

Learn and Teach

The VIHE Newsletter

ISSUE No. 2

AUG - OCT '16

As I write the VIHE is bubbling with activity. 56 devotees are taking the Bhakti-śāstrī course, spread over two batches—English and Hindi. Seeing each of them transform in their own individual way week after week with the progress of time, from curious or passive, casual listeners to disciplined, determined learners, and from shy strangers to dear friends, fills our heart with joy and nourishes our commitment to serving Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision for systematic spiritual education. We feel blessed and enlivened. The building, enrapt in the quiet, sātāvika atmosphere of the surrounding gośālā, with its gentle grazing cows, new born calves and noble bulls sitting all around, resounds with the recitation and discussions of the Holy Scriptures. It's hard work for the supporting staff, but a burden of love. Two thirds of the course are over. We passed over the exam fears; the sicknesses brought by the rainy season; the financial insecurity of the beginning days, not knowing whether we could supply lunch prasāda to the students throughout; and the overwhelming festivals—Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's Disappearance, Balarāma Jayantī, Janmāṣṭamī and Rādhāṣṭamī. This year the festivals have definitely been a highlight, bringing all of us, students, staff, teachers and guests, together in loving service. Between the festivals and the weekly kīrtanas, we've spent numerous blissful hours chanting, dancing and laughing our way through the semester. The Vrindavan sky is now sparkling light blue, occasionally decorated with foamy cotton white clouds. The autumn season is approaching. The early mornings are becoming cool and the grass, overgrown due to this year's sufficient rains,

Highlights

- ◆ Bhakti-śāstrī 2016
- ◆ The VIHE in Pictures
- ◆ Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's Disappearance Festival
- ◆ Upcoming Retreats



Abhiṣeka of Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa Balarāma on Janmāṣṭamī

is beginning to turn yellow. Throngs of monkeys are busy eating its seeds. One student confided that she wished time would just stop and she could remain for the rest of her life in that time-space-consciousness created by the synergy of the meeting of the soul, the dhāma, the Holy Sound, the teachers, the Holy Name and those devotees eager for devotional activities.

Looking ahead the staff is diligently preparing for the upcoming Holy Name and Govardhana Retreats, and the winter courses, expecting to host 40 Russian Bhakti-śāstrī students and two batches of Bhakti-vaibhava students—more service to come; more difficulties to overcome; more prayers to offer; more devotees to meet; more teachers to serve; more inner depths to explore. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is an ever expanding experience.

This is the second issue of the VIHE newsletter... coming out a bit late. You'll find in it an interview with His Holiness Bhakti Dhīra Dāmodara Svāmī, the experience of a Bhakti-śāstrī student, pieces of poetry by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, news of the Rūpot-sava and pictures all over. May it bring to you remembrance of Śrī Vrindavan Dhāma.

- Praśāntā Devī Dāsī



“Human life is meant for cultivation of spiritual knowledge, in eternal relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the executive heads of all states and all planets are obliged to impart this lesson to the citizens by education, culture and devotion.”

- Bhagavad-gītā 4.1, Purport

The Basket

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

I was happy to read your first VIHE newsletter. I like the news part - on your Bhakti-sadācāra and Bhakti-sārvabhauma course, Govardhan Center, and the new facilities in the main VIHE building. I didn't know all that. One must see "behind the curtain" - and realize how much endeavors and dedication it took and takes to get all these done and maintain it and expand it eventually. Also nice were the lecture excerpts from Śacīnandana Mahārāja and Kṛṣṇa-kṣetra Mahārāja, and of course Śrīla Prabhupāda's. You didn't elaborate on the Russian Bhakti-śāstrī, probably because it is not so much of interest for English-speaking audience. But it would be nice to have this info posted somewhere in Russian. Besides the retreats time, how are you going to use the Retreat Center at Govardhan? It would be nice to have some place at Govardhan for the devotees to stay for better absorption as Vrindavan town became so crowded and hectic, especially during Kārtika and Phālguna.

- Vāckreśvarī Devī Dāsī, Mayapur

Dear Vāckreśvarī Devī Dāsī,

Thank you very much for your feedback. As per your enquiry, this issue of the newsletter covers the Russian Bhakti-śāstrī progress. Information has been circulated in Russian-speaking countries and we will be happily welcoming 40 students in November. As far as the Govardhan Retreat Centre, well, it will be a place to retreat, available not only for VIHE-run programs, but also for groups from all over the world and for individuals as well. Serious sādhakas in search for a “cave” will indeed be able to rent accommodation for a set period of time whenever the retreat center is not fully booked. The master-plan even includes an open area with “bhajana kuṭīra” stations, each equipped with an underground level for japa, a ground level for study and reading, and a watch tower for Govardhana darśana! We beg for prayers for the swift completion of the various parts of the project. Looking forward to serve you.

- Editorial Staff

Come! Experience!

By Jaya Nitāi Dāsa



As I write this article, I feel so different compared to how I felt the day I first landed in Vrindavan on the 1st of July, 2016 to do the Bhakti-śāstrī course at the VIHE. What a “hot welcome” to the land of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Śyāmasundara it had been! I was told the summer, the hottest season, had just ended with the arrival of the first showers announcing the rainy season, thus the temperature had come down! I asked myself many times, “Why did they schedule this course in this season?!”

My tests started almost immediately. In the beginning I found it difficult to settle in this very different, yet “transcendental” place, having lived many years surrounded by material comforts back home in Melbourne, Australia. I got sick within a few days! “Should I go back?” My mind inevitably began to contemplate. It had been my cherished desire for years to come to the Holy Dhāma and undergo such śāstric studies. “But look what’s happened now! See the reality!” Well, the reality was that this is how the mind works. It rejects the very same thing that gave it pleasure just the day before. Didn’t Arjuna have this dilemma too? Yes, he did! And Lord Kṛṣṇa had to orient Arjuna to prepare him

for his upcoming life events. I stayed. And how happy I am today that I didn’t give up!

We had three days of orientation. Yes, three full days of orientation sessions! This helped me tune my multi-aimed holiday attitude and gave me the direction to make a single-pointed saṅkalpa. I resolved to myself, “Let me make this study a nice offering to my spiritual master, to Śrīla Prabhupāda and to Kṛṣṇa - all for their pleasure.” If the orientation of the course has such a transformational potency, then what will be the outcome of doing the whole course? I wondered. After such a heart-churning beginning, I began to happily study Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books.

Then, in the midst of all the excitement, Kṛṣṇa sent the pouring rains. What a relief that was! I applied myself to develop my study routine as one teacher after the next came and delivered their teachings. Soon came the festivals, first the three-day celebration of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s tirobhāva, then Balarāma Pūrṇimā, Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Vyāsapūjā, all adding to the abundance of joy in my heart. To add to these incredible moments, the course has given me the opportunity to meet some very nice devotees, fellow students, who are now my close friends. It is such an enlivening experience to be surrounded by sincere devotees - sincere devotees who walk the talk! Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in



Students refine their purpose for study during the Bhakti-śāstrī course orientation

the preface of the Nectar of Instruction, "Advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness depends on the attitude of the follower." What a powerful statement that is! I can see this in action.

Up to this point, we have successfully completed studying Śrī Īsopaniṣad, Upadeśāmṛta and the first six chapters of the Bhagavad-gītā. This gave me the time to introspect and analyze my attitude as a devotee. It gave me more clarity as to where I stand today on my journey on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Spending major time of the day in hearing, reading and writing Kṛṣṇa-kathā is such a purifying and enlivening experience for me. And after studies come exams. Don't get afraid! It is an unwavering absorption in remembering Kṛṣṇa for three hours - samādhi. "I love it". The guru and

the teachings of śāstra are definitely like the expert captain and the breezes respectively that help us navigate safely across the sea of existence and get us to the ultimate destination. Unless I know my real position, not the position that my mind tells me, how am I to reach my destination from where I am now?

I have an "upgraded enthusiasm" on my each day at the VIHE. And this is just the beginning and there so much more to come ahead! It is worth experiencing the experience of the experienced and be the experience for others. VIHE offers this opportunity to all – "learn and teach others."

So, in conclusion I say,
"Come! Experience!"

"Yes, we must set up our society as a school as best we can. I have already sent you letter. Please formulate the whole curriculum because we have to immediately submit to the Draft department and if this is accepted that will be great gain for our society. "Bhakti-śāstrī" is awarded after extensive study of Bhagavad-gītā, Easy Journey, and Nectar of Devotion. "Bhakti-vaibhava" is awarded after study of Vedānta-sūtras and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam on a preliminary basis; and "Bhaktivedānta" the highest title, is awarded after extensive study of Caitanya-caritāmṛita."

- Letter to Brahmānanda
23rd March, 1969

VIHE Calendar 2016 - 2017

- | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Sep 23 - 26 | : | International Vaiṣṇavī Retreat in Nepal |
| Nov 5 - 11 | : | Teacher Training Course One |
| Nov 5 - 11 | : | Teacher Training Course Two |
| Nov 5 - 7 | : | Seminar - The Yoga Ladder |
| Nov 6 - 7 | : | Seminar - Enhancing Cooperation |
| Nov 15 - Mar 5 | : | Bhakti-śāstrī (Russian) |
| Nov 18 - 23 | : | Holy Name Retreat |
| Nov 27 - Dec 4 | : | Govardhana Retreat |
| Dec 9 - 10 | : | Seminar - Manaḥ-śikṣā |
| Dec 11 - Mar 28 | : | Bhakti-vaibhava Canto 1 & 2 |
| Dec 11 - Mar 28 | : | Bhakti-vaibhava Canto 3 |
| Jan - Mar | : | Bhakti-sadācāra |
| Mar 21 - 26 | : | International Vaiṣṇavī Retreat in Govardhan |
| Jul - Nov | : | Bhakti-śāstrī (English) |
| Jul - Nov | : | Bhakti-vaibhava Canto 4 |

Madhusūdana Viṣṇu Dāsa: What motivates you to teach at the VIHE?

H.H. Bhakti Dhīra Dāmodara Svāmī: I am motivated to teach at the VIHE because I have done my Bhakti-śāstrī and Bhakti-vaibhava from here. I feel compelled to share with others what I have received here. As devotees, it's very important for us to know our scriptures properly so that we know why we should be a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, why we should sacrifice so many things to be a devotee. Śrīla Prabhupāda has presented all this very nicely in his books. When I did my training here, I could see that the knowledge which came from the books, the potency these books contain, is so pure, wonderful and powerful that I naturally felt "don't just keep this, share it with people." This is the reason I come to teach here.

MSVD: What difference do you perceive between teaching and preaching?

HH BDDS: Preaching is more casual. One can sit in a big auditorium and speak philosophy without being able to connect much with the audience. Whereas in teaching, you have to go deep into what you want to share with people, you need to make sure that what we are giving to the people penetrates their hearts. A good teacher should not leave the class if the student has not understood what is being taught. If the teacher knows well that he is accountable for the future of the students, he will very carefully prepare the lessons in a very systematic way knowing well their interest. So teaching is more deep and personal.

MSVD: What advice will you give to a devotee who comes here to study Bhakti-śāstrī?

HH BDDS: First of all, we must try to understand that we are not academicians. Śrīla Prabhupāda has mentioned in many places that devotion can be gained without academic qualifications. Therefore, all of us who are studying Bhakti-śāstrī should know that we are trying to groom our Kṛṣṇa consciousness by deeply associating with Prabhupāda, ācāryas and Kṛṣṇa.

When you have received the knowledge here, don't just keep it in your box but try to apply the knowledge. If we don't want to forget anything that we have studied, we should not just write it down but rather we should repeat it. If we just keep it in the box, we will forget it. We cram śloka, memorize things and after exam, no maṅgala-ārati, no personal application of the knowledge which you have received. The only gain which we have is our certificate, as the knowledge is going to disappear in due course of time if we are not using it. All of us should try to use this knowledge and try to pass it on to others. We should use this knowledge to be safe from Māyā, to know how to act in any given circumstance and then we should help others by passing the knowledge to them. If we do this, then our Bhakti-śāstrī will be meaningful. The aim is to become a sincere devotee and to help others in becoming a devotee.

THE VIHE IN PICTURES



Rūpotsava - A Personal Voyage

By Mādhurya Gaurāṅgī Devī Dāsī

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's disappearance festival falls during the first month of Cāturmāsya; this year it was on August 15. The VIHÉ has been organizing festivities on this occasion since 1999. Over the years the celebration has evolved into a 3-day festival culminating in Ter Kadamba, the place so dear to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. This place is foremost due to its special sweetness and stock of many beautiful pastimes. One of the most famous ones is the sweet rice pastime.

Rūpa Gosvāmī, who lived in Ter Kadamba for quite some time, had a strong desire to cook tasty sweet rice for his brother Sanātana. Being a mendicant he did not have the required ingredients. One day, a beautiful young girl, on the pretext of sādhu-sevā, gifted him exactly what was needed, and ultimately cooked the sweet rice herself. The ecstasy produced by the taste of the preparation induced Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī to realize that beautiful girl was non-other than our worshipable Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Both of them cried loudly, deeply repenting having taken service from her. Till today, sweet rice is always available at this secluded place.

Nandagram, the transcendental cowherd village of Vraja, is just a short distance away. After a

whole day of herding the cows and engaging in various other activities, Kṛṣṇa returns home every evening passing by Ter Kadamba. The precious dust of Vraja raised by the hooves of playfully roaming cows turns His colorful garland gray. Laughing at the jokes of His friends, Lord Keśava enters the village of Vraja, giving joy to all the inhabitants, who are thus instantly relieved from the pangs of separation from Him.

The next morning when He leaves again, the fire of anxiety starts to burn in the hearts of the elderly vrajavāsīs. But the young gopīs are filled with hope as they receive the indication of the rendezvous place, where later during the day they will be able to meet the beloved of their heart. The girls identify their meeting place by observing the position in which Kṛṣṇa puts the flower behind His ear—East, West, South, North. The sweetness of such pastimes has filled the entire area.

Currently, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma Deities are being worshiped with great care and affection at Ter Kadamba. Two Gauḍīya devotees, elderly Hṛṣīkeśa Bābā and young Śyāmasundara Bābā, are taking care of Their Lordships. In this serene and open land, peacocks roam around freely. The younger Bābā explains that everyday many of these peacocks come and fan Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma with their wide-open tails—no need of artificial peacock fans!

I Worship Lord Keśava

śramāmbu-kaṇikāvali-dara-viliḍha-gaṇḍāntaram
samūḍha giri-dhātubhir likhita-cāru-patrāṅkuram |
udañcad-ali-maṇḍalī-dyuti-vidāmbi-vakrālakaṁ
vraje vijayinaṁ bhaje vipina-deśataḥ keśavam ||

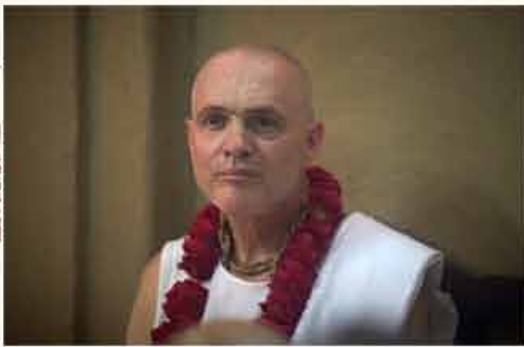
- Keśavāṣṭakam, Verse 4, Stava-mālā

I worship Lord Keśava. Coming back from the forest of Vraja, His cheeks are licked by a stream of perspiration, He is decorated with pictures drawn in mineral colors from the hill, and His curling locks of hair deride the splendor of a swarm of black bees.

Ter Kadamba is the glorious place that Rūpa Gosvāmī chose to complete his famous work, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. This fact alone makes Ter Kadamba very close to the hearts of aspiring Rūpānugas.

This year's festival was first inaugurated in Vrindavan, at the VIHE itself, where devotees gathered on the 13th morning for kīrtana, kathā and bhoga offering. A picture of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī is being worshiped daily in the VIHE temple room. Many guests came and it looked like the little space was opening up like a lotus flower to accommodate all the bee-like devotees eager for the honey of

Then all of a sudden the doors opened wide, letting devotees carry in many large trays piled up with varieties of foodstuffs. All kinds of bhoga preparations from the wide world's cuisine were offered to Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. The bliss increased further as the āraṭi was performed; and then, the tasting of all these preparations, now turned into mahā-prasāda, began. Generous amounts piled up on the plates, so much so that some of the students and guests appeared intoxicated in the end. On a tree close by, I noticed two bright green parrots dancing and chirping, indicating the auspiciousness of the



H.G. Mādhavānanda Dāsa



H.G. Sārvabhauma Dāsa

śravaṇam and kīrtana. The transcendental waves of Rūpa-related topics vibrating from the mouths of H.G. Sārvabhauma Prabhu and H.G. Mādhavānanda Prabhu attracted everyone's mind. kīrtana, like a savior's boat, pleasingly carried us above the influence of dualities. It was difficult to guess whether the cause of the heat was the heavy monsoon season, or the intensity of the devotees' feelings while chanting the holy name. It was difficult to understand in which direction to sit; all directions were filled with devotees immersed in harināma sankīrtana. Time seemed to have forgotten its role in this world and had manifested its form of blissful eternity.

moment. In Vraja it is said that when the kathā or kīrtana is pleasing to Their Lordships, the parrots come.

The flow of nectar continued the next day. It was ekādaśī and everyone gathered in the early morning for more kīrtana in Śrīla Prabhupāda's rooms at the Rādhā Dāmodara temple, and later in front of Rūpa Gosvāmī's samādhi. Kīrtana continued on

and on and the joy was ever in creasing. Emotions boiled in the devotees' hearts, forcing them to give up their sitting places and burst out dancing. Pilgrims who entered the hall joined in, unable to escape the waves of the Hare



Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī at the VIHE



In Śrīla Prabhupāda's room at the Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple

Kṛṣṇa movement. Old or young, men or women, grave or bubbly—all danced irresistibly. Even more so when Bhuvaneśvara Prabhu arrived in the midst of all, took up the microphone and sang.

Around noon everyone honored a few bananas that had been offered to Śrīla Prabhupāda in his rooms, and then departed, their minds filled with sweet expectations over the next day at Ter Kadamba. This festival is in the heart of many of the devotees who have attended VIHE courses over the years. Offerings are being sent from all directions, from near and far. It draws the minds of fortunate souls to newer depths of the sweet ocean of devotional service. What to speak of what it is like for the organizers! This ocean swallows up their bodies, words, thoughts and peace of mind weeks before the actual celebration.

Early on the 15th morning, the first car arrived at Ter Kadamba, bringing a couple of hundred mutkas (clay cups, pots and glasses) to be filled with a variety of preparations, and the necessary items, like bamboos and flower garlands, for the advance party to prepare and decorate a sitting place for Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Back in Vrindavan, the cooks—all glories to them!—worked behind the scenes, their blissful efforts having started a few days earlier. Some stayed up till 2 a.m. and then woke up at 3 a.m. again to dive into the sea of ecstatic cooking. By 10.30, offerings were collected from all over Vrindavan, carefully stored in containers and packed in a car to transport them to Ter Kadamba, along with items couriered from Mumbai and Surat. Seeing all this reminded me of Damayanti and her brother Rāghava Paṇḍita, who cooked mountains of preparations and stored



At Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's samādhi

them in many sealed sacks to deliver to Lord Caitanya. Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, being a cook himself, has elaborately described every item. I too, being your aspiring servant and one of the cooks, will describe some of the preparations.

At Ter Kadamba the earthen bowls looked like open mouths waiting for food. The generous devotees preparing for the offering filled these clay mouths, the offering plates for the Lord, with many, many delicious items. There were varieties of rice preparations—plain rice, cashew rice, mixed and uttapam. So many cooked vegetables were there. Who could ever follow the inspiration in the minds of the cooks—kālīnji seed potatoes in poppy seed paste, eggplant with peanut filling, stuffed ladyfingers, cinnamon cabbage, potatoes in tomato paste, deep-fried parwal, deep-fried eggplant with neem leaves, and even coconut beans. These are just the few items I can recall.

Innumerable pakorās and other savory preparations arrived and the transfer continued. There were rice-batter karela, almond pakorās, snacks and crisps in huge quantity—slim sliced potato crisps, besan-batter snacks of various shapes, lotus stem crisps, lotus seed puffs and even heart shaped crackers. Heaps of raisins, dried fruits and nuts seemed to be imitating the mountains and hills, while all the sweet items played the role of nectar rivers flowing from the mountain tops of the giving hands of those transferring the items, filling the lakes and seas of clay bowls and pots.

Who can count all the sweet preparations—semolina halavā, laddus of all shapes and consistencies, rice kheer and noodle kheer, some with coconut,



Bhoga offering at Ter Kadamba

some with almonds or mango strips. What to speak of steamed and fried sweet pumpkin squares! Above all, like large fortresses, stood two mind-blowing honey-laden cream cakes made of at least eight layers each. Fresh fruits decorated the offering with their colors and aroma. All together I counted 280 preparations.

As the bus and more cars arrived, the bulk of devotees were ushered in and the Śrī-guru-vandanā prayers were offered to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

As soon as all the mutkas were filled up to the top and set, the long awaited offering started, accompanied by the melodious singing of the bhoga āraṭi song. From then on the kīrtana didn't stop. Side by side mahā-prasāda

was served and the devotees could not check their eagerness to honor the unique feast. The chanting went on and on until night covered the fields with her blanket of calm and silence.

Encouraged by loud calls of love-sick peacocks, devotees got more and more enthusiastic and didn't waste a moment. They filled their lungs with the gift of the air sweetened by the nectar of the mahā-mantra and sang it out loudly in return—"Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa,



Flower abhiṣeka for Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa Balarāma

Hare Hare | Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare." The atmosphere was saturated with sweetness. It seemed as if Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's own sweet rice had spilled over into the devotees' hearts.

Peacocks tried to compete with the chanting of the humans and called out even louder: "Kṛṣṇa kahan hain?... Kṛṣṇa kahan hain?..." Some other birds, hiding in the bushes like spies, shrieked and exclaimed, "Śyāma... Śyāma ... Śyāma..." So it

seemed. Devotees danced, twisting and turning, while the parrots, chirping among themselves, incessantly flew from one tree or one branch to another. From atop those trees they certainly had the best view and wit-

ness how colorful puṣpa-abhiṣeka petals softly landed on the transcendental bodies of the Lords. These weren't ordinary petals for they had been dipped and soaked in the ambrosia of the affection that is kept locked in the hearts of the devotees. Their Lordships reciprocated from within the soft rose petal hill that quickly grew around and on top of Them.

As the fire of excitement grew, the heat of the day humbly retired. Taking advantage of the romantic

A Prayer

paśu-pāla-vareṇya-nandanau
varam etaṁ muhur arthaye yuvām
bhavatu praṇayor bhave bhave
bhavator eva padāmbhujēṣu me

O Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, children of the best of cowherd men,
This single boon I beg from You, again and yet again:
In all the countless births my endless sins will make me meet,
May all my love flow toward Your luscious lustrous lotus feet.

-- Stava-mālā (Versified translation by H.G. Draṇḍa Dāsa) --



Kṛṣṇa Balarāma kuṇḍa

environment set up by dusk, all the water insects, bugs and flies gathered around the kuṇḍa, in and on the surface of the water, to offer their well-rehearsed dance performance to the two Lords, the best of the enjoyers. Some two legged beetles showed the art of diving in circles; others with long and slender legs were smoothly skating on the water. The culmination of the dance was exhibited by some well-trained water flies, that swiftly rose up in the air and then fell back down in the water, expertly imitating rain drops.

Outside the bhajana kuṭīra, those who did not dance sat closely around the singers and musicians. Everything was pulsating with life. The kaṇṭhika trees surrounding the area quietly observed the overwhelming scene. Forming a protective fence, they shed their yellow tube-shaped flowers, forming a beautiful soft carpet.

When darkness manifested in its fullness, one hundred and eight ghee lamps were lit and offered to Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, as They enjoyed swinging gently in Their jhulana. Meanwhile, their minds flooded with more and more delight, devotees gave in to the sound of rapturous aṣṭakās taken from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's Stava-mālā. The air became charged by the transcendently appealing message of the beautiful verses. Their consciousness further awakened, the hearers and chanters dived into the never-ending ocean of the mahā-mantra—"Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare." At last, taking shelter of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, everyone joined in prayer for the mercy of Sri Rūpa.

Crossing the border of late evening and night, devotees filled the buses and cars, heading back to



Offering of Lamps

Vrindavan. The engine of the moving buses resembled the humming of the bumble bees from one of the Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's verses—din din din, "urasi parisphuraḍ-indiraṁ indindira-mandira-srajollasitaṁ..." Our bodies tucked into our seats, we prayed that these transcendental bees may carry our minds, like particles of pollen, to land at the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī who, out of her kindness, will one day engage us in the sweet service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare | Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare."

The Glories of Rūpa

vṛndāvanīyām rasa-keli-vārtām
kālena luptām nija-śaktim utkaḥ
sañcārya rūpe vyatanot punaḥ sa
prabhur vidhau prāg iva loka-srṣṭim

Before the creation of this cosmic manifestation, the Lord enlightened the heart of Lord Brahmā with the details of the creation and manifested the Vedic knowledge. In exactly the same way, the Lord, being anxious to revive the Vrindavan pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, impregnated the heart of Rūpa Gosvāmī with spiritual potency. By this potency, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī could revive the activities of Kṛṣṇa in Vrindavan, activities almost lost to memory. In this way, He spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world.

- Cc. Madhya 19.1

Upcoming Seminars & Courses

The Yoga Ladder

November 5-7, 2016

Speaker: Prāṇeśvara Dāsa

CONTENTS

Different yoga systems;
Hierarchy between yoga systems;
Various links between yoga systems;
How a yogī progresses on the ladder;
Different obstacles faced by the yogī;
Destinations of different yoga practitioners



Enhancing Cooperation

November 6-7, 2016

Speaker: Harī Vallabha Dāsa

CONTENTS

The seminar explores how to enhance relationships and cooperation among devotees by building up one's personal character and credibility through understanding the principles of trust.



Manah-śikṣā

December 9-10, 2016

Speaker: Urmilā-Devī Dāsī

CONTENTS

Manah-śikṣā is an instruction manual for the practice of spontaneous loving devotion. It is fully in line with how Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda want us to live. The principles are applicable even for beginning devotees, and devotees who are ready for deeper practice greatly benefit from such guidance from our Ācāryas.

Bhakti-Vaibhava

Dec 11 - Mar 28

Batch One: Cantos 1 & 2

Batch Two: Canto 3

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

CONTENTS OF THE COURSES

Invocation to Our Study
Sanskṛt Meters
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam - Cantos 1 & 2
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam - Canto 3
Ten Topics of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam
The Six Vedic Philosophies

TEACHERS

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

Deadline for Admissions: December 1



Teacher Training Courses

November 5-11, 2016

Level One

Facilitator: Aniruddha Dāsa

Level Two

Facilitator: Vaṁśī Vadana Dāsa

Russian Bhakti-śāstrī to Start

Following the spreading of Lord Caitanya's mercy in the Russian-speaking countries, many Russian devotees have made their way to India and particularly to the Holy Dhāmas in Vrindavan and Mayapur. The resident Russian-speaking community in Vrindavan is approximately 150 strong and growing. Many are elderly and have left their birth land for good to spend their remaining years in Vrindavan, in response to Śrīla Prabhupāda's words, "In the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we therefore invite all the elderly persons of the world to come to Vṛndāvana and stay there in retired life, making advancement in spiritual consciousness, Kṛṣṇa consciousness." (Bhāg. 7.5.5, pp).

Besides the residents, several hundred devotees from Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Kasakstan and other countries visit yearly, spending from a couple of weeks to several months in Vrindavan. Russian devotees are usually fond of engaging in book distribution and like to participate in public events such as Ratha-yatras, thus contributing to the Indian preaching. One particularity about them is that they seldom know English and often remain cut off from the ongoing

international sādhu-saṅga. At the Vrindavan Institute for Higher Education, we felt the need to extend our educational efforts to them. For this purpose the Russian Division of the VIHE was launched in 2013, primarily to cater to the residents, who gratefully welcomed the initiative. After three semesters of 7 to 8 months each, during which devotees studied custom-made courses in Bhāgavad-vidyā and Bhakti-sadācāra, we are now getting ready for the first VIHE Russian Bhakti-śāstrī course. If everything goes well, it will be repeated.

This time our audience has broadened. With the blessings of H.H. Bhakti Vijñāna Gosvāmī and some of the Russian ISKCON leaders we will be serving 40 students, mostly from Russia mainland. Some local residents have enrolled too, while others will continue to study other courses. November 15 has been set for the opening. The course will continue for 4 months. The teachers are Bhakti Vijñāna Gosvāmī, Bhakti Rasāyana Sāgara Svāmī, Caitanya Candra Caraṇa Dāsa, Vrajendra Kumāra Dāsa, Acyutātma Dāsa, Patita Pāvana Dāsa, Ādi Puruṣa Dāsa, Maharāja Dāsa, Gaura Sundara Dāsa, Rādhā Prema Devī Dāsī.

Bhakti-sadācāra

January - March 2017

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.

Contents of the course

Vaiṣṇava etiquette; Brāhmiṇical 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

Deadline for Admissions: December 1, 2016

Bhakti-śāstrī

July - October 2017

Contents of the Course

BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ
NECTAR OF DEVOTION
NECTAR OF INSTRUCTION
ĪSOPANIṢAD
SANSKRĪT PRONUNCIATION
INTRODUCTION TO DEITY WORSHIP

Teachers

Bhakti Dhīra Dāmodara Svāmī,
Sārvabhauma Dāsa, Mukunda Datta Dāsa,
Prāṇeśvara Dāsa, Ādi-puruṣa Dāsa, Asita
Dāsa, Lakṣmimoni Devī Dāsī, Praśāntā
Devī Dāsī

Upcoming Retreats

Holy Name Retreat

Nov 18 - Nov 23, 2016

This consists of six days of guided japa sessions and kīrtanas under the guidance of His Holiness Śācīnandana Svāmī and His Grace Bhūrijana Prabhu in the most auspicious and merciful shelter of Śrī Govardhana. There are days with classes on the topics of the holy name, the aim of the chanting, and the attitude of the chanter, a full day of kīrtana led by devotional kirtaneers, and a full day of japa, for which we travel to Ter Kadamba, the site of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's bhajana kuṭīra and where Kṛṣṇa gathered His surabhi cows while returning from the pasturing grounds to Nandagram in the evening. Expect an uninterrupted immersion in the purifying and elating vibration of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare | Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare in the company of seeking devotees.

Govardhan Retreat

Nov 27 - Dec 4, 2016

Started in year 2000, the Govardhan Retreat was conceived by His Grace Bhūrijana Prabhu and His Holiness Śācīnandana Svāmī as a program for hearing Kṛṣṇa-kathā with a view to increase attraction to Kṛṣṇa and the Holy Land of Vrindavan. The gathering is for eight days, each including the morning prayers and japa, four classes and kīrtanas, all set in a peaceful garden at the foot of Śrī Girirāja Govardhana in Jatipura. In this sublimely devotional atmosphere absorption in the enchanting world of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in the association of all the eager devotees attending becomes natural. The retreat is a unique opportunity to enliven one's personal devotional life with unforgettable experiences in Vraja. On one of the days, participants split into small groups to go to various locations around Govardhan to hear yet other kathās, walk on the parikramā path, chant japa or do kīrtana.

SPEAKERS & TOPICS

H.H. Śācīnandana Svāmī:

“Most Amazing Lord Dāmodara”

H.G. Bhūrijana Dāsa:

“Safe and Smooth Sailing on a Fierce and Boiling Lake of Poison”

H.G. Jagattāriṇī-Devī Dāsī:

“Turning to Kṛṣṇa in Great Difficulty”

H.G. Mādhavānanda Dāsa:

“Govardhana-vāsa-prārthanā-daśakam (Verses 1-3)”

H.G. Ādi Puruṣa Dāsa:

“The First Three Bhāgavata-dharmas”

International Vaiṣṇavī Retreat

March 21 - 26, 2017

The Vaiṣṇavī Retreat was started jointly by the Vrindavan Institute for Higher Education and the GBC Devotee Care Committee with the aim of facilitating spiritual association among women in bhakti. This retreat offers a wonderful opportunity for women from all over the world who are eager for sādhvī-saṅga.

The schedule is compact to maximize the devotional synergy. Kṛṣṇa-kathā and philosophical presentations by senior Vaiṣṇavīs, sharing of realizations by Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, inspirational readings before japa, musical workshops, dramas, dance, outings to Surabhi Kuṇḍa, Airāvata Kuṇḍa and Ter Kadamba, plenty of kīrtana, prayers of the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas, and more have been the regular highlights of the previous retreats. The event takes place in Jatipura, at the foothill of Śrī Girirāja Govardhana.

For information visit - facebook.com/vaisnaviretreatinternational, or vihe.org/vaisnavi_retreat.html

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