

ON THE POSITION OF THE INITIATING
GURU IN THE WESTERN USA ZONE

JULY, 1980

PART ONE

I. ACCORDING TO SASTRA, THE GURU IS A PURE DEVOTEE, A LIBERATED SOUL, AN UTTAMA ADHIKARI

If we carefully examine the Vedic literatures we will understand that the spiritual master is a pure devotee of Krsna, a liberated soul, and an uttama-adhikari. In other words, the position of guru is on the most elevated platform. From the following scriptural citations we can learn something of that elevated position:

The conclusion is that one cannot become a spiritual master unless he is a pure devotee of the Lord....One should therefore take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master. Success in life means accepting a spiritual master who knows Krsna as the only supreme beloved personality.

Bhag. 4.29.51 (4:4, p. 323)

The guru must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service. There are three classes of devotees, and the guru must be accepted from the topmost class.

Cc. Madhya 24.330 (Madhya:9, p. 268)

Trans.: O My sons, you should accept a highly elevated paramahansa, a spiritually advanced spiritual master.

Bhag. 5.5.10 (5:1, p. 180)

One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikari....The uttama-adhikari, or highest devotee, is one who is very advanced in devotional service. An uttama-adhikari is not interested in blaspheming others, his heart is completely clean, and he has attained the realized state of unalloyed Krsna consciousness.

NOI Text 5 (p. 48)

A disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikari as a spiritual master.

NOI Text 5 (p. 58)

Unless one is initiated by the right person, who always carries within his heart the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one cannot acquire the power to carry the Supreme Godhead within the core of one's own heart.

Bhag. 10.2.18 (10:1, p. 141)

A person who has full control over the senses and mind is called a gosvami or gosani. One who does not have such control is called godasa, or a servant of the senses, and

cannot become a spiritual master. A spiritual master who actually has control over the mind and senses is called gosvami.

Cc. Adi 7.13 (Adi:2, pp. 10-11)

When a devotee is perfectly qualified [offenseless] in chanting the transcendental vibration of the holy name, he is quite fit to become a spiritual master and to deliver all the people of the world.

TLC (p. 204)

The bona fide spiritual master is he who knows the science of devotional service in disciplic succession. This disciplic succession is called srotriyam. The prime symptom of one who has become a spiritual master in disciplic succession is that he is one hundred percent fixed in bhakti-yoga.

Krsna (Vol. 3, p. 177)

The bona fide spiritual master always engages in unalloyed devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Cc. Adi 1.46 (Adi:1, p. 45)

One cannot come to the precincts of Krsna consciousness unless he touches the dust of the lotus feet of a person who has become a mahatma, a great devotee.

Bhag. 4.26.20 (4:4, p. 113)

The symptoms of a true mahatma are described in the Bhagavad-gita:

Trans. O son of Prtha, those who are not deluded, the great souls, are under the protection of the divine nature. They are fully engaged in devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible. Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion.

Purp. In this verse the description of mahatma is clearly given. The first sign of the mahatma is that he is always situated in the divine nature. He is not under the control of material nature....The mahatma does not divert his attention to anything outside Krsna because he knows perfectly well that Krsna is the original Supreme Person, the cause of all causes.... They only meditate upon Krsna in Krsna consciousness. They are always engaged in the unswerving service of the Lord in Krsna consciousness....The mahatma cannot be manufactured by rubber-stamping an ordinary man. His symptoms are described here: A mahatma is always engaged in chanting the glories of the Supreme Lord Krsna, the Personality of Godhead. He has no other business.

Bg. 9.13-14 (pp. 463-465)

The spiritual master is not a conditioned soul:

Unless one can find a person transcendental to the four basic defects, one should not accept advice and become a victim of the material condition. The best process is to take the advice and instructions of Sri Krsna or His bona fide representative. In this way one can become happy in this life and the next.

Bhag. 5.14.26 (5:2, p. 38)

It is to be understood that the conditioned soul is tightly tied by the ropes of illusion. A man bound by the hands and feet cannot free himself--he must be helped by a person who is unbound. Because the bound cannot help the bound, the rescuer must be liberated. Therefore, only Lord Krsna, or His bona fide representative the spiritual master, can release the conditioned soul. Without such superior help, one cannot be freed from the bondage of material nature.

Bg. 7.14 (pp. 380-381)

If we receive knowledge from an ordinary man, there will be many defects. An ordinary person is subject to illusion and he also has the tendency to cheat. Although an ordinary person may be a very advanced scholar, he does not possess perfect knowledge. Perfection is something totally different from what we find in the material world. Perfection means that there is no mistake, no illusion, no cheating, no imperfection.

TLK (p. 198)

The bona fide spiritual master is a pure devotee. The characteristics of a pure devotee are described by Srila Prabhupada in The Nectar of Devotion (p. 149) as follows:

In the Narada Pancaratra pure unalloyed devotional service is explained as being without any motive for personal benefit. If a devotee is continuously in love with Lord Krsna and his mind is always fixed upon Him, that devotional attitude will prove to be the only means of attracting the attention of the Lord. In other words, A Vaisnava who is incessantly thinking of the form of Lord Krsna, is to be known as a pure Vaisnava.

Srila Prabhupada explains the symptom of pure devotion as follows:

/The Six/ Gosvamis were always engaged in chanting Hare Krsna and dancing in ecstasy. They taught that when one is merged in Krsna-kirtana, or the chanting of the holy names of Krsna, he merges into the ocean of love of Krsna. As soon as the sound of Krsna's name is vibrated, one can immediately merge into the ocean of love. That is the sign of pure devotion.

SSR (p. 294)

The following excerpt from Lord Caitanya's teachings to Sanatan Gosvami in the Caitanya-caritamrta reveals the exalted position of the liberated soul, the pure devotee:

Lord Caitanya told Sanatana Gosvami: 'If, by good fortune, a living entity develops faith /sraddha/ in Krsna, he begins to associate with devotees /sadhu-sanga/. When one is encouraged in devotional service by the association of devotees, one becomes free from all unwanted contamination by following the regulative principles and chanting and hearing /sadhana-bhakti/. When one is freed from all unwanted contamination /anartha-nivrtti/, he advances with firm faith /nistha/. When firm faith in devotional service awakens, a taste for hearing and chanting /ruci/ also awakens. After taste is awakened, a deep attachment arises /asakti pracura/, and from that attachment the seed of love for Krsna /priti/ grows in the heart.

Cc.Madhya 23.9-12 (Madhya 9, p. 6-7)

At this stage the pure devotee begins to experience bhava, exhibits symptoms of anubhava (such as being absorbed twenty-four hours daily in devotional service without wasting a single moment, even while resting), and displays bodily symptoms of ecstasy which are also anubhavas. /These eight bodily transformations, which indicate that a devotee is already liberated within himself, are called asta-sattvika-vikara.' (Bhag 4.12.18) / While chanting the holy names of the maha-mantra he realizes by direct perception the qualities of the Lord and the form of the Lord, manifested within his heart. This creates higher stages of transcendental emotion known as affection (sneha), counter-love (mana), love (pranaya), attachment (raga), sub-attachment (anuraga), ecstasy (bhava) and sublime ecstasy (maha-bhava). /When bhava softens the heart completely, becomes endowed with a great feeling of possessiveness in relation to

the Lord and becomes very much condensed and intensified, it is called prema (love of Godhead). (Cc. Madhya 23.7) By possessing these transcendental qualities one realizes his eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa in one of the five transcendental mellow, and becomes permanently fixed (sthayi-bhava) in one of these mellow. When these permanent ecstasies are mixed with other ingredients such as vibhava, sattvika, anubhava, and vyabhicari, they become composed of more and more tasteful transcendental mellow. All such experience is based on direct perception of the transcendental Lord.

(summary of verses Cc. Madhya 23.13-100.
Madhya 9, pp. 8-60)

Thus we can understand that the transcendental realization beginning with the fructification of the seed of love for Kṛṣṇa (priti) is the platform of the pure devotee, and the madhyama-adhikari has not yet reached this transcendental stage of direct perception of the Lord. He is understood to be situated in the preliminary stages of devotional service such as sadhana, anartha-nivṛtti, nistha, etc. Even to come to the stage of anartha-nivṛtti, of being completely freed from material contamination and desires within the heart is very rare, and that is prior to nistha, or unflinching, unwavering, unconditional service, which is all prior to bhava, etc. So from this we can consider the actual position of the madhyama (intermediate) devotee and the uttama (advanced) devotee according to sastra, and appreciate how elevated is the stage of uttama-adhikari.

According to sastra, however, such a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa is very rare:

Trans. Among the followers of Vedic knowledge, most are following the process of fruitive activity and distinguishing between good and bad work. Out of many such sincere fruitive actors, there may be one who is actually wise. Out of many millions of such wise men, one may actually become liberated /mukta/, and out of many millions of such liberated persons, a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa is very difficult to find.

Cc. Madhya 19.147-148 (Madhya:7, pp. 326-327)

Trans. O best of the brahmanas, Sukadeva Gosvami, out of many persons who follow religious principles, only a few desire liberation from the material world. Among many thousands who desire liberation, one may actually achieve liberation, giving up material attachments to society, friendship, love, country, home, wife and children. And among many thousands of such liberated persons, one who can understand the true meaning of liberation is very rare. O great sage, among many millions who are liberated and perfect in knowledge of liberation, one may be a devotee of Lord Narayana, or Krsna. Such devotees, who are fully peaceful, are extremely rare.

Purp. Unless the dirt within the core of one's heart is cleansed away, one cannot become a pure devotee. Therefore, the word sudurlabhah ('very rarely found') is used in this verse. Not only among hundreds and thousands, but among millions of perfectly liberated souls, a pure devotee is hardly ever found. Therefore the words kotisv api are used herein. /The word koti means ten million. Its plural means millions and trillions./ Srila Madhvacarya gives the following quotation from the Tantra Bhagavata: 'There are ninety million demigods and seventy million sages, who are all called narayanayana, devotees of Lord Narayana. Among them, only a few are called narayana-parayana.'

Bhag. 6.14.4-5 (6:3, pp. 4,5,8)

II. CAN ONE WHO IS NOT ON THE HIGHEST PLATFORM OF DEVOTIONAL SERVICE BE ACCEPTED AS A SPIRITUAL MASTER?

Considering the extreme rarity of a pure devotee, one may question whether it is possible to find a qualified spiritual master. Srila Prabhupada has explicitly declared that one who is not on the liberated platform may, under certain circumstances, accept the role of a spiritual master. In a letter to an early ISKCON devotee, Janardana, (dated April 26, 1968) Srila Prabhupada writes as follows:

The statements of Thakur Bhaktivinode are as good as scriptures because he is a liberated person. Generally the spiritual master comes from the group of such eternal associates of the Lord. But anyone who follows the principles of such ever liberated persons is as good as one in the

above mentioned group.... A person who is liberated acarya and guru cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and acarya by strictly following the disciplic succession.

Even if not liberated, one can become a spiritual master if he has full faith in Krsna's words and follows His instructions:

A conditioned soul is hampered by four defects: he is sure to commit mistakes, he is sure to become illusioned, he has a tendency to cheat others, and his senses are imperfect. Consequently we have to take direction from liberated persons. This Krsna consciousness movement directly receives instructions from the Supreme Personality of Godhead via persons who are strictly following His instructions. Although a follower may not be a liberated person, if he follows the supreme liberated Personality of Godhead, his actions are naturally liberated from the contamination of material nature. Lord Caitanya therefore says, 'By My order you may become a spiritual master.' One can immediately become a spiritual master by having full faith in the transcendental words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and by following His instructions.

Bhag. 4.18.5 (4:2, pp. 387-88)

In the following conversation between Srila Prabhupada and a GBC committee, we see that Prabhupada explained that he would (and later did) recommend some of his senior disciples first as ritvik (officiating), and later "regular" (initiating), gurus:

SDG: Then our next question concerns initiations for the future. Particularly at that time when you are no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiation would be conducted.

SP: Yes, I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating acarya.

TKG: Is that called ritvik acarya?

SP: Ritvik yes.

SDG: What is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and the...

SP: He's guru. He's guru.

SDG: But he does it on your behalf?

SP: Yes. That is formality, because in my presence one should not become guru. So on my behalf, on my order: amar ajnaya guru hainya--he is actually guru but by my order.

SDG: So they may also be considered your disciples?

SP: Yes, their disciples, but consider who...

TKG: No, he is asking that these ritvik acaryas, they are officiating giving diksa; the people who they give diksa to, whose disciples are they?

SP: They are his disciple.

TKG: They are his disciple.

SP: ...who is initiating...his grand disciple.

SDG: Then we have a question conc...

SP: When I order, you become guru, he becomes regular guru, that's all. /Long pause/ He becomes disciple of my disciple. Just see.

From this transcript we can understand that while Srila Prabhupada was still physically present, the ritvik (officiating) gurus were authorized by Srila Prabhupada to initiate on his behalf and that after his physical departure, they were to become "regular" gurus initiating their own disciples, disciples who were then Srila Prabhupada's grand-disciples.

If one is ordered by the Lord or Srila Prabhupada to perform a function, that order carries with it the blessings by which one can be successful. Therefore, if one is ordered to become a guru, then by the blessings of one's spiritual master one may become qualified. In the Third Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam we find the case of Lord Brahma who, although feeling unqualified, was empowered by the Lord to fulfill the function of creation.

Trans. The Lord saw that Brahma was very anxious about the planning and construction of the different planetary systems and was depressed upon seeing the devastating water. He could understand the intention of Brahma, and thus He spoke in deep, thoughtful words, removing all the illusion that had arisen. The Supreme Personality of Godhead then said: O Brahma, O depth of Vedic wisdom, be neither depressed nor anxious about the execution of creation. What you are begging from Me has already been granted before. O Brahma, situate yourself in penance and meditation and follow the principles of knowledge to receive my favor. By these actions you will be able to understand everything from within your heart.

Purp. Lord Brahma had to accommodate different places and situations for the requisite bodies of the conditioned souls. The task was meant only for Brahma, and no one in the universe can even understand how difficult it was. But by the grace of the Lord, Brahma was able to execute the tremendous task so perfectly that everyone is amazed to see the workmanship of the vidhata, or the regulator.... Any person authorized by either the Lord or by His bona fide representative is already blessed, as is the work entrusted to him. Of course, the person entrusted with such a responsibility should always be aware of his incapability and must always look for the mercy of the Lord for the successful execution of his duty. One should not be puffed up because he is entrusted with certain executive work. Fortunate is he who is so entrusted, and if he is always fixed in the sense of being subordinate to the will of the Supreme, he is sure to come out successful in the discharge of his work. Arjuna was entrusted with the work of fighting on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra, and before he was so entrusted, the Lord had already arranged for his victory. But Arjuna was always conscious of his position as subordinate to the Lord, and thus he accepted Him as the supreme guide in his responsibility. Anyone who takes pride in doing responsible work but does not give credit to the Supreme Lord is certainly falsely proud and cannot execute anything nicely. Brahma and persons in the line of his disciplic succession who follow in his footsteps are always successful in the discharge of loving transcendental service to the Supreme Lord.... The mercy the Lord bestows upon a particular person engaged in executing the responsible work entrusted to him is beyond imagination. But His mercy is received due to our penance and perseverance in executing devotional service. Brahma was entrusted with the work of creating the planetary systems. The Lord instructed him that when he meditated he would very easily know where and how the planetary systems must be arranged. The directions were to come from within, and there was no necessity for anxiety in that task. Such instructions of buddhi-yoga are directly imparted by the Lord from within, as confirmed in Bhagavad-gita (10.10)

Here, Srila Prabhupada explains that, although he began in a humble, helpless way, the Krsna consciousness movement has become successful due to the spiritual force of the order of the supreme authority:

"Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed." This Vedic injunction is very important, and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu supported it by His personal behavior. Believing in the words of His spiritual master, He introduced the sankirtana movement, just as the present Krsna consciousness movement was started with belief in the words of our spiritual master. He wanted to preach, we believed in his words and tried somehow or other to fulfill them, and now this movement has become successful all over the world. Therefore faith in the words of the spiritual master and in the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the secret of success.... We believed in the words of our spiritual master and started in a humble way-- in a helpless way--but due to the spiritual force of the order of the supreme authority, this movement has become successful.

Cc. Adi 7.95-96 (Adi. 2, p. 77)

As stated throughout Srila Prabhupada's books, the primary qualification for acting as a spiritual master is that one is conversant with the science of Krsna consciousness and presents it as it is, without change, to his disciples.:

Trans. 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 Krsna.

Purp.as far as Krsna consciousness is concerned, everyone is capable of becoming a spiritual master because knowledge in Krsna consciousness is on the platform of the spirit soul. To spread Krsna consciousness, one need only be cognizant of the science of the spirit soul. It does not matter whether one is a brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya, sudra, sannyasi, grhastha, or whatever. If one simply understands this science, he can become a spiritual master.... If one understands the truth of Krsna consciousness and seriously desires to attain transcendental knowledge for the perfection of life, he can accept a spiritual master from any social status, provided the spiritual master is fully conversant with the science of Krsna. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura also states that although one is situated as a

brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya, sudra, brahmacari, vanaprastha, grhastha or sannyasi, if he is conversant in the science of Krsna he can become a spiritual master as vartha-pradarsaka-guru, diksa guru or siksa guru.... This injunction given by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is not at all against the injunctions of the sastras.

Cc. Madhya 8.128 (Madhya:3, pp. 162-163)

There is no authority superior to Sri Krsna, and if we stick to this principle, we can become gurus. We don't need to change our position to become a guru. All we have to do is follow in the disciplic succession stemming from Sri Krsna. Caitanya Mahaprabhu has advised: amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa (Cc. Madhya 7.138). Caitanya Mahaprabhu instructed people to learn from Him and then go teach people within their own villages. One may think, "I am illiterate and have no education. I was not born in a very high family. How can I become guru?" Caitanya Mahaprabhu says that it is not very difficult. Yare dekha, tare kaha 'krsna'-upadesa: "Simply speak whatever Krsna speaks. Then you become guru." Whoever speaks what Krsna has not spoken is not a guru but a rascal. A guru only speaks what Krsna has spoken.

TLK (p. 87)

The Upanisads inform us that the guru is one who has received knowledge by hearing the Vedas. Srotriyam brahma-nistham. The Vedas are called sruti, and the bona fide guru is in the line of hearing from the disciplic succession. As stated in Bhagavad-gita (4.2), evam parampara-praptam. A bona fide guru does not impart some self-styled, concocted knowledge; his knowledge is standard and received from the parampara system. He is also firmly fixed in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (brahma-nistham). These are his two qualifications; he must have heard the Vedic knowledge through the disciplic succession, and he must be established in service to the Supreme Lord. He does not have to be a very learned scholar, but he must have heard from the proper authority.

TLK (p. 33)

All sastric injunctions, as well as the versions of great sages and authorities, establish that a bona fide spiritual master is not necessarily a brahmana. The only qualification is that he be conversant with the science of Krsna, Krsna consciousness. That alone makes one perfectly eligible to become a spiritual master. This is the conclusion of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in His discussions with Ramananda Raya.

TLC (p. 319)

In a letter to Hansadutta Swami dated December 3, 1968, Srila Prabhupada states his plan that all of his disciples who are well versed in all of his books would be allowed to initiate disciples:

Next January there will be an examination on this Bhagavad-gita. Papers will be sent by me to all centers and those securing the minimum passing grade will be given the title as Bhaktishastri. Similarly, another examination will be held on Lord Caitanya's Appearance Day in February, 1970, and it will be upon Srimad-Bhagavatam and Bhagavad-gita. Those passing will get the title of Bhaktibaibhava. Another examination will be held sometimes in 1971 on the four books, Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam, Teachings of Lord Chaitanya, and Nectar of Devotion. One who will pass this examination will be awarded with the title of Bhaktivedanta. I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975 all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations. That is my program.

Although this particular plan was never implemented, we can understand from Srila Prabhupada's letter that disciples who may not be fully on the liberated platform but who are well conversant with the philosophy of Krsna consciousness, could be allowed to initiate disciples with the intention of spreading the Krsna consciousness movement.

Another qualification for becoming a spiritual master is that one has been successful in preaching Krsna consciousness, because such success indicates that one has received the special mercy of the Lord. Even though one may not yet be a fully liberated soul, if it is seen that he is successful in spreading Krsna consciousness, it can be understood that he has been especially empowered by the Lord to do so: Krsna-sakti vina nahe tara pravartana: "One cannot spread the holy name of Krsna without being specifically empowered by Lord Krsna." (Cc. Antya 7.11) One's material position

does not matter. If he is sincere, he can be empowered by the Lord to spread Krsna consciousness (and thus take the position of guru):

According to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's philosophy, yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei 'guru' haya: anyone who knows the science of Krsna can become a spiritual master, without reference to whether or not he is a brahmana or sannyasi. Ordinary people cannot understand the essence of sastra, nor can they understand the pure character, behavior and abilities of strict followers of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's principles. The Krsna consciousness movement is creating pure, exalted Vaisnavas even from those born in families considered lower than those of sudras....By the grace of the Supreme Lord Visnu, one can be completely purified, become a preacher of Krsna consciousness, and become the spiritual master of the entire world. This principle is accepted in all Vedic literature. Evidence can be quoted from authoritative sastras showing how a person can become the spiritual master of the entire world. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is to be considered the most munificent personality, for He distributes the real essence of Vedic sastras to anyone who becomes qualified by becoming His sincere servant.

Cc. Antya 5.84 (Antya:2, p. 157)

In a way of preliminary summary, then, it can be stated that although generally it is understood that a spiritual master is one who is on the topmost platform of Krsna consciousness, a devotee who is not yet on that platform can be specially empowered by his spiritual master and by the Lord to become a spiritual master, and thus have the opportunity to qualify himself to act as a transparent via media for the instructions and blessings of the disciplic succession and the Supreme Lord.

III. THE POSITION OF THE MADHYAMA-ADHIKARI GURU

Now, the question arises, "What is the actual position of the madhyama-adhikari guru? Although he is not on the liberated platform, can he take his disciples back to Godhead? Is his disciple in a spiritually "safe" position? If he is not fully liberated, should his disciple accept his instructions as infallible? These are essential questions. In The Nectar of Instruction (Text 5, p. 58), we find this important instruction:

One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikari. A neophyte Vaisnava or a Vaisnava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance. Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikari as a spiritual master.

To clarify, a madhyama-adhikari guru can initiate and elevate his disciples gradually to his own level of Krsna consciousness. However, he cannot, by himself, elevate his disciples beyond the limits of his own realization. "Therefore, a disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikari as a spiritual master." For ISKCON gurus, therefore, there is the compelling responsibility to connect their disciples to Srila Prabhupada by seeing that their disciples take constant instruction from Srila Prabhupada's vani in the form of his books, lectures, letters, etc. In that way, Srila Prabhupada is a siksa guru for such disciples:

One who first gives information about spiritual life is called the varṭma-pradarsaka-guru or spiritual master. The spiritual master who initiates according to the regulations of the sastras is called dikṣa-guru, and the spiritual master who gives instructions for elevation is called sikṣa-guru.

Cc. Madhya 8.128 (Madhya: 3, p. 163)

Gurun is plural in number because anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a spiritual master. Although others give help in showing the way to beginners, the guru who first initiates one with the maha-mantra is to be known as the initiator, and the saints who give instructions for progressive advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are called instructing spiritual masters.

Cc. Adi 1.34 (Adi: 1, p. 37)

Thus, by dint of his connection to an uttama-adhikari guru, the disciple can advance beyond his madhyama-adhikari guru. We have an example of a disciple advancing beyond his guru in the case of Dhruva Maharaja and his mother, Suniti:

Trans. Dhruva was seated in the transcendental airplane, which was just about to start, when he remembered his poor mother, Suniti. He thought to himself, "How shall I go alone to the Vaikuntha planet and leave behind my poor mother?" The great associates of Vaikunthaloka, Nanda and Sunanda, could understand the mind of Dhruva Maharaja, and thus they showed him that his mother, Suniti, was going forward in another plane.

Purp. Dhruva had a feeling of obligation to his mother, Suniti. It was Suniti who had given him the clue which had now enabled him to be personally carried to the Vaikuntha planet by the associates of Lord Viṣṇu. He now remembered her and wanted to take her with him. Actually, Dhruva Maharaja's mother, Suniti, was his patha-pradarsaka-guru /varṭma-pradarsaka-guru/. Patha-pradarsaka-guru means "the guru, or spiritual master, who shows the way." Such a guru is sometimes called sikṣa-guru. Although Nārada Muni was his dikṣa-guru (initiating spiritual master), Suniti, his mother, was the first who gave him instruction on how to achieve the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the duty of the sikṣa-guru or dikṣa-guru to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to sastric injunctions, there is no difference between sikṣa-guru and dikṣa-guru... This incident proves that the sikṣa- or dikṣa-guru who has a disciple who strongly executes devotional service like

Dhruva Maharaja can be carried by the disciple even though the instructor is not as advanced....The conclusion is that a disciple or an offspring who is a very strong devotee can carry with him to Vaikunthaloka either his father, mother, or siksa- or diksa-guru.

Bhag. 4.12.32-33 (4:2, p. 187-189)

Further, in a conversation between Srila Prabhupada's esteemed Godbrother Sridhar Maharaja and GBC members, on March 26, 1978, Sridhar Maharaja says,

A beginner should also be respected, God willing, he may go and pass me and I am going slow, he may go quickly and overcome me one day. With this possibility we should try to give respect to any beginner. He may surpass me one day because he has come in connection with the real thing. God willing he may surpass me and go ahead one day. It may be possible.

Therefore, not only Srila Prabhupada's disciples, but the disciples of his disciples, and all future generations of disciples, must accept Srila Prabhupada as their siksa-guru. By hearing his sublime instructions, one can experience a transcendental relationship with him. This should be the situation as long as the Krsna consciousness movement exists, that is, for at least the next 10,000 years.

One may then inquire, "If one can approach an uttama-adhikari (Srila Prabhupada) by reading his books, then what need is there for taking initiation from a spiritual master who is less qualified?" The answer is that formal diksa, initiation, is always essential in spiritual life, according to the sastras. In

the purport to Cc. Adi 1.35 (Adi:1, p.38), Srila Prabhupada explains:

One should always remember that a person who is reluctant to accept a spiritual master and be initiated is sure to be baffled in his endeavor to go back to Godhead. One who is not properly initiated may present himself as a great devotee, but in fact he is sure to encounter many stumbling blocks on his path of progress toward spiritual realization, with the result that he must continue his term of material existence without relief. Such a helpless person is compared to a ship without a rudder, for such a ship can never reach its destination. It is imperative, therefore, that one accept a spiritual master if he at all desires to gain the favor of the Lord.

Although one can get instruction from the revealed scriptures, one still requires the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master:

Everyone is engaged in various kinds of scriptural inquiries, but the Srimad-Bhagavatam gives answers to all the various students of self-realization....One who is imbued with such sincere inquiries must ask the bona fide spiritual master in the disciplic succession from Brahmaji...Because the mystery was disclosed before Brahmaji by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the mystery of all such inquiries regarding self-realization must be put before such a spiritual master, who is directly the representative of the Lord, acknowledged in that disciplic succession. Such a bona fide spiritual master is able to clear up the whole thing by evidence from the revealed scriptures, both direct and indirect. Although everyone is free to consult the revealed scriptures in this connection, one still requires the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master.

Bhag. 2.9.36 (2:2, p.197)

By the process of initiation, one is freed from sin and enlightened with transcendental knowledge:

Diksa is the process by which one can awaken his transcendental knowledge and vanquish all reactions caused by sinful activity...

Bhakti-sandarbha of Jiva Gosvami
cited in Cc. Madhya 15.108 (Mad:6, p.54)

Diksa actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination.

Cc. Madhya 4.111 (Madhya:2, p.57)

One's actual connection with Krsna is established at the time of initiation by a bona fide spiritual master:

This relationship [with Krsna] is established by connecting oneself with the bona fide spiritual master who is the direct representative of Krsna in disciplic succession.... The connection with the spiritual master is called initiation. From the date of initiation by the spiritual master, the connection between Krsna and a person cultivating Krsna consciousness is established. Without initiation by a bona fide spiritual master, the actual connection with Krsna consciousness is never performed.

NOD p.xx

Unless properly initiated, one's devotional activities are useless and one can descend again into the animal species:

Unless one is initiated by a bona fide spiritual master, all his devotional activities are useless. A person who is not properly initiated can descend again into the animal species.

Hari-bhakti-vilasa (2.6)
cited in Cc. Madhya 15.108 (Mad:6, p.54)

Diksa is also necessary because at the time of initiation, the spiritual master consumes all the sinful reactions of his disciple:

As Krsna takes away all the sinful reactions of a person immediately upon his surrender unto Him, similarly the external manifestation of Krsna, the representative of Krsna who acts as the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, takes all the resultant reactions of the sinful life of the disciple immediately after the disciple's initiation. Thus if the disciple follows the principles instructed by the spiritual master, he remains purified and is not contaminated by the material infection.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu therefore states that the spiritual master who plays the part of Krsna's representative has to consume all the sinful reactions of his disciple.

Bhag. 4.21.31 (4:3, p.98)

So, in conclusion, although one can approach an uttama-adhikari (Srila Prabhupada) through his vani (his siksa), to advance in spiritual life it is still required that one take initiation from a living guru--a connection that facilitates proper, guided approach to Srila Prabhupada's siksa. The relationship between the spiritual master and the disciple is eternal and the disciple must follow the instructions of his spiritual master, whose words and actions are in accordance with the disciplic succession. Once the connection is made with the madhyama-adhikari guru through diksa, that relationship should not be given up.

It is also understood that as the madhyama-adhikari-guru advances in spiritual life, the disciple can advance with him. Although he may not be fully liberated in the present, such a guru is advancing on the path of liberation:

When a devotee completely forgets his bodily existence, he should be understood to be liberated. He is no longer encaged in the body. The example is given that when a coconut becomes completely dry, the coconut pulp within the coconut shell separates from the bondage of the shell and the outer covering. By moving the dry coconut, one can hear that the pulp within is no longer attached to the shell or to the covering. Similarly, when one is fully absorbed in devotional service, he is completely disconnected from the two material coverings, the subtle and gross bodies.... From the beginning of devotional service the path of liberation immediately opens, just as the coconut taken from the tree immediately begins to dry; it simply takes some time for the shell and pulp to separate from one another.

Bhag. 4.12.18 (4:2, pp.170-171)

[also Bg 3.31]

Therefore, the disciple of the madhyama-adhikari guru is in a spiritually protected position. He can advance as his guru advances, and he benefits from a direct, transcendental link to his parama-guru, Srila Prabhupada, the uttama-adhikari guru.

Another point is that because he is not yet fully liberated, the madhyama-adhikari guru is not yet completely free from the four basic defects of a conditioned soul. His instructions are not, therefore, independently absolute. His instructions and personal behavior must be supported by sadhu (disciplic succession) and sastra.

Sadhu-sastra-guru: one has to test all spiritual matters according to the instructions of saintly persons, scriptures and the spiritual master. The spiritual master is one who follows the instructions of his predecessors, namely the sadhus, or saintly persons. A bona fide spiritual master does not mention anything not mentioned in the authorized scriptures. Ordinary people have to follow the instructions of sadhu, sastra and guru. Those statements made in the sastras and those made by the bona fide sadhu or guru cannot differ from one another.

Bhag. 4.16.1 (4:2, p.318)

One who accepts initiation from a madhyama-adhikari guru, therefore, must not accept his guru out of mere sentiment or blind fanaticism. He must deeply study the sastra and try to understand the philosophy of Krsna consciousness and he must come to a mature understanding of the qualifications of a bona fide spiritual master, and choose a spiritual master accordingly:

The sastras enjoin that before we take a guru we study him carefully to find out whether we can surrender to him. We should not accept a guru suddenly out of fanaticism. That is very dangerous. The guru should also study the person who wants to become a disciple to see if he is fit. That is the way a relationship is established between the guru and disciple.

SSR (p. 59)

Even if a guru is not yet fully liberated, if he transmits the message of Krsna as it descends through the disciplic succession, those instructions are sufficient to liberate his disciple. The guru himself may not understand exactly how Krsna's mercy is passing through him, yet the process is going on. In the Addendum to the GBC paper of March 1978 concerning the position of the new gurus in ISKCON (in a sub-section titled, "The New Guru's Actual Realization of Krsna"), we find the following citation from Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta:

When Lord Caitanya was teaching Sanatana Gosvami 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."

If the disciple sincerely follows Krsna's instructions, as they are transmitted through the spiritual master, he will attain liberation:

One has to execute the order of Lord Visnu, whether receiving it directly from Him or from His bona fide representative, the spiritual master....every man's duty is to receive orders from Lord Krsna or from His bona fide representative and take these orders as his life and soul, without personal considerations. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura states that one should not care very much whether he is going to be liberated or not, but he should simply execute the direct order received from the spiritual master. If one sticks to the principle of abiding by the order of the spiritual master, he will always remain in a liberated position.

Bhag. 4.20.13 (4:3, pp. 16-17)

That the disciple becomes liberated by following the instructions of his spiritual master is stressed in the following scriptural citations:

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti advised that if we want to be successful in our attempt to go back to Godhead, we must very seriously act according to the instruction of the spiritual master. That is the way of perfection. There need be no anxiety over attaining perfection because if one follows the instruction given by the spiritual master he is sure to attain perfection. Our only concern should be how to execute the order of the spiritual master. A spiritual master is expert in giving special instructions to each of his disciples, and if the disciple executes the order of the spiritual master, that is the way of his perfection.

Bhag. 4.8.71 (4:1, pp. 383-384)

Devotional service is so perfect that simply by following the rules and regulations and executing them under the direction of the spiritual master, one is liberated from the clutches of maya, even in this body....In the discharge of devotional service, if one has unflinching faith in the instruction of the bona fide spiritual master and follows the rules and regulations, he is sure to be liberated, even within this present body. Srila Rupa Gosvami, in the Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu, has also confirmed this. Iha yasya harer dasye: anyone whose only aim is to serve the Supreme Lord under the direction of the spiritual master, regardless of where he is situated, is called jivan-mukta, or one who is liberated even within his material body.

Bhag. 3.33.10 (3:4, p. 475)

Trans: One must conquer the modes of passion and ignorance by developing the mode of goodness, and then one must become detached from the mode of goodness by promoting oneself to the platform of suddha-sattva. All this can be automatically done if one engages in the service of the spiritual master with faith and devotion. In this way one can conquer the influence of the modes of nature.

Purp: Just by treating the root cause of an ailment, one can conquer all bodily pains and sufferings. Similarly, if one is devoted and faithful to the spiritual master, he can conquer the influence of sattva-guna, rajo-guna and tamo-guna very easily. Yogis and jnanis practice in many ways to conquer the senses, but the bhakta immediately attains the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead through the mercy of the spiritual master. Yasya prasada bhagavat-prasada. If the spiritual master is favorably inclined, one naturally receives the mercy of the Supreme Lord, and by the mercy of the Supreme Lord one immediately becomes transcendental, conquering all the influences of sattva-guna, rajo-guna and tamo-guna within this material world. This is confirmed in Bhagavad-gita (sa gunan samatityaitan brahma-bhuyaya kalpate). If one is a pure devotee acting under the directions of the guru, one easily gets the mercy of the Supreme Lord and thus becomes immediately situated on the transcendental platform.

Bhag. 7.15.25 (7:3, pp. 222-223)

This same point is implied in the following references:

We sing in our daily prayers, yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi. By the pleasure of the spiritual master, one can get extraordinary power, especially in spiritual advancement. The blessings of the spiritual master are more powerful than one's personal endeavor for such advancement....Especially for spiritual advancement, one should carry out the bona fide order of the spiritual master. By the parampara system, one can thus be endowed with the original spiritual power coming from the Supreme Personality of Godhead (evam parampara-praptam imam rajarsayo viduh).

Bhag 8.15.28 (8:2, pp. 201-202)

Our duty is to execute devotional service sincerely, under the direction of the spiritual master. Krsna, by His grace, will supply whatever we need in executing our devotional service. In the Krsna consciousness movement, we simply have to execute the order of Krsna and guru. Then all necessities will be supplied by Krsna, even if we do not ask for them.

Bhag. 8.6.14 (8:1, p. 219)

The new devotee, by study of the scripture and by taking the advice of mature, senior Vaisnavas, should be very cautious in choosing a spiritual master. He should accept as a spiritual master someone who he feels confident can connect him to Krsna and to Srila Prabhupada by his instructions and by his personal behavior. The disciple's faith in his spiritual master should not be based on an artificial platform of construing that the madhyama-adhikari-guru is incapable of making any mistake. If his faith is thus falsely grounded, then if there may appear some minor fault in the guru, the disciple's faith will be seriously shaken. Rather than basing faith in a sentimental or fanatical idea, faith should be placed in the guru because he is sincerely endeavoring to represent, purely, the disciplic succession. Artificial faith will not endure. Because it is based on a false platform, it will be easily shaken. Insofar as the guru represents the Supreme Lord and the disciplic succession purely, the disciple's faith will develop.

If the madhyama-adhikari guru presents himself as, or allows himself to be presented or worshiped as, an uttama-adhikari, then he is simply cheating his disciples. He is making a false and artificial show, and thus is inspiring cheap, superficial faith and devotion. Rather than true and appropriate glorification, such cheap adoration is actually an insult:

Trans: Thus when the greatly powerful King Prthu, the son of Vena, saw the professionals before him, to congratulate them he smiled, and with the gravity of the vibrating sounds of clouds he spoke as follows. King Prthu said: O gentle suta, magadha and other devotees offering prayers, the qualities of which you have spoken are not distinct in me. Why then should you praise me for all these qualities when I do not shelter these features? I do not wish for these words meant for me to go in vain, but it is better that they be offered

someone else. O gentle reciters, offer such prayers in due course of time, when the qualities of which you have spoken actually manifest themselves in me. The gentle who offer prayers to the Supreme Personality of Godhead do not attribute such qualities to a human being, who does not actually have them. How could an intelligent man competent enough to possess such exalted qualities allow his followers to praise him if he did not actually have them? Praising a man by saying that if he were educated he might have become a great scholar or great personality is nothing but a process of cheating. A foolish person who agrees to accept such praise does not know that such words simply insult him. As a person with a sense of honor and magnanimity does not like to hear about his abominable actions, a person who is very famous and powerful does not like to hear himself praised. My dear devotees, headed by the suta, just now I am not very famous for my personal activities because I have not done anything praiseworthy you could glorify. Therefore how could I engage you in praising my activities exactly like children?

Purp: The prayers and praises by the suta, magadha and vandi all explained the godly qualities of Maharaja Prthu, for he was a saktyavesa incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Because the qualities were not yet manifest, however, King Prthu very humbly asked why the devotees should praise him with such exalted words. He did not want anyone to offer him prayers or glorify him unless he possessed the real qualities of which they spoke....Although Prthu Maharaja was factually an incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he rejected those praises because the qualities of the Supreme Person were not yet manifest in him. He wanted to stress that one who does not actually possess these qualities would not try to engage his followers and devotees in offering him glory for them, even though these qualities might be manifest in the future. If a man who does not factually possess the attributes of a great personality engages his followers in praising him with the expectation that such attributes will develop in the future, that sort of praise is actually an insult.

Bhag. 4.15.21-26 (4:2, pp. 311-316)

If one who is not factually on the uttama-adhikari platform poses as an uttama-adhikari, he becomes degraded, according to Srila Prabhupada in The Nectar of Instruction (text 5, p. 58):

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.

If one artificially accepts an exalted spiritual position, there is danger that he may become enamoured of the material facilities available in that position, such as wealth or followers:

The spiritual master must never be carried away by an accumulation of wealth or a large number of followers. A bona fide spiritual master will never become like that. But sometimes, if a spiritual master is not properly authorized, and only on his own initiative becomes a spiritual master, he may be carried away by an accumulation of wealth and large number of disciples. His is not a very high grade of devotional service. If a person is carried away by such achievements, then his devotional service becomes slackened. One should, therefore, strictly adhere to the principles of disciplic succession.

NOD (p. 117)

If one who is not on the most exalted platform of pure devotional service accepts an abundance of material facility and worship, there is great danger that he will become attached to his material position and thus fall down.

A madhyama-adhikari guru, therefore, should not accept the position of an uttama-adhikari. As such, he should not allow himself to be referred to as a paramahansa, a term reserved for those in the topmost rank of spirituality:

The spiritual master who is fully surrendered unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead and has no business other than the Lord's service is called the best of the paramahamsas. A paramahamsa has no program for sense gratification; he is interested only in satisfying the senses of the Lord.

Cc. Madhya 9.289 (Madhya:4, p. 70)

Since he, the true acarya, the spiritual master of the entire world is understood to be the most advanced devotee, he is called paramahamsa-thakura. Thakura is a title of honor offered to the paramahamsa. Therefore one who acts as an acarya, directly presenting Lord Krsna by spreading His name and fame, is also to be called paramahamsa-thakura.

Cc. Antya 7.12 (Antya:3, p. 7)

Haridasa Thakura was so exalted that he was addressed as thakura and gosani, and these titles are offered to the most advanced Vaisnavas. The spiritual master is generally called gosani, and thakura is used to address the paramahamsas, those in the topmost rank of spirituality.

Cc. Madhya 11.165 (Madhya:4, p. 195)

Further, only one who is truly situated on the fully transcendental stage of pure devotional service can be referred to as astottara-sata (108):

As soon as one is fully Krsna conscious it is to be understood that one is in his pure, original constitutional position. This state of existence is called suddha-sattva, which means that it is transcendental to the material qualities.

...In pure devotional service one simply serves the Supreme Personality of Godhead as a matter of duty, without reason and without being impeded by material conditions. That is called suddha-sattva, or vasudeva, because in that stage the Supreme Person, Krsna, is revealed in the heart of the devotee. Srila Jiva Gosvami has very nicely described

this vasudeva, or suddha-sattva, in his Bhagavata-sandarbha. He explains that astottara-sata (108) is added to the name of the spiritual master to indicate one who is situated in suddha-sattva, or in the transcendental state of vasudeva.

Bhag. 4.3.23 (4:1, pp. 113-114)

The term "acaryadeva" is used in relation to a pure devotee who engages in unalloyed devotional service without any interruption:

The bona fide spiritual master always engages in unalloyed devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By this test he is known to be a direct manifestation of the Lord and a genuine representative of Sri Nityananda Prabhu. Such a spiritual master is known as acaryadeva.

Cc. Adi 1.46 (Adi:1, p. 45)

From Srila Prabhupada's own words, it appears that the term "Visnupada" is on the same high level as the term "Prabhupada":

The pure devotees whose only business is serving are honored by the names Prabhupada and Visnupada, which indicate such devotees to be representatives of the lotus feet of the Lord.

Bhag. 1.1.15 (1:1, p. 75)

One who is not on the uttama-adhikari platform should not appropriate for himself, or accept from his followers, names which specifically denote those who are situated on such an advanced platform of devotional service.

Further, by allowing one's own name to be sung and glorified simultaneously with the glorification of the name of an uttama-adhikari devotee, it is presumed that one is equating

oneself with, or allowing oneself to be equated with, such a rare, exalted Vaisnava. Similarly if one is glorified in the prema-dhvani prayers recited after arati, with inappropriate title, or if one's vyasasana is situated beside that of the uttama-adhikari (what to speak of that of Srila Prabhupada), or one receives worship simultaneously with the worship of the uttama-adhikari Vaisnava, then it certainly appears, from an objective standpoint, that the non-uttama-adhikari is being equated with the uttama-adhikari and vice-versa. When this is done in ISKCON, the eleven initiating gurus are being elevated, in effect, to Srila Prabhupada's position or, conversely, he is being brought down to the same level as his disciples: disciples whose spiritual achievements and opulences cannot be remotely compared to his. Tragically, Srila Prabhupada's unique and glorious position is being minimized and eclipsed. At certain times and places it appears even as if Srila Prabhupada is being pushed to the background, or relegated to the position of a distinguished previous acarya, with no immediate relevance. This lamentable situation has created a serious and deep-rooted offense at the lotus feet of our beloved spiritual master with subsequent reactions within the movement. There is urgent need for radical, enlightened reassessment and rectification of the problem.

In carefully analyzing Srila Prabhupada's books and letters regarding the position of the guru I have come to the understanding that I have created a great offense against Srila Prabhupada by allowing myself to be regarded and worshiped on his level, along side His Divine Grace. I can honestly say that it was never my conscious intention to be thought of in this way, but due to the illusory energy of the Lord I was unable to see the effects on others of this system of guru-puja. I can now see clearly that by allowing forms of worship and address which were similar to Prabhupada's to be offered to me, I thus cheapened Srila Prabhupada's position. Not only is this a horrible offense to Srila Prabhupada, which weakens the entire Krsna consciousness movement (by cheapening our absolute, perfect authority--Srila Prabhupada), but it also means that I have cheated my disciples. I should have explicitly made clear to my disciples what my position is as a guru who is not yet a liberated soul, so that the distinction between myself and Srila Prabhupada, and thus the necessity for them to be properly thinking of and connected to Srila Prabhupada, would have been established.

Now I am seeking to rectify this situation. I am humbly begging the forgiveness, first of Srila Prabhupada, without whose causeless mercy I am simply a horrible, wretched creature. I am prepared to endeavor to serve you, Srila Prabhupada for as long as you permit, and I beg that this offense will not cause you to cast me away. Please continue correcting me and guiding me to serve you.

Next I must beg the forgiveness of my Gobrothers and Godsisters who have had to tolerate this offensive situation to Srila Prabhupada and the offenses simultaneously made to them by my having taken such an inappropriate position in their presence. I am very insignificant and have been given an inconceivable instruction to act as guru, and I need your help and mercy. Please kindly forgive me for the sake of Srila Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya's movement, and do not become overly discouraged by having to associate with me, because our Society needs desperately your full contribution and guidance to be successful. Kindly tolerate and correct me in all future occasions when I may deviate, either knowingly or unknowingly, and thus show your mercy to me.

Finally I must beg the forgiveness of my disciples who have been allowed to be misled by this situation. I have tried to present as best I can the science of Krsna consciousness to you but, still being subject to illusion, I have not been able to properly instruct you on this point regarding my position and Prabhupada's position until now. I can only pledge to you that I will sincerely endeavor to rectify this thoroughly so there will be no further impediment to your advancement towards the perfection of life in Krsna consciousness. I humbly pray that you also forgive me and understand the important lessons from this incident so that you may never again have doubts about these points regarding the position of our param-guru, Srila Prabhupada.

If there are ever any questions that my instruction or

behavior differs from his siksa, you must look towards him as the highest standard to try and follow. Thus you will always feel yourself under the divine protection of the Lord.

With all my little humility, I beg to remain,

Your unworthy servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ramesvara Swami". The letters are fluidly connected, with a large initial 'R' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'i'.

Ramesvara Swami

THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS FOR WORSHIP OF THE MADHYAMA-ADHIKARI GURU

To suggest that it is improper for the madhyama-adhikari guru to accept worship as if he were an uttama-adhikari is not, by any means, to suggest that he should not receive any worship from his disciples. It is, indeed, the duty of the disciple to tender proper honor and worship to his guru. If the disciple sees his guru as an ordinary man, his spiritual life is finished. As stated in the Padma Purana, "One...who thinks of the spiritual master in the disciplic succession as an ordinary man...is taken to be a resident of hell." (Cited: Bhag. 4.21.12) The guru need not yet have reached the fully liberated state in order to be worshiped. He is worshiped not necessarily because he is perfect (although certainly he is on the path of liberation), but because he is perfectly representing his spiritual master, the full line of disciplic succession, and the Lord Himself. Srila Prabhupada himself would sometimes refer to himself as a "peon" carrying the message of Krsna, just as a postman is simply a peon for the post office—he has no special message of his own; his business is simply to deliver the letters untouched and unchanged:

Even though we may not have the fortune to contact the Supreme Lord personally, the Lord's representative is as good as the Lord Himself because such a representative does not say anything unless it is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu therefore gives a definition of guru. Yare dekha, tare kaha 'krsna'-upadesa: the bona fide guru is he who advises his disciples exactly in accordance with the principles spoken by Krsna.

Bhag. 8.24.48 (8:3, p. 261)

Inasmuch as the guru is sincerely and purely transmitting Krsna consciousness, he is worshiped as the representative of Krsna:

* This addendum has been compiled in order to clarify and to elaborate upon several major issues raised in the first part of this paper.

The guru is Krsna's representative, 'the former acaryas' representative. Krsna says that all acaryas are His representatives; therefore the guru should be offered the same respect one would offer to God....When we offer respects to the guru, we are offering respects to God. Because we are trying to be God conscious, it is required that we learn how to offer respects to God through God's representative.

SSR (pp. 58-59)

The servants of God are to be respected as God by the devotees who actually want to go back to Godhead....By serving the servant of God, one can please God more than by directly serving the Lord. The Lord is more pleased when He sees that His servants are properly respected because such servants risk everything for the service of the Lord and so are very dear to the Lord.

Bhag. 1.2.16 (1:1, p. 112)

Since the spiritual master is the most confidential servant of the Lord, he should be treated exactly like the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The spiritual master should never be neglected or disobeyed, like an ordinary person.

Bhag. 4.28.43 (4:4, p. 224)

The Lord helps us by giving us direction how to act in devotional service and thus advance on the path back home, back to Godhead. He instructs us outwardly in the form of the spiritual master. Therefore, one should not accept the spiritual master as an ordinary human being. The Lord says, acaryam mam vijaniyan navamanyeta karhicit: one should not treat the spiritual master as an ordinary human being because he is the substitute for the Supreme Personality of Godhead (Bhag. 11.17.27). One should treat the spiritual master as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and never be envious of him or consider him to be an ordinary human being.

Bhag. 4.20.13 (4:3, p. 17)

In the sense that the spiritual master is purely representing Krsna, Krsna is coming through him. In this sense, Krsna appears "as" the guru to the sincere soul seeking liberation from material suffering. That is what is meant by "guru and Krsna are one":

My dear Uddhava, the spiritual master must be accepted not only as My representative but as my very self...

Bhag. 11.17.27/cited: NOD p. 59)

According to the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is nondifferent from Krsna. Lord Krsna in the form of the spiritual master delivers His devotees.

Cc. Adi 1.45 (Adi:1, p. 43)

My dear King, a disciple has to accept the spiritual master not only as spiritual master, but also as the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the Supersoul. In other words, the disciple should accept the spiritual master as God because he is the external manifestation of Krsna.

Bhag. Eleventh Canto (cited: NOD p. 59)

This "oneness" is not, obviously, complete oneness of identity, but oneness in purpose, oneness in message. If the guru is purely transmitting Krsna, then Krsna can be said to be "appearing through" or "as" the spiritual master. As explained hereinbefore, even though he may not yet be a fully liberated soul, the madhyama-adhikari guru can deliver his disciple, acting as a transparent via-medium to his own fully-liberated guru and to the entire disciplic succession. If Bilvamangala Thakura was able even to see his guru "appearing through" a prostitute, Cintamani, then certainly a disciple can receive the message of Krsna through his madhyama-adhikari guru. Furthermore, how can the disciple view as ordinary a personality who inspires faith in Krsna consciousness and who is successful in spreading Krsna consciousness? ("Unless empowered by Krsna, one cannot propagate the sankirtana movement.")

Cc. Antya 7.11/Antya:3, p. 6)

The conclusion is, because he is acting as the representative of Krsna and the disciplic succession, the guru--even if not yet fully liberated--is unquestionably and undoubtedly worshipable by his disciples.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE OF THE DISCIPLE TO HIS MADHYAMA-ADHIKARI GURU

In light of this, it must be clearly understood that the disciple must never disrespect his spiritual master or feel that he can sit in judgment of

him. This does not mean, of course, that the disciple approaches the guru in a mood of uncritical, blind following. He knows that the instructions of his spiritual master are perfect not merely because they have been spoken by him, but because his instructions do not contradict sadhu (parampara) and sastra. This is the position of the faithful and intelligent disciple:

It is not that we should blindly surrender, but we should be able to inquire with intelligence. Without inquiry, we cannot make advancement.... We may have a very good spiritual master, but if we have no power to inquire, we cannot make progress.... It is not that we are to submit ourselves blindly. The spiritual master may be self-realized and situated in the Absolute Truth, yet we have to question him in order to understand all spiritual points.

Bhag. 2.8.7 (2:2, p. 99)

Both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned. One should not only hear submissively from the spiritual master, but one must also get a clear understanding from him, in submission and service and inquiries.

Bg. 4.34 (p. 260)

Because the disciple does not follow blindly, but with intelligent understanding and with reference to sastra, if the guru were to speak incorrectly or against the pure principle of Krsna consciousness, the disciple would not be misled. Yet, the disciple cannot, if he wants to receive the mercy of his spiritual master and advance in spiritual life, maintain a critical, skeptical or fault-finding attitude towards his guru:

A devotee should not be disturbed by the activities of his spiritual master and should not try to criticize him. A devotee should be fixed in the conclusion that the spiritual master cannot be subject to criticism and should never be considered equal to a common man.

Cc. Antya 3.11 (Antya:1, p. 213)

Therefore, the disciple must be very careful in accepting a spiritual master. Once the spiritual master is accepted, the disciple must cultivate an attitude and mode of faith in his preceptor, and strictly avoid a challenging attitude:

Vidura was very eager to receive transcendental knowledge, and because of this, Maitreya was very pleased with him. One can please the spiritual master simply by surrendering to him and rendering service, saying, "Sir, I am your most obedient servant. Please accept me and give me instructions." Although Arjuna was a very intimate friend of Kṛṣṇa's, before receiving Srimad Bhagavad-gita he surrendered himself, saying, sisyas te 'ham sadhi mam tvam prapannam: "Now I am Your disciple and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me." (Bg. 2.7)

This is the proper way to ask for knowledge. One does not approach the spiritual master with a challenging spirit. One should also be inquisitive to understand the spiritual science. It is not that one considers himself superior to the guru. One must first find a guru to whom one can surrender, and if this is not possible, one shouldn't waste his time. By surrendering to the proper person, one can very quickly come to understand transcendental knowledge.

TLK pp. 38-39

The student must approach a spiritual master and surrender unto him fully (pranipatena). He must also question him in order to understand his instructions (pariprasnena). One should not only surrender to the spiritual master but also render loving service unto him (sevaya) so that the spiritual master will be pleased with the student and explain the transcendental subject matter more clearly. A challenging spirit before the spiritual master should be avoided if one is at all interested in learning the Vedic instructions in depth.

Bhag. 5.12.3 (5:1, p. 403)

If the disciple thinks independently, neglecting the instructions of the spiritual master, he is a failure:

For advancement in anything, especially in spiritual life, one must strictly follow the bona fide instructions of the teacher....One should have complete faith in the guru, who helps the disciple make progress in spiritual life. As soon as the disciple thinks independently, not caring for the instructions of the spiritual master, he is a failure (yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi).

Bhag. 8.17.1 (8:3, p. 2)

Only fools give up the service of the spiritual master and think themselves advanced in spiritual knowledge. In order to check such fools, Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself presented the perfect example of how to be a disciple. A spiritual master knows very well how to engage each disciple in a particular duty, but if a disciple, thinking himself more advanced

than his spiritual master, gives up his orders and acts independently, he checks his own spiritual progress. Every disciple must consider himself completely unaware of the science of Krsna and must always be ready to carry out the orders of the spiritual master to become competent in Krsna consciousness. A disciple should always remain a fool before his spiritual master.

Cc. Adi 7.72 (Adi:2, p. 55)

The instructions received from the spiritual master must be followed immediately. One should not deviate from or surpass the instructions of the spiritual master. One should not be simply intent on consulting books but should simultaneously execute the spiritual master's orders.

Bhag. 5.5.14 (5:1, p. 184)

One must remain a fool before one's spiritual master:

Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself said, "My Guru Maharaja, My spiritual master considered Me a great fool." He who remains a great fool before his guru is a guru himself. However, if one says, "I am so advanced that I can speak better than my guru, he is simply a rascal.

SSR (p. 57)

The disciple should never become familiar with the spiritual master:

One should not come very near a superior. The Deity of the Lord and the spiritual master should be seen from a distant place. This is called maryada. Otherwise, as is said, familiarity breeds contempt. Sometimes coming too near the Deity or the spiritual master degrades the neophyte devotee. Personal servants of the Deity and the spiritual master should therefore always be very careful, for negligence may overcome them in their duty.

Cc. Madhya 12.212 (Madhya:5, pp. 105-106)

The foolish disciple who, considering the spiritual master an ordinary man, tries to overtake him and occupy his post, immediately falls down:

One cannot attain perfection without smearing the dust from the lotus feet of an exalted devotee on his head. If one always follows the orders of the spiritual master, there is no question of falling down. As soon as a foolish disciple tries to overtake his spiritual master and becomes ambitious to occupy his post, he immediately falls down....If the spiritual master is considered an ordinary man, the disciple surely loses his chance to advance further."

Bhag. 5.12.14 (5:1, p. 421)

In summary, then, in order to advance in Krsna consciousness, the disciple must always maintain a submissive and humble position before the spiritual master, he must strictly follow his instructions and must not feel himself in a position to pass judgment upon or criticize his spiritual master.

If, however, it appears to the disciple that there is some major defect or deviation in the instructions or behavior of his spiritual master he should not give up faith in his guru, but should view this matter as the inconceivable arrangement of Krsna and, in a humble mood, approach a respected Godbrother of his guru for guidance and instruction. According to sastra, the Godbrother of the guru (who is strictly following the process of Krsna consciousness) may be respected as one respects one's spiritual master:

Trans: Thinking, "He Sri Advaita Acarya is a disciple of Sri Madhavendra Puri," Lord Caitanya obeys Him, respecting Him as His spiritual master.

Cc. Adi 6.40 (Adi:1, p. 542)

Sri Advaita Prabhu and Isvara Puri, Lord Caitanya's spiritual master, were both disciples of Madhavendra Puri, who was also the spiritual master of Nityananda Prabhu. Thus Advaita Prabhu, as Lord Caitanya's spiritual uncle, was always to be respected because one should respect one's spiritual master's Godbrothers as one respects one's spiritual master.

Cc. Adi 5.147 (Adi:1, p. 474)

The Godbrother should be very careful not to disturb the faith of his guru-Godbrother's disciple, but should approach his guru-Godbrother and speak with him confidentially and try to rectify the problem, if there is one.

PROPER METHODS OF WORSHIP OF THE MADHYAMA-ADHIKARI GURU

Worship of the guru is not merely a matter of ritual and ceremony. The practical basis of respect and worship of the spiritual master is seen in the disciple's inquiring and hearing from the guru (The Spiritual Master and the Disciple, pp. 257-273), in his following the guru's instructions (SMD, pp. 273-

298), in his serving the guru (SMD, pp. 298-302), in his satisfying and pleasing the guru (SMD, pp. 303-311), in his faith in the guru (SMD, pp. 311-316), and in his submissiveness and humility in his dealings with his guru (SMD, pp. 316-319). But ceremony and ritual, as an expression of devotion, also certainly have their proper place. Upon seeing his spiritual master, the disciple immediately offers obeisances:*

A spiritual master or the parampara-acarya should be respected exactly like the Supreme Personality of Godhead...Whenever an acarya is seen, one should immediately bow down before him.

Bhag. 4.22.4 (4:3, p. 143)

When he approaches his spiritual master, the disciple should offer suitable prayers:

It is the duty of a son or a disciple to offer respects and recite suitable prayers when he approaches his father or spiritual master.

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Also, the guru's picture must be established on the altar so that the disciple can offer everything to Krsna through his spiritual master:

There must be an asana, a sitting place before the altar. This asana is for the spiritual master. The disciple brings everything before the spiritual master, and the spiritual master offers everything to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Cc. Madhya 24.334 (Madhya:9, p. 297)**

* It is interesting to note that according to Srila Prabhupada, the spiritual master returns the obeisances of his disciple:

It is seen among Vaisnavas, that even when a disciple offers obeisances to his spiritual master, the spiritual master immediately returns the obeisances because they are mutually offered not to the body but to the Supersoul. Therefore the spiritual master also offers respect to the Supersoul situated in the body of the disciple.

Bhag. 4.3.22 (4:1, pp. 112-113)

** Since this reference, a citation from the Hari-bhakti-vilasa regarding items for Deity worship, refers to the place from which the guru accepts the offerings of his disciple and offers them to Krsna, it refers to the guru's picture-representation on the altar.

In addition, the disciple worships the guru daily with the devotional recitation of the Gurvastakam prayers by Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura. While chanting these verses, the disciple is meditating upon the transcendental qualities both of his diksa-guru (one of the ISKCON gurus) and upon his siksa-guru, Srila Prabhupada, understanding that where there is reference to rare exalted states experienced only by an uttama-adhikari Vaisnava, his diksa-guru is aspiring after this position (and will naturally attain this position in due course).

Naturally, on the Appearance Day of the guru, the disciple performs all appropriate worship of the spiritual master--a function generally reserved for the disciples of the spiritual master.

In addition, certain forms of etiquette must be observed, such as not using the sitting or eating place of the guru:

According to etiquette, things used by Krsna should not be used by anyone else. Similarly, things used by the spiritual master should also not be used by anyone else. That is etiquette. Whatever is used by Krsna or the spiritual master is worshipable. In particular, their sitting or eating places should not be used by anyone else. A devotee must be very careful to observe this.

Cc. Madhya 15.234 (Madhya:6, p. 119)

LIMITATIONS ON WORSHIP OF THE MADHYAMA-ADHIKARI GURU IN THE PRESENCE OF SRILA PRABHUPADA AND THE DEITIES

Although it is certainly fitting and proper for the initiating-gurus of ISKCON to receive worship from their disciples, an offensive situation is created when they are worshiped 1) on the same level as Srila Prabhupada, 2) in the presence of their spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada, and 3) in the presence of the Deities.

As far as being worshiped on the same level as, or in the presence of, Srila

Prabhupada is concerned, it has been demonstrated, hereinbefore, that if one is glorified as having attained or achieved a state that he has not, in actuality, attained, that glorification or worship is no better than an insult (pp. 24-25). Such artificial faith by the worshipers is nothing more than blind sentiment. By allowing such artificial faith to express itself, the recipient of such glorification is simply cheating his followers. And, further, if one artificially imitates a more advanced devotee without being qualified, he becomes degraded:

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. (NOI, p.58)

Srila Prabhupada was not an ordinary guru. He was not even an ordinary saint. By consultation of the sastra, and by his living darsan, it is clear that Srila Prabhupada was a maha-bhagavata, an uttama-adhikari, and a nitya-siddha Vaisnava. Further, his glorious and inconceivable transcendental opulences and practical spiritual achievements point to the fact that he was a saktyavesa-avatara, a living entity especially empowered by Krsna to perform extraordinary, transcendental feats. Over the years of his physical presence in ISKCON, the manner and style in which his disciples worshiped him (and still do worship him) reflected this exalted position (yet, of course, was never truly sufficient). In all temples he was offered very large and opulent vyasanas, and full arati was performed to his physical person as well as to his picture-representation. His worship was even performed in the presence of the Deities. These exalted modes of worship were unique to Srila Prabhupada, and should not be imitated by others. If one accepts a high and elaborate vyasana alongside Srila Prabhupada, and accepts full aroti worship alongside Srila Prabhupada, and accepts titles on the level of "Prabhupada," he is creating, or is allowing to be created, a prima facie appearance that he is equal to Srila Prabhupada. By being worshiped simultaneously with Srila Prabhupada, this appearance is compounded. As much as he may claim for himself a humble role and position, by

allowing himself to be manifestly worshiped like Srila Prabhupada, the appearance is manifestly created that he and Srila Prabhupada are on the same, and equal level. It certainly appears as such to outsiders and to those just coming to Krsna consciousness. This is undoubtedly the objective effect created. This is a matter of mere common sense. Is this not an offense at Srila Prabhupada's lotus feet?

As far as accepting worship before the Deities is concerned, because of his rare and exalted position as an intimate and confidential friend of Krsna's, Srila Prabhupada could accept this position. But can others?

There are many offenses one can commit while serving the Lord, and these are described in the Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu, Hari-bhakti-vilasa and other books. According to the rules and regulations, no one should accept obeisances in the temple of the Lord before the Deity. Nor is it proper for a devotee to offer obeisances and touch the feet of the spiritual master before the Deity. This is considered an offense....The point is that even though one plays the part of a spiritual master, he should not accept obeisances or permit a disciple to wash his feet before the Deity. This is a matter of etiquette.

Cc. Madhya 12.127 (Madhya:5, pp. 60-61)

In the same vein, when Srila Prabhupada was physically present, sometimes the opening or closing of Deity doors or curtains, the greeting of the Deities or the performance of arati was hurried or delayed. For such an exalted saint as Srila Prabhupada, who is an intimate, confidential friend of Krsna's, this was not inappropriate. But can others assume this position? Is this not an offense--perhaps a major offense?

One may argue that because Srila Prabhupada did these things, then we should. The injunction of sastra is not, however, that one should imitate the activities of advanced Vaisnavas, but what one should follow in their footsteps. There is an obvious difference between the two. The latter path is auspicious and uplifting, the former, inauspicious and degrading.

In all ISKCON temples, Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana is permanently installed, and it is a central place where worship of Prabhupada (his daily guru-puja) is focused. We must consider whether any other guru, coming in the line of Srila Prabhupada, should accept worship in his presence. The mood of all followers of Prabhupada should be to be like fools in his presence, and simply lead everyone in totally focusing on Prabhupada and on no one else, before his vyasasana. Further, we don't find in Vedic literature that there are two or more vyasasanas situated along side each other. For example, when Srila Sukadeva Gosvami was offered the vyasasana at the assembly of sages, it is not seen that other vyasasanas were simultaneously installed for the exalted personalities present, including Sri Narada Muni, Sri Vyasadeva, etc. The principle that we find throughout Vedic literature is one vyasasana. Where are the evidences for simultaneous vyasasanas anywhere in sastra?

ENCOURAGING OR ACCEPTING WORSHIP FROM GODBROTHERS

When the eleven gurus began to accept disciples, their non-guru Godbrothers were generally encouraged to participate in (and even organize and lead) the worship of their guru-Godbrothers, often with the rationale that if they did not do so, the disciples of the new gurus would not be able to learn the process of guru-worship. Although many Godbrothers of the gurus have willingly and enthusiastically engaged in worshiping their guru-Godbrothers in this way (while many others have done so motivated by the fear of being branded as "envious") this practice has had two detrimental effects which should be considered:

1) In viewing the Godbrothers of their guru worship him in the same manner as they do, new disciples will tend, naturally, to view their Goduncles as being on their own level ("I am worshiping my guru and they are worshiping my guru. Therefore they are the same as me."). Although, according to sastra (see p.7 herein), they should view the Godbrothers of their guru with great respect, almost on the level of their own guru (unless, of course, one is obviously unqualified), such new disciples have not had the opportunity to develop such respect. (When Govinda das, who was a disciple of Isvara Puri, came to render personal service to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Ciatanya Mahaprabhu felt it unbecoming him to accept service from His Godbrother. He reluctantly accepted the service of Govinda das only when he understood that His guru, Isvara Puri, had specifically ordered it. Cc. Madhya 10.131-147)

2) Dealings between a guru and his Godbrothers are quite different from his dealings with his disciples. The former is on a more equal level which allows for informality, and in the latter, the guru is superior to his disciple, who treats him with great respect and veneration. Therefore, some confusion is created in the minds of new disciples when they view their guru's Godbrothers

engaged in worship of their guru (the new disciples' guru) and later engaging in equal, informal dealings with him. A contradiction is therefore set up by these two very different examples of association. If the new disciples are supposed to follow the first example, what is to stop them from following the second? Such worship, especially when artificially performed, is an unnatural contrivance which can only succeed in bringing about confusion in the minds of new disciples.

If there is concern that an example of worship should be established, we suggest that that example already appears in two forms: 1) the worship of Srila Prabhupada's disciples for Srila Prabhupada, and 2) the worship of the ISKCON gurus of their spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada. Just as Srila Prabhupada's great devotion to his Guru Maharaja set the perfect example for his own disciples, let the new gurus' devotion to and worship of Srila Prabhupada set the example for their own disciples. Where is the necessity for them to engage their Godbrothers in their own glorification? Let them encourage their Godbrothers to increase and deepen their devotion to Srila Prabhupada. This is the natural process.

A FINAL WORD ON WORSHIP AND DEVOTION

It is easy to mistake ceremonial worship ("a ceremony of fruits and flowers") for real devotion. Devotion may be there in ceremony, but mere pomp and ritual is not the ultimate measure of devotion. One should not mistake external ceremonial formulas for devotion. We, as disciples of Srila Prabhupada, experienced that our faith in and love for Srila Prabhupada was not based upon gorgeous guru-puja arrangements but upon Srila Prabhupada's own wonderful, attractive, transcendental qualities and behavior. It is the qualities and activities of the spiritual master that inspire faith in his disciple, not external, ceremonial fanfare. The concern for development of faith in the new disciples for their

gurus should not, therefore, demand that they be able to worship their gurus on the same level and in the same way in which Srila Prabhupada is worshiped, ceremonially. Worship must be there, as explained hereinbefore, but it must be conducted with reference to Srila Prabhupada's unique and special status within the Krsna consciousness movement. Some practical recommendations concerning such regulation of ceremonial worship are suggested in the next section of this paper.

SUGGESTED PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

1) "Open-field" selection of guru: Although, in most cases, a newcomer to ISKCON will be especially inclined to accept as his guru he whose disciples he has been associating with, he should have the opportunity to hear from other gurus as well. Faith is established by hearing, and by having the opportunity to hear from a variety of advanced spiritual personalities, the faith of the new devotee will begin to attach itself most strongly to one individual to whom later he can formally submit as a disciple. In a conversation with the GBC, Srila Prabhupada's Godbrother Sridhar Maharaja spoke as follows on this point:

...According to his sraddha. A newcomer should be given some time, a fair period of time to hear from different persons. And then the sraddha, the faith, will be considered and he can decide to whom he will submit. Do you understand? After sravana, then varana. Five stages are there. First stage is to hear, and second stage is acceptance by the guru and sisya, both the preceptor and disciple. That is the second stage, varana-dasa. Then sadhana-dasa, or the attempt for realization will begin. First stage--to hear--is open, open field, fair field. To hear. And then the connection should come between guru and sisya, the preceptor and the disciple--from both sides.

When a new devotee joins a temple it is natural for him to hear from the guru who is initiating there or who is nearest. But if genuine faith does not manifest, the new devotee should not be forced, by social pressure, etc. At that point he must be allowed to hear from other gurus to develop his genuine sraddha.

2) The temple room itself should be reserved exclusively for the worship of Srila Prabhupada. Only his vyasasana should be installed there. A special modest asana can be reserved for the resident or any visiting gurus when they are present in the temple to lecture.

3) All devotees should participate in Srila Prabhupada's guru-puja in the temple room.

4) Disciples of the new gurus should be encouraged to keep a simple Guru-Gauranga altar in their place of residence (with a picture of the Panca-tattva, Srila Prabhupada, and their guru) which they can worship with offering of incense.

5) Option: A modest vyasasana for the guru can be kept in a special room, such as his personal quarters, with his picture installed on it. The guru or his picture can be garlanded and incense offered, with kirtan. The following instruction regarding proper reception of the spiritual master in one's residence is found in Sri Caitanya-caritamrta (Madhya 24.274-275 / Madhya:9, pp. 237-238):

Trans: The hunter then received both the guests Narada Muni and Parvat Muni in the courtyard of his house. He spread out a straw mat for them to sit upon, and with great devotion he begged them to sit down.. He then fetched water and washed the sages' feet with great devotion. Then both husband and wife drank that water and sprinkled it on their heads.

Purp: This is the process one should follow when receiving the spiritual master or someone on the level of the spiritual master. When the spiritual master comes to the residence of the disciples, the disciples should follow in the footsteps of the former hunter. It doesn't matter what one was before initiation. After initiation, one must learn the etiquette mentioned herein..

- 6) For the purposes of arcana by brahmana-disciples of the new gurus, a picture of the guru should be situated on the Guru-Gauranga altar just below Srila Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur. When disciples of other gurus offer puja to the Deities, they should install their guru's picture in the same way for the duration of the puja.
- 7) During congregational kirtan in the temple room, only Srila Prabhupada's name and pranam-mantra should be chanted.
- 8) The prema-dhvani prayers should be recited in the following way: "Jaya om visnupada..." to Srila Prabhupada and then to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. Later, just prior to "sama veda bhakta vrnda ki jaya," the name or names of any resident of visiting gurus are glorified: "Sri Srimad Ramesvara Swami Maharaja ki jaya, Sri Srimad Satsvarupa dasa Goswami ki jaya," etc.
- 9) The gurus should exercise extreme reserve in selecting or approving special names and titles which normally are reserved for uttama-adhikaris or maha-bhagavatas.
- 10) Pictures of the new gurus should not be placed on the steps of Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana. Understanding that Srila Prabhupada is personally present in his picture and more so in his murti, his disciple should not occupy the steps of Prabhupada's special place of honor.

11) When disciples of the new gurus enter Srila Prabhupada's temple, they should offer obeisances and recite his pranam-mantras after reciting those of their diksa-guru.

12) The new gurus should strongly encourage their disciples to regularly hear Srila Prabhupada's tape lectures (and, of course, study his books).

13) In general, there should be a deliberate and systematic effort to educate all devotees in the understanding of the unique, rare, and exalted spiritual position occupied by Srila Prabhupada and in the understanding of the new gurus' role as via media (for their own disciples) to Srila Prabhupada.

The unifying theme behind these specific, practical guidelines is that Srila Prabhupada, the uttama-adhikari, maha-bhagavata, the nitya-siddha, the saktyavesa-avatara, the Founder-Acarya of ISKCON, and the guru of all other gurus must, for all time, be the central and universal object of veneration and worship, apart from Krsna Himself, in all ISKCON temples. This special mood and atmosphere must be created by allowing for exclusive worship of Srila Prabhupada in the temple room itself, which must always be seen as his temple. Worship of the new gurus must continue, as is required by the sastra and as is necessary for the development of devotion in their disciples, but with special, separate arrangements and with full reference to Srila Prabhupada, the Supreme Personality of ISKCON.

WHAT WILL BE THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS PROGRAM?

1) By implementing this proper consciousness and its corollary practices, we will all be better able to remember Srila Prabhupada. With Srila Prabhupada in central view, and as the central object of worship, all devotees--both his

disciples and grand-disciples, and all coming generations of disciples--will feel Srila Prabhupada's presence more and more. Thus all members of the Krsna consciousness movement will clearly worship Prabhupada as their direct guru, their siksa guru. Thus the requirement to accept an uttama adhikari as one's direct spiritual master will be fulfilled.

2) By highlighting the worship of Srila Prabhupada, and by preserving a distinction between his worship and worship of subsequent gurus, his special, rare and exalted position will never be eclipsed or forgotten. His glories will never be minimized by superficial comparison to his disciples and future generations of disciples who accept the role of guru.

3) We have practically seen that by over-identifying individual temples and ISKCON administrative and initiating zones with specific initiating-gurus, party-spirit and factionalism has tended to develop. All devotees can unite, however, in common worship of Srila Prabhupada. By returning Srila Prabhupada to the center, a unified consciousness can be established based upon universal, ecstatic, devotional worship of Srila Prabhupada. If devotees view themselves only as sons of different fathers, then there may be so many different and opposing families; but if there is simultaneously one common father, then there is one common and unified family, and one absolute authority.

4) By effecting the above principles and practices, we will surely invoke Srila Prabhupada's mercy and blessings upon the Krsna consciousness movement.

5) By embracing this program, the guru's submission and devotion to their spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada, will be deepened and strengthened. When in Srila Prabhupada's temple, they can be better protected from the potential danger of being distracted by personal worship, from their mood of humble submission to Srila Prabhupada. Further, by renouncing personal worship within the temple in Srila Prabhupada's presence, they can better protect themselves from inadvertently imitating the behavior of Srila Prabhupada and thus eventually becoming "degraded" (see NOI, p. 59).

6) By seeing their guru take a more clearly subordinate position before Srila Prabhupada, the faith of the newer devotees in their gurus as servants and representatives of Srila Prabhupada will increase. A more graphic demonstration of their gurus' link to Srila Prabhupada through submission and devotion will naturally give them more of a sense of being linked up to and protected by the disciplic succession. This mood and realization on the part of disciples has already been seen in the temples in which these principles are being followed.

Concerning a guru taking a humble position before his guru in the presence of his disciple, we find a wonderful example in the Second Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam. Lord Brahma, as the creator of the universe, appeared to his disciple, Sri Narada Muni, to be all-powerful. Yet, because he knew that Brahma had attained creative energy by undergoing severe austerities, Narada could understand that there must be someone else superior to Brahma, who had invested Brahma with the power of creation. Therefore, he asks his guru if there is someone

more powerful than he (Bhag. 2.5.4-7). Lord Brahma answers his disciple, first, by admitting that, "Unless and until one is aware of the Personality of Godhead, who is the ultimate truth beyond me, one is sure to be illusioned by observing my powerful activities." (2.5.10) He continues by explaining, in detail, how not he, but Krsna, is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and that he himself creates only by the mercy of Krsna (2.5.11--2.6.33). He admits that only due to his sincere surrender to his guru, Lord Krsna, can he speak or act properly (2.6.34). Continuing, he admits that although he is "known as the great Brahma," perfect in Vedic wisdom, austerity, mystic power and self-realization, and although he is worshiped by the Prajapatis, still, he cannot understand the Lord, his spiritual master (2.6.35), and must, therefore, "surrender unto His feet, which alone can deliver one from the miseries of repeated birth and death." (2.6.36) Because he himself, as well as all other demigods are "bewildered by the illusory external energy of the Supreme Lord," they all have their own respective conceptions and estimations of the Absolute Truth (2.6.37). Finally, he tells his disciple Narada, "Let us offer our respectful obeisances unto that Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose incarnations and activities are chanted by us for glorification, although He can hardly be fully known as He is." (2.6.38) He then proceeds to glorify Lord Krsna.

7) As Srila Prabhupada is and will be for all time the ultimate, absolute example and model of Krsna consciousness, the standard-bearer of the highest spiritual perfection, if we establish him in the absolute center of ISKCON, the world can be better enabled to judge ISKCON on the basis of our Srila Prabhupada. Let them know that ISKCON is Srila Prabhupada and that Srila Prabhupada is ISKCON.

lest the world judge us by our own faults, our inconsistencies, our blunders, let us exalt Srila Prabhupada on the highest pedestal. Let everyone become attracted to this movement by being attracted by the divine, glorious, transcendental person of Srila Prabhupada. All glories to Srila Prabhupada! Srila Prabhupada ki jaya!

A FINAL APPEAL

At the present time, there are many devotees throughout the ISKCON world, of all ranks and dispositions, who are actively arguing in favor of the points presented in this paper. They feel that we have somehow gone astray, that dangerous errors are being made and offenses committed, that the solidarity of our movement is in jeopardy in consequence thereof. They point in dismay to the fact that serious spiritual and/or moral crises have befallen a number of the present eleven ISKCON gurus, a fact that formerly we could hardly have imagined possible. Although there may always be persons who, out of envious feelings, will attempt to discredit and debunk those in a superior position, these points of view are being accepted and furthered by devotees who are sincere, honest and mature Vaisnavas, many of whom are in positions of responsibility and respect within ISKCON, devotees who are genuinely concerned for their own and others' spiritual welfare and for the well-being of the movement. Can they all be dismissed arbitrarily as envious and misguided persons? We feel that they must be patiently heard and responded to. This paper has been prepared as a humble attempt to articulate their realizations and their feelings, with support from the sastra.

We therefore beg you on our hands and knees, with straw in our teeth, to consider all these points very carefully, with great patience and with a meditative mood. If our conclusions are erroneous, then we beg those Vaisnavas whose intelligence is more clear, whose hearts are more pure, and whose vision is more broad, to patiently and lovingly correct us. But if it appears that there may exist within these pages some kernel of truth, even some insignificant insight, then we beg you with all our humility to consider these points very, very carefully. Do not be impatient to condemn outright that which may appear to violate convention, that which may appear to suggest a revision of comfortable and long-held conceptions, that which may appear to suggest radical alternatives. Kindly do not attempt to discredit these arguments by discrediting those who further them, and do not reject everything if some isolated errors are found. We may be full of all kinds of faults and imperfections, but our sincere attempt is to take shelter of perfect instructions. Please, therefore, deal with all the points on their own merits with patience and with cool, spiritual intelligence. If these points are not properly and fully discussed and acted upon in the near future, we fear for the continued health and solidarity of Srila Prabhupada's Krsna consciousness movement.

FURTHER POINTS ON THE POSITION OF MADHYAMA, UTTAMA DEVOTEES

I) Uttama adhikari devotees are mahabhagavatas, or perfect devotees.

"There are three grades of devotees, namely the maha-bhagavata, madhyama-adhikari and the kanistha-adhikari. Those who go to the temples of the Lord and offer worshipful respect to the Deity without sufficient knowledge in the theological science and therefore without any respect for the devotees of the Lord are called materialistic devotees, or kanistha-adhikari, the third-grade devotees. Secondly, the devotees who have developed a mentality of genuine service to the Lord and who thus make friendships only with similar devotees, show favor to the neophytes and avoid atheists are called the second-grade devotees. But those who see everything in the Lord or everything of the Lord and also see in everything an eternal relation of the Lord, so that there is nothing within their purview of sight except the Lord, are called the maha-bhagavatas, or the first-grade devotees of the Lord. Such first-grade devotees of the Lord are perfect in all respects."
(Bhag. 1.12.17; SB 1:2)

"There are three kinds of devotees, namely kanistha-adhikari, madhyama-adhikari and uttama-adhikari: the neophyte, the preacher and the maha-bhagavata, or the highly advanced devotee... The advanced devotee can also see all other living entities as part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, without discrimination. The madhyama-adhikari (preacher) is also well versed in the sastras and can convince others also, but he discriminates between the favorable and the unfavorable. In other words, the madhyama-adhikari does not care for the demoniac living entities, and the neophyte kanistha-adhikari does not know much about sastra but has full faith in the Supreme Personality of Godhead."
(Bhag. 4.22.16; SB 4:3)

"There are three classes of devotees, namely the prakrita, madhyam, and maha-bhagavata. The prakrita or third-class devotees are temple worshipers without specific knowledge of the Lord and the Lord's devotees. The madhyam, or the second-class devotee, knows well the Lord, the Lord's devotee, the neophytes, and the non-devotees also. But the maha-bhagavata, or the first-class devotee, sees everything in relation with the Lord and the Lord present in everyone's relation. The maha-bhagavata, therefore, does not make any distinction, particularly between a devotee and non devotee."
(Bhag. 1.18.16; SB 1:3)

(TRANSLATION) "Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, "A first-class Vaisnava is he whose very presence makes others chant the holy name of Krsna." (PURPORT) "Such a Vaisnava (a maha-bhagavata, a first-class devotee) is always aware of his Krsna conscious duty, and he is enlightened in self-realization. He is always in love with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna, and this love is without adulteration. Because of this love, he is always awake to transcendental realization. Because he knows that Krsna consciousness is the basis of knowledge and action, he sees everything connected with Krsna. Such a person is able to chant the holy name perfectly... Actually a maha-bhagavata is fit to spread Krsna consciousness, but he does not distinguish where Krsna consciousness should be spread from where it should not. He thinks everyone is competent to accept Krsna consciousness if the chance is provided. A neophyte and intermediate devotee should always be anxious to hear the maha-bhagavata and serve him in every respect. The neophyte and intermediate devotees can gradually rise to the platform of uttama-adhikari and become first-class devotees... When teaching Sanatana Goswami, the Lord further said: 'If one is expert in Vedic literature and has full faith in the Supreme Lord, then he is an uttama-adhikari, a first-class Vaisnava, a topmost Vaisnava who can deliver the whole world and turn everyone to Krsna consciousness.' With great love and affection, the maha-bhagavata observes the Supreme Personality of Godhead, devotional service and the devotees. He observes nothing beyond Krsna, Krsna consciousness and Krsna's devotees. The maha-bhagavata knows that everyone is engaged in the Lord's service in different way. He therefore descends to the middle platform to elevate everyone to the Krsna conscious platform."
(Cc. Madhya-lila 16.74; (Madhya:Vol. 6)

"An uttama-adhikari, or highest devotee, is one who is very advanced in devotional service. An uttama-adhikari is not interested in blaspheming others, his heart is completely clean, and he has attained the realized state of unalloyed Krsna consciousness. According to Srila Rupa Goswami, the association and service of such a maha-bhagavata, or perfect Vaisnava, are most desirable." (Nectar Of Instr. Text 5)

(TRANSLATION) "A person who sees everything in relation to the Supreme Lord, and sees all entities as His parts and parcels, and who sees the Supreme Lord within everything never hates anything, nor any being." (PURPORT) "Here is an explanation of the maha-bhagavata, the great personality who sees everything in relation to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. There are three stages of realizing the presence of the Supreme Lord... Above the madhyam-adhikari there is the uttama-adhikari, who sees everything in relation to the Supreme Lord. He does not make any particular discrimination between the atheist and the theist, but sees in every one of them the part and parcel of God. He knows that there is no difference between a vastly learned brahmana and a dog in the street, because both of them are of the Lord, though in different embodiments due to the different quality of material action... Without considering the respective actions of the brahmana and the dog, the uttama-adhikari tries to do good to both. Such a learned devotee of the Lord is not misled by the material bodies of the brahmana and the dog, but he is attracted by the spiritual spark within the respective entities.

Those who imitate an uttama-adhikari in terms of the sense of oneness or fellowship, but who behave in terms of bodily relationships, are false philanthropists...

Only one who is already in the liberated status, according to the Bhagavad-gita, can become an uttama-adhikari devotee... The uttama adhikari sees the spirit soul of an entity, and serves him as spirit, which includes matter automatically."

(Sri Isopanisad, Mantra Six)

The conclusion is that an uttama-adhikari means a maha-bhagavata devotee, a perfect devotee of the Lord. The words uttama-adhikari and maha-bhagavata are interchangeable.

II) Further characteristics of the genuine uttama-adhikari, maha-bhagavata devotee.

(TRANSLATIONS) "A devotee advanced on the spiritual platform sees everything movable and inert as the Supreme Lord. For him, everything he sees here and there is but the manifestation of Lord Krsna. The maha-bhagavata, the advanced devotee, certainly sees everything mobile and immobile, but he does not exactly see their forms. Rather, everywhere he immediately sees manifest the form of the Supreme Lord." (PURPORT) "Due to his deep ecstatic love for Krsna, the maha-bhagavata sees Krsna everywhere and nothing else. This is confirmed in Brahma-samhita (5.38): premanjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena santah sadaiva hrdayesu vilokayanti... A devotee who has purified his existence through devotional service sees only Krsna in every step of life." (TRANSLATION) "Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu continued, 'A person advanced in devotional service sees within everything the soul of souls, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. Consequently he always sees the form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the cause of all causes and understands that all things are situated in Him.'"

(Cc. Madhya-lila, Ch. 8 Text 273, 274 and purport, 275; Vol. 3)

"On the maha-bhagavata platform, the devotee makes no distinction between friends and enemies. On that platform he sees everyone as a servant of Krsna... A maha-bhagavat being learned and advanced in spiritual consciousness, sees no difference between a tiger, an elephant or a learned scholar. The test of advanced spiritual consciousness is that one becomes fearless. He envies no one, and he is always engaged in the Lord's service. He sees every living entity as an eternal part and parcel of the Lord, rendering

service according to his capacity by the will of the Supreme Lord... The maha-bhagavata's heart is completely freed from material contamination, and he can become very dear even to fierce animals like tigers and elephants. Indeed, the maha-bhagavata treats them as his very intimate friends. On this platform there is no question of envy."

(Cc. Madhya-lila 17.32; Vol. 7)

"A fully Krsna conscious person, although situated in this material world, does not see anything but Krsna, anywhere and everywhere. This is the sign of a maha-bhagavata. The maha-bhagavata sees Krsna everywhere because of his attitude of pure love for Krsna. As confirmed in the Brahma-samhita (5.38): 'I worship the primeval Lord, Govinda, who is always seen by the devotee whose eyes are anointed with the pulp of love. He is seen in His eternal form of Syamasundara, situated within the heart of the devotee.' An exalted devotee, or mahatma, who is rarely to be seen, remains fully conscious of Krsna and constantly sees the Lord within the core of his heart... Even if one is an enemy of Krsna, a maha-bhagavata sees him to be also engaged in Krsna's service."

(Bhag. 7.4.37; SB 7:1)

(Bob): "Then you must be the best devotee."

(Prabhupada): "The thing is that even the best devotee, when he preaches, comes to the second-class platform of a devotee."

(Bob): "What would the best devotee be doing?"

(Prabhupada): "He sees that there is no need of preaching. For him, everyone is a devotee. Yes, he sees no more nondevotees- all devotees. He is called an uttama-adhikari."

(Perfect Questions/Perfect Answers, pg. 55)

III) Exalted qualities of a madhyam-adhikari

"Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura says that any Vaisnava who is constantly chanting the holy name of the Lord should be considered to have attained the second platform of Vaisnavism. Such a devotee is superior to a neophyte Vaisnava who has just learned to chant the holy name of the Lord. A neophyte devotee simply tries to chant the holy name, whereas the advanced devotee is accustomed to chanting and takes pleasure in it. Such an advanced devotee is called madhyama-bhagavata, which indicates that he has attained the intermediate stage between neophyte and the perfect devotee. Generally a devotee in the intermediate stage becomes a preacher. A neophyte devotee or an ordinary person should worship the madhyama-adhikari, who is a via medium.

In his Upadesamrita Srila Rupa Gosvami says: pranatibhis ca bhajantam isam. This means that madhyama adhikari devotees should exchange obeisances between themselves.

'The intermediate Vaisnava has to love God, make friends with the devotees, instruct the innocent and reject jealous people.' (Bhag. 11.2.46) These are the four functions of the Vaisnava in the intermediate stage.

'One who has attained the intermediate stage is not very advanced in sastric knowledge but he has firm faith in the Lord. Such a person is very fortunate to be situated on the intermediate platform.' (Cc. Madhya 22.67)

'Attraction and love are the ultimate goal of devotional service. The degrees of such attraction and love for God distinguish the different stages of devotion - neophyte, intermediate and perfectional.' (Cc. Madhya 22.71) An intermediate devotee is greatly attracted to chanting the holy name, and by chanting he is elevated to the platform of love. If one chants the holy name of the Lord with great attachment, he can understand his position as an eternal servant of the spiritual master, other Vaisnavas and Krsna Himself. Thus the intermediate Vaisnava considers himself Krsna-dasa, Krsna's servant. He therefore preaches Krsna consciousness to innocent neophytes and stresses the importance of chanting the Hare Krsna maha-mantra. An intermediate devotee can identify the nondevotee or the motivated devotee. The motivated devotee or the nondevotee are on the material platform, and they are called prakrita. The intermediate devotee does not

mix with such materialistic people. However, he understands the Supreme Personality of Godhead and everything related to Him are on the same transcendental platform."

(CC Madhya-lila, 16.74; Vol. 6)

"The madhyama-adhikary Vaisnava can awaken others to Krsna consciousness and engage them in duties whereby they can advance."

(CC Madhya-lila, 16.74; Vol. 6, p. 197)

IV. Final sastric caution

"Srila Rupa Goswami advises the devotee to be intelligent enough to distinguish between the kanistha-adhikari, madhyama-adhikari and uttama-adhikari. The devotee should also know his own position and should not try to imitate a devotee situated on a higher platform... Indeed, the advanced uttama-adhikari Vaisnava devotee should be accepted as a spiritual master. Everything one possesses should be offered to him, for it is enjoined that one should deliver whatever he has to the spiritual master. The brahmacari in particular is supposed to beg alms from others and offer them to the spiritual master. 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.

...Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has given some practical hints to the effect that the uttama-adhikari Vaisnava can be recognized by his ability to convert many fallen souls to Vaisnavism. One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of uttama-adhikari. A neophyte Vaisnava or a Vaisnava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance. Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an uttama-adhikari as a spiritual master."

(Nectar of Instruction, pps. 57-58)

(TRANSLATION: Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu speaking to Sanatana Goswami) "In your book there should be the characteristics of the bonafide guru and the bonafide disciple. Then, before accepting a spiritual master, one can be assured of the spiritual master's position. Similarly, the spiritual master can also be assured of the disciple's position. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna, should be described as the worshipable object and you should consider the bija-mantra for the worship of Krsna, Rama or any other expansion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (PURPORT) "In the Padma Purana, the characteristics of the guru, the bonafide spiritual master, have been described: maha-bhagavata-srestho/brahmano vai gurur nram/sarvesam eva lokanam/asau pujoya yatha harih/maha-kula-prasuto pi/sarva-yajnesu diksita/sahasra-sakhadhyayi ca/na guru syad avaisnavah. The guru must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service. There are three classes of devotees and the guru must be accepted from the topmost class. The first-class devotee is the spiritual master for all kinds of people. It is said: gurur nram. The word nram means 'of all human beings'. The guru is not limited to a particular group. It is stated in the Upadesamrita of Rupa Goswami that a guru is a goswami, a controller of the senses and the mind. Such a guru can accept disciples from all over the world... The bonafide spiritual master who accepts disciples from all over the world is also worshipped all over the world because of his qualities... When one has attained the topmost position of maha-bhagavata, he is to be accepted as guru and worshipped exactly like Hari, the Personality of Godhead. Only such a person is eligible to occupy the post of a guru."

(Cc. Madhya-lila 24.330; Vol. 9)

- V. Conclusion. It is a necessity for perfection in spiritual life for a devotee to accept an uttama-adhikari, a maha-bhagavata devotee as his spiritual master. So let Srila Prabhupada, who is in this distinct position, be presented to everyone as their siksa guru. It is also a necessity to accept diksa. But the intermediate devotee, even if he is giving diksa, should not be seen in the same position as the uttama guru, Srila Prabhupada. Otherwise there is danger of imitation, thinking oneself absolute and perfect in everything, and thus becoming gradually degraded.

GBC

GOVERNING BODY COMMISSION

International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Founder-Acarya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

From: ISKCON
Governing Body Commission Officers' Committee
(meeting at Rādhā-Kālacāndjī Dhama, Dallas)

17 August 1980

To: GBCs, Regional Secretaries, Temple Presidents,
and Assembled Devotees

Our dear respected Vaiṣṇava brothers,

Please accept our humble obeisances. All Glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Questions regarding the ISKCON GBC policy of *guru* worship, having serious implications to our Society, have been placed before the Governing Body Commission's Officers' Committee for necessary actions.

The GBC Officers' Committee is invested with solemn duties to remind the Society's members of their obligations to ISKCON in terms of existing GBC policies and the evidence of *sādhū*, *śāstra*, and *guru*.

In furtherance of these and other duties, the GBC Officers' Committee has appointed a subcommittee to effectively prepare the following paper dealing with the position of the spiritual master in ISKCON. The subcommittee members are:

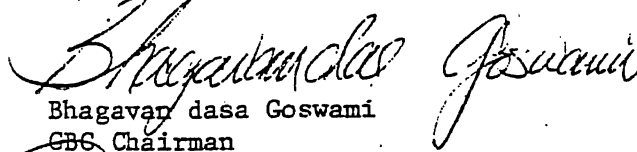
1. Śrīla Bhagavān dāsa Goswami, Chairman of Subcommittee. (GBC Chairman)
2. Śrīmān Jagadīśa dāsa adhikārī, Vice-Chairman of Subcommittee. (GBC Vice-Chairman)
3. Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Secretary of Subcommittee.
4. Śrīla Hṛdayānanda dāsa Goswami, Member of Subcommittee.
5. Śrīla Jayapātaka Swami, Member of Subcommittee. (GBC Secretary)

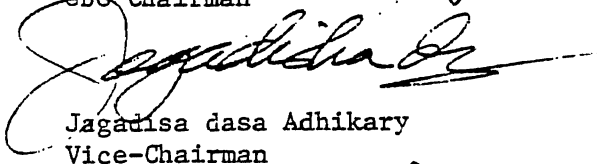
The above subcommittee has also been appointed to fulfill the duties of a GBC Action Committee under GBC rules.

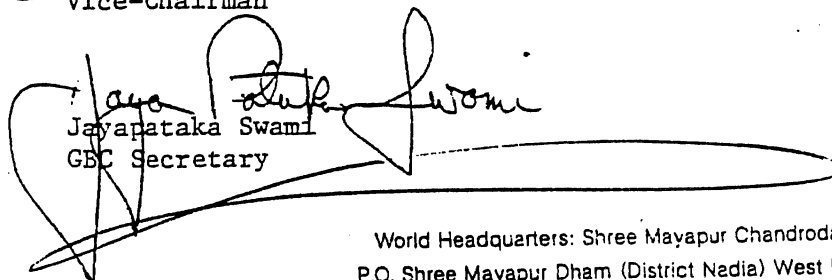
It will be clear in the following essay on the spiritual master in ISKCON that the Governing Body Commission, in their 1978 position paper on the *guru* in ISKCON, established a definite policy and procedure for ISKCON temples. The purpose of this paper is in no way to modify or change the existing GBC position but rather to clarify this position through evidence of *guru*, *sādhū*, and *śāstra*. In other words, until modified by the entire GBC body, the position stated in this paper is to be accepted, since it reiterates, clarifies, and explains the position taken by the Governing Body Commission at their Mayapura meeting in 1978.

We have addressed ourselves to GBC members, regional secretaries, temple presidents, and devotees in general. A full GBC meeting shall discuss further specific points which may be necessary. We hope this paper will serve as a helpful guide and tool. Thank you for accepting Lord Caitanya's lotus feet as your life and soul. We hope this meets you in good health.

Your servants in service,


Bhagavan dasa Goswami
GBC Chairman


Jagadisa dasa Adhikary
Vice-Chairman


Jayapataka Swami
GBC Secretary

World Headquarters: Shree Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir
P.O. Shree Mayapur Dham (District Nadia) West Bengal, India

Section One

INTRODUCTION

Certain persons in ISKCON have questioned the procedure of *guru*-worship which the GBC established with their paper released in March 1978, "The Process for Carrying Out Śrīla Prabhupāda's Desires for Future Initiations." Extremists have even doubted the validity of the *paramparā* from Śrīla Prabhupāda. A controversy has arisen that is disturbing ISKCON. On the one hand, some concerned Godbrothers are worried about the worship given to ISKCON *gurus*, having seen that a *guru*-Godbrother is capable of serious mistakes. On the other hand, the GBC members are concerned that the sacred principle of the *guru* not be disturbed, that Vedic culture not be distorted, due to the mistakes of some. Ironically enough, both the GBC and the critical Godbrothers are afraid of the same thing: a split in Prabhupāda's ISKCON. Some concerned Godbrothers fear that the *gurus* will become adversely affected and fall down, or that the worship itself is minimizing Śrīla Prabhupāda's position. This GBC sub-committee feels that this excessive criticism may crack what Śrīla Prabhupāda called the very foundation of spiritual life, faith in the *guru-paramparā*. The most important thing is that ISKCON remain unified. And ISKCON must remain unified according to the *paramparā* conclusions of Kṛṣṇa consciousness that Śrīla Prabhupāda has given through his books and other instructions.

Granting that in this controversy both sides have love for Śrīla Prabhupāda and ISKCON and that both sides are motivated by a desire to save ISKCON from splitting, we must resolve this conflict by first recognizing a oneness in purpose. That oneness in interest is to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission. Encouraging his disciples to persist in their love and trust in ISKCON despite its "growing pains," Śrīla Prabhupāda used to quote a line of English poetry: "England, with all thy faults I love thee!"

In his will, written in May 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda entrusted the Governing Body Commission to be the "ultimate managerial authority" in ISKCON. The questions regarding the *gurus* should be brought before the GBC body at its annual meeting in the prescribed form. Even an ISKCON emergency should be handled by bringing the matter to the GBC chairman for action. We caution our Godbrothers not to try to take the law into their own hands. And *all* persons concerned in this controversy should use restraint and not become implicated in offenses to the devotees, or fanatical actions.

The GBC paper of 1978 still stands regarding the continuance of *guru-paramparā*. This present paper will not refute those conclusions but clarify them in the light of the current controversies. It will attempt to provide guidelines and safeguards for the future. But as we wrote in 1978, we repeat: "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."

Section Two

ILLOGICAL, MISLEADING PHILOSOPHY

A. Improper Criticism by Illogical Techniques

Some persons, citing many scriptural references describing the qualities of the *mahā-bhāgavata*, have questioned whether any ISKCON *ācārya* exhibits these qualities. And they have further concluded that the ISKCON *ācāryas* cannot fully live up to the requirements of a regular *guru* in devotional service. This criticism is speculative; it is also against the etiquette of gentle devotees to judge or investigate a sincere devotee as to his inner realization. But aside from that, the whole line of reasoning is fallacious and the argument inapplicable. It starts with a speculative opinion and backs it up with quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books; but by this method one could "prove" all kinds of things.

For example, let's see how this could be done with the following opinion: "The *brāhmaṇas* in ISKCON are not bona fide." Starting from this speculative opinion, we simply have to refer to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books for quotes to back up our point.

1. A *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* or *vaiśya* will not accept employment for his livelihood under any circumstances.

(*Bhag.* 3.1.8, purport)

2. A curse by a *brāhmaṇa* is very strong: therefore it is called *duratyaya*, or insurmountable. As the Lord states in *Bhagavad-gītā*, the stringent laws of nature are insurmountable; similarly if a curse is uttered by a *brāhmaṇa*, that curse is also insurmountable.

(*Bhag.* 4.2.27, purport)

Thus by assembling śāstric quotes on the qualifications of a *brāhmaṇa*, we may say that the *brāhmaṇas* of ISKCON—because they sometimes accept employment, cannot utter insurmountable curses, etc.—are not true *brāhmaṇas*. But in this case the *śāstras* have been wrongly used and the conclusion is false.

Here is another example using another opinion: "The *gṛhasthas* in ISKCON are not bona fide." To "prove" our assertion, here is a śāstric quote:

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is stated that a householder should see to it that even a lizard or a snake does not starve. They also must be given food.

(*Bhag.* 4.22.45, purport)

Similarly, here are śāstric references which would appear to disqualify ISKCON *sannyāsīs*.

A person in the renounced order of life may try to avoid even a dress to cover himself. If he wears anything at all, it should be only a loincloth...

(*Bhag.* 7.13.2)

Certainly all ISKCON standards are based on *śāstra*, but *śāstra* has to be understood as ISKCON's Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda taught and demonstrated. This is the meaning of *mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthā*. In that verse, even the *śāstras* are declared to be inconclusive in themselves; the truth must be learned from the *mahājana*. Śrīla Prabhupāda is ISKCON's greatest authority, and from the Vedic literatures he has selected and established those principles that we must follow. So mere quote-finding cannot discredit ISKCON's *brāhmaṇas*, *brahmacāris*, and *sannyāsīs*; it is not that ISKCON devotees should relinquish the sacred thread, *daṇḍa*, saffron dress, or the title "His Holiness," etc. Similarly the ISKCON *gurus* cannot be disqualified or their bona fide nature diluted by citing quotes about *madhyama* or *uttama-adhikāris*. Nor should they, thinking themselves unqualified, abandon their duties and take up

master is to be recognized by his power to distribute his spiritual master.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.18.8), Śrīla Prabhupāda has given some special facilities to them." Specimens descended from the spiritual sky (*goloka-prema-dhama*) are easily available to the hopelessly fallen souls of Kaliyuga with the mood of Caitanya Mahāprabhu the difference in the achievements in the preaching mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Any other criterion will be a dangerous deviation from the path.

During Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence on the earth, he gave attention on those disciples who distinguished themselves by opening temples, producing and distributing literature.

5. Denying That Prabhupāda's Disciples Can Also Nurture the Enemies of Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's enemies in India who are envious, have viciously blasphemed the incarnation of Prabhupāda misled us by sending us out into the path of experience so-called ecstasy. They criticize Śrīla Prabhupāda. Such foolish critics do not understand that to engage in the movement is exactly in the mood of the *gopīs* who are in love. In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed in a letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda that his consciousness are following in the footsteps of the *gopīs* in the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

Such exalted living entities as Rūpa and Raghunātha, devoted associates of the Lord in *mādhurya-rasa*, came to the path such as *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and to help the Lord's devotees like Śrīnivāsācārya, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, etc. The ecstasy experienced by the ISKCON devotees is genuine spiritual bliss in the service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā. Prabhupāda becomes specifically empowered in both understanding and executing the order of the Lord's representative. Accepted as an *uttama-adhikārī* devotee and is posted under the auspices of the Lord's representative.

This does not mean that one who receives the elevated qualities of a liberated spiritual master. At the order of his spiritual master and faithfully repeating the *paramparā*, he is not acting as a bona fide spiritual master.

On the other hand, one who is faithfully and properly following the *paramparā*. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda personally empowered his disciples as spiritual masters, criticism is lodged that they are not spiritual masters. Criticism is destructive and false, as will be pointed out. One should not lend credence to those who blaspheme the *sankīrtana* method of preaching is not sufficiently qualified for devotional service.

6. Can ISKCON Gurus Deliver Their Disciples to Consciousness?

The real doubt in certain critics' minds is how they

QUALIFICATIONS

1. The Spiritual Master

In the *Upadeśāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda says:

One should not become an *uttama-adhikārī* in form can also accept the position. One should be under the control of his spiritual master in life under his instruction.

2. What Is an Uttama-Adhikārī?

According to *Upadeśāmṛta*, an *uttama-adhikārī* is one who is engaged in preaching work. Śrīla Prabhupāda says: "One should be the effect that an *uttama-adhikārī* is one who is engaged in preaching work to Vaiṣṇavism."

Śrīla Prabhupāda further explains:

When a neophyte is engaged in the orders of the spiritual master, he should be found to be following all the instructions of the spiritual master, always thinking of the spiritual master, and his association with the spiritual master.

3. Description of the Uttama-Adhikārī

When *The Nectar of Devotion* is read it three times, as it will govern devotional service.

The first or uppermost qualification is that he should be a devotee of the spiritual master. He should consider the ways of the spiritual master as the ultimate goal. He should know that Kṛṣṇa is the spiritual master who has strictly followed the spiritual master's instructions. He should be fully trained in the first class.... In the field of devotional service.

4. How Did Śrīla Prabhupāda Become an Uttama-Adhikārī?

From the descriptions of an *uttama-adhikārī*, the essential qualifications are such as Śrīla Prabhupāda's knowledge become mature and he should be strictly according to the Vedic literature, though the Vedic literature is *bhāgavata* Vaiṣṇava, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

unauthorized, whimsical procedures not taught or demonstrated by Prabhupāda or given by the GBC. They must stick to the orders of their spiritual master, for it is only by Śrīla Prabhupāda's mercy that they are actually qualified. The essential qualifications of a *guru* will be stated in section three of this paper.

B. Acceptance of Theories As Truth Without Direct Scriptural and Paramparā Basis

Those who advocate radical changes in the *paramparā* understanding of the spiritual master sometimes follow their opinions with selections from verses and purports found in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. The conclusions of these critics rest not on the *śāstras* but on axiomatic assumptions. And these assumptions rest on speculation. Let us give a few examples to show that despite the collections of quotes there is no *śāstric*, *sādhya*, or *guru* evidence put forward to prove the basic conclusion of those who want to restructure the *sampradāya*.

1. Where is the direct *śāstric* evidence that Śrīla Prabhupāda finds it offensive that the initiating *guru* appointed by him is being worshiped on a subordinate seat next to him in Prabhupāda's temple?

2. Where is the direct *śāstric* evidence (after the disciple-*guru* pays obeisances to his *guru* and Founder-Ācārya) that worship in the temple signifies equality, or that he has to leave the temple to be worshiped outside?

3. Where is the direct *śāstric* evidence that the disciple can be submissive and yet test his *guru's* every statement with *śāstra*, except in the extraordinary cases of the *guru's* ordering the disciple to leave the *sampradāya* or to leave Kṛṣṇa's service or teaching some bogus philosophy?

4. Where is the direct *śāstric* evidence that a disciple can jump over his bona fide spiritual master and have a direct relationship with his *parama-guru*?

5. Where is the direct *śāstric* evidence that the disciple should see a bona fide *guru* in a relative way?

By careful examination, therefore, we find that the quotes and arguments, as are being used to "prove" that the ISKCON *gurus* are not really bona fide, is a case of misleading and illogical use of *śāstra*.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If the *guru* himself hasn't reached the highest stage, then how can he guide his disciple to enter into his eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world? This is the doubt resting behind the phrase, "insufficient guidance," of the so-called *madhyama-guru*.

In understanding the different stages of spiritual advancement, it is essential to understand that many terms in Sanskrit and also in Prabhupāda's purports are used in different ways in different contexts. For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda often used the term "pure devotee" to refer to anyone surrendered to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, whereas at other times it refers to one who has obtained the highest stage of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Similarly, "self-realization" at times refers to one who has actually seen the soul and the Supersoul within all living beings, but it also often refers to one who has understood that he is an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa and who therefore joins ISKCON. The term "liberation" can indicate one who has taken *sannyāsa*, one who has understood that he is not this body, one who has merged into Brahman, one who has given up all fruitive activities and surrendered to a bona fide spiritual master, one who has seen Kṛṣṇa (and who therefore has no further material desire), or one who has entered the spiritual planets in his eternal spiritual body.

Similarly the term "*uttama-adhikārī*" has been quoted from *The Nectar of Instruction* as referring to an empowered preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, who never deviates from the principle of higher authority. Similarly in *The Nectar of Devotion*, the lawbook of ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda has given great emphasis to the fact that an *uttama-adhikārī* has a mature understanding of the ways of devotional service; he does not become bewildered by the complexities of expanding a spiritual movement within the material world. He is always fully surrendered to the plan of Kṛṣṇa.

Other descriptions stress more the internal attainment of love of Kṛṣṇa, describing highly exalted stages of consciousness whereby one remains fixed in seeing the spiritual form of Śyāmasundara. Certainly, the devotees of ISKCON can understand that Śrīla Prabhupāda was born and lived on the highest exalted platform of love of Kṛṣṇa. We can only aspire to serve his lotus feet and never to equal his inconceivable level of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Still, it should be understood that the members of ISKCON, according to *The Nectar of Instruction*, will attain the stage of *uttama-adhikārī* by faithfully chanting sixteen rounds, following the four regulative principles, and dedicating their lives to the preaching mission of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The attainment of this topmost stage does not imply an equality with Śrīla Prabhupāda. There are also many exalted descriptions in Vedic literature of the *sannyāsa-āśrama*. Analogously, Śrīla Prabhupāda adopted the dress and *daṇḍa* of the Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsa*, and his disciples followed him on this path, but it would be ludicrous to say that their similar dress implies an equality with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Similarly, according to Śrīla Prabhupāda's descriptions, his disciples will gradually attain the stage of *uttama-adhikārī*, but this is not at all to say that they will attain the unparalleled spiritual position of Śrīla Prabhupāda who is worshiped by all Vaiṣṇavas.

We should always remember that we are prosecuting Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Age of Kali. This means that conditions for spiritual advancement are at their worst, and yet, we have been given special benedictions for this age. This position is described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

The age of Kali is called the fallen age. In this fallen age because the living beings are in an awkward position, the Supreme Lord has given some special facilities to them. So by the will of the Lord a living being does not become a victim of a sinful act until the act is actually performed. In other ages simply by thinking of performing a sinful act, one used to become a victim of the act. On the contrary, a living being in this age is awarded with the results of pious acts simply by thinking of them.

(Bhāg. 1.18.7)

Aside from this liberal allowance by which sinful acts are not counted unless executed, there is also the prime benediction for this age, the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, by which even the most fallen can easily attain to the highest love of God:

At the end of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, it is said that even though all nefarious activities of the personality of Kali are present, there is a great advantage in the age of Kali. One can attain salvation simply by chanting the holy name of the Lord.

(*Bhāg.* 1.18.7)

It should be noted that there are many exalted descriptions in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describing the great Vaiṣṇavas who worshiped Kṛṣṇa in the past with transcendental love. It is specifically stated in the *Bhāgavatam* that in previous ages people had great mental power by which they were able to absorb their minds in the personal form of the Lord. However, in this age, people no longer have this mental power, and therefore throughout Śrīla Prabhupāda's practical descriptions of *bhakti-yoga* in this age, he has given all stress to practical engagement in the devotional service of the Lord.

The Nectar of Devotion is specifically written by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī to give practical guidance for the fallen souls of Kali-yuga, and therein, as well as in *The Nectar of Instruction*, it is clearly stated that one who has practically surrendered all of his bodily, mental, and verbal activities to carrying out the *saṅkīrtana* mission of the Lord is to be considered a *jīvan-mukta*, or liberated soul, despite his external condition. Among such *jīvan-mukta* souls, one who is especially empowered, who does not fall down from the principle of obedience to higher authority, who has a mature understanding of the mission of the Lord, and who is chanting the prescribed number of rounds daily is to be considered a topmost devotee of the Lord and is to be accepted as a spiritual master.

Yāmūnācārya states that sometimes the memory of sex life arises in his mind, but he spits at the thought. Similarly, in the second chapter of the *Gītā*, it is stated that even a pure devotee can perceive the entrance of waves of desire into the ocean of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but he is not moved by them. This demonstrates the benediction given in Kali-yuga: although the thought of material desire may enter the mind, if one always acts on the platform of devotional service, he is to be considered perfect. Such a surrendered soul, fighting the onslaught of Kali-yuga, can be recognized in various ways. Śrīla Bhaktīvinoda Thākura hints that he will be especially empowered to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness, on a large scale. His personal devotional service can also be analyzed according to specific symptoms called *anubhāva*.

7. The Symptoms of Anubhāva

In Chapter Eighteen of *The Nectar of Devotion*, "Character of One in Ecstatic Love," nine symptoms are given by Rūpa Gosvāmī to describe the characteristics of a person who has actually developed his ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa. They are as follows:

1. "He is always anxious to utilize his time in the devotional service of the Lord. He does not like to be idle. He wants service always, twenty-four hours a day without deviation."
2. "He is always reserved and perseverant." Śrīla Prabhupāda describes that if one can go on enthusiastically with his devotional service, despite various disturbances offered by the material nature, then he is to be considered reserved and perseverant.
3. "He is always detached from all material attraction." The example is given of Emperor Bharata, who left all kinds of attachments such as family, wife, and kingdom to perfect his devotional service.
4. "He does not long for any material respect in return for his activities." Here Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the example of King Bhagīratha who "developed such ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa that he became a mendicant and went out begging even to the homes of his political enemies and untouchables."
5. "He is always certain that Kṛṣṇa will bestow His mercy upon him."
6. "He is always very eager to serve the Lord faithfully."
7. "He is very much attached to the chanting of the holy names of the Lord."
8. "He is always eager to describe the transcendental qualities of the Lord."
9. "He is very pleased to live in a place where the Lord's pastimes are performed: Mathurā, Vṛndāvana or Dvārakā."

The spiritual advancement of a devotee should be understood by these scientific methods of estimation and not by superficial speculation based on either blind worship or useless faultfinding.

How then does the ISKCON *guru* lead his disciple to the highest level of love of Kṛṣṇa? This guidance is done not only by the spiritual master but also by the *caitya-guru*, or the Supersoul, within the heart. The disciple must have full faith in his *guru*. When Kṛṣṇa sees the faithful disciple then He will be pleased and will bless the disciple. Kṛṣṇa's pleasure therefore is dependent on the disciple's rendering service to the bona fide spiritual master, as is stated in the scriptures: *yasya deve parā bhakti*: "Only to one who has implicit faith in both the spiritual master and the Supreme Lord are all the imports of Vedic literature automatically revealed." And, "Attachment to his lotus feet is the perfection that fulfills all desires."

Certain critics may challenge, "Have these ISKCON *gurus* themselves realized love of Kṛṣṇa?" This can be ascertained by examining the above-mentioned nine symptoms of *anubhāva*. Aside from this, any devotee in ISKCON who can honestly say that he has love for Prabhupāda and who does not deviate from Prabhupāda's order has attained a state as good as love for Kṛṣṇa. Even Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say, "I do not know Kṛṣṇa, I only know my Guru Mahārāja." Any *guru* therefore, who can actually connect his disciple to Śrīla Prabhupāda and to Kṛṣṇa in the authorized way, by engaging him in the missionary activities of ISKCON, brings his disciple under the direct supervision of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, where he will get all protection and guidance.

As far as bringing his disciples into their eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda has explained how this will happen, in a letter to Śrīla Satsvarūpa Goswāmī dated March 21, 1967:

Regarding your question about the inhabitants of Brajabhumi, or Vrindaban, it is to be understood that Vrindaban is the original abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, as He is the original Personality of Godhead. In that transcendental plane He has His transcendental associates in different exchanges of humor. For ourselves, when we are in the perfect stage of devotional service, we can know our eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, and, as such, one of the associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa becomes our ideal leader. This acceptance of leadership by one of the eternal associates of the Lord is not artificial. Do not therefore try it at present. It will be automatically revealed to you in the proper time.

The spiritual master then will perfect his disciple to that point where the Lord Himself will appoint a resident of Vṛndāvana to guide the devotee into his particular relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly emphasized that this will take place automatically by chanting sixteen rounds and following the four regulative principles.

In other words, it should be clearly understood that any bona fide member of ISKCON who has accepted a bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession has exactly the same full opportunity for spiritual advancement. Śrīla Prabhupāda did not give secret or hidden instructions to any disciple. In fact, once John Lennon demanded that Śrīla Prabhupāda give him the secret inner teachings, but Śrīla Prabhupāda simply requested him to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the real point is that an ISKCON spiritual master must engage his disciple properly in the standard missionary activities of ISKCON, and the disciple so engaged is exactly on the same level of spiritual opportunity as the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda. In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed that the grandfather is even more favorably inclined, and therefore the young sons and daughters of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples are undoubtedly receiving special mercy to encourage them in their service to their spiritual master. Since in our ISKCON temples all devotees are working together, there is no question of "insufficient guidance" for the disciple of a faithful servant of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda always pointed to his disciples as proof of his work. In Śrīla Prabhupāda's preaching work in India he stressed showing his American disciples. Similarly, the ISKCON *gurus* can proudly point to their sincere disciples who are surrendered to preaching and distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books as ample and complete proof that their disciples are fully connected to the *guru-paramparā*.

8. What Is the Definition of Madhyama and Kaniṣṭha-adhikāri?

Generally, throughout his writings, Śrīla Prabhupāda has defined a *kaniṣṭha-adhikāri* as a neophyte devotee who is attached to Deity worship in the temple but who cannot appreciate either preaching work or the association of other devotees engaged in pure devotional service. This definition is confirmed in the teachings of Lord Kapila in the Third Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, as well as in *The Nectar of Devotion* and *The Nectar of Instruction*.

The *madhyama-adhikāri* devotee is generally considered to be one who has firm faith that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme object of love and worship, that friendship with the devotees is most desirable, that one should preach to the innocent nondevotees, and that the faithless atheists are to be strictly avoided. The *madhyama-adhikāri* is stated to be able to awaken nondevotees to the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa, but he cannot preach to the same degree as the *uttama-adhikāri* to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world. Finally, the intermediate devotee is not very mature in his understanding of revealed scriptures.

The second-class devotee is not very expert in arguing on the strength of revealed scriptures, but he has firm faith in the objective.

(NOD p.29)

A person whose conclusive knowledge of the *sāstras* is not very strong but who has developed firm faith in chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*...should be considered a *madhyama-adhikāri*.

(NOI p.55)

9. Can ISKCON Devotees Be Considered Uttama-adhikāri?

A bona fide Vaiṣṇava will always present himself as being at the lowest standard of devotional service. However, by one's service and preaching, it can be understood that a devotee is advanced. There is no need to harass a bona fide spiritual master by artificially demanding that he "confess" his internal spiritual position.

According to the statements of *The Nectar of Instruction* and *The Nectar of Devotion*, an empowered Vaiṣṇava who is spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness to millions of persons by organizing transcendental literature and *prasādam* distribution, who can answer the doubts of both devotees and nondevotees on the science of *bhakti-yoga*, who is capable of inspiring many hundreds of faithful preachers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and who can convert many fallen souls is to be considered a topmost devotee. It is foolish to state that such an empowered Vaiṣṇava is on the same level of spiritual understanding as his own disciples who are generally faithful *madhyama-adhikāri* Vaiṣṇavas preaching under his own guidance. One cannot establish that a highly empowered preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness does not have a conclusive understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, as stated in the case of a *madhyama-adhikāri*. In other words, for ISKCON devotees to claim that Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission is not yet able to bring a single person to the mature stage of devotional service is not a service to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who states very clearly that his disciples will be elevated to the stage of *uttama-adhikāri* simply by chanting sixteen rounds daily and following the four principles.

If one properly finishes chanting the prescribed number of rounds of *hari-nāma*, he is elevated step by step to the highest platform, *uttama-adhikāri*.

(NOI p.53)

Certainly we cannot claim that we are topmost devotees. A Vaiṣṇava will never think that he is on the highest stage of devotional service. He feels that he is not able to serve Kṛṣṇa nicely. Yet Caitanya Mahāprabhu's movement is so potent that one who is empowered to preach in this movement is considered by the judgment of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda to be topmost.

The conclusions we have developed above regarding the qualifications of *uttama-adhikāri* are supported by the following verse:

There are three classes of devotees, and the *guru* must be accepted from the topmost class....The *mahā-bhāgavata* is one who decorates his body with *tilaka* and whose name indicates him to be a servant of Kṛṣṇa by the word *dāsa*. He is also initiated by a bona fide spiritual master and is expert in worshiping the Deity, chanting *mantras* correctly, performing sacrifices, offering prayers to the Lord, and performing *sankīrtana*. He knows how to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead and how to respect a Vaiṣṇava. When one has attained the topmost position of *mahā-bhāgavata*, he is to be accepted as a *guru* and worshiped exactly like Hari, the Personality of Godhead. Only such a person is eligible to occupy the post of a *guru*.

(Cc. *Madhya* 24.330)

There is also the following verse in the *Bhāgavatam*, which emphasizes that the main symptom of the liberated spiritual master is his activity in devotional service, and he should not be judged by other symptoms.

Sometimes doubts arise in the minds of neophytes about whether or not the spiritual master is liberated, and sometimes neophytes are doubtful about the bodily affairs of the spiritual master. The point of liberation, however, is not to see the bodily symptoms of the spiritual master. *Jīvan-mukta* means that even though one is in the material body (there are still some material necessities since the body is material), because one is fully situated in the service of the Lord, he is to be understood to be liberated.

Liberation entails being situated in one's own position. That is the definition in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *muktir...svarūpeṇa vyavasthitiḥ*. The *svarūpa*, or actual identity of the living entity, is described by Lord Caitanya. *Jīvera svarūpa haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'*: the real identity of the living entity is that he is eternally a servitor of the Supreme Lord. If someone is one-hundred-percent engaged in the service of the Lord, he is to be understood as liberated. One must understand whether or not he is liberated by his activities in devotional service, not by other symptoms.

(*Bhāg.* 3.33.10)

10. Position of an Empowered Spiritual Master

Aside from trying to distinguish whether the spiritual master meets the requirements of *uttama-adhikārī* or *madhyama-adhikārī* himself, it should be understood that he is acting on the liberated platform by virtue of his strictly carrying out the order of the recognized *mahā-bhāgavata*, Śrīla Prabhupāda. As Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in a letter to Janārdana dāsa in 1968:

The *guru* is eternally liberated, and he is generally an eternal associate of the Lord. Generally the Vaiṣṇava *guru* comes from this category. However, it may sometimes be seen that a Vaiṣṇava *guru* comes from a different category where he is not eternally liberated and is not an eternal associate of the Lord, but is a conditioned soul rising to the platform of pure devotional service. In this case, if these *gurus* are following the orders and presenting the message of their predecessor *ācārya*, they are to be accepted as good as those who are in the other category.

The same theme was expressed in a letter by Śrīla Prabhupāda to Yadurāṇi, September 9, 1967:

You know there are two kinds of living entities, *nitya-mukta* or eternal associates of the Lord and *nitya-baddha* or eternally conditioned. This material manifestation is a chance for the eternally conditioned entities to go back to Godhead; but when they go back there, there is no distinction between the two. When Kṛṣṇa appears, some of His eternal associates come with Him to assist Him in His different incarnational activities; and some of the living entities from conditioned life are liberated by following the footprints of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His band of associates.

The obvious conclusion is that if a bona fide spiritual master is strictly carrying out the mission of his bona fide spiritual master and faithfully repeating his message, it is irrelevant whether such a bona fide

spiritual master is coming from the conditioned state or is eternally liberated. In either case, the etiquette for worshipping him by his disciples is exactly the same as stated by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Therefore, the important consideration is that the *guru* carry out the mission of one's spiritual master and faithfully repeat his message. If these requirements are fulfilled, there is no further consideration, and he should be offered all the respects due the representative of God. As stated by Śrīla Prabhupāda, such a person is a "regular *guru*."

These actual qualifications of the bona fide *guru* are confirmed as follows by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

1. ...when we speak of the fundamental principle of *gurudeva*, or *ācāryadeva*, we speak of something that is of universal application. There does not arise any question of discriminating my *guru* from yours or anyone else's. There is only one *guru*, who appears in an infinity of forms to teach you, me and all others.

(SSR pp. 70-71)

2. There is no authority superior to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and if we stick to this principle, we can become *gurus*. We don't need to change our position to become a *guru*. All we have to do is follow in the disciplic succession stemming from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed people to learn from Him and then go teach people within their own villages. One may think, "I am illiterate and have no education. I was not born in a very high family. How can I become a *guru*?" Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that it is not very difficult. *Yāre dekha, iāre kaha kṛṣṇa upadeśa*: "Simply speak whatever Kṛṣṇa speaks. Then you become a *guru*." Whoever speaks what Kṛṣṇa has not spoken is not a *guru* but a rascal. A *guru* only speaks what Kṛṣṇa has spoken.

(TLK p.87)

3. The *Vedas* enjoin us to seek out a *guru*; actually, they say to seek out *the guru*, not just a *guru*. The *guru* is one because he comes in disciplic succession. What Vyāsa-deva and Kṛṣṇa taught five thousand years ago is also being taught now. There is no difference between the two instructions. Although hundreds and thousands of *ācāryas* have come and gone, the message is one. The real *guru* cannot be two, for the real *guru* does not speak differently from his predecessors.

(SSR p.56)

4. A bona fide *guru* does not impart some self-styled, concocted knowledge. His knowledge is standard and received from the *paramparā* system. He is also firmly fixed in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*brahma-niṣṭham*). These are his two qualifications: he must have heard the Vedic knowledge through the disciplic succession, and he must be established in service to the Supreme Lord. He does not have to be a very learned scholar, but he must have heard from the proper authority.

(TLK p.33)

5. There is a standard for bona fide spiritual masters....Who is the spiritual master?... One who has heard from God explains the same message to his disciples. If the disciple doesn't change the message, he is a bona fide spiritual master.

(SSR p.264)

11. Conclusion

According to Vedic literature, the spiritual master is personally experiencing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and simultaneously he is distributing love of Kṛṣṇa to the conditioned souls by repeating the message of Kṛṣṇa in disciplic succession. According to the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda, it is clear that the bona fide *guru* is to be understood in terms of his practical work of teaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness by example and precept. In addition to his preaching work a devotee should be analyzed in terms of his ability to

follow the *anubhāva* symptoms and by his ability to control his senses including the mind, words, anger, etc. In fact, to speculate on the mind of the *guru* is a great offense. Some critics do not estimate spiritual advancement in terms of the standard criteria of *sāstra* but instead speculate on internal experiences that are not at all meant to be studied in determining a bona fide *guru*. In fact, in the book *The Spiritual Master and the Disciple* under the heading of qualification of the *guru*, we find no mention whatsoever of this internal examining process, nor a confessing process on the part of the *guru*. It is not a Vedic process and is based on foolish concoction.

If we ask a bogus man if he is fully Kṛṣṇa conscious, he will say yes and even exhibit so-called ecstatic symptoms for us. On the other hand, an advanced devotee feels that he is most fallen. Therefore, if we try to see who is a *kṛṣṇa-premī*, instead of looking to practical service and faithful preaching, our society will be overrun by the *sahajīyā* contamination, as India has been overrun by cheap show-bottle *sādhus*, ignoring the actual standard method of determining the bona fide spiritual master: namely, faithful repetition of the message of Kṛṣṇa in strict adherence to His order, under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession.

Section Four

STANDARD GURU-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

A. An Ācārya and Guru Must Be Worshiped and Respected as God's Representative

In the preceding section we demonstrated that the qualifications of ISKCON devotees are to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's orders, especially chanting sixteen rounds and following the four regulative principles. Furthermore, an advanced devotee will preach vigorously and carry out the specific instructions given to him by his spiritual master. Those disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda who Śrīla Prabhupāda has appointed as initiating *gurus* and who carry out their basic duties must be accepted as qualified spiritual masters. As stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,

One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master. And one cannot be a bona fide and authorized spiritual master unless one has been strictly obedient to his spiritual master.

(*Bhag.* 2.9.43, purport)

Now we would like to show specifically that if one is a bona fide spiritual master in the disciplic succession, he must relate to his disciples in the *paramparā* manner for a *guru* and his disciple. No one can contest that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted *gurus* to initiate disciples after his disappearance; and therefore, ISKCON must continue the standard attitudes and practices governing the relationship between the spiritual master and his disciples.

Let us review the *guru's* responsibility. What is required of him? Basically, a *guru's* work is simply to represent the *paramparā* under the order of the previous spiritual master. In the *Teachings of Lord Kapila* (p. 198-199), Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "It is not difficult to become a *guru*; provided we repeat what Kṛṣṇa says." And in *The Science of Self-Realization* (p. 264), Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that a spiritual master is one who has taken the message of another qualified master:

This is just like a medical man who has taken the knowledge of medical science from another medical man. Similarly, the bona fide spiritual master must come in the line of successive spiritual masters.

Śrīla Prabhupāda makes this point very clear:

If we send a telegram, he who delivers the telegram does not have to correct it, edit it, or add to it. He simply presents it. That is the *guru's* business. *Guru* may be this person or that, but the message is the same; therefore it is said that, "*Guru* is one."... There is no authority superior to Kṛṣṇa and if we stick to this principle we can become *gurus*. We don't need to change our positions to become *guru*. All we have to do is follow the disciplic succession coming from Kṛṣṇa.

(SSR p.56)

So, in essence, the *guru* is one who delivers the message of the spiritual master in the disciplic succession without changing it. Nor should any bona fide spiritual master change the *paramparā* regarding the spiritual master's identity, his function, and how he deals with his disciples.

If one considers the spiritual master an ordinary human being, one is doomed...One may argue by saying that since the spiritual master's relatives and the men of his neighborhood consider him an ordinary human being, what is the fault on the part of the disciple who considers the spiritual master an ordinary human being?...[But such opinions do not alter the position of the spiritual master, and he must be accepted] as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead....Even a slight deviation from this understanding can create disaster in a disciple's Vedic studies and austerities.

(*Bhag.* 7.15.26-27, purports)

As it is said, *ācāryam mām vijānīyāt*: one who acts on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead should be considered as good as the Supreme Lord Himself. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

The representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead who acts to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness is also guided by the Supreme Lord to act properly in executing the Lord's order. Such a person may appear to be an ordinary human being, but because he works on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the supreme spiritual master, he is not to be relegated as ordinary:

(*Bhag.* 8.24.46, purport)

So, without unnecessarily increasing the length of this section, as there are many quotes on this point, we would like to make the point clear that "The *guru* is Kṛṣṇa's representative, the former-*ācārya*'s representative." (SSR p.58)

Now let us hear how the disciple must regard his bona fide *guru*. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi 1.45) we find the following verse:

According to the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures the spiritual master is nondifferent than Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of the spiritual master delivers His devotees.

In the purport of the above verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes,

The relationship of the disciple with his spiritual master is as good as his relationship with the Supreme Lord. A spiritual master always represents himself as the humblest servitor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but the disciple always looks upon him as the manifested representative of Godhead.

As stated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in a letter to Brahmānanda Swami in March 1969:

Actually we are all conditioned souls so our demand from Krishna to accept us is unreasonable. From my personal point of view, I think that I am so sinful that I cannot even approach Krishna to show me any favor. But I have only one hope—my spiritual master—he is very kind. So some way or other he is dragging me towards Krishna. That is my only hope. *Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta* says therefore: *guru-kṛṣṇe*. By the mercy of the spiritual master and by the mercy of Krishna, one gets into Krishna consciousness. Narada Muni is our original spiritual master and he has dragged so many fallen souls towards Krishna, and we are also hoping to be dragged by him through the disciplic succession. Otherwise, if we study our own qualifications, there are none—rather I have got so many disqualifications.

All this must be clearly understood by all ISKCON devotees. Even if there is some controversy, the basic conclusion of *siddhānta* must never be lost or put aside. The spiritual master is the representative of his spiritual master, the *paramparā*, and the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is his actual position; it applies to any bona fide initiating *guru* of ISKCON and it should not be disregarded whimsically.

Nor when we consider the standard conclusion as presented in the scriptures can we abruptly assume that an initiating *guru* who is carrying out Śrīla Prabhupāda's order is actually accepting worship for himself. The standard conclusion is that the spiritual master does not accept honor for himself but that he is like a mailman delivering a message. He is like a tax collector, like a viceroy to a king. He is acting on behalf of the disciplic succession. Thus, by repeating what Śrīla Prabhupāda has said, the ISKCON initiating *guru* is a transparent via medium to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, when asked in May 1977 how initiations would be carried on in the future, replied that he would appoint *gurus*, who on his order would take their own disciples. Śrīla Prabhupāda:

When I order, you become *guru*, he becomes regular *guru*, that's all. He [the new disciple] becomes disciple of my disciple. Just see.

If these standard conclusions of the *guru*-disciple relationship are abandoned—if the disciple does not accept and worship the spiritual master as good as God—then the entire *paramparā* is in danger.

Section Five

RESPECTING ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA AND HIS REPRESENTATIVES IN ISKCON TEMPLES

A. Proper Respect for Śrīla Prabhupāda

His Divine Grace Oṃ Viṣṇupāda Paramahansa Parivrājakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda is the Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. He is understood to be the most exalted Vaiṣṇava who has done what no one else has done before in spreading Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's movement to every town and village in the world. He is understood to be an eternally liberated soul who was never conditioned and who came directly from the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world to award benediction to the earth. Among his most extraordinary activities is the fact that he presented the holy scriptures such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which will be the ultimate authority in human society for the rest of this age. In other words, Śrīla Prabhupāda is the Jagad-guru, the special incarnation of the mercy of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who perfectly explained all knowledge for the human beings of this planet. Any other literatures which are to be written in this age must be strictly based on the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and cannot in any way contradict them. Spiritual advancement means to follow the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his faithful representatives.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa can only be known by adopting the process instituted by Śrīla Prabhupāda and maintained and preached by his followers. There is no other process to understand Kṛṣṇa, or God, nor is there any process to become free from the suffering of material life, except surrender to Śrīla Prabhupāda or his bona fide representatives. Śrīla Prabhupāda's direct disciples and granddisciples are serving him under the guidance of the GBC and their bona fide representatives. It is the sincere desire of the Governing Body Commission, who are all the eternal servants of Śrīla Prabhupāda, to keep him clearly in the center of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. The first meaning of keeping Śrīla Prabhupāda in the center is to strictly maintain the injunctions and principles which he established. Foremost of these are worshiping the Deity in the temple and preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others through the distribution of transcendental literatures. Following the four regulative principles, chanting sixteen rounds daily, rising early and attending *maṅgala-ārati*, taking part in the missionary work of Śrīla Prabhupāda—this is the essence of keeping Śrīla Prabhupāda in the center.

But since spiritual life depends on *pāñcarātrikī-viddhi* as well as *bhāgavata-viddhi* there must be also ceremonial temple programs for keeping Śrīla Prabhupāda in the center. Spiritual life runs on two parallel lines, namely temple worship and preaching activities.

The GBC in their 1978 position paper on the *guru* insured that the place of Śrīla Prabhupāda's worship in the ISKCON temples would always be foremost:

The disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who is now initiating will always regard His Divine Grace as his superior and cannot occupy that seat. The second seat, however, a little below Śrīla Prabhupāda's *vyāsāsana*, should be given to the initiating *guru*. Thus the new disciples will see their *guru* as giving honor to His Divine Grace. This will impress the disciples: "Even my *guru* is also giving respect to his own *guru*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and in this way I must follow." This system of maintaining Śrīla Prabhupāda's *vyāsāsana* as a 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.

B. Guru-Worship in ISKCON Temples

The argument has been raised that by placing one's *vyāsāsana* next to the *vyāsāsana* of one's own spiritual master a *guru* is trying to present himself as equal in all respects to his spiritual master. It may be said in answer to this, however, that if one is a bona fide spiritual master it is only because he is surrendered at the lotus feet of his *guru* and is faithfully carrying out his order and broadcasting his message without concoction. Therefore, to place oneself next to one's own spiritual master beneath his shelter is perfectly proper. In fact, all the members of ISKCON have practical experience that we are more Kṛṣṇa conscious in the temple room. If we want to worship a *guru* in a separate place, it is far more likely that the *guru* may think that the worship is for him. Also, others will be likely to think the worship is for him. But when we worship a *guru* in the temple room next to his own spiritual master it is obvious that he is a servant of his spiritual master and the *guru* himself cannot forget his own spiritual master who is next to him and above him. There is no śāstric evidence that one cannot sit at the side of his own spiritual master. In fact, even during Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence he would often have his disciples sit at elevated seats at his side at preaching programs in India, and he would order them to give learned discourses on *śāstra*. It is stated in the Third Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that the offense of *maryādā-vyatikarma* is to try to show one's learning in the presence of a higher authority. Nevertheless, for the sake of preaching Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered his disciples to sit at elevated seats at his side and speak from the *Bhāgavatam* before thousands of people. Similarly, for the sake of enthusing the new disciples and expanding the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement it is proper for a bona fide spiritual master of ISKCON to accept the worship which—according to the ISKCON standard instituted by Śrīla Prabhupāda—is accorded to the bona fide spiritual master in the temple room. It is completely against the will and example of Prabhupāda to try to establish different places of worship within an ISKCON community. Śrīla Prabhupāda discouraged devotees in a center from eating at home or from worshiping at home. Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed again and again that we are one family, that everything depends upon love and trust and that we must always be united. In fact, the greatest danger is that we will not be united. Practically speaking, although we are working in different ways for Prabhupāda, we become united when we come together and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in the temple. It is in our acts of worship together that we become united. To separate the worship, therefore, by having the *guru* go to his own place where Śrīla Prabhupāda is not seen next to him is not auspicious.

We do not condone that any Godbrother should be pressured even subtly into worshiping his *guru*-Godbrother. But one should not think that such worship is objectionable in itself if the Godbrother wishes to offer such worship. It is not against our philosophy. There are innumerable injunctions in Prabhupāda's books and letters which confirm that offering respects to any Vaiṣṇava is most purifying, and such an activity is praised in the revealed scriptures. The Vaiṣṇava poet sings, *ye jana bhaje gaurāṅga se āmār prāṇ re*: "Lord Nityānanda said that He accepts any worshiper of Lord Caitanya as dear as His own life."

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself stated in a letter dated January 23, 1969 to Śivānanda Prabhu:

Regarding serving your Godbrothers, this is a very good practice. The spiritual master is never without his followers, so to serve the spiritual master also means to be the servant of his disciples. When you want to serve the king you must also serve his minister, secretary and everyone else who serves him. And to serve his servants may please him more than to serve the king personally.

To preach therefore to the disciples of Prabhupāda that they are committing a mistake by serving and offering respects to their *guru*-Godbrother is against Vedic injunctions. In fact, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, *gopī-bhartur pada-kamalaḥ dāsānudāsaḥ*. The more one becomes servant of the servant the more his worship becomes relishable and the more it becomes pleasing to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, to encourage a Vaiṣṇava not to offer respect to other Vaiṣṇavas in the name of pleasing his spiritual master is an example of foolishness. Of course it goes without saying that a humble Vaiṣṇava *guru* will never

expect or desire worship from any of his Godbrothers; in fact, he will be embarrassed by such worship and in return will want to worship his Godbrothers.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda stated in the letter to Śivānanda, "So the spiritual master is not alone. He is always with his entourage. We are not impersonalists." There is a continuous disciplic succession. Why disconnect the *ācāryas* of Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission from Śrīla Prabhupāda? Why create dichotomies, dualities, and different places of worship? That is not the spirit of ISKCON. The spirit of ISKCON is to unify the world. Even in the worship of the Deities in the temple, although there are different altars the worship takes place in one temple. Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Sītā-Rāma, Gaura-Nitāi, Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, although placed on different altars, are all in one temple together. Because Śrīla Prabhupāda is in the same temple as Kṛṣṇa does not mean we do not know the distinction between them. Prabhupāda never taught us the process to arrange a separate temple for worshipping Kṛṣṇa, a separate temple for worshipping Śrīla Prabhupāda, a separate temple for worshipping Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, and a separate temple for worshipping Gaura-Nitāi. We are one family, with one place of worship, the temple.

The argument has been given that it is offensive to accept worship in the temple because Prabhupāda is as much present as he ever was and therefore we cannot accept worship in his presence. But we must recognize the fact that since rejoining his *nitya-līlā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda is now simultaneously present and not present. If he is entirely present as he used to be then why doesn't he initiate the disciples? But before departing from this world, Śrīla Prabhupāda arranged that initiation would go on in his absence through the medium of his *guru*-disciples. As his appointed *guru*-disciples can accept their own disciples in the presence of Prabhupāda in the temple room, so by the same logic it is not objectionable that they accept their disciples *pūjā* in the presence of His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda. In fact, the example of the Gauḍīya Maṭha is that each Godbrother-disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī wanted his own separate temple for himself. And in these separate temples, the Godbrothers did not keep the *vyāsāsana* of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, but rather remained on their own as *guru*. We do not want to follow their bad example.

To deny the need for the living *ācārya*, as the living representative of Prabhupāda, is simply to dilute Prabhupāda's movement and make it like Christianity. The Christians have spent hundreds of billions of dollars to build the most gorgeous churches for Christ, and they often repeat his name. But Śrīla Prabhupāda said that Christianity is useless because they only pretend to keep Christ in the center but they do not strictly follow His messages because they do not have the example of a bona fide living *ācārya* in disciplic succession.

In the song to the departed *ācārya*, Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda says that Haridāsa Ṭhākura is still living because his message is still living. The message is broadcast by the *ācārya* and therefore the *vyāsāsana* for the new *ācārya* is a symbol of Prabhupāda's continuous life on this earth through the broadcasting of his message. Although all of Prabhupāda's disciples are powerfully broadcasting his message, the *ācārya* symbolizes the transmission of Śrīla Prabhupāda's message to future generations. One may argue that putting one's *vyāsāsana* next to Prabhupāda is trying to usurp Śrīla Prabhupāda's position. But rather it is a correct and proper manifestation of the truth of *paramparā*. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda is exalted far beyond our imagination and far beyond our powers of achievement, still in an essential, necessary way the *guru* is one and it is this oneness only which keeps the *paramparā* alive. All the members of ISKCON including the *gurus* must know that when the *guru* sits next to Prabhupāda it indicates his dependence on Prabhupāda, servitorship at the feet of Prabhupāda, and devotion, connection and remembrance of Prabhupāda. It would be dangerous for anyone in ISKCON, especially a *guru* to think that he is equal to his spiritual master. But, the *guru*'s oneness with Śrīla Prabhupāda is through surrender and not by personal achievement. On the other hand, if the worship of the *gurus* is conducted in a separate place it could lead to party spirit and an independent attitude and could also breed forgetfulness of Prabhupāda. In conclusion, the safest place within the universe is at the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda. And it is there in the safest place that the *guru* should receive worship so that he never forgets his eternal dependence on Śrīla Prabhupāda.

C. Titles Given to ISKCON Gurus

In the fourth volume of the *Madhya-līlā* of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (p. 120), Śrīla Prabhupāda states that the terms Prabhupāda and Viṣṇupāda as well as Ācārya or Ācāryadeva and Ācāryapāda are authorized names of the bona fide spiritual master.

...the spiritual master is addressed as Om Viṣṇupāda or Prabhupāda. The *ācārya*, the spiritual master, is generally respected by others as Śrīpāda, the initiated Vaiṣṇavas are addressed as Prabhu. Prabhu, Prabhupāda and Viṣṇupāda are described in revealed scriptures like the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Caitanya-bhāgavata*.

By practical tradition in India, the name Prabhupāda is reserved for the most exalted Vaiṣṇavas, whereas the term Viṣṇupāda is commonly accepted by Vaiṣṇava *dīkṣā-gurus*. Terms such as Gurupāda, Gurudeva, and Ācāryadeva are simply traditional terms used to indicate the bona fide spiritual master.

There has also been criticism of applying the terms of the *prema-dhvani* prayer in which it is stated: *jaya om viṣṇupāda paramahamṣa*... But it is proper to consider a bona fide spiritual master who executes his duties of reclaiming the fallen souls as a *paramahamṣa* because he has taken the essence of life, namely devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. As Śrīla Prabhupāda has stated in *The Nectar of Instruction*, "The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant for the *paramahamṣas*." In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the term *paramahamṣa* is used to refer to the transcendentalist, whether he be personalist or even impersonalist. If the impersonalist can be called in some sense *paramahamṣa*, then certainly this word can be applied to the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda who are engaged in pure devotional service. It is unfair to state that the ISKCON *gurus* are presenting themselves as equal to Prabhupāda because they adopt such standard terms.

We should note again that there are always higher and higher levels within the transcendental realm. And the devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement who are sincerely following will always be advancing. Those transcendental terms which refer to Vaiṣṇavas situated in *paramahamṣa* or Viṣṇupāda status should definitely apply to persons discharging the standard duties of Vaiṣṇava *gurus*. It has been pointed out that the phrase *aṣṭottara-śata*, which occurs in the *prema-dhvani* prayer, refers to a person who is in the *śuddha-sattva* stage. *Śuddha-sattva* refers to the stage of Vasudeva, the state in which Lord Kṛṣṇa is revealed. This is described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

This stage of existence is called *śuddha-sattva*, which means that it is transcendental to the material qualities. Since this *śuddha-sattva* existence is under the direct protection of the internal potency in this stage, the activities of the material consciousness stop....*Bhagavad-gītā* also confirms that anyone who engages in unadulterated devotion to the Lord is at once elevated to the position of pure Brahman: *maṁ ca yo 'vyabhicāreṇa bhakti-yogena sevate*.... Therefore, *śuddha-sattva* is the transcendental position, which is technically called Vasudeva.... In pure devotional service one simply serves the Supreme Personality of Godhead as a matter of duty, without any reason and without being defeated by material conditions. That is called *śuddha-sattva* or Vasudeva, because in that stage the supreme person, Kṛṣṇa, is revealed in the heart of the devotee. Jīva Gosvāmī has very nicely described this Vasudeva or *śuddha-sattva* in his *Bhāgavata-sandarba*. He explains that *aṣṭottara-śata* (108) is added to the name of the spiritual master to indicate one situated in *śuddha-sattva* or in the transcendental state of Vasudeva.

(*Bhāg.* 4.3.23)

While there are different levels of pure devotion, any devotee who is engaged in devotional service is untouched by the material nature. Śrīla Prabhupāda once gave the example that the devotee when he enters devotional service is like a person getting into a boat: because the boatman is not expert still the boat may continue to rock, but still he doesn't fall into the water. But he is in the boat even in the beginning stages. Similarly, just as the boatman is untouched by the water though he feels the waves, a liberated devotee may feel the waves of the three modes of nature, but being engaged in the internal potency of Kṛṣṇa, he is never actually touched by *māyā*.

There are similar meanings to be found in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.30), where Kṛṣṇa says that one who sees Him is never lost. The devotee always sees Kṛṣṇa in everything and sees everything in Kṛṣṇa. In the purport Prabhupāda says that a devotee may appear to see different objects in the material world, but in each case he sees Kṛṣṇa, because he knows that everything is the energy of Kṛṣṇa. So seeing Kṛṣṇa is another thing that is realized in pure devotional service, and it can mean seeing Kṛṣṇa in everything, because everything is His energy, and it can mean always seeing the Śyāmasundara form of Kṛṣṇa wherever one looks. Both levels of understanding constitute genuine transcendental realization and are completely dependent on the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, although one is higher than the other. Śrīla Prabhupāda has given a nice example that when the mother sees the shoe of her child she sees the child; this is similar to the vision of a devotee. He sees Kṛṣṇa everywhere because everything is Kṛṣṇa's energy.

It is not the mission of this movement to disrupt the traditions of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and to minimize the position of Śrīla Prabhupāda by stating that his disciples who are acting as bona fide spiritual masters are somehow less than real spiritual masters. If it is stated that a bona fide spiritual master who is a disciple of Prabhupāda is an advanced Vaiṣṇava, this does not mean he is equal to his own spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda is a *śaktyāveśa avatāra* far beyond our capabilities, but if we feel that the process to glorify Śrīla Prabhupāda is to suppress the legitimate spiritual advancement and achievement of his disciples and that Śrīla Prabhupāda will remain unique by not recognizing other bona fide Vaiṣṇavas, then we have completely misunderstood the mood of the spiritual world. The father is most glorified because his family is beautiful. As Śrīla Prabhupāda's ISKCON family becomes more beautiful in spiritual advancement, Śrīla Prabhupāda becomes more glorified, even by the demigods.

Section Six

JUMPING OVER THE SPIRITUAL MASTER

A. Respecting Śrīla Prabhupāda's Will and Order

Problems in present-day ISKCON sometimes seem to arise due to a basic misunderstanding or forgetfulness of the way that Śrīla Prabhupāda wants ISKCON to be managed in his physical absence. Śrīla Prabhupāda has spent his life's energy to establish this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world on a strong basis. His untiring concern for the proper management, present and future, of the society was all-pervasive in his dealings. Just as the universe, the cosmos, has an order and structure, similarly Śrīla Prabhupāda has given ISKCON a basic structure so that his will may be perpetuated and Lord Caitanya's message can be spread through the via media of ISKCON for the next ten thousand years.

Early in the history of the movement Śrīla Prabhupāda appointed the Governing Body Commissioners to assist him. The Governing Body Commission was formally established at Śrīdhāma Māyāpur with the following first resolutions:

1. The GBC has been established by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda to represent him in carrying out the responsibility of managing the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) of which he is the Founder-Ācārya and supreme authority. The GBC accepts as its life and soul his divine instruction and recognizes that it (GBC) is completely dependent on his mercy in all respects. The GBC has no purpose or function other than to execute the instructions so kindly given by His Divine Grace and to preserve and spread his teachings to the world in their pure and original form.
2. The members of the GBC do not have any inherent authority but rather derive their authority from the Governing Body Commission itself and ultimately from His Divine Grace. Their authority may be over a particular geographic area or over a particular function. Whichever area of responsibility is given to the various members, their primary responsibility is to the society as a whole.

The Governing Body Commission functioned under Śrīla Prabhupāda's direction and in 1977 in Vṛndāvana, in Śrīla Prabhupāda's final will the following direction for the future management of ISKCON was given:

I, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, settler of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, and disciple of Oṃ Viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja Prabhupāda, presently resided at Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira in Vṛndāvana, make this my last will:

1. The Governing Body Commission (GBC) will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness.
2. Each temple will be an ISKCON property....The system of management will continue as it is now and there is no need of any change.

His Divine Grace told all the GBC members present in Vṛndāvana that he was not appointing a single ācārya for ISKCON, but that the Governing Body Commission would be his representative and the ultimate managing authority in ISKCON.

He affectionately cautioned his dear GBC disciples that he considered them individually innocent and simple, almost like children in the face of the great task ahead, and he was concerned therefore that any individual might be misled. However, His Divine Grace put his full confidence in the collective intelligence of the whole Governing Body Commission. When doubters challenged Śrīla Prabhupāda by citing

examples of particular discrepancies in certain individual GBC members, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied: "One, two, or even three may make a mistake, but how is it possible for the majority of twenty-five advanced Vaiṣṇavas acting together to be wrong?" His order was that the GBC members should cooperate together and accept the collective policies of the Governing Body Commission.

The order of our Founder-Ācārya should be the guiding light for every follower in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

The order of the spiritual master must be obeyed without consideration.

(Cc. *Madhya* 10.44/*Madhya* 4, p. 181)

The way in which every disciple and follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda can express his love for His Divine Grace is by continuing his cooperation as Śrīla Prabhupāda requested:

...The International Society for Krishna Consciousness was formed to execute the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. I request my disciples who are determined to help me in this work to continue their cooperation fully....

(Cc. *Anṛya*, Concluding Words/*Anṛya* 1:5, p. 321)

This continuing of cooperation means strengthening the hand of the Governing Body Commission and allowing this sacred body to fulfill its obligation to Śrīla Prabhupāda to correct any deviations from his instructions and to "preserve and spread his teachings to the world in their pure and original form." If anyone individually feels he is more important and his opinion is greater and more valuable than the Governing Body Commission's opinion, then this is directly endangering everything Śrīla Prabhupāda has worked for.

B. Accepting One's Own Intelligence as Ultimate Criterion

Śrīla Prabhupāda cautioned us against relying excessively on one's own intelligence. His advice to GBC members was to accept the collective intelligence of the body and to manage in that way.

Today in ISKCON when any discrepancy appears, upon investigation it becomes revealed that obsession for relying upon one's own intelligence, even to interpret the *sāstras* and the instructions of the spiritual master, has resulted in difficulty. His Divine Grace warned us against this stubborn pride in one's own intelligence:

One must accept a principle of knowledge because one cannot attain the Absolute Truth simply by intellectual speculation. If everyone is an authority, or *if everyone accepts his own intelligence as the ultimate criterion*—as is presently fashionable—the scriptures will be interpreted in many different ways, and everyone will claim his own philosophy supreme. This has become a very great problem, and everyone is interpreting scripture in his own way and setting up *his own basis of authority*....Now everyone and everybody is trying to establish his own theory as the ultimate truth.

(Cc. *Madhya* 9.49/*Madhya*:3, p. 317)

Just as there are thousands of versions of *Bhagavad-gītā* in the market, today there are many opinions on what Śrīla Prabhupāda meant or wanted. However, it must be accepted that the Governing Body Commission, with its empowered collective intelligence, is the one that should be followed. This stands true to the humblest devotee, the humblest temple president, the humblest GBC member, and the humblest ISKCON initiating *guru*. Anyone who knowingly or unknowingly is setting up *his own basis of authority* rejecting Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions should be known to be deviating. No leader of this movement can implement unauthorized policies against the policy of the Governing Body Commission.

C. Jumping Over the Spiritual Master

Because of Śrīla Prabhupāda's exalted position, being an eternally liberated soul, and because he purely followed the instructions of the previous *ācāryas*, whatever he wrote or spoke is as good as re-

vealed scriptures. The followers of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement for all generations to come will read and relish his instructions for their enlightenment. To be completely understood and applied, Śrīla Prabhupāda's books must be read with the guidance of older devotees. And the books when read properly will always order people to approach the spiritual master. Anyone who faithfully follows a bona fide ISKCON *guru* will attain the highest spiritual platform.

In 1970 some of our ISKCON members deviated, starting a counter-program of directly worshipping Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura, because of anti-propaganda started by envious groups in India. Śrīla Prabhupāda chastised them for *jumping over the spiritual master*. This in no uncertain terms was called "Māyāvādī poison." This became clear shortly after when they actively preached Māyāvādī philosophy. No one can jump over his *guru* and directly approach the previous *ācārya*. This violates the basic principle of the disciplic succession system—*guru-paramparā*.

To create a new philosophy or a new procedure, jumping over the spiritual master's instructions and examples causes the disciple to fall down.

If one always follows the orders of the spiritual master there is no question of falling down. As soon as a foolish disciple tries to overtake his spiritual master and become ambitious to occupy his post, he immediately falls down....

(Bhag. 5.12.14/5:1, p.421)

What does the *post* of spiritual master entail? The spiritual master guides and directs his followers. During Śrīla Prabhupāda's manifested presence he would have a final word on policies and procedures in ISKCON. Śrīla Prabhupāda has handed this "ultimate management authority" to his Governing Body Commission and not to any individual or group. He has established this policy and system for management. No individual member of ISKCON, initiating *guru* or otherwise, can change the policies that Śrīla Prabhupāda has handed down, without being guilty of trying to usurp Śrīla Prabhupāda's *post*.

All devotees are advised not to fall prey to the *māyā* of thinking oneself as the only knower of the previous *ācārya*'s desires. One must be very careful to follow the orders and not jump over the instructions of the spiritual master.

D. Accepting Śrīla Prabhupāda's and the GBC's Authority

The present initiating *gurus* or *ācāryas* of ISKCON have not been empowered to make sweeping changes according to time, place, and circumstance for their disciples. As mentioned before, according to the order of our Founder-Ācārya, the Governing Body Commission must concur on policy changes. As long as a spiritual master follows the instructions of his previous *ācārya*, he is a bona fide spiritual master.

This is the way to advance in spiritual science. One must accept the words of an *ācārya*, a bona fide spiritual master, to clear the path for spiritual advancement. This is the secret of success. However, one's guide must be a spiritual master who is *without deviation*. Whatever the spiritual master says must be accepted by the disciple. Only then is success certain. This is the Vedic system.

(Cc. Madhya 10.14/Madhya: 4, p. 117)

This secret of success has been revealed: we must strictly maintain the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Everyone in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is very concerned that the unity is maintained, in order to fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda's dream that the message of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu be spread all over the world. Śrīla Prabhupāda has confirmed that it is only in the framework of ISKCON that his followers can attain success:

If the preachers in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are sincere devotees of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa will always be with them because He is very kind and favorable to His devotees. Just as Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa were victorious on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will surely emerge victorious if we remain sincere devotees of the Lord and serve the Lord according to the advice of predecessors (the six Gosvāmīs and other devotees of the Lord.) As Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has stated:

*tāṇdera caranā sevi bhakta-sane vāsa
janame janame haya, ei abhilāṣa*

The Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees must always desire to remain in the society or movement. Within the society we must try to serve the predecessors by preaching Caitanya Mahāprabhu's cult and spreading His name and fame all over the world. If we attempt this seriously within the society, it will be successfully done. There is no question of estimating how this will be done in a mundane sense. But without a doubt it happens with the grace of Kṛṣṇa.

(Cc. *Madhya*, 4.47/*Madhya*:2, p. 378)

The above references unequivocally prove that only within this ISKCON movement can we satisfy Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire. Even the initiating *gurus* of this movement are empowered as initiating *gurus* for ISKCON. Should they leave this ISKCON movement, by will of providence, their franchise no longer remains valid. Does not remaining within the ISKCON movement mean accepting the management, authority, and system that Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us? Is there any alternative for managing this society and pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda? The Governing Body Commission as established by Śrīla Prabhupāda is to meet every year at Śrī Māyāpur; the GBC may also meet in extraordinary circumstances. If there are any ideas or revelations for increasing the preaching of Kṛṣṇa consciousness or if there is any question, then that should be discussed according to the established procedures. To "take the law into one's own hands" would not be an acceptance of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his GBC's authority, and thus is a suicidal path. True humility and concern for the welfare of this movement can only be achieved by accepting Śrīla Prabhupāda's and the GBC's authority. The spiritual masters and leaders of this movement must take a submissive position in this regard and within this framework work for the betterment of Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement.

...a spiritual master or leader should not be proud of his position; being always humbler than an ordinary man, he should go on preaching the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

(Cc. *Ādi*, 17.31/*Ādi*:3, p. 274)

Section Seven

PROTECTING ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA'S MOVEMENT

This deals with protecting Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement from two basic dangers which have arisen. The first is brought about by the tendency to act independently, accepting one's own intelligence as the ultimate criterion for understanding the *śāstra*, and avoiding the GBC which Śrīla Prabhupāda has appointed to safeguard this movement; the second grave danger is the effect of whimsical interpretation of the status of the spiritual master in our present-day *sampradāya*.

A. The Effects of Independent Action Defying Śrīla Prabhupāda's Order

The most obvious danger of independent action is a schism which can create havoc in this movement. Śrīla Prabhupāda has warned us of this:

Translation: Some disciples strictly accepted the orders of the *ācārya* and others deviated, independently concocting their own opinions under the spell of *daivī-māyā*.

Purport: This verse describes the beginning of a *schism*. When disciples do not stick to the principles of accepting the order of their spiritual master, immediately there are *two opinions*. Any opinion different from the opinion of the spiritual master is useless. One cannot infiltrate materially concocted ideas into spiritual advancement. That is deviation. There is no scope for adjusting spiritual advancement to material ideas.

(Cc. Ādi 12.9/Ādi:3, p.6)

Just to avoid these types of schisms in our movement Śrīla Prabhupāda created the Governing Body Commission. He has requested his followers to be patient and to establish policies through this system. If someone becomes impatient or unsubmitive then schisms and the subsequent errors, offenses, and fall-down are inevitable. In the next *sloka* of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda adds:

Translation: The order of the spiritual master is the active principle in spiritual life. Anyone who disobeys the order of the spiritual master immediately becomes useless.

Purport: Here is the opinion of Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī. Persons who strictly follow the orders of the spiritual master are useful in executing the will of the Supreme, whereas persons who deviate from the order of the spiritual master are useless.

(Cc. Ādi 12.10/Ādi:3, pp.7-8)

Śrīla Prabhupāda, wanting to protect this movement from the varieties of danger which exist, has created a system of management. Anyone who deviates from that system, concocting their own opinion, immediately becomes useless. This type of activity should be rejected by all responsible devotees as "the spell of *daivī-māyā*."

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura established a Governing Body Commission for his *nāma-haṭṭa* organization. He described that the commission would sit together and the joint decisions would be accepted by all the members of his organization as the "word of Lord Nityānanda." Similarly, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura ordered his disciples to form a governing body commission, but they failed to do so. Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the fate of this failure:

Translation: At first all the followers of Advaita Ācārya shared a single opinion, but later they followed two different opinions, as ordained by providence.

Purport: The words *daiva kāraṇa* indicate that by dint of providence, or God's will, the followers of Advaita Ācārya divided into two parts. Such disagreement among the disciples of one *ācārya* was also found among the Gauḍīya Maṭha. In the beginning, during the presence of...Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, all the disciples were in agreement, but just after his disappearance they disagreed.

One party strictly followed the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, but another group created their own concoctions about executing his desires. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, at the time of his departure, requested all his disciples to form a governing body and conduct missionary activities cooperatively. He did not instruct a particular man to become the next *ācārya*. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of *ācārya*, and they split into two factions over who the next *ācārya* would be. Consequently, both factions were *asara*, or useless, because they have no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master. Despite the spiritual master's order to form a governing body and execute the missionary activities of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, the two unauthorized factions began litigation that is still going on after forty years with no decision...the secret of success in advancement of spiritual life is the firm faith of the disciple in the orders of his spiritual master.

(Cc. Ādi 12.8/Ādi:3, pp.4-5)

Thus Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us an insight into the desires of the previous *ācāryas* and into the causes for the falldown and failure of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. Śrīla Prabhupāda has taken extreme precaution that a governing body be formed, and it was his emphatic and unequivocal desire that no one should deviate or be independent from this GBC authority. A practical example is that during Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical presence no one would consider changing policies or procedures of temple worship without consulting His Divine Grace and getting his permission. Similarly, no change in policy or procedure should be implemented in ISKCON now without the permission of the GBC. That persons are going against this standard demonstrates a lack of faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions (that the GBC shall be his representative). This lack of faith in the spiritual master is the cause of schism—the main cause of possible ruination of the ISKCON movement.

Some people criticize that there have been instances of discrepancies in senior leaders of this movement, even those who possess initiating responsibilities from Śrīla Prabhupāda. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda has given a clue to understand whether we are on the right track:

...the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is being propagated according to this principle (faith in the words of the spiritual master), and therefore our preaching work is going on successfully, in spite of the many impediments...because we are getting positive help from our previous *ācāryas*. One must judge every action by its result.

Although discrepancies have appeared by the will of providence, the Governing Body Commission meeting by Śrīla Prabhupāda's order could easily realize in each circumstance where the difficulty lay. Immediate steps were voluntarily accepted in full Kṛṣṇa conscious spirit exemplary of advanced Vaiṣṇavas. Thus, preaching in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement continues to progress in spite of the momentary appearance of discrepancies. This is the proof that Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous *ācāryas* are helping this movement and will continue to help as long as we do not deviate from their instructions.

However, whenever people act independently without authorization there is a tremendous disturbance. The disturbance is the result of deep offense to the spiritual master and to the Vaiṣṇavas. If anyone tries to agitate the devotees' minds and create some kind of "mass movement" against the Governing Body Commission then responsible devotees should turn a deaf ear; they should wait for the proper Vaiṣṇava assembly to discuss these things and take appropriate actions according to the established GBC procedures.

The only place that policy change should be enacted is in authorized GBC meetings. It is useless, dangerous, and extremely harmful to fight or to act whimsically. When will we take caution from these words of Śrīla Prabhupāda?

Believing in the words of the spiritual master, He [Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu] introduced the *saṅkīrtana* movement, just as the present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was started with belief in the words of our spiritual master. He wanted to preach, we

believed in his words and tried somehow or other to fulfill them, and now this movement has become successful all over the world. Therefore, faith in the words of the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the secret of success. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu never disobeyed the orders of His spiritual master and stopped propagating the *saṅkīrtana* movement. Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, at the time of his passing away, ordered all the disciples to work conjointly to preach the mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu all over the world. Later, however, some self-interested, foolish disciples disobeyed his orders. Each one of them wanted to become head of the mission, and they fought...neglecting the order of the spiritual master, and the entire mission was defeated; we are not proud of this; however, the truth must be explained. We believed in the words of our spiritual master and started in a humble way—in a helpless way—but due to the spiritual force of the order of the Supreme Authority, this movement has become successful.

(Cc. Ādi 7.95-96/Ādi:2, p.77)

This movement belongs to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the previous *ācāryas*, and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The devotees, the temple, the region, the zone all belong to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. They are expansions from the ISKCON branch of His transcendental tree. The spiritual masters and the leaders of the Society are acting on behalf of the previous *ācāryas* and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Our only connection is that we submissively follow those instructions and cooperate with each other under the Governing Body Commission according to Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions. Otherwise the obvious and most dangerous result is staring us in the face, *we shall be separated from the Caitanya tree. We shall become asāra, or useless.*

Some people may leave this movement, but those who faithfully remain attached to the Caitanya tree through this ISKCON branch are guaranteed success in spreading Lord Caitanya's movement...Within the society (ISKCON) we must try to serve the predecessors by preaching Caitanya Mahāprabhu's cult and spreading His name and fame all over the world. If we attempt this seriously within the society, it will be successfully done. There is no question of estimating how this will happen in the mundane sense. But without a doubt, it happens by the grace of Kṛṣṇa.

(Cc. Madhya 4.79/Madhya:2, pp.37-38)

B. Chopping at the Roots of Faith of Our Devotional Tree

Faith is the basic root from which our devotional tree expands. Without faith everything is lost. A disciple must have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master:

Unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed.

To establish a new kind of *guru* in which a disciple must test his every word and cannot have implicit faith is the most dangerous concoction which can only destroy the faith of the disciple in the spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda advises how a devotee must see his spiritual master:

...a devotee should not be disturbed by the activities of his spiritual master and should not try to criticize him. A devotee should be fixed in the conclusion that the spiritual master cannot be subject to criticism and should never be considered equal to a common man...Even if there appears to be some discrepancy according to an imperfect devotee's estimation, the devotee should be fixed in the conviction that even if his spiritual master goes to a liquor shop, he is not a drunkard; rather, he must have some purpose in going there....

(Cc. Antya 3.11/Antya:1, p.213)

The breakdown of this basic faith of the disciples in their *gurus* spells the spiritual ruination of this movement. *Of course, the maximum burden is upon the spiritual master to strictly follow the instructions*

of the previous *ācārya* in order to remain in touch with the *saṁpradāya* and thus instill true faith in the heart of his disciples. How can ISKCON portray its spiritual masters to be ordinary men subject to the four defects of material life and thus unable to instruct their disciples properly? If this fanatical over-reaction were accepted then it would reduce ISKCON to the status of a dead *saṁpradāya*.

The breakdown of faith will create anarchy.

C. Casting Doubt on Śrīla Prabhupāda

By saying that Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples are not or cannot become advanced devotees of the highest order casts doubt upon Śrīla Prabhupāda and our previous *ācāryas*.

The GBC in the 1978 paper cautioned the Godbrothers of the present initiating *gurus* from being disturbed by the worship of the disciples to their spiritual masters.

...the disciples may gather and worship him (the *guru*) exclusively with all their devotion. They will worship him exclusively as the representative of God, of Kṛṣṇa. But other disciples may not feel encouraged by their behavior. They may feel, "Our faith in our *guru* (Śrīla Prabhupāda) is being disturbed by this. Now my *guru* is not absolute." It is a very subtle plane of sentiment...So we must prepare for that.

Similarly the relationship between the initiating *gurus* and their Godbrothers was explained: that they will see their Godbrother *guru* in a relative way and the relationship should be one of mutual respect as is due to Vaiṣṇavas. The Godbrother should, out of deference for the disciples, maintain some formal behavior. However, in private this formal behavior is not required. The *guru's* Godbrothers may discuss and offer him advice.

D. Avoiding Being Agents for ISKCON's Enemies

It is one of the greatest services we can do for ISKCON's enemies and Kali's agents to publicize that our *gurus* following Śrīla Prabhupāda are by definition second and third class devotees unable to deliver a fallen soul to the highest position of *bhakti*. The *sahajīyā* enemies of our *saṁpradāya* already are having their agents spread rumors in the USA and other parts of the world that people should go elsewhere for getting highest understanding of devotional service. Actually anyone who thinks that the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda cannot deliver fallen souls to the highest spiritual platform has not understood the essence of the teachings of Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda or Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. This has been previously explained in this paper. Every time some unauthorized statement disturbing the actual teachings of the *guru-paramparā* is broadcast, this plays into the hands of ISKCON's enemies.

A pure devotee can also fall under the influence of outside forces. This was seen in the case of Dhruva Mahārāja and other great devotees. By associating with senior Vaiṣṇavas one is protected, but by taking advice from less advanced devotees one can become misled. The poison of *asampradāyas* can break the very faith and structure of our disciplic succession. If a devotee is not careful to take advice from his higher authorities he can carry the poison of disease. He can affect another or himself without being aware of the disease or how the infection entered.

A danger of the above-mentioned new *guru* philosophy is that rather than stressing preaching and other practical symptoms authorized by Śrīla Prabhupāda for recognizing advanced Vaiṣṇavas, unascertainable qualifications like *siddha-deha*, *siddha-praṇālī*, *aṣṭa-sātvika-bhāva*, etc., may instead become the criteria, thus creating another *sahajīyā* group simply trying to obtain spiritual sense gratification from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Less intelligent devotees bewildered by flowery words may be misled and join *sahajīyā* camps where self-proclaimed (so-called) living *unama-adhikārī mahā-bhāgavata gurus* are cheaply available to further mislead them.

E. Understanding Potential Dangers of Offenses

The various offenses that can be created by reducing ISKCON *gurus* to a conditional level is that the disciple will see his *guru* with *nara-matī*, as an ordinary human being, which is a great offense, as de-

scribed in the *Vedas*. By lumping all devotees in one category, spreading rumors, and faultfinding one commits *vaiṣṇava-aparādhā*. By misapplication of śāstric evidence our connection to the *sampradāya* can be lost. By disobeying Śrīla Prabhupāda's orders everything is lost. These great dangers should not be minimized.

F. Obligations and Responsibilities of the Initiating Gurus to ISKCON

As mentioned before, a spiritual master must be strictly obedient to his spiritual master in order to be empowered.

One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master. And one cannot be a bona fide and authorized spiritual master unless he has been strictly obedient to his spiritual master.

(Bhag. 2.9.43/2:2, p.221)

One's guide must be a spiritual master who is actually an unalloyed devotee strictly following the previous ācāryas without deviation.

Lord Caitanya said a slight defect in a *sannyāsī's* character is immediately broadcasted, just as a small spot of ink on a white sheet is very evident. Similarly it is the deep responsibility of the ISKCON initiating *gurus* to strictly follow the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The first instruction is that one must act in a way representative of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda said: "Do as I am doing." Another primary instruction is that they must in love and trust accept the authority of the GBC as the ultimate management authority in ISKCON.

Initiating spiritual masters of ISKCON must be sensitive to the various feelings of devotees who are holding different relationships with them. The relationships with the Godbrothers and with a disciple are different. The spiritual masters of this Society must be sensitive to all of these issues and encourage everyone suitably in the worship of their spiritual master.

G. Responsibility of Other Leaders and Śrīla Prabhupāda's Disciples Around the Movement

It is the duty of the GBC in particular to educate the devotees in the principles upon which this movement is based. Everyone should have a clear understanding of the relationship between Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Governing Body Commission, the individual GBC members, initiating *gurus*, and other devotees of this movement. Any devotee noting a discrepancy in the execution of ISKCON policy should write to the GBC chairman with copies for the vice-chairman and secretary so that necessary action is taken. Śrīla Prabhupāda always advised that tolerance, patience, and determination are the qualifications of devotional progress. Devotees should avoid harming or injuring ISKCON and should allow the ultimate management authority to resolve management problems which may arise. Devotees should have faith in Prabhupāda's management system and should be quick to forgive and forget where it is seen that a devotee has undertaken corrective measures and is again progressing in his Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Section Eight

THE PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERSTANDING OF DISCREPANCIES AND THEIR RECTIFICATION

The material nature is very strong, and sometimes due to inattention even an advanced devotee can temporarily deviate from his position. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "We must rise early in the morning, bathe, attend *maṅgala-ārati*, worship the Deities, chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, study the Vedic literatures, and follow all the rules prescribed by the *ācāryas* and the spiritual master. If we deviate from this process, we may fall down, *even though we may be very highly advanced*," (*Bhag.* 5.8.8, purport) Even a highly advanced devotee can sometimes slip.

There are examples in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* of great devotees having difficulty. Citraketu unnecessarily criticized Lord Śiva; Dhruva Mahārāja became overwhelmed by anger at the Yakṣas for killing his brother; Lord Brahmā was affected by sex attraction for his daughter; and Bharata Mahārāja, who had attained the *bhāva* stage, neglected his devotional service due to mundane affection for a deer. These examples are very instructive. In each of these cases the devotees involved resumed their previous high standards of devotional service as soon as they realized their mistakes. There is no question of a permanent setback in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In fact, sometimes Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed out that failure is the pillar of success.

Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapter Nine, text 30,

Translation: Even if one commits the most abominable actions, if he is involved in devotional service he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated.

Purport: The material contamination is so strong that even a *yogī* fully engaged in the service of the Lord sometimes becomes ensnared; but Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so strong that such an occasional falldown is at once rectified. Therefore, the process of devotional service is always a success. No one should deride a devotee for some accidental falldown from the ideal path, for as explained in the next verse, such occasional falldowns will be stopped in due course, as soon as the devotee is completely situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Therefore a person who is situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and is engaged with determination in the process of chanting—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—should be considered to be in the transcendental position, even if by chance or accident he is found to have fallen. The words *sādhur eva*, "he is saintly," are very emphatic. They are a warning that because of an accidental falldown the devotee should not be derided; he should still be considered saintly even if he has fallen down accidentally. And the word *mantavyaḥ* is still more emphatic. If one does not follow this rule and derides the devotee for his accidental falldown, then he is disobeying the order of the Supreme Lord.

The mark of a spot which may be seen on the moon does not become an impediment to the moonlight. Similarly, the accidental falldown of a devotee from the path of a saintly character does not make him abominable. On the other hand, one should not misunderstand that a devotee in transcendental devotional service can act in all kinds of abominable ways; this verse only refers

to an accident due to the strong power of material connections. The devotional service is more or less a declaration of war against the illusory energy. As long as one is not strong enough to fight the illusory energy there may be accidental falldowns. But when one is strong enough one is no longer subjected to such falldowns.

The *saṅkīrtana* movement is a great war on the illusory energy. We should expect that there will be casualties on our side. When there are injuries or temporary setbacks we should not retreat or abandon the fight. These setbacks are due to a temporary lapse of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Upon realizing his mistake a devotee can immediately rise again to fight with renewed strength. A devotee should not be derided or blasphemed for a falldown once the rectification process has been given by the spiritual master and accepted by the disciple.

Arjuna had difficulties in the beginning of the Battle of Kurukṣetra, but it was due to his losing sight of Kṛṣṇa, not because of his accepting a superior position to Kṛṣṇa. It was Arjuna's duty to accept the Supreme Lord as his chariot driver in his fight against Duryodhana's forces. Similarly, it is the duty of ISKCON's initiating *gurus* to sit on their *vyāsāsanas* and defeat the ignorance of the age by their strong preaching. Some of our men may have difficulties, but their problems are due to their having lost sight of Kṛṣṇa for the moment, not due to sitting on a *vyāsāsana*. As pointed out elsewhere in this paper, the initiating *gurus* appointed by Śrīla Prabhupāda are exhibiting the symptoms of topmost devotees of the Lord by dedicating life and soul to the preaching of the *saṅkīrtana* movement; therefore, it is their duty to occupy the *vyāsāsanas* in order to represent Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Vyāsadeva and the entire disciplic succession for the people of the present day. Arjuna also wanted to step down from his chariot and abandon the fight, but Kṛṣṇa condemned this as a great mistake. Similarly, it will be a great mistake if our initiating *gurus* step down from their *vyāsāsanas*. Rather, let them preach boldly by the side of Kṛṣṇa as Arjuna fought boldly to crush the demoniac forces on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

We can understand that when a devotee who is advanced on the path of devotional service encounters some difficulty along the way it is due to his temporarily losing sight of Kṛṣṇa. The solution is to again take up activities which will bring real Kṛṣṇa consciousness into focus. This is expressed by Svāyambhuva Manu in his instructions to Dhruva Mahārāja after Dhruva's becoming angry with the Yakṣas. "My dear Dhruva, please therefore turn your attention to the Supreme Person, who is the infallible Brahman. Face the Supreme Personality of Godhead in your original position, and thus, by self-realization, you will find this material differentiation to be merely flickering." There is no *prāyaścitta* or purificatory performance required of the devotee separate from his activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If there is some difficulty then it is a sign that the devotee is not seriously sticking to the order of his spiritual master. The most effective means of advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is expressed by Mahārāja Rṣabhadeva in the Fifth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. There He instructs his sons that they should seek association with advanced devotees of the Lord. Such association opens the door to liberation. He also advises them to avoid the association of materialistic persons because their association opens the path to degradation. Our recommendation to all devotees for conquering all difficulties encountered in advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to take shelter of the association of advanced Vaiṣṇavas and with them try to understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's wonderful books. The leaders of Kṛṣṇa consciousness must study Śrīla Prabhupāda's books very scrutinizingly for a minimum of one to two hours each day. At the same time the association of materialistic persons who are attached to money and women should be strictly avoided. Even Bhīṣmadeva, who was one of the great *mahājānas*, or authorities in understanding Kṛṣṇa consciousness, was affected by this materialistic association. This manifested at the assembly when Draupadī was

insulted by Duḥśāsana. Bhīṣma failed to protect her against the heinous act. If even Bhīṣma-deva can be affected in this way, then what to speak of ourselves?

So let us accept these failures and setbacks as pillars of success. We have been warned that even advanced devotees can become temporarily overwhelmed. Let us always become fixed in hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, which are our life and soul. Śrīla Prabhupāda so many times told us that his only qualification was his strict adherence to the order of his spiritual master. To know Śrīla Prabhupāda's orders to us perfectly we must regularly, daily, take shelter of his instructions as they appear in the form of his transcendental books. As one must eat daily in order to keep his body healthy to go on working, similarly to go on working in Kṛṣṇa consciousness we must keep spiritually healthy by reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books as a regular daily function. This combined with following all the other basic principles, especially chanting sixteen rounds, will keep us strong and fit in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and quickly bring us to the level of advanced devotees. Kṛṣṇa's advice to Arjuna was to not leave the battlefield until he could somehow or other become Kṛṣṇa conscious. His approach was to make Arjuna fully Kṛṣṇa conscious so that he would be able to face the responsibility given to him by Kṛṣṇa.

Section Nine

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE PRESENT SITUATION

In pursuing a solution to the present situation all concerned parties should proceed in a proper Kṛṣṇa conscious way. We should not jump to conclusions and unnecessarily see our fellow Vaiṣṇavas as material or conditioned. We should also be hopeful of reaching a positive solution because of our faith in the protection of Lord Caitanya and the previous *ācāryas*. But we will only be assured of their protection as long as we follow their orders. We should not consider as a possible solution that we might please Prabhupāda by breaking away from ISKCON. Keeping in mind Śrīla Prabhupāda's order that the Governing Body Commission is the ultimate managerial authority of ISKCON, we should not cynically deride the collective intelligence of the GBC in which Prabhupāda invested his trust for the guidance of ISKCON. We should not only dutifully obey but positively encourage all devotees about the wisdom of following the GBC decision.

It will not be in the interest of our Founder-Ācārya if we find fault and constantly bring up discrepancies in the initiating *gurus* of ISKCON. When there are actual discrepancies seen in personal behavior of any spiritual master or ISKCON leader, then the Godbrothers and responsible heads of ISKCON should pursue the *proper* steps for rectification. We should not speculate on the internal activities of the devotees in question. Discrepancies should be reported in the following way:

- a. We should approach the person in question and if possible discuss our doubts with him.
- b. We should approach a neighboring or close GBC member to discuss the points.
- c. We should write the GBC chairman with copies of our letters to the vice-chairman and secretary for GBC action.

We should never take unauthorized action and degenerate into gossiping, faultfinding, or anarchy.

Here are some general suggestions for improving our Kṛṣṇa consciousness and establishing a peaceful situation in ISKCON.

- a. In our desire to keep Śrīla Prabhupāda in the center we should increase the preaching to the nondevotees and the book distribution. This is actually the greatest worship.
- b. If the devotees are questioning the level of Śrīla Prabhupāda worship in a temple it is best that they increase the level of Śrīla Prabhupāda worship rather than decrease the worship of his disciple-*gurus*.
- c. The regional secretaries and temple presidents' and other leaders should make it their duty (and pleasure) to attend the Śrī Māyāpur yearly temple presidents meeting.
- e. We should read and study Śrīla Prabhupāda's books one or two hours per day. Everyone should see that the proper chanting of *japa* and congregational chanting with dancing is being held in full measure.
- f. We should avoid *prajalpa* in the matter of *asampradāya* criticisms of ISKCON.
- g. We should hold public meetings to glorify Prabhupāda on his appearance and disappearance days.
- h. Additional suggestions shall be discussed by the Governing Body Commission.

