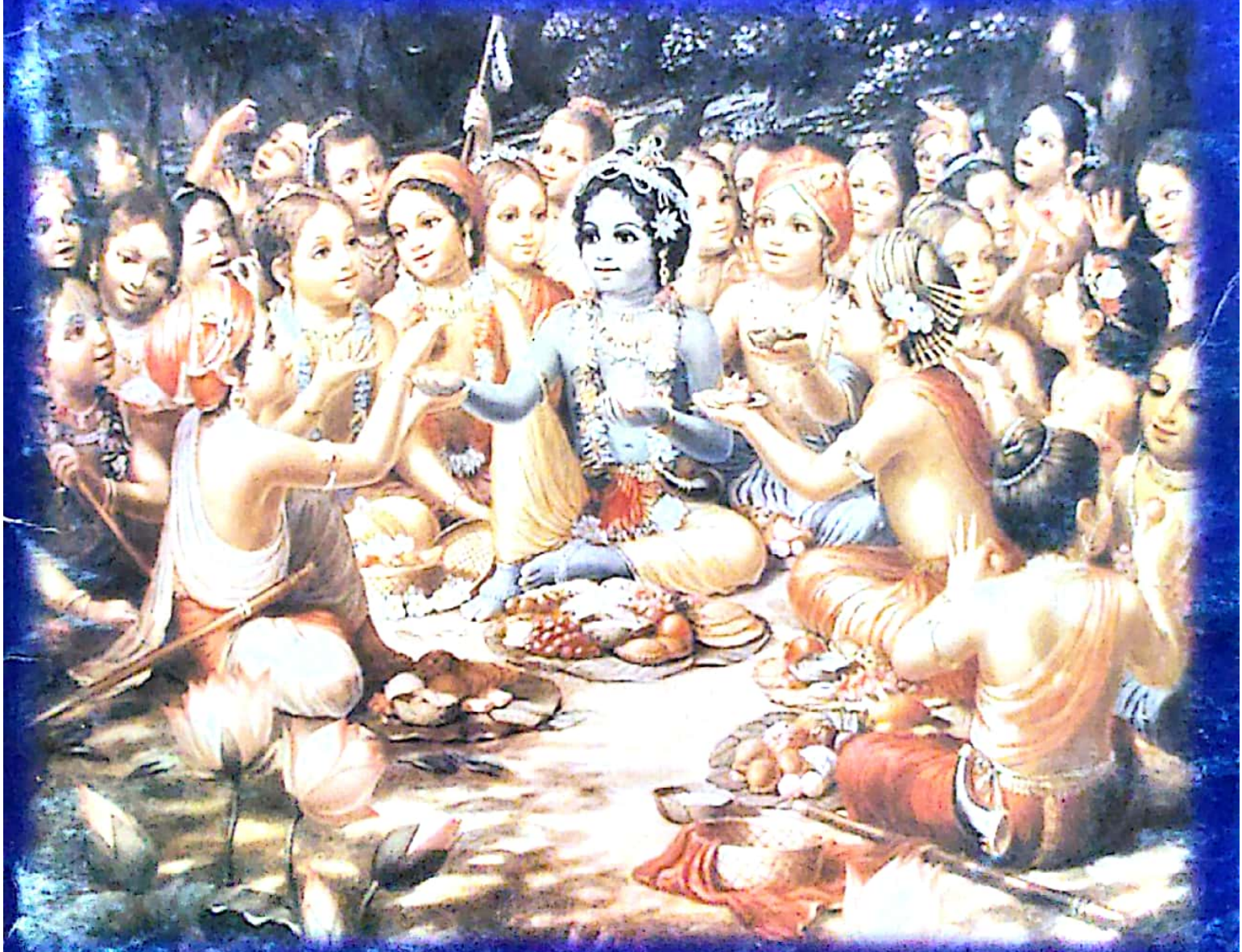


Avantika



Ujjain News

Issue 4



*jayatām suratau paṅgor mama manda-mater gati
mat-sarvasva-padāmbhojau rādhā-madana-mohanau*

**“Glory to the all merciful Rādhā and Madan-Mohana!
I am lame and ill advised, yet They are my directors
and Their lotus feet are everything to me.”**

-- Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Adi 1.15

Contents



Published for the pleasure of ISKCON's Founder-Ācārya
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Śrīla Prabhupāda

- 2 Prabhupāda Vani
Prasāda Distribution and Saṅkīrtana
- 5 Yours in the Service of Śrīla Prabhupāda
By His Holiness Bhakti Charu Swami
- 6 Current Affairs: The Vedic Perspective
Eating Green
By Jāhnavī Harrison
- 8 Scared Voyager
Guru Mahārāja at the United Nations
By Chandraśekhara dāsa
- 12 Reflections in the Light of the Master
By Śaraṇagatī devī dāsī
- 14 South African Retreat, 2009
By Ārati devī dāsī
- 16 Guru Upadeśa
ISKCON-Prabhupāda's International Āśrama
By His Holiness Bhakti Charu Swami
- 18 Ujjain News
Midday-Meal Project—An Update
By Kṛṣṇarcana dāsa
- 22 Vrinda's Divine Cuisine
By Nāyikā devī dāsī
- 24 Photo Features
Glory of Ujjain
Nārāyaṇa Village
By Rāghava paṇḍita dāsa
- 28 Avanti—Lord Kṛṣṇa's Gurukula
By Sītarama dāsa
- 30 Serving the Spiritual Master
By Ratna Rādhikā dāsī
- 34 A Labour of Love
Candan Yātrā
By Arunaksha dāsa

- Poetry Corner
37 Prabhupāda's gift
By Devahūti devī dāsī

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Divine Song
By Vaidehī devī dāsī

Glorification of the Guru
By Rādhā Piyarī dāsī

- Impact Feature
38 Śrī Guru
By Chitrāṅgadā devī dāsī

- Postcards
42 Cooking with Guru Mahārāja
By Śyāma mohinī devī dāsī

- 44 Reflections from Ujjain
By Bhūtabhāvana dāsa

- 46 Sugar Flowers for Kṛṣṇa
By Yamunā devī dāsī

- 48 Kids Corner

ADVISOR	H.H. Bhakti Charu Swami
EDITORIAL TEAM	Rādhārāṇī devī dāsī Sudevī Sundarī devī dāsī Jāhnavā devī dāsī
LAYOUT & DESIGN	Rādhā Piyarī dāsī
PHOTOS	Nāyikā devī dāsī Anshul Sharma
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Prasāda Distribution and Sankīrtana: The Peace Formulae

The spiritual master encourages *prasāda* distribution, remnants of foodstuff, distributed to the public. Ours is not a dry philosophy, that we simply talk and go home. No. We distribute *prasādam*, very sumptuous *prasādam*. In every temple, anyone who comes, we can offer *prasādam*. In each and every temple we have got already from fifty to two hundred devotees. And outsiders also, they come and take *prasādam*. This introduction is also another symptom of guru, *prasāda* distribution. *Caturvidha* means four kinds of different types of varieties of *prasādam*. *Śrī-bhagavat-prasādam*. *Śrī* means opulent. If you eat *bhagavat-prasādam*, then gradually you become spiritualized. It has got the potency. Therefore it is said that realization of God can be done by the tongue. *Sevonmukhe hi jihvādau* [*Brahma-saṁhitā* 1.2.234]. If you engage your tongue in the service of the Lord, then you realize God. You chant the holy name of the Lord, and you



take the *prasādam*, remnants of foodstuff given to the Lord, then you can become self-realized and God realized by these two methods. You do not require to be a very highly educated philosopher, a scientist or a rich man to realize God. If you sincerely engage your tongue only in the service of the Lord, you will realize Him. It is such a simple thing. It is not very difficult. Therefore, this *prasādam* programme is there, introduced by the guru, spiritual master... And when he's fully satisfied that the *prasāda* distribution is going on, he's very much pleased and engages himself in the devotional service of the Lord by chanting and dancing.

--Lecture on *Gurvaṣṭakam* at Upsala University Stockholm, September 9, 1973

There are sixty-four different prescriptions for worship of the Deity in the temple. There are many items offered to the Deity, some valuable and some less valuable. It is prescribed in *Bhagavad-gītā*: "If a devotee offers Me a small flower, a leaf, some water or a little fruit, I will accept it." The real purpose is to exhibit one's loving devotion to the Lord; the offerings themselves are secondary. If one has not developed loving devotion to the Lord and simply offers many kinds of foodstuffs, fruits and flowers without real devotion, the offering will not be accepted by the Lord. We cannot bribe the Personality of Godhead. He is so great that our bribery has no value. Nor has He any scarcity; since He is full in Himself, what can we offer Him? Everything is produced by Him. We simply offer to show our love and gratitude to the Lord. This gratitude and love for God is exhibited by a pure devotee, who knows that the Lord lives in every living entity. As such, temple worship necessarily includes distribution of *prasāda*. It is not that one should create a temple in his private apartment or private room, offer something to the Lord, and then eat. Of course, that is better than simply cooking foodstuffs and eating without understanding one's relationship with the Supreme Lord; people who act in this manner are just like animals. But the devotee who wants to elevate himself to the higher level of understanding must know that the Lord is present in every living entity,



and, as stated in the previous verse, one should be compassionate to other living entities. A devotee should worship the Supreme Lord, be friendly to persons who are on the same level and be compassionate to the ignorant. One should exhibit his compassion for ignorant living entities by distributing *prasāda*. Distribution of *prasāda* to the ignorant masses of people is essential for persons who make offerings to the Personality of Godhead.

--Purport, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.29.24

The *arcā-mūrti* accepts only foodstuffs offered by bona fide devotees. The Absolute Godhead is always perfectly full in all respects, but He condescends to accept an offering of flowers, leaves, fruit or water if it is offered in transcendental loving service. If one is not hungry he is reluctant to accept even the most delicious and palatable dishes because in the absence of hunger nothing is pleasing to the taste. But if one is actually hungry he

may accept food which is not even palatable. God, however, being full in Himself, is both hungry and satisfied simultaneously. Although He is always satisfied, He becomes hungry when one offers food to Him with a fully devotional attitude of transcendental loving service. He then accepts the food for the sake of His servitor and again replaces it with His transcendental potency to influence the revival of the spiritual senses of everyone who partakes of the remnants of such *prasāda* (spiritualized food). Therefore, there is a gulf of difference between distribution of ordinary foodstuffs and distribution of spiritualized *prasāda*. By accepting and distributing the former, both the giver and the taker become subject to the laws of *karma*, whereas by accepting and distributing the latter, both the giver and taker transcend the laws of *karma*. To offer cooked or uncooked foodstuffs to the Deity is to perform *yajña* (sacrifice) as ordained in the *śāstras* (scriptures), but to cook or collect foodstuffs for one's own self is to put oneself under the severe laws of nature. By performing *yajñas* we can have foodstuffs in abundance from the storehouse of nature, but campaigns encouraging farmers to grow more food for our own use simply enrages nature, who then restricts the supply. Such campaigns for self-satisfaction are sure to aggravate scarcity in the world, in spite of all scientific assurances to the contrary.

--The Ecstasy of Madhavendra Puri (*Back to Godhead* magazine, 1973)

Dhruva Mahārāja, as an ideal king, practically emptied his treasury by giving charity. A king is not meant simply to realize taxes from the citizens and accumulate wealth to spend in sense gratification. World monarchy has failed ever since kings began to satisfy their personal senses with the taxes accumulated from the citizens. Of

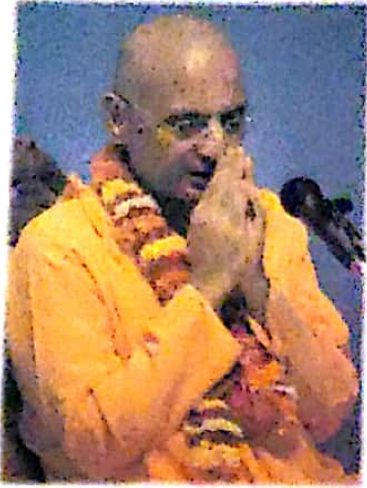
course, whether the system is monarchy or democracy, the same corruption is still going on. At the present moment there are different parties in the democratic government, but everyone is busy trying to keep his post or trying to keep his political party in power. The politicians have very little time to think of the welfare of the citizens, whom they oppress with heavy taxes in the form of income tax, sales tax and many other taxes. People sometimes have eighty to ninety percent of their income taken away, and these taxes are lavishly spent for the high salaries drawn by the officers and rulers. Formerly, the taxes accumulated from the citizens were

spent for performing great sacrifices as enjoined in the Vedic literature. At the present moment, however, almost all forms of sacrifice are not at all possible; therefore, it is recommended in the *śāstras* that people should perform *sankīrtana-yajña*. Any householder, regardless of his position, can perform this *sankīrtana-yajña* without expenditure. All the family members can sit down together and simply clap their hands and chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Somehow or other, everyone can manage to perform such a *yajña* and distribute *prasāda* to the people in general. That is

quite sufficient for this age of Kali. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is based on this principle: chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* at every moment, as much as possible, both inside and outside of the temples, and, as far as possible, distribute *prasāda*. this process can be accelerated with the cooperation of state administrators and those who are producing the country's wealth, simply by liberal distribution of *prasāda* and *sankīrtana*, the whole world can become peaceful and prosperous.

--Purport, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.12.10





Yours in the Service of Śrīla Prabhupāda

By Śrīla Prabhupāda's divine arrangements Ujjain has become my main place of involvement. Although I am not spending so much time here nowadays, undoubtedly this is where my main focus is. Here my ideas are taking shape and I am getting a chance to demonstrate what I actually want to do. As Śrīla Prabhupāda's representative, as a leader of ISKCON, I have to guide and train my followers, and Ujjain is the place where that is happening.

One of our main objectives is to produce ideal leaders for the human society. Although various individuals are assuming the roles of leaders all over the world, everyone can see that practically all of them are terrible disappointments. An ideal leader will not only bring true happiness and prosperity in the society but must also be able to guide his followers to the ultimate goal of life. That goal is to situate them in their spiritual identity by establishing their loving relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Until and unless that goal is achieved, mankind will not be happy and true prosperity will not prevail in the human society.

The spiritual reality is beyond our sense perception. Therefore, knowledge about that reality must be received from an authentic source. Originally that knowledge was given by Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Himself to the first created being in this universe, Brahmā. He in turn gave it to his disciple Nārada, and in this way this knowledge is flowing since time immemorial through a chain of disciplic succession. In the recent past His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, in that line of disciplic succession, distributed that transcendental knowledge all over the world, and in order to continue that distribution network he established the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. All the temples of ISKCON, all over the world, have only one objective distribute this pristine spiritual knowledge.

With that objective ISKCON has been established in Ujjain and it gives me great pleasure to see that the mission is being accomplished. About four years ago when we started our activities here we had a handful of participants but today thousands of local people have become actively involved. Many of them embraced Krishna Consciousness whole heartedly and are practicing the process with all sincerity.

Many youth are becoming involved. Some of them have become so enthusiastic about their involvement, that they want to give up their studies and want to join as full time devotees. However, I discourage them from doing that. It is better that they complete their studies and become responsible members of the society. Then they will set a very nice example for others to follow. And I tell the little ones that unless they do well in their studies and if their parents are not satisfied with their performances in school then I will forbid them from coming to the temple. Not that I mean it, but this warning bears a good result and they become serious about their studies also. And needless to say that their parents become pleased, not only with them but with us as well.

Bhakti Charu Swami

Eating Green

By Jāhnavi Harrison



If you ever watch TV, read a newspaper, or listen to the radio, chances are you'll have heard of the term "carbon footprint" by now. In our increasingly green conscious society, it's the buzzword of the minute, and refers to the impact human activities have on the environment.

Of course, most of us like to think that we do our bit for the planet, and advertisers have been quick to catch on to this. Today, everything from washing detergents to hybrid cars are sold with the promise of reducing the heavy impact of our daily activities. These slickly packaged claims can be pretty convincing, but how much do these little things actually help, and isn't there a simpler way?

The answer, according to



"Refusing meat is the single most effective thing you can do to reduce your carbon footprint."

Al Gore

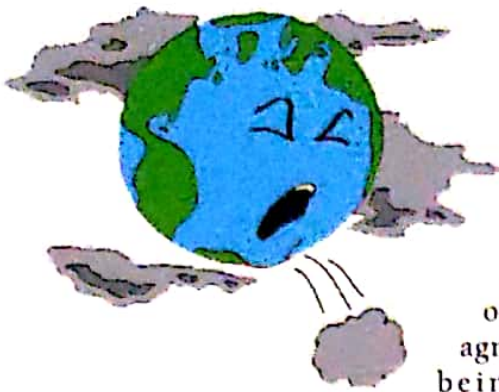
a huge number of environmentalists and those in the know, is a resounding yes. In the official handbook for the Live Earth concerts, organized by American politician, Al Gore, it is stated that, "refusing meat is the single most effective thing you can do to reduce your carbon footprint." They've even enlisted famous faces, such as Paul McCartney to promote this message. Of course, some might say that this is just another form of propaganda, but look past the high profile events and celebrity endorsements, and the statistics speak for themselves.

A 2006 United Nations report found that the meat industry produces more greenhouse gases than all the SUVs, Hummers, cars, trucks, planes and ships in the world combined. Here's an even simpler way of looking at it: eating 1lb of meat has the same effect on the planet as driving a Hummer 40 miles.



It's not just the air that is polluted either. The amount of manure produced by the meat industry is a problem that's near impossible to deal with. Even when a portion of it is used for fertilizer, the majority ends up dumped in fields and rivers, leaching excess minerals into the soil and upsetting the fragile balance of the earth's ecosystems.

Raising and feeding the livestock puts a major strain on the environment also. About 44% of all the grain in the world is used for animal feed. Therefore, most farm animals will, at any moment of their lives, have consumed more food-



energy or protein than they can ever deliver in the form of meat.

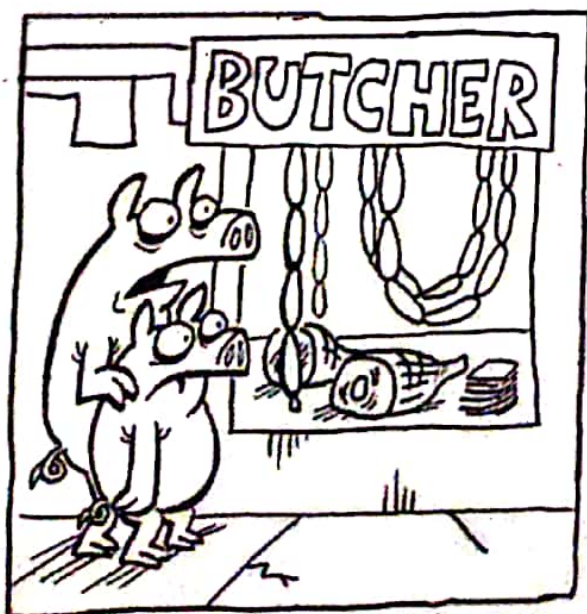
After reviewing the tens of millions

of acres of agricultural land being used for animal feed and

grazing in Europe, the European parliament commented last year that, "European farming is capable of feeding Europeans, but not their farm animals."

Even with all this land being used, it's still not enough to meet the demands of the commercial meat industry. Every year, large areas of forest throughout the world, are cleared, creating new grazing land, and ultimately often creating new areas of desert-like, infertile land, as a knock on effect of the deforestation.

This evidence is clear proof of the importance of vegetarianism. However, it's not just about the effect on the environment. Giving up meat is also recommended for its positive effects on our bodies and consciousness. If it's true that out of sight means out of mind, then it's no wonder we don't always make the connection between what we eat and how it influences our thoughts and actions. We buy nicely packaged meat off the shelf next to innocuous foods like cheese and Milk, but it is anything but innocuous.



"One day son, all this will be you.."

When an animal is slaughtered, its feelings of intense pain and fear experienced at death remain within its body, and these have an effect on those who consume this flesh later. As these feelings arise in us, it also becomes harder to feel compassion for others, whether animal or human. Ultimately, this lack of compassion can be found at the heart of many major world problems, as well as many difficulties within our day to day lives.

The legendary mathematician and philosopher of Ancient Greece, Pythagoras, stated "For as long as men massacre animals, they will kill each other. Indeed, he who sows the seed of murder and pain cannot reap joy and love." This message has been repeated by saints, philosophers and great thinkers throughout the centuries.



For as long as men massacre animals, they will kill each other. Indeed, he who sows the seed of murder and pain cannot reap joy and love.

—Pythagoras

Kṛṣṇa also tells us to only offer Him vegetarian foodstuffs, and devotees will never eat food not first offered to their Lord. By so doing the *Bhagavad-gītā* tells us that we will avoid the "great sinful reactions" that are otherwise incurred.

If we follow Kṛṣṇa's simple directions for our diet we will be healthier, happier and save our planet. 🌱

Jāhnavī Harrison is the daughter of H.G. Kṛpāmoya dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. She lives in London and has just graduated with BA in English Language and Creative Writing.

Guru Mahārāja at the United Nations Headquarters

By Chandraśekhara dāsa



living room. Guru Mahārāja sang sweetly as she sat with eyes closed, meditating on his voice. When Guru Mahārāja was preparing to take her leave, she reverentially offered each guest a meticulously gift-wrapped box of Hawaiian chocolates. Guru Mahārāja appreciated her kindness and sincerity.

The following day, in honour of "The 2009 United Nations International Year of Reconciliation and Culture of Peace," Guru Mahārāja spoke, along with co-guest Dr. Eileen Borris, in front of about two hundred guests. After politely listening to

By the expert arrangement of his disciple Śaraṇāgatī dāsī, Guru Mahārāja spoke for the second year in a row at the United Nations in New York this May.

The day before Guru Mahārāja's first speech, Audrey Kitagawa invited Guru Mahārāja and five of his disciples for lunch at her penthouse apartment in Manhattan. Mrs. Kitagawa, a friend of Śaraṇāgatī, is the Chair of the United Nations NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concern, as well as the Co-Vice Chair of the Council of the Parliament of World Religions. During the *prasāda* at her ornate dining table, holding her hands with great respect, she kindly asked each devotee to tell her his story of how he came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. She listened intently with heartfelt admiration. After the Italian meal, which Śrīvāsa dāsa had expertly cooked, Audrey asked Guru Mahārāja to lead a *kīrtana* in her

Dr. Borris' presentation on her book, *Finding Forgiveness*, Guru Mahārāja, in his usual gentlemanly manor, made several brief and sanguine points.

He delineated the three modes of material nature and their influence on our behaviour: For example, one person gets hit by a bicycle. If he is in the mode of ignorance he will start crying due to pain. If he is in passion he will grab the cyclist by his throat and start beating him up. However, if he is in goodness, he will brush the dust off his body and will tell the cyclist that everything is all right and that there is nothing to worry about. The audience was fascinated by this original angle of analysis, which they had never heard before. Guru Mahārāja then emphasized that a compassionate and forgiving attitude towards others, such as that exhibited by Jesus Christ while he was being crucified, can



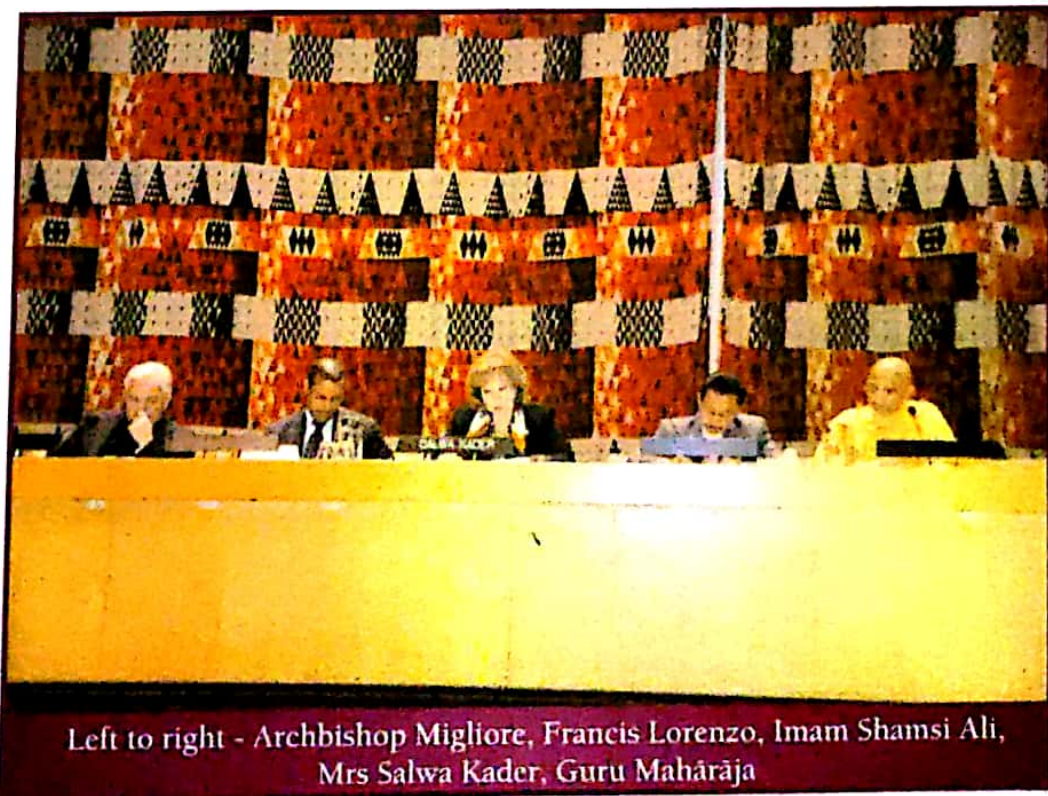
manifest when we ourselves are situated in spiritual knowledge. In order to assume the role of the elder brothers and guide people in general on a proper path, we ourselves have to become situated in the mode of goodness first; we have to become saintly and develop the qualities that will truly benefit the misdirected civilization of today. With no reservations, Guru Mahārāja ended by stressing the crucial importance of becoming connected to Kṛṣṇa: "In order to develop this universal brotherhood, we have to recognize our Supreme Father. It does not matter by which name we identify Him or call Him, but we have to recognize His presence and His affectionate influence in our lives. Then only can we develop our loving relationship with each other. Subsequently the divine qualities such as mercy, tolerance, compassion and forgiveness will become the natural ornaments of our noble characters. At that time we will be able to help this planet to become transformed into paradise."

Everyone applauded. Many individuals approached Guru Mahārāja to speak to him personally, asking him various questions. Several among them, including Dr. Borris, met Guru Mahārāja that same evening for a dinner reception at Priya Kṛṣṇa prabhu and Ambikā mataji's residence in Manhattan. There, in a more comfortable setting, they continuously listened to Guru Mahārāja's wise words for several more hours.

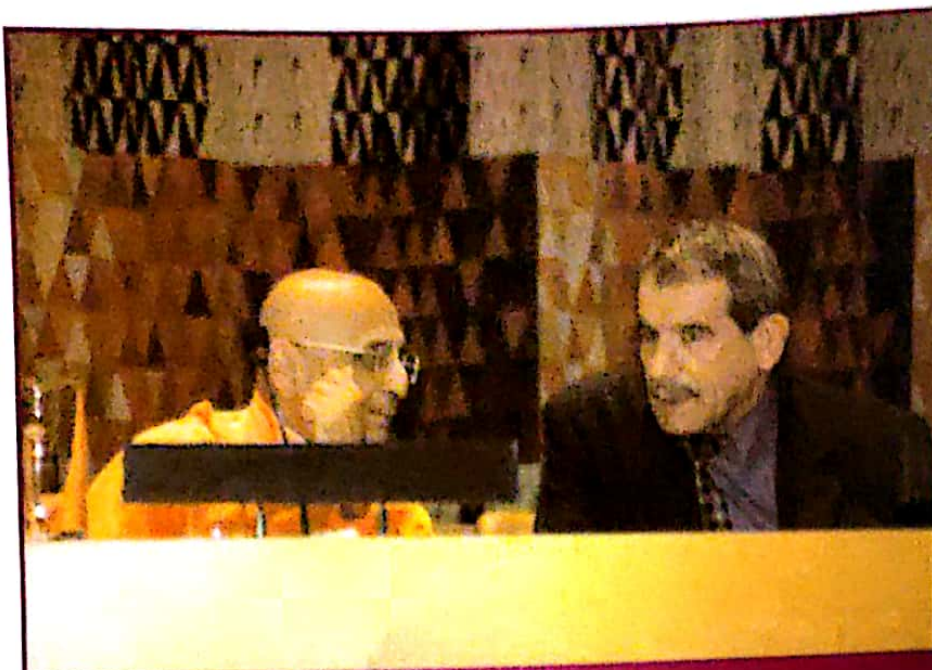
The following day, Guru Mahārāja spoke at the United Nations Economic & Social

Council (ECOSOC) Chamber. Sitting next to Guru Mahārāja were His Excellency Archbishop Celestino Migliore GCD, DD Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN (Vatican), and Imam Shamsi Ali, Imam at the Islamic Cultural Center of New York. After Francis Lorenzo, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic, introduced the three speakers, Mrs Salwa Kader, a fond admirer of Guru Mahārāja, who is also the president of the US Federation for Middle East Peace, introduced the topic to the audience: "Peace reconciliation." Guru Mahārāja spoke first. From the very beginning of his discourse, he addressed the universal commonalities in all religions as the key for cooperation.

"The purpose of my speech is to appeal to the religious leaders of the world to get together and sincerely consider how we can find the ultimate solution to all the problems of the world. At a time when so many atrocities are going on in the name of religion, it is extremely important that we try to find the similarities between different religious faiths instead of creating dissensions." Guru Mahārāja continued, "All religions accept two common concepts: they accept God and they show the way to develop our relationship with Him. When we stick to these two fundamental points, we can see that all the religions are actually striving to achieve the same goal. Due to the difference of name or identification, we tend to create differences regarding the same personality-God. In some language we call Him by a certain name, we then think "this is our God" and we become totally



Left to right - Archbishop Migliore, Francis Lorenzo, Imam Shamsi Ali, Mrs Salwa Kader, Guru Mahārāja



Guru Maharaj with Mr. Kader,
Head of the UN Military Mission for Peace

presence of the spirit soul is what makes the body alive and conscious." Guru Maharaja stressed, "The soul is not a product of some chemical combination. The soul comes from another world, another reality, the spiritual reality. In that spiritual reality there is a Supreme Personality who is the predominating factor, who is the cause of creation, and who maintains everything. He is doing this in an inconceivable way; that is God." In conclusion, Guru Maharaja once again emphasized the crucial need for all religious leaders to concentrate on a shared aim in order to unite and make a better world.

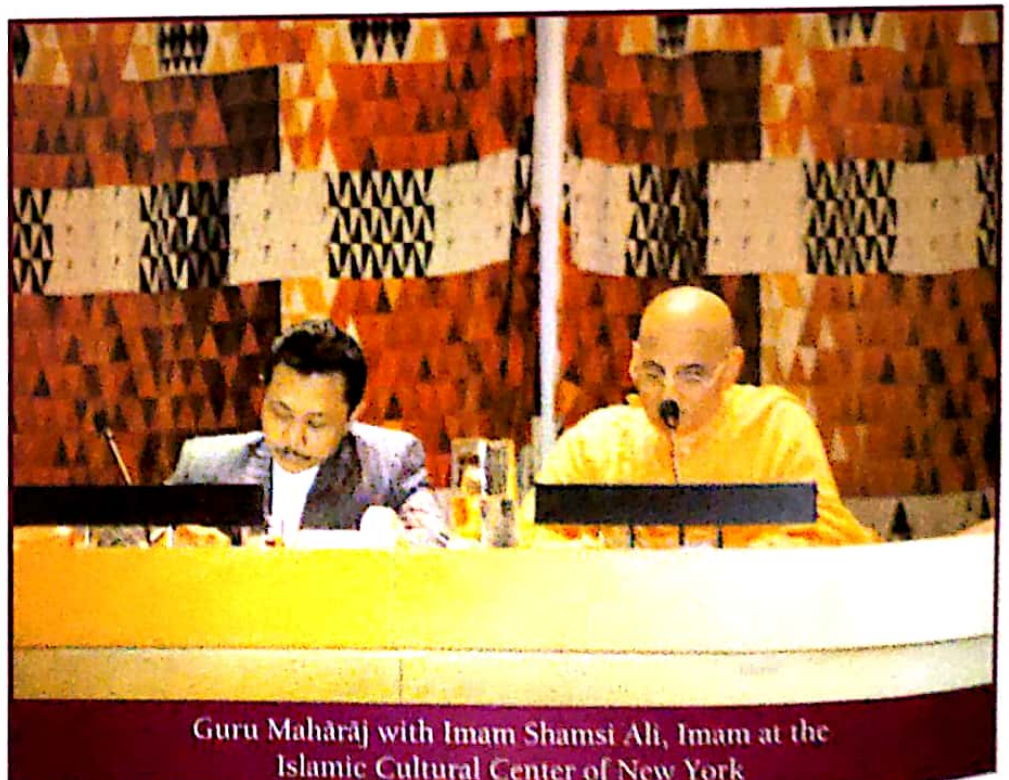
"The need to establish our relationship with God is the essential factor of all

intolerant about others' beliefs and others' approach towards Him. But the real fact is that He is one. He is our father, He is our dear-most friend, and at the same time He is the supreme proprietor and supreme controller." Guru Maharaja continued to stress a scientific, reasonable and non-sectarian approach to the problem: "Let us make a common sense approach. I say common sense approach because the intelligent class of people want a rational and tangible understanding of certain beliefs and faiths. Religion is not just a belief or a faith; it is reality, it is the actual method of approaching the spiritual reality. Religion is the means to understand God. All religions are actually a science of understanding that reality beyond our sense perception."

As the audience listened attentively, Guru Maharaja focused in on the fundamental teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness:

"In this room around us we can see that there are so many different objects--they are all inert. But you and I are living, conscious beings. Our functioning is completely different from the way inert matter functions. So let's start from here: what makes us function in such a way? The

religions. Therefore while we are thinking of establishing peace in this world, I personally think that it is extremely important that we--the ones who have taken the religious path, and those who are trying to educate others--get together and discuss amongst ourselves about our commonality and similarity, forget about our differences and try to educate the world about the similarity of all different religions. Then at least the atrocities that are going on today in the name of religion will be stopped. Thank you very much."



Guru Maharaj with Imam Shamsi Ali, Imam at the
Islamic Cultural Center of New York

As on the previous day, after the event, several guests and admirers, including Mr. and Mrs Kader, met Guru Mahārāja at the residence of Priya Kṛṣṇa prabhu. For several hours, again, Guru Mahārāja charmed them and preached to them, winning over their hearts.

In retrospect, Guru Mahārāja commented, "Establishing relationships with these people is the most important consideration."



At present there are hundreds and thousands of flags flapping in the United Nations, but during the time of Vidura there was, by the grace of Ajita, Lord Kṛṣṇa, only one flag. The nations of the world are very eager to again have one state under one flag, but for this they must seek the favor of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who alone can help us become one worldwide nation. Purport Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.1.20

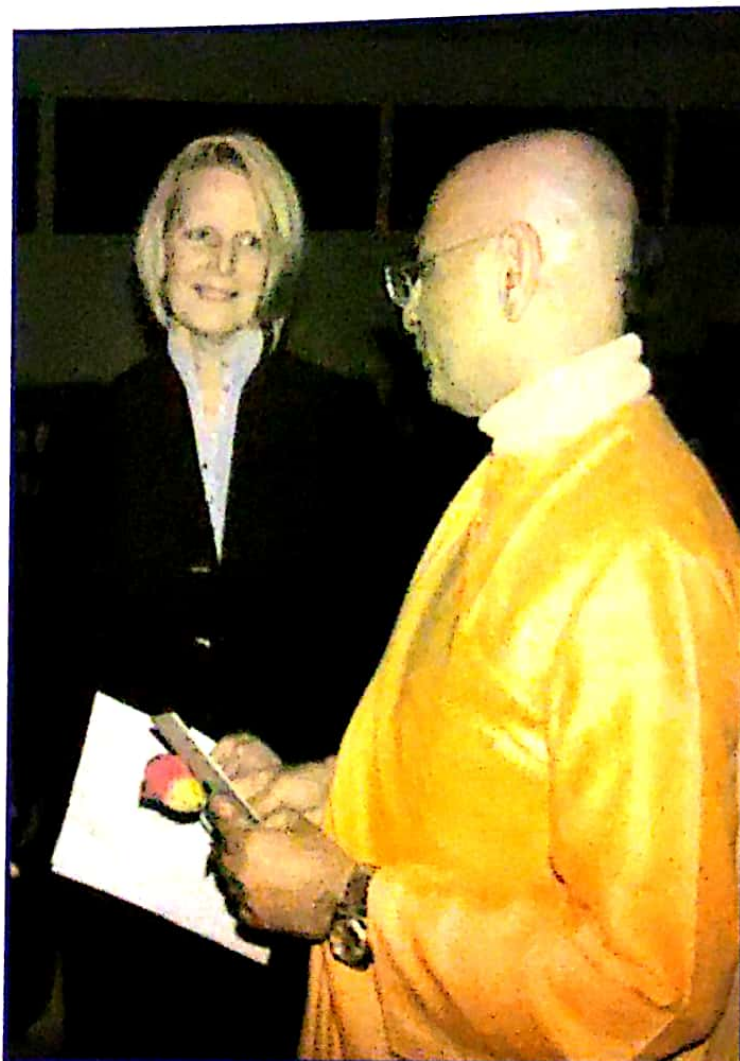


Reflections in the Light of the Master

By Śaraṇāgatī devī dāśī

It is important for a disciple or any follower to reflect upon and offer thanks for all that the spiritual master has given one; most importantly for the opportunity to be liberated from the cycle of samsāra (birth and death) and return to Kṛṣṇa's abode. Hopefully one day I will become sincere and offer service in a way that will be pleasing to my dear Guru Mahārāja's heart. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda will certainly be happy and take me and His devotees back to Godhead.

I would like to share a few reflections, shared by several of those, who interacted with Guru Mahārāja for the first time, during his visit to America in April and May 2009.



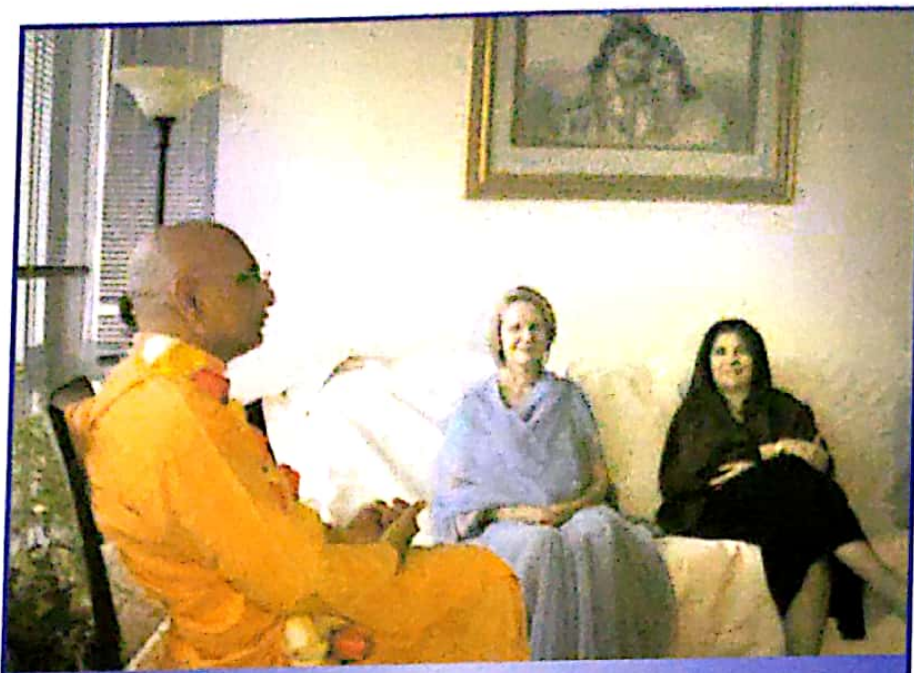
Jennifer Gerber, a school teacher, was so happy to have had the opportunity to meet Mahārāja at the Towaco Temple in New Jersey. She felt very much at home there, as she had once felt, while visiting Gītā-Nāgarī Farm. She asked me to thank Guru Mahārāja for so graciously inviting her into his aura. She felt it was a great blessing. Jennifer then shared with me that Guru Mahārāja looks like an ordinary man from the outside but is very far from ordinary. Just being with him for a short time shifted

her consciousness and she called me several times to discuss her experience. Besides this she wrote a thank you note saying, "I am changed." She couldn't thank me enough for inviting her and for the opportunity to be with Guru Mahārāja. She had heard about our Manhattan Temple; though it was small, it was the first ISKCON Temple established by Śrīla Prabhupāda in New York, and so had very high spiritual vibrations. She hoped to visit it and attend a kīrtana there.

Audrey Kitagawa, Chair of the NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns-New York, hosted a luncheon for Guru

Mahārāja and some devotees. She said, "Those who chant the holy names of God are blessed. And those who completely devote themselves to the love of God should be supported and offered the utmost of respect."

Krista Claudene Retto, a business strategist and designer, explained to me that she was an atheist. But something in her wanted to say, "Thank you," because she was very touched within, by her meeting with Guru Mahārāja.



Guru Mahārāja, Saraṇāgatī devī dasī, Dr Eileen Borris

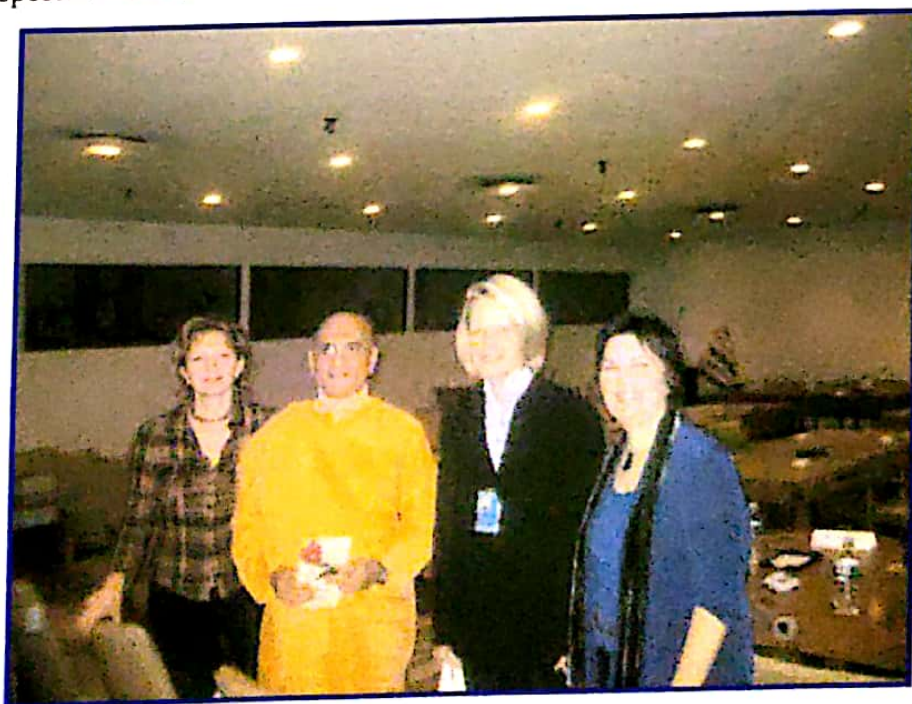
Dr. Eileen Borris, author of *Finding Forgiveness*, changed dramatically from the role of a speaker during the Forgiveness Panel Discussion at the UN, to a receptive listener of Guru Mahārāja during the evening reception following the event. It was heartwarming hearing her thoughts during the ECOSOC discussions. While we were sitting next to each other, Dr. Borris asked to receive as many as lectures as possible on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and wanted to know everything about loving God and the soul, which were some of the topics Guru Mahārāja spoke about during his speech. She also told me she is planning to visit Ujjain during her next trip to India.

Karen Larson, a UN staff member, shared, "It touches me, that you have invited such a person, such as H. H. Bhakti Charu Swami, several times to the United Nations. I noticed on your website about the project he is working on in India. I hope to visit there some day. My four year old son saves pennies in his piggy bank. He is already learning about saving money for good will projects. I hope we can support this work in Ujjain in some way." I felt so happy hearing her words; It is amazing to see someone light a spark that becomes a flame, to watch people become inspired by someone who really cares.

Bernice Cousins, a retired employee in the Arts Education Department of the Museum of Modern Art, mentioned that meeting H. H. Bhakti Charu Swami was like a nourishing nectar, "I was able to attend both events where he gave presentations and both were especially important because of what he had to say."

Guru Mahārāja's visit to the United Nations was an incredible experience: Attending the event in the ECOSOC Chamber, where long lasting decisions are made and actions are decided upon, I heard a woman leading the discussion on the essence of the divine feminine. On one side of her was a respected and well known Archbishop, a representative from the Holy Sea to the UN, and on the other side was a

Representative from the Muslim faith. It was a modern day miracle listening to Guru Mahārāja talking about loving God in such a way. The contents of his message were extremely important. These were precious moments of a spiritual happening. There we were, in the ECOSOC Chamber, talking about the peacekeeping force and about God. All this on 46th Street in New York, at the United Nations! It was like finding gems in a mine shaft. I really had to pinch my self to know that it was true. 🌸



South African Retreat, 2009

By Ārati devī dāśī



Nestled in the majestic Drakensberg mountain range in Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa, lies the large up-market holiday resort, Mont Aux Sources--usually the setting for lazy family vacations or corporate team building weekends, this time transformed into a spiritual paradise. Stressed corporate executives come here to de-stress but leave more stressed than ever after their team building programmes fail to unify their employees. They devise all sorts of silly mental games to boost the morale and team spirit of their employees, but to no avail. All the devotees did, was throw their arms in the air and sing and dance: Team built, morale in Goloka Vrndāvana, instantly!

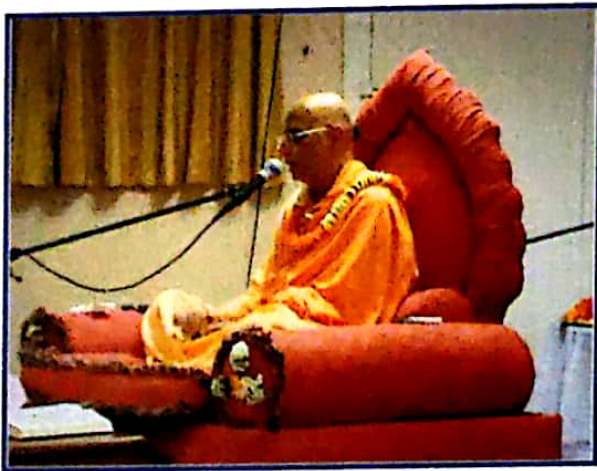
The first South African retreat with his Holiness Bhakti Charu Mahārāja was attended by about 220 devotees, the largest retreat attendance to date. Due to ill health Guru Mahārāja decided to hold spiritual retreats in places that would be easily accessible for many devotees, as well as cutting down on his intense travelling schedule. Guru Mahārāja expertly and mercifully used the retreats to recharge our Kṛṣṇa conscious batteries that run on empty so often. After the success of the

retreats held in Switzerland and the USA in 2008, South African devotees jumped at the opportunity to have Gurudeva's sweet and intimate association.

Arriving at the resort, we were met by smiling and eager devotees, the efficient and friendly retreat organizers and a divine lunch. One delicious meal followed the other. We were greatly fortunate that the resort management allowed our expert cooking team to take over their kitchens for the duration of our stay there. After lunch, room allocation and a quick shower, everyone was waiting in sweet anticipation for the first session with Guru Mahārāja. On the first night Gurudeva introduced the Śrīla Prabhupāda *kathā* evenings. Every evening the devotees had the opportunity to offer their heartfelt appreciation to Śrīla Prabhupāda: To relate how Prabhupāda had personally affected them, if they derived any special spiritual benefits, if they had any unusual experiences with Śrīla Prabhupāda in dreams or during difficult times, and finally tell how Śrīla Prabhupāda had saved them from material neo science. Sometimes the offerings were sad, sometimes humorous, but always very touching.

At times during the retreat it seemed as if Guru Mahārāja had inexhaustible energy. He patiently sat and listened to everyone's realizations. Apart from that, he also presented *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* classes, two seminars every day, attended to his usual duties, as well as give *darśana* to devotees, while kindly listening to their tales of woe, their spiritual and material difficulties and always ready to reach out to them and touch their hearts. Only towards the end of the retreat did he reveal that he was recovering from jaundice, a disease that exhausts the body tremendously.

Opulently dressed in beautiful garments and jewelry, the presiding Deities of the retreat, Śrī Śrī Jagannātha, Baladeva and Subhadrā Mahārānī, Their radiant smiles beaming, received *maṅgala-ārati* and *darśana-ārati* every day. The altar was made from lengths of brilliantly coloured cloth, changed daily and pleated and draped in the most amazing way; truly a work of art.



The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* classes were taken from the 3rd Canto, where Lord Kapiladeva instructs His mother, Devahūti in the science of self realization and service to the *sādhus*. Gurudeva explained that Devahūti was a wonderful mother and asked such profound questions to Lord Kapiladeva: "Devotional service is so powerful that we don't have to strive separately for austerity. Devotional service means surrendering to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. All other processes should eventually lead to *bhakti*. Knowledge and renunciation are essential for spiritual realization, but a person in love with Kṛṣṇa does not need them. These qualities will automatically follow. We should not give up the objects of our love whimsically but we should engage them in the service of Kṛṣṇa." Gurudeva further explained, "If we are to serve the *sādhus*, we should know who is actually a saintly person. People often fail to recognize a saintly person because Kali-yuga is the age of cheaters and the cheated. We should recognize a *sādhu* by his behavior

and not by his dress. Yet, it is difficult for us to recognize a real *sādhu* because of our envy. Our *anarthas* and material attachments prevent us from seeing a pure devotee. We have to purify our own hearts. We must develop attachment to *sādhus* and engage in the service of Kṛṣṇa. The result is that the heart will become peaceful and from that state of tranquility we will develop ecstasy, bliss and joy."



The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* classes tied perfectly to the *Bhagavad-gītā* seminars. Through both classes we came to the conclusion that devotional service is the ultimate goal of life. Guru Mahārāja started each *Bhagavad-gītā* class by singing a few stanzas of *Sāragrāhi Vaiṣṇava*. Afterwards he explained the finer points of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura's powerful poetry. The theme of the morning seminar was: *Scientific understanding of spiritual reality in the light of the Bhagavad-gītā*. Guru Mahārāja's final instructions to us were: "Make it a point to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Remain in good association. The devotees will inspire you. Chant regularly and take proper care in the pronunciation of the Holy Name."

Another highlight of the retreat was the re-enactment of Lord Kṛṣṇa's boat pastime



at a picturesque, little lake near the resort. Devotees walked the short distance in pouring rain and ecstatic *kīrtana*. The rain stopped just long enough for devotees to enjoy the Lord's boating fun.

An informal afternoon spent in the company of Guru Mahārāja, who shared with us his pastimes with Śrīla Prabhupāda, as well as anecdotes from his early years in ISKCON, was the perfect end to the highly successful and spiritually surcharged retreat. We all felt so privileged to be able to spend this sweet and spiritually rejuvenating time with Gurudeva. ❀

Guru Upadeśa

ISKCON--Prabhupāda's International Āśrama

By H. H. Bhakti Charu Swami



In the past, before Caitanya Mahāprabhu's appearance, *mantras* were kept secret. *Mantras* were given by the spiritual master to the qualified disciple in a secret way. The guru would whisper the *mantra* into the disciples' ears three times and the disciple would memorize it. Just by hearing the *mantra* he would receive the *mantra*. Since *mantras* were kept a secret one had to get initiation in order to receive the *mantra*. There was no other way of receiving the *mantra*. But Caitanya Mahāprabhu made the *mahā-mantra* public. He gave the *mahā-mantra* to anyone and everyone irrespective of their qualification. So now there is no need to receive this *mantra* through the process of initiation because it is not secret anymore. In Caitanya-caritāmṛta it is described that the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* doesn't depend on the formality of initiation and the process of purification. Just by coming in contact with the tip of the tongue, this *mantra* can deliver even a *caṇḍāla*, the lowest of mankind. Although Caitanya-caritāmṛta is saying there is no need for *dikṣā* and *puraścaryā*, but still we find Śrīla Prabhupāda instituted this process of initiation in ISKCON. Not only Śrīla Prabhupāda but Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura also instituted the process of initiation. Jīva Goswami also mentioned that although the holy name doesn't require the formality of *dikṣā*, still *dikṣā* is necessary. At the time of initiation the disciple surrenders himself unto Kṛṣṇa and at that time Kṛṣṇa accepts him. So for the sake of surrender, formal official surrender, *dikṣā* is necessary. *Dikṣā* is the process through which one actually surrenders to Kṛṣṇa through the agency and via medium of the representative of Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual master.

Spiritual life means surrender. In Bhagavad-gītā Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*: we must surrender unto Him. Caitanya Mahāprabhu teaches the process of *śaraṇāgati*. This surrender is the life and soul of devotional practice. Without surrender there cannot be spiritual life. Material life means independence. And to sacrifice that independence is surrender. If we want to transcend the material platform and embark onto the spiritual platform then the process is surrender. If you do not surrender you will remain in the material platform. That is why surrender is so important. It is difficult to surrender. In order to surrender there is a need for formalizing the process of surrender and declaring, "Yes I am going to completely surrender

myself now." That is the purpose and need for initiation. That is why Śrīla Prabhupāda instituted and formalized this process of initiation.

In earlier times spiritual masters would have individual *āśramas* to train their disciples, but *ācāryas* like Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda considered that in order to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world there needs to be an institution and governing body. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda established ISKCON. ISKCON is Śrīla Prabhupāda's *āśrama*. Śrīla Prabhupāda created this international *āśrama*. Generally the guru has an *āśrama* and he hands over the authority of the *āśrama* to one disciple. He appoints a successor. But Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't do that in ISKCON. Actually no one was qualified to be the successor of Śrīla Prabhupāda in an *āśrama* as large and extensive as ISKCON. Had it been a smaller *āśrama* then probably it would have been alright. But this is an *āśrama* that has spread all over the world. Only Prabhupāda could create and maintain such an *āśrama*. But for any other single individual to be able to maintain such an *āśrama* would be absolutely impossible. That is why Prabhupāda was so emphatic that no one individual should be appointed as his successor. Rather Prabhupāda wanted us to manage the society collectively through the Governing Body. Prabhupāda has created the authority structure for ISKCON. This is Śrīla Prabhupāda's creation. The line of authority is that Śrīla Prabhupāda is the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON. Śrīla Prabhupāda is unifying all of us in ISKCON. Śrīla Prabhupāda, though very humble about his preaching activities, was emphatic that his position as the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON was clearly established.

Where does our ultimate loyalty lie? It lies with Śrīla Prabhupāda. In the line of authority, next to Śrīla Prabhupāda is the GBC body. Then there is the Zonal GBC member. Every zone has a GBC member who is the zonal secretary. So we should be loyal to the GBC body and to the GBC member. And then there is the temple unit and in the temple the person in charge is the temple president and the temple council or temple management committee. In this way we have the line of authority established by Śrīla Prabhupāda. We must show our surrender to ISKCON by giving our obedience and loyalty to this authority structure created by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The Mid Day Meal Project An Update

By Kṛṣṇarcana dāsa



In the Bhagavad-gītā (2.65), Lord Kṛṣṇa says,

*prasāde sarva-duḥkhānām
hānir asyopajāyate
prasanna-cetaso hy āśu
buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate*

"For one who receives the mercy of Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa prasāda), the threefold miseries of material existence exist no longer; in such satisfied consciousness, one's intelligence is soon well established."



"You are what you eat," is a well known saying. What one eats affects the consciousness of an individual. *Prasāda* is Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Just by eating it we can receive His mercy and purify our consciousness.

Although India is actually a very rich country, abundant with gifts from nature, due to an uneven distribution of wealth a large section of the population lives below the poverty level. This poverty stricken condition prevents children from growing up in a healthy way. Due to a scarcity of food they are forced to become victims even at a tender age when they should have been blossoming into valuable assets for the nation, receiving due preparation and proper education. In the recent past, some parts of India have seen enormous prosperity in the industrial and commercial sectors. In the world scenario, India is considered to be one of the most progressive nations today. However, this

forward march has not benefited the poverty stricken masses. The Indian government has recently been trying to address this anomaly in various ways. One such endeavour is the introduction of a brilliant idea to entice children into schools by giving them food. This programme is called the Midday Meal Project.

In 2006, after the grand inauguration of the Rādhā Madan-Mohan Mandir in Ujjain, the local political leaders of Madhya Pradesh requested ISKCON to take up the government's Midday Meal Project. ISKCON enthusiastically accepted that proposal and built a purpose built structure costing \$300,000 to include the kitchen, equipment and vehicles. The MDM building is not just an ordinary kitchen: The structure is made of steel and glass to give it the appearance of a corporate building rather than a massive kitchen.



From Left: Guru Mahārāja, Mr. Rupa Pamnani (Chief of MP Cultural Cell), Mr. Paras Jain (Minister of Food Supply MP), Mr. Mohan Yadav (Chairman of UDA), Mr. Rameshwar Gupta (Commissioner of Municipal Corporation)

The project began by feeding 20,000 children a day. The first big challenge was to serve *chapattis* to all these children on a daily basis. The regular quota of providing three *chapattis* per head would mean making 60,000 *chapattis* per day. Bhakti Charu Swami decided to overcome this by importing a *chapatti*-making machine from Lebanon. However, just when

he was about to place the order for the machine, paying 50% in advance, Israel started to bomb Lebanon. He decided not to take this risk. The project was therefore delayed by a few months. Finally on 7 July 2007 the Midday Meal Project was started.

The government gives 100g of wheat and Rs2.50 per child. However, to provide a balanced meal, consisting of two vegetables, rice and *dahl*, the cost is Rs5 per plate. ISKCON therefore has to compensate for the deficit.

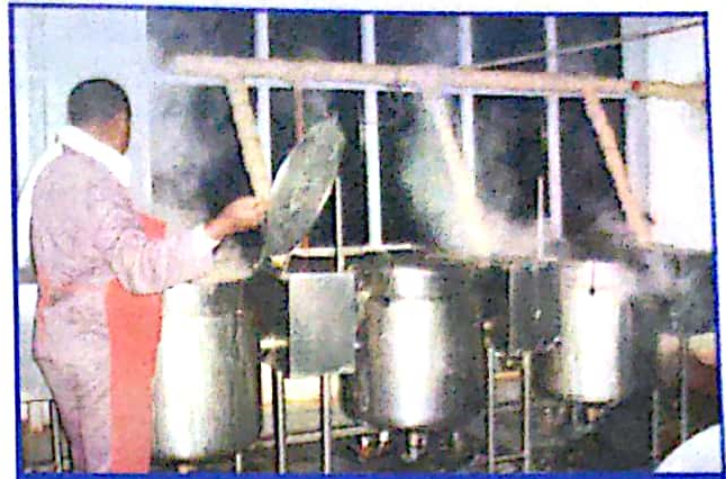
Inside the kitchen are various industrial machines to produce the huge quantities of food required. The wheat that comes from the government needs thorough cleaning and sorting. We therefore have a computerized wheat-shifting machine that separates the stone chips and other impurities from the wheat. The best grains are sent down a piping arrangement where the wheat is converted into flour. The *chapatti*-dough making machine prepares dough when given appropriate amounts of water and flour. The dough then enters the *chapatti*-making machine which makes 10,000 *chapattis* in an hour. There are also steam-run pressure vessels to prepare *subjis* and *dahl*, which can make 100 litres of *dahl* at a time.



Delivery Vans: Eight Vans, distribute lunch to 30,000 school children in 170 schools

Operations in the kitchen start very early in the morning. Fresh vegetables are purchased from the market and then washed, sorted and cut. The rice, *dahl* and *subji* are cooked in the huge steam jackets. When all the preparations are ready they are packed and sealed into one thousand stainless steel containers, to be loaded into transport vans. Eight trucks, painted with bright coloured murals of Kṛṣṇa enjoying lunch with the cowherd boys of Vṛndāvana, deliver the food to various schools in Ujjain. The vans arrive at noon. The *prasāda* is received by a teacher and served to the children by staff employees.

We now provide nutritious meals to 30,000 children and have just begun feeding 20,000 children in the nearby town of Devas. Even children from rich families are now going to government schools attracted by our Midday Meal Project. The Honorable Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Sri Shivraj Singh Chowhan, visited the project and was highly impressed with the efforts of ISKCON. The District Collector of Ujjain, the Commissioner of the Ujjain Development Authority and the Ujjain MP, Sri



Steam Jacket, prepares 100 liters of dhal at a time

Paras Jain, not only appreciated the project but also stood by us in support of our activities. The local community, children, teachers and government officials are all very appreciative of this noble effort on the part of ISKCON to help under-privileged children.



Chapatti Making Mechine, makes 10,000 chapattis in an hour

Vrinda's Divine Cuisine

Inauguration Ceremony at Indore, 2009

By Nāyikā devī dāśī



On 16th March 2009, a new restaurant, Vrinda's Divine Cuisine, was opened by Guru Mahārāja in Indore. The restaurant is situated in Vijayanagar, one of the most prestigious districts in Indore.

Mr. Pradeep Bhargava and his wife Dr Sujata offered their house in Indore in the service of Kṛṣṇa. It was a residential house and so could not be used for commercial activities. But due to their influence, in just two days, they got permission from the Municipal authorities to turn the house into a restaurant. Plans were quickly drawn up and the interior walls were broken to create adequate space.

Three days before the inauguration,



One of the ornate stained-glass window inside the Restaurant.

there was much to prepare for the opening. In fact, work was still going on in full swing. Workers were still painting, doors remained unfixed, tables and chairs stood unpacked and the floors looked dirty. Gradually, however, everything took shape. The *brahmacāris* headed by Gangā Nārāyaṇa prabhu, enthusiastically washed the floors and set up the tables, working quickly and cooperatively.

Inside there are two floors: each has a big, bright hall. On the first floor the main attraction are the seven beautifully painted, large stained-glass windows. The images were personally chosen by Guru Maharaja and later realized by Shyāmāṅgī Rādhikā mātājī and Amala bhakta prabhu. A number of split air conditioners were especially installed to keep the atmosphere cool. Outside, from the street, the view of the restaurant is very attractive, enhanced by carefully chosen lighting which focuses one's attention on the image of Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd boyfriends taking *prasāda*. I was deeply touched in my heart seeing how Guru Mahārāja had considered every detail: furniture, decor, dishes, the menu and even the attendants' outfits.



Mukunda priya dāsa gave up his business and moved to Ujjain with his family, because he felt the spiritual atmosphere of Ujjain is very conducive. In Bombay I saw a location for a restaurant in a new shopping mall. I told Mukesh Babu, it would be wonderful to have a restaurant there. The next thing I know, Mukesh bought the place for 1 crore rupees. Chirañjiva and Anshul created the menu for the restaurant. Actually so many devotees have helped."

At precisely 7 pm the doors to the new Vrinda's Divine Cuisine restaurant opened. Everything looked perfect. Guru Maharaja, surrounded by devotees, started a sweet *kīrtana* in front of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Everyone looked very happy, especially Guru Mahārāja. Many guests arrived and Guru Mahārāja welcomed each of them with a friendly smile. After the *kīrtana* Guru Mahārāja introduced everyone who had helped with project, and expressed his gratitude to them: "Mr Pradeep Bhargava and his wife Dr Sujata were very happy to offer their house in the service of Kṛṣṇa. Mrs Priti Nutha did the architectural design. Murāri dāsa has been working for weeks, neglecting his business and family to help us.

In conclusion Guru Mahārāja said: "We are starting Vrinda's Divine Cuisine because Vrinda is the care-taker of the forest of Vṛndāvana, the place of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Today we want to give you all a very hearty invitation to come here and have Kṛṣṇa's *prasāda*. Please make this place your home. We will always welcome you whenever you come. Not many people are interested in coming to the Temple. We have seen in Ujjain how our restaurant is more famous then our Temple because people are more interested in eating then taking *darśana* of the Lord. But Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is all-merciful. He always goes out of His way to bestow His mercy on the living entities. The conditioned souls in the

age of Kali however, are not interested in receiving Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Therefore we have to make arrangements so people can receive His mercy, because without receiving His mercy life is meaningless. When one receives Kṛṣṇa's mercy, not only does one's life become meaningful, it becomes absolutely successful."

Many visitors are now coming daily to the new Vrinda's Divine Cuisine restaurant, appreciating the warm, spiritual atmosphere whilst relishing the delicious *prasādam*.

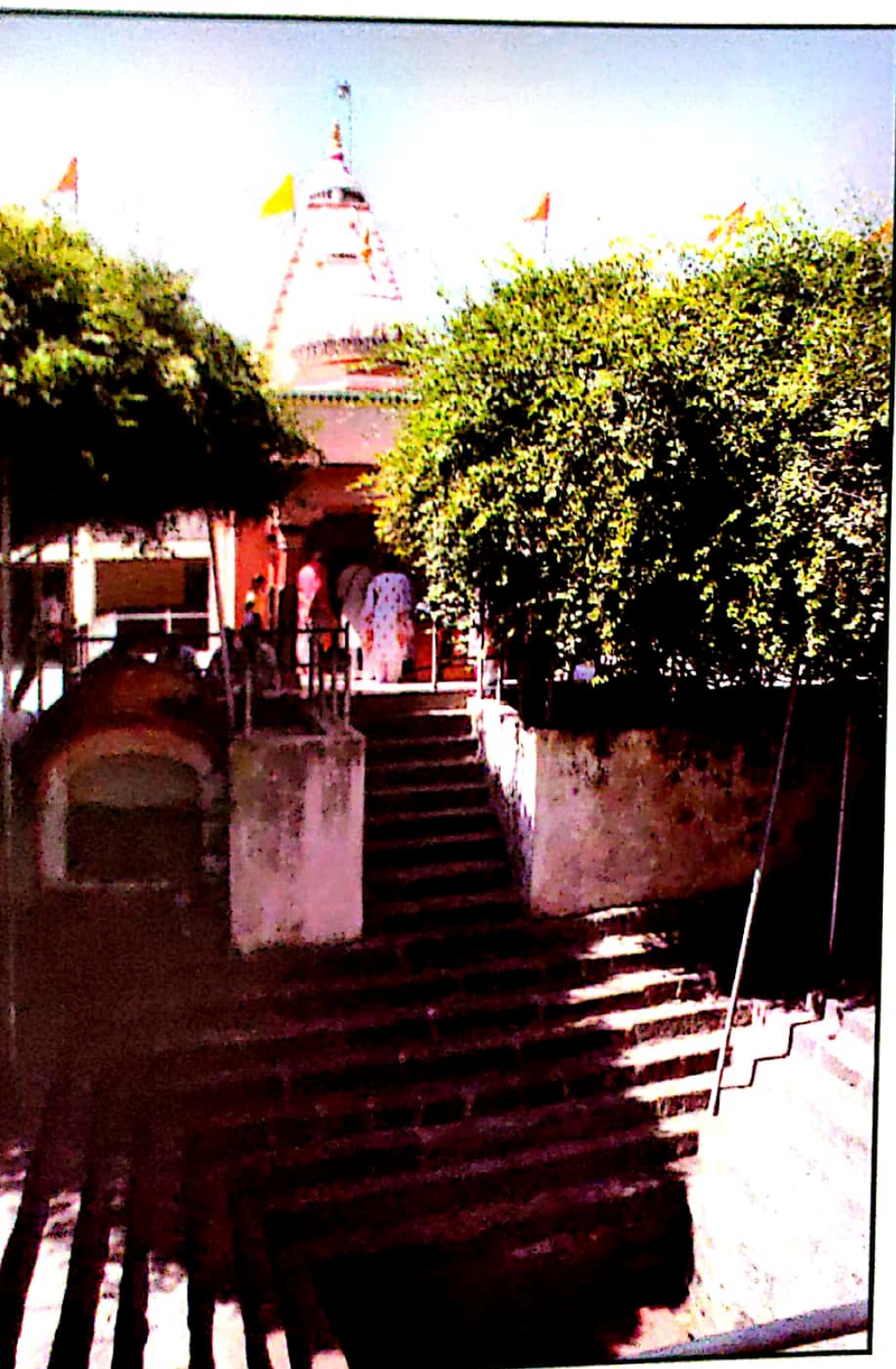






Nārāyaṇa Village

By Rāghava paṇḍit dāsa



*tuṣṭo 'ham bho dvija-śreṣṭhāḥ
satyāḥ santu manorathāḥ
chandāṁsy ayāta-yāmāni
bhavantv iha paratra ca*

“You boys are first class brāhmaṇas, and I am satisfied with you. May all your desires be fulfilled, and may the Vedic mantras you have learned never lose their meaning for you, in this world or the next.”
(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.80.42)

Nārāyaṇa village, only 31 km away from Ujjain, is an important sacred place for it is here that Sāṇḍīpaṇi Muni gave his blessings to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Sudama brāhmaṇa for their gurukula services. This place is also significant for the special pastime Śrī Kṛṣṇa enacted with His gurukula friend and devotee, Sudama brāhmaṇa, which is described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.80): Sudama vipra was learned, peaceful and self controlled, but he lived in great poverty. On the request of his wife he went to ask charity from Kṛṣṇa in Dvarka. Though he felt reluctant to approach the Lord for help, he was nevertheless happy thinking he would have the chance to meet Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which is the highest perfection of one's life.



that his teeth were making this sound. Because of this lie, all his life Sudama suffered from poverty.

Nowadays Nārāyaṇa is a small peaceful village. There is one *kunda* there named Dāmodara Kunda, which was manifested by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to quench Sudama's thirst. There are also two very beautiful sets of bushes which appeared from the logs of dry wood that Kṛṣṇa and Sudama collected for firewood. One bush manifested

When Sudama and Śrī Kṛṣṇa met, they both remembered the days they passed in the *gurukula* of Sāṇḍīpani Muni. One day their Gurumātā sent them to fetch firewood for the *āśrama*. After they had entered the vast forest an unseasonal storm arose, with fierce wind, rain and harsh thunder. After some time they lost their way and as night fell they were forced to stay in the dangerous forest. The next day when their Gurudeva came there searching for them, he bestowed his special blessings to them. At this place Sāṇḍīpani Muni uttered, "Nārāyaṇa Nārāyaṇa" and therefore this place has become famous as Nārāyaṇa village.

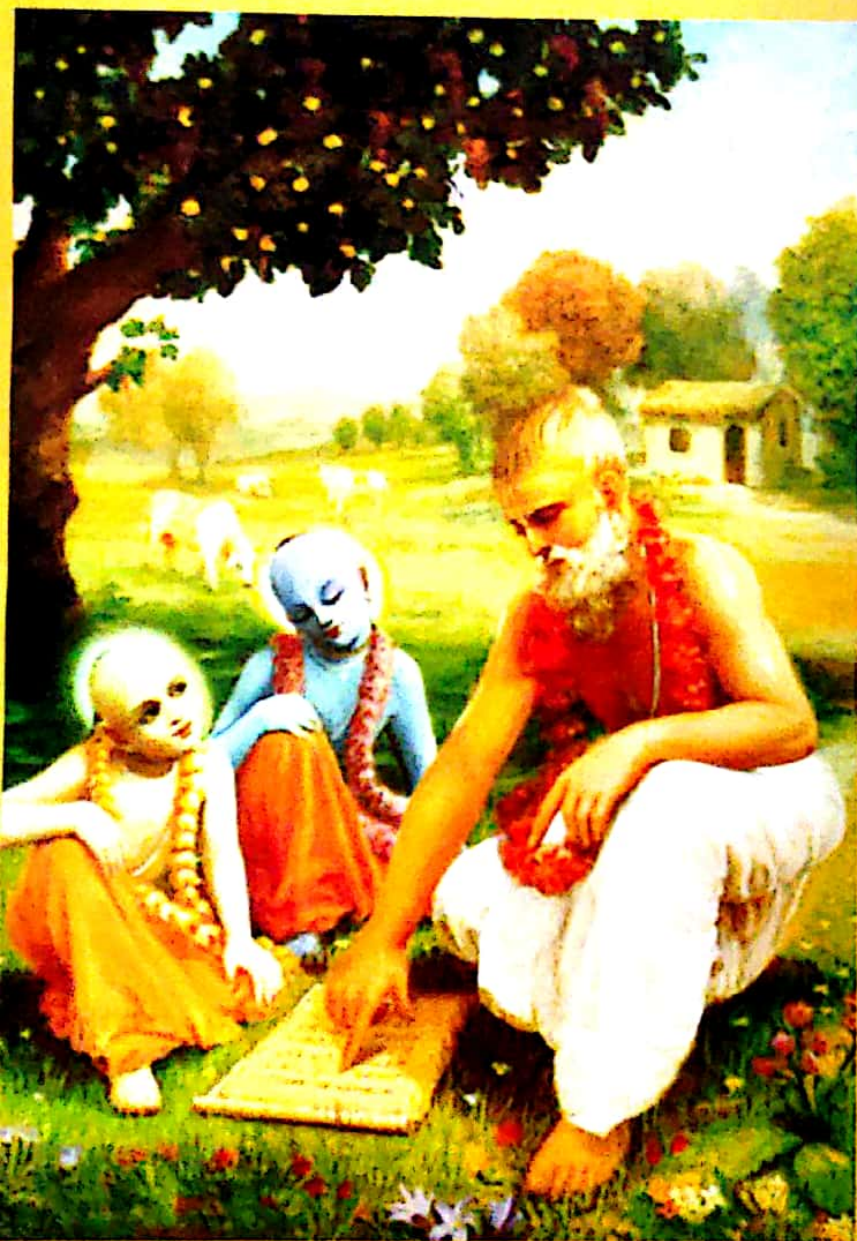
There is another story connected to this pastime of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Sudama in Nārāyaṇa; When Gurumātā told Kṛṣṇa and Sudama to fetch firewood for the *āśrama*, she also gave them *chana*, (grains) to eat if they felt hungry. When the storm arose Kṛṣṇa held Sudama's hand and took him to a safe place under a tree. Kṛṣṇa sat in the tree and Sudama sat underneath the tree. Now Sudama felt hungry and so he started to eat the *chana* given by their Gurumātā. After finishing his parcel he also ate Kṛṣṇa's portion. While eating the *chana*, Sudama was making a sound 'kat-kat-kat.' When Kṛṣṇa asked Sudama about the sound, Sudama lied saying it was because of the cold



from the wood Kṛṣṇa collected includes Kankar bela, Carissa Carandas, Kanthar and Jasmine shrubs. The other bush is from Sudama's firewood and consists of Jasmine and Kanthar plants. Even to this day these sacred bushes are extremely lush and green, and provide cooling shelter to the pilgrims.



Avanti Lord Kṛṣṇa's Gurukula



By Sitarāma dāsa

Ujjain is reputed, throughout India, for its learning centres. Śrī Vasudeva, like any father, wanted the best education for his sons, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Upon contemplation and consultation it was decided that they should attend the university/āśrama of Sāṅdipani Muni, a renowned *brāhmaṇa* sage endowed with all the excellent qualities of a bona fide professor of spiritual science. They left Mathura and came to Ujjain bringing along all the wonders associated with Their *līlā*. Within sixty-four days they mastered all learning covering the entire spectrum of all that needs to be known. Their pastimes in Ujjain were filled with many great gems that would enchant people for all eternity by dint of a benediction given by Sāṅdipani Muni. Grateful for having such accomplished students, he gave Them the benediction that Their words would, for all time, always enchant everyone. To this day we see how the brilliant *Bhagavada-gītā* brings joy to all who hear its transcendental truths. Kṛṣṇa, as the fulfillment of all benedictions, ensured that His guru's blessing would hold true for time immemorial by speaking *Bhagavada-gītā*, the crest jewel of philosophy from India which is famous throughout the world.

H.H Bhakti Caru Swami has now built a new University under the guise of his spiritual master who built a house for the whole world to live in. This marble gem, the Rādhā Madan-Mohan Mandir, arising from the dusty plains of Ujjain, required dedicated vision, devoid of sentimentality, as the ocean of *bhakti rasa* is not so well known in this domain where Śaivism has been the predominant form of worship for an interminably long time. These are the stomping grounds of Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa Balarāma's university years and They have now returned to inundate this dry land with the nectar of Their activities.

Instead of spending five years of study at some institution, as is the practice nowadays, Their Lordship's completed Their studies in a very short while, without once entering into the debauched mood and actions that prevail in

modern day educational institutions. Their beloved guru was ever enchanted with his two stupendous students whose prowess of learning was wondrous to be hold. Always attentive to the needs of Their spiritual master, Their Lordship's displayed the qualities of the Perfect Students. In the amazing KRSNA Book by His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda, we are given information regarding the subject matter studied by the Lord:

"After hearing only once from Their teacher, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma learned all the arts and sciences. In sixty-four days and sixty-four nights, They learned all the necessary arts and sciences required in human society. During the daytime They took lessons on a subject from the teacher, and by nightfall They were expert in that department of knowledge. They learned how to sing, compose songs, recognize different tunes; the favourable and unfavourable accents and meters; how to sing different kinds of rhythms and melodies, and how to follow them by beating different drums; how to dance to the rhythm of melody and different songs; how to write dramas, the various types of painting, to paint *tilaka* on the face; how to do *rangolli*, make a resting place with flowers and decorate clothing and limbs with colourful painting; how to set valuable jewels in ornaments, the art of ringing waterpots and how to splash water in rivers and lakes while taking bath with friends; to decorate with flowers, the art of dressing hair and fixing a helmet on the head; how to set up a theatrical stage, decorate dramatic actors and how to sprinkle sandalwood pulp and water to create a nice fragrance. They also learned how to perform magical feats like *bahu-rūpi* where a

person dresses up in such a way that he is not recognized even by friends. They learned how to make various syrups and beverages, different types of sewing and embroidery work as well as how to manipulate thin threads for dancing puppets; then They learned how to make and solve riddles, the art of how even a very dull student can quickly learn the alphabet and read books; how to rehearse and act out a drama, solve crosswords puzzles and how to draw and read pictographic literature; the art of architecture, how to recognize valuable jewels and how to fix it in gold and silver settings. They also learned how to study soil to find minerals. This study of soil is now a greatly specialized science, but formerly it was common knowledge even for the ordinary man. They learned to study herbs and plants to discover how they would act as medicine for different ailments. By studying the different species of plants, They learned how to crossbreed plants and trees and get different types of fruits. They learned how to train and engage rams and cocks in fighting for sport. They then learned how to teach parrots to speak and to answer the questions of human beings. They learned practical psychology, how to influence another's mind and thus induce another to act according to one's own desire. Sometimes this is called hypnotism. They learned how to wash hair, dye it different colors and curl it in different ways. They learned the art of telling what is written in someone's book without actually seeing it. They learned to tell what is contained in another's fist. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma learned how to speak and understand the languages of various countries. Not only did They learn the languages of human

beings; Kṛṣṇa could also speak even with animals and birds. Evidence of this is found in the Vaisnava literature compiled by the Gosvāmīs. Then They learned how to make carriages and airplanes from flowers. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma then learned the art of foretelling events by seeing signs. They also learned the art of composing *mātrkā*. A *mātrkā* is like a crossword box, with three numbers in each row. If one adds any three from any side, it will come to nine. The *mātrkā* are of different kinds and for different purposes. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma learned the art of cutting valuable stones such as diamonds, and They also learned the art of questioning and answering by immediately composing poetry within the mind. They learned the science of the action and reaction of physical combinations and permutations. They learned the art of a psychiatrist, who can understand the psychic movements of another person. They learned how to satisfy one's desires. Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, the reservoir of all knowledge, exhibited Their perfect understanding of all the arts and sciences mentioned above."

The modern cross word puzzle craze known as Sudoku, apparently invented by the Japanese, is here called *mātrkā*. Genetic engineering was a most common knowledge as was psychology, architecture etc.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are now, while standing still and taking service, allowing everyone to remember Their Ujjain lila thanks to His Holiness Bhakti Caru Swami and this time Kṛṣṇa has brought along Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī after an absence of 5 000 years. 🍎

Serving the Spiritual Master The Foundation for Success

By Ratna Rādhikā dāsī



Walking by a classroom in an elementary school where I work, I hear a teacher yelling, "I said bring the book RIGHT NOW! Do you want to learn or not?" I hear a sigh and then the sound of a book slamming on a desk. It is another ego war between a teacher and student. At stake is "transmission of knowledge." I wonder how much knowledge the teacher can give and how much the student can absorb in that mood. Although the transfer of knowledge is usually seen as a mechanical

and brief exchange between a teacher and student, transcendental knowledge is not received in that way. Spiritual knowledge, which is beyond the range of the senses, awakens within the heart of the disciple according to the spiritual master's qualification and the disciple's mood of surrender. Thus, the relationship between the teacher and student in spiritual life is not merely a formality, but the foundation for success in life.

Spiritual Master's Qualification

In the holy land of Ujjain, 5000 years ago, Lord Kṛṣṇa and His spiritual master, Sāṅdipani Muni, set the example of the fundamental relationship between disciple and spiritual master. In order to understand the relationship, one must first know who a spiritual master is. "Spiritual" is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as "incorporeal," or not relating to the body. Spirit, according to Vedic teachings, has three qualities: eternality, complete knowledge, and bliss. Thus, a spiritual master can guide one in distinguishing between matter and spirit with the purpose of disentangling oneself from matter and becoming firmly established in one's true spiritual existence in relationship to Lord Kṛṣṇa. However, not anyone presenting spirituality is a spiritual master. The credibility of a spiritual master is in the ability to pass down knowledge without alteration. The spiritual master must be in a bona-fide, unbroken line of teachers and disciples tracing back to the Supreme Lord Himself. He must present spiritual knowledge from the scriptures without change and must follow the same standards that he is presenting. A disciple may have more than one instructing spiritual master. In one's spiritual journey one may encounter many spiritual teachers who will guide one on the path back home back to Godhead.



Disciple's Qualification

Not only the spiritual master, but also the disciple has to be qualified in order to receive spiritual knowledge. The more a

disciple is able to feel utterly dependent on the assistance of the spiritual master, the more the disciple will make spiritual advancement.

The mood of submission that a disciple displays is not artificial or motivated, it comes out of natural love and gratitude towards the spiritual master. As it is stated in the Vedic scriptures, the spiritual master opens the eyes of the disciple with the torchlight of knowledge. When a disciple's eyes have been opened, he sees reality how he is actually the son of the Supreme king, but due to forgetfulness, he has become a pauper, struggling on his own. Therefore, he is ever grateful for the guidance of his spiritual master and he considers the guru to be his only lifeline to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The mood of utter dependence that the disciple feels towards the spiritual master is enhanced by service. Service to the spiritual master is rendered either directly or by following his instructions. Direct service to the spiritual master and any Vaisṇava helps to cleanse the heart of the cobwebs one collects in one's sojourn in this

world. However, even if one is unable to render personal service to the advanced Vaiṣṇavas, one can serve them by making their instructions "one with the heart," as Narottama dāsa Thākura explains. The disciple thus keeps the instructions of the spiritual master alive in his heart by continually hearing them and by putting them into practice in his life.

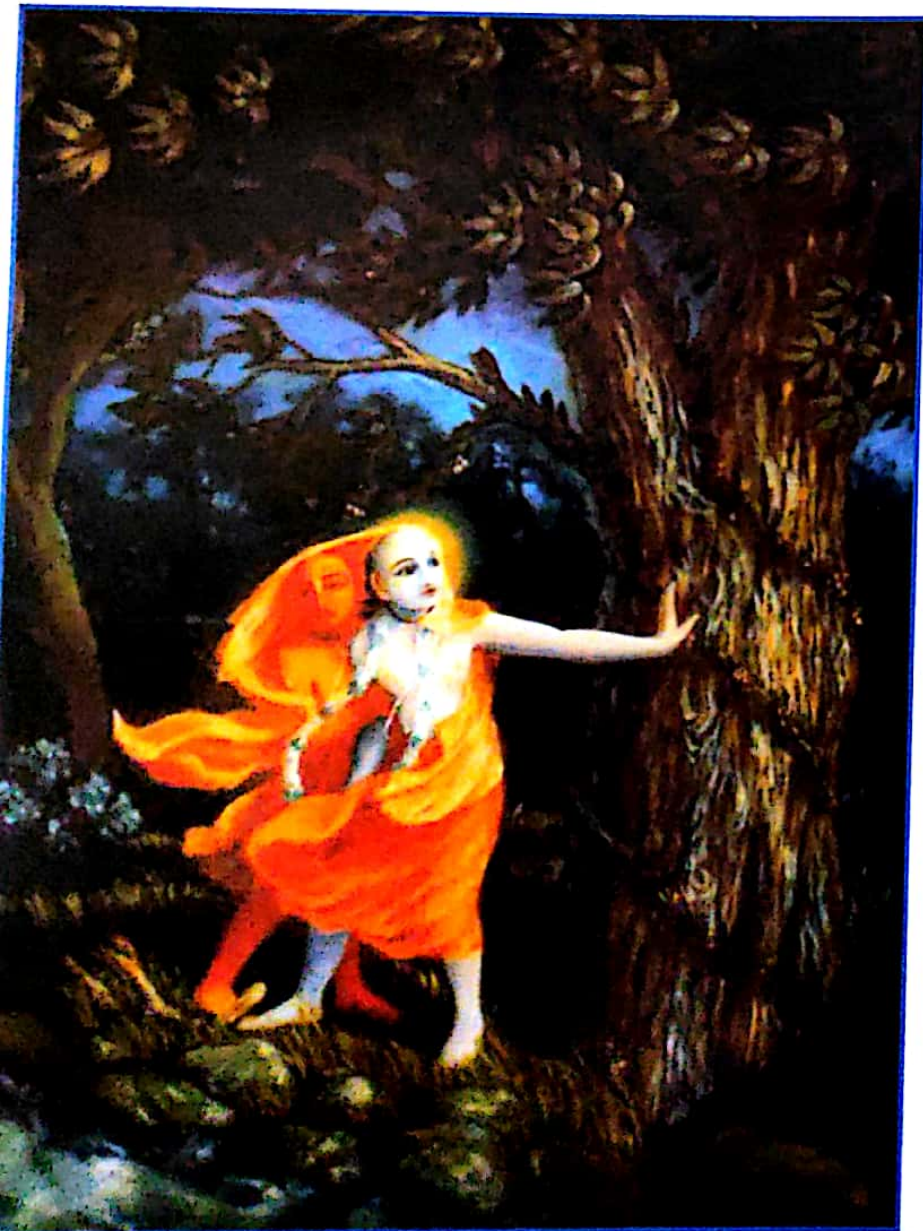
Personal Experience

By my Guru Mahārāja's mercy (His Holiness Bhakti Charu Swami), I was able to live more than half a year in the land where Kṛṣṇa and Sudāmā displayed their perfect student activities. Not only did I live in the holy place, but I was also able to practice rendering service to my spiritual master there. Guru Mahārāja kindly allowed me to do secretary service for him along with four elder godsisters: Arcanā, Chitrāṅgadā, Rādhārāṇī and Rādhā-nandinī. The

experience taught me that anything can be done through the mercy of the spiritual master, spiritual knowledge is revealed in the heart as one renders service, and that service is not limited to time and space.

Anything can be done through the mercy of the spiritual master

One day, when Guru Mahārāja was away from Ujjain, he called me and asked that I write up a document for one of his projects in Ujjain. Someone important needed it within the next hour. It was an emergency and Guru Mahārāja gave me instructions on how to proceed. Hanging up the phone, I found an amazing sense of focus that I never experienced before. The external world faded as I became engrossed in fulfilling the task at hand. Even fear of failure was too distracting to let it bother me. I wrote the five page document in an hour, but then, as I was about to send it off, it seemed to mysteriously disappear from my computer. At that point, I nearly started crying. I prayed to Lord Kṛṣṇa to please bring it back to assist Guru Mahārāja in his service. And sure enough, searching in hidden files, I found the document. It was an example out of many experiences, that through rendering service to the spiritual master, the impossible becomes possible.



Spiritual knowledge is revealed in the heart as one renders service

I had heard many lectures by Guru Mahārāja in the past, but I noticed that the lectures he gave in Ujjain seemed especially "alive" to me. Perhaps rendering service made my heart a little more open and ready to receive transcendental knowledge or perhaps I could sense how the instructions were essential for me in order to perform my service properly. In either case, I found myself holding on tightly to the safety floats of those instructions. A few that I especially remember are as follows: Put your heart into whatever you are doing. Be serious about your spiritual life. Always ask yourself, "Am I doing what I am doing to please Kṛṣṇa, or to please myself?" Become a flower and fruit-bearing plant in Lord Caitanya's garden, not a weed. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is joyfully performed. *San̄kīrtana* means to do whatever you are good at doing and using whatever you have at hand, in the Lord's service.

Service is not limited to time and space

Because of the amount of things that I needed to accomplish in my service every day, I would have to miss some programmes with Guru Mahārāja, like attending his evening *bhajans* in the temple. However, I found that if I was absorbed in service, my heart was satisfied and I felt extremely close to Guru Mahārāja. Sometimes I thought that even if I could attend the evening *bhajans*, my mind could very well be elsewhere. However, even when not in Guru Mahārāja's personal presence, rendering service was the closest way of associating with him.

One evening, as I was working in the office to finish up some work, I saw Guru Mahārāja walking with some of his god-brothers, giving them a tour of the new guest house, gardens and restaurant under construction. A group of devotees were following behind as Guru Mahārāja gave his tour. I felt like going out and joining the fun, but I realized that I needed to finish my work. As I drove back into the service, there was a knock on the door. Suddenly Guru Mahārāja and his god-brothers entered into the secretary office. Stunned, I offered my obeisances. Guru Mahārāja smiled lovingly and said, "Still working?" In a jolly mood, Guru Mahārāja showed his god-brothers the office and talked about his secretary team. He made jokes and even asked if I would be able to make herbal tea for them in the kettle we kept there. After they left, I realized that service was the best way of associating with Guru Mahārāja.

Conclusion

Remembering the jewel-like opportunity to render service to my spiritual master and the deep satisfaction that came from it, I become sad hearing the disrespectful comments between teachers and students in some public school classrooms. In the modern education system, it is rare to hear talk about qualification, respect, humility and dedicated service. Offering my obeisances at the

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lotus feet of Sāṅdīpani Muni, Lord Kṛṣṇa and Sudāmā, I am ever grateful to Them for setting the example of the perfect teacher-student relationship. By Their mercy, someday the world may once again be filled with qualified, spiritual teachers and eager, surrendered students. And thus, not only will spiritual knowledge be easily transmitted, but also everyone will be fully and completely satisfied. 🌸



Arunaksha dāsa is the Head Pūjārī at Rādhā Madan-Mohan Mandir. He rendered service in Māyāpura Chandrodaya Mandir for fourteen years as a saṅkīrtana devotee. There he was entrusted with the worship of the Sankīrtana Party's Gaura Nitāi Deities. In 2004, when H. H. Bhakti Charu Swami came to Ujjain to establish an ISKCON temple, he brought ten devotees with him from Māyāpura, including Arunaksha dāsa. Since that time he has been taking care of the Deity's with great sincerity and dedication.

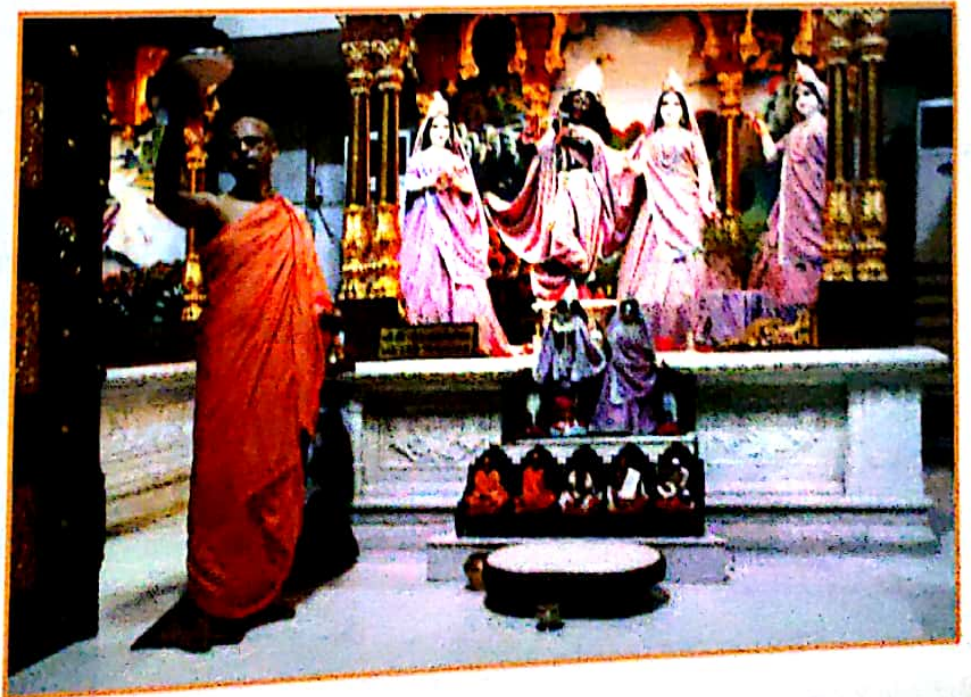
Candana Yātrā

By Arunaksha dāsa

The Lord has very deep relationships with His devotees. To exhibit these relationships He performs a variety of different pastimes. The pastime behind Candana yātrā signifies how the Lord personally calls upon His beloved devotee to render service for Him.

Mādhavendra Purī and Gopal

About five hundred years ago there was a pure devotee of the Lord called Mādhavendra Purī. At that time India was ruled by Muslims. The Muslim King Arangati was trying to destroy all the Hindu temples and deities. Some of the pūjārīs in Vṛndāvana took the Deities of Rādhā Madan-Mohan and Rādhā Govinda to Jaipur for safety. On the way one pūjārī dug a hole in the forest and placed the deity of Gopal under the mud. When Mādhavendra Purī was passing through this area he stopped in the forest to take rest for the night. In his dream he saw Gopal telling him to come and please rescue Him from under the ground. Upon waking Mādhavendra Purī called all the villagers and they dug the deity out. Afterwards they held a big festival and worshipped Gopal in grandeur. After some time Mādhavendra Purī had another dream: Gopal told him that His whole body was suffering from the intense summer heat. He told Mādhavendra Purī to go to Malaya-deśa in Jagannātha Purī, to get *candana* and apply the cooling sandalwood paste on His body to relieve Him of the heat.





Candan yatra in Ujjain

Since that time, every year in the month of May, we follow this tradition of smearing the body of the Lord with *candan*. This is called Candana yātrā. The festival starts from Akṣaya-tṛtīyā and carries on for twenty-one days until Pūrṇimā. Preparations begin a few months prior to the festival when we order the *candan* from Calcutta. Both the Kṛṣṇa Deities are covered entirely in *candan*, whilst the other deities have *candan* applied only on Their foreheads. For this purpose we require half a kilogramme of *candan* every day. Guru Mahārāja instructed us to begin preparing the *candan* a week before the festival. *Brahmacaris*, *ghasthas*, and even guests sit happily together to grind the *candan*. Kṛṣṇa is so merciful that He gives all His devotees, who otherwise may not be able to render direct service to Him, an opportunity to do so. During the festival, all the devotees are very blissful and the atmosphere in the temple is wonderful and full of excitement.



After *maṅgala-ārati* from 5.30am to 7.30am, we smear the Lord's body with the smooth *candan* paste. Then He is dressed with His day outfit and ornaments.



We decorate His face and hands with *gopi* dots. Some days we mix colours into the *candan* giving the Lords body a different hue. At the end of the day the *candan* is removed. Displaying playful pastimes with the devotees, sometimes the Lord holds the *candan* so tightly that it becomes very difficult to remove. And sometimes, when He feels happy, the *candan* comes off very quickly, without much effort. This *mahā-candan* is distributed to all the devotees.

I pray that this wonderful festival will carry on for many



years. My meditation during the festival is how to improve the service, how to decorate the Lord better, what we can do the next day to make the Lord look more beautiful. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa says, *dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te*: To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. So I pray to the Lord that He may give me the intelligence to serve Him properly. During the month of May, Guru Mahārāja is usually preaching abroad. I feel it would also be so nice if he could be in Ujjain during the blissful festival of Candana yātrā. He told me, "Arunaksha, take care of the Deity worship very nicely." I am trying with all sincerity to follow his instructions which are my life.

Poetry Corner

Prabhupāda's gift

— Devahūti devī dāsī

Will I wake up to see the green again?
Will I fulfill my duties, before the dead end?
I wonder these things, as days go by,
Because deep inside I hear my heart cry.

Birth, disease, old age and death,
All but māyā's obedient pet.
We live to enjoy for our personal gain,
It gives us nothing but just pain.

I pity myself for I am born in this age,
Egocentric, envious and in rage.
In despair we are, no sane will deny
Pain and sorrow is all we get to buy.

There is yet a world, so fresh and new,
Śrīla Prabhupāda gave it,
It's beautiful and true.
It's the highest taste and there is nothing above,
Kṛṣṇa's devotional service and pure love.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Divine Song

—Vaidehī devī dāsī

I stopped by the highland grass,
As I heard a Man sing.
The people did not wait to hear;
the praises of the true King.

I heard the vale profound
Overflowing with that sound.
He sang for God with love and true heart,
He made me realize, I wasn't good on my part.

As He cried for Lord in love,
I stepped forward, and then, I stopped.
Amongst all Indian saints,
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard.

Whatever the theme, that highness sang
As if His song could have no ending.
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill
The music in my heart I bore,
In this age it seems to be heard no more.

Glorification of the Guru

--Rādhā Piyārī dāsī

At the time of anguish, sorrow and pain,
You arrived and rescued me from suffering's chain,
And bloomed my life with blossoms of every hue,
For that I am eternally grateful to you!

From a stranger to the most important person,
You voyage my heart, O Kṛṣṇa's son!
Brought me in front of a long queue,
For that I am eternally grateful to you!

You bestowed your mercy on every step,
By your smile, glance, garland and clap,
Your teachings and love, nothing's few..
For that I am eternally grateful to you!

You accepted me, as Earth takes rain,
Gave me lamplight again and again,
And stopped me from chewing the chewed,
For that I am eternally grateful to you!

When I was puffed up and filled with false ego,
You smashed me, pointing, I am nothing but zero,
As desired to save me from falling down you do,
For that, I am eternally grateful to you!

I hurt you and hurt you and hurt you more and more,
And hurt myself each time I hurt your core,
But I am broken as I am still trusted by you,
For that, I am eternally grateful to you!

Śrī Guru

The Source of Spiritual Strength and Real Shelter

By Chitrāṅgadā devī dāsi

I realized the first moment I saw Guru Mahārāja in Śrī Jagannātha Mandir, Kuala Lumpur in 2003, that my life was going to change significantly. Maybe that was why I never went forward to meet him during his three day unscheduled visit to Kuala Lumpur. I knew from that moment that Lord Jagannātha had sent me a very special and pure soul to guide me in my life's journey searching for love of God, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I felt that by the mercy of this pure soul, my own search would find a conclusion and my life would be embellished with transcendental happiness, peace and contentment.

On 18th April 2003, Guru Mahārāja replied to the letter which I sent to the ISKCON Calcutta Temple. He wrote, "Thank you very much for your letter. I was very happy to receive it. Through that letter I got to perceive the depth of your devotion. If there is anything I can do to help you in your spiritual life, I will naturally try my best"

Guru Mahārāja has not only kept his side of the promise but he has given me so much more than I bargained for, a spiritual existence in this material world.

On March 4th, 2004, almost one year later and three days before the Panca-Tattva Installation in Śrīdhāma Mayapura, Guru Mahārāja mercifully gave me diksa and



accepted me as his disciple in the Jagannātha Temple nearby. Again I could see this was Lord Jagannātha's arrangement. Before Guru Mahārāja pronounced my spiritual name, Chitrāṅgadā devī dāsi, he gave an elaborate explanation on the pastime of Chitrāṅgadā, a Manipuri princess. Guru Mahārāja said she fought battles to safeguard her father's kingdom and even defeated the mighty Arjuna in one. Arjuna being pleased by her strength, honour and pride, married her. I wondered why Guru Mahārāja gave me that name; maybe it sounds so similar to my legal name, Chitra Devi. However I realized much later that Guru Mahārāja wanted me to be a strong and brave soldier in

ISKCON. I felt, after my tumultuous past with ISKCON in the 80's, Guru Mahārāja wanted me to fight many battles with maya so that I remain steadfast in my commitment to the spiritual path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and ultimately to ISKCON. I felt and still feels glorious to be part of this spiritual army.

As Chitrāṅgadā devī dāsi, I had to face many battles and my major battle came in the form of Hodgkins Lymphoma, a kind of blood cancer. I was diagnosed with Stage 3 carcinoma on 8th July 2005.

In mid April 2005, after I had returned from Ujjain and a preaching stint in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain with Arcanā mataji, I made up my mind to serve Guru Mahārāja on a full time basis as he had instructed. I was convinced that I could not be happy doing anything else other than being in the service of Guru Mahārāja. I could see that Guru Mahārāja wanted me to discover my true vocation in this life for myself, like a father who guides his daughter with love and patience. So I started to wrap up my carrier as an advocate in my legal firm, and prepared to leave to serve Guru Mahārāja in Ujjain. I was diagnosed two weeks before my departure. Today, I believe the Lord wanted me to be more surrendered and purified before I could engage my mind and heart in the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda. It was a test of my commitment to Guru Mahārāja. I had to embrace this special mercy with faith.

I still remember the day the doctors told me I had Stage three cancer and needed chemotherapy immediately. I was shattered and filled with fear and anguish. I had

already undergone one major surgery in my neck and several needle peircing tests, scans and biopsies. Everything seemed unreal, like a bad dream, but only one thing remained solid and real to me amidst my confused state of mind: Guru Mahārāja and the fact that I had to find my way back to Ujjain to help him in this amazing project he had undertaken to spread the holy name all over the state of Madhya Pradesh. I remember when I first called Guru Mahārāja to tell him the news. I still remember him asking me, "Are the doctors sure? Maybe there are other tests?" His voice became softer, with long pauses in between our conversation and he sounded sad. I remember the tears rolling uncontrollably down my cheeks whilst hearing his voice. Guru Mahārāja was so busy with the Temple construction, meetings, and a thousand other more important errands, but he made time to speak to me throughout my excruciating ten months of chemotherapy. He was my ultimate strength. Had I been diagnosed with cancer before surrendering to Guru and Kṛṣṇa, I would not have made it to tell my story today.



Arcanā devī dāsi and Chitrāṅgadā devī dāsi

Words cannot describe the agonising pain one undergoes during chemotherapy and today, even as I write this article, I remember the many months of pain and suffering. However, every single session became bearable because of Guru Mahārāja. His consoling and spiritually profound e-mails were my panacea. He would write, "I pray to Śrī Kṛṣṇa that He showers His mercy upon you and takes care of you always." One time, he wrote, "I can understand how you feel. Try to take everything in your stride and try to accept every situation, especially the difficult ones, as Kṛṣṇa's divine arrangement to bring you closer to His lotus feet." Guru Mahārāja not only made me feel protected at all times, but he made me understand that I was in a special position to reach out to the Lord in a more intense way. Such is the mercy of my spiritual master. Guru Mahārāja would always remind me that we are not this material body but the spirit soul. He would say, "*Chitrāṅgadā*, always remember you are not this body but the spirit soul. Therefore, pleasure or pain, both are immaterial to you. When pleasure comes, accept this as Kṛṣṇa's mercy and when pain comes, take it as your bad karma. Just remain Kṛṣṇa conscious and accept every situation as an opportunity to appreciate His mercy upon you." The pain always became tolerable when I read and re-read all his letters. I knew this was a special arrangement indeed to bring me closer to Guru Mahārāja and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I realized that by adhering sincerely to Guru Mahārāja's instructions and guidance I became more connected to the Lord. During my worst days in September 2005, Guru Mahārāja tried calling me but I was in the hospital. So he wrote to me, "*Chitrāṅgadā*, express all your inner feelings and emotions through your prayers to Kṛṣṇa. He will take care of you in all respects. Rest assured He will never fail you." Guru Mahārāja's words remain entrenched in my heart to this day. He assured me with such conviction that I was convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that if I placed myself in the shelter of his lotus feet, Kṛṣṇa will never fail me.

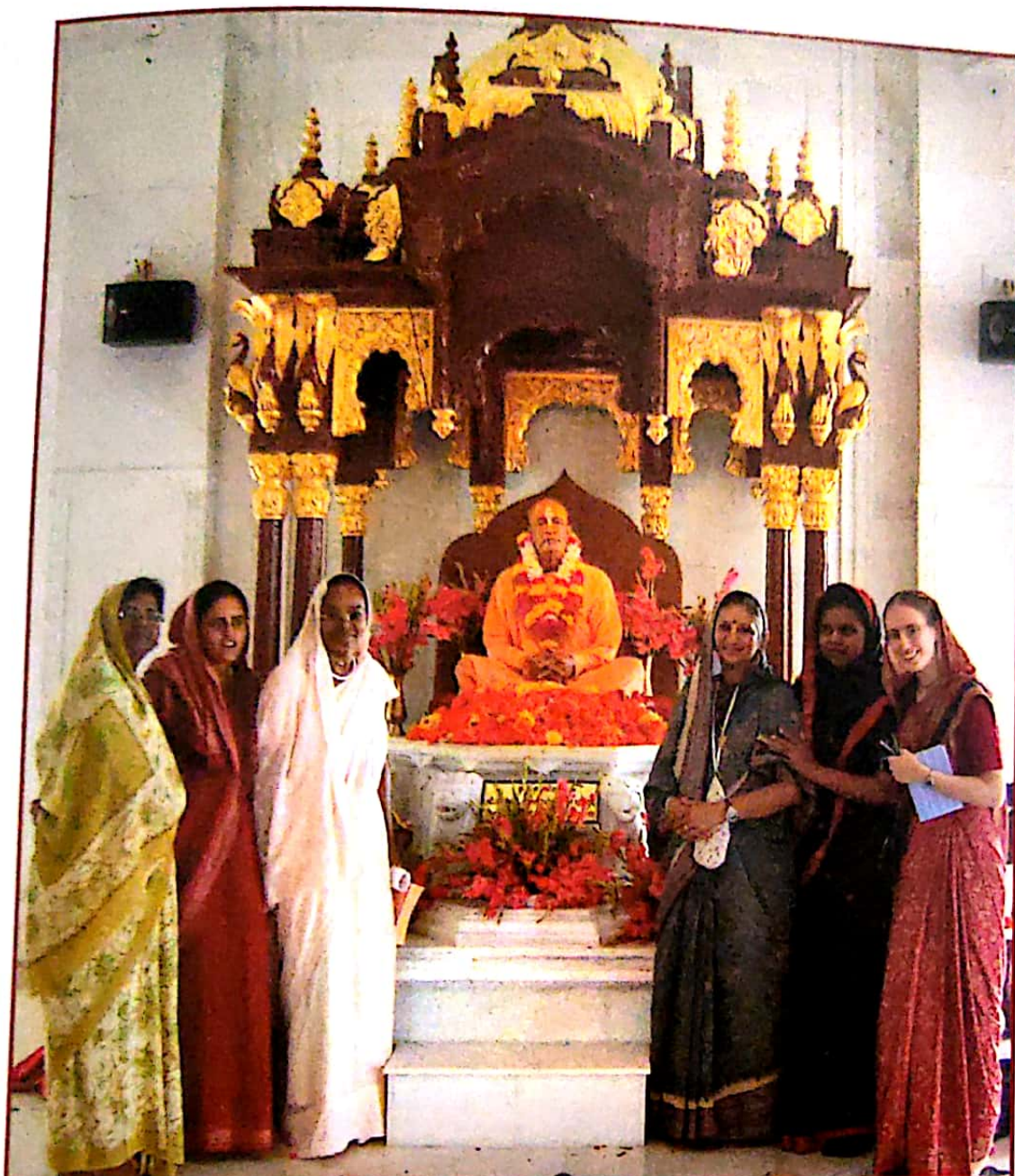
By Guru Mahārāja's mercy I was totally absorbed and engaged in devotional service in an intense way during these trying months. When I was unable to sleep at night, I would sew clothes for my Deities and even our Temple Deities in Kuala Lumpur. When I was in pain during my chemotherapy, I would chant the *Brahma Samhitā* Prayers. When I was sad, I would listen to Guru Mahārāja's bhajans. When I was feeling sorry for myself I would hear Śrīla Prabhupāda's class on Kuntī Devī's Prayers. Guru Mahārāja said, "*Utilize all these opportunities to make advancement in your spiritual life.*" I don't know if I made any advancement but I became

spiritually situated. The need for Kṛṣṇa consciousness was so intense then and I wish today I could feel that very same kind of dependency again. Guru Mahārāja promised me that Kṛṣṇa will reciprocate with me. Many times he said to me, "*You have taken shelter of Kṛṣṇa, therefore what is there to fear?*" I knew my spiritual master was my via media, my umbilical cord to the nectar of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And that is how I survived the most painful days of my life. I held on to him with full faith that his prayers would see me through this test.

Eventually I recovered fully and went into remission by the end of June 2006. The doctors were amazed at how I pulled through with such confidence and calmness. Dr. Harris, my Haematologist said, "Chitra, just continue with whatever it is you are doing because it's just amazing to see how you have recovered so nicely." He knew I was a Hare Krishna and many times shared my sweets (*prasāda*). The Lord truly makes amazing arrangements because Dr Harris is reputed to be the best in his line of medicine.

Guru Mahārāja then persuaded me to undergo a detox Ayurvedic treatment programme (*pañca karma*) in Ujjain. I immediately jumped at the offer because, more than the treatment, I wanted so much to see our beautiful Deities and Guru Mahārāja. The first time I saw the gorgeous white marble Temple, I knew this spiritual abode will be my eternal home. I remember climbing up the white marble stairs with Sudevī sundarī mataji and bursting out in uncontrollable tears of joy when I saw the Deities, whom I knew had made this wonderful arrangement for me to come to Them so soon after my remission. As soon as I arrived, feelings of belonging and happiness arose in my heart. I was so proud of Guru Mahārāja. But internally I lamented that I had not been there to help him and my god-brothers and sisters with the building of such an astounding place of worship for Their Lordships. I recall begging Arcanā mataji to keep one of the altar doors for me to gold-leaf. To me, Ujjain, Śrīdhāma Avantipura, is the spiritual abode of Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Guru Mahārāja once said in a morning class, "*In Ujjain, we can re-establish our loving relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They are here, present and simply waiting to give us Their love.*" Ujjain is for me a glimpse of the spiritual sky. Anyone who has even a glimpse of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Madan-Mohan, Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa Balarāma and Śrī Śrī Gaura Nītāi will lose their heart and mind to Them.

I went through the Ayurvedic treatment with intense



Left to right - Chitrāṅgadā devī dāsī, Sudevī sundarī devī dāsī, Arcanā devī dāsī, Rādhārāṇī devī dāsī, Rādhā-nandinī devī dāsī and Ratna Rādhikā devī dāsī

faith that Kṛṣṇa would make me better so that I could spend the rest of my life serving Guru Mahārāja. Guru Mahārāja personally ensured that all facilities were first class for me and that I was taken care of nicely. His very personal care and concern was overwhelming. I felt so blessed. The doctors made me say prayers to Lord Dhanvantari before each treatment; I would chant these prayers with deep reverence, understanding that it was not by chance I was getting treatment in Ujjain. The Lord in the form of Dhanvantari, was taking care of me too. I pretended that I was getting a drop of nectar from His golden jar whenever I had to swallow a preparation called *grid* (liquid hot medicated ghee). I had to think of

a way to keep it down somehow! I successfully completed three weeks of my *pañca harma* treatment in Ujjain and felt like a new person. I must also confess that Guru Mahārāja's persistent and loving reminders for me to drink wheat-grass juice in his apartment early each morning was a strong contributing factor. More than the wheat-grass, just being in his suite, on the receiving end of his loving attention, made me happy. I stayed on in Ujjain from September 2006 to November 2007. I have just completed my third year in remission and now serve Guru Mahārāja in a different capacity in Malaysia. I go back home to Ujjain whenever the Lord makes some special arrangements for me. Indeed it is the dwelling place of my heart. Going back to Ujjain was my dream, my goal and Guru Mahārāja kept his promise. Kṛṣṇa is

still taking very good care of me by keeping me connected to Him in Ujjain.

I will conclude by offering what remains of this life time to the lotus feet of my spiritual master and beg that he continues to shower me with his bountiful mercy so that I remain entrenched in my faith to Guru and Gaurāṅga. I beg that by his mercy I am able to adhere to his instructions. He said to me, "Do not allow anything to weaken your body and dampen your spirit. Whatever time you have, one day or one hundred years, is simply meant for you to serve Kṛṣṇa. Take this opportunity. That is really what matters. Everything else is just *maya*"

Cooking with Guru Mahārāja

By Śyāma mohinī devī dāśī

In June 2007, I learned from Sāndīpan Kṛṣṇa prabhu that H.H. Bhakti Charu Swami would be in Toronto for five days. From reading *Prabhupāda Lilāmṛita*, and hearing Mahārāja's lectures on "*Śrīla Prabhupāda in my life*," I knew that Mahārāja used to cook for Śrīla Prabhupāda. Since then it had always been my dream to see Mahārāja cook. I had also heard about how Mahārāja cooked sumptuous meals in a matter of a few minutes! Therefore, hearing about his upcoming visit to Toronto, I at once requested if I could be present when he was cooking; very mercifully, I was allowed to visit.

A few days later, when I entered the kitchen where Mahārāja was about to start cooking, Nilambari Rādhikā mataji was washing and cutting the vegetables to prepare the *bhoga*. The organization in the kitchen was distinct, and the meticulous and precise method for washing and cutting the



vegetables was evident. I was told that five preparations were being planned for the meal: 1) a spinach preparation, 2) asparagus, 3) cauliflower-zucchini-broccoli stir fry, 4) a tomato-cheese preparation and 5) rice. The rice, a combination of brown-black/wild and flat rice, took the longest to prepare, and therefore mataji had been begun cooking this in advance.

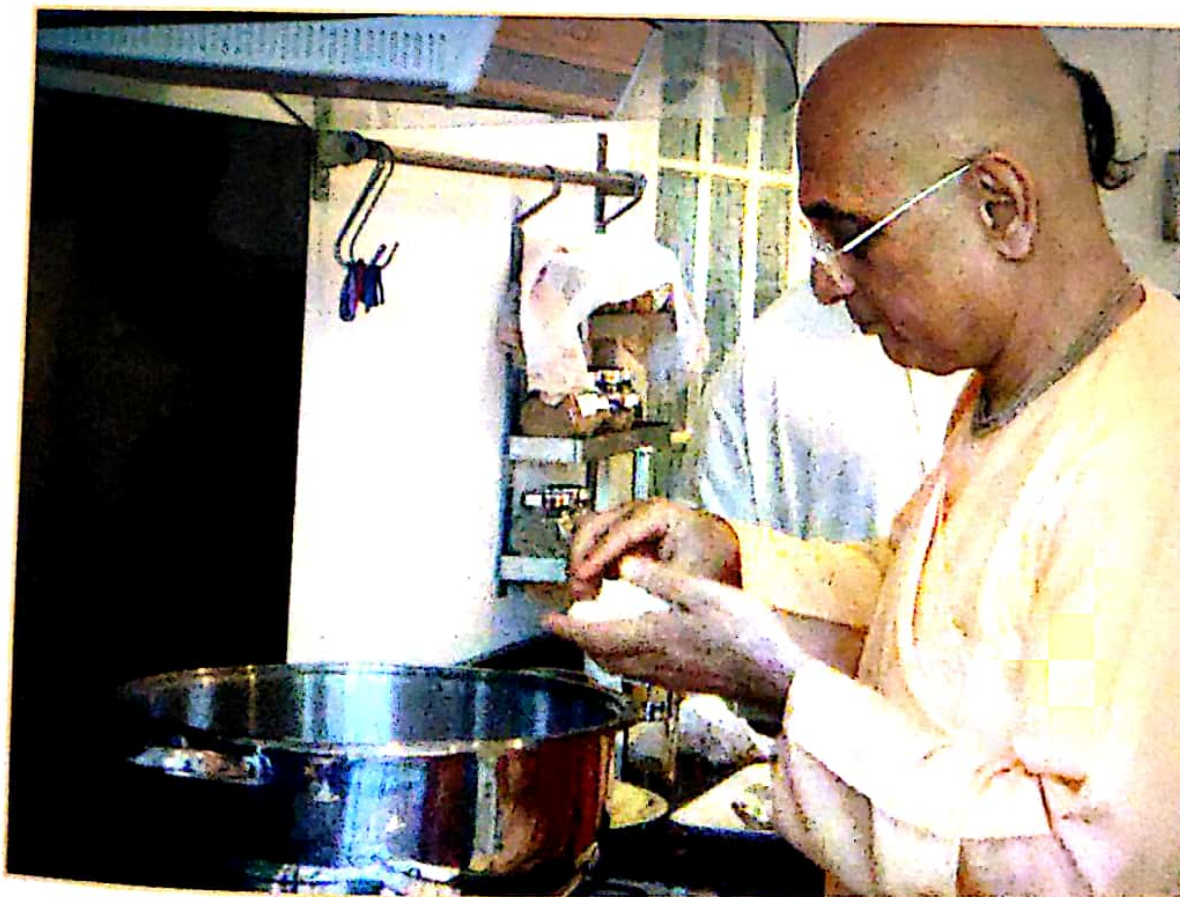
When the rice was almost cooked and all the other ingredients were ready, Mahārāja entered the kitchen. He began his cooking with the spinach preparation. In a pot, on medium heat, Mahārāja poured some butter, followed by *hing*, semolina and some nutmeg. Then the finely-chopped spinach was added. Mahārāja then added some hot water, covered the pot, and allowed the spinach to cook for a few minutes. In the meantime, he started cooking the broccoli-zucchini stir fry and asparagus.

For his last preparation, a tomato-cheese dish, Mahārāja cooked long and thin slices of tomato with salt and some oregano. After a few minutes, a layer of mozzarella cheese, topped with an equal amount of cheddar cheese, was added to the pot, which was then covered and cooked for about five minutes. Before I could realize it, all four preparations were ready in less than fifteen minutes. The food was mostly cooked in butter or sunflower oil, and no huge amounts of oil, ghee or large variety of spices were used. It was important that each preparation be cooked only for about five to seven minutes. According to Mahārāja, the idea was to enhance the taste and still keep the food healthy. The cleanliness in the kitchen while cooking appeared to be of utmost importance.

After the meal was ready, Mahārāja asked for the offering to be made, while we laid the table and prepared to serve. While honouring *prasāda*, Mahārāja talked to everyone present in the room,

describing how each dish was cooked, and wherever possible, provided suggestions to improve. Mahārāja then asked everyone else to honour *prasāda*. I distinctly remember my first bite, it was the most amazing taste ever, simple and delicious. And it was made more sumptuous by realizing that Mahārāja had cooked the feast himself. He very kindly ensured that everyone ate and insisted that we eat more.

In the days that followed, while the five-preparation meal remained the standard menu, Mahārāja would occasionally cook a different meal, such as pizza or wheat noodles. During one such cooking session, Mahārāja commented how each vegetable has its own unique taste and that the best cooking revives the original taste of each vegetable. These words, I later reflected, truly symbolize Kṛṣṇa consciousness, where our expect chef, the bona fide spiritual master, revives our original identities in the service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

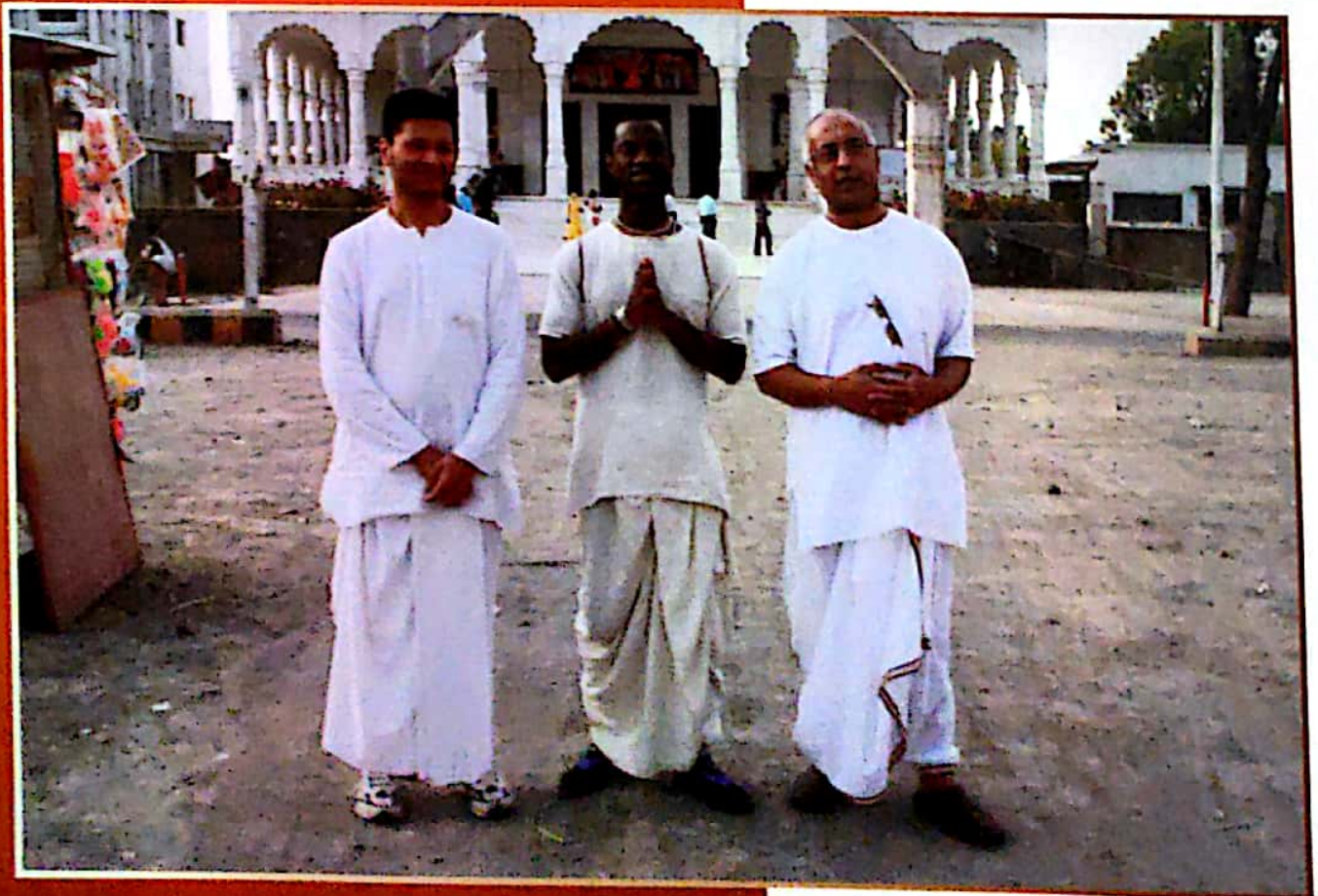


Bhūtabhāvana dāsa is
a disciple of H H
Bhakti Tīrtha
Mahārāja. He is a
member of ISKCON--
UK Communications
Team, and preaches
extensively at
Universities and
ISKCON Temples
around England.

Reflections from Ujjain

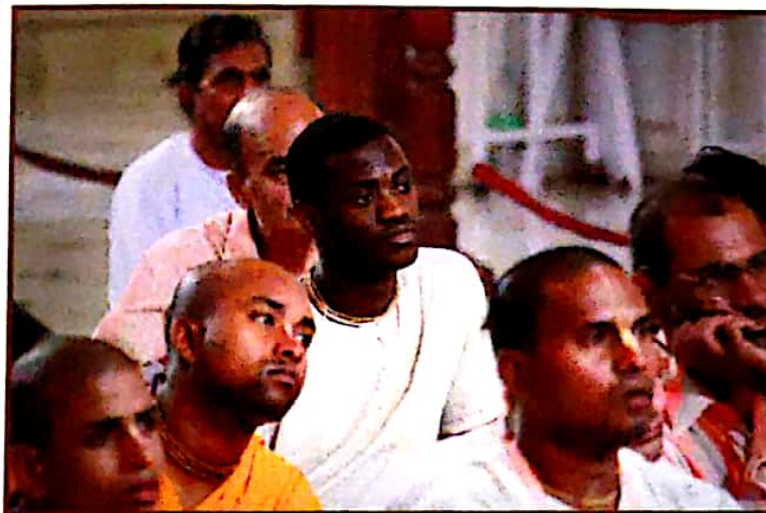
By Bhūtabhāvana dāsa

I had the great fortune to visit Ujjain in March 2009. I had heard a lot about this great *dhāma* from devotees in the UK. In anticipation, I was unsure what to expect: Maybe it would be different to what I had been told, maybe better or maybe worse, I didn't know.



When we finally reached the wonderful site of the Ujjain Temple, the first thing that struck me was the sheer magnificence of the Temple building. It is a great marble monument of devotion to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Even more impressive was the speed at which the Temple manifested itself. I say manifested, as I feel this site is another centre uncovered by the devotional potency of His Holiness Bhakti Charu Mahārāja.

Recently, we observed the disappearance day of His Holiness Bhakti Tirtha Mahārāja. I remember serving him in Gita Nagari Farm soon before he was diagnosed as having cancer. We were watching a DVD, *Memories of Prabhupāda*. It was the edition where Bhakti Charu Mahārāja was recalling pastimes with His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda. When my Guru Mahārāja saw Bhakti Charu Mahārāja on screen, he was just transfixed, staring at his image. Later that day, he dictated an e-mail for me to send to Mahārāja. Part of the e-mail said, "Where are you? I am sure you are somewhere in the ISKCON world, looking after, and caring for the devotees." This mood of caring was what I saw manifested in the ISKCON Ujjain project.



I visited Ujjain with a few of my friends from London: Kamlesh Kṛṣṇa and Gagan. We owe a great debt of gratitude to all the devotees of this illustrious *dhāma*, for the loving care they showed us. I recall coming for classes by Bhakti Charu Mahārāja in the Temple room, or in his quarters. I can honestly say the classes astounded me. Bhakti Tirtha Mahārāja would sometimes say that ones' ability to explain something complex in a clear way was a sign that one had realized that point. Bhakti Charu Mahārāja's classes are always like this. Even as I am writing this, I again catch a glimpse of the deep nourishing feeling that was invoked by hearing from him. He spoke from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and shared with us all his emphasis on how he was trained by Prabhupāda; it is that mood that he is passing down to us all. He told us how once Prabhupāda sent him to enquire whether the devotees in a particular Temple were being given nice *prasāda*. He informed Prabhupāda that the

prasāda was not very good and Prabhupāda was displeased. Mahārāja then explained that austerity for its own sake was not the main consideration, but that service is the main point.

In the Ujjain Temple, I witnessed a project that was simultaneously caring, compassionate, and yet bold, alive, dynamic and missionary. The common saying is: a devotee is as soft as a rose, and as hard as a thunderbolt. I feel Bhakti Charu Mahārāja and the Ujjain project embody this. The Govinda's Restaurant and Guest house, which are part of this project, are first class. Our rooms were clean, tastefully presented and had all the facilities we would require. I was told Mahārāja is planning to create flats that devotees can buy in this great *dhāma*, and during my visit preparations were being made for the launch of a new restaurant called *Vrinda's* in Indore. In line with the dynamic and forward thinking mood of the project, I got to meet the youth group who had come on Gaura Pūrṇimā day.

The group was inspired and enthusiastic. I could see they were taking the mission of Lord Caitanya seriously, which is a good sign for the future.

To think that Kṛṣṇa spent His youth in Ujjain under the training of Sāndīpani Muni, and that we were being given the blessings to be in this *dhāma* was exhilarating! We visited the *āśrama* of Sāndīpani Muni and also a village where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma would collect firewood for Sāndīpani Muni. While there, I prayed for blessings to serve the mission of Śrīla Prabhupāda in the way most pleasing to him. I rarely find places that I immediately feel an affinity for, but I can honestly say I felt this in Ujjain. The love and care of the devotees, who had imbibed the mood of Bhakti Charu Mahārāja, who had imbibed the same mood from Prabhupāda, immediately put us all at ease and made us feel as if we had come home. I will definitely return to this most wonderful of *dhāmas* again and again to receive the abundant spiritual blessings and rejuvenation made so readily available by these most sincere followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda.



Cake Decoration Classes in Ujjain

By Yamunā devī dāsi

In 1993 I had begun training in cake decoration and sugar craft techniques, and finally completed a City & Guilds diploma in Sugar-Craft Skills. Whenever Guru Mahārāja visited England and stayed at my house I would make a cake using the different techniques I had learnt. I also made cakes for the Deities at festivals, and for devotee weddings and celebrations. Over time I accumulated a massive tool box, with many vital instruments required for implementing diverse techniques and intricate details in cake decorating. In September 1995 I travelled to Italy to make Guru Mahārāja's Vyāsa-pūjā cake. I chose the theme of the *Gurv-astaka* prayers with eight cakes for each verse. I made models of Guru Mahārāja for each cake with devotees, Deities and devotional paraphernalia--everything was made from sugar. It took six weeks to prepare. Guru Mahārāja was delighted, and said it was a work of art. In 1998 I moved to Australasia and began training in Naturopathic medicine. On festival days and for my friends' birthdays, I continued to make cakes, but so much of my time was spent studying that my cake decorating fell somewhat to the side.

Ten years later, in December 2008, I arrived in Ujjain. Guru Mahārāja was excited about my arrival, and the prospect that I could train some of our god-family in sugar skills. He talked eagerly about different restaurants and bakeries he wanted to start in Bombay

and Indore where he wanted to supply *prasāda* with a difference. Within a couple of days, he told me to start teaching cake decorating. I entered the primitive, Indian, village-style kitchen, a vast difference from the Western technology and opulence I was used to. Several devotees were eagerly waiting their lesson. There was no piping bag, or any decorating equipment whatsoever, only a

few cherries, angelica, some silver balls and icing sugar for decoration. I felt my heart panic as I wondered where and how to start. Though it was so difficult, I had to do this service Guru Mahārāja had requested of me. I wondered, "Is my desire to make cakes, for my own glorification, or a sign of surrender to my spiritual master's request?" But in the end everyone rallied together and we somehow managed to make the first cake.



The next task was to make cakes for Lord Nityānanda's Appearance day. I had to make three cakes for the Deities and teach the devotees how to make the decorations. Guru Mahārāja was so kind and wonderful; he arranged for the ingredients and equipment to be sent from England. We were given a room to work in, (albeit without a sink) and began the task of making hundreds of roses for the cakes. Time was short and we had much to do. Guru Mahārāja came to see our work and was very pleased at how quickly the girls were picking up the skills. His interest and involvement made the sugar flower marathon fun and exciting for us. Knowing that we were pleasing him made it a more devotional challenge. We designed cakes into lotus petals



with a *tilak* in the centre. We worked through the night without any sleep and had to move to the hall way because of the frequent power cuts. But by morning we completed the cakes just in time for their Lordships offering.

The next day was my birthday. Guru Mahārāja gave me the best birthday of my life. Not only did he sponsor the feast for all the devotees, but also arranged that my god-sisters make me a special birthday cake. He gave it to me after Gaura-arāti and it was distributed in front of Śrīla Prabhupāda and all the Sunday guests. Guru Mahārāja gave me a wonderful gift, his *mahā* I-phone, which had photos and videos of Śrīla Prabhupāda on it. This deepened my attachment and made me yet more indebted to him. And I realized even more his deep



love and devotion for Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The final and hardest challenge of all was to make the Gaura Pūrnīmā cakes. Again we had to make three cakes plus a fourth one for Lord Jagannātha. Each cake had a different theme: For Lord Caitanya's cake we made a *mrdaṅga*, *kartals*, harmonium and sitar. For Rādhā Madan-Mohan's cake we made a lotus, peacock feather and sugar garland. And for Kṛṣṇa Balarāma, we made a painting of Balarāma's club and Kṛṣṇa's flute. Each day became more difficult and I found myself becoming stressed. I wondered if my attachment to perfection was getting in the way of my devotion and fortune for serving Their Lordships and my spiritual master. The support of my kind god-sisters though helped me immensely. And by the mercy of Gaura Nitāi, after many difficulties, we were able to offer all four cakes for Their Lordships.



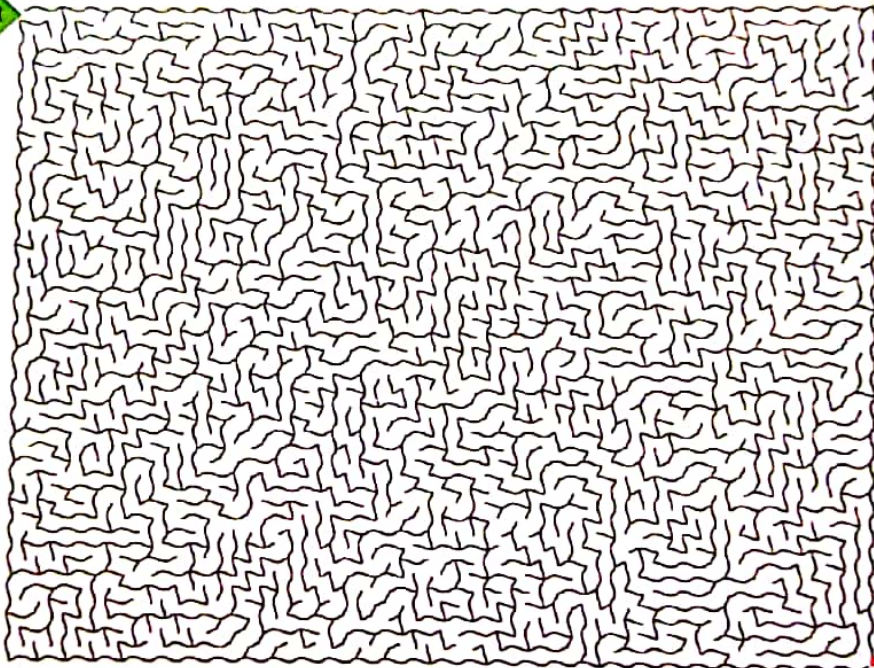
Ujjain is one of the most special and magical places in the whole universe, where Lord Dhanvantari appeared, and the history of Ayurveda began. I had been led to this mystical place whilst I was writing about medicine. My cake decorating past time there was an intense challenge. Looking back I miss it so much. It was one of the best times of my life. I realize that the experience was not ordinary pursuit but Kṛṣṇa's way of revealing my ego and attachments. I was so blessed to spend time in Ujjain: to prepare cakes for Their Lordships offerings, and to be with my spiritual master who was so kind to me. I pray the Lord will allow me to return there, for these temples in the holy *dhama* are truly unique and transcendental. 🌸

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Words to find:

architecture,
ayurveda,
balarama, dancing,
drama,
embroidery,
fragrances,
hairdressing,
hypnotism, kṛṣṇa,
minerals, painting,
poetry, rangoli,
reading, sandipani
muni, sewing,
singing.



*yānra prāṇa-dhananityānanda-śrī-caitanya
rādhā-kṛṣṇa-bhakti vine nāhi jāne anya*

Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda are the life and soul of those Vaiṣṇavas, who do not know anything but devotional service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

--Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Adi 5.230

ISKCON Ujjain's Mid Day Meal Program

The ISKCON Food Relief Foundation (JFRF) is founded with the aim of fulfilling the need of giving children proper nutrition. To this end the JFRF has started the Mid Day Meal (MDM) programme for children in government and government-aided schools in Ujjain. At present, the JFRF provides meals to 30,000 children in schools throughout Ujjain city. About 170 primary and middle schools are covered by the project. The children daily receive a meal of rice, dahl, subji and chapattis. This is prepared in the MDM kitchen by ten cooks. To prepare the huge quantities of chapattis, the kitchen is equipped with a special machine which makes 10,000 chapattis per hour. Eight trucks, painted with bright, coloured murals of Krsna enjoying lunch with His cowherd boyfriends of Vrndavana, deliver the food to the various schools in and around Ujjain.



Sri Sri Radha Madan-Mohan Mandir
Hare Krishna Land, 33-37, Bharatpuri, Ujjain-456010, M.P., India
Tel: 0734-2535000, Fax: -0734-2536000
E-Mail: iskconujjain@pamho.net Web: www.iskconujjain.com