

Formalities

BY: MAHESH RAJA

Sep 14, UK (SUN) — The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them Vaisnavas.

In his recent article, "[Ravindra Svarupa's Role in the Guru Reform Movement](#)", Rocana Prabhu wrote"

"It's a fact, as Kurma dasa writes, that this system of voted-in gurus is nonsense. Of course, Kurma prabhu is trying to make out that Srila Prabhupada's original program, which he thinks is synonymous with the current Rtvik system, should be put in place now. That's where he and I have a different understanding. I don't think you can introduce a system that has no verification in sastra."

Since many of us support the July 9th 1977 [ORDER of Ritvik System](#) that Srila Prabhupada himself set-up AND NEVER RECINDED, I wish to respond to the above.

The Ritvik System is just FORMALITIES, so as per Srila Prabhupada's instructions: "[The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them Vaisnavas.](#)"

It is being misconstrued as "introduce a new system", BUT--FACTUALLY--it is ONLY FORMALITIES.

Lets study the following in terms of FORMALITIES:

1) Srila Prabhupada as a sannayasi got his disciples married. There is no verification in sastra that a sannayasi can do this.

Srimad Bhagavatam 5.1.24 Purport - The Activities of Maharaja Priyavrata:

"Sometimes we are criticized because although I am a sannayasi, I have taken part in the marriage ceremonies of my disciples. It must be explained, however, that since we have started a Krsna conscious society and since a human society must also have ideal marriages, to correctly establish an ideal society we must take part in marrying some of its members, although we have taken to the path of renunciation. This may be astonishing to persons who are not very interested in establishing daiva-varnasrama, the transcendental system of four social orders and four spiritual orders. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, however, wanted to reestablish daiva-varnasrama. In daiva-varnasrama there cannot be acknowledgement of social status according to birthright because in Bhagavad-gita it is said that the determining considerations are guna and karma, one's qualities and work. It is this daiva-varnasrama that should be established all over the world to continue a perfect society for Krsna consciousness. This may be astonishing to foolish critics, but it is one of the functions of a Krsna conscious society."

Srila Prabhupada's Vyasapuja Lecture, August 22, 1973, London:

"I'm sometimes criticized by my Godbrothers that I have become a marriage-maker, because a sannayasi does not take part in a marriage ceremony, but I get my disciples married. This is also unique in the history. So they criticize me that I have become a marriage-maker. But they, they do not know why I take this risk. I have got many

disciples, they are married couples, but all of them, husband and wife, they are helping this movement. Here is Bhagavan dasa, he's also married man, children."

Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Satsvarupa, September 20, 1968:

"In your letter of the 17th instant, you have very frankly inquired from me about householder life, especially in the matter of sex relationship. A sannyasi is not supposed to be asked about anything sexual. But still, because you are so much dependent on my instruction, so I must give you information as far as possible. Married life is not for sex indulgence. The principle of marriage is on the background of getting good children. So the householder is allowed to have sex life once in a month, just after the menstrual period. The menstrual period prolongs at least for 5 days, so after this 5 days, one can have sex life provided he desires to get a child. And as soon as the wife is pregnant, no more sex life, until the child is born and is grown up at least for 6 months. After that, one may have sex life on the same principle. If one does not want more than one or two children, he should voluntarily stop sex life. But one should not strictly use any contraceptive method and at the same time indulge in sex life. That is very much sinful. If the husband and wife can voluntarily restrain by powerful advancement of Krishna Consciousness. That is the best method. It is not necessary that because one has got wife, therefore you must have sex life. The whole scheme is to avoid sex life as far as possible. And if one can avoid it completely then it is a great victory for him. Married life is a sort of license for sex life on condition of raising children. So you should try to understand these principles of married life and use your discretion. You should not imitate great personalities like Bhaktivinode Thakura, but you must follow His footprints. But it is not always possible to have the same success as great personalities like Bhaktivinode Thakura achieved. So in all circumstances you should try to follow the footprints of authorities but never to imitate them. Unless Jadurani develops a better health and strength, I do not advise her to become pregnant. I think you will understand the instruction as I have given and try to follow it as far as possible."

Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Sacisuta, July 5, 1969:

"Please accept my blessings. I thank you very much for your letter dated June 23, 1969, and I have carefully gone over the contents. I am so pleased to learn that you are feeling very nicely in Buffalo temple and you are working hard and sincerely to push on this sublime movement of Krishna Consciousness. Regarding your question about marriage, the thing is that as I am a sannyasi, I am not concerned with family life, but because I want to see my disciples very happy in Krishna Consciousness, therefore, those who are feeling some sexual disturbance are requested by me to get themselves married."

2) Srila Prabhupada had disciples hear the TAPE of him giving Gayatri Mantra at brahmana initiation. There is no verification in sastra of this.

Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Gaura Hari, September 24, 1971:

"At your recommendation I have gladly consented to accept Guy as my duly initiated disciple. His letter and beads are enclosed herewith. Also enclosed are three sacred threads duly chanted by me as well as four papers with Gayatri mantra for the four devotees you have recommended for second initiation. You should secure the tape of me reciting Gayatri mantra from Makhanlal in Seattle. Let each devotee hear the tape privately, one at a time, and through the right ear. They should have the paper in front of them and hear and repeat each word. Beforehand you can show them how to

count on the fingers, and beforehand hold a fire yajna and get the threads on the boys' bodies."

3) Srila Prabhupada had the WIFE of one disciple read Gayatri mantra to a devotee. There is no verification in sastra of this.

Srila Prabhupada's Letter to Vaikunthanatha, Sardia, April 4, 1971:

"Even though you have had no gayatri mantra, still you are more than brahmana. I am enclosing herewith your sacred thread, duly chanted on by me. Gayatri mantra is as follows:

[TAKEN OUT]

Ask your wife to chant this mantra and you hear it and if possible hold a fire ceremony as you have seen during your marriage and get this sacred thread on your body. Saradia, or any twice-initiated devotee, may perform the ceremony.

What Srila Prabhupada did was unprecedented in the history of Vaisnava sampradaya. But this did NOT mean he transgressed the sastra. On the contrary, sastra fully support Srila Prabhupada's actions IN AS MUCH AS the Ritvik System is ALSO part and parcel of above FORMALITY, wherein the Ritvik Representatives are performing FORMALITIES, i.e., the fire sacrifice and name giving CEREMONIES. The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them Vaisnavas.

Srimad Bhagavatam 4.8.54 Purport - Dhruva Maharaja Leaves Home for the Forest:

"Those who are not actually in the line of acaryas, or who personally have no knowledge of how to act in the role of acarya, unnecessarily criticize the activities of the ISKCON movement in countries outside of India. The fact is that such critics cannot do anything personally to spread Krsna consciousness. If someone does go and preach, taking all risks and allowing all considerations for time and place, it might be that there are changes in the manner of worship, but that is not at all faulty according to sastra. Srimad Viraraghava Acarya, an acarya in the disciplic succession of the Ramanuja-sampradaya, has remarked in his commentary that candalas, or conditioned souls who are born in lower than sudra families, can also be initiated according to circumstances. The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them Vaisnavas."

Srimad Bhagavatam 6.12.20 Purport - Vrtrasura' s Glorious Death:

"Therefore Sukadeva Gosvami says in Srimad-Bhagavatam (2.4.18):

*kirāta-hūṇāndhra-pulinda-pulkaśā
ābhīra-śumbhā yavanāḥ khasādayaḥ
ye 'nye ca pāpā yad-apāśrayāśrayāḥ
śudhyanti tasmai prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ*

"Kiratas, Hunas, Andhras, Pulindas, Pulkasas, Abhiras, Sumbhas, Yavanas and members of the Khasa races, and even others addicted to sinful acts can be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord, for He is the supreme power. I beg to offer my respectful obeisances unto Him." Anyone can be purified if he takes shelter of a pure devotee and molds his character according to the

pure devotee's direction. Then, even if one is a Kirata, Andhra, Pulinda or whatever, he can be purified and elevated to the position of a maha-paurusya."

Rocana Prabhu wrote:

"I don't think you can introduce a system that has no verification in sastra."

Yes we agree - ALL Srila Prabhupada did was change FORMALITIES in the way initiation was to be conducted in first and second initiations: "The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them Vaisnavas."

BUT Diksa per say, when MADHYAMA adhikari receives is unchanged, as that is NOT formality (see **Diksa Given to Madhyama-adhikari is Not a Formality**").

Srila Prabhupada in the July 9th, 1977 ORDER is FORMALITY of HOW 1st and 2nd initiations were to be conducted - and THAT is ALL it was. And THIS was the change in terms of FORMALITY, nothing more.

The INITIATED disciples were to be Srila Prabhupada's DISCIPLES. How can you have disciples belonging to anyone else? Disciples belong to one who gives discipline. FACTUALLY we are ALL taking - DISCIPLINE - FROM Srila Prabhupada's books, CDs, Tapes. Common sense!