

01/21/85

My dear GBC Godbrothers,

Please accept my most humble obeisances at your lotus feet. All glories to His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada.

Attached to this letter is a draft of a paper that I have prepared as a result of considering some issues that currently confront the GBC and ISKCON as a whole. In its present form, the paper is not meant for general consumption, but, instead is intended for reading by the GBC members only. I have provided a copy to Ravindra Svarupa das so that he and Mahakrama Swami might be apprised of its contents, but they have promised not to circulate it. If there is any purpose in circulating the paper, I would remove much of the last section and expand and qualify the section regarding the desire to become guru. Obviously, some of the abrasive quality would have to be smoothed out. (I am not striving to be the first to receive the Mad Dog Award in absentia.)

If any of you are affronted that I have sent such a letter as this for your consideration, I apologise. My motivation is to present some points for your consideration without burdening you with my objectionable presence.

The perspective of this paper is necessarily unique. It is not that of an "outsider", but reflects perceptions that result from discussions with many of the North American leaders that would be unlikely to occur were it not for my officialy disgraceful status.

Please don't overreact to some of the more sweeping generalities in the paper. They would have been modified and tempered in a second editing if there had been time. Unfortunately, this was also a busy week at BTG and there was precious little time to make adjustments.

Hoping this meets you all in good health and warm weather. I beg to remain

your most unworthy servant,

Adi Kesava das
Adi kesava das

Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare

In recent weeks a new controversy has swept through the International Society for Krsna Consciousness. At issue in the most narrow sense is the expulsion of HH Bhakti Dayal Swami from the northern European zone for allegedly preaching against Srila Hari Kesa Swami to his initiated disciples. Accompanying that issue is the forced departure of Jnana das from the North European zone after the confiscation of his writings and personal belongings and the aggressive vilification of Vegavan das, Hari vilas, and others. In a wider sense, the question arises whether there is a highly organized conspiracy afoot that links together numerous disaffected elements in a determined effort to undermine the established structure of ISKCON. In the widest sense, at issue is the contemplation of a purge of the current ISKCON leadership in order to insure compliance with a more radical theology of liberation than currently predominates.

This paper does not seek to address the issue of innocence or guilt in the case of HH Bhakti Dayal Swami, et al. Nor does it intend to either impugn or support the charges made by His Divine Grace Hari Kesa Swami in any way. It attempts to examine some of the broader issues involved in hopes of providing a constructive assessment of the general state of affairs as well as some indication of possible available alternatives. The author does recognize that the followers of Sridhar Maharaj have developed an organization determined to undermine and destabilize ISKCON and that there are some questionable liaisons between those persons and dissident elements that remain within ISKCON. He also attributes, at the very least, some degree of indiscretion to the activities of the "accused". And, finally he recognizes and regrets the deficiency on the part of many of the devotees who have reacted strongly to various reports of this incident without making any effort to converse directly with Srila Harikesa Swami regarding this matter.

Before proceeding further, it should be stated that this paper makes the following assumptions regarding the attitudes of the reader:

A. That the reader is aware of the attempts made by many senior disciples of Srila Prabhupada to examine our level of devotional exchange on the basis of guru (Prabhupada), sadhu, and sastra in order to improve the quality of our devotional exchanges. It is assumed that these noble efforts, although not always perfectly correct in expression, are meant to implement the instructions of the Bhakti rasamrta sindhu, Upadesamrta, and Caitanya Caritamrta as they have been given to us by Srila Prabhupada. It is also assumed that this spirit of constant "reformation" is welcomed by the reader as a sign of vitality in that it ensures the continued purity and integrity of ISKCON.

B. The reader is perhaps sympathetic to some of the stresses that have caused various members of the Society to leave and join other movements, but remains convinced that any devotee who leaves the association of ISKCON devotees to join a movement even subtly antagonistic to Prabhupada's ISKCON is a fool and has fallen prey to the darkest illusion. Such persons who take part in such unworthy activities are always free to recant and return to

the association of devotees.

C. The reader recognizes that the International Society for Krsna Consciousness is a pure and unimpeachable transcendental institution that has arisen from the devotional ecstasy of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. ISKCON is a branch of the Caitanya Tree as described in the Adi Lila of the Caitanya Caritamrta. The manifestation of ISKCON at this time may be incomplete, but the pristine quality of this uniquely spiritual institution remains undisturbed. If one wishes to be connected with His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, one must be connected with His ISKCON. One must learn to recognize that there are actions of devotees that are inconsistent with Srila Prabhupada's instructions, but their activity has no effect on the ultimate condition of the institution. It is our own realization of ISKCON that has shortcomings, not ISKCON itself. One must realize that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati's Gaudiya Math remains a pure untarnished vision despite the fact that the visible manifestation of that Society in this world has fallen into ruination. Similarly, that which is manifest as ISKCON can occasionally falter, yet the institution remains ultimately infallible. It is also in this sense that any devotee in ISKCON can have confidence in the leadership of the GBC and the other administrative structures set up to govern the Society, despite any disaffection that he or she might harbor from time to time.

D. As such, the reader accepts that no matter what impropriety is revealed in the character of a devotee, any follower, coworker or assistant of that devotee remains within the shelter of Lord Caitanya and the guru parampara if he or she remains faithful to the authority of ISKCON. If every attempt is made to rectify any behavior resulting from bad training or association, any devotee who adheres to the principles of bhakti yoga as imparted by Srila Prabhupada can remain peacefully within the Society.

E. The reader accepts that the highest priorities for every ISKCON member (besides always remembering Krsna and never forgetting Krsna) are to distribute Srila Prabhupada's books in massive quantities and to build a glorious city and Temple of Understanding at Sri Mayapur Dham. It is understood that all other projects must remain subsidiary to and supportive of these projects. In the same vein, the reader is expected to agree that the many other projects undertaken directly by Srila Prabhupada (such as Back To Godhead, the establishment of temples, life membership programs, etc.) are to be developed as Srila Prabhupada has outlined first, and then, subsequently, through inspiration and the collective guidance of the assembled devotees as new conditions are encountered.

F. The reader recognizes that many of the issues discussed herein pertain only to the United States and Canada. This is partly due to specific personalities present in the U.S. but is also due to the character of this extremely pluralistic society and the maturity of the Society here.

G. Finally, that the reader recognizes the author to be completely dependent on the compassion of the Vaisnavas and particularly unqualified to speak in their association. That he has brought nothing but misfortune to the lives of the devotees who come in contact with him, yet lives a proof of the mercy of true Vaisnavas. The author does claim, however, to have significant realization of the functions and attitudes of the members of the Governing Body Commissioners as well as many of the senior godbrothers who prevail in other positions of authority throughout the movement.

The Current Scene

srotavyadini rajendra
nrnam santi sahasra sa
apasyatam atma tattvam
grhesu grhamedhinam

Except for a blessed interlude during the Christmas Marathon, the last several months have witnessed a large number energetic discussions amongst supporters of two increasingly with an insufficient amount of energy dedicated to pursuit of a genuine understanding of the objectives and motivations of the opposing viewpoint. One camp is populated by GBC Acaryas and certain supporters. The other is composed predominantly of American leaders who claim fealty to the GBC in varying degrees, yet feel themselves to be oppressed and exploited by that authority to some extent. While many of their complaints are based on specific incidents and charges that can only be resolved over the course of time by increased dialogue or corrective action by the appropriate legislative body, even more are evidence of an established and growing mistrust of the GBC, both as a specific group of individuals and as an institution.

Most recently the expulsion of HH Bhakti Dayal Swami from the North European zone has heightened the tension. Bhakti Dayal Swami is much respected for his work in establishing Krsna Consciousness in the countries of Eastern Europe. His unswerving service in this area has become legendary. Suddenly, he is cast out as a "murderer of faith" and those who dare to associate with him are "raksasas" and in the words of the prevailing acarya of that zone "may have to be killed". The same person who has recently toured the U.S. condemning the activities of the followers of B. R. Sridhar Swami is now accused of being an agent of that same group. As the testimony of the unwitting disciples of the East is submitted by their GBC/Spiritual Master, a trickle of refugees has begun to arrive on Western doorsteps bringing tales of abuse that rival those of the police states in which they have risked their lives to establish the Krsna Consciousness movement. And all of these refugees protest the innocence of the alleged perpetrators of the crime. Meanwhile, whispers of the historic rivalry between H.H. Devamrta Swami and Bhakti Dayal Swami fan speculation that Srila Harikesa Swami has been ensnared in a court intrigue meant to consolidate the position of one of his

primary deputies as vitriolic rhetoric pours forth from the survivors of this supposed Kremlinesque fratricidal struggle.

Any rational person must ask himself one basic question: is the conspiracy real or is this a matter of localized infraction and intrigue spilling over into the already overheated international arena? Have there just been too many devotees sitting in stuffy rooms facing the pre Mayapur doldrums, frustrated by several years of slow progress and looking to vent some steam? Are we finally identifying and confronting the internal enemy that intends to destroy ISKCON? Or, are we succumbing once again to that most experienced of beguilers, Maya devi, as she leads us to throttle and club each other like the members of the invincible Vrsni dynasty so that we will not fulfill our appointed task of limiting her uncontrolled dominion of the mundane world?

Fortunately, the author is not about to attempt to answer those questions directly. Even an indirect attempt would be foolish for one who has learned to take simpleminded pleasure in heaving the mail bags full of BTG's onto the Post Office loading dock. Instead he will venture to tackle some of the thornier subsidiary issues in order to help bring all of us closer to the truth.

The first and most obvious issue is the nature of the exchanges between ISKCON leaders and between devotees in general. The recent paper offered by Ravindra Svarupa das thoroughly examined that issue and proposed the most effective solution to the problem: attention to the basic activities of sadhana bhakti. Although nothing different from what we all hear in Bhagavatam class on a daily basis, his initiative should be commended for highlighting one of the most elementary shortcomings in present day ISKCON. If we are honest about it, some of the de facto standards that have evolved over the years are quite unappealing. They could stand to be redirected more towards the traditional Vaisnava vaidi.

Perhaps the most significant of these non-defensible "standards" is the conception that the more one rises in the hierarchy of the society, the more one advances in Krsna Consciousness. Although there is a certain decorum that has a necessary function in a well organized society, the emphasis on bureaucratic advancement has created an impotent Society in many places in the world. In such circumstances, abuse is almost certain, as real spiritual values are subjugated to considerations of administrative rank. All too often the young ambitious men in our society are more intent on securing a bureaucratic niche than on venturing out in the preaching field to "do something wonderful for Krsna". As a result we find temples being used more as warehouses and business offices with little consideration for the impression made on visitors and newcomers. And, of course, all activities conducted within that sacred atmosphere become sanctified and legitimized. Temple communities become great joint Hindu families rather than preaching bases. And the preaching work of the society stagnates.

A corollary of this phenomenon is the "big service" syndrome. When lesser devotees, often the actual preachers in the field, bring up an unpopular suggestion, they are shouted down in the name of the "big service" of their commander. Often, the

results gained by that leader have been at the expense of the sweat and blood of the "lesser" devotee involved. Yet the one is emphasized as "big service" while the other is regarded as somehow insubstantial. What happened to the spider and Lord Ramacandra or the old woman who carried the water to Radha Damodar every day? Do you have to become a guru to perform any "big service"? The question is inevitable.

A more specific problem confronting ISKCON is the continuing uncertainty regarding the creation of new gurus. Although a mechanism has been set in place to deal with the necessity for expansion of the ranks of initiating gurus, continued agitation regarding this point has been causing major disruptions in the affairs of ISKCON over the last seven years. Part of the problem lies with the unwritten codes and conditions that underly the GBC resolutions regarding this matter. More of the problem lies with the unwillingness of some of the more predominant "imperial" acaryas to accept the necessity for expansion. But the most significant confusion lies with the unwillingness of ISKCON to clearly and plainly state that the hankering to become guru is generally a manifestation of material desire. Perhaps the reason that ISKCON's leadership has not spoken more forcefully on this point is a fear of a backlash from those who feel themselves most suited to take on the responsibility of accepting disciples. However, more damage is being done by not bringing this issue out into the open and discussing it frankly. The danger of backlash results not from this thorny issue, but from the general mistrust ISKCON leaders might hold for the GBC Acaryas.

But how did we get ourselves into this mess? The roots of the dilemma lie in the early, and unfortunate, reliance on instructions given by Sridhar Maharaja in 1978. These instructions legitimized the concept of the individual anticipating and desiring to become diksa guru, despite the fact that all examples of the previous Acaryas pointed to the contrary. Later attempts to use Sridhar Maharaja to justify limitation of expansion of the gurus only boomeranged as the revelation of Sridhar Maharaja's true intentions discredited anything identified with him -including a genuine understanding of nature of this anartha.

One can quickly recognize the trap that some of our best men have fallen into. Generally such a man would be one who has performed some significant service and gains recognition by his peers and faithful followers. Then, because kamini, or material desire, is present, our hero begins to perceive that such a circumstance might enhance his service. The rationale involved works as follows:

1. "It is impossible for anyone to understand the needs of the people to whom I preach as well as I do."
2. "All my resources are exploited by the GBC guru. He takes my men and money. I can't be recognized for my service to Prabhupada. Everything is the accomplishment of the guru. Nothing is my accomplishment."

or perhaps

" I have to really knuckle under. One slip and I can lose everything

blames
Sridhar

- All my work for all these years."
3. "In order to make a real contribution to ISKCON, one must be a guru and have his own BBT."
4. "I am more strict than so and so. I am more learned than so and so."

Obviously all of these arguments are based on the perceptions typical of kanistha adhikaries. To some extent our current situation encourages renounced, broad minded preachers to think in this way. Much has been made of the need for the initiating gurus to become less exploitative in their dealings. And if any of the GBC gurus decline to accept responsibility for some high handedness in this regard, they are ignoring the overwhelming thicket of tape recorders that have recorded them making such statements and creating plans to exploit their positions unfairly over the years. There is unquestionably hard evidence of abuse in abundance. But the reason that the tension remains so high on this issue has little to do with all that. The responsibility lies with all of us for not clearly identifying this desire for expansion into "guruship" for what it is: sex desire. A man can be maddened enough by sex desire to risk anything. POW's during World War II crossed mine fields to reach Russian prostitutes. Bilvamangala crossed stormy rivers. Only sex desire can drive a man to want to accept the responsibility to become idolized as perfect in return for accepting the karma of refugees from the ravages of Kali yuga. This burning desire to expand by accepting disciples is the same force that drives a man to want to increase his progeny. Having spiritual children means just that-increase in progeny. If one is fixed on becoming guru rather than becoming a pure devotee of Krsna, he is sure to cause embarrassment to the society as his material desires flourish.

The GBC should clearly establish a high priority to elucidating this point before Maya claims many more victims with this fabulous lure. The strain of doing so despite the current tensions is well worth the savings in capable leaders who will be on the Mayapur side of the Bhagirathi Ganga at next year's festival rather than insulting their Guru Maharaj in the streets of Navadvip.

In order to counteract these misconceptions, ISKCON's focus on book distribution must be restored, especially in America. Several years ago, a great attempt was made to legitimize fund raising and business activities that appeared to be necessary to support the temples by including them under the heading of "Sankirtan". Using the logic that everything was part of the Sankirtan movement, these business activities became the main thrust of the temples in America and the U.K. Instead of accepting them as necessary services like mowing the lawn and cleaning the toilets for Krsna, they became elevated to divine status. The result- pollution of the preaching spirit and the emergence of a generation of disillusioned devotees. Laksmi points gained from selling transcendental paintings, candles, toaster ovens, bumper stickers, computers, used cars, and bonsai trees (to name just a few) became glorified more than distribution of Prabhupada's books. Instead of assuring devotees that their money

raising activities were also important devotional service our leaders allowed them to "buy off the temple president" by glorifying their service above all others while tolerating serious neglect of devotional habits at home and extremely questionable practices in the field. The results have been disappointing: not only was there no miraculous improvement in the overall financial condition of the temples, but the number of dedicated bramacari preachers actually decreased, many valuable men ended up missing in action, and temples became afflicted with a purposeless state of existence due to a lack of preaching spirit. How many temple phones have not been answered with "Hello ISKCON" or "Hare Krsna" for years? We are now faced with so many devotees with distorted understandings of the objectives of the Sankirtan movement. Most cannot even show someone a book, convince them to take it, and ask for a donation. Even as book distribution is "coming back" in the American zones where it was abandoned, there is a tremendous amount of misunderstanding to overcome.

As a byproduct of this circumstance, the BBT in America has become the private domain of the one person and who has remained its avid supporter and is given to producing watered down PR oriented literatures instead of producing Srila Prabhupada's books. Back To Godhead Magazine is fighting for its life, the Florida temples have not distributed more than a handful of Srila Prabhupada's books in two years and will not participate in the U.S. BBT, and when full sets distribution has finally gotten off the ground as a grass roots movement in the USA, there are no sets left to sell.

For this particular malady the medicine is obvious:

1. The North American GBC men should decide what books should be given priority for publication in the next year. No matter how many books a certain party is distributing, he should not have a stronger voice than the others. The BBT must cease being one man's domain, even if his efforts put the others to shame.

2. Devotees should be educated how to distribute books in circumstances that befit their station, age and capacity. Careful planning should go into providing literatures for their needs.

3. Fund raising and businesses should be just that. Activities for stalwart devotees to undertake (in the mood of the steady cook or the faithful temple commander.) An exemplary study can be found in Mithiladisa in Los Angeles or Sadasiva in Boston.

4. BBT should emphasize programs that build on repeat sales of literature and contact Sankirtan.

5. All zones should commit themselves to distributing a mix of at least 50% of Srila Prabhupada's actual writings to any other literatures.

5. Temples should be resuscitated as preaching bases with appropriate respect for the sanyass and bramacari asrams. Grhastas should be encouraged to go out and start preaching centers. The spirit of "preaching adventure" must be restored.

Questions About the Future

In 1919 the smell of revolution was in the air all over Western Europe. The Bolshevik Revolution had just swept through Russia, the impact of a devastating World War that had been promulgated by the false egos of the aristocracy and the greed of the bankers was beginning to turn the general populace away from the patriotic sentiments that had motivated them during the height of the fighting. The advent of modern weaponry had made the price of war and revolution much higher than ever before while practically banishing heroism forever from the battlefield. In an atmosphere of dissatisfaction the labor unions, anarchist, and leftist radicals flourished as they never had before. In this environment Benito Mussolini founded his Fascisti. As fear of growing disorder, violent gangsterism, and constant shortage due to union inspired work stoppages gripped Italy, Mussolini and his "Black Shirts" made their famous march to Rome in 1922 and seized control of the government. He immediately suppressed the radicals, outlawed the labor unions, and brought peace and prosperity to Italy. At least up until the time of the Italian seizure of Ethiopia, the Fascisti were the darlings of European and American journalists and models for politicians around the world.

Of course, the later developments and the underlying violence of Mussolini's regime are well known to everyone. So are the excesses, perversions, and corruption that quickly manifested themselves. But, then again, if one is a student of history, this seizure of power by the fascists does not appear to be anything new- the history of the Attic tyrants or the rise of Imperial Rome followed much the same pattern. Only the label "Fascisti" was new.

From a Krsna Conscious point of view this cycle is easily comprehended. The general populace if left to govern itself will only implement governmental structures that intend to provide the maximum amount of sense gratification for themselves. Because of corruption and special interest groups there are always disparities. Because there is no yajna to Lord Visnu, there is inequitable distribution. Therefore a constant struggle exists between the sudras and the vaisyas (Communists and Capitalists). When the struggle and corruption become too great, the unqualified ksatriyas seize control and implement dictatorship. The result is temporary stability in an atmosphere of suppression then degradation and stagnation born of corruption and spiritual blindness. Because mundane society does not have real brahmins to advise it and does not accept their authority even if they exist, this cycle repeats itself endlessly, never benefitting from the experience. In fact, such a society only becomes increasingly secular due to the tendency of both the tyrants and the congregationalists to claim divine authority for their actions, encouraging participants in the next part of the cycle to view religion skeptically as an instrument of oppression.

In the Vedic times, the kings were rajarsis who not only ruled ably and showed administrative acumen, but who also possessed extensive training in spiritual principles. Most importantly, these kings remained always subservient to the instructions of the brahminical class of men and, in fact, considered themselves to be inferior to such persons. The notable

exception, of course, was when the the ksatriya rulers would deviate sufficiently from religious principles as to cause disturbance to society in general. In such cases, the brahmins would either rectify such leaders or cause their removal. In some cases a brahmin would take the role of a ksatriya to rule until a suitable personality was found to manage things properly. Or, the brahmins would install someone as king immediately to avoid further disturbance in society. When such a person did take the role of leadership, that person adopted all aspects of ksatriya responsibility, as is evidenced by the example of Maharaja Priyavrata as he is described in the Bhagavatam.

In ISKCON, we are currently faced with a situation that is not easily resolved. In some places in the world there is a great sense of order and cooperation due to the strong leadership of certain GBC/Acaryas. In those situations the devotees relish a great sense of well being as they work concertedly to bring the Sankirtan movement into the hearts and lives of the people of their respective countries. The price of that unity and serendipity is a certain elitism and "nationalism" that excludes certain melodies and countermelodies from the symphony conducted by the GBC man and his secondary leaders. More importantly, without careful attention, such an atmosphere readily contributes to an overall trend towards Balkanization, resulting in limited inter-territorial exchanges that can only be authorized by sanction of the acarya-kings. And, quite naturally, there is a mood of general condescension for those who do not follow the true path espoused by the local leadership.

On the other hand, we have places in the ISKCON world that appear to be an endlessly roiling sea of discontent. In such places, power seems to be in the hands of a less renounced class of householders who reject centralized forms of government and who seem to be endlessly concerned with their own voice and status in the governing process of the society. They attempt to rule by council and vote rather than accepting unequivocally the authority of the prevailing GBC/Acarya.

And, herein lies the challenge. For from that atmosphere comes our greatest base of intellectual diversification, philosophical apologetics, academic legitimacy, and production of significant writing. In this environment, substantial achievements continue to pile up. And it is there that the greatest number of disciples of Srila Prabhupada continue to survive, despite predictions of their imminent extinction coming from every quarter over year after year.

The desire of the brahmin/kings to seize control and purify ISKCON sometimes appears to be a necessary step to reestablish a sense of order and return things to the course chalked out by Srila Prabhupada during His presence in this world. But, on second thought, such an action is more likely to debilitate us even more.

The first, and most important reason is that Srila Prabhupada consistently opposed such moves in his lifetime. The events of the Mayapur festival of 1976 surely established that. The resolutions proposed by the GBC at that time were surely well intended, but were ultimately rejected by Srila Prabhupada as they were also

exclusionary, divisive, and separatist in nature. And, since the Sankirtan movement is meant to give shelter to the whole world, such sentiments are ultimately alien to its objectives. Srila Prabhupada was similarly unwilling to expel members of the society, even if they were guilty of wrongdoing or agitation against its institutional structure. He would either take such persons directly in hand or move them to another geographical location. He preached "First rectify, then remove" and opposed virtually every bid to force a devotee out of his position. In the rare case that He did support such a move, it was because such persons attacked Him personally. By that standard only a person who attacks Srila Prabhupada personally can be rejected by the society of devotees. If a person is critical of the GBC in a zone, it is quite legitimate to expell him from that zone, but not from the society. A high degree of intolerance for blasphemy of any devotee is beneficial. But to be expelled from ISKCON one must be proven to be antagonistic to ISKCON itself by the GBC body.

exclusion

It is also in the interest of the GBC/Acaryas to maintain a fairly high threshold of tolerance for criticism. Such a reputation can only be beneficial. Inevitably, in the course of administering the affairs of any institution there will be conflicts which will momentarily disenchant even the most loyal follower. If a record of intolerance is noted, secondary leaders will show increased reticence to express their grievances to their authorities, thus laying the groundwork for intrigue and suspicion where it otherwise would never be found. What to speak of the fact that when a GBC leader finds himself in some sort of distress, he may be in the untenable position of not being able to take advice from or reveal his mind to devotees who are competent to act forcefully and prevent mishap. This is a very real danger that can only be ignored by those who are absolutely sure of their perfect Krsna Consciousness and are convinced that they cannot be affected by the material energy in any way.

Another defect in this position is that it places the GBC/Acaryas in the role of ksatriyas without the guidance of brahmins. If, as we have recently heard, the Acarya is to act as rajarsi, he must accept the authority of a brahminical structure that is superior to himself. That means that he places the authority of some brahminical body above himself. Yet, if the GBC is made up only of the powerful voices of such "rajarsis", it becomes only a council of kings, not a council of brahmins. If one argues that such kings are only acting in such a role, one is neglecting the fact that even Lord Brahma becomes affected by the mode of passion over which he must rule.

It is essential to recognize that ISKCON is a brahminical society. Its members are not recalcitrant sudras and vaisyas, but transcendental Vaisnavas who accept various roles for the proper functioning of the society. It is logically inconsistent for the leaders of ISKCON to claim exemption from the responsibilities of the ksatriya role model if they are going to insist that the members of the society who do not agree with them are just materialistic sudras and vaisyas. ISKCON is meant to give spiritual leadership to the masses and establish the varnasram

system. The GBC must remain as an essentially brahminical body that guides the rest of the society. Its members should be extremely cautious of becoming contaminated by the imperatives of ksatriya life, even as they administer the needs of ISKCON.

To this end, the GBC should consider giving more stress to two valuable instruments that it has, in its wisdom, already established. The first is the legislative structure of the global secretariat. If this body is properly constituted with elected officials from each zone that the devotees therein feel represent their interests, it can not only relieve a tremendous amount of administrative pressure from the GBC but can also fulfill the intention of Srila Prabhupada's original temple presidents and senior devotee meeting. By giving the regional secretaries and zonal representatives (who often would be the same persons) the responsibility to determine some of the administrative policies that govern the worldwide society the present sense of exclusion would be eliminated in any sincere devotee. The GBC would then be able to fulfill its intended role and consider the more weighty issues that deserve more contemplation and consideration than they often receive.

The second is the use of study groups or committees of devotees outside the GBC who are learned in a particular field. Just as the President of the United States often refers an issue to a panel of scholars in order to help him form a more accurate proposal, the GBC could use such a device to give important issues the kind of study and contemplation they deserve, rather than forcing them through in an impassioned rush. Such an approach would have two benefits: better decision making and better exploitation of our own resources.

It is certainly helpful for us to also recognize that brahminical society in its mature state is essentially pluralistic. The brahmin is not ruled by the laws of the king. Participation in ISKCON must necessarily remain variegated and voluntary. ISKCON has not matured sufficiently for the characteristics of varnasram to fully manifest themselves. As a result today's apparent ksatriya is tomorrow's evident brahmin. Therefore a certain degree of mobility outside of the confines of the hierarchical structure and a commitment to plasticity are essential to the growth of our movement. And even those who are not cut out to be brahmins must still be treated as extraordinary Vaisnavas. Such treatment entails giving the highest priority to the expression of love of God, an expression which must necessarily be made as a sacrifice of free will. As soon as a devotee perceives that free expression to be limited, his rebellion will begin, either consciously or unconsciously.

Before continuing with some of the more pragmatic aspects of it would be useful to make one point that has rankled even the most loyal godbrothers. It is simply bad etiquette to insist upon one's absoluteness. The growing cynicism on the part of many godbrothers could be averted if this position was never adopted by an acarya when dealing with a godbrother. Amy Vanderbilt would be appalled.

On the promised practical side, it is obvious that any further steps taken towards a more restrictive

structure will easily worsen our already strained relationship with the academic community. They will see such a move as a contradiction of the aesthetic grace of the philosophy of bhakti. The appeal of bhakti is that the characteristics of the loving relationship with Krsna and the process for attaining love of Godhead are so meticulously detailed. That loving relationship is the ultimate expression of the only free choice the living entity can make. It cannot be forced in any way, but must be achieved by genuine surrender. A society that excludes those who are nonconformists as they seek to surrender their whole life to Krsna's will could easily be perceived as obstructionist and unmerciful.

If ISKCON does not remain a society of laws and allows itself to become an oligarchy ruled by capricious sentiment, future generations may find the path to corruption more easy to justify. If the Sankirtan movement is to flourish for ten thousand years, then the actions of these early years after the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada will be examined more thoroughly for precedent than any others in history. To this day, most Christian theology claims to be following the precedents set by the first followers of Jesus.

Finally, a more totalitarian (as opposed to disciplined) approach to the overall management of ISKCON will only serve to increase the strength of the splinter groups and syncretic movements that have risen up in recent years. Such a circumstance will also serve to enhance the tendency to conspiracy that already exists. The result will not only be continuing conflict but even more losses of disciples, even more disruption of sensitive preaching projects, and, of course, in a cumulative sense, even more casualties in the great battle with Kali himself.

Respectfully submitted,

01/21/85

Adi Kesava das

The most unworthy servant of the Governing Body Commission