

309: Radha Krsna Deity Worship Standards

Resolution A:

Whereas Srila Prabhupada has stated that the worship of Radha-Krsna is the “ultimate pinnacle” of worship and “must be done with the utmost caution and attention”;

Whereas there are Radha-Krsna Deities being worshipped with less than five aratis per day.

Whereas there are Radha-Krsna Deities being worshipped by, or cooked for by non-brahmanas.

Whereas ISKCON has become unnecessarily burdened by improper worship of Radha-Krsna and this is having long-term detrimental effects on individual devotees, local communities, and the whole of ISKCON;

Whereas Deity worship must be done according to the rules of the Pancaratra and the instructions of Srila Prabhupada to be effective;

Whereas when Deity worship is done properly following the rules of worship and maintaining strict cleanliness and punctuality, the worship is enlivening to devotees;

Whereas the maintenance of public Deity worship in an ISKCON center is the responsibility of the management of that center, under the supervision of that center's zonal authorities, but ultimately it is the responsibility of the GBC Zonal Secretary and the GBC Body;

Whereas in centers where the worship is below the required minimum standard, it is often a result of zonal leadership, local temple management, and/or the head pujari not knowing the proper standards of worship;

Whereas if proper worship standards are not being maintained, appropriate steps must be taken to rectify the situation;

Whereas since the decision to move an established Deity from a center is a serious consequence of ongoing neglect in worship which may adversely impact devotees and communities, there must be clear procedures, including objective assessment in place to ensure that such decisions are taken with the utmost caution and consideration of all parties;

Whereas if all other avenues for correction have been exhausted, Srila Prabhupada did sanction the moving of Deities (eg. Edinburgh);

Whereas Srila Prabhupada was clearly not in favor of closing a center once Deities had been established (eg. Edinburgh);

Whereas every year there are more and more Radha-Krsna Deities being installed in ISKCON;

Whereas at present the only procedures mentioned in ISKCON Law regarding moving of Deities are when the property on which the Deity resides is proposed to be sold. There are no procedures on deciding when to move a Deity due to insufficient standards of worship. The GBC Body wants to establish clear procedures now so that as far as possible future disputes and disruptions can be avoided.

Resolved:
[ISKCON Law]

Radha-Krsna Deities at ISKCON centers must be worshiped at least to minimum standards as given by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and as documented by ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry (IDWM).

IDWM is responsible to assess worship standards of ISKCON centers worshipping Radha-Krsna to ensure that at least minimum standards are being maintained.

Any concerns that minimum required worship standards are not being maintained must be addressed directly to IDWM.

IDWM will investigate and respond to all reports of substandard worship of Radha-Krsna in ISKCON centers to establish their legitimacy.

Any substantiated concerns of substandard worship requiring significant or immediate corrective action will be reported to the local management, local GBC(s) and the GBC Body. This assessment and report will include a detailed outline of the current standard of worship, highlighting strengths and challenges, and identifying corrective action required.

Such cases would include, but not be limited to:

- First-initiated or non-initiated devotees cooking for, or directly serving the Deities on the altar
- Deities being mistreated
- Lack of protection for the Deities (i.e. gates and/or security guards)
- Inconsistent or irregular worship, including offerings and aratis

Any centers identified as not currently worshipping Radha-Krsna at least to minimum required standards will be put on notice by IDWM. IDWM will then communicate with the center management as well as the GBC Zonal Secretary and Regional Governing Bodies to develop a corrective action plan to improve the worship within a specified time frame.

Temporarily reduced standards of worship

In cases where it is determined a center will be able to return to a full worship standard in a given timeframe, yet currently lacks the capacity to offer full worship to the Lord, IDWM in conjunction with GBC EC may allow the center to offer a reduced standard of worship.

Before adopting such a reduced standard, a clear and detailed corrective action plan to achieve at least minimum worship standards must be developed. This plan must identify all necessary

steps to return to at least minimum worship standards. This temporary reduced standard of worship may not be reduced further.

If it becomes necessary to reduce the standard further, then the next measure to be considered would be to move the Deities to a center that has the capacity to care for the Deities.

Moving Deities

If it is determined by consultation with the local management, GBC Zonal Secretary, Regional Body, and the IDWM, that no solution can be found within a reasonable time period (2 years maximum), the IDWM will then propose to the GBC body at a General Meeting that the Deities be relocated to a center that has the desire and capacity to care for the Deities.

In cases of emergency, including but not limited to natural disasters, civil unrest, etc.; where the immediate safety of the Deities is in question; a decision to move the Deities may be made by the GBC EC in consultation with IDWM.

The following elements and considerations must be included in any proposal for moving Deities:

- Whether or not the move will improve the situation for both centers.
- The property where Deities are being moved to must be owned by ISKCON.
- Detailed assessment of the current standard of worship, highlighting strengths and challenges.
- Detailed assessment of the target center's ability to care for the Deities, highlighting strengths and challenges.
- Detailed assessment of the managerial environment of both the existing host center and the target center.
- Detailed financial assessment of both the existing host center and the target center.
- Detailed assessment of the preaching prospects for both the existing host center and the target center.
- Detailed assessment of both the existing host center and the target center's capacity to maintain existing brahmanas, and develop and train new brahmanas.
- Letters from management of both the existing host center and the target center expressing their approval of the proposed relocation.
- Letters from GBC(s) of both the existing host center and the target center expressing their approval of the proposed relocation.
- Letters from other significant stakeholders expressing their approval of the proposed relocation.

Processing a proposal to move Deities by correspondence vote will only be allowed if it was previously discussed and resolved in a duly convened meeting that the matter could be finalized by a correspondence vote.

If it is decided that the best plan is for Deities to be moved to another ISKCON center, then the center to which the Deities are proposed to be moved should be able to provide the requisite standard of Deity worship, and this should be independently verified by the ISKCON Deity

Worship Ministry and the GBC Executive Committee. If the Deities are moved, They should be moved at a scheduled time with all appropriate public ceremonies.

Resolution B

Whereas the GBC has enacted the following Law governing the commencement of worship of Deities in ISKCON centers:

*Amendment of ISKCON Law 12.1.6: “Regulation of Deity Installations in ISKCON”
{ISKCON Law}*

Any ISKCON center wishing to install any Deities for public temple worship or commence the worship of any Deity in an ISKCON center must first receive a “Certificate of Readiness for Worship” for the said Deities.

Centers may procure Deities and begin promoting planned temple openings or additions to existing worship once they have successfully completed the first stage of the approval process. Centers shall not commit to and/or publicly advertise final dates for commencement of worship until they receive a “Certificate of Readiness for Worship.”

This “Certificate of Readiness for Worship” applies only to the Deities for which it is granted and is not a generic permanent approval.

The initial contact: The center wishing to commence the worship of Deities makes an application via the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry’s website, Deityworship.com. After receiving this application, the IDWM contacts the local GBC and regional authorities to assess the viability of the application. If this consultation shows the center has made a proper analysis of the requirements to worship Deities and are moving in the right direction regarding allocation resources, etc. to the worship of the Deities then the first stage approval is granted. This then enables the temple to make arrangements to acquire Deities and commence fund-raising, etc.

The second and final stage will be assessed based on the findings of a site visit by a IDWM representative, or comprehensive consultation with concerned devotees.

The readiness for worship will be assessed by a local representative (from the temple concerned); the local GBC, regional leadership (which may include a representative from the National Council or RGB, etc.); and an ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry representative. The GBC Executive Committee will be informed of the assessment outcome.

For any applications for Deities apart from those given by Srila Prabhupada, i.e. Radha-Krsna; Jagannatha, Baladeva, Subhadra; and Gaura-Nitai (or Panca-tattva) and salagram silas; the IDWM requires executive input.

Therefore, for any application that includes Krsna-Balarama or Sita Rama Lakshman Hanuman, the IDWM will consult with the GBC Executive Committee for approval.

Any Deities apart from the aforementioned must be approved by the GBC Body before the IDWM can issue a Certificate of Readiness for installing Deities.

This Certificate of Readiness is valid for up to 180 days beyond the initial scheduled installation date. If the 180 day period has elapsed without the installation being completed, the temple will be reassessed by the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry for a new Certificate of Readiness to be issued.

Whereas it is necessary to address discrepancies in Radha-Krsna worship in ISKCON temples;

Whereas it is necessary to ensure that new worship is established and maintained according to standards given by Srila Prabhupada and taught by the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry

Resolved:

That the ISKCON Law governing the commencement of worship of Deities in ISKCON centers shall be amended to include the following:

ISKCON centers proposing to commence worship of Radha-Krishna Deities must ensure that their proposed head pujari is well-versed and sufficiently trained in required minimum standards of worship for Radha-Krishna in ISKCON.

In order to achieve this, the candidate for head pujari must be a graduate of the Mayapur Academy.

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Whereas when Deity worship is done properly following the rules of worship and maintaining strict cleanliness and punctuality, the worship is enlivening to devotees;

Whereas, it has been seen that in temples where the worship is below the required minimum standard, it is often a result of zonal leadership, temple management, and/or the head pujari not knowing the proper standards of worship;

Whereas GBC members and other leaders of ISKCON may not have the time to learn appropriate standards for ISKCON centers;

Whereas, the maintenance of public Deity worship in an ISKCON center is the responsibility of the management of that center, under the supervision of that center's zonal authorities, but ultimately it is the responsibility of the GBC Zonal Secretary and the GBC Body;

Whereas Deity worship is one of the five primary *angas* of bhakti and therefore of primary importance in a *sadhaka's* progress in spiritual life;

Whereas other primary activities of ISKCON, such as book distribution, have standing annual presentation time to the GBC and discussion on ISKCON Deity worship at our centers is similarly worthy of the GBC Body's attention and awareness

Resolved:

Each year at the AGM in Mayapur, the ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry will be allocated a minimum of 1 hour, at the discretion of the Executive Committee, to present a report of Deity worship in ISKCON, particularly with a focus on Radha-Krsna worship.