

A response to: (ex) H. H. Vipramukhya Swami

Chakra Invents A New Language!



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“...a successor director or directors may be appointed by the remaining directors, provided the new director is my initiated disciple...”

(Sri Prabhupada’s Declaration of Will, June 4th, 1977)



by Krishnakant

Chakra Invents A New Language!

A response to: (ex) H.H. Vipramukhya Swami (no longer Swami)

There was recently posted an article on CHAKRA by H.H. Vipramukhya Swami regarding Srila Prabhupada's Last Will and Testament. The article offers an interpretation of the following phrase that is found on page 1 of the aforementioned will:

"A successor director or directors may be appointed by the remaining directors, provided the new director is my initiated disciple...."

We are given the following explanation:

"On the other hand, we are left to conclude that "my initiated disciples" means that everyone is a disciple of Srila Prabhupada through *siksa*, but not through *diksa*, and those who are initiated may become directors of ISKCON. [...] Therefore it is logical to conclude Prabhupada's usage of the phrase "my initiated disciple" indicates that all future generations must be initiated, *siksa*-disciples of Prabhupada. They will therefore not only be initiated disciples of Srila Prabhupada but also Bhaktisiddhanta, Bhaktivinoda, the Six Goswamis, Lord Caitanya and Krsna."

('Prabhupada's Will', Vipramukhya Swami, Pages 3-4).

The article has concluded that the term "**my initiated disciple**" means that one is connected to Srila Prabhupada only through a *siksa* relationship and not a *diksa* relationship. Now bearing in mind that this was Srila Prabhupada's will, signed by him, is there any evidence from Srila Prabhupada for such an interpretation of the term?

In fact looking at **EVERY** single use of the term '*my initiated disciple*' by Srila Prabhupada, it **NEVER** refers to becoming his disciple through *siksa* only, but each time it is used to signify a *diksa* relationship. Neither does Srila Prabhupada state that for the purpose of his **will** only, it will now acquire such a meaning for this one occasion. Thus Srila Prabhupada's use of this term is in direct contradiction to the meaning ascribed to it by the article.

Thus we are expected to make a totally radical change to the way Srila Prabhupada used the term 'my initiated disciple' based on no statement or evidence from Srila Prabhupada to do so. This despite the fact that the article also states that:

"... though characteristically Srila Prabhupada was always thorough in everything he did."

('Prabhupada's Will', Vipramukhya Swami, Page 2).

However at the same time we are expected to believe that Srila Prabhupada who was "**ALWAYS thorough**", forgot to tell us that:

"Even though I have used the phrase 'my initiated disciple', almost 100 times to ALWAYS mean a diksa relationship, just for once in my will I actually want it to mean siksa ONLY, thus reversing a meaning I have always consistently given it".

We are supposed to understand this without any authority or instruction from Srila Prabhupada to do so.

Thus there is no authority from Srila Prabhupada to support the interpretation of the term "**my INITIATED disciple**" as used by Srila Prabhupada himself. We are simply given a quote showing that the word 'disciple' **CAN** mean a *siksa* disciple. But the phrase in question is '**INITIATED disciple**'. There is no evidence from Srila Prabhupada that the term '**my INITIATED disciple**' **MUST** mean a *siksa* relationship **ONLY** between the disciple and Srila Prabhupada. In fact this interpretation does not follow from just the term 'my disciple', since even this term does not have to refer to *siksa* **ONLY**, as the disciple could be either *diksa*, *siksa* or both, so what to speak of '**my INITIATED disciple**'. The normal understanding that 'my initiated disciple' specifies a *diksa* relationship between the disciple and Srila Prabhupada is supported by **EVERY** single use of this term by Srila Prabhupada (almost 100 times). At this stage the matter is settled since Srila Prabhupada is the supreme authority, and since Maharaja has no authority from Srila Prabhupada to justify his interpretation of the phrase, his interpretation must be rejected.

Though there is no need to go any further at this point, for completeness we will now cover the reasons Maharaja **DOES** give for his interpretation of a phrase used by Srila Prabhupada to mean the exact **OPPOSITE** of what Srila Prabhupada always used it to mean. We have noted that Maharaja's authority for the interpretation does not come from Srila Prabhupada. Rather it comes from what he claims is a supposed weakness in the *ritviks'* argument:

"On one hand, the *ritvik* proponents would have us believe that Prabhupada reversed his previous instructions on the process of initiation without directly saying so. On the other hand, we are left to conclude that "my initiated disciples" means that everyone is a disciple of Srila Prabhupada through *siksa*, but not through *diksa*, and those who are initiated may become directors of ISKCON.

Both arguments appear to have weaknesses.

Comparatively, however, the *ritvik* argument is the weaker, because the *ritvik* proponents want to establish a system of initiation based on an indirect usage of words having nothing to do with the process of initiation.

Therefore it is logical to conclude Prabhupada's usage of the phrase "my initiated disciple" indicates that all future generations must be initiated, *siksa*-disciples of Prabhupada."

(*'Prabhupada's Will', Vipramukhya Swami, Pages 3-4*)

Thus Maharaja states the following:

- a) The *ritviks* have tried to use the will to establish the *ritvik* system of initiation. They cannot do this because the will does not mention the process of initiation.
- b) The interpretation of the term "my initiated disciple" to mean a *siksa* relationship only does have weaknesses.
- c) However it is 'logical' to pick b) because a) is weaker!

Thus Maharaja's authority for interpreting a term used by Srila Prabhupada to make it mean the opposite of what Srila Prabhupada had used it to mean comes not from Srila Prabhupada, but from the supposedly false reasoning used by the *ritviks*. In other words Maharaja's sole authority comes from how poorly the *ritviks* argue their case. '*Two wrongs makes a right*' has replaced the authority of Srila Prabhupada as the basis for deciding how to follow Srila Prabhupada's instructions. Srila Prabhupada's words however are totally independent of how any third party later attempts to use them, rightly or wrongly. How can what Srila Prabhupada have meant when he signed his will in June 1977 be dependent on how a group of reformers decided to use his will many years later? Reformers who did not even exist at the time Srila Prabhupada signed his will. And then Maharaja uses the supposedly false argumentation of this group of reformers to introduce an interpretation that Maharaja himself admits has 'weaknesses'.

To understand what Srila Prabhupada wanted we should be able to establish it by reference to Srila Prabhupada only, without any weaknesses. Not establish something that is apparently weak on the basis that another proposition is supposedly weaker. However this catalogue of erroneous reasoning does not end here. We will now see that the very claim that Maharaja makes about the way the *ritviks* use the will, the whole basis of his reasoning, a reasoning that is in any case false, is itself not even true.

FALSE CLAIMS & STRAW MAN

(*'Straw Man'* arguments are a tactic, often used in argumentation where one is unable to defeat an opponent's actual position, and so instead invents a false one which he feels more capable of tackling. This approach ends up being counter-productive for the protagonist since he loses credibility the instant his reader realises what's going on.)

Maharaja claims the following:

"Comparatively, however, the *ritvik* argument is the weaker, because the *ritvik* proponents want to establish a system of initiation based on an indirect usage of words having nothing to do with the process of initiation."

(*'Prabhupada's Will', Vipramukhya Swami, Pages 3-4*)

Maharaja here has falsely claimed that the '*ritviks*' use the will to 'establish a system of initiation'. In other words Maharaja claims that the will is supposed to be both the **PRIMARY** and **SOLE** piece of evidence for the *ritvik* case. It was so the GBC would know exactly what the *ritviks* are saying that they asked us to submit to them the '*Final Order*'. Maharaja has even claimed to have read this document. He then goes onto to state something that is **NOT** claimed by this definitive position paper of the *ritviks*. The system of *ritvik* initiation is '*established*' by the July 9th letter, not the **will**. This is why Srila Prabhupada does need to spell out the *ritvik* system in the will because he spells it out in a document that is sent to every Temple President and GBC 4 months before he departs. Further there are many other evidences such as the letter from Tamala Krishna Maharaja where he agrees that the *ritvik* system is the system for the 'future', that reinforces this system being established. We have **NEVER** claimed that the **WILL** 'establishes a system of initiation'.

All we state is the following:

"Another instruction in Srila Prabhupada's will which indicates the intended longevity of the *ritvik* system, is where it states that the executive directors for his permanent properties in India could only be selected from amongst Srila Prabhupada's initiated disciples:

“...a successor director or directors may be appointed by the remaining directors, provided the new director is my initiated disciple...”

(Srila Prabhupada’s Declaration of Will, June 4th, 1977)

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

[‘The Final Order’, Page 4]

The above paragraph comes in a section called ‘**Subsequent Instructions**’ which appears **AFTER** the main evidence **AND** ‘*supporting instructions*’. Further the above is the **LAST** item that is given in the whole chapter relating to ‘Evidence’.

Thus we do not even claim that it is the actual evidence or even supporting evidence. But rather something that merely **INDICATES** the **LONGEVITY** of a system. We never state the will actually **ESTABLISHES** or sets up the *ritvik* system.

Thus far Maharaja has not been able to produce any authority from Srila Prabhupada for his interpretation. Rather he tries to rely on the fact that ‘two wrongs make a right’ - “the way I use the will is weak, but the way the *ritviks* use it is even weaker, so let’s go with it my way.”

This is not the method by which to determine how one should follow the order of the spiritual master. But now we find in any case, that what the *ritviks* are supposed to have said about the will is totally untrue anyway! So wide-spread is this mis-representation that it is repeated again and again throughout the whole article:

“The proponents of the *ritvik* doctrine use this as evidence that Srila Prabhupada wanted all future generations of ISKCON devotees to be initiated by him only.”

(‘Prabhupada’s Will’, Vipramukhya Swami, Pages 1)

“Is their conclusion correct? Is this passage evidence that Srila Prabhupada intended to set up a system of *ritvik* initiation, i.e. initiation by proxy?”

(‘Prabhupada’s Will’, Vipramukhya Swami, Pages 1)

“This argument by the *ritvik* proponents is called indirect and would be inadmissible in a court of law. In the Last Will and Testament, Srila Prabhupada is talking not about the process of future initiation but about establishing future directors of ISKCON. To suppose his use of the term “my initiated disciples” is referring to something not mentioned in the Last Will and Testament (the process of future initiations) is an indirect supposition. In reality, no mention of the process of future initiations is mentioned anywhere in the Last Will and Testament. Therefore, it is indirect evidence.”

(‘Prabhupada’s Will’, Vipramukhya Swami, Pages 1-2)

“The theory of the *ritvik* proponents is that the term “my initiated disciples” in the Will indicates, indirectly, that Prabhupada wanted to establish a new system of initiation without directly saying stating this in the Will, even though characteristically Srila Prabhupada was always thorough in everything he did.”

(‘Prabhupada’s Will’, Vipramukhya Swami, Pages 2)

“In fact, nowhere in the Last Will and Testament does Srila Prabhupada say anything at all about the future process of initiation. If he had intended to establish a system of initiation by proxy (*ritvik*), why wouldn’t he have taken the opportunity in such an important document to clearly spell it out?”

(‘Prabhupada’s Will’, Vipramukhya Swami, Pages 2)

“Comparatively, however, the *ritvik* argument is the weaker, because the *ritvik* proponents want to establish a system of initiation based on an indirect usage of words having nothing to do with the process of initiation.”

(‘Prabhupada’s Will’, Vipramukhya Swami, Page 4)

To understand the scale of this mis-representation, the above false claims that we try to use the will as evidence to **ESTABLISH** the *ritvik* **SYSTEM** represent 40% of the total article.

Also throughout the article, another false claim is continually repeated - that the *ritvik* system suddenly ‘changes’ all of Srila Prabhupada’s previous instructions.

This false claim is evident right from the sub-title of the article wherein it is stated:

“Did Srila Prabhupada change all of his previous instructions without saying so?” (Title)

This false claim continues to be repeated throughout the article:

“Previously, Srila Prabhupada had explained his intentions for the process of future initiations. In reality, there’s nothing in the Last Will and Testament to contradict previous instructions such as the following:

‘Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bonafide Guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your Spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bonafide Spiritual Master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy.’

(Letter to Tusta Krsna, 2 Dec 75)

In this passage and others, Prabhupada clearly indicates his intention and desire for his disciples to have disciples. The *ritvik* proponents would have us believe that Prabhupada reversed these instructions in the Last Will and Testament, even though he never directly says so.”

(‘Prabhupada’s Will’, Vipramukhya Swami, Pages 2-3)

“On one hand, the *ritvik* proponents would have us believe that Prabhupada reversed his previous instructions on the process of initiation without directly saying so.”

(‘Prabhupada’s Will’, Vipramukhya Swami, Page 3)

Here we find ‘slipped-in’ the totally erroneous claim that the *ritvik* system suddenly changes at the last minute “ALL” of Srila Prabhupada’s “PREVIOUS INSTRUCTIONS”. However we look throughout the article and we find no evidence of ‘all’ these previous instructions. All we are given is one private letter to an ambitious disciple who needed to be told to at least wait until Srila Prabhupada had left the planet before he started to initiate. This is a letter that was private and only became published because of unauthorised activity. What is not mentioned is that there are only 6 instances ever where Srila Prabhupada even speaks of his disciples initiating their own disciples once he physically departs. In each case except one, they were letters warning that the individual must at least wait until Srila Prabhupada has left the planet, and in all cases the instructions were unpublished in 1977. The article forgets to mention that Srila Prabhupada never **ONCE** stated that he wanted his disciples to take their own disciples once he had departed, in a format that was available to the society in 1977.

- Thus how can something that does not exist be reversed?

All this is expounded on at length in our paper ‘**Institutional Cataclysm**’, so we do not need to go into it here. Suffice to say, we have challenged the GBC to repeatedly show us ‘ALL’ these ‘many’ instructions where Srila Prabhupada speaks of his disciples taking disciples. Needless to say, 20 years on, we are still waiting.

Please note that the above ‘straw-man’ argument and false claim consume almost 70% of Maharaja’s article.

Conclusion

1. The article tries to interpret the term “my initiated disciple” used by Srila Prabhupada so that the term has a meaning that would be the very **OPPOSITE** of the meaning which is given to it by Srila Prabhupada on **EVERY** single previous occasion.
2. The article produces no authority or evidence from Srila Prabhupada proving that Srila Prabhupada suddenly wanted the term to take on this totally opposite meaning. Thus this interpretation must be rejected since one does not have the authority to change the meaning of the words of the spiritual master.
3. **Further the reasons the article does give for trying to justify the interpretation are seriously flawed:**
4. They rely on the supposed weaknesses of some 3rd parties use of the words many years after the words were written down, when the 3rd party did not even exist.
5. They rely on the premise that even though the interpretation has ‘weaknesses’, ‘two wrongs make a right’, so a supposedly less incorrect course of action becomes the path to determining how to follow Srila Prabhupada.
6. They rely on mis-representing in any case how the 3rd party uses the words in question.
7. They rely on a totally false claim about what would be implied by Srila Prabhupada authorising a *ritvik* system.

Thus in summary we find no authority to interpret the term ‘my **initiated** disciple’ as meaning a *siksa* relationship **ONLY** between Srila Prabhupada and the disciple. Until such authority is produced we can only take the term to mean what Srila Prabhupada has **ALWAYS** used it to mean on **EVERY** previous occasion he used it (almost 100) - that there is a *diksa* relationship between the disciple and himself, because Srila Prabhupada is our only authority.

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