

Devotee-artisans visit America for 'India—A Festival of Science'

By Ārūḍha-devī dāsi

LOS ANGELES—Live demonstrations of ancient, esoteric crafts such as silver filigree, wood and marble inlay, brocade, calligraphy, and enameling were the attraction at "India—A Festival of Science."

The three-month-long exhibition, part of the government-sponsored Festival of India, concludes Jan. 15 at the California Museum of Science and Industry.

India's National Council of Science Museums sponsored the presence of a dozen artisans from Indian cities and rural villages. They demonstrated their crafts at the museum and spoke with onlookers.

While viewing the exhibition, my husband Ananta-rūpa dāsa and I met one of the artisans, Ananta Malakar. When Malakar learned that we were members of ISKCON and that a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple was nearby, he asked us to take him there.

When he visited the temple the following Sunday, the artisan was so taken by the beauty of the Deities that he wanted to fashion garlands for Them in his native craft known as *sholapith*.

"I will feel the perfection of my work when I make garlands for Lord Kṛṣṇa. I will use my best talents that He Himself has provided me with," Ananta said.

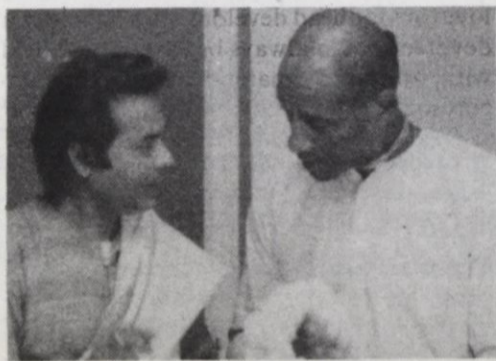
His art is carving *shola*, a reed that grows in East Indian bogs. Light in weight, it is brown on the outside with an ivory-like white inner-core. The outer covering is peeled off and the white pith is then fashioned with a sharp instrument known as a "kat."

On Oct. 23 Ananta-rūpa brought artisan Malakar back to the ISKCON temple where he presented the custom-tailored *shola* garlands to head priest Rāmadāsa.

Grateful for the gift, Rāmadāsa ordered two more sets for the other Deities. The beautiful ivory-like garlands will adorn the Deities during special festivals.

Born in a traditional *sholapith* craft family of Palita village, in the District of Burdwan, West Bengal, Malakar learned his skill from his father, the late Aswini Malakar.

His works have been exhibited in museums worldwide, including the Los Angeles County Art Museum, the Kremlin Museum in Moscow, and throughout India. His work has also been shown at notable exhibitions in Toronto, New York, Washington, D.C., and India. Besides receiving many awards, a 1976 documentary titled *Ananta's Dream* was produced in recognition of his talent.



Ananta presented the *sholapith* garlands to head priest Rāmadāsa (right).



One of Bengali artist Ananta Malakar's *sholapith* sculptures.

Sacred garlands grace Festival art show

NEW YORK—Devotees of the ISKCON temple here were invited to prepare flower garlands to present to guests at the Nov. 18 opening of a part of the government-sponsored Festival of India.

"The Golden Eye" art exhibit was held at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum (The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Design)

Exhibit curator Rajeev Sethi remembered the flower garlands presented to him at the "Aditi" exhibit held in early 1985, and contacted Nayanābhirāma dāsa to fashion similar garlands for this event.

"The garlands are true works of art and are fitting for the museum," Sethi said.

Among the dignitaries present were Indian Ambassador Bajpai, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (former U.S. Ambas-

sador to India), New York Philharmonic Orchestra Director Zubin Mehta and his wife, and dowager curator Dr. Stella Kramrisch of the Philadelphia Museum of Art's India Collection.

Dr. Kramrisch invited the devotees for a private viewing of her extensive collection. Her late husband is supposed to have once met Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master.

Other prominent personalities at The Golden Eye included members of the Kennedy family, who make frequent trips to India (including Vṛndāvana—Kṛṣṇa's birthplace), and who helped bring the exhibit to New York.

Since there weren't enough garlands to go around, everyone wanted a turn wearing them, or at least a chance to sniff one.



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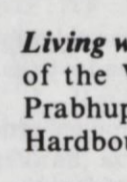
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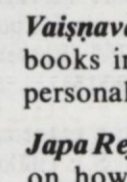
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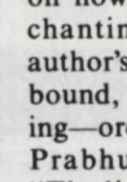
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Vaiṣṇava Calendar

January

21 Ekādaśī (fast from grains and beans)
22 App. Śrīla Jagadīśa Paṇḍita
25 Full moon; Puṣyābhīṣeka Lord Kṛṣṇa
30 App. Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī

February

2 Dis. Śrīla Locana dāsa Ṭhākura
5 Ekādaśī (fast from grains and beans)
12 App. Śrīla Pañcadraviḍa Swami
Tridaṇḍipāda (disciples fast)
13 Śrīla Kṛṣṇa-vasanta-pañcamī; app. Śrīla Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi; app. Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī; app. Śrīla Raghunandana Ṭhākura; app. Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā-devī; dis. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura; Sarasvatī-pūjā
16 App. Advaita Ācārya (fast till noon)
18 Dis. Śrīpāda Madhvācārya
19 Dis. Śrīla Rāmānujācārya

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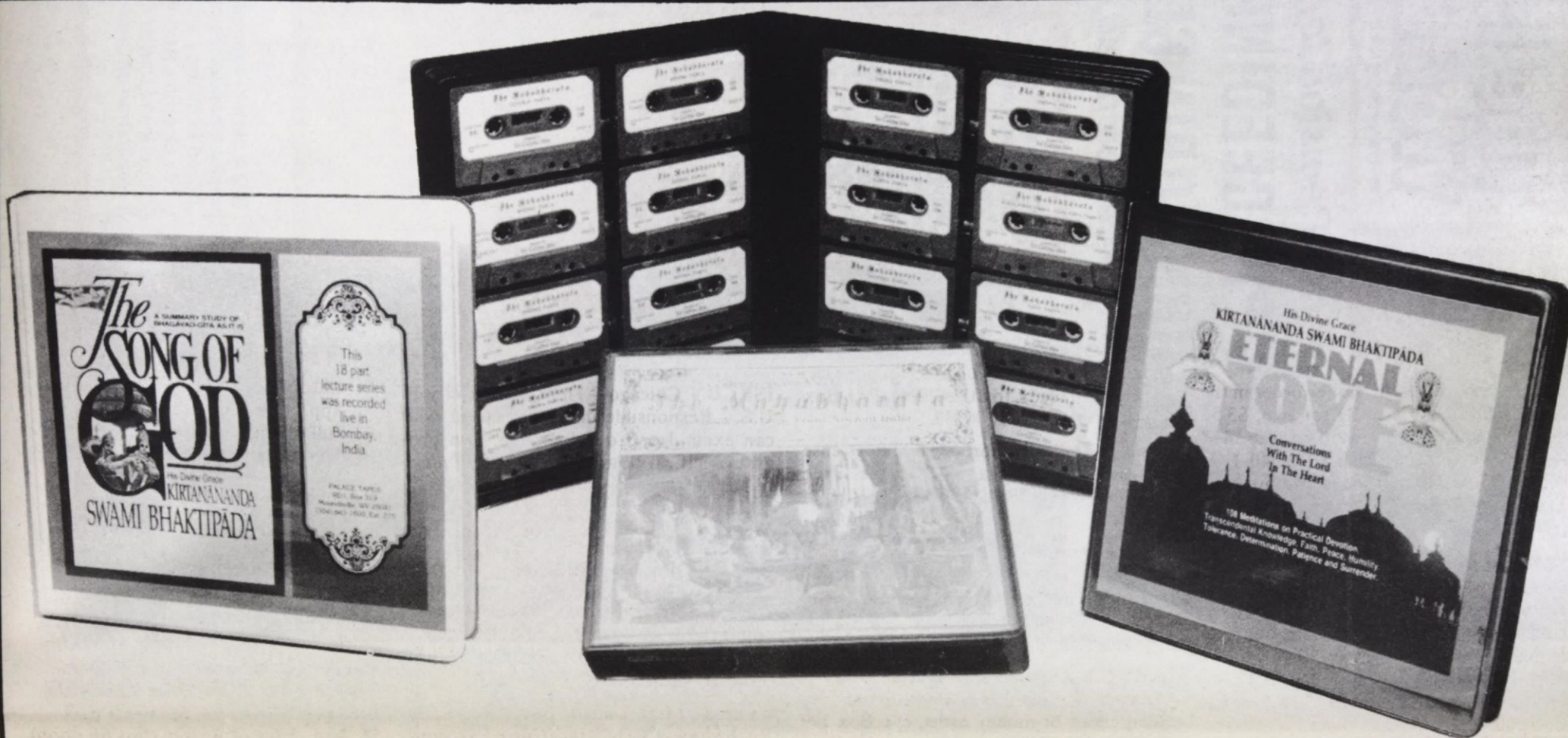
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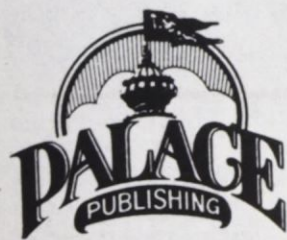
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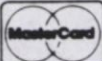

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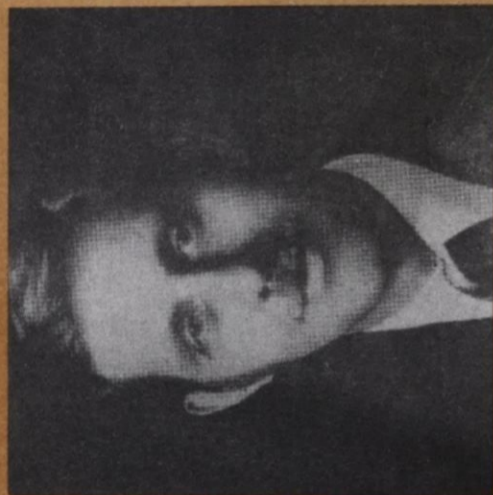
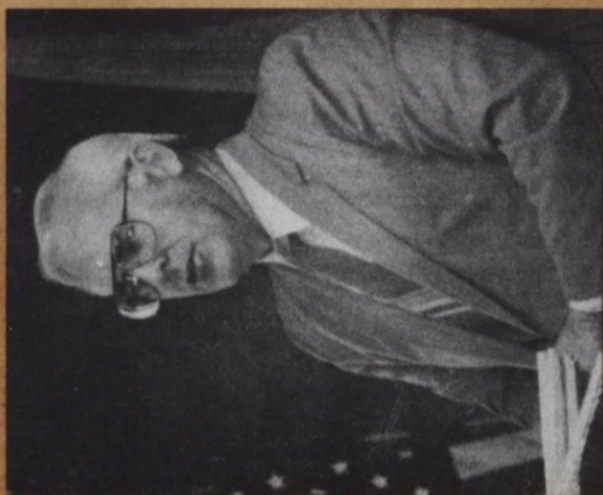
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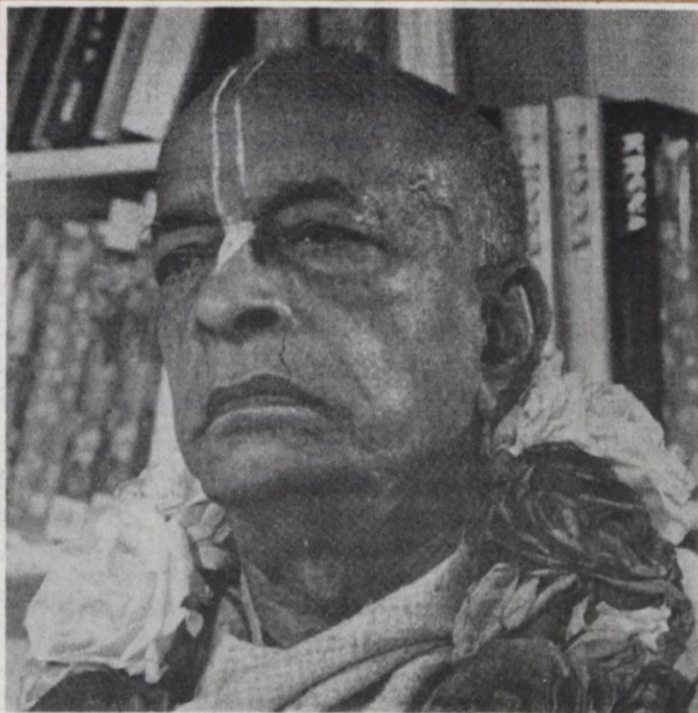


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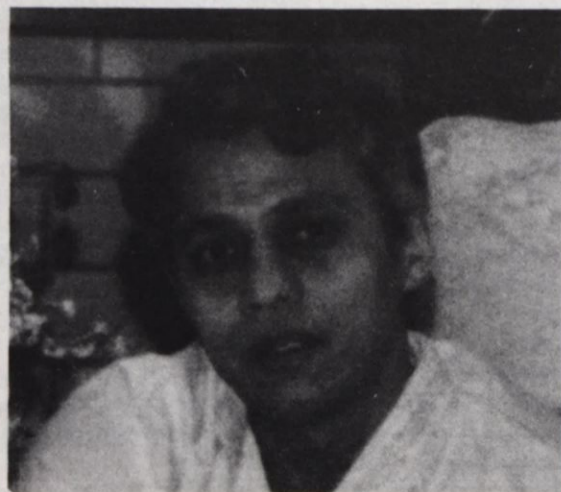
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