

IPBYS Outreach
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IPBYS Prison Program
Newsletter & Vaiṣṇava Calendar – December 2017

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa – Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma – Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

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Dedicated Servants of Śrī Hari, Guru, and
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IPBYS

INTERNATIONAL PURE BHAKTI
YOGA SOCIETY

·PRISON SEVA·

“By accepting Śrī Bhagavān (Sri Kṛṣṇa) to be our mother and father, our child and friend, our husband and our supreme master, we will never have to fall victim to mundane sorrow and delusion [...] He will never be the cause of sorrow and suffering for you.”

- Srila Bhaktivedanta Vamana Gosvami Maharaja

Celebrating Two Exceptional Godbrothers

Dear Readers,

This month, on the 11th December, we'll be celebrating the disappearance day of our dear Srila Gurudeva (Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja) and the appearance day of his dear godbrother, Srila Bhaktivedanta Vamana Gosvami Maharaja. Along with their dear godbrother, Srila Bhaktivedanta Trivikram Gosvami Maharaja, they both served their own Gurudeva, Srila Bhakti Prajnana Keshava Maharaja, with abundant love, affection and dedication. Besides that, the three godbrother supported each other extensively in their collective and individual service, and on many occasions our Srila Gurudeva spoke of the profound qualities his senior godbrother Srila Vamana Maharaja possessed and the extent to which he helped Srila Gurudeva. Ultimately, it was Srila Vamana Maharaja who urged Srila Gurudeva to begin accepting disciples and sharing the glories of Sri Sri Radha and Krsna worldwide.

While we are still pained by the disappearance of Srila Gurudeva from our vision, his disappearance day marks not only an opportunity to celebrate his constant, potent and loving presence in every moment of our lives, but also the opportunity to celebrate the glories of his godbrother and beloved friend, Srila Vamana Maharaja, whose birthday falls on the day that Srila Gurudeva left this world.

With the hope of pleasing our Srila Gurudeva, we'll be dedicating this issue of the newsletter to Srila Vamana Maharaja, beginning with a short tribute to his pastimes spoken by Srila Gurudeva, followed by a few of the letters he wrote to his disciples. We hope that in reading them, you'll gather a sense of his sweet, compassionate and devoted mood towards his disciples, as well as the beautiful way in which he shares Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's philosophy.

In service,

IPBYS Outreach



*Srila Gurudeva (left), Srila Vamana Maharaja (center)
and Srila Trivikrama Maharaja (right)*

Srila Bhaktivedanta Vamana Gosvami Maharaja

Spoken by Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja on the appearance day of Srila Vamana Maharaja, published on www.purebhakti.com on 15th November 2004

There are so many *jivas* (souls) in this world, and although some are inclined towards Bhagavan, most are averse to Him. Their intrinsic forms are as eternal servants of Krsna, but forgetting this, they are wandering in material existence. Without *bhakti* they will never possess any auspiciousness. Therefore, sometimes Krsna Himself descends into this world, sometimes He assumes different incarnations, and sometimes He sends His *sakti* (energy) in the form of the guru. Without this it would be impossible for the

jivas to ever receive auspiciousness, for only by *bhakti* can they attain their ultimate good fortune.

Bhakti is not a thing of this world. Inside the eternally perfected associates of Krsna, the essence of the *samvit* and *hladini saktis* (Krsna's energy) is always present in the form of *prema-bhakti* (pure, divine love for Krsna). Until the *jiva* receives that essence, he will not possess any real auspiciousness. The guru is a resident of the spiritual world, and he

descends into this world. He brings the *prema* of Goloka-Vraja (Kṛṣṇa's eternal home) to this world and bestows it upon the conditioned souls. Such a great personality, an eternally perfected *ragatmika* devotee who possesses *Vraja-prema* (the pure, divine love of Vraja) and brings it to this world, is known as a *suddha-guru* (a pure Vaisnava guru).

As the current of the Ganga carries water from the Himalayas down to the ocean, there is a current flowing through our *guru-parampara* (lineage of pure spiritual masters) which, beginning from Kṛṣṇa Himself, has come down to the modern *acaryas* (Vaisnava saints) and is presently flooding the entire material world with *Kṛṣṇa-prema*. This is the primary function of the guru. If someone is not able to give this *prema*, then he is not really a guru at all. Being capable of bestowing *Kṛṣṇa-prema* is the primary attribute of a genuine Vaisnava guru.

Today is the appearance day of such a guru, Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Vamana Maharaja, who serves as the present *acarya* of the Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti. He took birth in 1916 in the district of Jessore in East Bengal, which is now Bangladesh. His boyhood name was Santosa, and his paternal uncle was one of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhupada's first disciples, Sripad Nrsimha Maharaja. Srila Vamana Maharaja's mother was also a disciple of Srila Prabhupada, and she was very strict; she would even



Srila Bhaktivedanta Vamana Maharaja

discipline her husband. If her husband had been eating any prohibited food, she would not allow him to enter the house, and she disciplined the children in the same manner. Srila Vamana Maharaja was the oldest of her four sons, and she was very concerned about him being influenced by his father. So when he was only nine years old, she took him to Srila Prabhupada's matha in Mayapura where Nrsimha Maharaja was already staying. When they arrived there, Srila Nrsimha Maharaja led them to our Gurudeva, Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Maharaja, who was the temple commander at that time. Residing in the matha from that day on, Srila Vamana Maharaja received Harinama initiation directly from Prabhupada and has remained a lifelong *naistika-brahmacari* (celibate monk).

Our Guru Maharaja immediately put Srila Vamana Maharaja in school and would say to him, "I will give you some candy if you will recite just one sloka for me." In this way he learned many slokas, and Paramapujyapada Srila Gurudeva was always extremely affectionate to him. At that young age Srila Vamana Maharaja learned how to seat Vaisnavas for honoring *prasada* (food offered to Kṛṣṇa) by giving them a leaf to eat from and some salt and water. Then, after all the Vaisnavas were finished taking *prasada*, he would clean the area and paraphernalia. He also learned how to cook there, and he could very quickly prepare first-class offerings.

After some time Srila Prabhupada departed from this world, and then our Guru Maharaja established the Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti in 1943. I joined the mission in 1946, and at that time I saw how Srila Vamana Maharaja was doing everything: writing letters, managing the temple, cooking, and traveling for preaching. Together with my godbrother Srila Trivikrama Maharaja, three we received sannyasa from Guru Maharaja on Gaura-purnima in 1954.

Srila Vamana Maharaja is a great scholar just as our Gurudeva was. It has been said that he is like a dictionary of slokas because he knows so many verses from the scriptures. When while lecturing Gurudeva would sometimes forget a sloka, Srila Vamana Maharaja would always supply it from memory.

Once, when we went to Assam for preaching, Gurudeva boldly declared that the mouths of the people there who eat meat and fish were like the drains of sewers. One of the sects there, who were virtually prepared to stone us, challenged us by saying, "You say that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is Bhagavan Himself, but what evidence is there of this?" Guru Maharaja turned to Srila Vamana Maharaja and said, "Speak." Then Srila Vamana

Maharaja recited fifty slokas one after the other from different scriptures as evidence, and those people were silenced.

Srila Guru Maharaja left the entire responsibility of editing and publishing our Bengali magazine exclusively upon Srila Vamana Maharaja. From his boyhood Srila Vamana Maharaja studied Bhagavatam verses and their commentaries, and as a result he can speak on Vaisnava philosophy for hours without stopping. He is a great scholar, and a very sweet person as well. With children he is very affectionate, and he speaks with them concerning things like ghosts which they enjoy hearing about. He attracts innumerable persons to spiritual life, and even in an assembly of scholars, he is always the greatest scholar. He refutes others' misconceptions, but he does it in such a way that their feelings are not hurt, as if carefully performing a surgical operation.

Srila Vamana Maharaja is very grave and quiet, and there is another special quality which he possesses: I

have seen many people, myself included, who give explanations from the scriptures and enjoy taking praise from others for it. But having known Vamana Maharaja for almost fifty years, I have never seen him do this, not even by accident. He is also very tolerant. As if taking poison and digesting it, he may see the faults in others, but he never speaks about them. He has so much eagerness to preach the instructions of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and he has preached in all the villages of West Bengal and Assam. Bhagavan has especially empowered this great personality with many transcendental qualities. Today I pray to Srila Vamana Maharaja that he will mercifully allow me to always remain as his shadow, thereby enabling me to always follow him. I consider him to be my *siksa-guru* (instructing guru), because since the day I joined the mission he has given me whatever I required with great affection.



Śrī Hari, Guru, and Vaiṣṇavas are Moved by Our Emotions

A letter from Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja sent from Śrī Vāsudeva Gauḍīya Maṭha in Assam on 21 September, 1979

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅga jayataḥ!

[In the letter published in Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's *Patrāvalī*, the recipient was kept anonymous.]

I received a letter from you many days ago. I should have replied to your warm letter much sooner. Forgive me for failing to reply in a timely manner. Your weeping is so overwhelming that it has melted everyone's heart. In your letter, you referred to yourself as my 'fallen daughter'. In the shower of your tears, even the heart of a stone-hearted person like me is torn asunder. Śrī Bhagavān (another name for God) shall fulfil your heart's desires. Protect your great enthusiasm and forbearance within your heart. If you envision the smiling faces of Śrī Gurudeva and the Vaiṣṇavas and remember their instructions and teachings, you will find peace of mind at all times, in all circumstances.

I came to Kāśīnagara for the occasion of the deity installation which was held on Akṣaya-Trīṭīya (a very auspicious day) in the month of Vaiśākha (May), but at that time I had no chance to converse with you properly. It seems, therefore, that you have become dissatisfied with me. I hope that after understanding the gravity of my situation on that occasion, you have forgiven me. At that time, I presumed that perhaps

you were angry with me and hurt, but upon receiving your letter my presumption was proved wrong.

Because you always weep, to console you I am always saying, "O Mother, please do not cry." Śrī Bhagavān shall certainly bestow auspiciousness upon you. Do not feel upset that you have no monetary fortune and therefore cannot donate anything for service. One serves Śrī Hari and *guru* through one's wealth, words, mind and one's very spirit (*prāṇa*). Those who do not have wealth should serve with their words, minds and spirit. To surrender one's mind and spirit to Śrī Gurudeva and Bhagavān is the most excellent donation, for the mind and spirit are the supreme forms of wealth. If you are able to anxiously cry to Śrī Gurudeva and Bhagavān, you shall obtain the fruit of donating everything. And in that fruit your heart shall find joy and peace.

You wrote truthfully when you explained that in this world you cannot call anyone your own except for Guru, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān. If we can make them our own, then only will our lives be successful, and all our efforts blessed. Therefore, the *mahājanas* have sung, "*tava nija-jana, parama bāndhava, saṁsāra kārāgāre* – Your personal associates are our dearest relatives and greatest friends in this jailhouse of material existence." It is essential to realize this deep

down in our hearts. Affection and loving possessiveness cannot be displayed in front of just anyone, for they are the exchange of emotions of the heart.

For this reason, even tears of devotion often become the cause of criticism and misinterpretation if they are shed in the presence of ordinary people. Those very tears give many people an opportunity to falsely judge you, to misunderstand you and so on. Therefore, in matters of *hari-bhajana*, specific instructions have been provided regarding proper times, places and circumstances. Śrī Guru, the Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān are present within the heart. They know and embrace the emotions we feel for them. Therefore, whether we cry in front of them or out of their sight, our every cry truly reaches them. Śrī Bhagavān sat down for His meal in Dvārakā. Rukmiṇī Devi was serving Him. But at that moment, in Kāmyavana within Vṛndāvana, Draupadī's cry reached Him from over a thousand miles away.

1978 was the year your assets were lost. You wrote that you have undergone punishments comparable to residing in hell. As long as this body remains, pain and sorrow, sickness and disease, and suffering and torment will surely also remain. Most likely, you only went to the hospital because you were bound to. What you wrote is true – hospitals are like lakes from hell. There, you suffer hellish torture. The stench there makes life unbearable and before your eyes people die and writhe in pain. It is truly horrific. I understand that they even put you in the morgue. It was Śrī Bhagavān alone who protected you. You will never forget Śrī Gurudeva and Bhagavān, and you will faithfully perform *hari-bhajana* (deep prayer and worship of Lord Hari, Sri Kṛṣṇa).

You wish to know whether your fortune will be like that of the other two you mentioned. You wrote how they were born to a wealthy family and are serving so much and performing so much *bhajana*, while the crying in your heart stays in your heart alone. Is it that without money it is not possible for someone to perform *hari-bhajana*?

Why did you become so morose simply because you could not afford to give me a donation this time? The anxious fervour in your heart is certainly acknowledged by Śrī Guru and Vaiṣṇavas, who are very compassionate. Although you have no worldly wealth (*artha*), Śrī Bhagavān will see how you are crying and bless you with supreme, transcendent wealth (*paramārtha*). Of this there can be no doubt.

I understand that, despite being my mother, you have not yet had the opportunity to serve me by cooking for me with your own hands. I will come to your straw hut, relish the preparations cooked by your own hand, and take *prasāda*. This hope of yours will be fulfilled. In your home, *kīrtana* and class will be held. According to your means, you will most definitely be able to invite and feed eight to ten devotees. We will certainly come to your home and take *prasāda*. Do not worry; I hereby make you fearless in this regard. And please do not be angry with me for taking so long to reply.

Without worries, without disturbance, chant *harināma*. Maintain a practice of studying some scripture as time permits. Sing the songs of the *mahājanas* (the great Vaisnava devotees). Chant your *gāyatrī* three times a day. We are honoured to be invited to the house of Vidurā to partake of the foodstuffs prepared by the hand of Vidurāṇī.* We will be satisfied just by tasting the preparations of green leaves and rice you will prepare.

* [Once, Kṛṣṇa rejected the opulent meal offered to Him by Duryodhana, who lacked devotion, in favour of the exceedingly simple offering by the wife of Vidura, who possessed great devotion.]

I will be coming with the party to Kāśīnagara around the 20th of the forthcoming month of Pauṣa [December–January]. At that time, I will come to your house one day, take *prasāda* and hold class, *kīrtana* and so on. For those who have no one else in this world, Śrī Bhagavan, Śrī Guru and the Vaiṣṇavas are their only aid, so why have you written that you are unfortunate? Those who immerse their minds in *hari-bhajana* by taking shelter of *sad-guru* are the fortunate ones. Their births are blessed and successful. Selfish, worldly people are forever critically analyzing devotees, but none of their judgments can harm you.

May my fallen daughters and my crazy sons continue to serve Śrī Hari in happiness and peace. The all-auspicious Lord will certainly shower beneficence upon them. In your letter you have indicated that you remain awake, late at night, and express your inner agony, babbling incoherently. Know that I would never be indifferent to such a matter. May Śrī Bhagavān grant me the intelligence to at least be able to contemplate the simplicity of your heart. Otherwise I am concerned that this son of a crazy mother and father will surely become crazy before long.

If even after obtaining Śrī Guru and Vaiṣṇavas as your sons you still feel childless, then you should accept the provision that you should acknowledge Śrī Gopāla-kṛṣṇa alone to be your son, for such a son will never die, nor will He cause you to weep. By accepting Śrī Bhagavān to be our mother and father, our child and friend, our husband and our supreme master, we will never have to fall victim to mundane

sorrow and delusion. So, know Him to be your one and only son. He will never be the cause of sorrow and suffering for you.

Accept my unlimited, affectionate blessings. I am somehow or another doing fine. I conclude here.

Your ever well-wisher,

Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Guru, Grace and Endeavour

A letter from Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, sent from Sri Devananda Gaudiya Matha in Navadvipa (Nadiya) on 12th February 1977

My dear object of affection,

Sriman ***** went to see you. Not meeting you, he came back, for he did not have time to wait. Regardless, it is a matter of great fortune for you that you were able to attend Sri Puri-Dhama Parikrama and participate in the month-long festival of observing vows. How many people have this fortunate opportunity to cultivate hearing and chanting of Sri Hari-katha in a regulated manner in such good association?

We can observe that many people are very eager to go on pleasure trips within their own country and abroad, but it is only possible for one with spiritual credit to long for and desire to visit Sri Dhama (the sacred lands) in the association of saints, and to see the holy *tirthas*. (pilgrimage sites)

In order to obtain such an opportunity, one must consciously and carefully renounce any concern for worldly gain or loss, or the pros and cons involved, and simply go. Otherwise, one will be cheated of the opportunity for such immediate welfare. “Time and tide wait for no one.” Once an opportunity goes away, it does not come back.

And not everyone meets with the same types of opportunity and facility. One must accept one’s worldly or practical duties and responsibilities and, accordingly, go forward on the path of spiritual life. Otherwise misunderstandings, disorder, disputes and disagreements will present themselves. It is a common rule and even customary to sacrifice insignificant interest for the sake of higher interest, but often it simply cannot be avoided.

By the blessings of the devotees, all types of inauspiciousness or obstacles and hindrances can be whisked away, and this is an unfaltering truth. With the auspicious wishes for our well-being from *sadhu*, *guru*, and *vaiṣṇavas*, the unachievable can be

achieved. By their causeless compassion, the impossible can become possible. Inconceivable, transcendental events that can never be comprehended by the intelligence of worldly men, can be perceived and manifest in tangible reality by the grace of *sadhus* and *guru*. Earthly, mundane logic and reasoning are incapable and incompetent in addressing such matters.

“*Yamevaisa vrnute tena labhyah.*” This concept is applicable here. Grace is of more worth and is more glorious than endeavour. That is certainly proven here. Only when effort (*sadhana*) and grace (*krpa*) are united is it possible to achieve perfection.

“*Sri guroh krpa hi kevalam.*” Without grace, the practitioner, the *sadhaka* or *sadhika*,—cannot gain knowledge of the truth (*tattva-jnana*). *Sri guru* is the captain taking us across the ocean of material existence and the human form of life is the root or foundation for spiritual practice. To obtain the rarity of birth as a human but to be averse to worshipping Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate form of ruin and misfortune.

When, in due course, the *jiva* becomes conscious of his true duty while remaining in good association, then and only then does the desire to engage in *bhajana* become strong in his heart and compel him forward on the path of *sadhana*. On this path, a bona fide *guru* is the only refuge (*asraya*) because only the *asraya-vigraha* (embodiment of bhakti) can direct him in serving the *visaya-vigraha* (object of bhakti, Kṛṣṇa) and show him the path.

Sri guru incarnates according to Sri Bhagavan’s desire, and is therefore known as the “*prakasa-vigraha*”, or manifestation thereof. *Sri gurudeva* is the potency of Sri Nityananda, who is non-different from Baladeva. *Guru-tattva* (the existential reality of *guru*) is that *guru* is undivided and eternal. “*Nitaiyera carana satya tahara sevaka nitya*—the lotus feet of

Nitai are the absolute truth and his servant is eternal.” This is the special quality shared by master and servant in their mutual relationship and interaction. The bona fide *guru* is eternally the well-wisher of his followers and is always occupied in thinking about their welfare. This responsibility and duty of his remains forever, and one can never repay this favour.

If, on the appearance days of *sri guru* and *vaisnavas*, the *jiva* engages in glorifying them, his welfare is assured.

“*Hari, guru, vaisnava: tinera smarana; tinera smarane haya vighna-vinasana* – Hari, *guru*, and *vaisnavas*: by remembering these three, all of one’s obstacles will be destroyed.

“*Vaisnavera guna-gana karile jivera trana* – Singing the glories of the *vaisnavas* ensures the *jiva*’s deliverance.

This regulatory prescription is in accordance with proper discipline. No matter how many disqualifications the *sadhaka* or *sadhika* may possess, no matter how dejected or lowly they may be, now is the auspicious moment, now is the time in which to clear one’s slate.

Regret and repentance are the best atonement. By these, one’s inner self is purified. If one is not fixed and determined in following proper discipline, one cannot become pure inside.

“*Sattvasya suddhim paramatma-bhaktim; jnananca vijnana-viraga-yuktam*.” The tradition of confession, or the facilitation of the forgiving of sins in Christianity was originally adopted from the eternal *arya-sastras* (scriptures).

“*Prabhu bole: ara tomara na karisa papa* – The Lord said: You must not sin again.”

“*Jagai-Madhai bole: ara nare bapa* – Jagai and Madhai said: We will not sin again.”

This confession, “we will not sin again,” is an integral part of repentance and atonement. Sriman Mahaprabhu made Jagai and Madhai vow to this in front of Guru-Nityananda. Without such a firm and determined resolution, the urge to sin will return and try to pervert and pollute the pure inclinations of the heart.

Words of greeting and obeisance engender notions of self-surrender and the propensity to take exclusive shelter. In *smṛti* (a Vedic scripture), the subjects of full, eight-limb prostrated obeisance and full six-fold surrender are described. Although these things have been specifically detailed in verses such as

“*padabhyam jannubhyam sirasa*” and “*anukulyasya-sankalpah*”, the reality of their deep significance has been stated and conveyed throughout *sastra* (scripture).

If one’s heart does not melt when observing spiritual practices and customs, if a change does not overcome one’s mind, then such activities quickly become futile. “*Hrdaya hoite bole, jihvara agrete cale, sabdarupe nacce anuksana* – It speaks from within the heart, it situates itself on the tip of the tongue, and it dances in the form of sound vibration.” That is transcendental *sabda-brahma*: the absolute truth in the form of sound, or Sri Nama Brahma. That Sri Nama enters the heart through the pathway of the ears and raises a clamour there. Amid that, the consciousness becomes agitated and manifests the desire to obtain a vision of Sri Krsnacandra.

“*Purva itihasa, bhulinu sakala, seva-sukha peye mane* – I have forgotten all my past history while revelling in the bliss of serving.”

“*Ami to tomara, tumi to amara, ki kana apara dhane* – I am Yours, You are mine; what else is of any worth?”

In this is the awakening of knowledge of our relationship with the Absolute Truth. By the potency of the grace of a bona fide *guru*, all of one’s past history – or in other words, all of one’s worldly endeavours and arrogance – can be forgotten. We can thus be protected from the hands of such things. In this matter, the causeless mercy of *sri guru* is our only support. We must vow to engage our senses, which we have received from the Lord, to serve solely Him; He who is known as Hrsikesa, the Lord of the senses.

A bona fide *guru* is always well situated in actual knowledge of the truth, but this can never be inferred from a mundane source. Therefore, the devotees and their Lord are qualified by the term “*aprameya*” which means “immeasurable”. According to what we have heard from our predecessors (from *srauta-patha*), there is some difference between perceiving the Lord through *kirtan* and seeing Him directly. Everyone cherishes the hope to see Him in person, directly. Hastayukta Navami is on the 30th of Pausa.

Accept my loving blessings. I conclude here.

Forever your well-wisher,

Sri Bhaktivedanta Vamana

Dedicated Servants of Śrī Hari, Guru, and Vaiṣṇavas Never Suffer

A letter Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, sent from Sri Devananda Gaudiya Matha in Navadvipa (Nadiya) on 25th December 1972

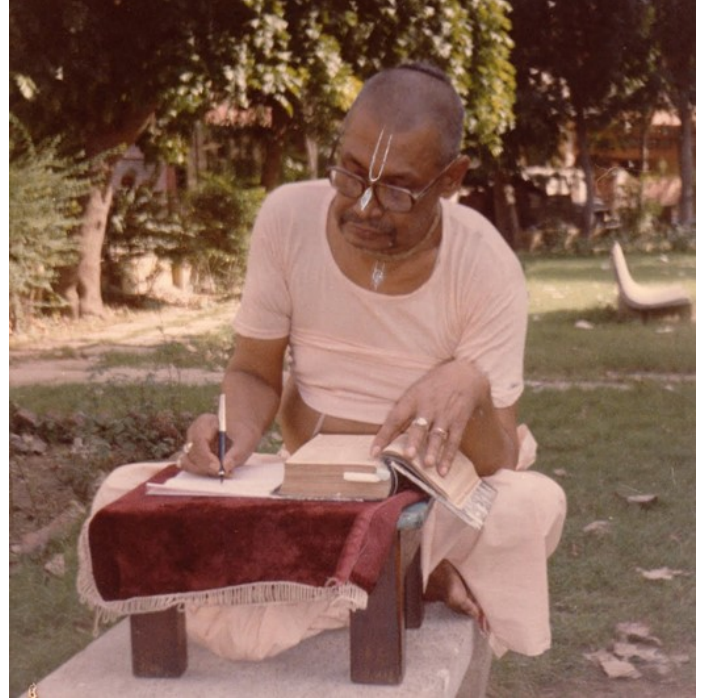
Dear recipient of my affection, (This letter was written to Śrī-yukta Umā Didi)

Those who are in the category of *guru-tattva* (true representatives of the Absolute Truth) do not possess bodies composed of the five gross elements. Consequently when they appear to be in a state of ill health, it has been referred to as “*abhinaya*”, or a performance. Yet the custom of inquiring about the welfare of someone’s body, mind, and soul is proper etiquette. This custom of exchanging goodwill in relation to these three things with everyone – who are all the recipients of our affection and honour – is also prevalent in the society of saintly devotees. In letters and other forms of correspondence between Vaiṣṇavas, one Vaiṣṇava prays for the “physical and spiritual well being” of the other, or for their “spiritual well being in every respect”. Even though one may inquire after these three things – body, mind and soul – one must not then assume *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas to be in some way mundane; one must not consider them to have this shortcoming. Then there will be no chance of perceiving the transcendent as material and thus committing offence.

Who would not be in anxiety upon hearing that a loved one is sick?

Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura has written, “*yata dekha vaiṣṇavera vyavahāra duḥkha, niścaya jānio sei parānanda sukha* – if one perceives distress in a devotee’s behaviour, know with certainty that it is actually the utmost ecstatic bliss.” Only he who is imbued with true devotion – whether a householder or a mendicant *sannyāsī*; whether a scholar or a fool – is a Vaiṣṇava. In the course of carrying out their sojourns through the corporeal plane, various forms of distress may even come to the physical and mental functions of Vaiṣṇavas. For devotees of the Lord, however, the occurrence of such distress is momentary and invariably leads to happiness.

A temporary life full of indulgence and attachment to mundane objects is all non-devotees have. So when physical and mental afflictions befall them, even to a small degree, they are easily bewildered. To mitigate their suffering they do not hesitate even to go as far as tormenting others. “Life is full of agony, and of death there is constant fear.” Such is the dire finale of those who indulge in gross pleasures.



But those who have dedicated their lives to the service of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas are not afflicted by fear of death or other forms of suffering; they are composed and steadfast. A devotee’s life is free from distress, trouble, and calamity; and they are never the cause of another’s sorrow or difficulty. “In maintaining my life, I will not give anxiety or distress to others. I will give up my personal happiness and work for the welfare of others.” They are thoroughly established in this mentality. Giving up worldly comforts and riches, the devotees are endlessly fixed in their spiritual practice (*bhajana-niṣṭha*) without wasting their time. For this reason, they are fearless, undaunted, and intent on the worship of eternal truth.

Śrī *guru* and Bhagavān are the shelter and resort of the shelterless. This is why the practicing devotee says, “I am without shelter, O Lord of the Universe (Jagadīśa), please protect me,” and takes refuge at their sublime feet. “You are the shelter of those without shelter, my dear master. You are family for those without it. You are the solace of those in distress and grief. You are the one who rectifies mistakes.” Many people pray in this manner also.

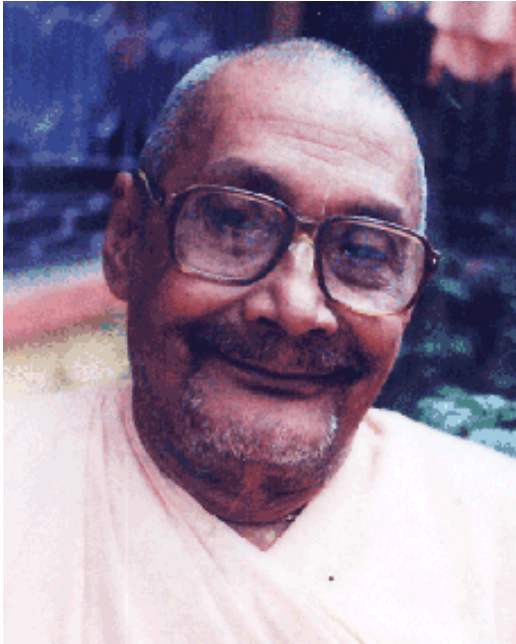
Śrī *guru* and Bhagavān are affectionate to their refugees; they take care of those who are surrendered to them. Toward those under their guidance, their supra-mundane affection is natural and spontaneous.

“*ami viṣa sei murkha viṣaya kena diba sva-caraṇāmṛta dīya viṣaya bhulibo* – I know what is right for him, and he is a fool. Why should I give him material things to enjoy? I will give him the nectar of My feet (*caraṇāmṛta*) and make him forget these fleeting things” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.39).

This is certainly how they make their divine parental affection known. The

responsibility *guru* and Bhagavān accept in regard to the lives of those surrendered to them is not time-sensitive. This connection is eternal and everlasting. They are my close relatives for all eternal time. “*cākṣu dāna dila jei, janme janme prabhu sei* – He who has given me the eyes to see [absolute reality] is my master birth after birth” (*Prārthanā*).

Those living entities still in the clutches of unwanted habits (*anarthas*) tend to make offences in the course of their spiritual practices. Their mundane speech



and mind is usually active. “*nāmāparādha-yuktānāma namani eva haranty-gham* – for those chanting with offences, the holy name Himself will gradually remove all obstacles” (*Padma Purāṇa*). This offers total and certain solace for them. When anxiety persists in regard to one’s spiritual practice (*sādhana-bhajana*), Śrī Bhagavān, the indwelling Supersoul in everyone’s heart, resolves all matters. “He is so merciful that He can turn a crow into Garuda (Lord Viṣṇu’s eagle carrier).” There is no comparison to His compassion and generosity. Even

to those who are unqualified, He grants the eligibility to practice spiritual life (*sādhana-bhajana*).

Thus I conclude.

Your eternal well-wisher,

Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Vaisnava Calendar

Note on the Vaisnava Calendar: beginning January 2018, the Vaisnava Calendar will no longer appear in the newsletter, but as a separate pamphlet, sent out once a year. As our community continues to grow, with over 470 members now (!) some small changes to our services will allow us to save money, so that more of you can receive books, allowing us to dedicate the entire 12 or so pages of the newsletter to lectures, letters, poetry and your art.

The calendar now lists break-fast times for 27 US cities. We advise that if you choose to follow *Ekādaśī* you refer to the break-fast time for the nearest listed city within your time-zone. And as before, take daylight savings time into consideration when assessing break-fast times. Dates listed apply to all cities, unless particular cities are listed.

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition celebrates many festival days throughout the year, following the Vedic lunar calendar, and as such the dates on which the festivals fall differ each year. Listed below are the dates on which we fast (*Ekādaśī* and others, indicated in italics) and the break fast times, spanning three months. Also included are several other significant festival dates, including the appearance days (birthdays) and disappearance days (when a saint leaves their body) of prominent pure Vaiṣṇava saints, as well as the birthdays of Kṛṣṇa’s incarnations (also known as appearance days). The Vedas describe several reasons for fasting on *Ekādaśī* (the 11th day after the full or new moon). Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s song, *Śuddha-Bhakata*, describes the day of *Ekādaśī* as “mother of devotion”, because *Ekādaśī* is Kṛṣṇa’s merciful manifestation as a day. By fasting from grains and beans and certain other foodstuffs, consuming only what we need for our sustenance and making the focus of the day our devotional practice, we are directly serving Kṛṣṇa. By offering all of our actions to Kṛṣṇa and honouring the spiritual practices of the day we will come to know Him. As such we also fast in the style of *Ekādaśī* on His appearance days.

Restricted and Permitted Foods on *Ekādaśī*: The essence is to eat simply, once or twice, so that one can spend as much time as possible hearing, chanting and remembering Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Never eat meat, fish, eggs, onions, garlic, carrots, red lentils, green flat lentils, mushrooms or products thereof.

Restricted foods on Ekādaśī:

- ~ Tomatoes, eggplants, cauliflower, broccoli, bell peppers, beets, bitter melon, ladies' fingers and banana flowers
- ~ Peas, chickpeas and all types of beans, including products made from beans (e.g., papadams, tofu, tempeh)
- ~ All leafy vegetables (e.g., spinach, salads, cabbages) and leafy herbs like parsley, coriander leaves, celery and curry leaves
- ~ Grains (e.g., millet, barley, farina, pasta, rice, corn) and all types of flour made from grains and beans (e.g., rice flour, chickpea flour, urad dahl flour)
- ~ Starches from corn or grains, and products made from or mixed with these starches like baking soda, baking powder, certain soft drinks with corn syrup, custard, certain yogurts and puddings, certain varieties of cream and cottage cheese, certain sweets and candies, and tapioca balls
- ~ Oils made from grains (e.g., corn oil, mustard oil, sesame oil) and products fried in these oils (e.g., fried nuts, potato chips and other fried snack foods)
- ~ Honey, and sweets made with starches

Spices used on Ekādaśī: black pepper, fresh ginger, pure salt and fresh turmeric, all taken from a new and clean package

Spices not used on Ekādaśī: hing (asafoetida), sesame seeds, cumin, fenugreek, mustard, tamarind, fennel, cardamom and nutmeg

Foods that can be taken all days of the year, including Ekādaśī:

- ~ All fruits (fresh and dried), all nuts and all oils made from nuts
- ~ Potatoes, pumpkin, cucumber, radish, squash, lemon, avocado
- ~ All pure milk products

Festival Days, Fasting Dates and Break Fast Times

3 Dec 2017 - Sunday

Kātyāyanī-vrata ends

6 Dec 2017 - Wednesday

Jagad-guru Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta

Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda ~ Disappearance (son of Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura)

11 Dec 2017 - Monday

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Appearance (Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's godbrother)
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Disappearance (Śrīla Gurudeva)

13 Dec 2017 - Wednesday

Ekādaśī – all US cities

Śrī Devānanda Paṇḍita ~ Disappearance

(associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

14 Dec 2017 - Thursday

Times for breaking fast (paran) (Daylight Savings not considered): Atlanta (07:35-10:53); Austin (07:19-10:43); Bangor (07:05-10:02); Boise (08:11-11:10); Boston (07:06-10:08); Chicago (07:11-10:14); Detroit (07:54-10:56); Durham (07:18-10:33); Hartford (07:11-10:14); Indianapolis (07:58-11:06); Las Vegas (06:44-09:58); Los Angeles (06:50-10:09); Madison (07:22-10:22); Missoula (08:14-11:05); Mobile (06:42-10:05); Montpelier (07:18-10:16); Nashville (06:50-10:05); New Orleans (06:48-10:13); ; New York (07:12-10:18); Orlando (07:10-10:37); San

Philadelphia (07:14-10:22); Phoenix (07:24-10:44); Portland (07:44-10:38); Salt Lake City (07:44-10:50); Francisco (07:16-10:28); Seattle (07:50-10:39)

15 Dec 2017 - Friday

Śrī Uddhāraṇa Daṭṭa Ṭhākura ~

Disappearance (associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

18 Dec 2017 - Monday

Śrī Locana dāsa Ṭhākura ~ Appearance

(associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

20 Dec 2017 - Wednesday

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī ~ Disappearance

29 Dec 2017 - Friday

Ekādaśī – all US cities

30 Dec 2017 - Saturday

Times for breaking fast (paran) (Daylight Savings not considered):

Boise (08:18-11:18); Las Vegas (06:51-10:06); Los Angeles (06:58-10:16); Madison (07:29-10:30); Missoula (08:21-11:13); Phoenix (07:32-10:51); Portland (07:51-10:46); Salt Lake City (07:51-10:57); San Francisco (07:24-10:36); Seattle (07:57-10:47); Atlanta (07:42-08:27); Austin (07:27-07:27); Bangor (07:13-08:27); Boston (07:13-08:27); Chicago (07:18-07:27); Detroit (08:01-08:27); Durham (07:25-08:27); Hartford (07:18-08:27); Indianapolis (08:06-08:27); Mobile (06:49-07:27); Montpelier (07:26-08:27); Nashville (06:58-07:27); New Orleans (06:56-07:27); New York (07:20-08:27); Orlando (07:18-08:27); Philadelphia (07:22-08:27)

Śrī Jagadīśa Paṇḍita ~ Appearance (associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Disappearance (disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda) – Boise, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Madison, Missoula, Phoenix, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Seattle

31 Dec 2017 - Sunday

Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Disappearance (disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda) – Atlanta, Austin, Bangor, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Durham, Hartford, Indianapolis, Mobile, Montpelier, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Orlando, Philadelphia

4 Jan 2018 – Thursday

Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī ~ Appearance (one of the six Gosvamis an associate of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

Śrī Rāmacandra Kavirāja ~ Disappearance (a celebrated Vaisnava poet)

5 Jan 2018 - Friday

Śrī Narahari Sevāvigraha – Disappearance (disciple of Srīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Thakua)

Śrī Bhakti Vaibhava Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Appearance (disciple of Srīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Thakua)

Boise, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Missoula, Phoenix, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Seattle

6 Jan 2018 - Saturday

Śrī Narahari Sevāvigraha – Disappearance (disciple of Srīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Thakua)

Śrī Bhakti Vaibhava Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Appearance (disciple of Srīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Thakua)

Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī ~ Disappearance [all states] (one of the six Gosvamis an associate of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

7 Jan 2018 - Sunday

Śrī Locana dāsa Ṭhākura ~ Disappearance (an associate of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

12 Jan 2018 - Friday

Ekādaśī
13 Jan 2018 - Saturday

Times for breaking fast (paran) (Daylight Savings not considered):

Atlanta (07:43-11:05); Austin (07:28-10:56); Bangor (07:10-10:13); Boise (08:16-11:21); Boston (07:12-10:19); Chicago (07:17-10:26); Detroit (07:60-11:07); Durham (07:26-10:45); Hartford (07:17-10:25); Indianapolis (08:05-11:17); Las Vegas (06:51-10:10); Los Angeles (06:58-10:21); Madison (07:27-10:33);

Missoula (08:18-11:16); Mobile (06:51-10:18); Montpelier (07:24-10:27); Nashville (06:58-10:17); New Orleans (06:57-10:25); New York (07:18-10:29); Orlando (07:19-10:49); Philadelphia (07:21-10:33); Phoenix (07:33-10:56); Portland (07:48-10:24); Salt Lake City (07:50-11:01); San Francisco (07:23-10:24); Seattle (07:54-10:24);

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja ~ Appearance (Srīla Gurudeva's godbrother)

14 Jan 2018 - Sunday

Makara-saṅkrānti ~ Celebration of Sun entering Capricorn

Gaṅgā Sagar Snāna Mela (bathing in Gaṅgā)
16 Jan 2018 - Tuesday

Appearance of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (Srīla Gurudeva)
21 Jan 2018 - Sunday

Vasanta paścami (Springtime festival)

Sarasvatī-pūjā (worship of Sarasvatī, the goddess of knowledge and learning)

Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriya-devī ~ Appearance (the wife of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

Śrī Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi ~ Appearance (an associate of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī ~ Appearance (one of the six Gosvamis an associate of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura ~ Disappearance (a great Vaisnava saint and author)

Śrī Raghunandana Ṭhākura ~ Appearance (an associate of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vivek Bharti Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Disappearance

23 Jan 2018 - Tuesday

Maha-viṣṇu-avatāra Śrī Advaita Ācārya ~ Appearance - Fast till noon then Ekādaśī preparations only

24 Jan 2018 - Wednesday

Times for breaking fast (paran) (Daylight Savings not considered):

Atlanta (07:39-11:06); Austin (07:25-10:57); Bangor (07:03-10:13); Boise (08:09-11:21); Boston (07:05-10:19); Chicago (07:11-10:26); Detroit (07:53-11:08); Durham (07:21-10:45); Hartford (07:10-10:26); Indianapolis (07:59-11:18); Las Vegas (06:47-10:11); Los Angeles (06:55-10:22); Madison (07:20-10:33); Missoula (08:10-11:16); Mobile (06:48-10:19); Montpelier (07:16-10:27); Nashville (06:54-10:17); New Orleans (06:55-10:27); New York (07:12-10:30); Orlando (07:17-10:51); Philadelphia (07:15-10:34); Phoenix (07:29-10:57); Portland (07:40-10:49); Salt Lake City (07:44-11:01); San Francisco (07:18-10:41); Seattle (07:45-10:49);

25 Jan 2018 - Thursday

Śrī Madhvācārya ~ Disappearance (a great Vaisnava saint)

26 Jan 2018 - Friday

Śrī Rāmānujācārya ~ Disappearance (a respected Vaisnava saint from a different lineage)

27 Jan 2018 - Saturday

Ekādaśī

28 Jan 2018 - Sunday

Times for breaking fast (paran) (Daylight Savings not considered):

Atlanta (07:37-11:06); Austin (07:24-10:57); Bangor (06:59-10:12); Boise (08:05-11:21); Boston (07:02-10:19); Chicago (07:07-10:25); Detroit (07:50-11:07); Durham (07:19-10:45); Hartford (07:07-10:25); Indianapolis (07:56-11:17); Las Vegas (06:44-10:11); Los Angeles (06:52-10:21); Madison (07:17-10:33); Missoula (08:05-11:15); Mobile (06:46-10:19); Montpelier (07:13-10:27); Nashville (06:51-10:17); New Orleans (06:53-10:27); New York (07:09-10:29); Orlando (07:15-10:51); Philadelphia (07:12-10:33); Phoenix (07:27-10:57); Portland (07:36-10:48); Salt Lake City (07:41-11:01); San Francisco (07:16-10:40); Seattle (07:40-10:48);

Varāha Dvādaśī ~ Appearance of Lord Varāhadeva (Kṛṣṇa in His form as a boar)

29 Jan 2018 - Monday

Nityānanda Trayodaśī ~ Appearance of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu - Fast till noon then Ekādaśī preparations only

30 Jan 2018 - Tuesday

Times for breaking fast (paran) (Daylight Savings not considered):

Atlanta (07:35-11:06); Austin (07:23-10:55); Bangor (06:57-10:11); Boise (08:03-09:55); Boston (06:60-10:18); Chicago (07:05-10:25); Detroit (07:48-11:07); Durham (07:17-10:45); Hartford (07:05-10:25); Indianapolis (07:54-11:17); Las Vegas (06:43-08:55); Los Angeles (06:51-08:55); Madison (07:15-10:32); Missoula (08:03-09:55); Mobile (06:45-10:19); Montpelier (07:10-10:26); Nashville (06:50-10:17); New Orleans (06:52-10:27); New York (07:08-10:29); Orlando (07:14-10:51); Philadelphia (07:11-10:33); Phoenix (07:26-09:55); Portland (07:34-08:55); Salt Lake City (07:39-09:55); San Francisco (07:14-08:55); Seattle (07:38-08:55);

31 Jan 2018 - Wednesday

Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura ~ Appearance (a great Vaisnava poet)

Festival in remembrance of Śrīmān Mahāprabhu's sannyāsa-līla

Boise, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Missoula, Phoenix, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Seattle

Outreach Report from North Carolina

By Bhagavati Kanta dasa

Today (Thursday, Nov 30) is another day of my prison preaching in Butner. The special thing about today is that it is the next day after Gita Jayanti (the day Kṛṣṇa spoke the Bhagavad-Gita), and that the current course going on in both the prisons is coincidentally 'Essence of Bhagavad-Gita'!

As usual, the security guard at the front desk greeted me when I entered. By now I have become very close to him and freely discuss about many things. When Chaplain Richard came to take me inside, his assistant also came. She mentioned that she herself personally already finished setup of the audio and video and chairs and she was leaving off the duty for the day. Whenever Richard is off, she takes that role and today even though Richard was also on-duty, she personally wanted to do it for our class before she left. I smiled inside. Yes, things are changing for better every day, and said to her, 'Thank you!'.

Today's class was about Karma Yoga (last class was on Advent of Bhagavad-Gita - history and introduction). Today there were few more new persons joined the class and it is growing, as Richard also commented. All glories to Srīla Gurudeva and Srīla Prabhupada. After the class ended on time (it never happens on

our Fridays), the devotee inmates were then preparing for the prayer and chanting. This is their agenda: After my class they do prayer, *arati* (worship) and chanting. Richard and another inmate carried the whole set of Srimad Bhagavatam that we donated earlier and they had selected to read the 4th Canto for today. Chaplain Richard also brought one incense stick for offering to the deity and a match box. I could not believe that! The Chaplain himself is doing this? Wow!

With so much of happiness, we left the complex. While Richard was taking me out, he was mentioning how good he feels when the fragrance of the offered incense gives nice mood for the prayer and chanting. He was also mentioning about quality beads made of real *chandana* versus fake ones and how nice it is to chant on the real one with scent. I was spell bound to hear him saying this because chanting beads are now coming in too! Once it was prohibited and now they are coming in. Surely this *sanga* (devotional community) is advancing!

All glories to Srīla Gurudeva and Srīla Prabhupada!

