



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS  
Founder Acharya: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

# HARE KRISHNA NEWS

November/December 2021

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## Vaishnava Calendar

14 Dec Tu	Advent of Srimad Bhagavad-gita
15 Dec We	Ekadasi
16 Dec Th	Break fast 04:49 - 09:31
23 Dec Th	Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur's Disappearance (Fast until noon)
30 Dec Th	Ekadasi
31 Dec Fr	Break fast 04:57 - 07:12
5 Jan We	Srila Jiva Gosvami's Disappearance
13 Jan Th	Ekadasi
14 Jan Fr	Break fast 05:08 - 09:46
23 Jan Su	Srila Gopala Bhatta Gosvami's Appearance
24 Jan Mo	Sri Jayadeva Gosvami's Disappearance Sri Locana Dasa Thakura's Disappearance
28 Jan Fr	Ekadasi
29 Jan Sa	Break fast 05:21 - 09:53
5 Feb Sa	Vasant Panchami Srimati Visnupriya Devi's Appearance (Consort of Lord Caitanya) Srila Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami's Appearance Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakur's Disappearance
7 Feb Mo	Sri Advaita Acharya's Appearance (Fast until noon)
9 Feb We	Sri Madhvacarya's Disappearance
11 Feb Fr	Sri Ramanujacarya's Disappearance
12 Feb Sa	Ekadasi (Fast until noon for Varahadeva)
13 Feb Su	Break fast 05:34 - 09:58 Varaha Dvadasi: Appearance of Lord Varahadeva (Fast on Sa 12 Feb)
14 Feb Mo	Nityananda Trayodasi: Appearance of Sri Nityananda Prabhu (Fast till noon)

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# PRABHUPADA MARATHON 2021



## "Simply Take Instruction"

Living with Srila Prabhupada

From a Lecture Given by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in Los Angeles, 20 June 1975

So we have to simply take instruction from guru, and if we execute that to our heart and soul, that is success. That is practical.

I have no personal qualification, but I simply tried to satisfy my guru. That's all. My Guru Maharaja asked me that "If you get some money, you print books." So there was a private meeting, talking, some of my important Godbrothers also there. It was in Radha-kunda. So Guru Maharaja was speaking to me that "Since we have got this Bagh Bazaar marble temple, there has been so many dissensions, and everyone thinking who will occupy this room or that room, that room. I wish, therefore, to sell this temple and the marble and print some book." Yes. So I took up this from his mouth, that he is very fond of books. And he told me personally that "If you get some money, print books." Therefore I am stressing on this point: "Where is book? Where is book? Where is book?" So kindly help me. This is my request. Print as many books in as many languages and distribute throughout the whole world. Then Krishna consciousness movement will automatically increase.

## Go Solo

Take a book pack and distribute at your will and time. Or even give them away as gifts. Book packs start with a minimum of 50 books (prices will vary as per book range).



## Team Up

A group of friends can register as a team. We will help you find spots and get books. Book packs are minimum of 125 books (prices will vary as per book range).

## Chip In

You want to live to give but don't have time? Sponsor books and we will distribute them for you.

## Hero Up

You don't need to sell a thing! Just place your feet on the pavement. We arrange everything – the place, the books, the company. Just give 125 minutes of your time.



## Meet Swarup Damodar Das

### Rasa-sthali Dasi Interviews

### Our New Co-Temple President

In this issue we interview Swarup Damodar, who is no stranger to the position of Temple President. He is the longest serving devotee in that capacity here and doing this interview helped me perceive the “weight” he developed in doing a service that is both demanding and daunting. He has grown in wisdom and vision and we can look forward to new frontiers under his leadership.

#### *Please share your journey into bhakti?*

My initial introduction into Krishna consciousness came when I was in university. While my time there was tiresome and unfulfilling, it did raise many questions about the purpose of life and helped me realize the futility of the usual mundane pattern people are herded into for the rest of their lives. By some good fortune, I came in touch with two of Srila Prabhupada’s books – *Easy Journey to Other Planets* and *The Perfection of Yoga*. I was taken by Srila Prabhupada’s unique brilliance in cutting through the illusion that I was being trained to surrender to. From then on, Krishna facilitated me in many ways to get the association of devotees and service. One of the experiences that helped attract me to want to deeply surrender was the opportunity to stay for short periods — a few weeks and weekends — at the temple in Chatsworth.

#### *What services have you rendered over the years?*

Before committing to full time residency, I assisted with *nama-hatta* programs. Shortly after joining the *ashram*, I was engaged in all sorts of services as is necessary and expected of all residents. I was also engaged in printing and publishing booklets and magazines and study guides for ISKCON’s educational programs. I was fortunate to have joined with a group of devotees for whom studying Srila Prabhupada’s books was important. I feel I gained much from that time that continues to guide me today. For a few years, well before the ISKCON Phoenix temple opened, I was engaged with a team to cultivate the congregation there and raise funds to maintain our small centre there. Although somewhat difficult for me, I felt purified and grateful for being

engaged in book distribution, calendar and incense distribution, and selling framed devotional pictures.

I developed a taste to serving senior devotees who visited Durban. Especially dear to me then, as a much younger devotee, was the service of assisting His Holiness Bhakti Tirtha Swami and His Holiness Krishna Das Swami. I learned so much in their edifying association. And I feel the mercy I received from them paved the way for me to receive one of my most cherished services – I became an assistant to my spiritual master, His Holiness Giriraj Swami.

A short while after accepting initiation, I was transferred to serve in Juhu, India. There, alongside assisting Giriraj Maharaj, I also served as a *pujari*. During this time, I learned much about process of deity worship, festivals, and the standards Srila Prabhupada wanted for temples.

Returning to South Africa, I was engaged in overseeing the *brahmachari ashram* and served as the *head pujari* at Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple. And then later on, as temple president. Over time, I was sometimes engaged as a co-National Secretary for South Africa.

#### *Out of all the services you have done, which one fills your heart and why?*

Trying to assist my spiritual master is very important to me. Besides him being a deep and humble practitioner of *bhakti*, which is very moving, he is so intimately connected to Srila Prabhupada, that I feel Srila Prabhupada’s presence when I am with Maharaj. Another aspect of my spiritual life is serving under the guidance and inspiration of His Holiness Indradyumna Swami who makes even an seemingly small engagement a exciting experience. In 2013, I closely assisted Indradyumna Maharaj in organizing one of the most groundbreaking and defining events for ISKCON in South Africa. Without his service, I suspect my life would be meager. And, the service to Sri Sri Radha Radhanath and Their devotees is precious to me.

#### *How important is community to you in spiritual practice?*

While we ultimately are individually responsible for the success or challenges we experience in *bhakti*, it takes a community to coach, support, cheer us on through the various difficulties along the way. I would not suggest that community is merely important, rather it is vital to spiritual growth. A broad community yes, but more importantly to find within that

**I feel much more attention should given to carefully raise the younger generation of devotees into roles of responsibility. I would like to see energy invested in developing a holistic care program for our devotee community.**



community like-minded devotees whom we can connect, feel safe, and supported.

*How important is Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Themselves and the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath community to you?*

Our Deities are special. They exude mercy. Whenever I look at Them directly or in pictures, I feel Their pose is conveying the plea: "We have so much mercy We want to shower over you. Please accept it." They are just so merciful. The beauty of our Deities manifest especially for the devotees who have dedicated their lives in serving Them – whether through *pujari* service, book distribution, *prasad* preparation and distribution, restaurant service, management, festivals, *nama-hatta*, etc. Anything done in service and anyone who is connected to Sri Sri Radha Radhanath brings out more of the merciful attractive beauty of the Deities.

The devotees of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath have undergone much sacrifice in the service to the Temple. I am personally very grateful to them for maintaining the worship of the Deities and for continuing the mission of Srila Prabhupada. Actually, the community of devotees is what manifests Sri Sri Radha Radhanath in our hearts. The Deities brought a community around Them and the community is what keeps the Deities and Their service in the centre of our hearts.

*How do you feel about your new appointment as co-temple president?*

I previously served as temple president here for some time and was relieved to have found someone capable in Vibhu Chaitanya Prabhu, who then managed the temple for about eight years and developed various wonderful programs, especially the important service of book distribution. Being asked to serve again in this capacity has temporarily altered my intended life direction. But the desires of Lord Krishna and Srila Prabhupada supersede one's personal aspirations – even if one's aspirations are meant to please them. So I take it in that way, that for now, the Deities and Srila Prabhupada want me to serve in this way. So it is a great blessing, this opportunity to surrender to the will of the Lord and the devotees. I sincerely hope to develop the humility, patience, and tolerance required to serve the Lord and devotees nicely.

*What vision do you have for the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple community?*

I would like to see a community full of eagerness. Eager to serve together and to hear and chant together. Eager to care for each other, and eager to share our good fortune with others. This is essentially what a Krishna conscious community is all about. To attain Krishna consciousness (the purpose of ISKCON), one has to develop intense greed or eagerness to get it. (Cc. M. 8.70)

*Where do you think we need to invest energy?*

I feel much more attention should be given to carefully raise the younger generation of devotees into roles of responsibility. I would like to see energy invested in developing a holistic care program for our devotee community. A program that cultivates each member to take responsibility for their spiritual life, and that creates opportunities for personal spiritual growth and engagement. I would like to see that as part of the holistic care, devotees are then engaged in systematic outreach to other communities, attracting these communities to the caring shelter of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath. Also, our temple is an architectural icon in South Africa. A structure that attracts people to Krishna but it is in need of extensive repair and restoration. So, we want to invest resources in professionally restoring the temple building and grounds.

And nationally, I feel that ISKCON's outreach strategies urgently needs to tactically adapt to the changing environments, and the changing needs and interests of people. I feel we have not kept pace with the current landscape and opportunities we are blessed with in South Africa. There is immense diversity in South Africa, probably more than any other country in the world. Bringing harmony within

*continues on page 7*



## Meet Swarup Damodar...continued from page 5

the broad diversity in South Africa, would be a great testimony to the efficacy of Lord Chaitanya's teachings and mercy. Regrettably we have stayed with the outreach and cultivation strategies that worked in the 70s, 80s, and early to mid 90s. Just as Srila Prabhupada did in the various places he pioneered, we need to assess the landscape with detachment and clarity and based on that, invest in programs, initiatives that will attractively carry the pure teachings of Srila Prabhupada. The South African yatra need to urgently invest time, resources, and energy in this as well.

### *What does it mean to you to be a Temple President?*

As we constantly adapt to the changing environments, there is the tendency to also steer away slightly, or sometimes even significantly, from the standards and principles Srila Prabhupada laid down to preserve ISKCON purity. As a temple president, guided by my managerial and spiritual authorities, I hope to ensure that our programs and direction taken at the Temple remains pure and true to what Srila Prabhupada wanted. Else, no matter how materially great the outcomes may be, if what we have done is not guided by Srila Prabhupada's direction, Sri Sri Radha Radhanath will not accept it.

As a temple president, I would also like to invest time in facilitating the inspiration that the Lord inspires within the hearts of the devotees in their service. So, if devotees are inspired to engage in areas where I have responsible influence, I would like to assist them to carefully grow their contribution to Srila Prabhupada.

### *How do you view your current presidency different from your previous presidency?*

Time is a great educator. Sometimes I do find myself taken aback at some of the decisions I made when I was younger. So, I would say that my current presidency comes with the benefit of wisdom borne of experience and much more patience, and an ability to better perceive a larger picture beyond what I instinctively am attached to. Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple yatra in many ways is the flagship project in South Africa, and I feel that we should invest what we can into other projects around the country that we feel are dedicated to taking forward Srila Prabhupada's desires for Africa.

### *Would you approach the presidency differently? How?*

I would definitely adjust my approach in some ways. One key area is to not be primarily focused on developing the project, but more on developing the people involved. And then naturally, by Krishna's hand, the project will develop as He desires. And depend much more on the mercy of the Lord, than my own ability.

## Sri Radha Lives To Give

On the Cover

By Taleah Vaid

I pray that I may please be a servant of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath, Srila Prabhupada and all Their loving devotees. A few weeks ago, we were reading Canto 2 Chapter 5 in my Srimad Bhagavatam book club. In the first few verses, Narada Muni enquires from his dear father, Lord Brahma, "Under whose protection are you standing? And under whom are you working?" (SB 2.5.4) One of the devotees shared that when we are engaged in devotional service, we should think about whom we are serving under. We do not serve Krishna directly, but we have the fortune of serving under His sweet servants. This meditation really struck me. It made me reflect and appreciate the wonderful qualities of the devotees whom I have the fortune of serving with. I am deeply inspired by their great love and care. Due to their boundless mercy, I experience so much joy in their incredible offerings, like stringing garlands of fragrant flowers, sewing, and taking photos of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath and Srila Prabhupada. Thank you to the jewel-like devotees who are patient, who protect, trust and guide me in devotional service. It is the greatest gift and they are my greatest blessing.



Our divine Srila Prabhupada has taught us that Bhakti is the art of eternal love. So that must mean that the practitioners of Bhakti are all artists! Therefore I am discovering, and slowly learning how to be an artist, and to follow his teachings is the most magnificent adventure. Bhakti – real love, true love, means expression. It is not only emotion. Srila Prabhupada explains that it is our natural propensity to love, therefore our natural propensity is also to express that love to our source of love – Sri Sri Radha-Krishna. That is perfection. So to be an artist, to create, means to be able to express our love to Sri Radha and Krishna, which is the highest perfection in life. And in bhakti-yoga we are able to do this in many beautiful ways. Be it cooking, reading, writing, listening, caring, painting, and so on. These are all arts. We are all on this artistic adventure together, eternally. This process is simple and pure. Our supremely expert, supremely beautiful, supreme artist, is our Queen, Srimati Radharani!

For this piece of art I used oil on canvas and my favourite painter is my sunshine sister, Girisha. Recently my darling sister, Priya Kishori, whom I am happy to also call my spiritual mentor, invited me to share my heart with what inspires me in Krishna consciousness. The first thought that entered my mind was my sweet Sri Sri Radha Radhanath. I feel deeply inspired by our beautiful temple — our home, our exquisite presiding Deities Sri Sri Radha Radhanath — and the sincere souls whose hearts live here. I look forward to spending time at the temple, it is a potent source of transcendental energy and inspiration. I am also inspired by reading Srila Prabhupada's books. I noticed that if I am not reading Srila Prabhupada's books, even if it is for one day, then I lack inspiration and enthusiasm in my personal sadhana (devotional practice). There is surrender in serendipity. While praying to surrender to this magical process, this painting "happened" to reflect the above two inspirations – Srila Prabhupada is our live-to-give Acharya and he is a divine instrument of Srimati Radharani's mercy. He is a dancing puppet in Her lotus hand. You see, Srimati Radharani, She lives to give us Krishna. And so does Srila Prabhupada.

Srimati Radharani is very sweet — very, very sweet. She is Radha-rani. She is the Queen of the Devotees. She is the greatest possessor of selfless love, meaning the selfless desire to simply serve God, to serve Krishna without any personal considerations. "...She is always full of mercy..." (Cc. Madhya 23. 87-91 describes Srimati Radharani's 25 transcendental qualities.)

This painting is an insignificant attempt to illustrate Srimati Radharani's mercy. It is a meditation on Her soft lotus hand, which so freely gives us Krishna. It is

## It is also how I imagine Sri Radha recommends us to Her beloved, gently carrying and offering us like little flowers for Krishna's pleasure.

also how I imagine Sri Radha recommends us to Her beloved, gently carrying and offering us like little flowers for Krishna's pleasure. It also made me think: "to see Her hand in everything."

On Sri Radhastami, August 29th 1971 in London, Srila Prabhupada gave a class where He explained; "Radharani is hari-priya, very dear to Krishna. So if we approach Krishna through Radharani, through the mercy of Radharani, then it becomes very easy. If Radharani recommends that, 'This devotee is very nice,' then Krishna immediately accepts, however fool I may be. Because it is recommended by Radharani, Krishna accepts."

So we have to take shelter of Srimati Radharani. She is Bhakti Devi, the presiding deity of devotional service. All devotional service is under Her direction. So if we pray to Her for mercy, "Please help me to become a better servant," She'll be happy to give us inspiration and empowerment to become better servants.

Therefore I hope we can pray together to become instruments of Sri Radha's mercy. We pray for Her empowerment to "live to give," just as Srila Prabhupada lived and gave. We pray for Her inspiration to serve selflessly and I pray we can all serve together and share Her mercy with the whole world by distributing Srila Prabhupada's books this December and always...eternally

"Who I am" is "who I pray to be." These are my prayers at the readers' lotus feet.

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



## My Pen Will Suffice

By Namanta Devi Dasi

I am daunted by the task ahead of me, what I have accepted will be my life's work. Firstly, to grapple with for my own understanding and then to communicate, for the benefit of others like myself, the philosophy of *bhakti-yoga*. This is a monumental task due to the vastness and sheer depth of this knowledge, its likeliness to be accepted in my circles uncertain. The latter consideration however is beyond my jurisdiction, a central principle on this path being to perform one's service wholeheartedly but without concern for the results thereof.

Perhaps this is a place to begin, for the moment setting aside historical context and other literary preliminaries, their imperativeness though assured, of the *Bhagavad-gita* – one of the core *bhakti-yoga* texts. Arjuna, the protagonist in this story, is a dexterous warrior and prince in a kingdom over the entire Earth. Moreover, he is deeply pious by nature, being a dear and devoted friend of Krishna's. Krishna, God, takes the role of his chariot driver during a formidable battle against an attempt by his impious family members to usurp the throne. Before the war begins, Arjuna surveys the battlefield, facing the reality that he must fight his own family including respectable elders and teachers. This horrifies him and leaves him depressed, woefully disturbed by the fact that his relatives are willing to

kill one another for the sake of power, and causes him to lay down his mighty weapon, refusing to fight. He is willing, rather, to be killed, unarmed and unresisting, contrary to the principles of the warrior class. Krishna, the proprietor and controller of all things, also Arjuna's confidante and advisor, sings the *Bhagavad-gita* in response, explaining to Arjuna the ultimate purpose of life to convince him that he should do his duty — in service to God, Allah, Jah, the Supreme Lord, Krishna Himself — despite his crisis and free from attachment to the outcomes of his actions. He should therefore fight, for Krishna's will in establishing a pious throne thus, without regard for killing his family members. Dreadful as this may sound, it stands as a higher principle than the morality which Arjuna bases his arguments on.

Part of Arjuna's purpose is that he is a universally recognizable character — a hero who has a dilemma, goes through a process of internal growth, and then rises to the challenge that he is faced with. Despite the immensity of his predicament and task, he is also universally relatable. Arjuna represents all of us, the people of the world. Though the specifics of our situations vary, his confusion and misery are something we can all recognize; his existential questioning something we all experience at some point in life; the answers given to him by Krishna applicable and beneficial to us all and the surrender such as he comes to also in our best interests eventually to do, as is shown by the end of the *Gita*. Following Arjuna's story and hearing Krishna's message as we read provides counsel for our own lives, not only illuminating our current condition of bewilderment under material illusion but also taking us through an enlightening process through which we can return to and fulfill our true spiritual purpose.

I can use the example of my own journey for my own continuous processing as well as to illustrate. At a crucial point in my life, I faced a crisis, pale in comparison to Arjuna's yet just as trying to me. And unfortunate as I was without Krishna's direct counsel, I made the wrong decision. The conversation between Krishna and Arjuna lasted about an hour, during which time his illusion was corrected. For most people, achieving enlightenment may take an entire lifetime, even with the aid of this scriptural treatise at hand, and we may find we repeatedly make mistakes even while on the spiritual path. Nevertheless, we begin where we are, get up each time we fall, and try to carry on. This has been my task ever since. My development continues, therefore.

I was a student of literature and social sciences in my final undergraduate year, an idealistic 19-year-old, and I believed that I had escaped what I considered a rat race by steering clear of the corporate world, choosing to study not for the purpose of getting





a sought-after job and a large income, but for acquiring and generating knowledge. However, I was becoming increasingly disillusioned by the moral flaws also present in the world of academia, and more and more aware that the university system of knowledge was bringing us no real answers to the world's problems. Looking back, these kinds of half-truths and other lies are not that big of a deal; they can be expected in a deceptive world. But I could not accept it. The breaking point was realizing, though for a while suspected but this time far too starkly during a course on slave narratives, that I, an African girl in the 21st Century, was still a slave, and that it was in the academic institution that this enslavement was most upheld yet under an illusion of a new and apparently growing freedom. Appalled by this and yearning for actual liberation, I left that battlefield, and went in search of a real and satisfying truth.

I had already come across *bhakti-yoga* at the time. It was part of what informed my questioning process. However, I lacked full comprehension of its principles and guidance on its path. The concept of engaging our occupations in service to God, whatever the result of that work, has become clearer to me over time. This deeper understanding of *bhakti-yoga* was the truth that I discovered on my rogue search, through study of scripture, spiritual association, and practice. Yet I could have better served that truth by staying within the academic space as I uncovered it, and there presented its solutions. Moreover, the freedom that I desired, if I had been unattached to its loss or attainment, would come as a natural consequence of doing my duty in service to that truth, as it promises.

This is a similar realization as that that Arjuna had to come to. As aforementioned, the advice given to him by Krishna was higher in principle than his morality. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada explains that it is attachment to worldly realities — in Arjuna's case that of family relations and in mine, the desire for freedom in my particular, African body — that puts one into these states of misunderstanding and despair. Arjuna makes several, well-informed arguments in defence of his decision not to fight — that no good can come from the killing of elders, that instead this will cause traditions to be lost resulting in broken homes and therefore broken communities; that he would incur unfavourable reactions as a result of the sin of killing his family; that even if he won the kingdom, he could not enjoy it without his family. He also simply feels pity and compassion for those he would have to put to death.

In my instance, I was dismayed not only by the conditions of slavery as revealed by my studies, but also by the fact, as it dawned on me, that despite

**Arjuna needed reminding of his real interests, and I needed to discover mine. I needed to learn what freedom really was.**

centuries of political, economic and social struggle these conditions continued and more deeply than generally realized; that changes achieved and those in progress were only surface deep, the essence of enslavement still well alive and stronger under its new disguises of freedom. The university space was both subtly and overtly oppressive, especially towards people of colour, yet we were eager for a place in it, fighting for reforms that did not in fact serve us but provided an illusion of emancipation and development. I was a student with a promising career in academia, in my kind of body especially encouraged in millennial hopes to rewrite history, yet under the same fundamental standards that have always defined this history. The slave narrative, for instance, was a critical tool in the fight to abolish slavery all over the world. Yet the limitations under which slaves wrote their stories defeated the purpose if one is interested in a true and total freedom. Granted, that may be a step-by-step achievement, but centuries and so much supposed progression later, my own writing as an African university student was still only valued according to essentially the same criteria. The level of prestige that 'slaves' now had access to had improved exponentially, but this was not freedom, nor would it ever be a means to it, as far as I could see. I rejected it, willing rather to struggle through life with no qualification or status. But — this was not freedom either.

Despite Arjuna's virtuous arguments, Krishna does not approve of his decision to withdraw from the fight. He views Arjuna's lamentation for his family as a petty weakness of heart and an impurity, as it arises from false self-interest as opposed to duty done in God's interest. Krishna would rather have Arjuna act in accordance with worldly obligations and use subsequent gains in His service, for instance by establishing a pious kingdom, than to reject it due to his own morality. And certainly, in the same way that I found myself still at a loss for freedom, Arjuna finds himself still rapt in indecision and confusion after his withdrawal. It is at this point though, that he surrenders to Krishna, asking Him to instruct him on the best course of action.

Arjuna needed reminding of his real interests, and I needed to discover mine. I needed to learn what freedom really was. Although Arjuna was momentarily in a state of ignorance concerning his duty and proper action, Prabhupada explains that it was his soft-heartedness and compassion

for his family as well as his detachment from the prestige of royalty that qualified him to receive the knowledge that Krishna went on to impart. Similarly, although I did not know the best course of action in my situation, my unwillingness to accept either enslavement or false freedom opened the pathway for me to receive the knowledge that I required, knowledge about real liberation. Our mistakes often lead us to valuable lessons, and if I had not taken the course that I had taken, I might not have learned what I have learned or developed the same appreciation for it.

But what is this knowledge, this liberation? I was particularly concerned with the fact that freedom was proving to be so elusive for people of my race. But the *Bhagavad-gita* explains that no one can be saved simply by rescuing their outward dress. In other words, it is useless to base our conceptions of freedom on bodily considerations. Real liberation means to be freed of material conceptions altogether. But the way to achieve this is not merely by removing ourselves from material or worldly activities. I am still living in the body of an African woman in this world, and I can communicate what I learn with others who share this experience and may benefit from my perspectives. So as far as we still must live in a material reality, the best course of action is to engage our material occupations and propensities in a higher, spiritual purpose. We must then also know what the spiritual entails. The world of religion and so-called spirituality is often just as misleading as the world of politics or knowledge production in the search for truth and freedom.

Therefore, one major stance of the *Bhagavad-gita* is that real knowledge means understanding the difference between the body and the soul, teaching us what that difference is; and that acting on the platform of the soul would lead to genuine freedom — that this is spirituality. It also holds that the best way to receive this knowledge is with the guidance of someone who is already and fully situated on that platform. None other fits this role better than Krishna, the very form of spiritual truth, God Himself. Arjuna surrenders to Krishna as his master, submitting all his doubts and questions to Him. Krishna imparts this knowledge unto him, embedding him in this spiritual reality, and beginning a disciplic line through which it has been passed ever since. In this line comes Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, taking Krishna's words without personal interpretation and expanding them for present-day readers. In addition, his followers present it in various ways for ever-widening audiences, my own spiritual master being one of these followers, and under his instruction I too now attempt to do this.

sung by the supreme teacher. Arjuna is a worthy student, and representative of all people wherever in the world and at whichever point in history we may be. We all benefit from Arjuna's surrender to Krishna and the teachings that follow. I was fortunate enough to discover and deepen into this when I needed it. It provided more satisfying answers for me than I had found anywhere else, regarding the purpose of life, the nature of truth, and the way to achieve freedom. By the end of the *Gita*, Arjuna was enlightened with perfect knowledge, giving him the courage with which to fight. He does so, emerging victorious and fulfilling his purpose. Krishna also tells him that to share this knowledge is the most valuable service that one can perform. So now I begin to write with this intention.

Arjuna though, never left the battlefield. It took him but an hour to come to the proper position. I, on the other hand, have had to endeavour for years to achieve the same understanding that he did, still ongoing. Moreover, I cannot return to the battlefield to carry out the right action. This has caused me to wonder whether I can still perform my duty or some service in accordance with Krishna's instructions. But what has become clear to me, over the past few years of my life, and due to the brilliance and undeniability of Krishna's teachings, is that there is no other way — whatever I do with my life, I must serve Him. Furthermore, He provides all facility in which to do so for anyone who desires to. It is said that anyone who surrenders to Him has nothing to fear. I submit my doubts before my spiritual master, and he helps me to see this. I come to understand that my battlefield has only, in fact, gotten bigger. I left the arena of academia only to speak to the world at large. This is daunting, but just as Arjuna raised his weapon again, my spiritual master assures me, "Your pen will suffice." I only pray to write honestly, with compassionate understanding, and with Krishna as the central point and the goal of all that I do.

As for my concern about the acceptability of this knowledge amongst other people like myself, for I am not the only one, African and aware of the tendency throughout history and currently, of almost every philosophy and religion alike to disregard and deride us, wary therefore of everything that claims to be truth but does not exalt us... The result of my work is beyond my control. But the goal of *bhakti* is far beyond either aforementioned extremes or anything in between. It is transcendental and for everyone. It is the best solution for the African and anyone caught in any kind of bondage or illusion. It will not indulge those illusions, but it will set us truly free. Anyone who is sincerely interested in this, true freedom, will recognize its value.



## Old Prayers Sung Anew

Gaura Bhumi devi dasi

*I mouth the syllables, and quiet permeates. I murmur the words, yet silence haunts. I vocalize stanzas, yet my pleas fall on dusty palms.*

*I can't really explain when I began to fall out of love with Him. It happened softly. Day-by-day, our conversations held less meaning and were done more out of duty, until we talked at each other rather than to each other. It was strange really, I did exactly what everyone else did, I said the same things and acted the same way, but why wouldn't He just provide?*

As an aspiring *bhakti-yogi*, I chant the same mantra as handed down through succession. I try to tune in to the same vibration as the saints before me. But am I chanting with the wrong mentality? Spiritual glorification with company holds such a powerful space. Surely private meditation should do the same? Could it be that I am afraid to be alone with Krishna?

*Is this what love is? The quiet resignation of souls who separate when the spark of intimacy wanes?*

Feelings of resignation set in when I feel that Krishna doesn't seem to reciprocate with me. But do I actually treat Him like a dear one, or only call Him up when I need something? Have I fallen prey to complacency, and therefore slipped up? The chanting of Krishna's holy names is often described as the quickest, easiest and most sublime method of connection with Him. Have I underestimated the apparent easiness of this spiritual practice?

*I have come to a fork on the path of growth. Do I comfort myself with the blanket of letting go? Or do I face the chilling unease of trying one more time? Everyone is deep but most are afraid to dive.*

A true life of integrity and fulfilment starts from moments of Krishna and I. There comes a time in spirituality when it isn't enough to know *bhakti*. I have to start doing *bhakti*. The process of chanting is the beginning of doing *bhakti* and I have to make it personal. As with the initial stage of any new relationship, the more I openly communicate with Krishna wholeheartedly, the more common ground I can find with Him.

*Dare I ease my doubts, curb my fears and sate my yearning with the wonders of a good conversation?*

Meaningful japa has all the markings of wonderful conversation. If I truly want to grow my faith in someone, I have to communicate with them and get

to know them on an internal level. Similarly, faith grows through chanting. *Bhakti-yogis* are realistically grounded. The *maha-mantra* is so magical that the more seriously I take my chanting, the more I can make miracles.

*But what about those moments when even meaningful conversation fails me?*

Ultimately, the holy name holds a space for when I cannot articulate my internal musings, when I am so covered in karmic dust that I cannot pray properly. At its core, *japa* is not a feel-good practice. Rather it's a feel-real practice. It is Krishna's way of saying 'come as you are'. As I turn to the mantra more and more, this is Krishna's way of loving me where I'm at. Of course this isn't where He wants me to be, but the holy name is Him accepting me where I am without adding any expectation. Krishna's grace is that somehow the most undeserving somehow get the greatest love.

*Let the mantra manage your life. Let the sound shape your core.*

My soul always hungers for authenticity. May I forever feed my internal appetite with moments of spiritual connection.

### Soul Poetry

By Rukmini Devi Dasi

#### No Diagnosis

My parched soul yearns for one drop  
Of the holy name  
Dehydrated by days of impersonal chanting  
It cries out

And I never really hear it  
Although I feel all the symptoms of spiritual malady  
Distraction; existential exhaustion; drained;  
Unbalanced; irritable  
Still, I never make the diagnosis  
Until I push the world aside and pick up my beads  
And grace flows into the crevices of a cracked heart  
That swells in satisfaction  
I must remember this !  
On the days when I think  
"I'm chanting, its not working!"

#### Silence

Its not the days of struggle  
That kept us distant  
Not the late nights and sleepy mornings  
That made us strangers  
It was the silent treatment  
You're there  
I'm there  
But my heart was silent to you  
Oh Japa Mala, I want to break this silence



## Govinda's Restaurant Changes Management By Ramvijay Das

Govinda's Restaurant provides a critical service to our devotee community and the general public, serving high quality prasada and providing much needed financial support to the temple. It has been managed by many hard-working and committed devotees over the years.

Over the past four years, Govinda's have been in the capable hands of Bhakti Devi. She graciously gave up her own business to come and live in the temple to manage the restaurant, amongst many other services. Bhakti Devi has done a sterling job, building further on the foundation set by Rasalika Mataji. She is known for her quick response, friendly demeanour and overwhelming kindness. She simultaneously took on many other services, which provided strength to the backbone of the temple. These areas included managing Radhanath's gifts, the central buying and stock management, overseeing festival sponsorships and managed the Take Care of Krishna bookings as well as shopping for the Ratha Yatra gift-shop, in India. Her experience, efficiency and ability to juggle all her responsibilities so effectively, are truly rare. We are sad to bid farewell to her as she moves on to the next adventure in her life and wish her well in her future. Her departure will leave a huge void within our temple community.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank Radhika Sundari and Jiva Doya who ran the pop-up restaurant during the lockdown. The prasada was prepared in the Food For Life Kitchen and sold from the marquee in the car park. From the middle of last year until early this year, they served in extremely challenging conditions reviving the Govinda's operation until the operation could return to the facilities inside the temple. Their commitment and loyalty are astonishing.

We are happy to welcome Mallika and Svayambhu to the Govinda's team. They are well known as stalwarts over many decades, and for being outstanding cooks and managers. Over the last few years they have been mainly engaged in serving the deities. Their dedication, capacity and commitment will be sorely missed within the deity department. We look forward to their contribution in taking Govinda's to greater heights using their wealth of skills and experience.

We have been so fortunate to have such highly qualified, dedicated and serious practicing devotees serving at our temple over many years. They have set such wonderful examples for all of us. We are truly grateful for all their contributions in the service of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath.

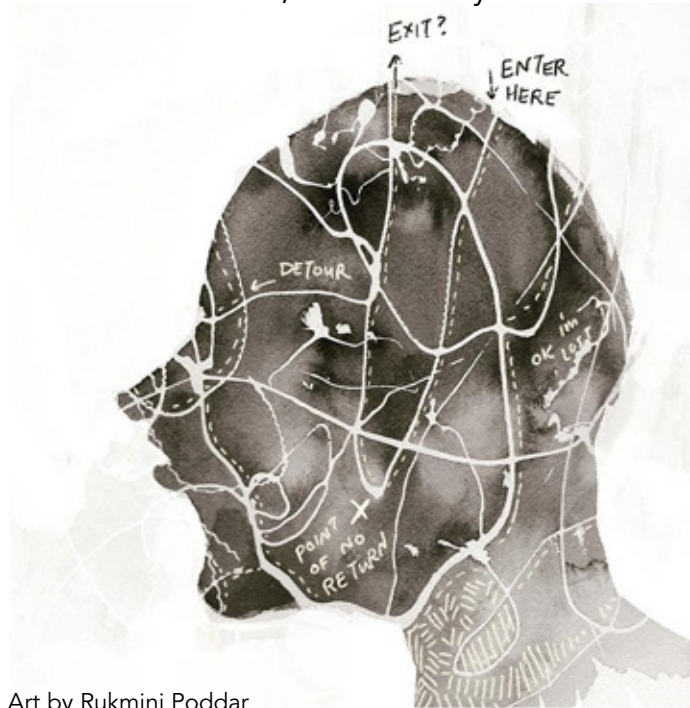
## The Fickle Mind By Kalpa Latika Dasi

The mind is intangible — not something we can see, smell, touch, or hear. But it is the one element of our existence that has the ability to control our entire being — our speech, our actions, and even our perceptions of the world and of ourselves. Our discrimination and rationality is so severely dictated by our minds that we are enslaved by it.

This world is constantly imposing (sometimes unrealistic) demands on us — to maintain a certain social construct, to possess certain items, to uphold certain values, to be perceived in a certain way, to behave in a demeanor that is pleasing. This pressure has the ability to send our minds on gravity-less adventures, almost like a helium balloon let loose. The balloon will constantly move whimsically up and up and up, until there isn't enough helium left in the balloon to keep it elevated. Then gravity will take control again, and the deflated balloon will fall wherever it may.

While this child-like nostalgia may seem indulging, this is not the case for the mind. There is great danger in allowing our minds to move whimsically through thoughts and feelings without being grounded and controlled.

Lord Krishna, in the *Srimad Bhagavad-gita* (6.5) says: *uddhared atmanatmanam natmanam avasadayet atmaiva hy atmano bandhur atmaiva ripur atmanah* — "One must deliver himself with the help of his mind, and not degrade himself. The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well."



Art by Rukmini Poddar



## Green Bhudda Bowl

The Vaishnava Chef  
By Chandrashekara Das

This delicious and hearty meal serves 2.

### Ingredients

- 1 cup cooked quinoa
- 4 tsp basil pesto
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 head of broccoli, rinsed and cut into florets
- 2 Tbls freshly squeezed lemon juice
- ½ tsp paprika
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 tsp hing
- 6 medium baby marrows spiralised or grated
- ¼ tsp rough salt
- 1 cup frozen green peas
- 2 cups baby spinach, washed and patted dry
- 1 avocado sliced
- 1 Tbls extra basil pesto
- 1 medium lime

### Method

Mix the cooked quinoa with the basil pesto and set aside. Heat a pot of water, add in the rough salt and cook the broccoli until bright green and slightly soft (the broccoli should still have a crunch). Drain the broccoli and add in the lemon juice and paprika, tossing to combine.

Add the olive oil to a pan on medium heat. Add in the hing and fry momentarily. Add in the spiralised baby marrow and fry quickly until bright green and soft. Set aside.

Bring a pot of water to the boil and add in the peas. Cook until soft. Drain and dunk into a bowl of ice cold water to retain the green colour.

To assemble add 1 cup of baby spinach to the base of the bowl. Place ½ cup of the cooked quinoa in a ramekin bowl and unmold on top of the spinach towards the side of the bowl to create a heap. Divide the broccoli and spiralised baby marrow between the two bowls creating a heap of each around the quinoa. Add half the avo plus a dollop of basil pesto to each bowl. Drizzle a squeeze of lime over the bowls, offer to Krishna with love and then serve.







### A Family That Colours Together Stays Together! • For the Kids (& Adults)

The notion that colouring is only for children is a very Western one. In the East, for centuries, people have used colouring to relax and meditate. One example is Tibetan Sand Art. Buddhist monks use dyed sand to create images like mandalas, often in breathtaking detail. In the 20th century, Carl Jung became one of the first psychologists to give the idea some serious thought. He believed that mandalas aided relaxation and encouraged people to self-discover their total self. This family activity is COVID safe and great way to spend quality holiday time together.