

Leadership Training Begins in India

ISKCON Leadership Education And Development System
(ISKCON LEADS)
A GBC Succession Committee Initiative

- By Nanda Dulal Dasa

Under the direction and inspiration of the GBC Succession Committee, Indian Regional Governing Body Members and Zonal Secretaries met with top ISKCON educators in India on numerous occasions since November 2008. This resulted in the birth of the ISKCON LEADS training program. ISKCON LEADS is an acronym for ISKCON Leadership Education And Development System.

ISKCON LEADS gives current leaders an excellent opportunity to identify potential leaders within their temples, regions and zones. Selected candidates enter a comprehensive training program of seventeen courses of four or five days each. This totals 89 days to be completed within a period of three years. The program covers Inter-Personal Spiritual Development, Missionary & Family Spirit Development and ISKCON Institutional Development. Please see attached document for details of the ISKCON LEADS program.

Brhat Mrdanga Dasa, a member of the GBC Succession Committee, and chairman of 'ISKCON LEADS' has been educating devotees in ISKCON for over 18 years. He facilitated the first course on 'Bhakti-Sadacara (Krsna Conscious Behavior)' at Juhu Temple, Mumbai for the Western Division from 17th to 20th March, 2009 with 49 attendees. He then traveled to Tirupati and conducted the 'Bhakti-Sadacara' course from 24th to 27th March, 2009 for the Southern Division with 30 attendees. The Leadership Training Program in the Northern and Eastern Divisions will begin later this year.

The depth of the 'Bhakti-Sadacara' course content astonished all. Pranesvara Dasa, Youth-Forum Department Head from Juhu Temple comments, "The concepts were revolutionary and well-supported by sastra. It was an eye-opener for me." Bhaktika Devi Dasi, wife of Revati Ramana Dasa, Temple President of ISKCON Tirupati shares, "This course highlights the role of women in spreading Krsna consciousness. The grhastha devotees will realize the importance of practicing strict sadhana and preaching Krsna consciousness to others." The facilitator's attention to details and astute wisdom forced the participants to go deeper and deeper in trying to understand the importance of a proper internal mood and corresponding external decorum especially for a devotee in a leadership position. Radheshyam Dasa, Temple President at Pune and First Vice-Chairman of ISKCON LEADS feels, "Vital aspects of vaisnava lifestyle were covered with depth and fineness. In all, it was a thrilling experience." Gaura Krishna Dasa, Temple President of ISKCON Aravade realized, "I have to be very careful, caring and conscious in my relationships with devotees." Laxmipati Gaura Dasa, Vice-President at Tirupati liked the emphasis on humility, (avoiding) aparadhas and why one falls down. Vamsi Gopala Dasa, a mentor engaged in corporate preaching at Pune reveals, "I realize

how important it is to care for devotees.” Damodar Caitanya Dasa, a youth preacher from Baroda felt that the course especially helped improve his relationships with devotees.

The course included skits, slide shows, group presentations thus giving everyone a life-changing experience. Even I experienced a great changeover. Sukirti Madhavi Devi Dasi from Chennai, an active preacher engaged in developing curriculum for students, and conducting courses on Bhagavad-gita and other sastra books feels, “This course deepened my loyalty to Srila Prabhupada. I realized how Srila Prabhupada and scriptures respected females. It also helped me tremendously improve my chanting.” Mohan Govinda Dasa from Tirupati was most impressed with the discussions on implementing practical varnasrama, especially that vanaprastha couples could take care of training younger devotees. Hrishikesh Ananda Das, the Sankirtana leader from Chowpatty felt that the course focused how to strengthen the foundational principles of ISKCON with the Founder-Acarya in the centre.

Gratitude overwhelmed the participants as they expressed their appreciation for conducting a course of such vibrant content yet based on very down-to-earth topics of concern to all. Kalanidhi Dasa from Hyderabad felt, “It is a relief to know that our movement, its methodologies, tactics and strategies are evolving with time, while keeping Srila Prabhupada’s mood and mission intact.” Sarvananda Das, Temple President at ISKCON Pondicherry enthusiastically said, “I cannot wait for the next course!”

The office facilities, accommodation and prasadam provided by ISKCON Juhu and ISKCON Tirupati were excellent.

The next course, ‘Kirtan and Japa Retreat’ will be conducted in Pandharpur for the Western Division from 15th to 18th April, 2009, facilitated by His Holiness Lokanath Swami, one of ISKCON’s leading kirtaneers. The other courses will be conducted by experienced devotees in their respective areas of services.

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