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IPBYS Prison Program  
Newsletter & Vaiṣṇava Calendar – October/November 2017

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

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Dear Devotee... and more!



IPBYS

INTERNATIONAL PURE BHAKTI  
YOGA SOCIETY

·PRISON SEVA·

“Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja knew both impoverishment and abundance. But this is inconsequential. What is significant is that the moods in his heart, his inclination to serve, and his surrender to śrī guru, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān never changed.” - Śrīla Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## A Glorification of Śrīla Swami Prabhupāda

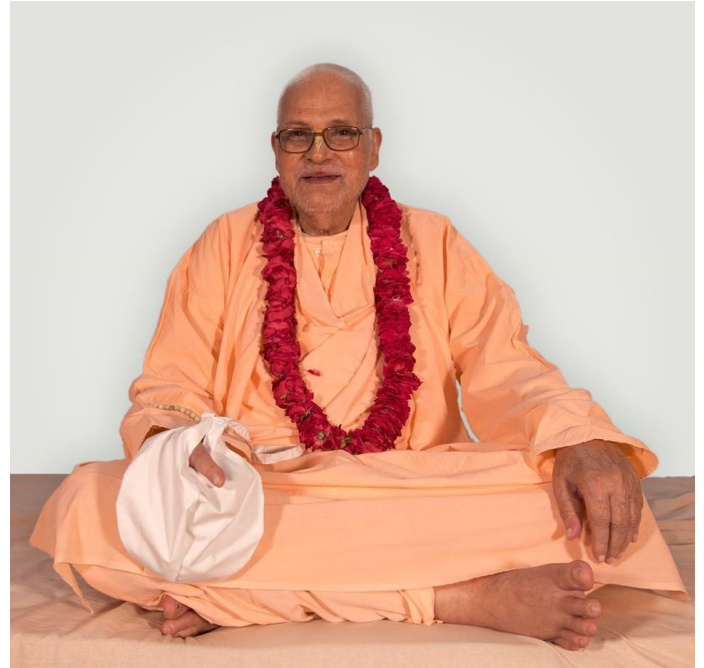
Abridged chapter titled ‘Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja’, from Śrīla Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s latest book, *My Beloved Masters: The Incomparable Masters of Srila Prabhupada’s Army*

*In honor of the 40th disappearance day of the brilliant and munificent Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, we’ve decided to feature an article by the sweet and merciful Vaisnava acarya, Śrīla Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who, amazingly, served every disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. In revealing some of the opportunities he had to serve Śrīla Swami Prabhupāda, Śrīla Bharati Mahārāja illuminates the beauty of transcendental friendships between the Vaisnavas and the brilliant qualities of Śrīla Swami Prabhupāda’s character. Throughout the article, Śrīla Bharati Mahārāja uses ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda to refer to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saravati Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, and ‘Śrīla Swami Mahārāja to refer to Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda.*

### His life: a lesson in surrender

In 1933, Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura awarded *dīkṣā* (mantra initiation) to Śrī Abhay Charan De, giving him the spiritual name Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda dāsa. Even while Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present, Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda Prabhu used to submit articles he composed to the Gauḍīya Maṭha publication team to include in their magazines.

Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered Śrī Abhayacaraṇāravinda Prabhu to preach in the western countries. However, at that time, Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda Prabhu was unable to fulfill his gurus’ desire due to his family responsibilities as a householder. He did his best to maintain his family by establishing several pharmaceutical businesses in cities such as Kolkata, Mumbai and Allahabad, but despite his arduous efforts, his ventures proved unsuccessful. As a result of the great hardships he faced, his family members were constantly dissatisfied with him. Even when he fell ill, not a single member of his family came forward to help him. At that time, my gurupāda-padma, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja kindly arranged for Śrī Abhayacaraṇāravinda Prabhu’s treatment.



*The author of this article, Śrīla Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, disciple of Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Madhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.*

Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda Prabhu accepted *sannyāsa* (renounced order) at the repeated insistence of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajnāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja and was given the name Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. Shortly after that, he relocated to Vṛndāvana. During his years in Vṛndāvana, he would mention time and again, “I have not carried out the order of my gurudeva; I have not preached in the western countries. This neglect is the cause of my suffering and the reason I was unsuccessful in all my endeavors. I have everything, because I have firm faith in śrī guru and his instructions. But at the same time I have nothing, as I have not done anything to fulfill his order. Although I have grown old, I will fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda’s orders to preach in the West and thereby atone for the offence of disobeying him.”

With this mood, he travelled to America aboard a cargo ship. However, after only a short while of preaching, he fell ill and returned to India. Later, he would repentantly express, “I went to the West to fulfill my gurudeva’s orders, but I returned to India out of fear when I became a bit sick. I am not fully



*Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

surrendered. I will now return to the West and preach until my dying breath, even at the risk of death.”

With this solid conviction, he returned to the West, where his preaching service met with tremendous success, so much so that he himself was amazed by the results, what to speak of others.

Bhagavān (God) is the master of all opulences, and His pure devotee Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura inherited that wealth. Those who are completely surrendered to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lotus feet will never face scarcity of any kind. Bhagavān will always fulfill the vow He has made to maintain His surrendered devotees:

*ananyāś cintayanto mām  
ye janāḥ paryuṣāsate  
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām  
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham  
Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (9.22)*

“For those who are devoid of other desires, who are always absorbed in contemplation of Me and who always worship Me, I personally carry their

necessities and preserve what they presently have.”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s relatives never cared for his wellbeing, neither when he was at home nor after he accepted *sannyāsa*. Yet, after he departed from this world, in order to argue rightful claims to his assets, those very same persons declared, “He was my father!” “He was my husband!” and so on. Such are the strange ways in which the people of this world behave.

### **His desire to unite all the Gauḍīya Maṭha branches**

Both before and after accepting *sannyāsa*, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja repeatedly beseeched his godbrothers Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the *ācārya* (Vaisnava saint/leader) of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kevala Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the *ācārya* of Bāghbazār Gauḍīya Maṭha, to put aside the trivial differences, individual motives and arguments between them and their godbrothers. He told them, “We must all unite and enthusiastically preach the message of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and Śrī Rūpa-Raghunātha, just as Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed us.”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja always had this sincere desire in the core of his heart, and his intentions were always pure. But as fate would have it, unification proved impossible, and so following the example of many of his godbrothers, he too was compelled to establish an independent institution of his own.

### **His fearlessness in service**

Every so often, while Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja was living in Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana, he would visit Delhi to print his self-published magazine, *Back to Godhead*. He had very little money in those days, and so he would perform *bhikṣā* (begging for alms), even in the scorching summer sun. During his visits to Delhi, he would often stay in the Karol Bāgh branch of Śrī Gauḍīya Saṅgha, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s institution.

One day, just before Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja was about to perform *bhikṣā* in the fierce heat, Śrī Bhakti Vaibhava Mādhava Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja, stopped him, begging, “Mahārāja-jī, please do not go out in this heat. Your advanced age makes you susceptible to heat stroke.”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja replied, “Someone has promised me a donation of five rupees, Mahārāja. I must retrieve it if I wish to print my magazine.”

“I will give you ten rupees,” Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja pledged. “But please do not go out at this time of day.”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja said, “Fine. Because of your affection, I will stay back for now. But in the future, I will not keep any stone unturned in my endeavors to serve Bhagavān. I will remain completely dependent on Him. I firmly believe that no harm can come to me as long as He wishes to utilize this body of mine in His service.”

### His time in Vṛndāvana

Prior to travelling to the West, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja resided in Vṛndāvana, initially at Chipī-galī and later near Sevā-kunja at Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara Mandira. He would regularly meet and perform *kīrtana* (singing of Kṛṣṇa’s names) with his godbrothers Śrī Rāghava-caitanya Prabhu and Śrī Girindra-govardhana Prabhu at our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha (temple). My godbrother Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja and I would sit behind them with a number of devotees, singing in response to the call of their *kīrtana*.

When Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja first saw our Vṛndāvana maṭha (temple)’s *kīrtana* hall, he said, “Previously, we Sārasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas had no place of our own to sit and perform *kathā* (discussion on Kṛṣṇa) and *kīrtana* in Vṛndāvana. Thankfully, Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja has now filled that void.”

### Śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana for all occasions

The assembly hall in the Vṛndāvana branch of our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha was completed in 1964. Around that time, I was informed that the state governor, Śrī Viśvanātha dāsa, was planning to visit Vṛndāvana. On behalf of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, I sent him a postcard invitation to visit the maṭha, which he kindly accepted.

Guru Mahārāja was not present in Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana at the time, and because my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja and I considered ourselves junior, both in age and in the realm of *bhajana* (spiritual practice), we invited two of Śrīla

Prabhupāda’s disciples—Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja and Śrīmad Rāghava-caitanya Prabhu—to receive the governor and speak to him about the specialty of the Gauḍīya Maṭha.

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja explained to us, “There is no better greeting than the performance of *saṅkīrtana* (congregational singing of Kṛṣṇa’s names). Bhagavān incarnates wherever *saṅkīrtana* is conducted. What could be more auspicious for the governor than the presence of Bhagavān Himself? Because the governor has already accepted your invitation, we will hold nothing back in our efforts to bring about his spiritual welfare. The Gauḍīya Maṭha extensively preaches that *śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the only means of deliverance in this age of Kali (the age of quarrel). The governor will certainly understand this message once he hears our *saṅkīrtana*.”

When the governor arrived, we welcomed him with *saṅkīrtana* performed under the guidance of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja. Afterward, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja related to him the glories and unique contributions of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. Throughout the course of their conversation, the district magistrate accompanying the governor repeatedly intimated through hand gestures that it was time to leave. The governor, however, dismissed him. “Just wait a bit,” he said. “Where else will we receive the opportunity to hear such wonderful *saṅkīrtana*?”

Seeing the governor’s reaction made me realize the transcendental glory of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s advice that *śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is truly the solution to all situations.

### The Origin of the name ‘ISKCON’

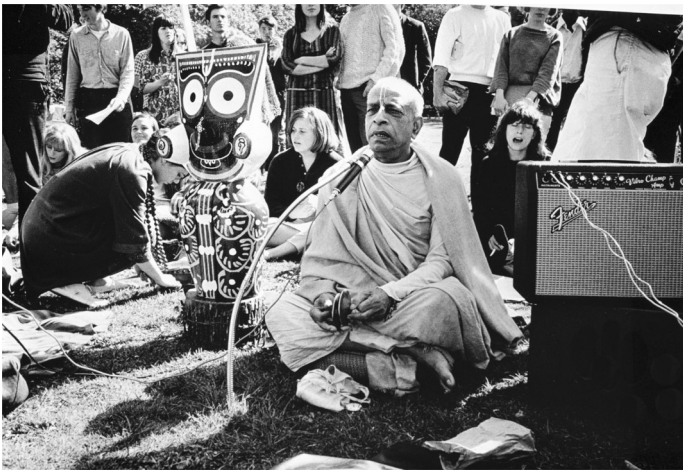
Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s sole intention for coming to America was to fulfill the innermost desire of his gurudeva by successfully disseminating the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the West. At first, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja had many ideas about how to do this. In the end, however, after observing the local peoples’ condition and by the inspiration of śrī guru and Bhagavān, he began sitting in a park and chanting the *panca-tattva mantra* and *mahā mantra*: “śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya, prabhu nityānanda, śrī advaita, gadādhara, śrīvāsādi gaura bhakta vṛnda” and “hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma hare hare,” respectively.

As a result of his total surrender to the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his intense desire to follow his gurudeva’s instructions, his *kīrtana* began to attract many sincere souls.

One day, a devotee asked him, “What inspired you to name your institution ISKCON?”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja replied, “When I was sitting in a park in America one day and singing the *mahā mantra* and *pancatattva mantra*, a stranger approached me and asked, ‘What kind of consciousness does this type of singing awaken?’

“By Bhagavān’s inspiration, I answered, ‘Kṛṣṇa consciousness.’ On that day, I decided I would name my future organization the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness.”



*Srila Swami Maharaja singing kirtan in a park, beside Sri Jagannatha*

### **Serving śrī guru through the service of others**

I heard from some of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s disciples that during his early days in the West, he would not only cook and serve *prasāda* (food offered to Kṛṣṇa) to newcomers, but he would even dispose of their plates, clean the place where they ate, and wash the cooking pots himself. This went on for a long time. He never asked anyone to assist him in any service. Rather, he encouraged them to give their full attention to receiving *śabda-brahma*, divine sound vibration. It was only after that *śabdabrahma*, in the form of his *hari-kathā* and *kīrtanas*, poured through their ears and entered their hearts that one of the regular visitors stepped forward and asked Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja if he could help him. Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja welcomed this service, and after that, many more people began to come forward to serve in various

various ways.

When I heard that Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja served in this way at such an advanced age, I came to realize the depth of his dedication to fulfilling the desire of his gurudeva, and that he was indeed a most exalted, transcendental personality.

### **Protecting all from bogus ‘Bhagavāns’**

Many of India’s spiritual figures have achieved great success preaching in the West, both prior to and after Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s efforts there. A number of them, being devoid of surrender and pure-heartedness, declared themselves to be God, such as the fraudulent ‘Bhagavān’ Rajanīśa, otherwise known as Osho. Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja preached against such imposters with bold determination, proclaiming the purport of Śrīla Viśvanātha Carkravartī’s statement:

*sāksād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair  
uktas tathā bhāvya eva sadbhīh  
kintu prabhor yah priya eva tasya  
vande guroh śrī-caranāravindam*

“The scriptures unanimously proclaim śrī guru to be *sākṣāt-hari*, directly Śrī Hari. This is a fact jointly corroborated by all saintly persons. Yet at the same time, śrī guru is very dear to Bhagavān. I adore the lotus feet of that śrī gurudeva.”

He repeatedly urged everyone, “*Jīvādhame īśvara jṣāna kabhu nā kribā*—never think a lowly soul to be the Lord.” In this way, he protected everyone from this frightening, undesirable proclivity (*anartha*).

### **A fully surrendered soul never succumbs to the temptations of luxury**

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja knew both impoverishment and abundance. But this is inconsequential. What is significant is that the moods in his heart, his inclination to serve, and his surrender to śrī guru, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān never changed. Not everyone has the capacity to refrain from enjoying. It is difficult for most people to resist enjoying, even to a slight degree, the luxuries afforded them, nor do many possess the ability to utilize such luxuries in the service of Bhagavān. It is rare to see a person’s views and conduct remain unaffected by wealth. In this

regard, there is a cautionary tale about King Nahuṣa.

When King Nahuṣa attained the position of Indra, he expressed his desire to enjoy Indra's wife, Śacī. When Śacī found out about this, she consulted a group of ṛṣis (esteemed sages), who advised her to inform the king that if he truly wants her, he must come to her on a palanquin carried on the shoulders of ṛṣis. Śacī followed the ṛṣis' advice and sent King Nahuṣa the message.

King Nahuṣa, being unable to digest and adapt to his new luxurious life, became exceedingly covetous, so much so that he did indeed order ṛṣis to carry his palanquin. Moreover, while being carried, he order them, "Sāpa, sāpa!—Go faster, go faster!" Seeing his wretched mentality, Śrī Agastya Ṛṣi cursed him to become a snake.

Because he lost his composure with his newfound wealth, King Nahuṣa fell into a wretched condition. Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja, however, remained unaffected, because he was fully surrendered to the lotus feet of Bhagavān and firmly dedicated to fulfilling the cherished desire of his gurudeva. All the luxuries in the world could not have affected him.

### India's true ambassador

Gradually, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja introduced the West to almost all the aspects of the world's ancient Vedic culture, including the congregational chanting of Bhagavān's names; the study and recitation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and other scriptures; the proper method to install Bhagavān's deity forms and the standards and regulations by which to worship Them; the observance of Vaiṣṇava etiquette; the Vedic Indian style of dress, that is, *dhotī* (lower garment) and *kurtā* (traditional shirt) for men, and *sārī* and petticoat for women; and the importance of applying *tilaka* (sacred forehead marking made of clay), maintaining a *śikhā* (sacred hairstyle for men) and wearing a sacred thread.

Additionally, he taught his disciples how to not only prepare exceptionally delicious and nutritious vegetarian dishes using milk, yogurt, fruits, roots, vegetables and grains, but also how to offer those dishes to Bhagavān and respectfully honor them as *prasāda* (the Lord's remnants). He also inspired them to become self-sufficient through such

sustainable practices as farming, serving cows and establishing *gurukulas* (schools focusing on Vaisnava education for children).

Rather than absorbing the foreign ways and customs of the Western people, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja taught them to accept and properly follow traditional Vedic culture and thereby become expert in all its fields. It is for this reason that a famous Bengali newspaper, *Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā*, honored him by printing the following commendation:

"The diplomatic ambassadors of today are embarrassed by the native culture of India. They return from abroad having adopted foreign attire, conduct and cuisine. Failing to introduce other nations to the great customs of India, they instead disgrace our country and waste the nation's wealth. The Founder-ācārya of ISKCON, Śrī Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, however, has proved himself to be a true ambassador of India, even without the financial support or regard of his country. Through his selfless work, he has set a noble precedent for all political leaders."

### Curbing society's problems through Kṛṣṇa consciousness

I heard Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja once say that a couple somewhere in the West had filed a court case against him that accused him of brainwashing their son. They wanted the court to deny him permission to visit or preach in their country. The judge, however, not only ruled in Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja's favor, but also praised him, saying, "Despite the fact that we, the government, have spent millions upon millions of dollars to end the rampant drug abuse and promiscuity prevalent among urban youths today, we have been unable to check it even slightly. This svāmī, however, has inspired thousands of individuals to renounce such habits and dedicate their lives to spiritual pursuits. Actually, he should be rewarded for his unmatched service to our society."

### Progress is the principle

One day, my godbrother Śrī Anaṅgamohana Brahmācārī (now Śrī Bhakti Mayukha Bhikṣu Mahārāja) asked Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja, "Mahārāja-jī, although

although scripture clearly states that *tilaka* is to be applied up to the hairline, your disciples apply *tilaka* that extends to the top of their heads. Why do you not correct them?”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja responded, “Prabhu, as of yet, I have told them only of the glories of wearing *tilaka*. They are very new to Vaiṣṇava society and are entirely unaware of Vedic customs. Just as new students progress from first grade to second grade to third grade and so on, my disciples will gradually climb all the successive steps of the staircase leading to the spiritual realm. Most of them used to eat the flesh of cows, but have since renounced such abominable habits and are now trying their level best to observe proper conduct, bit by bit.

“I am delighted by their progress, and I am firmly convinced that if they maintain such steadfast dedication, they will continue to progress even in my absence by attaining the foot dust (mercy) of advanced Vaiṣṇavas, by whose mercy they will gain the qualification to understand the subtle principles of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s *prema-dharma* (religion of divine love) and thereby make their lives successful.”

### **An expert and patient teacher**

Another time, Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī was waiting outside Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s room hoping to have his *darśana* (vision of him/meeting), when he saw a new Western devotee sitting nearby, about to apply *tilaka*. The devotee had a piece of *gopī-candana* (the hardened clay from which the *tilaka* is made) in his hand, but had no *ācamana* cup (cup of sanctified water) or any water at all with which to make a paste, and so he spat into his hand and started rubbing the *gopī-candana* in it. Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī was shocked to see this. He immediately called out to the devotee, “This is completely improper! Why are you doing this!”

At that time, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja came out of his room, called for Anaṅgamohana Brahmācārī to come over and very softly said, “There is no need to instruct this devotee. Somehow or other, he has received the inspiration to put on *tilaka*, which does not exist in his native culture. What problem is there if he is not aware of all the rules and regulations just yet? The time will surely come when he will learn the

proper way to perform all the activities of bhakti.”

Here, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja did not establish a new *siddhānta* (philosophical rule) for his disciples to follow for all time. Rather, because he was an expert teacher, he taught this particular disciple according to his nature and qualification.

### **Winning the respect of a local paṇḍā**

Once, while Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja and his disciples were visiting Śrī Jagannātha Purī, Śrī Gopīnātha Khuṭiyā, the Gauḍīya Maṭha branches’ local *paṇḍā* (priest), went to pay him a visit. As fate would have it, the fan in the room had stopped working that day, and one of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s Western disciples was trying to fix it. In doing so, the devotees climbed atop a stack of boxes containing copies of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam labeled “For free distribution—not for sale in India.”

Seeing this, Śrī Gopīnātha Khuṭiyā told him, “No Indian Hindu would ever touch even a box of ordinary books with his feet, not to speak of a box of Bhāgavatams. This is a perfect example of why Westerners are not allowed to enter Jagannātha’s temple despite being devotees. It will take a century for you to develop proper cultural impressions (*saṁskāras*). Your gurudeva is most magnanimous and glorious to have assumed the grave responsibility of patiently and affectionately teaching you as if you were a child. I respectfully offer *praṇāma* (obeisance) to him.”





### **ISKCON's relationship with Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha**

After Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja procured land in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura to establish an ISKCON temple, many of his disciples—Śrī Acyutānanda Prabhu, Śrī Bhavānanda Prabhu and Śrī Jaya-patākā Prabhu, to name a few—supervised all the preliminary construction work while staying in a hall at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. The hall was directly in front of my room at that time. I arranged for their *prasāda* and looked after their belongings when they would go to the West. Considering helping them to be serving Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja, I took up these responsibilities with great enthusiasm and regard.

At one point, Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja sent Śrī Acyutānanda Prabhu to our Kolkata *maṭha* to learn Bengali, *kīrtanas* and other things. Śrī Acyutānanda Prabhu became proficient in Bengali after spending almost three years in the *maṭha*. Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja once wrote him a letter ordering him to send Śrī Bhavānanda Prabhu an English-Bengali dictionary if possible.

In Bengali, Śrī Acyutānanda Prabhu replied, “I have fully learned Bengali. What will Bhavānanda Prabhu do with a dictionary? Why not engage me in whatever service it is you need done?” Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja would write to Śrī Acyutānanda Prabhu from time to time and instruct him to send various items to the West. I would assist Śrī Acyutānanda Prabhu in his service by helping him purchase and ship those items.

**Visiting his godbrothers' maṭhas during the construction of his ISKCON Māyāpura temple**

Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja set a noble example by staying

in a bamboo hut in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura while his temple there was under construction. A devotee who is immersed in *bhajana* lives happily anywhere and is supremely satisfied by any and all circumstances.

Before his bamboo *bhajana-kuṭīra* (place of deep spiritual practice) was built, he stayed in Kolera-ḍāngā at Śrī Caitanya Sārasvata Maṭha with Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Each morning, he would cross the Gaṅgā and spend the day overseeing the construction of his ISKCON temple in Māyāpura. During that time, he often honored lunch *prasāda* with us at our Māyāpura branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, where I received the good fortune to serve him *prasāda* on many occasions.

### **On the title 'Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja'**

Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja invited all his godbrothers for the deity installation festival of the ISKCON Māyāpura Śrī Caitanya-candrodaya mandira. At that event, my Guru Mahārāja expressed his concern about his adopting the title 'Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja.' He inquired, “My dear Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja, we godbrothers have a deep, unshakeable reverence for our gurudeva, Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura, whom we affectionately call 'Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja.' With all sincerity, we want to ask why you allow your disciples to call you by this title. It brings us, your loving godbrothers, great pain. Please kindly help us understand.”

Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja replied, “Mahārāja-jī, my disciples once asked me about the formal designations used to respectfully address one's gurudeva. I simpleheartedly replied that one might use any number of respectful titles, such as 'Viṣṇupāda,' 'Bhagavadpāda,' 'Śrīpāda' or 'Prabhupāda.' I am unsure how or when, but they all jointly decided to call me 'Prabhupāda.'”

Guru Mahārāja then asked, “Can you not forbid them from addressing you with this title? Just as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas use the title 'Mahāprabhu' for Śrī Caitanyadeva only and members of Rāma-kṛṣṇa Mission use the title 'Paramahaṁsa' exclusively for Vivekānanda's guru, Rāma-kṛṣṇa, we, the disciples of Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja, have been accustomed to hearing and using the title 'Prabhupāda' for our gurudeva from the time he was



physically present.”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja replied, “I too am accustomed to using this title exclusively for our gurupāda-padma. But I have grown tired of repeatedly explaining this to each and every one of my disciples. Despite my exhausting efforts, I am unable to stop them from calling me ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda.’”

Even today, many years after Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s disappearance, many people are confused when they read or hear the name ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda.’ They are unsure if it refers to Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura or his disciple Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. A disciple must remain discerning when trying to understand the inner desires of his gurudeva. Sometimes, even a simple act, though done innocently and with good intentions, can create difficulty for śrī guru.

#### Patiently and affectionately teaching his new disciples

Soon after establishing the ISKCON temple in Māyāpura, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja inaugurated his annual Śrī Navadvīpadhāma *parikramā*. During the *parikrama* (pilgrimage), he would send his disciples to have *darśana* of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, Īsodyāna. When the *parikramā* party arrived before the deities, some of the newer Western devotees entered the temple with their shoes hanging around their necks from tied-together shoelaces. Guru Mahārāja was present in the temple hall at that time. When we told them it is inappropriate to enter the temple or go before the deities with shoes, they replied, “We were told not to wear them on our feet while entering the temple. No one told us we cannot put them around our necks.”

Guru Mahārāja then very affectionately explained, “If it is prohibited in the temple to wear shoes on our feet, the lowest limbs of our bodies, what can be said about wearing them on any other higher limb? If our shoes happen to touch any limb above our feet, we must purify ourselves by bathing in the Gaṅgā with our clothes on. If you are told that someone is unqualified to speak to you, does this not imply he is unqualified to speak to your superiors, also?”

The Western devotees were quite satisfied by Guru Mahārāja’s explanation. They said, “We are very new

to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Our spiritual master spends most of his time patiently teaching us many things. Being very affectionate toward us, he does not become angry, even when we continually make mistakes. Today you have kindly taught us a new lesson that we will always try to follow.”

#### My advising his disciple in a debate

During the time Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja was still physically present in this world, one of his disciples, Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja, was preaching in Hyderabad with a group of devotees. In one of his lectures, Mahārāja proclaimed, “Those who do not worship Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa will go to hell.”

Many people became upset by this statement and raised objections. Śrī Niraṣjana Deva Tīrtha, the in-charge of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya’s Bhoga-Vardhana (Govardhana) Maṭha in Jagannātha Purī, vehemently opposed Śrī Tamālakṛṣṇa Mahārāja and made many hostile statements against him. He argued, “Reading the Quran and Bible is a prescribed duty (*dharma*) for Muslims and Christians, respectively, just as reading the Vedas is for Hindus. Do you mean to imply that although Muslims and Christians follow their prescribed dharma, they too will go to hell? Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said:

*yānti deva-vratā devān  
pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ  
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā  
yānti mad-yājino ’pi mām  
Bhagavad-gītā (9.25)*

Those who worship the demigods go to the planets of the demigods, those who worship the forefathers go to the planets of the forefathers, those who worship the spirits go to the planets of the spirits, and those who worship Me will surely come to Me.

“He has not said, ‘All those who do not worship Me are bound for hell.’ How, then, can you speak like this?”

I was residing in Hyderabad at the time, and I read about this issue in the local newspaper. I also read that Śrī Niraṣjana Deva Tīrtha had challenged Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja’s gurudeva, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, to an open debate on the subject.

After inquiring, I discovered that Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja was staying in the Sarasvatī hotel with a few devotees. My godbrother Śrī Dhīra-kṛṣṇa Prabhu, the in-charge of the Hyderabad branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, and I went to the hotel and met with Mahārāja. I asked him if he knew about the newspaper’s mention of the opposition against him and his gurudeva. He said he was aware and that he was drafting a response. He showed me a letter he was writing with the help of Śrī Hari-prasāda Bujurka, a devotee from the Śrī Sampradāya.

The response appeared to be appropriate to me. I suggested they also mention that while it is certainly true that not all who neglect to perform *kṛṣṇabhajana* will go to hell in the literal sense, they will definitely go in the figurative sense. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.19.18) states:

*karmaṇām pariṇāmitvād  
ā-viṛiṣcyād amaṅgalam  
vipaścin naśvaram paśyed  
adr̥ṣtam api dr̥ṣṭa-vat*

“An intelligent person should see that any material activity is subject to continuous change, and thus inauspiciousness exists even on Brahmāloka. Indeed, a wise man understands that just as all that he has seen is temporary, all things within the universe similarly have a beginning and an end.”

Therefore, even attaining the abode of Brahmā—the highest attainment in the fourteen planetary systems—is simply inauspicious. For this reason, devotees consider any position in this material universe equivalent to hell.

Moreover, such designations as ‘Hindu,’ ‘Muslim,’ and ‘Christian’ are all temporary and subject to change. They are merely material designations the soul amasses over time. They have no relation to the soul’s actual, eternal constitutional function (*dharma*). In the Vedic scriptures, the soul is referred to as “*ajo śāśvato nityam ayaṁ purāṇo*—the unborn, unchanging and eternal ancient being” and “*acalo ayaṁ sanātanaḥ*—immovable and ever-present,” not as ‘Hindu,’ ‘Muslim,’ ‘Christian’ or any other such designation.

When Śrī Niraṣjana Deva Tīrtha read Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja’s response, he replied, “This Tamāla-

kṛṣṇa Mahārāja is a *mleccha*, an outcaste. I refuse to enter into a debate with him. I challenge his guru, Śrī Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. I will converse only with him.”

When Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja read Śrī Niraṣjana Deva Tīrtha’s reply, he asked me, “What should I say now?”

I told him to write and ask which Śāṅkarācārya this Śrī Niraṣjana Deva Tīrtha follows, because he could not possibly be a follower of the Śāṅkarācārya who had stated, “*jivo brahmaiva na paraḥ*—the living entity is *brahma* (undifferentiated energy).” How can the *jīva* (soul) be a *mleccha* or a *brāhmaṇa* or anything else if he is *brahma*?

Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja liked this response and sent it as his reply. No counterargument came back from Śrī Niraṣjana Deva Tīrtha after that.

Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja was in Russia during the debate. However, when Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja informed him of my response by letter, Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja replied, “I was delighted to read his answer. It was highly appropriate.”

Sometime after this incident, Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja visited Hyderabad with a large party of people, but Śrī Niraṣjana Deva Tīrtha was nowhere to be found. No one had any idea whether he was in Hyderabad or not. It was as if he had totally vanished.

### A reciprocal invitation

When Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja came to Hyderabad another time, I invited him to honor prasāda in our maṭha. He mercifully accepted my invitation and honored prasāda with great joy. As he was leaving, he invited me and my godbrother Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī (now Śrī Bhakti Mayukha Bhikṣu Mahārāja) to one of his events. Fortunately, we were able to attend. At the event, Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja had Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī play *mṛdaṅga* (drums), and following the lecture and *kīrtana*, he mercifully had us sit with him to honor *prasāda*.

### Paying due honor to an ācārya

I once invited Śrī Svāmī Mahārāja to visit Śrī

Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Chandigarh while he was visiting the ISKCON temple there. He graciously accepted my invitation and arrived at the *maṭha* on the scheduled day. During his visit, my godbrother Śrī Rāma-prasāda Prabhu offered him a new wooden *vyāsāsana* (designated seat for those speaking), which he had constructed and carved with his own hands. Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja, however, refused to sit on it. He explained, “A new *simhāsana* (seat) must first be offered to and used by the *maṭha*’s *ācārya*.”

That day, we served Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja and his disciples *prasāda*. He very lovingly honored *prasāda*, and later appreciatively told us, “Today, after so long, I have honored the type of *prasāda* I am used to honoring. My disciples cook many preparations for me, but there is a big difference between their way of cooking and ours. They use large amounts of ghee, which I cannot digest. I would probably stay in this world longer if I were to regularly receive the type of *prasāda* we honored here in the *maṭha* today.”

Later, when Guru Mahārāja came to Chandigarh, he too declined Śrī Rāmaprasāda Prabhu’s request to accept the *vyāsāsana* he had made for Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja. He said, “How could I sit on it if my godbrother refused to do so? According to my godbrother’s words—‘Only the *ācārya* of the *maṭha* should sit on a new *simhāsana*’—I will place my gurudeva on it, for he is the true *ācārya* of this *maṭha*.”

Thereafter, Guru Mahārāja kept a portrait of Śrīla Prabhupāda on the *vyāsāsana*.

### The responsibility inherent in accepting offerings

Just before Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja manifested his disappearance pastimes, Henry Ford’s great grandson Alfred Ford, whose initiated name is Śrī Ambarīṣa dāsa, told Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja of his desire to fund the construction of a university in Kurukṣetra dedicated to teaching Bhagavad-Gītā.

However, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja declined his offer. “I will not be in this world for much longer,” He said. “If I take your money without being able to ensure it will properly be used in the Lord’s service, then I will be at fault.”

Through this example, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja has

demonstrated that we should accept only that which we are certain we can utilize in the Lord’s service, otherwise there is a chance of incurring fault.

### My situation at the time of his disappearance

I was overseeing a pilgrimage of Northern India when Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja manifested his disappearance pastime during the month of Kārtika. We were in Siddhapura—also known as Mātrī Gayā, the site where the philosophical exchange between Bhagavān Kapiladeva and his mother, Devahūti, occurred—when I read about his disappearance in the newspaper:

“Śrī A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī, the great personality who shook the whole world these past ten years, has manifested his pastime of disappearance.”

Although I had a strong desire to attend Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s samādhi ceremony, my obligations with the pilgrimage kept me from going. However, when my godbrother Śrī Maṅgalanilaya Brahmācārī (later Śrī Bhakti Hṛdaya Maṅgala Mahārāja), who was also serving on the pilgrimage, expressed a desire to go to Vṛndāvana for the ceremony, I did not prohibit him. Instead, I encouraged him to go and assumed his responsibilities in his absence.

When the devotees of ISKCON held Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s virahotsava (festival of separation) in Śrī Jagannātha Purī in 1978, they requested Guru Mahārāja to be chairman of the assembly. Although he was unwell, he faithfully participated in the festival out of deep regard for his godbrother.



## The Disappearance of Śrīla Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Mahārāja

Written by Jamuna Devi Dasi

On September 5, 2017 my beloved Gurudeva, Srila Bhakti Vijnana Bharati Gosvami Maharaja went into Samadhi.

Srila Maharaj was the foremost Vaisnava saint on the planet. Although he was 91 years old, no one expected him to go so soon. He held the faith of thousands of devotees by his deep realizations, his pure compassionate heart and his astonishingly perfect character. So many of us built our lives around him. We lived everyday with the hope and anticipation of our next meeting with him. A loss like this is unimaginable, yet the amazing thing about a pure Guru is that when they go into Samadhi they actually become even more accessible to us.

Although I have only been an aspiring devotee for about 4 years, I've heard this concept of Guru again and again. I

have heard that when a pure devotee leaves their manifest pastimes of this world, their transcendental body goes into Samadhi and their body doesn't decay as ours does. Although I have heard this and believed this, I never imagined how truly glorious the samadhi body of a pure Vaisnava Guru is until I saw my Gurudeva's samadhi body with my own eyes.

The day after my Gurudeva went into Samadhi many devotees went to Mayapur (where Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu appeared) where his *maha samadhi* ceremony (grand burial) would take place. The day began with the *sevaks* (servants) putting Srila Maharaj on a beautiful flower bed in front of the temple deities. When I saw him lying there I noticed his body was soft and fragrant and his mouth was turned upward like he was smiling.

That afternoon the *sevaks* put him on a palanquin covered in garlands and we took him to his Gurudeva, Srila Bhakti Dayita Madhava Gosvami Maharaj's samadhi. We sang a beautiful Guru bhajan there and the mood was ecstatic. Although I was heart-broken that my Gurudeva had left I was surprised by how happy I felt inside. Seeing my Gurudeva smiling in deep meditation was just the most beautiful sight anyone could ever see. We come to this path with a little faith and hopeful to get more. This experience was that moment where faith comes. When you see a body grow more and more golden and beautiful in front of your eyes it just brings you to your knees. We normally have to be so advanced to see these things but Guru is so merciful. They show this divine miracle of samadhi to fallen souls such as myself and therefore alter our lives forever.

Later in the day we bathed Srila Maharaj with milk, honey, sugar, yogurt, and ghee and saved all the remnants off his body for drinking. After this *maha abhishek* he no longer looked human as he sometimes could pretend to appear to look before samadhi. He looked like a glorious smiling golden *murti* (deity). Everyone was left breathless. He was lowered into the Dham earth and then covered in gorgeous garlands and garments that were once worn by Lord Jagannath. We had one final *arati* (worship with a ghee lamp, incense, water, flowers and a fan) and then covered him in holy dust.

At the time of samadhi the pure guru reunites with Radha and Krsna in Goloka Vrindavan. We all witnessed the blissful smile he had at the reunion. Now that he is no longer visible to our human eyes he is now even more merciful. This mercy does not just extend to his disciples but to anyone who sincerely prays to him. He came to help us and our relationship with him is really just starting. By seeing his divine form, I know this to be true. He is eternal and ever present and in this very special time right after his disappearance we can make a very deep connection very quickly. He is available to each and every one of us. He once said, "I want to be a friend to everyone." Our chance for this is now. I encourage everyone who reads this to call out his name with faith and begin a beautiful relationship with this most compassionate saint.

Srila Bhakti Vijnana Bharati Gosvami Maharaj Ki Jay!



## Vaisnava Song: Je Ānilo Prema Dhana

In honor of the incredible Vaisnavas who recently left our world, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Gosvami Mahārāja and Śrīla Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, as well as the many pure-hearted Vaisnavas whose disappearance day falls during the auspicious month of Kartika (between October and November), we'd like to share the *bhajan* (prayer) that's sung on these deeply saddening and yet eagerly celebrated days.

We have been told by our *acaryas* on numerous occasions that Sri Guru never dies, that those pure and self-realised Vaisnavas, eternally and consciously serving Srimati Radhika, never leave our presence, but that in the enactment of “sickness” or “death”, they are merely leaving our vision. Their disappearance awards new potential for a deepening of our relationship to them, and yet their physical presence and spoken counsel is painfully missed from our lives. It's in the grief of their perceived absence that we're able to grow in our affection for them, fuelling our desire to be of service still, and even more so now. In separation from our dear spiritual guides and ever well-wishers, from those who walked this earth only to help us in our relationship to Kṛṣṇa, we are called to remember them with gratitude. In remembrance we find meeting, and so, even if we have never met the Vaisnavas we honor, by singing and praying to them, especially on their disappearance day, we foster the hope that they appear before us again, within our hearts, in direct vision, and in the form Śrī Guru, who can make the impossible possible. Conviction in Sri Guru is the backbone of bhakti, and by meditating on the prayers of those who know true meeting and true separation—such as the one below by Śrī Narotama das Thakura—we will gradually come to feel how our lives depend upon the mercy of Śrī Guru and the Vaisnavas.

je ānilo prema-dhana koruṇā pracura  
heno prabhu kothā gelā ācārya ṭhākura (1)

Who, out of His vast compassion, brought Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu with His treasure of divine love to this world by calling Him with love and affection? Where has that Advaita Ācārya Ṭhākura gone? [Advaita Ācārya was shouting so loudly that Nārāyana's throne was shaking!]

kāhā mora svarūpa-rūpa kāhā sanātana  
kāhā dāsa raghunātha patita-pāvana (2)

Where are my Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rūpa Gosvāmī? Where is my Sanātana Gosvāmī? Where is my Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, the savior of the fallen, conditioned souls?

kāhā mora bhaṭṭa-yuga kāhā kavirāja  
eka-kāle kothā gelā gorā naṭarāja (3)

Where are my Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmīs? Where is my Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī? Where has my Gaurāṅga, the king of dancers, gone? Suddenly, all at once they left! Where have they gone?

pāṣāṇe kuṭibo māthā anale paśibo  
gaurāṅga guṇera nidhi kothā gele pābo (4)

I shall dash my head upon a stone or enter into fire! Oh, where shall I find such a great treasure-house of wonderful qualities as Gaurāṅga? Where has He gone?

se saba saṅgira saṅge je koilo vilāsa  
se saṅga nā pāiyā kānde narottama dāsa (5)

All of them shared extremely beautiful, sweet pastimes with each other. Bereft of their association, Narottama dāsa weeps.

## Janmāṣṭamī at Snake River

More wonderful news from Snake River Correctional Institution in Oregon! We were granted permission to host a beautiful Janmāṣṭamī program with a very special guest from India. We'd love to share some of the fantastic responses to the event below. Photos of the day will be published once we've received permission.

### Vasanti dāsī:

On August 25, an epic gathering was held at Snake River Correctional Institution in honor of Lord Kṛṣṇa's Birthday. Śrīpād Bodhayan Mahārāja, Syamasundara prabhu and myself attended along with a prasadam feast cooked by Gaura-priya didi from Boise. Getting approved to bring in prasadam (foodstuffs offered to Kṛṣṇa) was historic as bringing in food into prison is almost impossible.

Chaplain Persinger received us with so much honor, and in her announcement of our being there it sounded like she was very proud of having a Hare Kṛṣṇa group at Snake River Correctional. It was very sweet.

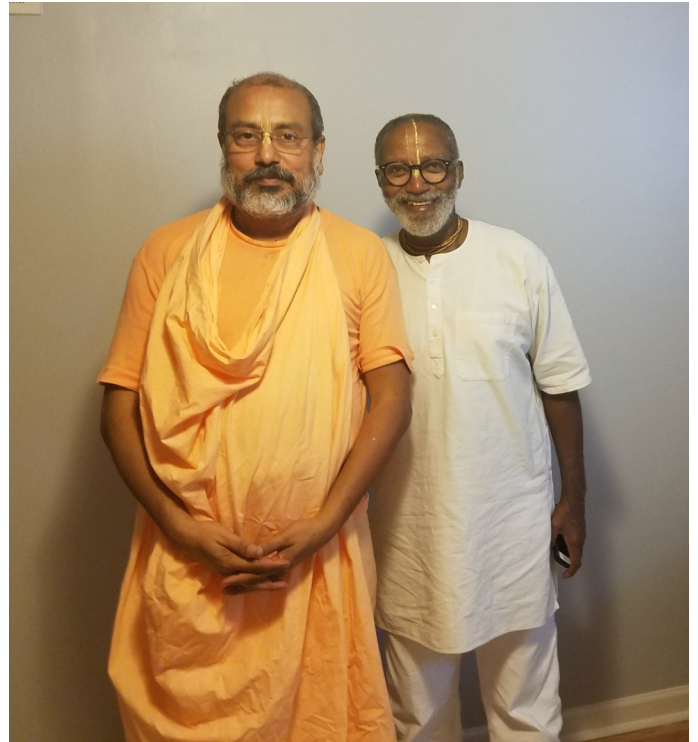
It was amazing that Śrīpād Bodhayan Mahārāja came. When I saw him in Puri, India, in June and asked if he would come, that one inmate there is a devotee whom he knows, his immediate response was, "Yes, I will go." That's compassion.

He gave such a nice class at Snake River, leaving us all with so much hope and positivity. I loved his simplicity and use of language. Mahārāja shared the power of chanting the holy name and then all chanted along with him. I could feel the depths of everyone's emotions who attended and their prayerful moods. All were so respectful and gave Mahārāja the proper respect due a sannyāsī (monk). We feel so blessed that such a program took place in the prison system. We pray that we can arrange (and be approved) to have more programs like this in other facilities across America.

### Satya Krishna Dasa:

I am extremely grateful to Śrīla Bodhayan Mahārāja, Vasanti dāsī and Syamasundara dasa for visiting SRCI and making this great event possible on such short notice, along with Gaura Priya dāsī for cooking the Sri Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī feast, which was enjoyed by many as an excellent assortment of Vaishnava prasāda (food offered to Kṛṣṇa).

Śrīla Bodhayan Mahārāja spoke extensively about chanting the *mahā-mantra*. He said: This age of Kali is the age of quarrel and hypocrisy. They should be here; we should not worry about all the conflict in the world, in our lives. This is natural for the present age. To get relief, we can chant the holy names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and this chanting will give us kindness, tolerance and respect. Kṛṣṇa is a Sanskrit word for God. In other cultures, people may use Buddha, or God, or Allah. In India, we say Kṛṣṇa. The word Kṛṣṇa means all-attractive eternal bliss. All living beings are striving for this. We all have Kṛṣṇa as our goal, even if we don't know it. Just as a piece of iron is attracted to a magnet, we living beings are all attracted to eternal bliss. But when a piece of iron is covered by rust, attraction to the magnet will be blocked. In our current state, our heart is covered with rust and chanting the *maha mantra* will clean our hearts. A question was asked of Mahārāja about feelings of guilt for the people we have hurt. Mahārāja said that to even chant a semblance of the holy name one time can destroy sins, it will clean our hearts, give us relief from hypocrisy and conflict, so we may live with kindness, tolerance and respect, and be attracted to eternal bliss, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Haribol!



Śrīpād Bodhayan Mahārāja (left) and Syamasundara prabhu (right)

**Ray Pawlowski:**

I would like to thank Śrīla Bodhayan Mahārāja for taking the time and travelling all the way from India to share your knowledge with us. Three years had went by since I went to any religious services. When my friend, Dasa, told me you were coming and invited me to hear you talk I got excited because we've talked before, and a lot of his spiritual beliefs I learned, were the same as mine. I would like to say you were right. The song we sang knocked the rust from my consciousness. And the story you told along with the knowledge you shared awakened me. Thank you. You will not be forgotten. Sincerely, Ray Pawlowski.

**Jeff Johnson:**

Many thanks to all who organized and participated in the 8/25/17 Kṛṣṇa celebration at SRCI. It was a sincere and meaningful affirmation of life. I'm fortunate to have experienced it. The home-made meal that followed was excellently prepared and thoroughly delicious. Thanks again to those who made this event possible.

**Asish Sharma:**

I wanted to thank you so much for coming here at Snake River prison and offering to help us remember and serve Sri Kṛṣṇa, offer guidance to the spiritual life, to help us celebrate the chanting of the holy names of Sri Kṛṣṇa remembering his manifestation. Chanting the *maha mantra* transported a lot of us to a spiritual realm even though some of them didn't know what they were chanting, but for the short time that we chanted, I could feel the bliss and happiness in everyone. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa has made me more self-realized and I hope I can become a selfless servant of Kṛṣṇa. I wanted to thank you for the delicious feast of Kṛṣṇa *prasada* that purifies one's existence, and gives strength, health and happiness which pleases our heart. Thank you so much for everything.

**Jason Centrone:**

A great irony accompanied this year's Janmāṣṭamī – the salient interest in a total solar eclipse. We all watched intently while only days later and as if to counter this dramatic blip of additional darkness in our lives, we received a luminous visit. In celebration of Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance concluding the *dvarāpa yuga*, travelling all the way from the land of Kṛṣṇa's birth, we received the most gracious light of Śrīla Bodhayan Mahārāja – we only missed the two minutes of sun, but we do need as much light as possible – as any could imagine, *sadhu sanga* in our milieu is remarkably rare – as hard to come by as a total eclipse, only this year ultimately it proved closer to being a reverse eclipse -- light pouring out where it usually isn't. we humbly thank the members of the IPBYS Prison Seva Program, Gaura Priya Devi Dāsī Catering, and most especially Śrīla Bodhayan Mahārāja for availing us such a wealth of light this markedly auspicious appearance day. Hare Kṛṣṇa!

**Tyke Supanchick:**

I just wanted to take a moment to say thank you to Śrīla Bodhayan Maharaj, Vasanti, and Symasundara for orchestrating the Janmāṣṭamī celebration on Friday August 25 2017 at Snake River Correctional Institution. I especially enjoyed the Kṛṣṇa mantra. I've been experiencing a lot of anxiety related to my experience in the military and I found the mantra very relaxing and I thank you for that bit of relief. Also, a big thank you to amazing confectioners who provided the mouth-watering viands. As we say in the marine corps, bravo-zulu, well done.

Our master-chef, Gaura Priya dasi, cooking up a storm

# Vaisnava Calendar

**\*Attention:** The Vaiṣṇava Calendar has changed. 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. \*

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 11<sup>th</sup> 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

1 Oct 2017 - Sunday

**Ekādaśī** – all US cities

2 Oct 2017 - Monday

Times for breaking fast (paran) (Daylight Savings not considered): Atlanta (06:33-10:29); Austin (06:25-10:21); Bangor (05:35-09:28); Boise (06:44-10:37); Boston (05:43-09:36); Chicago (05:49-09:43); Detroit (06:31-10:24); Durham (06:11-10:07); Hartford (05:49-09:43); Indianapolis (06:42-10:36); Las Vegas (05:37-09:32); Los Angeles (05:48-09:44); Madison (05:56-09:50); Missoula (06:37-10:29); Mobile (05:47-09:43); Montpelier (05:50-09:43); Nashville (05:43-09:38); New Orleans (05:55-09:51); New York (05:53-09:48); Orlando (06:19-10:16); Philadelphia (05:58-09:52); Phoenix (06:23-10:19); Portland (06:11-10:03); Salt Lake City (06:25-10:19); San Francisco (06:06-10:01); Seattle (06:10-10:02)

**Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī** ~

Disappearance

**Śrīla Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī** ~

Disappearance

**Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī** ~

Disappearance

5 Oct 2017 - Thursday

**Pūrṇimā** (full moon)

Beginning of the holy month of Kārtika

**Śrī Kṛṣṇa Saradiya rāsa-yātrā** (the anniversary of Kṛṣṇa's rāsa dance with the gopis)

**Śrī Murāri Gupta** ~ Disappearance (associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

**Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajśāna Keśava Gosvāmī**

**Mahārāja** ~ Disappearance (Śrīla

Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī

Mahārāja's guru)

**Fasting and special rules for 4th month of Cāturmāsya-vrata begins today**

For one month fast from sesame seeds, mustard seeds, sesame oil, mustard oil, eggplants, tomatoes, loki, parmal, urad dahl and honey.

9 Oct 2017 - Monday

**Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura** ~ Disappearance (associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

12 Oct 2017 - Thursday

**Appearance of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa**, bathing in **Rādhā-kuṇḍa** (Snāna-dhan) and giving charity

13 Oct 2017 - Friday

**Śrīla Vīracandra Prabhu** ~ Appearance (associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

**Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja** ~ Appearance (disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda

15 Oct 2017 - Sunday

**Ekādaśī** – all US cities

16 Oct 2017 - Monday

Times for breaking fast (paran) (Daylight Savings not considered): Atlanta (06:43-10:30); Austin (06:34-10:22); Bangor (05:52-09:31); Boise (07:01-10:40); Boston (05:58-09:39); Chicago (06:05-09:46); Detroit (06:47-10:27); Durham (06:23-10:08); Hartford (06:04-09:45); Indianapolis (06:56-10:39); Las Vegas (05:49-09:33); Los Angeles (05:59-09:45); Madison (06:13-09:53); Missoula (06:56-10:33); Mobile (05:56-09:43); Montpelier (06:07-09:46); Nashville (05:55-09:40); New Orleans (06:03-09:52); New York (06:08-09:50); Orlando (06:27-10:16); Philadelphia (06:12-09:55); Phoenix (06:34-10:20); Portland (06:29-10:07); Salt Lake City (06:40-10:22); San Francisco (06:19-10:02); Seattle (06:30-10:06)

17 Oct 2017 - Tuesday

**Ākāśa Dīpikā** begins (offering lamp to the sky for one solar month)

19 Oct 2017 - Thursday

**Dīpa-dāna, Dīpanvita, Diwali** (Festival of lights)

20 Oct 2017 - Friday

**Govardhana-pūjā, Go-pūjā, Go-kṛda** (Worship of Govardhana Hill, and worship and decorating of cows)

**Śrī Rasikānanda** ~ Appearance (associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

21 Oct 2017 - Saturday

**Śrī Vasudeva Ghoṣa** ~ Disappearance (associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

**Yama-dvitiyā** -- The blessing of Yamarāja to his sister, Śrī Yamunā-devī that if brother and sister take bath in Yamunā on this day, they will not go to the abode of Yama after death.

22 Oct 2017 - Sunday

**Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja** ~ Disappearance (Śrīla

Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī

Mahārāja's godbrother)

**Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Trivrikrama**

**Gosvāmī Mahārāja** ~ Disappearance (Śrīla

Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī

Mahārāja's godbrother)

23 Oct 2017 - Monday

**Tridaṇḍisvāmī Śrī Śrīmad A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupada** ~ Disappearance (commonly referred to in Western countries as Śrīla Prabhupada)

24 Oct 2017 - Tuesday

**Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktiśrīrūpa Siddhānti Mahārāja**

~ Appearance (disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda)

27 Oct 2017 - Friday

**Gopāṣṭamī, Goṣṭāṣṭamī** (when Kṛṣṇa takes the cows grazing for the first time)

**Śrī Gadādhara dāsa Gosvāmī ~ Disappearance** (associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

**Śrī Dhanaṣṭya Paṇḍita ~ Disappearance** (associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

**Śrī Śrīnivāsa Ācārya ~ Disappearance** (associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

30 Oct 2017 – Monday – Boise, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Missoula, Phoenix, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Seattle

**Śrīla Gaura-kīśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja ~ Disappearance** (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda's guru)

**Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Appearance** (disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda)

**Bhīṣma-paścaka begins** (the last five, extra auspicious days of Kartika)

31 Oct 2017 - Tuesday

**Ekādaśī** – all US cities

**Śrīla Gaura-kīśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja ~ Disappearance** (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda's guru)

**Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Appearance** (disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda)

**Bhīṣma-paścaka begins**

Atlanta, Austin, Bangor, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Durham, Hartford, Indianapolis, Madison, Mobile, Montpelier, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Orlando, Philadelphia,

1 Nov 2017 - Wednesday

Times for breaking fast (paran) (Daylight Savings not considered): Austin (06:45-10:25); Boise (07:21-10:46); Las Vegas (06:04-09:37); Los Angeles (06:13-09:48); Madison (06:33-09:58); Missoula (07:19-10:39); Phoenix (06:47-10:24); Portland (06:51-10:13); Salt Lake City (06:58-10:27); San Francisco (06:35-10:07); Seattle (06:54-10:13); Atlanta (06:57-07:29); Bangor (06:14-07:29); Boston (06:18-07:29); Chicago (06:24-06:29); Detroit (07:06-07:29); Durham (06:38-07:29); Hartford (06:23-07:29); Indianapolis (07:14-07:29); Mobile (06:07-06:29); Montpelier (06:28-07:29); Nashville (06:10-06:29); New Orleans (06:15-06:29); New York (06:26-07:29); Orlando (06:38-07:29); Philadelphia (06:30-07:29)

2 Nov 2017 - Thursday

**Śrī Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī ~ Disappearance**

(associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

**Śrī Kāśīśvara Paṇḍita ~ Disappearance**

(associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

**Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī**

**Mahārāja ~ Disappearance** (disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda)

3 Nov 2017 - Friday

**Śrī Kṛṣṇa Rāsa-yātrā ends**

**Śrī Nimbāditya ~ Appearance** (head of the Nimbarka *sampradhaya*/philosophical school)

**End of the month of Kārtika**

**End of Cāturmāsya-vrata**

4 Nov 2017 – Saturday

**Kātyāyanī-vrata begins** - Vraja-devī's take a one-month vow to please Yogamāya, (Kātyāyanī-devi) to get Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their beloved

13 Nov 2017 - Monday

**Śrīla Narahari Sarakāra Ṭhākura ~ Disappearance** (associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu)

**Ekādaśī** – Atlanta, Austin, Boise, Chicago, Detroit, Durham, Hartford, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Madison, Missoula, Mobile, Montpelier, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Orlando, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Seattle

14 Nov 2017 - Tuesday

Times for breaking fast (paran) (Daylight Savings not considered): Atlanta (08:16-10:38); Austin (07:16-10:29); Boise (07:38-10:52); Chicago (07:16-09:57); Detroit (08:16-10:38); Durham (08:16-10:17); Hartford (08:16-09:56); Indianapolis (08:16-10:49); Las Vegas (06:17-09:42); Los Angeles (06:25-09:53); Madison (07:16-10:04); Missoula (07:38-10:46); Mobile (07:16-09:50); Montpelier (08:16-09:58); Nashville (07:16-09:49); New Orleans (07:16-09:58); New York (08:16-10:01); Orlando (08:16-10:22); Philadelphia (08:16-10:05); Phoenix (06:59-10:28); Portland (07:09-10:20); Salt Lake City (07:14-10:32); San Francisco (06:48-10:12); Seattle (07:13-10:20)

**Ekādaśī** – Bangor, Boston

15 Nov 2017 - Wednesday

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

Bangor (06:33-09:44); Boston (06:35-09:51)

**Śrī Sāraṅga Ṭhākura ~ Disappearance**

16 Nov 2017 - Thursday

**End of Akāśa Dīpikā** (offering lamp to the sky)

21 Nov 2017 - Tuesday

**Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Jīvana Janārdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Disappearance** (disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda)

24 Nov 2017 - Friday

**Śrīla Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Appearance** (disciple of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda)

26 Nov 2017 - Sunday

**Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Jīvana Janārdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja ~ Appearance** (disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda)

29 Nov 2017 - Wednesday

**Ekādaśī** – all US cities

30 Nov 2017 - Thursday

Times for breaking fast (paran) (Daylight Savings not considered): Atlanta (07:24-10:45); Austin (07:09-10:36); Bangor (06:52-09:53); Boise (07:58-11:02); Boston (06:53-09:59); Chicago (06:58-10:06); Detroit (07:41-10:48); Durham (07:07-10:25); Hartford (06:58-10:06); Indianapolis (07:46-10:58); Las Vegas (06:32-09:50); Los Angeles (06:40-10:01); Madison (07:09-10:14); Missoula (07:60-10:56); Mobile (06:31-09:58); Montpelier (07:05-10:08); Nashville (06:39-09:57); New Orleans (06:38-10:06); New York (06:60-10:09); Orlando (07:00-10:30); Philadelphia (07:02-10:14); Phoenix (07:14-10:36); Portland (07:30-10:29); Salt Lake City (07:32-10:41); San Francisco (07:05-10:20); Seattle (07:36-10:30)

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);

Philadelphia (07:14-10:22); Phoenix (07:24-10:44); Portland (07:44-10:38); Salt Lake City (07:44-10:50); San 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

## Dear Devotee...

DeQuintian Beaty asks: "Would you be considered my initiating spiritual master?"

Syamasundara Prabhu answers: The person that will one day appear to you for the purpose of bringing you to the lotus feet of Sri Sri Radha Krsna will not be a person of this world. In other words, the genuine spiritual master of whom you should take shelter of, and initiation from, is not a soul that is in this world as a result of their previous karma. That person is an eternally liberated, associate of Sri Sri Radha Krsna. They descend into this world to claim suffering *jiva* (soul)'s, and deliver them to the eternal abode of Sri Sri Radha Krsna by their divine guidance. This is something that will come as a result of our sincere hankering to surrender and serve Sri Sri Radha Krsna. Sometimes a person that is following nicely his own divine master can be accepted as what is known as a *vartma padakasa guru*, or one who points the way. That person, if he is sincere, having no desire for profit, adoration, and distinction, will be able to nicely present the divine instructions he has heard from his own Gurudeva. In this way, he can help you. Sometimes, on behalf of his Guru, if it is helpful to a person, he can give a spiritual nickname until that time comes that he meets his own divine master. In our line, we understand that the spiritual master is one, though he may come in infinity of forms. In other words, my Gurudeva has wound up his manifest pastimes in this world. That person who will ultimately appear as your Gurudeva will be non-different in truth from my Gurudeva.

## IPBYS Prison Outreach Visits Lancaster

After months of trying to get a confirmed date with the Chaplain at the California State Prison in Lancaster, Sivananda Sena dasa, Thakura dasa, Jaya Govinda dasa and I (Vasanti dasi) held a program with 20 inmates. The security was more intense than any other prison I had been in, and when we were taken to a small, cold classroom, we sat down, made our prayers, and waited for the participants to enter. Only 1 person who came had heard of Krsna, and at the beginning when we chanted, we were met with blank stares. After our first chant, Shivananda spoke some philosophy, and everybody was so interested and then when we chanted again, he got up and danced which broke the ice and all felt at ease and comfortable to sing and dance along with him. It was a remarkable program, and at the end we felt so much affectionate exchanges and requests to please come back soon.

This time, Thakura couldn't come, so it was 3 of us. Jaya Govinda plays *mrdanga* (drum) and harmonium and sings very nicely, and Shivananda speaks wonderfully – engaging and makes people laugh.

Lancaster has 5 separate yards that don't mix. Our next program happened this past September. I asked the Chaplain if we could go back to the same yard to meet with the same guys, so we could take them further along in bhakti. In an email he said ok. When we were brought in by the Chaplain, he told us we were going to a new yard that day. We were kind of thrown off, as we felt it would be good to continue to cultivate the same group. The Chaplain explained that the institution would like each yard to experience our program so they will rotate us to all 5 yards each time we come. We realized this must be the Lord's plan, and good for all. This group was super inquisitive and many had heard of Krsna.

We are always grateful to hold programs in facilities as we feel it is extremely purifying for ourselves, and enlivening to share bhakti-yoga with those searching for the Truth.

After the program, Jaya Govinda said, "I want to express my feelings of gratitude to Vasanti didi and the prison program for inviting me to come do *kirtan* with the prisoners here. I feel like I need this, to realize what our Gurudeva has given us which is the holy name. When you live in a temple, you can take this *kirtan* for granted. These people are taking in the holy names with so much thirst. We are also in a prison. It makes me value our Gurudeva's teachings and to go deep into sharing this *maha-mantra* with all. Thank you for inviting me."

And Shivananda said, "Somehow by the mercy of our wonderful spiritual master, even though he has left our vision 7 years ago, the mood we are trying to cultivate internally and externally and will always be with us so when people come in contact with us there is some feeling in their heart that there is some connection. It is not our personalities that they are attracted to but to the current of bhakti that we are praying to flow through us. This kind of transcendental feeling is so impactful and purifying for us. We are not just there for them from the outside, but they are there for us by their receptiveness."