

Viplavah

Revolution Through Education
A Journal of the ISKCON Ministry of Education

Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



June 2020. Issue No. 2/4





MISSION STATEMENT

Vision statement

To provide Krishna conscious education of high quality to everyone through temples, educational institutions and various global initiatives.

Mission statement

To develop comprehensive educational systems globally, that foster higher spiritual values, fulfil the needs of ISKCON members, and the larger society, bringing about excellence in all areas of human life. We aim to fulfil this mission by

1. Empowering and supporting educational initiatives and collaborations among educators, educational institutions and professionals
2. Establishing and monitoring high standards of Vaisnava education
3. Supervising the development and execution of educational plans and ensuring they are delivered to high standards and
4. Understanding and fulfilling the educational needs of the Krsna conscious families
5. Making every temple as an educational centre and a centre of excellence.

MASTHEAD

Viplavah is a Journal of the **Ministry of Education** of the **International Society for Krishna Consciousness**, Founder Acharya His Divine Grace Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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The first issue of the Journal was published Janmastami 2017, publishing four issues each year. It is driven out of North American and the Western Hemisphere but is aimed at serving the educational needs of ISKCON globally.

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SRILA PRABHUPADA UVACA

Any moment death can take place. Not that “I am now kumāra, I can play. When I shall become old man, I shall chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.” This is not a very good policy. Prahlāda Mahārāja says, “No. Immediately.” Kaumāra ācaret prājño dharmān bhāgavatān iha. Therefore the children, those who are actually dhīra, Vaiṣṇava, they should give education to the children. What education? Not this so-called technical education or smoking education, drinking education and so many rascal education. This is not education. Education means bhāgavata education: to understand God. That is wanted. Athāto brahma jijñāsā. Education should be given in such a way that the student should be very, very inquisitive. Inquisitive what about? Inquisitive about Brahman, not about this body. The body is matter, and the spirit soul is Brahman. Athāto brahma jijñāsā. This is human life. One should be inquisitive to know about spiritual life, what is spirit soul. That is the first education. But where is that education? There is no such education. Prahlāda Mahārāja teaches that immediately, from the beginning of life, as soon as one is four or five years old, he should be educated about Brahman. That is called brahma-jijñāsā. Beginning. That is wanted.

(Lecture on SB 1.7.18 -- Vrndavana, September 15, 1976)

LETTERS FROM THE EDITORS



GENERAL EDITOR

By Hanumatpresaka Swami

Producing this Journal, *Viplavaḥ*, is a herculean task. We thank everyone, especially Indira-sakhi Devi Dasi, the current Managing editor. The articles that follow are very weighty and the reader might feel that some editing might have been done to avoid redundancy etc. but we think they will also appreciate that there is just not time for this and that the reader has to do their work also, to get this essential work out.

The tenor and individual character of the authors and articles will certainly be very quickly obvious to the discriminating reader, and they will certainly scan some of the articles and become absorbed in others, agree, disagree and demand more details on others ■



MANAGING EDITOR
Indira-sakhi Devi Dasi

The theme of this issue of *Viplavaḥ* is ‘**Raising Prahlad-like Children: Children’s Education in ISKCON.**’ I am grateful to HH Hanumatpre-saka Maharaja for giving me the opportunity to be the Managing Editor for this issue, particularly because the theme is one that is very close to my heart. As a parent I have seen my girls blossom in the association of devotees while studying in an ISKCON school. Unfortunately, such schools are few and far between. I hope that as a society we take up developing children’s educational programs with the urgent priority that it deserves, so that more and more devotee children get a chance to be well-versed with Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy from a very young age, as recommended by Prahlad Maharaja and Srila Prabhupada.

We have articles from **three leading schools** in ISKCON. The educators emphasize that imparting Vedic knowledge alongside the modern curriculum helps bridge the gaps in a system that is centered solely on the material dimension and provides a more balanced, holistic education. Such schools are not for devotee children alone. In fact, in one sense they are powerful preaching centers.

Apart from formal education in schools, another aspect of children’s spiritual education that we are focusing on in this issue is **exposing the children to the sublime philosophy** of *Srimad-bhagavatam*. Apparently it’s never too **early**, as Aruddha Mataji mentions in her article: “In London, some parents have formed a ‘Baby Bhagavatam’ group where they teach *Srimad Bhagavatam* to children aged 3-6 in fun and engaging ways.” It is wonderful to see the positive effect that *Srimad-bhagavatam* is having on innumerable children around the world on a day-to-day basis. Fittingly, our ‘**Book Review**’ section evaluates Aruddha Mataji’s multi-volume *Srimad-Bhagavatam* study guide for children which is being used in many ISKCON schools and Sunday Schools.

We also have articles discussing **Sunday School challenges**, homeschooling strategies and online education for children. **Virtual education** is specially relevant in the current world health crisis that is preventing traditional face-to-face interaction between educators and students. In this context we are also happy to announce the ministry’s collaboration with **Varnasrama College Online**. Included in this issue is a report on the Ministry of Education’s **annual international educational symposium** that was held in Sri Dham Mayapur in February 2020.

It is said that the youth is the future. We are pleased to introduce ‘**The Voice of the Youth**’ in this issue, a section focusing on the realizations of the next generation devotees in ISKCON - their hopes and aspirations, their expectations and disappointments, and their determination to continue the mission of our beloved founder acarya. In this issue two dynamic young devotees share their experience of undergoing education in ISKCON.

I am grateful to all the devotees who have worked behind the scenes to produce this issue. I am thankful to Chetan Hazare Prabhu for his suggestions regarding the structure and content of the journal. Thank you to Caitanya Prasad Prabhu for helping in so many ways from proofreading to sourcing photographs, and in general for being enthusiastic to serve.

We hope that this issue is useful and inspiring for devotees engaged in pushing on Srila Prabhupada’s revolution through education. Hare Kṛṣṇa ■



HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PANCH KOSHA VIKAS (BHAKTIVEDANTA MODEL SCHOOL, PUNE)



By Tulsi Das

About us

The Bhaktivedanta Model School was an initiative started in 2011 by parents seeking a more wholesome, holistic approach to their child's education. Many of the teachers, including our Director who heads the management committee, are parents of children currently enrolled in our school. This helps our educators develop a more personal bond with each student, making every classroom a home where our children are comfortable to learn and grow.

The school currently has a roll of 190 students, with a staff of 24 teachers dedicated to giving our students the best of both worlds. Srila Prabhupada easily blended eastern wisdom with western technology. We teach modern academics steeped in Vedic culture. Our vision is "To nurture future generations by sowing seeds of greatness within the soil that is Vedic culture while remaining relevant to the world around us." We do this by incorporating the "Pancha Kosha Vikas" which fully satisfy the holistic development of our students. This is taught alongside a CBSE (India's Central Board of Secondary Education) curriculum, enriched with additional Vedic subjects to make it "CBSE+". In an effort to make these methods even more academically sound, the school is in the process of developing its own books for various levels to achieve our vision.



Bhaktivedanta Model School's daily schedule is filled with Vedic/cultural activities with the goal of bringing our students closer to the lotus feet of Lord Sri Krishna. Sastra classes, daily *aratis*, BG sloka recitation, *Ramayan* reading, SB discussions, and ecstatic festival celebrations are just some of the activities we engage our students in to keep their minds Krishna conscious at all times.

A focus on the Vedic perspective is the methodology we adhere to when teaching any academic subjects. Be it Science, Math or Social Sciences students are given both a Vedic and modern perspective, in this way we balance both the spiritual and mundane most effectively.

Our Philosophy

A good education should cater to the all-round development of a child, from body, mind to soul. When the development is organic and gradual, it brings out the true nature of a child, and remains with them throughout their growth. Vedic literatures, especially the *Taitariya Upanishad*, therefore talk about the development of the 5 layers of every child. These 5 layers are called "Panch Kosha Vikas." The Bhaktivedanta Model School places a heavy emphasis on these teachings, incorporating it into every phase of our children's learning and development process. A quick overview of these 5 important koshas is given below.

Annamaya Kosha:

Ayurveda describes this body in great detail as made up of the seven *dhatus*, three *doshas* and three *malas*. The principle of utility and ability of the body depends upon how well it is developed. A weak and underdeveloped body will not be able to perform any of its assigned duties – material or spiritual. For this, *yukta ahar* and *vihar* are prescribed: yogasanas and exercise, proper diet, sleep, etc. Any offsets at this level will require correction.



This *kosha* spans the age group of 0-9 years. (The age limits are indicators with a margin of 2-3 years) As per medical science, the brain and lungs develop fully by the age of 7 and the heart at 9. So giving proper nourishment and exercise in early years of schooling is of utmost importance, much more so than the 3 Rs of education. Neglecting this has resulted in problems like early onset of physical ailments, mental diseases, and an overall degenerated lifestyle. Why? Because the education system that has created today's youth did not pay enough attention to diet and exercise during *annamaya kosha*. A child needs extensive physical workouts to develop his lungs, increase circulation and develop flexibility. But imagine a child who only sits with

books, or worse, an electronic device, for hours daily from age 4 to 8, how would his body cope up with the strains of later life? It is no wonder then that these organs fail in their 30s, 40s or 50s. Consider

the example of a butterfly - if someone takes pity on the struggling creature and assists it in breaking free of the chrysalis, then the growth of that butterfly remains stunted for life. But when the struggle is its own, only then will a fully-developed, healthy butterfly emerge. Same is the case with children.

The body is our vehicle to success, so we need to develop and take care of it. The one who exemplifies that I am not this body, but the body is mine to work with, has experienced a fully developed *annamaya kosha*.



Pranamaya Kosha:

This *kosha* is subtler than, and works independently of, the *annamaya kosha*. It is because of the *pranamaya kosha*, or the living force, that the body gets the ability to work. Respiration, secretion and circulation of fluids, digestion, sensory perception, speech and excretion are the major functions of this *kosha*, which are carried out by the different vital airs in our body as Srila Prabhupada mentions in BG 4.27.



This *kosha* roughly covers the age group of 7-12 years. It is due to the *pranamaya kosha* that one's physical stamina develops, and continuous regeneration of the body takes place. The body remains functional, capable of interacting with the environment as well as living entities around it. The symptoms of life are rooted here. Being subtler than the gross body, this *kosha* maintains control over it, and hence plays a vital role in human development. It also plays an important part in the development of the other *koshas*, for example, development of the *udana vayu* ensures proper functioning of the intellect, skills, etc.

Manomaya Kosha:

The five senses and their controller – the mind – constitute this *kosha*. These elements help us interact with the outside world. We experience the dualities of like/dislike, attachment/revulsion, etc. The idea of the universe, the identity of the self and its relationship with the Creator and His creation, our thoughts and emotions, etc. have their roots in this *kosha*. Ignorance, knowledge and the cognitive mind are its different aspects.



The age group for this *kosha* is 9-14 years. This *kosha* is extremely important, for it is in the mind that the value system of a child develops. Having strong bodies and vitality, but using it for *adharmik* goals would be akin to creating Duryodhanas. Inspirations, idealism and role models take birth in this *kosha*. Hence, imbibing stories of great heroes from the *shastras*, demonstrating clearly the dualities of life is of tremendous benefit at this stage. Let the children be inquisitive - a knowledgeable facilitator, who also emulates good behaviour, can lay a solid foundation and spark dreams in these little minds.

Efforts should be taken to reduce the influence of *rajas* and *tamas* and increase *sattva guna* to develop this *kosha*. The difference between permanence and impermanence should be made clear. Attachment to sense objects, as well as those under the control of their senses, will weaken the mind. An impure mind leads one to the path of ignorance and ultimate destruction. Purification and development of this *kosha* to its utmost capacity proves to be a major milestone in transforming man into an efficient, righteous being.

Vijnanamaya Kosha:

This *kosha* sees its onset at the age of about 14. The intelligence constitutes the *vijnanamaya kosha*. A child's power of discrimination develops due to his intelligence. Intelligence creates a reflection of the world and makes it relatable to us. We can explore the world around us through imagination, conceptualization, memory and understanding, which are honed by the intellect.

Analyzing and synthesizing are two important activities to be performed in this age group. Observing the diverse aspects of life, and yet acknowledging their integration is essential. Children of this age are naturally curious. They should be encouraged to ask 'why' and 'how' about everything, and stimulated to think and respond differently to various narratives they come across. The nature of the soul can be established as a result of such inquiry. This acts as the stepping stone to the next and final level - the *anandamaya kosha* – the ultimate aim of human life.



Anandamaya Kosha:

The joy derived from our divine connection are rooted in the *anandamaya kosha*. This *kosha* covers all the states of consciousness – waking, dreaming, deep sleep and *samadhi*. Far-sightedness and the experience of extreme agony and bliss are the different aspects of it. In the perfected stage it would encompass eight symptoms of ecstasy. ISKCON aims at mainly deals with this *kosha*.



This *kosha* helps in the development of compassion and love for all living entities. The *sat*, *cit* and *ananda* nature of the soul can be understood at this level, and hence our relationship with God can be established. It is at this stage that

imparting devotional practices such as chanting, meditation, deity worship etc will be of maximum benefit. The success of this *kosha* is the fructification of our *bhakti* at the *prema* stage – the ultimate, love of God.

Conclusion:

Once the *anandamaya kosha* sets in, the strengths and limitations of every individual can be assessed. One can know one's own mindset, identifying his role in society, thus paving the way to self-realisation. Exceptional ones like Prahlad Maharaj will anyway take to the highest *kosha* from early childhood and perfect himself. But one who is unable to attain the highest goal can still follow the path of *dharma*, be principle-centered in whatever he does and contribute for the betterment of society. He does not become a sinful enjoyer of the senses and remains a big asset to the Krishna consciousness movement. The 3 *purusharthas* of *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* can be worked on at appropriate levels so that *moksha* and *bhakti* can be easily achieved. And this is how the holistic education of a child is complete.

The Vedic body of knowledge helps us with this. We thus need to pay more attention to integrate this concept into our current education systems by which an ordinary child also attains success in this life and the next, which is the sole purpose of the Panchakosha methodology.

About author:

Tulsi das aka Tushar Gaikwad is a mechanical engineer by profession working in a Tata group of companies as Sr. Project Manager and also handling responsibility as the Director of the Bhaktivedanta Model School, Pune ■

PREACHING THROUGH TEACHING (BHAKTIVEDANTA NATIONAL SCHOOL, MAYAPUR)



By Premanjan Das

Srila Prabhupada often quoted this Bengali proverb: *Kaanchaay naa Snuyaale baansh paakle kore thaas thaas*. “If bamboo is not bent in its immature stage, it will not be bent easily once ripened. It will make a strong sound like *thaas thaas*.” The essence of this proverb is that it is far easier to mold a child than a mature adult. This adage is cross cultural, as the English proverb goes: “It is difficult to teach an old dog new tricks”.

Childhood is the ideal period to receive training. This is why both Vedic and modern educational institutions set aside this tender age as the beginning of student life.

Religious establishments throughout the course of history have recognized and taken advantage of the malleability of this age. Even today, there are numerous Christian missionary schools imparting the teachings of the Holy Bible within the soft hearts of children. Even if many of them are not indoctrinated, they develop an innate respect and positive inclination towards Judeo teachings. Our founder Acharya himself attended a Christian missionary college, maintaining a lifelong reverence towards Jesus Christ, whom he considered a direct representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

It is well documented that within India even fanatical Hindus and Muslims have no issue with sending their children to study in Christian missionary schools. On similar lines, we have developed the Bhaktivedanta National School in Sridham Mayapur to accommodate students of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Today the school has well over one hundred Muslims students. They participate in all spiritual classes and cultural programs: chanting *maha-mantra*, dancing in *kirtans* and honoring *mahaprasad*. We also designate the first period every five days in a week exclusively for Sastra



classes. These classes have differing degrees of depth commensurate with the grade of the student. Senior devotees are sometimes invited as guest speakers for these Sastra classes.

While we do put a heavy emphasis on spirituality, we do not do so at the expense of academics. The CBSE board (NCERT) syllabus is taught alongside all our Krsna Conscious themed cultural programs. While all of our students may not become initiated members of our tradition, they will definitely develop a favorable disposition towards Krsna conscious philosophy, creating a better outlook for future preaching efforts. Though young, the children appreciate our rational presentation of a personal God,



reincarnation and everything else our philosophy has to offer. They become disabused of any misconceptions accrued from a childhood spent alongside fanatic preachers within their community.

We have 49 teachers and 30 maintenance staff to help give our 670 students the best of both worlds. The school facilitates learning from Pre-KG all the way to STD 10. Many of these classes are offered in two sections, as boys and girls are separated from class six onwards. Bhaktivedanta National School was established in 2003, with the assistance of HH Bhakti Purusottama Swami. HG Rameswar Pra-

bhu, who has sadly passed on, was a regular donor and staunch supporter of our school. By his mercy our school will soon teach classes all the way up to 12th standard, with the addition of three branches (Science, Commerce and Arts).

People from multiple backgrounds across various communities are expressing a greater interest in Krishna Consciousness, embracing it far quicker than ever before. This effect can be multiplied if we also begin to open missionary schools in every part of the world.

HH Bhakti Purusottama Swami has taken the initiative to open many branches of schools in different parts of India, especially in tribal belts where conversion to other religions is a daily affair. The ready adoption of other religions by people from the seven states of North East India, widely known as the Seven Sisters, can be solely attribut-



ed to the effectiveness of these missionary schools. We should therefore follow suit and begin focusing on a similar approach, so that we too may enjoy the success other institutions have reaped.

Recently, the government of Tripura (one of the Seven Sisters) has granted us control of 20 schools, along with the freedom to run them in a Krishna conscious manner. What a great success!

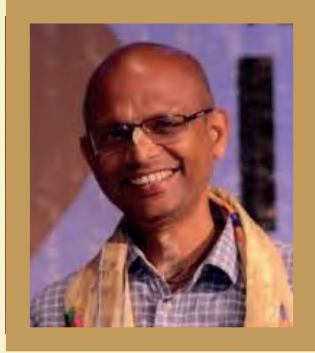
In conclusion, we should place a greater emphasis on spreading Krsna consciousness through teaching, and judging by the efficacy of these missionary schools, our endeavor will surely be met with resounding success. Of course, we should only do so while bearing in mind the instruction of Srila Prabhupada. We are only interested in opening schools if there is an active capacity to preach Krishna consciousness, not otherwise.

Please see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYAeAVEn9bw&feature=youtu.be> for more details about the activities at Bhaktivedanta National School, Mayapur ■



THE SCHOOL EDUCATION – AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

(BHAKTIVEDANTA GURUKULA AND INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, VRINDAVAN)



By **Dr Laxmidhar Behera (Lila Purusottama Das)**
Professor, Department of Electrical Engineering, IIT Kanpur

Seers of the past advocated an education that bestowed upon one freedom from nescience. In modern education, the primary objective has been to impart skills that will further our children along the path of their chosen career. We teach history to enable students to understand human behavior. Science is taught to understand the physical world. Mathematics is taught to quantify the world around us. We use language to describe the world. Human creativity is nurtured through arts and culture. Despite all our endeavors, we have failed to create people of character. This article will critically analyze the model of education that has been accepted as standard worldwide. It shall then propose an integrative model of education, focused on the holistic development of children.

Failure of Modern Education System

Children today have been dubbed iKids, due to the rapid acceleration of consumer technology and the explosion of information that has accompanied it. Although they have access to inconceivable amounts of knowledge, through mediums such as iPhones and tablets, they still have little experience of the real-world. A teacher at the school my daughter attends, related to me that when questioned as to the source of milk, most children answered that it came from shops instead of cows. This is a symptom of the systemic failure that has led the modern youth to adopt a more self-centric view.



The success of science, and the technological advancement it has promoted, is largely responsible for the present trend of education in schools and Universities. Perez¹ has delineated five major technological transformations beginning with the industrial revolution and ending with the current age of information and telecommunications. According to a study conducted by IBM research, emigration from villages into cities has increased at such a drastic rate that city population worldwide has superseded village population in 2007. Because of these trends, the main emphasis of modern education has been to sustain city life.

However, we need to examine the impact that such technological developments have had on the lives of people in general to understand whether it should be the primary focus of children's education.

Breakdown of Family Unit, No self-sufficiency

Since the advent of the industrial revolution in the 18th century, many people have been displaced from their land and are forced to work in crowded city factories. Strong family ties, self-sufficiency

¹ Carlota Perez, The Advance of Technology and Major Bubble Collapses: Historical Regularities and Lessons for Today, in Engelsberg Seminar on "The future of capitalism Ax:son Foundation, Sweden, June 2010, <http://www.carlotaperez.org>



and the right to occupy land have been replaced with dubious tenancy of land, dependency on trade and a weakening of the family unit.

The family unit is shown to be even more vulnerable today with soaring divorce rates. The rate of teenage suicides has increased manifold. People of modern society are either heavily mortgaged to banks or paying high rents. Not too long ago, Indian villages used to be self-sufficient. No one can be self-sufficient in a world governed by free trade, as the majority of resources fall into the hands of a few, greedy capitalists.

The Manipulation of Genetically Modified Products

A great threat to the world has been imposed by a few individuals, who want to control the entire food and textile industry through genetically modified (GM) seeds and animals. Genetically modified crops are dependent on pesticides, and contaminate organic and heritage seeds that have sustained people for thousands of years. GM is a taxation on everyone, because a patent will be on every seed, and the seeds will be designed to become sterile the following year. The greedy corporations and individuals who want control over our food, water and land, are uncaring to the irreversible damage their products are wreaking on the environment. These modern developments are not highlighted in school curriculum. Rather, in an insidious manner, children are trained in genetics so that they can be exploited by such unscrupulous individuals at a later date.

Exploitative Mentality

The 17th century scientific revolution has shifted science from a focus of understanding nature to one of manipulating nature, i.e. power. Science's emphasis on manipulating nature inevitably translates to manipulating people. In the name of science, misconceptions are being propagated to mislead people, the youth in particular. One can refer to *Science's First Mistake*² to illuminate the many illusions deployed in the name of science. It is not that scientific methodologies were non-existent during the pre-modern era. Rather, science was embedded into the lifestyle of ancient India, to facilitate people toward the path of simple living and high thinking. For example, the Indian broom is ingeniously designed so that it can clean floor while not killing any ants and other insects. Whereas, the modern vacuum cleaner cleans the floor while also killing ants and other insects.

Disparate Distribution of Prosperity

Advances in technology are not equitably shared within society. People with money are afforded a far greater opportunity to enjoy the benefits technology, which enables them to acquire even more wealth. A prominent example, John D. Rockefeller, the richest businessman in American history, owned a significant part of the country's GDP, due to his monopolization of the oil industry. The same fate has befallen India, with a major portion of the GDP owned by a few business conglomerates. Power and wealth are intrinsically tied together. Unfortunately, war has and will continue to be the driving force behind technology and innovation.

It can be therefore be concluded, that the entire education system worldwide is sacrificing our children to serve the interests of a few capitalists and factories, who are dedicated to producing tools of destruction and reaping the profits they sow.

² Ian O Angell and DS Demetis, *Science's First Mistake*, Bloomsbury, USA, 2010

Scientific Concepts in the Vedas

In the Vedas, many amazing scientific propositions are described. For example, Lord Brahma's life span is declared to be 311 trillion 40 billion years – a very large number, even by the standards of the modern astronomical time scale. The diameter of the universe in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is stated to be 4 billion miles, and unit of time is calculated as a measure of atomic vibration (Matreya's teaching to Vidura). Vedic cosmology provides models that can be used to predict lunar and solar eclipses, along with planetary positions.

There is a historical narration in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* in which Kardama Muni travelled in a space-ship across the universe, accompanied by his wife Devahuti. Kardama's space-mansion had a lake in which the artificial swans were so life-like that real swans sported with them. Nuclear weapons were also used in the great Mahabharata battle of Kurukshetra. There is a wonderful narration in Vishnu Purana where Markendeya Rishi contemplates infinity: if *only one jiva* (individual living being) is delivered to the spiritual world within the duration of one *kalpa* (one kalpa being 4.3 million years) even then, infinite *jivas* must have returned back to Godhead. How is it that this material creation still has infinite *jivas*?

It is prudent to present such scientific concepts in our education curriculum – not in a dogmatic style – but in a method that will encourage our children to challenge their scientific creativity. This will help our future generation in two ways. Since Vedic literature like *Srimad-Bhagavatam* emphasizes on Absolute devotion to Krishna, the personality of Godhead, students will imbibe top-most characters. When these students are blessed to encode the scientific truths given in these literatures, such a science will foster synergy among all aspects of creation – from all forms of living entities, even to natural creations such as hills, forests and rivers. It is indeed possible that such a science will inspire people to adopt a life of minimal needs, while also contemplating on the goal of life, which encompasses abstract subjects such as nature of spirit and matter.

The Need of the Hour

Actual science comprises both the study of spirit and the study of matter. Science of matter should be pursued as a sub-goal of the science of spirit. All living beings have a symbiotic relationship with each other, and there is a science which leads to a life of harmony and synergy. All forms of knowledge spring from the Absolute Person. Thus, in all previous Vedic ages, society adopted a science built on a foundation of spiritual values.

Both the animal and plant kingdom need to be preserved and expanded, so that crucial water resources such as rivers, lakes and ponds will be in balance. Instead of pushing everybody to an urban-centric lifestyle, villages have to be supported through sustainable cow protection, organic farming, natural water harvesting, and energy management. Knowledge generation is a key component to achieve these objectives.

In this era, most *goshalas* (cow husbandry facilities) are maintained through charity, and are deemed economically unviable. Science of cow-protection should foster a complementary use of cow-products in terms of diary items, medicine and energy while also giving cows access to enough grazing pasture. Considering the present environmental crisis, scientific methodologies should work toward making organic farming economically sustainable. The health care system needs to be restructured towards developing healthy, sustainable life-styles with ultimate goal of developing Prema, our innate love of God.

Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International School – An Example of Integrative Holistic Education System



Bhaktivedanta Gurukula was in 1975 founded by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, in the holy *dhama* of Vrindavana. The author of this article has been fortunate to run this school with the help of some dedicated IIT Kanpur graduates since 2010. The school is situated in a land of 60 acres. It is a boys' boarding school with 280 students.

On this land, we grow everything organically. Our students are provided with organic milk, organic wheat, rice and a host of organic vegetables.

Students are imparted holistic education that positively impacts their life style and character. The school logo has four pillars of *dharma* – *satya* (truthfulness), *daya* (compassion), *tapa* (austerity) and *saucha* (cleanliness). All residents of the school campus – teachers and students – take a vow that they shall adhere to these four pillars of *dharma* by: abstaining from meat eating (to preserve the principle of *daya*), avoiding all types of intoxicants (to preserve the principle of *tapa*), leading an honest life-

style devoid of any gambling (to preserve the principle of *satya*) and abstaining from illicit sex (to preserve the principle of *saucha*). However, the four pillars are not limited to these vows. For example, truthfulness is cultivated in students by encouraging them to always say “no” to copying in the examination. Students are encouraged to pursue celibate life to emphasize on internal cleanliness. Ours is a pure vegetarian campus free from smoking and alcohol.

All students memorize *Bhagavad-gita* verses. There are students in our school who can recite the entire 700 verses of the *Srimad Bhagavad-gita* without any pause. Our teachers incorporate the instructions of the *Bhagavad-gita* into our lessons. Students regularly hear from their teacher's topics such as the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Since our school is affiliated to ICSC, we have the freedom to select our course syllabus until the 8th standard. We take full advantage of this by teaching English to our students through the Krishna book written by Srila Prabhupada. The energy of our students is on another magnitude when they celebrate festivals such as Sri Krishna Janmastami and Ramanavami with great pomp and grandeur. We conduct quizzes, essay and debate competitions based on our Vedic heritage and literature. The cultural programs such as group dances, Kirtan, and dramas display the



inherent talent of our students. Fine arts are another medium through which the students express their devotion. We also conduct many retreats – both spiritual and mundane – within different parts of country, such as Rishikesh, Mayapur, Jagannatha Puri and Chitrakut.

While our students are instilled with values through the cultural upbringing within campus, their academic needs are taken care of in a very innovative manner. Activity based learning is one of the core strengths of this school. During teachers' training, before the start of the school session every year, we give educators very challenging projects that are relevant to society. Some of the projects that we assign to our teachers are as follows:

Design a water filter and demonstrate water qualities.

Design a bio-gas unit that produces electricity.

Design and fabricate a low-cost house.





Create a raised soil bed of 4ft x 40 ft size and grow multi-crop using *jivamrita* (natural fertilizer based upon cow by products) .

Technology for waste management.

Puppet dance using Lego kits.

The objective is to empower teachers to engage students when they participate in such projects. Our teachers are also trained to teach the nuances of biology, chemistry and physics through laboratory experiments. We have also built an observatory where teachers engross students in star grazing at the night. While entertaining, our students do not waste the academic opportunity as they also collect the data of planetary position for research.





We make our student contemplate the basic building blocks of this Universe. We teach them about the many symbiotic relationships that humans have with other creatures. For instance, during organic farming, they learn that the microbes and earthworm residing in the soil make it fertile, and that cow-dung and cow-urine are the key ingredients for organic farming.

Another important aspect of our school is controlled physical exercise. Sports is a great source of entertainment while Yoga is a source for calming the mind. Compounding this with the pure vegetarian food offered to Lord Krishna as breakfast, lunch and dinner, our boys remain pure in body, mind and spirit.

Through cultural transformation, our students are taught to not be greedy, proud and how to serve with a self-less character. Their teachers, having renounced lucrative professional careers, become their role-models in developing an upstanding character. With a spacious campus, surrounded by many trees and flowers, our students radiate with inner happiness.

With Lord Krishna, the Absolute Truth at the center of all of our activities, our students always feel divinely protected.

Conclusion

“Learned circles have positively concluded that the infallible purpose of the advancement of knowledge, namely austerities, study of the Vedas, sacrifice, chanting of hymns and charity, culminates in the transcendental descriptions of the Lord, who is defined in choice poetry.” (SB 1.5.22) Srila Prabhupada writes in purport:

“Human intellect is developed for advancement of learning in art, science, philosophy, physics, chemistry, psychology, economics, politics, etc. By culture of such knowledge the human society can attain perfection of life. This perfection of life culminates in the realization of the Supreme Being, Krishna.”

Thus, it is important to acknowledge that all forms of education must enlighten an individual in some aspect of the Absolute Truth. To this end, educational skills such as science, language and art must be developed to keep a healthy balance between city and village life, whilst maintaining a synergy with nature and the environment. However, the emphasis must remain in fostering a theistic character within our children. It is an ambitious challenge for educators to design such a model, so that the world may embrace this concept one day. This implies that once graduated from such schoolings, our children will accept social, scientific and global responsibilities as their mission – to create a conducive environment for all to accept Bhagavata principles. This will make all seers – Adi Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Nimbarka Swami, Madhvacharya, Sri Chaitanya Deva and His Divine Grace AC. Bhaktivedanta Swami very happy ■



THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING SRIMAD-BHAGAVATAM WITH OUR CHILDREN



By Aruddha Devi Dasi





My journey in education began with the homeschooling of my two sons. My motivation was the disappointment I felt toward the public-school system that they attended for the first three years of their childhood. The central theme of our homeschool curriculum was the study of *Srimad Bhagavatam*. After several years of education based on Srila Prabhupada's books, we noticed that the process was working, the children were doing well both academically and spiritually. Homeschooling was a fairly new concept within ISKCON during this time, so I was invited by interested devotees to conduct homeschooling seminars, in which I would share effective principles and techniques of educating at home, all while emphasizing the study of *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

After guiding homeschooling parents for many years, I had the desire to connect with Gurukula teachers, and the parents of children attending public schools. So, I adjusted the focus of my seminars from homeschooling to Krishna conscious parenting in general. However, the key concepts remained unchanged—the need for a good home environment, spiritual and academic success through the study of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, and solidifying children's faith by involving them in preaching programs.

I soon realized the heart of my seminars was the study of *Srimad Bhagavatam* for children. This is something all parents can practice with their child to mitigate the effects of a materialistic education. Many parents wanted to give their child something beyond a public-school education, yet felt unable to shoulder the heavy responsibility of homeschooling. They were however, eager to learn an easy method of teaching *Srimad Bhagavatam* to their children, somehow managing to squeeze it into their after-school or weekend schedule. They were inspired by the positive results such study evokes within the lives of children, who become well situated spiritually and even in areas seemingly unrelated to devotional life.

I found satisfaction in encouraging parents to study *Bhagavatam* with their family, regardless of how they chose to educate their children. The response has been amazing, the results life changing for many devotee families. A few years ago, **Bhaktivedanta Gurukula** in Vrindavan alongside **Sri Mayapur International School** both introduced the study of *Srimad Bhagavatam* as part of their daily curriculum for primary and middle school children. They used the resources provided in *Srimad Bhagavatam: A Comprehensive Guide for Young Readers*. This series of guidebooks is the result of a multi-year effort from parents around the world, who work tirelessly together in creating study resources for every chapter of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. These parents come from a variety of backgrounds: teachers, counselors, and stay-at-home mothers. The result? An innovative collection of material on every chapter of Cantos 1, 2 and 3. The creators taught their own children with the curriculum as they were designing it, experiencing wonderful results firsthand. Work is being done to provide a similar guide for Canto 4.

Parvesh Prabhu, English teacher for grade VII, shares the enthusiasm he feels from his students: "It gives me a sense of accomplishment when I see my students understand and appreciate what they learned from *Srimad Bhagavatam*, clapping their hands whenever they find proofs amazing, and en-



thusiastically volunteering to join in discussions. It truly is a wonderful feeling when they appreciate what I have taught them, not just in an academic sense but also general life lessons they have learned from study of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*.”

Sri Mayapur International School has also incorporated the daily study of *Srimad Bhagavatam* into their curriculum. They teach *Srimad Bhagavatam* to students in grade 1 all the way upto grade 13. Ganga Priya devi dasi, former vice principal of the school writes: “We are following your methodology from grades 1 to 13. Our children are happy and eager to attend Srimad Bhagavatam Class and our teachers are enthusiastic and inspired when teaching them.”





Temples in USA, Europe, New Zealand and Australia have introduced the teaching of *Srimad Bhagavatam* to children in their Sunday schools with excellent results. In London, some parents have formed a “Baby Bhagavatam” group where they teach *Srimad Bhagavatam* to children aged 3-6 in fun and engaging ways. To help in this endeavor, Vrinda Kishori devi dasi has made beautiful audio renditions of each chapter from the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, now available for all parents and teachers. The book distribution team at San Jose’s temple often distribute the children’s guidebook alongside Srila Prabhupada’s Bhagavatam set in an attempt to encourage families to study the Bhagavatam with their children. I hope many other gurukulas, day schools, and Sunday schools will also make *Srimad Bhagavatam* an integral part of their children’s curriculum.

During the coronavirus lockdown, I’ve been blessed with the opportunity to share my experiences and methods of teaching *Srimad Bhagavatam* to parents and teachers worldwide. Many of them have started a daily routine of studying *Srimad Bhagavatam* with their children, while others take a gradual approach, doing three days a week, just weekends, or even once a week. Regardless, it has been a joyful experience for everyone, finding answers to many difficult spiritual concepts through analogies and examples. They learn the art of teaching *Srimad Bhagavatam* in layers, giving the children one layer of understanding at a time. They discover how to evoke a child’s curiosity through discussion, then stoke that curiosity to new depths. They gradually begin to notice their child’s dormant ability for introspective thinking and spirited discussion.

We need not skip any part of the Bhagavatam, even mature topics or sections that are seemingly violent. Rather, we need to give children an understanding of the mundane world through a spiritual perspective. After all, our children are being exposed to such things every day, so it’s preferable that they learn about reality through the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Everything in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* is transcendental, and can therefore never be harmful. Topics such as death, descriptions of hellish planets, and the fateful future of *grhamedhi* life can be discussed in a manner that is starkly truthful, whilst encouraging reflection and compassion to keep the child hopeful of their own future. They should also learn to distinguish between blind faith, and faith derived from *sastra*.

How do we instill both the fearfulness of material life and the quality of fearlessness within our child? *Srimad Bhagavatam* teaches by contrast: For example, Hiranyakasipu was the biggest terrorist in history, while Prahlada was the greatest devotee. We can live in this world of self-serving leaders whilst following the example of Prahlada Maharaja. Through scripture, children will develop an understanding of the present condition of society; the struggles of living in a family, within a society of devotees, and living in the world at large. They can learn how to apply the teachings of *Srimad Bhagavatam* to every situation according to time, place and circumstance.

Presently, I teach *Srimad Bhagavatam* to about 100 children online, between the ages of 10-16, in groups of ten to twelve. Many of these children have been learning *Srimad Bhagavatam* from me for the past five years. I’ve personally witnessed the change in their consciousness, how their faith in Krs-



na and their attachment to Bhagavatam is becoming stronger and deeper every day. One parent writes: “My daughter is always looking forward to the classes. Sometimes when we are out and she gets late in joining the class, she becomes restless because she understands she is missing something precious.” Another parent wrote: “The study of *Srimad Bhagavatam* and the principles of Krishna consciousness have helped my daughter and I gain an understanding of life’s deeper meaning. We relish the taste of this sublime literature.” These are excerpts from just two of the hundreds of letters I receive from parents appreciating the change in their children, and themselves from the study of this great literature. All this gain is the result of studying *Srimad Bhagavatam* just once a week. One can only imagine the results if they study Bhagavatam with their children every day or even several times a week.

In the last few years, my efforts have been focused to build confidence in parents and teachers, impressing upon them the urgent need to study *sastra* with their children before they mature and their consciousness becomes materially conditioned. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than seeing their amazement for an insightful story or particular bit of philosophy when reading the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. The challenge comes in taking a discussion from “what happened?” to “why did it happen?”. In this way, children can enter deeply into Krishna’s pastimes, and understand His amazing quality of dealing with every devotee uniquely. Children love to debate, compete, and experience a good challenge! We can use these tendencies to give *maya* a good fight and root out impersonalism, mental speculation, concocted religious theories and bogus scientific claims. We study Bhagavatam in a lively and easy way, according to the child’s level of maturity, so that it remains easily digestible.

Over the years I have realised that unless children study Prabhupada’s books carefully, strengthening their intelligence through *Srimad Bhagavatam*, their other devotional activities may not be sufficient in maintaining their faith and identity as devotees, particularly as they grow older and face the temptations material life has to offer.

Whether parents are homeschooling or elect a public-school education, the key is to take shelter of Srila Prabhupada through his nectarean books. The purports are his inconceivably deep realizations, and by studying them we are gifted a small taste of that sublime ecstasy in our conditional state. Prabhupada said that *Srimad Bhagavatam* gives all knowledge completely. *Srimad Bhagavatam* addresses every psychological situation in the world.

Socrates once said: “An unexamined life is not worth living” A child who is raised in Krishna consciousness with study of *Srimad Bhagavatam* gets the opportunity to examine his/her life and live by the principles delineated in the Bhagvatam effortlessly. This applies not just to the children, but also the teachers and parents who benefit from such study. Our enthusiasm to teach and their enthusiasm to learn increase daily.

Srila Prabhupada has a strong desire that *Srimad Bhagavatam* be taught to children. He writes: “Our students specifically, they should take care of reading *Srimad Bhagavatam*. We have therefore prescribed in our school, Dallas....” “Even astronomy, astrology, politics, atomic theory, everything is there. Therefore if we study *Srimad-Bhagavatam* very carefully, then you will get all knowledge completely.” At another time he said: “Throughout the whole world, whatever knowledge is there, is in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*....If one simply reads this *Srimad Bhagavatam*, his education is the topmost. If one studies *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, he is well versed in every subject matter.”

We humbly request all parents and teachers to take up the study of Srila Prabhupada’s *Bhagavatam* with the children in their care, and thus experience the transcendental effects firsthand. We pray for their blessings so that we can complete this task of producing children’s study guides for the remaining Cantos. Lastly, we pray that Srila Prabhupada will be pleased by our humble endeavor.

Ordering Information:

To order copies of *Srimad Bhagavatam: A Comprehensive Guide for Young Readers*, please visit www.amazon.com/author/aruddha. At present, there are four books published—Canto 1 Vol. 1, Canto 1 Vol. 2, Canto 2, and Canto 3 Vol. 1. For a copy of *Homeschooling Krishna's Children*, a guidebook for Krishna conscious homeschooling and parenting, please visit www.krishnahomeschool.org. You may also order any of the above books by writing directly to the author at aruddha108@yahoo.com ■

SRIMAD-BHAGAVATAM FOR CHILDREN IN THE MEXICO YATRA

by Gopi-Radha Devi Dasi.

Srimad-Bhagavatam classes for children are having an amazing effect in ISKCON Mexico. First, I was invited to participate with some online classes on the ISKCON Mexico Facebook page. It was a great experience and it helped me to practice interacting with a virtual audience. The class format was simple, we just selected some stories from the Bhagavatam, like the Matsya Avatara and Krishna as 'The Butter Thief'. I complemented the class with power point presentations, with illustrations and photos alluding to the story. During the story I would ask questions and the children, with the help of their parents, would answer through chat.

During my formal training as an educator I learned to organize classes, face-to-face and online. I have a certain inclination for face-to-face classes, but now I realize that there are so many possibilities in the virtual teaching and learning environments. All study modalities have advantages and disadvantages and today teachers have to adapt to the needs of students and present knowledge in an attractive way.

Some devotees and people who had seen the recorded classes on the ISKCON Mexico page asked if we could continue with more classes; so, I decided to join with more devotees - Priya Sakhi from Chile, Dayalini Sita from Cuerámaro and Nikunja Nivasini who currently lives in Mayapur and is a teacher at the Mayapur SMIS International School. For now, we have started with a one-month program of Srimad-Bhagavatam classes on Sunday mornings, supported by Mother Aruddha's book. The transmissions are made through the Zoom platform and we have a WhatsApp group. We are already more than 35 families. We also activated the Anjana Suta Academy Kids Facebook page and from there we publish the classes and share educational content.

My idea is that more devotees know Mother Aruddha's books and can buy them, although, in Mexico it is somewhat difficult due to the change of currency from Mexican pesos to dollars. Govinda Pramodini from Monterrey is working on the Spanish translation of the first book, but it still takes some time to get it printed.

My medium-term project is to do a distance school. It seems difficult, but it really is not. My children study at home and are enrolled in a Catholic school at a distance, which has more than 500 students enrolled and only offers basic education curriculum to be implemented by each family at home. So, I am researching and studying various options, talking to interested devotees and analyzing what would be the best way for us ■

CROSSING OVER THE CHALLENGES IN SUNDAY SCHOOL PREACHING



By **Tarini Radha devi dasi**

Sunday School is a wonderful tool for educating children on a path of spirituality. Every child is born with their individual history and Karma but it is up to us to decorate these fresh minds with goodness and divinity. It would be best if the child could be trained and educated on the path of goodness and divinity all the time, 7 days a week! As such is not possible due to rigidly following the modern school system, at the very least Sunday should be utilised for a connection to the divine.

Challenge 1 – What do I teach?

For some, it is very exciting to set the syllabus to teach. But some prefer to use existing material. Before we explore what to teach, let us see what the main principles we need to convey are.

I am not this body, I am spirit soul

Krishna is the supreme personality of Godhead

Devotional service is the path towards happiness

We want to present a mixture of philosophy, Krishna consciousness and practical service. The mood to inculcate is that anything connected to Krishna gives us happiness. This is to be practically seen in the devotee who is teaching about Krishna.

During the first or second years of Sunday School, we are very comfortable with simple stories from the *Bhagavad-gita*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, *Caitanya Caritamrta*, *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*. Beginning from the third year, new challenges emerge such as –





“I know this story already”

“I know Ramayana and Mahabharata. I saw the TV serials”

“I know ‘all’ about the three basic principles of Bhakti Yoga”

Now, the children begin to lose interest. It is our natural craving to have something new to learn. And children are not interested in delving deeper into the pastimes of Krishna. They are not ready for that yet. What they need still, is just stories.

Stories are exceedingly important for children to advance in their understanding of the world, embrace appropriate behaviour and appreciate Krishna’s sweetness. Be fair – how many times will a child hear the story of Sakshi Gopal, Mrgari, Gopi Chandan or the stories connected to our annual festivals?



Keep in mind that many of these children have been born in devotee families, and have therefore been exposed to these stories since the age of 3 or earlier.

Activities are interesting. Children love them. But activities alone do not transform the heart. Our activities are again, based on the stories that we have already told them at least twice.

So, if you do not provide something new, you will begin to see a drop in attendance after one or two years. How do we solve this problem? I will offer some suggestions at the end of this essay.

Challenge 2 – Fall in Attendance due to an inability to travel

In ISKCON, Sunday school is typically held in the temple. This is actually a very big challenge for parents as well as teachers. Personally, as a Sunday school teacher in the 90s, I could not find satisfaction in the service as children were not regular in attendance because the parents were not regular in attending the Sunday program. Therefore, rather than have a progressive curriculum, I had to have stories and sessions independent of the previous week's classes.

Recently, at a Sunday School Seminar that I conducted in South India, one question posed to me was “How do you manage time as a Sunday School teacher?” When I asked what the problem with handling time was, her response was that it takes three hours of travel to come to the temple because of traffic jams.

Travel time can be avoided for parents as well as teachers by conducting the Sunday School not only in the temple but all over the city. In Chennai, we conduct the Sunday School in 60 units across the city which are all attended by around 500 kids. This has many advantages:

No time lost in travel for the parent or the teacher.

Very easy for devotees to conduct the classes from the comfort of their homes.





Regular attendance as the child can come classes independent of their parent's schedule.

Adults may have reservations about participating in an ISKCON program but they will happily send the child for a spiritual class. So more children join.

In such a setup it may seem that the parents are not coming to the temple, but you will see that within a short period of time the parents gain interest in Krishna through the children, eventually becoming ISKCON members. We have seen several instances where the parents of children have taken up Krishna consciousness, volunteer as Sunday School teachers and take up other services.

Challenge 3 – Fall in Attendance due to seasonal change or exams

Seasonal change and school exams also result in a drop in regular attendance. In Chennai, every December when there are rains and occasional floods, the children lose the routine and stop coming for the Sunday School classes. We solved this issue by planning our annual cultural program ahead of December. We hand out the roles and dialogues for a skit or drama, and begin rehearsing. This gets the children excited, and the parents eager to see their children perform on stage. The prospect of sharing



pictures and videos of their child performing further compounds the parents' enthusiasm. We hold the annual Sunday School cultural program around February or March ahead of school exams.

Challenge 4 – Different batches and age groups

This is a regular challenge as we do not have class rooms to segregate children according to their batch or age. Some ways to handle this are:

Different days of the week for different groups. (The problem here is, that if there are too few children, the fun is much less. Otherwise it is a good arrangement)

Different timings for the same day. (This can be a little difficult for the teacher to organize. But it's feasible, especially if one has many teachers to handle different batches)

Same day, same timings, teach the batches alternately. (With the help of an assistant teacher, while one batch does the lesson, the other batch does the activity. The children do sloka, japa, bhajan together and split according to their batch for lesson/activity. Then come back together for games, arati and prasadam. In this set up, the number of teachers and space required will be less.)

All batches of one age group: same lesson and activity. This fourth option is what we resorted to in Chennai and the teachers have all heaved a sigh of relief. Now we have only two age group divisions: 5-12 and 13-17.

Finding New Stories

Coming back to one of the biggest challenge of finding new stories to teach the children. Here we can turn to the vast volumes of literature given to us by Vyasadeva (the Puranas) and the amazing stories enacted by the devotees of the Lord. The Puranas are a storehouse of knowledge depicted through the pastimes of pure devotees who grace the Earth so rarely. Such stories demonstrate the sweetness of a relationship with Krishna.

After much survey, meditation and research, I have put together a series of nine books called the Glory of India. There are around 200 stories to this collection, enough to last 9 years or more in a weekly program.

The books are titled –

Krishna, the Supreme Hero and the Art of Storytelling. (Children hear the childhood pastimes of Krishna and learn to narrate them skilfully)

God and the Universe. (Children learn the general features of God and how to distinguish Him from demigods, who have only departmental powers)

Avatar. (The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* lists 23 incarnations. Let's learn about them all!)

Divine Nature. (11 Mountains, 7 rivers, 2 islands, ponds such as Radha Kunda and those found in various temples, trees such as the banyan, peepal, tulasi and neem, the clay we apply to our foreheads, etc. All these hold wonderful lessons for us)

Temple Tales. (The deity is most significant in the temple. How did he manifest and why? In this book, we cover 32 temples in South India)

Divine Deities. (This book covers 32 temples in the rest of India)

Sages and Saints. (The seven great sages, the Acharyas and saints who show how Krishna reciprocates the love of his devotees)

Rulers of Bharata. (Outlines the great kings of India who appeared in the lineage of Suryadev and Chandradev, and the values that defined their lives)

Living the *Bhagavad-gita*. (*Bhagavad gita* is a practical book that helps the youth handle growth and emerge victorious like Arjuna)

These books are graded according to the age of the child. I can say with confidence that it will fit ages 5-8, 9-12 and 13-17.

Along with these books, we have also published a song book for children. It comprises a collection of simple Gaudiya bhajans and about 60 English rhymes and songs including those composed by early devotees in ISKCON. A collection of 25 indoor games is available in a document, though frankly, we use only 5 of them regularly.

Certain things are best taught in a mixture of batches and age. For example, Sloka. The very small ones may find it difficult to repeat. But hearing the older children repeat, they pick up quickly. Chanting is also done best in a mixed group. Those that chant well can help the new ones become serious. Singing together is greatly enlivening when the vibrations are loudest. Children will also have a greater variety of friends to choose from. In this way we conduct common features together and segregate only for lessons and activities.

New Titles are attractive for outreach

The Sunday School program should not exclusively target devotee children. We want to connect with all children in wider society. By using different themes each year, new people get attracted. Rather than saying Sunday School, we should instead describe it as an 8 month weekly course on “Avatar” or “Divine Nature” or “Temples of India” etc. It will encourage new pious souls to send their children for the classes, and through the children, our congregation will expand very nicely. We need to follow the mood of Srila Prabhupada and “Think Big” so we can play an instrumental role in Caitanya Mahaprabhu’s plans to inundate the world with Krishna consciousness.

In case you are worried that “new” children may become bad association for devotee children, let me assure you that it is quite beneficial. Devotee children are exposed to devotional life by birth. Other children join and come by choice. This increases the faith of devotee children as they see Krishna consciousness being accepted by outsiders.

If I can be of any assistance to you in improving your Sunday School program, I will be glad to help. You can message me on my Whatsapp number - +919382063234 or email: tariniradha@gmail.com ■



PREPARING DEVOTEE EDUCATORS FOR ONLINE LEARNING & TEACHING



By Prana dasa (B.A, Dip.Ed, Grad Dip.TESSOL, M.Ed)

Although I have experience with both formal and informal delivery of Krishna Conscious curriculum, this article is going to focus on the development of Krishna Conscious online learning as an extra-curricular component. Many of the same principles will apply to both formal and informal settings, however, extra-curricular programs do not demand the same rigour around learning intentions, success criteria and evaluation.

Many, if not all aspects of best practices, in terms of curriculum development and delivery can be achieved through online learning. Having said that, there is no real substitute for face to face exchange between a learner and the teacher. Therefore, the popular contemporary idiom – blended learning. Blended learning seeks to leverage the best of both worlds.

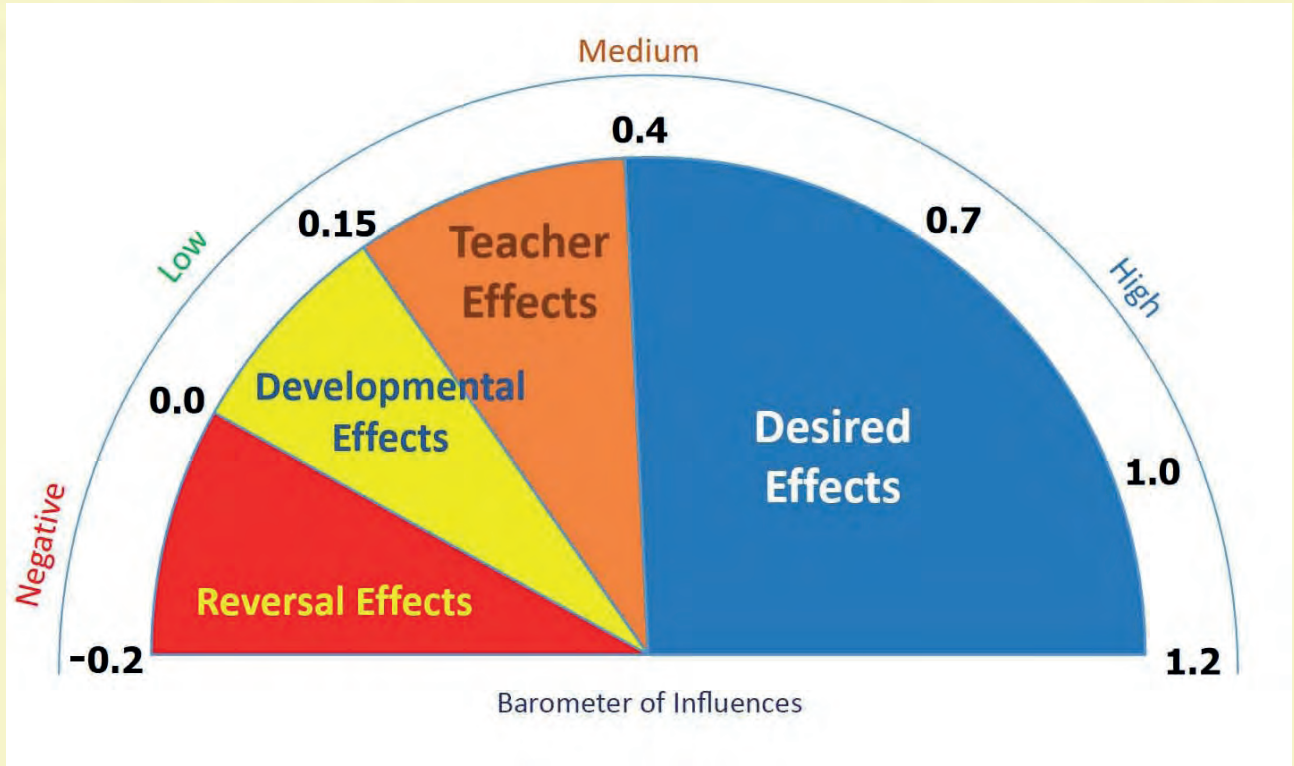
In these rapidly changing times it would seem prudent, if not an absolute requirement, to consider appropriate means by which to present Krishna Consciousness to our children through the medium of web-based services. It is equally important to continue our endeavours to equip teachers with the necessary tools and insights to ensure effective pedagogical practices prevail.

What does effective pedagogy look like and how do we know if we are meeting the requirements of effective delivery? One of the most referenced and acclaimed pieces of research in this regard, over the past decade or so, is the work of Professor John Hattie: Hattie, J. (2009) *Visible Learning*. In his original study, Hattie compiled and minutely analysed research findings from over 240 million students worldwide. This involved over 50,000 research papers – he documented 135 influencers and evaluated their relative effectiveness.

Hattie devised a methodology for gauging effectiveness of an initiative based on a differential of 0.4, which he termed the hinge point. Given that almost any intervention a teacher might implement has some effect on student learning and that in the course of any given year the average student would be expected to progress a calendar year in their academic development, Hattie and others highlighted the need for rigour in the evaluation of classroom interventions.

The hotly debated point here is: what criteria should be used for judging relative effectiveness, what type of data collection and analysis best serves the purpose, and how well suited are various methods to transferability, reliability and validity? According to many critics, this aspect of Hattie's research is highly contestable and for his harshest opponents, fundamentally flawed.

In this paper, I will not deal with the technical aspects of data analysis and interpretation. There is, however, a reasonable degree of concurrence as to the major influencers on effective pedagogy. Where the debate is most heated is in the interpretation of the data. Processes of learning and teaching are extremely complex and always nuanced. It is not surprising that educators debate *ad nauseum* about best practices.



For the purposes of this discussion, I present some consistently highly ranked effective methodologies and evaluate their suitability or adaptability to online delivery of curriculum. I will use our own work in Bhakti Learning as a case study to illustrate possible ways of utilising researched based findings of effective pedagogy in delivering effective Krishna Conscious curriculum online.

Bhakti Learning is an online Krishna Conscious learning program for children between the ages of 5 years and 10 years, with further developments in the pipeline. We have designed content in four subjects: Story, Sloka, Sanskrit, and Pilgrimage. The content is age appropriate and delivered as an annual subscription to our learners.

One of the top-ranking influencers on student achievement in the Hattie research involves appropriately pitched learning, the Hattie category is Piagetian programs. This refers to the work of Jean Piaget, the Swiss psychologist who observed children performing various tasks and documented stages of cognitive development. His developmen-





tal theory has influenced educational programs for almost 100 years.

Any attempt to differentiate curriculum (the primary curriculum) could be said to be rooted in Piagetian developmental psychology. A five-year-old child obviously has significantly different capacity to engage with cognitive, physical, and emotional tasks than a ten-year-old. In general, a ten-

year-old has inherent limitations for certain types of physical, intellectual, and social dealings than does a teenager.

In the Bhakti Learning materials we have so far differentiated according to three broad age groups and we intend to add at least one more and possibly a teenager category in the future. Currently, we differentiate in these three broad categories: 5 years and above, 7 years and above, and 9 years and above.

We have not used a scientific method for distinguishing the content in terms of age readability and phonemic awareness, as you might see in many of the reading systems around the world. We have used common sense and years of experience to determine appropriate content with simplification of vocabulary and sentence structure at each level.

Reading programs, vocabulary programs and comprehension programs each take up separate categories in the Hattie research, and each of them rate highly (above 0.6) according to the hinge point of effectiveness. The reading program we have designed not only differentiates the complexity of the texts but utilises a number of language tasks to support higher levels of comprehension.

We have designed an online version of a highly effective reading comprehension program called a "Three Level Guide". The three levels of comprehension in this system refer to the literal understanding of the text, the capacity to infer meaning from the text and the ability of the reader to apply concepts beyond the text. In the online platform, the first two levels are relatively easy to achieve, the third level requires interaction through discussion.

This is another unique feature we have built into the Bhakti Learning lessons, in all the subjects. The course is not designed to be a substitute for parental engagement with children, rather we have designed a package which creates a rich Krishna Conscious context within which parents are able to engage with their children and assist them to cultivate their bhakti in a fun, interactive and age appropriate way.

Relationships between the teacher and student – (parent and child) maintain a high ranking (0.72) in the Hattie research, as it does in many other research findings in a multitude of educational settings. The idea of the parent as the first teacher is well documented and practically realised in all societies. Children who feel loved, supported, nurtured, and encouraged in their learning will naturally develop a positive attitude to learning and to life in general.

The online platform provides ample opportunities to scaffold learning and to deliver the learning at appropriate levels and appropriate times. Most e-learning software enables teachers and developers to create interactive content including audio narrations, images, video and lots more. While we have stressed parental involvement and personal interaction as a hallmark of our course design, we certainly capitalise on the capacity of e-learning to enable young learners to develop independent learning skills.



There are many other facets of the Hattie research which could be identified as influencers on our approach to providing Krishna Conscious online learning. This article serves as an introduction to developing and providing effective online Krishna Conscious learning for our children. I will leave you with some thoughts on technology in general and web-based learning in particular.

I personally know many devotees in different parts of the world who oppose the concept of online learning. Some consider the use of technology to be harmful to natural development, socialisation, and personal interaction. Others prefer to live a more sattvic, simple way of life in closer proximity to nature and self-sufficiency. And there are some who only see the evil use of technology and how it is destroying the moral fabric of society through the propagation of illicit content and *prajalpa*.

I am writing this article at a time of unprecedented global disruption, disruption on practically every level of human interaction. The Coronavirus pandemic has escalated the need for many to seriously consider the future use of technology and especially the use of web-based tools for learning and teaching. If this was not already a reality within educational institutions it has become a global phenomenon, online education is here to stay.

In the mood of our previous acaryas, and especially in the mood of Srila Prabhupada, who was never the least bit intimidated by technology, I would strongly encourage devotee educators around the world to embrace technology as a learning and teaching tool - to see technology as a product of the material energy that needs to be utilized in Krishna's service. After all, everything in this material world has a connection to Krishna and to see it separate from the Lord is a form of incomplete or false renunciation - *phalgu-vairagya*.

Hare Krishna!

To find out more about Bhakti Learning please visit www.bhaktilearning.com ■

FROM DAUGHTERS TO DEVOTEES: HOMESCHOOLING GIRLS



By Sundari Radhika Devi Dasi

Srila Prabhupada wrote, “That is real affection, to make sure my child get back to Godhead, that is my real responsibility as a parent.” (Letter to Satyabhama, Hyderabad, March 23, 1973) Those of us who have accepted the role of being parents should sincerely endeavor to fulfill this responsibility. The process of nourishing the natural seed of *bhakti* within a child’s heart, through which he or she can ultimately achieve the Lord’s transcendental abode, is often different for boys and girls. Girls tend to be creative, artistic and caring. Furthermore, they can also be more sensitive than boys, thereby requiring extra protection from harmful situations. By carefully nurturing, training, and engaging female children in Krishna Consciousness, parents can transform them from *daughters* to *devotees*.

The process of Krishna Consciousness is so complete, that it can be adapted to each individual’s talents and interests. The world of devotees revolves around the beauty of Radha and Krishna and Vrindavana. Consequently, girls can transform their creative pursuits into devotional service. They can color, draw, and paint pictures of the Lord’s pastimes and incarnations. To improve their technique, they can also attend classes on drawing and art, all the while keeping their main goal of serving Krishna in mind. Furthermore, girls can improve their artistic intelligence by studying beautiful pictures of the deities around the world and appreciating their features, smiles, and ornamentation. In terms of access to resources, iskcondesiretree.net provides children with a plethora of coloring pictures and craft ideas to work with.



Another devotional and artistic engagement for girls is to dress dolls of Radha and Krishna. It involves buying various ornaments, necklaces, bangles, anklets, turban cloths, centerpieces, etc. Girls can also make these items themselves. Apart from satisfying their artistic tendencies, dressing the deity awards female children valuable training on how they should handle the deity and increases their attachment to the Lord instead of Barbies and American Girl dolls. As Krishna says in BG 2.59:

*viṣayā vinivartante
nirāhārasya dehinaḥ
rasa-varjam raso 'py asya
param dṛṣṭvā nivartate*

Though the embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness.

Music is also an integral part of our movement. As we sing every day at our homes and temples, girls will be naturally inclined to learn more about singing and playing musical instruments. There are many teachers available worldwide, to facilitate training in vocals and various musical instruments. In the beginning, girls are excited to learn new instruments or new songs. But the training should not just be limited to skills or presentation. Parents should ensure that their daughters fully understand the meaning of the songs they learn and the purpose of their singing, the satisfaction of Krishna. One has to learn to call out for the mercy of the Lord when alone or in a crowd and not be overly distracted by the numbers of people who participate. Just like a cook inadvertently transfers his or her consciousness into the preparations he/she makes, a singer also communicates the mood with which he/she performs kirtan to the masses who listen. There are countless bhajans of our previous Acaryas and many different ways of singing Hare Krishna *mahā-mantra*. One can use these resources to enter into a prayerful mood, purify one's own consciousness, and preach to others.



Learning classical dance-forms like Bharata Natyam, Kuchipudi, Odyssey, etc. is also a good physical engagement for girls. There are many dances that are related to the pastimes of Krishna and His incarnations that girls can perform. But this area of dancing must be handled extremely carefully. Otherwise, it can quickly carry girls away and cause them to overly concentrate on their bodies. The

best thing is to exclusively limit the girls' dance performances to preaching or temple programs and nowhere else.

Cooking is another service a girl can learn to do. In their childhood, girls can watch their mothers preparing various culinary dishes. Gradually, they can help make simple things like cookies and bread. Later when they are nine or ten years old, they can cook a meal once a week, to receive training in other aspects of cooking such as cutting, cleaning, precision, multi-tasking, and time-management. Most importantly, cooking is not complete without learning to control the senses and think of Krishna while cooking for Him. Once sufficiently trained, girls can cook simple preparations like a fruit chutney or salad for visiting sannyasis. They can help other matajis involved in cooking services at their temple kitchens as well.

Ultimately, all these services are auxiliary to the main service of chanting the holy name and studying the scriptures. In homeschooling, there will be enough time to do all the above-mentioned services along with regularly chanting the holy name and studying the scriptures. To deepen their knowledge in Sastra, girls can be enrolled in Bhakti Sastri and Bhakti Vaibhava programs. The knowledge they receive through Srila Prabhupada's books will guide them on how to live their lives and encounter troublesome situations.

While the bulk of this article outlined what daughters can do to improve their devotional service, parenting strategies are also of utmost importance to bring out the *devotee* in your *daughter*. Girls have a natural inclination to dress up. Therefore, we should satisfy their desire to dress up chastely so that they will not get attracted to dressing up in a revealing manner, as many girls in mundane society do. As dressing standards in society are quickly degrading, this is a topic of concern. Consequently, parents should buy nice gopi dresses and sarees to fulfill their daughters' desires for colors, embroidery, shine, etc. Eventually, as girls grow up and study the scriptures, they will move on to simple Krishna Conscious dressing styles.

Krishna Consciousness involves many trying times, and parents should rationally acknowledge that with their daughters. When girls face emotionally intense situations, both in ISKCON or the outside world, parents should make them feel heard and cared for. Instead of solely preaching ideals to them and brushing their problems away, we need to give them practical ways of dealing with various personalities, as the scriptures describe. Some situations are tough enough for adults to deal with, so we should encourage kids to succeed as much as they can in following ideals, and at the same time we should be careful of not pushing them in a corner where they feel that they cannot reveal their heart to us. Particularly, it is important to guard girls against mentally unstable people and abusive situations, especially in their teenage years. The impressions they receive during these years last for a very long time and parents should not risk their daughters losing interest, faith, or enthusiasm in Krishna Consciousness.

In the end, engaging your daughters in various Krishna Conscious activities according to their interests and talents, along with regular chanting and reading will nourish the seed of *bhakti* within their hearts. Carefully raising your daughters is a wonderful service to Srila Prabhupada, as you offer dedicated devotees who can further his mission for the next 10,000 years ■





SRILA PRABHUPADA'S PANDEMIC PREDICTION & VARNASRAMA COLLEGE ONLINE

By Jonson Chong
(Director for Marketing and Communication Varnasrama College ONLINE)

By any measure, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was a remarkable person and in the eyes of the devotee community, a uniquely empowered Vaisnava Acharya to whom there are countless tributes.

In his innumerable writings, conversations and lectures, one will find that Srila Prabhupada predicted the threats of war, pestilence, famine and other calamities due to humanity's sinful activities. The following are a couple of examples:

The material world is itself a place full of anxieties, and by the encouragement of animal slaughter the whole atmosphere becomes polluted more and more by war, pestilence, famine and many other unwanted calamities.³

They are thinking independently. No independence. As soon as you become sinful, there is reaction immediately. Immediately, there will be war, pestilence, famine, flu and so on, so on.⁴

Right now, almost everyone is in the grip of fear because of Covid-19. However, in actual fact, the world has also been inflicted by war and famine.

Let's take famine first. According to [Mercy Corps](#), "around the world, 821 million people do not have enough of the food they need to live an active, healthy life." And the reasons for this include drought, lack of access to and waste of food!

Now let's consider the incidences of war. Although war between nations has declined since World War 2, other forms of large-scale violence are still pervasive. Based on *Our World in Data*⁵ from 2007 to 2016, conflict between states only resulted in 595 deaths; however, there were more than 1,000,000 deaths during the same period, caused by "other forms of large-scale violence". Thus, apart from actual armed conflicts between states, we have terrorism, drug wars, race-based conflicts, and other forms of large-scale violence.

And we have not even touched on the trade war between America and China. Some may not consider that to be a real war. However, apart from the impact on actual livelihood of families throughout the world, the trade war could potentially lead to a nuclear war between those countries.

Nevertheless, it took an unprecedented pandemic that hit the whole world to finally catch everyone's attention. Apart from health concerns, attempts by national governments around the world to flatten the curve of Covid-19 infections have led to an abrupt halt to most economic activities. According to

³ Srimad-Bhagavatam, 1.7.37

⁴ Srimad-Bhagavatam, Lecture, 1.7.25 dated September 22, 1976, Vrindavan

⁵ <https://ourworldindata.org>

Deloitte, a leading business consulting firm, the Covid-19 situation “is an unprecedented event” and “non-essential businesses including real estate, construction, automotive, travel agencies and retail outlets have been forced to close.”⁶

Coming back to what Srila Prabhupada wrote and said, devotees will note that he not only predicted war, famine and pestilence, but he also instructed his disciples on how to counter or prevent such calamities, by establishing *Varnasrama* Colleges and farm communities or villages everywhere.

“The Varnasrama College has to be established immediately. Everywhere, wherever we have got our center, a Varnasrama College should be established to train four divisions: one class Brahmana; one class ksatriya; one class vaisya; and one class, sudra.”⁷

Prabhupada: So therefore this Varnasrama College is very essential... So in our India, in a place like Vrindavan, Naimisaranya, like that, many people will come, if Varnasrama College is established.⁸

“So immediately to solve all the problems like this it to start an institution to train four classes of men. Begin it.” (Room Conversation with Director of Research of the Sept. of Social Welfare, Melbourne, 21 May, 1975)

“Locally you produce your own food. You get your own cloth. Have sufficient milk, vegetables. Then what you want more? And chant Hare Krishna. This is Vedic civilization: plain living, high thinking.”⁹

Srila Prabhupada’s instructions to establish *Varnasrama* farm communities and his predictions of war, famine and pestilence are obviously related. He is asking devotees to be self-sufficient so that they can prepare for the impending calamities which he can see so clearly.

Indeed, the groundwork that all devotees must undertake is not only for the benefit of ISKCON members. Srila Prabhupada is asking us to do this to save the millions of people who will face and suffer the consequences of war, famine, and pestilence, not to mention economic collapse and environmental disaster. Thus, the need to heed Srila Prabhupada’s instruction is especially urgent these days.

Ironically, we now have the opportunity to fulfil Srila Prabhupada’s vision to re-establish *Varnasrama* principles in society through an online *Varnasrama* College because of the pandemic. With the current Covid-19 situation, since people are kept indoors by government measures to flatten the Covid-19 infection curve, both devotees and the general public are looking for meaningful online activities.

Recently, His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami (former National Minister of ISKCON *Daiva Varnasrama* Ministry, India), together with a group of devotees from different parts of the world, decided to seize the opportunity to establish *Varnasrama* College ONLINE (VCO)¹⁰. This project, which is in collaboration with the ISKCON Ministry of Education, was started with the aim to educate and train devotees and members of the public on *Varnasrama* Dharma, and also to establish a network of *Varnasrama* Colleges, traditional Gurukulas and Vaisnava villages all over the world.

With this new initiative, perhaps ISKCON and devotees around the world will receive a new impetus to revive the divine *Varnasrama* culture in line with Srila Prabhupada’s vision ■

6 <https://www2.deloitte.com/my/en/pages/financial-advisory/articles/financial-impact-of-covid-19.html>

7 *Morning Walk, Vrindavan, March 12, 1974*

8 *(Conversation with Governor, Vrindavan, 20 April 1975)*

9 *(Room Conversation, Mauritius, October 5, 1975)*

10 *Varnasrama College ONLINE: www.varnasramacollege.com*





HOW I WAS RESCUED BY ISKCON EDUCATION

Author Anonymous

I have a good memory. One of the earliest is of my mother extolling the virtues of college, and sharing with me how her biggest regret in life was leaving nursing school to join ISKCON as a full time Bhaktin. Back in 1977, or what many devotees now fondly call “the glory days,” it was common to have dozens of young men and women live in the temple, cooking, cleaning and distributing Prabhupada’s books day in and day out. It is because of these devotees that our movement was able to expand so rapidly, and now enjoys the comfortable position it does today. My mother does not mourn that the prime of her life was spent in this fashion; in fact, she often reminisces about the simplicity of her life back then, of the friendships created and Prasadam enjoyed. No, she cherishes those memories and still regularly keeps in touch with the friends of her Sankirtan party. What she does regret is not pursuing a higher education and qualifying as a nurse. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for devotees who dedicated their youth to that bygone era to experience financial hardship later in life within Grihastha ashram. My mother felt that if she had attended college first, and joined the temple after, she and my father could’ve enjoyed a far more comfortable life. She would often say that I was extremely fortunate to be born as a devotee, as I wouldn’t have to sacrifice my education as she had to embrace spirituality. Being born in the movement I was already exposed to the highest truth, and could therefore grow up to enjoy the best of both worlds. So, for me a heavy emphasis was always placed on the importance of education by my mother.

Unfortunately for my mother, but not at all surprising to anyone, including her, young boys are not particularly inclined toward school, and in that I was definitely no exception. Constantly moving between different countries didn’t do any favors for my studies either. While growing up in Dallas I would often visit my mother’s native land of South Africa, and at the age of eight my parents decided to permanently relocate there. Whilst in Durban I became familiar with my extended family, and in those three years I managed to build some strong ties and friendships with them. At the age of eleven, it was with great fortune that I moved to Sridham Mayapur, and by Krishna’s mercy I was allowed to live the next five years of my life here.

Most children don’t get the opportunity to travel so widely at such a tender age, and while living amongst different people and being exposed to different cultures helped me grow as a person, I often wished I was a normal child who just lived in one place for the entirety of their youth. Being that new kid at school, and having to start all over again, make new friends, was really difficult, especially in public schools. Back in Dallas I attended a Gurukula, I associated with devotee children who were just like me, and I was instructed by a teacher who shared the same beliefs as me. I took that for granted, and it wasn’t until I left for South Africa that I really appreciated the association of Vaisnavas. The kids in Public schools were very aggressive, they used to fight over things Gurukula boys wouldn’t even notice. They all had a bigger sense of pride, and its bruising usually instigated most of the fights I witnessed. Worst, the children also had far more insecurities than their devotee counterparts. This led to them bullying and teasing one another in a vain attempt to feel better about themselves. Being



the new, different kid, I was a prime candidate for this bullying. After the first month of school, I insisted on shaving my Sikah, as I was tired of being called a girl or gay for having a “ponytail.” It became increasingly clear to me, even back then, that in order to fit in I would have to stop being a devotee. I couldn’t be Krsna conscious in such an environment, I had to choose between being “normal” or being a social pariah. I chose the former, being young I wanted to have friends, but most importantly, I just wanted to fit in. Gradually, I started to change, explicit topics I wouldn’t have dared mention back in the Gurukula I now bantered and joked about, just to get a reaction, a laugh. I was starting to become more like them day by day.

Thankfully, this subtle metamorphosis was halted by my arrival in Sridham Mayapur. The children here weren’t perfect, but they were devotees. The difference was night and day, and once again I found myself an outsider, but this time I was the one who was insecure, I was out of my depth in a school comprised exclusively of devotees. My time in public school, though short, had changed me drastically. By the Lords mercy I was able to assimilate and revert (somewhat) back to my former self. The association of devotee children, and the influence of Vaisnava teachers played no small role in this. The Bhakti Sastri classes we had in the morning were invaluable to rekindling my Bhakti, as learning about our philosophy appealed to me in a way no amount of Kirtan or chanting ever had. The influence of my teachers effected the greatest change, I looked up to and admired them in a way that was impossible with my peers, and so I adopted some Vaisnava attitudes, if reluctantly, as I knew it would impress them.

I left at sixteen to return to America and complete my higher education. Thanks to the Dham, I left a reformed person and was able to resist the allures that has ensnared many a youth in the West. I managed to fulfill my mother’s wish and graduate from college, but in hindsight, at twenty-three years old I find education to offer less in the form of knowledge and more in the way of experiences. Nobody remembers the obscure mathematical formulas their teacher drilled into them in ninth grade, and every college graduate will guiltily admit to forgetting half of what they learnt in their last semester, let alone their first. The environment, the people you associate with, these are the most important aspects of education, as they are what will intrinsically change you. Childhood is when a person is most susceptible to change, and however they are molded during this period will affect them for the rest of their life. A person spends an inordinate portion of their youth in school, ultimately becoming who they associate with. This is how ISKCON education has benefitted me most. During my time in a South African public school, the reason I had changed from a Krsna conscious child into a Karmi so quickly is because the undesirable association I received was during the vulnerable age when my consciousness was most malleable. Fortunately for me, I was able to receive everything a true education encompasses at Sridham Mayapur, and reformed myself into something approaching a devotee. A Krsna conscious education provides the building blocks for a child’s spiritual life, and if nurtured accordingly, their consciousness will develop in such a manner that they will have a keen interest in spirituality upon adulthood. Thus, they can build Bhakti upon the foundation that was built during their youth, and pursue the ultimate destination back home, back to Godhead ■

MY JOURNEY FROM ISKCON STUDENT TO ISKCON TEACHER



By Gourangi Gandharvika Devi Dasi

Although I was born in the movement, I was told that I still had to make the choice of actually “joining.” Every child has the seed of Bhakti within their hearts and by watering this seed with love, care and positive experiences in Krishna consciousness, we provide stepping stones in their journey so they are able to realise this path of Bhakti as the topmost. For me personally, I recall my childhood memories being filled with beautiful, happy and fun experiences in Krishna consciousness. Due to the spiritual nourishment I received from my spiritual master – HH Jayapataka Swami – my parents, my teachers in gurukula and other Vaisnavas, it was the easiest decision I have ever had to make. The experiences of being engaged in devotional service – a monkey in HH Bhaktimarga Swami’s Ramayana drama, dancing in kirtan, cooking for a festival, singing slokas in school or excitedly worshipping my first Deities – these are the memories that have been so deeply ingrained in my heart that I could not imagine a better life than the one Srila Prabhupada has given us.

Based on my experience, there are three key aspects that should be the leading principles for anyone engaged in serving children – giving love, making it fun, and being an example. Srila Prabhupada relates fond childhood memories about how his parents showered him with love, engaged him in fun Krishna conscious experiences, such as celebrating his own Ratha Yatra festival, and taught him by being exemplary devotees themselves. Every child needs a role model, someone they look up to and who can guide them in their spiritual life, who will answer all their questions and shower them with love. They need to play, be happy and have fun with their friends. It is our responsibility, as educators, to create opportunities to give them blissful engagement in Krishna consciousness. I am eternally grateful that due to the mercy of the Vaisnavas in my life that I have received these three things and I can humbly say that I have found the love and beauty in trying to be a devotee of Krishna. They are the blessings in my life which I will always carry in my heart.

Although, I consider myself fortunate in my upbringing, I also realised that there was a large need for more programs, resources and initiatives to engage children in Krishna consciousness. Much of our effort and energy in ISKCON goes towards preaching, which is definitely a priority as missionaries of Lord Chaitanya’s movement. However, it is also equally important to care for the devotees that are already within the movement otherwise in the process of expanding, we might lose the ones inside if they are not spiritually guided and cared for. Srila Prabhupada has used the words “future hope” several times in regards with the younger generation as they are the future leaders of the movement. *“That is the success of the movement, because younger generation, they are the flowers, the future hope of the country, of the world. If they take this movement seriously then the whole world will be happy”* (Srila Prabhupada lecture – 20 July, 1972). I am convinced that by touching their hearts through deep, positive experiences in Krishna consciousness that such engagement will help them in their commitment of “joining” the movement.

Educating and engaging children in Krishna consciousness is a long-term investment not only for ISKCON but as Srila Prabhupada envisioned – for the whole world. “If the children are given a Krishna conscious education from early childhood then there is great hope for the future of the world” (Letter to Dayananda and Nandarani –27 January, 1973). Just imagine what powerful missionaries the next generations will become in Srila Prabhupada’s army and how they will take ISKCON to new heights. I can see that these heart-touching impressions were the steps that lead me to realising my service and purpose in ISKCON. The spiritual, loving nourishment I received from my teachers imprinted in my heart a life commitment to Srila Prabhupada. I felt grateful for the mercy I received and I wanted to give back to ISKCON – I wanted to share these treasures of bhakti that were passed on to me with other children as well. Once youngsters decide to “join” the movement they will naturally think, “How can I contribute to ISKCON, what will I do to try to repay Srila Prabhupada in Mahaprabhu’s mission?”



After graduating from Sri Mayapur International School, I joined the Congregational Development Ministry (CDM) and, following the request of our minister, H.H. Jayapataka Swami, the Ministry established a Children Services department - which I took up as my service. This gave me confirmation of my purpose and role in Srila Prabhupada’s movement. I decided that my goal in this life was to provide the next generations with more opportunities to be engaged in Krishna consciousness from early childhood through community children programs, at home and elsewhere. Around this time, I also conducted regular children’s classes in my home in

Mayapur. Since I ever remember, I have always wanted to be a teacher so I thought this was the perfect opportunity to put my inspiration and ideas into practice. Around 10 children on average (ages 7-12) would attend these classes, we named our group “Prabhupada’s army”. We did various activities together such as cooking, doing dramas, singing and crafts and we studied the first 2 chapters of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, basic Deity worship and learned about different personalities. Through these classes, I realised how special children born into Krishna consciousness are. They were naturally yearning devotional activities and were so eager to learn about Krishna that their enthusiasm was contagious. They were the ones inspiring me!

These children were one of my inspirations in helping me consolidate a vision and goal for serving children around the



world. My spiritual master inspired me to act locally and think globally through the CDM. Our goal in the Children Services department is to become a one-stop-source where devotees can find resources and training materials in order to help congregations around the world to implement children programs or expand existing ones. We would like to water their seeds of bhakti by engaging them in



Krishna consciousness in a fun way so that they find unparalleled taste and happiness in devotional service that we help them to make the decision of “Yes, I want to be your devotee.” We have compiled a Krishna conscious book for children with over 150 fun-filled activities, called *Becoming Your Devotee* and are in the process of creating lesson plans to help parents, teachers and temples use this book as a curriculum. We regularly share resources and activities on our social media and website page. Please shower us with blessings so that we may continue and expand our services for the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada and the devotees. We have many plans and ideas for Chil-

children Services and I have firm conviction that with your blessings even our wildest, most ambitious dreams will come true because everything is possible in Krishna consciousness!

If you would like to learn more about the CDM’s Children Services, please visit our website and facebook page:

Facebook – ISKCON Congregation: Children Services

Website – www.iskconchildren.com

Email – cdmchildrenservices@gmail.com

Please visit this link to order *Becoming Your Devotee*, just one click away! - <https://iskconchildren.com/2020/04/08/the-best-present-for-your-kids/>



BOOK REVIEW

SRIMAD-BHAGAVATAM: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR YOUNG READERS BY ARUDDHA DEVI DAS



By Sri Radhika devi dasi




Her Grace Aruddha devi dasi, a dedicated disciple of His Holiness Gopal Krishna Goswami, is well known within the entire ISKCON community as the homeschooling pioneer, whose two sons- His Grace Radhika Raman das and His Grace Gopal Hari das - provide a compelling testimony to the educational methods she has mastered. She mentors thousands of parents across the globe in how to make Bhagavatam an inseparable part of their children's lives, starting from the womb. After having documented her homeschooling methods in the book *Homeschooling Krishna's Children*, her second publishing project is a monumental task. In line with Srila Prabhupada's desire to train children in the Srimad Bhagavatam, Aruddha dasi, at the age of 67, is undertaking an effort to provide a 19-volume study guide for young readers covering the entire 12 cantos.

The Inception

So how did Aruddha dasi conceive of such a mammoth endeavor?

In her characteristically unassuming manner, she explains, "While conducting seminars on homeschooling and Krishna conscious parenting throughout the world, I met many parents who wanted to teach their children Srimad Bhagavatam, but needed more guidance on exactly how to do it. It was then that I started doing workshops, during which we would sit together with their children and I would demonstrate how to guide a discussion in a way that evokes the children's curiosity about the nature of the world, God, the self, and the purpose of life. Together, we would read the translations of a chapter of Srimad Bhagavatam and discuss the stories, main themes, and great personalities. We would talk about the relevance of Srimad Bhagavatam in our own lives - how to provide spiritual solutions to material problems. Both the children and parents were thoroughly absorbed in the discussion."

"When I explained at seminars how I taught my boys Srimad Bhagavatam through interactive reading and discussion, hundreds of parents were inspired to follow. However, I also realized that many parents who wanted to study the Bhagavatam with their children were uncertain on how to do it. They needed a formal curriculum for studying Srimad Bhagavatam. I pondered how this would be possible, for it would take a long time to do this. This is when I decided to start a collaborative project, involving devotee parents from around the world."



An International Effort

Aruddha dasi then started an online coalition of approximately 15 parents from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States to create study resources for each chapter of canto 1. Every parent would send their creations to others in the group, who would then use the materials with their own children and offer feedback. All the parents brought various skills to this endeavour. The team included English teachers, musicians, artists, and computer professionals. Aruddha dasi would offer directions on content, organization, and activity design, and when the materials were all compiled, send it for formal editing.

The result? An innovative collection of material on every chapter of Canto 1, which, besides providing spiritual nourishment, also meets cognitive and language standards outlined in the Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, such as acquiring knowledge, developing comprehension skills, applying knowledge, using knowledge to be creative, analyzing information, and self-evaluation.





Canto 1 for young readers was one of the last projects that His Grace Yamaraja das worked on. A dedicated disciple of Srila Prabhupada, he served the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust and Back To Godhead magazine for decades as a photographer, layout artist, designer, and proof reader. He made an extraordinary effort in designing the cover, along with the inside layout of the Bhagavatam Guide for Young Readers. "He has made a significant contribution in helping ISKCON's youth understand the Bhagavatam, it's a real tribute to his dedication and design skills," says Torchlight publisher, His Grace Advaita Candra das.

"Krishna's Lotus Feet Set" is Released

Srila Prabhupada explained that Cantos 1 and 2 represent the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. Now, Krishna's Lotus Feet has been made accessible to young readers as well!

Founder and owner of Torchlight, His Grace Advaita Candra das says, "This is one of the best book projects that we have been involved with since our inception 25 years ago. We are currently exploring options on creating multiple language editions." Torchlight has shipped bulk orders of both volumes around the world, as they are highly sought after by parents and teachers alike. The Vrindavana and Mayapur Gurukulas have accepted the book as their main spiritual curriculum. The book has also been made a required text in numerous Sunday Schools throughout the world.

Madhumati devi dasi, a teacher from Vrindavana Gurukula says, "We teachers at the Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and International School have had a wonderful experience teaching from the Srimad Bhagavatam guidebook. It has become our standard textbook, and we have planned a structured course based on it. Every day we plan for our classes through the Srimad Bhagavatam, by writing instructional objectives and procedures, ensuring we satisfy our curriculum. We then proceed to read the Srimad Bhagavatam ourselves, as teachers need to prepare ahead of time by reading verses along with the purports. Teachers are as enlivened as the students because of this integrated program of teaching English through Srimad Bhagavatam."



Purnesvari Radha devi dasi, a teacher at the Mayapur International School states, “The books are being accepted really well. They have been introduced both in primary school for the sastra classes, and in our middle and high schools for the morning Srimad Bhagavatam classes. I see that the children are very, very happy. The results are overwhelmingly positive. Our students enjoy studying the Bhagavatam, and our teachers enjoy teaching it. There is a nice atmosphere in the school now because of this. As a parent, I feel especially ecstatic when my younger one, who is 6 years old, joyfully comes home brimming with knowledge and information about her Bhagavatam lessons. Even though we study it at home, she is so excited to study Bhagavatam at school with her teachers and friends!”

Amazing Range of Learning Tools



It was Srila Prabhupada’s great desire that our children be educated in Srimad Bhagavatam from the very beginning. “If you study Srimad-Bhagavatam very carefully, then you get all knowledge completely,” said Srila Prabhupada on July 12, 1974 at Los Angeles.

The books are primarily geared for children between the ages of 6 and 14, but much of the material can be adapted for children above or below this age range. It gives parents discussion questions to ask their children, followed by various innovative written and oral exercises - including comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, key themes, character descriptions, word searches, language puzzles, arts, crafts, and songs.

The Perfect Teaching Aid

Srila Prabhupada’s books inspire critical reasoning and creative thinking, which are the main elements of academic education. Srimad-Bhagavatam is pure and perfect and can equip one with the highest knowledge, both material and spiritual. Parents and teachers who have taught their children Srimad-Bhagavatam from their early lives have experienced how easily they pick up English language skills, especially reading, comprehension, and analytical reasoning. Srimad-Bhagavatam is full of analogies, allegories, figurative speech, and metaphors. Even a seven-year-old child can understand difficult and sublime concepts because the subject matter of Srimad-Bhagavatam encourages highly-developed thinking skills.

Srimad-Bhagavatam is a perfect book to teach from because it gives the philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita through stories, and children love stories. These stories are not fictitious; rather, they are the lives of great saintly personalities and are the pastimes of Krishna and His avatars. By reading these, one directly associates with the great personalities and their teachings. By such association, one begins to develop the character of these same personalities and starts to see the world from their eyes. As children grow older, they learn to appreciate the instructions given by Queen Kunti, Prahlada Maharaja, Dhruva Maharaja, Kapiladeva, and so many others. In fact, many of the devotees described in the Bhagavatam, such as Prahlada and Dhruva, are children themselves, so our own children have perfect examples and heroes to follow. The scriptures tell us that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu heard the stories of Dhruva Maharaja and Prahlada Maharaja hundreds of times. The example and instructions of these saints are so valuable that no other moral book can compare with them. Children develop good character, saintly qualities, and pure bhakti by reading Srimad-Bhagavatam. Indeed, Srimad-Bhagavatam is the very essence of Lord Caitanya’s sankirtana movement.



“The goal is to provide parents with a practical way to make Srimad-Bhagavatam a central part of their children’s education. Regardless of whether parents are homeschooling or sending them to public schools, we hope they will find renewed confidence in studying this great literature with their children.” submits Aruddha dasi.

Testimonials from ISKCON Leaders

GBC Emeritus and Initiating Guru, His Holiness Romapada Swami says, “I am an ardent supporter of Aruddha Devi Dasi and the models of education which she develops and promotes through her books. Srimad-Bhagavatam: A Comprehensive Guide for Young Readers’ main objective is to provide children with a Bhagavatam-centered education, with lots of activities created by parents and teachers that are geared toward different learning styles, while meeting devotional, cognitive and language objectives of a growing child in Krsna consciousness. This innovative and systematic compilation of various activities in book form is a great resource for any parents who want their children to go deeper into the messages of Srimad-Bhagavatam.”

Executive Committee Member of the Ministry of Education and Initiating Guru, His Holiness Hanumatpresaka Swami writes, “Srimad-Bhagavatam: A Comprehensive Guide for Young Readers, to our reading, and from all reports, is an unsurpassed resource for teachers of Srimad-Bhagavatam, both in families and in schools. The variety of materials and amount of work that went into producing the book as a gift to Srila Prabhupada are astonishing.”

Aruddha dasi, through her book *Srimad-Bhagavatam: A Comprehensive Guide for Young Readers*, “is fulfilling Srila Prabhupada’s desire that our children get the best Krsna conscious education.” States Her Grace Narayani Devi Dasi, disciple of Srila Prabhupada and longtime teacher at VIHE.

May Krishna give Aruddha dasi many years of good health to successfully gift all 13 volumes to the devotee community!

Order Now!

Amazon.com is selling Canto 1 in two volumes, canto 2 in 1 volume, and volume 1 of canto 3. To order please visit: https://www.amazon.com/Aruddha-Devi-Dasi/e/B07RJJSR5J?ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_1&qid=1590753439&sr=8-1

Future cantos are currently under production, and will be available soon via Amazon ■



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM: VIPLAVAH 2020



On the 14th of February the *International Leadership Sanga* commenced in Sridham Mayapur, it was graced with the presence of numerous Sanyasis and countless devotees visiting from across the world. Yet just a day after its conclusion on February 20th a less heralded but just as important event was being hosted on the very same premises. *Viplavah* is an annual conference organized by the Ministry of Education with the goal of providing educators with a platform to share some of the unique insights and techniques born from years of experience in the field of education. After facilitating this exchange of invaluable information, it is our hope that these ideas will be implemented in various ISKCON schools worldwide, so that our future generation of devotees will be groomed into powerful, Krsna Conscious leaders.



Acknowledging the importance of such an ambitious project, many notable guests of the ILS did not just attend, but elected to become integral parts of our 2020 *Viplavah* symposium. Personalities such as Lokanath Swami, Bhakti Vijana Swami, Bhakti Rasayana Swami, Bhakti Dhira Damodara Swami, Yadunandana Swami, Arjava Priti Vardhan Swami and Gopal Krishna Swami all presented on various topics supplementing education, while

also discussing the crucial role it plays in making Srila Prabhupadas vision of ISKCON a reality. Indeed, our Founder Acharya was familiar with the age-old adage that “he who controls education controls the future.” Recognizing the importance of such an institution, Srila Prabhupada went on to establish the Ministry of Education, one of only three governing body ministries at the time.

For various reasons this Ministry has gone through continuing periods of activity and inactive, but under the guidance and care of numerous devotees it has experienced a revival in recent years. Events such as Viplavah are a big step toward reasserting our Ministry of Education in the position Srila Prabhupada envisioned it would be in all those years ago.







After welcoming each of the distinguished guests and speakers with by anointing them with Nrishimadeva oil, His Grace Sesa Prabhu delivered the Keynote Address, officially commencing Viplavah 2020. What followed was a host of presentations on a myriad of interesting topics. Everything from the philosophy of education, a practical application of Varnashram, the implementation and importance of ISKCON online teaching, and the presence of Gaudiya Vaisnava teachings, are just some of the many wonderful topics discussed at this year’s Viplavah.

By the grace of Mahaprabhu, all of these seminars have been recorded. If you’d like to experience Viplavah 2020 for yourself, please visit <https://iskconeducation.org/fortnight-symposium-seminars/> where a new video will be released every fortnight. If you’re inspired by these videos, and would like to experience Viplavah 2021 in person, please email us at viplavah.iskcon@gmail.com where we shall try our best to accommodate Vaisnavas who desire to be guests or speakers.

Viplavah is a unique experience that provides educators with the opportunity to not just share their thoughts and ideas, but also the chance to network and build connections with an international cadre of the best teachers ISKCON has to offer. That is why this annual conference is invaluable, for without it none of these wonderful things would be possible. It is therefore with great humility that we request the blessings of the esteemed Vaisnavas and Guru Parampara, so that by their combined mercies we may continue to organize Viplavah for many years to come. We sincerely hope to see you in person at Viplavah 2021 in Sridham Mayapur, or virtually on our webpage when we release our next Symposium video. *Hare Krishna* ■





ISKCON Ministry of Education
PAN-AMERICAN SASTRIC EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

By Tom Brown (PhD cand.)

June 4th - 7th, friends and members of ISKCON from all over the Americas joined for an on-line symposium on Sastric Education. Regular attendance seemed to run about 50-people and just a few of the participants were:

- H.G. Sesa Das - Minister of Education
- H. G. Bali-mardana Das - Symposium Host, North American Regional Representative, Director of 'Lil' Krsna Kids' etc.
- H. G. Gopi-gita Devi Dasi - N. A. Regional Rep, Vice President of Dallas Gurukula
- H. G. Sruti-priya Devi Dasi - South American Scholar,
- H. G. Gandharva Das - S. A. Regional Rep, and university professor for over 15year.
- H. G. Gauranga-darshana Das - Director, Vidyapitha, Govardhana-eco Village.
- Atul-Krsna Das, HpSwami, Rama-giridhari Das, Yadunanada Swami, Subra Devi Dasi.....

The program was a killer with two hours of programs morning and evening for three full days, and extremely, extremely productive.

- There were separate sessions for Sastric Education for Primary, Sunday and Adult schools.
- Vast, detailed report of SE from South America.
- Professional presentations and practical discussions of the Govardhana-eco Village, Vidyapitha, on-line and other SE programs and how we can implement them in the Americas.
- HpS and Sesa Das were all reminding us again and again that knowledge is an insignificant result of Sastric Education. The real result is change of character and reawaken our Krsna Prema.
- Bali-mardana Das revealed a breathtaking vision of an elaborate Pan-american SE institution training devotees in Bhakti Sastri, Bhakti-vaibhava and topical knowledge to expand KC everywhere.
- REAM techniques, assessment of our weaknesses, teaching little learners, getting to meet many new friends.

Now, we hear the sky full of discussions of the symposium, and we expect that in the next few days the effort will push on to planning for next year's symposium etc ■

CALENDAR

Please send us events to notice here.

NEXT ISSUE

Dear educators,

The third issue of the year always focuses on higher education in its relationship with ISKCON. Our aim is to report on higher education broadly conceived—secular university education, colleges within ISKCON, advanced research projects, career and vocational training, aspects of secondary education that relate to higher education, academic conferences, book publishing, and more. We invite articles on all these topics as they relate to ISKCON.

Please send us short academic articles (500 – 1000 words), book announcements, recent conference reports, project updates, and position papers on interesting ideas related to higher education.

We would be interested in articles from those who work within higher education (such as teachers, researchers, writers, and administrators) as well as those who work in fields that support higher education (such as chaplaincy, publishing, and student services). We would also be keen to receive articles from students and parents who can share their experience with higher education. If you have recently published a new book or begun a new project, we would love to hear about it.

Please aim at sending all submissions to me at ravigupta108@yahoo.com, no later than August 15, 2020. Thank you!

your servant, Radhika Ramana dasa (Prof. Ravi Gupta)

