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Acharya-
Appointed, Elected or Self-Effulgent?

by
Jagat Guru Siddha Swarup Ananda Goswami Prabhupad

*The following article by **Jagat Guru Siddha Swarup Ananda Goswami Prabhupad**, has been taken from various lectures and informal talks which he has given on the subject of "appointed spiritual masters". It is part of a much larger text which is soon to be published in book form. In the book, entitled* "GURU: The Qualifications", *Jagat Guru describes the qualities of a bona fide spiritual master in simple, direct language, and tells how such a saintly teacher can be recognized.*

In the scriptures you will find hundreds and thousands of descriptions of the transcendental qualities which make a person a spiritual master, but you will not find it mentioned anywhere that a qualification of a spiritual master is that he has been appointed or chosen by his spiritual master. "Guru" means being in a particular type of consciousness. And what is that consciousness? Consciousness of God. A guru or acharya is one who is knowing and loving Krishna. Is it possible to appoint someone to love Krishna? No, this is impossible.

Everyone Can Know Krishna

A spiritual master speaks because he wants others to know Krishna. If he speaks to someone, it means that he is trying to give them Krishna. In other words, he is saying that that person can know Krishna. Otherwise, why would he speak to them if it were not possible for them to know Krishna? If they can know Krishna it means they can be guru, because guru means one who knows Krishna. Therefore, everyone who has heard, and everyone who has been initiated by a bona fide spiritual master can know Krishna. Each and every single one of those initiated disciples can be guru. Of course, whether they become gurus or not will depend upon how much they are actually accepting their spiritual master's teachings. But the possibility is there. Now, if I appoint someone as guru or acharya then immediately this possibility is denied. If I appoint somebody to be guru, then it means simultaneously I am appointing everybody else to not be guru. I am saying that this person or these persons can be guru and these persons cannot. Right? That means I am saying that the others cannot know God, because guru means one who knows God. If I'm saying they can't be guru it means I'm saying they can't know God.

Jagat Guru Siddha Swarup Ananda Goswami Prabhupad

Actually, a bona fide spiritual master is giving equal opportunity to everyone, but this idea of appointed acharyas means that the guru is not giving equal opportunity to everyone. It means that the acharya's love is selective, which means that he's not guru, because a guru's mercy is given equally to everyone. So, anyone who says that his guru has appointed him as acharya is actually saying that his spiritual master is not a bona fide spiritual master. In other words, such disciples blaspheme an actual spiritual master. In their attempts to have others worship them as guru, they end up blaspheming their spiritual master, thus paving the way to a hellish existence for themselves.

The grace of the spiritual master is there in the form of his instructions, which are based on his desire that people know Krishna and his knowledge that they can know Krishna. That everyone can love Krishna is confirmed by Krishna Himself in the *Bhagavad-gita*.

"There is no question of selective love or mercy from the pure devotee... some people actually take his gift and some don't."

> "O son of Pritha, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth—women, vaishyas (merchants), as well as sudras (workers)—can approach the supreme destination."
> (*Bhagavad-gita* 9:32)

In his purport to this verse, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami remarks,

> "It is clearly declared here by the Supreme Lord that in devotional service there is no distinction between the lower or higher classes of people. In the material conception of life there are such divisions, but for a person engaged in transcendental devotional service to the Lord, there are none. **Everyone is eligible for the supreme destination.**"

Question: ***If the spiritual master's mercy is equal to everyone, how come some students advance and others don't?***

Jagat Guru: Some people don't take the mercy, that's why. Just like my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, he wrote so many books, and everything he was talking about is all quite clear. Whatever he said, he said to everyone. He did not say it to some select people. Therefore, he is bestowing his mercy upon everyone—the only difference is that some people are taking it and some people are not. In other words, some people pick up the books and read them and some people don't. And some of those who pick up the books and read them actually absorb what he is saying, and others are still full of envy so they cannot understand what they read. The truth is right in front of their eyes, but they still do nonsense, they still interpret.

There is no question of selective love or mercy from the pure devotee; it's just that some people appreciate and some people don't. Some people actually take his gift and some don't. But the very fact that he is giving the gift to everyone is evidence in itself that acharyas are not appointed. If he thought only eleven people

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could know Krishna or be guru, then why did he write so many books? And why did he go out of his way to speak to so many hundreds of thousands of people? Why didn't he just speak to those eleven? Because he didn't think like this, that's why! If somebody says that he appointed eleven people as acharyas, then that means they are saying he appointed everybody else that they are not acharyas or lovers of Krishna. That means they are saying that he consciously wasted his time by writing so many books, speaking to so many people, etc., when he knew they could never love Krishna. This is nonsense. It is a most offensive idea.

Lord Chaitanya's Command

The idea of appointed successors and acharyas also denies the teaching of Lord Chaitanya. It is Lord Chaitanya's wish that everyone should become a Vaishnava and guru, "By My command be guru, and everyone you meet give them the same command."

> "Instruct everyone to follow the orders of Lord Shri Krishna as they are given in *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad Bhagavatam*. In this way, become a spiritual master and try to liberate everyone in this land." (*Chaitanya Charitamrita, Madhya-lila* 3.7:28)

"Be guru" means know Krishna. Therefore, Lord Chaitanya is saying that everybody can know Krishna. It is not limited.

> "Whether one is a brahmana, a sannyasi or a sudra—regardless of what he is—he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Krishna." (*Chaitanya Charitamrita, Madhya-lila* 8.128)

This is Lord Chaitanya's conclusion. But as soon as a person talks about appointed acharyas he is denying this conclusion; he is limiting who can know Krishna. Therefore, a bona fide spiritual master will never appoint successors. Rather, each disciple will be able to affect others according to the purity of his own activities and how much he is actually loving Krishna. He will be guru or not guru according to whether or not he follows his spiritual master's instructions. A spiritual master doesn't appoint, "This person is guru and this person isn't," rather, he gives everybody the instructions by which they can become guru. If they follow them they become guru, in other words lovers of Krishna. And if they don't follow them, they remain lovers of maya, non-guru.

Disciplic succession is there, but it is not based on appointment. Disciplic succession means one pure devotee of Krishna hands the knowledge down to his disciples, and any of those disciples who accept it purely can pass this knowledge down to others. Anyone who hears purely is a pure lover of Krishna, and they will pass on purely what has been given to them. This is the meaning of guru.

"Anyone who hears purely is a pure lover of Krishna, and they will pass on purely what has been given to them."

Question: ***But how can a spiritual master be sure that the disciplic succession will continue if he doesn't appoint someone to take his place? In*** **Back to Godhead** ***magazine I read that Bhaktivedanta Swami "selected eleven senior disciples to act as initiating gurus who could accept disciples after his disappearance. In this way he insured the continuation of the parampara (disciplic succession)." (BTG, 13:1-2, p. 36)***

Jagat Guru: They are saying my spiritual master insured the continuation of the disciplic succession by appointing the next acharyas? That means they are saying he was in anxiety that the parampara would not continue unless he appointed someone, that he didn't believe that Krishna existed to give people the vision to see who His devotee is. It means they are saying all of his instructions were of no value. In other words, they are faithless, and they have projected their own faithlessness onto their spiritual master. Firstly, they have no faith that Krishna can empower somebody to speak. And secondly, they have no faith that people who are sincerely looking for a spiritual master will be able to perceive one unless he is pointed out to them by appointment. This shows lack of faith. "Oh, it's going to break down! It's going to break down! We gotta do something! How's it going to continue?" They are afraid. This is a very important point; it shows they are faithless.

A pure devotee of Krishna is not living in anxiety that his movement will fall apart. Firstly, he doesn't see it as his movement. He has faith in Krishna and he is thinking it is Lord Chaitanya's movement. A real acharya thinks like this: "Krishna is there within their hearts and I have given so much evidence about the qualities of a spiritual master, and in the shastra the qualifications of a guru are also there. It is very easy for anyone who is serious. Krishna will give them guidance. Krishna will protect them." He doesn't think, "Without me everything will fall apart." Because he is not full of anxiety he does not need to appoint acharya. He has full faith in Krishna. But these people who say otherwise, they are full of anxiety, they are full of fear and they have projected that same fear onto their spiritual master. They are thinking that their spiritual master was in anxiety.

Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

"Appointed acharyas philosophy" means that someone is in anxiety that things aren't going to go right unless he appoints someone as the next acharya. "No one will be able to know who the next guru is unless I appoint." Therefore, they are saying that their spiritual master left the planet in anxiety, because why would you appoint somebody unless you are in anxiety?

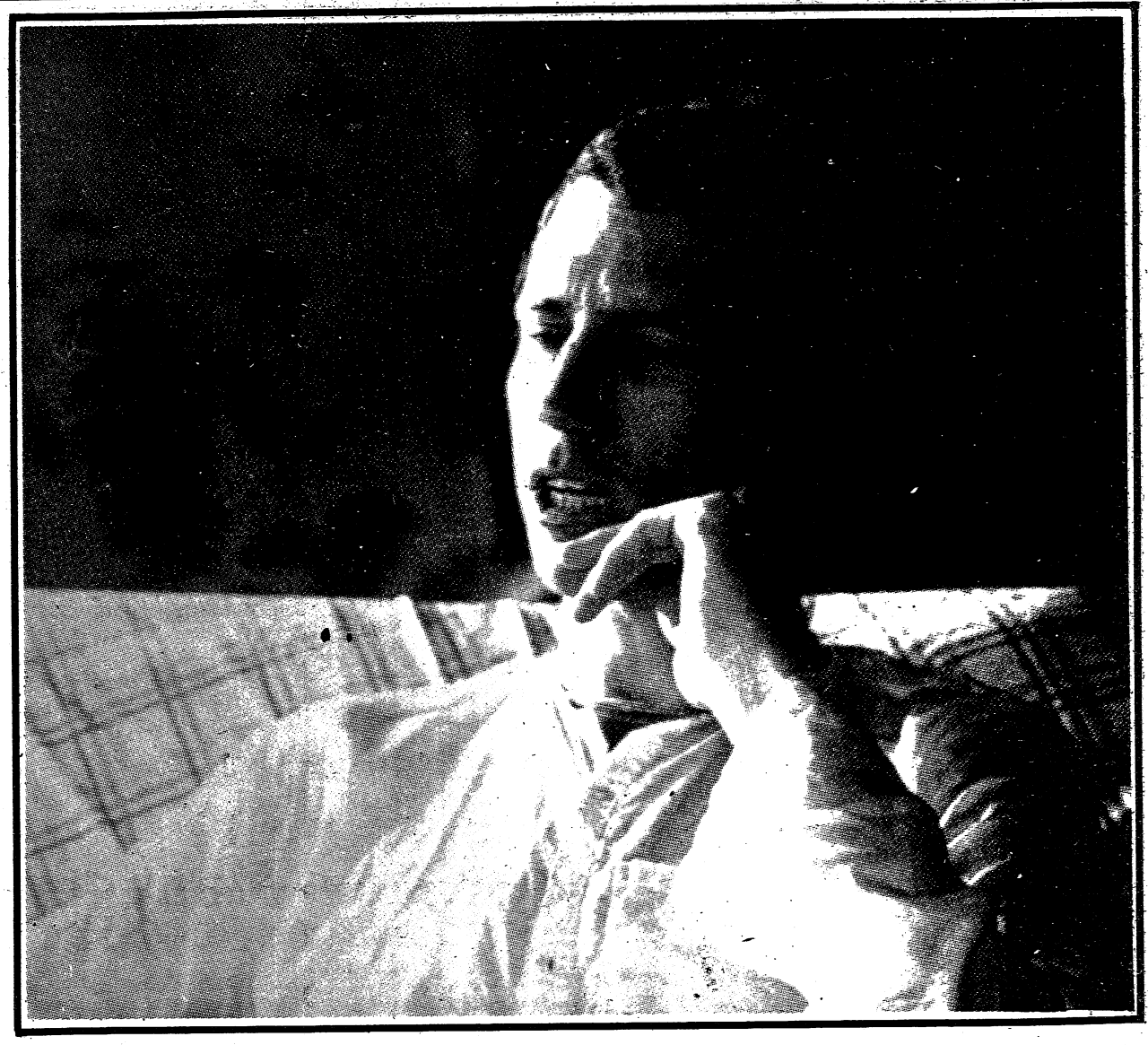
It is just like this one Godbrother of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami who appointed his son as the next "acharya" of the Gaudiya Math. He wrote a letter saying he wanted to make sure everyone knew so that there would be no confusion about who the next acharya would be. *(Editor's note: That incident is elaborated on in a later section.)*

For disciples of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad to say that their spiritual master appointed the next acharyas before he passed away, as a type of insurance of the continuation of the parampara, is to compare him with this nonsense fellow. They are putting our spiritual master in the same category as this nonsense person, because they are saying that both of them appointed acharyas. Is that understandable? They are placing him in the category of an ordinary man, a materialist, anxiety-filled. This is another offense. In this way, they are committing many offenses.

And if they say, "No, appointing a successor is a symptom of someone who is not in anxiety", then they are saying that all the previous acharyas were in a different situation than their spiritual master because none of them ever appointed successors. This again either denies that their spiritual master is bona fide or it denies that the previous acharyas are bona fide. Of course, if they say the previous acharyas are not bona fide, then they are also saying that their spiritual master is not bona fide because he's in their line.

Question: ***If it's not by appointment, then how does the spiritual master insure that the disciplic succession continues?***

Jagat Guru: To insure that the parampara continues, the spiritual master tries to give all of his disciples Krishna, and if they love Krishna, then that insures that the parampara will be continued. If you love Krishna, then you love others and you want to give Krishna to them. That's the insurance of the parampara continuing, not that you appoint somebody. A spiritual master insures the continuation of the parampara by giving Krishna to his disciples. If he can make just one person a pure devotee—if he can just bring one person to the point where they are really loving Krishna and loving others and they want to give Krishna to others—then the parampara is definite. The parampara is intact because that person who loves Krishna and loves others will work to get Krishna to the people. Simply by making it so that even one disciple loves Krishna so much that he'll work, no matter what, to give the people Krishna, the parampara is insured. No matter what the danger to himself, such a devotee works to give people Krishna. Even though 99.9 per cent of all your disciples are rascals, if just one becomes a pure lover of Krishna, then the insurance is there that the parampara will continue because that person is going to be moved out of compassion to give Krishna to others. This is the insurance. It's very practical. But you're saying that someone would not give Krishna to others unless he's appointed.



"A spiritual master insures the continuation of the parampara by giving Krishna to his disciples."

Question: ***Well, maybe he was seeing that those eleven were loving Krishna and therefore he acknowledged it by appointing them?***

Jagat Guru: Why would he have to appoint them if they love Krishna? If they love Krishna they'll love others and want to give Krishna to others. If they love Krishna then they will be empowered to give Krishna to others. What is the need for his appointment? There is no need for him to appoint anyone, because they will be moved out of their love for Krishna and out of their compassion for others. The motivating princi- of preaching is that you love Krishna and you love others and you want to give Krishna to others because you love them. What you're saying is that you don't have any faith that the acharya can be empowered by Krishna. You are ing that loving Krishna is not enough, that a person needs to be empowered by something else—you have to get some kind of diploma or something.

Also, according to this argument, if a person is not appointed, then he won't be able to give Krishna to others. It means that if I'm not appointed, then I will just keep living for myself, right? This is a nonsense idea. Why is appointment necessary? Either a person loves Krishna and therefore loves others and works to give Krishna to others and is therefore a guru, empowered, or he's not. If he's not a lover of Krishna then he doesn't care for others; therefore he doesn't care to give Krishna, that's all. It is a simple thing. This appointed business is for the faithless.

Guru Is Not A Post

People who subscribe to this idea of appointed acharyas think that "guru" is some sort of post that one achieves. Their idea is that guru is the top rung on the hierarchical ladder—a position of enjoyment. When you get appointed guru, you get to have people waving fans at you, bowing down to you, eating rose petals out of your shoe, and so forth. "Oh, oh, oh, bliss! Oh, look, everyone is worshipping me, oh, how wonderful!" That is their problem; they are thinking guru is a post like brahmin, sannyasi, swami, bishop, etc. Intelligent people will not go for this idea.

If you want to have a superficial guru, an official guru, and get to be an official disciple or an official devotee, that's one thing, but if you want to know God, that's something else. And the choice is yours. If you accept an appointed guru, then what is your idea about the goal of life? The highest point for you will be to achieve what your guru has achieved. Is that not right? So, if your guru's achievement is that he got appointed to be guru, then what you will be hoping for is that one day he will appoint you to be guru.

So, the goal of life is no longer to love God. It no longer has anything to do with going through internal changes. It just has to do with somehow becoming appointed. In that way they are hoping to be appointed brahmin, to be having the status of sannyasi or swami, or even to come to the point of being appointed and having the status of *Guru* . In this way, discipleship becomes a very cheap thing. The students of such appointed acharyas play politics and act with duplicity, maneuvering this way and that, offering all "respects" to their so-called guru and hoping that one day he'll appoint them because they've been such "loyal" disciples. Of course at the end, if he appoints somebody else and not them, they will be very bitter. Such is their love. Of course, if they do get to move into the post at the top of the ladder, it's another story. "I've finally made it to the top, yessirree, number one, yessir." Such people are simply eating stool, that's all. They are worse than maggots and flies, and those who follow them are also like flies and maggots. So, this is their life: they are eating stool and they

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"So, the goal of life is no longer to love God...It just has to do with somehow becoming appointed...In this way, discipleship becomes a very cheap thing."

are thinking it is food. If anyone thinks they are appointed guru, and they want to enjoy followers in this way, then it must be appreciated that they cannot be happy, nor can they lead anyone else to happiness.

These people want to play guru and they are seeing it as a post to be occupied. But to be guru is different than playing guru. The difference between being guru and playing guru is that being guru is a state of consciousness, a condition of spiritual advancement, and playing guru is a post or an external activity. So, if a person feels he can be appointed to be guru, really what he is saying then, is that he is going to "play" guru. Actually, guru is the consciousness of loving Krishna. One who is heavy, he is a guru. He is heavy-laden with love of Krishna; that is his qualification. A lover of Krishna can make others into lovers of Krishna. If you're not a lover of Krishna you cannot make others want to love Krishna. Therefore, you are not guru or acharya, no matter what kind of diploma you've got.

Question: ***Well, what is the position of these people then, if they're not appointed acharyas?***

Jagat Guru: Actually, the real situation with these people is that they are supposed to be maintaining the temples and maintaining the book distribution and the other programs that were arranged by their spiritual master, that's all.

Appointed Managers

Sometimes a bona fide spiritual master may appoint a person or persons to take care of the business and manage the affairs of his institution after he leaves the planet, but it should not be mistaken that he has appointed these persons to be acharyas. It is one thing to give someone the responsibility of maintaining an organization and taking care of the people who are linked up with that organization, and it is another thing entirely to appoint someone acharya. To confuse the two will simply cause disturbance, ar a practical example is there in the history of the Gaudiya Math institution which was founded by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur.

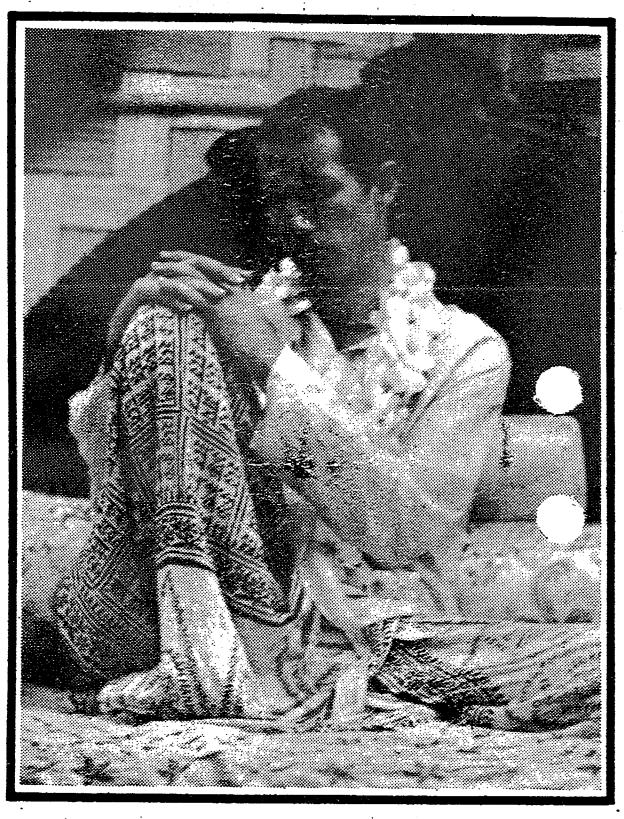
> "Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, at the time of his departure, requested all his disciples to form a governing body (GBC) and conduct missionary activities co-operatively. He did not instruct a particular man to become the next acharya. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of acharya, and they split in two factions over who the next acharya would be. Consequently, both factions were asara, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master . . . . . "
> (His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, purport to *Chaitanya Charitamrita, Adi-lila*, 12.8)

When Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur left the planet, many of his disciples got out various letters he had written them and started claiming in the courts that, "Bhaktisiddhanta appointed me as guru," "No, Bhaktisiddhanta appointed *me* as guru." In this way, they fought in the courts for many years over the properties, the temples, the land and the money of their spiritual master. They fought in the courts in order to be the official guru and now they are able to enjoy putting their picture and their name on the front of Bhaktisiddhanta's books, claiming "President-Acharya of the Gaudiya Math". In this way they got some small following, foolish people of course, but as far as actually influencing those who are materialists to become lovers of God, that they cannot do. So we should not similarly be misled by so-called appointed acharyas.

Question: ***Was your spiritual master, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, one of the "acharyas" who Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur supposedly appointed?***

Jagat Guru: No. Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati appointed twelve men to be leaders of the Gaudiya Math. He appointed them to take care of that institution, and my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, was not one of those managers. So this means that the first thing these fools who now follow the philosophy of appointed acharyas will have to do is reject their own spiritual master. Why? **Because he was not appointed by Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati.** My spiritual master had no letters of "appointment" or unappointment.

That means that the people who speak about



"To say that the qualification of acharya is appointment is to commit the greatest offense."

appointed acharyas are nullifying their own validity as bona fide spiritual masters in the line of Bhaktisiddhanta. In fact, to this very day, this argument is being used by Gaudiya Math members. They say Bhaktivedanta Swami was not a bona fide spiritual master because he wasn't one of the twelve appointed acharyas of the Gaudiya Math Society. They denounce everything that Bhaktivedanta Swami has done, saying that he was not appointed. And now, some of his own disciples are saying the same thing To say that the qualification of acharya is appointment is to commit the greatest offense. It is to deny everything that Bhaktivedanta Swami has done; it is to deny everything he has said. Not only is it offensive but, as I already mentioned, it also negates the validity of their own claim as being bona fide spiritual masters. After all, if Bhaktivedanta Swami was not bona fide because he wasn't appointed, even if he did "appoint" them, they would also not be bona fide because their spiritual master was not bona fide. So, immediately we have to reject their arguments. They are living contradictions to their own claims.

Question: ***Some people say you can't draw a parallel between the Gaudiya Math and Iskcon because when Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati left the planet, he was displeased with the way the Gaudiya Math Society was going. But the Iskcon leaders say that when Bhaktivedanta Swami left, he was very pleased with the way the Iskcon Society was going.***

Jagat Guru: The parallel is there. They both appointed GBC, and the parallel is still there even after they left the planet because some of the people that were appointed GBC started claiming that they were appointed acharyas. And that is also going on now in the Iskcon Society. To say that there is no parallel is not very intelligent. It is contradictory because they are saying Bhaktisiddhanta was displeased and therefore he appointed GBC, and they are saying Bhaktivedanta was pleased and therefore he appointed GBC. They should make up their minds. Is appointment of "acharyas" a sign of being displeased with your disciples or a sign of being pleased with them? Of course, this is just a side point, but it shows the absurdity in their logic. Also we must ask, if Bhaktisiddhanta was displeased, why didn't he appoint new GBC members or disappoint the ones he had already appointed? Another point is this: if they are saying that by appointing someone as GBC or acharya, you are displeased with them, as they say in the case of Bhaktisiddhanta, then that means that Bhaktivedanta Swami was displeased with all of the people he appointed to managerial positions who these people say are "appointed acharyas". Therefore, the fact that they have been appointed means that we should reject them. Now, if they say that appointment is a sign of pleasure, then that means that they are saying that their own spiritual master was not pleasing to Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati because he was not appointed by him. Therefore it means they themselves are not bona fide. At the

Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Thakur

very least, they will have to admit that somebody can become acharya without being appointed by or selected by the previous acharya; otherwise, how can they accept that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad is a bona fide spiritual master since he was not appointed by Bhaktisiddhanta? If they admit that a person can be guru without being appointed, then they're admitting that appointment is not necessary. They're also admitting that a person can be non-guru while supposedly having been "appointed" (since they don't accept those who were supposedly "appointed" by Bhaktisiddhanta), which means again that the whole so-called appointment business is useless.

Question: ***If before the acharya leaves this world he doesn't appoint someone as the next acharya, how can we know who the next acharya is?***

Jagat Guru: Whoever is pleasing to his spiritual master and all of the previous acharyas, he is acharya. And it is not limited to one person; there can be many. **If the spiritual master is not pleased with the disciple, the symptom is that the disciple is very envious and attached to material enjoyment. And if the disciple is pleasing to the spiritual master, there are also certain symptoms. The symptom is that he loves Krishna, and because he loves Krishna, he loves everyone and he wants to give them Krishna.** It's very simple. You don't need to have blind faith. You don't need to go by what someone else says. If you look, you will be able to see the symptoms in each person, whether they are acharya or not acharya.

Question: ***Is it possible that someone can be displeasing to their spiritual master today, and maybe in the future become pleasing and therefore become a qualified spiritual master?***

Jagat Guru: Yes. I may see that a person was not pleasing to his spiritual master at a particular time and place, but if I see that that person is giving people Krishna ten years later, then I can understand that that person is now pleasing to his spiritual master and Krishna. I can understand this because I know the law. The law is this: **You cannot give anyone Krishna unless you are pleasing to Krishna. And you cannot be pleasing to Krishna and displeasing to His devotee.** This is not possible.

You can understand this law in connection with what we were speaking earlier about disciplic succession by appointment. The idea of disciplic succession by appointment is not correct, because a person may be pleasing today but displeasing tomorrow. So, what if I am appointed today and tomorrow I am displeasing? For example, in the Gaudiya Math you have people that say that Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati appointed them as guru and that Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati was pleased with them and so on. But no matter what they say, and despite their letters of approval from Bhaktisiddhanta, I know that they are not pleasing to Bhaktisiddhanta. How do I know?

Question: ***Because they're not giving Krishna?***

Jagat Guru: Yes. This is the law. If someone is successfully giving Krishna to others—if they were attached to matter and he has changed them into lovers of Krishna—then it must be understood that he is pleasing to Krishna and Krishna's devotee, because you can't do that by your own strength. Therefore, these Godbrothers of my spiritual master, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami, may have many letters of appointment saying "You're a good devotee", and so on and so forth, but I know that they are not actually pleasing to Krishna and their spiritual master. Not because of the letters or this or that, but because of the symptom that they are not really loving others and they are not empowered to give Krishna to others. And my spiritual master—although he was not a big man in the Gaudiya Math Society, he was not part of the administration, he was not a personal secretary to Bhaktisiddhanta, he was nothing like that—I know that he is pleasing to his spiritual master. How? Because otherwise how could one man, 70 years old, come and give the Holy Name to so many people? It is not possible. Why would he be motivated to do that? Why should he leave Vrindavan where he was physically comfortable and thinking of Krishna? Why would he come to America at such an old age, to New York City in the winter time? Why would he ride a boat for so many months getting seasick, etc.? And how is it possible that one old man can do that and start chanting in the park in the middle of New York City at the age of 70? It is not humanly possible. So therefore I can see the motivation, I can see that this person is simply motivated to serve Krishna and that it is not possible for someone other than Krishna to do what he has done. So I take it that Krishna is pleased with him because Krishna is working through him. Krishna empowered him to do that; otherwise it would not be possible.

"Whoever is pleasing to his spiritual master and all of the previous acharyas, he is acharya. And it is not limited to one person."

Question: ***So you're saying that we can tell who an acharya is not by whether or not he says he is appointed, but by looking at his motivation and his work?***

Jagat Guru: Yes. It is simple. You know a tree by its fruit and not by the label on the tree. If you find a tree with thorns and no fruit and it says "orange tree" and it says "in season", but it's all dried up and it has all the symptoms of a keawe tree (a keawe tree is a very thorny tree with no fruit), then that means it's not an orange tree despite its label. Similarly, you may go to another tree and someone (the same fellow who put up the orange tree sign on the keawe tree) has put up a sign saying "keawe tree". He runs around telling everyone the keawe tree is an orange tree. And he points to the orange tree which is full of fruit and says, "This is a keawe, just look at the sign." If people are stupid, they'll say, "Yeah, that's right! The sign says keawe tree and this sign says orange tree." So they sit under the keawe tree waiting for some fruits to fall, or they climb the keawe tree and start eating the seeds and thorns, trying to imagine they are enjoying the fruit. This is a foolish person. But an intelligent person will know a tree by its fruit, not by its label. Similarly, someone can be known as a great spiritual master according to the fruit of their teaching, and not because they have the title "guru", or "appointed acharya". They may have the title, but they may not be able to give the fruit of love for God to others. And somebody else may not have such a title but they may be giving the fruit of love for God to their students; thus they are a true spiritual master.

"If you look, you will be able to see the symptoms in each person, whether they are acharya or not acharya."

Question: ***So these so-called appointed acharyas in Iskcon are not really acharyas then?***

Jagat Guru: I am not speaking out against any particular person. I am speaking out against the idea of appointed acharyas. I do not care to criticize my Godbrothers because if they are trying to give Krishna to others, that is each of their own individual business. That is for Krishna to judge, not me. That will be seen by the fruits of what they are doing. If the people who are following them develop love for Krishna, then I take it that they are empowered and that their spiritual master is pleased with them. For example, if I see that a disciple has all the symptoms of love for God, he's free from envy, he's simply working for the pleasure of God, and I find, "Oh, he is a disciple of Kirtanananda Swami" or some other Godbrother of mine, then I know, "This is a credit to his spiritual master. His spiritual master is bona fide." Otherwise, it is not possible that his disciple could have such characteristics. But if I see that a so-called acharya's fruits are bitter, then I can know that his spiritual master is not pleased with him.

So actually, some of these people may be gurus, but my point is this: if they are gurus, then they are gurus because they are lovers of Krishna and because they have heard purely from their spiritual master. They are not gurus because of some appointment or diploma. They may be so-called "appointed acharyas" and they may not be real acharyas, or they may be so-called "appointed acharyas" and they may be real acharyas. This means that appointment has nothing to do with it; it is based entirely on

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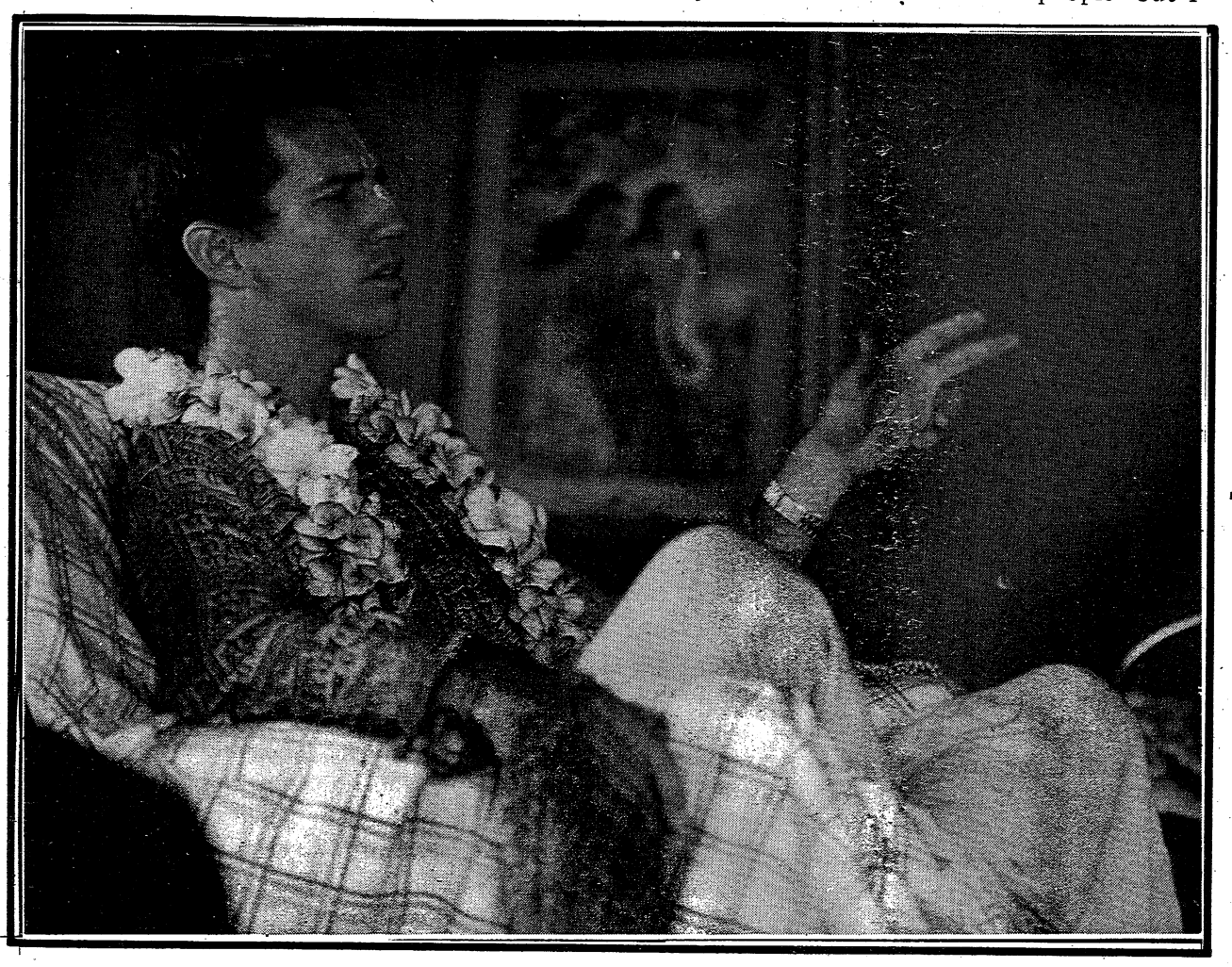
one's qualifications, one's purity. Whether or not they are gurus is to be seen by the fruits of their lives. If they can produce lovers of Krishna, then they are gurus. If they cannot change the hearts of the people, then they are not gurus.

My criticism is not on these people—but I can criticize, and I do criticize if they are giving a philosophy which is contrary to the philosophy of Lord Chaitanya. And if someone is teaching such a wrong philosophy, something which is different than is taught in the shastra and by the previous acharyas, then it must be concluded that they are not acharyas. That is one of the fruits.



"I can criticize, and I do criticize if they are giving a philosophy which is contrary to the philosophy of Lord Chaitanya."

Actually, I want my Godbrothers to succeed in giving Krishna to others. If a person is envious, he wants his Godbrothers to fail, but we want our Godbrothers to succeed. So we wish them all well, but we know that if they continue on with this nonsense appointment philosophy, they will fail. Therefore we are trying to help them by speaking the truth, that's all.

"Appoint! Appoint! Appoint!"

My spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, always spoke out strongly against this whole business of hereditary spiritual masters, appointed gurus, ecclesiastical acharyas, etc. **Never in any of his books or in any of the thousands of lectures he gave will you find him condoning the idea that one can become guru by appointment.**

I was once sitting with him in his room in Mayapur when he received a letter sent out by one so-called acharya of the Gaudiya-Vaishnava line. The letter said something like this: "Bhaktisiddhanta neglected to make it clear who the next acharya was supposed to be; therefore, I had to go through the courts and there was so much confusion. But I will not make the same mistake. Therefore, to make things quite clear, I am now designating that my son will be the next acharya." Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad was very furious to receive this news. Shaking the letter, he exclaimed, "Appoint! Appoint! Appoint! **Acharya is never appointed!!** He is thinking it is by accident my Guru Maharaj did not appoint a successor? My Guru Maharaj wrote so many hundreds and thousands of words. If he wanted to appoint a successor, why he could not write these few words: "I appoint such-and-such as the next acharya"? Why he could not write it? He is somehow deficient in some way? No! Acharya is not appointed!" So our own spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, also refused to follow this materialistic philosophy of appointed acharyas.

Even on his deathbed, when he was asked by some newsmen who would succeed him, he replied:

> "All of my disciples will take the legacy. If you want, you can also take it. Sacrifice everything. I one—may soon pass away. But they are hundreds and this movement will increase. It's not that I'll give an order: 'Here is the next leader.' Anyone who follows the previous leadership is a leader. I don't make any distinction between Indian and European. All my disciples are leaders . . . as much as they follow purely. If you want to follow, then you can also lead. But you don't want to follow. 'Leader' means one who's a first class disciple. *Evam param para praptam.* One who is perfectly following. Our instruction is *guru-mukha-padma-vakya.* Do you know this? *Arna koriho mane asa.* ('My only desire is to have my consciousness purified by the words emanating from the lotus mouth of my spiritual master.') To become a leader is not very difficult, provided one is able to follow the instructions of the bona fide guru." (from *Back to Godhead*, vol. 13, no. 1 - 2, pg. 25)

"They asked who his successor would be and he very clearly said, 'All of my disciples'."

Question: ***I read that quote by Bhaktivedanta Swami in the magazine, but then I read something that said completely the opposite in the editorial of the same issue. It left me confused ...***

Jagat Guru: You're confused because you don't know who to listen to. You think that because something is written down, it must be authoritative; therefore, you're confused because both of these things are written down. The fact is, the editorial contradicts the statement by Bhaktivedanta Swami. So, whom are we to listen to? My spiritual master, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami, is saying one thing and somebody else is saying something different. If he wanted to appoint the next acharyas, why didn't he say, "I have appointed these eleven as the next acharyas," when he was asked, "Who will your successor be?"

Question: ***They say he said that because he didn't want to pick one single person to succeed him as leader. This is their interpretation.***

Jagat Guru: This is nonsense. We don't care for their interpretation. They asked who his successor would be and he very clearly said, "All of my disciples." We don't need to interpret; we simply hear his words. He speaks for himself. I don't hear a saint through a dog. When a saint is speaking, I hear. I don't have to hear him through the interpretation of a dog. His words are there and they are very clear. Why would my spiritual master, at the latest point in his life, want to create confusion in people's minds? Obviously, if he had appointed eleven people as the next acharyas or twelve people as the next acharyas or one person as the next acharya or whatever, he would have at that point taken the opportunity to say, "Here are the people who are going to be the next acharyas. These are the ones that are going to be taking the legacy and they will carry on for me, preaching. I have appointed them and empowered them; now they will carry on." Why couldn't he say that simple thing and make it so that there's no confusion? He's not a Zen Buddhist speaking nonsense and trying to confuse everybody with koans.

He always made it very clear that he wanted all of his disciples to be acharya. In a letter to a Godbrother of mine, Tusta Krishna Swami, he stated: "Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are a bona fide guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle . . . this is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bona fide spiritual masters and spread Krishna consciousness very widely. That will make me and Krishna very happy."

But even today we find people again falling into the same nonsense illusion that there are appointed acharyas. No matter how much the truth is spoken, there will always be fools there to misunderstand.

Question: ***Weren't these eleven disciples helping Bhaktivedanta Swami initiate disciples before he left the planet?***

Jagat Guru: Yes. Some months before he left the planet, Bhaktivedanta Swami became very ill. At that time, he requested these persons to assist him in initiating his new disciples. So, they were helping him by chanting on the beads of new disciples, etc. They were not themselves initiating the students, but they were initiating them on behalf of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami.

Question: ***But this doesn't mean that they were appointed acharyas, does it?***

Jagat Guru: No. Chanting on beads, or initiating on behalf of your spiritual master is not a sign of appointment. I am not one of the so-called appointed acharyas, but Bhaktivedanta Swami also instructed me to chant on the beads after he accepted as his disciple someone whom I had