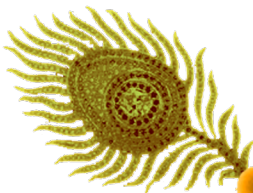


GRS PATRIKA

4TH EDITION

Be informed, get involved and be inspired.
Read the latest news and events from the Gita Reading Society.

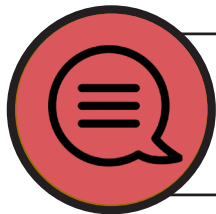
March 2023



GITA READING SOCIETY

— CHANT AND BE HAPPY —

Contents



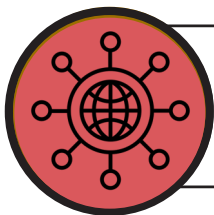
OPENING REMARKS

Read the opening remarks by His Grace Devakinandan Prabhu.



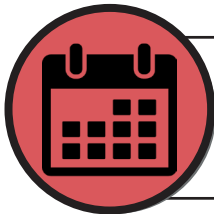
RAMA NAVAMI

The Appearance Day of Lord Ramachandra. The festival signifies the victory of good over evil and the manifestation of dharma to rule out adharm.



OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Every day thousands of souls come in contact with bhakti yoga through book distribution, festivals, temple visits, the Internet, and in other ways. Read about the latest preaching activities of by GRS congregation members.



UPCOMING

Mark your diaries with the upcoming festivals in the next quarter.



BE INVOLVED

Devotional service means activities performed for the pleasure of Lords-hips - Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subadra. Get in touch to find out about the opportunities available.

Opening



Dear Devotees,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada and Gurudeva! Hare Krishna!

Welcome to the fourth edition of the GRS Patrika where we aim to keep the congregation continually updated about the various activities we engage in at Gita Reading Society for the pleasure of our dear Lordships - Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subadra.

In the previous edition had highlights from prison counselling service, insights from an interfaith dialogue hosted at the Gauranga Centre, our involvement with International Bindi & Tilak Day 2022 and initiatives by the Madhavas' group.

In this issue, we will learn about the selfless work of our Bengali devotees, YouTube Outreach by Padma Radhika Mataji and Sewa Day - a new outreach method.

Please accept my personal invitation to get in touch and take up the opportunity to engage your talents for the community-at-large in service to Sri Sri Radha Krishna and Their devotees.

Yours in service to Srila Prabhupada,



Devakinandan das
Zonal Supervisor

Rama Navami

by Meera Joshi

The birth of Lord Rama is celebrated as Rama Navami. Lord Rama was born to King Dasharatha and Queen Kausalya in Ayodhya. He had three younger brothers Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna.

The Ramayana narrates the history of Lord Rama, who was the ideal man – a great and righteous King, an upright Husband, an ideal Son, a loving Brother and Master. As a son, he always obeyed his father and had great respect for his mothers. He was a perfect King and ruler. Lord Rama ruled for 14,000 years. His reign till today is called Rama Rajya. When Lord Rama was ruling his people there was no famine in his kingdom, no scarcity of food and no disease ever affected anyone. The people in his kingdom had a strong bond of love with Him. They lived only to serve and please Him.

The main significance behind the celebration of this festival is the glorification of the character of Lord Rama, someone who follows the right path against all odds in life. He was also the true embodiment of humanity. So celebration of Rama Navami is a special way to remember all the noble deeds performed by Lord Rama. It is a celebration of goodness and its victory against all evils. Sacred places associated with Rama, like Ayodhya, Ujjain and Rameshwaram, draw tens of thousands of devotees during Rama Navami. In Rameshwaram, thousands take a holy bath in the sea and worship Lord Rama. Many places in North India host fairs in connection with the nine-day Chaitra Navaratri festival, culminating in spectacular fireworks on Rama Navami.

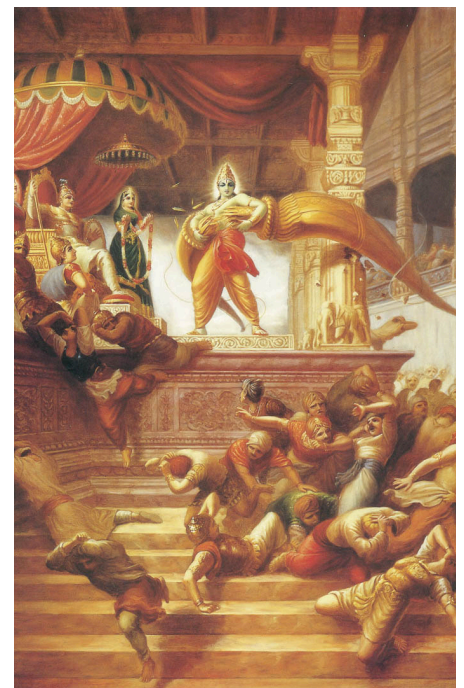
The birthday of Sri Rama, indeed, signifies an event worth remembering for anyone who cherishes the time-honoured sublime values of human culture and civilization. At the end of the nine-day Chaitra Navaratri festival, devotees stay awake on the ninth night, in anticipation of Lord Rama's birth. A Yagna is performed, and devotees sing devotional songs in praise of Lord Rama and rock his image in cradles to celebrate his birth. A special worship is performed the next morning as a token of gratitude for His mercy. Rama Navami is a festival of celebration and brings its devotees true happiness and joy. It gives them the strength and courage to fight against all odds of life.

Rama means 'bliss' and so Lord Rama provides bliss to all those who remember Him and pray to Him. Therefore let us all remember the activities and instructions of Lord Rama; follow them and achieve happiness.

Srila Prabhupada remarks that everyone wants Rama-Rajya, the ideal kingdom that existed during the reign of Lord Ramachandra. As a king, He cared for the citizens exactly like a father, and the citizens, accepting Him as their father, loved and followed Him. He was a perfect King and was respected by His generals. Although He became king during Treta-yuga, because of His good government, the age seemed like Satya-yuga, and everyone was fully religious and happy. Our founder Acharya states that the same conditions can be evoked now by following the instructions given in Bhagavad Gita and chanting the Lord's holy names, which have been made available to us by Lord Caitanya.

“If people take to this sankirtana movement of chanting Hare Krsna, Hare Rama, they will certainly be freed from the contamination of Kali-yuga, and the people of this age will be happy, as people were in Satya-yuga, the golden age. Anyone, anywhere, can easily take to this Hare Krsna movement; one need only chant the Hare Krsna maha-mantra, observe the rules and regulations, and stay free from the contamination of sinful life. Even if one is sinful and cannot give up sinful life immediately, if he chants the Hare Krsna maha-mantra with devotion and faith he will certainly be freed from all sinful activities, and his life will be successful. Param vijayate sri-krsna-sankirtanam. This is the blessing of Lord Ramacandra, who has appeared in this age of Kali as Lord Gaurasundara.”

(SB 9.10.51)



Acts of selfless devotion

The first to serve and last to leave - Bengali devotees renovate rooftop

by Meera Joshi, with many thanks to Dinavatsala Krishna Prabhu, Premananda Prabhu and Pushpa Gopal Prabhu for their contribution

There are about 3,000 devotees in Singapore at present, with a large portion of them professionals and labourers from Bangladesh. Often working six days a week, their only 'time off' is spent at the Gauranga Centre in selfless service.

“These devotees are exemplary; during festivals, they are the first to come for service and are the last to leave. Working without any reward, we can all take inspiration from them.” Dinavatsala Krishna Prabhu.

In mundane activities, motivation for work typically comes from self-imposed, outside expectations, obligations, peer pressure or other external factors such as reward, praise, recognition, appreciation etc. The inspiration shown by these exceptional devotees is noteworthy. They have a natural driving force that comes from a service mindset, propelling them to turn up each week for the pleasure of their Lordships.

This article cannot do justice to all the glories of these devotees; however, it aims to begin sharing the appreciation and admiration we all hold for them.

Renovation

In January 2023, 60+ Bengali devotees collaborated to renovate the Gauranga centre's deteriorating rooftop terrace. This service has saved the centre approximately 30,000 SGD. This project would not only restore the terrace but also provide a roof to protect devotees against the changing weather conditions and become a functional space so to host drama practices, Tamil preaching on Sundays, breakout discussions and space for children's classes.

Why did they take up this service?

Firstly they are in the business of construction, and this is their area of competency. The primary reason is that they always desire to serve in any capacity they possible can, and this was their chance that they could deploy their experience and talents in the service to satisfy the devotees and their Lordships, having talent or no talent, this is their mood as this prayer by Sri Madhavendra Puri explains it all:

*mugdham mam nigadantu niti-nipuna
bhrantam muhur vaidikah
mandam bandhava-sañcaya jada-dhi-
yam muktadarah sodarah
unmattam dhanino viveka-caturah ka-
mam maha-dambhikam
moktum na ksamate manag api mano
govinda-pada-sprham*

“Let the sharp moralist accuse me of being illusioned; I do not mind. Experts in Vedic activities may slander me as being misled, friends and relatives may call me frustrated, my brothers may call me a fool, the wealthy mammonites may point me out as mad, and the learned philosophers may assert that I am much too proud; still my mind does not budge an inch from the determination to serve the lotus feet of Govinda, though I be unable to do it.”

What inspires them?

“Prabhu it is for the pleasure of the devotees that I am doing this seva. I feel grateful to be able to do something that I can bring satisfaction and joy to the devotees by doing some little service.”

Premanada Prabhu who managed this great project shared *“The mood of the devotees there were all joyful, peaceful and most importantly blissful during*

this entire seva. No anger, no agitation but with peace and patience.”

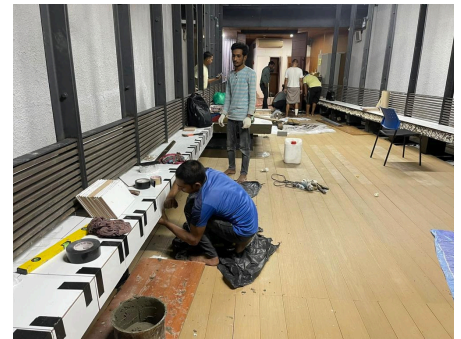
The verse below explains their mood of seva: **santuṣṭyā yena kena vā - satisfied under all conditions.**

*dayayā sarva-bhūteṣu santuṣṭyā yena
kena vā
sarvendriyopaśāntyā ca tuṣyaty āśu
janārdanaḥ*

By showing mercy to all living entities, being satisfied somehow or other and controlling the senses from sense enjoyment, one can very quickly satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Janardana.

Gauranga Centre - a sanctuary

Gauranga Centre and the association of the devotees is a sanctuary for them as they have left their families behind. The devotees consider that now Krishna has created for them the time and opportunity for them to fully utilize their weekend or whenever time is available for them to serve. They see Krishna as samañjasa — O source of all opportunities and they want to be an instrument in the hands of their Lordships nimitta-mātram bhava savya-sācin accordance with the desire of the Supreme Lord, then they would be happy.





Playing the Brihad Mrdanga

YouTube Outreach by Padma Radhika Mataji

by Lila Sundari Devi Dasi

Note: All viewers' names have been changed to protect identities.

Once upon a time, video broadcasting was the monopoly of the television and movie industry. A few big guns in the industry decided what got shown on television and movies and the rest of us were mere viewers. A sea change occurred in the past few decades. The doors of mass media have been thrown open to the public in various ways. A sensational app, YouTube now allows anybody, limited by their own creativity (and sometimes not-so-creativity!) to become a media star. Indeed, the independent content creator with YouTube's highest number of subscriptions is now a billionaire, merely from creating content on YouTube.

YouTube therefore is a very fertile ground for devotees to sow their preaching seeds. As Bhakti Charu Maharaj pointed out, the internet has become our Brihad Mrdanga. When we play mrdangas, some hear, but when we play the Brihad Mrdanga, so many hear! Indeed, devotees have taken this up, and some have become internet sensations – for e.g. Gaur Gopal Prabhu creates extremely appealing motivational content for youth worldwide. The Spiritual Scientist, Chaitanya Charan Prabhu creates deeply intellectual and highly insightful content through his various

channels. Madhavas Rock Band and 'GKD' produce catchy and melodious devotional music that appeals to a Bollywood audience. And today Gita Reading Society has our own home bred YouTuber, the ever enthusiastic and highly inspirational devotee, Padma Radhika Mataji.



Her channel, *padma radhika Singapore*, has Hindi as its medium. *Padma radhika Singapore* has daily, weekly, fortnightly and occasional programs. Daily programs include a two-hour Hare Krishna Mahamantra chanting session on Zoom and a one hour Srimad Bhagavatam session. There is also a systematic revision of every chapter of Srimad Bhagavatam through regular quiz sessions. Weekly sessions include live broadcasts of Vaishnava bhajans by various devotees on Saturdays and Sundays, and the reading of small books by ACBSP. Currently four books have been completed and one is in progress. Every Ekadasi, all 700 verses of Bhagavad Gita are recited

live. During various appearance and disappearance days, relevant videos are shown. On special festival days there are festival specific sessions. In the past, the following sessions were conducted – 18 Chapters of Bhagavad Gita were completed in 18 days, in both Hindi and English. A reading of the Lilamrta was completed. Krishna Book was also completed via 21 Kahoot quiz sessions. Three sessions on the importance and practical implications of Bhagavad Gita were completed. In addition, there were 10 quiz contests on Bhagavad Gita. Recently, in September-November 2022, there was a 10 week Bhagavad Gita study. Certificates (affiliated with GRS) were granted to all participants.

How did it all start? Padma Radhika Mataji's YouTube channel had two in-



dependent precursors. While many of us know that Padma Radhika Mataji is ubiquitous and every-ready for service at the temple, what we know less is that she used to conduct regular classes for children at home too. The first precursor to her YouTube channel goes back to 2014, when she started gathering children from her condominium for devotional classes at her house. Ever since then, Mataji and her family have changed 4 condominiums, and each time, she gathered a new cohort of children in her current condo for regular classes! In 2020, when the pandemic started, the classes moved to Zoom, and more opportunities to participate became available. Some of the children from her older condos, now grown up, were eager to take part. The second precursor to her channel occurred in 2020, when Padma Radhika Mataji was invited to conduct classes in Hindi for devotees in Chennai and Ayodhya. After these sessions, Padma Radhika Mataji thought that it would be best to have her classes on YouTube, so that they would be readily accessible to all, always. She pitched her idea to Gopal Krishna Maharaj. Maharaj redirected her to Devakinandan Prabhu, who, in turn, was extremely supportive of this idea. The YouTube channel, *padma radhika Singapore* was born.

Since its inception in August 2021, her channel, *padma radhika Singapore* has 570 videos and has engaged more than 300 regular viewers who participate in the various programs of the channels. Some viewers have shared with Mataji how her channel has impacted them. Radha, a gynaecologist from India, used to feel that karma was all about working for results. She could never relate to the BG verse 2.47, *karmanyevadhikaraste ma phalesu kadachana*. She wondered how it was possible for one to work without results. Now Radha has a much more holistic view of the Bhagavad Gita. She now believes that when one follows religion just to benefit oneself, religion becomes cheap. Dev was a shy first year college student in India. After being a regular in *padma*



radhika Singapore, he desired to celebrate Janmashtami in an appropriate manner. On Janmashtami day, despite the peer pressure of being in college, Dev managed to observe fast. He had a deep desire to go to the temple in the evening to celebrate Janmashtami but was not able to go, due to the strict curfew at his hostel. Later, Dev heard faint tinkling bells coming from one of the rooms in the hostel. He knocked on the door and gently opened it. Lo and behold, Dev could not believe what he saw! Some students had gathered to celebrate Janmashtami. He asked if he could join and was graciously welcomed. The few students enthusiastically sang kirtan, and joyfully celebrated Janmashtami. Dev felt this incident was a true indication of Krishna's mercy. It gave him the faith that Krishna will always be there for him.

Sreelatha had been a working woman with a promising career. When she had her children, she had to quit her job, and was very disappointed with the situation. Upon listening carefully to *padma radhika Singapore*, her mindset slowly changed. Sreelatha now realizes how huge a responsibility motherhood is. She is much happier, having embraced her new situation.

Jaya, another viewer of *padma radhika Singapore* had thought that religion was only about rituals. When she saw that there the spiritual aspect behind the rituals, she found greater meaning in religion.

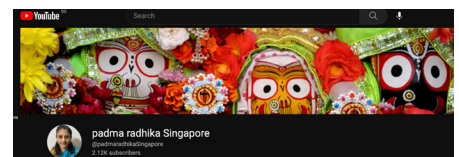
Viewers have expressed that they liked hearing details about the hellish planets from the 5th Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam. While hell is a common concept, the knowledge of the hellish

planets was not known until they heard it from *padma radhika Singapore*. They were happy to get this information.

This has been quite an accomplishment by Padma Radhika Mataji. For the record, Padma Radhika Mataji is a working mother at a prestigious financial institution. She has two young children. Yet, she finds time to do all this in addition to her relentless temple service! Time and again, Devakinandan Prabhu and Radhika Mataji have reiterated in their respective classes: "*Krishna is time. If we give time for Krishna, Krishna will make time for us.*" While this is difficult (for me!) to digest, Padma Radhika Mataji is a shining example of this principle. Meanwhile, Padma Radhika Mataji gently nudges me to remind me of her support system.

They say that behind every successful man is a woman. Behind this incredibly productive devotee woman is a devotee man. Padma Radhika Mataji affirms that the most important foundation in her online preaching is her husband, Paramatma Chaitanya Prabhu's unwavering support. In addition to Prabhu's own relentless service at the temple, Prabhu's role has been pivotal in all her endeavors. She expresses her humble gratitude to all his support, patience and heartwarming efforts in making all of this happen. Finally, she adds, "All glories to His Divine Grace, Srila Gurudev, H.G. Devakinandan Prabhuji and H.G. Radhika Mataji!"

Please visit the following link to view *padma radhika Singapore*: <https://www.youtube.com/@padmaradhika-Singapore>





Sewa Day - new age social action

New Outreach Methods

by Meera Joshi

Sewa Day, is one day of volunteering (acts of service 'sewa') which brings together thousands of good-hearted people across the world in engaging in service and experiencing the joy of giving. This service could be conducting workshops for the underprivileged, food distributions, clothing drives etc. It is hoped that the seeds of this giving are watered so that the flowers of acts of kindness and of public service bloom ever more.

Sewa Day is a global initiative centred around social and environmental action. It gives people the opportunity to take responsibility for helping overcome challenges of disadvantage, deprivation, and the environment. It does so by harnessing resources and talents that exist within them and using natural synergies within and across communities.

Prashant Joshi, a banking professional, originally from London, UK is the Co-Head of Sewa Day Asia Pacific since 2012. He had initiated the inaugural corporate-sponsored Sewa Day project with EY and Bhaktivedanta Manor in Watford, UK in September 2011. This has gone on to become a periodic Sewa Day feature across continents with sponsors including Deutsche Bank, Credit Suisse and BNP Paribas.

In 2012 Prashant moved to Hong Kong. There, he worked with devotees to set-up a collaboration between 'Food for

Life' and various corporates. In this effort, they made and delivered over 1,000 meals to the underprivileged, primarily the elderly. The event was branded as a success. It was the first time such a collaboration had taken place in Hong Kong. It has since gone on to run every year, drawing young professionals to give up their time for those in need.

2022 was the inaugural year where Sewa Day engaged with the Gita Reading Society, and various devotee run restaurants. The approach was taken to do as much as we could during Kartik. This month is particularly dear to Lord Sri Krishna - it is full of bhakta vatsalya. Any vrata, even the smallest, will yield huge results. The effect of performing a Kartik Vrata lasts for one hundred lifetimes.

During the course of the month, food distribution events were held weekly at Gopal's The Holy Cow restaurant. Here, 20-30 Bengali devotees who are migrant workers were given sumptuous meals.



A larger scale effort, cooking 400 meals, with corporate volunteers from Standard Chartered Bank, McKinsey, and BNP Paribas came together at the Gita Reading Society to prepare curries, rice, and daal for the Bengali devotee migrant workers. Over the course of three hours, volunteers gathered at the Gauranga centre to wash, cut and prepare vegetables for the meals.



Prashant said "this new age social action fits a modern lifestyle. Donating time as opposed to money has a more direct impact. Often, one doesn't know where or how donated money is used ... not so when donating time." If you are interested in being involved with Sewa Day in collaboration with Gita Reading Society, please contact Prashant Joshi on: sewa-daysg@gmail.com



Upcoming Festivals

- **NRSIMHA CATURDASI - 4 MAY**



The Appearance day of Lord Nrsimha. This festival is one of remembrance of the Lord as the protector of His devotees and the remover of all obstacles and difficulties on the path of devotion

- **SNANA YATRA - 4 JUNE**



The annual bathing rituals of their lordships- Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Subhadra Devi

- **JHULAN YATRA - 27 AUG**



A festival to celebrate Radha Krishna's pastime of swinging on a golden swing everyday until Balarama Purnim

- **BALARAMA PURNIMA - 31 AUG**



The appearance day of Lord Balarama. Lord Balarama is the first expansion of Lord Krishna appearing as His elder brother eight days before Lord Krishna's appearance day

Be Involved

Volunteering opportunities

We are seeking devotees to take up the opportunity to engage your talents for the community-at-large in service to Sri Sri Radha Krishna and Their devotees. We encourage you to offer your time, energy and love. Below are some examples of the opportunities that are readily available:

CONTENT WRITERS

If you have a flair for writing let the gift of your written words help to create awareness for GRS.

PHOTOGRAPHY / VIDEOGRAPHY

Capture memories from our joyous festivals and help spread awareness about our activities. Alternatively you can tag us on social media or email your photos to communications.grs@gmail.com

SOCIAL MEDIA ASSISTANCE

Help us advertise various GRS-related activities and news on our social media channels (Facebook and Instagram).

GET IN TOUCH

If any of these seva opportunities are of interest to you or you wish to dedicate your time but not sure who to reach out to, contact us communications.grs@gmail.com and a member of the team will be in touch to assist you.



GRS Patrika | Contact us

Calling writers, editors, artists and designers, who wish to work on GRS Patrika. If you are performing or know of an important service that you believe should be featured on GRS Patrika, get in touch. Contact us through: **Lila Sundari Devi Dasi** (laxmi.r.iyer@gmail.com) | **Meera Joshi** (meera.thankey@gmail.com) | **Paramananda Das** (gprakashnarayan@gmail.com)

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our thanks to:

- Dinavatsala Prabhu for all administrative matters and miscellaneous services
- Raghunandan Prabhu for festival updates

Feedback | Help us help serve you

If you're reading this newsletter on an electronic device, [click here](#) to complete our feedback form. Your opinion matters to us, help us help serve you better.

Alternatively you can **scan** the QR code using your camera on your electronic device to be directed to our feedback form.



SCAN ME