

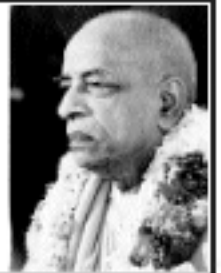
A NEWSLETTER FOR THE
RESIDENTS OF ISKCON MAYAPUR

Mayapur Katha

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

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



*"...by the time of Gaura
Purnima festival 2004 we
will have Pancha-tatva
here, in Mayapur, always
blessing everyone with
Their presence."*

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do you think?*

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Village* · page 20



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Prabhupada Vani

Brahmā, Viñēu, Maheçvara - they are managing the affairs of this whole universe. But He's enjoying in Vāndāvana. *Jaya rādhā-mādhava kui-ja-bihāré*. He has no concern. He doesn't care what is happening here. But it, it does not mean that He doesn't care, but He has no anxiety how the things are being managed. When it is mismanaged, then sometimes Kāñēa comes in His Vāsudeva form. Not the original Kāñēa. Original Kāñēa never leaves Vāndāvana. *Padam ekaà na gacchati*. He's always in His abode.

Bg Lecture 12-7-1972 [Ahmedabad]

Progressive human civilization is based on brahminical culture, God consciousness and protection of cows. All economic development of the state by trade, commerce, agriculture and industries must be fully utilized in relation to the above principles, otherwise all so-called economic development becomes a source of degradation. Cow protection means feeding the brahminical culture, which leads towards God consciousness, and thus perfection of human civilization is achieved.

SB 1-19-3 Purport



The Kāñēa who engages in killing demons is Vāsudeva Kāñēa, not the original Kāñēa. The original Kāñēa does not go anywhere; He never takes a step away from Vāndāvana. The other activities performed by Kāñēa are performed in the Vāsudeva, Saì karñāēa, Aniruddha or Pradyumna forms. Kāñēa expands as Saì karñāēa, Nārāyaēa, Viñēu, Mahā-Viñēu, Garbhodakaçäyē Viñēu and Kñērodakaçäyē Viñēu. God can expand Himself in many, many forms. *TLK Vs 3 Purport*

The basic principle of economic development is centred on land and cows. The necessities of human society are food grains, fruits, milk, minerals, clothing, wood, etc. One requires all these items to fulfil the material needs of the body. Certainly one does not require flesh and fish or iron tools and machinery.

SB 1-10-4 Purport

'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.*

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The large Pancha-tatva Deities are manifesting now

Interview with Ganga Prabhu

MK: When did you get involved with Pancha-tatva Deities making project?

Ganga Prabhu: I personally was involved in originally finding stapati, about five or more years ago, and recently I got involved because I felt that somebody has to push the project. I just felt the inspiration by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

MK: Who is on the actual committee in-charge of the project for making the Deities?

G: H.H. Jayapataka Swami, Nareshvara Prabhu, Jananivasa Prabhu, Pankajanghri Prabhu, Abhiram Prabhu and Kalakantha Prabhu who is the one who is going to raise the funds, then me, Bharat Prabhu. We are more executing than the committee, we can give ideas, but we are not the people who decide.

MK: Tell us how the project had unfolded up to now.

G: I was involved with the Samadhi construction as a purchasing manager. When that finished, Samadhi was open in 1996, this was the next appointment - to find a stapati.

As you know our Deities are very, very big, I believe that Lord Chaitanya is about 11 feet tall, from the pedestal to the head is 9 feet, but with raised arms it becomes 11 feet, it's about three and half meters, huge!

We went with Sadbhujia Prabhu on research all over South India to check who will be the qualified person to make such Deities. We met people who were able to make deities around 4-5 feet, maximum they were agreeing to make a five feet Deity, but no one was willing to take the risk to make the size we wanted.

And finally we found a stapati in Kumbhakaunam. It's 300 km South from Madras. His name is Devasenapati Stapati. He showed us his workshop he was the only person who had made a big Deity above six feet before, very big. He made one Laxmi

six feet high and one Balaji seven feet high. It is tricky to make very big deity. Devasenapati Stapati was the only person who was manufacturing this kind of Deity. He won the award as the best Deity maker in South India, which was given by the president of India in 1999.

So, he agreed to make and then we made the models. Also Bharat Prabhu is involved - he is the person who made the models.

Then there was some controversy about how beautiful they are. GBC and other leaders disagreed over them - some liked it, some didn't like. So, for many, many months the project was stopped.

MK: How did the work start moving again?

G: Somehow one devotee told me that he had a dream that we only will be able to make a big Temple when the Pancha-tatva Deities will be installed. Of course, I felt an inspiration in my heart that I should do something about it. During the last Gaura Purnima festival I actually called the meeting of many leaders, like Jayapataka Maharaja, Tamala Krishna Maharaja and Jananivasa and Pankajanghri Prabhus and many others to finalize this project, because we wanted to go ahead and do it, since we already got a sponsor - Radhapada Prabhu had already promised to pay for it. So, then finally they all got together, looked at the models and they agreed to go ahead with the project.

Then again I went to South India and took the help of Atmatatva Prabhu to speak with a stapati. He got very eager to make these Deities. But he was telling us that it is not the same as to make a doll. He has to meditate on a particular form of the Lord to make the Deity. He checked in Silpa Sastra, which was written many-many thousands years ago with descriptions of Narayana form, Radharani, Krishna, all the different avatars. But the forms of

Gauranga Mahaprabhu and Pancha-tatva were not described there. Of course, They had appeared only 500 years ago.

So, he said that he would like to come to Mayapur to actually see and experience who are these personalities. When he is making the Deity he meditates on the personality, requesting to manifest and reveal Themselves within the realm of material elements. Unfortunately at that time he had a stroke and could not come, but his son and his manager came.

We picked them up at the station, we made all arrangements for them to stay in Mayapur in our Guesthouse. We fed them prasadam, took them around to see different places and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's birth place with the help of Vrajanatha Prabhu, who was translating into Tamil language. They saw the models. They stayed here for four days and were very blissful.

Every day we had a meeting for a few hours with Jananivasa and Pankajanghri Prabhus and we asked many different questions about the Deities, about Their weight, the process of making and so on. Bharat Maharaja Prabhu was also present and asked all kinds of technical questions.

They brought with them a video tape, showing the process of making the last Deity they made, Venkatesvara Balaji, He is Vishnu with four arms, He is nine and half feet high. So, step by step they showed us the process of deity making. First they make the model in wax, then they cover it with different types of clay, making a thick cocoon. Next they bake the cocoon and the wax liquefies and runs out from the mould and then they pour inside the molten metal, eight different metals melted together.

So, they were very positive. We finalized the agreement. We sent the models on a truck to Swami Malayi, which is a place in South India near

Kumbhakaunam in Tamil-Nadu. We packed them nicely with straw and plastic, so the fiber glass models may not crack on the way.

Some wax models were made, but then unfortunately Devasenapati Stapati passed away. He had a heart attack. They did not inform us, because they said it's not proper to phone the temple and say that someone died. I phoned them to inform when we were coming and they told me this news. They asked us to pray for him, because he really wanted to make these Deities. His son is competent, so they will continue the work.

They asked us to come in December 2002. At that time Jananivasa Prabhu, Bharat Prabhu and I went there to check if the wax models were correct. We will go there again with a group of devotees when they give us a date when the casting of metal will be done. The stapati informed us that it is the custom that we perform puja continuously while casting is going on. So, he wants us to perform Harinama Sankirtana non-stop for three days. We will make a video of the entire casting process.

Now (January 2003) they have finished the wax model of Lord Chaitanya and they have made a mould. It has to dry slowly. They will then cook it and then they will cast the metal into the mold. Also they are working on the wax model of Lord Nityananda.

MK: *When will they cast Lord Chaitanya?*

G: At the end of March. They agreed that by May 2003 they will be able to send us two Deities and after few months the other three will come.

Once we receive Them, there will be a lot of finishing work to do here in Mayapur.

And then by the grace of Pancha-tatva we hope to install Them by the time of Gaura Purnima festival 2004. We will have large Pancha-tatva here, in Mayapur, always blessing everyone with Their presence.



My name is Ganga Das, I am 46 years old. I was born in Italy, 1956, December 29. I was in Italy for 20 years, I finished my study and I was in the army for one year, in Italy everybody has to be in the army. After that I took vacation and I came to India with a friend of mine, who is now a very famous musician in Italy, he is teaching mandolin in Conservatory. We came to India in 1978 together by road, so it was an adventure.

After six months he had to go back because his father got very sick and I remained in India. My visa was expiring, so I went to Nepal and there I second time met a devotee.

First time I met devotees was when I was 16 years old in the Square Rome, they were doing Harinama Sankirtana. I thought 'who are these crazy people?' with funny dress on. But at the end of the kirtana they gave some biscuits and cakes to everyone and I partook in some of the cake, which was very tasty and I thought: "OK, these may look like crazy people, but they are making such nice sweets" And then I forgot that.

Anyway, I met devotees again in Nepal, Katmandu, when I went to renew my visa. At the time I was with another Italian friend and we just applied for tourist visa to come back to India. At the time one Italian devotee, Jagadananda (later we became God-brothers) approached me with BTG, I looked and liked it so I purchased one, asked him a few questions, speaking in English. Then we found out that we were both from Italy. He

invited me to the Temple.

That time in Katmandu we had a small Temple, a house and there were Gaur-Nitai. Devotees fed me a lot of kichari prasadam, which was very very good.

I was waiting for my visa few more days. Then again I met a devotee in the embassy, when I went to pick up my visa. At that time there was a Swami, Bhakti Ananda Swarup Sawmi and he asked me: "Where are you going?" I said that I am going to India. He said: "O, really, we are also going to India. What are you doing?" I said that I was an engineer. He asked if I knew anything about car engines. I said: "Yes, I know". He said: "You know, we have two Mercedes vans and we always have some problems. You are going to India anyway, why don't you come with us in case we have some problems on the way, then you can help us since you are a mechanic". I said: "That sounds interesting".

The next day we had an appointment, at that time I was with one Italian friend, so, we both joined Sankirtana Party, which happened to be from Mayapur. We went on the road, which was going through the mountains - all kinds of turns, a river - very beautiful. At that party was Narottam, Radhakantha, Mukunda, many other devotees which are still here.

On the way I was asking Maharaja a lot of questions about Krishna Consciousness and he was preaching to me in Italian, answering my questions very nicely. I was amazed with the depth of Krishna Consciousness and I was feeling that this is going to be a turn in my life, the most important one. I had a realization that all the different things I did in my life, different experiences I had before this point were to guide me to this ultimate experience of shaping my life into a better human being. I was 22 then. So, it was something deep in my heart, the preaching was really nectarine, it was opening my eyes through a new vision of knowledge and understanding about life. Maharaj resolved the questions I had in my heart for many years, which no one could answer. I was very very happy.

The next day Swami told me: "Why don't you chant Hare Krishna?" I said: "Why not." So, he gave me a japa-mala and I started to chant. The first day I chanted 8 rounds and I was feeling very very blissful, I was feeling connected with the Lord. It was one of the most wonderful experiences in my life, which I can never forget.

We entered India and we stopped in some village near Patna. Maharaja told me: "I am going to the barber to shave my head. Do you want to come with me?" I said: "Why not?" So, I went with him and also shaved my head. They gave me dhoti and taught me how to put tilak.

And because that was a Sankirtan Party, the next day Maharaj told me: "Look, everybody here is doing one thing. We are distributing these books for the benefit of humanity. Would you like to help us to distribute the mercy of Lord Chaitanya?" I said: "But, Maharaja, I don't know anything, if somebody asks me something what should I tell?" Maharaja said: "Don't worry, Krishna is in your heart. You just sell these books. Just say 'Ek Rupiya'... 'Ek Rupiya' - and you will sell this magazine, no problem, you will see". "OK, I'll do, Maharaja, whatever you say" But I was feeling little uneasy, it was the first time. I was thinking: "O, what are the people going to say - I am with shaved head with tilak, funny dress on" But, anyway, Maharaj was telling me that it will please Krishna, I should do it.

Then I went walking, walking, and walking... shop to shop, person to person... I sold about 15-20 magazines. At some point I ended up in one court, where some court case was going on. There were many advocates dressed in the black dress, one of them called me: "Come here, what are you doing?" I said: "O, I am selling these books". They looked at the books and they liked it. They started to ask me all kinds of questions 'Where are you coming from? What are you doing?' and so many things about Krishna. I found myself preaching to them the same things which Maharaja told me.

After sometime I was thinking 'I don't know anything, how is it possible that I was speaking about these things'. Somehow Krishna made me to speak. Those people were very happy and satisfied, they wanted to organize some program, gave me their address. It was a very nice experience. When I came back Maharaja was very happy that I distributed 15 magazines so he gave me special Maha-prasadam. He was very loving and caring to me.

Then, finally, we reached Mayapur. At that time Mayapur was not so big, I am talking about 1979. Then here was the Lotus building, the Long building, the Main Gate, the Big Kitchen, a godown for storing cement

at the place where Srila Prabhupad's Samadhi is now. And there were rice fields all around. Still, it was a very beautiful place. I remember as I came to Mayapur there was a big kirtan.

At that time Radha-Madhava were in the Lotus building on the ground floor, now there is Chaitanya exhibition. I met many devotees. There was one mataji, Madhava Lata Devi Dasi, she was also from Rome, she also took nice care of me - gave me prasadam, milk.

I remember one of the first sevas I did in Mayapur was that I cooked for all the devotees one Italian preparation called gnocchi - it's a potato preparation and pizza also. Everyone liked it. Another service I did was cleaning all the bathrooms, it was like scraping my heart, cleaning the big pots in the kitchen, there is huge karai - very big round shape pot, you can actually go inside and clean it. So, I was very happy.

Then we continued travelling, we went to Kolkata, there we also did Sankirtana. I continued to stay with the same Sankirtana Party for many years, I was driving one of the vans. I got initiated by H.H. Jayapataka Swami in 1980, March, Gaura Purnima. And for next five or six years I was travelling with Sankirtana Party. In 1983 I took second initiation. We went many times to Bangladesh, South India. We opened a new temple in Bangalore, a new preaching center in Maisor, so we did a lot of preaching, distributed a lot of books, and made a lot of Life-members.

Bhagavatamrita Prabhu, Durgama, Satvik, Uttama Sloka Prabhus - it was a big mixed group of foreign and Bengali devotees. There were lots of nice preaching programs, lots of fun making Life-members, lots of books got distributed. We used to make marathons and competitions. Sometimes we used to go out all day, come back in the evening, ten o'clock, had many wonderful experiences.

Then in 1985 or -86 I was sent to Madras, where I became a temple president for five or six years. We built a nice chariot for Lord Jagannath, we have done a lot of nice programs there, eventually we got a land, where they are building a new temple now on Maha Bali Puran Road, next to the beach. Then in 1991 I came back to Mayapur.

MK: *When did you get married?*

G: In 1987, one year after I became the

president. My wife, Raseshvari Devi Dasi, is from Bangalore. It was an arranged marriage by my Guru Maharaja. She is a chartered accountant and she is a very nice devotee. She was helping me in so many ways when I was temple president. She used to take care of accounts and preach to all the ladies there. We have two sons. One was born in 1988, Gadadhar Pran, he is now fourteen. Another one was born in 1992, Bhakta Avatar. Both of them were born in South India, because the vedic custom is when the wife is pregnant she goes and stays in her father's house. So, on both occasions she stayed with her mother for six months in Bangalore.

Her mother was also initiated, both parents were initiated by H.H. Jayapataka Swami. Her mother passed away, her name was Teja Rupa Devi Dasi, her father is living with us, he is 87 and his name is Narasimha Chaitanya Das. He is chanting every day hundred rounds and he is reading always Bhagavad Gita, Srimad Bhagavatam, following Ekadasi. In our house we have Gaur-Nitai, so he sings Gaura-arotic. I think he is the oldest one around, but he is very sharp. He was a sales manager for the Remington Company, they used to sell typewriters.

It is a great inspiration for me to see him chanting all day and reading Bhagavatam and performing devotional activities. Sometimes we bring him to the temple. He can not walk properly, only with the help of the walker.

MK: *How long they have been devotees? The whole family joined at once?*

G: No, first Sarva Asraya joined, he is a temple president in Coimbatore now for more than ten years. My wife was initiated in 1984. The whole family are devotees. There are five sisters and three brothers and all of them are devotees. Sarva Asraya is the temple president, another two called Narayana and Krishna. Krishna is in America, Narayana is in Bangalore. They are all ISKCON devotees, chanting. Another two sisters are initiated. One is Satadhanya Prabhu's wife, Shymavallabha Devi Dasi. The other one is Radha Prema Devi Dasi, she is now in Australia. Other two sisters are not initiated yet, but they are chanting and following everything. All family are devotees, they have brahminical background, so they never eaten meat or drunk, smoked.

MK: *What services have you done in*

Mayapur?

G: Since we moved to Mayapur, I had been engaged in different services - I was a General Manager at some point, then I was a MAC member for ten years. I was involved with Srila Prabhupada's Samadhi Project, used to take care of the Maintenance department.

MK: Are you still in charge of the Maintenance Department?

G: Yes, some kind of in charge, but there are some other devotees, who are taking care of day to day activity. Maintenance means to make sure that everything is working nicely, everything is painted, clean, and if something breaks we repair it.

MK: The workshop is not under you any more?

G: It is supervised by Temple commander now and I am helping with technical, mechanical things.

MK: Could you elaborate some more on services you have done for the Deities in Mayapur?

G: One of the services I did for Radha-Madhava was fixing Their silver umbrellas. And for Narasimha Deva we fixed Ananta Sesa behind the Lord with the spring, so He is moving sometimes.

MK: Really!!!

G: You never saw it moving? In Mangala arotic time you can see that Ananta Sesa is moving, swinging little bit. There is a little pastime. When we were fixing Ananta we had a big drill to drill into the base of the Deity to fix the bracket, because it is movable thing. So we drilled four holes on the back side in the bottom. When we finished the last hole, the drill wouldn't come out. There was not any space, drill was touching the wall, because there is very little space in between the back wall and the Deity. We were praying to Narasimha Deva to be able to complete what we were doing.

Somehow slowly we removed the drill and then we removed drill beak from inside and it came out. So, we made flexible a stand. We used the spring from one old bus.

Now we are making prabhavali for Lord Narasimha Deva, it's a brass arch, like Prahlada Maharaj has. We are making it in South India It's for protection of the Deity.

MK: What other activities you are involved in?

G: We built a bullock cart, which is taking the visitors around our compound. We are fixing a boat for taking the pilgrims. Not Nitai-Pada-Kamala, but we have a motorized boat, which we built a few years ago, in the Ganga, plus we have one yellow boat (all covered), which was donated to the temple by one Life-member. We want to make seats and a canopy on top. We want to take pilgrims for a ride in the Ganga - to Bhaktivinoda Thakur's house, Navadvipa and other places. So, we will give experience to people, who are coming to Mayapur how wonderful and how merciful is the Holy Dham. Now we are trying to make Pancha-tatva Deities.

MK: The large Gaur-Nitai will not be installed first in 2003 festival?

G: No, so far the plan is to install all five of Them together.

The Dham is constantly expanding by the desire of devotees. So, if we keep ourselves very pure and very Krishna conscious the Lord will manifest Himself and the mercy of the Lord will be visible to everyone. So, we can preach nicely, we can make an impact on the life of conditioned souls. ◆



From Rasesvari Mataji:

MK: Please tell us something about you husband's family.

R: His family comes from Napple, now they all settled in Rome. He has two brothers and one sister. The elder brother owns one of the biggest radio stations in Italy. His mother is chanting and she is also a vegetarian. They give a lot of donations to Food-for-life program, Goshala. They like devotees a lot, they are very curious. Actually, we don't do big heavy preaching there, our main preaching is prasadam. They love Indian food. Whenever we go there we cook a big feast for all of them, two-three times. Last time we cooked for hundred people. They enjoyed it and even carried prasadam home, which is unheard of. Normally they wouldn't take left-overs, but they liked it so much, they were saying: 'please can we have it?'

MK: Indian cooking?

R: Yes. Cheese sabjee, lemon rice, sesame rice - things like that.

MK: No pasta, pizza?

R: No. That they have regularly. But they like cheese sabjee the best - this is the favorite. Sesame rice - they love it; lemon rice, kichari - they love it. They like kichari very much because it has got everything in it - vegetable, cereal... And they like potato-paratas, pakoras, they love pakoras. This time I made two hundred pakoras and they finished in no time.

His father, who passed away, used to be a manager of very big expensive Motel in Rome. He used to arrange food for all kinds of fancy people, but he would eat only what he cooked himself. He used to be very strict about it - he would never take anything, but his own cooking. Yet he was eating Mayapur prasadam. He used to carry maha-cookies, which we brought from Mayapur, with him and say that this is the best food he had ever taken.

His mother came to Mayapur many years ago. It was a cultural shock for her, but eventually she decided that she liked it here very much.

When she went back to Italy she said that one day she was doing her rosary and caught herself chanting Hare Krishna on her beads instead of Jesus Christ's names. She was surprised at first, but then decided that since God is one, it does not matter and carried on chanting Hare Krishna. She wants to come and live with us here in Mayapur. She almost came with us this time, but she needed some medical treatment and decided that she would come after fixing that problem.◆

Take that poison out!

Recollection by Ganga Das

It was back in 68, I was only 12 years old then, and I was madly in love with motorbikes. I could recognize any motorbike or car model by the sound they made, and 99% of the time I was right! Pino, a Swiss guard in the Vatican, promised to teach me how to drive his Lambretta Scooter 125, and I was eagerly waiting for that day to come.

At that time I was in my summer holiday mood helping my grandpa Nonno Luigi with his coffee-shop in the northern higher part of Rome. We used to open the shop at 4 am and close it at 12pm, and in the morning at around 5am we received fresh milk and cornetti (a pastry).

In a few years I had mastered almost everything about the coffee-bar, I would start the gas operated coffee steam express machine, mix the different coffee beans and grind them, serve multi colors ice cream cornettos (ice cream cones), manage the accounts, deal with suppliers etc.

The most important thing was that Nonno would impress upon me to serve the clients with love and devotion, and that was his recipe for success because people would come back again and again just to see him and talk to him.

As years passed by, my love for motorbikes greatly increased. By the time I turned 14, I already had a lot of experience in driving anything; from my elder brother Eddy's vesper 180 cc red color, to the Benelly twin cylinder 2 stroke 125 of my uncle Zio Gaetano. In my heart I worshipped and idolized Joel Robert a motocross bike racer, and Giacomo Agostini, a famous motorbike racer and 13 times world champion driving MV Agusta. So, me and my friend put some money together and purchased our first bike, a new Gory 50 cc for motocross! Oh boy! She was elegant.

We immediately started practicing motocross everyday. Near our house there was a big park called Caffarella and it had all these different landscaping with hillocks and plains making its use very challenging for motocross pros like we were. Soon our daily meditation was to be at 4 PM sharp in the cross field after finishing our study and school for the day!

Very soon other fans and enthusiasts joined us and soon we had a club of

about 8 to 15 guys. With the passing of the years we grew strong and started to organize our own races. I became very famous and won most of the time always the first or the second in the race. At that time we would challenge other groups similarly assembled in other parts of the city, and we would choose a neutral cross field for the race.

Occasionally we would fall and get a little hurt, but no big deal, no one could stop us, we had passion in our heart and adrenaline flowing high in our blood, the feeling was intoxicating, and to do the stuff we were doing, gave us a special status! We would master high jumps, spins etc. We had total control of the Baby (the bike.)

After winning few races I was approached by a production film people who offered me the opportunity to do some stunt work in an up coming movie. You know, doing the dangerous part so the hero doesn't get hurt. I had seen a couple of movies those stunts 'moves' so I gladly accepted, also this would give me some extra cash to improve my bike!

My passion for motorbikes made me join a professional Racing Team Cappelletti and immediately start to work and race with them. One of the owners, Mr. Plinio, was a speed racer and we would assist him in preparing the engines and give the technical support on the racing day.

Many years passed and finally after my army service, with a friend of mine called Fabio Giudice we went to discover India, we took the trip by road, and in 1978 we landed in the Dream Land, we had many powerful experiences, which I'm not indulging in now. Eventually he went back to Rome and went on to become a famous musician. I became a 'Hare Krishna', chanting the Holy Name and doing lots of work in my own self to upgrade my personality and serve the Lord better!

I still love motorbikes and infact I have a couple of them with me; vices are hard to die, and although I gave up a lot of attachments, this one is still there. Sometimes I meditated on how could I possibly use this expertise of mine in the service of Lord Krsna? To have been a good motocross racer does not really help your Krishna Consciousness, and of course you can use your experience in driving on Indian roads which are like motocross fields.

But one night, at around 10 PM. the phone rang, and as I had already gone into dreaming zone I was awakened with an urgent voice! - 'Wake up, Wake up!' it was the Principle of the Gurukula, Vedasara Prabhu, who told me to pick up my bike, a Yamaha 350cc. 64 hp, and rush to the Gurukula. We had to save a boy, Uttam, who had been bitten by a snake and there was no time to lose. He stated: "You are the fastest guy around!"

I quickly put on a T-shirt, pick up my shorts, and in few seconds I showed up to Vedasara Prabhu. We immediately put the boy in between me and Veda, who was seated on the back of the motorcycle, holding him in case the boy would fall unconscious. Anxiously I asked for directions... where to go? Krsnanagar? No, too far too risky. Navadvipa? No, no boat at this time in the night. He opted for a tantric. We rush to the tantric's house, but Mukul, the famous gardener who learned to remove poison by mantra from his father, was not there at the moment. So, from the people in Mukul's house we were directed to the next village to find another tantric, a Muslim. The people in the village guided us to his house, and we could find him easily. Soon we were in his house. Understanding the situation, he made the boy sit on a small seat and chanting mantras and blowing on his leg he made a small cut on the boy's toe with a blade and... Lo!! - all the black blood with poison came out!

The tantric made the boy drink some water and recite some mantras, the boy was saved! He felt dizzy, but better. There was a big hush and a big relief. The whole operation took maybe a few minutes, by the time we were back, the other devotees had called an ambulance just in case, but fortunately there was no need! I dropped them back in the Gurukula, Veda and Uttam, thanked me profusely, and I returned to my bed to continue my dream. I was feeling satisfied that I finally could engage some of my driving skills to save a devotee's life!

After all, my grandpa, Nonno Luigi, used to repeat an ancient folk saying... *'Learn all the arts and keep them, 'cause one day it will be put to good use!'*

Hare Krsna!

C u l t

The Mayapur Cultural Department, (MCD), was created in order to assist the Mayapur community through different kinds of Krishna conscious arts and cultural presentations. The MCD was officially accepted as a Mayapur Department on March 9, 2002. Radha Kanta Gopal Das has voluntarily accepted the responsibilities to function as the Departmental head of MCD. Jaigovinda Caran Das is Project Director.



Radha Kanta Gopal Das

came into contact with MCD during September 2002 and is actively involved in the department since then. After receiving the Blessings of his Siksha Guru H.H. Bhanu Swami Maharaja and his Guru Maharaja H.H. Jayapataka Swami, he became the departmental head of MCD in the

month of November. He and his family members are living in Mayapur since May 2002.

Radha Kanta Gopal Das is serving with Sri Mayapur Vikas Sangha as a Manager of Micro-Credit and Micro-Enterprise departments. Even though his main service is with SMVS, Radha Kanta Gopal Das is very keen and sure to devote his time to the Cultural Department.

His wife, Padma Radhika Devi Dasi was an English Teacher at Chennai and is at present teaching the children at the Gurukula. Their son, Chakravarti is at Yagna Varaha Vidhya Kshetra (Gurukula). Padma Radhika Devi Dasi has learnt South Indian classical dance Bharatha Natyam from an internationally reputed dancer 'Yamini Krishna Moorthi'.

RADHA KANTA GOPAL DAS:

Music, dance, drama, concerts, poetry are very strong medium through which we can communicate very effectively. Language is no barrier to it.

Cultural programs do not start and end at dance and drama. The word "cultural" means to relate to a society, idea, custom, living style and art etc. This is better represented and communicated through the presentation of plays, drama, poetry, concerts etc.

We have started to put Rangoli during the elephant parade every Saturday evening en-route the Sri Sri Radha-Madhava

procession. We have generated some interest and the devotees are now approaching us to participate in making Rangolis.

MK: Tell us what part your family takes in the activities of the Department?

RK: We are hailing from South India and both of us have keen interest in the cultural activities. We were presenting cultural programs at Chennai ISKCON temple during the festival periods. Now we have started our activities at Mayapur. We were assisting in making the Bengali play 'Tulasi Vivaha'. Recently we have trained two Namahatta Brahmachari's for 2 dance items. This dance will be presented in the pandal program which is now going around Bengal and the nearby areas.

We are in the process of working out our next program, which will be on stage during the Gaura Purnima period. This program, depicting Krishna's pastimes, will be in five different languages - Bengali, Tamil, Sanskrit, Hindi and English.

Since the staging of our first program, children are showing interest to learn dance and the parents are equally interested to send their children to learn. Hence, we are planning to start a Dance workshop for young and small girls. Still we are to find a proper place for the workshop and we hope to start it during the later part of January 2003.

We feel that it is a "once in a life time" opportunity given to us to serve Krishna and his devotees. We feel elated and are extremely pleased at the thought that we are the instruments in the hands of Krishna to render these services at Mayapur. We pray to Guru, Gauranga and all the Vaishnavas to give us enough strength and intelligence to progress further in our spiritual life and to serve the community.

We will be failing in our duties if we do not express our profound thanks to Sathya Madhavi Devi Dasi of Chennai who has brought this family into this Krishna Conscious family fold and we shall remain ever a servants of H.H. Bhanu Swami Maharaja - if not for his teachings and guidance we would not have scaled this far (even though it is very little) in our spiritual life.

MK: Who is supporting this program?

RK: MCD is suffering from a "NO FUND" situation. In fact we are spending our personal money whenever we produce and present any program. With the mercy of Sri Sri Radha-Madhava and with the cooperation of the administration and the community, we hope to overcome this situation soon.

MK: What are your goals?

RK: It is felt that there could be an increased and improved communication and coordination between the administration and the community and also the gap of communication between the communities should be narrowed.

Our desire is to build a strong and united Mayapur Community with a healthy bondage of relationship of "LOVE ALL". All of us should in our day-to-day life, keep improving the standard of our Vaishnava Culture. To achieve this end, MCD would like to act as a stepping stone. **Hare Krishna.**

Interview with *Mayapur Cultural Department*:



Krishna Das was helping to establish this Department from the beginning. Now he is having a little break, but he is thinking to take it up again.

MK: Which part of Russia are you from?

Krishna Das: I am from Siberia, Novosibirsk.

MK: Are your parents devotees?

KD: Yes, my parents are devotees and

they are both staying there.

MK: What are their names?

KD: Vatsanatsala Das and Kritamala Devi Dasi. I got a little brother, his name is Chaitanya Das. He is going to a karmi school.

MK: Why not Gurukula?

KD: I guess he likes there more than here, I don't know. Or may be my parents want to keep him close, they figured that they already sent one kid to Gurukula and he lost his heart in Mayapur. So, they don't want to lose another one.

MK: Tell us about yourself.

KD: I am in Mayapur for seven years. I was in Gurukula for five years. When I came out of Gurukula I was fixing computers for little while and about ten months ago we got inspired. I personally got inspired by my Guru Maharaja, Niranjana Swami. And thanks to Jay Govinda also, he helped me a lot to start this project. In the beginning I thought it was a crazy idea, but...

MK: Did your Guru Maharaja give you this idea?

KD: He didn't give me the idea, he inspired me... it was more like "you got to do something or you go back to Russia". Before I was practically doing nothing. So, he said: "You better get yourself together, do some service, be engaged in some way". So, then we had this great idea of Mayapur Cultural Department. Jay Govinda developed it.

MK: Have you started it together?

KD: Yes, just the last moment before my Guru Maharaja left. I just told him 'look, this is the situation, this is what I can do'. They had a little meeting, discussed it and Guru Maharaja said: "I give you six months trial, let's see how you do".

MK: So, have you passed?

KD: Well... yes, but I still have to maintain.

MK: How did you know to speak with Jay Govinda about it, or there was already something going on?

KD: O, because we are friends and we stay next to each other, so we shared some ideas, he came up with this thing and I really liked it...

MK: So, it was Jay Govinda's idea?

KD: Yes, I don't know what had inspired him...

MK: What about all these things - computer, screens, scanner, etc?

KD: I utilize my equipment for the Krishna's service. ♦



MK: Prabhu, please introduce yourself and what are you doing.

Jay Govinda Charan Das:

Hare Krishna! Mayapur community, this is me, your eternal servant, Jay Govinda Charan Das.

MK: Prabhu, what has inspired you to start a Cultural Department?

JG: Paramatma.

MK: How come it was this particular idea?

JG: Basically we thought it was the necessity for the community to have more cultural happenings. I have noticed that after a drama at the Samadhi auditorium there is a very nice atmosphere, everyone is happy. There is good feeling about drama.

I remember once in the Samadhi the drama was over and I thought... 'what a pity, you know?.. Now we are going to have a drama next year, next Narasimha Chaturdasi. Why not have more dramas?' Dramas will help to create a happy atmosphere in the community.

So, we wrote a paper, proposal to the MAC and local GBC. H.H. Jayapataka Maharaja, H.H. Bhakti Purusottama Maharaja and all the MAC members agreed with this idea and they gave permission to open a department.

MK: Do you have any funds in your Department?

JG: You see... we live practically on Krishna's mercy. Krishna Das is maintaining himself, sometimes I help him with some prasad. And I also live on the mercy of Krishna. But we finally got written permission for collection from H.H. Bhakti Purusottama Swami.

MK: And this room?

JG: O, yes! H.G. Sadbhuja Prabhu is helping us with that, he gives us this room. Sometimes Krishna Das is helping him.

MK: OK. So, how long you've been living in Mayapur and what were you doing before this project?

JG: I came to Mayapur in 1989. I was a student in the Mayapur Gurukula for a year, in Bhakti Vidya Purna Maharaja's ashram. At that time there was just one Gurukula in Mayapur, Bhaktivedanta Gurukula Village and Maharaja's ashram was a part of it.

MK: How old are you now?

JG: Thirty one.

MK: So, after Gurukula did you stay here?

JG: No, I left because of passport problems. And then I came back almost four years ago and stayed till now.

MK: Where are you from?

JG: I am... from Vaikuntha, I guess...

MK: Really?!

JG: From Ecuador. If you like bananas a lot, Ecuador is like Vaikuntha for you. Ecuador is the father of banana export.

MK: Are your parents devotees?

JG: Yes. My father passed away last year, he was chanting sixteen rounds every day. One day he was going to the park and said: "I am going to chant my last round

and come back". He sat in the park chanting and he passed away. So, it was actually his last round. He was never initiated. He didn't want to commit himself - you know regulative principles...

MK: *O, that's wonderful...*

JG: Also we have a program, which is called 'Community News Flash'.

MK: *Yes! Please tell some more about that.*

JG: Ask me.

MK: *What are you doing for that?*

JG: I coordinate everything.

MK: *So, you are pointing fingers?*

JG: If there is need of something then I'll do it myself. If the departmental head is not there I'll hold the meeting. If there is need to clean the office, then I will clean the office.

MK: *Often we see you filming with video camera.*

JG: Yes, this is something I really like to do. I like to be around with a camera, I actually have some experience with acting and photography. The 'Community News Flash' is actually my own creation and idea.

MK: *Who is putting the 'CNF' together?*

JG: The person used to do the actual job was Krishna Das, now we also have one devotee from South America. His name is Eko Gauranga Das. He is doing the same. May be Krishna Das can explain more about it.

Krishna Das: Basically what I do is when Jay Govinda brings the raw material to me in the camera, I put it into computer, cut it out, and then we both decide what is going in, how it is going to be, in what order. So, Jay Govinda gives me interviews, filming material, order and priority. He also writes down the narrations. My job is to put it all together. I cut it up and make the scenes follow one another.

MK: *So, the creative part is yours.*

KD: Well, filming is also creative, you have to visualize things before you shoot. Otherwise anybody can film, but doesn't mean you can make something nice with it. So, we have to work as a team, otherwise it won't come out nice.

MK: *What about your announcer?*

KD: O, Narayan! I really like his reading - he is natural. We try to use who ever is volunteering. One time Nandu wanted to do it, and he was also good. Last time was Narayan again.

MK: *Are you borrowing him from the Gurukula?*

KD: Yes, we ask permission to take him for an hour to do this.

MK: *What about the quality of pictures in the video clips?*

Jay Govinda: Quality is low because of the projector they are using in the Samadhi auditorium is very old. The camera is OK. It is projector's fault.

MK: *Do you have some set time line, when the 'CNF' is coming out?*

Krishna Das: We work hard to get it out every second Sunday.

MK: *What is your idea, what actually will inspire devotees to stay here more?*

Jay Govinda: We don't just have ideas. We put it to practice. We are creating a good atmosphere through cul-

tural events. All of our Department's activities are meant to inspire devotees to stay in Mayapur, to create a beautiful atmosphere for them.

MK: *So, do you think that it is a good atmosphere or mood, which is missing to inspire devotees to stay?*

JG: Yes. Our theory is that good relationships between Vaishnavas are bringing harmony.

MK: *What do you think will create it?*

JG: According to our concept culture is a very powerful tool. Through cultural and art activities we are going to create harmony.

MK: *What do you call culture?*

JG: Culture is everything.

MK: *So, how do you go about the other things, besides the dramas?*

JG: Some seminars...

MK: *Are you doing seminars?*

JG: O, I forgot to mention. We are actually waiting for Atmatatva Prabhu to come. He is also a member of this department; he was the first departmental head actually. Then he went to South India, and then he got sick and told me that he is not going to come for a while, but in future he would like to take part in these activities again.

So, now we are waiting for him, he is coming soon and he will be giving a seminar on *Krishna-lila-kirtana*. Usually *Krishna-lila-kirtana* is mistaken with *Sahajia kirtana*. Atmatatva Prabhu wants to give an introductory seminar on this matter.

MK: *And what about washing hands and feet... and Vaishnavas etiquette?*

JG: Yes, we are planning to do that also. It's our project. But, you know, we only started ten months ago, and we are already doing so much and we are planning to do more.

MK: *But on seminars may be five persons go, may be twenty-five...*

JG: Doesn't matter. If one goes and one practices, that's enough.

MK: *You are not going to do some broader programs? Like you already got some kind of media going, you are not going to expand it to the TV-like shows and programs?*

JG: That's actually a good idea. You are giving us a good idea here. Thank you very much.

MK: *Are any devotees helping you?*

JG: We have to mention that Sivananda Prabhu is helping us, we are using his camera actually. His wife, Yamanuja Mataji, is helping us so much! She is really good with the kids. She had a drama workshop with them and she is putting dramas together. She is very enthusiastic. Also there is one devotee Kaliya Krishna, who is helping Krishna Das sometimes.

Krishna Das: Also Vrisabha Prabhu has been very cooperative with us, he is taking care of the Samadhi auditorium, and he is running all the sound and the lights. Radharani is helping on the computer.

MK: *Sounds like you've got quite an inspirational department.*

Jay Govinda: It must be Radha-Madhava's desire to have it. Otherwise it wouldn't be possible. ♦

MK asked:

What do you think would encourage more devotees to stay in our ISKCON Mayapur community?

Some devotees have given their views.

If you also want to share your thoughts, you are welcome to continue this discussion on the pages of 'Mayapur Katha'.

Bhagavatamrita Prabhu said:

What would encourage devotees to stay here in Mayapur? - I say economic development. It sounds very harsh and very materialistic, but actually, if devotees can pay their bills in such a way that they don't have to go outside and collect their money then they can be peaceful here. We need to become a viable community, devotees should produce things here. That's the difference between viable community and a stagnant situation, where people lose courage and go elsewhere for shelter in life and to do whatever they want to do.

This is my personal understanding. This is very practical way. I see that many devotees want to stay here, but because they cannot sustain themselves, they have to go somewhere else and quite often it causes a lot of difficulties to their personal life and eventually they end up leaving.

There are a lot of opportunities here in Mayapur for devotees to make money. We buy so much from outside, things we could produce ourselves.

Unfortunately we have a little bit of the old sankirtan mentality, from the old times. Not to the full extent, but it's there - why should I plant tomatoes when I can go out on sankirtan and make a ten-fifty bucks in an hour and buy my tomatoes in the supermarket. Same, 'why should I farm to get my rice?', better to go outside, collect money by preaching and then go on spending it, buy my sabjee and other things from outside.

A proper way would be a self-sufficient community, where we produce our own stuff. At least 90% of what we consume we should produce. We should move slowly in that direction, but we are too accustomed to an easy way - we just make the money and go out there and spend the money.

And in the meanwhile money doesn't stay in the community. People out there are getting rich, but we are not generating opulence, wealth. If we produce and consume what we need here and if we are really good at it, then we will have extra, then we can sell to outside and bring more wealth into community.

So, we should build our wealth and keep our wealth. Not like in airport - money come and non-stop flying out again. That's no good.

Pankajanghri Prabhu said:

One thing is that if there was a good economic basis here, devotees would obviously stay more, if they can stay comfortably.

Another thing, if they have good association here, why would they leave?

And, of course, if we develop mode of goodness then we will not be so restless. But I have seen since the beginning of this project there has always been an influx, there have always been devotees coming and going.

What I see now is that Americans, Europeans, and Australians they come and go. Indians and North, East Europeans they come and stay.

Probably the main thing is economic reasons. And brahmachari's are leaving because they want to get married. So, I would say that if there would be good economic basis here then we wouldn't see so many devotees going.

So, as a solution I would say we need to start some industry, where everyone can be engaged nicely and live comfortably. I think a lot more people would stay then.

Dr. Shymasundara Prabhu said:

Mayapur is a place of worship and one becomes spiritually uplifted when staying in this place. This is the place of Chaitanya Deva and other great devotees, parishadas. It's a spiritual place. So, if someone stays here they will get affected by the spiritual vibration flowing through the whole place.

What ever little provision you have, if you stay in this place anyway you will greatly spiritually develop and your provision will improve in course of time.

Krishna wants service from everyone. Any service, as I am serving in SMVS as a medical officer, someone else is serving somewhere else. But we shall do what ever we are doing for Krishna's pleasure - perform whatever duty you have got and at the same time think of Krishna. Krishna wants service, so if you do service here, in Mayapur, it will please Krishna. Then you will also become pleased.

Madhava Hari Das said:

Mayapur is becoming a big city. More devotees want to stay here. We need to make more Guest Houses and apartments for them to stay, to encourage devotees and Nama Hatta devotees to come and stay for long time.

For that we need to create more living facilities and also more facilities for grihastha's to stay - like more schools, now SMVS is making Hospital or Medical Center. There is need to improve Gurukula, education facilities for grihastha's to stay here.

Krishna Madhuri Devi Dasi said:

The new houses should be built according to vastu. The present houses are designed vastu-wrong, not favorable for staying. That's what comes to mind now.

MK: What do you think would encourage more devotees to stay in our ISKCON Mayapur community?

Prema Manjari Devi Dasi said:

I think when devotees come here they should stay for a while and once they get into the service they will get inspiration to stay here. And of course we should provide more opportunities for grihastha's, once they have some sort of basic income they will be probably encouraged to stay. This is the main reason why devotees are leaving, because they have to collect money all the time.

So many tourists are coming here with so much laxmi. Like, for example, we are supplying the temple shops with small figures of Krishna, temple sells them and we have some percent of the profit. It is enough to survive.

Devotees should just try to do something. There is so much money to make here. Generally everyone thinks that they have to bring money, but you don't have to bring money from the West, you can just generate it here. We are making money. People are coming here by the thousands.

Another thing, devotees also should be honest. Like boundary wall shops, for example, are always complaining that they don't make money. How is that possible? Bhakti Purussotam Maharaj set up a little shop during festival, nothing special, all miscellaneous things, and it brings so much money. Money is there. Devotees should be also willing to give something. It goes both ways.

Ramaniya Mataji said:

Devotees are leaving Mayapur because they don't have service here, no way to make money, their children are getting older and need education.

Also sometimes they have some business or service already going on in the West, so they have to attend to that. And also preaching in the West is the most important activity.

Damodara Priya Devi Dasi said:

Real unity, love and trust between devotees.

I mean we need to stick together. Prabhupada said that the only way we can have problems within ISKCON is if we don't treat each other nicely. If we could treat devotees nicely, practice it not only preach it, have loving relationships, then everyone would want to stay. That's how Prabhupada kept everyone, by love.

This is Mahaprabhu's Dham, the Dham is very merciful and we need mercy, we need to take shelter of Mahaprabhu and His devotees. So, what is the better place to be? Ganga Mayi is here - come and take shelter!

Atita Guna Devi Dasi said:

I think that the most difficult thing is to maintain here. Devotees can not support themselves to stay here permanently. Those who are fortunate to have service, which maintains them are happy. Many others come and try, but they have to go eventually because they have to make money somehow, you can not live without money.

Ali Krishna Devi Dasi said:

I feel that Mayapur is such a wonderful place. Everything here is so nice, so I feel that anybody can just stay. Anybody... actually my Guru Maharaja (H.H. Tamala Krishna Goswami) said: "...a dabbler, a person who travels many paths, or a self realized person - all will get the same destination if they are in Mayapur".

Mayapur is such a nice place. But I know one thing - one who has really intense desire to be in Mayapur, leaving aside all other expectations, desire to be the highest... they can stay in Mayapur. And for me the highest goal is Mayapur Dham.

And it is not only the intense desire one should have, but also mercy of the pure devotees.

Krishna gives you so many tests, it happens with me. Two years ago I thought; "Krishna I want Mayapur". It really works. I think all devotees can just come here and stay.

Some devotees come and leave, they are not so ready to stay in the Dham. They have their goals to fulfill, they are preachers, all fired up. But we can preach here. I like. I am going to set up a book table outside of my Guru Maharaja's Samadhi and sell books.

Latika Bhakti Devi Dasi said:

Devotees need service to do, somewhere to live, and so they can support themselves by doing a full time service in some department.

The devotees who live here shall make newcomers feel welcome and taken care of. The main thing is that devotees can get some service here that they can get into, so they don't have to leave every two months to make money.

Then they can stay here and be happy, do some service and be able to support their families.

Satyabhama Devi Dasi said:

May be cheap accommodation. I have come here and it was difficult to find an apartment for rent and it is very expensive (4,500 Rs a month), for me and my three children. For us it is a lot of money and it is only available for three months. I want to stay for five years. At the end of three months I might be homeless because I can't find anywhere to live, big enough for us, and may be we will have to leave.

Also easy availability of five year visa would be very helpful (so devotees could get here all the necessary documents to get the five year visa).

Also I am having problems with exchanging the money. I have a 'visa' card, so to change my money I have to go all the way to Kolkata on these dangerous roads. I have to go once a month.

Otherwise it is really good to stay here, in Mayapur, especially for the children.

Note: Unfortunately Satyabhama Devi Dasi had to leave simply because she could not get a place to stay.

MK: What do you think would encourage more devotees to stay in our ISKCON Mayapur community?

Prahlad Nrisimha Das said:

Devotees want to be engaged. Mayapur has so many facilities to offer service, but it has to be somehow or other organized, so more devotees have the access to the service. Devotees from all over the world can come, many are qualified for some specific services, like teaching or may be someone is interested in developing a nice restaurant.

Mayapur is a huge community, but we have just one small restaurant. It can't even be called a restaurant, it's just a snack bar. MVT in Vrindavan has a wonderful restaurant, where devotees from all parts of the world are serving and cooking. This is something also needed here in Mayapur.

Also we have this wonderful Ganga river here, we could have so many nice boats, spin boats, they can be like little floaters to bring people from Kolkata. Some boats could have little snack bars and take people around Dham to different Holy places. This will give an opportunity to devotees to perform service. There could be some facilities for devotees to stay and perform some arts and dramas and present them to the visitors every weekend.

So, it is a question of opening the doors to more and more devotees. Srila Prabhupada very much wanted that the Western devotees should be part of Mayapur. He wanted this place to show how Westerners can practice Krishna Consciousness. Even this land itself was developed by Western devotees.

Devotees are coming from all parts of the world and if they are very much welcome and feel that they can render service, whatever they can do for Krishna. We need dentists, doctors, even lawyers; good farmers, we need someone who can do organic farming. We need artists, printers... So many things are needed here in Mayapur more and more. So, we need to open opportunities for devotees to perform this seva.

Also many devotees are very much into Vastu, for example, if they want to come and stay here they want to see vastu-friendly houses. Then they will be more interested to buy apartments or staying in the apartments because they will see that this community grows according to Vedic standards. Sometimes devotees come and want to buy an apartment, but it's very expensive and at the same time doesn't give the facility they are looking for. In the West people are so much into building their houses harmoniously with the Universe. Here in Mayapur we are not going for it. These are just little details, which can make devotees interested to stay here.

Also so many matajis want to come to Mayapur, sometimes ladies who are already old, they want to have some place here to practice Krishna Consciousness. But it is not so open to ladies to come and offer their seva in Mayapur. We need Brahmacharini Asram. There are so many single ladies in our movement who are very dedicated and sincere. They need a place where they can come and live peacefully. Now if they don't have money to pay for a flat they more or less are not allowed to

be in Mayapur.

There is need of facility for elderly people to come and leave their bodies in Krishna Consciousness in such a holy place. This will also provide so many services for devotees.

And devotees who are already staying in Mayapur have to be very communicative, very personal, help new devotees and guests, so they can feel the atmosphere of love and trust, that will create the desired effect that they will not want to leave Mayapur.

Tamalata Devi Dasi said:

Money is the problem. House is a big problem. Sitting in Mayapur means no money. You want money - go out and get.

My husband has service, I have service - we sit here, in Mayapur. Other devotees come - no service. They can not sit in Mayapur, no money - they can't stay.

For Bengali devotees this money is a very big problem. To get house to live in - so much problem, it cost three or four lakhs. No money - no house. No service - no money.

Agastya Rishi Das said:

Everyone goes to Vrindavan simply because it's more cheap there. Devotees who do not see the difference in spiritual benefits between Mayapur and Vrindavan prefer to go to Vrindavan because it is cheaper and easier to live there.

In Vrindavan there are so many different Guest Houses, it is possible to get very cheap accommodation. To get a small gas stove, vegetables and other living necessities is so much easier and cheaper there and more choice of where to get it from, quality, etc. And it is easier to go to Delhi from Vrindavan than to Kolkata from Mayapur. Every facility is easier there. In Vrindavan you can rent a room with bathroom, kitchen and balcony for half the price than it is to rent a small apartment here.

Also brahmachari's are not allowed to stay in Grihastha area here, there are no other facilities for them to rent other than Guest House. Guest House is something for people to stay a few days and move on. So far there is no such facility that devotees can come and stay for a long time in suitable living condition.. Mayapur needs a hostel where only ISKCON devotees would be allowed to stay, no guests from Kolkata, etc. It should have cooking facilities, because not everyone can eat in the Big Kitchen or Brahmachari Kitchen.

Myself, I prefer to stay in Mayapur rather than Vrindavan because I know it is much better for my spiritual progress. Here I have much better association with ISKCON devotees, it's a big community here. In Vrindavan ISKCON has only a small temple and Gurukula, there are so many different people, very confusing.

MK: What do you think would encourage more devotees to stay in our ISKCON Mayapur community?

Hema Gopi Devi Dasi said:

To make people come to Mayapur what I think will be nice is if we tell them what facilities we have.

Many people are scared of water pollution; they think that they will not be able to find the food they like. Many are not aware that Mayapur is improving so much, that we have good water, that we grow broccoli in our gardens.

So if we advertise nicely the facilities available and, of course, service. What will we do just living here for years without doing any service? At some point we will just want to go away. You can't live in the Dham without doing service, only for three days and then you have to go out.

So, I think we have to provide the opportunities for service and give chance to others to come and have their bread in Mayapur. Then I think people will come to stay.

Now Prabhupad Avenue is coming up, New Temple Project. Instead of hiring so many karmi people for designing and even doing the work, we can call devotees to come and participate, they will be glad to do it. And like that we also will not get cheated by outsiders, devotees will not cheat.

Ramadevi Mataji said:

The management should allow grihastha's to make money, to support themselves while they are here. Because everyone is having to leave to make money. Devotees could do prasadam or craft business, they could have shops of different kinds. Plenty of people are coming here, there is plenty of business for everyone to make money and no one will lose out if there is more businesses, more prasadam distributed. Krishna can provide for everyone.

Lila Madhuri Devi Dasi said:

We need to make devotees feel welcome and give them the opportunities for services with which they feel comfortable.

Those who are determined to stay already, they should give their love to the other devotees to encourage them, make them feel at home.

Those who decided to stay here should develop deep relationships with each other and they should also invest their energy into specific projects to expand and to develop Mayapur.

The senior vaisnavas, who realize the depths of the spiritual reality of Mayapur could impart this to others, so they can also develop the taste for Mayapur. Of course preaching programs have to be seriously established, also engaging matajis in services.

Sradha Devi Dasi said:

I feel if there was a social structure then everyone is bound to perform their role. But we have not been trained in that way. We were trained to be preachers. The stress is not being given on the family. Usually preaching is the main thing and family is Maya. And to take care of family is the secondary thing.

If you want people to stay here then you have to have a society. And society is a big thing with all elements. We don't have a society, we just have the temple. People are coming and going, getting disappointed, they don't know actually... like hippies.

Also there is a tendency to think that we are transcendental, everything will work out somehow, but when they actually come here it is a completely different experience, especially for westerners.

Indian devotees are staying, they live simple. For western devotees to stay in Mayapur - there is a great difference in culture, this is also one problem. We need to adjust to the culture.

Also many devotees come with children, they try to school them here, but it goes up to a certain age and then they have to leave to educate their children somewhere else. Different points like this... it has to develop some more.

It is also a question of Kali-yuga, people are unstable, they always like to change job, place, etc. It requires mode of goodness to maintain. Mode of passion is flickering and in mode of ignorance people don't care. We need to develop more goodness in our character - then we will be able to stay and do things for long time.

Kanakabja Das said:

Prabhupada said that one who does not get up at the time of brahma-muhurta and attend the spiritual programs, he is not a gentleman. I feel that everyone from all over the world should come and stay here and participate in systematical spiritual programs and live in spiritual atmosphere.

More Guest Houses are needed. And for devotees here should be more encouraging programs, like Bhakti-sastri course and other courses, where they can get good devotional training. Especially teacher's training, so devotees get trained how to teach others, so that they can be good preachers for this movement.

And devotees who stay in this community should develop brother-like relationships with each other, try to encourage and help each other. Sometimes some devotees feel disappointed and discouraged to do devotional service. So, we should have friendly relationships between us in the community, so we can help each other to do more and more service to the Lord. If we don't have good relationship then we are lacking in devotional service.

MK: What do you think would encourage more devotees to stay in our ISKCON Mayapur community?

Manasi Ganga Devi Dasi said:

What encouraged me to stay is such a nice facility for educating children. I really appreciated the ashram facility, it's really nice. A lot of parents are looking for ashram facilities. Of course, we need to improve the quality of the facilities more and more, that will encourage other devotees and they won't become disappointed. The economic structure is very important. If we could manage our departments in such a way, so we could provide a reasonable maintenance for devotees involved in different services.

Also as devotees if we mature and deal with each other nicely, others will find that an attractive thing.

Although there are undoubtedly spiritual reasons why we can or can't stay in the Dham, but I think medical facilities would help a lot of devotees to stay. Like, for example, Srimati Mataji would like to stay in Mayapur, but now she is forced to go to Vrindavan because there is no proper medical treatment for her here. A 24-hour medical center with qualified doctors would be really helpful, especially for old people.

And the road! It can kill you if you travel back and forth, although it did improve a lot. May be there should be jet boats on the Ganga.

Jaya Kesava Das said:

It's not an easy question. I think most of the devotees have a problem with collecting some Laxmi here and maintaining them selves in the Holy Dham.

I am living here for the last three years and I saw devotees coming and leaving. Not so many are ready to stay here. I would like to know their reason, but I think it is lack of service and regular income. I think we as a society have to make it possible for the devotees to make regular income even here.

It is not easy to settle up here in Mayapur - to get service, place to live, to make money for living. I am lucky to have a service with maintenance and place to stay, but for me it is a big problem to get money for the ticket to go to the West when visa runs out to get a new one.

Our authorities don't seem to think about such things. I don't know why. They seem to think that if western devotees come here that means that they have money for everything. It is not true. It is not good when devotees have to go to the West simply to work hard among karmis to collect money to come here. They should be able to make their money here.

Suchitendria Das said:

There are so many projects going on in ISKCON all over the world. If our leaders took this temple more seriously and built the Temple, then all the other temples would be built quite easily. Because then ISKCON will have the one main project, where huge money will come from.

Like Tirupati, for example, they give so much money to the central government every year. Srila Prabhupada liked

their management very much - they attract a lot of money. And Mayapur will also attract a lot of money. I heard Prabhupada was saying that there will be people standing in line to become life-members.

So much money will come. And with that money we could build ISKCON all over the world. Because the prediction of Lord Nityananda is that from this Temple the nitya-seva, the eternal service of Lord Chaitanya will spread through the world. So, I think it will actually do that.

We should give importance to this project. Why not devotees of ISKCON rededicate themselves to Prabhupada and put their energy into building up this Mayapur project? There is so much money in ISKCON individually and in different projects and businesses devotees have. We could build a good portion of the Temple just by the finance from the devotees.

I am talking about making the Mayapur project the main ISKCON project, when everybody would think of Mayapur only, when all ISKCON devotees know that the main purpose is to build Mayapur, when devotees go on Sankirtan and they will think 'I am going to help to build Mayapur'. Then Mayapur will return the favor to everyone in a most wonderful way.

And right now unless the Temple gets started there is not so much service for devotees. When the cake is only so big you can cut it only so many ways. When the Temple will be started there will be so many opportunities for service for everyone.

Mayapur is going to be a city. The main focus of the city is the Temple of understanding. If we just have a city here - what will everyone come and do here? They want to build the city because of the Temple. People will want to come and live here because of the Temple, because they want to be a part of this Temple. Everyone will want to be a part of the Temple.

Hari Bhakti Devi Dasi said:

To encourage devotees to stay in Mayapur we have to be balanced in our appreciation of each other, both men and women.

Until we come to that platform that we actually appreciate each other through our services, we can't really hope to maintain good relationships. So, ultimately we can't encourage devotees who may want to come here, but we are not ready for them and the ones who are here get discouraged and all enthusiasm is lost and they may go.

There should be more communication with an individual. May be that would help people to stay. Help devotees to know more what's happening, make them feel more part of what's going on here.

It is a little bit difficult here in comparing to the West. There you are very much part of the temple and here you have to find your little nook. So, sometimes it is little hard for a new person to come in.

We need to tune into each other's personalities by actually inquiring from devotees, get to know them, trying to

continued on page 16

CULTURAL DEPARTMENT

continued from page 10:

MK: How did you get involved with the Cultural Department?

Yamanuja Devi Dasi: I wouldn't get into it if it wasn't for Jay Govinda Prabhu. I was rather to stay at home and be busy with what ever I am doing. But he inspired me. He spoke with Jayapataka Maharaja and Maharaja gave suggestion that we shall make CD audio and also video and sell them during the Gaura Purnima festival to raise money for the department. So, it was Jay Govinda Prabhu and Jayapataka Maharaja who got me into it.

MK: So, what are you doing?

Y: At the moment I am working on the Mahabharata, translating it into Polish. Takes me a lot of time and I have two children to take care of. I teach creative writing in the Day School one hour a week. I am also writing songs for 'Krishna-janma' musical, which we already staged a few months ago. We decided to expand it and make it into a one-and-half hour show. Prahlad Narasimha Prabhu did all the music before and did a really good job. So, for now I am trying to finish the lyrics, when that is ready we will do recording and then think of staging it again. First CD has to be done properly. We want to do it as soon as possible.

MK: Who is singing the songs?

Y: Last time Prahlad Narasimha Prabhu was Vasudeva, Nirgata Mataji was Kamsa, Manorupa Mataji was the demigods and Narada Muni, and I was doing the voice of Putana and Devaki, Sankalpa Mataji gave the voice for Yasoda.

MK: We heard that you are doing drama workshops too.

Y: Well, I thought that it would help the children to perform better and develop some acting skills, to be able to speak in front of an audience, control the stage fright.

MK: What gave you the idea to do the workshop?

Y: I don't know what, but I know who - it was again Jay Govinda Prabhu. So, we started to do regular workshops. Then there were a lot of complaints about it, somebody didn't like it, something about boys and girls together. Anyway, I was thinking we could have a little break from it for a while to think what to do next and how to do it, so everybody is happy. **Hare Krishna.**

GOSHALA REPORT

December 2002 through January 2003

By Nanda Krishna Das

Cow census on 21.12.2002:

Milk cows - 64

Retired cows - 11

Heifer (from 6 month on wards) - 10

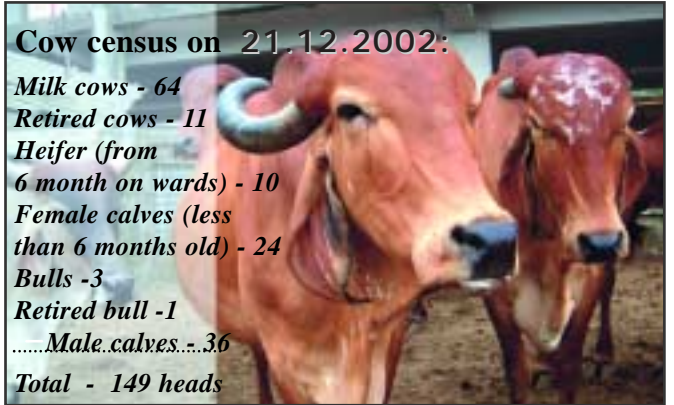
Female calves (less than 6 months old) - 24

Bulls - 3

Retired bull - 1

.....Male calves..... 36

Total - 149 heads



Five calves have been born during this period. Milk production was 12,000 litters.

A brucellosis (female reproductive disease, which causes a lot of abortion) camp has been held on January 13 and 16 by a group of Vets from the Regional Lab (Government of West Bengal). They collected some blood samples from different cow for confirmatory test.

During last Vraja-Mandala Parikrama 2002, we found in Vrindavan how to utilize cow urine for human health.

Recently we opened a new center here in our Goshala, where you can get cow urine. Here is a brief description of it: *purified and filtered cow urine from Gir cows;*

Purified cow urine can be used for treatment purposes like blood sugar, heart problems, gastric problems, cough and cold, fever, paralysis, TB, tumors, diseases of eyes, ear, nose or as a general tonic - for adults, children and aged people.

Dosage - 10 ml every morning and evening with water. Dietary restrictions: chilly, oily food, gur, sour food and yogurt. Full course is three months.

If anybody is interested to get the medicine, please contact our Goshala Office during 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. or for any information. Contact Nanda Krsna das (245327)

MK: What do you think would encourage more devotees to stay in our ISKCON Mayapur community?

continuing from page 15, Hari Bhakti Devi Dasi:

establish relationships. Externally we may think we know someone, but until we ask and find out about them, understand their nature, we can't make a proper calculation. Only our mind will give us a calculation.

But actually it will not give service to that person, because the personal aspect is blocked up. I mean, for example, if

you found out that she was born in Australia, been devotee for ten years, been through some hardships or whatever, then you can understand her mood by understanding a little history of her. That's personalism.

So, I think our responsibilities as individuals is actually to see each other as devotees and give respect to each other, to give up our impersonalism - that means to give up our false ego.

If we could do that and appreciate each other on devo-

Anyone who also wants to share their thoughts in answer to this question is welcome to continue this discussion on the pages of 'Mayapur Katha'. Contact us on 245-279.

NEW BABY IN OUR COMMUNITY

On the 10th of January Ishan Prabhu and Radha Bhava Devi Dasi got their first son. He appeared at Sadar Hospital in Krishnagar.

Ishan Prabhu: We went to Ramadevi Mataji's place at 1 PM and she said that probably by the time of Gaura-arotic we would have a baby. She told me to come after arotic.

I went there after Gaura-arotic and saw that my wife was still suffering from pain. Ramadevi said: "I will take her to Krishnagar, come with me. It wouldn't be possible here, too difficult"

So, we went to Krishnagar government hospital. They didn't allow me in, so I had to wait outside. They gave her injection and then baby came just before 9:30 pm. She stayed one night there then I brought her home.

It's a government hospital, free of charge, so many people go there. There was very big line - fifty or sixty or may be seventy-five people - lying everywhere. They had two or three mothers for one bed, after every few hours they change person on the bed - so crowded, I had never seen like that before. Nursing home was too expensive for us.

MK: *And you were outside the whole time?*

I: Yes, all night. Very cold. Then in the morning I went to see baby and gave prasad to my wife. She rested there for the day then we called the ambulance from the temple and came back. My mother-in-law is here now, she is taking care and helping my wife.

MK: *How big the baby was?*

I: Three kg.

MK: *How did you name your child?*

I: My child's name is Nimai. Nimai Krishna is full name.

MK: *How old are you?*

I: I am forty years old and my wife is twenty-six.

MK: *Are you both from the same place in Nepal?*

I: We are from same district.

MK: *How did you get married, was it parents arrangement?*

I: No, both of our parents are not ISKCON devotees. My wife used to come to Mayapur before. Also she was attending programs in Katmandu temple and chanting her sixteen rounds.

MK: *So, did devotees arrange your marriage?*

I: Yes. She was devotee in Nepal for eight years before we got married.

Radha Bhava Mataji: I came to Mayapur in 1998 and I liked it here very much.

MK: *What were you doing in Katmandu?*

RB: I was a primarily schoolteacher. I was living outside and had a job. I use to go to the temple.

MK: *What is your family doing?*

RB: I came from an agricultural family. I had been educated and worked as a primary schoolteacher.

MK: *Are you also teaching here in Mayapur?*

RB: No. I am doing garlands for the Deities.

MK: *Now you've got someone to teach. Your mother is here*



Ishan Prabhu and Radha Bhava Mataji with little Nimai Krishna

now, is she a devotee?

RB: No, but there is a little change in her now.

MK: *And you, Ishan Prabhu... how long have you been a devotee?*

I: I joined in January 1984 in Mayapur. Then I was doing Sankirtan for four years in Kolkata. Then I came to Mayapur again and for the last fourteen years I have been serving in the Guesthouse.

MK: *What are you doing in Guesthouse?*

I: Reception, serve prasadam, sometimes I take guests on the tour to Goshala, etc.

MK: *Where did you first come in contact with devotees?*

I: I joined in Nepal as a new bhakta, for fifteen days. Then they said that it is nice to go to Mayapur. I came to Kolkata first (May-June), was very hot. Adridharan Prabhu was the temple president then. From 1984 till 1988 I was doing service there - I was doing sankirtan and some other services, what was needed at the time. Then I came to Mayapur in 1988. Now I am fourteen years here in Mayapur. I like it here.

MK: *What were you doing before you became a devotee?*

I: I am a farmer from the village. I had my mother and four brothers and two sisters, I am the second one. They are all in different places now, only one boy stayed in my village. My father expired long time ago. My brothers and sisters were very small. I had to take care of them. I had to work in the city, travel four hours by bus every day. Seven years after my father expired I joined ISKCON. After I joined I didn't have contact with them for four or five years.

Before I used to work and stay in my own place and every Sunday, Saturday I used to go to the temple and do Harinam Sankirtana, take prasadam - nice halva... nice maha-prasad. When I visited Mayapur I also took maha-prasad, I like maha-prasad. I got inspired to become devotee from prasadam.

MK: *And now your service is to serve prasadam to others...*

I: Yes. I give prasadam to VIPs, some maha-prasad, they become happy. ♦

Q: Prabhu, where are you from and how did you come to Mayapur?

Padma Nayan Das: I came to Mayapur from Balosore district in Orissa, 14 August 1995. I have two brothers and my mother in my family. My father expired. My elder brother is a schoolteacher in our village. Other one is looking after our property. I finished my Bsc. from Utkol University with Maths. All of my family members including myself are very religious minded. From my childhood I liked to stay alone and wanted to get saints' company.

At the time I was finishing my graduation most of the evenings I was going to the nearby Gaudiya Math to see the sandhya-arotik. I loved to talk with the sanyasis and brahmacaris who were staying in the Math. I heard about Mahaprabhu and Krishna and Their transcendental stories. One day when I came back to my house from the University and I saw my mother and elder brother were getting ready to go to see the ISKCON pandal program. I went with them. I liked that program so much that I decided to join Mayapur at that time. But I had to wait.

After completing my graduation I was called for an interview in Kolkata for a job. After interview I didn't go back to my village. I came directly to Mayapur. At the time I reached Mayapur Bhagavad Gita class was going on. I heard it minutely and decided to join here. I met one Prabhu who is from my village and he allowed me to stay with him and he spoke with Advaita Prabhu, who was in-charge of New Bhakta Program at that time. Prabhu asked about my certificates. I was lucky enough because I came to Kolkata for an interview so I had my certificate with me. Thus I joined as a new devotee.

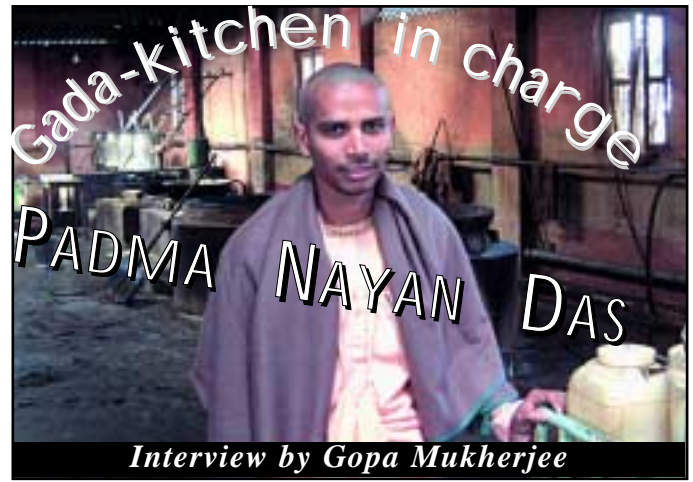
Q: How did you get this service?

PN: After two months Radhacharan Prabhu who was in charge of Gada Guest House called me to join as an accountant for the Guest House. I didn't have so much confidence to do this. I refused but Radhacharan and Bhaktajanapriya Prabhus forced me to do it. And helped me a lot. They became so pleased with me that after few months they made me the in-charge of Gada Kitchen. That was in November 1996. Since that time I have been doing this seva without any complaint. I'm very grateful to Radhacharan Prabhu.

Q: Who is helping you in your seva?

PN: Satya Gopal Prabhu, Satyananda Prabhu and Yogesh Prabhu are the main cooks and another four assistants are there who are helping them. Out of matajis only Sachirani Mataji is cooking. Sachirani Mataji is Srila Prabhupada's disciple. She has been cooking here since Srila Prabhupada's time. She is very sincere and regular, She doesn't like to be absent even if she is sick. She inspires us.

Narati Devi Dasi and Tulasi Devi Dasi help to cut vegetables. Sometimes it's a huge work, but they never feel tired. They are disciples of H.H.Jaypataka Swami. Banku Behari Das is helping in accounts. He is very competent to do this work. Rasaraj Gauranga Das is looking after gas and laborers. Balaram Prabhu looks after Prasadam Hall. Guest House bhaktas distribute Prasadam. Some laborers are here who clean the Prasadam hall. Ranganath Prabhu makes



sweets. He knows a variety of sweet dishes. Ten suppliers are supplying all necessary goods and items. At the time of festival I have more assistants for cooking as helpers.

Q: How many visitors get prasadam daily here and how do they get?

PN: Average 450 visitors get Prasadam daily. Visitors can get lunch and dinner - Rs 30 for lunch and Rs 15 for dinner. For lunch we serve eleven items normally (occasionally more) and for dinner we serve seven items. Sometimes we cook for a feast. Lord Jagannatha is here and before distributing we offer to Lord Jagannatha first. Pujari, Bhavamrita Krishna Das, is doing puja everyday. Sometimes HG Jananivasa Prabhu comes and gives us advice.

Q: Do you think that you need some modern machines, which can help you to do this work?

PN: Already we have one industrial grinder to grind a huge amount of spices at one time, one big mixy to paste huge quantities of masala and one juice-maker, one big steamer and 90 gas cylinders. Yet, I feel we need more modern machines, which can help us to make food more swiftly. I hope visitors and devotees will increase day by day.

Q: Besides this service do you have other activities here?

PN: Yes, I am in-charge of Guest Cultivation Office and Coordinator of Festival Committee.

Q: What are you doing there?

PN: As an in-charge of GCO with ten assistant devotees we look after special guests who are staying in the Conch Building. We are arranging special food for them, showing everything in Mayapur and preaching to them. Sometimes we go out of Mayapur for preaching. Now one program is going on in Kolkata after we will go to Haldia. As festival coordinator I am given some duties at festival times.

Q: Who is your spiritual master?

PN: I got initiation in 2002 in Vrindavan from H.H. Radha Govinda Goswami Maharaja.

Q: Are you attending any Seminars here?

PN: Yes, I did Vaisnava solachar and Bhakti Sastri Course here. I feel Mayapur is my home. I am very happy to live in Sri Dhama and want to stay for the rest of my life here and render service to the devotees as well as the visitors who are coming with their religious mind to see Lord Caitanya and Sri Sri Radha-Madhava.

I am very grateful to all Vaisnavas who are helping me in devotional service.

Hare Krishna. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

from Bhadra Balaram Das and Ahladini Radha Devi Dasi

WATCH OUT! If you ever thought that your maids are very loyal to you and will never steal anything from your house then read the following. It's our own experience, a very recent one.

We had a maid, Bani, working in our house for about three years. She appeared to be sincere and hard working and as such we didn't bother to check all her movements in the house. We also offered extra help that she needed as a poor mother having some children. She used to be in our house even when we were not there and had access to almost everything.

Surprisingly, once in a while we used to find certain things missing although we took it easy. But a few months back a brand new gold necklace with earrings that someone had just brought from abroad disappeared. We searched around like anything everywhere but couldn't find. The owner of the chain suspected the maid, but we were reluctant to look into that possibility considering our maid to be trustworthy.

A few days back again a 500 Rupee bill disappeared in minutes. Then one day Ahladini Radha found her newly brought 3-liter olive oil container reduced to almost half, all of a sudden!

In the meanwhile we also found things like washing powder, money, a gold ring, etc, disappearing. I also found my suitcase opened and its contents replaced with something else! All these made us think something was going on in our absence, but of course, our maid still remained loyal in our eyes.

Finally, on 17th December 2002 our eyes opened when my old mother in-law smartly caught that same maid, Bani, almost red-handed, stealing ghee from our house! Of course, she said she didn't know how comes that stolen bottle of ghee came in her bag. She told me that her friend, Nandarani, might have put it in. I located Nandarani and asked, but she denied doing anything of that sort on

that particular day or the day before. Now Bani had no option but to admit her sin. Later on she also agreed she had stolen olive oil. Ahladini Radha, who was shocked to hear her "loyal" maid, asked her if she was confessing out of fear or if she actually stole the stuff, but she said she stole them and admitted it was her mistake.

She begged apology, so I started preaching to her and assured her that if she truthfully told me about all that she stole from our house we would forgive her and wouldn't ask anything back. I had a list of things ready in my mind and was checking her out if she was sincerely feeling sorry about what she had done. But she said nothing apart from these two things she stole. I called the security people and sent her to their office for investigation. Everything that I had in my mind and even more came out one after another including that gold necklace that she said she sold for Rs. 1000/-. She also said once she took a bunch of money but didn't know how much!

So the mystery was no more a mystery. We realized we were deceived. I was not interested in verifying all that Bani said about what she did with the stolen items, but it was clear to us that she was a thief, or had become a thief while working in our house as a maid for about three years. Who knows how many things she stole during that period?

Another important point is, after we caught Bani and told her not to enter our house again, she went around telling other maids and devotees that actually she didn't steal anything, but was forced to accept the crime!

First of all, what she said makes no sense under the circumstance, but still, just for the sake of argument, if she didn't steal anything then how was she able to perfectly describe how the gold necklace looked like and when it was stolen? I didn't give this information to the security people who

questioned her. It was she who described it. Of course, there is no doubt that she is, not only a thief, a seasoned thief, although not very intelligent.

We are not making this a big issue for getting anything back. Lord Krishna is in full control and whatever we have lost is either due to our karma or His supreme will. Some devotees feel that we should hand her over to police, but we have neither interest or time to do so.

The main reason for this letter is we strongly feel that devotees should know what kind of people they are trusting. I am not saying all maids steal. What I am saying is "watch out" before you take it for granted that your maid can never steal. There are devotees who also thought so, but have now changed their opinions.

Also, in my humble opinion, it will be naive to think that the maid we caught stealing was the only thief. I wouldn't be surprised if later on we found that some other maids who are now supporting Bani's "innocence" were in the same category.

Looks like they have a maids union and since we caught this one stealing, others are advised / threatened not to work in our house to make a point that no one dares to doubt any maid in the future. Unfortunately stealing maids will always be there and devotees will always have to be careful about it.

Srila Prabhupada says in SB 7.11.24 purport "It is everyone's experience that workers or servants are generally accustomed to stealing. A first-class servant is one who does not steal". To think that all maids are first class servants would be a mistake.

We realized it!

I want to add that many maids, including Bani, do have good qualities and have helped devotees for many years in many ways. Also, we beg apology if this letter disturbs any devotee's sentiment.

Hare Krishna.

Navadvip Kripa Das is inviting all devotees to use the facility of ISKCON STD booth Internet service. It will cost you 60 Rupees per hour, 30 Rs per half an hour. Internet service is open: 7 AM - 9 AM; 10AM - 3 PM; 4 PM - 8 PM. Facility for printing and FAX also available.

Mayapur Mellows

Composed by the Bhaktivedanta Village Gurukula students

*I was contemplating what to write
When this idea came into sight*

*Mayapur is such a wonderful place
It is here that we see Madhava's face
With Radha standing next to Him
Thus giving inspiration
To write this hymn*

*Gauranga chanting so melodiously
Now let's join in ecstatically*

*Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare*



English class, year 9



Apurva Nimai Das, disciple of H.H. Jayapataka Swami, is an English teacher, he was born in London and now he is 25 years old. Apurva Nimai started his service with Gurukula this year (2002/03 academic year) and in his free of school time likes to read, play harmonium and sports.

"I first came to Mayapur in January 1999. I went through the New Bhakta training Program with Amrit Karan Prabhu as the head. This proved to be very rewarding as I learned a lot about how to discipline my life and also how to engage in devotional service with humility.

After this training period of 2/3 months, I joined a Muslim Preaching Department, where my duties involved book distribution outside of Temple courtyard and also I had the responsibility of running the tape ministry.

Joining the Gurukula seems to be a new chapter in my devotional career and I hope and pray that I do nice service here. Thank you for the opportunity.



Name: Manideep
Age: 15
Years in Gurukula: 2 years
Birthplace: India
Favorite subject: Math
Hobby: Art
Favorite sport: Soccer,
Basketball

The Gurukula means to me a place where you can study spiritual as well as material subjects in a peaceful atmosphere. It means a place where you can play and enjoy Krishna Consciousness with different enjoyable sports. It means to me a home a family to live with.

I have learnt that life is full of suffering so if I wish to be happy I've got to stay in Krishna Consciousness. I have learnt that Krishna Consciousness is the ultimate religion and the most fun.

I don't think I'd like to make any improvements on the academic side, but I would like to suggest more time to play. We are young and need to exercise ourselves to the utmost level.

The aspect that the Gurukula provides spiritual plus material education has helped me the most. The best activities at the Gurukula are playing soccer and going to the Temple for Guru Puja.

Name: **Gauravani**

Age: 16

How long have I been in Gurukula: this is my first year.

Place of birth: Long Island, NY, USA

Favorite sport: soccer

Hobby: Cartoonist

Profile: I was born in 1986 in NY, my parents, Janaka Das and Syama Gopa Rupa Devi Dasi, desired to move to some place a little bit more quiet like Gitanagari in Pennsylvania where I spent my time since I was five. I've been in Vrindavan Gurukula in 1999-2000. My brother, Krsnangri, was in Gurukula here in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001.



I'm thankful to be in Mayapur Gurukula, because I get to be in the Holy Dham learning subjects that will form the rest of my life.

In my studies, I learned that life is a short, valuable gift that we should use in Krishna Consciousness so we can advance to the spiritual world.

When I was asked what aspect of the Gurukula helped me the most, I didn't know what to say. I would like to stay here longer to find out and to meet more people of my age. The people that I do know have brought out the good in me, I think, and in aspects that I will need in the future.

I love to write and draw. I was practicing animation cartoons before I came to Mayapur as a profession.

I think my favorite things to do are to just hang out with the guys, see Sri Sri Radha-Madhava, do some sports and sleep.

I look forward to the coming computer class and my degree. But then I'll probably have to leave Mayapur...but what ever happens is Krishna's mercy so I'll just go with the flow.

Name: **Das Avatar Das**

Age: 15 years

Time in School: 2 years

Birthplace: Durban -South Africa

Favorite subject: Math

Favorite sport: Soccer

Q: What does the Gurukula mean for you?

DA: Coming to Gurukula has made a great change in my life. I've come to know how to deal with different people. In the Gurukula we don't only study, but also we have fun too. So this is what the Gurukula means for me.

Q: What have you learnt about life?

DA: I've learnt that life is temporary, so you should absorb as much knowledge as possible and fix your mind on Krishna the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Q: Are there any improvements you would like to make?

DA: No. No improvements. The spiritual side has helped me a lot. Spiritually we go to mangala-arati and get most of our rounds done. Also I have learnt how to deal with different people from all over the

world like Russians, New Zealander's, Bengali's etc. The teachers correct me for all the wrong stuff I do and also help me academically.

The best part at the school is when we all get together and do some work out and play soccer.

Name: **Gadadhar Pran Das**

Nickname: Gada

Birthplace: Bangalore

Age: 14

Brought up in Mayapur

Hobby: Modelling

Favorite subject: Art

Sport: Soccer

Time in school: seven years.

Q: What does the Gurukula mean for you?

G: To me the Gurukula is like a second home because it is the place where I live with friends and teachers. It is also like a family because everyone knows each other personally and people stick up for each other like brothers.

Q: What have you learnt about life?

G: Life out there is like hell.

People are totally in Maya and She will also try to take you, so you have to be prepared. Once

you go out of the Gurukula and its protection you really understand that life in the material world is like a brick wall - punch it and you will get hurt; so don't punch it - go over or around it. This is what we have learnt.

Q: What subjects or activities do you like the most?

G: I really like to play soccer, basketball, other local Indian games and learning ju-jitsu from the many activities we do every day.

Q: Are there any improvements you would like to make?

G: Yes, we have one very big improvement to make...a bigger soccer field.



Name: *Nimai Hawkins*

Age: 15

Years in Gurukula: 4 years

Place of birth: Auckland, New Zealand

Favorite subjects: Spanish, English, Science

Hobbies: skate boarding, writing

Favorite sport: soccer (goalie)

Q: What does the Gurukula mean for you?

N: The Gurukula is really a second home for me. It's where I live, grow, play and do everything. My teachers are like my parents and my friends are like my brothers. I consider myself

very lucky to be here, because before I used to go to a public school and that wasn't nearly so nice. It wasn't bad or anything: half the kids in that school were Hare

Krishna's anyway, but as soon as I came here to Mayapur, I had already made up my mind, I was going to join the Gurukula, and I have been quite happy with that decision ever since.

Q: What have you learnt about life?

N: I've learned not to watch the time fly by as I waste it! Sometimes I forget how important our lives actually are. Hare Krishna's are only a small minority of people in the world, so that puts more weight on our shoulders to continue and spread the movement. Life is a precious gift from Krishna and our days are numbered, so every moment wasted is really a great loss. Learning how to use my life properly is what being here is all about for me.

Q: Are there any improvements you would like to make?

N: Not really. The Gurukula is a pretty together place, although we could do with a bit more variety in the breakfast menu. We have voted, debated and argued all in vain. There are a million other things that I would like, which are not necessary, like washing machines for example, but I think the teachers have the situation here pretty much under control, and we are all happy. The biggest improvement which would be unanimously agreed upon by the students here would be to convert the home work into soccer over-time.

Q: What aspect of the Gurukula do you like the most?

N: Probably the fact that I'm getting a secondary school certificate here in the Dham, which is the best place to live in. I'm quite happy that the academic teachers here are competent to teach me and help me pass my exams, which are coming up in April next year. There aren't so many boys in the school this year, but I don't really think it has affected the academic side of things.

Q: How have your relationships with students and teachers fostered your personal development?

N: That's the interesting thing about being here. If you go to an outside public school, then your relationships at school with other people will be non-Krishna conscious, but living here is different. I live with other boys my age who are Krishna conscious and interested in mostly the same activities as me - so it's really not hard to foster relationships and learn a lot. The teachers are also friendly and can help me in my spiritual life to improve in all the areas that need it.

Q: What subjects and activities do you like the most?

N: I definitely like swimming in the Ganga and playing soccer. I also like drama, basket ball, science, Spanish, tons of other things too numerous to mention and reading. In general academic subjects aren't something we volunteer for, so I don't have that many favorites. When I am in Australia I like skate boarding, book distribution and swimming in the ocean.

Hare Krishna.

Vivasvan, 14.

Was born on January 1, 1988

To all the readers of 'Mayapur Katha'. If you are interested to know what the Gurukula is like for the boys (or just me) read this short piece of writing.

For me the Gurukula means quite a lot. In the Gurukula I learned almost everything I know - from cleanliness and getting up early for Mangala-arotic to Slokas, math's, English, etc. In the Gurukula I get inspired, helped, taught and many other things. The Gurukula boys are pretty much like brothers and the Gurukula and the Mayapur atmosphere is very nice and quiet. I really like art, carpentry, English and lots of other things. In art and carpentry I can learn my skills and creativity. In English I can always learn new words, rules, etc... and find out where I do badly in my speech and writing.

Also in the Gurukula we have soccer time at four o'clock. During that time I can put out all the energy that has been inside me bursting to come out during the whole day. So, by the time it's dark I am totally exhausted and can do nothing else then take a bath and take rest.

The Mayapur Gurukula is a nice place to stay and learn how to be a proper devotee. The Gurukula has really helped me out in my life and I will always remember Gurukula as a light spot in my life.

The Mayapur Project by the look of it is nice, but I would like to see it at least get started. I'll be lucky enough to see them to start the temple. But if I'll be lucky to see them finish the temple I wouldn't be sad, I would be quite happy.



Rishabhadeva Das, 13

By nationality I am mixed New Zealand and French, I was born in Christchurch, New Zealand, been in the Gurukula for the last three years. My favorite subjects are art, maths and history.

Hobby - reading novels; favorite sport - football.

The Gurukula means a lot to me. It is quite peaceful, yet fun place to stay and I like it because it is an unique school. We are away from the advertisements of materialist that are trying to pull us down, yet we are getting a good education. It is also very easy to be Krishna Conscious in the Gurukula, we live close to the temple.

We have to realize just how valuable time is. For no amount of money can you buy more time in your day, so we have to be careful in planning our day. Otherwise time just goes on and before we know it, it is night time - and ... well, it's too late to finish home work or japa. No time!

That is why another good aspect of our Gurukula is our excellent schedule.

Every day we go to the temple, chant our rounds, attend academic classes, wash our clothes and then go to varnashrama classes - carpentry, mridanga, tabla, harmonium, arts, crafts, etc. and we still have time for soccer and basketball afterwards.

I personally think that the part of Gurukula that has helped me the most is the peaceful atmosphere. We can study, chant, etc, totally undisturbed.



By Tara Das:

Q: *Having ashram-based Gurukula's tends to be a touchy issue for many devotees. What kind of reaction do you experience from the general community of Vaishnavas?*

A: We get a wide range of reactions. Some devotees are in a time-warp in terms of their impression of Gurukula. They are surprised to find out, for example, that our school has not had a single case of abuse for the last 13 years. Amongst devotees who are actually aware of the situation, there has been a dramatic resurgence of faith in the ashram system of education.

Q: *Some people feel it is better just to have day schools.*

A: Mayapur is nice in that, it facilitates devotees with either preference. Here, we have a day school and also ashram schools to fit the needs of different families. We feel strongly the need to maintain some facility for ashrams, because there are many benefits which come especially through ashram training. Also, the ashrams facilitate the foreign devotees who want to protect their sons from exposure to the degradation of western society. Many devotees are very keen to have their children grow up and be educated in the holy atmosphere of the Dhama even though they can't live here themselves. The ashram concept was Srila Prabhupada's desire, so we shouldn't throw out the baby with the bath water.

Q: *The degradation of modern youth has become a global concern. People are perplexed about how to remedy the problem. What is your approach to helping your boys develop good character?*

A: It takes a village to raise a child. The necessity is there for the child to have a stable, loving environment

within his family. Also, there should be consistency in the moral and social expectations of the general community.

With that type of background and support it becomes much easier

for us to give our boys a solid foundation of spiritual practices and Vaishnava etiquette. We try to maintain a relaxed, friendly and fun atmosphere so these principles will have a deep and lasting effect on the students.

Q: *In your opinion what do you think ISKCON can do to facilitate the future of these boys?*

A: Once we appreciate what a great contribution these kids can make to Prabhupada's movement then we will give them more importance.

Q: *Any specific proposals?*

A: Obviously, many areas concerning our youth need to be addressed. One area of concern to us is how to find proper services for our boys who are graduating and are inclined to preach. If the boys can travel with senior preachers then they will get a deep taste for Krishna consciousness as well as good life experience. These boys have taken an exalted birth and it is up to us to give them proper engagement, especially during their turbulent and risky teenage years. ♦



Navadvipa Dhama Mahatmya

By Bhaktivinoda Thakura

Lord Çiva said, "O Pärvaté, the Lord's supreme energy is called svarüpa-çakti. You, the Lord's mäyä-çakti composed of three guëas, are the shadow of that energy. The svarüpa-çakti has three forms: samvit (knowledge), sandhiné (existence), and hlädiné (bliss). The sandhiné-çakti reveals such things as the Lord's dhäma and name. By the order of the sat-cid-änanda Lord, the sandhiné-çakti reveals Navadvépa-dhäma to mortal eyes. O Devé, the wise know that Navadvépa manifests from the Lord's potency like fruits come from flowers. All the Vedas glorify Navadvépa as nonmaterial, spiritual, full of variety, beyond matter, the supreme eternal Brahmapura, an enchanting abode in the form of a lotus. The nine islands of Navadvépa exactly resemble a lotus flower.

Shaving the head, fasting, çraddha rites, bathing, and charity, which are prescribed at other tärthas are not prescribed in Navadvépa. If one performs any pious activities in Navadvépa, the effect is quickly dissipated, because all the knots of karma are cut. Just by seeing the Supreme Lord Gaurasundara, the knots in the heart are cut, as all doubts and material reactions are destroyed. O Pärvaté, for this reason the sages take shelter of Navadvépa and perform pure devotional service to the lotus feet of Rädhä and Känëa. They see the various forms of the Lord in the different islands, sing the names of the Lord, and bathe in the waters of the Ganges. With great devotion they spend nine days visiting the nine islands and pass their lives in bliss while taking mahä-prasäda.

"If anywhere in Navadvépa a caëöäla offers viñëu-prasäda to Lord Brahmä, he will certainly eat it. Even if the prasäda is dried up, stale, or brought from a distant place, one should immediately eat it without consideration of proper or improper time. In taking Gauräi ga mahä-prasäda, there is no rule concerning purity of place, giver, or receiver. O Pärvaté, if a person takes Gauräi ga mahä-prasäda up to the throat, he will develop devotion to Gauräi ga. In eating gaura-prasäda, there is no consideration of the fault of overeating. "There is no consideration of fitness for hearing the glories of Navadvépa. Dying in other tärthas gives either material enjoyment or liberation, but dying in Navadvépa gives pure devotion to the Lord. In Navadvépa there is no consideration of a faulty death-at an inauspicious time, in pain, in the house, or by accident. Death at other tärthas while practicing yoga or death in Käçé while absorbed in impersonal meditation become insignificant when compared to death in Navadvépa.

Living in Navadvépa for one day is better than living in Prayäga, Väräëasé, or any other tärtha for a kalpa. Whatever results one obtains by yoga, one achieves in Navadvépa. With every step one attains the results of great sacrifices, and by lying down and sleeping in Navadvépa, one gets the results of offering obeisances. Just by taking an ordinary meal in Navadvépa, one gets the results of eating the Lord's remnants. So, what more can I say regarding the faithful person who is devoted to chanting the holy name and taking Gauräi ga's remnants with faith and devotion?