

Satvatove Institute
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March 11, 2014

Dear Mahen prabhu,

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

Hare Krsna. My name is Dhira Govinda dasa. From Mahatma prabhu (Mario Pineda) I have heard about your courageous and inspiring efforts to serve Srila Prabhupada in Guyana. I understand that you are encountering hostile opposition. Based on what I've seen and experienced the past few decades, I am, unfortunately, not surprised to hear that there are those, in the name of Srila Prabhupada, who are attempting to discourage you and undermine your efforts to sincerely serve Srila Prabhupada and his mission. Please know that I admire your efforts and I support and encourage you to remain enthusiastic in your service to Srila Prabhupada. Hare Krsna.

I was first introduced to Krsna consciousness while I studied in the university in Pennsylvania in the early 1980s. I began adopting the practices of bhakti-yoga with some (not much) seriousness around 1983, and in 1984 I moved into a temple in Israel, near Tel-Aviv. I've written a book about some of my adventures in the Middle East, entitled Krsna, Israel, and the Druze: An Interreligious Odyssey.

Attached to this posting are some articles and essays that I've written, related to Srila Prabhupada and his relationship with the members of his movement. These articles include Srila Prabhupada: The Prominent Link, Response to the Sastric Advisory Committee, Sound and Presence, "Guru" in the Singular and Clarity about "Fall Down", and The Weightiest Argument. At the end of this posting are the articles **Current and Direct Link (CDL): Eight Principles and Practices, and 32.**

My doctoral dissertation is entitled Effects of the Hare Krsna Maha Mantra on Stress, Depression and the Three Gunas. In case you're interested, here is a link to my dissertation, as well as several articles that I published, based on my dissertation research, in social science research journals. <http://www.satvatove.com/dr-david-wolf-academic-articles/>.

For about the past 22 years I've resided in North Florida. In the late 1990s I established the Association for the Protection of Children (APC). Through the APC I served as Child Protection Director for the ISKCON organization from 1998-2004. Also in the 90s and early 2000s I served as chairman of the board of directors of New Raman-reti, the devotee community in Alachua, Florida.

Also, the past 15 years or so I've been developing and conducting, worldwide, personal transformation seminars based on Srila Prabhupada's teachings. Below I'm copying you on links to a few videos related to these seminars. We've been very inspired by how many people, with no previous connection to Krsna consciousness, are becoming enthusiastic to chant Hare Krsna and follow Srila Prabhupada's program, through their contact with these self-realization programs.

I give you my appreciation and support, and I hope that we get to associate and serve together.

Best wishes,

Your servant,

Dhira Govinda dasa

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xILQ8bSx60A>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usGc0MX5jZ0>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noJMp26akJU>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SayY-sr9zPE>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7kJ9aY4MZM&feature=player_embedded

Current and Direct Link (CDL): Eight Principles and Practices

By Dhira Govinda dasa

In 2001 I wrote Srila Prabhupada: The Prominent Link (PL), and therein described the PL model, which, according to our understanding of Srila Prabhupada's teachings, is consistent with his vision and guidance for continuance of the disciplic succession. The purpose of this article is to delineate specific principles and practices that indicate alignment with the PL model. This is necessary because over the years I have frequently heard from or about persons who claim to agree with the PL model, but whose actions and statements, given in other contexts, are distinctly contrary to PL model principles. My hope and intention is to provide well-defined guidelines to determine whether or to what extent someone, ourselves included, is in genuine agreement with the PL model.

Terms

I first heard the term "prominent link" at an initiation lecture in 2001 in Alachua, Florida, and from that hearing I decided to use the term in the title of Srila Prabhupada: The Prominent Link. The Vaisnava conducting the initiation ceremony described the relationship between Srila Prabhupada and the initiates, as "prominent link"- that is, Srila Prabhupada was the prominent link to the parampara for the initiates. A few weeks after this initiation lecture the devotee who performed the initiation ceremony expressed to me in-person in Mayapur that he is not in agreement with the PL model, though also he acknowledged that he hadn't actually read the short book, Srila Prabhupada: The Prominent Link.

The above illustrates that the term "prominent link" may be used in a manner that might to some persons indicate adherence to the principles described in Srila Prabhupada: The Prominent Link, but that actually does not align with what genuine supporters of the PL Model consider to be a Srila Prabhupada-centered approach. Other such terms include describing Srila Prabhupada as the preeminent siksa guru, or primary or main guru, or the "universal permanent Siksa-guru of ISKCON", or the Founder-acarya or the "foundational siksa guru for all ISKCON devotees". Also there are longer phrases, such as "...everything

in ISKCON, including even all the devotees, belongs to Srila Prabhupada...”, and “Srila Prabhupada is the proprietor of ISKCON”, which similarly serve to sometimes mislead listeners, or readers, to believe that the speaker, or writer, is aligned with the precepts of the PL model.

We’re not minimizing or criticizing these terms and phrases. They are all true, and certainly they have their appropriate use. We’re simply pointing out that they can and have been used, whether deliberately or inadvertently, in a misrepresentative manner. This essay does not focus on supporting or explaining the PL model. That is done in many other places, such as Srila Prabhupada: The Prominent Link

(www.divyajnana.org and <http://www.scribd.com/doc/6629198/Srila-Prabhupada-the-Prominent-Link>), and articles including Response to the Sastric Advisory Committee (SAC) (http://www.divyajnana.org/pl-response_to_the_sac.htm), Sound and Presence (<http://www.divyajnana.org> and <http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/05-06/editorials351.htm>), The Weightiest Argument (http://www.divyajnana.org/pl-weightiest_argument.htm and <http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/05-06/editorials353.htm>), 32 (<http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/02-10/editorials5690.htm> and <http://www.divyajnana.org/>), and “Guru’ in the Singular and Clarity about ‘Fall Down’” (<http://www.divyajnana.org/pl-guru-singular.htm> or <http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/11-05/editorials86.htm>).

This paper highlights terms and practices that clearly distinguish the authentic PL model from spurious appearances. Two terms that I’ve found almost always represent a genuine consciousness and understanding of the PL principles are “current link” and “direct link”. When these terms are used to describe Srila Prabhupada’s relationship with the initiate, and with all members of his movement, whether or whenever they’ve participated in a formal initiation ceremony, it usually indicates, from my perception, that the speaker or writer is undeniably aligned with PL principles. To clarify and emphasize this point- describing Srila Prabhupada as the “current link” and “direct link” is much more indicative of a fully Prabhupada-centered approach than terms such as “main guru”, “primary connection”, “preeminent siksa guru”, “prominent link”, or other terms above mentioned. Thus, what has till now been called the Prominent Link model will now be referred to as the Current and Direct Link model (CDL).

I’ve even seen “current link” used in slippery ways. Not long ago I was sent a link to a video of an initiation ceremony. I watched it and noticed that during the lecture the conductor of the ceremony expressed that Srila Prabhupada is the current link...”within our society”, and I’ve heard Srila Prabhupada described as the current link, or direct link, for ISKCON, or for the institution. This is substantially different than asserting that Srila Prabhupada is the direct link and current link for the person who is receiving formal initiation, and for any individual who has contacted Srila Prabhupada’s movement.

“Current link” indicates full presence, including presence through vani, and in the form of murti. I mention this because there are places in Vaisnava society where Srila Prabhupada is regarded as a “previous acarya”, and where Srila Prabhupada’s presence in his murti form is denied. These

conceptions are opposed to the CDL model, wherein Srila Prabhupada is understood and realized as the present acarya and fully present in his murti form.

As I wrote in Response to the ISKCON Governing Body Commission's (GBC) Sastric Advisory Committee (SAC) (<http://www.divyajnana.org/pl-response-to-the-sac.htm>):

"In correspondence, SAC members would refer to Srila Prabhupada as a 'previous acarya', a term with which this author is not comfortable in reference to Srila Prabhupada. We maintain that Srila Prabhupada is living in his instructions and murti form, and is a present acarya."

Regarding Srila Prabhupada's murti form, Srila Prabhupada: The Prominent Link (PL) states: "Just as Sri Krsna, Srimati Radharani, and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu are non-different from Their Deity forms, and are fully capable to act and relate in Their Deity forms, the murtis and pictures of the parampara acaryas, such as Srila Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, can similarly act non-differently from the acaryas. Obviously this requires special empowerment from the Supreme Lord. Ordinary persons, or even aspiring Vaisnavas, are not able to reciprocate in their picture form in the way that the great acaryas do."

In response to the above a member of the GBC Sastric Advisory Committee replied: "This is a novel theory, or at least one I am not familiar with, that the murtis and pictures of specially empowered acaryas are equally potent to the murtis of the Supreme Lord and His internal potency, while the images of less empowered Vaisnavas are impotent. The arca-murti of the Personality of Godhead is a special incarnation, nondifferent from His original self, and manifests all His potencies to those who worship Him with love. The murti or picture of one's guru is recognized as the proper place to make offerings in worship, but as far as I know the Vaisnava sastras do not identify the guru's image as the same kind of arca-murti."

Many followers of Srila Prabhupada, including this author, possess full conviction that Srila Prabhupada is living and present in his murti form, and this conviction is essential in the Current and Direct Link (CDL) model. The terms "direct link" and "current link" also signify particular practices.

Practices

Followers of the CDL model, of the understanding that Srila Prabhupada is their current link and direct link to the parampara, recite Srila Prabhupada's pranam mantras, and they don't recite the pranam mantras of others as their link to Srila Prabhupada. Also, they worship the picture of Srila Prabhupada, and they don't worship the pictures of others as their link to Srila Prabhupada. In addition, when such a follower of Srila Prabhupada refers to "my guru's Vyasa-puja", he is referring to the Vyasa-puja celebration of Srila Prabhupada. He does not celebrate a Vyasa-puja event of anyone else, as his link to Srila Prabhupada, because Srila Prabhupada is his direct and current link to the parampara.

The above practices do not imply that other Vaisnavas are not pure, or not worthy of pranams, worship, or Vyasa-puja celebrations. Rather, they clearly indicate that the devotee regards Srila Prabhupada as his current and direct link to the parampara. These three practices, and their accompanying proscriptions, are essential in the CDL model. Whatever an initiate or a devotee who performs an initiation ceremony, or anyone, may state verbally, these practices are vital in walking the walk of realizing Srila Prabhupada as the current and direct link to the disciplic succession.

With reference to the list of acaryas at the end of the Introduction to Bhagavad-gita As It Is, one who recognizes and realizes Srila Prabhupada as the current and direct link to the parampara relates to Srila Prabhupada as "32", without a "33". Naturally the devotee who regards Srila Prabhupada as his direct and current link to the parampara gets inspiration and guidance from other Vaisnavas. These Vaisnavas support him in directly connecting to Srila Prabhupada, and in directly cultivating his relationship with Srila Prabhupada. That is different than becoming the link to Srila Prabhupada. Below I have included some excerpts from the article 32

(www.divyajnana.org and <http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/02-10/editorials5690.htm>). These excerpts reference the concepts of "guru in the singular" and "guru in the plural". "Guru in the singular" refers to the guru in whom we have absolute and unconditional faith, with full conviction that he is not in any way influenced by the gunas. "Guru in the plural" refers to the fact that devotees naturally have many Vaisnavas who inspire them in Krsna consciousness, and in that sense they are gurus. These "gurus in the plural" may or may not be on the absolute platform of pure devotional service. From "32":

"At the start of Bhagavad-gita there is a list of 32 Vaisnavas. My understanding is that the Vaisnava preceding is the current, direct and primary link to the parampara for the Vaisnava succeeding. So, for example, #26, Srila Narottama dasa Thakur is the current, direct and primary link to the parampara for #27, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakur.

"A study of the history of this parampara reveals that not all of the current and direct links were on the planet at the same time as their successors. Also, we'll find that in several instances no formal initiation ceremony happened between these links.

"Therefore, based on the disciplic succession as given to us by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, neither a formal initiation ceremony nor simultaneous presence on the same planet is required for one Vaisnava to serve as the current, direct and primary link to the parampara for another Vaisnava.

"Based on the above references to logic and parampara precedent, my understanding is that A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami is available as the direct, current and primary link to the parampara for those who sincerely follow his guidance. There is... an abundance of additional sastraic evidence to support this. In addition there are the experiences of thousands of Vaisnavas to support this.

"Can this model, of accepting Srila Prabhupada as one's current and direct link to the parampara, be misused? Yes, of course it could. And certainly it has been used to avoid spiritual responsibility, and to avoid genuine surrender ("Srila Prabhupada is my guru so I don't have to listen to anyone, ...") I believe that any model can be misapplied and abused, and this one is no exception. That, though, is a discussion of psychology, sincerity and personal character. Herein I wish to focus on siddhanta, a deepening of our understanding of philosophical truth.

"...Simultaneously, the devotee described above served in Srila Prabhupada's movement. In that service and capacity he accepted others, such as, for example, the temple president, the visiting sannyasi, and the bhakta leader, as his "gurus in the plural". Maybe one or more of these gurus in the plural were, or are, pure devotees of Krsna. Maybe not. In any case,

Srila Prabhupada is the current and direct link to the parampara for this person. These gurus in the plural represented Srila Prabhupada, though they, regardless of their level of spiritual advancement, did not serve in the capacity of '33'."

[[[End of excerpts from "32". For more on "guru in the singular" and "guru in the plural" see "'Guru' in the Singular and Clarity about 'Fall Down'" - (<http://www.divyajnana.org/pl-guru-singular.htm> or <http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/11-05/editorials86.htm>).]]]

Verses

Çréla Viçvanātha Cakravarté Öhākura wrote:

yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo
yasyāprasādān na gatiù kuto 'pi
dhyāyan stuvaàs tasya yaças tri-sandhyaà
vande guroù çré-caraëäravindam

"By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Kāñëa. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement. Therefore, I should always remember and praise the spiritual master. At least three times a day I should offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master."

The above verse refers to "guru in the singular." One who genuinely accepts Srila Prabhupada as his personal, direct and current link to the parampara meditates on Srila Prabhupada when chanting or singing the above verse. Devotees receive mercy from many Vaiñëavas, who all, in a sense, are serving as his guru. "Gurūn is plural in number because anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a spiritual master" (Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta Ādi-lélä 1:34 Purport). For devotees in Çréla Prabhupāda's movement, however, the Vaiñëava whose mercy without which we would not receive the benediction of Kāñëa and would not make advancement is Çréla Prabhupāda. This is evidenced by the fact that the mercy and grace of other Vaiñëavas may be withdrawn, and the former recipient of that mercy continues to make advancement in Kāñëa consciousness and to receive benedictions from Kāñëa. This is possible because Çréla Prabhupāda continues to bestow his mercy and grace.

This can also be appreciated in relation to the verse:

yasya deve parā bhaktir
yathä deve tathä gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāù
prakāçante mahätmanāù

"Unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed" (Çvetäçvatara Upaniñad 6.23).

Here again, "guru in the singular" is referenced. Çréla Prabhupāda is the one in whom implicit faith must exist in order for the imports of Vedic knowledge to be automatically revealed. As the direct link, Çréla Prabhupāda is the person to whom the devotee surrenders absolutely.

These two verses serve as another measure of one’s claims of putting Srila Prabhupada in the center. On whom does one meditate when considering these verses? If a devotee conducts a ceremony of formal initiation, whom does he expect the initiate to consider the “guru in the singular”, as referenced in these verses?

Straw Men

Over the years I’ve heard the CDL model misrepresented, perhaps unintentionally in most instances, in many ways, and then the misrepresentations are attacked and condemned. Herein I’ll address a few of these misconceptions.

Some have asserted that the CDL model implies, or directly states, that there are no pure devotees in Srila Prabhupada’s movement, and this line of thought goes on to question the supposed CDL assumption that Srila Prabhupada didn’t create pure devotees. The understanding that Srila Prabhupada is the current link and direct link to the parampara does not assume or imply that there are no pure devotees in Srila Prabhupada’s movement. Perhaps there are some, or hundreds or thousands. The existence or nonexistence of pure devotees does not affect the principles of the CDL model. We strongly believe that if there are pure devotees of Kṛṣṇa in Srila Prabhupada’s movement, they would enthusiastically encourage everyone to connect with Srila Prabhupada as the direct and current link to the parampara, and they would fully support and live by the principles and practices described in this paper.

Often we hear that the CDL model minimizes the importance of Vaisnava association. That is not the case. While it is true that one could misuse a pseudo-form of the CDL model, the precepts of the model itself fully encourage devotees to serve, associate with and receive guidance from other Vaisnavas who will inspire them in cultivating their direct relationship with Srila Prabhupada. As I wrote in the Prologue to the Second Printing of Srila Prabhupada: The Prominent Link (<http://www.divyajnana.org/>):

“Throughout PL there are many references to the importance of service and teacher-student relationships between Çréla Prabhupāda’s followers. The principles of serving, honoring, and glorifying Vaiñēavas are presented about twenty times in PL. Still, some readers perceived that this point was not sufficiently emphasized in the essay, or even that the PL model is opposed to these principles. Herein we reiterate the essentiality for devotees in Çréla Prabhupāda’s movement to submissively and cooperatively serve other devotees, and to learn from and take shelter in senior and advanced devotees. These principles are completely consistent with accepting Çréla Prabhupāda as the prominent link to the disciplic succession.”

Other issues and straw men are addressed in Srila Prabhupada: The Prominent Link, including the Scenarios and Questions and Answers sections, and in related articles (see www.divyajnana.org).

Summary of Eight Principles and Practices

Here are the eight principles and practices described in this essay, for supporting us in identifying whether and to what degree someone is actually “Prabhupada-centered”, genuinely and actively aligned with Srila Prabhupada as the current and direct link to the parampara. We can apply these precepts and guidelines to ourselves, in determining the extent to which we truly accept Srila Prabhupada in the capacity as direct and current link to the disciplic succession.

Also these principles and practices can be utilized to evaluate suitability for accepting roles in a formal initiation ceremony. In that regard, it is important that the initiate and the devotee conducting the

ceremony are philosophically on the same page. Suppose that the initiate is interested in a formal initiation ceremony that is fully aligned with Srila Prabhupada: The Prominent Link, and the CDL model. He can use the guidelines herein to formulate questions for the devotee performing the ceremony, to determine whether there is full agreement with fundamental and vital issues.

1) Referring to Srila Prabhupada as the current link to the parampara.

A relevant question for a potential initiate, to a devotee who will potentially conduct the formal initiation ceremony, could be “After the ceremony, who will be my current link to the disciplic succession?” The principles of the CDL model would mean that all parties in the initiation ceremony clearly understand that Srila Prabhupada is the current link, and will remain the current link for the initiate after the formal ceremony.

2) Referring to Srila Prabhupada as the direct link to the parampara.

A relevant question would be the same as in #1 above, with “direct link” rather than “current link”. Please note that, as emphasized earlier in this essay, “primary link”, “prominent link”, “main guru”, or other such terms are not equivalent substitutes for “direct link” and “current link”, in establishing the genuine Prabhupada-centeredness of someone, including a devotee who conducts initiation ceremonies.

3) Pranam mantras for Srila Prabhupada, and not for anyone else as a link to Srila Prabhupada.

4) Worship of Srila Prabhupada’s picture, and not worshipping the picture of anyone else as a link to Srila Prabhupada.

5) Celebrating Srila Prabhupada’s Vyasa-puja, and not the Vyasa-puja of anyone else as the link to Srila Prabhupada.

As described above, the CDL model enthusiastically encourages humble service to Vaisnavas, and receiving guidance from experienced devotees. In the CDL model devotees who provide such guidance view their role as being to inspire others to establish their direct, personal relationship to Srila Prabhupada. This is distinct from viewing oneself as the link to Srila Prabhupada, as the person through whom another must go in order to connect with Srila Prabhupada.

Requiring or expecting pranams to, or worshipping the picture of, or celebrating the Vyasa-puja of, the person conducting the ceremony of formal initiation, would clearly indicate practices and understandings contrary to the CDL model. In the CDL model the formal initiation ceremony is an official acknowledgement that the initiate has already directly connected with Srila Prabhupada through directly receiving divya-jnana, transcendental knowledge, from Srila Prabhupada. The essential quality and nature of this direct, personal relationship does not change at the time of the formal initiation ceremony.

6) 32. The devotee regards and relates to Srila Prabhupada as “32”, with respect to the disciplic succession listed at the end of the Introduction to Bhagavad-gita As It Is. There is no 33. That doesn’t mean that there won’t ever be a “33” somewhere, sometime, for some devotees. A Vaisnava who accepts Srila Prabhupada as the direct and current link to the parampara accepts Srila Prabhupada as “32”. For such a devotee, whose consciousness is aligned with CDL, there is no “33”.

It might be helpful for a devotee who is in agreement with CDL and who is considering to participate in a formal initiation ceremony, to inquire from the Vaisnava who potentially will conduct the ceremony, whether that devotee, the performer of the ceremony, regards himself as “33”, or will regard himself as such, after the ceremony.

7) Srila Prabhupada is the Vaisnava referred to and meditated on by the verse “*yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo...*”

8) Srila Prabhupada is the Vaisnava referred to and meditated on by the verse “*yasya deve parā bhaktir...*”

Clarifying questions for a devotee who is considering to be an initiate in a formal ceremony might be “When I sing or chant these verses, on whom should I directly and personally meditate, Srila Prabhupada, or the devotee who conducts the formal initiation ceremony?”

As expressed earlier, the focus of this paper is to assist in clarifying what constitutes a genuine understanding of Srila Prabhupada as the direct and current link to the parampara. This hopefully will assist the reader to distinguish this understanding from words and statements that present a thin veneer of apparent “Prabhupada-centered” dedication, concealing, perhaps less than consciously, something quite contrary to principles and practices actually aligned with realizing Srila Prabhupada as the current and direct link to the disciplic succession. We are not claiming that CDL is necessarily the only viable model. We do assert that it is philosophically valid, and it is experienced as true by thousands of Vaisnavas. We humbly request that the worldwide community of Vaisnavas at least respects and honors this understanding of Srila Prabhupada as the current and direct link to the disciplic succession for members of his movement who sincerely approach him in that capacity, regardless of whether or when they participated in a formal initiation ceremony. My hope and intention with this effort is to enrich philosophical conversation and understanding around these important topics, to enhance appreciation for Srila Prabhupada, and to inspire implementation of the principles and practices of CDL, Srila Prabhupada’s model for continuing the parampara.

“32”

Hare Krsna. In recent months I've been conducting a Bhagavad-gita teleclass. The classes are supplemented by email correspondence. Below I am sharing some of this correspondence.

Your servant,
Dhira Govinda dasa

Feb. 3, 2010

Dear, Greetings,

On Feb. 1st, 2010 you wrote: "To Dhira Govinda: If I accept one guru and after his physical departure I mainly rely on associating with him through his instructions, who corrects me when I make mistakes? And does it mean that after 30 years or so of practicing spiritual life I don't need to be corrected anymore? Or my direct question would be, who corrects you Dhira Govinda?"

At the start of Bhagavad-gita there is a list of 32 Vaisnavas. My understanding is that the Vaisnava preceding is the current, direct and primary link to the parampara for the Vaisnava succeeding. So, for example, #26, Srila Narottama dasa Thakur is the current, direct and primary link to the parampara for #27, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakur.

A study of the history of this parampara reveals that not all of the current and direct links were on the planet at the same time as their successors. Also, we'll find that in several instances no formal initiation ceremony happened between these links.

Therefore, based on the disciplic succession as given to us by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, neither a formal initiation ceremony nor simultaneous presence on the same planet is required for one Vaisnava to serve as the current, direct and primary link to the parampara for another Vaisnava.

Based on the above references to logic and parampara precedent, my understanding is that A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami is available as the direct, current and primary link to the parampara for those who sincerely follow his guidance. There is, as I know you are aware, an abundance of additional sastraic evidence to support this. In addition there are the experiences of thousands of Vaisnavas to support this.

Can this model, of accepting Srila Prabhupada as one's current and direct link to the parampara, be misused? Yes, of course it could. And certainly it has been used to avoid spiritual responsibility, and to avoid genuine surrender ("Srila Prabhupada is my guru so I don't have to listen to anyone, ...") I believe that any model can be misapplied and abused, and this one is no exception. That, though, is a discussion of psychology, sincerity and personal character. Herein I wish to focus on siddhanta, a deepening of our understanding of philosophical truth.

When I use terms such as "direct, current and primary link", I am referring to the spiritual master- the singular guru in whom we have absolute faith, and to whom we aspire to surrender unconditionally. This is, for example, the spiritual master on whom we meditate when singing the Samsara prayers from Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti- one line of which is "yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado yasya prasadan na gatih kuto 'pi...", which translates as "By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Krsna. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement." This singular guru is the spiritual master referred to in verses such as: yasya deve para bhaktir yatha deve tatha gurau tasyaite kathita hy artha prakasante mahatmanah

"Unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed" (Svetasvatara Upanisada 6.23).

This singular guru is the one to whom we recite special pranam mantras, and the one to whom we offer bhoga.

Apart from *the* guru, in the singular, each of us has many gurus. To demystify the word "guru"- each of us has many teachers. Many persons, including for example, everyone in this course, has inspired me in my spiritual life. They are all my teachers, gurus. I'm sure that you consider that you too have and have had many gurus, in that plural sense. Also I'm sure that you don't consider all of these "gurus in the plural" to be living on the absolute platform, beyond any tinge of the modes of material nature, worthy of your unconditional surrender. Maybe there is one or more of these "gurus in the plural" whom you do regard to be on that absolute platform. That's wonderful. However, it's not necessary.

It is necessary, based on the system that Sri Krsna established for us, to have one guru, such as those on the list of 32, who is genuinely on that absolute platform, and who is

worthy to receive complete surrender on behalf of Krsna. As established above, that guru does not need to be the person who conducts the ceremony of formal initiation, and neither does that Vaisnava need to be physically present on the same planet as you.

Regarding "gurus in the plural", I believe that as we advance in spiritual life, our eagerness to invite and receive guidance from such gurus naturally increases. We naturally deepen our inspiration to hear from them, associate with them, accept rectification from them, maybe set up coaching-like accountability check systems with them, etc. For some of us "them" might look like one primary person in particular throughout our life, for others it might look like receiving guidance and spiritual inspiration from various persons at different phases of our life. Whatever it looks like, in this "Direct link" (DL) model, Srila Prabhupada is 32, and none of the gurus in the plural serve or want to serve in the capacity of 33. Rather, they support, assist and challenge us to enrich our connection with Srila Prabhupada as 32.

With regard to the specifics of determining from whom to receive guidance, when, for which challenges, that requires careful and steady cultivation of the science and art of bhakti-yoga, especially with regard to the science of Vaisnava relationships. Also it entails independent thoughtfulness, a quality that Srila Prabhupada wanted all of his aspiring followers to abundantly evince.

On February 1st, 2010, prabhu wrote:

"Based on my understanding, separation from the guru appears when there was presence beforehand, association with the guru. I can't honestly claim that I'm a Prabhupada's disciple if I had no direct contact with him, nor if I didn't receive initiation from him. And to receive initiation, there must be some contact. As you write: 'Physical presence is immaterial. Presence of the transcendental sound received from the Spiritual Master should be the guidance of life.' It is received from the spiritual master. Here, the letters you quote emanate from disciples who had a connection with Prabhupada, they were physically initiated by him."

Based on my understanding of history, 's understanding is inaccurate. While Srila Prabhupada was physically present he established a system wherein he had no contact with disciples who received initiation from him. That is, there are many persons who received initiation from Srila Prabhupada who never saw him, never received a letter from him, and never spoke with him on the phone. Also, Srila Prabhupada did not conduct their initiation ceremony. These disciples without a doubt consider Srila Prabhupada their current and direct link to the disciplic succession, and it was perfectly clear that Srila Prabhupada considered himself to be serving in that role for them.

So, please consider someone who connected with Srila Prabhupada's movement in, say, 1976. This devotee received initiation from Srila Prabhupada, though he never saw him or received a letter from him. In many instances Srila Prabhupada didn't even select the spiritually initiated name, nor did Srila Prabhupada chant on the japa beads of this person. Still, there is no question in the mind of this devotee that Srila Prabhupada is his direct, current and primary link to the parampara.

Simultaneously, the devotee described above served in Srila Prabhupada's movement. In that service and capacity he accepted others, such as, for example, the temple president, the visiting sannyasi, and the bhakta leader, as his "gurus in the plural". Maybe one or more of these gurus in the plural were, or are, pure devotees of Krsna. Maybe not. In any case, Srila Prabhupada is the current and direct link to the parampara for this person. These gurus in the plural represented Srila Prabhupada, though they, regardless of their level of spiritual advancement, did not serve in the capacity of "33".

As for myself, I aspire to follow the system that Srila Prabhupada established, as described above. On both accounts- following Srila Prabhupada as "32", and receiving wisdom and guidance from other Vaisnavas as "gurus in the plural"- my endeavors are admittedly pretty lame.

With regard to the phrase "living guru", in my study of Srila Prabhupada's books, letters, conversations and lectures, I don't recall him using that phrase (though maybe he did).

There is a well-known conversation referencing the phrase "living spiritual master", wherein Srila Prabhupada comments on Jesus and the principle of disciplic succession. I include that below.

Madhudvisa: Is there any way for a Christian to, without the help of a Spiritual Master, to reach the spiritual sky through believing the words of Jesus Christ and trying to follow his teachings?

Srila Prabhupada: I don't follow.

Tamal Krsna Goswami: Can a Christian in this age, without a Spiritual Master, but by reading the Bible, and following Jesus's words, reach the...

Srila Prabhupada: When you read the Bible, you follow Spiritual Master. How can you say without? As soon as you read the Bible, that means you are following the instruction of Lord Jesus Christ. That means that you are following Spiritual Master. So where is the opportunity of being without Spiritual Master?

Madhudvisa: I was referring to a living Spiritual Master.

Srila Prabhupada: Spiritual Master is not question of...Spiritual Master is eternal. Spiritual Master is eternal...

(Seattle, Feb. 10, 1968)

I agree that one needs a "living guru". Srila Prabhupada is, without any doubt, a living guru. I understand that you are considering these issues with respect to your personal spiritual life, and I appreciate your sincerity in this regard. I'm interested to hear your view of what I have presented, and any questions or comments you may have. Please note that I'm not saying that this "Direct link" (DL) model is the only possible alternative. I am saying that Srila Prabhupada is available, as described in the DL model, and I am not in agreement with the claim that he is not. Do you consider it a viable model to choose Srila Prabhupada as 32, your direct and current link to the parampara? Is your view that you consider this "Direct link" (DL) model to be valid, though you personally choose to continue to search for a "33"? Or, do you consider that the DL model, as I've presented it, is invalid (that is, your stance is that Srila Prabhupada is not available as the direct and current link to the parampara, for you or others)? If so, on what basis?

And of course, this presentation and these questions are not intended just for I'd like to hear from everyone in the course your views on the above, with regard to what I've presented, and my way of presenting it.

I hope this meets you well.

Respectfully,

Dhira Govinda dasa (David Wolf)