

PHOTO TOUR REPORT

Sri Krsna Janmastami and The Divine Appearance Day of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja

August 23-25, 2008



Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja and devotees coming out from Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha for the parade.

On the morning of August 23rd, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja arrived in Mathura from Govardhana for the celebration of Sri Krsna Janmastami, the appearance day of Lord Sri Krsna. This festival is Srila Maharaja's tradition. For the past 50 years he has been organizing the three day festival for this event, starting on the evening before Janmastami, with a grand parade of thousands of people dancing and chanting the Lord's names throughout the streets of Mathura.

Just outside Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha, he first offered arati to the Deities of Sri Sri Radha-vinoda-bihariji and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu as they sat on Their opulent chariot.



Then he indicated for the parade to begin, and it began – with a camel, an elephant, and a local brass band in front, followed by two children dressed up as Krsna and Balarama riding on two horses, and after that a kirtana party of mostly Indian devotees. Following this party were Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai on a chariot, a ladies' kirtana party, a float carrying children dressed up as Radha and Krsna, and a float carrying a child dressed as Dvarakadhisa Krsna. The third kirtana party, consisting mainly of western devotees, followed them, and they were followed by Srila Maharaja in his elaborately garlanded car. Finally, gloriously riding on a decorated bullock cart, sat Sri Sri Radha-Vinoda Bihariji and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Srila Maharaja walked for part of the parade, joining each kirtana party for a few moments.







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August 24th was Sri Krsna Janmastami. Bhajanas began about 6am at Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha. Srila Maharaja led the devotees in singing various hymns of glorification to Sri Krsna, and then he spoke about their deep meanings. He also discussed the glories of this auspicious day, beginning this part of his discourse with the question: “What would have happened if Sri Krsna had not come to this world?”





The next day, August 25th, was Nandotsava, the day that Nanda Maharaja celebrated the birth of his new son, Krsna. It was also the divine appearance day of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, famous throughout the world as Srila Prabhupada.



After the devotees performed mangala-arati and bhajanas, Srila Maharaja requested a few disciples of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada to speak, and he was the final speaker. The following is a transcription of his heartfelt offering:

“I am very, very fortunate that, as early as 1946, in Navadvipa and Calcutta, I met Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, at that time known as Abhaya Caranaravinda. My Guru Maharaja told me to serve him, as soon as I met him, and I have been doing so ever since. At that time ISKCON had not yet been born. I was with him and serving him then, and still I am with him and serving.

“Without power from Krsna, no one can preach all over the world in a couple of years, as he did. The power and inspiration of Krsna and the power of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu were with him, and that is why his Gurudeva told him to write articles in English and to preach in Western countries.

“Thus he went to America, without a cent in his pocket; nothing at all. He had karatalas, and with those he began to sing Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare; and Sri Krsna Caitanya Prabhu Nityananda, Sri Advaita Gadadhara Srivasadi Gaura-bhakta-vrinda. He was so internally absorbed that he was not aware of who was hearing him or not hearing.

“Attracted to what they heard and saw, the people coming to the parks in which he chanted, especially the hippies, would dance and sing with him. Sometimes, out of affection but not knowing what an exalted personality he was, they would offer him alcohol and other things like that.

“By his love and his mercy, spiritual impressions very quickly entered their hearts, and practically all those hippies who came to that Thompkins Square Park became happy. One of these hippies was Syamarani, another Vrndavana Vilasini, another was Tamal Krsna, and another was Krsna Vilasini [the three ladies were sitting in the temple-room of Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha as Srila Maharaja spoke].

“Engaging these hippies, he preached over the entire world, establishing preaching centers in the mountains, in the forests, in the midst of the ocean (on islands) – everywhere – in almost all of the counties of the world. His preaching was especially very solid due to his books – by his translations of Srimad Bhagavad-Gita As It Is, Srimad-Bhagavatam, Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, Sri Isopanisad, Easy Journey to Other Planets, and also the books of the Gosvamis. In a very few years, he preached everywhere.

“He gave sannyasa to young devotees, who were not qualified for sannyasa. If one has a thorn (splinter) in his foot, he takes it out by the medium of another thorn (or a needle or pin or another sharp object), and then throws away both thorns. Sri Krsna did something like this in His pastimes as well. *[See endnote]

“Similarly, his disciples were actually not qualified for sannyasa, but as a sannyasi he gave them sannyasa – because he wanted to preach the glories of the holy name and Sri Krsna everywhere. Engaging his disciples, he preached throughout the world and distributed his books.

“I think that my disciples are not doing as well as his. During his manifest stay in this world, young ladies used to go to airports, schools, colleges, and practically everywhere else. Somehow my book distribution is going on, but not like it was during his time. At that time, his disciples were not at all shy – they would go anywhere. I think that my disciples – lady and male devotees – should also preach like this. Still, I am happy that the mission of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the mission of Srila Rupa Gosvami, is now developing very quickly.

“At that time, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja saw that his followers were not qualified for raganuga-bhakti, so he mostly kept this secret in his books. For the most part, he did not speak about it in his general classes. Many of the ISKCON leaders have not carefully read his books, and therefore they do not know what is raganuga-bhakti and what is proper siddhanta (philosophical conclusions). They could not even understand his teaching that the soul can never fall from Goloka Vrndavana. He has never written that the soul falls from there. He has only written, and told, the words of Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami:

“krsna bhuli’ sei jiva anadi-bahirmukha
ataeva maya tare deya samsara-dukhha

[“Forgetting Krsna, the living entity has been attracted by the external feature from time immemorial. Therefore the illusory energy [maya] gives him all kinds of misery in his material existence.” (Madhya-lila, 20.117)]

“It seems that many of his disciples somehow think that the jivas were first remembering Krsna and serving Him in Goloka Vrndavana and after that they fell down, but this is not the truth. All of our acaryas, such as Srila Jiva Gosvami, Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana, and Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, have written that the jivas came from tatastha-sakti. When Sri Krsna is alone, with only His tatastha shakti, then the vibhinnamsa jivas (the infinitesimal separated parts and parcel living entities) manifest. The jiva soul here in this world has never gone to, or come from, Goloka Vrndavana. He has never fallen down from there.

“Many disciples could not understand the mood of their Gurudeva, and that is why they call Krsna ‘Radha-Parthasarathi’. This is quite wrong. In recent history, since the divine departure of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja from the vision of this world, I see that too many wrong ideas have been introduced, and so many of his disciples and followers are not progressing towards pure suddha-bhakti. They have no guidance in this regard, and that is why Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja told them just before his departure, “You should take guidance from Narayana Maharaja.” He also told them about Srila Sridhara Maharaja.

“He instructed his disciples and followers in this way, but many of them are not following. Nowadays so many persons throughout the world are engaged in ritvik discussions. Those who fell down, those who are without knowledge of spiritual truths – they are now ritviks. Actually ritviks have no relation with Krsna-bhakti. The actual meaning of the word ‘ritvik’ is only in relation to performers of fire sacrifices. The ‘ritviks’ of today do not even know what is a proper fire sacrifice, or how to do the offering of oblations in the yajna, or how to correctly utter mantras, what to say

about knowing anything of Guru-tattva. Nowadays, so many wrong things are going on.

“Now the time is over. Please perform kirtana, and after that you can all take your parana (break fast on the day following Janmastami, Ekadasi, or any appearance day of the Lord and His incarnations).”

Gaura Premanande.

[*Endnote: Krsna used demons to destroy other demons. For example, all the babies killed by Putana were actually demons taking birth to assist other demons. So Krsna set them against each other and ‘removed thorns by using thorns’. -ed]

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