

The joys of transcendental motivation

BRIAN JOHNSTONE

pline of temple life fairly readily when he joined the Glebe temple. He rose at 4.30 each morning and started the day with a cold shower - summer or winter. Following the shower the morning devotion to God began. This was later followed by chanting on the beads to free one from material entanglements. (Bernard says he wasn't entangled materially when he joined the Glebe temple but two fellows unentangled themselves of separate donations totaling \$10,000.)

Hare Krishna is chanted for 1½ to 2 hours and a lecture on the teachings of the spiritual master, Bahaktivedanta, follows, taking one up to breakfast. This all serves to ready the devotee for the rigorous day's chanting in the streets.

After a spell in Sydney, Bernard, with another three temple dwellers, was sent to Adelaide to get things moving. They opened up a temple at Kurrulta Park and were soon on the streets.

At about this time, a roving team of six Krishna followers arrived in Adelaide. Bernard said they were known as the Super Sales Squad. These fellows each collect up to a \$100 a day selling incense and books on the street. They have a roving commission to sell and collect donations wherever they please. They have covered most country towns and they each grossed 300 bucks a day in Perth.

Bernard says they came to Adelaide at a time when Bernard

and his friends here were earning only \$20 a day on the street and instructed them on several ploys to make more money.

One was told to hold out a piece of incense and when someone stopped to take it the Krishna devotee asked for a donation to help the children of Bangladesh or India. When the "customers" went to take out the money a book was handed to them. Instructions were to push it under the arm of the customer if need be. The customer was then told the book was free in the hope that this would obligate them to a more sizeable donation.

However, if the donation did not cover the cost of the book, the Krishna devotee was instructed to take it back and replace it with a cheap magazine. This was one of a number of tricks the roving team taught devotees around Australia.

It's all part of what the movement hierarchy in Sydney called "transcendental competition". A monthly bulletin is distributed in Krishna branches throughout the world detailing sales figures of books, magazines and incense. Challenges are issued from branch to branch on the number of sales both can record.

The Australian branch was challenging the Los Angeles branch when the super sales team hit Adelaide. At this stage Bernard claims \$30,000 a month was being sent back to America from Australia, whopping the LA branch which was bringing in monthly

sales figure of about \$25,000.

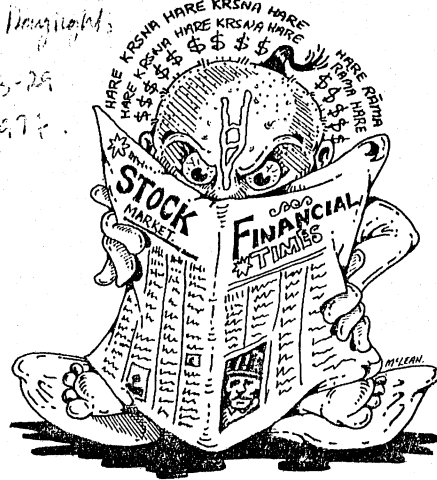
Competition in the divine competition was extremely keen as anyone selling well was glorified by the movement. A lot of pressure was placed on those not selling well. They were told they lacked faith and that increased chanting and devotion would result in higher sales.

Bernard says that when "transcendental competition" was at its peak the hierarchy placed a quota on each individual who was then pressured into selling so many books a day.

A ridiculous situation arose when some temple dwellers were on the streets from seven in the morning to seven at night trying to meet their quota.

Bernard says the movement's latest move in the streets is for devotees to wear wigs and don ordinary street clothes. The movement hierarchy ordered this when it became obvious the shaved heads and flowing robes tended to highlight the Krishna devotees presence on the footpath. Many people were crossing the street in an attempt to avoid dipping into their pockets.

Apart from street sales, the



movement was selling more than one thousand bucks worth of oils and clothes to Adelaide shops every week. The devious Krishna John (exploits revealed Daylights 13) sold \$2000 worth of oils to one Adelaide shop in a sole hit one afternoon.

Bernard says that apart from the obvious commercial ripoff the movement is riddled with internal spiritual conflict. Most of the temple presidents in each state have differing views on how the teachings of Bahaktivedanta should be interpreted.

One president had a free and easy style of life under his interpretation; a move to another state would find one entrenched in a rigid authoritarian code.

Bernard says that the perpetual chanting and six hours sleep per night plus the hassling on the streets make the devotee too tired to muster any significant protest to the teachings.

He told the temple chiefs a couple of times that he wasn't attaining any spiritual fulfilment from the chant but was told to keep on chanting and the love of God would take place. It never did.

IN MID 1971, Bernard Scanlon, 20 year old christian, bade farewell to his girlfriend of one year and left Adelaide, city of churches, for a catholic seminary in Sydney.

On arrival there Bernard came across a group of rather gaunt shaven-headed people wearing flowing saffron robes and chanting to the beat of the Mrdunga and clanging of kartels.

They told him they were worshipping their God - a cowherd boy. He had lived 5000 years ago, had enjoyed more than 16,000 wives, had produced ten sons by each wife, and had even found time to play flute. They seemed full of joy and Bernard left impressed.

He went on to the catholic seminary but decided the priesthood was not for him. He decided to seek out the street chanters. On new years eve of 1971 Bernard entered the hare krishna temple at Glebe as a celibate student. It was the beginning of a two year association with the movement in temples in Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

When this year he returned from Brisbane to Adelaide, his hometown, he decided not to rejoin the local temple and took a flat in town.

He retained contact with the movement in visits to the temple but these grew more infrequent until he decided to sever all ties a few months ago. He took a job and grew his hair. He left, he says, completely blown out by what he describes as the "enslavement and bondage of the devotees by the movement's hierarchy".

He's now a "christian", and enjoys playing footy - a frivolous pastime by the movement - for a local catholic college.

When I asked Bernard for an interview last week he seemed reluctant and said he did not want to put the movement down. However, he finally relented and recounted his experiences, both spiritually and commercially, in his two years.

He says he accepted the disci-

The Living Daylights

April 25-26

1977