

That's why we might cringe at the idea of having "the portraits of local ritviks hanging in the temple" or even getting a restricted group of "appointed ritviks" who could give initiations in the name of Srila Prabhupada. What will have changed? Even today the so called gurus in Iskcon do not have any responsibility or accountability towards their so called disciples, but they are getting a privileged platform on the basis of appointment. Their adoration has even gone down largely in these last years. If we artificially create rubber stamped ritvik acaryas by elections, what good they will be? In this sense Hrdayananda is right. There is nothing like a ritvik "acarya". This wasn't Prabhupada's expression. To my knowledge, Prabhupada never spoke of ritvik "acarya", he just spoke of ritvik. Others in the room mentioned "ritvik acarya", and Prabhupada repeated "ritvik". We can all be acaryas in the sense that we should preach by example, but we cannot be "ritvik acaryas" in the sense that the vedic sacrifice organization has a different prescription for the acarya and the ritviks. I found a very interesting reference about this lately, on the appearance day of Vamanadeva, while reading the instructions of Kasyapa to Aditi in the Payovrata process of worship. I commented about this on my newsletter in Italian language. Canto 8, chapter 16, verses 53-54. acaryam jnana sampannam vastrabharana dhenubhih tosayed rtvijas caiva tad viddhy aradhanam hareh. The position of the acarya is clearly distinct from the position of the rtvijah or ritviks, which Prabhupada translates as "assistant priests".

A ritvik is nothing more than an "assistant priest". Whoever is following Prabhupada and his instructions sincerely, chanting the prescribed number of rounds, following the principles, and conversant with the philosophy, should be allowed to introduce people to Srila Prabhupada both through his/her preaching AND with ritvik diksa wherever and whenever required, thus increasing Prabhupada's family simply for Prabhupada's glory. Otherwise we will again have good preachers and devotees making new devotees and then having to hand them over to an "acarya" (ritvik or whatever) who does not know anything about them (and he can't even care) but he has been rubber stamped or elected. There will be no personal relationship, no responsibility, but artificial worship and distinction. Again we will fall prey to impersonalism. And from impersonalism "patanty adah", we will fall again on the materialistic platform of power, exploitation, fighting etc.