To
Mr. Bob Cohen
Director
Bhaktivedanta Institute for Higher Studies
224 NE 10th Ave
Gainesville, FL 32601

30 January 2026

FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY REPORT

Subject: A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada
Date of Birth: 01 September 1896
Date of Incident: 14 November 1977

Dear Mr. Cohen:

Thank you for referring this forensic toxicology matter for my review on 21st May 2025.

In preparation for this report, I personally reviewed the materials and records you provided, and I undertook my own research and conducted interviews as I felt necessary. If additional records or materials become available to me, I will consider them, and I will submit a supplemental report if the opinions stated in this report are at all altered by my review of any additional records or materials.

I will present this report to you in classical fashion starting with a brief biographical profile followed by relevant *materia medica*, science review, as well as my opinions, conclusions and bibliography.

I. Brief Biographical Profile

I am a San Francisco–based, board-certified forensic toxicologist. Forensic toxicologists specialise in the analysis and interpretation of biological fluids and tissues for alcohol, pharmaceuticals, drugs, and poisons within medico-legal and judicial contexts.

I am the Director of Cameron Forensic Medical Sciences and Professor of Forensic Medical Sciences at Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London. I also hold Visiting Professor appointments at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece); Saint Louis University School of Medicine (USA); Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata (Italy); and the Università di Torino (Italy).

I hold a Bachelor of Science in Forensic Chemistry and Criminalistics from the State University of New York, College at Buffalo (1993); a Master of Science in Forensic Science, specialising in Criminalistics and Forensic Toxicology, from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York (1996); and a Doctor of Philosophy in Forensic Medicine and Science, specializing in Analytical and Forensic Toxicology, from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom (1999).

From 1999 to 2003, I worked in London, United Kingdom, first as Senior Lecturer in Forensic Science at London South Bank University and subsequently as Head of the Forensic Toxicology Service at St George's Hospital Medical School, University of London. From 2003 to 2016, I served as Chief Forensic Toxicologist and Director of the Forensic Laboratory Division at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the City and County of San Francisco. In that capacity, I performed, supervised, and interpreted approximately 50,000 forensic toxicology investigations, including both post-mortem and human performance cases.

Post-mortem forensic toxicology involves the detection, identification, and interpretation of drugs, their metabolites, ethanol and other volatile substances, gases such as carbon monoxide, metals, and other toxic chemicals in biological fluids and tissues collected after death, and the evaluation of their role as determinants or contributory factors in the cause and manner of death.

Human performance forensic toxicology focuses on the analysis and interpretation of ethanol, drugs, and other chemicals in blood, breath, or other appropriate specimens collected from living individuals, and the assessment of their effects on performance, cognition, and behavior.

I regularly serve as an expert in forensic toxicology for both Public Defenders/Defense Attorneys and District Attorneys/Prosecutors in post-mortem cases (including homicides, suicides, accidents, and sudden unexplained deaths in infancy) and in human performance cases (including drug-facilitated sexual assaults, driving under the influence cases, hit-and-run offences, public intoxications, workplace impairment investigations, and other drug-related matters). Over the past 15 years, I have been qualified as an expert in forensic toxicology in more than 335 civil and criminal cases in county, state, and federal courts in the United States and internationally.

I am board-certified as a Fellow of the American Board of Forensic Toxicology and am a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (Toxicology Section). In 2018, I was elected Chair of the Toxicology Section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. I am also an Honorary Fellow of the Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians.

I am a Founding Member of the International Alliance of Clinical and Forensic Toxicologists and a member of The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists, serving as an elected member of its Board from 2022 to 2024. Additional professional memberships include the Society of Forensic Toxicologists, the British Academy of Forensic Sciences, the California Association of Toxicologists (for which I served as its first Ethics Committee Chair), the California Association of Criminalists, the Balkan Academy of Forensic Sciences, the African Society of Forensic Sciences, the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors, and affiliate membership in the US National Association of Medical Examiners.

The dedication of my life and career to community safety and social awareness was triumphantly recognized in 2005 by the 109th United States Congress who honored with a Congressional Proclamation of Achievement.

II. Review of Records

I have personally reviewed the reports prepared by Dr. J. Steven Morris (University of Missouri, 1999–2005) and the Truth Labs Expert Committee (2024) concerning the death of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada, who passed away in Vrindavan, India, on 14 November 1977.

These reports rely solely on the analysis of hair clippings preserved as relics and subsequently tested by neutron activation analysis (NAA) in 1999, 2002, and 2005. The results were expressed in micrograms per gram (μg/g) of hair, and the conclusion reached was that Srila Prabhupada died from cadmium poisoning, possibly homicidal in nature.

I also undertook my own independent research and conducted interviews of key people who lived and worked with A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada near the time of his death.

Following my investigation and review and based on internationally accepted principles of forensic toxicology and peer-reviewed scientific evidence, I conclude that the findings that Srila Prabhupada died from cadmium and/or other heavy metal poisoning, possibly homicidal in nature, are scientifically unsubstantiated and unreliable and that the conclusion of homicidal poisoning, or of any other form of poisoning, cannot be supported to the requisite scientific or evidentiary standard.

III. Specimen Integrity and Storage:

When the Specimen Fails, the Conclusion Falls

a. ***Hair Clippings Are Environmental Collectors, Not Biological Records:*** The specimens were hair clippings collected with clippers in 1977. Such clippings lack follicular roots, may contain mixed hair, and are inherently prone to external contamination (clipper oils, lubricants, dust, smoke).
b. ***Absence of Control Equals Presence of Contamination:*** The specimens were preserved as religious relics rather than forensic evidence, with no chain of custody, sealing, or contamination control.
c. ***Long Storage Records History of Handling, Not Cause of Death:*** The first tests were conducted only in 1999, more than 20 years after death, with further testing in 2002 and 2005. Storage conditions over such decades cannot guarantee sample integrity.

IV. Limitations of Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA) for Cadmium in Hair

Analytical Capability Does Not Equal Interpretive Validity

a. ***Cadmium Is a Poor Target for Neutron Activation***: While NAA is a sensitive research tool, cadmium is a poor candidate for NAA due to its low neutron activation cross-section and interference from sulfur and other hair constituents.
b. ***When Better Tools Exist, Method Choice Matters***: By 1999–2005, ICP-MS was the recognized gold standard for cadmium measurement in biological matrices, offering superior sensitivity and control of interferences. The choice of NAA was methodologically outdated.
c. ***NAA Measures Presence, Not Pathway***: NAA cannot distinguish between cadmium incorporated via blood and cadmium deposited externally on hair. Thus, elevated readings may simply reflect surface contamination.

V. Misinterpretation of µg/g Hair Cadmium Concentrations

Big Numbers Without Biological Meaning

a. ***Multiples of 'Normal' Where No Normal Exists***: The reports interpret hair cadmium values as "177–284 times above normal average levels." However, no validated toxicological thresholds exist for cadmium in hair. Unlike kidney cortex cadmium (~150–200 µg/g wet weight), which is linked to renal dysfunction, hair concentrations are not diagnostic of poisoning.

b. ***Hair Cadmium Reflects Environment, Not Poisoning***: Population studies show hair cadmium concentrations vary widely (0.01–1 µg/g), strongly influenced by smoking, diet, and environmental contamination/dust. In the case of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada, the presence of metal elements in hair is to be expected given his regular exposure and proximity to incense smoke. Incense smoke often contains heavy metals such as cadmium since these metals are present in the raw materials used to make the incense sticks, such as the bamboo core, wood powder, dyes, and other additives. When the incense is burned, these heavy metals are released as toxic oxides into the air in the form of fine and ultrafine particulate matter which can be inhaled deeply into the lungs and deposited on people's hair and skin. Recent environmental health studies show that incense burning emits particulate matter containing cadmium, lead, arsenic and other metals, which readily deposit on indoor surfaces, clothing, skin and hair. Therefore, hair cadmium or other metals in an individual frequently exposed to incense cannot be assumed to reflect internal poisoning. This evidence further demonstrates that Srila Prabhupada's hair, collected in an environment with daily incense, could easily accumulate external metal contamination, invalidating any toxicological conclusion based solely on hair analysis.

c. ***Hair Cadmium Does Not Represent Systemic Cadmium Burden:*** The assertion that cadmium concentrations measured in hair represent "approximately 250-fold elevations above normal" is medically and toxicologically unsound. Cadmium toxicokinetics are well characterized: clinically significant cadmium poisoning requires sustained systemic exposure sufficient to result in accumulation within target organs, principally the renal cortex, and is reliably reflected by elevated kidney cadmium concentrations and urinary cadmium excretion. No validated dose–response relationship exists between cadmium intake and hair concentrations, and there are no established toxicological thresholds for cadmium in hair.

d. ***Poisoning Without Pathology Is Not Poisoning*****:** If cadmium exposure were genuinely of a magnitude sufficient to produce sustained systemic toxicity over a period of months, this would be expected to result in characteristic clinical and pathological manifestations, including proximal renal tubular dysfunction, proteinuria, progressive renal impairment, skeletal demineralization, or in cases of inhalational exposure, severe chemical pneumonitis. These hallmark features of cadmium toxicity have been extensively documented in occupational and environmental exposure studies and are notably absent in the clinical record of Srila Prabhupada.

e. ***Environmental Fallout, Not Biological Uptake*****:** The interpretation that elevated cadmium concentrations measured in hair reflect prolonged ingestion of toxic quantities of cadmium is not supported by established cadmium toxicology. The reported hair findings are far more plausibly explained by external contamination or environmental deposition, rather than by biologically meaningful systemic exposure.

f. ***Reproducibility Does Not Fix a Flawed Specimen*****:** Finally, the reports' reliance on repeated findings between 1999 and 2005 do not confirm poisoning; they simply confirm that the same contaminated relics were tested repeatedly.

VI. Absence of Corroborative Toxicological and Pathological Evidence

No Corroborative Biomarkers, No Toxicological Case

The reports rely exclusively on hair results.

a. ***The Primary Organs of Accumulation Were Ignored*:** No kidney or liver cadmium concentrations were ever measured. This is important as those are the true burden organs in cadmium exposures.
b. ***Absence of Functional Evidence of Exposure:*** No urinary cadmium or tubular markers (β2-microglobulin, NAG) were obtained to show renal injury.
c. ***Expected Pathology Was Not Demonstrated:*** No autopsy histology was reported to demonstrate pulmonary injury (acute cadmium) or renal osteopathy (chronic cadmium).

Without such corroboration, hair results alone cannot establish cadmium poisoning.

VII. Misattribution of Clinical Symptoms

Non-Specific Symptoms Misattributed to a Specific Toxin

a. ***Non-Specific Symptoms Are Not Diagnostic:*** The reports state that Srila Prabhupada's symptoms — anorexia, weakness, anemia, and weight loss — are "fully compatible with cadmium poisoning." These are non-specific symptoms equally consistent with common conditions in 1970s India: diabetes, chronic kidney disease, infections (tuberculosis, sepsis), malnutrition, and cardiovascular disease.
b. ***The Cadmium Poisoning Pattern Is Missing:*** Cadmium poisoning has well-characterized clinical profiles:
    a. Acute inhalation → pneumonitis/ARDS.
    b. Chronic ingestion → proximal tubular proteinuria, renal failure, osteomalacia (Itai-itai disease).

None of these features were documented in Srila Prabhupada's case.

VIII. Speculative Homicide Narrative

Extraordinary Allegations Without Extraordinary Evidence

Speculation Presented as Science: The reports suggest that cadmium was surreptitiously administered by close associates over 18 months, based solely on hair values and non-specific clinical features. This is speculation, not evidence. No toxicological proof of ingestion exists, nor any exclusion of alternative medical causes of death. Constructing a homicide theory on the basis of compromised hair samples is scientifically indefensible.

IX. Conclusion

The Case for Poisoning Completely Fails the Test of Science

The claims alleging that Srila Prabhupada was poisoned by cadmium or other heavy metals rely on scientifically unsound evidence.

a. ***The Specimens Were Never Forensically Valid:*** The specimens (hair clippings stored for decades) are invalid and highly prone to contamination.
b. ***An Inappropriate Method Applied to an Inappropriate Matrix:*** The method (NAA for cadmium in hair) was inappropriate and outdated by the time of testing.
c. ***Quantification Without Toxicological Meaning:*** The results (µg/g hair) lack validated toxicological thresholds and cannot differentiate contamination from exposure.
d. ***Absence of Organ Evidence Undermines the Interpretation:*** The interpretation ignores the absence of corroborative tissue or urinary biomarkers and misattributes non-specific symptoms.
e. ***No Forensic Basis for Allegations of Homicide:*** The homicide scenario is speculative and unsupported by forensic science.

Since my first expert testimony in the early 2000s, I have personally worked in and/or examined over 50,000 toxicology-related cases and I have testified in more than 330 cases involving a wide range of toxic agents, exposure scenarios, and analytical methodologies.

In none of those cases has a conclusion of poisoning been based on evidence as methodologically flawed and scientifically unsupported as that presented in the allegations concerning the death of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada.

The claim that cadmium concentrations reported as “approximately 250 times average” in hair constitute evidence of intentional poisoning fundamentally misrepresents both toxicology and hair biology. Hair is well recognised to act as a passive collector of environmental contaminants, readily adsorbing airborne particulate matter and metals from the surrounding environment. Measurements in hair therefore reflect environmental contact as much as, if not more than, systemic exposure.

Incense is a documented source of airborne heavy metals, including cadmium, released during combustion from the constituent materials of incense sticks. These metals are emitted as fine and ultrafine particulate matter, readily depositing on indoor surfaces, clothing, skin, and hair. In an environment characterised by frequent incense use, the presence of metals in hair is neither unexpected nor indicative of ingestion.

From a toxicokinetic and clinical perspective, the interpretation that such hair measurements represent sustained cadmium ingestion is not credible. Systemic cadmium exposure of a magnitude sufficient to produce prolonged elevations consistent with poisoning would be expected to result in clear and characteristic manifestations of toxicity, including renal tubular dysfunction, elevated urinary cadmium, and/or pulmonary injury. No such findings were documented.

In my professional opinion, the allegation that Srila Prabhupada was intentionally poisoned is not supported by reliable scientific evidence and does not meet accepted medical, toxicological, or forensic standards. The conclusions advanced are speculative in nature and cannot be substantiated by the data presented.

For these reasons, the reports used in support of these allegations do not provide scientifically reliable or legally defensible evidence that Srila Prabhupada died from cadmium or other heavy metal poisoning.

X. Disclaimer

Please note that my opinions are to a reasonable degree of scientific certainty/probability and that if additional facts become available to me, I will consider them and may issue a supplemental report stating my new opinions and the scientific bases behind them if the opinions stated in the present report are at all altered by my review of any additional records or materials.

This concludes my report.

Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully yours,

Professor Dr. Nikolas P. Lemos, BSc, MSc, PhD, FRSC, F-ABFT, MCSFS, Hon FFFLM
Forensic Toxicologist
Board-Certified Fellow by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology

XI. Bibliography

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