ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry CY2014 Report

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Executive Summary

The Mayapur Academy held its 8th consecutive 'Diploma in Arcana' semester this year with 50 devotees attending. All the courses were again presented with simultaneous Russian translation and written materials. Our focus for the Mayapur Academy is to expand the training and improve curriculum for the English, Bengali, and Russian speaking students.

ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry now has 10 regional representatives, with the addition of 2 new representatives this year. Between them they visited 81 temples in 2014. Their findings were generally consistent, i.e. lack of manpower, inadequate training, and inadequate standards of cleanliness. Our prime organizational initiative for the future of deity worship in ISKCON is to have local representatives serving every ISKCON temple in the world. Expanding our network of representatives will increase the training we are able to offer. This will enable devotees to be more effective in their service, and the ministry will be more effective in monitoring temples to identify potential problems earlier and possibly avert crises in the future.

There is a global shortage of qualified pujaris despite an ever increasing number of new brahmanas. Many temples are experiencing great difficulty in maintaining their deity worship. We encourage ISKCON leaders to require new brahmanas to contribute to the temple seva by making it a general condition for 2nd initiation.

The passing of the resolution in 2012 regulating deity installations is a significant milestone for deity worship in ISKCON. In 2014, 14 temples contacted ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry regarding proposed installations, (8 more than 2013), 7 of which received approval and installed deities. An 8th temple received approval for an application that was submitted in late 2013.

Work continues on "The Method of Worship" and significant progress has been made. Unfortunately due to lack of manpower and funding we are unable to meet our 2014 AGM deadline and target 2015 for completion.

Our financial situation is steadily deteriorating. Without sufficient resources and funding our effectiveness is greatly hampered and we are unable to assist temples in need.

Urgent funding and support is needed for ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry.

A Summary of Achievements for 2014

Education and Training

Education and training are the main tools of the Ministries to achieve their mandate. With this in mind, the resources of ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry are focused on developing and providing educational programs, such as the Mayapur Academy, on-site training programs, online training and resources, as well as publications and other resources.

Mayapur Academy

Riga – Latvia

The Mayapur Academy is ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry's most comprehensive educational initiative and we believe it to be 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 an improvement in their values. Mayapur Academy focuses on developing the knowledge, understanding, skills and values a brahmana needs to engage in worshiping the deity and serve ISKCON communities.

This year we presented our eighth English Diploma in Arcana semester and the second Russian Diploma in Arcana course for 11 devotees from Russia. This was achieved by offering simultaneous Russian translation. In total the Mayapur Academy has presented 14 separate semesters training more than 500 students in various aspects of deity worship and brahmincal culture and lifestyle.

This year Murli Manohara prabhu, the long-standing head pujari of ISKCON London, joined our team. Murli Manohara prabhu is also the Ministry representative for the UK. He cofacilitated the 3-week Temple Worship unit with plans to do the same next year. Ideally all Ministry representatives would participate in the training at Mayapur Academy each year.

All the devotees attending the course said they greatly benefited from the experience. In many cases a significant improvement in their service attitude was observed as the devotees became more inspired to offer devotional service. We get feedback from temples about the effect the training has on the service. Our prime target audience are head pujaris. Former students are head pujaris in:

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Butterworth – Malaysia;
Birmingham, Coventry and London – UK;
Bangalore, Calcutta and Delhi, Dvaraka, and Noida – India
Abentueur – Germany.
Kaunus – Lithuania
Portland – Oregon
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Online Training

This year saw the beginning of the development of our initiative to present online courses. This work has commenced with the assistance of the devotees who are developing resources for the GBC college. Currently we are developing the structure for the course and plan to pilot the course during 2015. This will act as a springboard for a whole range of online courses which will be the next major educational frontier for ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry. The introduction of online courses will give access to knowledge of deity worship to a much wider audience.

ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry

The ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry's global network of zonal representatives continues to grow. This year Ravindra Gopala dasa from Brazil and Manohara dasa from Italy joined our team. Ravindra Gopala dasa already serves as the deity worship secretary for the Brazilian National Council. Manohara dasa was previously the head pujari of Prabhupadadesa in Northern Italy. He will also serve as the onsite manager of Mayapur Academy for 6 months a year and secretary for ISKCON Deity Worship Minister

The primary role of the zonal representatives is training and reporting. They also personally guide and inspire devotees engaged in deity worship on behalf of ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry. Lastly, they act to keep ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry informed of local developments in deity worship and to give the Ministry a better understanding of the worship being offering in ISKCON centers.

ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry currently has representatives in:

- Australia Nrsimha Kavaca dasa
- Brazil Ravindra Gopala dasa
- Germany Damodara-priya devi dasi
- India Seva Atula dasa & Sheetalanga Gauranga dasa
- Italy Manohara dasa
- North America Jayananda dasa
- Philippines Mathuranatha dasa
- South Africa Saci Kumar dasa
- Spain Gauranga-lila devi dasi
- United Kingdom Murli Manohara dasa

Most of these devotees are graduates of Mayapur Academy and have been personally trained in the various arts and skills of deity worship in Sridham Mayapur (West Bengal) by Jananivasa prabhu and ISKCON's deity worship minister.

2014 Temple Visit and Activity Summaries



Australia/Global - Nrsimha Kavaca dasa (ISKCON Deity Worship Minister) continues to visit temples and meet with pujaris and devotees and training them in deity worship. He also visited and in many cases presented seminars in the following temples:

- Australia Melbourne, Sydney (3 separate seminars), Cessnock, Brisbane, Murwillumbah and the Bhakti center (Surfers Paradise).
- India Noida (both for the deity installation and a follow up visit 8 months later), Mayapur, Kolkata, Vrndavana, 3 temples in Bangalore (as well as the two non-ISKCON temples), Melkote, Tirupati, Delhi, Punjabi Bagh, and Rohini (Delhi).
- Attended both the AGM and mid-term GBC meetings.
- It was planned to travel to the UK for seminars mid year, but this was cancelled due to health concerns.

Brazil - Ravindra Gopala dasa visited and evaluated ISKCON Franco da Rocha, Sao Paulo and Suzano. He recommends not installing deities in Sao Paulo temple. He also participated in Srila Prabhupada's puspa samadhi installation in Suzano as well as discussing and planning the first Ratha-yatra there.

Germany/Austria – Damodara-priya devi dasi gave a seminar on deity worship in Goloka Dham in December 2014. She also visited Harinamadesh temple, but due to shortage of pujaris she is mainly remaining in Goloka Dham and offering her service there.

India – Sheetalanga Gauranga dasa and Seva Atula dasa. Seva Atula dasa visited 14 temple across India during 2014. He visited Pakur temple, Jharkand to assess their readiness for installing deities. He and Sheetalanga Gauranga dasa oversaw the opening ceremony of the new temple in Kanpur. He praises the quality of worship in Ujjain temples and expresses concern for Amritsar, Jammu, Udhampur and Indore temples.

Italy - Manohara dasa joined the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry team at the end of September 2014. He has mostly being engaged as administrator in Mayapur Academy. He visited Iskcon Hyderabad, meeting the head-pujari and evaluating the worship, and ISKCON Bologna in Italy.

North America – Jayananda dasa is the Deity Worship Minister for North America. In 2014, he visited 36 temples spending up to a week at each location. In total, he offered 218 days of travel from temple-to-temple on behalf of the Ministry. Since beginning his service with the Ministry, he has visited and established relationships with the pujaris and managers of most of the 50+ centers in North America. He regularly offers one-on-one training, group seminars, and temple management consultation.

This year he facilitated a successful deity worship seminar (20-hour 3-day weekend) in New Vrindaban for ISKCON temple pujaris attended by 30+ devotees from various temples in both the US and Canada. There are plans to make this an annual offering in both the eastern and western USA by also having seminars at ISKCON Los Angeles, with the first one scheduled for March of 2015.

Jayananda dasa also travels to Mayapur each year to help facilitate the annual pujari training program at Mayapur Academy. He is a member of the management team as well as co-facilitates two units.

Philippines - Mathuranatha dasa visited 4 centers (Manila, Laguna, Cebu and Hong Kong), giving seminars on deity worship, doing samskaras ceremonies and participating in festivals.

South Africa - Saci Kumar dasa visited Lenasia, Sandton, Pretoria, Soweto, Phoenix (New Jagannath Puri), and Pietermaritzburg. Additionally, he had been otherwise regularly advising devotees on deity worship.

UK - Murli Manohara dasa has been a member of the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry team for several years. He visited temple and centers in Coventry, Birmingham, South London (praising the improvement and/or maintenance of deity worship standard), Scotland, Belfast, and Manchester (manifesting concern for the worship and the devotees engaged in it).

Publications

e-Newsletter

This year ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry sent out 3 new newsletters, to the Mayapur Academy's Alumni, ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry's zonal representatives and to ISKCON temple presidents.

Method of Worship

The revision work has progressed significantly over 2014 with hundreds of hours dedicated, but it is still not complete. Our most recent goal for going to print was February 2015. Now our current goal is to print in the latter half of this year. There were other pending Ministry initiatives as well as a significant setback by the loss of the major part of the funds for printing MoW. However, parts of the book are already in the layout stage, so we are getting very close to completion.

Tulasi book

First draft edit of upcoming Tulasi book is complete.

Website/E-mail

Websites

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

Mayapuracademy.org provides information about the training and education available at the Mayapur Academy as well as facility for online enrolment. Eventually there will be a range of online courses that will offer preparatory training for those planning to attend the Mayapur Academy courses. This will further maximize the time devotees are able to spend away from their temples and service. As much of the curriculum as possible will be online, as well as training videos etc. so that by the time devotees reach Mayapur they will be familiar with much of the knowledge and some of the skills. In this way the devotees will be preprepared for the course and we will be able to increase the educational outcomes of the course, as well as pre-assess devotees suitability for the training.

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.

Email

Jananivasa dasa, Nrsimha Kavaca dasa, and Jayananda dasa and our team of representatives continue to provide advice for devotees engaged in deity worship wherever they visit and via email.

Facebook

ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry and Mayapur Academy both maintain a Facebook presence.

Please like us on Facebook.

Installations

In 2012 at the Annual General Meeting, the GBC passed a law regulating installation or commencement of worship of deities in ISKCON centers. Passing of this law is a significant milestone for ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry. Now with this ISKCON Law regulating the installation of, or commencement of worship, temples are contacting the Ministry and we are responding to their requests in a timely manner. Jayananda dasa processes the applications for "Certificate of Readiness."

ISKCON temples are required to get a Certificate of Readiness before procuring or installing/commencing worship of deities. Requesting approval after arrangements are made greatly impairs our ability to serve the temples effectively, and may result in an embarrassing situation for ISKCON if the installation is not approved.

It is increasingly apparent that the information regarding the installation law is not getting out to ISKCON temples and frontline preachers. We humbly request that GBC members and other ISKCON leaders ensure ISKCON temple management members are both educated about and properly following this GBC requirement to receive a "Certificate of Readiness" prior to procuring or commencing worship of deities in ISKCON centers.

Overall, the Ministry is satisfied that the law is achieving the intended goal of not initiating substandard worship in our temples.

In 2014, 14 temples submitted applications to the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry for getting a certificate of readiness. In 2014, 7 of the these temples received approval and installed deities in 2014 along with an 8th temple that received approval from an application that was submitted in late 2013. There was also a temple in Cambodia that came to our attention in 2014 for installing Gaura Nitai in 2013 with no approval.

Temple	Status
Noida, India	Approved & Installed
Govardhana Eco Village, India	Approved & Installed
Madurai, India	Approved & Installed
Houston, TX USA	Approved & Installed
Guntur, India	Approved & Installed
Kanpur, India	Approved & Installed
Bukit Mertajam, Malaysia	Approved & Installed

Chignolo d'Isola (BG), Italy	Approved & Installed
Jharkhand, India (Pakur)	Approved, installation planned for March 2015.
Perai Penang, Malaysia	In process
Jodhpur, India	In process
ISKCON of Central New Jersey, USA	In process
Mira Road, Mumbai, India	In process
Bellevue, WA, USA (Seattle area)	Declined (Balaji & Radha Krishna)
Prabhupada Village, NC, USA	Terminated review upon GBC request (Not legally an ISKCON entity operating under full direction of GBC {yet})
Glovesco, Cambodia	NOT INFORMED NOR APPROVED for Gaura Nitai installation in June 2013. Ministry became aware after seeing installation article on Feb 25 2014.

Additional information

Before the Tirupati mid-term meeting the Minister visited ISKCON Melkote. During the year the temple had placed a deity of Nrsimhadeva on the altar for Nrsimha Caturdasi and Radha Krsna deities on Janmastami. Both deities were still on the altar and being worshiped when the minister visited Melkote in October. After discussions with local management and the GBC, these deities have been removed from the altar as the temple does not have the resources to adequately care for these deities..

Installation / Commencement of Worship Procedure

Any center wishing to commence worship of new deities are will find all related information for applying for a "certificate of readiness "on our website: deityworship.com. The following information is under the Resources tab "Installing deities in ISKCON centers":

- GBC Resolution
- Document outlining considerations and worship standards prior to applying
- Application request form

http://deityworship.com/deity-worship-ministry-resources/deity-installations

Resources

In 2014 ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry was allocated US \$10,000 by the GBC. This was used in the following manner, \$4,500 for travel, \$3,000 to maintain our staff, which includes a \$30 per week stipend for the minister. Communication \$1,500 (telephone, internet, etc.) and \$1,000 toward purchasing education resources, a new raid hard drive for storing digital media used in presenting deity worship courses and for online courses.

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

Consultation

ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry has been actively involved in discussions with different temples about improving worship standards, relocating deities and future plans to build temples and install deities.

As a result of Ministry representatives visiting temples and offering reports suggesting improvements, temple management are responsive to various degrees. Some temple managers will show some interest and action, while others invest laudable energy in addressing concerns within the deity department. The Seattle (Sammamish), Washington USA temple is a prime example of the latter. Since the Ministry offered a report in March of 2014, systematic improvements and reporting have been happening in Seattle since October while in ongoing consultation with the Ministry.

This year there was a robust discussion with a number of senior devotees who have and significant experience in deity worship of the years. We believe this is the beginning of the Deity Care Committee that was discussed on the Leadership discussions conference two years ago. The first discussion we had was about how to offer arati in ISKCON. There are quite a wide range of views in this discussion so a conclusion is yet to be reached.

Challenges

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

In 2007 our income was US \$ 29,359 and our total expenses were US \$11,237 In 2008 our income was US \$ 11,000 and our total expenses were US \$17,292 In 2009 our income was US \$ 23,240 and our total expenses were US \$25,575 In 2010 our income was US \$7,662 and our total expenses were US \$10,195 In 2011 our income was US \$8,019 and our total expenses were US \$8,911 In 2012 our income was US \$11,323 and our total expenses were US \$15,866 In 2013 our income was US \$11,827 and our total expenses were US \$11,817 In 2014 our income was US \$13,214 and our total expenses were US \$12,963

At the end of last year the Minister received notification that he will be losing significant income in 2015. To be able to effectively continue in this service he will need a substantial increase in funding from the GBC and other sources.

Almost US\$ **3,000** of funds for the Ministry came from personal donations to the minister. With the change in financial situation this year he will be unable to sustain this.

To assist in maintaining his asrama the minister also serves as the head pujari of the New Govardhana farm community.

Debt

At the end of the calendar year the ministers current credit card debt is **Aust. \$4,875. \$3,000** less than last year.

Along with this over the past few years the minister has injected about US\$ 5,000 of personal funds to ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry to keep it going.

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 bring to ISKCON.

Devotee resources

IDWM continues to receive reports of chronic shortages of pujaris in temples around the world. So many beautiful projects are being built around the world, yet many of our existing temples are struggling to maintain the basics of worship.

Other

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.

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 brahmana initiation.

The problems faced by temples in maintaining deity worship only serve to reinforce the need for training. The Mayapur Academy is the most effective solution to these problems and ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry will become more effective if it has the resources necessary to increase the training that is so desperately needed.

Vision for Our Activities for 2015

Vision

- To increase the number of regional representatives for ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry. Thus enabling us to have greater reach and impact around the globe.
 Please help us to identify more devotees who can fulfill this need.
- To expand the availability of training and guidance for devotees worldwide.
- To engage in the activities associated with the worship of the Lord in His arcavigraha and to encourage the building of communities centered on such worship as integral to the preaching mission of ISKCON.
- Continue training devotees in the process of deity worship. Our goal is to inspire devotees 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. This will include
 writing and presenting more units. We are engaging more devotees in the
 development of the curriculum and will continue to do so provided increased financial
 resources become available.
- Expand the current Bengali course to a full diploma course similar to the English Diploma Course being offered.
- 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 and regional 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 fundraising for ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry
 & Mayapur Academy
- To facilitate courses being taught in 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.
- To continue with daily calls to develop projects for ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry such as strategic planning, databases, book projects, online training, etc.
- To further facilitate Saci Kumar dasa, Murli Manohara dasa and Jayananda dasa, and other zonal representatives who are assisting ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry in training and research.
- To continue sending out newsletters to the various stakeholders of IDWM and

Mayapur Academy.

• Develop a student registration and assessment database for Mayapur Academy.

Travel

• Increased travel and on-site training. This largely depends on funding.

Publications

- Publish the "Method of Worship." In order to do this we need increased funding and assistance.
- Publish the "Tulasi Handbook"
- Publish a quarterly e-newsletter
- Publish Arcana Journal 5

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 & Regional representatives

IDWM believes a major key to our success is to develop a network of zonal and regional representatives in every yatra around the world. These devotees would 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

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

Since March 2012 the minister has been serving as head pujari at New Govardhana in Australia. As a result he has stopped engaging in various types of paid activities to enable him to make a more concentrated contribution to ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry. As a result the overall income for the Ministry is significantly reduced.

A message to the GBC Executive Committee

Deity worship is one of the five principle angas of bhakti. By the hard work of a few dedicated devotees we are achieving significant results. With increased resources ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry would be able to reach many more devotees and as a result this would have greater effect. As the elected leaders of ISKCON, we look to you for guidance and assistance in facilitating our mandated service to ISKCON.

By the GBC injecting more funding and resources into ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry we would be able to have so much more effect on the dire situation in temples around the world and help them learn how to please Radha-Madhava.

Earlier this year I alerted you to a pending personal financial crisis. If I continue with service as I have been doing then I will lose significant funding and I am not sure how I will be able to maintain my wife and myself. As long as you desire, I am happy to dedicate myself to this service as a lifelong commitment, but need to feel satisfied with my contribution and that I am achieving the necessary goals of IDWM. I humbly request the EC to be increasingly generous in funding this year to enable me to continue and remain effective in this essential service.

Reports of temples in dire situations continue to come in. I implore the members of the EC to take this seriously. Deity worship is an essential component of Srila Prabhupada's preaching mission. 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. One of the prime ways in which our leaders can inspire others is by they themselves performing the service. I encourage all leaders of ISKCON, 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.

Another way to address this concern is to require devotees to make a one-year commitment to deity worship as a prerequisite for brahminical initiation. In recent years some temples have introduced a policy of only giving recommendation for 2nd initiation to devotees who are willing to make a commitment to doing regular deity worship for a minimum period of 6-12 months. Bhaktivedanta Manor, London Soho Street and Sydney, Australia are all examples of temples who have implemented this policy and it is proving successful. Please consider implementing such policy more broadly around the world.

I humbly request the members of the GBC to please help us develop the Mayapur Academy. The successful implementation of this curriculum will have far reaching effects in ISKCON. If it were a requirement to be a head pujari in an ISKCON center, a devotee must attend and successfully complete the Diploma in Arcana, this would greatly assisting in establishing and maintaining the standards that Srila Prabhupada strove to establish in ISKCON.

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.

I humbly prostrate myself at the feet of you all and thank you for giving your valuable time to read this report.

Begging to remain your servant,

Nrsimha Kavaca dasa ISKCON Deity Worship Minister