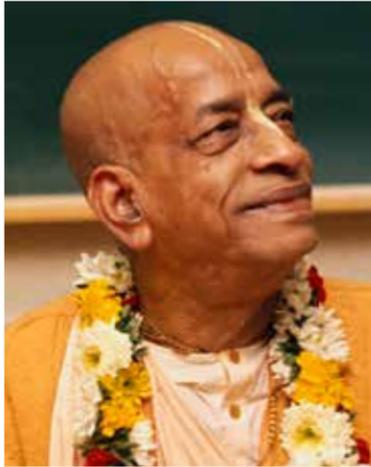




ISKCON Revival Movement

THE FINAL ORDER



Proves Śrīla Prabhupāda Is ISKCON's Initiating Guru

By

Krishnakant

Foreword by Dr. Kim Knott

Professor of Religious Studies, Leeds University, UK

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For further information, please write to:

Back to Prabhupada
PO Box 1056
Bushey
GREAT BRITAIN
WD23 3BR

Email the author Krishnakant at:

irm@iskconirm.com

Web: www.iskconirm.com

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His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Foreword to *The Final Order*

by

Dr Kim Knott, Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, University of Leeds, UK

Whilst researching a recent paper on ‘Insider and Outsider Perceptions of Śrīla Prabhupāda’, I found myself trying briefly to do justice to the different views held by devotees concerning disciplic succession and the role of gurus following Prabhupāda’s disappearance in 1977. Naturally, I had been aware before this of the periods of crisis surrounding the fall of individual gurus and the waves of shock and sadness experienced by their initiated disciples, godbrothers and godsisters. I had hoped like many, that guru-reforms in the late-1980s would solve ISKCON’s leadership and initiation difficulties. Looking again at the issue when preparing the paper, I read some of the arguments for and against the present system, as well as the work of other scholars on questions of guru and succession. It was clearly still a live issue. In the very latest scholarship on ‘The *Paramparā* Institution’ in volume 5 of *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies*, Jan Brzezinski discusses various aspects of this, stressing the importance of qualified, charismatic leadership in the future of ISKCON. His is just one view, but it is indicative of the power of this subject to motivate interest inside and outside the Movement.

Late in 1996 I was asked to read *The Final Order*, to give my opinions and to discuss the questions posed within it. Reading it, I was left in no doubt that this was a matter of very great significance to ISKCON and about which many devotees felt deeply. It seemed to me that it raised important theological questions concerning spiritual authority and its transmission, the relationship of the disciple and Kṛṣṇa’s representative, the guru, and the proper objects of devotional worship. As an outsider, I am quite unable to judge the matter (and unable to weigh the evidence presented here against the evidence for the present *ācārya* system). However, I am able to commend what is presented here as a serious attempt to argue the case that Śrīla Prabhupāda established a system of *ṛvik* gurus whom he intended would initiate disciples on his behalf. I hope it will be read carefully and discussed widely, not because I support or condemn its position, but because the profound issues it raises demand consideration at all levels. Every devotee has a real stake in the matter.

No doubt it is unwise for an outsider to involve herself by writing such a foreword, but my motives remain my interest in the Movement and goodwill to all its devotees.

Kim Knott, February 1997

Preface to the Fifth Edition

It is now more than a decade since the first edition of *The Final Order* was printed in 1996. Originally I described *The Final Order* as a “discussion paper on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions for initiation within ISKCON”. No one who knows the Movement would deny that the paper has provoked a good deal of “discussion”, and thus it has succeeded in its aim to bring this issue into the spotlight.

It would be hard now for ISKCON’s leadership to credibly claim oblivion to the legal documents, personally signed by Śrīla Prabhupāda, that clearly set out his intention to remain the sole initiating (*dīkṣā*) guru for the spiritual Movement he founded. It is these legal documents that constitute the core of *The Final Order* paper that has now been distributed all over the world, and is available on the world wide web. There are still countries where *The Final Order* has yet to be translated (as of September 2008, the following translations were available: French, Spanish, German, Russian, Chinese, Hindi, Bengali, Kannada, Czech, Italian, Hungarian, with more underway); added to this ISKCON leaders have placed a blanket ban on its distribution in all ISKCON centres. For these reasons there remain large numbers of ISKCON’s rank and file who have yet to read the paper, in spite of all the media coverage and controversy. But at least for ISKCON’s executive leadership and gurus, ignorance of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s order on spiritual initiation is no longer an excuse. In the introduction to *The Final Order* we stated that:

“We consider it highly unlikely that anyone is deliberately disobeying, or causing others to disobey, a direct order from our Founder-Ācārya.”

Given the GBC’s evasion, obfuscation, violent suppression and downright dishonesty over *The Final Order*, the above point may now need revising.

There is now a worldwide organisation called the **ISKCON Revival Movement (IRM)** that holds *The Final Order* as its foundation, and was set up specifically to promote its conclusions. It has a website with over 100 papers (www.iskconirm.com) by the same author and publishes a quarterly colour magazine called *Back to Prabhupāda* which is distributed free of charge to thousands of subscribers worldwide. There has been worldwide media coverage of the IRM’s activities, including numerous press articles and items on the BBC. The IRM has also made presentations at major academic conferences, including the International Cultic Studies Association, CESNUR and the American Academy of Religion. In addition, the author of *The Final Order* has been published by various academic and educational publishers including Columbia University Press, Martin Luther

University Halle-Wittenberg, Continuum International Publishing and Facts on File. Through these media the IRM has gained widespread acceptance amongst the scholarly community as a force for reform within ISKCON. Since the formation of the IRM, a growing number of ISKCON devotees and centres around the world have now accepted the conclusions of *The Final Order*.

Frequently Asked Questions about the ISKCON Revival Movement (IRM)

1. What is the IRM?

The IRM is a body composed of ISKCON devotees from all over the world who want to see the Society put back on track, in line with the directives of its Founder, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

2. Why does the IRM exist?

The spiritual purity and general prestige of ISKCON has undergone a massive deterioration since the physical departure of its Founder on November 14th 1977. Śrīla Prabhupāda single-handedly established ISKCON in 1966 as a great gift to the world, and when he left it was an expanding dynamic force, a beacon of light for humanity. Sadly today it is disintegrating, a fact admitted in a memo sent in May 2000 by the then GBC Chairman Ravīndra-svarūpa dāsa:

“Therefore the question remains: What, then, will we do? How will we deal with our polarized and disintegrating Society?”

This decline can be traced back to various deviations from the instructions and standards given by Śrīla Prabhupāda, the chief of which being his displacement as the sole *dīkṣā* guru for ISKCON. The ISKCON Revival Movement seeks to restore ISKCON to its former glory, purity and philosophical chastity through the re-institution of all the instructions and standards that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave, beginning with his role as the sole authority and *dīkṣā* guru for ISKCON. The IRM’s position is set out in *The Final Order* and *No Change in ISKCON Paradigm* position papers. Both these papers are also available on our website: www.iskconirm.com

3. Is the IRM separate from ISKCON?

It is a movement within a movement, composed of ISKCON members who seek to reform and revive the Society.

4. Is the aim of the IRM to form a new movement?

No. It is to re-establish the original ISKCON that Śrīla Prabhupāda left us. Once this is achieved the IRM shall be dissolved.

5. What difference would Śrīla Prabhupāda's restoration as the sole *dīkṣā* guru make?

Firstly, it is the most basic axiom of spiritual life that we can only make advancement by properly following the orders of the guru. If the guru asks for milk and we bring him water, how will he be pleased? And if the guru is not pleased, how will we ever approach Lord Kṛṣṇa?

For nearly three decades ISKCON has not been doing what Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered. Since Śrīla Prabhupāda left us physically we have not allowed him to initiate even one person via his *ṛtvik*, or representational, system. This is the only system of initiation he ever authorised to continue within the Society. If ISKCON members once more start to follow his order, then naturally they will please Lord Kṛṣṇa, and all spiritual success should naturally follow. Also, with everyone having the same direct relationship as Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, factionalism will be eliminated. For the first time in nearly thirty years there will be united team spirit, with everyone working for the same goal—the service and glorification of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Many ISKCON “gurus” have fallen prey to gross sinful activities; and when they leave they often take with them hundreds of thousands of dollars and many of their followers. This continual loss of properties, faith and personnel will be eliminated as faith is only placed in Śrīla Prabhupāda, and not in fallible substitutes. Money currently siphoned off by the 80 or so “gurus” from their disciples in *dakṣiṇā* (gifted money) will instead go to temples, making them healthy and strong.

6. How can the IRM be so sure its position is correct, and the GBC's is not?

The IRM consider their position correct since it is based on signed, legal documents that were directed to the whole Movement. On the other hand, the GBC have presented at least three completely contradictory official positions (none of which are supported by legal documents) and thus do not technically have a position, not to speak of a correct one. We should point out that not only do these various accounts contradict each other, but on occasion contradict themselves too. For example, if we just take the simple question of when Śrīla Prabhupāda was meant to have authorised his replacement as *dīkṣā* guru for ISKCON, we get the following answer from the following three official GBC papers:

a) *On My Order Understood* (GBC, 1995): Śrīla Prabhupāda gave the order for gurus at the same time as the order for devotees to act on his behalf, and this occurred on **July 7th, 1977** (p. 28 in *Gurus and Initiation in ISKCON*, GBC 1995)

b) *Disciple Of My Disciple* (H.H.Umāpati Swami, 1997): Eleven *dikṣā* gurus were all set up and ready on **May 28th, 1977** since “*ṛtvik*” means “officiating *ācārya*” which means “*dikṣā* guru”.

c) *Prabhupāda’s Order* (Badrinārāyan dāsa, 1998): On **July 9th, 1977** the eleven were fully functioning as gurus but simply observing the etiquette in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s presence.

Above we see the GBC have given three different dates for when Śrīla Prabhupāda allegedly sanctioned his replacement. **a)** refers to a garden conversation, **b)** refers to a meeting between Śrīla Prabhupāda and some of his senior disciples, whilst **c)** refers to the signed directive on initiation after which this book is named. Thus each GBC position paper tells a very different tale. To make matters worse:

In February 2004, at their annual meeting in Māyāpur, the GBC officially withdrew the paper *On My Order Understood*, privately admitting it contained “lies” and “stretched the truth”. It was this very paper that *The Final Order* set out originally to challenge (please see Introduction, p. xiii) and the fact it has now been withdrawn so ignominiously can only further vindicate the IRM’s position.

Quite clearly the GBC are confused over when successor *dikṣā* Gurus were authorised. The IRM argues that this is inevitable since Śrīla Prabhupāda never created any replacement *dikṣā* Gurus, only *ṛtviks*; and it was this *ṛtvik* system he left running with no order for it to be stopped. On this basis we argue that the GBC must first decide on a position, and only then will we be able to judge its efficacy.

The sad thing is that, even to this day, anyone who questions the GBC’s miasma of discordant testimony is ruthlessly hounded from the Society.

Krishnakant
September 2008

If you would like further information on the IRM, including a free subscription to our magazine, or wish to ask questions on the contents of *The Final Order*, then please email the author at:

irm@iskconirm.com

or

visit our website at:

www.iskconirm.com

Introduction

This book is a humble attempt to present the instructions Śrīla Prabhupāda left the Governing Body Commission (“GBC”) on how he intended initiations to continue within the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (“ISKCON”). Although we will refer to several papers and articles that have been published by senior ISKCON devotees on this subject, the main points of reference will be the GBC’s most recent official handbook on initiation entitled *Gurus And Initiation In ISKCON* (to be referred to henceforward as “*GII*”), and the paper *On My Order Understood* which is mentioned under section 1.1 of the ‘Laws of ISKCON’:

“The GBC approves of the paper entitled ‘On My Order Understood’ which establishes as ISKCON law the final *siddhānta* on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desire for continuing the disciplic succession after the departure of His Divine Grace. [See Part II: GBC Position Papers in this volume.]” (*GII*, p.1)

In *GII* it is the GBC’s clearly stated intention to remove incoherence and contradiction from ISKCON’s codes and laws surrounding gurus, disciples and *guru-tattva* in general, thus establishing a final *siddhānta* (philosophical conclusion). We sincerely pray that this paper is in pursuance of those very same aims.

In the interest of ever greater consistency and philosophical chastity, we feel there are still one or two discrepancies, not fully addressed in *GII*, which might benefit from further investigation and discussion. Although some of the issues thrown up in confronting these discrepancies may seem quite radical, even painful to deal with, we feel that tackling them now will greatly minimise future confusion and potential deviation. It is not unprecedented that guru systems in ISKCON have come under quite radical review. In the past, symbols have been removed, ceremonies curtailed and paradigms shifted—all without too much long term disruption.

In the whole scheme of things ISKCON is undoubtedly the most important Society on the planet. It is therefore imperative that constant vigilance is maintained in ensuring it does not stray even one millionth of a hair’s breadth from the managerial and philosophical parameters set out by our Founder-*Ācārya*. Śrīla Prabhupāda constantly stressed that we must not change, invent or speculate; but simply carry on expanding that which he so carefully and painstakingly established. What better time to closely scrutinise the way we are carrying on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission than this, his Centennial year (1996)?

It is our strong conviction that the present guru system within ISKCON should be brought fully in line with Śrīla Prabhupāda's last signed directive on the matter; his final order on initiation, issued on **July 9th, 1977** (please see Appendices, p.109). Sometimes people question the stress placed on this letter over and above other letters or teachings. In our defence we shall simply repeat an axiom the GBC itself uses in the *GII* handbook:

“In logic, later statements supersede earlier ones in importance.”
(*GII*, p.25)

Since the July 9th letter really is the *final* instruction on initiation within ISKCON, addressed as it was to the entire Movement, it must be viewed in a category of its own. It will be shown that the full acceptance and implementation of this order does not in any way clash with the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

We have no interest in conspiracy theories, nor do we intend to dredge up the gory details of unfortunate individuals' spiritual difficulties. What is done is done. We can certainly learn from previous mistakes, but we would rather help pave the way for a positive future of re-unification and forgiveness, than dwell too long on past scandal. As far as the author is concerned, the vast majority of devotees in ISKCON are sincerely striving to please Śrīla Prabhupāda; thus we consider it highly unlikely that anyone is deliberately disobeying, or causing others to disobey, a direct order from our Founder-*Ācārya*. Nevertheless, somehow or other, it does seem as though certain aberrations of epistemology and managerial detail have found their way into general ISKCON currency over the last nineteen years. In identifying these grey areas we pray we may be of some assistance in rooting out unnecessary obstructions to our devotional service to Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

In this book we shall be presenting as evidence signed documentation, issued personally by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and conversation transcripts, all of which are accepted as authentic by the GBC. We shall then look carefully at both the content and the context of these materials to see if they should be taken literally, or whether modifying instructions exist which might reasonably alter their meaning or applicability. We shall also discuss all relevant philosophical issues raised in connection with this evidence, and answer all of the most common objections raised against a literal acceptance of the July 9th initiation policy document. And finally we shall look at how the “officiating *ācārya* system”, as outlined in the July 9th order, might be implemented with the minimum disturbance.

We shall base all our arguments solely on the philosophy and instructions given by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his books, letters, lectures and conversations. We humbly beg the mercy of all Vaiṣṇavas that we may not cause offence to anyone or in any way disrupt the vital mission of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The Evidence

Anyone who knew Śrīla Prabhupāda would often note his meticulous nature. His fastidious attention to every detail of his devotional service was one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's most distinguishing characteristics; and for those who served him closely, was profound evidence of his deep love and devotion to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. His whole life was dedicated to carrying out the order of his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, and in that duty he was uncannily vigilant. He left nothing to chance, always correcting, guiding and chastising his disciples in his effort to establish ISKCON. His mission was his life and soul.

It would certainly have been entirely out of character for Śrīla Prabhupāda to leave an important issue, such as the future of initiation in his cherished Society, up in the air, ambiguous, or in any way open to debate or speculation. This is particularly so in light of what happened to his own spiritual master's mission, which, as he would often point out, was destroyed largely through the operation of an unauthorised guru system. Bearing this in mind, let us begin with facts that no one disputes:

On July 9th 1977, four months before his physical departure, Śrīla Prabhupāda set up a system of initiations employing the use of “*ṛtviks*”, or “representatives of the *ācārya*”. Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed that this “officiating *ācārya*” system was to be instituted immediately, and run from that time onwards, or “henceforward” (please see Appendices, p.109). This management directive, which was sent to all Governing Body Commissioners and Temple Presidents of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, instructed that from that time on new disciples would be given spiritual names and have their beads and *gāyatrī mantras* from the 11 named *ṛtviks*. The *ṛtviks* were to act on Śrīla Prabhupāda's behalf, new initiates all becoming disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda thus handed over to the *ṛtviks* total power of attorney over who could receive initiation; he made it clear that from that time onwards he was no longer to be consulted (for details of a *ṛtvik's* duties, please see the section entitled “What is a *Ṛtvik*?” on p. 90).

Immediately after Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical departure on November 14th 1977, the GBC suspended this *ṛtvik* system. By Gaura Pūrṇimā 1978, the 11 *ṛtviks* had assumed the roles of zonal *ācārya dīkṣā* gurus, initiating disciples on their own behalf. Their mandate for doing so was an alleged order from Śrīla Prabhupāda that they alone were to succeed him as initiating *ācāryas*. Some years later this zonal *ācārya* system was itself challenged and replaced, not by the restoration of the *ṛtvik* system, but by the addition of dozens more gurus,

along with an elaborate system of checks and balances to deal with those that deviated; the rationale for this change being that the order to become guru was not, as we had first been told, *only* applicable to the 11, but was a general instruction for anyone who strictly followed, and received a two-thirds majority vote from the GBC body.

The above account is not a political opinion, it is historical fact, accepted by everyone, including the GBC.

As mentioned above, the July 9th letter was sent to all GBCs and Temple Presidents, and remains to this day the *only* signed instruction on the future of initiation Śrīla Prabhupāda ever issued to the whole Society. Commenting on the July 9th order, HH Jayādvaīta Swami recently wrote:

“Its authority is beyond question [...] Clearly, this letter establishes a *ṛtvik*-guru system.”

(Jayādvaīta Swami, *Where the R̥tvik People are Wrong*, 1996)

The source of the controversy arises from two modifications which were subsequently superimposed over this otherwise clear and authoritative directive:

Modification a): That the appointment of representatives or *ṛtviks* was only temporary, specifically to be terminated on the departure of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Modification b): Having ceased their representational function, the *ṛtviks* would automatically become *dīkṣā* gurus, initiating persons as their own disciples, not Śrīla Prabhupāda’s.

The reforms to the zonal *ācārya* system, which took place around 1987, kept intact these two assumptions. The same assumptions, in fact, that underpinned the very system it replaced. We refer to a) and b) above as modifications since neither statement appears in the July 9th letter itself, nor in any policy document issued by Śrīla Prabhupāda subsequent to this order.

The GBC’s paper, *GII*, clearly upholds the above-mentioned modifications:

“When Śrīla Prabhupāda was asked who would initiate after his physical departure he stated he would “recommend” and give his “order” to some of his disciples who would initiate on his behalf during his lifetime and afterwards as “regular gurus”, whose disciples would be Śrīla Prabhupāda’s grand-disciples.” (*GII*, p.14)

Over the years increasing numbers of devotees have begun questioning the legitimacy of these basic assumptions. For many, they have never been properly substantiated, and hence an uneasy sense of doubt and mistrust has grown both within and outside the Society. At present, books, papers, email-outs and websites

offer almost daily updates on ISKCON and its allegedly deviant guru system. Anything that can bring about some sort of resolution to this controversy has got to be positive for anyone who truly cares about Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Movement.

One point everyone is agreed on is that Śrīla Prabhupāda is the ultimate authority for all members of ISKCON, so whatever his intended order was, it is our duty to carry it out. Another point of agreement is that the only signed policy statement on the future of initiation, which was sent to all the Society’s leaders, was the July 9th order.

It is significant to note that in *GII* the existence of the July 9th letter is not even acknowledged, even though this is the only place where the original eleven “*ācāryas*” are actually mentioned. This omission is puzzling, especially given that *GII* is supposed to offer the “final *siddhānta*” on the entire issue.

Let us then look closely at the July 9th order to see if there is indeed anything that supports assumptions a) and b) above:

The order itself

As previously mentioned, the July 9th order states that the *ṛtvik* system should be followed “henceforward”. The specific word used, “henceforward”, only has one meaning, *viz.* “from now onwards”. This is both according to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s own previous usage of the word and the meaning ascribed to it by the English language. Unlike other words, the word “henceforward” is unambiguous since it only possesses one dictionary definition. On the other 86 occasions that we find on Folio where Śrīla Prabhupāda has used the word “henceforward”, nobody raised even the possibility that the word could mean anything other than “from now onwards”. “From now onwards” does not mean “from now onwards until I depart”. It simply means “from now onwards”. There is *no* mention in the letter that the system should stop on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure, neither does it state that the system was to *only* be operational during his presence. Furthermore, the argument that the whole *ṛtvik* 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 Śrīla Prabhupāda four months before his departure with no subsequent instruction to terminate it. Without such a counter instruction this letter must be seen as Śrīla Prabhupāda’s final instruction on initiation, and should therefore be followed.

Supporting instructions

There were other statements made by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and his secretary, in the days following the July 9th letter, which clearly indicate that the *ṛtvik* system was intended to continue without cessation (all emphases added):

“...the process for initiation to be followed in the future.” (July 11th, 1977)

“...continue to become ritvik and act on my charge.” (July 19th, 1977)

“...continue to be rittik and act on my behalf.” (July 31st, 1977)

(Please see Appendices).

In these documents we find words such as “continue” and “future” which along with the word “henceforward” all point to the permanency of the *ṛtvik* system. There is no statement from Śrīla Prabhupāda that even hints that this system was to terminate on his departure.

Subsequent instructions

Once the *ṛtvik* system was up and running, Śrīla Prabhupāda never issued a subsequent order to stop it, nor did he ever state that it should be disbanded on his departure. Perhaps aware that such a thing may mistakenly or otherwise occur, he put in the beginning of his final Will that the “system of management” in place within ISKCON must continue and could not be changed—an instruction left intact by a codicil added just nine days before his departure. Surely this would have been the perfect opportunity to disband the *ṛtvik* system had that been his intention. That the use of *ṛtviks* to give initiates’ names was a “system of management” can be illustrated by the following:

In 1975 one of the preliminary GBC resolutions sanctioned that the GBC would have sole responsibility for managerial affairs. Below are some of the managerial issues the GBC dealt with that year:

“In order to receive first initiation, one must have been a full time member for 6-months. For second initiation, there should be at least another one year after first initiation.”

(GBC Resolution No. 9, March 1975)

“Method of initiating *sannyāsī*”.

(GBC Resolution No. 2, March 1975)

These resolutions were personally approved by Śrīla Prabhupāda. They demonstrate conclusively that the methodology for conducting initiations was deemed a “system of management”. If the *whole* methodology for conducting initiations is considered a “system of management” by Śrīla Prabhupāda, then one element of initiation, *viz.* the use of *ṛtviks* to give spiritual names, has to fall under the same terms of reference.

Thus changing the *ṛtvik* system of initiation was in direct violation of Śrīla

Prabhupāda’s final Will.

Another instruction in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Will, which indicates the intended longevity of the *ṛtvik* system, is where it states that the executive directors for his permanent properties in India could only be selected from amongst Śrīla Prabhupāda’s “initiated disciples”:

“...a successor director or directors may be appointed by the remaining directors, provided the new director is my initiated disciple...” (Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Declaration of Will, June 4th, 1977)

This is something that could only occur if a *ṛtvik* system of initiation remained in place after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure, since otherwise the pool of potential directors would eventually dry up.

Furthermore, every time Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke of initiations after July 9th he simply reconfirmed the *ṛtvik* system. He never gave any hint that the system should stop on his departure or that there were gurus, waiting in the sidelines, ready to take on the role of *dīkṣā*. Thus, at least as far as direct evidence is concerned, there appears to be nothing to support assumptions a) and b) referred to previously. As stated, these assumptions—that the *ṛtvik* system should have stopped at departure, and that the *ṛtviks* must then become *dīkṣā* gurus—form the very basis of ISKCON’s current guru system. If they prove to be invalid then there will certainly need to be a radical re-think by the GBC.

The above sets the scene. The instruction itself, supporting instructions and subsequent instructions only support the continuation of the *ṛtvik* system. It is admitted by all concerned that Śrīla Prabhupāda did *not* give any order to terminate the *ṛtvik* system on his physical departure. It is further accepted by all concerned that Śrīla Prabhupāda *did* set up the *ṛtvik* system to operate from July 9th onwards. Thus we have a situation whereby the *ācārya*:

- 1) has given a clear instruction to follow a *ṛtvik* system;
- 2) has not given an instruction to stop following the *ṛtvik* system upon his physical departure.

Consequently, for a disciple to stop following this order, with any degree of legitimacy, demands he provide some solid grounds for doing so. The only thing that Śrīla Prabhupāda actually told us to do was to follow the *ṛtvik* system. He never told us to stop following it, or that one could *only* follow it in his physical presence. The onus of proof will naturally fall on those who wish to terminate any system put in place by our *ācārya*, and left to run henceforward. This is an obvious point; one can not just stop following the order of the guru whimsically:

“...the process is that you cannot change the order of spiritual master.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Cc. Lecture, 2/2/1967, San Francisco)

A disciple does not need to justify continuing to follow a direct order from the guru, especially when he has been told to continue following it. That is axiomatic—this is what the word ‘disciple’ means:

“When one becomes disciple, he cannot disobey the order of the spiritual master.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Bg. Lecture, 11/2/1975, Mexico)

Since there is no direct evidence stating that the *ṛtvik* system should have been abandoned on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s physical departure, the case for abandoning it could therefore only be based on indirect evidence. Indirect evidence may arise out of special circumstances surrounding the literal direct instruction. These extenuating circumstances, should they exist, may be used to provide grounds for interpreting the literal instruction. We will now examine the circumstances surrounding the July 9th order, to see if such modifying circumstances might indeed have been present, and whether there is inferentially anything to support assumptions a) and b).

Objections Relating Directly to the Form and Circumstances of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Final Order

1. “The July 9th letter clearly implies that it was only set up for whilst Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present.”

There is nothing in the letter that says the instruction was only meant for whilst Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present. In fact, the only information given supports the continuation of the *ṛtvik* system after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure. **It is significant to note that within the July 9th letter it is stated three times that those initiated would become Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples.** The GBC in presenting evidence for the current guru system have argued vigorously that Śrīla Prabhupāda had already made it clear that, as far as he was concerned, it was an inviolable law that no one could initiate in his presence. **Thus the necessity to state Śrīla Prabhupāda’s ownership of future disciples must indicate that the instruction was intended to operate during a time period when the ownership could even have been an issue, namely after his departure.**

For some years Śrīla Prabhupāda had been using representatives to chant on beads, perform the fire *yajña*, give *gāyatrī mantra*, etc. No one had ever questioned whom such new initiates belonged to. Right at the beginning of the July 9th letter it is emphatically stated that those appointed are “representatives” of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The only innovation this letter contained then was the formalisation of the role of the representatives; hardly something which could be confused with a direct order for them to become fully-fledged *dīkṣā* gurus. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s emphasis on disciple ownership would therefore have been completely redundant were the system to operate only in his presence, especially since as long as he was present he could personally ensure that no one claimed false ownership of the disciples. As mentioned above, this point is hammered home *three times* in a letter which itself was quite short and to the point.

“So as soon as one thing is three times stressed, that means final.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Bg. Lecture, 27/11/1968, Los Angeles)

The July 9th letter states that the names of newly initiated disciples were to be sent “to Śrīla Prabhupāda”. Could this indicate that the system was only to run while Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present? Some devotees have argued that since we can no longer send these names to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the *ṛtvik* system must therefore be invalid.

The first point to note is the stated purpose behind the names being sent to Śrīla Prabhupāda, i.e. so they could be included in his “Initiated Disciples” book. We

know from the July 7th conversation (please see Appendices, p.128) that Śrīla Prabhupāda had nothing to do with entering the new names into this book; it was done by his secretary. Further evidence that the names should be sent for inclusion in the book, and not specifically to Śrīla Prabhupāda, is given in the letter written to Hamsadutta, the very next day, where Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami explains his new *ṛtvik* duties to him:

**“... you should send their names to be included in Srila Prabhupad’s
“Initiated Disciples” book.”**

(Letter to Hamsadutta from Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, 10/7/1977)

There is no mention made here of needing to send the names to Śrīla Prabhupāda. This procedure could easily have continued after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s physical departure. Nowhere in the final order does it state that if the “Initiated Disciples” book becomes physically separated from Śrīla Prabhupāda all initiations must be suspended.

The next point is that the procedure of sending the names of newly initiated disciples to Śrīla Prabhupāda in any case relates to a *post-initiation* activity. The names could only be sent *after* the disciples had already been initiated. Thus an instruction concerning what is to be done *after* initiation cannot be used to amend or in any way interrupt pre-initiation, or indeed initiation procedures (the *ṛtvik*’s role being already fulfilled well before the actual initiation ceremony takes place). Whether or not names can be sent to Śrīla Prabhupāda has no bearing on the system for initiation, since at the point where new names are ready to be sent, the initiation has already occurred.

The last point is that if sending the names to Śrīla Prabhupāda were a vital part of the ceremony, then even before Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure, the system would have been invalid, or at least run the constant risk of being so. It was generally understood that Śrīla Prabhupāda was ready to leave at any time, thus the danger of not having anywhere to send the names was present from day one of the order being issued. In other words, taking the possible scenario that Śrīla Prabhupāda leaves the planet the day after a disciple has been initiated through the *ṛtvik* system, according to the above proposition the disciple would not actually have been initiated simply because of the speed by which mail is delivered. We find no mention in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books that the transcendental process of *dīkṣā*, which may take many lifetimes to complete, can be obstructed by the vicissitudes of the postal service. Certainly there would be nothing preventing the names of new initiates being entered into His Divine Grace’s “Initiated Disciples” book even now. This book could then be offered to Śrīla Prabhupāda at a fitting time.

2. “The letter does not specifically say ‘this system will continue after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure’; therefore, it was right to stop the *ṛtvik* system at Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure.”

Please consider the following points:

1. The July 9th letter also does not specifically state: ‘The *ṛtvik* system should end on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure’. Yet it was terminated immediately on his departure.
2. The letter also does not state: ‘The *ṛtvik* system should run while Śrīla Prabhupāda is still present’. Yet it was run while he was still present.
3. The letter also does not state: ‘The *ṛtvik* system should only run until the departure of Śrīla Prabhupāda’. Yet it was only allowed to run till his departure.
4. The letter also does not state: ‘The *ṛtvik* system must stop’. Yet it was stopped.

In summary, the GBC insists on the following:

- The *ṛtvik* system must stop.
- The *ṛtvik* system must stop on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure.

Neither of the above stipulations appears in the July 9th letter, nor any other signed order; yet they form the very foundation of both the zonal *ācārya* system and the current “Multiple *Ācārya* Successor System”, or M.A.S.S. as we shall refer to it. (In this context we use the word *ācārya* in its strongest sense, that of initiating spiritual master, or *dikṣā* guru).

To argue that since the letter is not specific about the time period in which it is to run, it must therefore stop on departure, is completely illogical. The letter does not specify that the *ṛtvik* system should be followed on July 9th either, so according to this logic it should never 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 July 10th, so perhaps it should have stopped then.

The demand for the *ṛtvik* system to only operate within a pre-specified time period is contradicted by accepting its operation for 126 separate 24 hour time periods (i.e. four months), since none of these 126 separate time periods is specified in the letter, yet everyone seems quite happy that the system ran 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, so why choose departure? There is no example, either in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s 86 recorded uses, nor in the entire history of the English language, where the actual word “henceforward” has ever meant:

“Every time period until the departure of a person who issued the order.”

Yet according to current thinking this is what the word must have meant when it was used in the July 9th letter. The letter simply states that the *ṛtvik* system is to be followed “henceforward”. So why was it stopped?

3. “Certain instructions obviously can not continue after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure, and thus it is understood that they could only have been intended to operate in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s presence; e.g. someone may have been appointed ‘henceforward’ to give Śrīla Prabhupāda his regular massage. Maybe the *ṛtvik* order is of that type?”

If an instruction is impossible to perform, for example giving Śrīla Prabhupāda his daily massage after his physical departure, then obviously there can be no question of doing it. The duty of a disciple is simply to follow an order until it is impossible to follow any longer, or until the spiritual master changes the order. The question then is whether it is feasible to follow a *ṛtvik* system without the physical presence of the person who set it up.

In fact, the *ṛtvik* system was set up *specifically* to be operational without *any* physical involvement from Śrīla Prabhupāda whatsoever. Had the *ṛtvik* system continued after his departure, it would be identical in every respect to how it was practised whilst Śrīla Prabhupāda was present. After July 9th, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s involvement became non-existent, and so even at that stage it was operating as though he had already left. This being the case, we cannot classify the *ṛtvik* system dysfunctional, or inoperable, on the grounds of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure, since his departure does not in any way affect the running of the system. **In other words, since the system was specifically set up to operate as if Śrīla Prabhupāda was not on the planet, his leaving the planet can not in itself render the system invalid.**

4. “The fact that the order was ‘only’ issued in a letter, and not in a book, gives us a licence to interpret it indirectly.”

This “letters v. books” argument does not apply in this case since this was no

ordinary letter. Generally, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote a letter in response to a specific query from an individual disciple, or to offer individualised guidance or chastisement. Naturally, in these cases the devotee’s original query, situation or deviation may give grounds for interpretation. Not everything in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s letters can be applied universally. However, the final order on initiation is not open to any such interpretation since it was not written in response to a specific query from a particular individual, or to address a disciple’s individual situation or behaviour. **The July 9th letter was a procedural instruction, or management policy document, which was sent to every leader in the Movement.**

The letter follows the format of any important instruction that Śrīla Prabhupāda issued and wanted followed without interpretation—he had it put in writing, he approved it, and then sent it to his leaders. For example, he had one sent on April 22nd, 1972, addressed to “ALL TEMPLE PRESIDENTS”:

“The zonal secretaries duty is to see that the spiritual principles are being upheld very nicely in all the Temples of his zone. Otherwise each Temple shall be independent and self-supporting.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to All Temple Presidents, 22/4/1972)

Śrīla Prabhupāda did not publish a new book each time he issued an important instruction, regardless of whether the instruction was to continue past his departure. Thus, the form in which the instruction was issued does not make it prey for indirect interpretations, nor in any way diminish its validity.

5. “Maybe there was some special background surrounding the issuing of the order that precludes its application after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure?”

If such circumstances did exist, Śrīla Prabhupāda would have stated them in the letter, or in an accompanying document. Śrīla Prabhupāda always gave enough information to enable the correct application of his instructions. He certainly did not operate on the assumption that his Temple Presidents were all mystic mind readers, and that he therefore only needed to issue fragmented and incomplete directives which would later be made sense of telepathically. For example, had Śrīla Prabhupāda intended the *ṛtvik* system to stop on his departure he would have added the following seven words to the July 9th letter—“This system will terminate on my departure”. A quick look at the letter tells us he wanted it to continue “henceforward” (please see Appendices, p.109).

Sometimes it is argued that the *ṛtvik* system was only set up because

Śrīla Prabhupāda was sick.

Devotees may or may not have been aware of the extent of Śrīla Prabhupāda's illness; but how could they possibly be expected to deduce from a letter that says nothing about his health, that this was the only reason it was issued? When did Śrīla Prabhupāda say that any instruction he issued must always be interpreted in conjunction with his latest medical report? Why should the recipients of the final order on initiation *not* have assumed the letter was a general instruction to be followed, without interpretation?

Śrīla Prabhupāda had already announced that he had come to Vṛndāvana to leave his body. Being *tri-kāla jñā* (cognizant of past, present and future) he was most likely aware of his departure in four months time. He had set in motion the final instructions for the continuation of his Movement. He had already drawn up his Will and other documents relating to the BBT (Bhaktivedanta Book Trust) and GBC, specifically to provide guidance for after his imminent departure. The one matter that had not yet been settled was how initiations would operate when he left. At this point, there was still uncertainty as to how things were to run. The July 9th order clarified for everyone precisely how initiations were to proceed in his absence.

In summary, you cannot modify an instruction with information that those to whom the instruction was given did not have access to. Why would Śrīla Prabhupāda purposely issue an instruction that he knew in advance no one could follow correctly, since he had not given them the relevant information within the instruction? If the *ṛtvik* system was only set up because he was ill, Śrīla Prabhupāda would have said so in the letter or in some accompanying document. There is no record of Śrīla Prabhupāda ever behaving in such a purposely ambiguous and uninformative manner, especially when instructing the entire Movement. Śrīla Prabhupāda never signed anything in a cavalier fashion, and when one considers the magnitude of the instruction in question, it is inconceivable that he would have left out *any* vital information.

6. “Does not the ‘Appointment Tape’ contain relevant information that clearly frames the July 9th order as being only applicable whilst Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present on the planet?”

In the GBC's handbook *GII*, the sole evidence offered in support of modifications a) & b) is extracted from a conversation which took place on May 28th, 1977. The paper appears to concede that there is no other instructional evidence which directly relates to the function of *ṛtviks* after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure:

“Although Śrīla Prabhupāda did not repeat his earlier statements it was understood that he expected these disciples to initiate in the future.” (*GII*, p.35)

Since it is the *sole* evidence, there is a section exclusively dedicated to the May 28th conversation on page 33 of this book. Suffice to say it was not referred to in the July 9th letter, nor did Śrīla Prabhupāda demand that a copy of the taped conversation be sent out with the final order. From this we can deduce with absolute confidence that it cannot contain a scrap of modifying information vital to the understanding of the final order. As a point of fact, the May 28th conversation was not released till several years *after* Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure. Thus once more we are expected to modify a clear written instruction with information which was not accessible to the very people who were issued the instruction. As will be seen later, the May conversation has nothing in it to contradict the final order.

As a general point, later instructions from the guru will always supersede previous instructions; the final order is the final order, and must be followed:

“I may say many things to you, but when I say something directly, “Do it,” your first duty is to do that. You cannot argue, “Sir, you said me like this before.” No, that is not your duty. What I say now, you do it. That is obedience. You cannot argue.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda *SB* Lecture, 15/4/1975, Hyderabad)

Just as in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa gave so many instructions to Arjuna, He spoke of all types of *yoga* from *Dhyāna* to *Jñāna*, but all this was superseded by the final order:

““You just give up everything and become My devotee, My worshipper”—should be taken as the final order of the Lord, and one should follow that principle.”
(*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, Chapter 11)

The final order given by Śaṅkarācārya, “*bhaja Govinda*”, was also meant to supersede many of his earlier statements—all of them, in fact. As mentioned in the introduction to this book, the GBC itself recognises this as an axiomatic principle of logic:

“In logic, later statements supersede earlier ones in importance.”
(*GII*, p. 25)

It is not possible to have a “later” statement than the *last* one. Therefore we must follow the *ṛtvik* system by the GBC’s own logic.

7. “Śrīla Prabhupāda stated many times that all his disciples must become gurus. Surely this proves that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not intend the *ṛtvik* system to be permanent?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda never appointed or instructed anyone to be *dikṣā* guru for after his departure. Evidence for this claim has never been produced; indeed many senior leaders within ISKCON have conceded the point:

“And it’s a fact that Prabhupāda never said, ‘Alright, here’s the next *ācārya*’ or ‘Here are the next 11 *ācāryas*, and they’re the authorised gurus for the movement, or for the world.’ He didn’t do that.”
(Jayādvaīta Swami, ISKCON South London, 1993)

Śrīla Prabhupāda unequivocally stated that the *dikṣā* guru must be a *mahābhagavata* (most advanced stage of God-realisation) and be specifically *authorised* by his own spiritual master. He had always strongly condemned the assumption of guship by those who were not suitably qualified and authorised. We quote below from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books where the qualifications of the *dikṣā* guru are stated:

*“Mahā-bhāgavata-śreṣṭho brāhmaṇo vai gurur nṛṇāṃ
sarveṣāṃ eva lokānāṃ asau pūjyo yathā hariḥ
mahā-kula-prasūto ‘pi sarva-yajñeṣu dikṣitaḥ
sahasra-śākhādhyāyī ca na guruḥ syād avaiṣṇavaḥ*

The guru must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service. There are three classes of devotees, and the guru must be accepted from the topmost class.” (Cc. *Madhya-līlā*, 24.330, purport)

“When one has attained the topmost position of *mahā-bhāgavata*, he is to be accepted as a guru and worshipped exactly like Hari, the Personality of Godhead. Only such a person is eligible to occupy the post of a guru.” (Cc. *Madhya-līlā*, 24.330, purport)

Aside from the qualification, Śrīla Prabhupāda also taught that specific authorisation from the predecessor *ācārya* was also essential before anyone could act as a *dikṣā* guru:

“On the whole, you may know that he is not a liberated person, and therefore, he cannot initiate any person to Krishna Consciousness. It requires special spiritual benediction from higher authorities.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Janārdana, 26/4/1968)

“One should take initiation from a bona fide spiritual master

coming in the disciplic succession who is authorized by his predecessor spiritual master. This is called *dīkṣā-vidhāna*.” (SB, 4.8.54, purport)

Indian man: “When did you begin to become the spiritual leader of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “What is that?”

Brahmānanda: “He’s asking when did you become the spiritual leader of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “When my Guru Mahārāja ordered me. This is the guru *paramparā*.”

Indian man: “Did it...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Try to understand. Don’t go very speedily. A guru can become guru when he’s ordered by his guru. That’s all. Otherwise nobody can become guru.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Bg. Lecture, 28/10/1975)

Thus, according to Śrīla Prabhupāda, one can only become a *dīkṣā* guru when both the *qualification* and *authorisation* are in place. Śrīla Prabhupāda had not authorised any such gurus, nor had he stated that any of his disciples were qualified to initiate. Rather, just prior to July 9th, he agreed that they were still “conditioned souls”, and that vigilance was essential lest persons pose themselves as guru (please see Appendices, p. 126: April 22nd, 1977 conversation).

Evidence used to support an alternative to the *ṛtvik* system falls into three basic categories:

1. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s frequent call for everyone to become guru, often made in conjunction with the “*āmāra ājñāya guru hañā*” verse from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.
2. The half-dozen or so personal letters where Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions his disciples acting as *dīkṣā* guru after his departure.
3. Other statements in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and lectures where the principle of disciples going on to be *dīkṣā* guru is mentioned.

Looking first at category 1):

The instruction for everyone to become guru is found in the following verse in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, which was often quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

“Instruct everyone to follow the orders of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as they are given in *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. In this way become a spiritual master and try to liberate everyone in this land.”

(Cc. *Madhya-lilā*, 7.128)

However, the *type* of guru which Lord Caitanya is encouraging *everyone* to become is clearly established in the detailed purports following this verse:

“That is, one should stay at home, chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and preach the instructions of Kṛṣṇa as they are given in *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.”

(Cc. *Madhya-lilā*, 7.128, purport)

“One may remain a householder, a medical practitioner, an engineer or whatever. It doesn’t matter. One only has to follow the instruction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and instruct relatives and friends in the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [...] It is best not to accept any disciples.”

(Cc. *Madhya-lilā*, 7.130, purport)

We can see that these instructions do not demand that the gurus in question first attain any particular level of realisation before they act. The request is immediate. From this it is clear everyone is simply encouraged to preach what they may know, and in so doing become *śikṣā*, or instructing, gurus. This is further clarified by the stipulation for the *śikṣā* guru to remain in that position, and *not* then go on to become a *dikṣā* guru:

“It is best not to accept any disciples.” (Cc. *Madhya-lilā*, 7.130, purport)

To accept disciples is the main business of a *dikṣā* guru, whereas a *śikṣā* guru simply needs to carry on his duties and preach Kṛṣṇa Consciousness as best he can. It is clear from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports that, in the above verse, Lord Caitanya is actually authorising *śikṣā* gurus, not *dikṣā* gurus.

This is also made abundantly clear in the many other references where Śrīla Prabhupāda encourages everyone to become guru:

“yāre dekha, tāre kaha ‘kṛṣṇa’ upadeśa. [Cc. *Madhya* 7.128]. You haven’t got to manufacture anything. What Kṛṣṇa has already said, you repeat. Finish. Don’t make addition, alteration. Then you become guru [...] I may be fool, rascal [...] So we have to follow this path, that you become guru, deliver your neighbourhood men, associates, but speak the authoritative words of Kṛṣṇa. Then it will act [...] Anyone can do it. A child can do it.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Evening *darshan*, 11/5/77, Hrishikesh, emphasis added)

“Because people are in darkness, we require many millions of gurus to enlighten them. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mission is, He said, that ‘Every one of you become guru.’”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 21/5/1976, Honolulu)

“You simply say [...] ‘Just always think of Me.’ Kṛṣṇa said. ‘And just become My devotee. Just worship Me and offer obeisances.’ Kindly do these things.” So if you can induce one person to do these four things, you become guru. Is there any difficulty?”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Conversation, 2/8/1976, New Māyāpur)

“Real guru is he who instructs what Kṛṣṇa has said. [...] You have simply to say, ‘This is this.’ That’s all. Is it very difficult task?”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 21/5/1976, Honolulu)

“...‘But I have no qualification. How can I become guru?’ There is no need of qualification [...] ‘Whomever you meet, you simply instruct what Kṛṣṇa has said. That’s all. You become guru.’”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 21/5/1976, Honolulu)

(Astonishingly, some devotees have used such quotes as those above as a justification for “minimally qualified *dīkṣā* gurus”*(1), an entity never once mentioned in any of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, letters, lectures or conversations).

An example of a guru who has no qualification, other than repeating what he has heard, could be found on any *bhakta* induction course in ISKCON. It is perfectly clear therefore that the above are actually invitations to become instructing spiritual masters or *śīkṣā* gurus. We know this since Śrīla Prabhupāda has already explained for us in his books the far more stringent requirements for becoming a *dīkṣā* guru:

“When one has attained the topmost position of *mahā-bhāgavata*, he is to be accepted as a guru and worshiped exactly like Hari, the Personality of Godhead. Only such a person is eligible to occupy the post of a guru.”

(Cc. *Madhya-līlā*, 24.330, purport)

“One should take initiation from a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession who is authorized by his predecessor spiritual master. This is called *dīkṣā-vidhana*.”

(SB, 4.8.54, purport)

In the above quote Śrīla Prabhupāda states that the order to become an initiating guru has to be received specifically from one’s own guru. The general instruction from Lord Caitanya had been present for 500 years. It is obvious then that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not consider “*āmāra ājñāya guru hañā*” to refer specifically to *dīkṣā*, otherwise why would we need yet *another* specific order from our immediate *ācārya*? This general instruction from Lord Caitanya must be referring

to *śikṣā*, not *dīkṣā*, guru. *Dīkṣā* guru is the exception, not the rule. Whereas Śrīla Prabhupāda envisaged millions of *śikṣā* gurus, comprising of men, women and children.

Looking now at category 2):

There were a handful of overly confident devotees, anxious to initiate their own disciples in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s presence, whom Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote letters to. These letters are used to support the M.A.S.S.. Śrīla Prabhupāda had a fairly standard approach when dealing with such ambitious individuals. Generally he told them to keep rigidly trained up, and in the future, after his physical departure, they may accept disciples:

“The first thing, I warn Achyutananda, do not try to initiate. You are not in a proper position now to initiate anyone. [...] Don’t be allured by such maya. I am training you all to become future Spiritual Masters, but do not be in a hurry.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Acyutānanda and Jaya Govinda, 21/8/1968)

“Sometime ago you asked my permission for accepting some disciples, now the time is approaching very soon when you will have many disciples by your strong preaching work.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Acyutānanda, 16/5/1972)

“I have heard that there is some worship of yourself by the other devotees. Of course it is proper to offer obeisances to a Vaishnava, but not in the presence of the spiritual master. After the departure of the spiritual master, [sic] it will come to that stage, but now wait. Otherwise it will create factions.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Hamsadutta, 1/10/1974)

“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 bona fide Spiritual Master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely. That will make me and Krishna very happy.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa, 2/12/1975)

It is interesting to note that whilst *GII* quotes the above “law” in support of the M.A.S.S. doctrine, in the very *same* document it is asserted that it is actually not a law at all:

“There are many such instances in the scriptures about disciples giving initiation in the presence of guru, [...] In the scriptures there is no specific instruction about a disciple not giving initiation when his guru is present.” (*GII*, p. 23)

Eagerness to accept worship and followers is actually a disqualification for a spiritual master. We can only marvel at the power of the false ego, that even in the presence of the most powerful *ācārya* the planet had ever seen, some personalities still felt amply qualified to initiate their own disciples right under Śrīla Prabhupāda’s nose! *(2)

It is apparent that in writing to these devotees, telling them they could take disciples if they just held on a little longer, Śrīla Prabhupāda was simply trying to keep them in devotional service. In so doing there was at least the possibility that, in time, their ambitious mentalities might become purified.

Humble devotees who diligently performed their service in selfless sacrifice to their spiritual master would never have received a letter describing their glowing future as *dikṣā* gurus. Why would Śrīla Prabhupāda only seriously promise *dikṣā* guruship to those who were most ambitious, and hence least qualified?

As far as statements to the effect that they would be free to initiate after his departure, that is true. Just as in England one is free to drive a car once one is 17 years old. However, we must not forget those two little provisos. First, one must be qualified to drive, and second one must be authorised by the driving license authority. The reader may draw his own parallels.

Another letter which is quoted to support the M.A.S.S. states:

“By 1975, all of those who have passed all of the above examinations will be specifically empowered to initiate and increase the number of the Krishna Consciousness population.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Kīrtanānanda, 12/1/1969)

Does the above statement validate the termination of the final order on initiation?

Since this is an attempt to terminate the *ṛtvik* system through the use of personal letters, we shall invoke here Śrīla Prabhupāda’s “law of disciplic succession”. The first part of the “law” states that a disciple must not act as initiating *ācārya* in his own guru’s physical presence. Since this was the “law”, clearly the above letter could not be referring to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples initiating on their own behalf; **Śrīla Prabhupāda was still on the planet in 1975**. We can therefore only conclude that he was already contemplating some sort of “officiating” initiation system as early as 1969. As it turned out, by 1975, Śrīla Prabhupāda had indeed “empowered”, or authorised, devotees such as Kīrtanānanda to chant on beads

and conduct initiations on his behalf. The above letter appears then to be predicting the future use of representatives for the purpose of initiation. Later he called these representatives “*ṛtviks*”, and formalised their function in the July 9th order. Again, it would be foolhardy to suggest that Śrīla Prabhupāda was actually authorising Kīrtanānanda to act as a *sampradāya* initiating *ācārya* as long as he passed a few exams.

“Any one following the order of Lord Chaitanya under the guidance of His bonafide representative, can become a spiritual master and I wish that in my absence all my disciples become the bonafide spiritual master to spread Krishna Consciousness throughout the whole world.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Madhusūdana, 2/11/1967)

Using the quote above, it has been argued that since Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions his disciples becoming spiritual masters in his absence, he must have been referring to *dīkṣā*, since they were already *śīkṣā* gurus. However Śrīla Prabhupāda may simply have been reiterating his general encouragement for all his disciples to become good *śīkṣā* spiritual masters, and that they should continue becoming good *śīkṣā* spiritual masters also in his absence. There is definitely no mention in the above quote of his disciples initiating or accepting their *own* disciples. The term “bona fide spiritual master to spread Kṛṣṇa Consciousness throughout the whole world” is equally applicable to a *śīkṣā* guru.

Even if such letters as these did allude to some other type of guru system, they still could not be used to modify the final July 9th order since these instructions were not repeated to the rest of the Movement. The letters in question were not even published until 1986. It is occasionally alleged that some of these personal letters were leaked out to other members of the Society. This may or may not have been the case, but the important point to note is that the mechanics of such distribution appears never to have been set up or personally approved by Śrīla Prabhupāda. We have seen no evidence that Śrīla Prabhupāda ever ordered his private correspondence to be distributed to all and sundry. He once casually suggested his letters could be published “if there was time”, but he never intimated that without these documents no-one would know how to properly operate the M.A.S.S. on his departure.

To form a case regarding what should have been done in 1977, one can only use evidence that was readily available in an authorised form at that time. If such letters really held the key to how he planned initiations to be run for up to ten thousand years, surely Śrīla Prabhupāda would have made their publication, and mass distribution, a matter of utmost urgency. There was, after all, the reasonable possibility that not all his leaders had read his private correspondence, and as a result not gained a clear understanding of precisely how initiations were to run

after his departure. We know this to be more than a possibility since the entire GBC still had no idea what Śrīla Prabhupāda was planning as late on as May 28th, 1977 (please see May 28th conversation in Appendices, p.127).

In light of the above, any attempt to modify the July 9th order on the basis of this handful of letters can only be deemed recklessly inappropriate. Had such letters been vital appendices to his final order then Śrīla Prabhupāda would certainly have made that clear in the order itself or in some accompanying document.

In the end, the only position granted to anyone as far as initiations were concerned, was as representatives of the *ācārya*, *ṛviks*.

Finally we shall look at category 3):

There are various statements in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and lectures which have been extracted to justify the disbanding of the *ṛvik* system. We shall now examine this evidence.

In Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, all we find are the qualifications of a *dīkṣā* guru stated in general terms. There is no specific mention of his own disciples continuing to go on to become *dīkṣā* gurus. Rather, the quotes merely reiterate the point that one must be highly qualified and authorised before even attempting to become *dīkṣā* guru:

“One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master. And one cannot be a bona fide and authorized spiritual master unless one has been strictly obedient to his spiritual master.” (SB, 2.9.43, purport)

The above injunction hardly gives *carte-blanche* for anyone to initiate just because their guru has left the planet. The concept of the guru leaving the planet is not even mentioned here; only the idea that they must be authorised and have been strictly obedient. We also know that they must have first attained the platform of *mahā-bhāgavata*.

Some devotees point to the section in *Easy Journey to Other Planets* (p.32) dealing with “**monitor gurus**” as evidence supporting the M.A.S.S., and the resultant dismantling of the *ṛvik* system. However, this clever classroom analogy is clearly defining the position of *śikṣā*, not *dīkṣā*, gurus. In this passage the monitor acts on behalf of the teacher. He is not a teacher himself. He may become qualified as a teacher, but that is a process, and is not described as automatic on the departure of the teacher (who obviously corresponds to the *dīkṣā* guru). A monitor guru can only have, by definition, *śikṣā* disciples; and a limited number at that. Once such a monitor has become qualified, i.e. attained the platform of *mahā-bhāgavata*, and then been authorised by his predecessor *ācārya*, there is no sense in calling him a monitor any longer; he will be a teacher

in his own right. Once he is a teacher in his own right, he may accept unlimited disciples. So the monitor is the *śikṣā* guru, the teacher is the *dikṣā* guru, and by strictly following the *dikṣā* guru, the *śikṣā* guru may gradually rise to the platform necessary before *dikṣā* authorisation can theoretically take place. Furthermore, a monitor merely assists the teacher whilst the teacher is present. This again would be at variance with the “law” of disciplic succession, used to support the M.A.S.S. system, were the monitors actually *dikṣā* gurus. In other words, a monitor is not an entity that comes into being to replace or succeed the teacher, but exists to run in parallel or alongside him.

Certainly the monitor system in no way supports the GBC’s a) and b) assumptions: that the *ṛtvik* system was meant to stop at Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure, and that the *ṛtviks* could then automatically become *dikṣā* gurus.

There are other occasions, outside of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s personal letters, which are quoted as giving authorisation for his disciples to become *dikṣā* gurus:

“Now, tenth, eleventh, twelfth... My Guru Mahārāja is tenth from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, I am eleventh, you are the twelfth. So distribute this knowledge.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 18/5/1972, Los Angeles)

“At the same time, I shall request them all to become spiritual master. Every one of you should be spiritual master next.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda *Vyāsa-pūjā* Address, 5/9/1969, Hamburg)

The first quote clearly mentions that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples are *already* the twelfth—“you *are* the twelfth”. Thus this is not some authorisation for them to become *dikṣā* gurus in the future, but merely a statement that they are already carrying on the message of the *paramparā*. The second quote is in a similar vein. It undoubtedly mentions that his disciples are next in line. But as the first quote states, that succession had already taken place by dint of the disciples’ vigorous preaching. Either way, there is no clear, explicit order to take disciples, but simply to preach. Just because he was asking his disciples to become spiritual masters next, does not mean he wanted them to become *initiating* spiritual masters next. To insist that he did mean this is pure speculation. In fact, we know it is *wrong* since the final order made it clear that his disciples were only to act as representatives of the *ācārya*, and not in any type of initiating or *dikṣā* capacity.

To argue that such statements must override the final order is insupportable, and easily counteracted by quoting other statements made by Śrīla Prabhupāda, specifically in relation to what would happen after his departure, which completely contradict the proposition being made:

Reporter: “What will happen to the movement in the United States when you die?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “I will never die.”

Devotees: “*Jaya! Haribol!*” (Laughter.)

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “I shall live for my books, and you will utilise.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Press Conference, 16/7/1975, San Francisco)

Here was a clear opportunity for Śrīla Prabhupāda to lay out his plans for the M.A.S.S. were that to be his intention. But instead of stating that his disciples will succeed him as *dīkṣā* gurus, he says he shall never die and his books will do the necessary. From the above exchange it can be understood Śrīla Prabhupāda is a *living* spiritual master who continues to impart transcendental knowledge (the main constituent of *dīkṣā*) through his books; and that this will continue for as long as ISKCON exists. The role of his disciples was to facilitate the process.

“Don’t become premature *ācārya*. First of all follow the orders of *ācārya*, and you become mature. Then it is better to become *ācārya*. Because we are interested in preparing *ācārya*, but the etiquette is, at least for the period the guru is present, one should not become *ācārya*. 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 *ācārya*.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Cc. Lecture, 6/4/1975, Māyāpur)

The quote above does mention the principle of his disciples going on to become *ācārya*. However, the whole emphasis is that they should not do it *now*. In fact Śrīla Prabhupāda only seems to mention the principle of his disciples becoming *ācārya* if he is cautioning them not to do it in his presence. This is in a similar vein to the personal letters mentioned above. This is clearly not a specific order for any particular individuals to take their own disciples, but rather a general statement of principle. As will be seen later in the “Appointment Tape” (p. 33), which is used in *GII* as principle evidence for the M.A.S.S. system, Śrīla Prabhupāda still had not given the *dīkṣā* guru order even as late as May 1977 (“*On my order, [...] But by my order, [...] When I order*”). And this situation remained unchanged until his departure. Furthermore, later on in the same lecture, he encourages his disciples to channel these *ācārya* ambitions in the following manner:

“And to become *ācārya* is not very difficult. [...] *āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra’ei deśa, yāre dekha, tāre kaha ‘krṣṇa’-upadeśa:* “By following My order, you become guru.” [...] 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.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Cc. Lecture, 6/4/1975, Māyāpur)

It has already been demonstrated that Lord Caitanya’s instruction was for everyone to preach vigorously, make lots of Kṛṣṇa conscious followers, but *not* to take disciples. This point is reinforced where Śrīla Prabhupāda encourages his disciples to make many more devotees. It is significant that Śrīla Prabhupāda states “suppose you have got *now* ten thousand...” (i.e. in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s presence). From this it is clear he is talking about Kṛṣṇa conscious followers, not “disciples of his disciples”, since the main point of the lecture was that they should not initiate in his presence. The implication being then, that just as at that time there may have been around ten thousand followers of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, so in the future millions more would be added. The *ṛtvik* system was to ensure that when these followers became suitably qualified for initiation, they could receive *dīkṣā* from Śrīla Prabhupāda, just as they could when he gave the above lecture.

In conclusion

There is no evidence of Śrīla Prabhupāda issuing specific orders for his disciples to become *dīkṣā* gurus, thus setting up an alternative to the *ṛtvik* system.

What we *do* have is a handful of (at the time) unpublished personal letters, sent only to individuals desirous of becoming *dīkṣā* gurus even in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s presence, sometimes having only recently joined the Movement. In such cases they are told to wait until Śrīla Prabhupāda leaves the planet before they fulfil their ambitions. The very fact that they were unpublished at the time of the July 9th letter means that they were not intended to have any direct bearing on the future of initiation within ISKCON.

Furthermore, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and conversations only contain instructions for his disciples to be *śikṣā* gurus. Though the general principle of a disciple becoming a *dīkṣā* guru is mentioned, Śrīla Prabhupāda does not specifically order his disciples to initiate and take their own disciples.

The above quotes can in no way supplant the explicit instruction of July 9th, an order that was distributed to the whole Movement as a specific policy document. *There is clearly no equivalent document outlining the M.A.S.S.*

Thus the idea that Śrīla Prabhupāda had taught far and wide that all his disciples should become *dīkṣā* gurus, immediately on his departure, shortly after or indeed ever, is nothing but a myth.

It is commonly stated that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not need to spell out in the July 9th letter what was to be done about future initiations, since he had already explained again and again in his books, letters, lectures, and conversations

precisely what he wanted to happen. Sadly this assertion, apart from being totally false, merely raises further absurdities:

- If Śrīla Prabhupāda’s previous teachings on how he wanted to continue initiations in his absence were really so crystalline clear that he saw no need to issue a specific directive on the matter, why then did the GBC send a special delegation to his bedside in the first place? A delegation whose principal objective it was to find out what was to be done about initiations “particularly” at that time when he was no longer with them! (Please see “Appointment tape”, p. 33). Śrīla Prabhupāda was in ill health, about to leave his body, and here we have his most senior men asking him elementary questions which he had supposedly already answered scores of times over the preceding decade.
- If Śrīla Prabhupāda had clearly spelled out the M.A.S.S. system, why did he leave so little instruction on how to set it up that shortly after his departure his most senior men felt compelled to question Sridhar Mahārāja (of the Gauḍīya Maṭha) on how to operate it?
- If it really was so clear to everyone precisely how Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted everyone to become *dīkṣā* guru, then why did the GBC set up the zonal *ācārya* system where *dīkṣā* guruship was strictly limited, and allow it to run for almost an entire decade?

Although we have been somewhat critical of the GBC’s paper *GII*, there is one passage in it relating to this issue which we feel totally encapsulates the mood that will re-unite Śrīla Prabhupāda’s family:

“A disciple’s only duty is to worship and serve his spiritual master. His mind should not be agitated over how he may become a guru. A devotee who sincerely wants to make spiritual advancement should try to become a disciple, not a spiritual master.”

(*GII*, p. 25, GBC 1995, emphasis added).

We could not agree more.

* (1) This interpretation is advocated in Ajāmila dāsa’ paper “Regular or *Rtvik*”, published in the GBC’s *ISKCON Journal*, 1990.

* (2) We would like to point out that most of the devotees mentioned above have since recognised their faults, and thus we apologise for any offence or embarrassment we may have caused. Perhaps they may appreciate the fact that personal letters sent by Śrīla Prabhupāda, to specifically address their individual *anarthas*, are currently being used to support the M.A.S.S. within ISKCON.

8. “Maybe there is some śāstric principle in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books that forbids the granting of *dīkṣā* when the guru is not on the same planet as the disciple?”

There is no such statement in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, and since Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books contain all essential śāstric principles, such a restriction simply can not exist in our philosophy.

The use of a *ṛtvik* system after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure would actually be in line with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s many instructions stating the immateriality of physical association in the guru-disciple relationship (please see Appendices). After reading these quotes one can see how some members of the GBC have presented a somewhat different picture over the years:

“Śrīla Prabhupāda has taught us that the disciplic succession is a living affair [...] The law of the disciplic succession is that one approaches a *living* spiritual master—Living in the sense of being physically present.”

(Śivarāma Swami, *ISKCON Journal*, p. 31, GBC 1990)

It is hard to reconcile the above assertion with statements such as:

“Physical presence is not important.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Room Conversation, 6/10/1977, Vṛndāvana)

or

“Physical presence is immaterial”.

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter, 19/1/1967)

Of course, we must have a guru who is external, since in the conditioned stage pure reliance on the Supersoul is not possible, but nowhere does Śrīla Prabhupāda teach that this physical guru must also be physically present:

“Therefore we must take advantage of the *vāñī*, not the physical presence.”

(*Cc. Antya-līlā*, concluding words)

Śrīla Prabhupāda practically demonstrated this principle by initiating large numbers of his disciples without ever meeting them physically at all. This fact in itself proves that *dīkṣā* can be obtained without any physical involvement from the guru. There is nothing in *śāstra*, or from Śrīla Prabhupāda, linking *dīkṣā* with physical presence. Therefore, the continuation of the *ṛtvik* system is perfectly consistent with both *śāstra* and the example our *ācārya* set whilst he was physically present.

In one of the main sections on *dīkṣā* in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, it is stated that

the only requirement for receiving it is the agreement of the guru. This agreement was totally delegated to the *ṛtviks*:

“So without waiting for me, wherever you consider it is right... That will depend on discretion.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Room Conversation, 7/7/1977, Vṛndāvana)

Śrīla Prabhupāda instructs us that:

“As far as the time of *dīkṣā* (initiation) is concerned, everything depends on the position of the guru. [...] If the *sad-guru*, the bona fide spiritual master, agrees, one can be initiated immediately, without waiting for a suitable time or place.”

(*Cc. Madhya-līlā*, 24.331, purport)

It is significant to note that there is no stipulation that the *dīkṣā* guru and the prospective disciple must have physical contact, or that the *dīkṣā* guru has to be physically present to give his agreement (it is also interesting that Śrīla Prabhupāda equates the term *sad-guru* with the term *dīkṣā* guru). Śrīla Prabhupāda has stated many times that the requirement for being initiated is simply to abide by the rules and regulations he had taught over and over again:

“This is the process of initiation. The disciple must admit that he will no longer commit sinful activity [...] He promises to execute the order of the spiritual master. Then the spiritual master takes care of him and elevates him to spiritual emancipation.”

(*Cc. Madhya-līlā*, 24.256, purport)

Devotee: “How important is formal initiation?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Formal initiation means to accept, officially, to abide by the orders of Kṛṣṇa and His representative. That is formal initiation.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 22/2/1973, Auckland)

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Who is my disciple? First of all let him follow strictly the disciplined rules.”

Disciple: “As long as one is following, then he is...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Then he is all right.”

(Morning Walk, 13/6/1976, Detroit)

“...unless there is discipline, there is no question of disciple. Disciple means one who follows the discipline.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda, Morning Walk, 8/3/1976, Māyāpur)

Does the definition of the word *dikṣā* imply a connection with the guru being physically present on the planet?

“Dikṣā is the process by which one can awaken his transcendental knowledge and vanquish all reactions caused by sinful activity. A person expert in the study of the revealed scriptures knows this process as dikṣā.”

(Cc. *Madhya-lilā*, 15.108, purport)

Please also see “*Dikṣā*” diagram, p. 92.

There is nothing in this definition of *dikṣā* that in any way implies that the guru needs to be on the same planet as the disciple in order for it to work properly. Conversely, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions and personal example prove categorically that the elements that constitute *dikṣā* can be utilised without the need for the guru’s physical involvement:

“Reception of spiritual knowledge is never checked by any material condition.”

(SB, 7.7.1, purport)

“The potency of transcendental sound is never minimized because the vibrator is apparently absent.”

(SB, 2.9.8, purport)

Thus, all the elements of *dikṣā*—transcendental knowledge, the receiving of the *mantra* etc.—can be effectively delivered without the guru’s physical presence.

In summary, it can be shown conclusively that there is no śāstric principle mentioned in any of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books that precludes the granting of *dikṣā* once the guru leaves the earth planet. Although historical precedent is sometimes cited as an objection, historical precedent is *not* a śāstric principle. Though historical precedent may serve as evidence of the application of a śāstric principle, the lack of an historical precedent does not necessarily prove that a śāstric principle has been violated. Thus, our philosophy is based on following śāstric injunctions, not historical tradition. This is the very thing that distinguishes ISKCON from virtually every other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava group. There are many influential *smārta-brāhmaṇas* in India who strongly criticise the lack of adherence to tradition exhibited by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śāstric statements, along with the practical example of Śrīla Prabhupāda himself, fully support the principle that *dikṣā* is not dependent in any way on the guru’s physical presence.

9. “Since this instruction would lead to the setting up of a system that is unprecedented, and has no historical basis, it should be rejected.”

This can not be a reason to reject the July 9th order since Śrīla Prabhupāda set many precedents—reducing the number of required rounds of *japa* from sixty four to sixteen, performing marriages, allowing women to live in the temples, giving *gāyatrī mantra* by tape, etc. Indeed, it is a distinguishing feature of *ācāryas* in our line that, practically without exception, they set their own historical precedents. As *ācāryas*, it is their prerogative to do this; albeit in accordance with śāstric principles. As already stated, the use of *ṛtviks* without the guru’s physical presence on the planet does not violate any śāstric principle. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books contain all essential śāstric principles, and since there is no mention in his books of the guru needing to be on the planet at the time of initiation, it cannot be a principle. Thus the historical precedent of continuing to use *ṛtviks* after his departure can only be a change in detail, not in principle.

Śrīla Prabhupāda did many things, particularly connected with initiation, which were unprecedented, yet we do not reject them (please see box on page 48). It may be argued that he explained some of these changes in his books. This is true, but there were many he did not explain in his books. Besides, there was no need to give detailed explanations of the *ṛtvik* system in his books since he had practically demonstrated prototypes of it for many years, with the final touches of how it was to continue fully elucidated in the July 9th order. Śrīla Prabhupāda never taught us to just blindly follow tradition:

“Our only tradition is how to satisfy Viṣṇu.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Bg. Lecture, 30/7/1973, London)

“No. Tradition, religion, they are all material. They are also all designation.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Room Conversation, 13/3/1975, Tehran)

Whether precisely the same orders we received from Śrīla Prabhupāda were ever issued by a previous *ācārya* is utterly irrelevant. Our only duty is to follow the orders given to us by our own *ācārya*.

If a system of initiation can be rejected solely on the grounds that it has no exact historical precedent, then we would certainly be forced to reject the current guru system within ISKCON by the same token.

Never before has a plethora of *dīkṣā* gurus been subordinate to a committee that could suspend or terminate their initiating activities. No previous initiating guru in our line has ever been voted into office with a two-thirds majority vote, nor

subsequently fallen prey to gross sinful activity and as a consequence been hastily withdrawn from the “disciplic succession”. We reject such irregular practices, not on the grounds of historical precedent, but because they clash violently with many of the basic tenets of Vaiṣṇava philosophy found in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, and are in blatant violation of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s final order.

The fact that the identical system to *ṛtvik* is not directly mentioned in *śāstra*, or ancient Vedic texts, is also not pertinent. According to some Vedic rules, *śūdras* and women should not even receive *brāhmaṇa* initiation at all:

“Dikṣā cannot be offered to a śūdra [...] This initiation is offered not according to the Vedic rules, because it is very difficult to find out a qualified brāhmaṇa.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Bg. Lecture, 29/3/1971, Bombay)

Thus, strictly speaking, Śrīla Prabhupāda should not have initiated any of his western disciples since they were all born lower than the lowest Vedic caste. Śrīla Prabhupāda was able to over-rule such Vedic laws through the invocation of higher order śāstric injunctions. He sometimes exercised these injunctions in ways that had never been applied before:

“As Hari is not subject to the criticism of mundane rules and regulations, the spiritual master empowered by Him is also not subjected.”

(Cc. *Madhya-lilā*, 10.136, purport)

“Therefore the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and Īśvara Purī is not subjected to any Vedic rules and regulations.”

(Cc. *Madhya-lilā*, 10.137)

The important point is that although the *ṛtvik* system may be totally unique (at least as far as we know), it does not violate higher order śāstric principles. It is testament to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s genius that he was able to mercifully apply such śāstric principles in new and novel ways according to time, place and circumstance.

Perhaps we have yet to fully grasp just how unique Śrīla Prabhupāda is. There has never been a world *ācārya* before. No previous *ācārya* has ever stated that his books would be the law books for ten thousand years. There has never been anything like ISKCON before. Why should we be so surprised that such an unprecedented personality might decide to set up a seemingly unusual initiation system?

10. “Since there is no specific mention of the *ṛtvik* system prior to July 9th, 1977, it could not possibly have been intended to continue past Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance.”

This objection rests on the premise that Śrīla Prabhupāda would never “spring” anything new on the Movement. Taken literally, this objection is absurd, for it means that any order from the guru can be rejected if it is new, or even just a bit different from ones issued previously. It infers that in his final months Śrīla Prabhupāda should not have delivered far-reaching instructions regarding his Society, unless everyone was already familiar with them.

As we have explained, the *ṛtvik* system was not “new” anyway. Prior to the July 9th letter, the experience of *dīkṣā* initiation in the Movement would have predominantly been through the use of representatives. Śrīla Prabhupāda was the *dīkṣā* guru in ISKCON, and most initiation ceremonies, particularly in the later years, were performed by a Temple President or some other representative or priest.

The most notable difference after July 9th, 1977 was that the acceptance of new disciples would now be done by representatives without recourse to Śrīla Prabhupāda. The letter which was sent out to new initiates would no longer be signed by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and the selection of all the initiates’ names would be done by the *ṛtviks*. Also the procedure was now linked with the relatively unfamiliar word—“*ṛtvik*”.

To get connected to the bona fide *ācārya* through the use of representatives was the experience of initiation familiar to thousands of disciples. The July 9th letter defines the word “*ṛtvik*” as meaning “representative of the *ācārya*”. Clearly the system of being initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda through the use of representatives was nothing “new” at all. It was merely the continuation of what Śrīla Prabhupāda had taught and put in practice as soon as his Movement reached a state of rapid growth.

Why should it have come as such a great shock that this system would continue beyond November 14th, 1977?

Although unfamiliar to many, the word “*ṛtvik*” was not new either. The word and its derivatives had already been defined 31 times by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his books. What was “new” was that the system which had already been in existence for many years was now put in writing with the necessary adjustments for the future. Hardly surprising, since Śrīla Prabhupāda was at this time issuing many documents in writing regarding the future of his Movement. This arrangement was actually a re-endorsement of a system that everyone had already come to consider as standard practice.

Ironically, what was really “new” was the curious metamorphosis of the *ṛtviks* into the “material and spiritual pure successor *ācāryas*” to Śrīla Prabhupāda. This particular innovation came as such a shock that many hundreds of disciples left the Movement shortly after its implementation, with thousands to follow them.

Summary

We have demonstrated that there is no direct evidence supporting the termination of the *ṛtvik* system on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure, nor the subsequent transformation of the *ṛtviks* into *dīkṣā* gurus—assumptions a) and b). Even if there was extremely strong indirect evidence supporting a) and b), it would still be debatable whether it could actually supplant the direct evidence, since this usually takes precedence. However, as just demonstrated, there is not even a shred of indirect evidence supporting the discarding of the *ṛtvik* system on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure. Thus:

1. An instruction was issued to the whole Movement to be followed – **Direct evidence.**
2. An examination of the instruction itself, as well as other supporting and subsequent instructions, only supports the continuation of the *ṛtvik* system—**Direct evidence.**
3. There is **no direct evidence** of Śrīla Prabhupāda specifically ordering the termination of the *ṛtvik* system upon his departure.
4. There is also **no indirect evidence** on the basis of the instruction, *śāstra*, other instructions, special circumstances, the background, the nature and the context of the instruction, or anything else we can conceive of, that gives valid grounds for stopping the *ṛtvik* system at the time of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure. Interestingly, in examining these other factors we find only further indirect evidence *supporting* the continued application of the order.

In view of the above analysis, we humbly submit that the revoking of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s final instruction regarding initiation on November 14th, 1977, was at best an arbitrary and unauthorised act. We can find no evidence to support assumptions a) and b) which, as we have said, form the very foundation of ISKCON’s current guru policy. To re-comply with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s original order is our only option as disciples, followers and servants of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

To further assist with this compliance we will now go through the May 28th conversation and a number of related objections that appear to have given rise to confusion.

The “Appointment Tape”

The GBC claims in *GII* that the sole justification for modifications a) & b) to the final July 9th order comes from a taped room conversation which took place in Vṛndāvana on May 28th, 1977. These modifications are given below for reference:

Modification a): That the appointment of representatives or *ṛtviks* was only temporary, specifically to be terminated on the departure of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Modification b): Having ceased their representational function, the *ṛtviks* would automatically become *dīkṣā* gurus, initiating persons as their own disciples, not Śrīla Prabhupāda’s.

This section therefore will be dedicated to a close scrutiny of the May 28th conversation to see if it can be legitimately used to modify the final order in terms of a) and b) above.

Since the entire GBC position rests on just this one piece of evidence it is quite worrying that they have already published at least *four* different officially sanctioned versions, or transcripts, of this very same evidence. These differing transcripts appeared in the following publications:

1983: *Śrīla Prabhupāda-Līlāmṛta*, Vol 6 (Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, BBT)

1985: *Under My Order* (Ravindra-svarūpa dāsa)

1990: *ISKCON Journal* (GBC)

1995: *Gurus and Initiation in ISKCON* (GBC)

To be presented with four different versions of the same taped conversation in itself raises a number of serious questions. For example, it would not be unreasonable to ask, which is the correct version? Why are there differing versions in the first place? Is the transcript a composite of more than one conversation? Has the tape itself been edited from more than one conversation? Has there been more than one version of the tape released? If so, can we be sure that any version is true to any actual conversation? Thus already, even before the evidence is examined, we are placed in the invidious position of being expected to modify a signed letter through the analysis of tape transcripts, over which hang serious questions of authenticity.

However, for the purpose of examining the tape we shall use a composite of the four different transcripts. So here is the conversation, with the variations in brackets:

- (1) **Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami:** Then our next question concerns initiation(s) in the future,
- (2) particularly at that time when you are (you're) no longer with us. We want to know how
- (3) (a) first and second initiation(s) would be conducted.
- (4) **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up
- (5) I shall recommend some of you to act as *officiating ācārya(s)*.
- (6) **Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami:** Is that called *ṛtvik ācārya*?
- (7) **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** *Ṛtvik*. Yes. (Yes, *ṛtvik*)
- (8) **Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami:** (Then) What is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and (the)...
- (9) **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** He's guru. He's guru. (He is guru.)
- (10) **Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami:** But he does it on your behalf.
- (11) **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. That is formality. Because in my presence one should not become guru,
- (12) so on my behalf. On my order, *āmāra ājñāya guru (hañā)*, (he is) (be) actually guru.
- (13) But by (on) my order.
- (14) **Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami:** So (then) (they) (they'll) (may) also be considered your disciples?
- (15) **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, they are (their) disciples, (but) (why) consider who
- (16) **Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami:** No. He's (he is) asking that these *ṛtvik ācāryas*, they are (they're) officiating, giving *dikṣā*,
- (17) (Their)... the people who they give *dikṣā* to, whose disciples are they?
- (18) **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** They are (They're) his disciples (the disciples of the one who is initiating).
- (19) **Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami:** They are (They're) his disciples (?)
- (20) **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Who is initiating. (And they are my) (his) (he is) granddisciple(s)...

- (21) **Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami:** (Yes)
- (22) **Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami:** (That’s clear)
- (23) **Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami:** (Let’s go on)
- (24) **Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami:** Then we have a question concerning ...
- (25) **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** When I order you (to) become guru, he (you) become(s) regular guru.
- (26) That’s all. He (And they) become(s) (the) disciple(s) of my disciple. (That’s it). (Just see).

As we have previously mentioned, neither the July 9th order, nor any subsequent document signed by Śrīla Prabhupāda, ever *explicitly* refers back to the above conversation. This is quite peculiar since the central argument of *GII* is that this brief exchange of words is absolutely crucial to the proper understanding of the July 9th order.

This was not the regular way in which Śrīla Prabhupāda issued instructions to his vast worldwide organisation, i.e. by releasing incomplete and misleading written directives, which could only be properly understood by rummaging through old taped conversations.

When one considers the magnitude of the order in question, namely the continuation of the *saṅkīrtan* mission for up to ten thousand years, and what happened to the Gauḍīya Maṭha over precisely this issue, it seems inconceivable that Śrīla Prabhupāda would have managed things in this way. However, this is what we must believe if we are to accept the present GBC position. Let us now proceed carefully through the composite transcript, paying particular attention to all the lines which *GII* claims support the above mentioned modifications to the July 9th order.

Lines 1-3: Here Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami asks Śrīla Prabhupāda a specific question regarding how initiations will run in the future – **“particularly at that time when you are no longer with us”**. Whatever answer Śrīla Prabhupāda gives, we know it will be particularly relevant to after his departure, since that is the time frame Satsvarūpa is clearly concerned with, i.e. – **“when you are no longer with us”**.

Lines 4-7: Here Śrīla Prabhupāda answers Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami’s question. He says he will be appointing some disciples to act as “officiating *ācārya*”, or “*ṛtvik*”. Having clearly answered the question, Śrīla Prabhupāda remains silent.

He offers no further elaboration at this point, nor does he qualify, nor attempt to

qualify his answer. We therefore must assume that this was his answer. The only alternatives to this view are either:

1) Śrīla Prabhupāda deliberately answered the question incorrectly or misleadingly,

Or

2) He did not hear the question properly and thought that Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami was only asking about what was to be done whilst he was still present.

No disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda would even consider option 1), and if option 2) were the case, then the conversation can tell us nothing about the future of initiation for after his departure; hence we would still be left with an unmodified July 9th order as his only statement on future initiations.

Sometimes people have argued that the full answer is only properly revealed, piecemeal as it were, throughout the rest of the conversation. The problem with this proposition is that, in issuing instructions in such a manner, Śrīla Prabhupāda would only correctly answer the original question posed by Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami if the following conditions were satisfied:

- That somebody took it upon himself to ask more questions.
- That by sheer luck they would happen upon the right questions to get the correct answer to Satsvarūpa Mahārāja's original question.

This would be an eccentric way for anyone to answer a question, not to speak of direct a worldwide organisation, and was certainly not Śrīla Prabhupāda's style. Indeed if, as is being proposed by the GBC, he went to all the trouble of issuing a letter to the whole Movement with instructions on initiation which were only to have relevance for four months, surely he would not have dealt in such an obscurist manner with instructions which could run for as long as ten thousand years.

Clearly if we are looking to this transcript to incontrovertibly support modifications a) & b) we are not doing very well so far. Śrīla Prabhupāda is asked what will happen about initiations, particularly when he leaves: he answers he will be appointing *ṛtviks*. This completely contradicts both of the GBC's proposed modifications and simply reinforces the idea that the July 9th order was meant to run "henceforward". Let us read on:

Lines 8-9: Here Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami asks what relationship the **initiator** has with the person being initiated. Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami does not quite finish his question when Śrīla Prabhupāda immediately answers "he is guru".

Since *ṛtviks*, by definition, are *not* the initiators, Śrīla Prabhupāda can only have been referring to himself as the “guru” of those being initiated. This is confirmed in the July 9th letter where it states *three* times that those being initiated were to be the “disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda”.

Sometimes the curious theory is put forward that when Śrīla Prabhupāda says: “he is guru”, he is really talking about the *ṛtviks* themselves. This is quite bizarre since Śrīla Prabhupāda has only just defined the word *ṛtvik* as “officiating *ācārya*”—literally a priest who conducts some type of religious or ceremonial function. In the July 9th letter Śrīla Prabhupāda clarifies precisely what ceremonial function these priests will conduct. They were supposed to give spiritual names to new initiates, and in the case of second initiation, chant on their *gāyatrī* thread—all on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s behalf. That was it. There is no mention of them being *dīkṣā* gurus, initiating their own disciples or being Spiritual Masters on their own behalf. The letter specifically defines *ṛtvik* as “representative of the *ācārya*”. They were to act on behalf of the *ācārya*, not as *ācāryas* in their own right. This being the case, why would Śrīla Prabhupāda cloud the issue by calling the *ṛtviks* “guru”? If they were initiating gurus all along, why not just call them that to save confusion?

When discussing philosophical or managerial issues surrounding his position as *ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda would often speak of himself in the third person. It is particularly understandable that he should do so here since Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami’s questions at this point are posed in the third person.

Thus the conversation can only make sense if we take it that Śrīla Prabhupāda is the “guru” who was initiating new disciples, through his representatives, the *ṛtviks*.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda’s answers are quite clear and consistent, it does seem as though there is some confusion in the mind of the questioner at this point. This is where Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami asks on **line 10** – “**But he does it on your behalf**”. The “he” Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami is referring to is the *ṛtvik*, whereas the “he” that Śrīla Prabhupāda was referring to, as we have shown, could only have been himself, since he is the only *initiator* within the *ṛtvik* system. Despite his disciple’s apparent confusion, Śrīla Prabhupāda deftly adapts his next answer to match Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami’s actual concern, namely the status of these future *ṛtviks*.

Lines 11-13: This is where it is claimed in *GII* that there is evidence for modification a). Before considering whether or not these lines do constitute such evidence, we should first remember the analysis of **lines 1-7**.

If **lines 11-13** do establish modification a), this will only be at the expense of

contradicting **lines 1-7** where Śrīla Prabhupāda has already clearly answered that *ṛtviks* were to be appointed “particularly” for after his departure. So if indeed modification a) is established in lines 11-13, the implication is that Śrīla Prabhupāda contradicted a statement he himself made just moments before. Should this be the case it would once more render the transcript useless for determining anything about future initiations, since two totally contradictory positions would be equally validated in the same conversation. Again we would be forced to refer back to the final July 9th order in an unmodified condition.

Let us see if this did in fact happen. Remember we are looking for a specific statement that the *ṛtviks* must cease their duties once Śrīla Prabhupāda departs. In other words, that they can *only* operate in his presence.

On reading lines **11-13** we see that all that is stated is that the *ṛtviks* must operate in his presence because in his presence they cannot be guru. Thus Śrīla Prabhupāda is simply re-stating a principle he occasionally invoked in his dealings with ambitious disciples: that in the presence of the guru one must act only on his behalf. However, what Śrīla Prabhupāda does not say is that this “acting on his behalf” *must* cease once he leaves the planet. He also does not say that “acting on his behalf” can *only* happen whilst he is present. Indeed, nowhere thus far has he directly linked his physical presence in any way with the concept of acting on his behalf, but rather simply states it as a reason that prevents his disciples from being guru. It is this “not being guru” which is linked to acting as a *ṛtvik*.

In other words, at the time of this conversation, one of the reasons they could not be *dikṣā* guru was Śrīla Prabhupāda’s physical presence. But this is not the only hurdle preventing his disciples from taking on the *dikṣā* guru mantle, as we learn on the very next line.

On **line 12** we see that being guru also depends on receiving a specific order from Śrīla Prabhupāda—“*On my order*”. He repeats this condition on **line 13**—“*But by my order*”, and once more on **line 25**—“*When I order*”. It is quite clear then that this cannot be the order proper, otherwise why say: “*When I order*”? If this were the actual order to become guru after his departure, as the GBC maintains, then surely he would have said something like: “*I am now ordering you, that as soon as I leave, you stop being ṛtviks and become dikṣā gurus*”. Such a statement would certainly lend some credibility to the current GBC position and the M.A.S.S. doctrine. However, as can be seen, nothing even remotely resembling such a statement can be found anywhere in the May 28th conversation.

It is further argued that the use of the “*āmāra ājñāya*” verse at this point means that the order to be *dikṣā* guru had already been given, since this order from Lord Caitanya had been repeated many times by Śrīla Prabhupāda. However, the

“*āmāra ājñāya*” order, as we have seen, refers only to *śikṣā* guru; we know that the order to become *dikṣā* guru had not yet been given since Śrīla Prabhupāda states: “*When I order*”. Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s use of the verse at this point is simply to convey the notion of an order needing to be given before guruship, of whatever type, is taken up.

There is certainly nothing on **lines 11-13** that in any way modifies Śrīla Prabhupāda’s clear reply to Satsvarūpa’s original question (**lines 1-7**). Thus our understanding of **lines 1-7** remains intact. Śrīla Prabhupāda did not contradict himself, the July 9th order stands so far unmodified.

What **lines 11-13** do establish is that the *ṛtvik* system was to operate whilst Śrīla Prabhupāda was still present, but not that it can *only* operate whilst he is present. The July 9th letter makes this clear anyway by the use of the word “henceforward”. The word “henceforward” encompasses all time frames from that day onwards, regardless of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s physical proximity. Let us read on.

Lines 14-15: Interestingly, at this point Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami asks a question using the second person: “**So then they’ll also be considered your disciples?**” Śrīla Prabhupāda answers: “**Yes, they are disciples...**” once more confirming the ownership of any future disciples. Although it is not clear what Śrīla Prabhupāda is going on to say, his initial answer is quite definite. He is asked a direct question, about his own position, and he answers “Yes”.

If the GBC had any hope of upholding modifications a) & b), Śrīla Prabhupāda would have had to answer this question something along the lines of: “*No, they are not my disciples.*” Whatever Śrīla Prabhupāda was going on to say is irrelevant since no one can ever know. We only know that when asked whether future initiates were to be his disciples, he answered: “Yes”; again, not a good sign for modifications a) & b).

Lines 16-18: Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami seems to sense some confusion here and interrupts Śrīla Prabhupāda. He further clarifies Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami’s question by asking Śrīla Prabhupāda whose disciples are those who are being given *dikṣā* by the *ṛtviks*. Once again Śrīla Prabhupāda answers in the third person (having been asked the question in the third person): “*They are his disciples*”. As we have discussed, he can only be referring to *himself* since *ṛtviks* do not, by definition, possess their own disciples. Furthermore, we know that he was definitely referring to himself since he answers the question in the singular (“*his disciples...who is initiating*”), having been asked the question about the *ṛtviks* in the plural (“*these ṛtvik-ācāryas*”).

One idea, which is sometimes put forward, is that at this point in the conversation Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami is asking the question in some vaguely futuristic sense,

about an unspecified time frame in which the *ṛtviks* have somehow transformed themselves into *dīkṣā* gurus. According to this theory, when Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is now presumably mystically attuned to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami's mind-set, answers that future initiates are "his disciples", what he actually means is that they are disciples of the *ṛtviks*, who are now not *ṛtviks* at all, but *dīkṣā* gurus. Leaving aside the fact that this fanciful "meeting of minds" is both unlikely and highly speculative, there is at least one other problem with this hypothesis:

Up till this point Śrīla Prabhupāda has not stated that the *ṛtviks*, which he has yet to appoint, will ever act in any capacity other than as *ṛtviks*. So why would Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami have assumed their status was to change?

Lines 19-20: Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami (TKG) repeats the answer, and then Śrīla Prabhupāda continues: "*who is initiating... his grand-disciple.*" We have chosen the transcript version "his grand-disciple" over the version "he is grand-disciple" since it most closely resembles our copy of the tape, and seems to flow best with the sense of the conversation. (Otherwise the person initiating would simultaneously become a grand-disciple!—"who is initiating... he is grand-disciple.")

The argument that when speaking here in the third person, Śrīla Prabhupāda must be referring to the *ṛtviks* and not himself, can be tested by modifying the conversation in accordance with this view, replacing "his"/"who" with "the *ṛtvik*" (shown in brackets), for **lines 17-20**:

TKG: "whose disciples are they?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "They are (the *ṛtvik* 's) disciples."

TKG: "They are (the *ṛtvik* 's) disciples."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "(The *ṛtvik*) is initiating...(The *ṛtvik* 's) granddisciple..."

Given the premise that *ṛtviks* are only officiating, and that their role is only representational, it should be self-evident to the reader that this interpretation of **lines 17-20** is nonsense. It is a contradiction in terms for a *ṛtvik* to have their own disciples, not to speak of grand-disciples.

The accusation may be made that we are in some way "twisting" Śrīla Prabhupāda's words by stating that Śrīla Prabhupāda is talking about himself in third person. However, we feel our interpretation is consistent with the function Śrīla Prabhupāda assigned to his *ṛtviks*. There appear to be just two possible options for interpretation in considering this conversation:

- 1) Future new disciples were to belong to *ṛtvik* priests, who by definition are not *dīkṣā* gurus, but officiators who have been set up specifically to

act as proxies.

2) Future new disciples were to belong to the *dikṣā* guru, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Option 1) is just absurd. Therefore we have gone for option 2) as the only rational choice, and have thus interpreted the tape accordingly.

Lines 25-26: Śrīla Prabhupāda concludes with the unequivocal stipulation that *only* when he orders will anyone become guru. At such a juncture new initiates would be “*disciple of my disciple*”.

A great deal is made of the use of the term “grand-disciple”. For many, the use of this phrase by Śrīla Prabhupāda acts as a clincher, since you can only have grand-disciples if there are *dikṣā* gurus. This is true. Unfortunately the words following the term “his grand-disciple” are usually ignored. Śrīla Prabhupāda goes on to state that a grand-disciple and hence a *dikṣā* guru will only exist *when* Śrīla Prabhupāda orders his disciple to become a *dikṣā* guru. In other words Śrīla Prabhupāda is simply saying that when a guru orders his disciple to become a *dikṣā* guru, he will have grand-disciples (“his grand-disciple”), since the new *dikṣā* guru will *then* be initiating in his own right (“he becomes disciple of my disciple”). This seems straightforward enough, a point nobody could dispute. But where is the order for this guruship to occur? Certainly not on **lines 25-26**; nor for that matter anywhere else in the conversation.

In actuality, the May 28th conversation is not ordering any specific person to do anything at all. Śrīla Prabhupāda is simply making known his intention to appoint *ṛtviks* at some point in the future. He then goes on to answer slightly muddled questions about guru-disciple relationships within the *ṛtvik* system. He then concludes with a statement about what would happen should he ever decide to give the relevant order to someone to become a *dikṣā* guru. It is clear though that the specific order naming specific people to perform specific functions was first made on July 7th (please see Appendices, p.128), and then confirmed in the signed letter of July 9th. But as can be seen from reading the July 9th letter, there is no mention whatsoever of the eleven appointed *ṛtviks* ever becoming *dikṣā* gurus; or for the *ṛtvik* system to ever stop.

After our exhaustive analysis of the May 28th conversation, it is clear that what the GBC is presenting is a classic circular argument:

In order to support modifications a) and b), which are absolutely vital to the current position on gurus within ISKCON, we are told we must modify the July 9th letter using an “order” which Śrīla Prabhupāda allegedly gave in the May 28th transcript. However, having read the transcript carefully we see that Śrīla Prabhupāda says they can only be gurus “*When I order*”. So how can it be

asserted that this “When I order” was the same “order” that was finally put in place on July 7th and 9th, since this “order” is purely for the creation of *ṛtviks*, and is the very same “order” which was required by the GBC to be modified in the first place in order to support their crucial a) and b) modifications?

Unfortunately, in adopting the line of reasoning championed in *GII*, we find ourselves drawn inexorably towards the above absurd dialectical impasse.

As an aid to understanding the above impasse please see the flow chart on p. 93.

Ultimately, the biggest problem with the whole “modification” theory, apart from the obvious absence of any supportive evidence, is that you cannot legitimately modify an instruction with information that was not available to the very people who were supposed to carry out the instruction.

If it was indeed the case that the May 28th conversation had contained clear instructions supporting modifications a) and b), then surely the final letter should have contained at least some hint of them. Indeed, the main purpose of the meeting on May 28th was to clearly establish what was to be done about initiations after Śrīla Prabhupāda left the planet. And yet it is being proposed that when Śrīla Prabhupāda finally releases his last written directive on initiation, he somehow only addressed what was to be done before he left the planet.

In other words, the subject Śrīla Prabhupāda was not being asked about he supposedly gave clear and emphatic directives on; whilst the really important matter, the one which everyone did want to know about, i.e. the future of initiations for up to ten thousand years, he entirely omitted to address in his last signed instruction on the issue.

We can find no example of Śrīla Prabhupāda ever directing his Society in the following manner:

- 1) Issuing important directives that fail to even address the main purpose of their being issued.
- 2) Deliberately withholding vital information pertaining to an important new system of management.
- 3) Expecting the recipients of his instructions to be mystic mind readers in order to correctly follow an instruction.

The common defence that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not need to spell out in the final letter what was to be done about future initiations, since he had already clearly explained in his books and lectures how he wanted everyone to become a *dīkṣā* guru, has already been disproven in objection 7 above (please see p.14).

There is one further attempt made in *GII* to extract something from the May 28th conversation in support of a) and b) when it points to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s use of the verse “*āmāra ājñāya guru hañā*” on **line 12**. The verse is also repeated further along in the May 28th conversation after discussion relating to the translation of his books. According to this view, the *ṛtvik* order is identical to the order to be a *dikṣā* guru, simply by merit of Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioning this famous instruction of Lord Caitanya for “everyone to become guru” in the same conversation as he discusses *ṛtviks*. But all Śrīla Prabhupāda states is that:

“...one who understands his guru’s order, the same *paramparā*, he can become guru. And therefore I shall select some of you.”

(May 28th, 1977 Conversation)

The essential points to consider here are:

1. What was the “guru’s order” they had to understand?—to act as *ṛtviks*. (“**I shall recommend some of you to act as *officiating ācāryas*.**”)
2. What are they eventually selected to do?—to act as *ṛtviks* (please see the July 9th letter, p.109)
3. And by following the order of the guru, what sort of guru do they become? As was seen earlier from the analysis of Lord Caitanya’s order to “become guru”, anyone who faithfully executes this order is automatically qualified as a *śikṣā* guru.

***GII* presents the contradictory proposition that in following the guru’s order to act as a *ṛtvik* only (not as a *dikṣā* guru), one should automatically act as a *dikṣā* guru.**

By this logic, anyone who follows any order given by the guru has also somehow automatically received a specific order to become a *dikṣā* guru! Unfortunately, *GII* does not offer any evidence to support this thesis. As shown previously, the use of the “*āmāra ājñāya*” verse is simply an order for everyone to become a *śikṣā* guru only (“**It is best not to accept any disciples.**”).

In conclusion

1. On July 9th 1977 Śrīla Prabhupāda appointed 11 *ṛtviks* to carry out first and second initiations ‘henceforward’.
2. There is no evidence in the May 28th conversation that can be used to modify the July 9th order, such that the appointed *ṛtviks* must cease their duties on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure.
3. There is also nothing in the May 28th conversation that can be used to

modify the July 9th order such that the *ṛtviks* were to metamorphose into *dīkṣā* gurus as soon as Śrīla Prabhupāda left the planet.

4. The one thing clearly established in the May 28th conversation is that the *ṛtviks* were to operate after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure.

It should be noted that there have been at least four different transcripts, and three differing "official" GBC interpretations of this very same conversation. Many devotees feel that for this reason alone the conversation cannot be considered as conclusive evidence. Should this be the reader's conclusion, then he will have no choice but to return once more to the July 9th letter as the final order, since it is a signed letter, clearly written and sent to the entire Movement. This would certainly be the conclusion in a court of law; signed, written evidence always takes precedence over tape recordings. The only reason we have examined the May 28th conversation so carefully here is because the GBC have put it forward as the *only* piece of evidence in support of modifications a) and b).

We are forced then to reject totally modifications a) and b), the very foundations of the GBC's current position on initiation within ISKCON, since there is no evidence to support them. Consequently, the instructions given in the July 9th policy document do indeed constitute Śrīla Prabhupāda's final order on initiation and should therefore be followed.

Here follow some related objections we thought it would be helpful to address.

Other Related Objections

1. “Śrīla Prabhupāda has not mentioned the use of *ṛtviks* in his books.”

1) The word “*ṛtvik*” (meaning “priest”) and its derivatives actually have 31 separate references in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, only slightly less than the word “*dikṣā*” and its derivatives, which has 41 separate references in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. Certainly, the use of *ṛtvik* priests to assist in ceremonies is a concept fully sanctioned in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books:

***Ṛtvik* :** 4.6.1 / 4.7.16 / 5.3.2 / 5.3.3 / 5.4.17 / 7.3.30 / 8.20.22 / 9.1.15

***Ṛtvijaḥ* :** 4.5.7 / 4.5.18 / 4.7.27 / 4.7.45 / 4.13.26 / 4.19.27 / 4.19.29 / 5.3.4 / 5.3.15 / 5.3.18 / 5.7.5 / 8.16.53 / 8.18.21 / 8.18.22 / 9.4.23 / 9.6.35

***Ṛtvijām* :** 4.6.52 / 4.21.5 / 8.23.13 / 9.13.1

***Ṛtvigbhyaḥ* :** 8.16.55

***Ṛtvigbhiḥ* :** 4.7.56 / 9.13.3

(all these references are from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*)

2) Although spiritual principles were covered extensively by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his books, the *specifics* concerning those principles would often not be given (for example in the area of deity worship). These specific details would usually be communicated by other means such as letters, and practical demonstration. Thus, one needs to distinguish between the *principle* of *dikṣā* or initiation, and the *details* of its formalisation. Śrīla Prabhupāda never defined *dikṣā* in terms of any ritualistic ceremony, but as the receipt of transcendental knowledge that leads to liberation:

“In other words, the spiritual master awakens the sleeping living entity to his original consciousness so that he can worship Lord Viṣṇu. This is the purpose of *dikṣā*, or initiation. Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness.”

(*Cc. Madhya-līlā*, 9.61, purport)

“*Dikṣā* actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination.”

(*Cc. Madhya-līlā*, 4.111, purport)

“*Dikṣā* is the process by which one can awaken his transcendental

knowledge and vanquish all reactions caused by sinful activity. A person expert in the study of the revealed scriptures knows this process as *dīkṣā*.”

(Cc. *Madhya-līlā*, 15.108, purport)

Dīkṣā normally involves a ceremony, but it is not absolutely essential, more a formality:

“So anyway, from 1922 to 1933 practically I was not initiated, but I got the impression of preaching Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s cult. That I was thinking. And that was the initiation by my Guru Mahārāja.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 10/12/1976, Hyderabad)

“Initiation is a formality. If you are serious, that is real initiation. [...] My touch is simply a formality. It is your determination. That is initiation.”

(“The Search for the Divine”, *Back to Godhead* #49)

“... disciplic succession does not always mean that one has to be initiated officially. Disciplic succession means to accept the disciplic conclusion.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Dinesh, 31/10/1969)

“The chanting Hare Krishna is our main business, that is real initiation. And as you are all following my instruction, in that matter, the initiator is already there.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, 19/8/1968)

“Well, initiation or no initiation, first thing is knowledge...knowledge. Initiation is formality. Just like you go to a school for knowledge, and admission is formality. That is not very important thing.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Interview, 16/10/1976, Chandigarh)

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Who is my disciple? First of all let him follow strictly the disciplined rules.”

Disciple: “As long as one is following, then he is...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Then he is all right.”

(Morning Walk, 13/6/1976, Detroit)

“...unless there is discipline, there is no question of disciple. Disciple means one who follows the discipline.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda, Morning Walk, 8/3/1976, Māyāpur)

“If one does not observe discipline, then he is not a disciple.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda *SB* Lecture, 21/1/1974)

Thus, the ceremonial initiation is a formality performed to solidify in the mind of the disciple the serious commitments he has made to the process of *dikṣā*. Such commitments include:

- Receiving transcendental knowledge that will purify him of all contamination.
- Maintaining the determination to always follow the order of the *dikṣā* guru.
- To begin enthusiastically executing the spiritual master’s orders.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has clearly stated that the formality of the ceremony is just that, a formality, not an essential. Furthermore, this formalisation of initiation through a ceremony itself involves a number of elements:

1. Recommendation by an official of the institution, usually the Temple President.
2. Acceptance by acting *ṛtvik*.
3. The participation in a fire *yajña*.
4. The taking of a spiritual name.

It is only points **2** and **4** that necessarily involve a *ṛtvik* priest; **1** and **3** are usually carried out by the Temple President.

As mentioned previously, nowhere is it ever stated that the guru and disciple must co-exist on the same planet in order for the disciple to receive any element of *dikṣā*, such as transcendental knowledge, annihilation of sinful reactions, a fire *yajña* ceremony and a spiritual name. On the other hand, every element of *dikṣā* (knowledge transmission, the *yajña*, etc.) can be given quite easily without the guru’s physical presence. This was demonstrated practically by Śrīla Prabhupāda, as he gave all the elements of *dikṣā* through intermediaries such as his disciples and books. Thus, no spiritual principles are changed through the use of *ṛtviks*. Only a change of detail is involved.

Thus, to put into perspective the use of *ṛtviks*, it has been shown that we are dealing with the details of a formalisation ceremony; a ceremony which itself constitutes but one element, and a non-essential element at that, of the transcendental process of *dikṣā* (please see “*Dikṣā*” diagram on p.92).

We note that Śrīla Prabhupāda dealt with all these elements in a manner proportional to their importance:

Item	Explained in Books?	Followed Tradition?	Major Changes to Tradition?	Changes to Tradition Explained in Books?
<i>Dīkṣā</i>	YES	NO	Knowledge given primarily through <i>Vāṇī</i> and not physical contact Personal <i>parīkṣā</i> little used New initiation standards	SOME
Initiation ceremony	NO	NO	Use of deputies to chant on initiates' beads Giving <i>gāyatrī</i> mantra by magnetic tape	NO
Name giving process	NO	NO	Name given at time of <i>Harinām dīkṣā</i> The use of deputies to give the name	NO

Thus, the lack of specific mention in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books regarding the use of *ṛtviks* in initiation procedures, either historical or contemporary, is consistent with Śrīla Prabhupāda's general approach to matters surrounding initiation; specific mention in his books being directly proportional to the significance of the innovations involved.

2. “How can *parīkṣā* (mutual examination between disciple and guru), an essential element of *dīkṣā*, be achieved without physical contact?”

This question arises from the stated requirement that a disciple must “approach”, “inquire from” and “render service to” a guru (Bg. 4.34), and that the guru must “observe” the disciple (*Cc. Madhya-līlā*, 24.330). If we examine these verses carefully the following points become apparent:

- There is no mention that this “inquiring”, “rendering service to” and “observing” necessitates direct physical contact.
- The Bg. 4.34 purport speaks of these activities as being essential for a *disciple*. Thus, if these activities absolutely require the guru to be on the same planet, then *no one* has been Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciple since November 14th, 1977.
- The “inquiring” is done so the “spiritual master” can “impart knowledge”. However, to “impart knowledge” is also the definition of *śikṣā*, and it is already accepted that in order to impart *śikṣā*, or to accept enquiries pertaining to *śikṣā*, the guru does not need to be on the planet (please see p.94—“Does the guru have to be physically present?”). And, as explained above, by the logic of this proposition *no one* has had any “knowledge imparted” to them since November 14th, 1977.
- The “observing” is simply the agreement by the prospective disciple to follow the regulative principles and can be monitored by representatives of the guru:

“In our Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement, the requirement is that one must be prepared to give up the four pillars of sinful life [...] In Western countries especially, we first observe whether a potential disciple is prepared to follow the regulative principles.”
(*Cc. Madhya-līlā*, 24.330, purport, emphasis added)

This facility to use representatives is again repeated a few lines later when discussing the observation required for prospective second initiation candidates:

“In this way the disciple renders devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master or his representatives for at least six months to a year.”
(*Cc. Madhya-līlā*, 24.330, purport, emphasis added)

A few lines later we see how vital the use of representatives really is:

“The spiritual master should study the disciple’s inquisitiveness for no less than six months or a year.”
(*Cc. Madhya-līlā*, 24.330, purport)

- Bearing in mind the way in which Śrīla Prabhupāda had set up the Society, the above stipulation would have been *impossible* to follow. He could not possibly have observed every one of his thousands of disciples for a full 6 months. Thus, the use of representatives was not just a matter of choice, but totally *unavoidable* if the above requirement was to have

been fulfilled by Śrīla Prabhupāda. If personal (as in him being physically involved) *parikṣā* by the guru was an inviolable śāstric principle, why would Śrīla Prabhupāda have purposely set up a preaching mission (with disciples and centres all around the world) that rendered such personal examination *impossible*? One is, in effect, arguing that Śrīla Prabhupāda only achieved his preaching success at the expense of violating *śāstra*, an argument commonly used by other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava groups in India.

- All the above points are further substantiated by the strongest evidence possible—extensive practical example from the *ācārya* himself. Śrīla Prabhupāda initiated the majority of his disciples without any personal *parikṣā*. Thus, Śrīla Prabhupāda instituted a system whereby approaching his representatives for *dikṣā* was the same as approaching him directly. It may be argued that the elimination of personal *parikṣā* was justified because the guru was still present on the planet. Thus, at least personal *parikṣā* could theoretically have occurred. However this argument has no basis since:
 - i) There is no mention of this special get-out clause for personal *parikṣā* in any scripture. It would simply be an invention to fit the circumstances after the fact.
 - ii) When describing the use of representatives for personal *parikṣā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda never states that they can only exist if he is on the planet. What hitherto unmentioned śāstric principle forces a limitation on the use of representatives in certain circumstances pertaining to the physical proximity of the person employing them?
 - iii) As demonstrated, the need for personal *parikṣā* is not a śāstric requirement. Śrīla Prabhupāda supports the use of representatives, such as his disciples and books, as a substitute for personal *parikṣā*. So the question of when personal *parikṣā* may or may not be eliminated does not even arise.
 - iv) That *dikṣā* was given without physical contact is itself proof that it can occur without personal *parikṣā*.
 - v) The very fact that personal *parikṣā* was not always undertaken, even when it was possible to do so, proves that it can not be necessary to the process of *dikṣā*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda made it very clear what standards he expected in a disciple; the Temple Presidents and *rtviks* were meant to see them continued. The standards for initiation today are identical to those established by Śrīla Prabhupāda whilst he was present. So if he requested not to be consulted whilst he was present, what makes us think he would urgently want to intervene now? The only concern for us is to ensure that the standards are rigidly maintained without change or speculation.

3. “We may accept Śrīla Prabhupāda, but how do we know he has accepted us as his disciple even in his physical absence?”

On July 7th, when setting up the *ṛtvik* system, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that the *ṛtviks* could accept devotees as his disciples without consulting him. Thus, Śrīla Prabhupāda was not involved in the process of screening, or approving new disciples. The *ṛtviks* had full authority and discretion. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s physical involvement was not required:

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “So without waiting for me, wherever you consider it is right...That will depend on discretion.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami: “On discretion.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes.”

(Room Conversation, 7/7/1977, Vṛndāvana)

Furthermore, the names given by the *ṛtviks* would be entered by Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami into the “Initiated Disciples” book. Thus, externally at least, Śrīla Prabhupāda would not even have been aware of the disciple’s existence. Consequently, the process now would be the same as it was then, since the *ṛtvik* has full power of attorney.

4. “Only if *dīkṣā* initiation has occurred before the guru leaves the planet is it possible to carry on approaching, enquiring and serving him in his physical absence.”

At least the above assertion concedes the point that it *is* possible to approach, enquire from and serve a physically absent spiritual master. The injunction that this is *only* possible “if the *dīkṣā* link is made before the guru leaves the planet” is pure invention, with no reference in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, and thus can be ignored. *Dīkṣā* does not even require a formal initiation ceremony to make it function; it is the transmission of transcendental knowledge from guru to receptive disciple (along with the annihilation of sinful reactions):

“...disciplic succession does not always mean that one has to be initiated officially. Disciplic succession means to accept the disciplic conclusion.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Dinesh, 31/10/1969)

“Well, initiation or no initiation, first thing is knowledge... knowledge. Initiation is formality. Just like you go to a school for

knowledge, and admission is formality. That is not very important thing.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda Interview, 16/10/1976, Chandigarh)

It is irrational to assert that the transcendental process of *dīkṣā* cannot work properly if the guru is not physically present during a non-essential fire-*yajña*, particularly since:

- Śrīla Prabhupāda was often not physically present during initiation ceremonies. They were frequently carried out by his representatives, i.e., Temple Presidents, senior *sannyāsīs* and *ṛtviks*.
- It is accepted that many thousands of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples are still benefitting from the process of *dīkṣā* even though their guru has been physically absent for nearly two decades.

It might be argued that although Śrīla Prabhupāda was not present at these initiations, still he was physically present on the same planet at the time they took place. So is the guru’s physical presence on the planet during initiation essential to *dīkṣā*? In order to lend weight to this argument we would need to find an injunction in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books to the effect that:

‘*Dīkṣā* can only take place if the guru is within a distance, not greater than the earth’s diameter, of his disciple during a formal initiation ceremony.’

To date, no one has been able to locate such an injunction. Rather, as the quote below shows, a well-known example of *dīkṣā* in our philosophy (Bg. 4.1) actually contradicts the above proposition:

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

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Bg. Lecture, 24/8/1968, emphasis added)

It would appear that *dīkṣā* is not affected by the physical distances between gurus and disciples.

5. “What you are proposing sounds suspiciously like Christianity!”

1) *We* are not proposing the *ṛtvik* system, Śrīla Prabhupāda is—in the final order of July 9th, 1977. Thus even if it *is* like Christianity, we still have to follow it, since it is the order of the guru.

2) Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly sanctioned the idea of the Christians continuing

to follow the departed Jesus Christ as their guru. He taught that anyone who followed Christ's teachings was a disciple, and would achieve the level of liberation that was being offered by Jesus Christ:

Madhudviṣa: "Is there any way for a Christian to, without the help of a spiritual master, to reach the spiritual sky through believing in the words of Jesus Christ and trying to follow his teachings?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "I don't follow."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: "Can a Christian in this age, without a spiritual master, but by reading the Bible and following Jesus's words, reach the..."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "When you read Bible, you follow spiritual master. How can you say without? As soon as you read Bible, that means you are following the instruction of Lord Jesus Christ, that means you are following spiritual master. So where is the opportunity of being without spiritual master?"

Madhudviṣa: "I was referring to a living spiritual master."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Spiritual master is not the question of... Spiritual master is eternal. Spiritual master is eternal. So your question is without spiritual master. Without spiritual master you cannot be, at any stage of your life. You may accept this spiritual master or that spiritual master. That is a different thing. But you have to accept. As you say that "by reading Bible," when you read Bible that means you are following the spiritual master represented by some priest or some clergyman in the line of Lord Jesus Christ." (Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 2/10/68, Seattle, emphases added)

"Regarding the end of devotees of Lord Jesus Christ, they can go to heaven, that is all. That is a planet in the material world. A devotee of Lord Jesus Christ is one who is strictly following the ten commandments. [...] Therefore the conclusion is that the devotees of Lord Jesus Christ are promoted to the heavenly planets which are within this material world."

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Bhagavān, 2/3/1970)

"Actually, one who is guided by Jesus Christ will certainly get liberation."

(*Perfect Questions Perfect Answers*, Chapter 9)

“... Or the Christians are following Christ, a great personality. *Mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*. You follow some *mahājana*, great personality [...] You follow one *ācārya*, like Christians, they follow Christ, *ācārya*. The Mohammedans, they follow *ācārya*, Mohammed. That is good. You must follow some *ācārya* [...] *Evam paramparā-prāptam*.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Room Conversation, 20/5/1975, Melbourne)

3) This objection to being “Christian” is ironic since the current guru system in ISKCON has itself adopted certain Christian procedures. The theology behind the GBC voting in gurus is similar to the system of the College of Cardinals voting in Popes in the Catholic Church:

“Voting procedures [...] for guru candidate [...] a full deliberation of the voting members will ensue. [...] a candidate must receive a vote of 2/3rds [...] All GBC members are candidates for appointment [sic] as initiating Guru.” (GBC Resolutions)

Similarly, the GBC calls itself “the highest ecclesiastical body guiding ISKCON” (*Back To Godhead*, 1990-1991); again, “Christian” terminology.

These particular “Christian” practices were never taught by Jesus, and were totally condemned by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

“Mundane votes have no jurisdiction to elect a Vaiṣṇava *ācārya*. A Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* is self effulgent, and there is no need for any court judgement.”

(*Cc. Madhya-līlā*, 1.220, purport)

“Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī advises that one not accept a spiritual master in terms of hereditary or customary social and ecclesiastical conventions.”

(*Cc. Ādi-līlā*, 1.35, purport)

6. “The *ṛtviks* give a type of *dikṣā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda is only our *sikṣā* guru.”

- 1) The function of the *ṛtvik* is distinct from that of the *dikṣā* guru. His only purpose is to assist the *dikṣā* guru in initiating disciples, not take them for himself.
- 2) The *ṛtvik* only oversees the initiation procedure, gives a spiritual name etc., but he does not even necessarily perform the fire-*yajña*. The Temple President normally did this, and no one is saying *he* is the *dikṣā* guru.

- 3) Why not allow Śrīla Prabhupāda to be what *he* wants to be? He is certainly our *śikṣā* guru, but as he clearly indicated on July 9th, he was also to be our *dīkṣā* guru.
- 4) Since Śrīla Prabhupāda is our predominant *śikṣā* guru, he is our *de facto* *dīkṣā* guru anyway, since:
- He gives the *divya-jñāna* or transcendental knowledge—definition of *dīkṣā*.
 - He plants the *bhakti-latā-bija*—definition of *dīkṣā*.

Devotees can also assist in the above two activities (by preaching, book distribution, etc.), but they are *vartma-pradarśaka* gurus, not *dīkṣā* gurus, though by such service they may also become liberated souls.

- 5) The predominant *śikṣā* guru usually becomes the *dīkṣā* guru anyway:

“Śrīla Prabhupāda is the foundational *śikṣā* guru for all ISKCON devotees [...] Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions are the essential teachings for every ISKCON devotee.”

(GBC Resolutions, No. 35, 1994)

“Generally a spiritual master who constantly instructs a disciple in spiritual science becomes his initiating spiritual master later on.”

(Cc. *Ādi-līlā*, 1.35, purport)

“It is the duty of the *śikṣā*-guru or *dīkṣā*-guru to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to śāstric injunctions, there is no difference between *śikṣā*-guru and *dīkṣā*-guru, and generally the *śikṣā*-guru later on becomes the *dīkṣā*-guru.”

(SB, 4.12.32, purport)

7. “If Śrīla Prabhupāda is everyone’s *śikṣā* guru, then how can he be the *dīkṣā* guru too?”

The confusion between *dīkṣā* and *śikṣā* gurus occurs because their titles are confused with their functions. Thus it is sometimes assumed that only the *śikṣā* guru can give *śikṣā*, not the *dīkṣā* guru. However, as the last verse just quoted demonstrates, the *dīkṣā* guru also instructs. This should be obvious, otherwise how else will he transmit *divya-jñāna*?

Pradyumna: “*Guru-pādāśrayaḥ*. ‘First one must take shelter of the lotus feet of a spiritual master.’ *Tasmāt kṛṣṇa-dikṣādi-śikṣaṇam*. *Tasmāt*, ‘from him’, *Kṛṣṇa-dikṣādi-śikṣaṇam*, ‘one should take *Kṛṣṇa-Dikṣā*, initiation, and *Śikṣā*.’”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “*Dikṣā* means *divya jñānaṁ kṣapayati iti dikṣā*. Which explains the *divya-jñāna*, transcendental, that is *Dikṣā*. *Di, divya, dikṣānam*. *Dikṣā*. *So divya-jñāna*, transcendental knowledge... If you don’t accept a spiritual master, how you’ll get transcen... You’ll be taught here and there, here and there, and waste time. Waste time for the teacher and waste your valuable time. Therefore you have to be guided by an expert spiritual master. Read it.”

Pradyumna: “*Kṛṣṇa-dikṣādi-śikṣaṇam*.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “*Śikṣaṇam*. We have to learn. If you don’t learn, how you’ll make progress? Then?”

(Room Conversation, 27/1/1977, Bhubaneswar)

That transcendental *śikṣā* is the essence of *dikṣā*, is evident from the most well known verse on the guru-disciple relationship (Bg. 4.34). In this verse, the word “*upadekṣyanti*” is translated in the word-for-word as meaning, “initiate”. But in the actual translation the word “initiate” is replaced by “impart knowledge”, a process that is assisted through the disciple “inquiring”. Thus, the process of initiation is here described as being synonymous with imparting knowledge. Consequently, the “Prabhupāda is *śikṣā* not *dikṣā*” advocates are caught in a logical trap of their own making. If Śrīla Prabhupāda is capable of “imparting knowledge” when he is not on the planet—then he must, by definition be giving *divya-jñāna*—transcendental knowledge. Thus, if Śrīla Prabhupāda can be a *śikṣā* guru without the need for physical interaction, then why not *dikṣā* also? It is ludicrous to argue that Śrīla Prabhupāda can give *śikṣā* when not on the planet if acting as a *śikṣā* guru, but he can not give *śikṣā* if we change his title. **The very fact that he can be a *śikṣā* guru whilst not on the planet, is itself evidence that he simultaneously can give *dikṣā*.**

Some individuals have gone the next step arguing that Śrīla Prabhupāda cannot even give transcendental *śikṣā* without a physical body. If this were the case, one wonders why Śrīla Prabhupāda went to such effort to write so many books and set up a trust with the sole purpose of propagating them for the next ten thousand years? If it is no longer possible to receive transcendental instruction from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, why are we distributing them, and why are people still surrendering purely on the strength of them?

8. “Are you saying that Śrīla Prabhupāda created no pure devotees?”

No, all we are stating is that Śrīla Prabhupāda *did* set up the *ṛtvik* system to allow initiations to continue. Whether or not Śrīla Prabhupāda created pure devotees is not relevant to his clear and unequivocal final order. As disciples, our duty is simply to follow the instructions of the guru. It is inappropriate to abandon the guru’s instruction and instead speculate as to how many pure devotees there are now, or will be in the future.

Even taking a worst-case scenario, that there are in fact no pure devotees at present, one should consider the situation that existed after the departure of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. After almost 40 years, Śrīla Prabhupāda indicated that there was only one authorized initiating *ācārya* produced from the Gauḍīya Maṭha:

“Actually amongst my Godbrothers no one is qualified to become acarya*. [...] instead of inspiring our students and disciples they may sometimes pollute them. [...] they are very competent to harm our natural progress.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Rūpānuga, 28/4/1974)

* (Śrīla Prabhupāda used the terms “*ācārya*” and “guru” interchangeably):

“I shall choose some guru. I shall say, ‘Now you become *ācārya*.’ [...] You can cheat, but it will not be effective. Just see our Gauḍīya Maṭha. Everyone wanted to become guru, and a small temple and ‘guru.’ What kind of guru?”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda, Morning Walk, 22/4/1977)

This *could* be seen as a damning indictment of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s preaching work. However, it would be extremely unwise to argue that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was a “failure”. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta is known to have said that if his mission only produced one pure devotee he would have considered it a success.

In any case, the implementation of a *ṛtvik* system does not rule out, *a priori*, the possible existence of pure devotees. There are various scenarios that could easily accommodate both *ṛtviks* and pure devotees, e.g.:

Śrīla Prabhupāda may have created many pure devotees who have no desire to become *dikṣā* gurus. There is no evidence to suggest that the most advanced devotees in ISKCON must necessarily be those individuals who put themselves up for election each year. These pure devotees may simply wish to humbly assist Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission. It is nowhere stated that it is *mandatory* for a pure devotee to become a *dikṣā* guru. Such

persons would be delighted to work within the *ṛtvik* system if that was their guru's order.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire may be for large numbers of instructing gurus, but not necessarily for more initiating ones. This would be consistent with the earlier quoted instruction for everyone to become a *sikṣā* guru, and Śrīla Prabhupāda's caution not to take disciples. It would also be consistent with the fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda had single-handedly already put in place the success of his mission:

Guest (2): "are you planning to..."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "My movement is genuine."

Guest (2): "...to choose a successor."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "**It is already successful** [...] Gold is gold [...]"

Guest: "But there must be somebody, you know, needed to handle the gold exchange."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Yes, that we are creating. We are creating these devotees who will handle."

Hanumān: "One thing he's saying, this gentlemen, and I would like to know, is your successor named or your successor will be..."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "**My success is always there.**"

(Room Conversation, 12/2/1975, Mexico)

"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 endeavour. Whether I am present or not present doesn't matter."
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Arrival Conversation, 17/5/1977, Vṛndāvana)

Reporter: "What will happen to the movement in the United States when you die?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "I will never die."

Devotees: "*Jaya! Haribol!*" (Laughter.)

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "I shall live for my books, and you will utilise."

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Press Conference, 16/7/1975, San Francisco)

Reporter: "Are you training a successor?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: "Yes, my Guru Mahārāja is there."

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Press Conference, 16/7/1975, San Francisco)

“Only Lord Caitanya can take my place. He will take care of the Movement.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Room Conversation, translated from Hindi, 2/11/1977)

Interviewer: “What happens when that inevitable time comes a successor is needed?”

Rāmeśvara: “He is asking about the future, who will guide the Movement in the future.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “They will guide. I am training them.”

Interviewer: “Will there be one spiritual leader, though?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “No, I am training GBC, 18 all over the world.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Interview, 10/6/1976, Los Angeles)

Reporter: “Do you expect to name one person as your successor or have you already?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “That I am not contemplating now. But there is no need of one person.”

(Room Conversation, 4/6/1976, Los Angeles)

Interviewer: “I was wondering if he had a successor to do... Do you have a successor to take your place when you die?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Not yet settled up. Not yet settled up.”

Interviewer: “So what process would the Hare Kṛṣṇas...?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “We have got secretaries. They are managing.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Interview, 14/7/1976, New York)

The fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not authorise any of his disciples to act as *dīkṣā* guru does not necessarily mean that none of them were pure devotees. A *śikṣā* guru can also be a liberated soul. It could just be that Kṛṣṇa’s plan did not require them to take up such a role. Nevertheless, followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda do have an important role to play, just as when he was physically present on the planet. That is to act as his assistants, not successor *ācāryas*:

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

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Madhudviṣa, 4/8/1975)

“Sometimes a *dīkṣā* guru is not present always. Therefore one can take learning, instruction, from an advanced devotee. That is called the *śikṣā* guru.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Bg. Lecture, 4/7/1974, Honolulu)

Thus, the issue is not whether Śrīla Prabhupāda created any pure devotees, but the fact that he *did* set up the *ṛtvik* system. Although the *dīkṣā* guru at this time is not physically present, that does not mean he is not the *dīkṣā* guru. In his absence we are expected to take instruction from bona fide *śikṣā* gurus, of which there may eventually be millions.

9. “As long as a guru is following strictly it does not matter how advanced he is, he will eventually become qualified and take his disciples back to Godhead.”

As discussed previously, in order to act as a *dīkṣā* guru one must first attain the highest platform of devotional service namely *mahā-bhāgavata*, and then be authorised to initiate by one’s predecessor *ācārya*. The above post-dated cheque guru philosophy is an offensive speculation as the following quote illustrates:

“Although Pṛthu Mahārāja was factually an incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he nonetheless rejected those praises because the qualities of the Supreme Person were not yet manifest in him. He wanted to stress that one who does not actually possess these qualities should not try to engage his followers and devotees in offering him glory for them, even though these qualities might be manifest in the future. If a man who does not factually possess the attributes of a great personality engages his followers in praising him with the expectation that such attributes will develop in the future, that sort of praise is actually an insult.” (SB, 4.15.23, purport)

Just as it would be an insult to address a blind man as “lotus-eyed one”, to address partially conditioned souls as being “as good as God” (*GII*, point 8, p.15) is similarly offensive; not only to the person being falsely flattered, but also to the pure disciplic succession of factually realised souls, on up to the Supreme Lord Himself.

To “strictly follow” is the process by which a disciple advances, not a qualification in and of itself. Devotees often confuse the *process* with the *qualification*, sometimes even preaching that they are one and the same. Just because someone is following strictly does not mean he is a *mahā-bhāgavata*, or that he has been asked to initiate by his own spiritual master; and if a disciple *does* start

initiating before he is properly qualified and authorised, he is certainly not “strictly following” either.

Sometimes, devotees quote text 5 of *The Nectar of Instruction* (purport) to prove that “a neophyte Vaiṣṇava or a Vaiṣṇava on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples...” For some reason they do not notice that the rest of the sentence warns disciples of such gurus that: **“they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance.”** It then states:

“Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an *uttama-adhikārī* as a spiritual master.”

Unqualified gurus are also warned:

“One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of *uttama-adhikārī*.”

(*The Nectar of Instruction*, Text 5, purport)

If a guru is only offering “insufficient guidance” he cannot, by definition, be a *dīkṣā* guru, since this requires the transmission of full *divya-jñāna*. “Insufficient” means not enough. It is self-evident that initiating gurus who cannot help one “advance very well” are probably best avoided altogether.

10. “The *ṛtvik* system by definition means the end of the disciplic succession.”

The disciplic succession, or guru *paramparā*, is eternal; there is no question of it stopping. According to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the *Saṅkīrtan* Movement, (and hence ISKCON), will only exist for the next 9,500 years. Compared with eternity, 9,500 years is nothing; a mere blip in cosmic time. This would appear to be the time period during which Śrīla Prabhupāda shall remain the “current link” within ISKCON, unless he or Kṛṣṇa countermands the July 9th order, or some external circumstance renders the order impossible to follow (such as total thermo-nuclear annihilation).

Previous *ācāryas* have remained current for long periods of time; thousands (Śrīla Vyāsadeva) or even millions of years (see quote below). We see no reason why the duration of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s reign as “current link”, even if it extends right till the end of the *Saṅkīrtan* Movement, should pose any particular problem.

“Regarding parampara system: there is nothing to wonder for big gaps [...] we find in the Bhagavad-Gita that the Gita was taught to the sungod, some millions of years ago, but Krishna has mentioned only

three names in this parampara system—namely, Vivaswan, Manu, and Iksvaku; and so these gaps do not hamper from understanding the parampara system. We have to pick up the prominent acharyas, and follow from him. [...] We have to pick up from the authority of the acharya in whatever sampradaya we belong to.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Dayānanda, 12/4/1968)

The July 9th order is significant since it means that Śrīla Prabhupāda shall be the prominent *ācārya*, at least for members of ISKCON, for as long as the Society exists. Only the direct intervention of Śrīla Prabhupāda or Kṛṣṇa can revoke the final order (such intervention needing to be at least as clear and unequivocal as a signed directive sent to the entire Society). Thus, until some counter-instruction is given, the science of devotional service shall continue to be transmitted directly by Śrīla Prabhupāda to successive generations of his disciples. Since this is a common phenomenon in our disciplic succession, there is no cause for alarm. The succession can only be considered “ended” if this science of devotional service is lost. On such occasions, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself usually descends to re-establish the principles of religion. As long as Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are in circulation this “science” shall remain vigorously intact and perfectly accessible.

11. “The *ṛtvik* system means an end to the guru-disciple relationship which has been the tradition for thousands of years.”

The *ṛtvik* system involves linking potentially unlimited numbers of sincere disciples with the greatest *ācārya* who ever blessed the earth, namely Śrīla Prabhupāda. These disciples will have a relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda based on studying his books and serving him within his Society wherein there is ample opportunity for unlimited numbers of *śikṣā* guru-disciple relationships to exist. How is this ending the tradition of guru-disciple relationships?

The details of how *dīkṣā* guru-disciple relationships are formally bonded may be adapted by an *ācārya*, according to time, place and circumstance, but the principle remains the same:

“Śrīmān Virarāghavācārya, an *ācārya* in the disciplic succession of the Rāmānuja *Sampradāya*, has remarked in his commentary that *caṇḍālas*, or conditioned souls who are born in lower than *śūdra* families, can also be initiated according to circumstances. The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them *Vaiṣṇavas*.”

(*SB*, 4.8.54, purport)

Similarly this principle of accepting initiation from a bona fide spiritual master is in no way diminished or compromised by the *ṛtvik* system.

Some people point to traditional gurus living in villages in India as a model for ISKCON. Each guru has a few disciples who he personally trains. However cosy this may sound, it has nothing remotely to do with the worldwide mission Lord Caitanya predicted, and Śrīla Prabhupāda established. Within that mission Śrīla Prabhupāda is the world *ācārya* with thousands, and potentially millions, of disciples. Śrīla Prabhupāda set up a world Movement through which anyone can “approach”, “serve” and “inquire from” him anywhere in the world. Why should we want to introduce a village guru system into ISKCON, when it was not what Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered or set up?

If everyone is meditating on hundreds of different gurus of differing viewpoints, opinions and levels of realisation, how can there be unity? Rather than this lucky-dip approach to spiritual life, as we have demonstrated, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us a tried and tested system that facilitated surrender directly to himself, who is one hundred percent guaranteed. We know he shall never let us down, and in this way ISKCON will remain united, not just in name, but in consciousness.

Some devotees feel that without a succession of living, physically present initiating *dīkṣā* gurus, the science of devotional service will be lost. However, this principle is never once stated by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and thus cannot exist in our philosophy. As long as the *ṛtvik* system remains in force (once it is re-instituted of course), there will be a succession of living *śikṣā* gurus acting on behalf of a living, though not physically present, *mahā-bhāgavata*. As long as these *śikṣā* gurus do not change anything, invent philosophy, disobey important orders, and unauthorisedly pose themselves as *dīkṣā* gurus, the science of devotional service shall remain perfectly intact. If such misbehaviour were to obstruct the imperishable science of *bhakti*, then Kṛṣṇa would certainly intervene in some way, perhaps by sending again a resident of Goloka to establish a new bona fide Society. Let us work together to make sure this will not be necessary.

12. “*Ṛtvik* is not the regular way of conducting the disciplic succession. The proper way to do it is for the guru to teach the disciple everything he needs to know about Kṛṣṇa while he is physically present. Once the guru leaves the planet it is the duty of all his strict disciples to immediately start initiating their own disciples, thus carrying on the disciplic succession. That is the “regular” way of doing things.”

Leaving aside the two important pre-conditions to anyone initiating (authorisation

and qualification), it is clear that *dikṣā* activity within our *paramparā* is enormously diverse. We have observed that violations of the so-called “regular” system fall into five basic categories, though we do not deny there could be many others:

a) Gaps

These are all the occasions when an *ācārya* in the *paramparā* 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 directly after, his departure. For example, there was a gap of some twenty years between the departure of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta and the next bona fide initiation in our *sampradāya*. Gaps of more than one hundred years are not uncommon between members of the disciplic succession.

b) Reverse gaps

These are all the occasions where an *ācārya* has not yet left his body before his disciples start initiating. Lord Brahmā, for example, has not yet left his body, and yet generations of successor gurus have initiated millions upon millions of disciples. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta initiated when both Śrīla Bhaktivinoda and Śrīla Gaura Kīśora were still physically present. According to *GII* (p. 23) this is a common phenomenon in our *sampradāya*.

c) Śikṣā / dikṣā links

There are instances of a disciple accepting an *ācārya* as his principal spiritual master after he has left the planet. Whether the departed *ācārya* is a *śikṣā* or a *dikṣā* guru to the disciple is often difficult to discern. Śrīla Prabhupāda does not generally specify the precise nature of these spiritual interactions. For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda does not detail the exact nature of the relationship between Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, who lived over a hundred years apart. We may wish to call it a *śikṣā* relationship, but that is speculation, since Śrīla Prabhupāda simply says:

“Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, who accepted Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī as his servitor.”

(*Cc. Ādi-līlā*, 1)

“... Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. He accepted his guru, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda *SB* Lecture, 17/4/1976, Bombay)

Although such disciples normally go through some sort of ceremony with someone who is physically present, that still may not preclude the departed *ācārya* from being his *dikṣā* guru; just as a *ṛtvik* ceremony does not mean that

the *ṛtvik* or Temple President is the *dikṣā* guru. Also, such disciples normally obtained permission from an authority who was physically present, to accept a *sad-guru* who was not. In a similar way, were the *ṛtvik* system re-instated, new disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda would first gain the approval of the Temple President and the *ṛtvik* before they were initiated.

d) Mode of initiation

These are anomalous forms of initiation where unique or inconceivable forms of *dikṣā* transmission take place. For example, Lord Kṛṣṇa to Lord Brahmā; or Lord Caitanya whispering into a Buddhist's ear. Interplanetary *dikṣā* might also come under this category. This is where personalities initiate or transmit *dikṣā* to a disciple who resides on a different planet, for example Manu to Ikṣvāku in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.1).

e) Successor systems

This refers to differing successor *ācārya* systems within our *sampradāya*. For example, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda adopted a “powerful Vaiṣṇava son” successor system. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta envisioned a “self effulgent *ācārya*” successor system. As far as we can determine, Śrīla Prabhupāda left in place a **“rittik – representative of the acarya, for the purpose of performing initiations”** system, whereby **“the newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad.”** The present system favoured by the GBC is a “multiple *ācārya* successor system”.

It is clear that the approach of each *ācārya* is fairly unique; so to talk about a “regular” system for continuing the *paramparā* is practically meaningless.

13. “If we adopted the *ṛtvik* system, what would stop us taking initiation from any previous *ācārya*, such as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta?”

Two things prevent this from being a bona fide option:

- a) Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, and other previous *ācāryas*, did not authorise a *ṛtvik* system to run “henceforward”.
- b) We must approach the current link:

“...in order to receive the real message of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam one should approach the current link, or spiritual master in the chain of disciplic succession.” (SB, 2.9.7, purport)

It is self-evident that Śrīla Prabhupāda is the *sampradāya ācārya* who succeeded

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta. Śrīla Prabhupāda is therefore our current link, and is thus the correct person to approach for initiation.

14. “In order to be the current link you must be physically present.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda never states the above injunction.

So let us consider: Can a spiritual master be “current” if he is physically absent?

- a) The term “current link” is only used in one passage in all of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books; there is no reference to physical presence adjacent to the term. Were physical presence essential, it would certainly have been mentioned.
- b) The dictionary definitions of the word “current” do not refer to physical presence.
- c) 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 Śrīla Prabhupāda and his books.

- d) The very purpose of approaching a “current link” can be fully satisfied by reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books:

“...in order to receive the real message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* one should approach the current link, or spiritual master in the chain of disciplic succession.”

(*SB*, 2.9.7, purport)

- e) Śrīla Prabhupāda also uses the term “immediate *ācārya*” as synonymous with “current link”. The word “immediate” means:

“Without intervening medium”, “closest or most direct in effect or relationship” (Collins English Dictionary).

These definitions lend validity to a direct relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda without the need for intermediaries, again all regardless of physical presence/absence.

- f) 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/absence. 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 *ācārya* to remain the current link?

In conclusion, we see no evidence to suggest that the emergence of a current link is based on physical or non-physical considerations.

15. “Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Godbrothers all became initiating *ācāryas* after the disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, so what is wrong with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples doing the same?”

In posing as initiating *ācāryas*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s disciples acted in direct defiance of their spiritual master’s final order (to form a GBC and await a self-effulgent *ācārya*). Śrīla Prabhupāda roundly condemned his Godbrothers for their insubordination, describing them as useless for preaching, not to speak of initiating:

“...amongst my Godbrothers no one is qualified to become acarya.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Rūpānuga, 28/4/1974)

“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 spiritual benediction from higher authorities.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Janārdana, 26/4/1968)

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

(Śrīla Prabhupāda *Phalgun Krishna Pancami*, Verse 23, 1961)

We can see from recent experience what havoc just one of these personalities can cause to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission. We would suggest respect from as great a distance as possible. Certainly we cannot afford to use them as role models for how a disciple should carry on *their* spiritual master’s mission. They destroyed their spiritual master’s mission, and are more than capable of doing the same to ISKCON if we were to allow them.

With regard to the Gauḍīya Maṭha’s guru system, this may be the only historical precedent the M.A.S.S. can lay claim to, i.e. that it was also set up in direct defiance of clear orders from the Founder-*ācārya*.

16. “When Śrīla Prabhupāda said they should not be *ācāryas*, he meant *ācārya* with a big ‘A’. That is, an *ācārya* who heads up an institution.”

Where does Śrīla Prabhupāda ever differentiate between big ‘A’ and small ‘a’ initiating *ācāryas*? Where does he ever talk about a specific breed of initiating *ācārya* who can head up institutions, and indicate that there is an inferior species who, through some disablement, cannot?

17. “It is just common knowledge that there are three types of *ācārya*. Everyone in ISKCON accepts that.”

But this idea was never taught by Śrīla Prabhupāda, it was introduced by Pradyumna dāsa in a letter to Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami dated 7/8/1978. This letter was later re-printed in the paper *Under My Order* (Ravindra-svarūpa dāsa, 1985), and was used as one of the cornerstones of that paper’s thesis on how the guru system within ISKCON should be reformed. In turn, it is this paper *On My Order Understood* (GBC, 1995) that forms the basis of *GIP*’s doctrine on initiation (as mentioned in the Introduction, p. xiii). This paper led to the transformation of the zonal *ācārya* system into the present day M.A.S.S.:

“I have taken this definition of *ācārya* from the letter of August 7th, 1978, from Pradyumna to Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami. The reader should now turn to this letter (which I have appended) for careful study.”
(*Under My Order*, Ravindra-svarūpa dāsa, August 1985)

In his letter, Pradyumna explains that the word *ācārya* may be taken in three senses:

1. One who practises what he preaches.
2. One who grants initiation to a disciple.
3. The spiritual head of an institution who has been specifically declared by the previous *ācārya* to be his successor.

We accept definition 1, since it was used by Śrīla Prabhupāda. This definition would automatically apply to any effective preacher, be he *śikṣā* or *dīkṣā* guru.

Moving on to definition 2, Pradyumna explains that this type of *ācārya* can initiate disciples and be referred to as *ācāryadeva*, but only by his disciples:

“Anyone who grants initiation or is a guru may be called as “*ācāryadeva*”,

etc.—by his disciples only! Whoever has accepted him as guru must give all respects to him in every way, but this does not apply to those who are not his disciples.”

(Pradyumna dāsa, 7/8/1978)

This is a concoction. Nowhere does Śrīla Prabhupāda ever describe an initiating guru whose absolute nature must only be recognised by his disciples, but not by the world at large, or even other Vaiṣṇavas in the same line. Let us see how Śrīla Prabhupāda defines the word “*ācāryadeva*”. The following are excerpts from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *Vyāsa-pūjā* offering printed in *The Science of Self Realization* (“SSR”), Chapter 2, where he uses the term in relation to his own spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta:

“The guru, or *ācāryadeva*, as we learn from the bona fide scriptures, delivers the message of the absolute world...”

“...when we speak of the fundamental principle of *gurudeva*, or *ācāryadeva*, we speak of something that is of universal application.”

“The *Ācāryadeva* for whom we have assembled tonight to offer our humble homage is not the guru of a sectarian institution or one out of many differing exponents of the truth. On the contrary, he is the *Jagad-Guru*, or the guru of all of us...”

(SSR, Chapter 2)

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s use and definition of the word *ācāryadeva* is diametrically opposed to that of Pradyumna. Implicit in what Pradyumna says is that the term *ācāryadeva* can be falsely applied to persons who are not actually on that highly elevated platform. Thus he relativises the absolute position of the *dīkṣā* guru.

The term “*ācāryadeva*” can only be applied to someone who is factually “the guru of all of us”; someone who should be worshipped by the entire world:

“...he is known to be a direct manifestation of the Lord and a genuine representative of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu. Such a spiritual master is known as *ācāryadeva*.”

(Cc. *Ādi-līlā*, 1.46, purport)

In definition 3, Pradyumna explains that the word *ācārya* indicates the head of an institution, and that this meaning is very specific:

“It does not mean just anyone. It means only one who has been specifically declared by the previous *ācārya* to be his successor above all others to the seat of the spiritual institution which he heads. [...] This is the strict tradition in all of the Gaudīya *Sampradāyas*.”

(Pradyumna's Letter to Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, 7/8/1978)

We certainly agree that to initiate one must first be authorised by the predecessor *ācārya* (a point which is not even mentioned in the elaboration of definition 2):

“One should take initiation from a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession who is authorized by his predecessor spiritual master.”

(SB, 4.8.54, purport)

However, what this has got to do with taking over the “seat of the spiritual institution” is rather baffling, since Śrīla Prabhupāda is the *ācārya* of an entirely separate institution from that of his Guru Mahārāja. According to Pradyumna's philosophy therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda might only come in as a definition 2 *ācārya*. Whatever “strict tradition” Pradyumna is referring to, it was certainly never mentioned by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and thus we can safely discard it. Further down the page, we see exactly from where Pradyumna's insidious ideas originated:

“Indeed in the different Gauḍīya Maṭhas, even if one Godbrother is in the position of *ācārya*, he usually, out of humility, takes only a thin cloth *āsana*, not anything higher.”

(Pradyumna's Letter to Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, 7/8/1978)

None of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrothers were authorised *ācāryas*. One would think that genuine humility should translate into giving up one's unauthorised activity, whatever it may be, recognising Śrīla Prabhupāda's pre-eminent position, and then surrendering to the true *Jagad-Guru*. Unfortunately, few members of the Gauḍīya Maṭha have ever done this. The fact that Pradyumna cites these personalities as bona fide examples means he is once more denigrating the position of the true *ācāryadeva*.

“Regarding Bhakti Puri, Tirtha Maharaj, they are my God-brothers and should be shown respect. But you should not have any intimate connection with them as they have gone against the orders of my Guru Maharaj.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Pradyumna, 17/2/1968)

It is a shame Pradyumna Prabhu ignored this direct instruction from his Guru Mahārāja, and quite remarkable that his deviant views were allowed to shape ISKCON's current guru “*siddhānta*”.

Thus, when Śrīla Prabhupāda said none of his Godbrothers were qualified to be become *ācārya*, whether he meant definitions 1 or 3 *ācārya* is irrelevant. If they were not qualified for definition 1, then that meant they did not teach by example,

which would automatically disqualify them from definition 3, and hence from initiating altogether. And if they were not qualified as per definition 3, then they were not authorised, and hence once more they could not initiate.

In conclusion

- a) All preachers should aspire to become a definition 1 *ācārya* or *śikṣā* guru.
- b) The elaboration of definition 2 by Pradyumna dāsa is completely bogus. It is forbidden for anyone, disciple or not, to regard the bona fide guru, or *ācāryadeva*, as an ordinary man. And if he is, in fact, an ordinary man then he cannot initiate anyone and be referred to as *ācāryadeva*. Furthermore, there is no mention of the need to receive specific authorisation from the predecessor *ācārya* in disciplic succession, without which no one can initiate.
- c) Definition 3 is the only type of *ācārya* who may initiate; i.e. one who has been authorised by his own *sampradāya ācārya*—spiritual master. Having been so authorised he may or may not head up an institution, that is irrelevant.

Within ISKCON all devotees are instructed to become definition 1 *ācāryas*, teaching through example, or *śikṣā* gurus. A good start on the path to becoming this type of *ācārya* is to begin strictly following the orders of the spiritual master.

18. “It seems a small point, so how could these ideas regarding the *ācārya* have had any noticeable adverse effect on ISKCON?”

In fact, the relativisation of the initiating *dīkṣā* guru has led to all kinds of confusion within ISKCON. Some ISKCON gurus claim they are taking their disciples back to Godhead by acting as current links to Śrīla Prabhupāda who is the Founder-*Ācārya*; and some say they are simply introducing disciples to Śrīla Prabhupāda who is the actual current link who is taking them back to Godhead (almost *ṛtvik* philosophy). Some gurus say Śrīla Prabhupāda is still the current *ācārya*, others say that he is not; whilst a couple have claimed themselves to be the sole successor *ācārya* to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Some ISKCON gurus still believe Śrīla Prabhupāda appointed 11 successor *ācāryas* (a myth which was recently reported as fact in the *LA Times*); others that he appointed 11 *ṛtviks* who were to turn into small “a” *ācāryas* immediately on his departure; others that it was not just the 11 who should have turned into small “a” *ācāryas* on departure, but all Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples (except the women it seems).

If we return once more to *GII*, we can see that the GBC is highly ambivalent towards the gurus it “authorises”.

Whilst acknowledging the rubber stamping of *sampradāya ācāryas* is bogus (*GII*, point 6, p.15), the GBC nevertheless, in effect, performs precisely this function every Gaura pūrṇimā at Māyāpur, year after year. We now have close to a hundred initiating gurus, all anointed with the “no objection” stamp of approval. All these gurus are being worshipped as “*sākṣād-hari*” (“as good as God”) in accordance with the GBC’s own directives for disciples (*GII*, point 8, p.15).

These initiating *ācāryas* are heralded as “current links” to a disciplic succession of *mahā-bhāgavatas* stretching back thousands of years to the Supreme Lord Himself:

“Devotees should take shelter of the representatives of Śrīla Prabhupāda who are the current link in the disciplic succession.”
(*GII*, p. 34)

At the same time, however, the aspiring disciple is sternly warned that ISKCON approval “...is not automatically to be taken as a statement about the degree of God-realization of the approved guru”. (*GII*, section 2.2, p.9)

Elsewhere we are further cautioned:

“When a devotee is allowed to carry out the “order” of Śrīla Prabhupāda to expand the disciplic succession by initiating new disciples it is not to be taken as a certification or endorsement of his being an “uttama adhikary”, “pure devotee”, or to having achieved any specific state of realization.”
(*GII*, p.15)

These gurus are not to be worshipped by everyone in the temple, but only by their own disciples in a separate place. (*GII*, p.7)—Pradyumna’s *ācāryadeva* definition.

We have shown that the only type of bona fide *dīkṣā* guru is an authorised *mahā-bhāgavata*. (We have also shown that the *actual* “order” was for *ṛtviks* and *śikṣā* gurus). Thus, to describe anyone as a “current link” or “initiator guru” is synonymous with claiming he is a large “A” or definition 3 *ācārya*, an “*uttama-adhikārī*” or a “pure devotee”.

We would venture that it is infelicitous to approve, or “not object” to, the creation of *dīkṣā* gurus, and simultaneously disavow any blame or responsibility should they deviate. This is what’s termed “living in denial” according to modern psychological parlance. We are sure Śrīla Prabhupāda did not intend ISKCON

to be a type of lottery, or Russian roulette, where the stake is someone's spiritual life. Perhaps the GBC should refrain from further rubber stamping until they can stand one hundred percent behind those they approve. After all, every one of us stands one hundred percent behind Śrīla Prabhupāda as a bona fide spiritual master; so such consensual recognition of personal qualification is not impossible. GBC guru ambivalence was recently summed up quite succinctly by Jayādvaita Swami:

“The word “appointed” is never used. But there are “candidates for initiating guru”, votes are taken, and those who make it through the procedures become “ISKCON-approved” or “ISKCON-authorized” gurus. To boost your confidence: On one hand the GBC encourages you to be initiated by a bona fide, authorized ISKCON guru and worship him like God. On the other, it has an elaborate system of laws to invoke from time to time when your ISKCON-authorized guru falls down. One might perhaps be forgiven for thinking that for all the laws and resolutions the role of guru is still a perplexity even for the GBC.”

(Where the R̥tvik People are Right, Jayādvaita Swami, 1996)

When we look at the appalling track record of gurus in ISKCON it is hardly surprising that such mistrust should exist. To quote once more from Jayādvaita Swami's paper:

“FACT: ISKCON gurus have opposed, oppressed and driven out many sincere Godbrothers and Godsisters.

FACT: ISKCON gurus have usurped and misused money, and diverted other ISKCON resources for their own personal prestige and sense gratification.

FACT: ISKCON gurus have had illicit sexual intercourse with both women and men, and possibly children as well.

FACT: (...etc, etc...)”

(Where the R̥tvik People are Right, Jayādvaita Swami, 1996)

Newcomers to ISKCON are told that the onus is on them to carefully examine ISKCON gurus on the basis of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and instructions, to make sure for themselves that they are qualified to initiate. However, should such a prospective disciple come to the conclusion that none of the “physically present” gurus on offer are up to standard, and that he wishes instead to repose his faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda as his *dikṣā* guru, he is ruthlessly hounded from the Society. Is this really fair? After all, he is only doing what the GBC has told him to do. Should he be punished for not coming to the “right” conclusion,

especially since there is such clear and unequivocal evidence that this choice is precisely what Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted all along?

Is it reasonable to expect someone to have unflinching faith in a current ISKCON guru, when he sees that the GBC themselves have felt it necessary to construct a rigorous penal system just to keep them in line? A penal system which itself is never once mentioned in the very books and instructions the prospective disciple is being asked to base his decision on. A clearer case of self-referential incoherence it would be hard to find.

It would be safer for all concerned if we just follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's clear order to keep him as the only initiator within ISKCON. Who could object to that?

19. "According to the *ISKCON Journal* 1990, some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrothers were actually *ācāryas*."

Who said this?

- The same person who said there was no such word as "ṛtvik" in the Vaiṣṇava dictionary (*ISKCON Journal* 1990, p.23), even though the term is used repeatedly in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and in the July 9th letter which Śrīla Prabhupāda personally signed.
- The same person who implied that Śrīla Prabhupāda was not specifically authorised to initiate:

"Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī has not said or given any document that Swamiji (Śrīla Prabhupāda) will be guru."

(*ISKCON Journal* 1990, p.23)

- The same person who said that Tīrtha, Mādhava and Sridhar Mahārāja were bona fide *ācāryas*, even though Śrīla Prabhupāda had said none of them were qualified:

"But there is a system in our *sampradāya*. So Tīrtha Mahārāja, Madhav Mahārāja, Sridhar Mahārāja our Gurudev, Swamajī—Swamiji Bhaktivedanta Swami—they all became *ācāryas*."

(*ISKCON Journal* 1990, p.23)

Contrast the above with what Śrīla Prabhupāda thought of one of these "*ācāryas*"...

"Bhakti Vilas Tīrtha is very much antagonistic to our society and he has no clear conception of devotional service. He is contaminated."

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Śukadeva, 14/11/1973)

...and with what he said of the rest:

“...amongst my Godbrothers no one is qualified to become acarya.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Rūpānuga, 28/4/1974)

- The same person who recently claimed that Śrīla Prabhupāda had not given everything, and that it may be necessary to approach a *rasika* guru to gain higher knowledge.

20. “Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke well of his Godbrothers sometimes.”

It is true that on occasion Śrīla Prabhupāda dealt with his Godbrothers diplomatically, referring to Sridhar Mahārāja as his *śikṣā* guru etc. Śrīla Prabhupāda was also a warm person who had genuine care and affection for his Godbrothers, always trying to find ways of engaging them in the *Saṅkīrtan* Movement. We must realize however that had these been genuine *ācāryadevas*, Śrīla Prabhupāda would *never* have spoken ill of them, not even once. To speak of bona fide *dikṣā* gurus as “disobedient”, “envious snakes”, “dogs”, “pigs”, “wasps” etc., would itself have been a serious offence, and thus not something Śrīla Prabhupāda would have done. To illustrate the way in which Śrīla Prabhupāda viewed his Godbrothers, we shall offer excerpts below from a room conversation in which Bhavānanda is reading a pamphlet put out by Tīrtha Mahārāja’s *maṭha*:

Bhavānanda: “It starts off in big print, “Ācāryadeva Tridandi Swami Śrīla Bhaktivilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja. All learned men are aware that in the dark ages of India when the Hindu religion was in great danger...””

Śrīla Prabhupāda: (Laughs.) “This is nonsense.”

It is obvious what type of “*ācāryadeva*” Śrīla Prabhupāda considers Tīrtha Mahārāja (the same Tīrtha who is hailed as a bona fide *ācārya* in the 1990 *ISKCON Journal* mentioned earlier). Later on the pamphlet describes how Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was so fortunate to have a wonderful personality to carry on the mission.

Bhavānanda: “... In proper time, he (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta) got a great personality who readily shouldered the...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Just see now. “He got a great personality”. He is that personality. He’ll also prove that. [...] No one accepts him. [...] Where is his greatness? Who knows him? Just see. So he is making a plan to declare himself a great personality. [...] he (Tīrtha Mahārāja) is very envious about us. [...] these rascals they may create some trouble.”

(Room Conversation, 19/1/1976, Māyāpur)

Bona fide *ācāryas* can never be described as envious rascals who just want to cause trouble. Sadly, even to this day, some members of the Gauḍīya Maṭha are still causing trouble. Respect from a distance has to be the safest policy.

21. “We know that bona fide *ācāryas* do not have to be so advanced because sometimes they fall down.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda states the precise opposite:

“A bona fide spiritual master is in the disciplic succession from time eternal, and he does not deviate at all from the instructions of the Supreme Lord”

(Bg. 4.42, purport)

22. “But previous *ācāryas* even describe what one should do when one’s spiritual master deviates.”

Those deviant gurus being described could never, by definition, have been members of the eternal disciplic succession. Rather, they were non-liberated, self-authorized family priests posing as initiating *ācāryas*. Bona fide members of the disciplic succession never deviate:

“God is always God, guru is always guru.”

(*The Science of Self Realization*, Chapter 2)

“Well, if he is bad, how can he become a guru?”

(*The Science of Self Realization*, Chapter 2)

“The pure devotee is always free from the clutches of *māyā* and her influence.”

(*SB*, 5.3.14)

“There is no possibility that a first-class devotee will fall down”

(Cc. Madhya, 22.71)

“A Spiritual Master is always liberated.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, 21/6/1970)

There is not a single example in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books of a formally authorized *dīkṣā* guru, in our disciplic succession, ever deviating from the path of devotional service. The rejection of Śukrācārya is sometimes used to validate the view that *ācāryas* fall down, or can be rejected, but this example is highly misleading since he was never an authorised member of our disciplic succession. Lord Brahmā’s pastimes with his daughter are sometimes mentioned. Yet it is clearly stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that these incidents occurred before Lord Brahmā became the head of our *sampradāya*. Indeed, when the disciple Nitāi referred to the pastime as an example of an *ācārya* falling down, Śrīla Prabhupāda became most displeased:

Akṣayānanda: “I was recently told by one devotee that the *ācārya* does not have to be a pure devotee. [...]”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Who is that rascal? [...]”

Akṣayānanda: “He said it. Nitāi said it. He said it in this context. He said that Lord Brahmā is the *ācārya* in the *Brahma-sampradāya*, but yet he is sometimes afflicted by passion. So therefore he is saying that it appears that the *ācārya* does not have to be a pure devotee. So it does not seem right. [...]”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “He manufactured his idea. Therefore he’s a rascal. Therefore he’s a rascal. Nitāi has become an authority? [...] He thought something rascaldom, and he is expressing that. Therefore he is more rascal. These things are going on.”

(Morning Walk, 10/12/1975, Vṛndāvana)

According to Śrīla Prabhupāda, only unauthorised gurus can be carried away by opulence and women.

Despite a total absence from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books of bona fide gurus deviating, the GBC’s book *GII* has a whole section on what a disciple should do when his previously bona fide guru deviates! The chapter begins by asserting the importance of approaching a current link, and not “jumping over” (*GII*, p. 27). However, the authors proceed to do precisely this by quoting numerous previous *ācāryas* in an attempt to establish principles never taught by Śrīla Prabhupāda. The gurus described by these previous *ācāryas* could never have been bona fide members of the *paramparā*:

“Nārada Muni, Haridāsa Ṭhākura and similar ācāryas especially empowered to broadcast the glories of the Lord cannot be brought down to the material platform.”

(*SB*, 7.7.14, purport)

The danger of “jumping over” in the manner prevalent in *GII* is clearly demonstrated in the chapter on “re-initiation” (itself a term never once used by Śrīla Prabhupāda, nor any previous ācārya). In the question and answer section (*GII*, question 4, p.35) the conditions under which one may reject a guru and take “re-initiation” are described. The “explanation” follows:

“Fortunately, the crux of this issue has been clarified for us by Śrīla Bhaktinoda Ṭhākura in his *Jaiva Dharma* and by Śrīla Jiva Gosvāmī in his *Bhakti Sandarbha*.” (*GII*, p.35)

The word “fortunately” rather unfortunately implies that “*since Śrīla Prabhupāda neglected to tell us what to do when a guru deviates, it’s just as well we can jump over him to all these previous ācāryas*”. But Śrīla Prabhupāda told us that everything we needed to know about spiritual life was in his books. Why are we introducing systems never mentioned by our ācārya?

23. “But what is wrong in consulting previous ācāryas?”

Nothing, as long as we do not attempt to use them to add new principles which were not mentioned by our own ācārya. The idea that a bona fide guru can deviate is totally alien to anything Śrīla Prabhupāda taught. The problems over the “origin of the *jīva*” issue all stem from this propensity to jump over:

“...we must see the previous ācāryas through Prabhupāda. We cannot jump over Prabhupāda and then look back at him through the eyes of previous ācāryas.”

(*Our Original Position*, GBC Press, p. 163)

How is adopting entirely new philosophical principles, never mentioned by Śrīla Prabhupāda, “seeing the previous ācāryas through Prabhupāda”?

Even if the interpretation the GBC in *GII* has placed on these previous ācāryas’ writings were correct, we still could not use them to modify or add to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings. This is clearly explained in two verses in the book *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta* by Śrīla Narahari Sarakāra. *GII* should have mentioned these verses by way of caution, since it supported its thesis with other verses from the very same book:

Verse 48:

“A disciple may hear some instructions from another advanced Vaiṣṇava 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.”

Verse 49:

“...a disciple who listens to the words of other Vaiṣṇava, even if their instructions are proper and true, but does not re-confirm those teachings with his own spiritual master and instead directly personally accepts these instructions, is considered a bad disciple and a sinner.”

We would humbly suggest that in order for the GBC to remain consistent, and in the interest of the spiritual lives of all the members of ISKCON, the *GII* book be revised in a manner congruous with the above injunction.

24. “Why did Śrīla Prabhupāda not explain what to do when a guru deviates?”

According to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s final order, he was to be the initiator long into the future, and as an authorised link in the disciplic succession there was no question of his deviating from the path of pure devotional service for even one second:

“The bona fide spiritual master always engages in unalloyed devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”
(*Cc. Ādi-līlā*, 1.46, purport)

Śrīla Prabhupāda taught that a guru will only fall down if he is not properly authorised to initiate:

“...sometimes, if a spiritual master is not properly authorized, and only on his own initiative becomes a spiritual master, he may be carried away by an accumulation of wealth and large numbers of disciples.”
(*The Nectar of Devotion*, p.116)

When a guru falls down it is conclusive proof that he was never properly authorised by his predecessor *ācārya*. Even if no ISKCON guru had ever fallen down, one could still legitimately question where his authorisation came from to

initiate.

The problem for the GBC is that in accepting the stark truth of quotes such as the one above, various unpleasant ramifications loom menacingly before them. Since all of ISKCON's gurus claim to be authorised to the same degree as part of the same package (the alleged "order" from Śrīla Prabhupāda being equally applicable to all of them), the very fact that many of them have visibly fallen down is proof positive that the "order" was misunderstood. Had they actually been given proper authorisation there would be no question of any of them falling down. Indeed, they would all be *mahā-bhāgavatas*:

"A Spiritual Master is always liberated."

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter 21/6/1970)

25. "As soon as one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples reaches perfection, the *ṛtvik* system will have become redundant."

Sometimes referred to as "soft *ṛtvik*", the above injunction rests on the premise that the *ṛtvik* system was *only* put in place because at the time prior to Śrīla Prabhupāda's passing there were no qualified disciples.

However, this premise is speculation since Śrīla Prabhupāda never articulated it. There is no evidence that the *ṛtvik* system was set up only as a reaction to a dearth of qualified people, and that once there is a qualified person we should stop following it. This notion has the unfortunate side-effect of making the *ṛtvik* system seem only second best, or make-shift, when actually it is Kṛṣṇa's perfect plan. It also makes it possible for some future unscrupulous charismatic personality to stop the system through some false show of devotion.

In theory, even if there were qualified *uttama-adhikāri* disciples present now, they would still have to follow the *ṛtvik* system if they wanted to remain in ISKCON. There is no reason why a qualified person would not be more than happy to follow the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda, as we have already stated.

One possible source of this misconception could be the instructions Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta left the Gauḍīya Maṭha. Śrīla Prabhupāda told us that his Guru Mahārāja had asked for there to be a GBC, and that in due course a self-effulgent *ācārya* would emerge. As we know the Gauḍīya Maṭha did not follow this, to catastrophic effect. Some devotees believe we must also be on the look out for a self-effulgent *ācārya*; and that since he could come at any time, the *ṛtvik* system is only a stopgap measure.

The difficulty with this theory is that the instructions Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta left his

disciples, and the ones Śrīla Prabhupāda left us, are different. Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly left instructions that the GBC should continue managing his Society, but he said nothing anywhere about the emergence of a future self-effulgent *ācārya* for ISKCON. Instead he set up a *ṛtvik* system whereby he would remain the *ācārya* “henceforward”. Obviously, as disciples we cannot jump over Śrīla Prabhupāda and start following Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta.

If Śrīla Prabhupāda had been given some dictation from Kṛṣṇa that his Society was shortly to be helmed by a new *ācārya*, then he would have made some provision for this in his final instructions. Instead, he ordered that only *his* books were to be distributed, and that they would be law for the next ten thousand years. What would a future *ācārya* have left to do? Śrīla Prabhupāda has already put in place the Movement that will fulfill every prophecy and purport of our disciplic succession for the remainder of the *Saṅkīrtan* Movement.

How will it be possible for a new self-effulgent *dīkṣā* guru to emerge within ISKCON, when the only person allowed to give *dīkṣā* is Śrīla Prabhupāda?

Some have argued that *ācāryas* have the power to change things, and thus a new one could alter the *ṛtvik* system within ISKCON. But would an authorised *ācārya* ever contradict the direct orders left by a previous *ācārya* to his followers? To do so would surely undermine the authority of the previous *ācārya*. It would certainly cause confusion and bewilderment for those followers faced with the tortuous choice of whose order to follow.

All such concerns melt away once we read the final order. There is simply no mention of the “soft” *ṛtvik* injunction. The letter just says “henceforward”. Thus, to say it will end with the emergence of a new *ācārya*, or perfected disciple, is superimposing one’s own speculation over a perfectly clear request. The letter only supports a “hard” *ṛtvik* understanding, i.e.:

Śrīla Prabhupāda will be the initiator within ISKCON for as long as the Society is extant.

This understanding is consistent with the idea that Śrīla Prabhupāda had already single-handedly put into place the success of his mission (please see related objection 8: “Are you saying that Śrīla Prabhupāda created no pure devotees?”).

It is sometimes claimed that since the July 9th letter only authorises the original 11 appointed *ṛtviks*, the system must stop once the 11 persons nominated die or deviate.

This is rather an extreme argument. After all, the July 9th letter does not state that *only* Śrīla Prabhupāda can choose *ṛtviks*, or that the list of acting *ṛtviks* may never be added to. There are other systems of management put in place by Śrīla

Prabhupāda, such as the GBC itself, where new members are freely added or subtracted whenever it is felt necessary. It is illogical to single out one system of management, and treat it entirely differently from other equally important ones. This is particularly so since Śrīla Prabhupāda never even hinted that the approach to maintaining the *ṛtvik* system should differ in any way from the upkeep of other systems he personally put in place.

This argument has become popular for some reason, so we invite the reader to consider the following points:

- 1) In the Topanga Canyon transcript Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami relates the following question he asked whilst preparing to type the list of selected *ṛtviks*:

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Śrīla Prabhupāda, is this all or do you want to add more?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “As is necessary, others may be added.”
(Pyramid House Confessions, Topanga Canyon, 3/12/1980)

Certainly if some or all of the *ṛtviks* died or seriously deviated, that could be deemed a “necessary” circumstance for more *ṛtviks* to be “added”.

- 2) The July 9th letter defines *ṛtvik* as “representative of the *ācārya*”. It is perfectly within the remit of the GBC to select or decommission anyone to represent Śrīla Prabhupāda, be they *sannyāsīs*, Temple Presidents or indeed GBC members themselves. At present they approve *dikṣā* gurus, who are supposedly direct representatives of the Supreme Lord Himself. Thus it should be easily within their capacity to select a few name-giving priests to act responsibly on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s behalf.
- 3) The July 9th letter shows Śrīla Prabhupāda’s intention was to run a *ṛtvik* system “henceforward”. Śrīla Prabhupāda made the GBC the ultimate managing authority in order that they could maintain and regulate all the systems he put in place. The *ṛtvik* system was his system for managing initiations. It is the job of the GBC to maintain that system, adding or subtracting personnel as they can do in all other areas over which they are authorised to preside.
- 4) Letters issued 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 *ṛtviks* must have been put in place, even though it has yet to be exercised.
- 5) When trying to understand an instruction one will naturally consider the

purpose behind it. The letter states that Śrīla Prabhupāda appointed “some of His senior disciples to act as “*rittik*”—representative of the acarya, for the *purpose* (emphasis added) of performing initiations...” and that at that time Śrīla Prabhupāda had “so far” given eleven names. The aim of an obedient disciple is to understand and satisfy the purpose of the system. The purpose of the final order was clearly not to exclusively bind all future initiations to an “elite” group of individuals (“some [...] so far”) who must eventually die, and in so doing end the process of initiation within ISKCON. Rather the purpose was to ensure that initiations could practically continue from that time on. Therefore this system must remain in place as long as there is a need for initiation. Thus, the addition of more “senior disciples” to act as “representatives of the *ācārya*”, as and when they are required, would ensure that the purpose of the system continued to be satisfied.

- 6) Taken together with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Will (which indicates all future directors for permanent properties in India could only be selected from amongst his “initiated disciples”), it is quite clear Śrīla Prabhupāda’s intention was for the system to run indefinitely, with the GBC simply managing the whole thing.

Having said this it is always possible that Śrīla Prabhupāda could revoke the order if he wanted to. As stated previously the counter instruction would need to be at least as clear and unequivocal as the personally signed letter which put the *ṛtvik* system in place in the first place. With Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotees anything is possible:

Newsday Reporter: “...you are now the leader and the spiritual master. Who will take your place?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “That Kṛṣṇa will dictate who will take my place.”

(Interview, 14/7/1976, New York)

However, we feel it is safer to follow the orders we did receive from our *ācārya*, rather than speculate about ones that may or may not come in the future, or worse still invent our own.

26. “Proponents of *ṛtvik* just don’t want to surrender to a Guru.”

This accusation is based on the misconception that in order to surrender to a spiritual master he must be physically present. If this were the case then none of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s original disciples could currently be surrendering to him.

Surrender to the spiritual master means following his instructions, and this can be done whether he is physically present or not. The purpose of ISKCON is to provide proper guidance and encouragement to all comers through potentially unlimited *śikṣā* relationships. Once the current GBC itself surrenders to the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda, this system will naturally inspire more and more surrender from others, eventually perhaps even attracting die hard *rtvik* activists to do the same.

Even if all *rtvik* proponents were actually stubbornly unwilling to surrender to a guru, that still does not invalidate the July 9th order. The fact that pro-*rtviks* are allegedly so un-surrendered should make the GBC even more anxious to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's final order, if for no other reason than to prove a contrast.

27. “But who will offer guidance and give service to devotees if there are to be no *dīkṣā* gurus?”

There will be a *dīkṣā* guru: Śrīla Prabhupāda, and guidance and service will be given in exactly the same way as it was when he was present; through reading his books and through *śikṣā* guru relationships with other devotees. Before 1977, when someone joined the temple, they would be instructed by the *Bhakta* Leader, the *San̄kīrtan* Leader, visiting *Sannyāsīs*, the Cook, the *Pūjārī*, the Temple President, etc. It would be extremely rare to be given personal guidance directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda; in fact he constantly discouraged such interaction so that he could concentrate on his writing. We suggest things should go on just as Śrīla Prabhupāda set them up.

28. “On three occasions Śrīla Prabhupāda states that you need a physical guru, and yet your whole position rests on the idea that you do not.”

“Therefore, as soon as we become a little inclined towards Kṛṣṇa, then from within our heart He gives us favourable instruction so that we can gradually make progress, gradually. Kṛṣṇa is the first spiritual master, and when we become more interested, then we have to go to a physical spiritual master.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Bg. Lecture, 14/8/1966, New York)

“Because Kṛṣṇa is situated in everyone's heart. Actually, He is the spiritual master, *caitya-guru*. So in order to help us, He comes out

as physical spiritual master.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda *SB* Lecture, 28/5/1974, Rome)

“Therefore God is called *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within the heart. And the physical spiritual master is God’s mercy [...] He will help you from within and without, without in the physical form of the spiritual master, and within as the spiritual master within the heart.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Room Conversation, 23/5/1974)

Śrīla Prabhupāda used the term “physical guru” when explaining that in the conditioned stage we cannot rely purely on the *caitya-guru* or Supersoul for guidance. It is imperative that we surrender to the external manifestation of the Supersoul. This is the *dīkṣā* guru. Such a spiritual master, who is considered a resident of the spiritual world, and an intimate associate of Lord Kṛṣṇa, makes his physical appearance just to guide the fallen conditioned souls. Often such a spiritual master will write physical books; he will give lectures which can be heard with physical ears and be recorded on physical tape machines; he may leave physical *mūrtis* and even a physical GBC to continue managing everything once he has physically departed.

However, what Śrīla Prabhupāda *never* taught was that this physical guru must also be *physically present* in order to act as guru. As we have pointed out, were this the case, then currently no-one could be considered his disciple. If the guru must always be physically present in order for transcendental knowledge to be imparted, then once Śrīla Prabhupāda left the planet all his disciples should have taken “re-initiation”. Furthermore, *thousands of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples were initiated having had no contact with the physical body of Śrīla Prabhupāda*. Yet, it is accepted that they approached, enquired from, surrendered to, served and took initiation from the physical spiritual master. No one is arguing that their initiations were null and void by dint of the above three quotes.

29. “Can not the *dīkṣā* guru be a conditioned soul?”

As we have already mentioned, there is only one place in all of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings where the qualification of a *dīkṣā* guru is specifically mentioned (*Cc. Madhya*, 24.330). That is in the section of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* which deals specifically with *dīkṣā*. The quote clearly establishes that the *dīkṣā* guru must

be a *mahā-bhāgavata*. The pertinent point to note is Śrīla Prabhupāda’s use of the words “must” and “only”. It is not possible to be more emphatic. There are *no* quotes that state that the *dikṣā* guru can be a conditioned soul. This is not surprising otherwise Śrīla Prabhupāda would be preaching a contradiction in *guru-tattva*. There are quotes that may give the *impression* that they are supporting the idea of a non-liberated guru, but they usually fall into two categories:

- 1) Quotes dealing with the qualification for a *śikṣā* guru: these quotes will stress how easy it is to act as a guru, how even children can do it, and is usually linked to Lord Caitanya’s *āmāra ājñāya* verse.
- 2) Quotes describing the *process* of achieving guruhood: these quotes usually have the word “become” in them. This is because by “strictly following” the process outlined, one will advance and qualify oneself for guruhood. In this way one will “become” guru. The quotes will never say that the qualification of the *resultant* guru will be less than *mahā-bhāgavata*. They normally just describe the process.

We have kept this brief since it is a subject on which another paper could be written; more importantly it is a topic that is not directly relevant to the issue in hand—namely what Śrīla Prabhupāda actually ordered. Just because the *dikṣā* guru must be a *mahā-bhāgavata* does not mean we have to have a *ṛtvik* system, or that Śrīla Prabhupāda set up such a system. Conversely, even if the qualification of a *dikṣā* guru was minimal, that does not mean Śrīla Prabhupāda did not order a *ṛtvik* system. We simply need to examine what Śrīla Prabhupāda *did* and follow that; not what Śrīla Prabhupāda *may* or *should* have done. This paper has dealt exclusively with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s actual final instructions.

30. “Śrīla Prabhupāda put the GBC at the head of the Society to manage everything and this is the way they have chosen to run initiations.”

- Śrīla Prabhupāda never authorised the GBC to change any of the systems of management he personally put in place:

“Resolved: The GBC (Governing Body Commissioned) has been established by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda to represent Him in carrying out the responsibility of managing the International Society for Krishna Consciousness of which He is the Founder-Ācārya and supreme authority. The GBC accepts as its life and soul His divine instructions and recognizes that

it is completely dependent on His mercy in all respects. The GBC has no other function or purpose other than to execute the instructions so kindly given by His Divine Grace and preserve and spread His Teachings to the world in their pure form.”

(Definition of GBC, Resolution 1, GBC minutes 1975)

“The system of management will continue as it is now and there is no need of any change.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Declaration of Will, 4th June, 1977)

- The *ṛtvik* system was his chosen way of managing initiations within ISKCON. The job of the GBC is to ensure it runs smoothly, not disband it and start their own system, and in the process develop their own philosophy:

“The standards I have already given you, now try to maintain them at all times under standard procedure. Do not try to innovate or create anything or manufacture anything, that will ruin everything.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Bali Mardana and Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa, 18/9/1972)

“Now I have invested the GBC for maintaining the standard of our Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Society, so keep the GBC very vigilant. I have already given you full directions in my books.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Satsvarūpa, 13/9/1970)

“I have appointed originally 12 GBC members and I have given them 12 zones for their administration [sic] and management, but simply by agreement you have changed everything, so what is this, I don’t know.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Rupanuga, 4/4/1972)

“What will happen when I am not here, shall everything be spoiled by GBC?”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Hansadutta, 11/4/1972)

The GBC body should act solely within the parameters it was set by Śrīla Prabhupāda. It pains us to see Śrīla Prabhupāda’s representative body in any way compromised, since it was his desire that everyone cooperate under its direction.

**Let us all cooperate under the direction of
Śrīla Prabhupāda’s final order.**

CONCLUSION

We hope the reader has now gained a deeper appreciation for Śrīla Prabhupāda's momentous final order on the future of initiation within ISKCON. We apologise if any part of our presentation has offended anyone; that was not our intention, so please forgive our inadequacies.

We started this paper stressing how we are sure that if any mistakes have been made, they were not deliberate, and it should therefore not be felt necessary to witch-hunt or spend unnecessary energy blaming anyone. It is a fact that when the *Ācārya* leaves, there is automatically some confusion. When one considers that the Movement is destined to run for at least another 9,500 years, nineteen years of confusion is very little indeed. It is time now to digest what has gone wrong, learn from our mistakes and then put the past behind us and work together to build a better ISKCON.

It may be considered necessary to ease the *ṛtvik* system in gently, in phases perhaps. Maybe it can even run concurrently with the M.A.S.S. for a short, prespecified time period, in order not to create undue tension and disturbance. Such points will need careful consideration and discussion. As long as our goal is to re-establish Śrīla Prabhupāda's final order, then within that there should be scope to deal gently with everyone's feelings. We must treat devotees with care and consideration, allowing them time to adjust. If an extensive programme can be introduced whereby Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and instructions on the guru and initiation are presented systematically, we are confident the whole thing can be turned round quite quickly, and with a minimum of disturbance and ill feeling.

Once it is agreed that the *ṛtvik* system is the way forward, there will need to be a cooling off period where the enmity which has built on both sides of the issue can be allowed to dissipate. Retreats should be organised where both sides can come together and make friends. Unfortunately, there is considerable immaturity at present, as much from some *ṛtvik* proponents as from anyone else. Certainly, for ourselves, we do not believe that had we been senior disciples at the time of Śrīla Prabhupāda's passing, we would necessarily have acted any differently, or any better. More likely we would have made matters worse.

In our experience many devotees in ISKCON, even more senior ones, have never really had the chance to closely examine the *ṛtvik* issue in detail. Unfortunately, the form of some *ṛtvik* literature is enough to put anybody off, filled as it is with personal attacks and very little philosophy. The best solution, as far as we can see, is for the GBC themselves to resolve this issue. With the correct information before them we are confident everything will be adjusted correctly in time. This

would certainly be more desirable than being constantly pressured into change by a band of disgruntled and embittered devotees, some of whom may also have their own agendas not entirely in line with Śrīla Prabhupāda's final order.

Of course, we are also subject to the four defects of the conditioned soul and thus we warmly welcome any comments or criticism. Our main hope in writing this book is that the discussion it may inspire might go some ways towards resolving one of the most protracted and difficult controversies ISKCON has faced since the departure of His Divine Grace. Please forgive our offences. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Only Śrīla Prabhupāda can unite us.

What Is a *Ṛtvik*?

Ṛtviks are often defined in one of two incorrect ways:

- 1) As insignificant priests, mere functionaries, who simply dish out spiritual names robotically.
- 2) As apprentice *dikṣā* gurus who are acting as *ṛtviks* only until they are fully qualified, at which point they will initiate on their own behalf.

We shall now compare these definitions with the role of a *ṛtvik* as given by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Looking first at definition 1). The post of *ṛtvik* is a very responsible position. This should be obvious since Śrīla Prabhupāda specifically chose 11 devotees who already had a proven track record of taking senior responsibility within his mission. He did not simply pull the names out of a hat. Thus, although for the most part their function would be fairly routine, they would also be the first to spot deviations from the strict standards necessary for initiation. Just like a policeman's job is mostly routine since most citizens are law abiding, yet he will often be the first person to know when some misdemeanour is being committed. Śrīla Prabhupāda would often express concern that initiation should only take place when a student has proven, for at least six months, that he can chant 16 rounds a day, follow the four regulative principles, read his books, etc. Should a Temple President start sending recommendations to a *ṛtvik* for students who were failing in one of these essential areas, the *ṛtvik* would have the power to refuse initiation. In this way, the *ṛtvik* would ensure that the standards within ISKCON remained the same as the day Śrīla Prabhupāda left the planet.

Certainly a *ṛtvik* would himself have to be following strictly, and would hence be a qualified *śikṣā* guru. Whether the *ṛtvik* would have a *śikṣā* or instructing relationship with the persons being initiated is a separate issue. He may or may not. For a devotee who takes on this position, his *ṛtvik* portfolio is separate and distinct from his *śikṣā* guru portfolio, though the two may sometimes overlap. Whilst Śrīla Prabhupāda was present, new initiates would not necessarily even meet the acting *ṛtvik* for his zone. Very often the initiation ceremony would be carried out by the Temple President, the initiate's name arriving by post from his designated *ṛtvik*. At the same time we can see no reason why a *ṛtvik* should not meet new initiates, and even perform the ceremony, if such an arrangement is agreeable at the local Temple level.

We shall now examine definition 2). As we have several times mentioned, in order to take disciples one must be a fully authorised *mahā-bhāgavata*. Before Śrīla Prabhupāda left, he put in place a system that made it illegal for anyone other

than himself to initiate within ISKCON. Thus, there is no authorisation for anyone, at any time in the future of ISKCON, to initiate on their own behalf, apart from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Thus, even if a *ṛtvik*, or anyone else for that matter, were to attain the level of *mahā-bhāgavata*, he would still need to follow the *ṛtvik* system if he wished to stay within ISKCON. We were given an order on July 9th, 1977, and it says nothing about the *ṛtviks* ever becoming *dīkṣā* gurus.

What they do and how they are selected:

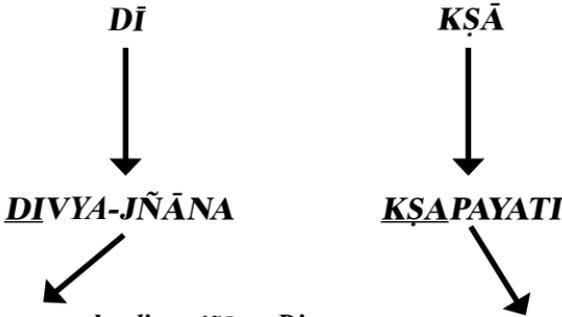
- a) The *ṛtvik* accepts the disciple, issues new initiates with a spiritual name, chants on beads, and for second initiation gives the *gāyatrī mantra*—all on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s behalf (please see the July 9th letter on p.109). This was Śrīla Prabhupāda’s chosen method for having responsible devotees overseeing initiation procedures and standards within ISKCON. The *ṛtvik* will examine all recommendations sent by the Temple Presidents to ensure prospective disciples have met the requisite standard of devotional practice.
- b) A *ṛtvik* is a priest and thus must be a qualified *brāhmaṇa*. When selecting the *ṛtviks*, Śrīla Prabhupāda first suggested “senior *sannyāsīs*”, though he also selected persons who were not *sannyāsīs* (please see July 7th conversation in Appendices, p. 128). The *ṛtviks* chosen were senior, responsible men to ensure that the process of initiation went on smoothly throughout the whole world.
- c) Future *ṛtviks* can be selected by the GBC. The way in which *ṛtviks* would be selected, reprimanded or decommissioned would be practically identical to the way in which *dīkṣā* gurus are currently managed by the GBC within ISKCON. This is definitely within the scope of the powers granted to the GBC by Śrīla Prabhupāda, as they had the authority to select and review much senior personnel such as *sannyāsīs*, Trustees, Zonal Secretaries, etc., Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami also admitted that more *ṛtviks* could be added by the GBC in the “Topanga Canyon” talks in 1980 (please see Appendices, p. 133).

So in summary, the system would work exactly as it did when Śrīla Prabhupāda was still on the planet. The mood, attitude, relationship between the various parties, etc., should continue unchanged from the way it was for a brief four-month period in 1977. As Śrīla Prabhupāda emphatically stated in the second paragraph of his Will:

“The system of management will continue as it is now and there is no need of any change.”

Dīkṣā

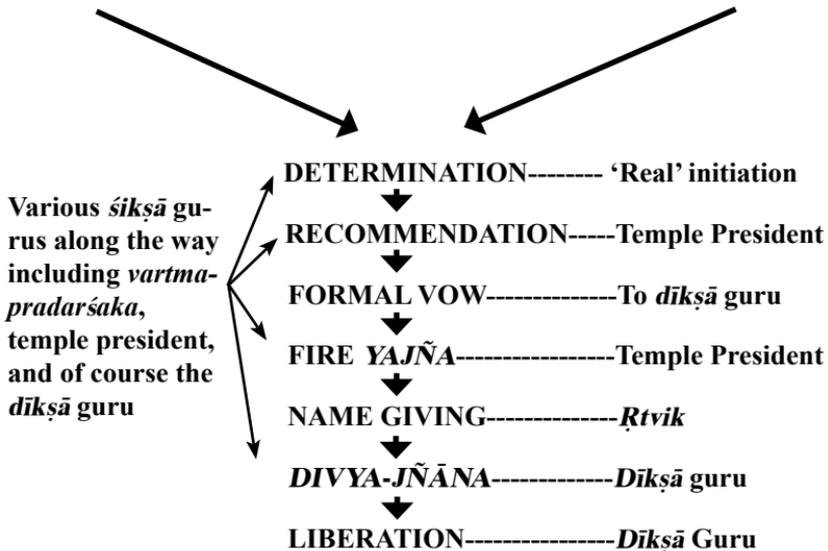
“*Dīkṣā* is the process by which one can awaken his transcendental knowledge and vanquish all reactions caused by sinful activity. A person expert in the study of the revealed scriptures knows this process as *dīkṣā*.”
(Cc. *Madhya*, 15:108)

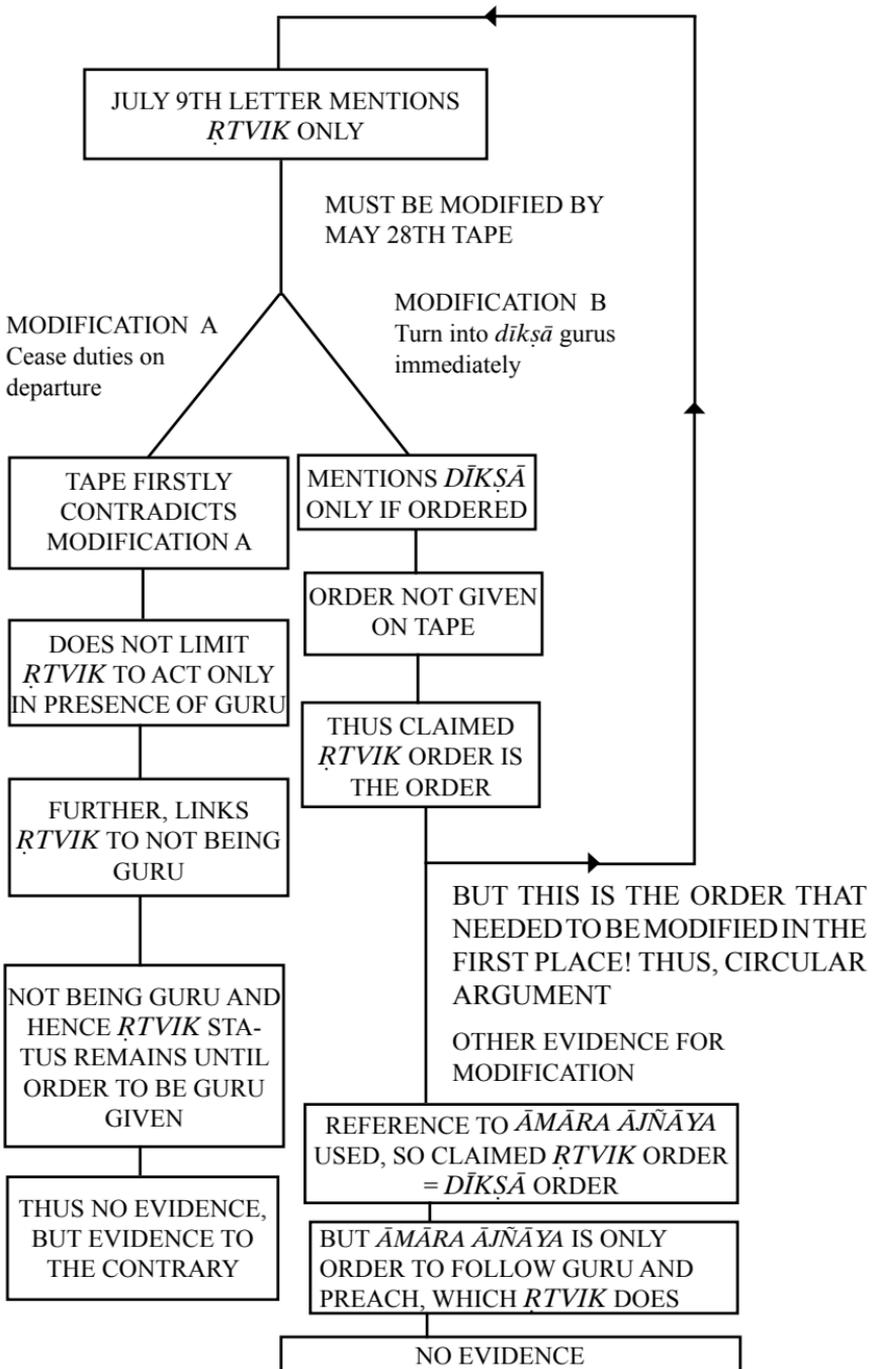


“There are two words, *divya-jñāna*. *Divya-jñāna* means transcendental, spiritual knowledge. So *divya* is *dī*, and *jñānam*, *kṣapayati*, explaining, that is *kṣa*, *dī-kṣā*. This is called *dīkṣā*, *dīkṣā*, the combination. So *dīkṣā* means the initiation to begin transcendental activities. That is called initiation.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 22/2/1973)

Kṣapayati - ‘annihilates’
(SB, 4.24.61)

This is the word-for-word translation given in the verse. It relates to the annihilation of sins given in the definition of *dīkṣā* above.





Does the Guru Have to Be Physically Present?

“Physical presence is immaterial; presence of the transcendental sound received from the spiritual master should be the guidance of life. That will make our spiritual life successful. If you feel very strongly about my absence you may place my pictures on my sitting places and this will be source of inspiration for you.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Brahmānanda and other students, 19/1/1967)

“But always remember that I am always with you. As you are always thinking of me I am always thinking of you also. Although physically we are not together, we are not separated spiritually. So we should be concerned only with this spiritual connection.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Gaurasundara, 13/11/1969)

“So we should associate by the vibration, and not by the physical presence. That is real association.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, SB, 18/08/1968)

“There are two conceptions of presence—the physical conception and the vibrational conception. The physical conception is temporary, whereas the vibrational conception is eternal. [...] When we feel separation from Kṛṣṇa or the spiritual master, we should just try to remember their words of instructions, and we will no longer feel that separation. Such association with Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master should be association by vibration, not physical presence. That is real association.”
(Elevation to Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, Chapter 4)

“Although according to material vision His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda passed away from this material world on the last day of December, 1936, I still consider His Divine Grace to be always present with me by his *vāṇī*, his words. There are two ways of association—by *vāṇī* and by *vapu*. *Vāṇī* means words and *vapu* means physical presence. Physical presence is sometimes appreciable and sometimes not, but *vāṇī* continues to exist eternally. Therefore we must take advantage of the *vāṇī*, not the physical presence.”
(Cc. Antya-līlā, concluding words)

“Therefore we should take advantage of the *vāṇī*, not the physical presence”.
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Śuci-devī dāsī, 4/11/1975)

“I shall remain your personal guidance, physically present or not physically, as

I am getting personal guidance from my Guru Mahārāja.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Room Conversation, Vṛndāvana, 14/7/1977)

“It is sometimes misunderstood that if one has to associate with persons engaged in devotional service, he will not be able to solve the economic problem. To answer this argument, it is described here that one has to associate with liberated persons not directly, physically, but by understanding, through philosophy and logic, the problems of life.”

(SB, 3.31.48, purport)

“I’m always with you never mind if I am physically absent.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Jayānanda, 16/9/1967)

Paramānanda: “We’re always feeling your presence very strongly, Śrīla Prabhupāda [...] simply by your teachings and your instructions. We’re always meditating on your instructions.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Thank you. That is the real presence. Physical presence is not important.”

(Room Conversation, 6/10/1977, Vṛndāvana)

“You write that you have desire to avail of my association again, but why do you forget that you are always in association with me? When you are helping my missionary activities I am always thinking of you and you are always thinking of me. That is real association. Just like I always think of my Guru Maharaj every moment, although He is not physically present, and because I am trying to serve Him to my best capacity, I am sure He is helping me by His spiritual blessings. So there are two kinds of association: physical and preceptorial. Physical association is not so important as preceptorial association.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Govinda Dāsī, 17/8/1969)

“As far as my blessing is concerned it does not require my physical presence. If you are chanting Hare Krishna there and following my instructions, reading the books, taking only Kṛṣṇa prasadam etc. then there is no question of your not receiving the blessings of Lord Caitanya whose mission I am humbly trying to push on.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Bal Kṛṣṇa, 30/6/1974)

““Anyone who has developed unflinching faith in the Lord and the Spiritual Master can understand the revealed scripture unfold before him. So continue your present aptitude [sic] and you will be successful in your spiritual progress.

I am sure that even if I am not physically present before you. Still you will be able to execute all spiritual duties in the matter of Krishna Consciousness; if you follow the above principles.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Subala, 29/9/1967)

“So although a physical body is not present, the vibration should be accepted as the presence of the spiritual master, vibration. What we have heard from the spiritual master, that is living.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 13/1/1969, Los Angeles)

Revatī-nandana: “...so sometimes the spiritual master is far, far away. He may be in Los Angeles. Somebody is coming to Hamburg Temple. He thinks ‘How will the spiritual master be pleased?’”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Just follow his order. Spiritual master is along with you by his words. Just like my spiritual master is not physically present, but I am associating with him by his words.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 18/8/1971)

“Just like I am working, so my Guru Mahārāja is there, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Physically he may not be, but in every action he is there.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Room Conversation, 27/5/1977, Vṛndāvana)

“So that is called *prakāṣa*, physically present. And there is another phase, which is called *aprakāṣa*, not physically present. But that does not mean, Kṛṣṇa is dead or God is dead. That does not mean, *prakāṣa* or *aprakāṣa*, physically present or not present, it doesn’t matter.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 11/12/1973, Los Angeles)

“So, spiritually there is no question of separation, even physically we may be in far distant place.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Śyāmā-dāsī, 30/08/1968)

“I went to your country for spreading this information of Krishna Consciousness & you are helping me in my mission although I am not physically present there but spiritually I am always with you.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Nandarani, Kṛṣṇa Devī, Subala & Uddava, 3/10/1967)

“We are not separated actually. There are two—*vani* or *vapu*. So *vapu* is physical

presence and *vani* is presence by the vibration, but they are all the same.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Hamsadutta, 22/6/1970)

“So in the absence of physical presentation of the Spiritual Master the vaniseva is more important. My Spiritual Master, Sarasvati Gosvami Thakur, may appear to be physically not present, but still because I try to serve His instruction I never feel separated from Him.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Karāndhara, 22/8/1970)

“I also do not feel separation from my Guru Maharaj. When I am engaged in His service His pictures give me sufficient strength. To serve the Spiritual Master’s word is more important than to serve him physically.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Śyāmasundara, 19/7/1970)

Follow the Instruction, Not the Body

“So far personal association with the Guru is concerned, I was only with my Guru Maharaj four or five times, but I have never left his association, not even for a moment. Because I am following his instructions, I have never felt any separation. There are some of my Godbrothers here in India who had constant personal association with Guru Maharaj, but who are neglecting his orders. This is just like the bug who is sitting on the lap of the king. He may be very puffed-up by his position, but all he can succeed in doing is biting the king. Personal association is not so important as association through service.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Śatadhanya, 20/2/1972)

“So spiritually, appearance and disappearance, there is no difference ... spiritually, there is no such difference, appearance or disappearance. So although this is the disappearance day of Om̐ Viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, so there is nothing to be lamented. Although we feel separation...”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, Los Angeles, 13/12/1973)

“So my Guru Mahārāja will be very, very much pleased upon you [...] It is not that he is dead and gone. That is not spiritual understanding [...] He is seeing. I never feel that I am alone.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 2/3/1975, Atlanta)

“Vani is more important than bopu.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, 14/12/1972)

“Yes, I am so glad that your center is doing so well and all the devotees are now appreciating the presence of their Spiritual Master by following His instructions although He is no longer physically present—this is the right spirit.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Karandhara, 13/9/1970)

“The spiritual master by his words can penetrate into the heart of the suffering person and inject knowledge transcendental, which alone can extinguish the fire of material existence.”

(SB, 1.7.22, purport)

“There are two words, *vāṇī* and *vapuḥ*. *Vāṇī* means words, and *vapuḥ* means this physical body. [...] *Vapuḥ* will be finished. This is material body. It will be finished. That is the nature. But if we keep to the *vāṇī*, to the words of spiritual master, then we remain very fixed up. [...] if you always keep intact, in link with the words and instruction of the superior authorities, then you are always fresh.

This is spiritual understanding.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 2/3/1975, Atlanta)

“So we should give more stress on the sound vibration, either of Kṛṣṇa or of the Spiritual Master.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 18/8/1968, Montreal)

“Never think that I am absent from you. Physical presence is not essential; presence by message (or hearing) is real touch.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to students, 2/8/1967)

“Reception of spiritual knowledge is never checked by any material condition.”

(SB, 7.7.1, purport)

“The potency of transcendental sound is never minimized because the vibrator is apparently absent.”

(SB, 2.9.8, purport)

“The disciple and spiritual master are never separated because the spiritual master always keeps company with the disciple as long as the disciple follows strictly the instructions of the spiritual master. This is called the association of *vāñī* (words). Physical presence is called *vapuḥ*. As long as the spiritual master is physically present, the disciple should serve the physical body of the spiritual master, and when the spiritual master is no longer physically existing, the disciple should serve the instructions of the spiritual master.”

(SB, 4.28.47, purport)

“If there is no chance to serve the spiritual master directly, a devotee should serve him by remembering his instructions. There is no difference between the spiritual master’s instructions and the spiritual master himself. In his absence, therefore, his words of direction should be the pride of the disciple.”

(Cc. Ādi-līlā 1.35, purport)

“He lives forever by his divine instructions and the follower lives with him.”

(SB, Preface)

“He reasons ill who tells that Vaiṣṇavas die, when thou art living still in sound.”

(Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Songs of the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas, 1972 edition)

“Yes, the ecstasy of separation of Spiritual Master is even greater ecstasy than meeting with Him.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Jadurāñī, 13/1/1968)

“Krishna and His representative is the same. Just like Krishna can be present simultaneously in millions of places. Similarly, the Spiritual Master also 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.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Mālatī, 28/5/1968)

“It is better service to Krishna and Spiritual Master in a feeling of separation; sometimes there is risk in the matter of direct service.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Madhusūdana, 30/12/1967)

The Books Are Enough

Devotee: “Śrīla Prabhupāda, when you are not present with us, how is it possible to receive instructions, for example, on questions that may arise?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Well, the questions... Answers are there in my books.”
(Morning Walk, 13/5/1973, Los Angeles)

“So utilize whatever time you find to make a thorough study of my books. Then all your questions will be answered.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Upendra, 7/1/1976)

“If it is possible to go to the temple, then take advantage of the temple. A temple is a place where by one is given the opportunity to render direct devotional service to the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna. In conjunction with this you should always read my books daily and all your questions will be answered and you will have a firm basis of Krishna Consciousness. In this way your life will be perfect.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Hugo Salemon, 22/11/1974)

“Every one of you must regularly read our books at least twice—in the morning and evening, and automatically all questions will be answered.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Randhir, 24/01/1970)

“In my books the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness is explained fully so if there is anything which you do not understand, then you simply have to read again and again. By reading daily the knowledge will be revealed to you and by this process your spiritual life will develop.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Bahurūpa Dāsa, 22/11/1974)

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Even a moment’s association with a pure devotee—all success!” [...]

Revatīnandana: “Does that also apply to reading the words of a pure devotee?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes.”

Revatīnandana: “Even a little association with your books has the same effect?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Effect, of course, it requires both the things. One must be very eager to take it.”

(Room Conversation, 13/12/1970)

Paramahansa: “My question is: A pure devotee, when he comments *Bhagavad-gītā*, someone who never sees him physically, but he just comes in contact with his commentary, explanation, is this the same thing?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes. You can associate with Kṛṣṇa by reading *Bhagavad-gītā*. And these saintly persons, they have given their explanations, comments. So where is the difficulty?”

(Morning Walk, 11/6/1974, Paris)

“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 doesn’t matter.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Arrival Conversation, 17/5/1977, Vṛndāvana)

Śrīla Prabhupāda Is Our Eternal Guru

Reporter: “What will happen to the movement in the United States when you die?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “I will never die.”

Devotees: “*Jaya! Haribol!*” (*Laughter.*)

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “I shall live for my books, and you will utilise.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Press Conference, 16/7/75, San Francisco, emphasis added)

Indian Lady: “... is that spiritual master still guiding after the death?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes, yes. Just like Kṛṣṇa is guiding us, similarly, spiritual master will guide.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 3/9/1971, London)

“The eternal bond between disciple and spiritual master begins from the first day he hears.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Jadurāṇī, 4/9/1972)

“The influence of a pure devotee is such that if someone comes to associate with him with a little faith, he gets the chance of hearing about the Lord from authoritative scriptures like the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. [...] This is the first stage of association with pure devotees.”
(The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 19, [Pre-1977 Ed.]

“These are not ordinary books. It is recorded chanting. Anyone who reads, he is hearing.”

(Letter to Rūpānuga Dāsa, 19/10/1974)

“Regarding parampara system: there is nothing to wonder for big gaps. [...] We have to pick up the prominent acharyas, and follow from him.”

(Letter to Dayānanda, 12/4/1968)

Nārāyaṇa: “So those disciples who don’t have opportunity to see you or speak with you...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “That he was speaking, *vāṇī* and *vapuḥ*. Even if you don’t see his body, you take his word, *vāṇī*.”

Nārāyaṇa: “But how do they know they’re pleasing you, Śrīla Prabhupāda?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “If you actually follow the words of guru, that means he is pleased. And if you do not follow, how he can be pleased?”

Sudāmā: “Not only that, but your mercy is spread everywhere, and if we take advantage, you told us once, then we will feel the result.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes.”

Jayādvaīta: “And if we have faith in what the guru says, then automatically we’ll do that.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes. My Guru Mahārāja passed in 1936, and I started this movement in 1965, thirty years after. Then? I am getting the mercy of guru. This is *vāñī*. Even the guru is not physically present, if you follow the *vāñī*, then you are getting help.”

Sudāmā: “So there’s no question of ever separation as long as the disciple follows the instruction of guru.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “No. *Cakhu-dān dilo jei*. What is that, next one?”

Sudāmā: “*Cakhu-dān dilo jei, janme janme prabhu sei.*”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “*Janme janme prabhu sei*. So where there is separation? Who has opened your eyes, he is birth after birth your *prabhu*.”

(Morning Walk, 21/7/1975, San Francisco)

Madhudviṣa: “Is there any way for a Christian to, without the help of a spiritual master, to reach the spiritual sky through believing in the words of Jesus Christ and trying to follow his teachings?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “I don’t follow.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Can a Christian in this age, without a spiritual master, but by reading the Bible and following Jesus’s words, reach the...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “When you read Bible, you follow spiritual master. How can you say without? As soon as you read Bible, that means you are following the instruction of Lord Jesus Christ, that means you are following spiritual master. So where is the opportunity of being without spiritual master?”

Madhudviṣa: “I was referring to a living spiritual master.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Spiritual master is not the question of... Spiritual master is eternal. Spiritual master is eternal. So your question is without spiritual master. Without spiritual master you cannot be, at any stage of your life. You may accept this spiritual master or that spiritual master. That is a different thing. But you have to accept. As you say that “by reading Bible,” when you read Bible that means you are following the spiritual master represented by some priest or some clergyman in the line of Lord Jesus Christ.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, 2/10/1968, Seattle, emphases added)

“You have asked if it is true that the Spiritual Master remains in the material universe until all of His disciples are transferred to the Spiritual Sky. The answer is yes, this is the rule.”

(Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Jayapatāka, 11/7/1969)

Appendices

A copy of the actual letter

ISKCON

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



July 9th, 1977

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 Vrndavana, Srila Prabhupad indicated that soon He would appoint some of His senior disciples to act as "rittik" - 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 das Goswami
 His Holiness Jayapataka Swami
 His Holiness Tamal Krama Goswami
 His Holiness Hridayananda Goswami
 His Holiness Bhuvananda Goswami
 His Holiness Kasesadutta Swami
 His Holiness Kamesvara Swami
 His Holiness Harikesa Swami
 His Grace Bhagavan das Adhikari
 His Grace Jayatirtha das Adhikari

In the past Temple Presidents have written to Srila Prabhupad recommending a particular devotee's initiation. Now that Srila Prabhupad 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 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 Prabhupad, by 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 vajra 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.

Hoping this finds you all well.

Your servant,

Tamal Krama Goswami

Tamal Krama Goswami
 Secretary to Srila Prabhupad

The actual matter of the letter

ISKCON

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Hoping this finds you all well.

Your servant,

*(signature appears on the original document)***Tamal Krsna Gosvami**

Secretary to Srila Prabhupad

Approved

[Srila Prabhupada's signature from original]

A copy of the actual letter

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS
 c/o: Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



July 10th, 1977

Dear Hamsadutta Maharaja,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet. Srila Prabhupada has received our letters dated July 4th and July 5th, 1977 respectively, and has instructed me to reply them.

Srila Prabhupada was very pleased to hear how you have organized everything in Ceylon, and that so many people are now taking interest seriously is proof of the effectiveness of your preaching. His Divine Grace said, "You are a suitable person and you can give initiation to those who are ready for it. I have selected you along eleven men as 'initiators' or representative of the acarya, to give initiation. In the first and second initiation, on my behalf." (A newsletter is being sent to all Temple Presidents and ISK in this regard listing the eleven representative selected by His Divine Grace, those who are initiated are the disciples of Srila Prabhupada, and anyone who you deem fit and initiate in this way, you should send their names to be included in Srila Prabhupada's "initiated disciples" book. In this way the Temple Presidents will send their recommendations for initiation direct to the nearest representative who will give a spiritual name or chant on the system which is used by Srila Prabhupada has been using.)

Srila Prabhupada smiled very broadly when he heard of the successful program organized by the local people in which 2000 persons attended. When he heard that you have introduced a full feasting program on Sundays, he said, "You are a good cook, so teach others now how to cook just as I taught you."

Regarding the printing going slowly, His Divine Grace stated, "Never mind. Go slowly. It doesn't matter slowly." I inquired from Srila Prabhupada about the Sinhalese translation which you mentioned. He said that "In Chanting Hari Krishna Mantra" was translated into Sinhalese and that translation is in his trunk in Bombay. We will try to get it to you as soon as possible. I do not know if Gopal Krishna has any Tamil manuscript, but if he does when I see him in about ten days, I will tell him to send it to you. You may also write him directly. *Prabhupada says it may be faster just to get a new translator - it is only 1 page.*

Srila Prabhupada was very glad to know that you would try to bring some Ceylonese devotees to Mayapur and said, "Oh, that is very good!" He did not know whether the story about Bhaktisiddhanta's disciples seeing a man eating a rat was true or not. Regarding the exact position of Sri Lanka, this is the opinion of some people. Srila Prabhupada advised that we not discuss this matter publicly at this time. Prabhupada also recommended that from Hari Sauri you take 5000. He said that you could have one fifth of whatever Hari Sauri sends to India. Regarding whether you should use the name Swami or Goswami, Srila Prabhupada said, "Stick to one. Swami is better."

Your servant,

Tamal Krishna Goswami

Tamal Krishna Goswami
 Secretary to Srila Prabhupada

His Holiness Hamsadutta Swami
 c/o ISKCON Colombo

Enc

The actual matter of the letter

ISKCON

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

July 10th, 1977

My dear Hamsadutta Maharaja,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet. Srila Prabhupad has received your letters dated July 4th and July 5th, 1977 respectively, and has instructed me to reply them.

Srila Prabhupad was very pleased to hear how you have organized everything in Ceylon, and that so many people are now taking interest seriously is proof of the effectiveness of your preaching. His Divine Grace said, "You are a suitable person and you can give initiation to those who are ready for it. I have selected you among eleven men as "rittik" or representative of the acarya, to give initiations, both first and second initiation, on my behalf." (A newsletter is being sent to all Temple Presidents and GBC in this regard listing the eleven representative selected by His Divine Grace. Those who are initiated are the disciples of Srila Prabhupad, and anyone who you deem fit and initiate in this way, you should send their names to be included in Srila Prabhupad's "Initiated Disciples" book. In this way the Temple Presidents will send their recommendations for initiation direct to the nearest representative who will give a spiritual name or chant on the Gayatri thread just as Srila Prabhupad has been doing.)

Srila Prabhupad smiled very broadly when he heard of the successful program organized by the local people in which 2000 persons attended. When he heard that you have introduced a full feasting program on Sundays, he said, "You are a good cook, so teach others now how to cook just as I taught you."

Regarding the printing going slowly, His Divine Grace stated, "Never mind. Go surely. It doesn't matter slowly." I inquired from Pradyumna Prabhu about the Sinhalese translation which you mentioned. He said that "On Chanting Hare Krsna Mantra" was translated into Sinhalese and that translation is in his trunk in Bombay. We will try to get it to you as soon as possible. I do not know if Gopal Krsna has any Tamil manuscript, but if he does when I see him in about ten days, I will tell him to send it to you. You may also write him directly. Pradyumna says it may be faster just to get a new translation – it is only 1 page.

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Your servant,

*(signature appears on the original document)***Tamal Krsna Goswami**

Secretary to Srila Prabhupad

His Holiness Hamsadutta Swami

c/c ISKCON Colombo

/tkg

A copy of the actual letter

ISKCON

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



July 11th, 1977

My dear Kirtanananda Maharaja,

Please accept my most humble obeisances at your feet. His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada has just received the latest issue of *Brijabasi Spirit*, Vol. IV, No. 4, which brought Him great joy. As He looked at the cover showing Kaladri performing a fire ceremony, He said, "Just see his face how devotee he is, so expert in everything." When Srila Prabhupada opened the first page, His eyes fixed on the picture of Radha-Vrindavana Candira, and He said, "Vrindavana Bihari—so beautiful. There is no danger wherever Vrindavana Candira is." After enjoying the whole magazine thoroughly Srila Prabhupada said, "It is printed on their own press. It is very good progress." His Divine Grace very much appreciated the article "How I Was Deprogrammed" by the young devotee boy. Prabhupada was feeling great sympathy when he heard his story and said, "If one man is turned like this boy then this movement is successful. There is good prospect, good hope. You all combine together and push this movement on and on. Now I am assured that it will go on." While going through the magazine, Srila Prabhupada also saw your good photo on the page "Istasgesthi" and Srila Prabhupada bestowed a long loving look upon your good self expressing his deep appreciation for how you have understood the Krishna consciousness.

A letter has been sent to all the Temple Presidents and GBC which you should be receiving soon describing the process for initiation to be followed in the future. Srila Prabhupada has appointed thus far eleven representatives who will initiate new devotees on His behalf. You can wait for this letter to arrive (the original has been sent to Ramesvara Maharaja for duplicating) and then all of the persons whom you recommended in your previous letters can be initiated.

His Divine Grace has been maintaining His health on an even course and most amazingly has doubled His translation work keeping pace with the doubling of book distribution, hoping this meets you well.

Your servant,

Tunal Krsna Goswami
Secretary to Srila Prabhupada

His Holiness Kirtanananda Swami
c/o ISKCON New Vrindavana

/tkg

The actual matter of the letter

ISKCON

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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Your servant,

*(signature appears on the original document)***Tamal Krsna Goswami**

Secretary to Srila Prabhupad

His Holiness Kirtanananda Swami
c/o ISKCON New Vrndavana
/tkg

A copy of the actual letter



THE BHAKTIVEDANTA BOOK TRUST

Founder-Acarya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

3784 WATREKA AVE. LOS ANGELES, CA 90034, U.S.A. • TWX 910 340-7062/TEL. (213) 559-4455

July 21, 1977

ALL GLORIES TO SRI GURU AND GOURANGA!

Dear GBC Godbrother Prabhus,

Please accept my most humble obeisances in the dust of your feet. All glories to Srila Prabhupada! I have just received some letters from Tamal Krsna Maharaja, and am enclosing herein two documents: 1) Srila Prabhupada's final version of his last will, and 2) Srila Prabhupada's initial list of disciples appointed to perform initiations for His Divine Grace. This list is also being sent to all centers.

From Tamal's letters it seems that Prabhupada is enthusiastic despite his continuing poor health, and is translating full force. He especially becomes enthused when reports arrive from different GBC men and temples with preaching results, general good news, etc. and Tamal Krsna Maharaja has stressed that we should all be sending such reports, as His Divine Grace often asks, "What is the news?" An outstanding example of Prabhupada's mood was shown after receiving an encouraging preaching report from Hansadutta Swami in Ceylon. Srila Prabhupada said, "I want to go to Ceylon. I can go. I can go anywhere by chair. It is difficult only in the imagination. The swelling is touching the skin, not my soul."

More than anything else, Tamal has stressed the genuine need for a visiting GBC member to come every month for personal service. Since Prabhupada has recently said that now this regular visiting is very important, all GBC members should be anxious to do this, as it not only involves important work which will help relieve Prabhupada from management, but also involves attending Srila Prabhupada personally, giving him massages and many other nectarean services, and in general affords an unusual amount of personal association, even more than in the past. Out of over 23 GBC members there should never be one month not filled up.

One final news report is that Srila Prabhupada has appointed a new GBC member for North India (including Delhi but not Vrndavana) - His Holiness Bhakti Caitanya Swami. Tamal Krsna Maharaja said that His Divine Grace appointed him to encourage him for the outstanding preaching work he is doing in Punjab.

Jai, I hope this finds you all well, and fully absorbed in preaching and thus satisfying Srila Prabhupada fully.

Your most unworthy servant,

Ramesvara dasa Swami
Ramesvara dasa Swami

Enclosures

The actual matter of the letter

BBT

THE BHAKTIVEDANTA BOOK TRUST

Founder-Acarya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

July 21, 1977

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Jai, I hope this finds you all well, and fully absorbed in preaching and thus satisfying Srila Prabhupada fully.

Your most unworthy servant,

(signature appears on original document)

Ramesvara dasa Swami

Enclosures

A copy of the actual letter

ISKCON

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS
Funder-Address: 154 Divine Grace A.L. Bhaktivinoda Swami Prabhupada

July 31st, 1977

My dear Sansadutta Maharaja,

Please accept my most humble obeisances at your feet. I have been instructed by His Divine Grace -rila Prabhupad to thank you for your letter dated July 25th, 1977.

You have written to Srila Prabhupad saying you do not know why has chosen you to be a recipient of His mercy. His Divine Grace immediately replied, "It is because you are my sincere servant. You have given up attachment to a beautiful and qualified wife and that is a great benediction. You are a real preacher. Therefore I like you. (then laughing) Sometimes you become obstinate, but that is one of my intelligent men. Now you have got a very good field. Now graze it and it will be a great credit. No one will disturb you. Make your own field and continue to be nitick and act on my

Srila Prabhupad listened with great enthusiasm as I read to him newspaper article. His Divine Grace was very pleased: "This article will increase your prestige. It is very nice article. Therefore newspaper has spared so much space to print it. It is very nice. It will be published in Back to Godhead. Now there is a column in the Back to Godhead called Prabhupad Speaks Out. Your article may be entitled 'Prabhupad's Disciple Speaks Out.' Yes, we shall publish this certainly. Let thisascal be fool before the public. I liked this article very much. I want my disciples to speak out and be blessed by complete reasoning. 'Brahma suris purnakata,' this is my message. They cannot answer. This Dr. Koveer should be invited to the Dr. Svarupa Ramodar's Convention on 'Wide comes from the East' to learn something at this scientific conference."

You should certainly get some ISKCON Food Relief money. I have collected American money and sent for food relief. This is my proposal. 300 people coming in no joke. You have to do many more preparations. I would like to eat but I cannot eat simply hearing these names of preparations. I am just thinking this morning if you ask now

to Srila Prabhupad and His stalwart throughout the world spreading the message of Krishna. This means you well.

Your servant,

Danab Kanta Goswami
Secretary to Srila Prabhupad

(Sanskrit) Hari, Omkar, Namas, (H.K.) Namas (H.K.)
Hari Hari Hari Hari Hari Hari Hari Hari Hari Hari

The actual matter of the letter

[LETTER from Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami to Hansadutta, on Śrīla Prabhupāda's behalf.]

ISKCON

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

July 31st, 1977

My Dear Hamsadutta Maharaja,

Please accept my most humble obeisances at your feet. I have been instructed by His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupad to thank you for your letter dated July 25th, 1977.

You have written to Srila Prabhupad saying you do not know why he has chosen you to be a recipient of His mercy. His Divine Grace immediately replied, "It is because you are my sincere servant. You have given up attachment to a beautiful and qualified wife and that is a great benediction. You are a real preacher. Therefore I like you. (then laughing) Sometimes you become obstinate, but that is true of any intelligent man. Now you have got a very good field. Now organize it and it will be a great credit. No one will disturb you there. Make your own field and continue to be rittik and act on my behalf."

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Yes, you should certainly get some ISKCON Food Relief money. For your program, American money collected and sent for food distribution. That is my proposal. 300 people coming is no joke. You mentioned so many nice preparations. I would like to eat but I ... I cannot at simply hearing these names (of preparations) it is satisfying. Just thinking this morning of you and now you have written me.

(last paragraph illegible)

Your servant,

(signature appears on original document)

Tamal Krsna Gosvami

Secretary to Srila Prabhupad

The Actual Will

International Society for Krishna Consciousness
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Founder Acharya
International Society for Krishna Consciousness

6. The properties outside of India and their associated ISC committee members are as follows:

- a) Properties in Chicago, Detroit and Ann Arbor: Jayatirtha das Adhikari, Harikesa Swami, and Balavanta das Adhikari.
- b) Properties in Hawaii, Tokyo, Hong Kong: Guru Kripa Swami, Rameswara Swami, and Tamal Krena Goswami.
- c) Properties in Melbourne, Sydney, Australia: Guru Kripa Swami, Hari Sauri, and Atreya Sri.
- d) Properties in England (London Radlett), France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden: Jayatirtha das Adhikari, Bhagavan das Adhikari, Harikesa Swami.
- e) Properties in Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa: Jayatirtha das Adhikari, Brahmamunda Swami, and Atreya Sri.
- f) Properties in Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Costa Rica, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, USSR: Kirtanananda Goswami, Panna Brahma Swami, Brahmamunda Swami.
- g) Properties in Georgetown, Guyana, Santo Domingo, St. Augustine: Adi Kesava Swami, Hridayananda Goswami, Panna Brahma Swami.
- h) Properties in Vancouver, Seattle, Berkeley, Dallas: Satavarupa Goswami, Jagadisa das Adhikari, Jayatirtha das Adhikari.
- i) Properties in Los Angeles, Denver, San Diego, Laguna Beach: Rameswara Swami, Satavarupa Swami, Adi Kesava Swami.
- j) Properties in New York, Boston, Puerto Rico, Fort Royal, St. Louis, St. Louis, Mo: Tamal Krena Goswami, Adi Kesava Swami, Rameswara Swami.
- k) Properties in Iran: Atreya Sri, Bhagavan das Adhikari, Brahmamunda Swami.
- l) Properties in Washington D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, Montreal and Ottawa: Rupanuga das Adhikari, Gopal Krena das Adhikari, Jagadisa das Adhikari.
- m) Properties in Pittsburgh, New York, Toronto, Cleveland, Buffalo: Kirtanananda Swami, Atreya Sri, Balavanta das Adhikari.
- n) Properties in Atlanta, Tennessee, Nashville, Miami, New Orleans, Mississippi, Farm, Houston, Balavanta das Adhikari, Adi Kesava Swami, Rupanuga das Adhikari.
- o) Properties in Fiji: Hari Sauri, Atreya Sri, Vasudev.

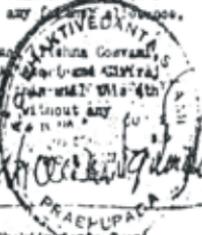
7. I declare, say and confirm that all the properties, both movable and immovable, which stand in my name, including current accounts, savings accounts and fixed deposits in various banks, are the properties and assets of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and the heirs and successors of my previous life, or anyone claiming through them, have no right, claim or interest in these properties whatsoever, save and except as provided hereafter.

8. Although the money which is in my personal name in different banks is being spent for ISKCON and belongs to ISKCON, I have kept a few deposits specifically marked for allocating a monthly allowance of Rs. 1,000/- to the members of my former family (two sons, two daughters, and wife). After the deaths of the members of my former family, these specific deposits (corpus, interests, and savings) will become the property of ISKCON for the corpus of the trust, and the descendants of my former family or anybody claiming through them shall not be allowed any interest.

9. I hereby appoint Guru Kripa Swami, Hridayananda Goswami, Tamal Krena Goswami, Kameshwar Swami, Gopal Krishna das Adhikari, Jayatirtha das Adhikari, and Brahmacharya to act as executors of this will. I have made this will on the 4th day of June, 1977, in possession of full sense and sound mind, without any persuasion, force or compulsion from anybody.

Witnesses: 1. Hiranyanaga Shree
Shree G. Hridayananda Goswami
Shree Gopal Krishna das Adhikari
Shree Jayatirtha das Adhikari
Shree Kameshwar Swami
Shree Tamal Krena Goswami
Shree Brahmacharya


 A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
 Founder Acharya
 International Society for Krishna Consciousness



W. N. ARORA, Advocate
 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

The Actual Will

I, the undersigned Swami Prabhupada, a devotee and disciple of Sri Kṛṣṇa Chandra De, founder of the ISKCON Society for Krishna Consciousness, founder of the ISKCON Trust and disciple of Om Visvanatha 108 Sri Brindaban Chandra De, founder of the Government Maharaja Prabhupada, presently residing at Sri Kṛṣṇa-Balarama Mandir in Vrindavana, do hereby make this last Will and codicil to give vent to my intentions; and clarify certain things which are to a certain extent a little vague in my previous Will dated 4th June, 1977, as follows:

I had made a Will on 4th June, 1977, and had made certain provisions therein. One of them being a provision of maintenance allowance to Sri M.M. De, Brindaban Chandra De, Miss Bhakti Lata De and Smt. Sulaksana Dey, who were born of me during my gṛhastha ashram, and Smt. Radharani De, who was my wife in the gṛhastha ashram for their lives as per para. 8 of the said Will. Since on careful consideration I feel that the said paragraph does not truly depict my intentions, I hereby direct that as regards Smt. Radharani De, she will get Rs.1,000/- per month for her life out of interest to be earned from a fixed deposit of Rs. One Lakh Twenty Thousand to be made by ISKCON in any bank that the authorities of the said society may think proper for a period of 7 years in the name of ISKCON, which amount shall not be available to any of her heirs and after her death the said amount be appropriated by ISKCON in any way the authorities of ISKCON think proper looking to the objects of the society.

As regards Sri M.M. De, Sri Brindaban Chandra De, Smt. Sulaksana Dey and Miss Bhaktilata De, the ISKCON will deposit Rs. One Lakh Twenty Thousand under 4 separate Fixed Deposit receipts, each for Rs.1,20,000/- for seven years in a bank to earn interest at least Rs.1,000/- a month under each receipt. Out of the said sum of Rs.1,000/-, only Rs.250/- per month will be paid to each of them from the interest of their respective Fixed Deposit receipts. The remaining interest of Rs.750/- will be deposited again under new Fixed Deposit receipts in their respective names for seven years. On the maturity of these Fixed Deposit receipts created from the Rs.750/- monthly interest for the first seven years, the said sums shall be invested by the above named persons in some Govt. Bonds, Fixed Deposit receipts or under any Govt. Deposit Scheme or shall be used to purchase some immovable property or properties so that the amount may remain safe and may not be dissipated. In case, however, the above named persons or any of them violate these conditions and use the said sum in purpose or purposes other than those described above, the ISKCON authorities will be free to stop the payment of the monthly maintenance of such person or persons from the original Fixed Deposits of Rs.1,20,000/- and they shall instead give the amount of interest of Rs.1,000/- per month to Bhaktivedanta Swami Charity Trust. It is made clear that the heirs of the said persons will have no right to anything out of the said sums and that these sums are only for the personal use of the said persons of my previous life during their respective lifetimes only.

I have appointed some executors of my said Will. I now hereby add the name of Sri Jayapataka Swami, my disciple, residing at Sri Mysapur Chandrodoya Mandir, Dist. Nadia, West Bengal, as an executor of my said Will along with the persons already named in the said Will dated 4th June, 1977. I hereby further direct that my executors will be entitled to act together or individually to fulfill their obligations under my said Will.

I therefore hereby amend, modify and alter my said Will dated 4th June, 1977, in the manner mentioned above. In all other respects the said Will continues to hold good and shall always hold good.

I hereby make this Will codicil this 5th day of November, 1977, in my full conscience and with sound mind without any persuasion, force or compulsion from anybody.

Witness:

- Witness: The undersigned Swami Prabhupada*
1. *Bishambhar Dayal s/o Bhaktivedanta Swami*
S. Radha Krishna, Vrindavan
 2. *Sukhdev Kumar Chakravarti*
25. Motilal Mang Malani
- A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

The matter in the Will

*Tridandi Goswami****A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami*****Founder-Acharya:****International Society for Krishna Consciousness**

CENTER: Krsna-Balarama Mandir,
Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg,
Ramanareti, Vrndavana, U.P.

DATE: June, 1977

DECLARATION OF WILL

I, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder-acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Settlor of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, and disciple of Om Visnupada 108 Sri Srimad Bhaktsiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Maharaj Prabhupada, presently residing at Sri Krsna-Balarama Mandir in Vrndavana, make this my last will:

1. The Governing Body Commission (GBC) will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness.
2. 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.
3. Properties in India will be managed by the following executive directors:
 - a) Properties at Sri Mayapur Dhama, Panihati, Haridaspur and Calcutta: Gururkpa Swami, Jayapataka Swami, Bhavananda Gosvami and Gopal Krsna das Adhikari.
 - b) Properties at Vrndavana: Gururkpa Swami, Akshoyananda Swami, and Gopal Krsna das Adhikari.
 - c) Properties at Bombay: Tamal Krsna Gosvami, Giriraj das Brahmachary, and Gopal Krsna das Adhikari.
 - d) Properties at Bhubaneswar: Gour Govinda Swami, Jayapataka Swami, and Bhagawat das Brahmachary.
 - e) Properties at Hyderabad: Mahamsa Swami, Sridhar Swami, Gopal Krsna das Adhikari and Bali Mardan das Adhikari.

The executive directors who have herein been designated are appointed for life. In the event of the death or failure to act for any reason of any of

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the said directors, a successor director or directors may be appointed by the remaining directors, 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.

4. I have created, developed and organized the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and as such I hereby will that none of the immovable properties standing in the name of ISKCON in India shall ever be mortgaged, borrowed against, sold, transferred, or in any way encumbered, disposed of, or alienated. This direction is irrevocable.
5. Properties outside of India in principle should never be mortgaged, borrowed against, sold, transferred or in any way encumbered, disposed of, or alienated, but if the need arises, they may be mortgaged, borrowed against, sold, etc., with the consent of the GBC committee members associated with the particular property.
6. The properties outside of India and their associated GBC committee members are as follows:
 - a) Properties in Chicago, Detroit and Ann Arbor: Jayatirtha das Adhikari, Harikesa Swami, and Balavanta das Adhikari.
 - b) Properties in Hawaii, Tokyo, Hong Kong: Guru Krpa Swami, Rameswara Swami, and Tamal Krsna Gosvami.
 - c) Properties in Melbourne, Sydney, Australia Farm: Guru Krpa Swami, Hari Sauri, and Atreya Rsi.
 - d) Properties in England (London Radlett), France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden: Jayatirtha das Adhikari, Bhagavan das Adhikari, Harikesa Swami.
 - d) Properties in Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa: Jayatirtha das Adhikari, Brahmananda Swami, and Atreya Rsi.
 - e) Properties in Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Costa Rica, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile: Hrdayananda Gosvami, Panca Dravida Swami, Brahmananda Swami.
 - f) Properties in Georgetown, Guyana, Santo Domingo, St. Augustine: Adi Kesava Swami, Hrdayananda Gosvami, Panca Dravida Swami.
 - g) Properties in Vancouver, Seattle, Berkeley, Dallas: Satsvarupa Gosvami, Jagadisa das Adhikari, Jayatirtha das Adhikari.
 - h) Properties in Los Angeles, Denver, San Diego, Laguna Beach: Rameswara Swami, Satsvarupa Swami, Adi Kesava Swami.

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- i) Properties in New York, Boston, Puerto Rico, Port Royal, St. Louis, St. Louis Farm: Tamal Krsna Gosvami, Adi Kesava Swami, Rameswara Swami.
 - j) Properties in Iran: Atreya Rsi, Bhagavan das Adhikari, Brahmananda Swami.
 - k) Properties in Washington D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, Montreal and Ottawa: Rupanuga das Adhikari, Gopal Krsna das Adhikari, Jagadisa das Adhikari.
 - l) Properties in Pittsburgh, New Vrndavana, Toronto, Cleveland, Buffalo: Kirtanananda Swami, Atreya Rsi, Balavanta das Adhikari.
 - m) Properties in Atlanta, Tennessee Farm, Gainesville, Miami, New Orleans, Mississippi Farm, Houston: Balavanta das Adhikari, Adi Kesava Swami, Rupanuga das Adhikari.
 - n) Properties in Fiji: Hari Sauri, Atreya Rsi, Vasudev.
7. I declare, say and confirm that all the properties, both movable and immovable, which stand in my name, including current accounts, savings accounts and fixed deposits in various banks, are the properties and assets of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and the heirs and successors of my previous life, or anyone claiming through them, have no right, claim or interest in these properties whatsoever, save and except as provided hereafter.
 8. Although the money which is in my personal name in different banks is being spent for ISKCON and belongs to ISKCON, I have kept a few deposits specifically marked for allocating a monthly allowance of Rs. 1,000/- [unreadable addition] to the members of my former family (two sons, two daughters, and wife). After the deaths of the members of my former family, these specific deposits (corpus, interest, and savings) will become the property of ISKCON for the corpus of the trust, and the descendants of my former family or anybody claiming through them shall not be allowed any further allowance.
 9. I hereby appoint Guru Krpa Swami, Hrdayananda Gosvami, Tamal Krishna Gosvami, Rameshwar Swami, Gopal Krishna das Adhikari, Jayatirtha das Adhikari and Giriraj das Brahmachary to act as executors of this will. I have made this will this 4th day of June, 1977, in possession of full sense and sound mind, without any persuasion, force or compulsion from anybody.

Witnesses:

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

The above will was signed by Śrīla Prabhupāda and sealed and witnessed by the following: Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, Bhagavān dāsa Adhikārī and several

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other witnesses (signatures appear on the original document).

I, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, a sannyasi and Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Settlor of Bhaktivedanta Book Trust and disciple of Om Visnupada 108 Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Gosvami Maharaja Prabhupad, presently residing at Sri Krsna-Balarama Mandir in Vrndavana, do hereby make this last Will and codicil to give vent to my intention, and clarify certain things which are to a certain extent a little vague in my previous Will dated 4th June, 1977, as follows:

I had made a Will on 4th June, 1977, and had made certain provisions therein. One of them being a provision of maintenance allowance to Sri M.M. De, Brindaban Chandra De, Miss Bhakti Lata De and Smt. Sulurmana Dey, who were born of me during my grhastha ashram, and Smt. Radharani De, who was my wife in the grhastha ashram for their lives as per para. 8 of the said Will. Since on careful consideration I feel that the said paragraph does not truly depict my intentions, I hereby direct that as regards Smt. Radharani De, she will get Rs. 1,000/- per month for her life out of interest to be earned from a fixed deposit of Rs. One Lakh Twenty Thousand to be made by ISKCON in any bank that the authorities of the said society may think proper for a period of 7 years in the name of ISKCON, which amount shall not be available to any of her heirs and after her death the said amount be appropriated by ISKCON in any way the authorities of ISKCON think proper looking to the objects of the society.

As regards Sri M.M. De, Sri Brindaban Chandra De, Smt. Sulurmana Dey and Miss Bhaktilata De, the ISKCON will deposit Rs. One Lakh Twenty Thousand under 4 separate Fixed Deposit receipts, each for Rs. 1,20,000/- for seven years in a bank to earn interest at least Rs. 1,000/- a month under each receipt. Out of the said sum of Rs. 1,000/-, only Rs. 250/- per month will be paid to each of them from the interest of their respective Fixed Deposit receipts. The remaining interest of Rs. 750/- will be deposited again under new Fixed Deposit receipts in their respective names for seven years. On the maturity of these Fixed Deposit receipts created from the Rs. 750/- monthly interest for the first seven years, the said sums shall be invested by the above named persons in some Govt. Bonds, Fixed Deposit receipts or under any Govt. Deposit Scheme or shall be used to purchase some immovable property or properties so that the amount may remain safe and may not be dissipated. In case, however, the above named persons or any of them violate these conditions and use the said sum in purpose or purposes other than those described above, the ISKCON authorities will be free to stop the payment of the monthly maintenance of such person

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or persons from the original Fixed Deposits of Rs. 1,20,000/- and they shall instead give the amount of interest of Rs. 1,000/- per month to Bhaktivedanta Swami Charity Trust. It is made clear that the heirs of the said persons will have no right to anything out of the said sums and that these sums are only for the personal use of the said persons of my previous life during their respective lifetimes only.

I have appointed some executors of my said Will. I now hereby add the name of Sri Jayapataka Swami, my disciple, residing at Sri Mayapur Chandrodoya Mandir, Dist. Nadia, West Bengal, as an executor of my said Will along with the persons already named in the said Will dated 4th June, 1977. I hereby further direct that my executors will be entitled to act together or individually to fulfill their obligations under my said Will.

I therefore hereby amend, modify and alter my said Will dated 4th June, 1977, in the manner mentioned above. In all other respects the said Will continues to hold good and shall always hold good.

I hereby make this Will codicil this 5th day of November, 1977, in my full conscience and with sound mind without any persuasion, force or compulsion from anybody.

Witness:

(signatures appear on the original document)

A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami

ROOM CONVERSATION April 22, 1977, Bombay

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “I told him that “You cannot do so independent. You are doing nice, but not to do in the...You admit.” People complained against Hamsadutta. Did you know that?”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “I’m not sure of the particular incidences, but I’ve heard general...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “In Germany. In Germany.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “The devotees there.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “So many complaints.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Therefore, change is good.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “No, you become guru, but you must be qualified first of all. Then you become.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Oh, that kind of complaint was there.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Did you know that?”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Yeah, I heard that, yeah.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “What is the use of producing some rascal guru?”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Well, I have studied myself and all of your disciples, and it’s clear fact that we are all conditioned souls, so we cannot be guru. Maybe one day it may be possible...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Hm.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “...but not now.”

Śrīla 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 Kṛṣṇa: “The process of purification must be there.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Oh, yes, must be there. Caitanya Mahāprabhu wants that. *Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā* [Cc. *Madhya* 7.128]. “You become guru.” (Laughs.) But be qualified. Little thing, strictly follower...”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Not rubber stamp.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Then you’ll not be effective. You can cheat, but it will not be effective. Just see our Gauḍīya Maṭha. Everyone wanted to become guru, and a small temple and “guru.” What kind of guru? No publication, no preaching, simply bring some foodstuff... My Guru Mahārāja used to say, “Joint mess,” a place for eating and sleeping. *Amar amar ara takana* [?]: “Joint mess.” He said this.”

ROOM CONVERSATION May 27th, 1977, Vṛndāvana

Bhavānanda: “There will be men, I know. There will be men who will want to try and pose themselves as guru.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “That was going on many years ago. Your Godbrothers were thinking like that. Mādhava Mahārāja . . .”

Bhavānanda: “Oh, yes, Oh, ready to jump.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Very strong management required, and vigilant observation.”

ROOM CONVERSATION May 28th, 1977, Vṛndāvana *

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami: “Then our next question concerns initiation(s) in the future, particularly at that time when you are (you’re) no longer with us. We want to know how (a) first and second initiation(s) would be conducted.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes. I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up I shall recommend some of you to act as *officiating ācārya(s)*.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja: “Is that called *ṛtvik ācārya*?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “*Ṛtvik*. Yes. (Yes, *ṛtvik*)”

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami: “(Then) What is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and (the)...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “He’s guru. He’s guru. (He is guru.)”

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami: “But he does it on your behalf.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes. That is formality. Because in my presence one should not become guru, so on my behalf. On my order, *āmāra ājñāya guru (hañā)*, (he is) (be) actually guru. But by (on) my order.”

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami: “So (then) (they) (they’ll) (may) also be considered your disciples?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes, they are (their) disciples, (but) (why) consider who”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja: “No. He’s (he is) asking that these *ṛtvik ācāryas*, they are (they’re) officiating, giving *dikṣā*, (Their)... the people who they give *dikṣā* to, whose disciples are they?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “They are (They’re) his disciples (the disciples of the one who is initiating).”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja: “They are (They’re) his disciples (?)”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Who is initiating. (And they are my) (his) (he is) granddisciple(s)...”

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami: (Yes)

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami: (That’s clear) (Let’s go on)

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami: “Then we have a question concerning ...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “When I order you (to) become guru, he (you) become(s) regular guru. That’s all. He (And they) become(s) (the) disciple(s) of my disciple. (That’s it). (Just see).”

* The above is a composite of four different transcripts given by the GBC in the following publications:

1983: *Śrīla Prabhupāda-Lilāmṛta*, Vol. 6 (Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, BBT)

1985: *Under My Order* (Ravindra-svarūpa dāsa)

1990: *ISKCON Journal* (GBC)

1995: *Gurus and Initiation in ISKCON* (GBC)

ROOM CONVERSATION July 7th, 1977, Vṛndāvana

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Śrīla Prabhupāda? 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.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “The local, mean, senior *sannyāsīs* can do that.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “That’s what we were doing... I mean, formerly we were..., the local GBC, *sannyāsīs*, 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.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “No, the senior *sannyāsīs*...”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “So they should continue to...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “You can give me a list of *sannyāsīs*. I will mark who will...”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Okay.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “You can do. Kīrtanānanda can do. And our Satsvarūpa can do. So these three, you can give, begin.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “So supposing someone is in America, should they simply write directly to Kīrtanānanda or Satsvarūpa?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Nearby. Jayatīrtha can give.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Jayatīrtha.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Bhavanan..., er, Bhagavān.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Bhagavān.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “And he can do also...Harikeśa.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Harikeśa Mahārāja.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “And... Five, six men, you divide who is nearest.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Who is nearest. So persons wouldn’t have to write to Your Divine Grace. They could write directly to that person?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Hmm.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Actually they are initiating the person on Your Divine Grace’s behalf. Those persons who are initiated are still your...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Second initiation we shall think over, second initiation.”

- Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** “This is for first initiation. Okay. And for second initiation, for the time being they should...”
- Śrīla Prabhupāda:** “No, they have to wait. Second initiation, that should be given...”
- Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** “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?”
- Śrīla Prabhupāda:** “They can do second initiation.”
- Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** “By writing you.”
- Śrīla Prabhupāda:** “No. These men.”
- Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** “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.”
- Śrīla Prabhupāda:** “Yes.”
- Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** “You know that book I’m maintaining of all of your disciples’ names? Should I continue that?”
- Śrīla Prabhupāda:** “Hmm.”
- Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** “So if someone gives initiation, like Harikeśa Mahārāja, 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?”
- Śrīla Prabhupāda:** “India, I am here. We shall see. In India, Jayapatāka.”
- Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** “Jayapatāka Mahārāja.”
- Śrīla Prabhupāda:** “You are also in India.”
- Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** “Yes.”
- Śrīla Prabhupāda:** “You can note down these names.”
- Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** “Yes, I have them.”
- Śrīla Prabhupāda:** “Who are they?”
- Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** “Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja, Satsvarūpa Mahārāja, Jayatīrtha Prabhu, Bhagavān Prabhu, Harikeśa Mahārāja, Jayapatāka Mahārāja and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja.”
- Śrīla Prabhupāda:** “That’s nice. Now you distribute.”
- Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** “Seven. There’s seven names.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “For the time being, seven names, sufficient. You can make Rāmeśvara.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Rāmeśvara Mahārāja.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “And Hṛdayānanda.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Oh, yeah. South America.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “So without waiting for me, wherever you consider it is right... That will depend on discretion.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “On discretion.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “That’s for first and second initiations.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Hmm.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Okay. Shall I send a *kīrtana* party, Śrīla Prabhupāda?”

ROOM CONVERSATION July 19th, 1977, Vṛndāvana

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Upendra and I could see it for the last... (break).”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “And nobody is going to disturb you there. Make your own field and continue to become *rttvik* and act on my charge. People are becoming sympathetic there. The place is very nice.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Yeah. He says, ‘The introduction of *Bhagavad-gītā* has been translated into Tamil, and I will have the second chapter done next. Then publish a small booklet for immediate distribution.’”

ROOM CONVERSATION October 18th, 1977, Vṛndāvana

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Hare Kṛṣṇa. One Bengali gentleman has come from New York?” (*One man had travelled from New York to be initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda*).

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Yes. Mr. Sukamal Roy Chowdury.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “So I have deputed some of you to initiate. Hmm?”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Yes. Actually... Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “So I think Jayapatāka can do that if he likes. I have already deputed. Tell him.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Yes.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “So, deputies, Jayapatāka’s name was there?”

Bhagavan: “It is already on there, Śrīla Prabhupāda. His name was on that list.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “So I depute him to do this at Māyāpur, and you may go with him. I stop for the time being. Is that all right?”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Stopped doing what, Śrīla Prabhupāda?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “This initiation. I have therefore deputed the..., my disciples. Is it clear or not?”

Giriraja: “It’s clear.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “You have got the list of the names?”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “And if by Kṛṣṇa’s grace I recover from this condition, then I shall begin again, or I may not be pressed in this condition to initiate. It is not good.”

ROOM CONVERSATION November 2nd, 1977, Vṛndāvana

(Śrīla Prabhupāda is explaining what was discussed with the guests)

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “...that ‘After you, who will take the leadership?’ And ‘Everyone will take, all my disciples. If you want, you can take also. (Laughter.) But if you follow. They are prepared to sacrifice everything, so they’ll take the leadership. I may, one, go away, but there will be hundreds, and they’ll preach. If you want, you can also become a leader. We have no such thing, that ‘Here is leader.’ Anyone who follows the previous leadership, he’s a leader.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Hmm.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “‘Indian,’ we have no such distinction, ‘Indian,’ ‘European.’”

Devotee: “They wanted an Indian to be the leader?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes. (Laughs.) ‘Everyone, all my disciples, they are leaders. As purely as they follow, they become leader. If you want to follow, you can become a leader—you are Indian—but you don’t want.’ I told them that.”

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: “Yes, they probably wanted to propose somebody who would take over our Movement.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Yes. Leaders. All nonsense. Leader means one who has become first-class disciple. He is leader. *Evaṁ paramparā prāpta...* One who is perfectly following... Our instruction is *āra nā kariha mane āśā*. You know this? What is that? *Guru-mukha-padma-vākya, cittete kariyā aikya, āra nā kariha mane āśā*. Who is leader? A leader..., to become leader is not very difficult, provided one is prepared to follow the instructions of a bona fide guru.”

PYRAMID HOUSE CONFESSIONS, December 3rd, 1980

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja: “I’ve had a certain realization a few days ago. [...] There are obviously so many statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda that his Guru Mahārāja did not appoint any successors. [...] Even in Prabhupāda’s books he says guru means by qualification. [...]

The inspiration came because there was a questioning on my part, so Kṛṣṇa spoke. Actually, Prabhupāda never appointed any gurus. [...] He appointed eleven *ṛtviks*. He never appointed them gurus. Myself and the other GBC have done the greatest disservice to this movement the last three years because we interpreted the appointment of *ṛtviks* as the appointment of gurus.

What actually happened I’ll explain. I explained it, but the interpretation is wrong. What actually happened was that Prabhupāda mentioned he might be appointing some *ṛtviks*, so the GBC met for various reasons, and they went to Prabhupāda, five or six of us. (*This refers to the meeting of May 28th, 1977*). We asked him, ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda, after your departure, if we accept disciples, whose disciples will they be, your disciples or mine?’

Later on there was a piled up list for people to get initiated, and it was jammed up. I said, ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda, you once mentioned about *ṛtviks*. I don’t know what to do. We don’t want to approach you, but there’s hundreds of devotees named, and I’m just holding all the letters. I don’t know what you want to do’.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said, ‘All right, I will appoint so many...,’ and he started to name them [...] He made it very clear that they are his disciples. At that point it was very clear in my mind that they were his disciples. Later on I asked him two questions, one: ‘What about Brahmānanda Swami?’ I asked him this because I happened to have an affection for Brahmānanda Swami. [...] So Śrīla Prabhupāda said, ‘No, not unless he is qualified’. Before I got ready to type the letter, I asked

him, two: ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda is this all or do you want to add more?’. He said, ‘As is necessary, others may be added.’ Now I understand that what he did was very clear. He was physically incapable of performing the function of initiation physically; therefore he appointed officiating priests to initiate on his behalf. He appointed eleven, and he said very clearly, ‘Whoever is nearest, he can initiate’. This is a very important point, because when it comes to initiating, it isn’t whoever is nearest, it’s wherever your heart goes. Who (you) repose your faith on, you take initiation from him. But when it’s officiating, it’s whoever is nearest, and he was very clear. He named them. They were spread out all over the world, and he said, ‘Whoever you’re nearest, you just approach that person, and they’ll check you out. Then, on my behalf, they’ll initiate.’

It is not a question that you repose your faith in that person—nothing. That’s a function for the guru. ‘In order for me to manage this movement’, Prabhupāda said, ‘I have to form a GBC and I will appoint the following people. In order to continue the process of people joining our movement and getting initiated, I have to appoint some priests to help me because just like I cannot physically manage everyone myself, I physically cannot initiate everyone myself.’

And that’s all that it was, and it was never any more than that. If it had been more than that, you can bet your bottom dollar that Prabhupāda would have spoken for days and hours and weeks on end about how to set up this thing with the gurus, but he didn’t because he already had said it a million times. He said: My Guru Mahārāja did not appoint anyone. It’s by qualification.’ We made a great mistake. After Prabhupāda’s departure, what is the position of these eleven people? [...]

Prabhupāda showed that it is not just *sannyāsīs*. He named two people who were *grhastas*, who could at least be *ṛtviks*, showing that they were equal to any *sannyāsī*. So anyone who is spiritually qualified—it’s always been understood that you cannot accept disciples in the presence of your guru, but when the guru disappears, you can accept disciples if you are qualified and someone can repose their faith. Of course, they (prospective disciples) should be fully appraised at how to distinguish who is a proper guru. But if you are a proper guru, and your guru is no longer present, that is your right. It’s like a man can procreate [...] Unfortunately, the GBC did not recognize this point. They immediately supposed these eleven people are the selected gurus. I can definitely say for myself, and for which I humbly beg forgiveness from everybody, that there was definitely some degree of trying to control [...] This is the conditioned nature, and it came out in the highest position of all, “Guru, oh wonderful! Now I’m a guru, and there is only eleven of us” [...] I feel that this realization or this understanding

is essential if we are to avoid further things from happening, because, believe me, it's going to repeat. It's just a question of time until things have a little bit faded out and again another incident is going to happen, whether it's here in L.A. or somewhere else. It's going to continuously happen until you allow the actual spiritual force of Kṛṣṇa to be exhibited without restriction. [...] I feel that the GBC body, if they don't adopt this point very quickly, if they don't realize this truth: You cannot show me anything on tape or in writing where Prabhupāda says: "I appoint these eleven as gurus". It does not exist because he never appointed any gurus. This is a myth. [...] The day you got initiated you get the right to become a father when your father disappears, if you are qualified. No appointment. It doesn't require an appointment, because there isn't one."

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