

*THE  
OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS  
OF  
THE NEW VRNDAVANA MEETINGS*

*Held in  
The New Vrndavana Community  
Moundsville, West Virginia  
September 16-20, 1985*

February 22, 1986  
Lord Nityananda's App. Day

Dear Prabhus:

The meetings held in New Vrndavana last September, and attended by many senior devotees from around the world, have become an inspiration for many reforms and improvements currently under consideration. This five day session was largely the result of the earlier meetings of the North American Temple Presidents Association.

Unfortunately, not everyone could attend the meetings in New Vrndavana, due to scheduling or cost considerations, etc. And now there are circulated rumors by some that these meetings were not actually very important and do not reflect the mood of the devotees at large, nor the will of Srila Prabhupada, nor the will of Krsna.

It is our humble attempt to clarify this matter by preparing unedited transcripts of notes which were taken in these meetings. These transcripts will allow anyone who is interested to review the meetings with the same facility as those who attended directly. It is hoped that this document will assist you and all fellow Godbrothers and sisters in carrying out Srila Prabhupada's mission.

*"All Glories to Srila Prabhupada"*

*...who built a house in which the whole world can live.*

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four axioms: books were the basis, utility was the principle, preaching is the essence, and purity is the force. So the joke went that there are two movements that we are going to have to decide whether we want to join: the original one based on those four axioms. Or the other movement which is described as: bucks are the basis, futility is the principle, deceiving is the essence, and purity is a farce. So, that was painful. It was presented as a joke, but it was painful for me to hear that because in some ways I feel like our movement has a little bit leaned in some of those directions.

So, I believe that the leaders in our movement, all of us are trying to be humble Vaisnavas, we do want to follow and show our love for Srila Prabhupada by cooperating with the devotees, especially our leaders in the GBC. We want to cooperate with them, but at the same time we want to feel that they have, as far as they are capable, the purest interests in mind in making decisions. So my request is that they please don't treat this assembly and our request as some insignificant gnat flying around a deer. But to take it very seriously and make decisions which will make our movement go forward and allow us to preach Krsna Consciousness.

(APPLAUSE)

Ramesvara Swami

Hare Krsna. All glories to Srila Prabhupada and the assembled Vaisnavas. Haripada and I have been working together for some time, and although we have many different opinions we are still working together. I am very happy that he is still willing to tolerate me. (some laughter) Hare Krsna.

I think that very often in discussions, all discussions, take place within certain set concepts. When that occurs those concepts tend to influence the discussion. We may point to this in our Origins magazine; our discussions about cosmology take place within so many set concepts that they greatly influence the discussion. So, I feel that there are many set concepts that devotees have which they come to these meetings with. And there are so many, but there is one in particular which I would like to address for a few minutes. And that is the concept, not everybody holds this but some devotees hold it, that the unity of our movement has been destroyed or is about to be destroyed. This has been repeatedly presented in different papers and repeatedly heard in conversations.

So, I have been thinking about this issue along with all of the other issues. And I want to just share my own personal feelings and some realizations which I hold personally about this. When I look at ISKCON, I see that Prabhupada created autonomous temples. And then He encouraged those autonomous temples to perform various services, including competing with each other in those services. I see that Prabhupada personally introduced this idea of temples competing with each other. So, someone might argue that doesn't lend itself automatically to unity. I also see that Prabhupada created zones and that

gradually they became autonomous while Prabhupada was present. And I tend to think that Prabhupada, in the same way that He wanted autonomous temples, He wanted autonomous zones.

And then I saw, especially in 1975, that Prabhupada introduced in His letters to the different GBC men that the zones could compete against each other in different services. So, within this mood of temples being autonomous and zones being autonomous and then temples and zones competing with each other in different services I tried to understand where did Prabhupada create the bond of unity? And the international unity, so that we could say that it was an International Society for Krsna Consciousness? And my analysis of this is that it falls into three categories. And the reason I am bringing this up is not just because I want to (phrase unclear) unity. I personally don't believe that this movement has lost that unity. And I hope to dispel that view if someone holds it.

But I also bring this up because we think that in the course of expanding the number of leaders in our movement, they may be more GBC men, they may be more gurus, there may be so many different expansions of leaders, I think that it is important that we analyze what are the areas in which Prabhupada wanted the unity and what are the areas in which Prabhupada wanted the autonomy. And that the leaders should certainly be tuned into the unity principle and be able to inspire whoever they are leading, whether they are gurus, GBC men or presidents to maintain that unity. It is hard for me to actually ignore a candidate for any position of leadership in our movement if he is not tuned into this principle. So this is my personal feeling of the three categories in which Prabhupada stressed unity as opposed to autonomy.

The first category that I see is in taking part in daily rituals and prayers, mantra chanting, our ceremonies, arotiks, our festivals like Janmastami, Rathayatra, and our regulative principles. And of course, our scriptures. This is universal. Anywhere in the world in any temple, country, zone. This transcends any autonomy. And that's maintained strictly. No one thinks that as a leader he has the authority to reduce or add or change any of these things. But that is one of the legs of unity within our movement. I personally think that leg of unity very much exists. That's what is preached in every temple in the world. Every temple has the same arotiks, prayers and so on.

The second leg of unity or internationalism that I see in the midst of all this autonomy is related to the BBT. And, in this regard, Srila Prabhupada would even write letters saying that temples and zones were almost like extensions of the BBT. Rather than being places for eating and sleeping, they are places for book distribution, they are bases. And, He gave an order to every devotee, every temple, every zone that 50% of their income should be used for this. And this transcends the autonomy of temples and zones and projects. And then, this order is followed, which in many parts of ISKCON it is, then the BBT has a responsibility all over the world to do certain things. Which is also part of the unity of our movement. For example, they share copyrights, they share manuscripts, they share design work,

artwork and paintings. Sometimes they collaborate together on printing. And they encourage each other and assist each other very frequently in making sure that all of Prabhupada's books are translated and printed and distributed all over the world.

And, in addition to that cooperation and internationalism they give a certain percentage of the BBT money from all the major BBTs in the world to international projects, mainly the temples being built in India. But there are also other international projects this body may not be aware of completely, all the different international projects that the BBTs of the world support. But there is quite a list, besides the millions of dollars that are sent to India. So, this preserves an internationalism. That monies are spent on these international projects through the BBT, that temples have a quota that they have to give a certain amount to the BBT, that the BBT has to share their manuscripts and paintings freely. And this has been going on since Prabhupada created the BBT. And, as a BBT man, I see that it is still going on today. Since His disappearance, the artwork and the manuscripts and everything is shared. The major BBTs of the world still give their money to the international projects faithfully every year. And so this is like internationalism, international cooperation, international unity.

And the third leg of unity and internationalism that I see Prabhupada created amidst of all the autonomy, is following the GBC resolutions. And here I will comment on it as I have the other two legs. I see that the rituals are the same, devotees take initiation and their vows are the same, the BBT is working in the same way as when Prabhupada was here. I see that all that is still in place. So, I can't take the opinion that the Society is very split. I still see that on many levels the Society is cooperating and is incredibly unified. But in following the GBC resolutions I agree that (end of tape).