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CONFIDENTIAL

Official Decision on the case of Keshava Bharati Das Goswami (KBdG) DOB: N/A

This decision, concluded on December 12th 2023, was rendered in accordance with the guidelines for arbitrating cases of alleged child abuse established by the ISKCON Child Protection Policy and Operational Guidelines ('Guidelines'), ratified by the ISKCON Governing Body Commission June of 2018. This finding is the Official Decision of the ISKCON Central Office of Child Protection (ICOCP) in the case of Kesava Bharati das Goswami (KBdG). For purposes of identification, KBdG, aka Kenneth Beck, is an initiated disciple of His Divine Grace ACBhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Currently living in United Kingdom. Born in United States of America. White-bodied male.

This decision defines the parameters of the relationship of KBdG with ISKCON. The ICOCP advises child abuse victims, their parents, and all members of ISKCON to report allegations of child abuse to governmental social service/ law enforcement authorities. Also, the ICOCP advises all members of ISKCON to research, be familiar with, and follow their local laws regarding child abuse and mandated reporting of child abuse.

There are allegations of sexual abuse against KBdG that occurred in Spain in 1985.

According to the ISKCON Child Protection Policy and Operational Guidelines, sexual abuse is defined as:

SEXUAL ABUSE occurs when perpetrators (male or female) use a child to meet their own sexual needs. It is an act of commission (perpetration) where a child is coerced, induced, persuaded, enticed, seduced, or entrapped into sexual acts with another person. The coercion can be either physical, verbal, or non-verbal. The other person could be either an adult, an adolescent (12-17 years of age), or in extreme cases, another child (less than 12 years of age). The abuser uses his/her position of authority or power (size, age, social position, cognitive differential) to exert control over and exploit the victim.

C. **Behavioural Principles in Dealing with Children**

1. A high ethical and professional standard while interacting with children must be maintained.

6. Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

a) Sharing the same bed, van, hotel room, sleeping bag or tent with a child unless the adult is a parent, guardian or sibling;

b) Being alone with a child who is not a member of the family in a locker room, rest room, dressing, changing or showering facility;

c) Taking photographs of children who are unclothed or dressing, or permitting photographs by others;

d) Verbal harassment, such as derogatory comments, jokes, or slurs;

e) Visual harassment, such as derogatory or sexually explicit messages, notes or gestures;

f) Sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

ISKCON recognises that there are few offences more serious than abuse or other misconduct with a minor, especially by a member of the ISKCON clergy or other personnel.

Accordingly, it is the policy of ISKCON to use every reasonable means to prevent the occurrence of abuse, to treat with utmost seriousness any allegation of abuse or misconduct and to alleviate, as far as possible, the suffering of all persons affected by abuse if an incident should occur.

- ISKCON Child Protection Policy and Operational Guidelines, 2018.

Evidence:

The ICOCP has received one statement from a victim regarding child abuse allegations against KBdG. The reported incident involved a ten-year-old child. The victim was female.

The alleged incident took place at New Vrajamandala, Spain. At the time of the alleged incident, KBdG was a sannyasi at the temple.

The allegations against KBdG are as follows:

1. The abuse happened on one occasion in 1985.
2. He groomed the victim by giving her gifts, such as a picture of Radha Krishna.
3. He groomed the victim by repeatedly summoning the victim to his room sometimes alone, and sometimes at night.
4. He asked her to sit close to him when they were alone.
5. He would give the victim big pieces of burfi and mahaprasad that were otherwise very hard to get. These gestures as described were seen as special treatment towards the victim
6. He would read the victim's palm under the pretence of astrology and directed her to keep these interactions a secret.
7. He was talking about his Vrindavan trip with the victim and whilst mentioning that his feet touched all those holy places and temples, he asked the victim to massage his feet. He laid down and put his feet on her lap, proceeded to open his lunghi, making his kaupin visible to the victim, whilst touching himself as the victim massaged his feet
8. KBdG remained silent when the victim was reprimanded in his presence for telling someone that she had massaged his feet.
9. One of the times that KBdG asked the victim to his room alone, he asked the victim to stand up and to put her feet on top of his. He was holding her and dancing and laughing.
10. [redacted]

This review panel has considered all the information at its disposal and has come to the following decision based on:

1. The accused groomed this ten-year-old girl and abused her sexually.

2. The accused knew very well the gravity of his actions and has admitted that out of guilt for his actions, at one point in time was considering committing suicide by jumping into the ocean at Jagannatha Puri.

3. The accused admitted to his guilt in his first response but later recanted.

4. The incident has left the victim traumatised, and at age ten felt she had been mistreated. She feels the accused has never apologised to her sincerely. She feels anger towards him for recanting on his admission of guilt and the fact that he boasts that he came back to sannyasa ashram by unanimous decision of then GBC in 2006.

Conclusion:

Based on the evidence presented, the Review Panel found it ***more likely than not that KBdG is responsible for child sexual abuse, spiritual abuse, and grooming a child*** *(building a relationship of trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit, and abuse them).* This is an ecclesiastic decision that defines the relationship between KBdG and ISKCON.

Requirements:

1. KBdG must write a letter of apology to the victim that should be sent to the CPO for delivery to the individual at an appropriate time. KBdG should not contact the victim directly.

2. KBdG is required to pay a sum of $1,000 within the next two years for child support/therapy/to support ISKCON youth programs such as: ISKCON Child Protection Office, or an ISKCON school accepted by the Child Protection Office). The money should be sent to the Child Protection Office.

Restrictions:

The following are restrictions placed upon KBdG **for a period for 8 years,** *effective immediately:*

1. KBdG may not visit any ISKCON centre or projects including nama-hattas, festivals, or ISKCON organised/affiliated programs in Spain where he committed the offences.

2. KBdG may not hold any position of leadership or management, including in an advisory capacity.

3. KBdG may not give class or lead kirtana/harinama in any ISKCON temple or project, or carry out any public preaching, including recording audiobooks, and any editing work where he will be publicly credited for his work.

4. KBdG may not perform brahminical services/public worship such as, offering arati, going on the altar, offering a garland to Srila Prabhupada, etc.

5. As per the 2007 GBC resolution #312 Clarifying Leadership Standards Part B, KBdG may not continue to give first, second, or sannyasa initiations. Nor should he accept any new disciples for siksa.

*<u>*Special consideration:*</u> This panel recognises that KBdG may still have initiated disciples that wish to continue taking shelter from him and it is for their sake only that this panel makes the following exception to the above restrictions:

KBdG may hold private sangas for his already initiated disciples, off ISKCON property, where he can continue to give class and lead kirtan. These can also be held online, but should not be advertised on, or posted in public forums or on social media (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) He may wish to make a disciples-only WhatsApp group, for example. Any vyasa-puja celebrations should also be held privately for disciples only.

The following are **LIFETIME restrictions** placed upon KBdG:

1. KBdG shall not have service involving children in any ISKCON temple, school or project. (Children are defined as anyone under 18 years of age.)

2. KBdG cannot stay overnight or reside at any ISKCON centre or facility affiliated with ISKCON.*

3. KBdG may not be present if the victim, or her family members, are present at an ISKCON centre or function. If the victim or her family arrive at the same place as KBdG, he should leave immediately.

*26/12/23: The panelists have considered the GBC EC's request that KBdG be permitted to reside at one ISKCON facility, such as ISKCON Goverdhana, as he is elderly and has no shelter other than ISKCON.

The panelists would like to stress the importance of zero-tolerance policy towards child abuse within ISKCON, highlighting that support for the victim must take precedence over any consideration for the abuser. They would like to highlight that the passage of time does not lessen the seriousness of the offence and its reproductions; rather, it reveals an inability to address abuse promptly, undermining the victims' trauma.

We call for introspection when we are more concerned with the wellbeing of the accused over the victim. The fact that the accused boasts about being welcomed into sannyasa by the GBC unanimously, gives us plenty to ponder.

The panelists have **reviewed and granted the request** based on KBdG's advanced age and health. KBdG must vacate if the victim would like to visit the chosen temple.

However, the panelists are concerned with the message this will send to the victim and broader community, that concern/considerations were for the accused, not the victim, highlighting skewed principles.

The GBC stated in their request, "ISKCON is Maharaja's only shelter."

We would like to bring the focus back to the abused child whose only shelter was also ISKCON, and was left unprotected and unsupported. We would like to emphasise that focusing on the victim's well-being is crucial. Handling abuse appropriately is crucial for the well-being of ISKCON and all its members.

The lifting of these sanctions is subject to full compliance of the above requirements and restrictions.

Any violation of the above may result in continuation of sanctions, dependent on the determination of the ICOCP Director.

Panel Recommendations:

1. This review panel recommends that the ICPO Director share this report with the Sannyasa Ministry so they can examine whether they deem KBdG's conduct befitting that of a sannyasi.

2. This panel recommends that the Guru Services Ministry consider whether, in light of this decision, KBdG should be permitted to continue to give first, second, or sannyasa initiations, or accept any new disciples for siksa once the 8 year restriction period is up. Taking note of the GBC resolution #312 Clarifying Leadership Standards Part B (detailed previously).

3. This panel would also like to address the Spanish GBC, leaders and managers. Initial complaints about KBdG's inappropriate behaviour with the victim were not dealt with adequately. The Spanish yatra needs to prioritise child protection and develop a better understanding of the impact of child abuse by ensuring all leaders (or future leaders), have mandatory CPO training in order to maintain their positions. This training has to be renewed every two years.

4. This panel would also like to highlight that many of KBdG's godbrothers and other senior devotees wrote character references for him, some even claiming that he could "never" have carried out any child abuse. This goes to show that the culture of defending and protecting one's friend still exists in our society, and unless leaders receive training and have an understanding of child abuse, they will continue to blindly support, protect, and defend those who have had serious allegations made against them. It should be mandatory for all GBCs and leaders to have ongoing child protection training.

5. This panel would also like to appeal to the Sannyasa Ministry. Our recommendation would be to seriously and thoroughly screen each sannyasa candidate and their eligibility. The impact of repeatedly seeing devotees given sannyasa and guru status that have abuse histories causes an extremely harmful dissonance for ISKCON and its members and breaks devotees' faith. We recommend in depth training in child protection for the sannyasa committee members.

Standard CPO Policies

Restriction Policy: The decision of the panel constitutes the minimum restrictions that an ISKCON organization must enforce. Any specific ISKCON center may choose to enforce restrictions that are more stringent. It is expected that all ISKCON entities will carefully consider these decisions of the CPO before imposing more stringent limitations, as the constraints prescribed herein are deemed sufficient.

Appeals: According to the 'Guidelines', in cases where allegations are determined to be valid, the Official Decision may be appealed to the Child Protection Office within 60 days of receipt of the decision. It must be submitted in writing to the CPO Director. The only two principles that an appeal may be accepted are 1) if procedures in the original review prevented a fair and impartial hearing, or 2) if there is new and compelling additional evidence. The official decision described in this document is effective immediately. Should s/he choose to appeal this decision the individual named must abide by the original decision during the appeal process.

The Review Panel Members in this case were:

NAMES WITHHELD

The Case Manager was Daksina dd 15/12/2023

Daksina devi dasi

The Director of the ICOCP was Kamalesh Krishna das 15/12/2023

Kamalesh Krishna Das