

# BHAKTIVEDANTA MANOR

NEWSLETTER

December 2019



International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

Founder Acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



## 50 YEARS OF ISKCON UK

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## Srila Prabhupada:

The duty of a brahmana is to culture the quality of forgiveness, which is illuminating like the sun. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, is pleased with those who are forgiving  
*Srimad Bhagavatam*  
9.15.40

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On November 24th, the UK devotees celebrated their 50th Anniversary in grandeur at the famous Apollo Theatre in London. The show brought together performing arts from East and West, theatrical acrobatics, drama, live music and sacred song, immersive mantra choir experience, award-winning dance, and incredible 3D visuals.

It was a modern expression of ancient culture in a spectacular story of how timeless wisdom from India came to swinging 60s London, and the relevance of Krishna Consciousness in our lives today.

The event gathered over 3,000 people

to celebrate together, including three of the original pioneers (Malati Devi, Gurudas and Shyamasundar prabhus), Radhanatha Swami and hundreds of devotees from all over the country. The event also attracted many newcomers who wanted to learn more.

The evening's professional standard entertainment included The Samadhi Dance Company from Amsterdam, music and song by Jahnvi Harrison's team,

Jayadev das leading the Mantra Choir, and dance and acrobatics by the Natya Nectar performing arts company.



## **Nine days of celebrations for the Lords of London**

The Krishna Spectacular event at the Apollo was followed by 9 days of celebrations at the ISKCON-London temple in special honour of ISKCON's first full-size deities, Sri Sri Radha Londonivara. It included kirtans, music, bus hari namas throughout the West End and remembrances of senior devotees including the pioneers Shyamasunder, Malati and Guru das. The culmination of the celebrations was the Golden Anniversary day on

Monday 2nd December. It included the presentation of new outfits for the shrine, made single-handedly by Hari Priya dasi and sponsored by Bhaktivedanta Manor.

That evening thousands of roses, many imported from Kenya, were made into tens of thousands of multi-coloured petals. Following the evening arati, within an electric atmosphere, the deities were showered with the petals and 50 golden balloons were released into the Temple room. A fitting way to bring the nine days of celebrations to a triumphant end.





## Dinner to celebrate 50 years of ISKCON UK

During the same weekend as the Krishna Spectacular show at the Apollo Theatre, Bhaktivedanta Manor organised a special dinner at the Avanti House Secondary School in honour of the 50th Anniversary of ISKCON's establishment in the UK.

The main guests were disciples of Srila Prabhupada and other key senior devotees. It was a great opportunity for younger generations to serve, join in honouring Srila Prabhupada, and listen to the memories of the pioneers. Speakers included Shyamasunder das, Gurudas, Malati dasi, Dhananjaya das, former Manor President Akhandadhi das, and Governing Body Commissioner (GBC) for ISKCON UK, Praghosa das.

The event was mainly organised by Kalakanti Radhika dasi, who, along

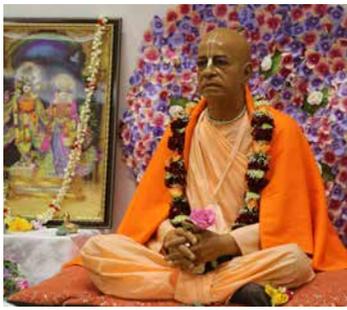
with a dedicated team, worked tirelessly behind the scenes.

Bala Gopal dasi oversaw the cooking of the three-course dinner, Anuradha dasi made a beautiful cake, and the event was supported by Bhaktivedanta Manor's Senior Management.

Gift bags were also distributed, which included copies of *A Legacy Begins*, a photographic account with quotes capturing key moments from ISKCON in the UK exactly 50 years ago.

"What a wonderful experience -- the opportunity to meet together in such a relaxed and delightful way, with nothing to hinder or deflect our attention from our shared pleasure of being together and celebrating Srila Prabhupada and each other," said Bhogini dasi.

"The event was a very uplifting and moving experience," added Jyestha dasi, "A big thank you to everyone involved. It definitely made an impact and it was greatly appreciated."





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## Volume 3 of popular children's CD released

Due to popular demand, a third volume of the CD Vedic Stories for Children, a collection of audio plays for children, has been released. This edition explores the appearance of Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Caitanya and Lord Jagannath. To purchase copies of any of the Vedic Stories for Children series, text Jaya Krishna das on: 07808 166 779



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## Remembering George Harrison

This year's George Harrison Evening, an array of tribute bands and presentations organised by Sakshi Gopal das, was extra special. ISKCON UK pioneers Shyamasunder das and Gurudas, who befriended and introduced George to Srila Prabhupada, shared their memories filled with humour and nostalgia!

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## Taking care of Krishna's bees



The bee-hives at Bhaktivedanta Manor, which are nicely tucked away from the crowds, produce over 15kg of honey a

year for the New Gokul farm-shop.

"Not many people know about how to look after bee-hives" explained Head Gardener Narahari Rupa das. "It involves special knowledge and training, so I attended a course organised by Welwyn Beekeepers' Association.

"The hives on the grounds of the Manor are now prepared for the winter. Bags of saw-dust have been carefully placed inside the hives to keep them dry. Also we have made the hive entrances smaller for the winter, to keep the heat in and make it easier for our bees to defend themselves from wasps."



## Vedic Cosmology Conference in Florida

Akhandadhi das and Radha Mohan das joined devotees interested in science in Gainesville, Florida to participate in a special conference organised by the US branch of the Bhaktivedanta Institute.

This conference was focused on the 5th Canto of the scripture Srimad Bhagavatam, namely how it could be understood and presented to the public in the West Wing of the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium in Mayapur, West Bengal. Any exhibits would complement any projects already accomplished on the site.

Discussions included:

- i) The structure of the Bhu-mandala and Jambhudvip planetary systems, and their relationship to the earth globe of our day-to-day experience.
- ii) The vertical dimension of the Vedic universe and the different types of planets
- iii) The nature of celestial bodies and abodes.

Founded in 1974, the Bhaktivedanta Institute is a centre for Advanced Studies in science and vedanta (Vedic philosophy).



## Another successful year for Bhakti Shastri Course

October marked another successful year for the Bhakti Shastri course run by the College for Vedic Studies. Eight students graduated with a Bhakti Shastri degree, and a further nine received certificates of participation. Over the 14 years since its introduction at the Manor, 248 students have obtained the Bhakti Shastri degree. Srila Prabhupada's desire was that devotees study his books, and the Bhakti Shastri course provides an opportunity to do this. Through the course, students systematically study 4 texts fundamental to the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness through a programme of engaging and interactive lessons.

If you would like further information about the course please email [bhaktishastri@krishnatemple.com](mailto:bhaktishastri@krishnatemple.com)

**HARE KRISHNA  
HARE KRISHNA  
KRISHNA KRISHNA  
HARE HARE  
HARE RAMA  
HARE RAMA  
RAMA RAMA  
HARE HARE**



## Chasing Rhinos with the Swami – volume 2

Shyamasundar das worked tirelessly to construct the UK's first ISKCON temple, organised its first Rathayatra chariot festival (for which he built the chariot), and , and hand-carved the beautiful Jagannath deities which reside in London's Radha Krishna Temple to this day.

Anyone who has already consumed Volume 1 of his gripping memoirs – staged on both sides of the Atlantic – will be more than ready to consume its sequel, Volume 2, the wider narrative, which plays out globally and especially in India. Volume 2 naturally follows on from Volume 1, which narrates Shyamasunder's first encounter with Srila Prabhupada, the establishment of ISKCON in San Francisco, the pioneering days in London, and his ongoing friendship with George Harrison.

He was invited to Bhaktivedanta Manor, Glastonbury Town Hall, Leicester, Birmingham, East London, South London, the Manor School, a Pandava Sena event , and of course ISKCON-London and the Krishna Spectacular show at the Hammersmith Apollo.

More info: [chasingrhinos.com](http://chasingrhinos.com)



## Making a spiritual commitment

During the last week of November, Bhaktivedanta Manor hosted a huge rite-of-passage ceremony, wherein 34 devotees received first initiation, and another 24 received second (brahman) initiation. Devotees came from across England, Hungary, Austria, and as far as Canada.

In the presence of Radhanath Swami, their selected ISKCON guru, participants promised to remain loyal to Srila Prabhupada's movement and mission, as well as to follow the regulative principles.

Initiation means the beginning of something. In spiritual life, it refers to the beginning of a new stage of spiritual practice. Srila Prabhupada offered two initiations to his disciples; the first was given when they had reached a level of stability in their daily meditation on the maha-mantra; and the second when, through that chanting, they had become 'spiritually purified' and fit to take on practices such as deity worship in the temple.



## Parliament decorated by Manor team

Each year, the Diwali in Parliament event, organised by the Hindu Forum of Britain, gives different temples the chance to decorate Parliament, recite opening prayers, greet guests, and organise gift-bags. This year, Bhaktivedanta Manor teamed up to ensure the event was a beautiful and devotional one.

A corner of the Terrace Pavilion of the iconic government building, adjacent to the Thames, was adorned with a magnificent Annakut sweet display, Radha-Krishna murti statues, peacocks, and pop-up banners.

Nila Madhava das recited the opening prayers and closed proceedings with a spiritual message.

## Devotee nominated as a UN advisor

Gopal Lila das has been nominated co-chair of the UN Multi-faith Advisory Council on Religion and Development. He is Director of the Bhumi Project, an environmental effort of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. He is an advisor to the Climate Action Task Force at the Parliament of the World's Religions.

In Gopal Lila's new position as co-chair of the UN Multi-faith Advisory Council on Religion and Development, he will represent the Bhumi Project and the Hindu communities it has been working with on climate change and environmental issues.

The Multi-faith Advisory Council is the first time in the UN's 74-year



history that it has created a religious advisory council of the world's faiths. It is comprised of 40 faith-based organisations who actively work and engage with the UN through the Inter-agency Task Force on Religion and Development.

Gopal is excited about the difference he can make, and how he can help ISKCON devotees become more aware about current issues.

For info: [gopal@bhumiproject.org](mailto:gopal@bhumiproject.org)



## University students enjoy retreat

250 students from 30 UK universities came together for a retreat at the Manor hosted by Krishna Consciousness Society (KCSOC).

From Brunel to Bristol, Cambridge to Coventry, students arrived to participate in yoga classes, practical Ayurveda sessions, and bull cart rides at the New Gokul farm - there really was something for everyone! They also heard mind-blowing talks from Narasimha Nama

das and Sutapa das, as well as getting the chance to quiz the scholar Ter Kadamba das on all things spiritual.

All the students meditated on sacred chants with Sandipani Muni das, and danced and chanted the day out to an ecstatic kirtan led by Sri Prahlad das in the temple room. The students' hearts were enlivened by the incredible retreat.

For more information: [kcsoc.com](http://kcsoc.com)





## DEVI National Launch

DEVI is the acronym for Devotional Empowerment Voluntary Initiative. It was initially launched during Janmashtami 2014 at Bhaktivedanta Manor with the aim of empowering, connecting, protecting and inspiring women and girls in its community.

In his purport to Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.5.12 Srila Prabhupada states that: "Everyone should be allowed to render service to the Lord to the best of his ability, and everyone should appreciate the service of others... Since everyone is a servant, everyone is on the same platform and is allowed to serve the Lord according to his ability."

DEVI, through the Temple Council and board of trustees ensures that there are no barriers to women serving in management roles at Bhaktivedanta Manor and monitors this to enable women to serve in any capacity "according to their desire and

inclination".

Another aim that DEVI sets out to fulfil is to protect women and girls from abuse and violence. This year, to commemorate ISKCON UK's 50th Anniversary, DEVI was launched nationally. Delegates attending the event were trained in 'Domestic Abuse Matters' by highly qualified specialists. They in turn were asked to "be a pioneer and do something extraordinary" by becoming a DEVI ambassador, and to work with DEVI to protect women and girls in ISKCON..

The event brought delegates from different ISKCON Temples throughout the UK and enabled them to share ideas, but above all, it provided knowledge and resources on how to help women and children experiencing domestic abuse.



## Watford Interfaith Walk

Radha Mohan das represented Bhaktivedanta Manor at the Watford Interfaith Walk, which included over sixty local faith members walking to local churches, mosques, synagogues, and finally a Gurdwara, to learn more, unite the community, and enjoy each other's hospitality.



## Diwali prayers for Three Rivers District Council

Jaya Krishna das delivered special Diwali prayers for auspiciousness and spiritual strength in the Inner Chamber of the Three Rivers District Council in Rickmansworth. Councillors heard about Bhaktivedanta Manor and its local and national significance.



## Malaysian Civil Servants visit Manor

Members of the Civil Service of the Malaysian government, specifically advisors of faith and cultural issues, made a special visit to Bhaktivedanta Manor to learn more about Hindu culture. The visit was recommended by Shaunaka Rishi das, the Director of Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies.



## Herts High Sheriff's Civic Service

Alpesh Patel and Radha Mohan das represented Bhaktivedanta Manor at the High Sheriff's Civic Service at St Albans Cathedral. This year, the event took place during interfaith week, and the high turnout of other faith representatives was acknowledged by the High Sheriff herself, Sarah Beazley.



## The Autumn Krishna festivals of sweets galore

The Govardhana Puja, Go-Puja and Annakuta festivals are all connected with the story of Lord Krishna lifting Govardhana Hill to protect the inhabitants of Vrindavan. On this day, a hill of sweets is made from food prepared by the devotees, which is then offered to the Deities, and subsequently distributed to everyone. This is known as the “annakuta” ceremony. Cows are honoured as part of the festivities as well.

The day after Diwali is referred to as Annakuta, or Govardhan Puja. On this day, the inhabitants of Vrindavan (Lord Krishna’s childhood village) would hold a harvest festival in honour of Indra, the demigod who provides the rains.

But Lord Krishna convinced the inhabitants of Vrindavan to honour Govardhan Hill instead, since the hill’s fertile soil provided the grass upon which cows and bulls grazed. Thus the cows and bulls who provided milk and ploughed the lands would also be honoured.

Indra retaliated with terrifying thunderstorms. However, Krishna, calmly lifted the hill with the little finger of his left hand. For seven days and seven nights the Lord held up the hill, providing a giant umbrella to shelter the inhabitants of Vrindavan from the torrential rain. Realising his folly, Indra bowed down before the Lord with folded hands and offered prayers.





## Mantras and meals in Margate

Mantra Chaitanya das and his wife Hema Mukhi, as well as volunteers from their yoga and meditation group in Margate, launched a free Sunday vegetarian meal scheme in the town.

Former musician Mantra Chaitanya began free yoga and meditation sessions last year, and says the popularity of the sessions has spurred him on to offer even more to the local community.

He said: "A small group of us have been running the "Margate Mantra Lounge", a free weekly meditation workshop at the Beet Bar cafe, aimed at helping people find health and happiness.

"Since we started, we have grown into a close family of like-minded people who are greatly benefitting from the workshops we do. We regularly see up to thirty people coming to take advantage of what we have to offer".

Members of the new devotee community in Margate were also involved in the walking Padayatra festival, which is a temple on wheels pulled by two bullocks. Its most notable destination was the historical city of Canterbury.



## UK Hare Krishna Festivals

Devotees gathered in North London to remember and honour His Grace Tribhuvanatha prabhu. Tribhuvanatha started the Hare Krishna Festival Team, which reported on outreach activities in 2019, including dozens of Harinams (music parades), hall programmes, Rathayatra chariot festivals, and outdoor events where thousands experience an introduction to Krishna Consciousness.

In Sutton, Tetbury, Canterbury, Birmingham, Dartford, Blackpool, Worcester, Tipperary, Glastonbury, London, Watford, Haywards Heath, Aberystwyth, Bath, Sheffield, Reading, and many more places, thousands of social media contacts were made, and thousands of books and plates of sanctified vegetarian food were distributed. It was a special effort to serve the mission of Srila Prabhupada this year, which marks the fiftieth Anniversary of ISKCON in the UK.

After the remembrance event - featuring memories, films, kirtan (music) and a feast - around one hundred devotees took part in a huge evening Harinam, chanting and dancing in Oxford Street and Regents Street, just as Tribhuvanatha and other pioneers had done so almost fifty years ago.



## Sell-out crowd at Shaw Theatre enjoy evening of kirtan

Talented devotional singer and musician Jahnvi Harrison shared the practice of kirtan (sacred chanting) to a sell-out crowd of 500 at the Shaw Theatre in Kings Cross. Kirtanlovers from

all backgrounds were delighted to experience an enchanting evening full of soulful music.

MantraRoots and MindBodySpirit produced and delivered the fantastic show in London and served up another sold-out event in New York.

To learn about similar events, visit <http://www.kirtanlondon.com>



## Glastonbury chariot

Devotees celebrated the 27th Glastonbury Ratha Yatra chariot festival recently. Devotees pulled the chariot of the deities, Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra, along the High Street to the famous Abbey ruins. The procession then continued on with the devotees

pushing the chariot up to foot of the Tor, believed to be the mythological Isle of Avalon.

Then the Hare Krishna Festivals team filled the local assembly hall with the singing of the names of Krishna, before Saksi Gopal das gave a talk about the history of the Ratha Yatra festival.



## SHREE KRISHNA HAVELI PROJECT UPDATE



The Haveli is almost complete awaiting utility connections, testing of plant & equipment and snagging. As goes with almost all construction projects, delays do happen for many reasons and rushing the contractors to finish wouldn't be in the best interest of the temple, as we want a quality finish for the entire project.

In the meantime, we are pleased to inform you that there will be some small 'stress testing' events, followed by a formal Grand Opening event in the New Year.

Our heartfelt thanks to you all, for your donations and pledges that most of you have started fulfilling.



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## Deities tour new Haveli facility

The ceremonial Utsav Deities of Sri Sri Radha Gokulananda, Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, Vrindadevi and Srila Prabhupada were recently taken on a tour of the nearly completed Shree Krishna Haveli building, located next to the main Manor building.

Temple devotees joined the procession with kirtan. Along the way, Their Lordships and the devotees received a description of each section of the Haveli including the multi-purpose function hall, prasad (dining) hall, foyer, classrooms, kitchen, crèche, entrance and courtyard.

The main hall includes a stage and lighting for festivals, visiting speakers,

Sunday programmes and plays, as well as youth clubs, weddings and other samskaras (rites of passage).

Vascroft were the main contractors, and many other companies were also involved.

“We called the campaign for this project, ‘A roof over our heads’,” said Gauri das, “because it’s never been about expansion – it’s been about accommodating the things that we do in the right amount of space.”

A soft opening for the Haveli will take place in the New Year, with a Kirtan Mela (festival) to celebrate. The formal opening will follow later in 2020.

