



Volume 4, October-December 2016

ISKCON Sannyasa Ministry Newsletter



From the Sannyasa Minister:

I am happy to introduce the 4th issue this year of the ISKCON Sannyasa Ministry newsletter. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada explained that an advanced devotee and preacher out of humility takes the vows and dress of a *tridandi sannyasi*. Previous to the reintroduction of *tridandi sannyasa* by Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada, advanced Vaishnavas who were renounced, often became *paramahansa sannyasis* and wore the white dress of a *babaji*. To keep himself in a position of a servant of his *paramahansa guru*, a disciple keeps himself in the formal 3rd stage of *sannyasa* (*parivrajakacarya*) rather than the 4th and final stage of a self-realized *paramahansa*. In the *paramahansa* stage, the *sannyasi* retires from preaching. However, Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and his followers in disciplic succession desire to widely spread Krishna consciousness. For this reason, Srila Prabhupada indicated that many of his advanced male students should take the role of *paravrajakacaryas*, and try to spread the mission of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu in all parts of the world.

In this issue, we learn from Lokanatha Swami about a *sannyasi* carrying a *danda*. Also in this newsletter are articles about BR Ambarish Swami's mission to the Eastern Ukraine, a memorial to Sankirtan Dasa, and a profile of Bhakti Vijnana Goswami.

Your servant,
Prahlanananda Swami



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Mission: Ukraine

By BR Ambarish Swami

BR Ambarish Swami recently embarked on a tour of Ukraine. Here is a short report of his preaching activities:

Donetsk and Lugansk are two major cities in the east of Ukraine. They were highly damaged by the war that has been going on there for the last two years. Nevertheless, devotees have been preaching there since the 1980's with great success. They have built a nice temple in Donetsk. They are organising a major Food For Life programme, and distributing thousands of plates of Prasad every day. This has saved many people's lives. In spite of the difficult conditions, devotees are continuing regular programs in the temple. One hundred and fifty devotees came for the Sunday feast program when I was there. They were chanting kirtan very enthusiastically and asking many interesting questions. They are very eager to receive more preachers.

Your Servant,
BR Ambarish Swami



Carrying the Tridanda

By Lokanath Swami

“I am happy that you always carry your *danda*”

– Srila Prabhupada, Bombay, 1975

After Sridhar Swami and I had been awarded *tridandi sannyasa* in Vrindavana, we made our way back to Bombay. Srila Prabhupada was also back in Bombay. Subsequently Sridhar Swami and I moved out of our Brahmachari quarters in Bombay into an apartment in the same building on the same floor as Srila Prabhupada's quarters. We had more interaction with Srila Prabhupada then, and greater freedom to see him whenever necessary.

I always carried my *tridanda* with me wherever I went, even if

I was just going into Srila Prabhupada's quarters and out again. Sridhar Maharaja was not doing that consistently. He always carried his *tridanda* to the temple and on preaching engagements, but when he went to see Srila Prabhupada, he did not always have his *tridanda* with him. One day Srila Prabhupada acknowledged my carrying my *danda* everywhere, and at the same time he asked, "I am happy that you always carry your *danda*. But why is Sridhar Swami not carrying his *danda*?"

The Mayavadi sannyasis take one *danda*, or one rod, whereas the Vaisnava sannyasis take three *dandas*. It is made of bamboo. A *tridanda* is actually made up of four sticks wrapped in a cloth. The one rod represents the *jiva* or the soul. The other three *dandas*, they symbolize his body, mind, and speech. So, the soul engages himself with his body, mind, and words for preaching Krishna consciousness. Taking up this *tridanda* literally means that you engage yourself and whatever assets you possess in the exclusive service of Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada's appreciation of my carrying my *danda* gave me a realisation. It was proper for a *sannyasi* to always carry his *tridanda*. The *tridanda* is from Vrindavana and Srila Prabhupada handed it to me in the courtyard of the Krishna-Balarama temple. I have always carried my *tridanda*. It has gone around the world to all the continents and on all the flights. Srila Prabhupada's god brother, Bhakti Vaibhava Puri Maharaja, had on many occasions expressed his pleasure when he saw me carrying my *danda*.

Often when I am travelling abroad, the airlines try to insist that my *danda* has to be carried in the belly of the plane with the other baggage. Sometimes they wonder whether it is a fishing rod! When that happens, it prompts me to think that indeed it is a different kind of fishing rod. This existence is an ocean with a misdirected civilization. The people of this age are like fish in that ocean and the travelling and preaching *sannyasis* are trying to fish people out of this ocean.

Once when flying from Chicago to Los Angeles on a United Airlines plane the attendant insisted that my *danda* be checked in. I said, "I'm sorry, but I cannot release this *danda* to you. Is it possible to speak to the captain?" It was a lady captain who said, "Oh, just keep it right behind me." We did just that, and my *danda* travelled on board in the cockpit. I always try to avoid letting them carry it underneath the plane because I am afraid that it may be lost or damaged. Sometimes I even try to prevent it from being carried in the baggage section by being tricky, and I almost always win.

After the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in America on 11 September 2001, I have opted not to carry my *tridanda* with me outside of India. The security at airports has become very stringent making it increasingly difficult to carry my *tridanda* on board. Srila Prabhupada had written a letter in 1976 in which he had stated that if it was too problematic to carry the *danda*, there was no need to do so. This is also in line with the GBC rules. In March 1983, the GBC resolved that all ISKCON *sannyasis* must carry their *tridanda* for a minimum of ten years, thereafter it is optional – a requirement which I have comfortably met.



In Memoriam: HG Sankirtan Dasa

On 5th September 2015, Lord Krishna's appearance day, Sankirtan Dasa left his body in Switzerland in the home of his sister, while he was listening to a lecture of Srila Prabhupada. Earlier that year, the GBC body had approved him for receiving sannyasa. Sankirtan Dasa was especially loved by the devotees in China, his main preaching area. Hereafter, Sankirtan Dasa shares with us, in his own words, his devotional history:

"In 1983 in Cuzco, Peru, at Govinda's Restaurant I picked up a book written in my German mother tongue. It contained Srila Prabhupada's conversations about an ideal society (Varnashrama). After years of wandering around the world I felt I had finally found what I was looking for. Previously I had enjoyed the "normal" Swiss life. But, at the age of twenty-two, I left everything to venture out for something better. After hearing from Srila Prabhupada through his books, I began to tell whomever I met what I had understood of his teachings. My rudimentary attempts were unappreciated, because mostly everyone would differ with my radical views. Philosophy alone was not enough; I also had to reform my character to effectively influence people."

"I eventually joined the devotees in ISKCON. After a year of serving in Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland, I came to Vrindavan. My prospective Guru Maharaja, His Holiness Lokanath Swami, engaged me in Padayatra in India. In 1988, I was asked to join His Holiness Tamal Krishna Goswami in the China Mission. Since then, apart from periodic studies at the VIHE and assisting my Guru in the Srila Prabhupada Centennial campaign, I have spent most of my time preaching in China. I now organize tours of Chinese Yoga groups to India's holy places. I have published two bridge-building books about Bhakti Yoga in English and in Chinese. In addition, I taught Bhakti Sastri and Bhakti Vaibhava courses in Radhadesh, the Middle East, South Africa, Bali, and in India (Pune, Salem and VIHE)."

Kavicandra Swami: He was always sublimely blissful association and always preaching, never asking for any help. In my opinion his books are brilliant and really show the depth of his realizations and intense desire to educate souls in the value of Bhakti.

Mukunda-anghri Dasa: I owe my coming to Krishna Consciousness fully to Sankirtan Prabhu. He was the first devotee I met in my life. His gracious smile and friendly nature immediately touched our hearts. It was a small place but we noticed he had a big heart. Although he was running the Taipei centre single-handedly, he always had time to talk to the devotees.

Radhacaran Dasa: Sankirtan Prabhu lived a very simple life. He was austere and was an exemplary sadhaka. He never sought out comfort for himself but did all it took to reach to the Chinese devotees who lived in difficult conditions.

SANNYASI PROFILE: BHAKTI VIJNANA GOSWAMI



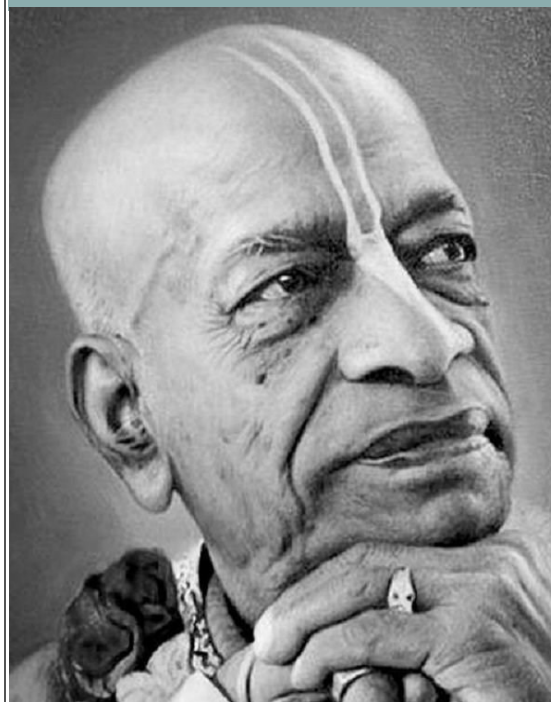
Bhakti Vijnana Goswami is a disciple of Radhanath Swami, and resides primarily in Moscow, Russia, working tirelessly towards the building of a monumental temple there. He still finds time to travel across the world sharing Krishna Consciousness.

Bhakti Vijnana Goswami was born in Tashkent, former Soviet Union. He took to spiritual life in 1980, during the difficulties of the communist era in the former Soviet Union, when the National Security forces were harassing any type of spiritual practitioner. Despite these obstacles, Bhakti Vijnana Goswami – a scientist, a Moscow State University graduate and postgraduate student at Institute of Molecular Biology – decided to experiment with the Hare Krishna mantra. To his great happiness, it moved him profoundly.

Since 1997 Bhakti Vijnana Goswami has acted as a member of ISKCON's Governing Body Commission and since 2005 has served as one of the initiating gurus of ISKCON. His zonal responsibilities include Georgia (CIS) and Israel. He serves as co-zonal secretary for Eastern and Western Siberia, Northwest CIS, Ural Region, Moscow, Southern, Central Region, CIS, Golden Ring, Armenia, Far East and also co-GBC for North and South Korea.

On 1st July 2010, the Council for Public Awards of the Russian Federation awarded Bhakti Vijnana Goswami a medal "for his contribution in strengthening Russian-Indian friendly relations, and for his contribution to the popularization of the spiritual-cultural literary heritage of India."

SRILA PRABHUPADA ON SANNYASA



"So you are sannyasi, but if you have to stay there for some time to manage, that is all right. Sannyasi simply means to do as I am doing, and sometimes I have to manage, sometimes cook, sometimes go to the bank, keep the money, write books, chant, preach in the class, keep accounts—sannyasi should be expert in every department."

(Srila Prabhupada Letter to Satsvarupa, 5th November, 1972)