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ALL GLORIES TO SRI GURU AND GOURANGA!

H.D.G. Satsvarupa das Goswami,
c/o ISKCON VRNDAVANA,

HARI SAURI DAS,
1A, Rainey Park,
Calcutta, 19.

February 10, 1987

Dear Satsvarupa Maharaja,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada!

Just recently I received a copy of your latest publication *Guru Reform* so I wanted to take the opportunity to express some feelings I had about it. I hope you won't find it impertinent of me to correspond with you on this matter as I think the booklet was intended to solicit some response as well as express your thoughts and feelings about a subject that has been quite contentious over the last few years.

Basically, I very much appreciate your expressions of humility and your desire to want to apologise etc. for any possible offenses committed as a member of the GBC body towards our godbrothers. Humility is certainly the best quality of spiritually advanced persons and any man's knowledge becomes useless without it. Your genuineness and honesty are a very good reminder to fallen persons like myself about the standard of real progress on the path back home back to Godhead. Thank you very much.

As well as feeling great pleasure I also felt some alarm and anxiety at certain aspects of the book and I hope you don't mind if I reveal these to you for your consideration. I am certainly not in a position to criticise anyone and I present the following points and queries in a humble mood for discussion and clarification:

PUBLIC APOLOGIES.

I understand your intentions as being primarily to clear your heart of any offenses, either real or otherwise, but in doing so I would have thought that discretion has to still be very carefully applied. You have cited Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur in making your apologies but in the verses you have quoted it is mentioned that this should be done in an assembly of *Vaisnavas*. I understand this to mean that such dealing between devotees are not to be made public but should be kept between those who can properly appreciate such behaviour and benefit from it. The fact is there are many envious persons who may utilise your book to slander all the ISKCON gurus and the institution for their own ends. We have many dissidents in places like India and South America who can do great damage to our united preaching attempt

by incorrect use of your 'confessions' and on this basis I would have thought it most unwise to publish and freely distribute it. Surely such an apology could have been made in a more confidential setting such as our own meetings in Mayapur, Vrndavana etc.? According to the ten offenses in chanting the holy names, it is forbidden to speak about the confidential pastimes of Krsna and his devotees to those who have no faith in the devotional process. Krsna Himself also confirms in Bhagavad-gita that one should not speak confidential subjects to non-devotees and the envious, and according to Srila Rupa Goswami, a devotee reveals his mind in confidence to other qualified devotees as an exchange of love. One should not however, open one's heart to those who cannot appreciate such behaviour.

LACK OF SIDDHANTA.

As the leading literary personality within our ISKCON as well as being a guru and very senior devotee I was dismayed to see you publish in book form something which is both inconclusive and an expression of personal confusion, especially when it pertains to the key element of spiritual life i.e. worship of the spiritual master.

Several newer devotees, who are already confused about the position of the gurus, have expressed to me their disappointment after reading Guru Reform. Rather than get some direction and positive clarification they felt as if they were left 'hanging' and just as confused as ever. Many of our godbrothers also feel that the book is incomplete, with no conclusion, and in that respect does not help the insecurity being felt in the society at this time but rather adds to it. It was surprising to receive from you something so inconsummate in print.

While things are under discussion surely it is better to limit our writings to positive statements from Srila Prabhupada and sastra rather than give a daily analysis of mental flux and subjective opinion? Regardless of current trends, devotees want to be given solid spiritual guidance based on eternal principles of sadhana and devotion and they naturally look to the leading members of the society for that. If our ISKCON acaryas and GBC can't supply it, who can? Of course, it is perfectly natural that debate and discussion take place but when we publish something, so far my understanding goes, it should be clear and final otherwise it has no ultimate value.

GOING OUTSIDE OF ISKCON FOR ADVICE.

I was most disturbed to read in big headlines about your meetings with senior Vaisnavas in Vrndavana who are not ISKCON members and your declarations to them of the difficulties within our society.

After all the trouble we have had in the past resulting from this kind of behaviour I find it very difficult to accept. By this, I do not wish to impute any wrong behaviour or secret or malicious intent towards ISKCON on the part of either Narayana Maharaja or Visvambhar Goswami. Nevertheless I want to call to your attention some statements from Srila Prabhupada regarding the dangers of going outside our own camp.

a. Concerning the Gaudiya Matha.

In 1982 you wrote on behalf of the GBC a paper called PURITY IS THE FORCE: Why the followers of Srila Prabhupada should not go outside of ISKCON for seeking spiritual instruction.

It addressed itself to the problem of Jayatirtha das and the defection of many senior men to the camp of Prabhupada's godbrother Sridhar Maharaja and contains many relevant and important instructions which we may ignore at our peril. The paper is twenty pages long so I will not reiterate it all here. However, I would request you to re-read it before the upcoming GBC meeting here in Mayapur. Meanwhile I present a few highlights from it for your immediate consideration:

The following resolution, which I believe is still on our books, was passed at the 1982 GBC meeting:

RESOLVED: That no member of ISKCON shall go to any institution for seeking spiritual instruction. Whoever does so will sever his connection with ISKCON.

"This resolution is simply a confirmation of Srila Prabhupada's teaching that only through the authorized parampara system can a Krsna conscious devotee receive his instructions in spiritual life..."

"The GBC resolution has specific application not only to mundane speculative sources of knowledge outside the Vedic literature and not only to Mayavadi books and teachers but also to the branches of the Gaudiya Matha run by Srila Prabhupada's godbrothers or their disciples. That members of ISKCON should not associate with even Srila Prabhupada's godbrothers or take them as guides or gurus for the management of ISKCON strictly conforms to many instructions Srila Prabhupada gave his disciples throughout his years of forming and leading ISKCON.

"The history of how the orders of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati were disobeyed and as a result the Gaudiya Matha broke up and failed in its mission for world-wide preaching is explained by Srila Prabhupada in the

following purports to Caitanya-caritamṛta: Adi-līla 12:8, and Adi-līla 7:96; [please read them]

"In a letter to Rupanuga das dated April 28th, 1974 Srila Prabhupada states:

"Actually, amongst my godbrothers no one is qualified to be acarya. So it is better not to mix with my Godbrothers very intimately, because instead of inspiring our students and disciples they may sometimes pollute them. This attempt was made previously by them... but somehow or another I saved the situation. This is going on. We shall be very careful about 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."

There are other letters also (not quoted in the GBC paper) which were written since the above one:

"My dear Karuna Sindhu das,

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated Oct. 24th 1975 and I have noted the contents. I am very glad to receive your letter. I can understand this cunning Purusottama das has taken advantage of your simplicity. So any one of my godbrothers cannot help me in this way of book writing because they are unfortunate in the matter of preaching work. They are simply trying to infiltrate our society to do something harmful by their attempt. So please do not have any correspondence with this Purusottama or any of my godbrothers, so-called. And do not do anything without consulting me. You can inform this instruction to everyone and send back to me the sheets of corrections sent to you by Purusottama.

I was very much anxious to know how Purusottama entered in our camp. Now the matter is clear. Be careful for further dealings with such men."

There are many other such letters and instructions which for brevity's sake I will not quote here but the point is made very clear as to why we cannot be helped in any way by members of the Gaudiya Matha, in Srila Prabhupada's purports in the Caitanya-caritamṛta, which were summarised in the following way in PURITY IS THE FORCE:

"The Gaudiya Matha failed because of its leading members not implementing their Guru Maharaja's instructions to have everyone work under the GBC... This splintering of the original Gaudiya Matha institution of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta made all chances for their successfully preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world impossible. Seeing this failure due to disobedience to their Guru Maharaja, Srila Prabhupada remained aloof from all these separate parties and although alone, he was determined to follow the original instructions of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta....

"In the same purport where Srila Prabhupada describes how the leading secretaries of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, with their politics and neglect to form a GBC, split the Matha and spoiled its preaching, Srila Prabhupada also charges these followers with their inability to preach. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati never authorized his disciples to divide up the Gaudiya Matha and because they did so they never experienced any world wide success. In other words, they lost Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's blessings, which are bestowed only upon those who follow his instructions and preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world." [see C.C. Adi-līla, 12:81]

Another reason given for not going outside is quoted as follows:

"When in 1967 Srila Prabhupada was very ill and about to leave for India, some of his disciples naively asked if one of Srila Prabhupada's godbrothers could come and be their teacher. Srila Prabhupada replied that such a suggestion was an insult, because if one of his godbrothers came and taught even one thing different, it would cause a great disturbance among Prabhupada's disciples."

It is quite clear that as an institution and individually we have nothing to gain from approaching the Gaudiya Matha members, whoever they may be, for help in resolving ISKCON managerial and spiritual affairs. Prabhupada himself said their own failure was due to *gurur-avaṇa*, disobeying their spiritual master. If we now disobey Srila Prabhupada by going to them for advice then what chance of success do we have? How can anyone, no matter how sincere he may be, help us to understand Srila Prabhupada's intention, unless he is a sold out follower of Srila Prabhupada? I have not noticed any member of the Gaudiya Matha make any move to re-establish a GBC as per Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's instructions and as actually executed by Srila Prabhupada, so they continue to perpetuate the offence of their predecessors. We do not say this to denigrate them in any way but Srila Prabhupada chose to write this into his books as a permanent warning to us all that we cannot in any way disobey the spiritual master's instructions without devastating our spiritual lives and the mission of the previous acaryas. From PURITY IS THE FORCE:

"Those devotees new to ISKCON who innocently and curiously want to approach Srila Prabhupada's godbrothers in the Gaudiya Matha are like babes in the woods. They do not know the history of Srila Prabhupada and the Gaudiya Matha. The Gaudiya Matha institutions are dangerous waters indeed for Srila Prabhupada's followers. Srila Prabhupada says his godbrothers are "very competent" to hurt us, and that they are invested with a mysterious

power to cause disruption. He has repeatedly said that we should not mix with his godbrothers. That instruction should be enough to make us push on our spiritual life strictly within the ISKCON direction."

In your Guru Reform book you mention that, "We spoke with Narayana Maharaja. He's a disciple of Prabhupada's sannyasa guru, Kesava Maharaja, and Prabhupada said he could be consulted."

However, in PURITY IS THE FORCE, this point as to what Srila Prabhupada actually said, is made quite clear:

"Another mention of Sridhar Maharaja by Srila Prabhupada that is blown out of proportion is Prabhupada's statement at the time of his disappearance. Because they were not expert in technical matters such as how to prepare the samadhi of the pure devotee spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada instructed his secretaries at his bedside that they could receive such technical information from two persons, namely Sridhara Maharaja and Narayana Maharaja. For this simple instruction on where to go for advice on technical matters, to be taken as an order by Srila Prabhupada that Sridhar Maharaja [or Narayana Maharaja] should now be the new world acarya or advisor for ISKCON is a complete fabrication."

Isn't it the fact that Srila Prabhupada never gave any such statement that Narayana Maharaja may be 'consulted' on any affairs of the management etc. of ISKCON, what to speak of the most confidential subject matters?

Maharaja, I do not offer these factual statements as a criticism of either you or Narayana Maharaja. My concern is that by simply mentioning Sridhar Swami in the past as a person to whom we could go for advice, we encouraged devotees, some personally motivated and others innocent, to seek an alternative opinion which turned out to be different from Srila Prabhupada's and that of the GBC. In doing so we fostered a severe split in our society and our foolishness was exploited by the unscrupulous to great effect. I know that there is pressure in our society from some quarters to continually go to Srila Narayana Maharaja to seek instruction and advice but this is clearly against Srila Prabhupada's direct orders to us all.

In Guru Reform you mention how despite being ordered by Srila Prabhupada in a letter to act in one way in the dealings with the real estate man in New York, you chose instead to listen to your misguided godbrothers and nearly wrecked your spiritual life:

"As these short comings were pointed out, they sounded very familiar to me. I know well my weakness in being influenced by others and not asserting the truth."

When one does this repeatedly he loses the instinct to ascertain and assert the truth, and he goes along with the crowd... I was convinced that Prabhupada was calling on me personally to carry out his will, and I knew that Brahma-nanda and Kirtanananda were not enlightened on the subject. But when I went to them and showed them Prabhupada's letter, they gradually convinced me that we should continue the policy of cooperating with Mr. Paine. They said Prabhupada would approve of it. Thus from an early stage in my spiritual life I began losing opportunities to carry out the truth."

If an ISKCON guru, and one of the most respected and senior at that, openly publishes the fact that he goes outside for guidance, and if he continually quotes someone other than Srila Prabhupada as his reference for statements he makes in class and *istagosthi*, then what are new devotees going to think? If they cannot obtain any *siddhanta* from the chief writer of ISKCON won't it naturally predicate their minds with the idea that there are others, a-ISKCON, who are more qualified to give them instruction on spiritual life and the development of their Krsna consciousness? Yet who is more qualified than Srila Prabhupada, who was the only member of the Gaudiya institution to successfully execute his spiritual master's desire? Why therefore should we quote anyone as our authority other than Srila Prabhupada and our previous acaryas, and thus suggest that other institutions are equal to, or more capable than, the ISKCON that he set up, in pleasing the *parampara* in the matter of spreading Krsna consciousness?

You also mention Narayana Maharaja's humble claim to regard Srila Prabhupada as his *siksa guru* but just how far does that go? Where was he when Srila Prabhupada struggled for twelve long and hard years to establish his world wide mission? He may be an admirer of what Srila Prabhupada did, but he stuck tight to a doomed institution while Prabhupada single-handedly made superhuman efforts, creating a movement which actually spread the glories of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati all over the world. A real *sisya* accepts his *guru's* instructions as his life and soul. Srila Prabhupada quite deliberately set up an institution which was entirely different from his godbrothers, designating himself as the founder-acarya and giving it a completely different name, what to speak of anything else. Srila Narayana Maharaja has spent his whole life and expended his entire energy for the Gaudiya Matha. Does he accept Srila Prabhupada's statements regarding the failure of the Gaudiya Matha, that it is *asara*? I recall (and read in PURITY IS THE FORCE) that Sridhar Maharaja, while proclaiming Srila Prabhupada to be a *saktyavesa*-avatar, advised us that in future printings of Prabhupada's books we leave out any disparaging or disagreeable references to the Gaudiya Matha and its members.

b. Concerning Visvambhar Goswami

Without belabouring the above points, I would question how ISKCON can possibly benefit from the advice of the modern day representative of the *jati-gosai*, which Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur mentions as one of the *apa-sampradayas*. Srila Prabhupada also speaks about the deviation of this line of *Vaisnavas* in *Caitanya-caritamṛta*. These references you may view for yourself.

I have another reference which you may be interested to note, coming from 1976. Srila Prabhupada received a letter from Srivatsa Goswami in June requesting him to intervene on his behalf over a deal on some book exchange he had made with Santosa das and the L.A. BBT. He was to give a complete set of 'Goswami literature' to ISKCON and receive in exchange a complete set of Prabhupada's books. He was sent two volumes of *Caitanya-caritamṛta* from L.A. and Santosa gave him some in Vrndavana. When the BBT men were chastised for sending Prabhupada's books to his godbrother Purusottama das [see above letter to Karuna Sindhu] they also stopped the supply to Srivatsa Goswami. He then wrote to Srila Prabhupada asking him to resume it. This is the correspondence that ensued:

To Rameswar Swami, L.A. BBT, June 24TH, 1976:

"I am in receipt of one letter from Srivatsa Goswami, 45, Dwarao Bagh Colony, Assi, Varanasi 221 005, India. He has written that Santosa das met him at his residence in Vrndavana and proposed to give Srivatsa Goswami all of my books in exchange for a set of 'Goswami literature' edited by Sri Purudas. All this was done without my sanction. Why has Santosa asked him for this? No one told him to do so. Write him and ask him who gave him permission to do this!

What is this swag??? Why haven't they asked me first??? We have nothing to do with any publication by these people. Those books are to be returned at once. Do the needful. Already they have sent several of my books to Srivatsa Goswami and Srivatsa Goswami mentions that he received 2 volumes of *Caitanya-caritamṛta* from Los Angeles BBT warehouse. Who is doing this?"

To Srivatsa Goswami, Varanasi, June 24TH 1976:

"With reference to your letter dated June 5th, 1976, I regret to inform you that this transaction has taken place without my sanction. We are not interested in book exchange. If you want our books you should purchase them from our Bombay centre: [address]

"Our Los Angeles office has been notified to return all your volumes to you. I hope that you have not been too much inconvenienced."

To Ranadhir das, L.A. BBT mail-order, July 5th, 1976:

"I am glad to see that you are now conscientiously executing your duty. Always check with me first before sending out any literature to persons who have not been specifically approved by me."

You may note that in his letter to Karuna Sindhu, Srila Prabhupada warned of attempts to infiltrate ISKCON and said that the problem was caused because his godbrother 'took advantage of your simplicity' and thus 'entered our camp'. Are we still 'babes in the woods'? Just recently I have read two letters from Visvambhar Goswami addressed to various GBC men. In the first, dated September 17th, 1986, he makes a couple of simple observations with the message that we should stick to our duty to Srila Prabhupada. He further states that he and ISKCON are part of the same *sampradaya* and offers his services. All seemingly very innocuous. However, in December, significantly after the festival in Vrndavana and your meeting with him etc., he sent another letter, this time with much more detailed proposals for the running of our society no less. This letter offers ideas on our fallen acaryas, marriages [the varieties of which he distinguishes according to bodily designation], *gurukula* organization, usage of funds within the society, the opening of temples, deity worship and several minor items.

I spent quite some time with Srila Prabhupada in Vrndavana, at least six occasions. I never heard him say anything favorable about the Vrndavana *gosais* but I did hear him say that they had created many obstacles for him personally in setting up ISKCON there. He did not do it with their help, rather he did it in spite of them. When Srila Prabhupada was personally present none of them came forward to help him but many hindered him. I do not say Visvambhar Goswami was one of them, but any man is known by his association (you may recall Srila Prabhupada's decision in Mayapur, 1977, not to follow up on his invitation to Sridhar Maharaja to come and live with him, on the grounds that he kept close association with Gaudiya Matha men who were inimical). Why are our men so eager to associate with those who are not in our *sampradaya* and who have nothing to offer the followers of Srila Prabhupada except perhaps their well wishes? If Visvambhar Goswami is genuine and wants to help, that's fine, but in the matter of preaching and in the matter of philosophy he has to learn from Srila Prabhupada and Srila Prabhupada's followers should not be so foolish as to think they have anything to learn from anyone but Srila Prabhupada.

Here are a couple of letters which serve as a very sobering reminder of the dangers of going outside our spiritual line, especially in Vrndavana. Please note the personality involved and the progression of the dates:

To Nitai das, Vrndavana temple, Nov. 7th, 1975

"My dear Nitai das,

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated October 28th 1975 and I have noted the contents. Regarding the matter with Purusottama das: you immediately go and take back whatever books of ours that he has in his possession. You may inform him that we do not require his editing, neither should he correspond with our men in Los Angeles. He is a very heinous man. He wants to become more important. Who sent him books from Los Angeles without asking me? Who has given him the books he now has? You take them back immediately. If this man comes to see me in Vrndavana, I do not wish to see him."

To Nitai das, Vrndavana, June 7th, 1976:

"I have received information that some of our men are mixing with the babajis in Vrndavana. This has produced so many problems amongst our men and women who visit Vrndavana. Here in Los Angeles, we have found that there is a group of about 40 devotees who privately meet to discuss the intimate pastimes thinking they can enter into the understanding of the gopis prematurely. This will create havoc in our society, and the result will be that if this allowed to go on our preaching work will be greatly hampered. This premature desire to understand the lila of Krsna is due to mundane sex-life desire as we have seen amongst many of the babajis and sahajiyas in Vrndavana. Our Jagannath das has come back from Vrndavana asking me that he had heard some babaji speaking about siddha-deha and he also was listening to these babajis. So I want this immediately stopped. If it continues, this mixing with the babajis, then it will mean spoiling. In many cases, these babajis keep 2 or 3 women. Asatsanga tyagi. Their association is to be avoided and prohibited amongst all of our devotees who visit Vrndavana."

To Gopal Krsna das, Bombay, July 14th, 1976:

"Why Nitai should be attending lectures outside of our temple? If he is not satisfied with the standard of lectures in our temple then he should be permitted to give some lectures himself but this habit of going outside to hear others should be stopped immediately. I am writing one letter to Nitai and the copy of this is enclosed for your reference."

To Nitai das, Vrndavana, July 14th 1976:

"I have received reports that you have been developing the habit of going outside the temple to hear lectures by others outside like Krsnachallabha. Also, I have heard now that even some of the Indian devotees are doing likewise."

Strictly nobody should go outside to hear the lectures by others. If you are not satisfied by the calibre of the classes at the Krsna Balarama mandir then you should give another class, but you cannot go outside for hearing other's lectures. Kindly stop this habit immediately."

We all know the fate of Nitai das; all along during the above period he was writing and expressing his loyalty and gratitude to Srila Prabhupada, yet by September 1976 he had become a guru tyagi whom Prabhupada referred to as a venomous serpent after he became thoroughly contaminated from his period of regular association with those who were ultimately against Srila Prabhupada and ISKCON.

Again, this is not a personal criticism of Visvambhar Goswami per se, whom I am sure is a well meaning man. It is simply an observation based completely on Srila Prabhupada's instructions and comments to us all and what happens when we ignore them. The fall of Dhira Krsna das, Aksayananda Swami, Madhava etc. all followed the same progression, with them repeatedly insisting they were fully fixed at Srila Prabhupada's lotus feet while at the same time they were being dislodged in a very clever and subtle way. As you noted in conclusion in PURITY IS THE FORCE:

"Let us not commit the deadly mistake of thinking we need guidance other than what Srila Prabhupada gives in his books and the guidance of his direct representatives. Only by a loyal, combined effort can we solve our problems within the Krsna consciousness movement and then go on to the larger, urgent work of rescuing the battered souls who are suffering in this worst of ages, bereft of Krsna's grace."

With all the above information Maharaja, I think there is little doubt as to whether we should be going to Narayana Maharaja, Visvambhar Goswami or anyone else. We cannot. Therefore I would like to humbly submit to you that a clarification of this position, which in Guru Reform you have made ambiguous, be very clearly stated, in writing, to all the devotees of ISKCON at this upcoming festival, that this practice of going outside is not at all authorized by Srila Prabhupada.

THE GURU ISSUE

This is something I would like the opportunity to discuss with you in greater detail than is possible here, so it will save until your arrival here in Mayapur. In general I am in agreement with the mood of humble evolution to the status of pure devotee rather than immediate imitation. Simply we have to ensure that the disciples are not completely omitted from worshipping and serving their spiritual masters under the false banner of egalitarianism.

I don't know if you have read the SRI KRSNA BHAJANAMRTA by Srila Narahari Sarakara but it throws alot of bright illumination on the whole topic of *siksa* and *diksa* gurus, the position of Vaisnavas in general and how the disciple should relate to them all. After reading that I find only a confirmation of what we attempted to do in beginning the process of new initiations and as is confirmed in Srila Prabhupada's books, of which the following is only one quote of literally hundreds:

On service to the guru: SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM 7.7.30:

guru-susrusaya bhaktya sarva-labdharpanena ca
sangenā sadhu-bhaktanaṁ isvaradaradhanena ca

"One must accept the bona fide spiritual master and render service unto him with great devotion and faith. Whatever one has in one's possession should be offered to the spiritual master, and in the association of saintly persons and devotees one should worship the Lord, hear the glories of the Lord with faith, glorify the transcendental qualities and activities of the Lord, always meditate on the Lord's lotus feet, and worship the Deity of the Lord strictly according to the injunctions of the shastra and guru."

PURPORT:

"To practice bhakti-yoga, one must first accept a bona-fide spiritual master. Srila Rupa Goswami, in his Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu (1.2.74-75) advises:

guru-padaśrayas tasmāt kṛṣṇa-dīkṣādi-sikṣaṇam
visraṁbhena guruḥ sevā sadhu-vartānānuvartanaṁ

sad-dharma-prcchā bhogaḍi tyagah kṛṣṇasya hetave

One's first duty is to accept a bona fide spiritual master. The student or disciple should be very inquisitive; he should be eager to know the complete truth about eternal religion (sanatana-dharma). The words guru-susrusaya means that one should personally serve the spiritual master by giving him bodily comforts, helping him in bathing, dressing, sleeping, eating and so on. This is called guru-susrusanaṁ. A disciple should serve the guru as a menial servant, and whatever he has in his possession should be dedicated to the spiritual master. Pranair arthair dhiya vaca. Everyone has his life, his wealth, his intelligence and his words, and all of them should be offered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead through the via media of the spiritual master. Every thing should be offered through the spiritual master as a matter of duty, but the offering should be made to the spiritual master with heart and soul, not artificially to gain false prestige.

This offering is called arpana. More over, one should live amongst devotees, saintly persons, to learn the etiquette and proper behaviour of devotional service. Srila Visvanatha Cakravati Thakur remarks in this connection that whatever is offered to the spiritual master should be offered with love and affection, not for material adoration. Similarly, it is recommended that one associate with devotees, but there must be some discrimination. Actually a sadhu, a saintly person must be saintly in his behaviour (sadhavah sad-acarah). Unless one adheres to the standard behaviour, one's position as a sadhu, a saintly person is not complete. Therefore, a Vaisnava, a sadhu, must completely adhere to the standard of behaviour. Srila Visvanatha Cakravati Thakur says that a Vaisnava, should be offered the respect befitting a Vaisnava, which means that he should be offered service and prayers. However, one should not associate with him if he is not a fit person with whom to associate."

In essence we did not start off with an understanding that was fundamentally flawed or incorrect. What conclusion could we draw from Srila Prabhupada's books and the example of his own behaviour other than that the guru is the most important person in the life of the disciple and that he should be worshipped by all means? It was philosophical misconcepts from outside, such as exclusive zonal acaryas etc. and individual anomalies arising from a misuse of free will that has resulted in some abuse and that is what we have to try to redress. The guru, however should not be thrown out with the bath water.

REFORMATION OF THE GBC

I would like to present one or two statements regarding the GBC body and it's function for your comment. I know there is much discussion and proposal to change the way the GBC functions in appointment of it's members, the way it regulates the society etc. and it is an apparently complex debate. Nevertheless, there are some clear and simply guidelines which, for the clear and simple, pose no problems for understandings:

Again, to quote from PURITY IS THE FORCE:

"In 1975, at Srila Prabhupada's request, the GBC drafted resolutions more fully defining the responsibilities of the GBC. These resolutions, as approved by Srila Prabhupada, stress that the GBC members must function cooperatively:

"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, however, their primary responsibility is to the society as a whole."

"The 1975 definitions of the GBC emphasise, as Srila Prabhupada wrote in his original Directions for Management, that the GBC is meant for carrying out Srila Prabhupada's will:

"The Governing Body Commission has been established by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada to represent him, carrying out the responsibility of managing the International Society for Krsna consciousness, of which he is the founder-acarya and supreme authority. The GBC accepts as its life and soul his divine instructions and recognizes that it is completely dependent on his mercy in all respects. The GBC has no other purpose and function 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."

So in Prabhupada's presence this was the way things worked. In his will and final instruction to us all Srila Prabhupada stated emphatically as the first point:

"The Governing Body Commission (GBC) will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krsna consciousness."

I understand that in December the GBC met in North America and accepted a proposal that all GBC men would submit themselves to a process of re-confirmation by a group of 50-60 godbrothers. If they attain a vote of 51% they may remain as GBC men. In my humble understanding this is the most blatant deviation from Srila Prabhupada's very clear and direct orders to us all. I cannot understand how our problems are to be solved by moving away from Srila Prabhupada's instructions. I can understand that by moving closer to them we can limit the damage inflicted by Kali-yuga but if anyone thinks that by making changes and instituting new procedures we shall become successful then they perhaps have not read the following:

Morning walk New Delhi, Dec. 14th 1975

Harikesa: "Change of government means getting poorer."

Prabhupada: "Change of government; Just like they say, a change of theories by the rascals -- change means rascal."

Harikesa: "But as soon as a govt. changes..."

Prabhupada: "Anything change, means it is the domain of rascals. Pandemonium. Just like in Manu samhita, it is said, (quotes sanskrit) women should not be given independence. Once said: that is fact. If you want to change, you suffer. That's all."

Hari-sauri: "Any deviation from absolute law means immediately suffering."

Prabhupada: "Bas: immediately you have to suffer."

As far as I am aware, Srila Prabhupada's instructions to us are absolute laws. Just as those of us who have failed individually to follow the rules and regulations have suffered, can you tell me how we shall avoid suffering if as a society we change the absolute guidelines set by Srila Prabhupada?

Clearly the GBC has to restore confidence in itself and in the society. It has to police its members more efficiently (although I cannot agree with those that claim the GBC has been entirely negligent in this respect. Hamsadutta, Tamal Krsna, Jayatirtha and now recently Rameswar, Bhagavan, Kirtanananda and Bhavananda, have all been dealt with although it clearly took too long to do it in some cases). At the same time all our members have to also realise that in Kali-yuga, fall-downs of individuals cannot be avoided. Srila Prabhupada states very clearly the real meaning of Lord Caitanya's mission in this letter:

To Jagadish das, Dallas, Nov. 9th, 1975.

"I am glad to hear that Govardhana prabhu is doing nicely now. I am very happy. If there is any discrepancy, we have to request them to correct, not changing or dismissing. Our whole process is to humbly request, sometimes falling down on the feet and flattering. The vivid example is Nityananda prabhu converting Jagai and Madhai."

Attaining a proper balance between strict and exemplary action and the dispensation of mercy which is the every essence of Lord Caitanya's mission has always been a goal of the GBC despite what uninformed critics may say, but it is a difficult balance. Nevertheless the example was given by Srila Prabhupada in his own actions and we must try our best to follow that.

There were fall downs of GBC, *sannyasis*, temple presidents and rank and file throughout Srila Prabhupada's presence on the planet, so if that was going on when we had the most conducive atmosphere for becoming Krsna conscious, how shall we expect that it won't go on now? In the time of the Gaudiya Matha there were many deviations of the leading men and according to the book SRI KRSNA BHAJANAMRTA by Srila Narahari Sarakara, the fall-down and correction of gurus even in the personal presence of Lord Caitanya happened many times.

This is not a justification for fall down. They are unfortunate and have to be dealt with according individual circumstances and the GBC has to be vigilant to protect the integrity of itself and the society. Still, we are not going to avoid it either. It is not that the GBC only has suffered casualties. How many temple presidents, sannyasis and others have had fall downs in the last few years? Even this year without the 'big worship' we have seen at least two new 'gurus' fall within six months and the leader of the so-called reform movement show himself to be in need of reform.

In 1976 when great disruption was caused by a leading GBC man in America Srila Prabhupada resolved the situation by removing the man temporarily from his field of activity but not from the GBC and he also allowed the temple presidents to meet and discuss the GBC proposals and express their feelings on them. However, he never gave them the power to overturn any GBC resolution nor to dictate to the GBC body. He wanted respectful dialogue but not anarchy. He made it quite clear what the relationship of himself, the GBC and the temple presidents was, just three months later in a letter to Vasudeva das in Fiji. ISKCON was just starting up and there was some reported reluctance on the part of the local devotees (initiated disciples of Srila Prabhupada) to accept a GBC as their ultimate authority. They were reported to be favouring a temple management committee, viz a viz a board of trustees:

Letter to Vasudeva das, Fiji, June 30th, 1976:

"In connection with our ISKCON project in Fiji, I beg to inform you that we are managing our Krsna consciousness movement by the Governing Body Commission, GBC. We have got about 20 GBCs looking after the whole world affair, and above the GBC I am there. Below the GBC there are the temple presidents, secretary, treasurer in every centre. So the temple president is responsible to the GBC and the GBC is responsible to me. In this way we are managing. But why are you proposing a separate trustee for Fiji. We have up to now no separate trustee."

A year later in the writing of his will, he remained consistent with the policy that he had maintained since the inception of the GBC body in 1970, stating very clearly, "there is no need of any change." It is very clear from the above that Prabhupada made the GBC a self-regulatory body. Even in 1976, the year of resolution, revolution, dissolution and no solution, Srila Prabhupada never altered that status. As the ultimate managing authority of ISKCON how can it be anything else? The GBC members simply do not have the authority to cede to the control of any other committee.

Are we so presumptuous that we shall now rake out of the files from 1969-70 a document which describes a system of voting for GBC which was considered but never implemented by Srila Prabhupada and declare it to be a valid replacement for that which he personally established and maintained? Are we now so intelligent that we can change Srila

Prabhupada's final instructions to us? Shall we risk the inflammation of the brain which Prabhupada called 'over-intelligence', the same disease the leading secretaries of the Gaudiya Matha suffered from which leads one to commit *gurur-avajna*.

The senior members of the society should have their say, and let the GBC seriously listen to them and take whatever appropriate action is required to both establish faith in themselves, and show their faith in others. And let the other members show their faith in Srila Prabhupada and their GBC godbrothers by accepting the GBC decisions with humble cooperation knowing that we are all intent upon the same goal - the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada and the spread of the Krsna consciousness movement all over the world.

Let the GBC humble itself before the assembled Vaishnavas by all means. Let them renounce any practice which causes unnecessary pain and hardship to their godbrothers and even themselves: but in the name of humility they should not fail to heed these words of Srila Prabhupada written to his godbrothers in 1961:

"You have become renouncers, brothers, so renounce everything. But if you also renounce the order of your spiritual master, then what kind of renunciation is that?"

"What is the difficulty for us all to come together in this way? And why do all these things have to even be said to you?"

"Give up your stubbornness; there is not time! Come, O brother, on this auspicious holy occasion."

"Today my brothers, get to this task. Save the battered souls by your preaching."

DEMOCRACY

This is the great cry of the day. In an age of quarrel everyone wants to be independent and nobody wants to be humble and submit himself to any higher authority. Even though our spiritual master has ordered us to work with one ultimate managing authority it seems we are becoming so victimised by the conditioning of our birth that we now demand the 'democratization of the society' and declare it as an important break through for it's functioning. Break through or breakdown? Can you kindly tell me how changing the hierarchical system of management described above to Vasudeva and insisted on by Srila Prabhupada, to one based on so-called democracy, will benefit us when Srila Prabhupada himself condemned it?

Democracy is a system of the demons; 'demon-crazy' as Srila Prabhupada termed it, which came about due to the devolution of the varnasrama system. It epitomises the envious Kali-yuga mentality that

'everyone is equal', it lends itself perfectly to management based on profit, distinction and adoration where even a qualified man is forced to compete for position and influence through a system of vote gathering, and it pitches the whole of society into constant political manoeuvrings, upheaval and change. It is the symptom of a society that is breaking down. It is not a spiritual system. It did not originate from the Vedas. It comes from the West and we should be mindful of Caitanya Mahaprabhu's statement that the further west one goes the more demonic the people. We were born in the lands of the demons but Srila Prabhupada gave us the chance to become devotees. He gave us an organized system to optimise the opportunity for spiritual advancement and we should stick to it no matter what.

We sense the wind of change and the minds of the devotees, hanging like flags on the pole of acquiescence, flutter in it's cool breeze, standing to announce it's arrival. The wind has gathered force and now even the big flags are unfurled as proud standards to declare to all: democracy has arrived! We should know however, that this wind is a stiff North-wester and once it blows it never stops. As it gathers force it drives everything helter-skelter before it, creating turbulence and confusion, blasting the dust and dirt of material existence into the eyes, blinding everyone in it's path. The once proud banners which heralded it's appearance are left by it in shredded tatters flapping uselessly as it blasts across the land carrying all before it. After prolonged exposure the body of citizenry becomes chilled to the bone and is left a dry and useless husk. When the main life has departed the only creatures left are the maggots who give praise to the wind of democracy for leaving them such a wonderful carcass to feed upon. In a struggling competing heap, by combined effort one comes out on top to enjoy a few brief glories as the king of the maggot pile before his supporters again shift and move out from under him, casting him back into the anonymous mass to become another face in the crowd. As they struggle against each other in a writhing confused tangle the foolish creatures do not realise they are consuming the very thing that gives them life and sustenance. The ill-wind of democracy does indeed blow nobody any good.

It is upto the GBC to check this wind by bringing the body of ISKCON Vaisnavas into the house that Srila Prabhupada has personally designed and constructed, which has the strongest foundation, being built with the best materials and expertise available. His instructions are the very basis of the house of ISKCON and if we try to replace them with a product of inferior design, the house is sure to collapse.

CONCLUSION

Surely the GBC has much work to do in repairing the state of affairs within the society, but it can only be done by reaffirming everything that Srila Prabhupada did and gave us and not by other means. We shall not solve any problems by declaring that we are now so preoccupied with arguing and politics that we cannot think about preaching. Purification can only come from *tapasya* and that austerity is uniting together to preach the message of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and pushing on with full faith in *guru* and *Krsna*.

We appear to be at a major point in the history of ISKCON. Let us hope that history will not record it as the year we committed *guru-avajna* and spoiled the whole mission of our *Guru-maharaja*. What ever solutions we come to we must simply stick to His Divine Grace's instructions and execute them as best we can. No matter how imperfect we may be, the perfectness of action lies in Srila Prabhupada's instructions. Despite individual falldowns the integrity of the movement and devotees in general will be preserved if we accept the following words from PURITY IS THE FORCE:

"We encourage all devotees to let these recent events work as a chastening agent to purify ourselves. We must work in genuine, deepfelt, paraapara allegiance to Srila Prabhupada and his society ISKCON. As quoted by Srila Prabhupada, 'Together we stand, divided we fall.' We must learn more than ever to give up our selfish desires and work together within the Krsna consciousness movement as Srila Prabhupada desired: 'Your love for me will be shown by how you cooperate with one another.'"

The devotees in general within our ISKCON society still look to the GBC body to preserve and protect Srila Prabhupada's teachings and instructions. They do not want to see a GBC which has to constantly compete with a self-appointed group of soothsayers and other individuals. We are not Lord Brahma who functions very nicely with four heads. They were given to him by Krsna so he has also the intelligence how to use them in a co-ordinated fashion. Srila Prabhupada only gave us one head, the GBC. Confusion in the head may be cured the *Ayurvedic* way by chanting Hare Krsna and hearing from *guru*, *sadhu* and *sastra* and acting on that basis. The western method of lobotomy, which results in the patient having to live under constant care of those who made him an imbecile, is not at all recommended.

Let the leading devotees meet together, make criticisms and proposals and let the GBC hear and apply careful consideration to what they have to say. If there are qualified men who can do great work for Srila Prabhupada let them not be suppressed and frustrated; bring them in. And if there are those by whose actions others lose

heart let them be corrected. But on no account should the GBC body abdicate the very great responsibility given to them by Srila Prabhupada to act as the ultimate managing authority of the International Society for Krsna Consciousness. And for those who find this difficult to accept let them take Srila Prabhupada's advice to a disaffected son:

Letter to Gaurisundar das, Aug. 1972

"I am in due receipt of your letter dated Aug. 20th, 1972 and I am quite surprised to read it. This does not sound like you. All along I have been discouraged in every way by my godbrothers, but still I have stuck to my duty, keeping my spiritual master always in front. Because there is some fighting or bickering amongst us, that does not mean that I should go away. If I have understood the order of my spiritual master rightly, then I must perform my duty under any circumstances and never think of going away out of disgust... We should not find fault with others and criticize and go away. That is not the Vaisnava way. Rather we should always be willing to offer all respects to others and consider them as our superiors always."

I look forward to seeing you within the next couple of weeks here in Sri Mayapur dham and I pray to Krsna that your health and the health of our ISKCON will improve from the spiritual association of the assembled Vaisnavas in the most blessed of all places in this age of dissent.

I hope this finds you in good health and increasingly Krsna conscious,

I remain your humble servant,

Hari Sauri Das.