

Explanatory note to GBC

The Chairman and Executive Committee Members and GBC members, Mayapur

Dear Maharajs/Prabhush,

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

Further to our offer of a peace proposal (attached separately) sent through HH Bhakti Caru Swami on February 4th 2009, we present before you the following explanatory note on the same:

The court case between ISKCON Bangalore and Iskcon Mumbai is coming to a close as the trial is over and case is posted for judgment on 28th February. Regardless of which side wins, the loser will appeal to the next court level. This will go on until it reaches the Supreme Court of India. Who knows how long this whole process will take, how much resources will be drained and how much time wasted. With this in mind, and with the supreme objective of continuing successful preaching for the satisfaction of HDG Srila Prabhupada, the Elected Governing Body of ISKCON Bangalore group of institutions has brought a peace proposal to the table.

This proposal was sent to HH Bhakti Caru Swami for delivery to the rest of the GBC. So far we have only received silence from HH Bhakti Caru Swami and the GBC to our offer. And the GBC meetings are getting over in few days. Under these circumstances we are making this offer public along with this Explanatory Note to Chakra, VNN, Sampradaya Sun, Dandavats and other Vaishnava sites hoping it would attract the attention of the GBC members and other Vaishnavas who are closely watching this war between ISKCON Mumbai and ISKCON Bangalore.

Our dispute with the GBC began in 1998 when we came across Srila Prabhupada's last written directive on initiation in ISKCON, famously known as the July 9th directive.

Year after year, from the early 80's we have heard from the dais of every Annual Ratha Yatra inauguration at Bangalore and every other public program, HH Jayapataka Swami being introduced as one of the eleven successor Acharyas appointed by Srila Prabhupada. Prior to 1998, being isolated in Bangalore and hardly exposed to international issues and being busy with building the temple at Bangalore, we all blindly believed the propaganda that the eleven persons had the sacrosanct appointment by Srila Prabhupada as the successor Acharyas. In fact the title of HH Jayapataka Swami was, 'Present Acharya'. However we were shocked each time one of the eleven

Acharyas fell down from grace, and this posed a big disturbing question as to why these persons, if they have been appointed by the pure devotee, Srila Prabhupada, are falling down? But the July 9th Directive answered our perpetual doubt about gurus fall down. They were never appointed by Srila Prabhupada but were appointed only as 'ritviks' or 'Representative of the Acharya'. More than anything was the deep pain in us for having become victims of this betrayal of trust.

It is a matter of undisputed evidence that several of the GBC members approached Srila Prabhupada on May 28th 1977 with a set of questions to be asked to him. One such question was, "How first and second initiation would go on particularly when he was no longer with us?" Srila Prabhupada's immediate reply was, "I will appoint some of you to act as Officiating Acharya." And to this HH Tamal Krishna Maharaj said, "Ritvik Acarya?" and Srila Prabhupada said, "Yes ritvik". **This is *Guru Mukha Padma Vakya*.**

A great misunderstanding has been perpetrated in ISKCON that the *parampara* will be lost if we had a *ritvik* system and in order to maintain *parampara* we must have living initiating gurus. But Srila Prabhupada says differently on when *parampara* is lost or stopped:

Devotee: Srila Prabhupada, if the knowledge was handed down by the saintly kings, *evam parampara-praptam*, how is it that the knowledge was lost?

Prabhupada: "When it was not handed down. Simply understood by speculation. Or if it is not handed down as it is. They might have made some changes. Or they did not hand it down. Suppose I handed it down to you, but if you do not do that, then it is lost. Now the Krishna consciousness movement is going on in my presence. Now after my departure, if you do not do this, then it is lost. **If you go on as you are doing now, then it will go on.**"

(*Room conversations, May 9th, 1975, Perth*)

Now, here also it is stated, *sa kalaneha mahata yogo nasto parantapa*: "My dear Arjuna, oh, you are the great hero. Now, that *Bhagavad-gita*, the instruction which I imparted to the sun-god, was coming by disciplic succession. Now it is lost." Now, we have to note down this point. Why it is lost? Why it is lost? Do you think that there was no learned man during that time? During Krsna's time? Oh, there were many learned sages. Not only one, two, there were dozens of learned sages. But still, the Lord said, Krsna said, that "They... That knowledge which I exactly imparted to sun-god is now lost." How it is lost? There were many scholars, and still, how it is lost? The **lost means that the purport of Bhagavad-gita is lost.** (*Gita lecture New York, July 13th, 1966*)

We have dozens of quotes on this subject that shows how and when *parampara* is lost, which requires a careful study. This is not the parampara of physical arts and crafts like music or massage therapy or wrestling - which requires a physical link of teacher and disciple to keep it going. We are talking of spiritual knowledge whose transmission, as repeatedly taught by Srila Prabhupāda, does not depend on physical presence. Srila Prabhupada has set up an institution of preachers who, if they continue to speak what ever Srila Prabhupada has taught, as it is, then the parampara will continue.

Another standard objection about ritvik system is that it is historically unprecedented. We have prepared a list of over a dozen things that Srila Prabhupada did that are historically unprecedented and would be considered unacceptable by other Indian Vaishnava traditions. And Srila Prabhupada has said this about an acharya:

“Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu **wanted to invent a way to capture** the Mayavadis and others who did not take interest in the Krishna consciousness movement. This is the symptom of an Acharya. An Acharya who comes for the service of the Lord **cannot be expected to conform to a stereotype, for he must find the ways and means** by which Krishna consciousness may be spread.”
(CC Adi 7.33)

“So therefore **it depends on the acharya how to adjust things**. So, my Guru Maharaja, ‘Alright go on preaching on a motorcar, it doesn’t matter.’... This is adjustment. **The acharya knows how to adjust things.**”
(SB class, Auckland, Feb. 20th, 1973)

And the most definitive direction on this subject is found in the purport of the Srimad Bhagavatam:

“One should take initiation from a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession, who is **authorized by his predecessor spiritual master**. This is called *diksha-vidhana*.” (SB 4.8.54)

And now it is a historically established fact that Srila Prabhupada did not authorize any one to become an initiating spiritual master.

Based on these and several instructions of Srila Prabhupada on this matter the entire Bangalore temple devotees were convinced that the ‘Officiating Acharya system’ was and is how Srila Prabhupada wanted initiations to carry on for the future of his movement through Ritviks, or Officiators of the Acharya, or persons “acting as Officiating Acharya”. There have been many debates over this July 9th directive which we will not get into here except for stating our stand. We also do not think that the

Officiating Acharyas are just brahminical priests as the eleven persons whom Srila Prabhupada named were indeed accomplished leaders who contributed to expand the movement. As far we are concerned over the last eleven years we have taken this directive to our heart and soul and have accepted Srila Prabhupada as our spiritual master.

So we have got everything in writing, in books, in instructions. Our duty is to take them rightly and utilize it properly, advance in Krishna consciousness. (SB class, New Vrindaban, June 25, 1976)

Srila Prabhupada writes in a letter:

“They misunderstand me. **Unless it is there from me in writing, there are so many things that ‘Prabhupada said.’**”(Letter to Omkara-devi dasi, dated September 2nd 1975,)

So we know that what is written (and signed) by Srila Prabhupada is final.

With this faith in the words of our Spiritual Master Srila Prabhupada we have been engaging successfully in expanding his preaching mission by opening several centers all over India, and distributing the Holy Name, Books and Prasadam from these centers to millions of conditioned souls. From when the time the dispute began and we were 60 full time devotees, now we are a community of over 275 full time devotees in 14 locations.

With the assistance of the devotees of ISKCON Bangalore, our congregation, outside supporters, visitors, and all of us together, with the grace of Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Radha Krsna Chandra, have made the temple and all of its preaching efforts a continual success, even in the face of the most vicious adversity. The GBC is very well aware of our recent history of adversity and maligning campaign that we have been facing, were we are called thieves and frauds, perpetrated by our opponents (ISKCON Mumbai) under the authorization of the GBC because of the court case against them. All of this I do not wish to list here to keep the mood positive. We can proudly say that we have tolerated it for a decade without retaliation and can safely say that we have never attacked ISKCON anywhere except a few months back when we brought out a booklet “Struggle for Truth.” (We took this step as agents of ISKCON Mumbai stole the database of 40,000 donors of ISKCON Bangalore from the temple and mailed a booklet titled *Fraud of Madhu Pandit Das*). We were always careful in spite of all the provocations not to burn the bridges with the GBC with a hope to work some day under a strong united GBC. In spite of our struggle against these obstacles, we have

carried out our devotional services to Srila Prabhupada to expand Krishna consciousness movement in India.

We can only imagine what the results of our efforts and resources would have been if we were permitted to expend them all on preaching, and not on defending the maligned attacks on us in the last decade.

Here is additional explanation of our proposal (attached along with) is:

1. We want to work under one single world wide GBC
2. But we should be respectably allowed to practice the Officiating Acharya system within our group.
3. Once we are under the GBC and as long as the law on ban of ritvik doctrine exists, we cannot practice the same under their authority except as hiding fugitives. We did not put up all these struggles to get that compromised status. What we are looking for is GBC permitting to practice the same only within our group, and obviously this cannot happen as long as the GBC is holding that it is a 'deviant' doctrine. We do not want to be under a body who does not accept us to have Srila Prabhupada as our spiritual master, both *diksha* and *siksha*, as we are practicing now. That cannot happen without them repealing the law on ritvik. This is the crux of the issue. Not the property, at least for us. If they accept clearly, unambiguously and honestly that ritvik system can be practiced in *our* group of temples, we are prepared to flex in many different manners to bring all the properties under the control of the GBC on par with other ISKCON temples in the world.

There are three letters of Oct and Nov 1974, to show that Srila Prabhupada directed certain devotees to register a separate society in Calcutta by the name "International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Calcutta" under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act, although that instruction was not carried out. HH Jayapataka Swami was named as one of the Trustees too in that document. When the movement had just begun in 1972, Srila Prabhupada naturally considered Bombay as the headquarters and wanted all the funds in India to be sent to Bombay for centralizing and in return all bills to be paid from Bombay. He wrote so in a letter in early 1972. But there is absolutely no evidence of it having functioned in this manner. Srila Prabhupada was so much against centralization as we see in April 1972 when he disbanded the entire GBC when an attempt was made by some of the GBC members to centralize ISKCON management all over the world. (ref: series of letters/telegrams that Srila Prabhupada wrote in April 1972).

If all the properties in India were to be controlled by the single trustee group of Mumbai society, i.e., Bureau, then why did Srila Prabhupada in his Will in 1977 not say so? On the contrary, Srila Prabhupada in his Will has appointed separate groups of three or more property trustees for each of the major properties in India. On the other hand, for India Srila Prabhupada could have just said, "...the Bureau is there."

In addition, in Srila Prabhupada's Will he even says that if one of them resign or die in any of those three or more trustee groups then the others will co-opt a new person as long as he is an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupada. Will is not a letter but a legal document. Only if the ritvik system is practiced can there be initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupada, say fifty years from now. Otherwise according to the Will all the properties would have to go to the government control as there will be no more initiated disciples of Srila Prabhupada to act as trustees. How does GBC answer these facts on Srila Prabhupada's Will satisfactorily? Are they not obligated to honor the Will of Srila Prabhupada? Or at least give an explanation?

Why did Srila Prabhupada appoint separate property trustee groups for the India properties when the Bureau of Bombay Society was existing? We all know many things have happened in ISKCON during and after Srila Prabhupada's life time, which were not according to his exact written direction. The fact is that these written directions exist today, and we can try to follow it unless the author, Srila Prabhupada, annulled such directions through another written document of equal weight.

Shankabrit Das as President, Ananta Padmanabha Das as Vice President, Amiya Vilas Das (now Amiya Vilas Swami) as Secretary and Poorna Brahma Das as Treasurer and Bhakta Das jointly with two others registered a separate society at Bangalore in 1978 by the name International Society for Krishna Consciousness under the direct instructions of the then HH Hamsadutta Swami, who was the then GBC for South India. Hence it cannot be said that the society has come into existence clandestinely by the collusion of all these people without the knowledge of the GBC. Recently this has been confirmed by Hamsadutta Prabhu through an affidavit given to us for the court case. Several allegations and arguments have been placed before the court by ISKCON Mumbai that Bangalore Society is a bogus imposter Society, etc. etc., and I have committed fraud to make ISKCON Bangalore and its properties independent of ISKCON Mumbai. In any case this is the crux of the case and these things are matters before the court and the court will decide these matters based on the evidence and arguments placed by both parties. (By the way, I joined ISKCON only in 1981, three years after ISKCON-Bangalore society came into existence).

It was H.H. Jayapataka Swami who directed me in the 1980's to approach Shankabrit Prabhu. He told me that he did not have a good relation with Shankabrit and hence I should try it myself and do the needful to formalize the handing over of the

management of ISKCON Bangalore society to me. Subsequently I contacted Shankabrit Prabhu in Tirupati as per the above direction of His Holiness Jayapataka Swami and that is how I became the President of Karnataka society after Shankabrit Prabhu resigned. Probably he remembered Srila Prabhupada's letter regarding his intention to register a separate society in Calcutta and that is why he directed me so without batting an eyelid.

The very first line of Srila Prabhupada's Will also says, "GBC is the Ultimate Managing Authority". But ISKCON Bombay took a stand in the court that it only exists for spiritual guidance. I had briefed my lawyers otherwise, during the cross examination. I had told my lawyers that GBC is the ultimate body though legally it has never been tied up properly. Otherwise where and how is the entire movement tied up as one. If they would have taken the right stand that GBC is the ultimate managing authority, we would have agreed to it, and would, of course, say that in this case they are not a party to this suit. And later if a fresh suit were filed by the GBC on the basis of such admission by us, we would have acceded control to it but would have argued that the real GBC would have to be formed by election of Temple Presidents as per Direction of Management. That was our plan if they had admitted the Ultimate Managing Authority of GBC. Obviously for this case such admission by them would have been fatal for them and so they said that GBC has only spiritual overseeing power over the temples.

In other words, we have always been willing to work under the properly elected GBC.

Therefore we want to work under an ISKCON which, at the least puts these things in right perspectives. That is the reason, we say, that we want to subordinate ourselves to the GBC and not to ISKCON Mumbai Bureau. In fact all ISKCON temples and institutions should incorporate amendments to give ultimate control to the GBC body. You can imagine, a body having such huge control over the properties, will be a very powerful body unlike present GBC which is toothless against protecting the properties of the movement. Why not have such a powerful body if that is what a united movement means as long as that body is an elected one which will automatically limit power corruption. Holding ultimate control of properties of the independent legal constituents of the movement by the GBC does not mean centralizing management or the GBC interfering with it.

This idea of election is not a concoction and this was conceived by Srila Prabhupada himself in the year 1970 itself and made into a legal document "Direction of Management." It is through this document that the GBC was brought into existence by Srila Prabhupada for the first time. In DoM Srila Prabhupada gives directions on how ISKCON should be managed especially after his life time. Further in July 22, 1974 Srila

Prabhupada wanted certain amendments to be made to incorporate the concept of GBC appointed as per DoM into “all official registration documents, constitutions, incorporation papers, etc.” on TOPMOST URGENCY basis. Hence we see that Srila Prabhupada wanted the concept of control by an elected GBC body according to DoM to be enshrined into all independent legal constituents of the entire movement.

In the DoM every three years election is suggested from amongst the temple Presidents to make up the GBC body, along with one third old members for continuity's sake. You cannot talk of institutional control and have a loose institutional control mechanism unable to check everyone at all levels - from the GBC, as a group, to individual GBC members to every single member of the society. Corruption of power can happen at all levels. An organizational structure that will protect the institution from perpetuating such corruption is what Srila Prabhupada has envisioned. Without such control the GBC is fully autocratic. Neither the extremes of autocracy nor the extremes of democracy are good. Srila Prabhupada did not say the GBC has to be elected by all the members of the society, but by the Temple Presidents who are knowledgeable. So it is not fully democratic, yet the essence of democracy wherein responsible and qualified leaders in the movement are allowed to choose who they will be governed by is intact. This keeps the topmost Governing Body from becoming permanently corrupted with favoritism, individualism and autocracy. In this age of Kali whether it is an individual or a group of individuals, total autocracy is not healthy. Yet individual authority and empowerment of Temple Presidents are also to be encouraged within healthy limits for organizational growth. Today the GBC as a body is a permanent, static and unquestioned authority. And that is why no real reforms can happen. This is the reason why, in our proposal, we want to subordinate all our properties to the control of a GBC which agrees to adopt Srila Prabhupada's DoM.

In any case, today ISKCON is full of guru groups. Let us not hide this fact: in Mumbai two distinct groups co exist. One is HH Radhanath Swami's disciples and other is predominantly HH Gopal Krishna Goswami's disciples and others. And we are asking, let us also be just another group and grow independently but under the GBC with due representation in the GBC for our group.

So you see our proposal is an integrated one involving an organizationally reformed GBC. Of course if ritvik is allowed by the GBC (not Bureau) then the beginning of our integration is done. It is said, something well begun is half done. I request the GBC to evaluate the proposal in the interest of the whole movement. Actually there is no negotiation from our side except for the ritvik issue. We want the intelligent people in the movement to think why each of the conditions have been put forward. That is why our offer was not based on victory or no victory in the court case. We want to work

under one worldwide GBC, but a reformed GBC, not the present flawed one with a track record of historically documented excesses, blunders and faults.

We cannot close this out-of-court settlement by patch up negotiation. The conditions I am asking, except for ritvik issue, are all organizational reforms for the good of a united ISKCON. That is why I am insisting that the GBC involve in discussing this proposal. Our proposal is not thrusting Ritvik system on others. But if we have to work under the GBC we have to be whole heartedly accepted. We would also want to be proud of being part of the united ISKCON movement. ISKCON as it stands currently, without election as per DoM, is headed by an autocratic body dominated by gurus. We obviously will not subordinate our institution and properties to such a body.

Regarding financial transparency, we are willing, as a group to subject ourselves to all scrutiny, which anyway GBC will have the authority to when we subordinate ourselves to them. However we would want all temples and institutions of the organization to follow the same level of transparency, starting from international BBT. There cannot be two different standards. We desire even higher standards of professional quality of transparency than what exists now within our group, but want to see that rest of ISKCON also follows the same. This is to make the outside world look at our organization with high degree of credibility. Our group wishes to integrate itself as a healthy creative partner and not that you ask transparency from us as if we are all 'thieves'. We cannot be approached with the mood that, "We who are in the house are honest and hence need not worry about transparency. Only you 'thieves' have to be transparent!"

Can we honorably sit with the GBC and discuss all this? We think this is GBC's duty. If they shirk, then it is the usual flaw manifested again of a non elected autocratic group as there is no one to question them on this neglect of duty to Srila Prabhupada at the highest organizational level when such an offer is placed before them. Law of Karma will act not only for ones action, but also for inaction. We are crying in wilderness to the GBC, "Please take us under your wings." But according to GBC our only defect is we are "hard core dedicated disciples of Srila Prabhupada!" What an irony!! But we have shown a way, without rocking their 'boat of spiritual masters and disciples', by which we can be accommodated as a distinct group so that we can all expand the movement under a united and reformed GBC.

Do not mistake us that we are asking the GBC members to reform individually. That is not within our purview. We are seeking only organizational reform through election as per Srila Prabhupada's DoM. We preach that Srila Prabhupada built a house where the whole world can live. Let the GBC first demonstrate that by expanding their house a little to accommodate the sincere followers of the very founder of the movement. Till

then this ISKCON is not Srila Prabhupada's house nor the GBC Prabhupada's GBC, but the houses of the gurus and a GBC body of gurus. The GBC has assumed a right upon themselves to experiment (played around with spiritual and material lives of thousands of souls in the last 30 years) with various theories of gurus: Zonal Acharyas, Mahabhagavata gurus till found fallen, GBC appointed gurus, voted- in gurus, No-objection gurus, suspended gurus, re initiating gurus - (except acting as Officiating Acharya). Even morally GBC is bound to accommodate us as respectably as you have accommodated the 'gurus and disciples' of the entire above flawed guru systems according to GBC's own admissions after each experiment failed.

We are not supposed to experiment in spiritual life. We are supposed to follow the perfect descending process. Let the GBC open their hearts to let us at least follow the clear directive of July 9th 1977, and work under an elected GBC as per Srila Prabhupada's "Direction of Management."

We have to write this explanatory note so that the GBC does not think that this is a 'compromise offer' to save our skins from fear of losing the court case or being thrown in the streets or jail, as being propagated by the agents of the ISKCON Mumbai. That depends on where Krishna wants to keep us, in jail or street or palaces. They or we have no control over it. Since we are serving Him, we have full faith that He is in direct control of these outcomes which will be known in the next few days. Neither are we doing all this to buy time by being in any illusion that ISKCON Mumbai/GBC is going to lessen any of their efforts to defeat us in the higher courts by all means available just because of this peace proposal. To sum up, it is a straight forward offer of peace to work together under one GBC body.

We request the GBC not to mistake us and think that what we have said above is out of arrogance. We have said so only with the desperate wish to work as part of a united worldwide ISKCON under a progressive GBC. We want the current GBC to see every one of our proposals in that light and respond so that court cases can all be ended. We are awaiting if the GBC body is serious about respectably welcoming our group as faithful Vaishnavas with some conviction, but not as deviant devotees being sheltered 'mercifully'. The offer is there officially in writing. The demands in the offer are simple to understand.

Thank you Maharajs and Prabhus.

Your servant in service of Srila Prabhupada,
Madhu Pandit Das. (President, ISKCON Bangalore.)