ADDRESS BY BHAVANANDA GOSWAMI TO HIS AMERICAN DISCIPLES
Brooklyn, N.Y., August 21, 1985

I just came from an important meeting at New Vrindavan of the GBC, North American temple presidents and senior disciples of Srila Prabhupada. We've been having a lot of discussion about the role, in our society, of our acaryas. There was one paper presented by Ravindra-svarupa, which was unanamously accepted by all of the temple presidents and senior Godbrothers who were there. Anyway, just briefly, it dealt with the fact that according to his [Ravindra-Svarupa's] study, Prabhupada never meant that there should be one acarya. After his departure, due to, not any ill-intension on anyone's part, but we set up the society in a way that instead of one world acarya we had zonal acaryas, and those zonal acaryas were also GBC secretaries. Over the years it has created a suffocating mood in the hearts of many of our Godbrothers, and also with that position of acarya, zonal acarya, it brought with it many, many trappings--opulences, adoration, distinction, profit--and our different acaryas started experiencing difficulties.

Just like, when I went to Australia in 1978, I was a very simple sannyasi. When I got off the plane, I had my wooden karangs, I had my beads, I had two sets of cotton cloth, a chaddar, and that was it. I was very peaceful, heavy, austere...but I was happy. But suddenly from having been a sannyasi who had done some service for Prabhupada--certainly no better or no more service than a lot of other wonderful disciples of Prabhupada had done--and with all of my frailties and shortcomings, suddenly I was a "pure devotee." You understand the point I'm making? From being a sannyasi and austere and of course having served most of my life in India--which was very austere--suddenly, somehow, by some arrangement, I became a "pure devotee." By that I mean quote-unquote "pure devotee." Now of course I understood the philosophy as well as everyone else understood the philosophy that the disciples have to see their guru as a pure devotee and in our novice mentality (because it was something new to us) we established a system of guru worship which was actually, now that we're all looking back at it, should have been ultimately reserved for Prabhupada who was <u>the</u> world acarya. But we followed his example.

So with the trappings of all of that worship and with the added responsibility (which we gladly took on because we felt it was Prabhupada's desire) taking disciples, travelling, giving council--with that came (for me anyway, I'm talking personally) a wearing down of myself physically, mentally and spiritually, to a point where at a certain time in my life as a guru and GBC man in ISKCON, from around 1980 to 1982 I experienced severe problems with my spiritual life and I fell down many times. In the past few years I'd overcome that, but there was still or still are symptoms, external symptoms, that something internally is wrong. In other words, I developed a spirit of enjoyment, an enjoying spirit. Now I might not have fallen down in the past few years but the enjoying spirit was still there. Of course I had hoped that these falldowns would not be known, but in our Society there are no secrets, because you can't keep a secret from Krsna. He knows everything. When some rumor came up regarding some of these problems I denied it and it was overlooked, at least on a certain level, but many, many Godbrothers were not convinced.

Anyway, everything was going along, and we came to this meeting in New Vrindavan and many of my Godbrothers who are very seriously concerned with the future of our ISKCON Society, with the future of the purity of our movement, with the future of Godbrothers who they want to look up to, their GBC Godbrothers, who they want to look up to, but they see in all of them, (and of course I'm not pointing a finger at anyone else because I'm dealing mainly with you and me) but they could see so many flaws and they have been actually begging us to recognise that there is something wrong with the "system". Anyway, at this meeting it was presented to me that someone had testified that I had approached them for sex in Vrindavan in 1980 and I went to Balavanta and Rupanuga and Tamal Krsna Prabhus and told them, yes that was right, It was true. When all of the presidents and senior men heard naturally, of course, they became concerned. I don't feel in any way that they were concerned or angered personally, that anyone wanted to "get" me, pull me down or anything like that. But their feeling was that this is another symptom that there is something wrong with our system, that this is going to go on like 10 little 9 little 8 little Indians, 7 little 6 little 5 little Indians, like that. So the privilege committee of the GBC which is the body which is assigned to investigate breach of faith situations like this, met yesterday. Of course I was in a lot of anxiety because I didn't know what was going to happen. I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know what my future would be in Krsna consciousness, as I said to Tamal when this first came up, I said, "Tamal, what of 'the children'? Of course I should have thought of the children then when I was having my difficulties, but I didn't. But then faced with the possibility of loosing my children, I thought,"what of the children?"

Anyway, the privilege committee meeting went on for some hours and their final result was that one of the main factors in the falldown of Bhavananda Goswami has been the acarya system that has been set up. They prefaced it by saying that. That doesn't excuse me, that doesn't excuse me. But they all see that is one of the main factors and I also see that. But again I'm not saying that that's an excuse. So, in light of that, their recommendation to me is that for an indefinite period of time I not initiate, and that regarding my GBC activities I should continue as a GBC member with full authority as a GBC man, but I'm on probation which means that I will be watched to see that I reform myself. That was their decision. Also at that meeting were some presidents and sannyasis. The sannyasis and the temple presidents also felt that that was a fair and judicious decision. I feel it was more than fair. Actually I should have had my head chopped off, but out of affection for me and out of some respect for me these men have now put the burden of correcting myself on me because they feel that I'll be able to do it. I was actually thinking anyway (see how Krsna fulfills your desire), I had been becoming so worn down from excessive travelling and even before I went to New Vrindavan and before this came up, because on last Sunday I was seriously meditating on taking some time off anyway from initiating. I have over 1000 disciples and they have required and I have given to them, willingly, all of my time and life-energy and that has required an inordinate amount of travelling and between the travelling and the counselling and the responsibility and the karma, it has brought me to a point where I felt that I was on the verge of a total nervous breakdown or exhaustion. That was on Sunday. On Monday it was confirmed.

So, I've been discussing with the leaders in my zone: Lakshmi Nrsimha Prabhu, Vicitravirya Prabhu, Romapada Maharaja--also in Australia I've contacted them:

Balaram Prabhu in Melbourne, Naresh in the BBT, the others I'll be speaking to later--and everyone has been very kind, and they feel that if I take strong moves to rectify myself--which means to become once again a renunciate, a sannyasi--they want to continue working side by side with me, to develop Detroit and New York. I also spoke to Vrajendralal--I was very apprehensive in speaking to Vrajendralal because I knew that he had been very much disturbed by Jayatirtha, but his reaction and his support was very, very wonderful for me. I've spoken with Ambarish Prabhu who is also totally supportive.

So, I've given so much time of my life. I have nothing to hide anymore. I'm not a 100% pure devotee at all. I have many, many flaws, inebrieties, material desires, and I want to now work on making myself whole again, so that if any of you do want to continue in this relationship, I'll be able to give you strong and substantial direction. I can do it, but I need now something from you. I need your support, I need your love, your affection. However, if you don't feel that you can, if you feel that I've betrayed you, or that I've cracked your hearts, then I can understand that also, and I will have no qualms if you looked elsewhere.

In a way it's a great relief for me and it's a great purification for me. Everyone has to go through a test. This is my test: whether I want to be Krsna conscious, how dedicated am I to the mission of Srila Prabhupada. That's what's being asked by Krsna. So that's it, that's who I am. I want to work in New York, I want to work in Detroit, I want to work in Australia, and of course I want to develop the project which Prabhupada gave me, Mayapur, and I feel that as I become stronger--which means to develop a sense of detachment--I've become very attached over the years. It's my fault and on another hand it's not my fault: it's the system's fault. Everything was thrust upon us. I'll take you back again: from being a devotee suddenly I was a "pure devotee." It doesn't happen like that. Bhaktisiddhanta of course said that the Supreme Lord burns up to the roots one's karma in the fire of ordeal. Krsna has been very kind to me all these years. I've had some ordeals, but never anything like this. This is the greatest kindness of Krsna. If I have support from my godbrothers and from my disciples I'm sure I can do it, and you will also become stronger. The enjoying principle is there in everyone. We have to be so careful on guard against this principle. If you want to go ahead, if you want to make advancement, you have to get serious. If it takes me and my ordeal and my dilemma and my shame and my humiliation and my mortification in order to teach you that lesson, then I gladly accept it, because that's what guru means. Do you understand that? This is both for my own purification and for yours. If this is what I have to go through and if you can benefit from it, then I gladly will go through this. I know especially for some of you this is especially a heavy blow because of your involvment with Jayatirtha, who also let them down. I've also let you down, I don't deny it, and I'm very, very sorry. But I feel that now I can start to make some real advancement in my spiritual life. Do you have any questions?

Devotees: We love you Srila Visnupada.

Bhavananda: Well if you really love me then become pure, then become pure.

Devotee: What are your immediate plans?

Bhavananda: Well, I'm going to Australia on Friday because I have to meet with the

devotees there also. Then we're having an international meeting of GBC. temple presidents, regional secretaries and senior Prabhupada disciples, a very huge meeting in New Vrndavan on the 16th of September--coming from all over the world to see how we can restructure our society so that everyone will become enlivened, not just a few men but so that everyone will fell that Prabhupada has built a house in which they can all live happily. That will be a very big event. So I'll be returning then for the New York Rathyatra on the 14th and I'll be comming with all the senior leaders of Australia and New Zealand. Then we'll go to New Vrndavan, and I'll go to Detroit, then I'll come back here to New York and then I'll return to Australia--for how long I'm not sure.

Devotee: Srila Visnupada, can you explain a bit more how the present acarya system contributed to the falldown of Bhavananda Goswami. Can you explain that a little more?

Bhavananda: It was one of the factors--by putting men into a position which was not actually intended by Prabhupada. That's the general feeling. Of course this is not an official thing, but it is now the general feeling among GBC men all over the wrold that there's been a mistake, that by putting men in a position of power, just like they say, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Of course it's not that everyone has fallen down like me. But these men, my acarya godbrothers, have become more and more out of touch with the mood and feelings of their Godbrothers and have become attached. Tamal Krsna Maharaja will confirm this, I'll confirm it, Ramesvara Maharaja will confirm it--I can't speak for everyone. But we've become attached to position, to influence, to everything that has come with that position. Prabhupada did not mean for there to be a world acarya and we don't really feel that he meant for there to be zonal acaryas. He meant all of his disciples to have a right to initiate. So we want to correct that--that all of Prabhupada's disciples will have a right to initiate with the blessings of the GBC and the consent of the temple president--not that it would become anarchy. And we also have to set up a system which is going to accommodate all of you, because we'll live 20, 30, 40 more years. If we just take a hyperthetical example: Prabhupada told me twice that I should have 50,000 disciples--that's his order to me, he told me twice. So say I have 20,000 disciples. Of those 20,000, 10,000 are men. Say I live to 80, which is not that much longer, 35 years. So those 5,000 or 10,000 men are all going to be 50,55,60. Thousands of them are going to be sannyasis because it's very clear in Prabhupada's books that when you turn 50 you must take sannyasa, must. So you are going to have maybe of those 10,000, 5,000 sanyasis. Then I die, and by the Lord's mercy I hope I'll go back with Prabhupada. Now, those men are going to want to initiate. They're certainly senior, they've been devotees for 40 years. We had devotees who were initiating when they had been devotees for only 8 years. So those men are also going to want to initiate. How is it going to work? Are they going to fight among each other for that, which can happen, which would be devastating to the Society? Therefore it is our responsibility as the GBC and as the senior Prabhupada disciples, it's all of our responsibility now to purify ourselves individually, to purify our Society and set up a system by which everyone can be accommodated for thousands of years to come. It's not that any one person is going to be the world guru. There is only one world guru, jagat guru, jagat acarya, and that's Srila Prabhupada.

So this meeting in September should be very momentus. It will be very heavy, it will be very momentus, and I think that many wonderful things will come from it.

It will deal with principle and it will deal with practical application. It will deal with Vyasasanas, it will deal with gurupuja. If you have twenty gurus in a temple will you have twenty Vyasasanas? Is it possible? It will deal with so many things, both practical and in principle, philosophical. We shouldn't have any fear. Of course you can't feel that way about me, but it's natural you feel your guru is the greatest. But your guru can still be the greatest even if he doesn't sit on the biggest seat, and even if he doesn't drive the biggest car, and even if he doesn't have the biggest this or that. That's not the indication of the greatness of your guru. The relationship is not so superficial.

Devotee: Do you feel you've hurt our relationship?

Bhavananda: Yes, I definately have. Because what has gone into your ear tonight has scarred you, whether you know it or not. It will leave a scar. Maybe a big scar maybe a little scar but the scar will be there, and for that I am sorry. But it's also your maturing. I have to now think of myself. I've thought of you all for years and some of you haven't helped me as you could have in terms of your surrender. Anyway that's neither here nor there. But I have to think of myself now, I have to cleanse myself. This is part of cleansing myself. I don't want you to think I'm anything more than what I am. You may love me for what I am and I love all of you, even the most fallen of you. I do. But let our relationship be based on that--on this mutual love and desire to assist each other. I need some assistance. I'm tired. I'm very, very exhausted. This is the icing on the cake. This is the straw that broke Bhavananda's back. But actually I feel less exhausted now than I did on Sunday. I need time for being more meditative.

Devotee: Srila Visnupada what would be the thing to do for your aspiring disciples?

Bhavananda: That's up to you. If you're still my aspiring disciple after what I've said tonight sinks into your head, you'll have to wait. I feel that I'm not going to ask to initiate, but when the temple presidents and leaders in the zones that I'm working for, when they feel confident then they can ask the GBC, and if the GBC gives permission then I'll initiate. I feel that's the way it should work. So if you still want to take initiation from me then you're going to have to wait, maybe a year, maybe more. But one thing I can tell you is that I do feel the GBC has given me some--they have faith that I can do it, that I can become strong.

Devotee: What is that assistance, what can we do?

Bhavananda: Become Krsna conscious. You know the lectures I've given. You don't have any problems. Of course you have problems but I can't, especially not at this time, I can't deal with those problems. That I was finding on my last trip to Australia in June. I've never had this before in Australia. Now I see every disciple individually. I did, but I was just unable to cope with their problems and the real reason was that there were material desires in my heart and they were causing conflict. I wasn't pure that I could really apply myself and apply my intelligence to trying to give direction. So now I need that time.

Devotee: Does that mean that we shouldn't ask to speak with you or write letters?

Bhavananda: You can certainly write letters. I appreciate it. You can write me letters. But the real help is, because it's a transcendental thing, that the

support comes from the purity. So as you become, all of you, very serious to become pure, then that will save me. That's like the story of, who was it that gave his youth to his father? Yayati--it's kind of like that. If you really want to help me, then you become very pure and that will give me great support.

Devotee: Srila Visnupada, we love you and we'll never leave you.

Bhavananda: Thankyou. Don't ever leave the Society. That's the main thing. Come what may, don't ever leave the Society, because if you love me then you have to love the Society. Don't ever leave it. It is the salvation of this world. Also don't let yourselves get into a position like me where I have to be taught such a lesson in order to appreciate the ability to be able to do service. When I thought--these things went through my mind while I was waiting for the privilege committee decision--that all my service would be taken from me (they would have that right), then that service became very, very important. Without it we have no life. So if you want to love me, that's nice. This is how you have to show it. In every temple that I work in, I've always preached that the leaders are fully capable of taking shelter of, and fully competant to give you instructions in your spiritual life. Not that I won't give you instruction, but they're also fully competant. I've always preached that. We should have that faith also. They are wonderful men: Muralivadaka, Lakshmi Nrsimha, Vrajendralal, Vipramukya Maharaja, Romapada Maharaja--they're wonderful men. If you pray for me--because you can do that, you pray to Prabhupada to help me for my speedy recovery. There's one thing I know, and I'm not bragging when I say this: I am very, very close to Prabhupada, I am very dear to Prabhupada. And I realised that when I saw how the privilege committee and how everyone has been dealing with me. They are dealing with me I'm sure just as Prabhupada would have dealt with me--dealing with me in a very loving way. So you pray to Prabhupada for me to forgive me. Then it should be alright. What do you think? It's pretty shocking. I'm fallible, but we're all fallible, and our infallibility is when we work together cooperatively. Therefore Prabhupada always said work together cooperatively with love and trust, and working together cooperatively with love and trust overcomes all of the defects.

Devotee: You've often said that the greatest quality of the Vaisnava is his quality of forgiveness.

Bhavananda: So I'm asking you to forgive me.

Devotee: Do you forgive yourself Visnupada?

Bhavananda: Not yet, I don't think I ever will as long as that can be used as an incentive to keep me fixed.

Devotee: Does this change our relationship with you at all?

Bhavananda: That's up to you. If you cannot see fit to continue to accept me as your guru, you have every right to reject me and you can seek someone else for initiation if you want.

Devotee: Can you reject us too?

Bhavananda: I could never reject you. But you have every right [to reject me] Scripturally, you have a right. It will be interesting to see what happens. If we make it it will be all that much sweeter.

Devotee: In the Bhagavat Gita it states that even if one commits the most heinous activity, he is to be considered saintly.

Bhavananda: Yes that's true. Even he commits the most heinous activity, which I've done, he should not be criticised. But I can't hide behind that because I'm a guru. I can't hide behind that. But I can use that [verse] that if he continues in devotional service he will very quickly become rectified. That's my hope. That's Krsna's statement, therefore I know it's true.

Devotee: The relationship between the disciple and the spiritual master is eternal.

Bhavananda: Thankyou. Even Lord Brahma had a problem, what to speak of me. I'm feeling enthusiastic and I'm feeling more peaceful than I've felt in years--you can imagine--the anxiety of the disguise. O.K.? Thankyou. Hare Krsna.