

## Deconstructing A Twit

By Krishnakant



Dec 21, 1999 — Recently Kundali das decided to 'Deconstruct *Ritvik-vada*' by pouring scorn on the notion that Srila Prabhupada should remain the *diksa* guru for ISKCON. It is surprising he should so readily sacrifice his reputation for scholarship, nurtured by him so carefully over the years, by writing with such venom on a subject he clearly knows nothing about. And this is the second time he has done so, previously even boasting that he had no intention of ever reading [The Final Order](#) which defines the very position he is supposed to be deconstructing'. Certainly Kundali's pathetic attempt at wit through deconstructing' the sanskrit word for a priest into an insult, does not save him from making a total twit of himself yet again, as we shall now reveal.

Before attempting to deconstruct a system of thought it is sensible to first familiarise oneself with it. Obvious surely? Yet apparently not so obvious to our poor 'scholar' Kundali das. Very quickly he reveals his ignorance on the subject with mistakes such as the following:

"But if one is not, one gets caught up in the *ritvik* (rit-twit) word jugglery and other foolish antics that they employ to try and squeeze their mental wranglings into the teachings of Srila Prabhupada, whereby they eke out meaning from the word "henceforth" that puts Srila Prabhupada at odds with the *parampara* conclusions of our great *acarya*, Srila Rupa Gosvami."

Had Kundali studied the *ritvik* position (as expressed in The Final Order and the [No Change](#) papers) he would not have written the above, since it is demonstrable nonsense. We clearly state that one could dispense with the word **henceforward** (notice our scholar' cannot even get the word right) and our position is not altered or damaged one iota. Let us quote from the paper Kundali refuses to read:

**"Furthermore the argument that the whole ritvik system 'hangs' on one word - henceforward - is untenable, since even if we take the word out of the letter, nothing has changed. One still has a system set up by Srila Prabhupada four months before his departure, with no subsequent instruction to terminate it. Without such a counter instruction, this letter would still remain intact as Srila Prabhupada's final instruction on initiation."**

*(The Final Order (1996) [page 3](#))*

Also Kundali has never actually shown how Srila Prabhupada's continued status as ISKCON's current link to the succession puts him or us at odds with the *parampara* conclusions' of Srila Rupa Gosvami. It seems that to Kundali's mind, unless Srila Rupa Goswami directly mentions something, then it must be bogus. Yet he did not directly mention the GBC, nor ISKCON, nor giving *gayatri* by magnetic tape, nor the BBT, nor pre-*samadhi ritvik* etc etc. For some peculiar reason Kundali singles out the *ritvik* system (*which Srila Prabhupada personally installed*) as something that must be stopped at all cost. Talk about double standards! A real scholar would at least attempt an explanation for such a biased approach. On what basis has Kundali decided which instructions of Srila Prabhupada not mentioned by Srila Rupa Goswami we can follow, and which we cannot?

Kundali confirms his lack of understanding with the following:

"So, all the rit-twits have to do to make their views stick is stop citing Prabhupada quotes in a one-sided way, stop their twisted logic long enough to show me where *ritvik* guru is part of Srila Rupa Gosvami's teachings and the debate is over. So simple."

As anyone who had bothered to read our position papers would know, \*We\* have never proposed nor even used the term '*ritvik-guru*'. So we have no idea what Kundali is talking about here. More fabrication from a mind too lazy, or prejudiced, to properly study the position he is supposed to be deconstructing'. The guru the IRM's '[No Change](#)' position speaks of is the *maha-bhagavata diksa* Guru, as represented by Srila Prabhupada.

We make no mention of any type of '*ritvik-guru*'- whatever that entity may be.

Such speculative nonsense from Kundali is par for the course, since he wrote 3 chapters of the same rubbish the last time he attempted to 'de-construct' the '*ritvik*' position. He did this in his book "Is Discrimination *Jnana-Yoga*". The following is our response to his last bit of scholarship', to which we have never received a reply.

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In this paper we will be responding to selected comments that Kundali prabhu has made in chapters 9-11 in his book 'Is Discrimination *Jnana-Yoga*'? These chapters deal with Kundali's views on the so called '*ritvik* philosophy'.

The first point to note about his treatise is that most of it is based on his speculations of what the so-called '*ritvik*' theory is, rather than what it really is. He never quotes from any *ritvik* source but simply takes a stab as to what this philosophy is supposed to say. In particular his comments do not in any way deal with the points brought out in 'The Final Order', the definitive *ritvik* position paper. This is only to be expected since his book was written before 'The Final Order' was released. This does however make his chapters on the *ritvik* issue largely redundant, since they do not deal with the actual *ritvik* position, but his supposed speculations on the subject.

The comments that Kundali prabhu makes will be boxed in " ", and from now on Kundali prabhu shall be referred to as the author.

"There is no functional difference in using the word *ritvik* guru or guru. Thus we find no *sastric* support for the concept of *ritvik* guru. Either one is guru or is not." (Chapter 9, p47)

Immediately the author has displayed his ignorance on the subject.

Neither [The Final Order](#)' nor Srila Prabhupada ever use the term '*ritvik-guru*'. So the points the author makes above may well be correct, but they have no relevance at all to the actual *ritvik* position, since it makes no reference to a '*ritvik-guru*'. It **DOES** make reference to '*ritvik's*' who are priests who administer aspects of the initiation ceremony on behalf of Srila Prabhupada, as was being done when Srila Prabhupada was on the planet.

Thus in the *ritvik* system, as set up by Srila Prabhupada, there is a functional difference between the *diksa* guru and the *ritvik*, who is a name-giving priest.

"*Ritvik-vadis* say that Srila Prabhupada, as a great *acarya*, can change things, can make innovations where necessary even if those innovations are not found in philosophy." (Chapter 9, p48)

Since 'The Final Order' does not say this, again another irrelevant objection.

"An *acarya* cannot change fundamental principles of the *parampara siddhanta*. An *acarya* is the *acarya* because he upholds those fundamental principles. A fundamental principle of Krsna Consciousness is that one must have a bona fide guru coming in disciplic succession who is fixed in the absolute truth, *srotiyam brahma-nistham*. One must please Krsna by service and submission to that person. This is an essential principle of *vaisnava siddhanta*, which has the full support of *sastra*. Since the authority of the *acarya* rests on the *sastra*, how can he change the *sastra*? The notion is posterous." (Chapter 9, p49-50)

Since 'The Final Order' is 100% in agreement with the above statements, again this has nothing at all to do with demonstrating the supposed flaws in the *ritvik* position. 'The Final Order' advocates, to use the author's words, 'have a bona fide guru coming in disciplic succession who is fixed in the absolute truth, *srotiyam brahma-nistham*'. They share

this person with the author himself. His name is Srila Prabhupada.

"Thus instead of proposing practical solutions to the problems (or just help to define them so they can be addressed), they advocate that we abandon the *parampara* philosophy about guru and adopt *ritvik-vada* in its place." (Chapter 9, p50)

Since 'The Final Order' does no such thing, this is just another unsubstantiated allegation from the author. The author is unable to state which aspect of the '*parampara* philosophy about guru' we are advocating should be abandoned. We unreservedly uphold the *parampara* philosophy about guru. One must certainly accept a current link guru coming in the line of disciplic succession. The author must demonstrate why it is he can accept Srila Prabhupada as a guru in the *parampara*, but nobody else in the future can. This in spite of the fact that Srila Prabhupada ordered his continued role as ISKCON's initiator through the July 9th letter, sent to all GBC's and temple presidents.

"So one who can explain the *sastra* with consistent logic and reason, without adding or subtracting anything, and whose conduct is clearly based on religious principles can be guru." (Chapter 9, p51)

Again we do not see the relevance of the above comment to the position of 'The Final Order' or the [No Change](#) papers, since there is no disagreement. However, for ISKCON he only authorised a *ritvik* system, and did not authorise any of his disciples to initiate.

"*Ritvik-vada* is not our philosophy. [...] There are matters of taste in our philosophy, which may be adjusted according to time, place, and circumstances, but philosophical core principles, such as guru-*tattva* cannot be adjusted." (Chapter 10, p53)

Since the application of the system, as outlined in the July 9th letter, requires no change in the philosophy of guru-*tattva*, the author has again either :

- a. not understood the *ritvik* position. In which case, in future he should find out what it is **BEFORE** he attacks it, (he has received The 'Final Order', but refuses to read it claiming it is 'offensive to the trees'). -

Or

- b. has just deliberately misrepresented the true position, which is cheating.

Either way, as we have been asking for years, if anyone can locate which principle in Srila Prabhupada's teachings the application of his July 9th letter, 'adjusts' would they please send us the references. To date no one, including the author, has been able to point to such a principle.

"If I were a newcomer I would still think it strange after reading Srila Prabhupada's books and finding not one sentence supporting this practice (the *ritvik* system)." (Chapter 10, p53)

Since the books stress again and again that one must approach a bona fide guru in the disciplic succession, how can the author state that there is no such support for taking initiation from Srila Prabhupada? Unless he claims that Srila Prabhupada is not a bona fide guru in the disciplic succession.

The books give no restriction that the Bona Fide guru must be physically on the planet at the time of initiation. If such a restriction exists the author must produce it. Srila Prabhupada satisfies all the requirements that the books give for the bona fide guru who is to be approached. The Bhagavad Gita actually gives a list of the *parampara* in the front, and Srila Prabhupada is listed as the most current representative. On the back cover of the same book, Srila Prabhupada is mentioned as the 'current representative' of the disciplic succession.

"By backing an idea that has no *sastric* support they are in *tamo guna*, yet they feel that as long as ISKCON does not get behind the *ritvik* understanding ISKCON is off." (Chapter 10, p54)

Please see the answer above. Srila Prabhupada's books **DO** support the notion that he can be approached as a bona fide guru in the disciplic succession.

"They have appointed themselves the sole arbiters of who is qualified and who is not. Without their approval, no one will ever be qualified, although they humbly admit that they are themselves are not qualified." (Chapter 10, p54)

Since The Final Order' states that there could be many *uttama adhikaris* in ISKCON right now, this is another irrelevant point. The issue is simply to follow whatever system Srila Prabhupada has left for us. In this case he authorised only the *ritvik* system as given in the July 9th letter.

"Becoming guru does not necessitate esoteric qualifications. [...] *Sastra* is our eyes." (Chapter 10, p57)

Since again this does not in anyway deal with or contradict any of the points made in [The Final Order'](#), this is again more irrelevancy. (As regards the qualifications of a guru, we simply repeat what Srila Prabhupada states in Madhya Lila, 24:330 - that one **MUST** be a *maha-bhagavata*.)

"We have no precedent in our tradition where devotees accept as *diksa-guru*, a *vaisnava* who is no longer present. The *tad-viddhi pranipatena* verse is clearly speaking of a living guru, for who else can we inquire submissively from? (Chapter 11, p58)

The fact that there is no precedent for an activity does not make it un bona fide. There is no precedent for accepting a *vaisnava* guru who is not Indian? So what. The issue is does it contravene a *sastric* principle? The *tad viddhi pranipatena* verse cannot be speaking of a 'living' guru, since it speaks of the disciple inquiring submissively. Since the author is a disciple of Srila Prabhupada, maybe he can tell us whom **HE** has been inquiring from submissively for the last 21 years?

"Without *sastric* support the whole *ritvik* philosophy collapses. No serious follower of Prabhupada would accept something that has no *sastric* support as a conclusive truth about the process of devotional service" (Chapter 11, p62)

We have already answered this point earlier. The process of accepting Srila Prabhupada as a bona fide guru in the *parampara* is fully supported by *sastra*.

"Prabhupada said guru must be an *uttama-adhikari*; since no one is an *uttama-adhikari* we cannot have gurus. This is their logic. Do they understand the meaning of *uttama-adhikari*." (Chapter 11, p 63)

This is another mis-representation. We never say the above. We state that we must follow Srila Prabhupada's last instructions on how initiations would proceed, which were given on July 9th. We also state that there maybe many *uttama adhikaris* in the movement. But Srila Prabhupada only authorised the *ritvik* system. He never authorised this system to be disbanded, and replaced with other *diksa* gurus.

The author then gives many quotes trying to show how 'simple' it is to be an *uttama adhikari*, and how it does not require any 'mystical qualifications'. Again this is irrelevant to the topic at hand, since we have never claimed that someone is not, or never will be, an *uttama adhikari*. We simply state that we must follow whatever Srila Prabhupada authorised. This simple following of Srila Prabhupada's orders is also not a 'mystical' qualification, but quite easily achieved. We are sure all the legions of *uttama adhikaris* will have no problem following the July 9th directive issued to the whole movement, instead of trying to illegally remove Srila Prabhupada as the initiating guru for ISKCON.

The author also repeatedly alleges that Srila Prabhupada stated that anyone who passed some examinations was supposed to be an initiating guru in ISKCON once Srila Prabhupada had left:

"How can we tell who knows the science of Krsna? Srila Prabhupada's solution to this was to have four examinations, culminating in the Bhaktivedanta degree. Following this, his disciples would be eligible to initiate, assuming that by their preaching they could create faith in others." (Chapter 10, p52)

"Also, Prabhupada said, in one of the few direct instructions he ever gave about the eligibility to be guru in ISKCON, that one who passes the four exams - *Bhakti-sastri* up to Bhaktivedanta - would be eligible to become guru." (Chapter 11, p59)

To support these allegations he offers the following letters:

"Another examination will be held sometimes in 1971 on the four books, Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, and Nectar of Devotion. One who will pass this examination will be awarded with the title of Bhaktivedanta. I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations. That is my program. So we should not simply publish these books for reading by outsiders, but our students must be well versed in all of our books so that we can be prepared to defeat all opposing parties in the matter of self-realization." (Letter to Hamsaduta, 1968) (Chapter 11, p 64)

"I have also suggested for the GBC's consideration, that we introduce a system of examinations for the devotees to take. Sometimes there is criticism that our men are not sufficiently learned, especially the *brahmanas*. Of course second initiation does not depend upon passing an examination. How one has moulded his life--chanting, attending arati, etc., these are essential. Still, *brahmana* means *pandita*. Therefore I am suggesting examinations. *Bhakti-sastri*--(for all *brahmanas*) based on Bhagavad-gita, Sri Isopanisad, Nectar of Devotion, Nectar of Instruction, and all the small paperbacks. *Bhakti-vaibhava*--the above plus first six cantos of S.B. -- Bhaktivedanta--the above plus cantos 7-12 S.B. *Bhakti-Sarvabhauma*--the above plus Caitanya-Caritamrta." (Letter to Svarupa Damodara 1976) (Chapter 11, p 65)

"Regarding the examinations, the idea is that anyone, after studying the books, who wants to gain the title of *Bhakti-sastri*, can take the exam.

This is academic. Just like a *brahmana* with *sastri* knowledge and a *brahmana* without. It is optional--one who wants may take. The real purpose is that our men should not be neglectful of the philosophy. The examinations will begin on Gaura Purnima, 1977, not this year, so there is no reason why any of the devotees should give up their normal engagement." (Letter to Satsvarupa, 1976) (Chapter 11, p65)

However a close look at these letters reveal that these exams were not intended to certify 'initiating gurus' but simply to improve the philosophical understanding of the devotees, who are supposed to be Brahmins:

In the letter to Svarupa Damodara Srila Prabhupada states that passing the exams is not even necessary for getting second initiation. In the letter to Satsvarupa, Srila Prabhupada states that the exams are just 'academic', and they are 'optional'. Finally in the first letter to 'Hamsaduta' where the word 'initiate' is mentioned, Srila Prabhupada is actually talking about them initiating in his own **PRESENCE** - 'By 1975' - so he was only talking about them acting as *ritviks*, since one cannot be an initiating guru in the presence of the Spiritual master (*according to the famous law of disciplic succession*)

Thus the author's allegation that these exams certify 'initiating gurus' is completely false.

## Conclusion:

We can see that the author's comments on the so-called '*ritvik*' issue are at best ill-informed and complete misrepresentations. They offer no evidence to terminate Srila Prabhupada's own instructions that the system should continue, nor does the author offer a **SINGLE** quote from *sastra* demonstrating the *ritvik* system is unauthorised or

breaks any *sastric* injunctions. In fact the author's chapters on the *ritvik* issue are noticeable for the almost complete absence of quotations of any kind. We would strongly suggest that the author first study 'The Final Order' to correctly ascertain what the *ritvik* position actually is.

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From the above it is clear Kundali shares the same intellectual dishonestly and sloppiness that so plagues the GBC and others who have attempted to attack the IRM's stated position.

Thus in finishing, we would like to paraphrase Kundali prabhu's own words:

Now the real challenge is this: **Having stuck his neck way, way out in favor of gross mis-representation, can Kundali now retract his over-committed neck? Can he admit defeat like a gentleman? Or will he react to clear logic, in line with Srila Prabhupada's teachings, with even more irrationality and vitriol, which he has gained a reputation for.**

**If he chooses the latter option then this is one twit we shall have great pleasure in deconstructing a third time.**