



Bhaktivedanta Manor Newsletter

Dedicated to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Celebrating Diwali 2008 in Westminster



Srila Prabhupada:

A pure Vedantist, or a bhakti-vedanta, instructs followers exactly according to the instructions of the Lord Himself. The Personality of Godhead, both in the Bhagavad-gita and in all other scriptures, has definitely instructed men to follow the Lord only. The Lord is the creator, maintainer and annihilator of everything. The whole manifested creation is existing by His will, and by His will when the whole show is finished He will remain in His eternal abode with all His paraphernalia.

SB: 1.5.30 purport



From left: Theresa May (Shadow Leader of the House of Commons), Shailesh Vara (Shadow Deputy leader of the House of Commons), Kripamoya das, Barry Gardiner MP, Patricia Hewitt (Secretary of State for Health)

On 15th October, Westminster hosted its annual Diwali celebration. Organised by the Hindu Forum of Britain, the event attracted senior political, community and business leaders. It took place in the Lacarno Suite at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Chief Guest was the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party Harriet Harman MP.

“Diwali is a wonderful, inclusive festival,” wrote Prime Minister Gordon Brown in a message to the assembled crowd, “[it] sends a powerful message of unity and peace to us all.”

The Manor’s pujari team escorted festival deities of Radha Gokulananda to the event, which became a most attractive feature.

Conquering The Peaks: Charity Walkers raise £108,000

Adventurous devotees from the Manor congregation took up the challenge of climbing the Yorkshire mountains in a bid to raise money for the playground of Krishna-Avanti

school. Each participant trekked 26 miles of rugged terrain - within 12 hours. The walk was organised by Raj and Kalpana Thakore and featured three teams led by Naresh,

Kaushik, Surjeet and Raju Shah. The teams had trained for two months in the Chiltern Hills in preparation for their ‘marathon’.

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The Arts and Creativity Emporium

A group of devotees have got together to create a Community arts project to engage in all arts for the sake of developing their creativity. They have been meeting every Wednesday night at 7pm at the Bushey Hall Community centre and working with Community Theatre, using improvisation, playback theatre, having a lot of good healthy fun and learning a lot using the techniques that the top professional actors would use. They are now starting an Indian Dance project and a Creative Writing Club. Anyone interested should contact Japa Yajna das on 07847 821528.



Restoring the Manor's sacred paintings



Responding to an invitation from Vishvambhar das, Italian senior devotees Panduputra das and Prashanta das flew in to restore the beautiful paintings at Bhaktivedanta Manor. Prashanta das is a professional artist who has been painting for the BBT since 1977. His illustrations are

included in the plates sections of the Bhagavad Gita, Caitanya Caritamrita and Srimad Bhagavatam.

All the main paintings at the Manor have now been cleaned, restored and varnished and now they look completely new.

Krishna-Avanti School launched

Britain's first state-funded Hindu faith school, the Krishna-Avanti Primary School, was launched at Little Stanmore Primary School on Monday 15th September. The school, which opened in temporary classrooms with a first batch of 30 pupils of 5-11 age group, will move to its permanent home — a state-of-the-art complex on Camrose Avenue — next year. The Head Mistress, Naina Parmar, said it would combine the “best of education in Harrow and with Hindu teachings.”

She added: “I want our school to be a haven of peace. Our faith naturally promotes a calm, caring and cooperative learning environment. This will be reflected not only in the curriculum — which will include prayer, yoga and meditation alongside all the usual mainstream subjects — but also in the school's ethos and environment.”



Al fresco upliftment in Rome: Manor Brahmacharis enliven the locals!



Three Peaks Diary - by Kalpana Thakore

After months of training in the rain, wind, high and low temperatures the final weekend had arrived. The 3 peaks Challenge had finally come. Amidst excitement, anxiety and the thrill of what is to come our challengers embarked on this spiritual, personal and selfless challenge.

Our group consisted of 11 ladies and 46 men. After a hot breakfast the group set off by coach to Horton at 5am, our starting point. After reciting Lord Nrsimhadev's prayers the group started in batches of 12 -13, after a good warm-up, to climb the first peak, Pen-y-gent, at exactly 6am (still in darkness).

Kitted with walkie talkies the groups could communicate with each other if they encountered problems. Many challenges were experienced such as falling into the bogs, stream crossings and many getting lost. Our support team (John, Lata and Kalpana) welcomed each and everyone of them with a loud cheer and served them hot and cold drinks, the famous chutney rolls, and any supplies they needed for the next peak. Indeed special thanks are due to our chefs Bharti and Hiteshni whose cooking kept the army marching.

During the first climb of the first peak everyone helped each other in getting

to the end and made sure that they all got through safely. Some people had very nasty falls and nearly broke arms and legs as it was very treacherous. It was the greatest team building exercise.

The second peak was very steep coming down and the knees took a knocking but our training in the Chilterns certainly came in handy.

The third peak is also very steep (almost 90% angle) and in some areas we had to be on all fours to climb and one slip of the foot and who knows what might have happened. I think at that moment team work was prevalent and also it was a real test of our faith in Krishna! It was a triumphant moment when all the walkers reached the top of the third peak. The view was spectacular from the top of the highest of the 3 peaks. The first group reached back at camp at 5.00pm and the final walkers of our whole group arrived at 7.00pm.

That evening we had another wonderful prasadam meal and everyone shared their own personal experiences with the group. It was an absolute pleasure and privilege to share this trip with this group and we have made some really close friends.

After being subjected to another round of Raj's jokes and kirtan, we finally arrived at the temple on Sunday evening at 5pm we were greeted in the most majestic manor by the temple team and to be blessed by maharaj with Radha Gokulananda's slippers and garlanded was the icing on the cake. Everyone without exception was very emotional and relieved to take darshan of the deities again. It will be an experience that we will certainly remember for the rest of our lives.

During the walk we certainly had some special guardian angels in our group who were helping the rest with their special ayurvedic medication and their expertise in massage. Nainesh Desai, Nik Patel, Jaynati and Mansukh Limani certainly do need a special mention. People were willing to put their own success and welfare aside and help others complete this task and that is why 90% of the group completed all the 3 peaks. Some walkers such as Hitu, Prashun and Tom, even with the blisters and knee problems were still willing to sacrifice and carry on and finish the walk. The walk was a phenomenal success and many lessons were learnt by all.



16,000 hyacinths planted

The Manor's garden and farm departments, aided by green-fingered volunteers planted 16,000 hyacinth bulbs in October. They will be in bloom from December until April next year.



Natural resources

Twelve years ago a borehole was drilled into the ground on the site of the Manor farm. Water was originally discovered 20 metres down and Parasuram das provided a wind-pump to bring it to the surface. As the system met a number of challenges, an electric pump is currently used. Recently the borehole has been deepened to 80 metres.

The water is from the same source as the water provided by local companies and is used for irrigation, drinking water for the cows and to keep the farm clean.

“The borehole plays an essential part of our demonstration of being dependent on nature in the local area,” explained farm manager Syamasundar das. “All living beings need food and water. To grow food we also need water. This borehole gives us a greater degree of security and also allow us to save money.”



Drive Carefully

If you walk around the grounds of Bhaktivedanta Manor and look carefully, you will witness the abundance of wildlife in the area, including squirrels, rabbits, pheasants, ducks, foxes and even bats, badgers and rare species of butterflies.

During his extensive stay at the Bhaktivedanta Manor, Srila Prabupada himself would comment on the natural beauty of the grounds, saying it reminded him of the holy place of Vrindavan. The Temple is a beautiful place, but please remember to drive carefully and follow the



20mph speed limit on the access road. Unfortunately, from time to time animals are being run over.

Signing for Krishna

As a member of the Radha Krishna Deaf Association, and a trained teacher of British sign language, Prema Pradip das teaches regularly, both to the children of Bhaktivedanta manor School, as well as other devotees, both hearing and non-hearing.

The classes educate students not just in standard British Sign Language, but also the additional signs that have been developed to describe Vedic philosophical concepts, main personalities, such as Radha and Krishna, and sacred texts, such as the Bhagavad Gita.

Visitors to the temple are well accustomed to seeing many plays, classes and presentations simultaneously translated into sign language by regular members of the

association. Started by Dayal Gauranga das over two decades ago, its primary aim has always been to give Krishna conscious knowledge to the deaf community, as well as to provide opportunities for the deaf community to integrate with hearing devotees, through mutual education.

This aim lies at the heart of their latest project, a DVD and accompanying book, entitled ‘Sign Language in Hinduism’. Using sign language with subtitles, it covers the central teachings of the Bhagavad Gita and elaborates on the practice of chanting the maha mantra, as well as narrating several stories from the Bhagavatam. Members of the association gather regularly to discuss spiritual topics. They hold special celebrations of many festivals, and often link up with deaf communities abroad.



Radhastami - Celebration of Divine Love

Radhastami, the appearance day of Srimati Radharani was on Sunday 7th September this year. This is the day when devotees especially seek Radharani's favour so that She will recommend them to Lord Krishna.

It is described that She is the chief associate and devotee of Lord Krishna, and topmost of all goddesses. She is the most excellent worshiper of Lord Krishna yet She is also an expansion of the Lord's energy. She is the feminine aspect of God.

Throughout the day devotees and guests were entertained with a variety of devotional performances. There was dancing by Manor School graduates

including Chandrika, Mohini, Radhika and Sari, followed by songs by Jayadev das.

Later Radha Gopal das played the sitar in Khamaj Raga, which is one of the main scales in North Indian Classical music which classify the different moods.

After the abhisekh (bathing ceremony) gifts were offered to Srimati Radharani and a feast was served to all.

The Deities were offered beautiful new yellow outfits and an evening of charana darshan drew a large number of pilgrims. An array of decorated cakes adorned the altar, expertly arranged by a team of artistic devotees.



A Breath of Fresh Sea Air

Brighton Rathayatra enjoyed its fourth annual parade along the Hove end of Brighton sea front. Around 200 devotees danced and chanted on a glorious sun-soaked promenade for 3 hours.

Onlookers and seafront apartment dwellers were delighted to see the devotees as the chanting was led by Kripa Moya das, Jayadeva das, Maha Visnu Swami and Giridhari das. Music celebrity Nick Cave stopped by for some shopping at devotee stalls.

"It was really nice to associate with the devotees on the beach with beautiful sunshine, great prasad (food) and beautiful chanting" said Dharani Dhara das who runs a shop in Brighton. Dina-Dayadra das, from the developing ISKCON community in the town said "it was the best Brighton Rathayatra since it started - we are really looking forward to many more like this."



Dusshera - The Victory

As Ravana burst into flames following an epic battle, spectators were reminded of the ultimate victory of divine over demoniac. The Pandava Sena drama brought to life a battle fought long long ago - between the armies of Ravana and the Supreme Lord Sri Ramachandra.

The story is a classic account of good over evil, a vivid description of qualities found in living beings. At the heart of the story is the message that in exploitation lies downfall.

Ravana's kidnapping of Sita and her subsequent rescue by Lord Rama illustrate many points of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Lord Rama appeared as a perfect human, and taught by his example how an ideal King, citizen and even husband should behave. Devotees pray to Lord Rama that they may not succumb to the dictates of lust, anger, greed and envy.



Simplicity – The Ultimate Sophistication

by Jahnvi Harrison

I came home from a long trip this summer, to find that my old car was no more. Without mentioning names, a certain family member accidentally wrapped it around a telegraph pole, and it was promptly written off.

I wasn't too disturbed however, as by the time I arrived back on English soil, a replacement had been bought. Same make, similar model – it seemed that not much had changed. That was, until I got inside. I immediately began to notice all the things that were wrong with it, from the broken seatbelt to the shaky clutch. I sighed inwardly every time I had to move the seats forward – this being my first three door car – and my biceps ached from turning the stiff steering wheel. As if it couldn't get any worse, a few days later, our main family car broke down. Now, with only one small Corsa between a family of five, we were officially stuck.

A month slowly passed, and whilst at first we would complain to each other daily, about the incredible inconvenience of having to share and schedule car time, after a little while, we began to adapt. We soon found there were other ways of getting where we needed to go, sharing rides whenever we could; or walking, or cycling!

It's easy to blow inconveniences out of proportion. In our everyday lives, we often become so reliant on our gadgets and home comforts, that it feels as though they are additional limbs. Any disturbance created in our use of them can give us almost physical discomfort. For many people the thought of even a day without their mobile phone or computer is preposterous.

And of course,

what we have is never enough. I bought a shiny new laptop last year and excitedly unwrapped it, only to find that two weeks later, the manufacturers had brought out a thinner, even more stylish model, that made mine pale in comparison. Advertisers know how vulnerable we are, and are no fools when it comes to making us feel we always need to change and upgrade what we already have.

A popular Indian folk tale warns of what can happen when we become ruled by our insistent desires, telling of a simple man, living by a river, who only desires an extra cloth to wear, so that he doesn't have to wash the same one every day and wait for it to dry. His desire is granted, but as a mouse starts to nibble on the new cloth, he quickly finds out that he again needs something – a cat! With the cat comes the need for more food, which requires more money, which requires a change of location, which creates more entanglements – and so on.

So how can we combat this? As devotees of Krishna, we learn that it is beneficial to lessen ones attachments to the material world, as its nature is temporary.

However, anyone that's ever tried to ignore a desire, including me, knows that it's no walk in the park. Like an itch, it just won't leave you alone unless you scratch it.

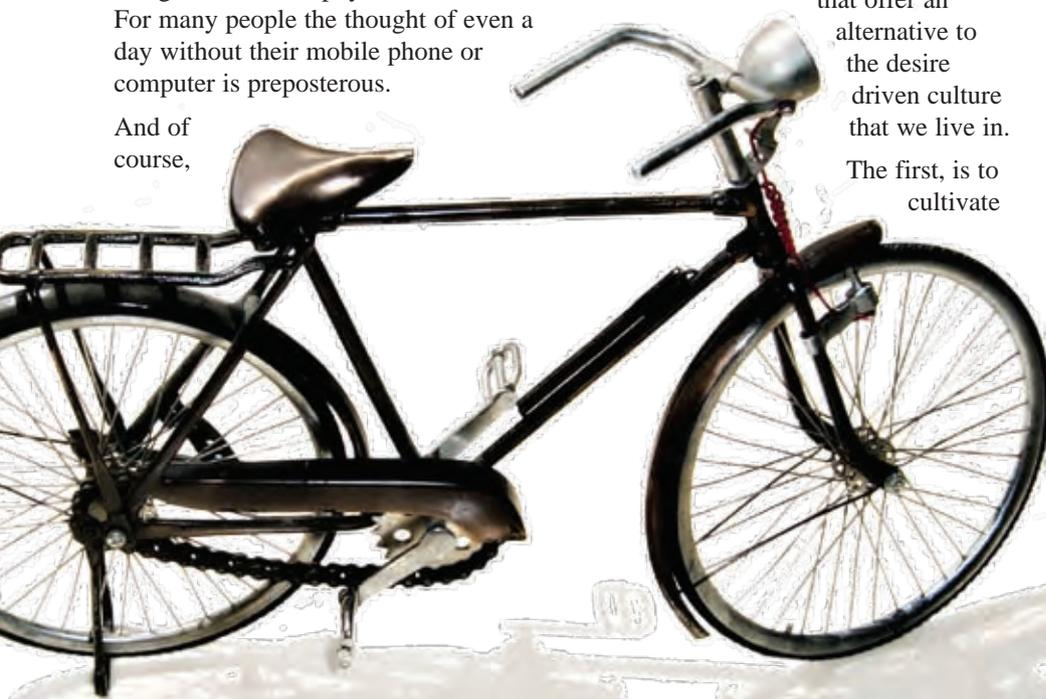
Thankfully, there are several ways in which we can focus our minds, that offer an alternative to the desire driven culture that we live in. The first, is to cultivate

gratitude for everything that we already have. This doesn't have to be a forced 'starving children in Africa would be happy to have this', but rather, simple recognition that we are in fact blessed every day. All that we eat and drink, the homes in which we take shelter, the vehicles we drive, all come from Lord Krishna, who kindly allows us to utilise them. Understanding this both helps us to see and appreciate Lord Krishna's hand in our lives, as well as to not take his gifts for granted. In the case of my car, having to walk more and take public transport made me realise how fortunate I was to even have a car at all.

Our desire for things can never be satisfied, and recognising this can motivate us to try and live more simply. Rather than being subservient to the world that demands everything at lightning speed, from fast-food to friendship, we can greatly benefit from aligning our lives more with nature.

At the core of successful simple living, is the need for strong spiritual inspiration and practise, without which, we will never feel satisfied or truly complete. It is essential to make a space for this activity, such as chanting the Hare Krishna maha mantra, in our daily lives. This 'higher taste' is not a dry substitute for real pleasure. Rather, it is the real pleasure, that we can never find in any department store or restaurant, and is supreme in its ability to relieve us from the demands of the mind.

I found that indirectly, my car troubles aided this part of my life too. Being able to tolerate and maintain equilibrium is usually challenging at the best of times, but by being forced to live at a slightly slower pace, I found that the time I had in each day increased, and giving some time to Krishna each day has become less and less of a struggle. In the words of the great philosopher, Henry David Thoreau, "As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler; solitude will not be solitude, poverty will not be poverty, nor weakness, weakness." Oh, and not to mention the fact that cycling up and down hills does help the old waistline too...





pandavasena

By the youth, for the youth



pservant

Bijal Majithia

Age: 23

Studied: BSc in Sociology at the University of Birmingham

Currently: Studying for a MSc in Project & Enterprise Management at UCL

The Chairman's Story



Jay Shetty, the chairman of ISKCON Pandava Sena (IPS), explains the steps that led him to become a member of ISKCON

I think I came to Krishna Consciousness (KC) many times, leaving, then coming back again and finally deciding to stay. My father became a follower of ISKCON at the age of 40 after his two year spiritual search at which time I was 10 years old, leading him to leave his financially successful job in the city and become the accountant for the temple for the central London temple (on Soho Street). This came as quite a shock to me as it seemed to be a contradiction.

When I was 14 my father started to explain to me the philosophy of KC and the culture. Through his persuasion and my contact with an ISKCON Pandava Sena (IPS) member at the Janmashtami festival at Bhaktivedanta Manor I started attending their programmes. My reasons for going to the events were much more social and as a result I soon dropped out.

Subsequent to this, the death of two of my close friends caused me to enter into what turned out to be the most independent, rebellious and experimental time of my life, as well as the hardest. As a result, I really felt something was missing from my life and developed the desire to turn to God as, I had no one else to talk to or confide in. My friends were two-faced, could not always be trusted. At this point I started listening to my dad a lot more.

However, there were more bad experiences to follow. Due to my bad association I was involved in several illegal activities such as buying and selling drugs, stolen goods and getting into fights with gangs. This led to my suspension from school, occurring several times in the same year. I soon realised that these activities brought me nothing but misery and, as a result, I again started listening more to my father and further developing my understanding of KC.

At the age of 18 I came in touch with the IPS again and I was persuaded to attend their annual summer trip, which was to New Mayapura in France that year. I was reluctant to go as I felt that I wouldn't have a good time or that I would fit in. When I returned my view on KC had completely changed and I had gone through a massive transformation. The association of the boys on the trip, as well as the senior devotees, changed my heart and made me realise the true goal and purpose of life. I came to KC through IPS and I am indebted to them forever.

We often may feel that our past and current actions make us unsuitable for spiritual life or unqualified to approach God. However, it is very much the opposite because our life experiences whether it be through friends, family, relationships, education are all there to help us search for who we really are and what is our purpose. If I was told a number of years ago I would have been leading a spiritual lifestyle I would have probably laughed and said 'that's crazy'. Like me, we try out so many things in our lives to make us happy and to attain happiness from these things we have to give our fullest. In the same way, in KC if we give it our all we are truly able to experience a spiritual high which is not attainable in any other way. My service as chairman not only allows me to understand more about KC but helps me to develop several skills that are required in the modern world today, for example management strategies, communication and networking skills, budgeting and also enterprise and innovation techniques.

I have now been the chairman of IPS for two years and I am aspiring to become a disciple of His Holiness Radhanatha Swami Maharaj. I am currently studying Management Science at Cass Business School (City University).

What made you start attending IPS events?

I always thought there was more to the world that what we see around us, but was never satisfied by any of my enquiries. At the age of 15 I met some youth from IPS and they asked if I wanted to be in a play! I thought I'd give it a go and I felt so enlivened that I carried on getting involved as much as possible, and was lucky enough to act in Trafalgar Square in a Diwali play for 10,000 guests. I then started attending Harrow Jammins where many of my questions were answered.

What did you find appealing about KC?

It's the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me Krishna!

What services are you currently involved in?

I am currently involved in university based Krishna Consciousness societies, which is a core part of IPS's activities.

I personally benefitted from Harrow Jammins, so I am currently helping the coordinators in an attempt to give back in some small way. Jammins are a great place to chill out on a Friday night, to learn about Krishna, to participate in a soul stirring kirtan, to make new friends and enjoy delicious prashad - it really is a must go!

Interesting fact about yourself

Last summer I did a 30,000 ft skydive for charity and raised over £1,000!



Jammin is a fortnightly youth event organised and facilitated by IPS. It has the usual elements of Krishna Conscious philosophy, Deity worship, kirtan and prashadam but is delivered using fun and interactive mediums, such as discussions, debates and dramas.

This year's focus across Harrow, East London and Crawley is to introduce new comers to the Bhagavad Gita As It Is, by systematically going through the 18 chapters. Each Jammin area picks a specific verse from the same chapter and then chooses a theme based on modern culture that best relates to their audience.



Dr Vasant Lad



Dr Vasant Lad conducted a series of seminars lasting several days at Bhaktivedanta Manor, focusing on the application of Ayurveda. Specifically, the key aspects of Ayurvedo Amritanam and their practical application for a health long life covered in-depth.

Dr Vasant Lad was the Medical Director of the Ayurvedic Hospital in Pune, India, and was Professor of Clinical Medicine at the Pune University College of Ayurvedic Medicine where he was an instructor for many years.

In 1984 he founded the Ayurvedic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico and is currently its director and principal instructor. He is the author of several books and is recognised throughout the world.

Calendar - dates for your diary

October

Fri 24th Rama Ekadasi
 Sun 26th Laxmi Puja
 BST ends (clocks go back)
 Tue 28th Diwali
 Wed 29th Govardhan Puja, Annakuta, Go Puja

November

Sat 1st Disapp of Srila Prabhupada (fasting till noon)
 Sun 2nd Diwali & Annakuta Festival
 Thu 6th Disapp of Sri gadadhara das Goswami & Sri Srinivas Acarya
 Sun 9th Utthana Ekadasi
 Bhisma Pancaka
 Disapp of Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji (fasting till noon)
 Wed 12th Disapp of Sri Bhugarbha Goswami & Sri Kasisvara Pandit
 Thu 13th Sri Krishna Rasayatra
 Tulsi-Saligrama Vivaha
 Kartik ends
 Sun 23rd Utpanna Ekadasi
 Tue 25th Disapp of Sri Saranga Thakura

Herts County Council Away Day

Members of the Adult and Family Learning Service from Hertfordshire County Council held their annual 'Away Day' at the Manor. During the day they enjoyed Prasad (sanctified vegetarian food) a tour of the Manor, mehndi workshops and 'office yoga'.



Avengers Treasurer Hunt reveals top prize



As part of the 'Avengers Dead Man's Treasure Hunt', fans of several 1960s and 70s action-oriented television series visited the many sites where location filming took place. Bhaktivedanta Manor (then Piggott's Manor) was used for filming many exterior scenes in episodes of television series such as 'The Avengers', 'Department S' and 'Randall and Hopkirk Deceased'. "Absolutely fantastic. Fascinating. It was great to see what you have done to the interior of the building," said organiser Chris Bentley as the group soaked up the atmosphere.

St Bartholomew's Nurses' reunion



Former trainee nurses who lived at the Manor between 1957 – 1972 gathered for a reunion. Formally the estate of Bhaktivedanta Manor was owned by St Bartholomew's Hospital. The event organiser Christina Harocopos said "it was a very special day, a unique blend of nostalgia and spirituality. In those days we all lived and worked comunally at the Manor and in many ways it was like a Convent. It is fascinating to see how the estate has changed yet still possesses a community atmosphere."

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