****

**DAMODARA OUTREACH PROGRAMME MANUAL 2020**

***The highest form of compassion is in relation to the living entities’ souls. From such a compassionate propensity is born eagerness to deliver fallen souls from the miseries of material existence by awarding them devotional service to Krsna. ( Sajjana Tosani 9/9 by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur )***

**Published by – ISKCON CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY**

 **Chakra Building # 127, Mayapur Nadia District – 741313, West Bengal.**

**Contact numbers – +91-8101-880-342, + 91-7478-431-264**

**Email id –** **cdmofficeiskcon@gmail.com**

**Website – www.iskconcongregation.com**

**First edition – August 2020**

**Copyrights. All Rights reserved.**

***Please note: This manual is an ongoing project. Please send us your own ideas and experiences so that we may include them in future editions.***

***“You have asked about the specialness of the month of Kartika, 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 Kartika. 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.” ( Srila Prabhupada letter to Jayapataka Das Brahmachari 30th January,1969 )***

**DEDICATION**

**We dedicate this manual to the lotus feet of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada whose potency is unfathomable, mercy incomparable and who is a dearmost servant of Lord Krsna. He traversed the entire earth spreading the mood and mission of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, saving many souls from the degraded conditions of material life. It is by his mercy that we try to spread Krsna consciousness far and wide.**

**We pray for the mercy of the Guru Acharyas, Vaishnavas who are so enthusiastically dedicated to the preaching movement of Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.**

****

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

* PREFACE
* INTRODUCTION AND BASIC IDEA OF THE PROGRAMME
* THE HISTORY
* THE ADVANTAGES OF THE DAMODARA OUTREACH PROGRAMME
* HOW TO PROMOTE
* PROCEDURES TO CONDUCT DAMODARA PROGRAMMES
1. Homes.
2. Schools.
3. Shopping malls.
4. Offices.
5. Parks.
* OTHER PLACES WHERE THE DAMODARA OUTREACH PROGRAMME CAN BE CONDUCTED.
* THE CHANTING OF JAPA
* DAMODARA PROGRAMME AS FAMILY ACTIVITY
* THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION
* GETTING THE CONTACTS
* FOLLOW UP OF THE CONTACTS
* BRIDGES PROGRAMMES

 **PREFACE**

***“This is a very special month( Kartik Damodara month) and offering a lamp on this day not only helps you but also your forefathers and also helps your descendants, your children, grandchildren even those who are not yet born. So who will not take this opportunity to offer a lamp or do some simple seva”***

***( His Holiness Jayapataka Swami Maharaj, 3rd November 2015, Avataridesh)***

 **INTRODUCTION AND BASIC IDEA OF THE PROGRAMME**

The month of Kartik (Oct – Nov) is most auspicious. This month is also known as Damodara

(Dama ‘ropes’ and Udara means ‘abdomen’. Lord Krsna being the performer of unlimited pastimes is the reservoir of unlimited ecstasy. His sweetness evokes affection. The pastime where Mother Yashoda binds her son Krsna depicts that the Lord is bound by ropes of unmatched love of Mother Yashoda. Srila Prabhupada in the Krsna book writes ‘The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is known as the son of Yaśodā and Nanda Mahārāja, is never so completely known to the yogis and speculators. But He is easily available to His devotees. Nor is He appreciated as the supreme reservoir of all pleasure by the yogis and speculators.’

Therefore, the month of Kartik is a perfect opportunity to try our level best to make the Lord the centre of our lives.

It is said in the Skanda Purana, ‘as Satya Yuga is the best of yugas, as the Vedas are the best of the scriptures, as Ganga is the best of rivers, so Kartik is the best of months, most dear to Lord Krsna.’

This is the best time and perfect opportunity to receive the causeless mercy of the Lord. This is the time not only to approach the general masses but also to cultivate them in this process of devotional service. The Vedas state that because this month is very dear to Lord Krsna, if anyone offers just a ghee lamp to the Lord, that person receives many benefits.

Therefore, the main aim of this programme is to reach out to many people by inducing them to offer ghee lamps to Yashoda Damodara. The chanting of Holy names and narration of the Lord’s sweet pastimes will surely bring a change in the consciousness of the general public as this programme is carried out in a very simple and effective way.

For the newcomers in this process of Bhakti, this programme will sow a seed of enthusiasm towards preaching and conducting the same programmes in their own locality. Children can be engaged as well, because children like to learn everything in devotional service in a creative way. This programme also gives us a chance to distribute Srila Prabhupada books which helps householders to take up this service. It is also a practical way of showing Jiva Doya because it is said in Hari Bhakti Vilasa, Kartikka Mahatmya, text 144, *‘A person who offers a lamp to Lord Krsna during Kärttika attains the eternal spiritual world where there is no suffering’.*

**THE HISTORY**

The Damodara Outreach programme was an initiative taken by the Malaysian devotees about a decade ago and now this programme is conducted world-wide. It all started with a few devotees visiting houses during the month of Kartik. This month is the time of festival within Indian communities and many people are in a happy, festive and prayerful mood, especially during Diwali. The devotees took this opportunity and visited a few homes and induced people to offer ghee lamps to Lord Damodara. As the devotees witnessed positive and familiar responses from the public, they started conducting the programme on a large scale. For the past few years, during this most auspicious month they have organised programs every night in different homes. In a programme 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. In the first year, the congregational devotees’ combined efforts blessed over two hundred homes with the performance of such Damodara vrata. People in neighbouring flats would hear the melodious kirtana and they would later approach the devotees to hold a similar programme in their houses as well. In this way the devotees increased the programme and in 2019 they reached 100,000. Gradually, this programme ventured into Schools, Colleges, Temples, Offices, Factories, Shopping Malls and Public areas.

**THE ADVANTAGES**

This is a very innovative and potent programme based on the scriptures and everyone can participate in it. It is very easy to cultivate new people because the approach is very simple and familiar. For new devotees this is a very innovative way to learn to preach and distribute books. This is a very sublime way to connect everyone to Krsna consciousness and to introduce the glories of Damodara Lila. The contacts received from the visits can be cultivated and in this way we make more devotees. This programme is a good way to get people to participate in Harinaam Sankirtan. The Damodara programme is very enjoyable.

**THE PROMOTION**

The promotion should start several months earlier with the leaders and temple presidents showing the importance of this programme and how it will benefit everyone. Devotees, other congregational leaders can share ideas of how to improve and make it more attractive. The previous year’s achievements of all temples can also be presented to give a higher motivation and bring out more creative ideas. Videos and pictures of Damodara programmes conducted in homes, public places, offices, schools with great participation from the people can be shown and need to be uploaded onto YouTube channels, websites, Whatsapp groups and on the Damodara app. The targets and score card format can be shared. Templates, reading materials showing a guideline as to how to conduct the programme in homes, schools, shopping malls and parks can be provided to the trainers and the interested devotees. Articles and powerpoint presentations can be created. All the materials should be broadcast and shared locally as well as globally. The aim should be to give an outline of what this programme is and how it is to be conducted. The objective has to be clear.

**HOW TO PERFORM THE DAMODARA OUTREACH PROGRAMME**

As the main objective of the programme is to introduce Krsna consciousness to everyone, the programme should be simple, creative and effective.

This programme consists of the following:

1. ***OFFERING OF LAMPS***– Place a picture of Yashoda Damodara on a table, altar, or any clean place that has space and is visible to everyone. Then encourage and invite everyone to offer Ghee lamps.
2. ***HARINAM KIRTAN AND SINGING OF DAMODARASTAKA* –** While offering lamps the devotees can sing the Damodarastakam and then the Hare Krishna mahamantra. Hard copy printouts of Damodarastakam can be given to participants.
3. ***NARRATION OF THE PASTIME AND GLORIES*** – Usually it is good to narrate the pastime of Mother Yashoda binding Lord Damodara but in case of time constraint, we can give print the pastime and give this out.

To start the programme we need committed devotees who are willing and able to dedicate some time and energy. Devotees can start planning strategies a few months before Damodara month begins. They can select groups of devotees who will go out, plan areas and brainstorm new ways of conducting programs and approaching new people. Promotion of the programme amongst devotees by providing necessary material is very important. Create a list of homes, schools, offices or any other public places that will be visited. Make a list of invitations with the hosts. Prepare a kit which is to be always carried for the programmes - for example the deity pictures, printouts and ghee lamps. The ISKCON Congregational Development Ministry has a Damodara kit where you can find all about Damodara month and a step-by-step guide for conducting a programme. This is available on our website [www.iskconcongregation.com](http://www.iskconcongregation.com). Then schedule all the home visits and public outings and maintain records of all the events.

**PROCEDURE TO CONDUCT DAMODARA PROGRAMMES**

 **AT HOMES**

1. A host home is selected beforehand. Schedule the appointments. Prepare the list of homes to be visited each day.
2. All the necessary paraphernalia has to be carried i.e. table, altar cloth, framed picture of Damodara and Srila Prabhupada, lamps or candles, ghee bottle, matches, song-sheets, musical instruments, sound system Damodara kit CDs and prasadam. Flowers, incense and other types of decor are optional.
3. The programme should be scheduled for 1 hour.
4. Prepare a short narration of Damodara lila and the glories of offering a Ghee lamp and the glories of Srila Prabhupada.
5. Offer the ghee lamps while singing the Damodarastakam and Hare Krishna Mahamantra. Ghee lamps should be offered in a proper organised way. It should not be in a chaotic way. Make prior arrangements for the proper disposal of ghee lamps.
6. Chant one round of Japa with everyone. A report of the number of people who chanted should be taken.
7. Distribute some prasadam.
8. A gift can be given to the host at the end of the programmes.
9. Contact names should be collected and relayed to all the preachers, coordinators and leaders. Follow up is a must so that the people involved feel personally care for.
10. The home programmes allow everyone in the family to participate and by seeing this, other families get motivated to have a similar programme in their own home.
11. A book table displaying Srila Prabhupada’s books can be set up.

 **IN SCHOOLS**

* 1. Devotees have to be assigned to organise DOP in schools in a particular area. For this they have to compile a list of schools in that specified area.
	2. An appointment with the principal or other authorised person of the school has to be taken prior to the programme. The letter should be on an official letterhead. This letter should mention the details of the programme, its benefits and a description of the glories of offering a ghee lamp. In the letter it can be mentioned that this month has a main festival which is Diwali; the festival of lights and that it is very beneficial for everyone.
	3. Once the letter is given to the school authorities and permission is received, then the next step is to set a date.
	4. On the said date carry the necessary paraphernalia i.e. table, altar cloth, a framed picture of Damodara and of Srila Prabhupada, flowers, incense and other types of decor, lamps, gifts, candles, matches, song-sheets, ghee bottle, musical instruments, sound system, Damodara kit CDs and prasadam.
	5. The DOP in schools has to be conducted in an organised manner depending on the age of the children. For the young children who cannot be given lamps, they need to be invited to an assembly hall where they sit one behind the other. If there are many class divisions then there might be separate rows for each group. Each row can have 50-60 children sitting. Ahead of the students should be the class teacher of each group. The teacher faces the table where the picture of Lord Damodara is placed. A short narration of Damodara Lila pastime is narrated, then, to offer the lamps, each class teacher should be given a large lighted lamp. The child who sits right behind the teacher touches the teacher and all the children sitting behind will touch the previous child which will look like a chain from the beginning to the end. Then the teacher offers the lamp. The idea is that even if the child touches the teacher who holds and offers the lamp and all the children touches the previous child, they get the benefit of showing the lamp. When the lamps are offered in this way and the children start leaving the hall, hand over some prasadam. In this way each child gets the benefit of hearing Damodara lila, offering the lamp and honouring prasadam.
	6. Older children can queue up and one by one approach the table with the picture of Damodara and offer the lighted lamp that is placed in front of the picture or take individual lamps handed out by a devotee. They have to be guided as to where to leave the individual lamps once they have shown it to the Lord. One by one a child will come, take the lighted lamp, offer the lamp, place the lamp back on an empty tray, take the prasad and go back to his or her seat. In this case the great advantage is that not many lamps are required. One lamp can be used by all the children.
	7. The offering of lamps should be done in an organised way ensuring the utmost safety of children. Always see that young children in school are given the first chance to offer lamps. Ensure that at the end of the programme children have all received prasadam.
	8. Make prior arrangements for disposal of lamps.
	9. A book table of Srila Prabhupada books and also ISKCON children’s books can be set up.
	10. If, after the programme, the principal or the school authority gives “letter of appreciation”, that can be used for taking permission in other schools and can be kept to be displayed to other congregations.
	11. A box of prasadam and a gift can be given to the school Principal and teachers.
	12. Relevant contact numbers should be taken for reference or for future invitation to temple programmes with regular follow up.

 **IN SHOPPING MALLS**

1. Assign devotees for this. Devotees can choose popular malls and other shopping venues that attract big crowds.
2. Devotees should visit the management with a letter seeking permission to set up a table with picture of Damodara and invite shoppers to participate. The letter has to be on an official ISKCON letterhead. The letter should mention why this month is considered auspicious as well as giving a description of the festival of lights - Diwali. The idea can be promoted by saying how the lighting of lamps is beneficial. Some previous year’s pictures of lighting lamps in malls from other countries or in other malls can be shown as reference. The devotees can use terms like- these are Lamps of Love, Peace and Prosperity. If there is more than one mall with a large number of crowds visiting, then the devotees should assign days for each mall for the programme. This depends on the number of devotees willing to be engaged. If the programme can be done in one whole month in more than one mall, the devotees should divide themselves into groups in order to conduct the programme for the entire month. Specify how much space is required to have a diorama inside the mall.
3. Once permission is granted, the devotees should relay this to their authorities or congregation leaders.
4. Malls attract a huge number of crowds. Therefore, the diorama where Yashoda Damodara deities and a framed picture of Srila Prabhupada would be placed have to be decorated nicely with flowers. It should look colourful.
5. The devotees should carry all the necessary paraphernalia i.e. table, flowers, incense, lamps, ghee bottle, gifts, candles, match box, sound system and Damodara kit CDs.
6. Devotees should invite people with a smiling face to offer lamps. Harinam should be played constantly.
7. Some two to three lamps can be lit, kept on the table and used for offering by everyone. Pamphlets of the glories of Damodara month can be given out.
8. Srila Prabhupada’s books, mainly Bhagavad Gita As it Is and The Krsna Book, can be displayed. A small donation box should also be kept alongside.
9. Small gifts and prasadam can be given out.
10. The contacts should be collected and related to the concerned authorities/ leaders. Proper follow up should be organised.
11. Maintain score cards.

 **IN OFFICES**

1. A Damodara programme in offices can be done in a very simple way. Devotees working in their offices can seek permission from their authorities at work. Usually in western countries the programme is organised on Diwali but in countries like India, Diwali is a holiday so this programme can be conducted on other days.
2. The programme can be conducted in the evening, just prior to colleagues leaving for home, as that is considered the best time.
3. On the day carry pictures of Yashoda Damodara and Srila Prabhupada, a cloth to cover the table, candles, lamps, ghee bottle, match box, pamphlets, flowers and prasadam.
4. Then some three to four lamps can be lit and the office staff can come one by one to offer the lamps to the picture. The same lamps can be used. Damodarastakam can be played or sung.
5. Hand out the pamphlets and distribute prasadam.
6. Prepare the report and relay it to the concerned ISKCON authorities.

 **IN PARKS**

1. Devotees select a park in their area.
2. Then seek permission wherever necessary for conducting the programme.
3. On the day, carry all the necessary paraphernalia i.e. a small table where pictures of Yashoda Damodara and Srila Prabhupada can be kept. Some ten to fifteen lamps can be taken. Also ghee bottles, candles, flowers, sound system, musical instruments, templates, Damodara CDs, song sheets and a donation box.
4. Start singing kirtan and invite people to offer lamps. The same lamps can be handed over to the next person.
5. Once they finish offering lamps, the Damodara pamphlets can be given out along with some sweet prasadam.
6. Books of Srila Prabhupada should be displayed and a donation box can be kept as well.
7. Approach them in a friendly way and collect the contacts of those who are interested. Good follow up will give good results.
8. Make the score card and relay it to the ISKCON authorities.
9. If there are enough devotees, then it can be done in a more enjoyable manner attracting the crowd say for example by singing and dancing in the kirtan. Devotees can bring people to chant and dance along with them, making the programme livelier.

**OTHER PLACES WHERE YOU CAN PERFORM DAMODARA PROGRAMMES**

The Damodara Programme can be conducted in numerous ways and places. Here are some more ideas -

WHERE THERE IS A GATHERING - A place can be chosen where there is some sort of gathering. You can put up a table with pictures and keep a few lamps or candles. Carry Srila Prabhupada books. Then invite people to offer lamps. You can say this lighting of lamp is to bring peace, happiness and love around the world. In many countries during Diwali the devotees choose an Indian shop and they put up a small table with pictures and invite people to light lamps. Take contact details and later invite participants to temple programmes.

NON-ISKCON TEMPLES- One can conduct such a programme in some non-ISKCON temples as well. Take permission and set up a table with pictures, lamps and Srila Prabhupada books. One can invite their friends, other family members and colleagues. The programme can be conducted in a similar way to house programmes if there is enough time. Otherwise the people can come and show lamps and devotees can give prasadam .Take contacts and do the necessary follow up.

HARINAAM ON STREETS – When devotees go out for Harinaam, they can carry Yashoda Damodara in a basket or pictures, lamps and other necessary paraphernalia. Select a place where there is huge gathering and then invite people to offer lamps. The people get the benefit not only of offering lamps but also listening to Harinnam kirtan, dancing to the kirtan and taking prasadam.

ON CAR TRUNKS - Many devotees use the trunk of a car for distributing books . Similarly lamps can be offered here too. Pictures of Yashoda Damodara and Srila Prabhupada can be kept. Light the lamps, invite people to offer, give out templates, distribute books and prasadam.

SHOPS/SALONS / PARLOURS - Devotees having their own shops and beauty parlours or salons can keep a Yashoda Damodara picture and keep a big lamp. People who come can offer the lamp.

For a very small performance of devotional service in the month of Damodara, one gets a very big result. Therefore, the Kartik Damodara programme can be conducted in many ways giving benefit to the general population.

 **CHANTING THE HOLY NAME**

The seed of devotional service is there in every living entity. Therefore, the duty of devotees coming in the line of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu is to ignite the dormant Krsna consciousness in the hearts of all living beings. In the Bhagavad Gita Lord Sri Krsna assures us that the power of Bhakti and a simple act of devotion will surely save everyone from the clutches of repeated birth and death. This Programme gives every living being a chance to do the simplest thing, that is to offer a ghee lamp to the Lord. With that, when a living being chants the Holy Names of the Lord it gives a more tremendous transformation in the hearts and consciousness of every living entity. In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy the best method of self- realization is chanting the Holy Names of the Lord. Whatever one does in executing devotional service must be accompanied by the chanting of the Holy Names of the Lord.

We must ensure that whatever devotional programmes one conducts, there should be Hari Naam Sankirtan.

**DAMODARA PROGRAMME AS A FAMILY ACTIVITY**

The Damodara Programme is a programme in which all members of a family can participate together. 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. The Grihastha devotee plays an important role in bringing people to Krsna consciousness. During the Kartik month many families go together in the streets, to different houses, various communities and induce people to offer lamps. This programme is different from other programmes because expert training is not required. Each member of the family can come up with many innovative and creative ideas. Often, family members cannot attend programmes together, for example parents cannot attend children’s programmes, but the Damodara programme is a platform where everyone can get involved. It is a great way for household devotees to reach out to new households and create goodwill and unlimited devotional credits for everyone. Each member of the family can invite their own friends, colleagues and others.

Many devotee families organise Damodara programmes for the entire month and invite their friends, neighbours and others to come and take part. This way they get an opportunity to preach, get others to chant the Holy Names, spread the glories of Srila Prabhupada and Lord Krsna, distribute books, distribute prasadam take then, in following up, maybe invite them to Bhakti Vriksha and other events. Devotee families also organise Govardhan puja where many members of the community take part and offer ghee lamps. In this way the culture and the spiritual understanding behind the festivals of Diwali and Govardhan puja are spread. Families can influence many people to take up Krsna consciousness. All that is required is enthusiasm and dedication. The Damodara Programme conducted in many innovative ways by families, results in sowing the seeds of bhakti in the hearts of people and making many devotees, thus connecting everyone to Lord Krsna.

**IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION IN DAMODARA PROGRAMMES**

Children too play an important role in the programme. Children are by nature very enthusiastic. Dressed in their Vaishnava attire they look so attractive that when they visit door-to-door, people become joyful and receptive. The children could narrate the Damodara lila in a very short and sweet way in the house programmes. They can enthuse the members of the host family to chant a round or they can help volunteer in giving out japa and prasadam. Children can even be engaged in a short drama while conducting the Damodara programme in houses and schools. They can decorate the basket which carries Yashoda Damodar. They can sing kirtan in the streets making it attractive to onlookers and passers-by. They can distribute books. Children usually pledge to get some particular number of participants every day to offer lamps and they make great efforts in reaching their goal. They can distribute prasadam and colour the earthen lamps making them look more artistic. This way they are always in a jovial mood eagerly waiting for Damodara month every year.

**GETTING THE CONTACTS**

In Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu 1.2.4 Srila Rupa Goswami writes ‘*tasmāt kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet’* “Therefore, somehow one must think of [Kṛṣṇa](https://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/krishna#hinduism) by any of the favorable methods.” The sole purpose of all our programmes is to connect people to Lord Krsna. This programme is an easy and sure way to reach out to new people showing them the real blissful

nature of the spiritual world. Therefore, while conducting such programmes, we have to ensure that all the necessary contacts have been taken. Our idea should be to connect them to Krsna consciousness till the time of their own commitment to devotional life. For this we will probably have to develop new, effective ideas as to how to get the contacts. The youth in the congregation will likely have different ideas on how to reach out to people and get the necessary details from them. Therefore, devotees especially the youth, should be trained up. A friendly nature is always the key to developing good relationships with others and this will also make others feel special. A positive approach, body language and facial expressions are important considerations. Whenever there is a programme, whether in schools, colleges, in the stalls or on the streets, the devotees should carry necessary things like a notebook or forms where they can fill out contact details. Contact cards should always be available. Basic information like name, address, contact numbers, email id etc. should be taken and a system developed so that details are passed to someone responsible for entering the information onto an electronic database so that details are not lost.

**FOLLOW UP OF CONTACTS**

Once the contacts are collected, handed over and entered, the next and the most important step is to **follow up**. The follow up is the most important step to connect and bring people to Krsna consciousness. We strongly suggest that follow up commence immediately. If we take too much time then people may lose interest and it might become difficult to engage them in further activities.

 Some ways of follow up:

1. You can ask the person whether they wish to receive a monthly newsletter by email and request them to visit the websites or your Facebook, Instagrams or Twitter sites.
2. You can invite them to attend a temple festival or a Sunday Feast program.
3. You can inform them of any Food for Life programs and invite them to participate
4. If they are favourable and have children, inform them about our children’s classes.
5. You can tell them about any Bhakti Vriksha gatherings in their neighbourhood.

When calling up a person, the devotee should be aware of the time of the call. Usually weekends are the best time. On week days, make sure you don’t call during office hours, evening time may be best. The conversation should be very friendly and short. Prepare conversation notes so that you don’t get confused during the call. We should state our appreciation that they came and showed interest in a programme. If the details are not complete, we can get more information while speaking to the them. If a person shows disinterest then we should not call them up again. After each call, the devotee should write a remark so that further contact and follow up will be appropriate and personal.

Following up on contacts in a timely fashion and appreciating their efforts and interests in Krsna consciousness will not only benefit them but also keeps devotees enthusiastic.

**BRIDGES PROGRAMS**

Once the follow up of the contacts is done nicely, then the next step is to develop the relationships. Initially not everyone will come to the temple to attend morning programmes, hear the Bhagavad Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam classes or attend temple seminars. Therefore, devotees may have to create a place between the newcomers and the temple - a bridging experience. The devotee decides how to develop the contacts and may decide, for example, to invite them to some home programmes where they can be more familiar, feel more relaxed and where there’s more chance of a nice personal interaction taking place before thinking about inviting them to more formal programmes or a Bahti Vriksha. A simple programme may include a simple introduction to Krsna consciousness, maybe a short power point presentation on topics such as “Who Am I” “The Science of Reincarnation” etc. Then one round of japa followed by kirtan and prasadam. Different temples and congregations have different ways of bridging the gap between first contact and commitment.

**CONCLUSION**

Srila Prabhupada gives us the example of a store that has a sale, when a customer can get a very valuable item for a very low price. So, the month of Kartik is like a sale, a transcendental sale. With a little investment in terms of spiritual practice and service, you can get a great result. Of course, the management of the store hopes that you will come to appreciate its goods and patronize the store even after the sale is over. So we too hope that everyone will continue with their spiritual practices, or increased practices, even after the month of Kartik is over.

****

ISKCON CONGREGATION

CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY

‘HELPING YOU TO EXPAND YOUR CONGREGATION’

**Sri Damodara Astakam**

**(8 verses glorifying Lord Damodara)**

**Found in the Padma Purana of Krsna Dvaipayana Vyasa, spoken by  Satyavrata Muni in a conversation with Narada Muni and Saunaka  Rishi.**

***“In the month of Kartika one should worship Lord Damodara and  daily recite the prayer known as Damodarastaka, which has been  spoken by the sage Satyavrata and which attracts Lord Damodara.”***

***(Sri Hari-bhakti-vilasa 2.16.198)***

**(1)**

**namamisvaram sac-cid-ananda-rupam**

**lasat-kundalam gokule bhrajamanam**

**yasoda--bhiyolukhalad dhavamanam**

**paramrstam atyantato drutya gopya**

**TRANSLATION**

**To the Supreme Lord, whose form is the embodiment of eternal  existence, knowledge, and bliss, whose shark-shaped earrings are  swinging to and fro, who is beautifully shining in the divine realm  of Gokula, who [due to the offense of breaking the pot of yogurt that  His mother was churning into butter and then stealing the butter that  was kept hanging from a swing] is quickly running from the wooden  grinding mortar in fear of mother Yasoda, but who has been caught  from behind by her who ran after Him with greater speed-to that  Supreme Lord, Sri Dämodara, I offer my humble obeisances.**

**(2)**

**rudantam muhur netra-yugmam mrjantam**

**karambhoja-yugmena satanka-netram**

**muhuh svasa-kampa-trirekhanka-kantha**

**sthita-graivam damodararm bhakti-baddham**

**TRANSLATION**

**[Seeing the whipping stick in His mother's hand,] He is crying and  rubbing His eyes again and again with His two lotus hands. His eyes  are filled with fear, and the necklace of pearls around His neck,  which is marked with three lines like a conchshell, is shaking  because of His quick breathing due to crying. To this Supreme Lord,  Sri Dämodara, whose belly is bound not with ropes but with His  mother's pure love, I offer my humble obeisances.**

**(3)**

**itidrk sva-lilabhir ananda-kunde**

**sva-ghosam nimajjantam akkyapayantam**

**tadiyesita-jnesu bhaktair jitatvam**

**punah prematas tam satavrtti vande**

**TRANSLATION**

**By such childhood pastimes as this**

**He is drowning the inhabitants of**

**Gokula in pools of ecstasy, and is**

**revealing to those devotees who**

**are absorbed in knowledge of His**

**supreme majesty and opulence**

**that He is only conquered by devotees whose pure love is imbues  with intimacy and is free from all conceptions of awe and  reverence. With great love I again offer my obeisances to Lord  Damodara hundreds and hundreds of times.**

**(4)**

**varam deva moksam na moksavadhim va**

**na canyam vrne 'ham varesad apiha**

**idam te vapur natha gopala-balam**

**sada me manasy avirastam kim anyaih**

**TRANSLATION**

**0 Lord, although You are able to give**

**all kinds of benedictions, I do not**

**pray to You for the boon of**

**impersonal liberation, nor the highest**

**liberation of eternal life in Vaikuntha,**

**nor any other boon (which may be**

**obtained by executing the nine**

**processes of bhakti). O Lord, I simply**

**wish that this form of Yours as Bala**

**Gopala in Vrndavana may ever be**

**manifest in my heart, for what is the**

**use to me of any other boon besides**

**this?**

**(5)**

**idam te mukhambhojam atyanta-nilair**

**vrtam kuntalaih snigdha-raktais' ca gopya**

**m e**

**uhus cumbitam bimba-raktadharam m**

**manasy avirastam alam laksa-labhaih**

**TRANSLATION**

**O Lord, Your lotus face, which is encircled by locks of soft black  hair tinged with red, is kissed again and again by mother Yasoda,  and Your lips are reddish like the bimba fruit. May this beautiful**

**vision of Your lotus face be ever manifest in my heart. Thousands and thousands of other benedictions are of no use to me.**

**(6)**

**namo deva damodarananta visno**

**prasida prabho duhkha jalabdhi-magnam**

**krpa-drsti-vrsyati-dinam batanu**

**grhanesa mam ajnam edhy aksi-drsyah**

**TRANSLATION**

**O Supreme Godhead, I offer my obeisances unto You. O  Damodara! O Ananta! O Visnu! O master! O my Lord, be pleased  upon me. By showering Your glance of mercy upon me, deliver  this poor ignorant fool who is immersed in an ocean of worldly  sorrows, and become visible to my eyes.**

**(7)**

**kuveratmajau baddha-murtyaiva yadvat**

**tvaya mocitau bhakti-bhajau krtau ca**

**tatha prema-bhaktim svakam me prayaccha**

**na mokse graho me 'sti damodareha**

**TRANSLATION**

**0 Lord Damodara, just as the two sons of**

**Kuvera--Manigriva and Nalakuvara--were**

**delivered from the curse of Narada and**

**made into great devotees by You in Your**

**form as a baby tied with rope to a wooden**

**grinding mortar, in the same way, please**

**give to me Your own prema-bhakti. I only**

**long for this and have no desire for any**

**kind of liberation.**

**(8)**

**names te 'stu damne sphurad-dipti-dhamne**

**tvadiyodarayatha visvasya dhamne**

**namo radhikayai tvadiya-priyayai**

**namo 'nanta-lilaya devaya tubhyam**

**TRANSLATION**

**O Lord Dämodara, I first of all offer my obeisances to the  brilliantly effulgent rope which binds Your belly. I then offer my  obeisances to Your belly, which is the abode of the entire  universe. I humbly bow down to Your most beloved Srimati  Rädhärani, and I offer all obeisances to You, the Supreme Lord,  who displays unlimited pastimes.**