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HARE KRISHNA NEWS

May / June 2018

The Journey From Head to Heart

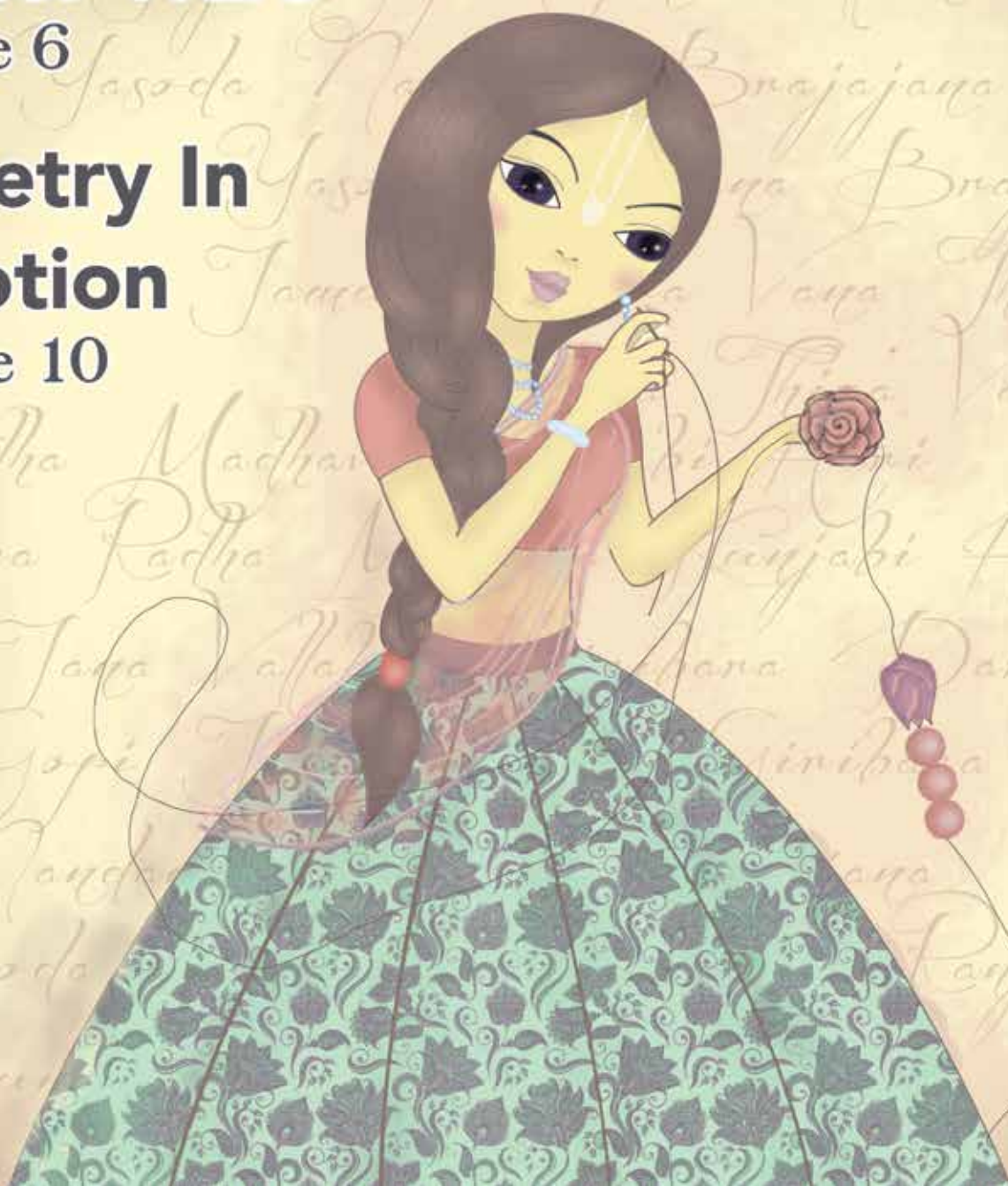
page 11

Inner Wars

page 6

Poetry In Motion

page 10



In this Issue

Living With Srila Prabhupada A Journey to Faith	4
Book Review Five Years Eleven Months	5
The Six Enemies Inner Wars	6
2018 Durban Festival of Chariots	8
Creatures in Bhakti Poetry In Motion	10
The Journey from Head to Heart	11
Marriage Matters Actions Peak Louder Than Words	12
For the Kids The Protector	14
The Vaishnava Chef Potato Bake with Herbed Soda Bread	15

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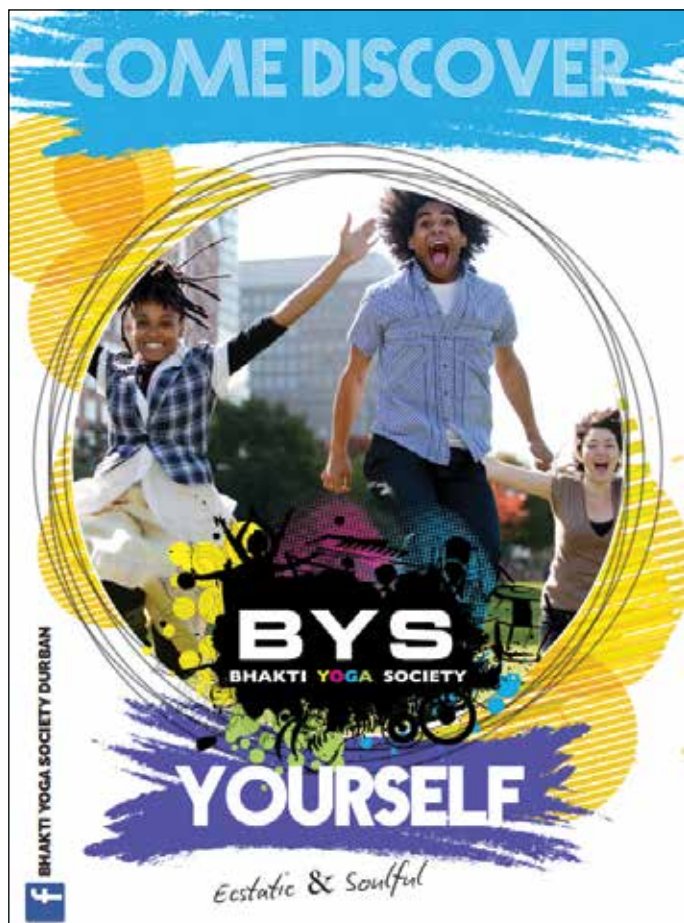
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Destructive Enlightenment

by Sutapa Das

When a budding sculptor approached his master for guidance, he received some cryptic advice. After quizzing him on his purpose, the young craftsman replied: "More than anything else, I would like to sculpt a beautiful elephant." Without the blink of an eyelid, the master set a block of stone and some tools in front of the young boy. "Here is some marble, a mallet, and a chisel" the master said, "all you have to do now is carve away everything that does not look like a beautiful elephant!" Simple as that.

While crafting our ideal life, we can contemplate these words and discover some valuable insight. We often equate progress with gaining, growing, increasing and adding. We dream of evolving into something different. There is a whole realm of spiritual development, however, which is about shedding, cutting, letting go and downsizing. It was the French writer, Antoine de Saint-Exupery, who said, "perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away." On a practical level, we must chip away at

those aspects of our life which don't contribute to the final goal. Over time, such an incremental approach will mould a focused and distilled lifestyle. Bad habits, time wasting and procrastination impede the momentum, and many other things we do just don't have any relevance in the bigger picture. As we let the nonsense crumble away, the load of our life becomes lighter and lighter, opening the doors to real liberation and freedom.

On a deeper spiritual level, we must find our real self. We often think spirituality means to become something. Maybe, however, the journey is not so much about becoming something, but rather unbecoming everything that isn't really you, so you can be who you were meant to be in the first place! The Sanskrit texts explain how we are littered with anarthas ("unhelpful qualities") and upadhis ("artificial identities"). They block us from seeing the real self. Enlightenment is the crumbling away of such untruth. It's seeing through the facade of pretence. It's the complete annihilation of everything we imagined to be true. To remember who we really are, we have to forget everything that world told us to be. This is destructive enlightenment.

<https://sutapamonk.wordpress.com>



On the Cover

Artwork by Ramashna Naidoo

Ramashna (aka Ramy) is a mom of a 16-year-old. Her family introduced her to Krishna consciousness when she was twelve. Ramy describes feeling excited by the philosophy and lifestyle. She says that she had never encountered anything that had so much depth or substance. Now, over thirty years later she still feels the same, if not more. Ramy's passion for all things creative started at a young age and over the years she has dabbled in various areas of visual arts as well as crafts, from drawing and painting to textile designing and printing.

Ramy tells us about her artwork:

"For me, this drawing has been quite a challenge

as it is the first time that I have used the computer screen as my canvas and a mouse as my drawing tool. I would classify this piece as a digital collage. It has layered prints, shapes, words, and of course, my own drawing to create a juxtaposition of styles, namely the eastern subject and western ornate print. I used muted colours overall to create fusion and harmony. The inspiration for this style came from an art collection called Mirabelle. Mirabelle is an enchanting art; elegant and sophisticated. The delicate and wistful style is exquisitely detailed, embellished with stylised floral motifs, vibrant butterflies, brilliant birds, and other intriguing imagery. However, as I worked on this piece, the style evolved and I am glad to say that it became my own.

This drawing was inspired when I started experimenting with Photoshop and had the idea to create a series of characters for children, based on the Gopis of Vrindavan. Each gopi has distinct qualities, characteristics, and activities. This is a drawing of Sri Lalita Devi, as she is the foremost and most intimate friend of Srimati Radharani. Lalita Devi has a fiery and feisty nature. You will notice in the artwork she is stringing a flower garland; that is one of her expertise. She is expert at decorating with flowers and ornaments. Lalita Devi is special to me as I like her mood and I feel that she is the embodiment of dedication and love for Radha and Krishna.

I am humbled but honoured that my work was accepted for the cover of this issue. If this art inspires people in anyway, be it creatively (like Lalita Devi) or spiritually then I would consider this a success."



Prabhupada in his room at Radha Damodar Mandir during Kartika in 1972. Photo by Visakha Dasi

The Journey to Faith

Living with Srila Prabhupada
An Interview with Visakha Dasi

The following is an interview with Visakha Dasi, the author of *Five Years, Eleven Months*, which was the exact amount of time she had spent with Srila Prabhupada.

Why did you want to share your story?

I went through such a transformation in my life, over a period of time and for a large part of that period I was very busy doing things. So finally when I had time to breathe and look back, I started to wonder what had happened that I made such an enormous transformation. Not only from atheism to theism, but also in terms of the culture that I had adopted, my values, my goals, how I spent my time — everything had been transformed. The book was an attempt to uncover...to see the transformation, the different steps, and pushes and pulls that created that transformation.

I wasn't sure how well it was going to be received but it was important for me to put down, at least for myself. The fact that people appreciate it, I'm very grateful for but really it was a personal unveiling of where I had been and what had happened that made me write about it.

What would you like the reader to take away from your story?

I'm finding that the readership is variegated — some people were not devotees and don't know about Hare

Krishna and they are moved by the transformation and by the potency of Srila Prabhupada. So for them, I would hope that they take spiritual life more seriously in their own lives and see that it can be a central part of their lives instead of something on the periphery.

And for devotees who read it, I hope they understand perhaps, for instance, Prabhupada's mood towards women. Sometimes that is not so clear. So that would be an important message to take away. Srila Prabhupada was asked if women could be made Temple President and he said yes. He was also asked if women can initiate and he said yes. So both of those are leadership positions. Srila Prabhupada did have a vision of women in leadership positions.

Also perhaps, what it was like to be in Prabhupada's presence and what it was like in those times, in the 70s when Prabhupada was so actively travelling and preaching. So according to the reader there

are different offerings that I tried to make. I really wanted my book to be for new people and devotees so I was deeply gratified when people reviewed the covers or were appreciating it. That

was my mission from the very onset. I wanted it that someone could relate to me and my journey and then that would carry them through the ins and outs.

I think Prabhupada has that appreciation for all his followers who are trying to follow his instructions.

My Doubts and Srila Prabhupada

It was hard to say how much Srila Prabhupada knew my doubts. The very first time when I met Srila Prabhupada, which was in Akash Ganga, he didn't

speak about Krishna, which was highly unusual for Prabhupada. Ordinarily in his conversations Krishna is intertwined but intuitively he knew somehow that was not appropriate for me. It would not have been attractive to me and so there was no talk about Krishna at all, which was remarkable seeing how much he talked about Krishna ordinarily. In that way he was extremely intuitive but how much he knew my doubts, I can't say.

If you read peoples' remembrances you will find that Srila Prabhupada repeatedly gave them the right direction, or the right words to inspire and guide them in unexpected ways. It was just appropriate for that individual. I don't think there could have been a more perfect instruction or suggestion from Prabhupada than to send me to Vrindavana, just to be immersed in that environment for a month. It was transforming and that was his suggestion. So that is something extraordinary. It seems that Prabhupada sent me to Vrindavan somehow knowing it was the right place for me at that time and that experience of Vrindavan opened me. I feel had I not gone to Vrindavan, I would not have been able to hear, I would have been closed to what he had to say. But the widows of Vrindavan, experiencing the incredible faith of the residents of Vrindavan, and the atmosphere imbued with spirituality constantly, so then when I was finally able to be with Prabhupada, I was ready to hear something. It was just what I needed, to crack that very thick, hard shell.

Transformation and Gratitude

Prabhupada made such a transformation in my life and when I look back to what I was and the kind of life I was living and my trajectory following that path, I have to be daily grateful to him for changing that trajectory so dramatically for the better, in every way. So it's a daily feeling for him and of course all that he has done, presented the philosophy — which makes sense of the world otherwise it is crazy...Yes, so the debt is very deep. And because the debt is so deep then the gratitude for that is very great. The more we can remember how deeply indebted we are, the more grateful we are for the gift.

The Most Outstanding Moment with Srila Prabhupada

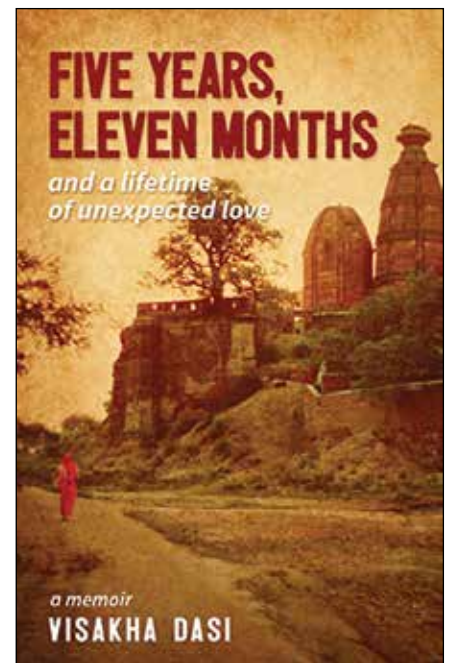
That simple moment when I was chanting *japa*, waiting for him for his walk on Juhu Beach. He came very quietly, I didn't hear him at all and he passed right by me and said, "Thank you very much." It was such a simple exchange and at first I had no idea what he was thanking me for and then I realised that he was thanking me for chanting *japa*. That just because I was doing that small act of trying to follow his instruction, he was appreciating it. I think Prabhupada has that appreciation for all his followers who are trying to follow his instructions.

Book Review

**Five Years,
Eleven Months**
By Visakha Dasi
Published by
Our Spiritual
Journey Press

Review By
Byron Kyle

Available online
only.
Temple currently
out of stock.



I love how this book stands in stark contrast to other memoirs I have read. This is also the first book I have read written by a female devotee. Visakha Dasi is an eloquent and powerful writer, and I have found it fascinating how we can all tread different paths but seek to answer the same questions. I am even more fascinated by how we reach the answers in our own individual time and mode.

I really admire the fairness and tenderness with which this book was written and it was a breath of fresh air. My greatest take away from this book was how gradual the process of coming to faith was for the author. Her journey has been one of careful consideration from scepticism to belief and that process didn't happen overnight. She had direct contact with devotees for much of her experience and while I wouldn't say she possessed a heart of stone she did have what I thought were appropriate doubts and reservations about the movement and its followers.

Some of her concerns have been my concerns like individual identity and zealotry in relation to ISKCON; and a reminder that faith must always be tempered by reason. Proper discernment is needed within every spiritual community. I realise I only touch on one aspect of her memoir and there are many other recollections which other readers will find inspiration and agreement with.

This is a worthwhile read and a courageous endeavour by the author. I think it is a good read for someone new to the movement and for particularly reluctant and stubborn admirers of Krishna consciousness, who don't feel fully ready to get their feet wet in the philosophy and require a bit of a nudge to help them through their doubts.

Inner Wars

The Six Enemies

By Rukmini Devi Dasi

For the first time the principles of the Bhakti philosophy is told in the form of a fictional story. This is a technique used by the previous spiritual masters, albeit not quite as modern. However, it is our hope that the principles explained here will have a lasting and memorable effect that you will be able to grasp and carry throughout your life.

I gazed at the Doors of Introspection with mixed feelings; knowledge can be a dangerous thing. How much do I really want to know? And more importantly, once I know, what would I do about it? Change is always more lucrative on mental paper. I sank to my knobby knees. My feet were blistered and burned. The spiritual path had led me here. It was not a crossroads. I didn't have a choice of many paths — only two. One led back to the Mardi Gras of Material Consciousness — a sea of painted smiles and masked suffering. It was there that I awoke dazed and mugged of self-awareness. When the sunshine of Sublime Truth washed over me, it cast no shadow. And I realised for the first time that I could not see me. I ran. It was fear that brought me to the spiritual path but with time I had morphed into a seeker and much happened in between. It was not a quick sprint as I had assumed. My strength waned and my stride retreated to a trot as I stumbled upon the Doors of Introspection. It was the second option — forward; the only way to meet my True Self and purpose.

My feet moved up the steps before my mind could second guess itself. The Map had never failed me before. This was not a time for doubt. I plunged through the tall oak wood doors and fell into nothingness. The floor sank beneath me, I could see no sky. Free falling into a suffocating darkness, my arms reached out desperately. "Face the Darkness of Avidya," the Stranger had warned me. My stomach lurched. My legs kicked out in frantic panic. "To see oneself, one must confront the Realms of Ignorance," his voice echoed above my screams. My body somersaulted through the denseness. "And in the darkness pray for light."

"I am willing," I yelled, "Show me Light." Silence. Stillness. Suspended in mid-air. I swallowed my inner reproach, "Why does good advice seem to always get me into trouble? Why do I always need to be in the deep end before questioning how to swim? If I had just played the game like everyone else..." And then a soundless, "Help!" On cue, golden shards of light pierced the darkness through tall cathedral-like windows. Blinded in brightness, I fleetingly remembered how knowledge can be painful. A thousand light beams zipped across the room and refracted off six giant mirrors emerging from the blackness. Mentally scanning The Map, I realised The Doors of Introspection had led me to the House of Mind Mirrors. My skin prickled and I sucked in the damp air. This meant that the Inner Wars were not far off. I recall the Stranger: "You will meet foes of fury, offspring of the Realms of Ignorance. You cannot defeat what you do not know." My eyes fixed onto the bottomless floor, desperately trying to muster a courage I didn't believe I could possess. "Look up!" I willed myself. "Be a Warrior! Change will only come if you look within. And finally find peace."

Fine words for my crumpled skinny form, too tall with too many sharp edges, braced in foetal position, something like Mr. Bean contending in a WWE Raw final. I raised my head slowly with half an eye open. Swirls of black smoke danced in the mirror before me. Smoke? No, it was a hole — a spinning vortex that sucked the air out my lungs. I jerked forward a hundred meters, caught in its magnetic pull before I noticed the inscription on the mirror's edge etched in ancient Sanskrit: Kama (Lust) the overpowering

sense of wantingness, the gaping vacuum in my heart loomed wide open in that mirror. It was hunger — the unfulfilled-ness of a meal that was lacking, the dull ache of a body in wanting. It was constant dissatisfaction with the now; my needs over yours. The yearning was inescapable. With all my energy I threw things at it, then positions, then people, all to fill the lacking. Insatiable, it surged with each attempt, and the momentary relief was followed by expanded emptiness.

But what would a tortured soul not do for a grain of comfort. And as desire churned in me, I caught in my reverie a slimy green tentacle slithering out of a side mirror, edging



closer. On the tip grew a giant pair of green lips. As I veered backwards; it shot forward with a vengeance, pausing inches from my ears and dripping green goo. With a sweet yet raspy voice it softly beckoned, "More." My pockets empty, I threw Integrity and Loyalty into the vortex of Lust, now spinning like planet out of orbit. The green lips of Lobha (Greed) urged louder, "More. More!" As if slicing off pieces of my own flesh, I threw in Self-respect. The voice rose deafeningly, "More! More! More!" But I was sweating and panting and frustration boiled in me like hot lava, smouldering at all my failed attempts of satisfaction, at the unfairness of the world, at my unrequited longings.

The burn was so real I could almost feel it searing through my skin. I spun around. His eyes were glowing red coals emitting seething rays.

Caught in the glare of Krodha (Anger), my own rage burst forth. Shards of glass flew in the air like lethal razors. Fists were pummelling the rear mirror. My fists. I looked at the blood pouring down my knuckles. The eyes of Krodha popped out into my open palms. I tried to jerk them away but they stuck to my skin. A small voice in my head told me to calm down, that the burning would stop if I just let the resentment go. It just made me angrier.

"How could you do this to me?" I screamed. "Do you know who I am?" Ballooned feet appeared at the bottom of the western mirror, then knees the size of soccer balls. It took a few seconds to recognize them. My arms looked like a donation from The Incredible Hulk. And oh my God! My head! I mentally vowed to never complain about being skinny again, ever. The Big Unfriendly Giant – the "me" in the mirror – was indignant and filled with the hot air of self-importance. It was Mada – Madness. The sense of fullness was overpowering. I glared at the reflection, swollen with pride, all ability to reason left me. My giant self burst through the mirror, glaring in arrogance at the mirror's smallness. I became very aware that a few steps more and I would be road-kill.

Skidding through the air, I caught site of the Doors of Introspection once more. Who am I kidding? I'm no hero. Why did I think I could conquer the enemies within? An eerie creaking filled the room. The oak doors were closing. I made a bee-line for the only exit. "But the stranger would be so disappointed..." Bang! I was on the floor again. Pain shot through my nose. The doors closed. The hot trickle down my face had a metallic aftertaste. It was as if I had walked into an invisible wall between me and the doors. Then I saw it. It was otherwise translucent yet lined by a silver thread so faint that it disappeared every few seconds. The fifth mirror, Moha or Illusion. I didn't

want to look into its depths. I had enough horror, I wanted out. Except the little girl in the reflection, seated on a heart-shaped rock and gazing the sky speckled with finite stars through geeky glasses – she touched a chord in my heart. I felt her wonder and her confusion. The mirror split into ten scenes, each screening some fragment of my life; my first poetry recital at six, losing my swim shorts in the ocean, a fist-fight at school, the secret love letter, my parent's divorce... The constant in each scene was me, a different me but the same me. And then the scenes split into a million pieces, each screening a different life story. Different people starred in each

screen. Some were male some were female, some mammal, insect or bird. Some appeared divine with wings and armour and some subterranean or reptilian. Bile rose in my throat and I

swallowed hard. I had the definite feeling that just as the different scenes of my life were me, each of the millions of screens was me too; a different me, but the same me. Jarred, I backed away. Who am I? What was my past? What makes my future? The screens condensed to form one again, the little girl on a rock under the stars. She was me. Or was she? I wasn't sure anymore. And again the mirror split into a million scenes, each with its own voice, each beckoning to me, in a tone that felt like home, that was the True Me. Illusion's weapons were subtle but lethal. More brutal than any of the others, it was killing me softly, my carcass straight-jacketed by delusion.

I closed my eyes. If only the darkness would come. If only I could have the brief relief of Ignorance. I looked up, searching for an escape. Eerily floating in a horizontal position was the last mirror. The image chilled me. It was no vacuum suction, dripping lips or burning eyes and yet unnerving in its quietness. It was me, seated on a throne with a flute in hand and a peacock feather in my hair; playing God. I felt an inner dawning. But the sunlight left me exposed in its truth. Naked. My most coveted desires paraded in the brightness. Vulnerable. Envy (Matsariya) laughed. It was hollow, cold, mirthless laughter that left me empty.

Surrounded, with no escape in sight, I fought the helplessness inside. The mirrors began to converge. The suction pull of Lust, the seductive whisper of Greed, the seething rays of Anger all drew closer. Madness pounded the ground in slow giant leaps. Illusion spoke through its millions of screens scattered everywhere. Envy's laughter rose to an intolerable screech. The combined clamour left me paralysed. The inner wars had begun.

To be continued in the next issue...



Photos courtesy of Tara-Leigh Sassin, Priya



Poetry In Motion

Creatures of Bhakti

By Shaunaka Muni Das

Inconvenience or physical harm are seldom expected, especially when our existence is one of remarkable beauty and facility. But isn't that generally how things are? On any enthusiastic, sunny day with clear blue skies, there is the potential advent of gloomy rain clouds. And before you know it you're soaked by a downpour you never saw coming. Interesting isn't it? Calamity is seldom on schedule or prepped for.

Ancient wisdom describes that to anticipate that our situation will be filled with happiness, based on aesthetics, is unwise, *padam padam yad vipadam* [SB. 10.14.58]. At any given moment there's an eager await of inconvenience. We develop an understanding of how to deal with this by dwelling within stories of the *Bhagavatam* that are older than time. We meet it's characters (all real and larger than life) who have encountered spontaneous difficulty and triumphed through it, providing us with light.

Long ago in the splendorous forests of the Trikuta Mountain, a place of exceptional landscapes and various jungle animals, there lived an celestial elephant king named of Gajendra. By merely identifying his scent, tigers, lions, rhinos, and great serpents fled in fear. He was merciful to the smaller animals and allowed them to loiter freely in the forest. In return, out of respect, they did not stand before him.

Once, together with his female associates, family and friends, Gajendra wandered toward a lake to enjoy its cooling waters after a long day of jaunting – fraught with liquor, indulgence and jollying. Overwhelmed by fatigue and intoxication they trampled over many plants, creepers, thickets and trees without worrying about their piercing thorns. At long last they reached the lake and relieved themselves by drinking it's refreshing waters mixed with the dust of lotus flowers and water lilies.

The elephant had his wives and children bathe and drink the water. Not minding the arduous labour, he raised water within his trunk and sprayed it over them. Life couldn't be more pleasant for the elephant king.



However the elephants' presence in the lake agitated many of the aquatic creatures and duly provoked an encounter he never imagined. An angry crocodile attacked the elephant's leg. Even though the elephant was strong it couldn't extricate itself from the firm clutches of its new foe. Gajendra's family were frantic, they couldn't rescue their beloved king.

All we want in life is to provide for and protect our loved ones. It is crippling to know that when we are in danger even the ones we love won't be able to save us. At most, they can wish us well. But is that enough, knowing that

inconvenience can befall anyone at any moment? The elephant did not exercise such sobriety, therefore he suffered a consequence of ignorance. The great politician and thinker Chanakya Pandit once said: "one who is always alert will never be surprised by anything". To remain attentive is imperative in this world.

The fight between the elephant and the crocodile went on for a thousand years. Gajendra became weaker yet the crocodile grew in strength. Vedic commentators reason that the crocodile was in its natural habitat whereas the elephant was in a foreign environment. Our situation is similar, being spiritual by nature and living among matter puts us in a compromised position.

*...living among matter
puts us a in a
compromised position.*

In this uncomfortable position, Gajendra finally decided to beseech protection from God. In his elephantine form, he recited some of the finest prayers to ever be documented in Vedic history. It is described that Lord appears primarily to deliver His followers and to annihilate the miscreants. We see in Gajendra's episode how this promise was upheld. The elephant king was a great human king in a previous life and whilst being so, practiced the path of *bhakti-yoga*. Having lost his way, he took birth as an elephant in his next life. It was due to his past divine activities that he could remember the Lord and offer Him well-versed prayers. Sincerity attracts the mercy of God not the quality of materials we offer Him. Gajendra's royalty, strength, fame, or family couldn't save him, and neither did his lower specie birth deter him. His unalloyed turn towards God was all that mattered. And thus he was alleviated of the crocodile's cruel bite and delivered.

Life is a short experience and while we still can we should by all means cultivate remembrance of God. It is what will save us from the greatest danger!

The Journey from Head to Heart

By Byron Kyle

Faith for many people it seems is an automatic process. For others, like me, faith is something that is grappled with. It has been said that the longest journey you'll ever make is the journey from your head to your heart. Why is it that some people can accept seemingly outrageous stories such as a blue boy lifting a mountain on his pinkie finger? Surely these people are deluded? I think these are rational questions.

What I've come to realise is that faith is not a blind leap but rather, it is a choice made on substantial evidence. The Vedas are the oldest religious scriptures in the world. This can be historically, philosophically, and linguistically proven, but what about their contents? To many gurus and adherents, the stories are fact. To many scholars both religious and irreligious, they are myths and imagery for transferring sophisticated philosophical meaning or used as poetical devices. It is not my place to speculate, especially with my limited knowledge and understanding. I think that is a good place to start. To recognise that you are limited and will probably never have all the answers.

Instead of trying to figure out whether something is real or not, I prefer on the effects that faith can have on a person and I do think there is a right and wrong way to "do" faith. Faith can sow discord in individuals and between people and nations, but it has a far greater capacity to create harmony and a community of love. I think concerning faith, even when it comes to inter-religious discussion, on the fundamentals we can agree, on the superficial we can differ but in all things we can love. We can agree that we are all children of God and are loved by God. From there, faith can help us see ourselves in proper relation to each other and to God. What unites us is far greater than what divides us. Where faith either tries to make us into something more or less than our current condition i.e. human, then I think faith needs to undergo careful revaluation.

So what really is my point in all this? What am I trying to say about faith? Well, I was taught that faith is belief in something not yet seen. As we awaken our spiritual sight we will begin to see more. The reward of faith is that we will someday behold that which we

believe and testify to be true. Faith should produce certain qualities in us. To the degree that we develop greater love, joy, peace, tolerance, and self-control in our lives is the degree that we should follow our faith. If faith is producing fear, unhealthy shame and hate, I think it should be abandoned or better – reevaluated. Faith is experiential and relational as well as an academic pursuit.

Why is it that some people can accept seemingly outrageous stories such as a blue boy lifting a mountain on his pinkie finger? Surely these people are deluded?

I am not concerned about people's particular beliefs. If Christianity works for one person, Krishna consciousness for another, and Islam for yet another; and these wholesome qualities are being fostered, then I say go for it my friends. In a

conversation with Allen Ginsberg, Srila Prabhupada said, "...We don't say that you change your Christianity. No. We don't say that. If you have got a nice name, an all-attractive name, in your scripture—don't manufacture, but authorised—then you chant that. We simply request, 'You chant.'"

Isn't it wonderful that God communes with us in our own individual time and mode? And if your faith is not answering your questions or resolving your inner conflict, perhaps it is time to look outside of it or look deeper within.



Artwork © Devaki Devi Dasi

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Marriage Matters
By Mahatma Das

You Decide

Freud documented the impact that heredity and upbringing have on a person's fate. We learn patterns early on that play out over and over while we remain oblivious to how they control (and possibly destroy) our lives. But does that mean the destiny of our marriage was determined years ago?

There is no doubt that we have deeply rooted relationship instincts, but those instincts don't have to control us. Our past constantly vies for control of our future, but we have a choice whether or not to allow our past to control our future.

Control takes place in the present. We can decide how to act. We can decide how to act rather than be a victim to our past. After all, karma is a result of our past actions. Even what we do a minute ago affects us right now. Every effect has a cause. This point is that we can consciously reject what we know doesn't work and then replace old habits with new behaviour.

The point is: Most people are more comfortable doing what's familiar, even though destructive, than doing what's unfamiliar although constructive. As crazy as it sounds, most people prefer doing what they know doesn't work rather than breaking out of old patterns to do something different that would work better.

We need to become a "transition person." A transition person is someone who breaks free from unhealthy relationship patterns that have been in their family for generations. We are by no means a product solely of our heredity or environment. There is a third element: our decision. And that is how we deal with our past. By the way, marriage education means to educate someone to acquire the ability to choose their behaviour. A successful marriage is not something that just happens; we have to craft it. It's a result of deliberate and conscious decisions to make our relationship work well.

Respect

What actions of ours demonstrate respect to our spouse? What actions of ours undermine respect?

Relationships are based on and nurtured by respect. Anger, yelling, criticism, sarcasm, inappropriate language, put downs, irreverence, not listening well, self-centredness, not keeping promises — what to speak of physical abuse — all show disrespect. The point is: Be aware of how we may be disrespecting our spouse and do more things to honour and respect him or her.

Relationships have an emotional bank account. Positive actions are like deposits. Negative actions are like withdrawals. However, it takes five positive actions to compensate for one negative action. If you keep making withdrawals, your relationship will be bankrupt. Is our marriage rich or is our marriage on the verge of bankruptcy? We can make it richer with more deposits and less withdrawals.

Appreciation

Do you notice the beat of your heart? Nobody really does. Something that doesn't get our attention doesn't get our appreciation. What stirs gratitude within us is when something uncommon or infrequent is done for us. If a friend invites you over for a meal, you thank them many times. If your wife cooks for you every day, you probably take it for granted. So the more we get something, the more we expect it — and the less likely we are going to appreciate it. This is one of the great challenges of building a lasting marriage. We crave appreciation.

The point is: A successful relationship depends upon appreciation.

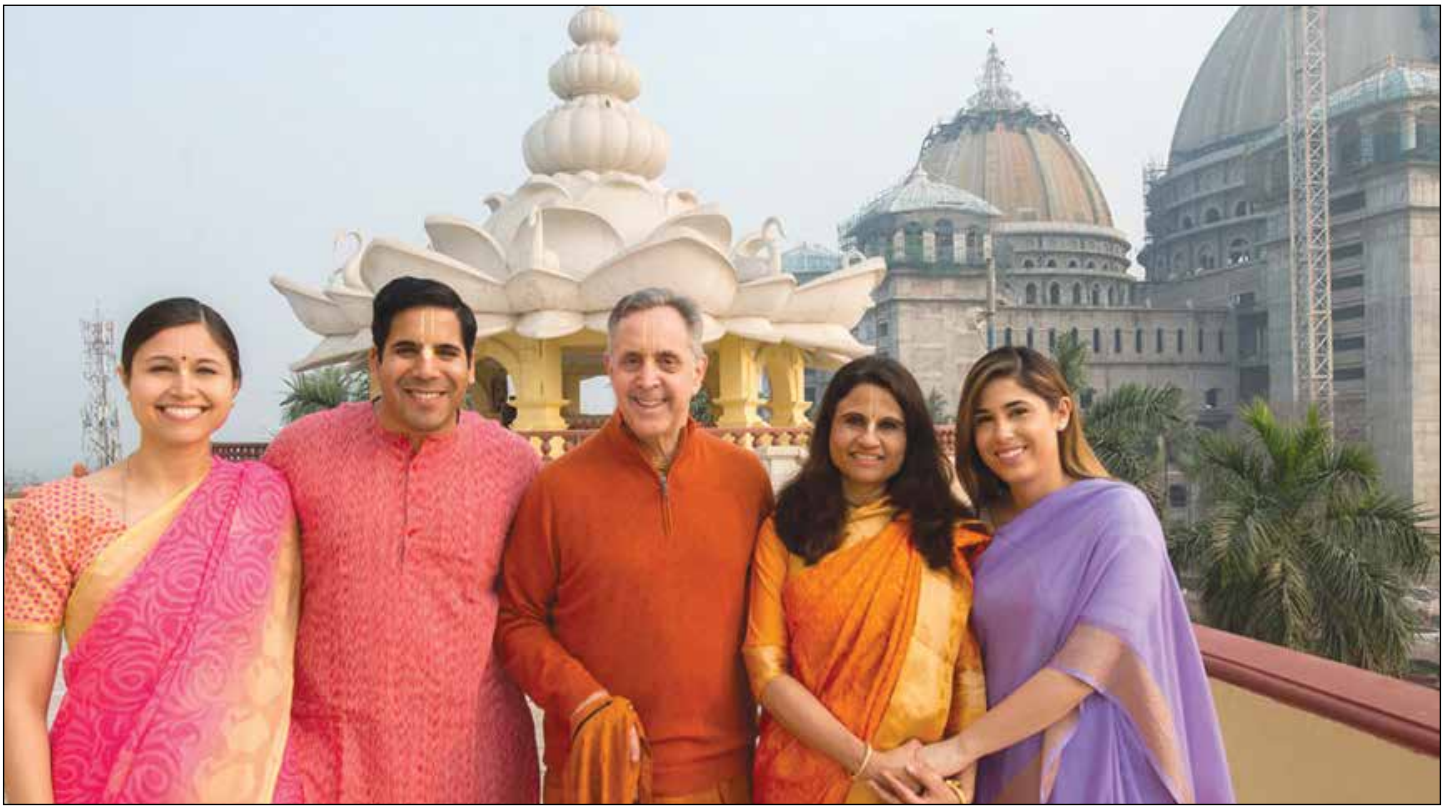
People can't live fulfilling lives without it. But the longer we're married, the less likely we are to appreciate our spouse. So we need to be aware of this natural tendency and be proactive about not letting it happen.

There's no easy way to fill a marriage with appreciation. It may not always come naturally. We have to make it a conscious discipline. Before the day is over, make sure to say at least one word of appreciation to your spouse. And do this every day.

Expressing Feelings

Sometimes openly and honestly expressing our feelings can be very hurtful to our spouse. We might feel that it is important to be honest about our feelings, but if honestly expressing our feelings is hurtful to the other person, then it will damage the relationship, and thus is inappropriate.

“Most people are more comfortable doing what's familiar, even though destructive, than doing what's unfamiliar although constructive.”



The main point is (explained in the Bhagavad-gita 17.15): Austerity of speech consists in speaking words that are truthful, pleasing, beneficial, and not agitating to others, and also in regularly reciting Vedic literature.

Focus on the Positive

Don't focus on the difficulties or problems in your marriage; focus on what you can do to make your marriage better. By doing this, many (or all) of the negatives will vanish. Once we make our marriage better, we will be able to more easily and successfully deal with any remaining negatives. Focus on action. Focusing on listening and discussing problems rather than doing things to make the marriage better doesn't work. Although this may help us have a better understanding of each other's point of view, what we actually need is an action plan to improve our marriage. Talking about the problems in a marriage can actually make the problems worse. This could lead to arguments and bad will.

The real point is this: We will never talk ourselves out of a problem that we behaved ourselves into.

Marriages change because people change. Say little; do much. Speak in a vocabulary of your actions. New choices resolve marital problems; discussions don't. Solving problems does create more affection; creating more affection solves problems.

Our Needs

We should not be upset because our spouse doesn't know our needs. We may have to communicate our

needs to them. Don't be unhappy that they are not always aware of our needs. Be happy if they respond to the needs we tell them we have.

The point is this: Don't expect our spouse to be a mind reader. Yes, we should try to feel what our spouse needs, but we shouldn't have that expectation of them for ourselves.

We should communicate our needs to them. Keep our problems private. One of the most important values in a marriage is privacy. Therefore, it's a mistake to talk about your marriage or our spouse to family or friends without their permission. It's a violation of our spouse's privacy and it is wrong. We like to talk to friends about our problems. Sometimes we need to talk about our problems. But it is not right to reveal your marital problems to your friends, even if you think you need them to help you solve such problems without our spouse's permission.

The point is: It is unfair to your spouse to reveal your personal problems with him or her to your friends or family unless you have their permission. If problems are serious they can be addressed by professionals.

His Grace Mahatma Das a disciple of Srila Prabhupada travels widely facilitating workshops and retreats on important practices such as chanting, forgiveness, humility, vows and sexual purity. He is the co-director of Bhakti Life, a non-profit organisation that teaches the practices of devotional service through interactive workshops, retreats, and online courses and counselling. He is the founder of Touchstone Training, a company that teaches the practices of devotional service through interactive seminars and workshops.

The Protector!

For the Kids

By Mala Rampershad

Hiranyakashipur was a proud man who was against Lord Krishna. He thought he was immortal. Once the four-headed Lord Brahma, the engineer of the universe, granted Hiranyakashipur the boon that he could not be killed by a man or animal, at day or night, neither inside nor outside, and neither by any weapon.

One particular day Hiranyakashipu was in a bad mood. His son Prahlad had returned from school and instead of singing the praises of his father, he spent his time chanting the names of Krishna, his father's sworn enemy. When Hiranyakashipur asked Prahlad what he had learnt at school, he replied: "Devotional service to Krishna! To remember Krishna by chanting His name and offering one's very self to Krishna. To think of Krishna as your best friend."

Furious, Hiranyakashipur decided to kill Prahlad! But he could not, even though he tried many times. He threw his son into a pit of poisonous snakes, tried to boil him in oil and even tried to get wild elephants to trample him to death but each time the child miraculously came out without even a hair moved out of place! Finally, in a rage he shouted "You say Krishna is everywhere. Is he in this pillar?"

Krishna was furious and burst out of the pillar in the form of Lord Narasimha i.e. a half-man half-lion form. A great battle ensued. Finally, at dusk the Lord dragged Hiranyakashipur to the

doorway, laid him on His lap and using His nails, tore Hiranyakashipur apart.

We can meditate on Lord Narasimha and how He appeared to especially protect his devotee, Prahlad.

Activity

This activity will help you feel close to Lord Narasimha. You will need: colouring pens or paints; scissors; glue; and cardboard. Colour in the drawing of Lord Narasimha and decorate to your taste. Cut out the picture and paste onto the board and keep close to you.





Potato Bake & Herbed Soda Bread

The Vaishnava Chef

By Chandrasekhara Das

This is a perfect combination for a hearty winter entrée.

Potato Bake

Ingredients

6 medium/large soft cooking potatoes (the "up to date" variety works well)
 ½ cup finely chopped green pepper
 1 x 400ml can coconut milk
 1 cup milk (substitute with plant based milk for a vegan option)
 2 tsp hing
 3 sprigs fresh thyme
 1 bay leaf
 3 Tbsp whole-grain mustard (I found the Pick 'n Pay brand to be garlic free)
 2 Tbsp grated Parmesan cheese (substitute with 2 Tbsp nutritional yeast for a vegan option)
 1 tsp sea salt
 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Method

Preheat oven to 190°. Slice potatoes very thinly using a mandolin. Steam potatoes in boiling water until just soft but not broken (too soft will cause the potatoes to disintegrate). Combine coconut milk,

milk, hing, thyme, bay leaf, mustard, salt and pepper in a large saucepan and heat until boiling. Add the steamed potatoes to the boiling sauce and gently combine taking care not to break up the potatoes. Remove from the heat and carefully pour into an oven proof dish levelling out the potatoes. Cover with baking paper and bake for 20 minutes. Remove baking paper and bake for a further 20 minutes. Offer to Krishna with love and devotion. Serve piping hot with herbed soda bread.

Herbed Soda Bread

Ingredients

2 cups smooth whole-wheat flour (Atta flour works best)
 2 cups cake flour
 ½ tsp cream of tartar
 2 tsp dried thyme
 2 tsp hing
 1 tsp baking soda
 1 tsp sea salt
 2 cups buttermilk

Method

Preheat oven to 220°. Thoroughly combine dry ingredients in a large bowl. Add buttermilk and mix into a slightly sticky dough. Gently knead the dough on a lightly floured surface for 1 minute. Over kneading the dough will result in a tough textured bread. Divide into 6 balls and roll out on a floured surface into ovals of 1.5 cm thickness. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown.

Event Guide



Disappearance of Sri Ramananda Raya (He was an intimate associate of Lord Chaitanya)
5 May | Saturday



Purushottama Maas
(Occurs once every three years and is considered more auspicious than Kartik.)
16 May - 13 June



Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple Women's Forum
9 June | Saturday



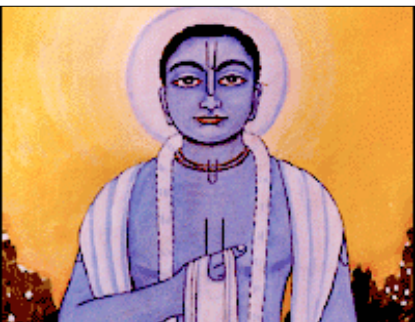
Ganga Puja and Disappearance of Sri Baladeva Vidyabhusana (Author of Sri Govinda Basya, the Vaishnava commentary on Vedanta-sutra.)
22 June | Friday



Appearance of Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur (Author of Sri Chaitanya Bhagavat)
12 May | Saturday



Kirtanuity Youth Day
16 June | Saturday



Disappearance of Sri Syamananda Pandit
29 June | Friday
(Shyamananda Pandit was a member of the first *sankirtana* party — with Srinivas Acharya and Narottama Das Thakur — that first brought the books of the Six Gosvamis from Vrindavan to Bengal and Orissa.)

EKADASI

Fast from all grains, beans and legumes. This fast awards spiritual benefits and detoxifies the body and mind.

Ekadasi
11 May | Friday
Break Fast
12 May | Saturday | 06:31 - 10:05

Ekadasi
25 May | Friday
Break Fast
26 May | Saturday | 06:39 - 10:08

Ekadasi
10 June | Sunday
Break Fast
11 June | Monday | 06:47 - 10:12

Pandava Nirjala Ekadasi
(Total fast, even from water, if you have broken Ekadasi)
24 June | Sunday
Break Fast
25 June | Monday | 06:51 - 10:16



Appearance of Srimati Gangamata Gosvami
22 June | Friday
(From her childhood Princess Sachi Devi [Gangamata Goswami], the daughter of King Naresh Narayana of Bengal, showed unalloyed devotion to Lord Sri Krishna. After her father's demise she ruled the kingdom. But she soon renounced it to find a bona fide spiritual master. On the order of her spiritual master she went to Jagannath Puri. Everyday she lectured on Srimad Bhagavatam. Her classes became popular attracting eager listeners from miles around. Many people, including *brahmanas* and King Mukunda Deva, took initiation from her.)



Panihati Cida Dahi Utsava
25 June | Monday