

The rationale and economics of The Dāmodara Program

1. Endeavor of compassion & mercy

It is the duty and responsibility of every one of us to spread the mission of Mahāprabhu's movement to the general masses. In the C.C. it is described as our "Para Upakāra."

It is in reverence, deep respect and as an act of repaying our debt of gratitude to our Founder Acharya and the Paramparā who painstakingly established the movement to every continent of the World for the benefit of all living beings.

Once Śrīla Prabhupāda was asked what should be done to repay his gratitude for delivering us from the ocean of birth and death and connecting us with Kṛṣṇa and the Paramparā. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that there is only one way to repay with grateful heart for the mercy that the Lord has given us and that is to preach KC to others with all humility. H.H.Radhanath Swami.

Furthermore Mahāprabhu's order echo's with our founder acharya's compassionate nature.

"Listen, listen Nityānanda! Listen, Haridas! Make My command known everywhere! Go from house to house and beg from all the residents, "Please chant Krishna's name, worship Krishna, and teach others to follow Krishna's instruction." Do not speak, or cause anyone to speak, anything other than this."

Śrīla prabhupāda writes in of his purports in SB,

Brahmā also does his duty very perfectly, not only by generating the living entities but also by spreading his party for reclaiming the fallen souls. The party is called the Brahma-sampradāya, and any member of this party to date is naturally engaged in reclaiming the fallen souls back to Godhead, back home. The Lord is very much anxious to get back His parts and parcels, as stated in the Bhagavad-gītā. No one is dearer than the one who takes the task of reclaiming the fallen souls back to Godhead.

Anyone, however, preaching the mission of the Lord in the line of the Brahma-sampradāya is always dear to the Lord, and the Lord, being satisfied with such a preacher of the authorized bhakti cult, shakes hands with him in great satisfaction.

SB 2.9.20

Thus it is our prime duty to be an instrument of the instrument, to spread the glories of Caitanya Mahāprabhu with a grateful heart.

2. Life time opportunity for the soul.

Quoting B.G. 2.40," In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution", Śrī Kṛṣṇa assure us in His own words that the power Bhakti and a simple act of devotion will surely saves one from the clutches of repeated birth and death, the evil saṁsāra that swallows every living entity into darkest region of material existence. In this verse the lord is also eagerly awaiting for the jīva for a little act of devotion so that He can award the jīva the freedom from saṁsāra bandhana. The Dāmodara program unveils the contact point for the living entity to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the simplest thing to do in the festive season is by an act of offering a ghee lamp, which in itself has a tremendous effect for the evolution of the soul into the path of KC. (Pls refer to the appendix 1) - The glories of the kārtika month.

Is that all? Do the principles of The Dāmodara program lead to Bhakti?

Skanda purāṇa declares the glories of Dāmodara month as by an offering a ghee lamp during the kārtika month, one burns away a collection of sins as big as mount Meru or mount Mandara. Of this there is no doubt.

It further declares “ Oh nārada, no sin exists anywhere in the three worlds that will not be purified by an offering of a ghee lamp to Lord Keśava during Kārtika”

And this will eventually lead one to the path of bhakti.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentioned in the Gītā that after many, many births of executing pious activities, when one is completely freed from all contaminations, and from all illusory dualities, one becomes engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord.”B.G. 7.28

Dāmodara program does not end with only the Ghee lamp offering to the Lord. Through in Dāmodara Harinām and in house programs we have actually incorporated very essential principles of Mahāprabhu’s movement which is chanting the holy name and narrating the Lord’s pastime. While offering the ghee lamps we encourage the devotees/ hosts who offer the ghee lamp to chant the Mahā mantra or Damodarastakam. In our experience, most of them participate in the offering in memory of The Lord’s līlā linked with the celebration of the Diwali festival.

The common people through this program either by chance or accident do chant or hear the Lord’s Holy name. And through Harinams we boldly broadcast the holy name to the public, irrespective of cast, color and creed. The crowds, being the Diwali season receive it very enthusiastically. Most of them do emphasize a heavy kīrtan in their houses thinking by allowing such an act; The Lord will be satisfied and will reciprocate with auspiciousness. Śrīmad Bhāgavatam further enhances the principles of The

Dāmodara program by its own profound wisdom by declaring as such “To say nothing of the spiritual advancement of persons who see the Supreme Person face to face, even a person born in a family of dog-eaters immediately becomes eligible to perform Vedic sacrifices if he once utters the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or chants about Him, hears about His pastimes, offers Him obeisance’s or even remembers Him. SB 3.33.6.

It further declares the best process of atonement in this age.

“The chanting of the holy name of Lord Vishnu is the best process of atonement for a thief of gold or other valuables, for a drunkard, for one who betrays a friend or relative, for one who kills a Brāhmaṇa, or for one who indulges in sex with the wife of his guru or another superior. It is also the best method of atonement for one who murders women, the king or his father, for one who slaughters cows, and for all other sinful men. Simply by chanting the holy name of Lord Vishnu, such sinful persons may attract the attention of the Supreme Lord, who therefore considers, “Because this man has chanted My holy name, My duty is to give him protection.” By following the Vedic ritualistic ceremonies or undergoing atonement, sinful men do not become as purified as by chanting once the holy name of Lord Hari. Although ritualistic atonement may free one from sinful reactions, it does not awaken devotional service, unlike the chanting of the Lord’s names, which reminds one of the Lord’s fame, qualities, attributes, pastimes and paraphernalia. SB 6.2.9,10,11.

As such The Dāmodara program is a one of the best method to deliver the Holy name to the masses, coinciding with the conducive nature of festive season.

3. The statistics

Throughout the years, hundreds of thousands of people have offered ghee lamps to the Lord and so would it be in many more in years to come. But one hardly sees that our temple is filled up with devotees except during festivals such as Ratha Yatra and appearances of the Lord. Where are they, where are all these devotees?

It takes time.

As Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares in the BG.7.3

Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth.

And the Lord further declares in 7.19

... the rarity of the nature devotional service which is Sudurlabha. After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare.

But we have to start somewhere. The Jīvas must be connected back to the Lord through any of the bona-fide Paramparā. The act of offering, chanting the names of the Lord, hearing the līlās of the Lord will slowly but surely cleanse the hearts of the rebellious souls, and once again they will be attracted to the all attractive Lord. This program knowingly or unknowingly connects one to “mukhya dharma”. The real dharma of the soul. And continuous offering throughout the years, will recondition the masses that real celebration is for the pleasure of the Lord and not for the pleasure and request of the Demon Narakāśura as many Hindus believe. Last but not least, May the Lord Dāmodara bless us with prema bhakti as He did for the sons of Kuvera, for those devotees who out of deep gratitude and duty, accomplish the Dāmodara program for the pleasure of Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga with great joy.

**Verse 7 kuverātmajau baddha-mūṛtyaiva yad-vat tvayā
mocitau bhakti-bhājau kṛtau ca tathā prema-
bhaktim svakām me prayaccha na mokṣe graho
me ‘sti dāmodareha**

“O Lord Dāmodara, although Mother Yaśodā bound Your divine form to a wooden grinding mortar, You mercifully delivered the sons of Kuvera, Maṇigrīva and Nalakūvara, who were cursed to stand as trees, and You gave them the gift of devotional service. Please bless me in this same way with Your most wonderful prema-bhakti. I have no eagerness for any other type of liberation.”

Appendix 1

Kārtika-masa, also known as Dāmodara-masa, in accordance with Vaishnava calendars, is described in the scriptures as the best among months.

tasmād vrata tra yam hy etān mama tīva priyankaram māgha kartikayos tad vat tat hai
vaikadasi vratam van aspatinam tulasī māsānām kartikah priyaḥ ekādaśī tithi nam ca
ksetranam dvārakā mama ete sam sevanam yastu karoti ca jitendriyaḥ same vallabhatam yati
na tat ha yajanadi bhīḥ

Of all plants, the scared Tulasī is most dear to Me, of all months, Kārtika is most dear, of all places of pilgrimage, My beloved Dvārakā is most dear, and of all days, Ekādaśī is most dear.

(Padma Purana, Uttara Khanda 112.3)

The festival of offering lamps to Lord Krishna, lasts the entire month of Dāmodara (Kārtika, usually during Oct-Nov), which glorifies Krishna's pastime of being bound with ropes by Mother Yaśodā. Observing vrata (austerities) in the month of Kārtika is glorified in the Purāṇas. It is also mentioned that one who offers ghee lamps to Lord Dāmodara in this auspicious month and sings the Dāmodara Ashtakam (8 verses glorifying the Lord) will get rid of his past sins and develop Bhakti (devotion) to Lord Dāmodara.

“As Satya-yuga is the best of yugas (ages), as the Vedas are the best of scriptures, as Gaṅgā is the best of rivers, so Kārtika is the best of months, the most dear to Lord Śrī Krishna.”

“When one offers a ghee lamp during the month of Kārtika, his sins in many thousands and millions of births perish in half an eyeblink.”

“Please hear the glories of offering a ghee lamp during the month of Kārtika, an offering that is very pleasing to Lord Keśava. O king of brāhmaṇas, a person who offers a ghee lamp in this way will not take birth again in this world.”

“Even if there are no mantras, no pious deeds, and no purity, everything becomes perfect when a person offers a ghee lamp during the month of Kārtika.”

“To one who either at home, or in a temple offers Him a ghee lamp during the month of Kārtika, Lord Vāsudeva gives a great result.”

“A person who offers a ghee lamp to Lord Krishna during Kārtika attains the eternal spiritual world where there is no suffering.”

“By offering a ghee lamp during the month of Kārtika one burns away a collection of sins as big as Mount Meru or Mount Mandara. Of this there is no doubt.”

“O Nārada, no sins exists anywhere in the three worlds that will not be purified by offering a ghee lamp to Lord Keśava during Kārtika.”

(Source: Skanda Purāṇa)

“One who offers a steady ghee lamp to Lord Hari during the month of Kārtika enjoys pastimes in Lord Hari's splendid spiritual world.”

(Source: Skanda Purāṇa)

“Of all gifts the gift of a ghee lamp during the month of Kārtika is the best. No gift is its equal.”

(Source: Nārada Purāṇa, in a conversation of Śrī Mohini-devi and Śrī Rukmangada)

We wish to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all preachers for their support in spreading the glories of Lord Dāmodara Bhagavān every nook and corner of the World.

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