

May 2018



THE CONCH

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"Lord Sri Krishna and Arjuna blew their celestial conches to rally and enthuse the devotees."

NEWSLETTER
New Govardhana Community



krishnafarm.com

Dedicated to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

SACRED SOUND RETREAT
Holy name resounds on the hill

MUKUNDA GOSWAMI
INITIATES
New birth for Vrindavani

GURUKULA UPDATE
Strong foundations



NEW SANKIRTANA VAN + MOTHERS & BABIES PLAYGROUP

THE GLORIES OF RAMANANDA RAYA

By Ambika devi dasi

Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the incarnation of both Radha and Krishna, decided to tour South India from Jagannatha Puri. His great devotee, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, advised Him to meet a very special devotee called Ramananda Raya during the tour.

Ramananda Raya had a high position as Governor of Madras. He daily took his bath in the Godavari River, accompanied by many *brahmanas*, musicians and soldiers.

Lord Chaitanya met Ramananda Raya by the banks of the river. Their initial meeting was very emotional, since Ramananda Raya's spiritual identity is Visakha – a very dear companion of Radha and Krishna. As they embraced, ecstatic symptoms appeared in each of them. Their natural love was awakened and they fell to the ground.

Forced to restrain themselves, they sat and began a session of questions and answers that was repeated over the following ten days. Lord Chaitanya would ask Ramananda Raya about the goal of life and encourage him to go deeper and deeper with his answers,

until the highest conclusion of love of Godhead was reached, specifically the love the gopis have for Krishna.

At the end of these transcendental discussions, Lord Chaitanya revealed His divine form as Radha and Krishna to His very dear devotee. He then requested Ramananda Raya to come and live at Jagannatha Puri so that they could relish Krishna's pastimes together there.

Ramananda Raya was one of the Lord's two most confidential associates in Jagannatha Puri along with Svarupa Damodara. When the Lord became completely absorbed in love for Krishna during evenings and nights, His ecstatic symptoms frequently resulted in Him becoming unconscious. At these times, it was Ramananda Raya who would quote relevant verses from *Srimad-Bhagavatam* to pacify the Lord and Svarupa Damodara, who would sweetly sing of Krishna's pastimes. In this way, they gently brought the Lord to external consciousness.

Highly respected by the King of Puri, the *brahmanas*, Vaishnavas and local residents, Ramananda Raya lovingly served his Lord throughout the remaining years of His earthly stay, in full Krishna consciousness. By remembering such an exalted soul, we please the Lord and make spiritual progress. 🙏

Source: *Caitanya-caritamṛta*

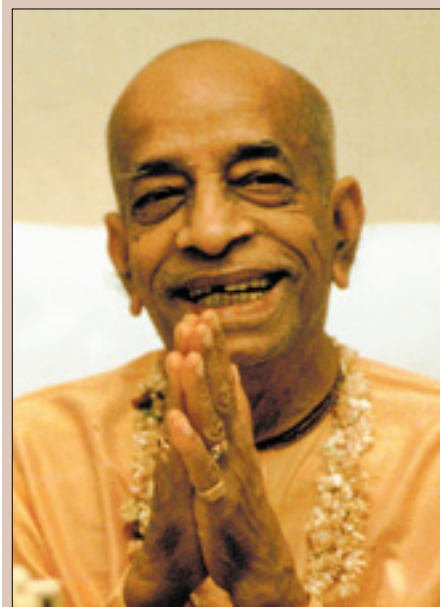


Photo: gosai.com

ISKCON Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Srīla Prabhupada Uvaca On Vrīndavana dāsa Thākura

Just as Vyasadeva compiled Lord Krishna's pastimes in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Thakura Vrindavana dasa depicted Lord Caitanya's pastimes. His *Caitanya Mangala* annihilates all misfortune. From it, I learned the wonders of Lord Caitanya and Nityananda and came to know all the most subtle doctrines of devotional service to Krishna. Vrindavana dasa Thakura has summarized the essence of the teachings of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* in his *Caitanya Mangala*. If even a Muslim or an atheist should listen to *Caitanya Mangala*, he immediately becomes a great Vaishnava. An ordinary human being could not have composed such a sublime work; Lord Chaitanya himself has spoken through the mouth of Vrindavana dasa. I offer millions of obeisances unto the lotus feet of Vrindavana dasa Thakura who has delivered the entire universe through his book. He was born in the womb of Narayani who eternally enjoys Sri Caitanya's remnants. How wonderful is his description of the activities of the Lord, simply by hearing which the three worlds have become sanctified! 🙏

(*Caitanya-caritamṛta* 1.8.34–42)



Photo: theharekrishnamovement.org

Lord Chaitanya reveals His divine form as Radha and Krishna to Ramananda Raya.

SACRED SOUND RETREAT

By Ajita dasa

The purpose of the Sacred Sound Retreat (SSR) is to enliven the devotees. ISKCON's Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada wanted us to fill stadiums and have everyone chant and eat *prasadam*, just like the festival he held in Nairobi.

SSR's goal is to eventually gather all the devotees in Australasia to chant, dance and take *prasadam* together. Chanting *japa* purifies us, and *kirtana* improves relationships among participants. This will eventually give great strength to the Australasian yatra by breaking down any barriers.

Therefore it is vital that everyone participates in such national events. One of Srila Prabhupada's key instructions is to co-operate, which can be easily achieved by all of us participating in *kirtana* at the same place and time.

The cost to hold such a festival varies from \$35,000 to \$45,000, so everyone who donates towards it receives tremendous benefit and ensures its continuity for the good of everyone.

SSR 2018 was very special, more so than SSR 2017 because rarely had we seen such a variety of participants being so enthused, enlivened and spiritually surcharged. It was very moving and rewarding to observe the increasing bliss of the participants – be they our volunteers, yoga students, visitors, guests, and new as well as the senior devotees.

For SSR 2019, we aim at improving the services offered to our guests, create better facilities both in the venue and in accommodation. I think everyone was very satisfied with the quality of the *prasadam*.

This year our organising crew gained a few members but lost Venugopal dasa and Braja Vallabhi dasi, so it was somewhat challenging. However, we are very grateful for the new members of the 2018 organising team, especially Braja Vallabhi's family, who were integral in the organisation of the festival.

Please register for SSR 2019 now and be part of this growing and exciting preaching event. 🙏

Photo: Trevor Gore



Bhadahari dasa leading one of his sweet kirtanas at the Sacred Sound Retreat.

TRANSFORMATION AT SSR

By Jhulan dasi

We received so much positive feedback from devotees and guests alike at New Govardhana's Sacred Sound Festival (SSR). Here is one testimony from a student at Krishna Village.

Winter Harvey from Hawaii, an attendee at the Yoga Teaching Training course at Krishna Village, said, "It's hard to believe that less than a year ago I was deeply fearful of singing in front of anyone. I wouldn't even sing Happy Birthday to my husband. My fear was so bad, I actually ran out of a workshop crying on Day 2 of Yoga Teacher Training at Krishna Village because the instructor asked me to sing.

"Fast forward to the Sacred Sound Retreat 2018. There I was chanting at the top of my lungs – belting out the *maha-mantra* as loud as I possibly could – not a care in the world about who might hear me. Chanting the *maha-mantra* has rewritten my destiny, and *kirtana* has been the instrumental tool in finding a voice and cultivating the self-confidence I needed to share yoga with the world.

"I was blown away by the soulful musicians at the Sacred Sound Retreat – they were next level. At certain points during the festival I felt that I had reached *samadhi* – with the mantra flowing through my veins, my body kept moving as my soul floated high above New Govardhana in pure ecstasy. Best weekend ever! 🙏

EACH YEAR BECOMES SWEETER

By Jhulan dasi

It was my third year attending the Sacred Sound Retreat as a resident of New Govardhana. It is becoming sweeter and sweeter. Each year I am in a different mindset. The first year I absorbed myself in the holy name and developed a taste for *kirtana*; in the second year, my focus was more on the devotee association. This year it was serving the Vaishnavas.

I was engaged in the Temple Shop service, and I also tried to help with the needs of our guests. It was very nice to connect with many devotees and see them pleased with my little services for them. They weren't necessarily big things, just little favours such as finding their lost property, helping with directions, answering questions, and so on. It was nice to get out of my daily routine and engage in spontaneous service.

Various people came with different requests, that sometimes I even felt like it was a game Krishna was having with me. Each time He gave me a mission that I had to deal with, it seemed as if He also gave me a score of my service attitude. There were challenges, but whenever I felt weak from my mind and body I reminded myself of the power of the blessings of the Vaishnavas.

It was also nice to co-operate with our community members in preparation for the festival. I really like being a part of New Govardhana as it is my most favourite place in the world. 🙏

BB GOVINDA SWAMI AUSSIE VISIT

By *Kisori devi dasi*

Bhakti Bhringa Govinda Maharaja – affectionately known as BB Govinda Swami – who usually resides in Vrindavana, recently visited Australia for the first time. His good friend Indradyumna Maharaja had invited him to the Sacred Sound Retreat festival, held over the Easter weekend at New Govardhana.

Maharaja gave mesmerising classes on the *Sri Brhad-Bhagavatamrta* and led ecstatic *kirtanas*, captivating the hearts of many.

He travelled with his beautiful Deities and was ably served by his disciple Vinod Bihari dasa during the visit.

Maharaja writes: “Well, I wanted to dance with a kangaroo, duel with an Australian Brown Snake, cuddle a koala bear, and ride on the back of a Great White Shark.

“But instead I ended up having the association of many loving godbrothers and godsisters, an ocean of enthusiastic chanters and dancers, totally amazing hospitality, and it all took place in an area more beautiful than the planets of heaven.

“Thank you dear devotees of the Australian yatra. I pray that someday may return to your beautiful country, have your association, and the blessed hope to serve you all.”

All the devotees of the Australian yatra are eagerly awaiting his next visit. 🙏



His Holiness BB Govinda Swami at the Sacred Sound Retreat 2018.

Photo: Trevor Gore



Photo: Courtesy Facebook

Devotees at the Ipswich Ratha-yatra, which concluded the Commonwealth Games harinamas.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

By *Suvarna Rupa dasi*

There was no shortage of service opportunities last month for New Govardhana devotees, as the end of the Sacred Sound Retreat marked the beginning of the Commonwealth Games.

When their farm *seva* allowed it, many devotees travelled to the Gold Coast to join the Harinama Ruci team for two weeks of blissful *sankirtana*. Two devotees in particular, Garuda dasa and Syamalata dasi, made an extraordinary effort to attend *harinamas* every night. Their enthusiasm was a great inspiration.

“To see the hearts of so many souls touched by the holy name and a simple smile gives me the faith that *harinama* really can deliver everybody who comes in contact with the devotees,” says Syamalata. She continues, “Garuda has taken some of our devotees out almost every day, even though he has been doing all his regular services at the farm. He is also an inspiring devotee because he is making *harinama* possible for our

local New Govardhana community to travel to the Gold Coast.”

For the devotees who attended the harinamas, some of the highlights included dancing and chanting with the ecstatic women’s hockey team from Ghana and the grand finale *harinama* being the Ratha-yatra in Ipswich. 🙏

SERVICE OPPORTUNITY NOTICE

Paraphernalia service:

4.30am – 7am

7am – 10am

4.30pm – 8pm

General cooking:

Main breakfast

Dinner

if you are interested in any other service opportunities, please contact Padmalocan dasa

0423 374 840

NEW HORIZONS

By **Suvarna Rupa dasi**

It is a great blessing to be able to call New Govardhana *dhama* my home. I love waking up early in the morning and taking *darshana* of beautiful Shri Shri Radha Govardhanadhari, Krishna Balarama, Lord Giriraja and Gaura Nitai and serving Them alongside inspiring devotees.

I have heard from many Vaishnavas around the world that they have wanted to reside here for so many years, but still hadn't been given the opportunity. So I feel especially grateful to have been given this mercy.

As a newly arrived resident, coming from Sydney, I am very aware of the rare jewels that are freely offered. There is an unlimited variety of services: *kirtana*, outreach, cow *seva*, cooking, gardening, *harinama*, book distribution, garland making, study, devotee care, just to name some – and all in the most breathtaking environment imaginable.



Photo: Trevor Gore

Suvarna Rupa dasi singing the holy name at Burleigh Heads.

Here, devotees can practice and explore their unique relationship with Krishna in a natural and joyful way within a nurturing and encouraging community. But it's not just the devotees who can do this: the volunteers and yoga students from Krishna Village can, too!

Coming from a city outreach centre, one thing that is often challenging

is the introduction of guests to temple practices. This gap is so well integrated at New Govardhana, and it is inspiring to observe how the villagers grow more and more interested in devotional culture.

I pray that I can serve and please Their Lordships and the devotees here for many years to come.

STRONG FOUNDATIONS

By **Kisori devi dasi**

The new high school construction at New Govardhana's *gurukula* is making solid progress.

Vinod Bihari dasa, the school's principal, explains: "As a strong spiritual foundation will carry us well through life, so also a strong building foundation will hold firm our classrooms for years to come. Under Maha Mantra dasa's expert supervision, the high school construction is well underway.

"Specially engineered reinforcing structures are now being erected to ensure a strong support for the hilly slopes of the new high school site. The new buildings will be positioned on the different levels, allowing our high school students a beautiful view of the valley without any obstructions from other buildings and structures.

"We are looking forward to the completion of these robust retaining walls and the local Tweed Shire

Council giving us a green light for the building of the actual classrooms and other educational facilities on the new campus," he concludes.

Maha Mantra dasa offers some technical insights: "The first stage in constructing the new high school is to build the retaining walls. The masonry walls are being built prior to the construction of classrooms. This

sort of wall has the longest lifespan compared to other types.

"The first wall of Stage One has been completed, and the second wall should be complete in three weeks. After this, a smaller wall and a stairwell will follow and that will complete Stage One. 🏗️



Photo: Mahamantra dasa

The retaining walls at the new high school construction site receive close attention.

HOME MOTHERS GROUP

By Jyestha devi dasi

The idea to begin a mothers group at my home came to me during my pregnancy. There were at least seven other women in our community who were also expecting. I thought how nice it would be for all our children to form friendships right from birth, as they would most likely all be going to *gurukula* together in the future.

There are up to 10 mothers and 16 children who attend each week. The children are aged from four months to eight years (and some mothers are pregnant also). Of course, school holidays are the busier weeks.

The mothers group begins with morning tea at 10.30am and some guests bring a plate of *prasadam*. We also prepare lunch at home.

During the gathering, we share advice and experiences with each other. We also have *kirtana* with the babies and older children.

In the afternoon, everyone heads to the pool for a swim. The day usually ends with some mothers racing to the bus stop to collect their older



Photo: Courtesy of Jyestha devi dasi

A stellar cast of stars at Jyestha devi dasi's play group.

children, and some stay on for dinner as well.

We have such a lovely time together, watching our children grow and forming new friendships. It is a

wonderful support group for our community.

For any mothers or mothers-to-be who would like to join us, please contact me on 0457 060 150. 🐾

HAPPY HEARTS

By Indranila devi dasi

Happy Hearts Family Day Care in Murwillumbah is a Steiner-inspired day care that uses more than 70 per cent natural materials and toys. The curriculum includes gardening, handwork and craft, arts, adventure and cooking.

We provide freshly cooked vegetarian meals and try to practice sustainability. We also hold seasonal family festivals.

Happy Hearts Family Day Care is situated in the town of Murwillumbah, and we have vacancies on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8.30am–3.30pm. Please visit us for a tour!

Feel free to visit our FB page: @happyheartsfamily or website: www.happyheartsfamily.com. Otherwise, for more information, please call Ingrid (Indra) 0450 503 570 or (02) 66723916. 🐾



Photo: Indranila devi dasi

Top: Example of the delicious *prasadam* served at Happy Hearts.

Below: Children at play with natural materials.

CORRECTION

On page 2 of the April issue, there was a case of mistaken identity. Gadadhara Dasa, who was the subject of the column 'Sriila Prabhupada Uvaca' is different to Gadadhara Pandit of the Panca Tattva. We had included a bulleted point reminding readers that it was the Appearance Day of Gadadhara Pandit on 16 April, leading devotees to think that Gadadhara Dasa is the same personality as Gadadhara Pandit. We apologise for the confusion.

SPIRITUAL CHARIOT

By Vasusrestha dasa

Although cars are material objects made of metal, rubber and plastic, the New Govardhana devotees were pretty excited about our latest acquisition for the farm: a shiny, eight-seater Toyota Hiace Grand with low mileage. This new spiritual chariot will take our *sankirtana* party all over the area to spread the holy name.

Just seeing the van, ideas began to flow in the devotees' minds about what they can do and where they can go to expand the preaching. So far we are looking into developing outreach programs in Byron Bay and Mullumbimby.

Photo: Vishnujana dasa



Smiles all around for the new *sankirtana* van.

So with our new, yet-to-be-named chariot (the last one was called the 'Blue Screamer' because everyone used to scream, "where are the keys to the blue van?"), there's lots of

potential for the devotees to start small preaching centres nearby, consolidate our weekly *harinamas* and increase book distribution. 🙏

WAY NORTH

By Mandakini devi dasi

New Govardhana welcomed Townsville resident Malthi Sundari devi dasi for a two-day visit last month.

Five years ago Malthi started Bhakti Vriksha programs at her temple home in North Queensland. This highly successful venture is growing steadily, with regular book distribution and public programs. Her facility is a home away from home for the New Govardhana catering team, travelling preachers/book distributors and any devotee who may be en route to other destinations.

As a growing industrial town with various communities and a large army base, Townsville presents many annual and ongoing activities and cultural festivals. Thanks to Malthi, an annual Ratha-yatra festival is now one

of them, and much appreciated by everyone.

Opportunities for preaching abound, and Malthi never misses the chance to set up her bookstall and perform *kirtana*. She also works with Hindu communities and is often invited to religious events.

Malthi originally hails from Burma (now known as Myanmar). Her family members were the first ISKCON devotees there with her father, Bhagavata Dharma dasa, serving as the first temple president. Currently he is filling that role in Moulmein and at the advanced age of 85 remains a tireless preacher.

Her brother, Srivasa Pandit dasa, now heads up ISKCON Myanmar, a large project consisting of eight temples, four preaching centres, two *goshallas*, a *gurukula* and Food for Life. He also serves as the GBC for the growing Myanmar devotee population.

Malthi works full time as a literacy coach for secondary students at Education Queensland.

She thanks the New Govardhana farm management and all the devotees who have for many years supported the *yatra* in Townsville.

If you are heading up her way, Malthi can be reached on 0407 110 042 or Facebook Eliza Ba Than ebathan@gmail.com 🙏

Photo: Courtesy of Malthi devi dasi



L to R: Mandakini devi dasi and Malthi devi dasi at New Govardhana.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The Conch is your community newsletter. Please be a part of it! We invite you to submit articles for publication.

Articles should be 300 words or less and supplied in MS Word via email to caroeditor@gmail.com. Photographs must be in JPG format. Please provide the

name of the author and the photographer.

Deadline is the 12th of each month. Occasionally a submission could be held over to a later edition. All submissions will be edited, proofread and may be rejected without notice.

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FOR ENQUIRIES, COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS:

Contact: www.conch.org.au

SACRED SOUND REPORT

By Manjulali devi dasi & Jhulan dasi



All profits will go towards improving the festival for next year.

SNAPSHOTS – LADIES KIRTANA



Photo: FOTORLOKA

On Sunday 15 April, New Govardhana celebrated with a special Ladies Sunday Feast Kirtana. Kisori devi dasi presented a short seminar on the benefits of cow protection, and a number of talented Vaishnavi kirtaneers filled the temple with the sound of the holy name from 3pm to 8.30pm. Pictured here is Sri Gandharvika devi dasi leading a beautiful kirtana.

MAY CALENDAR

(from Vaishnava calendar www.vaisnavacalendar.com)

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 5 Sat | Sri Ramananda Raya – Disappearance |
| 11 Fri | Ekadasi – Fasting for Aparā Ekadasi |
| 12 Sat | Dvadasi – Break fast after 10.05am |
| | Srila Vrindavana Dasa Thakura – Appearance |
| 25 Fri | Ekadasi – Fasting for Padmini Ekadasi |
| 26 Sat | Dvadasi – Break fast 6.27 – 9.57am |

AUSPICIOUS BEGINNINGS

By The Conch team

On 19 April, Mukunda Goswami gave Vrindavani Briant first and second initiation simultaneously in a moving ceremony at New Govardhana.

Vrindavani lived on the farm for a period of time in 2016, and was delighted to have been able to be initiated here. She and her family are based in Mayapur. Her mother, Jahnvi devi dasi, is also a disciple of Mukunda Goswami.

Her initiated name is Vrindavani devi dasi.



Mukunda Goswami shows Vrindavani devi dasi how to chant gayatri mantra.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to Oxford and Webster and several other dictionaries, the word 'yuga' is part of the English language. Unbeknown to most present-day English speakers, the word crept quietly into the English language in about 1784.

HARINAMA SANKIRTANA KI JAYA!



Weekly at various locations
Contact **Garuda dasa** for details
garuda108das@hotmail.com

Sunday Mornings
Northern NSW & Gold Coast
Visnujana dasa 0498 141 021