

Inspire

Local updates & spiritual articles



I offer my respectful obeisances unto Sri Krishna Caitanya and Lord Nityananda who are like the sun and moon. They have arisen simultaneously on the horizon of Gauda to dissipate the darkness of ignorance and thus wonderfully bestow benediction upon all. (CC Adī līla 1.2)

ISKCON Belfast



January/February 2024



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International Society for
Krishna Consciousness.
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Swami Prabhupada

Read about Krishna's most merciful incarnation



Lord Nityananda

On 22nd of February we will celebrate the appearance day of Lord Nityananda. This is considered to be one of the most important days in the *Vaisnava* calendar. It's a day when we can easily get the help we need to advance in spiritual life.

Lord Nityananda is the most merciful incarnation of the Supreme Lord. *Nitya* means eternal and *ananda* means bliss; So Nityananda is eternally blissful. In Krishna lila He is Krishna's brother, Balarama, the first expansion of Krishna (*vilas vigraha*), who lives to serve Krishna. As Krishna has the

complexion of a beautiful monsoon cloud, Balarama has the colour of a beautiful new spring cloud; He is whitish in complexion.

In this age of Kali, Krishna appears as Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Balarama appears as Nitai to assist in the spreading of the holy name and to bring mercy to all the fallen, materially conditioned souls. He is said to be the embodiment of service in separation from Krishna.

Nityananda serves as an intermediary between Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His devotees. His mercy is essential. Unless we get His mercy, we cannot get Lord Caitanya's mercy and in *Prarthana*, Narottama Das Thakura says

"hari hari vipphale janama gonainu";

anyone who does not approach Radha Krishna through a relationship with Nityananda, has uselessly spoiled their life.

Narottama Das says: "I am a distressed and unhappy person. I am drowning in this dreadful ocean of material existence. O Sri Nityananda Prabhu, please make me very happy. Please keep me at your lotus feet." (*Nitai-Pada-Kamala. Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura*).

Nityananda Prabhu is the original and top-most spiritual master

Srila Prabhupada says: The guru is the incarnation of Nityananda. Anyone strictly following the instruction of the guru is following Nityananda. That is the best way to become Krishna conscious, and Krishna is non-different from Nityananda. You may pray to Lord Nityananda to help you become dedicated in the service of your guru." *Letter to Makhanlal.*

Going from door to door Lord Nityananda implored everyone; **"O My dear brothers, all of you engage yourselves in the chanting of harinama. If you do this and follow My instructions I promise that you will very easily cross over this dreadful ocean of material existence."** (*Sri Caitanya Bhagavata. Srila Vrndavana Das Thakura*)

Lord Caitanya instructed Lord Nityananda and Haridas: **"Please go from door to door, to every house and beg everyone 'Chant the holy name of Krishna, worship Krishna and serve Krishna'."** (*Sri Caitanya Bhagavata. Srila Vrndavana Das Thakura*)

Lord Nityananda is *adi-guru* (the original Guru), and only by the mercy of the Guru can one make progress on their spiritual path. Attachment to Him protects us from danger. We pray that **"His lotus feet will be firmly planted within our hearts"**. (*Sri Caitanya Bhagavata. Srila Vrndavana Das Thakura*)

Lord Nityananda`s life

Lord Nityananda was born in 1474 in Ekachakra, a remote village in West Bengal, about one hundred miles north of Mayapura. His parents were Hadai Pandit and Padmavati.

As a child, the playtimes of Nityananda and His friends consisted only of Krishna`s lila. Their playful pastimes included the slaying of Putana and the demons Dhenuka, Agha, and Baka, lifting Govardhan Hill, the killing of the Kuvalaya elephant and the wrestlers Canura and Mustika, the killing of Kamsa, and Krishna`s butter-stealing pastimes. Nityananda sometimes took the role of Lord Ramachandra while His friends acted the part of monkey soldiers, pretending to build a bridge of floating stones across the ocean.

Nitai would often hold His relatives and friends in an affectionate embrace and everyone in Ekachakra loved Him. They wondered how it was possible that this child knew so much about Krishna`s childhood activities.

Nitai`s father was so devoted to Him that, everywhere he went, he took Nitai with him. Nitai was his very life. When Nitai was twelve years old, a travelling sannyasi called Laksmipati Tirtha visited his home. As he was about to leave, Hadai Pandit asked if he could do anything for him. The *sannyasi* asked that his son, Nitai, join him on his travels as his *brahmacari* assistant. Although heart-broken, Hadai Pandit had to stick to his word and Nityananda went travelling with the sannyasi.

Nitai wandered as a pilgrim for twenty years, visiting many of the holy places He had visited five thousand years ago in His incarnation as Lord Balarama and His beauty and kindness charmed everyone He met. People became ecstatic upon seeing Him.

He visited Prayaga, Mathura, Dvarka, Kuruksetra, Naimisaranya and Hardwar, where the flow of Mother Ganges originated on this Earth planet. In Vrndavana He rolled in the dust, sported in the Yamuna River and walked around Govardana Hill. He also bathed in many of India`s other holy rivers.

Nitai had a deep melodious voice and He constantly sang the glories of Krishna. He had the carefree mood of a wild *avadhuta*, meaning that, being completely absorbed in love of Godhead, he did not act under any rules and regulations and no one could understand his transcendental moods.

As Nitai travelled, in His heart He was always waiting to meet Lord Caitanya and until He met Lord Caitanya, He did not preach; He waited for the Lord to give Him instructions.

When He heard that the Lord was preaching in Navadvipa, He went there and when the two Lordships were finally reunited, many esoteric pastimes took place. Nityananda was thirty-two years old and Caitanya Mahaprabhu was twenty.

Nitai married two daughters of Suryadasa Sarakhela; Vasudha Devi and Jahnava Devi. After marriage, He settled in Khardaha, West Bengal. He had a son, Virabhadra and a daughter, Ganga, by Vasudha. He left this world some time between 1540 and 1544.

Lord Nityananda expands in various extraordinary forms; the Purushas are His plenary expansions, He is *Maha Sankarshan* (the support of the entire spiritual world) and the source of all the *Visnus*. He is the thousand-headed *Ananta Sesa* who holds the universes on His hoods and as Balarama, He assumes the forms of Krishna`s umbrella, slippers, couch, pillows, garments, residence, sacred thread, throne etc. We can please Him by spreading the Holy name far and wide.

The lotus feet of Sri Nityananda are as cool as millions of moons. The whole universe gets peace by the shade of those lotus feet.

Without the mercy of Sri Nityananda, nobody can get Radha and Krishna – the aim of human life. Therefore, catch hold of the lotus feet of Sri Nityananda Prabhu very tightly.

Always aspire for the lotus feet of Sri Nityananda.

Narottama dasa says: “I am a distressed and unhappy person. I am drowning in this dreadful ocean of material existence. O Sri Nityananda Prabhu, please make me very happy. Please keep me at your lotus feet.”

Nitai-Pada-Kamala. Narottama Das Thakura

Devotee Close-up



Sachi Kumar das

Sachi Kumar das grew up in Ermelo, South Africa. He joined ISKCON at an early age and he has recently been residing in Belfast temple.

Tell us about your family. Were they religious?

I was born into a Hindu family but we were not very serious about the teachings and practices. We were really Hindu in name only as I would not have been able to explain what being a Hindu meant or who God was. My family were basically living a western lifestyle with little emphasis on religion. My parents were kind-hearted and charitable. Fortunately, my mother was interested in Krishna, due to the influence of her father.

Were you attracted to God at an early age?

I did have an attraction. As a child I recall looking forward to watching the weekly Ramayan series that was broadcast on a local South African television station. This station allocated four hours of time each Sunday to programmes that were of interest to the Indian community. I was fascinated by the story of Lord Rama and the His various pastimes. I had no idea that He was God.

Once a week, during the morning school assembly, we would recite the prayer below.

1 Father, we thank Thee for the night,
and for the pleasant morning light;
for rest and food and loving care,
And all that makes the world so fair.

2 Help us to do the things we should,
To be to others kind and good;
In all we do, in work or play,
To love Thee better day by day.

Reciting it had an uplifting impact on my mind, which I consciously noted and I really wanted the experience to be longer-lasting.

How did you first encounter Krishna consciousness?

It was through my mother; I was eight or nine years old. She had begun to practice Krishna consciousness after reading Srila Prabhupada's Krishna book. She started chanting Hare Krishna and became a vegetarian. She taught me to chant japa and had me chant one round every week.

When and where did you meet ISKCON devotees and how did that change your life?

The closest ISKCON temple (ISKCON Johannesburg in South Africa) was three hours drive from my hometown of Ermelo. My mother had been corresponding with the temple by letter and one week-day two lady *sankirtana* devotees drove there to meet my mother. This would have been around 1992. I remember meeting them. They had smiling faces and they gave me a Hare Krishna sticker. They brought us a small box of *maha prasadam* sweets and I remember being amazed at the taste of the sweets. Their cultivation of my mother's spiritual life led to the development of my Krishna consciousness.

What was your first service and what service do you like to do now?

The first service I remember doing was sweeping the temple room floor

at ISKCON Johannesburg. Now I like doing many services, particularly hearing and discussing the philosophy and teachings of Krishna consciousness, helping new devotees on their journey, *kirtana* and deity worship.

Can you explain how Krsna consciousness has changed you and what it means to you?

In my pre-teen years I did not understand how precious Krishna consciousness was. As a teenager I had become rebellious and disinterested in Krishna consciousness. During those years I experienced a lot of mental struggles and varieties of suffering by trying to enjoy material sense gratification. Going through that brought me to realise that, unless one has a relationship with Krishna, one cannot be happy in this world. When I was sixteen I started to seriously chant again; I began chanting eight rounds a day and could feel an immense difference in my life. I began reading *Bhagavad-gita* and Srila Prabhupada's summarised biography. Bhakti Tirtha Swami's "*Spiritual Warrior vol 1*" really helped propel my Krishna consciousness forward, allowing me to understand many things I had experienced in my earlier years. The influence of Bhakti Tirtha Swami and Bhakti Caitanya Swami led me to join the temple full time after I finished high school.

Living as a *brahmacari* and being engaged in intense devotional service was the best decision I made for myself as this part of my life laid a strong foundation for my future spiritual life and allowed me to have wonderful experiences of mercy and devotional growth.

Krishna consciousness is the most valuable aspect of my life. For me, without it there would be no reason to live. It is the only thing that makes me feel complete and content.



On chanting

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

The *maha-mantra* is not a material sound, like the sounds we hear on the radio. It is a spiritual sound that comes from the spiritual world. (SB *The teachings of Lord Kapila*).

The sixteen words of the Hare Krishna mantra are especially meant for counteracting the sins of the age of *Kali*. To save oneself from the contamination of this age, there is no alternative but to chant the Hare Krishna mantra. After searching through all the *Vedic* literatures, one cannot find a method of religion so sublime as the chanting of Hare Krishna. (*Kali-Santarana Upanisad* 5&6. Lord Brahma instructs Narada)

Since Krishna and His holy name are identical, the holy name is eternally pure and beyond material contamination. It is the Supreme Personality of Godhead as a transcendental vibration. The holy name is completely different from material sound, as confirmed by Narottama Das Thakura:

Golokera prema-dhana hari-nama sankirtana: the transcendental vibration of hari-nama sankirtana is imported from the spiritual world. (CC *Adi lila* 7.74).



Understanding Reincarnation and Karma

By Bhagavati devi dasi

Reincarnation and karma are two related concepts familiar to those who belong to the Vedic tradition, commonly known nowadays as Hinduism.

Reincarnation is also known as transmigration of the soul. Each living body is animated by a soul which is a unique, conscious, spiritual particle situated in the heart.

As the sun illuminates and energizes the whole universe, similarly the soul illuminates the whole body with consciousness and energizes it with life force which is carried to every cell of the body by the blood circulating from the heart.

The soul departs from the body when it becomes too old, diseased or damaged and thus death occurs; the result is that the body is no longer conscious because the soul, the source of the consciousness, has left and moved on to another body.

Birth occurs when the soul is carried by a sperm from the father into the womb of the next mother where the sperm and egg unite at the time of conception. The body begins to grow on the basis of the soul's presence and after nine months the baby is born.

Karma is often stated simply as, "What goes around, comes around." Or, as we read in the Bible, "As you sow, so shall you reap."

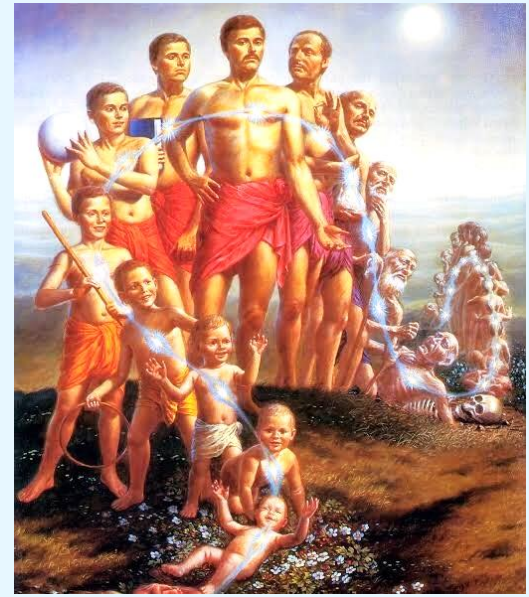
The activities that each person performs create reactions. There is a law in physics which states, "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction."

Bad or selfish activities result in negative or unpleasant future experiences in this life and future lives. Good or selfless activities result in positive or pleasant future experiences in this life and in future lives.

Piety leads to future enjoyment and impiety to future suffering. Credits or debits are registered in our account according to our choices and behavior.

We can visibly see this dynamic at work within our current lives. If someone performs criminal activities they are likely to end up in prison which is not a desirable situation. If someone is dutiful and caring they are likely to be appreciated and rewarded by those around him.

If we reflect on these concepts, we can understand that the mechanisms of karma and reincarnation require a system of surveillance which records the events of this world and on a bigger scale, events in this universe.



Who is checking what we are doing, and on that basis, arranging for our next set of parents after we leave our current body? How does it work?

Bhagavad-gita, the classic Vedic scripture, explains that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose name is Krishna, lives in everyone's heart. (Not just in the human heart but in the heart of all living creatures.)

Krishna, the all-powerful Supersoul, is the friend and well-wisher of each soul, as they transmigrate from body to body. He is the witness of all activity, mental as well as physical; karma is the result of His observations. He knows each soul's desires and track record and guides and facilitates them accordingly.

Reincarnation expresses the karmic reactions a particular soul carries with him. Good credit leads to a birth where one is beautiful, wealthy, well-educated and part of a cultured family. Bad credit leads to a less congenial birth.

An individual person has responsibility for his or her own future; our choices impact our destiny. To go more deeply into this topic, one may well need expert guidance from a spiritual master to know more details of what actually is good and bad based on scriptural injunctions and very importantly, according to our personal situation and level of spiritual advancement.

Srila Prabhupada says

Krishna is always trying to bring us back home to the spiritual world.



“Only Kṛṣṇa can deliver us from this material existence. Indeed, He is always trying to deliver us. *Īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati*. He is within our hearts and is not at all inattentive. His only aim is to deliver us from material life.

It is not that He becomes attentive to us only when we offer prayers to Him. Even before we offer our prayers, He incessantly tries to deliver us. He is never lazy in regard to our deliverance. Therefore this verse says, *bhūri-karuṇāya namo 'layāya*.

It is the causeless mercy of the Supreme Lord that He always tries to bring us back home, back to Godhead. God is liberated, and He tries to make us liberated, but although He is constantly trying, we refuse to accept His instructions (*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*). Nonetheless, He has not become angry. Therefore He is described here as *bhūri-karuṇāya*, unlimitedly merciful in delivering us from this miserable material condition of life and taking us back home, back to Godhead.” *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 8.3.17. *Purport*

Easy flapjack recipe

The ground nuts in this recipe make the flapjacks rich and crispy.



Ingredients

100g butter
100g mixed dried fruit and nuts
110g porridge oats
100g mixed dried fruit & nuts
100g self-raising flour
100g golden syrup

Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4.

Line a deep 20cm square baking tin with greaseproof paper and rub with olive oil.

Pulse the butter, dried fruit and nuts, oats and flour in a food processor until the mix comes together and away from the sides, then pulse in the syrup until fully combined.

Transfer to the lined tin, flattening to the edges. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden.

Remove from the oven, slice into 16 squares ready to cut, and leave to cool in the tin for 5 minutes. Then use the paper to lift out on to a wire rack, and leave to cool completely.

The Supreme Lord

By Peter Goodall

Oh Krishna, You are the one true Lord
With mundane entertainment I am bored
because chanting and hearing have acted like a sword
to cut through the illusion that it's fun or a reward.
It doesn't provide a wonderful time,
it just covers the truth - that this world is a spoof.
Most things I can afford and as a result, too much junk I
have stored.
So, because there is nothing to achieve in this world,
I have now turned to You dear Lord.
Oh Krishna, You are the only true Lord and by Your
devotees you are rightly adored.

Tribute to Nitai Sachinandana

By Kalyani devi dasi

An unsung Hero you held no position
Yet you gave your whole life to Prabhupada's mission
A friendly soul that welcomed seekers
A servant, a friend, rather than preacher.

A wonderful taste for the holy name
Trinad api no doubt to blame
You went to chant on the city streets
Giving the holy name sweetly to all you would greet.

In a world that's utterly insane
You never chased money position or fame
But rather you worked to perfect your own life
And returned home to Krishna which became your right

Yes dear Nitai you were happy to serve,
never making a fuss.
And you're in Krishna's arms now, that we can trust.

Monthly Outreach Programmes

Harinama

in Belfast city centre
outside Dunnes Stores - 1.30pm

Mantra night

at Women's Resource Centre,
Lower Crescent - 6.30pm

Third and fourth Saturday of each month.

For details, call our mobile no.
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Vaisnava calendar Jan/Feb 2024

January

07 Jan 2024 - **Saphala Ekadasi**
07 Jan 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Devananda Pandita**
09 Jan 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Mahesa Pandita**
09 Jan 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Uddharana Datta Thakura**
12 Jan 2024 - **Appearance Day of Sri Lochana Dasa Thakura**
14 Jan 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Jiva Goswami**
14 Jan 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Jagadisa Pandita**
15 Jan 2024 - **Ganga Sagar Mela**
15 Jan 2024 - **Makara Sankranti**
21 Jan 2024 - **Putrada Ekadashi**
22 Jan 2024 - **Appearance Day of Sri Jagadisa Pandita**
25 Jan 2024 - **Sri Krishna Pushya Abhishek**
31 Jan 2024 - **Appearance Day of Srila Gopala Bhatta Goswami**
31 Jan 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Ramchandra Kaviraja**

February

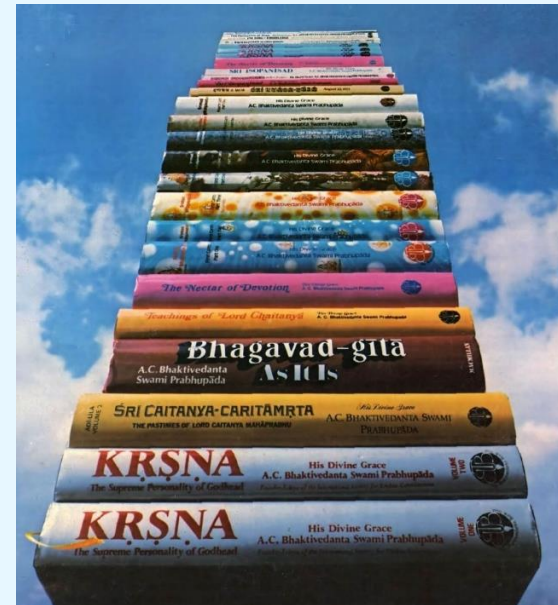
01 Feb 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Jayadev Goswami**
02 Feb 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Locana Dasa Thakura**
06 Feb 2024 - **Sat-tila Ekadashi**
14 Feb 2024 - **Appearance Day of Srimati Vishnupriya Devi**
14 Feb 2024 - **Sarasvati Puja**
14 Feb 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura**
14 Feb 2024 - **Appearance Day of Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi**
14 Feb 2024 - **Appearance Day of Sri Raghunandan Thakura**
14 Feb 2024 - **Appearance Day of Srila Raghunatha Dasa Goswami**
16 Feb 2024 - **Appearance Day of Sri Advaita Acharya**
17 Feb 2024 - **Bhismastami**
18 Feb 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Madhvacharya**
19 Feb 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Ramanujacharya**
20 Feb 2024 - **Bhaimi Ekadashi**
21 Feb 2024 - **Varaha Dvadasi**
22 Feb 2024 - **Nityananda Triyodasi – Appearance Day of Nityananda**
24 Feb 2024 - **Sri Krishna Madhura Utsava**
24 Feb 2024 - **Appearance Day of Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura**
29 Feb 2024 - **Appearance Day of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura**
29 Feb 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Sri Purusottama Dasa Thakura**
29 Feb 2024 - **Disappearance Day of Srila Gour Govinda Swami**

Sunday programme

Enhance your spiritual life by joining the temple activities

Reading Srila Prabhupada's books

Everyone is welcome to join us on Sundays at 2.00pm when we will read Srila Prabhupada's books together and share our observations and realisations.



2.30pm - Kirtan

3.00pm – Class

3.45pm – Japa

4.00pm – Arati

4.30pm – Sunday Feast



Book Distribution

Could you sponsor some books?

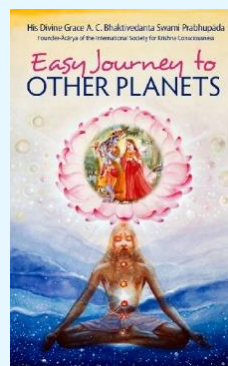
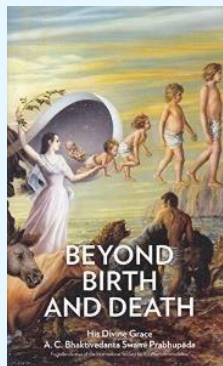
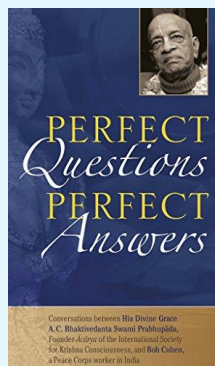
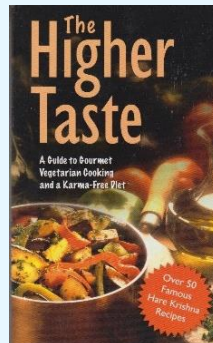
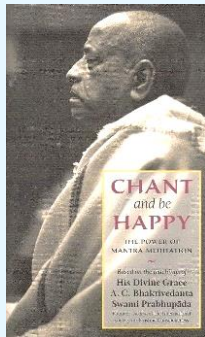
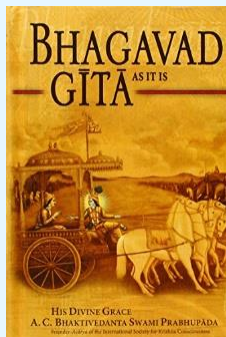


Please help us get the message of Krishna consciousness out to the people. Book distribution is one of the best methods of preaching.

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Chant



And be happy