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To know more about Srila Prabhupada visit www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada

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The Scientific Reality of Spiritual Life

A conversation between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and Dr. S. P. Oliver, Rector of the University of Durban, in Westville, South Africa, on October 10, 1975.

Dr. Oliver: We are in this twentieth century, this last part of the century, with a new global search for the truth about the spiritual. We, of course, in the Western world, are not familiar with the Bhagavad-gita. Our problem is basically, I think, the one that you raised in your lecture: How do we make the spiritual a scientific reality? And I think you were quite right. I think really few people get the point that you were trying to make—that this is a scientific matter.

Srila Prabhupada: That is the beginning of the Bhagavad-gita—scientifically presenting spiritual knowledge. Therefore I raised the question: What is transmigration of the soul? Nobody could reply properly. We are changing bodies. There are so many varieties of bodies, and we may enter into any one of them after death. This is the real problem of life. Prakrteh kriyamanani gunaih karmani sarvasah: nature is working, providing us with material bodies. This body is a machine. This machine, just like a car, has been offered to us by material nature, by the order of God, Krishna. So the real purpose of life is to stop this perpetual transmigration from one body to another, one body to another, and revive our original, spiritual position so that we can live an eternal, blissful life of knowledge. That is the aim of life.

Dr. Oliver: The conception of transmigration is not, of course, in the Christian religion.

Srila Prabhupada: It's not a question of religion. Religion is a kind of faith that develops according to time and circumstances. The reality is that we are spirit souls. By the laws of material nature, we are carried from one body to another. Sometimes we are happy, sometimes distressed; sometimes in the heavenly planets, sometimes in lower planets. And human life is meant for stopping this process of transmigration and reviving our original consciousness. We have to go back home, back to Godhead, and live eternally. This is the whole scheme of Vedic literature. The Bhagavad-gita gives the synopsis of how to act in this life. Therefore, through the teachings of the Bhagavad-gita we can begin to understand the constitutional position of the soul.

First of all we have to understand what we are. Am I this body or something else? This is the first question. I was trying to answer this, but some people in my audience thought it was a kind of Hindu culture. It is not Hindu culture. It applies to everyone. dehino 'smin yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanam jara tatha dehantara-praptir dhiras tatra na muhyati

[to a devotee:] Find this verse.

Devotee: [reads] "As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change." [Bg. 2.13]

Srila Prabhupada: In the Bhagavad-gita everything is explained very logically, very scientifically. It is not a sentimental explanation.

Dr. Oliver: The problem, as I see it, is how to get modern man to make an in-depth study of what is contained or outlined in this book, especially when he's caught up in an educational system that denies a place for this very concept or even the philosophy of it. There is either complete neutrality, or just a simple rejection of these truths.

Srila Prabhupada: They do not accept the soul?

Dr. Oliver: They accept the soul. I think so. But they do not care to analyze what it means.

Srila Prabhupada: Without analyzing this, what is their situation? First of all, they should analyze the distinction between a dead body and a living body. The body is always dead, just like a motorcar without a driver. The car is always a lump of matter. Similarly, this body, with or without the soul, is a lump of matter.
There is a story that once Krishna went with a classmate to the forest to collect dry wood for His spiritual master... So even Krishna, whom we accept as the Supreme Lord, had to go to gurukula and serve the spiritual master as a menial servant.
Dr. Oliver: It isn't worth very much. I think around fifty-six cents.

Srila Prabhupada: But if one cannot distinguish between the car and the driver of the car, then he is just like a child. A child thinks the car is running automatically. But that is his foolishness. There is a driver. The child may not know, but when he is grown up and has been educated and still he does not know, then what is the meaning of his education?

Dr. Oliver: In the Western world the whole range of education covers only primary, secondary, and tertiary education. There is no place for an in-depth study of the soul.

Srila Prabhupada: I talked with one professor in Moscow. Maybe you know him—Professor Kotovsky. He teaches at the Soviet Academy of Sciences. I had a talk with him for about an hour. He said, “After this body is annihilated, everything is finished.” I was surprised that he told me this. He is known to be a very good scholar, and still he does not know about the soul.

Dr. Oliver: We have an Indology course here, given by a scholar from Vienna. But what he teaches, what kind of basic philosophy, I wouldn't know. There are about forty students. In essence they ought to start by making a detailed study of the Bhagavad-gita and use that as a basis for their whole philosophy.

Srila Prabhupada: So why not appoint someone to teach Bhagavad-gita As It Is? That is essential.

Dr. Oliver: Our University almost has an obligation to make a study of these points in depth.

Srila Prabhupada: By thoroughly studying Bhagavad-gita, one begins his spiritual education.

Dr. Oliver: Well, this is apparently what one needs. Our Hindu community here in South Africa seems to lack any fixed idea of what constitutes Hinduism. The young people especially are living in a complete vacuum. For various reasons, they do not want to accept religion, because this is what they see around them. They cannot identify with the Christian religion, the Islamic religion, or the Hindu religion. They are largely ignorant.

Srila Prabhupada: They should be shown the right path. This is the original, authentic path.

Dr. Oliver: There were not very many great scholars in South Africa amongst our Indian community. The Indian people came, by and large, as workers on the sugar plantations—field workers. A few were jewelers and tailors and so on. Then for the last hundred years there was a political struggle, resisting transportation back to India. They were fighting to make a living and to find their own place in this country. As I see it, they must give meaning to the essence of their own beliefs and faith. I've been telling them that we are privileged to have them here in this country with their background, and that they mustn't cut themselves away from it and drift into a vacuum. But they don't know to whom they should turn. So basically, they and myself and others want to know how we get this spirit into our own hearts, and how does this then issue out into everyday living?

Srila Prabhupada: That is all explained in the Bhagavad-gita: how to live peacefully in this world and how to go back home, back to Godhead.

Dr. Oliver: But how does one get modern man to voluntarily make this experiment? The real tragedy is we have wandered so far away from the spirit that we do not know where to start. And we can't get a few dozen honest believers to sit down and try to find out how much God wants to give of His mind to our minds.

Srila Prabhupada: God is giving Himself. We just have to accept Him. That requires a little advancement. Otherwise, everything is there. God says that the soul is eternal and the body is changing. It is a very simple example. A boy becomes a young man, and a young man becomes an old man. There is no denying this fact. I can understand it, and you can understand it. It is very simple. I remember that as a boy I was jumping, and I cannot do that now because I have a different body. So I am conscious that I possessed a body like that. Now I do not possess it. The body is changing, but I am the same person eternally. It requires a little intelligence to see this, that's all. I am the owner of the body, and I am an eternal soul. The body is changing.

Dr. Oliver: Now, having accepted that, a further problem then arises: What are the implications?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. If I understand that I am not this body, yet at the present moment I am engaged only to keep my body comfortable, without taking care of myself, that is wrong. For example, if I am cleansing this shirt and coat thrice daily, but I am hungry—that would be impractical. Similarly, this civilization is wrong in this basic way. If I take care of your shirt and coat, but I don't give you anything to eat, then how long will you be satisfied? That is my point. That is the basic mistake. Material civilization means taking care of the body and bodily comforts. But the owner of the body, the spirit soul, gets no care. Therefore everyone is restless. They are changing the "ism" from capitalism to communism, but they do not know what the mistake is.
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Dr. Oliver: There is very little difference. They are both material.

Srila Prabhupada: The communists think that if we take control of the government, everything will be adjusted. But the mistake is there—both the communists and the capitalists are taking care of the external body, not the eternal identity, the soul. The soul must be peaceful. Then everything will be peaceful.

bhoktaram yajna-tapasam
sarva-loka-mahesvaram
suhrdam sarva-bhutanam
jnatva mam santim rcchati

[To a devotee:] Read that verse.

Devotee: "A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries." [Bg. 5.29]

Srila Prabhupada: This means that one must know what God is. Because you are part and parcel of God, you already have a very intimate relationship with Him. Our business is knowing God. So at the present moment, there is no information. People have no complete idea.

Dr. Oliver: Well, I believe that if a satellite in the sky can reveal what is happening from one pole to the other pole, then surely God can reveal His spirit and His mind to anyone who wants to obey Him, who wants to know Him, and who sincerely wants to follow Him.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, yes. So here in the Bhagavad-gita God is explaining Himself. We have to take it by logic and reason. Then it will be a clear understanding of God.

Dr. Oliver: Yes, but how to get this across?

Srila Prabhupada: The teaching is there. We have to understand it by authoritative discussion.

Dr. Oliver: I think so. This is probably where one has to start. We have to sit down and discuss this, much the same as some professors would discuss any scientific experiment.

Srila Prabhupada: The process for understanding is described here:

tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya
upadeksyanti te jnanam
jnaninas tattva-darsinah

[To a devotee:] Find out that verse.

Devotee: "Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth." [Bg. 4.34]

Srila Prabhupada: Read the purport

Devotee: "The path of spiritual realization is undoubtedly difficult. The Lord therefore advises us to approach a bona fide spiritual master in the line of disciplic succession from the Lord Himself. No one can be a bona fide spiritual master without following this principle of disciplic succession. The Lord is the original spiritual master, and a person in the disciplic succession can convey the Lord’s message as it is, to the disciple.

"No one can be spiritually realized by manufacturing his own process, as is the fashion of the foolish pretenders. The Srimad-Bhagavatam (6.3.19) says, dharmam tu saksad bhagavat-pranitam: the path of religion is directly enunciated by the Lord. Therefore, mental speculation or dry arguments cannot help lead one to the right path. Nor by independent study of books of knowledge can one progress in spiritual life.

"One has to approach a bona fide spiritual master to receive the knowledge. Such a spiritual master should be accepted in full surrender, and one should serve the spiritual master like a menial servant, without false prestige. Satisfaction of the self-realized spiritual master is the secret of advancement in spiritual life. Inquiries and submission constitute the proper combination for spiritual understanding. Unless there is submission and service, inquiries from the learned spiritual master will not be effective. One must be able to pass the test of the spiritual master, and when he sees the genuine desire of the disciple, he automatically blesses the disciple with genuine spiritual understanding.
Srila Prabhupada, the founder-acharya of ISKCON, has delivered more than 1500 lectures on Vedic scriptures like Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam and Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita. The audio recording of his lectures are available in ISKCON centers. You can also hear some of these lectures in www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada-lectures

“In this verse, both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned. Not only should one hear submissively from the spiritual master, but one must also get a clear understanding from him, in submission and service and inquiries. A bona fide spiritual master is by nature very kind toward the disciple. Therefore when the student is submissive and is always ready to render service, the reciprocation of knowledge and inquiries becomes perfect.”

Srila Prabhupada: The practical example is here. These European and American boys are coming from well-to-do families. Why are they serving me? I am Indian, coming from a poor country. I cannot pay them. When I came to the West. I had no money. I brought only forty rupees. That was only an hour’s expenditure in America. So their soul is to carry out my instruction. And therefore they are making progress. Pranipatena pariprasnena—they are asking questions. I am trying to reply to them, and they have all got full faith. They are serving like menial servants. This is the process.

If the spiritual master is bona fide and the disciple is very sincere, then the knowledge will be there. This is the secret. Yasya deve para bhaktir yatha deve tatha gurau—Vedic knowledge is revealed unto those who have faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master. Therefore in Vedic society, the students are automatically sent to the gurukula [the place of the spiritual master], regardless of whether one is a king’s son or from some other background. Even Krishna had to go to gurukula.

There is a story that once Krishna went with a classmate to the forest to collect dry wood for His spiritual master. Suddenly there was a heavy rain storm, and they could not get out of the forest. The whole night they remained in the forest with great difficulty. There were torrents of rain. The next morning, the guru, their teacher, along with other students, came to the forest and found them. So even Krishna, whom we accept as the Supreme Lord, had to go to gurukula and serve the spiritual master as a menial servant.

So all of the students at the gurukula learn how to be very submissive and how to live only for the benefit of the guru. They are trained from the very beginning to be first-class submissive students. Then the guru, out of affection and with an open heart, teaches the hoys all he knows. This is the process. There is no question of money. It is all done on the basis of love and education.

Dr. Oliver: I might have difficulty accepting parts of what you’ve indicated here, simply because I don’t know. But basically I accept that God lives in us and that when we leave things to Him, He knows how to direct these things. The challenge is living life so that He will be satisfied. This is where the difficulty comes in: you need the inspiration to be disciplined. This will only become a reality in one’s life if one practices it. And practices it with others who share this commitment.

Srila Prabhupada: Therefore we have this International Society for Krishna Consciousness—showing how to live a life of dedication to God. That is required. Without practical life in God consciousness, it remains simply theoretical. That may help, but it takes longer. My students are being trained up in practical spiritual life, and they are established.

Dr. Oliver: I want to thank you very much, and I pray that God will bless your visit to our country and our people here.

Srila Prabhupada: Hare Krishna.
Srila Prabhupada: People are trying simply for sense gratification. They do not even know the purpose of life. So our mission is to eradicate this ignorance. They are living under a wrong conception of life. Not a spiritual conception, but a material one.

Devotee: In Kathmandu I was asking people, “What kind of enjoyment is this from smoking cigarettes? You are coughing. Intoxication—toxin—means poison. So you are actually giving yourself poison. This is sanity? This is human life?” So these people usually told me, “Well, I’ll give up cigarettes later.”

Srila Prabhupada: At least they admit the fault. Do they not?

Devotee: Yes, some people do. I reminded all these people about karma. You know: “According to your activity in this life, you’re preparing your next life. If you live a spiritual life, you’ll go to the spiritual world. If you live a materialistic life—animalistic—you’ll stay in the material world and become an animal.” And they all admitted. “Yes. I know about the law of karma.” But when I said, “Why don’t you serve Krishna?” they said, “Later. Later.”

Srila Prabhupada: Hare Krishna.

Devotee: So, Srila Prabhupada, can your instructions in the Srimad-Bhagavatam stop these people’s lust? Or do we have to hope that somehow they will be frustrated in their attempts to enjoy sense gratification?
Srila Prabhupada: They are being frustrated. Who is successful in the material world? Can you name any instance in which someone has been really successful? [Laughs. A brief pause.] Then?

Devotee: Everywhere in this material world, people are miserable. In America, Amy Vanderbilt, the famous etiquette expert, jumped out of her window.

Srila Prabhupada: There are many.

Devotee: Oh, yes. In San Diego and also in San Francisco, they have these fences so that when people jump off the bridges, they are caught by the fences.

Srila Prabhupada: And I think in Berkeley they had to enclose the top of the clock tower with glass?

Devotee: Oh, yes, at the University of California—to keep the students from jumping off.

Srila Prabhupada: These are signs of how desperate people are, how disappointed with their life of materialism. They are always ready to commit suicide. Some thirty years ago, a man was sitting near me in a railway car—and all of a sudden, he jumped through the window. All of a sudden. He had been sitting nicely. What he was thinking I do not know. But he took the opportunity of the open window and jumped. I saw it.

Devotee: A kind of insanity overpowered him.

Srila Prabhupada: Insanity. Everyone is overpowered by insanity. Everyone who is trying to be happy in this material world—everyone is overpowered by insanity. They do not know the only solution is, as Krishna says, sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja: “Just surrender to Me.” (Bg. 18.66) But that they’ll not do. Anything but surrender to Krishna.

Devotee: I was telling these Indian people that in America the big thing is they want to “raise the standard of living,” but even those people who have raised the standard of living—they are also killing themselves. But many times these Indian people don’t want to listen. “Our goal is economic development,” they say. “That is the top priority.”

Srila Prabhupada: Obstination. Dog’s obstinacy. Now they are busy manufacturing various types of religious systems so that one may not have to surrender to Krishna. This is going on. Big, big swamis are saying, “Yes, whatever you manufacture, it is all right.” Yatha mata tatha patha: “Whatever you concoct, that is all right.” So people are content. If somebody said, “You surrender unto me,” that would not be very palatable. When somebody says, “No, you can surrender to anyone,” that is very palatable.

Devotee: Because that means no surrender. To surrender to anyone . . .

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Devotee: . . . means no surrender.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Devotee: Sometimes people say, “When Krishna wills it that I surrender to Him, then I will do it.”

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Such rascaldom. You think that Krishna is not willing it, rascal, when He says in the Bhagavad-gita, “You must do this—you must surrender to Me”?

Devotee: Sometimes people say, “When Krishna makes my heart open to Him, then I will surrender.”

Srila Prabhupada: But you have no heart. You have simply stone. In the words of one devotional song: “My heart is harder than a stone. I know that chanting Hare Krishna can melt even a stone, but it does not melt my heart. Therefore I think my heart must be harder than a stone.”

Devotee: Some of these religious systems even say that it is offensive to say the name of God.

Srila Prabhupada: What can I do? If these rascals say something like that, what can I do?

Devotee: Even when they write the word God, they don’t write “G-o-d.” They write “G, dash, d,”—so that they’ve indicated God, but they haven’t said “God.” It’s too holy to pronounce. That’s what they say.

Srila Prabhupada: They might as well say, “G-zero-d.” [Laughter.] That would nicely convey their idea of God.

Devotee: Zero signifies their love for Him.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Zero is controlling both sides, G and d. If you multiply something by zero, what does it become?

Devotee: Zero.

Srila Prabhupada: That’s all. This kind of thinking is sunyavadi, voidist. It is successful suicide. But we know life is not void, because God is not zero.

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I forsook You, O Lord,
   And came to this world of pain and sorrow.
Now I submit my tale of woe
   At Your lotus feet.

While still in the unbearable fetters
   Of my mother’s womb,
I saw You before me.
   You revealed Yourself but briefly
And then abandoned this poor servant of Yours.

At that moment I swore to worship You
   After taking birth.
But birth came, and with it
   The network of worldly illusion,
Which robbed me of all good sense.

As a fondled son in the lap of relatives,
   I passed my time smiling and laughing.
My parents’ affection helped me forget
   The pangs of birth,
And I thought the world a very pleasant place.

Day by day I grew
   And soon began playing with other boys.
Before long my powers of intellect emerged,
   And I studied my lessons incessantly.
Travelling from place to place,
   Proud of my education,
I grew wealthy and maintained my family
   With undivided attention.

O Lord Hari, O Krishna, I forgot You!
Now, in old age,
   I, Bhaktivinoda, weep sadly.
I failed to worship You, O Lord,
   And instead passed my life in vain.
What will my fate be now?

Kedarnatha Datta Bhaktivinoda led a life of devotion to Sri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He wrote nearly one hundred books on the science of bhakti-yoga (devotional service to the Supreme Lord), established several major places of pilgrimage, checked the rampant growth of unauthorized, pseudodevilational practices across India, and paved the way for the transmission of Krishna consciousness to Western shores.

Despite numerous titles and responsibilities—court magistrate in the city of Puri, manager of the huge Jagannatha temple, husband, and father of thirteen children—Bhaktivinoda Thakura remained throughout his life dedicated to reviving the movement of devotion to Sri Krishna begun in the late fifteenth century by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In his poetry, the Thakura reveals this dedication through verses filled with the humility and philosophical insights of a pure devotee of God.

The word saranagati means “complete surrender to the Supreme Lord”. In this poem Bhaktivinoda Thakura describes the journey of the conditioned soul from birth and entanglement in the false promises of material affection, to liberation in saranagati. He humbly takes on the role of the subject of this journey, which begins with the decision to leave the eternal spiritual world and pursue the fleeting pleasures of material life. As a yet unborn child in the womb, the conditioned soul realizes his error and vows to again take up devotional practices. But the shock of birth wipes out all memory of this vow, and the soul finds himself progressively entangled in family affairs, mundane education, marriage and wealth.

The poem ends with Bhaktivinoda lamenting the loss of his loving relationship with Lord Krishna and contemplating the consequences he must now face, namely rebirth in another material body.
The Deity or archa vigraha is the form that the Supreme Lord resides in, to accept the offerings of His devotees and to give them an opportunity to personally relate with Him in this material world. The Vedic scriptures state that worshipping His deity form is non different from worshipping the Lord directly.

Brahmotsava is the commemoration of the installation of the Deities of the temple and is usually a ten-day celebration. This year’s celebrations on Hare Krishna Hill began on April 10 and ended on April 21. Every evening, Lord Krishnachandra and Smt Radharani ride on different vahanas or carriers, dressed in various alankaras depicting Their transcendental pastimes. They then receive dolotsava seva accompanied by sangeetha seva for Their pleasure.
Gaja Vahana
Rukmini Dwarakadisha Alankara

Chandra Prabha Vahana
Radha Rasabihari Alankara
Anantha Sesha Vahana
Lakshmi Narayana Alankara

Hamsa Vahana
Mohini Alankara
Kalpa Vriksha Vahana
Radha Kunjabihari Alankara

Hanumad Vahana
Seetha Rama Pattabhisheka Alankara
Surya Prabha Vahana
Radha Swarnendu Sundara
Krishna Alankara

Garuda Vahana
Devendra Vijaya Alankara
Ashwa Vahana
Rukmini Vijaya Alankara

Maha Pallakki
Radha Raja Gopala Alankara
Brahma Ratha
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Kalyanotsava
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BANGALORE: (above) Sri Sri Krishna Balarama in Sri Sri Rama Lakshmana Alankara
(below) Rama Taraka yagna
On behalf of all the citizens of Karnataka, I would like to thank ISKCON Mysuru for conceiving this project called Nava Brindavan Dham here in Mysuru... As is known worldwide, Srila Prabhupada did not limit this Krishna consciousness to just the boundaries of India alone, but by traveling across the globe, he spread Lord Krishna’s message, Krishna consciousness throughout the whole world. This was possible for this great personality, Srila Prabhupada, because Lord Krishna was with him. Chanting loudly of this mantra Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare is sufficient for everyone. Even I have been a life member of ISKCON since 35 years.

Mysuru is a city of palaces, this is a city of museums, this is a city of culture and tradition. In Mysuru, we have the famous Brindavan Garden, and today, ISKCON missionaries have invited Lord Krishna to come and play in the Brindavan Gardens, and thus they have conceived of this Nava Brindavan Dham project. We have here the temple of Chamundi Devi and now we are going to have a temple for Lord Krishna, and this brother and sister together are now going to shower Their mercy on the people of Mysuru. I would like to thank and congratulate ISKCON Mysuru again for undertaking this very good work.

His Excellency Vajubhai Rudabhai Vala
Honourable Governor of Karnataka
On completion of the grand temple at Hare Krishna Hill, Bangalore, in the year 1997, the devotees wishing to spread the movement further, took lead steps in conducting preaching programmes in various cities of Karnataka. In the year 1999, His Grace Stoka Krishna Dasa along with few other devotees, rented a house in Gokulam, Mysuru to house the Deities of Sri Sri Krishna Balarama. Subsequently, a 9-acre kharab land in the Malavadi Grama was sanctioned for the purpose of building a religious and cultural centre, in the year 2003. Soon after the allotment, a temporary structure was built in the year 2004 and since then the temple started functioning here. An Akshaya Patra kitchen feeding 2000 school children every day, was also set up. Under the leadership of His Grace Jai Chaitanya Dasa, the Nava Brindavan project was initiated in the year 2008. This plan has been cleared by various departments and is now ready for execution.
His Grace Madhu Pandit Dasa speaks on the occasion of Shilanyas

ISKCON’s efforts to erect yet another cultural monument in Mysuru is to fulfil one of the several dreams of Srila Prabhupada, the Founder-Acharya of ISKCON—the dream of presenting Vedic wisdom and culture in a most appropriate manner for attracting the modern minds. A dream to create a hub for serving humanity through social initiatives like Akshaya Patra.

Today, the world is at the pinnacle of progress in science and technology, that have taken humanity to great heights of material achievements. Unprecedented innovations in every aspect of life in this age of computers and Infotech, ought to have created a happier civilization. But surprisingly and on the contrary, this materialistic progress and lifestyle has resulted in creating dissatisfied and frustrated individuals!

Today's typical citizen is a man without peace. Interestingly, about a century ago an average man was more satisfied and peaceful, although he had lesser facilities for his gratification of the body, than today. Despite material progress, the society today is filled with more and more people with mental distress and newer physical diseases than ever before. What has gone wrong, in spite of the tremendous material progress? Where does the problem lie?

By studying the status of the world it is clear that as we marched towards material progress, man has not endeavoured to progress in the spiritual direction. This is where the problem lies. It is a lack of balance between material progress and spiritual growth, both as individuals as a society. This lopsided imbalanced growth has resulted in man becoming more and more greedy and less and less peaceful. More and more frustrated because there is no solution to greed except to obliterate greed.

An environmental crisis has been created from reckless and mindless excessive consumption of natural resources by man. This has been caused by man’s greed. It is very clear that if the western model of consumerism is blindly pursued by India, we are responsible for aggravating this environmental crisis. Over-consumption has been clearly identified by scientists, religionists, politicians and environmentalists as the single biggest cause for the environmental crisis the world is facing today.
When there is no peace where is the question of happiness? Reflecting on this reality the vital question would be, can modern civilization be considered the truly progressive civilization?

The answer is, not so unless it is balanced by spiritual growth. The ancient rishis and philosophers of this country had adopted a different means to unravel the secrets of existence through tapas and austerity and bring about peace and harmony. Their ideas and wisdom regarding the science of sustainable living were recorded in the Vedic literature thousands of years ago.

This knowledge formed a basis and guide for man's balanced material and spiritual growth under the tenets of dharma, artha, kama, moksha and Bhagavad prema. Vedic wisdom is not against pleasure, kama, and not against economic development, artha, as long as it is regulated by religious principles of dharma for the ultimate purpose of liberation or moksha and developing Bhagavad prema.

Today the world, largely influenced by western culture, is playing the game of unrestricted artha and kama for its own sake, largely focused on immediate gains, ignorant of the higher principles and purposes of human life of dharma, moksha and Bhagavad prema. This has led to an environmental crisis of pollution, climate change, shortage of natural resources. So it is not at all surprising that this new religion of man, of maximizing exploitation of material resources by mutual competition is leading to this great crisis, not to the individuals, but to the earth itself. Just like a fever is a symptom of a deeper malfunctioning of the body, the environmental crisis is only an alarming symptom of man's ignorance of higher values and purposes of life of dharma and Bhagavad prema.

The solution lies only in influencing large number of people to change their values towards voluntary simplicity of life style. Spirituality and religion can play a major role in creating value systems that will reduce over consumption and stop this environmental degradation. Nava Brindavan cultural center will be a center for disseminating these spiritual principles for a peaceful life on earth.

At the heart of every culture is a thought system that consists of varieties of shared beliefs and values. What is culture? How are cultures formed? Over long periods of time shared values and beliefs get reflected and encoded as a way of life in the form of customs and practices, religion, language, art forms, festivals and so on, creating a unique culture. Vedic culture is based on a very deep understanding of man's essential eternal nature and is as ancient as man himself.
What are the most important shared beliefs of our Indian culture that distinguish us from several other western cultures?

It is our belief in *atma, Paramatma, karma, dharma, moksha*, Bhagavat *prema*. We believe in *atma*: that we are eternal beings beyond this bodies which we inhabit for a short time from birth to death.

We believe in Paramatma or Ishvara: the eternal omnipresent, omniscient God, who creates this world and who respects the freewill of each of us.

We believe in *karma*: that life situations are determined by laws of universal justice through Nature's reward and punishment.

We believe not only in free will of human being but also in destiny that circumscribes such free will.

We believe in *kala*: eternal time as a force that moves everyone's life in this world according to individual *karma* under the direction of the Paramatma.

We believe in *dharma*: the eternal relationship God and us. We believe that the essence of everything being is service to God and humanity. We believe in *moksha*. We believe that each one of us are divine and perfection of life is attain God and His love.

We believe in tolerance and acceptance of other religions as appropriate paths to God, suited to different time, place and circumstances and suitable for different stages of that soul's journey to God according to their respective faiths.

This profound Vedic culture is in direct contrast with materialistic culture which is based on the idea that I am this body. It does not accommodate the parallel reality of another substance *brahman, atma* or consciousness which is the higher non-material energy of God. There is no higher purpose according to this material philosophy other than what relates to the body itself, hence such materialistic culture understands perfection of life to be only perfection of enjoyment of the body. It is short sighted culture based on the superficial understanding of man's nature that he is the body, and death is the end of everything. It is indeed dangerous, since, when stretched to its extremity, it will only create polished animals out of human beings and not gentlemen.

Any educational system is influenced by culture and vice versa. Our traditional educational system has been imperceptibly replaced by the western system over the last few centuries. Thus through the newly introduced education system, western culture gradually invaded our original Vedic culture. Srila Prabhupada, our Founder Acharya, wanted his movement to play an important role to set right this anamoly by promoting and preserving the valuable Vedic culture especially among the younger generation.

Today's children are extremely intelligent. We want our children to talk with ease and understanding the ideas of *atma and Paramatma, dharma, karma*, freewill, destiny, *moksha*, etc.

Nava Brindavan Dham will be fulfilling its mission if we succeed in making our youth of Mysuru responsible God-loving citizen's with a desire to serve and not exploit nature and humanity.

It is high time we took steps before we are completely consumed by materialistic western culture. The time has come to set the balance right; Let us boldly use science and technology to educate children in Vedic knowledge and culture, so as to inculcate in them profound values and truths of existence right from childhood. Our Acharya Srila Prabhupada taught us to engage even material things in the service of God and mankind. He encouraged us to use everything modern to enhance the presentation of our cultural values and beliefs in a scientific manner that is appealing to modern minds.

Even as we have taken a lead in applying technology to address the social problem of hunger amongst school children in our Akshaya Patra programme, we also wish to take a leading step in the direction of building this kind of high tech temple-cum-cultural-complexes in an attempt to bridge the material imbalance in the society. This is our mission here at Nava Brindavan: to bring the best of the West and East for the benefit of mankind. We want to make our youth proud enough to proclaim to the world that they are part of the culture that has rational solutions to all problems of mankind and that they are not part of a superstitious cult as wrongly portrayed by many foreign invaders over the centuries to the rest of the world, as well as to all of us English-speaking Indians.

Nava Brindavan Dham will be an abode of the Lord, wherein visitors will learn to look at our heritage from a very rational and a scientific point of view. The Nava Brindavan Dham cultural center though architecturally a monument, has in its essence, the promotion and teaching of Indian philosophy through scriptures like *Bhagavad-gita, Bhagavatam* and other *Puranas* and promoting traditional Indian arts, dance, music. Nava Brindavan Dham, besides being a cultural center, will be hub for many more social initiatives like Akshaya Patra.

On this occasion I would like to announce the setting up of free residential schools all over the country for underprivileged children, which will be expanded to colleges eventually. Our plan is to provide free residential
education to totally 50,000 students all over the country. As part of that programme, called Great India Talent Schools, Nava Brindavan dham will be setting up a free residential school for 2000 underprivileged children near Mysuru, in Mahadevapura.

I would like to make a fervent appeal to all of you to contribute generously, to make this project a success. The scriptures extoll the rareness of an opportunity to participate in building a Vishnu temple.

"O devoted one, one who builds a beautiful temple for Lord Narasimhadeva, will be freed from all sinful reactions and he will enter the Vaikuntha planets." — Narasimha Purana

In the Skanda Purana there is the following verse: “Just by starting the construction of a temple for Lord Krishna, sins committed in seven births will be wiped out and one will deliver his forefathers who are suffering in the hellish planets.”

On this auspicious occasion we seek the blessings and good wishes from Srila Prabhupada the Founder-Acharya of the Hare Krishna Movement. We are very grateful to His Excellency the Governor of Karnataka and all other dignitaries who have come here today to witness and grace this Bhumi Puja and pray to Lord Krishna and Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to gives all the strength and intelligence and skills for the accomplishment of this grand vision for the upliftment of mankind and glory of God.
In an initiative to recognize, nurture and build talent among marginalized families, Great India Talent School (also known as Mahan Bharat Pratibha Vidyalaya) was inaugurated in Kashiram Para, Kanchanpur Sub-division, Tripura on 29 March, 2017. This school will provide text books, notebooks, uniform and mid-day meals to the children on an entirely free of cost (100% FOC) basis. Initially, 350 children have been admitted into the school and this initiative is poised to grow to serve 1000 students. The facility will primarily support the education of children of the Reang tribes of Tripura as they are located in camps in close proximity to the school. The school will play a major role in the development of Reang community here at Kashiram Para.

Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa, Chairman, Great India Talent Foundation and The Akshaya Patra Foundation, inaugurated the school. The Honourable Governor of Tripura, Sri Tathagata Roy, who has always been in support of promoting talents in the region, could not be personally present in the program due to inclement weather. In a personal message sent to Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa, he lauded the special initiative and wished the Great India Talent School a great success.

This project has been started by the Great India Talent Foundation under the guidance and leadership of Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa, who is also the President of ISKCON Bangalore, with the conviction that India has a large rural population with innumerable abilities and talents which go untapped. It is an endeavour to build a sustainable workforce with skills at par with industry standards while maintaining the balance between the ability and need. On the lines of the ancient Indian Gurukul philosophy, the school aims to identify and nurture the natural inclination of children. Each individual is different with varied strengths and needs; the school will recognize this important aspect and train the children accordingly. With several plans in the pipeline, the initiative will cater to the student populace inculcating mainstream skills along with life skills.

Sri Chanchalapathi Dasa, Vice Chairman, Great India Talent Foundation and The Akshaya Patra Foundation and Sri Janardhana Dasa, President, Great India Talent Foundation and The Akshaya Patra Foundation, North East Division also participated in the event. Sri Janardhana Dasa will oversee the management and growth of this project.

H H Tridandi Swami Bhakti Kamal Vaishnava Maharaj, H H Sri Chitta Maharaj, Sri Y Raghavulu, Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa and Sri Chanchalapathi Dasa during the inaugural ceremony.

Meals served to the children of Reang tribes by the dignitaries.
important initiative which is poised to tremendously impact the lives of thousands of children and thereby immensely contribute to the development of the North-East region.

The Educational Partners of the initiative are Sadhak Ratanmani Seva Sadan, and this school is also supported by The Akshaya Patra Foundation. The inauguration was also graced by His Holiness Tridandi Swami Bhakti Kamal Vaishnava Maharaj, Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, Sri Jagannath Mandir Agartala, His Holiness Sri Chitta Maharaj, President, Shanti Kali Ashram, Tripura, and Shri Y Raghavulu, Joint Secretary, V.H.P.

Speaking on the occasion, Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa thanked the Honourable Governor of Tripura, Sri Tathagata Roy and other dignitaries for extending their full-fledged support. He said, “The school will be a beacon for recognising and furthering young talents on a national and global scale. Imparting education to children and training them on life skills will prepare them to secure a better future for themselves and their families. This will boost their confidence to lead a balanced life of values and productivity.”

Sri Chanchalapathi Dasa also expressed his gratitude for the support received and said, “Our country has great talent. If the right opportunity and ecosystem is provided to the children, they will blossom and become productive in the society.”

Rituals performed for the inauguration

Cultural programme by Reang tribes during the occasion
Sri Rama Navami  

ISKCON Bangalore celebrated Rama Navami on 5th April, 2017 at Sri Radha Krishna temple. The Deities of Krishna-Balarama were decorated as Rama-Lakshmana. In the evening, the Deities of Radha-Krishna were decked-up as Sita-Rama and taken in a procession to the accompaniment of devotees chanting the Hare Krishna mantra. 
Read More: [https://goo.gl/WmwQps](https://goo.gl/WmwQps)

Nava Brindavan Dharn  

Karnataka Governor Vajubhai Rudabhai Vala laid the foundation stone for the Nava Brindavan Dham, ISKCON Mysore Cultural Centre at Jayanagar, Mysuru on April 2, 2017. The 60 meter tall structure will integrate the old charm of Hoyasala style with ultra-modern architectural forms. 
Read More: [https://goo.gl/URPilV](https://goo.gl/URPilV)

Mid-day Meal Kitchen  

One of the most modern and hygienic kitchens supplying mid-day meals is located on the outskirts of Bengaluru. It caters to 94,000 school children every day. Work begins as early as 1 a.m. starting with the cleaning and cutting of vegetables at the Doddakallapandu kitchen run by the Akshaya Patra Foundation on Kanakapura Road. 
Read More: [https://goo.gl/EJF2pu](https://goo.gl/EJF2pu)

Guru and Krishna  

Until one gives up sinful activities and is determined to serve Krishna through His representative, firm devotional service will not take hold in spite of chanting the Hare Krishna mantra. There is every chance that one will fall prey to all sorts of material desires. 
Read More: [https://goo.gl/xNWMfa](https://goo.gl/xNWMfa)

Reviews from tripadvisor®  

Divine discipline: Located in north Bangalore, this temple, sprawling over a large expanse, firstly strikes one with the cleanliness n the social discipline as shown by everyone visiting n paying obeisance to the deities. There is no mad scramble, no jostling n yelling as devotees quietly await their turn in a queue either silent or talking softly. One can easily spend a couple of hours in these divine environs. **pinaki50**

Must-visit in Bangalore: The temple may look hi-tech from outside, but inside with a vast prayer hall, its good place to sit and meditate... the chanting makes it more spiritual... **Sumeysb B**

Magnificent and Clean Temple: ISKCON temple at Bangalore is really clean and well maintained, the queues are orderly. There is sufficient parking space for the car and the temple also has a very good Sattvic Food restaurant called Higher Taste - which has really good Biryani and Paneer. Be sure to carry a shawl / pull over - as you are not allowed to enter in shorts or with shoulder less dresses. **AbhaNanda**

Spiritual recharge atop hill of grandeur! A well-organized entry, car-parking and the queue system. A mind calming walk up the hill with chants of Hare Rama.... The sanctum sanctorum is an awe-inducing hall of splendor and divinity. The ever patient and calm volunteers add a halo to the experience. A visit worth to make with family and friends. Not the one to pass up if you are in Bangalore. **Ashok K**

Beautiful temple: It’s a very beautiful temple of Lord Sri Krishna located on a hill which adds to the beauty, very vibrant atmosphere with bhajans happening inside the main hall. **chaitald2015**

Top YouTube Picks  

H.H. Sri Sri Vishvesha Tirtha Swamiji speaking at the Sri Chaitanya Jayanti Sambhramotsava

Sri Navadhipa Mandala Parikrama

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SBI Foundation donated 1,250 insulated vessels to The Akshaya Patra Foundation. These vessels are customized to maintain food temperature for several hours and therefore will help in delivering hot and nutritious food at schools. These vessels will be put to use at the Bangalore (Karnataka), Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Guwahati (Assam) and Nathdwara (Rajasthan) kitchens of The Akshaya Patra Foundation. The event was held in the premises of The Akshaya Patra Foundation at Bangalore in the presence of Sri R. Narottham Reddy, President and Chief Operating Officer, SBI Foundation and Sri Chanchalapathi Dasa, Vice-Chairman, The Akshaya Patra Foundation.

During the event, Sri Narottham Reddy stressed on the need to eliminate malnutrition in the country. “We are proud to be partnering with Akshaya Patra which is working towards eradicating malnutrition in India, and happy that these insulated vessels will be instrumental in delivering hot and nutritious meals to the children. We look forward to a long term association with the Foundation”, he said.

Sri Chanchalapathi Dasa, Vice-Chairman, Akshaya Patra said, “We are overwhelmed by the support from SBI Foundation. We take pride in being the first NGO to receive aid from SBI Foundation and we profusely thank them for supporting this noble cause and joining hands with us in our fight against hunger.”
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