

In order to expand properly all over the British Isles we shall require a big, big headquarters. Seize the iron while the fire is hot...

Srila Prabhupada in a letter to Dhananjaya prior to the purchase of Bhaktivedanta Manor, 1973

Dear Friends,

Hare Krishna

Last November the temple leadership agreed that a consultation should be carried out that engages with the various communities involved and related to Bhaktivedanta Manor. The purpose of the consultation is to review the temple management and the services it provides. As part of this process we approached you and I would like to sincerely thank you for taking the time to respond. The level of response was very encouraging and it represented a good cross-section of the greater community.

A total of 130 people were invited to participate, out of which 76 responded equating to **58.4%** response rate and thus fairly good considering the nature of this type of consultation. The following is a breakdown of respondents:

	Number of	Percentage of respondents' total feedback
• Disciples of Srila Prabhupada	15	19.7%
• Elder Community members	15	19.7%
• Temple Management	6	7.9%
• Ashram Residents	7	9.2%
• Indian Congregation	15	19.7%
• Sanga Group Leaders	5	6.6%
• Gurukulis	7	9.2%
• Pandava Sena	3	4.0%
• Well-wishers	2	2.6%
• Anonymous	1	1.3%
TOTAL:	76	

The overall tone of the response was appreciative while also expressive of stiff critique. In all, it represents a multiplicity of voices and has been extremely informative for the purpose of this review.

Upon reflection of the feedback received, there was an overwhelming feeling of regret amongst the present leadership at the lack of introspection and attention in certain key areas of Bhaktivedanta Manor. In order to begin to address these issues, they have unanimously agreed to the process of change which is greatly needed. Further details are highlighted after the following section.

Summary of the Feedback Received

(highlighting points of significant and somewhat serious concern)

Aspirations for Bhaktivedanta Manor:

I would like Bhaktivedanta Manor...

...to be primarily seen as a focal point of spiritual practice and example - and also to be seen as a retreat centre of renown, a centre of excellent education in Sanskrit, philosophy, theology, and the arts; a working bhumi-friendly farm; temple gardens of national repute; a venue for hosting national discussions, debates, and consultations; and a place where every devotee offers service with a smile.

... to be a community that is diverse and reaches out to others - that is offering something unique - whose members are those with integrity, honesty and individuality - that has a message that people can grasp or apply in their lives.

...to be a vibrant, dynamic, expert and loving community where everyone feels welcomed and materially & spiritually uplifted. I see Bhaktivedanta Manor as an example to the world.

Spirituality:

Sanga, kirtan, devotees...

I lived there for many years, brought up my daughter there, saw Srila Prabhupada there. So it has a deep emotional and spiritual meaning for me. I consider it a place of pilgrimage to be with Srila Prabhupada and their Lordships. It has memories for me of Srila Prabhupada. in his physical form and service I did thus it is a very important tirtha to me

Areas in need of serious attention and improvement:

- Increased emphasis and encouragement upon the cultivation of meaningful *sadhu sanga*
- Create a unified *Vaishnava* community free of the concepts of bodily designations and culture of origin

Leadership:

The greatest achievement in my opinion is the financial stability, and the Goshalla...

Bhaktivedanta Manor is a successful temple, the flag ship for the UK and potentially for the rest of Europe provided it sets an ideal standard of both spiritual and managerial Krishna Conscious leadership. In this way the leaders of Bhaktivedanta Manor have a great responsibility to Srila Prabhupada's movement. (BG 3.21 "Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues").

Areas in need of serious attention and improvement:

- Greater emphasis and priority to be placed upon the core mission and the Seven Purposes
- Exceptional effort to be made to rebuild trust between management and the community it represents
- Development of a more transparent management and decision making processes
- Establishment of appropriate measures of success for the mission's growth
- Appropriate diversity in the management and decision-making teams, particularly an increase in the presence of women and other under-represented "minorities".

Outreach:

The Bhaktivedanta Manor is a great and big preaching centre, where we teach bhakti yoga. Bhakti yoga includes cow protection, ecology, responsibility and love for Krishna and his devotees...

Our public image within the local community and wider community has definitely improved significantly....this is due to the schools programme which reaches out to many children and their parents and teachers, being involved in local projects, being more involved in interfaith, volunteers, community choir and open days

Areas in need of serious attention and improvement:

- Greater emphasis and inspiration placed upon systematic preaching through *harinam* and *sankirtan*
- Greater emphasis, enthusiasm and resources are placed upon 'western outreach'
- Development of western community as large, dynamic and enthusiastic as the current 'Hindu' community

Devotee Care:

The devotees of BM are my father and mother. I feel eternally grateful to them for tolerance and guidance. All I can and all I know is just thanks to the devotees of the Bhaktivedanta Manor. It is my place of worship, my ashram. And maybe also my attachment.

Establishing what I perceive a strong brahmachari ashram, with young congregation members aspiring to take sabbaticals and perhaps become brahmacaris.

Areas in need of significant attention and improvement:

- Develop a more personal/personable and caring culture
- Treating devotees with greater respect, beyond mere resources
- Guardianship of residents, staff and community
- Ethos of *bhakti* and *seva* in the operation and management of Bhaktivedanta Manor alongside discussing more appropriate and fairer means of remuneration (than the present culture)

Education:

For me, Bhaktivedanta Manor is the temple I joined Krishna Consciousness. The beginning of my spiritual growth took place here in a huge family of devotees who provides shelter and training to grow in Krishna Consciousness.

It is a training and education centre in the process of bhakti yoga. Practically applied in ashram training, congregational training, harinam-sankirtan performance, deity worship, cow protection, agriculture, primary school, and nursery.

Area in need of significant attention and improvement:

- Greater educational focus and encouragement to engage in more training in all areas

My Home

Bhaktivedanta Manor is the most important place in my life. It has served many purposes throughout my life, it is my second home, it has been my school, it has served as a place of employment, it is where most of my closest friends and family congregate, it is my place of worship, my place of learning, it is a place to relax and escape the material world... but most importantly it is the only place in the world where i feel completely comfortable and safe. I couldn't live without it. Bhaktivedanta Manor is my oasis in the material world.

The Bhaktivedanta Manor is the place around which my sense of spirituality, community, identity, and social realm revolve. It is the place I can easily attend to see Radha and Krsna, but also the place around which most of my friends have chosen to reside. You can draw a line clearly from the Manor to the houses of all the friends I see most often, and the radius will be quite the same. So it's like a magnetic pull.

Areas in need of significant attention and improvement:

- Ensure that the use of Bhaktivedanta Manor for programmes balances the needs and aspirations of all sections of the ashram and congregation
- Development of an attitude of gratitude for those that have made sacrifices for the mission
- Increased dialogue and enhanced relationships between the Manor and ex-ashram community
- Re-establishing *istagoshtis* and developing a culture of consultation

Culture & Service

My simple understanding is that Srila Prabhupada was interested in making 'Vaishnava'. ...I can only say with my limited knowledge that his temples should be a gateway to attracting non-vaishnavas and transforming them into vaishnavas over a period of time in the 'serene atmosphere of Vrindavana' as Srila Prabhupada would often say looking out of the windows of his rooms at the Manor. He always appreciated the service rendered by his disciples whether one gave money or a mango or even toilet rolls! He felt heartbroken when he learned a devotee had become disillusioned and left his Society.

Areas in need of significant attention and improvement:

- Developing a culture of being more welcoming, inclusive and engaging with visitors
- Review the impact of the weddings and other functions in the temple room
- Enhancing the quality of service, interaction and *prasadam* served through the community shop, particularly toward newcomers and health conscientious visitors

Initial Consideration in Response

The review team have now presented the feedback to the leaders, and although some of it is daunting, they remain open and are committed to the process. The main concern for now is how to move forward and initiate informed and inclusive change. From the initial consideration of the feedback it is apparent that in due course change needs to take place in the following areas:

- ❖ Investment in initiatives that appeal to the Western audience
- ❖ The promotion of a culture of integrity and sound ethical conduct
- ❖ An open discourse and broad participation in understanding and responding to what we are as a diverse faith and spiritual community
- ❖ A re-evaluation of leadership and how best it can be formed to respond to the expanded requirements of the Society (ISKCON), while abiding by the directions of Srila Prabhupada and respecting diversity
- ❖ Developing facilities to make accommodation for the growth and needs of community
- ❖ The necessity of a broad and representative visionary body.

In the pursuance of this feedback, the following five key priority areas have been identified:

- Western outreach
- Devotee care and welfare
- Community development
- Leadership and management / communication
- Estate development

These will be discussed in greater detail later in this document.

A Model Fit for Purpose?

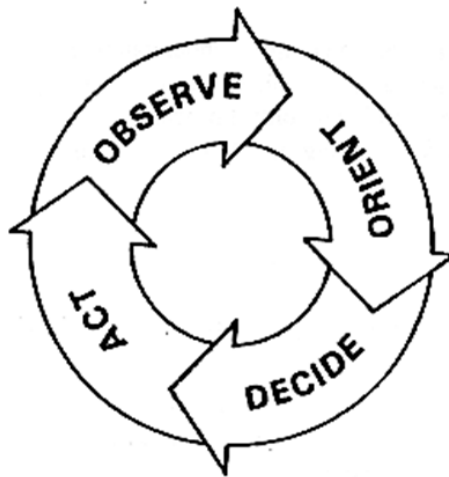
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Srila Prabhupada, 1973

In considering the points raised and in deliberating on Srila Prabhupada's aspiration for spreading Krishna Consciousness throughout the UK, it is of utmost importance to find a suitable medium, an inclusive forum by which to facilitate discussions and formulate possible solutions. With guidance from external experts, a consultative decision making process known as the 'ooda-loop' (see diagram

below), with its parallels to a Vedic model has been proposed and welcomed by the leaders as a likely vehicle for moving forward.

According to this model, effective leadership consists of four roles in harmony; the leader, the manager, the supervisor and the beneficiary/ observer. The leader determines the purpose and vision of an organisation, the manager allocates and determines the appropriate resources to achieve the purpose and vision of an organisation and the supervisor plans and implements the use of resources. The beneficiary experiences the services delivered and feeds back to the leaders. The leaders “orientate” (likened to brahmanas), managers “decide” (likened to Ksatriyas), supervisors “act” (likened to workers but not in a derogative sense) and the observers “experience” (likened to the beneficiaries). The current state of leadership at Bhaktivedanta Manor is a confusion and amalgamation of roles that do not enable effective decision making and result in distress. It just has trouble separating them into their appropriate roles. The expectation of what a “leader” should do is currently confused due to the amalgamation of roles. Effective decision making will result from appropriate demarcation.



MODEL				
OODA Loop	Observation	Orientation	Decision	Action
Vedic Model	'Istagosthi'/ consultation of diff groups	Brahmana	Ksatriya	True worker – not the modern derogative/ diminished perception
Parliament	Lobbyists / researchers / MP surgeries/ election process / media	House of Lords	House of Commons Cabinet / Front bench Senior Ministers	Civil Service
Roles	To gather info / research	To inspire / to set agenda inspirational	To prioritise and manage	To supervise

		leaders		
Questions		Concerned with <u>WHY</u> we do something	Concerned with <u>WHAT</u> should be done	Concerned with How / Who When & Where
About	Observing and feeding back	Purpose and suitability Regulating - defining principles, culture, behaviour and parameters	Resource allocation	Planning
BM Decision Making Process	Consultation	Visionary / Advisory Body	New Charity Board	Strategic Development / Senior Managt
Time-frames	Variable	8-10 years	3 years	Day to day

The role of this new structure will enable Bhaktivedanta Manor to understand and relate to its primary weaknesses, make appropriate decisions and take effective actions.

As the initiative evolves, everyone's participation will be required at various points, istagostis will be used to consult/ sense check with the various stakeholder groups. Points raised will then be taken into account by the Vision/ Advisory Body which will make recommendations to the appropriate bodies. Opportunity to air contentious issues will be addressed via this process, therefore no one party should feel they are not represented nor heard.

It should be noted that the role of the Vision Team is pivotal to the delivery of long term change at Bhaktivedanta Manor. They have the task (over the next year) of articulating the Vision for Bhaktivedanta Manor evolving over the next 8 – 10 years. That vision will take into consideration the essence of the feedback received and also get input from various strategic bodies going forward.

The Five Initial Areas of Priority:

These have been identified as the initial areas in need of primary focus for the next 3 years:

1) Western outreach

To set up:

- Vibrant, dynamic & expanding local groups
- Local outreach facility in major towns & cities
- Weekly harinam sankirtan event in local towns, encouraging the participation of residents and congregation

2) Devotee Care & Growth

To set up care programmes in the following areas:

- Health system to offer complimentary care for physical ailments
- Mentorship/ Counsellor system – to offer personal care and support to devotees

- c) Pensions for residents – plan financial support for long-serving residents

3) Community Development

- a) To provide a forum to engage with the wider devotee community to keep Srila Prabhupada the centre of our service and relationships
- b) To serve the Vaishnavas and respond to their personal interests and concerns

4) Leadership and Management

To have an open, effective and empowering leadership body with a clear vision and mission aligned to Srila Prabhupada's instructions

5) Estate Development

To have a comprehensive plan covering our next 10 years of development, that has been achieved through a fully inclusive process, and represents in architecture and proportion what the community wants

In moving forward, enormous patience will be required – it will not be achieved overnight. No doubt there will be pain in the process.

In reading the above if you feel there is any specific area that you have personal interest in or experience of, please let us know. If you would rather just submit your ideas in writing and be kept informed of progress, we will be more than glad to inform you.

"This is not the end, this is not the beginning of the end, but it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning"
Winston Churchill

Pending any further feedback, the next step will be to establish the Vision Body with a cross-section of Bhaktivedanta Manor's greater community, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. We will strive to give you regular updates as we progress, every couple of months.

Again thank you for your candid feedback.

Your servants,

The review team,

Sitarama das & Tony Goodwin

[The actual process of Bhaktivedanta Manor's Review began in January '10; Tony Goodwin (a freelance management consultant and congregational member) joined the process in Feb/March '10. Particular thanks go to Pradyumna das who has also assisted us to get to this point and to Sam Brier (external consultant for voluntary and public sector organisations) who joined us for two days of strategic planning meetings in July '10 and has continued providing guidance].