



## Spiritual Initiation & the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

**An Analysis of Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions on initiations in ISKCON.**

Compilation & commentary *by Mādhavānanda dāsa*. - [Youtube Channel](#)

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## Introduction

Anyone who has come to the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness movement soon comes to understand that progress in spiritual life requires the guidance of a spiritual master. Before 1977 within ISKCON Śrīla Prabhupāda was understood to be everyone's worshipable dīkṣā guru or initiating spiritual master and thus ISKCON was strongly united.

Since the passing of Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1977 however there has been a great deal of confusion and debate over what exactly the founder ācārya of ISKCON Śrīla Prabhupāda has actually authorized for the continuation of initiations after his disappearance. During this time there have been many persons who have assumed the role of initiating spiritual master. Devotees have become confronted with the question of whom to accept as their initiating spiritual master. Indeed the most common introductory question in ISKCON has become "who is your spiritual master ?" As a result there have come about numerous camps of followers of various individuals who have assumed the post of dīkṣā guru, not only within ISKCON but in numerous other organizations separate from ISKCON which have evolved.

This presentation is intended to delve deeply into the topic and make a thorough analysis of the issue. The goal is to actually understand the truth of the matter and know for sure which course to follow. The intention here is to take an honest look at the situation by studying points from both sides of the issue. In the process I have spent a great deal of time over the years reading and studying papers from different and various perspectives and conclusions. In summary there are basically two different ideas. One is what has come to be called the "living guru" philosophy, asserting that the dīkṣā guru must be physically present, and the other is what is generally referred to as the "ṛtvik philosophy" asserting that Śrīla Prabhupāda has setup a system to continue on as the current dīkṣā guru, at least for ISKCON.

What I've found is that there are many good points to consider from both perspectives. Many people however may assume they have a clear cut understanding on what is correct without actually studying into the matter closely for themselves. Often I've seen that devotees may easily accept whatever they hear from others without actually confirming it for themselves by going deeply into studying the teachings and instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Often it is apparent that persons may have an initial bias towards one position on the matter because it better suits their likes and dislikes or because it is the popular opinion & more socially acceptable. Likewise whatever becomes the majority consensus is often automatically accepted as a fact for convenience sake.

The actual truth may not always be so crystal clear for everyone, this is the nature of the material world. And this particular situation is evidently requiring devotees to use their individual intelligence to study the matter thoroughly for themselves. This research I have found to be truly fascinating and I hope this presentation may be helpful to some in it's attempt to present a concise compilation of statements and evidences towards a conclusive understanding. After all, such a spiritual master is supposed to be accepted as one's life and soul. I feel it best to approach this matter scrutinizingly.

## The July 9th Letter To All Temple Presidents & GBC's

July 9th, 1977

Letter to: All G.B.C., All Temple Presidents

To All G.B.C., and Temple Presidents Dear Mahārājas and Prabhus,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet. Recently when all of the GBC members were with His Divine Grace in Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda indicated that soon He would appoint some of His senior disciples to act as "ṛtvik" - representative of the ācārya, 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 Kīrtanānanda Swami  
His Holiness Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī  
His Holiness Jayapatāka Swami  
His Holiness Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī  
His Holiness Hṛdayānanda Gosvāmī  
His Holiness Bhavānanda Gosvāmī  
His Holiness Haṁsadūta Swami  
His Holiness Rāmeśvara Swami  
His Holiness Harikeśa Swami  
His Grace Bhagavān dāsa Adhikari  
His Grace Jayatīrtha dāsa Adhikari

In the past Temple Presidents have written to Śrīla Prabhupāda recommending a particular devotee's initiation. Now that Śrīla Prabhupāda 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 Śrīla Prabhupāda by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gāyatrī thread, just as Śrīla Prabhupāda has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the 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 yajña 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 Śrīla Prabhupāda, to be included in His Divine Grace's "Initiated Disciples" book.

Hoping this finds you all well.

Approved: A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Your servant, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī Secretary to Śrīla Prabhupāda

### **Viraha Aṣṭaka : Eight Prayers in Separation from My Spiritual Master**

A poem by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda written in 1958 — nearly a quarter century after the disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī — about Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's official institution.

**Fourth Octet:** The Essential Purport Neglected

**Stanza 3:** Those disciples who were irresolute in performing devotional service according to your instructions have divided your mission into many factions. It appears that the tigress of ambition for material name and fame has appeared and personally provoked this upheaval.

**Fifth Octet:** The Disciples Empowerment is Lost

**Stanza 2:** Your so-called disciple, the jackal named Ananta Vāsudeva, disobeyed your final instructions to keep the mission united, and thereby created a scandalous fiasco. The result of this philosophical deviation is evident to this day as imitative sahajiyās are being worshiped as gurus in your temples.

**Stanza 3:** Is there a single temple to be found where your instructions are still being followed? As it is said: "punar mūṣiko bhava" — Everyone has "again become a mouse".

**Stanza 4:** The lion's food has been stolen away by the deceptive tricks of the jackal. Now caught in Māyā's clutches, everyone is reduced to wailing and weeping.

**Sixth Octet:** The Preaching Mission is Scattered

**Stanza 5:** The Vaiṣṇavas were famous as "patita-pāvana" (deliverers of the fallen), but now this title has fallen into disgrace. Countless numbers of your disciples have been forced to leave your movement.

**Stanza 6:** At such an inauspicious time, O Master, what can be done to repair the damage that is done? The beautiful garden that you had so carefully planted is now parched and withered away.

**Stanza 7:** O Master, please awaken some good intelligence in this insignificant disciple of yours so that my firm faith in your transcendental message may increase more and more.

**Stanza 8:** O Śrīla Prabhupāda You personally suffer to see the suffering of the fallen conditioned souls. On this day of separation I am utterly despondent.

### **Selecting the Bonafide Initiator - A Personal Experience**

I came in contact with the movement in '93', and from the very beginning I was presented with information concerning the "guru issue". After visiting the temple I could understand that different devotees were worshiping different individuals whom they had accepted as their spiritual master. As I recall now there were different guru pūjās taking place at which time a partition covered the murti of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Having been new to the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement at the time I wasn't quite sure what to make of this. A minority of persons claimed that ISKCON had deviated after the departure of Śrīla Prabhupāda and never gotten back on track. They claimed that Śrīla Prabhupāda had instructed that after his departure some disciples were to conduct initiations on his behalf. New initiates were to be disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The majority of devotees however, accepted the idea that Śrīla Prabhupāda had authorized for his disciples to initiate their own disciples. Anything counter to this was considered by many to be heresy.

It was clear that practically everyone was in agreement on one point and accepted it as a fact - that after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure a zonal ācārya system operated for about 10 years until many of the 11 'gurus' fell down and it became obvious that something was very wrong. I came across a BTG from '87' with a column titled 'An Apology', in which the editors admitted to supporting what they called an erroneous zonal ācārya system and said that it was overthrown by a 'guru reform movement' which had successfully reestablished Śrīla Prabhupāda's actual instructions.

According to popular belief it was at that time that ISKCON installed the bonafide system which supposedly authorized anyone to initiate their own disciples provided they were strictly following for some time. By '93' this system had been operating for several years; yet another point acknowledged by both sides to be a fact - that many of the new gurus had fallen down as well. It was brought to my attention that there were even some devotees who had been "initiated", or what is called "reinitiated", two or three times by different gurus who had fallen down one after another.

It seemed that many devotees were unsure of their connection to the Paramparā and wondering "who is the 'real' ācārya?" At that time there were already 60 or 70 initiating gurus. It would often be said that if you're sincere Kṛṣṇa in the heart will lead you to who is bonafide. Evidently however, many of the devotees who were accepting this system, simultaneously were not confident that all or even most of the initiating gurus were actually bonafide. One devotee would encourage "come to my guru Mahārāja", another devotee would say "be wary of others, come to my guru Mahārāja." It all seemed quite strange, and it was obviously not the united worldwide International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness that I had heard or read about.

I had to seriously ask myself "Is this really the system that Śrīla Prabhupāda authorized ?; or have motivations for personal aggrandizement overthrown the leadership of ISKCON ?" I found in many places that Śrīla Prabhupāda often warned that the Gauḍīya-Maṭha had introduced an unauthorized system of rubber-stamping ācāryas, and that ISKCON Must be 'careful not to make the same mistake'.

It was brought to my attention that the ISKCON initiating gurus are subject to a voting board which must give a 2/3 approval, and that the position is basically taken on by one's own initiative after deciding for oneself that one feels qualified to initiate his own disciples. I had read however that Śrīla Prabhupāda said there is no need for an ācārya to be nominated, and that one becomes an initiating spiritual master not on his own initiative, but by a specific order from his spiritual master.

**"Interviewer: So you are at this particular time then the head in the world of this movement? Would that be correct? Prabhupāda: I have got many other Godbrothers, but I was particularly ordered to do this from the very beginning. So I am trying to please my spiritual master. That's all." (television interview July 4, 1971)**

**"He's asking when did you become the spiritual leader of Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Prabhupāda: When my Guru Mahārāja ordered me. This is the guru-paramparā. Indian: Did it... 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." (Lecture 10/28/75)**

**"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)**

**"...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." (NOD 14)**

**"As soon as a foolish disciple tries to overtake his spiritual master and becomes ambitious to occupy his post, he immediately falls down." (Purport SB 5.12.14)**

**"One should not try to be an artificially advanced devotee, thinking, "I am a first-class devotee." Such thinking should be avoided. It is best not to accept any disciples." (Madhya 7.130)**

**"Mundane votes have no jurisdiction to elect a Vaiṣṇava ācārya. A Vaiṣṇava ācārya is self-effulgent, and there is no need for any court judgment." (Purport Madhya 1.220)**

**"His idea was ācārya was not to be nominated amongst the governing body" (referring to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja) (Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Rūpānuga 4/28/74)**

These statements and many others I found to be clearly at odds with the idea that someone can become a dīkṣā guru authorized to initiate one's own disciples by taking the position out of one's own initiative combined with the approval of a voting board - the GBC - who conducts the voting (most, if not all of the GBC members have elected each other as dīkṣā gurus.) & refers to itself as "the highest ecclesiastical body guiding ISKCON".

**"Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī advises that one not accept a spiritual master in terms of hereditary or customary social and ecclesiastical conventions." (Ādi 1.35)**

It appeared that ISKCON was repeating exactly the same mistake that Śrīla Prabhupāda said the Gauḍīya Matha made after the disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. As Śrīla Prabhupāda has said "history repeats itself."

"If everyone just initiates then there will only be a contradictory result. As long as it goes on there will be only failure. 29. O shame! My dear brothers, aren't you embarrassed? In the manner of businessmen you increase your disciples. 40. The one who renounces the guru's order (guru tyāgī) and the one who tries to enjoy the assets of his spiritual master (guru-bhogī) are two kinds of useless persons. First become a servant of your spiritual master (guru-sevī) and then you will understand things clearly." (Phālguna Kṛṣṇa Pañcamī)

"In the latter days of my Guru Mahārāja he was very disgusted. Actually, he left this world earlier, otherwise he would have continued to live for more years. Still he requested his disciples to form a strong Governing body for preaching the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He never recommended anyone to be ācārya of the Gauḍīya Matha. But Śrīdhara Mahārāja is responsible for disobeying this order of Guru Mahārāja, and he and others who are already dead unnecessarily thought that there must be one ācārya. If Guru Mahārāja could have seen someone who was qualified at that time to be ācārya he would have mentioned. Because on the night before he passed away he talked of so many things, but never mentioned an ācārya. His idea was ācārya was not to be nominated amongst the governing body. He said openly you make a GBC and conduct the mission. So his idea was amongst the members of GBC who would come out successful and self effulgent ācārya would be automatically selected. So Śrīdhara Mahārāja and his two associate gentlemen unauthorizedly selected one ācārya and later it proved a failure. The result is now everyone is claiming to be ācārya even though they may be kaniṣṭha-adhikārī with no ability to preach. In some of the camps the ācārya is being changed three times a year. Therefore we may not commit the same mistake in our ISKCON camp. Actually amongst my Godbrothers no one is qualified to become ācārya. So it is better not to mix with my Godbrothers very intimately because instead of inspiring our students and disciples they may sometimes pollute them." (Letter to Rūpānuga 4/28/74)

"Why this Gauḍīya 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 ācārya." But these people; just after his passing away they began to fight, who shall be ācārya. That is the failure. They never thought, "Why Guru Mahārāja gave us instruction so many things, why he did not say that this man should be ācārya?" They wanted to create artificially somebody ācārya and everything failed. They did not consider even with common sense that if Guru Mahārāja wanted to appoint somebody as ācārya, 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 ācārya. Then another man came, then another, ācārya, another ācārya. So better remain a foolish person perpetually to be directed by Guru Mahārāja. That is perfection. And as soon as he learns the Guru Mahārāja is dead, "Now I am so advanced that I can kill my guru and I become guru." Then he's finished." (Room Conversation 8/16/76 Bombay)

"...just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of ācārya, and they split into two factions over who the next ācārya would be. Consequently, both factions were asara, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master," (Ādi 12)

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: The process of purification must be there. Prabhupāda: Oh, yes, must be there. Caitanya Mahāprabhu wants that. Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā. "You become guru." (laughs) But be qualified. Little thing, strictly follower... Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Not rubber stamp. Prabhupāda: Then you'll not be effective. You can cheat, but it will not be effective. Just see our Gauḍīya Matha. Everyone wanted to become guru, and a small temple and "guru." What kind of guru? (Conv. 4/22/77)

It was evident that for the following reason why many persons would be unauthorizedly assuming the post of initiating spiritual master:

**"A guru is worshiped... Just like my disciples. They are offering respect exactly like God. That is their duty. Sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstraiḥ: All the śāstra recommends that guru should be respected as good as God." (lecture 7/15/75 San Francisco)**

**"According to scriptural injunctions, a spiritual master should be respected and be regarded on an equal level with the Supreme Personality of Godhead" (Kṛṣṇa Book 44)**

**"It is recommended in authoritative scriptures that the spiritual master should be worshiped on the level of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because of his being His very confidential servitor, and it is accepted by great authorities that the spiritual master is the external manifestation of Kṛṣṇa." (Kṛṣṇa Book 46)**

**"Our next spiritual master is he who initiates us into transcendental knowledge, and he is to be worshiped as much as I am. [...] the spiritual master who initiates the disciple is called dīkṣā-guru." (Lord Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Book 80)**

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Kṛṣṇa states here that it is specifically the dīkṣā guru who is to be worshiped as much as Himself. Śrīla Prabhupāda has explained how everyone comes into material existence desiring to be God, a desire never to be fulfilled. It made logical sense that after being baffled in one's attempt to become God, one could next desire to become guru who is worshiped as good as God. We know however from Śrīla Prabhupāda that one who is actually a bonafide initiating spiritual master has not even a tinge of personal desire for fame, profit, adoration or distinction.

**"What is the symptom of bona fide spiritual master? Everyone wants to become spiritual master. [...] he has taken shelter of the Supreme Absolute Truth, without any material desires. He has no more any material desires; he's simply interested in Kṛṣṇa, or the Absolute Truth." (B.g. Lecture Pittsburgh, September 8, 1972)**

**"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." (Madhya 24.331 purport)**

**"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. The first-class devotee is the spiritual master for all kinds of people." (Madhya 24.330)**

**"One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī. A neophyte Vaiṣṇava or a Vaiṣṇava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance. Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikārī as a spiritual master." (NOI 5)**

It was clear that a bonafide initiating spiritual master must be completely pure, free of all selfish motives, and situated on the topmost platform of devotional service; such a person who is a mahā-bhāgavata, an uttama-adhikārī, factually as good as God and worthy of the highest honor. I found that most devotees of ISKCON were propagating the philosophy that Śrīla Prabhupāda is no longer present to accept disciples and one should therefore find someone else for initiation; also that initiating spiritual masters sometimes fall down, and that a devotee should simply seek out another if one's initiating guru has fallen. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda makes it clear that a disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikārī as a spiritual master, and that such a first class spiritual master never falls down.

**"There is no possibility that a first-class devotee will fall down" (Madhya 22.71)**

Taking everything into consideration, I had to seriously consider the circumstances and the instructions given by Śrīla Prabhupāda. I myself would eventually need to accept formal initiation and certainly I would want to make the proper choice the first time.

**"That intelligence you must have, who is a pseudo spiritual master or real spiritual master. Otherwise you'll be cheated. And that is being done." (Lecture 10/2/68 Seattle)**

**"Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī advises the devotee to be intelligent enough to distinguish between the kaniṣṭha-adhikārī, madhyama-adhikārī and uttama-adhikārī. The devotee should also know his own position and should not try to imitate a devotee situated on a higher platform. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has given some practical hints to the effect that an uttama-adhikārī Vaiṣṇava can be recognized by his ability to convert many fallen souls to Vaiṣṇavism. One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī." (N015)**

The decision of accepting an initiating spiritual master I felt to be a matter of life and soul, one to be made only after seriously scrutinizing the matter. How could such a decision be made whimsically, without sufficient insight, or as a matter of fashion ? Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

**"The Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (2.6) quotes the following injunction from the Viṣṇu-yamala: 'Unless one is initiated by a bona fide spiritual master, all his devotional activities are useless. A person who is not properly initiated can descend again into the animal species?' " (Madhya 15.108)**

**"One who is not properly initiated may present himself as a great devotee, but in fact he is sure to encounter many stumbling blocks on his path of progress toward spiritual realization, with the result that he must continue his term of material existence without relief." (Ādi 1.35 Purport)**

**"the importance of initiation is mentioned here. Unless one is initiated by the right person, who always carries within his heart the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one cannot acquire the power to carry the Supreme Godhead within the core of one's own heart." (S.B. 10.2.18)**

In Śrīla Prabhupāda's books I found many other warnings.

**"Unfortunately in this Age of Kali there are many mundane persons in the dress of Vaiṣṇavas, and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has described them as disciples of Kali. He says, kali-celā. He indicates that there is another Vaiṣṇava, a pseudo Vaiṣṇava with tilaka on his nose and kanthi beads around his neck. Such a pseudo Vaiṣṇava associates with money and women and is jealous of successful Vaiṣṇavas. Although passing for a Vaiṣṇava, his only business is earning money in the dress of a Vaiṣṇava. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura therefore says that such a pseudo Vaiṣṇava is not a Vaiṣṇava at all but a disciple of Kali-yuga. A disciple of Kali cannot become an ācārya by the decision of some high court. Mundane votes have no jurisdiction to elect a Vaiṣṇava ācārya. A Vaiṣṇava ācārya is self-effulgent, and there is no need for any court judgment. A false ācārya may try to override a Vaiṣṇava by a high-court decision, but Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says that he is nothing but a disciple of Kali-yuga." (Madhya 1.220)**

**"The pseudo religionists have neither knowledge nor detachment from material affairs, for most of them want to live in the golden shackles of material bondage under the shadow of philanthropic activities disguised as religious principles. By a false display of religious sentiments, they present a show of devotional service while indulging in all sorts of immoral activities. In this way they pass as spiritual masters and devotees of God. Such violators of religious principles have no respect for the authoritative ācāryas, the holy teachers in the strict disciplic succession. They ignore the Vedic injunction ācāryopāsanā—"One must worship the ācārya"—and Kṛṣṇa's statement in the Bhagavad-gītā (4.2) evam Paramparā-praptam, "This supreme science of God is received through the disciplic succession." Instead, to mislead the people in general they them-**



selves become so-called ācāryas, but they do not even follow the principles of the ācāryas. These rogues are the most dangerous elements in human society. Because there is no religious government, they escape punishment by the law of the state. They cannot, however, escape the law of the Supreme, who has dearly declared in the Bhagavad-gītā that envious demons in the garb of religious propagandists shall be thrown into the darkest regions of hell (Bg. 16.19-20). Śrī Īsopaniṣad confirms that these pseudo religionists are heading toward the most obnoxious place in the universe after the completion of their spiritual master business, which they conduct simply for sense gratification." (Iso 12)

It was quite clear by these instructions that I should consider with extreme care, whom to accept as my initiating spiritual master. In addition to these instructions, I found further instructions regarding the use of careful discrimination also in choosing the proper association amongst devotees.

**"The devotee should avoid a person whose character is not fixed in the standard understanding; even though he may be a Vaiṣṇava, or a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, if his character is not correctly representative, then he should be avoided. One should steadily control the senses and the mind and strictly follow the rules and regulations, and he should make friendship with persons of the same standard." (SB 3.29.17 Purport)**

**"There are many jealous people in the dress of Vaiṣṇavas in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and they should be completely neglected. There is no need to serve a jealous person who is in the dress of a Vaiṣṇava." (Madhya 1.218)**

**"Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura advises that a Vaiṣṇava who is not of good character should be avoided. A Vaiṣṇava is one who has taken the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the ultimate goal of life, but if one is not pure and still has motives, then he is not a Vaiṣṇava of the first order of good character. One may offer his respects to such a Vaiṣṇava because he has accepted the Supreme Lord as the ultimate goal of life, but one should not keep company with a Vaiṣṇava who is in the mode of ignorance." (S.B. 3.29.8)**

**"If one thinks that there are many pseudo devotees or nondevotees in the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Society, one can keep direct company with the spiritual master, and if there is any doubt, one should consult the spiritual master." (Madhya 19.157)**

**"I am in due receipt of your letter dated September 3, 1975 with the enclosed statement about Van Mahārāja. So I have now issued orders that all my disciples should avoid all of my god-brothers. They should not have any dealings with them nor even correspondence, nor should they give them any of my books or should they purchase any of their books, neither should you visit any of their temples. Please avoid them." (Letter to Viśvakarmā, 11/9/75)**

That the current ISKCON initiating system was actually authorized by Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared doubtful and thus I continued to consult with Śrīla Prabhupāda through his written and spoken words. I studied presentations from both sides of the issue. What I found was more and more evidence supporting the claim that ISKCON's current system of electing multiple initiating gurus is not what Śrīla Prabhupāda actually authorized.

It was evident that many devotees of ISKCON had somehow or other become influenced by the same ideas which the Gauḍīya-Maṭha introduced after Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's disappearance; ideas which Śrīla Prabhupāda had often forewarned of. The current ISKCON initiation system evidently had come about by the influence of that association which Śrīla Prabhupāda had forbidden to all of his disciples.

History reveals that some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's leading disciples, despite Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions in regards to his godbrothers and in regards to how to proceed after his departure, did consult with his godbrothers immediately after his departure and subscribed to the same erroneous idea that there must be a dīkṣā guru physically present to continue the Paramparā. These godbrothers of Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed his disciples that a dīkṣā guru must be physically present and that they must therefore become dīkṣā guru themselves.

Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly stated however that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta never instructed for anyone to become the next dīkṣā guru immediately after his departure and this idea and insistence that there must be some dīkṣā guru physically present created havoc to the mission. This ideology which has come to be known as the "living guru philosophy" is a conclusion which I could not find to be supported by Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and teachings.

The statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda being used to support this idea I found to be mostly of two kinds. There are first quotes where Śrīla Prabhupāda states a general law of disciplic succession that a disciple must wait until after his spiritual master's departure to initiate. There is no support however that this law automatically assumes a disciple to the post of dīkṣā guru when his spiritual master departs. Obviously from Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements regarding his godbrothers, none were either instructed or entitled to become dīkṣā gurus.

**"If Guru Mahārāja could have seen someone who was qualified at that time to be ācārya he would have mentioned. Because on the night before he passed away he talked of so many things, but never mentioned an ācārya. (...) Actually amongst my Godbrothers no one is qualified to become ācārya."** (Letter to Rūpānuga 1974)

This statement was made by Śrīla Prabhupāda even many years after Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's disappearance. It is conclusive that this law of disciplic succession is simply one of the conditions for becoming a dīkṣā guru. We find as we go on that the other two conditions are that one must be qualified and specifically ordered to become dīkṣā guru. The other type of quotes are those statements which give a general instruction to preach and in this way become a spiritual master, namely as a śikṣā guru. The most common is Lord Caitanya's **"yāre dekha, tāre kaha kṛṣṇa-upadeśa"**. (Every one of you can become a guru)". [Cc. Madhya 7.128]

(Other statements of this nature):

**"This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement directly receives instructions from the Supreme Personality of Godhead via persons who are strictly following His instructions. Although a follower may not be a liberated person, if he follows the supreme, liberated Personality of Godhead, his actions are naturally liberated from the contamination of the material nature. Lord Caitanya therefore says: "By My order you may become a spiritual master." One can immediately become a spiritual master by having full faith in the transcendental words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and by following His instructions."** (S.B. 4.185)

**"...we require many millions of gurus to enlighten them. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission is, He said, that "Every one of you become guru." āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei deśa. You haven't got to go foreign countries. Wherever you are, you teach; become guru. It doesn't matter. Ei deśa. He says, ei deśa. If you have got power, you can go other country, but it doesn't require. In which-ever village, whichever country or town you are, you become a guru. This is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission. āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei deśa. "This country, this place." So, "But I have no qualification. How can I become guru?" There is no need of qualification. "Still I can become guru?" Yes. "How?" Yāre dekha, tāre kaha kṛṣṇa-upadeśa: [Cc. Madhya 7.128]**

**"Whomever you meet, you simply instruct what Kṛṣṇa has said. That's all. You become guru."** (lec 5/21/76)

**"It is not that to be a representative of Kṛṣṇa or to be a spiritual master one has to have any extraordinary qualification. He simply has to carry the message from the authority as it is without any personal interpretation." (Elevation to KC pg 80)**

Although on a few occasions only Śrīla Prabhupāda may have appeared to refer to the possibility of his disciples accepting disciples of their own, finally Śrīla Prabhupāda stated "when I order". The order however which came with the official July 9th document to all temple presidents and GBC's has given authorization only for acceptance of disciples on behalf of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Furthermore, in accordance with this instruction Śrīla Prabhupāda states in his will that **"Each new executive director for the ISKCON properties must be my initiated disciple"**, an instruction requiring the presence of initiated Prabhupāda disciples for as long as ISKCON continues to exist. Until presently, nowhere has it been shown that Śrīla Prabhupāda ever gave a specific order to anyone to accept disciples of their own. The situation as arranged by Lord Kṛṣṇa has shown to be a great test of obedience to Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions. **"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."** (Lec. Hyderabad 4/15/75)

Continuing on to research this issue scrutinizingly, more than substantial evidence is found to conclude that factually Śrīla Prabhupāda has set up a transcendental system of initiating his own disciples after his physical departure. According to the primary definition of dīkṣā or initiation, to impart transcendental knowledge, dīkṣā is undoubtedly still being given by Śrīla Prabhupāda through his vāṇī — his transcendental teachings.

**"dīkṣā actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination." (Madhya 4.110)**

**"Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness." (Madhya 9.61)**

**"dīkṣā is the process by which one can awaken his transcendental knowledge and vanquish all reactions caused by sinful activity." (Madhya 15.108)**

Śrīla Prabhupāda continues giving transcendental knowledge through his writings and recordings. As outlined in the July 9th document to all temple presidents and GBC's, Śrīla Prabhupāda has delegated the formal acceptance of disciples to officiating ācāryas who are representatives or śikṣā gurus. Through this system Śrīla Prabhupāda has accepted many disciples without ever having physical contact with them.

It is often misunderstood that the initiating spiritual master must be physically present in order to observe and accept an aspiring candidate for initiation. Śrīla Prabhupāda however delegated this responsibility to leading disciples, namely temple presidents. By this system Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted many disciples and may continue to accept many more disciples.

**"For six months, a candidate for initiation must first attend āraṭi and classes in the śāstras, practice the regulative principles and associate with other devotees. When one is actually advanced in the puraścaryā-vidhi, he is recommended by the local temple president for initiation. It is not that anyone can be suddenly initiated without meeting the requirements. When one is further advanced by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra sixteen rounds daily, following the regulative principles and attending classes, he receives the sacred thread (brahminical recognition) after the second six months." (Madhya 15.108 Purport)**

**"Initiation should be given as a future hope, but we should be careful about the second initiation. As recommended by the president or GBC they should only do so when they are quite confident of a man. Otherwise, he should not be recommended. If you follow this principle it will be**

successful. Every day I am getting request for second initiation, but I do not know. The responsibility goes to the presidents who pick them. Unless they are thoroughly convinced second initiation should not be given. In the beginning we may be a little lenient. But if someone falls down after being initiated he should not be credited with second initiation." (Letter to Rūpānuga 4-28-74)

"In our Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement the requirement is that one must be prepared to give up the four pillars of sinful life- illicit sex, meat eating, intoxication and gambling. In Western countries especially, we first observe whether a potential disciple is prepared to follow the regulative principles. Then he is given the name of a Vaiṣṇava servant and initiated to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-Mantra, at least sixteen rounds daily. In this way the disciple renders devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master or his representative for at least six months to a year." (Madhya 24.330)

Thus disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, acting in accordance with his instructions, are authorized as bona-fide representatives, spiritual masters or śikṣā gurus, empowered to expand the sankirtan movement & increase the numbers of initiated Prabhupāda disciples throughout the world for generations to come. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the role of śikṣā (instructing) gurus, how they should be respected, and their simultaneous oneness and difference with the dīkṣā (initiating) guru. The dīkṣā guru must be a mahā-bhāgavata, first class devotee, whereas a śikṣā guru may or may not be a mahā-bhāgavata, but can be any person who presents the instructions of the dīkṣā guru without change or interpretation. One must have only one dīkṣā guru whereas in the case of śikṣā gurus, there may be many.

"A devotee must have only one initiating spiritual master because in the scriptures acceptance of more than one is always forbidden. There is no limit, however, to the number of instructing spiritual masters one may accept." (Ādi 1.35)

"Our next spiritual master is he who initiates us into transcendental knowledge (the dīkṣā guru), and he is to be worshiped as much as I am. The spiritual master may be more than one. The spiritual master who instructs the disciples about spiritual matters is called śikṣā-guru, and the spiritual master who initiates the disciple is called dīkṣā-guru. Both of them are My representatives. There may be many spiritual masters who instruct, but the initiator spiritual master is one." (KB80)

This verse and the next show that the dīkṣā guru is to be worshiped as much as Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself and therefore must be a mahā-bhāgavata:

"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." (Madhya 24.331 purport)

"anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a spiritual master. Although others give help in showing the way to beginners, the guru who first initiates one with the Mahā-Mantra is to be known as the initiator, and the saints who give instructions for progressive advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are called instructing spiritual masters. The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings. Their function is to guide the conditioned souls back home, back to Godhead." (Ādi 1.34)

"There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and the other is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions." (Ādi 1.47) (shows that a śikṣā guru may or may not be a mahā-bhāgavata)

"A person who is liberated ācārya and guru cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and ācārya by strictly following the disciplic succession." (Letter Janārdana 4/26/68)

"...there is no difference between śikṣā-guru and dīkṣā-guru because if he's actually guru, he'll not say anything which Kṛṣṇa has not spoken. yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa. So guru is that. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tare' ei desa: "You become a guru." And what is the function of the guru? yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa. That is there. You haven't got to manufacture any instruction. Whatever is said in the Bhagavad-gītā, you say." (Lec 1/31/77)

"Then so śikṣā and dīkṣā-guru... A śikṣā-guru who instructs against the instruction of spiritual, he is not a śikṣā guru. He is a demon. śikṣā-guru, dīkṣā-guru means... Sometimes a dīkṣā-guru is not present always. Therefore one can take learning, instruction, from an advanced devotee. That is called the śikṣā-guru. śikṣā-guru does not mean he is speaking something against the teachings of the dīkṣā-guru. He is not a śikṣā-guru. He is a rascal." (Lec 7-4-74 Honolulu)

"To answer your last point, one who teaches can be treated as Spiritual Master. It is not that after we become initiated we become perfect. No. It requires teaching. So if we take instruction from them, all senior godbrothers may be treated as guru, there is no harm. Actually, you have only one Spiritual Master, who initiates you, just as you have only one father. But every Vaiṣṇava should be treated as prabhu, master, higher than me, and in this sense, if I learn from him, he may be regarded as guru. It is not that I disobey my real Spiritual Master and call someone else as Spiritual Master. That is wrong. It is only that I can call Spiritual Master someone who is teaching me purely what my initiating Spiritual Master has taught. Do you get the sense?" (Letter to Śrī Galim 11/20/71)

"Regarding your question about the husband becoming the Spiritual Master of the wife, anyone who can give instructing in spiritual life is treated as Spiritual Master. There are two kinds of Spiritual Master, initiator and instructor. So the husband can help the wife as instructor." (Letter Himavatī 1/24/69)

"Within the heart of every living being the Lord Himself as the Supersoul (Paramātmā) becomes the spiritual master, and from without He becomes the spiritual master in the shape of scriptures, saints and the initiator spiritual master." (SB 1.7.5 Purport)

"The Paramātmā is always the caitya-guru, the spiritual master within, and He comes before one externally as the instructor and initiator spiritual master." (SB 4.28.52 Purport)

"Spiritual master is not that a particular man is spiritual master. Spiritual master is a truth. So what is that truth? The truth is saṁsāra-dāvānala-līḍha-loka-trāṇāya kārūṇya-ghanāghanatvam. The whole world is in the blaze of material pangs, threefold miseries. And a person who is authorized to deliver people from that material pangs, he is called spiritual master." (Vyasa pūjā Lec 9-5-69)

It is evident by the previous quotes that the term 'spiritual master' is applicable to both the dīkṣā and śikṣā guru. Similarly the term 'disciple' may as well refer to a relationship with either a dīkṣā or śikṣā guru as evidenced in the following quote:

"The second-class devotees are therefore meant for preaching work, and as referred to in the above verse, they must loudly preach the glories of the Lord. The second-class devotee accepts disciples from the section of third-class devotees or nondevotees." (SB 2.3.21)

Referring again to the statement in Nectar of Instruction **"One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī."** (N015), one may conclude that this previous statement in regards to second-class devotees accepting disciples refers to devotees acting as śikṣā gurus, since only a śikṣā guru may be a second-class devotee, whereas a dīkṣā guru, who is worshiped as good as God, must be a mahā-bhāgavata or first-class devotee. As stated previously, **"anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a spiritual master"**, in the same manner it is logically understood that anyone who accepts instructions and follows may also be considered a disciple. When there is spiritual master, whether śikṣā or dīkṣā, then there must be disciples or students. Śrīla Prabhupāda uses the terms 'spiritual master', 'ācārya' and 'guru' interchangeably with the term 'teacher' and uses the term 'disciple' interchangeably with the term 'student', as shown in the following quotes. So we can understand that the terms 'guru' and 'disciple' can be general terms equal to 'teacher' and 'student' and are equally applicable to the relationship of a śikṣā guru and instructed devotee.

**"Later they became teachers or spiritual masters and liberated the entire world."** (Madhya 7.107)

**"The Vedic scriptures and the ācāryas, or saintly teachers, are compared to expert boatmen."** (Iso 3)

**"Aside from the parents of our students, many businessmen are also dissatisfied because we teach our students to abandon intoxication, meat-eating, illicit sex and gambling.[...] However, we have no alternative than to teach our disciples to free themselves from materialistic life."** (S. B. 6.5.20 purport)

**"So we got this information from His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and that knowledge is still going on. You are receiving through his servant. And in future the same knowledge will go to your students. This is called Paramparā system. Evam Paramparā praptam... It is not that you have become a student and you'll remain student. No. One day you shall become also guru and make more students, more students, more. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission, not that perpetually... Yes, one should remain perpetually a student, but he has to act as guru."** (Lec 12110/76)

Since a śikṣā guru is also a teacher, it naturally follows that a śikṣā guru may also have students or disciples. Thus in the above statement Śrīla Prabhupāda may just as well be referring his disciples acting as śikṣā gurus and accepting disciples in terms of offering instructions to newer 'students' or devotees. The point here is to understand how second-class devotees, or śikṣā gurus, also accept disciples as stated in the previous verse that **"The second-class devotee accepts disciples from the section of third-class devotees or nondevotees."**(SB 2.3.21) .

A śikṣā guru accepts disciples, yet in a different capacity than the dīkṣā guru. **"The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings."** (Ādi 1.34)

The dīkṣā guru formally accepts disciples whereas a śikṣā guru accepts disciples on behalf of the dīkṣā guru by offering relevant instructions in accordance with those of the dīkṣā guru, Śrīla Prabhupāda. A śikṣā guru does not necessarily consider those to whom he imparts instructions to as directly his disciples, as they are disciples or potential disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, yet factually there is a relationship of spiritual master and disciple between the advanced devotee and the neophyte devotee who is taking instructions; and anyone accepting genuine spiritual guidance from an advanced devotee should regard that person as a spiritual master or śikṣā guru, a bonafide representative of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

**"There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service.[...] The initiating spiritual master is a personal manifestation of Śrīla Madana-mohana vigraha, whereas the instructing spiritual master is a personal representative of Śrīla Govindadeva vigraha. " (Ādi 1.47)**

With this understanding, Śrīla Prabhupāda's system of management for ISKCON, which delegates authority and responsibility to his disciples acting as his representatives, bonafide śikṣā gurus, can assist in giving the necessary training, guidance and association required by devotees. Thus there will be steady advancement in the spiritual lives of ISKCON's members. Śrīla Prabhupāda gives further understanding on how this system of cooperation works properly:

**"You speak of pure devotee, that he is śaktyāveśa-avatāra, that we should obey him only—these things are the wrong idea. If anyone thinks like that, that a pure devotee should be obeyed and no one else, that means he is a nonsense. We advise everyone to address one another as Prabhu. Prabhu means master, so how the master should be disobeyed? Others, they are also pure devotees. All of my disciples are pure devotees. Anyone sincerely serving the spiritual master is a pure devotee[...]. Anyone who is surrendered to the spiritual master is a pure devotee [...]. Amongst ourselves one should respect others as Prabhu, master, one another. As soon as we distinguish here is a pure devotee, here is a non-pure devotee, that means I am a nonsense. " (Letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa 12/14/72)**

The following quote exemplifies how spiritual masters who are śikṣā gurus can guide disciples in the practical applications of devotional service. As stated here one must develop beyond theoretical understanding and actually apply Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings in one's life. This development may be assisted by śikṣā gurus.

**"Simple theoretical book knowledge is not sufficient for a neophyte devotee. Spiritual knowledge must be developed by a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge, and that is the guaranteed way for attainment of spiritual perfection. The training of devotional service for a neophyte devotee completely depends on the expert spiritual master who knows how to lead his disciple to make gradual progress towards the path back home, back to Godhead. One should not become a pseudo spiritual master as a matter of business to meet one's family expenditures; one must be an expert spiritual master to deliver the disciple from the clutches of impending death. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura has defined the bonafide qualities of a spiritual master, and one of the verses in that description reads:**

**Śrī -vigrahārādhana-nitya-nānā-śṛṅgāra-tan-mandira-mārjanāda  
yuktasya bhaktams ca niyunjato 'pi vande guroh Śrī -caranaravindam**

**Śrī -vigrahā is the arcā, or suitable worshipable form of the Lord, and the disciple should be engaged in worshiping the Deity regularly by sṛṅgāra, by proper decoration and dressing, as also by mandira-marjana, the matter of cleansing the temple. The spiritual master teaches the neophyte devotee all these kindly and personally to help him gradually in the realization of the transcendental name, quality, form, etc., of the Lord." (SB 2.3.22)**

This preceding verse may be accepted as also referring to śikṣā guru since it mentions not becoming a "pseudo spiritual master as a matter of business", something which is never a consideration for a mahā-bhāgavata dīkṣā guru. Keeping this in mind, we see that the statement yet mentions "the expert spiritual master who knows how to lead his disciple". Here again we see a statement which can be understood as a reference to the relationship of spiritual master and disciple existing between the śikṣā guru and devotee receiving instructions. With this understanding, let us now

put into further perspective the various statements wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks of accepting disciples. In the Caitanya Caritāmṛta it is stated:

**"it is best not to accept any disciples. One has to become purified at home by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-Mantra and preaching the principles enunciated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Thus one can become a spiritual master and be freed from the contamination of material life." (Madhya 7.130)**

This statement speaks of becoming a spiritual master yet states **"It is best not to accept any disciples"**. Therefore this must be referring to the formal acceptance of disciples.

Later in Caitanya Caritāmṛta it is stated:

**"According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, a preacher has to accept many disciples to expand the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This is risky because when a spiritual master accepts a disciple, he naturally accepts the disciple's sinful activities and their reactions. Unless he is very powerful, he cannot assimilate all the sinful reactions of his disciples. Thus if he is not powerful, he has to suffer the consequences, for one is forbidden to accept many disciples." (Madhya 22.118)**

Being incapable of absorbing all of the karma of a disciple is another reason why it is enjoined in the śāstra that one should not become an initiating spiritual master unless situated on the first-class platform:

**"One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī." (N015)**

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the initiating spiritual master takes on the disciples karma at the time of first initiation.

**"The spiritual master accepts the sinful activities of his disciples from the first initiation." (Letter Jadurāṇī 9/4/72)**

In many places Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes that initiating disciples is very risky for one who is not yet on the first-class platform:

**"So to become a guru is not an easy task. You see? He has to take all the poisons and absorb. So sometimes, because he's not Kṛṣṇa, so sometimes there is some trouble. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu forbidden that "Don't make many sisya, many disciples." But for preaching work we have to accept many disciples, for expanding preaching. Never mind we suffer. But that's a fact. The spiritual master has to take the responsibility of all the sinful activities of his disciples. So to make many disciples is a risky job unless he's able to assimilate all the sins. (Conversation 2/27/72)**

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore stated that the spiritual master who plays the part of Kṛṣṇa's representative has to consume all the sinful reactions of his disciple. Sometimes a spiritual master takes the risk of being overwhelmed by the sinful reactions of the disciples and undergoes a sort of tribulation due to their acceptance. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore advised that one not accept many disciples. (S.B. 4.21.31)

**"The spiritual master accepts the sinful activities of his disciples from the first initiation. I may give initiation very easily, but what can I do? I am prepared to go to hell for service of Lord Caitanya." (Letter Jadurāṇī 9/4/72)**



Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks very humbly of himself, yet actually for an *uttama-adhikārī*, there is no question of risk, or being **"overwhelmed by the sinful reactions of the disciples"**. As stated previously **"There is no possibility that a first-class devotee will fall down"** (Madhya 22.71).

For a first class devotee there is no impediment in initiating disciples.

**"Anyone can see how the bona fide spiritual master accepts disciples from all over the world." (Purport C.C. 24.330) "the devotees of Lord Caitanya are so powerful that each one of them can deliver a universe." (Purport S.B. 4.24.58) "If they so desire, powerful spiritual masters, or pure devotees of the Lord, can instantly deliver the entire universe and take everyone to the shelter of the Supreme Lord's lotus feet." (Renunciation Through Wisdom 2.3)**

Furthermore, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that a *mahā-bhāgavata* is completely unaffected by material influence and does not feel suffering:

**"Devotees are not under the karma. In the Brahma-saṁhitā it is stated, karmāṇi nirdahati kintu ca bhakti-bhājām [Bs. 5.54]."**

**Prahlāda Mahārāja was tortured by his father in so many ways, but he was not affected. He was not affected. Superficially... Just like in the Christian Bible also, that Lord Jesus Christ was tortured, but he was not affected. This is the difference between ordinary man and the devotees or transcendentalists. Apparently it is seen that a devotee is being tortured, but he is not tortured. [...] whenever you'll find that a great devotee is placed into torturing condition, he does not feel." (Conversation 6/29/68)**

It is evident that an *uttama-adhikārī* is competent to accept disciples from all over the world without difficulty, or to even deliver an entire universe instantly. An *uttama-adhikārī* can accept disciples without restriction and thus the injunction that one is forbidden to accept many disciples is applicable not to the first-class devotee, but to the second class devotee. The conclusion is that when it is stated **"The second-class devotee accepts disciples from the section of third-class devotees or nondevotees." (SB 2.3.21)** or that **"Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore advised that one not accept many disciples."**, this is in reference to a *śikṣā guru* and the informal acceptance of disciples by the offering of spiritual instructions.

This is confirmed in the following reference from Easy Journey to Other Planets where Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the manner in which disciples are accepted by a second class devotee, or *śikṣā guru*:

**"He must not take on unlimited disciples. This means that a candidate who has successfully followed the first twelve items can also become a spiritual master himself, just as a student becomes a monitor in class with a limited number of disciples." (EJ 1)**

Śrīla Prabhupāda uses the teacher and student analogy to convey the actual position of a *śikṣā guru*. A monitor is defined as **"a student appointed to assist a teacher."** The monitor acts as a teacher by taking charge of the class, yet he is not the main teacher but a representative of the teacher. Similarly, by delegating various responsibilities to officiating *ācāryas*, temple presidents, temple commanders, *sankīrtan* leaders, *bhakta* leaders, *sannyāsīs*, *GBC's*, etc., Śrīla Prabhupāda has established a system whereby qualified disciples act as *śikṣā gurus* or representatives of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the initiating spiritual master, and accept disciples on his behalf. The formal acceptance of disciples on behalf of Śrīla Prabhupāda has been specifically delegated to temple presidents and officiating *ācāryas*, or *ṛtviks*.

Giving guidance to other devotees who are also initiates of Śrīla Prabhupāda or prospective candidates for receiving initiation from him, these *śikṣā gurus* can continue expanding the worldwide fa-

mily of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples throughout the world for generations to come. ISKCON will remain united as all devotees formally accept and worship Śrīla Prabhupāda on the same level as Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. All ISKCON devotees will offer exclusively to Śrīla Prabhupāda, Guru pūjā, Vyasa pūjā, praṇām, prayers and all food offerings. Devotees of ISKCON will also accept as their spiritual master, śikṣā gurus, or other advanced devotees who are bonafide representatives of Śrīla Prabhupāda, thus offering proper respects. Through this system, devotees all around the world can be initiated in devotional service by Śrīla Prabhupāda, a jagat-guru, spiritual master for the entire world.

**"When one is completely fit to chant the holy name in this way, he is eligible to make disciples all over the world, and he actually becomes jagat-guru. Then the entire world, under his influence, begins to chant the holy names of the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-Mantra." (Ādi 7.83)**

**"The bona fide spiritual master who accepts disciples from all over the world is also worshiped all over the world because of his qualities. lokānāmasau pūjyo yathā hariḥ.: the people of the world worship him just as they worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead" (Madhya 24.330)**

### **Who is Your Spiritual Master ?**

Today in ISKCON, many devotees are asking "Who is your spiritual master?" Practically speaking, since the disappearance of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda in November 1977, ISKCON has become divided into so many different groups following various gurus. Many devotees have migrated to camps outside of ISKCON. For those who are familiar with the history of ISKCON, it is clear that fragmentation of the movement began with the implementation of an unauthorized initiation system introduced immediately following Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was always concerned with the future safety and well-being of ISKCON, the institution he founded. He therefore gave his disciples specific instructions intended to protect the society from the emergence of factions and other deviations. Included in those instructions was a recommendation to have initiations performed by "officiating ācāryas", disciples who perform formal initiations on behalf of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

This system was implemented in ISKCON by Śrīla Prabhupāda over a number of years, during which time many devotees were initiated as disciples of His Divine Grace without ever having met him physically. The new disciples received instructions from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, from temple authorities and from other senior disciples.

Overwhelming evidence concludes that Śrīla Prabhupāda has factually authorized for the continuation of this system after his disappearance, thus keeping ISKCON united under one initiating spiritual master, a jagat-guru, spiritual master for the entire world.

At the end of May, 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda was lying ill in Vṛndāvana and had indicated that his disappearance may likely be soon. At that time a committee of six GBC men met with Śrīla Prabhupāda to make final inquiries about the future management of ISKCON. In the course of this discussion, which took place on May 28th, 1977, Satsvarūpa Mahārāja asked Śrīla Prabhupāda to explain how initiations were to be handled in the future.

**Satsvarūpa Mahārāja: "Then our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you are no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiations would be conducted." Prabhupāda: "Yes. I shall recommend some of you, after this is settled up. I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating ācārya." Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: "Is that called ṛtvik-ācārya?" Prabhupāda: "ṛtvik, yes."**

Only a few weeks later on July 9th, Śrīla Prabhupāda signed and authorized an official document addressed to all temple presidents and GBC's describing this system of initiations to be conducted henceforward by these officiating ācāryas, or ṛtviks. Immediately after the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda however, the GBC instituted a "zonal ācārya" system, ignoring Śrīla Prabhupāda's recommendation that they act as officiating ācāryas.

The eleven disciples Śrīla Prabhupāda selected for the function of ṛtvik assumed the position of dīkṣā gurus, considering themselves successors to Śrīla Prabhupāda and accepting worship on the same level as God. The eleven zones which Śrīla Prabhupāda had designated for accepting disciples throughout the world became territories of the new 'gurus', new initiates were claimed as their own disciples, and the assets of ISKCON as their own property.

Over the next ten years many of these 'gurus' became exposed in various acts of gross misconduct including illicit sex with both men, women and children, intoxication, money fraud and other various scandals. One of the 'gurus' was imprisoned, another decapitated, and others abandoned their positions leaving the movement altogether. This is clearly stated how if one falsely and unauthorizedly accepts the position of dīkṣā guru whereby one is worshiped on par with the Supreme Lord, then one is destined to fall down.

**"...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." (NOD 14)**

**"As soon as a foolish disciple tries to overtake his spiritual master and becomes ambitious to occupy his post, he immediately falls down." (Purport SB 5.12.14)**

**"One should not try to be an artificially advanced devotee, thinking, "I am a first-class devotee." Such thinking should be avoided. It is best not to accept any disciples." (Madhya 7.130)**

**"Indeed, the advanced uttama-adhikārī. Vaiṣṇava devotee should be accepted as a spiritual master. [...] However, one should not imitate the behavior of an advanced devotee or mahā-bhāgavata without being self-realized, for by such imitation one will eventually become degraded." (NOI 5 purport)**

By the mid 80's it was obvious that the "zonal ācārya" system was not authorized. The reason a zonal system was carried out in the first place and why it continued for ten years after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure is because Śrīla Prabhupāda set up the zonal system and never instructed for it to end. There was havoc only because the system was improperly executed.

The eleven disciples authorized to act only as representatives assumed themselves as dīkṣā guru successors and accepted grand worship. After so many falldowns it should have been then clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda had never authorized anyone to assume the position of dīkṣā guru. Śrīla Prabhupāda's instruction for officiating ācāryas continued however to be disregarded. The position of dīkṣā guru, rather than being monopolized by 11 only, was then opened up to a multitude of 'dīkṣā gurus' by the process of election by the GBC.

This next system put in place which ISKCON leaders called the "guru reform", the current practice of voting in dīkṣā gurus, is the same practice which Śrīla Prabhupāda had formerly condemned as having been unauthorizedly introduced by the Gauḍīya-Maṭha just after the disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Today in ISKCON (as of 2022), over 100 gurus have been elected, and falldowns continue to occur on a regular basis.

Meanwhile devotees jump from one guru to the next trying to figure out who is bonafide; and the pure philosophy of ISKCON, to accommodate for this unauthorized system, has been adulterated

with the idea that it is normal for dīkṣā gurus in the paramparā to fall down. The result is that ISKCON no longer remains the unified world family which it is intended to be, for devotees have lost sight of Prabhupāda as the initiating spiritual master for ISKCON and thereby have lost sight of ISKCON's spiritually uniting factor. For those of us who are actually concerned about the welfare of ISKCON, we have to face the facts. Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

**"Unfortunately, when the ācārya disappears, rogues and nondevotees take advantage and immediately begin to introduce unauthorized principles in the name of so-called swamis, yogis, philanthropists, welfare workers and so on.[...]The ācārya, the authorized representative of the Supreme Lord, establishes these principles, but when he disappears, things once again become disordered. The perfect disciples of the ācārya try to relieve the situation by sincerely following the instructions of the spiritual master."** (S.B.4.28.48 purport)

Śrīla Prabhupāda often warned of the possibility of ISKCON deviating in this way.

**"Therefore we have created these GBC. So they should be very responsible men. Otherwise, they will be punished. They will be punished to become a śūdra. Although Yamarāja is a GBC, but he made a little mistake. He was punished to become a śūdra. So those who are GBC's, they should be very, very careful to administer the business of ISKCON. Otherwise they will be punished."** (S.B. class June 14, 1974)

**"So Śrīdhara Mahārāja and his two associate gentlemen unauthorizedly selected one ācārya and later it proved a failure. The result is now everyone is claiming to be ācārya even though they may be kaniṣṭha-adhikārī with no ability to preach. In some of the camps the ācārya is being changed three times a year. Therefore we may not commit the same mistake in our ISKCON camp."** (Letter to Rūpānuga April 28, 1974)

There is no evidence that Śrīla Prabhupāda ever authorized any successor gurus, or ever indicated that his disciples could appoint or elect themselves to be initiating gurus, yet somehow or other successor gurus appeared, and now gurus are elected. To justify this the argument is often put forward that Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed everyone to become a spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda often refers to Lord Caitanya's instruction "Āmāra ājñāya guru - everyone become guru".

On just a few occasions, perhaps to give encouragement, Śrīla Prabhupāda may have made a statement which could be taken as a specific reference to his disciples initiating their own disciples. Mostly however, Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized that everyone should simply preach Kṛṣṇa Consciousness to one's best capacity and in this way become a spiritual master as a śikṣā guru, by following and teaching the instructions of the dīkṣā guru.

In later years Śrīla Prabhupāda had stated that even his leading disciples were still yet to come to this platform of being qualified as ideal śikṣā, or instructing gurus, what to speak of being qualified as an initiating spiritual master who is worshiped as good as God.

**"The GBC should all be the instructor gurus. I am the initiator guru, and you should be the instructor guru by teaching what I am teaching and doing what I am doing. This is not a title, but you must actually come to this platform. This I want."** (Letter to Madhudviṣa Aug. 75)

Only two months later Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

**"Now has the GBC become more than Guru Mahārāja? As if simply GBC is meant for looking after pounds, shilling, pence. The GBC does not look after spiritual life. That is a defect. All of our students will have to become guru, but they are not qualified. This is the difficulty."** (Letter to Ālālanātha Nov. 10,1975)

Śrīla Prabhupāda is likely again speaking here of his disciples becoming ideal śikṣā gurus. When Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks of an initiating spiritual master, he speaks only of a mahā-bhāgavata first class devotee who is specifically ordered by his spiritual master to initiate. Such a spiritual master can never fall down. Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the high position and qualification of the dīkṣā guru as well as how one becomes 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." (Madhya 24.330)**

**"Unless one is a resident of Kṛṣṇa Loka, one cannot be a Spiritual Master." (Letter to Mukunda 6110/69)**

**"One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī.[...] Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikārī as a spiritual master." (N015)**

**"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. The first-class devotee is the spiritual master for all kinds of people." (Madhya 24.330)**

**"There is no possibility that a first-class devotee will fall down" (Madhya 22.71)**

**"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." (Lec 10/28/75)**

Often the statement of Lord Caitanya "everyone become guru" is cited as the order for anyone to become a dīkṣā guru, yet in a purport immediately following this verse "āmāra ājñāya guru"- "everyone become guru" (Madhya 7.128), it is clearly stated **"It is best not to accept any disciples. One has to become purified at home by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-Mantra and preaching the principles enunciated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Thus one can become a spiritual master and be freed from the contamination of material life."** (Madhya 7.130)

Thus the order of Lord Caitanya to become guru refers primarily to śikṣā guru. Śrīla Prabhupāda has explained that an initiating spiritual master absorbs the sinful reactions of the disciples and therefore must be very powerful. From practical experience we have seen that those who are not on the first class platform and yet accept disciples are prone to fall down. An uttama-adhikārī, or first class pure devotee however is capable of delivering the entire universe, and therefore can accept disciples without limit.

**"the devotees of Lord Caitanya are so powerful that each one of them can deliver a universe." (Purport S.B. 4.24.58 )**

It is by the mercy of Lord Caitanya, the most magnanimous avatāra, that his representative Śrīla Prabhupāda, savior of the entire world, may continue to give shelter to all through dīkṣā initiation now and for generations to come.

The notion that Śrīla Prabhupāda is no longer present to accept disciples and give personal guidance is a great misconception. In previous times, although Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present, his availability was not nearly as accessible as it is today. Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence exists now, even more than ever, through countless publications and literally thousands of hours of audio recordings of his transcendental words and teachings.

And now with today's technology anyone in any part of the world can easily hear from Śrīla Prabhupāda 24 hours a day. In this way, Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples who were initiated during the era

of his physical presence, continue receiving his personal direction, as will many future generations of his disciples.

The various arguments, rationalizations and adjustments to the pure paramparā message which have been manufactured in order to maintain positions of sense gratification within ISKCON, can be dissipated by intelligent inquiry and a sincere desire to understand the truth. Śrīla Prabhupāda instructs that one should approach spiritual life, not blindly, but with intelligence and proper understanding so as not to be misled by unscrupulous persons.

**"The idea is that devotee must be expert in understanding things very clearly.[...]So devotee is expected to pass all kinds of examinations."** (S.B. class October, 1976)

The evidence of Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence and availability as dīkṣā guru is there in full within his books, tapes, letters and transcripts. In particular is the letter issued by Śrīla Prabhupāda on July 9, 1977 - the official final document on initiation, sent out to all temple presidents and GBC's, drafted by Śrīla Prabhupāda's secretary Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, and bearing Śrīla Prabhupāda's signature of authorization.

The most essential instructions necessary for understanding Śrīla Prabhupāda's last instructions regarding initiation is in this particular document. Every devotee should study this letter scrutinizingly to see how Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered ṛtvik- representatives to continue conducting initiations on his behalf thus continuing Śrīla Prabhupāda as today's current initiating spiritual master for ISKCON.

Just before issuing this letter Śrīla Prabhupāda met with the GBC less than six weeks earlier on May 28th, 1977. Given the condition of his health at that time, it was evident that Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure was coming soon. As a pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda would have likely been well aware that his disappearance would soon take place, which it did only five months later.

The GBC representatives were meeting with Śrīla Prabhupāda to discuss how the society would be managed in the future. When the GBC then asked Śrīla Prabhupāda how initiations would be conducted in the future, specifically after his departure, he replied that he would recommend some disciples to act as officiating ācāryas, or ṛtviks.

Shortly thereafter, on July 9th, Śrīla Prabhupāda signed and issued the official document to the entire society listing eleven disciples appointed to act as ṛtviks — **"representatives of the ācārya for the purpose of performing initiations"**.

The letter refers to these eleven disciples seven times as "representatives" and three times confirms that newly initiated devotees are disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda. It states that the system is to be implemented "henceforward" (as defined in Webster's dictionary 'from this point on'), and does not indicate that it should be stopped at anytime. There is no mention anywhere of anyone initiating their own disciples. This document is the first, last and only document on future initiations ever to be issued by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The greatest oversight came when the leaders of ISKCON did not see or otherwise ignored these instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Some temple presidents were misinformed by other ISKCON leaders that the system described in the letter was intended to operate only until Prabhupāda's departure, however this was not stated in the July 9th letter or anywhere else. This idea would imply that Śrīla Prabhupāda, without issuing any further written instructions on the matter, left the situation open to speculation.

The GBC met with Prabhupāda on May 28th specifically to question him about how initiations would carry on after his physical departure. This July 9th letter Prabhupāda issued for all ISKCON

leaders refers to this very meeting. It only makes sense that the letter addresses this most important inquiry of the GBC - how initiations would continue after his departure. The GBC however, insists that the letter does not have anything to do with initiations after his departure. Rather, they say, this letter only deals with how to conduct initiations before his departure.

Does this make sense that Prabhupāda would issue this letter to all ISKCON leaders & not mention anything about the important issue of initiations after his departure, which the GBC just questioned him on specifically ? This was the final order, the last instruction issued by Prabhupāda on the matter of initiations. No further instructions were given by Prabhupāda afterwards authorizing disciples to initiate their own disciples & become worshiped as good as God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was very careful and expert in managing his society and certainly would never leave the most critical matter - future initiations - wide open to speculation and possible cheating. Śrīla Prabhupāda's approval of the wording 'henceforward' in the July 9th letter is adequate in conveying that he intended for this system to continue onward without stop or until otherwise instructed. Had Śrīla Prabhupāda meant differently he would have stated in the letter that the system was intended "for the time being", or "up until my departure", but Śrīla Prabhupāda never made any such statement either in the July 9th letter, or at any time thereafter.

And the GBC obviously knew that Prabhupāda setup a zonal system & never instructed for it to end upon his departure. Otherwise, why did ISKCON have a zonal system for 10 years after ? These are questions that most ISKCON followers do not think to inquire about, but rather just follow suit with the popular opinion without studying the instructions for themselves. Most persons are more concerned with following along and being part of a social club than with understanding the instructions of Prabhupāda.

A valid question may be raised as to why the letter rests on the word 'henceforward' rather than stating specifically that the system should continue onward after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure. This it seems would have clarified any confusion on the matter.

It may however be suggested that the Lord's plan always has good reason, and in this case every devotee is required to apply their own individual intelligence to understand the instructions of the spiritual master. It is also possible that had the letter made such a clear specification, it's wide distribution may possibly have been obstructed by ambitious persons eager to occupy the post of initiating spiritual master themselves. The situation is apparently a test of whether disciples will use intelligence or blindly follow ambition.

### **Missing Tapes**

It is known that Prabhupāda's every word was constantly being recorded during the months leading up to his departure. Yet almost all of the tapes are missing. Anyone can see this by looking at the archives list of tapes for that time, there's almost nothing available. It is alleged that the missing tapes were burned in a fire where Tamāla Kṛṣṇa was involved. In any case, the tapes are missing. During that time Prabhupāda spoke more on the system of initiation for after his departure and there's disciples who testify hearing him specify that newly initiated disciples were to be his disciples (not his grand disciples).

There is however a recording of the May 28th conversation when the six GBC members met with Śrīla Prabhupāda in Vṛndāvana to ask him about future initiations after his departure. It only became available years later when many of the 'zonal ācāryas' were falling down. The GBC was talking about reforming the zonal guru system. But rather than clarifying the position of the eleven chosen representatives to conduct initiations on behalf of Prabhupāda, they instead decided to rubberstamp more 'initiating gurus' to be worshiped as good as God. The GBC claims this May

28th recording is proof that that Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed his disciples to initiate their own disciples after his disappearance.

This recording has been questioned as to its authenticity and has been subjected to forensic analysis by professional laboratories. Subsequent test results claim that the tape has been tampered with. Yet even this not being the case, and taking the conversation as it is, an analysis of the conversation leaves one still wondering as to when did Śrīla Prabhupāda ever actually order anyone to become a dīkṣā guru.

In the conversation Prabhupāda never states the GBC could nominate initiating gurus. Śrīla Prabhupāda only states that he will recommend some disciples to act as officiating ācāryas - ṛtviks, after his departure. There is some further questioning, and then mention of 'grand disciples', 'disciple of my disciple', and of his disciples becoming 'regular gurus'. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda concludes by stating "When I order".

The order, however, which Śrīla Prabhupāda issued to the entire society only six weeks later with the July 9th letter, makes no mention whatsoever of anyone accepting disciples of their own; only that eleven disciples were being authorized to act as ṛtviks, by performing initiation ceremonies whereby new initiates are accepted as direct disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda and that the system should be followed 'henceforward'.

The July 9th letter does not refer to any additional source or document for disclosing further instructions on this matter. It's a complete instruction in itself. The mention of anyone accepting disciples of their own in the May 28th recording where Prabhupāda concludes by saying "when I order", bears no change on the instructions outlined in the July 9th letter.

The claim that Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed the eleven disciples to become initiating gurus is also not supported by the fact that many were exposed in gross fall-downs. The GBC's guru system rests on the assertion that the new initiates were to become Prabhupādas's grand disciples. The fact that most of these 11 were exposed in gross misconduct shows that they were never actually authorized to occupy the post of initiating guru and accept to be worshiped as good as God.

So the current ISKCON guru system rests on the assertion that 1. Prabhupāda issued a letter to all the leaders with no instruction about initiations after his departure, even though the GBC meeting referred to in the letter was specifically about this matter 2. that Prabhupāda authorized unqualified persons to become worshiped as pure devotees.

These assertions make absolutely no sense but this is the foundation upon which the ISKCON guru system is based. Actual evidence that Prabhupāda authorized this current system of nominating dīkṣā gurus doesn't exist. The ISKCON guru system goes against Prabhupāda's teachings that an initiating guru is never nominated & that only an uttama-adhikārī mahā-bhāgavata can occupy the position.

What does exist is an order issued to the entire society for the ṛtvik system of initiation to continue on indefinitely. The evidence strongly supports that Śrīla Prabhupāda remains as the initiating spiritual master for ISKCON. His transcendental instructions & personal guidance will be available for generations to come.

By this transcendental system devotees may continue to receive guidance from Śrīla Prabhupāda as well as formal initiation from him. Authorized disciples (namely ṛtviks or officiating ācāryas) may formally initiate new disciples on behalf of Śrīla Prabhupāda after receiving a recommendation from a temple president who has observed the qualification of an aspiring candidate for initiation.



**"In our Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement the requirement is that one must be prepared to give up the four pillars of sinful life- illicit sex, meat eating, intoxication and gambling. In Western countries especially, we first observe whether a potential disciple is prepared to follow the regulative principles. Then he is given the name of a Vaiṣṇava servant and initiated to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-Mantra, at least sixteen rounds daily. In this way the disciple renders devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master or his representative for at least six months to a year." (Madhya 24.330 Purport).**

At the time of the initiation ceremony the aspiring disciple takes vows and receives a spiritual name as an initiated disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. In this manner the formal aspect of initiation (dīkṣā) takes place, whilst the primary aspect of initiation - reception of transcendental knowledge - continues through Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions present in his books and recordings.

**"dīkṣā actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination." (Madhya 4.110)**

**Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness. (Madhya 9.61)**

**"...disciplic succession does not always mean that one has to be initiated officially. Disciplic succession means to accept the disciplic conclusion. (Letter Dinesh 10/31/69)**

In this way ISKCON will remain united and strong under one initiating spiritual master, a mahā-bhāgavata first class devotee of the Lord who can deliver the entire world. Disciples throughout the world will be one spiritual family as godbrothers and godsisters of one spiritual father - Śrīla Prabhupāda - whose guru pūjā will be offered daily by all ISKCON devotees for as long as ISKCON exists.

This essential practice of worshiping the initiating spiritual master as sākṣād, as good as God, is confirmed by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, who states that it is specifically the initiating spiritual master, dīkṣā-guru, who is to be worshiped as much as Himself...

**"Our next spiritual master is he who initiates us into transcendental knowledge, and he is to be worshiped as much as I am. The spiritual master may be more than one. The spiritual master who instructs the disciples about spiritual matters is called śikṣā-guru, and the spiritual master who initiates the disciple is called dīkṣā-guru. Both of them are My representatives. There may be many spiritual masters who instruct, but the initiator spiritual master is one." (KB 80)**

It makes further sense that since a disciple must have only one dīkṣā guru, a spiritual institution should also have only one dīkṣā guru. Everyone hence would worship together and be united under one spiritual master. The system of multiple initiating spiritual masters as it is seen has divided up the mission and nowadays there are many camps of followers of different gurus.

The standard practice of worship has been that disciples of an initiating spiritual master together perform daily guru pūjā for their initiating guru. Śrīla Prabhupāda has instructed his disciples to perform his guru pūjā. The multiple guru system has brought about the problem of whom ISKCON devotees are to perform guru pūjā for. For some years within ISKCON temples devotees were doing different guru pūjās for different gurus which resulted in schisms and competition. This practice has been gradually done away with as the level of worship for the ISKCON gurus has by default become progressively scaled down.

Today devotees are generally instructed to perform guru pūjā for Śrīla Prabhupāda. Yet still the host of ISKCON 'initiating gurus' continue claiming to be the dīkṣā gurus. Looking at Śrīla Prabhupāda's example he never became the initiating spiritual master of the Gauḍīya-Maṭha, his spiritual master's institution. He did not operate within Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's temples, initiating his own disciples and telling them to perform guru pūjā for Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta. He never used anything

of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's institution to promote himself. Śrīla Prabhupāda went out and established his own branch, his own institution with it's own name - ISKCON, he wrote his own books and opened his own temples.

Those claiming to be bonafide dīkṣā gurus should follow in line with Śrīla Prabhupāda's footsteps and do the same. Best however would be to remain within ISKCON in the honest position acknowledging Śrīla Prabhupāda as the sole initiator for the institution and acting as his śikṣā guru representative.

### **Continuing the Paramparā**

Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, acting as instructing spiritual masters, will carry on the paramparā by repeating what Śrīla Prabhupāda has taught and guiding others to his shelter. Often it is misunderstood that the disciplic succession is a chain of dīkṣā-gurus only, and that a ṛtvik system of initiation would mean the end of the disciplic succession. The Paramparā however consists of both dīkṣā and śikṣā gurus. Actually, for the most part dīkṣā connections are few and far between.

There is also the common assumption that a physical connection exists between each link in the Paramparā. Yet there are indeed instances where there was not any physical connection with the previous ācārya, such as with Viśvanātha and his spiritual master Narottama who were one hundred years apart.

It should also be noted that the disciplic succession as presented by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Bhagavad-gītā As it Is, is a "transcendental unbroken chain of disciplic succession", yet there are only thirty-one persons listed from Lord Brahmā to Śrīla Prabhupāda, a period of time extending over many millions of years. Śrīla Prabhupāda states,

**"Regarding Paramparā system: there is nothing to wonder for big gaps.[...] we find in the Bhagavad-gītā that the Gītā was taught to the sun-god, some millions of years ago, but Kṛṣṇa has mentioned only three names in this Paramparā system--namely, Vivasvān, Manu, and Ikṣvāku; and so these gaps do not hamper from understanding the Paramparā system. We have to pick up the prominent ācāryas, and follow from him. (Letter Dayānanda 4/12/68)**

**"Sometimes a dīkṣā-guru is not present always. Therefore one can take learning, instruction, from an advanced devotee. That is called the śikṣā-guru." (Lec 7/4/77 Honolulu)**

**Physical presence is not essential; presence by message (or hearing) is the real touch. (Letter to students 8/2/67)**

It is conclusive that the disciplic succession carries on often through śikṣā-gurus and that a physical connection between the spiritual master and disciple does not always exist.

In fact many devotees who were initiated as Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples never met him physically even once. Prabhupāda taught that they could all advance by reading his books, hearing his recordings, following his instructions, associate with devotees & receiving guidance from god-brothers acting as śikṣā gurus. And that this could continue even when he is no longer physically present.

**"So there is nothing new to be said. Whatever I have to speak, I have spoken in my books. Now you try to understand it and continue in your endeavor. Whether I am present or not present it doesn't matter." (Conv. 5/17/77 Vrn.)**

Unfortunately because many devotees have been misled by this "living guru" philosophy they think Prabhupāda is gone & they have to find a so called "living guru" to be initiated by and get instructions from. So many of these living gurus have come & gone, either falling down or some-

times even passing away only shortly after giving “initiation”, leaving the newly initiated devotees to continue their misguided search for another so called living guru to take instructions from. The living guru philosophy will perpetually leave spiritual aspirants on a bewildered search for a guru when all along Prabhupāda is present through his vani & spiritual instructions in the form of books, recordings, murtis, etc.

Other similar misconceptions have been introduced to make it seem as though the ṛtvik system of initiation implies that there are not to be any more pure devotees, or that Śrīla Prabhupāda cannot produce pure devotees. As we know, Śrīla Prabhupāda cultivated a pure devotee like Jayānanda Ṭhākura, yet generally a pure devotee of the highest caliber is very rare and something not to be taken cheaply. As stated in Cc.

**“According to the revealed scriptures, if a spiritual master can convert even one soul into a perfectly pure devotee, his mission in life is fulfilled. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura always used to say, “Even at the expense of all the properties, temples and maṭhas that I have, if I could convert even one person into a pure devotee, my mission would be fulfilled.” It is very difficult, however, to understand the science of Kṛṣṇa, what to speak of developing love of Godhead. Therefore if by the grace of Lord Caitanya and the spiritual master a disciple attains the standard of pure devotional service, the spiritual master is very happy.” (Ādi 7.91)**

Even amongst the disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, Śrīla Prabhupāda had stated that none were qualified to initiate, and instructed his disciples to avoid their association:

**“Actually amongst my Godbrothers no one is qualified to become ācārya. So it is better not to mix with my Godbrothers very intimately because instead of inspiring our students and disciples they may sometimes pollute them.[...] We shall be very careful about them and not mix with them. This is my instruction to you all.” (Letter Rūpānuga 4/28/74)**

Of course Śrīla Prabhupāda wants all of us to become pure devotees, and any first class pure devotee, being fully in harmony with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s will, would be perfectly happy to work within ISKCON under Śrīla Prabhupāda’s ṛtvik system and in this way carry on the Paramparā as a śikṣā-guru.

Why have these instructions been subject to interpretation for so many years? Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

**“The difficulty is sometimes things are interpreted in a manner dovetailing one's own sense gratification. I have got this personal experience in my Guru Mahārāja's institution. Different Godbrothers took the words of Guru Mahārāja in different interpretations for sense gratification and the whole mission disrupted. This is still going on for the last 40 years without any proper settlement. I am always afraid of this crack, but I am sure if our aim is to serve Kṛṣṇa sincerely and the spiritual master simultaneously, that will be our success.” (Letter to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Oct. 18, 1969).**

The instructions given in the July 9th letter are complete and can be clearly understood with honest intentions, but otherwise become interpreted. Somehow or other by the influence of Kali, the ambition for profit, adoration and distinction has covered the eyes of many ISKCON leaders from seeing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s clear instructions on initiations.

In his books, lectures, and conversations, Śrīla Prabhupāda many times warned of not making the same mistakes which ruined the Gauḍīya-Maṭha institution after the disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Despite repeated warnings from Śrīla Prabhupāda, ISKCON leaders, following in the footsteps of the Gauḍīya-Maṭha, have disregarded these instructions. In the following verse

of Caitanya-caritāmṛta Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the situation current in ISKCON as it has occurred previously in the official institution of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta.

**“TRANSLATION: At first all the followers of Advaita ācārya shared a single opinion. But later they followed two different opinions, as ordained by providence. PURPORT: The words daivera kāraṇa indicate that by dint of providence, or by God’s will, the followers of Advaita ācārya divided into two parties. Such disagreement among the disciples of one ācārya is also found among the members of the Gauḍīya -Maṭha. In the beginning, during the presence of Oṃ Viṣṇupāda Paramahaṁsa Parivrājakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, all the disciples worked in agreement; but just after his disappearance, they disagreed. One party strictly followed the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, but another group created their own concoction about executing his desires. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, at the time of his departure, requested all his disciples to form a governing body and conduct missionary activities cooperatively. He did not instruct a particular man to become the next ācārya. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of ācārya, and they split into two factions over who the next ācārya would be. Consequently, both factions were asāra, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master. Despite the spiritual master’s order to form a governing body and execute the missionary activities of the Gauḍīya-Maṭha, the two unauthorized factions began litigation that is still going on after forty years with no decision.[..] The members of the self-appointed ācārya’s party who occupied the property of the Gauḍīya-Maṭha are satisfied, but they could make no progress in preaching. Therefore by the result of their actions one should know that they are asāra, or useless...” (Ādi 12.8 Purport)**

Śrīla Prabhupāda often forewarned his disciples of what could possibly happen after his departure.

**"What will happen when I am not here, shall everything be spoiled by GBC?" (Letter Haṁsadūta 4/11/72)**

**"Now by the grace of Kṛṣṇa we have got sufficient properties all over the world, so there cannot be any diplomacy or conspiracy by any sane man. All these properties and opulences whatever we have got, this will not go with me when I go away from this world. It will remain here. I am training some of my experienced disciples how to manage after my departure. So if instead of taking the training, if in my lifetime you people say I am the Lord of all I survey, that is dangerous conspiracy.[...] I wanted you all my experienced disciples should manage the whole institution very cleverly without any personal ambition like ordinary materialistic men. The Gauḍīya-Maṭha institution has become smashed, at least stopped its program of preaching work on account of personal ambitions." (letter to Karandhara 10/8/74)**

**“They might have made some changes. Or they did not hand it down. Suppose I handed it down to you, but if you do not do that, then it is lost. Now the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is going on in my presence. Now after my departure, if you do not do this, then it is lost." (Conversation 5/9/75 Perth Australia)**

Only a few weeks before Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance he stated:

**"That I am thinking, that such a big society, the aims and object may be dismantled. I am thinking from that vision." (Vrn. 10/26/77)**

**"In this condition, even I cannot move my body on the bed. Only chance you should give me - let me die little peacefully, without any anxiety. I have given in writing everything, whatever you wanted - my will, my executive power, everything. Disaster will happen if you cannot manage it." (Vrn.10/2/77)**

Śrīla Prabhupāda, being a very expert and meticulous manager, actually sealed within his last will and testimony this final instruction for initiations as stated in the following clause: **“The system of management will continue as it is now and there is no need of any change. Each new executive director for the ISKCON properties must be my initiated disciple”**. Clearly there is no way this would be possible, for his initiated disciple to be the ‘new’ executive director of the properties, unless they were his disciple - not the disciple of his disciple.

Fifty or one hundred years from now all those who were initiated during the time of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s physical presence will have passed on. Thus, there is no other way for this instruction to be followed other than by the ṛtvik system of formal initiation. Also it is known that Śrīla Prabhupāda had rejected the first draft of his will before this particular amendment was made to specifically include the words ‘my disciple’.

In late 1976, on at least three occasions, reporters specifically questioned Śrīla Prabhupāda on whether he would have any successor after his departure. Each time Śrīla Prabhupāda indicated there would not be any successor, but that he was training ‘managers’, or GBC to carry on the movement.

**Reporter: “Is there anyone who is designated to succeed you as the primary teacher of the movement?” Prabhupāda: “I am training some, I mean to say, advanced students so that they may very easily take up the charge. I have made them GBC. They are under my direct training, and I think they will be able to conduct this movement.” Reporter: “Do you expect to name one person as your successor or have you already?” Prabhupāda: That I am not contemplating now. But there is no need of one person.” (Int. 6/4/76)**

**Interviewer: “What happens when that inevitable time comes when a successor is needed?” Rāmeśvara: “He is asking about the future, who will guide the movement in the future.” Prabhupāda: “They will guide. I am training them.” Interviewer: “Will there be one spiritual leader, though?” Prabhupāda: “No, I am training GBC, eighteen all over the world.” (Conv. 6/10/76 L.A.)**

**Interviewer: “I was wondering if he had a successor to do... Do you have a successor to take your place when you die?” Prabhupāda: “Not yet settled up. Not yet settled up.” Interviewer: “So what process would the Hare Kṛṣṇas...?” Prabhupāda: “We have got secretaries. They are managing.” (Conv. 7/14/76 N.Y.)**

**Reporter: “Who will succeed you when you die ?” Prabhupāda: “I will never die! I will live forever from my books and you will utilize.”**

Finally, Śrīla Prabhupāda stated only days before his physical departure

**“Only Lord Caitanya can take my place. He will take care of the movement.” (Conv. 11/2/77)**

Having faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda, we should understand that he has been empowered by Lord Caitanya to establish a system for accepting disciples throughout the world for generations to come. Śrīla Prabhupāda is the first ācārya in the history of the Paramparā to establish a worldwide institution and manifest an ongoing presence and availability through the distribution of millions of books and tapes. Śrīla Prabhupāda lives, and we only need to realize it and take shelter of him by reading his books, hearing from him, and following his instructions;

**“if we stick to our principles and do not make any compromise and push on--in this way, I have given you instruction, it will never stop; it will go on. It will never stop. At least for ten thousand years it will go on.” (Conv. New Vṛndāvana June 21, 1976)**

**"So there is nothing new to be said. Whatever I have to speak, I have spoken in my books. Now you try to understand it and continue in your endeavor. Whether I am present or not present it doesn't matter." (Conv. 5/17/77 Vrn.)**

**"After 80 years, no one can be expected to live long. My life is almost ended. So you have to carry on, and these books will do everything." (Conv. 2/18/76)**

**In my books the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa 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. (Letter Bahurūpa 11/22/74)**

**"Everyone of you must regularly read our books at least twice, in the morning and evening, and automatically all questions will be answered." (Letter Ranadhir 1/24/70)**

**"Never think that I am absent from you. Physical presence is not essential; presence by message (or hearing) is real touch." (Letter to students 8/2/67)**

**"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." (Lec 1/13/69 L.A.)**

**"I shall remain your personal guidance, physically present or not physically, as I am getting personal guidance from my Guru Mahārāja." (Conv. 7/14/77)**

Let us honor Śrīla Prabhupāda as jagat-guru, spiritual master of the entire world.

**"Anyone can see how the bona fide spiritual master accepts disciples from all over the world. The guru is a qualified brāhmaṇa; therefore he knows Brahman and Parabrahman. He thus devotes his life for the service of Parabrahman. The bona fide spiritual master who accepts disciples from all over the world is also worshiped all over the world because of his qualities. lokānāmasau pūjyo yathā hariḥh: the people of the world worship him just as they worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (Madhya 24.330)**

### **Quotes Presented In Opposition**

In order to give a complete perspective on the subject matter contained in this book, presented here are the main quotes which are often used in attempt to substantiate the belief that Śrīla Prabhupāda authorized his disciples to initiate disciples of their own; or that an initiating spiritual master need not necessarily be a mahā-bhāgavata. This conclusion is accompanied by the idea that Śrīla Prabhupāda is no longer the initiating spiritual master of ISKCON.

Although there are valid points made with these quotes, at the same time each statement must be corroborated with other statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda. To arrive at a final conclusion Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions must be taken altogether. When dealing with this topic in particular, it is essential to examine Śrīla Prabhupāda's latest and final instructions on this matter and from that point put everything into proper perspective. Specifically there is the final directive and will of Śrīla Prabhupāda, accompanied by the July 9th letter to all temple presidents and GBC's.

### **[Cc. Madhya 8.128]**

**TRANSLATION: "Whether one is a brāhmaṇa, a sannyāsī or a śūdra—regardless of what he is—he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa."**

**PURPORT:** This verse is very important to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. In his Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya, Śrīla Bhaktinoda Ṭhākura explains that one should not think that because Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was born a brāhmaṇa and was situated in the topmost spiritual order as a sannyāsī, it was improper for Him to receive instructions from Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya, who belonged to the śūdra caste. To clarify this matter, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu informed Rāmānanda Rāya that knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is more important than caste. In the system of varṇāśrama-dharma there are various duties for the brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras. Actually the brāhmaṇa is supposed to be the spiritual master of all other varṇas, or classes, but as far as Kṛṣṇa consciousness is concerned, everyone is capable of becoming a spiritual master because knowledge in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is on the platform of the spirit soul. To spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one need only be cognizant of the science of the spirit soul. It does not matter whether one is a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra, sannyāsī, gṛhastha or whatever. If one simply understands this science, he can become a spiritual master.

It is stated in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa that one should not accept initiation from a person who is not in the brahminical order if there is a fit person in the brahminical order present. This instruction is meant for those who are overly dependent on the mundane social order and is suitable for those who want to remain in mundane life. If one understands the truth of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and seriously desires to attain transcendental knowledge for the perfection of life, he can accept a spiritual master from any social status, provided the spiritual master is fully conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura also states that although one is situated as a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra, brahmacārī, vānaprastha, gṛhastha or sannyāsī, if he is conversant in the science of Kṛṣṇa he can become a spiritual master as vartma-pradarśaka-guru, dīkṣā-guru or śikṣā-guru. The spiritual master who first gives information about spiritual life is called the vartma-pradarśaka-guru, the spiritual master who initiates according to the regulations of the śāstras is called the dīkṣā-guru, and the spiritual master who gives instructions for elevation is called the śikṣā-guru. Factually the qualifications of a spiritual master depend on his knowledge of the science of Kṛṣṇa. It does not matter whether he is a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, sannyāsī or śūdra. This injunction given by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is not at all against the injunctions of the śāstras. In the Padma Purāṇa it is said:

*na śūdrā bhagavad-bhaktās te 'pi bhāgavatottamāḥ  
sarva-varṇeṣu te śūdrā ye na bhaktā janārdane*

One who is actually advanced in spiritual knowledge of Kṛṣṇa is never a śūdra, even though he may have been born in a śūdra family. However, even if a vipra, or brāhmaṇa, is very expert in the six brahminical activities (paṭhana, pāṭhana, yajana, yājana, dāna, pratigrahaḥ) and is also well versed in the Vedic hymns, he cannot become a spiritual master unless he is a Vaiṣṇava. But if one is born in the family of caṇḍālas yet is well versed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he can become a guru. [...] A Vaiṣṇava is understood to be above the position of a brāhmaṇa. As a preacher, he should be recognized as a brāhmaṇa; otherwise there may be a misunderstanding of his position as a Vaiṣṇava. However, a Vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇa is not selected on the basis of his birth but according to his qualities. Unfortunately, those who are unintelligent do not know the difference between a brāhmaṇa and a Vaiṣṇava. They are under the impression that unless one is a brāhmaṇa he cannot be a spiritual master. For this reason only, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu makes the statement in this verse:

*kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya  
yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya*

If one becomes a guru, he is automatically a brāhmaṇa. Sometimes a caste guru says that ye kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei guru haya means that one who is not a brāhmaṇa may become a śikṣā-guru or a vartma-pradarśaka-guru but not an initiator guru. According to such caste gurus, birth

and family ties are considered foremost. However, the hereditary consideration is not acceptable to Vaiṣṇavas. The word guru is equally applicable to the vartma-pradarśaka-guru, śikṣā-guru and dīkṣā-guru. Unless we accept the principle enunciated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement cannot spread all over the world. According to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's intentions, pṛthivīte āche yata nagarādi grāmasarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's cult must be preached all over the world. This does not mean that people should take to His teachings and remain sūdras or caṇḍālas. As soon as one is trained as a pure Vaiṣṇava, he must be accepted as a bona fide brāhmaṇa. This is the essence of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's instructions in this verse." (end)

A principle is given here in order to counter caste conceptions that only an Indian born in a brāhmaṇa family can become a Vaiṣṇava, and thus a first class devotee and spiritual master. One common example is Haridāsa Ṭhākura, who although born in a Mohammedan family, was accepted by Lord Caitanya as Nāmācārya. This verse is sometimes taken to mean that in order for the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness movement to spread throughout the world, other persons must be accepted as bona fide dīkṣā gurus in ISKCON. The essential point in this purport is that it is possible for anyone to take to Kṛṣṇa Consciousness regardless of birth, or status, and rise up to the first class platform, by which one can be eligible to act as a śikṣā guru or dīkṣā guru. The position of dīkṣā guru however must be sanctioned by a specific order to initiate.

The next verse deals with the topic of whether a dīkṣā guru must be a mahā-bhāgavata.

**"This incident proves that the śikṣā- or dīkṣā-guru who has a disciple who strongly executes devotional service like Dhruva Mahārāja can be carried by the disciple even though the instructor is not as advanced. Although Sunīti was an instructor to Dhruva Mahārāja, she could not go to the forest because she was a woman, nor could she execute austerities and penances as Dhruva Mahārāja did. Still, Dhruva Mahārāja was able to take his mother with him. Similarly, Prahlāda Mahārāja also delivered his atheistic father, Hiraṇyakaśipu. The conclusion is that a disciple or an offspring who is a very strong devotee can carry with him to Vaikuṅṭhaloka either his father, mother or śikṣā- or dīkṣā-guru. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura used to say, "If I could perfectly deliver even one soul back home, back to Godhead, I would think my mission--propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness--to be successful." The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading now all over the world, and sometimes I think that even though I am crippled in many ways, if one of my disciples becomes as strong as Dhruva Mahārāja, then he will be able to carry me with him to Vaikuṅṭhaloka." (Purport S.B. 4.12.33)**

This above purport is sometimes taken to mean that a dīkṣā guru can be "less advanced", in other words, that the dīkṣā guru need not necessarily be a mahā-bhāgavata. From one perspective it is understood that Śrīla Prabhupāda's purpose here, as he goes on to speak of himself, is in expressing his humility by stating that perhaps one of his disciples could carry himself back to Godhead. At the same time this purport should be taken in consideration of the following statements which we are already familiar with:

**"One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī. A neophyte Vaiṣṇava or a Vaiṣṇava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance. Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikārī as a spiritual master." (NOI 5) "**

**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." (Madhya 24.331 purport)**



Of course Dhruva Mahārāja was a mahā-bhāgavata himself and therefore could carry anyone with him back to Godhead. Unless we are already mahā-bhāgavatas ourselves, then we should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikārī as an initiating spiritual master. The point in this purport is not that a less advanced devotee can become an initiating spiritual master, but that one who is an uttama-adhikārī can deliver anyone, even his dīkṣā guru if he happens to be someone who is less advanced by some arrangement of the Lord.

The following verse is sometimes interpreted as an instruction to become a dīkṣā guru.

**“There is no consideration of material impediment. So it is open for everyone. cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam. That is a chance given, that you can become a brāhmaṇa, you can become a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and you can become the spiritual master of the world. That is the... And I think you should take seriously.”** (Lec July 29, 1966)

Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly wants all of his disciples to become a spiritual master of the entire world. The next verse describes specifically what is meant by “spiritual master of the world.”

**“Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura then comments: ‘Without being empowered by the direct potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa to fulfill His desire and without being specifically favored by the Lord, no human being can become the spiritual master of the whole world. He certainly cannot succeed by mental concoction, which is not meant for devotees or religious people. Only an empowered personality can distribute the holy name of the Lord and enjoin all fallen souls to worship Kṛṣṇa. By distributing the holy name of the Lord, he cleanses the hearts of the most fallen people; therefore he extinguishes the blazing fire of the material world. Not only that, he broadcasts the shining brightness of Kṛṣṇa's effulgence throughout the world. Such an ācārya, or spiritual master, should be considered nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa—that is, he should be considered the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's potency. Such a personality is kṛṣṇāliṅgita-vigraha that is, he is always embraced by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. Such a person is above the considerations of the varṇāśrama institution. He is the guru or spiritual master for the entire world, a devotee on the topmost platform, the mahā-bhāgavata stage, and a Paramahaṁsa-Ṭhākura, a spiritual form only fit to be addressed as Paramahaṁsa or Ṭhākura.’”** (Madhya 25.9)

Śrīla Prabhupāda encourages everyone to take Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously so that we can each become first class devotees and enlighten the whole world. There is no impediment for this to take place and simultaneously for Śrīla Prabhupāda to remain as the initiating spiritual master of ISKCON. mahā-bhāgavatas often play the role of śikṣā gurus as well. Śrīla Prabhupāda gives here in the first description of two kinds of instructing spiritual masters, the kind of spiritual master he hopes for all of us to ultimately become

**“There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and the other is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions.”** (Ādi 1.47)

Such an instructing spiritual master **“fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service”** can also be a **“spiritual master of the entire world”**.

The next verse is also taken in the same manner, as an instruction to become a dīkṣā guru.

**“The purport is that one should not accept as a spiritual master someone who is fool number one, who has no direction according to the scriptural injunctions, whose character is doubtful, who does not follow the principles of devotional service, or who has not conquered the influence of the six sense-gratifying agents. The six agents of sense gratification are the tongue, the genitals, the belly, anger, the mind and words. Anyone who has practiced controlling these six is permitted to make disciples all over the world.”** (NOD 7)

This statement may refer to becoming a dīkṣā guru and it may also refer to making disciples all over the world as a śikṣā guru as well. Sometimes it is put forward that since Śrīla Prabhupāda awarded the title 'Gosvāmī', or 'master of the senses' to some disciples, they should initiate their own disciples according to the above instruction.

It is evident Śrīla Prabhupāda gave this title and also gave sannyāsa to disciples to encourage their preaching, yet this did not mean that the disciple was instantly placed on the platform of mahā-bhāgavata. This verse refers to one who is actually a mahā-bhāgavata. As we know

**“There is no possibility that a first-class devotee will fall down”** (Madhya 22.71)

It has been seen that persons, although awarded the title Gosvāmī, given sannyāsa, or who have taken the position of initiating spiritual master, have oftentimes fallen down, sometimes abandoning devotional service altogether. Again the conclusion is that the initiator must be a mahā-bhāgavata and additionally be authorized by his spiritual master to initiate.

**“The one point is that without increasing the number of disciples, there is no propagation of the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, sometimes even at a risk, a sannyāsi in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu may accept even a person who is not thoroughly fit to become a disciple. Later on, by the mercy of such a bona fide spiritual master, the disciple is gradually elevated. However, if one increases the number of disciples simply for some prestige or false honor, he will surely fall down in the matter of executing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”** (NOD 7)

**“Accepting an unlimited number of devotees or disciples is very risky for one who is not a preacher. According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, a preacher has to accept many disciples to expand the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This is risky because when a spiritual master accepts a disciple, he naturally accepts the disciple’s sinful activities and their reactions. Unless he is very powerful, he cannot assimilate all the sinful reactions of his disciples and has to suffer the consequences. Therefore one is generally forbidden to accept many disciples.”** (Madhya 22.118)

Since it is stated that “Unless he is very powerful, he cannot assimilate all the sinful reactions of his disciples and has to suffer the consequences.”, these statements are sometimes taken to mean that one who is not an uttama-adhikārī can initiate his own disciples. The actual meaning of these statements is clarified by the following: (this particular point has been more extensively addressed in this book)

**“He must not take on unlimited disciples. This means that a candidate who has successfully followed the first twelve items can also become a spiritual master himself, just as a student becomes a monitor in class with a limited number of disciples.”** (Eeasy Journey 1)

Since initiating disciples is very risky for one who is not a mahā-bhāgavata, Śrīla Prabhupāda instructs that one can accept a limited number of disciples as a monitor, or in other words as a śikṣā guru who accepts disciples on behalf of the dīkṣā guru by offering instructions and guidance.

**"Anyone following the order of Lord Caitanya under the guidance of His bona fide representative can become a spiritual master and I wish that in my absence all my disciples become bona fide spiritual masters to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the whole world."** (SPL Madhusūdāna, Nov. 2, 1967)

**“Every one of you should be spiritual master next.”** (Hamburg, September 5, 1969)

Since Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions here becoming spiritual master “next” and “in my absence”, it is assumed that Śrīla Prabhupāda must be speaking of becoming dīkṣā gurus, which may or may not

be the case. Śrīla Prabhupāda may just be saying that he hopes for his disciples to continue preaching and propogating the movement as śikṣā gurus after his departure.

Even if it were a fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda originally may have indicated that his disciples could eventually initiate disciples of their own, Lord Kṛṣṇa finally arranged for Śrīla Prabhupāda to remain as the initiator, an arrangement which tests our dedication to the spiritual masters final instructions. Here is an earlier letter from 1968 which is often presented to support that Prabhupāda wants his disciples to be dīkṣā gurus:

**“Next January there will be an examination on this Bhagavad-gītā. Papers will be sent by me to all centers, and those securing the minimum passing grade will be given the title as Bhakti-śāstrī. Similarly, another examination will be held on Lord Caitanya's Appearance Day in February, 1970 and it will be upon Śrīmad- Bhāgavatam and Bhagavad-gītā. Those passing will get the title of Bhakti-vaibhava. Another examination will be held sometimes in 1971 on the four books, Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, and Nectar of Devotion. One who will pass this examination will be awarded with the title of Bhaktivedanta. I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations.”** (68-12-03.Ham Letter: Hamsadūta)

Śrīla Prabhupāda states that **“maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initate.”** Since Śrīla Prabhupāda has often stated that **“it is the etiquette that in the presence of one's Spiritual Master, one does not accept disciples”**, it would have to be assumed that Śrīla Prabhupāda was already in 1968 planning to have departed by 1975, which is unlikely. Considering this, what Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks of here is more likely about a system in which his disciples would initiate on his behalf as monitors.

**“Regarding your question about the disciplic succession coming down from Arjuna, it is just like I have got my disciples, so in the future these many disciples may have many branches of disciplic succession.”** (Los Angeles, 25 January, 1969)

This reference regarding disciples having branches of disciplic succession need not necessarily refer only to disciples becoming dīkṣā gurus as the disciplic succession and it's branches are extended through lines of śikṣā as well.

**“So far as your taking initiation from Brāhmaṇanda Mahārāja, I have no objection, but it is the etiquette that in the presence of one's Spiritual Master, one does not accept disciples. In this connection, Swami Brāhmaṇanda may write me and I will instruct him.”** (Letter to John Milner 3/24/71)

It is evident that Śrīla Prabhupāda does not deny one's desire to accept one of his disciples for initiation. Yet again, Śrīla Prabhupāda states in his books **“A disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikārī as a spiritual master”** (NOI5) Of course, each individual has the free will to make their own choice, and as Lord Kṛṣṇa states **“All of them--as they surrender unto Me--I reward accordingly.”** (Bg. 4.11) Śrīla Prabhupāda by his mercy, was also sometimes lenient in making concessions for certain individuals so as to encourage them.

The following references deal with such instances wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged certain disciples who were evidently eager to become initiating spiritual masters themselves, even while in the presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda. This is known by the history of the devotees concerned as well as by what Śrīla Prabhupāda tells in the following letters.

**“Please accept my blessings. I have received so many letters from both of you and I am replying today summarily, especially your joint letter dated July 27, 1968, and Jaya Govinda's letter dated August 19, 1968. The first thing, I warn Acyutānanda, do not try to initiate. You are not in a proper position now to initiate anyone. Besides that, the etiquette is that so long the Spiritual Master is present, all prospective disciples should be brought to him. Therefore if anyone is anxious to be initiated, he should first of all hear our philosophy and join chanting at least for three months, and then if required, I shall send chanted beads for him if you recommend. As we are doing here. Don't be allured by such Māyā. I am training you all to become future Spiritual Masters, but do not be in a hurry.”** (Letter Acyutānanda 8/21/68)

(next a follow up letter some years later to the same devotee:)

**“Some time 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. Stick to the line of our strong preaching method and many misguided persons will be blessed by your proper guiding.”** (Letter Acyutānanda May 16,1972)

Another letter to a different devotee later that same year seems to give the same promise of becoming what appears to be a dīkṣā guru:

**“I have heard that there is some worship of yourself by the other devotees. Of course it is proper to offer obeisances to a Vaiṣṇava, but not in the presence of the spiritual master. After the departure of the spiritual master, it will come to that stage, but now wait. Otherwise it will create factions”.** (Letter to Haṁsadūta October 1, 1972)

Śrīla Prabhupāda does not condemn their pursuit but rather encourages them in order to keep them engaged in devotional service. Of course, some ambitious disciples could likely be motivated to achieve such a post as dīkṣā guru for receiving honor and recognition, yet Śrīla Prabhupāda would still dovetail an individuals tendencies to keep them engaged. Despite the fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda may have under certain circumstances given such an instruction to a particular individual, the necessity of qualification and genuine authorization must still be considered as to whether someone is actually a bonafide initiating guru:

**“One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī.”** (NO15)

**“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.”** (Lec 10/28/75)

Sometimes a devotee with some material ambition may be given a certain sanction in order to go through a learning experience to become purified and also serve as an example for others. In this connection the devotee here Haṁsadūta whom Śrīla Prabhupāda has written to was later selected as one of the eleven devotees who would perform the function of ṛtvik or officiating ācārya. After being implicated in the “zonal ācārya system” by falsely taking on the post of dīkṣā guru and subsequently breaking the regulative principles and engaging in illegal activities, Haṁsadūta later came to his senses admitting that Śrīla Prabhupāda had wanted initiations to take place on his behalf after his departure. All of the disciples for whom he performed official initiation were hence declared by him as disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Here is another letter which may appear to support that Śrīla Prabhupāda has authorized dīkṣā gurus.

**“Every student is expected to become ācārya. ācārya means one who knows the scriptural injunctions and follows them practically in life, and teaches them to his disciples. [...] I want to see**

**my disciples become bona fide Spiritual Master and spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness very widely, that will make me and Kṛṣṇa very happy... Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona-fide 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.”** (SPL Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa, December 2, 1975)

This letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa is an interesting instance of how Śrīla Prabhupāda would deal with disciples on an individual basis, giving some concession to a disciple in order to keep the disciple engaged according to his propensity. This instruction is along the same lines of that given to Hamsadūta. It is found that while Śrīla Prabhupāda gave this instruction to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa, at the same time only a few weeks earlier on November 10 Śrīla Prabhupāda stated that none of his disciples were actually yet qualified to become guru.

**“Now has the GBC become more than Guru Mahārāja? As if simply GBC is meant for looking after pounds, shilling, pence. The GBC does not look after spiritual life. That is a defect. All of our students will have to become guru, but they are not qualified. This is the difficulty.”** (Letter to Ālālanātha November 10, 1975)

This statement is also another taken to mean that Śrīla Prabhupāda wants that all of his disciples become initiating spiritual masters. Again, it is assumed that when Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks of becoming guru, he’s speaking of dīkṣā guru. Yet actually, the order of becoming guru refers mostly to śikṣā. An example is given in a letter to Madhudviṣa only a few months earlier, where Śrīla Prabhupāda states to become guru specifically as instructor, as he is the initiator. Here he states that his disciple is still yet to come to this platform of qualifying as an instructor, even though the disciple was already active in preaching.

**“I am in the initiator guru, and you should be the instructor guru by teaching what I am teaching and doing what I am doing. This is not a title, but you must actually come to this platform. This I want.”** (Letter to Madhudviṣa, August 4, 1975)

Therefore when Śrīla Prabhupāda states **“all of our students will have to become guru, but they are not qualified”**, it can be understood as a reference to strictly qualified instructing gurus or monitors. The same applies to the following quote:

**“It is not that you have become a student and you'll remain student. No. One day you shall become also guru and make more students, more students, more. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission, not that perpetually... Yes, one should remain perpetually a student, but he has to act as guru. That is the mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu.”** (12-10-76)

The next statement is very unique. It was made by Śrīla Prabhupāda some years earlier in 1971. Since it is mentioned here by Śrīla Prabhupāda that his disciples are competent to make disciples, **“But as a matter of etiquette they do not do so in the presence of their spiritual master”**, it certainly seems that Śrīla Prabhupāda is actually referring to his disciples becoming dīkṣā gurus.

**Mohsin Hassan: After you, is it any decision has been made who will take over? Prabhupāda: Yes. All of them will take over. These students, who are initiated from me, all of them will act as I am doing. Just like I have got many Godbrothers, they are all acting. Similarly, all these disciples which I am making, initiating, they are being trained to become future spiritual masters. Mohsin Hassan: How many swamis do you initiated, American? I'm speaking just on... Prabhupāda: About ten. Mohsin Hassan: You have ten swamis. And outside of swamis, what's the lower... Prabhupāda: Now, they're competent. They can, not only the swamis, even the gṛhasthas, they are called dāsa adhikārī, and brahmacārīs, everyone can, whoever is initiated, he is competent to make disciples. But as a matter of etiquette they do not do so in the presence of their spiri-**

tual master. This is the etiquette. Otherwise, they are competent. They can make disciples and spread. They can recruit more members in this. They do, but they are being trained up. Just like here in this meeting, one of my disciples, he is acting as priest. It is not myself; he is acting. So some of my students, they are acting as priests, some of them are swamis, so they are competent to make disciples. (RC Detroit, July 18, 1971)

It is very interesting how Śrīla Prabhupāda states “**whoever is initiated, he is competent to make disciples.**” Śrīla Prabhupāda may have meant this literally at the time, or he may have had some other reason for answering this way. Some years later however, Śrīla Prabhupāda stated: “**All of our students will have to become guru, but they are not qualified. This is the difficulty.**” (Letter Ālālanātha 11/10/75)

Also here where Śrīla Prabhupāda states “**Just like I have got many Godbrothers, they are all acting. Similarly, all these disciples which I am making initiating, they are being trained to become future spiritual masters**”, should be compared with what he said about his Godbrothers later: “**everyone is claiming to be ācārya even though they may be kaniṣṭha-adhikārī with no ability to preach. In some of the camps the ācārya is being changed three times a year. Therefore we may not commit the same mistake in our ISKCON camp. Actually amongst my Godbrothers no one is qualified to become ācārya.**” (Letter to Rūpānuga 4/28/74)

It is obvious that earlier statements such as the above do not in themselves give authorization for initiated devotees to go ahead and begin initiating disciples of their own.

### **The May 28th Conversation Tape**

This next segment addresses the main statements over which there is controversy on whether Śrīla Prabhupāda has intended for the ṛtvik system to continue after his departure, namely the May 28th conversation and the following July 9th letter. These points have already been covered in this book and this analysis serves as a recap of the main points.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is asked directly by Satsvarūpa Mahārāja how initiations will be conducted, specifically after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance. Śrīla Prabhupāda answers that he will recommend some disciples to act as officiating ācāryas. It is therefore accepted that Śrīla Prabhupāda intended for officiating ācāryas to act after his disappearance. The questions and answers that follow however bring in another idea. Let’s read through the conversation and then examine:

May 28, 1977

**Satsvarūpa: Then our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you’re no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiation would be conducted. Prabhupāda: Yes. I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up, I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating ācāryas. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Is that called ṛtvik-ācārya? Prabhupāda: ṛtvik, yes. Satsvarūpa: Then what is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and the... Prabhupāda: He’s guru. He’s guru. Satsvarūpa: But he does it on your behalf. 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. Be actually guru, but by my order. Satsvarūpa: So they may also be considered your disciples. Prabhupāda: Yes, they are disciples. Why consider? Who? Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: No, he’s asking that these ṛtvik-ācāryas, they’re officiating, giving dīkṣā. Their... The people who they give dīkṣā to, whose disciple are they? Prabhupāda: They’re his disciple. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: They’re his disciple. Prabhupāda: Who is initiating. He is granddisciple. Satsvarūpa: Yes. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: That’s clear. Satsvarūpa: Then we have a question concern... Prabhupāda: When I order, “You become guru,” he becomes regular guru. That’s all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That’s it.[...] Prabhupāda: And Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā. One who can understand the order of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he can become guru. Or one**

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

Since Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions that ṛtviks would officiate on his behalf as a formality because in “my presence one should not become guru”, and then speaks of an initiate becoming a “grand disciple”, and “disciple of my disciple”, many have concluded that Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed for his disciples to initiate their own disciples after his departure. Oftentimes, especially new devotees, once hearing this statement are easily drawn to this conclusion. Again however, before coming to a final conclusion, one must apply intelligence considering other points on the matter and further statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda concludes this conversation by stating **“when I order”** and afterwards **“I shall select some of you”**. Now the question which follows is when exactly was this order given ? and exactly what would Śrīla Prabhupāda select some devotees for ?

About five weeks later Śrīla Prabhupāda meets with his secretary Tamāla Kṛṣṇa at which time he gives a list of eleven disciples to act as ṛtviks by selecting spiritual names and chanting on the beads of new initiates to become disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa reiterates that **“all these persons are still your disciples. Anybody who gives initiation is doing so on your behalf”** and Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms **“Yes”**.

July 7, 1977

**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. 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. Prabhupāda: No, the senior sannyāsīs... Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: So they should continue to... Prabhupāda: You can give me a list of sannyāsīs. I will mark who will...**

**Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Okay. 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? Prabhupāda: Nearby. Jayatīrtha can give. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Jayatīrtha. Prabhupāda: Bhavānan..., er, Bhagavān. And he can do also. Harikeśa. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Harikeśa Mahārāja. 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? Prabhupāda: Hm.**

**Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Actually they are initiating the person on Your Divine Grace's behalf. Those persons who are initiated are still your... 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... 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? Prabhupāda: They can do second initiation. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: By writing you.**

**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. Prabhupāda: Yes. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: You know that book I'm maintaining of all of your disciples' names? Should I continue that? Prabhupāda: Hm.

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? Prabhupāda: India, I am here. We shall see. In India, Jayapatākā. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Jayapatākā Mahārāja. Prabhupāda: You are also in India. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Yes. Prabhupāda: You can note down these names. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Yes, I have them. Prabhupāda: Who are they? Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja, Satsvarūpa Mahārāja, Jayatīrtha Prabhu, Bhagavān Prabhu, Harikeśa Mahārāja, Jayapatākā Mahārāja and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja. Prabhupāda: That's nice. Now you distribute. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Seven. There's seven names. Prabhupāda: For the time being, seven names, sufficient. You can make Rāmeśvara.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Rāmeśvara Mahārāja. Prabhupāda: And Hṛdayānanda. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Oh, yeah. South America. Prabhupāda: So without waiting for me, wherever you consider it is right... That will depend on discretion. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: On discretion. Prabhupāda: Yes. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: That's for first and second initiations. Prabhupāda: Hm.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has here now officially selected eleven persons to act as ṛtviks. Formerly, GBC sannyāsīs were already performing the function of chanting on beads after receiving a recommendation from a temple president who would then perform an initiation ceremony after receiving the disciples' spiritual name from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Here Śrīla Prabhupāda has delegated the function of selecting names and chanting on beads to eleven persons specifically, each who would be responsible for a particular geographical zone.

At this point the question remains as to whether the system was intended to continue after Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance. Some point out the following line from this conversation, concluding that it was not. **Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: "Is there someone else in India that you want to do this? Prabhupāda: India, I am here. We shall see. In India, Jayapatākā."** The point made here is that if Śrīla Prabhupāda is selecting these persons with the intention of them being ṛtviks after his disappearance, why does he say "India, I am here" ? Well because he could conduct initiation where he's physically present. So this is not a strong point, & it's not sufficient for finalizing our conclusion. Śrīla Prabhupāda does proceed to select someone, and as we continue on in the matter we find that there are more strong points supporting the conclusion that the system is intended to continue beyond Prabhupāda's physical presence.

Two days later on July 9th Tamāla Kṛṣṇa meets with Śrīla Prabhupāda at which time a policy document is finalized, approved and signed by Śrīla Prabhupāda for distribution to all temple presidents and GBC's. The ṛtvik system is described and the names of eleven ṛtviks officially announced for the leaders of ISKCON. Interestingly however, the letter makes no mention whatsoever of anyone initiating disciples of their own after Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance. Neither does it state that the ṛtvik system should end after Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, but only that it should be effective "henceforward".

There is no instruction in the letter to refer to a recording or transcript of the May 28th conversation or any other source for additional information. It states only that "Recently when all of the GBC members were with His Divine Grace in Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda indicated that soon He would appoint some of His senior disciples to act as "ṛtvik - representative of the ācārya." Since this letter is the last and only document on this matter ever made available, it would have to contain all essential information required by ISKCON leaders for carrying on Śrīla Prabhupāda's intended system of future initiations.



Some who disagree contend that Śrīla Prabhupāda already told his disciples on May 28th that they could initiate their own disciples after his disappearance and that he named them in the July 9th letter. Others who also disagree put forward that Śrīla Prabhupāda actually instructed for all of his disciples to initiate, a theory which later evolved after the fiasco of the original “zonal ācārya” system; a belief based solely on the above quotes which have been shown to be often taken out of context.

It so happened that by the Lord’s arrangement, ISKCON’s main spokespersons in support of these conclusions publically admitted both of these ideas to be completely erroneous. The first statement of such was published in Back to Godhead magazine in 1991 in a column titled “An Apology” wherein BTG’s editor in chief, speaking on behalf of ISKCON leaders, admits that ISKCON leaders instituted a major deviation from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions on initiations.

### **An Apology (An article reprinted from BTG Jan./Feb. 1991)**

In the difficult times after Śrīla Prabhupāda departed from this world, misunderstandings arose on a crucial issue: Who would be the next spiritual master ? Śrīla Prabhupada had clearly taught that he wanted all his disciples to follow his teachings, teach them to others, and thus become spiritual masters.

But by the influence of Māyā, illusion, a different idea soon evolved - that Śrīla Prabhupāda had appointed eleven pure devotees to serve as the gurus after him. These eleven , the idea went, should each serve as the spiritual master for a specific geographical "zone" of the world.

This zonal guru system as it came to be called, prevailed in ISKCON for about ten years, until it's faleness became clear and an ever-growing reform movement overthrew it and reasserted Śrīla Prabhupāda's original instructions. In 1986, ISKCON's Governing Body Commission formally dismantled the system. In the years till then Back to Godhead sometimes reflected and supported the erroneous zonal guru system.

Here, therefore, we wish to admit this mistake. I was the managing editor for some of those years. And Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī was editor in chief. He joins me in apologizing to our readers for BTG's conformity to the "zonal guru" error. In particular, we express our heartfelt apologies for contributing to the hurts and wrongs devotees endured when ISKCON diverged from Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions. May Lord Kṛṣṇa henceforward keep us straight on the path of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, as Śrīla Prabhupāda taught it. Hare Kṛṣṇa. Jayādvaita Swami,

Editor in Chief.

Ironically, by “tricks of chance” as Śrīla Prabhupāda says, the author prays “May Lord Kṛṣṇa *henceforward* (same word in the July 9th letter) keep us straight on the path”, yet unfortunately the so called “ever-growing reform movement” which supposedly “reasserted Śrīla Prabhupāda's original instructions” only further complicated the situation by rubber stamping many more unauthorized initiating gurus. Years later Jayadvaita Swami again frankly admitted the continued falldows of ISKCON gurus of the so called ‘reform movement’ in his following statement “Where The Ritvik People Are Right”. Yet ironically he continued supporting the system. In this statement he described the result of the so called reform movement, a system of voting in over 100 initiating gurus, a system which continued to disregard the instruction that a dīkṣā guru must have qualification & a specific order to initiate.

If it is very clear to ISKCON leaders precisely how Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted so many persons to become dīkṣā gurus within ISKCON, then why did the GBC initially set up the zonal ācārya system, where dīkṣā guruship was strictly limited to 11 persons, and allow it to run for almost an entire decade ? The above mentioned movement referred to as a "reform movement" went on to posi-

tion now more than 100 initiating gurus in ISKCON by a GBC voting commission which has nominated 90% of it's own members as gurus. This alternative system has introduced a new philosophy that the initiating spiritual master can be less than 100% pure and places more emphasis on a spiritual master having a physical body than on having actually the qualification of uttama adhikari, one who is completely pure, free of all material desires & who actually sees Lord Krishna face to face.

**Prabhupāda: Anything change means it is the domain of rascals, pandemonium. Just like in Manu-sāmhītā it is said that, nāsyām svatantratām arhati, women should not be given independence. Once said, that is fact. If you want to change, you suffer. That's all. (Conv. 12/14/75 Del.)**

### **Where The Ritvik People Are Right: By Jayādvaita Swami**

The following statements were made years later after the above mentioned so called "reform movement" also known as the "guru reform". Jayādvaita Swami to this day (2022) remains a supporter of the current ISKCON multiple guru program despite the following admissions. Interestingly he also happens to be one of the main editors who continue making endless changes to Prabhupāda's books.

**FACT: ISKCON gurus in good standing have fallen. FACT: The ISKCON GBC has supported even fallen gurus and tried to paper over their falldowns. 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: Some ISKCON gurus still in good standing have had such serious personal difficulties that the GBC has been obliged to suspend them from initiating. FACT: Other ISKCON gurus have snapped back into line only after "narrow misses". FACT: ISKCON gurus recently lead a movement advocating a premature and inappropriate emphasis on rasika-bhakti. FACT: Some ISKCON devotees have felt obliged to accept a new guru twice or even three times over.**

ISKCON continues to this day in 2022 to elect more initiating gurus, and falldowns continue on a regular basis. The following is a letter of admission from one of the many elected ISKCON "initiating gurus" before he passed away. It is a clear example of how the GBC continues rubberstamping men with the title of initiating guru, the guru who Lord Kṛṣṇa says is to be worshiped on the same level as Himself, God.

### **Bhaktivedanta Hospital, Mumbai**

**March 24, 2016**

Dear Devotees.

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

I am writing this letter to reveal my mind and heart. I see this as my duty to you and as something I need to do for my purification.

Seven years after joining the movement, I began occasionally looking at inappropriate explicit material. I said nothing about this to the GBC before taking sannyasa, because I thought I had successfully freed myself from this deviation and more significantly because my pride prevented me from opening my heart.

After accepting sannyasa, I sometimes slipped again, and at one point my superiors learned of an instance when this had happened. But I tried again to be fixed in my vows, and when from time to time I failed, I kept my failure to myself, even after I took up the position of initiating guru.

I wanted very much to serve the movement by accepting such responsibilities, and I told myself I could purify myself through the service. But instead I sacrificed my integrity and the welfare of others. All along, I should have disclosed the truth to my godbrothers, seeking their help. Now I am deeply regretful.

When I was diagnosed with stage-four prostate cancer, I felt as if Krishna, at the end of my stay in this body, began directly showing me what an offender I was, making me aware of my misdeeds and how difficult it would be to face him and Srila Prabhupada without being open with the devotees about what I had done. As I continued contemplating the seriousness of my actions and how they would affect others lives, I became filled with the overwhelming need to reveal my heart once and for all. I spoke my secret to the Vaishnavas. Again, I am so regretful for all my wrongs.

During these last few months, so many devotees have kindly been chanting and praying for me and giving me all kinds of support, and this unworthy soul feels grateful.

I am sure Krishna is putting me through this to help me give up a sin I couldn't give up on my own. Now I want to spend the rest of my life genuinely living in Krishna Consciousness, without this sin and without attachment to any position or title.

Although I do not deserve it, I pray for your forgiveness.

Your servant,  
Gunagrahi Das

Shortly after this letter was written, Gunagrahi passed away. He admitted that as a sannyasi he was exposed & it was known to the GBC, yet the GBC proceeded shortly after to vote him in as an initiating spiritual master. Prabhupāda states that one cannot even sit on the Vyāsāsana if he is not free from illicit sex, what to speak of being an initiating spiritual master who accepts disciples' karma & is worshiped as good as God.

**“A gosvāmī, or the bona fide representative of Śrī Vyāsadeva, must be free from all kinds of vices. The four major vices of Kali-yuga are (1) illicit connection with women, (2) animal slaughter, (3) intoxication, (4) speculative gambling of all sorts. A gosvāmī must be free from all these vices before he can dare sit on the vyāsāsana. No one should be allowed to sit on the vyāsāsana who is not spotless in character and who is not freed from the above-mentioned vices. He not only should be freed from all such vices, but must also be well versed in all revealed scriptures or in the Vedas.”** (SB 1.1.6 Purport)

Although a clear admission was made to the devotees of ISKCON, the initiation system has remained the same. ISKCON leaders and followers continue propagating the philosophy that initiating gurus in the parampara fall down and may be addicted to illicit activities. There have been many instances like this over the years where initiating gurus have continued to be exposed. Yet the majority of illicit activities likely remain hidden, and yet more 'initiating gurus' continue to be elected. From our point of view, this is not a very high understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings. Those who follow blindly the popular opinion and do not seriously try to understand Prabhupāda's teachings are inclined to be misled.

Finally, one must ask, when was the order for anyone to initiate their own disciples ever actually given ? As Śrīla Prabhupāda says “One has to test by the result”. The result of ISKCON's current multiple initiating guru system which opens the post of dīkṣā guru to many persons, as we have

seen, is that a great deal of cheating and speculation is going on over who is a bonafide initiating spiritual master. The devotees of ISKCON have been factioned into many various camps. Everyone is asking “Who is your guru ?” The philosophy that dīkṣā gurus in the paramparā regularly fall prey to illicit sex & scandals has diluted the pure message. The Krishna Consciousness Movement is factioned into the followers of the multiple initiating gurus whom many follow out of blind sentiment.

To some it may be a great wonder how there could be such confusion over this matter. One may ask why it seems there is not more information of Śrīla Prabhupāda speaking on how the ṛtvik system would continue after his departure. Of course there are the testimonies of many devotees who directly heard Śrīla Prabhupāda speaking about the ṛtvik system and his intention for it’s continuance after his disappearance. There is also the fact that mostly all of the tapes from those last few months of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s physical presence have mysteriously vanished. It is known that practically everything which Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke at that time was being recorded, yet the tapes from then are gone without a trace.

One need not speculate on the matter however as the July 9th letter together with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s final will give a definite conclusion on the matter. Of course Śrīla Prabhupāda was very careful in managing every aspect of ISKCON, what to speak of something as important as future initiations. As stated in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s will regarding the future directors of ISKCON properties: **“a successor director or directors may be appointed by the remaining directors, provided the new director is my initiated disciple”** a clause requiring the continuation of the ṛtvik system for the duration of ISKCON’s existence.

This conclusion is furthermore confirmed by the philosophy supported by numerous statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda that one should accept an uttama-adhikārī as a dīkṣā guru, and that Śrīla Prabhupāda indeed continues giving dīkṣā through his transcendental vāṇī. As arranged by the Lord, the system of formal acceptance of disciples by Śrīla Prabhupāda has been extended indefinitely, giving everyone a chance to be initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda, a jagat-guru, spiritual master of the entire world.

The question of how there could be such a controversy over Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions for initiations after his disappearance can be further understood through the following segment from Caitanya Caritāmṛta:

**“At first all the followers of Advaita ācārya shared a single opinion. But later they followed two different opinions, as ordained by providence.**

**PURPORT: The words daivera kāraṇa indicate that by dint of providence, or by God’s will, the followers of Advaita ācārya divided into two parties. Such disagreement among the disciples of one ācārya is also found among the members of the Gauḍīya-Maṭha. In the beginning, during the presence of Om̐ Viṣṇupāda Paramahaṁsa Parivrājakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, all the disciples worked in agreement; but just after his disappearance, they disagreed. One party strictly followed the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, but another group created their own concoction about executing his desires. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, at the time of his departure, requested all his disciples to form a governing body and conduct missionary activities cooperatively. He did not instruct a particular man to become the next ācārya. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of ācārya, and they split into two factions over who the next ācārya would be. Consequently, both factions were asāra, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master.” (Adi 12.8)**

As Śrīla Prabhupāda has stated “history repeats itself”. In the same manner by which Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s leading secretaries made plans to occupy the post of ācārya after his disappearance,

the leading secretaries of Śrīla Prabhupāda also made such plans. It is evident that Śrīla Prabhupāda's head secretary Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, whom Śrīla Prabhupāda engaged in drafting the July 9th letter, somehow or other went on later to pioneer the movement which diverted ISKCON from Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions on initiations.

Devotees who were present at the time heard both Śrīla Prabhupāda and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa speak of how initiated devotees would continue to be disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda after his departure. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa along with others became influential in persuading the entire group of those whom Śrīla Prabhupāda selected as ṛtviks, to comply with the plan that they themselves would become successor initiating gurus to be worshiped as good as God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda selected eleven devotees to each perform the function of ṛtvik within a particular zone. Rather than following this, the eleven individuals became what was later referred to as "zonal ācāryas", something not to be found anywhere in Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and instructions. This system eventually collapsed as it's falseness became overwhelmingly evident. According to Nectar of Instruction the falldown of the "zonal ācāryas" was inevitable:

**"one should not imitate the behavior of an advanced devotee or mahā-bhāgavata without being self-realized, for by such imitation one will eventually become degraded."** (NOI5)

Without Śrīla Prabhupāda as the uniting factor of the devotees, enmity and materially motivated competition arose between the different camps. Increasing complications arose due to conflicts of interest. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, being the most clever and ambitious amongst the eleven, was successful in bringing much of the power to his side. It then came about after a few years that GBC members wanted to have him suspended from his position as "initiating spiritual master". At that time, under the influence of pressure from the GBC, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa made the following confession that Śrīla Prabhupāda did indeed select ṛtviks to continue initiations after his disappearance, and that he never actually authorized any of the eleven ṛtviks to accept disciples of their own.

### **Pyramid House Confession**

The following transcript is from a taped conversation on December 3, 1980 before a group of devotees at Pyramid House, CA, wherein Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja, one of the original 11 "appointed gurus", explained Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire for initiations in ISKCON:

**"I've had certain realizations a few days ago... There are obviously so many statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda that his Guru Mahārāja did not appoint any successors... Even in Śrīla 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 that he might be appointing some ṛtviks, so the GBC met for various reasons, and they went to Prabhupāda, five or six of us. 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 of 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 I asked him two questions, one: 'What about Brāhmaṇanda Swami?' I asked him this because I happened to have an affection for Brāhmaṇanda Swami... So Śrīla Prabhupāda said, 'No, not unless he is qualified.' Before I got ready to type the [July 9th.] 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; therefore he appointed officiating priests to initiate on his behalf. This is very important 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... I cannot physically manage everyone myself.'

And that's all it was, and it was never anymore 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, because he had already said it a million times. He said: 'My guru Mahārāja did not appoint anyone. It's by qualification.' We made a great mistake... I feel that this realization or this understanding is essential if we are to avoid further things 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 LA 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..."

This statement from Tamāla Kṛṣṇa refutes the claim that Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed on May 28th that the officiating ācāryas whom he would choose were to accept disciples of their own after his disappearance. This is the main claim on which today's multiple ācārya system is based upon. Supporters of the multiple ācārya system claim that it was very clear to Śrīla Prabhupāda disciples on May 28th that Śrīla Prabhupāda authorized these persons to accept their own disciples, yet for a decade after Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance a zonal system was implemented and then afterwards admitted that the 11 selected as ṛtvik representatives mistakingly claimed the position of initiating spiritual masters; and here Tamāla Kṛṣṇa admits that Śrīla Prabhupāda never did appoint anyone to initiate their own disciples. Taking Śrīla Prabhupāda's concluding statement on May 28th "When I order, You become guru," The question remains, when ever did Śrīla Prabhupāda give such an order ?

A letter written by Tamāla Kṛṣṇa two days after drafting the July 9th letter shows further of his awareness at that time of Śrīla Prabhupāda's intention for the ṛtvik system to continue on after his departure.

**"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. Śrīla Prabhupāda has appointed thus far eleven representatives who will initiate new devotees on his behalf."** (Letter to Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja, 11th July 1977)

Despite the above confession made after three years of maintaining a position as a “zonal ācārya”, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa managed to work out some agreement by which he continued acting as a ‘zonal ācārya’ for an additional seven years until the zonal system completely fell apart. Later in this same conversation Tamāla Kṛṣṇa introduced the contradictory idea that anyone could take the position of becoming initiating spiritual master if they’re qualified (which came to mean only that one is supposedly chanting sixteen rounds and following the four regulative principles – the minimum requirement for any devotee). This idea later became the basis for the ‘guru reform-movement’ in the late 80’s which replaced the ‘zonal ācārya system’ with today’s multiple ācārya system wherein anyone on their own initiative can take the position of initiating spiritual master provided they receive a 2/3 vote of approval from the GBC.

**“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.” (NOD14)**

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa was again highly influential in leading forth this further deviation. This controlling tendency was observed by many devotees and is often noted in the recorded histories of Tamāla Kṛṣṇa as well as by Śrīla Prabhupāda, quoted here on the matter in Hari-śauri’s Transcendental Diary:

**“Of all the GBC, he,” indicating Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja with a tip of his head, “is the most intelligent. But the problem is, those with intelligence want to control everything. And he wants to control the whole Society.” (Excerpt from : “A Transcendental Diary” by Hari-śauri dāsa).**

Śrīla Prabhupāda stated the following in the presence of Tamāla Kṛṣṇa several months before his disappearance.

**“As soon as this poison will come--“Suppress guru and I become Brahman”--everything finished. Spiritual life is finished. Gauḍīya-Maṭha finished, that..., violated the orders of Guru Mahārāja [...]as soon as you manufacture, fall down. Evam Evaṁ paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo... This manufacturing idea is very, very dangerous in spiritual life. [...]Our mission is to serve bhakta-vīśeṣa and live with devotees. Not that you take the place of the guru. That is nonsense, very dangerous. Then everything will be spoiled. As soon as you become ambitious to take the place of guru--guruṣu nara-matiḥ. That is the material disease.” (Conversation 4/20/77 Bombay)**

After another fifteen years of continuing to keep his post as an ISKCON dīkṣā guru Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja died in 2002 in a fatal auto accident. The actual history of the other members of the original eleven who assumed themselves as dīkṣā gurus appears as perhaps a great warning. This history speaks for itself, serving as an example of what is eventually destined for anyone who unauthorizedly assumes a position of being worshiped as good as God; and it serves to exemplify the distinction between a bonafide dīkṣā guru and unauthorized self appointed or elected “dīkṣā guru”.

**“one should not imitate the behavior of an advanced devotee or mahā-bhāgavata without being self-realized, for by such imitation one will eventually become degraded.” (N015)**

**“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.” (4.15.23)**

**“If a so-called spiritual master accepts a disciple for his personal benefit or for material gain, the relationship between the spiritual master and the disciple turns into a material affair, and the spiritual master becomes like a smārta-guru. There are many caste gosvāmīs who professionally create some disciples who do not care for them or their instructions. Such spiritual masters are**

satisfied simply to get some material benefits from their disciples. Such a relationship is condemned by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who calls such spiritual masters and disciples a society of cheaters and cheated. They are also called **bāulas** or **prākṛta-sahajiyās**. Their aim is to make the connection between the spiritual master and the disciple into a very cheap thing. They are not serious in wanting to understand spiritual life.” (Madhya 24.330)

### History of The Original Eleven

**Tamāla Kṛṣṇa**: Died in auto accident. **Kīrtanānanda**: Imprisoned for many years for money scandals and conspiracy. **Satsvarūpa**: Troubled by many ailments, admitted to sexual affair with a woman. **Bhavānanda**: Admitted to having homosexual affair (search Google video online for documentary film entitled "Hare Kṛṣṇas-Hiders Or Seekers" , Bhavānanda himself gives confession; the film highlights on the other scandals of the original eleven as well). **Jayātīrtha**: introduced his followers to LSD , engaged in illicit affair with female follower and as a result was murdered (decapitated) by her partner. **Haṁsadūta**: Engaged in intoxication and illegal activity but later resigned and acknowledged Śrīla Prabhupāda as ISKCON's dīkṣā guru. **Rāmeśvara**: Had illicit connection with woman before abandoning his position. **Bhagavān**: Enjoyed money and women before abandoning his position. **Harikeśa**: Left his position and become involved with a woman. **Jayapataka**: continues acting as an "ISKCON initiating guru" **Hridayānanda**: reportedly no longer acting in the role of dīkṣā guru

For many of us there may be many questions as to how and why those who closely served Śrīla Prabhupāda could either not clearly understand his instructions or otherwise simply refuse to follow his instructions for initiations. As it is stated above by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Caitanya Caritāmṛta

**“by dint of providence, or by God’s will, the followers of Advaita Ācārya divided into two parties.”**

It may appear to us that there is ambiguity in the various statements available on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions for initiations after his departure, yet by a thorough analysis we find that everything is there for clear understanding. Due to the apparent ambiguity there are various parties having different opinions about what Śrīla Prabhupāda has instructed on initiations. Evidently this is arranged by the will of the Lord. The situation requires each devotee to thoroughly inquire and study Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings. Śrīla Prabhupāda has strongly expressed that he wants devotees to carefully study his instructions and understand the philosophy so as not be diverted in any way. Śrīla Prabhupāda expects us to apply our intelligence, accepting the process of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness not blindly but with systematic understanding. For many of those who simply take someone else’s word for it & just follow the popular opinion without making an honest and thorough investigation of their own, it is easy to be misled.

All in all, the situation as it has come about proves to be a test for each devotee as to how we attempt to understand and follow the order of the spiritual master. Lord Kṛṣṇa says

**“All of them - as they surrender unto Me – I reward accordingly.”** (Bg. 4.11)

It is also stated that when one sincerely wants Kṛṣṇa then He sends a bonafide spiritual master. In one regard the situation as arranged by the Lord facilitates everyone according to what one desires and deserves. Many people approach Lord Kṛṣṇa for various reasons. As the Lord states there are generally four kinds of pious persons who approach Him, many of which are coming for material purposes. Often someone desires to accept a guru as a fashion, for social reasons, or for fulfillment of some other material desire. Similarly someone may have a desire to become a guru and receive honor, reputation, etc. The Lord may sanction all of these desires accordingly and thus we find that there are many various situations in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement; many persons are taking the position of initiating their own disciples and many persons are accepting someone



or other as their dīkṣā guru. If however one actually wants to achieve the ultimate goal of life then Lord Kṛṣṇa sanctions by leading one to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and become his initiated disciple.

**“Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth.” (BG 7.3)**

It is therefore seen that instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda are understood in different ways according to one’s position. The following instruction is a perfect example:

**“One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī. A neophyte Vaiṣṇava or a Vaiṣṇava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance. Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikārī as a spiritual master.” (NOI5)**

Many devotees will overlook the first and last line of this statement and will take the rest as a sanction to accept disciples or accept an initiating guru who is not an uttama-adhikārī. So according to the Lord’s will and sanction, all of these things are going on and in this sense it should not be a surprise that there are now many camps of devotees. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda has expressed his desire for a united worldwide ISKCON – which once existed when everyone was initiated as his disciple and which may still exist as more and more devotees recognize Śrīla Prabhupāda as the current initiating spiritual master for ISKCON.

**“Become Guru” – An Order To Preach Distinct From An Order To Initiate**

There are many quotes where Śrīla Prabhupāda cites Lord Caitanya’s instruction for everyone to become a guru. In most instances there is no specific mention of initiating one’s own disciples, but rather a general instruction to preach. Usually it is mentioned there that there is no need for qualification for taking up this duty. The following is a good example of the same instruction given many times:

**“That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mission. Yāre dekha tāre kaha kṛṣṇa-upadeśa [Cc. Madhya 7.128]. Every one of you can become a guru. He says that. Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra’ ei deśa [Cc. Madhya 7.128]. Wherever you are, you can deliver the persons, surrounding persons in your neighborhood. “How can I become guru? I have no qualification.” No. There is no need of qualification. Simply repeat. Yāre dekha tāre kaha kṛṣṇa-upadeśa [Cc. Madhya 7.128]. Very simple thing. Anyone you meet, “My dear friend, just hear little.” “What is that?” “Now, Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You kindly think of Kṛṣṇa. Just offer your obeisances to Kṛṣṇa, just become a bhakta and chant His holy name.” Bas. Your guru duty is finished. So it is not very difficult task. Anyone can do this.” (lecture December 16, 1976)**

This point is always made that there is no need of any qualification and that anyone can do this, all that one needs to do is preach. Thus anyone can easily become a guru or teacher. It is evident by this point that the instruction is not intended as a general sanction for everyone and anyone to instantly become a dīkṣā guru, but moreover a general order to preach.

This is further corroborated by the following: **“One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī. (NOI5)**

There are some quotes however where Śrīla Prabhupāda does speak specifically of his disciples accepting their own disciples after his departure. He mentioned specifically that they should at least wait until after his departure as that is the etiquette. He also states that a disciple must be specifically authorized by his spiritual master to initiate.

**Brahmānanda: He's asking when did you become the spiritual leader of Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Prabhupāda: When my Guru Mahārāja ordered me. This is the guru-paramparā. Indian: Did it... 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. (October 28, 1975)**

**"When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it." (Conversation with GBC May 28th 1977)**

**"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." (S.B. 4.8.54, purport)**

**"...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. His is not a very high grade of devotional service." (NOD 14)**

Śrīla Prabhupāda also said that in order to become ācārya in the capacity of initiating one's own disciples the training must be complete. As already shown, Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes specifies a very strict requirement that one cannot become a dīkṣā guru unless one has attained the level of *uttama-adhikārī*.

**"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." (Madhya 24.330)**

**"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." (Madhya 24.330)**

There is another statement which is often interpreted to mean something different than this:

**"The second-class devotees are therefore meant for preaching work, and as referred to in the above verse, they must loudly preach the glories of the Lord. The second-class devotee accepts disciples from the section of third-class devotees or nondevotees. Sometimes the first-class devotee also comes down to the category of the second-class devotee for preaching work." (S.B. 2.3.21 purport)**

Of course, there is mention here of second-class devotees accepting disciples, yet in Nectar of Instruction we find where it is emphasized that a second-class devotee cannot actually give sufficient guidance and again it is stated that only an *uttama-adhikārī* can become and should be accepted as a dīkṣā guru:

**"One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of *uttama-adhikārī*. A neophyte Vaiṣṇava or a Vaiṣṇava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance. Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an *uttama-adhikārī* as a spiritual master." (NOI 5)**

The capacity in which second-class devotees are advised to accept disciples is described in the next quote:

**"He must not take on unlimited disciples. This means that a candidate who has successfully followed the first twelve items can also become a spiritual master himself, just as a student becomes a monitor in class with a limited number of disciples." (Easy Journey 1)**

Śrīla Prabhupāda states many times that an initiating spiritual master accepts the karma of his disciples and therefore must be very powerful or otherwise may be overwhelmed, and that Lord Caitanya has therefore forbidden to accept many disciples.

**“As Kṛṣṇa takes away all the sinful reactions of a person immediately upon his surrender unto Him, similarly the external manifestation of Kṛṣṇa, the representative of Kṛṣṇa who acts as the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, takes all the resultant actions of the sinful life of the disciple immediately after the disciple’s initiation. Thus if the disciple follows the principles instructed by the spiritual master, he remains purified and is not contaminated by the material infection. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore stated that the spiritual master who plays the part of Kṛṣṇa's representative has to consume all the sinful reactions of his disciple. Sometimes a spiritual master takes the risk of being overwhelmed by the sinful reactions of the disciples and undergoes a sort of tribulation due to their acceptance. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore advised that one not accept many disciples.” (4.21.31)**

Sometimes Śrīla Prabhupāda made statements such as **“...the injunction is one should not accept many disciples. But for preaching work we have to do that.”** (Conversation 12/17/73) Śrīla Prabhupāda often would say **“we”** in reference to himself, so such a statement could be taken in this sense while it could also be taken in reference to both himself and his disciples.

Either way, considering the following quotes it is reasonable to conclude that unless one is an uttama-adhikārī authorized to initiate, one should simply act in the capacity of a śikṣā guru, or representative of the dīkṣā guru, accepting disciples only on his behalf by offering relevant guidance and instructions:

**“One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī.” (NO15)**

**“Unless he is very powerful, he cannot assimilate all the sinful reactions of his disciples. Thus if he is not powerful, he has to suffer the consequences, for one is forbidden to accept many disciples.” (C.C. Madhya 22.118)**

**“One should not try to be an artificially advanced devotee, thinking, “I am a first-class devotee.” Such thinking should be avoided. It is best not to accept any disciples. One has to become purified at home by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-Mantra and preaching the principles enunciated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Thus one can become a spiritual master and be freed from the contamination of material life.” (CC)**

Lord Caitanya's instruction forbidding to accept many disciples and Śrīla Prabhupāda's remark that “for preaching work we have to do that” is understood further by the same statement:

**“He must not take on unlimited disciples. This means that a candidate who has successfully followed the first twelve items can also become a spiritual master himself, just as a student becomes a monitor in class with a limited number of disciples.” (Easy Journey 1)**

The use of the word “monitor” in this reference clearly distinguishes between a spiritual master acting as a śikṣā, representative of the dīkṣā guru, and a full fledged dīkṣā guru. A monitor guides a class when the regular teacher is not present. This distinction is elsewhere defined by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

**“Śikṣā-guru, dīkṣā-guru means... Sometimes a dīkṣā-guru is not present always. Therefore one can take learning, instruction, from an advanced devotee. That is called the śikṣā-guru. (Śikṣā-guru does not mean he is speaking something against the teachings of the dīkṣā-guru. He is not a śikṣā-guru. He is a rascal.)” (Lecture July 4, 1974 Honolulu)**

**“But 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. His is not a very high grade of devotional service.” (NOD 14)**

This last verse directly addresses the result of taking the position of initiating disciples on one’s own initiative without proper authorization. It indicates a specific order distinct from a general order to preach. Sometimes a verse such as the following is again put forward to support the other way of thinking, that one can take up the post on one’s own initiative. :

**“So it is not very difficult. One may not think that “I am not qualified to become guru.” No, you are qualified if you follow strictly the paramparā system. Then you are qualified. That’s all. Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā... And what is the difficulty? Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, “Don’t feel any difficulty.” Because as spiritual master, what you have to do? Yāre dekha, tāre kaha, ‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa [Cc. Madhya 7.128]. Whomever you meet, you simply speak to him the instruction which Kṛṣṇa gives.” (Lecture august 22, 1973)**

The reasoning as it follows is that Śrīla Prabhupāda has many times such as this already given the order that everyone should become a guru, thus one should think oneself qualified to push forward the movement and therefore one should take up the post of dīkṣā guru.

Śrīla Prabhupāda however, in these statements does not mention initiating disciples, but simply states that we should preach, that there should be no impediment to this as there is no need of qualification to simply preach.

**There is no need of qualification. Simply repeat. Yāre dekha tāre kaha kṛṣṇa-upadeśa [Cc. Madhya 7.128]. Very simple thing. Anyone you meet, “My dear friend, just hear little.” “What is that?” “Now, Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You kindly think of Kṛṣṇa. Just offer your obeisances to Kṛṣṇa, just become a bhakta and chant His holy name.” Bas. Your guru duty is finished. So it is not very difficult task. Anyone can do this.” (leture December 16, 1976)**

Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions that to become guru there is no need of qualification and anyone can do this. But does that mean that he’s saying that there’s no need of qualification to become a dīkṣā guru (who is worshiped as good as God) and that anyone and everyone should think themselves qualified and decide for themselves to take up the post ? Why then does Śrīla Prabhupāda emphatically state:

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

**“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.” (Madhya 24.330)**

**“One should not try to be an artificially advanced devotee, thinking, “I am a first-class devotee.” Such thinking should be avoided. It is best not to accept any disciples.” (Madhya 7.130)**

This last statement that one should not think oneself as advanced also gives another indication why a specific order would be required for someone to initiate. An advanced disciple who is in fact qualified to become a dīkṣā guru would actually be thinking of himself as unqualified:

**“This is the nature of a pure devotee; he always thinks himself to be the lowest, to be incompetent and unqualified.” (S.B. 7.10.48)**

Such a devotee would thus require a specific order from his spiritual master obliging him to take up the task of initiating disciples of his own.

Consider again such statements as:

**“become a guru...it is not very difficult task. Anyone can do this”, “ “One may not think that ‘I am not qualified to become guru’.” “There is no need of qualification.”**

If such statements refer also to becoming a dīkṣā guru and anyone can just become a dīkṣā guru on their own discretion without first qualifying as an uttama-adhikārī then why did Śrīla Prabhupāda make such statements as :**“Actually amongst my Godbrothers no one is qualified to become ācārya.”** ?

Didn't the disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta have the same right to become ācāryas on their own initiative ?

Why does Śrīla Prabhupāda in one place state “become a guru... Anyone can do this”, and in other places state that nobody can become guru unless he's ordered by his guru ?

**“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.”** (October 28, 1975 Nairobi)

Śrīla Prabhupāda is evidently speaking of becoming a dīkṣā guru in this instance and at other times speaking in general terms mostly of becoming a śikṣā guru. Is there no distinction between the two ? It appears that Śrīla Prabhupāda's general instruction for everyone to preach is being confused as an instruction for everyone to become a dīkṣā guru (who is to be worshiped, according to śāstra, on the same level as the Supreme Personality of Godhead)

Considering all of the above, that an intermediate devotee can only give insufficient guidance, that the disciples cannot advance very well towards the ultimate goal of life and that the guru may be overwhelmed by the karma of the disciples, it is sound reasoning to again conclude that **“One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī”**. One can however **“become a spiritual master himself, just as a student becomes a monitor in a class with a limited number of disciples”**

### The “Tradition”

**“... 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.”** (SPL Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa, December 2, 1975)

Based upon a statement such as the above the argument is often put forward that there is a “tradition” of the disciplic succession that when one dīkṣā guru physically departs, then one or some of his disciples automatically become the next dīkṣā guru. With this idea it is assumed that the ṛtvik system goes against this “tradition” and against the śāstra. Let us first consider what is meant by this law of disciplic succession.

Śrīla Prabhupāda first states the principle that initiating disciples is to be conducted only in the absence of one's own initiating spiritual master. The physical absence of the spiritual master however, is not the only condition required for initiating disciples. As we know, Śrīla Prabhupāda states in many places that the qualification must also be there, specifically that of being an uttama-adhikārī. Śrīla Prabhupāda has stated that after the disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta many disciples attempted to take the position of initiating spiritual master but were not qualified. **“Actually amongst my Godbrothers no one is qualified to become ācārya.”** (Letter to Rūpānuga 4/28/74). Additionally, there must be also a specific order to initiate disciples, for it is not to be done on one's own initiative alone.

**“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) “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.”(NOD 14) “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.” (Lec 10/28/75)**

It is evident that the law of disciplic succession does not mean that a disciple automatically becomes an initiating spiritual master upon the disappearance of his spiritual master. The qualification and authorization must be there. The general order to preach is also different than a specific authorization to initiate disciples. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta gave an instruction to all of his disciples to preach throughout the world. Yet this itself was not a specific order to become the next initiating ācārya.

**“Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, at the time of his departure, requested all his disciples to form a governing body and conduct missionary activities cooperatively. He did not instruct a particular man to become the next ācārya. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of ācārya, and they split into two factions over who the next ācārya would be. Consequently, both factions were asara, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master” (Ādi 12.8) “Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, at the time of his passing away, ordered all his disciples to work conjointly to preach the mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu all over the world. Later, however, some self-interested, foolish disciples disobeyed his orders. Each one of them wanted to become head of the mission, and they fought in the courts, neglecting the order of the spiritual master, and the entire mission was defeated.” (Ādi 7.95-96)**

That specific order to become the next initiating spiritual master was however given to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

**Interviewer: So you are at this particular time then the head in the world of this movement? Would that be correct? Prabhupāda: I have got many other Godbrothers, but I was particularly ordered to do this from the very beginning. (Conversation 7/4/71)**

As far as tradition is concerned, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that a Vaiṣṇava's only tradition is to serve the Lord. As necessary, such devotional service can be done according to time, place and circumstance (deśa-kāla-pātra).

**“if you want to make your life successful, then you must keep the tradition of brāhmaṇa-vaiṣṇava. So our, we are Vaiṣṇava. Our only tradition is how to satisfy Viṣṇu.” (Lec. 7/30/73)**

**“Śrī Vīrarāghava Ācārya, an ācārya in the disciplic succession of the Rāmānuja-sampradāya, has remarked in his commentary that candalas, or conditioned souls who are born in lower than sūdra families, can also be initiated according to circumstances. The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them Vaiṣṇavas.” (S.B. 4.8.5 P)**

**“Vaiṣṇava who is preaching, it may be in a different way, according to time and place and the party they have to change something, deśa-kāla-pātra--but we have to see the essence.” (S.B.Lec. 10/18/74)**

Śrīla Prabhupāda's preaching mission is unlike any other as he is the first ācārya to establish a worldwide society, making himself easily accessible throughout the world by countless literatures and recordings. If we have faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda, it is not very difficult to understand that he is empowered by Lord Caitanya to do whatever is required for delivering the fallen conditioned souls. This includes establishing a ṛtvik system for accepting disciples throughout the world for

generations to come. Vāsudeva Datta delivered the entire universe during the era of Lord Caitanya. Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda is capable of the same magnitude of service to the Lord. There should be no surprise that by the will of Lord Caitanya, Śrīla Prabhupāda can remain as the initiating ācārya of ISKCON for as long as it continues to exist.

### **Śāstra and Following The Instructions Of The Pure Devotee**

(some segments here are from the same webpage covering book changes)

The argument that the ṛtvik system goes against śāstra is based upon the false conception that one can know śāstra independently of the ācārya. Anything we actually know about śāstra is only what we have learned by the grace of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Therefore the real consideration should be not what we think we know according to śāstra, but rather what are Śrīla Prabhupāda's actual instructions.

According to śāstra, a sannyāsī is not even to travel over the ocean, yet at the same time, Lord Caitanya has instructed for a spiritual master to preach throughout the world. An empowered Vaiṣṇava is therefore authorized to transcend Vedic injunctions when it is required. Had Śrīla Prabhupāda followed this 'tradition' of sannyāsīs not crossing the ocean, then nobody outside India would actually know anything about pure devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Every devotee acknowledges the fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda, as the founder Ācārya of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, performed many unprecedented activities:

- 1 . Harinama dīkṣā given by mail
- 2 . Brahminical initiation given by tape recording
- 3 . ṛtvik's or deputies chanting on initiates beads
- 4 . The performance of marriages by a sannyāsī
- 5 . Young unmarried women being allowed to live in the āśrama as brahmacāriṇīs
- 6 . Initiates names being given at the time of Harinama dīkṣā

According to some sastric injunctions, it would appear that these activities are not possible. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda, being completely transcendental, is empowered to do whatever is required to spread Kṛṣṇa Consciousness according to time, place and circumstance. Oftentimes persons with a limited understanding have made the great mistake of criticizing Śrīla Prabhupāda for these activities.

**"I'm sometimes criticized by my Godbrothers that I have become a marriage-maker, because a sannyāsī does not take part in a marriage ceremony, but I get my disciples married. This is also unique in the history. So they criticize me that I have become a marriage-maker. But they, they do not know why I take this risk. I have got many disciples, they are married couples, but all of them, husband and wife, they are helping this movement." (lec 8/22/73)**

**"Unfortunately we are surrounded by neophyte Godbrothers who do not appreciate the extraordinary activities of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. They simply try to bring us to their platform, and they try to criticize us in every respect. We very much regret their naive activities and poor fund of knowledge." (NOI6)**

Establishing a system to continue giving dīkṣā after his disappearance is also possible for Śrīla Prabhupāda. Due to misconceptions, one may argue that the ṛtvik system goes against śāstra. There are problems however using śāstra against the ṛtvik system as this is what His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda himself has instructed for the future of ISKCON. Therefore it is not about what "we" think is right, or what "you" think is right. It's about what Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed us to do based on what "he" knows to be right, even if we don't always understand it or agree. Taking that

into consideration, lets look at one example of using scripture to try to disprove various points of the ṛtvik system.

Nectar of Devotion instructs that we are not to wear red or blue in front of the Deities. If we do so, we have made an offense. Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed us that we do not have to follow this. Countless devotees have all worn red or blue in front of the Deities many times, and in a movement that is quick to critique you, close to nothing has been said. The few times it was brought up it was simultaneously and quickly countered, "Prabhupāda told us we do not have to follow this." That ended it. This is only one example of many in which we do differently from śāstra simply because Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed us in that way. Here are more:

A sannyāsī is not to travel over the ocean. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda, as a sannyāsī, traveled over the ocean to save us. This is not according to shastric instruction, yet he did it. And, he was following his spiritual master's instruction. Again, it is not shastric for a sannyāsī to travel by air, yet Prabhupāda traveled by air. Śrīla Prabhupāda created brahmacārīni āśramas which is not an instruction to be found in the śāstra and literally unheard of. Prabhupāda had women lead kirtans, give Bhāgavatam class, talk on the streets to men for the sake of preaching and book distribution, and had them hold leadership positions in ISKCON. Again, not in accord with shastric instruction. Śrīla Prabhupāda performed marriage ceremonies, which again was not shastric for a sannyāsī. Our lineage and śāstra requires the chanting of 64 rounds daily, and Śrīla Prabhupāda's original instruction was indeed 64. Later, he changed that instruction to 16. Prabhupāda also gave the Gāyatrī mantra to women, which is not the instruction of śāstra.

Śrīla Prabhupāda did much that may seem to be not according to shastric injunctions or to previous 'traditions' of our sampradāya, yet who dare to criticize his choices? Who dares to say he's wrong? What Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks is actually as good as śāstra itself. It's not however that the question is invalid of what to do when the instruction of the spiritual master seems to differ from the instruction of śāstra; It was asked during the time of Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical presence as well. But when we looked at ourselves we realized that we cannot possibly know what is really the Kṛṣṇa conscious thing to do more than Śrīla Prabhupāda. How can anyone presume they understand śāstra more than jagat-guru Śrīla Prabhupāda? Without him, most of us would not know śāstra in the first place, or would know impersonal śāstra at best, or belong to some wishy-washy church.

It is a fact that the instruction of jagat-guru should always be followed even if we notice that scripture seems to contradict it. For us to compare Śrīla Prabhupāda's instruction to the instruction of śāstra, and next evaluate it, is not our job. Śrīla Prabhupāda, our spiritual master, is the person to make such comparisons, relate them to us and decide what would be best for our spiritual life. When he has made that decision, we are not to turn into doubting Thomas. I have seen some fall down who argue about wearing red clothing or reading various Sanskrit translations, thinking they know Sanskrit better than Śrīla Prabhupāda. Many of them are gone or practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness in some odd way, as they can no longer understand the true philosophy due to their offenses. Bottom line on this topic? Between the instruction of jagat-guru and the instruction of śāstra, the one of jagat-guru has always been the more important. Therefore one has to figure out, "What are his instructions?" Many think they know, and some do. Yet so much has been hidden. We are here to try to uncover and recover some of that.

### **The Zonal System & The Election Process**

In 1972 Śrīla Prabhupāda indicated his intention for a zonal system whereby initiations would be performed by his disciples.



**"GBC means now they should tour very extensive. That is the first principle, the GBC. Not sit down (in) one place and pass resolution. No, they must be active. They must act like me. As I am old man, I am traveling all over the world. Now to give me relief, the GBC members...I shall expand into twelve more so that they can exactly work like me. Gradually they will be initiators. At least first initiation. You must make advance. That is my motive. So, in that way I want to divide it in twelve zones. And we have to make more propaganda throughout the whole world. Now if you think that the world is so big, twelve members are insufficient, then you can increase more than that and make the zone similarly divided. It is world affair after all." (Conversation with GBC May 25, 1972 Los Angeles)**

Since Śrīla Prabhupāda is speaking here of zones and indicating a time extending over his physical presence, he is evidently referring to his disciples as "initiators" in the capacity of initiating on his behalf.

On another occasion later, after he had already deputed certain disciples to perform initiations on his behalf within this zonal system, he spoke using similar terminology, referring to these representatives, or "initiators".

**Prabhupāda: Hare Kṛṣṇa. One Bengali gentleman has come from New York ?**

**Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Yes. Mr. Sukamal Roy Chowdury.**

**Prabhupāda: So I have deputed some of you to initiate. Hm?**

**Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Yes. Actually... Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda.**

**Prabhupāda: So I think Jayapatākā can do that if he likes. I have already deputed. Tell him. (October 18, 1977 Vṛndāvana)**

It is undisputed that Śrīla Prabhupāda was the only initiator up until his disappearance, yet here he says that Jayapatākā can "initiate" him. It is understood that Śrīla Prabhupāda is actually giving dīkṣā and his representative is performing the formal ceremony on his behalf as clearly outlined by the July 9th letter:

**"Śrīla Prabhupāda indicated that soon He would appoint some of His senior disciples to act as "ṛtvik - representative of the ācārya, for the purpose of performing initiations, both first initiation and second initiation. [...] The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the above eleven senior devotees acting as His representative." (July 9th Letter to all temple presidents and GBC's)**

It is therefore consistent that Śrīla Prabhupāda would refer to his representative for initiation (later called "officiating ācāryas" or "ṛtviks") as "initiators". Whether Śrīla Prabhupāda was intending at that time for these "initiators" to go on to initiate their own disciples after his departure is a point of contention, yet Śrīla Prabhupāda was questioned during news interviews in 1976 on three occasions about who will succeed him after his departure and each time he spoke of a committee of GBC zonal secretaries. He never spoke of any successors and does not say that his disciples would carry on the movement by initiating their own disciples. In fact he even states there is no need of any successor ācārya, because the zonal committee as his representative, would manage the movement.

**Reporter: Is there anyone who is designated to succeed you as the primary teacher of the movement? Prabhupāda: I am training some, I mean to say, advanced students so that they may be very easily take up the charge. I have made them GBC. They are under my direct training, and I think they will be able to conduct this movement. Reporter: Do you expect to name one person**

as your successor or have you already? Prabhupāda: That I am not contemplating now. But there is no need of one person. As other things are managed, but by committee, so this can also be managed, and the committee may elect one person as chief. As, just like in the democracy there are senators and there is president, so it may be I may nominate or they can nominate. (June 4, 1976)

Interviewer: What happens when that inevitable time comes when a successor is needed? Rāmeśvara: He is asking about the future, who will guide the movement in the future. Prabhupāda: They will guide. I am training them. Interviewer: Will there be one spiritual leader, though? Prabhupāda: No, I am training GBC, eighteen all over the world. (Interview June 10, 1976)

Interviewer: I was wondering if he had a successor to do... Do you have a successor to take your place when you die? Prabhupāda: Not yet settled up. Not yet settled up. Interviewer: So what process would the Hare Kṛṣṇas...? Prabhupāda: We have got secretaries. They are managing. Rāmeśvara: He has appointed from all the disciples a group of secretaries. Each one is in charge of a different sector of the world. Interviewer: How many secretaries? Rāmeśvara: Presently there is eighteen. Interviewer: And so that group of eighteen secretaries will choose another leader? Prabhupāda: I am training each one of them as leader so that they can spread extensively. That is my idea. (interview with Newsweek July 14, 1976)

Śrīla Prabhupāda is specifically questioned three times about whether he will have a successor, and on each occasion he refers to this zonal system to carry forth the movement after his disappearance. There is no specific mention here however of disciples initiating their own disciples and becoming successor dīkṣā gurus.

It is indeed a fact that for ten years after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure a zonal system was in effect, This clearly indicates that Śrīla Prabhupāda never gave an instruction for the zonal system to end after his disappearance. This is consistent with the fact that the July 9th letter instructs for the system to continue henceforward without any indication of it ending at any time.

The zonal system set up by Śrīla Prabhupāda is intended for officiating ācāryas to initiate within their zones on his behalf. The eleven officiating ācāryas however assumed themselves as successor dīkṣā gurus, initiating, within their zones, disciples of their own. It is quite evident that the "zonal gurus" either did not understand, or purposely disregarded Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions on how initiations were to be conducted within these zones after Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance. The zonal system, improperly executed, resulted in havoc and consequently was dismantled by ISKCON leaders.

The zonal system as well as the process of elections was established by Śrīla Prabhupāda and is intended for ṛtviks, or officiating ācāryas. When however these functions are applied to initiating gurus, it becomes a concoction which is clearly contrary to what Śrīla Prabhupāda has instructed. The election process is applicable to the ṛtvik system only and was never intended as a means to authorize initiating spiritual masters. After dismantling the zonal system the GBC introduced this practice of electing gurus.

Often an argument is posed that to have officiating ācāryas initiating disciples on behalf of the spiritual master after his disappearance would not be in line with the "tradition" of the paramparā. Where however in the history of the paramparā was there ever a voting board by which dīkṣā gurus were elected ? According to statements in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books a Vaiṣṇava ācārya does not require to be elected by any voting board:

**"Mundane votes have no jurisdiction to elect a Vaiṣṇava ācārya. A Vaiṣṇava ācārya is self-effulgent, and there is no need for any court judgment."** (Madhya 1.220)

**“Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī advises that one not accept a spiritual master in terms of hereditary or customary social and ecclesiastical conventions.”** (Adi 1.35) (the GBC describes itself as “the highest ecclesiastical body governing ISKCON”)

Śrīla Prabhupāda had stated that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was against the idea that an initiating ācārya could be nominated by the GBC:

**“His idea was ācārya was not to be nominated amongst the governing body. He said openly you make a GBC and conduct the mission.”** (Letter to Rūpānuga, April 28 1974)

Śrīla Prabhupāda had said that GBC’s may be nominated however. When questioned about whether he’d have a successor, he never stated that there would be a multitude of successor ācāryas or even one for that matter, but he did indicate that a committee of zonal secretaries would succeed him, and he suggested that they may conduct nominations.

**Reporter: Is there anyone who is designated to succeed you as the primary teacher of the movement? Prabhupāda: I am training some, I mean to say, advanced students so that they may be very easily take up the charge. I have made them GBC. They are under my direct training, and I think they will be able to conduct this movement. Reporter: Do you expect to name one person as your successor or have you already? Prabhupāda: That I am not contemplating now. But there is no need of one person. As other things are managed, but by committee, so this can also be managed, and the committee may elect one person as chief. As, just like in the democracy there are senators and there is president, so it may be I may nominate or they can nominate.**

The idea that GBC’s could be nominated has been also indicated as applicable to the selection of ṛtviks, or officiating ācāryas. The eleven officiating ācāryas which were originally selected by Śrīla Prabhupāda were the GBC zonal secretaries and Śrīla Prabhupāda had stated on May 28th that the GBC could select competent persons to fulfill important roles and could also replace a GBC member should one falldown.

**Prabhupāda: So there is no question of changing GBC. Satsvarūpa: No. Prabhupāda: Rather, one who is competent, he can be selected to act by the board of the GBC. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Of course, if someone has a falldown, just like in the past some GBC men have fallen down... Prabhupāda: He should be replaced. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Then he should be replaced. But that’s a serious falldown, not some minor discrepancy. Prabhupāda: They must be all ideal ācārya-like. In the beginning we have done for working. Now we should be very cautious. Anyone who is deviating, he can be replaced.** (Conv. Vrndavana 5-28-77)

This has also been indicated by Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja having stated that Śrīla Prabhupāda said other ṛtviks could also be added as is necessary:

**“Before I got ready to type the (July 9th ) 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.’”**

Thus if the GBC were simply nominating ṛtviks, or officiating ācāryas, then having such voting procedures would not be out of line with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions. Where however did Śrīla Prabhupāda say that dīkṣā gurus could be elected and that if they fall down they can be replaced by nominating procedures ? Śrīla Prabhupāda does state **“They must be all ideal ācārya-like”** in regards to GBC representatives, but where does he say that they could elect themselves and others to become full fledged initiating ācāryas ?

**Gurus and Initiation: Laws Of ISKCON**

This Segment is taken directly from the official GBC resolutions published as "ISKCON lawbook" a section entitled "Gurus and Initiation" Laws of ISKCON" which publically states the official practices and procedures Of today's ISKCON institution.

Over the years, rather than having a clear and consistent standard procedure on initiations and worship of the dīkṣā guru, the GBC has made many adjustments and amendments to their policies. This itself is a good indication of a system which is speculative and unauthorized. The following "ISKCON laws" are claimed to be based on teachings of previous ācāryas "in addition to the writings of Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and instructions however, according to Śrīla Prabhupāda are complete in themselves for guiding his society. He never required that ISKCON leaders would have to go to other sources for information on how to manage the society. One reason is that the ācāryas often preach according to time and circumstances and thus there may be certain differences in the practical application of the philosophy.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's circumstances of preaching worldwide in various languages, setting up an international society for many years to come are vastly different than the circumstances of previous ācāryas. Another reason why Śrīla Prabhupāda would require instructions for his society to remain fully within his own books is that the authenticity of translations and commentaries of the previous ācāryas are often questionable. These books were written often for certain class of individuals and in languages of India such as Sanskrit and Bengali requiring to be translated by authorized and qualified persons. Thus there is often a shadow of doubt as to what is authorized. Whereas Śrīla Prabhupāda's books are a standard of authority which can be widely accepted and which Śrīla Prabhupāda has said would be the lawbooks for ten thousand years. Additionally, it is taught by Śrīla Prabhupāda that everything must be understood through the current ācārya and that one cannot jump over and try to understand directly the teachings of previous ācāryas.

**"So this is Paramparā system. You cannot imagine what my spiritual master said. Or even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. The is called Paramparā system. You cannot jump over to the superior guru, neglecting the next ācārya immediate next ācārya. Just like our, this Gau.,, Caitanya Mahāprabhu's cult; we cannot understand Caitanya Mahāprabhu directy. It is not possible."** (Lec 12/8/73)

Śrīla Prabhupāda has stated that complete instructions have been given in his books, everything that is needed to know for his disciples to go back to Godhead is there.

**"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 mv books."** (Letter to Satsvarūpa 9/13,,0)

Thus Śrīla Prabhupāda has not required his leaders to go to the books of previous ācāryas in order to establish specific procedures for his ISKCON society. The reason why ISKCON leaders have done so is due to the influence Of the Gauḍīya- Maṭha which Śrīla Prabhupāda had forewarned of, and because Śrīla Prabhupāda's books themselves make very little or absolutely no mention of such things as "reinitiation" or "suspended guru" (these terms do not exist anywhere in Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings. One can see by searching the Vedabase).

Śrīla Prabhupāda does mention in a few places about rejecting a guru if that guru turns out to be unauthorized. However he never speaks of his society as being one where everyone must speculate about who is a bonafide spiritual master and sometimes take reinitiation three or four times, nor is it likely that he would require us to be subjected to such circumstances. Śrīla Prabhupāda never spoke of such a system where dīkṣā gurus are subordinate to a committee which can suspend the powers of a dīkṣā guru or terminate them altogether. Thus the following "ISKCON laws"

are evidently concocted in order to accommodate an unauthorized system of rubber stamping dīkṣā gurus in ISKCON.

### **The "ISKCON Laws":**

**1.7. Rejection Of a Fallen "Guru"** N.B.: The following laws are based on Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhajanamṛta by Śrī Narahari Sarkara (an associate Of Śrī Caitanya), Bhakti Sandharbha by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, and Jaiva Dharma by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, in addition to the writings of Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

**1.7.1. When a Fallen Guru May Be Rejected:** If it is ascertained either by the admission of the guru, or by the testimony of irrefutably reliable witness(es) that the guru was fallen at the time of initiation then the disciple has a legitimate reason to reject him and take re-initiation from a bona fide spiritual master

#### **1.7.2. When a Fallen Guru Must Be Rejected**

**1.7.2.1. Hopelessly entangled in sense gratification:** If a guru has become hopelessly entangled in sense gratification, and it has been established by reliable testimony or by his own admissions that he has been regularly violating the regulative principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and if there is virtually no hope for his rectification, then the disciple should reject him and may accept re-initiation.

#### **1.7.2.2. Takes on demonic qualities**

If the spiritual master takes on demoniac qualities and becomes inimical to ISKCON, he should be rejected and the disciple may take re-initiation.

#### **1.7.3. When Not to Reject a Fallen Guru**

If a guru is engaged in sense gratification, violating one or more of the regulative principles, but there is hope that he can be rectified, then his disciples should not reject him but should allow time for such rectification to take place, and they should take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and senior Vaiṣṇavas as śikṣā gurus.

#### **1.7.4. When a Suspended Guru May Be Rejected**

A disciple of a suspended guru who has severely lost his faith in his spiritual master, or who has developed an offensive mentality towards him, and who is unable to regain his faith, even after hearing many instructions in the matter, may take permission from the spiritual master for release to accept a different initiating guru. The devotee should act in consultation with his local GBC representative. If the suspended guru withholds his permission, then the disciple may seek permission from the GBC body.

#### **1.7.5. "Guru-āśraya" for Guidance**

Devotees whose initiating spiritual master has fallen down should take guidance from the GBC papers entitled "Guru-āśraya" and "Questions and Answers About Reinitiation." These papers also present ISKCON's guidelines on the importance of taking shelter of a spiritual master and the role of śikṣā guru.

### **Is The Physical Presence Of The Initiating Spiritual Master Essential ?**

In today's caste system of India which is based upon the bodily conception, one common idea is that an initiating spiritual master is primarily a person who conducts an initiation ceremony. In this concept there is generally more emphasis placed on the physicality and bodily designation of the person acting as the initiating guru rather than on actual spiritual qualification. This conception

has carried over into the current ISKCON system whereby many believe that there is no possibility of dīkṣā taking place unless the spiritual master is physically present. In this system there is practically no consideration of whether the initiating spiritual master is actually a mahā-bhāgavata, but rather the emphasis is placed on whether or not the person is physically present.

According to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the initiation ceremony, or formal aspect of dīkṣā, although it has its significance, is secondary to the essential aspect which is transmission of transcendental knowledge. The performance of a ceremony in itself does not constitute the process of dīkṣā, but rather enhances it by formalizing one's commitment and vows to the spiritual master.

**"...disciplic succession does not always mean that one has to be initiated officially. Disciplic succession means to accept the disciplic conclusion." (Letter Dinesh 10/31/69)**

**"Initiation or no initiation, first thing is knowledge. (break) ...knowledge. Initiation is formality. Just like you go to a school for knowledge, and admission is formality. That is not very important thing." (Conv. 10/16/76)**

**"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 dīkṣā, or initiation. Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness." (Madhya 9.61)**

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness is fully contained within his books, and that by regular reading and practice, this reception of transcendental knowledge takes place. Sometimes however, the following quotes are presented in such a way as to establish that Śrīla Prabhupāda's books cannot be understood unless one accepts initiation from someone who is physically present:

**"If God sees that you are sincere, He will give you a spiritual master who can give you protection. He will help you from within and without, without in the physical form of spiritual master, and within as the spiritual master within the heart." (5/23/74 Rome)**

**Indian lady: How does one contact the spiritual master? Through a book can you contact the spiritual master? Prabhupāda: No, you have to associate. Śyāmasundara: "Can you associate through a book?" she asked. Prabhupāda: Yes, through books, and also personal. Because when you make a spiritual master you have got personal touch. Not that in air you make a spiritual master. You make a spiritual master concrete. So as soon as you make a spiritual master, you should be inquisitive. (9/23/69 London)**

**"One should not proudly think that one can understand the transcendental loving service of the Lord simply by reading books. One must become a servant of a Vaiṣṇava. As Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has confirmed, chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra peyeche kebā: one cannot be in a transcendental position unless one very faithfully serves a pure Vaiṣṇava. One must accept a Vaiṣṇava guru (ādau gurv-āśrayam), and then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is. That is called the paramparā system." (C.C. Antya 7.54 purport)**

**"So if you want to understand Bhagavad-gītā, then we must understand in the same way as the person who directly heard from. This is called paramparā system. Suppose I have heard something from my spiritual master, so I speak to you the same thing. So this is paramparā system. You cannot imagine what my spiritual master said. Or even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. This is called paramparā system. You cannot jump over to the superior guru, neglecting the next ācārya, immediate next ācārya. Just like our, this Gau..., Caitanya Mahāprabhu's cult; we cannot understand Caitanya Mahāprabhu directly. It is not possible. We have to understand through the Gosvāmīs." (Lecture, Los Angeles 12/8/73)**

(Śrīla Prabhupāda also stated that we can associate with the Gosvāmī's by reading his book Nectar of Devotion.)

**"So our ācārya in the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya, the Śrī Rūpa, Sanātana, Bhaṭṭa-Raghu-nātha, the six Gosvāmīs, and if we associate with them... this book Nectar of Devotion, Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, if you read regularly, try to understand this means you are associating with Śrī-la Rūpa Gosvāmī directly; and if you act accordingly, then you are serving their lotus feet".** (N.O.D. Lecture 10/20/72)

The above quotes are sometimes taken with the assumption that Śrīla Prabhupāda is no longer the immediate or current ācārya and that one therefore cannot understand his books without taking initiation from someone physically present. This however brings up the question of how Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples are able to advance without the presence of his physical body. Śrīla Prabhupāda initiated many disciples who never contacted him physically, but have the opportunity always to advance by hearing his words and following his instructions. Śrīla Prabhupāda's points in the above quotes are not to negate the potency of reading his books but to emphasize that one should also faithfully serve the pure Vaiṣṇava and inquire while understanding the Paramparā message from the current ācārya.

As far as physical association is concerned, the physical aspect of Śrīla Prabhupāda still continues to be present in the form of his books, audio and video recordings, murtis and pictures, which he has intended to remain for the duration of 9,500 years. There are also śikṣā-gurus physically present to give guidance in understanding his teachings. The following quotes establish that the presence of the physical body of the spiritual master is not absolutely essential. The spiritual master remains present by his words and by simply hearing and following his instructions, one can serve and associate with the spiritual master directly.

**"Some people argue that Arjuna was talking with Kṛṣṇa because Kṛṣṇa was present before him, whereas in my case, Kṛṣṇa is not present. So how can I get directions? But that is not a fact. Kṛṣṇa is present by His words—the Bhagavad-gītā."** (Kṛṣṇa the Reservoir of Pleasure)

**"Never think that I am absent from you. Physical presence is not essential; presence by message (or hearing) is real touch."** (letter to students, Vrindaban 8/2 /67)

**"In my books the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa 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."** (Letter Bahurūpa 11/22/74)

**"[...]one has to associate with liberated persons not directly, physically, but by understanding, through philosophy and logic, the problems of life."** (3.31.48)

**"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."** (Ādi 1.35)

**"Physical presence is sometimes appreciable and sometimes not, but vāñī continues to exist eternally. Therefore we must take advantage of the vāñī, not the physical presence."**

**"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."** (Lec 1/13/69 L.A.)

“There are two words, vāṇī and vapuḥ. vāṇī means words, and vapuḥ means this physical body. So vāṇī is more important than the vapuḥ. 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.” (Lec 3/2/75)

“...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.” (Letter Mālatī 5/28/68)

“I also do not feel separation from my Guru Mahārāja. 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.” (Letter Śyāmasundara 7/19/70)

“The potency of transcendental sound is never minimized because the vibrator is apparently absent.” (S.B. 2.9.8 purport)

“Next you ask if I am present in my picture and form? Yes. In form as well as in teachings. To carry out the teachings of guru is more important than to worship the form, but none of them should be neglected. Form is called vapu and teachings is called vāṇī. Both should be worshiped. vāṇī is more important than vapu.” (Letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa 12/14/72)

“So far as personal association with Guru is concerned, I was only with my Guru Mahārāja four or five times, but I have never left his association, not even for a moment. Because I am following his instruction, I have never felt any separation. There are some of my Godbrothers here in India, who had constant personal association with Guru Mahārāja, 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.” (Letter Satyadhana 2/20/72)

“After 80 years, no one can be expected to live long. My life is almost ended. So you have to carry on, and these books will do everything.” (Conv. 2/18/76)

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..” (Conv. 5/13/73)

“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 in your endeavor. Whether I am present or not present, it doesn't matter. As Kṛṣṇa is living eternally, similarly, living being also lives eternally. But kīrtir yasya sa jīvati: "One who has done service to the Lord lives forever." So you have been taught to serve Kṛṣṇa, and with Kṛṣṇa we'll live eternally. Our life is eternal. Na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre. A temporary disappearance of this body, it doesn't matter. Body is meant for disappearance.” (Arrival address 5/17/77 Vṛndāvana)

“So utilize whatever time you find to make a thorough study of my books. Then all your questions will be answered.” (Letter Upendra 1/7/76)

Nārāyaṇa: So those disciples who don't have the opportunity to see you or speak with you... Śrīla Prabhupāda: That he was speaking, vāṇī and vapu. Even if you don't see his body, you take his words, vāṇī. Nārāyaṇa: But how do they know they're pleasing you? Prabhupāda: If you actually follow the words of Guru, that means he is pleased. And if you do not follow, how can he be pleased [...] My Guru Mahārāja passed away in 1936, and I started this Movement in 1965, thirty years after. Then? I am getting the mercy of Guru. This vāṇī. Even if Guru is not physically present, if you follow the vāṇī, then you are getting help.



**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?  
**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... **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. **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. So any case, you have to follow a spiritual master. There cannot be the question without spiritual master. Is that clear?  
**Madhudviṣa:** I mean like we couldn't understand the teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā without your help, without your presentation. **Prabhupāda:** Similarly, you have to understand Bible with the help of the priest in the church. (Lec. 10/2/68 Sea.)

**"Sometimes a dīkṣā-guru is not present always. Therefore one can take learning, instruction, from an advanced devotee. That is called the śikṣā-guru."** (Honolulu July 4th 1974)

Opponents of this system of accepting Śrīla Prabhupāda as the current dīkṣā-guru argue that this system is just like the Christians who say that Jesus is the only way. In some regards the situation is similar as described by Śrīla Prabhupāda above, however unfortunately in most cases these people are not actually following the teachings of Christ largely because his teachings have been adulterated and the Bible has been changed a great deal. Thus the real message is practically lost. Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings however have been extensively recorded and preserved and thus we are greatly fortunate that we can continue to take his association constantly. For more guidance as Prabhupāda says we can take help from advanced devotees or śikṣā gurus. Thus with this system all aspects of initiation, namely receiving transcendental knowledge and guidance are available to us.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has delegated the responsibility of carrying out the formal aspect of initiation to officiating ācāryas, or ṛtviks. In his books and recordings, Śrīla Prabhupāda is personally present giving this transcendental knowledge, and one simply has to apply oneself to receive it. Therefore, physical presence is not essential in order for Śrīla Prabhupāda to give dīkṣā. The formal acceptance of a disciple is carried out by śikṣā gurus, generally temple presidents or GBC's who give a recommendation for initiation to a local officiating ācārya, who then chants on the beads and selects a spiritual name. The fire yajña is then performed by the ṛtvik or temple president. A disciple then continues to progress in spiritual life by receiving primary guidance from Śrīla Prabhupāda as well as the assistance of śikṣā gurus who are physically present. Thus one can advance by regular association with Śrīla Prabhupāda, whose presence is completely transcendental and beyond any limitations or bodily conceptions.

### **The Paramparā & Common Misconceptions**

In his Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, Śrīla Prabhupāda presents the following succession (given from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu downwards): (1) Lord Caitanya, (2) Rūpa (Svarūpa, Sanātana), (3) Raghunātha, Jīva, (4) Kṛṣṇadāsa, (5) Narottama, (6) Viśvanātha, (7) (Baladeva) Jagannātha, (8) Bhaktivinoda, (9) Gaurakiśora, (10) Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. This is commonly accepted as the Paramparā of the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya-Sarasvatī tradition.

A historical examination of the paramparā above leaves no doubt over the fact that in this presentation of guru-paramparā, dīkṣā-connections are few and far between. It is well known that (1) Śrī Caitanya never gave dīkṣā to anyone. (2) Rūpa Gosvāmī received dīkṣā from Sanātana Gosvāmī; of Svarūpa, there is no information. (3) Raghunātha received dīkṣā from Yadunandana Ācārya; Jīva received dīkṣā from Rūpa.

(4) Kṛṣṇadas has not clearly mentioned his dīkṣā-guru, though some have suggested Raghunātha Bhatta. (5) Narottama received dīkṣā from Lokanātha Gosvāmī. (6) Viśvanātha received dīkṣā from Rādhāramaṇa Cakravartī, who was in the third generation in the dīkṣā-paramparā from Narottama dāsa; there was a gap of roughly one hundred years between their births.

(7) Baladeva received dīkṣā from Rādhāramaṇa dāsa Gosvāmī; Jagannātha received dīkṣā from Jagadānanda Gosvāmī (viz. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidana). There was a gap of roughly one hundred years between the two. (8) Bhaktivinoda received dīkṣā from Vipina Vihārī Gosvāmī. (9) Gaurakiśora received dīkṣā in Śāntipura (according to some, from Nandakiśora Gosvāmī).

This is the guru-paramparā presented by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura from Śrī Caitanya downwards. As one may easily observe, there is no consistent dīkṣā-lineage in this presentation. Moreover, what is perhaps more astonishing is that there was no physical link, neither dīkṣā nor śikṣā, between Narottama and Viśvanātha, nor between Viśvanātha Baladeva and Jagannātha. This confirms that the guru-paramparā may descend even without the physical proximity of either the initiator or the instructor.

The conclusion here is that the disciplic succession would continue with the ṛtvik system through both Srila Prabhupāda in his transcendental instructions combined with physically present śikṣā gurus. It could only end if the philosophy is changed or no longer propagated or practiced by anyone. Changes to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books however, and changes to the pure philosophy such as the belief that a bonafide initiating spiritual master in the paramparā may sometimes fall down, could bring about the end of or at least endanger the continuation of the bonafide paramparā. This is already happening with changes to the initiation system and many changes to Prabhupāda's books, some of which we'll cover here.

### **Will There Be Another Bonafide Initiating Ācārya ?**

**“Everything is there. Still, why you are searching after God? This is foolishness. This is foolishness. Owls', owls' philosophy. Owls' philosophy... The owl will not open the eyes to see the sun. Just open your eyes, you see, here is sun. "No, there is no sun." This is owls' philosophy.”** (Lecture 8/16/74)

Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence is also like the sun, yet for many it is covered by the clouds of illusion. Due to the great oversight of Śrīla Prabhupāda's instruction on initiation, devotees are often seeking here and there for an initiating spiritual master, sometimes traveling to India to search, and sometimes jumping from one “guru” to another. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda is already there and available for everyone. He has given everything required for our spiritual life. Contacting a bonafide initiating spiritual master is only a matter of realizing this. Of course, we should seek out the association of advanced devotees, but the initiating spiritual master is already in our presence by his transcendental vāñī.

**“And as you are all following my instruction, in that matter, the initiator is already there.”** (Letter to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa 8/19/68)

The question of whether another mahā-bhāgavata initiating spiritual master is present on the planet or will manifest in the future is an area of speculation which generally diverts the attention of devotees from fully focusing on Śrīla Prabhupāda's vāñī. Rather than spending time wondering

about something unknown, we can proceed forward based upon the facts which are known. Śrīla Prabhupāda is ever present and will remain as long as his original teachings continue to be available.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta stated that a self effulgent ācārya would manifest after him, which we know of course to be Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda however did not make such an indication. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta left the “self effulgent ācārya” system for after his departure, whereas Śrīla Prabhupāda left an officiating ācārya system, and stated that there would be no need for another person to take his place. Indeed Śrīla Prabhupāda told only days before his disappearance, that only Lord Caitanya could take his place.

**Reporter: Do you expect to name one person as your successor or have you already? Prabhupāda: That I am not contemplating now. But there is no need of one person.** (Int. 6/4/76)

**"Only Lord Caitanya can take my place. He will take care of the movement."** (Conv. 11/2/77)

As far as ISKCON is concerned, Śrīla Prabhupāda will remain as the initiator. This is set forth in the July 9th letter requiring the ṛtvik system to continue henceforward, or in other words from July 9th 1977 onwards indefinitely, unless some unique circumstance comes about whereby we can know for certain that Śrīla Prabhupāda has instructed otherwise. This continuation is duly confirmed by Śrīla Prabhupāda's will requiring that there be initiated disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda present for the duration of ISKCON's existence.

This of course is not to say that other mahā-bhāgavata pure devotees will not manifest in ISKCON. This is certainly Śrīla Prabhupāda's foremost desire. As far as can be seen by Śrīla Prabhupāda's present instructions, such devotees will serve as śikṣā gurus, continuing to remain as representatives of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the foremost ācārya, whose books will remain the foundation of ISKCON for its entire duration.

**“You have taken the right view of the importance of my books. Books will always remain. That was the view of my Guru Mahārāja, and I also have taken it. Therefore I started my movement with my books. And we shall be able to maintain everything with the sales of the books. The temples will be maintained by the book sales, and if there are no more temples, then the books shall remain.”** (Letter to Haṁsadūta 11/8/73 Hamburg)

**“Literatures are selling, they are appreciating, learned circle. Takes some time, but if we stick to our principles and do not make any compromise and push on--in this way, I have given you instruction, it will never stop; it will go on. It will never stop. At least for ten thousand years it will go on.”** (conversation New Vṛndāvana June 21, 1976)

### **Ṛtvik – Authorized & Implemented by Śrīla Prabhupāda**

In “Prabhupāda's Order”, the official GBC document declaring the ṛtvik system as “heresy”, the following is stated:

*“The signifigant point here is that terms such as ṛtvik-guru and ṛtvik-ācārya simply do not exist. There is no such term in any Sanskrit dictionary, nor in any recognized Vedic literature, to my knowledge. There is no such term because there is no such concept. In other words, our friends are proposing something which does not exist in Vedic culture. This is the main problem with it.”* (Hri-dayānanda dāsa Gosvāmī)

The term ṛtvik however, (defined as ‘priest’), and its derivatives actually appears in 32 references from the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. By no means was it ever a new term manufactured by someone's

imagination, but a term which Śrīla Prabhupāda had already given in his books and which he specifically defined in the July 9th letter as follows:

**“ ‘ṛtvik’- representative of the ācārya, for the purpose of performing initiations, both first initiation and second initiation.”** (July 9th letter to all temple presidents and GBC’s)

The specific term used by Śrīla Prabhupāda on May 28th 1977 was “officiating ācāryas”. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa twice used the term ‘ṛtvik-ācārya’ to mean the same, and Śrīla Prabhupāda complied stating “ṛtvik, yes”, and later confirmed this by authorizing the July 9th letter again using the term ‘ṛtvik’.

**Prabhupāda: I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating ācāryas. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Is that called ṛtvik-ācārya? Prabhupāda: ṛtvik, yes. [...] Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: No, he’s asking that these ṛtvik-ācāryas, they’re officiating...**

It is a false claim that ṛtvik is “something which does not exist in Vedic culture”. It is evident by the following references that the function of ṛtvik is common in Vedic culture and that the ācārya may employ his own assistant priests – ṛtviks, in Vedic ceremonies. The ṛtviks are brāhmaṇas and representatives of the ācārya. The actual matter to address is not whether ṛtvik is a bonafide Vedic concept but whether Śrīla Prabhupāda has intended for ṛtviks to continue to initiate on his behalf after his disappearance.

## References from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

### Ṛtvik:

4.6.2 sa-ṛtvik-sabhyāḥ—with all the priests and members of the sacrificial assembly.

4.7.16 ṛtvik—the priests

5.3.2 ṛtvik—priests conducting the ceremony

5.3.3 ṛtvik—the priests

5.4.17 ṛtvik—the priests

7.3.30 purport) “Acting as Supersoul, the Lord gives inspiration to a suitable person to perform the Vedic ritualistic ceremonies. In this connection, four classes of priests, known as ṛtvik, are required. They are mentioned as hotā, adhvaryu, brahma and udgātā.”

8.20.22 saha-ṛtvik-ācārya-sadasyaḥ—with all the priests, ācāryas and members of the holy assembly.

### Ṛtvijaḥ:

4.5.7 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests

4.5.18 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests

4.7.27 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests

4.7.45 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests

4.13.26 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests

4.19.27 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests

4.19.29 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests

5.3.4 ṛtvijaḥ ūcuḥ—the priests said

5.3.15 (purport) “The ṛtvijaḥ, the priests at the sacrifice”

5.3.18 (purport) “The ṛtvijaḥ, the priests”

5.7.5 (purport) Such sacrifices are impossible in this age due to the scarcity of .expert brāhmaṇas or ṛtvijaḥ who are able to take the responsibility.

8.16.53 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests recommended by the spiritual master. (Translation) One should satisfy the spiritual master [ācārya], who is very learned in Vedic literature, and should satisfy his assistant priests [known as hotā, udgātā, adhvaryu and brahma].

8.18.21 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests engaged in ritualistic ceremonies

8.18.22 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests

9.4.23 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests

9.6.35.36 ṛtvijaḥ—the priests

### **Ṛtvijām:**

4.6.52 ṛtvijām—of the priests

4.21.5 ṛtvijām—of the priests

8.23.13 ṛtvijām madhye—in the group of all the priests

9.13.1 ṛtvijām—the chief priest of the sacrifice

### **Ṛtvigbhyaḥ:**

8.16.54 ṛtvigbhyaḥ ca—and to the priests engaged by the spiritual master

(Translation) One should satisfy the spiritual master and assistant priests by giving them cloth, ornaments, cows and also some monetary contribution.

### **Ṛtvigbhiḥ:**

4.7.56 ṛtvigbhiḥ—with the priests

9.13.3 ṛtvigbhiḥ—by priests

Śrīla Prabhupāda had already for years before 1977 implemented priests by authorizing devotees, namely temple presidents, to select qualified candidates for initiation and conduct formal initiation ceremonies. The term 'ṛtvik' later was used by Śrīla Prabhupāda in reference to those devotees whom he authorized to perform these functions with the addition of chanting on beads and selecting spiritual names, which was formerly handled by Śrīla Prabhupāda alone. Certainly the term and concept of 'ṛtvik' is significantly present in the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Unfortunately in ISKCON the term ritvik is often misused as a derogatory label to demonize & outcast devotees who are simply trying to follow Prabhupāda's instructions for initiation. Rather than being understood as the priests who performs ceremonies on behalf of the spiritual master, 'ṛtviks' has instead become misunderstood as referring to envious renegade persons who are trying to deviate ISKCON. As such, devotees of Prabhupāda who accept him as the current initiating spiritual master of ISKCON have been ignorantly mislabeled by blind followers as 'ritviks'. Such blind followers, following out of sentiment rather than true knowledge, are blind to the fact that the ṛtvik system of initiation is Prabhupāda's actual instruction.

**"Make your own field and continue to become ṛtvik and act on my charge."** (Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja, July 19th 1977)

### **How To Know If You Are Accepted by Śrīla Prabhupāda As His Disciple ?**

The question is sometimes put that "how are you to know that Śrīla Prabhupāda has accepted you as his disciple ?" Śrīla Prabhupāda delegated the official acceptance of disciples to ISKCON leaders. Under ideal circumstances, were the ṛtvik system to be functioning in ISKCON, a devotee would know that he has been accepted through Śrīla Prabhupāda's authorized agent, generally a temple president. Under current circumstances, whereby the system has been dismantled by ISKCON leaders, one can simply understand whether one is following Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions and

know that he has set up a system to accept qualified candidates for initiation for generations to come.

As for formal initiation, it is recommended when possible and there is of course benefit in the formal process, otherwise however, when not available, the formal process is not considered as most essential. What is most essential is hearing from and following the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda as stated by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself:

**"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."** (O.T.G. Search for the Divine)

**"Initiation or no initiation, first thing is knowledge. (break) ...knowledge. Initiation is formality. Just like you go to a school for knowledge, and admission is formality. That is not very important thing."** (Conv. 10/16/76)

**"First of all you have to decide whether you will abide by the rules and regulation and become Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is your consideration. You have to think yourself whether you are going to take seriously this Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is your decision. Initiation is formality. If you are serious, that is real initiation. So if you have understood the Kṛṣṇa philosophy, and if you have decided that you will take Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously and preach the philosophy to others, that is your initiation. My touching is simply formality. It is your determination that is initiation."** (Room Conversation and Interview -- July 3, 1972, New York)

**"The eternal bond between disciple and spiritual master begins from the first day he hears. Just like my spiritual master. In 1922 he said in our first meeting, you are educated boys, why don't you preach this cult. That was the beginning, now it is coming to fact, Therefore the relationship began from that day."** (Letter to Jadurāṇī, 4th September 1972)

**"So I was at that time a fool, but I opined like this. And I accepted him as my spiritual master immediately. Not officially, but in my heart. That was in 1922."** (Lecture 1973)

**"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. Then officially I was initiated in 1933 because in 1923 I left Calcutta."** (Lecture, Disappearance day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, Hyderabad, 10th December 1976)

**"The chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is our main business, that is real initiation. And as you are all following my instruction, in that matter. the initiator is already there. Now the next initiation will be performed as a ceremony officially, Of course that ceremony has value because the name, Holy Name, will be delivered to the student from the disciplic succession, it has got value, but in spite of that, as you are going on chanting, please go on with this business sincerely and Kṛṣṇa willing, I may be coming to you very soon. I have already written to Jayānanda about this, so don't be impatient. Pray to Kṛṣṇa that I may meet you very soon. "** (Letter to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, 19th September 1968)

**"A disciple means one who is always following the orders of the spiritual master. So I instruct my disciples to refrain from four prohibitions, namely no eating of meat, fish or eggs, no illicit sex life, no taking of intoxication, including tea, coffee, cigarettes, etc., and no gambling. Besides that my students must chant sixteen rounds of japa of Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra daily, so if you are able to follow these principles without fail, then you are as good as my disciple. And after you have practiced these things for a few months' time, then we can see to your formal initiation."** (Letter to Suresh Chandra, 11 th August 1972)

## Changes To Śrīla Prabhupāda's Books

Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms in the previous conversation that one can accept a spiritual master, although not physically present, and receive his guidance with assistance of the scriptures and saints, or priests. This is called guru-sādhu-śāstra. This system is effective when the actual teachings of the spiritual master are presented without any change or adulteration. In the case of Christianity however, because there has been a great deal of changes to the original teachings of Christ, the authority of the Bible has been lost and the system therefore rendered ineffective. The Bible was neither written directly by Lord Jesus Christ. The Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam however, are written and translated by the mahā-bhāgavata spiritual master himself. The actual teachings of Lord Jesus Christ have been almost completely obscured, whereas the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda have been immensely documented and recorded in volumes of books and thousands of hours of media recordings. As long as this precious treasure of Śrīla Prabhupāda's vāṇī is preserved, his presence will remain, and his association and guidance will continue to be available.

Unfortunately, as has been the case with the Bible, many unauthorized changes to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books have been made, as well as editing done to his tape recordings. The book changes have brought about a great controversy to return to the original editions and leave them intact for the future generations. These unauthorized changes have often diverted the actual meaning of the text, as well as set a dangerous precedent in which the end result could be the same as that of the Bible, which today has lost its potency and pure message due to numerous alterations. Śrīla Prabhupāda addressed this issue in mid '77, as unauthorized changes were already being made and he expressed strong disapproval of such editing. Unfortunately, after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure, extensive unauthorized editing has continued to take place. Today more and more edited versions of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books are being produced, all without any evidence of Śrīla Prabhupāda's consent.

**Rādhā-Vallabha:** Now Jagannātha had some questions on corrections in the book. In verse twenty-eight it says, "Then he worshiped Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the essence of all Vedas, with this hymn." **Prabhupāda:** Where it is? **Brahma-saṁhitā?** **Rādhā-Vallabha:** Yes. **Prabhupāda:** What is that? **Rādhā-Vallabha:** So it says, "Then he worshiped Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the essence of all Vedas, with this hymn." **Prabhupāda:** Where it is? **Rādhā-Vallabha:** It's verse twenty-eight, "Then he worshiped Śrī Kṛṣṇa." So Jagannātha said it should be, "Then he worshiped..." **Prabhupāda:** No, no. Jagannātha cannot correct. That bad habit he must give up.

**Rādhā-Vallabha:** So we should just leave it exactly. **Prabhupāda:** Oh, yes. You should not be more educated. **Rādhā-Vallabha:** He wasn't changing any of the words. He was just... **Prabhupāda:** Nothing of the... This of should be strictly forbidden. **Rādhā-Vallabha:** So no corrections. That makes it simple. **Prabhupāda:** They can divide the synonyms. That's all. **Rādhā-Vallabha:** Synonyms. So even... **Prabhupāda:** That is his tendency, to correct. That's very bad. He should not do that. **Rādhā-Vallabha:** So I'll just forget this, then. **Prabhupāda:** The system is: whatever authority has done, even there is mistake, it should be accepted. **Rādhā-Vallabha:** Oh. **Prabhupāda:** Asa-prāya(?) That is ha... He should not become more learned than the authority. That is very bad habit. **Rādhā-Vallabha:** He was always wondering how he should think. So I'll tell him that. He thinks, "If I think I see a mistake, what should I think?" I'll tell him what you just said. **Prabhupāda:** He cannot see mistake. He is mistake. He should... That is being done by this rascal. I don't want. And the Hayagrīva has..., the Easy Journey, he has changed so many things. That... He is now bad character. (Conversation 2/27/77 Māyāpur)

**Prabhupāda:** These rascal editorial... That Easy Journey, original, this (indistinct) Hayagrīva has changed so many things. **Tamāla Kṛṣṇa:** He actually took out the whole part about their going to the moon being childish. He deleted the whole section. **Yaśodā-nandana:** Also in the Bhāgavatam, where Prabhupāda was talking about Lord Buddha... You mentioned that if the followers of

Lord Buddha do not close the slaughterhouse, there is no meaning to such a caricature. That word was very nice. But in new book that word is not there any more. They have pulled the word. The meaning of the word is not... So many times. Prabhupāda: It is very serious situation. Rāmeśvara is in direct... Svarūpa Dāmodara: I think they're working too independently without consulting properly. Yaśodā-nandana: Sometimes they appeal that "We can make better English," so they change like that, just like in the case of Īśopaniṣad. There are over a hundred changes. So where is the need? Your words are sufficient. The potency is there. When they change, it is something else. Svarūpa Dāmodara: That's actually a very dangerous mentality. Yaśodā-nandana: What is it going to be in five years? It's going to be a different book. Prabhupāda: So you... What you are going... It is very serious situation. You write one letter that "Why you have made so many changes?" And whom to write? Who will care? All rascals are there. Write to Satsvarūpa that "This is the position. They are doing anything and everything at their whim." The next printing should be again to the original way." (Conversation 6/22/77 Vṛndāvana)

**"Such transcendental literatures, even though irregularly composed, are heard, sung and accepted by purified men who are thoroughly honest."** (SB preface)

The topic of book changes has been covered in other presentations and anyone who would want to further investigate the subject could search on the internet for "changes to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books". Included here is one segment which can be found on the internet. This segment includes only a few examples of changes. A complete presentation requires a separate book altogether, for there are literally thousands of unauthorized changes in all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books including Kṛṣṇa Book, Bhagavad-gītā, Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Śrī Īśopaniṣad, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, etc.

### **Law Books For The Next Ten Thousand Years**

Everyone seems to agree that Śrīla Prabhupāda's books are to be the law books for the next 10,000 years. The problem here is that the books have already been changed. There are many arguments about that, but the final word comes from Prabhupāda and he has clearly stated that we are not to change his books. To clarify, no one is opposed to the correcting of genuine typographical errors, but there have been thousands of changes. Often the meaning is changed, and all without authorization.

**"As soon as you interpret or change the scripture, the scripture loses it's authority. Then another man will come and interpret things in his own way. Another will come and then another, and in this way the original purport of the scripture is lost."** (Discussions on Western Philosophy & Science)

So how can we accept them as law books, and how will they even survive or have potency as law books for the next 10,000 years if they are tampered with? Fortunately this problem can be fixed and both sides can at least unite on this point. We hope the BBT will stop making changes and will correct former changes to Kṛṣṇa Book, the Gītā, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam and so on, and that they will do it soon.

**"I shall never die." Śrīla Prabhupāda once said. "I shall live forever in my books."** (SSR, Introduction.)

### **SOME BOOK CHANGE EXAMPLES**

Bg 4.34 Original Version

**"Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth."**



**"Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth."**

In the first quote from the original Bhagavad-gītā Śrīla Prabhupāda uses the word soul whereas the edited version uses the plural souls. If we accept that this change is more true to the original Sanskrit manuscripts then why did Śrīla Prabhupāda himself never use the plural when quoting the verse in lectures? The following is an example illustrating how Śrīla Prabhupāda would always present the verse.

**"And what is that submission? "Render service unto him." Try to please him by satisfying him, by service. yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ, you singing. If he is pleased, then you know Kṛṣṇa is pleased. And if he is displeased, then there is no other way. This is the process, submissive. "The self-realized soul can impart knowledge." And because you have to select spiritual master, a self-realized soul... Just like if you want to study particular subject matter, you have to approach a realized person, a perfect person. Then you get. "The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth." One who has not seen the truth, he cannot." (B.G. lecture 4.34-9)**

Why didn't Śrīla Prabhupāda himself instruct his disciples to change this so called mistake? Śrīla Prabhupāda was very alert in making sure the correct translation was presented in his books. Here are a couple of examples.

**"Nitai: "At the time of death, Ajāmila saw three awkward persons, very fearsome in appearance, with ropes in their hands. They had twisted faces and deformed bodily features, and their hair stood on end. They had come to take Ajāmila away to the shelter of Yamarāja. Ajāmila became extremely bewildered when he saw them. His small child, Nārāyaṇa, was playing a little distance off, and with tearful eyes and great anxiety, he called the name of his son very loudly three times, 'Nārāyaṇa, Nārāyaṇa, Nārāyaṇa!' "**

**Prabhupāda: Is there "three times"?**

**Nitai: It said in the manuscript. The manuscript said "three times."**

**Prabhupāda: Who said in the manuscript? There is no three times. Not "Nārāyaṇa" three times. One time, "O Nārāyaṇa," that's all. So did I say "three times"? No, it is not said here. You should correct it. Once, "O Nārāyaṇa," that's all. There is no reason of calling three times. There is no mention here. Once is sufficient. " (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam lec. 6.1.28, Philadelphia 13 July 1975, HDG A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda)**

**"Pusta Kṛṣṇa: "My dear Prahāda, may you live a long time. One cannot appreciate or understand Me without pleasing Me, but one who has seen Me or pleased Me has nothing for which to lament for his own personal self." Prabhupāda: "His own personal satisfaction." (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam Lec. 7.9.53, Vṛndāvana 8th April 1976, HDG A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda)**

The previous quote is very significant as it appears a very minor fault. Nevertheless, Śrīla Prabhupāda was very quick to correct Pusta Kṛṣṇa by saying satisfaction.

**"Madhudviṣa: Thirty-four: "Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth." Prabhupāda: This is the process of understanding spiri-**

**tual knowledge. "Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master."** (B.G. lec.4.34, L.A. 12th January 1969, HDG A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda)

Here we see Śrīla Prabhupāda in the same situation as when with Pusta Kṛṣṇa. He says nothing about the translation and particularly the word soul. It is evident that the edited translation with the version 'The self-realized souls' could be intended to indicate that there are many initiating spiritual masters in ISKCON. Devotees have often been influenced to accept initiation from one of the 'ISKCON initiating gurus' on the grounds that one cannot understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's books or make spiritual advancement without doing so. A line which is not even the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda, but is manufactured by the editor has been added to the purport of this verse 4.34 ("Nor by independent study of books of knowledge can one make spiritual advancement.") This sentence does not exist in the original and appears to be intended to negate the fact that one can actually make spiritual advancement by independent study of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. This theory has often been propogated in ISKCON that one cannot understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's books unless explained by an 'ISKCON initiating guru' whom one must accept initiation from.

Bg 10.34 Original Version

**"...One need not read many books on different subject matters; the ability to remember a few and quote them when necessary is another opulence."**

Revised & Enlarged Version

**"...And the ability not only to read many books on different subject matters but to understand them and apply them when necessary is intelligence (medha), another opulence."**

The change of meaning here is very obvious. This next one is a little difficult. See if you can find the change:

Bg 2.61 P Original:

**"The Yoga-sūtra also prescribes meditation on Viṣṇu, and not meditation on the void. The so-called yogis who meditate on something which is not the Viṣṇu form simply waste their time in a vain search after some phantasmagoria. We have to be Kṛṣṇa conscious--devoted to the Personality of Godhead. This is the aim of the real yoga."**

Bg Revised & Enlarged: 2.61 P:

**"The Yoga-sūtra also prescribes meditation on Viṣṇu, and not meditation on the void. The so-called yogis who meditate on something which is not on the Viṣṇu platform simply waste their time in a vain search after some phantasmagoria. We have to be Kṛṣṇa conscious--devoted to the Personality of Godhead. This is the aim of the real yoga."**

Do you see it? Some changes can be so subtle the reader doesn't pick up on them. This happens often. Notice that around the 2nd use of the word "Viṣṇu" the prefix "plat" has been added in front of the word "form." and the word "on" has been added in. So it changes from:

**"yogis who meditate on something which is not the Viṣṇu form" To "yogis who meditate on something which is not on the Viṣṇu platform"**

And now we have a different meaning. Even when Prabhupāda gave a little, initial, leeway to edit his books, he said never to change his meaning." (Though once edited, that was that. Eternal editing was not the idea.)

Another argument in favor of book changes is to make an improvement in Prabhupāda's English. Yet, this was never mentioned by Prabhupāda. What was mentioned is to leave everything alone. His English held an endearing tone and form to it. Whether it was his spoken word or his written word, there was an especially high transcendental vibration to all who read his books. That same mood it gave to us can also be given to new devotees, if the changes are discontinued and the books put back to rights. Lets look and see if the English has been improved upon:

Bg 2.66 T Original:

**“One who is not in transcendental consciousness can have neither a controlled mind nor a steady intelligence, without which there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be any happiness without peace?”**

Bg 2.66 T Revised & Enlarged:

**“One who is not connected with the Supreme [in Kṛṣṇa consciousness] can have neither transcendental intelligence nor a steady mind, without which there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be any happiness without peace?”**

In Prabhupāda's original, it can be seen that there's no possibility of peace and happiness without a "controlled" mind. In the revised and enlarged edition, it instead says "steady" mind. What is the difference? That we even have to ask that question shows the English corrections have only brought about confusion. Anyway, Prabhupāda explains it. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa reads this very verse, to which Prabhupāda replies:

**"Everyone in this material world, they are after peace, but they don't want to control the senses. It is not possible. Just like you are diseased, and doctor says that "You take this medicine, you take this diet," but you cannot control. You are taking anything you like, against the instruction of the physician. Then how you can be cured? Similarly, we want cure of the chaotic condition of this material world, we want peace and prosperity, but we are not ready to control the senses. We do not know how to control the senses. We do not know the real yogic principle of controlling the senses. So there is no possibility of peace. Kutah śāntir ayuktasya. The exact word is there in the Bhagavad-gītā. If you are not engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there is no possibility of peace. Artificially, you may try for it. It is not possible. Go on." (B.G. Lecture 2.62-72, LA, Ca., Dec, 1968)**

So initially we may not think there is much difference between use of the words "controlled mind" and the changed version of "steady mind," but since we are not pure devotees, and after reading the above elaboration, we can see that no human being can understand the mind of the pure devotee and therefore should never change even one of Prabhupāda's words. It can result in more of an alteration than we, the human being, may recognize.

Bg 2.57 T Original:

**"He who is without attachment, who does not rejoice when he obtains good, nor lament when he obtains evil, is firmly fixed in perfect knowledge."**

Bg 2.57 T Revised & Enlarged:

**"In the material world, one who is unaffected by whatever good or evil he may obtain, neither praising it nor despising it, is firmly fixed in perfect knowledge."**

In this verse the principle of being without attachment is has been removed in the newer version. Simply put, Prabhupāda included the words "without attachment" for a reason. Attachment is an

important point. We should not think we know Sanskrit, what to speak of reasons better than jagat-guru. Nor was there ever any authorization by Prabhupāda to make these changes.

**"I am also practically finding that if any of our students artificially try to become scholars by associating with unwanted persons they become victimized, for a little learning is dangerous, especially for the Westerners. I am practically seeing that as soon as they begin to learn a little Sanskrit immediately they feel that they have become more than their guru and then the policy is kill guru and be killed himself."** (SP Letter to Dixi, Sep., 18, 76, Vṛndāvana)

Keeping the philosophy straight

Bg 3.7 T Original:

**"On the other hand, he who controls the senses by the mind and engages his active organs in works of devotion, without attachment, is by far superior. "**

Bg 3.7 T Revised & Enlarged:

**"On the other hand, if a sincere person tries to control the active senses by the mind and begins karma-yoga [in Kṛṣṇa consciousness] without attachment, he is by far superior."**

This verse points toward merely "trying" to control the senses, etc., as sufficient. However, this is contrary to what Śrīla Prabhupāda taught. Not only in his original verse above, but within his entire philosophy. After all, why does he require disciples to take "vows" (promises), if it is merely about "trying" to control our senses? One must do it, not merely try to do it. While some may argue that trying is a starting place, that is not the topic. Nor is it about occasional fall-downs and being merciful about them. Again, a different topic. When we read absolute śāstra to discover the absolute truths, we do not want half truths leading us to believe we have achieved the goal when realistically, there is more purification to be had.

One more important point is that the word "devotion" has been replaced with "karma yoga (in Kṛṣṇa consciousness)." And only "beginning" it, at that. Yet this is not what Prabhupāda instructed. Although there is similarity between the two, Karma yoga is not exactly synonymous with Bhakti yoga or "works in devotion" and to replace the phrase gives a different interpretation to the actual meaning.

[...] There are many more changes to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. I don't want to list them all and sound overwhelming. I don't want to omit them and leave it sounding a smaller problem than it really is. Hopefully you will understand that there are many changes to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books that I am not putting here. Not just Kṛṣṇa-Book but Bhagavad-gītā, Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Śrī Īsopaniṣad, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam and others. This entire web page is merely a small sampling of the many changes made. As a matter of fact, 70% of the purports and translations of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books have been changed.

From one perspective it may appear that book changes are not a guru related issue. When looked at more closely, it is. Simply because none of this could have happened if ISKCON gurus had disapproved. Not only did they approve, some were involved. Please, let's put the books back to the way they were, the way Prabhupāda wants them, it will thus help unite our movement again. Śrīla Prabhupāda took change very seriously. He did not like us to change anything once he authorized it. Not even the book cover:

**"Now we have just published 30,000 Gītā-Gan's (although I am not satisfied with the new cover, why they have changed ?)"** 1976, letter to Jayapatāka

**“Consequently, Śrīla Vyāsadeva is a guru. He does not misinterpret the words of Kṛṣṇa, but transmits them exactly as they were spoken. If we send a telegram, the person who delivers the telegram does not have to correct it, edit it, or add to it. He simply presents it. That is the guru's business.”** (Science of Self Realization Chap. 2)

### **More On Missing Audio Cassettes:**

There are approximately 150 tapes missing. A devotee who was in India at the time (Bhagavat dāsa) use to go into Prabhupāda's room. He was instructed by the other devotees that if Prabhupāda said one word, to hit the "record" button. Now, there are no tapes from that time period. None. What happened to all those tapes? Possibly with some of Prabhupāda's last and more detailed instructions on them. Were there some rtvik instructions on many of them? Were they hidden or trashed? Where are they? Inquiring minds would like to know.

I also discovered that just as the books were changed, audio cassettes have been changed. Be it lectures, morning walks, etc., there have been significant changes made. Devotees who listen daily to Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures have found that while reading along with the transcripts on the Vedabase (which were made from the original reel-to-reel tapes), it is quite often seen where many segments of the recording have been omitted. It is known that some years ago during the production of the Bhaktivedanta Tape Ministry, when the recordings were being duplicated onto standard audio cassettes, a great deal of editing was done. It is said that the reason was to fit a lecture onto one thirty minute side of a tape. Śrīla Prabhupāda however once stated that his lectures should be delivered in their entirety or not at all. We would therefore like to see that the complete version of all 2000+ hours of Śrīla Prabhupāda's recordings be made available. Currently there is approximately 1200 hours available on the MP3 collection which includes the many edited recordings. Another 800+ hours is still lying dormant in the archives on the original reel-to-reel tapes, yet to be transferred to digital format for the benefit of the world.

### **The Analogy Of The Pāṇḍavas**

As noted, by the Lord's will the followers of Advaita Ācārya divided into two parties. Similarly it was by the will of the Lord that the Pāṇḍavas and Kurus divided resulting in the battle of Kurukṣetra. It is very clear that sometimes there is division, even amongst devotees, by the arrangement of the Lord. The scenario depicted in the Bhagavad-gītā of two parties in opposition offers much to learn in regards to the current situation in ISKCON. There are many similarities in the circumstances and by seeing it as an arrangement of Lord Kṛṣṇa we can come to a higher understanding of the Lord's ultimate plan.

**Prabhupāda states “Kṛṣṇa wanted that this fighting must go on because He wanted to install Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, the pious king, on the throne.” (Lec 2/11/70) “It was Kṛṣṇa's plan to kill all these asādhus, duṣkṛtām, Duryodhana and company. That was His plan. So that is His business. He came to install Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, Dharmarāja, on the throne, and He wanted to kill the adharma, Duryodhana and company. That was his business. So therefore this Kurukṣetra war was planned ...” (Lec 3/27/74)**

It was the plan of the Lord that His pure devotee representative Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira would be the emperor of the world and the tyrant kings who were giving trouble to the innocent would be destroyed. Similarly, the Lord wants to see His pure devotee Śrīla Prabhupāda honored as jagat-guru, spiritual master of the entire world. As glorification of Śrīla Prabhupāda increases, simultaneously unauthorized gurus who mislead the innocent public will be eliminated.

In ISKCON there is division on the issue of Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions for initiations. On one side are those who want to follow the multiple guru system and on the other side those who want to see Śrīla Prabhupāda recognized and honored as the initiating spiritual master of the entire

world. Just as in the battle of Kurukṣetra there are devotees on both sides. Grandfather Bhīṣma was a great devotee yet due to self invested interest he ended up on the opposing side of the Lord. Although grandfather Bhīṣma was a great devotee, somehow or other he had become implicated as an opponent and Arjuna was thus instructed to kill him.

Similarly, there are persons who have done great service to Śrīla Prabhupāda, yet somehow or other have ended up on the side which is opposing his instructions for carrying on initiations. Newer generations of devotees often become enamored by the fact that such devotees had much association with Śrīla Prabhupāda during the time of his physical presence. Thus it seems unimaginable how these original devotees of Prabhupāda could be going against his instructions. In this connection Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

**“So far personal association with the Guru is concerned, I was only with my Guru Mahārāja 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 Mahārāja, 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.”** (Letter to Śatadhanya 2-20-72)

Thus enamored by the association which early devotees had with Śrīla Prabhupāda, other devotees, cannot see how such persons should be opposed in any way, as Arjuna who was perplexed in opposing Bhīṣma and other superiors on the battlefield. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the situation when Arjuna was perplexed of his duty.

**“How can I kill Bhīṣma?” But duty is so strong. Kṛṣṇa is advising, “Yes, he must be killed because he has gone to the other side. He has forgotten his duty. He should have joined you. Therefore he is no more in the position of guru. You must kill him. He has wrongly joined the other party. Therefore there is no harm, killing him. Similarly Droṇācārya. I know they are great personalities, they have got great affection. But only on material consideration they have gone there.” What is that material consideration? Bhīṣma thought that “I am maintained by the money of Duryodhana. Duryodhana is maintaining me. Now he is in danger. If I go to the other side, then I should be ungrateful. He has maintained me so long. And if I, in the time of danger, when there is fighting, if I go to the other side, that will be...” He thought like this. He did not think that “Duryodhana may be maintaining, but he has usurped the property of the Pāṇḍavas.”** (Lecture 8-5-73)

**“In the beginning of Bhagavad-gītā Arjuna was worried about killing Bhīṣma and Droṇa, his worshipful grandfathers and masters. But Kṛṣṇa said that he need not be afraid of killing his grandfather. When they tried to disrobe Draupadi in the assembly, Bhīṣma and Droṇa were silent, and for such negligence of duty they should be killed.”** (B.g. 11.49 Purport)

As Draupadi was offended and the property of the Pāṇḍavas stolen, similarly, the Lord’s pure devotee Śrīla Prabhupāda has been offended as his desire to continue accepting disciples has been rejected and opposed, and the properties of ISKCON have been usurped by persons with their own agenda seeking material gains. Some devotees who are witness to this remain silent, “towing the party line”, as Bhīṣma in the assembly. Bhīṣma was interested in maintaining a comfortable position and his main consideration was in regards to how to maintain his material position. Devotees, who are likened to Bhīṣma, remain silent on this matter and support the other side for fear of losing the benefit of utilizing ISKCON’s facilities or of being part of the crowd. Those devotees who have opposed this deviation by ISKCON leaders, especially many of those who were present in 1977, have been pushed out from the ISKCON institution or otherwise suppressed from speaking the truth on the matter of initiations. These devotees on the outside of the institution are like the

Pāṇḍavas who were exiled after their kingdom was usurped, and put through many hardships. The hardship of such devotees is in trying to execute the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda without the ISKCON institution giving support but rather giving opposition. These devotees contend with Māyā's forces from the outside world as well as from within the house which Śrīla Prabhupāda built for all to take shelter.

Prior to the assembly on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra the Lord offered Duryodhana to choose between having either Himself on his side or His armies and forces. Duryodhana chose to have the Lord's armies and Arjuna chose to have Lord Kṛṣṇa.

**“Kṛṣṇa divided His soldiers one side and Himself another side with the condition that if He joins, then He would not fight. So Arjuna preferred to take Kṛṣṇa on his side, and the other party, Duryodhana, he decided to take Kṛṣṇa's soldiers.”** (Lec 9/7/73)

Those who have usurped the institution and have the facilities, temples, money and followers on their side are like Duryodhana who chose to have the Lord's armies rather than the Lord Himself. On the other side are those who have chosen the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda and are thus like Arjuna who chose to have the Lord on his side. As Arjuna, those devotees are given the task of fighting for the truth. Some, as Arjuna first wanted to avoid fighting, feel unwilling to contend with the opposition and want to remain passive on the issue. Difficult as it may seem, duty calls to stand up and fight to establish the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda. In general, this simply means to become a sincere disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda and help facilitate others to do the same despite all opposition.

**“It may be questioned why a devotee is put into such tribulation by the Personality of Godhead. The answer is that this kind of arrangement by the Lord is just like a father's sometimes becoming unkind to his sons. Because the devotee is a surrendered soul and is taken charge of by the Supreme Lord, whenever the Lord puts him into any condition of life--either in distress or happiness--it is to be understood that behind this arrangement there is a large plan designed by the Personality of Godhead. For example, Lord Kṛṣṇa put the Pāṇḍavas into a distressed condition so acute that even grandfather Bhīṣma could not comprehend how such distress could occur. He lamented that although the whole Pāṇḍava family was headed by King Yudhiṣṭhira, the most pious king, and protected by the two great warriors Bhīma and Arjuna, and although, above all, the Pāṇḍavas were all intimate friends and relatives of Lord Kṛṣṇa, they still had to undergo such tribulations. Later on, however, it was proved that this was planned by the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa as part of His great mission to annihilate the miscreants and protect the devotees.”** (KB 88)

Thus the plan of the Lord serves to accomplish many purposes. Devotees are put to the test by which they learn valuable lessons and become delivered, the miscreants are vanquished and ultimately true dharma is established. In order for this to come about ISKCON is currently going through an era of learning the difference between an unauthorized guru and an authorized mahābhāgavata initiating spiritual master. Those who are ambitious to take the post of initiating guru on their own initiative without actual authorization become instrumental in exemplifying, for future generations, the difference between an authorized and unauthorized initiator.

Gradually more and more will see that no one can replace Śrīla Prabhupāda and that it is he who is giving shelter to the world through his expanding presence. Many 'gurus' of today will come and go like shooting stars. Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence however will continue expanding and becoming more and more prominent throughout the world. Gradually as Śrīla Prabhupāda becomes increasingly recognized as jagat-guru, spiritual master of the entire world, the flickering light of shooting stars will become completely dissipated. As the tyrant kings in pursuit of followers, wealth and power were eliminated from the earth, unauthorized gurus who are also after followers, wealth

and power will likewise be eliminated by the plan of the Lord and the pure representative of the Lord Śrīla Prabhupāda will come to be widely accepted as jagat-guru, the spiritual master of the entire world.

### **ISKCON Guru Tattva Siddhānta**

(The following is a series of quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda relevant to the ISKCON guru issue. The quotes are presented in a logical order which addresses the entire issue point by point. Let us hear the perfected words of our beloved spiritual master.)

**“There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and the other is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions.” (Ādi 1.47)**

**“...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.” (S.B. 2.9.7)**

**“...disciplic succession does not always mean that one has to be initiated officially. Disciplic succession means to accept the disciplic conclusion.” (Letter Dinesh 10/31/69)**

**“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 dīkṣā, or initiation. Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness.” (Madhya 9.61)**

**“dīkṣā actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination.” (Madhya 4.110)**

**“Initiation or no initiation, first thing is knowledge. (break) ...knowledge. Initiation is formality. Just like you go to a school for knowledge, and admission is formality. That is not very important thing.” (Conv. 10/16/76)**

**“In my books the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa 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.” (Letter Bahurūpa 11/22/74)**

**“Everyone of you must regularly read our books at least twice, in the morning and evening, and automatically all questions will be answered.” (Letter Ranadhir 1/24/70)**

**“I shall remain your personal guidance, physically present or not physically, as I am getting personal guidance from my Guru Mahārāja.” (Conv. 7/14/77)**

**“Generally a spiritual master who constantly instructs a disciple in spiritual science becomes his initiating spiritual master later on.” (Ādi 1.35)**

**“Sometimes a dīkṣā-guru is not present always. Therefore one can take learning, instruction, from an advanced devotee. That is called the śikṣā-guru.” (Lec 7/4/77 Honolulu)**

**“You simply say, 'Kṛṣṇa said four things: man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī māṁ namas-kuru. '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?’ (Conv. 2/8/76 Paris)**

**“It is not that to be a representative of Kṛṣṇa or to be a spiritual master one has to have any extraordinary qualification. He simply has to carry the message from the authority as it is without any personal interpretation.” (EK6 pg. 80)**



**“In our Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement the requirement is that one must be prepared to give up the four pillars of sinful life- illicit sex, meat eating, intoxication and gambling. In Western countries especially, we first observe whether a potential disciple is prepared to follow the regulative principles. Then he is given the name of a Vaiṣṇava servant and initiated to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-Mantra, at least sixteen rounds daily. In this way the disciple renders devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master or his representative for at least six months to a year.” (Madhya 24.330 Purport)**

**“Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā, nistāra pāyeche kebā: without serving a pure devotee, one cannot advance in spiritual life.” (S.B. 4.22.22)**

**“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service to him. The self realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.” (Bhagavad-gītā verse 4.34)**

**“The service of the spiritual master is essential. 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.” (Ādi 1.35)**

**Paramahaṁsa: “Śrīla Prabhupāda, when you are not present with us, how is it possible to receive instructions, for example, on questions that may arise? Prabhupāda: Well, the questions... Answers are there in my books”. (Conv. 5/13/73)**

**“So utilize whatever time you find to make a thorough study of my books. Then all your questions will be answered.” (Letter Upendra 1/7/76)**

**“These are not ordinary books. It is recorded chanting. Anyone who reads, he is hearing.” (Letter Rūpānuga 10/19/74)**

**Nārāyaṇa: “So those disciples who don't have the opportunity to see you or speak with you... Śrīla Prabhupāda: That he was speaking, vāṇī and vapu. Even if you don't see his body, you take his words, vāṇī. Nārāyaṇa: But how do they know they're pleasing you ? Śrīla Prabhupāda: If you actually follow the words of Guru, that means he is pleased. And if you do not follow, how can he 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. Jayādvaita: And if we have faith in what the Guru says, then automatically we'll do that. Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. My Guru Mahārāja passed away in 1936, and I started this Movement in 1965, thirty years after. Then ? I am getting the mercy of Guru. This vāṇī. Even if Guru is not physically present, if you follow the vāṇī, then you are getting help. Sudāmā: So there is no question of ever sepāration as long as the disciple follows the instructions of Guru. Śrīla Prabhupāda: Whether I am present or not present, it doesn't matter. As Kṛṣṇa is living eternally, similarly, living being also lives eternally. But kīrtir yasya sa jīvati: "One who has done service to the Lord lives forever." So you have been taught to serve Kṛṣṇa, and with Kṛṣṇa we'll live eternally. Our life is eternal. na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre. A temporary disappearance of this body, it doesn't matter. Body is meant for disappearance. Tathā dehāntara-prāptiḥ. So live forever by serving Kṛṣṇa. (Conv. 5/17/77 Vṛndāvana)**

**“Sometimes a dīkṣā-guru is not present always. Therefore one can take learning, instruction, from an advanced devotee. That is called the śikṣā-guru.” (Lec 7/4/77 Honolulu)**

**“Caitanya Mahāprabhu's, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement propaganda, what is this propaganda? He says that "Every one of you become guru." He wants not rascal imitation guru but real guru. That He wants. 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." āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei deśa. You haven't got to go foreign countries. Wherever you are, you teach; become guru. It doesn't matter. Ei deśa. He says, Ei deśa. If you have got power, you can go other country, but it doesn't require. In whichever village, whichever country or town you are, you become a guru. This is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission. āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei deśa. "This country, this place." So, "But I have no qualification. How can I become guru?" There is no need of qualification. "Still I can become guru?" Yes. "How?" yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa: "Whomever you meet, you simply instruct what Kṛṣṇa has said. That's all. You become guru." (Lec. 5/21/76)

There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and the other is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions. (Ādi 1.47)

Generally a spiritual master who constantly instructs a disciple in spiritual science becomes his initiating spiritual master later on." (Ādi 1.35)

A devotee must have only one initiating spiritual master because in the scriptures acceptance of more than one is always forbidden. There is no limit, however, to the number of instructing spiritual masters one may accept. 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..." (Madhya 24.330)

"When one has attained the topmost position of mahā-bhāgavata (perfected devotee), 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 guru." (Madhya 24.330)

"Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī advises the devotee to be intelligent to distinguish between the kaniṣṭha-adhikārī (neophyte), madhyama-adhikārī (intermediate), and uttama-adhikārī (fully self-realized)...Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has given some hints to the effect that an uttama-adhikārī Vaiṣṇava can be recognized by his ability to convert many fallen souls to Vaishnavism. One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikārī. A neophyte Vaiṣṇava or a Vaiṣṇava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance. Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikārī as a spiritual master." (Nectar of Instruction txt 5)

"Unless one is a resident of Kṛṣṇa Loka, one cannot be a Spiritual Master. That is the first proposition. A layman cannot be a Spiritual Master, and if he becomes so then he will simply create disturbance." (Letter Mukunda 6/10/69)

"...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." (NOD 14 p.116)

"As soon as a foolish disciple tries to overtake his spiritual master and becomes ambitious to occupy his post he immediately falls down." (S.B. 5/12/14 P)

"The so called spiritual master without sense control is certainly the cheater, and the disciple of such a so called spiritual master is the cheated." (S.B. 2.9.43)

"Such cheating gurus should not be accepted. Anyone can see how the bona fide spiritual master accepts disciples from all over the world. The guru is a qualified brāhmaṇa; therefore he

knows Brahman and Parabrahman. He thus devotes his life ... teaches his disciples to follow in his footsteps. Thus he is an ācārya or jagat-guru." (Madhya 24.330)

“Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, however, has explained that jagat-guru properly refers to one who is the controller of his tongue, mind, words, belly, genitals and anger. pṛthivīm sa śiṣyāt: such a jagat-guru is completely fit to make disciples all over the world.” (Ādi. 7.64)

"If everyone just initiates then there will only be a contradictory result. As long as it goes on there will be only failure. 29. O shame! My dear brothers, aren't you embarrassed? In the manner of businessmen you increase your disciples. 40. The one who renounces the guru's order (guru tyāgī) and the one who tries to enjoy the assets of his spiritual master (guru-bhogī) are two kinds of useless persons. First become a servant of your spiritual master (guru-sevī) and then you will understand things clearly." (Phālguna Kṛṣṇa Pañcamī)

“Why this Gauḍīya-Maṭha failed? Because they tried to become more than guru. He, before passing away, he gave all direction and never said that "This man should ... began to fight, who shall be ācārya. That is the failure. They never thought, "Why Guru Mahārāja gave us instruction so many things, why he did not say that this man ... somebody ācārya and everything failed. They did not consider even with common sense that if Guru Mahārāja wanted to appoint somebody as ācārya, why did he not say? He said so ... missed? The real point? And they insist upon it. They declared some unfit person to become ācārya. Then another man came, then another, ācārya, another ācārya. So better remain a foolish person perpetually to be directed by Guru Mahārāja. That is perfection. And as soon as he learns the Guru Mahārāja is dead, "Now I am so advanced that I can kill my guru and I become guru." Then he's finished.” (Lec. Aug 16, 1976 Bom.)

“In the latter days of my Guru Mahārāja he was very disgusted. Actually, he left this world earlier, otherwise he would have continued to live for more years. Still he requested his disciples to form a strong Governing body for preaching the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He never recommended anyone to be ācārya of the Gauḍīya-Maṭha. But Śrīdhara Mahārāja is responsible for disobeying this order of Guru Mahārāja, and he and others who are already dead unnecessarily thought that there must be one ācārya. If Guru Mahārāja could have seen someone who was qualified at that time to be ācārya he would have mentioned. Because on the night before he passed away he talked of so many things, but never mentioned an ācārya. His idea was ācārya was not to be nominated amongst the governing body. He said openly you make a GBC and conduct the mission. So his idea was amongst the members of GBC who would come out successful and self effulgent ācārya would be automatically selected. So Śrīdhara Mahārāja and his two associate gentlemen unauthorizedly selected one ācārya and later it proved a failure. The result is now everyone is claiming to be ācārya even though they may be kaniṣṭha-adhikārī with no ability to preach. In some of the camps the ācārya is being changed three times a year. THEREFORE WE MAY NOT COMMIT THE SAME MISTAKE IN OUR ISKCON CAMP. Actually amongst my Godbrothers no one is qualified to become ācārya. So it is better not to mix with my Godbrothers very intimately because instead of inspiring our students and disciples they may sometimes pollute them.” (Letter Rup. 4/28/74)

“The GBC should all be the instructor gurus. I am in the initiator guru, and you should be the instructor guru by teaching what I am teaching and doing what I am doing. This is not a title, but you must actually come to this platform. This I want.” (Letter Madhudviṣa 8/4/75)

“...the difficulty is that our GBC men are falling victim to Māyā. Today I trust this GBC and tomorrow he will fall down. That is the difficulty. If the GBC men are so flickering then what to speak of the others. Unless this problem is solved whatever we may resolve it will not be very useful.” (Letter Jayatīrtha 12/16/74)

**"I think it is best thing if the GBC members always travel on Saṅkīrtana Party in their zone and go from one village to another and visit the temples to see how the students are learning and do my work. In this way, they will avoid the propensity to sit down and plot and scheme how to eat and sleep. So you can advise them all to travel extensively on Saṅkīrtana all over their zone."**  
(Letter Karanandhara 5/4/72)

**"Now has the GBC become more than Guru Mahārāja? As if simply GBC is meant for looking after pounds, shilling, pence. The GBC does not look after spiritual life. That is a defect. All of our students will have to become guru, but they are not qualified. This is the difficulty."** (Letter Ālālanātha 11/10/75)

**"Unfortunately in this Age of Kali there are many mundane persons in the dress of Vaiṣṇavas, and Śrīla Bhaktinoda Ṭhākura has described them as disciples of Kali. He says, kali-celā. He indicates that there is another Vaiṣṇava, a pseudoVaiṣṇava with tilaka on his nose and kaṅṭhī beads around his neck. Such a pseudo Vaiṣṇava associates with money and women and is jealous of successful Vaiṣṇavas. Although passing for a Vaiṣṇava, his only business is earning money in the dress of a Vaiṣṇava. Bhaktinoda Ṭhākura therefore says that such a pseudoVaiṣṇava is not a Vaiṣṇava at all but a disciple of Kali-yuga. A disciple of Kali cannot become an ācārya by the decision of some high court. Mundane votes have no jurisdiction to elect a Vaiṣṇava ācārya. A Vaiṣṇava ācārya is self-effulgent, and there is no need for any court judgment. A false ācārya may try to override a Vaiṣṇava by a high-court decision, but Bhaktinoda Ṭhākura says that he is nothing but a disciple of Kali-yuga."** (Madhya 1.220)

**"Instead, to mislead the people in general they themselves become so-called ācāryas, but they do not even follow the principles of the ācāryas. These rogues are the most dangerous elements in human society. Because there is no religious government, they escape punishment by the law of the state. They cannot, however, escape the law of the Supreme, who has clearly declared in the Bhagavad-gītā that envious demons in the garb of religious propagandists shall be thrown into the darkest regions of hell (Bg. 16.19-20).**

**Śrī Īsopaniṣad confirms that these pseudo religionists are heading toward the most obnoxious place in the universe after the completion of their spiritual master business, which they conduct simply for sense gratification."** (ISO 12)

**"Unfortunately, when the ācārya disappears, rogues and non-devotees take advantage and immediately begin to introduce unauthorized principles in the name of so-called svāmīs, yogis, philanthropists, welfare workers and so on. [...] The ācārya, the authorized representative of the Supreme Lord, establishes these principles, but when he disappears things once again become disordered. The perfect disciples of the ācārya try to relieve the situation by sincerely following the instructions of the spiritual master."** (SB 4.28.48)

**"...twelve men are authorized to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So we have to follow. mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ. Therefore we have created these GBC. So they should be very responsible men. Otherwise, they will be punished. They will be punished to become a śūdra. Although Yamarāja is a GBC, but he made a little mistake. He was punished to become a śūdra. So those who are GBC's, they should be very, very careful to administer the business of ISKCON. Otherwise they will be punished. As the post is very great, similarly, the punishment is also very great."** (Lec. Gen. 6/4/74)

**"What will happen when I am not here, shall everything be spoiled by GBC ?"** (Letter Hamsadūta 4/11/72)

**"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." (Letter Bali Mardana 9/18/72)**

**"Mundane votes have no jurisdiction to elect a Vaiṣṇava ācārya. A Vaiṣṇava ācārya is self-effulgent, and there is no need for any court judgment." (Madhya 1.220)**

**"Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī advises that one not accept a spiritual master in terms of hereditary or customary social and ecclesiastical conventions." (Ādi. 1.35 P)**

**"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." (Lec. 10/28/75)**

**Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: The process of purification must be there. Prabhupāda: Oh, yes, must be there. Caitanya Mahāprabhu wants that. Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā . "You become guru." (laughs) But be qualified. Little thing, strictly follower... Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Not rubber stamp. 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? (Conv. 4/22/77)**

**"When one has attained the topmost position of mahā-bhāgavata (perfected devotee), 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 guru." (Madhya 24.330)**

**"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." (Lec 1/13/69 L.A.)**

**"So far as personal association with Guru is concerned, I was only with my Guru Mahārāja four or five times, but I have never left his association, not even for a moment. Because I am following his instruction, I have never felt any separation. There are some of my Godbrothers here in India, who had constant personal association with Guru Mahārāja, 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." (Letter Satyadhana 2/20/72)**

**"...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." (Letter Mālatī 5/28/68)**

**"I also do not feel separation from my Guru Mahārāja. 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." (Letter Śyāmasundara 7/19/70)**

**"Never think that I am absent from you. Physical presence is not essential; presence by message (or hearing) is the real touch." (Letter to students 8/2/67)**

**"The potency of transcendental sound is never minimized because the vibrator is apparently absent." (S.B. 2.9.8 purport)**

**"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." (Ādi 1.35)**

**“After 80 years, no one can be expected to live long. My life is almost ended. So you have to carry on, and these books will do everything.” (Conv. 2/18/76)**

**“So there is nothing new to be said. Whatever I have to speak, I have spoken in my books. Now you try to understand it and continue in your endeavor. Whether I am present or not present it doesn't matter.” (Arrival Conv. 5/17/77 Vrn.)**

**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? 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... 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. 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. So any case, you have to follow a spiritual master. There cannot be the question without spiritual master. Is that clear? Madhudviṣa: I mean like we couldn't understand the teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā without your help, without your presentation. Prabhupāda: Similarly, you have to understand Bible with the help of the priest in the church. (Lec. 10/2/68 Sea.)**

**“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.”**

**“Regarding Paramparā system: there is nothing to wonder for big gaps.[...] we find in the Bhagavad-gītā that the Gītā was taught to the sun-god, some millions of years ago, but Kṛṣṇa has mentioned only three names in this Paramparā system--namely, Vivasvān, Manu, and Ikṣvāku; and so these gaps do not hamper from understanding the Paramparā system. We have to pick up the prominent ācāryas, and follow from him.[...] We have to pick up from the authority of the ācārya in whatever sampradāya we belong to.” (Letter Dayānanda 4/12/68)**

**“Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, who accepted Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravarti as his servitor.(Ādi 1) Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura. He accepted his guru, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.” (Lec 4/17/76) (\*Note: 100 years between Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravati)**

**“if you want to make your life successful, then you must keep the tradition of brāhmaṇa-vaiṣṇava. So our, we are Vaiṣṇava. Our only tradition is how to satisfy Viṣṇu.” (Lec. 7/30/73)**

**“Therefore, when the self-realized devotees ordain any new arrangements they should be agreed with as a religious code, even if such new arrangements are not found in the scriptural dictums of the previous sages” (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākuras Śrī Tattva-sūtra)**

**“Śrī Vīrarāghava Ācārya, 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 sūdra families, can also be initiated according to circumstances. The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them Vaiṣṇavas.” (S.B. 4.8.5 P)**

**“Vaiṣṇava who is preaching, it may be in a different way, according to time and place and the party--they have to change something, deśa-kāla-pātra--but we have to see the essence. “ (S.B.Lec. 10/18/74)**

**Interviewer: What happens when that inevitable time comes when a successor is needed? Rāmeśvara: He is asking about the future, who will guide the movement in the future. Prabhupāda: They will guide. I am training them. Interviewer: Will there be one spiritual leader, though? Prabhupāda: No, I am training GBC, eighteen all over the world. (Conv. 6/10/76 L.A.)**

**Reporter: Do you expect to name one person as your successor or have you already? Prabhupāda: That I am not contemplating now. But there is no need of one person. (Int. 6/4/76)**

**Interviewer: I was wondering if he had a successor to do... Do you have a successor to take your place when you die? Prabhupāda: Not yet settled up. Not yet settled up. Interviewer: So what process would the Hare Kṛṣṇas...? Prabhupāda: We have got secretaries. They are managing. (Conv. 7/14/76 N.Y.)**

**Only Lord Caitanya can take my place. He will take care of the movement." (Conv. 11/2/77)**

**The GBC does not look after spiritual life. That is a defect. All of our students will have to become guru, but they are not qualified. This is the difficulty." (Letter Ālālanātha 11/10/75)**

**Satsvarūpa: Then our next question concerns initiation in the future, particularly at the time when you are no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiations would be conducted. Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. I shall recommend some of you. After this settled up I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating ācārya. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Is that called ṛtvik ācārya ? Śrīla Prabhupāda: Ṛtvik. Yes. (Conv. May 28 1977)**

**Prabhupāda: So without waiting for me, wherever you consider it is right... That will depend on discretion. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: On discretion. Prabhupāda: Yes. (Room conv. 7/7/77 Vrn.)**

**Continue to be a ṛtvik and act on my charge." (Conversation July 19, 1977)**

**The executive directors who have herein been designated are appointed for life. In the event of death or failure to act for any reason of any of 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 Kṛṣṇa Consciousness as detailed in my books. (Śrīla Prabhupāda's Will) (Note: In order that this particular clause be fulfilled, it is necessary that there are initiated disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda for many generations to come. As devotees may consider themselves disciples of other gurus, likewise those gurus may consider themselves founders of other branches of Vaiṣṇavism distinct from ISKCON, as is the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava Institution. Certainly other gurus may exist, however Śrīla Prabhupāda shall always be the founder and current initiating ācārya of ISKCON. ")**

**"The one who renounces the guru's order (guru tyāgī) and the one who tries to enjoy the assets of his spiritual master (guru-bhogī) are two kinds of useless persons." (Phālguna Kṛṣṇa Pañcamī)**

**"In every town and village My name will be heard." (Lord Caitanya Madhya 25.264)**

**"I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who is more magnanimous than any other avatāra, even Kṛṣṇa Himself, because He is bestowing freely what no one else has ever given--pure love of Kṛṣṇa." (Ādi Intro.)**

**"Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has freely given this love of Kṛṣṇa everywhere and anywhere, even to the most fallen, such as Jagāi and Mādhāi. What then to speak of those who are already pious and elevated?" (Ādi 8.20)**

**“So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is very rare thing, but, by the grace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, it is being distributed all over the world freely. It is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's grace.”**  
(Lec. 1/6/73 Bombay)

**“The true ācārya presents Kṛṣṇa to everyone by preaching the holy name of the Lord throughout the world.”** (Antya 5.85)

**“When one is completely fit to chant the holy name in this way, he is eligible to make disciples all over the world, and he actually becomes jagat-guru. Then the entire world, under his influence, begins to chant the holy names of the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-Mantra. Thus all the disciples of such a spiritual master increase in attachment for Kṛṣṇa, and therefore he sometimes cries, sometimes laughs, sometimes dances and sometimes chants. These symptoms are very prominently manifest in the body of a pure devotee.”** (Ādi.7.83)

**“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 jagat-guru, or the guru of all of us.”** (SSR 2)

### **Closing Statement**

For many years during Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical presence there was already an initiation system in effect where Śrīla Prabhupāda authorized his own disciples to conduct initiations on his behalf. The system was implemented specifically for the purpose of accepting new disciples without the necessity of Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical presence. Prospective candidates for initiation were accepted on the discretion of authorized disciples such as temple presidents. The devotee received a spiritual name and was accepted as a direct disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is estimated that over one third of Śrīla Prabhupāda's initiated disciples received initiation in this manner. Many of them never once physically met Śrīla Prabhupāda.

On may 28th 1977 members of the GBC consulted Śrīla Prabhupāda specifically on the issue of initiations when he would no longer be physically present. To this he replied "I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating ācārya." Only weeks later on July 9th Śrīla Prabhupāda issued a signed document regarding initiations to all temple presidents and GBC. Currently, opposers of the officiating or ṛtvik system are proposing that Śrīla Prabhupāda issued this document to the entire society without making any reference at all to the GBC's recent inquiry, the most important issue, namely initiations after his physical departure.

The July 9th letter remains to this day the only signed instruction on the future of initiation Śrīla Prabhupāda ever issued to the whole Society. It clearly states that the system described was to operate 'henceforward'. There is no statement made in the letter or at any time after indicating that this system was to terminate after his physical departure. Furthermore, the letter states three times that newly initiated devotees are to be disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The necessity of stressing ownership three times is a clear indication that the instruction was intended to operate during a time period when ownership would even be an issue, after his departure. **"So as soon as one thing is three times stressed, that means final."** (Lec. 11/27/68)

While considering the fact that this letter uses the word 'henceforward' rather than explicitly stating 'after my departure', it appears that the direction is apparently open to interpretation. However, after carefully examining the situation in it's entirety, one can clearly see what was Śrīla Prabhupāda's intention for the future of ISKCON. We may understand this as a transcendental arrangement by the Lord and His pure devotee for testing the sincerity of everyone in following the orders of the spiritual master.



In addition to this, it has become well known that during the last days of Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical presence in Vṛndāvana, the congregation of devotees were withheld from seeing him despite his request to have everyone before him. Evidently there was something to be concealed from the mass of devotees. In all likelihood, if the July 9th letter which was drawn only months before Śrīla Prabhupāda left his body, had indeed stated specifically 'after my departure', its distribution also would have been withheld from the congregation. One devotee has testified that while at the New York temple only days before Śrīla Prabhupāda passed, a devotee returning from Vṛndāvana after having just spoken with him openly announced to everyone, "Śrīla Prabhupāda says to us, do not trust anyone but himself". Many devotees who somehow or other were able to see Prabhupāda during that time also testify to having heard directly from him speaking of ṛtvik and future initiations on his behalf. Unfortunately, most of the tapes made at that time have been concealed or eliminated.

The reader is herein given to decide upon whom to repose their faith in and accept as their initiating spiritual master. That person is the devotees' primary recipient of devotion as the direct via medium to the Supreme Godhead. The preceding quotes have established the necessary qualification of that initiating spiritual master and the means by which the spiritual master initiates the disciple with transcendental knowledge. It has been proven that the vāṇī, or recorded words and instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda are completely sufficient for initiating one with full knowledge and complete realization of the Absolute Truth. Presently, jagat-guru Śrīla Prabhupāda continues instructing persons throughout the entire world by his books which are available in more languages than any one person knows. It remains a fact that direct instruction and guidance is unlimitedly more available from Śrīla Prabhupāda than from any other person on this planet or elsewhere. Truly his mercy is available to all. Such a guru is jagat-guru, Guru of the entire world, and should be recognized as our foremost recipient of devotion. He is the true initiating spiritual master, the dīkṣā guru for ISKCON now and for many generations to come. Jaya jagat-guru Śrīla Prabhupāda, may your glories continue to shine more than the rays of a million suns, Hare Kṛṣṇa !!!

**"These great souls (members of the disciplic succession) were not mere luminaries like the comets appearing in the firmament for a while and disappearing as soon as their mission is done. They are like so many suns shining all along to give light and heat to succeeding generations. Long time yet to roll on when they will be succeeded by others of sublime mind, beauty and calibre." (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura)**