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Congregational Development Journal



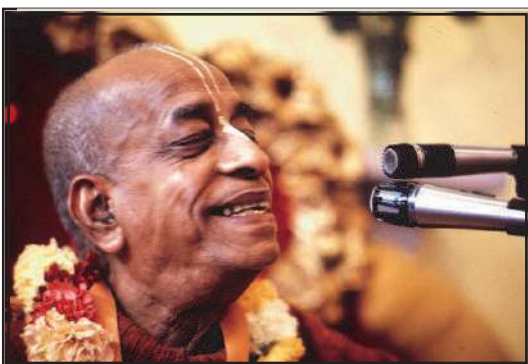
THE DAMODARA PROGRAM



An initiative started by the Malaysian devotees over a decade ago enabled them to reach over 100,000 people last year. ISKCON's Congregational Development Ministry wants to offer you the opportunity to celebrate this pastime, not only at the temples, but by going out to people's homes and public places, involving as many people as possible. This program encourages the collective participation of congregations by suggesting a combined effort in reaching out to others. It has been an outstanding success in many Yatras around the world. The idea of the program is simple: to encourage devotees to create visiting teams and perform the Damodara worship (offering of candles, singing the Damodara-song and hearing the narration of the pastime) in as many places as possible. This is a great opportunity to establish and cultivate new contacts and strengthen previous ones. Please read on to learn about the glories of this Damodara month and the exponential scope of this simple but effective program.



Srila Prabhupada on the celebration of Damodara...



“During this month, in Vrndavana it is the regulative principle to pray daily to Lord Krishna in His Damodara form. The Damodara form refers to Krishna in His childhood when He was tied up with rope by His mother, Yasoda. Dama means ‘ropes,’ and udara means ‘the abdomen.’ So mother Yasoda, being very disturbed by naughty Krsna, bound Him round the abdomen with a rope, and thus Krishna is named Damodara.” (Nectar of Devotion)



The Damodara Program: An Example of Innovation

By H.H. Jayapataka Swami

Innovation is an important aspect of spreading the Hare Krishna movement, and congregational preaching could greatly benefit from new ideas. The month of Damodara (October–November in the Roman calendar), also known as *Kartika*, offers us the opportunity to be innovative. Srila Prabhupada said that the Damodara month is a good time to bring new people to Krishna consciousness, and the *sastras* say that during this month, service performed for the satisfaction of Lord Krishna bestows unlimited benefit.

In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the congregational devotees use this special opportunity to engage people in devotional service. For the past few years, during this most auspicious month they have organized programs every night in different homes. In a program that lasts about half an hour, they display the picture of Mother Yasoda binding Krishna (Damodara), offer lamps, perform *kirtana*, and at the end serve *prasadam*. The hosting family then keeps the picture as a gift.

In the first year, the congregational devotees' combined efforts blessed over two hundred homes with the

performance of such Damodara-*vrata*. People in neighboring flats would hear the melodious *kirtana* and think, "They are getting so much mercy!" They would appear in the doorway and ask, "Why don't you also come to my house?" The next year the devotees increased the program, holding Damodara *kirtanas* in six hundred homes.

Many years ago, when I did a tour of Malaysia, I attended a program in a big hall decorated with banners proclaiming the glories of Damodara month with quotes from different *Puranas*. (The Vedic literature gives so much evidence on how dear this month is to Lord Krishna. In this month one's forefathers can be delivered if a devotee in the family offers lamps. Most importantly, in this month one can be awarded pure devotional service). The lights in the hall dimmed and a procession of young children holding candles appeared. One child held something that looked like a flute but was in fact a scroll. He handed the scroll to me, and the message revealed the devotees' plan for glorifying Lord Damodara, "Our goal is to hold the Damodara program in 1,008 homes during the Kartika month!" When I read the statement aloud, the whole audience of congregational devotees cheered and

chanted Hare Krishna. The Malaysian devotees spent the entire next year preparing the event, and everything was organized very practically. Their strategic planning paid off: they held programs in 1,300 homes and a total of 12,000 ghee lamps were offered to Lord Damodara. Because of this campaign many new people got a taste of Krishna consciousness. And the devotees keep inviting those newcomers to continue relishing the nectar of devotional service by coming to Namahatta programs and temple festivals.

This is a very innovative and potent program based on the scriptures. This type of program may be held during other auspicious occasions, such as the appearance and disappearance days of previous *acaryas* and on Ekadasis. The month of Vaisaka (April–May) is another auspicious time for performing *vratas*. Whenever there's an opportunity to take advantage of the mercy, devotees can organize special initiatives to increase and expand devotional service.

(This article describes the launching of the program in Malaysia on a grand scale nearly 10 years ago)

"...The Lord does not award devotional service to ordinary persons who are not serious about it. But even such unserious persons who execute devotional service according to the regulative principles during the month of Karttika, and within the jurisdiction of Mathura in India, are very easily awarded the Lord's personal service." (Nectar of Devotion)



How to Start

- Gather a committed team of devotees
- Promote the program amongst the congregation at Sunday Feasts, festivals, home programs, etc.
- Make a list of hosting families and other places to run the program (schools, yoga studios, Harinam spots, etc..)
- Gather the required items for the program (or Download the CDM Damodara-kit)
- Schedule home visits and public outings
- Maintain records of visits and outings



THE DAMODARA KIT

The Congregational Development Ministry, have compiled a Damodara-kit that has all that you need to go to friends', relatives' and neighbors' homes and hold a Damodara program with them. Power points, handouts, the song, the pastime and a step-by-step guide are included in the kit. It is available at: www.iskconcongregation.com



THE 3 PARTS OF THE DAMODARA PROGRAM

1. Worshipping:

- Arrange for a Damodara picture or Deity (figurine) to be placed on an altar or visible place
- Encourage participants to offer ghee lamps

2. Singing:

- Gather a Kirtan group or secure a CD or device that would play the Damodarastakam prayers
- Photocopy handouts of the Damodara song for everyone

3. Narrating:

- Print Damodara pastime handout to distribute to participants (if possible)

DAMODARA AROUND THE WORLD



Poland

Different temples around the world send us their reports every year on the development of the Damodara Program. This gives us a sense of how the worship of Lord Damodara is increasing year after year in our ISKCON congregations.

There are various benefits of this program. For example, many preachers report that when performing the Damodara program encouraging people in offering lamps, it has helped them in distributing Srila Prabhupada's books. Some devotees have taken a bold step and have brought Damodara to the streets, engaging the public to light a candle and offer it to the Lord, right in the midst of onlookers and passers-by.

Devotees from Bangladesh reached around 40,000 people last year, achieving their target of 2,000 homes visited. We also received reports from Canada, where the devotees organized home visits to interested people. In Chile, 7 families of devotees organized the offering of lamps to Lord Damodara in their houses every day. They also organized a grand celebration of the Govardhana festival where a large number of community members offered ghee lamps.

In Houston, USA over 60 homes were visited and 6,560 lamps were offered. In Coimbatore, in South India 73 homes took part in the Damodara celebration. London devotees reported 1,252 house programs with a total of 6,914 people offering lamps and 1,256 books distributed. A special mention for the devotees in Mumbai, who organized 559 programs in shops, schools and at people's homes. They reported 3,000 people having offered lamps.



USA

In Sri Lanka, the devotees set a quota of visiting an average of two houses per day, reaching hundreds of participants in the one month celebration.

In Florida, USA devotees from Tampa held several home programs and harinams, engaging a total of 320 people offering candles. Most of these people were newcomers. In Miami, 450 people offered lamps and 269 books were distributed during the programs.

The Malaysian yatra, for many years has set record numbers of participants and their innovative ways have taken this program to unprecedented heights. This is an example of how far the program can reach and devotees, according to their resources, can gradually increase it. We hope these number encourage you to try to further develop the Damodara program amongst your congregations. Happy Damodara month everyone!



Sri Lanka



Argentina

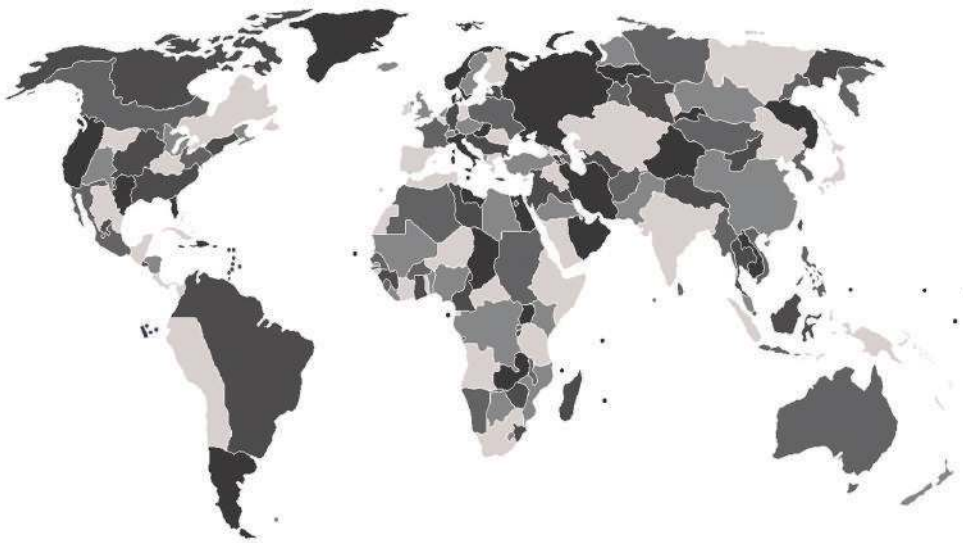


Malaysia





India



A SUCCESS STORY: Increasing Loving Reciprocations

“The Damodara Program is a very nice way of interacting with devotees. As a leader, I understand it is our role to educate and cultivate the congregation. And in this relationship, it is we who should be taking the first step, extending ourselves. Our society is voluntary, it is based on trust and loving reciprocations so this program is a perfect means to increase this.

If we are at all interested in Congregational Development, this is something we should be doing. I learnt about this program last year in Mayapur in ISKCON Congregational Development Ministry and we applied it in Warsaw. Of course the devotees appreciated it very much. It

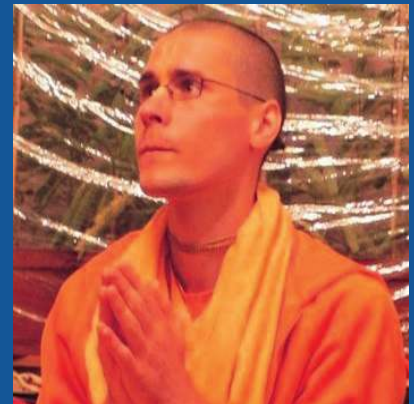
is such a wonderful direct service for Lord Damodara that we ourselves are also happy to participate. The results were wonderful and we will definitely continue this year with even better results by Krishna’s mercy

We are very happy and thankful to the Ministry for offering such a ready-at-hand means and we hope to continue the program with greater success. . I encourage everybody to participate in it.

Hare Krsna. Thank you very much!



Bangladesh



IN POLAND

Krishna Kirtan Dasa, Warsaw Temple President, describes his experience in implementing the Damodara Program.



Maximizing the Impact of the Damodara Program

By Kaunteya das •



"In devotional service there is no loss or diminution," Bhagavad-gita 2.40 teaches us, "and even a small service rendered in devotional life is sufficient to save one from the greatest danger." Engaging people in the simple act of offering a lamp to Krishna is, in itself, full of meaning, benefit and certainly impacts that soul's destiny in a powerful way. At the same time those who take the trouble (the burden of love) to organize the Damodara Program might wish to meditate on how to facilitate the growth of that simple act of service into something that grows in frequency and in substance.

The first consideration could be on the experience itself. For instance we could make sure that the lamps are not dripping ghee or other oily substances and don't leave the hand greasy (in that case we might want to provide ways for the devotees to wash their hands).

Secondly, we might want to ensure that the experience of being invited to offer the lamp is cordial, that the act is explained in a clear but succinct way, and that people don't feel forced by overzealous devotees (who could appear as more interested in accumulating numbers than in the individual person).

Thirdly, we could consider what small gifts

we could provide, what publications or souvenirs we can give to people to make their experience more pleasant, more memorable and equipping them more in terms of information.

And so we could make a mental (or written) list of the do's and don'ts in getting people to offer the lamp. After that, we could meditate on how to water the seed of the relationship with the devotees with some kind of follow-up. Of course there is a variety of circumstances, widely differing from each other, but in some cases we could take people's contact details (phone number, email or address, etc.) and make a point of getting back in touch with them at a later date, offering other devotional engagements.

Sometimes we compare this program with "getting one's foot in the door" an expression indicating completing the first step in a process, to ensure an initial opportunity and build on it later on. The Wikipedia's entry entitled "Foot-in-the-door technique" provides more insights on the psychological dynamics at play in the Damodara Program – besides its purely spiritual value: "Foot-in-the-door (FITD) technique is a compliance tactic that involves getting a person to agree to a large request by first having them agree to a modest request.

"The foot-in-the-door (FITD) technique succeeds owing to a basic human reality that social scientists call 'successive approximations.' Essentially, the more a subject goes along with small requests or commitments, the more likely that subject is to continue in a desired direction of attitude or behavioral change and feel obligated to go along with larger requests.

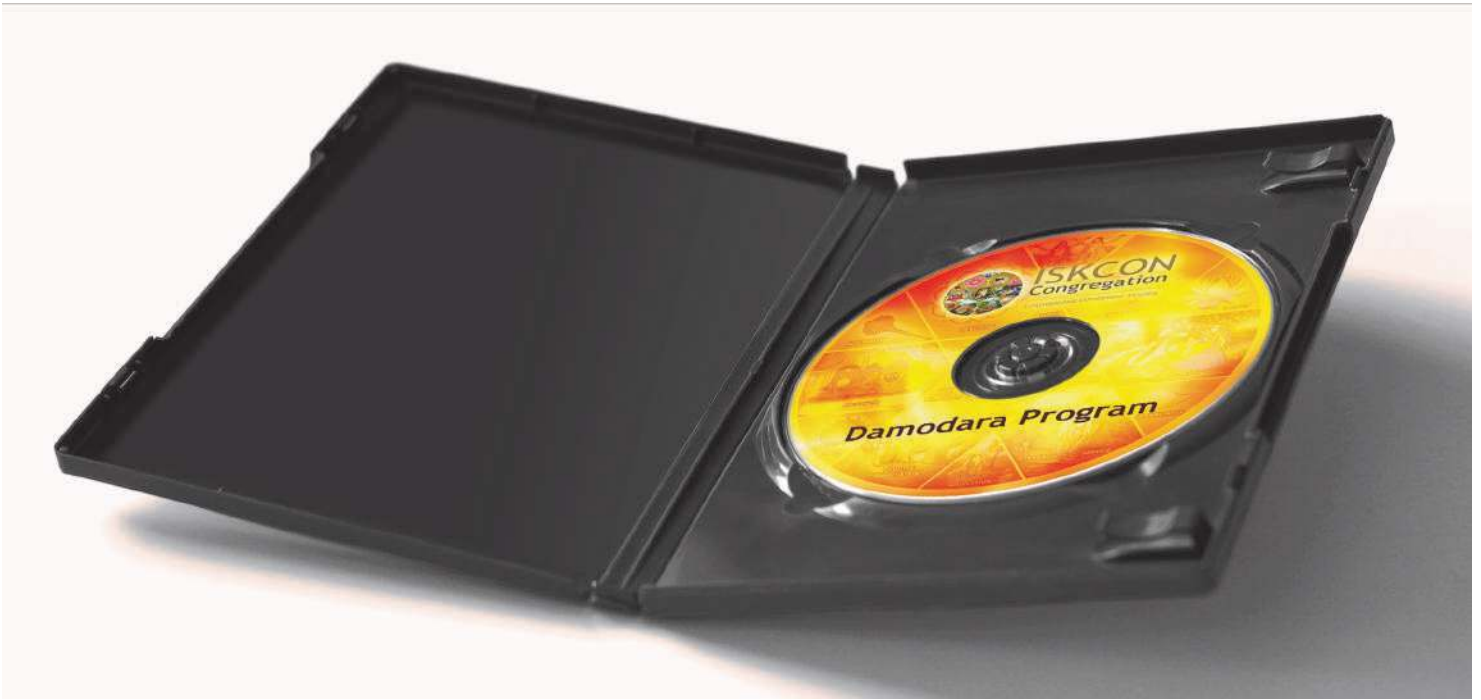
"FITD works by first getting a small 'yes' and then getting an even bigger 'yes' . . . The principle involved is that a small agreement creates a bond between the requester and the requestee. Even though the requestee may only have agreed to a trivial request out of politeness . . . When a future request is made, the requestee will feel obliged to act consistently with the earlier one."

And so we should meditate: What is the next request we can make? What is the next service, involvement we can offer? What is the next step in this soul's development of Krishna-bhakti? How could this small gain in the building of the relationship with the devotees be concretized into something more solid, more involving?

I will let your creativity – and your analysis of your situation – take over from here.



"Now I want that we shall concentrate on making our devotees Krishna conscious and ourselves becoming Krishna conscious, and not be so much concerned with expanding ourselves widely but without any spiritual content. Just like boiling the milk, it becomes thicker and sweeter. Now do like that, boil the milk." - Letter to Rupanuga, 9 May 1972



The Damodara Kit

Everything that one needs for the program is included in the Damodara-kit. It has Power Point presentations to teach about the pastime, to listen to and sing the Damodarastaka song, to present the program to others, and to read Srila Prabhupada's narration. It even includes a children's version of the slideshow. In addition it has handouts for participants, a brochure, and a report template. Everything is designed in a user-friendly style to make it easier for any devotee who wants to implement this program in their local area. This kit is available at: <http://iskconcongregation.com/content/damodara-kit/ebooks>

Opportunity for Service

Many devotees feel inspired by these congregational programs and want to know how to participate. Here are a few ways:

- * Send us a short report and/ or photos of your congregational programs
- * Share our facebook page or encourage others to check our webpage
- * Give a one time or monthly donation

Donation Options- Please visit our website at www.iskconcongregation.com/content/donate and

- 1) Donate through our bank
- 2) Donate through PayPal , or
- 3) Visit our central office in Mayapur, Chakra (Long) Building, office #127 and donate in person

For more information, please contact us at: cdm@pamho.net
www.iskconcongregation.com

*“...it is a special inducement for persons who are not in Krsna consciousness to perform some devotional service.....
....sometimes a store gives a special concession to attract new customers.”*



Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Jayapataka das Brahmachari,

30th January, 1969

“You have asked about the specialness of the month of Karttika, and the answer is that it is a special inducement for persons who are not in Krsna consciousness to perform some devotional service. For persons who are doing nothing in Krsna consciousness, it is an indirect inducement to take to devotional service in earnest seriousness, every moment is Karttika. In this connection, there is a good example that sometimes a store gives a special concession to attract new customers. But for those who are already customers there is no need of a special sale. They will purchase at any cost if they know the important value of the goods. Similarly, those who are pure devotees do not aspire for any concession, and out of spontaneous love try to engage themselves in devotional service twenty-four hours each day, three hundred and sixty five days every year, without any stoppage.”