hare Krishna food relief programs.

If you visit a Hare Krishna temple during the famous Sunday Feast

“... I would walk the seven miles across town every Sunday night to get one good meal a week at the Hare Krishna temple.”

—Steve Jobs, Founder of Apple Inc



Far left: A guest at Govinda's restaurant in Sydney, Australia. Top: At the University of Florida, ISKCON has been providing student lunches for the past 38 years.

program or another one of ISKCON's many festivals (see page 44), you will discover a unique community experience that is now a global phenomenon.

“There is a deep sense of connection and camaraderie while eating a Krishna feast,” says Alalanath dasa, coordinator of the Sunday Feast program in New South Wales, Australia. “Enjoying a delicious vegetarian meal with friends and fellow pilgrims follows a tradition that has existed in India for thousands of years.”

There are also more than 100 affiliated Hare Krishna restaurants around the world. They can be found just around the corner from London's Oxford Street; within a castle near the Ardennes' foothills in Belgium; in the center of New York City's lower east side neighborhood; and near downtown Buenos Aires—just for starters. Each restaurant has its own ambiance and adapts its menu to the local culture, but all share in the unifying factor of providing delicious vegetarian meals cooked and served with love.

Govindas Catering, another ISKCON affiliated program, sends its trucks to attend music festivals in many parts

of the world, providing wholesome vegetarian options to attendees.

Says one catering crew member, Krishna Gana dasa, “I often hear our clients at music festivals say they’ve been waiting for us all year.”

Why So Delicious?

What is it that makes Krishna food so tasty? “The most important ingredient is that our food is carefully prepared as an offering of love to Krishna [God],” says chef, author, and TV cooking star Kurma dasa from Australia. “It’s part of our meditation to carefully select top quality ingredients and prepare the most delicious meals we can, knowing that we’re not doing so just to eat, but as a spiritual practice.”

Such meditation takes any drudgery out of cooking and makes it fun and even uplifting. Menus are planned with an understanding of the ‘six tastes’—bitter, sour, salty, pungent, astringent, and sweet—as explained in the ancient Indian health scripture, Ayurveda. A dedicated cook learns how to combine these



tastes using many ingredients, such as vegetables, fruit, grains, spices, and herbs, to create an extraordinary experience that looks, smells, and tastes wonderful.

Why Vegetarian?

Ancient Indian scriptures explain that a healthy vegetarian diet is sattvic—or in the mode of goodness—which increases the duration of life, giving strength, health, happiness, and satisfaction.

There are many references in these ancient texts confirming that only fruit, vegetables, grains, nuts, and dairy products are fit for human consumption. Thus Hare Krishna devotees refrain from



eating meat, fish, poultry or eggs.

From a medical point of view, there are many modern scientific reports that show clearly the link between meat-centered diets and cancer, heart disease, and other serious human ailments. From a spiritual perspective, because

eating meat requires killing innocent animals it consequently leads to bad karma (or reactions to sinful actions).

Feed a Hungry World

In 1974, when Srila Prabhupada saw village children in India competing with



Clockwise top: Children enjoying the lunchtime *prasadam* that ISKCON Food Relief Foundation distributes; Nelson Mandela dancing at a Hare Krishna Food for Life event; a happy guest with plates of Hare Krishna food; taste sensations—delicious vegetarian preparations found in Hare Krishna cuisine; ISKCON distributes free food in Tokyo, Japan; now that's a pot! ISKCON cooks for thousands.

HARE KRISHNA FOOD FOR LIFE

Hare Krishna Food for Life (FFL) has grown into the world's largest vegetarian food relief program. It is appreciated by so many around the world, rich and poor alike. Here are some of the testimonials that prominent and influential people have offered:

"Another important building block for new democracy is the love and goodwill we show to each other. That is the spirit of Masakhane, of bringing one another together. It is also the spirit of today's festival organized by Food for Life."

—Nelson Mandela

"Food for Life is an international, non-profit charitable organization that provides plant-based foods in over 60 countries around the world for malnourished people; people in disaster areas; wherever there is a need, they provide it ...

—Paul McCartney

"We don't have education about how to eat. We are eating too much meat and people are getting sick all the time. We have to show to the people what they need to eat. The doors are open for Food for Life. We are going to work together to get better food for our kids into the schools."

—Jose Mujica, Former President of Uruguay

"... though it may not get top mention on the nightly news, Food for Life is among the world's most intrepid relief organizations, in at least one case delivering food to a war-torn region after the Red Cross and other agencies gave up."

—*Vegetarian Times*, USA

dogs over scraps of discarded food, Srila Prabhupada, feeling great compassion, instructed his students, "No one within ten miles [16 km] of our temples should go hungry." In response to this order, his disciples—later joined by volunteers worldwide—were inspired to expand free *prasadam* distribution into a global network of kitchens, free cafés, and mobile units.

Since then, Hare Krishna Food for Life and other affiliated efforts have grown into the world's largest vegetarian food relief programs. They include mobile units that serve *prasadam* to the homeless within major cities and

distribute meals to thousands of needy victims of natural disasters.

As well as this initiative, ISKCON Food Relief Foundation, or 'Annamrita,' distributes hot, healthy lunches to more than 6000 schools across India. Since its launch in 2004, Annamrita has set up state-of-the-art kitchens in eight Indian states and provides 1.2 million meals every day to underprivileged school children.

Parasurama dasa, who distributes Krishna food to the needy all over Europe says, "These meals provide more than just sustenance; they are a means to share, connect, and offer support and spiritual love to those who need it." ■

A Timeless Tradition



A look at the roots of the Hare Krishna Movement by Dr. Ravi M. Gupta.

The Chaitanya Vaishnava or Hare Krishna tradition—also known as Gaudiya Vaishnavism—is famous for its scholarship, refining the practice and aesthetics of devotion into a sophisticated science. This devotional movement, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was constructed upon a solid foundation of philosophical argument and understanding.

While all Vaishnavas worship Vishnu—hence the term ‘Vaishnava’—Chaitanya Vaishnavas repose their devotion particularly in Krishna. For them, Lord Krishna’s (God’s) preeminence does not lie in His majesty, opulence or power, nor do these awesome attributes provide enough reason to love Him. The Supreme Deity is above all the Lord of

sweetness: a bluish-hued cowherd boy, the color of a monsoon cloud, who charms His friends and family with His beauty, sweet words, and the sound of His flute.

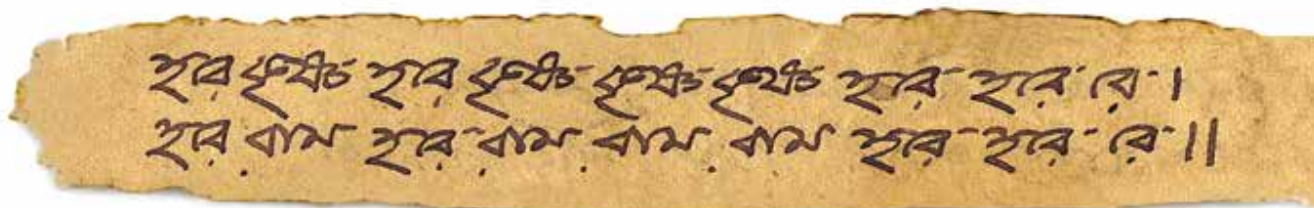
Yet Krishna is concerned with only one task—to enjoy relationships of love with His devotees. Every individual has a unique and personal relationship with Krishna—as a servant, friend, parent, or beloved.

The exemplars of service in these relationships are the residents of Vrindavana, whose love for Krishna springs not from regard for His majesty, but from spontaneous attachment. The topmost of these devotees is Radha, Krishna’s beloved consort and personal energy, who is inseparable from Him.

The Origins

It is the aspiration of devotees to re-establish their personal relationship with Krishna and recover their natural relationship to Him. This becomes possible by the careful execution of daily devotional practice, according to rules laid down in scripture.

The Chaitanya Vaishnava tradition was founded in the early 16th century by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu—Krishna Himself—who descended to teach human beings how to love Him by personal example. Within a short period of 48 years, He spread a wave of devotion to Krishna throughout India, particularly in Bengal, Orissa (now known as Odisha), and Vrindavana. (See page 36 for more details.)



Although Chaitanya Mahaprabhu left only eight verses by way of written work, the movement He inspired produced an astonishing array of poetical, philosophical, and ritual literature glorifying Krishna.

The famous six Gosvamis of Vrindavana, who were given a mandate by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to systematize and expound His teachings, composed much of the movement's early canonical literature. One of those Gosvamis, Jiva Gosvami, was said by renowned scholar of Vaishnavism and Bengali literature Janardan Chakravarti to be "One of the greatest of philosophers that India ever produced."^{*}

The tradition's middle period—in the 17th and 18th centuries—included such theologians as Vishvanatha Chakravarti, who wrote many books on devotional aesthetics and poetry, and Baladeva Vidyabhushana, who wrote the tradition's first complete commentary on the *Vedanta-sutra*.



Top: Handwritten *maha-mantra* in Bengali by Bhaktivinoda Thakura.

Above: A handwritten copy of *Chaitanya-Charitamrita* from 1760.

Left: A figure of Jiva Gosvami, said to be "One of the greatest philosophers that India ever produced."

Below: *Bhagavat Purana* from pre-print era written on palm leaves with annotations said to be by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.



A resurgence of Chaitanya Vaishnavism occurred in Bengal during the 19th and 20th centuries, with the prolific writing and institutional organization of the learned Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura.

The Chaitanya Vaishnava movement soon spread globally, thanks to the work of ISKCON's Founder-Acharya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. He was the specially empowered disciple of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, and he translated these canonical scriptures into English, publishing them with his erudite commentary. ■

^{*} Quotation from the book *Bengal Vaisnavism and Sri Chaitanya* by Janardan Chakravarti. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1986.



Far left: 19th century painting showing the ancient Ratha-yatra festival at Puri, the same festival ISKCON devotees now perform worldwide.

Above: The Bhaktivedanta Research Centre in Kolkata, West Bengal, India, where ancient and rare manuscripts, preserved using advanced technology, are made available to scholars worldwide.



Dr. Ravi M. Gupta is Director of the Religious Studies Program and the Charles Redd Endowed Chair of Religious Studies at Utah State University. A graduate of Oxford University, he is one of many Hare Krishna devotees who hold degrees in theology and religious studies from prestigious universities worldwide.



Many Faces of ISKCON

by **Bhakta dasa**

Hare Krishnas are not just people who wear Indian-style dress and dance and sing on the street. Nor do the members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) all hail from a specific ethnicity, country, gender, or age group.

Visitors to ISKCON communities find young people in jeans and t-shirts alongside middle-aged men in robes and ladies of Indian origin in brightly colored saris. It's this diversity that helps many to feel at home.

Evolution

Since its founding in 1966, ISKCON has evolved from a small spiritual organization to a significant global movement. Observers characterize the transformation of ISKCON—including its progression from a monastic to mostly lay community—as the sign of a healthy organization that has weathered its first fifty years and is here to stay.

Burke Rochford, a professor of sociology at Middlebury College and author of *Hare Krishna Transformed*, wrote: "It's entirely possible these days that a Hare Krishna could be living next door to you and you wouldn't know it ... They're just now part of the culture in ways that the average person couldn't have imagined some 35–40 years ago."

ISKCON's congregations have been bolstered in many countries by unprecedented numbers of people of Indian origin who, looking for a place of authentic Vedic, or Vaishnava Hindu, worship have also found a home in ISKCON.

Krishna devotees of all backgrounds apply the principles of simple living and high thinking in their lives.

In addition to a daily practice of chanting and meditating on the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*, they voluntarily refrain from eating meat, gambling, intoxication, and sex outside marriage.

Putting their faith into action, Krishna devotees network with vegetarian and animal rights activists; take leadership

in interfaith organizations; promote eco-friendly practices; support religious freedom initiatives; and participate in government events.

Growing Up

Despite the challenges it has faced, ISKCON's influence has been greater than its number of adherents would suggest. Author Philip Goldberg states in his book *American Veda*, "A number of early Hare Krishnas became scholars whose work constitutes a quiet but important stream of Vedic influence."

He continues: "The Hare Krishnas have probably generated more interest in reincarnation and vegetarianism than any other single source."

"For more than forty years, they have been drawing people of all inclinations to their colorful temples, festivals, feasts, [and] restaurants."

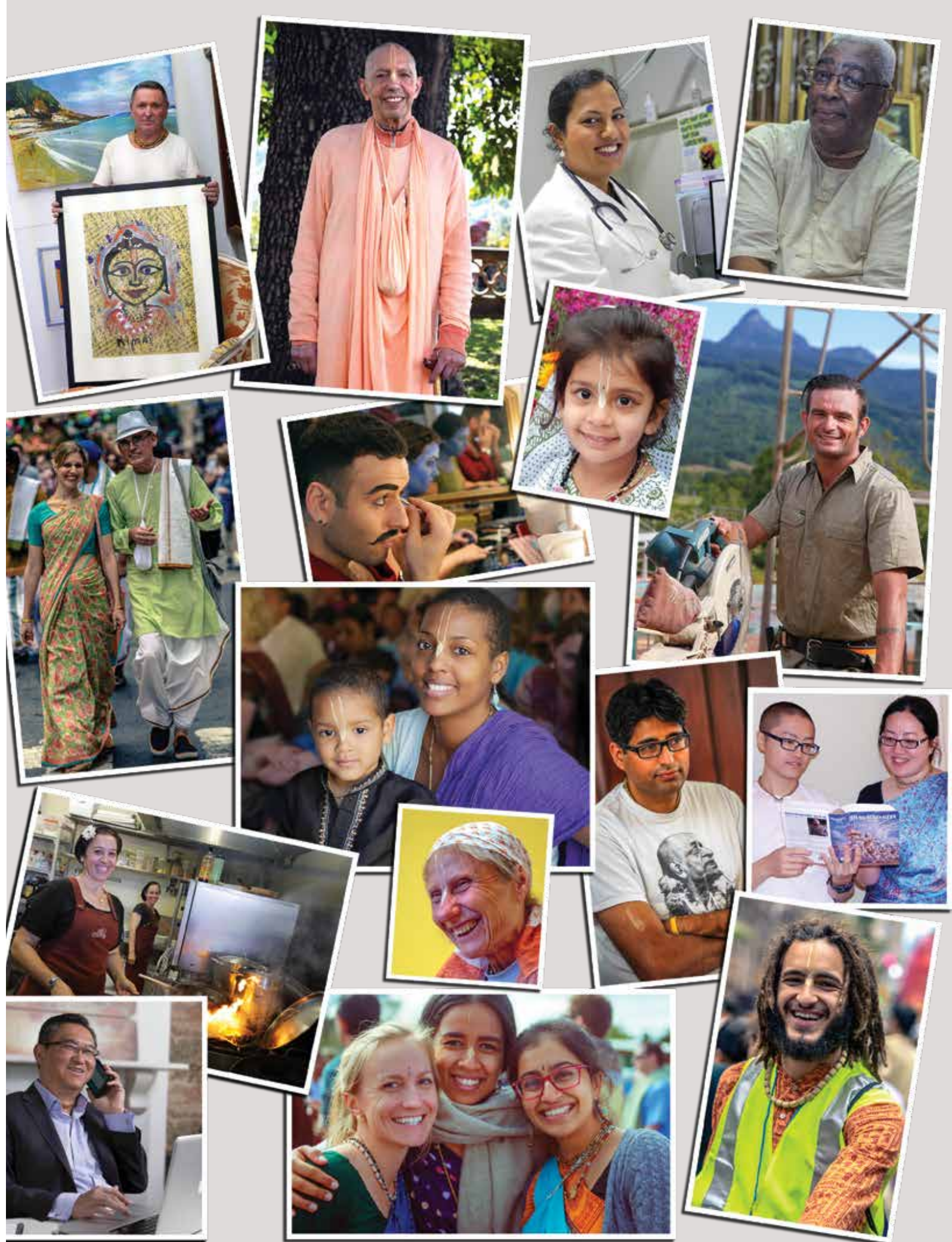
ISKCON's evolution was sparked partly by changing needs and partly by an exodus of members in the wake of serious challenges, including schisms and leadership crises, that arose after the passing of ISKCON's Founder, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, on 14 November, 1977.

"Speaking as a member of the first generation, we made a lot of mistakes," says Anuttama dasa, Communications Minister for ISKCON and member of ISKCON's Governing Body Commission (GBC). [See sidebar on page 23.]

"We were overzealous and failed to care for the broader needs of our members, especially families and children. Those mistakes alienated many. We have since learned to balance our priorities and incorporate more accountability into our leadership structures," Anuttama concludes.

Today, with monks and other members more involved in mainstream society, Hare Krishna devotees continue to live their lives in a mood of devotion and service to the Divine in whatever walk of life or occupation they choose to follow. ■








The

Kirtana Experience

A proven way to calm the mind and nourish the true self, singing devotional songs, or *kirtana*, has emerged from India and found its way to the West.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands playing a mridanga drum. The drum is made of wood and has a dark, polished surface. The person is wearing a silver watch on their left wrist. The background is blurred, showing green foliage.

Most of us try some form of meditation at one time or another. It could be just a few minutes of deep breathing at a yoga class, or an activity as simple as sitting still at the beach, watching the waves roll to the shore.

Living in the current chaos of modern life takes its toll on our mental and physical wellbeing, and increasingly we are seeking ways to find long-lasting peace of mind. Silent meditation is one way to relax the busy mind, but have you noticed that it can be difficult to reach the stage when the chattering inside your head is finally quiet?

The ancient wisdom of India recommends that silent meditation is not the ideal method for attaining inner peace and harmony in these times. In ancient Vedic texts, this era is known as the 'age of quarrel and hypocrisy' or Kali-yuga. In short, self-understanding is difficult in our turbulent world.

Connection

In the restless environment that most of us experience, the practice of *kirtana*, the call and response singing of mantras, is now a worldwide phenomenon, courtesy of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, ISKCON's founder.

by Krishnarupa devi dasi

Kirtana is defined as the singing of the holy names of God or devotional songs glorifying the qualities of God. The most powerful mantra for this age is the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.

Christine Stein, an Iyengar yoga teacher of many decades in the USA, says, "My guru, Srila Prabhupada, first introduced *kirtana* in America as early as 1965, singing beautiful melodies to glorify the Supreme Truth. People all over the country took to this practice. And now, fifty years later, those who practice yoga (*asana* and *pranayama*) have added another level—*kirtana*!"

Like a bridge reaching across boundaries of age, gender, religion, and social or economic status, *kirtana* is overwhelmingly popular. Its attractiveness is due to the deep sense of personal spiritual happiness and a feeling of unity with others that it creates—a real sense of community.

Carmella Baynie, one of Australia's leading practitioners of *kirtana*, began her singing career as a soloist in the Latin Church choir at the age of seven. Surrounded by sacred music in her early years, this planted the seed of attraction to spiritual sound.

"Yoga and meditation are becoming popular forms of stress release and tools that help you detach a little from the outside world and discover the deeper self," Carmella says.

By singing spiritual songs, the hard work of silencing the mind becomes easier. The purity of these ancient chants fills our hearts and helps us reach an inner focus, free from the stresses of modern living.

Christine Stein says, "Seekers have embraced the ancient practice of *asana* (yoga postures) and *pranayama* (yogic breathing) to bring a natural balance to the body and mind. However, the study of yoga is not complete with just the physical practice.

"The age-old yogic texts advise that we should understand the meaning of our life as well. They talk about *pratyahara* (seeking inward), and *dharana* (concentration), and *dhyana* (meditation) to experience who we really are and to realize something greater than ourselves."

The Origins

Kirtana has been a spiritual practice for thousands of years in India. Just over 500 years ago Chaitanya Mahaprabhu spearheaded the renaissance of chanting the names of God (see page 36 for more). He popularized the spiritual process of this chanting throughout the whole of India.

Sung with time-honored melodies in various tempos, *kirtana* is generally accompanied by the *mridanga* (two-headed Indian drum), *kartalas* (small cymbals), and harmonium (keyboard instrument), as well as by non-traditional instruments, like the guitar or saxophone.

Kirtana is now part of our mainstream vocabulary. It embraces a broad swathe of modern society as people from all walks of life and spiritual beliefs find joy in group chanting.

A Positive Encounter

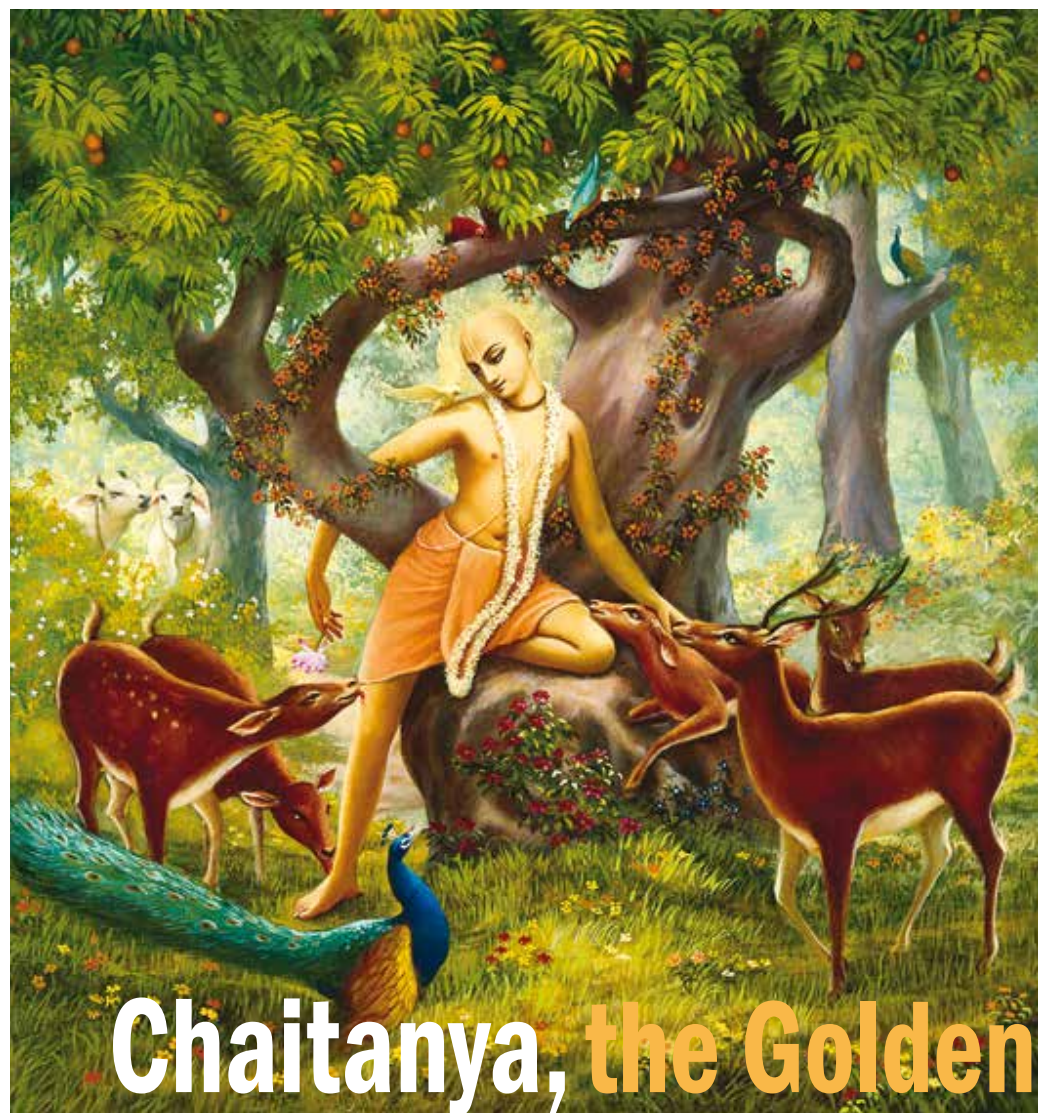
Kirtana is potent on many levels. There's the sense of community, singing with "one heart and one voice" age-old mystical mantras that purify and elevate the soul. Although you can have a *kirtana* with just one or two people, the effects of chanting in unison where no one is just a spectator, but where everyone is a participant, is very powerful.

Internationally acclaimed *kirtana* proponent Shri Prahlada attended his first *kirtana* at four years of age. He explains: "People are looking for tangible, positive spirituality, and *kirtana* provides a tangible, positive spiritual experience.

"Over the past twenty years, as people have become adept in yoga and experienced the powerful physical and mental benefits of yoga practice, they have also become curious about the spiritual philosophy behind yoga.

"Going into that philosophy through books such as the *Bhagavad-gita*, they discover bhakti or devotional love as the perfection of yoga. Among devotional practices, teachers of old have emphasized that *kirtana* is a most effective spiritual practice. It involves calling out to the Divine in love, and the chanter often feels touched by Divine grace."

Kirtana is inclusive, not exclusive. It's for young and old, frail or fit. It crosses the boundaries of religious sectarianism and wraps the participant in an unforgettable experience. ■



Chaitanya, the Golden Avatara

Just over five centuries ago, Krishna appeared in the form of a perfect devotee who spread pure love of the Divine by chanting God's holy names. By His Holiness Jayapataka Swami

On 18 February 1486, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was born in the holy place of Mayapur, West Bengal, India. For His first twenty-four years, He resided in His place of birth, where He quickly became a master of Sanskrit and philosophy.

At that time, many *brahmanas* (priests) focused on rituals aimed at material advancement rather than spiritual enlightenment. They promoted rigid caste traditions, saying that only *brahmanas* could perform religious duties or chant the holy names of God. It was in this environment that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu began His *sankirtana* movement (the congregational chanting of God's holy names). He taught that anyone, regardless of caste, creed or social status, could develop their pure love of God through this process of *sankirtana*.

The ancient Vedic texts predicted that God, or Krishna (Krishna means 'all-attractive'), would personally appear in this age and propagate the chanting of the holy names of God. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu embodied these predictions in full, thus He is not only accepted as a great saint and teacher in the bhakti tradition, but also as a complete incarnation, or *avatara*, of God Himself.

Civil Disobedience

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu began His mission with small *sankirtana* groups attended only by His very close associates.

However, caste-conscious *brahmanas* and others envious of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's growing influence complained bitterly to the *kazi*, the Muslim administrator of the region. As a result, he tried to prevent the

congregational chanting, ordering that the clay drums used in accompaniment be broken, hoping to discourage Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and His many followers.

But the movement soon took to the streets in an early example of peaceful civil disobedience. Hundreds of thousands turned out to protest the actions of the *kazi*. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu led the massive demonstration, and by His humility and spiritual arguments the ruler was convinced to allow the chanting to proceed, finally decreeing that neither he nor his descendants would ever disrupt the *sankirtana* movement again.

At twenty-four, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu accepted the renounced order of life (*sannyasa*) and spent six years traveling all over India, distributing His message of pure love of God. He spent His final eighteen years with His close associates in the holy city of Jagannatha Puri, Orissa (now Odisha).

Practical Process

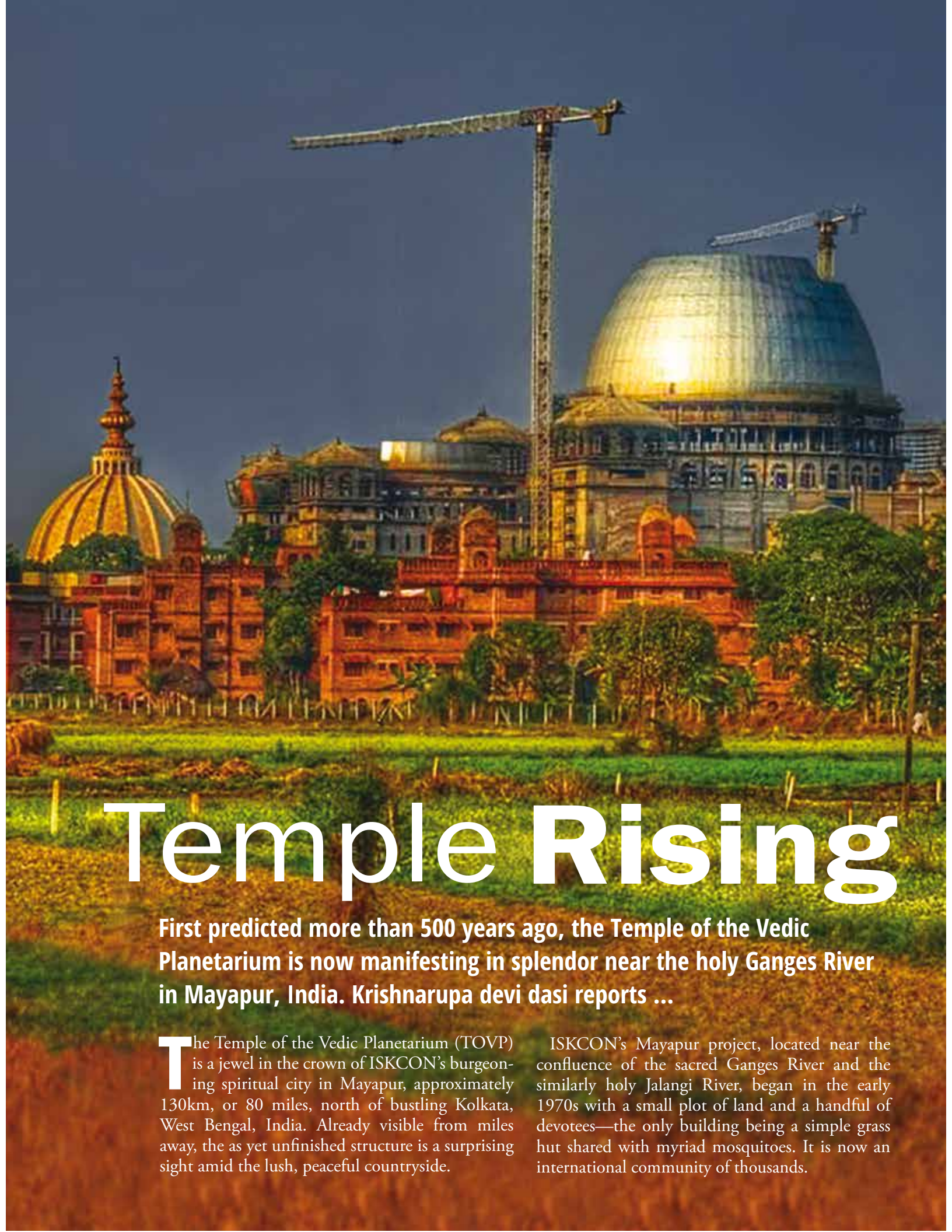
While most religions accept the importance of sacred sounds, hymns or mantras, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

presented a complete theology and practical process based on chanting Krishna's holy names. The process is simple enough for anyone to practice, but also so powerful that it propels the practitioner toward spiritual perfection.

In Mayapur, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu laid the foundation for what would later become a global movement. Mayapur is therefore venerated as a place of deep spiritual significance by devotees of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Future Vision

In the late 19th century, one of the foremost exponents of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's bhakti process, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, had a spiritual vision of a great temple. One of Srila Prabhupada's cherished desires was that his followers fulfill this prediction by constructing a unique and wonderful Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP) at the birthplace of Chaitanya, which would broadcast the glories of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu throughout the world (see opposite). ■



Temple Rising

First predicted more than 500 years ago, the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium is now manifesting in splendor near the holy Ganges River in Mayapur, India. Krishnarupa devi dasi reports ...

The Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP) is a jewel in the crown of ISKCON's burgeoning spiritual city in Mayapur, approximately 130km, or 80 miles, north of bustling Kolkata, West Bengal, India. Already visible from miles away, the as yet unfinished structure is a surprising sight amid the lush, peaceful countryside.

ISKCON's Mayapur project, located near the confluence of the sacred Ganges River and the similarly holy Jalangi River, began in the early 1970s with a small plot of land and a handful of devotees—the only building being a simple grass hut shared with myriad mosquitoes. It is now an international community of thousands.

The TOVP and its three imposing domes powerfully dominate the skyline. As an indication of its size, Premavatar Gauranga dasa, Construction Manager of the TOVP, explains, “Once aviation lights are installed on the top of the main dome, it is likely to be seen from as far as Kolkata.”

The Background

Why build such an impressive, costly house of God in rural India? There are many reasons: it will cement in the minds of the many devout who travel to this holy region that their long-held beliefs are worthy of such efforts, and it will provide them with accessible information on the culture and principles of Vedic wisdom (10 million visitors are expected annually once completed). Then there are the prophecies: Lord Nityananda, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s foremost associate, predicted more than five centuries ago that a magnificent temple would be built in this holy place of pilgrimage. Then, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, the great saint and scholar in

the line of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Lord Nityananda, as he stood before his window and looked across the Jalangi toward what is now ISKCON-owned land, had a spiritual vision of a great temple rising, as described earlier.

In order to fulfil these prophecies, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-*Acharya* of ISKCON, often expressed his deep desire that his disciples build a unique “Vedic Planetarium” to present the Vedic perspective of life to the public.

Currently there are approximately five million pilgrims who visit the temple-rich area annually. With the completion of the TOVP, this will increase exponentially as guests from India and around the world flock to see this spectacular building.

A Sight to Behold

After many obstacles—including a long architectural gestation phase—at the time of writing the TOVP has reached completion of Phase 1, with the superstructure almost completed.

The three domes, which are the dominant features of the structure, are impressive even in their unclad state. The central dome at 113m (approximately 370ft) has the greatest height and width compared to many famous dome structures worldwide, including St Paul’s Cathedral, London, and the Taj Mahal in Agra, India.

Above the TOVP’s central dome, a stainless steel *kailasha* crowned with a golden *chakra*, will be positioned. A *kailasha* is a traditional, distinctively shaped spire, and a *chakra* is the discus representing Lord Vishnu and is a symbol of protection found on all Krishna temples. These will be covered in gold titanium nitride, an extremely robust material often used as coating to improve the substrate’s surface properties. It is said to last “forever,” in the words of the project’s Managing Director, Sadbhujada.

The concrete domes will be covered in highly durable, weather-resistant, custom-made, ‘robin’s egg blue’ ceramic tiles, with GRC (Glass





Clockwise from left:
An artist's impression of the finished Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP); international artists work patiently on intricate sculptures for the temple; one of the massive decorative cornices that will embellish the structure.



Reinforced Concrete) ribs and ornate golden ceramic Fabergé-style decorative work.

In addition to the three domes, there are the eight *chatris* ('umbrella'-like structures) facing the different directions. These are designed in the traditional Bengali architectural style and will also be in robin's egg blue with golden embellishments.

Two huge mosaics, depicting Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Lord Nityananda, respectively, will decorate the face of the front *chatris*.

When completed, the TOVP will cover approximately 30 acres. Grand gardens, fountains, ponds, and outdoor artwork will enhance the beauty of the temple. The exterior walls will be clad in high-quality marble and sandstone in shades of blue, white, and gold.

Inside the structure, royal blue marble from Bolivia and white marble

from Vietnam will form three of the four impressive altars. The fourth altar will be composed of dramatic black granite and white marble with gold accents.

Pièce de Résistance

When visitors enter the TOVP, they will view the world's largest chandelier, a gigantic rotating model of the universe approximately 60m (196ft) high by 30m (98ft) diameter. The 'chandelier' will demonstrate the structure of the universe with the planets moving through their orbits according to ancient descriptions.

"This mechanical chandelier with articulated mechanisms will be a grand cosmographic display and will function as an intricate timepiece exhibiting the movements of the heavenly bodies as well as a representation of the higher realms of the cosmic manifestation," says Sadbhujia.

This one-of-a-kind chandelier is a moving 3-D model and in itself will be a structural feat of engineering. Explanations and displays will also be presented describing how these movements correspond to the visible universe and beyond.

The Journey Continues

The TOVP is a unique project, combining ancient knowledge with modern technology to serve as a lasting, inspiring reminder of the glorious traditions it represents.

Srila Prabhupada desired a state-of-the-art temple in honor of his spiritual preceptors and one that would draw people from around the world to be given the opportunity for a spiritual education.

It is indeed an undeniably ambitious project, but, as Srila Prabhupada said, "My idea is to attract the whole world to Mayapur." ■

A man wearing a red turban, a light blue jacket over a patterned shirt, and dark trousers is leading a large brown bull with long, curved horns. The man is holding a long wooden stick and a rope attached to the bull's harness. They are walking on a dirt path that runs alongside a green lawn. In the background, there are lush green trees and a clear blue sky. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Back to Basics

The modest things in life often make us happier than the complex trappings of modernity. Clean air, fresh food and water, good friends, and being in touch with nature lift the spirits, while mass industrialization and over-populated cities have created an ecological crisis. Kalakantha dasa explores some alternative solutions for our troubled planet.

It's clear that we are suffering from hazards such as pollution, climate change, a worldwide financial crisis, an increase in the price of food, and a clear decrease in the biodiversity that nature offers to sustain its inhabitants.

Dr. Peter Doran is a renowned scholar in environmental law from the University of Belfast. In June 2013, at a meeting we held at the university on ISKCON's sustainability activities, he said in reference to developed countries, "We believed that simply by the exploration of other countries and financial speculation we would be in a good situation, but now with the [environmental] crisis we are not so sure."

Ireland, for example, bases its economy on exports and dedicates eighty per cent of its land to pasture grounds for the dairy and the beef industry. Only nine per cent of their soils are dedicated to crop production. Such policies contributed to Ireland's current economic crisis.

But a change of behavior is possible—during crises, decision makers hunt for working models. For example, Cuba went through such a rethinking process during the oil crisis. Driven by city hunger, urban farming spread like wild fire and the practice survives to this day.

ISKCON & Sustainable Agriculture

In the past 40 years ISKCON has branched out in several farming communities and eco-villages around the globe.

Many ISKCON members in the early 1970s made the move 'back to the land.' One of the very first ISKCON properties was New Vrindaban, just outside Moundsville, West Virginia.

"When New Vrindaban was founded, we used ox carts for transportation, just like people use in India. We grew our own food and had our own dairy. Later, however," said Malati devi dasi, one of the early members of ISKCON, "the focus of the community shifted from agriculture."

This was a phenomenon that was replicated in various other ISKCON farms as their main attention turned to other aspects of the movement's mission.

However, a silent revival of 'back to the land' is taking place in many locations. One of them is Krishna Valley, a 270-hectare property only two hours drive from Budapest, Hungary. This farming community, established in 1993, is



celebrated as a highly sustainable eco-village in Hungary.

Krishna Valley draws 30,000 visitors and ecotourists annually as they seek to connect with a community based on a peaceful, environmentally conscious lifestyle.

Krishna Valley has developed various aspects of the sustainable paradigm, such as holding its own currency, having a recognized cow protection center, organic agriculture, efficient water and waste management as well as providing for child and adult education.

The community also cares for cows and oxen, and is self-reliant in grains, vegetables, and fruits.

Some European leaders see Krishna Valley as a model to fight many ecological and economical disorders. Their example has inspired a farm conference in Europe, now in its eighth year.



Clockwise from left: Cows, bulls, and bullocks are protected from birth to end of life in ISKCON; volunteers in the vegetable patch in Bhaktivedanta Manor, UK; cows resting in one of ISKCON's comfortable cowsheds; harvest time—working with the bullocks.



Above: Govardhana Eco Village, Wada India. Left: Students of Bhaktivedanta Academy, Mayapur, India, form close bonds with animals in their care.



Photo: Bhaktivedanta Academy, Mayapur

family, so they established ‘Govardhana Farms,’ where they produce organic vegetables and supply part of the ISKCON Toronto community in Canada. Like them, there are many others around the world taking up such initiatives.

Visionaries who are trying to show the benefits of a conscious spiritual life connected to the land and the cows—or ‘spiritual ecology’—are making this silent move.

Eco-farming in ISKCON is growing in focus. Across the globe there are many other active movements like the permaculture network, organic farming, eco villages associations, and NGOs doing the important work of bringing about a responsible consciousness. Therefore, ISKCON is currently working to build a network to connect with some of these endeavors.

Sustainable Vaishnava Communities (SVC), headed by ISKCON member Bhakti Raghava Swami, is one such network that invites leaders of these ISKCON settlements to join hands to make the change.

Many believe that if we can prove spiritual ecology on a local level, it will also work on a larger scale. As the cost of living becomes even harder to cope with, more may see farming as the answer to an increasingly difficult life.

Finally it’s the story of food cutting across age, creed and cradle in a spiritual thread that sustains the path to a spiritually balanced existence.

In the words of Srila Prabhupada, “Let everyone chant Hare Krishna, eat nicely and keep their bodies fit and healthy. This is an ideal lifestyle.” ■

Another eco-friendly farm is Gita Nagari in Port Royal, Pennsylvania, USA. As the very first certified slaughter-free dairy in the country, Gita Nagari’s Creamery is Grade B (raw milk) certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. This means that it is legally allowed to distribute raw milk for public consumption within the state of Pennsylvania.

Govardhan Eco Village in Maharashtra, India, is another successful community. The fifty-acre property lies at the foothills of the Sahyadri Mountains, approximately 112km (seventy miles) from Mumbai. They have helped more than 200 neighbouring impoverished farmers to improve their standard and quality of living by teaching them how to be self-sufficient through the practices of organic farming.

Govardhana Eco Village currently holds prizes on eco solutions, and has also established a community school, a temple, a retreat, a training center for young monks, and a college. The project promotes the culture of spiritual care,

and receives hundreds of visitors every month who go there to study yoga, eco farming, leadership, and to receive spiritual guidance.

In Australia, northern New South Wales, the 1000-acre ISKCON property called ‘New Govardhana’ is growing food all year around, and the much-loved cows provide rich, creamy milk.

There is provision to stay for a short visit or longer, with a popular international WWOOFer (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) program in place like many of ISKCON’s other rural communities. The farm’s WWOOFer program hosts a number of young travelers who use the opportunity to become familiar with a new culture and way of life.

What the Future Holds

There are other examples on a smaller scale, but with equally dramatic effects. Phil and Sukhayanti dasi, for instance, are a new couple expecting their first child. They decided that the city was not a place where they would like to raise a

There are many discussions about climate change and the world's lack of environmental consciousness, but equally troubling is the continual strife of war.

However, unlike climatic problems and their effect on the long-term health of the planet, war has always been there. It is nothing new. It was there fifty years ago, a 100 years ago, and several thousand years ago. Perhaps we just hear and see more on a daily basis due to communication advances.

Conflict Resolution

Since there are continuous wars, the implication is that it is difficult to prevent them. Even the United Nations itself does not have a successful record at resolving conflicts.

Wars arise from many causes: economics, religion, nationalism, and the desire for profit. But behind these hide greed, fear, hatred, and anger of both individuals

and communities. It seems we have not yet evolved a system to handle such issues peacefully on a large scale.

If we can create conflicts, why can't we resolve them? What's the problem? Ancient Indian spiritual texts, such as the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Bhagavad-gita*, offer four core principles to cure this warring human condition: honesty, purity (lack of lust, anger, and greed), a simple life-style, and compassion.

Society can function properly when its members follow these four principles. Can anyone envisage fighting if both parties have truthful information, lack of lust, anger, and greed, a sense of simplicity, and respect for all life?

As individuals we need to cultivate these principles first, so that in turn they will also govern the countries where we live. The main problem of course lies in implementing the principles within us. However, we *can* learn to change our habits.

Love & War

It is with that hope that these age-old scriptures give advice. These principles, motivated by creation of a better, peaceful self and a better, peaceful world, can be ensconced within us. However, they must be established much deeper than the counter principles of greed, exploitation, and hatred.

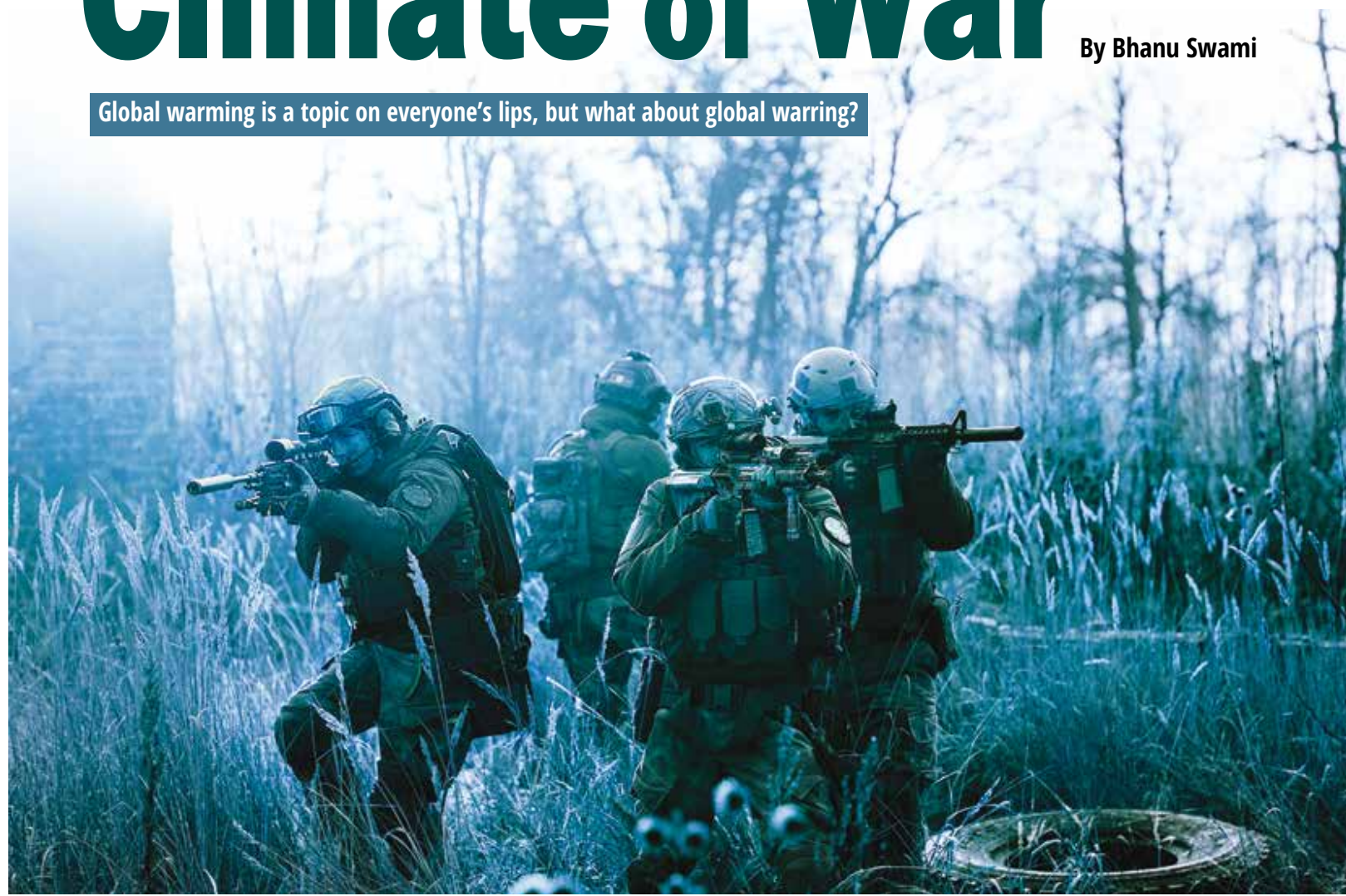
These ancient writings propose two deeper levels: soul and God. When we connect with the Supreme, the four principles are easily established in the soul and spread to the mind, body, and action in the world. Operating in a group of individuals, these core principles create the basis for a peaceful nation and a peaceful world.

This also naturally creates a solution for the environmental problem: we no longer act as the earth's adversary, what to speak of another nation's. When we respect the earth as well as all its inhabitants, conflict and war against one another and the exploitation of Mother Earth are no longer viable options. ■

Climate of War

By Bhanu Swami

Global warming is a topic on everyone's lips, but what about global warring?



A World of Festi



In the Vaishnava tradition that Hare Krishna devotees follow, almost every day can become a festival. Devotees try to please God by offering the best of everything with love. In a mood of sharing, they organize many festivals for everyone to enjoy.

Most of these events are celebrated according to the lunar calendar and may fall on different days each year—a wide

variety that piques the interest of any newcomer. If you haven't already been to one of these occasions, you are cordially invited to attend one.

Krishna's Birthday

'Janmashtami' commemorates the birthday of Krishna in this world. Krishna is declared in the ancient Vedic texts of India to be God Himself. One of the

biggest religious festivals in the world, it is celebrated by almost a billion people around the globe.

Festivities begin before dawn and continue throughout the day until midnight, the time of Krishna's birth. All but the young, infirm, or very old fast all day. Devotees celebrate with *kirtana* (singing God's names) and *japa* (private prayer on beads); performance of

vals



drama and dance; recitation of sacred scriptures; the special bathing of the deity forms of Krishna and Srimati Radharani, the feminine aspect of God (see page 55 for more on deity worship); decorating the deities in new clothing, jewelry, and fragrant flower garlands; and serving a multi-course vegetarian feast of sanctified food (*prasadam*) eaten just after midnight.



Photo: Keshava das



Far left: At a festival in the Ukraine. Left: ISKCON's Rathayatra parades feature in major cities around the world. Above: Kids love to dress up. Below: New York's finest—an officer enjoying the festive spirit.

Around the globe, devotees of Krishna host wonderful festivals celebrated by people from all walks of life.

By Bhakti devi dasi



Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's Advent

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is an incarnation, or *avatar*, who is actually Krishna Himself in the guise of a devotee. He taught love of God and emphasized that this love should be distributed to everyone. He appeared on earth in 1486, and those who witnessed His activities write how they saw Him dance and chant with ecstatic love for God, the likes of which had never been seen before. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu inaugurated the Krishna consciousness movement and encouraged everyone to follow this same process. His birthday, called 'Gaura Purnima'—the golden full moon—is one of ISKCON's primary annual festivals.

Radharani's Birthday

Radhastami is the birthday of Srimati Radharani, the eternal consort of Krishna. Radha is an expansion of Krishna Himself and the mother of all souls. On this day Radha and Krishna are usually decorated with colorful clothing made entirely of fresh flowers. Where jasmine vines are blooming, the altar is decorated with Radha's favorite jasmine flowers. As Radha is the most dear to Krishna, on this occasion devotees pray to Her to bless them with more service to Her beloved Krishna.

Govardhana Puja

In this festival, especially popular with children, Govardhana Hill, which figures greatly in Krishna's pastimes on earth, is worshiped. Govardhana Hill supplied the residents of the holy Indian village of Vrindavana with all their needs in the form of grains and grasses for the people and the cows.

In ISKCON temples, attendees walk, dance, and sing around a symbolic Govardhana Hill, covered with cooked grains and different varieties of sweets. The food is offered to Krishna with love and devotion then distributed to delighted guests.

Festival of Chariots

The Festival of Chariots, or Ratha-yatra, honors Lord Jagannatha, a manifestation of Krishna. (Jagannatha means 'Lord of the Universe.') The festival's origins



Above: Festivals involve a great deal of planning and preparation behind the scenes. Here devotees and guests string garlands for festival decorations.

date back thousands of years to Jagannatha Puri, India. The deity is seated on a gigantic wooden chariot, and a crowd pulls the vehicle with long ropes in procession—symbolically pulling God back into their hearts and to Vrindavana.

Ratha-yatra was first introduced in the West by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON, in San Francisco in 1967.

The Ratha-yatra festival is now celebrated in many countries, with free entertainment and exhibits at the end of the parade, culminating in a delicious vegetarian feast, often for thousands.

International Festivals of India

Throughout the year, various Hare Krishna Festivals of India are held worldwide. Often they are linked with local public events. ISKCON members showcase Vedic culture in a presentation of theatrical performances, poetry, art, song, and dance. Most famous of these are the Polish Woodstock Tour and the Festival of India in the USA.

Kirtana Mela

Kirtana, group singing of the names of Krishna, is popular and publicly recognized (see page 34 for more on *kirtana*). Each year many *kirtana melas*, or gatherings, are organized in ISKCON temples and public venues around the globe. These sometimes last from six hours to all day, and occasionally for several days with periods of intermittent rest.

In various creative ways, ISKCON devotees organize such festivals to celebrate chanting Krishna's name and to increase awareness of the benefits of the chanting. By absorption in chanting the names of God, hearts and minds become purified and all participants experience their true selves, devoid of false ego.

And There's More

The events described here are just a few on the devotees' annual calendar. Other festivals include Rama Navami, the birthday of Lord Rama; Snana Yatra, when Lord Jagannatha is bathed with various liquids such



Left: In New York, everybody gets involved in the festivals. Below left: Festival goes at Poland's Woodstock Festival get into the groove.



Above: Three young girls take time out for a quick photo as they prepare for a festival drama performance.

as milk, ghee, yoghurt, and honey; Diwali—the Festival of Lights—the celebration of the return of Lord Rama to His kingdom; Go-puja, a special day dedicated to honoring Lord Krishna's cows; and Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa Puja, the birthday of ISKCON's Founder. Many temples also now include Holi, the Festival of Colors, as it gives devotees the opportunity to

gather people together and share the richness of spiritual life in Krishna consciousness.

Readers are welcome to join festivities at their nearest ISKCON centre. Visit www.iskcon.org and click on the 'Connect' tab for a temple near you. Regardless of educational qualifications, background or religion, anyone can dance, sing, and enjoy sumptuous vegetarian food! ■



The Finely Tuned Universe

Modern science provides evidence that numbers and ratios appear to be finely tuned to enable life to exist in our universe. But **Michael A. Cremo** argues that it oversteps its boundaries when it claims to have answered questions about the origins of life.

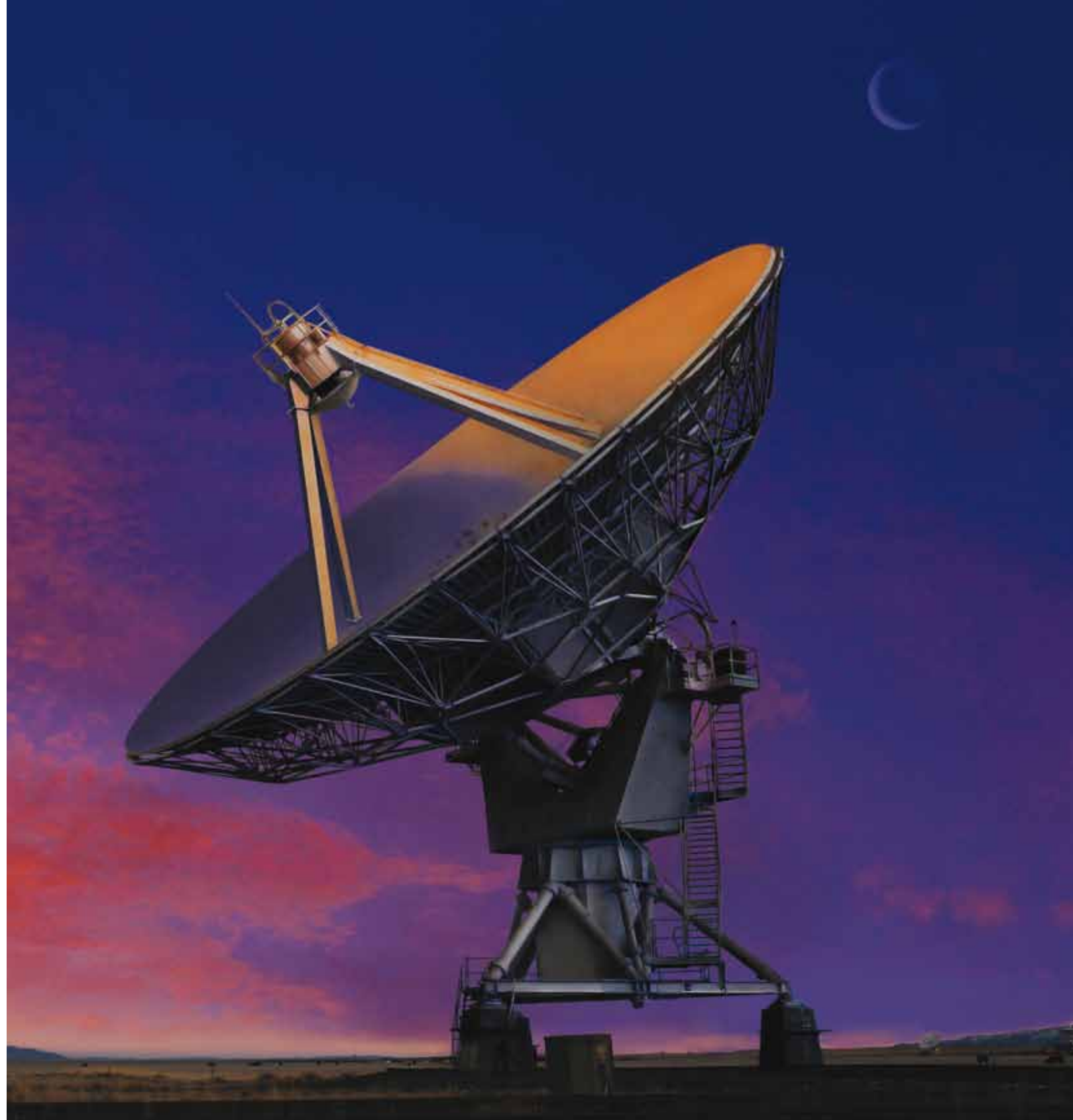
Where did we come from? Today, the most common answer to that important question comes from Charles Darwin and his modern supporters. According to them, we have come into existence as a result of a purely materialistic process of evolution that began with

life self-organizing from chemicals early in the earth's history.

Darwinists say that humans like us came into existence between 100,000–200,000 years ago. Before this, they say there were only more primitive apelike human ancestors. The founder of ISKCON, His Divine Grace A.C.

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, wrote, “The Vedic histories—the *Puranas* and *Mahabharata*—relate human histories that extend millions and millions of years into the past.” (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 4.29.42–44, purport).

In *Forbidden Archeology*, a book I co-authored with Richard L.



Thompson, I document extensive evidence in the form of human bones, human footprints, and human artifacts, showing that humans like ourselves have inhabited the earth for millions of years, just as the ancient Sanskrit writings of India tell us. This evidence is not very well known

because of a process of knowledge filtration that operates in the world of science. Evidence that conforms to the Darwinian theory of human evolution passes through this social and intellectual filter very easily, but evidence that radically contradicts the Darwinian theory does not. For ex-

ample, in the 19th century, gold was discovered in California. To extract it, miners dug tunnels into the sides of mountains, such as Table Mountain in Tuolumne County. Deep inside the tunnels, in deposits of early Eocene age (about fifty million years old), miners found human bones and artifacts.

“

In other words, if the facts did not fit the theory of human evolution, the facts had to be set aside, and that is exactly what happened.”

consciousness and the mind may continue to exist after the brain has ceased to function and the body is clinically dead.”

Where does the soul go after the death of the material body? If the soul has not become completely God-conscious, it will enter another material body, in the cycle of reincarnation. According to Vedic knowledge, the soul can in the process of reincarnation evolve through different kind of bodies, achieving higher and higher levels of consciousness.

The soul moves from one body to another; it is not that the body is transforming. Darwin's theory that the body is transforming is not correct.

Intelligent Design

So there is an evolution of the soul, not an evolution of one kind of body from another. Material bodies are vehicles for conscious selves, souls, in the world of matter.

These vehicles are designed and created by God. If we study the bodies of living things on the biomolecular level, we find a level of complexity that points to intelligent design.

The conscious self, the soul, has its origin beyond the world of matter. It is meant to exist in the spiritual world. But if a conscious self is not fit to exist in the spiritual world, there must be some place for it to act in forgetfulness of its real nature. This suggests that the universe of our experience should show signs that it was designed by a higher intelligence for accommodating human life and other forms of life.

Modern cosmology does provide evidence for this. Scientists have now

Above: In the 19th century gold miners dug into Table Mountain in Tuolumne County, California, where they found human bones and artifacts in deposits of early Eocene age, about fifty million years old. (Photograph for illustrative purposes only.)

Dr. J. D. Whitney, the chief government geologist of California, in his book *The Auriferous Gravels of the Sierra Nevada of California*, published by Harvard University in 1880, carefully documented the discoveries. But we do not hear very much about these discoveries today. In the Smithsonian Institution Annual Report for 1898–1899 (p. 424), anthropologist William Holmes said, “Perhaps if Professor Whitney had fully appreciated the story of human evolution as it is understood today, he would have hesitated to announce the conclusions formulated, notwithstanding the imposing array of testimony with which he was confronted.”

In other words, if the facts did not fit the theory of human evolution, the facts had to be set aside, and that is exactly what happened.

Although this kind of evidence for extreme human antiquity contradicts the current Darwinian theory of human evolution, it doesn't tell us anything about the origin of human beings. These discoveries simply tell us that we need a new explanation for human origins.

The Truth of Humanity

In *Human Devolution: A Vedic Alternative to Darwin's Theory*, I set forth such

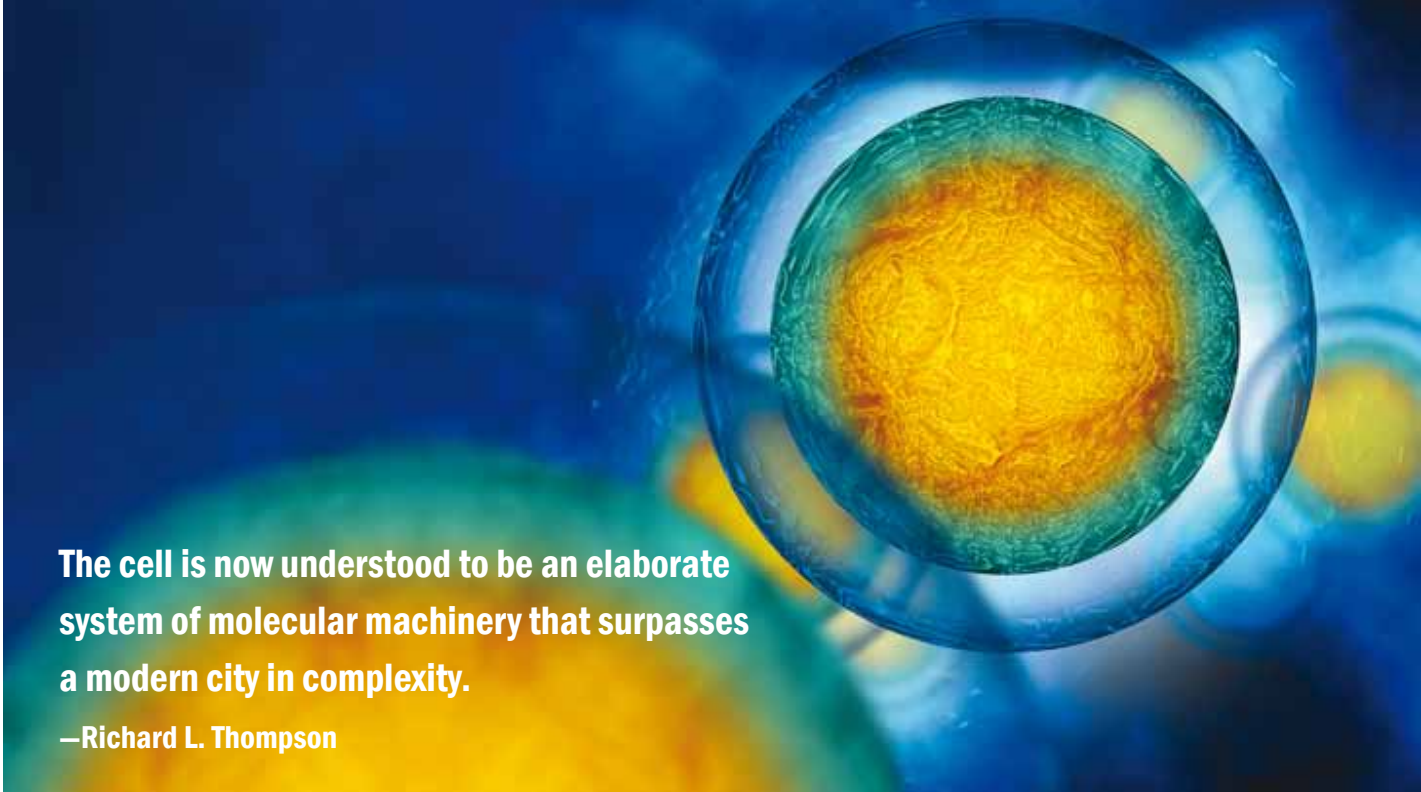
a new explanation, an explanation based on information found in the ancient Sanskrit writings and the teachings of Srila Prabhupada.

Before we ask, “Where did human beings come from?” we should first of all ask the question, “What is a human being?” Today most scientists assume that a human being is simply a combination of ordinary chemical elements. However, it is more reasonable, based on available scientific evidence, to start with the assumption that a human being is composed of something more than the chemical elements. Within the body is the conscious self. Matter does not produce this conscious self; it can exist separately from the material body.

Evidence for a conscious self that can exist apart from mind and matter comes from medical reports of out of body experiences (OBEs). For example, in February 2001, a team from the University of Southampton, in the UK, published a study on OBEs in cardiac arrest patients in the journal *Resuscitation* (v. 48, pp. 149–156).

Dr. Sam Parnia, a senior research fellow at this university, headed the team. On 16 February 2001, a report published on the university's website said that the work of Dr. Parnia “suggests

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The cell is now understood to be an elaborate system of molecular machinery that surpasses a modern city in complexity.

—Richard L. Thompson

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discovered that numbers, representing at least six fundamental physical constants and ratios of natural forces, appear to be finely tuned for life to exist in our universe. Astronomer Sir Martin Rees considers six of these numbers to be especially significant.

In his book *Just Six Numbers* (2000, pp. 3–4), he says, “These six numbers constitute a ‘recipe’ for a universe. Moreover, the outcome is sensitive to their values: if any one of them were to be ‘untuned’, there would be no stars and no life.”

There are three main explanations for the apparent fine-tuning of the physical constants and laws of nature: simple chance, many worlds, and some intelligent providential creator. Many cosmologists admit that the odds against the fine-tuning are too extreme for a simple chance to be offered as a credible scientific explanation. To avoid the conclusion of a providential designer, they have posited the existence of an almost unlimited number of universes, each with the values of fundamental constants and laws of nature adjusted in a different way. And we just happen to live in the one universe with everything adjusted correctly for the existence of human life.

But these other universes have only a theoretical existence, and even if their existence could be physically demonstrated, you would further have to show that in these other universes the values



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of the fundamental constants and laws of nature are in fact different than those in our universe.

The Vedic cosmology also speaks of many universes, but all of them are designed and created by God for life.

We are not just machines made of molecules in an accidental universe, as many scientists now believe. We are eternal conscious selves, placed in bodies in a universe designed by God to enable us to do either of two things: act out our selfish desires to exploit matter in forgetfulness of God or act in such a way as to restore consciousness to its original pure state, Krishna consciousness. ■

Above: Evidence for a conscious self that can exist apart from mind and matter comes from medical reports of out of body experiences. A report suggested that consciousness and the mind may continue to exist after the body is clinically dead.

- Michael A. Cremo—along with Richard Thompson (both ISKCON members)—is co-author of the book *Forbidden Archeology*, which documents archeological evidence consistent with the accounts of extreme human antiquity found in the *Puranas*, the Vedic historical writings. He is also author of *Human Devolution: A Vedic Alternative to Darwin's Theory*. His most recent book is *My Science, My Religion*, a collection of 24 papers Cremo has presented at major international scientific conferences.

Devotees of Lord Krishna deeply immerse themselves in an artistic lifestyle of spiritual music, dance, design, and drama. By Bhaktimarga Swami and Damodara Pandita dasa.

Krishna Culture

Devotees of Krishna practice bhakti-yoga, or connection to God through spiritual actions. One of the many ways to express this devotion is through the arts, such as painting, drama, poetry, singing God's holy names, dancing—the list goes on.

Even in ordinary life we use the arts to celebrate love and devotion. When family and friends visit we offer them the best cuisine, and most celebrations feature beautiful music and dancing.

Ancient Vedic literature describes the spiritual realm as a place where “every step is a dance and every word is a song.” Evoking this mood, Krishna devotees endeavor to make the arts a part of their daily lives in an expression of love for God.

Propagating ways of how to re-ignite our original relationship with Krishna (God) through the arts has continued steadily after His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, ISKCON's

Founder-*Acharya*, passed away in 1977. Today, Krishna devotees around the world continue this powerful phenomenon of engaging the arts to promote spiritual awakening.

The Dramatic Arts

The essential principle behind bhakti, or the yoga of devotion, is to channel our talents and use them in a mood of service to the Divine. Srila Prabhupada would recognize these different skills and guide his disciples on how to use them in Krishna consciousness. For example, he encouraged theater that portrayed the messages of the great sages of India, including the use of the comedic art.

‘The Vaikuntha Players’ troupe was formed early in ISKCON's history. It presented a beautiful repertoire, including a masterful rendition of the famous epic, Valmiki's *Ramayana*. In the UK, ‘The Bhaktivedanta Players’ has delighted audiences with classical and contemporary pieces portraying the



incarnations of Krishna, as well as parodies of modern life. Another show, ‘The Magic India Festival’ is now touring the world and enlivening audiences from all walks of life with its medley of entertainment.

Such dramatic presentations convey the principles of spiritual life in captivating ways and show the relevance of Krishna consciousness to contemporary audiences.



At left: A scene from a dramatic performance of the ancient Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*, which features stories of Krishna and His devotees.

is gaining a different perspective of what constitutes art and spirituality.

The Art of Cooking

Cooking is held in such high esteem that it is considered to be one of the Vedic arts. Inspired by Srila Prabhupada, who was a great chef and gracious host, ISKCON members have continued this tradition of hospitality with vegetarian meals that are healthy, tasty, and beautifully presented. The hundreds of Krishna temples and Krishna restaurants worldwide are popular eating destinations for millions. What sets these meals apart is the fact that all the preparations are offered first to Krishna. Thus sanctified, they become *prasadam*, or God's mercy.

Design

Devotees of Krishna could be called the 'aesthetic' ascetics. Traditionally yogis and sages generally lived in remote forests or caves, but bhakti-yogis use the visual arts and creative design to build pleasing environments for both Krishna and the many visitors to His temples.

Many ISKCON temples reflect innovative architecture (see page 8 to learn more about some of ISKCON's purpose-built temples). Inside these temples you can view many striking paintings of Krishna and His transcendental realm. These paintings, created by talented devotee artists, are considered windows into the spiritual world.

Writing & Poetry

The devotees of Krishna are always keen to recite Krishna's all-attractive qualities. They do this through song, poetry, and other recitations.

This includes studying the works of great devotee scholars and poets of the past, such as the dramas of Rupa Goswami, whose

Dance

In addition to *kirtana* (devotional singing) and theater, dance always takes center stage at ISKCON festivals. The various styles of traditional dance, like Bharatanatyam, are taught in schools such as the Bhakti Kalalayam Dance Academy of devotional dance in Florida, founded by Anapayani dasi, a lifelong devotee of Krishna. ISKCON's

Manipuri style dance academies also offer unique presentations of spiritual culture while providing opportunities for the artists to explore their devotional talents.

The profoundly rich Vedic literatures have proven excellent source material where practically every page could easily find its way onto the stage in some shape or form. Experiencing these arts of devotional performance, the world

Photo: David Crick



Clockwise from left: One of the beautiful paintings that decorate the walls of a temple in Hungary; the MOSA gallery in Florence, Italy, focuses on devotional artwork; traditional dance allows these devotees the chance to express their talents.

Yadubara dasa and his wife, Vishaka devi dasi, traveled the world photographing and filming Srila Prabhupada. Yadubara's latest film, *Acharya*, documents Prabhupada's life and legacy. These photographs, recordings, and films are a valuable addition to the legacy of the Hare Krishna Movement.

Other documentaries include Yadubara's *Vrindavana, Land of Krishna* and *Rescuing the Stolen River*, by Krisztina Danka, which documents the efforts to save the sacred Yamuna River from environmental degradation.

Bhakti Charu Swami, a senior member of ISKCON, produced a popular series aired on Indian TV on the life of Srila Prabhupada called *Abhay Charan*.

With the proliferation of mass media and the internet, numerous devotional offerings including cartoons, music clips, short films, and presentations are also available. Mayapur.tv, for instance, is a live website based in Mayapur, India. It streams devotional activity from all around the world. The site also records and stores festivals like Mayapur's annual Kirtana Mela, a four-day spiritual music festival. Websites like Mayapur.tv are also active distributors of the devotional arts and share live feeds, footage, and files to a global audience.

In all of the arts by devotees of Krishna, whether it is dance, paintings, sculpture, drama, or cooking, the main focus is always to expand the glories of God in an appealing and artistic way. ■

Lalita Madhava and *Vidbhagya Madhava* are considered artistic pieces of pure revelation.

Modern Media

Bhakti-yoga is not limited to using only traditional art forms as devotional offerings. Srila Prabhupada taught that everything could be utilized in the service of God. As such, he was practical in employing modern means to help express the culture of devotion. Nowadays, ISKCON devotees worldwide contribute devotional content in all forms of modern media. ISKCON members



The Museum of Sacred Art

The Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) at ISKCON's Radhadesh, Durbuy, near Brussels, opened in 2009 with a focus on the traditional and living arts of India revolving around devotion to God.

Set within the campus of a beautiful 19th-century chateau near the historic town in the Belgian Ardennes, it now includes contemporary Indian art from across different spiritual traditions and faiths. The museum has also opened a branch in Italy at ISKCON's Villa Vrindavana near Florence where a magnificent villa is being transformed to house MOSA.

Funded chiefly by Martin Gurvich (Mahaprabhu dasa), its founding director, the MOSA collection has been diligently built during his visits to India over the years. With work by masters and young artists, MOSA has more than 1000 works of art. There are paintings, sculptures, photography, and digital and video art in the collection representing major spiritual traditions of the world. Gurvich notes: "I hope that interfaith dialogue will also be encouraged through the arts." (<http://mosabelgium.com/about-us/>)



Divine Forms

Since antiquity, devotees of Lord Krishna have worshiped deity forms according to ancient principles. Nrsimha Kavaca dasa and Antony Brennan explain why ...

If you've been to a Hare Krishna temple you may have noticed everyone paying attention to what appears to be statues on an altar in the temple room. You may have wondered what it was all about—why are these figures dressed so opulently and why is someone ringing a bell and waving objects, like flowers and incense, in front of these forms?

This is deity worship or the worship of divine forms, a practice rooted in the ancient scriptures and culture of India. While this form of worship is common in India, deity worship is not isolated to any one region of the world. We also see the forms of Lord Jesus Christ and various saints in the Christian tradition being revered. Some branches of Christianity also honor relics or items associated with Jesus Christ or great saints.

What is Deity Worship?

Deity worship is a form of devotional service, or bhakti-yoga, which provides a means of using all of our senses in the service of the Supreme Person, God.

The Vedic scriptures tell us that deity worship is the art and science of offering various items as an act of worship to God, or Krishna, in His incarnation, or manifestation, as the deity.

Deity worship is not idolatry. We do not worship wood or stone. The form of the deity is an authorized incarnation of Krishna and it is He who is the object of our worship.

Why do we Worship Deities?

Spiritual predecessors in the bhakti tradition describe many activities that

help those in the beginning stage of spiritual practice to use their senses in the service of God. They say the following are the five principal activities:

1. Hearing *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (a primary scripture of the bhakti tradition).
2. Associating with persons advanced in spiritual life.
3. Living in a sacred place.
4. Chanting the holy names of God.
5. Serving the deity form of God with great faith.

Practicing these five items assures rapid advancement in devotional life, culminating in pure love for Krishna. The spiritual predecessors explain that these five principal activities have great power. Even without faith in these time-honored



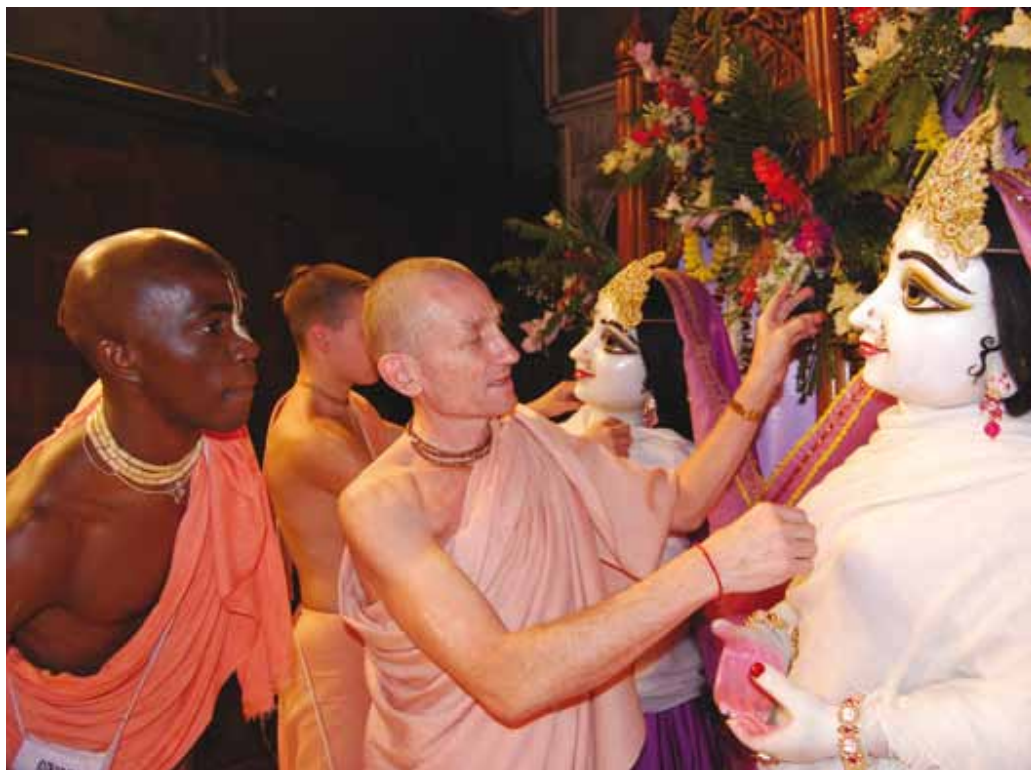
practices, a person can begin to experience love of Krishna by even a slight connection with them.

Can God be in a Deity?

Krishna presents Himself before His worshipers in five different manifestations: His original form as Krishna; His expansions who create the universe; His various earthly incarnations; the in-dwelling Lord in everyone's heart; and the deity.

Because we have material senses we are unable to perceive the transcendental form of God. Therefore, to show compassion on us Krishna agrees to appear in an authorized form that we can serve—such as in stone, metal, wood, or even in a painting.

The following allegory explains how this is possible. If we place our letters in an official mailbox on the street, we know our letters will reach their destination. But if we place them in a box not



Clockwise from left: The deity of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in Mayapur, India; Radha Gopinatha in Sydney, Australia; children having fun in a deity festival; flower petals are showering the deities in a special ceremony; devotees adorning the deities.

authorized by the post office, our letters will not reach their destination. Similarly, God has an authorized representation in the deity form, which is an incarnation of the Supreme Lord. God accepts our service through that form and is happy to reciprocate in a loving exchange with us.

Photo: Bhakti dev dasi



The Focus of Temple Life

Life in ISKCON communities revolves around the deities. ISKCON devotees—whether congregational members or those living directly in an ISKCON temple—keep the deity as the center of their lives and spiritual practice.

As much as possible, ISKCON devotees visit their local temple daily or weekly, where they offer prayers and other services to the deities. Each day many ceremonies are held where the deities are offered a variety of articles, such as incense, fresh water, and flowers.

Elaborate vegetarian meals are prepared several times daily in the temple kitchen and are first offered to the deity and then distributed as *prasadam*, or sanctified food. Over time it is

seen that by such services worshipers develop a very personal and loving relationship with their deities, caring for them with devotion, offering them new clothing, food, and financial contributions to be used in the deities' service. Many ISKCON devotees also worship deities in their own homes, keeping Krishna in the center of their lives.

Deity Worship Standards

The Vedic art and science of deity worship was first introduced by ISKCON into countries outside India in 1967, when His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of ISKCON, instructed his disciples to begin worshiping the deity in San Francisco.

In 1969, Srila Prabhupada installed ISKCON's first Radha-Krishna deities (the forms of Krishna and His eternal consort Srimati Radharani) in the Los Angeles temple. Over a period of several months Prabhupada intensively trained his students in all facets of devotional service, including deity worship and established the standards of worship for ISKCON temples all over the globe.

Since that time, ISKCON has established a Deity Worship Ministry to guide and inspire devotees to achieve high standards of worship. Most of these standards are enumerated in the revered book, *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, which was written centuries ago by the great scholar and saint Sri Sanatana Goswami. ■

Crossing Boundaries

The Hare Krishnas actively bridge the divide between different creeds, writes **Anuttama dasa**.

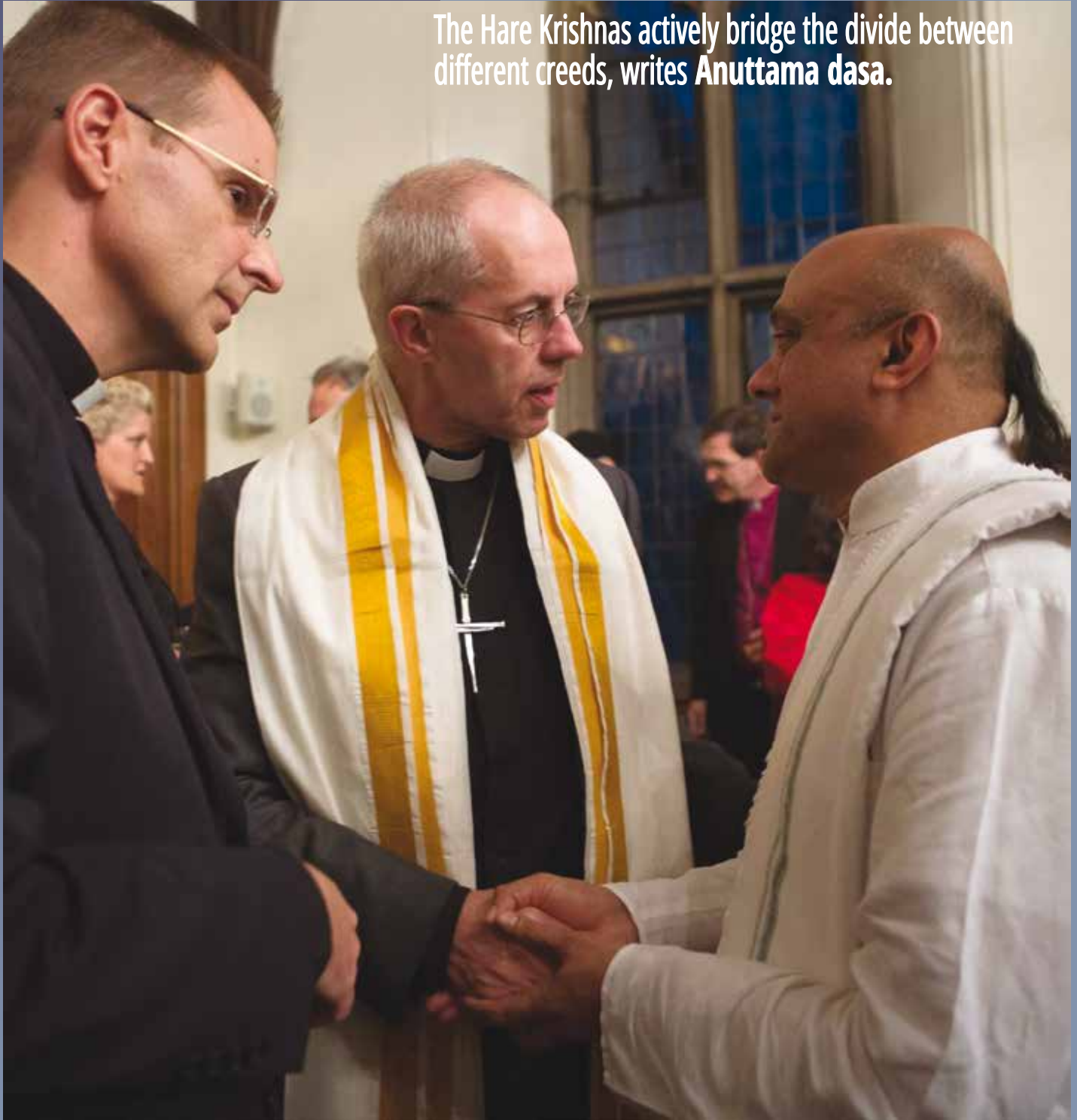


Photo: Courtesy of Marc Gascoigne of Lambeth Palace.

“When we have the occasion to be present at the place of worship of other religionists at the time of their worship, we should stay there in a respectful mood, contemplating thus: ‘Here is being worshiped my adorable highest entity, God in a different form than that of mine ... I bow down with prostration before His emblem as I see here and I offer my prayer to my Lord who has adopted this different emblem that He may increase my love toward Him ...’”

—Snila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Introduction to *Sri-Chaitanya-Siksamrita*

Today's news is full of gruesome stories of interreligious persecution, conflict, and full-scale war. It's enough to cause many of us to reject religion altogether. Who needs a set of creeds that simply leads to sectarianism, bigotry, and violence?

What is the Hare Krishna opinion on these problems? Well, we don't agree that religions or religious values per se are in conflict, although there are certainly many differences between religious tenets and beliefs.

We see that major conflicts between religions primarily arise when leaders misuse religious beliefs and practices to drive wedges between people and incite rivalry and conflict. It is the drive for political, military, economic, and other gains that leads to conflict—not religion itself.

A Common Purpose

The Hare Krishna, or Vaishnava, tradition teaches that the great religious traditions of the world have the shared purpose of helping us find happiness based on spiritual knowledge and self-realization and awakening our love of the Divine. The *Bhagavad-gita*, one of the main ancient texts that the Hare Krishna devotees study, explains that God comes to this world to reestablish the principles of religion “whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice and a pre-dominant rise of irreligion.”

In his commentary on this verse, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, ISKCON's Founder-Acharya, explains, “Every *avatara*, or incarnation of the Lord, has a particular mission ... in each and every incarnation He speaks as much about religion as can be understood by the particular people under their particular circumstances. But

the mission is the same—to lead people to God consciousness ... sometimes He descends personally and sometimes He sends ... His son or servant.”

Many great teachers, especially in the Vaishnava lineage, have taught respect and appreciation for the diversity of religions in the world, seeing them as different expressions of a spiritual search in the awakening of spiritual identity.

In ISKCON, we put this belief into practice in many ways, including our support of interfaith efforts globally. For instance, in Europe and the USA, ISKCON members serve as leaders within the international organization Religions for Peace.

In Australia, members of ISKCON are active with the Faith Community Council of Victoria and serve as chaplains at local hospitals. In Argentina, devotees participate in the Mendoza Interfaith Council. In Germany, they represent Hinduism at the University of Hamburg's Academy of World Religions.

In Washington, DC, ISKCON has hosted prominent scholars, priests, and ministers over the past twenty years at an annual two-day Vaishnava-Christian Dialogue and retreat. For the past five years, ISKCON also played host at the annual Vaishnava and Muslim Dialogue event in Washington.

Through these dialogues and other efforts, we realize the import of Krishna's teachings in the *Bhagavad-gita*—that God is in the heart of all beings and is working through different religious traditions, teachers, and spiritual practices to bring all people back to their eternal relationship with Him.

ISKCON's official statement: “ISKCON in Relation to People of Faith in God,”* puts it this way:



“ISKCON's members are encouraged to be respectful to people of faith from other traditions and to see the need for people of different faiths to work together for the benefit of society as a whole.”

Religious people and traditions have great gifts to share with one another. And we all face the same challenges and opportunities—that is, how to live together peacefully while sharing the gifts of the earth and seeking to understand and serve the Divine. When more of the world sees this as life's priority, the conflicts that plague us will subside. ■

* For more details and to download ISKCON'S interfaith brochure, please visit: www.radha.name/sites/default/files/Interfaith%20Brochure.pdf

Opposite page: Temple President of Bhaktivedanta Manor, UK, warmly greeting the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Bishop of Bradford Dr. Toby Howarth.

Top right: East meets West—two respected religious traditions are united here in this image.

Right: In London, devotees receive their Certificates for Clinical Pastoral Care, which certify the proficiency in chaplaincy skills in providing pastoral care for people in need.



Most of us occasionally suffer from stress and depression,
and many experience these states frequently. Mantra meditation
can play an important role in improving your well-being,
writes Bhanu Swami.

Meditation for your Well-Being

It is estimated that between 10–36 per cent of the world's population suffers from depression. There are many types and causes, but the huge numbers indicate a serious problem in society. It is also by and large a modern disease, caused in part by our lifestyles.

Here is a simple analysis of the cause. Keep in mind that this article doesn't cover all varieties of mental problems, but it will reveal a pattern that could lead to a simple solution.

The tendency of the modern world is to consider most things in terms of what satisfies us—our bodies, our goals, other people, society, and the environment. Our goals are thus centred on our individual comforts. This is reinforced by constant media persuasion.

Change of Identity

This focus on an identity based on selfish ideals is at odds with an obvious fact: everything we strive for and gain for our physical and mental happiness is bound to perish. Everything, including our bodies, is bound to be destroyed. Although we tend to forget this fact, it remains somewhere in our psyche and causes us anxiety, dissatisfaction, and sometimes depression. We long for eternal happiness.

Is there any solution? Despite modern progress, we have not succeeded in making eternal bodies or eternal objects. Should we give up our urge for eternal happiness, even though that urge for the eternal seems natural and logical?

At this point many people turn to a spiritual solution, which is considered unconventionally unscientific in a scientific age. This of course is nothing new. Spirituality (something beyond scientific proof) has been a human quest throughout history and the basis of various religions. Perhaps the acquisition of eternal happiness is also another human necessity.

What is the True Self?

The *Vedas* of ancient India give us an interesting explanation: the alternative self to the body and its acquisitions is the *atma* or soul—the real self. This *atma* is eternal, with a capacity for experiencing eternal happiness. Its very nature is one of harmony, unity, compassion, tolerance, and love—which are all eternal. Thus human beings are advised to cultivate awareness of this real self.

It is through this acquisition of self-knowledge that we can become genuinely happy and free from the anxiety created by present-day goals and activities.

The sages of ancient India made an important discovery. They learned that particular sounds or words—called mantras—were endowed with special power. The word 'mantra' literally means 'deliverance of the mind.'

These sounds have the ability to alter mental states in a positive way. By uttering or meditating on these sounds, we are able to easily activate the qualities of that real self, and gradually free our minds and ourselves from





negative mental states. In other words, by chanting a mantra, we are able to uncover our real potential. This brings about a balance in the personality, with a basis in the real self rather than the pseudo self.

There are more difficult practices in yoga, but this method is easy, safe, and effective.

Mantra meditation is flexible—it may be spoken and heard or recited within the mind as meditation. It can be sung individually or in a group. We can chant it anywhere, at any time. Even chanting for five minutes is beneficial, although it is most effective as a daily practice.

To enforce the power of the mantra, we may contemplate positive qualities, such as compassion and tolerance and seek to emulate them. This can be understood through the example of a tree. A tree tolerates all kinds of weather and other disturbances and yet yields shade, wood, leaves, flowers, and fruit for others to use.

The sound of the mantra combined with the positive aspirations of the individual manifest remarkable results and bring a sense of happiness and peace, even in the midst of otherwise disturbing and depressing conditions.

The most effective mantra in this age is called the *maha-mantra* (*maha* means great). It is:

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

The *maha-mantra* is free and available to all people of all ages and religions. If you aspire for eternal harmony, unity, peace, integrity, and joy, why not try this simple solution to a complex ailment in the modern world? ■

The philosophy of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is based on India's ancient Vedic literature. Among his many other attributes, ISKCON's Founder, Srila Prabhupada, was a Sanskrit scholar. His published works contributed significantly to the world's philosophical and theological body of knowledge.

By Vijaya dasa

A Lasting Legacy

In 1922, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, ISKCON's Founder-*Acharya*, then known as Abhay Charan De, first met his spiritual teacher, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. At that highly significant meeting, the importance of spreading the message of Krishna bhakti, or love of God, was firmly planted in Srila Prabhupada's heart.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura requested Abhay Charan to spread this spiritual knowledge throughout the English-speaking world. He instructed, "If you ever get money, print books and distribute them."

Srila Prabhupada took this instruction to heart and when the time was ripe, embarked on his



Left: Srila Prabhupada, with some of his published works. Right: In cities around the world (shown here in London), Krishna devotees distribute Srila Prabhupada's books.

remarkable mission to spread this Krishna consciousness to the Western world and to translate with commentary as many of the Vedic texts as possible. Former Prime Minister of India, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, said of Srila Prabhupada, "His books are significant contributions to the salvation of mankind."

As novelist and poet Christopher Morley wrote, "When you give someone a book, you don't give him just paper, ink, and glue. You give him the possibility of a whole new life."

East Meets West

While still in India in the early 1960s, Srila Prabhupada translated, printed, and distributed the First Canto of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, the age-old Indian literature considered the cream of all Vedic knowledge.

After arriving in the USA and attracting a handful of initial followers, he focused on publishing more of the many volumes of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and also the *Bhagavad-gita*. The books were then sent to ISKCON temples and inspired members began selling them door to door as well as at public venues such as concerts, universities, and airports.

In 1970, Srila Prabhupada established the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT) to oversee the publishing of his books. The BBT soon became the world's largest publisher of books in the field of Indian religion and philosophy.

By 1972, the members of ISKCON were distributing BBT books by the thousands—and they continue to do so to this day.

Dedicated Author

Srila Prabhupada was a prolific writer and wrote most of his books after the age of seventy. He continued writing until his passing from the world in 1977. While constantly traveling and visiting ISKCON temples worldwide, Srila Prabhupada would regularly rise at 12.30am and write through the early morning hours. During the day, he was busy managing the Hare Krishna movement by mail, writing many hundreds of letters a year, speaking widely and carefully guiding his burgeoning international society.



Srila Prabhupada wanted his books to be widely distributed, yet he also wanted his disciples to study them diligently. On a morning walk with some of his book distributors in Europe, he listened as they explained how his many books were being appreciated. Then he asked the booksellers, "But are you reading them?" He knew that if his books were not studied carefully, his followers would not have the spiritual strength to continue distributing them under often difficult conditions. He wrote in one letter: "Our only motto in ISKCON is to read and distribute books." And in a lecture in Los Angeles he instructed the devotees to: "Print as many books in as many languages [as there are] and distribute [them] throughout the whole world."

Srila Prabhupada's followers have taken these instructions to heart. To date more than half a billion of his books have been distributed worldwide. Srila Prabhupada's desire was that at least one of his books would find its way into every home in the world. You, too, may have one sitting on your bookshelf!

His works have been translated into more than eighty languages and are studied in university courses. His books have won praise for their authority, depth, and clarity from professors at universities, including Harvard, Oxford, and Edinburgh.

In the final twenty years of his life, Srila Prabhupada translated more than sixty volumes of Vedic literature into English. In just twelve years after he first left India, he did so much that we can only marvel at his accomplishments and dedication.

Srila Prabhupada considered his greatest success to be the books he wrote, which he gave to the world for us to learn from and to live by. ■

Join the Conversation...

Go to www.krishna.com

- Find the nearest ISKCON temple, restaurant, or eco-village.
- Keep up to date with festivals, events, and have your questions answered.

Official websites

Official website of ISKCON - iskcon.org
News about ISKCON - news.iskcon.org
Back To Godhead Magazine - btg.krishna.com
Bhaktivedanta Book Trust - bbt.info

ISKCON 50th Anniversary - iskcon50.org
Keep in touch - krishna.com
Bhaktivedanta Research Centre - brcindia.com

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twitter.com/krishnacom



Pronunciation

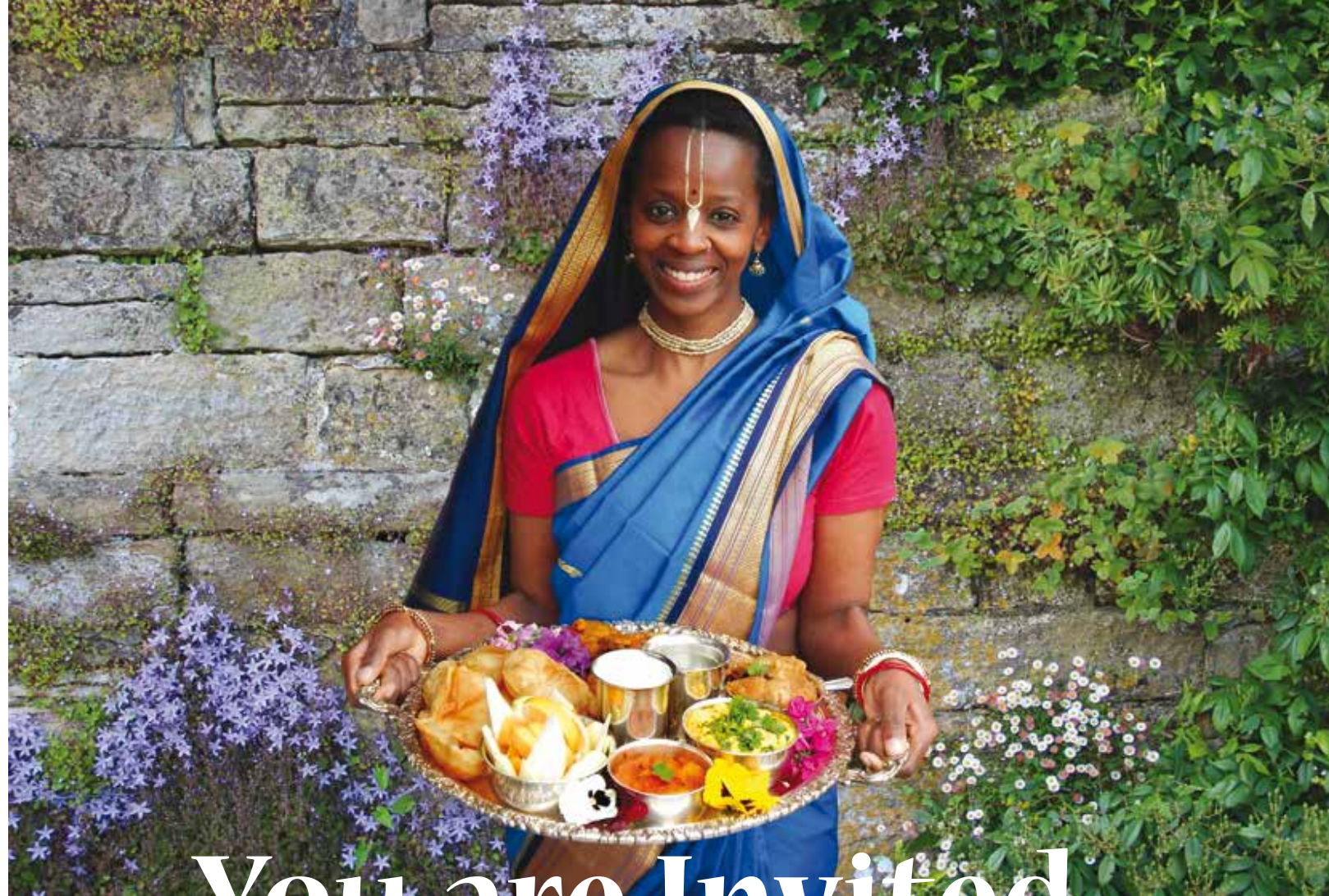
Most of the non-English words in this magazine are in Sanskrit, which is considered the mother of all languages. The Sanskrit 'a' is pronounced 'ah.' The Sanskrit 'e' is pronounced like the 'a' in the English word 'pay.' 'Hare' is pronounced 'Hah-ray'—usually with the accent on the first syllable. 'Krishna' is pronounced 'Krish-nah'—usually with the accent on the first syllable—and 'Rama' is pronounced 'Rah-mah' or 'Rahm'—usually with the accent on the first syllable, if there are two. 'Chaitanya' is pronounced 'Chai-tahn-yah'—usually with the accent on the second syllable, 'Radha' as 'Raad-ha'—usually with the accent on the first syllable—and 'Prabhu-

pada' as 'Prah-boo-paad'—usually with the accent on the first syllable. The Sanskrit word 'Sri' is pronounced 'Shree'.

Generally, the names of Krishna and His various incarnations—and possessive pronouns—are capitalized.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Krishna or His great devotees combined with the Sanskrit word 'dasa' for men or 'dasi' for women. Both of these words mean 'servant.' For instance, Krishna dasa means 'servant of Krishna.'



You are Invited...

Each Sunday ISKCON temples worldwide host a fabulous Sunday Feast.

For your nearest center, please visit: www.iskcon.org



Chant & Be Happy!