

## SERVING SRILA PRABHUPADA'S WILL

The thesis of the paper "Under My Order. . . ." is that after Srila Prabhupada's departure initiating gurus were established in ISKCON as appointed successor acaryas. The paper argues that such a system of institutional acaryas in ISKCON is nowhere indicated by Srila Prabhupada's order; in fact it conflicts with the GBC system so carefully established and nurtured by our founder-acarya.

I cite Pradyumna's letter of August, 1978 principally to support the claim that the position assumed by gurus in ISKCON is in fact that of acarya in the institutional sense of the term. Pradyumna distinguishes three senses of the word acarya: 1) one whose conduct is exemplary, 2) an initiating guru, 3) the spiritual head of a religious institution or pitha.

Some readers of the paper have challenged Pradyumna's analysis. Some of these have said that Srila Prabhupada never used the word acarya in the third sense. Let me therefore call attention to the quotation from Caitanya-caritamrita set at the head of the paper, in which Srila Prabhupada twice uses the expression "the post of acarya." One should also note the use of the word in the expression "founder-acarya" and in the names Madhvacarya and Ramanujacarya. In all these cases the word acarya is used specifically in the third sense.

Others have objected to the analysis on the more vague grounds that usage does not yield such clearly distinguishable senses. They seem to think that the three meanings are somehow bound up together in such a way that if you don't have acaryas in the third sense, you won't have them in the others--in short, you won't have gurus.

This fear can be allayed by a little careful consideration. We see that these three senses of "acarya" are clearly distinguishable and are presented in a cumulative or increasingly inclusive order. Thus, the Namacarya Haridasa Thakura, for instance, is an acarya in the first sense, but not in the second or third. Gaurakisora dasa Babaji and many other great devotees are acaryas in the first and second sense but not the third. (Since an initiating guru's conduct must be exemplary, anyone who is an acarya in the second sense must also be one in the first.) Finally, Srila Prabhupada and Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura are acaryas in the third sense (and as a matter of course in the other two as well). Thus we see the three senses of the word are clearly distinguishable, and that one can be a great acarya on the topmost platform as an initiating guru without taking the seat at the head of the institution, or even without ever initiating disciples. (Or in other words, one can be an acarya in either of the first two senses without needing to occupy the post of acarya in the third --or institutional--sense.)