

Letter of September 23, 1986

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Dear Maharajas and Prabhus,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

It seems that within the last year, and especially these last four months, great forces have been moving all of us in new and somewhat unexpected directions. As the time factor, Krsna has let us see each other at our strongest and our weakest moments so that we can more clearly understand our position in devotional service.

You have all been dependent on me as your leader, and as I go through my evolution in Krsna consciousness, which sometimes we forget we do, you are doubtlessly deeply affected in your own spiritual lives and service. Although according to sastra the line of spirituality is drawn in such a way as to make things philosophically black and white, it is more difficult to understand how Krsna inconceivably works through His devotees to establish the fact that devotional service, being non-different than Him, can go on unchecked under all circumstances. However, it is certain that those who dedicate their lives to the service of the holy name and the service of Caitanya Mahaprabhu receive special compensation while traversing the difficult path back home, back to Godhead.

In the process of dealing with the specific issue concerning myself over the past month, we have all certainly been moved by Krsna from within to realize essential practices by which we must restructure the sankirtana movement to prepare leaders who can establish dharma in an ideal and real way, so that we may successfully utilize the energy of the world in preaching. Together we have realized some essential pieces of the structural framework which Prabhu[pada] has left us, which will enable ISKCON to cooperatively and systematically spread Krsna consciousness to every town and village. Just from what we have accomplished so far, I feel that my life has been complete and successful. I only hope that you will continue to appreciate how each country's individual success is based on your mutual interdependence, and that the cooperative spirit not be broken, either by my temporary or extended absence, or by financial pressures. Rather, take these situations to establish the absolute necessity of the council system, both for management and asrama training and sustenance.

For now, until it is clear how the Zonal Council and the GBC want to engage me, you can elect a chairman from amongst you to run

the meetings or chair different parts of the agenda. If the decisions are intelligently and seriously taken, then the ministers should have a reasonable degree of success in the follow-up. If necessary, and extra-ordinary meeting can be called, as you have so efficiently done during these past months.

Now, for many reasons, whether it can be said to be negligence regarding the strict principles of sannyasa, by dealings with individuals or the public, the painful internal dealings within the movement I have felt, the great endeavour, especially over the past four years, in travelling and managing a major part of the world, strong astrological influences, or the innumerable karmic reactions I have had to take on at this stage of my own spiritual life, I feel impelled towards a change of direction in my life and service. How great a change it actually turns out to be, we will have to see in time.

During these last months I have been through a great personal struggle, which you have tried to deal with to the best of your experience and ability. During this demanding period, I have tried to the best of my ability to carry on and vigorously preach and manage in such a way that both our zone and society have been able to take significant steps forward in our organization, especially in redimensioning BBT and sankirtana policy. In their own unique way, these personal events have also served to elevate all of you in your internal understandings of yourself in your duties to Srila Prabhupada.

Nonetheless, by powers that are beyond me, I am not able to remove the sentiments which have developed between myself and the concerned party, which are certainly out of place for the sannyasa asrama, but which may ultimately allow me to serve better. I no longer want to appear before you in a duplicitous way, as I have never dealt with you in that way before.

All of you have known me as being willing to meet any challenge, so perhaps this is Krsna's way of equipping me with some humility and pridelessness, which is so noticeably lacking in me, as you have very clearly pointed out. I suppose by whatever means one can learn, to feel lower than the straw in the street, and more tolerant than the tree, his life moves toward perfection. Having had several horoscopes done, everything points at this time to tremendous forces which are upon me, moving me towards a significant change in my understanding of myself and my social position.

I do not know how Krsna plans to use me or these events in His ultimate plan for me or ISKCON. But I know that I have tried to give everything for the last 17 years of my life to His glorification, and as He is most kindhearted, He somehow always keeps the servants at His feet. Being the supreme controller, Krsna can always turn adversity and irreconcilable events into something symmetrical and coherent.

Those who can actually be real and understand how I have given so much of my life to them will be even more grateful than ever before, and show that by realizing all our plans and dreams, Those that want to be superficial can certainly find reason to quit. Please be patient as to when we will serve together again, which may be sooner or later than we can now calculate.

As I have recently expressed during my last visit to England, I have tried, however faultily, to make every one of my disciples attached to Srila Prabhupada, ISKCON and preaching. As we in this zone have stressed many times, we are gurus for our institution and not separate. Please join in and take initiation to be part of a great historical movement started by the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself, and not part of some social club or personality cult. X

So now, due to these special events in my life, I must beg you to please take the management of the zone and my spiritual children in your hands with renewed love and perseverance, as I make the necessary adjustments in my life. Of course, all of you are practically seen by them with the same devotion they have for me, so this is certainly an opportunity to fulfill your role as their siksa-gurus. Although the heart will certainly react according to the initial uncertainty caused by this decision, those whose attachments and realizations have been real will respond with an increase in appreciation, hopefulness and service mood.

In reviewing the history of events, of course hindsight is always better than foresight, and had we understood how heavy it is to manage such a spiritual movement, and especially to take on the position of acarya, certainly we would have taken steps to better train and prepare ourselves. I think the way we are going about things now in regard to making collective management decisions, administering guru functions and guiding devotees through groups are landmarks in our organization. Interestingly enough, I have spoken with several leaders and many devotees here, who appreciate the idea of a moratorium on initiations, or at least a significantly longer waiting period. Although it is ISKCON policy that devotees can take initiation from any guru, the practicality of hearing and receiving training from a local guru cannot be minimized. X

None of you have ever opted for this function, but now, due to the circumstances, you must at least begin, more than ever, to prepare yourselves. In this regards, I personally feel my own situation as representing the essential principle and need to carefully train every devotee in their particular service and asrama, especially top leadership, before putting them into a position, preventative medicine being always preferable to surgery.

In one sense, I think I have sacrificed a part of my life so that others could observe and learn, although those who I have been a disturbance and challenge to will look at this as something they have predicted all along, and find some long-awaited retribution. Still,

we established that one need not have or desire the position of guru to be satisfied in his service, and that until the individuals agree to submit to the group, increasing gurus will be a catastrophe. In analyzing my situation, perhaps it was too little too late, or as the recent intensity and frequency of our asrama councils have been, too much too late. Still, I feel that somehow Lord Caitanya will keep me by His feet, but for now I need some time to make the necessary changes and adjustments so that I do not have to be split apart as I have been during these last months. X

The instructions I have given to my disciples in regard to preaching and devotional service, although nowhere as deep or voluminous for me as Srila Prabhupada's books were to him, in that they represent the essence of my realizations. So if they actually ever loved me and care for me, they will prove that such instructions are ahaituky apratihata and show that sankirtana will go on in a dynamic way. As I expressed recently, the relationship between spiritual master and disciple is one of extreme practicality, where Krsna sees the disciples' love for their spiritual master through their attachment to his instructions, and he also becomes delivered in his own struggles. X

Recently Krsna has put me X in a position, as a member of the Executive Committee of the GBC, where I have had to take the lead in explaining the principles we have developed during these last months, and thus take a strong stance in regard to members of the Body who were not able to maintain the expected codes of conduct. To put such important principles forward as valid for our movement, that is, expected resignation from position, and not apply the same for myself, is unreasonable to say the least. Therefore I want to set an example in this regard at least, and recognize that I must readjust myself, and beg you all to respond with sensitivity and strength to ~~the~~ these new changes, and remember the great progress we have made together. See this as Srila Prabhupada calling upon you to take a great step forward in your service to him.

You are all much greater souls than I, so now you may learn from all of my deficiencies and mistakes, and come forward as the real leaders of the Krsna consciousness movement, who all along deserved the credit for my so-called success, and allow me the service to take the blame for anything that was wrong. There are many ways that one can be born again, and by the grace of Srila Prabhupada you will see me again in a more purified state of consciousness where I can better assist you and His Divine Grace in performing sankirtana.

I have tried my best to take care of all of you and my disciples, so perhaps by some inconceivable plan of Krsna, I am meant to get those realizations so that in the long run, I will not have disappointed you or His Divine Grace. As we often say, it is not how you begin the race, but how you finish, which is important.

I hope that all of you have seen the great importance and benefits of associating on the level we were on the Zonal Council, and that my leave of absence will not cause you to divide, and will prove an important point to our movement, how this system can guide and stabilize the society. Already it is beginning to be implemented in Southern California and Australia. Perhaps you might want to consider Sivarama Maharaja as Acting GBC for Great Britain, and Sundararupa Maharaja for the rest of Europe, till such time as you feel Kesava Bharati Maharaja is ready for the post.

I will keep in touch with you, perhaps through Tamala Krsna Maharaja, but I beg you to allow me some time to myself. So please don't come rushing over with another emergency session. Perhaps Lord Caitanya will still want to use me to develop the Ministry and help to get America reestablished in book distribution, thus proving again that He is the Absolute patita-pavana. When Krsna does one thing, many things are accomplished simultaneously, but we can only patiently wait to see and understand.

Thank you all for your unmotivated concern and dedication. You might want to make this letter available to the devotees. One day soon, I hope, I can be that person you are all expecting.

Your servant always,

Gurudeva