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'Making a Scapegoat': A Letter to Prithu Prabhu

by Jayadvaita Swami

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[This letter from Jayadvaita Swami was sent to Prithu in 1997]

Dear Prthu Prabhu,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. You have sent me a message you have written about Dhanurdhara Swami, and you write: "I would be glad to hear what you have to say."

I'm not very familiar with the exchanges concerning Dhanurdhara Swami on the "GBC Discussions." In March I suspended my membership in that conference, and I've kept it suspended ever since.

What little I know of the issue comes from having read Nirmal Candra's web pages, having spent some time with Dhanurdhara Swami and having spoken briefly about the matter with some GBC friends.

I can, however, add something from my personal experience.

Back in 1986 when I was on Padayatra in South India, a Western devotee joined our party named Ananta Rupa Dasa. The party consisted of a grab-bag of Westerners and Indians, most of whom had a hard or impossible time communicating with one another. So when we got Ananta Rupa, who was fluent in Hindi, fluent in Bengali, and capable of getting things done, we were pretty happy.

But soon we starting getting letters from Dhanurdhara Swami. He had found out that Ananta Rupa had been sodomizing the kids in Vrindavana. And after kicking Ananta Rupa out of Vrindavana, Dhanudhara Swami was adamant that Ananta Rupa should not only be out of Vrindavana and away from every ISKCON school, but out of India entirely, and pretty much out of ISKCON.

In keeping with the ethos of the day, those of us on the padayatra thought: Well, first of all we haven't heard all the evidence. And second-ok, even if he might have buggered a kid or two, there weren't any kids on padayatra, and this is where people come to do austerities and be purified, and the man's got to do "something", so why not let him stay?

But Dhanurdhara Swami was adamant: This man has got to be out. And Dhanurdhara Swami was so strong and persistent about this that soon Ananta Rupa was out; he was off our party.

But from what I later heard, Ananta Rupa didn't quite leave India. Instead he went to Secundarabad, where the local GBC man then put him in charge of their school.

When Dhanurdhara Swami got word of this, he was outraged. He at once sent a clear, strong message to those

responsible for Secundarabad: Ananta Rupa has got to go.

But he didn't go. The leaders kept him. And so Dhanurdhara Swami brought the matter to the ISKCON Ministry of Justice, and later went to Mayapur to appeal to the GBC to get Ananta Rupa out.

But those were the days when ISKCON took child abuse lightly. So the GBC men he appealed to did nothing.

So where does that leave us?

Is the then-GBC man for Secunderabad-still with us-ready to resign from the GBC? To give up initiating? To give up preaching? To live outside ISKCON?

And how about the other GBC men who failed to act when Dhanurdhara Swami appealed to them to get Ananta Rupa out? Are they ready to resign? To forget about initiating and preaching? To live outside?

For the better part of two decades, Dhanurdhara Swami was among a small handful of devotees who kept pleading with the GBC for men and money for the Gurukula: "We should be giving the Gurukula our best men! We should be investing our best resources in these kids!"

And meanwhile our GBC leaders, if they gave any men at all, usually gave their rejects. And as for money: Remember the days of the "11 pure devotees"? And the pure devotees who came next? Remember the Rolexes and the silver plated and the swanky cars and the knock-'em-dead lunches and the closets full of kashmir sweaters? Remember how our authorized pure devotees derailed Srila Prabhupada's society, luxuriated in its resources, lorded it over their godbrothers and godsisters, and drove so many sincere people out?

Some of these pure devotees are still with us, right on the GBC. Are they ready to resign? To forget about initiating? Give up preaching? Live outside of ISKCON?

Even in more recent memory, some of the pure devotees sitting right with us on the GBC body are the same people who had thousands of dollars to spend on their own constructions projects but who were perennial deadbeats when it came to paying Dhanurdhara Swami the nominal fees for their sons in the Vrindavana gurukula. Are such men now among the noble leaders demanding that Dhanurdhara Swami dissolve into virtual nonexistence for the sake of ISKCON's integrity?

To take things further:

Some of our North American GBC leaders now putting on the pressure for tests and investigations and justice are the same men who not long ago were playing "Krsna and the gopis" with their female disciples. Resignations, anyone?

And as you and I know, as most GBC men know, and as it's common knowledge outside the GBC, we've got at least one or two devotees on the GBC body right now who, almost unquestionably, don't even chant 16 rounds a day. And yet on they go, initiating more and more disciples, and getting them to vow strictly to chant at least 16 rounds daily.

So if your on a campaign for justice, and honor, and responsibility, and the reputation of ISKCON, and detachment from position, then great-bully for you.

But then the blade should cut evenly. As the English saying goes, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander." That is: The same principle that applies to the accused should equally apply to the accuser, and to everyone else. Not merely that for the sake of "protecting ISKCON" we make one man the scapegoat and skin his hide, while carefully protecting our own. A society willing to stoop to that is a society from which any halfway bright member of our second generation-and most of them are very bright-would want to keep a long distance.

Thank you for inviting me to comment.
Hare Krsna.

Hoping this finds you good health,
Your servant,
Jayadvaita Swami.