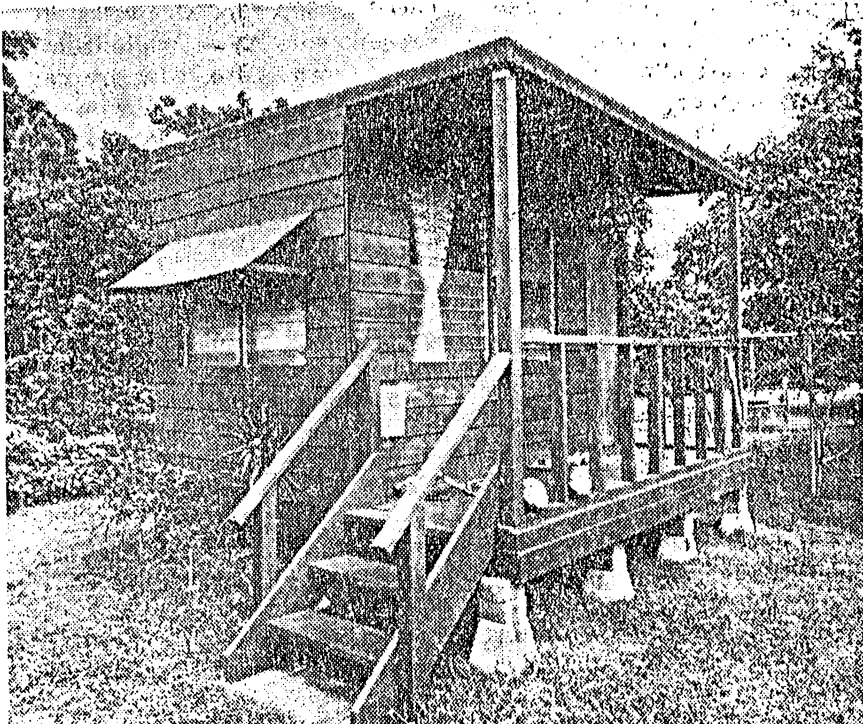


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EXCLUSIVE—His Divine Grace Satsvarupa Das Goswami Acharya receives guests in this separate bungalow on ISCKON property in Nuuanu.—Star-Bulletin Photos by Warren R. Roll.

His Divine Grace Visits Nuuanu

A Krishna Leader Defends Group's Fund-Raising Ways

By Nadine W. Scott
Star-Bulletin Writer

The followers of Hare Krishna who seek donations from travelers at the Honolulu Airport and from tourists in Waikiki are just as religious as the minister who passes a collection plate from his pulpit on Sunday.

This is the opinion of His Divine Grace Satsvarupa Das Goswami Acharya who is visiting the Nuuanu headquarters of the ISKCON (Hare Krishna) organization here.

Asked why his people approach the general public on the streets and at the airport, he said:

"Our activities are evangelistic. We go out and try to spread the word of God Consciousness."

He said if these evangelistic activities involve money, "that doesn't make it bogus or a mere business enterprise."

He said if any bona fide preacher from a bona fide religion "collects money for his books or his livelihood or to pay for printing his books it doesn't make it any less religious than his passing a basket from the pulpit on Sunday.

"We do it every day," he said, "not just on Sunday."

HE MENTIONED that the question is often asked if the money collected is misused and he said people can come and see here that we live very simply. Most of the money goes for our food distribution program, or books and for holding festivals."

He said it is "not that some of us are living high on donations."

H.D.G. Satsvarupa explained the Hare Krishna teachings of his sect are based in "God Consciousness rather than Hinduism or the Eastern culture."

Asked why the neighbors in Nuuanu have lodged so many complaints against the devotees and the way they practice their religion, he said these objections are caused by "narrow mindedness." He said we are a peaceful people who do not wish to disturb by our presence.

"They should try to understand what we are doing before they form some opinion based on, say, just a newspaper article."

This reporter noted that some peo-



Satsvarupa

ple at the airport have complained about being "accosted" by members of the sect, and Satsvarupa said:

"That's their concept. They're very busy, and we are offering something they don't want. It will free them from all suffering."

He said: "For example, when I get off a plane there are so many things demanding my attention that are agitating. It's buy this. Drink this. Smoke this."

"EVERYWHERE YOU look, people are dressed half-naked and drinking and intoxicated."

This reporter said you do not have to look at all those things.

Satsvarupa replied: "You can also choose not to take our books."

"We just give out books and we have to pay for the printing," he continued. "If we ask for donations

it is also for use in spreading God Consciousness."

Satsvarupa is 39, was born in New York and is one of 11 initiating gurus selected by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada to form a continuous line of discipleship, successors to carry on the work of the movement when he departed this planet on Nov. 14, 1977.

He said the founder of the order, Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, suggested there should be many spiritual masters to serve when modern society ceases to function. At that time, he said, people will turn to the Hare Krishna movement whose members live very simply and farm. There will be a need, he said, "for many spiritual masters to guide the people spiritually as well as materially."

Satsvarupa said he is a monk who travels, mostly in the United States and Canada, "rather than staying in one place."

He said he joined the order in 1966 when he was attracted by the spiritual leader, "by his example and by his chanting." Before that, he said he was a social worker for the city of New York and graduated from Brooklyn College in New York in 1961.

"WE THINK IT (the Hare Krishna movement) is the highest form of welfare work we can do," he said.

He said his parents do not understand it is the highest form of welfare work he could be doing, but approve of his change of career in that "it has been very good for me."

He said ISKCON has done well since the death of the founder, with 100 temples, mostly in the East Coast, Vancouver, Texas and Hawaii. The Midwest, he said is considered a good place for the Krishna teachings. "Where there are no cities, people are more pious," he said.

Satsvarupa said his is not an Eastern religion. "Our tenants," he said, "permit no intoxication, no illicit sex, no meat eating and no gambling."

Satsvarupa suggested the reporter might concentrate much more on the religious practices of the group rather than asking such "mundane" questions.