

Center for the Study of
World Religions
Harvard University
42 Francis Avenue, No. 10
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January 10, 1985

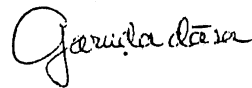
My Dear Godbrothers and Godsisters,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. All glories to Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga. At the annual BBT Trustees meeting at the Mayapura festival in 1984, the European and Australian BBTs pledged a certain amount of financial support for specific preaching projects for which I am responsible. The primary purpose of this letter is to express my gratitude to all the devotees in the European and Australian Zones, to Srila Bhagavandasa Goswami Maharaja, and to Srila Bhavanandadasa Goswami, who authorized this support. It is by your mercy and the mercy of these leaders of the Movement, including Srila Ramesvara Swami, that I have the opportunity to attempt to perform some devotional service to Srila Prabhupada's great Movement. Thank you very much.

When the disbursements from both zones began, Visvambhar Maharaja, a regional secretary of the European Zone, asked me to send a report explaining my preaching work. Therefore I am pleased to submit to those of you who are interested the following attached statement covering (1) the general areas of preaching with which I am involved, (2) the specific preaching projects that you are helping to support, and (3) the preaching value and ultimate benefit of such work. A more general explanation of the nature of my preaching work can be found in the 1984 Vyasa Puja offering that I wrote for the Bhaktivedanta Institute of Religion and Culture.

I pray to Sri Krishna that one day I will be able to fully satisfy the transcendental expectations of the Vaishnavas, and in this way know that I have satisfied Srila Prabhupada.

Your servant,



Garuda dasa

pc: Srila Bhagavandasa Goswami
Srila Bhavanandadasa Goswami
Srila Ramesvara Swami
Other ISKCON Leaders and Vaishnavas

"INTERNAL" AND "EXTERNAL" PREACHING IN THE EDUCATIONAL REALM:
A Statement on the Nature of My Preaching Work

by Garuda dasa

"Internal" and "External" Preaching Defined

The educational spheres, both within and outside of the ISKCON movement, are where my preaching work lies. Srila Prabhupada has stated in numerous places that people in general suffer from a poor fund of knowledge. Since our task as preachers is essentially to disseminate, to ourselves and to others, the knowledge of God as it is revealed in the books of Srila Prabhupada, the purpose of the ISKCON Vaishnava movement is fundamentally educational. For the Movement such knowledge does not mean just theory and study, but also includes application and practice (jñānam vijñāna-sahitam), whereas outside the Movement, such knowledge is being introduced, and is taken as theoretical. All preaching work falls into these two broad categories: (1) "internal", i.e., preaching directed toward the devotees within the Movement, where the philosophy and its application are actively pursued, and (2) "external", i.e., preaching directed to persons outside the Movement where the knowledge of Krishna consciousness must be appropriately introduced. The "external" may be further divided into two subcategories, the "masses" and the "classes", or preaching which is directed to the general masses of people and that which is for specific classes of people.

I am involved in educational types of preaching, both internal and external. My "internal" preaching is in the higher educational system of ISKCON where I am working to develop the conception of what higher education will be, or what is commonly called "varṇāśrama college." Also, I am

working on two books to be published by BBT, one short range and one long range: The short range book is on world religions from the Vaishnava perspective, and the long range is the researching and writing of the complete history of the Vaishnava movement, from ancient times to the present. These works will be written for all devotees in the Movement as well as students in ISKCON higher education and are directly sponsored by Srila Ramesvara Swami and the American BBT.

"Presentational" and "Infiltrational" Preaching

The "external" preaching in which I am involved also has to do with higher education, but with the educational class of people in modern Western society. If one examines all external preaching closely, one can see two basic approaches to it, no matter what level of "classes" or "masses" one is working with: (1) the "presentational" approach, i.e., Krishna consciousness that is presented directly, such as giving a lecture in full garb and tilak, harināma saṁkīrtana, and numerous other forms of presentational preaching; (2) the "infiltrational" approach, i.e., Krishna consciousness which is, by necessity, presented in subtle forms due to the unreceptive nature of the audience. The infiltrative preacher is dealing primarily with persons to whom he must introduce Krishna consciousness but in whom there is very little desire or receptivity. Infiltrative methods typically involve conformity with codes of dress and etiquette, and often require the most delicate applications of language and tact. Some infiltrative methods involve forms of Krishna consciousness which are immediately conducive to infiltration, e.g., prasādam distribution which may appear as just "food" to an ordinary person. Other examples of infiltrative methods are dressing in plain clothes for the distribution of books or for earning money for the Movement as a businessman, where total incognito is required.

All preaching, even if predominantly presentational in form, has an infiltrative dimension to it. Preaching situations demand the preacher to employ methods by which the audience can be gradually cultivated and elevated to the understanding of, or ultimately, the practice of Krishna consciousness.

Three Levels of Academic Infiltration

The infiltrative approach that I use is in the context of the modern educational machine, at several levels. The first level of infiltration is to go into the "enemy's camp", the second is to learn all their plans and secrets, and the third is to establish channels for transforming that realm. The first level of infiltrative preaching entails entering into the highest level of the intellectual community where the leaders of education are positioned. Therefore I have been a student for many years, keeping a low or neutral profile. As I am writing this letter, I sit here in my apartment at the Center for the Study of World Religions of Harvard University, one of the most powerful machines of modern culture in the world.

The second level of infiltration entails acquiring the qualifications needed to enter into and work within the exclusive academic community. I have been learning the methods and techniques in the subject areas of history and historiography; certain modern and classical Western and Indian languages; theology; the anthropology and psychology of religion; the interpretation of religion (hermeneutics); and the comparative study of religion. One among us must have these credentials; otherwise, even if academic scholars are favorable or appreciative, they will ultimately not take Krishna consciousness seriously as something which can and should affect their lives and thinking. Therefore I already possess several master's degrees from the University of

Chicago and Harvard, and I am presently earning the doctorate in "the comparative study and history of religion" from the Divinity School here at Harvard.

Within the above mentioned fields of study I have been applying the infiltrative method of what I call "swanning" (extracting the milk from the water, so to speak) as I have carefully studied it in Srila Prabhupada's books, especially Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. The difficult art of "swanning" allows me to utilize the effective materials and methods from external educational spheres and reject the useless ones for the ultimate purpose of establishing Krishna consciousness among the intelligencia. We in the Movement should not attempt to re-invent the wheel, but rather we must fully engage those sophisticated methods and disciplines that can be used to benefit our service to Krishna. Not only will we use those methods to introduce and further establish Krishna consciousness, but let us take these methods and disciplines that many academic speculators themselves would use against us and use them to defeat their own speculative philosophies!

Once one has learned their methods and acquired their credentials, the goal of all infiltration work becomes possible: the establishing of specific channels of preaching where one can go "in like a needle," and then the forming of a foundation for coming "out like a plough." At this third level Krishna consciousness is established in ways that will ultimately change and affect how people view Vaishnavism and, furthermore, these established channels will lay the ground work for intercepting materialistic intellectual conceptions which are in the process of developing. Affecting change in the minds of people in general occurs when the effects of infiltrational preaching filter down through the material educational systems to reach the "masses".

Establishing Vaishnavism as a Field of Knowledge

Creating these above mentioned channels within the academic realm constitutes the third level of my infiltrative work, and it is in this realm that the European and Australian zones have been providing invaluable support and assistance. One of the preaching channels which we have established is the Institute for Vaishnava Studies at the American University. This is a separately incorporated, academic institution, recognized by the American University in Washington, D.C. (which allows us to use its name with the Institute's). It is made up of qualified scholars from the academic and Vaishnava communities in the West and India. The purpose of this institute, which is a joint effort between Vaishnava and academic scholars, is to establish Vaishnava studies as a field of knowledge in its own right.

One of the obstacles to establishing such a field of knowledge is that, at the present time, the Hare Krishna Movement, and the historical Vaishnava traditions themselves, are seen by the academic community as being, at best, a branch of or an offshoot from "Hinduism". But the Hare Krishna Movement is Vaishnavism and Vaishnavism must not be seen as an aspect of the amorphous conglomerate of political, religious, as well as pseudo-religious movements typically known by the reductionistic term "Hinduism". It is convenient for academic scholars to ignore the greatness of Vaishnavism by merging it in the mish-mash of Hinduism, a term that many scholars cannot adequately define or even agree about using. Our attempts or academic scholars' attempts to establish the authenticity and credibility of this Movement by identifying us as a "branch of Hinduism" is a futile effort since this catch-all word Hinduism only obscures our identity and authenticity. Rather, we must establish Vaishnavism as a distinct tradition, removing it from the meaningless category of Hinduism in which it has

been buried. The name Vaishnavism accurately describes the deity around which the worship is conducted (as the names of many great world religions do, such as Christianity, Buddhism, et. al.) Therefore the use of the term "Hinduism" is counterproductive for establishing Vaishnavism as a field of knowledge and thus also for creating our real historical credibility as well as our actual identity.

Building the Literary "Monument" of Vaishnavism

There are many steps to be taken, in order to establish Vaishnavism as a field of knowledge. But the first step, and perhaps the most important one for establishing any field of knowledge, is to establish the largest resource of works that directly and indirectly relate to the field. In other words, "books are the basis," and this is also true in the academic arena.

Thus our first task is to build the largest literary "monument" of Vaishnavism in the world. This project originated with Srila Prabhupada himself in 1975 when he was considering opening up a department of Bhagavat Studies at the University of Calcutta. The first thing the university demanded was a bibliography of all relevant works, and Srila Prabhupada stated that we have so many books, all the books of the different Vaishnava traditions. A preliminary list of Gaudiya works was made, but nothing further developed with the University of Calcutta idea. Years later, devotees of the American BBT Sanskrit department began a project, known as the "Matsya Project," of microfilming many hundreds of Vaishnava works in Western libraries and India as well. But due to a shortage of funds, this project stopped. Then, in 1980, the Institute for Vaishnava Studies was formed and, through the American University, applied for large sums of money from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., to microfilm Vaishnava manuscripts in Indian collections. By

Krishna's grace, a large grant was awarded for this project. I went to live in India to begin the field work and establish the field methods. The project in India continues into the present, and will be ongoing until we are satisfied that we have acquired the largest resource of Vaishnava works anywhere.

The funds that the European and Australian Zones contribute to the Institute go directly toward the building of this literary monument of Vaishnavism in the following ways: (1) two fifths of these BBT disbursements cover the American University overhead costs for accepting and administering the second recently awarded funding from the Smithsonian given to continue the project's filming in India; (2) one fifth of the funds will contribute to applying for further funding for more overseas filming (in England as well as India); and (3) the remaining two fifths of funds is being presently used for microfilm and other archival equipment, supplies, and microfilm reproduction and presentation. All funds disbursed to me for this and other projects are accounted for with the same strict recording standards that are required by the Smithsonian Institution, and my financial records are accessible to any ISKCON devotee who has contributed to these projects. Also, a summary of my financial records has been sent to zonal authorities.

Ultimately, this unparalleled library and archive of Vaishnava source and secondary materials will demonstrate how rich in literature and philosophical thought the Vaishnava traditions are and have been. The library will consist of the following:

- 1) Access to all of the primary works (śruti, smṛti, śāstra, vedāṅga, itihāsa, and purāṇa) for each of the Vaishnava traditions in the original languages as well as in translation, in the form of handwritten manuscripts as well

as in printed editions, in the original form as a book or manuscript or in a reproduced photocopy or microform;

2) Access to all of the secondary works (academic literature on or about these above mentioned works, or works on Vaishnava history) pertaining to all the Vaishnava traditions in the original languages as well as translated editions;

3) A computerized data base management system that provides complete bibliographic information on and annotations for all the above mentioned works including the location of each work, making this library the largest resource as well as the largest collection of Vaishnava works in book and microform.

The development of this collection of literature and resource center for Vaishnava studies is now taking place while the filming for the Smithsonian is continuing. Later it will be expanded to include exhibits of archeological artifacts, paintings and other Vaishnava art forms, audio-visual studies, and other media presentations. However, it's present resources will soon be published.

There are other important infiltrative projects that will depend on the building of this literary monument of Vaishnavism. Some of these are the following: publishing translated Vaishnava works; forming a journal of Vaishnava studies to circulate among the academic and Vaishnava scholars in India and the West; holding conferences; and many other projects meant to establish the study of Vaishnava thought and practice. But perhaps the most important project, which is underway while we are establishing the foundational literary monument of Vaishnavism, is the researching, compiling and writing of the complete history of Vaishnavism.

General Description of the Vaishnava History Project

The complete history of Vaishnavism, when it is finally finished, will cover an enormous amount of material. Some of the general subject areas that will be incorporated are mentioned here. In an introduction to the work, I will contrast the Vaishnava conception of history to the many Western conceptions and from these construct a specific approach that will allow me to present Vaishnava history in a way that will be respectable and scholarly and will also do justice to Vaishnavism. The "pre-" historical and historical beginnings of Vaishnavism will be presented in various ways. The different Vaishnava movements throughout history will be presented and will be constantly contrasted to the general Indian ("Hindu") socio-political and religious contexts (i.e., wars and political regimes), to show how Vaishnavism always held together a unique socio-religious body of people, distinct from that of the rest of India (or "Hinduism"). I will also describe the various ways in which Vaishnava traditions had great impact on the socio-political fabric of Indian culture (kings and kingdoms becoming Vaishnava, etc.) and trace its powerful influence into other cultures as well. The work will go from general descriptions of certain periods to specific biographical narrations of great Vaishnava devotees and acharyas. It will also describe the unique philosophic perspectives that each of the mature Vaishnava traditions put forth and how all of them culminate in the philosophy of Sri Caitanya. It will give detailed accounts, as far as possible, of the great devotees in our line and give definitive explanations of the various devotional (i.e., dikṣā and śikṣā) and geneological Vaishnava lineages in the Caitanya and other sampradayas. It will show how Vaishnavism took different social forms during the oppressive periods of Indian history especially during the Muslim reign from the 13th century on. The work will follow Vaishnavism from

ancient times through Bhaktivinoda Thakura up to Srila Prabhupada and the historical phenomenon of ISKCON.

This kind of comprehensive history of Vaishnavism has never before been attempted. We should not wait until a non-Vaishnava writes it; we must establish the history of Vaishnavism first ourselves, in a way that will satisfy both the "internal" and "external" preaching requirements. In other words such a work must be respected and acknowledged by both the society of devotees and the intellectual and educational realms.

Preaching Value of a Vaishnava History

The potential preaching value and benefit of a history of Vaishnavism is great. Internally, the Movement could benefit at a number of levels. First, such a history could be a major resource for gurukula and ISKCON higher educational courses of study. Second, this history could provide the leaders of the ISKCON Movement with the vitally needed historical perspective upon which important decisions could be examined and based. Third, it could provide the preacher of Krishna consciousness with a background knowledge of the Vaishnava movement for any number of preaching contexts. Most other active and controversial religious movements of the day do not have such a rich social and cultural history directly behind them. And fourth, because the work will demonstrate Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON to be unprecedented in the history of Vaishnavism, it could increase our appreciation of our relationship with Srila Prabhupada as well as our understanding of our own identity and mission.

Externally, the comprehensive history of Vaishnavism could have several effects on the academic community and ultimately influence, in certain ways, the rest of modern

civilization. First, the work will be written in such a way as to be accepted by intelligent outsiders and academicians as a major statement of Vaishnavism, and it will correct some of the major historical misconceptions that they have had about the Vaishnava movement. This acceptance will be possible only if the contents are substantiated by extensive research and bibliographic referencing. The literary monument spoken of above is essential to this. Second, a history of Vaishnavism will naturally contribute to the establishing of a field of Vaishnava studies. This directly leads into the third effect which is that this work could help establish our position in relationship to the other great world religions. And fourth, this work, by substantiating our historical identity and authenticity, might enable the educated class to be more readily attracted to what this Movement offers, and perhaps take up the way and life of a Vaishnava. In short, the history could have the effect of affording people a greater appreciation of Srila Prabhupada's role in the history of religion and, further, a greater level of receptivity to the Movement insofar as it directly reflects his unique role.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, this will be a massive work and a much needed one. As we have seen above, "books are the basis" in both internal and external forms of preaching. The more we realize this in our preaching, the more Srila Prabhupada's books will be acknowledged and appreciated, by others and ourselves, as the very apex of the literary monument of Vaishnavism and as the present manifestation of the Vaishnava spiritual heritage.

It will only be by the grace of Krishna, Srila Prabhupada and the Vaishnavas, that I may become instrumental in establishing Krishna consciousness in the intellectual and

educational realms, which would, in turn, play a part in establishing the practice and thought of this great Movement deeply within the fabric of Western culture and civilization, ultimately bringing people to a newer and higher level of appreciation of the whole Vaishnava movement.

Jaya! All glories to the Sri Krishna Samkirtana Movement!! All glories to Srila Prabhupada and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu!!!

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