

# Why we home schooled our children?

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When my two sons, Radhika Raman and Gopal Hari, turned five I enrolled them in a private school, hoping for wonderful results. They studied there for the first two years of their schooling. Besides looking after their academic education, I really wanted to train them to be good devotees. I wanted to read them stories from the Krishna book and Srimad Bhagavatam and teach them how to play mrdanga. I thought I would do these things after they came home from school. But very soon I was disappointed because I realized that there was no time. When they came home they were tired and it was difficult to get them into a devotional frame of mind. Also I had to spend so much time undoing what they had already learnt in school. Gopal once told me how his class teacher, out of frustration, had spent the entire day talking about good behavior because some children were misbehaved and disruptive. So much time was wasted. Good behavior and character come from being God-conscious. Krishna sets our values and standards through the scriptures and examples of saintly persons. Public and private schools are secular institutions where any talk of spirituality is discouraged. This is not a healthy environment for our children. When Gopal was in kindergarten, he had a young teacher whose boyfriend would come to class and they would openly kiss in front of the children. She also did not check his classmates when they teased him about his shikha and his lunch menu, which was generally chapattis and subji. He was mortified but she would not take any action. In this school the teachers would heat all the lunches in the microwave before handing them out to the students. One time accidentally the teacher exchanged the contents of another box with the contents in Radhika Raman's lunch box. He found himself biting into chicken legs instead of broccoli pakoras that I had packed for him. Fortunately he spit it out before swallowing it, finding the taste rather strange since he had never had meat in his life. I once went to sit in Radhika Raman's math class. I noticed how he had finished his math work before everyone else and was sitting bored with nothing to do. The teacher had 20 students and she could not spend time with him individually to challenge him further. Most schools cater to the needs of the average students. If the child is above average he is bored and if he is below average he is frustrated. These are just a few reasons why we decided to home school our children. Prabhupada said that children who are born into devotee families are not ordinary children and they should be given great care. These children are very fortunate. Even those of us who were born in India and brought up in nice vegetarian families with Vedic

culture and habits, did not have the good fortune of hearing the holy name and Krishna katha from the day we were born. Taking birth in a family of devotees means that the children have done some devotional service in their past life and are here to finish their work and go back to Godhead. So if we neglect this important aspect and don't give them the proper training in which they can advance to the topmost level, they can easily fall back. Birth alone will not save them from taking another body or help them to go back to Godhead. The purpose of education is to understand who God is, who we are, what is the nature of this material world, and our relationship with Him. This body belongs to Krishna and the purpose of life is to use the body in His service and to recover our lost relationship with Him. When Lord Caitanya asked Ramananda Raya what the highest standard of education is, Ramananda Raya replied that the highest standard of education is knowledge of the science of Krishna. In a society where there is no philosophy of God consciousness there are no values. For example we see that today in the name of material advancement there is no protection of women, children, old people, cows, animals and no respect for brahminical culture. Day by day there is an increase of crime and all kinds of mental and physical diseases. Material education aims at sense gratification--how to live and enjoy this material world. This may be immediately beneficial, but spiritual education aims at enjoyment in its pure form in our relationship with Krishna. It is both immediately and ultimately beneficial and auspicious. Therefore, as parents we should also take care of our child's spiritual needs and protect them from this cycle of birth and death. Homeschooling can be a very nice way of giving our children the atmosphere and training they need to lead a life of service to Krishna.