

## RTVIK: AUTOMATIC ACCEPTANCE?

Hare Krishna.

In his recent article on the Sampradaya Sun, titled “Automatic?,” (<http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/11-10/editorials6768.htm>) Mahavidya Prabhu argues that the supporters of Srila Prabhupada’s rtvik order are denying him his right to reject aspiring disciples. I’ve appreciated Mahavidya’s writing on many occasions, but that accusation is wrong.

There is no need for Srila Prabhupada to accept (or reject) individual disciples now, because historical record shows that he chose to distance himself from that role and delegate it to rtviks instead. This can be shown clearly in four events in 1977:

1. April 22, Tamal Krsna Gosvami tells Srila Prabhupada that he does not think any of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples are qualified at the level of guru, and Srila Prabhupada agrees, telling TKG that he is waiting for someone to become qualified. This contradicts any earlier evidence someone may put forward saying that he had authorized gurus. As of April 22, 1977, he had not.

Conspicuously absent is any mention by Srila Prabhupada of how he supposedly authorized everyone to be initiating guru with a private letter to Tusta Krsna swami several years earlier.

2. On May 28, Satsvarupa das Gosvami formally asked Srila Prabhupada how initiations were to continue after his disappearance, and he immediately replied, “Officiating acarya... Rtvik, yes.” As if unsatisfied with this, his disciples brought the conversation around to discussion of gurus, and Srila Prabhupada emphasized it would be upon his order, an order that apparently was never given.

3. Srila Prabhupada signed a document dated July 9, 1977, indicating that the rtviks listed therein were to act on his behalf in accepting disciples, which would then be Srila Prabhupada’s disciples. (TKG mentioned on at Topanga Canyon on Dec. 3, 1980, that Srila Prabhupada told him more rtviks could be added.) With this document, Srila Prabhupada materially removed himself from the decision-making process in accepting disciples, having already clearly established his standard of 16 rounds, 4 regs, etc. Nowhere in this document is there any termination clause or any other contradiction of Srila Prabhupada’s prior expressed choice to employ the rtvik method for accepting disciples in ISKCON after his disappearance.

4. That Srila Prabhupada dismissed himself from the decision of accepting disciples was confirmed on October 18, when the desire of one man to become his disciple was presented to Srila Prabhupada, and Srila Prabhupada referred five times to the “deputies” he had made to go to instead. Reading the conversation gives me the impression that he was a little annoyed at being bothered to verbally accept a disciple when he had already delegated that role.

Leaving aside other supporting evidence for the sake of time and space, these four events clearly illustrate the relevant decision that Srila Prabhupada actually made, to continue accepting disciples after his disappearance via the rtvik method he instituted. Therefore it is far better to focus on honoring Srila Prabhupada’s expressed order rather than worrying that someone might wrongly accept a disciple on his behalf and force Srila Prabhupada to save another soul and deliver another devotee to Krishna against his will. Yeah, it sounds ridiculous. Have we forgotten Srila Prabhupada’s mercy?

The way Mahavidya presented it, one unaware might think Srila Prabhupada was big on rejecting his aspiring disciples. We know he accepted several thousand, including some who were just passing through and many whom he never met. How many did he

reject? Mahavidya acts as if he knows of one but yet calls him a disciple, so that suggests Srila Prabhupada accepted him too. I would like to know what, if any, evidence anyone has to suggest that Srila Prabhupada would reject an aspiring disciple who would meet the criteria for initiation that he established for ISKCON. In the absence of such evidence, I find it extremely mislead for anyone to stand in the way of aspiring disciples wanting to take shelter at Srila Prabhupada's lotus feet. Some, including Mahavidya Prabhu recently if I recall correctly, have presented an argument they seem to find very clever, that if we can be initiated as Srila Prabhupada's disciples even now, then that means we could just as well be initiated as disciples of any past acarya. They say, devoid of logic, that the rtvik system is invalid because I could become the godbrother of Krishna's spiritual master, for example. This again ignores the fact that Srila Prabhupada created a worldwide institution and a rtvik method within that institution for accepting disciples in his absence, and he said this was the method to be used after his disappearance. The previous acaryas came in a different time, place, and circumstance, and did not do that. History shows that Srila Prabhupada did.

Others present the idea that somehow a guru cannot accept disciples after his disappearance. I'm not sure whether they think this is a limitation on Krishna's abilities, on the guru's, or both.

Considering that an ordinary rich person can give his material wealth after his disappearance to someone he has never met but who meets certain qualifications, I find it impossible to believe that on the spiritual platform a guru cannot give his spiritual wealth in an equivalent situation. Materially, it happens every day. Someone has loads of money and establishes a foundation, with funding, trustees, criteria for awards, etc., and money is given as designated, even after the founder's death. Srila Prabhupada's establishment of the rtvik system in ISKCON during his manifest pastimes provides a similar infrastructure, making that system possible even now. Given that Srila Prabhupada provided the means for accepting disciples after his disappearance, directly said to utilize the rtvik method after his disappearance, widely promulgated a written order following that, referred to the same in later conversations and letters, and never subsequently contradicting this order... if the "walks like a duck, quacks like a duck" logic is good for anything, then rtvik system is undoubtedly what Srila Prabhupada wanted to do.

Therefore one should accept the decisions Srila Prabhupada made rather than falsely accusing others of stealing from Srila Prabhupada a decision that he formally delegated.

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