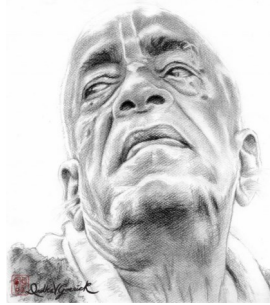




"Our life is very short. The Krishna consciousness movement is not meant for fulfilling one's personal ambition, but it is a serious movement for the whole world. I am therefore going to the Eastern hemisphere, beginning from Japan. We are going four in a party and all of us are sannyasis. In this old age I am going with this party just to set an example to my disciples who have taken recently the sannyasa order... Take it now with great responsibility and every one of you may serve jointly for Krishna's satisfaction. That is my request to you all."



(Srila Prabhupada Letter to Satsvarupa, July 31st, 1970)

Dear Maharajas,

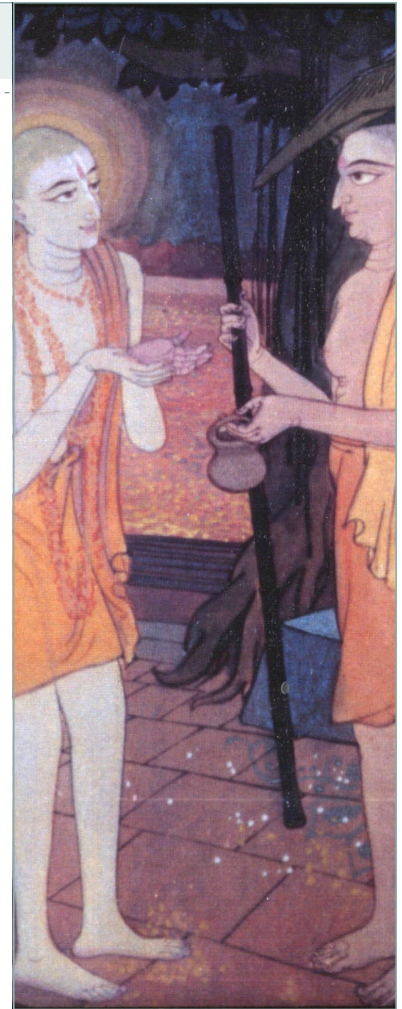
Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

I am happy to introduce the second Sannyasa Ministry newsletter. In this newsletter there is an article by Kripamoya prabhu about Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura's revival of the sannyasa ashrama in our disciplic succession. You will also find some words of appreciation for Gaura Krishna dasa Goswami, a relatively new sannyasi who unexpectedly departed from this world last year. In this newsletter you read about the visit to Nigeria with Bhakti Ananda Tirtha Swami, who went there last year as a sannyasa candidate. Of the many sannyasa candidates, I'd like to especially express my appreciation to five of them who were accepted to take sannyasa this year.

Your servant,

Prahladananda Swami

Minister of Sannyasa Services



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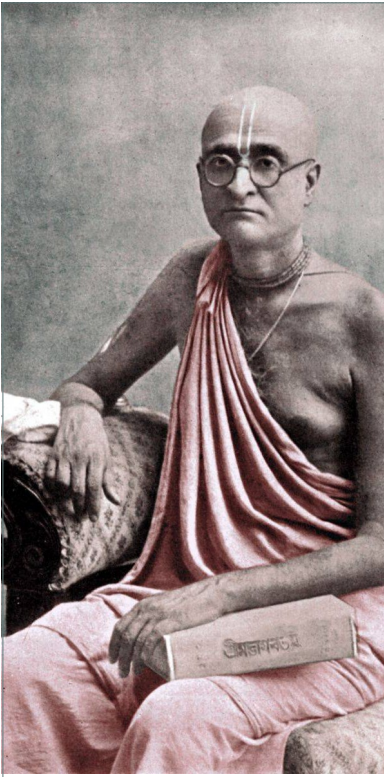
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- Mission: Nigeria
- New Sannyasis for ISKCON in 2016

Website:

www.sannyasacandidates.com

Email (Secretary):

Bhakti.Prabhava.Swami@pamho.net



FEATURE ARTICLE: BHAKTISIDDHANTA SARASWATI THAKUR, GAUDIYA MATH & SANNYASA

By Kripamoya Dasa

The life of a sannyasi is an arduous path to take. But the inner consciousness of the sannyasi is the main element of it all, rather than the external orange robes, the bamboo sticks and the begging bowl. This was the argument of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, the spiritual master of ISKCON's founder-acharya. So why did Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati feel it necessary to introduce the order of sannyasa into the line of the Chaitanya Vaishnavas?

Four hundred years had already gone by without it, and it was neither a theological nor a social requirement for Vaishnavas. In northern India, the orange clothing was commonly identified with the followers of Adi Shankara, the teacher of atheistic monism, a teaching completely opposed to Vaishnavism. And in the Caitanya Caritamrita, the leader of the Vaishnava community, Sanatana Goswami, is recorded as saying to his friend, Jagadananda Pandit: *rakta-vastra vaisnavera parite na yuyaya* – “This saffron cloth is not fit for a *Vaishnava* to wear...”

So although Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu had joined the sannyasa order, the Six Goswamis, his principal followers and codifiers of his theology and ritual, did not. From that time onwards it was the custom for renounced Vaishnavas in the Gaudiya parampara to simply adopt the Goswamis' hermit life and, like them, to wear knee-length off-white loin cloths. It is just conceivable that Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati could have conducted all his preaching activities without any sannyasis at all.

But the social, religious and intellectual circumstances of Bengal demanded something more. The so-called followers of Caitanya Mahaprabhu were withdrawn, inaccessible, and often morally incapable of representing the tradition. Some of them flouted even standard moral principles and led lives far beyond the pale of respectable society. So reprehensible were they – and so numerous - that even the very word 'vaishnava' was despised in some quarters. Millions of people had their religious needs met either by brahmanas expert in rituals or family gurus who were inheritors of their father's title. Religious instruction was in the hands of men who were often no better off, spiritually, than those they sought to teach. There were some good ones, but their 'disciples' were simply registered students who neither studied nor followed the moral precepts. The very survival of the line of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was at stake.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur wanted to create an accessible, authentic, spiritually strong and socially respectable movement. He wanted to distance himself and his followers from the degraded pseudo-followers of Sri Caitanya, and he wanted thereby to preserve the purity and reputation of his own spiritual forebears such as Gaura Kishor Das Babaji and Jagannatha Das Babaji.

So he did something quite radical. He re-created tridandi-sannyasa within his Gaudiya line, beginning with himself. After consulting with sannyasis in the Sri Sampradaya in the south of India, he first took sannyasa himself, then gradually initiated his qualified disciples until there were eighteen sannyasis altogether. At that time in Bengal the Ramakrishna Mission

was popular. They weren't technically sannyasis, but all the celibate members dressed in the traditional orange of a sannyasi. When one of their leading organizers joined him as a disciple, the decision was made and all of his brahmachari disciples also wore the saffron cloth, too.

COMPLAINTS

But there were complaints and arguments all over Bengal against what many viewed as inappropriate dress and behaviour. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur was making ordinary men into brahmanas and was now initiating his disciples into the sannyasa order. What was going on? Most Bengalis had never been to the far south of India and not seen Vaishnava sannyasis of the Sri and Brahma sampradayas. They simply had no knowledge of any such thing as an orange-clad Vaishnava. They had many arguments against it:

Sannyasa was part of the varna-ashram social system – and weren't Vaishnavas above and beyond this? The orange cloth was only for mayavadis, those preaching an impersonal philosophy – what business was it of those who believed in a supreme person to wear this colour?

And finally, none of the Six Goswamis had taken sannyasa; Sanatana Goswami had deemed it unacceptable; and hadn't Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu himself quoted from scripture saying that five things are forbidden in the Age of Kali - and one of them was taking sannyasa?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur dealt with all these arguments, and more. He replied that a person's qualification as a brahmana should be ascertained by his character and behaviour – springing from his purity – and not from his caste by birth. He quoted a famous sage in defence of his awarding brahminical initiation to those from different rungs of Indian society:

*jata-karmadibhir-yastu samkaraih samskrtah sucih
vedadhyayana-sampannah sad sat karmasvasthitah
saucacarasthitah samyag vighasasi guru-priyah
nityabrali satyaparah sa vai brahmana ucyate*

"One whose birth and subsequent works have all been purified by the appropriate samskaras, who has the qualities of purity and cleanliness, who is devoted to Vedic study, who performs worship of the Supreme Lord Vishnu, and who instructs others in that worship, who is a paragon of the six activities of a brahmana, whose behaviour is never impure, who eats the remnants of his guru's prasada, who is dear to the guru, who always carefully follows his vows, and who is fixed in the truth is known as a brahmana." (Bharadvaja Muni)

He said that the true, 'topmost' Vaishnava is beyond the varna and ashram society since he has already reached the platform of bhakti, but that a Vaishnava who wishes to keep himself humble will consider that his guru is on such a level but he himself is within the boundaries of social norms, simply aspiring for elevation. This will keep him free from pride. Although the mayavadi sannyasis believe that as soon as one takes sannyasa he is 'as good as Narayana,' the Vaishnava could never think like this. Therefore the Vaishnava does not take sannyasa out of pride, but out of humility. Whereas the mayavadis, upon taking sannyasa, remove their sikha, the short lock of hair on the back of the head, and their upavita, the sacred thread, the Vaishnavas kept both.

Continued on next page

When Caitanya Mahaprabhu referred to sannyasa being forbidden in the Age of Kali he was referring only to phalgu-vairagya, or false renunciation; the markata-vairagya, or 'monkey-renunciation.' The monkey is also saffron in colour, he also lives in the forest and sleeps under trees – or up them – but he keeps six girlfriends. This type of pseudo-renunciation will become widespread in the Kali Yuga, and it is not required.

The sannyasis of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur were a body of renunciates who established the real spirit of vairagya as opposed to those who simply spoke of it. They were travelling preachers and extended the mercy of Caitanya Mahaprabhu throughout Bengal and beyond – even to Europe. They became respected, influential and popular; they gained the appreciation of the intellectuals and the masses – and as a result the Gaudiya Mission spread like a saffron fire. By the time of his passing in 1937, the mission was represented in sixty-four cities and towns and was comprised of thousands of adherents.

“Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur wanted to create an accessible, authentic, spiritually strong and socially respectable movement... So he did something quite radical. He re-created tridandi-sannyasa within his Gaudiya line”



IN MEMORIAM: GAURA KRISHNA DASA GOSWAMI

On 17th November 2015, Gaura Krishna Dasa Goswami, who was known and appreciated for his simplicity, spiritual strength and inspiring Hari Katha, departed from this mortal world.

Gaura Krishna Dasa Goswami was born on 22nd January 1964 in Bihar, India. He met his spiritual master, Radha Govinda Swami, at Varanasi in the year 1979. The following year he received first initiation, and then second initiation one year later. Following his graduation in 1984, he decided to join ISKCON as a fulltime brahmachari. In the following years, he served at the ISKCON centres in Vrindavan, Mayapur and Juhu. He also accompanied Lokanatha Swami on Padayatra from 1985 to 1987. His preaching engagements took him to places like Jharkhand, Mayapur, Delhi, Vrindavan, Lucknow and Kurukshetra.

Later, he began preaching internationally, for which he went to Nepal, Bangladesh and Mauritius. In that spirit, he was awarded the order of sannyasa in May 2015, at Haridwar, on the banks of the River Ganga.

His eloquent and empowered preaching introduced many into devotional life. The valuable contributions and memories of Gaura Krishna Dasa Goswami will remain etched within the hearts of many devotees.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu once asked Ramananda Raya, “Of all kinds of distress, what is the most painful?”, to which Ramananda Raya replied, “Apart from separation from the devotees of Krishna, I know of no unbearable happiness.”

SANNYASA WAITING LIST 2016

The following devotees are currently on the sannyasa waiting list (as of GBC Meetings 2016):

Adi Purusa Dasa (GGS) - 2 years	Mahadyuti Dasa (ACBSP) - 1 year
Adwaitacharya Dasa (GGS) - 1 year	Mahat Tattva Dasa (BVS) - this year
Agnideva Dasa (ACBSP) - 2 years	Mahaprabhu Dasa (SRS) - 2 years
Akincana Dasa (BSDS) - 1 year	Markandeya Risi (PVS) - 1 year
Ambarish Dasa (GKG) - this year	Navadvip Dvija Gouranga Dasa (JPS) - 2 years
Ananda Vardhana Dasa (BVG) - 2 years	Pritivardhana Dasa (BVPS) - 3 years
Asit Krsna Dasa (GGS) - 1 year	Puspashila Shyama Dasa (JPS) - 2 years
Bhaktipada Dasa (SRS) - 2 years	Raghava Pandit Dasa (GKG) - 2 years
Dayavan Dasa (BVG) - this year	Rupa Raghunatha Dasa (LOK) - 1 year
Deva Deva Dasa (GGRS) - 2 years	Santa Nrisimha Dasa (JPS) - 3 years
Eklavya Dasa (LOK) - 2 years	Uttamasloka Dasa (IDS) - this year
Gaura Chandra Dasa (JPS) - 2 years	Venudhari Dasa (JPS) - 3 years
Halayudha Dasa (RGS) - this year	Vijaya Dasa (HRD) - 2 years
Hari Dasa (BSDS) - 1 year	Vishvavasudasa (NIR) - 3 years
Madhu Sevita Dasa (ACBSP) - 1 year	

MISSION: NIGERIA

Every year, candidates on the sannyasa waiting list are assigned preaching missions to places outside their regular zone. In 2015, Bhakti Ananda Tirtha Swami (previously Mahat Tattva Dasa) visited Nigeria. It was an exciting, enlightening and fruitful visit. Here are some excerpts from his diary:

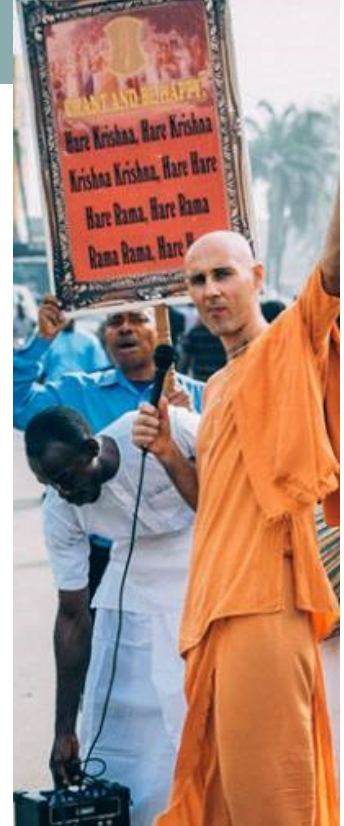
Dec 7, Mon (Lagos)

Meeting devotees, even though I did not know them, was like meeting old friends. No power - a daily affair here. Lots of noise due to the generators running all over the neighborhood. I find it to be sattvic. It is nice to be off the grid, despite the generator noise.

In these kind of simple situations, if you are not expecting much in terms of physical comfort and modern amenities, you will be very happy, otherwise you may find yourself disturbed.

Dec 8, Tue (Lagos)

Mangala arati - dozen or more devotees. Typical, standard Iskcon morning program, with a few extras, such as recitation of Siksastakam



Continued on next page

after mangala arati and a prayer to the Holy Name by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura before chanting japa.

At about 8pm I was driven to a house where an Indian family lives to speak to the gathering of devotees about the Bhagavad-gita. I think the audience was enthused and are now planning a larger gathering this Thursday. Back at the temple around 10pm.

Dec 9, Wed (Lagos)

This morning's SB class was shortened so that we could make it to the TV station on time. I was given fifteen minutes on the Nigerian national TV. I think it was a success as the temple phone started ringing even before our fifteen minutes term was over. After the show, people who help the show behind the scenes showed interest in Krishna consciousness and engaged us in conversation.

Dec 10, Thu (Lagos)

Today we went to inspect a three acre rural property devotees are trying to buy. The idea is to start a farm where devotees will demonstrate the benefits of a simple, agrarian life in Krishna consciousness. Soil here is fertile though sandy. It is of a rich orange/red color. Vegetation is lush and it grows without a need to water it. Weather is warm and steady, pretty much the same all year round. It is just perfect for agriculture.

I gave another Bhagavad-gita lecture in the evening at a home of a devotee family from India.

Dec 11, Fri (Lagos)

Today's highlight was a meeting I had with a professor of philosophy at University of Lagos, Anthony O. Okeregbe, Ph.D. It seems that if you're white and from the States, you can get to meet and talk to a whole lot of people you otherwise couldn't. I spent about an hour talking to the professor. After our discussion on philosophy and social currents in Nigeria, we spoke about the youth of Lagos and then segued into what I really came to talk to him about: venues that we, devotees of Krishna, could explore and utilize to present the spiritual wealth of the Vaishnava tradition to the students of the University of Lagos. The professor was very helpful and gave us his card so that we can contact him when we are ready for some action. According to Kavikarnapura Prabhu, the president of ISKCON of Lagos, that was a major accomplishment, something devotees have been unsuccessfully trying to pull off for years, since the death of a professor who used to sponsor devotees' activities at the university.



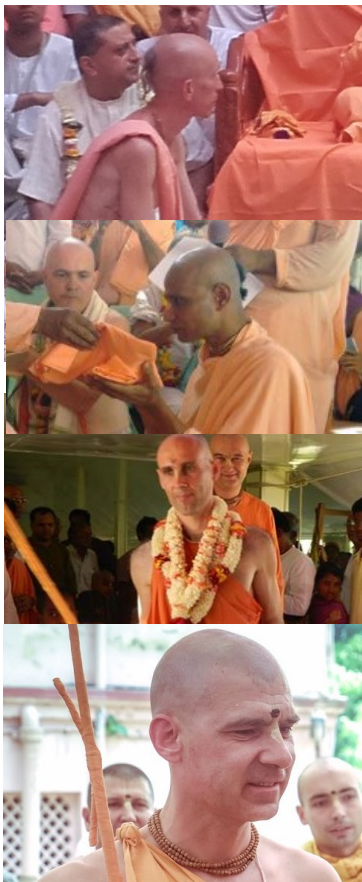
By now, I came to know and meet most of the devotees of Iskcon of Lagos community. They seem to be a pleasant and smoothly operating group. No indications of tension, politics, and other such symptoms of troubled communities. The temple is not rich, but they are definitely not lacking funds for basic operations and outreach work. Devotees are distributing Srila Prabhupada's books, hold public harinamas, and have regular temple programs. There are also regular gatherings at devotees' homes. I think they could use more concentrated and focused outreach to the youth of Lagos. I spent some time talking to Kavikarnapura Prabhu about this and he was quite inspired to hear of different examples of outreach programs devotees in other parts of the world do to communicate Krishna consciousness to the youth.

Dec 12, Sat (Lagos)

Lively harinam in the company of a dozen or so devotees in a large market area. I was pulled over by police for taking a photograph of a police officer. After much yelling and shouting, the police let me go and returned my camera. Before I left their mood drastically changed to where they were all smiling and chanting Hare Krishna. During the harinama devotees were distributing On Chanting pamphlets and prasadam fried-banana chips.

Dec 13, Sun (Lagos)

Standard Iskcon Sunday Feast program. About fifty or more people gathered in the temple to chant, dance, and feast on Krishna prasadam. Kirtan was lively. My lecture went for hour and a half and additional half hour for Q&A. There were a lot of questions. There was no time to entertain them all. It seems to me that, in comparison to Americans, people are relatively simple and love to talk about God and religion. They obviously love to engage in discussions on these topics.



NEW SANNYASIS FOR ISKCON IN 2016

In the first quarter of 2016, four devotees received sannyasa initiation:

On April 1, 2016, in Vrindavana (India), Gopal Krishna Maharaja awarded sannyasa to Ambarish Dasa. His sannyasa name is Bhakti Ratnakar Ambarish Swami.

On March 20, 2016, in Bhubaneswar (India), Radha Govinda Maharaja awarded sannyasa to Halayudha Prabhu. His sannyasa name is Haladhara Swami.

On March 19, 2016, in Salem (India), Bhakti Vikasa Swami awarded sannyasa to Mahat-tattva Prabhu. His sannyasa name is Bhakti Ananda Tirtha Swami.

On March 13, 2016, in the Jagannath temple at Rajapur in Sridhar Mayapur, Indradyumna Swami awarded sannyasa to Uttama Sloka Prabhu. His sannyasa name is Bhakti Rasayana Sagar Swami.