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# *Jayapatākā Swāmi*

Acarya & Governing Body Commissioner

Sri Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir

REPLY:ISKCON CALCUTTA

Trustee - Bhaktivedanta Book Trust

"Sri Prabhupada's birth city"

Sri Jaganath-Subhadra-Baladeva Temple

3C, Albert Road, Calcutta-700017, INDIA.

3 February 1985

Date

Lord Nityananda's Appearance Day

TO THE G.B.C. PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE

GBC MEMBERS: HDG Hrdayananda Goswami, HDG Satsvarupa Goswami, and HH Jagadisha Goswami;

PRESIDENTIAL MEMBERS: HG Rabindraswarup das A., and others.

My Dear Godbrothers,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada, the Absolute Founder-Acharya of ISKCON! This letter is my submission as requested by the G.B.C.,

Several areas definitely could benefit by your study. For your information I am presenting here some important points which we hope will be answered through your research, if possible. Please forgive me if what I am about to say is anything obvious or already understood. I just want to make sure that none of the most prominent subjects get forgotten. The basic points I want to inform you of are given below for your information.

1. It would be appreciated if the questions I recently presented by letter to Srila Acharyadeva were answered by your committee. (I think everyone has a copy.) Many persons have commented that the questions given are fairly representative of the questions covering the broader considerations regarding initiating spiritual master expansion. Even some of the apparently minor or detailed questions often are heard—the devotees would appreciate your answers, I am sure.

2.(a). Srila Prabhupada stressed more than any other philosophical point that it is the duty of a disciple is to follow the orders of his spiritual master not only during his physical presence, but in physical separation as well. Srila Prabhupada explained that this was the essence of spiritual life and the substance which pushed on the Kṛṣṇa consciousness Movement.

It is on this very point that those so-called gurus inimical to Srila Prabhupada always attack ISKCON. They advise, in gross and subtle ways, that ISKCON devotees should desert Srila Prabhupada or his bona fide representatives for their "shelter" and "guidance" as if Srila Prabhupada's instructions or society were inadequate. This seems to me to be the most heinous act of spiritual perversion that can possibly exist! Remember how even a seemingly minor criticism during a Mayapur Parikrama years ago was described by Srila Prabhupada as a horrible spiritual scar on the spiritual lives of all who heard those statements. Imagine how Srila Prabhupada would have reacted to direct attacks and disciple theft—I remember how intensely Srila Prabhupada reacted to Bon Maharaja taking his disciples! We hope that your research will effectively support the absolute necessity of remaining totally dedicated to Srila Prabhupada's teachings and shelter forever!

(b.) Similarly, the absolute requirement of total adherence to the order of the spiritual master is just as applicable to Srila Prabhupada's spiritual grand-children to their Spiritual Masters, as long as they are sincerely following Srila Prabhupada. The principle is basic and absolute. I am alarmed that today in ISKCON we can hear the same interpretations that Srila Prabhupada had to negate years ago. New disciples are being told that they have the same obligation to other senior devotees who give them "instruction" as to their initiating spiritual master, i.e. they are being told that they have other "siksha gurus" to whom they owe responsibility. These words may sound appealing to

leaders and senior godbrothers, but it brings in a new relativity in their commitment to their guru's orders and slackening their responsibility to the initiating spiritual master by saying that others are to be followed equally. Alanath used this argument to steal almost one hundred of Srila Prabhupada's grandchildren to be used in opposition to Srila Prabhupada's movement. Srila Prabhupada stated that he was both the initiating and instructing spiritual master. This should be made the standard in ISKCON. The principle of shiksha guru is that one should accept a shiksha guru only with the permission of the diksha guru and not otherwise. Others who help are considered "vartma-pradarshak-gurus" and respected as such, but not with the same absolute dedication as is due to the order of the initiating spiritual master.

Simple matters on the platform of philosophy, particularly in regard to following the order of the spiritual master, become very serious "down the road". It only took a few loaded words in 1970 to cause four sannyasis to become infected with mayavadi poison of the most grave nature. Let us analyze what could happen if ISKCON were to accept this liberal interpretation of shiksha-guru. That would put us in the dangerous situation of applying the same logic to our obligation to Srila Prabhupada's orders. Which is what a godbrother of Srila Prabhupada has convinced some of our godbrothers of, i.e., that they can whimsically accept another person as "shiksha-guru" and accept his instructions as absolute and thereby they have an excuse to neglect the eternal orders given to them by Srila Prabhupada. It is a very dangerous situation which must be guarded against very carefully. I hope that you can all appreciate the point.

The principle of "guru-tattwa" cannot and should not be manipulated to adjust for local disagreements. A bona fide guru must be one who instructs in line with the previous acharya's. In ISKCON adherence to the principle of Governing Body Commission is also based simply on following the order of the previous acharyas. Rather than "water down" the commitment of disciples to their initiating spiritual masters, with the apparent aim of avoiding group defections from ISKCON, is it not better to institutionalize commitment to the Governing Body Commission? Srila Bhagavan Goswami recently recommended that all new initiates at the time of the fire sacrifice should take an oath of allegiance to his spiritual master and to the ISKCON Governing Body Commission. That seems a positive alternative to protect against fall-down of an initiating guru and subsequent departure with disciples from ISKCON—that process of "oath of allegiance" is handed down from Srila Prabhupada. But to make relative the obligation of the disciple to his initiating guru and the parampara system by introducing some speculative system of "multi-shiksha-gurus" seems one of the greatest dangers ISKCON faces today—as it is something which can completely change the future of the movement.

(c.) While discussing different aspects of absolute faith in the spiritual master in Krishna consciousness I want to request that your committee gives us some recommendations on how to maintain cooperative Krishna conscious relationships in the multi-faceted ISKCON of today, i.e., between present-day ISKCON guru's and his disciples, guru god-brothers with his non-initiating godbrothers, GBC's and their temple presidents & regional secretaries, and the general relationship between Srila Prabhupada's spiritual children and grand-children.

3. During the Miami GBC meeting the need for a stronger presence of the Governing Body Commission, under certain circumstances, was repeatedly expressed. A need was felt for Governing Body Commission action if someone were to grossly preach things or do things not authorized by Srila Prabhupada and the previous acharya's. In support of this note the following example: Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu went after Lord Adwaita with a stick when he preached Mayavadi philosophy! Your respected committee would gratify us if you would research under which circumstances and with what methods should ISKCON have the Governing Body Commission or its officers come into action to protect the purity and unity of ISKCON. Naturally these should be in keeping with Srila Prabhupada's instructions and mood.

We all have witnessed Srila Prabhupada send investigative committees, both secret and declared, to areas of concern. Srila Prabhupada also took severe actions when he saw ISKCON was threatened. For example, Srila Prabhupada declared Nitai das a "snake" and banned him from ISKCON stating that he couldn't get a bona fide spiritual master for at least one hundred thousand births. Similarly, the four sannyasis were banned for sometime from any ISKCON temples. Srila Prabhupada personally acted against the umbrella corporation and to stop the "gopi-bhava-club" on the west coast of America. Srila Prabhupada was both "soft as a rose, and hard as a thunderbolt". In contrast the Governing

Body Commission is less equipped to mobilize itself to protect ISKCON. Action would be needed in some cases to protect ISKCON in case any of its initiating spiritual masters, GBC's, Regional Secretaries, Temple Presidents and other responsible leaders start propagating words and acting against authorized Srila Prabhupada philosophy? If discrepancies arise which threaten the purity or the integrity of ISKCON what should be done? Isn't this one of our real basic problems? If no one spoke or did anything which wasn't authorized by Guru & Gouranga then what problems would there be in ISKCON? Unfortunately, at present it seems we can do little or nothing until a person is too far gone to do anything effective.

4. Please don't open any "cans of worms" or "pandora's boxes"! Srila Prabhupada discreetly neglected going into the detailed description of our disciplic succession with its own unique idiosyncrasies. Srila Prabhupada answered questions as to why our disciplic succession had time gaps between the spiritual masters mentioned in the parampara. His Divine Grace said we only mentioned the principle members in the succession. There are other mysteries about our disciplic succession which are very confidential which Srila Prabhupada would not get into discussions about. It is common knowledge that Bhaktivinode Thakur re-established in full strength the disciplic succession—that more than implies that we had some things which needed to be "re-established". Since Thakur Bhaktivinode has firmly re-established the system of disciplic succession eliminating any undesirable elements, we should simply follow the system given in Srila Prabhupada's books. He presented to us what we need to know regarding the disciple succession.

I bring this up as I have recently heard devotees discussing openly some of the statements made by different Indian "sadhus" including HH Sridhar Maharaj about our gaudiya disciplic succession. If these matters were brought up to Srila Prabhupada, His Divine Grace would immediately question who had been discussed with, because these topics come only from outside of ISKCON. They are subtle topics which are very easy to misinterpret, and I humbly submit that they should be avoided in your research as there is no one qualified to give a proper explanation more than what is in Srila Prabhupada's books. It can potentially cause confusion, and is very easily mishandled and misused. Generally we refer to the first and second generations after Lord Caitanya for reference, and since Thakur Bhaktivinode.

5. One of the subjects that your committee will probably be discussing is exactly what devotional ceremonies or practices, particularly in relation to the spiritual master, should be followed in ISKCON. In this regard, the Governing Body Commission has been discussing these issues for many years. During these sometimes long debates one important principle has been established which I feel it is important to explain, as the non-GBC members may not be familiar with the reasoning the GBC used.

To give a little history, in the first days after Srila Prabhupada's disappearance several parties wanted to introduce different procedures in ISKCON. For example, Yasodananda dasa (Swami?) and Pradyumna dasa made a presentation that our guru's should follow the example of the Acharya's in the modern Madhva sampradaya (who were criticized as "tattwa-vadis" by Lord Caitanya) who use wooden planks to sit on. Their recommendation was that the ISKCON gurus should sit one inch off the floor on wooden boards. Someone else said we should follow the Gaudiya Mathas example and only have guru-puja once a year on vyasa-puja day. Other examples and suggestions were made—creating a very confused scenario. The GBC turned to Srila Prabhupada for inspiration.

Srila Prabhupada said, "Do as I do!". His Divine Grace would chastise use for speculating or doing something that he didn't authorize. The matter was debated for hours together, but it was finally decided that if we start to look outside of Srila Prabhupada's example for anything which His Divine Grace had already set a personal standard then we would be in trouble. There would be no end of improvisation and speculation. In the end the mood, and flavor of Srila Prabhupada could be undermined!

This has already happened to the disciples of Srila Prabhupada who have deserted ISKCON to live in the Gaudiya Matha. Today we learn that in the centers which have defected from ISKCON and gone to the other side of the river—they have begun openly criticizing Srila Prabhupada's daily guru-puja's even to His Divine Grace's disciples—but they make no protest! Now the order has been issued that Srila Prabhupada nor any other guru is allowed to have daily guru-puja in the Gaudiya Matha. Not

only that, they have banned the chanting of "Jaya Radha Madhava"! It is well known that they freely talk about intimate pastimes of Radha and Krishna, which Srila Prabhupada never did, but they can't tolerate chanting "Jaya Radha Madhava".

The opposing camp has banned or changed many other standard practices of ISKCON which were established by Srila Prabhupada. You will be astonished to hear that most recently there has been a ban on chanting japa on beads before first initiation! Of course, initiation is given to those who promise to chant at least 4 rounds daily. It seems that any practice which can be identified as originating from Srila Prabhupada is deleted from their standard practices. This is not universal as many Gaudiya Mathas who are more favorable have started adopting some of Srila Prabhupada's practices.

The Governing Body Commission saw that in this way ISKCON will be in real trouble if we start looking outside to find standard practices. The firm decision was made not to change any practices for which Srila Prabhupada has already established an example. Once we start doing that then there is no end to it! In the future generations of ISKCON they won't know what Srila Prabhupada did first-hand, as we do. Isn't it our duty to preserve what Srila Prabhupada has given us? Didn't Srila Prabhupada warn us not to change anything---that the western tendency was always to change?

Therefore, the Governing Body Commission works under the ideology that to alter and create new procedures abandoning the procedures and ceremonies established during Srila Prabhupada's lifetime is virtually a direct act of "removing Srila Prabhupada from the center". Once we start to change Srila Prabhupada's established systems then there is no end to the confusion which can break loose! In support of this, I've been living in India now over 15 years, and you can take it from me, there is at least a slightly different system in every temple---when you get to the fine points of daily routine. No two Gaudiya Mathas exactly agree on the same exact methods of observing holidays, fasts, and other regular ceremonies. This is because for preaching the spiritual master can adjust some of the fine details---basic principles remain the same. Why should ISKCON look to anyone else for an example? Would we do it during Srila Prabhupada's physical presence?

Particularly when one goes into the realm of offering worship to the spiritual master, one will not find any absolute instruction on how big the guru's seat should be, or other details of guru worship, etc. HH Bhanu Swami and myself have just completed a massive research of as many vaishnava references on ceremonies and procedures as we could find for the express purpose of writing the standard ISKCON handbook, and, we can assure you, on those particular matters there is no more descriptive source than Srila Prabhupada's books. There it is described how Lord Krishna received Vipra Sudama (his brahmin god-brother), and how Prthu Maharaja received the Four Kumaras, and many other similar descriptions. The "archana padati" of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur gives the same ingredients to be used for guru-puja. Surely, we don't have any doubts as to whether or not Srila Prabhupada has followed the true vedic systems! Furthermore, haven't we all received daily inspiration even in the most materialistic western world by following Srila Prabhupada and His Divine Grace's methods? Fear fills my heart when I think of an ISKCON that no longer follows Srila Prabhupada's instructions and examples. May that day never be!

Therefore, the methods that Srila Prabhupada has established should be preserved. When applying His Divine Grace's methods to his spiritual descendants they should be adapted in such a way so that the mood and principle is maintained as handed down, only in such a way that Srila Prabhupada's unique position as the Founder-Acharya is most prominent and exclusive. It is for these reasons that the Governing Body Commission has decided after long debates to preserve Srila Prabhupada's example as the standard in ISKCON and to preserve them as our own heritage and tradition handed down from His Divine Grace. I hope that you can appreciate these important points and will consider them in your own objective study.

6. The Temple Presidents, etc. of North America have expressed their concern that Srila Prabhupada was less in the center than before. If your committee can answer this question or challenge, and thereby to inspire the disciples of Srila Prabhupada that ISKCON is in fact the only place in the world where Srila Prabhupada is most in the center, it will be a great service to the whole society. In addition, it would be appreciated if you can come up with some practical solutions or suggestions on how to further enhance Srila Prabhupada's position in ISKCON.

It is my desire that our godbrothers be more inspired to remain in ISKCON, and certainly rather

than leave for places where Srila Prabhupada is not in the picture at all! I would like to take this opportunity to present some of my own suggestions in this regard for consideration by your committee for your information and hopefully for recommending their utilization, they are as follows:

- a) In all ISKCON temple's Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa-asana should be at least twice or "double" the visible size and "presence" (in terms of decorations, opulence, etc.) as a "rule of thumb" in comparison to the vyasa-asanas of the present day acharya's.  
COMMENTARY: Today the system that Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa-asana be "bigger" is not good enough. Some temples have so little difference between Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana and the present day acharyas vyasasana that it is almost impossible to see any difference. In other temples although a good six inch difference may be present—it is still too little a difference to set off Srila Prabhupada's unique absolute position as the eternal ISKCON Founder-Acharya. I am not in favor of eliminating the vyasa-asanas of present day initiating gurus, or reducing the standard of guru worship or faith in our present representatives of the disciplic succession. Rather, a standard should be kept which amply establishes in the mind of the viewer the special position of Srila Prabhupada. I feel that the L.A. temple is a good example, as well as the Bhaktivedanta Manor. In both temples Srila Prabhupada is most prominent while the asanas of the present day acharyas are respectable, yet in good proportion compared to Srila Prabhupada's.
- b) The practice followed in some zones that Srila Prabhupada's disciples accept prasadam with the acharya or in a special manner be made a recommended practice as it helps in establishing the unique position of Srila Prabhupada's disciples in the minds of the newer devotees, and brings the godbrothers closer together.
- c) The chant "Jaya Srila Prabhupada Jagat-guru" should be replaced with a more appropriate chant. Srila Prabhupada expressed on certain occasions that to chant "jagat-guru" was not very palatable as it was used so cheaply by the mayavadi gurus. For the greatest empowered representative of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu—who has established Krishna consciousness all over the world, a more appropriate unique "jaya-dwani" appendage could be used, ie. "Jaya Srila Prabhupada \_\_\_\_\_".
- d) The Temple Presidents Meeting in N. America felt that Srila Prabhupada's physical absence brought with it an erosion of the status or position of "Temple President" in ISKCON. They felt that it is one symptom of Srila Prabhupada's being less in the center. Thus a clear explanation of the vision Srila Prabhupada had for ISKCON's world structure and management, particularly in regard to the position of Temple President or for management of a Temple, would be very timely now, as well as important to know while planning future programs for ISKCON. In this regard the fate of the "Temple Presidents Meeting" as the forum for advising the GBC should be analysed in its context that today less than 50% of the temple presidents are Srila Prabhupada's disciples. Should there be another "vaishnava council" comprised of Srila Prabhupada disciples in senior positions as Temple Presidents or Regional Secretaries, etc.
- e) During the physical presence of Srila Prabhupada I was a temple president until 1977, and my experience was that Srila Prabhupada didn't want the GBC members to directly manage a temple but to advise the Temple Presidents in his zone how to best do things. Srila Prabhupada explained that he wanted his Temple Presidents to become qualified to perform many services and to develop responsibility.

Simultaneously, Srila Prabhupada would insist that Temple Presidents should take their problems to their GBC members, and not bother His Divine Grace unless all else failed. Thus a hierarchical system was personally established in ISKCON by Srila Prabhupada. Now in the physical separation from Srila Prabhupada it seems that a "new left", or "resistance" movement has appeared in ISKCON and some godbrothers want to remove this system established by His Divine Grace. They want that all disciples of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada

should be considered as absolute equals, or something. Spiritually we may all be equal infinitesimal particles of Godhead, but in terms of responsibility, spiritual realization, and even as godbrothers in terms of seniority, knowledge, and steadiness there are differences between one and another. Our dealings<sup>in</sup> ISKCON have always reflected this in terms of following certain etiquettes and reciprocations. ISKCON was given a type of hierarchical system by Srila Prabhupada, although sometimes we seem shy to admit it. Those holding a more responsible position were always to help and assist the others in their practice of Krishna consciousness. How will it be possible to preserve the original stature of Temple Managers, etc., if the original hierarchical structure is not preserved? For example, if respect for the GBC members is undermined (Krsna forbid!), then how will any other level of respect be maintained? Now with the new complexities in ISKCON relations, how to preserve the original intention of His Divine Grace in regard to GBC's, and Temple Presidents in consideration of the radically new scenario? Certainly we should be careful not to "throw out the baby with the bathwater"!

- f) The worship of god-brothers (disciples of Srila Prabhupada) has sometimes offended some finer sentiments of non-initiating disciples of Srila Prabhupada. Varying reactions have been seen. It would be appreciated if your committee would give a finding on whether it is detrimental to one's relationship with Srila Prabhupada for a Godbrother to participate in the guru puja being performed to his godbrother. In what way should a godbrother look to his godbrother who may be more advanced? Was I wrong for always looking up to my senior godbrothers following the stricture in SB 3,32,42: "(The disciple) should not be unnecessarily envious of his Godbrothers. Rather if a Godbrother is more enlightened and advanced in Krsna consciousness, one should accept him as almost equal to the spiritual master, and one should be happy to see such Godbrothers advance in Krsna consciousness." I worship my godbrothers as "vaishnavas" and I bow down to them with my right side. I worship Srila Prabhupada as my spiritual father and spiritual master and bow down straight on. I worship Lord Krsna as the SPG and bow to him with the left side facing him. This point should be clarified so that godbrothers don't feel uneasy.

7. The final point I wanted to make was regarding the expansion of initiating gurus. As the Chairman of the GBC many different viewpoints are presented to me and if you can shed light on the subject it is likely to produce a valuable lasting policy decision.

One group of senior devotees are adamant that expansion of the number of initiating gurus should be done only through the GBC, ie., to GBC members. They say that the GBC should be opened up and expanded to accommodate more members. That devotees who want to initiate should be given new areas to develop, as Srila Prabhupada gave preaching areas to Brahmananda Maharaja, and others. They say that they can develop an area and gradually move up from Asst. GBC, to full GBC and also initiating guru as well. Their practical point is that this will be more dynamic having real proven leaders as initiating gurus, and as members of the GBC it will be easier to coordinate matters with them. That's not the only practical point. They say that the present system has proven itself to be effective in making strong preaching teams, and more books are being distributed, and more preaching being performed than ever before. They speak from experience that in temples which had more than two gurus the disciples became bewildered and the temple president was over-taxed with the myriad of problems arising from so many gurus and disciples in one temple. The protagonists of the expansion through GBC principle say that it is sentimentalism to risk the preaching progress in stable zones by making some "blanket" program just to satisfy someone's desire to have a couple of disciples. Some grihastha godbrothers have even criticized this desire for a couple of disciples as non-different from wanting children and that it is safer they get married rather than risk the preaching progress for this unauthorized desire. If they want to take on such a heavy responsibility let them develop a new area, become GBC's and then be appointed as an initiating spiritual master. They don't want to water down the most important institution in the society.

On the other side, there are those responsible devotees who feel that expansion should be made to anyone who has been a steady devotee for a considerable amount of time with a good record of

conduct. They are sympathetic with the expressed desires of some of their god-brothers who want to accept disciples on behalf of the guru-parampara. They don't see what would be the harm if their god-brothers who are desirous of initiating would initiate.

In this attitude some initiating gurus have strong opinions that expansion should not be inhibited. Although none of them has yet felt the need in their own zone to sponsor a non-GBC member as an initiating spiritual master. However, they encourage others to do so with good reasons.

Exactly how the multi-level guru system will function hasn't been discussed at length, but some say that things will work themselves out by "trial and error". Some formulas have been recommended for organization of non-GBC gurus they should be assigned an field as their area to concentrate on (or guru-datta-desha). Similarly, some recommend that there should be different levels of gurus according to norms to be established by the G.B.C.,---although this has been rejected by the Temple Presidents in North America.

Some other supporters of the all-level expansion group say that the present gurus are too prominent and have over-shadowed Srila Prabhupada, and the only rectification is to dilute their presence in ISKCON and for that purpose it is necessary to make many gurus by any means. Others simply sincerely feel that it is healthier to have people become gurus rather than leave ISKCON for the material world or to join some other organization out of frustration and desperation over not being able to have disciples. Other, more conservative, devotees feel that multi-level guru system can work, but they insist there must be structure and hierarchy, otherwise it will be chaotic and possibly create anarchy.

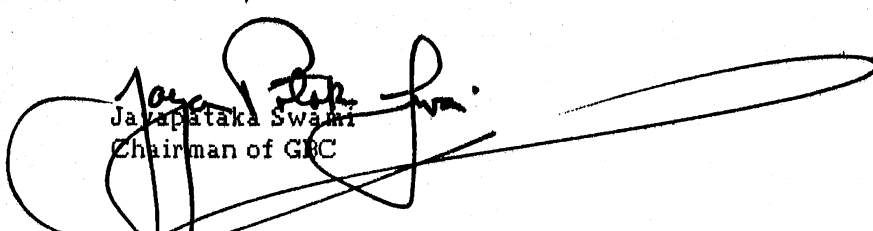
Of the two above groups the second major group seems more vocal, but it is hard to say as there may be a silent majority on either side. The pro- "GBC first/guru thereafter" group is confident based on experience. The pro- "guru expansion on all levels" group is breaking new ground or uncharted waters so there hasn't yet appeared a visible consensus.

The devotees are hoping that some of these questions can be answered by Srila Prabhupada through your study of his teachings.

To find a universally applicable solution to many of the problems I recommend the temple presidents contact presidents from other continents as well, such as Europe and Australia, etc. Otherwise the group of North American temple presidents (who are a minority in the world) may only provide a regionally applicable solution.

Please have your vaishnava blessings upon me. Kindly excuse the computer print out, it was faster than Indian photocopying, which have dots as letters. I hope that this finds you in good health,

Your servant,



Jayapataka Swami  
Chairman of GBC

cc: To all members of the GBC Philosophical Research Committee;  
To all members of the GBC constitutional Committee.

(ref:philtrl,gbc)