

After the disappearance of Jayananda Das on May 1, 1977, His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada instructed devotees all over the world to commemorate the event every year as they would any great Vaishnava's disappearance day. Therefore we respectfully submit these pages to all devotees and friends of ISKCON as a means to remember and understand more about Jayananda's devotional service. Of course, we will see how he joined ISKCON and how he left this mortal world. More importantly, we shall see the astounding qualities possessed by a true devotee, a sincere disciple and genuine servant of Srila Prabhupada.

Jayananda's Beginnings In Krishna Consciousness

Jayananda was the all-American boy. Handsome, strong, intelligent, born in a more than middle-class family, Jayananda (Jim Kohr) took a degree in mechanical engineering from Ohio State University. With a background like that, it is surprising that Jayananda ended up as a cab driver in San Francisco. Karandhara once asked him why he didn't get a better-paying job. "I didn't fit in with the upper class crowd," he said.

Always introspective in nature, Jayananda felt empty and unsatisfied within himself during his college years. He would often say that he was "never happy" before joining Krishna consciousness. His depression was almost suicidal when, in 1967, he read a small article in a San Francisco paper, about an Indian Swami who had come to the Bay Area to propagate the chanting of the names of God. Jayananda recalled feeling a "ray of hope" when he read that article. Thinking the Swami may have something to offer, Jayananda made up his mind to

attend the Swami's lectures.

Srila Prabhupada's early lectures in the Bay Area were mostly attended by hippies, and Jayananda was one of the only "straight" people there. Jayananda later recalled that, "I wasn't much of a religionist, but I was attracted to Srila Prabhupada." He was especially fond of attending the early morning lectures because at that hour, most of the hippies would be in bed. On some occasions Jayananda would be the only guest listening to Srila Prabhupada speak from the Bhagavatam.



Srila Prabhupada was always fond of Jayananda, and sometimes he would invite his budding disciple to take prasad with him in his room. "Srila Prabhupada would cook prasad and serve me," Jayananda recalled. "He didn't say anything - he just kept feeding me, and I kept eating." Jayananda soon donated his life savings of \$5,000 to Srila Prabhupada to help His Divine Grace print the Bhagavad-Gita As It Is. As more and more devotees joined ISKCON in the Bay Area, Jayananda continued to work as a cab driver and supported the Temple by contributing all of his earning.

Jayananda's Attraction for Krishna Consciousness

Chandan Acharya Prabhu remembers this special feature about Jayananda: "He was completely enamored by Krishna consciousness. Even when he'd go out on incense runs all by himself, he would rise every morning before four, have a little mangal-artik, chant all his rounds, read and cook prasad. He never deviated. He loved it. He was completely happy as long as he was practicing Krishna consciousness."

Take prasadam, for example. Jayananda worshiped prasadam. When a little prasad spilled on the floor, he would always bend down on all fours and lick it up. He loved to cook, offer, distribute and eat prasad in a big way. He would always take prasad with him and distribute it, whether he was making a bhoga run (buying bulk foods from the market) or taking a chanting party downtown. He would even say "prasadam" in a special way that made you immediately want to take some.

Jayananda knew how to attract people to Krishna consciousness with the prasadam weapon. When a new devotee came, for example, Jayananda would see to it that he was sumptuously fed with prasadam. When Jambavan Das was just becoming a devotee, Jayananda would bring him a plate of prasadam so big that he thought he could never eat it all. When he finally did finish the plate, Jayananda immediately put an identical plate down before him. "I can't eat that," said Jambavan. "Srila Prabhupada said that we should eat 'til we waddle like a duck," said Jayananda. Jambavan would finish the second plate.

Of course, Jayananda himself could be found honoring large quantities of prasad anytime day or night. He was the kind of devotee who would come up to you at ten o'clock with some peanut butter halava and say, "Hey, Prabhu, come here - check this out!"

Another example of his attachment to Krishna consciousness is Jayananda's love for kirtan (chanting). Jayananda was always eager to take the whole Temple out on hari-nama chanting parties. He had a special attraction for chanting in the streets. Whether kirtan was held in the temple or in the street, Jayananda could always be seen dancing and chanting enthusiastically. When he was making Maharaja Das into a devotee, Jayananda would visit his house and have big kirtans. Even if there were only two of them, they would jump and chant "Nitai-Gaur Hari-bol!" Also, Karandhara recalls how, one day, after working very hard for ten hours straight, Jayananda suddenly announced, "Hey, it's ten to seven. Let's go to artik." Everyone else was so tired that artik was the last thing on their minds, but Jayananda quickly jumped into the shower and then bounced down to the temple room for artik.

Of all the processes of Krishna consciousness, Jayananda was most attached to preaching. Whether it was during the Sunday feast, while making incense runs, or while building Ratha-yatra carts, Jayananda was always trying to find some person with whom he could share his ecstasy in Krishna consciousness. His preaching was very simple and easy to listen to. "We just have to keep chanting and have faith in the Name." "We just have to chant and take prasadam. Srila Prabhupada is so kind to give us such a simple process." Karandhara remembers how Jayananda preached to him on his first day in the temple. As they worked together preparing a little garden for Srila Prabhupada at the old Los Angeles temple. Jayananda said, "You know, things don't always go just right in Krishna consciousness. You have to keep chanting." At the time, Karandhara couldn't imagine how anything could go wrong in Krishna's service. Years later, however, as he found himself still remembering those words, Karandhara could appreciate the real potency of what Jayananda had said. "So many things may come and go. Just have faith in the Name."



Jayananda's preaching was very attractive for the non-devotees. Chandan Acharya recalls seeing Jayananda engaged in preaching late one night. It was 11:30, and Jayananda was up fixing a broken-down sankirtan van. As he lay on his back working under the van, he preached to two hippies who were standing nearby. All they could see of him was a pair of legs, but they stood by listening, completely absorbed, as Jayananda worked and preached away.

As soon as he felt a person was at all ready, Jayananda would preach to him about chanting and about Srila Prabhupada. There was no protocol or strict etiquette. Just sincere and confidential glorification of Krishna. True to his character, Jayananda was often seen preaching to guests from his wheelchair even during his last days in this world. Devotees who knew him could tell from a distance exactly what he was saying: "You just have to have faith in the Name."

Jayananda's Humility

Humility was certainly Jayananda's most prominent quality. He treated everyone as his superior, even new devotees. Maharaja Das remembers that Jayananda was always asking his advice: "Hey, Bhakta Mike, what do you think of this?" Although his service was glorious, he never wanted any glory. He avoided praise like the plague. Devotees got to know that if they wanted to be around him, they'd better not praise Jayananda. Otherwise he would simply leave. Once when he was with Danavir, someone came to Jayananda and began praising him. Jayananda just ignored it. Later he turned to Danavir and said, "You know, if you've been around this movement a few years, people naturally offer you some respect." Not that his service or qualities were so great, he just was around a few years was his humble thinking. If he ever spoke about himself at all, Jayananda would speak so humbly that Lochan Das recalls, "It was difficult not to think of yourself as being better than him. If you had any reason to be puffed up, Jayananda would bring it out in you." Feeling himself unworthy, he would step aside so that

others could lead kirtan, give classes, or do artik. Instead, he could be found fixing cars, unplugging toilets, washing dishes, or taking out trash.

Once a new boy came to visit the San Francisco temple. He wanted to help, so Kesava Das sent him to the trash area where Jayananda was preparing the weekly trash run. Jayananda told the boy, "I'm the garbage man around here. For years I've been watching garbage men carry out trash, and now Krishna is giving me a chance to do this for Him." The boy not only helped load the trash, but accompanied Jayananda to the garbage dump. Later that boy became a devotee, and he recalled thinking, "If the garbage men at this temple can be so blissful, just imagine what the rest of the devotees are like!"

Karandhara recalls another incidence of Jayananda's humility. "One day, before Ratha-yatra, I spent the whole day running around with Jayananda. By the time we got back to the temple it was midnight. The whole building was so crowded that we couldn't find any space to lie down. Finally we found room in one little storage closet. I was so tired that all I could do was throw my sleeping bag on the floor and lie down. Then I saw Jayananda walking out of the room. I asked him, 'Where are you going?' He said he'd be right back, but I kept pressing him, and finally he explained that he had some rounds of japa chanting to finish up. He didn't want to keep me awake by chanting in our room, nor did he want me to feel bad because he was going out to do something else. He just wanted to slip away to some corner and fulfill his vow. I remember saying, 'Sometimes it's not possible to finish all one's rounds because there is so much work to do.' 'That's okay, I'm not too tired,' Jayananda replied. I was amazed not only by his consideration for me but by his full submission to Srila Prabhupada."

Although perfectly qualified, Jayananda was reluctant to take a post as temple president or sannyasi. It was not that he wouldn't or couldn't do it - he would do whatever was asked of him. He was happiest just to be working under someone. In this way he was the backbone of the Bay Area's ISKCON temple for years. Through frequently changing administrations, he would

always faithfully serve the acting temple president. He was very special, and yet no one paid any special attention to him. That was just the way he liked things.

Jayananda's Service Attitude

Jayananda was always ready to do whatever was necessary to push on Krishna consciousness. He was expert at everything: cooking, preaching, Deity worship, public relations, sankirtan, selling incense, construction, and everything else it takes to run a temple. He was a tireless worker. He would be the first one up in the morning and the last one to sleep at night. It was Jayananda who was always running out to get the flowers, Jayananda who was washing dishes and making sure the kitchen was clean, Jayananda who was often missing class while he was out doing some service, and Jayananda who was always encouraging others to go out and preach, and setting the example himself. Whatever assignment he was given, he would always get done, even if he had to suffer personally for it. No matter how hard he was working, he would never stop for a nap during the day. He seemed to be inexhaustible.

Hare Krishna Centre - Leicester, UK - Remembering Jayananda

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 10 July 2011 22:20 - Last Updated Saturday, 31 March 2012 06:54



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