Urmila devi dasi

(Dr. Edith Best)

List of seminars and workshops

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Contents

[Sastra seminars 5](#_Toc196290427)

[Nectar of Instruction 5](#_Toc196290428)

[Sri Isopanisad 5](#_Toc196290429)

[Bhagavad-gita, depth 6](#_Toc196290430)

[Bhagavad-gita, overview 6](#_Toc196290431)

[Nectar of Devotion 7](#_Toc196290432)

[Krishna Book 7](#_Toc196290433)

[Brhad-Bhagavatamrta, part 2 8](#_Toc196290434)

[Srimad Bhagavatam, Canto 2 8](#_Toc196290435)

[Catur-sloka of Srimad Bhagavatam 8](#_Toc196290436)

[Talks between Lord Caitanya and Ramananda Roya 8](#_Toc196290437)

[Manah-siksa (Raghunatha Dasa Goswami’s verses with Bhaktivinoda’s commentary) for Devotees 8](#_Toc196290438)

[1 session seminar description 8](#_Toc196290439)

[3 session seminar description: 9](#_Toc196290440)

[6 session workshop description: 9](#_Toc196290441)

[12 session workshop description: 9](#_Toc196290442)

[Seminars and Workshops on Manah-siksa for the General Public 10](#_Toc196290443)

[1 session seminar description: 10](#_Toc196290444)

[3 session workshop description: 10](#_Toc196290445)

[Hermeneutics: How to understand and explain the words of guru, our acaryas, and sastra 11](#_Toc196290446)

[Sastra based: Applying Krishna Consciousness (all one seminar unless otherwise indicated) 11](#_Toc196290447)

[Career Dharma: The Natural Art of Work 12](#_Toc196290448)

[Main lesson: Overview of the nine principles 12](#_Toc196290449)

[Lesson 1: Six ways to be rich and prosperous 12](#_Toc196290450)

[Lesson 2: Four Fields and their qualities 12](#_Toc196290451)

[Lesson 3: Four Fields and their qualities—disposition and expertise 12](#_Toc196290452)

[Lesson 4: What happens when we do someone else’s work (work in the wrong field) 12](#_Toc196290453)

[Lesson 5: Putting it all together and making a plan to move forward 12](#_Toc196290454)

[Additional lesson: Cherishing your prosperity type 12](#_Toc196290455)

[Additional lesson: Getting Above the Shades of Ego (the gunas) 12](#_Toc196290456)

[Additional lesson: The asramas, or life cycle 12](#_Toc196290457)

[Additional lesson: How the four Fields of Work relate to each other in an ideal society 12](#_Toc196290458)

[Certification Course for Career Dharma Coaches 12](#_Toc196290459)

[Essence Seekers: From materialist to Krishna prema 12](#_Toc196290460)

[Siksastaka 13](#_Toc196290461)

[Dharma: Dance or Bureaucracy? 13](#_Toc196290462)

[Spiritual and Material Happiness 13](#_Toc196290463)

[Excuses, blame, and boundaries 13](#_Toc196290464)

[Pleasure in the Self 13](#_Toc196290465)

[Material and Spiritual Balance 13](#_Toc196290466)

[How can all the aspects of my life energize me spiritually? 13](#_Toc196290467)

[Struggles with maya—is there hope and how? 13](#_Toc196290468)

[Can I find high quality time for Krishna in a life filled with so much to do? 14](#_Toc196290469)

[Always thinking of Krishna—Is it possible in the realities of my life? 14](#_Toc196290470)

[How to Control the Mind 14](#_Toc196290471)

[Peace Instead of Worry 14](#_Toc196290472)

[What is Maya 14](#_Toc196290473)

[Who is God 14](#_Toc196290474)

[Getting free of anarthas: English only, not suitable for translation into other languages 14](#_Toc196290475)

[The Nine Processes of Devotion 14](#_Toc196290476)

[ Friendship with the Lord 14](#_Toc196290477)

[ Surrendering everything. 14](#_Toc196290478)

[ Prayer and Obeisances. 14](#_Toc196290479)

[Coming to the mode of Goodness 15](#_Toc196290480)

[Dealing with Sexual Desire 15](#_Toc196290481)

[Our Longing for Reciprocation (can be taught as one or as three seminars) 15](#_Toc196290482)

[Forgiveness 15](#_Toc196290483)

[Emotions: material and spiritual 15](#_Toc196290484)

[Humility 15](#_Toc196290485)

[Choosing our Association 15](#_Toc196290486)

[Fellowship with devotees 16](#_Toc196290487)

[Meditating on Krishna in everyday life 16](#_Toc196290488)

[Obstacles and Tests: If I want to serve Krishna, why are there external difficulties in my life? 16](#_Toc196290489)

[Chanting with Attention, general 16](#_Toc196290490)

[Chanting with Attention: reversing material creation through sound 16](#_Toc196290491)

[Brahma Gayatri Mantra 16](#_Toc196290492)

[Developing Vaisnava Qualities 16](#_Toc196290493)

[Overcoming the “Stigma” of Being a Religious Person in a Secular Society 17](#_Toc196290494)

[Women’s Ancient and Modern Social and Economic Role 17](#_Toc196290495)

[Where I Am in Spiritual Life and How to Progress 17](#_Toc196290496)

[Stages of Hearing and Meditation 17](#_Toc196290497)

[ISKCON and Lord Caitanya in the scope of “Hinduism” 17](#_Toc196290498)

[How to Treat a Wife 17](#_Toc196290499)

[Transcendental Personalities and Places 17](#_Toc196290500)

[Spiritual strength from Lord Balarama 17](#_Toc196290501)

[Taking shelter of the divine energy: Srimati Radharani 17](#_Toc196290502)

[Nrsimhadeva 18](#_Toc196290503)

[Lord Nityananda 18](#_Toc196290504)

[A visual and auditory meditation on Nitai Pada Kamala 18](#_Toc196290505)

[Some of Lord Nityananda’s Lilas 18](#_Toc196290506)

[Lord Caitanya 18](#_Toc196290507)

[Lord Siva 18](#_Toc196290508)

[Ramayana 18](#_Toc196290509)

[Srivasa Thakura 18](#_Toc196290510)

[Advaita Acarya 18](#_Toc196290511)

[Krishna’s appearance 18](#_Toc196290512)

[Tulasi devi/Vrinda devi 18](#_Toc196290513)

[Govardhana 18](#_Toc196290514)

[Radha Kunda and Shyama Kunda 18](#_Toc196290515)

[Prabhupada seminars 18](#_Toc196290516)

[Prabhupada as Founder-acarya (not suitable for translation; English only) 19](#_Toc196290517)

[Prabhupada as Preacher—his life (not suitable for translation; English only) 19](#_Toc196290518)

[Prabhupada in our lives 19](#_Toc196290519)

[Prabhupada—assisting in service 19](#_Toc196290520)

[Practical Life Skills for devotees 19](#_Toc196290521)

[Plans that Work 19](#_Toc196290522)

[Personality Types 19](#_Toc196290523)

[Giving a Scripture Class or Any Public Lecture 20](#_Toc196290524)

[Inspiring People to Achieve Their Best 20](#_Toc196290525)

[Metaphor and Story Telling 20](#_Toc196290526)

[The Relationship between Spiritual Life and Culture 20](#_Toc196290527)

[Eight ways to modify unwanted behavior 20](#_Toc196290528)

[Leadership and Management 20](#_Toc196290529)

[An effective persuasive agent of change 21](#_Toc196290530)

[Implementing effective plans and policies 21](#_Toc196290531)

[Organizational Culture and Structure 21](#_Toc196290532)

[Preserving ISKCON 21](#_Toc196290533)

[ISKCON History 21](#_Toc196290534)

[Relevant and Relatable ISKCON 21](#_Toc196290535)

[Women in ISKCON 22](#_Toc196290536)

[For primary and secondary school administrators 22](#_Toc196290537)

[For Preachers and Teachers, General 22](#_Toc196290538)

[Super Motivated Listeners/Students? Teaching to peoples’ real needs 22](#_Toc196290539)

[Students/listeners Retaining What They’ve Learned: method 1 23](#_Toc196290540)

[Creating Presentations that People Remember: method 2 23](#_Toc196290541)

[Practical and Relevant Preaching and Teaching 23](#_Toc196290542)

[Bloom’s levels of learning along with Multiple Intelligences and Talents 23](#_Toc196290543)

[The Vocation of Teaching in Krishna Consciousness: Inspired for Life 23](#_Toc196290544)

[For ages 2-18 with adults helping (parents or teachers) 24](#_Toc196290545)

[Parents and Children Fun Workshop 24](#_Toc196290546)

[For Parents and for Teachers of Children and Youth 24](#_Toc196290547)

[Transmitting the Culture of Krishna Consciousness to the Next Generation 24](#_Toc196290548)

[Parenting and teaching based on the Gita 24](#_Toc196290549)

[Srila Prabhupada’s principles of education 24](#_Toc196290550)

[Teaching and Guiding Children in Chanting Japa 24](#_Toc196290551)

[Sadhana for Parenting in Krishna Consciousness 24](#_Toc196290552)

[Motivating our Children to Engage in a Variety of Devotional Services 25](#_Toc196290553)

[Motivating our Children to Hear and Read About Krishna 25](#_Toc196290554)

[Multi-level Classroom 25](#_Toc196290555)

[Speaking and Drama 25](#_Toc196290556)

[Critical Thinking/Logic 25](#_Toc196290557)

[Brief biographical information about Urmila devi dasi 25](#_Toc196290558)

# Sastra seminars

In general, the sastra seminars are designed for practicing devotees, or those with some knowledge of Krishna consciousness. Most require printing of materials for the presenter, and often also printing materials for the participants. Some also require a projector and screen.

## Nectar of Instruction

4 seminars, 1 hour each (can be given as a group or separately). For each of these seminars, we need printing of materials for presenter and students. These are designed for devotees.

* Ourselves and Our Life (texts 1-3)

The importance and method of controlling the mind and senses as well as what will accelerate or hamper our progress in devotional service

* Devotees and Society (texts 4-6)

Having a society based on loving exchanges with devotees on various levels of realization, transcending bodily limitations

* Absorption in Krishna (texts 7-8)

Going from the offensive to pure stage of chanting, understanding our progress through the steps of devotion

* Better and Best (texts 9-11)

How to become the best person and live in the best place?

## Sri Isopanisad

(note: These seminars are available in two forms. One concentrates more on content and is suitable for a concentrated Bhakti shastri course, whereas the other concentrates more on personal application. These can be taught as a group or separately.) For each of these seminars, we need printing of materials for presenter and students. These are designed for devotees.

These seminars can be optionally taught with a projector.

5 seminars, 1 hour and 10 minutes each

* Relationship Between Krishna, Jivas, and Prakriti (invocation-mantra 3)

Finding happiness and harmony through overflowing completeness which eliminates lack and scarcity

* The Lord as Known by the Maha-Bhagavata (mantras 4-8)

The vision and consciousness of great souls who through revelation know the Lord’s inconceivable qualities

* Knowledge and Ignorance (mantras 9-11)

Knowing wolves and wolves in sheep’s clothing to lead instead a balanced life

* Worship of Absolute and Relative (mantras 12-14)

Other kinds of wolves and wolves in sheep’s clothing that help us to distinguish real and false religion, being successful both spiritually and materially

* Revelation of the Lord (mantras 15-18)

Developing loving appreciation for Krishna through the process of surrender and His mercy.

## Bhagavad-gita, depth

* 18 classes, one seminar per chapter, 1 ½ hours each, needs projector, for devotees
* Special for Gita, Chapter Twelve, needs projector, for devotees

Three parts—can be taught as one seminar, as two, or as three seminars of about 1 hour each, with projector; This chapter gives a model for the progression of bhakti

* Texts 1-7: the two paths to perfection
* Texts 8-12: going step-by-step: how the paths connect (this includes printed handout)
* Texts 13-20: qualities of peace

## Bhagavad-gita, overview

These need printing for the presenter; printed handouts are available for participants. Suitable for any audience

* Overview (the entire gita)

A summary of the entire work, showing the relation of each chapter to each other, with some emphasis on key verses, and a concentration on thinking of Krishna with love and surrender

* The Self and Working in Sacrifice with Knowledge (chapters 1-6)

How the essence of Karma yoga and Dhyana yoga is meditation on Krishna, dedicating our mind and activities to Him

* The Lord, Sri Krishna, Known through Bhakti (chapters 7-12)

The glories of the Lord, distinct from demigod worship or impersonalism, can be known through linking with Him through loving service. He then reciprocates and reveals Himself to the devotee.

* Material Nature and Knowledge that Increases Love and Surrender (chapters 13-18)

Among the world’s theological philosophies, none gives as complete an understanding of the relationship of the Lord and the soul with matter. By understanding the nature of our entanglement, we can also gain knowledge of how to become free and again situated as Krishna’s servant.

## Nectar of Devotion

* The Six Opulences

We first explore the benefits from hearing about Krishna’s qualities, and how one can truly understand the Lord’s qualities. Then, for each of Krishna’s six opulences, participants study how to think about the Lord’s reciprocation with us as well as examples and stories of the manifestation of each of the opulences. This is suitable for any audience. Printouts are needed for presenter and participants.

* Some Traits of Krishna

After considering benefits from meditating on Krishna’s qualities, participants consider three traits discussed in Nectar of Devotion, with several stories related to each. Two other traits, as well as the four traits manifested only in Krishna, are also discussed. This is suitable for any audience. Printouts are needed for presenter and participants.

* Krishna’s Personality

The four seemingly contradictory descriptions of Krishna’s personality are explored, along with examples and stories that illustrate each. An understanding of the Lord’s personality is compared and contrasted with concepts of mundane personality. This is suitable for any audience. Printouts are needed for presenter and participants.

* Nectar of Devotion, Introduction through chapter 19 (Eastern Ocean)

8 classes, 1-1 ½ hour each. For devotees. Needs screen and projector

* Nectar of Devotion, chapters 20-34 (Southern Ocean)

12 classes, 2 hours each. For devotees with some basic knowledge of sastra. Needs screen and projector

* Nectar of Devotion, chapters 35-51 (Western and Northern Oceans)

9 classes, 2 hours each. For devotees with some basic knowledge of sastra. Needs screen and projector

## Krishna Book

These each require printouts for the presenter. They are suitable for devotees and people with some exposure to Krishna consciousness.

* Kaliya serpent
* Brahma stealing the boys and calves
* Swallowing the forest fire (needs projector and sound hook up for the computer)
* Salva attacking Dvaraka
* Pundraka, Sudaksina, and Daksinagni
* Bringing back the brahmana’s children from Mahavishnu

## Brhad-Bhagavatamrta, part 2

With projector, this seminar tells the story of the journey of Gopa Kumara through the universe to Goloka Vrindavana. This story gives a model for a devotee’s progress. Useful especially for devotees but can be taught to any audience

## Srimad Bhagavatam, Canto 2

Overview of the canto. A multimedia presentation that requires a projector. For devotees

## Catur-sloka of Srimad Bhagavatam

These requires printouts for the presenter and participants. Suitable for all audiences though especially for devotees. 4 seminars of about 1- 1 ½ hours each

* 2.9.33: Krishna is everything; acintya bedabeda tattva (includes an overview of how to meditate on Krishna in the world)
* 2.9.34: The nature of illusion and the illusory energy
* 2.9.35: The Lord’s detachment from the world and His attachment for His devotees and acintya bedabeda tattva
* 2.9.35: The independence and glories of bhakti-yoga

## Talks between Lord Caitanya and Ramananda Roya

Lord Caitanya hears from Ramananda Roya about better and better methods to attain life’s perfection. Their discussion helps us to understand whether or not we are on the best path and how to adjust so as to make the most rapid spiritual progress. This seminar requires a projector and screen and is useful for devotees.

## Manah-siksa (Raghunatha Dasa Goswami’s verses with Bhaktivinoda’s commentary) for Devotees

[Note for organizers: These are seminars and workshops for devotees: people already familiar with, and practicing, bhakti yoga in the Gaudiya tradition. A projector and a screen are highly recommended, but not absolutely required. There is a one-page printed handout to be given to participants. This course can be taught in 1, 3, 6, or 12 sessions of 45-90 minutes each.]

General description:

Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami wrote Manah siksa under Svarupa Damodara Gosvami’s direction as a step-by-step guidebook for attaining love for Krishna in the mood of the residents of Vrindavana. In twelve verses, it goes deeply into the heart with practical and clear instructions for overcoming all obstacles and finding the ultimate spiritual attainment.

Copies of Manah siksa, translated by ISKCON scholars, profusely illustrated, and with commentaries by Bhaktivinoda and contemporary ISKCON devotees (Jayadvaita Swami, Sivarama Swami, Sacrinandanda Swami, Bhaktivijnana Swami) will be available for purchase.

1 session seminar description:

* The shining path of Vraja bhakti starts and ends with loving attachment to Krishna and His associates. But on the way thieves and various traps lurk to stop the devotees’ progress. We get an overview of the step-by-step process, learning what to do and not to do on our spiritual journey.

3 session seminar description:

* 1) Making sure our compass is set to the right direction, and our heart is attuned to the mood of the spiritual world; 2) Recognizing the increasingly subtle inner thieves and traps on the path, and employing counteracting measures; 3) How the fully humble soul enters into loving perfection in Vrindavana.

6 session workshop description:

* 1) Making sure our compass is set to the right direction, and our heart is attuned to the mood of the spiritual world; 2) What we talk about: How speech is the key to spiritual wealth or poverty—the prostitute, the tigress, the goddess’ husband, and the jewel; 3) What we do: matching our actions and words—the thieves on the shining path of love, ropes woven out of actions, the cheating crane, and the protectors; 4) What we want: when pure speech and action have hidden motives—the burning donkey urine, the ocean of love, the artistic singer, and the mountain holder; 5) What we crave: the deep and hidden desire that blocks full internal absorption in bhakti—the dead dog, the dance of the promiscuous woman, the army general, and the ladies of pure love; 6) How the fully humble soul enters into loving perfection in Vrindavana.
* All participants will work with the metaphors of the original text as well as crafting their own, in their choice of medium and expression (language, song, painting and so forth). Participants will also create a short and long term plan for personal and group application of peace through authenticity.
* [paper and writing implements are required, as are musical instruments]

12 session workshop description:

* 1) Starting the journey to Vrindavana by having affection for Krishna and all that is related to Him including non-sectarian appreciation of devotees; 2) Our relationship with our spiritual masters (what to do and what not to do), and the place of Lord Caitanya in our love for Krishna; 3) The dawning of our spiritual identity in the science of rasa, the guidance of Rupa Goswami and Svarupa Damodara Goswami, and the incompatibility of love and liberation; 4) What we talk about: How speech is the key to spiritual wealth or poverty—the prostitute, the tigress, the goddess’ husband, and the jewel; 5) What we do: matching our actions and words—the thieves on the shining path of love, ropes woven out of actions, the cheating crane, and the protectors; 6) What we want: when speech and action in spiritual life have hidden motives—the burning donkey urine, the ocean of love, the artistic singer, and the mountain holder; 7) What we crave: the deepest hidden desire that blocks full internal absorption in bhakti—the dead dog, the dance of a promiscuous woman, the army general, and the lady of pure love; 8) Deep authenticity: the humble soul—purity, glowing nectar to drink, and the service of the supreme artistic singer; 9) Meditation—sacred places and supreme persons who connect to the deepest places in our heart; 10) The internal energy and the supreme goddess, Srimati Radharani; 11) Direct service through five nectars and our connection with Govardhana; 12) Benediction—singing, understanding, applying—gaining another jewel.
* All participants will work with the metaphors of the original text as well as crafting their own, in their choice of medium and expression (language, song, painting and so forth). Participants will also create a short and long term plan for personal and group application of peace through authenticity.
* [paper and writing implements are required, as are musical instruments]

## Seminars and Workshops on Manah-siksa for the General Public

 [Note for organizers: These are seminars and workshops for a general audience (university classes, temple Sunday feast, etc.). It can be taught either as a seminar overview or as in-depth workshops. For a seminar overview (30 minutes-1 ½ hours), a projector and screen are desirable but not necessary. For more in-depth workshops (3 sessions of 1 to 1 ½ hour each), a projector and screen are required, participants should bring paper and writing implements, and musical instruments should be available.]

### 1 session seminar description:

Title: Instructing Our Mind to Attain Peace through Authenticity

A presentation of a classic guidebook to mental balance and peace, as interpreted by contemporary international philosophers and visual artists. The seminar is based on Manah-siksa [Instructions to the Mind] by Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami (1495-1586).

Topics include:

* Affection and passion: genuine love of ourselves and others
* Respect and integrity: escaping the pitfalls of arrogance and deceit
* Metaphor and poetry: using literary ornaments and visual art to unlock our potential

Copies of Manah siksa, translated by ISKCON scholars, profusely illustrated, and with commentaries by Bhaktivinoda and contemporary ISKCON devotees (Jayadvaita Swami, Sivarama Swami, Sacinandanda Swami, Bhaktivijnana Swami) will be available for purchase.

### 3 session workshop description:

Title: Instructing Our Mind to Attain Peace through Authenticity

A presentation of a classic guidebook to mental balance and peace, as interpreted by contemporary international philosophers and visual artists. The workshops are based on Manah-siksa [Instructions to the Mind] by Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami (1495-1586).

Topics include:

* Affection and passion: genuine love of ourselves and others
* Respect and integrity: escaping the pitfalls of arrogance and deceit
* Metaphor and poetry: using literary ornaments and visual art to unlock our potential

In three sessions, using a multi-media approach, participants study the original text as interpreted by contemporary international philosophers and visual artists. They explore the concepts and timeless principles. Additionally, the group crafts proposals in which, in the world today, we can achieve unity in diversity by applying those principles according to local culture. The proposals are generated though discussion, role-play, music, art, and creative writing. All participants will work with the metaphors of the original text as well as crafting their own, in their choice of medium and expression (language, song, painting and so forth). Participants will also create a short and long term plan for personal and group application of peace through authenticity.

Copies of Manah siksa, translated by ISKCON scholars, profusely illustrated, and with commentaries by Bhaktivinoda and contemporary ISKCON devotees (Jayadvaita Swami, Sivarama Swami, Sacinandanda Swami, Bhaktivijnana Swami) will be available for purchase if there is at least three months’notice.

# Hermeneutics: How to understand and explain the words of guru, our acaryas, and sastra

The ISKCON Hermeneutics Course provides initial training in the discipline and methodology of how to appropriately study, assimilate, apply, explain, and perpetuate the teachings of *guru-sādhu-śāstra*. It embraces theory and method, underpinned by values.

It is based on the GBC approved Foundation Document. It uses traditional Vedic and Vaiṣṇava principles and tools, some of which are adapted specifically for ISKCON.

It is designed especially for ISKCON leaders, preachers, teachers, and those engaged in systematic study of *śāstra* (for example, *bhakti-śāstrī* courses), though all ISKCON members can benefit from it.

**The course emphasizes:**

* Respectful and constructive *śāstric* conversation
* Authentic understanding and explanation of *śāstric* conclusions
* Resolution of philosophical controversies within ISKCON
* Proficiency in addressing difficult or contentious *śāstric* statements

**Benefits:**

For individual members:

* Fulfillment within personal spiritual life
* Increase in faith in *śāstra*, our *ācāryas*, and Śrīla Prabhupāda
* Satisfaction and happiness in discussing the words of *guru-sādhu-śāstra* with devotees
* Increased ways of teaching and preaching on difficult topics and statements, including answering questions often asked by those new to Kṛṣṇa consciousness

The course is 8 lessons of 1.5-2 hours each. Generally, it is best to have a variety of teachers from the Sastric Advisory Council, which involves some advance planning. Participants need extensive materials, some of them printed.

NOTE: the first three lessons can be taught as a stand-alone, introductory course. Printing is required.

# Sastra based: Applying Krishna Consciousness (all one seminar unless otherwise indicated)

These seminars, in general, are useful for both/either new people and devotees. Please note which seminars require a projector, printouts, and sound hook-up for the computer.

## Career Dharma: The Natural Art of Work

Not sure what your nature is, and how to find a matching career where your work is your dharma?

### Main lesson: Overview of the nine principles

Gain an overview of the nine principles of dharma in work so that you can move towards having a satisfying career that is the best expression of yourself. One hour; projector needed; suitable for general audiences

Some Selected Lessons:

### Lesson 1: Six ways to be rich and prosperous

### Lesson 2: Four Fields and their qualities

### Lesson 3: Four Fields and their qualities—disposition and expertise

### Lesson 4: What happens when we do someone else’s work (work in the wrong field)

### Lesson 5: Putting it all together and making a plan to move forward

Descriptions for lessons 1-5: Get clarity on your natural values in our livelihood, get a sense of your “self” and core place in the world of work–what resonates with you and what doesn’t in terms of the work you do and the ways in which you feel rich and fulfilled. Recognize the signs through your life so far as to our deep values, and plan to continue to nourish and train those values and skills going forward

Each lesson can be taught in 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. Projector needed; suitable for general audiences. Please note that lessons 2 and 3 can be combined into one class.

Additional lesson: Cherishing your prosperity type

Additional lesson: Getting Above the Shades of Ego (the gunas)

Additional lesson: The asramas, or life cycle

Additional lesson: How the four Fields of Work relate to each other in an ideal society

### Certification Course for Career Dharma Coaches

Inquire if interested in hosting this six-session, multi-day workshop

Essence Seekers: From materialist to Krishna prema

The journey to Krsna prema, based on Jada Bharata's Forest of Enjoyment in the Fifth Canto, Lord Caitanya's instruction to Sanatana Goswam on Sarvajna, and Raghunatha dasa Goswami's Sri Manah Siksa (Splendid Instructions to the Mind)

(There is a book to accompany this seminar, so it’s best to arrange it at least three weeks in advance to give time to order books). Projector needed. Suitable for people new to Krishna consciousness and all devotees.

## Siksastaka

Meditation on the first verse of the siksastaka; this requires a projector and sound hook-up for the computer

## Dharma: Dance or Bureaucracy?

We explore the paradoxes and intricacies of dharma based on Srimad Bhagavatma 1.7.53-54. Requires a screen and projector. Can be suitable for any audience.

## Spiritual and Material Happiness

Exploring the differences; this requires a projector and sound hook-up for the computer. Suitable for any audience.

## Excuses, blame, and boundaries

How to have steady enthusiasm without burnout. Requires a projector.

## Pleasure in the Self

How realization of our real spiritual self is joyful; this requires a projector. Suitable for any audience.

## Material and Spiritual Balance

How to balance devotional sadhana, work, study, family and so forth; this requires a projector and sound hook-up for the computer. This seminar can be taught in summary form in one hour, or in 4 sessions of one hour each. The 4 session version is as follows. Each of these sessions can also be taught as entirely separate seminars:

### How can all the aspects of my life energize me spiritually?

Dealing with misconceptions about renunciation and detachment, experiencing Krishna in the world, seeing our life as service, seeing Krishna’s hand in everything, seeing everything as spiritual energy

### Struggles with maya—is there hope and how?

Examining the nature of illusion, our temptations, and a variety of solutions, including the eight ways to change bad habits

### Can I find high quality time for Krishna in a life filled with so much to do?

Examining the problems such as scheduling, demanding lives, busyness, and the solutions such as gaining perspective and prioritizing, along with various practical and creative ideas

### Always thinking of Krishna—Is it possible in the realities of my life?

How to enter into practical samadhi through bhakti-yoga throughout the day

## How to Control the Mind

Understanding the mind and how to control it—for people with at least some preliminary interest in Krishna consciousness; this requires a projector

## Peace Instead of Worry

Why we worry, and how to find peace; this requires a projector. Suitable for any audience.

## What is Maya

Understanding Illusion and how to be free of it; this requires a projector. Suitable for any audience.

## Who is God

Using logic and sastra to understand the nature of God; this requires a projector. Suitable for any audience.

## Getting free of anarthas: English only, not suitable for translation into other languages

A meditation on letting go (from Rocks in my Pack); this requires a projector and sound hook-up for the computer

## The Nine Processes of Devotion

* Friendship with the Lord. This is an exploration of the two parts of friendship that are included in sadhana bhakti, as well as a brief look at the rasa of friendship of the pure devotees. This requires a projector and sound hook-up for the computer. Suitable for any audience
* Surrendering everything. Krishna ends the Bhagavad-gita with a call for our surrender to Him. But what does surrender mean? How do we do it? What does surrender feel like? Are there ways to think we are surrendered when we are not? We meditate on the surrender of King Bali, explore the two limbs of bhakti that deal with surrender, and relish the six symptoms of surrender with corresponding songs of Bhaktivinoda Thakura. This requires a projector and sound hook-up for the computer. Suitable for any audience
* Prayer and Obeisances. There are physical prayers, mental prayers, and verbal prayers. There are prayers of humility and longing. There are famous prayers, and simple ones. With a multi-media approach we share how to deepen our spiritual lives with prayer. This requires a projector and sound hook-up for the computer. Suitable for any audience

## Coming to the mode of Goodness

An analysis of the three modes, why goodness is important, and how to transcend the modes; this requires a projector and sound hook-up for the computer (allow 1 ½ hours for this presentation) Suitable for any audience.

## Dealing with Sexual Desire

We look at Bhagavatam verses 5.25.5 and Caitanya Caritamrita Madhya 8.138 to examine the source of desire in the soul, how to ultimately transform it back into prema, and how to deal with it until perfection. This requires a projector and sound hook-up for the computer. This is suitable for devotees and those with some preliminary exposure to Krishna consciousness

## Our Longing for Reciprocation (can be taught as one or as three seminars)

Do we ever find that we do our utmost yet all is dry? Do we have moments of sweet reciprocation and realization that we can’t maintain and they vanish? In this seminar we explore having a conversation with the Lord, as we open our mind and heart to understand the various ways of reciprocation, and the unlimited love Krishna has for us. From Bhagavatam 10.32. This requires a projector and sound hook-up for the computer. This is more suitable for devotees

## Forgiveness

What is forgiveness?  Is it condoning? What about justice? How do we forgive and yet protect ourselves? We explore misconceptions, truth, and freedom in this practical and healing seminar. This requires printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for any audience.

## Emotions: material and spiritual

We learn the functions and interrelation of the intelligence, body, and soul, how to deal with and control the material emotions. We explore the value and variety of spiritual emotions and the difference and similarity between impersonalists and personalists in thinking about and dealing with the emotions. This requires printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for any audience.

## Humility

Exploring the need for humility, we define what humility is and is not. Participants then learn various ways to develop this quality in their behavior and hearts. This requires printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for any audience.

## Choosing our Association

After considering the power of association in general, participants learn of various ways of thinking about and dealing with people according to our relationship with them and their advancement in devotional service. We also explore various ways to interact with non-devotees, including situations where such non-devotees are family or co-workers. This requires printing for the presenter. Can be adjusted for any audience.

## Fellowship with devotees

We explore the value of devotee association at all levels of our spiritual advancement. We learn the six loving exchanges with devotees, explore the necessity of such exchanges for devotees to develop the support, strength, and determination to succeed in spiritual life, and make a plan to increase the practice of these exchanges. This requires printing for the presenter. For devotees and those with some knowledge of Krishna consciousness.

## Meditating on Krishna in everyday life

Finding the Divine in the seemingly mundane! This seminar is of great help to people who want to be Krishna consciousness while living and working in the world. Find Krishna in water, clouds, our digestion, and nearly everything! Needs projector, suitable for any audience

Three seminars that can be done independently of each other: 1) Meditations from the Bhagavad-Gita “I am” verses, 2) Meditations from the Bhagavatam universal form descriptions, 3) Meditations from the list of Krishna’s 64 qualities as given in the Nectar of Devotion.

## Obstacles and Tests: If I want to serve Krishna, why are there external difficulties in my life?

We examine sources of problems—our own behavior, the external energy, and ways in which Krishna Himself is dealing with us. Then we consider the purposes for obstacles and the different ways in which devotees and materialists respond. This requires printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for any audience.

## Chanting with Attention, general

Why and how overcoming this offense to the holy name is the key to spiritual advancement and removal of all obstacles is examined in this seminar. An honest appraisal of both the problem and solution is explored. This requires printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for devotees.

## Chanting with Attention: reversing material creation through sound

An explanation from the eleventh canto of why and how we can revive our original consciousness through attentive chanting of the mahamantra. This seminar gives a very practical experience of attentive chanting and an unusual scientific explanation of the process. Based on a series of seminars given by HH Bhaktivijnana Maharaja. Highly recommended This requires printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for any audience.

## Brahma Gayatri Mantra

The benefits, origins, and mediations on Brahma Gayatri. Suitable for devotees and those familiar with spirituality (Hindus, yoga practitioners, etc.) Requires a printout for the presenter.

## Developing Vaisnava Qualities

Considering why such qualities matter to an individual and society, this seminar focuses on some specific qualities and the ways to make them an integral part of our character. This requires printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for any audience.

## Overcoming the “Stigma” of Being a Religious Person in a Secular Society

This workshop defines the discrimination, often subtle, that religious people experience when interacting with modern society, whether at work, school, or even shopping. We explore the two toxic extremes devotees of Krishna can adopt when interacting with the world, and many specific strategies and results. This requires printing for the presenter. Suitable for those trying to be devotees. (There is a sociological version of this with a projector. Please discuss which version is more suitable to the particular audience)

## Women’s Ancient and Modern Social and Economic Role

Exploring history and exploding myths, this seminar challenges our assumptions about Vedic culture and practical application in the modern world. Participants consider an unbiased and rational understanding of women’s role in society, beyond stereotyped liberal and conservative ideas. This requires printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for any audience.

## Where I Am in Spiritual Life and How to Progress

From Sraddha to Prema with an emphasis on overcoming the ten offenses and exploring other ways to think about the stages of progression in spiritual life. This requires printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for people with some involvement in Krishna consciousness.

## Stages of Hearing and Meditation

From sravanam to perfection—the eight stages of hearing and meditation from Nectar of Instruction, text 8, Jaiva Dharma, Harinamacintamani, Premabhakticandrika, and Manah Siksa. This seminar explores how we advance in devotion with a focus on the internal state of the devotee’s mind and heart. Suitable only for people who are practicing Krishna consciousness. This requires printing for the participants.

## ISKCON and Lord Caitanya in the scope of “Hinduism”

A scholarly presentation, suitable for university classes and a general audience. Needs a projector.

## How to Treat a Wife

Based entirely on scripture verses, Prabhupada’s purports and instructions, we examine how to please Krishna by the way a husband treats his wife.

# Transcendental Personalities and Places

These are designed for any audience and can be used for festivals related to the person, or at any time. They all require a projector and a sound hook-up (external speakers) for a computer

## Spiritual strength from Lord Balarama

How Balarama kills Denukasura and the process for gaining spiritual strength

## Taking shelter of the divine energy: Srimati Radharani

A meditation on Srimati Radharani, with emphasis on Bhagavad-gita 9.13 (also available with Russian or Hungarian text)

## Nrsimhadeva

The story of the Lord’s appearance as Nrsimha.

## Lord Nityananda

### A visual and auditory meditation on Nitai Pada Kamala

### Some of Lord Nityananda’s Lilas

## Lord Caitanya

A visual and auditory meditation on Parama Karuna

## Lord Siva

His identity and pastimes

## Ramayana

The Appearance and Pastimes of Lord Ramacandra

## Srivasa Thakura

His identity and some of his pastimes with Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu

## Advaita Acarya

His identity, His spreading of bhakti, and His followers

## Krishna’s appearance

The story of why and how Krishna comes to the material world. The emphasis is on Bhagavad-Gita 4.9

## Tulasi devi/Vrinda devi

The glories of Tulasi, benefits from worshiping her and using her wood. Some discussion of her role in Krishna’s pastimes.

## Govardhana

The excellent qualities of Govardhana Hill and the story of Krishna lifting the hill

## Radha Kunda and Shyama Kunda

A tour through the holiest of all places

# Prabhupada seminars

## Prabhupada as Founder-acarya (not suitable for translation; English only)

Deepening appreciation for Prabhupada’s unprecedented success, and Prabhupada’s position and accomplishments in respect to ISKCON. Requires projector and sound hook up for computer

## Prabhupada as Preacher—his life (not suitable for translation; English only)

We identify important events in Prabhupada’s life, explore how we can be connected to Srila Prabhupada, understand his wonderful gift to humanity, and explore how to promote knowledge of Prabhupada’s life to people in general.

## Prabhupada in our lives

Participants describe how they personally interact with Prabhupada on a daily basis, discuss the specific benefits they receive from that contact, and plan for increasing the quality, quantity, or both of their regular contact with him. Requires paper, pencils/pens, flipchart or whiteboard/blackboard

## Prabhupada—assisting in service

We explore Prabhupada’s accomplishments in service, define devotional service and discuss how one becomes empowered in devotional service. Participants make an offering of service to Srila Prabhupada. Requires paper, pencils/pens, flipchart or whiteboard/blackboard

# Practical Life Skills for devotees

## Plans that Work

Before we can accomplish anything, we need to know our goal. Unfortunately, sometimes we only know what we want to get away from. Our lack of success may lie in plans that invite failure. This seminar covers the five essential elements of planning. In this workshop practical skill will not only aid your own formation of long and short term goals, but also greatly enhance your teaching and counseling in all areas. This seminar is most useful for everyone in all areas of service, particularly for those who are engaged in teaching, lesson planning, counseling, and managing. Can be done either with a projector/screen or with printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for any audience.

## Personality Types

This workshop explores how our relationships are more conducive to developing Krishna consciousness (as well as being more externally pleasing and productive) when we understand our and others’ personality type. The models presented are easy to understand and apply. The personality models presented are both modern and based on ayur-veda and the modes of nature. The principles are universal and scriptural. (If there is sufficient advanced notice and funds, participants can receive scoring devices and booklets to determine their style according to one of the models described) This requires printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for any audience.

## Giving a Scripture Class or Any Public Lecture

This workshop will give participants the skills to organize and deliver a class that captures the main points of a verse and purport. We will explore the goals of a public lecture, the proper mood of the speaker, effective delivery skills, and how to organize the content so it will be interesting, logical, and memorable. Although we will focus on classes based on sastric verses and purports, the skills covered here are applicable for any public lecture. Attendees will be actively involved in the learning process. This requires printing for the presenter and participants. Suitable for devotees. (This is a workshop and requires at least two hours.)

## Inspiring People to Achieve Their Best

How do our expectations of others affect us and them? Are their ways we can communicate positive expectations so as to inspire others? Practical formulas and examples from Prabhupada. (Also called: Law of Expectation) Highly recommended (This seminar has an accompanying PowerPoint and so a projector that can be connected to a laptop should be provided, thought it can be taught without it.) This requires printing for the presenter. Suitable for any audience, though designed for devotees.

## Metaphor and Story Telling

Why are the sastras full of stories and metaphors? Why did Srila Prabhupada, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, and all the acaryas use stories and metaphors extensively in their preaching? Learn the advantages of metaphor and story telling in teaching and preaching. This is a workshop where participants will practice the two ways of creating metaphors for specific purposes. This workshop is suitable for all teachers of all subjects (including those who give sastric lectures) and for all counselors. (It is helpful to have already taken the “Well-formed Plan seminar prior to having this one.) This requires printing for the presenter. Suitable for any audience, though designed for devotees.

## The Relationship between Spiritual Life and Culture

What culture is “native” to Krishna consciousness? How can devotees relate to other cultures in the world? What are the pros and cons of dealing with outside cultures in various ways? This presentation is based on the study of the sociology of religion and is especially suitable for devotees. It requires a projector.

## Eight ways to modify unwanted behavior

This workshop examines eight ways to change unwanted behavior in yourself or others (both adults and children). We discuss how Krishna uses all eight methods in the material world, the pros and cons of each, and real life examples. Participants work on scenarios and how they would use these methods to deal with issues they are facing.

# Leadership and Management

These seminars are designed for ISKCON leaders and managers (or those interested in leadership topics) and are based on the research of sociologists or organizational experts, with reference to sadhu-sastra-guru. They all require a projector. Please also see the “Practical Like Skills” section, most of which are applicable to leadership and management.

## An effective persuasive agent of change

When we want to move a society, a group, or an individual in a new direction, what are the effective tools of persuasion? We explore and practice methods that are both elegant and straightforward to apply. Become an expert change agent in terms of organizational culture, goals, values, and behavior. (8-12 hours for a fully interactive course) Projector and printing required.

## Implementing effective plans and policies

Why do good policies and plans so often end up not getting implemented at all, apparently implemented but in an unrecognizable form, or having negative unanticipated consequences? We learn various ways of crafting and evaluating plans so as to maximize enthusiastic implementation with the intended results. Expect to challenge existing ideas of how to be effective! (6 hours for a fully interactive course). Projector and printing required.

## Organizational Culture and Structure

Prabhupada spoke and talked about “brahmincal culture” and about having ISKCON be like a “family” based on “love and trust.” What is organizational culture, how does it form, what does it affect, and how can we change it, are the questions explored and answered in this seminar. We especially look at the relationship between organization culture and varnasrama, as well as organizational culture and structure.

## Preserving ISKCON

Mahaprabhu’s Movement will flourish for 10,000 years. Prabhupada sometimes warned us, however, that we had to be careful to keep ISKCON both alive and pure. In this seminar we examine the work of two leading sociologists of religion and their research on what factors contribute to the preservation and purity of a religious tradition.

## ISKCON History

An overview of ISKCON History from Bhaktisiddhanta to the present time. Not for a general audience. Needs a projector and screen.

## Relevant and Relatable ISKCON

This is a three part interactive workshop, one hour for each session. Each participant requires printed materials in the form of two handbooks.

Participants learn how to make preaching dynamic, attract more people to become devotees, make Krishna consciousness accessible while maintaining the purity, and increase the participation of existing members through the regular and systematic use of scanning. Needs a projector and screen.

## Women in ISKCON

This is a three part interactive workshop, one hour for each session. This workshop is for ISKCON leaders only, not for a general audience. We explore developing a vision for ISKCON and the world with practical application. We also explore the history of women in ISKCON, as well as Prabhupada’s instructions and example. Needs a projector and screen.

## For primary and secondary school administrators

Each of these lessons is about an hour to an hour and a half long. Each participant requires a printed handbook. The lessons for that course are as follows:

1. Duties of an administrator, necessity and definition of vision
2. Formulating an effective vision statement
3. Developing school policies that reflect the school’s overall vision
4. Restrictions on vision—law, constituency, resources, and finances
5. Policies and procedures for admitting students
6. Curriculum views, approaches, methods, and organization
7. Extra-curricular activities and general evaluation
8. Discipline
9. Choosing, supervising, and evaluating teachers
10. Relationships with ISKCON leaders and general adult community
11. Parents
12. General conflict avoidance and resolution
13. Choosing or arranging the physical facility to meet goals
14. Funding and maintenance
15. Choosing educational materials and equipment
16. Prasadam program and library
17. Planning the school year
18. Promoting the school and its vision
19. Overview of administrator’s service
20. Self-evaluation: Are we achieving what we’ve envisioned?

# For Preachers and Teachers, General

These seminars are for anyone who is regularly engaged in teaching or preaching to any age or audience.

## Super Motivated Listeners/Students? Teaching to peoples’ real needs

Anyone who teaches or preaches anything to anyone will find much useful information and practical guidelines in this seminar. Are those whom we teach eager to learn, and begging us for more? Do those who attend our classes feel that what we are teaching is relevance and helpful for their lives? If you’re a classroom teacher or give Bhagavatam classes, this presentation can revolutionize your effectiveness. (Also called: Law of Need) Highly recommended (This seminar has an accompanying powerpoint and so a projector that can be connected to a laptop should be provided, thought it can be taught without it.)

## Students/listeners Retaining What They’ve Learned: method 1

What is the difference between “dumping” information on students and facilitating their long-term learning? Learn and practice the seven maxims and seven methods for having learning “stick.” This seminar is helpful for anyone who teaches anything to anyone (including those who give scriptural classes), as well as to those who write and develop educational materials. (Also called: Law of Retention) Highly recommended (This seminar has an accompanying powerpoint and so a projector that can be connected to a laptop should be provided, thought it can be taught without it.)

## Creating Presentations that People Remember: method 2

Based on the Made to Stick method, this interactive workshop helps us to find our core message, and present it in ways that capture and hold attention, allowing people to remember and use what we teach in their lives

## Practical and Relevant Preaching and Teaching

Ever sit in a class and wonder how it applied to your life? Ever look at a verse and purport and wonder how to explain it so the listeners could really use it? Want your preaching and teaching to be revolutionary and transformational? Learn and practice a simple approach to teaching for personal transformation and lifechange. (Also called: Law of Application) Highly recommended (This seminar has an accompanying powerpoint and so a projector that can be connected to a laptop should be provided, thought it can be taught without it.)

## Bloom’s levels of learning along with Multiple Intelligences and Talents

This workshop uses a matrix of levels of learning and kinds of learning, creating 42 templates. Participants then create a wide variety of plans and activities for teaching and learning. Using the templates not only gives much variety to teaching, but also facilitates various individuals’ strengths and talents, as well as having learning move past information and memory to really make a difference in life application. This requires printing for the presenter and participants

## The Vocation of Teaching in Krishna Consciousness: Inspired for Life

Participants will explore what practices and attitudes are most conducive for long-term satisfaction in teaching and evaluate themselves in light of whether or not they are heading for satisfaction or “burn-out.” This requires printing for the presenter and participants

# For ages 2-18 with adults helping (parents or teachers)

## Parents and Children Fun Workshop

For one or two hours we have supervised fun activities related to Krishna and His various incarnations. This workshop needs some advance planning by local people to have various materials and handouts. It requires a room with tables and chairs and some facility to make a mess.

# For Parents and for Teachers of Children and Youth

## Transmitting the Culture of Krishna Consciousness to the Next Generation

What’s the four most important elements and practices to inculcate someone with culture and behavior? Setting a good example is not enough and may even be counterproductive unless these three elements are present. This seminar defines many practical applications and is designed mostly for devotees. This requires printouts for the participants.

## Parenting and teaching based on the Gita

There are many philosophical principles in the Bhagavad-gita which have direct application to teaching and parenting children. In this seminar we examine three of those principles along with general and specific ways to apply them with children. This seminar is particularly aimed at an audience who is new to Krishna consciousness, and is also useful for committed devotees. This requires printouts for the participants.

## Srila Prabhupada’s principles of education

Based on lectures Prabhupada gave about gurukula and the brahmacari asrama, we explore basic principles of Krishna conscious education. Requires printout for the presenter. Suitable for any audience.

## Teaching and Guiding Children in Chanting Japa

Participants will explore the goals of having a japa class, learn various methods of teaching japa, and the essence of the japa instruction. (It is helpful to have already taken the “Well-formed Plan seminar prior to having this one.) This is designed for devotees. This requires printouts for the participants and the presenter.

## Sadhana for Parenting in Krishna Consciousness

Involving children in regular sadhana as part of family and temple life, this workshop considers obstacles and useful practices. (note: this seminar is similar to *The Vocation of Teaching in Krishna Consciousness, Part II: Inspired for Life,* except that it is geared toward the specific needs of parents and their daily practice of spiritual life.) This is designed for devotees. This requires printouts for the participants and the presenter.

## Motivating our Children to Engage in a Variety of Devotional Services

What are our children’s gifts? In this interactive workshop, we explore how to match activities to people, and come up with a practical plan for implementation. This is designed for devotees. This requires printouts for the participants and the presenter.

## Motivating our Children to Hear and Read About Krishna

Based on meeting the real and felt needs of our children, participants consider many approaches to increasing the quantity and quality of their children’s reading and hearing about Krishna, so that children will want to make such absorption a regular lifelong habit. This is designed for devotees. This requires printouts for the participants and the presenter.

## Multi-level Classroom

Designed for academic teachers and school administrators, this seminar covers the philosophy and practice of teaching several grades and ages together. This requires printouts.

## Speaking and Drama

How to have our children become expert at public speaking? What do we hope to accomplish with courses in speaking and drama? This workshop can be adapted to the needs of elementary or secondary teachers and can focus only on public speaking rather than also including the drama section. This requires printouts.

## Critical Thinking/Logic

What is Critical Thinking? This seminar explores definitions, the objectives of teaching critical thinking to primary and secondary students, the main means of instruction, and whether students should be taught with the content areas or as a separate course. This requires printouts.

Brief biographical information about Urmila devi dasi:

Urmila Devi Dasi (Dr. Edith Best) joined ISKCON in 1973 in Chicago. She received first initiation in 1973 and second initiation in 1975 from His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. In 1996, Urmila and her husband, Pratyatosa, entered the renounced order of vanaprastha. They have three grown married children, thirteen grandchildren (one of whom is married), and two great-grandsons.

She is the chair of the Sastric Advisory Council to ISKCON’s Governing Body Commission (GBC) and was an associate editor of Back to Godhead magazine from 1990-2020. She has taught the entire Bhakti Shastri course over 15 times, and was a professor of Sociology and Education at Bhaktivedanta College in Radhadesh. She travels worldwide teaching sastra as well as practical courses in education and organization. Urmila has three decades of experience teaching primary and secondary students, which include 19 years of experience as a school administrator and leader. She has a masters degree in school administration and a PhD in educational leadership from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Urmila’s publications include Krishna Meditations (<https://a.co/d/8X1nwaZ>) and Career Dharma: The Natural Art of Work (<https://books2read.com/careerdharma>) Vaikuntha Children, a guidebook for devotional education (<http://www.illuminationeducation.com/freebooks> ), The Great Mantra for Mystic Meditation (<http://www.amazon.com/Great-Mantra-Mystic-Meditation-ebook/dp/B007TVCRO0> ), Essence Seekers ([https://www.amazon.com/Essence-Seekers-Beyond-Forest-Enjoyment/dp/1987703464/ref=tmm\_pap\_swatch\_0?\_encoding=UTF8&qid=1526068487&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Essence-Seekers-Beyond-Forest-Enjoyment/dp/1987703464/ref%3Dtmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1526068487&sr=8-1)) dozens of articles, and Dr. Best Learn to Read, an 83 book complete literacy program with technology enabling the story books to speak in 25 languages at the touch of a special “pen” (<http://www.illuminationeducation.com/> ). Her official website: <http://urmiladevidasi.org/> and personal website: <http://urmiladasi.com/>

Shorter Bio:

Urmila devi dasi (Dr. Edith Best) has served ISKCON continuously since her initiation by Srila Prabhupada in 1973. She and her husband are in the vanaprastha order since 1996. They have three married children, 13 grandchildren (one of whom is married), and two great-grandsons. She has a PhD in education, was a primary and secondary teacher for 27 years, and has 19 years of experience with school management. Urmila is the chair of the Sastric Advisory Council to the GBC, was an associate editor of Back to Godhead for thirty years, and was a professor of Sociology of Religion at Bhaktivedanta College. She travels worldwide teaching Krishna consciousness. She is the author of Dr. Best Learn to Read, an 83-book literacy program for children. Her books for adults are Krishna Meditations, Career Dharma: the Natural Art of Work, The Great Mantra for Mystic Meditation, Essence Seekers, and Sri Manah Siksa, all available on Amazon. Her official website: <http://urmiladevidasi.org/> and personal website: <http://urmiladasi.com/>