

Our Paramahansa Parampara

By Narasimha das

Srila Prabhupada did many things that might be adjudged, by *veda-vada-ratas*, *Hindus* or others, to be against Vedic traditions.

For instance, Srila Prabhupada left India as a *sannyasi* and traveled abroad. He offered *diksa* and *sannyasa* to persons born in families of *yavanas*. He offered *gayatri diksa* to women and allowed women to be *pujaris* in public temples. As a *sannyasi*, he allowed women to approach him and do personal service. As a *sannyasi*, he took part in marriage ceremonies for his disciples. He established Deities and temple worship outside of India. He traveled in cars and planes, left India, and circled the globe 12 times, although Vedic tradition forbids such travel for *sannyasis*. He formally initiated thousands of disciples he had never met. He did this through the agency of *ritvik* priests. He accepted disciples on the basis of recommendations of other disciples without ever meeting them in person. Srila Prabhupada accepted formal, public worship in Krishna's temples while sitting on a throne in front of the Deities, although this was apparently never done by any previous Vaisnava *acarya*. In all these ways, by his causeless mercy and the order of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he quickly expanded the Krishna consciousness movement all over the world and proved his unique position.

The argument that Srila Prabhupada's final order for *ritvik* initiations was against Vedic tradition is fallacious. *Paramahansa* Vaisnava *acaryas* are always transcendental to tradition.

"No. Tradition, religion--they are all material. They are also all designation." (Conv., March 13, 1975)

"Our only tradition is how to satisfy Vishnu." (Lecture, July 30, 1973)

In any case, no one can show--according to *sadhu*, *guru*, *shastra*--that no other Vaisnava *acarya* ever allowed *ritviks* to preside over the formalities of *diksa* without the *Acarya's* manifest presence. A liberated personality is not limited by time, space or Vedic traditions. No one in the GBC's *sampradaya* has ever shown any evidence indicating that "posthumous" *ritvik* initiations on behalf of the *Sampradaya Acarya* are forbidden by Vedic tradition. Unfortunately, many devotees have been misled into the belief that Srila Prabhupada is an ordinary, temporary guru limited by a physical form.

"The spiritual master is not a question of ...['living' or 'dead']. The spiritual master is eternal; the spiritual master is eternal..." (Lecture, Seattle, Oct. 2, 1968.)

"The spiritual master is in the disciplic succession since time eternal, and he does not deviate at all from the instructions of the Supreme Lord." (*Bhagavad-gita As It IS* 4.42, Purport.)

It is common sense to understand that what Srila Prabhupada formally ordered in an official directive sent to all ISKCON temples and leaders during his last weeks in 1977 takes precedence over other things he may have privately said, insinuated or suggested prior. A letter to a renegade disciple, for instance,

who was not part of ISKCON is not evidence for changing the entire system of initiations Prabhupada carefully arranged in late 1977. In fact, the *ritvik* system of initiations had been current in ISKCON for several years prior to 1977, and Prabhupada spoke about it at length right up until his departure in November.

"I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating *acaryas*." (Conversation, May 28, 1977, Vrindaban.) **"These initiations. I have deputed my disciples. Is it clear or not?"** (Conv., Oct. 18, 1977, Vrindaban.)

"I may say many things to you, but when I say something directly to you, you do it. Your first duty is to do that, you cannot argue: 'Sir, you said to me to do like this before.' No, that is not your duty. What I say to you now, you do it. That is obedience. You cannot argue." (Lecture, April 14, 1975, Hyderabad)

Srila Prabhupada never suggested arrangements for nominating or approving successor *acaryas* or *diksa-gurus*. Nor did he authorize any person, group, or organization to create such a system. Nor did Prabhupada indicate that one may appoint himself as *diksa-guru* or *acarya* simply by adopting the role or status. Srila Prabhupada spoke only of *ritvik* initiations. He never suggested anything else. In 1977 he officially reconfirmed the *ritvik* system and made an adjustment to allow the system to continue without his personal supervision. When he was specifically asked how initiations should be conducted "*in the future, particularly at a time when you are no longer with us*", he spoke repeatedly only about *ritvik* initiations. If he had wanted his disciples to begin initiating their own disciples, why didn't he say so?

"They did not even consider with common sense—that if Guru Maharaja wanted to appoint somebody as *acarya*, why did he not say? He said so many things, and this point he missed? The real point? And they insisted upon it. They declared some unfit person[s] to become *acarya*. Then another man came. And then another—'Acarya!' Another – 'Acarya!'..." (Conversation, Bombay, August 16, 1976)

The GBC *iskurus* and their promoters are dead against Srila Prabhupada's orders for *ritvik* initiations. They think it condemns them to remain forever as humble servants, denying them their right to initiate their own disciples in Srila Prabhupada's mission—denying them the opportunity to receive guru *dakshina*, prestige, worship and life-long indentured servants.

They have no problem, apparently, with *iskurus* offering *ritvik* initiations, even though they may be neophytes of questionable character. They have no problem with women becoming elected *diksa-gurus*, although this is clearly against Vedic tradition. They have no problem with *sannyasis* who associate with women. They have no problem with concocted systems for electing gurus, although all this is clearly against Vedic tradition. They have no problem ignoring the flamboyant extravagance of dozens of their voted-in "gurus". They have no problem closing Prabhupada's temples, selling his properties, selling his cows, changing his books, and spending millions of dollars in court to fight his bona fide disciples who

are preaching successfully. They have no problem with the fact that thousands of their Godbrothers disagree with their deviant policies.

They pose as *diksa-gurus*, they say, for preaching Krishna consciousness. Yet they find it impossible to accept Srila Prabhupada's system for *ritvik* initiations--even for the sake of keeping ISKCON pure and united. They are horrified, thinking, "How will Prabhupada ever authorize us to be gurus? Even if we become self-realized, how will he know it? How will he speak to us now? He is dead and gone." Such is the foolishness of the GBC and their elected, upstart "Iskcon gurus", more aptly known as *iskurus*.

According to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, our Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya *guru parampara* is based on the instructions of *paramahamsas*. (See *Sri Guru-Parampara*, Verse 9, *Songs of the Vaisnava Acaryas*.) This is the real tradition we follow. Our *sampradaya* is not based on the formalities and rituals of the Vedas. Pure Vaisnavas are not bound by Vedic traditions. Krishna points out in *Bhagavad-gita* that the Vedas deal mostly with the three modes of material nature and are meant for those within the jurisdiction of these modes. Lord Krishna advises Arjuna to rise above these modes. (Bg. 2.45) The actual tradition of Krishna consciousness teaches that only a *paramahamsa*, a devotee on the topmost level of devotional service, is *eligible* to become guru. The real, eternal tradition asserts that no one can become guru unless he is ordered to become guru by the *paramahamsa Vaisnava acarya*, or by Krishna Himself.

"When one has attained the topmost position of *maha-bhagavata*, he is to be accepted as guru and worshiped exactly like Hari, the Personality of Godhead. Only such a person is eligible to occupy the post of guru." (*Caitanya-caritamrta* Madhya, 24.330, Purport, citing *Padma Purana*.)

"A guru can become guru when he is ordered by his guru. Otherwise nobody can become guru." (Conversation, October 28, 1975, Nairobi.)

This eternal tradition was perfectly illustrated by Sri Gadadhara Pandita and Srila Gaura Kishora Das Babaji. When Sri Vallabha Bhatta approached Sri Gadadhara Pandita for initiation, the latter said, "***The work of acting as a spiritual master is not possible for me. I am completely dependent. My Lord is Gaurasundara, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. I cannot do anything independently, without His order.***" (*Caitanya-caritamrta*, Antya 150, 151.) When Srila Bhaktisiddhanta begged Srila Gaura Kishora for initiation, the latter said the same thing, "***I must first ask Mahaprabhu!***"

Yet self-appointed upstarts think a majority vote from a vitiated ecclesiastical body is all they need to assume the most exalted status of Gaudiya Vaisnava *diksa-guru*. In defiance of Srila Prabhupada's clear instructions in these matters, they rely on the sanction of the bogus GBC for their authority to imitate Srila Prabhupada, the real *diksa-guru* for all of ISKCON. In spite of the chaos and division these illicit guru enterprises have created in Srila Prabhupada's mission and the lives of thousands of devotees, they stubbornly insist--using concocted "*scissor logic*"--that their way is bona fide and Srila Prabhupada's system for "representatives of the *Acarya*" is bogus.

All this *maya* is due to a poor fund of knowledge, Hindu ideas, and the original sin, namely false ambition. A statistical analysis will show that the job of *iskuru* is one of the most dangerous jobs in the world, right up there with rodeo bull rider, motorcycle stuntman, and front-line, war-time Marine. Foolish upstarts risk their lives, the integrity of ISKCON, and the faith of thousands of followers for the sake of false ambition, the original sin of all conditioned souls.

Additional References:

"One should not try to be an artificially advanced devotee, thinking, 'I am a first-class devotee.' Such thinking should be avoided. It best not to accept any disciples." (C.C., *Madhya* 7.130, Purport.)

"If everyone just initiates, there will only be a contradictory result. As long as it goes on, there will only be failure." (From the *Palguna Krishna Pancami*, a poem by Srila Prabhupada, 1961.)

"The bona fide spiritual master is in the disciplic succession since time eternal, and he does not deviate at all from the instructions of the Supreme Lord." (*Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, 4.42, Purport.)

"Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an *uttama-adhikari* as spiritual master." (*Nectar of Instruction*, Text 5, Purport.)

"...help can be given only by a spiritual master like Krishna. Therefore the conclusion is that a spiritual master who is one hundred percent Krishna conscious is the bona fide spiritual master, for he can solve the problems of life." (*Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, 2.8, Purport.)

"He reasons ill who says that Vaisnavas die, when Thou art living still in sound." (From a poem by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura.)

"However, one should not imitate the behavior of an advanced devotee or *maha-bhagavata* without being self-realized, for by such imitation one will eventually become degraded." (*Nectar of Instruction*, Text 5, Purport.)

"Srila Jiva Goswami advised that one not accept a spiritual master in terms of hereditary or customary social and ecclesiastical conventions. One should simply try to find a genuinely qualified spiritual master for actual advancement in spiritual understanding." (*Caitanya-caritamṛta* Adi 1.35, Purport)

"Why did this Gaudiya Matha fail? They wanted to create artificially someone as *acarya*, and everything failed... They declared some unfit person to become *acarya*. Then another man came. And then another--'*acarya*!' Then another --'*acarya*!' ..." (Conversation, August 16, 1976, Bombay.)

"Srila Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhakura, He said that 'When our men will be *sahajiya*, oh, they'll be more dangerous.' So our men are becoming, some of them, *sahajiyas*. This very word He said, that 'When our men will be *sahajiyas* he'll be more dangerous'."

"As soon as a foolish disciple tries to overtake his spiritual master and becomes ambitious to occupy his post, he immediately falls down." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.12.14, Purport)

"And as soon as he learns that Guru Maharaja is dead, 'Now I am so advanced that I can kill my guru and I become guru'... then he is finished." (Conversation, August 16, 1976, Bombay)

"Mundane votes have no jurisdiction to elect a Vaisnava *acarya*. A Vaisnava *acarya* is self-effulgent, and there is no need of any court judgment." (Caitanya-caritamṛta, Madhya 2.218.)

Please note: Srila Prabhupada replied in similar ways to related questions such as "*who will be the next acarya?*" and "*who will be your successor?*" Below are a few examples.

"Only Lord Chaitanya can take my place. He will take care of the movement." (November 2, 1977, Vrindaban)

"After me, there will be no more *acarya*." (Conversation, New York, 1968)

"I will always be the spiritual master for the entire Krishna consciousness movement--for anyone in this age willing to follow the principles I have taught for the benefit of everyone." (Conversation, 1975, Ookala, Hawaii.)

"My success is always there. Yes. Just like the sun is there always. It may come before your vision or not -- the sun is there. But if you are fortunate, you come before the sun... The sun is open to everyone." (Conversation, February 12, 1975, Mexico City.)

"I will never die. I will live from my books and you will utilize." (Interview, July 16, 1975, Berkeley.)

Please note: Srila Prabhupada's *vani* repeatedly describes the importance of recognizing the bona fide spiritual master. For instance:

"Srila Jiva Goswami advised that one not accept a spiritual master in terms of hereditary or customary social and ecclesiastical conventions. One should simply try to find a genuinely qualified spiritual master for actual advancement in spiritual understanding." (Caitanya-caritamṛta Adi 1.35, Purport)

"I wish that each and every branch keep their independent identity and cooperate, keeping the *Acarya* in the center. On this principle we can open any number of branches all over the world." (Letter, February 11, 1967.)

"But if everyone simply imitates your exalted status, there will be only a contradictory result. As long as this pretense continues, there will only be utter failure." (From *Vaisistya-Astaka*, a poem by Srila Prabhupada, 1961)

"Oh, shame! shame! my dear Godbrothers--aren't we embarrassed by what we are doing? In the manner of mundane businessmen we deceptively increase the numbers of our own disciples."
(*Vaisistya-Astaka*, 1961)

"If one tries to mingle the worship of *yogamaya* with *mahamaya*, considering them one and the same, he does really show high intelligence." (Cc. *Madhya* 8.90, Purport)

"Intermingling the spiritual with the material causes one to look on transcendence as material and the mundane as spiritual. This is all due to a poor fund of knowledge." (Cc. *Madhya* 16.72, Purport)

"Presently people are so fallen they cannot distinguish between a liberated soul and a conditioned soul." (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 4.18.5, Purport)

"One who considers the spiritual master an ordinary human being... is considered a *naraki*, a candidate for hellish life." (*Caitanya-caritamrta* Antya 6.294, Purport)

"As soon as a foolish disciple tries to overtake his spiritual master and becomes ambitious to occupy his post, he immediately falls down." (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 5.12.14, Purport)

"Why did this Gaudiya Matha fail? ... They wanted to create artificially someone as *acarya*, and everything failed... They declared some unfit person to become *acarya*. Then another man came. And then another--'*acarya*!' Then another--'*acarya*!' So better to remain a foolish [simple] person perpetually, to be directed by Guru Maharaja. That is perfection. And as soon as he learns that Guru Maharaja is dead, '*Now I am so advanced that I can kill my guru and I become guru.*' Then he is finished." (Conversation, August 16, 1976, Bombay.)

Please note: Srila Prabhupada repeatedly ordered that nothing be changed in ISKCON.

"So we follow that '*No Change Policy*'. Not that because I think I have become now advanced, I change this to that. That means I am not advanced. My knowledge is imperfect. Therefore I am changing."

"Real law means there is no change. Just like day and night, it is coming. The fortnight, the dark period and the light period, it is coming for millions and millions and time immemorial. The same law is going...going on. You cannot change. So as soon as you change, that means it is imperfect."