

# **VISION AND MISSION OF THE BHAKTIVEDANTA INSTITUTE**

**Implementation of Srila Prabhupada's Program for the  
spiritualization of human society through training people in  
spiritual technology based on the universal science of Krishna  
consciousness.**

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From the very beginning of his preaching, Srila Prabhupada emphasized the scientific and universal character of the teaching of Krishna consciousness, distinguishing it from religious dogmas, calling it "the science of God"<sup>i</sup>. The universal nature of Krishna consciousness was postulated by Srila Prabhupada in his program document "The Seven Purposes of ISKCON", in particular in the very first purpose: "To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and to educate all people in the techniques of spiritual life in order to check the imbalance of values in life and to achieve real unity and peace in the world".

Later, at the end of his stay on the planet, Srila Prabhupada created the Bhaktivedanta Institute (BI), which he attached great importance to in spreading the philosophy and practice of Krishna consciousness. He called it "our most powerful weapon"<sup>ii</sup> and was ready to allocate any funds for this activity<sup>iii</sup>.

What gave Srila Prabhupada the right to constantly emphasize the scientific character of Krishna consciousness? To qualify for the title of "scientific", any theory must:

- 1) be rational, i.e. non-dogmatic – its conclusions should logically follow from several fundamental premises;
- 2) explain the maximum number of observed phenomena;
- 3) be universally applicable, i.e. work anytime, anywhere;
- 4) be experimentally verifiable.

The Krishna consciousness philosophy meets all of these criteria. Answering *all* the fundamental questions of being from a *God-centered point of view*, it lays the foundations for a rational, scientific view of the world, which is fundamentally different from the views prevailing in modern society. This radical change in the paradigm, proposed by Krishna consciousness, implies a completely different way of life, in which *any* person (regardless of their nationality or religion) can improve the quality of their life, solve many problems, become happier and thus *experience* the effectiveness of the proposed model. Srila Prabhupada himself many times emphasized the practicality of the philosophy of Krishna consciousness, which not only allows, but *implies* experimental verification: "Philosophy is above all, but above philosophy – the practice of this philosophy"<sup>iv</sup>.

This main thesis underlying the idea of BI was formulated by Srila Prabhupada himself in his program documents in the form of a succinct expression of *spiritual techniques* or *techniques of spiritual life*. It was these universal spiritual techniques and practices, based on the rational God-centered philosophy of Krishna consciousness, as conceived by Srila Prabhupada, that BI had to teach the people.

## MAIN DIRECTIONS OF THE BHAKTIVEDANTA INSTITUTE

Srila Prabhupada saw the BI as a full-fledged research and educational institution that would educate people and award degrees, promoting the paradigm of Krishna consciousness in science and society<sup>v</sup>. From the numerous letters and conversations of Srila Prabhupada from 1974-1977, one can single out the main goals that he set for BI.

- 1) Establish Krishna consciousness as a truly scientific movement<sup>vi</sup>.
- 2) Increase the prestige of ISKCON<sup>vii</sup>.
- 3) Teach the principles of spiritual science “mainly to those who did not come to our temples”, although ISKCON members can also receive education and degrees in BI<sup>viii</sup>.
- 4) Refute the materialistic paradigm and transform godless society<sup>ix</sup>.
- 5) Authoritatively and scientifically explain the real facts from the point of view of Krishna consciousness<sup>x</sup>.
- 6) Offer solutions to the economic problems of society based on the philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita<sup>xixii</sup>.
- 7) Publish scientific monographs proving that God is a person<sup>xiii</sup>.
- 8) Build a model of the Universe, based on the philosophy of Srimad-Bhagavatam. Explain the nature of consciousness and evolution of living beings.
- 9) Expose the fraud of scientists and the deception of "scientific progress"<sup>xiv</sup>.
- 10) Deeply study the philosophy of different schools of Vedanta, Vedic music (Sama-Veda) and political science (instructions of Prthu Maharaj)<sup>xv</sup>.
- 11) To attract the scientific elite to the teachings of the Vedas<sup>xvi</sup>.

The first nine objectives are predominantly educational in nature. Their target audience is thinking people brought up in a scientific paradigm. 1-3, 5, 7-10 goals are equally addressed to practicing vaisnavas, helping them to strengthen their faith in the philosophy of Caitanya Mahaprabhu – this is the second target audience of BI. Items 4 to 8 should be based on fundamental research, held by vaisnavas. This research is intended to attract the scientific community. Thus, the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th goals of BI are aimed at scientists and the intellectual elite. These are three different target audiences of the BI project – each of them needs to be able to speak its language, each of them needs to be taught the teaching of Krishna consciousness by different means.

These three target audiences define the **three main areas of BI**.

1) **Enlightenment activities** – introducing the philosophy and practice of Krishna consciousness to seeking, intelligent people.

2) **Educational activities** – teaching practicing vaisnavas the scientific foundations of the philosophy and practice of Krishna consciousness.

3) **Research activities** – researching and writing monographs proving the correctness and relevance of the God-centric paradigm of the philosophy of Bhakti-Vedanta.

### **The importance of BI**

BI is one of Srila Prabhupada's last creations. The seed of this idea originated in Srila Prabhupada's mind a very long time ago, but he began to actively discuss it only in 1974<sup>xviii</sup>, and in 1976 the BI was registered. He attached great importance to this project. Even in the last days of his

life, Srila Prabhupada constantly thought about it<sup>xviii</sup> and spent long hours in talks with Bhakti Svarupa Damodar Goswami, longer than with anyone else<sup>xix</sup>. Bhakti Svarupa Damodar Goswami, the first BI director, recalls Srila Prabhupada meeting with devotees of the Juhu temple in Bombay in March 1977 after the hotel was built. Very pleased, he thanked them for this service, and then turned to Svarupa Damodara and said, "The next stage belongs to you. Now you have to prove that our movement is truly scientific. You must decisively preach everything to scientists – both natural scientists and humanitarians."

Unfortunately, after the departure of Srila Prabhupada, despite the efforts of Bhakti Svarupa Damodara Goswami, Sadaputa Dasa, Druta-karma Das and others, for objective and subjective reasons, the BI activity gradually left the focus of ISKCON leaders.

Initially, he wanted to establish BI, headquartered in Vrindavan.<sup>1</sup>  
Dress<sup>xx</sup>.

## **Mayapur Bhaktivedanta Institute (MBI)**

The founding of the Mayapura Bhaktivedanta Institute is aimed at establishing the goals, that Srila Prabhupada assigned to it. With the vision of uniting various initiatives on Bhaktivedanta Institute around the world around Mayapur.

### **Tasks of MBI**

#### **In science:**

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<sup>1</sup> Śrīla Prabhupāda's original plan was to establish the Bhaktivedanta Institute in Vr̄ndāvana, the holy Dham. He requested Bon Maharāja to hand over the Vaisnava Oriental Research Institute to us.

- Create a sanga, that would generate pure vaisnava brahminical energy, that would support all other activities of Mayapur Bhaktivedanta Institute;

- Conduct yearly international scientific vaisnava conference;
- Help devotees to get scientific degrees in the outside world;
- Establish scientific society centered around ISKCON Mayapur;
- Establish system of internal scientific titles within this society and way of their obtaining;

- Train Mayapur preachers and teachers of Krishna consciousness in scientific approach;

- Spread scientific approach within ISKCON educational field;
- Conduct research and scientific work, results of which are conducive to the development of bhakti within devotees;

- Write books and periodicals, etc. in order to achieve abovementioned goals.

### **In education:**

- Conduct continuous analytical study work of current situation within Mayapur in regards to the necessities of it's devotional community, that can be fulfilled through education;

- Create vision of strategic approach towards vaisnava education in Mayapur and oversee it's implementation;

- Creating general guidelines for educational institutions within Mayapur area;

- Keep regular contact with devotees in charge of educational projects within Mayapur in order to help them get better situated within the established vision and guidelines and share their feedback on those;

- Establish way of open communication between various educational institutions in Mayapur and Mayapur devotional community;
- Create and conduct necessary courses, writing books and periodicals, etc. in order to achieve abovementioned goals;
- Conduct expertise of various textbooks and other educational materials, as well as the work of teachers and other educational staff within Mayapur;
- Establish one's own educational institution within Mayapur, that would exemplify approach, suggested by the MBI and help devotees:
  - study the scriptures at a deeper level;
  - study the philosophy of different schools of Vedanta, Vedic music (Sama-Veda) and political science (instructions of Mah. Prthu), etc.;
  - study scientific basis underlying the practice of Krishna consciousness and various complimentary Vedic areas such as agriculture, etc.;
  - study ways to refute the philosophy of impersonalism and expose the frauds of scientists;
  - study ways to preach to scholars, philosophers and intellectuals.
- Synchronize with national and international educational ministries and other bodies within the educational sphere.

**In preaching:**

- Popularize scientific approach towards Krishna consciousness within Mayapur devotional community;
- Formulate ideas of the Scientific branch of MBI in a language that is adopted to the society at large;

- Work with various preaching departments within ISKCON Mayapur to assist connection between them and MBI;
- Publishing and distribution of books and other literature of the MBI to the devotional community as well as society at large;
- Present MBI on various festivals and other Mayapur events for the devotees and visitors of Mayapur;
- Preaching to the university students, philosophers, scientists and intellectuals in India.

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<sup>i</sup> Expression "science of God", "science of Krishna", "science of Krishna consciousness" For example: "Such persons should be given the chance to study our books very carefully. In this way they will actually understand what is science". (SPL To Vaikunthanatha and Bahulasva 14.03.1975)

<sup>ii</sup> Also, we have formed the Bhaktivedanta Institute for organizing scientific presentations of Krishna Consciousness. This party is our most important preaching arm with which we will be able to destroy the bogus speculation and cheating which goes under the banner of scientific advancement. Therefore I have got great hope for Swarup Damodar and his colleagues. I want them to travel vigorously throughout the world to lecture in all universities and other institutions. (SPL To Amarendra das 02.04.1977)

<sup>iii</sup> We have enough money and we will spare no expense to see the success of this group. (ibid.)

<sup>iv</sup> SPL To Brhaspati das, 17.11.1971

<sup>v</sup> Then on Jan 10, 1976 Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the following more specific directive to Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodar Maharāja, "I have read the aims and objects of the Institute and it is done very nicely. I am satisfied that you are properly understanding the philosophy. I have also suggested for the GBC's consideration, that we introduce a system of examinations for the devotees to take. Sometimes there is criticism that our men are not sufficiently learned, especially the brāhmanas. Of course, second initiation does not depend upon passing an examination. How one has molded his life – chanting, attending arati, etc., these are essential. Still, brāhmana means pandita. Therefore I am suggesting examinations. Bhakti-śāstrī – (for all brāhmanas) based on Bhagavad-gītā, ŚrīĪsopanisad, Nectar of Devotion, Nectar of Instruction, and all the small paper backs. Bhakti-vaibhāva – the above plus first six cantos of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Bhakti-vedānta – the above plus cantos 7-12 S.B. Bhakti-sārvabhauma – the above plus Caitanya-caritamṛta. These titles can correspond to entrance, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. So just consider how to organize this Institute. "

<sup>vi</sup> Then he turned to me and said, "The next phase is yours. You must establish our movement as a genuine scientific movement. You must preach to all the scholars and scientists very vigorously." (SP Talk, 27.03. 1977)

<sup>vii</sup> SP Talk. Bombay, 27.03.1977.

<sup>viii</sup> In a letter to Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodar Maharāja on September 30, 1975 Śrīla Prabhupāda explains what the Bhaktivedanta Institute is: "The Institute will be primarily for those who have not entered our temples. The subject matter will not be different from what is taught

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in our temples. There will be no difference between our temples and the Institute, but the Institute will be official for the general mass. It will be a formal education and they will get degree. It will be open for everyone, including those who have already entered our temples, they may also participate. But, the subject matter should not be different from what is in the temples. (SPL To Bhaktisvarupa Damodar Swami 30.09.1975).

<sup>ix</sup> On June 2, at 6:00 a. m., Śrīla Prabhupāda continued his instructions to me, "You have everything – books, money, men – so show that our movement is scientific. Make a movie to show that there is a superior energy, and that without jīva-bhūta this material energy has no value. Also, hold conferences in Bombay and in all the major cities around the world. Do it! I've trained you for all this." On June 4, at 5:00 a. m., Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed me, "Start a revolution. Hold conferences everywhere. Transform the Godless society."

<sup>x</sup> SPL To Niranjana, 21.05.1973, to Dr Wolf-Rottkey and others.

<sup>xi</sup> On June 5, at 3:00 a.m., Śrīla Prabhupāda called for me to come to the roof of the Vrndāvana guesthouse. When I arrived, I saw Prabhupāda sitting, and Śatadhanya Maharāja was standing beside him, massaging his head. Prabhupāda started instructing me about the Bhaktivedanta Institute: "The Bhaktivedanta Institute should be based on Bhagavad-gītā. We have to prove that for the solution to economic problems, agriculture and cow protection are the topmost programs--not industry. For all aspects of society – religion, economics, politics, etc. – the foundation is the Bhagavad-gītā".

<sup>xii</sup> SPL To Giriraj 24.07.1976.

<sup>xiii</sup> At 8 o'clock in the evening Śrīla Prabhupāda again called me. "All religions of the world," he said, "have some conception of God, but none of them has any idea about the personal character of God. Write books and show that God is a person."

<sup>xiv</sup> You may be knowing that we have formed one party of scientists under the leadership of Sriman Swarup Damodar prabhu. Also we have formed the Bhaktivedanta Institute for organizing scientific presentations of Krishna Consciousness. This party is our most important preaching arm *with which we will be able to destroy the bogus speculation and cheating which goes under the banner of scientific advancement*. (SPL To Amarendra 02.04.1977). Now we are forming scientists party and we shall try with their help to establish Krishna consciousness as the genuine scientific movement of the world exposing the so-called scientists as nothing but speculators. Swarup Damodar has received very good response here in India from the scientific community and there is good hope that many others will join him. (SPL To Ramesvara 02.04.1977)

<sup>xv</sup> Further, on January 29, 1976 in a letter to Svarūpa Dāmodar Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "In the tentative course outlines some additions are as follows. In the philosophy section there should be a class dealing with all the Vaisnava philosophies (the four sampradayas). Music class can be based on the Sama Veda. In the Political Science class Maharāja Prthu's life may also be studied."

<sup>xvi</sup> On June 20 Śrīla Prabhupāda called me at 6:45 a. m. and poured out divine nectar until 9:00 a. m. He was keenly interested in preaching to the scientists, and he was very pleased with my short report about my meeting with a few scientists in Calcutta. I suggested that if we could convince at least two or three leading world scientists about Krsna consciousness, that would be enough to convince the whole world. Śrīla Prabhupāda commented, "I have said that many times before." I then suggested that the scientists, had to be from the U.S. because nowadays anything done in the U. S. is respected all over the world and taken as authoritative.

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ISKCON preaching projects, especially in the academic world. One day Prabhupāda called me to his room. Alone in the room with me, he showed me three or four magazines produced by the Vaisnava Oriental Research Institute. Śrīla Prabhupāda's God-brother Bon Maharāja established this institute, which is just across from the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira in Vṛndāvana, many years ago. Śrīla Prabhupāda asked me whether I thought we could also establish a Vaisnava Research Institute to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness among the intellectuals all over the world.

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<sup>xviii</sup> It was very clear that His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda was constantly thinking about the Bhaktivedanta Institute and how it would introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness into the academic community. On June 1, at 5:30 a. m., Śrīla Prabhupāda called me into the washroom. He was rinsing his face and mouth and simultaneously chastising Bhakti Caru Maharāja because he was pouring water on Śrīla Prabhupāda's hands too slowly. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda turned to me and said, "You should establish a branch of the Bhaktivedanta Institute here in Vṛndāvana. The guru-kūla here will be more prestigious if the Institute is added. The name of the institution here in Vṛndāvana should be 'The Bhaktivedanta Gurukūla and Institute for Higher Studies,' and you should be the director of both."

<sup>xix</sup> Before I left, Tamāla-Kṛṣṇa Maharāja suggested that I not leave immediately, because Prabhupāda had been instructing me so much. He said, "Prabhupāda never speaks to anyone for as long as he speaks to you."

<sup>xx</sup> Once again he instructed me extensively about the academic preaching project. Among many other things, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Your dress must command respect. You should dress like a scientist – in suit and tie – for preaching."