



THE BHAKTIVEDANTA BOOK TRUST

SPANISH DIVISION

Founder-Acarya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

3764 WATSEKA AVE., LOS ANGELES, CA 90034 U.S.A. • TWX 910 340-7062/TEL. (213) 559-8540

Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavan svayam!

Date: Aug. 20, 1978
Camp: Sao Paulo, Brazil

My Dear GBC Godbrothers,

Please accept my respectful obeisances at your lotus feet. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!! the ocean of mercy. I would first like to express my sincere wish that things are going peacefully in your zone, or activity.

The subject matter of this letter is the recent disturbances in South America occasioned by the well-known incidents in Venezuela, and the purpose is to clarify the present situation. I am very sorry that you may have been disturbed by these incidents.

I beg your patient indulgence as I would like to briefly sketch the specific stages leading to this problem.

Last year in Spain, Pramana Swami became involved with Haihaya dasa Adhikary in an "anti-Bhagavan" mentality, so much so that Bhagavan Maharaja found it necessary to remove Haihaya both from his presidency in Barcelona as well as from the country of Spain. Pramana Swami continued preaching at this year's Mayapura festival that the eleven gurus were speaking "their own opinions" and that each new bhakta should carefully scrutinize the gurus and select a qualified one at his own discretion, and not at the recommendations of a GBC or temple president. I personally had long arguments with him and wasted most of this year's festival, both in Vrndavana and Mayapura trying to convince him that he should be submissive and not envious of the gurus. Finally he surrendered, touched my feet several times, begged my forgiveness and vowed undeviating loyalty to me. Based on these emotional assurances, I accepted him and invited him to work with me in Venezuela.

Concerning Viraha Prakasha Maharaja, he also became influenced by Pramana's preaching in India, but also, after speaking with me, repeatedly offered his obeisances, practically with tears in his eyes and begged to eternally serve me. In this way we three parted company, and the next contact I had with them was when they called me from Venezuela to say that they were kicking me out. At that point, a three-man GBC committee went there headed by Satsvarupa Maharaja.

I will not attempt any detailed defense of my previous work in Venezuela. I will simply mention the basic facts. When I arrived in Venezuela in 1974, there were approximately 30 devotees, worshipping Panchātattva and engaged in selling incense and other merchandise to maintain; there were evening classes and Sunday feasts. Our general reputation with ~~with~~ the people and the government was very negative due to some unfortunate incidents. At the time of the Mayapura festival of 1978, there were about 80 devotees in Venezuela, three preaching centers had been opened in addition to Caracas; Venezuela had become the biggest Sankirtana center in all Latin America, Gour-Nitai deities were installed, BBT money allocated to purchase a farm in Venezuela, a first-class relationship established with the government so that they

were actively helping us, our public image was the best in Latin America, and virtually every literate person in the country had one of Prabhupada's books or had a relative or friend who owned a book.

Since I have left, two of the four preaching centers have been closed, book distribution has been reduced by over 85% of the 1977 level.

At this time I beg to proceed to another topic: the initiation of new sannyasis this year in Latin America. This year, in extraordinary measures, I initiated three sannyasis, namely Bir Krishna Maharaja, Jagajivana Maharaja, and Alanatha Maharaja. In defense of this, I would like to state that 1) In each case I gained the approval of three or more GBC Godbrothers, 2) I considered these measures of urgent and dire necessity to save Iskcon in Latin America.

These initiations do not in any way express an attitude on my part either consciously or unconsciously, that I consider myself independent of, or transcendental to, the GBC Board. I state openly that I am a servant of my GBC Godbrothers, all of whom I consider to be my worshipful masters and further that I consider my first duty as Guru to carry out and enforce the will of Srila Prabhupada as it is expressed by the GBC board.

On the other hand, I humbly beg your understanding that down here "south of the border" we have just gone through a tremendous struggle to preserve and protect over twenty-five of Srila Prabhupada's temples and over 500 of his beloved disciples and grand-disciples. I would like to make it perfectly clear that the repeatedly stated intention of the Venezuelan sannyasis was not just to capture Venezuela and take it outside of Iskcon, but to liberate all foreign Iskcon centers from the exploitation and control of an "American-centered oligarchy of political GBC members." I personally was told by Viraha that he expected all Latin American centers to follow his example, and that to encourage them he would be preaching to them. I was cast as an American "tyrant" who had created the Spanish BBT as an instrument to exploit the labor of the poor Latin devotees.

Practically, letters were sent to Colombia, and Chile, personal visits were made to Trinidad and Santo Domingo, and devotees were stolen from the Iskcon center in Spain. I mention these facts not to harp on old problems nor save face personally, but to underscore the urgent need I felt to strengthen Latin America before it was overwhelmed by this poison. The danger of this poison was that these sannyasis played upon the material prejudices and dogmas of latin youth. Just as an american devotee, who was formerly a hippie, might be agitated by an old friend offering him drugs, similarly this type of envious politics is the old bad habit of most young Latin devotees.

This imminent danger was combined with the fact that the GBC had miraculously stated for the second straight year in Mayapura that the growing, ever-increasing temples in Latin America were not really a "zone", and didn't really require "management" like other zones. Without wanting to sound bitter, for several years I have begged the GBC to make proper arrangements for managing Latin America, and I humbly, honestly state that the repeated negligence and indifference of the GBC toward Latin America created a situation of such severe under-management in the temples that they became easy targets for cheap political agitation.

Faced with imminent danger of my life's work being spoiled, and an entire continent packed with temples and devotees being polluted and stolen from ISKCON, I acted boldly and immediately to save our movement. Jagajivan Goswami and Bir Krishna Goswami were sent to protect and manage large geographic areas, with many devotees. Personally I was forced to travel like a madman to over twenty temples initiating devotees and preaching heavily to save Latin America. Due to the strain of this travelling I suffered a physical collapse midway in my travelling and had to return to Brazil for three weeks of recuperation. Frequently I was travelling day and night with dangerously high fever. I am mentioning this only to point out that there was a critical thing going on down here, not that I exploited the situation to get my zonal buddies a cheap sannyasa initiation

without GBC approval.

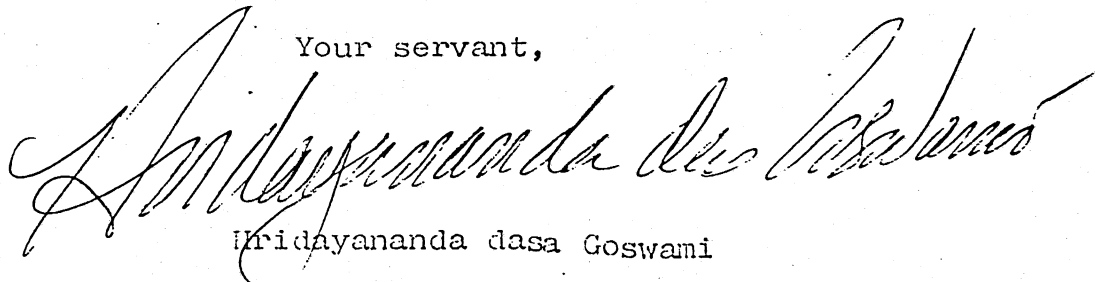
Due to this intense travelling in which every single temple was visited, due to the presence of new and qualified, potent sannyasis patrolling the zone, and due to my arranging to take a huge quantity of books out of Venezuela (which also caused me great suffering), the Venezuelan sannyasis were forced to see that their "liberation movement" had been completely checked, and had nowhere to go but down. Furthermore, several senior men left Venezuela, they were beset by financial calamity, and all possibilities of further support in Latin America were crushed. Faced with this situation, they wisely surrendered to Kirtanananda Maharaja. I do not want to minimize the spiritual influence of His Divine Grace Kirtanananda Maharaja, whom I consider a pure devotee of Krsna and always my superior, by implying that by my political arrangements and not by his purity this problem was, if not solved, at least abated. However, it is a fact that in the beginning of "la revolucion" they were completely and absolutely confident not only of victory and great success in Venezuela, but throughout Latin America, and this would serve as an example for the rest of the world, as they stated.

Alanatha Swami was initiated by me because of danger that these sannyasis would come to Brazil. They have often expressed this desire and the prospect of their preaching against me in my headquarters either on their own behalf or on behalf of another bonafide Guru, is in either case most disturbing and discouraging for me. The other two sannyasis do not even work in my zone, which I consider to be Brazil. In Brazil I am managing five city temples, a large farm and BBT, which I consider, in addition to serving as guru in twenty other temples, to be my fair share of the burden of managing this society. Often I must leave Brazil and I simply refuse to leave my zone wide-open for pollution without even having one person of sannyasa status to defend my position. The other two sannyasis I made are managing the "non-zones" which according to the GBC don't require any GBC management, although these "non-zones" are as large as many "real" GBC zones.

In conclusion I would like to emphasize that my only motive in making these new sannyasis was to be a faithful servant of the GBC by preventing the imminent chaos and disaster which would have been caused. I fully understand that Latin America belongs to Iskcon and the GBC and I thought you might be agitated to lose it. Therefore I have consciously incurred your criticism, which I know was there, in order to serve you in the best way. Hopefully at the coming Mayapura meeting proper arrangement can be made.

I think that if any other GBC, sannyasi or Guru would use my example to justify his making new sannyasis without GBC approval, this would be a highly unfair justification. If a pujari gives up the arotika ceremony to stop a thief who attacks the deities, how can he be criticized? Similarly, I acted only to save your property, therefore I humbly beg that you will understand and give me your mercy. Please grant me the benediction that life after life you accept me as your insignificant servant. I will be happy to reply to any specific questions. Hoping this meets you well, I beg to remain

Your servant,



Hridayananda dasa Goswami