



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS
Founder Acharya: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

HARE KRISHNA NEWS

September/October 2025



Special Anniversary Edition



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**HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA
KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE
HARE RAMA HARE RAMA
RAMA RAMA HARE HARE**

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Vaishnava Calendar

11 Oct Sa	Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura's Disappearance
14 Oct Tu	Bahulastami
17 Oct Fr	Ekadasi
18 Oct Sa	Break fast 05:14 - 08:50
21 Oct Tu	Diwali
22 Oct We	Govardhana Puja Go Puja
25 Oct Sa	Srila Prabhupada's Tirobhava Fast until midday.
30 Oct Th	Gopastami
2 Nov Su	Ekadasi Srila Gaura Kisora Dasa Babaji's Disappearance First day of Bhisma Pancaka
3 Nov Mo	Break fast 04:59 - 09:26
5 Nov We	Kartik Purnima Last day of Bhisma Pancaka
15 Nov Sa	Ekadasi
16 Nov Su	Break fast 05:41 - 09:24
1 Dec Mo	Ekadasi Advent of Srimad Bhagavad-gita
2 Dec Tu	Break fast 04:47 - 09:26
8 Dec Mo	Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura's Disappearance Fast until midday.

Editors Note

I am compelled to write a short note in this issue. I have been editing Hare Krishna News since 2010, first as the assistant editor to Haripriya and later as the editor. I am pleased to share that this issue brought me to tears, my hair stood on end, and I felt I went on an adventure with each devotee as they shared their story. Earlier this year, we sent out a call to everyone who had some connection to Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple to share their memories, realisations, and reciprocations. Of all the issues I have been involved in, this issue is by far the most exhilarating. My hope is that when you read this publication, you, too feel inspired to share your story. These stories are not only about the storyteller but also the rich and unfortunate forgotten history of the many services, initiatives, and extraordinary experiences that are the heartwarming proof of Krishna's direct and dynamic involvement in our lives, and in the sankirtan mission. I invite you to take advantage of The Memory Vault and The Memory Wall, both of which allow you to record your memoirs. I wish you a blissful Anniversary celebration.

Warmest regards
Rasa-sthali Dasi

Write to me: rasasthali@iskcondurban.net
Layout & design by Rasa-sthali Dasi.

Acyuta Gotra Das

All Glories to Sri Sri Radha Radhanath. All Glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Under the guidance of Swarupa Damodar Prabhu, I personally saw a hand that established my service to Krishna. My first time doing greetings to Their Lordships, I felt some sense of protection, love, care, and adoration they have for devotees. Their unflinching love and support to help devotees grow closer to them is unimaginable. Coupled with love from Srila Prabhupada, enabling us to get closer is pure.

bhoktaram yajna-tapasam
sarva-loka-mahesvaram
suhrdam sarva-bhutanam
jnatva mam santim rcchati

"A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries."

Only through service and appreciation for Sri Sri Radha Radhanath can we, the fallen, attain peace. And I've experienced it first-hand that loving the devotees and serving them, my Lordships, gave me everlasting peace.

Your ever genuinely humble servant,
Acyuta Gotra Das

Akinchana Devi Dasi

By the mercy of their Lordships, Sri Sri Radha Radhanath, They have allowed me to play a small part in the big plan of Their manifestation here today. I cannot alone take credit for anything, as we always worked in groups. I hope that I have managed to make a small contribution by my meagre efforts.

After the Ananta Sesa deity was placed by our then GBC in 1982, we engaged in many forms of fundraising to build a temple. My parents, the Baboolal Rajcoomars, were very much part of it as well.

However, it was not until our new GBC Bhagavan Prabhu took hold of the reins in 1983 that things really got going. He sent nearly all of us out to sell Hong Kong paintings, in whichever way we could, door to door, offices, exhibitions in shopping malls, etc. Although selling paintings was undoubtedly hard work, it was an adventure nonetheless. That endeavour generated realistic amounts of funds to start construction, and we continued fundraising until the temple was completed and opened in October

of 1985. The project was headed by the very capable leadership of Tulsi Prabhu and supported by many dedicated devotees in the community.

The opening was a grand affair. Bhagavan Prabhu requested me to cook 100 kg of basmati rice to serve to the public at the temple opening. This was no easy task for me, but I managed with the help of my mother, Ramadevi Dasi. That's another story in itself! When the curtains opened, the Deities looked splendid in their gorgeous outfit that Lila Devi Dasi had made. I would like to mention a few things that come to mind from those days.

Head of Prison Buys Paintings

One Saturday, when I was at an exhibition in Johannesburg at a Pick 'n Pay, a uniformed officer approached and started looking through the pile of large paintings. He was a white big guy, at least six feet tall, fair-haired, with a very intimidating presence. He very soon concluded that he liked too many paintings and requested that I bring the paintings to his place of work that afternoon. His place of work was the local prison. We drove there, but I was really scared, not knowing whether he was a genuine buyer or not, nor what his intention was. Amidst all the nervousness, we took a spare roll of paintings in, resulting in there being several of the same paintings. That made me even more nervous, so I told him that I brought extras, just in case he wanted several of the same ones. He ended up buying 30 large paintings! I can only presume that it was to decorate the prison building. The payment



was another story too: he asked if he could pay in cash, to which I replied, "Yes!" So, we counted the money, stuffed it all into a plastic bag and drove off. I was still very nervous, wondering if it was real or not. Sometimes I still wonder about it some forty years on! With it being Saturday, we had to keep the cash with us in a rented accommodation until the banks opened on Monday. Bear in mind, this was during the height of apartheid, and me being from a quiet, reserved, and very shy Indian background, this was not an easy task for me – nerve-wracking!

Where to Keep the Money?

Talking about money in plastic bags, there is yet another story I must share. I had to do something similar on another occasion. In 1983, Tulsi Prabhu asked Rasapriya Devi Dasi to train me to work in accounts and treasury for one week and then sent me to Johannesburg to run the sankirtan office. On my first Friday there, the travelling devotees returned to the temple with their week's collections, mainly cash and some cheques. The cash totalled just over one hundred thousand, and as the evening drew closer, I realised that the office had no safe and I had nowhere for safekeeping, so I rang Tulsi Prabhu in Durban and explained my dilemma. His solution was very simple: when I go to sleep at night, I must place it under my mattress, not tell anyone, and when going to shower, make had to sure I take it with me. And if I went anywhere else on the property, I to make sure to keep it in my possession and then bank it on Monday.

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Did you know?

Since the Temple opening in 1985



Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple
Ran a Bhakti-yoga Program at Westville Prison

Maximum Security:
468 Programs with 23,760 inmates

Juvenile Prison:
108 Programs with 3,240 inmates

Women's Prison:
864 Programs with 25,920 inmates

Note: The Temple did not keep formal records of the service statistics. The statistics are estimates based on information given by inmates who were engaged in these initiatives. Some programs are no longer active, while others are periodic. These statistics are from the Temple opening in October 1985 until March 2025.

Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple | Temple@johannesburg.net | 011 453 3328 | www.jkradha.org.za

Krishna Smiles Amongst the Prisoners

Amongst the many services I rendered, one service was preaching in the prisons, mainly to ANC political prisoners in Johannesburg and Pretoria. In 1983, Tulasi Prabhu asked me to become the treasurer at Cato Ridge Temple. In the office, I found a letter which had sat there unopened for two years. It was from a prisoner in Johannesburg. He had somehow got one of Srila Prabhupada's books and was requesting more information.

I took the time to write to him, and that became the seed of the first African preaching programme. With some support, I pioneered and managed the prison preaching programme from 1983-1989, in between doing other services. Initially, through correspondence and later in person. From that one letter, the preaching grew across six prisons with many prisoners chanting and reading daily. The prisoners I saw had been put in jail for political reasons, such as being members of the ANC. These people were intelligent and educated; some were teachers and others professionals. At first, the wardens were reluctant to allow me to speak in the prisons, but they noted that prisoner behaviour was significantly improved after inmates engaged in chanting the maha-mantra.

I Want Vegetarian Food

The head of the prison – a big, tall Afrikaner – called me requesting that I come in and stop a riot. Prisoners went on a hunger strike and started demanding vegetarian food. Wardens did not know what to do. The prisoners were telling the wardens that they needed to offer their food to Lord Krishna first, so they needed to change from their daily meat diet to a vegetarian diet. By the Lord's mercy, I managed to negotiate a successful outcome for the prisoners. Again, this was not an easy task for a quiet, shy Indian lady during the height of apartheid. I smiled with great pleasure at Krishna's little trick on this one.

Once, one of the prisoners requested that I bring him chanting beads. He had read about chanting on beads in the Back To Godhead magazines that I had left behind. But the wardens did not allow it. On a following visit, this prisoner told me that he was now chanting on beads. When I asked him how, he put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a mala, which he had made by himself. He said that when he'd been going out on ground duties, and gathered all the matchsticks he could find. He snapped them in half and knotted them on a string. For the Krishna bead, he left the stick whole. His story brought me to tears and shivers down my spine – where there is a will, there is a way. He had even set up an altar with pictures from the magazines.

Initially, when I started the project, I funded all the books through family support. Then, Tribanga Prabhu came on board to support me, and he supplied all the books I needed, and Nanda Kumar funded a few flights for me to Joburg from Durban. I am thankful to both of them. Additional support also came from various devotees who decided to make visits to the prisons, including Giriraj Swami, Kamsahanta, Hari Kirtan, Jagat Guru, Kunti, Guruseva, Madri, Rupa Raghunath, among others.

When Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple opened, we had only a handful of pujaris to serve the Deities. As far as I remember, there were only four full-time pujaris: Mahavidya, Jyesta, Radha Radhanath, and myself, along with a few part-time devotees who filled in as and when needed. There were no congregation pujari. This was very challenging, especially if one of us became ill or unable to serve on any given day.

Srila Prabhupada said that to start things is easy, but to maintain them is very difficult. So starting it all off is one thing, but to see how nicely everything is maintained today by the current team of pujaris is a real pleasure to see. I am very grateful to be one of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath's first pujari and cook. They look beautiful and happy, with so many pujaris and cooks. Thank you all for maintaining and serving so nicely. May you all be blessed by Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Radhaath.

Hare Krishna
Your servant
Akinchana Devi Dasi

Aradhana Krishna

My mum and I have been serving Sri Sri Radha Krishna for many decades. It is such a tremendous, breathtaking, mesmerising, and divine experience to serve. With utmost love and humility, we offer gratitude a decillion times at the lotus feet of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath!

Champakalata Dasi

Early Introduction to Krishna Consciousness – late 1970's

My journey with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) began when I was still a young girl, in the late 1970s. Around 1977–78, my family was among the early pioneers who helped establish nama-hatta programmes and festivals in the greater Durban area, especially in Isipingo. Those days were simple but deeply formative. We often visited the small *asrama* in Cato Ridge, the very first ISKCON temple in KwaZulu-Natal and subsequently joined the harinams in Prince Edward Street, Durban.

As a child, my own contribution was modest—selling “Buy a Brick” tickets to raise funds for the new temple construction in Chatsworth, where all efforts were being directed. Yet even this small service made me feel connected to something much bigger than myself, as if I were part of a sacred mission unfolding right before my eyes. Just like in the pastimes of Lord Rama, where even the squirrels had the opportunity to render service in building the bridge to Lanka, this was my insignificant contribution to fund-raising for the temple construction.

I still remember the atmosphere of those early Wednesday evening programs, held in the unfinished lower floor of the temple, during the construction of the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple. The congregation was small, but every gathering was full of enthusiasm and devotion. Little did I know that these humble beginnings would grow into the magnificent Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple—a place that would shape the course of my entire spiritual journey and remain at the very heart of my life.

The Temple Opening – 1985

As a teenager, one of my clearest and most cherished memories is the grand opening of the temple. The day itself felt magical. My father, being a professional photographer, had the privilege of circling above the temple in a helicopter to capture aerial images, while I remained on the ground, documenting the scene through my own young eyes and through the lens of a video camera that he had entrusted me with.

The sheer size of the gathering left me awestruck—I remember the endless queue of bumper-to-bumper traffic on the Higginson Highway and the massive crowds at the opening festival. The event was covered widely in newspapers and on television, and for me, it was a moment of wonder, as I realised how significant this temple would be—not only for our community but for the city of Durban and beyond.

Early Festival Service and Ratha Yatra

As an 18-year-old student at university, my involvement with temple activities deepened. Not only was I actively involved in organising the Bhakti Yoga Society's (BYS) activities on campus, which were ISKCON's university preaching programmes, but I soon became involved in the Festival of Chariots.

In December 1988, the temple hosted the first Ratha Yatra festival on the Durban Beachfront. In the days preceding the festival, the temple was a hive of activity. It was a call for action for all devotees to be involved in some way or other, in making this an event that would be so impressive to the Mayor and City Council, that it would become an annual event

on the city's calendar. We had to put on the best festival ever. Everyone found something to do. We were not going to be guests; we were the hosts and had to serve accordingly. I had the joy of threading flower garlands as decorations for the chariots. The colourful, festive atmosphere and the media attention that the festival attracted, even during the build-up to the event, made a deep impression on me and would later inspire me to get involved with the temple's public relations team.

Also, having grown up in my parents' photographic studio, I already had an eye for presentation, and combined with my love for writing, it felt natural to serve in the area of public relations and communications for the temple. From the following year onwards until 2012, my service at the Ratha Yatra festival has always been media publicity, coordinating the cultural entertainment stage programme, and inviting and hosting dignitaries at the festival.

My University Holidays at the Temple

During all my university holidays, I would serve at the temple daily. My winter vacations would be spent assisting with beadwork and the sewing of the deities' outfits for upcoming festivals. I am grateful to Mother Radha Radhanath for the gentle care that she showed me during those days and for engaging me in such a sweet service. To me, carefully stitching beads on an outfit was not just about beads, fabric and thread—it was about love, reverence, and the joy of knowing that Sri Sri Radha Radhanath would be adorned gorgeously on Balaram Purnima, Krishna Janmashtami, Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa-puja, and Radhashtami. These moments in the deity sewing room gave me a sense of closeness to the deities, as if I could offer them something truly personal from my own hands.

During my summer vacations, I would assist Mrs Naidoo at the reception desk and switchboard to the extent that she saw this as an opportunity to take her annual leave during my vacation, knowing that her tasks would be well covered by me.



Serving my Guru Maharaja at the Temple

Eventually, my Guru Maharaja, Indradyumna Swami, would enlist my services to perform secretarial duties for him whilst he stayed at the temple, being the chief organiser of the Ratha Yatra festivals. I would take care of typing correspondence, which he recorded using a dictaphone, take minutes of meetings, serve his guests who were often City Council officials, as well as assist with the cultural entertainment scheduling and liaise with the media. These were the best days of my life – fully engaged in service at the temple from mangal arati until the evening, only going home to sleep and return to the temple the following day.

Serving under Sruta Kirti Prabhu as Temple President
When Sruta Kirti Prabhu became temple president, he recognised my commitment and entrusted me with the official role of Public Relations and Communications Officer. It was a service I carried out with great care, especially knowing that it was my responsibility to represent Srila Prabhupada's teachings in the best possible light to the wider world.

Sruta Kirti Prabhu was a great visionary. He recognised the importance of building harmonious relationships and sharing our philosophy with political leaders and international diplomats, not just for their personal spiritual benefit but also because of the great influence they wield and to ensure that ISKCON plays a role in the moral, social and political fabric of the nation. The time was especially ripe during this period of transition to a democratic South Africa. In this way, I was always hosting politicians as guests of honour at our festivals, giving them a first-hand opportunity to observe our prasada distribution, culture and philosophy in action.

DR MANDELA'S VISIT TO THE TEMPLE AS ANC CHAIRMAN – 1992

In 1992, Sruta Kirti Prabhu seized the opportunity to invite Dr Nelson Mandela, in his capacity as Chairman of the African National Congress, to visit the temple. He walked reverently into the temple room and listened attentively as Bhakti Chaitanya Swami (Raghubir Prabhu at the time) explained the equality of all souls, as children of God, our supreme father, as one of the fundamental teachings of the Bhagavad Gita and how Srila Prabhupada took these teachings out of India and spread them across the globe. He was very appreciative of Srila Prabhupada's efforts.

After the tour of the temple, Dr Mandela shared a prasada meal at Govinda's with, amongst others, Bhakti Caitanya Swami. I was part of the waitering crew on that occasion, and we had been carefully trained in the order of the dining service and from



which side of the guest to serve the item on the plate. I was extremely nervous and executed my duties cautiously. This was the first of three occasions where I got to have the direct opportunity to interact with President Mandela.

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA – 1994 DIWALI ADDRESS FROM THE TEMPLE

On 6 November 1994, a few months after South Africa's first democratic elections, President Nelson Mandela returned to the Radha Radhanath Temple on the occasion of Diwali. It was the first time in the history of South Africa that a President was delivering an address on such an occasion. In conjunction with the South African Hindu Maha Sabha, an invitation had been extended to him, and he reciprocated warmly. Several thousand guests gathered in eager anticipation to hear his address. Government ministers and foreign ambassadors accompanied him. The event became one of the most striking intersections of spirituality and new-era South African nation-building. Representatives from various sectors of the Hindu community were also in attendance and given opportunities to participate in the formalities at the event. It was indeed the ultimate recognition of the right of freedom of expression and religious freedom.

The guests were seated in a massive marquee which covered the temple's entire car park. The stage was aptly decorated with huge brass lamps, and President Mandela would eventually light a lamp, symbolic of the celebration of Diwali. The President's security detail arrived earlier, and we had a run-through of the line-up of his activities for the duration of his visit. Before addressing the audience, the President toured the temple, garlanded the deity form of Srila Prabhupada, and respectfully bowed his head to the floor, as an offering of obeisances to Srila Prabhupada. It was a simple, human moment that contrasted with the global significance of his struggle; an act of ultimate humility by a great political leader respecting the great sacrifices that Srila Prabhupada made to save humanity.

Whilst marvelling at the ornate interior of the temple and the paintings on the ceiling, he slowly reached the main altar and received the Lord's blessings in the form of the Lord's crown (sitari) being placed on his head. Captured on a photograph by my dad, Sri Nathji Das, the image remains an iconic photograph in ISKCON Durban's archive.

After President Mandela took darshan of the deities, whilst the temple was filled with the sound of devotees chanting Hare Krishna, he stopped by the exhibition stands where he intently observed ISKCON's activities that were displayed. He then went into the marquee to deliver his public address. In his speech, which was in the wake of the assassination of Chris Hani, a political leader, President Mandela emphasised the need for a peaceful transition and social harmony.

American-born Bhakti Tirtha Swami, who had been one of the chief guests at the temple opening, made a special effort to be in attendance on this occasion too. President Mandela was clearly impressed with the dynamic speech given by Bhakti Tirtha Swami, and he led the crowd in a standing ovation after Maharaja delivered his speech.

Subsequently, President Mandela took a full meal at Govinda's Restaurant with thirty members of his entourage, including American Consul General Pamela Bridgewater, with whom I spent a lot of time dining and forging a relationship on behalf of ISKCON. After the meal, devotees (my sister, Padmavati Radhika Dasi, included) presented a copy of Prabhupada's Science of Self-Realization to the President and everyone in his group.

On this visit, I served as the Public Relations Officer for the temple. My responsibilities included liaising with the President's entourage, coordinating press positions, assisting with arrival and departure protocol, and welcoming and seating visiting dignitaries. I remember escorting religious leaders, ministers of parliament and ambassadors across to the carefully planned reserved seating area, guiding camera crews to vantage points, and quietly ensuring Mr Mandela's movements flowed smoothly. We would meet again in 1997 at the Festival for the Children of the Rainbow Nation, which was President Mandela's third attendance at an ISKCON event.

FESTIVAL FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE RAINBOW NATION – APRIL 1997 – "HAPPIEST DAY" OF PRESIDENT MANDELA'S LIFE

On 23rd April 1997, a momentous event in the history of ISKCON worldwide took place at the Kings Park Soccer Stadium in Durban. Hosted by Food For Life, "The Festival for the Children of the



Rainbow Nation,” drew together 50,000 school goers, educators, Members of Parliament, King Goodwill Zwelethini (King of the Zulu nation) and President Mandela, as well as a huge contingency of international and national media. Many unexpected prominent persons, including Miss South Africa, made appearances at the festival.

Ahead of the event, the Radha Radhanath Temple was the nerve centre where all the planning took place for weeks on end. I was very much involved in the planning. My Guru Maharaja, Indradyumna Swami, had arrived in the country to lead the project together with Kapil Deva Das (Food For Life co-ordinator). The event required extensive organising as meal packs of breyani, dhal and juice were provided for the children who were entertained with a line-up of cultural entertainment featuring various genres of music, dances, and activities performed by famous local performers, television personalities and the children themselves. A separate meal was being catered for the dignitaries in the VIP suites of the stadium. It was a mammoth event with various teams tasked with duties including coordinating school bus drop-offs, ushering school groups into the stadium, distributing the prasad packs, back-stage performing artists and programme syncing.

The night before the festival, my Guru Maharaja phoned me and said, “Champak, I want you to MC the programme tomorrow.” This was a radical change of plans and something that I had not anticipated. I was now upfront and sharing centre stage with President Mandela, King Goodwill Zwelethini, Prince Mongosuthu Buthelezi, Bhakti Tirtha Swami and Indradyumna Swami.

Apart from figuring out how to introduce each item on the programme, weaving everything together seamlessly, I had to find myself a new outfit to wear, which would not be reflective of me as an ISKCON devotee, yet be culturally appropriate and comfortable. On the day, I found myself having to quieten down a rowdy stadium of 50,000 school children on several occasions, seeking their attention for the speeches that were being delivered and then encouraging them to enjoy the entertainment that was provided for them. It was a difficult task, which I had to execute with utmost tact and decorum.

President Mandela enjoyed the event so much that he cancelled the rest of his day’s engagements and instead extended his stay at the festival, which lasted more than five hours. He had received a raucous welcome led by a praise singer and school children on stage, singing struggle songs, which in true Madiba style he jived to. The Mercury newspaper had a huge spread on the front page the next morning, quoting the President as saying that it was the happiest day of his life!

The atmosphere was electric, and ISKCON had pulled off another feat, one of its kind, that would go down in its history forever, and I was there, right next to President Mandela!

Marriage in the Temple – 1st May 1993

My memoirs of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath would not be complete if I did not share the fact that one of the most meaningful moments of my life unfolded at the temple itself—my marriage to Saksi-Gopal Das. On





1st May 1993, with nearly 500 guests in attendance, we were married in the presence of Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Radhanath, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and Srila Prabhupada.

My wedding is one of the very few that have taken place in the temple, so it remains historic in that sense too. Moreover, we were blessed to have both our gurus present – my Guru Maharaja, Indradyumna Swami, officiating the ceremony and personally performing the fire sacrifice, whilst my husband's guru, Bhakti Charu Swami, attended the full ceremony and presented a talk. Shyamal Prabhu, who was always very close to my family, assisted my Guru Maharaja in the ceremony. To be joined in sacred union directly in the presence of our Lordships and our gurus was an unparalleled blessing.

Another special memory of that day is the grand wedding feast. In the morning of our wedding day, my husband personally took charge of cooking the prasadam, supported by a dedicated team of temple volunteers. Their love and devotion were evident in every dish, and the feast brought together our families, friends, and the larger devotee community.

The temple was not just the venue of my wedding—it became the home where the most important milestones in my life have always occurred.

In November 1992, the day before I wrote my final law exam, my mother and I received our diksa initiation from His Holiness Indradyumna Swami at the temple and the following year, my parents and I jointly received our brahmin initiation there too. This was at a time when only temple resident devotees received initiation. Our initiations by our Guru were the first for non-resident devotees. Years later, our daughter, Rasa Keli, would also have her name-giving ceremony at the temple.

Whenever possible, my family and I still celebrate birthdays and anniversaries by sponsoring, cooking, and serving prasadam at the temple, surrounded by devotees who have become our extended family.

Early Married Life: Kitchen, Sewing, and Sunday School

The early years of my married life were filled with opportunities for hands-on service. I assisted my husband in the deity kitchen to prepare the Sunday raja-bhoga offerings. Tuesdays were spent alongside my mother, assisting with the 7pm offering. These intimate services brought me closer to developing a personal relationship with the deities.

Our Sundays belonged entirely to the temple. After assisting in the deity kitchen in the morning, I would spend my afternoon teaching children in the Sunday school. Sharing stories of Krishna with the next generation was deeply rewarding. Eventually, I stepped out of the kitchen service and spent my Sunday mornings studying the Bhakti Sastri course under Brhat Mrdanga Prabhu (now Bhakti Brhat Bhagavat Swami). This opened new dimensions in my understanding of scripture while still keeping me rooted in service.

Govinda's Restaurant – 2001–2003

In the early 2000s, when the management felt that the income from Govinda's Restaurant at the temple was dwindling, my husband was given the opportunity to manage it and boost the income generation. During this time, I supported his efforts to maintain and uplift this important outreach. Govinda's was not only a place for wholesome vegetarian meals—it was also a gateway for newcomers to experience Krishna consciousness through prasadam.

Jointly, we refined the menu options and focused on the quality of the prasadam and improving customer service. It was hard work, but the turnover quickly tripled and helped pay the temple's expenses. We both felt proud knowing that our efforts supported the temple financially while nourishing the wider community.

Managerial and Advisory Services

It was around the same time that my services gradually expanded into more managerial and advisory roles. I was appointed as the chairperson of the ISKCON KwaZulu-Natal Management Board, often having to attend meetings extending into the late hours of the evening.

During my entire career as a lawyer (now in my 30th year of practice), I have served as legal advisor to the temple and ISKCON nationally.

One of the more challenging legal battles came in the 1990s, when I led the defence in a court case where a group of disgruntled devotees sought to place the temple under curatorship. With a skilled legal strategy, we managed to stay that off, affirming ISKCON's autonomy and administrative competence.

I feel that the perfection of my legal qualifications and skills is to use them in Lord Krishna's service, and that means serving His devotees, especially Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON, which the temple is an integral part of.

Srila Prabhupada's Centennial Celebrations - 1996
I cannot conclude this memoir without mentioning the once-in-a-lifetime event that I had the good fortune to assist in organising media and public relations, as well as inviting VIPs to Srila Prabhupada's centennial Sri Vyasa Puja Celebrations. The slogan used in this event was *na bhuto na bhavisyati* – a Sanskrit phrase that translates to "never was there, never will there be" a time like this again. Highlights included the Sahastra Tirtha Jal Abhishek, where, on the 100th anniversary of Srila Prabhupada's appearance, his deity was bathed with waters from 1,008 sacred rivers.

Another significant offering to Srila Prabhupada in this year was the renaming of Chatsworth Circle, where the temple is located, to Bhaktivedanta Swami Circle. This was only possible due to the political acquaintances that Sruta Kirti Prabhu had forged, and in particular, Ashwin Mohanlall was instrumental in this regard. I had worked closely with him in motivating for the road name change. It was therefore a cherished moment as I observed the board bearing the new road name being erected and Sruta Kirti Prabhu raising his hands in the air, jubilantly exclaiming "Haribol!" This was a very special offering to Srila Prabhupada on his centennial celebration.

Continuing Service

There are so many memories to share, but I have selected just a few described above in the hope that future generations will be able to reflect on these glorious days that I was blessed to have experienced.

Over the years, although my responsibilities in ISKCON expanded into the international sphere, serving in the role of international Child Protection Officer director (November 2009 to June 2016), first director of the newly established global Leadership Misconduct Office (2018 to 2022) and since 2022 as ISKCON's Minister of Justice, I continue to cherish and hold dear the special place that the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple has in my heart. I continue to serve here in whatever capacity is required. I remain connected as a member of the Executive Committee of ISKCON's South African National Council, still involved in guiding the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple from a national managerial perspective.

Looking back over more than four decades, I feel a deep sense of gratitude. From a little girl selling bricks to a devotee entrusted with leadership, every

step has been a blessing. The temple is far more than just a building to me—it is my spiritual home, the heart of my family life, and the place where my devotion has steadily deepened and continues to deepen, year after year.

All glories to the 40th anniversary of the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple and to all the Vaisnavas who have served and to those who continue to serve here! May you receive the same inner satisfaction and indescribable joy that I feel to this very day! A special "thank you" to my parents for bringing me to ISKCON.

Chandrakantha Das

In early 1975, the Hare Krsna devotees arrived in the city of Durban. They were preaching, singing, and dancing through the streets, spreading joy and spiritual energy. At that time, my family and I were also living in Durban. My younger brother, only sixteen and still in school, began visiting the Cato Ridge farm for weekend prayer services.

One day, he told my mother and me that we should come and meet a swami who was going to save the world. That swami was His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada. I saw Srila Prabhupada, heard his philosophy, and I thought it was too high. At first, I was baffled, but his conviction stayed with me.

During his visit, Srila Prabhupada attended several public programs in Durban. Over the years, I occasionally visited the Cato Ridge Temple, and later, the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple (SSRRT) in Chatsworth once it opened. My mother and I attended many major festivals and programs there.

In 1991, on the occasion of Janmashtami, I made a firm decision: I would follow the four regulative principles and chant 16 rounds daily. At that time, the Temple President, Srutakirti Prabhu (BCS), kindly engaged me in many different services. I would often drive devotees to Pietermaritzburg for harinam on Saturdays.

Another devotee, Ramananda Das, was leading the harinam party in Durban. He would frequently beg me to join them. In the beginning, I was shy, since being born and raised in Durban, many people knew me. But eventually, I overcame that hesitation and joined the party.

One day, near the entrance of Govinda's, I saw a poster with Srila Prabhupada's picture and his instruction: "If you want to make me happy, distribute my books." Those words touched my heart deeply. I decided to try book distribution, and my very first award was for securing a single Back to Godhead subscription.

While doing sankirtan in Asherville, I came across a handbill in the gutter advertising a Tent Campaign. I attended the program and was warmly welcomed by the devotees, who even asked me to help transport prasad. I ended up attending all five days of the campaign, where His Holiness Partha Sarathi Das Goswami spoke. I sat right in the front row, listening with rapt attention.

Later, I attended another campaign in Newlands. As Maharaja was passing by, I suggested that the tent program should come to Bonella, Cato Manor. Maharaja was very pleased and asked for my home address. A month later, he personally visited my house, saw my altar, and even visited my neighbour, who later became his disciple.

For Srila Prabhupada's centennial Vyasa-puja, my Guru Maharaj, His Holiness Bhakti Charu Swami, embarked on producing an epic movie about the life of his beloved spiritual master. I went to visit subscribers at their homes and became very emotional at one point, simply watching the production of the film. The struggle and difficulties that Srila Prabhupada endured in going to the West to fulfil his spiritual master's instruction left a deep impression on me.

Soon after, I joined the Asherville Nama-hatta, which later moved to Saligram Hall and then to Clare Estate. Eventually, I was able to acquire the Asherville Hall for weekly programs.

Over time, I have tested everything that Srila Prabhupada gave us and instructed us to share with the public – and I can say with full conviction: it works.

I remain forever a servant of the servants.

Your servant,
Chandrakanta Das

Darshan Padigadu

My grandma always talked about you and Krishna since I was a small child. We would always visit the temple together, and even as a fourteen-year-old, I still remember all the teachings about you. I just want to say thank you for allowing my grandma and me to share those moments talking about you.
Love Darshan

Dayal Kumar & Shalina Bux

Dearest Sri Sri Radha Radhanath,
Hare Krishna, Your Lordships!

We offer our humble respects and gratitude for your divine love and pastimes on this auspicious occasion of your 40th anniversary.

We attended the temple opening with our respective families at the ages of fourteen and twelve. It was an exciting time infused with joy, palpable excitement, and an engaging sense of curiosity. The festivities were spectacular. Sri Sri Radha Radhanath's divine presence transported us into a magical realm we hadn't experienced before. The temple was absolutely breathtaking with the intricate designs and decorations reflecting Krishna consciousness.

Please continue to bless us and our family so that we may deepen our devotion to Sri Sri Radha Radhanath and serve You with love and sincerity.

With heartfelt devotion, we offer our deepest gratitude to Srila Prabhupada. His divine vision and benevolent guidance led to the creation of this beautiful temple, spreading Krishna consciousness and endearing us to the loving exchanges of Sri Sri Radha-Krishna.

All glories to Sri Sri Radha Radhanath on this special day.

Your servants in Krishna consciousness,
Dayal Kumar and Shalina Bux

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS
Founder Acharya His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Did you know?



40
1985 - 2025

Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple

Distributed
1,429,862
Books & Magazines &
457,017
Back To Godhead Mags
since the Temple opening in 1985

Note: The Temple did not keep formal records of this various initiatives. The statistics are estimates based on interviews with various devotees who managed these initiatives. Some programs are no longer active, while others are periodic. These statistics are from the Temple opening in October 1985 until March 2025.

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Dhan Somlal

On 12 October 1975, Srila Prabhupada delivered a discourse on the Bhagavad Gita at a packed Luxmi Narayan Temple hall. Devotees eagerly awaited his wisdom. At the event, a member in the audience posed this question, "Where did we come from and where are we going? Prabhupada, in his calm and composed manner, directed the question to the audience, "Who can answer that question?" Not a soul stirred! Breaking the silence, Prabhupada answered: "Where did we come from? We came from home. Where are we going? We are going home." I found the response deeply meaningful yet so simple. The Gita mentions the soul's journey from the spiritual world to the material world and Back to Godhead. This is my recollection from Prabhupada's discourse. Thank you. Hare Krishna.

Gaura Premi Devi Dasi

Hare Krishna. Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Sri Guru, Srila Prabhupada and Sri Gauranga. All glories to Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple of Understanding

The bond that I have in this life with Sri Sri Radha Radhanath, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and Srila Prabhupada began with the Deities' installation and my birth in the same year, 1985. My parents, His Grace Radha Raman Das and Her Grace Karuna-sakti Dasi, were very fortunate to attend the temple opening, but my mother was afraid that the huge crowd on the bridge would crush her 8-month-old baby and didn't fight her way into the temple for that precious first darshan of Their Lordships. I've joked with her in the years since that this would have been the best way to go! (But Their Lordships had other plans for me.) That my father and mother were present at the opening was due to their deep spiritual connections to Their Lordships and Srila Prabhupada: my father was a member of the Clairwood Nama-hatta in the late 1970s, and helped raise funds for the building of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple (SSRRT) like selling "Buy-a-Brick" tickets, and my mother was at the Luxmi Narayan Temple programme when Srila Prabhupada was in South Africa. A year after the temple opening, my brother Omkhar was born, who became my joyful childhood companion in spiritual life and was favoured by many spiritual masters and senior devotees.

Some of my most evocative childhood memories are walking into the temple after a joyful morning of book distribution under the guidance of our eminent siksa guru, His Grace Raghunath Bhatta Das. The exotic aromas of incense would waft across the wooden archways in the foyer, and Yamuna Devi's sweet singing of the Govindam prayers played over the speakers. Next in my mind is the late His Grace Ramananda Das leading the most ecstatic kirtans

EVERY Sunday – leaping into the air while playing mrdanga at the same time – which would leave him completely drenched, as His Grace Bhagavata Seva Das performed the arati at 4:15p.m. when the Love Feast programme began. To me, Their Lordships always seemed directly descended from the spiritual world, and I could never take my eyes off Their exquisite visage, save to admire the luminescence pouring through the golden windows onto the cool marble floor. Distinguished speakers enchanted my little mind with everything they said, especially when it was in reference to my favourite childhood book, the Bhagavad Gita As It Is. My father's 1969 version of this timeless literature indescribably captured my soul and cemented my participation in devotional service, despite all the challenges over the years.

What I didn't actually look forward to was taking prasad at the end of the programme because I was a notoriously slow and picky eater (still am!) and I had an overwhelming fear of being left behind if I didn't finish honouring my prasad. Thus began a lifetime of pleading with the servers to give me "very little" of the preparations, which usually elicits a quizzical look since they're so used to being asked for the

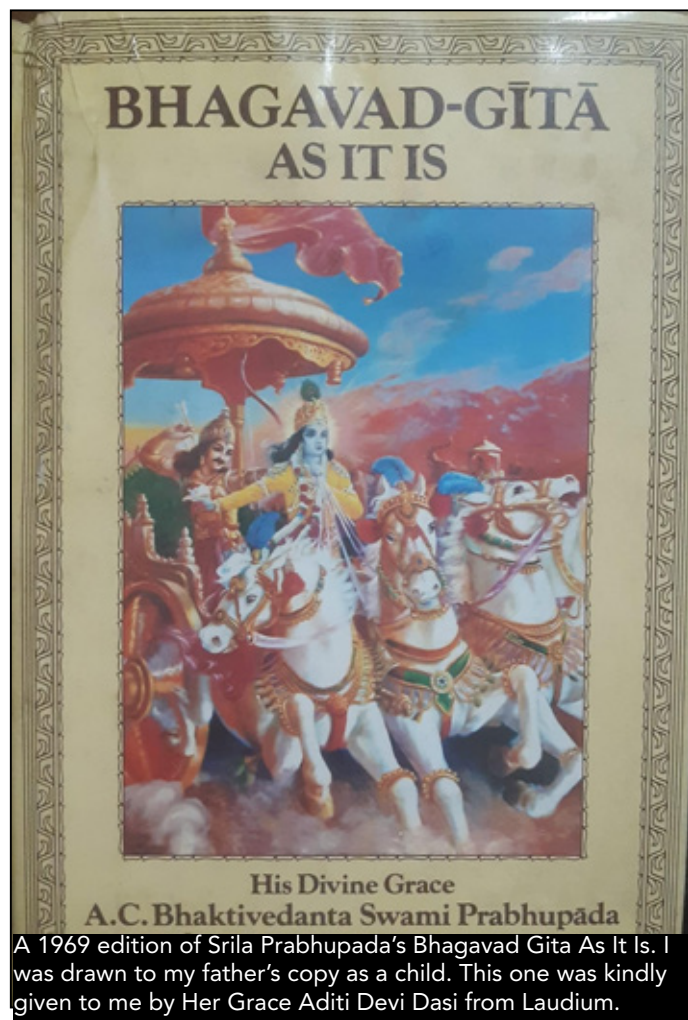


My mother and I around the time that Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple opened in 1985.

opposite! Only one devotee would insist that I get more halava for the “sweetest voice in ISKCON” after I gave two classes at SSRRT when I was just eleven years old. The second of those classes was to an illustrious audience that included His Holiness Mukunda Goswami, as well as His Holiness Indradyumna Swami, who took the kindest interest in my education in both sastra and material, which culminated in a career as a general surgeon and initiation from him. After that class, the humble way that Mukunda Maharaj advised me on answering questions left an indelible impression, which I hope to honour by following in his gigantic footsteps as a pioneering preacher.

And back to prasad! When I did get around to eating under the stars in the amphitheatre where prasad used to be honoured, I remember the tastes to be incomparable. The opportunity to get a crumb of a mangal sweet shared from a small piece that someone received in the prasad queue was priceless. And we relished the chance to participate in the festival and Sunday Love Feast preparations as well. Omkhar (who is not so little now and makes me look young to my great amusement) and I sat beside our parents, cheerfully peeling potatoes and cleaning tomatoes. That was a different time when children were more like little adults and given responsibilities that helped us grow in talents, and realise the philosophy practically. Thanks to the encouragement of my parents, Srila Gurudeva, and of the many spiritual masters and kind devotees whom we encountered over the years at SSRRT, I learnt so much about devotion and had the opportunity to engage in more services than I can state here. I am grateful for everything that I imbibed, even if sometimes in painful circumstances, and with all my faults.

We remember the heydays of the glorious Tent Campaigns, of our dynamic Newlands Nama-hatta that produced so many stalwarts at SSRRT, and of joyous beachfront harinams, parades and processions and massive Food for Life serve outs like the Children of the Rainbow Nation Festival. Oh, and we loved festivals, especially Ratha-yatra, rendering any services that we were given alongside good souls whom we met along the way, many of whom sadly passed away over the years. Missing a temple programme actually hurt my little heart. But the irony was that missing temple programmes became inevitable as change unfolded dramatically, and I moved away from Durban to study and then to specialise. Change also happened at SSRRT when sweet Sri Giriraj Govardhan joined Sri Sri Radha Radhanath and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu on the altar. The New Jagannath Puri Temple opened in Phoenix, and the Sunday afternoon programme at SSRRT moved to the morning. My father, who had faithfully nourished my spiritual and material



education, suddenly passed away in 2011. As the moat was restored and gradually filled with new life with the gorgeous and lively koi, the prasad marquee happened, along with a new reception area, the book office cabins, and increased fencing, gates, and security, while two degrees and two initiations happened for me. I'd drop into SSRRT as much as possible to help with Karuna-sakti's services, like preparing Srila Prabhupada's Sri Vyasa-puja cake for 2000-3000 attendees. Boy, is she a lean, mean kitchen machine! A legend at SSRRT who served in Govinda's, the bakery, at Sunday feasts, festival feasts and the Deity kitchen with dedication. I, however, was never a natural in the kitchen until Sri Sri Nitai-Gaurahari in Lenasia arranged for me to learn from Their beloved Her Grace Kalindi Devi Dasi, another kitchen legend who hailed from Durban. Sri Sri Radha Radhanath may have felt me too much of a nonsense and passed me over to Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda. Many services in the Johannesburg yatra and wonderful parikramas to India then unfolded in between, and at SSRRT, the Food for Life kitchen was renovated, and new buildings came up, while the old guest rooms for gurus and the ladies' quarters were transformed. COVID-19 then ground the services at SSRRT almost to a halt, and my health complications did the same to me.

We both emerged differently, and life would not

A picture of Srila Prabhupada at the Luxmi Narayan Temple, a program that my mother attended. The image is from my father's 1980 prayer book



be the same again, as I found myself back at the lotus feet of Their Lordships in Durban in the "new normal." Through Their unfathomable arrangement, many more services and a radically different destiny unfolded from the one that I had envisioned in my childhood at SSRRT. But with that also came invaluable opportunities for spiritual growth and deeper realisations about life, which I can transmit to others as a treasured service to Lord Caitanya and Srila Prabhupada. For the opportunity to be able to give back meaningfully to the community in which I was raised and which started my journey in Krishna consciousness, I'm forever grateful. I'm sitting on the vyasasan again, nearly three decades later, to share how the scriptures, sadhus, service, guru, and this great and transcendental structure of SSRRT set me on the rare path back to Godhead, and I'm hoping to help others do the same with whatever little I've learnt. SSRRT also brought me to married life, which my Gurudeva wanted for me, and to also lead a nama-hatta – where my spiritual journey began in 1994, as well as to lead a little weekly sankirtan party – where my heart finds the greatest joy.

I am immensely blessed to witness the mercy of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath, Sri Giriraj Govardhan, Lord Caitanya and Srila Prabhupada throughout this life, along with all the changes that SSRRT and I have undergone, and to share this 40th "birthday" year with Them. I pray to always serve Their lotus feet as They desire and for Their pleasure, as well as that



of all Their faithful devotees. gopi-bhartuh pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanudasah: "I identify Myself only as the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Lord Sri Krishna, the maintainer of the gopis." (CC Madhya 13.80)

Your insignificant
Gaura Premi Devi Dasi (Gourisha Jugunanan)

Indirakshi Devi Dasi

Hare Krishna! I was first introduced to ISKCON in 1995 by my neighbour Chandrakanta Prabhu. I was already a vegetarian. He took me to Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple for the Sunday Love Feast.

I was drawn to Deities – it was love at first sight! The chanting, dancing, and the entire ambience were magical. I lived in Mayville and joined the Clare Estate Nama-hatta. I did monthly sankirtan, book distribution, and the Sunday Love Feast was a family affair. We also participated in Food For Life and served at the Tent Campaigns.

I later met His Holiness Partha Sarathi Das Goswami and started aspiring from him as my spiritual master. He visited me at home and kindly guided me in my spiritual practice, and gifted me a Srila Prabhupada deity. I was awarded initiation in 2005.

My favourite festival is Ratha-yatra. In the early days, Ratha-yatra was in December, Chandrakanta and his good wife, Ambika, and I started the popcorn tent at the festival, and we went on to do this service for the next 20 years.

At Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple, I used to iron Srila Prabhupada's clothes and offer back-up service in the deity kitchen – I loved this service. Thirty years later, I'm still enjoying my spiritual life. I love my special place: my Sri Sri Radha Radhanath temple, my home!

Our dearest Srila Prabhupada did say he built a house in which the whole world can live.

My prayers for our 40th anniversary are for everyone who sets their feet in Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple, feels the same love that I felt when I first visited the temple.
Blissful greetings!
Indirakshi Devi Dasi

Kripya Moya Das

In 1999, what started off as a "boys" get-together at a devotee's rented house in Arena Park emerged to become the Super Sunday Sankirtan (SSS) team.

Under the guidance and leadership of Ekachakra Prabhu, we held harinams in the areas around the



Temple. When we had a regular group, we used to take turns bringing prasad and then venture out. Later, when it became more organised, we used to meet every Sunday at the Temple for 7am greetings and leave for harinam after breakfast. Thus, Sundays became the day. That is how the team derived its name.

The group started to grow, and from that, Ekachakra established the first nama-hatta in Unit 6, which is now known as the Krishna Prema Nama-hatta, under the leadership of Alanath Prabhu. Initially, people would invite our harinam party into their homes, and Ekachakra would give an impromptu class. That became the norm for a few years. Later, as some of us became more serious, we started to incorporate book distribution. After the harinam, we would split up in pairs with a bag of books. At some point, we were confident enough to join the Prabhupada Book marathon held every December.

We travelled the length and breadth of Chatsworth doing harinams and book distribution. In 2011, Partha Sarathi Das Goswami wanted us to record our activities and give him regular feedback. Ekachakra decided to incorporate the distribution of japa beads in our efforts. Between 2011-2025, we recorded 1,267 home visits with an average of four times that number of japa beads (5,068 sets) given in each household. The unrecorded number of homes we visited between 1999 and 2010 is estimated to be around 1000.

On our travels outside Chatsworth during the Book Marathon would estimate 600 homes. We also distributed clay lamps during the month of Kartik, maybe around 880 lamps thus far. Of course, COVID-19 put the brakes on sankirtan activities for two years.

As part of the outreach activities and mostly inspired by Giriraj Swami and Indradyumna Swami to we tried





to reach out to the second largest population in South Africa, the whites. So, for about three years, we focused on that. We ventured into the area of Malvern, considering it to be an ideal place to start, with its previously reserved area for "Whites only." It was a challenge, though. However, we stuck to it, realising we are merely instruments in the greater scheme of things. As a plan to quickly reach out, we collected old Back to Godhead magazines and distributed them in shopping centres in Malvern, Pinetown, Montclair, and the Bluff. I would estimate that about 800 magazines have been distributed thus far. About five years ago, as part of the follow-up, we decided to redo Chatsworth – road by road and door-to-door – this is where we are at currently.

We are ever so grateful to all our spiritual masters and senior devotees for their inspiration and encouragement over the years. A special mention to Anand Prabhu of the Metro Police and Indran Dharma Prabhu for their kind sponsorship of japa beads and bags. To the team who have been relentless and still keeping their boots on. To Ekachakra Prabhu, our stalwart and main inspiration. His 40 years of sacrifice and service are legendary. I hope to follow in his footsteps. Once, I asked him what it is about sankirtan that keeps him so motivated. He told me to keep whatever he says a secret; however, he closed his eyes and said, "Distributing books is like being in Vrindavan," and his face lit up as if having a moment. It was beyond my comprehension. Now that the secret is out, I will endure the punishment.

For the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada and the devotees and in keeping this open secret, I created a Facebook page a few years ago with some of our activities @Distributing Srila Prabhupada's Books in Vrindavan.

Jai Srila Prabhupada
Thank you.



Krsangi Radhe Dasi

From the time my memory serves me, I remember Sunday afternoons were dedicated to attending the Love Feast program. The amphitheatre would turn into a place where all the devotees would come together to take prasada. The serve-out would take place in the arena of the amphitheatre, on both sides. Devotees would queue from the main entrance alongside the walls (on either side) and go down the staircase. The buzz was so special. That was a fond childhood memory – once we reached home after the Love Feast programme, we knew the week ahead was about to begin. My cousins used to stay over on weekends (what a delight), and it was only after the Love Feast that they would go back home. So, when packing to come over for a weekend sleepover to my house, a sari or punjabi

used to always be in the bag! My mom and sisters used to always dress me in a full sari, bangles, sirbandi and the entire fit. Now looking through old photos – I wonder how I ever managed! It was time to go to the temple, so we always had to look our best to visit Lord Krishna.

Come mid-week festivals – that too was just such an amazing time. We would get to go to the temple during the week. It was safe, and school wasn't as hectic then (for learners) as it is now. So, we would attend every festival with no excuse of it being a work or school day evening. My favourite memory of the weekday (evening) festival is Srila Prabhupada's Disappearance Day. Candles around Srila Prabhupada's asana – with the mellows of Sri Guruvastakam reverberating in the temple room. It was during the early days of the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath temple that my Guru Maharaja, His Holiness Indradyumna Swami, was the Temple President. Those were the days when festivals took a different shape. Kirtan roared for hours and will often extend to the foyer area, going down to around the moat and back up to the temple room. We would spend many a morning (during school holidays) attending mangal arati and then going down to observe my guru maharaja performing puja to his beloved Nrsimhadeva deities and several other precious silas.

A fond recollection, which still sets my heart alight, is that of Lord Nrsimhadeva Appearance Day. Decades ago, my Guru Maharaja requested that I play the part of Bhakta Prahlad in the magnificent play that was to be performed at the festival. I was cast in the play without even auditioning! From my perspective as a seven-year-old girl, I was dressed in a yellow dhoti, adorned with jewellery, my face made up with makeup, and I had to be brave in front of a capacity audience in the temple. I clearly remember (and can still feel the deep emotion of nervousness) standing at the foyer waiting for my cue – the roar of Lord Nrsimhadeva. A life-size pillar was placed on top of a huge cake. I cannot remember how my Guru Maharaja, who was playing the part of Lord Nrsimha, got inside the pillar – but indeed he did. At the climactic moment, the ROAR took over the temple room. Devotees sat erect and eagerly awaited Lord Nrsimhadev, and at the perfect moment, the claws of the half-man, half-lion form of the Supreme Personality, cut through the large pillar. Maharaja's depiction of Lord Nrsimhadev was so real – he was fierce in every way. That was my cue to walk with folded palms through the packed crowd (there was no clear path) to Lord Nrsimhadeva, who was seated where Srimati Tulsi Devi's asana is now. I nervously and with a great deal of fear (because the lion mask and roar were so real – the whole performance was so real to me) climbed

the stairs and sat on Lord Nrsimhadeva's lap. His Grace Ranchor Das, a disciple of His Holiness Giriraj Swami, then performed arati for Lord Nrsimhadeva and Bhakta Prahlad whilst the entire temple room resonated with the Sri Nrsimha Pranams. This is a memory I will never forget, and I doubt any of the audience will either. It was heartfelt and endearing. The magnitude of such a performance was unfathomable, and here I was, a little girl playing such a major role. This indeed was a life-changing moment for me, without me even knowing it!

Then came the years of growing up – a clear routine of prayer and purpose through every day. The temple was the home to many senior and learned devotees who used to frequently visit my parents' photo studio and then visit our home to take prasad. When we met those devotees at the temple thereafter, a clear bond was formed. Devotees were warm and friendly – although we were part of the congregation, there was never a divide between the residents and the congregation. They saw the congregation as an extension of the devotee family. His Holiness Bhakti Brhat Bhagavata Swami (then Bhrat Mdranga Das) used to ask me to learn scriptural verses and then test me a week later. It was a quick spot test – I was too afraid to show up at the temple without learning the tasked verse – so 100% of the time, I would know the verse! The next week was spent learning the English translation and then being tested on the same. It was due to this type of teaching and testing that I know so many verses today. My family and I were the first group of students at the Bhaktivedanta College of Education and Culture. We did the Vaishnava Sadachara, and I recall His Holiness Bhakti Charu Swami handing me my graduation certificate – such special memories!

Last year, I was invited to offer Srila Prabhupada an official countdown to the 50th anniversary of his visit to South Africa in 2025. I recall, as a little girl, this particular festival was my favourite. Whilst driving to the temple, I was thinking how things have changed and how the congregation numbers have also decreased due to various factors.

I still cannot believe that I was present at the temple opening in 1985. As a four-year-old, I do not remember much of the proceedings. I do remember that it was long days and nights and that I was extremely tired. My dad was the official photographer for the temple opening (and several festivals thereafter), which meant we had to be there from the beginning to the end. Little did I know that by Sri Sri Radha Radhanath's mercy, I would eventually be planning and hosting so many festival schedules at the temple. It was truly a humbling journey of mercy where I still find myself thinking about just how fortunate I am to have Sri Sri Radha

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Did you know?

Since the Temple opening in 1985



Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple
Ran a Bhakti-yoga Program at High Schools
*The program included a discourse,
 books distribution & free meals.*
43 High Schools • 21,450 Learners
(Including all schools in Chatsworth.)

3,915 School Temple Tours • 234,900 Learners
(Schools across South Africa.)

Note: The Temple did not keep formal records of the various programs. The statistics are estimates based on reports from various devotees who managed these initiatives. Some programs are no longer active, while others are periodic. These statistics are from the Temple opening in October 1985 until March 2025.

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Radhanath Temple as my home, my shelter, and so often my escape from the noise of the material world. Over the years, not only has the temple been a place for meetings, services, discussions, classes, and much more – it has also been a means to take time out from the world that is so heavy and disruptive.

Stepping into the portfolio of Public Relations Officer during His Grace Vibhu Caitanya Das's leadership was an exciting time. And with that came the planning for the Temple's 30th anniversary. We had a huge billboard on Higginson Highway sponsored to celebrate the temple. We hosted several dignitaries – the Late Mr Ashwin Trikamjee (President SAHMS) and the Late Mangusutho Buthelezi (IPF leader who was also present at the temple opening). That year, I also put together a 12-page pull-out supplement to honour the temple in the POST newspaper. This was also such an exciting yet stressful service. Stressful because we were dependent on advertisers to fund the supplement, and exciting because this was going to go to people far and wide. They will have dharshan of Their Lordships – the picture I selected for the cover page was that of the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath's pushpa abishek. It did indeed create a wow effect, as any cover picture should!

Over the years, many relationships were forged due to different services. I hosted the media at a

media launch ahead of Janmashtami 2024 – all the delegates were really so impressed by the upkeep of the temple and the operational skills and drive that is required to go on for 24/7 non-stop. My relationship with various dignitaries, media and other stakeholders has been long-standing and continues to develop. Most recently, I hosted the MEC for Social Development, who was most impressed with the work that the temple does not only for the community it serves, but for society in general. Therefore, over the years, many such dignitaries (religious, government or business sectors) have been involved in planning these engagements and allowing them the special mercy of the deities.

The Women's Day events are fond memories that sit close to my heart, as I was the founder of this at the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath. I remember being hesitant to take on such a service because I felt that not many people would want to go to a temple to celebrate Women's Day when there are so many other, more "relatable" ways to celebrate. However, I had faith in the mercy of Srimati Radharani to guide the process, and it has been a huge success ever since. A team of like-minded devotees formed, and we ran with this for several years.

After becoming a mom, I realised the lack of spiritual offerings for children within the broader community. We had several things that children could do, but not deeply meaningful things. Therefore, I had the vision to create something special and meaningful for children – that is when the Krishna Kids Winter Retreat unfolded. I embarked on hosting a three-day retreat during the school winter break. It was such great fun! Everything was based on Krishna, but I kept the activities simple and engaging. The temple grounds turned into a wonderful playground for the children. It became their home for three days, and friendships were born during those retreats. From sweet making, clay lamp decorating, story telling and so much more – fun was had by all!

Both my daughters have special memories of our beautiful temple. My spiritual master, His Holiness Indradyumna Swami, whispered my younger daughter's name (Varsana-Rani) into her ear at the temple and announced it to the devotees and families who were present. Basically, her Christening (Naam samskara) was held at the temple. My elder daughter, Vraja-Sundari's first visit, after coming home from the hospital, was to the temple on New Year's Day 2008. Both their grain-giving ceremonies took place at the temple. I fondly remember His Holiness Bhakti Caru Swami offering Varsana-Rani her first grains in Srila Prabhupada's room. Vraja-Sundari had her first grains offered to her by His Holiness Bhakti Nrsimha Swami, and that took place quietly in the temple room after the raj bhoga arati.

Both the girls were fortunate to have maha kheer fed to them by such saintly devotees.

My service within the deity department is very close to my heart. Gandaki Dasi was actually my mentor who encouraged me to take up service in the deity kitchen. I remember it was a Gaura Purnima morning when I first went to assist in the deity kitchen (this was years ago), and the kitchen was so busy! The senior ladies who were experienced were thrilled to see me there, donned with a head scarf and apron. I helped with the back-up from washing a sink full of dishes (on repeat) to mopping, cleaning stoves, and serving in their association. I loved every minute. The vibe was so electrifying – everyone had a common goal – to prepare the best offering for Their Lordships. It was amazing. The warmth and spirit called for me to take up more service within the deity department. Over the years, I have remained a servant of a servant in the deity department.

Janmashtami will always be special. I remember as a young child being so very sleepy waiting until midnight – I would be restless and really want my bed. Now, I have experienced that with my two daughters, but now they too look forward to the midnight darshan. It becomes something that is innately built within us – the internal clock on Janmashtami no longer fights for sleep! Now, as we count down to Srila Prabhupada's 50 arrival anniversary to South Africa, I have been blessed to lead this national project. I do not know how such a mammoth project could ever come my way, and I have been praying for guidance and direction so that some small endeavour can be made to please Srila Prabhupada. My team and I have been meditating on Srila Prabhupada during this period, and as a personal reflection, I feel that perhaps that is why the Lord had mercy upon me to bring this service my way – so that I can focus my mind more on spiritual matters. This is mercy – to a fallen and undeserving person.

Today, my heart is overcome with emotion that my journey from being a little girl at the temple opening, to attending every major festival at the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple over four decades now am trying, begging and pleading to Their Lordships to make the #SP50 celebration a befitting one to Srila Prabhupada. I am overwhelmed by emotion – and even within my family circle, we have all been meditating on how to spread Srila Prabhupada's glories across South Africa.

The mercy of the most beautiful Sri Sri Radha Radhanath is abundant. I can tell that from my own personal life experience. The temple is indeed a beacon of hope for thousands. Not just its grandeur, but the energy it holds is just amazing. There is

still so much more in my heart and mind – but for now, this is where I leave this attempt at writing some memories. Remembering forty years' worth of memories (yes, it is all there), but putting pen to paper is something else. I will need more time to reflect, write and honour the deities. This is a mere attempt to briefly highlight the journey, with spot focus areas (omitting so much) and pray that the journey continues with more focus, steadfast devotion and pray my home will never change.

Kunti Dasi

My Fond Memory of the Temple Opening

A temple was born in Chatsworth in October of 1985. I had the great fortune of attending the grand opening on the 19th of October.

It was a sunny day, and the air was filled with spiritual energy. Throngs of people lined up, eager and curious, waiting patiently to enter the temple for the very first time. Chatsworth had been transformed into a place of pilgrimage — all eyes drawn to this magnificent structure that seemed to have descended from the celestial sky itself.

As the hours passed, my patience wore thin, but I held on. And when I finally stepped inside, the wait was more than worth it. Entering the temple felt like stepping into a sacred realm — a place far beyond the material world.

From that day onward, this beautiful temple became a part of my life. It has been my spiritual shelter through life's many calamities, a guiding light in moments of darkness.

I will always hold deep love and gratitude for our beloved founder, who turned this divine vision into a reality for our community.

With love and gratitude,
Kunti Dasi aka Monica Lakrajh

40
Janmashtami
Celebrations
563,000
Visitors

Lokanath Das

Hare Krishna

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. All glories to the Temple of Understanding, Sri Sri Radha Radhanath, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Giriraja Govardhan.

I joined the Temple of Understanding to become a full-time resident in 1998 and lived there for 8 years. I was attracted by the kindness of Jaisacinandan Prabhu and Smita Krishna Prabhu, as well as the beauty of the Deities and the grandiosity of the Temple. The initial contact with Krishna and the temple happened by the mercy and guidance of Kandarpa Manjari Mataji and her husband, Krishna Kirtan Prabhu, who ran the preaching centre in Musgrave and the BYS program at Natal Technicon.

The highlight of my temple stay was the morning program. Every day at 4:30am, there is a festival at the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath temple, and it goes on until 9:30am. I felt blessed to reside at such a wonderful place with its beautiful gardens, amazing architecture and golden sunrises.

This is where I got to know my spiritual master, who was resident there for a large part of the year and that's the heart of the temple life, the devotee association. That is what makes the place so magical – the activities that go on there and the consciousness of its residents and visitors, which rubs off on you.

If you are blessed to have the opportunity to visit this magnificent place, please take full advantage of it and perform service with the devotees there and hear from them about the glories of the Lord.

I remember my time at the temple very fondly, and it is the foundation of my life today. I recommend at least an eight-year stint to everyone!

Your servant
Lokanath Das

Noleen Durgapersadh

The most meaningful event of my life ever was joining Srila Prabhupada's family way back in the 80s as a college student. Many wonderful devotees inspired and nurtured my spiritual growth and services in ISKCON, and I remain eternally grateful to these wonderful devotees.

Sri Hari Prabhu's explanations of ISKCON philosophy won me over to ISKCON. Merciful Lakshminath Prabhu used to fetch me from home and drop me back so I could attend temple regularly and render whatever service I could. The late Ramananda Prabhu rendered the most beautiful kirtans at the

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS
Founder Acharya His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Did you know?



40
1985 - 2025

Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple
Hosted
Bhakti Yoga Society
(University Programs)
On 7 campuses
5,693 Programs
159,500 Students Attended
185 Off-Campus Gatherings with
1,309 Student participation
since the Temple opening in 1985

Note: The Temple did not keep formal records of the various initiatives. The statistics are estimates based on information with various devotees who managed these initiatives. Some programs are no longer active, while others are periodic. These statistics are for the temple opening in October 1985 and March 2022.

Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple | TEMPLE@ISKCONDURBAN.NET | 031 403 3328 | WWW.ISKCONDURBAN.NET

Sunday programmes and filled our hearts with transcendental bliss.

Balabhadra Prabhu and Kandarpa Mataji engaged me in the services of Quality Fine Arts, selling paintings to raise funds for the temple. The late ex-president Srutakirti Prabhu was a wonderful leader who inspired us daily through his compassionate care to do our best for fundraising. His brother Shaun and I were in a transcendental competition to raise the most funds for the temple through the sale of paintings. Sruta Kirti Prabhu would bring us wonderful prasada every day. I ran the exhibition at the then prestigious Workshop Mall in central Durban, and my dear late friend Premathura Radha Krishna (Brainy) used to sell jewellery from India for the temple from a "barrow" at the Workshop. Every day she brought her deity, Ladoo Gopal, to "work" to inspire us. She gave a daily prasada order to Srutakirti Prabhu and would say it was Ladoo Gopal's request. I joined ISKCON as a single female youth, and it wasn't the easiest thing to find my place in an organisation. I had no family or relatives in ISKCON to socialise me. All the wonderful devotees mentioned were my support system.

Growing up in the 80s, our family never owned a vehicle. Srutakirti Prabhu lent me his vehicle to drive to and from the painting exhibitions daily, and that

was how I learnt to drive on my own after getting my license. My first solo drive was from the temple to the Durban CBD on a Friday at noon. It was a harrowing experience as a very young and new driver, contending with all the buses, but those experiences made me a better driver.

While I was doing the daily exhibitions, I got news that I was to report to my first paid job, and Sagie Prabhu, who was one of the temple's drivers back then, took me to work on the first day. How lucky I was to be taken to work on my first day by a devotee.

Later, I got involved in sewing services by Mother Radhanath's mercy. On my first trip to India, I experienced the bliss of chanting in Mayapur at the Japa Garden. I loved the concept and wondered why no one had implemented this in South Africa. When the chairman of festivals, Balaram Prabhu, asked what service I wanted to engage in for Ratha-yatra, I happily said CHANT AND BE HAPPY, and by his mercy, we got to inaugurate that service at Ratha-yatra and continue to serve in the Mantra Meditation tent.

Vibhu Caitanya Prabhu inspired us to get involved in sankirtan, and we have been involved in the Monthly Sankirtan Festivals and book marathons, serving under Ranga Devi Mataji, Radha Raman Prabhu and Priya Kishori Mataji. I also still enjoy sewing by the grace and mercy of Hemlata Mataji. I can claim a beautiful life-transforming journey with Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple, my spiritual home. Thank you, Srila Prabhupada, for the opportunities.

Prabha Durgapersadh

Please accept my humble obeisances. Thank you for this opportunity to share my memories of our beautiful SSRRT. I recall SSRRT from my formative years as a teenager, which was a beacon of light and hope in Chatsworth. One cannot travel past our opulent temple without being proud of this remarkable spiritual haven. A spiritual haven is exactly what SSRRT has been to me. I derive hope, courage, comfort, safety, and protection when I am in SSRRT. I shudder to think what my life would have been had it not been for SSRRT. Thank you to our Founder Srila Prabhupada for ensuring that every town, village and city would have a temple. Without this great soul, I would have literally and figuratively drowned in this age of Kali. SSRRT has provided me with a reason and purpose to be better. Thank you to the beautiful devotees at SSRRT who are true grand disciples of Srila Prabhupada. Their association have been a priceless gem whilst steering and finding my path in this journey of life. I recall the days of serving the temple by helping to raise funds by selling paintings at the Workshop, then my service increased in the past years, to monthly sankirtan,

serving at the Japa and Meditation tent at the annual Ratha-yatra, and supporting and assisting in all manners. Wonderful devotees like Vibhu Caitanya Das, Ranga Mataji, Sri Hari Prabhu, Ramananda Prabhu, His Holiness Bhakti Nishma Swami, Partha Sarathi Das Goswami, His Holiness Bhakti Caitanya Swami, His Grace Jaisacinandana Prabhu – the list is long. I recall the campfire sessions initiated by His Grace Vibhu Caitanya Prabhu to share realisations on the Bhagavad Gita and book distribution. There are truly infinite memories of SSRRT, which has been my transcendental boat in this Kali-yuga, and I pray and offer my obeisances to the numerous devotees who continue to be amazing.

Ranga Devi Dasi

Hare Krishna Dear Devotees

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

*nama aum visnu padaya krsna prastaya bhutale
srimati indradymna swami iti namine.
namaste prabhupada priya dasya jagannathanda
murtaye bhakti sukhena krsna kirtanena nrshingaya
raksitaye namaha*

*nama aum visnu padaya krsna prastaya bhutale
srimati bhaktivedanta swami iti namine.
namaste sarasvati deve gaura vani pracarine,
nirvisea sunyavadi pascate desa tarine.*

Sri Sri Radha Radhanath has been the epitome of love, compassion and mercy for me. Ever since my first darshan in the 80's their images have remained in my heart and hopefully will continue eternally.

In the 90s They brought me closer to Their lotus feet, when I surrendered my life to serve Them intimately whilst residing at the Temple temporarily.



Upon my return from Cape Town Temple in 2001, I completely dedicated my entire life to serving at Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple. Soon after, I received initiation and never looked back.

For almost a decade, I served at the book counter; thereafter, with the aid of my Godbrother, His Grace Luxminath Das (who has passed on), I was involved with African Preaching from 2005 to date and opened nama-hattas in KwaMashu and Welbedacht.

Since my recent diagnosis of cancer, I have not been actively preaching at nama-hatta, but engaging in teaching at the Bhaktivedanta College of Education & Culture and BCaiS Education, the Bhakti Sastri and Bhakti Vaibhava courses in service to Their Lordships. I also go on book distribution and harinamas whenever my health allows.

I was also involved in backup services in the deity kitchen when I first joined. Their Lordships have been very merciful in this regard, as I wasn't yet initiated. Eventually, after receiving my 2nd initiation, I started to cook, make sweets, dress the utsava Sri Sri Radha Radhanath and perform aratis. Nowadays, I still engage in making garlands and sweets, as my health allows. I've also been cooking for the resident devotees since I joined.

I would say that my biggest contribution would be preaching in whatever capacity, whether it be online preaching, book distribution, or giving morning Srimad Bhagavatam classes.

I pray to Their Lordships that whatever may happen to this body, let it be, just allow me to preach Your glories.

Sri Sri Radha Radhanath ki jai!
Sriman Gaura-Hari ki jai!
Sri Giriraj Govardan ki jai!
Srila Prabhupada ki jai!
Srila Gurudeva ki jai!
Ananta koti Vaisnava Vrinda ki jai!



Sarah Chetty

Hare Krishna. Please accept my humble obeisances. I was thirteen years old when the temple hosted the grand opening ceremony. Up to that point, I had been attending service at the temple in what is now the restaurant. I remember many heart-warming programs that really drew me to Lord Krishna. As the temple was being prepared for the grand reveal, I remember the excitement and anticipation during the buildup to the main days of the launch. So many humble devotees working together cohesively to deliver an experience that was meant to be out of this world. My siblings and I threw ourselves into whatever service we were capable of handling,



from lovingly shining the brass railings at the altar, to cleaning the temple floor, to getting elbow deep into massive dishes of vegetable cleaning for the grand feasts to come.

On the days of the auspicious opening, we welcomed thousands of people, some came out of curiosity,

some were so excited to have such a worthy place of worship for Lord Krishna. My sisters and I assisted with distributing books and stickers.

It is hard to believe that forty years have passed. So many precious memories of helping with prasad preps, to driving to the temple at 1am and leaving my children sleeping in the car whilst we helped cook breakfast for the devotees who were cooking for the Ratha Yatra prasad distribution.

It has been an absolute honour to have provided the little service that I did, and my only regret is that I wish I had done more. May Sri Sri Radha Radhanath remain with us for generations to come and for all future generations to be fortunate to bathe in Their mercy. Hare Krishna.

Sri Nathji Das (Selvan Pillai)

I was born and raised in Durban, South Africa. From a young age, I was fascinated by the power of photography to capture moments and preserve memories. Whilst in full-time employment as a wage clerk in a construction company, I began freelancing as a photographer, capturing weddings, social, cultural, and sporting events and also supplying content to newspapers. This allowed me to combine my artistic vision with entrepreneurship, and over the years, the photographic business that my wife and I founded, Kris-Jay Studios, became a household name. Within ISKCON, photography was more than a profession for me; it became my instrument of service, especially in documenting the festivals and activities of the ISKCON community in

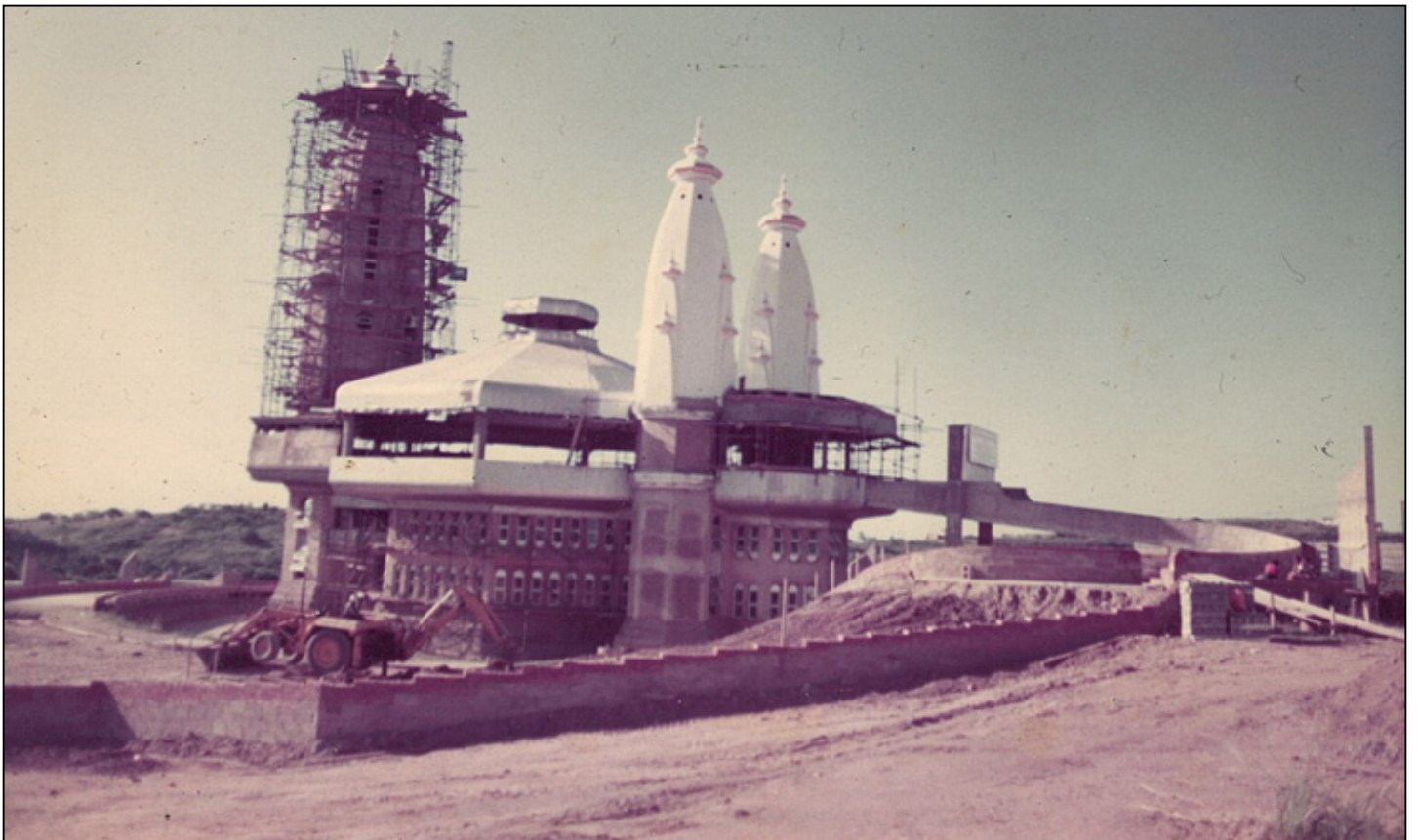
Durban. When I first began this service, little did I know that I would be capturing photographs that would be of historic significance.

Encounter with ISKCON

My spiritual journey began in the latter part of 1977, when I came across the Tent Campaign in Chatsworth. I was deeply moved by the surrender exhibited by the foreign devotees who were preaching from the Bhagavad Gita As It Is; how they had embraced what was my birthright and were setting an example for me. Attending the lectures at the Tent Campaign, I learnt the deep philosophy behind acts of worship, which until then were merely performed by me out of custom, following the tradition of my forefathers. I was compelled to request that the Tent Campaign come to Isipingo, the area where I resided, and to share this spiritual knowledge and experience with others, too. Thereafter, I started a nama-hatta in Isipingo and regularly arranged bus trips for new congregants to the Cato Ridge temple. Every Sunday morning, I would also leave home very early, driving to Cato Ridge to fetch a devotee who would come to conduct the "Sunday Service" at our nama-hatta and then drive him back to Cato Ridge. In this way, I had the good fortune of associating with the devotees and would also take my family to the Cato Ridge temple regularly. Soon, the devotees began to engage me according to my skills, mostly as a photographer.

Some of my early assignments – Before the Opening of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple

* 9th October 1978 – Tongaat Ratha Yatra: I captured



the first Ratha Yatra in Tongaat at Outspan Grounds, documenting the chariots, the devotees, the cultural entertainment and the colourful festivities.

* May 1979 Installation of Sri Sri Nitai Gaurahari deities in Cato Ridge temple

* Installation of Srila Prabhupada deity in Cato Ridge temple

* Chatsworth – Unit 3B Grounds – Krishna Janmastami festival

* Chatsworth Ratha Yatra festival

* Durban Playhouse festival

* Photographs for the Hare Krishna newsletters

Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple Construction Begins

As a precursor to the commencement of construction, it is customary to install a gold Ananta Sesa deity by placing Him about 6 metres below the ground. I captured this event through my photography and subsequently photographed every stage of the construction. Ananta Sesa was positioned exactly beneath where the altar would later be built. This event was accompanied by a sacred fire sacrifice. Tulsi Das served as the Temple President, and Raja Rama Das from Austria was the architect and construction manager. Bhagavan Das was responsible for the South African yatra at the time, and whenever he visited, he would motivate the devotees, who set up their own construction company, to reach a certain stage of construction by

his next visit. In this way, he moved the construction ahead with targeted deadlines. The temple gradually took shape, reflecting the devotion and efforts of many devotees. Having been involved with ISKCON for almost a decade now, serving the devotees and donating towards the temple construction, I was naturally elated that the temple opening was scheduled for 18th to 20th October 1985 and I was appointed as the official photographer!

The Temple Opening

The opening of the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple was indeed an experience of a lifetime. I was assigned to assist Nrsimhananda and Siddhanta Prabhus of ITV (ISKCON Television Network,) who had come to South Africa to film the temple opening for the purposes of making a documentary. I had to locally source some equipment, such as tripods and video lights, for them. During the temple opening festival, I also had the greatest privilege of accompanying them on a chartered helicopter, departing from Virginia airport and flying over the temple, circling it from overhead. Looking down from the skies, the temple's well-manicured lotus-shaped lawns and domes rising from the moat which encircles it, was a magnificent sight to behold. With my Pentax 1000, a fully manual 35mm film camera in hand, precariously leaning out of the helicopter unharnessed at a dizzying height, and manually focussing whilst the helicopter was in motion, to gain stability, avoiding



blurry shots was indeed a challenge but I did it and captured some epic shots which were later featured in ISKCON newsletters and displayed internationally during Srila Prabhupada's centennial celebrations in Mayapur. Despite the manual focus and the limitations of film, the photographs were sharp, vivid and ultimately, history in the making.

Over the long weekend of festivities, I also captured the grand fire yajnas in huge kunds that were performed by pujaris from Mayapur, India. I witnessed and captured photographs and videos of the deities who lay on a bed of rice with their eyes closed, honouring Them before the installation. I photographed every moment of this sacred ceremony, including the opening of the eyes ceremony. The installation of the Srila Prabhupada deity took place with an abhishek ceremony and ecstatic kirtans led by Bhakti Tirtha Swami and the late Shyamlal Prabhu. Other senior devotees, such as Partha Sarathi Dasa (who later became Partha Sarathi Das Goswami), Raghubir Das (later known as Bhakti Chaitanya Swami), also participated in this event.

Bhakti Tirtha Swami gave a dynamic talk whilst politicians from various political parties, as well as Professor Olivier, who met Srila Prabhupada, sat in awe and joined in thunderous applause with the audience. Eventually, there was the ceremonial ribbon-cutting by ISKCON leaders and the dignitaries. I was amongst the first people to enter the temple when the temple doors swung open and revealed the ornate altar, which revealed the beautiful forms of Sri Sri Radha Radhanath in Their first darshan to the public. It was a spellbinding moment, which I shall never forget.

On the opposite end of the temple was the deity of Srila Prabhupada, which having been carried on a palanquin in procession circumambulating the temple around the moat three times, with ecstatic kirtans, kartals, mrdangas, conch shells, and bells, was now on his special vyasasana, looking at the presiding deities of this breathtaking temple – the



most beautiful temple not just in South Africa but in the entire African continent.

When I turn over the pages of the temple's grand opening souvenir book, I am deeply moved to see my name listed in the Appreciation Page, where it is stated that "the following people have dedicated countless hours of their time in assisting to bring the Radha-Radhanath Temple to its completion. The leaders of the Hare Krishna Movement would like to thank them sincerely for their selfless service, without which we could not have done it." Although I was also acknowledged for my financial contribution in the category of over R4000 (which was the third highest category of donations and a lot of money at the time), I treasure the words of appreciation for the time and effort I put in, as it was, after all, a labour of love.

Later Milestones and Historic Events

ISKCON's activities and outreach continued to grow over the subsequent years, and I captured too many to mention. Here are a few of the most significant, historic, and memorable events that I also had the honour to capture:

- * 1992 – Nelson Mandela's 1st Visit to the Temple: A historic occasion, documenting Mandela at the temple highlighted the temple's national significance.

- * 23rd November 1993 – Food for Life Kitchen Opened: I captured the opening of this kitchen, which has served thousands of meals to those in need.

- * 6th November 1994 – Mandela Delivers Diwali Address: Photographing and video filming Mandela delivering his Diwali address at the temple was a moment of national and spiritual importance.

- * 10th October 1995 – 10th Anniversary of Temple Opening and 20th Anniversary of Srila Prabhupada's Visit to South Africa: I documented the dual celebration, capturing the devotional programmes, kirtans, and ceremonies marking these milestones across KwaZulu-Natal.

- * 11th June 1996 – Road Renamed Bhaktivedanta





Swami Circle: I photographed the ceremonial renaming in honour of Srila Prabhupada.

* Srila Prabhupada's centennial Sri Vyasa-puja – I photographed every person who performed the Sahasra tirtha jal abhishek for Srila Prabhupada, sponsored the printing and gave those photos to every one of the donors.

* 23rd April 1997 – Festival for the Children of the Rainbow Nation with Nelson Mandela: I documented this joyful festival celebrating unity and diversity through music, dance, devotion and Food For Life's role in ensuring that the school children receive wholesome meals

* Sannyasa initiation ceremonies of Partha Sarathi Das Goswami, Bhakti Brhat Bhagavat Swami, and Bhakti Nrsimha Swami

* Capturing the deities during deity greeting on Krishna Janmastami morning, rushing off to have them printed to large A0 size, framed and donating them to the temple to be auctioned before the midnight arati the same day. One of those framed prints raised R35 000 for the temple.

* Filming and producing a series of DVDs of lectures presented by Bhakti Charu Swami and Bhagavat Katha by Lokanath Swami. All proceeds from sales of these DVDs were donated to the temple.

Reflections on Service and Devotion

Now, 40 years since the temple's opening, I can say that through my camera lens, I have had the rare privilege of capturing and preserving the memories of the glorious Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple for

future generations. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. I hope that every shot that I took will remain forever, a story of devotion, faith, and service. The temple is more than a structure; it is a living testament to the dedication and love of countless devotees. Capturing the aerial view of the temple, the fire sacrifices, the ecstatic kirtans, Srila Prabhupada's installation, and the presence of national figures like Nelson Mandela, I realised photography could serve as a bridge between history, devotion, and memory.

I feel blessed to have been able to serve ISKCON in this way. All glories to Sri Sri Radha Radhanath and to Srila Prabhupada, whose mercy and vision continue to guide my life and service.

Taralaksi Dasi

My greatest fortune came when His Holiness Partha Sarathi Das Goswami Maharaj, with his kind permission and immense blessings, I joined the temple full-time just after spending my July vacation in 1993 there. By his mercy, I was engaged in back-up service in the deity kitchen, which soon expanded into making garlands, cooking devotee prasad, assisting in festivals, helping in Govinda's, not forgetting the bakery, going on sankirtan, harinam, and best of all, honouring Krishna prasad. We bhaktins were a formidable team, enthusiastically rendering the above-mentioned services, as congregational participation was less during that era.

I cherish every drop of nectarean association from Nikunja Seva Dasi, Sukumari Dasi and Radha Dasi, and I am truly grateful. By attending the Bhaktivedanta College daily, I developed the proper understanding of the science of devotional service. Deity Greeting was always breathtaking and exhilarating as we waited for darshan of Their Lordships – Their merciful glance captured our hearts and overwhelmed me. Upon Their Lordships' beautifully smiling and gorgeously decorated with fine ornaments, I reverentially appreciated Their personal presence, which created a festival for my teary eyes. Dancing, clapping, and the resounding musical instruments, along with the melodious kirtan, surcharged the atmosphere and kept us captivated in the moment.

I recall the sweet-smelling fragrance of the incense and aromatic scent of the flowers, and Their Lordships in Their effulgent splendour presided over everything – a memorable spiritual experience, forever will be etched in my mind and hopefully, in my soul too.

The devotee association was the most invaluable lesson I've learnt. Unknowingly, Nikunja Seva, Sukumari, and Radha Dasi were my mentors. I've imbibed many inspiring lessons through close interaction with them and through rendering service. With great humility and tolerance, they overlooked my flaws, making them truly admirable and emulatable. The temple, a reminiscent of the spiritual world, is my Goloka Vrndavan.

My three children: Radhika (Kisori Radhe), Vasudeva (Vasudhama) and Arjun (Rasika Mohan), had also grabbed the most fortunate opportunity of spending their school holidays at the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple. They, too, found their experience glorious, uplifting, and memorable. I am forever indebted to Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Radhanath for giving me the greatest special boon in this lifetime to experience Their association through a sincere service attitude and to always remember Them and never forget Them.

Vaishali Bhatt

I was lucky to visit Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple. Krishna Charan Prabhu, formerly from South Africa but now living in Adelaide, Australia, recommended that I connect with Jaisacinandana Prabhu. On Nrsimha Chaturthi, I came to the Temple for mangal-arati and had the good fortune to meet Shireen Mataji. I participated in the Nrsimha Yagna and developed friendships with lovely Vaishnavas. I also met Premagali Mataji, who was going for the surgery the next day, but still captured beautiful pictures of the Deities for me as I was leaving to

return to Australia. The second time I visited Durban was last year in November. I rendered devotional service on the occasion of Govardhan Puja by Shireen's arrangement and helped make puris for the feast, and again got to associate with beautiful devotees. The next day, I joined the devotees on a bus trip to the Sri Krishna Goshala. On the bus, Shireen introduced me to Smita Krishna Prabhu, Kubashnie, Kisori Radhe Mataji, her brother and a Gujarati couple, whose names I cannot recall. At the Goshala, we got to hear from Bhakti Caitanya Swami. The second time I got to help in the kitchen, I was with Tulsi Mataji and Arthie Gungadeen. We chopped green chillies and fried chilli bites. We had a great time! Then, on Gita Jayanti, I got to assist Jaisacinandana Prabhu in the devotee kitchen preparing ekadasi prasad. I also got to know Prabhashni on that day and spent some time with her in the gift shop. I was also blessed to witness the grand Ratha Yatra festival for three days, which was a memorable event in my life – I felt like I was in Jagannath Puri. I got to associate with Ujjvala Rasa Mataji, Raghunath Bhatta Das, some Prabhupada disciples & many wonderful devotees from different parts of the world.

Vaisnava Priya Dasi

Hare Krishna

I received initiation from His Holiness Partha Sarathi Das Goswami in 2009 and was engaged in Deity backup service on Thursday evenings for the 8pm offering. Three years later, my husband, Sampati Das and I received second initiation and engaged in cooking the 8pm offerings on Thursday evenings, and I also assisted in dressing little Sri Sri Radha Radhanath. We also run the Gillitts Nama-hatta and are part of the Festival Committee. Recently, I have also been appointed to head the Women's Forum at SSRT. I would like to thank my Guru Maharaj and Srila Prabhupada for allowing us to engage in a little service. Hare Krishna!



Meet Devadeva Das

Rasa-sthali Dasi Interviews

Our New Temple President

In this issue we interview His Grace Devadeva Das. He has been serving as the Head Pujari for over two decades. People may have seen or know of Devadeva Das but may not know him personally. This interview gives you an honest, open, and heart-warming glimpse into the person he is. What really struck me is his investment in the community and his deeply held desire to foster open and honest relationships within the community.

Can you share your personal journey into bhakti and how it has shaped your life over the years?

I am profoundly grateful for being born into a pious family deeply rooted in spiritual values. Although I was instilled with righteousness and God consciousness from an early age, I was still able to see firsthand the transformative power of Krishna consciousness in daily life. Reading Srila Prabhupada's books in 1996 was a lightbulb moment, and meeting my spiritual master, His Holiness Bhakti Caitanya Swami, in 1998, was a catalytic event in my life. That guidance set my heart firmly towards bhakti, inspiring my lifetime of service ahead.

My journey began with simple services like washing pots, growing and cutting flowers for the Lord, and participating in harinama sankirtan. This later progressed to pujari backup, garland making, distributing books, participating in outreach preaching, and prasad distribution. Year after year, these experiences nurtured a deep appreciation for the community and the privilege of serving side by side with sincere devotees. Devotional service has governed my life, continuously reminding me that every personal achievement is only possible by the collective efforts, blessings, and sacrifices of many glorious devotees in my life. This inspires me to serve as a facilitator (a servant leader), committed to assisting everyone, focusing on small daily acts of encouragement and gratitude, and building a culture where devotees' hearts remain nourished and inspired with love and devotion.

What types of devotional service have you been involved in throughout your time in ISKCON?

Over the years, I've been blessed with a diverse range of services: preparing and distributing prasad, book distribution, Bhakti Yoga Society involvement, mentorship, giving classes, organising festivals, various levels of management, and Deity Worship. As the Head Pujari and later as the Global Executive Director for the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry, I have had the privilege of interacting with great devotees practically throughout the world, thereby learning best practices from them and humbly integrating these into the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple. Each service has helped me grow and has added new dimensions to my appreciation for the collective strength and sincerity of our glorious ISKCON Durban community.

Among all the services you've performed, which one has touched your heart the most—and why?

My dearest service is serving the Deities. Serving as a pujari has moved and molded me in ways words cannot fully express. To stand before Sri Sri Radha Radhanath each day, not only as Their servant but also as a servant to every devotee who comes to see Them, is an indescribable honour. A pujari's role is often silent but pivotal—quietly caring for the Lord while facilitating the spiritual nourishment of the entire community. Through this service, I have learned that it is the unseen offerings—the sacrifices of countless devotees behind every festivity, garland, and meal—that are the real foundations of our temple. These selfless acts inspire me to recognise and appreciate each devotee, as every offering strengthens our shared spiritual home—Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple.

How would you describe the role of community in one's spiritual growth and practice?

The community is the living, breathing heart of spiritual practice. Such association fosters encouragement, accountability, personal care, and shared joy in service. I am deeply conscious that each person who steps through our doors is a valuable member of our spiritual family, desiring connection, acceptance, and opportunities for meaningful service. Spiritual growth is best accomplished in a mood of mutual upliftment. The commitment to truly being there for each other—celebrating victories, assisting in challenges, and offering genuine care—creates stability not only for the individual but for the whole yatra.

What significance do Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Themselves and the Temple community hold for you personally?

Sri Sri Radha Radhanath are the heart and soul of everything we do. They are my divine inspiration, ever merciful and so beautifully present for our pleasure and transformation. The Temple community is my family, each devotee a precious jewel in the Lord's temple. I see in them a spectrum of talents, histories, and spiritual aspirations, all underpinned by deep devotion; together we are bound by the mercy of Their Lordships and the mission of Srila Prabhupada. The temple's vitality flows from the sincere efforts, big and small, of every devotee—each effort offered as a garland at Their Lordships' lotus feet. My deepest gratitude goes to every servant, for they are the lifeblood of our spiritual home.

How did you feel about your appointment as Temple President?

The call to serve as Temple President filled me with great humility—an acute awareness of my own limitations, and a profound appreciation for the trust of the community. This position is not a reward, but a grave responsibility to be a servant of the servants. I approach this role with a prayerful heart: "My dearest Lord and Master—Srila Prabhupada, please let me be useful to you and your devotees." I am determined to be an always-accessible leader—one who sees and values every individual

effort, listens sincerely, and acts out of care. My goal is to be both a facilitator and protector, creating a safe environment for every devotee to thrive in their spiritual journey, while developing genuine loving relations for the Lord and each other.

What is your vision for the future of the SSRRT community under your leadership?

My vision centres on stability, expansion, and a deep internal culture of love and appreciation. I see SSRRT as a beacon of spiritual excellence—where spiritual practice, loving exchanges, and quality Vaishnava education go hand-in-hand with dynamic community outreach. Long term, I want us to become a training ground for exemplary devotees and preachers: a place where newcomers feel embraced, youth and second-generation members find purpose, and every devotee is given genuine care and opportunity. I see greater infrastructural expansion, digital outreach, and systematic training in both sadhana and practical leadership, ensuring our temple thrives as a sanctuary for generations to come.

Are there specific areas within the temple or community life where you see opportunities for improvement?

Yes, several.

Firstly, devotee care must be more substantial, proactive, and personalised; we need to create systems where every individual feels seen and valued beyond their service contribution.

Secondly, youth engagement needs to be prioritised—we must give space, empowerment, and a voice to our emerging leaders.

Thirdly, communication between management and the congregation can be deepened to foster greater collaboration and trust.

Lastly, there is room to expand educational offerings, counselling, and mentorship programs, ensuring that practical and spiritual life remain balanced and uplifting.

In your view, where should the community focus its energy and resources in the coming years?

The focus should be threefold:

- In-reach—Devotee Care: Strengthen systems of personal connection, well-being, databases, and appreciation for every devotee. This is our foundation for everything else.
- Outreach: Invest in Food for Life expansion, large-scale preaching initiatives, innovative digital outreach (social media, an online relevant presence, and online seminars), interfaith collaborations, and structured training for book distribution and congregational preaching.
- Infrastructure: Begin phased expansion and renovation of our existing 40-year-old facilities—improving accommodation, multipurpose halls, and making the environment welcoming and accessible for all.

What does the role of Temple President mean to you on both a spiritual and practical level?

Spiritually, it is a call to humility—a life of constantly putting others' needs before my own, and constantly praying for the capacity to serve devotees as Srila



Prabhupada would want me to.

Practically, it means management, ensuring that all functions—administrative, financial, logistical, and physical—run smoothly to provide security and opportunity for every devotee to focus on their spiritual practice and service. I see this role as an opportunity to act as a loving, available guide and reliable servant, who supports and empowers others to shine.

How does this new leadership role compare to the other leadership positions you've held in the past?

While every leadership role carries responsibility, the presidency is unique in its breadth—balancing tradition with innovation, being accessible to every individual while still steering the whole yatra strategically. My past services taught me teamwork, resilience, and empathy; as president, my primary duty is to orchestrate all these lessons that Lord Krishna sends us into harmonious growth. Unlike prior roles, here the focus must be on developing others—empowering a new generation to inherit and expand Prabhupada's vision.

Will your approach to the presidency differ from how you've served in other ISKCON roles across South Africa? If so, how and why?

Yes, though my core mood of service is unchanged, in SSRRT I will be more present, more dialogical, and more focused on devotee care. This role demands greater inclusivity and transparency, and it is far more operational. I am committed to hands-on leadership, fostering open forums for discussion, and being responsive to evolving needs. My priority is to keep the focus on individual empowerment—ensuring every devotee feels their contribution matters to Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple, and that they grow and flourish into great leaders themselves.

May Sri Sri Radha Radhanath, Sri Giriraj Govardhan, and Sriman Mahaprabhu bless you all.

1,429,862

Books & Magazines

457,017

Back To Godhead
Magazines

315,000

Calendars

234

Temple Newsletters

4437

Street Chanting
(Harinams)

60

KZN Pada Yatra
1994-1996

University Programs

5,878

Programs

160,809

Participants

School Programs

43

High Schools

21,450

Learners

Program included a discourse, free books & meals.

Accomplishments of

40

1985 -

37

Festival of Chariots

2,590,000

Visitors

3,108,000

Free Meals

40

Janmashtami
Celebrations

563,000

Visitors

500

Hall Festivals

250,000

Attendees

713

Tent Campaigns

148 Venues

102,600

Attendees

19,975,000

Food For Life

*Excludes below.

3,027,383

Feasts served at festivals, hall programs,
university programs, Temple weekly programs,
Tent Campaigns, nama-hattas, and prison programs

Kartik Lamp Offerings

18,900

Kartik Mobile Temple

125,400

Temple Offerings

2040

Sunday Love Feasts
510,000 Attendees

1040

Wednesday Programs
222,040 Attendees

Bhaktivedanta College

8,000

Graduates

500

Courses Offered

54,378

Tours
2,175,120 Visitors

3,915

School Tours
234,900 Learners

over the last 40 years



2025



320

Auspicious Festivals

160,000

Attendees

744

Dramas & Skits

400

Nama-hattas
(Satellite Weekly Gatherings)

16,000

Programs

480,000

Attendees

Sri Sri Radha

Radhanath's Worship

116,880

Food Offerings

964,260

Food Preparations

102,270

Aratis

34,090

Kirtans

14,610

Bathing Ceremonies

10

Boat Festivals

180

Maha Abhisheks

3

Flower Abhisheks

640

Outfits

29,300

Bathing & Dressing

Prison Program

1440

Programs

52,920

Inmates

*Includes maximum
security, juvenile, and
women's prisons.

15,200

Spiritual Classes
(Bhagavata Katha)

46,551

Home/Business/Office
Visits

Note: The Temple did not keep formal records of the various initiatives. The statistics are estimates based on interviews with various devotees who managed these initiatives. Some programs are no longer active, while others are periodic. These statistics are from the Temple opening in October 1985 until March 2025.

Under Acharya His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada