

# TRUTH IS THE ISSUE, AN ANALYSIS OF THE GBC LAWBOOK

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## Preface

Dear devotees,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glory to Srila Prabhupada.

The motivation for this book is a series of experiences, during my years as a member of ISKCON, which led to serious doubts about our leadership. These experiences were so traumatic that they often led to loss of faith and the departure of sincere souls from the preaching movement.

My initial tendency was to ignore and deny the situation. It seemed more pleasant to do so, as everyone likes to think that the society they have joined is perfect, or that it just has a few minor flaws that will go away in time. However, does such denial help us to progress out of illusion? In the Bhagavatam, it is described that "The highest truth is reality distinguished from illusion for the welfare of all." Is it likely that this highest truth can be realized by the denial of reality?

## "This is Maya"

Srila Prabhupada: "The rabbits when they face danger, it understands, 'Now my life is in danger.' He closes his eyes. He thinks that the problem is now solved. And peacefully he is killed. Similarly the problems are there, but we are closing our eyes. 'Oh there is no problem. We are very happy.' So this is called maya. The problem is not solved, but they are thinking their problem is solved by closing the eyes." Lecture, Hamburg, 1969.

The problem we have is that by our dynamics, as exemplified and enforced by our laws, old devotees are being pushed out the back door even as new ones enter through the front. Denying this reality and concentrating on good news will never help us to learn from the past, which is a vital necessity and a symptom of the

mode of goodness. Neither will denying reality help us fight the war against maya. Indeed, according to Srila Prabhupada "This is called maya."

### **The Problem is Not Solved**

In the spirit of taking the responsibility to "not close the eyes", we should all look deeper into the tenets under which our society is currently operating. We are each individually responsible for the condition of the society we live in. How do our laws affect the dynamics of our leadership, and the achievement of the goal for which our society was founded - enlightenment? How do they work against this goal? And how do they reflect upon our lives and conform to the Vedic model of Vaisnava society and philosophy, as described in sastra and by Srila Prabhupada?

Upon examination we find that such laws actually work against the achievement of our ideals, by encouraging blind following, callous dealings, and might-is-right leadership. An example of a law which encourages the first is the following:

#### **GBC Law 6.2 - Qualifications of Gurus in ISKCON**

##### **6.2.1 - Mandatory qualifications.**

10. Must have no loyalties that compete with or compromise his loyalty to Srila Prabhupada, to his teachings and to ISKCON.

It is the last point, "loyalty...to ISKCON," which is quite amazing in light of our history. This certainly puts anyone who is aware of our history in an impossible situation: What if we disagree with ISKCON's actions or policies on the basis of Srila Prabhupada's teachings, and of sastra? What if loyalty to Srila Prabhupada's teachings is incompatible with loyalty to ISKCON in some instance? Further investigation will in fact reveal that many of the GBC laws actually work against the tenets of our philosophy and our goal of enlightenment, as taught by Srila Prabhupada.

We are not supposed to blindly ignore our problems like the rabbit, and deny our perception by closing our eyes - "This is called maya." What if we disagree on the basis of truth?

## **CHAPTER 1 LAWS THAT ENCOURAGE BLIND FOLLOWING**

Indoctrinating blind following in the disciple...

Srila Prabhupada said that "the Krsna consciousness movement is for training people to be independently thoughtful...There must always be individual striving and work and responsibility, not that one should dominate and distribute benefits to the others and they do nothing but beg from you and you provide. No."

Is our society doing this? Or is it creating a situation in which the freedom of independent thoughtfulness is replaced by obedience to laws and blind belief in authority? It is one thing to cooperate for Srila Prabhupada, but we have to be careful that we cooperate with that which furthers the purpose of his mission, not something which goes against it.

Let us examine the first step of the initiation procedure, which is the examination of the disciple. Later we will examine some interesting additions to the number of vows he has to take at initiation.

### The Examination of the Disciple

It would be expected that this examination would test the disciple's understanding of the philosophy. However, the examination to be passed is more like an exploration of the degree of the disciple's blindness, and how much he is prepared to pursue his beliefs blindly, irrationally, rather than with knowledge:

#### 4. Do you believe the spiritual master speaks the absolute truth?

The use of the word "believe" here, indicates that it is not a matter of solid faith based on observation, but of fantasy. Meanwhile we hear and preach, "Krsna consciousness is not belief, but science, with readily observable results". If the spiritual master actually speaks the absolute truth, the disciple will experience for himself the disappearance of doubt, fear, and lethargy, as did Arjuna. It was not then a question of "belief". Why has it become so now?

#### 13. What is ISKCON...and why should one remain in ISKCON?

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, the founder of the Gaudiya Matha, did not consider religious institutions necessary for spiritual growth. On the contrary:

"The original purpose of the established churches of the world may not always be objectionable. But no stable religious arrangement for instructing the masses has yet been successful...."

Does this warning refer to religious institutions in our parampara as well? Srila Bhaktisiddhanta makes clear that it does, but that the original spirit was different:

"The Supreme Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, in pursuance of the teachings of the scriptures enjoins all absence of conventionalism for the teachers of the eternal religion. It does not follow that the mechanical adoption of the unconventional life by any person will make him a fit teacher of religion."

So joining the Krsna consciousness movement does not mean that one automatically becomes Krsna conscious. It depends on whether one follows the rules and regulations mechanically, blindly, or with realization. Mechanical, blind

following of rules, for the sake of being "acceptable", is an unfortunate consequence of being part of an institution:

"Regulation is necessary for controlling the inherent worldliness of conditioned souls. But no mechanical regulation has any value, even for such a purpose. The bonafide Teacher of religion is neither any product of nor the favorer of any mechanical system. In his hands no system has likewise the chance of degenerating into a lifeless arrangement. The mere pursuit of fixed doctrines and fixed liturgies cannot hold a person to the true spirit of doctrine or liturgy."

What to speak if those "fixed doctrines" themselves don't hold true to the spirit behind our philosophy. In all cases, it is necessary to understand the true spirit of Vaisnavism, and of the instructions of the spiritual master. I wonder how much our candidates of initiation are aware of this; or are we keeping them in ignorance of such facts, so as to possess them and count them as a preaching victory?

Dear reader, keeping this warning of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta in mind, recall question 13:

### 13. What is ISKCON.....and why should one remain in ISKCON?

Was this what Srila Prabhupada had in mind when he set sail for America? Another movement of narrow-minded sectarianism? He never made "remaining in ISKCON" a requirement for being his disciple; but now, and indeed after so much corruption in the movement has come to light, it has become a requirement in order to be his grand-disciple, as indicated by question 13!

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta continues:

"The idea of an organized church in an intelligible form, indeed, marks the close of the living spiritual movement. The great ecclesiastical establishments are the dykes and the dams to retain the current that cannot be held by any such contrivance. They, indeed, indicate a desire on the part of the asses to exploit a spiritual movement for their own purpose. They also unmistakably indicate the end of the absolute and unconventional guidance of the bona fide spiritual teacher. The people of this world understand preventive systems, they have no idea at all of the unprevented positive eternal life."

The GBC laws are certainly preventative systems, and the examination of the disciple is obviously geared to prevent him from leaving ISKCON. However, such a style of interrogation ignores the fact that freedom and enlightenment will lead to voluntary surrender, the "unprevented positive eternal life." Surrender should be based on knowledge, not on ignorance. Rather than the disciple being taught that one should "remain in ISKCON," he should be educated about the potential dangers of organized religion, as described by our spiritual great-grandfather, so that if he sees ISKCON fall into such dangers he can assess the situation clearly and take

positive steps to correct the problem, rather than become confused and disheartened and go away.

The assessment of the situation should include consideration of the cause described by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta: a desire on the part of the asses to exploit a spiritual movement for their own purpose. This possibility must at least be considered. Instead, in ISKCON, we teach that such an attitude of questioning the motives of socially superior members is "aparadha". Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, however, considers it a function of a chanter of kirtan, to uphold the truth regardless of the person it involves:

"As a chanter of the kirtan of Hari, it is his constant function to dispel all misconceptions by the preaching of the truth in a most unambiguous form without the influence of person, place or time."

The issue is truth, not social position. Similarly, we understand that the basis of dealings between devotees is straightforwardness, nonduplicity, and truth; regardless of "person, place or time." We will see later some of the reactions and punishments that our GBC metes out to those who criticize them, regardless of the truth of the criticism. Such criticism is labeled "undermining the authority of the GBC," and this label is used to justify any amount of Avaisnava behavior, culminating in excommunication of the critic.

But this should not happen too often, as the GBC have carefully designed everything in ISKCON to operate smoothly, with everyone blindly conforming to the rules, by twisting every nook and cranny of our philosophy so that it serves their purpose, rather than the purpose of the parampara. And thus, what is supposed to be voluntary surrender based on understanding and faith, is now enforced by law, by vow, and by giving "correct" answers in a test.

#### **GBC Law 7.2.1.1.6**

2. Why are you convinced to follow the orders of the spiritual master in this life and in life after life?

This is interesting. Apart from the fact that such an answer should come from the heart, from realization, and not from "getting it right," a consideration of our history makes the premature acceptance of such obedience even more absurd. Sastra lists as one of the symptoms of the mode of goodness, the willingness to learn from a study of past, present and future. If one were at all willing to learn from our past, such a conviction as mentioned above would not be rationally possible, and certainly not in the beginning. How many prospective disciples are aware of this dynamic, and that cultivation of sattva-guna is necessary for elevation (sattva brahma-darsanam)? Or that "...even if there is some duty one has to see the effect of duty...Devotee means he is not blind."

If there is to be a test at all, it should focus on whether the disciple's eyes are being opened by the process of diksa, which is its purpose: To learn to distinguish between reality and illusion, light and darkness, spiritual energy and material energy, and the real form of the bhakti lata and the various gross and subtle anarthas which mimic and may ultimately choke it.

Instead, the test really measures the degree to which the disciple is able to live with corruption and hypocrisy and still see it as sublime Krsna consciousness, the "Absolute Truth", and something that one should follow "life after life". In other words, the test measures the degree to which the disciple is a blind believer, prepared to follow a blind leader into a ditch. And new initiates are supposed to ignore our history and believe that such a disaster could never happen!

### Vows at Initiation

Although Srila Prabhupada required only two vows at initiation; that is, to chant sixteen rounds and follow the four regulative principles, now **the GBC have made a law wherein five vows are required.** We will now examine the additional three, and see if they serve the spirit of Srila Prabhupada's mission, or some different purpose.

#### **GBC LAW 7.2.1.4 Vows at Initiation**

**VOW 3. To accept the order of the spiritual master as their life and soul....**

Faith in the guru and the guru's words is attained after much careful study of both. Gradually it can develop to the point where the disciple, if he is sincere, may actually feel inspired to take up the order of his guru as his life and soul. To legislate that this must happen by vow, rather than voluntarily from the heart, is to replace genuine faith with coercion. It may well be that a particular diksa guru does not merit such a level of faith from a sincere disciple.

**Considering the number of guru fall downs and scandals, spanning our history since 1977, it would clearly be ludicrous to take such a vow.** Would Kirtanananda's or Harikesha's disciples have benefited from this vow? Or Bhavananda's, Jayatirtha's or Bhagavan's? There are other examples as well.

**VOW 4. To accept discipleship into the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya sampradaya through the Founder-Acarya of ISKCON and remain faithful to their order and teachings.**

More legislation for remaining faithful. Sastra says that faith develops naturally, as a result of association. Faith is a condition of the heart which is cultivated as one associates with saintly persons and is enlivened by their example, and enlightened by their presentation of the philosophy. Then gradually one becomes convinced at

heart, and pleased to the core to follow them in all respects; willing faithfulness is a natural result of all this.

Did Srila Prabhupada have to legislate that we remain faithful to him? Or any other guru in our line? And how can following rules and making vows inspire faith?

VOW 5. To remain faithful to Prabhupada's order by maintaining loyalty to ISKCON and its ultimate managing authority the GBC.

Again the attempt to force the development of faith by legislation and vow. Regarding loyalty, why can't we support ISKCON by being loyal opponents to whatever does not seem in line with Prabhupada's mission? Why is it considered offensive to be truthful?

In contrast, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta describes our "bounden duty":

"It is his bounden duty to oppose any person who tries to deceive and harm himself or other people by misrepresenting the truth, either due to malice or genuine misunderstanding."

We should not assume that because a person is in authority, he will never misrepresent the truth, either due to malice or genuine misunderstanding.

Srila Prabhupada: "Nothing is to be blindly accepted, nothing is to be blindly rejected." "Doubt is one of the important functions of intelligence: blind acceptance of something does not give evidence of intelligence." (SB 3.26.30 purport)

Srila Prabhupada wanted ISKCON to be a society of brahmanas, first-class intelligent people, broad-minded souls, who are able to consider things from different angles of vision. When appropriate; i.e., when they perceive discrepancies, they should give advice to administrators, particularly with a view toward ultimate, rather than immediate considerations.

Focusing on immediate results, a symptom of the mode of passion, is symptomized by the impatience shown in this particular application of ISKCON law - the examination for the disciple. Rather than waiting until faith and loyalty to the guru develop naturally in the heart of the prospective disciple as the result of the guru's consistent good character and teaching of realized knowledge (the ability to discern reality from illusion), the GBC makes the disciple take a vow to be faithful and loyal. Rather than inspiring the disciple to take the guru's orders as his life and soul, by convincing him through his intelligence, as Srila Prabhupada did, the disciple has to vow that he will.

Why is it that what was once voluntary is now enforced? It's because in the mode of passion, one acts to get immediate results, rather than put in the time and

effort to achieve lasting benefit; in this case, real sraddha in the disciple. One wants the result without paying the price for it. According to sastra, however, action in the mode of passion results only in misery. We have seen many times in our history the disastrous effects of blind following. Therefore Srila Prabhupada never demanded such vows, and condemned blind following of any sort, even blind following of the guru: "In this verse, both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned." (Bg 4.34)

Regarding being "faithful to Prabhupada's order," Srila Prabhupada did not have to demand faithfulness; he convinced us through our intelligence that it was in our best interest to follow him, and we willingly took it up. It is the basis of our path to reject what is not Krsna conscious, and to accept and conform to what is. To do so presupposes that one is allowed to doubt at all times: "Doubt is an important function of intelligence."

Arjuna, in the beginning of the Gita, accepted Lord Krsna as his guru, and Lord Krsna advised him to fight. However, Arjuna refused to do so until all his doubts were eradicated, until he was convinced that it was the best course of action to take. Even at the end, Lord Krsna placed the discretion for following his order in Arjuna's hands: "Deliberate on this fully and then do what you wish to do." Thus the decision to follow or not was in Arjuna's hands at all times while he was Lord Krsna's disciple.

Srila Prabhupada, in the purport to the above verse, writes: "The best advice imparted to Arjuna is to surrender unto the Supersoul seated within his heart." How this happens is also described: "By right discrimination, one should agree to act according to the order of the Supersoul." On the other hand, to ignore one's doubts is to fail to use one's intelligence, which elsewhere Prabhupada described as the form direction of the Supersoul. (SB 2.2.35 Purport)

The effect of laws is to replace such inner direction with external authority, to take away the very thing which is our most valuable possession, the ability to discriminate, which must be used every step of the way in the guru/disciple relationship, and is the basis of surrendering to the Supersoul within, as described above.

Thus the GBC laws, as exemplified by the examination and vows for the disciple, blatantly defy the process of surrender through use of one's intelligence, and the natural development of faith, as portrayed in the Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam. They only encourage blind following which is specifically condemned in the verse pertaining to surrender to the guru, Bg. 4.31.

## CHAPTER TWO: ADDITIONAL LAWS TO ENSURE BLIND FAITH

### Engendering blind following in ISKCON members

In addition to examinations and vows which encourage the delusion in the prospective disciple that bhakti is about blind following, there are other laws which one must follow if one is to remain a member of ISKCON in good standing:

### **GBC Law 8.1.1 Faith in ISKCON's GBC Body**

**Faith in the GBC as the ultimate managing authority in ISKCON, shall be preserved protected and enhanced by all ISKCON members.**

According to this law, it is the responsibility of ISKCON's members to develop and safeguard faith in the GBC, not the responsibility of the GBC to earn and command such faith by their behavior. A truly fascinating concept of faith!

I have faith that the sky won't fall on my head because it has never done so in my experience, nor have I ever heard of it doing so. But if the sky was always falling on people's heads, here, there, and everywhere, should the people still have faith that it won't? And if instead they display "faithless tendencies" based on experience, should we then make a law to force them to "preserve, protect and enhance the faith in the infallibility of the sky"? Isn't this completely absurd? The justification for maintaining faith that the sky won't fall is the continued experience of the infallibility of the sky itself. The same is true for faith in anything, unless one is a blind follower, prepared to follow every blind leader into a ditch.

### **Engendering Blind following in the Leaders**

Srila Prabhupada declared "He who follows, he can lead", and he qualified what sort of following he meant when he condemned blind following. So, following the instructions of the spiritual master with intelligence and discretion as to the time, place, and circumstances surrounding the instruction, is the right qualification to be a leader in our movement. Our movement is exactly that - a movement - with freedom of thought within the parameters of our philosophy; not neglecting our God-given intelligence, but applying it fully to discriminate, on the basis of sastra, between truth and all the various shades of illusion.

Thus, blind conformity to laws as the basis for enforcing obedience would never be favored by any bonafide teacher of religion, for with such a mechanism, growth of understanding is replaced with rigidity of law, which is a lifeless arrangement:

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta: "The bonafide teacher of religion is neither any product of nor the favorer of any mechanical system. In his hands no system has likewise the chance of degenerating into a lifeless arrangement...."

An example of a lifeless arrangement is to replace natural loyalty with a contrived form of obedience, exacted by oaths of allegiance which are obligatory, if one is to have any position at all in ISKCON:

#### **GBC LAW 5.4.2.2 The Procedure for Taking Oaths**

2. Every GBC shall make the oath orally in a group, before the Deities in Sridhama Mayapur during the course of their annual meetings.

3. Every Temple President, Regional Secretary, Temple Officer etc. shall take the oath orally before the Deities of the temple every year. The oath shall be administered by the local GBC Secretary.

Wouldn't once be enough? Why should the annual renewal of oaths in front of the Deities be necessary? A truthful man's word said once should be enough, so this is very curious. A look at the oath itself will give us a clue as to the reason for all the official proceedings:

#### **GBC Law 5.4.2.1 Statement of Oath**

2. To accept the GBC as the ultimate managing authority of ISKCON.

5. To be guided by the spiritual directions of ISKCON's management.

To vow to do this year after a year and before the Deity, certainly instills fear of consequences of not following the oath, but what if one chooses not to follow the GBC on the basis of sastra, or one's own conscience and volition? It seems that these laws are meant to replace our conscience and sastric vision, instead of which, fear of punishment becomes the guiding principle. Thus, as Srila Bhaktisiddhanta so accurately assessed:

The idea of an organized church in an intelligible form, indeed marks the close of the living spiritual movement.... The people of this world understand preventive systems, they have no idea at all of the unprevented positive eternal life.

Such an unprevented positive life was described by Srila Prabhupada when he declared that "This Krsna consciousness movement is for training men to become independently thoughtful...not for making bureaucracy."

Certainly it was not the inspiration of an "unprevented positive life" and "independent thoughtfulness" that led our GBC members to formulate the following:

The archive and record of all oaths submitted to the GBC shall be maintained by the GBC secretary who shall annually provide a list to the Executive Committee of

ISKCON Leaders, for whom oaths of loyalty have been received and [take note!] the list of delinquent leaders for enforcement.

Just a thought, I wonder what Bhaktivinoda Thakura meant when he said "Here we have full liberty to reject the wrong idea which is not sanctioned by peace of conscience." I think he must have had a late night and actually meant "... not sanctioned by institutional law." What on earth has conscience got to do with anything in ISKCON? There is no mention of it in our law, only conformity to what the GBC tells us is right.

### Engendering Blind Following in the Gurus(!)

#### GBC Law 6.4.3.2 Standard of Conduct for Gurus in ISKCON

2. ...he must accept the GBC Body as his authority and follow the directives of the GBC.

3. ...must submit to any disciplinary sanctions imposed by the GBC body.

Not only must brahmana gurus follow the ultimate managerial authority in all respects, which is against varnasrama, but must even obey lower managerial authorities:

#### GBC Law 6.4.3.4

1. Must be accountable to the local ISKCON authorities for all his actions...

5. Must not undermine ISKCON authorities in any way.

"In any way", of course, precludes undermining the authorities not only via error, but via truth as well. But as one GBC man put it so eloquently when questioned on this:

**"Truth is not the Issue!"**

Srila Prabhupada: "Facts should not be misrepresented. According to social conventions, it is said that one can only speak the truth when it is palatable to others, but that is not truthfulness. The truth should be spoken in a straightforward way, so that others will understand what the facts are. If a man is a thief and people are warned he is a thief, that is truth. Although sometimes the truth is unpalatable, one should not refrain from speaking it." (Bg 10.4-5 Purport)

Of course, speaking "unpalatable truth", as advised by Srila Prabhupada, and speaking the unambiguous truth "without consideration of the person", as advised by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta (Appendix 1), may well mean "undermining ISKCON authority" as forbidden in Law 6.4.3.4.5, especially when you consider that such

undermining is interpreted as broadly as possible, as indicated by the words "in any way". This effectively rules out all possibility of independent judgment.

The law goes further:

2. Must cooperate with local ISKCON authorities.

4. Must instruct disciples and other devotees to cooperate with ISKCON authorities.

What if such authorities' actions or instructions are wrong, according to sastric guidelines, then what? Why must cooperation be enforced by law, rather than proceed naturally from an independent assessment of a situation, and finding it worthy of one's cooperation?

What is so wrong with using one's own discretion, being an independently thoughtful person within the tenets of the philosophy - in our "religion of liberty"? Can't we follow our authorities when they're making sense and conforming to sastra, and object if they do not? Or is only blind following recommended - indeed, enforced - instead of "always condemned", as per Prabhupada's statement, along with his warning that "everything should be accepted with care and caution", and "nothing should be accepted blindly"?

We have seen the outcome of a guru following the law just stated. He instructed me to ignore the neglect and abuse of cows, and just "cooperate with ISKCON authorities." In fact, that was probably the same instruction given to the members of an ISKCON community whose leader, in 1999, murdered more than a dozen of the farm's cows, as it was a fact that the devotees did not speak up when they suspected something was amiss. They were instilled with "fear of Vaisnava aparadha", and so the horrendous act was done when it could have been prevented.

Similarly, in Srila Prabhupada's time when a temple authority was deviating, those who spoke up were told "You are envious and offensive." But when that authority's actions came to Srila Prabhupada's notice, he said: "The senior men should have spoken up, they should have said something." He didn't seem to think this would have been envious; rather, he said it is what should have been done!

Lord Krsna: "That understanding by which one knows what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what is binding and what is liberating, is in the mode of goodness".

Bhaktivinoda Thakura: "We have full liberty to reject the wrong idea which is not sanctioned by peace of conscience."

How easily this understanding could have prevented the abuse of cows and children. Instead we have laws, tests, and vows which enforce unconditional following. In other words, our laws enforce blind following, rather than conscientious following guided by the peace of conscience and understanding in the mode of goodness, which leads to enlightenment.

### **Avoiding "crisis management"**

Srila Prabhupada desired that we introduce varnasrama within our society to come to the mode of goodness, and the head of the varnasrama system is the brahmana, who is a thinker independent of management. He holds no position in administration, and therefore can make unbiased judgments. Even the ultimate managing authority, the king, must take direction from him. But in the above-mentioned laws, we see that everyone must follow the GBC without exception. This is like saying that the brahmanas must follow the king, or administrative heads of state, under all circumstances. This is a formula for failure, for decision-making in the mode of passion.

In fact, by artificially fusing the roles of brahmana and ksatriya, we see the mode of passion at work, in the shape of laws that are not in the spirit of voluntary service, which is what devotional service is all about, but of coercion. Such repression of the natural unfolding of spiritual life cannot be maintained:

Srila Prabhupada: "There is no question of force. Force cannot act."

Lord Krsna: "What can repression accomplish?"

The use of force is the prerogative of the ksatriyas, the lawmakers. But in an enlightened society, varnasrama, the ksatriyas are always open to the advice of the brahmanas, who are capable of seeing the long-term good, being enlightened by sense control and other symptoms of the mode of goodness as described in sastra. They are not bound by laws, but by conscience.

Brahmanas, the spiritual masters of society, are by nature devoted to sastra, and being truthful, always follow the sastric injunctions. It was on this basis that Srila Prabhupada said: "One can be guru, who follows his spiritual master without deviation..., who knows and presents the science of Krsna expertly", and "is exemplary...." But these criteria are not mentioned as qualifications for authorities in the Lawbook. In the following chapters we will discuss further material which is most certainly not based on Srila Prabhupada's teachings.

### **CHAPTER 3 : BRAND NEW CRITERIA FOR GURUS!**

It seems that in addition to forgetting the three additional vows, while initiating his thousands of disciples, Srila Prabhupada stressed criteria for gurus which are

not to be found in the ISKCON Lawbook; and he didn't mention any of the criteria in the Lawbook at all! For example:

6.4.1.1 A candidate for guru in ISKCON must first receive a majority vote of approval in a council composed of all the GBC secretaries of his current preaching area and at least ten (10) other senior devotees.

6.4.1.1.2 ...obtainment of "no objection" letters...from the GBC temple presidents and other authorities (managerial).

Once he's endorsed by the council, then the GBC secretaries must endorse him by considering a letter from the council which must include:

6.4.1.3.1 A thorough description of the qualifications of the candidate, showing point by point how he CONFORMS to the GBC standards...

Again there is no mention of independent thoughtfulness and broad-mindedness, but rather conformity to the ultimate managing authority, with its laws and so on. Nor is this a relative consideration, but a mandatory qualification for being guru. We have the kind of society Srila Prabhupada described as headless. No bona-fide brahmana or guru would agree to conform to a managing authority, unless he saw that the managing authority was consistently in line with sastra. This has hardly been the case in our history. Yet, even if the authorities were as perfect as the saintly kings of Vedic times, they would never make decisions without consulting their board of independent, brahminical advisors. The brahmanas are never advised to conform to the ksatriyas - it is the other way around!

As if all of this weren't wondrous enough, we see that our managing authority also makes laws about who can be guru. And if even this fails to completely amaze us, we find that these laws do not correspond with any of the guidelines in sastra, or with anything that Srila Prabhupada mentioned in any of his teachings, regarding the qualification to be guru:

6.4.1.3.3 Then the chairman of the council sends a "nomination" to the GBC describing how the candidate conforms to the GBC standards, his description and the description of all who voted for him and how "senior" they are and explanations why they voted for him.

Here the notions of approval and conformity are stressed, rather than devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and ability to instill faith in Him into the hearts of others, making Him the goal of life. Nothing of that sort is found; rather, the guru must simply conform to our laws. And get approval from our ksatriyas!

6.4.1.3.2 [Then he is] "properly endorsed."

Hold on, prospective disciples. He's nearly there, on his way to being a transparent via medium to the Lord. Then, if doesn't get more than three GBC's disapproving him within six months (Law 6.4.1.4), he's "approved"! Jaya Gurudeva!!!

Provided, of course, that takes some vows, which described next:

#### **GBC Law 6.4.2 Vows of Guru**

2. I accept the GBC as the ultimate managerial authority in ISKCON. I support the GBC system and will follow them....

3. I remain surrendered to the orders of his authorized representatives....

5. As a spiritual master I must always conform to ISKCON policies [note the word "conform" - again!]

and, last but not least:

7. I shall teach all my disciples they are part of ISKCON[!?!]

Guru is supposed to teach sambandha, abhideya and prayojana; one's relationship to Krsna, the process to reach Him, and the perfection of reaching Him. Maybe this is a new version - nirbandha-ISKCON-sambandhe?

Don't be distressed if it doesn't make sense to you; it's the new, institutionalized version of Krsna consciousness, called ISKCON-think. Rather than expanding one's realization of the process, instilling faith in the heart, and bestowing courage to go beyond convention for Krsna, following in the footsteps of the residents of Vrindavana, it brings the whole process down to the mundane level of conforming to laws. Rather than teaching that one is part and parcel of Krsna, with unique propensities which reach their perfection in His service, the law states only that one is part of the institution of ISKCON! Meanwhile, Srila Prabhupada said that Krsna consciousness is about giving up all designations other than being the servant of Krsna, and that knowledge of Krsna means knowledge of everything else. (SB 1.5.22 purport) But then, he didn't read the lawbook, did he?

Back to the "gurufacturing". Now, from then on (after he has the rubberstamp of approval, and is now considered non-different from Krsna), he is still not enjoined to work to increase his disciples' faith in Krsna, which is the whole purpose of being or having a guru, as described: "By the grace of Krsna one gets guru, and by the grace of guru, one gets Krsna." No, in ISKCON that is not the main point.

#### **GBC Law 6.4.3 Standards of Conduct for Gurus in ISKCON**

4. Must encourage newcomers' faith in ISKCON and protect the faith of existing members.

Now, "faith" means faith in ISKCON, you see. Mind you, this was challenging before we learned that ISKCON authorities, indeed the GBC themselves, were implicated in child abuse of horrific proportions. But, wonder of wonders, even after all has come to light, we are still obliged to have faith in them. And, more wondrous yet, the gurus themselves have the duty to instill such faith as part of their obligation. Truly, they'd need to be empowered to do so. But for defeating illusion or propagating it?

6.4.3.2.1 He must respect the GBC as Srila Prabhupada's chosen successor, the ultimate authority, and respect, serve and follow them....

6.4.3.2.2 He must act under their supervision....

6.4.3.3 [He must] not change residence without their approval....

6.4.3.4.5 [He must] avoid confrontation....

6.4.3.4.6 [He must] not undermine ISKCON authorities in any way....

6.4.3.4.2 He must always cooperate with them....

6.4.3.4.4 [He] must instruct his disciples to cooperate with them.

If he refuses to conform to any of these laws, there will be warnings, to be followed by probation, suspension and removal, in various stages, if the warnings are "blatantly ignored", or if the guru becomes inimical to ISKCON and its sublime laws. This condition is equated with being "envious" and "demoniac" (Law 8.4.8.7), just to ensure that we have properly executed the necessary ritual of character assassination before ejecting the guru from our society of high-thinking, simple-living souls.

But the further description of such loving dealings between devotees, of a level which Rupa Goswami could hardly conceive, we will leave until the next chapter.

[Mail This Link](#)

## CHAPTER 4: WALKING THE PLANK

"You should always deal things so tactfully that people may not fall away. Every living being is important in Krsna conscious service, and we must take all precautions that one may not fall away...." (letter to Tamal Krsna, 1969)

Srila Prabhupada also cried when he heard that a devotee had left. Was his character different when he said that the GBC are the ultimate managing authority? Was that instruction meant to supersede everything other consideration, or was it to be reconciled with his other instructions and demonstrated attitudes?

Does "following" mean blind following?

Does Srila Prabhupada expect that we carry on the spirit with which he imbued this movement, the loving acceptance of diversity, or to replace it with rigid laws invented by the GBC and representing exactly that which he was opposed to - narrow-minded sectarianism? Is this what he had in mind when he begged us to cooperate with each other?

Let us now examine the content of our expulsion laws, and compare them to Srila Prabhupada's comment on a situation where "one section of men have gone away." It is hard to imagine his anger and disappointment in the present situation - where we are not only failing to ensure that they will not go away, but practically ensuring that they do!

### Expulsion Guidelines

#### GBC LAW 8.4.5 Expulsion (Excommunication)

1. Some members of the Society who have previously been in good standing have subsequently deviated from the ISKCON standard [and we do like everything to be very standard, no diverse opinions based on sastra, like that nitya-siddhas don't fall - that is called a deviation], the GBC Body may, by 2/3rds vote, expel any member of ISKCON....

Srila Prabhupada has described how one should treat diversity and dissension by unification, not excommunication. It must not be seen as a threat, and in no case should anyone be expelled for not conforming.

Srila Prabhupada: "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."

Srila Prabhupada instructs here that our GBC men should meet in Mayapur to discuss exactly how to make unity in diversity. Instead of this, they meet and discuss how to excommunicate members, and to prevent the activities and association of persons who hold diverse opinions, various loyalties, and so on. Particularly emphasized are critical opinions one may hold regarding the GBC members themselves:

b. The member is openly and flagrantly antagonistic to the GBC or other ISKCON authority.

Our experience with the GBC on the occasion of the publication of a set of very truthful but revealing books, revealed a tendency for them to become "flagrantly antagonized" by any sort of criticism of their attitudes and actions, however true the criticisms may be. This they label as "undermining the authority of the GBC", and punish by excommunication.

Here's something to consider: Was the washerman undermining Lord Ramachandra's authority when he criticized the Lord? Are the GBC more worshipable than the Supreme Personality of Godhead?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta declared "He who criticizes me is a friend." This is the mood of one who has actually imbibed the essence of humility, and not merely learned to speak humbly.

2. ...the GBC by a 2/3rds vote of the members present may issue a notice of non-participation. If such a notice is issued against an expelled member, such member shall not, as far as possible, be allowed to participate in the functions of ISKCON. This law shall concurrently run with other disciplinary laws.

The section on expulsion is completed by the following justification:

The GBC has been designated by Srila Prabhupada as the highest ISKCON authority, and the final appellate power rests with that body in all ISKCON affairs.

This despite the fact their laws directly contradict Srila Prabhupada's desires, as we have discussed in this section on expulsion. But note how they have declared themselves "the highest ISKCON authority".

Actually, Srila Prabhupada said "managing authority" in relation to the GBC, which indicates only ksatriya-type authority, meaning that they should not be the ultimate authority, but must take advice and be guided by brahmanas.

Brahmanas are people who are completely truthful, do not flatter others, and are thoroughly unbiased in their judgment. But brahminical oversight is easily sidetracked by our GBC. Indeed, they have passed a law declaring the post of GBC member to be a brahminical post. So there you go. Varna determined not by qualification, nor even by birth, but a new method - resolution.

Even this would be acceptable if the qualifications were somehow there. But what brahmana would succumb to punishing those who merely express dissenting opinions? A brahmana is by nature himself a dissenter toward all that is hypocritical. If our GBC claim that they represent Srila Prabhupada, and then pass resolutions directly opposing Srila Prabhupada's instructions, are they not both hypocritical and unworthy of the title of brahmanas?

Actually it was not just one section of ISKCON but all of ISKCON that Srila Prabhupada wanted to act conscientiously with spiritual vision, free from the victimization of one man over another, which is precisely exemplified by these laws, particularly the laws regarding expulsion.

Diksa is mentioned as well, and, quite contrary to our oaths and vows, as discussed in Chapter One, it does not involve allegiance to and ownership by ISKCON, or abiding by GBC decisions, but "acting and living freely, with spiritual vision...."

### **Constitution of Association of ISKCON**

G: To attempt to save men individually from the chain of victimization...so that Man may again be a free soul, to act and live freely with spiritual vision. This is possible by individual spiritual initiation Diksa....

I wonder how many devotees are made aware of this at initiation? Probably none, as they would then naturally refuse to take vows 3-5.

### **Back into the Safety of the Herd**

Dear devotees, despite all our propaganda about bringing people back, which sounds so impressive, you have to be realistic. With our lawbook, it's not that easy to return once you have been expelled, because as you will see, you would have to grovel, and not just any old way, but in an "appropriate manner." After which it is still up to the GBC to decide if it you have been sufficiently humiliated:

### **GBC Law 8.4.6 Principles of Clemency and Repentance**

(Precisely how, when, where, and to whom to grovel.)

Should a person found guilty of transgression and offence, express his repentance in an appropriate manner or in writing, then it shall be duly considered by the adjudicating or appeal authorities. It shall be at their discretion whether such expression is adequate to remedy the situation and accordingly shall adjust the prescribed remedial measure or grant reprieve.

Not only that, but it is not enough to have renewed faith in Krsna Consciousness and the process of devotional service (in fact that's not relevant at all, as there's no mention of it), but you must have renewed faith in - guess who - why, the GBC of course:

### **GBC Law 8.4.7 Reinstatement of Apostates**

#### **8.4.7.1 Conditions of Reinstatement**

That devotees who have left ISKCON are welcome to come back...provided only that they agree that the ultimate managerial authority for all of ISKCON must be the GBC Body...[and] that they follow all GBC resolutions....

This of course must necessarily proceed from the point of "Clemency and Repentance" for those guilty of transgressing. "Transgressing what?" you may ask. "Principles of vaisnava behavior?" No, the Guaranteed Blind Conformity resolutions.

Even then, the GBC must be convinced you are faithful (to them, of course):

#### **8.4.7.2 Procedure of Reinstatement**

The procedure for reinstatement shall be that the devotee desiring to return shall send a signed letter to any GBC member stating his agreement to the above-listed provisions. This GBC member shall send the letter to the GBC corresponding secretary, who shall distribute copies to all GBC members. If no objections are received by the Corresponding Secretary within 90 days of the date of mailing copies to all members, then the Corresponding Secretary shall send a notice of reinstatement to the devotee in question. During the waiting period, the devotee may serve under the auspices of a GBC member..

There are 5 exceptions to the rule, which necessitate a resolution from the whole GBC body.

It is so nice we are welcoming people back with open hearts, begging them to return to Krsna's shelter!

With all this bureaucratization of excommunication, we had the wonderful experience of personally being in a community where half of the devotees were

banned from going to the temple for choosing the shelter of an "unauthorized" guru, and some of the rest were banned due to being suspected of criticizing the management. Long-term friendships quickly ended when the authority convinced the conforming devotees that the action toward their friends was justified, on the basis of GBC law. And so we make progress toward having a house in which the whole world can live, a world free from enmity and false designations based on caste and creed (i.e., what one believes).

It is so nice, too, isn't it, that we are following the footsteps of the mahavadanyaya avatara, Lord Chaitanya, who went to such pains to save His servant, and delivered the most fallen; and patita-pavana Lord Nityananda, who forgave the greatest sinners, Jagai and Madhai. How we are taking on the mood of Srila Prabhupada who cried when he heard that a devotee had left and declared that everyone can take part in the process of devotional service, be he Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, because Krsna consciousness is universal and beyond designations.

So the devotees there were left to wonder in a most peculiar quandary, "Why, despite our philosophy, are we banned?"

The reason is clear upon examination of these laws. These devotees defied the GBC by choosing to accept an unauthorized diksa guru, and that is simply not allowed in the universal, non-sectarian religion of Krsna consciousness, as institutionalized in ISKCON.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura, for one, would have been shocked (to say the least). He has commented on the value of liberty thus: "Liberty then is the principle which we must consider the most valuable gift of God...In the Bhagavat we have been advised to take the spirit of the sastra and not the words. The Bhagavat is therefore a religion of liberty, unmixed truth and absolute love."

(This essay can be viewed in full at: [www.bhakti-yoga.ch/Buch/bhagavata.pdf](http://www.bhakti-yoga.ch/Buch/bhagavata.pdf) )

## The Cold Shoulder

### GBC Law 8.4.5

3. ISKCON devotees should avoid association with an excommunicated person, except when authorized to preach to him for his rectification.

Remember the GBC mantra already quoted:

The GBC has been designated by SP as the highest ISKCON authority, and the final appellate power rests with that body in all ISKCON affairs....

Is this what Srila Prabhupada had in mind when he formed ISKCON? Quite the contrary. In his Constitution of Association, we find:

N. To discharge [do away with] the vitiated [debauched, corrupt, depraved] system of supremacy of one man over another, by false prestige of birthright or vested interests.

This power over others by false prestige includes many notions that are prominent in the GBC laws, such as being appointed to the position of guru and demanding its privileges, even if one cannot open the eyes of his disciples. It also includes the right to claim who can or cannot be in the association of devotees. Here, Srila Prabhupada describes it as "vitiated"; i.e., debauched or perverted. Thus we can have no doubt whatsoever as to Prabhupada's opinion of "power over" dynamics, more of which is analyzed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE: QUESTIONABLE CHARACTERS

This chapter examines what our laws say you must do, should you have a grievance against the management:

### **GBC Law 8.4.9 Grievances against Management**

If a sannyasi or party leader has a grievance regarding the management of a temple, the matter should not be brought before the devotees in general.

Maybe you see them acting in ways that are counterproductive to genuine Krsna consciousness. However, this is not to be discussed among devotees, even if you are a leader or sannyasi. If you have a grievance, then the only remedy mentioned in the lawbook is to keep quiet.

It is difficult to imagine exactly how one could do this, and still abide by the instructions of both Srila Prabhupada and Srila Vyasadeva to be "thoroughly honest." And by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's advice to speak the truth in the most unambiguous manner. He did not advise us to keep quiet, but stated that it was indeed the duty of the chanter to "speak the truth." But according to our lawbook, silence is required even in civil matters, and we are not free to invoke the civil law where it has been transgressed:

8.4.9 (second part): When a person becomes a member of ISKCON or assumes an office, he does so on the condition of submission to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of ISKCON, and however he may be dissatisfied with the exercise of that jurisdiction, he shall refrain from invoking the supervisory power of the civil court, but shall seek redress of any grievance(s) through the ISKCON judicial process. Otherwise he may be removed from office and/or his membership in ISKCON terminated.

"Terminated." A lovely word, isn't it? So charmingly final!

## The Judicial Process

The only judicial process mentioned in the lawbook appears to be an appeal to the ISKCON Ministry of Justice. The interesting thing is, this section of the lawbook seems to contain more laws aimed against the complainers than those dealing with procedures for handling the complaints. It also has an interesting idea for how to prevent complaints from happening! Prevention being better than cure, after all!

One would think such prevention would involve being more personal with devotees, making their quality of life better, being just in settling disputes, and so on, but what it's actually about is curbing the tendency for devotees to complain, by the use of heavy psychological tactics:

### GBC Law 4.4.2 Ministry of Justice [an eye-opener]

#### 4.4.2.4.1 Complaint Registry Services

This title is a bit misleading. You see, this is not about registering complaints about particular issues, but to register complaints against "quasi-devotees" who complain and don't go about it the right way, or who do go about it the right way, but aren't happy with the Ministry's decision:

4.4.2.4.1 The Ministry of Justice shall maintain a registry of complaints against devotees, quasi-devotees, and devotee organizations which either refuse to participate in the dispute resolution mechanisms described above (which ends in abiding by the arbitrator) or who fail to abide by the agreements reached. Thus, the ISKCON community will have one place it can go to find out information of previous complaints against individuals or organizations. Essentially this shall serve like a Better Business Bureau.

Actually, since we're using poetic alliteration, I thought "Big Brother" was more apt.

#### 4.4.2.4.2 Prevention Registry [the nitty-gritty stuff]

Another aspect of this service shall be to maintain a registry of questionable characters, who travel the ISKCON world.... Such individuals may be listed with the Complaint Registry and information would be available on request. As this service has the potential of being misused [like to complain about these laws], listing and reporting will be subject to the discretion of the Minister of Justice [whose appointment, by the way, is at the discretion of the GBC].

Such a neatly packaged way to keep devotees from complaining! We thought we might simply gag the "quasi-devotee" complainers and other questionable

characters, but that wouldn't look too good if a guest walks in and sees a bunch of roped and gagged brahmacharis lining the temple walls. Little gurukulis we can put in dustbins for a few days, but brahmacharis are rather hard to stuff in. I guess we really did get these Big Brother-style ideas from George Orwell's "1984".

## CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS FOR A RELIGION BASED ON PERSONALISM

There are implications of this sort of justice system on the degree of personalism we can have in our movement. The prospect of solving our problems may seem overwhelming to one with no power or formal position. I had a lesson in this regard from a 8-legged terror who subsequently turned into a friend, sent along to teach me (at least it seems that way in hindsight).

The night before writing this, I found a spider in my toilet. He was huge. I didn't want to face him, so I procrastinated for most of the evening. When I finally faced him with a broom, he was even more terrifying. He ran so fast. Then I got him cornered and he shrank in fear, and as he did, I gradually (very gradually) got enough courage to get him into a bucket, and out.

When we have problems that we don't like to face, they are like the spider. They are usually more terrifying until we analyze them, which is like cornering the spider. Then they become more submissive, and we become their controller rather than being controlled by them. They shrink and we grow, because as we surrender to applying ourselves to the difficulties, problems, and fears of life, Krsna says "I carry what they lack." This is a fact even in daily life; we see it every time a child learns to walk, what to speak of a devotee fighting the war against illusion. Krsna carries what everyone lacks, if only they apply themselves, and in this way He fulfills all desires: "God helps those who help themselves."

Srila Prabhupada: "You can pray, but you must accompany your prayer with your endeavor."

Arjuna was overwhelmed by the military arrangements he had to face, and, as described by Srila Prabhupada, only wished that Krsna do the killing, but Krsna spoke to encourage him to face his difficulties and grow. By acting in this way in Krsna's service, we reach the realization of our full potential for service. We become fitting instruments for His service.

We thus have a responsibility to apply ourselves to problem-solving, and to overcome the mentality that causes us to shrink from problems. This is not easy, as we have to face our fears, but it is comforting to know that this is the way, the only way, to overcome them. Nothing is more terrifying than the unknown, which I found out as I faced this spider; because once I got to know him a little better, I found out that he was as scared as I was!

Therefore, although it may be unconsciously motivated on their part, we sometimes see our leaders deliberately distancing themselves from the rank-and-file, not allowing themselves to be known except by laws and resolutions, and by so doing, invoking awe and obedience. Other tactics used are the emphasis on titles, infrequent visits, infrequent (or non-existent) correspondence with disciples, and lack of response to our concerns. Also the creation of laws to control others by threat of censure, expulsion and condemnation, but not to help mitigate the difficulties they help to create. They also accomplish their purposes by not listening, and only invoking quotes from Srila Prabhupada or sastra - "outquoting" us. Or, instead of making laws to expedite the handling of complaints, they make laws to blacklist the complainers to the so-called Justice Ministry. And thus the black tide of impersonalism pervades our society, with our willing participation, or at least our acquiescence.

But if you refuse to play along, you can see their game, which is a deceptive cover for a lack of security in the leaders themselves. They are afraid to become persons and to deal with others on a truly personal basis, but instead they hide behind their offices and their titles and the laws that they pass. Another prime example of this is the following:

### **GBC Law 8.2.2 Support and Adjust to GBC Decisions**

The authorized forum for GBC policy is the annual GBC meeting, annual ISKCON Leaders meeting, annual sannyasis assembly, and similar official meetings held after the Gaura Purnima festival at Sri Mayapur. Outside of these meetings it is the duty of all ISKCON members and leaders to support and adjust to GBC decisions.... Activities contrary to this shall be considered as a serious breach of etiquette and discipline.

When there are significant difficulties with a GBC member one should state his problem in writing and forward it to the GBC Executive Committee for necessary consideration.

Note that "significant difficulties" with a GBC member are not dealt with personally (God forbid!), but by letter, for consideration of their validity by people you may not know, have probably never met, and have no hope of having discussions with. And they are appointed by the GBC out of their own membership, not by you. What this all boils down to is impersonalism, pure and simple. And it's all enshrined in our laws - your personal concerns enter the void of the unknown committee's discussion (if you're lucky). This kind of impersonalism is not found in just one law, but in so many. Look again at the laws regarding expulsion. To add insult to injury, the lawbook actually begins with a glorification of Srila Prabhupada as having defeated impersonalism and voidism!

The solution to this abominable situation is to not shrink from this knowledge and close our eyes like the rabbit and pretend it doesn't exist, that everything will turn

out alright in the end. This is often passed off as "faith in Krsna as the ultimate controller," but Prabhupada defined it simply as "maya." Faith in Krsna means to act as Arjuna did, and apply our abilities in His service, particularly our intelligence, because that will help us to avoid falling into the ditch of blind following. It will enable us to see in what subtle ways maya is attacking our society from within, which according to Srila Prabhupada, is the only way we can be destroyed. And as we struggle to defeat the power of the illusory energy pervading our movement in the form of so many impersonal laws and dealings, Krsna will help us and give us the ability to do even more:

"I give them the intelligence by which they can come to Me."

Unless we endeavor in this way, we cannot expect the help of Krsna, Who is like a father waiting to see his child take the first steps, and Who thereafter encourages the child by giving him so much support. He is not so much inclined to help the child who simply cries, "I can't do it." But if we are willing to use whatever we already have in His service, we can have complete faith that He will reciprocate accordingly.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: REDEFINING THE DICTIONARY

In this chapter we will look at some terms which have to be redefined, lest sastra or your dictionary lead you astray in interpreting the Lawbook.

### a) "Demonic"

Notice that in the following law there is a quaint and novel twist to the meaning of "demonic". It is usually taken to signify envy of the Supreme Lord. At least the dictionary would have us believe so. However, the following laws define it quite differently.

#### **GBC Law 6.4.5.4 Removal**

If a guru becomes openly inimical to...ISKCON, or otherwise acts demoniacly...or blatantly and consistently defies ISKCON and GBC policies...he shall be removed from his position as diksa or siksa guru.

#### **GBC Law 6.5.1.2 When a fallen guru MUST be rejected**

##### 6.5.1.2.2 Takes on demonic qualities

If the spiritual master takes on demonic qualities and becomes inimical to ISKCON, he should be rejected, and the disciple may take re-initiation.

I thought demoniac meant inimical to God. Now, it means inimical to ISKCON.

What if a person is seemingly "inimical" to ISKCON because of, say, the child molestation that the GBC ignored for so many years, or because of various other blatant transgressions of common decency? Or due to deviations from sanatana dharma, such as the excommunication of Vaisnavas and the punishment of truthful critics? Srila Bhaktisiddhanta warns us to keep a good distance from those who are not straightforward. So isn't it possible that some people are keeping their distance from ISKCON authorities for good reasons? Under such conditions, what is the necessity of assuming that the reasons are bad?

"We will cultivate the society only of those who are straightforward. We will not keep company with any person who is not so. We must by all means avoid bad company. We are advised to keep at a distance of a hundred cubits from animals of the horned species. We should observe the same caution in regard to all insincere persons."

### b) "Controversy"

Our philosophy is that sastra is the ultimate authority for resolving conflict, but the GBC says it is not; it is, in fact, the GBC itself:

#### 8.2.1.1

1. ...[regarding] controversial matters pertaining to ISKCON - the GBC is the ultimate authority for resolving such matters.

This neatly eliminates the embarrassing possibility of a conflict between sastra and the GBC, or Srila Prabhupada (or other acharyas) and the GBC. Such conflicts can be simply resolved in favor of the GBC by following this authoritative pronouncement.

### c) "Spirit"

Srila Prabhupada said that "ISKCON is my body," but according to the GBC, ISKCON is actually Srila Prabhupada's spirit (and if we follow Law 8.2.1.1, of course we know which version to accept).

8.2.1.2 As ISKCON is spiritually non-different from HDG A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, no one has the right to lead anyone away from ISKCON.

So easily are terms like "body" and "spirit" interchangeable, when you have a flawbook that overrides every other consideration, like guru, sadhu and sastra. Now there is a fourth, and definitive, source of truth, the GBC and its laws.

#### d) "Obligations"

There is a new meaning of Krsna conscious obligations that the Six Goswamis were quite unaware of:

#### **GBC Law 8.4.8.10 Offenses Against Krsna Conscious Obligations**

One would think that "Krsna Conscious Obligations" herein refers to doing one's duty for Krsna, but in the Lawbook it goes far deeper. It means not following obligations imposed as a remedial measure by the GBC:

#### **8.4.8.10.1 Violations of Obligations Imposed by a Remedial Measure**

One who violates the obligations imposed by a compulsory remedial or corrective measure, can be subjected to additional remedial measures.

Strangely, our philosophy says the only remedial measure necessary is the chanting of Hare Krsna.

#### e) "Offenses"

There is even a new meaning to guru-parampara offenses.

#### **GBC Law 8.4.8.4. Offense of Collaborating in Guru-parampara offenses**

A person guilty of having recommended or encouraged a member or associate of ISKCON to accept any form of initiation outside of ISKCON or any further initiation or [take note of the word!] duplicate initiation from someone other than his bonafide ISKCON initiating spiritual master, shall be corrected with a censure....

"Diksa" means the imparting of divine knowledge, but here we are forbidden to dare to think that this could possibly happen outside of ISKCON! No, that is just a "duplicate" initiation, in accepting which you would be "guilty" of "offense."

If a spiritual authority has failed to discourage a member in his care from accepting re-initiation or renouncing his spiritual master, he shall be corrected with a suitable remedy.

The "suitable remedy" is not specified, so ripping off fingernails or pulling teeth or plucking out eyeballs is not out of the question. But I suspect the favored approach would be cutting out the tongue!

#### f) "Mahatma"

A genuine devotee has the broadest possible vision, because he sees everything in its connection with Krsna. He is expert in "all departments of knowledge and

action", and is "able to resolve differing opposing angles of vision with reference to logic and sastra." Well, at least that's what Srila Prabhupada taught, but the GBC has other ideas:

### **GBC Law 8.2.1.1 Seeking Instruction Outside ISKCON**

Since all the spiritual knowledge and instruction required is available in Srila Prabhupada's books and from ISKCON, no ISKCON member should be allowed to seek instruction from any other person outside of ISKCON, without approval of the GBC body. Any member of ISKCON who willfully disobeys the above order, will thereby sever his connection with ISKCON.

Srila Prabhupada describes that a devotee must learn to take good instruction from anyone, even a low-class person. Krsnadasa Kaviraja, for instance, quoted a prostitute in order to explain a high point of our philosophy. In addition, we were told by Srila Prabhupada that "utility is the principle"; and that "gold should be taken even from a filthy place." Indeed, yukta vairagya is one of the cornerstones of our philosophy. At least that is what we present to the public. But is it what we live by? Something to think about.

Srila Prabhupada instructed us in particular to take advantage of the books of the previous acaryas in resolving controversy, but in the above law we see that only his books can be studied or one "thereby severs his connection with ISKCON."

The point may be raised that Srila Prabhupada on various occasions asked that we not associate with certain personalities outside of ISKCON. I have given a further analysis of this instruction [Appendix 2](#), but suffice it to say here that it was an instruction that varied according to the time, place, circumstances, and personalities involved. It was never a blanket rule, with threats that all connection with ISKCON would be severed if any such association took place.

When the GBC attempt to replace our sense of judgment with their laws, they are committing an impersonalist attack upon the most fundamental aspect of our lives as human beings, upon that which makes us human as such - the power of volition, the ability to judge, and the freedom to not misuse our God-given independence and intelligence. Their desire is to control outcomes, rather than trust in the Lord's plan.

The Lord Himself never interferes with the free will of the living entity, but only serves his best interest, by guidance. It is only when we attempt to be the controller, which is our disease in this world, that we stifle things in the pursuit of growth and maturity. And the nature of illusion is that this can so easily be passed off as the "lawful" association of devotees.

### **g) "Blasphemy"**

In Law 8.4.8.7, it states that any speech, writing, or communication which damages faith in or creates contempt against the GBC is "blasphemy" and an "envious act."

What if the communication is true and is intended to help and warn people, as Srila Prabhupada did when he wrote that "There are mundane men in the dress of Vaisnavas in this Krsna consciousness movement and they should be completely neglected (avoided)." ( CC Madhya 2.218 purport)

Sorry; according to Law 8.4.8.7 even such truthful and well-intended communication constitutes envy and blasphemy. You see, truth and motivation are simply not relevant where the GBC are concerned. It is therefore forbidden to warn people that they are blindly following blind leaders into a ditch.

Srila Prabhupada on truthfulness:

"Satyam, truthfulness means that facts should be presented as they are, for the benefit of others. Facts should not be misrepresented. According to social conventions, it is said that one can speak the truth only when it is palatable to others. But that is not truthfulness. The truth should be spoken in a straightforward way, so that others will understand actually what the facts are. If a man is a thief and if people are warned he is a thief, that is truth. Although sometimes the truth is unpalatable, one should not refrain from speaking it. Truthfulness demands that the facts be presented as they are, for the benefit of others. That is the definition of truth." (Bg 10.4-5 Purport)

Considering that following unenlightened leaders always lands us in a ditch, as Srila Prabhupada repeatedly warned, damaging a person's faith in such leaders may well be necessary for his spiritual survival. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta told us that this may be perceived as a "malicious act", but we are to do it in order to be "fit for chanting the holy names." He also stressed that speaking the unambiguous truth is good no matter what the status of the person one is speaking it to. Indeed it is our duty to do so.

"As a chanter of the kirtan of Hari, it is his constant function to dispel all misconceptions by the preaching of the truth in a most unambiguous form without the influence of person, place or time. That form has to be adopted which is least likely to be misunderstood.

"It is his bounden duty to oppose any person who tries to deceive and harm himself or other people by misrepresenting the truth, either due to malice or genuine misunderstanding."

To recognize "genuine misunderstanding" we must always examine that which appears to deviate from the legacy of Krsna conscious experience we are meant to preserve on behalf of Srila Prabhupada, particularly if the deviation is enshrined

within our laws. The lawmakers may be convinced that they are doing the right thing by these laws, but we have a "bounden duty" to examine whether this is true or not, and to speak the truth "in a most unambiguous form without the influence of person, place or time." Even if it is unpalatable.

This can only help us in the fight against maya. Truth is the only remedy for illusion. Let titles be ignored, let us examine each and every person and decide if he is truthful, unattached and so on, and treat him as a brahmana (or not) accordingly. Let us see if he dispels others' illusions, and treat him as a guru (or not) accordingly. As soon as you take away from people their right to judge for themselves you make them less than human. And this is what many of the GBC laws are all about.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: THE ATMOSPHERE OF FRESH CHALLENGE

Srila Prabhupada: "That is the art of management: To draw out spontaneous loving spirit of sacrificing some energy for Krsna. But where are so many expert managers and preachers?"

If you think the main duty of spiritual leaders in ISKCON is to make sure that the temple devotees are being trained up in the philosophy and practice of Krsna consciousness, you are wrong, wrong, wrong.

5.3.1.1 Wherever we have powerful leaders - whether GBC members, gurus, sannyasis, temple presidents [implicit here is that no one else can be powerful leader- the rest of ewes are sheep], they ought to impress upon their followers that book distribution, and making new devotees to go out on book distribution are ISKCON's main work.

Notice first that according to the Lawbook, being a powerful leader has nothing to do with quality, as per the varnasrama system, but is a matter of title; and notice also the definition of the duties of such people. The spirit of voluntary devotional service is certainly not being illustrated here. One would think, upon reading this law, that book distribution is the only worthwhile service a devotee can perform. Just compare this to Srila Prabhupada's famous directive of management, written to Karandhara:

"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 Krsna. But where are so many expert managers...Krsna

consciousness movement must always be a challenge, a great achievement to be gained by voluntary desire to do it, and that will keep it healthy...."

Obviously Srila Prabhupada had a different idea of the duties of managers than the GBC has.

2. That the leaders of ISKCON ought to see and promote book distribution as our most effective means of preaching.

Note the words "ought to see". The leaders cannot come to their own conclusions about this or develop a voluntary desire to increase book distribution - they "ought to see" in the light of these laws. Meanwhile we hear from our Founder-acarya within the same letter:

"There is some symptom of missing the point. The point is to be engaged in doing something for Krsna, 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 a part of his occupational duty."

3. That the leaders of ISKCON, as followers of Srila Prabhupada, ought to see the duty of training and facilitating congregational members as their primary function.

Another "ought to see", this time focusing on the congregation. However, training the congregation was secondary to Srila Prabhupada, as in this letter to Satsvarupa (1972):

"You mention you like to speak now very often but the first business should be to preach to the devotees....Your first job should be to make sure that every one of the devotees in your zone of management is reading regularly our literatures and discussing the subject matter seriously from different angles of seeing, and that they are somehow absorbing the knowledge of Krsna consciousness philosophy. Don't be too much concerned for the time being with non-devotees, now we must fix up what devotees we have got in the knowledge of Krsna consciousness"

Obviously, Srila Prabhupada did not consider cultivation of the congregation to be the primary responsibility of management. Rather, he stressed "boiling the milk"; that is, working to deepen the Krsna consciousness of existing devotees.

4. Wherever we have powerful leaders- whether GBC members, gurus, sannyasis, temple presidents, they ought to impress upon their followers, that everyone be brought into the congregation and empowered to preach Krsna Consciousness powerfully (see p. 151 for details).

I was interested in the procedure of empowering, so I went to page 151. It was all about developing Mayapur, the duties of the committee devoted to it, etc. I guess that will empower everyone, this is such a scientific process!

So now you have a wider appreciation of the meanings of empowering, voluntary service and so on, but before going on (to my poetry), I would like to share with you an excerpt from the impressive preface to the Lawbook:

"...this volume will serve the GBC, ISKCON leaders, and all devotees as a useful source book of information in the practical affairs of executing devotional service within our institution....[Note the word "executing", which is synonymous with "putting to death"]

"...in general, the laws are well thought out, each one representing many hours of deliberation on the part of the most experienced devotees in ISKCON [experienced in what, is the question!]

## CHAPTER NINE- POETRY SECTION

### Truth is Not the Issue

"Truth is not the issue!", my GBC said, He hit the Lawbook right on my head. As I went down, I asked "What is, then?" He said "LAW 6.4.3.2, number 10!"

My GBC declared "Truth is not the Issue!" I went out back to get me a tissue. I needed it so bad when he said to me "You just follow the Laws of the GBC!"

I looked and I studied, scrutinizingly The Lawbook, the GBC kindly gave me,  
Stressing only uncompromising conformity And irrational submission to authority!

I looked and I studied, but to no avail, I couldn't for my life find head nor tail  
Of anything remotely resembling sastra, Of Vaisnava behavior, or ideal character.

But I could not protest this insanity; It's banned in Law 7.3.2, number 3! You are  
"envious" and "demoniac", if you willfully Undermine the authority of the GBC!

Dear devotees, one day, if you chance to observe That the sky dare be blue, it is  
not; how absurd! We must wait, the GBC law 'bout it's still pending, Or if not, well,  
you're warned, of an unhappy ending.

### BELLBIRD

Silvery, floating, In summery meadows, Entering deeply, the Forestly shadows.

Frozen in frosty Whiskers of pale, Clad by the misty Clothes of the vale.

Airborne on breaths From the mouth of the river, Floating down currents, A windily shiver.

Stepping on paths That the gentle cows took Entering doors Where the mindly ones look.

Awaken awareness! If not heard before, To beckon, to reckon, To search for the call.

Your sound all around me, How could you be So close and so distant, Beckoning me?

Drawn unto You, As in a spell. Oh heavenly rapture, Oh Bird of the Bell!

Your sound is unearthly, I cannot tell Where your sound is firstly, An echoey shell.

I can't help but feel Your source is divine, A Spirit who searches Through stems intertwined.

Beyond the dark, rigid Walls of His churches, Life's playful Wizard, The Spirit Who searches.

In birdsong, in chants, In the longing, lifelong, To be filled and entranced Every step, by the Song.

Caught up in the scheming Of life's interactions, This fugitive fleeing From the furtive attraction.

Suspended in dawn, In the still morning air, The hidden, withdrawn Into worldly care.

To be silent, aware, Is to hear, once, Your call, Like light penetrating A dark, distant wall.

To the searching spirit, To the mind, enraptured, To the wandering soul, By Your charm, to be captured.

## **CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION: TRUTH IS THE ISSUE**

Srila Prabhupada: "Now has the GBC become more than Guru Maharaja? As if simply GBC is meant for looking after pounds, shillings, pence. The GBC does not look after spiritual life that is the defect. All of our students will have to be guru, but they are not qualified. This is the difficulty." (letter to Alalanatha, 11-10-75)

Should we in all circumstances follow a Body that Srila Prabhupada stated does not look after spiritual life? What does he say about that?

"Even there is duty, we have to see what is the effect of duty. That is devotee. Devotee means he is not blind" (SB lecture '76).

Consider this: The GBC is the ultimate MANAGING authority for ISKCON - as stated repeatedly (indeed, ad infinitum) in the Lawbook. Your acceptance of it as such is part of your vows at initiation, of the oath to become Temple President, sannyasi, GBC member, or guru, and is a requirement even to be considered part of ISKCON; that is, not an outlaw!

It is a fact, however, that the GBC also require (though they don't emphasize it nearly as much) that we follow Srila Prabhupada's instructions. He instructed us to introduce varnasrama into our Society, where even the ultimate manager - the king, in Vedic times - is subject to the advice and scrutiny of independent advisors, the brahmanas. The qualifications of brahmanas are the symptoms of sattva guna, as described in the fourteenth chapter of Bhagavad-gita. No other qualification, such as being approved by management, is required. In fact, they must NOT be involved in any management, nor even be financially dependent on any manager, for that may affect their judgment, which must be based on sastra alone. The managers are duty-bound to take advice and direction from them, and to show them all respect. This is varnasrama, which we hear and read about so much.

However, it doesn't work that way in our Society. You see, the GBC somehow feel that despite declaring themselves the ultimate managers, they can also declare themselves to be brahmanas - by the passing of a resolution, of course - with the implication that they therefore need no advice from outside the GBC body. This is not scientific; caste is determined by the guna and the karma, not by proclamation or passing of resolutions.

So, as indicated in the above letter, while Srila Prabhupada hoped the GBC would not be involved in management but simply work to maintain spiritual standards in ISKCON, by the time he wrote his will, he considered their authority to be managerial, not brahminical: "The GBC shall be the ultimate managerial body". So this begs the question: WHERE are the independent brahminical advisors they are duty-bound to follow?

The conclusion is that we cannot wait for such a miracle to happen. Our GBC have been implicated in corruption in all areas, from financial to child abuse. And as you have seen in the Laws, only the strictest conformers can ascend to their absolute positions; indeed, only by strict conformity can any position be attained in ISKCON, from neophyte disciple onward.

The GBC have redefined such terms as "demoniac" and "envious", and by so doing have tried to redefine our understanding of Krsna consciousness to suit their purpose of demonizing the loyal opposition and gaining absolute control. And they have enshrined such concepts in their laws. All this despite their own appalling history of failure, even in matters of basic morality and legality. But they refuse to resign and we still have them on our Governing Body.

Despite this track record of behavior in the modes of passion and ignorance, they lay down the law of who is qualified to be in ISKCON or visit temples, and who can be a guru, disciple etc., in terms contradictory to, or not mentioned in, sastra.

We can never have an enlightened society while blindly following blind authorities, nor can we have a Vaikuntha atmosphere where laws inflict punishment on honest dissenters. Such activities indicate a wrong dynamic, one that fosters illusion, fear, and bondage, not freedom, enlightenment, and courage.

If we want the positive alternative society that Srila Prabhupada envisioned on the basis of varnasrama, we have to take the responsibility of being brahmanas ourselves, as per his instructions. This is the responsibility of each of us, to act a brahmana, which includes taking the responsibility to be truthful. From the Constitution of Association, Section M:

To invoke the quality of goodness particularly in EVERY member of the society...by establishing one in the status of Brahmin on the basis of truthfulness, knowledge and faith in the transcendental service of the Lord.

Srila Prabhupada wanted all his disciples to be leaders, so we all have the duty to become responsible for the society we live in:

"...in a round if each person is given the chance of managing the whole affairs, that means everyone becomes responsible officer." (Letter: 74-09-12)

"All of us should become expert managers and preachers...so you big managers try to train up more and more competent preachers and managers like yourselves. Forget this centralizing and bureaucracy." (Letter: 72-12-22)

"Our purpose of Krsna consciousness movement is to create first class servants of Krsna, that means they know how to do everything" (Letter: 73-01-09)

Srila Prabhupada did not envision a society of sheep, but of expert leaders. When asked "How do I become humble?" by a meek and shy devotee, he slammed his hand down hard and said, "Simply become bold for Krsna!" The "for Krsna" is significant. Not for ulterior motives, but for the protection of Krsna's society. For truthfulness, satyam.

Mahabharata on truthfulness (Shakuntala to Duhsanta):

"There is no higher virtue than speaking the truth, for there is nothing higher than the truth. And nothing in this world is more bitter than deceit. O king, to speak the truth is to stand with God, and therefore our willingness to tell each other the truth is the highest covenant...."

Srila Prabhupada on truthfulness:

"The devotees speak only the truth, satyam, though it may not always be sweet, priyam."

This indicates that we should not let laws stop us from speaking the truth, which means stating the plain facts. It also necessarily includes dissenting when something is presented as Krsna conscious law, when in fact it is only law, without Krsna consciousness. To distinguish between the two requires clarity of vision, which is another symptom of a devotee. He refuses to be part of a society of cheaters and the cheated, even when they appear in the Krsna consciousness movement. He does not deceive others and he is not deceived himself, particularly by title and position falsely presented as proof of higher consciousness. He is after substance, and Krsna conscious character as described in sastra, not merely an external display, or evidence of approval from the masses. And he has the courage to refuse to abide by such a system of deception and the laws which perpetuate it. There are so many examples in sastra of devotees displaying such courage, such as Prahlada, Bali, Raghunatha dasa, Rupa, Sanatana, Jada Bharata....

The most deceptive guise of all is the "mundane man in the dress of a Vaisnava", who is therefore the "most dangerous type of association", as described by Bhaktivinoda Thakura; and such people are "present in our Krsna consciousness movement", as warned by Srila Prabhupada. It pays to be sharp-witted, to see how and when symptoms of their presence affect our movement, and it takes courage to speak the truth about it for the good of all, for "Truth is the highest covenant."

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta on the duty of the kirtan chanter:

"As a chanter of the kirtan of Hari, it is his constant function to dispel all misconceptions by the preaching of the truth in a most unambiguous form without the influence of person, place or time. That form has to be adopted which is least likely to be misunderstood."

Such action taken individually by all members will necessarily result in a higher level of Vaisnava conduct among our leaders, more just laws, and more personalism in their dealings. The atmosphere of our society will become conducive to attracting and keeping people of higher character and intelligence, and it will encourage those who are lacking these to improve themselves. Of course, such a choice is officially forbidden, and yet no one and no law can

effectively prevent such independent thoughtfulness and adherence to honesty in one who has made a determination to cultivate these qualities. And that's exactly what Srila Prabhupada wanted us all to do.

## APPENDIX 1

### Words of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, the Enemy of Hypocrisy

A chanter of the kirtan of Hari is necessarily the uncompromising enemy of worldliness and hypocrisy. As a chanter of the kirtan of Hari, it is his constant function to dispel all misconceptions by the preaching of the truth in a most unambiguous form without the influence of person, place or time. That form has to be adopted which is least likely to be misunderstood.

It is his bounden duty to oppose any person who tries to deceive and harm himself or other people by misrepresenting the truth, either due to malice or genuine misunderstanding. This will be possible if the chanter of kirtan is always prepared to submit to be trodden on by thoughtless people if any discomfort to himself will enable him to do good to his persecutors by chanting the truth in the most unambiguous manner. If he is unwilling to chant the kirtan under all circumstances due to consideration of self-respect or personal discomfort, then he is unfit to be a preacher of the Absolute Truth.

Humility implies perfect submission to the truth and no sympathy for untruth. A person who entertains any sympathy for untruth is unfit to chant the kirtan of Hari. Any clinging to untruth is opposed to the principle of humility, born of absolute submission to the truth. Those who serve the truth all time, by means of all their faculties, and have no hankering for the trivialities of this world, are always necessarily free from malice born of competing worldliness, and are therefore fit to admonish those who are actively engaged in harming themselves and others by this method of opposing or misrepresenting the truth in order to attain the rewards of such a policy in the shape of a perpetuation of the state of misery and ignorance. The method which is employed by the servant of the good preceptor for preventing such misrepresentation of the truth, is a part and parcel of the truth itself.

It may not always be pleasing to the diseased susceptibilities of the deluded mind, and may even be denounced by that as a malicious act, with which they are only too familiar, but the words of truth from the lips of a loyal and humble servant of Hari possess such beneficent power that all effort to suppress or obstruct them only serves to vindicate to impartial minds the necessity of complete submission to the Absolute Truth as the only cure of the disease of worldliness.

Humility that is employed in the unambiguous service of the Truth is necessarily and qualitatively different from its perverted prototype, which is practiced by cunning people of this world for gaining their worldly ends. The professors of

pseudo-humility have reason to be afraid of the preachings of the servants of Hari, (one whose duty it is to expose the enormous possibility of mischief possessed by the many forms of so-called spirituality), when they are taken to task for serving the untruth.

### Commentary

This is worth some serious mulling over and digesting. Note how many times he uses the word "unambiguous."

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's own disciples had a problem with this preaching. But there is a correlation between the spirit that is explained here and being prepared to face death, and people don't see the connection. To cling to the truth and let the chips fall where they may takes a kind of courage. A very rare kind of courage. It is the same courage with which one must face death ultimately, and if one can face all the little rehearsal opportunities, then one prepares oneself well for meeting death with a clear consciousness, unflinching.

This is not a small thing, and those who are too much attached to fulfilling the social stereotype of a sadhu as someone who ruffles no one's feathers or just puts too much stock in being "loved" by everyone, which means that "everyone" in fact dictates who that person will be, will see my above paragraph as a rationalization.

Such people have never experienced the freedom and fearlessness that comes with the authentic role of being an unambiguous speaker of the truth, so they can't imagine that state. Moreover, they are too much inhibited by their own fears to even try to experience it. Ultimately, they don't admit that what is holding them back is fear. So they cloak their attitude in virtuous language. Some will say that the litmus test is that "It must strengthen." Others will talk about "love of harmony." Still others mention being "dear to both the ruffian and the saintly," and on and on. But these are not ultimates. These things are taken as ultimates because of the most pervasive of all misconceptions about spirituality - that the most outstanding indication of true spirituality is that one's interpersonal relationships improve. Thus one will be popular and so forth. This is not just a misconception, it is pure stupidity when you consider the lives of so many saints. St. Francis was disowned by his father. Raghunatha dasa Goswami was treated very nastily. Saints were often reviled and martyred in horrible ways. So it is just sentimentality to maintain that to be saintly is to be loved. The fact is, to be saintly is to stand with the truth, and that's it!

If a saint becomes popular, he regards this as simply the will of the Lord, as his lot in life. If he stands with the truth, and is unpopular, then he sees this as his lot in life also. The key thing is to stand for the truth.

Some say, or at least believe in their hearts, that one should be able to stand with the truth and at the same time orchestrate one's popularity, but this is already a

departure from the unambiguous truth that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta is talking about. But those who think like this don't want to see what he is really talking about. In the end, only a few will see this truth clearly, due entirely to their character, and not dependent on age, level of education, sex, class, or any other consideration.

So, satyam, truth, is the ultimate. But it takes tremendous courage to live that.

Shakuntala to Duhsanta:

"Honesty was placed on a scale opposite one thousand horse sacrifices, and honesty was found to be greater. Learning all the Vedas and bathing in all the sacred waters, may or may not be equal to speaking the truth. There is no virtue higher than speaking the truth, for there is nothing higher than the truth. And nothing in this world is more bitter than deceit. O king, to speak the truth is to stand with God, and therefore our willingness to tell each other the truth is the highest covenant. Do not break your covenant. O king, may you be united with truth!"

## APPENDIX 2

### SRILA PRABHUPADA ON "OUTSIDE INSTRUCTION"

Dear devotees,

This is meant to stimulate thought on how far one should avoid non-ISKCON association, and what should be the basis of such association. I personally have not felt the need to take such association, so this is nothing personal, but an attempt to see things in a non-biased way.

I am here responding to "answers" to "doubts" which are not really doubts, but points of view, but the author of the answers prefers to label them as doubts, presumably to take advantage of the negative connotation the word has in ISKCON circles.

**Second doubt:** "Yes, but while Srila Prabhupada was still present, he instructed devotees to go outside ISKCON for instructions."

**Answer:** "In two cases did he instruct his disciples to ask for siksa outside ISKCON: 1) In the beginning days, and 2) When his disciples needed some special instructions beneficial for the whole society. In the first case, when his disciples were completely alone in India, he sent them to take siksa from non-ISKCON devotees. However, seeing that the received siksa had an opposite effect on the whole society, he gave a general instruction that nobody should come in touch with non-ISKCON Vaishnavas (see letter to Tirupati, 74-04-28). He never changed this instruction and so it is still valid today."

This does not make sense. Here we see SP freely changing his instructions by making judgments as to their effect. He instructed us to "Judge a thing by the results." If he did that during his life, should we take his final version on some point as the one for all time? Or should we, as we are instructed, follow in his footsteps, and make necessary adjustments according to circumstances - as he did - not whimsically, or due to any ulterior motive, but to serve the essential purpose of the instruction. Which makes more sense?

The instruction to not take instruction outside of ISKCON is certainly not based on sastra, but on time, place, and circumstance, since he changed it himself, as pointed out. Therefore one should judge - is this non-ISKCON person actually enlightening me, helping me to apply the philosophy for my benefit, or is he twisting it for some other purpose? And we must certainly apply the same criterion to the ISKCON personalities with whom we associate. What is the effect of their association?

**Answer (continued):** "As followers of Srila Prabhupada we should not follow just some of his instructions but reject others, as that would not be the behavior of a bona-fide disciple."

We cannot reject anything whimsically, but that does not mean rejection is never appropriate. Circumstances change, and therefore an instruction which served a necessary purpose once may not always do so.

Srila Prabhupada once told of a guru who instructed that his cat be tied up during his lecture. It was because the cat rubbed up against him and disrupted the lecture, but a foolish disciple, not understanding this, thought the tied-up cat served some purpose, and when the original cat died, he obtained another to one to tie up during the guru's lecture.

Therefore one needs a living guru, because people, times, places and circumstances change.

Another consideration is that an instruction that is suitable for a person at one level could be bad for a person at another level. One man's nectar is another man's poison.

**Answer (continued):** "Srila Prabhupada wrote his ultimate conclusion on this topic in his commentary on the Srimad Bhagavatam (4.9.11). There he explains that without the association of the devotees, we cannot make any advancement in Krishna consciousness, and that therefore this International Society for Krishna Consciousness was founded so that those persons who live within ISKCON can automatically develop their Krishna consciousness."

First of all, I question the author's judgment that Srila Prabhupada is making an "ultimate conclusion." More importantly, I looked up this purport and nowhere

found anything resembling the word "automatically" as claimed here. Another point is that regardless of the purpose for which an institution is founded, the real issue is whether it is currently fulfilling that purpose. The author apparently does not make this distinction, but it is a crucial one. He continues:

"In the second case Srila Prabhupada gave his disciples the instruction to inquire about building a planetarium and about carrying out the samadhi ceremony, and all this only in his name."

This is illogic par excellence. Because Srila Prabhupada wanted the his disciples to inquire about the samadhi ceremony and planetarium, only in his name, this author concludes that we are to not take instruction outside of ISKCON. Wow. 1+4=14567735!

"Ultimately, when Srila Prabhupada told anyone to take instructions outside ISKCON, this referred only to certain disciples and in a very limited way."

Here the author admits that it is a relative and not an absolute consideration.

"In his letter from Bombay (1972 December 25) he wrote that one should ask people outside ISKCON for help without becoming obliged or influenced by them, but this is certainly not to say that one may ask unlimited advice and guidance from non-ISKCON siksa-gurus."

The mistake here is confusing a designated title with the spirit of a thing. Who is an actual ISKCON guru, the ones who actually understand that Krsna Consciousness is non-sectarian and that the guru is not manufactured by vote; or the ones who have been manufactured by institutional rubberstamp and who accept and propagating this illusion? Let's keep in mind what ISKCON stands for - Krsna consciousness - not herd consciousness and sectarianism based on it.

**Third doubt:** "We can fulfill the two instructions of searching the association of the Vaisnavas and avoiding non-ISKCON Vaisnavas even if we associate with non-ISKCON Vaisnavas who perfectly represent Srila Prabhupada."

This is not a doubt at all, but a perfectly valid realization!

**Answer:** "If they are perfectly representing Srila Prabhupada then why are they not in ISKCON?"

Maybe because they have seen so many ways which ISKCON is deviating from Srila Prabhupada's instructions, including the ones I have mentioned. Maybe because ISKCON excommunicated them, because they "undermined the authority of the GBC" by calling them naked emperors.

**Answer (continued):** "Moreover, Srila Prabhupada experienced that as much more [sic] of his disciples came into contact with non-ISKCON Vaisnavas, his position became minimized and the preaching of ISKCON decreased."

Must we therefore conclude that this will always be the effect?

"Looking for a siksa-guru outside ISKCON has caused a lot of harm to ISKCON and to Vaisnava relationships.

Oh yes, I experienced that one. Boy, did I ever! But looking for a siksa guru was not the cause. The cause was the condemnation and ostracization of such seekers by ISKCON members who had no idea of the basics of Krsna Consciousness, but who loved to wield their power to persecute others. They caused massive harm to ISKCON and to Vaisnava relationships. Practically beyond repair.

"None of these Vaisnavas can compare to Srila Prabhupada and therefore none of them is suitable to become a siksa-guru."

Hmmm, a new sastric guideline. Siksa guru now means one who can compare to Srila Prabhupada. Got that? Except of course in ISKCON, where they are embarrassingly non-comparable. But in that case it's OK, as the institutional rubberstamp supersedes every other consideration!

"To accept the invitation of Srila Prabhupada to teach within ISKCON would mean that these Vaisnavas would have to accept him as the Founder-acarya and to represent him, as only this would make them recognized and suitable to give siksa with full right."

Here we have another new qualification of a siksa guru - must accept Srila Prabhupada as the Founder-acarya. Pure sectarianism passing itself off as non-sectarian religion. Amazing.