

Dāmodara Program in a nutshell

1. What is the Dāmodara Program?

It is a simple program aimed at capitalizing the most auspicious month of Dāmodara / Kārtika to introduce Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa to as many individuals as possible, especially offering them a chance to offer ghee lamps to Krishna.

The Śāstras clearly elucidates the glories of this simple act of devotion, done knowingly or unknowingly. This agyatya-sukriti, or unknowingly performing devotional service can elevate any sincere fallen soul to the transcendental abode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Thus, the potency of this activity is further increased.

2. What are the activities of Dāmodara Programme?

What we are doing in Malaysia is very limited. The options are endless. The following are some the ways we have adopted in Malaysia that you may want to duplicate in your yatra:

*i. **Dāmodara Harināma Carolling:*** Devotees travel in small groups performing Harināma sankirtan in residential areas. They carry with them a small deity/picture of Lord Dāmodara and ghee lamps. Whenever they get an opportunity they enter the homes and invite members of the home to offer ghee lamps to the traveling altar while Harināma chanting goes on.

Before leaving, the devotees hand-out Prasādam and brochures explaining the glories of the Dāmodara pūjā. Last year we visited more than 10,000 homes in one month.

*ii. **Setting up booth at public place:*** Dāmodara booths were set-up at a Sales Fair in the cities. The booth was beautifully decorated with large picture of Lord Dāmodara. Patrons of the fair were given a chance to offer ghee lamps throughout the 20-day fair free of charge. Some 30,000 visited the booth.

*iii. **Medium/large gatherings:*** We organize large Dāmodara Pūjā gatherings at Hindu Temples, Schools, Colleges, Welfare Homes, etc. These programs consist of Bhajans, class on Lord Dāmodara pastimes, ghee lamps offering and Prasādam.

*iv: **Mega project:*** Several years back, we have launched the beginning of the Dāmodara festival at a Sales Carnival with the attendance of VIPs. The program consisted of the launch, cultural program and mass offering of ghee lamps. Some 3000 ~ 5000 people took part in those events.

What we have presented is only a glimpse of what can be done in this month to introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

3. What are the advantages of the Dāmodara programme?

- a. Devotees get a chance to meet and make contacts with many people through homes visits, gatherings, etc. We also get to enter into homes of virtual strangers – an opportunity we do not get during other times.
- b. Awards good publicity amongst the Hindus because Dāmodara Pūjā is tied-up with Diwali festival. Diwali festival is celebrated grandly by the Hindus in Malaysia and around the world.
- c. A soft way of introducing Kṛṣṇa consciousness that is well-received by the public. We do not take donations or ask anything in return. This is appreciated by the people.
- d. The home visits have created many friends of ISKCON.
- e. A very good way of introducing the glories of Dāmodara līlā. In Malaysia, at least, the spiritual aspect of Diwali is virtually lost.
- f. Devotees get immense spiritual benefit by introducing others to offer ghee lamps to Lord Dāmodara.
- g. A good way to encourage congregation devotees to join in Harināma during this month.
- h. Create new devotees by cultivating the contacts that we made in this month. Some homes have begun to host this festival annually.

4. History in Malaysia

It has been 14 years since the devotees of Śrī Jagannātha Mandir, ISKCON Kuala Lumpur (SJMKL) bathed in the glory that is the Dāmodara Program. From humble beginnings of just 24 homes being blessed with the presence of Lord Śrī Dāmodara, it has grown by leap and bound to a startling 10,000 homes and some 100,000 people offered ghee lamps in recent years.

In Malaysia, Deepavali (Diwali) is the most celebrated Hindu holiday for religious as well as customary purposes. Nevertheless, the devotees have utilized this spirit of celebration to bring out the glories of the Dāmodara month (according to Gauḍīya Vaishnava calendar). Generally, people are in a festival and prayerful mood during this month, albeit with the lack of purpose or understanding of why in fact Deepavali is celebrated, they warmly welcome the devotees who explain the origins of this celebration. Therefore we have taken opportunity of this month to not only spread the mercy of Lord Dāmodara (Krishna) to the mass public but also educate and enlighten the people about ISKCON and Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's message. Gradually, we ventured into Schools, Colleges, Temples, Offices, Factories, Shopping Malls and Public domain.

This program will be ideal where there is a large Hindu community in the area. We also have experience where non-Hindus have invited us into their homes to perform Dāmodara pūjā.

5. What the Congregation Development Ministry is offering?

- a. We are offering to provide free samples of all the necessary print materials that we are using for this festival in hardcopy and softcopy.
- b. We are willing to share further information with any interested party through email communications.

6. Seminars / training

We have shared this wonderful gift of love with the below mentioned countries. We will be bearing our own travel expenses:

1. Major temples in India
2. Bangladesh
3. Indonesia
4. Singapore
5. Fiji
6. Australia
7. Middle East
8. Mauritius
9. South Africa
10. Hong Kong