

a reply to Jayadvaita Swami's Paper

“Where the Ritviks are Wrong”



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“The GBC should all be instructor gurus.

I am the initiator Guru, and you should be the instructor guru by teaching what I am teaching and doing what I am doing.”

(SPL Madhuvisa Swami, 4.8.75)



by Krishnakant

A Reply to Jayadvaita Swami's Paper

“Where the Ritviks are Wrong”

Dear Jayadvaita Swami,

Please accept our humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Thank you for sending us your paper on how we *ritvik* people are wrong. It is certainly one of the best written and most biting attacks we have thus far sustained. We shall be addressing the issues you raise in far more detail in a forthcoming paper, to be submitted as a discussion document to the GBC. However we felt your thoughtful paper warranted a more immediate reply. Since we only received it a few days ago this has been a bit rushed, more something to be going along with, rather than definitive.

There is much we agree with in your paper as far as which arguments are most germane to the establishment of the case of p.s. *ritvik*. To save time we shall mainly address those arguments which we feel you might wish to look at more closely, arguments 1 & 6. We appreciate that arguments 2, 3, 4 and 5 could only be used supportively once it has been established that the p.s. *ritvik* system was authorised by Srila Prabhupada. In themselves they would not be conclusive evidence. Nor have we ever promoted them as such.

You correctly point to doctrinal variations within the *ritvik* camp. We shall not waste your time pointing out the numerous differing positions GBC members have presented over the years. Suffice to say good open dialogue can only help to clarify things in everyone's mind.

We are grateful for your use of the term 'post-samadhi' as opposed to 'posthumous', which always carried with it mundane connotations. We are happy to use the term. We shall use the term 'Multiple Acarya Successor System', or M.A.S.S., when referring to your favoured method of continuing the *parampara* - (in this context we use the word '*acarya*' in its strongest sense, i.e., initiating spiritual master, or *diksa* guru).

According to your analysis we are supporters of the 'hard *ritvik* doctrine' with a subtle modification (underlined):

Srila Prabhupada should be the only initiating *acarya* for ISKCON, for as long as the society is extant. All members of ISKCON should, in our humble view, aspire to act as instructing spiritual masters, or *siksa* gurus.

“The GBC should all be instructor gurus. I am the initiator Guru, and you should be the instructor guru by teaching what I am teaching and doing what I am doing.”

(SPL Madhuvisa Swami, 4.8.75)

Anyone wishing to initiate on their own behalf should do the honourable thing and form their own institution. The type of 'spiritual master' Srila Prabhupada constantly encouraged all his disciples to become, was *siksa*, not *diksa*. This is clear from the purports to the '*amara ajnaya guru handa*' section of the CC:

“It is best not to accept any disciples”.

(CC.Madhya Lila 7:130)

So to your presentation.

To kick off there are two basic assumptions in your paper which we feel are seriously flawed. The first of these is that p.s. *ritvik*, by definition, means the end of the disciplic succession, or guru *parampara*. This is a false assumption.

The *parampara* is eternal. According to Srila Prabhupada the *sankirtan* movement, and hence ISKCON, will only last for 9,500 more years. Compared with eternity 9,500 years is nothing, a mere blip. That is the time period in which Srila Prabhupada shall remain the current link within ISKCON. After that time period p.s. *ritvik* will be rather difficult to follow since its practitioners will be hunted and eaten, (some of us fear similar treatment even now). Previous acaryas have remained 'current' within the *parampara* for hundreds or even thousands of years. For example Srila Vyasadeva. We see no evidence that in times previous to Madhavacarya, learned sages were all up-in-arms about Srila Vyasadeva ending the *parampara*. Why then should you be so concerned about the duration of Srila Prabhupada's reign as current link?

The second point we need to urgently address is your 'regular vanilla' concept. If there is one feature which most distinguishes *diksa* transmission in our guru *parampara*, it is that it is almost entirely devoid of regularity. Despite this you use the concept to frame the entire *ritvik* issue. We feel the 'regular vanilla' frame is drastically incomplete, and hence potentially misleading.

Although you only offer a rough outline of what 'regular vanilla' *diksa* activity entails, we have gleaned the following basic scenario:

According to you the regular form of *diksa* involves a guru teaching his disciple everything he needs to know about Krishna Consciousness. The disciple cannot just enquire philosophically from the guru, he must personally approach and serve him as well - (we are not sure if you mean this service and approach must be to his physical body, one to one. If so that was certainly not Srila Prabhupada's modus operandi - many of his disciples never met him physically at all). After the guru leaves the planet, the disciple is connected to him largely through his indebtedness and is immediately free to act as a *diksa* guru, initiating his own disciples.

Any other scenario would presumably be of a particular flavour, and hence not 'regular vanilla'. This is a picture you feel everyone will be totally happy with. Perhaps we are in deeper trouble than you thought.

Let's look more closely at 'regular vanilla'.

The very first example you give involves interplanetary *diksa*, (*Bhagavad Gita* 4.1). Srila Prabhupada comments on the verse as follows:

"So there was no difficulty in communicating with Manu or Manu's son Ikshvaku. The communication was there, or the radio system was so nice that communication could be transferred from one planet to another."

(BG lecture 1968).

Strangely this mode of *diksa* does not appear to be wholly consistent with what you would have us accept as 'regular vanilla'. Unless you are saying that it is also 'regular' for a disciple to accept a spiritual master who is not physically present on the same planet. We must confess the idea is not entirely without merit. When you think about it, this form of *diksa* sits quite comfortably with the p.s. *ritvik* system. After all, we know Srila Prabhupada is still in the universe offering personal guidance to his disciples, at least those who still believe such interaction is possible:

"You have asked if it is true that the spiritual master remains in the universe until all his disciples are transferred to the spiritual sky. The answer is yes, this is the rule"

(SPL Jayapataka 11.7.69).

We also know that as a *Mahabhagavat* Srila Prabhupada is at least as powerful as demigods such as Ikshvaku. So transferring or transmitting *diksa* to receptive disciples should present him no difficulty at all, from whichever planet he may presently reside. This exchange seems to be slightly more mystical than mere feelings of 'indebtedness':

"Just like Krishna can be present simultaneously in millions of places. Similarly, the Spiritual Master can be present wherever the disciple wants. A Spiritual Master is the principle, not the body. Just like a television can be seen in thousands of places by the principle of relay monitoring."

(SPL 16.5.68)

Aside from the facility of internal realisation afforded by off-world *diksa* transmission, we also have the added, and in our case quite essential advantage, of the extensive spiritual infrastructure and support system which Srila Prabhupada put in place whilst he was physically present. This physical support system includes his books, (from which he is non-different), his tapes, videos, murti, temples, society, GBC etc etc.

If you really do believe 4.1 is an example of 'regular' *diksa* then maybe we are not so far apart after all. One of the main objections we have come across to taking a mukhya vritti, or literal interpretation of the July 9th order, is that off-world *diksa* transmission violates sastra. And yet by using 4.1 as your only sastric example of the *parampara* you imply it is quite the thing to do.

We shall now look at examples of the enormous diversity of *diksa* activity in our *parampara*.

We have observed that violations of 'regular vanilla' fall into five basic categories, although we do not deny there could be many others:

1) Gaps.

These are all the occasions when an *acarya* in the *parampara* leaves, and there is no next link to immediately start initiating. Or the person who is to become the next link does not immediately receive authorisation from his spiritual master to initiate on, or straight after, his departure. For example there was a gap of some twenty years between the departure of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and the next bona fide initiation in our *sampradaya*. Gaps of more than one hundred years are not uncommon between members of the disciplic succession.

2) Reverse gaps.

These are all the occasions where an *acarya* has not yet left his body before his disciples start initiating. Lord Brahma, for example, has not yet left his body, and yet generations of successor gurus have initiated millions upon millions of disciples. According to the GBC's recent book '*Gurus and initiation in ISKCON*' (page 23), this is a common phenomena in our *sampradaya*.

3) Siksa/diksa links.

These are instances of a disciple accepting an *acarya* as his principle spiritual master long after he has left the planet. Whether the departed *acarya* is a *siksa* or a *diksa* guru to the disciple is often unclear. Srila Prabhupada does not generally specify. Although these disciples invariably go through some sort of ceremony with someone who is physically present, that does not preclude the departed *acarya* from being his *diksa* guru, just as a *ritvik* ceremony does not mean the temple president or name-giving *ritvik* is the *diksa* guru.

4) Mode of initiation.

These are anomalous forms of initiation where unique, or inconceivable forms of *diksa* transmission take place. For example Lord Krishna to Lord Brahma. Or Lord Chaitanya whispering into a Buddhist's ear.

5) Successor systems.

This refers to differing successor *acarya* systems within our *sampradaya*. For example Srila Bhaktisiddhanta adopted a 'self-effulgent' successor system. As far as we know Srila Prabhupada opted for an officiating *acarya* system with his books as the successor.

"My life is almost ended. So you have to carry on, and these books will do everything."

(Conv 18.2.76)

With such abundant variety as this it is a challenge to identify what 'regular vanilla' actually means. And yet such *diksa* activity undeniably exists in our *parampara* system. Let's look at some more deviations from 'regular vanilla':

It appears Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura formally initiated nobody, and set up an extensive network of nama hattas with no *diksa* gurus anywhere in sight. Is this 'regular vanilla'? Lord Chaitanya gave formal initiation to nobody; Haridas Thakura seems neither to have received nor given formal *diksa*. Were these classic examples of 'regular vanilla'? Srila Gaurakisora dasa Babaji, whilst amply qualified, had no desire to initiate anyone and practically had to be forced into it by the sheer persistence of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. Is this 'regular vanilla' behaviour? Srila Bhaktisiddhanta left the planet with instructions only for a GBC, and no authorisation for his disciples to initiate at all. In this regard Srila Prabhupada made frequent reference to his godbrothers' lack of authorisation and qualification to act as *acaryas* (initiating gurus):

"Amongst my godbrothers no one is qualified to become *acarya*".

(SPL Rupanuga 28.4.74)

"On the whole you may know that he (Bon Maharaja) is not a liberated person, and therefore he cannot initiate any person to Krishna Consciousness. It requires special benediction from higher authorities."

(SPL to Janardana. 26.4.68)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta had left the planet, so according to your 'regular vanilla' *parampara* concept one would have thought there would be nothing preventing the kind of guru free-for-all we see in ISKCON, and yet it seems Srila Prabhupada did not approve:

"If everyone just initiates then there will be contradictory result. As long as it goes on, there will be only failure"

(Srila Prabhupada Phalgun Krishnan Pancami, verse 23).

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta left it that a self-effulgent *acarya* would emerge. Thirty years later he did. Was this 'regular vanilla'? We could give pages of examples of irregular vanilla, and quite a few examples of tutti fruiti, (especially during the post-*samadhi*

period), but perhaps you see our point.

If by 'regular vanilla' you are referring to the general principle of accepting a current link guru who is an authorised member of the disciplic succession, then we are in total harmony. The p.s.*ritvik* system allows unlimited numbers of people to approach, enquire and serve Srila Prabhupada, who is just such a spiritual master. The mechanics of how such acceptance takes place may vary according to time place and circumstance, but the principle remains the same. This principle is certainly not compromised in any way by p.s.*ritvik*.

According to the cover of the *Bhagavad Gita* (1983 edition), which you yourself revised, Srila Prabhupada is the current representative of the disciplic succession. Despite being clearly stated on your own revised book, when we last met, you adamantly insisted in the strongest possible terms, that Srila Prabhupada was in fact not the current representative of the disciplic succession.

To justify your dramatic shift in position since '83 you invoked the injunction that 'in order to be a current link the guru must be physically present'. If you recall we looked up the term 'current link' on folio and discovered it was only mentioned once in the Srimad Bhagavatam. On reading the relevant section we found no trace of your injunction. You then said that the very definition of the word 'current' meant 'physically present'. When we brought you a dictionary you seemed unable to substantiate even this claim. We shall now tie up any loose ends on the 'current link' issue before returning to your paper.

We reject your injunction that- 'a current link must be physically present' - for the following reasons:

The term 'current link' is only used once in all of Srila Prabhupada's teachings, and there is no reference to physical presence adjacent to the term. Were physical presence essential it would certainly have been mentioned.

The dictionary definitions of the actual word 'current' do not refer to physical presence.

Dictionary definitions of the word 'current' can be readily applied to a physically absent Spiritual Master and his books:

'most recent', 'commonly known, practised or accepted', 'widespread', 'circulating and valid at present'

(Collins English Dictionary).

As far as we can see all the above definitions can be applied to Srila Prabhupada and his books.

The very purpose of approaching a 'current link' can be fully satisfied by reading Srila Prabhupada's books:

"... 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'.

(S.B. 2.9.7)

Srila Prabhupada also uses the term 'immediate *acarya*' as synonymous with 'current link'. The word 'immediate' means:

'Without intervening medium', 'closest or most direct in effect or relationship'.

(Collins English Dictionary).

This would validate a direct relationship with Srila Prabhupada without the need for intermediaries, again all regardless of physical presence/absence.

Since there are examples of disciples initiating when their guru was still on the planet, there would appear to be no direct relationship between current link status and physical presence. In other words if it is possible to be the next current link even whilst your own guru is physically present, why should it not be possible for a departed *acarya* to also remain the current link. The emergence of a current link does not appear to be based on physical or non-physical considerations. If they are you have failed to show how.

As the current link, it is Srila Prabhupada we must approach for initiation.

Whether Srila Prabhupada is physically present or not is utterly irrelevant to the transcendental process of *diksa*, as he made amply clear in his books, in his lectures, in his conversations and letters - time and time and time again:

"Physical presence is immaterial".

(S.P Lecture 19.1.67)

"... one has to associate with liberated persons not directly, physically, but by understanding, through philosophy and logic..."

(S.B. 3.31.48)

"So we should associate by vibration, and not by the physical presence. That is real association."

(S.P Letter 19.1.67)

“So spiritually appearance and disappearance, there is no difference ... spiritually there is no such difference, appearance or disappearance”.

(S.P Lecture 13.12.73)

“We should associate by the vibration and not the physical presence. That is real association”.

(S.P.Lecture Montreal '68)

“... presence by my message is the real touch”.

(SPL '67)

This is what Srila Prabhupada consistently taught up until 1977. If anyone tries to tell us that physical presence has any bearing on accepting a spiritual master we shall take your advice. We shall not trust them.

Anyone who chants sixteen rounds a day, reads Srila Prabhupada's books, and follows strictly the four regulative principles, is eligible to be recommended for *ritvik* initiation. Srila Prabhupada will accept unlimited numbers of such sincere souls as his initiated disciples. We just need to facilitate the whole thing.

Srila Prabhupada: Who is my disciple? First of all let him follow strictly the disciplined rules.

Disciple: As long as they are following, then he is...

Srila Prabhupada: Then he is alright.

(S.P. 13.6.76)

1. Argument from restatement of what's accepted

Let us now go to the centre of the controversy. The final instruction.

Although you optimistically refer to the May 28th conversation as the 'final instruction'; on consulting our fully authorised BBT calendar we find that July actually follows on from May by two months.

You say everyone accepts the July 9th order and the establishment of the *ritvik* system. In our experience most devotees have never read the July 9th letter before we give it to them, and are quite surprised when they do. (We have even questioned prominent GBC men who claim never to have seen it). Having read it, and understood that it was the only signed directive to the society from Srila Prabhupada on the future of initiation, many devotees become sympathetic to *p.s.ritvik*. Of course you might say that they were simply gullible fools. But maybe we should not judge too hastily.

The May 28th conversation

Going back to the May conversation, Srila Prabhupada is first asked about initiations in the future, particularly when he was no longer present. He says he shall be appointing some disciples to act as officiating *acaryas* or *ritviks*. He then answers some muddled questions about guru disciple relationships within the system, mostly in the third person as was his custom. Srila Prabhupada then finishes by saying that there would be gurus if he orders them, and should he ever do so they would then be disciples of his disciples. Just see.

His use of phrases such as 'on my order', 'but by my order' and 'when I order' prove incontrovertibly that this could not be the order proper. If this was the actual order to become guru we would have expected Srila Prabhupada to say something like 'I am now ordering all my disciples to become *diksa* gurus on my departure'. That would be strong evidence for your M.A.S.S doctrine. Unfortunately nothing even approaching such a statement appears in this conversation, or any other for that matter. Surely you must see this!

Some people argue that the order to become guru was already given in the 16th century by Lord Chaitanya Himself. As we have discussed however, this refers principally to *siksa* not *diksa*. Why would Srila Prabhupada say 'but by my order', if the order was already given? This would not make sense. Why would he also condemn his godbrothers for posing as *acaryas*, and teach that one must first receive specific authorisation from the predecessor *acarya* before initiating, if anyone could do it? Enough said.

The Final Order

Moving on to the actual 'final order', the one issued to more than one hundred GBC's and temple presidents, given on July 9th, we find that Srila Prabhupada did exactly what he said he was going to do.

He selected *ritviks* to act 'henceforward', initiating on his behalf. There is not even a whisper about *diksa* gurus in the final order. The letter does not say- 'this system should end on my departure' or 'this is a temporary measure due to sickness' or 'once I

depart please get hold of a copy of the letter sent to Tusta Krishna for further instructions'. We can only assume therefore that it was meant to carry on. As we have shown, Srila Prabhupada consistently taught that his physical presence was immaterial. Thus his physical departure can have absolutely no relevance to the July 9th order. In fact the very way in which the *ritvik* system operated required absolutely no physical involvement from Srila Prabhupada, so why should his departure affect it in any way?

From where do you derive the notion that Srila Prabhupada wanted the system to stop at his departure?

In essence what we are being asked to accept, by yourself and the GBC, is that Srila Prabhupada went to all the trouble of sending over one hundred letters to the entire movement on a subject the GBC body had not asked him about, and which was only to have relevance for four months, namely initiations during his physical presence.

And at the same time the most important issue, the one which Satsvarupa Goswami and all the GBC had specifically asked him about, i.e the process of initiation for after his departure and on for ten thousand years, he remained utterly silent on. No written instructions to his temple presidents, no orders to the GBC, no signed letter. The absurdity of this proposition beggars belief.

Of course the next defence is that he did not need to write a letter about how to continue initiation once he had left, he had already explained in explicit detail what was to be done time and time again.

But this assertion itself raises further absurdities.

If Srila Prabhupada's teachings on how to run the *parampara* in his absence were as crystalline clear as you imply they were, for an entire decade. So clear he did not even need to issue a specific directive to the movement on the matter, why on earth did the GBC send a special delegation to his bedside in the first place? A delegation whose sole purpose it was to find out what was to be done about initiations once Srila Prabhupada left! According to you they were asking some blindingly goofy questions. Srila Prabhupada was in ill health, about to leave the planet, and here we have his most senior men. All trooping off to his room to pester him with inquiries which, as you make it appear, were as comparatively basic as 'what's that yellow stuff on your forehead?' and 'why do you wear those orange robes?' You seem to insinuate that the way to carry on a *parampara* was so painfully obvious, any Tom, Dick or Hare could have answered it. So why did the topmost leaders of the entire movement have to bother Srila Prabhupada with it?

If it was all so clear to you and everyone else precisely how Srila Prabhupada wanted things to run after he left, why is it that you had to completely dismantle the zonal *acarya* system ten years on?

The only examples you can offer of Srila Prabhupada ever mentioning his disciples initiating are extracted from letters to ambitious deviant devotees like Tusta Krishna. Humble devotees, who simply went diligently about their service, never received letters describing their glowing future as initiator gurus. For the unhealthily ambitious (Hamsadutta included), Srila Prabhupada would sometimes dangle the guru carrot, perhaps in order to keep them in devotional service a little longer.

The obvious point is:

You cannot modify the July 9th order on the basis of documents, which the recipients of the order had no access to.

That would be a form of cheating. The letters you quote from were not published for many years after Srila Prabhupada departed, and can therefore have no direct bearing on the issue. They could act as supporting evidence if you had a clear-signed directive to the whole society from Srila Prabhupada indicating the M.A.S.S. Sadly it does not appear you have such a letter.

If we're honest, your thesis does not hold up too well, does it.

Maybe it is time to look at things in a different way.

Srila Prabhupada is unique. There has never been a world *acarya* before. No previous *acarya* has ever stated that his books would be the law books for ten thousand years. There has never been anything like ISKCON before. Srila Prabhupada set his own precedent.

THERE IS NO 'REGULAR VANILLA'

Thus we are left with a unique *acarya* ordering his disciples to operate a *ritvik* system 'henceforward'. Why did they stop?

2. Linguistic arguments

You do not believe the *ritvik* system should have continued past Srila Prabhupada's disappearance because it does not say in the letter the words - 'this system will continue after my departure'. We have a few points for you to consider:

The July 9th letter also does not state that the *ritvik* system- 'should end on Srila Prabhupada's departure', yet you adamantly insist that it should, why?

The letter also does not state that the *ritvik* system- 'should run while Srila Prabhupada is still present', and yet you insist that it

was correct to run it while he was present, why?

The letter also does not state that the *ritvik* system should run- 'until Srila Prabhupada's departure' and yet you insist that it should only have run until his departure, why?

The letter also does not state that the *ritvik* system should ever stop, and yet you vehemently insist that it should stop, why?

In summary, you insist on the following:

a) The *ritvik* system must stop.

&

b) It must stop on Srila Prabhupada's departure.

Neither statement a) nor b) appears in the July 9th letter. They are purely your own invention. An invention inspired by the 'regular vanilla *parampara* system', which, as we have clearly shown is itself another fiction created from your own imagination, with no basis in reality.

Your argument is that since the letter is not specific about the time period in which it is to operate, it must therefore stop at departure. This is completely illogical, might we say a classic argumentative blunder. The letter also does not say the *ritvik* system should be followed after August or September either, and yet you do not object to those periods of operation at all.

The letter does not specify that the system should be followed on July 9th either, so according to your logic it should not have been followed at all.

Even accepting that 'henceforward' can at least stretch to the end of the first day of the order being issued, it does not say it should be followed on the 10th of July, so perhaps it should have stopped then.

You contradict your own demand for the system to only operate within a pre-specified time period by accepting its operation for 128 separate 24 hour time periods, e.g four months. None of these 128 separate time periods is specified in the letter, yet you happily go along with the *ritvik* system during this time frame.

Unless we take the word 'henceforward' literally to mean 'indefinitely' we could stop the system at any time after July 9th, why choose departure?

There is no example either in Srila Prabhupada's 86 recorded uses of the word 'henceforward', nor in the entire history of the English language where the word 'henceforward' has ever meant:

'Every time period until the departure of the person who issued an order'

Yet you insist that this is what the word must have meant when it was used in the July 9th letter. Your insistence that this is so seems only to be based on a false conception of how a *parampara* operates. This misconception, together with your conspicuous bias towards the M.A.S.S, (which itself has no clear instructional basis), is thus causing you to twist and distort a straightforward request from your spiritual master. Not a healthy situation.

Even your Juhu beach example is not relevant since the activity of walking on the beach is interrupted, not necessarily by death, but by any external circumstance which might render the walking impossible. For example flying off to another country. If something is impossible, then obviously there is no question of doing it. The only thing your example validates is that one must continue carrying out an instruction until it becomes impossible to perform any longer.

As we have said, the departure of Srila Prabhupada was not the type of external circumstance which would render the *ritvik* system inoperable, or impossible, since the system was set up specifically to operate without any physical involvement from him whatsoever.

We will concede that in 9,500 years time, after the last *ritvik* priest has been barbecued, perhaps external circumstances will have rendered the instruction inoperable. Until that fateful day we really do feel the system should be left to run 'henceforward'.

Literal problem with the word 'henceforward'

You claim that only the original 11 appointed *ritviks* are authorised to initiate on Srila Prabhupada's behalf, and hence we cannot take the word 'henceforward' in the letter literally, because some day they will all have to die. As one has already, or deviate, as several have and continue to do. Therefore you argue it is absurd to take a literal, or *mukya vritti* interpretation of the letter.

We invite you to consider the following points:

In the Topanga Canyon transcript Tamal Krishna Goswami relates the following question he asked whilst preparing to type the list of selected *ritviks*:

Tamal Krishna: "Srila Prabhupada, is this all or do you want to add more?"

Srila Prabhupada: "As necessary, others may be added".

Pyramid House confessions 3.12.80

Certainly if some or all of the *ritviks* died or seriously deviated that could be deemed a 'necessary' circumstance for more *ritviks* to be 'added'. We feel sure you would hesitate to doubt the testimony of Tamal Krishna Goswami.

The July 9th letter defines *ritvik* as: 'representative of the *acarya*'. It is perfectly within the remit of the GBC to select or decommission anyone who represents Srila Prabhupada, be they *sannyasis*, temple president or indeed GBC members themselves. At present they see themselves as capable of approving *diksa* gurus, who are supposedly direct representatives of the Supreme Lord Himself. It should therefore be well within their capacity to select a few name-giving priests to act on Srila Prabhupada's behalf.

The July 9th letter shows Srila Prabhupada's intention was to run a *ritvik* system 'henceforward'. Srila Prabhupada made the GBC the ultimate managing authority in order that they could maintain and regulate all the systems he put in place. The *ritvik* system was his system for managing initiations. It is the job of the GBC to maintain the system, adding or subtracting people as they do in all other systems over which they were authorised to preside.

Letters issued by Srila Prabhupada on July 9th, 11th and 21st all indicate that the list could be added to with the use of such phrases as 'thus far', 'so far', 'initial list' etc. So a mechanism for adding more *ritviks* must have been put in place, even though it has yet to be exercised. Were the GBC to choose more *ritviks* a new list could be sent to the entire movement, we would not object.

Even if you reject all the above, including your preceptor Tamal Krishna's admission, as pure speculation, you must still accept that Srila Prabhupada had intended for the system to run for at least the next thirty or forty years. At the very least you must operate the system until all the original *ritviks* are deviated or dead. Certainly you present no grounds for abandoning the order on November 14th 1977.

Taken together with the will (which we shall be coming to) it is quite clear Srila Prabhupada's intention was for the system to run indefinitely, with the GBC simply managing the whole thing.

You would not argue with the fact that Srila Prabhupada wanted the GBC to manage the society 'henceforward', and yet we do not see you bickering with them every time they select a new member. Nor do we see you warning them that if any of them ever die they must never be replaced. Were anyone to carry on like that at the Mayapura meetings it is likely they would find themselves being quickly escorted from the property by men in white *dhotis*.

If you could find within yourself the generosity to apply your 'residential quarter on the Ganges' principle to this letter, we are convinced you would very quickly see what Srila Prabhupada's intention was.

Your argument that the remaining *ritvik* appointees think p.s.*ritvik* is 'bunk' is completely irrelevant. Obviously it does not logically follow that just because a disciple refuses to obey the gurus order, the order itself is invalid. All such refusal highlights is the quality of the disciple.

We also feel you have been a little hard on our 'soft' counterparts. It is always theoretically possible that Krishna could intervene in some way to allow Srila Prabhupada to countermand the July 9th order, as is hinted in the following:

Newsday Reporter: You are now the leader, the Spiritual Master. Who will take your place?

Srila Prabhupada: That Krishna will dictate, who will take my place.

(Conv 7.14.76)

And on another occasion:

Srila Prabhupada: Only Lord Chaitanya can take my place. He will take care of my movement.

(Conv. 2.11.77)

Whether a miraculous intervention will ever occur to modify the final July 9th order is obviously highly speculative. As 'hard' *ritviks* we are doubtful. In any event the safest thing is if we all just try to follow the orders Srila Prabhupada did give, rather than worry about ones that may or may not come in the future, or worse still invent our own. The *parampara* is maintained by Lord Krishna Himself, so we need no more worry about its upkeep than we would about the orbits of the planets. Both are equally beyond our control.

3. 'Argument from a lack of counter evidence'

The only time we invoke this argument is when someone tells us that *ritvik* goes against all vaisnava teachings. When we ask them which specific teachings it violates, they then tell us we are making a 'classic argumentative blunder'. Such is the word-

juggling sophistry with which we have to contend.

As you say, just because it is not condemned in sastra does not mean Srila Prabhupada wanted it. But as you appear to begrudgingly concede, p.s.*ritvik* does not violate any sastric principles. This is comfort at least for the growing numbers of devotees who wish to take the July 9th order 'literally'.

To accept Aristotle's mother's ghost would certainly violate sastra since she is not an authorised member of the disciplic succession, much less a current link. Though we hear she may have been vegetarian.

The will

This has to be the most extraordinary attempt to re-interpret a clear directive we have ever encountered.

Let us first quote from your 'Argument from logical necessity' where you point out that just because Srila Prabhupada thought his disciples were not qualified, it did not follow that he must have set up a p.s.*ritvik* 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 Krishna Himself, or the *Bhagavatam* itself, or the holy name itself would be the spiritual master. Or he could have simply left everything up to Krishna. The point is that it's not enough to talk about what Srila Prabhupada could have done. We have to see what Srila Prabhupada actually did'.

We totally agree with the above. We have to see what Srila Prabhupada actually did, since he could have done one of practically unlimited things bearing in mind that there is no such thing as 'regular vanilla'. The bedside GBC delegation is proof that nobody had the foggiest clue what Srila Prabhupada was going to do.

Now let us quote you again from your section dealing with the will and the phrase 'my initiated disciple':

"And ultimately one can become not only his (Srila Prabhupada's) disciple in spirit but his 'initiated disciple' through the guru-parampara system".

One might ask, if it is possible for anyone to become factually an 'initiated disciple' of Srila Prabhupada, then what in the name of Durga are we all arguing about. Quite remarkable!

You then go on:

"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 Thakur, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, the six Gosvamis, and all the other *acaryas* in Srila Prabhupada's line".

So we are left with two options if we are to accept your thesis literally (as unfashionable as it may be to do so):

It is acceptable to have more than one initiating spiritual master. In which case you are preaching a form of semi-*ritvik*, or perhaps more accurately multi-*ritvik*, with a new initiate becoming a direct disciple of every previous member of the disciplic succession;

or

It is only permissible to have one initiating spiritual master. In which case Srila Prabhupada is preaching full-blown *ritvik*- 'my initiated disciple'.

On consulting the *Chaitanya Caritamrta* (CC Adi Lila 1.35) we find it is forbidden to have more than one initiating spiritual master. Therefore the only possible conclusion is that Srila Prabhupada was upholding p.s.*ritvik* in signing the will.

You may now argue that when you said we were all Srila Prabhupada's disciples, along with every previous *acarya*, what you really meant was *siksa* not *diksa* disciples. Unfortunately the word 'initiated' precludes this interpretation. And since Srila Prabhupada only refers to disciples as being 'his', not Srila Bhaktivinoda's, and since multiple *diksa* is forbidden, we must reject your thesis as yet another colourful invention.

THE TERM 'INITIATED DISCIPLE' CAN ONLY REFER TO DIKSA.

Thus it is quite clear the will supports our understanding of the July 9th letter, not yours. Srila Prabhupada expected to continue acting as a *diksa* guru long into the future; henceforward in fact.

In view of your earlier statement that we must see with an open mind 'what Srila Prabhupada actually did', not what we think he should have done based on our own imperfect speculation, we can only come to one conclusion:

THE WILL SUPPORTS P.S. RITVIK.

Having covered the main issues we will now seal the case with a few more points and some questions.

1. Argument from a need for evidence.

Please show a signed letter from Srila Prabhupada to the whole society which:

- a) Countermands the final July 9th order on future initiation
- b) Establishes beyond doubt the M.A.S.S., with all its contrivances and machinations.

2. Argument from a need to show precedent.

Please provide the following:

- a) Clear statements from Srila Prabhupada's books to the effect that before we carry out one of his instructions we must first check the entire history of Gaudiya Vaisnavism to make sure the identical order was issued, and carried out, at some point in the past.
- b) An example from the history of our *parampara* where a plethora of *diksa* gurus were subordinate to a committee who could approve, suspend and terminate them.

3. Argument from a need for good logic.

Logical arguments constructed around a false premise are as good as useless. Your ice cream has melted.

Please indicate which of the arguments in this paper are logically deficient.

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

Please provide the following:

An example of Srila Prabhupada issuing an instruction which could only be properly understood by reading documents which were inaccessible to the persons receiving the instruction.

Specific teachings of Srila Prabhupada which a *p.s.ritvik* system clearly contravenes.

One reason you give for rejecting the post-*samadhi ritvik* system is because it is not mentioned in Srila Prabhupada's books. But the pre-*samadhi ritvik* system is also not mentioned in Srila Prabhupada's books, and yet you appear to have no objection to that at all. Mention in Srila Prabhupada's books is a red herring argument. There are numerous systems of management put in place by Srila Prabhupada, some of which continue to this very day, which have absolutely no mention in his books.

Another point to consider is that the initiation ceremony itself is not described in Srila Prabhupada's books. Why would you expect the name-giving function of a *ritvik*, which forms a tiny part of the proceedings, to be specifically mentioned in Srila Prabhupada's books if the main bulk of the ceremony is not described at all? Is that logical?

5. Argument from Srila Prabhupada's final instruction.

Please study your calendar and look up the word 'final'.

6. Argument from how Srila Prabhupada expressed his desires.

Nowhere in Srila Prabhupada's books or letters to the whole society does he ever describe the M.A.S.S.

The only signed directive to the entire society on the future of initiation is the July 9th letter, which upholds *p.s.ritvik*.

7. Argument from a need to reject new doctrines.

The *ritvik* system was up and running in 1977, and was put in place personally by Srila Prabhupada to run 'henceforward'.

The M.A.S.S was introduced in two phases. The first phase began in March 1978. The second modified version was set up around 1987. Srila Prabhupada described neither version previous to 1977.

This concludes our response to your paper. Thank you for your time and consideration.

To reiterate, we are producing a much more thorough presentation on the *ritvik* issue, which we would be happy to forward to you once it is complete.

We warmly welcome any feedback you may have on any of the above points.

Throughout ISKCON, every day of the week, we sing prayers to Srila Prabhupada, glorifying him as our spiritual master. His books are the force which drives the preaching and attracts devotees to surrender their lives. Srila Prabhupada arranged that his murti be installed in every temple, and that he should be offered daily guru *puja*. Factually he is our eternal sad-guru, our initiating spiritual master. Through him we may eventually meet Krishna. We humbly beg you to please re-consider your position on Srila Prabhupada's final order to the society.

We know you are a sincere follower of Srila Prabhupada, and that you really believe that p.s.*ritvik* is a heresy to be stamped out with papal vigour, but we implore you to pray to Srila Prabhupada for his direction on the matter. If you pray deeply we are sure that he will answer you very swiftly.

ISKCON leaders may not listen to us, but they will listen to you. You could put ISKCON back on track, and thus greatly please Srila Prabhupada.

Please forgive any offence we may have caused. We are well wishers, however bewildered you may consider us.

Hoping this meets you in full health.

Your servants

KRSNA KANTA DESAI & YADURAJA DAS

(Signed)

The following correspondence ensued

12.4.96

Dear Maharaja,

Please accept our humble obeisance's. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. We are very sorry that we were unable to meet with you recently on your trip to London. But as you are aware Krishna Kant is not allowed onto the temple premises. Also we were very busy trying to get a reply to your paper before you left. Sorry the reply was a bit rushed but we only got your paper a few days before you arrived in the country. We would like to thank you for having taken the time and trouble to address this issue. We both know that you are very busy. Hopefully it may be the beginning of a fruitful dialogue, which will lead to some resolution. Since it is the centennial year we think that this would be very fitting.

I hope you got our response via Pradip along with the e-mail address. Please reply with your thoughts, comments and response to us via the e-mail

We both look forward to your reply.

All glories to your service to Srila Prabhupada.

We beg to remain,

Your Servants

Krishna Kant,

Yadhuraja Das.

17.4.96

To: Krishna Desai.

Hare Krishna. Please accept my best wishes. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Yes I'm sorry too that we didn't get the opportunity to meet while I was in London.

I received your paper from Pradip and looked through it. But since the paper itself starts by saying that it is something of a rushed reply, I'd rather not comment on it. I'd rather give you time to think things through more carefully, unhurried. After that, I'd look forward to hearing from you again.

Hoping this finds you in good health,

Your in Srila Prabhupada's service

Jayadvaita Swami

18.4.96

Dear Maharaja,

Please accept our humble obeisance's. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. Thank you for your reply. Though our paper was rushed due to a lack of time, it WAS a definitive response to YOUR paper. We are working on another paper that deals with the Ritvik issue more generally, but as you will have noted from our reply, we have adequately covered all the points that YOUR paper raises. Thus even 3 weeks on if we were to have another response to YOUR paper it would be virtually identical. We have made small mistakes such as stating that the time period from July to Srila Prabhupada's passing covered 100 days when in fact it should have been 128. But the philosophical points that were made we are more than happy with. We would therefore appreciate a reply.

Looking forward to your response.

Your Servants

Krishnakant, Yadhuraja

24.4.96

Dear Maharaja,

please accept our humble obeisance's. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. We do not know if you received our last message since we have not heard from you. Your paper seems to have circulated quite widely and hence many people have asked us to respond. We did not want to make our reply public until you have a chance to reply. Thus we need to know if you have any objection to us releasing the reply to your paper. Please let us know if you have any objection as we were planning to release it next week. If we do not hear from yourself I will take it that you do not have any objection. Hope this meets you in the best of health and Krishna Consciousness.

Your Servants,
Krishnakant,
Yadhuraja Dasa

29.4.96

Dear Krishnakant and Yadhuraj,

Hare Krishna. Please accept my best wishes. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

> We do not know if you received our last message....

Yes, I received it. But I've just gotten back to Alachua, so I've been slow on responding to my mail.

> Your paper seems to have circulated quite widely....

Good.

> and hence many people have asked us to respond. We did not want to make our reply public until you had had a chance to reply.

The situation seems to be this:

You are asking me to reply not because you value what I might say. "Submissive aural reception" is certainly not what you have in mind. Ok, it doesn't have to be. But judging from your paper, even "open-minded hearing" would be stretching it.

What then would be the use of my responding?

The only benefit I can think of is that my pre-publication response would afford you a pre-publication opportunity to try to patch up some of the grosser holes with which your paper is riddled.

But why should I want to do that? It would make more sense for me to let you publish your paper as it is.

> Thus we need to know if you have any objection to us releasing the reply to your paper. please let us know if you have any objection as we were planning to release it next week.

Yes I do have an objection. The objection is that by releasing your paper you would keep on pushing a doctrine contrary to the teachings of Srila Prabhupada, and thus you would be doing violence to people's spiritual lives [including your own].

I would prefer that you take a different course: Go back to my paper and consider it carefully, with thoughtful and open minds, with a mood of trying to understand rather than trying to refute.

> If we don't hear from yourself I will take it that you have no objection.

And now you have heard my objection, I suppose you'll do whatever you think best.

In any case, again my best wishes.

Hare Krishna.

29.4.96

Dear Maharaja,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. Thank you for your reply.

1] You imply that we did not read your paper with an open mind. You seem to forget that we actually agreed with a lot of your paper - in fact we only picked up on two of your objections. Hardly the response of a closed mind.

2] You state that you do not want us to distribute the paper as it will destroy people's spiritual lives. This means:

a] That our paper is FUNDAMENTALLY and TOTALLY erroneous.

b] That if it's distribution can be halted then that's good.

However you illogically state that you do not wish to reply as it will give us the opportunity to "patch up" the paper. However since you imply a] it would be impossible to 'patch up' something that is totally bogus. We would actually need to do one of two things:

i] Either write a completely new paper whereby we would say that *ritvik* was wrong.

ii] Or not distribute the paper at all.

Either way b] would be satisfied.

you can not 'patch up' something that has NO substance whatsoever. If you tell us where we are wrong you will actually ensure that people's spiritual lives will not be destroyed since we will be forced to do either i] or ii] .

If we could simply 'patch up' what we had written then it could not be that far from the truth to begin with. Either way you have no reason to not point out our errors. In any case it is your job as a sannyasi to keep us out of illusion. Especially when we have specifically asked you to do so.

Further you say that we do not want to hear, and yet you are afraid that what you do say will be heard so well by us that we will immediately use it to modify our whole paper.

Whatever way you look at it, there is no reason for you to not point out the error of our way.

Your Servants,

Krishnakant, Yadhuraja Dasa

5.5.96

Please spare me the cute logic. I retain my original impression: You are not approaching me for knowledge; you are interested in making propaganda--and this I'm not interested in helping.

Best wishes.

Hare Krishna.

--js

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