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# GBC-EC Statement and Report Regarding Balabhadra das (formerly Bhakti Balabha Puri Maharaja)



**By the GBC Executive Committee**

The GBC Executive Committee, after much deliberation and consultation, has no alternative but to sadly report the deviations of and the abuses to devotees carried out by Balabhadra dasa (ACBSP), previously known as Bhakti Balabh Puri Goswami. Notwithstanding his fall-downs the GBC offered Balabhadra Prabhu shelter and guidance provided he work under their guidance, absorbing himself in sadhana. Unfortunately he has recently defied this agreement, the guidance of his friends, the direction of GBC members and the authority of this Society, thus in effect leaving ISKCON and acting independently. Therefore, as he has plans to continue some independent form of "preaching" and collections, we have no option but to inform the devotees of his deviations. What follows is a brief history of Balabhadra dasa's disturbing behaviour, behaviour which led to his stepping down from gurushipp, sannyasa and finally membership of ISKCON.

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Report on Balabhadra dasa, formerly Bhakti Balabh Puri Goswami

This report was compiled for the GBC by the committee dealing with this case, Sivarama Swami, BB Govinda Swami and Praghosa dasa and has been approved by the GBC Executive Committee. It has been reproduced here in full, and thus may contain more information than expected from a general article.

Introduction

Balabhadra dasa was always eccentric and even in the early 80's showed a penchant for cars, cameras and handling money. However his wife, his godbrothers, and his own strong spiritual practices, namely sadhana and deity worship, generally kept his eccentricity and indulgences to a tolerable level. Otherwise he was known as a good preacher, inspirational sankirtana leader, and a caring devotee. The death of his wife seemed to be a visible turning point in his life. His sadhana deteriorated, his bodily weight increased and he became increasingly involved in the lives of his female disciples, despite his having entered the renounced order. There was a "special" relationship with one female disciple, who was the person with whom he later, repeatedly fell down. Balabhadra dasa's distancing Sivarama Swami from Scotland and the latter's eventual resignation as GBC for the UK left Balabhadra dasa more or less unsupervised and uncontrolled. Although the exact chronology of events is not perfectly represented above, it does give a cursory indication of Balabhadra dasa's decline over time.

Findings of the Working Committee

Over three years ago Balabhadra dasa's sexual abuse of his female disciple came to light and in investigating that abuse, a Pandora's box of equally serious deviations gradually came to light, all of which were made known to the GBC Executive. The

committee working with Balabhdara dasa first removed him from all positions of authority and suspended his gurushiip, later they restricted him to residence in Vrndavana and finally negotiated with him his retirement from active service. The conclusion of the three years discussions and consultation was a final meeting in Scotland, the results of which are recorded later in this report.

Years of investigations and meetings with Balabhadra and his disciples revealed Balabhadra's degradation into a disoriented person who could in no way be considered fit for a position of authority in this movement, what to speak of spiritual leadership. This assessment is shared by all the senior devotees in Scotland and substantiated by many practical examples, only some of which are cited below. (He was sent to a professional psychiatrist for six weeks, however he blocked us from obtaining the results of the analyst's report.)

To disciples and later to the committee dealing with him Balabhadra dasa has admitted that he thought of himself as a personal associate of Lord Caitanya and/or Krsna. In addition, his conception of guru was one in which he was the proprietor of his disciples, of ISKCON's assets and especially of ISKCON Scotland's monies. And because a guru, he thought, takes the karma of his disciples he deemed that he was above Srila Prabhupada's order to co-operate with the GBC secretary and the GBC body.

Balabhadra would become physically abusive to disciples, sometimes violently hitting and kicking them, even to the extent of drawing blood. In the name of 'helping' two female disciples he performed many explicit sexual and voyeuristic acts by exploiting the obedience of his female disciples. Considering himself proprietor of the Society's funds Balabhadra wasted money by the frivolous purchase of, amongst other things, expensive cars, motor-homes, cameras and dozens of guitars.

His dealings with disciples were contradictory, duplicitous, manipulative, intimidating and abusive. To his disciples he openly criticized senior devotees, sannyasis and friends, both in private and in public classes and lengthy istaghostis.

Despite all these obvious deviations, to date, at the repeated request of those who have been trying to assist him he has not, and by his own admission cannot, document the reasons leading to his gross deviations. He is unable to understand the severity of his transgressions, or the reactions of those in knowledge of them. He still believes his good motivations overshadow any faulty methodology.

Preliminary Recommendations

While there are many other symptoms and examples of Balabhadra's deviation, the words above do not do full justice in portraying the hurt devotees have suffered at his hands. Our society must be clear that such abuse will not be tolerated, especially from gurus, those who are meant to show the ideal example of the humble Vaisnava.

Therefore the working committee considered it inappropriate that our Society allow him to continue as a spiritual master or sannyasi, invest in him any managerial or spiritual responsibility, or put him in a position of trust. Having seen how he has abused the trust placed in him by the Society, the devotees, and his disciples; having seen how grievous his conduct and deeds were, the committee was convinced that Balabhadra dasa could no longer be put forward as a representative of this society in any capacity.

August Meeting in Scotland

With these conclusions in mind the working committee along with six senior devotees of the Scottish yatra sat with Balabhadra dasa to work out an agreement. It was accepted that if Balabhadra dasa continues to work under ISKCON authority, then his basic needs would be looked after by the Scottish yatra. The desire to look after Balabhadra dasa was in recognition of the years of dedicated service he performed prior to his problems arising and the heartfelt appreciation of the Scottish devotees for the help he had given them. In every meeting with Balabhadra dasa over the years, including at this final meeting, his great services and good intentions were always acknowledged. Yet those could not negate his offenses.

After two full days of discussion the following mutual agreement was reached with Balabhadra dasa:

* The Scottish Yatra would support Balabhadra with a monthly allowance and give him the permanent use of an apartment in Sridhama Mayapura, where he was to

move. In addition Scotland would cover budgeted travel, medical and miscellaneous expenses. * Balabhadra dasa agreed to step down both as a guru and as a sannyasi o Balabhadra dasa would serve under the guidance of Sivarama Swami, BB Govinda Swami and Praghosa dasa, until further notice, staying at Kusum Sarovara and as soon as the necessary arrangements are made, move to Mayapur where he will be under the supervision of a senior vaisnava o Balabhadra dasa would only travel by prior agreement
* Balabhadra dasa agreed to undergo further counseling as soon as it could be arranged.
Even during the meeting Balabhadra dasa gave up his sannyasa cloth and we continued amicably calling him Balabhadra Prabhu rather than Puri Maharaja. At the conclusion of the meeting Balabhadra dasa departed from Scotland and everyone appeared satisfied with the above agreement, especially since all the points were mutually agreed upon without much ado.
The Scottish Devotees
Until this year, the only devotee in Scotland aware of all the deviations and subsequent restrictions on Balabhadra dasa was the temple president, Prabhupada Vani dasa. Others thought he had semi-retired for health reasons.
In the beginning of the year news gradually leaked to other senior devotees and since that time we have had many meetings to inform and then help those disciples. These disciples included all the senior and leading devotees of the yatra. With the exception of two (mentioned below) all devotees accept Balabhadra's stepping down as both guru and sannyasi and have stopped all worship of and appellation in regards to him. Many have sought shelter from other senior Vaisnavas.
The devotees are all united around and supportive of Prabhupada Vani dasa as temple president, who is doing an admirable job in that service, in an otherwise trying situation. Balabhadra's son and daughter, also living near the temple, are fully aware of his transgressions and fully supportive of the working committee, its decisions, and the Scottish temple management.
There appears to be two die-hard supporters of Balabhadra who show no apparent change in allegiance to their "guru", even after being made aware of all the transgressions and abuses. These devotees are now being engaged by Balabhadra for his purposes.
With those exceptions, who are now leaving the devotee community, the yatra, the temple and the congregation is stable, the devotees mature and the mood upbeat. There have been many visitors recently, such as Hari-sauri prabhu, Madhavananda prabhu, Dhananjaya prabhu and Indradyumna Swami and more are expected. In short the isolation is over.
Subsequent Development
Within one month of this agreement being reached, Balabhadra dasa reneged on it. Instead of fulfilling certain duties and communications assigned him, he turned up at the temple in Scotland, at midnight, on Janmastami, unannounced and without permission. Obviously the devotees there were both shocked and intimidated. He spoke to some proclaiming that he was now a free man and not working under any authority. He also stated that he had friends and collecting abilities, thus he would not be affected by losing the support of the Scottish Yatra, or of ISKCON.
Unless and until Balabhadra submits himself to the working committee and the authority of ISKCON, he should be considered as his own agent, not a representative of ISKCON. Thus whatever project he promotes, or funds he collects for, are not with the approval of ISKCON. Thus temples and temples' congregation should be appropriately informed.
This report completes the work of the committee assigned to this case.
The reason this issue is being announced on Dandavats is twofold;
1. It was made clear to Balabhadra dasa that if he broke the agreements regarding his rectification, restriction, and future service, and if he chose to do as he liked, his case would be made public in order to protect devotees of the Society from him.
2. Since Balabhadra dasa is now his own man, with no means of livelihood, he will seek to raise funds from the international society of devotees who should be informed that supporting him is not supporting any ISKCON approved project or person.

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**COMMENTS • [COMMENT FEED]**

**1**

It should be pointed out that this is *not* the same Balabhadra of ISCOWP fame.
That should be pretty obvious because this one is in Scotland and the cow protector Balabhadra is in the USA, but someone actually asked me if it was the same person, so I thought it would be a good idea to make that perfectly clear.

Comment posted by Akruranatha on September 24th, 2007

**2**

Hare Krishna,
At the request of some devotees I would like to add a few points of clarification regarding this statement:
1) All devotees who suffered as a result of these events were of adult age
2) As soon as specific knowledge was known of the abuses, Balabhadra das was removed from the Scottish yatra and any position of authority
3) The police were also informed of the situation
4) Other relevant authorities have also been informed
5) All the devotees who suffered abuse have been offered counselling
Your servant, Praghosa dasa

Comment posted by Praghosa on September 25th, 2007

**3**

Dear Prabhu,
I wrote my previous comments hurriedly and noticed several mistakes, could you please replace it with the following. Thanks.
All devotees who take on the service of guru should understand that it is not they that are worshipable, but Krishna, who manifests through them (thus the distinction between vani and vapu). The Lord reclaims the fallen conditioned souls by means of sound vibration (Vedic knowledge) and the guru is considered to be synonymous with Krishna only when he repeats the same pure message without deviation.
A chunk of metal or rock has no significance before it is fashioned into the form of a murti. But as soon as it becomes representative of the Lord it becomes worshipable and it is the same with the guru. He is an ordinary living entity who becomes worshipable only when he is representative of the Lord and even then it is Krishna, assuming the form of the guru who is significant and not the jivatma. The jiva is vapu (physical form) and therefore, always insignificant.
In Vedic times a disciple would go to the home of the guru at four years of age and would stay there until he was twenty-five. Thus, he would feel very obligated to the guru for teaching him everything he knows. For us it's not like that. We have obtained something like 25% of our knowledge from our parents, 25% from our education, 25% from our friends and contemporaries and 25% from 0ur spiritual master. The guru may be giving us the most important instructions, but still we DO NOT owe him everything.
Respect for the teacher is inherent in all Hindu traditions, whether he be teaching yoga, martial arts or dance. Even dacoits and prostitutes respect their teachers. So we have to keep a balance realizing that much of what we are told about the position of the guru is simply formality.

It is only illusion and the desire for sense gratification that causes a devotee to think that he has actually become a 'divine grace' and associate of the Lord. And, we have now witnessed this scenario many times: of gullible followers worshipping exploitative personalities, without learning important lessons.
ISKCON gurus generally need to move away from the idea that everything is about them and disciples should be trained to be less credulous. The problem is that objectivity in the guru-disciple relationship is not encouraged and this is the heart of the problem.

Comment posted by yaduvendu das on October 6th, 2007

**YOU MUST LOGIN BEFORE REPLYING.**