

ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry

Report 2009

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Document Summary

ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry oversaw the relocation of Sri Sri Radha-Paris-isvara.

"Arcana Journal #4," is printed and ready for distribution.

The Mayapur Academy held its 3rd Diploma semester with 30 devotees attending. Urgent funding and support is needed for this project.

In the coming year we will be expanding the Mayapur Academy curriculum to include 2nd year courses with advanced learning outcomes as well as presenting all our courses in the Russian language.

The library is growing steadily but donations of books and funding is vital.

ISKCON deity worship minister visited temples in the following countries: Australia, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, India and the U.K. The findings were generally consistent in many of the temples visited, i.e. lack of manpower, inadequate training and low standards of cleanliness.

Work continues on "The Method of Worship." Visnumurti dasa from the UK is assisting with editing and research. More manpower and funding are needed to meet the Gaura Purnima 2011 deadline.

In line with our vision to expand the availability of training, guidance, and encouragement for devotees worldwide Murli Manohara dasa has been appointed as zonal rep. for the UK and Saci Kumar dasa for South Africa.

There is a global shortage of qualified pujaris and appropriate training. Many temples are experiencing great difficulty in maintaining their deity worship and often seek guidance on how to reduce their worship. Without sufficient resources and funding these shortcomings will be very difficult to overcome and will compound in the future.

We need support in the form of more active members to help overcome this problem as well as the monitoring and regulation of installations to avoid this in future.

1. A Summary of Achievements During 2009.

In our 2001 GBC report, ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry submitted a plea to the GBC body regarding the desperate situation in Paris.

On August 1, 2009, due to the support and guidance of Sivarama Maharaja and other dedicated Vaisnavas, a wonderful new home was found and purchased for their Lordships and the deities were safely moved to their new home under the supervision of ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry. This temple, along with a nearby guesthouse, is wholly owned by ISKCON.

Education and Training

Mayapur Academy

In ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry's 2007 report to the GBC the inauguration of the Mayapur Academy was announced. The Mayapur Academy is ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry's prime educational activity and focuses on training brahmanas to engage in deity worship in ISKCON temples.

This year we presented another English Diploma in Arcana semester as well as a Bengali semester. Since opening the Mayapur Academy has presented eight separate semesters and more than 300 students have been trained in various aspects of deity worship and brahminical culture and lifestyle. This includes seminars on Brahminical Culture & Ethics, Deity Cooking, Deity Dressing, Deity Dress-making, Festivals, Daily Temple Worship, Tulasi Care & Worship, Samskaras, Flower Arranging and Astrology.

All the devotees attending the course said they greatly benefited from the course. We noticed a significant improvement in the attitude of the devotees and they became more inspired to worship the Lord.

Former students are head pujaris in Butterworth, Malaysia; Birmingham, Coventry and London in the UK; Calcutta, India; and Abentueur, Germany.

The Mayapur Academy is the most effective response to the myriad of challenges in deity worship faced by temples and devotees worldwide. Deity worship requires purity and commitment. The aim of the Mayapur Academy is to inspire devotees to develop their purity and dedication through facilitating a change in their values.

This year the Mayapur Academy received a 5 lakh grant from the MVT. This grant was allocated for re-developing our kitchen lab where devotees are equipped with the skills necessary to cook a raja bhoga offering for the deities and to purchase additional resin models used for deity dressing practice.

Five-Year Plan

After the Diploma Semester in March 2009 development meetings were held for the Mayapur Academy. One of the major outcomes of that meeting was the crafting of a five-year development plan for the Mayapur Academy. One of the major achievements towards realizing this five-year plan was the appointment of Gauranga Simha dasa as the administrator of the Mayapur Academy. His involvement in the Mayapur Academy has already made a significant difference to the function of the Mayapur Academy and realizing the goals of ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry.

An element of the five-year plan is the introduction of 2nd year courses, the development of which began this year. These courses will be offered to graduates of the first year units. We plan to commence second year courses in 2011. The second year courses will include units on Salagrama worship; Advanced Temple Worship; ISKCON Civics; Ministering to an ISKCON Community; and Mantras and Mudras. The second year courses are aimed at equipping devotees with the knowledge, skills and values that will enable them to function as head pujaris in an ISKCON temple.

Part of the five-year plan is the introduction of a Russian language course. Development work has begun and the course is scheduled to be presented 2011.

Mayapur Academy Library

The Mayapur Academy Library continues to grow under the kind patronage of many devotees and ISKCON organizations, including the BBT, and Friends of the BBT. We would particularly like to thank Gopal Krishna Maharaja, Madhusevita dasa, Hanuman dasa and Nabhinandan dasa for their support. We now have Srila Prabhupada's books in 49 of the 85 languages available. Donations of books are steadily flowing in.

A great deal of funding is required, especially in the area of rare acquisitions and preservations. There is also a lot of furniture needed, bookcases, reading desks of good quality etc. The goal is to make a world-class library for the use of all devotees.

On-site Training

ISKCON Deity Worship Minister visited and in many cases presented seminars in the following temples:

- **Australia** – Melbourne, Murwillumbah, Adelaide & Sydney,
- **India** – Calcutta, New Delhi, Mayapur, Vrndavana, & Mumbai (Juhu)
- **UK** – Karuna Bhavan, Scotland; Dublin, Inish Rath and Belfast in Ireland; Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester, Bhaktivedanta Manor, London Soho St., Swansea, Manchester, Newcastle and South Norwood
- **Hungary** – New Vraja Dhama, Budapest
- **France** – Paris, New Mayapur
- **Germany** – Koln, Weisbaden, Munich, New Simhacalam, Heidelberg and New Goloka, Abentueur.
- **Croatia** – Zagreb

Our findings were generally consistent in many of the temples visited, i.e. lack of manpower, inadequate training and low standards of cleanliness.

On a positive note I was happy to see that there have been many significant improvements in the deity worship at Bhaktivedanta Manor since my last visit especially in the area of cleanliness.

I was impressed by the standards of worship maintained in both the temples in Hungary which have developed under the guidance and inspiration of H.H Sivarama Maharaja

Zonal Representative:

This year Murli Manohara dasa, Head Pujari from London, Soho St. Temple, attended the Diploma course at the Mayapur Academy and has agreed to function as ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry representative for the UK. Murli Manohara dasa plans to explore the possibility of presenting Mayapur Academy style training in the UK.

Saci Kumar dasa from South Africa has also agree to represent ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry on a trial basis in South Africa and adjoining countries.

Publications

Arcana Journal, edition 4, has been published. 3000 issues have been printed.

A draft of "The Method of Worship" (formerly titled "Pancaratra Pradipa" was again used as the handbook for the Mayapur Academy.

Four chapters of this work are now completed with two remaining chapters and appendixes to be completed. Visnu Murti dasa from Coventry U.K will be assisting with corrections and editing. We are hopeful that his involvement in this project will enable us to meet our deadline of Gaura Purnima 2011.

This detailed project still requires many corrections and much research. I appeal to the readers of this report, particularly the members of the GBC, to assist this

endeavor with whatever resources they can. We need competent devotees for editing and proofreading, as well as devotees who can research details of worship procedures etc. Please help us finish this project.

More funding is required to enable Nrsimha Kavaca dasa to travel to Mayapur to go over the details of this project with Jananivasa dasa.

In due course we will also require significant funding to print this two-volume book.

Website/E-mail

Websites

ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry maintains two websites for the online devotee community; Deityworship.com & Mayapuracademy.org

Mayapuracademy.org offers information about the training available at the Mayapur Academy as well as facility for online enrolment. Currently we are developing a range of online courses that will offer preparatory training for devotees planning to attend the Mayapur Academy courses.

Deityworship.com is an online resource for devotees worldwide. Future development of the website includes increasing the online resources available to assist devotees in serving the Lord in a way that is pleasing to Him.

The goal is to develop these websites as interactive resources for the devotees of ISKCON.

Email

The PAMHO Deity Worship conference continues to be active with about 300 texts this year. Nrsimha Kavaca dasa continues as conference moderator.

Krsna Ksetra dasa, Jananivasa dasa, Pankajanghri dasa and Nrsimha Kavaca dasa continue to provide advice for devotees engaged in deity worship wherever they visit, and to answer questions by email.

Resources

The facility offered by the Mayapur Academy greatly enhances the resources the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry is able to offer to ISKCON. The Mayapur Academy has four purpose built classrooms. It also provides the first library in Mayapur that is open to all devotees, and a range of teaching aids that offer students the opportunity to get hands on experience without going on the altar.

We humbly request those interested in seeing the cause of deity worship promoted in ISKCON and fulfilling the desire of Srila Prabhupada to have gorgeous deity worship in ISKCON, to assist the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry in our training initiatives.

Challenges

ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry continues to experience a lack of resources. Our resources in terms of funds and manpower are stretched ever thinner.

In 2007 our income was **US\$ 16,000** and our total expenses were **US\$ 8,000**

In 2008 our income was **US\$ 11,000** and our total expenses were **US\$14,000**

In 2009 our income was **US\$ 23,250** and our total expenses were **US\$ 25,575**

It is important to note that more than US\$ 7000 came from the minister's personal funds.

I am happy to report that the disbursement of GBC funds has been very efficient this year. Thank you Gokula prabhu.

Some temples are reluctant to allow ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry to seek financial support from members of their congregation for the Ministry or Mayapur Academy. These two projects serve the whole of ISKCON. This restrictive mentality impedes the development of these important projects thus limiting the benefit they can bring to ISKCON as a whole.

Devotee resources: I continue to receive reports of chronic shortages of pujaris in temples around the world. This year, of particular concern were the recent reports from Gita Nagari, USA and Karuna Bhavan, Scotland. It is not clear how long they will be able to continue in their present circumstances.

Many temples rely on imported devotees to serve the temple deities. In most temples this has also adversely impacted on the standards of worship and the overall morale of those engaged in the deity worship.

- In the past year I have received reports from the following temples or yatras informing me of the difficulties experienced in deity worship:

Gita Nagari, USA

Karuna Bhavan, Scotland

Warsaw, Poland

South America

Various temples in Europe including those in Germany, France, Spain and Holland

A changing demographic associated with shifts to grhastha asrama certainly has an effect on this. There is a general broadening of the community where there are less devotees living in the temple, hence a larger congregation. In many places there is a marked slow down in the number of devotees receiving brähmaëa initiation.

- I continue to receive reports from temples advising me of their intention to install or begin worshiping deities. When they explain their motive or intentions for this worship, it leads me to believe that they have inappropriate understanding of the reasons for installing deities or the methods of worship. Many of these centers should be worshiping pictures.

These above mentioned problems reinforce the need for increased training. The Mayapur Academy is the most effective solution to these problems and ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry will become more effective if we have the resources necessary to increase our training.

2. Vision for Our Activities for 2010

Vision

To expand the availability of training, guidance, and encouragement for devotees worldwide.

To engage in the activities associated with the worship of the Lord in His arca-vigraha and to encourage the building of communities centered on such worship as integral to the preaching mission of ISKCON.

We aim to achieve this by continuing to train devotees in the process of deity worship. We hope to inspire them to also take up the training of other devotees in the art of pleasing the Lord through the process of deity worship.

Progressive goals

To develop, refine and expand the Mayapur Academy curriculum assisted by Damodara Pandita dasa, Bachelor of Education. This will include writing and presenting more units. We are looking at engaging other devotees in the development of the curriculum and will do so as increased financial resources become available.

- To develop courses in Bengali, Hindi and Russian. This will enable us to identify and train reliable devotees who then might be able to go to western temples to engage in deity worship.
- The compilation of the 2nd year curriculum has begun and we will be offering these courses next semester.

To facilitate Saci Kumar dasa, Murli Manohara dasa and Visnu Murti dasa, who are assisting ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry in training and research.

To identify more devotees who can assist in developing and expanding ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry.

In particular we are looking for devotees who can:

- Receive training in Mayapur with a view to serving as local representatives of ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry in various zones around the world to train pujaris, monitor worship standards and offer support to pujaris
- Take the service as director of fund-raising for ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry & Mayapur Academy

Travel

- Increased travel and onsite training. This largely depends on how much funding is at the Ministry's disposal.

Publications

- Publish the "Method of Worship." In order to do this we need increased funding and assistance.
- We plan to have issue 5 of the Arcana Journal ready for Gaura Purnima 2011.

Websites

To complete the redevelopment of both our websites as greater resource for devotees. To offer in that resource:

- **Podcasts** that give graphical demonstration of how to perform the various procedures of deity worship
- **Short essays** of explanation responding to frequently asked questions and covering issues that frequently occur in deity worship.
- **Downloads of altar pictures**, such as guru parampara, ISKCON gurus and various avataras associated with the festivals observed in ISKCON temples.

- **Downloads of deity worship procedures** for both temple and home worship.
- **Downloads back issues of the Arcana Journal.**
- **Downloads of mantra audio files** so devotees can learn how to pronounce the mantras used in deity worship.
- **Online training** and courses covering theory portions of Mayapur Academy courses and home worship courses.
- **Online shop** where devotees will be able to purchase worship resources

Needs

Manpower

The Ministry requires more active members who can engage in education and development of resources. The training is done directly, either in the form of seminars in Mayapur and other places, or on site training on the altars of ISKCON temples around the world.

Zonal representatives

To develop a network of zonal representatives in every yatra around the world. These devotees will be trained at the Mayapur Academy and then return to their yatras. Their duties would include:

- Training others in the knowledge, skills and values they have developed at the Mayapur Academy
- Give annual reports on the deity worship being conducted in the temples and their zones
- Serving as ambassadors for ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry and the Mayapur Academy

Financial situation

In order to achieve our goals our financial situation needs to dramatically improve.

The current Minister is still doing paid service washing pots at the Melbourne temple and domestic cleaning in order to fund different aspects of the Ministry.

3. A message to the GBC Executive Committee

I continue to receive reports of temples in dire situations. Just this month I have received letters from Gita Nagari, USA and Karuna Bhavan, Scotland outlining the difficulties they are facing due to a lack of manpower and funds. I implore the members of the GBC to take this important component of Srila Prabhupada's preaching mission very seriously. If the leaders of our society are unable to inspire others to participate in this important service it is unlikely the situation will ever change.

I encourage you all, where possible, to get involved in deity worship. If senior devotees show enthusiasm for deity worship this will make a significant difference and enliven devotees in their service to the deities.

Inspire devotees to participate in deity worship. If a one-year commitment to deity worship were a prerequisite for brahminical initiation this would significantly improve the stability of deity worship in our temples.

I encourage the leaders of ISKCON to attend courses at the Mayapur Academy. I also request them to encourage their disciples and others to attend. If devotees are thoroughly trained in brahmanical knowledge and skills and develop the values of a brahmana, this will no doubt help ISKCON expand and flourish.

Please help us to identify devotees that will be able to take the role of Zonal Representatives.

I humbly request the members of the GBC to please help us to develop the Mayapur Academy. We feel the successful implementation of this curriculum will have far reaching effects on ISKCON.

I humbly request the EC to be increasingly generous in their funding this year to enable us to continue and become more effective in this essential service.

Again this year I am requesting the GBC to implement criteria that will ensure assessment of a temple's resources and understanding of the process of deity worship before the GBC gives approval for installations of new or additional deities. We further request that all installations and additions of deities only be done with approval from the GBC body, or a GBC authorized agency in consultation with ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry.

Srila Prabhupada personally assessed the temple's situation to see whether or not deities could be installed. It is pivotal to the well being of ISKCON to continue this system that was established by Srila Prabhupada.

By establishing and maintaining suitable standards of worship, the Lord will become pleased with our service. Then all the activities of ISKCON will bear fruit. Srila Prabhupada explained to the devotees in Mayapur that Madhava is the husband of the goddess of fortune and if we satisfy Madhava then He will take care of everything.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report.

Your servant,

Nrsimha Kavaca dasa