

Minutes of the ISKCON North American Temple Presidents Meeting October 12-13, 1984

A meeting of the ISKCON North American Temple Presidents was called to order at 1:00 p.m., Friday, October 12, 1984 by the Chairman, Bahudaka Prabhu.

Officers of the General Body

Chairman-Bahudak Das
Vice-Chairman--Mahakram Swami
Secretary-Krishna Gopal Das
Sargent at Arms-Vakesvara Pandit Das

A list of attendees is attached.

PASSED RESOLUTIONS:

The following resolutions were passed by the General body.

1. Only North American temple presidents, regional secretaries, ministers, and sannyasis will be allowed to attend and vote in these North American temple presidents meetings and that delegations and visitors wishing to address the body will be received on Saturday, October 13, the following day.
2. All others wishing to be observers will petition the Chairman and must receive a majority vote to participate as observers in the North American temple presidents meeting. Observers can participate vocally in the meetings but do not have voting rights.
3. Resolved: That a standing committee be formed to research Srila Prabhupada's books and our Gaudiya tradition concerning the problems and issues confronting ISKCON. The body elected Ravindra Swamysa das to head the committee as Research Director and Vatsala das as Assistant Director. Others devotees volunteered their time to work on the committee. The North American temple presidents body felt that deep and careful research and analysis of the present guru institution is required before the number of gurus be significantly expanded. The presidents unanimously want to see a significant expansion of gurus but only after the problems that currently exist, as well as the problem involved in expansion, are properly resolved. The research committee will strive to have recommendations for the GBC body by their Mayapur meetings in 1985.

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4. Resolved: That the GBC observe its resolution that only Srila Prabhupada's pranama-mantras should be chanted in temple kirtans. This resolution, contained in the 1978 GBC paper, An Initiating Guru, is current ISKCON law. Accordingly, the pranam-mantra of the vartmana-acarya should be chanted only during their guru-pujas.

5. Resolved: That the annual vyasa-puja for the vartmans acaryas be celebrated one day only.

6. Resolved: WHEREAS several ISKCON gurus and GBC men have fallen down in the last several years;

WHEREAS other ISKCON gurus and GBC have shown evidence of slackness in chanting their prescribed rounds and attending the morning program;

WHEREAS the elevated leadership position of guru and GBC demands that there not be even the appearance of impropriety;

and WHEREAS the scriptures enjoin that even the most advanced devotee on the raganuga platform must follow the regulative principles of devotional service just like a neophyte.

Therefore, no devotee being exempt from strictly following the regulative principles of devotional service, we propose that all gurus and GBC in ISKCON must visibly chant 16 rounds a day; must follow the four regulative principles; and must religiously attend the daily morning program in the temple, as prescribed by Srila Prabhupada.

7. Resolved: That the Privilege Committee should henceforth contain two members from outside the GBC. These members will be elected by the Temple Presidents/Regional Secretaries meeting in Mayapur every third year.

1 "There are two processes by which one may execute this raganuga bhakti -- external and internal. When self-realized, the advanced devotee externally remains like a neophyte and executes all the sastric injunctions, especially hearing and chanting. However, within his mind, in his original purified self-realized position, he serves Krsna in Vrndavana in his particular way. He serves Krsna twenty-four hours, all day and night." (Cc. Madhya 22.156-157.)

"The advanced devotee who is inclined to spontaneous loving service should follow the activities of a particular associate of Krsna in Vrndavana. He should execute service externally as a regulative devotee (sadhaka-rupena) as well as internally from his self-realized position (siddha-rupena). Thus he should perform devotional service both externally and internally." (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.295, quoted in Cc. Madhya 22. 158).

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8. Resolved: That a committee of four members be formed from the body of North American temple presidents to present and represent the conclusions of these meetings before the North American GBC in January, 1985. The following persons were elected by the body:

Bahudaka Dasa
Mahakrama Swami

Romapada Swami
Muralivadaka dasa

9. Resolved: That the body of North American temple presidents meet again in early February following the North American GBC meeting, in order to hear the results of their meeting, and to plan for the Mayapur meetings.

10. Resolved: The body of North American leaders are firmly opposed to the concocted idea of institutionalizing a two-tiered system of worship and identity among the vartmanacaryas, such as embodied in the suggestion that present GBC spiritual masters will be "acaryas" but that future non-GBC spiritual masters will be merely "gurus". The levels and forms of puja among all initiating gurus in ISKCON should be the same for all, past and future, GBC and non-GBC. We are concerned that some distinction between the "super guru" and "regular guru" not be established in ISKCON. The only proper place for such a distinction is between Srila Prabhupada on the one hand and his initiating disciples on the other.

11. Resolved: The GBC resolution requiring that one must be a sannyasi before becoming guru is flagrantly asastric and should be repealed.

The following proposal was tabled for further consultation with ISKCON legal authorities. The Chairman will pursue such consultation.

Proposed: That all ISKCON gurus should be accountable for all personal accounts (laksmi) as well as income and expenditures at the annual GBC meeting.

OTHER CONDUCTED BUSINESS

1. Reports were given by previously designated members of the General Body regarding their discussions with the North American GBC member. Their presentations helped the General Body familiarize itself with each GBC's feelings about the concerns expressed in the previous meeting.

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2. Srila Bhaktipad attended the meeting on Saturday afternoon to express his concerns. He suggested that the General Body should proceed in its efforts to improve the current situation facing ISKCON, working in a mood of love and trust. He also expressed doubts in using legislation to solve the problem, although he did favor increase in gurus.

3. Dhirstadyumma Swami, Sundara Rupa Swami, and Hare Krsna Das, from Southern Europe, also attended a seperate meeting with the General Body. They expressed their concerns and tried to answer questions about any misunderstandings devotees had concerning Srila Bhagavan's Zone.

4. The absence of Tripurari Swami from the General Body Meeting was discussed and members were surprised to here of the false rumors that were being spread throughout ISKCON about Tripurari.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 Saturday afternoon.

(The list of devotees attending the meeting is on the back of this report)

. HARE KRISHNA

P.S. Let me also take this time to inform you of the upcoming North American Public Affairs Conference and Workshop scheluded for Janurary 4-5 in Phil^ladelphia, Pa.. Please make plans to attend or have a representative come on your behalf. More information will be forth coming.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NAME	POSITION	TEMPLE
Vipramukhya Swami	Sannyasi Servant	Traveling
Vakresvara Panon das	Assist. President	New York
Romapada Swami	R. Sec./Sannyasi	New York
Vrkodara das	President	New Orleans
Ramanatha Sukha das	Head Cook	Philadelphia
Murali Vadaka das	President	New Purusottama Ksetra
Vatsala das	President	Los Angeles
Nara hari Swami	Regional Secretary	Hawaiian Islands
Girijadhava das	Observer	Philadelphia
Kulichak das	President	Ottawa
Agnideva das	President	Laguna Beach
Tapahpunja Swami	President/Sannyasi	Cleveland
Haripada das	President	Fullerton, Calif.
Nagaraja das	President	Potomac
Yadu Ganguli das	President (observr)	Cebu, Philippines
Sesa das	President	Philadelphia
Laksmi Nrsimhadev das	President	New York.
Kalki das	President	Chicago
Naikatama das	President	Detroit
Karnapura	Vice President	Long Island
Mahanidhi das	President	Baltimore
Gaura das	Vice President	Montreal
Bhakti Saragna Swami	President/Sannyasi	Miami/Mayapur Project
Vaiyasaki das	Regional Secretary	Bangladesh
Subhananda das	Preaching	Philadelphia
Radhanath Swami	Reg. Sec./Sannyasi	Ohio, W. VA., W. PA
Radha Krsna Swami	President/Sannyasi	L.A./Mexico
Devamrta Swami	Poland, Denmark, Korea, NE Europe	
Kundali das	BTG staff	Philadelphia
Ravindra Svarupa das	B.I., B.B.T., BTG	Philadelphia
Trivikram Swami		San Francisco
Mahakrama Swami	Reg. Sec./Sannyasi	Mid-Atlantic
Bahudak das	Regional Secretary	Western Canada
Birkrishna Goswami	Sannyasi/TP, RS, Guru aspirant	North Carolina
Bhaktimirga Swami		Toronto
Niraujana das		New England
Maha Buddhi das	GBC Minister of Tourism/ President	Dallas
Krishna Gopal das	N.A. minister P.A.	Washington, D.C..

Results of poll taken at North American leaders meeting

(The five figures following each statement represent the percent of the total body who 1) strongly agree with, 2) agree with, 3) feel neutral about, 4) disagree with, and 5) strongly disagree with, that particular statement.)

- ✓ 1. There are fundamental and compelling problems with the guru institution as it presently exists in ISKCON. (77 17 2.8 0 2.8)
2. In general, I am satisfied that our ISKCON gurus are exemplifying the spiritual standard expected of a Vaisnava acarya. (0 0 5.7 40 54)
- ✓ 3. The material opulence displayed by some of our ISKCON gurus is excessive and inappropriate, especially considering the need for funds to complete Srila Prabhupada's Samadhi temples and to develop Mayapur. (80 14.2 2.8 0 0)
4. The GBC should regulate the personal use of funds by gurus. (48 25.7 14.2 8.6 0)
- ✓ 5. Many of the gurus display an arrogance that is totally inconsistent with the example of humility set by Srila Prabhupada. (57 34 0 8.6 0)
- ✓ 6. The standard of spiritual purity in ISKCON has been seriously compromised by the way in which the GBC has neglected, and at times covered up, discrepancies in the personal behavior of gurus and its members and gurus. (71 20 2.8 5.7 0)
- ✓ 7. The evolution of the institution of acarya in ISKCON has, in effect, seriously diminished Srila Prabhupada's position in ISKCON (i.e. removed him from the center). (48 46 5.7 0 0)
8. The gurus should continue to be worshipped at the current level. (2.8 2.8 11.4 40 43)
9. There should be immediate and significant expansion of the number of initiating gurus in ISKCON. (37 51 11.4 0 0)
10. There are serious problems with the current system of zonal gurus. (46 43 8.6 2.8 0)
- ✓ 11. There is a significant and distressing lack of communication between the GBC and the temple presidents. (66 28.5 5.7 0 0)
- ✓ 12. The GBC body tends to deal with the second level of management in ISKCON in a condescending manner. (57 34 5.7 2.8 0)
13. In recent years, the institution of the Temple President and the principle of temple autonomy, as established by Srila Prabhupada, have been significantly minimized. (69 31 0 0 0)
14. Some GBC zones are too large and as a result are being improperly managed. (77 20 2.8 0 0)
15. I approve of the concept of a global secretariat. (0 11.4 22.8 28.5 34)

Putting Prabhupada in the Center.

In our survey, 94% of the devotees felt that Srila Prabhupada's position in ISKCON has been diminished by the evolution of the institution of acharya, and nobody disagreed.

Certainly, this has happened without anyone's desire and yet our group unanimously agreed that it has happened..Individual examples of this perceived shift are easy to point out. This years vyasa puja book for Srila Prabhupada fell apart on first opening. There are many vyasa puja books published for other gurus of much better quality, often hardbound. The vyasa puja celebrations for the new gurus are sometimes more lavish and prolonged than that for Srila Prabhupada. When simultaneous gurupuja was going on, it could be clearly noticed that the largest throng of devotees was usually in front of the new guru, not Srila Prabhupada. As more new disciples come, more and more lectures and kirtans of the new gurus are heard in the temples and found in san kirtan newsletters etc. We do not agree that Srila Prabhupada's position should gradually recede in importance as the ratio of new disciples increase. We do not agree that he should be seen as the previous acharya, as we looked upon Srila Bhaktisiddanta, while all concentration of the the new disciples is directed to the new guru. We rarely observe a new disciple chanting before Prabhupada's vyasasana, listening to his kirtans or lecture tapes etc. Even those disciples who were first initiated by Srila Prabhupada generally appear to identify themselves more strongly as disciples of the new guru, as that is the prevailing emphasis. If their guru has written books it is not uncommon to find the disciple hankering to distribute those

POSITION PAPER, TEMPLE PRESIDENTS, 1984.
INTRODUCTION

The annual meeting of North American temple presidents was held September 4th and 5th at our temple at Towaco, New Jersey. It has become tradition since Mayapur 1978, that sannyasis and regional secretaries also attend this meeting as they are senior leaders of ISKCON. It became immediately obvious that most of the devotees wanted to discuss the philosophical issues facing our movement; particularly the role and position of guru. An agenda was formed by the members present and a discussion on that agenda ensued. It was agreed that rather than pass a long series of resolutions a list of survey questions would be prepared at the end of the discussions that would allow the devotees present to precisely express their attitude. This was also done to ensure privacy in the sampling procedure. The results of that survey are included with this paper as well as a list of the devotees present at the first meeting. During the meeting, when it became obvious that very serious matters were being discussed and that there was a high level of both feeling and consensus on these matters, it was decided by the devotees present that a position paper should be prepared, and that a second meeting to discuss, modify, and ratify this paper should take place in the near future. This paper then, is that position paper and in its final form will be ratified by the body of devotees, and it will become the basis of our approach to the GBC body.

PROLOG. Before we present our recommendations to the GBC body it may be appropriate to consider our standing to do so. There is concern that some members of the GBC consider our discussions

NORTH AMERICAN LEADERS POSITION PAPER,

INTRODUCTION

The survey results had surprised most of us. Almost the entire body of second level leaders in North America were clearly unhappy, one could say deeply unhappy with many aspects of the guru institution. We frankly did not believe that so many of us could be simultaneously "off" or envious nor did we accept the "black plague", "the gullible fellows", or the "contaminated by Sridhar" explanations for these rather shocking results. We accepted the most simple and logical conclusion that there must be some fundamental mistakes in the direction our movement has taken and that we should take a close look at Prabhupada's instructions to find some possible answers. At the same time we want to proceed cautiously and carefully; we would be most dissatisfied if our convictions were misread by the GBC. We do not seek an angry confrontation but an opportunity to work with the GBC to solve these problems. We want to initiate an ongoing discussion both between ourselves and especially with the GBC to find a Krishna Conscious solution to the dissatisfaction and doubts that now trouble us.

Before we present our suggestions and research findings to the GBC body it may be appropriate to consider our standing and right to do so. There is concern that some members of the GBC consider our discussions undesirable, perhaps impertinent, and even dangerous to Srila Prabhupada's movement. Some devotees fear that these frank discussions on the position of the guru are threatening to the faith of the new disciples; when there is widespread discussion it is hard to avoid some disturbances to the new disciples. Others say that the defects of ISKCON's gurus should not be aired at a public forum but should be handled in private. It is sometimes felt that the discussions are based on envy and ambition of some few who have "infected" others who are gullible. It is also said that we are not mature preachers of Krishna Consciousness and are not qualified to give advice on the deep issues we have embarked upon. We reply to these apprehensions about our motives and qualifications as follows:

1. We do not believe that our loyalty should be questioned. We are the leaders that have worked to defend ISKCON at many levels and who have proven our cooperative attitude in working with our senior GBC godbrothers. In fact on the basis of our loyal service we now request the GBC to consider our opinions with attention and concern, not with condescension or hostility.