

Dear GBC members and ISKCON devotees,

Please accept our respectful obeisance. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

The Improving Sanga initiative is our humble attempt to serve the devotees. However, we fear some may misunderstand our intentions, considering us critical and offensive. For example, in *Learning from the Past*, we discuss key mistakes we feel the GBC made soon after Srila Prabhupada's departure, some of which they also acknowledge. In *Right or Wrong: You Decide*, we discuss policies and current ISKCON teachings that we consider philosophical speculations. In *Some Thoughts on Sraddha to Nishtha* we discuss the first four stages of bhakti and why we believe ISKCON's initiation policies undermine devotees' progress through them.

We must emphasise that though we address perceived problems, we recognise and are deeply thankful for all ISKCON's successes, and for the sacrifice and contribution of Srila Prabhupada's disciples who assisted him in establishing ISKCON. When Srila Prabhupada physically departed, his seniormost disciples had been practising bhakti yoga for no more than eleven years. Understandably, then, mistakes were made. It is a great credit to all Srila Prabhupada's followers that ISKCON has done so well.

However, it is also true that the GBC made errors, which resulted in many of their god siblings leaving ISKCON, and numerous newer devotees losing their faith, and even suffering material harm.

We are therefore not wanting to simply point out problems but are offering what we sincerely feel is a positive solution: Improving Sanga. We pray that the Lord and his pure devotees will give us the collective intelligence to apply the principles it espouses, which we have drawn from Srila Prabhupada's teachings.

In respect of one major problem we perceive, namely the GBC's authorisation of diksha gurus, Tamal Krishna Goswami and Hamsaduta das, two of the original proponents of this policy, said the following in 1980:

*"Actually, Prabhupada never appointed any gurus. He didn't appoint eleven gurus. He appointed eleven ritviks. He never appointed them gurus. Myself and the other GBC have done the greatest disservice to this movement the last three years ... because we interpreted the appointment of ritviks as the appointment of gurus." [Tamal Krishna Goswami](#)*

The GBC body also admitted to errors in a 1999 resolution.

*As humble followers of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada, the GBC Body must execute his will to the best of our ability as we collectively understand it. During Srila Prabhupada's physical presence,*

*he empowered the GBC Body and guided us when we erred. We continue to pray for his guidance and feel it is his will that we now correct the misunderstandings of the past. Thus, the GBC Body, both individually and collectively, wishes to express its deepest apologies to, and beg the forgiveness of, the followers of Srila Prabhupada who were offended or hurt by our past decisions resulting in the excesses and abuses of the zonal acarya system and its ongoing ramifications. [GBC Resolutions 1999](#)*

We understand the GBC has taken steps to rectify the errors. However, we think there is room for improvement, and pray that Improving Sanga can assist. Although we know that devotees may find some of our points challenging, we feel duty-bound to speak what we feel is true.

*“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 that 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*

*“Devotees always humbly offer respect to everyone, but when there is a discussion on a point of sastra, they do not observe the usual etiquette, satyam bruyat priyam bruyat. They speak only the satyam, although it may not necessarily be priyam.” [Letter to Srimati Morarjee](#)*

We also understand that such discussions are beneficial for all participants.

*“A sincere student should not neglect the discussion of such conclusions, considering them controversial, for such discussions strengthen the mind. Thus one’s mind becomes attached to Sri Krsna. You should be always alert in understanding the sastric conclusions that will help you, otherwise we can be misled by bogus philosophies.” [Letter to Ayodhyapati das. 1976](#)*

We sincerely pray that this website will inspire respectful open discussion on the topics we raise in the light of Bhagavad-gita’s teachings, and that such discussions will benefit ISKCON, its leaders, temple devotees, and congregation alike. `

With deep respect,

Your servants,

The Editors

Krishna Dharma das & Chintamani dhama dasi

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