



## **Sivananda Canada**

*Advisory Council Ordinary Meeting*

Saturday April 25th 2020

List of recommendations

**Question 1** : What practices should we adopt to encourage staff to discuss personal issues with non-leadership individuals?

Advisory Board stress the necessity to have outside counsellors available for staff. Those counsellors should be closely connected with the Organization and be able to direct staff towards appropriate help and resources if needed.

The Advisory committee discussed the difference between a counselor vs. a psychotherapist, with the former being more of a guide for decision-making/ life or spiritual direction and the later being more appropriate for deeper psychological issues. The Advisory Board suggested that both services would be good to have available for staff, depending on the individual needs that come up.

Advisory Board supports the idea of setting up a “buddy” system but stresses the importance to hold active listening trainings for staff, among other trainings, to ensure that this system is helpful and beneficial.

Advisory Board stresses the need to assure staff of confidentiality when discussing personal issues with counsellors or buddies.

Advisory Board suggests organizing some staff programs, activities and orientations, to help foster a sense of belonging and welcome new karma yogis.

**Question 2:** How should we treat the name and image of Swami Vishnudevananda while the investigation remains unresolved?

Among other topics, the importance to respect the community’s will, to recognize the victim’s trauma and at the same time to separate the teachings from the teacher and to acknowledge Swami Vishnu’s contribution in bringing Yoga to the West were discussed.

Vote to remove all pictures of Swami Vishnudevananda.  
Unanimously rejected.

Vote to make Swami Vishnudevananda’s presence smaller in the Krishna Temple and Centre’s Altars, by example by reducing the size of his pictures.

Unanimously approved.

Some members expressed the idea that making a decision about the name and image of Swami Vishnu should come at the end of a process involving the community.

→ The Organization should reach out and evaluate the opinion of the community at large on that matter and engage in discussions to find an acceptable solution for all. Some members suggested that the Organization should strictly follow the community's opinion on that matter.

Some members suggested that the Organization should be very honest about Swamiji's actions, and recognize openly what he did good as well as what he did bad. In this way, the narration and interpretation of his life and being could be reviewed to better fit what he actually was and avoid deifying him.

Some members stressed the necessity to keep some kind of reference to Swami Vishnu within Sivananda locations, whatever may be the decision about his pictures and his name being chanted. This could be done by example by the creation of historical spaces.

→ While some staff/teachers/student may be uncomfortable to have the presence of Swamiji around in the form of pictures or chants, for others, especially staff, he still acts as an inspirational figure for which they are reaching out. Thus he should not be completely removed from the Organization environments. In the event that his pictures need to be taken down and his name removed from the chanting, keeping his memory alive through a more sober and historically oriented space seemed a reasonable compromise.

Some members also suggested to omit names in the salutations to the Gurus at the end of the final prayers, allowing the staff/teacher/student to connect with whichever figure he/she feels inspiring.

**Question 3:** How can we ensure that staff have the financial stability to feel free to leave the organization?

Discussion about the current situation for permanent staff members.

Proposal to support the petty cash (monthly credit) system and the creation of an "exit fund" to support permanent staff wishing to leave the organization

8 for, 1 against

Some members suggested that the amount received when leaving should depend on the amount of years spent in the Organization and should in that fashion be incremental, reaching a peak after for example 5 years of service.

Some members suggested that proper information and guidance on financial matters should be provided to staff about to commit themselves to a long-term period of service.

Some members suggested that a separate committee should be formed to address the technicalities of the benefit system (monthly credit and exit fund) and administrate the distribution of benefits.

Some members raised the question about what would be the benefits available for senior staffs wishing to retire.