His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder Acharya
International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Vedic Village Review

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Please notify us if you wish to continue receiving VVR, or we will assume you do not. Back Issues are $2.00 each. We request you to mail or call us with names and addresses of devotees who may like to receive a complimentary issue of Vedic Village Review or Vedic River Devotional Supplies flyers. ISKCON World Review will not report on New Jaipur nor print our ads for Vedic River Devotional Supplies. We therefore depend on our readers to help us find persons who might like to be on our mailing list.

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*Srila Prabhupada, letter to Nityananda dsa, 3/16/77: "The New Taiewan Review and brochures are both very nicely done and I thank you for them...Please go on very enthusiastically developing your farming community."

Editorial Policy

VEDIC VILLAGE REVIEW is meant to promote a better understanding of issues and philosophy vital to Vaishnavas and their preaching work. We apologize for our errors and we hope to continue with the blessings of devotees, open to review from all quarters. Although we may unintentionally upset some by addressing sensitive issues, it is better to generate debate and an exchange of views than to be silent. Complacent and dull-headed we will not be. We want to spark healthy discussion and analysis of topics for the advancement of Srila Prabhupada's mission. We beg pardon for any offenses that may be made in this effort. We invite response to our articles, as we have an open editorial policy. We do reserve the right to edit letters and articles for brevity and conciseness, taking care to preserve the spirit of the opinion. So please, participate in this forum by writing us today!

VVR is printed by NEW JAIPUR PRESS, and attempts to promote the development of "Vedic villages" around the world as the foundation of a new Vedic civilization. God-centered, rural devotional communities such as New Jaipur, Mississippi, are the hope of the future during the Golden Age. These villages will be based on the teachings of Lord Krishna, Lord Chaitanya and His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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CONTENTS

Editorial . 1
TKG Performs Ritvik Initiation . 3
Response to ISKCON Journal . 4
Recognizing the Bona Fide Guru . 9
Nrisimha Appeals to Badarinarayana . 11
Dreams of Srila Prabhupada . 13
The Failure of the GBC . 14
A Few Words to Satyaraja . 16
Our Official Response to the GBC . 19
Letters to the Editors . 22
Maharaja Kulasekharara . 41
Let Us Discuss Siddhanta . 43
Krishna's Successors – Contaminated? . 46
The Stages of Devotion . 48
New Jaipur Constitution . 52
Greater ISKCON Bulletin Board . 54
Notes in Response Part II . 56
Measures for Rectification of GBC . 58
Attending Mangala Arati . 60
Vedic River Supplies . 61
Rupavilasa – Farewell . 66
Questions & Answers . 67
Prabhupada's July 9th '77 Ritvik Letter . 68
Ritvik or Havoc? . 69
EDITORIAL
by Nityananda dasa

First of all I would like to personally offer my sincere apologies to any devotees whom I may have offended by whatever I wrote in previous issues of VVR. There is no doubt that my words are far from perfect, what to speak of my motives. To address such sensitive and complex issues as has been done by VVR makes it almost impossible not to offend at least some, yet we will try our hardest to avoid stepping on toes or vexing our dear Godbrothers and the devotees of the Supreme Lord. We do not intend to accelerate the rhetoric or try to out-criticize our detractors. Our tone will be reserved and mellow, calculated and philosophical.

At the same time, I want to verify my own (and VVR's) stand: there is a great need for continued reforms in ISKCON that will take place only if there are open discussions and debate. I think VVR has been successful in promoting such an honest review of ISKCON's issues of the day. VVR is pro-ISKCON, pro-GBC, pro-Prabhupada. We feel strongly that there must be a counterbalancing voice of reform in our movement, and so VVR will go on. Properly directed authority, such as a rectified GBC, must remain responsive to feedback from the general body of Vaishnavas. The feedback today (just read VVR's Letters section) shows widespread apathy, discontent, rebellion, desertion, conflict and grave doubts in ISKCON's leadership throughout the worldwide society of devotees. The Hare Krishna movement is still moving along, though seriously injured and bleeding. VVR wants to help the healing, even though it may mean scrutinizing closely many ugly wounds and bruises.

I agree that VVR may have been untactful, wrong or unfair about some things, and maybe even a little brash. But we are not enemies of Srila Prabhupada's mission as some would have us believe. The reaction from the ISKCON GBC in chastising and expelling us, banning the VVR, denouncing the case for rtviks as the work of Kali and slamming shut the door for further research and debate... is very unfortunate. The GBC has exerted their maximum force of intimidation to silence the voices of protest and the whispers of doubts and discord. I think it was an OVER-REACTION and an improper one at that. Rather than sweep the Gurugate mess under the rug, the GBC must act to satisfy the thousands of Prabhupada's disciples and others who yearn to solve and correct this most important matter. Diplomacy and appeals to the intelligence must come long before the stick.

The story on page 3 herein, about how Tamal Krishna Goswami gave a RITVIK initiation in 1986, illustrates how the GBC can approve rtvik initiation one year and then ban it the next. If rtvik is a bogus and totally unauthorized method of initiation, then why did TKG do it? They may say it was a special, one-time case, but nevertheless, the GBC has demonstrated the validity of rtvik initiations and then shown themselves to be inconsistent (I won't say hypocritical) in their policy making. How can we take seriously the GBC ruling that rtvik-after-departure is nonsense and dangerous? Anyway, I would feel better if TKG was expelled along with the VVR editors for his role in establishing the ISKCON precedent in rtvik initiations! Between the Pyramid House confessions and the 1986 Vrindavan rtvik initiation, which side TKG is working for? ISKCON needs continued reformation. The pen is mightier than the sword; the GBC overkill will only serve to quicken the necessary changes in Prabhupada's institution. Let us review the following:

1. Prabhupada never appointed gurus, only rtviks. As soon as Prabhupada left, the rtviks mysteriously became full gurus in their own right, calling themselves successor-zonal acaryas. A partial reform in 1985-87 succeeded in toning down the ostentatiousness of the ISKCON gurus only temporarily. Gradually the same features of the past are returning, namely big vyasasanas, over-emphasis on the new gurus, minimization of Prabhupada's position and zonal acaryas.

2. Most devotees have not studied carefully the case for rtviks. Commonly we hear, "There is not even a shred of evidence..." or "It is wrong to deny the possibility of qualified gurus other than Prabhupada..." However, there is a great deal of evidence to support the rtvik system. And VVR only proposes to determine the sastric qualifications for the new diksa gurus, and does not rule out that there may be or will be qualified gurus. I think that New Jaipur Press's upcoming book, THE CASE FOR RITVIK, will help consolidate all the information and provide convincing material in an organized manner.

3. Why is the GBC so self-righteous and sure of themselves? Have they not caused the movement more problems than anything else? It would seem a little caution on their part, a little deference to the general body of devotees would be advisable. The GBC track record is poor; they are legends in their own minds only, their credibility shattered by long years of mismanagement and deviation from Prabhupada's teachings.

4. What is the current ISKCON guru system? It seems to be a voting club, a guru cartel involving favoritism, political alignments and a rubber stamping process. Ten years in the movement, no falldowns for 5 years, 10 recommendations, less than 3 blackballs, and PRESTO... a guru!

But sastra has a very much more stringent test of qualification. The GBC is a guru cartel; how did we expect them to respond to the rtvik system: implementing it would mean loss of their positions, prestige, power, wealth and more. We need not realign ourselves with this unauthorized guru club, but rather, the GBC must realign itself with Prabhupada's teachings.

5. A new vision for ISKCON, wherein Prabhupada's house could accomodate a much broader cross-section of Vaishnavas, is "a priori" for the last decade of this century. Rather than expelling those who want to participate because they have different opinions, we must try to bring back all the devotees who are on the "outside" of this movement. Let us say, "forgive the past, please come back."

6. The GBC must organize and sponsor open seminars worldwide to discuss and debate various views and philosophical opinions, as well as permitting review of GBC policies and actions. The GBC must become responsive to the needs, opinions and desires of the Vaishnavas. Is openness really harmful? Dissent cannot be ignored.

7. At present VVR is the only Vaishnava journal offering alternative views and the opportunity to speak openly about ISKCON needs and problems. We appeal to devotees everywhere to support VVR by subscribing to the constructive
and thought-provoking VOICE OF GREATER ISKCON. Please send your subscription now.

8. VVR humbly invites any GBC, temple president, sannyasi or other devotee to visit New Jaipur and thus grace us with the association of Vaishnavas. We are not separatists, and we welcome anyone who has the conviction in their own opinions necessary to sit down and openly discuss Vaishnava philosophy with us. Dear GBC, please send us some of your ideologists and representative preachers so that we may engage in enlightening philosophical discussions. Either we will be delivered from illusion or you will be converted into a RITVIKVADI!

The September 1977 BBT Report says, “The incredible pastimes of Prabhupada...[are] described in detail in the diaries of Tamal Krishna Maharaj and Hari Sauri Prabhu.” Hari Sauri is publishing his memoirs in a book to be released soon. But TKG has apparently hidden his diary from all others and has not made it available to the society of devotees: “Regarding my diary, it is locked in a safety deposit vault in India which I do not have access to.” Diaries are private, of course, but TKG was representing all devotees in his service to Prabhupada in 1977 and whatever he wrote should thus be made available to the other devotees. There may be information in TKG’s diary regarding things not yet heard or understood. VVR calls on Tamal Krishna Maharaj to produce his 1977 diary for inspection by some neutral party to ascertain what pertinent information may be there relating to any issues currently being discussed. At least we would like to know why TKG cannot make his diary available.

VVR’s Challenge horse remains on our page. The GBC has not yet replied to the following challenges, and until they do, the Challenge Horse remains on the loose in their territory:

Kindly Substantiate the Present ISKCON Guru System with Reference to Srila Prabhupada’s Teachings, Especially in Regards to the Appointment and Qualification Issues.

If Unable to Do so Conclusively, then Abandon this System as Unauthorized and Institute the Rtvick Acharya System Authorized by Srila Prabhupada in 1977. This Does Not Preclude the Appearance or Recognition of New Diksha Gurus Who Are Qualified as Described in Sastra.

GREATER ISKCON CONVENTION

New Jaipur May 1991

New Jaipur is planning to host a GREATER ISKCON CONVENTION, comprising lectures, discussions and workshops, in May 1991, the exact dates to be determined soon. Four days, Thursday thru Sunday, will feature 10 non-political sessions in which the following subjects will be discussed:

1. LIVES OF THE VAISHNAVA ACHARYAS
2. THE GURU & DISCIPLE IN GREATER ISKCON
3. IMPLEMENTING VARNASHRAM
4. ASTROLOGY AND ITS USE IN KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS
5. VEDIC MUSEUM AND DIORAMA PREACHING
6. SRILA PRABHUPADA’S GURUKULA
7. HOME SCHOOLING GURUKULA
8. THE GBC PRESENTS – ISKCON’S CURRENT GURU SYSTEM (a GBC representative will be invited)
9. DEITY WORSHIP
10. FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF ISKCON

Those interested in participating, by attending or speaking, or by helping in the organization, please contact VVR. We hope to conduct these seminars in a positive, constructive and enlightening manner with the view that ISKCON is a growing organization and certain topics have not been heretofore addressed and discussed in great depth, which many devotees would like to do. We will invite such esteemed Vaishnavas as Tamala Krishna Goswami, Ravindra Swarupa, Yasodanandana, Nrisingha, Srilal Ajamila, Gaura Keshava, Bhushaya, Yasomatinandana, Nalinikanta, Shyamasundara, Pradyumna and others to participate. The seminars will be strictly moderated and guided, hopefully by someone of respected stature such as Sri Ramdas. The aim will be to discuss, debate and provoke thought in an amiable atmosphere without faultfinding or offensive behaviour... the quest for the siddhanta is the all and all.
We have received reports from a venerable devotee, who was present at this year’s GBC meeting, that TKG delivered a tempestuous anti-ritvik address declaring the ritvik-in-absentia system to be completely unauthorized and entirely against the principles of disciplic succession. He also pushed hard for the expulsion of the editors of VVR, saying that the ritvik philosophy was a severe threat to Srila Prabhupada’s movement. He suggested that just as the sannyasis who preached Mayavadi philosophy in 1970 were strictly dealt with by Srila Prabhupada, the VVR editors should be similarly treated. This was the prevailing mood of the GBC body.

And yet—we have received another report from a reliable intimate of TKG’s that in 1986 Gosvami Maharaja performed a ritvik initiation for Jalatala devi dasi, Srila Prabhupada’s grand-niece. This incident took place in Srila Prabhupada’s room on the occasion of his disappearance celebration of 1986.

We telephoned Mother Jalatala and found her quite unaware of the politics surrounding this issue. She knew little or nothing about the VVR or the ISKCON Journal. She told us her story openly and without reservation. Here it is in brief: She was given first initiation by Srila Prabhupada in 1976. She was very determined to take second initiation only from him, never suspecting that Srila Prabhupada would disappear so soon. Crushed when Prabhupada departed, she remained determined to take second initiation from him. Over the next ten years she had seven dreams in which she approached Srila Prabhupada for second initiation. In those dreams he was pleased with her for asking and laughed at her insistence. He gave no immediate answer, however. She then dreamed that Prabhupada was chanting Gayatri, and after he had finished, she again begged him for second initiation. He told her to chant forty-nine rounds a day. She did this faithfully for the next four years. Finally, she dreamed that Srila Prabhupada agreed to give her second initiation in Vrindavan. She wrote down the history of her dreams and her firm determination to take diksha from Srila Prabhupada and presented her case to Tamala Krishna Maharaja. TKG consulted some of his GBC Godbrothers and agreed to her proposal that she take second initiation from Srila Prabhupada. During the Vrindavan Karttika festival on the anniversary of Prabhupada’s disappearance, the initiation was conducted in Srila Prabhupada’s room. A tape of Prabhupada chanting Gayatri was played, and TKG showed her the method of counting when chanting Gayatri. Both parties understood, without any doubt, that the initiation was given by Srila Prabhupada and not TKG—a classic ritvik initiation.

We do not at all disapprove of this very sensible behavior by Gosvami Maharaja, but we must raise the question that if the ritvik-in-absentia process is bogus, unauthorized, an anathema to the principle of disciplic succession, then why did he do it? Note the wording of 1990’s GBC resolutions: “Whereas the posthumous ritvik theory (a concocted system by which a spiritual master allegedly acts as diksha-guru after his departure through the agency of ritviks or officiating priests) has never been sanctioned by [Srila Prabhupada]; Whereas posthumous ritvik initiation has never been approved by sadhu, sastra and guru; Whereas the posthumous ritvik theory essentially conflicts with the law of disciplic succession as established by Lord Sri Krishna, as taught by Srila Prabhupada and all previous acharyas, and as practiced by all bona fide Vaishnava sadhus and swampradaya; The GBC hereby declares that the...theory is a dangerous philosophical deviation. It is therefore totally prohibited in ISKCON. No devotee shall participate in such posthumous initiation ceremony in any capacity including acting as ritvik initiate, assistant, organizer, or financier. No ISKCON devotee shall advocate or support its practice.”

It is surprising that anything seen as so unauthorized by the GBC (that attitude appearing paramount in the person of TKG) could possibly be sanctioned by TKG under any circumstance, even as reasonable a circumstance as the one cited above. If the ritvik-in-absentia idea is so dangerous and terrible, if devotees who advocate it are to be expelled from the Movement, if indeed it is such an awful philosophical deviation, then why has TKG sanctioned it at all? It has been argued by one Godbrother that such an initiation was valid because of Jalatala’s familial connection with Srila Prabhupada (though such an assertion is not borne out by scripture). If it is acceptable in some cases, then what are those cases? Are there other instances in which it is to be sanctioned? Isn’t there anything at all wrong with it? It may be argued that since she was already first-initiated by Prabhupada, that she was clearly Srila Prabhupada’s disciple. That is not at issue. What is at issue is whether a ritvik initiation, either first or second, can be performed after the departure of Srila Prabhupada at any time or under any circumstances. The GBC has condemned this practice, and one of the principle anti-ritvik ideologists is TKG. What was sanctioned by the consensus of a number of GBC men in 1986 is now totally condemned for all, irregardless of circumstances. For the GBC to be fair and honest, they must admit to being hasty in their denouncing ritvik initiation, admit that there are circumstances in which it is appropriate and reopen the debate so as to determine the true extent of such circumstances.

Postscript

When word leaked that VVR was to publish a story on Jalatala dasi’s ritvik initiation, VVR received numerous pleas not to do so. After several editors’ meetings, considering everything carefully, we decided to proceed. We were concerned that an innocent lady like Jalatala might be harassed or intimidated as a result of her story appearing in VVR. But since she told her story freely to many devotees, since we heard it from several sources, since it concerns the issue of the validity of ritvik-in-absentia initiation, since it is extremely relevant to the debate now raging on the ritvik issue, we could not in good conscience suppress the story. It should be noted that Jalatala dasi is non-political, and uninterested in entering the current ritvik debate. Her story has been confirmed by several other devotees, and her account was used to confirm information VVR already had obtained. No one should criticize Jalatala dasi for her story’s appearance in VVR. We apologize to Jalatala and her husband, Bhima Prabhu, for any inconvenience our report may cause, and we report it only to highlight the very significant involvement of TKG and the GBC in authorizing and performing her ritvik initiation and later in denying the very validity of such an initiation.
Response to ISKCON Journal

by Karnamrita dasa

A magazine entitled ISKCON Journal appeared recently under the aegis of the GBC Executive Committee, replete with articles attacking what its editors choose to call the 'post-humous ritvik system'. The editors of VVR prefer to use the term 'ritvik in absentia', however, out of respect for Srila Prabhupada, for he exists eternally in his books, recordings and murtis, and in his form as the eternal associate of Sri Krishna in Goloka Vrindavan. Much argumentation, but no substantial evidence, has been given to establish the view that the ritvik system utilized during Srila Prabhupada's physical presence could not continue in Srila Prabhupada's physical absence. The only credible argument the Journal's editors have proffered is the absence of precedents for such a practice in the Gaudiya-sampradaya. Articles of note in the Journal are an interview with His Holiness Narayana Maharaja and an interview with Tamala Krishna Mahraja. The former, as many readers know, is a scholarly and highly respectable sannyasi associate of Srila Prabhupada, the latter, Srila Prabhupada's personal secretary in the last year of his life. Articles, such as that by Ajamila dasa, which merely reiterates ideas already expressed by Virabahu Prabhu, and several other pieces in the ISKCON Journal, due to their inflammatory rhetoric and the dearth of credible witnesses cited, are not noteworthy. Moreover, Pradyumna Prabhu was angered when he heard that he had been "interviewed". He remembers a casual telephone conversation only, and he asked us to make it clear that he is not an advocate of the philosophical position espoused in the ISKCON Journal.

No Surprises

There are no surprises in Narayana Maharaja's remarks for the most part, and he confirms many of the assertions that we have made in the VVR. For example, in speaking of the guru, he says, "He should be at least sabda-brahma, srotriyaam. Nistha, ruchi, asakti. Up to asakti. Anarthas should be gone; there should be no anartha, [or] nama-aparadha...[such a] madhyama adhikari should be guru." This analysis is well substantiated by Srila Prabhupada's books, and is oft stated in the 'controversial' pages of VVR. He further declared that, "...kanistha adhikari cannot be guru."

From the very outset of the interview, which was conducted by Rabindra Svarupa Prabhu, Rabindra manages to misrepresent VVR's position, claiming that our view is that "Srila Prabhupada directed that after his departure the parampara system would be suspended indefinitely." We have opined that the parampara system was to continue with the ritvik system until such time as some of Srila Prabhupada's disciples would "be actually guru" as Srila Prabhupada stated on the 28th of May, 1977. We have never mentioned indefinite suspension. His Holiness Narayana Maharaja presents the traditional view of disciplic succession forcefully and accurately, and we do not wish to argue with him, as he is learned and much senior to us. Nevertheless, there are a number of his remarks of statements with which Srila Prabhupada would not seem to agree. On that basis, I believe we can take issue with him, but in a mood of respect and humility.

The Acharya Limited?

Even if we accept that there are no precedents for a ritvik system continuing after the departure of an Acharya, that is nevertheless not an argument which necessarily nullifies Srila Prabhupada's establishing such a practice. As we have argued before, Srila Prabhupada was well able to establish whatever he liked. Many of his activities were unprecedented: his permitting the establishment of large Vyasasanas, his daily guru-puja, his establishing his murti during his physical presence, his performing marriages although a sannyasi, his initiating by tape recording, his allowing both unmarried women and men to live in the temple, etc. To assert that Srila Prabhupada could not continue to initiate in the full sense of the word diksha (divya jnanam—hy atra srimate mantle bhagavat-svarupa-jnanam tena bhagavata sambandhavisesa-jnanan ca [Bhakti Sandarba 243]) through the medium of his books and tapes, while his ritviks performed the ceremonial and other regular aspects of initiation and training, appears to be a severe underestimation of the capabilities of one of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's dearmost associates.

After all, is not Srila Prabhupada the senapati bhakta described in Lochana dasa Thakura's Chaitanya-mangala, the personality predicted by Bhaktivinoda Thakura in the pages of Sajjana-toshti, and the great preacher recognized by all enlightened people as the unique, saktyavesa avatara, who descended from the spiritual world to establish Lord Chaitanya's mission worldwide?

A Strange Theory

Rabindra Svarupa had an odd proposition to put to the Maharaja: "[VVR's editors] argue that as a great Acharya Srila Prabhupada could make an adjustment like this. But to my mind there are limits even for great Acharyas, because they are not God... An Acharya can make different adjustments, but something as fundamental as guru parampara can't be changed." Here Rabindra Prabhu argues for seeing the Acharya as one limited in potency or constrained by tradition, and able to make only minor adjustments to the regulations governing bhakti and parmapara. Srila Prabhupada adjusted the number of rounds we chant from 64 to 16, and yet the statement can be found in Chaitanya-bhagavata that Lord Caitanya will not accept the offerings of a person who does not
daily chant a lakh of names (or 64 rounds). What are we to make of that? Why was the adjustment to sixteen rounds per day within Sri Prabhupada’s capacity as an Acharya and not the adjustment to a *ritvik-in-absentia* system which was, after all, meant ultimately to be supplanted by regular initiations given by qualified gurus? We should note that Sri Prabhupada declared Lord Jesus Christ able “to eat the whole universe” if he liked, and as the guru of the Christians, still capable of being accepted by them as such, and approachable as a guru through priests or glaymenn. Surely we Sri Prabhupada is at least as powerful as Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus can still accept disciples then why can Sri Prabhupada not? Is he any less a guru than Christ? Why are Sri Prabhupada’s remarks in this connection persistently ignored? Hiranyakasipu, despite being demonic, was able to control all the demigods, the seasons, the elements, and the planets, altering their natural patterns and activities in various ways. Great yogis, like Visvamitra, are able to create and annihilate entire universes. Certainly Krishna may act as He wishes through His pure devotees. There can be no limitation set on the extent to which Krishna empowers his pure representative. If Krishna so directs him, he may perform many unprecedented acts to execute His will. Thus it should be admitted that to argue about what an empowered pure devotee cannot do is not only presumptuous, but it indicates something akin to agnosticism.

Please consider the following:

*prabhu kahe, — isvara haya parama svatrantra

*prabhu kahe —Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said; isvara — the Supreme Personality of Godhead or Isvara Puri; haya — is; parama — supremely; svatrantra — independent; isvara — of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or of Isvara Puri; kapa — the mercy; nahe — is not; veda-paratantra — subjected to the Vedic rules.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, “Both the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the spiritual master, Isvara Puri, are completely independent. Therefore the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and Isvara Puri is not subjected to any Vedic rules and regulations.” (CC Madhya 10.137)

Sri Prabhupada comments: “...Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu replied that his spiritual master, Isvara Puri, was so empowered that he was as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As such, Isvara Puri was the spiritual master of the whole world...The conclusion is that an empowered spiritual master is authorized by Krishna and should be considered to be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. That is the verdict of Visvanatha Chakravarti: *saksad-dharitvena sambasta-sastraih*. An authorized spiritual master is as good as Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If Hari is free to act as He likes, the empowered spiritual master is also free.” (CC Madhya 10.137 purport)

It is important to remember that Sri Prabhupada did not much criticize the Christians for their maintaining a priestly system and seeing Lord Jesus Christ as the actual guru. He faulted them, in actual fact, for not strictly following the commandments of Jesus Christ. He did not at any time disagree with the assertion that Christ could be the guru of the Christians.

No Such Word As Ritvik?
A noteworthy difference to Sri Prabhupada’s opinion and presentation occurs in the next part of the interview. Narayana Maharaja says, “We don’t follow any ritvik system. In our Gaudiya Vaishnava line there is no ritvik. I have not seen the word ritvik in our Vaishnava dictionary.” He goes on to admit that someone can officiate on behalf of the Acharya, but insists, “But it is not called ritvik. We have seen no such word as ritvik.”

It may be that Narayana Maharaja has actually not encountered the word ritvik, but the term was employed by Sri Prabhupada and Sukadeva Gosvami, and as cited in VVR 12, is employed in *Manu-samhita* II.43, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 10.23.10, and KRISHNA, Chapter 22. We have not made an exhaustive search in the word-for-words of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, but recently we came across two occurrences of the term ritvik in the eighth canto thereof, which clearly explain the concept and set to rest the question as to whether or not such an expression can be found in the Vaishnava lexicon, since what could be a more substantial Vaishnava reference than the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*? The first reference is SB 8.16.53:

*acharyam jnana-sampannam

vastrabhara-dhenubhih
tosayed rvijas caiva
tad viddhi aradhanam hareh

*acharyam* — the spiritual master; *jnana-sampannam* — very advanced in spiritual knowledge; *vastrabhara-dhenubhih* — with clothing, ornaments and many cows; *tosayed* — should satisfy; *rvijah* — the priests recommended by the spiritual master [ritviks]; *ca eva* — as well as; *tat viddhi* — try to understand that; *aradhanam* — worship; *hareh* — of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

“One should satisfy the spiritual master [acharyam], who is very learned in Vedic literature, and should satisfy his assistant priests [rvijah]. One should please them by offering them clothing, ornaments and cows. This is the ceremony called Vishnu-aradhana, or worship of Lord Vishnu.”

Examining the word-for-word of this stanza we see that the *acharya* is clearly differentiated from the *ritvik* by the descriptive: *jnana-sampannam*, which means: — “very advanced in spiritual knowledge.” The definition of *ritvik* is also clear: “the priests recommended by the spiritual master.” Of course, the assistant priest may also be very qualified, but there is no indication here that a ritvik would automatically be qualified to be an Acharya by reason of the Acharya’s disappearance. Rather, the indication given is that one is Acharya by virtue of being “very advanced in spiritual knowledge.”

The term *ritvik* occurs again in text 55 of the same chapter:

*daksinam gurave dayad

dvighyas ca yatharhatah

annadynena sva-pakams ca

prinayet samupagatam

daksinam — some contribution of money or gold; *gurave* — unto the spiritual master; *dayat* — one should give; *dvighyah ca — and to the priests engaged by the spiritual master; yatharhatah — as far as possible; *annadyna — by distributing pra­
sada; sva-pakam — even to the candalas...; ca — also; prinayet — one should please; *samupagatam* — because they have assembled there for the ceremony.

Note the synonyms given by Sri Prabhupada for *rtvighyah*: “to the priests engaged by the spiritual master”. And in the verse translation, we find “assistant priests”. Again a distinction is made between the ritvik and the guru. A ritvik is clearly an assistant engaged by the guru to perform a specific function.
on his behalf. The guru is the master. Although Srila Prabhupada makes no mention of the term ritvik in the purport to these verses, the term nevertheless does exist—it was used by Srila Prabhupada and by Sukadeva Gosvami. It was translated by Srila Prabhupada, and he clearly distinguishes between a spiritual master and a priest. Furthermore, the idea which has been put forward that being a ritvik is not a respectable enough position to warrant serious consideration is erroneous, for these verses state that the guru and his ritviks should be “satisfied” and given “cloth, ornaments, cows and some monetary contribution.” They further declare such charitable activity to be, “the ceremony of Vishnu-aradhanā, or worship of Lord Vishnu,” thus, by honoring the Acharya and his ritviks one is deemed successful in his worship of Lord Vishnu.

Even if the word ritvik is not found in any current Vaishnava dictionary, the term is nevertheless repeatedly employed in Srimad-Bhagavatam, the most important scripture of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas, which seems adequate evidence for its legitimacy.

Sripatha B.R. Sridhara Maharaja used the term ritvik and instituted a ritvik system for carrying on his line, which may have been misunderstood by his followers in a way similar to the misunderstanding of Srila Prabhupada’s followers. At any rate, Narayana Maharaja has admitted that a guru may have someone ‘officiate’ on his behalf, an English synonym used by Srila Prabhupada to describe the function of the ritvik. Thereafter, Narayana Maharaja reveals that Prabhupada told him, “I have given this trust to our devotees to do the work of Acharya, and they will do. And after [my] demise...they will all preach and give hari-nama and diksha.” We do not know if Narayana Maharaja is recalling the exact words of Srila Prabhupada when he says “do the work of Acharya”, yet that is exactly what a ritvik does! He is a deputy of the Acharya, and he assists the Acharya by performing duties assigned him by the Acharya.

Gaudiya Matha Acharyas?

There are several other points worthy of our attention in this interview. In making his analysis of guru-parampara, Narayana Maharaja states that, “there is a system in our sampradaya. So Tirtha Maharaja, Madhava Maharaja, Sridhara Maharaja, our Gurudeva, Swamiji...they all became Acharyas...Anyway guru parampara system, guru pranali, should not be checked. And I think that Swamiji has not told this. If he had said that after my demise this system should be stopped, then he would have gone against the principles of Vaishnava sampradaya.” Of course Narayana Maharaja is being led in this instance to argue against a proposal that no one has actually made, i.e. “this system [of parampara] should be stopped.” We have never proposed that the sampradaya should be stopped. We simply disagree with some of our Godbrothers as to how the sampradaya should be continued without diluting it or cheapening it in any way. The significant point on which Srila Prabhupada would seem to disagree with Narayana Maharaja, however, is whether or not some of the above-mentioned persons, specifically Tirtha Maharaja and Madhava Maharaja, could legitimately be called Acharyas. Srila Prabhupada spoke very forcefully on this subject and several times asserted that these persons were not at all qualified to be designated as Acharyas. The stress in Srila Prabhupada’s teachings on “becoming guru” has always been on the point of qualification. He never indicated that “becoming Acharya” was merely contingent on the disappearance of the previous Acharya. Neither does Narayana Maharaja generally make assertions of this nature, rather, he generally stresses qualification too. It is true that in the Gaudiya Matha so many devotees are conventionally called Acharya, guru, etc. Srila Prabhupada, however, did not approve of this. Rather, he said, “The result is now everyone is claiming to be Acharya even though they may be kanishtha adhikari with no ability to preach. In some of the camps the Acharya 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 Acharya. 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. This attempt was made previously by them, especially Madhava Maharaja and Tirtha Maharaja and Bon Maharaja...” Thus, if Rabindra Svarupa and Co. want to accept that they are Acharyas in the above sense, we will ask them to remember the simple truth that Srila Prabhupada did not approve of such “Acharyas”.

Regarding Bon Maharaja, for example, he has written, “On the whole, you may know that he is not a liberated person, and therefore, he cannot initiate any person to Krishna consciousness. It requires special spiritual benediction from higher authorities.” (SPL 68.4.18) Therefore, although Narayana Maharaja may consider it acceptable to regard such persons as Acharyas, it must be said that Srila Prabhupada does not agree with him. As a matter of fact, Srila Prabhupada identified this tendency of accepting unqualified persons as guru or Acharya as the root cause of the break-up of the Gaudiya Matha, and his expressed opinion was a fundamental point of contention between him and his Godbrothers. He clearly stated in Bombay in 1976: “Why this Gaudiya Matha failed? Because they tried to become more than guru. Before passing away, he [Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura] gave all direction, and never said this man should be the next Acharya. But these people, just after his passing away, they began to fight, — ‘Who shall be Acharya?’ That is the failure. They never thought — why Guru Maharaja gave us instructions [about] so many things. Why he did not say that this man should be Acharya? They wanted to create artificially somebody Acharya, and everything failed. They did not consider even with common sense: that if Guru Maharaja wanted to appoint somebody as Acharya, why did he not say? He said so many things, and this point he missed? The real point? And they insisted on it. They declared, ‘Come on, unfit persons — become Acharya.’ Then another man comes, then another comes, and another. Better to remain a foolish person perpetually to be directed by Guru Maharaja. That is perfection.”

The Best Kanishtha?

A curious anomaly in these exchanges is that although Narayana Maharaja repeatedly stresses the qualifications of the guru, at one point he is quoted as saying: “Say there is no madhyma adhikari. Suppose we are all kanishtha adhikari. Then within the kanishtha adhikari group, if one is on a higher level than me, he should be treated as a guru. He will be vartma-pradarsaka-guru, or he can initiate.” This appears to be a contradiction, as he several times asserts that a kanistha cannot initiate. And he has also explained that one must be at least at the nistha platform to be guru. Therefore, either the translators erred or there is some unresolved mystery. The
verdict of Prabhupada’s books is clearly that the guru must be at least at the nishtha stage to be actually a bona fide guru — this is confirmed by the Acharya-purusha concept mentioned elsewhere in the IJ. We have established this fairly exhaustively in previous issues of VVR, and don’t really think that Narayana Maharaja would ever disagree, as he asserted it on a number of occasions when I discussed the guru issue with him. That an more advanced kanistha should be treated respectfully by less advanced kanisthas is accepted, but that he can perform initiations as anything more than an officiating priest is very difficult to substantiate.

Who Is Qualified?

One final point that the interviewers misrepresented us on: “They seem to have already decided that no one is qualified.” The editors of VVR admit that they cannot accurately judge who is disqualified unless the person under scrutiny exhibits some obvious anarthas. Neither have we decided that no one is qualified — we are certain someone must be. Narayana Maharaja declares that the prospective disciples will have to judge — though he also told me that we should ensure that pretenders are not allowed to pose as gurus. What we do suggest is that those who would be guru should take it that they should first be liberated souls — assuming that the range of actual liberation is from nishtha to prema — and if they are less than qualified, they should stop pretending to be sad-gurus, or bona fide gurus, and admit their status as ritviks, monitors or whatever one may prefer to call himself to indicate his actual position. If someone is unsure whether he is liberated or not, then he should not initiate. The editors of VVR, as servants of Srila Prabhupada who care about his mission, have a responsibility to examine the record of ISKCON devotees’ attempts at being Acharya, to present research on the qualifications of the bona fide guru and to try and provide relevant information to assist prospective disciples and would-be gurus alike in coming to an authentic understanding of guru-tattva. If we have failed in this, we humbly apologize. If we have succeeded, then all glories to Srila Prabhupada! Please consider the following excerpt from the interview with Narayana Maharaja:

NM: Your gurudeva is mukta-purusha: How can you say? How can you say? All we can do is anumana — anumana means?
Devotee: Inference.
NM: Yes. If we were mukta-purusha, then we could know a mukta-purusha. But by action we can make inference. He is always chanting the name...Krishna, tears in his eyes; his every act is full of devotion — then we can know that he is a guru. He never commits offense to anyone, he is always merciful to the fallen jivas and gives them Krishna-bhakti — then he is a guru. The inner thing we cannot see. But by anumana we can take it, and we should take diksha or siksha from him.

This is a standard with which no one could disagree.

Response to TKG

Regarding the interview with Tamala Krishna Maharaja, we do not wish to make an elaborate analysis of all the contradictions in his replies, except for a few particularly obvious ones which our readers may wish to contemplate in order to determine whether such latter-day testimony is reliable. Elsewhere in this issue Yasodanandana Prabhu has responded at length to TKG’s allegations, and will more elaborately indicate the discrepancies.

First, there was this exchange:

IJ: On May 28th, a number of GBC members including yourself questioned Srila Prabhupada about how ISKCON’s affairs would go on after His Divine Grace’s departure. During the months leading up to this time do you remember any meeting in which Srila Prabhupada instructed you or discussed with you the system of ritvik initiations?

TKG: No, I don’t remember any such meetings.

In examining this statement let us go back to 1980:

TKG: What actually happened, I’ll explain. I explained it, but the interpretation is wrong. What actually happened was that Prabhupada mentioned that he might be appointing some ritviks, so [then] the GBC met for various reasons, and they went to Prabhupada, five or six of us. [referring to the May 28th meeting]

There are two interesting things here. One is that TKG revealed “what actually happened” on May 28, 1977, in 1980 at Topanga Canyon (something that he had apparently not done before that 1980 meeting). Prior to 1980, we apparently acted upon an erroneous interpretation of the so-called appointment. There was also, according to him, at least one occasion (which was not necessarily a meeting per se) prior to the May 28th meeting when Prabhupada expressed his desire to appoint ritviks — in his garden perhaps. Ten years later TKG says, “No, I don’t remember any such meetings.” Clearly, if it is a question of memory, then his memory in 1980 was certainly bound to be much more reliable than it would be ten years on. It follows that his 1990 testimony — that he could not “remember any such meetings” cannot be given much credibility. If in 1990 TKG has forgotten things which he remembered clearly ten years before, then how credible is his memory regarding other incidents of 1977?

The next exchange which raises many more questions than it answers is as follows:

IJ: After the GBC met with Srila Prabhupada on May 28th, was there any confusion amongst the devotees in Vrindavan about what Prabhupada’s instruction was?

TKG: No, there was no confusion whatsoever. Everyone understood clearly that Prabhupada wanted his disciples after his departure to begin initiating disciples of their own who would be Prabhupada’s grand disciples.

Tamala Krishna Maharaja may be legitimately describing what he considers was in the minds of the devotees in Vrindavan. However, Yasodanandana Prabhu was one of those devotees in Vrindavan — his impression was that Srila Prabhupada had appointed some ritviks, and he was otherwise unsure what was supposed to happen after Prabhupada’s departure. Jayadvaita Maharaja apparently was not so sure either, because he told Satsvarupa Maharaja in October, 1977 — “You had better get this in writing, because it’s very important, and it’s not very clear. This is going to be contested.” (Memoir — Satsvarupa Maharaja, December, 1989) When Satsvarupa Maharaja tried to see Srila Prabhupada to get this crucial matter clarified in writing, TKG refused to let him in. When Gurukripa Maharaja tried to get in to clarify how initiation would be conducted in the future, he was similarly denied...
That was his plan. ‘Let them manage by strong governing body, as it is going on. Then Acharya will come by his qualifications.’

Would it automatically stop with Srila Prabhupada’s physical disappearance? TKG would insist that it would. But they wanted that…” (Sept. 21, 1973 Bombay)

Regarding the letter of July 9th, 1977, authorized and signed by Srila Prabhupada: “Now that Srila Prabhupada has named these representatives, Temple Presidents may henceforward send recommendations for first and second initiations to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee as an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupada by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gayatri thread, just as Srila Prabhupada has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the above eleven senior devotees acting as His representatives.”

‘Henceforward’ means “from this time on” or “from this time indefinitely into the future.” And yet TKG makes the following observations: “Yes, I remember. It’s significant that Prabhupada in no way mentions that these persons will continue to be ritviks after his departure.” On the contrary, there is no significance in the fact that Srila Prabhupada did not say that the ritviks would continue to be such after his departure. What is significant is that he did not mention them becoming gurus at any time in the future. Srila Prabhupada had authorized ritviks and a ritvik system. He never appointed any gurus, and he indicated, by the use of the word ‘henceforward’, that the ritvik system could continue indefinitely. Again, what is actually significant is not that Srila Prabhupada never directly said “ritvik initiations should continue after my departure”, but that he stated that the ritvik system was to be observed henceforward, which is to say for the indefinite future.

Now, at what point would the ritvik system become obsolete? Would it automatically stop with Srila Prabhupada’s physical disappearance? TKG would insist that it would. But from the indications of this letter and Srila Prabhupada’s other instructions on the matter, it appears that such a system could continue, so long as it was not perfectly obvious who was qualified to be actually guru. This is the very obvious conclusion to be made from the letter of July 9th. Furthermore, Prabhupada commented in 1973, “[Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura] advised that ‘You make a governing body and Kunja Babu may be allowed to remain manager.’ This was directly spoken. He never asked anybody to become Acharya. His idea was ‘Let them manage; then whoever will be actual qualified for becoming Acharya, they will elect. Why should I enforce upon them?’ That was his plan. ‘Let them manage by strong governing body, as it is going on. Then Acharya will come by his qualifications.’ But they wanted that…” (Sept. 21, 1973 Bombay)

Moreover, the creation of the ritvik system, documented by the letter of July 9th 1977 and thus authorized by Srila Prabhupada, was a managerial arrangement for initiation based on geographical considerations and on the principle of managing a world-wide society. It was despatched with Srila Prabhupada together with his Last Will and Testament. In his will Srila Prabhupada wrote as follows with respect to his managerial arrangement: “The system of management will continue as it is now, and there is no need of any change.” These two documents are the last signed statements by Srila Prabhupada regarding the future management of his Society. They must be viewed as extremely significant.

Another significant point with respect to confusion in the minds of the devotees in Vrndavan is inadvertently revealed by the printing of the minutes of the March 28th meeting with Prabhupada. Rabindra Svarupa prefaced these notes by stating that there was no question whatsoever in the devotees’ minds with respect to the possibility of there being any ritvik system after Srila Prabhupada’s departure. But look at the questions the GBC men intended to put to him. One was: “What is the relationship of those initiated with those who initiate them?” Why on earth did the GBC or some individual among the GBC propose to ask such a question UNLESS THERE WAS SOME INKLING THAT THOSE INITIATED AFTER PRABHUPADA’S DEPARTURE WERE TO BE HIS DISCIPLES? We think this question is extremely significant and, even if the GBC men were satisfied with Satsvarupa Maharaja’s interpretation of the meeting—and it is questionable whether they heard a recording of the meeting by which to arrive at their own conclusion, there certainly was some inkling of proxy initiations prior thereto.

In TKG’s remarks about Yasodanandana Prabhu, it is noteworthy that he does not directly deny Yasodanandana Prabhu’s allegations. Instead he uses a courtroom technique to avoid directly answering the question. He said, “I could never have stated that Prabhupada wanted the ritviks to continue after his departure. Why would I have ever said such a thing when His Divine Grace never mentioned it? How could Yasodanandana Prabhu have imagined such a thing?” To say that “I could never have stated” is not to say that “I didn’t...”, and raising the two questions which follow the “I could never...” does not constitute a direct answer either. Even if we take TKG’s questions as some kind of answers, still a memory thirteen years old cannot be regarded on the same level as a direct diary entry made on the same day the event transpired. The VVR staff have seen the original diary entry of Yasodanandana’s and have photocopies for anyone who would like to examine the evidence for themselves.

The analysis that Srila Prabhupada’s disciples were unqualified to be gurus in 1977 was put forward by Srila Prabhupada, confirmed by TKG and reconﬁrmed by Srila Prabhupada. There was no question of TKG’s remarks being simply an exhibition of humility—it was the plain, literal truth, confirmed by Srila Prabhupada. See the whole text of the discussion in VVR 11 for proof.

We must agree with TKG’s final warning that the “greatest danger” is “philosophical deviation.” We have suffered a great deal from philosophical deviations of one sort or another since 1977, and if we are to avoid a constant repetition of such in the future, we will do well to welcome constructive criticism from thoughtful devotees as a practical means of avoiding another thirteen years of turmoil and dissatisfaction. Otherwise, the house for sheltering the world built by Srila Prabhupada may, for all practical purposes, become empty.
Recognizing the Bona Fide Spiritual Master

by Kamamrita dasa

The burning question, whether or not one accepts the proposition of a ritvik in absentia system, is “What is the qualification of the bona fide guru?” If Srila Prabhupada intended us to act as ritviks until we are qualified to act as gurus, then the self-realised soul can impart knowledge unto you. Thus Krishna has instructed the aspirant to approach a self-realised soul. The self-realised soul can impart knowledge unto you. For we expect, and indeed find, that such advice is unequivocal.

Basic Injunctions

We begin by examining a few well known injunctions with regard to approaching a potential guru. Firstly, from the Gita:

\[
tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya
upadeksyante te jnanam
jnaninas tatta darsinah
\]

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realised soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.” Bhg.4.34

This utterance of Sri Krishna, aside from setting forth the advisability of accepting and serving a guru, gives precise information with respect to his qualification, viz. he must be a tattva-darsh, or “one who has seen the truth”. Such a personality is characterised by Srila Prabhupada in his translation as a self-realised soul. Thus Krishna has instructed the aspirant to approach one who has surpassed the conditional stage.

In the Mundakopanishad we read:

\[
tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet
samit-panih srotyam brahma nishtham
\]

“In order to learn the transcendental science, one must approach the bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession, who is fixed in the absolute truth.” Mundaka 1.2.12

According to this injunction the bona fide guru is not merely a member of a particular sampradaya, he is fixed in the transcendence. The indication is clear: he must at least be at the nishthra platform.

In the Bhagavatam we find:

\[
tasmad gurum prapadyeta
ijnasasah sreyaum uttamam
sabde pare nishnatom
brahma upasamnrayam
\]

“Any person who seriously desires to achieve real happiness must seek out a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of his spiritual master is that he must have realised the conclusion of the scriptures by deliberation and be able to convince others of these conclusion. Such great personalities, who have taken shelter of the Supreme Godhead, leaving aside all material considerations, are to be understood as bona fide spiritual masters.” Bhag. 11.3.21 as rendered in Bhag. 5.14.41 purport.

The essence of this enunciation of the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna, is that one must approach a self-realised soul, one who has “realised the conclusion of the scriptures.” Such a person is a bona fide guru, and one is meant to be initiated by him.

These three renowned verses give direct instruction to the aspirant, the sum and substance of which is: “Approach a realised soul and surrender to him.” If we make a general search of such injunctions in Srila Prabhupada’s books we will find this theme repeated again and again. What we will not find is any commandment, or even encouragement, to accept someone who is less-than-liberated as one’s guru.

The Tenor of Srila Prabhupada’s Teachings

In the Bhagavatam we read:

“To become Krishna conscious one must take shelter of a realised soul—a mahat, or mahatma—who’s only interest is to engage in the service of the Lord... One must take shelter of a self-realised spiritual master... One must take shelter of a niskincana, a person engaged in devotional service and free from material contamination.” Bhag. 7.5.32 purport.

Here the message is clear—it is a self-realised soul that must be taken shelter of.

We find this statement in Teachings of Lord Chaitanya:

“A student is considered perfected when he understands the identity of the holy name and the Supreme Lord. Unless one is under the shelter of a realised spiritual master, his understanding of the Supreme is simply foolishness.” TLC p.201

Divya-jnana can only be got from a guru who is realised. When that divya-jnana has fully manifest itself to the devotee he achieves perfection. Otherwise, if his guru is not self-realised, his so-called knowledge is “simply foolishness”.

In the Bhagavatam we read:

“Sri Narottama dasa Thakura has sung, chadiya vaishnava seva nistara payeche kebe: ‘Without serving the lotus feet of a pure Vaishnava or spiritual master, no one has ever attained perfect liberation from material bondage.’” Bhag. 5.1.6 purp.

[Rsabhadeva said:] ‘O My sons, you should accept a highly elevated paramahamsa, a spiritually advanced spiritual
master.” Bhag. 5.5.10

“...one cannot get free from...material existence unless one receives shelter at the lotus feet of a pure devotee...the Vedic injunction is the one should approach a spiritual master...One must come to Krishna consciousness, and therefore one must take shelter of a pure devotee.” Bhag. 5.14.41 purport.

“No one can get out of this struggle for existence, which is full of miseries, without accepting a pure devotee of the Lord.” Bhag. 5.14.1 purport.

“A serious devotee must first approach a spiritual master who not only is well versed in the Vedic literatures but is also a great devotee with factual realisation of the Lord... Without the help of such a devotee spiritual master, one cannot make progress in the transcendental science of the Lord.” Bhag. 2.4.10 purport.

“Unless one can find a person transcendental to the four basic defects one should not accept advice and become a victim of the material condition.” Bhag. 5.14.26 purport.

These statements all insist on the necessity of taking shelter of a great devotee with factual realisations. If one does not do so, then he can make no significant progress in spiritual life. A guru who is not free of anarthas, or who has only theoretical knowledge of Krishna cannot much help one advance. Indeed, the association of such devotees may result in one’s bewildernent.

“Krishna consciousness cannot be achieved by self-endavour. One must therefore approach a self-realised Krishna conscious person and touch his feet... One cannot come to the precincts of Krishna consciousness unless he touches the dust of the lotus feet of a person who has become a mahatma, a great devotee.” Bhag. 4.26.20 purport.

“There is no gain in hearing the Vedic hymns form some mental speculator. When the same is heard from an actual self-realised soul and is properly understood by service and submission, everything becomes transparently clear.” Bhag. 1.18.4 purport.

“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 heart.” Bhag. 10.2.18

This carrying of the Lord in the heart cannot simply refer to the Supersoul, who is sarva-bhutanam hrd dese...tisthati — i.e. seated in the heart of all living beings. Rather, it is full realisation of the Supreme Lord, a realisation that cannot be conveyed to the heart of another unless one possesses it oneself.

In the Caitanya-caritamrita:

“One must accept the words of an acarya, a bona fide spiritual master, to clear the path for spiritual advancement. This is the secret of success. However, one’s guide must be a spiritual master who is actually an unalloyed devotee strictly following the instructions of the previous acarya.” Cc. Madhya 10.17 purport.

Lest the phrase “unalloyed devotee” is taken to mean something less than the uttama devotee, consider the following:

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

This is corroborated by the Nectar of Instruction:

“...A disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikari as a spiritual master.” NOI Text 5 purport.

There are indications elsewhere that one may accept a nishtha-bhakta as his spiritual master; however, statements such as these make it clear that it is preferable to accept the topmost devotee as guru.

Here are some indications of one who is unfit to be guru:

“One should not accept as a spiritual master someone... 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.” NOD p.58

If the prospective guru is prone to anger, vacillates in his opinions, indulges too much in idle talk, or is unable to satisfy one’s doubts, etc., then he should not be accepted as guru.

In the Bhagavad Gita we find:

“Real knowledge can be obtained from a person who is in perfect Krishna consciousness. Therefore, one has to seek out such a bona fide spiritual master and, under him, learn what Krishna consciousness is.” Bg. 5.16 purport.

The bona fide guru is in “perfect Krishna consciousness”. Such is the devotee that should be sought out.

In Easy Journey to Other Planets Prabhupada has written:

“A bona fide spiritual master who is fully cognizant of the methods of spiritual science, learned in the spiritual scriptures such as the Bhagavad-gita, Vedanta, Srimad Bhagavatam and Upanishads, and who is also a realised soul who has made a tangible connection with the Supreme Lord, is the transparent medium by which the willing candidate is led to the path of the Vaikunthas.” EJP pp.32-33

Here the transparent via medium is defined. Such a guru, who is a realised soul, can lead one to the spiritual world.

Conclusion

We have given here just a few quotations from Srila Prabhupada’s books with respect to the aspirant and the kind of devotee he should approach as a potential spiritual preceptor. We have not seen any statements which direct one to take shelter of a devotee who is not free from anarthas. True, there are many statements where one is enjoined to approach a Vaishnava, or a pure devotee for initiation, which lend themselves to interpretation, but then we could hardly expect Srila Prabhupada to explicitly state what he meant by ‘Vaishnava’ or ‘pure devotee’ in every instance. Since there are many extremely strong statements to the effect that the less-than-liberated devotee is unable to give consummate guidance in spiritual life, we must take it that the strict meanings of ‘Vaishnava’ and ‘pure devotee’ are intended in such instances. There are, moreover, innumerable injunctions to the effect that one must take recourse to a bona fide guru. While there is certain to be some disagreement as to the qualification of a bona fide guru on the basis of our natural prejudices, the definition of such by Srila Prabhupada leaves little room for argument, e.g. “Unless one is self-realised and knows what his relationship is with the Supersoul, he cannot be a bona fide spiritual master.” Bhag. 3.28.2 purport. Thus those injunctions that one must be initiated by a bona fide spiritual master mean that such a devotee must be self-realised. It is not that one absolutely has to be initiated by an uttama-adhikari, but one’s guru must at least be at the threshold of true devotional service, i.e. at the level of nisphha bhakti. Below that the following admonition must hold true: “It is illegal to become a spiritual master if one is unable to deliver his disciple.” Bhag. 2.8.7 purport.
Nrisimha Appeals to Badrinarayana

A Response to the “ISKCON Journal”

THANK you for asking your secretary to send the ISKCON Journal. Since she said I’d be allowed to comment on it, I’m offering the following, though I don’t feel qualified to do so. I was enthralled to be reminded how Srila Prabhupada broke open the storehouse of Love of Godhead and quickly elevated his neophyte disciples by encouraging them to become preachers and even gurus. Of course, we all haven’t completely captured those high levels Prabhupada let us taste, and so the Movement has suffered. Yet ISKCON remains somewhat together and Godbrothers worldwide are cooperating without letting false ego spoil everything. These are good signs. I’m still hoping that many of our alienated Godbrothers can come back to the fold and support ISKCON with greater force than before. Following Nityananda Prabhu’s example, the GBC should try as hard as he has to reach out and encourage those who, though not directly connected with Prabhupada’s institution, still strive for full Krishna consciousness.

I agree that some of the attitudes expressed in VVR seem offensive. There were some offensive statements and innuendos also, and of course it was wrong to so openly suggest, without solid evidence, that leaders like Tamala Krishna Goswami might have conspired to hide some of Prabhupada’s last instructions. I was also surprised by the challenge horse and their sudden boldness in issue eleven. Yet I’ve tried not to be judgmental of VVR because I believe the editors are sincere in their purpose. Nonetheless, I’ve cautioned Nityananda and Karnamrita Prabhus about being overly zealous in presenting their views. And, I must confess. I’ve also encouraged them to go on preaching boldly and researching this guru issue from all angles. We were hoping the discussions, though short on tact, might help further purify ISKCON and clear up lingering doubts about its leadership. Other devotees have also advised the VVR editors to tone it down and not be harsh or dogmatic, and, as far as I know, they have responded with proper humility. They conducted themselves well in the meetings at your temple, and a consensus there said the questions raised were legitimate and in need of further investigation.

Yet now, suddenly, rather than having an impartial investigation and some more open meetings, Ravindra Svarupa and a few others have whipped out a magazine to spoon feed us their own conclusions. Although I have no problem supporting several Godbrothers who feel they must present themselves as regular gurus, I was very disappointed with the ISKCON Journal. What can I say? I found the magazine arrogant. Even offensive. Especially Suhotra Swami’s articles. The Journal’s harsh tone and style has surpassed VVR’s sometimes tactless presentations. At least VVR has stuck mostly to philosophy. The ISKCON Journal on the other hand, appears to carry a deliberately deadly political response to VVR’s philosophical slap in the face. Is it proper to respond to a slap with a jab to the heart? Must we believe that Nityananda, Karnamrita Prabhus are vengeful, deviant devotees out to destroy Prabhupada’s movement? Must we believe they are instruments of Kali, possessed of demoniac mentality and comparable to the sahajiyas that were rampant during the times of Bhaktivinoda Thakura? (Have you heard much about the deviations of those sahajiyas Suhotra Swami compared our Godbrothers to?) Is VVR spouting mayavada philosophy by saying Prabhupada can still initiate and inspire new disciples? Really Badrinarayana Prabhu, isn’t this response a little extreme? And why do you think so many devotees have written VVR, encouraging the editors? Why so many of our Godbrothers still don’t have full faith in some of the top ISKCON leaders? I pray you’ll consider these questions carefully.

A new disciple may be trained to see his local instructor-initiator as the total manifestation of Krishna’s Divine Mercy, but it seems more fitting that he sees Srila Prabhupada in that way. After all, Prabhupada did say that a kanistha guru or madhyama guru must be on the same level as his disciples. (“One should not become a guru unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikari. A neophyte Vaishnava or a Vaishnava 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 aim of life under his insufficient guidance.”) Yet no matter how we argue the point, the disciple must decide for himself, ultimately, where to repose his full faith. That’s between him, Sri Guru, and Sri Krishna Bhagavan. Certainly spiritual relationships cannot be legislated. And this is one reason, I believe, that neither Srila Bhaktisiddhanta nor Srila Prabhupada, apparently, made a clear mandate: “These disciples are regular gurus.” or “These disciples must remain as officiating gurus.” Water will find its own level, and those who are intelligent will naturally learn to take shelter of Srila Prabhupada — by reading his books, hearing his tapes, worshiping his murti, and serving his mission. Such sincere devotees will naturally be well-behaved and cooperative. And without intrigue, sincere gurus will naturally bring hundreds of sincere souls to Srila Prabhupada’s special shelter.

It is clear that Srila Prabhupada did not specifically appoint anyone to be the next spiritual master. Nor did he specifically forbid anyone. Yet who will deny that he is the ultimate guru for everyone in ISKCON? What harm, then, in humbly admit-
Why should any dedicated devotee need to feel he has no direct access to Srila Prabhupada? Some ridicule such faith, calling it Christianity. But that's just conflict. We should try to understand the essence and avoid needless conflict. If a guru inspires his disciples in Krishna consciousness and instructs them to carefully study Prabhupada's books and serve Prabhupada's mission, then we may accept him as a “regular” guru—if everyone insists on that definition. Let the disciple find out for himself what Prabhupada says about these issues. The problem is when we attempt to bar any ISKCON devotee from direct access to Srila Prabhupada's spiritual association and suggest that those whose guru's death results from the excessive desire for initiation, who are we to suggest such things? Prabhupada clearly established himself as The Spiritual Master of ISKCON. He said ISKCON was his body. So why should any dedicated devotee need to feel he has no direct access to Srila Prabhupada? It seems foolish to deny this direct access for purified souls who want it. Surely new disciples will need some training and purification to come to the point of appreciating Prabhupada fully, and it will be our glory if we help them get there. As you indicated in a letter to VVR, some of them may get there before some of us.

I feel that Prabhupada is still capable of giving shelter, and still willing to give shelter, to any sincere follower, old or new. Some ridicule such faith, calling it Christianity. But that's just name calling. A meaningless criticism. Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and Srila Prabhupada recognized Jesus Christ as a saktyavesa jagat-guru who delivered thousands, if not millions, of fallen souls. And they recognized him as being capable of delivering, and willing to deliver, even today, anyone who follows his instructions.

And it seems concocted to say that a “mercy case” like Gauridasa Pandit had no real access to Srila Prabhupada and no understanding of Prabhupada's intentions. Several of the Journal's authors remind us that their own service to Prabhupada was very intimate and special. We should feel indebted to several senior Godbrothers who took up major leadership roles and helped expand Prabhupada's mission. We always saw them as empowered representatives of Srila Prabhupada. Yet many have violated their Godbrothers' trust and never made much, if any, apologies. They've done some great service but have also relied on the support and cooperation of their Godbrothers. (Lord Ramachandra saw the squirrel's service of throwing pebbles into the sea to be as good as Hanuman-ji's service of throwing mountaintops.)

In conclusion I'll venture that Srila Prabhupada's mercy won't be limited or regulated by formalities and technicalities of tradition. I don't feel that His Holiness Narayana Maharaja or anyone else can tell us about the precise boundaries of Prabhupada's mercy. Is it traditional, for instance, that a guru sits on huge vyasasanas before the Deities and establishes his murti to be worshipped by his followers for thousands of years to come? Who has done this? Who has preached all over the world, to all classes of people, using all modern facilities? Only Srila Prabhupada. His position is unique.

Perhaps this “ritvik in absentia” idea is not traditional. Maybe Prabhupada didn't specifically request it. What surprises me though, is how vehemently some GBC leaders are reacting, calling it a vicious attack on the Movement, mayavadi philosophy, sahajiyism, a very dangerous and major deviation of the worst kind, etc. Why all the fuss? What's at stake here, really?

It's obvious that Rabindra Svarupa Prabhu was largely responsible for the external form of the magazine, and it appears he has joined in a kind of personal vendetta against the editors of VVR. When Vaishnavas, or great sages, engage in cursing and counter-cursing it can get very deadly indeed. When Vasishthi Muni cursed that Vaishnava king to drop dead, the king cursed the muni, and they both dropped dead.

For everyone's sake, I request you to try to convince your colleagues to tone down their speech. An institutional position of authority in ISKCON does not automatically put one in a superior spiritual position above all question. Nor is it a license for arrogance. You are well-respected in ISKCON, and rightly so, your words will be effective.

Human life is meant for sober, calm, philosophical reflections aimed at understanding the Absolute Truth, Sri Krishna. Beyond this is spontaneous devotional service. Yet even advanced devotees may sometimes disagree. If we must fight, let's fight like brahmmins and save the deathblows for the demons, those who are truly antagonistic to Lord Chaitanya's movement.

I hope this letter finds you blissful and well. I'm looking forward to your comments and instructions in these matters. Please forgive me for rambling on in this way. I hope I haven't offended anyone, but I felt constrained to say all this. We may argue...but of course Lord Chaitanya will have the last say regarding what's best for His Movement.
Dreams of Srila Prabhupada

by Karnamrita dasa

WHEN Mother Lalatala related the series of dreams she had had of Srila Prabhupada to Tamala Krishna Goswami he quite rightly took them seriously. Srila Prabhupada has several times mentioned that if one receives instructions from the spiritual master in a dream then one should act upon them—provided such instruction do not go against scripture. In the case of Lalatala’s dreams it was deemed by Goswami Maharaja and several other GBC men that such was not the case and thus she was given the proxy initiation she desired. For that reason we can take it that the dream reported in VVR 12 by Adwaita dasa, New Zealand, was also bona fide: “One of the new devotees that wanted to be initiated by Srila Prabhupada had a dream that he and I went before Srila Prabhupada for what he thought was initiation. He witnessed Srila Prabhupada call me forward and give me a set of japa beads. Then, Srila Prabhupada smiled amazingly at him...” He realised that the beads I had been given by Srila Prabhupada...were meant for him.” The said devotee was later given a ritvik initiation by Adwaita Prabhupada. It is clear to the unbiased mind that there was no essential difference between the two cases cited, that 1) dreams of Srila Prabhupada are extremely significant, and that 2) Prabhupada has indicated, by dreams, that he is far from opposed to proxy initiations.

We in New Jaipur, and our good friend Yasodanandana Prabhu, have had more than our share of dreams of Srila Prabhupada in the past year. I had one wherein Srila Prabhupada encouraged me in my writing. Nityananda has had dreams wherein Srila Prabhupada strongly berated assembled GBC men and expressed his dissatisfaction with their minimisation of our Founder Acharya. Bhaktalata dasi, who joined post 1977, had a dream wherein Srila Prabhupada instructed her how she could associate with him via recordings of his vani. Saradvihari dasi had a dream wherein Prabhupada visited New Jaipur and ridiculed the idea of re-initiation. Even three-year-old Jahnavee suddenly woke one morning and declared, “Swami Prabhupada told me to sing and dance!” Is this a sign of us being disconnected from Srila Prabhupada? Are we really to conclude that we have perpetrated a vicious assault upon his movement? Not only has Srila Prabhupada frequently graced us in our dreams, we find no difficulty in confirming the messages thereof by his writings.

Yasodanandana recently called us to relate to us a dream he had of New Jaipur and Srila Prabhupada—the first he has had for eight years of His Divine Grace. It ran as follows: The residents of New Jaipur noticed one day that the cows and peacocks of New Jaipur had gathered at the fence that runs alongside Highway 553. Some of the New Jaipurites went to investigate, and found, to their amazement, that Srila Prabhupada had landed in an aeroplane, piloted by Jayananda Prabhu, upon the highway. Srila Prabhupada then proceeded to the Cedars temple and went upstairs to his room. Thereafter, he sent one of the children to fetch Nityananda. Nityananda, for his part, not knowing that Srila Prabhupada had come, and being merely told that “someone” wanted to see him, fobbed the messenger off on the plea that he was too busy and would come later! When he was finally apprised of the presence of his spiritual master, he went quickly to see him. Srila Prabhupada spoke to him at some length, giving him various instructions, one of which was to always ensure the he was kept in the centre. Thereafter, Srila Prabhupada put his feet on Nityananda’s head and rose to leave. On his way out he passed Karnamrita and others, and smiling broadly at them, raised his hand, palm turned out, in a gesture of blessing.

...an aeroplane, piloted by Jayananda Prabhu, some of the New Jaipurites went to investigate, and found, to their amazement, that Srila Prabhupada had landed in an aeroplane, piloted by Jayananda Prabhu, upon the highway. Srila Prabhupada then proceeded to the Cedars temple and went upstairs to his room. Thereafter, he sent one of the children to fetch Nityananda. Nityananda, for his part, not knowing that Srila Prabhupada had come, and being merely told that “someone” wanted to see him, fobbed the messenger off on the plea that he was too busy and would come later! When he was finally apprised of the presence of his spiritual master, he went quickly to see him. Srila Prabhupada spoke to him at some length, giving him various instructions, one of which was to always ensure the he was kept in the centre. Thereafter, Srila Prabhupada put his feet on Nityananda’s head and rose to leave. On his way out he passed Karnamrita and others, and smiling broadly at them, raised his hand, palm turned out, in a gesture of blessing.

In reporting these nocturnal meetings with Srila Prabhupada...we are bound to be criticised. One objection that has already been raised to the validity of such dreams is that the most noteworthy dream thusfar broadcast by any follower of Srila Prabhupada is the famous dream of Kirtanananda Swami, which clearly deviated from Vaishnava siddhanta. But there is a misconception here, and one we were unable to dispel at San Diego. The fact is that Kirtanananda’s dream was no dream at all. It transpires that his so-called dream was an adaptation of a work by some Sufi Moslem, and was not in the least original.

Our dreams of Srila Prabhupada, which are genuine dreams, have much encouraged us at a time when we are widely seen as pariahs. The letter to Prabhupada featured in VVR 12 has been to some extent answered by our dreams. Srila Prabhupada does not seem to be displeased with us. We feel enlivened by his presence and his blessings, all of us. Come to New Jaipur and dream of Srila Prabhupada!

Questioning or Fault-finding?

by Tamala Krishna Goswami

QUESTION (a 6-year devotee): What about certain thoughts or critical questions we have about older devotees now in the movement, when do they turn into offenses? Instead of praising the GBC, it may not always be so positive...

TKG: Just be very careful, that’s all. If you do it without an envious mentality, there’s no offense. It’s not that you can’t question. We’re living in a society of devotees where everyone has a right to question. But there’s a way and a method of questioning which is not based on enmity or envy. The real issue is that it shouldn’t be envious or inimical. But there’s nothing wrong with questioning.

You are supposed to be a responsible member [of ISKCON]—everyone is...which doesn’t mean blind followers. We don’t need blind followers, this is not what our process is. So everyone has a right to question. The Gita says you should question. It says: taddvidhi pranipatena pariprasnena... But if you do it in an inimical way or in an envious way, that’s not very good. You have to know how to be very polite, you have to know how to observe Vaishnava etiquette. If you do all of that, then questioning is not bad.

Bhudhara: In the verse you quoted, the distinction in that verse about questioning is that the mood is to render service. So if our mood is to render service by asking a question to help ISKCON grow and help all our godbrothers advance...

TKG: If it is free of a fault-finding propensity, then it is OK.
The Failure of the GBC

by H.H. Visvambhara dasa Gosvami

I appreciate the efforts of the editors of VVR. It takes courage and honesty to address an issue straightforwardly and yet respectfully. This is fearlessness. Like many others, I have been struggling for an understanding of why Srila Prabhupada's great house has become such an uncomfortable home. Your VVR has successfully established a forum for discussion. This is most necessary in this interim period when we are grasping for a definition of our institution.

You are to be praised for your honest attempt to define for the future the architecture of Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON institution. I fear also that we are failing to follow Srila Prabhupada's instructions since his physical departure from this world. And worse, whatever we are doing, we do very carelessly, unconcernedly. We have not yet fully grasped the concept that in shaping ISKCON as the international institution for re-spiritualizing the human society in this Kali-yuga we are handling the most delicate, urgent and important mission. On our success or failure depends the fate of the whole of suffering humanity. As we engage in this battle, we should not forget that we are dealing with Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's Own Desire. We are executing the will of all our great previous acaryas. And particularly, we are but the humble servants of the vision of His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, whose constant preaching in his own fashion, since the time of Lord Caitanya till today, has no systematic means of being manifested to the world at large. The foundation-stones for a world-wide congregation of Vaishnavas chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra was laid down by His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. When most of his disciples failed him, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada took it upon himself to establish the concrete manifestation of his idea.

Srila Prabhupada's disciples, as unprepared as they are, have inherited the sacred task of implementing ISKCON as a continuing, self-perpetuating institution that will unite the world under the one priority (serving the Supreme Absolute Truth, Sri Krishna) that can save it from self-abomination. It is my humble opinion that it is puerile to expect that such a mission can be carried to success without the acceptance of a leadership. We know both from the failure of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura's Gaudiya Matha and from Srila Prabhupada's own insistence that such a leadership cannot be based on the "acarya" concept.

Individual spiritual masters, each utilizing his disciples to preach in his own fashion, since the time of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's and the Gosvamis' departure kept the sankirtana movement disorganized and unfocused. It was Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's bold genius which brought Vaishnavism to the modern stage. And both of his immediate successors have taught us to accept the leadership of a Governing Body Commission. On this, I believe, every devotee must agree.

It is also a fact of our scriptural knowledge that the welfare and success of any society is entirely dependent on the purity of its leadership. This concept is all pervading as we can see from the story of the brahmana from Srimad-Bhagavatam who faulted his king because his child was still-born. Srimad-Bhagavatam relates how wonderful and opulent the world became when ruled by God-conscious emperors. As far as we can gather from his instructions, Srila Prabhupada wanted ISKCON to be the example, the brahminical impulse, behind a re-organizing of the present materialistic humanity into just such a Krishna conscious society.

But because the GBC has failed to assume the full responsibility entrusted to them by our founder-acarya ISKCON is disarrayed and ineffectual in terms of establishing itself as a significant voice on the world stage. There is impurity at the top, gross and subtle. Because of it, GBC authority cannot be strong, and it is contested. In speaking of Maharaja Parikshit's reign Srila Prabhupada stated, "Unless the authority is strong, well-trained and Krishna conscious there will be revolution." Out of respect for Srila Prabhupada, all devotees will pay lip service to the concept of GBC, but in actual fact no one is willing to make the sacrifices necessary to organize such a Body and accept fully its authority. Over the years, the GBC has come to be mistrusted even by its own members. The GBC was supplanted by the 'acarya system' which still haunts us. It was brought to its knees by a revolution of the devotees. It was disbanded and reconstituted, but not reformed. The members and everyone else use it for political maneuvering. Still, no one will cry foul. Our elders are content with establishing themselves as great preachers in their own right by establishing themselves by disciples and zones or fields of control. No one will address the difficult question of how the Governing Body must organize itself in order to lead a world-wide institution (the word lead is taken here in its literal sense of educating or taking the world out of ignorance and into enlightenment). But if we, all of Srila Prabhupada's followers, fail to recognize the need for a properly functioning GBC, by failing our spiritual master, we fail the world. And every morning we fervently pray: "Only by the grace of the spiritual master can one receive the mercy of Krishna, without the grace of the spiritual master no one can make any progress in spiritual life."

The NewJaipur brahmanas are bravely confronting the issue of guru-tattva. The issue of guru-tattva is however simply a symptom. It is allowed to fester and pollute the relationships between devotees only because the GBC is not trusted and not to be trusted with establishing the true "siddhanta" of the matter. We should satisfactorily resolve the issue and determine the role a spiritual master should play in ISKCON, but I doubt very much that we will, inasmuch as, authority being absent, we are working at cross-purposes with each other. Furthermore, only a strong, well-organized GBC could enforce the conclusion practically.

The 'guru issue' has become problematic, and extreme solutions are grasped at only because complete immaturity on the part of Prabhupada's disciples has prevented them from grasping the seriousness of the legacy left to us by Srila Prabhupada. It is easy to forget that before the so-called 'revolution' of 1987, it was as GBC representatives that the 'acharyas' were able to prevail on their Godbrothers to cooperate with their plan to subvert Srila Prabhupada's position. In the eyes of many Godbrothers the GBC then meant Srila Prabhupada's living representatives, the supreme authority of the movement, in spite of one's own personal qualms about the direction taken.

It was the GBC who failed the entire population of devotees...
by not enforcing its authority over the so-called 'acharyas'. These men, some of our best, thus became victims of their own independence.

In order to bring about change, the devotees had to introduce the concept of democracy into ISKCON. The potential of the GBC to govern was further reduced. And now again, the GBC is failing to guide the Society not only on such important issues as guru-tattva, the establishment of varnashram and gurukula, but also book-distribution and farm-communities. The impression one gets is that the GBC members have renounced as too difficult the task of leading the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. They would rather take refuge of their disciples and their individual projects than to detach themselves for the collective enterprise. Therefore, more rebellion is brewing, more confusion is reigning. It is so easy to be the naked king, to be like one who pretends to sleep and therefore cannot be awoken.

It is not for me to suggest a solution to our present dilemma(s). My observations are the following: The GBC still is without a clear constitutional mandate that soars above petty political considerations. Begging the pardon of the sincere devotees who believe that our Society should run on love and trust — we are still an organization designed to function in human society with all the frailties which it implies. The first symptom of love and trust is respect of the instruction of one's accepted authority. Any society must define the authority it is willing to abide by. This is done by establishing a Constitution and giving the means, the structure to implement it.

We have not clearly stated how the GBC is to represent Srila Prabhupada. Therefore, the GBC can waffle about its role, maintain appearances and fail the Society. And the devotees feel free to also act independently as if Srila Prabhupada wanted ISKCON to be just another denomination. Notwithstanding the objections, the role of leading is of a kshatriya nature. Some of our best 'kshatriyas', having no clear mandate, fell flat on their faces. Now we look suspiciously at 'leadership'. We prefer 'supervisors' to 'leaders'. But if we are to succeed, then, as with anything else in this world, we must have a 'leader'. The GBC cannot play at being 'brahminical'. As in Vedic culture, the GBC must be given a clear mandate and the means to implement it and must be supervised by a council of brahmanas. Only then can it successfully guard Srila Prabhupada's Great Legacy.

It is time we all stopped trying to imitate Srila Prabhupada and accept being servants of his desire. We offer our respects to someone who will boldly accept a position as a kshatriya, a sudra, etc. Better such honesty in accepting a role one can play in a Krishna conscious society than all the theorizing about whether we are pure devotees or not.

As far as the guru issue is concerned, I fail to understand still what all the rush is about. On one side, we have those who are rushing to accept disciples without even questioning their own qualifications for occupying the most elevated post in the universe. On the other side, we have a melee of potential disciples who are rushing to get initiated without even knowing what a spiritual master is. And the movement encourages both sides to go about this folly with the greatest haste, estimating that our growth can best be evaluated by the number of initiations that are performed. It is as if we estimate that real spiritual progress depends solely on initiations or initiating.

Then again, however, there are others who are rushing to declare initiation to be but a formality and the spiritual master simply a 'priest'. It is a great offense to diminish the importance of the spiritual master in the eyes of the disciple and the world. As an institution and as an individual, the spiritual master in our tradition is the gateway to devotional service. We pray every day, "I seek refuge at the feet of my spiritual master, the only passageway to the spiritual world."

As a practical solution a prospective initiating spiritual master should be brought to think more deeply about the commitment one offers a disciple. Prospective disciples should be educated and made aware of how Srila Prabhupada defines a spiritual master before rushing into initiation.

But again, both of these, and the immediate correction of any abuse are only possible in the presence of a strongly mandated and endowed Governing Body Commission. Unless our present erroneous methods are corrected we will go from problem to solution to problem to solution as materialistic organizations are wont to do. Meanwhile, the world is being benefited by the outstanding devotional service of individual devotees who adhere to Srila Prabhupada's instructions faithfully. But if, on behalf of Sri Krishna and of Srila Prabhupada, we wish to make a great impact on society we have to concert our efforts. This is the final instruction of our beloved spiritual master: "For preaching, cooperate together with the GBC."

Before we establish history-making precedents let us first establish the principles on which our authority is founded. If Srila Prabhupada's books and instructions are the basis, then a major instruction of both him and his own Guru Maharaja is that for the practical application of our philosophy and regulation of our preaching work we defer to the Governing Body Commission. If we miss this central instruction, then the sankirtana movement will again be disarrayed as it was before the appearance of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura and after the immediate disappearance of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. This is not a criticism of those who seek reform but rather a vindication of proper reform, properly arrived at with all of our Vaishnava principles intact.

I know that even amongst devotees, cynicism is "de mise". But cynicism is an enemy, a very powerful one in this Kali-yuga. If he is to be vanquished, only ISKCON can overcome him. If we fail Srila Prabhupada in this, then we will have to resort to the idealistic theory that another great acharya will have to rise and unite us. This is another excuse. Devotees want to believe that Srila Prabhupada has given the world all that it needs to successfully pull itself out of darkness. Now we have to see if individually and collectively we are willing to make the necessary sacrifices.

Let the GBC properly dictate and enforce what role the initiating spiritual master is to play as a servant of ISKCON. This role can perfectly be that of a 'ritvik' almost, but without the name. It is already so anyway, since, in fact, Srila Prabhupada's books and temples are factually making new devotees, his ISKCON is training them and maintaining them. The 'gurus' have just become intoxicated with their positions. That is why they are claiming exclusive ownership of their disciples and using them for their own self-aggrandizement. In some blatant cases they do not even care about the spiritual well-being of their so-called disciples.

These are the excesses. The GBC is too weak to rectify them. Therefore, the whole atmosphere of ISKCON is again becoming contentious and dissidentious.
A few words to Satyaroja

by Kamamrita dasa

Prabhupada, you recently submitted an article subtitled "Reflections on the Ritvik Revolution" to us for inclusion in VVR. We declined to publish it because we felt it was seriously flawed and thus unhelpful to our readership—not for the imaginative reasons given by Ravindra Svarupa dasa in the "ISKCON Journal"! Since your article has been disseminated movement-wide, however, and prefaced by some misleading comments, I hope you will not be offended if I say something in reply. I'm sure you will not be surprised to find that I am not much in agreement with your essay. In fact I would like to take issue with you almost from the outset: II page 38—your comparing the Ritvik System to Christianity. Two points here:

1) the Ritvik system was never meant to be permanent and we have never stated that it should be. Without going into the evidence that Srila Prabhupada wanted the Ritvik System to continue after his physical departure, he clearly did state on a number of occasions that he wanted his disciples to become regular gurus and that he would appoint some Acharyas in due course. However, his wishes and the materialisation of those wishes are, to our minds, separated by a certain amount of time—years certainly, possibly decades. At the very least, we do recognise that there will be Acharyas after Prabhupada, and the sooner the better. But we believe the Acharya must, at the very least, be free of anarths, otherwise it becomes a question of the blind leading the blind.

2) Let's get this issue of Christianity straight—Srila Prabhupada never condemned Christ or those that followed his teachings. He even said that one is the disciple of Christ if he follows his instructions under the guidance of some priest (conversation in Seattle, quoted in VVR). This does not seem to be mere rhetoric (if Srila Prabhupada was ever guilty of speaking thus) and certainly supports the idea of a Ritvik System in extremis. If there is to be any parallel drawn between ISKCON and the Christian Church it must be on the basis of not properly following the teachings of the respective Founders.

Your other objection to the Ritvik System, that the ritvik will be seen as some insignificant persona non grata by the initiate, bewilders me. As far as I recall, during Srila Prabhupada's physical presence, his ritviks, and other such senior devotees, were regarded with the greatest of respect by the mass of devotees—almost on the level of gurus! I was present when Srila Prabhupada told one of our number: "Ask your senior Godbrother" when he put some basic philosophical question to Prabhupada. It was definitely Srila Prabhupada's mood that we should treat more experienced devotees with respect, even reverence. Of those men who were idolized, I remember well, and had things continued as they were set up by Prabhupada in mid-1977 I'm sure they would have continued to be so. If that degree of respect was to be found for GBCs, sannyasis and ritviks pre-1978 then why could the same mood not prevail now? The fact that such doubts arise merely illustrates that this movement has been distorted practically out of all recognition. I don't think new devotees will be as you caricature them—incapable of respecting anyone but their actual guru—if they are properly trained.

With the greatest of respect, your depiction of the Ritvik System as advocated by VVR is unfair, almost dishonest. This idea that we want Prabhupada to be the only guru, for all time, is simply not true. Since you base a good deal of your argument on this misrepresentation much of what you say in your paper is askew—based on a false premise as it were. Our idea simply is not that "No one comes to the Father but through Prabhupada". We want to see devotees attain the proper spiritual status before they accept disciples, and we firmly believe that that is what Srila Prabhupada intended.

I don't hold with your argument to the effect that the Ritvik System in absentia is unprececnted and thus untenable. On the basis of such an argument we should all start chanting sixty-four rounds a day, young unmarried women should be barred from living in the temple, spiritual names should be awarded at the time of second initiation, Srila Prabhupada's vyasasanas should be dismantled and his daily guru-puja discontinued, etc. etc. In short, we don't perpetuate practices introduced by His Divine Grace because they have precedents, but rather because we are his obedient servants and have faith that his establishing precedents is justified by his gloriously unique position.

As for the necessity for a living guide—that we also accept. But the living guide(s) is not necessarily fit to become the eternal preceptor of one he guides. I was trained by a devotee for whom I had the greatest respect and affection, and who, in his way, was learned, grave, and worthy of my sincere regard. Be that as it may, I never thought he was my guru, and as things have transpired I was correct not to. We rarely got direct training from Prabhupada when I joined, rather, his senior men trained us. Such a system would be perfectly adequate to our present needs were we not so ambitious as to don the garb of guru even while anarths persist in our hearts.

It is also wrong of you to see our idea as a contrivance born of a desperate wish to make sense out of chaos, as if we were unaware of our own mental processes! We have tried to get to the bottom of things, and rescue the true view from confusion. That we may, perhaps, be wrong, we acknowledge. But the issue as we have presented it has not come about by chance or merely by intense wishful thinking. There is evidence for the Ritvik System, both documentary and testimonial, and we have yet to see or hear any substantial evidence to the contrary. I cannot agree that the Ritvik System, for which there is sound evidence, should be rejected either on the grounds that there is some slight danger of us becoming Christians as you suggest,
We have no trouble accepting that a nishtha bhakta can act as absence if our thesis were true (pages 39-40). There's nothing The dangers associated with accepting a devotee as non-dif­
guru. Just let him be approved by Srila Prabhupada "by higher
that His followers would have wanted to act as ritviks in His
innocent neophytes as their disciples.

The idea of coming up with some “happy medium" is, I feel, presumptuous. If, as we believe, Srila Prabhupada wanted a Ritvik System until the emergence of some advanced soul chosen by him to be Acharya, then that should be the system adhered to in ISKCON. If he did not intend the Ritvik System to continue, then the normal rules of scripture should be followed and the guru should be seen as non-different from Krishna. The “happy medium" is likely to be a concoction. The danger with a Ritvik System is that it might be unnecessarily perpetuated in the presence of a sufficiently exalted Vaishnava.

You state that “...the madhyma initiates” really cannot be borne out by the list of our disciplic succession! All those Acharyas are, to the best of my knowledge, uttama bhaktas. How can you seriously make such an assertion in the light of our sampradaya? Where are all the madhyma devotees that you are referring to?

The idea of coming up with some “happy medium" is, I feel, presumptuous. If, as we believe, Srila Prabhupada wanted a Ritvik System until the emergence of some advanced soul chosen by him to be Acharya, then that should be the system adhered to in ISKCON. If he did not intend the Ritvik System to continue, then the normal rules of scripture should be followed and the guru should be seen as non-different from Krishna. The “happy medium" is likely to be a concoction. The danger with a Ritvik System is that it might be unnecessarily perpetuated in the presence of a sufficiently exalted Vaishnava. That danger is slight, however, as long as the desire to contact and get the association of such a soul is kept in the forefront. The dangers associated with accepting a devotee as non-different from Krishna are non-existent — as long as non-realised devotees do not make a pretense of advancement and take innocent neophytes as their disciples. As soon as we post men who are likely to fall down, or are not certain to make advancement, as the nishtha bhakta is, as gurus, then the ghastliness that we have thus far witnessed in ISKCON is the certain result. We have no trouble accepting that a nishtha bhakta can act as guru. Just let him be approved by Srila Prabhupada “by higher authorities" by dream or vision first.

I don't much like your musings about Sriman Mahaprabhu: that His followers would have wanted to act as ritviks in His absence if our thesis were true (pages 39-40). There's nothing wrong with the regular system of disciplic succession when pure devotees are available — in fact it is based on the natural order of service in Goloka, in Vaikuntha. That is a higher subject matter, and we don't generally consider it when dealing with the subject of guru-tattva, but it is unavoidable when such objections are raised. The problem is that Prabhupada almost certainly saw none of his disciples fit at the time of his passing to act as Acharya (though he may have said something seemingly to the contrary). Like it or not, the preponderance of evidence points to that fact. He told Bhakticharui Swami: “They want to be guru and they don't know how to be disciple." The argument you proffer with respect to us mistaking an uttama Godbrother for a madhyma-adhikari is not convincing to my mind, though of course it may possibly happen. The danger is that if we assume that no one is fit to judge who is advanced and who is not, then we are simply inviting fraud. We have to make some kind of judgement in this regard in order to protect the Krishna Consciousness Movement from pre-
tenders. We may not know absolutely for certain who is who, but it seems we had no real problem recognising Srila Prabhupada as a Paramahamsa, even though we knew so much less all those years ago. And if you argue: “You cannot judge who among your Godbrothers is advanced and who is not...” then that argument, which I guess is based upon the example of Srila Prabhupada’s Godbrothers, is erroneous. Srila Prabhupada’s Godbrothers did not misjudge him, I would venture, because they were his Godbrothers, but because they were neophytes.

I personally believe it is better to err on the side of conservatism than liberality when it comes to protecting immature devotees from unqualified gurus. You want to give your Godbrothers the benefit of the doubt, which is commendable, but do you have the right to lead inexperienced boys and girls into the absolute care of one whose advancement is doubtful? We must learn from our past mistakes, determine a completely safe minimum qualification for guru, strictly on the basis of guru, sadhu and shastra, and stick to it. We should give our Godbrothers a chance, but we shouldn’t give them the opportunity to ruin someone else’s spiritual life if even the slightest doubt exists as to their spiritual qualification.

I think if you study the history of the various Vaishnava Acharyas it will be seen that their behaviour was exemplary at all times, at least from the time of their surrender. Why do you want to give devotees with known histories of falldown and deceit the chance to injure others? How will it help them to go back home to Godhead by putting temptation in their path?

This just seems like excessive and dangerous liberalilty to me!

Your analysis of Rupavilasa’s brain-surgeon analog on page 41 is fatally flawed, because you overlook the fact that the qualification of bona fide guru is much more difficult of attainment than that of brain surgeon. Srila Prabhupada once remarked that it took him thirty years to perfect his chanting. How many qualified gurus were there during the time of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, or during Prabhupada’s later years? Suddenly there seems to be dozens. I am rather doubtful that there really are!

Your remarks about Prabhupada “zapping us in a dream” really are facetious and seem to bear little relationship to the kinds of events found described in scripture and even in the recent history of our Gaudiya Vaishnava Acharyas. A kind of materialism seems to have crept in that does not permit us to believe in the supernatural anymore. There are so many examples of advanced devotees having visions of “departed” acharyas, and of the Supreme Lord, and dreams too (take Krishnadasa Kaviraja’s dream about Lord Balarama for instance) that I am astonished that you can give such a thing so little credence! This is another symptom of the gross errors we have made in the past 12 years, that we now have so little faith in the power of great Vaishnavas.

Take care with the letter to Hamsadutta you cite on page 42—our detractors say one cannot initiate in the presence of one’s guru (they make MUCH of this!), yet Prabhupada seems to be saying that they would. Unless he didn’t expect to be around in 1975. I think he was referring to Rittvik initiations.

Page 43. Sorry, but I cannot agree with your interpretation of the letter to Janradan. See the part where Prabhupada states that a person who is not liberated cannot initiate anyone—that part is usually ignored! We discussed this letter in VVR 12. It’s interesting though that you mention srotriyam brahma-nishtham as the basic qualification for being guru; brahma-nishtham means nishta-bhakti, or madhyama-madhyama. I suspect you think it means less-than-fixed-in-the-transcendence. Could you substantiate that interpretation if I am correct?

You use the “emotional” argument to show that the appointment discussions were of necessity imperfect and that no further questions could possibly have been put to Prabhupada about future initiations. Yet you must have heard or read by now that several devotees wanted to put very specific questions to Prabhupada in this regard and were not allowed to. Most of the devotees in Vrindavan in 1977 were able to function reasonably normally despite their anxiety at Srila Prabhupada’s condition. Ask Rupavilasa and Yasodanandana Prabhus if they were so out of their minds in May of 1977 that they didn’t know what they were doing or saying. They were there too. I am willing to believe this argument with respect to Satsvarupa Maharaja, but I don’t agree that he has nicely paraphrased the discussion in the Lilamrita; rather, it seems he has interpreted it according to the way he understood them. Why not simply report them as they were spoken? Why change even one word? After all, Jayadvaita Maharaja convinced him that those discussions were not all that clear.

You mention the fact (page 44) that you expect your article to be lambasted by VVR—well of course! We don’t much agree with it I’m afraid. But since you have taken the trouble to lambast VVR, and Rupavilasa in particular, I’m sure you were not complaining on that score!

Your closing remarks truly astonish me. You are suggesting, once again, that the guru must at least be at the level of nishta—and we entirely agree on that score. I just get the same feeling as above, that you think the nishta platform is something rather less than it actually is—i.e. freedom from anarthas and the establishment in irrevocable devotion. Nishta simply does not mean chanting sixteen rounds and following the four regulative principles. Nishta is the threshold of transcendence and is marked by a complete indifference to worldly things—na sochati na kankshat... Such a position is rarely attained. I have no objection to the acharya-purusha idea as long as the true significance of nishta is understood. I doubt it is present.

So there you have it: my opinion of your paper. I haven’t covered every single instance where I think you are mistaken—time and space to do not permit. What troubles me about the kind of things that are being written on this subject by our detractors are the repeated misrepresentation of our position on one hand and the re-emergence of arguments bandied about in the Zonal Acharya era on the other. We do not wish to write for eternity on this subject. We hope to have the grace to admit when we are wrong and that others engaged in this debate will do likewise. When that time comes then we can simply chant Hare Krishna, read Srila Prabhupada’s books and take prasadam. Kabe habe, bolo sei dina amara...
Our Response to GBC Allegations and Threat of Excommunication

The GBC Body has apparently decided to expel the editors of VVR from ISKCON. Quite a list of charges has been leveled against us, and five compulsory items of atonement have been prescribed for our rectification by the GBC Body if we wish to avoid said expulsion. We hereby respond.

The charges that have been levied against us may be summarized as follows:
1. The ritvik-in-absentia system was never sanctioned by Srila Prabhupada.
2. The ritvik-in-absentia system is not approved by guru-sadhu-sastra.
3. The ritvik-in-absentia system conflicts with the "law of disciplic succession".
4. The ritvik-in-absentia system is a dangerous philosophical deviation.
5. The basis upon which they feel that our personal expulsion from ISKCON is justifiable is as follows:
6. We have openly deviated from the tenets of the Society's teachings.
7. We are openly, flagrantly antagonistic to the GBC and other ISKCON authorities.
8. We have publicly preached deviant philosophical understandings.
9. We have actively undermined the faith of ISKCON devotees in the authorized Krishna conscious philosophy and in the institutions established by Srila Prabhupada.
10. We have vitified and attacked members of the ISKCON Society.
11. We have accused the GBC of conspiring to suppress Srila Prabhupada’s will and to mislead the ISKCON Society.
12. We have published a petition asking the GBC to declare the disciples of current ISKCON gurus Srila Prabhupada’s initiated disciples.
13. We have damaged the Society with these activities.

We would first like to point out that almost all of the above charges have neither been seriously substantiated nor proven. We requested a thorough investigation to determine Srila Prabhupada’s order and desire with respect to the continuation of the sampradaya at the North American GBC meeting held in San Diego in January of this year. The North American GBC agreed to this as a sincere and practical means of determining the truth vis-a-vis the ritvik controversy. Their proposal to this effect was not accepted in Mayapura. The first four charges thus remain unproven. We do not accept them as facts but the final decision in that regard was made without our having a fair opportunity to argue our case. Regarding the rest of the charges, we would have to admit to 10 and 11, but the remainder are, to the best of our understanding, not so. As for number 10—more on that follows. Regarding GBC charge number 11, we recognize that some devotees felt the petition in VVR 11 was worded in an extreme and all-inclusive fashion, especially the second and third points, viz. “Nullify the authority of the present ‘gurus’ to initiate their own disciples, and declare all disciples Srila Prabhupada’s.” We recognized that this statement did not take into account the possibility that some Godbrother may be of sufficient spiritual stature to initiate his own disciples. Thus, in VVR 12 we offered a second, perfectly reasonable petition that can accomplish all that we expected from the first one. We apologize to those who were offended by the wording of the first petition.

It is shocking that one may be expelled from ISKCON for publicly expressing opinions which, though perhaps controversial, are nevertheless presented on the basis of guru, sadhu and sastra as well as other conventional forms of evidence. Our opinions may have been right or wrong. Neither we, nor the GBC Body, have absolutely proven or disproven the ideas put forward in the pages of the VVR. It would have lent much credibility to the GBC’s case if they had expressed the opinion that our ideas were incorrect after conducting a thorough and impartial investigation of the matter. That they have not done. If our ideas could be proven wrong and misleading on the basis of such thorough research, that would have been a powerful presentation. The GBC charges, which are really no more than unsubstantiated opinions, ring with the tone of a Kafkaesque Trial in which unsubstantiated judgments are passed with no opportunity for reply from the accused. Total submission to their will appears to be the only choice offered, and their opinion must apparently be viewed as absolutely as if Srila Prabhupada had personally judged the matter. If they had proven their case beyond a shadow of a doubt, it would have been possible for us to fully surrender. Unfortunately, they have not. Considering all that has transpired in the last thirteen years, their prescription is a bit hard to swallow.

Nevertheless, the Editors are prepared to offer apologies and obeisances to all devotees who have been offended, perturbed, bewildered, outraged, disgusted or horrified at anything we have said, especially in VVR issues 10-12. If we have appeared to be, or have actually been, antagonistic, hostile or offensive to any devotees, we repeatedly bow down to them and ask for their forgiveness. If we have disrupted anyone’s devotional life, we bow down and ask for their forgiveness. If we have made any false accusation, then we again ask for forgiveness. We sincerely apologize for offending any Vaishnavas, and we hereby offer our heartfelt apologies at their feet, straw between our teeth, requesting them to mercifully excuse us.

We have been accused of the arrogance of wanting to be seen as great preceptors and gurus. We definitely do not see ourselves as anything but very ordinary devotees, not very advanced or learned, and capable of error. However, this fact of our existence should not preclude our presentation being taken seriously—it should be taken on its own merits. We accept the arguments of the opposition in the same spirit. If we have sounded arrogant, overly critical, cocksure, etc., then that is a true reflection of our conditioning, and we apologize to anyone whose sensibilities have been ruffled, inflamed or offended.

The GBC Body has ordered us to take five steps for our rectification or be expelled. They have demanded that the editors of Vedic Village Review:

1. retract the allegations of a conspiracy by Tamala Krishna Gosvami and other members of the GBC.
2. Admit the error of their posthumous ritvik theory.

3. Apologize for the disruption caused to members of ISKCON by the formulation of their unauthorized philosophy.

4. Apologize for their antagonistic attitude towards GBC policies and practices.

5. Permit the Executive Committee of the GBC to distribute this written rectification—and other material as they deem necessary—to the entire distribution base of the VVR at the expense of the VVR.

We should like to respond to the above point by point:

1. **Withdraw allegations of a conspiracy.** A conspiracy is effected when several persons agree to work together to do something unlawful or unauthorized. The GBC decided to institute the unauthorized zonal-successor-acharya system. Since they did thisconcertedly, without authority, and with little or no consultation with the mass of devotees, it is hard to preclude there being any conspiracy whatsoever. We may find the word unpalatable, but it seems to fit the circumstance. It may be argued that the GBC, or rather, those “appointed” as gurus, simply got carried away and “misinterpreted” Srila Prabhupada’s instructions, but still it must be admitted that some degree of conspiracy took place as a result. Tamala Krishna Gosvami was a prime player in creating that unauthorized system. He has already admitted as much. How much further that conspiracy extends should be investigated. Srila Prabhupada has written, “But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of acharya...” This refers to conspiracy, and what is the difference between this description and what was effected in Mayapura in 1978? There isn’t any, and this has been pointed out by our venerable reformer Rabindra Svarupa Prabhu in his paper Under My Order in August of 1985. Another example: it is well known that Srila Prabhupada wanted as many of his disciples as possible to come to him in Vrndavana in 1977. I cite Several Grievances Against the Members of the GBC by Jayadvaita Swami, March 5, 1987: “In 1977, when Srila Prabhupada was lonely (“I have become poisonous”), he wanted many devotees to come be with him in Vrndaban. But the GBC falsely conveyed that what he wanted was GBC men and very senior devotees. The GBC then arranged to send only a handful of men, in rotation, and preached to the other devotees that ‘for service’ they should stay home. The devotees stayed home, and Srila Prabhupada left the world.” The telegram that was to inform them was waylaid, and those devotees never got the message. Who authorized this? Who was involved in interfering with Srila Prabhupada’s request? Wasn’t that a conspiracy? Weren’t GBC men involved? Who sent the telegram which opposed Srila Prabhupada’s desires? How many other written instructions of Srila Prabhupada were intercepted and altered? This should be investigated and cleared up for all time. Why were Satyavrupa Maharaja and Gourkripa Maharaja prevented by Tamala Krishna Maharaja from ascertaining Prabhupada’s desires for the continuance of the disciplic line? This should be thoroughly investigated, and it should be further determined if others tried to get clarification on this point and were denied access. Another example: a good number of devotees in Italy were waiting to get initiation from Srila Prabhupada in 1977. On July 9, 1977, the ritvik-initiations letter signed by Srila Prabhupada was sent out to all temple presidents and GBC men. These devotees never saw the letter and were never informed they could be initiated by Srila Prabhupada through the ritvik process, and thus they were forced to wait and be initiated by Bhagavan dasa. Why were they not informed that they could be initiated by Srila Prabhupada?

We cannot apologize for saying there was conspiracy, though we are truly sorry that the word offends, for it appears there was. Whether such conspiracy was concerted, and done fully consciously, and how far it extended is still largely unknown. It should be seriously and thoroughly investigated, however, by the GBC for the benefit of all the members of our Society.

2. **Recant the ritvik acharya “theory”.** We cannot say that the ritvik-in-absentia idea is wrong. So far as we can ascertain from Srila Prabhupada’s own statements, this system was put forward by him and is authorized. We stand by that opinion, admitting that as conditioned souls we could be wrong. So far, however, we have not at all been convinced to the contrary. See the Ritvik Review article in this issue for a final summary of our case based almost entirely on Srila Prabhupada’s statements or statements authorized by him.

3. **Apologize for creating a disruption in ISKCON.** We do apologize for creating any disruption or disturbance to the members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, but we cannot apologize for sincerely holding opinions which we are convinced are correct.

4. **Apologize for antagonism to the GBC and its policies.** We do not think we have been antagonistic to GBC policies and practices in general, but we are prepared to apologize for creating that impression. We meant to be argumentative and challenging about ideas with which we disagreed. This contentiousness was intended in the spirit of debate and philosophical exchange as is standard in Vedic society. We had no idea that such an argumentative and challenging spirit would not be accepted in the spirit of churning for the siddhanta. Whether we are right or wrong, such discussion can be strengthening. It has been effective to some extent, and we think not very destructive. The GBC has fortunately been galvanized to respond to sensitive and serious issues which continue to trouble many devotees. The misfortune is that they seem to be over-reacting to what was actually an attempt at continued reform and debate by deciding to expel us from the society of devotees. The other aspect of the misfortune is that they appear to be jumping to conclusions under the impulse of the mode of passion, which they may well have to retract later on.

5. **Distribute said recantations and apologies to entire VVR readership.** Since we are publishing our apologies and explanations as part of this issue, it seems that we are fulfilling this condition as far as we can without becoming hypocrites. What the GBC is in effect requesting us to do is to say that we don’t really believe the things we say and to further accept that we
have done and said things that we haven’t. Yet it would neither be honest nor constructive for us to falsely recant. Should we be made to lie? Should we be made to retract what the mass of devotees would not otherwise have heard?

With respect to accusations of us proposing things we have not, one oft repeated accusation is that we advocate the suspension of the disciplic succession. This is preposterous. We advocate disciplic succession as ardently as anyone else. What is at issue is whether or not Srila Prabhupada authorized ritviks to continue the disciplic line, as his proxys, until such time as they, or others, became qualified to be actually gurus. From the evidence so far amassed it seems that he did—and was fully capable of instituting such a novel arrangement! The GBC asserts that he did not and could not. Let the issue be more seriously investigated. The ISKCON Journal, and the draconian response of the GBC, are woefully inadequate responses to a vital issue.

A double standard is at work here. The editors of VVR are being threatened with expulsion, having been variously charged with sedition, offensiveness, preaching heresy, etc. We humbly request the readers to peruse the essay Several Grievances Against the Members of the GBC by H.H. Jayadvaita Swami to see the charges leveled against that GBC Body in 1987. A few examples which seem appropriate to the current situation are cited herewith:

“The GBC instituted, encouraged, and for many years beligerently and obstinately defended symbols, rituals, practices, teachings, and structures subversive to the unique importance of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

“After Srila Prabhupada’s disappearance, for many years the GBC systematically misrepresented Srila Prabhupada’s teachings and instructions about carrying on the disciplic succession.

“The GBC instituted, encouraged, and for many years beligerently and obstinately defended symbols, rituals, practices, teachings and structures meant to create for a small group an elite status to which they were never entitled.

“The GBC, in concert with the BBT trustees and against the expressed will of the ISKCON temple presidents, deliberately suppressed publication of Srila Prabhupada’s letters, even in edited form.

“Various members of the GBC have permitted, encouraged, or demanded the use of ISKCON funds to publish books, magazines, newsletters, recordings, etc., that excessively advertise their own glories, blaspheme other Vaisnavas, propagate falsehoods, and disturb the peace of the Society.

“The GBC and its members have allowed, have failed to halt, have defended, have encouraged, and have deliberately brought about mistreatment and persecution of innocent persons.

“The GBC, both indirectly by impure acts and directly by confrontation and force, has driven large numbers of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples out of their service, out of their homes, and out of ISKCON.” (‘You should always deal things so tactfully that people may not fall away. Every living being is important in Krishna conscious service, and we must take all precautions that one may not fall away.’—letter to Tamala Krishna, Oct. 18, 1969)

There was not much in the way of serious denial when these charges came out in 1987. And yet—not a single GBC man was expelled from ISKCON as a result. It should be clear from the above charges that the editors of VVR have not been able to effect a fraction of the damage which the GBC of 1977-87 was able to do to the Society. According to Jayadvaita Maharaja and many other senior devotees, the GBC drove out thousands of devotees, they spoke and published bogus philosophy, they misrepresented Prabhupada’s desires on disciplic succession, they published magazines which propagated lies and blasphemy, persecuted the innocent, etc. etc. And yet—not a single expulsion ensued. It is not a fact that all the GBC men and gurus submissively recanted their sins, made public, or in some cases even private, apologies, underwent public pillorying, were expelled or even vehemently, publicly criticized. The fact is that they got off with very light treatment without proper apologies or public admission of the immense disaster they had created. What’s more, many of these grievances of 1987 remain unanswered and unresolved.

And yet—the editors of VVR will be expelled unless they publicly admit to being in error, deceitful, deceptive, blasphemous, etc. “If it were so, it were a grievous fault and grievously hath they answered it.” If the cited laws in the GBC notice are grounds for expulsion (“The member is openly deviating from the fundamental tenets of the Society’s teaching. The member is openly and flagrantly antagonistic to the GBC or other ISKCON authority.”), then will the GBC body also take action against the remaining members of the original eleven gurus and GBC men that disturbed the ISKCON world more shatteringly than the editors of VVR could do in years together and expel them as well? Or if they want to exhibit mercy to the GBC wrong-doers, then perhaps they should consider an even-handed approach with the editors of VVR.

Is justice selective or universal? Let us conclude with some remarks from Rabindra Svarupa Prabhu in his historic paper Under My Order: “I am sure that Srila Prabhupada is not taking sides in any dispute, but supports and encourages all sincere devotees, whatever our shortcomings. He does not want to exclude anyone from his ISKCON. So let us consider this matter in a tolerant and broad-minded spirit—with care, with prayer, and with love.”

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No Physical Contact Necessary

(Srimad Bhagavatam 1.10.14 purport)

THEREFORE ladies who were the wives and daughters-in-law of those who died in the battlefield NEVER came in DIRECT contact with Krishna. But all of them HEARD of Him and His great activities, and thus they thought of Him, talked of Him, His name, fame, etc., and BECAME AFFECTIONATE ALSO, LIKE THOSE WHO WERE IN DIRECT CONTACT. Therefore, directly or indirectly, anyone who thinks of Krishna, talks of Krishna, or worships Krishna becomes attached to Him. Because KRISHNA IS ABSOLUTE, there is no difference between His name, form, quality, etc.

Editor’s Note: Can not the same apply to Srila Prabhupada?
LETTERS
To The Editors

From Anonymous, Third World, 1.17.90:
Much as we would like to engage other devotees to sign this important petition you intend to submit to the GBC at Mayapur this year, we cannot. We are in a zone where any criticism is met with the utmost hostility. As all the devotees here in this country are the disciples of our illustrious GBC, to approach them with this petition would be considered the height of heresy, and you all know the punishment for this crime. Our present GBC hands out his photo to all who are willing to take it, with the view that his photo should be in every home and on every altar in the country. Although I am not his disciple I am expected to behave as if I was, and am routinely chastised for not meeting him at the airport when he arrives once a year, for his adulation tour. The fact that the arrival airport is only 500 km. away from this fledgling temple is of no consequence to our fearless leader. Best of luck with your endeavor. There is no doubt in my mind that you have the full blessings of Srila Prabhupada on this one. Keep the nectar flowing.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:
We have received Kirtanananda Swami’s recent paper called “On Chanting”, where we can see how New Vrindaban is trying to perfect the process of chanting. We understand that “meditation kits” are provided there, including blindfold and earplugs. Now you are chanting silently and practicing pranayama breathing techniques during chanting. The chanting can be in English or Sanskrit, as desired, and now there is word that monks in New Vrindaban are allotted 4 ounces of wine a day in the Benedictine tradition. Only those who do not sufficiently read Prabhupada’s books could be taken in by all these concocted innovations to the already perfect method of chanting the Holy Names as taught by Srila Prabhupada. As far as inspiring others in their own faiths, what is the use of inspiring others in sub-religious principles? Why not directly teach how to develop faith in the Supreme Person, Krishna? Watering down Prabhupada’s teaching until it is a NEW PATH DESIGNED BY KIRTANANANDA SWAMI: are you sure you want to forsake Prabhupada in this way?

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:
I, for one, believe that a single verse by Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura is worth ten-thousand of the poorly composed English “verses” now being sung in New Vrindaban (and to the plagiarized melody of “Dixie” at that). As for the other changes made, one of Srila Prabhupada’s final commandments was that nothing should be changed, and this aside from the fact that he took pains to chastise Kirtanananda Swami for his advocating change of dress and suchlike as long ago as 1967 (and not merely because of the hippie culture then in vogue). In making such unauthorised, unnecessary changes he has grievously disobeyed his spiritual master and has misled many innocents. Sadly, this is not simply a case of superficial deviation. The catalogue of unseemly acts perpetrated in private by Mr. Ham and his cronies has brought shame upon us all.

From Sikshastaka dasa, New Vrindaban, 1.25.90:
I have noted with amusement Nityananda dasa’s sentiments in VVR #11 in which he stressed the importance of being open-minded and engaging in interfaith dialogue for peace and brotherhood, but ironically, in the same breath, indicting Srila Bhaktipada & the New Vrindaban devotees for “watering down” Vaishnava practices and culture.
But before we get caught up in waves of righteous indignation and judge others on the basis of this accusation, we should understand what Vaishnava practices are. Is Sanskrit scholarship or wearing a cultural style of dress requisite to practicing Vaishnavism? Obviously not, because Srila Prabhupada said Christians are also Vaishnavas, because they pray. Shastra says the essence of Vaishnavism is the nine processes of devotional service beginning with hearing, chanting, praying, etc., under the direction of a self-realized soul. If the guru is bonafide and his disciples are sincerely executing one or more of those practices under his guidance, then they will manifest all godly qualities. The devotees in New Vrindaban are very intensely engaged in trying to perfect the process of chanting, and surrendering everything to Krishna. That is the main thrust of the preaching here, any unbiased observer would admit. But are they manifesting the qualities that devotees are supposed to have? We have had many letters of appreciation from the participants in our recent Interfaith Festival who have been deeply moved by the dedication and enthusiasm of the devotees to execute these basic principles. As a result, our guests have been inspired in their own faith. If we can inspire others in their devotion, then our mission is successful. If not, then we have failed. We judge everything by the fault, therefore we are not affected by the praise or blame of others.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:
If the guru is bonafide and we care to preserve the spirit of the opinion we were both disappointed and also aggrieved that you did not care to print Nrsimha Guru dasa’s letter in your recent issue. Srila
Bhaktipada expressed that he had no intention that his letter should be printed without Nrsimha’s, since his own letter was intended to elucidate certain issues, whereas Nrsimha was determined to refute, point-for-point, Rupa Vilas Prabhu’s arguments.

We remain thoroughly dissatisfied with a policy that appears riddled with the same hypocrisy that is the basis of most karmic media, that of envy and entertainment. We should request that as long as you fail to print our own responses to your specific challenges, kindly refrain from your own provocative critiques.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:

VVR is not obliged to print every letter or essay submitted. Nrsimha Guru was never promised that his point-for-point refutation would be published. What’s more, his response was so long-winded and stretched the limits of imaginative speculation to such a fantastic degree that we felt much better about printing Kirtananda Swami’s quixotic, but thankfully brief, response, which at least partially revealed his unique viewpoint. We felt that the source of the new philosophy should be allowed to speak for himself.

From Rasamanjari devi dasi, Culver City, CA, 4.4.90:

I do not believe the guru question seriously concerned Srila Prabhupada. Rather, for years he concentrated on establishing a Governing Body Commission according to his teachings and desires when he left us. Most unfortunately, at his passing, the GBC seemingly forgot everything he taught them in the scramble for profit, adoration and distinction. Everything became divided into I and mine. No one could be trusted. Everyone had vested interests. The intensity and extent of misrepresentation, cover-ups, confusion, quarreling, falsity, back-biting, intimidation, abuse, indulgence and separateness was just unbelievable. Now, maybe more than ever, seeing what our folly has led to, there are sincere attempts to repair the damage. The danger I see in making the guru/ritvik issue so important, is that it is again dividing us from one another over an ideology. If what Srila Prabhupada really wanted is instituted properly, it wouldn’t even be an issue.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:

But what is it that Prabhupada wanted? It is an issue because there are various views and opinions on the matter. Therefore let the issues be discussed openly and honestly in an attempt to ascertain to the satisfaction of the body of devotees (Greater ISKCON) what is the siddhanta and tattva on the guru issue. Otherwise newcomers to ISKCON will be playing “guru roulette.”

Reply, Kamamrita dasa:

The guru issue would not, perhaps, have eclipsed all other aspects of Krishna conscious philosophy if it were not for the unseemly rush to become guru in which so many of our Godbrothers have engaged. Historically such a thing has never been seen as far as I am aware. Has ISKCON really produced so many more qualified persons than our sampradaya has hitherto? Were our spiritual forebears really unaware that one need not be so very advanced to be guru? It seems that many devotees feel themselves unfulfilled if they are bereft of the upadhi—guru. In raising the question of ritvik initiation, we have incidentally exposed much dirt that has been swept under the carpet. We are sorry that the pursuit of truth is productive of division in our Society, but how can we remain silent in the face of so many devotees being denied proper access to Srila Prabhupada as the result of dubious philosophy?

From Anonymous, U.S.A. 5.6.90:

I found the ISKCON JOURNAL disappointing, to say the least. Any sober, unbiased devotee could go through it point by point and find many contradictions and downright foolish statements. But what’s the use? It seems the main ISKCON leaders are not, at this time, willing to listen to reason. I wish VVR’s presentations could have been more mellow, more soft, less inflammatory. Yet apart from a few isolated statements, it hasn’t been particularly offensive. The conclusions are philosophically sound.

The editors several times invited GBC members and other ISKCON leaders to respond and participate in the discussions, yet only two or three did. As early as issues eight and nine it was clear where the discussions were heading, so I’m just wondering why the GBC leaders, particularly Rabindra Swarupa Prabhu, were silent so long? Why did Tamala Krishna Maharaja wait so long to respond to the questions raised in regard to what he heard or didn’t hear from Srila Prabhupada? It is said of debate, “Silence admits defeat.” So it looked bad that the GBC didn’t offer much direct response sooner but rather waited until the VVR editors had bluntly stated the conclusions they felt were justified based on what evidence they were able to obtain. Then when the GBC leaders finally offered a serious response, it was harsh and intimidating. And it failed to answer, point by point, the issues in question. Such stampede tactics are used in the modern political arena because undoubtedly they are effective. After all, most people just can’t follow detailed discussions. Particularly philosophical ones. Yet we wouldn’t expect political tactics from leaders of a spiritual movement. The GBC’s response was inappropriate, incomplete and extreme.

I’ve been meaning to write something for weeks, but I’ve been thinking, “What’s the use of my entering these discussions? Why even respond to such wild statements? Why get myself in trouble? Who will listen to me?” Yet, for what it’s worth, I’d like to go ahead and offer the GBC the following two suggestions:

First, encourage H. H. Suhotra Swami to get professional help. Seriously. Maybe some devotee with qualifications in the field of therapy could help with a series of counseling sessions.

Second, I suggest that everyone carefully reread ISKCON JOURNAL and think again about whether or not it’s a proper and adequate response to questions raised by Vedic Village Review. If it is a fact that VVR has gone way off the deep end, then ISKCON leaders should spare no effort to completely defeat VVR’s contentions. In other words, we need real philosophy, a thorough presentation, to defeat the highly philosophical and painstakingly presented essays of VVR.

After sitting through four initiation ceremonies with different gurus who fell down in most extraordinary ways, and after finally taking shelter of Srila Prabhupada exclusively and feeling his reciprocation in a number of ways, I remain unconvinced, in spite of what the GBC says, that I need a guru other than Srila Prabhupada to take me back to Godhead. I have no
doubt that Srila Prabhupada is my spiritual master, to whom I have direct access requiring no other link. I've been directly connected with him by accepting diksa and by following his instructions, and therefore I feel no need for further initiations and diksa gurus. I'm willing to hear arguments opposing my above contentions only if such can be presented intelligently, without obvious political motives, according to guru, sastra and sadhu.

From Anonymous, Mayapura, 4.4.90:
I have read your magazine from No.5 and I found them very interesting and enlightening. When I finished No.11 everything was so clear in my mind. I know that you are right and many people agree with you. I hope you will be successful in your attempt to put Srila Prabhupada again in the center. Anyhow, for me, even if the G.B.C. doesn't accept your petition, now I know (thank you) I can worship Srila Prabhupada without fear of offense to anyone by “jumping over”. Nobody can tell me otherwise; Srila Prabhupada is the siksha guru for all the universe, and if He is also the diksha-guru, better yet.

I see so much corruption and perversion here in the Holy Dhama that I was getting really discouraged. All my expectations with my “Guru Maharaja” little by little start to vanish. I was really frustrated. For years my leaders taught me how to worship people like “His Divine Grace”, but I saw many times they didn't act in such a way. Really, prabhus, I felt so much relief when you explained about the ritvik, because I could never understand how Srila Prabhupada “appointed” Bhavananda and others as “gurus”. I was trying to accept the system, but my mind was preaching to me very hard about “how is it possible Srila Prabhupada put Bhavananda as a guru?” Now everything is so logical; Srila Prabhupada didn't make a mistake, He only told them to be ritviks!

I'm sure you know the situation here. The maha-guru system is really going on and vyasasanas, lavish guru-pujas in public places (the last one just outside the temple in Mayapura), and this kind of philosophy is really strong. I'm from South America, and I saw how hundreds of devotees left because of ill-treatment and disappointment when they found out their gurus were not “His Divine Grace”. Please forgive my offenses and thanks again for all your hard work in trying to tell the truth to the devotees of the Lord.

From Jayantakrit dasa, France, 2.28.90:
I was shown a copy of the “Pyramid House Talks” in late 1984 and asked Tamala Krishna Goswami in Dallas, 1985, if he could confirm everything in this paper. He said, “Yes, everything”. I then asked him why he didn't take steps to publicly broadcast the truth and adopt a reform policy. It was just prior to the New Vrindavan meetings. I pressed him to take such a position, and apply it at least in his zone. He said, “No, because if I do, there won't be a Hare Krishna Movement anymore.” I returned to France to try and launch a reform campaign there. I wrote to TKG, pleading with him, then I spoke with him prior to the New Vrindavan meetings. I said I would pray to Krishna to inspire him. He replied, “Please pray that Krishna gives me courage, because it takes guts to speak what I know.”

Reply, Nityananda dasa:

Why does the GBC not compel Tamala Krishna Maharaja to answer the many questions that have been raised over the years regarding the guru issue. Maybe he could start with the questions addressed to him in VVR 12. May he find the courage to do so soon. This is not a vendetta, but a quest for answers and the truth.

From Ajamila dasa, England, 2.3.90:
Dear Karnamrita and Rupavilasa Prabhus: As you know our relationship from the very beginning has always been centered on philosophical discussions and our similar opinions have bound us together as good friends. But now the time has come for me to strongly disagree with your understanding on two points: your proposed and yet to be proven posthumous ritvik acharya system, and your exaggeration that nobody among Srila Prabhupada’s disciples is qualified to be guru.

So in view of all the evidence put forward to date from both sides, I am convinced that Srila Prabhupada did not want a posthumous ritvik acharya system, nor am I convinced that Srila Prabhupada would agree that none of his disciples are qualified to be guru. That is my frank opinion and I am prepared to stand by it.

I support your intentions that there must be reform in many areas of the guruship within ISKCON, but I cannot support the way you are going about it nor the conclusions you have come up with. I am one hundred percent convinced that you could have satisfied all your doubts about this issue and Tamala Krishna Goswami in a proper way, and if you did I would have supported you. But I cannot support defamation of Vaishnavas who are preaching unless you have clear-cut, absolute evidence. You are gambling by assuming your imperfect senses to be absolutely perfect, and you want to drag thousands of others into the same gamble. No thank you. I think I will oppose you on this one. I still have all respect for you as devotees, and I sincerely hope and pray that Krishna and Prabhupada will not let you become separatists, so that once again we can be in agreement, some time in the future.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:

There is sufficient evidence to convince any reasonable person that the ritvik system could have continued after Prabhupada’s departure simply from Srila Prabhupada’s own statements on the matter. There is no evidence that an unqualified person can deliver others from the cycle of birth and death. Srila Prabhupada calls this the blind leading the blind. Whether or not someone in our Society is a bona fide guru, we cannot absolutely determine, not being on the perfect, absolute plane as you have pointed out. We can only judge by the symptoms as Narayana Maharaja has proposed. What should we see? We should see all the symptoms of a liberated soul as described in Bhagavad-gita, Sri Upadesamrila, Nectar of Devotion, etc. If our gurus are not liberated souls but content to masquerade as liberated souls, or to develop philosophies which preclude their even needing to be liberated to liberate others, and disciples are not carefully trained to know what symptoms and what tests to apply to determine the position of their prospective guru, then what can be said of the likely result? It will simply become a society of the cheats and the cheated.

There is no doubt that many of our GBC men perpetrated
the dangerous and destructive successor-acharya theory for many years. We are still experiencing the effects of "unfit persons" trying to be Acharya. Those who propagate the idea of the non-liberated guru, zonal-guru, rubber-stamp guru, etc. are rendering a terrible disservice to Srila Prabhupada's movement. We do not wish to be separatists at all, but we are being forced out for holding a different opinion.

Regarding our criticism of TKG: we did take a very challenging position to try to elicit the truth from him about the 1977-78 era, which is still surrounded by misconceptions and mysteries. TKG has many times contradicted his own position and testimony, and we hoped to pressure him to reveal all that he knows. He was party to, and one of the prime instigators of, the successor-acharya hoax. This has been even admitted by him. He propagated the misconception of zonal-acharya even after admitting in the Topanga Talks of 1980 that it was nonsense and that Prabhupada only appointed ritviks. The successor-acharya theory was still being pushed by him in 1984 in his book Servant of the Servant, despite his earlier admissions. There is more than sufficient cause for asking him some very tough, hard-nosed questions. The GBC to date appears unwilling to take the issue seriously enough to investigate the matter in a responsible way.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

Your proposition, that one can only be a friend to those with whose ideas one totally agrees, is questionable, both philosophically and psychologically. Moreover, the superficially polite tone of your letter belies the reprehensible manner in which you have dealt with your erstwhile friends, Krishnakan- ta in particular, during the past few months. The worst example of this was conniving to have Krishnakantha, an ingenious devotee who happens to believe in the ritvik system, absolutely banned from Bhaktivedanta Manor, prior to any decision on the issue by the GBC, to the extent that he cannot even enter the temple to see the Deities. Couldn't you simply have asked him not to speak about the issue? I am certain he would have complied. This was a callous act for which there is little justification and for which you will surely have to suffer some reaction (remember that Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura states that one may commit offences against even immo- tate devotees). You utilised money sent you by Nityananda for a purpose for which you knew it was not intended and treated friends as enemies on the unacceptable plea of disagreeing with their philosophy—a philosophy which you fully endorsed just a few weeks prior to your denouncing them! Does this demonstrate the tolerance, mercy and honesty of true Vaishnavism, or have you allowed yourself to be swayed by the political implications of aligning yourself with what some have seen as a lost cause?

Please excuse the accusative tone of my reply, I mean no offense, but you have hitherto presented yourself as the as the champion of the underdog—by writing papers and lecturing vigourously against re-initiation, for example—and since you have now completely changed your position on guru-tattva, those who look to you for guidance should know that you may prove an unreliable friend.

From Bhakta Paul, New Zealand, 2.25.90:

It is with enthusiasm and renewed determination that I write you, as I have recently been very fortunate to savor the articles of VVR. They are transcendental because for the first time since totally accepting our beloved Srila Prabhupada's teachings someone has at last come along who has enough humility and insight to hand the reins of the ISKCON chariot back into Srila Prabhupada's hands.

Please let us allow Srila Prabhupada to live once again. It appears to me to be the only way in which ISKCON will survive the 1990's. Prabhupada has been long forgotten in too many places. Unfortunately our [New Zealand's] misguided former guru has left a scar so deep and so badly infested, it will be a very long time before a healthy attitude returns amongst this country's devotees. Therefore you can imagine what a lot of the ex-temple devotees plus the congregation members have felt after reading VVR. It has breathed new life into a lot of people, and allowed all of us to see that there are some of Prabhupada's disciples who have understood and are living by his instructions. With the Mayapura meeting coming up with the GBC, I send you my best wishes and full support in establishing the ritvik guru system.

From Govindaraja dasa, Italy, 3.3.90:

I happened to read VVR #11 while I was in Radhadesh, Belgium. Actually I made photo copies and brought them back to Italy. When I reached Italy, I began to read it more deeply and discuss it with other devotees. It was quite surprising! The fact that Srila Prabhupada never appointed any diksha guru, but instead a ritvik acharya system, for myself and other devotees was a distant idea. It took a little time for understanding the whole thing, but you presented it in such a nice way that now we don't have any more doubts. But now by reading VVR #11 with so much evidence, everything is very clear. How was it possible to misinterpret and misunderstand the order and desire of Srila Prabhupada? If it had not been for VVR how long we would have waited for knowing the truth? But now, many devotees know what happened, and we are very thankful for all your endeavors to establish ISKCON as Srila Prabhupada wanted. Please keep on presenting the truth and be sure many devotees are with you all to support what Srila Prabhupada and Sri Krishna want, a society where politics, conflicts, truth-twisting is definitely absent. Again, thank you very much.

From Urdhvaga dasa, England, 2.7.90:

VVR gives a healthy vision in an institutionalized ISKCON society, suffering from the guru-syndrome. I would like to congratulate you for your major breakthrough with VVR 11. I thought that you might not find the root cause, from which all ISKCON problems have emanated, past and present. It is definitely the unauthorized guru system that followed Srila Prabhupada's physical departure and which is still maintained at present. Your "challenge horse" runs in the proper direction and you can bet that it will create a lot of turbulence amongst certain ISKCON GBC authorities. Since your horse is running against the very establishment of the present set-up, you will have the whole ISKCON club against you.

I really admire your courage and fearlessness. I therefore pray to Krishna that He may protect you and that He may give you all the strength you need. The whole GBC body should make a public statement saying that Prabhupada never appointed specific successor-acharyas to succeed him, but that those appointed gurus have appointed themselves. I do not question the guruship of those gurus. They may be gurus if they
show the proper qualifications, but to say that Prabhupada
appointed them to their status is a lie. Prabhupada never
appointed gurus, only officiating ritviks and after His departure
those officiating ritviks have appointed themselves to the status
of gurus. This is the truth and should be admitted by the GBC,
but instead the original lie is still being maintained. Even TKG
admitted it and who knows it better than him? VVR is the only
magazine that preaches Prabhupada philosophy, represents
Srila Prabhupada as He is, and reveals the truth about the
misconceptions and incompetence of the GBC leadership.

From S.A. Baranov, Moscow, 3.8.90:
This is a letter from a Russian young devotee. Recently I
have read a copy of VVR #11. It made a great impression on
me. It's difficult for me to imagine that such interesting facts
concerning Srila Prabhupada's personality have had their place
in reality. There are not so many devotees in Moscow who
worship Srila Prabhupada by studying His books seriously. The
main reason is a poor command of English among us. But those
who are serious need to read such correspondence as VVR and
books from Vedic River. The newly printed editions are not
available here. So I'd be very glad to communicate with you and
receive some copies of VVR and some other books in any
suitable way. It could be very helpful for our spiritual organiza-

From Dasanudas dasa, Bombay, 3.17.90:
After reading the ISKCON Journal my views on the subject
of ritvik acharya changed considerably. I think the IJ, notably
the articles by Narayana Maharaja and Satyaraja Prabhu,
undoctrined your assertions. I can no longer support your
ritvik acharya philosophy. I expected to be severely chastised
and then politically blackballed, but the various GBC's were so
understanding and kind that I saw the mood of the GBC had
dramatically changed. The GBC has demonstrated in the last
few years that they can protect this movement from philosophi-
cal deviations like the "zonal acharya" system. And now, they
are becoming averse to fault-finding and Vaishnava aparadha.
I found them to be gentlemen when approached with humility.

Since philosophical deviations and aparadha are the only
things that can stop our movement, I feel that the GBC is
properly protecting ISKCON and that we have a very bright
future ahead. I'm not trying to say that they're perfect, but I
have experienced a very definite improvement in the relations-
ships between the GBC men and other devotees. None of the
GBC tried to be heavy with me or coerce me into accepting
their philosophy. Instead, they allowed me to express myself
freely, and then we discussed the pros and cons of the various
points of view and their ramifications for Srila Prabhupada's
movement.

You have also experienced this kind of fair, open discussion
in San Diego. Then a GBC committee appointed for the pur-
pose investigated the issue thoroughly and found that your
philosophy was a deviation from the tradition of our Gaudiya
Vaishnava sampradaya. So who can you blame if the GBC was
heavy with you?

You've been judged wrong. Accept the GBC's decision with
humility, as Srila Prabhupada would want you to do, and go on
with your service in cooperation with your Godbrothers. Why
keep on struggling and making accusations when the decision
is clear?

ISKCON is not run by some dreadful Machiavellian con-
spiracy. It's run by a very mature and reasonable process of
discussion and consensus. And the leaders are becoming more
spiritually advanced all the time. I think it would be a shame if
you force the GBC to expel you from ISKCON. Nobody wants
to see that happen. We already have two splinter groups in
defiance of Srila Prabhupada's desire that we work together
cooperatively. You have rightly criticized devotees who have
defied the orders of Srila Prabhupada and the decisions of the
GBC; do you really want to join their camp? Unless, of course,
you intended to start a splinter group all along. Then a GBC
expulsion would give you a good excuse. Please do the nec-

From Danishta dasi, Illinois, 3.14.90:
Thank you VVR for this transcendental forum, structured
by sound philosophical Vedic evidence of the Absolute Truth,
as revealed to us through Srila Prabhupada's merciful litera-
ture. I firmly (and have always) believe our beloved Srila
Prabhupada is the only Jagat Guru so far and to the end of this
age. He lives in His books. He is obviously the only truly pure and self-effulgent soul, compassionate enough to take on the sins of this age of Kali. Thank you most compassionate Gurudeva.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:
We are not advocating the end of the disciplic succession when we favor Prabhupada's own arrangement for ritvik-after-departure initiations. Of course there will come many new qualified diksha gurus by Prabhupada's mercy, but Srila Prabhupada is such a special incarnation and associate of Lord Chaitanya that it is extremely doubtful that any of them will compare to him at all. Perhaps it can be said that Prabhupada is to the upcoming Golden Age what Christ was to the Christians of the last 2000 years.

However, I do not think we can say that Srila Prabhupada will be the only maha-bhagavata to appear for the rest of the Kali-yuga. There is no way that any of us could be that familiar with Krishna's plans, unless we were maha-bhagavatases ourselves! It is fair to say that Srila Prabhupada's stature, even amongst our Acharyas in the Gaudiya sampradaya is unique, in that he performed the unique task of spreading Krishna consciousness all over the earth. He fulfilled Lord Chaitanya's prediction, which clearly marks him as an intimate and empowered servant of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He can continue to be everyone's guru, because there are no limitations to his mercy. See our response to the ISKCON Journal for more on this.

From Bill Wulthoop, Ohio, 3.4.90:
Please keep up your valuable work in New Jaipur and VVR. It's really helping me, and I appreciate it very much. ISKCON Journal just arrived. The GBC say it's taken so long to reply to this subject because they're humble. Now that they've broken their humble silence and are now speaking so-called humbly, I wonder if they would humbly travel around to the different houses of the hundreds of devotees whose K.C. lives have been destroyed by the humble actions taken toward them through the years. Humbug. Anyway some of it seems pretty good. It's about time they were up front philosophically on this subject.

From Jaya Achyuta dasa, Hilo, HI, 3.27.90:
I am starting to see the value of what you are saying. A couple of quotes from Srila Prabhupada (VVR #11) seem very significant: (1) that Jesus is still (or could still) be accepting disciples, and (2) that after him (Srila Prabhupada) there would be no more Acharyas. Regarding this second point however, I would want to put it in the context of HIS movement and interpret it as--after him there would be no more Acharyas in ISKCON.

For the sake of this argument we assume that Srila Prabhupada is the saktyavesa avatar of Lord Nityananda—that would seem obvious by the nature and scope of his preaching, and has also been confirmed by Srila Srídharara Maharaja. Therefore, for the Golden Age it would seem perfectly valid for the preaching on a global scale to go on under such a system. I don't think anyone would deny Srila Prabhupada's competence in this regard. And I don't think anyone can argue that ISKCON would have been millions of times better off under this ritvik system.

Obviously if such a system is put in place there would be no need for any other diksha gurus in ISKCON. Even if someone became uttama it would not be proper for him to compete with Srila Prabhupada within ISKCON—he should have his own matha. An uttama guru is absolute and need not be under GBC authority. This is not to say that such gurus and ISKCON could not and should not have a friendly relationship of mutual respect and cooperation. But within ISKCON Srila Prabhupada should be the only diksha guru.

Acharyas outside of ISKCON could continue to follow the regular system of succession—which is that the present uttama Acharya designates his uttama successor if there is one, and otherwise his disciples cooperate and wait for the next acharya to emerge, if there is to be one. After all, some limbs do die out. This system is most prevalent in our line. Some recent examples being Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, who pointed out Gaurakishora Dasa Babaji and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:
It's hard to follow the logic of your response. If someone is self-realized, what is the difficulty for him to become a diksha-guru in ISKCON? Being a diksha-guru does not mean that such a person will be seen as a competitor to Srila Prabhupada. An uttama guru does not feel himself to be anyone's competitor, but rather he sees himself as everyone's servant. He could stay inside the society in a mood of perfect cooperation, so long as he was not driven out by the envy or politics of less advanced Godbrothers.

From Anonymous, U.S.A., 1.25.90:
I would like to send in and participate in your petition drive to overthrow the GBC on the guru issue. But even more than that, this issue is not a matter of how many petitions can be signed, but is a matter of what is allowed by the sampradaya. You folks have built a solid case why making gurus via the GBC has been a perversion. I myself have examined the controversy quite closely. I don't know if vox populi is the right approach to show the GBC their error. This seems to hint that the issue is one of popularity. If they make a similar drive for a petition signing, it might come down to who has the greater number of petitions!?

Reply, Nityananda dasa:
Petitions are useful to awaken leaders to the fact that their constituents oppose their policies and that their views need to be considered carefully. Sometimes it seems as if the GBC is out of touch with the movement. Therefore devotees should not have to be afraid to speak their views, fearing reprisals and excommunication. Why else are the number of anonymous letters increasing??

Anyway, we are not trying to "overthrow" anyone! We are experiencing what it's like to be thrown out though! Might makes right is not a Vaishnava principle as far as we have understood, but it seems to have become an operating principle in our Society.

From Trai dasa, Italy, 1.17.90:
Please send a subscription to the VVR plus back issues after #8. My wife and I are opening a small center in the south of Italy distributing books and holding kirtanas and Sunday feasts. Being far away, I like to have the association of my Godbrothers through your journal. It is very encouraging that there are many
Godbrothers taking shelter of the clear instructions of Srila Prabhupada, because than we will surely have all success in spreading Lord Chaitanya's movement.

From Eleanor Grant, Waterloo, Ontario, 1.15.90:
Am really enjoying The Seventh Goswami. And I was very interested to read about the spread of “Greater ISKCON” in VVR. Keep it coming! Haribol!

From Ekachakra, Nigeria, 1.31.90:
It was A____ dasa who gave me a copy of your magazine and took time to explain your commitments to bring back ISKCON’s lost glory. We have not seen the magazine here and even if you did send some to the temple, it would not be allowed. For example, the points you discuss are clearly in contrast with the concepts here: guru reform, zonal-acharya, re-initiations, and comments on Kirtanananda Swami. All books and magazines which venture to comment on these issues are burnt immediately when they arrive. At any rate, while the reform in ISKCON may take time to come here, I’m convinced we will one day be educated to understand the actual Krishna Consciousness as wanted by Srila Prabhupada. If you can send constant copies of your magazine to me through my office where I assist as a contributing editor, I can help distribute among enlightened devotees. Also I will appreciate if you can send to me all past issues. Keep the flag flying—we are all behind you.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:
Many devotees are writing to change their delivery address so VVR will not be confiscated upon arrival. Over 200 copies of VVR 12 were hijacked by Ajamila dasa in England, and now the GBC has banned VVR from all temples. Anyone wanting to receive future issues should provide safe addresses, and subscribe if they have not already done so.

From Taittireya dasi and Hrsikesa dasa, Australia, 2.6.90:
Thank God, some real answers to some very real ISKCON problems. We are sure ritvik gurus are what Srila Prabhupada wanted. The evidence is there, and it seems the most straightforward, realistic way. How has this eluded us for so long?

From Dave Glover, England, 2.15.90:
Here is the petition with my signature. I received a copy of VVR together with a letter and a 17 page document from Ajamila dasa arguing against the ritvik guru system. After studying both VVR 11 and the document by Ajamila dasa I have come to the firm conclusion that your views are correct. On the balance of everything that has been said, VVR is correct and it appears the GBC are indeed premature in their acceptance of the current diksha gurus.

1 imagine that the GBC will have difficulty swallowing their pride and may thoroughly reject VVR’s proposals (and reject the community at New Jaipur, too).

From Rathayatra dasa, San Francisco, 2.22.90:
I just read my first copy of VVR, excellent! It really reminds me of the days when we were all united under one guru, Srila Prabhupada, and serving his mission. Enclosed is a check for a subscription. VVR is a good way for me to keep in touch on current issues in ISKCON, and also my godbrothers and sisters.

VVR is a start to reunite our family again and thus rebuild this great movement. All glories to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Good luck to your case at Mayapur. Hari Bol.

From Jiva-Daya dasa, France, 2.17.90:
I read your review number 10 & 11 and find it most interesting, I can say that “belief” about ritvik guru has been my conviction all along. Please carry on your nice service to Srila Prabhupada and to the devotees, and I am waiting to read your next review.

From Robert Gilpin, New York, 3.5.90:
The enclosed books are a donation to Vedic River, please use them as you see fit. Myself, I need only books by Srila Prabhupada, not bogus interpretations by those who would deviate from Srila Prabhupada’s instructions. Hoping this letter reaches you in good health and happiness. Keep up the good work.

From Anonymous, Latin America, 3.1.90:
This is just to let you know that I know two devotees, both with two initiations by Prabhupada, who would totally welcome your magazine. They are from — where your idea of changing the guru system would not even be whispered: 1) because they’re probably the only two Prabhupada disciples there and 2) because it’s so isolated from outside thought. I thought it would be nice if you could give them the chance to hear the opinions held among our Godbrothers. The thing is that they are very poor, because they’re completely dedicated to working for the temple there. So I’m appealing to you to send them each a free subscription to your magazine for at least a year, so that their eyes can be opened.

From Tamala Krishna Goswami to his disciples, 12.30.89:
Recently a community named New Jaipur has published a magazine called Vedic Village Review, stating that ISKCON’s initiating gurus are not bonafide and that anyone who has been initiated by them should reject his or her guru and instead consider themselves Prabhupada’s initiated disciples. Without going into a point for point refutation of the various false conclusions and misleading “facts” described in the magazine, I can categorically state that there are many discrepancies in both the conclusion and the “facts”. The most recent issue of the magazine contains statements which my disciples in particular would find especially offensive.

Neither myself nor most of the leaders and senior members of our society wish to respond to this magazine, as we find its editorial policy biased, opinionated and unauthorized. Instead, the GBC intends to produce ISKCON’s own journal which will address these matters plainly to the satisfaction of all ISKCON members. There are perfectly convincing sastric arguments as well as details of factual historical events to soundly defeat any false conclusions and expose any misleading information.

In the meantime, since the New Jaipur community is not an ISKCON center nor is the Vedic Village Review an authorized ISKCON publication, I cannot advise any of my disciples to read it. Anything which weakens the relationship between the guru and his disciples causes havoc in the disciple’s spiritual life. I have already seen a case in which a devotee’s faith became temporarily disturbed by reading this confusing publication. It...
is foolish to indulge in reading something that openly encourages you to reject your relationship with your guru.

Although I trust that you are all sufficiently intelligent to protect yourselves, I would be failing in my duty as your spiritual master if I were not to also issue this warning. The relationship between the spiritual master and the disciple is clearly explained in all of Srila Prabhupada’s books and you all have personal experience of it.

Hoping this meets you in the best of health and Krishna conscious spirits.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

It is natural for Maharaja to be concerned about his followers’ well-being and faith in Krishna consciousness, although I don’t see how VVR is the threat he makes it out to be. Perhaps Maharaja could also consider the hundreds, maybe thousands, of devotees worldwide who want to hear his answers to the questions posed to him in VVR 12. Whether VVR is so-called authorized or not, the fact is that a very large segment of the society of Vaishnavas want Maharaja’s answers. Why not be forthright and satisfy these devotees? In ISKCON Journal TKG answered some of the questions, but his answers are at variance with the accounts of others. Yadodanandana and Gauridasa Pandita Prabhus are willing to be interviewed by any committee to verify historical data concerning the guru issue and Prabhupada’s instructions in this regard. They will even submit to polygraph tests. Will Tamala Krishna Maharaja agree to the same? Why not?

From Mahanidhi Swami, Vrindavan, 2.19.90:

In all matters of establishing standard one must take into consideration kala, desa, and patra, i.e. time, place, and circumstance. Regarding support for our behavior and philosophical worldview, we generally accept Srila Prabhupada’s books as par excellence evidence across the board for many if not all issues. Secondary support comes from Prabhupada’s tape legacy and tertiary instructions from his letters. Again, these tapes and letters can be highly individualized, thereby excluding use for larger audience. Therefore, one must consider time, place, and circumstance to weigh the applicability of letters and tapes.

Enclosed some original memorabilia from pre-ISKCON Prabhupada, I dug these up at Radha Damodara rooms. One is a copy of the 1957 Hindi BTG (Bhagavat Darshan). The other Hindi pamphlet is an outline for the League of Devotees. Hope you can use them.

From Suhota Swami, India, 1.14.89:

I’m writing from Sridham Mayapura, where I have learned more about the controversy between your good selves and the GBC. I WISH TO DISASSOCIATE MYSELF ENTIRELY FROM ALL THIS... I understand Ravindra Swaroop Prabhu and others are preparing an ISKCON journal to specifically refute all your arguments on the guru issue, point by point. So there is absolutely no need of my “soft touch” approach. Besides, who cares what I say... I’M DROPPING OUT TO SIT ON THE SIDELINES AND WATCH. I’m all for discussion, but flailing my Godbrothers over the head with verbal clubs is just too bitter an experience. I’ve been there before, AND DON’T WANT TO GO THAT WAY AGAIN... I DO NOT WANT TO BECOME A PARTY TO CONTROVERSY BETWEEN GODBROTHERS. After seeing VVR #10 and #11, it’s clear to me that I won’t be able to agree with your views on ritvik guru. So I’ve expressed that to you, just for the sake of feedback. But let’s keep this between ourselves. I’m not a “big devotee”, so I DONT FEEL MY VIEWS ARE CONSEQUENTIAL ANYWAY; let others arrive at their own conclusions by airing your views vis-a-vis the views of the GBC. My request is heartfelt and urgent. PLEASE- as my Godbrother, I’m asking you to have mercy on me and not print these letters. I FIND SUCH CONTROVERSIES MOST UPSETTING. You will be helping this one fallen soul in his spiritual advancement if you just keep me out of it.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:

OK, we comply with your request not to print your letters previous to your request above. Your comments above are interesting in their contradictory nature, and stand out in sharp contrast to your subsequent vituperant participation in the ISKCON Journal. To me, it just looks like you have changed opinions to stay with what you perceive as the prevailing GBC mood.

From Suhota Swami, 4.28.90 (excerpts, 3 letters):

(To VVR): Please be informed that future issues sent to me will be trashed without being read. VVR has become too biased, deviated and downright silly for me to ever read it again. My initial interest in VVR was sparked by an apparent open-minded and forthright editorial policy. But your espousal of the apasampradayic ritvikvada philosophy has shown that to be dead wrong. I completely opposed you in the ISKCON Journal, because I have exhaustively researched the 13 apasampradayas, and I see that you are a modern version of the Kartabhajas. Nowadays in Bangladesh, adherents of another neo-Kartabhaja sect started by Anukula Chandra Thakura, now deceased, espouse ritvikvada, just as you are doing. They claim Anukula Chandra still accepts disciples via his “ritvks”, their argument being that Anukula was God incarnate on earth and is no less with us now as he was when he was physically present. The simple fact is that the ritvik system is indulged in only by Mayavadis and sahajiyas. It was never a policy of any bona fide branch of Lord Chaitanya’s movement. Sarada devi, after her husband Ramakrishna died, declared that no disciple was qualified to initiate, so she became a ritvik-guru, initiating on her husband’s behalf. There are many other arguments against your position that I could give based on my research, but your magazine is not a proper forum for philosophical discussion.

(Suhota Maharaja to Gauridasa Pandita)

Yes, I admit that what I have learned about this [ritvik] matter I’ve gotten primarily from TKG himself... I see no reasonable grounds to doubt the testimony of TKG... The fact that no major scandal has ever attached itself to TKG is proof enough that he is on the mark.

There is no hint anywhere of tangible proof that Srila Prabhupada ever said the things you claim that he said. Everything rests on your say-so, beginning with your revelations to VVR, not earlier. I find it simply incredible that you and the VVR can continue to insist on such a scandalous and outright blasphemous portrayal of His Divine Grace. It irritates me to no end that you folks can claim this ritvik crap is “Prabhupada’s system.”
Reply, Nityananda dasa:

It should be noted that several devotees have confirmed the testimony of Gauridasan Pandita (that Prabhupada said ritviks were to continue after his departure), hearing such from Gauridasan in 1977 and also in the mid-1980's. The history of Tamala Krishna Maharaja's activities in ISKCON, for one who knows of them, leaves little doubt that it is not at all out of line to want him to answer a long list of questions, starting with the list in VVR 12.

Suhotra Swami has an amazing ability to flip-flop in his positions and with each flip or flop argue with the same ferocity despite whatever illogic or misinformation he puts forward as truth. Srila Prabhupada most certainly did establish a ritvik system while he was present, and quite clearly indicated that it could continue. To call the ritvik system "crap", aside from being crude, is also offensive, since the term and practice is discussed in the pages of Srimad-Bhagavatam.

Regarding the apasampradayas, no one is claiming that Srila Prabhupada is God, but to claim that he is sufficiently powerful to institute a ritvik-after-departure system is in line with scripture. Please see the response to the ISKCON Journal for more on this.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

Suppose Suhotra Maharaja is correct, and the Kartabhajas and Ramakrishna's wife supported some sort of ritvik system - so what? That bogus people support something does not necessarily make that thing bogus! It is silly to suggest it does. Many adherents of bogus sects chant Hare Krishna or other such mantras. Should we then abandon the chanting of the Holy Name? Many of them worship the Deities of Sri Sri Radha and Krishna - should we abandon such Deity worship? Obviously not! This kind of nonsense touts as evidence simply defies all logic; it can not even be accepted as circumstantial evidence. Suhotra Maharaja wears a lungi and do many Indian washerman - does this make him a washerman? According to his logic, yes, because he calls us sahajiyas on the grounds that we advocate something also advocated by sahajiyas! Notwithstanding the fact that Maharaja has got some of his facts wrong, is prone to the odd non sequitur, and is also rather insulting, we hope he soon cools down a bit and comes up with something a little more substantial than the hot-headed rubbish he has thus far offered as philosophical comment on the ritvik acharya question!

From Kapindra dasa, Prabhupada Sankirtan Center, New York:

It's Srila Prabhupada all the way. Jagat-guru. My guru, your guru, everyone's guru now and in the future. Everyone, become qualified and take initiation directly from Srila Prabhupada via the officiating guru system he inaugurated.

The Prabhupada Sankirtan Center is an official ritvik temple established in September 1986, on the premise that as soon as someone comes in contact with Srila Prabhupada via his books, tapes, his disciples etc., he has a direct relationship with him and is eligible to become his disciple as well.

Now, by the grace of Lord Chaitanya, Sri Sri Radha-Govinda, Srila Prabhupada, the previous great acharyas, and all the assembled devotees we have a temple in Manhattan, U.S.A.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

The small band of Manhattan devotees headed by Kapindra dasa are out on the streets of New York every day doing Harinama and book distribution. They distribute prasadam Saturdays at Tompkins Square Park and have a Sunday Love Feast at their Gaura Nitai center at 154 West 27th St. Call them at 212 GOD 7200, and send them a donation to help reestablish Prabhupada's first temple in the West. Drop a note of encouragement to these hard working fighters.

From Visvamitra dasa, Moscow, 1.29.90:

Thank you very much for 2 copies of VVR #11. Ananta Shanti already distributed copies among senior devotees in Moscow and also sent some to other cities.

From Damodar Pandit dasa, Tbilisi, USSR, 3.4.90:

Glories to all devotees! Not far ago I read VVR and New Jaipur rules; I was fond of them. This made me sure that the clean line of Srila Prabhupada will be continued and never loosed.

From Govardhanadha dasa, 2.19.90:

Thank you so much for printing my letter in VVR #11. I have received so many letters encouraging me in my Krishna Consciousness.

I humbly ask if anyone could send me Deity photos and some other transcendental literatures. Believe me, I'm so grateful for your mercy! Sometime in your life when you're down, you will understand what I mean, when a devotee keeps contact and encourages you when you really need it and appreciate it. Anybody wants to write me, please - I would appreciate it!

Address: #20892 Unit Navajo B, Bx 1700 Blk Canyon Stage 1, Phoenix, AZ 85027.

From Gita Govinda dasa, Nigeria, 1.3.90:

I came across your wonderful magazine VVR a few days ago, #’s 8,9 &10, and I could not stop reading until I had read them from cover to cover. Let me not waste your time in congratulating you all on a job well done, and a great service to all Vaishnavas around the world. More grease to your elbow.

From Jagatkarta dasa, Monroe, LA, 1.19.90:

As VVR #11 so thoroughly showed us, Srila Prabhupada did not “appoint” any gurus before his disappearance. Yet, the Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita has printed this lie, put Prabhupada's name to it, and distributed it worldwide by the thousands. The reprinted portion of the so-called “appointment” tape [in the Lilamrita] accompanied by the commentary of the Lilamrita author undeniably gives the reader the impression that Srila Prabhupada appointed 11 gurus to initiate disciples. As the Lilamrita author also happened to be one of the so-called appointed gurus, it would seem obvious why that impression is there. If it is an offense to disobey the words of the spiritual master, what can be said when he is misrepresented, his words are changed, and then the whole mess is printed and distributed? Of course, all of this took place under the auspices of the BBT, Srila Prabhupada's own publishing house, with Srila Prabhupada's money and the energy of his disciples.

While we are busy reforming the guru system in ISKCON,
let us not forget to thoroughly examine what we are distributing as the purported “authorized” biography of Srila Prabhupada.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:
Having raised and discussed this point with the author, we feel that he honestly believed his interpretation of the conversation with Srila Prabhupada was correct: the ritviks would immediately and automatically become gurus with the departure of Srila Prabhupada. Now, whether this interpretation is correct or not should be thoroughly investigated.

From Rupa Raghunatha dasa, Vancouver, 1.4.90:
I agree that Prabhupada as the Founder-Acharya of ISKCON should always be in the center and that his teachings are the foundation of this great movement for the next 10,000 years, and should never be minimized. I disagree with Rupavilasa, however, when he makes his “simple but profound” point that Srila Prabhupada never gave the order to become guru and therefore one should not become guru. But Srila Prabhupada clearly states: “You become guru, but be qualified”. Then Prabhupada states how: “Little thing, strictly follower”. Now, if my spiritual master is a strict follower and a sincere hardworking disciple of Srila Prabhupada, not deviating from the path, how can one say he is not guru? To me, it is clearly our philosophy, that after the spiritual master’s disappearance the disciples are expected to initiate in disciplic succession. Srila Prabhupada says in that same quote: “You become, all, acharya. I retire completely. But the training must be complete.” So now that Srila Prabhupada in his vapi has retired completely, all of his disciples, who have been trained up completely by strictly following Prabhupada’s vani, should become acharya. Those who are sincerely giving their life and soul to spread Krishna Consciousness cannot be criticized for their taking disciples. However, one who is not qualified should not take disciples.

Rupavilasa gives the impression that in the future a self-effulgent acharya will emerge among the disciples of Srila Prabhupada and that Prabhupada actually didn’t want regular gurus of the disciplic succession but just ritvik gurus to act on his behalf until the acharya (s) emerged. Did Prabhupada himself ever predict this self-effulgent acharya? In reading Prabhupada’s books and conversations I have never seen any such statement. He made many statements like this one in Srimad Bhagvatam 7.6.24, “Sri Caitanya therefore advised everyone to become a guru-devotee and preach Krishna Consciousness”. Prabhupada in volume 2 of the conversations books gives this succinct definition: “Bonafide spiritual master means who carries out the order of higher authorities”. In the Chaitanya Charitamrita section where the devotees coming in the disciplic succession from Lord Caitanya are being described, Prabhupada warns: “One should not be envious, considering one preacher to be very great and another to be very lowly. This is a material distinction and has no place on the platform of spiritual activities. Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami therefore offers equal respect to all the preachers of the cult of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu who are compared to the branches of a tree.” If one is connected to Lord Chaitanya’s tree of devotional service and is tasting the fruits of love of Godhead, what difference does it make to him which of the innumerable branches or sub-branches he is connected to.

Rupavilasa does not seem to be very aware of the viewpoints of the disciple towards his faithful ISKCON guru. I don’t feel there has ever been any bar in developing my spiritual relationship with Prabhupada, but on the contrary, my guru is forever giving Prabhupada to his disciples as are many other ISKCON gurus. The fall-downs of certain unfaithful gurus cannot be ignored, but when everything is in order with one’s guru, how can one suspect that his relationship with his grand-spiritual master and the disciplic succession is being blocked. I as an individual, (and I know there are many others like me) have never felt cheated or used by my ISKCON guru. Even when sitting in the “big seat” he never took a false position of being anything other than the messenger of Srila Prabhupada. When you are discussing this ritvik issue the point of view of the disciple towards his spiritual master should also be carefully considered. You God-brothers may think my guru as an amateur spiritualist whose Krishna Consciousness only started when he joined ISKCON, but to me he’s the worshipable representative of Prabhupada and Krishna, fully capable of bringing me to them. After feeling spiritual inspiration and receiving proper instruction from my diksha guru for 12 years, do you think some scholarly dissertations on ritvik will change my acceptance of him as a bona fide diksha guru? Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami rejects false followers but offers respectful obeisances to real followers. Let’s be careful not to lump in the real followers, when rejecting the useless ones, which is like throwing away the baby with the bath water.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:
Let us make it clear that we do not and have not said that no one should become a guru! Obviously everyone should, but becoming a guru is a process and one that takes a lot of time. Nor do we deny that Srila Prabhupada wanted regular or bona fide gurus. You have to read what we have written. Please don’t misrepresent us!

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:
The term ‘bona fide guru’ is derived from the Sanskrit sad-guru, which means one who is on the platform of eternity or sat. Our point of view is that one can only be a ritvik or monitor guru, so long as he is not a self-realized soul. Beginning from the nishtha platform one can be guru. Regular guru means one who has become self-realized. Regarding “strict following”, I have discussed this point fairly elaborately in VVR 12 in my response to Rabindra Svarupa Prabhu. I humbly refer Rupa Raghunath das Prabhu to that discussion for our point of view on strict following. I do not think anyone who executes the process of Krishna consciousness is “amateur”. All preachers are gurus in the sense of their delivering the message of the Lord under the ageis of the current Acharya. So far as our taking the responsibility of delivering another soul from the ocean of birth and death, that has to be from the unbound or liberated position. One who is bound cannot free the bound. We do not judge whether your guru is liberated or not, it is you who has to know the testing procedure. You have made your own determination and have got your convictions, and we respect that.

Srila Prabhupada several times stated, “When I order, you become guru...” Since he did not make any arrangement for the GBC to elect gurus, and did not name any successor acharyas (though a few still think otherwise), we are left with this one instruction. To our knowledge Srila Prabhupada has
not yet given that order. As regards the, “Little thing, strictly follower...” Prabhupada was chuckling when he said this—I think one can make far too much of it. It certainly is a simple thing to understand, provided one’s consciousness is not clouded by the ambition to be guru, that one must be a consummate follower before he can be guru. As for the “strict following” being simple to achieve, that is another question altogether. We simply have to look at the record of the majority of the original eleven “Acharyas”—not to mention the ordinary devotees. How many of them found being a strict follower simple? The sad tale is that we have lost thousands of devotees over the last decade or so.

From Sruktirśa dasa and Kusa dasi, New Jersey, 4.1.90:
Srila Prabhupada is merciful and all knowing. On many occasions he demonstrated these qualities. I remember one event that took place in Ahmedabad. There was a group of Indians that were requesting Srila Prabhupada to order them to build a temple. Srila Prabhupada said, “Yes, if you like you can build a temple.” They pleaded, “No, you must order us to, then we will construct one.” Srila Prabhupada said, “Certainly, you want to build a temple, then by all means, build a temple.” In this way the conversation went back and forth, they begging for his blessing, and he giving them blessings but in his own special way not in the way they wanted it. After the group left, I asked Srila Prabhupada why he had not ordered them to build a temple. He answered most compassionately, “If they want to build a temple, that is fine, that is service. If they build it, that is better. If they do or don’t, blessings are there. If I had ordered them to build a temple and they failed to do so, that would be a great offense.” Srila Prabhupada showed his kindness on their souls, not on their egos.

Another such instance was after the mail had arrived, one of the letters contained a request from a disciple to Srila Prabhupada. This man asked Srila Prabhupada if he could divorce his wife due to incompatibility. Srila Prabhupada said that it was all right. I was very agitated by this. I couldn’t get it out of my mind, so when Srila Prabhupada and I were alone during his evening massage, I asked him about it. He said, “This boy was going to divorce his wife anyway. If I said no to him, this would have then compounded his difficulty. The disregard for my order would have been a great offense.” I could understand at that moment how all-knowing and caring Srila Prabhupada was to us fallen souls. It is not that he would be offended, just as Ambarisha Maharaja was not offended by Durvāsa Muni. Krishna takes offense as shown in the SB 9, ch 5. When Ambarisha Maharaja saw Durvāsa Muni much aggrieved and fallen at his lotus feet, he became ashamed and even more aggrieved. He immediately began to offer prayers to the glorious Sudarshana chakra of the Lord begging for Durvāsa Muni’s safety. In this same way our beloved guru deva, rather than risk our making offense, bestows his special kindness in a unique way—one that may be difficult to understand for those of us who are blinded by the obvious.

It is my humble wish that sharing these memories will shed some light on what took place shortly before Srila Prabhupada’s departure from this earth, regarding the maintenance of ISKCON. Srila Prabhupada was well aware of the mentality and intentions of his disciples. He manifested his compassion by softening the hard and fast rules so we may not become offenders.

By focusing on the all-knowing mercy of Srila Prabhupada we can understand how the various camps may each have a portion of the truth. Together, by the grace of His Divine Grace and Krishna, we may have it all. I pray that in our waking and sleeping hours we serve the will of Srila Prabhupada by glorifying the Lord.

From Jaya Gaura dasa, France, 1.12.90:
Thank you very much for sending me regularly the VVR. It is quite interesting and will surely help to further the development of Krishna consciousness in the world.

From Ankotta dasa, Kansas, 3.12.90:
I would like to thank you and all the prabhus at your community for the kind hospitality and nice K.C. association. I was very impressed with the guru-kula set up. The children seem to have very good facility and good sincere devotee teachers. Mother Chandrika took myself and the rest of the family on a guided tour of the school, thus I was able to see first hand the situation. As my eldest son is soon approaching school age, I would like to keep your school in mind.

From Norman Gibbs, California, 3.14.90:
Thank you for sending me your free complimentary issue of VVR #11. It has been of great help for me to better understand what is happening within ISKCON and the world wide Hare Krishna movement.

From Parvati devi dasi, Ohio, 3.19.90:
You are doing a wonderful service. May our Eternal Father continue to bless you and the other devotees at Vedic River.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:
Someone may say, why do they print all the praise for VVR and none of the criticism? The answer is simple: we are receiving very few critical letters. Frankly, I am disappointed and hope to get more soon. Meanwhile, it seems many devotees appreciate a little what VVR is about: the quest for truth.

From Dravinaksha dasa, Naples, 3.22.90:
Thank you for sending us copies of Ravindra Svarupa’s articles. We wanted to study his learned opinion from his own writings. After reading his papers seriously, I must say that Karnamrita Prabhu has got him beat, despite Ravindra’s below the belt punches!

From Urddhava dasa, London, 3.22.90:
Whenever I get a copy of your magazine in my hands, I am immediately thrilled. My heart is jumping up and down in ecstasy. I become instantly blissful and feel very happy and content. I am not writing this to flatter you, but these are real symptoms I am experiencing. First I thought that I might be over-reacting. But your magazine also gives life and inspiration to devotees who live outside the temples. Don’t stop your magazine, go on printing.

I have heard that the GBC decided not to go back to the ritvik issue, but they rather stick with the present unauthorized guru system which was established 12 years ago by self-appointed acharyas. I also heard that they still cling obstinately to the bogus process of more or less forced re-initiation.

Are you still trying to help ISKCON which apparently does
not want to be helped by you? Are you still trying to save something where there is nothing to be saved anymore? Can we conclude that ISKCON is beyond rectification, beyond hope, incapable of being healed? Or do you see any hope of rectification? I think it is much worse than the Gaudiya Math.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:
Actually, I do not share your extreme negativity about ISKCON's condition or future. It is understandable how you and many of our Godbrothers have come to feel like this, and it is a shame. Yet somehow we cannot become consumed by the past, we must move forward in a positive direction. If we cannot find our niche in ISKCON, we can make one for ourselves outside of ISKCON, but as long as we are following the teachings of Prabhupada, what is the difference between in and out? We cannot expect this planet to be like heaven; there are lots of nasty things and problems all around us. Just because ISKCON is infected with a bit of DADS does not give cause for total despair. I believe that things will work out soon and ISKCON will be back on track as the genuine pure spiritual movement for the next 10,000 years. There are too many intelligent devotees on this planet for ISKCON to fail. Srila Prabhupada's work will bear fruit in its own time and the world will become Krishna conscious in spite of everything that looks so bad today.

From Tattva Darshan dasa, Hyderabad, 1.19.90:
Firstly, a million gratitudes for your complimentary subscription to VVR. It is appreciated not only by myself but by the numerous other devotees who relish its contents. Please never stop sending it. It is rare to receive and, in fact, besides the many who read it and return it or pass it around, others also xerox it too. Just like distributing books in India, at least 50 people read each book distributed. Thank you again.

We are a group of about 10 devotees here dedicated to establishing a working model as Prabhupada wanted of a Varnashram, Vedic, self-sufficient community. At present we choose "New Naimisharanya" (commonly called the Hyderabad farm) to try, but due to the past inattention of the GBC, the farm is plagued by more than a dozen court cases, police harassment, physical goonda force and other nefarious tactics by the original donors — all meant to reclaim the land and drive out the devotees. The farm was very dear to Srila Prabhupada, and he wanted it to serve as a model for all other farms. At present though, ISKCON has no control over all the assets, more than 200 cows and most of the land. Any attempts to build a bathroom or farm a single acre meet with stiff resistance and restraint by court orders. We invested over 20 lakhs rupees over the years, which are now utilized by karmis who follow no principles and devotees must face physical attack if they try to use any of the properties in Krishna's service.

Needless to say, this is another product of the days of "zonal acharyas". The history is long and detailed. We plan to relocate soon and start fresh and get down to our real service, establishing ISKCON's first Vedic village in India.

Please continue to keep me on your complimentary list. Also try to get into more articles on farming, practical implementation of varnashram in Kali-yuga, engaging the masses on our farm, practical stuff like beekeeping, cheese making, cottage industries etc.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:
Devotees should be engaged according to their natures. When past GBC's tried to manage, and they were not qualified to do so, things became mismanaged and lost. Not just GBC men, but presidents and on down as well. If one tries to be what he isn't, disaster results. Just like the gurus: some of them may be qualified if judged by the requirements of the sastra, but it is obvious that some in the past were not gurus, but managers. Because the general level of realization in ISKCON about varnashram and how to be best engaged is not very good, many devotees become ambitious to be guru, which is a transcendental position, not what they are by the influence of the material modes, be it brahmanas, kshatriyas, sudras, etc. It is a cheating atmosphere: honesty must prevail to save ISKCON from total mismanagement. Let's use astrology, brahminical councils and the wisdom of our elders, as Bhaktivinoda Thakura recommends, to determine each devotee's varna. Then ISKCON will grow like anything!

From Matthew Cory, San Francisco, 1.29.90:
Thank you for continuing to produce your excellent magazine. The service you are rendering to all devotees and would-be devotees is of the highest order.

From Saradiya devi dasi, New York, 1.9.90:
Having had more time recently, I have thoroughly read VVR #9, 10, and 11. There is no doubt that if ISKCON had taken the path of the rivicik guru system, things would be very different today, especially in regard to ISKCON's public image and credibility. Your excellent and well researched articles are very convincing. It confirms the growing doubt that many of us had regarding the present guru system in ISKCON. However, just as our senses are biased according to our personal conceptions, so various devotees take knowledge according to their own understanding. I feel this issue will take some time to be resolved. In recently speaking to some new devotees about this, they felt that their relationship with their guru was being minimized. It will be hard to erase 12 years of past conditioning from many minds.

In the latest issue of BTG; vol. 24, #9, pg. 8—there was a question from an Indian man about needing a real guru. Instead of answering that you are already associating with the topmost guru, Srila Prabhupada, by reading his books and chanting the Hare Krishna mantra (as the man was doing), the answer was that you must associate with devotees in the temple and eventually Krishna will send you a bonafide guru to inspire and help you. Every time I go to the Brooklyn temple, after the lecture there is always a question from the guests about initiation. And the same answer is given with not a mention of the possibility of Srila Prabhupada's siksha.

Hopefully these misconceptions will gradually change as anyone who reads Prabhupada's books will know that he is personally speaking to us. Here in Westchester county, we are regularly having kirtan programs, and we invite devotees in the area to come. Kapindra Prabhu has been coming up from Manhattan to lead the programs so they have been very nice, as he centers the whole program around Srila Prabhupada.

From Jane Crawford, N.S.W., Australia:
Someone recently handed me a copy of your VVR #8. I found it very informative and inspiring and would like to sub-
scribe. I found a small error, however, that everyone from New Govardhana would notice. On pg. 27 there is a photo of a devotee standing on his head. The caption states that it is Upananda dasa. However it is Lagudi prabhu who lives at New Govardhana and is very well known for his love for Krishna's bullocks, his lengthy Krishna Conscious discussions, and his head stands. Lagudi daily works with bullocks who others could not tame. They plough the fields, collect cow dung, unbog cars, drag logs for building and carry Their Lordships on parikrama on festival days. If anyone saves the bullocks here from slaughter, it's Lagudi prabhu and Gopinathacharya prabhu in their loving service to Krishna and His bullocks.

From Bhagavan dasa, Berkeley, CA:
Please do not send us your magazine. We are not interested in reading it. Thank you, from the home of William Ehrlichman.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:
Bhagavan dasa, former zonal acharya for half of Europe, now wants to erase his memories of Prabhupada and ISKCON, and has become a disciple of Lazarus, a new age "guru", who teaches that sense pleasure is good for you. We are sorry Bhagavan has taken this path, and hope that someday he will come back to Prabhupada and employ his unique abilities to preach Krishna consciousness. If Bhagavan had been an administrative leader instead of guru, things may have gone much differently.

From Janaki dasi, California, 2.9.90:
I was initiated in the summer of 1980. Maharaja performed the ceremony. For at least 7 years I was a strict follower and a very obedient disciple. Then in February of 1987 I married a disciple of Srila Prabhupada and left the temple organization. Since that time I have been directly serving and worshiping Srila Prabhupada. I took my new guru's photo from my altar and also removed him from my heart and replaced him with Srila Prabhupada. I can honestly say that I feel renewed toward OUR most blessed guru's divine mission. Nothing had been a lot of controlling and other such strange things going on in ISKCON anymore. Thank you for this forum and for your dedicated efforts toward OUR most blessed guru's divine mission. Nothing had inspired me as being a truthful effort until I saw this issue, vol. 12 of VVR. This was a relief — an answer to our prayers. All Glories to His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada.

From Jagajjivana dasa, Lafayette, Ca., 3.2.90:
VVR #12 comes across very strong, and the letters from our Godbrothers and Godsisters are especially impressive — and reassuring that we are on the proper path.

From Mark Schiffer, New Zealand, 2.25.90:
Personally, I have run into a few problems with ISKCON. I admit that in some of the cases — I was at fault and had lessons to learn. But this FRUSTRATION can't just have been all and only me. There has been a frustration in me which some friends have helped me see through. This frustration is due to all this ISKCON politics. ISKCON politics — in capital letters! There has been a lot of controlling and other such strange things going on in New Zealand ISKCON. Many people have noticed these characteristics (arrogance, pride, lack of humility...) and have been disillusioned with spiritual life and what ISKCON has to offer. But then, through the grapevine, I received a VVR #11. This magazine was to me very refreshing and encouraging. It gave me renewed encouragement to know that we are not alone in our dissatisfaction, and that there is an established voice speaking up and questioning subjects that have been disguised and infiltrated into ISKCON. Things are changing. The voice of truth can't be suppressed — it can only grow in strength. Your magazine has inspired and raised questions to many in New Zealand ISKCON. Thank you very much for doing this magazine and addressing practical and important issues. This is a growing period for us and ISKCON and I am sure we will learn through it. ISKCON has got something beautiful to offer, and that is Prabhupada and our surrender to him and Krishna. I give you all my support concerning the ritvik guru issue. I wish you all the best of luck when you present your petition during the 1990 Mayapura meeting.

From Murari devi dasi, Gurabo, P.R., 2.28.90:
I read VVR 10 & 11, and it's amazing how Krishna works. Actually I had so much to hear to convince me of so many thoughts going in my mind for all these years. I hope you go on trying to help ISKCON succeed, for only by the truth can we achieve any spiritual understanding. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. Your servant here in P.R., disciple of Satsvarupa Maharaja since 1978, age 62.

From Dhanistha dasi, Illinois, undated:
Thank you for this forum and for your dedicated efforts toward OUR most blessed guru's divine mission. Nothing had inspired me as being a truthful effort until I saw this issue, vol. 12 of VVR. This was a relief — an answer to our prayers. All Glories to His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada.

From Brahma-sampradaya dasi, Virginia, 3.1.90:
Hurray for the letter from Sudarsana devi dasi, VVR #12. This is the only possible reward hoped for by someone who has cooperated with ISKCON's guru hoax. The idea, that the disciple is to have special vision of the guru different from the Godbrothers, is certainly a fact. Ordinarily no one thinks about what it is like to have Srila Prabhupada's special mercy ripped away and be told to worship someone else instead of Srila Prabhupada. Unless you specifically find yourself in that situation, it takes 10 years to reveal the effects. Those trying to have mercy 10 years ago were intimidated and threatened. Sudar-
Thank you so much for your prompt, efficient service on all my orders. Your mail order dept. is saving grace. I thank you a hundred times over and more. Krishna Consciousness is so wonderful and the devotees also.

From Parasurama dasa, Denver, undated:
We have read several issues of VVR and are very enthusiastic to hear of your progress in preaching Krishna Consciousness. We recently had the opportunity to view the ritvik video debate, and can appreciate the efforts you are doing to fulfill Srila Prabhupada’s mission. I was initiated under Ramesvara dasa at Denver in 1981, so you can understand my position in hoping you all success over the current guru/initiation issue.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:
We’re sure Satsvarupa Maharaja would be the first to agree that there is no comparison between Srila Prabhupada and him, just as followers of Madhvacharya or Ramanujacharya would not regard anyone in their line as being equal to their Founder Acharyas. Srila Prabhupada’s siksha is the basis of our whole movement. To say that you view the importance of Srila Prabhupada and your diksha-guru equally seems a little artificial and, if you will excuse me, not very discriminating. Regarding your opinion that a diksha-guru doesn’t need to be self-realized, I don’t think you can conclusively prove this hypothesis on the basis of scripture. There may be qualified gurus in ISKCON, but it seems that in the light of our recent history there must be some doubt about it — though the possibility should be admitted. We are not interested in rubber-stamping anybody as anything, nor demanding dreams or accounts of Krishna’s darshan from anyone. If someone is a liberated soul, then he will exhibit the symptoms of such a spiritual status will be obvious to all non-envious souls. And, if he is pressed on the subject by a sincere questioner, he will admit his status. This is the honesty of the sadhu.

Dear blessed Vaishnavas, Hare Krishna! I have two books; Chaitanya-charitamrita and Bhagavad-gita. I am in a mental hospital on forensic. I don’t expect to be getting out. I would like to correspond with people at ISKCON, who are in transcendental devotional service of the Lord and His devotees. I have nothing intelligent to say. Just: Krishna, He is God. I am God’s servant, transcendently, although I am otherwise situated. Please write back c/o Forensic Unit 25-I, POB 1000, Chattahoochee, FL 32324.

From Brahmamananda dasa, Virginia, 2.12.90:
How is your ritvik campaign going? I heard you were defeated on a video debate with Jayadwaita Swami, but I haven’t seen it. Today a devotee from Holland called me to say that Bhakti-charu wants to resign as GBC of Holland and Belgium, because the ritvik idea (via your publication) has so captured the devotees’ imagination in those countries, that he cannot agree with them at all. For myself, legislating the guru-disciple relationship, either ritvik or acharya, is artificial. I think the truth lies somewhere in between the two — where, I don’t know exactly. Anyway, VVR did liven up things within the movement, all over the world.

From Jaya Balaram dasa, Gainesville, 2.7.90:
I’d like to thank you for your magazine VVR, which I consider an essential means for the servants of Srila Prabhupada to communicate their understandings of the Gaudiya Vaishnava siddhanta. Commonly an apathy appears to prevail concerning philosophical discussion of the position of guru and comments vis-à-vis your writings are such as — “Oh! We’ve been through all this before!” or “Better we just perform our devotional service and get purified.” However, one pranam mantra offered to Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati is as follows: namas te gaura-vani-sri-murtaye dina-tarinel rupanuga-iruddhapasiddhanta-dhvanaharine

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto you, who are the personified teachings of Lord Caitanya. You are the deliverer of the fallen souls. You do not tolerate any statement which is against the teachings of devotional service enunciated by Srila Rupa Goswami.”

The use of the word apasiddhanta, apa — against, siddhanta-
I want to see the evidence. To date I believe VVR has more tangible evidence. I hope this ISKCON Journal is published in the near future, and I hope they will present much more evidence than they have up to this point. This type of dialectic between VVR and ISKCON GBC, I believe is extremely valuable. Future generations of devotees surely will benefit from the discourses. They will not need to go through the same anxieties that leaders and rank and file devotees have been going through and are still going through. Prabhují, keep up the good work and keep fighting for the establishment of Prabhupada's desire. Please give my regards to Rupavilasa and Karnamrita prabhus. I would like to contribute more to VVR in the future. My extent of contribution at the present time comes from discussing with devotees the VVR issues. New Talavan is not very favorable, but not because of studying and discriminating on the issues involved.

From Kesava, Amrita, Chintamani, Yamuna, & Jayananda, New Zealand:
I would like to thank you for my complimentary copy of VVR. I am enclosing some money for a subscription. VVR 11 came to us after years and years of going through the guru issue. Fortunately, my husband and I have had the association of a staunch Prabhupada devotee right from the start of our Krishna consciousness. He kept telling us, “Don't surrender to anyone, don't accept anyone else as your spiritual master except Srila Prabhupada.” That was 11 years ago, and today we stand strong only because we followed his instructions. Over the years, various devotees told us that we must accept a living spiritual master, we must surrender to a “new guru”. With the strength of Srila Prabhupada’s disciple, Adwaita dasa, behind us, we were able to stand up and say, “NO, Srila Prabhupada never left.” So we prayed and prayed to Srila Prabhupada to accept us as his disciples, and in February of 1989 Adwaita dasa initiated us on behalf of Srila Prabhupada. Exactly as a deputy would do. We feel very much encouraged to know that there are devotees like yourselves out there preaching pure Prabhupada consciousness, and I humbly pray that he will bestow all blessings upon your most sincere endeavor. Thank you for your much appreciated association.

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From Anonymous, New Talavan, MS, 3.25.90:
The opinion here in New Talavan generally is that ISKCON GBC is correct and that VVR is concocting their philosophy in connection to the guru issue. As for myself, well, I am waiting for further developments from VVR and from ISKCON GBC.

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my area. Sorry I couldn't collect more, but many members are reluctant to commit themselves for fear of repercussions from the current "gurus" and their followers.

From Vrinda dasi, Saranagati, Canada, 2.19.90:
Do you know if there is a children's Krishna Conscious newsletter or something similar for home-schooled children to feel part of a larger group of young devotees?

Reply, Nityananda dasa:
No, there isn't one I know of. But why don't we start a PEN PAL program for devotee children? Any children out there who want to correspond with the children of New Jaipur? Introductory letters will be matched by age level and who knows what friends will be made through the mail? Address letters to Chandrika dasi, c/o VVR.

From Anonymous, Mayapura, 1.9.90:
In the Mayapura Gurukula here the boys are being taught to worship the new gurus along with Prabhupada in a daily simultaneous guru-puja. The Prabhupada deity is taken from the altar and placed on the vyasasana. At the foot of the vyasasana are about 10 photos of various gurus who are worshipped along with Prabhupada. These photos always sit there. This practice has been instituted by the resident gurukula "pandits".

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:
There seems to be some regression to practices seemingly expunged during the "reform" period (1985-87). It is unfortunate that the GBC felt itself unable to declare such practices concoctions. I do not believe Srila Prabhupada intended the daily guru-puja to be extended to even the most exalted gurus that follow him—it was a special arrangement made for especially materialistic disciples.

From Arjuna dasa, Nigeria, 3.10.90:
Only Krishna can reward you all there for your efforts to re-organize ISKCON. Please keep the flag flying.

From Bhakta Wallace, LA, CA, 4.12.90:
I have been following the "ritvik" situation and have been scrutinizingly reading your VVR's and the new ISKCON JOURNAL and to be totally frank with you, I am split. I feel both you and the GBC make very compelling arguments. My only conclusion at this point is to see what the future holds. After all, everything is in Krishna's hands.

From Prithu dasa, Nigeria, 3.5.90:
Having seen a few copies of the VVR from my friend, P-prabhu, I therefore very much would like to request for free and continuous copies of the VVR. I commend the effort of the residents of Vedic Village for their efforts in spreading Srila Prabhupada's movement, and pray for the continuous guidance of Srila Prabhupada to all the New Jaipur residents.

From Paul Best, San Diego, CA, undated:
Enclosed please find a check for $8 to renew my subscription to VVR. I very much appreciate and am stimulated by the sober, intellectual discussion of the current issues facing us. VVR has certainly instigated many serious discussions here in the San Diego area on issues many were thinking about, but no one was voicing. Thanks for breaking the ice!

From Gopinatha dasa, Paris, 1.13.90:
Bravo! Bravo! I read VVR 11 all night with great jubilation! The evidences showing that Srila Prabhupada appointed ritvik-acharyas looked very solid. Reading the reply of Ravindra Prabhu, I was very sad to see the arrogant tone and weak logic he was using to refute your arguments. I heard that other GBC-gurus are also fighting very much to keep their artificial "absolute" position. It is very sad that the movement is going through such a fighting business. I really appreciate the way you present scriptural evidence without "calling names". I believe this is the attitude that will make the issue clarified for the pleasure of all. What is very important is that all your arguments have been brought with the sincere desire to purify Srila Prabhupada's movement and establish Prabhupada's desire as the standard. I learned a lot of things about the guru-tattva. Many devotees here in Europe are appreciating your writings because it helps them to take shelter of Srila Prabhupada. A lot of them are fed up to hear from the GBC's that they have no connection to Srila Prabhupada. I took a lot of time to discuss your writings with them, even if I prefer to engage in direct preaching activities. I think that you also prefer to be absorbed in more sweet Krishna and Vaishnava-katha, but we have to fight for reestablishing Srila Prabhupada's pre-eminent position. Please keep on fighting. Devotees from all over the world need your support.

From Suresvara dasa, Gita Nagar, 3.27.90:
I waited to read the ISKCON Journal before replying. For me, the Journal has answered all the questions and doubts VVR has been raising regarding guru-tattva and the parampara. Thank you for provoking the GBC to better communicate with the devotees. The attempt to communicate is what I like about VVR. For 14 months I was away from Gita Nagar, BTG was on the wane, and I appreciated your trying to reach out to devotees everywhere. Somewhere you prabhus got carried away, and I wonder if devotees like Suhotra Swami, Ajamila prabhu and myself aren't partially responsible as we encouraged you to speak out. When suddenly we saw the deep end up ahead, we got off the bus. Thanks for the ride. But what now? The Journal has engladdened me that the GBC really is the heart of what we call Greater ISKCON. I think VVR may now join forces with the Journal to inspire and promote better understanding among devotees worldwide. Of course, I do not know your feelings regarding the GBC RESOLUTIONS CONCERNING VEDIC VILLAGE REVIEW AND ITS EDITORS...The thunderbolt is there, and the rose as well. I believe His Divine Grace has answered your open letter. If VVR continues, I would like to see you write more about the basis of the Vedic village—the land and the cow. We may know so many things theoretically, but unless we can practically demonstrate Prabhupada's plain alternative to modern life, it's all just high sounding words.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:
Some of the evidence presented by the ISKCON Journal was downright dishonest. Pradyumna, for example, denies that he ever gave any interview at all. Some who gave evidence conveniently forgot things they said ten years ago. Some of the
witnesses have such bad character and have strayed so far that
Gauridasa's misdemeanours pale to insignificance in com-
parison. And yet THEIR evidence is acceptable! I pray you give
our reply to the ISKCON Journal a fair reading.

From Alexei, Leningrad, 2.24.90:
I am writing you from USSR, from Leningrad. You send me
your magazines. My name is Alexei. Thank you very much for
your nice magazines. I like the VVR. They are very much
interesting.

From Anonymous, New Vrindavan, 2.23.90:
Thank you for sending VVR 12. I received the San Diego
tapes, and see your posture as the only hope for ISKCON.
Personally, having lived in New Vrindavan for 10 years, (I still
live just a few miles from the community, but do not care to visit
there or take part in Kirtanananda's insanity) I have seen first
hand the atrocities and utter futility of this guru system. My
faith in this movement, after being a devotee for 19 years, has
all but been destroyed. I served Kirtanananda since 1977,
hoping that he had been empowered by Krishna to act as "pure
devotee" acharya, in Srila Prabhupada's absence. Now I've
awakened in the midst of a nightmare as "jagat guru" Srila
Bhaktipada has become mad. This is not exclusively a philo-
sophical matter. Rhetoric will not solve the real problems.
Consider not only the turmoil for the new disciple when his
guru falls down, but the credibility the entire movement suffers,
when a so-called guru has been found to be abusing children,
or committing crimes or is almost killed by disenchanted fol-
lowers. Look at the publicity our movement has gotten. We've
become the laughing stock of the world. Ship of fools. Have we
no shame? I would suggest that as devotees step forward and
seek to accept guru status, that in light of what's gone on since
Srila Prabhupada's departure, that they should be lined up and
shot.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:
Well, that may be a bit drastic and obviously that's not a
serious suggestion but just a way of expressing extreme disappoin-
tment over how things have gone awry since Prabhu-
pada's departure. New Vrindaban is a very sad story, but
somehow we must find out devotee association of like mind
and continue in the development of our Krishna conscious-
ness and service to Srila Prabhupada.

From Drupada dasa, Ontario, 3.1.90:
Please find enclosed $101 for my subscription and to sponsor
some others. This is a small token of my appreciation for what
you are attempting. I am praying also that Srila Prabhupada
will answer your letter to him (VVR 12) soon. That may depend
on our ability and qualification to hear from him.

From Anonymous, Europe, 2.26.90:
I have carefully followed the discussion of the "guru issue"
over the various numbers of VVR. I am an initiated disciple of
one of the present gurus in ISKCON, namely Harikesha Mahara-
ja. You are dealing with your godbrothers when you discuss
this matter, but I am talking about my own spiritual master. My
intention is to make you aware what is perhaps going on not
only within myself but also within other members of our society,
who happen to be grand-disciples of Srila Prabhupada. I have
great respect for Harikesha Maharaja, and I know that he is far
superior to most devotees I know. I find your arguments in
VVR regarding the guru issue, if not convincing, at least con-
siderable (I have signed the petition not because I fully agree
with it, but because I want to support the intention for more
openness and reformation—glamor and perestroika—within
our society). I understand that many problems have come from
immature gurus, and they were the ones who suppressed all
discussion about this guru issue and what Srila Prabhupada
wanted his society to be. So I appreciate the fact that this
discussion is going on now, even publicly, and I have learned a
lot from it. I don't know what Harikesha Maharaja is thinking
about this issue and how he is acting in the GBC. Maybe you
can shed more light on this matter for me. I am very much
interested in these matters, and I understand that the whole
matter is certainly not satisfactorily solved by the GBC so far.
But still I am hesitant, because I fear I could perhaps act too
quickly and destroy something very precious.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:
Thank you for your support of open debate. Numerous
reports paint a picture of Harikesha Maharaja's zone as the
foremost zonal acharya program on earth today. The book
distribution is phenomenal, and this fact is used to defend the
zonal guru mood in northern Europe. VVR sure would like to
hear from Harikesha Swami on his views regarding the issues
discussed in VVR lately.

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:
We are reluctant to publicly express our opinions about
individual devotees who render active service in ISKCON,
suffice to say that ISKCON seems to have been deviated from
its true course by the action of a group of individuals who
wanted too much to be gurus. It is up to you, in the final
analysis, to determine whether you have contacted a bona fide
guru or not. In the matter of the relationship between guru
and disciple, the scriptures repeatedly stress that there must
be mutual pariksha, or study of the eligibility of guru and
disciple to take up their respective roles. Since we have gen-
erally failed to give new devotees sufficient training whereby
they may properly scrutinize their prospective gurus, it would
not seem out of place for them to do so when they are suffi-
ciently armed with knowledge. Such scrutiny, however, must
be undertaken with the greatest care, lest unnecessary offence
is committed.

From Vyapaka dasa, Deux Montagnes, QUE, 2.24.90:
I had the opportunity recently to view the San Diego debate
carried amongst yourselves, Yasodanandana prabhu, Rabin-
dra Swarup and Jayadwaita Maharaja et al. It was refreshing
to see the devotees gathered around a table presenting oppos-
ing views in a well marshalled discussion. I hope it marks the
initial stages of a new-found maturity in sharp contrast to our
previous reflex of isolation and the affixing of a label. At the
same time, I found that there were some disturbing tactics
employed during the debate that really did not seem to be
appropriate for such a brahminical assembly. This was the
method of argument utilized by Jayadwaita Swami, which in-
volved attacking nearly exclusively the character of the in-
dividuals, rather than their positions. I am referring to
Jayadwaita Maharaja's opening remarks, where he dismissed
all of Yasodanandana's and Gauri dasa's claims by bringing to our attention the four defects found in the human being; and most notably the flaw in their characters by their alleged propensity to cheat. He dismissed all of Yasodanandana prabhu's experiences, which were ostensibly documented in his diary, as being fabricated due to this dishonest propensity. And that was it! Never another mention of the remarks overheard from Tamala Krishna Goswami; or could there exist misplaced conversation tapes where Prabhupada discussed the ritvik system more fully; nor any proof that Yasodanandana or Gauri dasa were acting underhandedly in this circumstance. I am certain that such a display of oratory would draw praise from the president of a debating society or from an experienced parliamentarian, but it seemed to fall well short of exhibiting any true enthusiasm to come to the truth of these matters. It is not my intent to criticize any individual's sincerity as I am certainly not qualified to do so; or to imply that one should not exercise the freedom to hold a contrasting opinion. However, it was clear that there was just too much posturing undertaken with the seeming intent to arrest any further progress of an inquiry.

Should it not be the role of the GBC to investigate such well presented allegations? Some may argue that this was indeed the case, established by the fact that the debate occurred in the first place. Undoubtedly, to a degree, this is true, but I question the depth of sincerity of the investigators due to the fact that Tamala Krishna Goswami was not instructed to be present. I was told that TKG was busy in China. I am certain such is the circumstance, but perhaps a case could be made that a failure in judgment in the establishing of priorities has occurred. At the time of the debate, the policy of ritviks had been exhaustively presented and the reasons for such a conclusion clearly established. Most of the testimony revolved around statements made by Tamala Krishna Maharaja before or after the time of Srila Prabhupada's passing; and yet it was not deemed necessary to demand his presence. I do not feel we have been circumspect in this respect. In the end it was unanimously decided that further investigation is warranted and I have faith that whatever Prabhupada decided will eventually come to pass as Prabhupada's desire is the desire of Krishna. A word of warning to those who are being deceptive in these regards. The truth always comes to pass and those who foolishly decide to establish otherwise will have only their own foul karma to drown in. When will we begin to learn our lesson from history?

Reply, Karnamrita dasa:

Regrettably, the liberalism exhibited by the GBC in San Diego was shortlived. It seems the GBC, and Tamala Krishna Goswami in particular, simply were not prepared to have their position so thoroughly assailed and did all they could to stamp us out. We made an honest and, believe me, selfless attempt to bring some important matters out into the open, at some personal risk, at least with respect to our peaceful situation in ISKCON, but our action has been construed as a spiteful attack on the movement and even upon our beloved Srila Prabhupada. Under the circumstances the GBC has left very little room for compromise or indeed for further discussion of the subject. We pray that our leadership will eventually forswear the practice of learning the hard way; until then we must do our duty and continue to speak out, with your support, as we have.

To a New Jaipur resident from Mukunda Goswami, 1.2.90:

You may know that Nityananda and Rupavilasa and Karnamrita prabhus will be attending the North American GBC meeting this weekend. There will be a debate on the guru issue, and this should be enlivening for all concerned. As soon as my health improves, and I get some assistance, I do intend to visit New Jaipur. I look forward to that time when I can get the association of so many nice devotees there.

Comment, Nityananda dasa:

Mukunda Maharaja has been very kind to New Jaipur and us VVR editors in the past. He tried hard by promoting dialogue and temperance, cooperation and unity, in all his dealings with us. I really appreciated his association and broad-mindedness. Since the above letter was written in January, however, several things have happened. ISKCON World Review advertised the ritvik videos and reported on the San Diego debate in a fair and neutral way. Then at Mayapura, the GBC's lurched into action against the VVR and acted decisively to squeal the ritvik "theory." TKG and several other GBC's severely chastised Mukunda Maharaja for how he handled the IWR coverage on the San Diego debates. Mukunda Maharaja WAS ORDERED by the GBC to apologize to IWR readers and come out firmly in support of the present GBC policies and decisions. The recent issue of IWR complied accordingly and thus the GBC, by their heavy handed rather than by true philosophical enlightenment or expert diplomacy, has again SILENCED ALL OPPOSING VIEWS. When will the GBC tactics of intimidation and repression end?

From Kanjanaalochna dasa, Columbus, Ohio, 3.24.90:

We received the San Diego tapes and viewed them with great interest. Your presentation on Srila Prabhupada's desire and instructions in regard to the ritvik system was accurate and spiritually empowered by Srila Prabhupada. We thank you very much for your brilliant explanations. As an insignificant member of Srila Prabhupada's worldwide movement, I only beg that my godbrothers within ISKCON management as GBC or "acharyas" may lead the way in rebuilding the Hare Krishna Movement according to the desires of our beloved spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada. Arguments opposing the ritvik seemed weak, unreasonable at times and devoid of any direct instructions of Srila Prabhupada. I cannot recall any proof that Srila Prabhupada appointed acharyas, BUT INSTRUCTED US TO CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN AS HE HAD GIVEN US. HE HAD GIVEN US RITVIK-ACHARYAS!!! To automatically become guru was opposed by Srila Prabhupada. To appoint an acharya by popular vote was opposed by Srila Prabhupada. The reason is clear, our own ISKCON-history has proven the fact, that without qualification we cannot produce an acharya. The logic is clear, service to Srila Prabhupada is not checked with his departure from this planet. Living in sound, birth after birth our master; what more proof do we want to serve him? Do we require from him a miracle, to reappear in our midst (like Lord Jesus Christ) to prove to us that he is still living and not dead? Our ISKCON leaders have become blind materially and spiritually as to the position of Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada's movement has suffered due to political leaders as GBC or zonal acharyas! Their so-called material qualification has not helped us to grow stronger as a
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be forced to apologize against the threat of total ostracism.

because these Prabhus disagree with me they must be branded

activities, might have legitimate differences of opinion. It's not that

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sion. Yet I also believe that the GBC body's purity has been

passed in the mood of deep concern for not only the

result, befitting sincere devotees who, while they may disagree

on certain issues, respect the sincerely held opinions of others.

Reply, Nityananda dasa:

I have no doubt that by far most of the GBC members are

very sincere and devoted to the cause of Prabhupada's mis­

sion. Yet I also believe that the GBC body's purity has been

seriously compromised by a few individuals who are ambitious

and who have capitalized on other devotees' weakness for

"becoming" a so-called guru. It is this contamination in

ISKCON that starts at the very top, that DADS, or Dreaded

Acharya Disease, that has made such a mess of things. My

prabhus are very respectable, but the DADS must be purged.

Anyway, where is the opportunity now for continued dis­

cussion with the GBC on the guru issue?

From Anonymous ISKCON servant, Honolulu, 5.9.90:

I've been following the discussions on guru-tattva in the Vedic

Village Review. It all sounded pretty good. Seemed in line with

what Prabhupada says in his books. But I was thinking the
discussions were a little one-sided. I also thought that it should

not be forced on everyone to accept Prabhupada as their only

guru. I was happy when I first saw the ISKCON Journal, be­
cause I thought it would be good to balance the discussions.

After reading the Journal, though, I was not very enlivened.

Why? Because rather than carefully answering the doubts

raised in VVR, our leaders have tried to intimidate the mass of

followers such as myself and close all open discussions once

and for all. These are the divide and conquer tactics of

khshatriyas. Not very brahminical. It makes us forget our unity,

and forces devotees to choose sides in a conflict. Let's just

remember that Vaishnavas, due to their individual personal­

alities, might have legitimate differences of opinion. It's not that

because these Prabhus disagree with me they must be branded

as sahajiyas or mayavadis or offenders, etc. Or that they must

be forced to apologize against the threat of total ostracism.

VVR was somewhat radical and bold in its presentation in

latter issues, yet it never went to the extreme that ISKCON

Journal has.

Let's try to unify rather than ostracize and stratify. That's the
duty of real leaders, real gurus, such as Srila Prabhupada, who

did his best to keep so many half-baked disciples together

under one banner of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

From Chaitanyaapiya dasa, Manhattan, NY:

I have read The Tenor of Srila Prabhupada's Teachings, and I

agree with the conclusion that the diksha-guru must at least

be on the platform of nishtha—preliminary liberation. But I
disagree that this is the tenor of Srila Prabhupada's instructions

regarding seeking out a bona fide spiritual master, for liber­

ation is not the only qualification of a bona fide spiritual master.

It is only a preliminary qualification. After all, a devotee is not

seeking liberation, he's seeking pure love of Krishna. There­

fore, he seeks out a guru who has such pure love of Krishna,

and by the blessings of such a guru and Krishna, the disciple

ultimately attains to the stage of Krishna prema. When one

seeks pure love of Krishna, he must seek out a guru who has

conquered the Supreme Lord with his love, and who is thus in

a position to deliver Krishna to the disciple.

The general tenor of Satyaraja Prabhu's paper seems to be a

one of let bygones be bygones, or onward into the future

without mature contemplation of past errors. This, I think, is a

grave mistake. Past errors are meant to be learned from, not

forgotten. The brahmana forgives, not forgets.

One statement in particular I would like to analyze is on the

fifth page of Satyaraja's paper The Tenor of Srila Prabhupada's

Teachings: "Actually, this is the mystery of disciplic succes­sion.

'By the mercy of Vyasa,' says Sanjaya, 'I have heard these most

confidential talks from the master of all mysticism, Krishna,

who was speaking personally to Arjuna.' (BG 18.75) In the

purport Prabhupada...does not emphasize 'inner realisation'
or anything of the kind. If one simply delivers the message

unchanged, he is guru. Like a mailman...[he] may be perfect

or not—the message is perfect. With sastra and sadhu one can
discern if one's guru is delivering the message unchanged.'

I looked at the above-cited Bhagavat-gita purport, and this

is what I found: "...One has to understand Krishna, not direct­

ly, but through the medium of the spiritual master. The spiritual

master is the transparent medium, although it is true that the

experience is direct. When the spiritual master is bona fide,

then one can hear Bhagavad-gita directly as Arjuna heard it."

By reading the purport I could understand that Srila

Vyasadeva, who gave Sanjaya understanding of the Personality

of Godhead, must have had the deepest "inner realization" to be

able to bestow this understanding upon his disciple. Thus, I

conclude that this is "the mystery of disciplic succession"— that

the spiritual master has inner realization of Krishna and blesses

the disciple with the seed of such experience.

Srila Prabhupada further clarifies that the spiritual master

is the transparent via medium. Consequently, I cannot whole­

heartedly accept that parrot-like repetition is the sole qualifica­tion

tion of a guru, as is implied here by Satyaraja Prabhu. And

finally, in the purport of Bhagavad-gita 2.8 Srila Prabhupada

concludes that help can only be given by a spiritual master like

Krishna: "...the conclusion is that a spiritual master who is one

hundred per cent Krishna conscious is the bona fide spiritual

master." Therefore, if one's guru is like Krishna and is one

hundred per cent Krishna conscious, how can he not have

complete inner realization? All Glories to Srila Prabhupada!
Maharaja Kulasekhara

by Karnamrita dasa

"O Krishna, let the swan of my mind enter into the stem of Thy lotus feet [while I am youthful], for at the time of my death, when my throat is choked with mucus, air and bile, how can I possibly remember Thee?" [Mukundamala 40]

This verse, composed by the Sri Vaishnava saint, or Alhvara, King Kulasekhara, was often recited by His Divine Grace, Srila Prabhupada. King Kulasekhara appeared in year 27 of the Kali Yuga, in Travancore, South India. He is said by the Sri Vaishnavas of that region to be the incarnation of the Kaustubha gem of the Supreme Lord. Traditionally, the sovereigns in his dynasty owne allegiance to the famed archa-vigraha of the Godhead, Sri Padmanabha of Travancore, to whom they offer obsequies and a report of their royal business twice daily.

Despite his origins, however, Kulasekhara Maharaja played the part of a materialist to begin with, just as our Gaudiya saint, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura did. He was valiant, however, and by force of arms became king of the Cholas and Pandyas as well as the people of Malayalam, and was possessed of a mighty military force. His administration of his kingdom was moral, just and magnanimous.

As above stated, Kulasekhara Alvara appeared at first to be a munda, a sovereign who fancied himself the lord and controller of his realm. But with the passage of time his natural devotion to the Lord of Vaikuntha, and especially to Lord Sri Rama, manifest itself for all to behold. By the practice of sadhana-bhakti he came to be free from all signs of ignorance and passion and shone as one situated in pure goodness. The natural tendency of a devotee towards renunciation arose in him, and he viewed the world as unfit for his habitation. So pure was he, that Lord's intimate parshada, Sri Vishvakarma, was deputed by His Master to initiate the king by the practice of satrn-hanta and Sanskritiyana.

"The body, its beauty faded, will inevitably fall down, the joints of its limbs unbent; just as our Gaudiya saint, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura did. He was valiant, however, and by force of arms became king of the Cholas and Pandyas as well as the people of Malayalam, and was possessed of a mighty military force. His administration of his kingdom was moral, just and magnanimous.

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Being thus enabled to enter into the mysteries of unalloyed devotion, King Kulasekhara lamented his position as a pounds-and-pence monarch and declared his royal opulence to be as inscrutable to him as fire. Above all there arose the earnest desire within his heart to give up his regal seat and go to the famed temple of Ranganatha, and there to render service to the Lord as His mortal servant. The king would sigh as he contemplated serving the Lord at this great centre of devotion, and then at other times he would long to go to other holy sites and abide there for the rest of his days. In this way he longed to renounce his royal burden and devote himself exclusively to the service of Godhead. He invited many saintly devotees to his capital and he studied the scriptures with them. He read the eighteen Puranas, the Itihasas and the sacred lawbooks too. Having extracted the essence of all this shastric lore he composed the great Mukundamala, 'A Garland for Mukunda', which contained verses such as these:

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madana parihara sthitim madiye
manasi mukunda-padavinda-dhamni
hara-nayanu-krasanu krshosi
smarasi na ca kaka-para-krnam murureh

"O Cupid, give up thy place in my heart, which is the seat of the lotus feet of Lord Mukunda, lest thou art scorched by Siva's third-eye! Do you not remember the supreme power of the discus of Krishna, the Enemy of Mura?" [Mukundamala 29]

idam sarire parinama-peshalam
patay avasyam slatha-sandhi-jaharam
kim ausadhaih klyisyai mudha-durmate
nairamayam krshna-rasayanam piba

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Prahhupada Sankeertan Center devotees lit To/tlpkins Sq. Park Falher Jim
There is now no need for your assistance - your desire has been vanished from sight.

decided to somehow bring about his disenchantment with the
decided to somehow bring about his disenchantment with the

The king's ministers were by now convinced that their sover-eign was afflicted with a sort of religious insanity, and they tried to determine how they might curb his excesses. They decided to somehow bring about his disenchantment with the
Let Us Discuss Siddhanta

a letter from Yasomatinandana dasa

WHAT happened between the VVR and the GBC in recent months is very unfortunate. You have provided an open forum for the worldwide community of Vaishnavas to discuss vital issues concerning Srila Prabhupada’s mission. Devotees are basically philosophers. That is how they became attracted to Krishna consciousness, through Srila Prabhupada’s books. They needed a forum to discuss their heartfelt convictions. You provided it at your own expense. You maintained impressive regularity in your publication. Thus you became very popular. Even the establishment supporters who condemned you at first started participating in your magazine after seeing your popularity. These were hopeful indications.

But the discussion of controversial issues became sour when you started attacking personalities and throwing challenges to the GBC. I do not agree with you that there was a conspiracy lead by Tamala Krishna Gosvami to cover up Srila Prabhupada’s desires regarding initiations after his departure. TKG, as well as other leaders were always over-confident, and as a result they may have misunderstood what Srila Prabhupada meant. But to say they purposely presented a distorted picture to the society is not acceptable to me. I think you have made an error in pursuing this line of action, and TKG has a right to demand an apology from you. I am one of your sympathizers and supporters. My conclusions on the guru issue are closer to your conclusions than Tamala Krishna Gosvami’s. But attacking him, or for that matter anyone, personally does not serve your purpose anyway. In the same way, challenging the GBC was also hasty and wasteful. How did you expect to make the whole GBC bow down and accept your conclusions? As humble Vaishnavas, the best recourse is to offer an unconditional apology to all those who felt offended and continue with your discussion of siddhanta in a detached mood without too much involvement of personalities in the discussion.

On their part, the GBC body has acted strangely in demanding that you “withdraw your conviction about the ritvik idea”. What does this mean? Will the GBC control people’s thinking process? Control everyone’s minds? Are they serious? Isn’t this repression? Should people be expelled for having a different opinion? Three years ago Jayadvaita Swami read out a thirty-two point charter accusing the GBC of serious charges. Now the same so-called reform leaders want to stifle the voice of dissent and encourage totalitarian rule? Why are they afraid? They have the power. They don’t have to accept your idea. That’s it. Why should they demand that you give up your idea and declare it heretical? It seems that they are insecure in their philosophical understanding. Thus, they want to stop all the discussion altogether and push the issue under the rug. This is dangerously unfair. After all that has gone on in ISKCON, who can be so sure and confident they have the answer and condemn the other side altogether. Maybe they are reacting to your strong and rather impolite and harsh demands and petitions, etc. Maybe they will become more considerate after you apologize. Most people think you went a little too far in your approach. But that mistake should not be used to permanently silence everyone who offers some criticism.

Of course, I don’t quite agree with the idea of ritvik as you have defined it. But I agree with most of your conclusions. I would like to present my ideas as follows: The person giving an initiation with accompanying fire sacrifice is not automatically the principal spiritual master of the candidate. There is a very interesting historical account of a similar controversy that raged in 1932 against His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura in Vrindavan. I gathered these facts from notes kept by His Holiness Bhakti Vikas Gosvami (formerly Ilapati Prabhu). He had a discussion with Jatisekhar Prabhu, one of Srila Sarasvati Thakura’s disciples who lived in the Gaudiya Matha as a brahmachari for fifteen years during Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura’s time. He is presently staying in Orissa. In 1932 the caste gosanis of Vrindavan had one of their men write a book against Srila Sarasvati Thakura. Their main accusation was that the disciplic succession published by him was a concocted one. It did not include the diksha-gurus of different acharyas. Srila Gaura Kisoras dasa Babaji had taken initiation from Advaita Parivara (from the family of Advaita Acharya). Why wasn’t his name included? Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura had taken initiation from Bipin Bhari Gosvami. Why wasn’t his name included? Srila Gaura Kisoras dasa Babaji didn’t wear a sacred thread, didn’t perform a fire sacrifice (he gave Sarasvati Thakura some Navadvisa dust as a ceremony of initiation). How could Sarasvati Thakura award sacred thread? Why was he performing fire sacrifices? Why did he take san-nyasa? They were criticizing him on all these points.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura replied in this way: Diksha parampara is Pancaratraik parampara. That is bound to be lost in the course of time. Our parampara is Bhagavata-parampara, meaning the parampara of maha-bhagavatas, pure devotees, who are fixed in the absolute conclusions of Srimad-Bhagavatam. These parivaras (family lineages) are parivaras only (families only). What is their value? What are they doing for Lord Chaitanya’s mission? Let them match my preaching, my sadhana, my studies.

Thus, the issue was discussed and cleared by Srila Sarasvati Thakura. This is vital information. You don’t have to call the present gurus ritviks, you can call them pancaratraikis gurus. Srila Prabhupada, however, remains the Bhagavata guru.

One of the questions often asked by the supporters of the “initiator is absolute” ideology is, “Now that Srila Prabhupada is gone, is the disciplic succession broken? No more disciplic succession?” It is surprising to hear this, because the same question was raised by Kirtanananda Swami, whom the GBC expelled. In part, he was expelled for claiming to be the next acharya. Now the GBC are asking the same question and coming to the same conclusion. In fact, Virabahu Prabhu’s book, his papers and conclusions are such that if one didn’t know who wrote them, one could easily conclude that they were written by Kirtanananda Swami.

Srila Sarasvati Thakura has cleared this issue, however: “Disciplic succession is Bhagavata-parampara.” To consider Srila Prabhupada as just one of many siksha-gurus is not appreciating his position properly. He remains the principal spiritual master, the Bhagavata-guru for all ISKCON devotees for all time.

Isn’t it significant that in our own disciplic succession, which is published in Bhagavad-gita As It Is, there are hardly three or
four names out of the whole list who took direct initiation from the previously named acharya in the list? And yet the proponents of "disciplic succession by initiation only" say without their names being included in them parampara the disciplic succession will be considered broken. Their argument about disciplic succession being discontinued without them being seen as "absolute" by their disciples is actually apasiddhanta—deviation comparable to the criticism made of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura some sixty years ago. It is a caste gosvami mentality.

As far as whether the initiators should be considered gurus or ritviks, it doesn't matter what you call them. The word guru does not automatically mean maha-bhagavata or self-realized spiritual master as described in the Gurvastakam, just as the word 'soldier' doesn't automatically mean 'general'. A general is also a soldier, so is a colonel, major or captain, as well as the newly recruited private. Similarly, there are many varieties of gurus serving varieties of functions. Dronacharya was a guru, Sukracharya was a guru, Chinamani, the prostitute, was a guru of some kind. The avadhutra brahmana lists twenty-four instructing gurus in the eleventh canto. In Lord Krishna's family, Garga Muni was a guru and Sandipani Muni was also a guru.

In this way there is no harm in considering the new initiators as gurus. But to equate them with Srila Prabhupada is a dangerous mistake. In other words, to say that their diksha disciples should see them as great as Srila Prabhupada is a mistake. That is the serious mistake we made these last twelve years. It is not an ordinary mistake. We paid a heavy price for this. Jayatirtha walked away with almost a hundred innocent men. Kirtanalamba Swami also misled hundreds of men. Why did these things happen? We, the leaders, convinced the new bhakta to see these imperfect, conditioned souls as maha-bhagavatas. We told them to worship them daily. By the time we were ready to tell them, "Wait a minute, this man is not right..." these innocent men were addicted to ignorance. They were injured beyond repair. We are responsible for misleading them, the blind leading the blind. At least now, after seeing so much, after losing so much, we have to open our eyes, introspect and change our ways. This was the purpose of our reform meeting, the Fifty Man Committee, etc. But due to the tension in the atmosphere at the time, the threats of violence, etc. these philosophical aspects were not fully discussed. Everybody discussed the problem, but not enough time was given for philosophical analysis. As a result, instead of a reform based on philosophy and principles, only a cosmetic, external reform took place. Some faces changed but the ideology didn't.

The issue of the qualifications of the real guru is the most important issue at hand now. To use the postman argument is not proper. Srila Prabhupada said, "I am just a postman. I am delivering Krishna's and my spiritual master's message. I don't have to be perfect as long as I follow a perfect master." When Srila Prabhupada says such things, it is out of his humility. Also he is trying to emphasize the point that if someone presents Krishna's message perfectly, then the audience will get full benefit. However, this doesn't mean that just as we are not perfect, Srila Prabhupada was also imperfect. When we say we are not perfect, it is not humility. It is reality. A few years ago this statement would have been branded 'envious'. But after seeing more than half of the so-called perfect masters falling down, it should be considered an understatement.

In fact, it is a great offense to bring Srila Prabhupada down to our level and try to compare ourselves to him. To say that Srila Prabhupada said, "we are all liberated" is a great misuse of Srila Pranabhupada's statements. It also renders the term 'liberated' meaningless. Are we to think that the people who fell down were liberated at one time, but became conditioned later on? Is liberation so cheap, so fragile that one day you are liberated and the next day you are conditioned? So many of them? What lessons have we learned from these serious, gross fall-downs. These fall-downs were not subtle. Even ordinary gentlemen in India do not stoop to such depths as drinking alcohol, child molestation, homosexuality, drugs, etc. We must consider the harm done by allowing the apasiddhanta to prevail in the past. Harm was done both to the people who artificially put themselves up so high and those who were artificially made to take shelter of such unqualified men.

I do not mean to say that we should not respect anyone or look at everyone with suspicion. No. We must establish the normal codes of conduct as per varnashram etiquette. A sannyasi is the guru for the other three ashrams, a brahmana is the guru for the other three varsna, a husband is the guru of his wife. Srila Prabhupada cited the above from Madhvacarya in SB 7.11.30. A Vaishnava should respect all other Vaishnavas, especially those who are senior. But we should still know what a maha-bhagavata is and fully surrender unto such a personality. All scriptures glorify such maha-bhagavata association. Prabhala Maharaja says, mahiyasam pada rajohisekam niskicananam.... "Until one receives the dust from a great devotee who has no other possession than Krishna..." Jadabharata says, rahuganair tat tapasa na yati...vina mahatpada rajohisekam... "Such devotional ecstasy does not come by austerities and penances, study of the Vedas, by renunciation or fruitive activities. Without the dust from the lotus feet of mahat—great saintly devotees..."

Can we say that a new bhakta should sing Gurvastakam, keeping his diksha-guru in mind? Should he artificially feel that his guru, who is still an aspiring candidate, a sadhaka, is constantly relishing the glorification of the qualities, form, name and pastimes of Sri Sri Radha Madhava? Should he be thought to be assisting the gopis in making different tasteful arrangements for the conjugal pastimes of the Divine Couple in the groves of Vrindavan? Is it just a formality? Srila Prabhupada was on the highest platform. This is no exaggeration. But if we start applying these verses to sadhakas, we will imply that Srila Prabhupada is also a sadhaka and that we are singing praises for him, just because a disciple has to do it, just an official ritual.

All the statements in the Vaishnava sastras refer to a self-realized guru, a siddha-purusha and not a sadhaka or baddha-jiva. It has been proven beyond doubt that most of us (especially the leaders who supported corruption for so long) are conditioned souls. We should not imitate a maha-bhagavata, or else we shall surely be doomed as one who imitates Lord Siva's drinking of poison.

What are some of these imitative activities? Taking daily worship, putting our pictures on the altar of Sri Sri Radha-Krishna, having mantras chanted to us, taking service which distinguishes us from our Godbrothers of equal rank, etc. Such behavior is harmful. Instead of such behavior inspiring us to feel ourselves the servant of the servant, lower than a blade of grass, it rather makes us feel that we are masters. This will immediately stifle our progress. This will degrade us to the level
of kanishthas and even further down than this. No one will make progress. In spite of our big buildings, big projects, big numbers of books distributed, we shall close the gates of advancement in spiritual life.

The scriptures recommend no such procedure of worshiping a conditioned soul. This idea is worse than demigod worship. Again—the qualifications of a bona fide spiritual master is a key issue. Some people say, "This is impersonal. Everyone needs a living connection." The answer is, "Srila Prabhupada is living, his movement is living, his disciples are living, his instructions are living, and his books are all living, spiritual, transparent." Individually we are opaque. Opaqueness is blindness, darkness, death. It has been seen, proven. The impersonalists do not give much importance to Lord Krishna and disciplic succession. They see everything in Mukantananda, Chinmayananda—"living gurus". So who is an impersonalist? Another point often raised is, "Why don't we worship Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, or Rupa Gosvami directly?" This is also a good question. The answer is, "This movement ISKCON was established and founded by Srila Prabhupada, not by Srila Sarasvati Thakura or Srila Rupa Gosvami. Srila Prabhupada is transparent. His instructions are absolutely non-different from Srila Sarasvati Thakura's and Srila Rupa Gosvami's. By following him we are following the whole parampara. Thus, as the Founder-Acharya, he is the highest authority, and he has the highest purity. We have neither the authority nor the purity. Srila Prabhupada left authority in the organization, the GBC, the presidents. Therefore, by creating another center of authority, imperfect conditioned souls acting as gurus who attempt to take the same absolute status for their disciples as Srila Prabhupada did for us—this has already partially disintegrated the movement, and it will further disintegrate.

This is also the reason why I don't agree with your idea that we should continue with the ritvik system until a self-realized acharya becomes manifested. This is very subjective. As Mother Urmila asked, "Who is to decide who is self-realized? A movement can't be governed by such subjective ideas. Even if a maha-bhagavata devotee did appear, why does he have to be formally recognized?

We say Srila Prabhupada is still present in his books, his instructions, etc. Then why should we think someone else has to manifest as the acharya? There is a technical confusion here. Because Srila Prabhupada is the Founder-Acharya of ISKCON, as long as ISKCON lives, he remains the predominant spiritual master. Let there be hundreds of maha-bhagavatas within Krishna consciousness. Rupa Gosvami, Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Gadadhara Pandita Gosvami, etc. did not have a big seat of acharya from where they controlled things.

The Founder-Acharya must be a maha-bhagavata, otherwise his movement will become apasampradaya, a deviated line. He is the absolute authority. But once the movement is established, all the positions within it are appointed and not spontaneous, i.e. not requiring subjective analysis—who is self-realized and who is not. These positions are not absolute, but always relative to the absolute position of the Founder-Acharya, who is the common binding force for all the devotees for all time as long as the movement survives.

Advanced devotees and sannyasis will always be respected on their own merits, because of their qualities and activities, not because of some official position, but because of guna and karma. Even in the time of Srila Prabhupada, sannyasis and leaders were greatly respected by the devotees under them, even though they were not initiating. That will be ideal. We have to go back to Prabhupada days. We deviated, went on a wrong track, and therefore we must go back to the point from which we deviated.

There are many things to be said about this issue. In ISKCON Journal they have printed an interview with Narayana Maharaja to support their position. But I have heard other statements from Narayana Maharaja also. He told me, "All these boys [the devotees in Mathura] have taken diksa from Yamana Maharaja, but they are more attached to me. So it is not diksha or siksha or anything. Whoever sets the best example of a devotee and inspires you in that way is the real guru." Narayana Maharaja is a saintly person. He doesn't know the intricacies of ISKCON and what goes on in our movement. Both sides have to be present to talk to him. And yet he will have to speak from his experience in Sriptada Kesava Maharaja's branch of Gaudiya Matha.

I cannot claim I am right, and they are all wrong. I may be absolutely wrong. My Godbrothers in the GBC are much more qualified than me. Most of them are sannyasis, big preachers. They have sacrificed so much for Prabhupada in comparison to me. But the above points are a personal reflection. Sometimes even a small man can figure out something which a big man may overlook. There are so many things that govern ISKCON. The guru issue alone is not the governing factor. Mangala arati, chanting sixteen clear rounds, reading and distributing Srila Prabhupada's books, and most important of all remaining united in the service of Srila Prabhupada's mission—these are more important. United we stand, divided we fall. It is very difficult to please everyone, but there is no harm in sharing our ideas and discussing siddhanta. It is not against the principles of Krishna consciousness. It is not maya. Srila Krishna dasa Kaviraja says,

siddhanta baliya cipta na kara alasa
tha hoite krsne lage sudratha manasa

"A sincere student should not neglect the discussion of such conclusions, considering them controversial, for such discussions strengthen the mind. Thus one's mind becomes attached to Krishna."

Our intention is not to rock the boat or challenge the authorities. Our intention is to simply follow the above advice and discuss siddhanta. Hare Krishna!
Lord Krishna’s Successors—Contaminated?

From Our Living Guru, by Puranjana dasa and Jagajjivana dasa

Q. In the Brahma-Madha-Gaudiya sampradaya of guru successors of Lord Krishna, do we find anyone with material contamination?

A. Absolutely not. Still, some would-be gurus have claimed otherwise, possibly to downplay material contamination of their own. For instance, after incidents of drug-taking and homosexuality, post-1977 ISKCON’s “living gurus” claimed in their August 1980 GBC report, “There are examples in the Srimad-Bhagavatam of great devotees having difficulties... Lord Brahma was affected by sex attraction for his daughter.”

In January 1990, in San Diego, speaking on Srimad-Bhagavatam at a meeting about ISKCON’s “guru issue”, a “living guru” claimed that sometimes, for a few minutes, great gurus such as Brahma become bewitched by maha-maya.

But in Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.12.28, Srila Prabhupada vindicates Lord Brahma’s absolute, cent-percent freedom from material contamination: “This extraordinary immorality on the part of Lord Brahma was heard to have occurred in some particular kalpas, but it could not have happened in the kalpa in which Brahma heard directly from the Lord the four essential verses of Srimad-Bhagavatam, because the Lord benedicted Brahma, after giving him lessons on the Bhagavatam, that he would never be bewitched in any kalpa whatsoever.

This indicates that before the hearing of Srimad-Bhagavatam, he might have fallen victim to such sensuality, but after hearing Srimad-Bhagavatam directly from the Lord, there was no possibility of such failures.”

Yet the “living gurus” have insinuated that Lord Brahma became contaminated after hearing the Bhagavatam—after becoming Krishna’s guru successor. In other words, one can be materially contaminated and still claim to be Krishna’s successor.


Even so, quoting Narayana Maharaja of the Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha, the editors of the ISKCON Journal have seen fit to print the following statement: “But there is a system in our sampradaya. So Tirtha Maharaja, Madhava Maharaja, Sridhara Maharaja, our Gurudev, Swami—Swami Bhaktivedanta—they all became acharyas.”

In his books and correspondence, as for instance a letter dated 14 November 1973, Srila Prabhupada states the reality: “Bhakti Vilas Tirtha is very much antagonistic to our Society and he has no clear conception of devotional service. He is contaminated.”

And in a letter dated 28 April 1974, Srila Prabhupada goes on to explain his Godbrothers’ contamination: “Sridhara Maharaja is responsible for disobeying the order of Guru Maharaja.... If Guru Maharaja could have seen someone who was qualified at that time to be acharya, he would have mentioned. Because on the night before he passed away, he talked of so many things but never mentioned an acharya. His idea was acharya 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 GBC, who would come out successful and self-effulgent acharya would be automatically selected.

“So Sridhar Maharaja and his two associate gentlemen unauthoritizely selected one acharya, and later it proved to be a failure. The result is that now everyone is claiming to be acharya, even though they may be kanista-adhikari, with no ability to preach. In some camps the acharya is being changed three times a year. Therefore,” Srila Prabhupada orders, “we may not commit the same mistake in our ISKCON camp.” Srila Prabhupada wants no unauthorized “acharya factory” or “living guru project” of the kind we have witnessed since 1977.

“Actually,” Srila Prabhupada emphasizes, “amongst my Godbrothers, no one is qualified to become acharya. 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. This attempt was made previously [notably in 1970] by them, especially Madhava Maharaja and Tirtha Maharaja and Bon Maharaja, but somehow or other I saved the situation. This is going on.

“We shall be careful about them and not mix with them. This is my instruction to you all. They cannot help us in our movement, but they are very competent to harm our natural progress. So we must be very careful about them.”

If only the leaders of post-1977 ISKCON had been careful. We would still have a vibrant, unified movement centered on the only true sampradaya-guru, the only true successor of Lord Krishna, that we have known or are likely to know for the time being—our inconceivably magnificent Srila Prabhupada.

In Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta, Volume 3, pages 162-163, we learn that in 1967, when Srila Prabhupada seemed about to disappear from this world, “One devotee suggested that perhaps one of Swamiji’s Godbrothers should come to America and fill in for Swamiji, and if the worst happened, take over the leadership of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness...he considered it without immediately replying...

“...Swamiji said he would not call any of his Godbrothers to come and take care of his disciples. He said, ‘If this person speaks just one word different from what I am speaking, there will be great confusion among you.’ Actually, he said, the idea was an insult to the spiritual master.”

Nevertheless, between 1978 and 1981, ISKCON’s leaders committed this kind of insult by making Sridhara Maharaja their de facto authority. And as Srila Prabhupada had foretold,
his Gaudiya Matha Godbrother caused great confusion among them. Sridhara Maharaja spoke about how we need “living gurus” — who must play-act as sampradaya-gurus, successors of Krishna, even though materially contaminated. (“It will be to deceive the disciples…. Better not to break their faith.”)

In 1982 ISKCON’s GBC cast him aside. But they did not cast aside his teaching that we need “living gurus,” who must pose as successors of Krishna, even though materially contaminated. That teaching the “living gurus” have kept. That teaching they have enforced. And now in the 1990s, perhaps to uphold their own status, they are upholding the guru status of Sridhara Maharaja and Prabhupada’s other ‘guru’ Godbrothers.

Q. But in the spirit of [the interview with Narayana Mahara in] the ISKCON Journal shouldn’t we accept Srila Prabhupada’s Godbrothers as Acharyas, as “living gurus” as sampradaya-gurus, to keep the sampradaya going?

A. The sampradaya of Krishna through Brahma through to Srila Prabhupada will keep going. But those who accept impure people as sampradaya-gurus, deviate from the sampradaya. In a lecture on Chaitanya-charitamrita, recorded on 19 April 1967, Srila Prabhupada diagnoses the post-1936 Gaudiya Matha disease and post-1977 ISKCON: “Our Godbrother, Professor Sannyal…was doing very nicely as long as our spiritual master was present. But just after his departure, he became a party man, and he created havoc. But Guru Maharaja saved him — that he died very soon after his activities.

“There is this possibility, because in our mission, my spiritual master never designated anybody as acharya. He left advice that ‘You should work combinedly, and who is acharya — he will come out.’ But this man wanted to post one of his pet fellows on the acharya post, and the result was that the whole missionary activities were disturbed. He did not follow the instructions, and there was havoc. That havoc is possible.”

As Srila Prabhupada points out, his Gaudiya Matha Godbrothers disobeyed their spiritual master’s instruction about humble cooperation and tried to manufacture a new sampradaya-guru or -gurus. Naturally, they despised Srila Prabhupada for emerging successful and self-effulgent, without the rubber stamp of their “Acharya factory”. And naturally, they tried to check Srila Prabhupada, largely by infecting his disciples with their material impurity: “Why should Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati or Bhaktivedanta Swami be the only current link, the only sampradaya-guru? We may be materially contaminated, but still, we can be sampradaya-gurus.”

In a letter dated 30 September 1969, Prabhupada affirms about his “guru” Godbrothers, “Both the Bagh Bazaar party [of Sridhara Maharaja] and Mayapur party [of Tirtha Maharaja] have unlawfully usurped the missionary institution of Srila [Bhaktisiddhanta] Prabhupada…."

In a letter dated 14 September 1970, amid an early takeover attempt by his Godbrothers, Srila Prabhupada writes, “The four sannyasis [his disciples, contaminated by Madhava Maharaja, Tirtha Maharaja, and Bon Maharaja] may bark, but still the caravan will pass. There is every evidence that they are influenced by some of my fourth-class Godbrothers…. Try to convince these rascal sannyasis who are influenced by fourth-class men that if they at all want to have a change of leadership, why do they not select a better leader than at present moment. What is the use of finding out a fourth-class leader who has no asset as their background…. Ishan dasa has inquired from Tamal regarding Tirtha Maharaja. I do not know what is the sequence of this inquiry, but it is clear that there is a great clique…spreading contamination in our Society.”

In a letter dated 25 September 1970, Srila Prabhupada adds, “There is reference to Tirtha Maharaja’s name, as if they [some of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples] were advised…to come to India and join Tirtha Maharaja…. It is now clear that my Godbrothers take objection to my being called Prabhupada, and on this point they want to poison the whole Society…."

In a letter dated 18 November 1970, Srila Prabhupada cautions, “Regarding the Gaudiya Matha, our position is to have nothing to do with them. They cannot do anything, and if somebody does something, they will be envious. That is the nature of third-class men.”

And Srila Prabhupada noted on 2 December 1970, in a letter to Puri Maharaja, “Perhaps you are my only Godbrother who has appreciated my humble service to the cause of Guru Gauranga. All of my other Godbrothers are very much envious, as I can understand from their behavior.”

As Srila Prabhupada instructs in a letter dated 23 February 1971, “So far as cooperating with my Godbrothers is concerned, that is not very urgent business. So far until now my Godbrothers have regularly not cooperated with me, and by the grace of my Spiritual Master, things are still going ahead. So cooperation or non-cooperation, it is the desire of Bhaktivinoda Thakur to preach the Chaitanya cult all over the world, and in 1875 he predicted that someone would come very soon who would individually preach this cult all over the world…. My Guru Maharaja also wanted us to work together, but somehow or other it hasn’t happened up till now. So your program of cooperating with Madhava Maharaja is not so important.” Also, in March 1971, in Mayapur, Srila Prabhupada’s disciples heard him request ruefully, “You must guard me. My Godbrothers would very much like to see me killed.”

In a letter dated 20 August 1972, Srila Prabhupada writes, “All along I have been discouraged in every way by my Godbrothers, but still I have stuck to my duty, keeping my spiritual master always in front.” And in a letter dated 29 August 1972: “All along my Godbrothers gave me only depression, repression, compression — but I continued strong in my duty.”

In a letter dated 21 May 1973, Srila Prabhupada says of his Godbrothers, “They are simply inclined to criticize me, that my students call me Prabhupada. They could not do anything practical or tangible. They are satisfied with a temple and a few disciples begging alms…. So, we can understand that they have all become sudras. How can they have interest in Bhagavad Gita? Although some of them have been born in brahmana families, by quality they are all sudras.”

If only the ISKCON leaders deputed by Srila Prabhupada had stayed strong in their duty and had followed the instruction he gives in a letter dated 21 November 1972: “If you are serious about being an important assistant in our Society, you should fully engage yourself…. and do not mix yourself with my so-called Godbrothers. As there are in Vrndavana some residents like monkeys and hogs, similarly there are many rascals in the name of Vaishnavas; be careful of them. And do not dare to question impudently before your spiritual master.” Let us end the current era of impudence, of contamination. Let us start a new era of obedience, of cooperation — to bring fellow contaminated souls to Srila Prabhupada, Krishna’s true sampradaya-guru successor.
The Stages of Devotional Service

I. Bhajana-kriya

Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura describes two varieties of bhajana-kriya, or the performance of regulated devotional service to Krishna: 1. unsteady (anishthita) and 2. steady (nishthita). The steady (nishthita) stage follows anartha-nivritti. Both stages will be described shortly.

When the practitioner begins the process of devotional service his bhakti is anishthita, and this stage has six characteristics: 1. over-confidence (utsaha-mayi) 2. sporadic endeavor (ghana-tarala), 3. indecision (vyudha-vikalpa), 4. combat with maya (visaya-sangara), 5. inability to uphold vows (niyamashrama), and 6. enjoying the waves (taranga-rangini). These six are further described as follows:

Utsaha-mayi (over-confidence): As a child, having just begun study of the scriptures, thinks he has immediately become a great scholar worthy of everyone's praise, a person just beginning devotional service may develop the audacity to think that he has mastered everything. He is called utsaha-maya, or puffed-up with enthusiasm.

Ghana-tarala (sporadic endeavor): A child is diligently engaged in his studies, and yet at other times, because of his inability to understand the scriptures and because of lack of real taste, he becomes totally negligent. In the same way, a new devotee sometimes practices the different activities of devotional service and sometimes neglects them. Being sometimes assiduous and at other times negligent, his endeavor is called ghanataarala (condensed-dilute or thick-thin).

Vyudha-vikalpa (indecision): This state is characterized thus: "Shall I just spend my life happily in family life, making my wife and children Krishna conscious and worshiping the Lord; or should I give them all up and go to Vrndavana and become a real success by engaging full time in hearing and chanting, the more he is purified of material contamination. Liberation from material contamination is called anartha-nivrtti, indicating a diminishing of all unwanted things. This is the test of development in devotional service. If one actually develops the devotional attitude, he must be freed from the material contamination of illicit sex, intoxication, gambling and meat-eating. These are the preliminary symptoms. When one is freed from all material contamination, his firm faith [nishtha] awakens in devotional service." Thus, to be freed from the four sinful propensities is a preliminary feature of anartha-nivrtti, and when one is completely freed from all other material contamination he achieves the stage of nishtha.

I should die in that condition I will go to hell. From that type of renunciation I won't get any strength. Therefore, for the time being, I will just work to keep my body alive, and later, after satisfying all my desires, I will enter Vrndavana and engage in the worship of the Lord 24 hours a day. As the scriptures point out, it is wrong to think that bhakti arises from renunciation, but one can say that bhakti gives rise to renunciation, for renunciation is dependent on bhakti. But in the life of renun-
Anarthas Arising from Bhakti: Just as, along with the main plant, many weeds grow, along with bhakti there appears the acquisition of material wealth and other facilities, worship and respect from others, a comfortable position, name and fame, etc. By their very nature, they have the power to influence the heart of the devotee, grow in size and cover up the main plant intended for cultivation, the bhakti-lata.

The above four divisions are mentioned by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura. These four divisions of anarthas have five grades of eradication: i. limited (to one anartha), ii. pervasive (affecting many anarthas), iii. general, iv. complete and v. absolute.

Anarthas arising from nama-apuradh has are removed in the following stages. One should understand that the word ‘nullification’ (nivritti) applies not only to the complete absence of anarthas, but to any of the progressive stages of nullification as well. Thus with the performance of devotional activities (bhajana-kiyra) there is nullification but the eradication is limited. With the appearance of nishtha-bhakti, the eradication is pervasive. With the appearance of rati or bhava, the eradication is

II. Anartha-nivritti

After bhajana-kiyra comes anartha-nivritti, or clearing of bad qualities, which obstruct the progress of bhakti. Anarthas may be classified into four types according to origin: 1. those arising from previous sinful activity, 2. those arising from previous pious activity, 3. offenses against devotional service (seva- and nama-apuradha), and 4. those arising from bhakti (imperfectly performed).

Previous-sins-anarthas: arising from previous sinful activities fall in the category of five klesas (afflictions): ignorance, false ego, attachment, hatred and addiction to evil.

Pious-activity-anarthas: are the addictions to the results of pious action (sense enjoyment in the mode of goodness and mukti). Some people include the anarthas arising from pious activities under the five klesas (afflictions) category since the presence of sense enjoyment and liberation deprive a person of bhakti, and therefore prolong his existence in the material realm. Offenses Against Devotional Service: Those anarthas which arise from offense refers to those arising from the nama- and seva-apuradh. There are ten offenses against the holy name, and until one is cleared of these offenses and comes to the offenseless platform of chanting, he has not fully achieved the anartha-nivritti stage. Furthermore, there are thirty-two principal seva-apuradh ones commits while rendering service to the Deity which are listed in the Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu. These must also be avoided. Of the two, nama-apuradh is more serious, as seva-apuradh is generally cleared by constant service, by chanting the Holy Name and the recitation of various stotras. However, if one becomes careless and tries to take advantage of the above principle, then his seva-apuradh becomes nama-apuradh, an anartha which will obstruct progress. This amounts to committing sin on the strength of chanting. Sadhu- ninda, criticism of Vaishnavas, is an especially serious obstruction. One should also not mistakenly think that this only refers to liberated Vaishnavas. It refers also to sadhakas. If one commits this offense he is obligated to throw himself at the feet of that Vaishnava and beg his forgiveness and offer him all respect and service. If the Vaishnava is still not satisfied, he should remain ready to comply with every wish of that Vaishnava. If that Vaishnava is still not appeased, then one should give up everything and continuously chant the Holy Name. One cannot immediately take up constant chanting until he has first attempted to satisfy the offended Vaishnava in every way. All these efforts failing, one may then give up everything else and take up constant chanting. Eventually one will become free of the offense. Guror avajna, the third offense may be treated in the same way as sadhu-ninda. If one disrespects Vedic literature, then he must nullify the offense by praising the scriptures and the practitioners thereof and loud chanting of the Holy Name. Generally, nama-apuradh, even if longstanding, have been committed unconsciously. Their presence is inferred by the result: lack of advancement. The means of nullification of all offenses is ultimately constant chanting of the Holy Name.

Niyama-akshama (inability to uphold vows): Then the devotee will resolve: “From today I will chant such and such number of rounds of japa and will pay so many obeisances. And I will perform services for the devotees. I will not talk on any subject except the Lord, and I will give up all association with people who talk on material matters.” Though he makes such resolutions every day, he is always unable to execute them. This is called niyama-akshama, or inability to follow rules. Visaya-sangara is the inability to give up material enjoyment, whereas niyama-akshama is the inability to improve his devotional service.

Taranga-rangini (enjoying the waves): Finally, it is well-known that the very nature of bhakti is to be attractive — so all types of people become attracted to the devotee, the abode of bhakti. And as the popular saying goes, “By the attraction of respect from others, a comfortable position, name and fame, etc. By their very nature, they have the power to influence the heart of the devotee, grow in size and cover up the main plant intended for cultivation, the bhakti-lata.

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general. With the appearance of prema the eradication is complete. With the attainment of the Lord's lotus feet, the eradication is absolute.

The eradication of anarthas arising from previous sins is as follows: With the performance of bhajana-kriya, the eradication is general, with the appearance of nishta-bhakti, the eradication is complete, and with the appearance of asakti it is absolute.

The eradication of anarthas arising from bhakti is as follows: With the performance of bhajana-kriya, eradication is limited. With the appearance of nishta-bhakti it is complete and with the appearance of ruchi it is absolute.

III. Nishta-bhakti

srutatam sva kathah krishnah punya sravana kirtanah
hṛdy antah sīho hy abhadranī vidhunoti suhṛt satam
nasta prāyesv abhadresu nityma bhagavata sevaya
bhagavaty utama stoke bhaktir bhavati naishthikī

The first verse refers to the stage of anishtitha or unsteady bhakti, for in the next verse nishtithi bhakti is mentioned. In the first verse abhadraṇi vidhunoti (destruction of inauspicious elements) refers to the stage of anartha-nivṛtti. The words nasta prāya (almost destroyed) means that to a small degree the anarthas are still present. The proper order according to Srimad-Bhagavatam is therefore bhajana-kriya, anartha-nivṛtti, nishta. Nishta means the quality of steadiness. Though a person tries for steadiness every day while anarthas are still present, he will not attain steadiness. This is due to the persistent obstacles of laya (mental inactivity or sleep), vikṣeṣpa (restlessness), apratipatti (spiritual indifference), kasaya (sinful habits) and rasasvad (taste for material enjoyment). However, after the stage of anartha-nivṛtti, when all of these obstacles are almost completely destroyed, one achieves nishta bhakti. The symptom of steadiness is the absence of the above bad habits.

Laya (mental inactivity or sleep) refers to the tendency to sleep during kirtana, sravana (hearing) and smarana (remembering) (in order of increasing tendency). Vikṣeṣpa (restlessness) refers to affinity for material topics while performing kirtana, etc. Apratipatti (spiritual indifference) refers to the state of being unable to perform kirtana, etc. in spite of the absence of laya or vikṣeṣpa. Kasaya (sinful habits) means the tendency to indulge in anger, greed, pride and other unworthy habits. Rasasvad (taste for material enjoyment) refers to the inability to absorb the mind in kirtana when one gets the opportunity for mental sense pleasure. Nishta-bhakti appears in the absence of these faults.

tada rajas tamodbhavah kam lobhaydasya ca ye
ceta etair anaviddham sthitam satvate prasidati

At that time one is completely free from the influence of tama and raja guna, situated in satvata. Since all of the impurities are completely removed, however, only at the stage of bhava, this means that their slight presence does not act as an obstacle at the nishta stage.

Nishta-bhakti means steadiness of two types: with respect bhakti itself and with respect to elements favorable to bhakti. Steadiness in bhakti itself has three basic divisions, bodily, vocal and mental. According to some authorities, first one attains steadiness in bodily services, then in vocal activities (kirtana, etc.), and finally in mental activities (remembering, meditation). Others, however, disagree with this progression, saying that steadiness in a particular area will develop according to the individual abilities of the different devotees.

Steadiness in elements favorable to bhakti refers to steadiness in such qualities as humility and giving respect to others, friendliness and mercy. If one has actually achieved steadiness in bhakti (nishtha- or naishtiki-bhakti) the qualities of raja and tama guna are completely absent.

From this description and the descriptions in the writings of the Gosvamis, as well as Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, it is obvious that nishta-bhakti is an extraordinary, exalted condition not easily achieved. At this stage one is more or less liberated, as he is free of the influence of the lower modes and is fixed in spiritual consciousness: brahma-nisṭha, brahma-bhuta. This is confirmed in Srila Prabhupada’s purports to the verses from the first canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam, the same verses cited by Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura at the beginning of this section. From this fixed platform preceptorship may begin. Regarding the more advanced stages of madhya-advaita, here are some excerpts from Madhurya-kadambini:

IV. Ruchi

“When the golden coin of bhakti, shining effulgent in the fire of steady practice and propelled by its own energy, becomes fixed in the devotee’s heart, ruchi appears... When a person develops a taste for the activities of bhakti such as hearing and chanting, which is vastly greater than attraction to anything else, that is called ruchi. Unlike the previous stages, constant performance of hearing and chanting does not result in even the least fatigue... Ruchi is of two types: that which depends on excellence of elements, and that which does not... A person with the second type of ruchi will experience great pleasure wherever and whenever there is a performance of kirtana. He does not depend on excellence of the elements because he has actual depth of taste. He has no trace of impurity in his heart... the devotee will despair over his previous state of consciousness with disgust. Then, in a remote place, like a swan, he will begin tasting and reverently reciting the nectarean topics about the Lord, the juice from fruit from the desire tree, the mystic science of bhakti. He will converse constantly with devotees thereupon, to the exclusion of all other topics... He will take refuge in the Lord’s dāma and will fix himself purely in the Lord’s service. Ignorant people will think he is going crazy... he will experience an extraordinary, unimaginable bliss.”

V. Asakti

“After this, when the taste for bhajana reaches extreme depth, and Krishna becomes the very object of one’s devotional activities, that is called asakti or attachment. At the stage of asakti, the creeper of bhakti bears clusters of buds. These buds will in no time become flowers at the stage of bhava and then fruits at the stage of prema... Asakti polishes the mirror of the heart to such a condition that the Lord may suddenly be visible there. Before reaching the stage of asakti, the devotee, after realizing that his mind has been overpowered by material objects and desires, withdraws his mind and fixes it on the Lord’s form, qualities and activities by a deliberate effort. In the stage of asakti, however, absorption of the mind in the Lord is automatic, without effort. A devotee even at the stage of nishta-bhakti cannot prevent his mind from sometimes with-
drawing from the Lord and fixing itself on material affairs. A person at the stage of asakti, however, spontaneously draws his mind from material topics and absorbs itself in topics of the Lord. This latter quality is not seen in those who have not attained asakti (even those with ruchi)...

"When asked what ails him he will sometimes act like a mute, at other times he will feign normality. His friends will apologize, ‘He was alright before, but now his intelligence has become covered.’ Those neighbors unacquainted with him will conclude that he was an idiot from birth. The followers of Vedic ritual will consider him stupid. The impersonalists will consider him illusioned. The followers of pious activities will say he is fallen. The devotees will say he has acquired great fortune. And the offenders will say he is pretending.

“But the devotee, far from considerations of respect and disrespect, having fallen into the current of the great celestial river of attachment (asakti) to the Lord, will simply continue in the same manner.”

Thus, we have summarily presented the stages of advancement from bhajana-kriya to asakti, the levels comprising madhyama-adhikara. This encompasses the neophyte Vaishnava, who is struggling with anarthas, up to the liberated, ragunagya devotee who is experiencing asakti, who at times sees Krishna in the core of his heart and is never materially bewildered even for an instant. Our conclusion is reconfirmed that unless the madhyama-adhikari has come at least to the nishtha platform, and better still ruchi or asakti, he should not dare to take up the service of delivering others and being thus honored by the world with all of the dangers which attend such distinction. After all, from the unsteady platform, one can easily be bewildered by honor, material facilities, etc. and one can thus be conquered by various enemies like pride, anger, etc. and fall down to the kanistha platform or worse.

Far be it from the author to judge anyone’s devotion, for he knows himself to be riddled with anarthas and offensive tendencies. Nevertheless, it is one’s duty to judge the extent of one’s bhakti and thus ensure that proper progress is being made. Using the above description as a rule of thumb, perhaps those pondering, “To be or not to be guru” will have food for thought. It is true that a very advanced Vaishnava will not think himself advanced, yet when Krishna or His pure representative directly impel him, he will step forward and announce to the world that he is an Acharya and has come for the deliverance of the fallen. Such boldness is only legitimate, possible and practicable in one who has thus received an order from the Lord and His representative. As Srila Prabhupada succinctly put it in describing a God-brother, “On the whole, you may know that he is not a liberated person, and therefore, he cannot initiate any person into Krishna consciousness. It requires special benediction from higher authorities…” (SPL 68-4-18)

Thus, we see that the most humble and advanced Vaishnava, who would never dream of putting himself forward as advanced or important, may do so after receiving special benediction and direction from higher authorities, specifically the Supreme Lord and/or His pure representatives. This principle has been exhibited in the activities of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Srila Sarasvati Thakura, Srila Prabhupada, and many other great Acharyas of the past. The natural humility of such devotees is overcome by their desire to please the Lord just according to His dictation. In this way they become gurus or Acharyas. By dint of their actual qualifications and the personal dictation of the Lord, such devotees attempt to deliver others and not otherwise.

| Uttama Adhikara | Prema \ Full-blown love of God |
| Madhyama Adhikara | Bhava \ The dawning of true ecstasy |
|\ | Asakti \ Attachment to a particular rasa develops |
| \ | Ruchi \ A taste for devotional practices develops |
| \ | Nishtha \ Fixed devotion—preliminary liberation—one has minimum qualification to be guru |
| Kanishtha Adhikara | Anartha Nivritti \ Sinful tendencies gradually dwindle |
| \ | Bhajana Kriya \ Regulated devotional practice—and initiation |
| \ | Sadhu Sanga \ Association with devotees |
| \ | Sraddha \ Initial faith in Krishna is established |

Left: A diagramatic representation of the stages of devotional service. According to standard opinion one may be guru (if necessary) when he has attained to the platform of Nishtha-bhakti.
New Jaipur Regulations & Constitution

By the end of 1988 it had become clear that in order to insure the smooth running of the New Jaipur community devotees should be perfectly clear about the aims and workings of the community before committing themselves to joining it. Some devotees, for example, have a genuine difficulty in accepting their natural role in the Varnashram system, and would either be ill at ease in New Jaipur or, worse still, disruptive. There are also many aspects of Vedic life that are unfamiliar or even unacceptable to some devotees trained exclusively in the West, and perhaps in communities that are not particularly well up on the details of Vedic living. There have been one or two attempts to keep dogs as pets, for example, something unthinkable in Vedic civilisation!

Thus it was that Karnamrita was deputed to draft a Constitution and Regulations for New Jaipur just prior to his coming here to settle. Many of the clauses therein refer to normal Vaishnava practice, like observing the regulative principles and regularly attending the morning programme. It is amazing how often these basic rules are flouted these days in the Krishna Consciousness Movement, despite Srila Prabhupada having said that one is not his disciple if he does so. Other rules pertain to the implementation of Varnashram, a fairly novel attempt to the minds of devotees trained exclusively in the West, and perhaps in communities that are not particularly well up on the details of Vedic living. There have been one or two attempts to keep dogs as pets, for example, something unthinkable in Vedic civilisation!

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1

New Jaipur is established in accordance with the wishes of the Founder Acharya of ISKCON, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, as the residence of sober minded devotees of Lord Sri Krishna who are followers of His Divine Grace, where they may benefit from one another’s association and, by following the prescription of authorised scripture and the example of recognised Vaishnavas, advance happily in Krishna consciousness. It is, moreover, intended as a model for genuine Vedic communities based on bona fide scriptures and the teachings of Srila Prabhupada.

Entry into the New Jaipur community is open to all devotees of the above description who are willing to abide by the teachings of His Divine Grace and the regulations of New Jaipur as framed in consideration of the sacred teachings of His Divine Grace, the tenets of appropriate scriptures and the precedents of historical Vaishnavism. The said regulations are meant for the general well-being of community members and are in no way intended to infringe upon the rights of mature Vaishnavas who are able to properly regulate their lives. Thus no member of the community of any status whatsoever shall conduct himself so as to pressure, cajole, intimidate or chastise any other member except as permitted by the terms of the Constitution and Regulations of New Jaipur.

3

In recognition of the fact that pure devotional service is not easily achieved, and that spiritual advancement is of necessity attained by a gradual progress from the conditioned state, the devotees of New Jaipur agree to perform their practical service within the scope of the system of Daivi Varnashram, so that they may all be rightly situated in terms of work and spiritual status, and thus maintain themselves in a healthy physical, mental and spiritual condition.

4

All members of the New Jaipur community shall abide by the four regulative principles, viz. 1) No eating of meat, fish or eggs or any byproducts thereof; 2) No gambling; 3) No sexual indulgence, except for the procreation of children as per Srila Prabhupada’s instructions; 4) No taking of any intoxicating substances, as defined in Srila Prabhupada’s writings.

5

All members of the community shall, under normal circumstances, daily attend Mangal Arati, Tulasi Pooja, Bhagavatam Class and Guru Pooja in the community temple or other such designated place of worship of Lord Krishna, and chant sixteen rounds of Japa on japa-beads (Japa Mala). Attendance at the morning programme is required for children five years and upwards; the daily chanting of sixteen rounds is compulsory for all community members over sixteen years of age. The members of the community shall also endeavour to properly observe holy days, such as the appearance days of the Lord’s incarnations and His principal devotees, etc.

6

New Jaipur will be governed by a Chief Executive, beginning with Nityananda Dasa Adhikari, under the supervision and guidance of a Council of Brahmanas, and with the assistance and advice of an Executive Council of Kshatriyas.

7

In order to regularise the activities of the members of the New Jaipur community within the Daivi Varnashram institution, a Varnashram Council, comprising the Chief Executive, the Council of Brahmanas, and, where applicable, the parents of individuals, will direct devotees to perform the duties of a particular Varna according to their nature, and such individuals will agree to perform the duties of that Varna alone under all normal circumstances. The Swabhava (nature) of an individual will be the principal criterion in deciding his Varna, and whatever that Varna may be deemed to be, it shall in no way reflect upon his status as a Vaishnava as per his particular nature.
level of spiritual advancement. Members of the New Jaipur community will also give proper consideration to the judgement of the Varnashram Council with respect to their Ashram, especially with regards to adopting the orders of Vanaprastha and Sannyasa.

Married women will be deemed, under normal circumstances, to belong to the same Varna as their husbands, and should make all reasonable efforts to conform to the Swabhava (nature) of their spouses. However, if it is deemed unreasonable by the Varnashram Council for a particular married woman to perform duties that are fundamentally opposed to her swabhava, then she may be engaged in appropriate duties with the consent of her husband. In the case of unmarried girls, they generally will be deemed to belong to the same Varna as their parents, though parents of unmarried girls may take recourse to the Varnashram Council where there exists serious doubt in that regard when they reach marriageable age.

All boys, when they attain to their fifteenth year or thereabouts, shall be submitted to the Varnashram Council as above constituted, and it shall be decided whether they may be designated as belonging to the same Varna as their fathers. If any boy is deemed to belong to a lower Varna than his father, he shall be given two years grace by the Varnashram Council in which to raise himself to the same Varna as his father. At the end of that period he shall again be assessed and designated as belonging to that higher Varna. If, at the first assessment, any boy is deemed to have a higher Varna than his father he will be designated as belonging to that higher Varna. When assessment has been finalized boys' parents should arrange for their sons to be given appropriate Samskaras, including marriage where appropriate. This arrangement shall not preclude earlier training in the duties of the four varnas where appropriate.

The Chief Executive will be responsible, either personally, or through the agency of qualified deputees, for: [sub-clauses 1] and 2) to be ratified 3) filling and augmenting the coffers of New Jaipur, or at the very least maintaining a contingency fund adequate to any emergency that may arise, thereby ensuring the economic well-being of the community 4) ensuring that the essential physical needs of the members of the community, both human and non-human, are met 5) upholding the rule of law according to both authorised scriptures such as Manu Smriti, and the government of the United States of America, with the administering of appropriate correction where necessary 6) settling disputes between the members of the community...

The Chief Executive alone may own land within the boundaries of New Jaipur, and he shall grant portions of that land, in consultation with the Council of Brahmanas, to the members of the community for the duration of their lives, or until the terms of the Life Estate Grant are deemed to have been contravened. The amount of land granted and the location of said land shall be determined according to the Varna of the grantee. Such land shall be granted as a Life Estate, and registered according to the appropriate legal codes, and at no time shall such land be resumed by the Chief Executive without the grantee having first committed some serious breach of the New Jaipur Regulations or other terms of the Life Estate Grant. Such resumption of estates shall only be enacted with the agreement of the Council of Brahmanas and the Executive Council.

The Council of Brahmanas shall be responsible for the following matters: 1) Advising the Chief Executive in all matters pertaining to the governing and development of New Jaipur and to the spiritual practices and social customs of its members; 2) Overseeing the running of the New Jaipur Gurukula and Varnashram College; 3) Overseeing the observance of sacred festivals, the performance of sacrifices and sanskaras, and the worship of the Archa Vigraha of Sri Krishna in the community temple or other designated places of worship; 4) Ensuring that scriptural classes and the opinions publicly espoused by members of the community are philosophically sound; 5) Advising members of the community in spiritual matters and on the performance of their occupational duties where applicable; 6) Inspecting all literature to be published under the aegis of the Chief Executive and ensuring it is philosophically and factually correct.

All members of the community who are designated as Vaisya will render up to 25% of their income or produce to the Chief Executive as tax according to their means and the judgement of the Chief Executive, and members designated as Sudra will do so at the discretion of the Chief Executive up to 25%. Kshatriyas will render "tribute" according to mutual arrangement or treaty with the Chief Executive. Brahmanas shall neither be taxed nor subject to any levy. All taxes collected and the uses to which they are put shall be recorded by the Chief Executive or his Treasurer or other such deputy in their entirety and he shall at once make such records available for the scrutiny of the Council of Brahmanas if they deem it necessary. The Chief Executive may waive or reduce taxes upon any individual if severe want arises on the part of that individual.

No person(s) or body, having either official or unofficial status of any sort whatsoever, shall in any way be permitted to interfere with the governing of the New Jaipur community, or take possession of any of the land and structures comprising New Jaipur, or the funds thereof, except within the bounds of United States statute, if such action be against the wishes of the ruling councils of New Jaipur and the will and best interests of the members of the community.

Parents shall be responsible for the decorous behaviour of their teenage children such that such children will under no circumstances freely associate with persons of the opposite sex unless they are expected to be married, and then only under the strictest supervision.
Great ISKCON Bulletin Board

Compiled by Nityananda dasa

This regular column will serve to bring news of devotees and their devotional service, preaching work, and spiritual programs, the news of which may not be found elsewhere and can be described as taking place in the Greater ISKCON. There are many devotees in and out of the official GBC ISKCON, and they all deserve the association and support of their Godbrothers and Godsisters. May Lord Chaitanya’s movement and Srila Prabhupada’s followers reach every village and cow crossing in the world!

Friends of Lord Krishna
14346 Knobcone Drive
Penn Valley, CA 95946
916 432-2173 attn: Gopala dasa

Things have been happening up here in Nevada County since a temple and farm project were established in the mid seventies. They didn’t last, but Prabhupada’s mission here is still very much alive. A regular Sunday Feast program and special festivals are celebrated on a rotating basis at the homes of local established devotees. An evening Bhagavad Gita class is held every Tuesday evening downtown at the Learning Center. Over the years many advanced devotees have graced us with their association and public events of all varieties have been successfully put on for the upliftment of our community, a rural group of 7 families, each self-sufficient and living independently of each other. Persons looking to raise their family and consciousness in an independent manner and yet maintain some nice association may please contact us.

INDIA VILLAGE PREACHING TOUR
Attn: Bhakti Vikas Swami
ISKCON Bombay, India

Bhakti Vikas Swami has written to VVR requesting that we announce his definite unchangeable plans for raising funds to purchase a Toyota Bus to preach in the villages and Indian hinterlands. The bus is already outfitted for travelling and preaching. At last report, Maharaja had collected $8,000 and needs only $6,000 more. Anyone caring to contribute to this fine cause may send their donation care of Bhakti Vikas Swami, 305 Schermerhorn, Brooklyn, NY 11217. Srila Prabhupada emphasized many times the powerful results of preaching in India’s villages.

NEW BRAJAMANDALA FARM COMMUNITY
Brihuega, Guadalajara, Spain

Divya Deha Prabhu writes that Prahlada dasa and his wife Manishi dasi teach English and Hatha Yoga in a village a few miles from the farm. The local people appreciate his hospitality as he cooks for anyone who comes to see him. They have 3 children, educated at home, and now another devotee family has moved there to build their house. Their small center is called Atreya Rishi Ashram.

PRABHUPADA SANKIRTAN CENTER
154 West 27th Street, Suite 2 East
New York, NY 10001 (Manhattan)
Attn: Kapindra dasa

After 4 years of struggling in Manhattan, Kapindra and a few other devotees have finally managed to secure a permanent temple. Facilities include a large temple, kitchen and bathrooms, offices and living quarters. After many years Srila Prabhupada once again is represented in the world’s most important metropolis: Manhattan. Membership is growing amongst outside devotees and Hindus, and Kapindra Prabhu is appealing for financial support from anyone able to help. Rent is $2500 per month; please send a dollar or two whenever possible. Surely Srila Prabhupada is pleased that the devotees have re-established a center in downtown New York! New Jaipur sends $25 a month (not a whole lot but symbolic nevertheless)

IS COWP
PO Box 363, Port Royal, PA 17082
Balabhadra Prabhu and family came through New Jaipur in May with his big bus and attached trailer with two huge Brown Swiss oxen. He is touring the country, preaching Krishna consciousness and cow protection. After many years of working directly with ISKCON temples, Balabhadra now has started his own program of delivering the message of Godhead. This is a very impressive display of real responsibility to Prabhupada’s mission; make it happen yourself. International Society for Cow Protection is a non profit ISKCON type society promoting membership for the nominal annual fee of $15. Readers, this is something you can help with. Send for a free information packet and consider this very worthy cause. Out of the $15 fee, $5 goes to buy land for protected cows. Everyone in New Jaipur became members, and I pledged $25 a month. Check it out!

Puranjana & Jagajjivan Prabhus
47 Lafayette Circle #221, Lafayette, CA 94549

These two devotees are trying to establish a new center in the area between Berkeley and Sacramento, where a number of devotees now reside. Anyone living in this area may contact them at the above address. They have been in contact with Dr Stillson Judah, who wrote “The Hare Krishnas and the Counterculture” in the mid 1970’s. Dr Judah is now very ill with terminal cancer, and we are sure that he would love to hear from his many devotee friends around the world. Dr Judah was much appreciated by Srila Prabhupada for his work to increase acceptance of the Hare Krishna movement in the West.

Vishnumurti Prabhu
PO Box 351, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 1SW, England

For a number of years now, Vishnumurti Prabhu has been travelling around Europe in search of devotees living on the “outside”. He has developed a regular circuit of hundreds of families, to whom he preaches and distributes books, and who he helps with their spiritual programs. He encourages his contacts to gather with other devotees in their area for programs, feasts and association. He is reaching and supporting devotees who might otherwise have been forgotten or lost. Vishnumurti Prabhu searches out devotees like a detective, and then offers his spiritual services in a way no one can refuse. If you know any “lost” devotees in Europe, please send the information in to this wonderful devotee.
George Martis, Braamberg 45, 2905 BK
Capelle a/d Yssel, Holland

Bhakta George wrote that he and 18 other devotees in Rotterdam are now establishing a new center in this large port city. They are distributing Prabhupada's books, having chanting parties and prasadam programs. Someone has offered $50,000 towards a temple building.

HARE KRISHNA CULTURAL CENTER
49, Kiekenmarkstraat, Brussells 1000, Belgium

Rasananda Prabhu wrote about their established temple with daily lunch club program and nightly Food for Life program feeding the poor. There is a shortage of trained devotees here, and Rasananda is inviting inquiries about participation in the Belgian preaching.

VVR OFFERS COMPUTER SERVICE

If you are out somewhere without devotee association, or wondering what other devotees may be in your area, VVR will help you find them. We can give a list of devotees in your area, so you can try to organize feasts, kirtans, festival observances or just simple association and friendship with Lord Krishna's servants. For example, we noticed we had two Vedic River customers in the same town, and they didn't know about each other. Now they are working together on several projects in Krishna consciousness.

BHAKTIVEDANTA DIFFUSION
Toulouse, France

Vrishakriti Prabhu left official ISKCON just before the fall of the "Sun King" in 1986. Several families in his area are trying to develop means to support themselves and share each other's Krishna conscious association. Bhaktivedanta Diffusion is a mail order service, on a smaller scale than Vedic River, to supply French friends of Lord Krishna with transcendental supplies and books.

ISKCON SCHOOL
192 Lenox, Detroit, MI 48215

Urmila Devi, with support from her businessman husband, runs a true blue, strict Prabhupada-style gurukula on the Detroit's Fisher Mansion grounds. Her school is independent of temple management, and it is managed very well. If anyone is wondering where there may be a good gurukula in the USA, here is one. She and husband Pratyatothasa dasa just built and moved into a new schoolhouse adequate for 40 students. Check it out!

Gopavindapala & Mulaprakriti dasi
1950 Willow Heights, Aptos, CA 95003

This Vaishnava family has been developing a devotional retreat in the Santa Cruz mountains for many years. They are interested in offering another devotee family, with a daughter 9 to 12 years of age, the facility of an extra house for unspecified terms. Home schooling is in development. Inquire above.

ISKCON TRINIDAD
Edinburgh Rd, Longdenville, Chaguanas,
Trinidad, West Indies

Three sincere, hard working devotees, Krishna Sarana, Adi-

purusha and Haridasa Thakura Prabhus, wrote to VVR requesting help from the devotee community. This temple has large installed Radha Krishna deities, a large Hindu community, a dozen cows, 11 devotees and a mortgage which is not large but a great burden. Without help, Trinidad will lose its temple building. The GBC has not been able to help. One US dollar goes a LONG WAY down there. Send US Postal Money Orders for $1.00 or more (whatever you can spare) to these struggling devotees at this critical time. There are many temples to save nowadays, but let's include this one too. Send something today, please!!

SEATTLE ISKCON RESURRECTED

Last year the Seattle temple moved out of the city to Issaquah, an hour out of town. Now a group of devotees have rented a second and bigger hall to carry on their program of classes and Sunday feasts. About 30 to 50 guests are coming regularly, and new devotees are joining. Gauridasa Pandita dasa is trying to preach a little while others debate the guru issue, and is feeling blissful for it, he says.

New Jaipur NEWS

Karnamrita Prabhu's first volume of the "Ramayana" is ready for printing, and "Living Still in Sound", an anthology of essays about Guru-Tattva, is printed and selling well at the low low price of $5.95. Karnamrita Prabhu is polishing Volume 3 of the "Lives of the Acharyas" series, covering both Gaura Kishora dasa Babaji and Jagannatha dasa Babaji. A two volume edition of Bhaktivinoda's complete song books will be sent to the printer soon. A condensed version of Mahabharta is being edited on the computer and is expected to be out in a three volume set by the end of the year.

The other New Jaipur programs and activities are all progressing well; Sri Sri Radha Govinda Temple, Vedic Village Gurukula, cow protection, ox training, devotee housing construction, ancient east meets old south Gloucester Tour Mansion (including cooking classes), Victorian Empire and Second Empire antiques stores, Govinda's Health Foods store, Vedic River Devotional Supplies mail order business, brahminical research and writing, and of course the Vedic Village Review.

The Festival of India passed thru on the way to Atlanta, and there were some nice meetings, kirtans and talks. Dhanurdrhara Swami and "bear-hug" Ayodhyapati Prabhu came to visit, as Maharaja has done the last three years. Balabhadra Prabhu came to visit with his bus and travelling oxen show. Vichitravasini dasi stopped by for a few months to pioneer the bake program for Govinda's.

Six adults and six Gurukula children went to the opening of the Jackson Mississippi Hindu Temple. The children chanted Gita verses, prasadam was distributed, kirtan held and new friends made. A regular program of Harinama Sankirtan for struggling devotees at this critical time. There are many temples to save nowadays, but let's include this one too. Send something today, please!!

Gloucester Vedic Cultural Museum had an excellent Spring Pilgrimage season, with more visitors than last year. About 10,000 should sign the guest book for 1990. The museum includes a tour of the 1799 brick mansion as well as the Vedic sanctuary (temple) with Vedic exhibits, like palm leaf books and medieval Vedic art, and culminates with Srila Prabhupada's quarters, the Bhaktivedanta Memorial Shrine. Everyone is very respectful to Prabhupada and they are impressed with the displays and memorabilia showing His Divine
Notes in Response Part II

by Yasodanandana dasa

This article is a response to certain allegations made by His Holiness Tamala Krishna Gosvami in the inaugural issue of the ISKCON Journal, Vol.I, No.1.

TKG: I do recall meeting Yasodanandan and showing him the list.

YND: On the 10th of July, 1977, at 9:25 A.M., H.H. Tamala Krishna Gosvami showed me the original letter of July 9th signed by Srila Prabhupada in the [bottom] left-hand corner. It was not merely a list.

TKG: ... but I could never have stated that Prabhupada wanted the ritviks to continue after he departed. Why would I have said such a thing when His Divine Grace never made mention of it?

YND: I hereby reconfirm my statement in VVR 11 that TKG did personally tell me that the ritviks would continue as such after Srila Prabhupada’s departure.

YND: And when Prabhupada departs?

TKG: They’ll be ritviks. That’s what Prabhupada said. It’s all on tape.

It should be pointed out for the benefit of the readers of VVR that the above statements are not the product of a thirteen year old memory. They have been reported from a diary which I kept, and the entries were made immediately following the conversation.

TKG: How could Yasodanandan Prabhu ever have imagined hearing such a thing?

YND: These statements are not imaginary. The are the actual words of H.H. Tamala Krshna Gosvami on the above-mentioned date. (See the complete text of that conversation at the end of this article.) It is interesting to note that H.H. is making his statements on the basis of a 13 year-old memory with the accompanying defects suggested by Jayadvaita Swami at the San Diego meeting at the beginning of January, 1990.

TKG: He was visibly disappointed. I think he expected that his name should have also been included in the list. It was widely known among the devotees in Vrindavan that he was upset about not being included...

YND: Again, another hazy memory from 13 years back. I hereby deny any expression of disappointment. This is pure speculation on his part. It was known to numerous devotees present in Vrindavan that I was actively engaged in the duty personally entrusted to me by Srila Prabhupada in 1976: to be engaged in teaching and training the gurukula students. I was satisfied with this order, and I was not disappointed.

TKG: In fact, after Srila Prabhupada’s departure, he actively canvassed among GBC men that he should be allowed to initiate students in our Vrindavan Gurukula where he was teaching.

YND: I did canvass members of the GBC in connection with the initiation topic. I approached them for clarification on what policies should be observed for Prabhupada’s Vrindavan Gurukula regarding student initiations. A policy paper was then later circulated among the teachers regarding the school’s initiation policy, which was the result of my discussions with the said GBC men and the teachers. I still have a copy of it, and it clearly refutes the allegations of H.H. I also actively canvassed many members of the GBC for proper funding and help for the gurukula. I received much lip-service but little concrete support. It seems that the priorities of our leadership at the time were somewhat distorted. What’s more, any confusion on my part about whether the gurus were meant to be Acharyas was fostered by the secrecy surrounding the “appointment tapes”. Most of the devotees, myself included, never heard these unreleased tapes nor heard any serious discussion of them. In the meanwhile, the “appointed guru” philosophy was the prevailing party line. Therefore, if anyone concluded that the system for carrying on the disciplic succession was as the GBC propagated it, whose fault was that?

TKG: ... You can interview so many persons who knew Yasodanandan Prabhu at that time, and I am sure they will attest to the fact that he never brought up the issue about ritvik...

YND: I have covered all of this in Notes in Response in VVR 12. I refer the reader to that. In short, I brought up the ritvik issue, as well as numerous other aspects of guru-tattva with TKG, Bhagavan, Bhavananda, Hari Sauri and Jayapataka in Vrindavan in August, 1978— I clearly argued to them that they had been appointed ritviks not the Acharyas of ISKCON, and that clarification of their actual position should be determined through thorough research and discussion. TKG said that it would be discussed later by the GBC. It wasn’t. In December of 1978 I went to Sriidhara Maharaja, and he attempted to contact TKG for discussion on Prabhupada’s actual words and intentions regarding disciplic succession, as documented in...
TKG: This is a new thing, and if, in fact, he actually heard of it way back in 1977, I don't know why it has taken him 13 years to come out with it.

YND: H.H. is respectfully referred to my article in VVR 12 entitled Notes In Response. I will state in quick review that I repeatedly attempted to bring many areas of guru-tattva, as well as the ritvik issue, to the point of serious discussion from 1977-79. After that, the atmosphere in ISKCON was not very conducive to serious discussion on the topic for many years, and I was living outside working at a regular job. My original notes and papers were stored in the homes of devotees in various distant cities during most of this time, and it was only very recently that I recovered all of them, including the diary notes that I originally cited in VVR 11. It may be questioned in turn that if the regular guru system was clearly and obviously what Srila Prabhupada wanted for this movement all along, then what took the GBC 13 years to come out with that?

TKG: Personally, I am very sorry...I have written personal letters of apology to both Pradyumna and Yasodanandana, although they have not given any response...

YND: With all due respect to H.H., I did receive an unsigned letter supposedly from him, so I'm not quite certain whether or not it was. I also sent him a letter in April, 1979, to the St. Louis Temple, mailed from the Bangalore G.P.O. The contents dealt with various statements and other matters which had transpired in 1978 in Mayapura, as well as in August of 1978 in Vrindaban, and which included numerous other statements made by H.H. and some of his then associates. I never received a reply to that letter. I am still hoping for an answer to that. As for the apologies and expressions of sympathy apparently made by H.H. as well as other GBC subsequently, the underlying feeling is nice. However, I don't consider it appropriate for me to accept these apologies until public apologies are expressed to all the disciples of Srila Prabhupada who were driven away, insulted and discouraged by the unauthorized imitation of Srila Prabhupada. Frankly, I also truly feel that even if such apologies are made, trust and integrity will not be restored to this movement until the unrepentant architects, masterminds and imitators of the greatest Vaishnava preacher in living history have resigned from their positions as GBC and have made a verifiable effort to atone for the disturbance they have created to the unified preaching of this movement.

Regarding Pradyumna Prabhu: I doubt very much that my Godbrother would approve of the kind of abusive, offensive language indulged in by the various contributors to the ISKCON Journal, Vol. 1, No. 1. I remain unconvinced that Sriman Pradyumna Prabhu would agree with most of the philosophical positions espoused, preached, institutionalized and many times enforced by the GBC. As a matter of fact, in a recent conversation with him, he informed me that he did know Gauridasa Pandita, that he was not interviewed by the ISKCON Journal and that he does not agree with the GBC's ideas about disciplic succession. I am truly saddened to see the unconscionable manner in which the editors and writers of the ISKCON Journal have chosen to deal with this issue. It seems to be a mixture of paranoia, neo-evangelical Christian mentality and the skeletal remains of the "might is right" philosophy of the first thirteen years since Prabhupada's return to Goloka.

Yasodanandana dasa's 1977 Diary: Excerpt

THIS is a true copy of two pages of the diary of Yasodanandana Prabhu, written on lined Indian paper in pencil. The original is faint, readable, but difficult to reproduce. Anyone who want copies of the original can contact the VVR staff.

9th July
Prabhupada's health still vacillates between improvement and --
But He is always in transcendence: sa gunan samatiyaat
4:22 P.M. I hear from Tamal Krishna Maharaja in the afternoon that Srila Prabhupada had told him to send a letter to "all the temples" "to explain the ritvik initiation system for the future." I asked him to show me the letter as soon as he would have it. He said, "I'll definitely show it to you." Haribol. He then returned inside.

10th July
9:25 A.M. Tamal Krishna Maharaja comes out of Prabhupada's room (I'm coming from the Gurukula) near the garden.

TKG: Haribol. Yasoda, did you see this?

YNS: No, what is it?

TKG: This is signed by Prabhupada. (He pointed to Srila Prabhupada's signature in the left hand bottom corner. I read the entire letter and then asked him.)

YNS: What does all of this mean?

TKG: Devotees have been writing to Prabhupada asking for initiation, and now Prabhupada has named eleven ritviks who can initiate on his behalf. Prabhupada said that others can be added.

YNS: And when Prabhupada departs?

TKG: They'll be ritviks. That's what Prabhupada said. It's all on tape.

Haribol. I had to return to the Gurukula deeply thinking of the meaning of the conversation with Maharaja.
## Measures for the Rectification of the GBC

**by Yasodanandana dasa Adhikari**

1. Public, open apologies should be made to all of Srila Prabhupada's disciples and grand-disciples (or initiates, depending on one's viewpoint) by the remaining "acharyas" and GBC men (1978-1987) for their participation, either directly or indirectly, in the unauthorized attempt to occupy Srila Prabhupada's unrivaled, supreme position as the predominant acharya of his movement, as well as the institutionalization of the zonal acharya and appointed diksha-guru hoax, which clearly deviated from Srila Prabhupada's teachings.

2. Immediate, unconditional surrender and resignation of the remaining gurus of the original eleven and pre-1987 members of the GBC for their participation in and the aiding and abetting of the above deviation.

3. An immediate moratorium on any initiations in ISKCON for at least one year until the proper understanding of guru-tattva is fully and conclusively established through an exhaustive compilation and analysis of Srila Prabhupada's statements on all aspects of the topic.

4. Establishment of an independent, impartial, brahminical research committee to fully investigate the above, as well as all pertinent discussions, statements, tapes, incidents, etc. prior to Prabhupada's departure.

5. A full review of all official GBC position papers from 1977 up to the present and a critical analysis to determine whether the views of the GBC on guru-tattva have been consistent and fully in accordance with guru, sadhu and sastra.

6. An exhaustive compilation and analysis of all of Srila Prabhupada's statements about the function, position, authority, etc. of the GBC.

7. The results of #3, 5 and 6 should be published and widely circulated to all members of the Society.

8. The GBC should publicly admit the error of the various unauthorized guru-tattva theories of the last 13 years:
   a. the successor acharya theory
   b. the appointed diksha-guru theory
   c. zonal acharya theory
   d. the current rubber-stamp approval system
   e. the still unproven re-initiation theory.

9. A moratorium on any new publications or personal writings of any ISKCON guru until all of Srila Prabhupada's lectures have been published. If there are funds for their books, then why are there no funds for Srila Prabhupada's complete lecture series (what to speak of his books that are out of print)?

## A Vyasa-puja Offering to Srila Prabhupada

**by Bhakttilata devi dasi**

DEAR Srila Prabhupada, please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet. I was always wondering what you meant by saying you never felt separation from your Guru Maharaja, but on this day of your disappearance I realize a little bit that the departure of liberated souls is only a pastime. In your own words, "He lives forever in his divine instructions and his followers live with him." Being extremely merciful, you give shelter to whoever takes your instructions to heart and follows them truly. Such a sincere follower is your bona fide disciple. For a long time I used to think that I was initiated by someone else, but because in my heart I was more inclined to Your Divine Grace I could somehow be considered your disciple. And this very thought was followed by shame, doubt and fear of "jumping over". But now, through the merciful researches of your honest servants, I realize that I have been initiated by you from the very beginning of my spiritual life. And you have accepted me as your disciple by appointing rtvik-acharyas to link me to your lotus feet. And by this wonderful arrangement, you make possible the injunction of the scriptures that one must accept an uttama-adhikari as spiritual master.

Some devotees have had the great fortune to be initiated by you in your very presence. Others received initiation through the medium of your letters, and they were still very fortunate. They are not, at any moment, to be considered second-class disciples. Yet others were initiated by you through the medium of rtvrik-acharyas that you so kindly appointed in order to keep the path open after your so-called disappearance. And these disciples cannot be considered less initiated by you than those who received initiation by letters or fire sacrifice.

I feel like a lost child who just opened her eyes and found that her real father was right by her side the whole time. I do not decry others for the marvelous service they render to Lord Krishna, but I am very much enthused to be the disciple of such an exalted personality as you. It is just like having spiritual insurance against the fire of material existence. I am conscious that you did your part to save the souls of Kali-yuga. And even in your physical absence, you gave us so many books, videos, lecture tapes and instructions where your transcendental presence can be felt by any willing disciple. My part now is to do the needful and not to be a disciple in name only. I must be obedient and take advantage of your association and teachings, and in this way become purified, so that one day I can be fit to serve you and Lord Krishna with body, mind and words.

I thank you so much for having given us the path of bhakti-yoga in such a simple way, so that even unintelligent beings like me can understand it and try to execute it. I beg to be able to perceive your presence at every moment of my life and to be useful in any way you desire.
The Descent of Krishna’s Mercy

by Harinama dasa, Hawaii

EVERY devotee must know how Krishna, the Supreme Absolute Truth, manifests Himself to the conditioned souls in the material world in order to understand the absolute and transcendental nature of the bona fide spiritual master, who like Krishna is also inconceivable to the empiric mind. This is my humble attempt to relate what little I have learned on this subject from Srila Prabhupada.

Krishna is sometimes called Advaita-jnana or “Absolute Knowledge”. This knowledge, which consists of Krishna’s infinite glories (SB 1.5.22), descends to this material world through transcendental sound, beginning from the voice of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself (SB 1.5.38, 2.9.6), throughout history through the lips of His pure devotees and Incarnations. For facilitating the continual propagation of these sounds, they are also written down in symbols in Sanskrit and other languages. Thus the written symbolic sounds and meaning of the book Bhagavata and the spoken sounds and meaning of the devotee bhagavata are identical.

For the above reason, either the pure devotee bhagavata or the book Bhagavata are for attaining the highest perfection of spiritual life. However, it is far easier for the conditioned souls to make spiritual advancement by inquiring from the pure devotee bhagavata, because answers to specific philosophical questions are given immediately. Whereas, if one consults only the book Bhagavata, one has to first know what question to ask, which in itself is quite difficult for the fallen conditioned souls. Furthermore, after knowing what question to ask one has to then scrutinize all the books on Bhagavata dharma for the correct answer, mainly from the 18,000 verses of the Srimad Bhagavatam.

Clearly, this is quite an impossibility for the ordinary conditioned souls whose senses and mind are exclusively limited to the material nature. For this reason, it is clear that the pure devotee bhagavata is more merciful to the conditioned souls than the book bhagavata, although they are transcendentally non-different. To emphasize this, Lord Chaitanya Himself pretended to be an ordinary man not qualified to study Vedanta philosophy, in order to teach us the importance of simply hearing and chanting the transcendental sounds of Krishna’s glories among pure devotees.

The real benefit of the book Bhagavata is that it is the best media in which to preserve the knowledge of the transcendental sounds and their meaning, in the absence of the person bhagavata. Therefore, anytime there is doubt as to the embodied presence of a pure devotee bhagavata, the book Bhagavata or instruction form of Krishna and His pure devotees naturally become all-important. Furthermore, after the disappearance of the mahabhagavata, pure devotee, it is only natural for the last known mahabhagavata pure devotee to be glorified until another one manifests.

According to one’s surrender to the glories of Krishna either in written or spoken form, one realizes a proportionate amount of knowledge of Krishna (Gita 4.11). The pure devotee is therefore one who is fully self-realized in the science of Krishna Consciousness due to his full surrender to the revealed knowledge of Krishna. Consequently, he is fixed in the essence of knowledge of the Supreme Absolute Truth. This undeviating quality from the knowledge of the previous pure devotee also makes him a pure and potent representative of Krishna, capable of removing all illusion from any sincere soul by defeating any doubts to Krishna’s supremacy and bestowing pure devotional service to Krishna.

This receiving of the knowledge of Krishna is not done by popular vote or any other rubber-stamp process. It is done only through full surrender to the knowledge from the pure devotee of Krishna (vapu) or the book Bhagavata (vani). Thus complete knowledge of the Supreme Absolute Truth, Krishna, the highest good, is the only proof of the mercy of Krishna or God. No other criteria can be applied, not formal initiation, not brahmthread, not sannyasa, nor any number of disciples, lavish temples, or huge sacrifices (CC Madhya 6.89, Gita 4.36-39).

The idea of selecting an absolute successor(s) to a departed guru is erroneous because the pure devotee is not attained by popular votes but by surrender alone to the instructions of the previous pure devotee. Thus pure devotional service is ultimately allowed when Krishna Himself is pleased with the surrender of His devotee.

The best solution to this problem is to continue to follow the instructions of our disciplic succession and our spiritual master, which is to always initiate disciples on behalf of the previous guru. If one wants to be worshipped by everyone on the level of the mahabhagavata guru, then one must leave one’s spiritual master’s temple, and go out and initiate one’s own disciples and establish one’s own temples, just as the mahabhagavata acharyas have always done. Otherwise, there will be inevitable corruption due to the offences to the previous spiritual master in wanting to be worshipped on the same level as him in his temples among his disciples. This is strictly forbidden. But we especially in the west do not understand this very important Vaishnava etiquette and tradition, which is only perceived in proportion to the level of one’s transcendental realization.

Comment, Kamamrita dasa:

The only problem we have with this pleasantly lucid essay is with the contents of the final paragraph. Firstly, why would a mahabhagavata wish to be worshipped as such unless he is ordered by Krishna to accept such worship? Such a person, being ordered by the Supreme Lord Himself, would obviously be worthy of adoration, even though the mahabhagavata generally sees himself as the most fallen and does all he can to avoid being worshipped.

It seems that in ISKCON the worship of Srila Prabhupada (in both his vapu and vani forms) is sufficient to provide the direct association of a mahabhagavata at any rate. Thus, assuming that ISKCON will continue in its present form, it is unlikely that Krishna would so order. Secondly, if one wished to be worshipped as a mahabhagavata and he was not at that standard of devotion, then one would have to say that he was in some kind of illusion. Under the circumstances, should he be encouraged to begin his own mission?

Perhaps Harinama Prabhu has not expressed himself as clearly as he would wish in his closing remarks. We will be delighted to publish any clarification he might like to make in the future.
Attending Mangala-arati

from an ISKCON sannyasi

We recently received a letter from a leading sannyasi requesting us to publish his research into the importance of attending mangala-arati and the morning program in general: "I am writing concerning a great anxiety that I have about ISKCON and many of its members. Many members of ISKCON including some of the 'leaders' neglect to regularly attend the morning programs in the temple. I have done some research into the importance which Srila Prabhupada gave to the morning program. I was surprised that in his letters Srila Prabhupada gave the same priority to mangala-arati that he gave to the rounds and principles. There is a tendency amongst many older devotees to relegate mangala-arati and the morning program to an optional status, using excuses of work, family life, health, etc. to justify their behaviour...I humbly request you to make this one of your missions: that is, to reveal to the devote community worldwide Srila Prabhupada's opinion about the morning program, just as you have taken the lead in the quest for the truth in the 'guru' issue.

"Our movement can only be strong when its members are spiritually fit. The very spiritual foundation of ISKCON is threatened by this disobedience of Srila Prabhupada's orders. Of course, as you know, for one to consider himself a disciple, he must follow all the orders of the spiritual master. So let us embark upon this great mission of stressing Srila Prabhupada's orders once again and become fit to spread Krishna consciousness."

The following citations are all excerpted from Srila Prabhupada's letters. They are by no means an exhaustive list.

"You must see that they strictly follow the regulative principles, the four prohibitions, as well as the devotional practices of arising early, taking morning bath, putting on telok, attending mangala arati, chanting japa 16 rounds, and attending Srimad-Bhagavatam class. This is the duty of all my initiated disciples, whether they are big or they are small.

"Everyone must rise early, take bath, attend mangala arati, chant at least 16 good rounds, attend class, and follow the four regulative principles. If these things are lax, then there is no question of spiritual life. Any one who does not accept these things staunchly will have to fall down. You must teach them by your own personal example, otherwise how will they learn?

"I am requesting again and again that all of my disciples simply follow all of the rules and regulations very strictly. Rising early, chanting 16 rounds, attending mangala-arati and class, etc. are all essential for spiritual development.

"...please institute these most important points of attending mangal aratik and chanting 16 rounds, these are the most important points of Krishna consciousness process.

"Everyone should attend mangal aratik and chant 16 rounds daily."

As soon as one discontinues his staunch following of the regulative principles such as chanting 16 rounds on beads, reading the books, going for the street sankirtana, preaching to anyone and everyone, offering the prasadam, like that, these principles of devotional service are there to safeguard us from maya’s attack by keeping us always enthusiastic.

"The main thing is that you must set nice example for the others by following very rigidly the regulative principles, such as chanting 16 rounds on beads, reading books, going for the street sankirtana, preaching to anyone and everyone, offering the prasadam, like that, these principles of devotional service are there to safeguard us from maya’s attack by keeping us always enthusiastic."

"That is of utmost importance. Do not fail to chant 16 rounds daily, rise early, come to mangala aratik, come to classes and follow the 4 regulative principles. In this way your life will become free from all anxieties.

"By simply following this process without deviation, chanting 16 rounds, following the four regulative principles, attending classes and mangala artik, rising early, these things will gradually bring you to the platform of pure love of Krishna.

"Keep yourself pure and fixed up...by following the basic principles that I have given: chanting 16 rounds daily, following the four regulative principles, rising early, attending mangala artik and classes, etc. This is of the utmost importance.

"I am also glad to hear that in your temple no one misses mangala artik and that everyone is becoming steady and peaceful in their service....life will flourish.

"Rise early, attend mangala aratik and class, chant 16 rounds, and follow the four regulative principles without deviation. This will guarantee your spiritual perfection.

"Rise early, attend mangala artik, attend class, chant 16 rounds and follow the four basic rules and regulations. This is most important. Without these things, there is no spiritual life. If you try sincerely, then Krishna will give you all blessings.

"All men who live in the devotee rooms must attend mangal aratik or starve."
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Rupavilasa—farewell

We are sorry to announce the departure of Rupavilasa dasa from New Jaipur. He played an important part in attracting devotees to participate in its projects in 1988 and 1989, he wrote many colorful and learned articles for the Vedic Village Review, and formulated many of the ideas that are part of the ongoing ritvik and qualifications-of-guru debate. Regrettably, his good grasp of the Gaudiya Vaishnava philosophy, and his congenial nature, did not entirely protect him from the onslaught of maya and he was found to fall prey to some material tendencies incompatible with the standards required for a community like New Jaipur. We hope the discerning reader is generous enough as to forgive him his weakness and recognize the value of the sincere service thusfar rendered by him to the Krishna Consciousness Society.

Rupavilasa will now spend some time recuperating (we pray) in the privacy of some bhajan-kutira by absorbing himself in the vani of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. His wife, Chandrika devi, will continue at the helm of the New Jaipur gurukula, which, being run along Prabhupadite lines, is an oasis in the desert of education.
Questions and Answers

by Karnamrita dasa

1. Kindly clarify the following: Narahari Sarakara Thakura and Jiva Gosvami have written on the procedure to be followed if one’s guru falls down. Now if the regular guru is transcendental by definition, then how can he fall down?

Answer: According to our research, the range of liberation which enables one to be a guru is from nishtha (madhyama-adhikara) to prema (uttama-uttama-adhikara). If one falls from nishtha, it is possible to fall down, since a trace of anartha persists until that stage, although with increasing taste and immersion in transcendence it becomes progressively unlikely that this will happen. Only when one is at the highest stage of pure love of Godhead, and no trace of anartha is found, does it become impossible to fall down.

2. Why do we chant hare krishna hare krishna krishna krishna hare hare rama hare rama rama hare hare when we find in the Kali-santarana Upanishad that the mantra is given as hare rama hare rama rama hare hare hare krishna hare krishna hare hare?

Answer: Srila Prabhupada was asked this question by Achyutanaanda Swami in 1975. Srila Prabhupada replied, “You can chant like that if you like.” Everyone laughed, because after chanting thus a few times it comes to the same thing. Moreover, we chant it in this fashion because Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Who is the Supreme Lord, did so. It is also said that since sudras are not permitted to chant Vedic mantras, the mantra was inverted so that all classes of men could chant it without contravening the scriptural injunction.

3. I recently heard a visiting devotee explain that a bhakti-yogi is a karma-yogi who has given up his attachments to the results of his practices. That didn’t sound right to me. Would you care to comment?

Answer: This sounds more like the distinction between a karma and a karma-yogi. A real karma-yogi, a person who strictly executes his duties in devotional service to Krishna without attachment to the fruits thereof, is a bhakti-yogi. Of course, while engaged in the process of purification it may be that residual fruitive desires remain in the heart. When one is actually free of all tinges of jnana and karma, then he is a liberated person, pure and free from all material desires.

The readers will be familiar with the title of the fifth chapter of Bhagavad Gita, no doubt: Karma yoga—action in Krishna Consciousness. In that chapter Krishna makes no distinction between karma-yoga and bhakti-yoga, and He states that at the fixed (naishthiki) stage of devotional service the bhakta surrenders the fruits of all his works to the Supreme, an example of classical karma-yoga (Bg. 5.12). One thing that might make the issue confusing is that we tend to misuse the words karma and karma. If one refers to Sri Isopanishad, and specifically to the purport to mantra 2, one will find the terms karma, vikarma and akarma defined. Strictly speaking, a karmi is one who acts according to the Vedic injunctions. One

is not a karma-yogi, however, until he comes to the point of akarma, or action that is transcendental and thus productive of no material reaction. Non-devotees sometimes indulge in the pretence of surrendering the fruits of their labour to the Absolute (while actually engaging them in the service of their family or community) and call this imaginary process karma-yoga. Such ersatz karma-yoga is, according to Srila Prabhupada, “For the fools.”

4. It is explained that when one chants the Holy Name with the understanding that such chanting will clear one of his sinful reactions, that type of chanting is offensive and prevents one from developing the taste for the Holy Name. However, suppose a sinful person chants not for the purpose of getting relief but for the sake of chanting the Name? What about if he commits sinful actions regularly? What about if he commits sinful actions accidentally? Srila Prabhupada says that such falldown is overlooked, yet how would it affect one’s chanting of the Holy Name?

Answer: The offence in question is to deliberately commit sins and decide that one will chant the Holy Name and thus escape the consequences of one’s evil behaviour (and presumably go on in that way). This kind of thinking is to be condemned, no doubt, but whatever the circumstances one has no option but to chant the holy name. Narottama dasa Thakura states in this connection: harinama apasthita harinama. “If one commits an offence against Lord Hari’s Holy Name he is delivered from the reaction thereto by [chanting] Harinama.” One must of course try and avoid committing offences against the Holy Name, but at all costs one must chant. As for the impure person who chants for some purpose other than eradicating sin, his position is actually better than the deliberate offender’s, for his chanting is considered to be namabhasa, or a precursor to the actual pure name of God. Such chanting is described in the sixth canto of the Bhagavata, ch. 2, verse 94: “One who chants the Holy Name of the Lord is immediately freed from the reactions of unlimited sins, even if he chants indirectly [by uttering the Holy name while referring to something else], jokingly, for musical entertainment, or even neglectfully. This is accepted by all the learned scholars of the scriptures.” The person who deliberately commits offence no doubt puts obstacles in the path of his own progress, but still, by the constant chanting of Harinama, such obstacles will eventually be removed. The person who chants in some indirect way is given a special opportunity, if his chanting is genuinely of the abhasa kind, but as he progresses from the point of ignorance of the actual meaning of the Holy Name he must take great care not to fall into the trap of committing namaparadha.

If one allows accidental falldown to become habitual, then such falldown can no longer be said to be accidental and one will almost certainly have to suffer the consequences of his folly. If one is so unfortunate as to fall prey to habitual sin, his only hope of redemption is to stick to the chanting of the Holy Name. One should never think that he has become too sinful to chant the Holy Name. In time his tendency to commit sin will be eradicated and he can begin to chant namabhasa and progress from that point. The difficulty is that persons who have chanted somewhat, but who subsequently fall prey to sinful tendencies, generally avoid chanting Harinama for one reason or another.
To All G.B.C., and Temple Presidents

Dear Maharajas and Prabhus,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your feet. Recently when all of the GBC members were with His Divine Grace in Vrndavana, Srila Prabhupad indicated that soon He would appoint some of His senior disciples to act as "rittik" – representative of the acarya, for the purpose of performing initiations, both first initiation and second initiation. His Divine Grace has so far given a list of eleven disciples who will act in that capacity:

His Holiness Kirtanananda Swami
His Holiness Satsvarupa das Gosvami
His Holiness Jayapataka Swami
His Holiness Tamal Krishna Gosvami
His Holiness Hridayananda Gosvami
His Holiness Bhavananda Gosvami
His Holiness Ramesvara Swami
His Holiness Harikesa Swami
His Grace Bhagvan das Adhikari
His Grace Jayatirtha das Adhikari

In the past Temple Presidents have written to Srila Prabhupad recommending a particular devotee's initiation. Now that Srila Prabhupad has named these representatives, Temple Presidents may henceforth send recommendation for first and second initiation to whichever of these eleven representatives are nearest their temple. After considering the recommendation, these representatives may accept the devotee as an initiated disciple of Srila Prabhupad by giving a spiritual name, or in the case of second initiation, by chanting on the Gayatri thread, just as Srila Prabhupad has done. The newly initiated devotees are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, the above eleven senior devotees acting as His representatives. After the Temple President receives a letter from these representatives giving the spiritual name or the thread, he can perform the fire yajna in the temple as was being done before. The name of a newly initiated disciple should be sent by the representative who has accepted him or her to Srila Prabhupad, to be included in Divine Grace's "Initiated Disciples" book.

Hoping this finds you all well.

Your servant,

Sri ISKCON

July 9th, 1977

[Signature]

Tamil Krishna Gosvami
Secretary to Srila Prabhupad
Ritvik or Havoc?

by Nityananda dasa

THE reaction to the articles in VVR’s last several issues has been mixed. Of course, VVR does not present articles and views based on what might be popular, but still it is interesting to review how devotees are responding, in particular, to the ritvik issue.

We have learned that in the Hare Krishna Movement things are not always what they seem to be on the surface. Although Srila Prabhupada’s house for the whole world (ISKCON) appears in many ways to be getting smaller, actually the opposite may be true as well. While the GBC controlled ISKCON structure remains constricted by numerous spiritual and managerial problems of profound proportions, Lord Chaitanya’s tree of mercy is sprouting out in many new and healthy directions. To highlight this aspect of ISKCON, we are producing a regular column herein called The Greater ISKCON Bulletin Board.

As for reactions to VVR’s “Case for Ritvik Gurus”, the GBC has taken strong issue with it, ruling at Mayapur this year that VVR and its editors have until August to retract and repent or BE EXPELLED from the official ISKCON. The 1990 GBC resolutions are inquisitorial in nature. Actually, the GBC had refused to recognize us and New Jaipur as part of ISKCON long before the Ritvik controversy began, and their doing so now is nothing new.

VVR’s crusade for ISKCON glasnost is being perceived as a serious threat by the ISKCON GBC-Guru elite, who are acting as though they were assailed by enemies of the state. It is strange how the truth and a call for openness can sometimes get adverse reactions. Allow me this quote: “...in this discussion there should be no fear of repercussions. I have no fear of anything and that’s why I can say anything... We should not speak now with the thought that, ‘Well, if so-and-so finds out what I’ve said, I’m getting into trouble.’ That’s not right; we should be totally open.” (Tamala Krishna Goswami, 1990).

We think that VVR and its Gurugate research has found a raw nerve and thus the GBC is franticly trying to sweep the discussions of the issues under the rug with typical communist-style propaganda: “Demonic philosophy, a threat to the movement, envious devotees, faultfinders, disenchanted and embittered troublemakers, etc.” It seems that the GBC is actually controlled through a political influence network by a small group of the original eleven and their supporters. Thus the term “elite” is used. Otherwise, the GBC is composed of many sincere but impressionable (manipulated?) devotees who will tend to go along with the direction established by certain high-powered and influential GBC members. The power in ISKCON is actually held by a small club of charismatic individuals.

Thus the GBC does not want to discuss Ritviks, Gurugate or qualifications of the diksha guru. They do not want philosophical debate on these issues. They do not want to discuss the past and how to heal old wounds that still fester. This would be opening a BIG can of worms for them, and major changes might take place in ISKCON as a result of false propaganda and misconceptions being thus dispelled. Such an openness might result in an unwelcome change of status for some. So although we are sorry that the GBC has decided to cancel further discussion and research on RITVIKS and other guru issues, we are also not at all surprised. There are tremendous vested interests at stake in the unauthorized ISKCON guru program, and they will not let go easily, what to speak of condone open discussions and philosophical debate. They say they need to protect Prabhupada’s movement, but they themselves have caused the most harm over the years. The history of GBC errors would fill a book. Who but the GBC is responsible for ISKCON’s enduring ills?

Anyone not “properly aligned” with the GBC policies will be intimidated or expelled. Srila dasa was given a few days notice to get out of Radhadesh and he has been banned from every temple in Europe. Apparently Sivarama, Bhakticharua and TKG Maharaja arranged for Srila’s ouster at Mayapur. The temple presidents and 50 devotees signing a RITVIK-type petition from the Benelux have been effectively silenced by Srila’s expulsion, heavy preaching and an increase in authoritarianism. The outspoken Srila Prabhupada has become reluctant to stand up for his sastrically referenced views. Anyone sheltered within the official GBC-ISKCON knows full and well what the penalty is for a voicing views other than the GBC ordained policies: loss of shelter. Thousands of devotees over the years have been de facto expelled in this way since Prabhupada’s departure.

To illustrate the point: in March Syamapiyra dasi gave a VVR magazine to a woman devotee in Mayapur who was considering being reinitiated by Jayapataka Maharaja. Jayapataka Maharaja heard of this, and told Tamala Krishna Goswami how this had greatly upset him. TKG called Syamapiyra to his office and lectured her for two hours about the evils of VVR, whereupon she expressed her lack of faith in ISKCON’s leaders after having seen so many hundreds of devotees driven out of ISKCON over the years. Tamala’s reply: “We did what we had to do”. In other words, one is secure in ISKCON only if he adopts the GBC party line and gives tacit sanction to the present guru system.

In many places, reinitiation is practically compulsory. It is blatantly said that there can be no connection with Prabhupada or Krishna without taking initiation from a “current link” in good standing. This is the impudence of the obsolete, not the opulence of the Absolute. The relegation of Srila Prabhupada into the background and the promotion of themselves as the “current link” is a most serious error and has (and is) causing tremendous damage to Prabhupada’s movement and followers. Vyassanas are reappearing in the temple rooms, simultaneous guru-pujas are back, the zonal acharyas are back (some never left!). DADS is quite insidious. VVR has verified this story from FOUR reliable sources:

It is late 1977, and TKG enters Prabhupada’s room with Bhakticharua Swami present. TKG asks, “Prabhupada, after you, who will be the next acarya?” Prabhupada says, “You all GBC men meet and decide.” That night, TKG returns to Prabhupada’s room with Bhakticharua Swami again present. Prabhupada asks TKG, “So, what did the GBC decide?” TKG is silent and gives no answer. Again Prabhupada asks, “What did the GBC decide?” TKG is silent, ignoring Prabhupada’s question, and then leaves the room without answering. Prabhupada then says to Bhakticharua Swami in Bengali, “Just see, they want to be guru, but they cannot even be disciple.” And yet, within
months we see the eleven appointing themselves as the chosen ones, the new Acharyas, the new Vishnupada, Chaitanyapada, Acharyadeva, Acharyapada, Tirthapada, Bhaktipada etc.

Sometimes the argument is made that there is no precedent in our line of ritviks-after-departure. Since we know very little of the history of our sampradaya and its detailed workings, it is not possible at this time to refer to previous examples of ritviks-after-departure. However, it can be answered that Prabhupada instituted many things never before done in the line of acharyas. Srila Prabhupada was no doubt fully authorized by Krishna to make amazing arrangements for the sake of delivering fallen souls. Brahmacarini ashrams, second initiation for women, the GBC (where is the mention of GBC in the Bhagwatam?), allowing His own murti on the temple altar, daily guru puja of himself are a few examples. Saradiya dasi writes how, as referenced in Prabhupada's Letters (4.13.71 & 4.4.71), Srila Prabhupada said that the gayatri mantra tape was not required for second initiations, and also told Saradiya to give second initiation to her own husband by chanting the mantra and performing the fire ceremony. This was VERY unusual, yet we cannot question the authenticity of that initiation since it was ordained by Srila Prabhupada. If yogis can produce people from coconut trees, and create flying cities, what can be said about Prabhupada's power?

Even if ritvik-after-departure had never been done before, if Srila Prabhupada instituted such a system, who can question it?

Madhukanta dasa sent VVR a news clipping from the LA Times, Nov 15, 1977, the day after Prabhupada's departure. Rameswara was quoted, "The Governing Board of ISKCON will not immediately choose a successor. The position is only awarded when a devotee achieves a certain stature." This verifies that Prabhupada did not appoint acharyas, at least, as of 11.15.77, this was so. Rameswara confirmed the qualification requirement to become guru, yet the GBC in 1978 declared themselves appointed after all.

In CC Adi 12.8, we read: "...just after his (Bhaktisiddhanta) passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of acharya... (they) were asara, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master... The members of the self-appointed acharya's party who occupied the property of the Gaudiya Matha are satisfied, but they could not make progress in preaching."

In August 1976, Prabhupada said: "They never thought, 'Why did our Guru Maharaja give us instructions on so many things, but he did not say that this particular man should be guru?' They wanted to create someone as acharya..." In one of TKG's more candid moments, in 1980, at the Pyramid House, he confessed the following: "Actually Prabhupada never appointed any gurus. He didn't appoint eleven gurus. He appointed eleven ritviks. He never appointed them gurus. Myself and the other GBC have done the greatest disservice to this movement in the last three years because we interpreted the appointment of ritviks as the appointment of gurus." Then TKG said, "And that's all that it was, and it never was any more than that... Prabhupada would have spoken for days and hours and weeks on end about how to set this thing up with the gurus, but he didn't because he had already said it a million times. He said, 'My Guru Maharaja didn't appoint anyone. It's by qualification.' We made a great mistake... these eleven people (were) selected the gurus. I can say definitely for myself, and for which I humbly beg forgiveness from everybody, that there was definitely some degree of trying to control... 'Guru, oh wonderful! Now I'm a guru, and there's only eleven of us.' And in 1990, the eleven are now fifty. Is anything really different? Only the numbers.

Let's face it. The GBC has an extreme credibility problem. Because the history of GBC errors and varying, discredited actions on their part have left us bewildered and distraught, how can we so easily assume, as IWR says it, that the GBC has once again shown its ability to protect ISKCON? ??? IWR might be better called GBC PRAVDA. Only the newcomers, the inexperienced and party members can accept these hackneyed lines issued by the GBC.

Let's review Tamala Krishna Maharaja's positions through the years:

1977: TKG wants to know who the next acharya will be. He protects Prabhupada from devotees who want to see him to clarify the guru and initiation-after-departure issue.

1978: TKG takes part in the GBC approved successor and zonal appointed guru hoax.

1980: TKG insists that his godbrothers worship him as the current via medium to Prabhupada. Tripari, Sura, Pragosh, Mrigendra and others defect from his zone. The GBC chastens TKG and relieves him of his zone and authority to initiate. TKG responds with some of the truth at the Pyramid House and denounces the appointments and bogus guru system.


1986: TKG quietly gives a ritvik initiation to Jalalata dasi in Vrindavan.

1990: TKG denounces the ritvik-after-departure concept as bogus and incites the GBC to punish and chastise VVR and its editors for propagating philosophy "damaging" to the foundations of ISKCON.

Is it any wonder that TKG's frequent philosophical flip-flopping has us asking questions?! On another point, regarding TKG's denial of Gauridasa Pandita's testimony that Prabhupada appointed ritviks to initiate AFTER his departure, VVR has verified Gauridasa's testimony thru Yasodanandana, Babhru, Sridhara dasa, Bill Wulfhoo, Viswanmitra and others.

Another unusual incident has come to light, which may amount to nothing, but which deserves full disclosure to all the devotees: Jananmanidasi dasa has written to Jagjivan dasa about a visit he made to Srivatsa Goswami some years ago in Vrindavan. Srivatsa Goswami told him that TKG changed Srila Prabhupada's will twice in November 1977, the last time being the night before Prabhupada's disappearance. In the middle of the night, TKG is alleged to have brought the Registrar of Wills from Mathura to Vrindavan to alter Prabhupada's registered will. Now, the will we are all familiar with is the June 1977 version, wherein Prabhupada appoints property trustees etc. What were the November 1977 changes, if any? What were the circumstances? What were Prabhupada's instructions in this regard? Perhaps someone can get a copy of Prabhupada's FINAL will from Mathura to clear up this little mystery.

ISKCON World Review's post-Mayapur issue dutifully supported the GBC resolutions to expel the VVR editors and declare ritvik-after-departure as bogus philosophy. IWR's pre-
Mayapur issue, however, had featured a neutral report on the January San Diego guru debate. IWR explains: “IWR has SINCE learned that the debate was NOT an official GBC debate...” Of course, under orders from the GBC, IWR does not any longer sell the RITVIK DEBATE videos, which are now available only thru ITV or Vedic River Devotional Supplies (for sale or rent). IWR has been “straightened out” by the GBC.

However, VVR will not be silenced so easily. The editors are veterans of 20 years of ISKCON politics and we will continue in the struggle to rectify ISKCON of various anomalies, especially the unauthorized guru system presently in place. Gurus are made by qualification only, not by a voting club, and what those qualifications are according to sastrā must be established correctly. While we remain prepared to retract our views if they are shown to be incorrect, we still very firmly believe them to be largely correct, and as such, in good conscience, we cannot quit our campaign to change ISKCON for the better. Without ISKCON firmly situated on a solid philosophical foundation, how can we change the face of the planet earth and effectively preach love of God?

Over the last 12 years, thousands of devotees have been de facto expelled from ISKCON by the same “new-guru” policies that still prevail today. Most of them were not able to find shelter outside official ISKCON, and thus unfortunately have become compromised by maya to various degrees. The GBC may have forgotten them, but VVR has not. Most of these alienated devotees will return to the movement once Prabhupada’s house is put back in proper order. Almost all of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples are outside ISKCON; does being expelled have any meaning anymore? ISKCON may become an empty shell very soon, with most of Srila Prabhupada’s assets on the so-called “outside”. At what point does outside become inside? There is getting to be as much of ISKCON ‘out’ than there is ‘in’. Therefore we are speaking about the GREATER ISKCON, hoping for and working towards a common platform for all devotees, centered around Srila Prabhupada as the PROMINENT GURU for the rest of this Golden Age.

The ISKCON GBC has been so wrong so often, that to be expelled can almost be taken as a sign of being on the right track. This is a sad commentary on ISKCON, and saying this does NOT mean that VVR is anti-GBC. VVR is pro GBC, as Srila Prabhupada wanted a competent, honest and pure GBC body to implement his instructions. However, the GBC has deviated in many serious ways from Srila Prabhupada’s instructions, and therefore, in order to reunite and inspire ISKCON, the wounds of the past must be healed, the Dreaded Acharya Disease must be eliminated, and the GBC must be rectified.

The GBC could be rectified if they do the following:

1. Encourage and permit ISTHA-GOSTHIS on guru-tattva.
   a. REVIEW THE HISTORY OF THE GURU IN ISKCON.
   b. DETERMINE “WHO AND WHAT IS A GURU?”: Especially considering the scriptural and testimonial evidence brought to light by the VVR
   c. DETERMINE HOW INITIATIONS WILL GO ON
2. RECONSIDER PREVIOUS GBC RESOLUTIONS & POSITION PAPERS DEALING WITH THE GURU IN ISKCON AND REINITIATION.

a. THE GBC POSITION PAPERS OF MARCH 1978 & AUGUST 1980 establishing the continued process of parampara and initiations should be officially withdrawn by GBC resolution, thus exposing their discrepancies and misconceptions.

b. The 1989 GURU-ASRAYA PAPER should be revised.

3. The GBC GURU RESEARCH COMMITTEE SHOULD BE REFORMED INTO A PERMANENT GURU STANDARDS COMMITTEE, adding a number of devotees who would neutralize the political influence of present gurus.

4. HOLD A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION. ISKCON needs a Constitution to protect it from politicization of the GBC and guru-cartel influence. The system for initiations must be established with complete reference to sastrā and Prabhupada’s instructions, not based on a guru-club vote system.

5. SEND OPEN LETTERS TO ALL ISKCON CENTERS from EACH of the former Zonal Acharyas (we want to see it in print!) — to all devotees — expressing realizations, regrets, and apologies for the excesses and discrepancies of the Zonal Acharya system.

6. REQUEST TO HEAR ANY PAST GRIEVANCE from any devotee (including their own disciples!).

7. APPROACH INDIVIDUAL GODBROTHERS in and out of the Movement — all those whom one might have offended (or alienated). In particular, those who have opted to leave ISKCON to follow BRS Sridhar Maharaja should be reconciled.

8. APPOINT A GBC SPOKESMAN to tour all temples to explain the repentance, rectification and past deviations of the GBC and the zonal acharyas.

9. DECLARE PROXY INITIATES: Whereas Srila Prabhupada authorized any desiring devotee to act as a “regular” guru provided he was actually qualified (“But be actually guru”); and whereas the leading GBC members in 1977 did unlawfully form and perpetuate an exclusive system of successor acharyas (which included posing as mahā-bhagavatas), simultaneously introducing apa-siddhantī (non-Prabhupada) ideas about guru-tattva; it can be concluded that such gurus were not fit for the designation as “regular” guru. Consequently, any disciples of these former Zonal Acharyas — their faith being shattered by gross misrepresentation, both by their individual guru and by the institution itself — should be declared “proxy initiates”, de facto disciples of Prabhupada, regardless of whether their guru is apparently fallen or not.

Bhaktarupa Prabhu, GBC Communications, wrote that the GBC could not take the petitions VVR submitted to the GBC seriously because they were photocopies only, and some lacked complete addresses or original signatures. We regret the GBC’s not taking the petitions seriously; yet, they continue to come in and add up. Due to the repressive mood of the GBC, however, we expect many devotees to be reluctant to put their name on the line. Many think: ‘What is the use, and why expose oneself to possible retaliatory actions?’

Still, response to the petitions in VVR 11 & 12 was impressive. We have collected about 300 names, and many more devotees have expressed support by phone and mail. The petitions were strongly worded, and many sympathetic devotees were hesitant to sign for that reason. Thus we believe the petition response was excellent, considering the normal
element of apathy: one signature in hand indicates many more in potential. So 300 signatures point to thousands in sympathy with the petition.

Our petition campaign will continue throughout 1990, so even now that Mayapur is over, if you have not sent your name in to VVR, please do so now. A show of numbers is an effective method to introduce constructive changes in ISKCON. Petitioning in itself entails working within the system; VVR wants to work from within Srila Prabhupada’s movement.

Several parties have suggested that we try to start a splinter movement, since the GBC appears unmoveable in this or that realm of reform and debate. However, we cannot endorse that approach at all, since we believe ISKCON to be Srila Prabhupada’s chosen vehicle for preaching Krishna consciousness, and there are many signs that ISKCON will be very much reformed in the near future. Truth has a way of prevailing, and dispelling things like ignorance, cheating, hypocrisy and repression. VVR wants the TRUTH. Too many devotees all over the planet want the truth. Just read the letters to the editor: are they all from cranks? Is what they all say just bunk? In a short time the unauthorized guru system will collapse due to its own defects and the withdrawal of support from the devotees. When the so-called “grand-disciples” come to understand the errors in GBC policies to date and Srila Prabhupada’s supreme position and present availability to all devotees, then the present guru system will collapse as fast as did the Berlin Wall.

The most significant item in VVR 13 is the story about Tamal Krishna Maharaja giving a true-blue RITVIK initiation in 1986. The GBC may say that it was a special case for this or that reason, yet it remains an example where the GBC says one thing but does another. How can we accept the GBC verdict that Ritvik is maya when they have done it? If it was bona fide in one instance, why not others? It is well known that Bhaktiswarup Damodara Swami gives initiations in the “ritvik” mood, explaining to initiates that he is only acting on Prabhupada’s behalf and that Prabhupada is the real guru. Radha Krishna Swami, Rohini Kumara Swami and others have also given ritvik initiations in the past. So although it was not called “ritvik” per se, ritvik is not a new concept or invented by VVR. We can see from these examples that ISKCON itself has a history of using “ritviks”, or officiating priests, after Prabhupada’s departure.

Is the opposition to the ritvik system actually a philosophical one, or does it fall into the realm of politics? For some, it may be a philosophical issue, but for others there seems to be a simple fear of the loss of prestige or position. Of course, if someone meets the test of qualification according to sastra, that is another thing. But what those qualifications are must be properly ascertained. To pretend to be qualified is cheating, and could beget strong reactions a la Jayatirtha, Kirtanananda, etc. RITVIK or HAVOC, what will it be?

Appeal To All Honest Devotees

ISKCON will not change by itself. Devotees must act to effect that change. Stand up for what’s right! Write down your thoughts, realizations, satirical compilations, and letters: mail them to VVR. The more devotees speak up, the more ISKCON and the GBC will respond to the needs and desires of the devotees. Break your silence and write. Meet, discuss, and speak up. GRASS ROOTS REFORM! And support VVR with your subscription: mail it today.

In Reply to Ajamila

by Urdhvagav dasa

I have received VVR 11 along with your letter warning against the controversial and misleading assertions of the editors on the subject of ritvik system, which you consider to be a partial presentation only. You also say that they have gone too far and you want to know what I think.

Well, I don’t think they have gone too far. I think they rather went back to the root cause of all ISKCON problems, namely the bogus guru system introduced after Srila Prabhupada’s departure. This unauthorized guru system, which was maintained up to date, is bogus not so much because of unqualified disciples, but it is bogus because they say Srila Prabhupada appointed them to this position, which is a lie.

The truth is that Srila Prabhupada never appointed successor-acharyas. He only appointed ritviks to officiate in behalf of him; and that’s all it was, and it was never any more than that. After Srila Prabhupada’s departure, those 11 have appointed themselves as successor-acharyas. If they feel qualified, who am I to judge their qualification? But they should be honest and say that they have appointed themselves; instead they are saying that Prabhupada appointed them to their positions. Unfortunately, you forgot to include this point.

Actually, I would even go further than VVR. I would say that all those 11 gurus, including the GBC, are unbonafide because of this appointment lie and a 13 years cover-up. The whole GBC body should make a public statement (of rectification) saying that Srila Prabhupada never appointed specific successor-acharyas to succeed him, but that those so-called appointed gurus have appointed themselves to their status.

I also do not agree with your interpretation of Prabhupada’s statement: “They are his disciples”. This statement refers to Srila Prabhupada, himself, as the initiator on whose behalf the others are initiating. I think this statement was also repeated by Tamala Krishna to Satsvarupa, who was confused about this point. Therefore, Tamala Krishna repeated to Satsvarupa: “They are his disciples”, meaning Srila Prabhupada.
A DIFFERENT TRADITION: Halloween costumes for Ananta Rupa and his older brother, Krishna Sevananda, of the Old South Society for Vedic Life, may differ from other trick-or-treaters, but the two have just as much fun as they visit businesses in Downtown Natchez Tuesday.

Dear Lord Nrisimhadeva, please protect Your humble servants here at New Jaipur and elsewhere in the Krishna Consciousness Movement from repression and intolerance. Grant Your lowly servants the courage to continue to defend their beloved spiritual master's movement!

Jaya Sri Nrisimhadeva!