

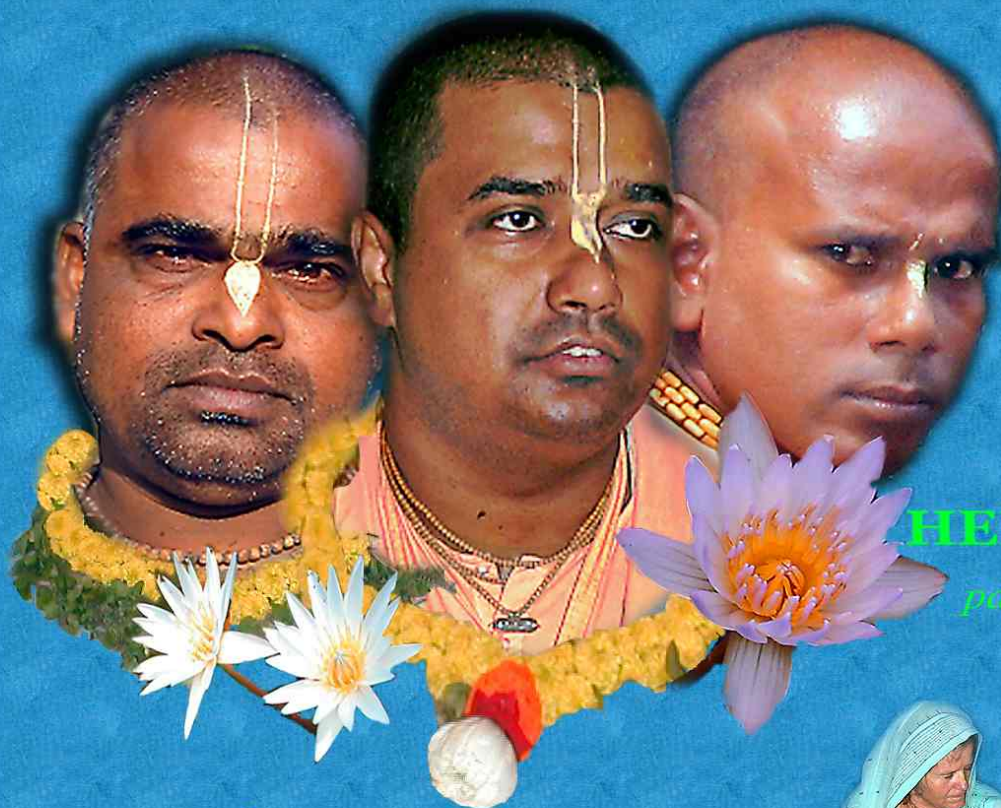
A NEWSLETTER FOR THE
RESIDENTS OF ISKCON MAYAPUR

Mayapur Katha

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

VOL. 6 NO 4

FOUNDER-ACHARYA HIS DIVINE GRACE A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA



HEROES

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Looking to the future...



*Chanting
of Holy Name
is increasing
in Mayapur*

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*Will
Queen of England
visit Mayapur?*

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... our cows ... page 19

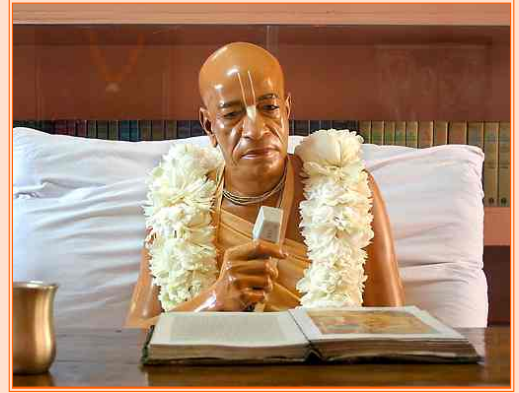


Prabhupada Vani

It is said in the sastras that by once uttering the holy name of the Lord, the sinner gets rid of a quantity of sins that he is unable to commit.

Such is the power of uttering the holy name of the Lord. There is not the least exaggeration in this statement. Actually the Lord's holy name has such powerful potency. But there is a quality to such utterances also. It depends on the quality of feeling. A helpless man can feelingly utter the holy name of the Lord, whereas a man who utters the same holy name in great material satisfaction cannot be so sincere.

[SB 1.8.26 Purport]



Anyone who cannot collect money, they should go to Mayapur and live there and simply eat and sleep, like women and widows. I shall arrange for their eating and sleeping. But in cities, those should live who can collect and earn. The widows are not earning in Hindu society, they eat and sleep at other's expense. So if you are not able to earn in Calcutta, better all go to Mayapur and eat and sleep and I shall accommodate all widows, women, and others at Mayapur and Vrindaban. Otherwise why should we maintain such large establishment in Calcutta simply for eating and sleeping and spending.

These two places will be reserved for those who cannot collect. For them I am making provision. Only the active members who can collect, they shall live in the city. Eating-sleeping members, they shall live in Mayapur, that's all.

[Letter to Bhavananda 14.6.1972]

My dear Jayapataka,

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated October 17, 1972, and the pleasure of my again spending some days in Vrindaban is only exceeded by the pleasure of hearing from you the good news of our

activities in Mayapur. I am very much encouraged to note the many signs of progress in the building work and other things. You are the best man for this task of being responsible for our world headquarters at Mayapur, thank you very much for helping me in this way.

Regarding the preparation of rice by steaming and then drying, we can offer such rice even it is twice-cooked. Gaudiya Math offers, even during the presence of Prabhupada it was done, so there is no wrong. It is called sidha. I never took sidha except in Gaudiya Math.

Now you have got one very nice Jersey cross-bred cow, so take care of her very nicely. Feed her nicely fodder and she will give more milk.

Never mind coming here, I shall come very soon to Mayapur and speak thrice times what I am speaking here. I am coming there soon to live with you, so do not be anxious.

Hoping this meets you in good health.

Your ever well-wisher, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

[Letter to Jayapataka 22.10.1972]

Mayapur Katha

is a facility for you to share your ideas, articles, suggestions, comments, realizations, concerns, etc, with the community of Vaisnavas. You are welcome to contact us.

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MK: Prabhu could you share with us your impressions of Mayapur during this visit?

Gauridas Prabhu: Actually I was living in Vrindavan for ten years - I had responsibility there and was completely committed to Vrindavan, above and beyond everything else. But, then the inspiration came to go back to the West for preaching. There was some discussion about being temple president of Bhaktivedanta Manor, in the UK, so I took up this position.

So, I got myself involved with preaching in the West again, I've been there now for over three years.

This time I was planning to go to India, and it was Radhastami during the time I'd be visiting, and obviously I thought that my natural choice would have been to spend Radhastami in Vrindavan, because I spent ten years there. I had ten consecutive Radhastamis in Vrindavan, and that's Radharani's place.

But something within me was just dragging me to Mayapur. Whether it was a consequence of my preaching in a new line, I just felt that I couldn't go to Vrindavan without going to Mayapur first, and preparing myself. But, then I thought I'm going to miss Radhastami in Vrindavan - because for the time I have I'll be in Mayapur for Radhastami. So, I thought - anyway, what to do, I will have to celebrate Radastami in Mayapur. And I was thinking it would be second best, but I thought 'what can I do'.

So, when I came the night before, we had this addivas ceremony they where singing beautiful songs by Vrindavan das Thakura of the adivas preparations for the worship of Radharani on Her appearance. They sing it so beautifully in Bengali and then on the altar they place Radha-Krishna on a most beautiful throne.

I sat there and I watched Jananivas Prabhu worshiping Radha-Madhava with that backdrop and I just felt, for how many more years will I be privileged to witness and to see Jananivas Prabhu worship Radha-Madhava.

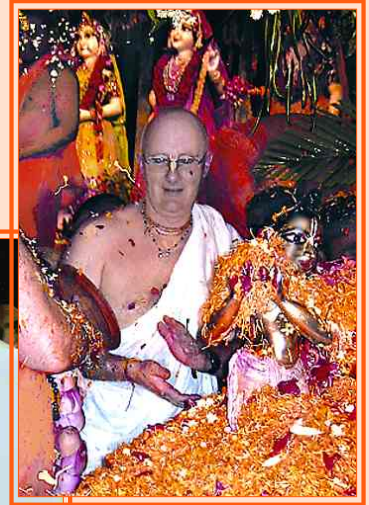
And then the next day in the celebration they were singing in padavali kirtan about Vrishabhanu Maharaj with great joy and the devotees were enacting the pastimes of Vrishabhanu Maharaj giving charity on the appearance of Radharani and then there was the most incredible abhishik . And I was invited to be part of that and it was one of the most moving experiences of my life.

'Mayapur Katha' interviews GAURIDAS PRABHU,

the temple president of Bhaktivedanta Manor, on his visit to Mayapur, for few days over Radhastami.



Gauri Prabhu with Queen of England



*interview by
Vrindavan Lila
Devi Dasi*

As I was bathing the Deities of Radha and Krishna on Radhastami, I was thinking, that so much I'd wanted to live in Vrindavan, so much I'd wanted to be in Vrindavan for Radhastami. But I thought by the grace of Srila Prabhupada I am simultaneously in Mayapur and Vrindavan at the same time.

And I thought if I was in Vrindavan, I would have been solely in Vrindavan at Radhastami. But, being in Mayapur and participating in the entire festivities - everyone's consciousness was in Vrindavan. Everyone was absorbed in the pastime of Radharani's birth and Vrishabhanu Maharaja's joy with such life and enthusiasm that I felt myself simultaneously in Vrindavan and Mayapur. And I thought that by being in Mayapur I got twice the benefit. And I felt within myself that whenever I will get the opportunity to celebrate Radhastami in India - for sure it will be in Mayapur.

I think that coming to Mayapur this time after sacrificing so much time and effort for service and preaching in London, I felt the greatest reciprocation. I just felt that Mayapur opens up with an incredible atmosphere of accommodation and hospitality. Practically - I was received at Kolkata station by the devotees, Vrajanatha Prabhu and his wife, who then very carefully and with attention led us to Mayapur, accommodated us, introduced us to devotees, arranged a lunch for us with most prominent vaishnavas in Mayapur, and practically continued to take care of us every moment while we were in Mayapur.

And we, as a family feel quite overwhelmed by the reception, by the mood of hospitality and by reciprocation of Radha-Madhava and Their devotees.

And since I came devotees had told me that Srila Prabhupada said that the deities within a Holy place take on the mood of that place. So, Radha-Madhava have taken the audarya mood of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and of Navadvip Dham. I just feel They are so accessible, They make themselves so accessible.

So, I think - seeing the administration, seeing the practical organisation, seeing the care of guests and seeing the beauty of the deity worship, the excitement of Namahatta preaching, the devotion of Namahatta congregation - there is just no other temple in the world like Sri Dham Mayapur. It is definitely Prabhupad's place of worship. And I think that devotees from all over the world can draw the greatest inspiration from visiting Mayapur.

MK: At the Manor you also have a very big congregation and preaching. How it compares with here?

G: Yes, we have huge preaching there. What are we preaching - the glories of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the glories of Mayapur Dhama, the glories of Krishna-chandra, the glories of Vrindavan.

And I believe, all these places are embassies of the spiritual world are not different from the spiritual world, but because of where they are situated and because of activities there is simply to give Krishna Consciousness to other people, it has a specific mood. We, devotees who are in other coun-

tries, where the principals of devotional service is practiced by so few - for us to come here and to feel welcome - Mayapur couldn't offer us more inspiration and encouragement than that - just to make us feel a part of the family and welcome.

MK: *How often do you come to Mayapur?*

G: Every one or two years.

MK: *At the festival time?*

G: Depends, there is no fixed time.

MK: *How old is your daughter?*

G: She is five. She loves Mayapur, cried buckets when leaving Mayapur, wanted to stay.

MK: *Was she born in Vrindavana?*

G: She was born in Vrindavana and lived there for two years.

MK: *Where's your wife from?*

G: She is from South Africa, Durban. She just completed a master's degree in banking and tax law.

MK: *O, she is not from India?*

G: No, she left everything and came to India, to Vrindavana. She is also a dedicated devotee of Vrindavana. And her experience of Mayapur has been incredible. She says "if we are going to live anywhere, we should live in Mayapur".

And that's a debate...(laughs).

MK: *How old are you as an ISKCON devotee?*

G: I joined twenty years ago in England. I was initiated by Tamala Krishna Maharaj.

MK: *Where are you originally from?*

G: I am from Scotland, I was a Horticultural student before I joined.

MK: *How did you join ISKCON?*

G: A friend at work gave me the science of self realisation.

MK: *What services you have been engaged over the years in ISKCON?*

G: Sankirtan, cooking, assisted Sivarama Swami, Life-membership, Gurukula

teacher in both UK and Vrindavan.

MK: *What specific direct involvement did you have, or still having now with Mayapur?*

G: We (Bhaktivedanta Manor) are sponsoring the food-for-life prasada at the Mayapur temple for the next year.

MK: *Bhaktivedanta Manor usually also contributes a lot for Mayapur festival. How is it happening?*

G: Actually, Bhaktivedanta Manor as a project is considered to be relatively quite successful in the world. We

want to invest in Vrindavan and Mayapur. Because these places are so important to us, and so important to our congregation - if we don't contribute to these projects, then what will we come to visit?

MK: *Are you going to build your embassy here?*

G: I don't think so. The mood of devotees in Britain is just to come here and to take shelter of whatever facility you can offer us.

MK: *You want to contribute to the general facility?*

G: I think so. Yes. You are running such good Guest Houses, I don't think there is any necessity for us to have a British House in Mayapur.

MK: *Was it Srila Prabhupada's idea, I heard some time ago that every yatra should have their 'embases' in Mayapur?*

G: If that was Prabhupada's desire, then we will do it.

MK: *You have not heard about it?*

G: No. I don't know. We have a real League of Nations here, worshipping Mahaprabhu under one roof.

MK: *It seems like a lot of devotees from England are coming here in general.*

G: Yes. Every devotee in UK is considering very substantially coming to Mayapur, and it's my recommendation. I re-altered all of our sankirtan devotees program that when they come to India they come in time for Mayapur festival.

MK: *I saw your photo on the Internet with the Queen of England. Is she interested in Hare Krishnas?*

G: No, she just was very cordial and invited all faith leaders of UK to Buckingham Palace, so I was invited along.

I shook her hand and expressed my appreciation that she is respecting all the faiths. Of course, it should be natural for the 'guardian of faith' to do so. She has a title 'guardian of faith'. In Britain they are pretty good, they do respect faiths, they want to make everyone feel very much part of the British fabric.

I also met with prince Charles last year. He was asking me specifically what was the special aspect of this faith that attracted me. And I expressed that the unalloyed, unconditional surrender of Caitanya Mahaprabhu - what He exemplified can not be found in any other faith of the world.

Such an embodiment of love for God. And that was the very special aspect of our tradition that won me over. He was very impressed, very impressed.

I also met later with the prime-minister of UK, Tony Blare, and I gave him a book of Srila Prabhupada's biography. He was very appreciative.

MK: *He was in some rock-group before, very much into Beatles. Did he appreciate Prabhupada from the aspect of His connection with Beatles?*

G: He was a band-manager. Nothing like that was mentioned. He just said that he deeply appreciates our work and he felt that we were seriously contributing to the social culture in a positive way in UK. He felt that we are not only living a very good life ourselves, but we were contributing goodness to the British community with our values and with our principals of living. He was very appreciative.

MK: *Are any of them going to come to Mayapur for a visit?*

G: Actually, I am trying to arrange and encourage some of our members of parliament to come here. Also some people from the House of Lords are interested. So, we will see what the picture holds.

MK: *What are their names?*

G: May be I better don't mention them. They may feel...

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura said that one day the judges will wear tilak. Right now, the vice-chair man of the British Law Society is a devotee - Kamallesh Bal. One day she may be the Chair of the British Law Society. She is a devotee.

MK: *Is she an initiated devotee?*

G: Not yet. But every letter she writes and every speech she gives she introduces it by writing/saying :

**Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,
Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama
Rama, Hare Hare.**

MK: *Wonderful. I heard that Bhaktisidhanta Saraswati Thakur really wanted the King of England to come to Mayapur. Am I right? Did you hear about that?*

G: Maybe the Queen will come. If someone sends me a quote I can show it to the Queen next time I get the opportunity.

MK: *Thank you for your wonderful interview, Prabhu. Hare Krishna!*

DEVOTEES BRAVELY SAID NO TO THE FLOOD



Interview with the
General Manager,

**Sankarsan
Nitai Prabhu**
by
*Vrindavan Lila
Devi Dasi*



*Temple Comander, Kesava Prabhu,
supervising the work on
the sand bags*

MK: *It looked like it was going to flood, but it did not flood... So, what happened?*

Sankarsan Nitai Das:

The last Ekadasi, October 10, we received a water report that the Ganga's water level was increasing and it will be entering ISKCON Mayapur compound that night.

So, at around five PM with the temple commander, Kesava Prabhu, we started to arrange the sand bag's. We engaged many workers and many devotee's to fill up these sand bags so we could put them at the roadside to stop the water coming in.

We started the work at five o'clock in the evening. All the sand bags were filled up at about eight o'clock at night. I called many devotees, we also brought one tractor from the Goshala and Gourahari Prabhu was driving the tractor.

So, we took all the sand bags that were in front of the senior brahmachari ashrama, which is under construction. We took all the sand from there, and Mayapur project provided all the bags, so we could put in the sand. We took that sand to the road side, starting from near the Hulor-ghat, next to Gopinath Guaidya Math temple. We started to work from there. We put all sand bags at different places along road.

MK: *O! So, it is ISKCON put the sand bags all the way there?*

S: Yes, from there and all the way to the Hospital, Gour Nagar.

MK: *It was a long way!*

S: It's about one and half kilometres, but just in some places, it was not continuing line of sand bags. We put down about two thousand sandbags at different places.

The operation took place from 8 PM to 12 at mid-night on the Ekadasi. Then again, in the morning the water level was still increasing, so we had to put down more sand bags with the help of

labour and devotees from different departments.

We established sand bags at different places to increase the level, so that no water can come in, and then at around 5.30 pm, we started work again with all the devotees from bramachari ashram, because the water level was still increasing. So, we put more sand bags down - to make the level high to stop water coming in.

That was the second day.

We worked through-out that day, up until 11.30 PM and the next morning Kesava Prabhu did the work that was left over.

In the evening of that day we got a report that water from Jalangi was flowing in at the Taranpur side. Their sewage pit was over-flooded with water, there was seven feet of water and they had no lock on it. So we went around 5 PM next day, we stayed till 10 PM to stop the water coming in, we put down the sandbags. So, we worked for three days.

MK: *Was it along the Taranpur road?*

S: Not Taranpur road, behind Taranpur road there is suppose to be a lock-gate. At the place where water was leaking-in, water was to the level of seven feet, and there was no lock on the gate. For every gate there is supposed to be a lock. So, all the water was flooded and coming in.

MK: *All the sewerage was coming in?*

S: Yes, so devotees went there and tried to stop that water also.

That was from Jalangi, it was coming on Taranpur road. Jalangi water was coming in the gate.

MK: *Who's sewerage that was?*

S: It was local Panchaet's (village) sewerage, but they were not doing anything.

The people who are taking care of the forest, they gave the report that water was flowing in very rapidly, so we heard that we should stop that water because that may affect that side of our property. We went there with some devotees, around twenty devotees and ten labours, and stopped that water.

So, in that way we tried to manage. If it was not done the water would have come into Mayapur temple - maybe one and half or two feet of water would have been here.

MK: *And if Ganga had not been stopped how much water would have come into temple?*

S: Around one metre, up to the waist on a middle size person.

MK: *Thank you for saving us from this! Why so much water came?*

S: They released some water from the Dam.

MK: *Nothing else, nothing was broken?*

S: It was that some little Dam was broken also.

MK: *How many Dams up there that we depend on?*

S: Many. The closest main one is where water from Ajay River comes into Ganga and over-floods, near Katva.

MK: *How many devotees where working on sand bags?*

S: On Ekadasi Day about fifty and on the other three days around thirty to forty along with the workers also, and on the third day at Taranpur twenty devotees and ten labours.

On Ekadasi day we were really working hard, more then fifty devotees - from 5 o'clock up until 11.30-12 o'clock at night.

MK: *Why was it at night?*

S: Because we thought it might not increase, so we put one level of sand bag, but it increased, so we had to put another level of sandbags. We heard that it was going to stop, but it did not stop, the water level kept increasing, so we had to put more sandbags.

MK: *Was it increasing at night?*

S: No, it was increasing all the time, but it was reported at night, at five o'clock.

MK: *And who was reporting these things to you?*

S: Local administrator, sub-divisional officer.

MK: *They contact you or you contact them?*

S: I contact them, they contact me.

MK: *What is that division?*

S: Sub-division, it is different for every district.

Mayapur is in the district of Nadia. Nadia has different sub-divisions, so we are in Krishnagar sub-division. The head of the sub-division is the SDO, and he was giving the report.

MK: *And now, as of October 15, what is the water level?*

S: The water level has started decreasing as of yesterday. Slowly, slowly it is decreasing, so we are taking out the sand-bags.

MK: *But what if it will increase again!?*

S: It will not increase.

MK: *Other days it decrease and then increased again...*

S: Otherwise, if we don't take out the sand bags - they will steal it, the local people, it is not so expensive, but it is expensive.

MK: *But are you sure that water will not increase?*

S: We are not taking sand bags out at the coast of the flood, but only the extra ones.

MK: *And if some more rain comes?*

S: Very difficult to say, but we are thinking it is safe, no more is there.

MK: *Are they releasing the Dam regularly or is it just because there is too much water?*

S: The rain is there on the North part of the State, it is coming in, and it puts pressure on different Dams, and then they release the water.

MK: *Now is rainy season not completely stopped.*

S: This water rise is stopped, but still, it is happening in different places.

MK: *From which department devotees were taken for this service?*

S: Many departments - Temple Commander department, Central department, from Sankirtan, from Goshala, from Life-member Guesthouse, from all departments. Mainly those, who staying in brahmachari asram and Sankirtan bhavan, and also very few Guest House devotees (3-4) were there.

Kesava Prabhu, the Temple Commander, was the real man, working really hard. Also Gourahari Prabhu, the Gosala in-charge, was working really hard. These were two main persons behind this work, also Chandra Shyam Prabhu, our security man, I was there through these days also.

MK: *Do you want to name more devotees?*

S: It was work for 24-hours, mostly Brahmachari ashram and Sankirtan bhavan and also Guesthouse Devotee's, very few were engaged.

..If I name one, the others will be upset - all the devotee's were really working hard.

Sundar Govinda Prabhu was taking photos and sending to www.mayapur.info along with your's.

MK: *OK. Hare Krishna, Prabhu. Thank you for saving all of us from the disaster of flood! u*



Goura Hari Prabhu



Double level of sand bags on the main road



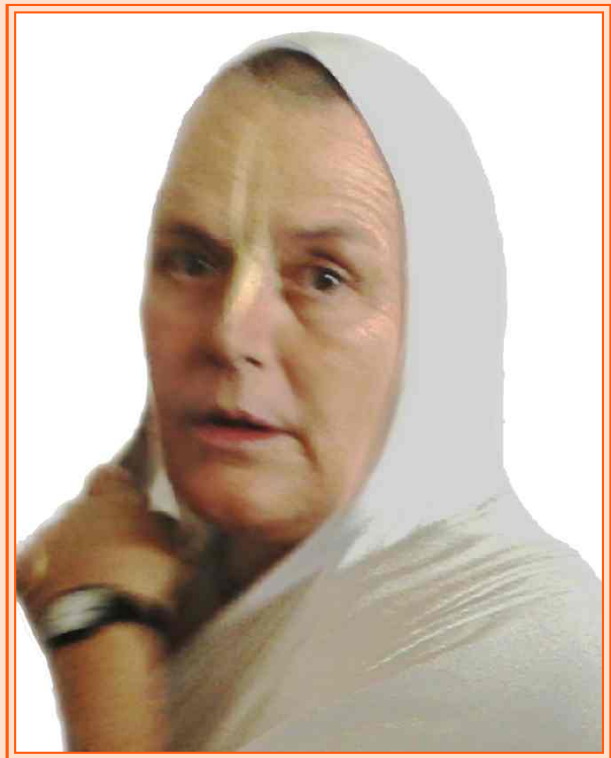
Sand-bags on the main road



Life of Surrender

Interview with *Srimati Devi Dasi*

by Vrindavan Lila Devi Dasi



MK: *When did you join ISKCON? Was it easy to become a devotee? Who helped you to become and stay a devotee?*

Srimati Mataji: By the mercy of Bhavananda Prabhu and the potency of Srila Prabhupada's books, I joined ISKCON in Australia, in 1981.

I was initiated into astanga-yoga and was a serious practitioner and so the austerities of devotional service were very easy for me. However, I had some serious misconceptions about what spiritual life meant, and that made my early life as a devotee difficult mentally. I could not relate to the opulence of Prasad, I could not relate to selling candles and T-shirts as a spiritual activity.

So many things challenged my convictions as a spiritual practitioner and that did not make my early days as a devotee easy. Luckily, Bhavananda Prabhu gave me a lot of attention and mercy. And Kurma Prabhu took the time to teach me key slokas and bhajans and answer my many questions. I am eternally indebted to both these wonderful devotees.

MK: *When and how you first heard about Mayapur? And what was your service before you came to Mayapur?*

S: Bhavananda Prabhu spoke to me a lot about Mayapur and I read about it in Caitanya Caritamrta, also my primary service in Australia was mass book distribution and full set distribution. I felt spontaneously attracted to Mayapur, the heart of Gauracandra's sankirtan movement.

MK: *When did you first come to Mayapur and how you decide to stay here?*

S: I first visited Mayapur in 1982 and immediately felt that it was my real home.

MK: *Tell us a little about getting accepted as part of the Mayapur scene (by the residents of that time, the managers, establishing service, etc)*

S: In early 1984, my Guru Maharaja and the

Australian GBC decided that I should start a girl's gurukula in Mayapur. I arrived in Mayapur by the mercy of their instruction on Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura's Appearance day 1984 to live and to serve here. While I was teaching, being accepted in Mayapur was not a problem. Bhavananda Prabhu and Jayapataka Maharaja were the most influential devotees in Mayapur at that time and both were very much wanting the project, and supportive of it.

I still remember how much pleasure it gave Jayapataka Maharaja to hear the girls chant Srimad Bhagavatam slokas. Whenever he gave Srimad Bhagavatam class he would make it a point to ask the girls to chant the sloka.

MK: *How was Mayapur then? (Environment, facility, association, guidance, easy-difficult things)*

S: In those days the environment was much simpler. It was mainly open fields; there were a lot less buildings both within and without ISKCON Mayapur. I was living with the girls on the first floor of the Cakra building. Bhavananda Prabhu gave us quite a large portion of the building for school purposes, and so life was quite easy and protected physically.

My main association and guidance on a day to day basis in those days was Didima, Jananivas and Pankajangri Prabhu's. Radha-Madhava's altar was where Srila Prabhupada's Vyasasana is now, and life seemed a lot sweeter and more personal then. I have so many fond memories of rendering very personal service to Sri Sri Radha-Madhava and being right in front of the Deities watching Jananivas Prabhu make the last finishing touches to Their srngara, I remember Pankajangri Prabhu when Prahlada-Nrisimha Deva first came, coming up to me and asking me to make an angry face. He was trying to work out where to put the chandan lines so that our Ugra Nrisimhadeva would look angry. But he was never successful - our Nrisimha Deva likes to smile at His devotees.

Mayapur was very much of a family in those days. There were not so many devotees, and most who lived here were Bengali.

The preaching on campus was not so developed and the number of visiting guests was much, much less. We were very much in our own company, and that added to the family mood. There were only two GBC's in Mayapur at that time - Bhavananda Prabhu and Jayapataka Maharaja. They were both personally trained by Srila Prabhupada for Mayapur seva and they lived just like brothers. Although they were very, very different people, they made a very good team.

We used to call Bhavananda Prabhu "The father of Mayapur" - he dutifully brought in all the Laksmi to develop Prabhupada's Mayapur and he was very strict in keeping Prabhupada's high standards.

Jayapataka Maharaja we called "The mother of Mayapur". He was always so concerned and caring in his dealings with us, just like Bengali mother. I have very strong and sweet memories of these early days in Mayapur.

MK: *What dreams did you have when you came to Mayapur and how did they evolve into reality over the years you served in Mayapur?*

S: I came to Mayapur on the instruction of my Guru Maharaja and my GBC authority. I really did not have any "dreams" when I came.

MK: *Please recount all the service you were engaged in here over the years and which one was your favorite?*

S: We did a lot of spontaneous service, especially in the areas of Deity and guest seva, but our designated services were:

- 1 - managing and teaching in the girl's gurukula;
- 2 - teaching in the boy's gurukula;
- 3 - Hari Nama preaching.

I relished all of these services and learned a lot from all of them. However, serving Nama was, and still is my favorite service, Nama is definitely the most merciful master.

MK: *What moved you to change services?*

S: The girl's gurukula closed and Bhavananda Prabhu made arrangements for me to stay in Mayapur and teach in the boy's gurukula. When he was removed from his guru and GBC seva, I was heart broken, especially by the way he was dealt with at that time.

I decided that I would begin preaching again, and offer all the results of this to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu daily for Bhavananda Prabhu's spiritual protection and nourishment and his reinstatement in Prabhupada's mission as a devotee in good standing. He saved me from the jaws of Kali Yuga and he was always encouraging me in my sadhana and preaching. I felt it was the very least I could do to help him spiritually in his time of difficulty and trials.

MK: *Do you want to share with us any special memories, realizations, visions, hopes, experiences, which you had while living in Mayapur?*

S: Mayapur is a very amazing place. My whole being has been shaped by my time living in Mayapur. Everyday is a special day here. Here we are all living under the big umbrella of Prabhupada's mercy. How fortunate one is to live in Prabhupada's Mayapur. I have limitless memories and realizations I could share. But for now I will just share two memories - one (a) from the devotee perspective and another one (b) from the preaching perspective.

a) There was a big flood in Mayapur. Jayapataka Maharaja would always come back at that time and head up the "Food-for-life" flood relief. This time he arrived at the stairs of the Lotus Building by boat and went upstairs to take bath. He soon came downstairs again, effulgent as ever and dressed in fresh, well ironed silk cloth. He got back into a boat and asked to be taken to Radha-Madhava temple (Pancha Tattva were not in Mayapur at this time). He stepped out of the boat onto the raised area in front of Radha Madhava. It was covered with about 12" of water. He looked

very lovingly at Radha Madhava for a long time and then paid his full dandavats in the water. I learnt from this that true love knows no limits!

b) Once, when I was preaching in the park, a young Indian couple came and began joking about what I was doing. They were both dressed in western cloth. The man in tie and suit, the woman in a tight ribbed jumper and miniskirt. Her shoes were dangerously high ones. I could not understand how she could walk in such shoes. Anyway, I tolerated their joking for a while, but then felt to try and encourage them to at least once chant the Holy Name. I chanted with them for a while and their mood softened a little, I then asked the man his title and he proudly replied that he was a Chakravarty.

I took him by his tie, "What! Your title is Chakravarti, and you are joking and criticizing the Yuga Dharma! You should be ashamed of yourself! If you are truly a Chakravarti then you have to chant the Holy Name. Now!" The man sheepishly repeated the Panchatattva Mahamantra and Hare Krishna Mahamantra after me and then began chanting on the steps.

His wife stepped out of her high shoes and submissively followed in his footsteps.

I then went to encourage other guests to chant. But then I heard a verse from one of my favorite chapters from Caitanya Caritamrta, chapter seven: I looked up to see the man in the suit, with his hands and head on Caitanya Mahaprabhu's lotus feet chanting Caitanya Caritamrta. Then he broke down and wept uncontrollably for some time. Eventually he took a set of beads and a mantra card, and promised he would try to chant everyday. Nama is such a powerful and penetrating person!

MK: *Please tell us in detail how the idea of the Hari Nama Parikrama developed, who was involved, how it was supported.*

S: When I first began preaching the glories of the Holy Name I was going alone to different villages in the Dhama asking people to chant and accept mahaprasad. In celebration of

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's 500th birth anniversary, devotees from all over the world retraced His divine steps throughout India, chanting the Holy Name along the way. This Nama-parikrama finished in Sri Dhama Mayapur and a monument with Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's lotus feet was placed in the park as a memorial of the event. Jayapataka Maharaja placed 108 steps around the monument and had some brahmacari's try and encourage guests to chant the Holy Name on each of those steps leading to the lotus feet of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

It did not prove very successful, but Jayapataka Maharaja noticed that my Nama preaching in the villages was very successful. He invited me to take responsibility for the Hari Nama Parikrama project. It was such a wonderful opportunity to glorify and please Nama that I just could not refuse it.

We began the service alone, but it was quite a challenge. Then Nama sent some very special devotees to help - Prema Manjari Devi Dasi, and Radhapriya Devi Dasi both of these devotees went through incredible austerities in their efforts to selflessly serve the Holy Name.

Bhakti Caru Maharaja also offered very strong moral support as well as financial help.

We later on arrange a scholarship scheme in co-operation with the Bhaktivinoda Thakura School near the Yoga Pitta. A very wonderful Dhambasi called Tarun Ghosh was instrumental in making this possible.

We held an entrance exam in the auditorium of Srila Prabhupada's Samadhi and over 45 young men applied. We choose 5 of these men to help us with the HNP preaching. They had the responsibility of chanting four rounds a day, reading Srila Prabhupada's Gita daily, attending 2 classes weekly and helping with the park preaching.

We took on the responsibility of helping them with their study expenses, and teaching them Krishna Consciousness and English.

It worked very well, and had a big influence on these young men. MAC

also gave us great help by giving brahmacari's for the service, as well as paying for the mahaprasad distributed. This initiative was taken by Bhakti Purusottam Maharaja and Dayaram Prabhu and I am eternally indebted to both of them for the very positive and practical support they gave the HNP (Hari Nama Parikrama) preaching.

One special feature of this department was that although I took responsibility for paying the monthly Prasad costs of the devotees, and collected for all the printing costs and sound system and construction work, the brahmacari's must meet all their other needs through book distribution and they are still doing that. It has made them very strong and steady in their Krishna Consciousness.

Even though I handed over the department to Bhakti Purusottama Maharaja over three years ago, the same devotees are still faithfully serving Nama Prabhu. I pay my most humble obeisances to them all.

MK: *If possible, please tell us how you have been supporting yourself all these years?*

S: For me, sastra is not just for reading and preaching. It's for living. Srila Prabhupada and our Acharya's consistently tell us that if we are sincerely trying to become Krishna Conscious and we are seriously serving their mission, we don't have to worry about keeping body and soul together. Krishna will provide everything. And that is my experience.

Of course, life isn't always a bed of roses, but even when I've faced difficulties, Prabhupada's purports always gave me the insight and strength to deal with them. At one time I wasn't even able to regularly honor Prasad, finances were so bad. But Srila Prabhupada told me through his purports that Mayapur is so powerful that one can live just by breathing the air, that the brahmana can be satisfied just by drinking a glass of water. It just takes practice; there is no scarcity in the world only human mismanagement. I believed what he said

and live by it, and I'm still alive to talk about it. We can choose to depend on Krishna or the material energy. I choose to depend on Krishna, and I don't regret it.

MK: *What advice would you give to:*
(a) *Someone visiting Mayapur for sometime,*

(b) *Someone checking out if they can stay in Mayapur or not,*

(c) *Someone who has come here with a desire to stay and serve, no matter what happens?*

S: (a) if someone is visiting Mayapur for sometime:

-Make sure you go to the full morning program and sandhya artik. It offers so much nourishment and strength. Kirtan is the key.

-Chant and pray before the deities and at the Samadhi's and Bhajan Kutir's of our previous Acharya's

-Live on mahaprasadam if you can, and take bath in Ganga as often as possible.

-Hear and learn from the senior and sincere devotees you meet during the visit.

-Carefully avoid the 10 offences to the Holy Name, and to the holy Dhama, so that the benefit of doing all of the above is not lost.

(b) if someone is checking out if they can stay in Mayapur or not:

-Chant and pray to Srila Prabhupada, the previous Acharya's and Panchatattva for their permission, vision and strength to live and serve in Mayapur Dhama without offence.

-Find a resident of the Dhama who has a similar mentality and situation to you and seriously discuss the advantages and disadvantages of living in ISKCON Mayapur.

-Check very carefully whether the facilities needed for you to peacefully and steadily practice Krishna Consciousness are available here. Whether you and your family will be able to cope with the weather.

-Check whether there is a service available for you that would keep you enlivened, happy and satisfied.

-Check whether there are seniors here whom you feel you could trust and depend upon in time of difficul-

ty and challenge.

(c) if someone come here with a desire to stay and serve, no matter what happens:

-Come with the conviction that the holy Dhama is Mahaprabhu's training ground, and that everything that happens here is happening under the shelter of Yoga Maya and for your benefit.

-Come prepared to accept only gurudeva, Prabhupada and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu as your protection and maintenance. Live a life of prayer and active service, dependent on them.

-be very careful to avoid the ten offences to the Holy Name and the holy Dhama.

-be aware of the four classes of the anarthas that disturb our sadhana and service and be convinced that all the contamination in our heart can be destroyed by the Holy Name.

-In particular, avoid that anartha called weakness of heart. It manifests as attachment to things other than Krishna, politicking, holding grudges against, and seeking recognition and position as a devotee.

-And most important of all take full shelter of Srila Prabhupada's process and teachings. A true follower of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu accepts the Holy Nama, Bhagavad Gita, and Srimad Bhagavatam as his life and soul.

-Make sure everything is in order with MAC+FRO. Deal responsibly.

MK: *Why did you move to Vrindavana?*

S: I think it's more a matter of who made me move to Vrindavana.

I was and am so attached to Mayapur Dhama, and the deities and devotees here that only God himself could have forced me out - and that's what He did. Srila Prabhupada and Sri Caitanya decided it was time for me to move to Vrindavana. It was their decision, not mine. But they always know best.

If I had had the second stroke in Mayapur, I would not have survived it. Or if I had, I would have been paralyzed and a burden on the devotee community.

MK: *How is your health doing at the*

moment?

S: It's not good. I had another brain seizure on September 1. However, I am beginning to understand that Mahaprabhu is using this illness to rapidly increase my Krishna Consciousness and my dependence on Him. He is preparing me for a successful death. I am a slow learner, and so He has given me three practice runs in 2 years. It's been a really intensive learning and growing experience, and I am grateful to Him for that.

MK: *How does living in Vrindavan compare with living in Mayapur?*

(a) *Spiritually?*

(b) *Socially?*

(c) *Facility wise?*

S: I don't live in Vrindavan. I live in Prabhupada's Vrindavana-MVT. And that is close to exceptional on every level, thanks to the Krishna Consciousness, dedication and hard work of Dhananjaya Prabhu and his family.

However, if we look at Vrindavana in general, Mayapur is far more favorable spiritually, socially and in terms of facility.

Vrindavana is very rapidly and heavily being covered.

MK: *What are you doing in Vrindavana?*

S: I chant a lot for Nama's mission and preachers. I am working very hard to become Krishna Conscious, because I am not sure how much time I have.

Vrindavana is a very intense place and it is plagued by so much deviation.

For some reason, I am seen as a steady and a fixed up devotee and so many devotees come to me with their problems and doubts. I see this as an essential service.

Many of the Goswami's and the historical deities of Vrindavan are very badly neglected. We are developing a team to take care of their basic needs.

At present winter sets are being made for deities in Vrindavan, Gorvardhana and Radha Kund.

When groups of visiting devotees come to Vrindavan, I am often invited to give seminars or work-

shops. This is truly Their mercy upon me.

MK: *Given your years of experience here, what advice would you offer to the Mayapur devotees on how to develop a more stable and workable community here?*

S: Remember that these are only spiritual solutions to our material problems. Become convinced that all the answers to life's challenges can be found in the pages of Srila Prabhupada's books, and by taking shelter of gurudeva, and the Holy Name. Bring your consciousness, desires and life into harmony with Srila Prabhupad and Mahaprabhu in this way.

When you harmonize with them you will naturally be in harmony with yourself, your environment and the devotees around you.

MK: *Please name all the devotees who have helped you in on your spiritual path.*

S: That's impossible! So many devotees have helped me in so many ways over so many years. I will only mention those who have been an exceptional source of nourishment, inspiration and support - Bhavananda Prabhu, Hrikesha Prabhu, Bhakti Charu Maharaj, Bhaktividya Purna Maharaj, Jananivas Prabhu and first and foremost - Srila Prabhupada.

MK: *Is there any especially memorable devotional relationship you would like to tell us about?*

S: I have had the good fortune to develop relationships with many advanced and merciful devotees. But I think the relationship that touched my heart the deepest was my dealing with Bhakti Caru Maharaj. The compassion he selflessly showered upon me was very personal and his practical ways was so torrential, it was over powering.

I think the reason he touched me so deeply at soul level, is that he so perfectly embodies the culture of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. What the soul is crying for, he is able to give so spontaneously and sweetly. I guess that's why Prabhupad called him "Bhakti Caru Maharaj". When I was on my deathbed in September 2003,

he wrote such an incredible letter that it empowered me to live for sometime more in the service of Srila Prabhupada. He is truly an exceptional vaisnava.

MK: *Is there any special experience you have had - where you have been the one to help, to guide another on the devotional path?*

S: One of the greatest gifts Mahaprabhu gave me was the opportunity to train and serve with Bengali brahmachari's dedicated to Prabhupada's mission. Raghunatha Das Goswami explains that Mahaprabhu saw Bengali's as his countrymen in this world. After working closely with devotees born in Gaudiya culture and tradition, I can understand why he said that. I grew so much as a spiritual personality from this experience, although externally I was seen as their teacher and authority.

MK: *What things most concern you these days, and what makes you most happy?*

S: Srila Bhaktisidhanta Saraswati Thakur tells us that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's desire manifest in this world as the mission of the Acharya. It most concerns me when devotees do not fully take shelter of Srila Prabhupad's teachings and process or are not trained properly. This hurts not only them as individuals but also Srila Prabhupad's ISKCON.

What makes me most happy is to see devotees blissfully absorbed in the congregational chanting of the Holy Name especially, here in Mayapur. Just by chanting and dancing in Sandhya-aratik kirtan here you are benefiting the whole planet. It's such an amazingly powerful way to grow personally and be compassionate to others.

MK: *What is your prediction, advice/warning/opinion about the future development of Mayapur?*

S: Transcendental development of Mayapur as a spiritual city can only happen if the resident's devotees make the mission of Srila Prabhupada and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu their life and soul. For example, Prabhupada tells us in his preface in Bhagavad Gita that "our

Krishna consciousness movement is genuine, historically authorized, natural and transcendental due to being based on "Bhagavad Gita as it is."

How many of us read Gita daily? How many of us are trying to live its teaching? If we are not, can we really call ourselves followers of Prabhupada, members of ISKCON? This is a very big subject, but I feel this simple example may give some insight into how we can best begin to deal with it.

MK: *What do you consider to be the most important to develop in the future in Mayapur?*

S: Our Krishna Consciousness. Every sincere devotee living in ISKCON Mayapur needs to take very seriously the responsibility to become Krishna Conscious.

This will have an incredibly powerful affect not only on the individual and the Mayapur Project, but also on the whole planet. It will please Prabhupada and Mahaprabhu so much, and then by their mercy things will really start to develop on the external plane here.

MK: *Do you believe you will see the Adbhuta Mandir in your life time?*

S: I am not really a good person to ask this question. It doesn't look like I have much more time in this embodiment.

MK: *What do you think will boost the most enthusiasm in devotees for building the Adbhuta Mandir?*

S: Transcendental enthusiasm is a symptom of being in harmony with Krishna's desires and mood. Such harmony is a symptom of purity of heart, and in this age purity of heart comes from Nama Sankirtana - *cheto-darpana-marjanam...*

The more we take shelter of the Holy Name and engage in chanting the Holy Name - both individually and as a society - the more Srila Prabhupada, the Acharya's and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu will be pleased. And the more they are pleased with us the more they will shower their mercy upon us. That mercy will manifest as the empowerment to build the Adbhuta Mandir.

MK: *You have come to Mayapur after a long time - do you see any changes here, besides the appearance of big Pancha-tattva?*

S: The changes I see are subtle ones, but they are very powerful.

When Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu advents, the Holy Name also appears. Since the installation of Pancha-tattva here, Nama seems a lot more present and this is having a very wonderful affect on the devotee's hearts and their dealings with each other. I am seeing things here that I haven't seen before, and it is a great source of joy for me.

I went to Sat Sevaka Prabhu's shop to buy some subji one afternoon - he was showing a guest how to chant on japa mala.

I went to the temple to chant before the Deities during devotee's breakfast prasada time - Prana Vallabha Prabhu was playing harmonium and chanting his heart out for the pleasure of Sri Sri Radha-Madhava.

I went to noon arotik in Srila Prabhupada's Samadhi and was delighted to see Saranya Mataji playing harmonium and singing the Holy Name for Prabhupada's pleasure.

I have also heard that MAC has passed a wonderful resolution that all residents of ISKCON Mayapur must chant together in the temple for one hour after mangala arotik, regardless of position or status.

All this is the beginning of a revolution!

Hearts are being transformed. And the more they transform, the more Mahaprabhu will reveal and actualize His plans for ISKCON Mayapur.

I have also noticed a marked increase in the service mood here. I first became aware of it when I was corresponding with Naru Gopal Prabhu and his Guest House team about accommodation during my stay here. I thought it was just the result of Naru's cultured nature and his good training of his boys. However, during my stay I have come to understanding that it is a general maturing of the devotee's consciousness here. It really has

been a great pleasure to associate and deal with the Mayapur devotees this trip.

There is also a marked increase in devotees visiting from foreign lands. When I was here it was very rare for a group to visit Mayapur during the monsoon season. But during my recent time here - large groups from China, England, Hungary and Bangalore (India) have braved the rains to get Pancha-tattva's mercy. Such visits make a very enthusing and enlivening impact on the hearts of the resident devotees and visa-versa. This interaction has a lot to do with radical transformation of hearts and expansion of consciousness. Bhaktivinoda Thakur predicted it and Srila Prabhupada is making it a reality.

Jaya Srila Prabhupada!

MK: *Now the large Pancha-tattva deities are here. Some devotees are anticipating a lot of change because of this, and some are saying that the only change is that we have another set of deities now. What do you think of this?*

S: These Deities are very powerful, very present, and overwhelmingly merciful. But whether Their presence will mean changes depends on us. A blind man can not see even when the sun is high in the sky. Similarly, if devotees don't enter into a binding relationship of service with these Deities, they will not experience the inconceivable mercy They have come to distribute.

MK: *We are hearing that a lot of devotees are going to Vrindavan. You see both, so where is the larger devotee-gathering - Mayapur or Vrindavan? And why?*

S: Some devotees are coming to Vrindavan and some are leaving. Quite a few of those who come, come to die or to practice vanaprastha. Three devotees have come to die in Vraja in the last few months and all of them successfully fulfilled their mission.

There is no real sense of community in Vrindavana. After all, the devotees are forced to live outside of the temple area, and that is very difficult. There are definitely more

devotees in Mayapur and a greater sense of community here in Mayapur.

MK: *Are you planning to stay in Vrindavana now or will you come to serve in Mayapur again?*

S: One of the main lessons I've learned over the last two years is 'don't make plans!' I planned to live, serve and die in Mayapur, and I was very attached to that plan, but Mahaprabhu had other plans. Oh, how bewildering and painful my plan became! So, these days I am just trying to live and serve in harmony with Srila Prabhupada's and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu plans for me. Each day my prayer is:

'Oh, my Prabhupada! Oh, my Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu! Please accept me, my body, my mind, my intelligence, my ego, my consciousness, all that I am and have and will do - and shape it in such a way that at the end of the day it will not only be a source of great pleasure and satisfaction for you, but also increase my pure and unalloyed love for you'.

MK: *Can you remember some funny or amazing preaching stories (Mayapur or else where), from your personal experience?*

S: I have been preaching full time for more than twenty years, and so I could tell many stories of my experiences. However, since I moved to Vrindavan, roles have changed. I am now the ignorant one in need of mercy in the form of transcendental knowledge and nourishment. And Sri Vrindavan Dhama and it's residents have become my compassionate preachers, teachers and guides. I would like to share two of these experiences with you. They will give a glimpse into the very mysterious and mystical nature of the transcendental land of Vraja, as well as a source of inspiration and happiness for you.

- One of the first lessons Vraja Dhama gave me is 'you don't know who is who here, or what is what. Give up your judgmental mentality'.

It was very early morning, and it

was Rupa Goswami's disappearance day. I was pretty much alone and relishing circumambulating his bhajan kutir and Samadhi while chanting the Holy Name. After some time two monkeys appeared.

One of them was absorbed in yawning and scratching himself. The other one offered full dandavats in front of Rupa Goswami's bhajan kutir - and it was a very pukka, deliberate and human-like dandavat pranam. He looked into the bhajan kutir for a while and then began to honor all the maha remnants at the door - Yamuna water, milk, flowers and ghee wicks. Having taken to his satisfaction, he nested for a while, just like a true Vaishnava gentleman. By the time the sun rose, he had begun his 'occupational duties' - shaking trees, stealing glasses and harassing the visiting pilgrims. But, I just could not think badly of him, he was a servant of Srila Rupa Goswami.

- While living in Mayapur, I was overwhelmed by Srila Prabhupada's all-merciful nature. Since moving to Vraja, I've also come to understand a little of His transcendental potency, and how loved He is by the residents here.

Early in the morning I was inspired to go and chant at Nidhuvana. It's a very sacred place of Krishna's Vrindavana pastimes, in the heart of Seva Kunja. When I arrived there, the big entrance was over-run by many, many monkeys. It was as if they have been instructed to keep this neophyte nonsense off the property. They were looking at me so menacingly. At first I was bewildered and I could not think of what to do. But, then I thought 'I am living and serving in Vrindavan under Srila Prabhupada's guidance and protection, the best thing to do is to pay my obeisancies to Him and beg for His mercy. And so down I went. When I got up, there was not one monkey at the entrance. I could not believe my eyes! I thanked Prabhupada and entered the sacred land of Nidhuvana to chant peacefully for some hours. There were many monkeys there, but they all behaved like very sober and

respectful gentleman towards me. 'We won't trouble this one, she belongs to A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada' - this so obviously seemed to be their mood.

MK: *Do you have any plans for teaching / training younger devotees?*

S: As I mentioned earlier, I don't make independent plans any more. However, many sincere and serious younger devotees do come to me for advice and friendship, and I am always happy to spend some time with them. It's so often a nourishing and happy exchange for both of us and I feel blessed by it.

MK: *We have all heard that Mayapur and Vrindavan are non-different from each-other. Do you have any personal realizations and experiences of this statement?*

S: By Srila Prabhupada's potency and mercy I have a little understanding of this, and I would like to share it with you.

We can only enter this amazing reality when we have firm faith that Krishna is the Supreme PERSON. He and His energies are inconceivable and He is Rasaraja - the supreme enjoyer of rasa (different taste and moods).

When we get angry, there are some changes in the body and we make others upset, but that's about all. But Krishna is so amazing that when He wants to taste a particular mood or emotion, His form transforms to most perfectly experience that mood or emotion. And when Krishna transforms, His intimate associates' transform, as does His Dhama.

It's not that everything becomes different. It's the same Svayam-Bhagavan Krishna and His energies, but He is tasting things differently, and so they manifest differently. This is explained philosophically by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's *acintya-bheda-bheda-tattva* principal.

Mayapur and Vrindavana are simultaneously different and non-different. They are non-different in the sense that they are non-different from Krishna.

But they are different in that the

Supreme Personality of Godhead experiences different moods and His Dhama manifests in different ways to support these moods - Radha-Gopinatha in Vrindavana and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in Mayapur.

In both cases - the Dhama has manifested to support the Supreme Personality of Godheads mood and activities. And that manifestation is eternal.

Perhaps I will use a practical example to make things easier to understand. If we want to buy a fridge and we know a man who sells fridges, do we go to his home or his shop? The answer is obvious, isn't it?! We go to his shop.

It's the same man in both places - the home and the shop, but his mood will be different, and that will be obvious in his activities, his associates and his environment. So, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is Krishna in audarya bhava, a mood of giving Krishna-prema freely. He is taking only a nominal payment for the goods He is distributing - the price of our faith. But, when he manifests as Radha-Gopinatha, the mood is that of relishing prema.

But whether we reside in Vrindavana or in Mayapur as Gaudiya Sadhakas - or even if we were perfected - Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is our life and soul. Why this is so is very, very sweet and deep.

Once, when Srila Bhaktisidhanta Saraswati Thakura was at Radha Kunda, he commented on a pious Kolkata businessman, who was

doing dandavat parikrama of Radha-kunda to please Krishna. But our position and interest are different. We are dasa-anu-dasa-anu-dasa, and Srimati Radharani is the greatest servant of Krishna. Therefore, we serve Krishna to please Srimati Radharani. We want Her mercy, we want to serve Her all-merciful desires for Her pleasure, and this will automatically please Krishna. When Krishna is completely captivated and controlled by Her mood and emotion, He manifests as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. And it is that Krishna who is our life and soul.

This subject matter is very deep and subtle, but I hope what I said is of some help.

MK: *Is there anything you want to say to the community devotees and all of our readers that was not covered by these questions?*

S: I would like to thank all the Mayapur devotees for the kindness and friendship they have showered upon me over the many years. I would also like to beg their forgiveness for any offences I may have committed at their lotus feet, either knowingly or unknowingly.

And if there is time in their day, and room in their hearts, I humbly request them to pray to Prahla-Nrisimhadeva and Pancha-tattva for the protection, maintenance and Krishna conscious development of Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON Vrindavana. It must be such a source of pain for Him at present.

MK: *Hare Krishna.*





Lila Vrindavana dd
sings in Guru-puja

EXTRA KIRTAN for RADHA-MADHAVA & SRILA PRABHUPADA

Interviews
by
Lila Vrindavana
Devi Dasi



Saranya Mataji sings in Srila Prabhupada's Samadhi Mandir

Interview with **SARANYA Devi Dasi**

LilaV: *How did you become involved in this service - kirtan & bhajan for Radha-Madhava & Srila Prabhupada?*

Saranya devi dasi: Once I discussed with Amrita Gaurangi devi dasi about having bhajans in Srila Prabhupada Samadhi. She followed up the idea with Bhaktajana Priya Prabhu. He agreed. So it started but not as a regular program.

Recently, I discussed the same idea with Bhakta Priya devi dasi, but on a daily basis. She very promptly approached Bhaktajana Priya Prabhu. He agreed, but first desired at least to mention this change to some early Mayapur devotees - Jananivas Prabhu, Bhavananda Prabhu and Hari Sauri Prabhu.

So, first Bhakta Priya and I started daily offering kirtan to Srila Prabhupada. We invited all matajis.

LilaV: *What is your singing schedule and how has it come about?*

S: At first we were singing at 11.30-12.30. Later, Bhakta Priya chose to sing 10.30-11.30, she is joined most regularly by Lila Madhuri devi dasi.

I maintained the 11.30 - 12.30 hour with Bhaktajana Priya Prabhu 's permission and was then inspired to offer the Bhoga-arotik song, but the pujari was not too sure how Jananivas Prabhu would appreciate it. However, Jananivas Prabhu, said that because Srila Prabhupada offers his Bhoga to

Krsna and is always meditating on Krsna (samadhi) that it was a nice idea and he wished me all the best and also for the lady's Bhajans in general.

Thanks to Srila Prabhupada 's special mercy and that of the Samadhi Vaisnavas, I am quickly gaining experience playing for Srila Prabhupada's midday arotik as well.

Jananivas Prabhu also agreed, with his well wishes, to an idea to fill the time gap in the Temple between Srimad Bhagavatam class and Radha-Madhava's bhajan group by offering kirtan and bhajan for the pleasure of Radha-Madhava. The temple commander Kesava Prabhu and MAC members have also agreed. So I sing from 9.00-10.00 AM for Radha-Madhava.

Usually I offer 30-40 min kirtan to Srila Prabhupada in Bhajan Kutir approximately (10 45 - 11.20 a.m.) with Adi Guru Prabhu's encouragement and that of the Bhajan Kutir crews.

LilaV: *Do you take part in Mataji's Bhajans on Sundays?*

S: Yes, just after they began. Vaidiki devi dasi was there then and was the mainstay. She helped me get started. Recently the Bhakti Vaibhava classes and study commitments coincided with Sunday Bhajan times, so I haven't joined in for some time.

LilaV: *How do devotees and guests*

react to your offerings?

S: Oh, they are all so very encouraging. Indians, westerners, devotees, guests, young, old, male, female - all very supportive! It encourages me most when guests or devotees sit and sing with me. Sraddha and Gaura Bhavani are two devotees who make some time a couple of days a week. When newcomers join in, I feel I am at least a little part of Lord Caitanya's movement.

LilaV: *What musical or singing Training have you had?*

S: I feel that it is quite obvious that I have had so little training, particularly here in Mayapur, where so many devotees are so very expert with instruments and singing.

However, I take to heart when I recall that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Maharaj would at times select his least accomplished disciples to lead kirtan. Also Srila Prabhupada desired that we become competent in all areas. So I hope my endeavours give them both pleasure.

LilaV: *Do you have any goals for your new service?*

S: Yes. As a means to, simply wanting to please Their Lordships the Vaisnava's, I desire to expand my repertoire of offerings unlimitedly. I very much desire to offer specific bhajans in Pancha-tattva temple as well as so many more in Radha-Madhava temple and I'd also like to put Prahlada Maharaja's Nrsinga-

kavacha to music and offer in front of Prahlad-Nrisimha.

In the Samadhi I want to offer many guru oriented songs.

I consider the tunes to be like decorative clothing for Mahamantra incarnation, and the songs of our Acharyas to be His additional jewels.

First and foremost I plan to keep constantly working on the quality of my presentations, pronunciation, melodies and meditation on the acarya's words and moods.

When everyone who enters the temple or Samadhi spontaneously chants at least one manta out loud or in the mind, then I'll know that the Lord is pleased by my service.

LilaV: *What else encourages or inspires you?*

Saranya devi dasi:

* By the mercy of Lord Caitanya a lame man can cross mountains.

* By the mercy of Pancha-tattva the

impossible can become possible.

* Krsna is the ability in man... He can empower according to surrender.

* Srila Prabhupada encourages us to continue the service even if superficially there appears no success.

* Bhakta Priya confided a prayer: "Krsna, if you accept the milk of Putana, surely you might accept my singing."

* As long as I see Madhava's smiling face I can keep singing.

* I appreciate the tremendous responsibility to broadcast the Holy Names from the hub of this universe.

* The greatest inspiration comes to me from Bhaktivinoda's Bhajan Rahasya, wherein I have realized the maha-mantra to be the Supreme Love Song - the only one which can attract and satisfy all souls, dissolving our envy as we connect

more and more with the Divine Couple's favourite song.

LilaV: *Any closing words?*

S: Yes. I'd like to say that I am eternally grateful to Jananivas Prabhu, Bhaktajana Priya Prabhu and Adi Guru Prabhu for their encouragement and for affording me the opportunity to render some service.

I wrote this prayer shortly after being allowed to perform this service:

'I am an impostor trying to pose both as a musician and a singer. Please somehow engage me in YOUR SERVICE. I have no other hints of ability. So, as I may no longer be rendered useless, please provide what I lack and preserve anything that You have given me of which I am unaware, so that I am able to perform this simple, menial service for Your pleasures'. U

Interview with LILA MADHURI Devi Dasi

LilaV: *Could you please retell how the mateji's started own bhajan group.*

Lila Madhuri devi dasi: It's a question of desire. I felt separation from Ahindra Prabhu's kirtan. Before, it was not possible to sing in the temple in a group. It was a different time. There was a reluctance to allow both men and ladies' singing.

Now devotees are more broad minded and there is a family atmosphere. We had to do separate kirtans in the park in front of the Conch building. We used to sing every Sunday. Vaidiki Mataji was encouraging us very much. Srimataji Mataji was encouraging us very much. It was very nice we had a banner with the Hare Krsna Maha-mantra on it. (We have now donated it to the Goshala shop that is next to the shoe stand, but originally it was our banner.)

As soon as we started we were getting into it very enthusiastically. Later Bhadra Prabhu approved that we could sing once a week on Sundays in the temple. Baliraj Prabhu encouraged us to come on Mondays as well, but we didn't have time to do it. After a few years Vaidiki left. She left her body in Vrindavan last winter.

After that many Matajis were joining ladies' bhajan group. Many of them are really talented. For example, Bhakta Priya Maraji used to be a singer before she



joined.

LilaV: *Who got the idea to start singing in Srila Prabhupada's Samadhi?*

LM: Bhakta Priya Mataji organized everything. At that time I was in Vrindarvan.

LilaV: *Could you share your realizations after your singing for Srila Prabhupada in the Samadhi?*

LM: Before I had the desire to go to Samadhi more often. Now I go there everyday. Prabhupada is extremely present there. He answers your questions, He helps you to solve the problems. I wish I could be engaged in kirtan all day - it is my life. But we are trying to do it not for our pleasure. It is for Srila Prabhupada and Krsna.

LilaV: *Can anyone come and join your group?*

LM: Yes, Bhakta Priya has a beautiful mood. She likes to encourage devotees to sing too.

Saranya Mataji is very dedicated to this service as well. Before, we used to sing together. But it turned out that we had different style and mood. So, it was not very practical to sing together and we made two groups. If any matajis want to sing they can come and lead at any time. They are always welcome. Many people lead in one hour, that is why we welcome new groups. So far it is only ladies. It is good preaching, we try to encourage people to sing with us.

We do the following: usually the fans are directed to the stairs, but we direct them to us. So, naturally, people sit next to us. We invite them to join and it creates a family atmosphere.

LilaV: Do you have a banner?

LM: No but it would be useful.

Right now there are few of us singing - Bhakta

Priya, Amrita Gopala, Saranya Mataji, Varsana Mataji, Yamuna and me. When Bhakta Priya does not come, we have no harmonium player. I can not play harmonium and I don not lead at all. Amrita Gopala plays mrdanga.

LilaV: Do you have any further plans regarding this service?

LM: No, I just function according to inspiration that comes from the Lord. I have the desire to be part of preaching. We should have kirtan going all day long, but there are not enough matajis to do that now.

When I first came to Mayapur, in 1989, only two matajis used to chant in the temple room after Mangala arati - Janani Radha Mataji and me. Others wouldn't dare. We used to sit near the pillar next to Srila Prabhupada. Now the whole mood in Mayapur is different - a family mood. Prabhus see us ladies as their mothers. Everybody has matured. U

Interview with BHAKTA PRIYA Devi Dasi

LilaV: Could you retell please how the ladies started to sing in Srila Prabhupada's Samadhi.

Bhakta Priya devi dasi: It started two days before the appearance day of Srila Vrindavana Dasa Thakura. Saranya Mataji approached me during Srila Prabhupada's guru puja. She looked very inspired. She said it would be very nice if we, ladies, started singing in Srila Prabhupada's Samadhi. Originally this idea came a long time ago to a group of western matajis, and Amrita Gopal Mataji tried to organize it. So, Saranya Mataji knew that I was singing in the temple and she asked me if I was interested in this idea.

It is very interesting that she became inspired to ask me during Sri Prabhupada's guru-puja. Usually I welcome all new ideas when somebody suggests a new thing. But, the problem is not how to start, but how to maintain what is started. That is why I prefer not to give new ideas. Otherwise I have to carry them out into the life. So, I didn't want to take upon myself the responsibility for this new project. It was not in my plans, but after thinking it over, I became enthusiastic to sing for Srila Prabhupada.

So, we wanted to give it a try, but Bhaktajana Priya Prabhu was in Bangalore. We phoned him, and he said that we should wait until he comes and discusses it with the authorities. By that time we had decided to sing not 24-hours a day, but steadily at least one hour a day. It was a serious thing to start. Lila Madhuri and Amrita Gopal Matajis became very fired up at once.



Bhakta Priya Mataji dancing in kirtan

Soon Bhaktajana Priya came back, it was just before the appearance day of Vrindavan Dasa Thakura. That day devotees went on parikrama to Mamgachi and I joined them.

When we were coming back by boat I was looking at Srila Prabhupad's Samadhi. Hari Sauri Prabhu was trying to take pictures. We were about one kilometer from ISKCON nearly approaching, and then I looked at Samadhi and saw a ray of light above it. Because of my spiritual disqualification, before I didn't give much importance to Srila Prabhupada's puspa Samadhi. I was thinking that Srila Prabhupada's body is in Vrindavan Samadhi, but here there are flowers only. Of course, there is Srila Prabhupada's murti here too, but I did not realize the importance of Srila Prabhupada's Samadhi here. And then suddenly I saw a ray of light going from the dome straight into the black sky to the stars. It was getting wider and resembled a road rather than a ray, it was semi-transparent.

I did not tell anyone about it. I had the impression that someone either left Samadhi or came there and the door closed behind them.

When we came to the bank I asked some devotees if any body had seen anything. But nobody had noticed anything, somebody said that it was a reflection of lamps. Straight away I went to the Samadhi and started investigating, trying to find the source of that light. But I understood that the light from those blue lights was to dim to produce such a ray. Moreover, that ray disappeared. So, for me it was the sign.

That evening for a few minutes I met Bhaktajana Priya Prabhu, he told me he will discuss our issue and let me know about the decision.

The next day I met him by the Ganga and he gave us the permission to start. I would like to acknowledge the support that Bhaktajana Priya Prabhu has given us. He is always very open for any suggestions. He has been helping us all this time, I'm grateful for his support and his help with the harmonium.

I had already some experience with singing in the temple on Sundays. But we started to sing in Samadhi, I felt the atmosphere was different. There is no microphone and the whole atmosphere is very merciful there. We are not professionals, but everyone can sing for Srila Prabhupada. When I sing for Radha-Madhava I feel nervous - the supreme personality of Godhead is in front of me. But I do not have any tension in front of Srila Prabhupada. Singing for Prabhupada is like a rehearsal before singing for Radha-Madhava. A very special atmosphere. We have only ladies in our group, although sometimes Prabhus join us as well - to play, to lead.

Also guests join, it is a good opportunity to preach - we tell them "boshun, boshun" (sit down). They sing and clap their hands. Sometimes we have really nice kirtan parties - children pilgrims. They offer obeisances and embrace each other. They become very inspired when they see western devotees. There is an exchange between them and us. It inspires us as well - every new day of singing gives us new inspiration.

Singing for Radha-Madhava is preaching too. But the Samadhi

atmosphere is closer. In front of Radha-Madhava I feel like I am in a big theatre. And in Samadhi people are close to you. Maybe it is due to the shape of the temple room. We have more freedom in Samadhi. In the temple we can not have exchanges with the people - our singing is for Radha-Madhava only.

I feel very grateful to all the devotees who do service in the Samadhi-pujaries, devotees at the book tables, guards. They always wait for us to come. I'm very happy to see these devotees.

Once a month we are invited for Srila Prabhupada's maha-prasadam. Our first bajan-group included Saranya Mataji, Lila Maduri Mataji, Amrita Gopal Mataji and me. Sometimes Varsana Sevika Mataji joins us. She serves in the Samadhi. She is a professional singer. Srila Prabhupada arranged so that she could sing, because she doesn't have any other time. Sometimes other devotees join us. We always welcome if some devotees join our group or form another group. Also my friend Yamuna comes sometimes.

At first we stated from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. That was followed by Saranya Mataji's singing Bhoga-aroti for Srila Prabhupada. But after a month we decided to make two groups because different mataji's had different styles of kirtan, also we noticed that one hour was not enough time for us all to lead so we divided the time.

Three of us started to sing at 10:30-11:30 AM and then Saranya Mataji continued. Amrita Gopala joked that 'Bhakti-Vriksa split into two, but our beat broke'. We suggested that we could have even four groups. So, now matajis are singing for 2.5 hours. Saranya Mataji is very enthusiastic. I am very inspired with her determination and steadiness. I would like to develop these qualities in myself. We didn't make the commitment to continue with this service till the end of our lives. We try to sing everyday, but sometimes I am not able because of different circumstances, but I try as much as possi-

ble. My meditation is that senior devotees, lady disciples of Srila Prabhupada also sometimes come to the Samadhi and sing. It would be wonderful preaching. I feel that it would please Srila Prabhupada very much.

Our offering to Srila Prabhupada is definitely not perfect, we are not professional and Saranya Mataji is always worried about the quality of her singing. I told her that in front of Radha-Madhava I pray to Krishna saying 'If you accepted Putana's milk and not her poison please overlook my mistakes, pride, and self admiration. Please accept whatever good I have'.

Krishna is very merciful. He does not accept anything bad. He likes nectar he doesn't like poison. Whatever we can offer to Krishna, we do it. We are trying to perfect our service. We experiment with Bengali tunes. We even give names to different tunes - Rasaraj tune, Mathurresh tune, Pancatattva installation tune, Nrisimha Caturdasi tune etc.

We have a kind of music slang. We try to sing in two voices. We have our jokes about different tunes for example during one particular tune Lila Madhuri, is supposed to say "Hari !Hari !" and if she does not do it we turn to face her with an expression of "what happened"?

LilaV: *Did you study music?*

BP: In my childhood my mother's dream was that I study music. My father was a good singer. My mother did not sing, but wanted to fulfill her dream in me. My brother could not sing either. At the age of seven I joined a music school and studied the piano. I had been studying there for seven years and by the end of my studies I played in different teenager bands.

After I joined Krishna Consciousness I got music vocal lessons from Sulalita mataji, a disciple of Bhakti Vaibhava Swarmi (she is a famous Russian singer). She was teaching me vocal. It happened when I was sent to the ISKCON press-centre in Moscow, to be engaged under Vipina Purandana Prabhu in public relation service. It was in 1996. I stayed there

for one month and took as many vocal lessons as I could. They were very useful to me. After that I left Moscow.

My next teacher was Sachidevi Mataji, a disciple of Sachinandana Maharaja. I met her during the Polish tour - she is a wonderful devotee. We asked her to give us classes of Indian vocal. The tour administration allowed us to study during the day. So, I learned Indian music sa-re-ga-ma. Sri Prahlad was laughing at our constant sa-sa-sa-sa-sa- (six of us were in the group). Sacidevi explained to me the secrets of Indian style, not to imitate it. Sulalita told me that anyway, I will not be able to sing better than Indian ladies. You need to practice 3-4 hours a day. In Indian and Western system there are many similarities, such as the rates of breathing. I took lots of important things from the Indian system. My voice became of greater range. I combine both systems, in the West I would be called a professional. It's not enough to graduate from a music college, you have to go higher to play in the orchestra.

I'd like to perfect myself in my service, to learn more bhajans for Krishna. I have different ideas - to make one's voice better it's necessary to listen to good tapes, good singers and get new ideas from them.

My favorite singers are Vayasaki Prabhu and Ahindra Prabhu. Their styles are completely different. Ahindra Prabhu sings kirtans mostly. When I was in Vrindavana, I tried to always come to the temple when he was singing. Now I am learning some Vrindavan-kirtans.

And Vayasaki Prabhu is my ideal of bhajan singing. He has both the voice and a wonderful mood. When he is singing it seems that he is retelling a story. A realized singing. So, my aim is to combine professionalism, skills of playing and singing with the proper mood, to find the golden middle.

In Samadhi I succeed to combine both things. Srila Prabhupada is our main judge.

LilaV: *During the Purusottama month the ladies were singing in the temple every day. Could you tell us,*

please, how you decided to do it?

BP: We wanted to take some vrata. When thinking of Purusottama month, I was meditating to sing more. There is a lot of special bhajans that are recommended for singing in this month. So, matajis are allowed to sing daily in the temple from 1 to 4 pm.

Purusottama month started on Sunday, 18th of July. I was waiting for a long time for this month. During mangala-aroti it was announced that on that day from 1 to 4 pm matajis will sing, and from 4 to 6 pm - Mayapur devotees (laughing) will sing. I did not understand, because since it was Sunday, it was our day to sing from 4 to 6 pm as well. But, Lila Madhuri Mataji said that they will sing in Panca-tattva temple room and matajis in Radha-Madhava's, so we were hoping to sing.

But at 4 PM 'Mayapur devotees' started to make arrangement in Panca-tattva room to have the main Kirtan there. They put down mats, brought the microphone and harmonium - which meant that the ladies kirtan was cancelled. I became very upset because it seemed that Radha-Madhava did not accept our offering.

We asked Prabhus from the bhajan-group and they said that Matajis will not sing on Sundays. I was nearly crying. I tried to find Kesava Prabhu, but he was not in Mayapur. Finally, I found Sankarsan Nitai Prabhu and complained. He said he could not do anything, but promised that we'll sing next time. So, we went to join 'Mayapur devotees'. When we came to the temple we could not believe our eyes: all the mats mics, etc, were taken away from the Panca Tattva temple room and Prabhus started to sing their usual bhajan in front of Radha-Madhava. Everything happened in half an hour.

I was looking at Radha-Madhava and telling Them: "If you want me to sing I will sing, I will sing", I was confused. And then, when Prabhus finished one bhajan, Kamal Gopal Priya Prabhu told me: "Mataji, sit down".

Lila Madhuri exclaimed, 'Radha-Madhava are testing us how determined we are to do Their service!'

In general, the first day of Purusottama month started with failures for me - I wanted to take bath in Ganga, but the ghat was full of men and buffalos. My alarm broke and I was late. The fire of the ghee-lamp that I was trying to offer to Radha-Madhava was constantly going out. I needed Krishna's mercy. And finally, when Radha-Madhava gave me the chance to sing, I felt so much nectar. Krishna is ordering music.

When I start to meditate - it is as if I am catching Radha-Madhava's waves. And They let me know what to sing. Sometimes Krishna arranges such lilas. I would like to say that I am very grateful to the devotee's who support us.

Jananivas Prabhu is always very encouraging. His advice is to have 24-hour kirtan everywhere, since it was Srila Prabhupada's desire. There should be the Holy Name everywhere, especially here in Mayapur. Bengal is famous for good singers. You can find them in every house. There is no problem to organize 24-hour Kirtan in the temple and in the Samadhi.

It is my dream as well. We were discussing it with Jananivas Prabhu. Maybe to start 24-hour kirtan on every Ekadasi day. For example, to give one hour of time to every department.

Sometimes I think "why was I allowed to sing in the abode of Lord Caitanya? To sing in the temple, in the Samadhi?" I try to understand it. Actually, everybody is allowed, not me only. I had so many opportunities for singing in Moscow. Sometimes we sang in the temple, on the stage during festivals and programs. But not as much as I can do now. Why does it happen?

Mayapur is so merciful!

We are given the chance to do something for the Lord, to serve him. There are so many singers in the world, but I have this opportunity to sing in Mayapur. I do not understand why this mercy was given to me. I am so grateful to Radha-Madhava, Srila Prabhupada, Panca-tattva for this, and for Their tolerating me. U

Starting new life in Mayapur

Interview with NITAI NARESH Prabhu

by Vrindavan Lila Devi Dasi

MK: Nitai Naresh Prabhu, the Govinda's restaurant in-charge, and his wife Anuradha Sakhi Devi Dasi got a baby son...when?

Nitai Naresh Das: He was born day before the installation of Panchattava. That's why I named him Suvarna Gour. This is a name of Mahaprabhu, suvarna means golden colour.

MK: So, now he is eight months old.

N: Yes. He was born in Krishnanagar, Marry Immaculate Hospital.

MK: How long you have been married for?

N: About three years. I got married after taking up the restaurant service.

MK: Where you were serving before?

N: In the Guest House.

MK: How long have you been living in Mayapur?

N: I am here for fourteen years already.

MK: How it came about that you took charge of the restaurant?

N: I wanted to do that and Dayaram Prabhu offered me the opportunity.

MK: Do you want to have more babies?

N: I am not sure.

MK: Where do you live?

N: In the Grihastha Area, in a rented apartment, Arcana building.

MK: Is your service providing for your family properly?

N: Yes.

MK: Do you have plans for your son?

N: Yes, definitely. I want to make him a devotee. And I want to take this opportunity to ask all the devotees to bless him, so he can be a good devotee. His mother, Anuradha Sakhi Devi Dasi, also wants the same.

When he was in the womb, she used to go every day to the temple and pray 'I want my baby to become a devotee'.

MK: Where is she from?

N: She is from Bangladesh.

MK: How did you find her?

N: My parents arranged our marriage, they are devotees.

MK: So, what is your son doing in life?

N: He learned how to say 'mom', 'baba, he can stand and move on the floor.

MK: What his chart says?

N: Devarishi Prabhu is working on his chart now. One astrologer in South India already gave a chart - it looks pretty good, he is supposed to be intelligent. But I have more faith in Devarishi Prabhu. So, let us see what he says.

MK: OK. Thank you, and good luck to your baby. **Hare Krishna.**

Goshala Report

October 2004

by Nanda Krishna Das, vet doctor

Milk cows - 63

Retired cows - 9

Bulls -2

Bullocks -24

Heifers - 19

Calfs - 55

Births - One male and one female calf.

Deaths - One bullock, black colored.

His service was to pull the garbage cart. He was doing this since 2001. Recently he died as a result of accidentally eating of huge quantity of dalda (vegetable oil) - someone left a big can of it outside and he ended up eating it.

(!)

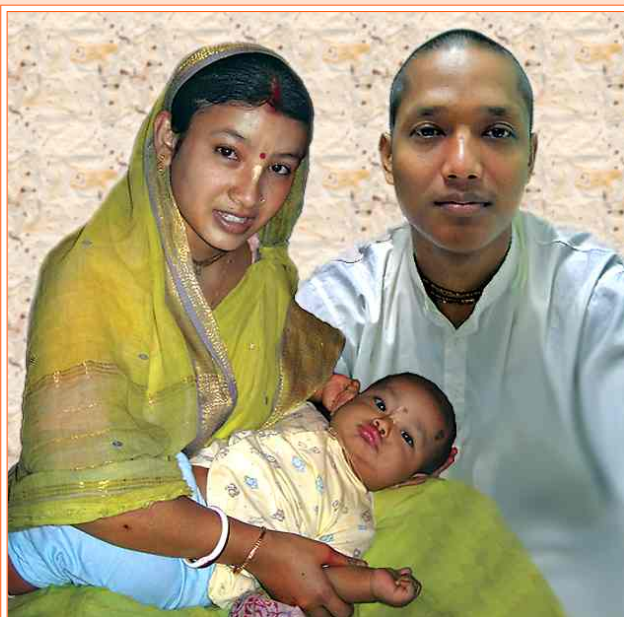
Milk production is reduced to 150 liters a day. This reduction is due to stopping the breeding of cows...

If cow does not become pregnant with a calf, she stops producing milk in her mammary gland.

Also cows and heifers are suffering estrous bleeding every month at the end of the cycle when they do not get pregnant. Their body needs to get pregnant, it is their nature, and then they will give milk too.

Cows are not meant to keep brahmachari, they are suffering from that very much.

We must follow this policy of stopping breeding the cows, as we are told to do so by the ISKCON Cow Protection Ministry, of which Balabhadra Prabhu is in-charge. Hare Krishna. **U**



Moo-oo...
am I allowed to have a baby too..?

What is Mayapur like to you?...

'Mayapur Katha' interviews Aja, 15 years old son of Rajendranandana Prabhu and Chatura Mataji, who are both Srila Prabhupada's disciples from San-Diego. Now they are considering to move to live in Mayapur.

Interview by Vrindavan Lila Devi Dasi

MK: How long have you been in Mayapur now?

Aja: Three months.

MK: So what do you think? Is it your first time in India?

Aja: No, It's the third time, and the second time in Mayapur.

MK: So how is it going?

Aja: It's weird to see all the bamboo huts that were built for the festival being put up and afterwards taken down. It's different, the change.

MK: Not like America?

Aja: No it's cement and bricks there.

MK: Is it nice here?

Aja: It's nice everything is made with bamboo.

MK: How old are you?

Aja: Fifteen in October.

MK: Your parents are disciples of Srila Prabhupada?

Aja: Yes.

MK: Do you associate a lot with the other kids here?

Aja: Not so much here, some of my friends from San-Diego came and were here with me, but they left.

MK: When you live here all the time do you get to know people here?

Aja: No, usually I am busy throughout the day, I do not have much time, so busy here - when I wake up I go to the morning program, then go to the Ganga, take Prasad... then I have to study. If I have time, I hang out with some of the kids in the park. There is a kid in the other building, I hang out there. His name is Gopinath. We go out to play in the park and there is another boy Janu, he is younger than me, but he is so nice.

MK: What do you do with your friends?

Aja: In the park, they have swings and there is a tree swing, we climb on the tree.

MK: You go to the temple program?

Aja: I go to the morning program every day and I try to go to mangala-arotic as much as I can.

MK: Do you like to go there or you go just because been told to?

Aja: No, I like to go. If I do not go - I feel so bored throughout the day.

MK: What is so attractive about going to the program?

Aja: It's nice to see the Deities and the devotees are so happy.

MK: Do you go to some sort of school?

Aja: I go to school in America, but I have got my books here.

MK: What school is that, karmi school?

Aja: Yes it's a karmi school.

MK: Do you have to go there every-day?

Aja: I get to go two or three days a week, just for a couple of hours.

MK: How is the comparison between karmi kids and devotee's kids? Do you see much difference?

Aja: When you look at them they just seem kind of dull, they don't know Krishna, their faces aren't so happy.

MK: Do you try and tell them about Krishna?

Aja: I take them to the Temple and tell them about Krishna, they like prasadam.

MK: Have you ever thought how you would like to be when you grow up? You are now fifteen. For example, when you are aged 24 or 35 - how do you see yourself in the future?

Aja: Well I would like to preach. Sometimes we go on Harinama in San-Diego. I can distribute books.

MK: Whom do you go with?

Aja: With some devotees at the temple they go every Friday, they

chant.

MK: And you go every Friday?

Aja: I try to. My father does, I don't go every time.

MK: So you see your occupation in the future is mainly to preach or something else?

Aja: I work with my father he has a karmi job. He sells items and we get to travel around US. So, I work with him. So, I'll probably carry on doing that.

MK: So, you are already travelling, how does that go with the school?

Aja: Oh, they let me take my books - so, I do homework.

MK: Do you stay with your mother when father is travelling?

Aja: A lot of the work is actually done at home. There is a mall and sometimes he goes, so I go with him. When he goes on really long work I don't go.

MK: So, you are actually learning to work with your father.

Aja: Yes.

MK: Are you successful? Do you like to do that?

Aja: Yes, it's really fun. One of the things we are selling is comfy slippers.

MK: So you are going to carry on with that?

Aja: Yes.

MK: So, you don't think you will go on to be a brahmachari?

Aja: Probably not, I will probably end up getting married.

MK: Are you chanting sixteen rounds? Is it hard or easy for you?

Aja: I try to chant sixteen rounds as much as possible. Right now I am chanting eight or nine rounds a day, every few months I try to chant more and more. When I am at Mayapur it's easy to chant sixteen rounds a day, back home - it's not so easy.

MK: *Here in Mayapur, when you are just looking around do you see anything you would like to do in the future?*

Have you never thought looking around I would like to do this like this or like that?

Aja: When I see the brahmacaris on the altar doing artik.

MK: *Do you want to be a pujari?*

Aja: Yes, a pujari.

MK: *Do you actively want to be a pujari, do you get some training?*

Aja: Yes, it would be nice if I got some training. I just saw when they were cleaning the deities, changing the deities outfits - I like that.

MK: *Did you try to approach pujaris to train you?*

Aja: They said that to do some work you have to be initiated, I am not initiated though.

MK: *Do you think of becoming initiated?*

Aja: Yes.

MK: *Do you know by whom?*

Aja: Well, I was associating a lot with Satcitannanda Swami, and he was very nice to me and we went to Manipur together, but he didn't come this year.

MK: *You like him the most.*

Aja: Yes.

MK: *In Mayapur have you got into doing some service?*

Aja: I tried to distribute Prabhupad's flowers holding the basket and I pass around the lamp and Jananivasa Prabhu gives me some service in Pujari area.

MK: *Do you prefer to study like your father in MIHE, or you want to be more active, or may be you want to be a manager?*

Aja: I like what he is doing, but I would like to study by myself or with a couple of people not in a big group, and also they have a lot of essays and tests and stuff...

MK: *Do you think you could come and develop some business here sometime, or you want to be in America?*

Aja: We are coming here for three months every year, but I like being in America. It's nice to tell new people about Krsna, everyone knows

here. It's nice to preach to some friends and other people. I like to stay in America.

My dad wouldn't have a job here. When he retires he plans to come to live here and do service. I will take up his job.

MK: *Is it easy to preach on the job he is doing?*

Aja: Yes, you can find someone little more interested and talk more to them.

MK: *What are other devotee's kids doing when they grow up?*

Aja: They having normal karmi jobs and coming to the temple on Sundays.

MK: *Do you think it's OK, or it is something to change?*

Aja: Well, I think it's OK, they seem like nice devotees. But then, some do fall down. I think they should come to Mayapur to live.

MK: *And do they aspire to take up some duties within ISKCON?*

Aja: They are not really doing much service, just come and take Prasad.

MK: *Do you think you will be like them when you grow up some more and take up your father's job fully?*

Aja: I am coming to Mayapur for a few months every year with my parents. Each time I come here I feel enlivened to stay and to do service, and then after - when I go back to San-Diego I feel more encouraged to try to do some devotional service.

MK: *Did you make someone into a devotee yet?*

Aja: Not big time devotees, they like to come for Sunday feasts.

MK: *Who are they?*

Aja: Some friends from the school.

When they come to my house they recognize Srila Prabhupada's chanting and say "O, this is Prabhupada'.

MK: *When you go to the temple, do you have some association with the temple devotees, some service?*

Aja: Yes. I have a lot of friends who are devotees, they come to the temple every Sunday with me. They also came to Mayapur with me. It's their first time, so I was showing them around. I took them to the Ganga, Srila Prabhupa's Samadhi. They really liked it. Now they want to go back and preach to everyone.

MK: *Do you see anything that could be done here, in Mayapur that will enliven devotees even more, inspire them?*

Aja: I think that things are fine the way they are, I see that everyone is getting inspired here.

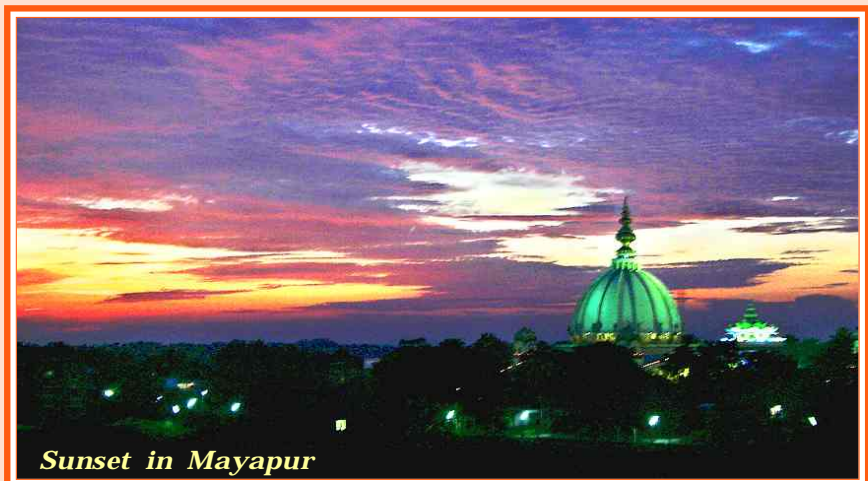
MK: *So, it's enough for you?*

Aja: It's enough for me. They are building more houses - that's nice. So many more people will come here. Specially, to be able to buy your own apartment - it makes everything more permanent.

MK: *Here is supposed to be a spiritual city. Would you like to be a part of it?*

Aja: Yes. For a few years I want to stay in America and then come here to stay.

MK: *Thank you, Aja. Hare Krishna.*



Glories of Navadvipa

From 'Jiva Dhama'

by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

Vrajanatha: I wish to understand something about the spiritual abode (dhama) of the Lord. Please be kind and explain this to me: Why do the Vaisnavas use the word "sridhama" in relation to Navadvipa?

Babaji: Sri Navadvipa-dhama and Sri Vrindavana-dhama are not different. This Mayapura is the highest spiritual abode. Sri Mayapura is to Navadvipa what Sri Gokula is to Vraja. Mayapura is the holiest place in Navadvipa.

In Srimad-Bhagavatam (7.9.38) it is said: *channah kalau*

"In the age of Kali, however, You do not assert Yourself as the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

As the Supreme Lord's incarnation is hidden in the Kali-yuga, so the Supreme Lord's abode, Sri Navadvipa, is also hidden. In the age of Kali there is no holy place like Sri Navadvipa. A person who understands the spiritual nature of Sri Navadvipa has become qualified to reside in the spiritual world of Vraja. Material eyes see Vraja and Navadvipa are both material places, made of the five material elements. Only persons who have become fortunate to have their spiritual eyes opened are able to see the truth of these holy abodes..."

Vrajanatha: I wish to know the truth about Sri Navadvipa-dhama.

Babaji: "Goloka", "Vrindavana", and "Svetadvipa" are the names of the innermost places in the spiritual world. In Goloka the Lord's svakiya pastimes are manifested, in Vrindavana the parakiya pastimes are manifested, and in Svetadvipa other pastimes are manifested. Gokula, Vrindavana, and Svetadvipa are not different in nature. Sri Navadvipa is therefore not different from Svetadvipa and Vrindavana. The residents of Sri Navadvipa are most fortunate. They are the eternal associates of Lord Gauranga. It is because in past lives they performed many pious deeds that now they are able to reside in Sri Navadvipa. The transcendental mellows (rasa) that were not revealed in Sri Vrindavana have been revealed in Sri Navadvipa. When a person becomes qualified, he is able to taste the sweetness of those mellows.

Vrajanatha: What is the size of Navadvipa-dhama?

Babaji: The circumference of Sri Navadvipa is sixteen krosas (32 miles). The holy abode of Navadvipa is an eight-petal lotus flower. Eight of the dvipas form the eight petals, and the island in the middle is the whorl of the lotus. The eight islands that are petals of the lotus are: Simantadvipa, Godrumadvipa, Madhyadvipa, Koladvipa, Rtvadvipa, Jahnudvipa, Modadrumadvipa, and Rudradvipa. The whorl in the middle of the lotus is Antardvipa. In the middle of Antardvipa is Sri Mayapura. A soul who performs sadhana-bhakti (devotional service in practice) in Navadvipa-dhama, or especially in Sri Mayapura, quickly attains the perfection of prema (pure love of God). In the center of Sri Navadvipa is the very holy place of Sri Jagannatha Misra's home. The most fortunate devotees are able to see Lord Gaurangadeva enjoying His eternal pastimes in this holy place.

[Jiva Dhama chapter 14]

Vijaya-kumara: Is living at Sri Navadvipa purifying only because it is by the Ganges, or is there another reason?

Babaji: Ah! Living within the thirty-two mile area of Sri Navadvipa is exactly like living in Sri Vrindavana. This is especially true for Sri Mayapura. Seven holy cities are famous for granting liberation. They are: Ayodhya, Mathura, Mayapura, Varanasi, Kanci, Avantipura, and Dvaraka. Of them, Mayapura is the most important. Sri Mahaprabhu brought the spiritual world of Svetadvipa to Mayapura. Four hundred years after Lord Mahaprabhu's appearance, this land of Mayapura-Svetadvipa will be the most important of all holy places. A person who lives in this places throws all offenses far away and easily attains pure devotional service. Sri Prabodhananda Sarasvati said that this abode of Navadvipa is not different from Sri Vrindavana. Indeed, he said it was more glorious than Vrindavana.

[Jiva Dhama chapter 20]