

## A Rebuttal of the GBC's False Doctrine

By Narasimha das

Recently while in Spain I was handing out our booklet, *Srila Prabhupada Siddhanta (SPS)*, to a few senior devotees who are old friends of mine. This 64-page booklet points to the fact that in 1977, a few weeks before His disappearance, Srila Prabhupada ordained *ritvik* priests to initiate new devotees on His behalf. He did this specifically in response to the question: "How will initiations be conducted in the future, particularly at a time when you are no longer with us." In response to all such questions, He reaffirmed the same *ritvik* system of initiations that had been functioning in ISKCON since 1970, or slightly prior.

Recorded conversations cited in *SPS* show that Srila Prabhupada ordered senior devotees to conduct the formalities of initiation on His behalf and made an adjustment to allow this system to continue without His physical presence. Several conversations and letters cited in *SPS* illustrate how Srila Prabhupada reaffirmed the *ritvik* system for initiations in ISKCON repeatedly after issuing His official July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1977 directive, which He wanted sent to all ISKCON leaders and temples. He never mentioned or alluded to another system, such as one wherein the GBC would ordain *diksa-gurus* by electing immature preachers. The concocted GBC system for initiations, which ignores Srila Prabhupada's instructions and Gaudiya Vaisnava *siddhanta* on *guru-tattva*, has produced scandal, confusion, chaos, division and heartache for thousands of devotees, while diminishing the reputation of ISKCON worldwide.

Although there was no valid reason to do so, the eleven GBC members who were originally entrusted by Srila Prabhupada to act as His *ritvik* priests conspired instead to reject His order and pose themselves as His chosen successor *acaryas*. In trying to defend their positions, they claimed that Srila Prabhupada was "posthumous," or dead, and thus ineffective in the matter of initiating and guiding new disciples. They concluded that His official order for *ritvik* initiations should be rejected in favor of their own concocted system for sanctioning *diksa-gurus*. "*Srila Prabhupada Siddhanta*," however, does not dwell on the GBCs deviations but rather focuses on the positive truth. *SPS* is a collection of quotes from Prabhupada's books, conversations and letters that concisely explain the position of the bona fide spiritual master and glorifies the exalted status of Srila Prabhupada and great Vaisnavas in the Gaudiya *sampradaya*. This book points to evidence of Srila Prabhupada's unique position, while briefly and succinctly explaining the essential *sadhana* and *siddhanta* of the Krishna consciousness movement.

When the local GBC man and guru candidate for Spain, Vedavyasa das, heard about my preaching and read *SPS*, a collaboration of several senior devotees, he wrote a paper titled "*A Rebuttal of Ritvik Philosophy*," which he began circulating in a lame attempt to counteract the information cited in *SPS*. Even the title of his brief paper is misleading. "Ritvikism", "ritvik philosophy", or "ritvik-vada" are concocted terms used derogatorily by misguided persons to insult faithful disciples who understand that Srila Prabhupada is still the bona fide initiating and instructing spiritual master for all ISKCON devotees. The GBC and its followers have deliberately tried to deride the Vedic concept of *ritvik* priests who, in the matter of conducting Vedic rituals, act on behalf of the liberated *Acarya*. They use the transcendental term "*ritvik*" as a profanity to label deviants.

In truth, the term “*ritvik*” and the functions of *ritvik* priests are glorious. *Ritviks* are several times mentioned in Srila Prabhupada’s books and conversations. *Ritviks*, or *ritvijah*, are mentioned throughout the Vedas. For instance, in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* we find the story describing how *ritvik* priests were able to invoke the personal presence and blessings of the Supreme Personality of Godhead on behalf of Maharaja Nabhi. To deride the idea that *sadhaka* devotees should always act as representatives of the bona fide self-realized spiritual master, who is always an exalted *uttama-adhikari*, is offensive and foolish. “Ritvikism” is not a philosophy (*vada*), nor is it a deviant or concocted new idea. Rather it is an age old standard method for conducting powerful Vedic rituals under the auspices of the spiritual master, even without his personal presence.

For many devotees it may be hard to appreciate Srila Prabhupada’s final order on initiations without first trying to understand the fully transcendental position of the bona fide spiritual master, as well as Srila Prabhupada’s unique position as *jagat guru* and *sampradaya-acarya*. Anyone blessed at some time, even briefly, with an actual taste of Krishna consciousness and not poisoned by false ambition can easily understand that Srila Prabhupada is both the initiating and instructing spiritual master for all ISKCON devotees.

As usual for those under the spell of false ambition, the above-mentioned GBC man resorts to insulting the messengers, calling the compilers and authors of *SPS* academically “dishonest” and “offensive.” Apparently irritated by our constant glorification of Srila Prabhupada, he lashes out, trying to prove his accusations using straw man arguments. This is a typical GBC MO for dealing with anyone who challenges their concocted idea that the bona fide spiritual master need not be an *uttama-adhikari* and need not be specifically authorized for this service by Sri Guru and Sri Krishna.

This so-called rebuttal of “Ritvik Philosophy” offers no explanation whatsoever as to why the GBC stubbornly refuses to accept Srila Prabhupada’s order for *ritvik* initiations. It offers no explanation why this order was rejected by the GBC. It completely avoids the dozens of *sastric* quotes cited in *SPS* that confirm the following: 1.) a bona fide *diksa-guru* or Vaisnava *acarya* is an *uttama-adhikari*. 2.) A bona fide guru must be ordered by his guru to accept disciples. 3.) Srila Prabhupada ordered his disciples to conduct the formalities of initiation on His behalf. 4.) A bona fide spiritual master does not require institutional sanction and discipline. 5.) A liberated, perfect Vaisnava is not limited by material conditions and is above Vedic tradition. 6.) Srila Prabhupada is available equally to everyone who follows His instructions. 7.) Srila Prabhupada ordered that all spiritual practices remain unchanged in ISKCON.

Using classic straw man tactics, Vedavyasa das writes: “*Therefore the Ritvik Philosophy can only hold water if there is evidence from sastra, guru and sadhu that there is indeed a fundamental difference between siksa- and diksa-gurus. As it turns out, proof for this cannot be found in Srila Prabhupada’s books. Quite the opposite—we find quotes that expose this idea as a false conclusion, an apa-siddhanta.*”

Vedavyasa das offers two quotes that confirm his above statement. (SB. 4.12.32 and Cc. Adi. 1.47) Nowhere in *SPS*, however, do we suggest there is a “*fundamental difference between diksa-gurus and siksa-gurus.*” Nor does this have anything to do with the real issue at hand. The real questions that

Vedavyasa das completely avoids are these: 1.) Why did the GBC reject Srila Prabhupada's order for *ritvik* initiations? 2.) Why does the GBC condemn thousands of devotees worldwide who believe only Srila Prabhupada can deliver them from the fire of material existence? 3.) Why won't the GBC accept Prabhupada's orders rather than facilitate ambitious persons who want to assume the post of spiritual master without mature realization or an order from Srila Prabhupada?

In *Caitanya-caritamrita*, Srila Prabhupada mentions that the *siksa-guru* who constantly gives one instruction (as Srila Prabhupada does for all true ISKCON devotees) usually becomes ones *diksa-guru*. Vedavyasa das, while attempting to defeat Srila Prabhupada's order for *ritvik* initiations, exposes his misconceptions. He apparently believes that any upstart elected by misguided members of the GBC is as good as Srila Prabhupada and *siksa-gurus* like Srila Rupa Gosvami and Srila Sanatana Gosvami. In fact, a genuine *siksa-guru* and a genuine *diksa-guru* are both authorized self-realized souls. They never need the sanction, discipline, or guidance of ecclesiastical bodies. This is the real meaning of the statements quoted by Vedavyasa das, which prove that the *diksa-guru* and *siksa-guru* are to be treated equally. To use these statements to deride so-called "*Ritvik Philosophy*" is a weird misuse of scripture.

We remain confident in Srila Prabhupada's conclusive statements cited in *Srila Prabhupada Siddhanta*. *SPS*, in fact, relies entirely on direct quotes from Srila Prabhupada and His books, without speculation or interpretation.

In defiance of Srila Prabhupada's statements and instructions, Vedavyasa das rejects the idea that a Vaisnava *acarya* must always be a perfect, self-realized devotee, or *uttama-adhikari*. The idea that a bona fide Gaudiya Vaisnava *acarya* need not be a perfect devotee--one directly appointed by Sri Guru and Sri Krishna--is the primary, offensive deviation promoted by the vitiated GBC of iskcon. They challenge the idea that all bona fide *diksa-gurus* in our Gaudiya Vaisnava *sampradaya* are infallible *uttama-adhikaris*, and they reject an official written order from Srila Prabhupada by citing letters to sentimental, wayward disciples who had already left ISKCON and were initiating their own disciples without authorization. In these rare letters to renegade disciples who were determined upstarts, Srila Prabhupada acknowledged the idea that any one of His disciples could one day become a guru by following strictly and preaching purely, without selfish motives.

Srila Prabhupada's books clearly state the exalted qualities necessary for this service and the necessity of a direct order from the *acarya*. The real proof of a bona fide spiritual master is his humility and full knowledge. But impatient GBC upstarts can't wait for their own purification or an order from Prabhupada. They covet the highest position in the universe right now, without authorization or self-realization. Vedavyasa das says, "*The whole ritvik philosophy hinges on this idea: the position of the diksa-guru is so elevated that only a nitya-siddha maha-bhagavata uttama-adhikari like Srila Prabhupada qualifies to occupy it.*"

Here above Vedavyasa das creates another straw man and exposes his belief that not all Gaudiya Vaisnava gurus are *uttama-bhaktas*. This is an offensive idea introduced by GBC pundits, such as Ravindra Swarupa das, to facilitate the false ambitions of guru-wannabees. "*Ritvikism*" is not a philosophy and certainly not a concocted idea to be hated or argued against. *Ritvik* initiations were a

common practice in ISKCON for several years prior to 1977, and the system was ordered by Srila Prabhupada repeatedly in the latter part of 1977, after He officially established it by a written directive.

In fact, *ritvik* priests are mentioned throughout the *sastra* and in several places in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. In *SPS*, many quotes are presented that prove the bona fide spiritual master must be an *uttama-adhikari* and must furthermore be authorized by his predecessor guru. One who is able to impart transcendental knowledge to many fallen conditioned souls must certainly be an *uttama-adhikari* empowered to act in the position of spiritual master. Such empowerment and authorization can only be offered by Sri Guru and Sri Krishna.

Ironically, while falsely accusing *SPS* and *ritviks* of promoting the idea that there is “a fundamental difference between *siksa-guru* and *diksa-guru*,” he apparently does the same thing. He faults the compilers of *SPS* of neglecting to mention the concept of *siksa-guru*, yet throughout Srila Prabhupada’s books he repeatedly speaks of the bona fide spiritual master without referring specifically to the *siksa-guru* or *diksa-guru*, who are one and the same in principle and, for the most part, in person. Vedavyasa falsely states, “We should note that the *SPS* booklet does not mention the position and role of the *siksa-guru* at all.” This statement is a false. He conveniently missed the following quote in *SPS* on page 23: **“I am the initiator guru, and you should be the instructor guru by teaching what I am teaching and doing what I am doing. This is not a title, but you should actually come to this platform. This I want.”** (Letter, August 4, 1975)

Srila Prabhupada has several times confirmed that he wanted his disciples to become gurus by acting as His representatives and becoming pure devotees rather than by adopting titles and positions without authorization. He wanted his disciples to become qualified *siksa-gurus* through strict following, yet he never ordered anyone to assume special exalted titles or posts of *diksa-gurus* in His ISKCON mission. The obvious point that devotees like Vedavyasa das miss is that one needs an order from Srila Prabhupada to accept the title and position of spiritual master—either *diksa-guru* or *siksa-guru*. Srila Prabhupada confirmed that his pure disciples may one day act in the capacity of guru, but he never suggested an ecclesiastical system for nominating *diksa-gurus*.

At the end of his essay Vedavyasa das offers several quotes indicating that Srila Prabhupada wanted his bona fide disciples to become gurus and continue His mission. Unfortunately, he doesn’t include references, so I can’t easily confirm whether these quotes are accurate. He condemns us for not including any of these quotes in *SPS*, yet none of these quotes mention a blanket authorization for his disciples to begin initiating their own disciples in ISKCON. These quotes simply refer to a general principle: the guru’s bona fide disciples may one day act as bona fide gurus. None of his cited quotes suggest an immature preacher may become a *diksa-guru* by self-appointment or ecclesiastical sanction.

Vedavyasa das admits that his cited quotes refer only to gurus and spiritual masters--not specifically to *diksa-gurus*--and he offers his own interpretation as to why this is so. He writes, “We should note that in all these quotes Prabhupada never makes a distinction between *siksa-* and *diksa-guru*. He speaks simply of ‘guru’ and ‘spiritual master’.” Vedavyasa das then concludes his piece with his own wild speculation as to why this is so, stating, “This is because there is no fundamental difference [between *siksa-* and

*diksa-guru], it is simply a difference of function and dealing. With this truth revealed, the ritvik philosophy loses its foundation and collapses. RIP.”*

There is no way to guess why Vedavyasa das thinks the so-called “ritvik philosophy” is founded on the idea that there is a fundamental difference between the *siksa-guru* and *diksa-guru*. I have never heard any senior devotee in the so-called *ritvik* camp suggest this at any time. Quite the opposite, they all say Srila Prabhupada is both *siksa-guru* and *diksa-guru* for all ISKCON devotees.

People like Vedavyasa have apparently failed to understand there is no fundamental difference between pure Vaisnavas, whether they act as *diksa-guru* or not. They fail to realize that one must first become a pure disciple before becoming a bona fide guru of any kind. They have not understood that becoming a bona fide disciple or bona fide guru is no cheap thing. The emphasis throughout Srila Prabhupada’s books is to encourage devotees to become pure disciples by carefully understanding the path of *sadhana-bhakti*. There is no emphasis on becoming *diksa-gurus*. In fact, Srila Prabhupada has clearly advised, “**It is better not to accept any disciples.**” Srila Prabhupada obviously wanted His disciples to become pure devotees and act on His behalf in whatever capacity He ordained. Such pure disciples are automatically bona fide gurus--though not necessarily initiating gurus who accept their own disciples and worship in ISKCON.

Srila Prabhupada never ordered anyone to initiate his own disciples in ISKCON. Prabhupada created many titles and positions for His disciples in ISKCON but never ordained anyone to be *diksa-guru*. Nor did He authorize the GBC to sanction, nominate, appoint or dismiss *diksa-gurus* in ISKCON. These facts are indisputable for honest devotees. He did, however, clearly describe the function and position of “*representatives of the Acarya*”, otherwise known as *ritviks*. And he authorized the GBC to nominate or dismiss such representatives.

Unfortunately, ambitious upstarts are not satisfied with being *ritviks*, or representatives of the *Acarya*. Instead, they aspire, without authorization or mature realization, to become *diksa-gurus* with their own disciples in Srila Prabhupada’s mission. Such false ambitions have created havoc in ISKCON throughout the world. Yet these hard-hearted, stubborn upstarts never admit it.

It should be noted that under Vedavyasa das’s watch, the Spanish Yatra remains greatly diminished compared to the times I was there in the late 70s and early 80s. On the surface, this would seem to indicate that, as a guru and leader, he may not be as qualified as were his predecessors, all of whom have grossly deviated and/or left Krishna consciousness altogether.

The GBC has done a great disservice in promoting false *siddhanta* and false ambition. They have tried to minimize Srila Prabhupada’s position in Iskcon and minimize the exalted qualities and status of Gaudiya Vaisnava spiritual masters. They preach false *siddhanta* to justify their determination to artificially rise to the post of spiritual master. They have ignored Srila Prabhupada’s specific orders in this regard and have thus created division in His mission and great harm to his disciples and aspiring disciples while facilitating scandal, chaos and confusion in Srila Prabhupada’s mission and society. Worst of all, they have suggested that Vaisnava *acaryas* are ordinary men who make mistakes and sometimes fall down. In this way they have tried to justify their decision to post impure preachers as *diksa-gurus* in Iskcon--

preachers who have often fallen down to grossly sinful behavior and left the mission, after exploiting it for sense gratification. The GBC callously disavows any responsibility for the misery and doubts they have created for thousands of innocent devotees. They claim that even great devotees often fall down, and they say that if a devotee has accepted a guru who later becomes a fallen rascal, it is simply due to his or her bad karma. It can thus be concluded that leading members of the GBC have become deluded by the spell of *maya*. All such illusion arises due to false ambition, the original sin of all conditioned souls and the last snare of *maya*.

In truth, the GBC's philosophy on *guru-tattva* has no foundation at all. It floats, for the time being, on the slime of ignorance in the quick sand of Kali Yuga. It will not last. It will rapidly sink into oblivion by the grace of Lord Caitanya and Srila Prabhupada. Although men like Vedavyasa das and his cohorts in the GBC despise *ritviks* and wish they would all go away and die, this will never happen. Srila Prabhupada, His orders and His bona fide disciples will live forever by His Divine Grace and the mercy of Lord Caitanya.

**“He lives forever through His divine instructions and His follower lives with Him.”**