

Learn and Teach

The VIHE Newsletter

ISSUE No. 1

MAY - JULY '16

Hare Kṛṣṇa! Well, well, well! Here it is: the first issue of "Learn and Teach," the VIHE Newsletter, a project that had been sitting on the back burner for quite a long time. Finally it is ready and reaching your mailbox. We hope it will be useful to you. You will find herein news, interviews, articles, interesting passages from Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and ācāryas' commentaries, class transcripts, announcements, links to recordings, photos and videos, and a place for you to share your own thoughts and updates.

The purpose of the VIHE has been defined as follows:

"The Vrindavan Institute for Higher Education was established in 1987 to fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire for an educational institute in Vrindavan. Its aim is to deepen the devotees' understanding, realization, and appreciation of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and mission, and to preserve and disseminate the standards he set for acting in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thus the VIHE contributes to passing on to successive generations the Kṛṣṇa conscious culture and values given by Śrīla Prabhupāda."

It is a tall order.

As the VIHE staff, we feel blessed; and for those who come in contact with the Institute, we strive to provide an atmosphere conducive to serious sādhana and deep study. Our service involves

Highlights:-

- ◆ Bhūmi-pūjā for the VIHE Govardhana Retreat Centre
- ◆ Upcoming Courses and Events
- ◆ Vaiṣṇavī Retreat Report
- ◆ Announcing Bhakti Sadācāra



bringing the students and teachers together for spiritual training and cultivation of devotional qualities within the shelter of Śrī Vrindavan Dhāma.

Śrīla Prabhupāda conceived that besides temple programs, festivals, prasādam, accommodation, and parikramās of the holy places, the ISKCON centers in Vrindavan and Mayapur would offer the worldwide community of bhaktas systematic education and training in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so



devotees could become further strengthened by their pilgrimage to India, and spiritually empowered to distribute the message of Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam throughout the world. The VIHE has contributed and continues to contribute to the establishment—envisioned by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself—of the four levels of systematic study of his books. Bhakti-Śāstrī has been running since 1990. Bhakti-vaibhava began in 2002, and the first ever Bhakti-vedānta course was completed in 2011. We are now thrilled in expectation of the first Bhakti-sārvabhauma course, to be taught by the VIHE founder, His Grace Bhūrijana Prabhu, and by Her Grace Nārāyaṇī Devī any time soon.

Since 2003, the VIHE premises have been situated in the midst of the ISKCON Goṣālā in Ramaṇa Reti, a few minutes' walk from the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple in Vrindavan. We are surrounded by cows, Tulasī Mahārāṇī, the Vrindavan Parikramā Mārga and the samādhis of several exalted departed ISKCON devotees, including our former teacher, His Holiness Pūrṇa-candra Gosvāmī, and Her Grace Yamunā Devī. 2015 has been a rewarding growth year. With the support of many of you we



VIHE Calendar 2016 - 2017

Jul 2 - Nov 3	:	Bhakti-Śāstrī (English)
Jul 2 - Nov 3	:	Bhakti-Śāstrī (Hindi)
Sep 23 - 26	:	International Vaiṣṇavī Retreat in Kathmandu
Nov 5 - 11	:	Teacher Training Course One
Nov 5 - 11	:	Teacher Training Course Two
Nov	:	Seminar - The Yoga Ladder
Nov 18 - 23	:	Holy Name Retreat
Nov 27 - Dec 4	:	Govardhana Retreat
Nov - Mar	:	Bhakti-Śāstrī (Russian)
Dec - Mar	:	Bhakti-vaibhava Canto 1 & 2 and Canto 3
Jan - Mar	:	Bhakti-Sadācāra
Mar	:	International Vaiṣṇavī Retreat in Govardhana

were able to add an additional floor to the existing VIHE building. This was a most welcome enlargement indeed, which now makes everything so much easier and more appealing. We wish to dedicate the first issue of this newsletter to all the devotees who contributed to this welcomed transformation. The Institute now has 4 classrooms, a temple room, reception and offices, a re-vamped kitchen, verandas for prasādam, and accommodation for teachers.

The beginning of 2016 has seen the start of the construction of the VIHE Govardhana Retreat Center at Jatipur, on the land purchased for this purpose in 2004. After many years of sorting out legalities, the construction permit was finally obtained. Śrī Ananta Śeṣa was installed on February 3 and the foundations are now being laid. Consequently, the VIHE has evolved into two distinct branches—the Vrindavan Institute and the Govardhana Retreat Center—both under the common umbrella of the newly formed VIHE Board.

At the dawn of the 2016 semesters we pray for blessings to be able to carry on with our services with full enthusiasm, dedication and efficiency for the pleasure of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

- Praśāntā Devī Dāsī

Bhūmi-pūjā for the VIHE Govardhana Retreat Centre

By HH Śacīnandana Svāmi
and HG Bhūrijana Prabhu



The Govardhana Retreat has been going on since 2000 – the first with only thirty students under the trees surrounding Girirāja (we still remember having to crawl under a barbed wire fence to get to our spot!), the most recent with almost a thousand students, now at a rented ashram.

As the number of students has grown, so too has our desire to serve this ever-expanding community of devotees by building our own center at Govardhana, along with our awareness that we needed our own place to house and host the devotees, and to give them a quiet place to actually retreat from the busy-ness of their lives.

For us, the Bhūmi-pūjā was a monumental event, like a first mango flower finally blossoming on a tree planted twelve long years earlier. We have



been patient. We originally procured land near Govardhana Hill in 2004, and added three more small pieces over the next eight years. Two years ago, we added one more piece, a large two-and-a-half-bigha plot, making the final

size of the plot for the centre five acres. Finally, we had enough land to allow our centre to be uncramped, unbuilt-up, and to possess the natural and simple ambiance we desired.

Then, after another year spent acquiring legal approval from the local council (MVDA), we were ready to build. Interestingly, and perhaps even mystically, that approval arrived suddenly while three hundred devotees were chanting Kṛṣṇa's holy names at the 2015 Holy Name Retreat in a colorful pandal at Govardhana during an unseasonal rainstorm. And on February 3, 2016, at an auspicious moment, two hundred meters from Govardhana Hill, we performed the Bhūmi-pūjā, and the initial construction of the VIHE Govardhana Retreat Centre officially started.

The sweetness of that moment reminded me of the sweetness that descends during the Govardhana retreats when all the devotees present are absorbed in hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa. That sweetness, I take it, comes from Girirāja



Construction started on 3rd Feb, 2016



“Soon we shall be introducing the Bhakti-śāstrī examination, which all brāhmaṇas will be expected to pass. It will be based on Bhagavad-gītā, N.O.D., Nectar of Instruction, Īsopaniṣad, and the small paperback books like Easy Journey. A brāhmaṇa should be a paṇḍita.”

- Letter to Brṣakapi, 7th January, 1976

Govardhana's pleasure, for Kṛṣṇa is being glorified in the association of devotees in Vrindavan.

And that is the essence of our endeavor to construct a retreat centre in this holy land. We wish to make this offering to Śrīla Prabhupāda: May his followers, both individually and in groups, retreat at least for some time from the lands where māyā's influence predominates, and approach the shelter of Girirāja Govardhana to gain deep nourishment by practicing absorbed hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa in Vraja.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda said in his purport to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.21.17:

"Only by drinking the nectar of chanting and hearing the pastimes of the Lord can one forget the intoxication of material existence."

And in a 1972 lecture in Vrindavan:

"So we must be inquisitive. We must be very eager. That eagerness should be aroused: 'Where Kṛṣṇa-kathā is being taught, let me go there, let me hear.'"

We pray that within the protected and serene atmosphere of the Govardhana Retreat Centre, devotees will experience Kṛṣṇa's potent presence through hearing and chanting His glories in Girirāja Govardhana's soothing shelter.

The Bhūmi-pūjā was highlighted by the presence of many kind-hearted sannyāsīs and other senior disciples and followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda. (We also received the distant, recorded well-wishes from a number of others.) Their words highlighted their own hopes for the quick and successful completion of the Centre. We pray that you add your prayers to theirs.



VIHE at the ILS

Six devotees from the VIHE staff participated in the ISKCON Leadership Sanga held recently in Mayapur. The devotees attended seminars and interacted with the many leaders and devotees from all over the world. The VIHE stall set up for the occasion served the devotee community by giving them information about the Institute, distributing books, and enrolling them for the various courses held all throughout the year.



Touching Lives...

The sixth Annual International Vaiṣṇavī Retreat

It is amazing how time always passes so quickly! Back in 2011 the Vrindavan Institute for Higher Education and the GBC Vaiṣṇavī Care Committee together started this new project with the motto **“Peer Association for Spiritual Progress.”** We were wondering how it would turn out, but from the first retreat it was clear that our aim of facilitating spiritual association among women in bhakti and celebrating Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy, was being fulfilled.

This year, 90 devotees took part in this six-day event, which, over the years, has been combining Kṛṣṇa-kathā and philosophical presentations by senior vaiṣṇavīs; classes covering practical topics related to mental and emotional care; sharing of realizations by Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples; kīrtana; inspirational readings to enhance japa; mṛdaṅga and kārātāla lessons, art workshops, occasional dramas, classical dance, and more—all together, a wonderful opportunity for the international community of women devotees eager for sādhu-saṅga.

This year the retreat took place from March 29 to April 3 in Jatipur, at the foothill of Śrī Girirāja Govardhana. The teachers were Yaśomatī Devī, who drew everyone inwards with her Kṛṣṇa conscious bedtime stories and kīrtanas; Prema Padminī Devī, who taught how to preach through personal care; Anurādhā Devī, who gave a presentation on Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam; Yaśodamayī Devī, who taught preaching applications from the second



chapter of Bhagavad-gītā; and Praśāntā Devī, who opened up the hidden meanings of the analogies given in the 20th chapter of the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, under the title “The Arrival of the Autumn Season.”

Attending the retreat fulltime was Kuśa Devī. Other disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda -- Mañjarī Devī, Annadā Devī and Lolā Devī -- joined the retreat for one or two days. On two occasions, devotees gathered closely around Govinda Devī and her associates from the Kṛṣṇa Balarāma temple garlands department, who came to teach the art of making flower ornaments for Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, as depicted by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in his Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa Gaṇoddeśa Dīpikā, verses from which adorned the walls of the retreat temple hall.

Much more happened, including a six-hour kīrtana at Ter Kadamba, Prabhupāda kathā at Airavata Kuṇḍa, and an enchanting visit to Surabhī Kuṇḍa. Among many, Nikuñja Vihārīṇī Devī Dāsī gave her feedback:

“I came, eager to deepen my spiritual life in the association of like-minded and advanced vaiṣṇavīs. Thank you for offering a platform where this could be made possible.”

“The barriers of shyness and reservations reduced as the days passed and we became a close-knit family. To be in the company of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s wonderful jewels, his spiritual daughters, is a real achievement.”





As his representatives they are offering a meaningful and transforming service to the mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

"I deeply appreciated the thoughtful and spiritually focused team working hard for this retreat. The chosen topics and speakers were enriching and wonderful. The idea of allotting a "sakhi," thoughtfully chosen for each of us, added to the retreat's nourishing experience. The kīrtanas by Her Grace Yaśomatī Mātāji and Bhaktin Anna [now Amṛta Gopī Devī Dāsī] will always stay in my heart. The Vaiṣṇavī Retreat is touching the life of the participants and helping us to increase our commitment to Śrīla Prabhupāda."

Looking forward to the next one...

Watch out for the First International Vaiṣṇavī Retreat in Kathmandu, Nepal, on October 23-26, 2016.

On the Vaiṣṇavī retreat 2015:

"It was, I would say, six days of gradual entry into the spiritual world, what the spiritual world really is - being together with devotees, glorifying Kṛṣṇa through kīrtana, japa, and hearing about Him. It's a blessing to be reminded that whatever we experience here we can carry it in our hearts and minds, and always meditate on the day that we can come back, and be together here."

- Jāhnavī Devī Dāsī, UK

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA - A Lecture

BG 4.1-6, Los Angeles, January 3, 1969

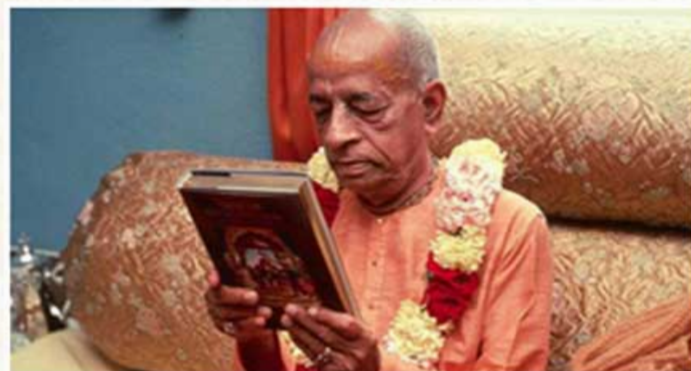
There are two kinds of knowledge: mundane knowledge and transcendental knowledge. Mundane knowledge means how to maintain this body, āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunaṁ, to meet the demands of this body. What are the demands of this body? We require to eat something. Eating, sleeping. We require rest after working hard. After eating sumptuously we require sleeping. Eating, sleeping, and during sleeping we sometimes dream, fearing, or without dream, fearing. So we take protection. While sleeping, we close our doors. Eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating—sense gratification. So to arrange for these necessities of life of the body, the knowledge that we require, that is called mundane knowledge.

In the modern materialistic civilization, we have very good arrangement for eating, for sleeping, for defending, and for sense gratification. The modern material civilization is simply based on this mundane knowledge, but there is no arrangement or university for imparting transcendental knowledge. There is no section in the university, practically, for what is called brahma-jijñāsā, the science of knowing the spirit soul. That is called transcendental knowledge.

We are busy with mundane knowledge, but the most important part of knowledge is transcendental knowledge. "What I am? Wherefrom I have come? What is my constitutional position? Am I this body or I am beyond this body?" These are [the subjects] of transcendental knowledge.

Continue further reading at -

<https://old.prabhupadavani.org/main/Bhagavad-gītā/GT125.htm>



Three Secrets of Bhakti-yoga

By HH Śācinandana Svāmi

What is bhakti? What is devotional chanting? It means you chant, not for yourself, but for Kṛṣṇa. In what way? In what mood? Are there further instructions? Ānukūlyena. You do it with a favorable mood, that of wanting to give pleasure to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa has many expansions. You can chant for Nṛsiṃhadeva's pleasure or for the pleasure of the devotees. In this way a kīrtana leader can think, "I want the devotees to chant nicely, for Kṛṣṇa to relish their call."

Devotional service, my dear devotees, means that you must learn to absorb your consciousness in these three things. Then your activity becomes bhakti, bhakti-yoga or devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Activity for Kṛṣṇa is not done mindlessly. It is done in a mood to give Him pleasure, a favorable mood.



anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-
śīlanam bhaktir uttamā

(Brs. 1.1.11)

That is called bhakti. Such activities are not jñāna, not for our liberation, and they are also not karma, not for our sense enjoyment. They are for Kṛṣṇa. Devotional service means

- i. activity
- ii. for Kṛṣṇa
- iii. in a favorable mood.

That, you have to learn.

When you do this, then your practice becomes very sweet, full of taste and you will be able to give up material sense enjoyment, even though you may be surrounded with cars and mobile phones and dressed in a Kīrtana Melā T-shirt.

I am so much appreciating Bhūrijana Prabhu for having the vision to start this VIHE program. The VIHE over many years has struck its roots, gaining strength. Such wonderful students are coming. The chemistry is just right. Now all students have to think very seriously, "How do I carry this to the place I am coming from and how do I plant more seeds of the VIHE?" As Śrīla Prabhupāda said in one letter to the German devotees, "Let it increase!"

- H.H. Kṛṣṇa-Kṣetra Svāmi

"For me, coming to Bhakti Śāstrī enhanced the process of internal cleansing and developed my gratitude to Śrīla Prabhupāda for what he has done for all of us. I got the realization that the process of knowledge is not the end but rather the beginning of our devotional lives. In this association all of us have been prepared to become worthy members of ISKCON and model citizens of the world. Of course we are very grateful for having been given the opportunity to be in the holy Dhāma. But the most important thing is that we could develop a sense of responsibility towards our movement and towards the world."

- Paul Musu, London UK

"It had been a four-year dream to come and study at the VIHE. To be here for four months, 24 hours a day, in Vrindavan dhāma, is just an unbelievable experience. Wherever I go, I will always be remembering these four months. I want to thank all the teachers and classmates from different parts of India and the world. I did not just read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books during this time. I actually had many realizations. That was the biggest benefit of doing the course. That required deep study and that's exactly what I managed to do. This motivated me to study more and more in the coming years."

- Kṛṣṇa Kumāra Dāsa, Melbourne Australia

Excerpts from H.H. Kṛṣṇa-kṣetra Svāmi's Seminar at the VIHE

THE WORLD OF THE BHĀGAVATA AND THE BHĀGAVATA WITHIN THE WORLD

Many episodes in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam are about receptions, some positive, some negative and some in between. Whenever there is a bad reception, there is trouble. In Canto Four, the Dakṣa yajña is a story of a bad reception. What is the first word in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam after the offering of obeisances? It is “janma” - birth. Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is a tale for the dying which begins with the word “janma.” Next we are getting to hear a birth story, a very unusual birth story indeed. Mahārāja Parīkṣit is the sole survivor of the whole dynasty. This has been the challenge throughout the Mahābhārata: How to have a continuous line of kings. It has led to a huge war in which everybody died, except the five Pāṇḍavas, who at one point decide that anyway there is no use of all this life and leave for the Himālayas, where they drop dead one after another. Now the only one left is Parīkṣit, and the attempt is made by Aśvatthāmā to eliminate him—as they say in the US military, “to take him out.” And of course what happens is that the Lord appears and so we have another motive here—seeing the Lord, darśana. What an amazing condition in which to see the Lord—in the womb—qualifying Mahārāja Parīkṣit in such a way that his heart is full of longing throughout his life for the Lord. We have had a prelude to that in the story of Nārada. He sees the Lord once and the Lord says, “That’s it, you are not going to see Me anymore in this life”. That sense of longing is there. You could also consider this as a story of bad reception: Aśvatthāmā is giving trouble to Mahārāja Parīkṣit even before he enters the world. And then Kṛṣṇa is entering into Mahārāja Parīkṣit’s life, in a figurative sense. But entering and exits, meetings and departures, one after the other, are making up the First Canto. This is all leading up to preparing us to understand that the Lord has departed, but He remains present as the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Upcoming Courses...

Bhakti-Śāstrī 2016

Jul 2 - Nov 3

Don't think it's not for you! Make a plan to attend...

And don't miss the opening!

July 2: The auspicious beginning of a four-month special period

Teachers for this year

BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

Bhakti Dhīra Dāmodara Svāmī, Sārvabhauma Dāsa, Lakṣmīmōnī Devī Dāsī, Kamala Locana Dāsa, Vamśī Vadana Dāsa, Ādi Puruṣa Dāsa

NECTAR OF INSTRUCTION:

Anirudha Dāsa, Anurādhā Devī Dāsī

NECTAR OF DEVOTION:

Ādi Puruṣa Dāsa

ĪŚOPANIṢAD:

Praśāntā Devī Dāsī

INTRODUCTION TO DEITY WORSHIP:

Mukunda Datta Dāsa

SANSKRIT PRONUNCIATION:

Vraja Ramaṇa Dāsa

Admissions deadline: June 1

“With these examinations I wish to encourage all my disciples to very carefully learn this philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, because there are so many preachers who will be required to bring this message to all of the corners of the earth.”

- Letter to Mahāpuruṣa, LA, Feb 7, '69

भक्तिशास्त्री २०१६

जुलाई ०२ से नवंबर ०३

अध्यापक गण

पू. सार्वभौम दास, पू. मुकुंद दत्त दास,
पू. वृंदावनचंद्र दास, पू. कमल लोचन दास,
पू. असित दास, पू. अतुल कृष्ण दास, पू. प्राणेश्वर
दास, पू. वंशी वदन दास, पू. अरुण चरण दास,
पू. विचित्र कृष्ण दास

Bhakti-Vaibhava

Dec 10 - Mar 18

Batch One: Canto 1 & 2

Batch Two: Canto 3

Teachers & Classes

ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM:

Yadunandana Svāmī, Bhakti Dhīra
Dāmodara Svāmī, Sārvabhauma Dāsa,
Śrīvāsa Dāsa, Kamala Locana Dāsa, Ādi
Puruṣa Dāsa, Praśāntā Devī Dāsī

THE SIX VEDIC PHILOSOPHIES:

Kamala Locana Dāsa

TEN TOPICS OF ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM:

Praśāntā Devī Dāsī

SANSKRIT METERS:

Vraja Ramaṇa Dāsa

Cantos 1 & 2 and Canto 3 will be taught in parallel. Students may join either or both courses

Admissions deadline: November 1

A New Course !!!

Bhakti-Sadācāra

Jan 2017 - Mar 2017

Over the years we have repeatedly and increasingly felt the need for an opportunity for devotees to receive the basics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Training is not always available in local areas and Śrīla Prabhupāda envisioned Bhakti-śāstrī as a program to train brāhmaṇas. Before one comes to Bhakti-śāstrī, one needs to have a background of devotional knowledge and culture. To fill the gap, the VIHE curriculum development team has conceived of Bhakti-sadācāra, a pre Bhakti-śāstrī study and training program.

The aim of Bhakti-sadācāra is to assist devotees in cultivating Vaiṣṇava qualities, a brahminical lifestyle and devotional values, to impart foundational knowledge and training, to inspire the practice of sādhana-bhakti, and to nourish a relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Contents of the course

- Vaiṣṇava etiquette
- Brahminical lifestyle
- Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta
- Introduction to the Bhagavad-gītā
- Our daily prayers, their meaning and purpose
- Eight types of service
- The four regulative principles
- Vaiṣṇava tithis and observances
- Memorization skills and practice

Admissions are OPEN...

An Interview with Madhusūdana Viṣṇu Dāsa
(Bhakti-Śāstrī student-2015)

Prema Sindhu Gauranga Dāsa: What inspired you to study at the VIHE?

Madhusūdana Viṣṇu Dāsa: After holding a job in Mumbai for four years, I decided to join ISKCON as a full time brahmacāri. I first wanted to deeply study and understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings. Doing Bhakti Śāstrī is what came to my mind. Since the VIHE is renowned for its rigorous and systematic education system, I chose to study there.

PSGD: What's the best thing that happened since you started studying Śrīla Prabhupāda's books through a systematic approach? How did that make you feel in your devotional service?

MSVD: Reading and studying Śrīla Prabhupāda's books in the right spiritual atmosphere under the guidance of senior devotees is a great learning, enlivening and joyful experience. Before attending Bhakti-Śāstrī I had never understood the statement, "Everything is there in Śrīla Prabhupāda books." The course taught me how to study and mine the gems in these books. It definitely made me feel encouraged, and my resolve to become a serious practitioner of Kṛṣṇa consciousness became stronger.

PSGD: How would this experience help you in your service to Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission?

MSVD: Since this course grooms one in the thorough understanding of the essence of the timeless wisdom of Vedic literature, bhakti-yoga, I am now more confident of both practicing and preaching these teachings and becoming an instrument in sharing this wonderful knowledge with others.

Serve at the VIHE

Staff Vacancies:

Retreats administrator
Commander
Pūjārī

Contact; mitra.vihe@gmail.com

Contact Us -

Website:

vihe.org

Facebook:

vihe.vrindavan

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vihe.courses.admissions@pamho.net

Retreat registrations:

vihe.retreats.registrations@pamho.net

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