

Youth Services

Brief History

- Ujjain is a small place with not many colleges so HH Bhakti Prem Swami, then Temple President of ISKCON Ujjain, went to Bhopal for book distribution with a few devotees.
- He met friends of an acquaintance, gave them the basic knowledge and invited them to Ujjain temple. After a few months, HG Krishnachandra Prabhu started full-fledge preaching at NIT Bhopal by adopting HG Radheshyam Prabhu's model ie. 1 time program followed by Journey of Self Discovery (JOSD).
- In Indore, HH Bhakti Prem Swami invited friends of a fellow student devotee, Ajay Vyas, for a half an hour program. They were then invited to the Ujjain temple too.
- The boys in Indore held evening kirtans everyday for half an hour. HG Krishnachandra Prabhu and HG Nitai Chandra Prabhu would frequently visit Indore to cultivate these boys.
- At the same time, mass preaching was started in Ujjain, with over 500 boys in attendance.

Overview of Workflow

- While Indore and Bhopal has boys from an engineering background, Ujjain has boys from mixed backgrounds. There are 6-7 BACEs in Indore & Bhopal. One BACE has been recently started in Ujjain Engineering College.
- Preachers go to the localities for youth preaching where they give Gita class. Those interested are invited for JOSD, 3 & 6 session courses, and further cultivated.
- Preachers are given full independence to choose any method of preaching favourable. Once they start chanting 2 rounds, boys are invited to the temple, given accommodation, prasadam and motivated to attend the morning programs. Topics such as Re-incarnation, Difference between God and Demi-Gods, etc. are briefed upon.
- After 6 months- 1 year, boys are taken for spiritual retreats to Vrindavan, Mayapur and Jagannath Puri. They grow spiritually and get acquainted with philosophy, gurus, etc.
- As they advance, an option to choose Ashrams (Brahmachari/ Grihastha) is given.
- In college preaching programs, a 1-time program is held after which 'Discover Yourself Course', etc. is held and the same course of action as above follows.

Achievements

- There are 15 youth centres- Bhaktisiddhantha Saraswati Hostel & BACE. NIT Bhopal has been the most successful preaching centre. There have been 15 full time devotees from Bhopal and Indore each.
- Indore also boasts a CA BACE where around 25 CA students live together-they chant ½ rounds daily, and do kirtan in the evening. 3 CAs from this BACE joined the temple in the year before last. Others have taken up jobs and are financially supporting the temple.
- Indore houses the largest centre with 35 students staying in 1 building. In Bhopal, there are 30 students staying in 1 building. In other centres, there are 15-20 people in each with a total of 270 students. Around 60 students are working and practicing KC.
- Devotees working in other cities lend their financial support for preaching activities.

Structure

- This program works under the guidance of HH Bhakti Prem Swami and HH Bhakti Charu Swami. Under the Temple President is the ISKCON Youth Forum (IYF) Head- under him there are 15 preachers with each preacher looking after 1/2 BACEs.
- Each BACE has a co-ordinator locally (senior most student/ passout). In the temple, monthly youth festivals are organized and 1 team is dedicated for that alone. The largest gathering has been of 250 students.
- Ujjain Temple is not a huge one with many departments, but running successfully nevertheless.

Financial Structure

- Initially, the temple provided financial support. Over the years, as devotees started earning, they started contributing financially to develop youth preaching.
- Each youth centre has a separate financial accounting and centres don't do inter-transfers. Financial help is provided only to new preachers. In this way, all centres are stable and growing.
- A nominal fee of Rs. 4000/- is charged from the BACE residents.

Unique Features

- The whole setup is operating on the foundation of compassion. HH Bhakti Charu Swami showed a lot of compassion trying to imbibe the same mood in all the preachers.
- By the Lord's will, the BACE for CA students is running successfully. Students appreciate the selfless service attitude of the preachers.

Key Lessons

- The youth is waiting for KC. On simple preaching through book distribution, giving prasadam and holding kirtan, they become receptive. They are eager to lead a happy and balanced life.
- Follow-up is very important.
- There should be an emphasis on quality over quantity.

Notable Features

- No devotee is full-time preacher. Apart from preaching, they are involved in various other departments like Accounts, Pujari, Deity department, etc.
- Preachers must be present in the temple 5 times a week, attend brahmachari classes after the morning program and associate with devotees in order to enhance their spiritual strength so that they preach better.