

Story of my Life

By: Bhakta Mick

Like many people my age, I was 'using' psychedelics as a way to attain spiritual enlightenment. I can remember one night back in 1995 sitting in my parents' shed, stoned out of my brain thinking, "There has got to be an ultimate truth out there. Maybe one day I'll become a monk." No kidding! But it wasn't all spiritual effects the drugs were having. The rest of the time I was sat there either laughing uncontrollably at the universe or having panic attacks. There had to be a better way!

This is a bit of a digression, but something else coincidentally happened shortly after. I was reading the underground dance music magazine "Eternity" and they had started running a column on spiritual matters. In this article the writer gave the example of "We say that this is MY arm, MY leg, MY head, etc... where am I in all of this?" Looking back it was another stepping stone, or introduction to KC.

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Back to the main story. Two years had passed and I was 24 when I had been thrown out of the family house for amongst other things being disrespectful. I was staying on a friend's sofa, feeling a bit dazed, confused and a little depressed which was compounded by me "getting out of it" all of the time. I went to Derby HMV and decided to cheer myself up by buying some CDs – a lot of CDs! Well, surely John Lennon would have all the answers? (I now realise I had chosen the wrong Beatle!) Shortly after I had paid for the CDs and when the retail therapeutic buzz had subsided I clearly recall saying to myself, "These are just plastic, silvery discs. How are these going to ultimately fulfil me? There must be more to life than this?!" I left the shop and turned the corner – literally *and* metaphorically as it turned out!

I saw a girl selling books. I tried my hardest to avoid eye contact, cross the road, etc. but for some reason (answers on a postcard please...!) I went over to her. She asked me if I'd ever thought

about the soul. Cool! Yes I had. "Then what do you think the purpose of life is?" "Erm, well, to er transcend the material," I blurted out. I must have heard it on Richard and Judy or somewhere. "OK, you've obviously thought about this before. If you'd like to give a donation..." Again, hesitantly



but with some unknown purpose I bought the book "The Journey of Self Discovery."

From the first page of the introduction I was blown away. Finally

my life all made sense. The relief I felt was immense. I still want to meet the devotee in person and thank her but, as you all will have experienced I am horrendous at remembering names – and indeed faces!

I believed every word that Srila Prabhupada wrote wholeheartedly. That doesn't mean to say that I liked everything that I read. Women being in a lower class? Ooh. I could hear suffragettes spinning in their graves! Follow the four regulative principles? Makes sense but I'll never manage that! Krishna married 16,108 times? Nice story but difficult to conceive. But I felt that what he was saying was sincere, truthful and authoritative and I wanted to work towards following the scriptures quoted in his book.

Soon after I attended a rave in Somerset. I didn't end up getting in but I did end up meeting some devotees distributing books in the car park. I immediately asked them for a Bhagavad Gita. They eyed me with some suspicion. Was I an ISKCON "mystery shopper" dressed up to look like a long haired raver? It must have seemed strange to them. Again, another big turning point in my life. I read the Bhagavad Gita everyday and soon stopped eating eggs, meat and fish. I also adhered to the no gambling rule. Two down, two to go!

A while later I decided to bite the bullet and visit a temple. I chose ISKCON Birmingham. I arrived at the front door and nervously went in. In every room I saw Indians in dhotis and saris. I felt a little intimidated by this and left before anyone saw me. I vowed to myself I would go back one day.

In 2002 I met my future wife. Although she wasn't a firm believer in any particular faith she was cool with my fledgling belief. This part of my life was

so blissful. Every time I got a wave of material love washing over me I thanked Krishna for my being alive to experience this. Valentines Day 2003 we got engaged. On bended knee in front of her dad – the lot!

Three days later we discovered she had breast cancer. To cut a long but educational story short I was devastated. We married that April. As time went on treatment was useless to stop it spreading and she died at home in September. Throughout this phase of being full time carer, step dad, and future widower I read the Bhagavad Gita and other books whenever I could. They were a great comfort. The priest doing my wife's funeral service asked me how I was coping so well!

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Fast forward two years. I sent away for some KC books by mail order. On the form there was a space for people to give a potted history of their devotional life, if any. I filled this in as candidly as I could, explaining that it was a big ambition to visit a temple and finally associate with devotees. I posted it off. A few weeks later I received a phone call from a devotee. He said he had admired my honesty and would meet me at Watford train station and give me a tour of the Manor. So, no more excuses!

My visit to the Manor knocked me for six. Everyone was so peaceful and together. I was soon saying Haribol to everyone and making friends and experiencing mind-blowing prasadam.

My drinking decreased, and my chanting increased. After attending the Birmingham Ratha Yatra I went to ISKCON Leicester for a set of Srimad Bhagavatam. A devotee suggested that I stopped drinking altogether. "Why not?" I thought. Three down, one to go!

My association with all of you devotees continues to spur me on so much. Every week I commute to Leicester, Birmingham and Watford (and recently Soho St.), go on occasional Harinams and Food For Life, chant 16 rounds daily and remain celibate. (Four down, a long, long way to go!)

This is just the beginning of my story, the beginning of My Journey of Self Discovery...