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DĒKÑĀ OR RITVIK?

By His Holiness Danavir dasa Goswami

of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness Founder-acarya:
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

What has been the standard system of initiation (diksa) conducted throughout the ages in all bonafide Vaisnava sampradayas, today we neophyte American devotees desire to change.

“That is your American disease. This is very serious that you always want to change everything.”

— *Srila Prabhupada*

Following Srila Prabhupada’s departure, in order to uphold the noble, American, tradition of unnecessarily changing things, some of us voted in favor of sannyasa rights for women. At present, some of us lobby for reductions on the number of regulative principles to be followed and the number of rounds which are meant to be chanted each day. Nevertheless, our attempt to eliminate the process of Vaisnava diksa (initiation) via a so-called “ritvik” jump must be counted among our most preposterous new propositions to date.

The cheating propensity helps us to rationalize our weaknesses into a sort of pseudo-spiritual, philosophical doctrine. “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” We may be weak due to corporal attachment but diluting the medicine doesn’t cure the patient.

Many Americans favor a lifestyle that’s unbridled from religious authority, using instead their own so-called, guilt-free mores. Unfortunately, by associating too much with materialists and by neglecting our spiritual benefactor, some of us have become again Americans (punar americano bhava). Spiritual life is not a November election where anyone above a certain age can make marks aside the latest list of propositions. A Vaisnava should take for granted that Krsna’s system of disseminating spiritual knowledge is perfect, not requiring any improvements.

“Yes,” one may argue, “for philosophical issues that’s true, but the initiation process (diksa) is a managerial detail which is subject to alteration according to time, place and circumstance.” To the contrary, diksa is not a managerial detail, but a solid Vaisnava principle. The function of a guru is to train, correct, and guide the disciple on the path Back to Godhead.

Srila Rupa Goswami considers taking initiation as paramount in importance among his sixty-four items of devotional service (adau gurvasrayam) [underlining and highlighting throughout added]:

In Bhakti-rasāmāta-sindhu compiled by Çrē Rūpa Gosvāmē it is said that one should be very liberal in behavior and should avoid any undesirable activities. The most important affirmative points are that one should accept the shelter of a bona fide spiritual master, be initiated by him and serve him. (Teachings of Lord Caitanya: Chapter 12)

In effect, eliminating the diksa guru is tantamount to spiritual abortion.

SMOKING GANJA THROUGH ANOTHER'S HAND

Wishing to propound an invented philosophy, a philosopher may speak as if his own ideas were expounded within Lord Kṛṣṇa's Bhagavad-gīta. Using Bhagavad-gīta's popularity and authority, the less-known philosopher hopes to gain an audience. Using this technique, unscrupulous commentators have written that the Bhagavad-gīta propounds political non-violence, psychological symbolism, Mayavada doctrine, and other erroneous ideas.

Srila Prabhupada compared such mischievous activity to a ganja smoker who asks another person to hold the ganja while he smokes it in order to avoid the bad smell remaining on his own hand. The present attempt to propound a new theory of ritvik initiations is already mischievous enough but by trying to attribute the concoction to His Divine Grace through twisting his words is nothing less than outrageous.

SIKSA LINE?

Wily ritvik advocates try to prove diksa gurus obsolete because, according to them, the Brahma Madhva Gaudiya Sampradaya is a "siksa line," not a "diksa line." The truth is however, that the Brahma Sampradaya is simultaneously both a diksa and a siksa line, exactly as recommended in the sastras. Every preceptor in the line has taken diksa directly from a physically-present guru and every preceptor accepts transcendental instructions from advanced Vaisnavas. There is no Vaisnava acarya who will say that it is not necessary to take initiation from a bonafide spiritual master. *Vaisnava sva-paca guru*. Even if person is born of a family of dog-eaters, if he is a Vaisnava, he can become a guru. Furthermore, ISKCON devotees are duty-bound to accept the diksa principle because Rupa Goswami and Srila Prabhupada ordained it.

Devotee: [reading from NOD Introduction] "The connection with the spiritual master is called initiation. From the date of initiation by the spiritual master, the connection between Kāñēa and a person cultivating

Kāñēa consciousness is established. **Without initiation by a bona fide spiritual master, the actual connection with Kāñēa consciousness is never performed."**

Prabhupāda: Yes. We must connect with the current. Just like you have heated your room with electrical wires, but if you do not touch it with the current going on, then simply electrical (sic:) feeting with not help you. Similarly, **initiation is essential.** Ādau gurvācṛayam. Ṇṛēla Rūpa Gosvāmē recommends in his *Bhakti-rasāmāta-sindhu* for executing proper spiritual life, one must take shelter of the bona fide spiritual master. (Room discussion: October 29, 1972)

Krsnadasa Kaviraja Goswami respects both his diksa and siksa gurus:

*mantra-guru āra yata cikñā-guru-gaēa
tāi hāra caraēa āge kariye vandana*

I first offer my respectful obeisances at the lotus feet of my initiating spiritual master and all my instructing spiritual masters. (CC Adi 1.35)

Siksa-line proponents point out that Srila Vyasadeva was not the diksa guru of Madhvacarya, and that other spiritual masters listed in our disciplic succession were not initiated by the person whose name appears directly above theirs. We should not fail to acknowledge, however, that each acarya whose name appears on the list has a diksa guru. **There is no acarya in our line who does not have a diksa guru.** How then can we say that it is not a diksa line? Although Madhvacarya is certainly a glorious siksa disciple of Srila Vyasadeva, his honored diksa guru is Acyuta Prekñācārya Tērtha.

By trying to eliminate the diksa guru, ritvik proponents ignore Srila Prabhupada's emphasis on this point.

Actually, you have only one Spiritual Master, who initiates you, just as you have only one father. But every Vaisnava should be treated as prabhu, master, higher than me, and in this sense, if I learn from him, he may be regarded as guru. It is not that I disobey my real Spiritual Master and call someone else as Spiritual Master. That is wrong. It is only that I can call Spiritual Master someone who is teaching me purely what my initiating Spiritual Master has taught. (Letter November 20, 1971)

Srila Prabhupada refers to the diksa guru as one's real spiritual master and the siksa guru as one who, in the absence of one's diksa guru, supports the same teachings as the diksa guru. In other words, the attempt of an initiated disciple to find a siksa guru who surpasses or circumvents

one's diksa guru is offensive and such rascaldom will be disastrous to one's spiritual life.

Devotee: There also is the position of or some question is raised as to how to actually follow the authority. What is the authority between...?

Prabhupāda: Authority is your spiritual master. You do not know who is authority? Why this question is there? If one is initiated, then he accepted the authority. And if he does not follow the instruction of spiritual master, he is a rascal. He is defying the authority. That's all.

Devotee: The question also is there: the authority is the spiritual master, but the via media to the spiritual master... The difference between, like we were discussing in the automobile of çikñā and dēkñā-guru.

Prabhupāda: Then so çikñā and dēkñā-guru... A çikñā-guru who instructs against the instruction of spiritual, he is not a çikñā guru. He is a demon. Çikñā-guru, dēkñā-guru means... Sometimes a dēkñā-guru is not present always. Therefore one can take learning, instruction, from an advanced devotee. That is called the çikñā-guru. Çikñā-guru does not mean he is speaking something against the teachings of the dēkñā-guru. He is not a çikñā-guru. He is a rascal. Because that is offense. Guror avajī ā. First offense is guror avajī ā, defying the authority of guru. This is the first offense.

So one who is offensive, how he can make advance in chanting? He cannot make. Then everything is finished in the beginning. Guror avajī ā. Everything is there. If one is disobeying the spiritual master, he cannot remain in the pure status of life. He cannot be çikñā-guru or anything else. He is finished, immediately. Guror avajī ā çruti-çāstra-nindanam, nāmno balād yasya hi... You do not study all these things. You become initiated. There are ten kinds of offenses. Do you have any regard for these things or not? You must avoid these ten kinds of offenses. The first offense is to disobey the orders of guru. That is first offense. (Lecture: July 4, 1974)

We can also hear from Srila Narahari Sarakara Thakura about this topic of Vaisnava etiquette:

"Just as a faithful son may go out for earning money and subsequently brings to his father the wealth gained, later the son may ask for some allowance from the father and whatever he receives from the father he is entitled to spend for his own enjoyment. Similarly, a disciple may hear some instructions from another advanced Vaisnava but after gaining that good instruction he must bring it and present it to his own spiritual master. After presenting them he should hear the same teachings again

from his spiritual master with appropriate instructions.” (Sri Krishna Bhajanamṛta 48)

YOU BECOME GURU

It is devious to try to misinterpret Srila Prabhupada’s instructions to mean that his disciples should not become gurus. Consider for yourself the following:

... This time I have requested all Nairobi important friends that “Now you take sannyāsa and become guru. Kāñēa Caitanya Mahāprabhu asked everyone to become guru. amāra āji āya guru hai ā tāra ei deḥa. You have come to Africa. Now become their guru and deliver them.” “Now, how shall I do it?” Yāre dekha tāre kaha kāñēa upadeḥa: “Simply speak. Don’t become very big upstart. Simply speak what Kāñēa has done. That’s all. You become guru.” (Lecture: December 20, 1975)

There is an entire lecture given by Srila Prabhupada in which he told his disciples, or rather, insisted that his disciples become gurus. Here’s an excerpt.

To become spiritual master is not very difficult thing. You’ll have to become spiritual master. You, all my disciples, everyone should become spiritual master.

Is it clear enough? Here Srila Prabhupada directly informed his disciples that he desired each and every one of them to become qualified gurus. I remember hearing this lecture on tape in the seventies and I understood that Srila Prabhupada was training us, his disciples, to carry on the disciplic succession. Not only myself but every devotee that I knew also had the same understanding. I never heard, even once, from any devotee in ISKCON during the period of 1970 to November 1977 that Srila Prabhupada did not expect his disciples to become gurus. Was the whole movement misunderstanding Srila Prabhupada during his physical presence? No, the devotees all understood correctly then, but after Srila Prabhupada’s departure some persons affected by the age of Kali, concocted a new idea, that new devotees should take initiation directly from Srila Prabhupada via ritviks. Srila Prabhupada now points to why, among his disciples, the ritviks are disqualified from being gurus themselves:

It is not difficult. It is difficult when you manufacture something. But if you simply present whatever you have heard from your spiritual master, it is very easy. If you want to become overintelligent, to present something, to interpret something, whatever over you have heard from spiritual master you can make some further addition, alteration, then you’ll spoil whole

thing. Then you'll spoil whole thing. Don't make addition or alteration. Simply present as it is. Therefore, we have begun Bhagavad-gētā As It Is. Don't try to become over spiritual master. Then you'll spoil. Remain always a servant of your spiritual master and present the thing as you have heard. You'll be spiritual master. This is secret. You should know it. Don't try to become overintelligent. That will spoil. Evam paramparā prāptam imaà rājarñayo viduù. (Lecture: August 22, 1973)

By saying that Srila Prabhupada's disciples should not become gurus, the ritvik proponents spoil everything because this is the method Lord Kṛṣṇa has arranged for continuing his teachings down through the ages. But someone may point out that modern devotees are not capable of becoming gurus.

Lord Caitanya does not accept these apparent disqualifications:

So Caitanya Mahāprabhu says,

*āmāra ājī āya guru hai ā tāra ei deça
yāre dekha, tāre kaha, 'kñāēa'-upadeça*

Just see. It is very nice. You'll find in Caitanya-caritāmāta, now it is published. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, He is the Supreme Lord, Kñāēa. He says, āmāra ājī āya. "Whatever I say, āmāra ājī āya, by My order, you become a spiritual master." Caitanya Mahāprabhu. So one may be very illiterate, no education, or no scholarship, may not be born in brāhmaēa family, or may not be a sannyāsē. There are so many qualification. But one may not have all these qualifications. He may be rascal number one, but still, he can become spiritual master. How? Āmāra ājī āya. As Kñāēa says, as Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, if you follow, then you become spiritual master. One may be rascal number one from material estimation, but if he simply strictly follows whatever is said by Caitanya Mahāprabhu or His representative spiritual master, then he becomes a guru.

So it is not very difficult. One may not think that "I am not qualified to become guru." No, you are qualified if you follow strictly the paramparā system. Then you are qualified. That's all. Āmāra ājī āya guru hai ā... And what is the difficulty?

The qualification for becoming a spiritual master, i.e. dikṣa guru, sikṣa guru and vartmapradarsaka guru is to be a sincere disciple of one's own

spiritual master. In our case, Srila Prabhupada ordered his disciples to strictly follow four regulative principles, chant a minimum of sixteen rounds daily, preach according to Vaisnava siddhanta, and serve cooperatively within ISKCON. If a disciple of Srila Prabhupada does this faithfully, he is qualified to be a guru. Therefore the eighty or so initiating gurus within ISKCON, as well as the hundreds of siksa and vartmapradarsaka gurus within ISKCON are all qualified to be spiritual masters according to this explanation.

... So if you simply preach this cult, "My dear friend, my dear brother, you surrender to Kāñēa," you become spiritual master. You become spiritual master. You go door to door. ... So I hope that all of you, men, women, boys and girls, become spiritual master, and follow this principle. Spiritual master, simply, sincerely, follow the principles and speak to the general public. Then Kāñēa immediately becomes your favorite. Kāñēa does not become your favorite; you become Kāñēa's favorite. Kāñēa says in the Bhagavad-gētā, na ca tasmād manuñyeñu kaçcin me priya-kāttamaü: "One who is doing this humble service of preaching work, Kāñēa consciousness, nobody is dearer than him to Me." So if you want to become recognized by Kāñēa very quickly, you take up this process of becoming spiritual master, present the Bhagavad-gētā as it is. Your life is perfect. Thank you very much. (end) (Lecture: London August 22, 1973)

Not only is a disciple of Srila Prabhupada *allowed* to become a diksa, siksa and vartmapradarsaka guru but he is actually *encouraged* to do so. "If you want to become recognized by Kāñēa very quickly, you take up this process of becoming spiritual master." Shouldn't we want to become recognized by Kṛṣṇa? Is there something wrong with that? No, it is those who oppose Srila Prabhupada's instruction to become a bonafide spiritual master who are in error.

ETCHED IN STONE: THIS IS THE LAW OF DISCIPLIC SUCCESSION.

This brings us to the real crux of the issue. Some say that none of Srila Prabhupada's disciples should become a spiritual master because none of them are uttama adhikaris. First of all how do the critics know for sure? Are they the all-knowing and all-pervading supersoul present within everyone's heart? Nevertheless, this is not the real question. The real question is; **"Is the guru bonafide or not bonafide?"** How does Srila Prabhupada describe one who is bonafide?

*I am a **bonafide** teacher as long as I follow the instructions of my spiritual master. That is the only one qualification for*

becoming a teacher. As soon as one deviates from this principle one is no longer a teacher. (Letter: October 29, 1967)

*“Every student is expected to become Acarya. Acarya means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his disciples... Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bonafide Guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your Spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance **you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession.** I want to see my disciples become bonafide Spiritual Master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy. (Letter: December 2, 1975)*

The numerous references where Srila Prabhupada definitively states his desire and that of the disciplic succession for continuing the initiation process are so crystal clear that it is dumbfounding to see them being contended. It is another of Srila Prabhupada's unlimited glories that he reiterated the same instruction so many times, each time etching the message deeper into the stone foundation pillars of ISKCON. Thus he is Founder-acarya because he established the immovable laws of the Society.

*Whatever we hear from the bonafide spiritual master should be practiced in life and the same message delivered to whom-ever we meet. In this way **you become spiritual master.** (Letter: December 31, 1975)*

*I wish that **in my absence all my disciples become the bonafide spiritual master** to spread Krishna Consciousness throughout the whole world. (Letter: November 2, 1967)*

Srila Prabhupada could not have been more direct and straightforward about his desires.

Someone may argue, “Yes, this person may be acting properly as a bonafide guru **now**, but what about the future? There's every possibility that he may fall down later.” To answer this inquiry, Srila Prabhupada gives a brilliant analogy of fresh food and rotten food.

*No, this argument is not very strong. Just like one foodstuff, freshly made, it is fresh. But if somebody argues that if it remains four days more, it will become bad, that is surmisation. Now it is fresh. We take it fresh. What will happen in future, that is no consideration. In future, everyone may fall and everyone may become elevated. But **we have to take his present situation, what he is at present.** This is reality. If at the present mo-*

ment he is free from all sinful activities, that is reality. In future, everyone is susceptible to fall down. If he does not carry the principles strictly that proneness is there. But that is not consideration. What he is at present, that is consideration. (Conversation: July 11, 1973)

FRUSTRATION: "I SHALL EAT ON THE FLOOR"

Because some spiritual masters, sannyasis, brahmanas, grhasthas and brahmacaris within ISKCON have succumbed to their own former material tendencies and fallen from the platform does not justify anyone to conclude that all spiritual masters, sannyasis, brahmanas, grhasthas and brahmacaris within ISKCON are unqualified. Similarly, because one has received some counterfeit currency does not mean that there is no real currency.

"Because they have confronted with some non-bonafide, they have concluded that everyone is non-bonafide." (Conversation: November 3, 1976)

Srila Prabhupada once told a Bengali story of a man whose household utensils were stolen by a thief. He became so disturbed that he made a solemn promise that because the thief had stolen his plates, he would never purchase utensils again and instead he would eat on the floor.

IF A GURU DEVIATES

Srila Narahari Sarkara Thakura, the fortieth branch of the Caitanya Tree described in the Caitanya Caritamṛta, writes:

"If the spiritual master commits a wrongful act breaking Vaisnava regulative principles, then in that case one should, in a solitary place, confront him for his rectification using logic and appropriate conclusions from sadhu, shastra, and guru references, but one is not to give him up... The authorized course of action is to continue, as before, with one's prescribed devotional service. One may take guidance through instructions from Vaisnavas, as all Vaisnavas are considered guru or "spiritual master," or one may use one's own intelligence, duly considering the relevant instructions from sadhu, shastra and guru. In all cases one should continue in one's devotional service.

However, if the spiritual master:

- acts enviously towards 'isvarebrantah', that which is connected with the Supreme;
- is bewildered regarding the Supreme Personality of Godhead;
- is adverse to expanding the fame of Lord Kṛṣṇa;

- personally refuses to accept hearing or chanting about the glorious pastimes of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa;
- has become totally bewildered, listening to the false praise of ignorant persons and day by day is more materially contaminated and fallen

— then the spiritual master must be renounced.

Under those circumstances one should not doubt, “How can I give up my spiritual master?” With a strong desire for achieving spontaneous devotional service and attaining the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, a devotee accepts the shelter of a spiritual master as the via media to Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa. However, after accepting the responsibility of serving the spiritual master, if that spiritual master takes on “asuric” qualities or a demoniac mentality then it is one’s duty to reject such a demon “asura” guru and in his place accept a Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual master and worship him.

*By taking shelter of the strength of the Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual master’s devotional service the ill effects or contamination of the demoniac previous spiritual master is counteracted and destroyed. These activities are recommended by all Vaisnava authorities as the authorized conclusion of the shastra. **During the pastimes of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu there have been many practical examples of the above.***

What happens if a person is undergoing a serious medical operation when his surgeon suddenly falls ill? What to do? Should not the patient or the patient’s well wishers seek another competent physician to continue the operation?

What if aboard a Boeing 747 flight above the Atlantic, the pilot becomes sick? Would any passenger begrudge the co-pilot from taking over as pilot?

Out of disappointment, we may pass a resolution that no one should be encouraged to take re-initiation but that does not alter the advice of ācāryas such as Srīla Nārāhari Śākarā Thākura, Srīla Jīva Goswāmī, Srīla Bhaktīvinoda Thākura and Srīla Prabhupāda. Democracy and vox populi are not replacements for following the footsteps of the great devotees, *mahājano yena gataḥ sa pañtha*.

“Unqualified guru means who does not know how to guide the disciple. Guru’s duty is to guide. So such kind of guru can be at least rejected. That is Jīva Gosvāmī’s... Kārya-kāryam ajānataū. A guru who does not know what to do and what not to do, but by mistake, by mistakenly I have accepted somebody

as guru, he can be rejected. **By rejecting him, you can accept an actual bona fide guru.** So guru is not killed, but he can be rejected. That is the injunction of the *çāstra*. So Bhēṁmadeva or Droëacārya, certainly they were gurus, but Kāñëa indirectly giving indication to Arjuna, that “Although they are in the position of guru, you can reject them.” Kārya-kāryam ajānataū. “They do not know factually.” (Lecture August 5, 1973)

RITVIK THEORY NULLIFIES SRILA PRABHUPADA'S TEACHINGS

A few years ago, I had a discussion with a critic of the standard initiation process as conducted in ISKCON. The devotee said, “If you think you are qualified to be a guru then tell me what Radharani said to Kṛṣṇa last night.” I replied that the Vedic scriptures do not mention this as a qualification for being a bonafide spiritual master. To this the devotee replied, “Leave the scriptures out of this. Let's use common sense.”

Well, if we are supposed to leave the Vedic scriptures out as the main guiding evidence in life, then certainly all kinds of incredible notions are possible to entertain. Fortunately however, ISKCON is not at liberty to break from the celebrated path of the great spiritual masters.

The principles of the paramparā system were strictly honored in previous ages—Satya-yuga, Tretā-yuga and Dvāpara-yuga—but in the present age, Kali-yuga, people neglect the importance of this system of *çrauta-paramparā*, or receiving knowledge by disciplic succession. (Adi 7.74 Purport)

Embracing ritvik theory means, essentially, that one considers Srila Prabhupada so unfortunate that he could not train even one disciple to carry on the disciplic succession.

So our request is that every one of you become a guru. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's order. He wants that everyone must become a guru. How? That He says:

*yāre dekha tāre kaha 'kāñëa'-upadeça
āmāra āji āya guru hai ā tāra' ei deça*

This is guru. Suppose you are family member. So many living entities, your sons, your daughters, your daughter-in-law, or children, you can become their guru. Exactly like this you can sit down in the evening and talk about the Bhagavad-gētā, yāre dekha tāre kaha kāñëa-upadeça. You haven't got to manufacture something. The instruction is there; you simply repeat and let them hear—you become guru. It is not difficult at all. So

that is our preaching. We do not want to become alone guru, but we want to preach in such a way that every, the chief man, or any man, he can become guru in his surroundings.

“I GLADLY ACCEPT THE DEVOTEES YOU HAVE RECOMMENDED FOR INITIATION”

Recently I had a discussion with a Godbrother who was formerly a temple president at a time when Srila Prabhupada was present. My Godbrother was trying to support the idea that Srila Prabhupada's acceptance of new disciples was “automatic” once they were recommended by the temple presidents. I replied that generally Srila Prabhupada trusted his leaders' judgements on new candidates for initiation but no temple president would have dared take it for granted that a candidate was assured initiation without getting Srila Prabhupada's personal acceptance. The candidate must wait patiently until he received that wonderful letter...

“I am very glad to accept you as my initiated student. I am returning your beads herewith duly chanted by me. Your initiated name is Hladini devi Dasi.”

Since Srila Prabhupada was the person accepting the karma for each disciple, he also exercised the prerogative to accept or reject the person. No temple president could guarantee that Srila Prabhupada would accept anyone as his disciple just because a letter was sent. My Godbrother agreed.

While present, Srila Prabhupada personally considered, acknowledged and accepted or rejected each new candidate. It is odd then to expect him, after his departure, to accept new disciples impersonally by the mere imagination of so-called rtvik channelers, who are not even recognized members within ISKCON. Can a rtvik channeler force Srila Prabhupada to take the new initiate's karma through a fire sacrifice? The so called ritvik may reply, “Well, Krsna says He'll free anyone from sinful reactions who surrenders to him.” Yes, that is His position as the Supreme Personality of Godhead but the spiritual master never claims to be equal to God. The representative only assists the Lord in His work of purifying the conditioned souls and by Krsna's arrangement, he shares in accepting but a token of the karmic reactions of the disciples he initiates. Srila Prabhupada took more than his fair share of karma and now it is the turn of his serious disciples to follow his example of compassionate preaching.

If it were so easy to jump up the ladder and become the direct disciple of Srila Prabhupada, then why couldn't one just as easily double jump up to become Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati's direct disciple. Going a bit further one might eventually imagine proceeding directly to the Lord Himself without the need of intermediate gurus.

Next I'll relate a very nice story that shows how initiation cannot be taken for granted.

SRINIVASA ACARYA FINDS HIS DIKSA GURU

Srinivasa Acarya, accompanied by a companion, traveled to Puri to see Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. During the journey, however, he learned that the Lord had disappeared from the world. Srinivasa was devastated and was prepared to commit suicide. Fortunately, that night Lord Caitanya and Nityananda appeared to Srinivasa in a dream. They consoled the grief-stricken young Srinivasa and bade Him to make his way to the Gopinatha temple in Puri to take shelter of Gadadhar Pandit.

Upon reaching Puri, Gadadhar Pandit told Srinivasa: "Just before Caitanya Mahaprabhu passed away, He instructed me to teach you the Bhagavatam. He knew that you would arrive in Puri one day and He asked me to explain Krishna-lila to you. I cannot teach you Bhagavatam at this time, O young Srinivasa, for the manuscript in my possession has now become illegible due to the profusion of tears that I have cried on its pages."

At Gadadhar Prandit's request, Srinivasa himself was sent back to Bengal to get the Bhagavatam. He procured the Bhagavatam from Narahari Sarakara Thakura but upon returning, he found out that Gadadhar has passed from the world. Although heart-broken he was encouraged by many eminent Vaisnavas to journey to Vrndavana and take shelter of Rupa and Sanatana Goswamis. Traveling by foot, he set off for Vrndavana. Only four days before arriving in Vrndavana, Srinivasa heard that Sanatana Goswami had recently passed away. Then when he reached Mathura, but one day's walk from Vrndavana, he learned that Rupa Goswami had passed away only three days earlier. Hearing this, Srinivasa fell to the ground crying like a madman. He felt that he was the most unfortunate person in the entire universe. Every step, from his proposed meeting with Mahaprabhu, to his studying Bhagavatam with Gadadhar Pandit, to his meeting with Rupa and Sanatana, had all failed.

Srinivasa sat beneath a tree and wished for his own death. At this time however, Rupa and Sanatana Goswamis appeared to him in a dream and encouraged him to proceed to Vrndavana. There he visited the temple established by Rupa Goswami, Radha-Govinda Mandira and met Srila Jiva Goswami. Jiva Goswami who introduced him to Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami. Later Srinivasa accepted Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami as his initiating spiritual master.

Srinivasa was a contemporary and all but a few steps away from the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Sri Gadadhara Pandit, Srila Rupa Goswami and Srila Sanatana Goswami. But They each disappeared from his sight, leaving him seemingly alone. If ritvik initiation had been an option, certainly Srinivasa would have been the most eligible candi-

date to partake of it. But ritvik initiation is not valid therefore Srinivasa continued his devotional service and ultimately approached the junior Gopal Bhatta Goswami.

We empathize with devotees who are pained at having missed the chance to take diksa directly from His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, but they should follow the example of Srinivasa Acarya who proceeded on with determination, knowing that the Lord had a plan for his deliverance. It is further revealed by the acaryas that Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Himself personally ordained that Gopal Bhatta Goswami would initiate Srinivasa. This further substantiates the fact that such arrangements are divine, not accidental or simply formality.

ONE YEAR MUTUAL EXAMINATION

Did you know that there is a scriptural injunction for a one-year mutual examination period before taking initiation? Ritvik theory eliminates the mutual testing between guru and disciple. In ritvik theory, the guru has no say in the matter, only the self-appointed ritvik channeler calls the shots. This statement from Srila Sanatana Goswami defeats ritvik theory and shows how mutually personal the initiation process is.

*“Therefore it is said in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa that one year should be taken to study one another, the guru and the disciple. **The guru also will see whether the person is fit to become a disciple**, and the disciple also will see “Whether this gentleman can become my guru.” (Lecture: August 10, 1974)*

*“Before accepting somebody as spiritual master you must know about his bona fides. That time is allowed. It is said in the *çāstra* that if you like to accept somebody as spiritual master, you should associate with him at least for one year, see how things are going. If you follow of course others, that is also good. But personally, it is advised that you just remain with the proposed spiritual master for at least one year, so that **the spiritual master is also given chance to study you, whether you are acceptable**. This is the process.” (Lecture: January 30, 1974)*

“I HAVE INSTRUCTED EVERYTHING IN MY BOOKS”

—SRILA PRABHUPADA

*“So I preferred to come to Vāndāvana. If death takes place, let it take here. **So there is nothing to be said new. Whatever I have to speak, I have spoken in my books.** Now you try to understand it and continue your endeavor. Whether I am present*

or not present, it doesn't matter." (Arrival address: Vrndavana, May, 1977)

Since whatever he had to speak, he spoke in his books, let us then try to understand what's in Srila Prabhupada's books in regards to his disciples becoming diksa gurus:

"A sober person who can tolerate the urge to speak, the mind's demands, the actions of anger and the urges of the tongue, belly and genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world." (Nectar of Instruction, 1)

*kibā vipra, kibā nyāsē, çūdra kene naya
yei kñāēa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya*

"As far as Kṛṣṇa consciousness is concerned, everyone is capable of becoming a spiritual master because knowledge in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is on the platform of the spirit soul.

"The word guru is equally applicable to the vartma-pradarçaka-guru, çikñā-guru and dēkñā-guru. Unless we accept the principle enunciated by Çré Caitanya Mahāprabhu, this Kñāēa consciousness movement cannot spread all over the world." (Sri Caitanya Caritamṛta 8.128 Purport)

"One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.9.43 Purport)

*"As already stated, Brahma is the original spiritual master for the universe, and since he was initiated by the Lord Himself, the message of Srimad-Bhagavatam is coming down by disciplic succession, and **in order to receive the real message of Srimad-Bhagavatam one should approach the current link, or spiritual master, in the chain of disciplic succession.** After being initiated by the proper spiritual master in that chain of succession, one should engage himself in the discharge of tapasya in the execution of devotional service." (Srimad Bhagavatam, 2.9.7 Purport)*

WORD JUGGLING

Please read this interesting excerpt from a room conversation and tell me what you think Srila Prabhupada is saying.

Mohsin Hassan: *Now this movement must have structure. Will you please tell us about the structure of the (indistinct) from the hierarchy on the top, and all the way down.*

Prabhupāda: Yes, it is, this movement is started from Kāñēa.

Mohsin Hassan: Yes.

Prabhupāda: Then, from Kāñēa, Nārada. From Nārada, Vyāsadeva. From Vyāsadeva to Madhvācārya, from Madhvācārya to Ēsvara Puri, Mādhavendra Puri, then Caitanya Mahāprabhu, then His disciples, the six Goswāmés, then Kāñēa dāsa Kavirāja, then Baladeva Vidyābhūñāēa. So we are taking account very rigidly from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and I am the tenth generation from Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Mohsin Hassan: Yeah, the tenth. After you, is it any decision has been made who will take over?

Prabhupāda: Yes. All of them will take over. These students, who are initiated from me, all of them will act as I am doing. Just like I have got many Godbrothers, they are all acting. Similarly, all these disciples which I am making, initiating, they are being trained to become future spiritual masters.

Mohsin Hassan: How many swamis do you initiated, American? I'm speaking just on...

Prabhupāda: About ten.

Mohsin Hassan: You have ten swamis. And outside of swamis, what's the lower...

Prabhupāda: Now, they're competent. They can, not only the swamis, even the gāhasthas, they are called dāsa adhikārē, and brahmācārē, everyone can, whoever is initiated, he is competent to make disciples. But as a matter of etiquette they do not do so in the presence of their spiritual master. This is the etiquette. Otherwise, they are competent. They can make disciples and spread. They can recruit more members in this. They do, but they are being trained up. Just like here in this meeting, one of my disciples, he is acting as priest. It is not myself; he is acting. So some of my students, they are acting as priests, some of them are swamis, so they are competent to make disciples.

Would you not agree that, in short, Srila Prabhupada is saying that he expects his disciples to become spiritual masters and accept disciples after his departure? But rtvik theory advocates say that none of Srila Prabhupada's disciples should take disciples. In fact, their newest word-juggling leader pleads that when Srila Prabhupada says "granddisciple" he doesn't really mean the disciple of his disciple. Here is Srila Prabhupada's actual statement.

Prabhupāda: They're his disciple. Who is initiating. He is **granddisciple**. When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it. (Room conversation: May 28, 1977)

I know it is a little cruel to my reader, but nevertheless I must include a portion of the word-juggler's argument just to demonstrate the extreme lengths to which people will go in order to rearrange concepts which they find unpalatable. Here is the juggler's interpretation of the above excerpt.

"Also there is no reason to suppose that Srila Prabhupada did say 'He's' as opposed to 'His', since such an interpretation would not make any sense. The pronoun 'He' (from He's) before the term 'grand-disciple' refers to the person BEING initiated, the initiate, or the 'grand-disciple'. However in straight-forward standard English the pronoun usually refers to the immediate antecedent (the term that the pronoun follows). In this case that term is 'who is initiating'. It is obvious therefore that in this case the pronoun CANNOT be 'HE' because how can the INITIATE, the person being INITIATED, or 'grand-disciple', simultaneously be the person 'who is initiating'!...

Even if we allow for the antecedent that the pronoun refers to, to not be the most immediate, there is actually NO antecedent for the pronoun 'HE' to refer to in the whole conversation, since the speaker Srila Prabhupada has never previously mentioned nor alluded to the initiate, or the person BEING INITIATED, in the singular. The only time previously in the conversation that the speaker or the questioners, ever mention the initiate, it is ALWAYS in the plural. '(Yes, THEY are disciples.)' Thus a speaker cannot just introduce a pronoun that has no antecedent. It does not make sense. In other words the 'HE' has to REFER to something. But it can not refer to something that has not yet even been mentioned...

However the use of 'His', does make sense, since this use CAN be consistent with the most immediate antecedent, 'who is initiating'. In this case the 'HIS' MUST refer to Srila Prabhupada since the 'ritvik' cannot have grand-disciples. Srila Prabhupada would then also be the person 'who is initiating'"

This is pure nonsense. The juggler cannot follow Srila Prabhupada's simple explanation. Instead, intending to rid the world of gurus, the juggler wants to make Srila Prabhupada the initiating spiritual master and the grand spiritual master at the same time. Must we accept this nonsense?

Lord Kṛṣṇa's words get twisted too. Man-manā bhava mad-bhaktāu: "One need not submit to Kāñēa as a person, but to "the unborn within Kāñēa." Sripad Sankaracarya, the pure devotee Lord Siva incarnate, finally advised his followers to desist from manipulating grammatical suffixes and prefixes and just surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa, bhaja Govinda, bhaja Govinda, bhaja Govinda. In the same way, the sincere followers of Srila

Prabhupada should stop wasting time hypothesizing about antecedents and instead get on with the duty of assisting Lord Caitanya's sankirtana mission by becoming qualified, bonafide gurus.

GRANDDISCIPLES?

Srila Prabhupada used the term "granddisciple". Did he make that up? Here are two verses from Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja's Caitanya-caritamṛta.

*çīṇya, praçīṇya, āra upaçīṇya-gaëa
jagat vyāpila tāra nāhika gaëana*

çīṇya—disciples; **praçīṇya—granddisciples**; ara—and; upaçīṇya-gaëa—admirers; jagat—the whole world; vyāpila—spread; tāra—of that; nāhika—there is none; gaëana—enumeration.

Thus the disciples and the granddisciples and their admirers spread throughout the entire world, and it is not possible to enumerate them all.

*tāi ra çīṇya-upaçīṇya,—tāi ra upaçākhā
eimata saba çākhā-upaçākhāra lekhā*

tāi ra—his; çīṇya—disciples; **upaçīṇya—granddisciples and admirers**; tāi ra—his; upaçākhā—subbranches; eimata—in this way; saba—all; çākhā—branches; upaçākhāra—subbranches; lekhā—to describe by writing.

His (Gadādhara Paëõita) disciples and granddisciples are his subbranches. To describe them all would be difficult. (Chaitanya caritamṛta, *Adi Lila* 9.24.15-16)

Even though the ritvik proponents wish they could just eliminate the word "granddisciple," it's not so easy because there are other annoying words like "grand spiritual master" and "great-grand spiritual master" and so on in the Vaisnava family tree.

The predecessors of the spiritual master are his spiritual master, his **grand spiritual master**, his **great-grand spiritual master** and so on, who form the disciplic succession of ācāryas. (SB 3.29.17 Purport)

"You'll be surprised to know that my **grand-spiritual master**, my spiritual master's spiritual master, he was illiterate" (Lecture: January 12, 1968)

"You are all helping me by abiding the orders of my Spiritual Master, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati

Goswami Maharaj and He'll be pleased upon you who are His **grand spiritual children.**" (Letter: February 16, 1971)

"Thus Advaita Prabhu, as Lord Caitanya's **spiritual uncle**, was always to be respected because one should respect one's spiritual master's Godbrothers as one respects one's spiritual master." (Adi 5.147 Purport)

Accepting rtvik theory means we'll have to throw out Srila Prabhupada's books, lectures, conversations and letters so there won't be any traces of these troublesome words to contend with.

SOME THINGS TO WATCH FOR

In this short paper we are only examining a very few of the faults of the rtvik theory. Actually it is full of unlimited faults because it opposes the Vedic system of disciplic succession. Why don't we see any enthusiastic new devotees emerging from the rtvik camp distributing Srila Prabhupada's books like the ISKCON new devotees. Most likely this theory of rtvik initiations will fall by the wayside because the aim is not to follow the acaryas but merely to concoct something which appeases the desire for sense gratification. Fueled by illusion and envy, the subliminal intention of the ritvik theory is to eliminate gurus and disciples altogether as most so-called Christian denominations have done.

Those who cannot accept Srila Prabhupada's uncompromising teachings will undoubtedly form splinter groups, but the ISKCON caravan should remain firmly fixed and pure in pursuing the path of the mahajanas.

THE BIG BRUTE

The following is an excerpt from a Vyasa-puja lecture delivered by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Maharaja. Read it and you'll understand why Vaisnavas cannot abolish the process of gurus accepting disciples.

FROM A VYASA-PUJA LECTURE

By Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Maharaja

"We have taken upon ourselves the responsibility of welcoming this grave charge. All the audience have accepted ordinary seats, I alone have been provided with a lofty seat. All are being told in effect—"Do have a look at a big animal from the Zoo-gardens. What arrogance! So foolish! So wicked! Have you ever seen such a big brute? Garlands of flowers have been put round his neck! What laudations! What bombastic long-drawn, and hyperbolic adjectives! And how complacently too he is listening to the praise of his own achievements, how intently, and with his own ears! He also evidently feels delighted in mind! Is he not acting in

plain violation of the teaching of Mahāprabhu? Can such a big brute, so selfish and insolent, be ever reclaimed from brutishness?"

I happen to be one of the greatest of fools. No one offers me good advice on account of my arrogance. Inasmuch as nobody condescends to instruct me I placed my case before Mahāprabhu Himself. The thought occurred to me that I would make over the charge of myself to Him and see what He would advise me to do. Then Çré Caitanyadeva said to me:

*"Whom-so-ever thou meet'st, instruct him regarding Kāñēa,
By My command being Guru deliver this land; In this thou wilt
not be obstructed by the current of the world; Thou wilt have My
company once again at this place."*

In these verses is to be found the proper explanation of the apparent inconsistency noticed above. He whose only teaching is humility greater than that of a blade of grass, said—"By My command being guru save this land!" In this instance Mahāprabhu Himself has given the command. His command being "Perform the duty of the guru, even as I do it Myself. Also convey this command to whom-so-ever you chance to meet." Caitanyadeva says, "Tell them these very words, viz. By My command being Guru save this land. Deliver the people from their foolishness." Now who-so-ever happens to hear these words would naturally protest with palms joined—"But I am really a great sinner; how can I be Guru? You are Godhead Himself, the Teacher of the world. You can be Guru."

To this Mahāprabhu replies:

*"In this thou will not be obstructed by the current of the
world; Thou wilt have My company once again at this place."*

*"Do not practice the craft of a guru for the purpose of injur-
ing othersthrough malice. Do not adopt the trade of a guru in
order to get immersed inthe slough of this world. But if you can,
indeed, be My guileless servant you will be endowed with My
power—then you need not fear."*

I have no fear. My gurudeva has heard this from his gurudeva. And it is for this reason that my gurudeva has accepted even such a great sinner as myself and has told me: "By My command being guru save this land." It is only those who have never heard these words of Gaursundara who say "How odd! To listen to one's own praise!" While the guru is instructing his disciple in the eleventh Skandha of the Bhāgavatam what a great sin, in their opinion, is he not perpetuating! What is the ācārya to do when he has to explain the śloka, ācārya māḥ vijaniyat: Never disregard the ācārya; never entertain the idea that the ācārya is your equal in any sense." These are the words of Çré Kāñēa Himself by which the jiva is to be benefited. Is the guru to take himself off, to desert his seat—the seat of the ācārya—from which these words are to be explained? That office his gurudeva has

conferred on him. If he does not act up to its requirements he is doomed to perdition by reason of his offense against the holy Name in the shape of disrespect towards the guru. He has to do it in spite of the fact that such procedure is apparently open to the charge of egoism.

When the guru imparts the mantram to the disciple should he not tell him by this mantram to worship the guru? Should he say instead, "Give the guru a few strokes of the shoe or the horse-whip?" The guru is never to be decried. The guru is the abode of all the gods. Should the gurudeva abstain from communicating these words to his disciple while reading the Bhāgavatam to him? "To him alone who possesses guileless spiritual devotion, similar to the transcendental devotion that is due to Kāñēa Himself, to the gurudeva, the holy mysteries are manifested." Is the gurudeva not to tell these things to his disciples? Athau gurupuja: the worship of the guru has precedence over all others." The guru is to be served just as Kāñēa is served. The guru is to be worshiped in a particular way. Is the guru to desert his seat without telling all these things to the disciple? In the angle there is always the defect in the shape of absence of the fullness, the evenness of level, of 180 degrees or of 360 degrees. But in the plain surface, in 360 degrees, there is no such defect. That in the emancipated state no defect is possible, this simple truth ordinary foolish people entirely fail to grasp.

As the saying goes, "Having started on the dance it is no use to draw close the veil." I am doing the duty of the guru, but if I preach that no one should shout "Jai" to me, that is to say, if I say in a round about way, "Sing Jai to me," it would be nothing short of duplicity. Our Gurudeva has not taught us such insincerity. Mahāprabhu has not taught such insincerity.

I have to serve God in the straightforward way. The word of God has come down to the gurudeva; I have to obey it in all sincerity. I will not disrespect the guru at the instance of any foolish or malicious sectarians. Especially as Çré Gurudeva has directed me saying, "By My command being guru save this land." This command has my gurudeva preached. My gurudeva in his turn has conveyed the command to me. I will not be guilty of any insincerity in carrying out that command. In this matter I will not accept the ideal of ignorant, insincere, pseudo-ascetic sectarianism. I will not learn insincerity. The worldly-minded, the malicious, the pseudo-renunciators, the selfish cannot understand how the devotees of God, spurning at everything of this world by command of God, never, not even for a second, deviate from the service of God through all the twenty-four hours.

Hypocritical sectarians, pseudo-Vaiñēava sects, those sects that cherish internally the longing for earthly fame, naturally enough think "What a shame it is for one to listen to the eulogies of disciples occupying the seat of the guru." But every Vaiñēava regards everyone of the Vaiñēavas as the object of his veneration. When Ōhākura Haridāsa exhibits the attitude of humility Mahāprabhu says—"You are the greatest of the world, the

crest-jewel of the world. Be agreeable, let us have our meal together." He carried in His arms the body of Ōhākura Haridāsa which is eternally existent, self-conscious and full of spiritual bliss. In the community that follows Çrē Rūpa, the qualities of desiring no honor for oneself and of readiness to duly honor others are fully present. Those who detect any disparity are, like the owl, blind while the sun shines. They commit an offense by such conduct.

If I disobey the law which has come down to me through the chain of preceptorial succession, the offense due to omission to carry out the command of the guru will sever me from the lotus-feet of Çrē Gurudeva. If in order to carry out the command of the Vaiñēava guru I have to be arrogant, to be brutish, to suffer eternal perdition, I am prepared to welcome such eternal damnation and even sign a pact to that effect. I will not listen to the words of other malicious persons in lieu of the command of the gurudeva.

I will dissipate with indomitable courage and conviction the currents of thought of all the rest of the world, relying on the strength derived from the lotus feet of Çrē Gurudeva. I confess to this arrogance. By sprinkling a particle of the pollen of the lotus-feet of my Preceptor crores of people like you will be saved. There is no such learning in this world, no such sound reasoning in all the fourteen worlds, in no man-gods, that can weigh more than a solitary particle of the dust of the lotus-feet of my gurudeva. Gurudeva in whom I have implicit trust can never spite me. I am by no means prepared to listen to the words of any one who wants to hurt me or to accept such a malicious person as my preceptor."

A FEW QUESTIONS TO ASK RITVIK PROPONENTS:

1. Why has every single Vaisnava acarya in the Brahma-madhva-gaudiya Vaisnava sampradaya, including its founder Lord Sri Krsna and Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, accepted Vaisnava diksa in the standard manner?
2. Who takes the karma for disciple at initiation?
3. Who promises to take the disciple back to Godhead at the time of a so-called ritvik initiation?

Note: If you say Srila Prabhupada to both of the above questions, that is not possible because he said the new disciples would be his granddisciples.

If you say the ritvik acaryas, appointed by Srila Prabhupada before his departure take the karma and promise to take the new disciples back to Godhead, then there are problems. Devotees in ISKCON don't accept the ritvik theory and consequently do not perform such ritvik initiations. That only leaves those outside ISKCON to perform the initiations.

If you put forward others to act as ritvik initiators besides those appointed by Srila Prabhupada, what is their authorization?

1. What are the qualifications for becoming a new ritvik initiator? Are they similar to those for becoming a bonafide guru?
2. Is there a governing body to direct the ritvik movement?
3. If not, how are decisions made?
4. If there is a ritvik governing body, are the members more qualified than ISKCON's GBC members? If you say yes, how do you determine that?

A FEW DRAWBACKS OF THE RITVIK THEORY

1. Ritvik theory is based on faultfinding (hati mata) rather than scriptural evidence. For example the recent "poison theory" also emanated from the ritvik proponents.
2. Ritvik theorists blaspheme ISKCON Vaisnavas in good standing and thus cause themselves and others to become spiritually weakened.
3. Ritvik theory makes it convenient for so-called disciples to maintain an immoral position without the intervention of a physically present guru. This is much like so-called Christians who say that Jesus is in their heart and he died for their sins and therefore they are saved.
4. Ritvik theory disregards Srila Prabhupada's instructions by opposing ISKCON and the GBC.
5. Ritvik theory seeks to deprive new devotees the opportunity of following the parampara properly and receiving real initiation.
6. Ritvik theory seeks to deprive Srila Prabhupada's disciples the chance of fulfilling Lord Caitanya's order to become gurus (guru haya).
7. Ritvik theory contorts Srila Prabhupada's words about becoming gurus.
8. Ritvik theory encourages lower standards by propounding that it isn't possible to attain the high position of becoming a bonafide spiritual master.
9. Ritvik theory paves the way for dismantling the entire Vedic system based on daivi varnasrama since the main function of sannyasis and brahmanas is to teach and accept disciples. If the gurus are eliminated then disciples are eliminated as well. Perhaps this is why we do not see new devotees joining the ritvik camp. They only draw bewildered, weak devotees having a hard time following Srila Prabhupada's strict standards.

10. Ritvik theory is similar to some sects of modern Christianity, and other so-called Vedic sects who, influenced by Mayavada philosophy, improperly attempt to catapult their leader up to the platform of Godhood. Let us not make this mistake within ISKCON. The jiva is fallible but a pure devotee never misuses his free will to deviate from Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is incorrect to think that only a nitya-siddha saktyavesa avatara is eligible to become a bonafide spiritual master.
11. Ritvik theory propounds changing the parampara system of initiation, and ushers in the thinking that there is no need for initiation.

THE REAL FINAL ORDER: SAME AS ALL HIS OTHER ORDERS

By Drutakarma Dasa

- (1) In 1971, Srila Prabhupada told a scholar who was writing his thesis on the Hare Krishna movement that his disciples would become spiritual masters and initiate their own disciples. But he expected them to be qualified and to wait until after his departure. His answers were given in direct response to questions by the scholar. Srila Prabhupada was aware that the scholar intended to publish his answers in his thesis. The answers that Prabhupada gave are thus authoritative on the question of how initiations were to be conducted after his departure.
- (2) In April, 1975, speaking from the vyasasana in Mayapura, during the annual Gaura Purnima Festival, Srila Prabhupada told all the assembled devotees, including the GBC, sannyasis, temple presidents, and a good fraction of ISKCON's entire membership that he expected his disciples to become gurus and initiate their own disciples. He said he expected them to be qualified, by following his instructions, and he also expected them to wait until after his departure to begin. This, he said, was the etiquette.
- (3) Later in 1975, Srila Prabhupada wrote a letter to Tusta Krishna Maharaja, saying the exact same thing. He expected his disciples to become gurus who would initiate their own disciples. But they should be qualified and they should wait until after his departure. That, he said, was the etiquette. This was not just an attempt to pacify an over ambitious disciple. It was the exact same thing that Prabhupada told the scholar in 1971, and the same thing he said to the entire leadership of the movement in April 1975 in Mayapur. Srila Prabhupada

had also written the same thing to Acyutananda Dasa and Jayagovinda Dasa in a letter dated August 21, 1968:

“The first thing, I warn Acyutananda, do not try to initiate. You are not in a proper position now to initiate anyone. Besides that, the etiquette is that so long the Spiritual Master is present, all prospective disciples should be brought to him. . . . I am training you all to become future Spiritual Masters, but do not be in a hurry. . . . You don’t be attracted by such cheap disciples immediately. One has to rise gradually by service. . . . Don’t be allured by cheap disciples. Go on steadfastly to render service first. If you immediately become Guru, then the service activities will be stopped; and as there are many cheap gurus and cheap disciples, without any substantial knowledge, and manufacturing new sampradayas, and with service activities stopped, and all spiritual progress choked up.”

Here Srila Prabhupada repeated the same thing he always said about his intentions concerning the continuation of the disciplic succession. He expected his disciples to become gurus who would initiate their own disciples, but he wanted them to become qualified and to wait until after his departure. That, he said, is the etiquette.

This same view was also expressed by Srila Prabhupada in a letter to John Milner, dated March 24, 1971. “So far as your taking initiation from Brahmananda Maharaja, I have no objection, but it is the etiquette that in the presence of one’s Spiritual Master, one does not accept disciples. In this connection, Swami Brahmananda may write me and I will instruct him.” Again, the indication is that Srila Prabhupada expected his disciples to become gurus who would initiate their own disciples, but he also expected them to observe the etiquette of waiting until after his departure.

Srila Prabhupada said the same thing on May 28, 1977. At this time, most of the GBC had assembled in Vrindavan to be with Srila Prabhupada during his final days. At this time, he invited the GBC members to ask him any questions they might have about how the movement was to go on after his departure. The GBC members met among themselves, and drew up a list of questions they would put to Srila Prabhupada. This list of questions can be found in the official GBC minutes book. Among the questions was how initiations would go on after Srila Prabhupada’s departure. Srila Prabhupada said the same thing he had always said in regard to this subject. He expected that his disciples would become gurus and that they would initiate their own disciples. He said they would be “regular gurus.” He said that their disciples would be “my granddisciple.” He also said that they would be “disciple of my disciple.” And he also repeated his statements that they should be qualified and that the etiquette was that they should not initiate while he was still present. The conversation was

tape recorded. Although there are some breaks in the tape, the section about initiations is without any breaks, as admitted by the experts who examined the tape. The answer that Prabhupada gave to the question of how initiations would go on after his departure is also recorded in the official GBC minutes book. Here is what is said in the document:

Here are the GBC records:

“Resolved: The following questions will be taken to Srila Prabhupada for his answers. They will be presented by a committee of Tamal Krsna Goswami, Satsvarupa Goswami, Jagadisha, Rupanuga , Bhagavan, Kirtanananda Swami, Bali Mardan.

1. How long should GBC members remain in office?
2. How can GBC members who leave be replace?
3. In the absence of Srila Prabhupada what is the procedure for first,secondand sannyasa initiations?
4. What is the relationship of the person who gives this initiation to the person he gives it to?
5. Is there any provision for publication of other translations of Vaisnavascriptures by the BBT, after the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada?

For the purpose of recording information, Srila Prabhupada's answers to the above questions are given as follows:

1. GBC members shall remain permanently. If a member leaves, the GBC can appoint new members.
2. Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future, even after his disappearance. The disciples they accept shall be their disciples and Srila Prabhupada will be their grand spiritual master.
3. New translations of Vedic works can be published in the future, even after Srila Prabhupada's departure, but they can only be done by someone who is very expert. At present, Srila Prabhupada acknowledged, there are very few such men.”

The May 28 conversation was the last time that Srila Prabhupada, directly and in his own words, gave any instruction about how initiations were to go on after his departure. The tape is there, where he talks about “regular guru,” “disciple of my disciple,” “my granddisciple,” etc. And the summary of the answer given by Prabhupada to the direct question that was put to him is recorded in the official GBC minute book. There were 22 members of the GBC present in Vrindavan for this important meeting with Srila Prabhupada, and all their names are on the original document.

If we want to talk about a final order, this was it. At no point after this did Srila Prabhupada directly say anything, either in a recorded conversa-

tion or in a letter, in his own words, about how initiations were to go on after his departure. The July 9 letter is not Prabhupada's direct words. And furthermore this letter says nothing directly about Prabhupada's departure and how initiations were to go on after his departure. The rtvik heretics have tried to interpret it that way, but there is no direct language in the letter that speaks to the question of how initiations were to go on after Prabhupada's departure. So, it can be clearly be seen, that from the time he began the Krishna consciousness movement until the time of his departure, Srila Prabhupada consistently said the same thing every time the topic of his disciples becoming gurus came up. He said he expected them to become gurus who would initiate their own disciples, but they should wait until after his departure (because this was the etiquette) and they should be qualified (simply by following his instructions—it was easy, simple, he often said)and stay qualified. Srila Prabhupada said this to a scholar, knowing his answer would be taken as authoritative. He said it to all his assembled leaders in Mayapur in April 1975. He said it to individual disciples. He said it to the entire GBC during his last days. Every single time Srila Prabhupada ever talked about this issue, he always said the exact same thing.

So let us stick to the direct words of Srila Prabhupada, where he directly talks about his departure and what he expected to happen after his departure regarding initiations. Don't be fooled by the ritvik proponents' fancy word jugglery, in which they take a letter that doesn't contain Prabhupada's direct words, a letter that does not even mention Prabhupada's departure and what was to happen thereafter regarding initiations, and tries by some verbal hocus pocus to convert it into some imaginary final order saying the exact opposite of what Srila Prabhupada himself always said on this topic.

Therefore, let us resolve to:

1. Make it clear that rtvik is absolutely not going to be part of the reform agenda in ISKCON.
2. Immediately discipline or remove any ISKCON officer or sannyasi who advocates or supports rtvik in violation of the 1990 GBC resolutions.
3. Begin an intense campaign to educate and inform ISKCON's members and congregation that the rtvik idea and its supporters are not part of ISKCON. They are a splinter group that has violated the direct instructions of Srila Prabhupada regarding the continuation of the disciplic succession.
4. Refuse to participate in any discussions or negotiations with rtvik advocates about the possibility of rtvikism being instituted in ISKCON. Discussions should only concern how ISKCON and the rtvik splinter group are going to relate to each other.

ALL BLUFF, NO STUFF

There is no final order in Prabhupada's words where it is stated that Prabhupada will continue to initiate disciples after his departure. All the ritvik proponents do is offer their imaginative interpretations of a letter written by Tamal Krishna Goswami on July 9, 1977 that does not say a single word about Prabhupada's departure or Prabhupada's intentions regarding initiations after his departure. When a document does not say what you would like it to say, you have to interpret it—endlessly—to get it to say what you would like it to say. And that is all ritvik proponents can do. Interpret, interpret, interpret. Speculate, speculate, speculate.

I am still waiting for the ritvik proponents to produce this so-called final order where Prabhupada directly says in his own words that he is going to change the whole Vedic system of disciplic succession by continuing to initiate disciples after his physical departure from this world. The reason they have not produced any such final order is because such a final order does not exist. If such a final order did exist, there would be no need for the ritvik proponents to give volumes and volumes of their own speculative interpretations of Tamal Krishna Goswami's July 9 letter. It is all bluff, no stuff.

If the ritvik proponents cannot produce this so-called final order where Srila Prabhupada directly says in his own words (or directly says in anybody else's words under his signature) that he is going to continue to initiate disciples after his physical departure, I suggest that they confess to the world that all they are doing, all they ever have been doing, is offering their own speculative interpretation of words written by Tamal Krishna Goswami, words that do not mention Prabhupada's departure or initiations after Prabhupada's departure.

Actually, I am going into final boredom waiting for them to produce their so-called final order. If they had it, I suspect they would have produced it by now. The real truth: they just do not have any real stuff to back up all their bluff.

Any disciple of Srila Prabhupada who, out of some momentary suspension of good judgement, has decided to follow in the footsteps of the imaginative ritvik proponents should immediately distance themselves from him, because time is really getting short. If such disciples are truly interested in reform, I suggest they step away from the ritvik theory and come to Mayapur this year (without their ritvik heresy baggage) and sit down with their godbrothers and godsisters and get down to the real work of reforming ISKCON in line with Srila Prabhupada's desires. They will be honored and welcomed. It should not be held against anyone that they have toyed with the ritvik idea for awhile. But they should understand that if they keep following into ritvik heresy fantasyland, they are going to be marginalized more than ever. If that's how they want to spend the rest of their lives, that's fine. But I certainly hope they will join their loyal ISKCON

godbrothers and godsisters who, like them, are very concerned about the past, present, and future of the Krishna consciousness movement. This year is going to be a year of major changes in ISKCON, setting it on a new course. If they want to be part of this, they will be welcome. Reform yes, rtvik no. Otherwise, with our best wishes, they can start to chart the course of their own rtvik heretical sect.

I am quite happy to see on CHAKRA that the members of the Bangalore congregation are speaking out, and showing their firm determination to oppose the rtvik heresy in Bangalore. It would be good if the temple members themselves would do the same. Hopefully, they will be able to prevent their temple from becoming known throughout the ISKCON world as the New Vrindavan of the New Millenium. I apologize to the sincere followers of Srila Prabhupada in New Vrindavan who have brought their community back from exile into the family of ISKCON for referring to an unhappy bit of history. But the residents of Bangalore ISKCON should realize that they are being led down the same path.

I am also happy to see on CHAKRA that the granddisciples of Srila Prabhupada are starting to organize themselves to oppose the rtvik heresy. This is a good development. The fact is that ISKCON today, except for the topmost leadership positions, is now in the hands of Prabhupada's granddisciples. They are the ones who are distributing the books, worshipping the Deities, and running the temples all over the world. I encourage them to start making their opinions about the rtvik heresy (and ISKCON reform) known. In a few years, they will also be holding all the leadership positions. And I pray they will continue to keep ISKCON on the right track.

Now, let's look at phase two of the ritvik proponent's program of deception and distortion. Not only do they manufacture phantom final orders, they deliberately dismantle all of the actual orders that Prabhupada gave to ISKCON about the continuation of the disciplic succession, all the orders where Prabhupada directly mentions in his own words his departure and what he expected to happen after his departure regarding initiations. The ritvik proponents flagrantly dismiss the sacred words of Srila Prabhupada by the same method they use to manufacture phantom final orders in Srila Prabhupada's name—speculative misinterpretation. If Srila Prabhupada says something about his disciples initiating disciples of their own after his departure, ritvik proponents, applying the magic of speculative misinterpretation, turn these statements into their exact opposite. No disciple of Srila Prabhupada who honors the memory of Srila Prabhupada and the sacredness of his words should allow them to get away with this. This is the same tactic that the Mayavadis use to turn the sacred words of Vyasadeva, establishing the Personality of Godhead, into words establishing their doctrine of impersonalism.

Here is an example—the Caitanya-caritamṛta class given by Srila Prabhupada in Mayapur, on April 6, 1975.

Prabhupada: So Advaita Acarya is the typical example how to become acarya. All are our acaryas, sri-krsna-caitanya prabhunityananda, sri-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura-bhaktavrndā. All of them are acaryas because they are following the acarya, supreme acarya, Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Therefore they are acarya. Evam parampara-praptam imam rajarsayo viduh. So we have to follow the acarya. Then, when we are completely, cent per cent follower of acarya, then you can also act as acarya. This is the process. Don't become premature acarya. First of all follow the orders of acarya, and you become mature. Then it is better to become acarya. Because we are interested in preparing acarya, but the etiquette is, at least for the period the guru is present, one should not become acarya. Even if he is complete he should not, because the etiquette is, if somebody comes for becoming initiated, it is the duty of such person to bring that prospective candidate to his acarya. Not that "Now people are coming to me, so I can become acarya." That is avamanya. Navamanyeta karhicit. Don't transgress this etiquette. Navamanyeta. That will be falldown. Just like during the lifetime of our Guru Maharaja, all our Godbrothers now who are acting as acarya, they did not do so. That is not etiquette. Acaryam mam vijaniyat na avaman... That is insult. So if you insult your acarya, then you are finished. Yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado yasya aprasadat na gatih kuto pi-finished. If you displease your acarya, then you are finished. Therefore it is said, Caitanya Mahaprabhu says to all the acaryas... Nityananda Prabhu, Advaita Prabhu and Srivasadi-gaura-bhaktavrndā, they are all carriers of orders of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. So try to follow the path of acarya process. Then life will be successful.

And to become acarya is not very difficult. First of all, to become very faithful servant of your acarya, follow strictly what he says. Try to please him and spread Krsna consciousness. That's all. It is not at all difficult. Try to follow the instruction of your Guru Maharaja and spread Krsna consciousness. That is the order of Lord Caitanya.

*amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa
yare dekha tare kaha krsna-upadesa*

"By following My order, you become guru." And if we strictly follow the acarya system and try our best to spread the instruction of Krsna... Yare dekha tare kaha krsna-upadesa. There are two kinds of krsna-upadesa. Upadesa means instruction. Instruction given by Krsna, that is also krsna-upadesa,

and instruction received about Kṛṣṇa, that is also kṛṣṇa-upadeśa. Kṛṣṇaśāstra upadeśa iti kṛṣṇa upadeśa. Samāsa, sasti-tat-puruṣa-samāsa. And Kṛṣṇa viśaya upadeśa, that is also Kṛṣṇa upadeśa. Bahu-vrihi-samāsa. This is the way of analyzing Sanskrit grammar. So Kṛṣṇas upadeśa is Bhagavad-gīta. He's directly giving instruction. So one who is spreading Kṛṣṇa-upadeśa, simply repeat what is said by Kṛṣṇa, then you become ācārya. Not difficult at all. Everything is stated there. We have to simply repeat like parrot. Not exactly parrot. Parrot does not understand the meaning; he simply vibrates. But you should understand the meaning also; otherwise how you can explain? So, so we want to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Simply prepare yourself how to repeat Kṛṣṇas instructions very nicely, without any malinterpretation. Then, in future... Suppose you have got now ten thousand. We shall expand to hundred thousand. That is required. Then hundred thousand to million, and million to ten million.

Devotees: *Jaya!*

Prabhupāda: *So there will be no scarcity of ācārya, and people will understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness very easily. So make that organization. Don't be falsely puffed up. Follow the ācāryas instruction and try to make yourself perfect, mature.*

Here Prabhupāda says to the entire leadership of the Krishna consciousness movement (the GBCs, sannyāsīs, and presidents gathered at Mayapur) that he expects them to become ācāryas (gurus) who will initiate their own disciples. He just asks them to be qualified and to wait until after his departure to take up that role. This is the same thing that Srīla Prabhupāda always said whenever he directly spoke in his own words about the future of the disciplic succession in ISKCON.

In one of his replies to me, a word-juggling spokesman for the ritvik proponents goes through his usual exercise of using speculative misinterpretation to prove that when Srīla Prabhupāda says white he means black. First of all, he says "Nowhere in the above passage does Srīla Prabhupāda even mention the word 'initiate'". Yes, he does. He used the word "initiated." He directly says that if someone approaches one of his disciples for initiation, the disciple should not initiate that person because the etiquette is that the disciple should wait until after the departure of the spiritual master to initiate such disciples. So Srīla Prabhupāda directly uses the word initiation ("initiated"), which establishes quite definitely what kind of ācārya the whole discussion is about—it is about ācāryas who initiate their own disciples.

That is why Prabhupāda stresses the matter of becoming mature and waiting until after the departure of the guru. If Srīla Prabhupāda were talking only about śikṣa-gurus, in the sense of children and ordinary folks who just repeat whatever they remember of Krishna's instructions, with no

particular level of realization, then there would be no need to talk about becoming mature. You don't have to wait until after the departure of your guru to start telling people about Krishna. It is never premature to do that. You don't have to come to any particularly mature stage of Krishna consciousness to do that.

By directly mentioning initiation in connection with his use of the word *acarya*, Srila Prabhupada is clearly indicating that he is talking about an *acarya* who gives *diksa*, initiation. Also, the *acaryas* that he mentions in the immediately preceding sentences (*Advaita*, *Nityananda*, etc.) were *acaryas* who gave *diksa*, initiation. Srila Prabhupada directly says he is interested in preparing such *acaryas*, *acaryas* who will give initiation. Otherwise, he would not impose the conditions of becoming mature and waiting until after his departure.

To make the matter even more abundantly clear, Srila Prabhupada uses the word *acarya* in connection with his godbrothers, explaining that they observed the etiquette of not initiating until their guru, *Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati*, had departed. This confirms that the word *acarya* is being used in the sense of *diksa guru*, a guru who gives initiation.

So here Srila Prabhupada lays out his plan for the continuation of the disciplic succession after his departure. The *ritvik* proponents want to interpret this as just a slap at overambitious disciples. They want us to think that when Prabhupada says he is interested in preparing *acaryas*, *acaryas* who will initiate, he is really saying that none of his disciples will become gurus after his departure. In other words, by their speculative interpretations, they want us to think that when Prabhupada says white, he really means black.

I ask the *ritvik* proponents to produce a statement where Srila Prabhupada says that in his statement to the entire leadership of the Krishna consciousness movement on April 6, 1975 that his real intention was not to prepare *acaryas* who would initiate. Where does Srila Prabhupada say that this was a statement he made just to give some false hopes to some overambitious disciples? There is no such statement. It is only a speculative interpretation offered by *ritvik* proponents in order to dismiss a conclusive statement by Srila Prabhupada that directly contradicts the *ritvik* proponents' deliberate misreading of Tamal Krishna Goswami's letter of July 9, 1977, which makes no mention of Prabhupada's departure or who was to initiate after Prabhupada's departure.

Some leading *ritvik* proponents emphatically assert that the word *guru* in the *amara-ajnyaya* verse, spoken by Lord Caitanya and recorded by Krishnadasa Kaviraja in *Caitanya Caritamrta* can ONLY refer to *siksa gurus*. I have read through the *Caitanya Caritamrta* very carefully, and I can find no statement by Krishnadas Kaviraja that says the word *guru* in the *amara-ajnyaya* verse can only mean *siksa guru*. I did not see any statement by Lord Caitanya in that section or anywhere else that says the word *guru* in the *amara ajnyaya* verse can only refer to *siksa guru*. I have seen no statement by Srila Prabhupada that the word *guru* in the *amara ajnyaya*

verse can only refer to siksa-guru. Indeed, the only persons I have ever heard make that assertion is the ritvik proponents.

A final indication that Srila Prabhupada's use of acarya throughout the April 6, 1975 lecture indicates gurus who initiate disciples is found in his reference to ISKCON having "ten thousand." Anyone who was around during this period will remember this as Srila Prabhupada's standard estimate of the number of his initiated disciples. Here follow a few quotes that demonstrate this:

Prabhupāda: So we have got ten thousand disciples all over the world. Mostly they are Europeans and Americans and Australians. Their expenditure is very heavy. How Kāñēa is supplying, you can see. We are spending ten lakhs of rupees per month, and Kāñēa is supplying. (April 11, 1975, Hyderabad)

Prabhupada: For example, you can see practically all my disciples present there. They are coming from Western countries, Europe, America, or even in India, Parsis and other, Mohammedans, they are coming. But they are now pure, cleansed of all dirty things. In this movement throughout the whole world there are at least ten to twelve thousand devotees like that. And before this life they were addicted to all kinds of sinful life. We have summarized all sinful activities into four groups, namely, illicit sex, meat-eating, intoxication, and gambling. So all these ten to twelve thousand men who are now attached with this Kāñēa consciousness movement, they are not committing these four pillars of sinful life. (January 5, 1976, Nellore, India)

Journalist: Yes. How many followers do you have throughout the world now?

Prabhupāda: No, throughout the world, in India everyone is Kāñēa conscious. In the outside India we have got about ten to twelve thousand dedicated followers. (May 19, 1975, Melbourne, Australia).

Reporter (3): How many followers do you have? Prabhupāda: Well, to find out first-class man is very difficult. Therefore, our followers, you cannot count a large number. We are training them to become first-class man. Still, we have got about ten thousand followers in the western countries. (July 9, 1975, Chicago)

BBT editors: In the mid-seventies Çrēla Prabhupāda's translating and publishing intensified dramatically. Scholars all over the world showered favorable reviews on his books, and practically all the universities and colleges in America accepted them

as standard texts. Altogether he produced some eighty books, which his disciples have translated into twenty-five languages and distributed to the tune of fifty-five million copies. He established one hundred eight temples worldwide, and he has some ten thousand initiated disciples and a congregational following in the millions. Çrëla Prabhupāda was writing and translating up to the last days of his eighty-one-year stay on earth. (foreword to Science of Self-Realization)

So it is abundantly clear that Prabhupada is speaking throughout the April 6, 1975 lecture of acaryas who will initiate disciples and increase the current number from ten thousand to tens of millions. He established two conditions for becoming acarya—becoming mature by repeating and following the instructions of the previous acaryas, and observing the etiquette of waiting until after his departure before beginning to initiate. He says there will be no scarcity of acarya. He will not be the only acarya (guru). There will be many, many, many—no scarcity. His sincere disciples will be acaryas who will increase the number of disciples after his physical departure.

I feel very, very sorry for any disciple of Srila Prabhupada who takes seriously the ritvik proponents' efforts to turn this very clear statement by Srila Prabhupada, given to most of the leadership of ISKCON at Mayapur and a good fraction of its total membership, into the exact opposite of what Prabhupada actually said. I feel very, very sorry. But if they want to follow such persons instead of their own spiritual master, so be it. Everyone has free will, but they have to live with the results.

TWO BOATS

Being enlightened and broadminded does not mean having no convictions, no sense of right and wrong, no sense of true and false. The primary reason I am able to function so well in so many circles is that I have some intellectual integrity. I am very straightforward in what I say (I'm right, you and Darwin are wrong), and do not hesitate to explicitly state the value judgements inherent in my position (you Darwinists are intellectually dishonest). I do not pretend to be a neutral objective evaluator of all claims. I have my point of view, inspired by my commitment to Vedic truth, and I clearly announce both of them (the view and the commitment). I'll do the same on CHAKRA. By the way, although I am able to move in many circles, I have attracted in most of them a considerable amount of flack.

I disagree that any proposed solution to a problem must be given compassionate attention. There are limits. A teenager may be upset because of being unjustly disciplined by his or her parents. But if the

teenager's response is to kill the parents in their sleep, that is the wrong solution and I would not hesitate to say it in the strongest terms.

I am very interested in ISKCON reform, but I also think that the universe of those able to positively contribute to that reform process and the universe of possible reforms is limited. I don't expect everyone to agree with my definition of the limits, but I am going to state them as I see them. For example, the ritvik idea and its supporters fall outside those limits.

My conviction is that ISKCON, throughout the process of reform that it is undergoing, must maintain its doctrinal integrity and its unique position in the constellation of Gaudiya Vaisnava sangas. And this does mean drawing some lines in the sand. We all do this in our individual lives (everyone has their limits), and we all experience it in our social lives (we all have to act within the limits imposed by society, workplace, nation, etc.).

I believe that ISKCON should be composed of a group of devotees who share a common set of teachings, values, practices, and authority. A certain amount of diversity can be tolerated, but there are limits.

To be a little more precise, I hold that commitment to the rtvik philosophy is outside the limits that can be tolerated. Attachment to Gaudiya Matha gurus, to the extent that their teachings and practices differ from those of Srila Prabhupada, is outside the limits that can be tolerated. Finally, so called reformers who express their dissatisfaction through punitive lawsuits, vile language, and other extreme methods are also outside the limits that can be tolerated. I recognize that such persons may be the victims of genuine mistreatment and may have valid proposals for reform (aside from those that fall outside the limits I've proposed). But their commitment to any of the above three items is a disqualification for full participation in ISKCON. That is my proposal. Anyone is, of course, free to agree or disagree with me. But I do hope to persuade those in positions of institutional authority ISKCON and the general membership of ISKCON of the correctness and advisability of what I propose.

I believe that ISKCON is due for some downsizing and focusing of its membership, to the point that there is a group of devotees that actually does share a common set of teachings, values, practices, and authorities, and can behave toward each other with genuine civility, if not love. If that number happens to be ten thousand or one thousand or one hundred, it makes no difference to me. From that number of sincere devotees who are willing to work with each other in a spirit of love and trust it will be possible to expand unlimitedly.

To achieve this, I believe in what I call the two boats policy. Let's take the rtviks. Their philosophy and practice is not something that can be tolerated within the limits of an ISKCON based on Prabhupada's teachings and values (in my opinion). This is not to say that they could not, apart from that, make a valuable contribution to the reform and regeneration of

the Society. But if that is to happen, they have to make a choice. Too many people have their feet in two boats. My policy is to start moving the boats apart. At a certain point, people are going to have to decide which way they want to jump, which boat they want to stay in. I am using my communication and propaganda skills to insure that the boats start moving apart. If one wants to maintain commitment to the rtvik idea then one is eventually going to be forced to take one's foot out of the ISKCON boat and plant both feet firmly in the boat of a society based on rtvik philosophy and practice. If one wants to participate in the ongoing reform of ISKCON, one is going to have to take one's foot out of the rtvik boat. This is not to say that when the rtvik and ISKCON boats have separated, that there has to be ongoing conflict between them. I think that they can sail on in parallel fashion. But that depends on those in the rtvik boat. If they adopt a hostile attitude and continue making propaganda against ISKCON, I think they can expect appropriate retaliation.

The same is true in the case of the Gaudiya Matha branches that have attracted former ISKCON members. The boats should be moved apart. No feet in both boats. Once this is accomplished, I see no reason why the various Gaudiya Vaishnava boats cannot sail along in a peaceful fashion. But the integrity of each boat and crew has to be respected. And if one or more of the Gaudiya Matha boats tries to raid or otherwise attack the ISKCON boat, or dictate the course of the ISKCON boat, then again, I think that boat should expect retaliation.

Once everyone is in the proper boat (i.e. when everyone finds themselves as part of a crew that shares a common teaching, practice, and authority system), and once the crews of those boats have developed mutual respect for the integrity and independence of the other boats, including the ISKCON boat, then we can start talking about charting a common course.

The ISKCON/guru party should have its boat, the rtvik party should have its boat, and the various Gaudiya branches should have their boats. Those currently associated with ISKCON are going to have to decide what boat they want to be in. And the policy on the ISKCON/guru boat should be "no feet in two boats."

As far as reforming the ISKCON boat is concerned, that's not going to be possible until the above mentioned separation of boats and crews is accomplished.

'PRABHUPADA'S ORDER'

(Excerpts)

by the Ministry for the Protection of ISKCON

Introduction

The late eighties and early nineties saw the rise and fall of ritvik theory—a philosophy that teaches that Srila Prabhupada wanted to continue as the only diksa guru for ISKCON after his departure from the world, and his disciples were to take the role of proxies and perform initiation ceremonies on his behalf, certifying the new disciples as Srila Prabhupada's. This same theory reappeared 2-3 years ago with new, more articulate writers, but the philosophy and rationale was the same. Since then, many papers for and against ritvik theory have been produced.

In this paper we intend to show the overwhelming evidence to support the acceptance by the GBC that Srila Prabhupada wanted the traditional system of 'parampara' or disciplic succession to continue after his departure from this world. Although Srila Prabhupada stressed that he would always remain the Founder-Acarya and primary instructing spiritual master for the whole society, in the future there would be many initiating spiritual masters who would accept disciples on behalf of Lord Krishna and the disciplic succession.

Definition of "ritvik" by Hridayananda dasa Goswami:

The word *âtvik* is a combination of two elements:

1. *âtu* means, in Monier-Williams (MW), "any settled point of time, fixed time, time appointed for any action, especially for sacrifices and other regular worship, thus the right time, etc." In the Bhagavatam and Mahabharata, the word usually means "season." For example, a woman's fertile "season" is called *âtu-kâla*. Similarly, when we hear of seasons being disturbed or inverted in Kali-yuga, the word is usually *âtu*.

2. *ij* comes from the root *yaj*, "to sacrifice." In the word *âtvik*, the 'v' comes from the 'u' of *âtu*, and the 'k' comes from 'j'. I will spare you more technical explanations of the phonetic rules that cause this.

Thus ātvik means, in MW, “sacrificing at the proper time, sacrificing regularly; a priest (usually four are enumerated, viz. Hotā, Adhvaryu, Brahman, and Udgātā etc.” These are the well-known priests that officiate at Vedic ritualistic sacrifices.

The significant point here is that terms such as ātvig-guru and ātvig-acarya simply do not exist. There is no such term in any Sanskrit dictionary, nor in any recognized Vedic literature, to my knowledge. There is no such term because there is no such concept. In other words, our friends are proposing something that does not exist in Vedic culture. This is the main problem with it.

Chronology of Srila Prabhupada’s Instructions

1966

*“That is a chance given, that you can become a brāhmaëa, you can become a great devotee of Lord Kāñëa, and you can become the spiritual master of the world... If you, some of you at least understand this science and take up this science, you become future hope of the, this country or the world. **That is my request to you, that you should take this chance and become a spiritual master for all the people.**” — New York, July 29, 1966*

1967

“Anyone following the order of Lord Caitanya under the guidance of His bona fide representative can become a spiritual master and I wish that in my absence all my disciples become the bona fide spiritual master to spread Krsna Consciousness throughout the whole world.” — (SPL to Madhusudana, 2nd November, 1967)

Comment: Note the date on this letter - 1967. So, even from the early days of his movement, Srila Prabhupada expected that his disciples would become spiritual masters.

Note also the phrase used by Srila Prabhupada to designate when this would occur - “in my absence.” This phrase is significant for two reasons. The first refers to after his departure from this world, which is what is expected in a standard disciplic succession - some of the disciples take their own disciples after their spiritual master has left this world. However, the other level of meaning in the phrase “in my absence” is very significant to the ritvik debate. The ritviks claim that no future diksha gurus are ever needed because Srila Prabhupada is always present in his books. That Srila Prabhupada is present through his books has never been in dispute. However, we see that Srila Prabhupada did also consider his

physical presence to have some significant relevance in the issue of disciplic succession, and this aspect is mentioned in many of his other statements.

1968

"A person who is liberated acharya and guru cannot commit any mistake, **but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and acharya by strictly following the disciplic succession.**"

—New York, 26 April, 1968

1969

*"Regarding your question about the disciplic succession coming down from Arjuna, it is **just like I have got my disciples, so in the future these many disciples may have many branches of disciplic succession.** — Los Angeles, 25 January, 1969*

COMMENT: The first part of the quote is especially important, since Srila Prabhupada makes clear that his disciples will form branches of the disciplic succession, which would not be possible under the ritvik theory.

***Indian lady:** How does one contact the spiritual master? Through a book can you contact the spiritual master?*

***Prabhupāda:** No, you have to associate.*

***Çyāmasundara:** "Can you associate through a book?" she asked.*

***Prabhupāda:** Yes, through books, and also personal. Because when you make a spiritual master you have got personal touch. Not that in air you make a spiritual master. You make a spiritual master concrete. So as soon as you make a spiritual master, you should be inquisitive. — London, September 23, 1969*

1970

*From the life of Narada Muni it is distinct that **although He was a conditioned soul in His previous life, there was no impediment of His becoming the Spiritual Master. This law is applicable not only to the Spiritual Master, but to every living entity.***

— Los Angeles, 21 June, 1970

1971

"Everyone can, whoever is initiated, he is competent to make disciples. But as a matter of etiquette they do not do so in the presence of their spiritual master. This is the etiquette. Otherwise, they are competent. They can make disciples and

spread... they are competent to make disciples.” — Detroit, July 18, 1971

1972

The ritvik-theorist will try to discard these verses as being “just to encourage the devotees” etc. and will point to the falldown of ISKCON gurus as evidence that this is not correct. **They try to use ‘reverse-logic’ to prove that because a number of ISKCON gurus have fallen down it means that Srila Prabhupada didn’t want his disciples to become gurus.** But if we accept this line of reasoning we could list so many instructions that devotees have trouble following. **So many devotees have been unable to follow the four regulative principles but that doesn’t mean that Srila Prabhupada didn’t issue the instruction to his disciples to follow.** Srila Prabhupada wants that we follow nicely, but if we can’t follow it doesn’t change his desire that we do. He explains this in the following quote:

“If you are incapable of raising yourself to the standard of becoming spiritual master, that is not your spiritual master’s fault, that is your fault. He wants, just like Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, āmāra ājī āya guru hai ā, by My order, every one of you become a guru. If one cannot carry out the order of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, then how he can become a guru? The first qualification is that he must be able to carry out the order of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Then he becomes guru. So that carrying out the order of Caitanya Mahāprabhu depends on one’s personal capacity. Āmāra ājī āya guru hai ā.” — June 21, 1972, Los Angeles

Also note how Prabhupada makes the point that “carrying out the order of Caitanya Mahāprabhu depends on one’s own capacity”. In other words, become a guru, but if you cannot become diksa guru become siksa guru or vartma-pradasaka guru, but somehow tell people about Kṛṣṇa. **The understanding that ritvik proponants put forward is a blanket one; “because most devotees aren’t qualified to become diksa gurus it means that Lord Caitanya’s and Srila Prabhupada’s order to become guru couldn’t refer to this. However, the correct understanding, as given by Prabhupada above, is that the order to become spiritual master is there for every disciple, but the application of what kind of guru one can become will depend on his qualification.**

1973

Prabhupada has stressed so many times that he wanted his disciples to become spiritual masters that it is actually very amazing how the ritvik theorists can interpret things in such a way that they deny the desire of His Divine Grace. In his Vyasa-Puja address of 1973, Srila Prabhupada re-

peatedly requests his disciples to become spiritual masters and continue his movement.

*"...I am very much hopeful that my disciples who are now participating today, **even if I die, my movement will not stop. I am very much hopeful, yes. All these nice boys and girls who have taken so seriously... You will have to become spiritual master... you... all my disciples...**"*

— Vyasa-Puja address, London, 22nd August, 1973

*"This is called parampara system. **Suppose I have heard something from my spiritual master, so I speak to you the same thing. So this is parampara system. You cannot imagine what my spiritual master said. Or even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. This is called parampara system. You cannot jump over to the superior guru, neglecting the next acarya, immediate next acarya.**"*

— Srila Prabhupada lecture December 8th, 1973

Here Srila Prabhupada specifically mentions the issue of surrendering to the current link in the chain of disciplic succession. He instructs his disciples that, "even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. This is called parampara". **He clearly explains the principal of parampara, and even explicitly states that simply to read books is not enough (a corner stone of ritvik-theory), but rather the disciple must understand everything through his own spiritual master, and not attempt to independantly understand the previous acaryas.**

1974

*"This is the magic. If you adulterate nonsensically like a rascal, then you cannot become a spiritual master. **If you simply follow what Kāñëa has spoken, then you become spiritual master. Very simple thing. It doesn't require education. You can hear from your spiritual master what has Kāñëa said.**"*
Bombay, April 4, 1974

1975

"Every student is expected to become Acarya. Acarya means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his disciples... Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide Guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your Spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples

without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bona fide Spiritual Master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy."

— New Delhi, 2 December, 1975

COMMENT: This quote comes from a much later time, only two years before Srila Prabhupada left the planet. However, this quote echoes the same sentiments from some of Srila Prabhupada's earlier quotes. In fact, this quote is quite a bit stronger in certain regards. First, note that Srila Prabhupada expects every student to become an acarya. This title is not used casually. Second, note that Srila Prabhupada says that the acarya teaches things to his disciples. So, the acarya is expected to have his own disciples, and Srila Prabhupada expected his disciples to become acaryas. The natural conclusion, therefore, is that Srila Prabhupada expected his disciples to one day take disciples of their own. Finally, note that Srila Prabhupada once again says "in my absence," which does, as explained above, place importance on the physical presence of the spiritual master. However, in that same letter, Srila Prabhupada makes even stronger statements:

*"Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that **during the lifetime of your spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession.**"*

(Letter to Tusta Krsna Swami, 2nd December, 1975)

This is a very clear statement from Srila Prabhupada showing that he expected his disciples to become bona fide gurus and accept their own disciples eventually. He once again makes reference to the physical presence of the spiritual master, and makes clear that the initiation of new disciples depends on the physical presence or absence of the initiator's spiritual master. In this statement, Srila Prabhupada makes clear that this process is how the disciplic succession continues.

Also note how in this and other letters, Srila Prabhupada clearly explains that a disciple should not initiate in the presence of his spiritual master. **If Prabhupada refers to 'initiate' and 'become spiritual master' only in the sense of siksa instructions or becoming an officiating priest (as the ritvik proponents claim), why does he expressly forbid doing this on the one hand, and at the same time gives direct instructions to numerous disciples to act as both siksa-gurus and officiating priests to initiate disciples on his behalf? Clearly Srila Prabhupada is talking about something other than the officiating role which was already being performed by his**

senior disciples; he was talking about his disciples accepting their own disciples when he was no longer physically present on the planet. This is not surprising since his books and conversations are absolutely full of references to the parampara system and how this system, of surrendering to a living bona-fide spiritual master, is imperative to the proper understanding of Vedic knowledge.

1976

"You each be guru," Srila Prabhupada said. "As I have five thousand disciples or ten thousand, so you have ten thousand each. In this way, create branches and branches of the Caitanya tree." — Mayapur GBC meetings 1976

COMMENT: This statement also has several important points. The first is when Srila Prabhupada tells his disciples to become gurus and have ten thousand disciples each. Had he just expected his disciples to keep endlessly initiating on his behalf, the statement he made would have been inappropriate. The statement only makes sense if the disciples are to take their own disciples eventually. The second important point is that he expects the tree (sampradaya) to have "branches and branches". If all future disciples were to become his and his only, then there would be no branches in the tree, since all the disciples would be connected directly to Srila Prabhupada's link in the tree.

Ritvik proponents attempt to disregard Prabhupada's direct letters to disciples to become spiritual masters by making the spurious claim that this was only to encourage overly ambitious disciples to continue in their service. The above quote and others show Prabhupada giving the same instruction to a large gathering of disciples. There is no question that his desire was secret or hidden, or that he was simply giving the instruction to encourage his disciples.

1977

Prabhupāda: Yes. I shall choose some guru. I shall say, "Now you become ācārya. You become authorized." I am waiting for that. You become all ācārya. I retire completely. But the training must be complete.

Tamāla Kāñhā: The process of purification must be there.

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes, must be there. Caitanya Mahāprabhu wants that. Āmāra ājī āya guru hai ā. "You become guru." (laughs) But be qualified. Little thing, strictly follower...

— Bombay, April 22, 1977

LIBERATED OR NOT LIBERATED GURU

*"One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master."
— Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.9.43p*

Ritvik proponents argue that Srila Prabhupada's disciples are not qualified to become guru, giving the explanation that one must be a mahabhagavata or uttama adhikari to become spiritual master. In his purport to Srimad Bhagavatam, Srila Prabhupada gives a different explanation.

*"The second-class devotee accepts disciples from the section of third-class devotees or nondevotees. Sometimes the first-class devotee also comes down to the category of the second-class devotee for preaching work."
— Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.3.21p*

Confirming that **not only can the madhyama-adhikaris accept disciples, but that this is their general function, and the first class devotee only "sometimes" comes to the level of second class for preaching purposes.** Ritvik proponents also argue that the spiritual master must be a liberated soul, however Prabhupada many times defined what it means to be liberated, and interestingly enough it is the same definition he gives many times for the qualification to become a guru i.e. one must be strictly following all the instructions of his spiritual master.

*"When his senses are completely engaged in the service of Hāñēkeṣa—Hāñēkeṣa is another name of Kāñēa—that is called bhakti. Bhakti means the activities of liberated life. **One may understand or not understand; if he is actually engaged in Kāñēa's service, under the direction of spiritual master, he is liberated. But if he voluntarily accepts again māyā's service, then he is become conditioned. This is the secret.**"*

*— Srila Prabhupada philosophy discussions with
Hayagriva Das*

"Try to understand this point. Our system, paramparā system, is that I am just like disciple of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. I don't say that I am liberated. I am conditioned. But because I am following the instruction of Bhaktisiddhānta, I'm liberated. This is the distinction between conditioned and liberated."

— January 4, 1977, Bombay

WHO ACCEPTS THE KARMA?

The following letter from 1972 illustrates another deficiency in the theory of ritvik initiations from Srila Prabhupada after his departure. Note

how Srila Prabhupada gives instructions to his representative Sri Govinda Das, and then asks him to instruct them not to commit any sinful activities otherwise he will have to suffer as their spiritual master.

Instruct them fully in the qualifications for becoming brahmana, and henceforth they must be very, very careful not to commit any sinful acts or otherwise I shall have to suffer as their spiritual master.

Srila Prabhupada is explaining that even though Sri Govinda is performing the ceremony, still it is Srila Prabhupada, their spiritual master, who will suffer if they commit sinful activity.

If Srila Prabhupada is not personally present to accept responsibility for his disciples, then who accepts the reactions of the disciples' sinful activities. This is one of the unanswered questions from the ritvik theorists.

Prabhupada many times stated that everything is in his books and the faithful followers of Srila Prabhupada accept his statements that his books will be the lawbooks for the next ten thousand years. **Certainly, all instructions needed to become self-realised are in Prabhupada's books except the system of ritvik initiations over succession generations. There is no question, it is simply not there- it doesn't exist anywhere in Prabhupada's teachings.**

In conclusion, it is very hard for those who knew Prabhupada and his consistency of teaching, or for that matter anyone who has made a thorough study of his books, to accept that Srila Prabhupada intended his followers to completely overturn all of his voluminous teachings, and those of his predecessor acaryas, and then introduce a system of proxy-initiations over successive generations of disciples, which is found nowhere either in his teachings, those of his previous acaryas or the scriptures.

The Confirmation of May 28, 1977

*"He is granddisciple... He becomes disciple of my disciple.
That's it"*

— Srila Prabhupada, May 28th, 1977

In May of 1977, foreseeing his imminent departure from the world, Srila Prabhupada requested his GBC disciples to come to him with any questions they had, specifically about what would happen after his departure. After meetings on May 27th and 28th, the GBC resolved that a list of 5 questions, relating to the replacement of GBC members, initiations in the absence of Srila Prabhupada and publications by the BBT, would be taken to Srila Prabhupada by a committee of 5 GBC representatives. The questions were:

Satsvarupa: *Then our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you're no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiation would be conducted.*

Prabhupada: *Yes. I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up, I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating acaryas.*

Tamala Krsna: *Is that called rtvik-acarya?*

Prabhupada: *Rtvik, yes.*

Satsvarupa: *Then what is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and the...*

Prabhupada: *He's guru. He's guru.*

Satsvarupa: *But he does it on your behalf.*

Prabhupada: *Yes. That is formality. Because in my presence one should not become guru, so on my behalf, on my order... Amara ajnaya guru hana. Be actually guru, but by my order.*

Satsvarupa: *So they may also be considered your disciples.*

Prabhupada: *Yes, they are disciples. Why consider? Who?*

Tamala Krsna: *No, he's asking that these rtvik-acaryas, they're officiating, giving diksa. Their... The people who they give diksa to, whose disciple are they?*

Prabhupada: *They're his disciple.*

Tamala Krsna: *They're his disciple.*

Prabhupada: *Who is initiating. He is granddisciple.*

Satsvarupa: *Yes.*

Tamala Krsna: *That's clear.*

Satsvarupa: *Then we have a question concer...*

Prabhupada: *When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it.*

Then after some talk about BBT matters, Srila Prabhupada concludes his comments on initiation by saying:

Prabhupada: *And Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, amara ajnaya guru hana. One can understand the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he can become guru. Or one who understands his guru's order, the same parampara, he can become guru. And therefore I shall select some of you."*

Here Srila Prabhupada clearly answers questions 3 and 4 above, which the GBC body had put to him. He says that he will nominate certain persons to act as officiating-acaryas, and that they will act as gurus, but that as a "formality", they will do so on behalf of Srila Prabhupada in his presence, because it is Vaisnava etiquette that one does not accept disciples in the presence of one's own spiritual master. Then when asked

again to clarify whose disciple would the initiated devotee be, Srila Prabhupada states, "they're his disciple" and stating the same thing again, "he is grand-disciple".

At this point both Satsvarupa Maharaja and Tamal Krishna Maharaja both understood Prabhupada's intention, stating, "Yes" and "That's clear". However, just to clarify the point even further, and to leave no doubt in the minds of the GBC, Srila Prabhupada ignores the attempt to move on to the next question, and goes on to state, **"When I order, 'You become guru,' he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it."**

So here Srila Prabhupada confirms the exact same thing that he has been explaining in his lectures, writings and letters for the last 12 years without exception, to a select committee of his most senior and trusted disciples, who had been summoned by him, specifically to clarify how the society would be run in his physical absence. The recorded GBC minutes of the conversation confirm what everyone present understood. On the next page of the GBC minute book after the 5 questions were recorded, the following minutes record the answers to the questions posed by the GBC committee to Srila Prabhupada:

1. GBC members shall remain permanently. If a GBC member leaves, the GBC can appoint new GBC members.
2. **Srila Prabhupada said he will appoint several devotees who shall perform initiation in the future, even after his disappearance. The disciples they accept shall be their disciples and Srila Prabhupada will be their grand spiritual master.**
3. New translations of Vedic works can be published in the future, even after Srila Prabhupada's departure, but they can only be done by one who is very expert. At present, Srila Prabhupada acknowledged, there are very few such men.

Once again, if we simply accept Prabhupada's instructions, without interpretation, it is very clear what he really wanted.

The Letter of July 9th, 1977

The letter was a response to a conversation of July 7th, where Tamal Krishna Maharaja brings to Srila Prabhupada's attention the dilemma of what to do about all the devotees who wanted to take initiation but had been told to wait due to Prabhupada's sickness. Although this conversation is a follow-on from the one of May 28th in the fact that Prabhupada actually names those devotees who would act as 'officiating acaryas', the reason behind the conversation is significantly different. The May 28 con-

versation deals specifically with the question of what would happen after Srila Prabhupada's departure, and he answers unequivocally that his disciples would accept disciples of their own. In contrast, **this conversation, from the very beginning, deals with the question of what to do about the backlog of new initiation candidates:**

Tamala Krsna: *Srila Prabhupada? We're receiving a number of letters now, and these are people who want to get initiated. So up until now, since your becoming ill, we asked them to wait.*

Prabhupada: *The local, mean, senior sannyasis can do that.*

Tamala Krsna: *That's what we were doing... I mean, formerly we were... The local GBC, sannyasis, were chanting on their beads, and they were writing to Your Divine Grace, and you were giving a spiritual name. So should that process be resumed, or should we...? I mean one thing is that it's said that the spiritual master takes on the... You know, he takes on the... He has to cleanse the disciple by... So we don't want that you should have to... Your health is not so good, so that should not be... That's why we've been asking everybody to wait. I just want to know if we should continue to wait some more time.*

Prabhupada: *No, the senior sannyasis...*

Tamala Krsna: *So they should continue to...*

Prabhupada: *You can give me a list of sannyasis. I will mark who will...*

Tamala Krsna: *Okay...*

Prabhupada: *And... Five, six men, you divide who is nearest.*

Tamala Krsna: *Who is nearest. So persons wouldn't have to write to Your Divine Grace. They could write directly to that person?*

Prabhupada: *Hm.*

Tamala Krsna: *Actually they are initiating the person on Your Divine Grace's behalf. Those persons who are initiated are still your...*

Prabhupada: *Second initiation we shall think over, second initiation.*

Tamala Krsna: *This is for first initiation, okay. And for second initiation, for the time being they should...*

Prabhupada: *No, they have to wait. Second initiation, that should be given...*

Tamala Krsna: *Should... Some devotees are writing you now for second initiation, and I'm writing them to wait a while because you're not well. So can I continue to tell them that?*

Prabhupada: *They can do second initiation.*

Tamala Krsna: *By writing you.*

Prabhupada: *No. These men.*

Tamala Krsna: *These men, they can also do second initiation. So there's no need for devotees to write to you for first and second initiation. They can write to the man nearest them. But all these persons are still your disciples. Anybody who gives initiation is doing so on your behalf.*

Prabhupada: *Yes.*

Tamala Krsna: *You know that book I'm maintaining of all of your disciples' names? Should I continue that?*

Prabhupada: *Hm.*

Tamala Krsna: *So if someone gives initiation, like Harikesa Maharaja, he should send the person's name to us here and I'll enter it in the book. Okay. Is there someone else in India that you want to do this?*

Prabhupada: *India, I am here. We shall see. In India, Jayapataka...*

The reason for this conversation, as stated above, is that there was a backlog of hundreds of devotees who wanted to take initiation from Srila Prabhupada. However, the initiations had been stopped, as Tamal Krishna Maharaja explains, because the devotees close to Prabhupada were concerned about Prabhupada having to accept the karma of his disciples in his weakened condition.

The practice of having his disciples perform initiations on his behalf had been instituted by Prabhupada since the early days of the movement. He accepted this as a necessary step to spread Krishna Consciousness worldwide. The only difference now was that devotees could write directly to any of the senior disciples named by Srila Prabhupada, and he would initiate them, give them a spiritual name and send the record of initiation to Prabhupada in Vrindavana.

There are also two very clear evidences in the conversation that Srila Prabhupada and Tamal Krishna Maharaja were talking specifically about that time, i.e. when Prabhupada was present there in Vrindavana, and not forever after. The first is where Tamal Krishna Maharaja states, "So if someone gives initiation, like Harikesa Maharaja, **he should send the person's name to us here** and I'll enter it in the book." This quite clearly confirms the context of the conversation, which had been set at the beginning; it was regarding the question of initiations while Srila Prabhupada was sick in Vrindavana.

Another confirmation of this comes when Tamal Krishna Maharaja asks Srila Prabhupada, "Is there someone else in India that you want to do this?" and Prabhupada answers, "India, I am here. We shall see. In India, Jayapataka..." this clearly reveals Srila Prabhupada as accepting the context of the matters being discussed related to what should happen at that time, when he was present but not physically fit to perform initiations.

The subject of this conversation was then dictated by Tamal Krishna Maharaja as a letter to all Temple Presidents and GBC's, letting them know that initiations could again be performed, and which devotees Srila Prabhupada had deputed to oversee the giving of names and chanting on beads:

Vrindaban, 9 July, 1977, 77-07-09

To All G.B.C., and Temple Presidents

Dear Maharajas and Prabhus,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet. Recently when all of the GBC members were with His Divine Grace in Vrindavana, Srila Prabhupada indicated that soon he would appoint some of his senior disciples to act as "ritvik - representative of the acarya, for the purpose of performing initiations, both first initiation and second initiation. His Divine Grace has so far given a list of eleven disciples who will act in that capacity:

*His Holiness Kirtanananda Swami
His Holiness Satsvarupa dasa Gosvami
His Holiness Jayapataka Swami
His Holiness Tamala Krsna Gosvami
His Holiness Hrdayananda Gosvami
His Holiness Bhavananda Gosvami
His Holiness Hamsaduta Swami
His Holiness Ramesvara Swami
His Holiness Harikesa Swami
His Grace Bhagavan dasa Adhikari
His Grace Jayatirtha dasa Adhikari*

In the past Temple Presidents have written to Srila Prabhupada recommending a particular devotee's initiation. Now that Srila Prabhupada has named these representatives, Temple Presidents may henceforward send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee as an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupada by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gayatri thread, just as Srila Prabhupada has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the above eleven senior devotees acting as His representative. After the Temple President receives a letter

from these representatives giving the spiritual name or the thread, he can perform the fire yajna in the temple as was being done before. The name of a newly initiated disciple should be sent by the representative who has accepted him or her to Srila Prabhupada, to be included in His Divine Grace's "Initiated Disciples" book. Hoping this finds you all well.

Your servant,

Tamala Krsna Goswami, Secretary to Srila Prabhupada

Approved: A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

The fact that this arrangement was not intended to be for all time is again confirmed in the letter resulting from the above conversation, where Tamal Krishna Maharaja says, "The name of a newly initiated disciple **should be sent by the representative who has accepted him or her to Srila Prabhupada**, to be included in His Divine Grace's 'Initiated Disciples' book."

Much effort has gone into trying to analyse and make judgements on what is the actual meaning of this letter. Of course, if you want to know what is actually meant by some particular statement, the very best person to ask is the person who made it. As the letter was written by Tamal Krishna Maharaja, we thought it pertinent to allow him to explain what he actually meant by the letter, and particularly the word 'henceforward' which is often highlighted to have special significance.

On July 31st, 1998, we contacted His Holiness Tamal Krishna Goswami by e-mail, asking him to give some first hand insight about how the word 'henceforward' was used in the letter of July 9th, 1977. As the person who wrote this letter, which was later countersigned by Srila Prabhupada, he is in the best position to know what the intended meaning was. He was asked three questions (in italics) and his answers follow each question.

1. *Who actually worded the letter of July 9th stating 'henceforward'?*

I did.

2. *If you worded it, what did you mean by this word?*

'Henceforward' means something like, 'in the foreseeable future,' or, 'until further notice.' My service was to encourage Srila Prabhupada to survive his illness. I made every effort, both when speaking with him, and in correspondence, to be positive about recovering from his disease and continuing to physically lead the Krishna Consciousness Movement in a healthy condition. In fact, I believed this is exactly what would happen, and

not until the final days did I ever think otherwise. Therefore, the word 'henceforward,' in fact the entire letter, in no way refers to a situation after Prabhupada's departure, a situation that I was not prepared to normally think of. That situation was already addressed by Prabhupada in the May 28th conversation, which I make brief mention of at the outset of my letter.

3/ Was there any accompanying explanation to this letter given by you to Srila Prabhupada, when you read it to him for his approval, which may shed more light on Srila Prabhupada's understanding of the term "henceforward" in this context?

Yes, in the sense that this letter was viewed by Srila Prabhupada as a managerial document for how new disciples could continue to be initiated during His illness, not a blueprint for how the disciplic succession would continue after His departure. Though I have no specific memory about such an accompanying explanation, there undoubtedly would have been some exchange between us along the lines of what we discussed in the garden the previous day.

*Hope this makes things a little clearer. Hare Krishna.
Your servant,*

Tamal Krishna Goswami

The GBC Minutes, the tape of the May 28 conversation, the testimony of the individuals that shared the conversation with Srila Prabhupada are, altogether, the evidence that Srila Prabhupada gave a final confirmation that he wanted a timeless tradition that he had consistently presented and supported from the beginning to the end of his preaching work to go on. This has never been discarded by the GBC and hopefully in centuries to come, never will be.

RITVIK RUINS VARNASRAMA

By: Hare Krsna dasi
(Brunswick, Maine)

I am somewhat alarmed to hear the growing support for ritvik initiations in India. If such a policy is adopted by ISKCON, it will surely kill the chances of fulfilling Srila Prabhupada's varnasrama mission.

Varnasrama starts by dividing devotees first by varna, then by asrama, as explained by Srila Prabhupada in the "Varnasrama Walks" March 14, 1974 in Vrndavana. But who will designate the devotee's varna to ensure that he is trained in the appropriate skill? Prabhupada makes it overwhelmingly clear that the devotee's varna should be designated by his spiritual master. That means that the initiating spiritual master must be physically present to personally interact with the disciple and guide him to the proper varna.

Without this personal interaction between guru and disciple, it is not possible to establish a legitimate form of varnasrama.

The ritvik method rules out this personal relation, and opens the door to a world of speculation and nondiscipline— as the so-called disciple determines by his own whims what he imagines the spiritual master is telling him. There is every chance that he will choose his own varna based on a desire for prestige, if left to his own imagination. Whereas, if the guru is physically present, he is able to determine varna based on the actual character of the disciple as shown by Prabhupada's statements below.

I predict that in communities that adopt the ritvik deviation from Prabhupada's instructions, there will be no development of varnasrama and no development of self-sufficient varnasrama communities based on cow protection and working the oxen. As a result of abandoning Prabhupada's varnasrama mission, such communities will be marked by relationships which are just like nectar in the beginning and just like poison in the end.

Who determines the devotee's varna—the devotee? His parents? The temple president? No. The spiritual master determines his varna.

No conditioned soul actually knows what is to be done and what is not to be done, but a person who acts in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is free to act because everything is **prompted by Kṛṣṇa from within and confirmed by the spiritual master.**

(Bg 18.58 Purport)

As already stated, Brahma is the original spiritual master for the universe, and since he was initiated by the Lord Himself, the message of Srimad-Bhagavatam is coming down by disciplic succession, and in order to receive the real message of Srimad-Bhagavatam one should approach the current link, or spiritual master, in the chain of disciplic succession. After being initiated by the proper spiritual master in that chain of succession, one should engage himself in the discharge of tapasya in the execution of devotional service...

The Lord Himself appears as the spiritual master to a person who is sincere in heart about serving the Lord. Therefore the bona fide spiritual master who happens to meet the sincere devotee should be accepted as the most confidential and beloved representative of the Lord.

(SB 2.9.7 Purport)

First of all find out whom you like to accept as guru. Then put question. But sometimes we have to talk with persons who is not student: outsider. That is preaching work. But sastra says that one should approach a guru, and with surrender he would ask him, and guru will talk with a person who is surrendered. Otherwise, there is no necessity of talk, because he will not accept. One who has come to challenge the guru, so he will simply waste time. He will not accept. But a disciple who has surrendered, he will accept. Therefore talking is recommended between guru and disciple, not outsider. Tad-vijnanartham sa gurum eva abhigacchet. This is essential. And guru trains the disciple according to the Vedic principle. Therefore there are division of varna and asrama.

So these are very scientific things. The whole world is unaware of these scientific things, this animal civilization; and this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to elevate to the standard of human being.

(Lecture: Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.1.47 Dallas, July 29, 1975)

Guest (3): Your Grace, may I ask a question? Before I asked about a man not knowing what his duty was, and you spoke of the highest duty of giving up all to Kṛṣṇa and becoming de-

tached from the fruits of your action. But suppose the question is: What shall I become—a shopkeeper, a teacher, a carpenter?

Prabhupada: In any condition, you can surrender yourself to Krsna. Svakarmana tam abhyarcya.

Guest (3): Yes, but it sounds like it doesn't matter what I do as long as I dedicate my action to Krsna.

Prabhupada: Therefore you require spiritual master to guide you.

Guest (3): So I cannot know myself.

Prabhupada: That is not possible.

Guest (3): And intuition does not help.

Prabhupada: Intuition is wrong. It is a practice. A thief thinks "I should steal." His intuition says. He's practiced to steal and intuition says "You steal." That is not guide. Intuition means that things which you are practiced, that's all. You are accustomed, that's all.

Guest (3): How does a man find out what his duty is?

Prabhupada: Duty is... The sastra is there. Bhagavad-gita is there. The Bible is there. So follow.

Guest (3): Whether a man should be a shopkeeper or a teacher or a carpenter, the Bible won't tell me that, and the Bhagavad-gita won't tell me that.

Prabhupada: Bhagavad-gita is there, the four divisions of human society, brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya, sudra. So each one's duty is prescribed. Brahmana's duty, ksatriya's duty, vaisya's duty, sudra's duty, brahmacari's duty, everything is there.

Guest (3): But then you said before that if I think I'm brahmacari, then I should be a brahmacari. If I become a sudra, I act as a sudra.

Prabhupada: Yes, you act as a brahmacari, do your brahmacari work, you'll be successful.

Guest (3): But how do I know that I am thinking properly?

Prabhupada: Therefore I say it is mentioned in the sastra, brahmacari guru-kule vasan danto guror hitam. If you want to be a lawyer, you must know the law. Without knowing the law, how you become a lawyer? Without knowing the engineering art, how you become engineer? So either you become a brahmacari, grhastha or vanaprastha, sannyasi, or anything, you must know what you are meant for. Without knowing, how you can become brahmacari?

Guest (3): I must know what I am meant for.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Guest (3): But that's what my question is, how does one know.

Prabhupada: Then you have to go to the... Tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhicacchet. Just like we were discussing Sanatana

Gosvami, he has gone to Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he said, "Sir, You have brought me from the entanglement of family life. Now tell me what is my duty." So that discussion is going on. So you should approach guru and take instruction from him what is, how to act...

Guest (3): But it says that if I follow another person's occupation, even if I do it better than my own occupation, that is not as good as following what I ought to be doing.

Prabhupada: If you are unfit for that occupation, why should you imitate, waste your time? If you are, you are fit for becoming a carpenter, why should you imitate a brahmana? Better be expert carpenter and serve Krsna with the result of carpentry work. Then there is perfection...

Devotee (4): Must initiation be there, Srila Prabhupada?

Prabhupada: Initiation must be there. Otherwise, how you'll be guided?

(Evening Darsana; July 8, 1976, Washington, D.C.)

Just like in the school, college, somebody is being trained up as a scientist, somebody is trained up as an engineer, as a medical man, as a lawyer. According to the tendency, practical psychology of the student, he is advised that "You take this line." Similarly, these four divisions of the society, it is very scientific. So by the instruction of the guru, when he's in the gurukula, he will be specified a particular type of duty, and if he does it faithfully... Sva-karmana tam abhyarcya. The real purpose is Krsna consciousness. And according to his guna and karma he's engaged in a particular occupational duty.

(Lecture: Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.7.36-37;
Vrndavana, September 29, 1976)

Pancadravida: How do you teach a varnasrama college? In varnasrama college if somebody comes in... They say, "I want to be ksatriya" or "I want to be vaisya." Is it like that?

Prabhupada: No, that will be tested by the teachers, what for he is fit. He will be test by the guru.

(Morning Walk; April 20, 1974, Hyderabad)

Finding Spiritual Solutions to Material Problems

Today practically everyone is getting a college education. But what is taught at these colleges? Mostly technical knowledge, which is sudra education. Real higher education means learning Vedic wisdom. This is meant for the brahmanas. Alone, sudra education leads to a chaotic condition. Everyone should be tested to find out which education he is suited for.

(The Science of Self Realization; Chapter 6)

The people who take birth in this tract of land are divided according to the qualities of material nature—the modes of goodness [sattva-guna], passion [rajo-guna], and ignorance [tamo-guna]. Some of them are born as exalted personalities, some are ordinary human beings, and some are extremely abominable, for in Bharata-varsa one takes birth exactly according to one's past karma. If one's position is ascertained by a bona fide spiritual master and one is properly trained to engage in the service of Lord Visnu according to the four social divisions [brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya and sudra] and the four spiritual divisions [brahmacari, grhastha, vanaprastha and sannyasa], one's life becomes perfect.

(SB 5.19.19)

"O son of Prtha, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth—women, vaisyas [merchants], as well as sudras [workers]—can approach the supreme destination." [Bhagavad-gita 9.32] It does not matter what one's position is; if one aims at reaching Krsna by performing his occupational duty under the direction of the spiritual master, his life is successful.

(SB 7.15.67 Purport)

Syamasundara: Plato said this type of education reveals what category a person belongs to. He did have the right idea that one belongs to a particular class according to his qualification.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that we also say, but we disagree that everyone should go through the same training. The spiritual master should judge the tendency or disposition of the student at the start of his education. He should be able to see whether a boy is fit for military training, administration, or philosophy, and then he should fully train the boy according to his particular tendency. If one is naturally inclined to philosophical study, why should he waste his time in the military? And if one is naturally inclined to military training, why should he waste his time with other things? Arjuna belonged to a ksatriya [warrior] family. He and his brothers were never trained as philosophers. Dronacarya was their master and teacher, and although he was a brahmana, he taught them Dhanur Veda [military science], not brahma-vidya.

(The Journey of Self-Discovery; 7.1:)

So it is, it is the spiritual master's business to see the disciple, in which way he has got the tendency. And he tries to

utilize his natural tendency in the matter of serving Kṛṣṇa. One has got tendency for a certain thing. That tendency can be engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service also. It is not difficult. Simply it requires training and guidance. Sva-karmana tam abhyarcya, samsiddhi labhate narah. One has got a particular tendency to work. By that work, if it is nicely done, you can satisfy Kṛṣṇa.

(Lecture: The Nectar of Devotion, Calcutta, January 25, 1973)

Catur-varnyam maya srstam guna-karma-vibhagasah. [Bhagavad-gita 4.13] Guna, not everyone is qualified in the same way. Therefore you... The acarya will pick up that "They are meant for becoming brahmanas. They are meant for ksatriyas."

(Lecture: Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.8.41, Mayapura, October 21, 1974)

Prabhupada: Yes. That is by tendency. Guna-karma-vibhagasah. By the tendency. Therefore one has to approach the spiritual master. He will give direction that "This boy is meant for becoming a brahmana." Everyone has got some tendency. From the tendency it should be designated.

(Room Conversation with Banker; September 21, 1973, Bombay)

WHERE THE RITVIK PEOPLE ARE WRONG

By His Holiness Jayadvaita Swami

If Srila Prabhupada didn't clearly and definitely say it,
and if it first came up after 1977, whatever it is, don't trust it.

— *Rule of Thumb*

The purpose of this paper is to deal with a particular theory of how Srila Prabhupada intended devotees in ISKCON to receive initiation after his physical departure.

We'll come to the controversies shortly, but first let's look at what we all agree on.

What all of us agree on

Forget for a moment that Srila Prabhupada has physically disappeared. Put aside questions of what should happen in modern-day ISKCON. For the moment, let's just look at the standard teaching Srila Prabhupada gave us about the disciplic succession.

I apologize for presenting a piece of my own writing from BACK TO GODHEAD, but I think it gives a reasonably concise summary that any ISKCON devotee would agree with. Here it is.

From Master to Disciple

The parampara is the chain of spiritual masters and disciples through which Krsna consciousness is taught and received. In Bhagavad-gita Lord Krsna says, "I taught this ancient science of yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvan. Vivasvan taught it to his son Manu. And Manu taught it to his son Ikshvaku. In this way, through the system of parampara, disciplic succession, the science was understood by the saintly kings."

In the parampara system, then, the original teacher, the original spiritual master, is Lord Krsna, God Himself. The Lord gives perfect knowledge, and that knowledge is handed down from master to disciple. It's like a ripe fruit handed down from person to person, from the top of the tree to the ground.

In the chain of parampara, each spiritual master has the duty to transmit the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as it is. He is not to add anything, subtract anything, or change anything. He simply has to deliver the message, just as a postman delivers a letter, contents fully intact.

According to the Vedic scriptures, one who is serious about attaining self-realization or God realization or the ultimate goal in life must approach such a bona fide spiritual master. It is not optional; accepting a bona fide spiritual master is essential.

The method of accepting the spiritual master is explained in Bhagavad-gītā: one must surrender to him, inquire from him, and serve him. Inquiry alone is not enough. One must humbly submit oneself before the spiritual master, accepting him as a representative of God.

The spiritual master is not God, and any so-called master who claims to be God should at once be rejected as bogus. But the spiritual master is honored as much as God because he intimately serves God through the disciplic chain. Because each spiritual master serves his own spiritual master, all the members of the chain are ultimately servants of God and therefore very dear to God. More precisely, the bona fide spiritual master is the servant of the servant of the servant of God, or Kṛṣṇa.

This is one of the secrets of the parampara system: to be a genuine master, one must be a genuine servant. The student, therefore, surrenders to the spiritual master as a disciple and serves him, and the master responds by answering the disciple's questions, enlightening him with transcendental knowledge. For the sincere disciple who has full faith in Kṛṣṇa and equal faith in the bona fide spiritual master, all the truths of spiritual realization are factually revealed.

The genuine disciple feels everlastingly indebted to the spiritual master and continues to serve him forever. In this way, even when the spiritual master leaves this world, the master and disciple are connected. The disciple continues to serve the spiritual master by following what the master has taught him, and by teaching it to others. Thus the bona fide disciple becomes a bona fide spiritual master, and the chain of succession continues.

Leave aside, for the moment, further questions about the credentials of the bona fide spiritual master. Leave aside whether he must be an *uttama adbhikari* or whether a *madhayama adbhikari* is good enough, whether to serve as guru one must receive an explicit personal order from the spiritual master or whether a standing general order is in effect. We can talk about these matters later. For now, we are looking only at the fundamentals, at the broad principles everyone agrees on.

I feel confident that every reasonable disciple of Srila Prabhupada would be with me on these principles so far. This is what Srila Prabhupada taught to all of us, from 1966 through 1977. It's what all of us learned and accepted and repeated to others. It's "plain vanilla."¹

On this much, then, we should all be in agreement.

Now, let's move on to something else that everyone agrees on.

Srila Prabhupada himself, in 1977, appointed eleven disciples to serve as ritvik gurus, or "officiating spiritual masters."

He authorized these ritviks to decide which candidates to accept, and to chant on the candidates' beads and give the new disciples spiritual names. The ritviks were to do this on Srila Prabhupada's behalf, and the new disciples were to be not those of the ritviks but of Srila Prabhupada himself.

On July 9, 1977, Srila Prabhupada signed a document that makes these facts unmistakably clear.

I hope we all agree so far. If not, we're in deeper trouble than I thought. But if so—if we all do agree—we can now put these issues aside and move on.

What is the post-samadhi ritvik-guru doctrine?

We now come to the question to be decided:

Did Srila Prabhupada intend that, even after his physical departure, his disciples would continue to serve as ritvik gurus by initiating devotees who would be not their disciples but his?

On November 14, 1977, Srila Prabhupada ended his manifest physical pastimes and, as the traditional language puts it, "entered samadhi." The assertion that his disciples should continue to serve as ritviks, then, is what we may call the "post-samadhi ritvik-guru doctrine."

I trust you will accept that my statement of the question has been accurate and fair and my language neutral.

Now, moving on, I should next make clear that the post-samadhi ritvik-guru doctrine comes in two forms, which we may call "hard" and "soft."

The "hard" doctrine says this:

Srila Prabhupada is the only initiating spiritual master for all ISKCON devotees, and he shall continue to be so forever. Acting as ritviks on his behalf, certain disciples may initiate new devotees, who then become not

their disciples but his. ISKCON shall follow this system, and only this system, forever.

Differing on certain points is the “soft” doctrine:

Srila Prabhupada is the only initiating spiritual master for all ISKCON devotees. Acting as ritviks on his behalf, certain disciples may initiate new devotees, who then become not their disciples but his. This system shall continue until the appearance within ISKCON of pure devotees fit to initiate disciples of their own. The ritvik system will then come to an end.

It should be instantly clear that these two doctrines are incompatible and mutually exclusive. If the hard doctrine is right, the soft doctrine is wrong, and vice versa. Just as a man cannot be both living and dead, or a woman both pregnant and sterile, we cannot have a ritvik system that is both permanent and temporary. It's either one or the other—not both.

(I am leaving aside here appeals to “inconceivability.” By arguing that something is “inconceivably true,” one can make a case for literally anything. We accept, of course, that certain scripturally endorsed contradictions are “inconceivably true.” But if we were therefore willing to accept “It's inconceivable” as a valid argument for everything, nothing could ever be shown false. We would then be obliged to accept the truth of even the most ridiculous nonsense.)

For the sake of thoroughness, we may also note that some people have put forward a hybrid “soft/hard” doctrine, in which pure devotees initiate their own disciples and yet the ritvik system continues side by side. This doctrine, of course, is incompatible with the other two. If it is right, both of the others must be wrong, and if either of the others is right, this one must be wrong.

Now, therefore, we have what I think is a fair and accurate statement of what for the sake of brevity we may call the “p.s. ritvik-guru doctrines.” (We've seen that there are more than one of them.) I've considered dropping the “p.s.” (“post-samadhi”), but I've retained it to avoid later confusion. To keep our thinking clear, we will need to remember that what's at issue is only what system Srila Prabhupada intended for after his physical departure.

So the doctrines are now before us, and we've seen that only one of them, at the most, could be true. The question now, therefore, is whether any of these doctrines truly represents what Srila Prabhupada intended, and if so which one.

What are the arguments in favor of the doctrines?

So now let us look at the arguments and evidence put forward in favor of the post-samadhi ritvik doctrines.

From devotees I've spoken with and papers I've read, the arguments seem to take the following forms:

1. Argument from restatement of what's accepted.
2. Argument from personal testimony.
3. Argument from logical necessity.
4. Argument from the virtues of the doctrines.
5. Argument from a lack of counter-evidence.
6. Linguistic arguments.

Let's examine these arguments one by one.

1. Argument from restatement of what's accepted.

Devotees have sometimes announced that they have "irrefutable proof" of the ritvik-guru system. They then offer into evidence various quotes in which Srila Prabhupada speaks of appointing ritviks. Next comes the document in which Srila Prabhupada actually appoints them, and then letters in which Srila Prabhupada makes clear to the ritviks their duties. Then further evidence: testimony from senior devotees that Srila Prabhupada did indeed appoint ritvik gurus.

On top of this we are offered a careful tracing of history: Srila Prabhupada gradually handed things over—first the performance of fire yajnas, then the chanting on beads, and finally the actual acceptance of candidates and giving of spiritual names. Yet through all of this, we are reminded, the new initiates were always disciples of Srila Prabhupada, and no one else.

And then comes the conclusion: In the face of such an overwhelming body of evidence, how can one deny that Srila Prabhupada did indeed establish the ritvik-guru system?

The answer, of course, is simple: What the argument succeeds in proving is what everyone already accepts. That Srila Prabhupada appointed ritvik gurus and established a "ritvik-guru system" is not in dispute. Everyone agrees about it.

The argument, therefore, entirely misses the issue.

What's at issue is whether Srila Prabhupada intended some form of ritvik-guru system to continue after his physical departure.

Some people seem to think that merely offering more and more evidence that Srila Prabhupada set up a ritvik-guru system somehow makes the case for a post-samadhi ritvik-guru system stronger and stronger. It doesn't. If one wanted to prove the existence of two-headed pigeons, no amount of evidence that there are pigeons would be enough. That pigeons exist is something we already know. What would need to be shown is that some of them have two heads.

Arguments proving again and again what's already accepted do nothing to settle the issue at hand. When used knowingly and deliberately, such arguments are a form of cheating. When used innocently, they are merely irrelevant.

So let's leave this behind and go on.

2. Argument from personal testimony.

We now come to an argument that is relevant: the personal testimony of devotees who say they heard before Srila Prabhupada's departure that Srila Prabhupada had set up a post-samadhi ritvik-guru system.

Gauri Dasa Pandit, one of Srila Prabhupada's disciples, tells us that while serving as an assistant to His Holiness Tamal Krsna Goswami in Vrindaban, on or about May 23, 1977, he directly heard Srila Prabhupada tell Tamal Krishna Goswami that the appointed ritviks should continue to serve as ritviks even after Srila Prabhupada's departure. This conversation, he tells us, was even recorded on tape.

In addition, Yasodanandana Dasa tells us that in May 1977 Tamal Krishna Goswami and Bhavananda Goswami indicated to him that Srila Prabhupada had endorsed a post-samadhi ritvik-guru system. Yasodananda Prabhu offers a diary in which he noted this at the time.

When we come to this sort of testimony, several questions are naturally relevant: How many witnesses are testifying? How reliable are their accounts? How well do they agree with one another?

From the beginning, then, this argument is in trouble. How many people claim to have heard directly from Srila Prabhupada that Srila Prabhupada wanted this system? Only one. He was a junior man, not a leading devotee, Srila Prabhupada was not confiding in him directly, and though we have nothing bad we wish to say of him he has not especially distinguished himself by his record of devotional service. Moreover, for

some reason he held back his testimony until many years after Srila Prabhupada left.

Most important, Gauri Dasa Pandit, for all his good qualities, may still be subject to the four frailties common to all conditioned souls: imperfect senses, a tendency to make mistakes, a tendency to fall into illusion, and a propensity to cheat.

Yasodanandana Dasa, of course, is presumably subject to the same four shortcomings. And apart from this, a serious concern is that his testimony is second hand.

If the tape recording Gauri Dasa speaks of has ever existed, it has never been found. One may obliquely suggest that someone must have deliberately erased it. But in any case, evidence that doesn't exist is no evidence at all.

What we are left with, then, is mainly Gauri Dasa's lone report. And according to Tamal Krsna Goswami, the other person allegedly present, what Gauri Dasa tells us is wrong.

At best, then, the evidence from personal testimony is equivocal and weak.

Here, perhaps is the place to bring forward a point made by Tamal Krishna Maharaja and approvingly quoted in several papers by proponents of post-samadhi ritvik-guru doctrines.

At a meeting in Topanga Canyon in 1980, Tamal Krishna Maharaja stated that Srila Prabhupada had never appointed the eleven ritviks to be anything more than ritviks. "If it had been more than that," he said, "you can bet your bottom dollar that Prabhupada would have spoken for days and hours and weeks on end about about how to set up this thing with the gurus, but he didn't. . ."

The same point about how Srila Prabhupada let us know what he wanted is relevant here. If he had wanted a ritvik-guru system to continue after his departure, would we have expected him to have said so merely once in private to his secretary, or would he have spoken about it with his leading devotees "for days and hours and weeks on end"?

For those familiar with how Srila Prabhupada did things, the answer should be easy.

This is a point we shall return to later. But for now let us move on.

3. *Argument from logical necessity.*

Another line of reasoning begins with a critique—much of it valid—of Srila Prabhupada’s leading disciples and their failings after his departure. None of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples, it is argued, is now fit to serve as a bona fide spiritual master. And scriptural arguments are offered to support this point of view.

Therefore, the argument continues, since no one else is fit, the only person of whom we can safely take shelter is Srila Prabhupada himself.

Srila Prabhupada knew the limitations of his disciples, and he must have known what would happen. Therefore, the argument concludes, he must have set up the ritvik-guru system.

The response to this argument is simple: It is speculative and should therefore be rejected. A speculation may be reasonable or unreasonable, but Srila Prabhupada taught us to rely on authority, not on speculation.

Moreover, this speculation is logically defective. To dispose of it, we need not decide whether Srila Prabhupada’s disciples are fit or unfit, or whether they “received the order” to become guru or not. Nor do we need to discuss what the credentials of a bona fide spiritual master should be. (These are important topics, but they are not the topic at hand.)

Suppose for the moment that Srila Prabhupada’s disciples are all indeed unfit. It does not therefore logically follow that Srila Prabhupada must have (note the speculative language) set up a post-samadhi ritvik-guru system.

Instead, if he found his disciples all unfit he could have blessed one or more to quickly attain spiritual perfection. Or he could have declared that henceforward Kṛṣṇa Himself, or the Bhagavatam itself, or the holy name itself would be the spiritual master. Or he could have simply left everything up to Kṛṣṇa.

The point is that it’s not enough to talk about what Srila Prabhupada could have done or must have done. We have to see what Srila Prabhupada actually did.

To argue that Srila Prabhupada must have set up a ritvik-guru system and that the evidence for this is so scanty only because it must have been suppressed and covered up is merely to take the speculation one step further.

And speculating is not the way Srila Prabhupada told us to do things. One who wants to take shelter of Srila Prabhupada, therefore, should avoid taking shelter of speculations.

Coming back to a point on which all agree, we should all take shelter of Srila Prabhupada and his instructions. Srila Prabhupada is the exalted pure devotee who gave us the Krsna consciousness movement. We can all be completely confident of his instructions and his example. And we can be sure that by strictly and sincerely following Srila Prabhupada we will always be safe and secure.

But we must follow Srila Prabhupada as he himself instructed us to follow. We must follow Srila Prabhupada and those who follow Srila Prabhupada, not the speculations of others.

This brings us to the next argument.

4. Argument from the virtues of the doctrines.

The next argument is really just an extension of the previous one: Srila Prabhupada must have set up a ritvik-guru system, because the system has so many advantages.

“Just see all the benefits of this system,” declare the advocates of this point of view. “How much better it would be than the alternatives.”

Or the same argument is put in negative form: We are in trouble and perplexity only because we have failed to take up this wonderful system.

To make it all clear to us, the advocates sometimes offer charts showing us the benefits their system would bring, compared to the bad points of what’s going on now.

But those who have learned from history will refuse to be lured. The one-appointed-acarya system of the Gaudiya Math, the zonal-acarya system of ISKCON—both looked so good. They seemed to offer so many advantages. Or the alternatives seemed so bleak.

For many, only in retrospect could those fine-looking systems be recognized as deviations and therefore causes of disaster.

But, again, what Srila Prabhupada trained us to do was not to evaluate all the possibilities, choose what seems to us to have the most points going for it, and then conclude that this must have been what he wanted. What he trained us to do was to strictly follow what he taught us.

If there's one lesson we should have learned from history it should be this: However good a path of action may seem, if it's against what Srila Prabhupada taught us, forget it.

5. *Argument from a lack of counter-evidence.*

We now come to another argument we can deal with quickly.

Where, it is demanded, has the sastra or Srila Prabhupada said that one can't approach an acarya for initiation merely because he has physically departed? Where do the authorities tell us that a post-samadhi ritvik system is no good? Can you show me a verse? Can you point to a purport? How then can you say it's not valid?

This is simply a classic argumentative blunder, a textbook fallacy.

"How do we know that you don't beat your wife?" demands the rumor-monger. And then you're stuck there, trying to come up with evidence to counter a groundless accusation.

How do you know there's not a celestial planet controlled by a three-legged grasshopper with seven heads and superhuman intelligence? Can you show me a verse that refutes it? Can you point to a purport?

How can you prove it's not bona fide to take initiation from the ghost of Aristotle's mother or a picture of a self-realized boa constrictor?

One must support one's views by evidence, not by assertions that a lack of counter-evidence makes them true. Enough said.

6. *Linguistic arguments.*

Last, we come to arguments based on linguistics.

One may ask, "If Srila Prabhupada wanted a post-samadhi ritvik system, where does so he say so in black and white?" The proponents of the p.s. ritvik doctrines have an answer: The black-and-white evidence is to be found in two places—in the letter in which Srila Prabhupada appoints the eleven ritviks and in Srila Prabhupada's last will.

The appointment letter is dated July 9th, 1977. It is signed by Tamal Krishna Goswami and countersigned "Approved A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami." Its authority is beyond question.

The letter explains that Srila Prabhupada has appointed some senior disciples to act as ritviks, and it lists eleven disciples Srila Prabhupada has so far named to act in that capacity. The letter then says:

“Now that Srila Prabhupada has named these representatives, Temple Presidents may henceforward send recommendations for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee as an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupad by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gayatri thread, just as Srila Prabhupad has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the above eleven senior devotees acting as His representative. After the Temple President receives a letter from these representatives giving the spiritual name or the thread, he can perform the fire yajna in the temple as was being done before. The name of a newly initiated disciple should be sent by the representative who has accepted him or her to Srila Prabhupad, to be included in His Divine Grace’s ‘Initiated Disciples’ book.”

Clearly, this letter establishes a ritvik-guru system. But one may ask where it says that such a system should continue even after Srila Prabhupada’s departure. The answer given is that this is clear from the word “henceforward.”

The next source of evidence, Srila Prabhupada’s last will, is dated June 4, 1977. In the will, Srila Prabhupada declares that the Governing Body Commission “will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness.” He says, “Each temple will be an ISKCON property and will be managed by three executive directors. The system of management will continue as it is now and there is no need of any change.”

The rest of the will deals almost entirely with provisions for safeguarding ISKCON’s properties. Srila Prabhupada names the executive directors for them. Then he provides that in the event that a director dies or fails to act, the remaining directors may appoint a new one, “provided the new director is my initiated disciple following strictly all the rules and regulations of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness as detailed in my books, and provided that there are never less than three (3) or more than five (5) executive directors acting at one time.”

How is this black-and-white evidence of a post-samadhi ritvik-guru system? Proponents explain that since Srila Prabhupada certainly intended his will to be in force for generations after his departure, and since he

stipulated that each successor director would have to be “my initiated disciple,” it follows that Srila Prabhupada would continue to initiate, long after his physical departure, through a ritvik-guru system.

Now, what are we to make of these two points of evidence?

The first thing we note is that they're weak. What would strong evidence look like? Something like this:

“Acting on my behalf, my disciples serving as ritvik gurus shall continue to initiate even after my physical departure. The new disciples initiated shall not be disciples of the ritviks. They shall be my own.”

A statement like that, either in the appointment letter or in Srila Prabhupada's will, or anywhere else, would have settled the matter once and for all. Of course, no such statement exists.

In the absence of such a clear, unequivocal statement, proponents of ritvik-guru doctrines have to rely on inference and build their case on more slippery ground

Let's look more closely.

Let us start with the word “henceforward.” In the appointment letter, Srila Prabhupada's desire that the ritvik-guru system last forever is supposedly set forth to the world in this one highly significant word. The meaning, we are reminded, is clear: “from now on.” And so Srila Prabhupada desired that the ritvik-guru system continue even after his physical departure.

Now, the first thing to note about this argument is that it works only for the “hard” version of the post-samadhi ritvik doctrine, in which only ritviks initiate forever—or perhaps for the hybrid “hard/soft” version. The “soft” version, in which the ritvik system runs till some qualified gurus come along, is ruled out.

Taking “henceforward” to mean literally forever, never will the ritvik-guru system come to an end. By this “hard” version of the doctrine, even should an uttama-adhikari someday appear, he will never initiate disciples of his own. At most, he will serve merely as a ritvik. For according to this hard version of the doctrine, Srila Prabhupada is the final member of the disciplic succession. The succession has come to an end. Srila Prabhupada is the only guru forever after. Henceforward, all new devotees will be his disciples, through his appointed ritviks.

And since we're insisting that "henceforward" must mean literally forever, we must apply it not merely to a selected portion of what Srila Prabhupada's appointment letter says but to the letter in its entirety.

"Temple presidents may henceforward send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee. . . The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the above eleven senior devotees acting as his representative."

If we're being literal, as the argument says we must, then let's be literal. Though the letter says that Srila Prabhupada has "so far" given a list of eleven ritviks, he never added to the list. So this is it. The only authorized ritviks are these eleven. There is no mention that any of them may ever be removed or replaced, nor is there any mention of any successor. Nor does Srila Prabhupada provide that the list may be altered by the GBC. Henceforward, these eleven.

Of these, one—Jayatirtha Dasa—fell into intoxication and illicit sex and is now dead. How he will continue to serve as ritvik henceforward is unclear. But presumably he must, provided we can find out where he is so we can send him requests for initiation from the temples nearest.

And then we have Kirtanananda Swami, Bhavananda Goswami, Ramesvara Swami, Bhagavan Dasa Adhikari, and Harikesa dasa all are fallen from their spiritual vows but serving eternally as ritviks nonetheless.

Or Hamsadutta Swami. His falldowns have become the stuff of literature, yet now that he has become humble, perhaps he is available to serve as a ritvik guru from now till the end of time. For some, perhaps, once again, Hamsadutta is the only way.

If these choices somehow don't suit you, you're left with Jayapataka Swami, Hridayananda Goswami, Tamal Krishna Goswami, or Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami. The problem here, of course (aside from the possibility that you may not like them), is that all of them are sure they were supposed to serve as ritviks only until Srila Prabhupada's departure. As far as they're concerned, the post-samadhi ritvik doctrines are bunk. Now these devotees wouldn't serve as ritviks for love or money. So if you're looking for an authorized ritvik, go back to the other names on the list.

And remember, henceforward—from now till the end of time—these are the only authorized ritviks.

My apologies for the sarcasm, but a person who puts forward an argument is obliged to live with its consequences. And if the consequences are absurd, so is the argument.

So let's suppose you go for the "hard/soft" version of the doctrine, in which self-effulgent acaryas come along to initiate yet still the ritviks continue side by side. When those self-effulgent acaryas show up, what's the need of them? You can still become Srila Prabhupada's disciple through the ritviks, and that's a safer bet, just in case the effulgence might wear off. And when it comes to ritviks, you're still stuck with these eleven—and only these eleven.

Good luck.

Of course, one could take "henceforward" in a more elastic and informal sense. For example, I might say, "Henceforward I shall take my walk on Juhu Beach every day." Must that mean literally from now till the end of my life? Or, still more literally, from now through eternity, even after I'm physically gone? Or could it simply mean from now till I leave Bombay?

Take the word super-literally if you like—but then be prepared to embrace all the consequences.

Unfortunately, proponents of ritvik doctrines rarely do this. Instead, most often they'll start out with insisting on a literal meaning of "henceforward"—an insistence that fits only with "hard" or "hard/soft" versions of the doctrine. Then, having put forward their proof, they switch over to embracing the "soft" version, with which the literal meaning entirely clashes. This, in a word, is cheating. Not a good sign.

So now we come to the second piece of evidence, that phrase from Srila Prabhupada's will in which he stipulates that each new executive director for the ISKCON properties must be "my initiated disciple."

The logic, again, is that since Srila Prabhupada must have wanted to protect these properties forever, he must forever have direct disciples, initiated through a ritvik system.

Again, please note that this logic works only for the "hard" form of ritvik doctrine (or for the "hard/soft" version), in which the ritvik system lasts forever. The "soft" version, in which the ritvik system lasts only until the appearance of qualified gurus, is ruled out: for the will to be followed, Srila Prabhupada must have direct disciples forever, through the agency of his ritviks (again, "these eleven").

Even if one wants to go with a “hard/soft” ritvik doctrine, in which ritviks and pure devotees in Srila Prabhupada’s line initiate side by side, one might wonder why the disciples of those pure devotees are to be excluded from serving as executive directors. Is their initiation somehow less effective? Are they not equally connected with Srila Prabhupada? But this is a small point. Let us go on.

Before we accept this phrase from Srila Prabhupada’s will as a clear sign of Srila Prabhupada’s intention for an eternally existing system of ritvik gurus, let us pause for a moment to see how that phrase got in there. Doing so won’t tip the scales one way or the other, but the history is interesting.

It appears that the theme for the will arises in Vrindaban on May 27, 1977. That day, Giriraja Swami says to Srila Prabhupada: “This morning you gave the hint that there might be envious persons coming to take away our properties, so in the GBC meeting we discussed this point.” He then relates how a committee of devotees has come up with a “model trust deed” to protect the properties.

Introducing the text, Ramesvara Swami says, “This is based on the BBT Trust document that you wrote many years ago.” He then begins reading the new document.

In the course of reading, he comes to the list of trustees for various temples, and gradually to those for Vrindavana. “The proposed trustees are Aksayananda Swami, Gopala Krsna and Visvambhara.” Visvambhara Dayal (known as “Bhagatji”) was a devoted friend of ISKCON who rendered much service to Srila Prabhupada in Vrindaban.

The following conversation ensues:

Prabhupada: *Visvambhara is not our regular disciple.*

Jayapataka: *Shouldn’t be included.*

Prabhupada: *Then he has to accept sannyasa from me.*

Jayatirtha: *Jaya.*

Prabhupada: *He should know...*

Tamal Krsna: *Become initiated.*

Jayapataka: *Trustee must be initiated disciple.*

Prabhupada: *Oh, yes.*

Ramesvara: *If he is seen... He could be on the advisory board.*

Prabhupada: *No, you can say that “If you take sannyasa, you become on this.”*

Tamal Krsna: *So we'll talk to him, and if he says no, then we'll select another person and come back and tell you who our choice is.*

A few days later, on June 2, devotees present Srila Prabhupada a revised draft.

Giriraja: *So we drafted a will, including the trust for the properties of India and some of the other. . .*

Prabhupada: *Will? Will, there will be direction that "Management should be done like this." That's all.*

Giriraja: *Yes.*

Prabhupada: *Nobody can say in court case that "This temple will be in charge of this person, this temple. . ."*

Ramesvara: *Yes, just like you said.*

Giriraja: *So we've included those points. . . In the original draft, the successor trustees are simply "never less than three or more than five." But in the second draft the devotees working on the document have added that the trustees, in this draft called "executive directors," are to be "initiated disciples" following the regulative principles.*

Srila Prabhupada signs the will two days later.

If after Srila Prabhupada disappeared he would cease to initiate, why did the devotees working on the document use the phrase "my initiated disciple"? Why not language that took into account that both Srila Prabhupada and his disciples would soon disappear?

"We weren't used to thinking like that," says Giriraja Swami. "In retrospect it's very naive."²

But however the language came to be there, the will is signed by Srila Prabhupada, and it clearly says that each successor director should be Srila Prabhupada's initiated disciple.

So the argument still stands: How could a director generations from now be Srila Prabhupada's disciple unless initiated by Srila Prabhupada's ritvik?

Here opponents of p.s. ritvik doctrines might argue that we cannot accept the dictionary meaning of "disciple" but instead must offer an interpretation. When the dictionary meaning is clear, no interpretation is needed. But when the meaning is equivocal, an interpretation may be warranted.

Srila Prabhupada gives this example: One may say, "There is a residential quarter on the Ganges." But then a question arises: "The Ganges is water, so how could there be houses on the water?" The answer offered is that "on the Ganges" doesn't mean literally on the water of the Ganges but rather "on the bank of the Ganges."

Srila Prabhupada gives this as an example of a legitimate interpretation, offered when there is a legitimate need.

One might argue, then, that since accepting the dictionary meaning of "disciple" would have the unexpected result of requiring the entire system of guru-parampara to be put aside, here an interpretation is legitimately called for.

In fact, however, no such interpretation is required. The dictionary does fine.

Going to the Oxford English Dictionary, we find that a disciple is "one who follows or attends upon another for the purpose of learning from him; a pupil or scholar." More explicitly: "A personal pupil or follower of any religious or (in more recent use) other teacher or master." This is the definition we're most used to, and it's the one the ritvik people have in mind.

But there's more. Here's the next definition, equally valid: "One who follows or is influenced by the doctrine or example of another; one who belongs to the 'school' of any leader of thought."

This is the sense in which anyone who wants to can, beyond a doubt, become Srila Prabhupada's disciple. Any sincere person can follow Srila Prabhupada's teachings and example. Anyone can join his school of thought, or, still further, his International Society for Krishna Consciousness. And ultimately one can become not only his disciple in spirit but his "initiated disciple" through the guru-parampara system.

In this sense, by the grace of Srila Prabhupada, one can become not only his disciple but at the same time the disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, the six Gosvamis, and all the other acaryas in Srila Prabhupada's line.

"This," as Srila Prabhupada writes (Bg. 18.75), "is the mystery of the disciplic succession." One is linked through the transparent medium of the bona fide spiritual master, but at the same time "the experience is still direct."

We might envision the day when those who believe they have become directly “initiated disciples” of Srila Prabhupada through a ritvik—or from a picture, or in a dream—might challenge in court that they alone have the right to serve as executive directors for ISKCON properties. Only the direct disciples are bona fide, they might claim, not those who profess to be merely disciples of his disciples in succession. We leave it for you to decide how well this would conform—legally and spiritually—to the intention of Srila Prabhupada’s will.

Questions that matter—or do they?

We’ve now pretty well exhausted, as far as I can tell, the arguments put forward in favor of post-samadhi ritvik-guru doctrines. Whatever we haven’t dealt with are merely variations on the same themes.

If we’re now nearly convinced that none of these doctrines is valid, we’re nearly ready to get on with the questions we should have been dealing with all along: What are the credentials of a bona fide spiritual master? Do any of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples fit the bill? Before I surrender, how can I be assured that the person I’m approaching is legitimate?

But for those who subscribe to the “hard” version of the ritvik doctrine, such questions no longer matter. For it’s Srila Prabhupada forever. The disciplic succession is finished.

For the advocates of the “hard/soft” version, too, the questions hardly ought to matter. For Srila Prabhupada will initiate eternally through his ritviks. And even if new gurus come along, they will merely be needless appendages. After all, who could be a greater guru than Srila Prabhupada? And why be initiated by anyone else? For the “hard/soft” people, too, “the eternal system of disciplic succession” is essentially over.

Those who stick to the “soft” version, in which the ritvik system runs until the appearance of pure devotees, have their special problems. Either they have to “wait for the messiah.” Or else they will have to persuade the world that the messiah is already with us.

For when the pure devotee arrives, the ritvik system will cease. And who is to decide when he arrives? Will he need the unanimous approval of all ISKCON devotees? Or will a 2/3 majority be enough? Will he need to be recognized by a vote of the Governing Body Commission? Or should a panel of experts be appointed to certify we’ve got the genuine merchandise? If we need a panel, who should be on it?

Till he comes, of course, the credentials of a bona fide spiritual master don't matter. For again the only guru is Srila Prabhupada, and by his order the system of disciplic succession has been indefinitely suspended.

And then there are those who might believe that the next pure devotee, the self-effulgent acarya, is already with us. Some devotees may hold this belief even now. The problem is, the effulgence is apparent only to them. The rest of the world doesn't see it. And after he has come and gone, if he leaves no pure devotees behind him, what happens then? Will his ritviks be the only bona fide gurus? Or will it then be his ritviks and Srila Prabhupada's?

All right, enough. The time has come to leave the ritvik doctrines behind us.

Sealing the Case:

What's Wrong with the P.S. ritvik Doctrines?

Before we finally do turn our backs to the post-samadhi ritvik-guru doctrines, let us look briefly at the additional reasons for rejecting them.

We could place those reasons into six categories:

1. Argument from a need for evidence.
2. Argument from a need to show precedent.
3. Argument from a need for good logic
4. Argument from the consistency of Prabhupada's teachings.
5. Argument from Srila Prabhupada's final instruction.
6. Argument from how Srila Prabhupada expressed his desires.
7. Argument from the need to reject new doctrines.

Now let us look at these briefly.

1. Argument from a need for evidence.

This argument is simple. As Srila Prabhupada taught us, the process of speaking in spiritual circles is to say something upheld by authorities.

Our authorities are guru, sadhu, and sastra. For us to accept that post-samadhi ritvik-guru theories are right, we should see statements in which guru, sadhu, and sastra directly endorse them. We don't. Therefore the theories should be rejected.

A first-class appeal to authority does not consist of authoritative statements linked with a line of logic: "Therefore he could have. . . Therefore he must have. . ." It consists of a clear, unequivocal statement that directly supports what you're trying to show.

What statements of this kind are available to support the p.s. ritvik-guru doctrines? None. Therefore the doctrines should be discarded.

Please note that the argument here is different from the "argument from a lack of counter-evidence" rejected before. We are not saying, "X is true. Prove that it isn't." It's not "You beat your wife. Prove that you don't." Rather, it's "If you believe that X is true, please show that it is." "Oh, do I beat my wife? All right, what's the evidence?"

Neither from guru nor sadhu nor sastra do the post-samadhi ritvik-guru doctrines have any evidence going for them. Therefore we should reject them.

2. Argument from a need to show precedent.

Again, a simple argument.

Srila Prabhupada usually did what was done by the predecessor acaryas. And never in the history of Gaudiya Vaisnavism, nor any other form of Vaisnavism, have we found any instance of a post-samadhi ritvik-guru system.

Yes, Srila Prabhupada could have put in place an unprecedented system. He could have done anything. But the lack of precedent gives a good reason to doubt that he did.

3. Argument from a need for good logic

The reasons given for accepting the p.s. ritvik-guru doctrines are poor. And why should we accept doctrines backed by poor reasons? We shouldn't.

4. Argument from a need for consistency with Srila Prabhupada's teachings.

The p.s. ritvik doctrines require us to accept that Srila Prabhupada, in his last few months, reversed what he'd taught for the previous ten years.

*One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master.
—Srimad Bhagavatam 2.9.43, purport*

Every student is expected to become acarya. Acarya means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his disciples. . . . Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of the spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession.

—letter to Tusta Krsna Swami, December 2, 1975
(emphasis supplied)

So we have got this message from Krsna, from Caitanya Mahaprabhu, from the six Gosvamis, later on Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Bhaktisiddhanta Thakura. And we are trying our bit also to distribute this knowledge. Now, tenth, eleventh, twelfth. . . . My Guru Maharaja is tenth from Caitanya Mahaprabhu, I am eleventh, you are the twelfth. So distribute this knowledge.

--Los Angeles arrival lecture, May 18, 1972

Commenting on the letter to Tusta Krsna Maharaja, a treatise advocating a p.s. ritvik doctrine says, "All the letter states is the normal process of disciplic succession: Guru departs and a qualified disciple continues initiating." (emphasis in original) The treatise then argues that because no one was qualified, Srila Prabhupada set up a p.s. ritvik system.

The faulty argument that since no one was qualified Srila Prabhupada "must have" set up a new system has been previously disposed of. What I want to focus on here is a simple point: That a spiritual master initiates until his departure and then his disciples initiate next is the normal system. On this we are all in agreement. This is what Srila Prabhupada taught the entire time he was with us.³

The p.s. ritvik doctrines require us to accept that Srila Prabhupada—in contradiction to more than ten years of his own consistent teaching—suddenly put aside the normal system and replaced it with a new innovation.

Asking us to accept this is simply asking too much.

5. Argument from Srila Prabhupada's final instruction.

On May 28, 1977, when a deputation of GBC members asked Srila Prabhupada how initiations would go on after Srila Prabhupada's physical departure, his last words on the subject were these:

*When I order you become guru, he becomes regular guru.
That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. Just see.*

“Disciple of my disciple.” The meaning is clear, and it's consistent with Srila Prabhupada always taught us.

For those who refuse to see it, no amount of argument will help. For the rest of us, there it is.

6. Argument from how Srila Prabhupada expressed his desires.

Here is the place to recall, one last time, that when Srila Prabhupada wanted to do something different and new, he spared no pains to make himself clear. As his disciples will remember, when His Divine Grace had an important point to make, he would drive it into our thick heads again and again and again.

If Srila Prabhupada had wanted to initiate even after his physical departure, he wouldn't have merely disclosed this privately to only one conspiratorially minded disciple. Or packed it all into one pregnant word. Or left it for us to infer from a phrase about property directors.

Had Srila Prabhupada wanted to revolutionize the entire parampara system, you can bet your bottom dollar he would have spoken about it for days and hours and weeks on end. But he didn't, because he simply expected us to follow the normal system he had taught us for the past ten years.

Asking us to believe anything to the contrary is, again, simply asking too much.

7. Argument from the need to reject new doctrines.

Srila Prabhupada entered samadhi in 1977. Post-samadhi ritvik-guru doctrines began appearing only in the mid-1980's.

After all the troubles we've been through since Srila Prabhupada's departure, after all the concoctions, after all the disasters, now we are supposed to put our faith in a truth that came to light only years after Srila Prabhupada physically left us.

The teaching about parampara we all understood and repeated and agreed about till 1977, and for years after—out the window it goes.

Now, with no precedent from sastra, no example from previous acaryas, no clear and public instruction from Srila Prabhupada himself, we are supposed to set aside the normal system Srila Prabhupada taught us the whole time he was physically here. And we're supposed to buy into something entirely opposite, a new doctrine that has sprung up, amidst a swirl of controversy, half a decade or more after His Divine Grace has physically left.

As Srila Prabhupada used to say, "And I have to believe it?"

Please—that's asking far too much.

We remind you of the rule of thumb put forth at the head of this essay:

If Srila Prabhupada didn't clearly and definitely say it,
and if it first came up after 1977,
whatever it is, don't trust it.

So where does that leave us?

It's now time to put the post-samadhi ritvik theories themselves into samadhi. And let us get on with genuine spiritual life.

What are the signs of a bona fide spiritual master? What qualifications must he have? How is such a guru to be found?

Such are the questions that should now concern us. Let us put wrong theories aside and move forward. [end]

Notes:

¹ Note for non-Americans: Ice cream is sold in dozens of elaborate flavors, but the most simple and commonplace is vanilla. So "plain vanilla" is an idiomatic term for anything that is simple, basic, unadorned, and standard.

² Personal interview, January 26, 1996.

³ I'm skipping here the opportunity to offer many more quotes. For a point that everyone agrees on, to multiply the quotes seems needless.

THE HUMBLE DISCIPLE

By His Holiness Danavir Goswami

Some devotees propose an ISKCON which is “more Prabhupada-centered,” while they simultaneously propose that Srila Prabhupada’s instructions about the position of the guru and the disciple be moved aside. Thousands of statements, like the one below, are conveniently dismissed:

Srila Visvanaha Cakravarti Thakura has greatly stressed the mercy of the guru, and it is an actual fact that if we satisfy the guru by our service, he will give us his blessings. This is a very great opportunity, for the guru is the confidential servant of Krsna. The guru never claims that he is Krsna, although he is worshiped as Krsna: saksad dharitvena samasta-sastrair uktas tatha bhavyata eva sadbhih (Gurv-astaka 7).

All the sastras describe the guru as being on an equal basis with Krsna, for he is the representative of Krsna. Therefore he is worshiped as Krsna. Being the most confidential servant of Krsna, the guru is very dear to Krsna; therefore if he recommends someone to Krsna, Krsna accepts the person. The guru is the confidential servant of Krsna because he canvasses from door to door, saying, “Please become Krsna conscious and surrender unto Krsna.” Krsna tells Arjuna that such a person is very dear to Him. The bona fide guru tells people to surrender not unto him but unto Krsna. Thus one has to surrender unto Krsna through the via media of the guru, not directly. This is the process. The guru does not accept respect from his disciple for his personal self but conveys this respect to Krsna.” (TLK vs 30)

Ritvik proponents, whether blatant or covert, suggest straw gurus who don’t “interfere” in the lives of their disciples. Instead of becoming humble disciples respecting Lord Krsna’s instructions, they accuse the guru of being proud for accepting respect from his disciples. Therefore kanistha adhikaris are confused about how to spread Krsna consciousness.

New Age Parallels

In the '70's, New Agers eagerly imported unfamiliar ideas from Eastern teachers and Vedic philosophical principles such as, yoga, karma, reincarnation, guru and mantras. But since at heart they were impersonalists, who have no respect for any authority except themselves, they gradually replaced all these with themselves and their own modern, concocted processes for enlightenment. We should note that the trend toward creating a guruless ISKCON is paralleling the "New Age" movements' activities exactly. In the beginning some devotees liked Srila Prabhupada's teachings but because of their strong inclination toward sense gratification and their Mayavadi tendency, they now reject them in favor of their own imaginative theories, such as ritvik, reiki, three regulative principles, etc, etc.

It is painful to hear devotees try to create polemics by the use of terms "Prabhupada-centered choices" and "non-Prabhupada-centered choices." They decide what are "Prabhupada-centered choices" without referring to Srila Prabhupada's instructions and then label those who disagree as proud proponents of non-humble gurus. By continuously coaxing granddisciples to choose between honoring their spiritual master or honoring Srila Prabhupada, hopeful problem-solvers fail to recognize that in spiritual life, both gurus are equally important. By serving their bonafide spiritual master, a granddisciple is also perfectly serving Srila Prabhupada, the entire disciplic succession and Lord Sri Krsna.

Recently one devotee argued in favor of ritvik or similar "guru reform" measures by saying that, "we have tried the guru system for twenty years, but it didn't work." This is like a child deciding to discontinue his doctor's medicine after a few days because "it doesn't feel like it is working." Srila Prabhupada and the disciplic succession have prescribed principles meant to guide society perpetually. They do not give us some quick medicine to last twenty years and then be rejected by modern-thinking disciples and granddisciples. To the extent which we follow Vedic teachings, they work and if we reject them then it will create havoc.

ISKCON First

Some accuse ISKCON of "institutionalizing exploitation" because diksa gurus may fall from the pure standard of devotional service. This is unreasonable. ISKCON cannot insure that a living entity, even one acting in the capacity of a guru, will not misuse his free will. Lord Krsna also does not overrule such free will. The most important duty of ISKCON is, indeed, to insure that the Vedic teachings, as received through His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, are preserved in tact. By minimizing the importance of the guru in the life of the disciple, one demeans Vedic culture. Thus, the supporters of ritvik philosophy, or things

similar, actually propose the greatest “institutional exploitation” by urging ISKCON to misrepresent Srila Prabhupada’s teachings.

Covered ritvik proponents extoll, “Why should the disciple have to offer prasadam to his guru’s picture?”; “Why should the disciple have to chant a pranama mantra for his guru?”; “Why should the disciple have to address his guru as gurudeva or guru maharaja?”; “Why must disciples put so much trust and faith in the spiritual master, afterall he is fallable like you and me.”

Gurusu nara-matir. .. naraki sah. Minimizing the injunction forbidding disciples to regard the guru as an ordinary human being, encourages devotees to relegate their so-called “non-Prabhupada-centered” guru to an unimportant position. After trying their best to diminish the importance of the guru for the disciple, subtle ritvik advocates magnanimously agree to “grandfather in” the ISKCON disciples and gurus who are happily executing devotional service as enjoined within the scriptures.

The Brighter Side

Besides those who are dissatisfied with ISKCON, however, there are many who are very happily serving Srila Prabhupada by following his instructions to honor the spiritual master and take his instructions seriously. Hundreds of book distributors, pujaris, temple presidents, brahmacarīs, grhasthas, ladies, sannyasis, and thousands of congregational members are, right this moment, blissfully swimming in the nectarean ocean of devotional service, undisturbed by volcanic eruptions spewing from a remote corner of the world. The sincere devotees should not despair—Kṛṣṇa and Srila Prabhupada will protect them from such mischievous doctrines.

Conclusions

The conclusion is that to become a pure devotee requires complete faith in both the guru and Kṛṣṇa. Sadly, some disciples are unable to accept this and instead of trying to advance further, they prefer to change the Vedic system of guru parampara. The actual solution is that all devotees in ISKCON acting as a guru or GBC or any other position should strictly follow GBC regulations. It is not required to keep manufacturing new systems. The result of democratic reform movements is constant change and politics. The policy which ISKCON uses at present is good but can be improved through more vigilant supervision. Rather than pull down the guru, better we rise up to the standard expected by our founder-acarya, to become humble disciples.

Eliminating the dikṣa guru would open the door to endless, whimsical, political and psychological schemes to “solve problems.” The real problem, although often ignored, is that devotees do not apply Srila

Prabhupada's instructions like rising early, attending mangala aratrika, guru puja, Srimad Bhagavatam class, following four regulative principles, chanting sixteen rounds daily, attending the evening temple program and reading Srila Prabhupada's books regularly. Those who are deficient in these areas are part of the problem of ISKCON, and instead of trying to reform the society as a whole, they should concentrate on reforming themselves.

In my opinion, it is time for members of ISKCON to decide, as Drutakarma Prabhu has suggested, which boat they prefer to sit in. Attempting to fashion ISKCON into a hodgepodge shop where everyone can live—so-called peacefully tolerating scores of nonsense philosophies, is not what Srila Prabhupada had in mind.

Comments on various "Ideas for ISKCON Leadership Reform"

In this paper we address several suggestions put forward recently by various groups of devotees through opinion polls. Unfortunately the beneficial effect of such exercises is greatly diminished due to large percentages of the participants having admittedly fallen from the initiation standards of strictly following the regulative principles. This may well account for some suggestions which gravely deviate from the parampara.

REFORM SUGGESTION #1:

Establish in ISKCON law that siksa is more important than diksa.

COMMENT:

Seeking advice for improving the leadership in ISKCON must be to gain transcendental realizations based on guru, sastra and sadhu. There is no use passing an ISKCON law which departs from Vedic principles. The misconception found in the above suggestion is the notion that diksa or initiation is devoid of instruction (siksa). This was defied by Lord Caitanya when He instructed Sanatana Goswami:

*guru-padasraya, diksa gurura sevana
sad-dharma-siksa, prccha, sadhu-marganugamana*

"On the path of regulative devotional service, one must observe the following items: (1) One must accept a bona fide spiritual master. (2) Accept initiation from him. (3) Serve him. (4) Receive instructions from the spiritual master and make inquiries in order to learn devotional service." (CC Madhya 22.115)

Attempting to lessen the value of diksa seriously assails the pure application of Vaisnavism. We may be disappointed with our Godbrothers as well as ourselves who have failed in executing the process properly, but we should never lose faith in the perfect system itself.

“Diksa actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination.” (CC Madhya 4.111 Purport)

The diksa guru and siksa gurus are to be respected equally according to Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Goswami:

“I first offer my respectful obeisances at the lotus feet of my initiating spiritual master and all my instructing spiritual masters.” (CC Adi 1.35)

“The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Krsna, although they have different dealings.” (CC Adi 1.34 Purport)

REFORM SUGGESTION #2:

Establish in ISKCON law that there is no “jumping over” if a devotee takes shelter of Srila Prabhupada.

COMMENT:

Guru is one in that the primary instructions given by each conforms to those given by the Lord. If someone, therefore, deviates, in words and/or actions from the previous acaryas, he is not a guru. Everyone should doubtlessly take shelter of Srila Prabhupada. However, if one thinks he can do this without properly accepting Vaisnava diksa or by disregarding one's bonafide initiating spiritual master, he is certainly “jumping over” and this is an offense. By encouraging today's devotees of ISKCON to minimize the importance of their bonafide diksa gurus, this suggestion promotes the most grievous offense to the chanting of the holy names called guru avajna or belittling the guru.

Once Srila Virabhadra Gosani, heard of a devotee, who regarded his own guru to be less important and consequently preferred to identify himself as the direct disciple of his famous grand spiritual master. Virabhadra Gosani, the incarnation of Ksirodakasayi Visnu, considered this action to be such a great offense (guru avajna), that he immediately wrote a order forbidding all of the Vaisnavas from talking with that unfortunate offender. Srila Prabhupada further explains this important principle of spiritual life.

“You cannot imagine what my spiritual master said. Or even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. This is called parampara system. You cannot jump over to the superior guru, neglecting the next

acarya, immediate next acarya.” (Lecture by Srila Prabhupada;: December 8, 1973)

Those trying to eliminate the “jumping over” principle more or less promote the philosophy of ritvik or the abolition of the initiation system. Similarly, Mayavadis preach Buddhist atheism in a covered way, pretending to be Vedic theists. Nevertheless, suggestions attempting to minimize the importance of initiation, belittle the importance of the diksa guru, and disregard acaryas’ warnings about offending one’s guru cannot be accepted among learned Vaishnava circles.

REFORM SUGGESTION #3:

Establish in ISKCON law that no one can replace Srila Prabhupada in this role. ISKCON diksa gurus perform the formality of initiation, but Srila Prabhupada is the main spiritual guide for all ISKCON members. Disciples are to be trained accordingly, not to see their diksa guru as more important than Srila Prabhupada.

COMMENT:

Every bonafide spiritual master in ISKCON will admit that Srila Prabhupada is the superior spiritual guide for all ISKCON members. Yet this does not support the present attempt to diminish the importance of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples who are acting as spiritual masters. Lord Caitanya may be superior to all else yet His subsequent representatives play an equally important role in delivering the perfect message to seekers. “A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.”

Let us try impartially try to understand the statements of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarty Thakura who wrote:

*saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastrair
uktas tatha bhavyata eva sadbhih
kintu prabhor yah priya eva tasya
vande guroh sri-caranaravindam*

“The spiritual master is honored as much as the Supreme Lord because he is the most confidential servitor of the Lord.”

Srila Prabhupada’s comment makes it clear when heard dispassionately.

“Therefore it is said, saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastraih. Guru is the mercy incarnation of God. Saksat, direct. Hari-vena, he is Hari, God. Samasta-sastraih. It is not that somewhere it is stated, somewhere it is not stated. No. In all Vedic

literature. Saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastrair uktah. Uktah means "it is said." And tatha bhavyata eva sadbhiih. Sadbhiih, those who are real devotees, they accept this. "Yes, guru is exactly representative of Krsna, mercy representative." But from the guru's side, a disciple may respect... May respect, must respect. It is not "may." Must respect guru as God." (Lecture October 1, 1972)

By suggesting that the sacred Vaisnava initiation process is merely a "formality," something like a notary's verification of a signature, the reformers ignore one of His Divine Grace's most emphatic instructions. One must accept initiation from a bonafide spiritual master and take his orders as one's life and soul. Without such faith and loyalty to one's initiating guru, the acceptance of initiation becomes a cheap fashion.

REFORM SUGGESTION #4:

(Reinitiation) Eliminate any official GBC requirement or even encouragement for reinitiation. Leave such a decision entirely up to the disciple, recognizing his siksa relationship with Srila Prabhupada and others he trusts remains intact, even in the absence of his diksa guru. When a disciple accepts initiation from an authorized guru, that connection with the parampara is valid, even if the guru later falls. The notion of reinitiation has done far, far more harm than good in ISKCON. Some devotees have had four gurus. Accepting a guru is like accepting a husband. It is a very personal decision, and after prequalifying both the guru and the disciple for initiation, the GBC should keep out of it. Allow reinitiation if the disciple chooses, but don't force or even encourage it. Do away with this dreadful policy once and for all.

COMMENT:

Within ISKCON, reinitiation is not forced although it is recommended even for sannyasis, because Srila Narahari Sarakara Thakura, Srila Jiva Goswami, and other distinguished acaryas recommended it. Such exalted acaryas would not advocate a "dreadful policy"

REFORM SUGGESTION #5:

That ISKCON officially recognize that women are not inferior to men.

COMMENT:

Spiritually there is no difference between the soul of a man and the soul of a woman. Materially however, there are differences—physiological and psychological. As long as one is engaged within a material body which resembles a vehicle, he must, to some extent, submit to its limitations. A driver of a go-cart cannot expect to fly to New York, nor can he typically expect to reach New York as speedily as a Mercedes. Female

human bodies, although not the most suitable vehicles for attaining self-realization, are adequate when properly engaged in the sankirtana movement. This fact was stated by Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad-gītā (9.32):

*mam hi partha vyapasritya
ye 'pi syuh papa-yonayah
striyo vaiśyas tatha sudras
te 'pi yanti param gatim*

O son of Prtha, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth—women, vaiśyas [merchants] and sudras [workers]—can attain the supreme destination.

It has been proven throughout the scriptures and even recently that devotee women can attain the highest perfection.

However Lord Kṛṣṇa draws a distinction between male and female bodies, Svayambhuva Manu has drawn a distinction, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswami has drawn a distinction, and Srīla Prabhupāda has drawn the same distinction again. Yet the suggestion here seems to be obsessed with the motive of overturning Vedic principles by the sheer volume of its clamor. Should this movement be conducted under the direction of Vedic authorities or by popular sentiments and trends?

REFORM SUGGESTION #6:

Topic: Leader tests: All current & prospective ISKCON leaders should submit to standard psychological evaluations. Candidates showing symptoms of mental illness or tendencies to abusive behavior should not be allowed to assume a leadership role. Maltreatment or malpractice by ISKCON leaders leads to loss of faith in subordinate devotees and a loss of credibility to ISKCON. Such tests are mandatory for many ordinary job applicants. Why not for ISKCON spiritual leaders?

COMMENT:

This suggestion indicates that when devotees associate too much with materialists they also begin to put their faith in imperfect tests. Mundane psychology was imperfectly conceived by limited conditioned souls and is being administered and evaluated by terribly defective methods. We should not base our spiritual leadership on such flawed experiments.

Devotee: Some psychologists are there. They are doing a laboratory test on all the devotees.

Prabhupada: Our devotees also agreed to sit down like that?

Devotee: So we shouldn't bother with such tests?

Prabhupada: No...

Devotee: You cannot understand the consciousness of a devotee by testing his body or his mind.

Prabhupada: *No, consciousness means... That is mental platform. Consciousness is also in different platform, bodily consciousness, mental consciousness, intellectual consciousness, then spiritual consciousness. Krsna consciousness is spiritual consciousness... They are not on the spiritual platform, so all their studies are useless. They are studying with a pre-concept idea. It is called, in logic it is called prittio principia(?). So it is useless.*

(Morning Walk: June 10, 1975)

REFORM SUGGESTION #7:

Topic: Vyasa Puja: As an expression of humility, all ISKCON diksa gurus should celebrate Vyasa Puja on a single day, such as Vyasa Purnima. It is improper that many disciples are trained to offer more veneration to their diksa gurus than to Srila Prabhupada. Elaborate Vyasa Pujas reinforce this improper notion and strain ISKCON resources.

COMMENT:

Why does following the standard Vedic system of celebrating Vyasa Puja on the birthday of the spiritual master promote anything improper? It is Srila Prabhupada's instruction:

"The spiritual master is the representative of Vyasadeva also. Therefore, according to the Vedic system, on the birthday of the spiritual master the disciples conduct the ceremony called Vyasa-puja." (Bg 18.75 Purport)

This suggestion above is very interesting. The Mayavadis celebrate the birthdays of the gurus on one day which they call Guru Purnima.

"This Guru Purnima is generally performed by the Mayavadi sects. The idea of Guru Purnima is to offer gratitude to the Spiritual Master by the disciple once in a year. That is called Guru Purnima. So far as we are concerned, Gaudiya Vaisnavas, we offer all our gratefulness to the Spiritual Master on His Appearance Day Ceremony, called Vyasa Puja." (Letter: August 2, 1969)

"In the Mayavadi Sampradaya they observe the Guru Purnima day to offer respect to the Spiritual Master. This system of offering respect to the Spiritual Master is current in all sections of Vedic followers, but so far we are the Gaudiya Sampradaya is concerned, we offer on the Appearance Day of the Spiritual Master our humble homage annually and this particular auspicious moment is called Vyasa Puja." (Letter: August 25, 1970)

It is not an expression of humility to deviate from the parampara and follow the Mayavada practice but rather it is an expression of overintelligence (thinking oneself more intelligent than the guru).

REFORM SUGGESTION #8 :

Topic: Slower initiations Candidate must have 1 year of 16 rounds before approaching guru; first initiation only after 18 months minimum.

COMMENT:

ISKCON follows the principle laid down by Srila Prabhupada which was to have devotee candidates and gurus observe each other for at least one year before initiation takes place.

“Therefore in the system it is enjoined that the spiritual master also observe the disciple at least for one year, and the disciple also studies the spiritual master at least for one year.”
(Lecture: January 12, 1969)

Devotee: *Is there any fixed amount of time that one has to be in the Society to get first, hari-nama, initiated? Because I...*

Prabhupada: *That we have already fixed, six months to one year. (Conversation with the GBC: March 27, 1975)*

“Therefore, chance is given that ‘Stay with us for six months or one year, be determined. Then be initiated.’” (Conversation: June 23, 1976)

“That we have already fixed.” These are important words by our founder-acarya. If the founder-acarya fixes something as serious as the waiting period for initiation, why should his disciples or granddisciples feel it their prerogative to change that? This is the main problem with all of the suggestions cited here...the tendency to disregard Srila Prabhupada's stated instructions in favor of something new and whimsical with no scriptural basis.

TKG's DIARY

(Excerpts)

By His Holiness Tamal Krishna Goswami

May 15

Last night, Çréla Prabhupāda was unable to sleep or to work. There had been severe windstorms announcing the coming of the monsoons, and it also rained. All of Rishikesh was without electricity. Therefore Çréla Prabhupāda was unable to read the Bhāgavatam or to translate. Because the fans did not work and the windows had to be closed to prevent their slamming in the wind, the room became too hot and Çréla Prabhupāda could not rest properly. Finally he called me at 5:30 in the morning feeling very weak. I massaged his whole body for over an hour. Later, he told me the massage had given him much relief. There had also been disturbance from washermen who were banging their laundry against the ghāta steps, and from some hotels across the river. This place, which formerly we had found so nice, was fast becoming like hell. It was dark without electricity, the wind was always howling, there was sand blowing everywhere, and it was not at all quiet.

During darçana, Prabhupāda gave the example that when a shirt had arms and pants had legs, there must be a body inside that also had arms and legs. Similarly with the body and soul. So how could one say "nirākāra"?

A retired judge had translated the account of the New York court case into Hindi. He was very much impressed that such a favorable decision had been reached in a foreign court.

Tonight, I approached Prabhupāda about the increased swelling in his hands, legs, and feet. Prabhupāda became very annoyed and asked, "Why you are bothering?" I said, "I thought it was my duty." Prabhupāda answered, "It is my body; I am not disturbed." Here, I could see his perfect understanding. But after some time, Prabhupāda said, "From material point of view, these symptoms are not good. If you think you can consider how everything may be turned over so that in my absence everything will go on, you can make a will and I can sign." I said I had always thought that Prabhupāda was in complete control of the time he would leave his body. Prabhupāda said that was up to Kāñëa. If Kāñëa liked, he

could remain for another ten or twenty years; and if Kāñēa liked, he could go at once. I said we were praying for him to stay, and Prabhupāda said that much we could do. He added, "But I am fairly confident that I am not leaving now." I asked why Kāñēa would take him if the *Ācārya-Bhāgavatam* was not complete and the temples in India were not properly situated. "Anyway," he said, "this is a very private matter; you just think over it [the will]."

May 16

Suddenly, at 1:30 in the morning, *Ācārya* Prabhupāda called me. From beneath his mosquito net he said, "As I was telling you, the symptoms are not good. I want to leave immediately for Vāndāvana. If I am going to die, then let it be in Vāndāvana. What time can we leave by?" I said by six o'clock. After some deliberation, we decided to determine whether train reservations were available that day before departing by car. We packed all night; then I went to sleep for a few minutes in Prabhupāda's sitting room. Prabhupāda came in at 4:30 and said he had been unable to sleep all night. Every time he lay down, he would have heart spasms. At six o'clock in the morning I left for the Hardwar train station, only to find out the train was all booked; and the day train leaving at one o'clock in the afternoon had no reserved seats. Under those circumstances, I was not willing to risk bringing His Divine Grace. Back in Rishikesh, I found Prabhupāda sitting with Mr. Sethie, manager of Ganga Darshan, waiting for me. I gave my report, and we resolved to leave by 10:00 in the morning. Prabhupāda took a brief massage and bath. We took only fruit and sabudana with us. When it was time to leave, *Ācārya* Prabhupāda looked very beautiful as he was carried by palanquin out to the boat for crossing the Ganges. When Prabhupāda commented how nice the Ganges looked, I handed him some water, which he placed upon his head. Many pilgrims waiting on the other side of the Ganges were fortunate to receive the unexpected darṇa of the Lord's pure devotee. Kāñēa is very protective of His pure devotee. Just see how He has arranged for Prabhupāda's departure ceremony with so many pilgrims offering their obeisances! We situated Prabhupāda in his car and set off for Delhi-Prabhupāda, Upendra, and I, with Dāmodara Paëōita driving. The ride was smooth; and within four and a half hours, we reached Delhi, to the surprise of the Delhi president, Bhāgavata-ācārya, and the other devotees. On the way, *Ācārya* Prabhupāda had us purchase kakadi, a small, thin type of cucumber which, he said, would keep us from becoming thirsty.

Prabhupāda asked me to cancel the Chandigarh and Solon programs. When I told him that he looked very happy to be going to Vāndāvana, he replied, "Yes, Vāndāvana is my home, and Bombay is my office."

Prabhupāda took a much-needed rest this afternoon. When he awoke, he found a plate of mahā-prasādam before him. He tasted a little and appreciated the opulent offering to the Deity. Most of what he ate, how-

ever, remained caught within his teeth. "Practically," Prabhupāda said, "eating is finished. I prayed to Kāñēa to be free from eating and sleeping, and now it is happening. I already have given up mating and defending. Now all these animal activities are finished with."

Prabhupāda commented, "We want a few selected men, not a big crowd."

May 17

This morning, we journeyed to Vāndāvana- Ćrēla Prabhupāda, Upendra, Gopēnātha, and I, with Dāmodara Paēōita driving. When we were near, Guēārēava, who was waiting on a motorcycle, hurried ahead to ready everyone. As we turned off the Delhi-Agra Road, Prabhupāda saw the new sign, "Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg." We were greeted at the Kāñēa-Balarāma Mandir by all the devotees, who were out in the road performing a huge kērtana. There were Yaçodānandana Mahārāja, Akñāyānanda Mahārāja, and many others. Prabhupāda was carried to the darçana mandap, where he offered his respects to the two Lords, Kāñēa and Balarāma. The Transcendental Brothers were smiling to see Their beloved devotee. Prabhupāda was then carried to his darçana room and all the devotees came in. The gurukula boys offered Sanskrit prayers of praise, Yaçodānandana Mahārāja performed the foot bathing ceremony, and āraṭi was offered. Ćrēla Prabhupāda spoke briefly about the deterioration of his health. He said he had come to Vāndāvana because if he were to die, he wanted to die here. Many devotees were crying because they could see how weak Prabhupāda was.

After taking his darçana, everyone except a few devotees left. One was Mr. Bose, the son of Bhakti Pradēpa Tērtha Mahārāja, who was the first sannyāsē in the Gauḍēya Math and was very close to our Prabhupāda. It was B. P. Tērtha Mahārāja who had given the title "kavi" to Ćrēla Prabhupāda. Now, his son had renounced family life and government service and was living in our āçrama. Prabhupāda had said at first, "You will not be able to adjust to this way of life." But Mr. Bose expressed his determination, and Prabhupāda said, "You have very good family, so it is hopeful."

Prabhupāda stated that Mr. Sethie, the manager of Swarga Ashram and Ganga Darshan in Rishikesh, had said our movement was solid but that Transcendental Meditation was bogus. I felt that Mr. Sethie was impressed that Prabhupāda's statements were all backed by çāstra; and he could see that the caliber of our men was different from that of the hippies and young Indian opportunists who were attracted to Mahesh Yogi. Further, the judge in New York, unless he had been completely sure of the bona fide nature of Kāñēa consciousness, would not have given such a decision on the first day of the hearing. Prabhupāda said, "We have

achieved this position because we have followed the order of my Guru Mahārāja.”

Prabhupāda ate only a little cheese for lunch. Afterwards, the conversation came surprisingly to ghosts. I asked Prabhupāda in which Mullik house the ghost had appeared. He replied it was that of Lokanath Mullik. “The house was known a ghost house. Lokanath died, and his wife’s stepson gradually ruined the estate. But the wife approached the High Court, saying that ‘I am coming from the respectable Mullik family; now I have nothing.’ The court took her seriously and ruled that the Marwaris, who had acquired the house, must allow her half the estate as long as she lived. Later, this stepson haunted the house as a ghost.” Then, Prabhupāda told us about a ghost house he had rented in Lucknow. “I am not afraid of ghosts; I am ghost proof. In England there are also many ghosts. Ghosts are generally evil, and sometimes they even kill. They can be seen sometimes, entering a latrine, sitting on a pillar. By offering piēḍa, one can free one’s forefathers from ghostly bodies. In Māyāpur there were Muhammadan ghosts, but not any more. By chanting Hare Kāñēa, ghosts go away.”

I told Prabhupāda that I would give him a report on the various activities. He said, “Yes, you become my eyes.” Later that evening, Prabhupāda asked why Surabhi Swami had not come to offer respects. Prabhupāda said that, because he had chastised 3/4 Swami in Bombay, he had become sorry and was now disrespectful. Prabhupāda then became very disturbed thinking about Bombay and said, “I have worked so far to get done whatever is accomplished. Now, if the Deities are not properly installed in my presence, it will be a great shock.”

Prabhupāda had us throw water on the outside floors upstairs for cooling. He also had his bed and desk set up outside. Because Upendra could not make this arrangement, Prabhupāda called me and said, “You must give me complete relief from management.” I mentioned that sometimes Prabhupāda would become upset if he were not informed; but he said better not to inform him. Then, he said in all seriousness, “Now take it that I am dead.” Since he speaks often about death, I feel I must now consider how everything should be managed by all of us, as if Prabhupāda were not present, because only if we think like that will he ever be relieved.

Prabhupāda slept little at night due to heart palpitations.

May 18

Prabhupāda was visited by Prem Yogi, who had read some of Prabhupāda’s articles and believed he could be helpful with the planetarium. He told Prabhupāda he was a yogé and could give his life and youth to Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda was very pleased with this sentiment, but he refused.

Prabhupāda wanted me occasionally to cook feasts at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple.

May 19

"No one was so affectionate to me as my father," Prabhupāda said. "Sometimes, if he had to chastise me he would apologize, saying it was his duty. 'Even Caitanya Mahāprabhu's father would chastise Him; do not mind.'"

This morning, Ṣrēla Prabhupāda went for a drive to get some fresh air and found it very invigorating. As he sat in the back seat, he breathed deeply the fresh morning air of Vāndāvana and closed his eyes relaxing.

The outer porch was being converted into a reception room. Prabhupāda became very disturbed that the already existing walls had to be partially removed. Regarding the contractor's cheating, he explained, "It is not only a sin to cheat, but it is sinful to allow yourself to be cheated. With so much effort and difficulty, both from my part and my disciples, this money has been collected and now it becomes spoiled. I cannot allow this."

This afternoon, we set up the air cooler in Prabhupāda's sitting room, which very much improved the situation. Prabhupāda said that most persons in Vāndāvana did not have the use of such an air cooler, but they were doing all right. Since we were used to a different standard, however, we should not change things too suddenly. We should not try to become renounced artificially. Renunciation would come with realization.

Ṣrēla Prabhupāda received a letter from Girirāja. He offered loving prayers to Ṣrēla Prabhupāda, especially the prayers from Ṣrēmad-Bhāgavatam 7.9.28. When Prabhupāda receives such letters from Girirāja, he appreciates them very much. He closes his eyes and drinks in every word. He has so much affection for Girirāja because of his faithful service. Girirāja never became fearful even when his life was threatened. He never left a difficult service, but remained always cool-headed, considering only Prabhupāda's desires and not his own. *Ye yathā māḥ prapadyante, tāḥ tathaiva bhajāmy aham.*

Prasādam was brought to Prabhupāda from the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. Prabhupāda looked at it. When I asked whether he would like some, Prabhupāda said, "I have tasted it."

Prabhupāda took a half bath in late afternoon.

This evening, Sri Sita Ram Singh, a member of Parliament from Bihar, came with relatives. Immediately, Prabhupāda attacked the narrow-mindedness of party politics. Then he attacked the politicians for their attitude of nonviolence which, they say, was preached in the Gētā. This was a philosophy Gandhi had started. Prabhupāda said that in the first verse of Bhagavad-gētā it was stated, "yuyutsavaū." Why speak of non-violence? Prabhupāda does not care an iota for anyone's position. He

simply preaches absolutely and condemns totally all illusions, irrespective of anyone's sentiments.

Earlier, he had heard the essay "The Long Arm of the Law Catches Lord Nityānanda's Mercy" by Sākñē Gopāla dāsa Brahmācārē. Sākñē Gopāla had defended us expertly in a courtroom in London, and the case had been dismissed. Prabhupāda appreciated that our men were able to speak better than lawyers.

May 20

This morning, I attended a lecture by Yaçodānandana Mahārāja. Afterwards I mentioned to Prabhupāda that, along with speaking on other topics, Yaçodānandana had criticized false gurus. Çrēla Prabhupāda was displeased and said we must be positive and speak about real gurus. "This criticizing tendency will not attract. We must ourselves be ideal." Then, he mentioned why Yaçodānandana and Guru dāsa and other sannyāsés were keeping their hair long (although it was only three or four weeks since they had shaved). It was the tendency to become hippies again.

In the afternoon, Seth Bisen Chand came to visit with Çrēla Prabhupāda, who had me read the account of our devotees in the London courtroom.

That night, Çrēla Prabhupāda asked Akñāyānanda Mahārāja, "Are you ready to initiate disciples? I want to retire now." Akñāyānanda replied that with Prabhupāda's order came the ability to carry it out; therefore, he was ready. Later in the night, Prabhupāda told Gopēnātha, "Now I am in Vāndāvana, so it does not matter if I die. We are living in opulence, but there are so many persons living here in complete poverty just so that they may die in Vāndāvana."

May 21

During our morning car ride, we passed a cold-storage plant under construction. I asked if it was possible they would store meat. The owner was from Bānke-Bihārē. "Why not?" Prabhupāda said. "There are so many families and their only source of income is Bānke-Bihārē."

The air cooler in the sitting room brought much needed relief in the heat of the day. Prabhupāda had his bed brought into the center of the room, where he took rest after lunch. Upon awakening, he called and said that the report of the Dacca preaching was very encouraging. A letter had just arrived from Jayapatākā Swami in Dacca. Prabhupāda was very much pleased that the people eagerly received us. Jayapatākā Swami praised Prabhupāda and stated that our coming had given these people new hope in life after so many years of Muhammadan persecution.

How merciful Çrēla Prabhupāda is that all over the world, people's spirits are being uplifted! Prabhupāda smiled with his eyes closed and said, "I have no other motive. I am simply planning how people can be happy." I said, "Prabhupāda, you are a great enemy of modern civiliza-

tion." "Oh yes," he conceded. "I am the greatest enemy of modern civilization. It is a regular war declared."

This afternoon Prabhupāda had me take inventory of his almira. It was bothersome for him to be present, but he insisted on being there to answer any questions. He is always doing his duty.

During correspondence I read a letter from Bhāgavata dāsa about Bhubaneswar. Money was scarce. Prabhupāda gave the same recommendation he had given in so many letters. Building was not as important as prasādam distribution and kṛtana. If there was money, we could build later.

The day was very hot and Prabhupāda felt the heat too much, even after moving up to the roof. While Viçvambhara massaged his legs, he had me massage his heart and the portion of the back behind the heart, using a little oil. As I left to take rest, I felt that Prabhupāda's desire to live was no longer as strong as it had been in Bombay. I felt that he had tried hard to recover since Māyāpur, but everything had failed. Since Bombay and Rishikesh he had grown increasingly weaker. I could see that it was a great strain for him to remain within his body, which was now malfunctioning so badly. It would be much easier to give up his body and join Lord Kāñēa. That has always been his causeless mercy that he has chosen to remain with us so long.

May 22

When I came to my shift at 4 a.m., Akñāyānanda Swami was sitting before Prabhupāda chanting japa. Prabhupāda was sitting up. I also sat down and started chanting. Prabhupāda asked that we chant louder. After some time I began to massage his chest of my own accord, since formerly he had said massage was always welcome. His body has become so thin, and now I felt a hard knot in his abdomen.

Later, after the car ride, I decided to speak with Prabhupāda. I said frankly that his condition was deteriorating. For some time we discussed his health, the value of doctors and medicines, and diet. Prabhupāda said medically the defect was in the kidney. The problem was he had no appetite and no digestion. He said Çrēdhara Mahārāja had a similar problem, which he solved by eating and then after some time inducing vomiting. In this way he got some value while the food was still in the stomach.

After I went out, Prabhupāda called me back a few minutes later and said, "There are two things, to try to survive and to prepare for death. It is better we plan for the worst. Arrange always to have three or four men have kṛtana and read Bhāgavatam all the time. And I will try to take little food. Parēkñit Mahārāja did not even take water." I mentioned to Prabhupāda the need for a will. He said yes, a few of us would sign as witnesses: "You simply know where all the accounts are."

I mentioned that Bhavānanda Mahārāja had asked to be called if Prabhupāda's condition worsened. Prabhupāda said yes and added, "Actually all devotees should come." Then he corrected himself, "All important devotees can come."

Prabhupāda said, "My Guru Mahārāja, when he was to undergo hernia operation, he wrote on a scrap of paper a small will. But Tērtha Mahārāja took it and it was never presented. But that is enough for a will, even a scrap of paper. He later did not undergo operation. He had a sentiment that the doctor was paid to kill him."

The program of constant kērtana and Bhāgavatam reading went on today from 6 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and again from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Prabhupāda was sitting with his eyes closed, absorbed in kērtana. He often said today, "Bhavañadhāc chotra-mano-'bhirāmāt, 'the medicine for the disease of material existence, which gives pleasure to the mind and ear.'" I began to feel that this was the only possible remedy. I promised Prabhupāda that no letters would be read and no visitors would come. How long has he wanted this-to be undisturbed?

But it took such a serious disease, for it finally to be possible. I could see he was much relieved not to be bothered by problems. Still his mind was thinking. "What about Rādhā-Dāmodara temple?" he asked. "Jayaçacēnandana has gone to Delhi, but will go to the rooms tomorrow." "Why has Guru dāsa given the key to Gaurachand? Those are the best rooms; they may try to utilize them. If he likes, he can live with his wife in the kitchen room, but not in my room."

This evening, at the end of kērtana, Prabhupāda said, "This disease is not ordinary. It is fatal, no one recovers from it. But by Kāñēa's special mercy it is possible. If Kāñēa wants, one can live, and if He neglects, it is not possible." Then he spoke about Brahma-saḥhitā, "ānanda-cinmaya-rasa." Our movement was full of these.

After some time he said, "I can speak some more, or if Kāñēa desires, then whatever I have given already, that is all." How unlimitedly Prabhupāda is willing to speak about Kāñēa. Prabhupāda seems relieved that he has decided not to struggle to survive anymore. I get the feeling that although it is a time for sorrow, I cannot but feel happy to see that Prabhupāda is very relieved simply to be able to think of Kāñēa.

Today after lunch he dictated the outline of his will: "The G.B.C. shall be the trustees of the whole Society. Each temple will be managed by three trustees. Each temple will be a trust property. The system of management will go on as it is now. There is no need of changing. The money which is in my name in different banks is being spent for the Society and it will be the Society's property. In this connection there are a few deposits, which are allowing some pension to the members of my former family, and may not be taken up within their lifetime (wife, Vrindaban De, M. M. De); but after their lifetime will revert to the Society. Also any properties in my name belong to the Society."

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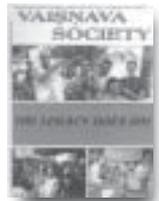
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