

Concerning Satsvarupa Maharaja

GBC Executive Committee Statement

Posted May 11, 2004

Dear Devotees,

Please accept our humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

The following statement from the GBC Executive Committee represents ISKCON's official position on the subject at hand.

At the end of this posting you will find a candid letter from Satsvarupa dasa Goswami about a falldown that occurred in his spiritual life about a year and a half ago. This took place within the context of his ongoing endeavors to serve while struggling with debilitated health.

The GBC Executive Committee would first like to express its deep gratitude toward Satsvarupa das Goswami, a much loved devotee in the Hare Krsna movement, and acknowledge his career of dedicated devotional service, exemplary sadhana, and inspired literary preaching on behalf of Srila Prabhupada.

As a GBC Emeritus, Satsvarupa Maharaja holds no official position in the management of ISKCON and is unlikely ever to do so.

In consultation with the GBC EC, he has agreed to retire from initiating; he will not initiate any more disciples.

His present disciples are encouraged to go on steadily in their devotional service to ISKCON and Srila Prabhupada, and he will continue to offer guidance and care as they so desire.

As Srila Prabhupada writes in Bhagavad-gita (9.30): "Sometimes. . . it may be seen that a person in Krsna consciousness commits some act which may be taken as most abominable socially or politically. But such a temporary falldown does not disqualify him. The material contamination is so strong that even a yogi fully engaged in the service of the Lord sometimes becomes ensnared; but Krsna consciousness is so strong that such an occasional falldown is at once rectified. Therefore the process of devotional service is always a success."

Satsvarupa Maharaja has re-dedicated himself to his vows and asrama and is committed to his full recovery and service to Srila Prabhupada. We offer him our wholehearted affection, encouragement, and support.

Out of respect for Satsvarupa Maharaja, we request all devotees to give him the time, space and privacy he requires to recover fully. Out of respect and honour for the sacrifices he has made on behalf of Srila Prabhupada and ISKCON these many years, we encourage devotees everywhere to offer him their support, prayers, and good wishes.

Your servants,
GBC Executive Committee

Letter From Satsvarupa Maharaja

May 1, 2004
Dear Maharajas and Prabhus,

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

There has been gathering exposure that I, Satsvarupa Maharaja, and a female therapist had a short-lived romantic involvement about one and a half years ago. As many of you may know, I have tried many therapies over the years to try and cure what is a severe case of "anxiety disorder anticipatory migraine." In one such effort a Godsister was helping me as a counselor, and regrettably I held sessions alone with her. And so the relationship developed.

I certainly committed a mistake, and I felt relieved when I wrote a letter of confession to the ISKCON sannyasa minister. He asked me if she and I had sexual intercourse, and I honestly said "no." Krsna saved us from that.

I feel like I want to explain what steps I've taken to protect myself from further problems. The saying "once burnt, twice shy" certainly applies to me. In addition to any consequences endorsed by the GBC, I feel great personal shame. On the other hand, this has increased my intimacy with Krsna in prayer. I know, for example, that a sannyasi should never be alone with a woman. I am suffering third-degree burns by disobeying this simple first instruction for sannyasis. I'm determined to never make that same mistake again. I am praying constantly to Prabhupada and associating with my Godbrothers in a humble mood.

My health is not good, but I don't wish to dwell on it here. I'm under the care of an expert psychiatrist MD and an authorized counsellor who is helping me with my anxiety issues. I consider my status to be semi-retired. I will not be initiating any new devotees. I am serving the devotee community by writing books and also answering letters. I served in an active capacity for almost 40 years and I can't keep it up. I am not avoiding the society of devotees. I simply can't travel in cars or planes to go to temples or festivals, to sing or dance or give lectures. Maybe each of you will reach that stage sooner or later.

I am profoundly sorry that I slipped and fell on the road this way, a 64-year-old sannyasi who had no other brush with a woman. I thought for sure I'd get through to the end with a perfect record. Krsna must have seen I was proud. I pray He allows me to remain in ISKCON and follow the rules and regulations to my dying day. I heard that Sridhara Swami told a Godbrother just before he passed away, "Be who you are and make a contribution." I think I have written this same sentence in my books. I fall at the feet of all devotees and ask their forgiveness.

Yours in the service of Prabhupada,
Satsvarupa das Goswami