



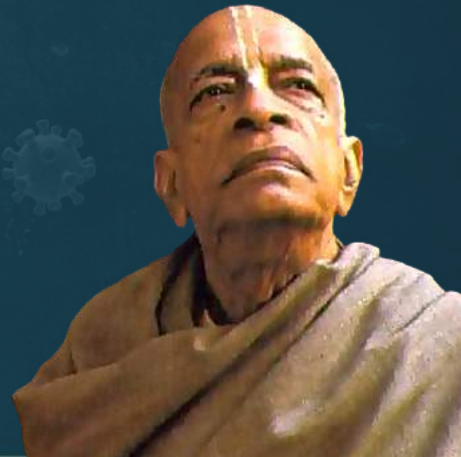
GBC-SPT PRESENTS



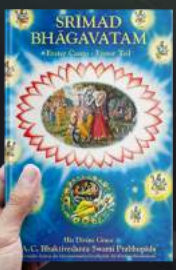
# DEALING WITH COVID-19

## A KRISHNA CONSCIOUS PERSPECTIVE

A guide on helping maintain your devotion during the pandemic



GBC SPT



[www.gbspt.com](http://www.gbspt.com)

International Society for Krishna Consciousness  
Founder-Ācārya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda



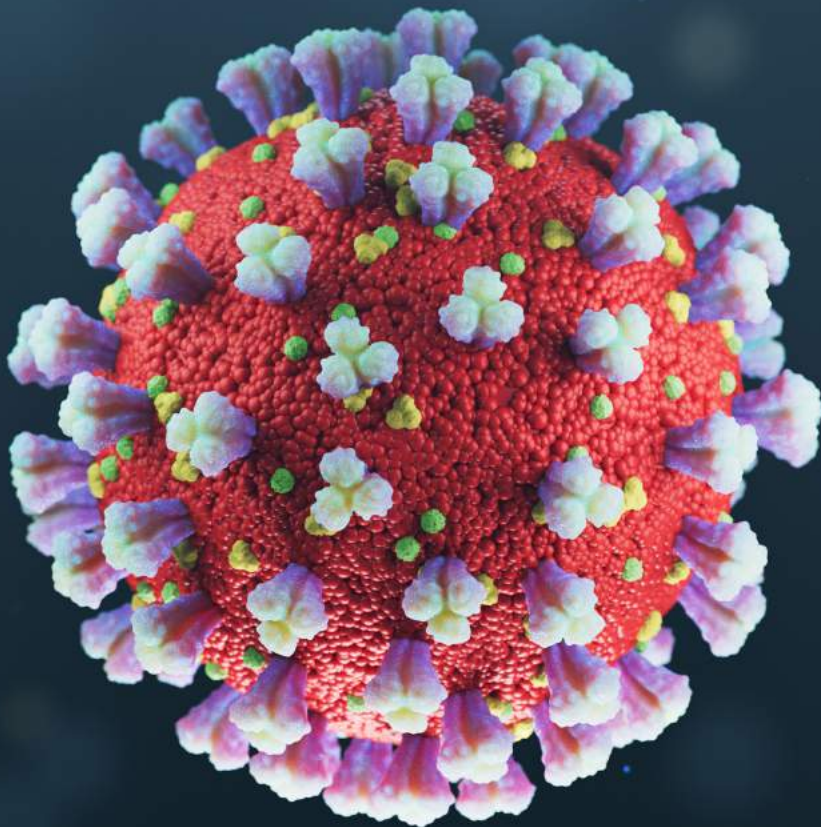


# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>A</b>	<b>Why care?</b>	
<b>B</b>	<b>Preventive measures: Avoid the avoidable</b>	
<b>C</b>	<b>Spiritual protection</b>	
<b>D</b>	<b>Caught COVID-19: What to do next?</b>	
<b>E</b>	<b>Serving Vaiṣṇavas</b>	
	<b>Closing Words</b>	

# DISCLAIMER

This booklet does not express the official position of the GBC Body. The GBC Body does not give medical advice and neither does it encourage/discourage vaccinations nor any other medical precautions or treatments.



# INTRODUCTION

Śrīla Prabhupāda showed concern for the health and welfare of his disciples and followers from the very beginning of the movement.



“*Sarve sukhino bhavantu.* This is the Vedic culture, that Vedic culture wants to see everyone is happy. And especially the Vaiṣṇava.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture: SB 1.8.40 — Mayapur, October 20, 1974]

A Vaiṣṇava takes care of both body and soul in the service of Krishna and is careful not to cause harm to themselves or others through inattention.

At present the world is in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, causing hardship and pain as well as leading to the loss of lives, including many precious members and well-wishers of our ISKCON community.

The purpose of this booklet is to help one to:

- **S**trengthen one’s spiritual connection with Lord Krishna during this period.
- **A**dapt to deal with crisis at an individual and organizational level from physical, emotional and spiritual perspectives.
- **F**oster hope, care and compassion.
- **E**ducate and enlighten through simple and practical tips to deal with unforeseen situations centered around principles and instructions from our acharyas.

## A. WHY CARE?

### 1. We are eternal souls; should we care for our bodies?

Our body is the property of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and thus, we should take all care to protect our body so that we can serve their Lordships, as well as the Vaiṣṇava community to the best of our capacity.



“Regarding your question about maintaining your body nicely, I think that if you follow our regulation of diet, sufficient sleeping, and keep to the prescribed rules of cleanliness, two bath per day, then you will be able to keep yourself in proper health. Of course, disease will always be there at some time while there is this material body, but this we must tolerate and not be very agitated by. Actually, the Vaisnava who knows that he is not this body, he does not therefore neglect his body, but he takes very nice care so he may utilize his body in service of Krishna. Just like a man may know that he is not this car, so he does not therefore neglect his car, but he will take care of it so it will be able to render service to him.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Balabhadra, 12 May, 1969]

“Keep your health in good condition and work very hard for Krishna. That is our motto of life.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Rayarama, 6 March, 1969]

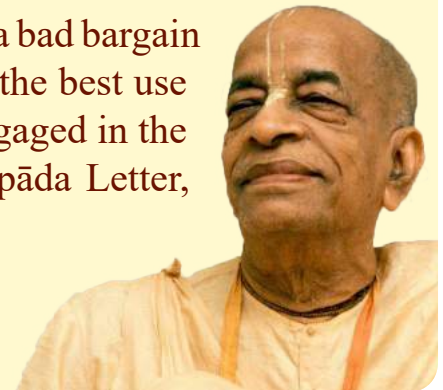


“The first thing is that you must feel well. In whatever condition you should feel well, because if you fall sick, everything will be topsy-turvy. And what you require to be in good health, you know better than anyone else. That is your first business...” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Brahmananda, 15 May, 1969]

“It is important to keep the body fit and healthy so that we will not meet the obstacle of ill health while serving Krishna. Ill health may hinder one’s service, so we want to avoid it as much as possible.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter, June 19, 1975]

“Regarding your physical malady, you should do whatever is required to treat it properly. Whatever is most practical.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Bhakta dasa, May 7, 1975]

“This body belongs to Krishna and therefore we must always keep it in healthy condition to the best of our ability, but if due to some past sinful activities, we are suffering some bodily miseries we should not become discouraged. Devotional service must continue under all circumstances. This material body is actually a bad bargain because it is prone to suffer, but we must make the best use of this bad bargain. That means to always be engaged in the service of Krishna without fail.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter, April 19, 1975]





## 2. Does taking precautions or treatment contradict the principle of depending upon Krishna?

As indicated by *śāstra* and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s examples, taking precautions/treatment and depending upon Krishna are not mutually exclusive. A devotee is cognizant of the physical laws created by Krishna, dutifully striving to protect and maintain the body for Krishna’s service, while simultaneously remaining fully conscious of the fact that the ultimate outcome – good health/disease/death – depends entirely upon Krishna.



“One of the symptoms of a devotee is that he is kind, so if our Godbrother becomes ill it is our duty to help him get the proper medicine and treatment so that he can recover.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter, April 5, 1974]

So long as you are in the material world, you cannot neglect physical laws. Suppose you go to a jungle and there is a tiger. It is known that it will attack you, so why should you voluntarily go and be attacked? It is not that a devotee should take physical risk so long as he has a physical body. It is not a challenge to the physical laws: “I have become a devotee. I challenge everything.” That is foolishness. [Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers 6: The Perfect Devotee]



“You ask if children may be taken to ordinary medical doctors. Why not? Of course, we do not always trust that these doctors may be doing the right thing, but what can be done? The governing principle for our activity should be to do what is favourable for pleasing Krishna. So, if your child requires medical attention to be fit for serving Krishna, then it is only practical she should get it.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Lalita Kumar and Jambavati, 1971]

## B. PREVENTIVE MEASURES: AVOID THE AVOIDABLE

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. As Krishna’s servant, we can’t perform our service if we become diseased. As members of ISKCON, we have responsibilities towards ourselves, our devotee communities and the public we serve by spreading our mission. As such, it is proper to invest in maintaining our health.



“Prabhupāda: Why is everyone coughing? What is the difficulty? Yesterday also I heard. What is the difficulty?  
Devotee: I think there’s a cold going around.  
Prabhupāda: Eh?  
Devotee: I think there’s a cold going around, a lot of people.

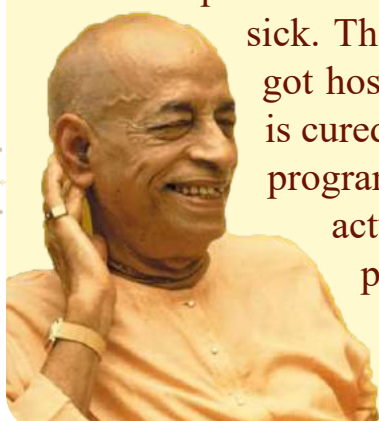


“

Prabhupāda: But you have no sufficient warm cloth, so you are affected? That you must arrange. You must take care of your health. Yuktāhāra-vihārasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā. In the Bhagavad-gītā it is said, yuktāhāra. You should take food just to maintain your health nicely. Similarly, other necessities of the body must be taken care of. If you become diseased, then how you can execute Krishna consciousness? Just like Brahmānanda could not go today. So we must be careful.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture on SB 1.8.37, April 29, 1973]

“Be careful about your health first. This information is not only for you but all my noble sons. I am an old man. I may live or die, it does not matter. But you must live for a long time to push on this Krishna Consciousness movement.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Rayarama, 21 December, 1967]

“Precaution is better than cure. One comes to the hospital for cure, but why not take the precaution so that he may not have to come to the hospital for cure? That is Vedic civilization. They have different prescribed rules and regulations so that a person may not fall sick. The modern idea is that “Let them fall sick; we have got hospitals and treat them, and they’ll be cured.” But he is cured, again he falls sick. That is going on. They have no program for precaution. They have a program for cure. But actually, precaution is better than cure. We are taking precaution.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Garden Conversation, June 23, 1976]



# PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE



Wear a tight fit mask that covers your nose and mouth.



Stay six feet apart from people you don't live with.



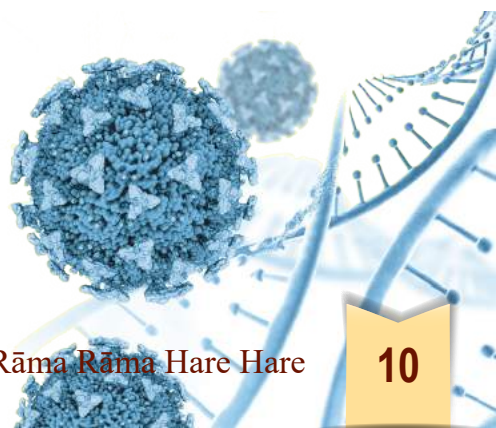
Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated places.



Wash your hands often with soap and water, and use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.



Build your immunity



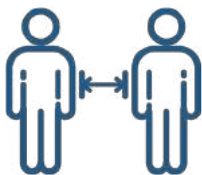
# 1. Personal Responsibility



Avoid any place in which a person is likely to contract the disease



- Follow local government's direction in connection with lockdown
- If you need to go out for necessities, make the visits as infrequently as possible



- Practice social distancing
- If you need to drop off any essentials to others, leave it on their doorstep and without any contact
- Always stay 2 meters apart from others when outside



- Minimize trips to the places that may be crowded, such as shopping centers or grocery stores, and stock up on necessities when you do go out.

## If you do leave home:



A. Use common sense and be cautious



B. Avoid touching your mouth, eyes or nose



C. Sanitise your hands & wash them as soon as you get home

## 2. Leadership Responsibility – Protection of the community and acting exemplary



“Now that you are President of the Detroit Temple, you have very great responsibility to take proper care of all the devotees who are engaged there and are spreading Krishna Consciousness at one of our most important centers.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Kaliya Krishna, 8 October, 1972]



Strictly abide by the local government norms



Strictly maintain social distancing at all times



Keep hand sanitizers available at different locations



Use thermal scanners to monitor the temperature of visitors



Create and maintain isolation space for infected devotees. Do a special handling of infected disposals to avoid further spread.



Keep basic equipment like pulse oximeters, thermometers, basic medications in the temple to timely check suspected infected devotees.



No celebrations of mass gathering festivals as long as the corona threat looms over the region.



Support and care for infected devotees by providing them timely medical help as per the need and capacity.



Spread the awareness of dangers of not following proper precautions.

## Possible areas/times where infection may spread, take precautions



– While paying obeisances



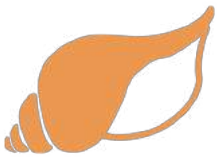
– While ringing the bell to enter the temple



– During group dancing



– Whilst giving flowers or garlands



– Whilst blowing conchshells if they are not properly sanitized



– If *caraṇāmṛta* is kept in public

– During *prasādam* distribution



– During *kīrtan*

## C. SPIRITUAL PROTECTION

The rate at which the pandemic is continuing to spread globally certainly can cause fear, anxiety and negative emotions. As devotees, we constantly strive to let our faith in Krishna be greater than our fear as we pray to Krishna to give us strength

### 1. Devotional tips to overcome fear

The root of fear is our identification with this material body. “*bhayam dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syāt*” [SB 11.2.37]. *Dvitīya* refers to matter, which is beyond spirit. Matter is the secondary manifestation of spirit, for matter is produced from spirit. Just as the material elements described are caused by the Supreme Lord, or the Supreme Spirit, the body is also a product of the spirit soul. Therefore, the material body is called *dvitīya*, or “the second.” One who is absorbed in this second element or second exhibition of the spirit is afraid of death. [SB 3.26.16, purport]

By following the various processes of devotional service, we overcome fear:

#### a. Hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

*yasyām vai śrūyamāṇāyām,  
kṛṣṇe parama-pūruṣe  
bhaktir utpadyate puṁsaḥ,  
śoka-moha-bhayāpahā*

Simply by giving aural reception to this Vedic literature, the feeling for loving



devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, sprouts up at once to extinguish the fire of lamentation, illusion and fearfulness. [SB 1.7.7]

b. Chanting Krishna's Name

*etan nirvidyamānānām, icchatām akuto-bhayam  
yoginām nṛpa nirṇītam, harer nāmānukīrtanam*

O King, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all. [SB 2.1.11]

c. Meditating on Krishna's Form

*etad vapus te bhagavan, dhyāyataḥ paramātmanaḥ  
sarvato goptṛ santrāsān, mṛtyor api jighāmsataḥ*

My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, You are the Supreme Soul. If one meditates upon Your transcendental body, You naturally protect him from all sources of fear, even the imminent danger of death. [SB 7.10.29]

## 2. Invoking the Lord's mercy through prayers

There are nine processes of devotional service according to *śāstra* beginning with hearing about the Lord, chanting the glories of the Lord, remembering the Lord, etc. One of these processes is *vandanam* (prayer). Offering prayers is one of those essential items of *bhakti*. Although seemingly simple, when done in accordance with the *paramparā*, it is a highly potent method to seek and invoke the Lord's mercy. Simply by learning the proper method of praying we can invoke the mercy of the Lord within our lives. Throughout the

*Vedic* scriptures we see so many poignant hymns and prayers. In fact within the *Vedas*, so much of the teachings are conveyed through the offerings of prayers by great souls.

“Although rendering devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and worshiping Him are very difficult, if one vibrates or simply reads this prayer, he will very easily be able to invoke the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” [SB 4.24.76]

“A devotee who rises early in the morning and with folded hands chants these prayers sung by Lord Śiva, and gives facility to others to hear them, certainly becomes free from all bondage to fruitive activities.” [SB 4.24.78]



“My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, I am Your eternal servant. Somehow or other, I am now fallen in this ocean. Please pick me up and fix me again as the dust of Your lotus feet.” This is the prayer. So we should know in what dangerous position we are. Then there is the necessity of prayer. And prayer to whom? To the Supreme Person to save us. Therefore there are so many prayers in the *śāstra*. Prayers means addressing the Lord to save us from this. The real saving is to pick us up from this ocean of nescience, ignorance. Then everything is all right.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, Durban, 7th Oct, 1975]

*aham hare tava pādaika-mūla, dāsānudāso bhavitāsmi bhūyaḥ  
manaḥ smaretāsu-pater guṇāṁs te, grṇīta vāk karma karotu kāyaḥ*

O my Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, will I again be able to be a servant of Your eternal servants who find shelter only at Your lotus feet? O Lord of my life, may I again become their servant so that my mind may always think of Your transcendental attributes, my



words always glorify those attributes, and my body always engage in the loving service of Your Lordship? [SB 6.11.24]

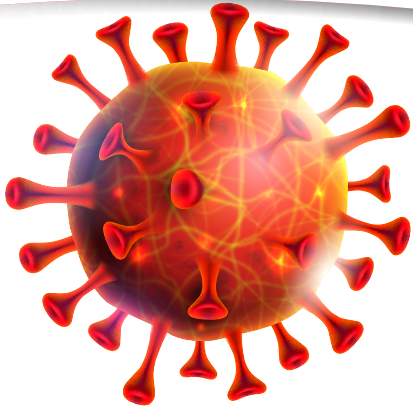
I am very weak and lazy to do even the smallest devotional service, and so when I hear of the peerless and difficult-to-perform services perfected by great devotees of ancient times, my heart burns with despair. But Oh Lord! Oh killer of Agha! When I hear that Your waves of mercy splash everyone, not only the demigod Brahmā but even the most insignificant creature, my heart is sprinkled with a cooling drop of hope. [*Stava-mālā, Tribhaṅgi Cchandaḥ, 2*]



“I thank you for your concern for my well-being. Actually I was very ill. I was falling down. But, by your prayers Krishna has kindly made me recover. Because you have prayed to Krishna, therefore I have recovered. Just like Srimati Kunti Devi, when there was difficulty, she prayed to Krishna. That is Krishna consciousness. Not that when there is difficulty I shall forget Krishna. Whatever the material condition may be, we should just cling to Krishna’s lotus feet.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Shakti Mati devi dasi, October 7, 1974]

**Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa  
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare  
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma  
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare**

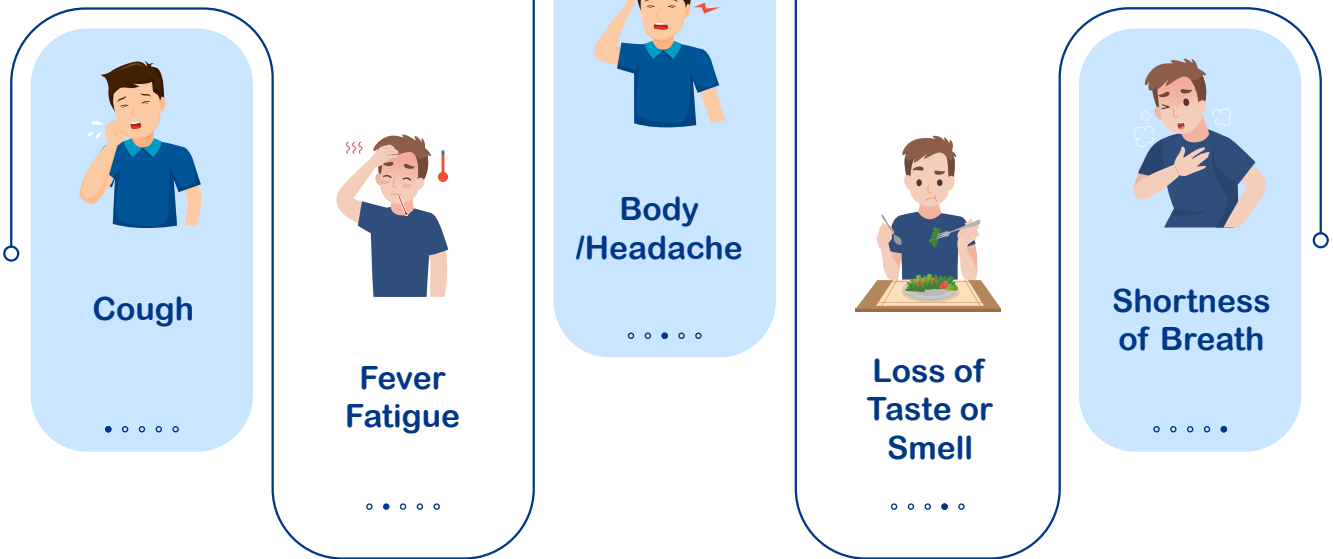




# D. CAUGHT COVID-19: WHAT TO DO NEXT?

## 1. Caution: No or mild symptoms

### SYMPTOMS



## Things to do:

Self isolate, chant and pray more, increase your hearing and reading, exercise, stay hydrated, eat healthy, monitor vitals a few times a day, stay in touch with friends or family, listen to healthcare reminders (monitor the symptoms and if they do not abate then seek medical help).



## 2. Care: Moderate symptoms

- a. Managing symptoms at home (continue to carry out the above recommendations but add regular consultations and monitoring by medical professionals).
- b. You may need to go to the hospital – In the light of the uncertainty of how the infection will progress, it is wiser to be over prepared than underprepared.

Checklist “things to pack” before you leave home:

1. Remember – japa beads, devotional paraphernalia, sacred books, playlist of bhajans and lectures, personal essentials.
2. Express – converse with your family at the time of departing (such as some advice and/or some wishes you want your family members to carry out.), check if you have a Will.
3. Consider who should take care of any services you may be responsible for or any Deities you may have at home.

## 3. Complication: Symptoms get worse

At this stage, you may have to be admitted to the hospital perhaps for a long time and with uncertain outcomes. You might need a ventilator or oxygen support and have to undergo intense medical therapeutic intervention.

**Try to focus on Krishna: In times of such great concern, follow the 3Ps – a) Prayers b) Positive thoughts c) Practice devotional service.**

a) Pray to the Lord and seek prayers from devotees.

Can it still be considered pure devotional service to Krishna to pray for one's health and that of others?

*Satsvarūpa: Swamiji said we should pray to Lord Nṛsimha and the prayer should be “My master has not finished his work.” At different times he would allow us to take turns and massage different parts of his body. Then he had us go downstairs and hold kīrtana through the night.*

*Jadurāṅī: He taught us the prayers to Lord Nṛsimhadeva. He said the words one by one, and I wrote them down. I called up the temples in San Francisco and Montreal and told them the prayer. Swamiji said, “You should pray to Kṛṣṇa that my spiritual master has not yet completed his work, so please let him finish.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, Chapter 25]*

*vidikṣu dikṣūrdhvam adhaḥ samantād,  
antar bahir bhagavān nārasimhaḥ,  
prahāpayal loka-bhayaṁ svanena,  
sva-tejasā grasta-samasta-tejāḥ*

Prahlāda Mahārāja loudly chanted the holy name of Lord Nṛsimhadeva. May Lord Nṛsimhadeva, roaring for His devotee Prahlāda Mahārāja, protect us from all fear of dangers created by stalwart leaders in all directions through poison, weapons, water, fire, air and so on. May the Lord cover their influence by His own transcendental influence. May Nṛsimhadeva protect us in all directions and in all corners, above, below, within and without. [SB 6.8.34]

What should be the content and intent of our prayers?

Looking at Śrīla Prabhupāda’s example, we see that he did at times include the aspect of health in his prayers for others, however, not as an end in itself, but as a means to facilitate devotional service. Thus, we may also request Krishna for improved health or longevity, but for the purpose of serving Him better, while simultaneously reposing our full trust in Krishna’s will and ultimate decision. We find this mood reflected in the prayer that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave his disciples upon their request: “My dear Lord Krishna, *if You so desire*, please cure Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

## b) Positive thoughts of Krishna

Here are some thoughts to consider:

- What is the most favorable attitude we can have while encountering distress?
- Are we able to see Krishna’s hand in unfortunate/disappointing circumstances?
- Saints in our tradition have shown us the path as to how an ideal devotee deals with happiness and distress.

My dear Lord, for one who is being tormented on the terrible path of birth and death and is constantly overwhelmed by the threefold miseries, I do not see any possible shelter other than Your two lotus feet, which are just like a refreshing umbrella that pours down showers of delicious nectar. [SB 11.19.9]

The word *hari* conveys various meanings, but the chief import of the word is that He (the Lord) vanquishes everything inauspicious and takes away the mind of the devotee by awarding pure transcendental love. By remembering the Lord in acute distress, one can be free from all varieties of miseries and anxieties. Gradually the Lord vanquishes all obstacles on the path of devotional service of a pure devotee, and the result of nine devotional activities, such as hearing and chanting, becomes manifested. [SB 1.7.10, purport]

My dear Lord, one who earnestly waits for You to bestow Your causeless mercy upon him, all the while patiently suffering the reactions of his past misdeeds and offering You respectful obeisances with his heart, words and body, is surely eligible for liberation, for it has become his rightful claim.

Unhappiness suffered by a sincere devotee is not technically a karmic reaction; it is rather the Lord's special mercy for inducing His devotee to completely let go of the material world and return home, back to Godhead. A sincere devotee earnestly desires to go back to the Lord's abode. Therefore he willingly accepts the Lord's merciful punishment and continues offering respects and obeisances to the Lord with his heart, words and body. [SB 10.14.8, translation and purport]

### c) Practice devotional service

How can a devotee practice devotional service in this situation? We understand that no material condition can hamper devotional service, *ahaituky apratihātā*: “Devotional service cannot be checked by any material condition.” [SB 1.2.6, cited in SB 4.24.69 purport]. Thus, devotees can feel encouraged and fortified by the fact that come what may, nothing can deprive them of their connection to Krishna.



“There are many examples of great saints in our history who have been very much disabled physically, but still have executed Krishna Consciousness. Still, up to date in places like Vrndavana, India, there are many persons who are blind, crippled, lame, deformed, etc., but they are determined to practice Krishna Consciousness to their best ability. So, you should also do that. Simply be determined to practice the process of Bhakti-yoga with whatever abilities you may have. If you are really sincere, then Krishna will give you help. If you require any medical help, you can take as much as is needed.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Krsna Vilasini, 3 June, 1975]

“So you should take it that your hospitalization is an opportunity to chant Hare Krishna mantra 24 hours. After all we are not this body so bodily disorders cannot hamper our advancement in Krishna consciousness. So long the tongue is active we can chant. Even if the tongue is not active we can think of Krishna. Some way or other if we can keep in touch with Krishna that is our success in life.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Cidananda, 28 September, 1971]

## 4. Dying: Preparing for the final exam

Despite all precautions, we may have to face the reality that we are destined to leave this world. We know that death is inevitable, yet it is still a great challenge to accept the reality and prepare for it in the best way possible.

The following is a list of some practical steps that may be taken in preparation:

- Preparing the room
  - Keep it clean
  - Keep photos of Deities and Prabhupāda



- *Kīrtan* (live or recorded)
- Reading/hearing from *śāstra*
- Clearing whatever needs to be cleared regarding this world (for example, having a Will, offering apologies, saying goodbyes, closure with relationships, etc)
- Removing oneself from all external mundane distractions (social media, news etc)
- Notifying devotees and loved ones to be on hand to support the final journey
- Arranging for *tulasī*, Gaṅgā/Yamunā water, Deity garland, etc.

We must also prepare our consciousness so that at the time of death our final destination is assured:

*anta-kāle ca mām eva,  
smaran muktvā kalevaram,  
yaḥ prayāti sa mad-bhāvaṁ,  
yāti nāsty atra saṁśayaḥ*

And whoever, at the time of death, quits his body, remembering Me alone at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt. [BG 8.5]

A *manīṣiṇām* person, like Mahārāja Parīkṣit, must therefore take to the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa and fully engage himself in devotional service — hearing, chanting, etc., of the holy name and pastimes of the Lord, which are all *hari-kathāmrta*. This action is especially recommended when one is preparing for death. [SB 2.3.1, purport]



“Everyone has to die. So before that death we must become fully Krishna conscious so that *ante nārāyaṇa-smṛtiḥ* (SB 2.1.6). The end will come today or tomorrow or day after tomorrow. Nobody will live here. But the success is if we can remember Nārāyaṇa at the end of life...*Ante nārāyaṇa-smṛtiḥ*. We should practice that.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, Vrindavan, November 12, 1976]

*kṛṣṇa tvadīya-pada-paṅkaja-pañjarāntam,  
adyaiva me viśatu mānasa-rāja-haṁsaḥ,  
prāṇa-prayāṇa-samaye kapha-vāta-pittaiḥ,  
kaṅṭhāvarodhana-vidhau smaraṇam kutas te*

My Lord Krishna, I pray that the swan of my mind may immediately sink down to the stems of the lotus feet of Your Lordship and be locked in their network; otherwise at the time of my final breath, when my throat is choked up with cough, how will it be possible to think of You? [*Mukunda-mālā-stotra* 33]

*yadi vātādi doṣeṇa madbhaktom mām na ca smaret  
ahaṁ smarāmi madbhaktam nayāmi paramām gatim*

If My devotee is unable to remember Me at the time of death because of disturbances felt within the body at that time, then I shall remember My devotee and take him back to My supreme abode. [*Varāha Purāṇa*]

Let this temporary body be burnt to ashes, and let the air of life be merged with the totality of air. Now, O my Lord, please remember all my sacrifices, and because You are the ultimate beneficiary, please remember all that I have done for You. [*Śrī Īśopaniṣad*, Mantra 17]

O my Lord, as powerful as fire, O omnipotent one, now I offer You all obeisances, falling on the ground at Your feet. O my Lord, please lead me on the right path to reach You, and since You know all that I have done in the past, please free me from the reactions to my past sins so that there will be no hindrance to my progress. [*Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, Mantra 18]

## What should we do if it is a loved one or community member that is passing away?

### 1) Be understanding

We may think we know what is best but ultimately Krishna is the Supreme controller



“About a sadhu it is said, “jiva va mara va,” a sadhu may live or die, it doesn’t matter. While living he is engaged in Krishna Conscious business and when dying he goes back home back to Godhead.” [*Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Jayananda, 26 February, 1977*]

One may argue that at the time of death a devotee also suffers because of giving up his material body. But in this connection the example may be given that a cat carries a mouse in its mouth and also carries a kitten in its mouth. Both the mouse and the kitten are carried in the same mouth, but the perception of the mouse is different from that of the kitten. When a devotee gives up his body (*tyaktva deham*), he is ready to go back home, back to Godhead. [SB 9.13.9 purport]

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura also wrote a short stanza about the influence that a Vaiṣṇava (a pure devotee of the Lord) carries in this world even after his passing:

“He reasons ill who tells that Vaiṣṇavas die  
When thou art living still in sound!  
The Vaiṣṇava dies to live, and living, try  
To spread the holy name around!”

2) Be present to render love and support

- Offer reassurances/reminding Krishna’s love and ultimate shelter for all
- Offer practical and/or emotional support
- Offer prayers
- Offer condolences to the family at the time of death

Overcoming distress/anguish:

There can be innumerable doubts that might plague our minds and those of the family members, friends and well wishers who are left behind after the departure of a devotee.

How could it be that Krishna allowed His devotees to be overcome by COVID-19?

Is Krishna actually the protector of His devotees?

Why did Krishna not acknowledge the faithful service of His devotee for all these years? Why did He show a neglectful, callous and indifferent attitude?

It is understandable that these questions may haunt us and it is natural to experience heartache in seeing the sincere devotees of the Lord departing in seemingly tragic ways. However, as a devotee of the Lord, we can derive solace in the fact that the Supreme Lord is truly our well wisher.

As stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, everyone should know that there is no well-wisher like Kṛṣṇa. Everyone should understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the supreme well-wisher of everyone and should take shelter of Him. In this way one can become completely confident and satisfied, knowing that he has someone who is able to give him all protection. [Kṛṣṇa Book, Chapter 87]

O King, no one can know the plan of the Lord [Śrī Kṛṣṇa]. Even though great philosophers inquire exhaustively, they are bewildered. [SB 1.9.16]





## E. SERVING VAIṢṆAVAS

Vaiṣṇava *sevā*, service to the devotees lies at the heart of our Krishna consciousness movement. What could be a better time than this to offer oneself fully to the community! Our scriptures extensively recommend that those who want spiritual enlightenment are advised to do good for others. The *śāstras* clearly state that activities for the benefit of others can be seen to be both a prime symptom of spiritual advancement as well as an integral part of the process to achieve enlightenment.

Many devotees in our communities are being hit by the pandemic and are suffering physically, emotionally and spiritually, thus presenting us numerous opportunities to serve them and be blessed by the Lord. Lord Krishna values service to his devotees more than direct service to him.

*sādhavo hṛdayaṁ mahyaṁ, sādḥūnāṁ hṛdayaṁ tv aham  
mad-anyat te na jānanti, nāhaṁ tebhyo manāg api*

The pure devotee is always within the core of My heart, and I am always in the heart of the pure devotee. My devotees do not know anything else but Me, and I do not know anyone else but them. [SB 9.4.68]

*ye me bhakta-janāḥ pārtha, na me bhaktās ca te janāḥ  
mad-bhaktānām ca ye bhaktās, te me bhakta-tamā matāḥ*

[Lord Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna:] ‘Those who are My direct devotees are actually not My devotees, but those who are the devotees of My servant are factually My devotees.’ [From *Ādi Purāṇa*, quoted in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 11.28]

*siddhir bhavati vā neti saṁśayo ’cyuta sevinām  
niḥsaṁśayas tu tad bhakta paricaryāratātmanām  
kevalam bhagavat-pāda-sevayā vimalam manaḥ  
na jāyate yathā nityam tad bhakta-caraṇārcanāt*

One may doubt whether the servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead will attain perfection, but there is absolutely no doubt that those who are attached to serving His devotees will attain perfection. One’s mind is not as fully purified by serving the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord as it is by serving the feet of His devotees.” [ *Varāha Purāṇa, Śāṅḍilya-smṛti*, quoted by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in the *Govinda-bhāṣya to Vedānta-sūtras* 3.3.51]

*ārādhanaṁ sarveṣāṁ viṣṇor ārādhanaṁ param  
tasmāt parataram devī tadīyānām, samarcanam*

[Lord Śiva told the goddess Durgā:] ‘My dear Devī, although the Vedas recommend worship of demigods, the worship of Lord Viṣṇu is topmost. However, above the worship of Lord Viṣṇu is the rendering of service to Vaiṣṇavas, who are related to Lord Viṣṇu.’ [From *Padma Purāṇa*, quoted in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 11.31]

Practical steps:

- Set up a small devotee care team within one’s congregation to do a regular health check up on all the members.
- Provide spiritual support through reading, group discussions or personal counselling during difficult times.
- Cook for them and help them with the logistics if they are sick while maintaining proper COVID-19 guidelines/standards.
- Offer financial support (within one’s means).
- Support the local temple.

A devotee is known as *para-duḥkhe-dukhī* and can not tolerate the sufferings of other living beings. It is our duty to extend a helping hand to those who may be suffering at any time. This can be achieved in many ways, be it prayer, practical support and above all spiritual nurture and encouragement.

*etāvān avyayo dharmah, puṇya-ślokair upāsitaḥ  
yo bhūta-śoka-harṣābhyām, ātmā śocati hr̥ṣyati*

If one is unhappy to see the distress of other living beings and happy to see their happiness, his religious principles are appreciated as imperishable by exalted persons who are considered pious and benevolent. [SB 6.10.9]

*etāvaj janma-sāphalyam, dehinām iha dehiṣu  
prāṇair arthair dhiyā vācā, śreya-ācaraṇam sadā*

It is the duty of every living being to perform welfare activities for the benefit of others with his life, wealth, intelligence and words. [SB 10.22.35]





## CLOSING WORDS

We pray that this booklet helps devotees navigate the current challenges as well as deal with the possible heartache that this pandemic is causing.

We further offer our heartfelt prayers for the well-being of all those affected by the pandemic. We would like to thank all the wonderful devotees who are rendering valuable service to others during this most challenging time. All glories to your wonderful services.

Finally, we humbly beg forgiveness for any mistakes or inadequacies within this booklet, our sincere prayer is that the words and information within provide some inspiration and guidance to you all. The devotees of our movement are the most precious to us and here at the GBC Strategic Planning Team we are striving on a daily basis to find ways to support, inform and serve our worldwide community.

