

**To the Attention of the GBC Executive Committee
ISKCON - March 10, 2026**

**Subject: Urgent Request for Intervention, Guidance, and Review
Regarding the Growing Crisis of Trust in Latin America Due to the
Delay in Defining the Issue of Vaiṣṇavī Dīkṣā-guru**

Dear Members of the GBC Executive Committee,

Please accept our most respectful obeisances.
All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

We write to you with deep respect, in a spirit of service, and with the sincere desire to protect Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission, the stability of our communities, and the trust of the devotees in their spiritual and institutional authorities. However, we also write with a very serious, growing, and urgent concern, which at this moment can no longer be regarded as merely a difference of opinion or another internal debate within the history of our Society.

In recent weeks, more than **200 devotees** and nearly **30 Vaiṣṇava organizations of ISKCON Latin America**—including temples, congregations, nāma-haṭṭas, schools, educational projects, preaching leaders, and other community expressions in our region ([Click here to view them](#)).—have been engaging in conversations, consultations, listening to testimonies, and sharing concrete experiences regarding **Vaiṣṇavī dīkṣā-guru**. This situation has been particularly aggravated by the most recent resolutions, in which the matter appears to remain open without a concrete timeframe, without verifiable criteria for closure, and without a pastoral, communicational, or institutional roadmap capable of containing the effects that are already occurring.

First of all, we wish to express our appreciation to some representatives of the **Latin American RGB** who kindly and openly agreed to meet with us in a sincere spirit of listening. In that meeting—lasting nearly three hours on Zoom, with more than 60 devotees, congregational representatives, and leaders from ISKCON Latin America—they were able to hear many of our concerns, respond to several questions, and directly witness the depth of the concern that exists in the region. We

genuinely value that gesture, and also the fact that they themselves indicated that many of these concerns appear serious, urgent, and worthy of being raised promptly to the **GBC Executive Committee**. It is precisely for this reason that they requested that we prepare this letter so that it may be presented to you as soon as possible.

It is within this context that we write to you today.

We kindly ask that you receive this letter not as a confrontation, nor as a hostile criticism, nor as an attempt to delegitimize the GBC. Our intention is not to weaken the authority of the institution. On the contrary, our intention is to help prevent greater harm by alerting, in time, to processes of erosion, fragmentation, and loss of trust that are already underway. We do so because we love ISKCON, because we value the role of the GBC, and because we believe that out of respect for Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission we cannot remain silent when we see the situation becoming increasingly delicate.

What is at stake today is not merely an isolated doctrinal issue, nor exclusively an internal procedural matter. What is at stake today is **spiritual, moral, institutional, public, and generational trust in the leadership of ISKCON**. What is at stake today is the possibility that our communities will continue to feel they belong to an institution capable of acting with clarity, justice, integrity, pastoral sensitivity, and historical responsibility. What is at stake today is whether we will be able to sustain the unity of the Society and its credibility before the modern world, before new generations, and before our own devotees.

With sincerity, we must say that the situation is serious. And we must also say that if appropriate measures are not taken urgently, we fear that **ISKCON Latin America will become far more weakened, distrustful, and fragmented than it already is today**.

Below we would like to describe some of the concerning scenarios we are witnessing. These are only examples—there are many more—but they suffice to demonstrate that we are not facing isolated perceptions, but rather a serious regional phenomenon that is repeated and increasingly visible.

1. Crisis of Pastoral and Spiritual Trust Among Devotees, Leaders, and Communities

One of the first effects we are observing is a **profound loss of spiritual and pastoral trust toward ISKCON and the GBC**, especially among women devotees, congregational leaders, educators, preachers, mothers, young professionals, and individuals who for many years have faithfully sustained services with dedication and loyalty to ISKCON.

We are not speaking here merely about emotional displeasure or temporary frustration. We are speaking about people who are beginning to feel that the institution not only fails to protect them, but also fails to convey clarity, justice, or hope. In some places it is already reported that it has become extremely difficult to sustain pastoral conversations with women devotees who express feeling hurt, discouraged, invisible, or even institutionally disauthorized by the way this issue has been resolved—or, more precisely, not resolved.

When a community begins to perceive that such a sensitive matter can be prolonged indefinitely while, in practice, the restriction falls only upon women, the effect is not neutral. People do not experience the indefiniteness as a “suspension of judgment,” but rather as a concrete decision disguised as waiting. And pastorally speaking, that lived experience is devastating. It generates not only pain but also exhaustion, loss of faith in institutional processes, and difficulty recommending to others that they trust the wisdom and sensitivity of the authorities.

This affects especially those serving in intermediate leadership roles—congregational leaders, teachers, facilitators, coordinators, preachers, senior couples, and community reference figures—who must now support the emotional and spiritual stability of others while they themselves begin to experience confusion, helplessness, and burnout. The pastoral cost of this situation is already extremely high.

We are deeply concerned that if there is no rapid and clear intervention, this crisis of trust may become a true **spiritual and communal hemorrhage**—slow but sustained—in which people do not necessarily explode or confront, but simply drift away due to exhaustion, sadness, shame, or loss of hope.

2. Direct Impact on Public, Academic, Professional, and Cultural Preaching

Another extremely serious scenario is the impact this situation is already having on **public preaching**, especially in academic, professional, interreligious, cultural, and educational environments.

In several Latin American countries, people who first approach ISKCON through a kīrtana, yoga class, cultural fair, book table, personal friendship, or university activity often later search online about the movement. What they encounter as their first impression is not our elevated philosophy, nor the legacy of Śrīla Prabhupāda, nor the value of our books, nor the transformative power of bhakti. What they encounter instead is a growing perception that ISKCON maintains or tolerates a doctrinal or institutional gender inequality that appears morally unjustifiable.

In practice, this functions as an entry barrier. Many people close themselves off before even hearing the philosophy. They do not reach the point of understanding the internal nuances of the debate. The public image appears already contaminated by a perception of inequity.

This is particularly serious in academic and professional environments where the ethical legitimacy of an institution is evaluated immediately. Preaching projects, workshops, conferences, invitations, and collaboration proposals are beginning to become fragile or unviable because organizers do not want to be associated with an institution that may be perceived as discriminatory or regressive regarding issues considered today to be morally basic.

Several devotees engaged in academic preaching and in “safe space” projects or dialogue between religion and human rights have reported that their work is being slowed down, weakened, or placed on hold precisely because they do not know how to present ISKCON to the outside world while this situation remains undefined and continues to produce concrete consequences.

This has enormous gravity. Because it is not merely a problem of “image.” It is about ISKCON’s real capacity to continue entering spaces where public opinion is formed, where future professionals are

educated, where networks are built, and where it is decided which religious voices are considered trustworthy, serious, and ethically habitable.

It pains us to say that in many cases the emerging public perception is that ISKCON risks appearing as an institution incapable of coherently and courageously sustaining the truths it claims to possess. And that perception destroys credibility before the philosophy is even heard.

3. Silent Exodus Toward Other Saṅgas and Structural Weakening of ISKCON

In various places, a particularly alarming phenomenon is being reported: **the gradual departure of trained devotees toward other saṅgas, other Vaiṣṇava missions, or less institutional forms of spiritual practice.**

This phenomenon does not always occur through open conflict. Sometimes it happens silently. Devotees who for years studied, served, preached, supported temples, sustained projects, and defended ISKCON gradually began to shift internally. They stop trusting, stop inviting others, stop defending the Society institutionally, and eventually begin associating more with other spiritual spaces that they perceive as offering greater coherence or greater doctrinal courage.

This is extremely serious for several reasons.

First, because we are often speaking about devotees who required years of training, years of accompaniment, years of service, and years of identity-building within the mission of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Second, because when these devotees leave, the loss is not merely of an individual. What is lost is experience, leadership, preaching capacity, community stability, and generational transmission.

Third, these departures send a powerful message to others: that even mature and well-trained devotees are unable to sustain their trust in the current process. This, in turn, accelerates further distancing.

This exodus does not weaken only the number of members. It weakens the backbone of the institution. And if it continues, ISKCON risks becoming an organization that not only struggles to attract new members, but also loses those it has already trained and consolidated.

4. Declining Śāstric Confidence in the Doctrinal Capacity of the GBC

Another extremely delicate issue is the **growing loss of confidence in the doctrinal and hermeneutical consistency of the GBC.**

Many students of śāstra, teachers, educational leaders, preachers, scholars, and long-standing devotees are observing with deep concern that the current situation appears, in practice, to rest upon a distinction between śikṣā and dīkṣā that they do not find doctrinally convincing. For many of them, the way one is permitted while the other is restricted does not appear to reflect a clear, stable, and well-founded theological principle, but rather an artificial separation that ultimately weakens confidence in the exegetical seriousness of the process.

This becomes even more delicate because within ISKCON we have always taught that spiritual authority must be deeply rooted in śāstra, in siddhānta, and in a coherent understanding of the tradition. When many devotees now perceive that the institution seems to be sustaining a practical distinction without a sufficiently solid doctrinal justification, the damage does not remain limited to this specific issue. It extends to a broader and far more serious question: **can we continue to trust the GBC's ability to interpret and apply śāstra correctly in complex matters?**

This is a very serious question. Respect for the GBC does not rest solely on administrative structure. It rests largely on confidence that its members seek and express faithfully the will of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the siddhānta, and the tradition. If that hermeneutical trust erodes, one of the deepest foundations of spiritual and institutional authority is also eroded.

5. Concrete Damage in Countries Where Devotees and Hope of Repair Are Already Being Lost

In several countries, concrete, visible, and cumulative damage is already being reported. These are not hypothetical fears. There are communities where this situation is translating into real losses of people, participation, trust, and hope.

According to the temple president in Santiago, Chile, approximately 50 devotees have already been lost—including leaders and project coordinators—due to the situation of institutional distrust generated by the prolonged indefiniteness regarding VDG.

In some contexts it has been clearly expressed that the recent resolution has been experienced as a painful confirmation that “there is no hope of repair.” When devotees reach that point, it is no longer simply a matter of disagreeing with a decision. It becomes a matter of feeling that the institution either does not want, or is unable, to correct something that deeply wounds the conscience of a significant portion of its members.

This is spiritually dangerous. Because when hope of repair is lost, people no longer wait for institutional maturation. Instead, they begin internally preparing for distancing, resignation, or migration.

What is most alarming is that these processes are rarely rapid or dramatic. Most often they are slow, silent, and difficult to reverse. By the time trust is later attempted to be rebuilt, the damage has already become deeply sedimented.

6. Legal, Reputational, and Media Risks for Temples and Projects

Another issue requiring urgent attention is the **legal and reputational risk**.

In several countries of our region, legal, cultural, and media frameworks surrounding gender equality are becoming increasingly strong. In this context, a complaint, a viral publication, a journalistic article, or a digital campaign can severely damage a temple, school, congregation, or preaching project—even if the case does not succeed legally.

This is not paranoia. It is a contemporary reality.

ISKCON has already carried difficult stigmas in the past, and for years much effort was invested in leaving behind certain public images that harmed the social perception of the movement. Today, however, the new stigma threatening us is that of a religious institution perceived as rigid and outdated in its treatment of women. This has concrete consequences: it complicates alliances, slows invitations, generates suspicion among families, limits access to institutions, and places devotees in front of questions for which they do not have a clear institutional response to offer.

We are deeply concerned that there appears to be no clear, serious, and coordinated communication strategy to address this challenge. Without official guidance, each temple, leader, and preacher is left to improvise explanations for a problem that has already become regional and international.

7. Loss of Legitimacy Among Other Religious and Hindu Communities

We must also point out the growing risk that ISKCON may **become isolated and weakened in its cultural and religious legitimacy**, even in relation to other Hindu communities.

In some countries, such as Chile, Hindu leaders are already using ISKCON's current position on this issue to argue that our institution does not represent the spiritual culture of India in a dignified way in the modern world. They seek to detach ISKCON from any representative connection to Hindu tradition, arguing that what they perceive as a discriminatory message toward women is detrimental to their own public relations.

This is very serious. Because it does not come only from secular critics, but also from religious sectors that could otherwise have been natural allies or respectful interlocutors.

When a religious organization becomes trapped for years in a debate that from the outside appears unnecessary, incomprehensible, or morally regressive, the cost in legitimacy is extremely high—and rebuilding it is very difficult.

We are concerned that if this continues, ISKCON may increasingly be seen as an isolated and outdated sect, disconnected both from its own cultural roots and from the minimal ethical language that the modern world expects from a spiritual institution.

8. Damage Caused by Public Statements from Leaders Perceived as Misogynistic

The situation becomes even more serious when statements from certain ISKCON leaders circulate online that are now perceived—both inside and outside the institution—as misogynistic, insulting, or degrading toward women. One such example is Bāsu Ghoṣa Dāsa, who has publicly stated in videos that women’s occupations are limited to the kitchen and the bed.

Even if such statements do not represent the official position of the entire institution, when they are made by institutional leaders the public does not easily distinguish between individual opinions and institutional climate. When there are no clear corrections, visible institutional distancing, or concrete sanctions from the GBC, the perception that remains is that the organization tolerates, normalizes, or accompanies such expressions.

This severely harms the entire mission—not only women. It harms all devotees who strive to represent with dignity the compassion, intelligence, and spiritual elevation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness before the world.

The fact that such statements can now be used as “evidence” of alleged institutional misogyny, combined with recent resolutions, is creating a perfect storm of internal and public distrust toward the GBC, ISKCON, and any organization representing them.

9. Financial Risk and Suspicion That Economic Factors May Be Taking Priority Over Siddhānta.

This is a particularly delicate point, yet we cannot omit it.

In different sectors of the community, rumors and suspicions are circulating that economic, property, or governance considerations might

be influencing this process, to the point that concerns regarding properties, donations, power structures, or institutional material consequences could be weighing more heavily than fidelity to siddhānta, to the research already conducted, and to the spirit of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

We want to be very clear: **we are not presenting these rumors as established facts.** However, precisely because these rumors are already circulating and weakening confidence in the moral integrity of the process, we believe it is essential that they be addressed and clarified.

When devotees begin to suspect that a doctrinal matter might be delayed or shaped by economic considerations, the moral authority of the institution becomes deeply affected. At that point, the problem is no longer only what has or has not been decided. The problem becomes whether the decision-making process itself was spiritually free, morally upright, and doctrinally honest.

If the GBC does not clearly dispel these suspicions, the damage will continue to grow.

10. Perception of Unequal Treatment Compared to Other Doctrinal Conflicts

There is also a growing lack of trust in the GBC due to what many communities perceive as unequal treatment of this issue compared to other doctrinal matters (for example, the Ritvik issue).

In other cases considered dangerous or deviating for the Society, the institution has acted with much greater speed, energy, documentation, public argumentation, and decisiveness. However, in this matter—where studies, precedents, and strong arguments also exist—many perceive extreme caution, indefinite delay, and a much lower willingness to clearly establish a position that many believe has already been sufficiently examined.

This creates the impression that the current situation is not being shaped solely by doctrinal conviction, but also by political calculation,

fear of certain sectors, or a desire to avoid conflict with those who oppose Vaiṣṇavī dīkṣā-guru.

Whether fair or unfair, this perception is highly corrosive. It leads many devotees to feel that not all principles are defended with equal firmness, that not all errors are confronted with equal courage, and that not all sectors receive the same treatment.

11. Distrust Regarding the Transparency and Balance of the Deliberative Process

Another very serious concern is the growing distrust regarding **how the process itself may have been conducted.**

In many communities, questions and rumors are circulating about whether both positions truly received the same amount of time to present their arguments, the same level of consideration, the same space for being heard, and the same actual weight within GBC meetings and deliberations. It has been suggested that those opposing Vaiṣṇavī dīkṣā-guru may have had greater time or influence. It has also been mentioned that proposals for mediation between the two sides may have been offered, and that those supporting Vaiṣṇavī dīkṣā-guru were willing to engage in mediation, while the other side may not have shown the same willingness.

If these claims are not accurate, they urgently need clarification. And if any part of them is accurate, then they also require an honest explanation.

Because from the outside, the perception that emerges is troubling: that refusal to mediate, intransigence, or unwillingness to engage in dialogue may not have had any procedural cost, while those who were willing to mediate now face a non-definition that in practice preserves the position of the most rigid sectors.

This damages trust greatly. Not because devotees wish to attack the GBC, but because they do not know how to explain to their communities that the process was fair, balanced, and transparent if they lack clear information to support that claim.

12. Concern Regarding the Logic of the Current Non-Definition and Its Unilateral Practical Effects

There is also a question of institutional logic and procedural fairness that generates considerable concern.

As long as the issue continues to be presented as “unresolved,” many devotees understandably ask why the lack of resolution continues to produce concrete consequences **only in one direction**—namely, preventing women from initiating in practice. If the argument is that a definitive conclusion has not yet been reached, then for many it would appear more coherent not to impose a unilateral restriction while the process remains open.

Otherwise, the non-decision effectively functions as a decision. And not just as any decision, but one that falls exclusively upon women.

This is perceived not only as unfair, but also as deeply inconsistent. It creates the impression that the lack of conclusion has already taken a side in practice, even if it has not formally acknowledged doing so.

13. Catastrophic Risk of Practical Fragmentation Within ISKCON

If this situation continues without clear measures, timelines, pastoral guidance, and transparency, many fear a scenario of **practical fragmentation within ISKCON**.

Not necessarily a formal fragmentation, but rather a gradual disintegration: communities becoming depleted, leaders distancing themselves, young people choosing not to join, preachers losing enthusiasm in representing the institution, devotees quietly migrating elsewhere, and temples losing cohesion, legitimacy, and strength.

This scenario is catastrophic precisely because it undermines what the GBC exists to protect: the unity, health, governance, trust, and harmonious advancement of the Society.

14. Critical Risk for Youth Retention and the Second Generation

This point deserves special mention because of its seriousness.

Many young people—especially those educated in academic, professional, and digital environments—today consider gender equality to be a basic moral filter. It is not simply an ideological preference. It is a minimal criterion through which they evaluate whether an institution is morally habitable or not.

Therefore, when they perceive that ISKCON maintains a practice that restricts women while the issue remains undefined, they quickly conclude that they are facing a religion that is outdated or ethically inconsistent. Many disengage at the first contact. Others, who were already involved, stop inviting friends, withdraw from public service, step back from youth leadership, or remain silent out of embarrassment.

Most painful of all is that this effect is also being observed among the sons and daughters of devotees—including second- and even third-generation members—who feel affection for ISKCON, value the philosophy, and love many aspects of the movement, but who no longer feel able to defend institutionally a position they perceive as incomprehensible or morally unacceptable.

If we lose this generation, the damage will be immense and long-lasting.

15. Urgent Need for Clear Timelines, Criteria, and Immediate Assistance

One of the most destabilizing aspects of this entire situation is the absence of a concrete timeline and verifiable criteria that would allow the community to understand what it actually means for the matter to be “satisfactorily resolved.”

Without a timeline, the community fears an indefinite prohibition.

Without clear criteria, the community does not know what to expect.

Without pastoral guidance, leaders do not know how to respond.

Without procedural transparency, rumors grow.

Without concrete measures, the damage deepens.

For this reason, we feel that it is no longer sufficient simply to say that the matter remains under study. What is needed today is clarity

regarding **how, under what criteria, with what safeguards, within what timeframe, and with what measures of pastoral care** this crisis will be prevented from continuing to erode the internal life and public credibility of ISKCON

Final Request to the GBC Executive Committee

For all the reasons expressed above, we respectfully but very seriously request that the GBC Executive Committee consider intervening as soon as possible through concrete actions such as the following:

Issuing a **formal written response** that may help temples, leaders, and congregations explain the situation without continuing to generate confusion and distrust.

Providing immediate **pastoral and communication guidance** to help contain the impact on women devotees, leaders, youth, preachers, educational projects, and affected communities.

Clarifying whether there is a concrete timeline for a final resolution and what verifiable criteria would define that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved.

Explaining transparently how **equity, moral integrity, impartiality, and balance** have been guaranteed—and will continue to be guaranteed—in the deliberative process.

Seriously considering measures that prevent the current non-definition from continuing to function in practice as an indefinite prohibition with devastating effects on the trust of devotees and the mission of ISKCON.

Helping to neutralize, through clear institutional communication, the rumors that are currently damaging the credibility of the process and the moral authority of the leadership.

Dear members of the Executive Committee, we ask you to please understand the seriousness of this moment. We are not writing out of passing anxiety nor out of a desire to engage in polemics. We are writing because we are witnessing real pain, real disorientation, real exhaustion, real loss of trust, and real institutional risks.

We need help.
We need it soon.
And we need it from you.

We need to return to our communities with something more than provisional explanations. We need to return with guidance, with hope, and with evidence that this matter is being addressed with the seriousness, transparency, pastoral sensitivity, and doctrinal responsibility that the situation requires.

We trust that you will receive this appeal in the same spirit in which it has been written: respect, concern, responsibility, and love for ISKCON.

We sincerely thank you for your attention, your time, and your service to the Society of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

With respect and sincere concern,

Collective of communities, temples, nāma-haṭṭas, congregations, schools, and organizations across ISKCON Latin America