



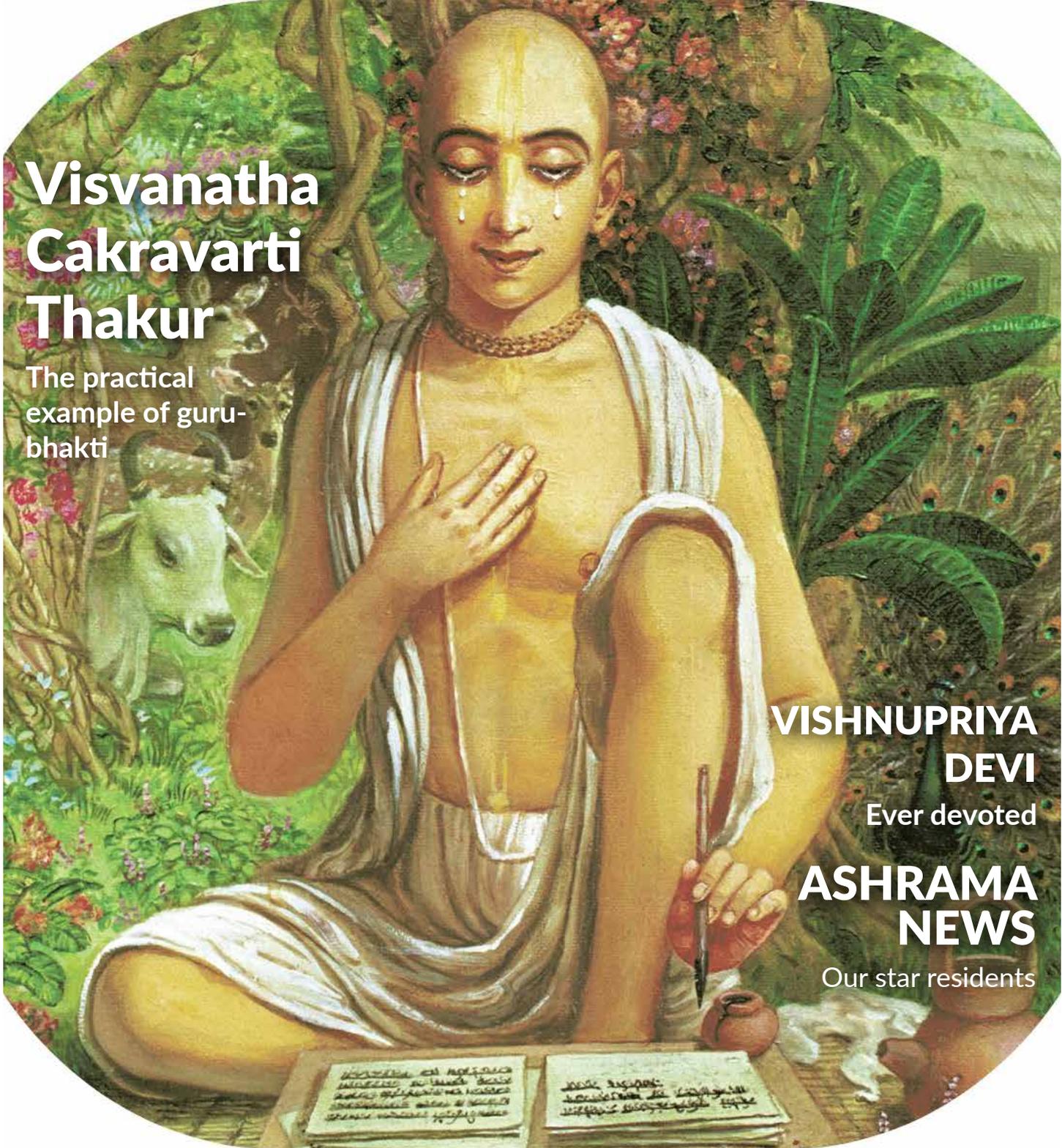
the
CONCH

New Govardhana Community Newsletter

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January
2020

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



Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakur

The practical
example of guru-
bhakti

**VISHNUPRIYA
DEVI**

Ever devoted

**ASHRAMA
NEWS**

Our star residents

Overseas Farm Conference • Goshalla Goss • Hope Flowers

Srila Prabhupada Uvaca

Daksa sraddadhanah: faithful. Faithful to whom? To the spiritual master. Whatever he says, the *brahmachary* should take it: “Yes, it is my life and soul.”

Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has taught very, very nicely about guru. Therefore he has written in *Gurvastaka, yasya prasada bhagavat-prasada*. He is a practical example of *guru-bhakti*.

He accepted his guru, Narottama dasa Thakura. So he said that, “I am not interested for my salvation or going back to Godhead. I am not interested.”

Interested means “It may come; it may not come ... But I am interested only with the words of my guru.”

Visvanatha Cakravarti said, “Whether I will be successful or not successful, it doesn’t matter. I must take the words of my Guru Maharaja as my life and soul.” 🙏

(Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura’s Disappearance Day is celebrated on 30 January.)

Reference: From *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 7.12.6 lecture

Please join us each Ekadasi for Srimad-Bhagavatam class given by ISKCON’s Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. These classes will feature subtitles.

Darshan arati 7am
Class 7.30am

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Cover photo: Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura

Photo credit: houseofbhakti.com

Vishnupriya Devi, Vipralambha Personified

By Anasuya dasi

Vishnupriya Devi was the second wife of Lord Chaitanya. In the town of Navadvip, Their marriage was celebrated with much fanfare, extravagant rituals and *kirtana*, as described in *Sri Caitanya Bhagavat*.

Lord Chaitanya’s first wife, Lakshmipriya Devi, dramatically died, leaving Him a widower. Vishnupriya Devi herself essentially became a widow when the Lord took *sannyasa* when she was just 16 years old and childless.

For Vishnupriya, the Lord’s departure preceded a lifetime of austerity and glorious love in separation. Worshipping Dhamesvara, a Deity form of the Lord, and eating only as many grains of rice as she chanted rounds, Shri Vishnupriya Devi is the ultimate example of how to live in this world while suffering from *vipralambha*, love in separation.

Noted by Srila Prabhupada as being non-different from the Goddess of Fortune (Srila Prabhupada letter to Govinda dasi, 1969), Vishnupriya Devi glorifies the Lord through her dedicated love for Him.

Indeed, Srila Prabhupada writes that “when her husband became *sannyasi* she also became greater than *sannyasa*”. (Srila Prabhupada letter to Govinda dasi, 1974.)

So, we can take shelter of Vishnupriya’s example, a lifetime of devotion to her beloved Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and especially remember her loving perseverance in times of difficulty. 🙏



Vishnupriya Devi always remembered Lord Chaitanya, so in that way she was always serving Him and was therefore never separated from Him.
(Letter to Govinda dasi, 13 Dec 1972)

Photo: www.iskconnews.org

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 200 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 10th 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.

Dry Days

By Karunamayi dasi

Due to the lack of rain and increasing heat the drought has been getting worse all around the country! The farm has not been this badly affected by drought in anyone's memory.

The cows seemed to be getting by, but then we noticed they had started to lose weight, so we sprang into action. Some of the cows have access only to extremely poor grass so huge bales of hay are being delivered to the farm on a weekly basis so every cow gets adequate feed every day.

A ute is driven around each morning by the cowherd team with help from the volunteers to reach every cow on every inch of the farm. The cows are so happy to be getting the feed and so hungry that they come running to the ute as soon as they hear the engine.

The cows don't appear to be losing weight any more, which is definitely a great sign! They had started to cry



The drought-stricken cows are overjoyed to be receiving their personally delivered meals.

Photo: Karunamayi dasi

because they wanted food so much, now we love to watch them while they silently feast on their delicious hay.

Please continue to pray for rain! 🙏

In full bloom

By Alyona Potapova

Despite the drought, by using the wash off or slurry water from the dairy, the garland makers are embracing the abundance of flowers brought this summer by our new flower gardener, Danielle Holmes. She arrived in July for the Yoga Teacher Training (YTT) programme, but coming from a background of growing flowers commercially, she couldn't help but picture New Govardhana in full bloom.

Ajita dasa, the temple director, and Thiago, our syntropic gardening expert, liked her vision and, in this hot and dry summer, Danielle with the help of volunteers managed to bring to the Deities hardy flowers, such as zinnias, marigolds and carnations to name just a few.

Her own experience with gardening started from using permaculture principles to grow food for her family,



Danielle Holmes with some of the blooms she is growing for the Deities at New Govardhana, thanks to some ingenious watering methods.

Photo: Courtesy Danielle Holmes

which turned into working on an organic market garden. She then teamed up with her friend to supply local florists, markets and events with cut flowers.

Danielle hopes to grow such flowers as poppies, freesias and anemones late summer, as well as continue to grow her spiritual practice in New Govardhana. 🙏

In Focus:

Ratipriya devi dasi

By Anasuya dasi

This month, *The Conch* interviews Ratipriya devi dasi, who has had a connection with both the Bhaktivedanta Gurukula and New Govardhana since the 1980s.

Q: Please tell us something about yourself.

RP: I met the devotees in 1980 in Brisbane. In 1983 I took initiation as Rati Srestha devi dasi. I then moved to the farm with my two sons, Sunanda and Jai, and served in the *gurukula*.

In 1984, I received *brahmana* initiation, and thus had the great fortune to begin Deity worship in addition to my *gurukula* service. In 1990, I married Prabhu dasa and moved to North Sydney, worshipping Shri Shri Radha Gokulananda (who, until March 1991, were presiding over North Sydney temple). In late 1991, we moved to Auckland.

There, in New Varshana, I also served in the *gurukula* and the Deity department until we returned to New Govardhana in 1994, where I resumed my previous services.

In 1999, we relocated to Melbourne, and I served Shri Shri Radha Ballabha in a variety of capacities, mainly sewing and *puja*, but I also helped set up their new commercial kitchen. In 2001, His Holiness Indradyumna Swami initiated me with the name Ratipriya devi dasi. Prabhu and I have three children, Prithu, Ramai and Amrita Keli.

Q: What is your main service here at New Govardhana?

RP: I serve as personal assistant and secretary to the *gurukula* principal. My husband encouraged me to apply for the advertised role and the rest is history. I like assisting Vinod Bihari prabhu and all the dedicated teachers.

Q: As a long-term devotee, what has kept you dedicated to Krishna consciousness?

RP: My desire to know true love and



Ratipriya devi dasi serving at the gurukula, one of her many long-term seva posts in her devotional career.

Photo: Anasuya dasi

how to attain it has sustained me. My service to guru, Gauranga and all the wonderful devotees I have met and maintained relationships with over the years have given me the foundation to begin understanding this.

Q: Do you have a favourite personality?

RP: I am particularly attached to Krishna Balarama. Here at New Govardhana, I dressed Them for many years. In Vrindavana during the 2017 Kartika, my personal Deities of Krishna Balarama blessed me and came home with me. My *guru maharaja* kindly named them 'Kanai Balai', personal names the *brajabhasis* call Them.

Q: What inspires you?

RP: My Deities, spiritual master and *sadhu-sanga*.

Q: Can you tell us what the Australian yatra was like in the past?

RP: In the 1980s there was a very dynamic mood; all the devotees were

engaged in full-time service to Srila Prabhupada. I was a teacher at the time. In 1980, Sabhapati dasa told me to quit my job and move into the temple, assuring me that Krishna would take care of all my needs. I didn't do that!

However, when I did move onto the farm, the mood was very vibrant. When the spiritual master for Australia at the time left a few years later, the *yatra* struggled. Devotees managed to rally together and things improved and became the community it is today.

Q: Lastly, what is your favourite quote?

RP: Once Indradyumna Swami told of a devotee asking Srila Prabhupada, "What does it mean when you chant Hare Krsna?"

Srila Prabhupada replied, "You are calling out to Krishna, 'My friend, my friend'."

I try to remember this during *kirtana* and my *japa* time. 🙏

Ladies' Ashrama Update

By Anasuya dasi

The women's *ashrama* at New Govardhana has been full of activity of late, with new devotees Bhadra Yamuna (from the US), Bhaktine Cameron (from UK) and Bhaktine Jin Lou (from Hong Kong) arriving, inspired to serve Shri Shri Radha Govardhanadhari.

Ellie, who is from Germany and who has already been serving at the temple for some time, has moved into the ladies' *ashrama* from the 'Krishna Pad'. Krishna Pad is a stepping-stone between the Krishna Village and either the *brahmachary* or ladies' *ashrama*.

Mandali-Kishori dasi continues as *ashrama* co-ordinator and keeps all the residents happily engaged. During Kartika, with many devotees away in India, Mandali-Kishori did a service marathon where she covered many services in addition to her regular cow and bullock *seva*.

Ashrama residents are spoiled each week with the senior association



Happy in Krishna's service (L-R): Bhadra Yamuna dasi, Ellie, Mandali-Kishori dasi, Jin Lou and Cameron.

Photograph: Anasuya dasi

of Srila Prabhupada disciples, Ambika devi dasi and Krishnarupa devi dasi, who give *kirtana* sessions and *Prabhupada Lilamrta* readings, respectively.

Residents are also delighted to have Sitala devi dasi residing in the *ashrama* for a couple of months, whose devotional presence always

enthuses. So there are no shortages of happenings in the ladies' *ashrama* at the moment.

"The ladies' *ashrama* at New Govardhana is one of the best in the world, with its beautiful outlook, tranquil gardens and very comfortable accommodation." says Sitala. 🙏

News from the Brahmachary Ashrama

By Padmalocan dasa

It's been a productive year in the *brahmachary ashrama* at New Govardhana in 2019. The *ashrama* is headed up by Krishna Gana dasa, who has not only been travelling around Australia catering but also took Govindas catering over to France to help the New Mayapur team begin their catering venture.

Garuda dasa has been up to his old tricks pushing Srila Prabhupada's Movement forward through his never-ending preaching, *hari-namas*, amazing feasts and transcendental lectures.

Jiv Jago has played a big role here at New Govardhana this year, doing all kinds of services including some



The happy brahmachary ashrama residents: L to R: Jiv Jago, Garuda dasa, Krishna Gana dasa, Padmalocan dasa, Giridhari dasa, and Bhakta Jack Ruhle.

Photo: Sastra Caksus dasa

big catering events, plenty of Sunday feasts and ecstatic *kirtanas*.

Bhakta Jack, the fresh face of the *ashrama*, has been doing some wonderful things – from milking and looking after the cows, paraphernalia cleaning, care for the many banana trees and many other services.

It's also been nice having Sudama Clark visit from Mayapur. He's been working hard on some great building projects around the farm and has been instrumental with the festival setups and decorations. 🙏

Gopastami Report

By Karunamayi dasi

New Govardhana celebrated Gopastami late last year in a wonderful festival of Krishna's coming of age to care for the cows.

It was a beautiful community organised festival. Devotees commented on the relaxed atmosphere and inclusiveness of the event.

Krishna Kirtana dasa, Markendeya dasa and Mandali-Kisori dasi took three young bullocks up for the festival where guests and devotees showered them with love.

A variety of beautiful dances, poetry and *bhajan*s were performed for the pleasure of their Lordships Shri Shri Radha Govardhanadhari. The incredible feast cooked by Govardhanadhari dasa and his team was described by many as one of the best feasts they've ever had.



The folk dance performed for the Gopastami Festival set the scene for the event celebrating Krishna's herding the cows to the forest for the first time.

Photo: Karunamayi dasi

Madhurangi devi dasi and her talented team of decorators beautifully invoked the mood of Vrindavana *dhama*. All aspects of the festival were brought together by

young Gopal, an amazing MC at such a young age.

Such a sweet day with something for everyone! 🙌

A Spiritual Trek to the Heart of the Himalayas

By Anasuya dasi

One of New Govardhana's main *pujaris* Dhanistha devi dasi recently embarked on a spiritual pilgrimage to the Himalayas. Along with friends, Bhuvana Mohini devi dasi and Madhu, Dhanistha braved dangerous slopes and high altitudes to eventually arrive at Gangotri, the origin of Mother Ganga.

Their journey began with a day drive from Rishikesh to Janaki Chattrion a very windy, frightening road complete with treacherous mudslides. Next, the team hiked six kilometres to Yamunotri, a very steep, but beautiful climb 3,291 metres above sea level. Despite being exhausted due to altitude sickness, the team continued on, only relenting to ride a pony for the last kilometre.

"I was particularly amazed at the inspiring local devotees, some of them



L-R: Madhu, Bhuvana Mohini devi dasi and Dhanistha devi dasi on their spiritual trek to Gangotri.

Photo: Courtesy Dhanistha devi dasi

quite elderly, who regularly make the climb. They smiled at our team and urged us onwards," says Dhanistha. From Yamunotri, the ladies followed on to Gangotri, driving two days to get there. Gangotri is nestled in the

Garhwal Himalayas. The temple there attracts many pilgrims who also bathe in the icy cold pious waters of Mother Ganga.

Dhanistha's pilgrimage into the Himalayas is inspiring to say the least! 🙌

North American Farm Conference

By Damodar Govinda dasa

Late last year, Ajita dasa, Director of New Govardhana, and myself, as General Manager of Krishna Village, were invited by Kalakantha dasa on behalf of the GBC Ministry of Agriculture and Cow Protection and EcoV* to participate in the third Annual North American Farm Conference. The conference was held against the beautiful backdrop of ISKCON New Vrindaban (West Virginia, US).

As representatives of New Govardhana, we were asked to describe the basic steps for developing a thriving community, focusing especially on our successful Krishna Village project.

“A community is like a pyramid,” Ajita explained, “and if we don’t put the right amount of energy in promoting and developing the base it won’t be stable. In the past 50 years, ISKCON has been focusing on building the brahminical head of the society; now it’s time to solidify the foundations.

“That’s why it is not only important but necessary that every ISKCON community, especially rural ones, include in their management plans the development of projects aimed to attract a wider variety of people that



Smiling attendees from the third annual North American Farm Conference 2019 held at New Vrindaban, West Virginia.

Photo: Courtesy Damodar Govinda dasa

can benefit from the association of devotees in a spiritual environment.”

In my presentation, I explained to the enthusiastic crowd the key points for a sustainable and successful community project. Special emphasis was put on assessing what people in general want and expect. We need to use intelligence along with creativity to meet their needs while offering spiritual support, a friendly and inclusive environment and, most important, an example of practical devotional life.

The managers of New Vrindaban were so impressed by the presentation that we had to repeat it the next day

for the New Vrindaban community.

We came back with some fresh ideas and the encouraging validation that the ‘New Govardhana way’ we presented was greeted with enthusiasm. 🙏

For more visit the following for the full description of the farm conference: <https://newvrindaban.com/north-american-farm-conference/>

* EcoV (Earth, Cows, Organics & Villages) is a non-profit whose mission is the development of local communities with a focus on animal protection, sustainable agriculture and lifestyles of voluntary simplicity.

Kadamba Kanana Swami Visits

By Bhadra Yamuna dasi

Late last year, His Holiness Kadamba Kanana Swami visited New Govardhana and as always gave engaging classes at the temple and down at Krishna Village. He led a lively *hari-nama* at Surfers Paradise and gave initiations at Brisbane temple as well.

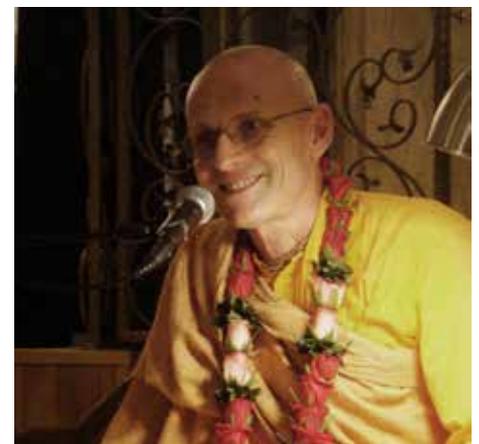
Maharaja’s humour, energy for service, and personable presence was inspirational for the New Govardhana community.

Max, one of the volunteers, says about the *kirtana* Maharaja held at Krishna Village, “It was amazing, I felt like I left myself beyond body and mind – like I was in Krishna consciousness – my real self.”

He was a big fan of the *hari-nama* as well.

“It was my first experience of chanting in the street, and I loved it! I felt like there was a light around me. It was interesting to see people’s reactions. My body became tired but my soul was awake.”

We look forward to the next visit from Kadamba Kanana Swami. 🙏



His Holiness Kadamba Kanana Swami is one of New Govardhana’s highly respected guest speakers.

Photo: Courtesy google image

Upcoming Events

**HARINAMA
SANKIRTANA
KI JAYA!**

WEEKLY

at various locations.
Contact Garuda dasa
0423 170 267

**SUNDAY
MORNINGS**

Northern NSW &
Gold Coast.
Contact Visnujana
dasa 0498 141 021