

THE PROCESS FOR CARRYING OUT SRILA PRABHUPADA'S DESIRES

FOR FUTURE INITIATIONS

(A paper prepared by the GBC in consultation with higher authorities, Mayapur, March 1978)

In May 1977 His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada felt that his days in this material world were almost at an end. He traveled to Vrndavana and asked that his leading disciples come and join him. Specifically, he called for the members of the Governing Body Commission, who manage the worldwide preaching activities of ISKCON. Within a few days they gathered, in fear of the imminent departure of His Divine Grace. At that time many last affairs of His Divine Grace were put in order. He wrote his last will, entrusting everything to ISKCON, and assigned his disciples as trustees of the various ISKCON properties in India and around the world.

The GBC members met together in Vrndavana and prepared a few last questions to put before Srila Prabhupada. One very important question was how disciples would be initiated in the parampara after the departure of His Divine Grace. When asked this question, Srila Prabhupada replied that he would name some persons who could initiate disciples after his disappearance. We then asked him who the spiritual master of such disciples would be. He replied that the new initiators would be the disciples of those whom he empowered to initiate and that he, Srila Prabhupada, would be their grand spiritual master. Then he said that he would name the initiating gurus later. Srila Prabhupada seemed to recover somewhat in his health and he dispatched the GBC men back to their preaching missions around the world. He stayed on in Vrndavana, but his disappearance still seemed imminent.

Then one day in June he gave his secretary the names of eleven disciples who would be the initiating disciples. Their names were:

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| 1. Kirtanananda Swami | 7. Harikesa Swami |
| 2. Jayapataka Swami | 8. Ramesvara Swami |
| 3. Tamal Krsna Goswami | 9. Hansadutta Swami |
| 4. Satsvarupa Goswami | 10. Bhagavan dasa |
| 5. Hrdayananda Goswami | 11. Jayatirtha dasa |
| 6. Bhavananda Goswami | |

Because of his illness, Srila Prabhupada had not awarded any initiations for months. On naming these disciples, he ordered that they become "rittvic acaryas", which means that they were to initiate disciples on his behalf. He indicated, as he had said in May, that these rittvic acaryas named by him would, after his disappearance, continue as initiating spiritual masters. He named eleven but said that the number could be increased in the future.

Now it is March, 1978, the annual international gathering of ISKCON devotees at Sri Dhama Mayapur on the occasion of Gaura Purnima. After meeting and consulting with senior Vaisnavas and taking sastric evidence, the GBC members have prepared the following statement of principles for carrying out the orders of Srila Prabhupada.

FIRST AND SECOND INITIATIONS

Devotees ask, "If I received first initiation from Srila Prabhupada but now, after his disappearance, I receive second initiation from one of his appointed initiator gurus, what is my relationship with each of the spiritual masters?"

In coming to an answer, we must first know that harinama (first initiation) is the main initiation. The harinama is the main thing, and the second initiation is only to help the harinama. This is mentioned in Jiva Goswami's writings. Harinama diksa is bhagavati diksa, and initiation with the gayatri mantra is pancaratiriki diksa. The mantra is only to help harinama, so that one can reach the siddhi of harinama. Mantra's jurisdiction (pancaratiriki diksa) is up to salvation, liberation, and after liberation harinama continues. The harinama circle is the greater circle and the mantra diksa is a smaller circle within the harinama circle.

Those who have taken first initiation from Srila Prabhupada are his disciples mainly, and they will take help from the diksa guru, the guru who awards second initiation. There are a nama guru and a mantra guru. If one has received first initiation from Srila Prabhupada and then second initiation from one of Srila Prabhupada's disciples, that disciple will be his mantra guru. The new disciple must offer respect both to his mantra guru and to Srila Prabhupada. The guru is one in many forms. Therefore we say, "vande'ham sri guru sri yuta padakamalam sri gurun." Thus we address the guru as plural.

HOW TO CHOOSE A GURU

How does one know who is to be his guru? One must choose according to his sraddha, his faith. A newcomer should be given some time. He should consider to whom he will submit, based on his faith in him. There are five stages in successfully approaching a spiritual master, and the first is to hear (sravanam). The second stage is acceptance both by the preceptor and the disciple. Then sadhana, the attempt for realization, will begin. In the beginning, it is an open field: the candidate hears, and then the connection should come between guru and disciple. One should take help from senior Vaisnavas so as to avoid error.

SIKSA AND DIKSA GURUS

Sometimes devotees ask what the difference is between a siksa guru and a diksa guru. The answer is found in the Caitanya-caritamrta: "siksa-guru kevata yani krsnera svarupa." Both gurus are extensions of Krsna. Guru is Krsna. Acaryam mam vijaniyam. Krsna has come to liberate us in His different appearances, or representations. Thus there is oneness in a variety of forms. Actually, whoever sincerely helps me go forward towards Krsna is a siksa guru. Vaisnavas are also siksa gurus. There is the vartma-pradarsaka guru (the one who first shows one the path of spiritual life), the siksa guru, nama guru, mantra guru, and sannyasa guru. Whoever helps me the most in my spiritual progress is the main guru. If one is accepted by a nama guru, then as long as the nama guru is present, one has only one guru. The nama guru and mantra guru will be the same, and no other guru will be present. Only the vartma-pradarsaka guru may be present before the real guru. Thus during Srila Prabhupada's presence the ritviks he appointed were actually vartma-pradarsaka gurus. But if after the nama guru's departure one accepts a mantra guru or sannyasa guru, one should also offer full regard to him, seeing him as the representative of the previous guru.

ACCEPTING KARMA

When the guru first accepts the disciple, then the guru takes charge. There is an explanation of diksa, spiritual initiation, in the Nectar of Instruction, page 51. At the time of initiation, the guru accepts the disciple as he is and accepts charge of washing away the disciple's sins by his instructions. This can be done by the mercy of Srila Prabhupada. The main thing is that the new gurus must be transparent. The medium is so transparent that by guru parampara everything goes to Krsna in no time. He who has wholly given himself to his own guru, Srila Prabhupada, is actually a guru. The fully surrendered servant of Srila Prabhupada is guru. This is the criterion. It is to be understood that the initiating spiritual master accepts karma at both harinama initiation and diksa (mantra) initiation.

SEVERAL GURUS IN ONE TEMPLE

A delicate situation may arise when in one ISKCON temple there are disciples of different gurus. The natural way to avoid this is for a guru to perform diksa in his own zone. Srila Prabhupada deliberately chose gurus in different parts of the world to arrange for this. But this is only a general principle, and there may also be special arrangements.

WORSHIP OF THE GURU

When a disciple of Srila Prabhupada's disciple performs worship, he will worship the portrait of his own guru. His guru's picture may be placed to the left of Srila Prabhupada's. If there are disciples of other gurus present in the temple, then the portraits of those gurus may also be put on the altar to the left of Srila Prabhupada. They should all be dealt with as Vaisnavas. In such a situation, the devotee performing worship - arati, for example - will first worship the picture of his own guru, then the Deities, and then he may offer worship to the other gurus. He worships his own guru as guru and the other gurus as Vaisnavas. Of course, we are all experiencing awkwardness and growing pains in the new procedures. But we have to appreciate that new disciples in the future will want to worship their own spiritual masters, and this is proper. We may start in this way, and time will gradually help us.

VYASASANAS

Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana should not be occupied by any of his disciples or by the picture of any disciple. The disciple of Srila Prabhupada who is now initiating will always regard His Divine Grace as his superior and cannot occupy that seat. A second seat, however, a little below Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana, should be given to the initiating guru. Thus the new disciples will see their guru is giving honor to His Divine Grace. This will impress the disciples: "Even my guru is also giving respect to his own guru, Srila Prabhupada, and in this way I must follow." This system of maintaining Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana as the main center of guru worship should be maintained not only in the present ISKCON temples but in any temples established in the future. Whatever we are creating is from the impression received from him. In this way we will all come within the same administration.

During guru-puja, disciples of Srila Prabhupada's disciples may first offer respect to their guru and then to Srila Prabhupada.

PRANAM MANTRA

As far as a pranam mantra to be used by new disciples to offer respect to the initiating gurus, this common mantra may be used: om ajnana timi-randhasya jnananjana-salakaya/caksur unmilitam yena tasmai sri-gurave namah. Or nama om visnupadaya with the new guru's name inserted; that is also a general mantra. Visnupadaya means "unto the representative of Visnu." It means that the guru is at the feet of Krsna by virtue of his being at the feet of Srila Prabhupada.

These pranam mantras may be used unless and until a guru's disciples compile a special mantra for him. The guru should not arrange his own pranam mantra. But when the disciples make a mantra for guru-puja, with his special characteristics, then they may recite that mantra. The pranam mantra should be composed in perfect Sanskrit. In kirtan in ISKCON temples the nama om visnu padaya mantra with the new guru's name inserted should not be sung.

HOW WILL MORE GURU'S BE ADDED?

Those who are already empowered to initiate will extend the number by their consideration. In this way it will have spiritual characteristics. The eleven picked by His Divine Grace will extend themselves. The area of initiating gurus should spread from this point, bigger, bigger, bigger.

UNDERSTANDING ABSOLUTE FAITH IN ONE'S GURU

Our process is extremely autocratic. The guru is all in all. The submission to the guru is unconditional. This we find in all Srila Prabhupada's books. There is an expression, "If anyone marries, then a separate room is necessary." As long as one is not married, he doesn't need a separate room. But as soon as one marries, he wants a separate house. Similarly, as long as a Vaisnava does not initiate, he does not want any special place or special respect. But when he initiates he is absolute in the eyes of his disciples. The sisya will not tolerate any other Vaisnava's coming to disturb the absolute position of his guru. This is the heart's feeling or proper Vaisnava sentiment, and disciples of Srila Prabhupada should be sensitive to this and careful not to disturb the relationship between the new gurus and their disciples. Therefore there may be at least one place where the disciple can have his guru exclusively, where he will find, "My guru is absolute here." For example, on the birthday of the guru the disciples may gather and worship him exclusively with all their devotion. They will worship him exclusively as the representative of God, of Krsna. But other disciples may not feel very much encouraged by their behavior. They may feel, "Our faith in our guru is being disturbed by this. Now my guru is not absolute." It is a very subtle point of sentiment. In Krsna's camp also Radharani and Candravali and others contended. So we must prepare for that.

An example is given that every mother is most affectionate to her own son. The affection of each mother is absolute. But if one were to compare the affection of two mothers and try to determine who is more affectionate, one would see according to relative judgement. In this way there are both relative and absolute calculations. But the absolute realization is supreme. In our ISKCON dealings, these two conceptions have to be harmonized. Although one of the gurus may be a Godbrother to me, he is the worshipable guru of his disciple. Harmony of absolute and relative is seen in Krsna. He whom we think the supermost is being

chastized by Yasoda. He is the supreme Deity, but He is carrying Nanda's shoes on His head. In this way we can learn to adjust absolute and relative.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we humbly request all devotees to keep uppermost one of Srila Prabhupada's last instructions to us: "Your love for me will be demonstrated by how you cooperate amongst yourselves after my disappearance." Let us deal with each other in love and trust. It is unfortunate that His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada did not stay with us another 100 years in his physical presence.

That was not Krsna's desire. Therefore we have to see how his departure is a blessing. Now more than ever we must cooperate amongst ourselves. Let us not make the tragic mistake of the disciples who break into factions over party disputes and disobey the order of the spiritual master.

The carrying on of the Krsna Consciousness Movement means we must have new disciples. Therefore Srila Prabhupada has given us new gurus. Let us heartily welcome them in our midst. In this way we will find increased union even in separation from His Divine Grace.

(see following addendum)

Addendum: further clarification of the process

March 1978

Worship of the Diksha Guru

We can understand that when the initiator guru is a disciple's nam-guru he should be given all worship, just as the disciples of Srila Prabhupada worshiped His Divine Grace. But the question may be asked what worship should be offered to the guru if he is one's diksha guru?

The answer is that the disciple should see his nam-guru within his diksha guru. In arcana, such as arotike, he should worship his mantra guru's portrait. In general the worship of both gurus should be the same as far as possible. One should think, "Prabhupada is present in my mantra guru."

The sannyasa guru, however, is generally not worshiped. The sannyasa guru is more a function necessary to carry on our preaching work. But he should be given respect.

A Godbrother's New Relationship With An Initiating Guru

Srila Prabhupada has chosen eleven of his disciples to become initiating gurus. Previously many of their Godbrothers have dealt with these gurus as familiar friends. Now these Godbrothers are worshiped by their disciples as genuine spiritual masters. This means, for example, that they are to be considered, as stated in the Gurvastakam, as nikunja-vuno rati keli siddhyai--intimate assistants in the pastimes of Krsna. So how are their old Godbrothers to understand that their fellow Godbrother has assumed the position of associating with Krsna in this way?

The adjustment comes in a two-fold way. The disciples are in one disposition and the Godbrothers in another. When, for example, Krsna entered the arena at Mathura, He appeared to different persons in different ways. So for the disciples of a genuine guru, Krsna will come to them through their guru, even though it may not be shown to his Godbrothers. Krsna can show Himself differently to different persons. A devotee in madhurya rasa is seeing Krsna in one way and in vatsalya-rasa, Yasoda is seeing Krsna in another, and the servants of Krsna see Him in still another way. Rsi Gargamuni sees Him in still another way.

You may look upon your Godbrother who's now a guru in your own way, but you must behave so that the new bhaktas' and disciples' faith is not disturbed. Your conception of him may be kept in the mental world, but not shown on the outside. It is very difficult for a fallen soul in Kali-yuga to collect his faith and regard and offer it to his guru. The maximum faith that he can gather and offer

to his guru will benefit him accordingly in his approaching Krsna. So that sraddha shouldn't be disturbed. The guru's rank or position should be respected even by his Godbrothers. The disciple is advised by sastra to understand that the Personality of Godhead has come down to him in his gurudeva. The well known injunction that the spiritual master is never to be considered as an ordinary man must be observed in this case also. As long as the gurus are sincerely functioning in the charge given them by Srila Prabhupada, all others have to preserve this line by their own respectful dealings with them.

The point is not to be a faultfinder, especially in this case. Sincerity is the main thing. If one feels that the chanting of Hare Krsna has removed his trouble then he has a right to give it to others: "Take the Holy Name, it will relieve you from all troubles." The position of acarya can begin from this point, and then it can go on. Srila Prabhupada may be compared to an ocean and the new gurus may be like so many tanks or ponds, but still they are going on. By sincerely serving Krsna, they can deliver their disciples from birth and death.

Again, the main thing is faith. Because Krsna is infinite, even the greatest devotee cannot know Him in full. Therefore whether one is touching the ocean from the shore or another is diving a mile deep into the ocean--the ocean's limit is unobtainable in either case. And both are genuinely touching the ocean. Srila Prabhupada used to give the example that a ripe mango is mature and an unripe mango may not be mature, but both are the same fruit, mango. So real sraddha can bring us near and connect us to Krsna. Not imitation sraddha, but real. And as much as the faith in guru and Krsna is increased, a disciple can go deeper and deeper. We should realize that a new bhakta or new disciple can even surpass a senior devotee one day, if he has Krsna's favor. We have to deal with these matters in all humility and submissive faith, not with pride or haughtiness.

The New Guru's Actual Realization of Krsna

We can understand without too much difficulty, that the person holding the designation of guru must be given all respect, just as we give respect to the judge in court, calling him, "Your honor." When we are alone with our guru Godbrother we may mix freely but when amongst his disciples we must observe the proper protocol. But aside from the formality, factually what is the position of those empowered by Srila Prabhupada to act as gurus? Does it mean that because they've been given the position of guru they are, as in the verse, nikunja-yuno rati keli siddhyai, actually intimates of Krsna?

One verse in the Bhagavatam helps us in this connection, aham vrtti suka vrtti, vyaso vrtti nivrtti ca. This means that the real purpose of the Bhagavatam is difficult to conceive. The verse is spoken by Lord Siva and he says, "I know the purpose of the Bhagavatam, Sukadeva, the disciple and son of Vyasa, he knows it thoroughly, and Vyasa, the author of Bhagavatam, he may or may not know." When Lord Caitanya was teaching Sanatana Goswami He said to him, "Sanatana, Krsna is going to give His kindness to you through Me. I am talking to you like a madman. I feel many things are passing through Me to you. I feel that much. But I do not know what I have."

Once during the war, a patriotic advertisement appeared showing a picture of a military uniform and the saying "Just take this uniform and the dress will show you what you have to do." If one is sincere and is given a particular charge or post, he will learn what the duties of that post are. Krsna will help him if he is sincere. Srila Prabhupada has given us the more familiar example that while ordinarily a judge must first possess all qualifications and only then sit on the judges bench, bhakti yoga offers such facility that one first assumes the activities of a devotee and then the qualifications follow. The new gurus have taken the charge--but that charge has not come only by chance. It was Srila Prabhupada's own picking. So if they try, Krsna will help. Prabhupada and Krsna are not cheats. They will come to a sincere devotee with all Their might and instruct him, "Do like this. I'm helping. I'm behind you." When we are all sincere, it will happen like this. We all know what we have to do; we simply have to carry it out sincerely. Surely His Divine Grace is continuing to direct us through these changes. Let us cooperate and expand the Krsna consciousness movement keeping all its purity intact: