

INSIDE ISKCON - OUTSIDE ISKCON

During the discussion between Kirtanananda Swami and Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu in Philadelphia, Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu recommended Kirtanananda Swami that, because there was doubt he would ever work under a GBC, and because of the government investigation against New Vrindaban, Kirtanananda Swami should continue preaching, but outside of ISKCON.

I remember a similar case when, back in 1982, I was explained by one regional secretary in Bhagavan Maharaja's GBC zone that the function of ISKCON's leadership was to give association to third class devotees, kanistha adhikaris, and that a more advanced devotee, madhyam adhikari, did not need such association and could easily practice Krishna consciousness outside of ISKCON. That regional secretary thereby encouraged me to pack my bags and leave. I finally ended up in New Vrindaban where I have not heard such philosophy preached.

According to Srila Prabhupada, this Krishna consciousness movement is meant to elevate people to the platform of Krishna prema. In fact, he wanted all of his disciples to be pure devotees, and all of ISKCON to go back home, back to Godhead: "Anyone surrendered to the spiritual master, sincerely serving him, is a pure devotee. As soon as we distinguish, here is a pure devotee, here is a non-pure devotee, that means we are nonsense. Why do you only want to be in the spiritual sky with one specific person? [...] If one person can go, why not everyone? All of you will go. We will have another ISKCON there." (Letter, 12/14/72, to Tusta Krsna dasa)

To think that ISKCON can be understood as a mundane organization or corporation the existence of which depends on a political committee, is directly opposed to Srila Prabhupada's instructions: "asmamayah plavo yesam te yatha majjantam plavam anumajjanti tatheti raja-nity-upadestrsu sva-sabhyesu kopo vyanjitah. If society is guided by political diplomacy, with one nation maneuvering against another, it will certainly sink like a stone boat. Political maneuvering and diplomacy will not save human society. People must take to Krishna consciousness to understand the aim of life, to understand God, and to fulfill the human mission. (Bhag. 6.7.14, Purport by Visvanath Cakravarti, translation by Srila Prabhupada)"

Now, this does not mean there should be no organization or administration in order to facilitate the preaching. But this organization must serve and be subordinate to its purpose, which is preaching the gospel of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. As everything depends on personalities, it must therefore leave room for inspiration and give facility to empowered preachers of Krishna consciousness. Srila Prabhupada, for example, would see himself as an instrument of his spiritual master, and understood that all success he had in preaching was due to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. He would even see his disciples as representatives of his guru maharaj. Still, both in Srila Prabhupada's books and in his letters, we find that he doubted whether his godbrothers were dedicated to their spiritual master's order. In the following letter to Rupanuga Prabhu, dated 4/28/74, he describes Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's plan for the future of the Gaudiya Math, along with the actual development:

"They [Srila Prabhupada's godbrothers] have no idea or brain how to broadcast the cult of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. My Guru Maharaj used to lament many times for this reason, and he thought, if at least one man had understood

the principle of preaching, then his mission would achieve success. [...] Still, he requested his disciples to form a strong Governing Body for preaching the cult of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He never recommended anyone to be acarya of the Gaudiya Math. But Sridhar Maharaj is responsible for disobeying this order of Guru Maharaj, and he and two others who are already dead, unnecessarily thought that there must be one acarya. If Guru Maharaj could have seen someone who was qualified at that time to be acarya he would have mentioned it; because on the night before he passed away he talked of so many things, but never mentioned an acarya. His idea was that an acarya was not to be nominated amongst the governing body. He said openly, You make a GBC and conduct the mission. So his idea was, amongst the members of the GBC, he who would come out successfully would automatically be selected as a self effulgent acarya. [my underlining]*

"So Sridhar Maharaj and his two associate gentlemen unauthorizedly elected one acarya, and later it proved a failure. The result is now everyone is claiming to be acarya even though they may be kanistha adhikari with no ability to preach. In some of the camps the acarya is being changed three times in a year. Therefore we may not commit the same mistake in our ISKCON camp. Actually, amongst my god brothers none is qualified to become acarya. So it is better not to mix with my god brothers very intimately, because instead of inspiring our students and disciples they may sometimes pollute them. [...] This is going on. We shall be very careful with them and not mix with them. This is my instruction to you all. They cannot help us in our movement, but they are very competent to harm our natural progress. So we must be very careful about them."

As Srila Prabhupada obviously follows in his spiritual master's foot steps concerning the forming of a GBC, this letter explains to us two facts:

1. An acarya should not be selected by the GBC. The "acarya system" is wrong.
2. When, without the GBC's "rubber stamp," an inspired, "self effulgent" personality, namely Srila Prabhupada, took up strong preaching work, then that was also within Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's plan.

In his books, Srila Prabhupada often speaks about his relationship to his godbrothers:

"Srila Narottama das Thakur says, chadiya vaisnava seva nistara peche keba: unless one serves a vaisnava, one cannot be delivered. The spiritual master initiates the disciple to deliver him, and if the disciple executes the order of the spiritual master and does not offend other Vaisnavas, his path is clear. [...] If a Vaisnava, by the mercy of the Lord, is empowered by Him to distribute the holy name all over the world, other Vaisnavas become very joyful, that is, if they are truly Vaisnavas. [...] An actual Vaisnava is very pleased to accept another Vaisnava who is bestowing the Lord's mercy. [...] When Narottama das Thakur says, chadiya vaisnava seva nistara peche keba, he is indicating an actual Vaisnava, not an envious or jealous person in the dress of a Vaisnava. [...]

* In the original, this sentence reads as follows: "So his idea was amongst the members of GBC who would come out successful and self effulgent acarya would be automatically selected."

"Unfortunately, in this age of Kali, there are many envious persons in the dress of Vaisnavas, and Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has described them as disciples of Kali. He says, kali-cela. He indicates that there is another Vaisnava, a pseudo Vaisnava with tilaka on his nose and kunti beads around his neck. Such a pseudo Vaisnava associates with money and women and is jealous of successful Vaisnavas. [...] A disciples of Kali cannot become an acarya by the decision of some high court. Mundane votes have no jurisdiction to elect a Vaisnava acarya. A Vaisnava acarya is self effulgent, and there is no need for any court judgement. A false acarya may try to override a a Vaisnava by a high-cour court decision, but Bhaktivinoda Thakur says he is nothing but a disciple of Kali. [my underlining]"

- Cc Madhya 1.218 and 1.220, Purports

This is what Srila Prabhupada said concerning certain events in Vaisnava history. What we can learn from this is that a spiritual or Krishna conscious administration, or "Krishna's revolution" (Ravindra Svarupa in his discussion with Kirtanananda Swami) must take care to leave room for spiritual enthusiasm. After all, Krishna must always be given the right to interfere with our schemes, and, if He wants to empower someone to preach His mission, how can we want to restrict Him? This would be wanting the kingdom of God without God. Indeed, it would directly oppose the purpose of our movement.

Therefore, let us learn from history. Srila Prabhupada had many disagreements with his godbrothers, and we should try to avoid such quarrels. Let Krishna decide. Let us give Him the chance to empower a strong preacher out of His own sweet will, if He so desires. This movement was started by Him in his merciful incarnation as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and it is still Krishna's movement in which everyone will become a pure devotee and meet all of his godbrothers back in the spiritual world, in the same ISKCON. For now, as long as we still have to deal with so many conditions, let us set up everything properly for everyone to achieve perfection, following the principle of unity in diversity.

Vaidyanath das,
New Vrindaban, 2-22-87

THE ROLE AND DUTIES OF THE GBC IN ISKCON

- An Analytical Historical Survey -

compiled on the request of

Srila Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada

by Vaidyanath das

(Registrar, New Vrindaban Archives)

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1. The Official Beginning, Purpose and Legal Basis of the GBC

Although ISKCON'S GBC had been appointed by Srila Prabhupada since 1971, the first annual Mayapur GBC meeting (with 10 of 14 GBC's present) took place before Srila Prabhupada in his room at Sridham Mayapur on March 25, 1975 during the Gaur Purnim festival. At that time the GBC as a body was formally established. Those first resolutions define the Governing Body Commission and the individual GBC's position and function:

1. The GBC has been established by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad to represent him in carrying out the responsibility of managing the International Society for Krishna Consciousness of which he is the founder acarya and supreme authority. The GBC accepts as its life and soul his divine instruction and recognizes that it is completely dependent on his mercy in all respects. The GBC has no other purpose or function other than to execute the instructions so kindly given by His Divine Grace and to preserve and spread his teachings to the world in their pure and original form.

It is understood that the GBC as a collective body of 14 members has been authorized by His Divine Grace to make the necessary arrangements for carrying out these responsibilities of management. The arrangements may include delegating authority, managing resources, setting objectives, making plans, calling for reports, evaluating results, training others, maintaining spiritual standards and defining the sphere of influence of the various GBC members as well as other devotees.

The members of the GBC do not have any inherent authority but rather derive their authority from the Governing Body Commission itself and ultimately from His Divine Grace. Their authority may be over a particular geographic area or over a particular function. Whichever area of responsibility be given to the various members, their primary responsibility is to the Society as a whole.

In his final will and testament, Srila Prabhupada defines the GBC's role as "ultimate authority" for the whole of ISKCON:

"I, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder-acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, settler of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, and disciple of Om Visnupada 108 Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaja Prabhupada, presently residing at Sri Krishna Balaram Mandir in Vrindavana, make this my last will:

1. The Governing Body Commission (GBC) will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

2. Each temple will be an ISKCON property, and will be managed by three executive directors. The system of management will continue as it is now, and there is no need of change." (Dated June, 1977)

Also, Srila Prabhupada earlier stated on May 23rd, 1971, in his will in brief:

The Governing Body Commission (GBC) shall be the trustees of the whole International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

[This first part adapted from Jaya Pataka Swami: "The Governing Body Commission - Srila Prabhupada's Representative", 1/15/1980]

In a discussion with the GBC after its official establishment on March 25, 1975, Srila Prabhupada further defines the duties of the GBC:

1. He should organize the opening of new temples, appoint temple presidents for new temples, and be responsible for training temple presidents and assuring the spiritual standards.
2. He must follow the four regulative principles.
3. He has to sign an oath of allegiance (see later). Even the temple president should sign an oath of allegiance.
4. The GBC man has to authorize the taking of loans, except for BBT loans (selling of books on consignment).
5. The GBC man should settle philosophical disputes in the temple.
6. The GBC man should receive monthly financial reports, as well as sadhana reports, from the temple president.
7. Srila Prabhupada defines the functional responsibility of the GBC man as follows: "Main functional responsibility is to go and see that the regular temple work is going on, the president is doing nicely, to check in this way. You can sit down in the class and see how things are going on. That's it." (March 27, 1975)
8. Srila Prabhupada may have to appoint special committees from the GBC. Practically speaking, as there is close cooperation amongst GBC members, and they consult each other, the committee spirit always exists. The GBC is a standing committee, whereas other committees are temporary. The GBC meets once a year in Mayapur.
9. The GBC must not take money from other branches of ISKCON, like lifemembership. The GBC sees that 50% of the income in ISKCON is spent on constructing temples, 50% for printing books. The GBC manages the BBT.
10. The financial policy should be: as soon as you have some income, pay the bills. Do not create a debt.

- Contents of the Discussion with GBC on March 27, 1975

1.1.1. The Oath of Allegiance

The oath of allegiance is as follows (adapted from a conversation with Srila Prabhupada on March 27, 1975):

"Tamal Krishna: This oath of allegiance is both a legal document and a spiritual one.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Atreya Rishi: Should I read the pledge now? I have written it.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, everyone may hear.

Atreya Rishi: "I, Mr. So and So, karmi name, initiated name in parantheses, date of birth, at present residing at, of certain nationality, do hereby solemnly affirm, dec are and state as under as follows: I state I have been elected or nominated a member of the Governing Body Commission, under the recommendation of my guru maharaja, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-acarya and Supreme Authority of the Krishna Consciousness Movement under the banner of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. I state that I have imposed all my faith, integrity and honesty in my aforesaid guru maharaj with the result that he is the only responsible person and supreme authority of my present position and status which I have gained and which I am holding in the organization of the International Society for Krishna consciousness. I, the said Mr. So and So, both names, do hereby swear in the name of Krishna that I will bear truth and faith and alliance to the constitution, by-laws, rules, regulations (no illicit sex, meat eating, intoxication or gambling, chanting 16 rounds of Hare Krishna daily very seriously) and directions which have been given through him or a person or persons authorized by him, and I shall obey faithfully all such instructions and directions which shall be binding on me, and that I will uphold the sovereignty and integrity of my guru maharaja, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and the managing body commission and, or, any other body appointed by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada working under the said International Society for Krishna Consciousness. And I shall faithfully discharge the duty upon which I am about to enter or to which I have already been appointed to that effect. I further pledge that His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad is the only source of authority, represented by his instructions and books, and I shall follow his instructions and books.

I further state that I am holding moneys, movable and immovable...

Srila Prabhupada: No, the GBC, practically, does not hold any money.

Atreya Rishi: No, as GBC, we do not deal with any money. In other words, if someone is dealing with money, it's the temple president.

Srila Prabhupada: The GBC should see that it is being done properly. He may also sign and authorize expenditures, but he does not directly deal with money. The money matters are dealt with by the president, secretary and treasurer. Three men, out of three, two should sign. And the GBC's business is to see that things are going on, money matters. That's all. The GBC is not supposed to deal directly with the money. He has to inspect. That's all. But, if the GBC and the temple president is the same man, that is not good. The president should be separate. The president, treasurer and secretary, they will deal directly, and the GBC should inspect the books

and accounts, that it is done very nicely. That's all. You can question, "Why you have done this?" That's nice. Otherwise, it will be difficult to manage.

Rupanuga: Yes. We don't become entangled in that money.

Madhudvisa: Who has control of the money, then?

Srila Prabhupada: Control means if there is vigilant, I mean to say, examination, inspection, then there is control of money."

- Conversation with GBC, Mayapur 3/27/75

1.2. Today's Understanding of the GBC Role Amongst Srila Prabhupada's Disciples

In the meeting of Srila Prabhupada's disciples and North American Temple Presidents in New York, Feb. 13th and 14th, 1987, fifty of Srila Prabhupada's letters concerning the GBC were read, and a special committee was formed to discuss the duties of the GBC on the basis of those letters. The committee came up with the following list of GBC duties:

I. The Role of the GBC as a Whole:

1. It is the Ultimate Managing Authority in ISKCON.
2. It executes Srila Prabhupada's will.
3. It is the ultimate arbitrator of spiritual standards.
4. It plans worldwide preaching strategies.
5. It thinks about the application of sastra.
6. It hears from and is accountable to other devotees.
7. It establishes and makes known policies for the BBT, the Mayapur Trust, etc.

II. The Role of the single GBC man:

1. Srila Prabhupada's letters to Karandhar das and to Kirtanananda Swami (enclosed) are a mandate for GBC conduct.
2. He maintains the standards.
3. He sees that the local management is proper and that the temples are financially independent.
4. He has no authority to overrule local leaders until the next GBC meeting in Mayapur.
5. He follows the standard of the rules and regulations.
6. He respects the devotees.
7. He knows scripture and preaches.
8. He is surrendered to the will of the GBC body.
9. He cooperates with other GBC men and devotees.
10. There should be no reasonable complaints about him.
11. He should not change the standards; there should be no fights.
12. He should train more GBC men.

The two mandate letters are as follows:

1. Letter dated 12/22/72 to Karandhar das

"Regarding your points about taxation, corporate status, etc., I have heard from Jayatirtha you want to make big plan for centralization of management, taxes, monies, corporate status, bookkeeping, credit, like that. I do not approve at all of such plan. Do not centralize anything. Each temple must remain independent and self-sufficient. That was my plan from the very beginning, why you are thinking otherwise? Once before you wanted to do something centralizing with your GBC meeting, and if I would not have interfered, the whole thing would have been killed. Do not think in this way of big corporation, big credits, centralization - these are all nonsense proposals.

"Only thing I wanted was that books printing and distribution should be centralized, therefore I appointed you and Bali Mardan to do it. Otherwise, management, everything, should be done locally by local men. Accounts must be kept, things must be in order and lawfully done, but that should be each temple's concern, not yours. Krishna consciousness movement is for training men to be independently thoughtful and competent in all types of departments of knowledge and action, not for making bureaucracy. Once there is bureaucracy the whole thing will be spoiled. There must be always individual striving and work and responsibility, competitive spirit, not that one shall dominate and distribute benefits to the others and they do nothing but beg from you, and you provide. Never mind there will be botheration to register each center, take tax certificate each, become separate corporations in each state. That will train men how to do these things, and they shall develop reliability and responsibility, that is the point.

"I am little observing now, especially in your country, that our men are losing their enthusiasm for spreading our programs of Krsna consciousness movement. Otherwise, why so many letters of problems are coming, dissatisfied? That is not a very good sign.

"The whole problem is they are not following the regulative principles, that I can detect. Without this, enthusiasm will be lacking. Even mechanically following, and if he gets gradually understanding from the class, he will come to the point of spontaneous enthusiasm. This spontaneous loving devotional service is not so easy matter, but if one simply sticks strictly to the rules and regulations, like rising early, chanting 16 rounds, chanting gayatri, keeping always clean, - then his enthusiasm will grow more and more, and if there is also patience and determination, one day he will come to the platform of spontaneous devotion, then his life will be perfect. All of this I have told you in 'Nectar of Devotion.'

"So I do not think the leaders are themselves following, nor they are seeing the others are following strictly. That must be rectified at once. Each center remain independent, that's all right, but the president and other officers must themselves follow and see the others are following the regulative principles carefully, and giving them good instruction so they may understand nicely why this tapasya is necessary. And GBC and sanniyasis will travel and see the officers are doing this, and if they observe anything lowering of the standard, they must reform and advise, or if there is some discrepancy I shall remove it.

"Of course, if new men are coming, they may not be expected immediately to take to our regulative principles cent percent. Therefore we should not be so anxious to induce them to live in the temple. Anyone who lives in the temple must agree to follow the rules and regulations without fail. So if some new man moves in with us he may become discouraged if he is forced in this way. Therefore let them live outside and become gradually convinced in the class why they should accept some austerity, then they will live with us out of their own accord and follow nicely everything. It is very difficult to give up so many bad habits as you have got in your country. So educate them gradually, first with chanting, and do not be so much anxious to count up so many numbers of new devotees, if such devotees go away later being too early forced. I want to see a few sincere devotees, not many false devotees or pretenders.

"The point is to be engaged in doing something for Krishna, never mind what is that job, but being so engaged in doing something very much satisfying to the devotee that he remains always enthusiastic. He will automatically follow the regulative principles because they are part of his occupational duty - by applying them practically as his occupational duty, he realizes the happy result of regulative principles.

"So the future of this Krishna consciousness movement is very bright, so long the managers remain vigilant that 16 rounds are being chanted by everyone without fail, that they are all rising before four morning, attending mangol aratrik - our leaders shall be careful not to kill the spirit of enthusiastic service, which is individual and spontaneous and voluntary. They should try always to generate some atmosphere of fresh challenge to the devotees, so that they will agree enthusiastically to rise and meet it. That is the art of management: To draw out spontaneous loving spirit of sacrificing some energy for Krishna.

"But where are so many expert managers? All of us should become expert managers and preachers. We should not be very much after comforts and become complacent or self-contented. There must be always some tapasya, strictly observing the regulative principles. Krishna consciousness movement must be always a challenge, a great achievement to be gained by voluntary desire to do it, and that will keep it healthy. So you big managers, now try to train up more and more some competent preachers and managers like yourselves. Forget this centralization and bureaucracy."

2. Letter dated 10/18/73 to Kirtanananda Maharaj

"Now this displeasing of godbrothers has already begun and gives me too much agitation in my mind. Our Gaudiya Math people fought with one another after the demise of Guru Maharaj, but my disciples have already begun fighting even in my presence. So I am greatly concerned about it.

"Following in the footprints of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu:

trnad api su-nicena taror iva sahisnuna
amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada harih

'One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street, one should be more

tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and should be ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.'

"We must always remember this verse and be as tolerant as the tree, as we execute the Krsna conscious movement. Without this mentality we cannot be successful.

"Material nature means dissension and disagreement, especially in this kali yuga. But, for this Krsna consciousness movement, its success will depend on agreement, even though there are varieties of engagements... In the material world there are varieties, but there is no agreement. In the spiritual world there are varieties, but there is agreement. That is the difference. The materialist, without being able to adjust the varieties and the disagreements, makes everything zero. They cannot come into agreement with varieties, but if we keep Krsna in the center, then there will be agreement in varieties. This is called unity in diversity. I am therefore suggesting that all our men meet in Mayapur every year during the birth anniversary of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. With all GBC and senior men present we should discuss how to make unity in diversity. But, if we fight on account of diversity, then it is simply the material platform. Please try to maintain the philosophy of unity in diversity. That will make our movement successful. One section of men have already gone out, therefore we must be very careful to maintain unity in diversity, and remember the story in Aesop's Fables of the father of many children with the bundle of sticks. When the father asked his children to break the bundle of sticks wrapped in a bag, none of them could do it. But, when they removed the sticks from the bag, and tried one by one, the sticks were easily broken. So this is the strength of unity. If we are bunched up, we can never be broken, but when divided, then we can become broken very easily."

2. The Relationship Between Guru and GBC

2.1. Srila Prabhupada's Instructions in May of 1977

"It is remarkable that Srila Prabhupada never mentioned specifically anything about the future process of initiation until on May, 1977, a GBC committee was sent to ask Prabhupada some questions on GBC and future initiations, to which he replied that he would appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future, even after his disappearance. The disciples they accept shall be their disciples, and Srila Prabhupada will be their grand spiritual master. (May 28, 1977) Other than this incident, as far as I know, he didn't dwell much on the topic apart from the naming of eleven disciples to be initiating spiritual masters."

- Adapted from Jayapataka Swami Acaryapada: The Governing Body Commission. Srila Prabhupada's Representative, 1/15/1980

In addition, towards the end of the said discussion with the GBC committee on May 28, 1977, concerning the initiating process after his demise, Srila Prabhupada gave the following instructions in relationship to gurus, the GBC, and acaryas:

"And Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, amara ajnaya guru hana. One who can understand the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he can become guru. Or one who understands his guru's order, the same parampara, he can become guru. And therefore I shall select some of you. Hm. So there is no question of changing GBC. Rather, one who is competent, he can be selected to act [as GBC] by the board of the GBC.

Tamal Krishna: Of course, if someone had a fall down, just like in the past some GBC men have fallen down...

Prabhupad: He should be replaced.

Tamal Krishna: But that's a serious fall down, not some minor discrepancy.

Prabhupad: They must be all ideal acarya like. In the beginning, we have done for working. Now we should be very cautious. Anyone who is deviating, he can be replaced."

- (End of discussion with GBC, May 28, 1977)

In a series of darshans held by Srila Prabhupada in April and May of 1977, one finds that Srila Prabhupada speaks almost daily about the necessity of becoming guru. However, he does not explain anything new:

"So there is nothing to be said new. Whatever I have to speak, I have spoken in my books. Now try to understand it and continue your endeavor. Whether I am present or not present, it doesn't matter. [...] So you have been taught to serve Krishna, and with Krishna we'll live eternally. [...] So live forever, serving Krishna."

- Srila Prabhupada in Vrindavana, 5/17/77, upon Return from Hrishikesh

From Srila Prabhupada's books and previous instructions in his letters, we can get an appropriate understanding of the role of the spiritual master.

On April 1, 1977, there is a short but important lecture about guru puja, that it gives divya-jnana and should always be performed.

2.2. The Actual Development

In his last instructions as well as in his letters, Srila Prabhupada mentions that he wanted his disciples to become gurus:

"Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bonafide guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But there's a matter of etiquette. It is the custom that during the lifetime of the spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bona fide spiritual master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy."

- Letter to Tushta Krishna Swami, 11/2/75

There has always been a question where the exalted spiritual master should have his place in relationship with the GBC, and this question has not been answered so far by the GBC.

The scriptures say:

"One should know the acarya as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods." - Bhag. 11.17.27

"Only unto those great souls who simultaneously have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed." - Svetasvatara Upanisad 6.23

Because Srila Prabhupada neither appointed a single acarya, nor wanted this to happen, the GBC initially concluded that the guru should work under the GBC. In fact, the gurus were members of the GBC, and they succeeded Srila Prabhupada cooperatively. Later, the GBC interpreted Srila Prabhupada's instructions to mean that the gurus should be acaryas. The idea developed that the "successor gurus" were on the same level as Srila Prabhupada in terms of their placement in the philosophy and their standard of worship. They established themselves as institutional acaryas in their GBC zones. To preserve Srila Prabhupada's unique position as founder acarya, his murti would be given a seat on a higher vyasasana than his guru disciples. Thus, a system of appointed acaryas was created.

But, as early as 1979, certain individuals doubted whether this system correctly followed Srila Prabhupada's instructions. The doubt lay in whether the new spiritual masters exhibited the necessary qualifications of a spiritual master, as explained by Srila Prabhupada in his books and letters:

"Unless one is a resident of Krsnaloka, one cannot be a spiritual master. That is the first proposition. A layman cannot be a spiritual master, and if he becomes so, then he will simply create disturbance."

- Letter by Srila Prabhupada, 6/10/69, to Mukunda dasa

On August 17, 1980, a GBC subcommittee consisting of Bhagavan das Goswami (GBC Chairman), Jagadisha das (Vice Chairman), Srila Satsvarupa das Goswami, Srila Hridayananda das Goswami and Srila Jayapataka Swami (GBC Secretary) released a paper dealing with the position of the spiritual master in ISKCON. The purpose of this paper was to refute criticism of the then practiced system of initiations, and thus help avoid a split in Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON:

"Some persons, citing many scriptural references describing the qualities of the maha-bhagavata, have questioned whether any ISKCON acarya exhibits these qualities. And they have further concluded that the ISKCON acaryas cannot fully live up to the requirements of a regular guru in devotional service. This criticism is speculative; it is also against the etiquette of gentle devotees to judge or investigate a sincere devotee as to his inner realization. But aside from that, the whole line of reasoning is fallacious and the argument inapplicable. It starts with a speculative opinion and backs it up with quotes from Srila Prabhupada's books; but by this method, one could prove all kinds of things." (p. 2)

The committee warned against abolishing the system of acarya worship:

"To deny the need for the living acarya, as the living representative of

Srila Prabhupada, is simply to dilute Prabhupada's movement and make it like Christianity. [...] Srila Prabhupada said that Christianity is useless because they only pretend to keep Christ in the center but they do not strictly follow his messages because they do not have the example of a bona fide living acarya in disciplic succession.

"The breakdown of the basic faith of the disciples in their gurus spells the spiritual ruination of this movement. Of course, the maximum burden is upon the spiritual master to strictly follow the instructions of the previous acarya in order to remain in touch with the sampradaya and thus instill true faith in the heart of his disciples. [italics in original] How can ISKCON portray its spiritual masters to be ordinary men subject to the four defects of material life and thus unable to instruct their disciples properly? If this fanatical over-reaction were accepted, then it would reduce ISKCON to the status of a dead sampradaya." (p. 26/27)

In conclusion, the committee, believing that Srila Prabhupada had wanted the then practiced system, made the following recommendations for improving the spiritual standard of both the critics as also the criticized:

"In pursuing a solution to the present situation, all concerned parties should proceed in a proper way. We should not jump to conclusions and unnecessarily see our fellow Vaisnavas as material or conditioned. We should also be hopeful of reaching a positive solution because of our faith in the protection of Lord Caitanya and the previous acaryas. But we will only be assured of their protection as long as we follow their orders. We should not consider as possible solution that we might please Srila Prabhupada by breaking away from ISKCON. Keeping in mind Srila Prabhupada's order that the Governing Body Commission is the ultimate managerial authority of ISKCON, we should not cynically deride the collective intelligence of the GBC in which Prabhupada invested his trust for the guidance of ISKCON. We should not only dutifully obey but positively encourage all devotees about the wisdom of following the GBC decision.

"It will not be in the interest of our Founder-Acarya if we find fault and constantly bring up discrepancies in the initiating gurus of ISKCON. When there are actual discrepancies seen in the personal behavior of any spiritual master or ISKCON leader, then the godbrothers and responsible heads of ISKCON should pursue the proper steps for rectification. We should not speculate on the internal activities of the devotees in question. [...]

"We should never take unauthorized action and degenerate into gossiping, fault finding, or anarchy. Here are some general suggestions for improving our Krishna consciousness and establishing a peaceful situation in ISKCON.

- a. In our desire to keep Srila Prabhupada in the center we should increase the preaching to the nondevotees and the book distribution. This is actually the greatest worship.
- b. If the devotees are questioning the level of Srila Prabhupada worship in a temple it is best that they increase the level of Srila Prabhupada worship rather than decrease the worship of his disciple-gurus.

- c. The regional secretaries, temple presidents and other leaders should make it their duty (and pleasure) to attend the Sri Mayapur yearly temple president's meeting.
- d. We should read and study Srila Prabhupada's books one or two hours per day. Everyone should see that the proper chanting of japa and congregational chanting with dancing is being held in full measure.
- e. We should avoid prajalpa in the matter of asampradaya criticism of ISKCON.
- f. We should hold public meetings to glorify Prabhupada on his appearance and disappearance days.
- g. Additional suggestions shall be discusses by the Governing Body Commission. " (p. 32)

Unfortunately, by 1986, only 6 out of the originally 11 acaryas appointed by the GBC were still in office. A few new ones had been appointed, and the others had fallen down, giving reason for rampant criticism of the system. During the meeting of Srila Prabhupada's disciples in New Vrindaban, September 16th through 19th of 1985, reform of the standard of worship of the acarya was officially begun, and new rules for appointing gurus were proposed. It was demanded that the GBC regret its activities in relationship to Srila Prabhupada's disciples and its policies concerning the position of appointed acaryas. In the GBC meeting in Mayapur in March, 1986, a new system for choosing initiating spiritual masters was created, and numerous gurus were appointed, thus opening up guruship to many.

The main criticism was that the gurus or acaryas were worshipped too much, and had become overly proud, misusing assets and moneys given to them for service for their own gratification. Thus, they became bewildered by material opulence, and in many cases fell down from their platform of spiritual life. It was therefore demanded that their worship be decreased. This happened by removing "personal vyasasanas" from the temple and regulating the size and placement of pictures of the new gurus to be allowed on altars and vyasasanas.

The result of all this was cynicism and a tendency to abandon the worship of the spiritual master, except for Srila Prabhupada, ISKCON's founder acarya. The predictions made in the paper released by the GBC subcommittee in 1980 are thereby becoming true. Disciples are not allowed to worship their guru in public, and practically speaking, the majority of ISKCON devotees today believes there is no living qualified spiritual master on the planet. Thus, the guru-parampara is on the way to extinction.

3. What Went Wrong?

3.1. New Committee Formed

The North American GBC subcommittee authorized an "Association of North American Prabhupada Disciples" to make proposals on what is to be done next. Members were selected from non-GBC disciples of Srila Prabhupada. To be member of this association, "one must have received at least one initiation from His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, be actively engaged in pushing

on this movement, strictly be following the four regulative principles and be chanting a minimum of 16 rounds daily on japa beads. To be a voting member and receive the quarterly newsletter, members must remit 30\$ dues for every 6 months." (Draft Copy, Nov. 17, 1986)

Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu, the chairman of this committee, formulates criticism of the GBC as follows in the "Resolution to Restore Full Faith in the GBC":

"The purpose of this resolution is to set forth a procedure by which the faith of the followers of Srila Prabhupada in the GBC body can be restored. The erosion of confidence in the GBC on the part of senior devotees, junior devotees, and even the well-wishing public has gathered to the point of a crisis, and ISKCON is de facto without an ultimate managing authority. If nothing is done to swiftly revive faith in the leadership of the GBC body, ISKCON may well dissolve forever as a unified preaching movement.

"This radical loss of faith in the GBC body is due to the perception that the GBC has not been able to accept the fact that it made a grievous error in the way the position of the guru was established in ISKCON after Srila Prabhupada's departure. There has been no collective realization of the error; there has been no regret; there has been no rectification. The GBC has begun to carry out reform with great reluctance and only after several of the "acaryas" established by the GBC fell, and only then under the extreme pressure of a reform movement lead by non-GBC senior devotees. Reform was begun in New Vrindavan in September, 1985, and yet, at the following Mayapur meeting, a reactionary spirit prevailed among the GBC. Now the leader of that reactionary move, in whom the GBC body put its faith, has also fallen. In addition, the GBC has not had the will to police its own members, especially it's established "acaryas"; it has reluctantly acted only when forced to do so by public scandal or severe pressure from non-GBC devotees.

"In short, the GBC body has not been able to give this movement proper spiritual guidance. It has allowed its members to use their positions to protect sense gratification, and not to pursue self realization. It has not been able therefore to execute the will of Srila Prabhupada. It has fully supported unqualified men as acaryas, even in the face of great evidence of their unworthiness. It has misled and misguided thousands of innocent men and women by directing them to surrender to those who have not surrendered to Krishna. And yet, the GBC body has not yet acknowledged its own deviations nor undertaken any fundamental rectification. It is no wonder that devotees have lost confidence in the GBC."

Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada also believes that the mistake of the GBC has been not to follow the instructions of Srila Prabhupada. GBC gurus have accepted worship without rendering the worship to Srila Prabhupada and Krishna, and they have not followed the four rules and regulations. Thus, the GBC has not acted according to its purpose and oath of allegiance.

3.2. Has It Srila Prabhupada's Fault?

Surely, we cannot say that Srila Prabhupada made a mistake in establishing the GBC as spiritual and material ultimate managing authority of ISKCON whose function would be to assure the continuation of the disciplic succession and

preserve the unity of his movement. The mistake, therefore, must be in the practice of the persons who comprise the GBC. Mistakes in GBC conduct had been pointed out many times by Srila Prabhupada when he was still present to observe the work of his GBC disciples: (See also the letters to Karandhar and Kirtanananda Swami quoted above).

"I had no information that you all GBC members have met and decided such big big issues without consulting me. So I have issued one letter in this regard to all of you, and you may take note that I consider that vote, the meeting and the resolution to be irregular, and immediately there should be no change. Again, I'm so much burdened by this administrative work that I feel great difficulty. I was very anxious to return to my Los Angeles home to sit down for translation work. But if you all, my right hand men, are doing things without consulting me and making such big big changes within our society without getting my opinion and the opinion of all the GBC members, then what can I do? I am so much perplexed why you all have done this. I have appointed originally 12 GBC members, and I have given the 12 zones for their administration and management, but simply by agreement you have changed everything, so what is this I don't know."

- Letter to Rupanuga das, 4/4/72

"We must expand more and more unlimitedly. [...] I have chosen my best men to be GBC and I do not want that the GBC should be disrespectful to the temple presidents. You can naturally consult me, but if the basic principle is weak, how will things go on?" - Letter, 5/19/76, to all GBC

In establishing a Governing Body Commission, Srila Prabhupada followed the example of his spiritual master Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, who also established a GBC to lead the movement after his physical departure. That GBC also fell apart, as Srila Prabhupada many times points out in his books. The mistakes of his godbrother's GBC is described even more clearly in one of Srila Prabhupada's letters to Rupanuga Prabhu, dated 4/28/74:

"They [Srila Prabhupada's godbrothers] have no idea or brain how to broadcast the cult of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. My guru maharaj used to lament many times for this reason, and he thought, if at least one man had understood the principle of preaching, then his mission would achieve success. [...] Still, he requested his disciples to form a strong Governing Body for preaching the cult of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He never recommended anyone to be acarya of the Gaudiya Math. But Sridhar Maharaj is responsible for disobeying this order of Guru Maharaj, and he and two others who are already dead, unnecessarily thought that there must be one acarya. If guru maharaj could have seen someone who was qualified at that time to be acarya he would have mentioned it; because on the night before he passed away he talked of so many things, but never mentioned an acarya. His idea was that an acarya was not to be nominated amongst the governing body."

The letter continues explaining Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's actual plan for the continuation of the disciplic succession:

"He said openly, You make a GBC and conduct the mission. So his idea was, amongst the members of the GBC, he who would come out successfully would automatically be selected as a self effulgent acarya."

[My boldfacing. In the original, this last sentence reads as follows: "So his idea was amongst the members of GBC who would come out successful and self effulgent acarya would be automatically selected."]
What happened, however, was this:

"So Sridhar Maharaj and his two associate gentlemen unauthorizedly elected one acarya, and later it proved a failure. The result is now everyone is claiming to be acarya even though they may be kanistha adhikari with no ability to preach. In some of the camps the acarya is being changed three times in a year. Therefore we may not commit the same mistake in our ISKCON camp. Actually, amongst my god brothers none is qualified to become acarya."

Here we see a parallel to Srila Prabhupada's last instructions. Obviously, the mistake of our GBC was the idea of appointing acaryas. Unfortunately, this mistake is now being perpetuated by the "reform movement." A list of points offered the GBC for discussion by the "North American Association of Prabhupada Disciples" includes: "Disciplinary measures regarding GBC members and gurus: censure, resignation, suspension, leave of absence, which includes voluntary and involuntary, re-assignment and expulsion." (January, 1987)

The Gaudiya Math appointed one acarya who fell down. The ISKCON GBC appointed many, and because it misunderstands the instructions of the previous acarya, it is going to appoint many more. That many appointed acaryas fell down proves that the GBC did not have the ability to understand the spiritual qualifications of the persons appointed, it did not know "what is guru." Obviously, a committee resolution or democratic voting process is not the way to "make an acarya."

Let us again turn to Srila Prabhupada's books to understand how to become acarya:

"The Vedas enjoin us to seek out a guru; actually, they say to seek out the guru, not just a guru. The guru is one because he comes in disciplic succession. What Vyasadeva and Krishna taught five thousand years ago is also being taught now. There is no difference between the two instructions. Although hundreds and thousands of acaryas have come and gone, the message is one. The real guru cannot be two, for the real guru does not speak differently from his predecessors. Some spiritual teachers say, 'In my opinion you should do this,' but this is not a guru. Such so-called gurus are simply rascals. The genuine guru has only one opinion, and that is the opinion expressed by Krishna, Vyasadeva, Narada, Arjuna, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and the Goswamis. Five thousand years ago Lord Sri Krishna spoke the Bhagavad-gita, and Vyasadeva recorded it. Srila Vyasadeva did not say, 'This is my opinion.' Rather, he wrote, sri bhagavan uvaca, that is 'The Supreme Personality of Godhead says.' Whatever Vyasadeva wrote was originally spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Srila Vyasadeva did not give his own opinion.

Consequently, Srila Vyasadeva is a guru. He does not misinterpret the words of Krishna, but transmits them exactly as they were spoken. If we send a telegram, the person who delivers the telegram does not have to correct it, edit it, or add to it. He simply presents it. That is the guru's business. The guru may be this person or that, but the message is the same; therefore it is said that guru is one." - SSR (p. 56)

In addition, let us again consider some passages from the letters that were accepted as mandate letters for GBC conduct:

"Forget this centralization and bureaucracy." - Letter to Karandhar das

"Once there is bureaucracy the whole thing will be spoiled. There must be always individual striving and work and responsibility, competitive spirit." - Letter to Karandhar das

"The whole problem is they are not following the regulative principles, that I can detect. Without this, enthusiasm will be lacking."
- Letter to Karandhar das

"So the future of this Krishna consciousness movement is very bright, so long the managers remain vigilant that 16 rounds are being chanted by everyone without fail, that they are all rising before four morning, attending mangol aratrik - our leaders shall be careful not to kill the spirit of enthusiastic service, which is individual and spontaneous and voluntary. They should try always to generate some atmosphere of fresh challenge to the devotees, so that they will agree enthusiastically to rise and meet it. That is the art of management: To draw out spontaneous loving spirit of sacrificing some energy for Krishna."
- Letter to Karandhar das

4. What to Do Now?

The prevalent mood in the ISKCON GBC today is to regret the past mistakes, offer apologies to mistreated godbrothers, and reduce the standard of guru worship. Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu urges in his article "Resolution to Restore Full Faith in the GBC":

"Therefore the GBC now must undertake measures to restore the faith of the devotees. The body as a whole is now heavily burdened by its past sins of commission and omission, and it must now become free from that burden. Therefore it needs to undergo a process of renewal, restoration and rebirth - just as Brahma, feeling himself tainted, cast off his old body and took a new purified body to continue the work of creation."

Satsvarupa dasa Goswami believes that sincere regret on the part of the mistaken GBC men and acaryas, humility and modesty in terms of accepting worship from their disciples and a re-assessment of their relationship with their godbrothers, as well as the reformation of everyone's relationship to Srila Prabhupada would help. There is a tendency among the gurus appointed since 1986 to perceive their role as nothing more than grade school teachers who teach their disciples what Srila Prabhupada said. They hardly want to ask for service any more, nor accept the responsibility to take their disciples back home, back to Godhead. That burden they are loading on the shoulders of the Founder Acarya, Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Kirtanananda Swami, as well as many disciples of the new acaryas, criticizes this philosophy on the grounds that if the disciple is not allowed to serve and worship his spiritual master, how will then he render service to Krishna, and go back home, back to Godhead? Those opposed to the new philosophy quote scriptural references like this verse from the Bhagavad-gita:

tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya
upadeksyanti te jnanam
jnaninas tattva darsinah

"Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth." (Bg. 4.34)

They also present arguments that have already been formulated in the 1980 paper by the GBC committee:

"In the song to the departed acarya, Thakura Bhaktivinoda says that Haridas Thakur is still living because the message is still living. The message is broadcast by the acarya, and therefore the vyasasana for the new acarya is a symbol of Prabhupada's continuous life on this earth through the broadcasting of his message. Although all of Srila Prabhupada's disciples are powerfully broadcasting his message, the acarya symbolizes the transmission of Srila Prabhupada's message to future generations. One may argue that putting one's vyasasana next to Srila Prabhupada is trying to usurp Srila Prabhupada's position. But rather it is a correct and proper manifestation of the truth of the parampara." (p.17)

Kirtanananda Swami further points out that one who neither understands Srila Prabhupada's desires nor follows the principles layed down in his books is not a GBC. He says that no one can become acarya by the "rubber-stamp" of a committee. Kirtanananda Swami explains pride and humility as follows:

"Humility is developed by having knowledge of your position. We are like a grain of sand on the ocean shore. Depending on how closely we see Krishna, humility develops.... Pride makes us forget Krishna. Our natural position is very small. One who is simply acting as servant is free from pride. When we get some opulence, there is a tendency to become proud. Real pride is to be servant of Krishna. Real humility is to concentrate on pleasing Krishna, not on pleasing everyone's senses."

- Brijabasi Spirit, June 1986, pp.19, 20

4.1. Srila Prabhupada about ISKCON Leadership

In an effort to present Srila Prabhupada's conception of the leadership of his International Society for Krishna Consciousness, let us first of all hear his explanation concerning faith in the devotees. Through the repeated fall downs of personalities that had so far been respected and worshiped as spiritual masters, naturally all faith in superior devotees has been destroyed. Srila Prabhupada explains that faith in devotees exists on the spiritual platform. An exalted Vaisnava can only be recognized by another exalted Vaisnava:

"Regarding your question about faith in devotees, faith must be there. But we should always take instructions from devotees who are considered to be elevated. A preacher's position is like this: He should have firm faith and love for Krishna. He should make friendship with devotees. He should be very much charitable and kind to the neophytes, and he should avoid the company of non-devotees. This program suggests, of course, a devotee who is not in the neophyte stage can discriminate what is Krishna, what is

devotee, what is neophyte, and what is nondevotee. Unless one is able to discriminate, one is to be considered to be in the neophyte stage. In the neophyte stage the position is that the neophyte devotee worships the Deity in the temple with great awe and reverence, but he cannot discriminate who is devotee, who is non-devotee, and who is neophyte." -
- Letter, 9/28/69, to Hansadutta das

The present inclination is to leave the decision making process to voting committees and election meetings. This process has been introduced by Srila Prabhupada concerning management decisions in the GBC and Temple Presidents meetings. In many places, however, Srila Prabhupada pointed out the disadvantages of democracy. According to him, it encourages irresponsibility:

"I have never been in favor of this practice of many times changing the responsible officer, three times in one week changing presidents, this will ruin the whole thing. From now on, if someone takes the leading post, he must agree to stick and not go away just because it is difficult from time to time. That is ideal leader. He is responsible and he knows his duty. Just like I did that. My guru maharaj gave me a task and always I was discouraged by my god-brothers, but I did not forget him even for a moment, and I was determined to follow my duty, even though sometimes I did not like to do it. But this always changing means no sense. "If he is a leader, he must be fixed-up. Otherwise, if he has no real interest, why he takes that post? He must be responsible. He must stick and develop the highest standard of Krsna consciousness practice in that area of management. But if he is sometimes thinking, Oh, I do not like to do this, let me go away at first opportunity, then how will things go on? That is just like democratic system in your government: every four, five years changing all the leaders. In this way, every man is thinking he shall not try to do very much. No one is interested in the real welfare of the citizens, simply because the post is temporary. That is not our process.

"Real meaning of duty is just like Arjuna: He did not like to be responsible, he wanted to leave the scene, but Krsna convinced him, this is your duty, to fight, so he did it for Krsna, and he fought until the last man was killed from the opposing side. That is leadership. He is determined to stick to his position because he has understood Krsna. [my underlining]" - Letter, 11/5/72, to Satsvarupa Goswami

Srila Prabhupada expresses the same idea in another letter:

"This constantly changing managers is not good. [...] It is just like one man is holding government post by getting votes, so today or tomorrow or next day, but he will have to go out, then another man comes, then another, another - in this way, democratic system, no one becomes responsible for the welfare of the citizens, only they want to take for themselves as much as they can before they have to get out, so they do not take real interest in their duty. It is a little like that. My idea is that the leaders must agree to stick at one place, even they may have to remain there life-long, that is the ideal leader, one who is conscious of his duty." -
Letter, 11/5/72, to Hridayananda Goswami

A leader must understand Krishna. How, otherwise, could he become a leader? This is also explained in the Srimad Bhagavatam:

"One who cannot deliver his dependents from the path of repeated birth and death should never become a spiritual master, a father, a husband, a mother or a worshipping demigod." - Bhag 5.5.18

Srila Prabhupada gave his most significant instruction concerning leadership in a conversation with disciples on the train to Allahabad, on January 11, 1977:

Rameshvara Swami: Srila Prabhupada, should we be thinking in our minds that one day the Krishna consciousness movement will have to manage the cities and nations of the world?

Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes.

Rameshvara Swami: So, there are so many departments in managing such a big thing. It requires a lot of...

Srila Prabhupada: No, no. If people become Krishna conscious, then so many nonsense departments will be reduced.

Hari Sauri: Simplified.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. The sinful departments, illicit sex, meat eating, they will be closed, and that will make it simple.

Rameshvara Swami: They have given too much power to the people, the people demand so many things.

Srila Prabhupada: Therefore, they are suffering. Ordinary people, what will they do? They'll engage in anarthas. Actually, they have created so many things.

Rameshvara Swami: So when the Krishna consciousness movement becomes so powerful that it is in charge of the government, is it because a small group of people or because of a mass?

Srila Prabhupada: It is due to the quality of the leaders.

Rameshvara Swami: But will it be like Russia where there is only a small group of people who are conscious?

Srila Prabhupada: No, it is not like that. The quality of the people will be changed.

Rameshvara Swami: So that means the whole mass population will take part.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Rameshvara Swami: Only then will the Krishna consciousness government be possible.

Srila Prabhupada: No, you can have a government even when you are in the minority. But the mass of people will have to see the quality of the leaders.

Hari Sauri: The desire for good leadership is there, so if we present good leaders, then they'll naturally accept.

Srila Prabhupada: Our leaders must be very good.

Hari Sauri: That means we have to move into political circles and do a lot of preaching there.

Srila Prabhupada: If you work strictly on your principles, then everyone will accept.

Srila Prabhupada: No, you show the example. People will automatically follow. When the people find it is very nice, they will accept." (excerpts)

5. Definitions

Srila Prabhupada's definition of cooperation:

"Fighting amongst ourselves is not at all good. If our preaching work is neglected, or if we fall down in following the regulative principles such as rising before four, chanting 16 rounds, like that, if these things are not strictly observed then maya will enter and spoil everything. So my best advice to you is to strictly observe these things yourself and be the example so that all others may follow. We should not criticize each other, as Vaisnavas, because there is fault in everyone and we may be ourselves subject to criticism. Best thing is to be beyond suspicion ourselves, then if we see discrepancies and make suggestion the others will automatically respect and take action to rectify the matters. That is cooperation.

"And we must exist on such cooperation, otherwise the whole thing is doomed if we simply go on fighting over some small thing. So try to organize things and preach together in this spirit, and that will please me very, very much. - Letter, 11/18/72 to Madhumangal das

Srila Prabhupada's definition of a pure devotee:

"You speak of the pure devotee, that he is a saktavesa avatar, that we should obey him only - these things are the wrong idea. If anyone thinks that only a pure devotee should be obeyed and no one else, that means he is a nonsense. We advise everyone to address one another as prabhu. Prabhu means master, so how should the master be disobeyed? Others are also pure devotees. All of my disciples are pure devotees. [underlined in original] Anyone surrendered to the spiritual master, sincerely serving him, is a pure devotee. As soon as we distinguish, here is a pure devotee, here is a non-pure devotee, that means we are nonsense. Why do you only want to be in the spiritual sky with one specific person? Why not with everyone? If one person can go, why not everyone? All of you will go. We will have another ISKCON there. Of course, Mr. N. must stay....

"As for your next question, Can only a few pure devotees deliver others? anyone, if he is a pure devotee, he can deliver others, he can become spiritual master. But unless he is on that platform he should not attempt it. Then both of them will go to hell, like blind men leading the blind."

- Letter, 12/14/72, to Tusta Krsna dasa

Therefore, we have to know who is guru and surrender unto him:

"And who is a liberated person? One who knows Krsna. It is stated in the Bhagavad-gita, fourth chapter, anyone who knows Krsna in truth is immediately liberated, and after quitting the present body, he immediately goes to Krsna. That means he becomes a resident of Krsnaloka. As soon as one is liberated, he is immediately a resident of Krsnaloka, and anyone who knows the truth of Krsna can become spiritual master. That is the version of Lord Caitanya....

"Your next question, whether the Spiritual Master was formerly a conditioned soul, actually a bona fide spiritual master is never a conditioned soul. There are three kinds of liberated persons. They are called 1. sadhan siddha, 2. kripa siddha, and 3. nitya siddha. Sadhan siddha means one who has attained perfection by executing the regulative principles of devotional service. Kripa siddha means one who has attained perfection by the special mercy of Krsna and the spiritual master, and nitya siddha means one who was never contaminated. The symptom of a nitya siddha is that from the beginning of his life he is attached to Krsna, and he is never tired of rendering service to Krsna.

"So we have to know what is what by these symptoms, but when one is actually on the siddha platform there is no such distinction as to who is sadhan, kripa, or nitya siddha. Just like the river water gliding down to the Atlantic ocean, nobody can distinguish which portion was the Hudson river or some other river, neither is there any necessity to make any such distinction....

"You are correct when you say that when the spiritual master speaks it should be taken that Krsna is speaking. That is a fact. A spiritual master must be liberated. It does not matter whether he has come from Krsnaloka or he is liberated from here.... But in the broader sense, everyone comes from Krsnaloka. When one forgets Krsna, he is conditioned, when one remembers Krsna, he is liberated."

- Letter by Srila Prabhupada, 6/10/69, to Mukunda dasa

Srila Prabhupada about initiation:

"Regarding your question concerning paramatma: You are fortunate enough because of your sincere service. Krsna is paramatma who is sitting within your heart, and He is now dictating. Krsna is so kind that He wants to help us as spiritual master in two ways. He helps us from within as caitya guru, and He expands Himself externally as siksa guru (as instructor) and diksa guru (initiator). So the principle is that whatever you are instructed by the caitya guru internally may be confirmed by the instructor or initiator externally. Then your progress will be complete."

- Letter, 5/21/69, to Shivananda dasa

"Regarding your question, the second initiation is the real initiation. The first initiation is preliminary, just to prepare the student. It is like primary and secondary education. The first initiation gives the student the chance to become purified, and when he is actually purified, then he is recognized as a brahmin. That is the real initiation. The eternal bond between disciple and spiritual master begins from the first day he hears. Just like my spiritual master, in 1922 he said in our first

meeting, You are an educated boy, why don't you preach this cult. That was the beginning, now it is becoming a fact. Therefore the relationship began from that day.

"The spiritual master accepts the sinful reactions of the disciple from the day of first initiation....

"If you think of me and work for me, then I am in your heart. If you love somebody, then he is in your heart. It is a common thing, everyone understands it. If I hate or love someone, he is in my heart. Therefore, simply by hating Krsna one gets salvation, like Kamsa. So if you want to hate, hate Krsna." - Letter, 9/4/72, to Jadurany dasi

Srila Prabhupada about disciples:

"Practically, I do not have any disciples; I select so many masters to train them in the service of the Lord. Your natural attraction for Krsna makes it show that in your previous birth you have cultured this science of Krsna consciousness....

"We do not bluff our students: 'You have liberty to do all sorts of nonsense, and at the same you will time advance in spiritual understanding.' And because we are a little bit strict in this matter, we don't have a very large number of followers, neither do we want any large number of nonsense followers. We want only the moon at night, and we do not care for millions of stars." - Letter, 1/18/69, to Jai Mazo

6. More About Kali Yuga and the Self Effulgent Acarya

To blame the present state of affairs on the fact that we are living in the age of Kali may sound naive, but scripture states that the age of kali has a deteriorating effect on all, even devotees. Srila Prabhupada stated in the mandate letter to Kirtanananda Swami that, due to the age of kali, there is the tendency to quarrel even amongst devotees. In 1977, he said the fact that many of his disciples were wearing long hair was a sign that they were victimized by Kali-yuga:

"Hippie. Lavanyam kesa-dharanam. Kali-yuga. Victim of kali-yuga. There are so many things to victimize over the living entities in kali-yuga, and one of the items is that he will think, I have become very, very beautiful by keeping long hair. You are victimized by Kali yuga. That's all. No explanation. Our trade mark is clean-shaven."

- Morning Conversation in Vrindavana, 5/29/77

The Srimad Bhagavatam says:

"Cities will be dominated by thieves, and the Vedas will be contaminated by speculative interpretations of atheists. Political leaders will virtually consume the citizens, and the so-called priests and intellectuals will be devotees of their genitals and belly."

- (Srimad Bhagavatam, 12. Canto)

Srila Prabhupada further explains in the Caitanya Caritamrita:

"Unfortunately, in this age of Kali, there are many envious persons in the dress of Vaisnavas, and Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has described them as disciples of Kali. He says, kali-cela. He indicates that there is another Vaisnava, a pseudo Vaisnava with tilaka on his nose and kunti beads around his neck. Such a pseudo Vaisnava associates with money and women and is jealous of successful Vaisnavas. [...] A disciple of Kali cannot become an acarya by the decision of some high court. Mundane votes have no jurisdiction to elect a Vaisnava acarya. A Vaisnava acarya is self effulgent, and there is no need for any court judgement. A false acarya may try to override a Vaisnava by a high-court decision, but Bhaktivinoda Thakur says he is nothing but a disciple of Kali. [my underlining]"

- Cc Madhya 1.220

He may here refer to Srila Prabhupada's letter to Rupanuga Prabhu, where he says:

"They [Srila Prabhupada's godbrothers] have no idea or brain how to broadcast the cult of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. My Guru Maharaj used to lament many times for this reason, and he thought, if at least one man had understood the principle of preaching, then his mission would achieve success. [...] Still, he requested his disciples to form a strong Governing Body for preaching the cult of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He never recommended anyone to be acarya of the Gaudiya Math. But Sridhar Maharaj is responsible for disobeying this order of Guru Maharaj, and he and two others who are already dead, unnecessarily thought that there must be one acarya. If Guru Maharaj could have seen someone who was qualified at that time to be acarya he would have mentioned it; because on the night before he passed away he talked of so many things, but never mentioned an acarya. His idea was that an acarya was not to be nominated amongst the governing body. He said openly. You make a GBC and conduct the mission. So his idea was, amongst the members of the GBC, he who would come out successfully would automatically be selected as a self effulgent acarya.

"So Sridhar Maharaj and his two associate gentlemen unauthorizedly elected one acarya, and later it proved a failure. The result is now everyone is claiming to be acarya even though they may be kanistha adhikari with no ability to preach. In some of the camps the acarya is being changed three times in a year. Therefore we may not commit the same mistake in our ISKCON camp.

Because Srila Prabhupada obviously follows in his spiritual master's foot steps concerning the forming of a GBC, this letter explains to us two facts:

1. An acarya should not be selected by the GBC. The "acarya system" is wrong.
2. When, without the GBC's "rubber stamp," an inspired, "self effulgent" personality, namely Srila Prabhupada, took up strong preaching work, then that was also within Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's plan.

Kirtanananda Swami says that there should be a strong GBC who knows and preaches rightly according to Srila Prabhupada's instructions what is guru. He should recognize such a guru, if he has all the symptoms of a guru. This is the function of the GBC as "ultimate managing authority" and preserver of the guru

parampara. Finally, let us again quote Srila Prabhupada's letter to Kirtanananda Swami:

"Material nature means dissension and disagreement, especially in this kali yuga. But, for this Krsna consciousness movement, its success will depend on agreement, even though there are varieties of engagements... In the material world there are varieties, but there is no agreement. In the spiritual world there are varieties, but there is agreement. That is the difference. The materialist, without being able to adjust the varieties and the disagreements, makes everything zero. They cannot come into agreement with varieties, but if we keep Krsna in the center, then there will be agreement in varieties. This is called unity in diversity." - Letter to Kirtanananda Swami

By following Srila Prabhupada's instructions, we will be able to solve all our problems in our conditioned state.

"One should have unflinching faith in Krishna and similarly in the spiritual master. That is the way of understanding the secret of Krishna consciousness. Unfortunately, attempt has been made lately to shake this formula. This mischievous attempt has done a great harm, but if you, the members of the Governing Body Commission can rectify this mischievous attempt, then still there is hope of making our progress uninterruptedly. I hope Krishna will help us." - Letter to Bali Mardan das, 8/25/70