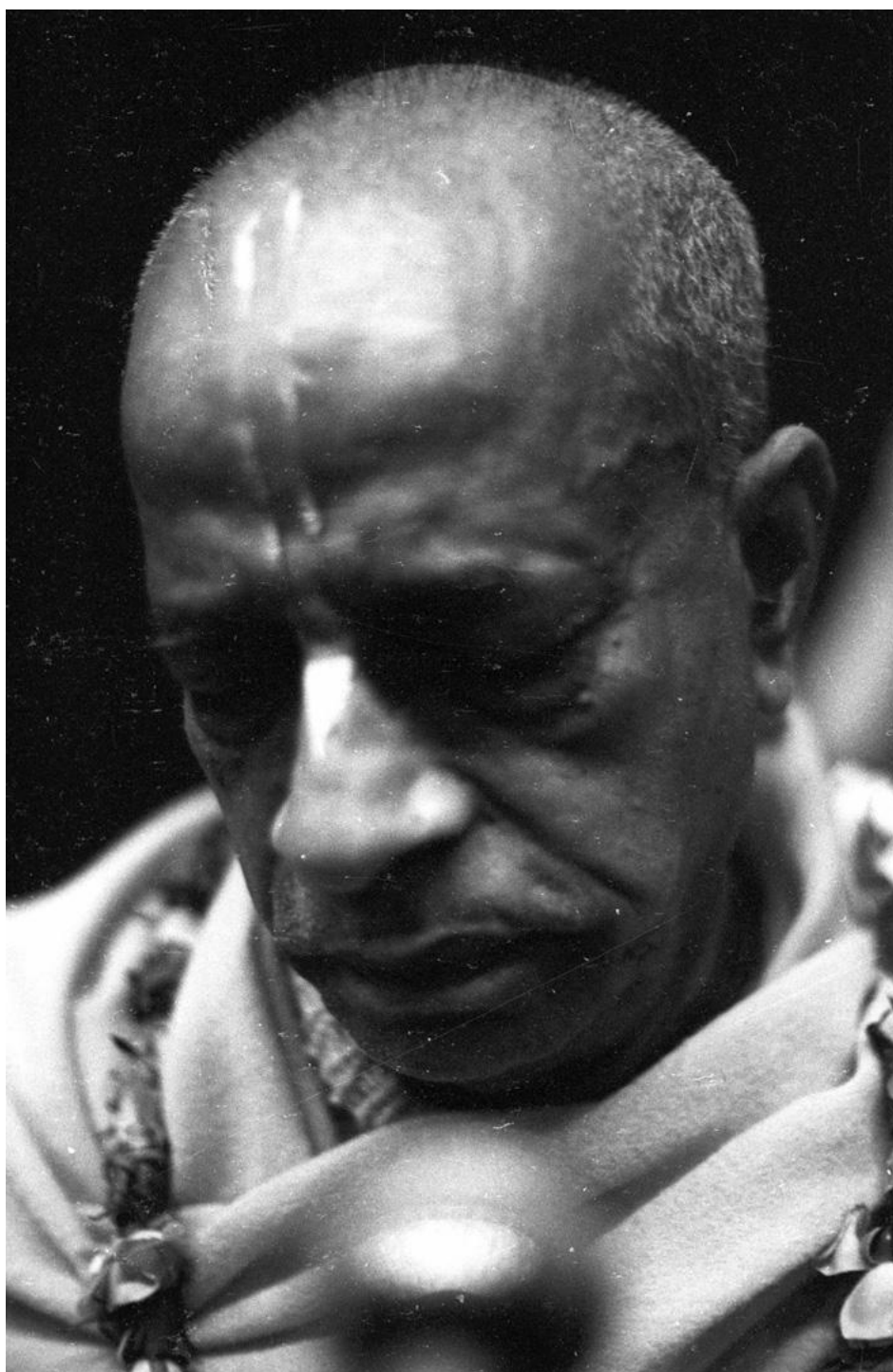


Reply to Druva Maharaja's *Siksa-Diksa* Paper

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

(C.c. Madhya, 9.61, purport)



by Krishnakant

Reply to Druva Maharaja's *Siksa-Diksa* Paper

August 1998

This is a reply to the above paper, which recently appeared on VNN and has also been widely distributed as a booklet. In this paper the author tries to 'solve' the 'guru' problems we are facing in ISKCON by stating that we need to emphasise Srila Prabhupada more, but only as our *siksa* guru, and that we must not continue to place over-due emphasis on the *Diksa* Guru. Though the author's intentions are good, the perfect solution as to how to keep Srila Prabhupada in the centre was given by Srila Prabhupada himself. Thus as will be shown, we do not need to speculate, look to history, or to other *sampradaya's* to figure out what to do. We simply need to directly follow the instructions given by Srila Prabhupada himself.

Henceforward all extracts from the above booklet will be boxed with our comments following. Dhruva Maharaja Dasa will be referred to as the 'author'.

The author begins by revealing the methodology that he has used to arrive at his conclusions:

"State a Concept. Support or prove that concept with quotes from Srila Prabhupada's books or succinct examples from Vedic culture, including the four bona fide Vaisnava *sampradaya's*."

1. The above statement is in itself a concept - that one can prove a concept by reference to Srila Prabhupada OR 'Vedic culture' - and thus the author here suffers from self-referential incoherence, since the author has not proved the above concept by reference to Srila Prabhupada or vedic culture.
2. Indeed it is the last phrase - "OR succinct examples from Vedic culture, including the four bona fide Vaisnava *sampradaya's*" - that has led to the erroneous conclusions produced by the author. One can ONLY determine the desires of Srila Prabhupada by reference to Srila Prabhupada himself, not by reference to 'Vedic culture'. One can of course SUPPORT Srila Prabhupada's teachings by reference to 'vedic culture' but one cannot determine conclusively or reject any of Srila Prabhupada's desires simply based on our evaluation of 'vedic culture'. For instance there are many things that Srila Prabhupada instituted that cannot be determined by reference to Vedic culture or the other vaisnava *sampradaya's*, and indeed one may in fact have to REJECT if we used these as a criteria.

"By presenting concepts in this manner I hope to remain free from speculation and theory, two of the innumerable *anarthas* that have kept me entangled in this rotten material world."

As we have shown, by trying to determine what Srila Prabhupada wanted us to do in ISKCON by referring to sources that have nothing to do with Srila Prabhupada's instructions for ISKCON. The author has actually simply done the above, 'given a speculation and theory', which may or may not be correct. Only confirmation from Srila Prabhupada will determine this.

"The Ramanuja (Sri) *sampradaya* and Madhva (Brahma) *sampradaya* are successfully established Vedic lineage's, and Srila Prabhupada's disciples would do well to follow these tried and proven examples. By following this cultural ideal we would also create a panacea for those suffering from confusion or doubts about having a *maha-bhagavata, uttama-adhikari* devotee for a guru, and would undoubtedly increase everyone's desire to hear directly from Srila Prabhupada, whether they are his personally-initiated disciples or not."

Having just told us that he wishes to remain free from 'speculation and theory', the author proposes that we institute practices in ISKCON simply because in the opinion of the author they are following a 'cultural ideal' and are 'tried and proven examples' in 'successfully established vedic lineage'. Also by doing this, in the opinion of the author we would 'create a panacea for those suffering from doubts and confusion about having a *maha-bhagavata, uttama-adhikari* devotee for a guru'. This may be all well and good.

- But is this what was ordered by the very person that the author is trying to encourage us to follow - Srila Prabhupada?

Unfortunately, there is no attempt made to determine this. Thus, the author has simply offered his own 'speculation and theory'. ISKCON was set up by Srila Prabhupada to be 'managed ultimately' by a GBC whose mandate was as follows:

- **“The purpose of the Governing Body Commission is to act as the instrument for the execution of the Will of His Divine Grace.”**
(Direction of Management for ISKCON, 28/7/70)
- **“ Resolved: The GBC (Governing Body Commission) has been established by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada to represent Him in carrying out the responsibility of managing the International Society for Krishna Consciousness of which He is the Founder-*Acarya* and supreme authority. The GBC accepts as its life and soul His divine instructions and recognises 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)

There is no mention that ISKCON should be governed by reference to ‘cultural ideals’ from other ‘established Vedic lineage’s’. The very method through which Srila Prabhupada wanted ISKCON managed - by reference to his ‘will and divine instructions’; the author has not offered evidence from to support his ‘theory’. Until he can do so, his ‘theory’ will remain a ‘speculation’.

“During the last twenty years we have developed an extremely unhealthy over-emphasis on *diksa* gurus, rather than continuing ideas chalked out by Srila Bhaktisidhanta Sarasvati who so brilliantly preached the philosophy of the *bhagavata parampara*. His Divine Grace emphasised that those who know and preach the purport of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* are our real gurus, not simply the individual who performs a fire sacrifice and/or changes our name.”

Here again by not referring directly to the words of Srila Prabhupada, the author has made two elementary errors:

1. He has equated a ‘*diksa* guru’ on whom we are placing an ‘extremely unhealthy over-emphasis’ with the ‘individual who performs a fire sacrifice and/or changes the name’. However, this is NOT the definition of a *diksa* guru at all. Had the author read the July 9th letter, the author would know that the ‘individual who changes our name’ is the *Ritvik*. The ‘individual who performs a fire sacrifice’ was to be the TEMPLE PRESIDENT. Thus even whilst Srila Prabhupada was on the planet the performance of these activities were not to be the way in which the *diksa* guru is defined. Rather Srila Prabhupada states that the *diksa* guru is a rather more powerful individual:

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

(C.c. Madhya, 9.61, purport)

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

(C.c. Madhya, 4.111, purport)

“*Diksa* 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 *diksa*.”

(C.c. Madhya, 15.108, purport)

We are surprised that the author has made the elementary mistake of confusing a *diksa* guru with a *ritvik*, especially since the author had informed us that in producing this paper:

“As we read all of Srila Prabhupada’s books thoroughly, we underlined each and every quote mentioning the concept or word guru; in 1979 computers were not common and there was no Vedabase”.

2. The person from whom we receive the message of the *Bhagavatam* IS THE person who directly links us to the *parampara*:

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

(S.B. 2.9.7, purport)

Unfortunately, this lack of understanding of the reality of *diksa* forms the foundation for the theme underlying the author’s whole paper. That Srila Prabhupada is our *siksa* guru only, and that we must have other *diksa* gurus, but that we must not ‘emphasise’ them too much - and thus we can see how some of conclusions presented in the rest of this paper will collapse.

“Although the *diksa* and *siksa* gurus are equal manifestations of the Supreme Lord, as previously cited, we can lean toward or emphasise one above the other, just as the *madhurya* aspect of love of God can be considered above *dasya*, *sakhya*, and *vatsalya* although all are transcendently equal.”

Yet again the author offers no evidence from Srila Prabhupada that this is what he wanted us to do in ISKCON. Instead, the author attempts to look through his telescope at the history of our *parampara* and speculate about exactly what happened then,

and on that basis try and figure out what should be done in ISKCON. I say 'speculate' because though all the points he makes in this section may appear reasonable he does not offer one quotation from Srila Prabhupada to back up his conclusions.

We do of course have the correct alternative of going directly to Srila Prabhupada's instructions themselves.

"Taking our own *parampara* example still further, we should note that Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti never received *diksa* from Narottama dasa Thakura, the guru mentioned as his predecessor. History also reveals that Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's *diksa-guru* was named Vipin Bihari Gosvami. He never received *diksa* from Jagannatha das Babaji. Why, then, is Jagannatha dasa Babaji's picture on ISKCON altars as a guru in the *parampara*?"

Yet, SRILA PRABHUPADA does not actually teach all these distinctions. On the contrary, he ONLY states:

"Jagannatha Dasa Babaji INITIATED Bhaktivinoda Thakura."

(Adi, 1, Introduction)

Again, we note that the author seems to be unable to establish many of his conclusions by reference to Srila Prabhupada. This would either mean that Srila Prabhupada gave incomplete or mis-leading information. Yet, we do not believe that the author believes this, since throughout the paper the author is also glorifying Srila Prabhupada to the max:

"The *shakti* displayed by Srila Prabhupada in awakening conditioned souls from *maya* has never been matched by any *saktyavesa-avatara*, any *jagad-guru*, or even any *avatara* of God Himself in the known history of mankind! What audacity it takes to produce your own books or lecture tapes without encouraging your disciples hear directly from Srila Prabhupada."

What the author says here is wonderful and we could not have put it better ourselves. Similarly the author should follow these sentiments and clearly establish any conclusions by hearing 'DIRECTLY from Srila Prabhupada'.

"The message of Godhead, or spiritual sound vibration, is passed down by instructions imparted from guru to disciple, not simply by *diksa*-initiation."

However, as we showed in the definitions of *diksa* before, the process of *diksa* is NOT divorced from 'instructions imparted from guru to disciple'.

"Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness."

(C.c. Madhya, 9.61, purport)

"*Diksa* actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination."

(C.c. Madhya, 4.111, purport)

The '*divya-jnana*', transcendental knowledge is imparted by the *diksa* guru to the disciple.

"Can you believe it? The *shakti* displayed by Srila Prabhupada in awakening conditioned souls has never been matched by any *saktyavesa-avatara*, any *jagad-guru*, or even any *avatara* of God Himself in the known history of mankind!"

Here the author practically states that Srila Prabhupada IS everybody's *Diksa* Guru, for 'awakening conditioned souls from *maya*' is very similar to the definition that Srila Prabhupada gives for *Diksa*:

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

(C.c. Madhya, 9.61, purport)

"*Diksa* 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 *diksa*."

(C.c. Madhya, 15.108, purport)

"Concept #9 - We should not swing to the other end of the pendulum by implementing the *ritvik* system, but should rather implement the proven Vedic cultural system of following our Founder-*acarya*."

Having made the fundamental errors above, we see how now the author leads up to in the conclusion of his paper to rejecting the very solution to the problem of keeping Srila Prabhupada in the centre that Srila Prabhupada gave himself.

"Srila Prabhupada never publicly stated that this was what he wanted. During the thousands of lectures, room conversations, and interviews, he did not clarify the *ritvik* process as the method that would continue his movement after his departure."

1. The July 9th letter was sent to the whole movement, so how can it not be stating it '*publicly*'?
2. Srila Prabhupada gradually started devolving the elements of the initiation ceremony right from the very beginning, and the majority of Srila Prabhupada's disciples were initiated without even physically meeting Srila Prabhupada. Before his leaving, Srila Prabhupada then sends out a letter documenting that the disciples were to now carry the whole process out for the entire movement. Why is this not clear?
3. Also the *ritvik* system merely keeps things the SAME, - Srila Prabhupada continues doing what he has always done - initiate everyone who joins the movement.
Why is the author asserting that Srila Prabhupada needs to continually state everyday that he will stay the *diksa* guru as if the *ritvik* system was proposing a drastic change to the way in which he had so far run his movement?
Srila Prabhupada never continually STATED that he was the *diksa* guru for ISKCON when he was PRESENT. At the end, he simply keeps things running as they are, and in a manner, that everybody was familiar with.
Where is the evidence that Srila Prabhupada was setting up a movement in which he was going to shortly remove himself as the central focus for future generations, and that he would be replaced as the *diksa* guru for ISKCON?
It is THIS notion that Srila Prabhupada would have needed to Continually PUBLICLY state in order for there to be anything that the '*ritvik*' system would have drastically changed that daily clarification was needed.

"Krishna Kant has based his entire argument on a letter composed in July of 1977, and it has genuine merit, but only one quote in all the times Srila Prabhupada spoke leaves a trail of ambiguity that is difficult to follow."

My argument is not just based on one letter, though even if it was, if it is a directive to the whole movement it still needs to be followed.

- Is the author stating that an instruction for the whole movement can be ignored simply because it was stated once, or over 100 times, as with the July 9th letter (the letter was sent to every GBC and temple)?

"2) There remains the very real question of Srila Prabhupada's acceptance of these disciples. Guru-disciple relationship requires two people, and the guru must agree to accept each disciple. How can Srila Prabhupada agree to accept everyone? Carte blanche initiations? That didn't even happen when he was personally present! This method of initiation too closely parallels Christianity, wherein Jesus Christ is seen as the only pure devotee who can "save" his followers. Gaudiya Vaisnava philosophy differs from this concept."

This question of course is answered in the '*Final Order*', and even when Srila Prabhupada WAS present, the *ritvik* system was in place, with the *ritvik*'s accepting the disciples without ANY reference to Srila Prabhupada. Unfortunately, in displaying this ignorance, the author has not followed the very advice he gave his own readers at the beginning of the paper:

"If you're like me, and skip here and there while surfing the net, I would suggest you copy and download this file so you can scrutinise it more closely at your convenience, instead of browsing through a few philosophical concepts and then jumping to something else. This article gradually develops a logical progression of philosophical premises and is best digested in its entirety." Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, there are no other examples of a *ritvik*-guru system in any bona fide Vaisnava *sampradaya*. One of the fundamental principles of Vaisnava philosophy is to follow the previous *acaryas* without inventing something new."

- a) Again this point is answered in the '*Final Order*'. We also have another paper that deals specifically with this point - '*The Unprecedented Objection*'
- b) The author confuses the lack of 'examples' of something with a change in the Gaudiya Vaisnava PHILOSOPHY. There are no other 'examples' of MANY things Srila Prabhupada instituted either.
So what?
They are still bona-fide as long as they do not violate sastra.
Does Srila Prabhupada remaining the bona fide *diksa* guru in the *parampara* through whom we are connected violate any of Srila Prabhupada's teachings?
If not then how can its novelty be an excuse to reject it?
- c) Since Srila Prabhupada instituted the July 9th letter to be followed in ISKCON, by not following that then we are also not following the *acaryas* and inventing something.

"A cursory study of other Vaisnava *sampradaya*'s reveals that the *Samsthapakacarya*, the Founder-*Acarya*, is the foundational *siksa* guru, and all subsequent gurus are simply representatives of his teachings, but there are no examples of a *ritvik* system in any of them."

1. Srila Prabhupada specifically defines the *ritvik* in the July 9th letter as the 'representative of the *acarya*'. So this is in line with what the author is saying.
2. As we have demonstrated above, simply because these exact representatives may have not been used before is not in itself a reason to reject the *ritvik*/representative of the *acarya* system.

"This concept of representing the Founder-*Acarya* also guards society from guru fanaticism or sentimentality that gradually leads to a breakdown of unity and the establishment of various camps or offshoots, a trend that has already begun in ISKCON."

So does following the actual system which Srila Prabhupada ordered.

"Unfortunately history has already left another vivid example of how losing focus on the Founder-*Acarya* can practically destroy a movement. Not long after the disappearance of Srila Bhaktisidhanta Sarasvati, his disciples lost their focus on him and began establishing themselves as *acaryas*, instead of co-operating together as his *sisyas*, followers of his teachings. Today, only sixty years after his disappearance (a very short time indeed compared to 10,000 years), the Gaudiya Matha has fractured into multiple branches and lost its core strength. If we don't establish this vital understanding of Srila Prabhupada as the *siksa* guru for our entire society, then what's to prevent the very same thing, or worse, from happening to ISKCON- especially after the disappearance of the present generation of Srila Prabhupada's directly initiated disciples?"

The fracture occurred in the Gaudiya Matha specifically because the disciples disobeyed the order of the Guru, and became initiating gurus themselves - which is exactly what will still continue in ISKCON if we followed the author's solution to continue to reject Srila Prabhupada's July 9th letter:

Why this Gaudiya Matha failed? Because they tried to become more than guru. He, before passing away, he gave all direction and never said that 'This man should be the next *acarya*.' But these people, just after his passing away they began to fight, who shall be *acarya*. That is the failure. They never thought, 'Why Guru Maharaja gave us instruction so many things, why he did not say that this man should be *acarya*?' They wanted to create artificially somebody *acarya* and everything failed. They did not consider even with common sense that if Guru Maharaja wanted to appoint somebody as *acarya*, why did he not say? He said so many things, and this point he missed? The real point? And they insist upon it. They declared some unfit person to become *acarya*. Then another man came, then another, *acarya*, another *acarya*. So better remain a foolish person perpetually to be directed by Guru Maharaja. That is perfection.

(Room conversation, Bombay: August 16, 1976)

"The only justification that the GBC can give for disbanding the *ritvik* system is that the *ritvik*'s were 'appointed' and 'selected' to become 'initiating *acaryas*'

(GBC resolution 1978, 'Gurus and Initiation in ISKCON', GBC 1995, Disciple of My Disciple, 1997).

The author's proposal will keep this initial *maha*-deviation intact. He is simply attempting to fix a SYMPTOM of this original *adi*-deviation - the lack of focus on Srila Prabhupada. But 'do not treat the symptom, cure the disease.'

"In direct contrast to the Gaudiya Matha, we have two excellent examples of working systems; systems that have endured the test of time. Ramanujacarya lived approximately one thousand years ago. That's right, one thousand years! And today the Sri Sampradaya remains respected, strong, and healthy. How did they do that? The Madhvacarya sampradaya also remains strong and healthy, and has been so for more than eight hundred years. ISKCON, on the other hand, was incorporated a mere thirty-two years ago and is already experiencing traumatic difficulties. I suggest it would be wise to thoroughly research these other respected *sampradaya*'s, and then implement administrative policies that have worked and proven their merit for many generations."

1. We also have an even better example of a perfect working system - the system that was established by Srila Prabhupada himself, and with which he spread Krsna Consciousness himself - having himself as the *diksa* guru with his disciples performing the formalities of *diksa*. A system, which he also directed, should be instituted in ISKCON before just before he departed.
2. Srila Prabhupada NEVER told us that if we have a problem, we should fix it by looking at what we think 'works successfully' in other *sampradaya*'s. This is a perfect example of the 'speculation' that the author claims he has attempted to avoid in this paper. Rather we should only follow Srila Prabhupada's instructions in this matter. Or is the author suggesting that Srila Prabhupada purposely did NOT tell us which guru system should be followed, that we need to look elsewhere to figure it out?

"Each of these above mentioned bona fide *sampradaya*'s have somehow established systematic methods of continuing their line of the *parampara* while keeping the original teachings of their Founder-*Acaryas* in tact. Not only that, they have also preserved a unique reverence for their founders. We must do the same by following the Vedic system. Srila Prabhupada must be glorified as the Founder-*Acarya* and should be revered as such for hundreds and thousands of years. Each subsequent guru, now and in the future, should simply be recognised as a representative of Srila Prabhupada and his teachings. This is an established Vedic etiquette."

Srila Prabhupada also gave us a system whereby the 'line of *parampara* continues', the teachings remain 'intact', there is also an 'unique reverence for the founder', and the disciples are only 'representatives'. It was outlined in the July 9th letter. It seems

the author is hell-bent on introducing any system from anywhere, except the *ritvik* system given by Srila Prabhupada, even though the author is trying to achieve the same result. Best to stick with Srila Prabhupada's instructions ONLY.

"To implement this mature understanding of Srila Prabhupada as the focal point in our society, however, requires mature devotees, selfless devotees who realise their position in relation to the Founder-*Acarya*. Unfortunately, there are very few who are manifesting this mentality at the present time. Rather, most gurus are influenced by false ego in relation to "their disciples" and thus havoc will continue until these anomalies are corrected from a personal and administrative level"

The author is also here admitting that the current *diksa* gurus in ISKCON are not even qualified to be Gurus. Srila Prabhupada states that:

***Maha-bhagavata -srestho brahmano vai gurur nram
sarvesam eva lokanam asau pujo yatha harih
maha-kula-prasuto' pi sarva-yajnesu diksitah
sahasra-sakhadhya yi ca na guruh syad avaisnavah***

"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."

(C.c. Madhya, 24.330, purport)

"When one has attained the topmost position of *maha-bhagavata*, 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."

(C.c. Madhya, 24.330, purport)

"The *Ritvik* Theory was the outcome of a pendulum swing-the opposite extreme of the Zonal Guru syndrome in the early eighties. On one end of the pendulum swing were the New Gurus, many who, no doubt, fell victim to pride and power invested in them through ecclesiastical politics. On the other end of the pendulum swing were those who fiercely opposed the new regime and propounded the *Ritvik* Theory, stating that all the new gurus were only insignificant pawns empowered to perform the rituals of sacrifice."

Here the author confuses HOW a theory is formulated with WHY it may become prominent. The theory itself is based on instructions from Srila Prabhupada. He may argue that we have misunderstood those instructions but that is another matter. However, the theory was not just concocted as an expedient measure to curb the gurus. Ironically as we have shown above, this is exactly what the author seems to have done here.

"Both ends of the swing are extremities and by-products of the mode of passion. Proper balance is found somewhere near the center, in the mode of goodness, and proper balance can be found in the fact that Srila Prabhupada's teachings are the structural foundation for ISKCON and all of us are representatives of those teachings-even the non-liberated souls."

1. The proper balance is found by following Srila Prabhupada's instructions, as given in his July 9th directive, not in trying to invent a system by looking at other *sampradaya's*, something which Srila Prabhupada did not ask us to do.
2. Ironically, this directive results in the fact that "Srila Prabhupada's teachings are the structural foundation for ISKCON and all of us are representatives of those teachings - even the non-liberated souls".

Conclusion

1. The author has said many wonderful things about Srila Prabhupada, and we appreciate his attempt to keep Srila Prabhupada in the centre.
2. We appreciate the fact that he has acknowledged that the current Guru system in ISKCON definitely needs to be changed.
3. Unfortunately the solution he proposes is based on rejecting Srila Prabhupada's instructions and instead trying to come up with some theory from other *sampradaya's* that Srila Prabhupada himself has not told us to adopt. Further this approach will only abate the symptoms of the problem; it will not cure the actual disease that the author is trying to combat.
4. We would humbly suggest that the author amends some parts of his paper in line with the above. Many of his concepts about keeping Srila Prabhupada's position central are great.

www.iskconirm.com
irm@iskconirm.com