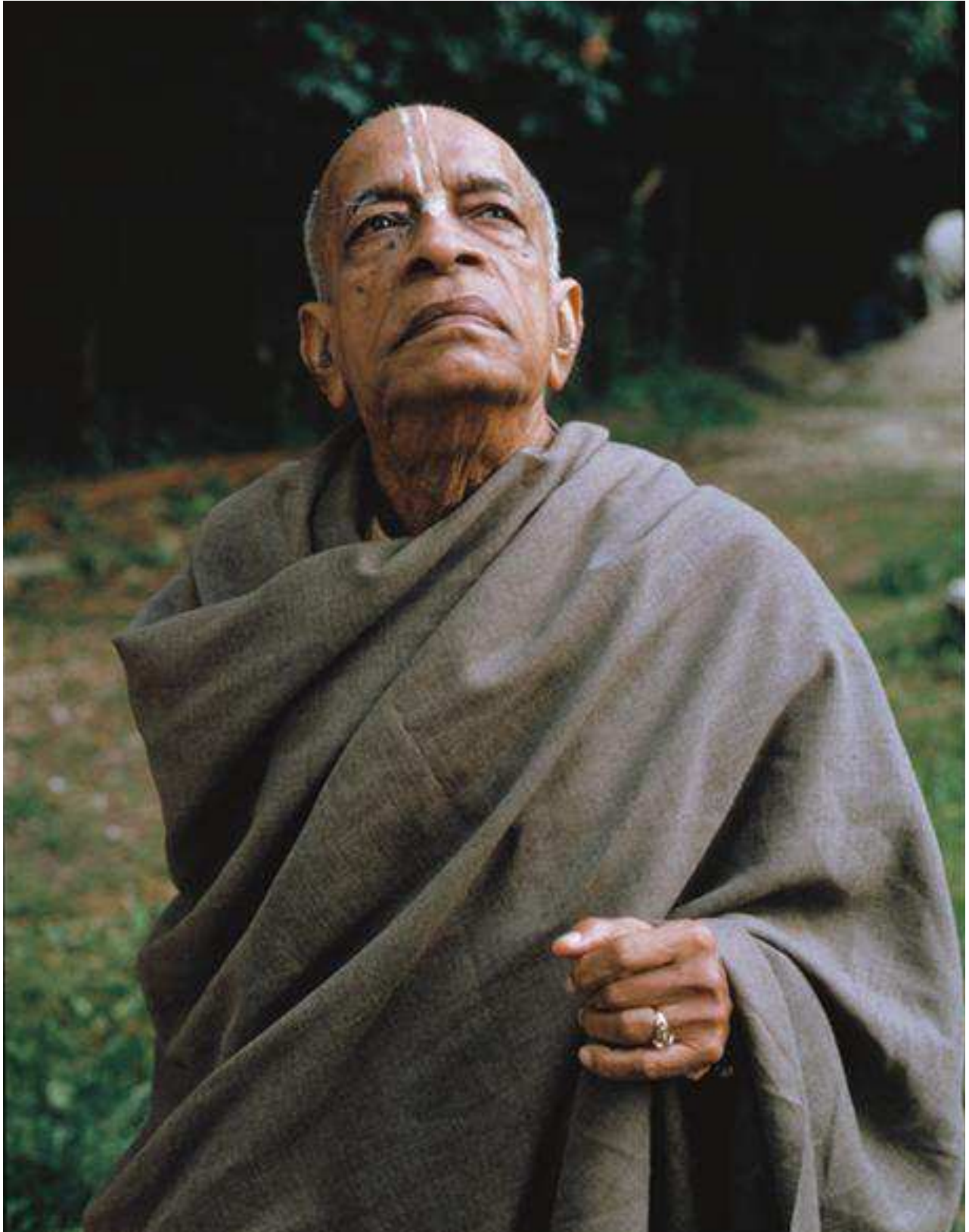


Prabhupāda



He came with the message of the absolute world

His Journey

"When I first arrived in your New York harbor, I did not know whether to turn left or right."

Although one candle kindles unlimited numbers of other candles, each with the same intensity as the first, there yet remains the original candle. Similarly, although the Supreme Personality of Godhead expands Himself in unlimited forms, He yet remains the original cause of all causes. In the Vedas, that supreme original cause is known by the name Kṛṣṇa because He possesses unlimited transcendental qualities, which can attract all living beings.

Five hundred years ago, that same supreme cause, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, appeared as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and declared that the chanting of His holy names-Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma-would spread beyond the shores of India to every town and village in the world. Hundreds of years then passed as Lord Caitanya's faithful followers endeavored to expand His mission. Still they remained wondering just how and when the Lord's bold prediction would come true.

Then, on August 13, 1965, just a few days before his sixty-ninth birthday, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami-philosopher, scholar, and saint-set out for America to see what could be done. Begging passage from a local steamship company, he traveled as the only passenger on board a small weathered cargo ship named the Jaladuta. In his possession were a suitcase, an umbrella, a supply of dry cereal, about seven dollars worth of Indian currency, and several boxes of books.

When the Jaladuta arrived in New York harbor thirty-seven days later, Bhaktivedanta Swami was utterly alone. He had come to America knowing no one, with absolutely no visible means of support, and with only the meager handful of possessions he had carried on board the ship. He had no money, no friends, no followers, not his youth, good health or even a clear idea of how he would accomplish his far-reaching objective-to present the spiritual knowledge of the Vedas to the entire Western society.

In a poem written in Bengali just after his arrival, Bhaktivedanta Swami expressed his humble faith in Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the special instruction of his own spiritual master, who had intended him to spread the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the English-speaking world:

"My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa.... How will I make them understand this message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness? I am very unfortunate, unqualified, and the most fallen. Therefore I am seeking Your benediction so that I can convince them, for I am powerless to do so on my own.... I am sure that when this transcendental message penetrates their hearts they will certainly feel engaddened and thus become liberated from all unhappy conditions of life...."

This poem was written on September 17, 1965. Just twelve years later, on November 14, 1977, Bhaktivedanta Swami passed away in India at the age of 81. What happened in those twelve years? What was Bhaktivedanta Swami able to accomplish during this brief period, having begun with nothing, and at an age when most are ready to retire? The list of accomplishments is striking by any standard.

In short, between the years 1965 and 1977, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, or Śrīla Prabhupāda, as his followers affectionately came to know him, had spread the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to every major city in the world, and had formed an international society comprising thousands of dedicated members. He had established 108 temples, with magnificent estates spread across six continents, and had circled the globe twelve times to personally guide the membership of his broadening mission.

As if this were not enough accomplishment for a person proceeding from his 70th to his 82nd year, Śrīla Prabhupāda had also translated, written, and published 51 volumes of books in 28 different languages, tens of millions of which had been distributed throughout the world. He had delivered thousands of lectures, written thousands of letters, and taken part in thousands of conversations with followers, admirers, and critics alike. And he had won the esteem of hundreds of prominent scholars and social figures, who had genuine appreciation for Śrīla Prabhupāda's contributions to religion, philosophy, and culture.

The astonishing story of how Śrīla Prabhupāda achieved such a marvelous result in twelve short years is far beyond the scope of this pamphlet. But the remaining pages will provide you with a glimpse into his remarkable teachings and achievements.

His society

"I have come here in this old age neither for sightseeing nor for personal interest. It is for implementing the science of Kṛṣṇa which will actually make people happy."

After arriving in New York City in September 1965, Śrīla Prabhupāda struggled alone for the first year to establish his God conscious movement. He lived simply, lectured whenever and wherever he got the opportunity, and gradually began to attract some small interest in his teachings.

In July of 1966, while still working alone from an obscure storefront on New York City's Lower East Side, Śrīla Prabhupāda nonetheless founded a spiritual society intended for worldwide participation. He called it the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, or ISKCON for short.

At the time of incorporation, Śrīla Prabhupāda had not attracted even one committed follower. Undeterred, he enlisted volunteers from among the small group of regular attendees at his evening lectures to act as ISKCON's first trustees.

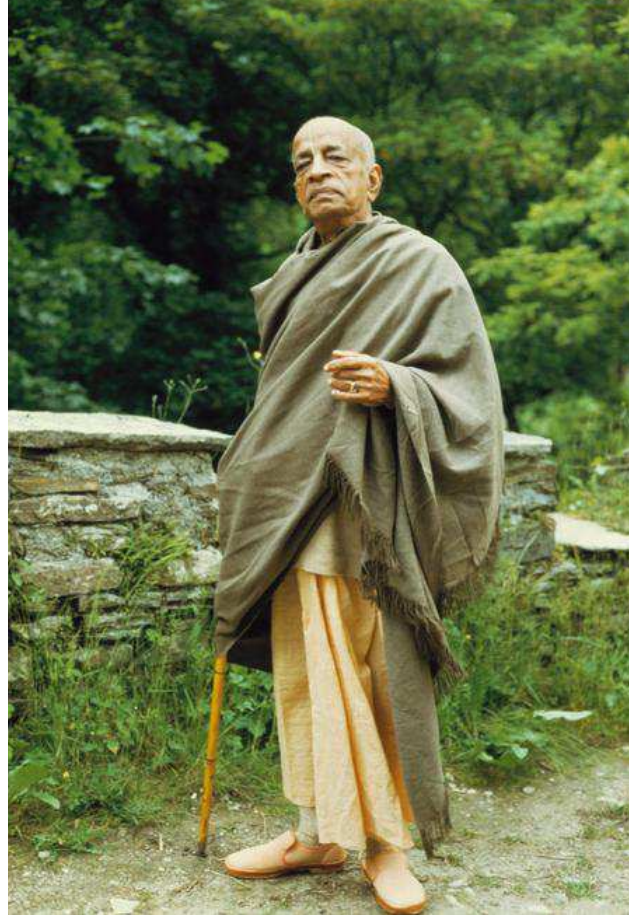
That was then. Today, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness comprises more than 300 temples, farms, schools, and special projects throughout the world and maintains a worldwide congregation numbering in the millions.

ISKCON's Purpose

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is more than another sectarian faith. It is a technical science of spiritual values that is fully described in the Vedic literature of ancient India. The aim of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to acquaint all people of the world with these universal principles of God-realization so that they may derive the highest benefits of spiritual understanding, unity, and peace.

The Vedas recommend that in the present age the most effective means for achieving self-realization is to always hear about, glorify, and remember the all-good Supreme Lord, who is known by many names. One of these names is "Kṛṣṇa," which means "He who is all-attractive," another is "Rāma," which means "He who is the reservoir of all pleasure," and "Hare" indicates the Lord's inconceivable energy.

Following the Vedic recommendation, the members of ISKCON are always seen chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. This sublime chanting puts us directly in touch with the Supreme Lord through the



sound vibration of His holy names and gradually awakens us to our original relationship with God.

ISKCON's primary mission is thus to encourage all members of human society to devote at least some portion of their time and energies to this process of hearing and chanting about God. In this way they will gradually come to realize that all living beings are spirit souls, eternally related to the Supreme Lord in service and in love.

Distributing Spiritual Food

Along with teaching Vedic knowledge and spreading the chanting of the Lord's holy names, ISKCON also freely distributes spiritual food throughout the world. Like the philosophy and the chanting, vegetarian food that has first been offered to the Lord purifies the heart and mind. Thus it assists in the process of gradually uncovering one's original awareness of God. ISKCON's distribution of spiritualized food, therefore, through its program known worldwide as "Food for Life," is beneficial for the body as well as the soul of each recipient.

His Teachings

"Human life is simply awarded to a living entity so that he can realize his spiritual identity and his permanent source of happiness."

Of all his various contributions, Śrīla Prabhupāda considered his books most important. In fact, he would often describe his work of translating and explaining the ancient Vedic texts as his very life and soul. In 1970, Śrīla Prabhupāda founded the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, now the world's largest publisher of Vedic literature. Through its work over the last quarter century, millions of people have read at least one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and have felt their lives genuinely enriched. Here is a brief introduction to the spiritual knowledge you will find within those books.

The Importance of the Human Form of Life



There are many forms of life on this planet. There are immovable forms such as trees and plants, and a vast array of aquatic, insect, bird, beast, and mammalian forms as well. Our human form is also one among these varied forms of life, yet even a casual observer would have to agree that we human beings are endowed with unique capacities that distinguish us from all other forms of life. What exactly are those unique capacities?

We can begin answering this question with another. What is it that distinguishes a living form from a nonliving form? The answer is consciousness, or awareness. All living forms display this symptom of consciousness to one degree or another. That is why we call them living rather than dead. Even the small microbial germ or the common houseplant show signs of consciousness, whereas our dining table and chairs do not.

It is also evident that different forms of life display different degrees and levels of consciousness, and the human form represents the highest development of consciousness that we know. It is this greater development of consciousness, then, that distinguishes

the human being from all other forms of life on the planet.

But what is it about our consciousness that makes it so different from that of the insect, the bird, the beast, or even the monkey? These creatures eat and we also eat; they sleep and we also sleep; they reproduce and we reproduce; they defend themselves and so do we. That we can perform these functions with greater sophistication may be one indicator that we possess higher consciousness, but it does not fully explain our excellence above all other forms of life.

A more satisfactory explanation is found in our ability to question our existence, reflect upon our selves, and inquire into our own nature and the nature of God. We can create languages, ponder the meaning of life, and puzzle in wonderment over the nighttime sky. Such an endowment is not present in any other form of life.

The Vedas therefore advise that in this human form of life we should be inquisitive to know who we are, what the universe is, what God is, and what the relationship is between ourselves, the universe, and God. We should inquire about the solution to the ultimate problems of life, namely birth, death, old age, and disease. Such questions cannot be asked by the cats and dogs, but they must arise in the heart of a real human being.

The Perfect Knowledge of the Vedas

If we can accept the importance of this type of inquiry, our next consideration will naturally be where to find authoritative answers to such questions. Clearly, if perfect knowledge concerning questions of the self, the universe, and God, exists at all, it would have to be of a standard higher than just your opinion or my opinion, or for that matter Freud's or Einstein's or anyone else's opinion.

Because all of us have imperfect senses and because we are all prone to make mistakes, our relative opinions about matters beyond our experience can supply neither valid nor reliable information.

Thus our attempt to approach such matters empirically will be fraught with various imperfections and ultimately fail. Therefore, so-called truths established exclusively on the basis of mental speculation cannot help us understand the Absolute Truth, which is beyond the reach of the imperfect senses and mind.

The Vedas explain that if we want to know about things beyond the jurisdiction of our experience-beyond the limitations of human perception and cognition-the process is to hear from one who knows. The transcendental knowledge of the Vedas was first uttered by the Supreme Lord Himself. The Lord, the supremely powerful being, cannot fall under the influence of any other force. As a logical consequence, His knowledge must be perfect. And anyone who transmits that knowledge without change gives the same perfect knowledge. We need only accept this proposition theoretically to progress in our understanding of Vedic thought.

The idea is that the perfect knowledge of the Vedas has been preserved over time by transmission through an unbroken chain of spiritual masters. Śrīla Prabhupāda represents one such disciplic chain or succession. That succession goes back thousands of years to Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. Thus the knowledge found within Śrīla Prabhupāda's books is nondifferent from that which was originally imparted by the Supreme Lord. Śrīla Prabhupāda did not manufacture "truths." He merely delivered the timeless teachings of the original Vedas without addition, deletion, or change.

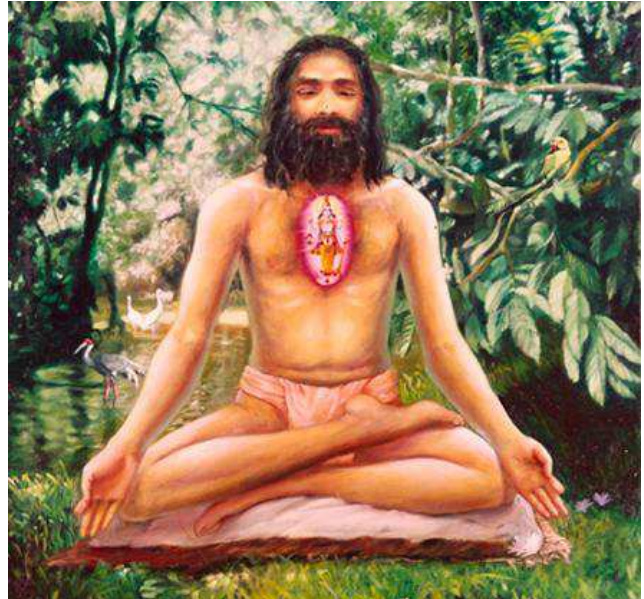
The writings of Śrīla Prabhupāda are represented mainly by three Vedic texts-the Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and Caitanya-caritāmṛta. Together these works of literature comprise more than 25 volumes of detailed information constituting the original Vedic science of God realization, or bhagavata-dharma. Their translation into the English language, along with elaborate explanations, constitutes Śrīla Prabhupāda's most significant contribution to the spiritual, intellectual, and cultural life of the world.

Universal Science of God Realization

The Vedic teachings presented in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books can be summarized under three general headings, known in Sanskrit as sambandha, abhidheya and prayojana. Sambandha means our relationship with God, abhidheya means acting in that relationship, and prayojana means the ultimate goal or perfection. These three divisions of understanding represent universal principles common to all religious teachings of the world.

The knowledge described in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books enables anyone to advance in his or her understanding of God without having to change current religious, national, or cultural affiliations. The science of how to understand God, how to understand one's relationship with God, and how to develop love for God has nothing to do with sectarian faiths. These are objectives no religion in the world could deny. They are, in other words, the essence

of religion-universal features by which all religions may be understood.



Preferences regarding God's holy name may differ from one religion to another, modes of worship may differ, and details of ritual and doctrine may differ as well. But the test is how much the practitioner actually develops knowledge of God and love for God.

Real religion means to learn to love God. And how to love God is the sum and substance of the teachings found in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

The Difference Between the Self and the Body

Without exception, all material phenomena have a beginning and an end. A most prominent idea of modern culture is that consciousness is another such material phenomenon. Thus it is believed that consciousness (or the self) also ends with the death of the material body. This point of view, however, remains only an assumption. It has not been proven true by any scientific observation or experiment.

Nonetheless, the idea that the self ends with the body remains one of the great articles of faith of modern materialistic thought, and most of us have been educated from early childhood to think of ourselves in terms of such beliefs. Few of us, however, have thought through the philosophical implications of this type of thinking, which draws us unconsciously toward voidistic and nihilistic styles of life.

The most basic of the Vedic teachings stands in direct opposition to the modern scientific view of consciousness and life. According to that teaching, individual consciousness is not at all dependent upon neurobiological functions but permanently exists as an independent reality.

The presence within the material body of a conscious observer who remains ever present throughout changing bodily and mental states indicates the existence of two energies—the spiritual energy (represented by the conscious self) and the material energy (represented by the temporary body). The Vedas explain that this spiritual energy, symptomized by consciousness, continues to exist even after the material body is finished.

If each of us is an eternal soul covered only by different temporary bodily dresses, we can reasonably conclude that the highest welfare activity for all of human society is that which awakens us to our true spiritual identity and our dormant relationship with God. That activity is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Just as there is neither glory nor profit in saving the dress of a drowning man, there is neither glory nor profit in humanitarian efforts aimed exclusively at improving conditions for the temporary material body, which in the end is destined to grow old, become diseased, and die.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda himself notes in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam: "The actual self is beyond the gross body and subtle mind. He is the potent, active principle of the body and mind. Without knowing the need of the dormant soul, one cannot be happy simply with the gratification of the body and mind.... The spirit soul's needs must be fulfilled. Simply by cleansing the cage of the bird, one does not satisfy the bird....

"There is dormant affection for God within everyone.... Therefore we have to engage ourselves in activities that will evoke our divine consciousness. This is possible only by hearing and chanting the divine activities of the Supreme Lord. Thus any occupational engagement which does not help one to achieve attachment for hearing and chanting the transcendental message of God is said... to be simply a waste of time."

"The Vedas are not compilations of human knowledge. Vedic knowledge comes from the spiritual world, from Lord Kṛṣṇa."

His Temples

"We are purchasing such big, big houses. Why? Just to give people the opportunity to hear about Kṛṣṇa."

As already mentioned, ISKCON currently has more than three hundred temples, farms, schools, and special projects throughout the world. At each center members teach daily classes, perform chanting, and provide individual instruction on the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Each center also holds a weekly festival and vegetarian feast, as well as programs on festive occasions throughout the year. All programs are open to the public.

ISKCON's Spiritual City in India

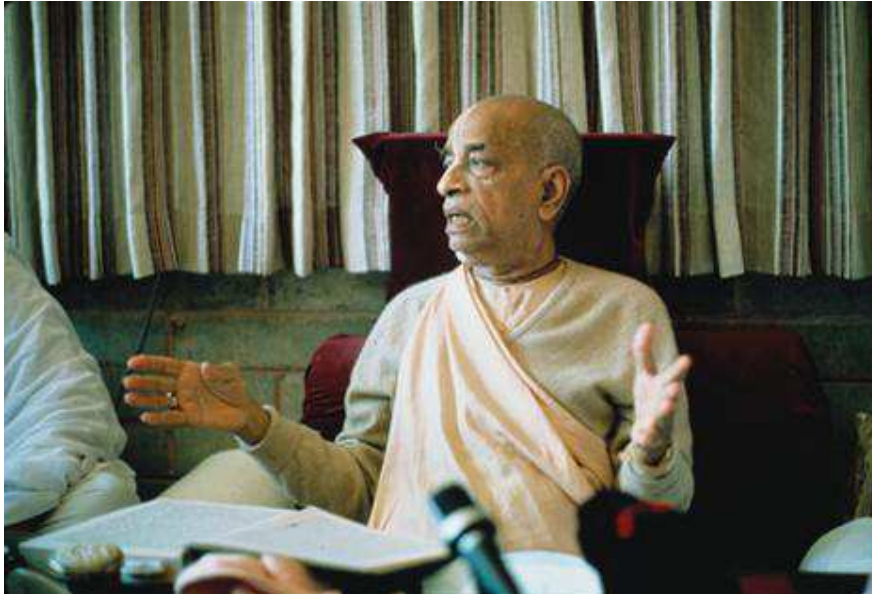
The construction of a spiritual city in Mayapur, India, may represent the most ambitious of Śrīla Prabhupāda's many programs for the further expansion of Kṛṣṇa consciousness worldwide. When completed, Mayapur City will be one of the most powerful and attractive features of ISKCON's 21st century presentation of Vedic culture.

The project, already well under construction, will include restaurants, guest houses, permanent residences, several fully interactive theme parks, and a special memorial cathedral in honor of Śrīla Prabhupāda. It will also include the "Temple of the Vedic Planetarium" and much more.



Scholarly Appreciation Of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Teachings

Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks with several German scholars in his room at Rettershof castle in Germany.



Śrīla Prabhupāda often noted that although modern colleges and universities had many departments of understanding, there was no department that taught scientific knowledge of the self and God. By presenting the original Vedic science of God realization through his books, Śrīla Prabhupāda filled the gap and met this vital educational need. Over the years, hundreds of scholars who either personally met Śrīla Prabhupāda or read his books have expressed keen appreciation for both his personal qualities and the contribution his teachings have made to humanity.

For example, Harvey Cox, world-renowned professor of religion at Harvard University, describes how he gradually recognized the value of Śrīla Prabhupāda's contribution:

"When I first met the Hare Krishnas, I can remember how surprised I was, and I wondered what this meant. The costumes, the chanting, and the shaved heads appeared a little strange to me. But as I came to know the movement, I came to find that there was a striking similarity in the essence of what they were teaching and in the original core of Christianity—that is, living simply, not trying to accumulate worldly goods, living with compassion toward all creatures, sharing, loving, and living joyfully. I am impressed with how much the teachings of one man and the spiritual tradition he brought have impacted themselves into the lives of so many people. In my view Śrīla Prabhupāda's contribution is a very important one and will be a lasting one."