

THE SACRED ARCHIVES OF ADIDAM

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An Interview with Jane Lind

Long-time Archivist and member of the Digital Preservation Project Team

By Claire Murdoch



This interview is part I of a three-part overview of Adidam's Sacred Archives photographic Preservation Project.

Jane Lind is a long-time devotee of Adi Da Samraj and has served the Sacred Archives in every aspect for more than 35 years. She offers a fascinating insight into how the Sacred Archives was created and what it means for all of us.

Q: Jane, thank you for talking with me. Can you first tell us how you found out about Adi Da Samraj?

Jane: Well it was back in the early 1970's. Just like a lot of other young people in their 20's in the 1970's, I was looking for the meaning in life and the truth. When I got into college I began to think more for myself and to realize how shallow my understanding of life was. So, just like a lot of other people during that time, I began to look for some aspect of God that was real in my life. And in the process of doing that, I went on a kind of spiritual quest out in the desert with a friend, and I had some mystical type of experiences. I had prayed and invoked the Divine in the midst of feeling afraid, and I saw this star above me with light that poured down and bathed my body and took away the fear. And I kept invoking God. I didn't know who else to call upon at that point.

And what occurred was so profound for me that I began to look for a teacher, because I didn't understand what had happened. And it made me feel the mystery of the Divine and something greater than myself that was tangibly there.

So I began to look for a teacher. I was working at that time for an architectural firm and the accountant there was a Yogananda devotee. I told her what had happened to me in the desert and she suggested that I read some spiritual literature. So I started reading Yogananda's books and went to a few lectures. It was a whole new turn in my life to be on a spiritual quest. Then I met a man who, when I told him that I was looking for a teacher, said that I should go see Franklin Jones in Hollywood. And I'm thinking, "Franklin Jones from Hollywood?" That didn't sound spiritual like "Yogananda from India". So I was a little put off.

But he brought me the *Knee of Listening* (Adi Da Samraj's first published book) to read. On the cover was a picture of Franklin Jones. He didn't look like anything in my understanding of what a spiritual teacher should

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look like. So I didn't really want to read the book and I turned it face down on my desk. I don't know why, but I just didn't want to look at it. During the next couple of months, I read every other spiritual book I could get my hands on -

Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, and many others. But one day, I decided to take another look at this book. So I picked it up and started reading, and I could not stop. I stayed up all night and through the next day and into the evening. 10 pages into the book, I felt, this man is speaking the Truth. There was some recognition on some deep level. Even though I had resisted this book, I had resisted who Franklin Jones looked like, there was something about this that spoke to me so deeply that I was a changed person from that day forward.

And based on reading that book, I wanted more. So I went down to the Melrose Avenue Ashram (*in Los Angeles, California*) and they were just starting to teach a course in June of 1973. I took the course for 12 weeks and at the end, they said that I should start thinking about becoming a student. I had been going to classes and evening events on a regular basis, but when it came time to becoming a formal member...I was resistant. It all seemed too much to me.

I hadn't met Bhagavan yet; I had only heard His voice on tapes. And one morning, I was lying on my bed in that state between being asleep and waking up. I had been in this dilemma for days - what shall I do, what shall I do? And this voice suddenly came in me or around me, I have no idea from where, but it was Bhagavan's voice. I recognized it. And He said, "No matter where you go or what you do, you will always come back to me." And I just sat up in bed, wide awake, and I started thanking Him. I was so grateful, because I had been in such a dilemma about this whole thing. It completely relieved me at heart and gave me the trust and confidence to go and sign up and become a formal member.

Q: How did you first meet Bhagavan in person?

Jane: I had learned marquetry from my father. It's sort of like mosaic, done with wood veneers. So I made a plaque of the Dawn Horse logo in marquetry as a gift for Bhagavan for His birthday. It was a logo that Bhagavan had designed Himself and He explained the meaning of every aspect of the design from a dream that He had had. I copied that, and made it out of wood, and I brought it to the Ashram. I couldn't wait to give it to Him on His actual birthday, so I went about a week before, and I walked into the office and told the devotee there that I had this gift for Bhagavan for His birthday. I wanted to just hand it to her and leave, but she said, "Oh, well go right in, you can give it to Him yourself." And I had never seen Him before or met Him. I was pretty nervous. It had always been very formal before. But now she was gesturing for me to go into Bhagavan's office, which we never went into as new students. So I walk in the door, and this wall of force just overwhelmed me. I almost fell backwards. And Bhagavan was just sitting there in the back of His office as if He were in meditation. And He just looked at me and gestured for me to come in. And His office was like a temple - absolutely pristine, and the air was thick with His Pres-

ence. It felt so sacred. So I walked up to Him and gave Him my gift and He was very gracious. He just looked and looked at it and asked me questions. And every time I tried to answer His questions, my words felt like they would come right back and hit me in the face, you know, it was like I had never been in the presence of a Being as Holy and Divine as He is. I had no recognition at much depth at that time, but He was my Teacher and I had just made this gesture to become a student and change my life, and here I was in front of Him, and He received my gift so graciously, and He said "Tcha" (*Adi Da's unique verbal expression of acknowledgement and Blessing of devotees*). After some time, I simply backed out of the room, because I couldn't take my eyes off of Him, but my legs were like spaghetti and I was sort of backing away. So that was my very first meeting with Him. It was very special.

Q: Because you came to Bhagavan so early on, you have been a witness to all of the years of His teaching work with devotees. Your experience is so uniquely useful in your service to the Sacred Archives. When did you start to do archival work for Adidam?

Jane: Well, for the first few years, there really wasn't an archives. As a brand new student in 1973, I had the privilege to transcribe one of Bhagavan's talks. But the first time I remember doing anything archival was in 1975 or early 1976. I was living on the Mountain of Attention (*Adidam's Retreat Sanctuary in Northern California*) and I was asked to duplicate some audio tapes. There was an

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office on the top of Huge Helper (*the name given by Adi Da Samraj to the original hotel building on the Mountain of Attention*) where there were these old tape winding machines. And I would rewind the tapes and I would

make copies of them for the transcribers. That was my first real service that was associated with preserving Bhagavan's Teaching. And I did that for a little while and then at some point I was drawn in on all kinds of projects in what was becoming a real archives. But then I moved with my family to Boston for a while to help establish a regional Adidam center there. When I came back to the Mountain of Attention in the mid-eighties, I was drawn back into serving the archives and I became an assistant to the head archivist. I learned and did everything then. I learned how to de-acidify Bhagavan's handwritten pages. We put them in a special alkalizing bath to take out all the acidity in the paper, because Bhagavan had used pretty cheap paper in the early years to write all His Dharma. So that was absolutely wonderful. And I did that for a long time until I was asked to be head of the Archives at some

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point and became in charge of the overall preservation of everything. By that time, we had all these fireproof safes. We had 3 or 4 places to keep things. And at one point, in 1987, I was invited to go on a service retreat to Adi Da Samrajashram (*the Hermitage Ashram Island in Fiji*). I was going to help to clean up after a huge hurricane that had hit the island. And I was to specifically serve the archives over there. This was a really special moment in my service relationship to Bhagavan. It really solidified it. When I was there, I was invited to a small horse show performed by one of the children for Bhagavan. So we were all gathered with Bhagavan beside the coral, and were watching the show when one of the Fijian residents came up to Bhagavan and offered Him a tabua. (*A tabua, pronounced "tom-boo-a", meaning "sacred", is a rare sperm whale's tooth that is highly revered in the Fijian culture as a symbol of reverence and spiritual power and it is given to the highest chiefs as a sign of deep respect*). It was attached to a beautiful, intricately macraméd rope. I was at quite a distance from Bhagavan, and I watched Him as He received and looked at it carefully, and He gestured and spoke to the Fijian man. And then He said something to one of His devotees who was standing with Him and He looked over my way. I had no idea what it was about. A few minutes later, the devotee came over to me with the tabua and she said, "Beloved said to give this to you and to tell you to take care of it for Him". It was so

intimate and personal, and it really was the first time that I felt the complete connection to what I was doing - taking care of Him and His personal things, His body, His objects, His artifacts, whatever it was. And that's when it solidified and cemented in me forever - this passion of taking care of His things.

So over the years in the Archives, He involved me in so many different projects that drew me to Him. Like one that I loved doing was finding every place He ever lived from His birth until the present day. That was one of the most wonderful projects, because I would go back and forth with Him. I would give Him what I had found out up to a certain point and He would make comments or He would point out what about it didn't seem right and say "I remember staying here in this place" or "We stayed in Bea's Rest Home in 1972" (*Bhagavan's humorous name for His first residence in Los Angeles*) or whatever. And that went on for over a year.

In the midst of all of this, we started doing sacred history museums, which we did at our annual celebrations. We would put together artifacts and quotes from Bhagavan's Teaching, along with photographs from a certain period of the Ashram. For example, for Bhagavan's birthday celebration, we would show photos of Him growing up and recount His sadhana (*spiritual practice*) with His early spiritual teachers. So every celebration would include a sacred history museum. We would stay up half the night beforehand, creating a display. And they just kept getting bigger and bigger. Then we started creating a more permanent museum in Huge Helper with different rooms representing different periods of Bhagavan's life and teaching. So at one point, many of the rooms on the second floor of Huge Helper were turned into museum display rooms. And when people would come and visit the Mountain of Attention, they could come through all these rooms and it became a real attractive force, potent with Beloved's Siddhi (*Spiritual Presence*). I mean, those artifacts are so full of His Spiritual Transmission. And we'd have audio recording so of His talks from the different Teaching periods playing in the rooms, and photos from those times. So it was wonderful to be a part of that.

Then in the midst of all of that, there would be more things coming into the Archives for safekeeping. We had to preserve them, store them and find out how to take care of them. And then there would be requests coming from Bhagavan. He would want to see something from such and such a year or need research about such and such a time. And the Dawn Horse Press would ask for research to be done also. So it just had many levels of being engaged with Bhagavan, His Teaching, His photos, and the artifacts associated with the different periods of His Teaching Work with devotees. It was a very full time of serving Bhagavan.

In 1991, Bright Behind Me (*a residence on the Mountain of Attention*) burned down. At that time, I had a regular job and could only do Archive service part-time. The day of the fire, I got a call at work and I was asked to come to the Mountain of Attention and help move everything out of Huge Helper, for safety's sake. So we moved everything down into the Stone Room under Great Food Dish

(*Bhagavan's name for the Ashram dining room*). It was incredible to move all that we had, even by then, received from Bhagavan for preservation in the Archives. After the fire, we began a process that took about 3 years to raise the money to build a new building that would be safe and secure to protect Bhagavan's Sacred Archives (and Library). Bhagavan renamed the new building Bright Behind Me and it now houses much of the Sacred Archives.

So that's a kind of history of my time at the Archives.

Q: And now you are involved in the massive preservation process of taking the photographic slides and negatives of Bhagavan and converting them into permanently preserved digital format, and you are the first in the line of a 3-step process to get these photographs protected. One of the reasons why you are so uniquely qualified to do this first step is because of your long and detailed history with Bhagavan. You have a real sense of how to organize this enormous amount of material and prepare it to be digitized. So can you tell us exactly what you do on this project?

Jane: Well yes, I had a lot of organizational background, even in jobs before I became a devotee of Adi Da Samraj, that would prove useful in my service to the Archives. Organizing is kind of my second skill set. At some point, it became apparent that the slides we had from way back to Bhagavan's birth in 1939 and earlier, were starting to show signs of aging and slow degeneration. And as the new digital technology came out, we were finally able to start this process of digitizing everything in the Archives for preservation's sake.

The other thing about it was that originally all the photos were divided into separate collections based on 5 broad subject categories. So every time you wanted to do a project, you had to go searching in these 5 different places. And hopefully they were in chronological order, but not always, and not everything was dated. So it was very cumbersome. Combining and organizing the photographs was something that I had always wanted to do. And everyone felt that this was something that really needed to happen. So I was very excited about being a part of that process of putting all these photos - and we're talking hundreds of thousands of them - into chronological order, to visually tell Bhagavan's Story.

But in order to do that, you have to use your own memory of events and talk to people who were there, and you have to use the written accounts of Bhagavan's interactions with devotees found in old Adidam magazines and devotees' diaries. Using all these resources, we gradually put together a pretty accurate timeline. It became like a sleuthing kind of a project, because during all those years with Bhagavan, things moved so fast, and everything was changing, and you were also involved with your own life, so you didn't always see every part of the Sacred History as it occurred. Now I have this opportunity to relive the Sacred History through these slides, and study them, because I'm putting them in order.

And not only do we put them in chronological order by date, but then we try to sequence them by how events occurred during each day. For example, on Bhagavan's birthday in 1973, He started out at the Melrose Ashram in the morning and granted Darshan, and then He went over to the La Brea St. Center to open up His birthday gifts from devotees, and He granted Darshan there. Then He went over to a devotee's house in Studio City. You know what I mean? You have to put the photos in sequential order for each day as best as you can. So that is the first step before it can go over to Charles Campbell, who takes all those slides and begins to convert them to a digital format.

Q: Well, since I work in the same office as you, I've noticed that you've had to get people to come in who were actually present during a certain period of time, in order to identify what was going on in some of the slides. So it is a very detailed process you have to go through to get these slides in order.

Jane: You do the best you can. And it's so much fun to have those devotees come in and identify images when we're stumped by certain photos. And they're moved by what they are seeing. I mean I've had people come in and break down in tears, and feel their devotional connection to Beloved through seeing these photos and remembering those events, and helping to identify significant moments in Bhagavan's Life and Work. And all we can get this as right as possible, for all time.

Q: That's wonderful Jane. So the last thing I wanted to ask you was about how this service has helped your relationship to Bhagavan, what's it meant to you?

Jane: Well I talked about that a bit already, but it's always been my personal bond with Bhagavan to serve Him in this aspect. So in that way, I've always had this ongoing way to offer gifts to Beloved, because over the years, we've been able to create many gifts for Him. And Beloved always received them so graciously, and was always really interested in anything that had a historical significance to it. And He would get involved in it with you. So it was this dynamic that was just drawing me to Him always, and opening my heart to Him, and feeling this personal relation with Him through my service. And then of course, it's a way to be able to pass on everything to others and to preserve His Teaching, His Dharma for all time. It's for all beings, He always said.

But, just on a day to day basis, in terms of the practice of turning to Him and releasing my own attention to myself and identification as a body-mind, what could be more Graceful than to sit and look at photos of Bhagavan day after day, and be reminded of these events in His Life and His Teaching Work and His Blessing Work. I know that anybody who serves here feels what a Grace it is, and what an honor, and what a privilege it is to be reminded constantly of who He is, and to participate with Him in Communion. So even since His Divine Maha Samadhi, He is Alive in all His Murti forms, He is alive in devotees, He is Alive in these photographs

and these artifacts.

And also, just as a character, I love doing this work! So it opens up my heart in relation to Bhagavan in every way.

Q: Thank you so much for your service, Jane.

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If you are inspired by the work that Jane Lind and others are doing at the Sacred Archives of Adidam, please consider making a monthly donation. Every dollar you donate will go directly to fund this all-important Digital Preservation Project.

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