

1. THE PROCESS FOR EXPANDING THE NUMBER OF
INITIATING GURUS IN ISKCON

In 1977, shortly before his disappearance from this world, His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada wrote his last will, in which he describes the GBC as the final authority for managing the affairs of ISKCON. At that time, Prabhupada also selected eleven of his disciples to be initiating gurus to carry on initiations in disciplic succession after his disappearance. He said that this number could later be increased, and this principle was followed by the GBC. At their annual meetings in 1978 through 1982, the GBC decided not to increase the number of initiating gurus. Now, in 1982, the GBC has voted to increase the number of initiating gurus by adding three persons and by introducing a system whereby more shall be increased in the future. The resolution is as follows:

That all GBC be nominated as candidates to become initiating gurus with the requirement that they receive the blessings of 3/4 (three fourths) of the GBC members present to begin their initiating role. Thereafter, the individual GBC men who are initiating will be responsible for recommending new candidates for initiating guru from the Godbrothers within their zone. These names must then receive the blessings of 3/4 (three fourths) of the majority of the GBC present at the annual meeting for them to begin their initiating roles. The GBC shall prepare a paper elaborating this proposal.

The GBC's direction to increase the number of gurus by recommendation from the world zones is based on the concept of prabhu-datta desa. Prabhu-datta desa means the area in the world where a devotee is assigned to preach by his spiritual master. Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu thus instructed the six Gosvamis

to preach by writing books and excavating places of Krsna's pastimes in Vrndavana, and Lord Caitanya assigned Lord Nityananda to preach in Bengal. The Krsna consciousness movement is to be propagated world-wide, and therefore preachers must be assigned to dedicate their lives to spread this movement to the people in different areas, and these assigned areas are known as prabhu-datta desa.

Srila Prabhupada also adopted this system of prabhu-datta desa when he formed the GBC in 1970 and divided the world into zones, assigning his GBC zonal secretaries responsibility for the sankirtana movement in all the different countries throughout the entire world. For years Srila Prabhupada trained his GBC men to work on a zonal basis, and when he selected the initiating gurus, he also considered geographic areas. Also, from the viewpoint of world management, the GBC meets and plans how the various zones can cooperate together to achieve our world-wide aims.

The GBC has decided this year that the GBC men will select future candidates for initiating gurus from their zones because they felt there is a natural loving relationship within the zone. The GBC man can confidently select a candidate he has worked with and in whom he has full love and trust. To have someone initiating within his zone enables local disciples to get more association from the gurus who work in that area. Thus it will be natural for the local leaders to train new men for initiation for gurus assigned to their zones because they are regularly preaching in that zone. Of course, initiation by

gurus outside the zone is allowable when the disciple develops faith in any bona fide ISKCON guru. For GBC men to select candidates for guruship from the zone also emphasizes the fact that in spiritual life a devotee serves Krsna by serving another devotee. Even in the spiritual world when a devotee enters his eternal rasa with Krsna he does so by taking up service under another devotee who is leading in that rasa with Krsna.

In accordance with Srila Prabhupada's desire as explained in his last will, the GBC body functions in this system of expansion as the final authority, beyond the jurisdiction of any single guru or ISKCON zone. It will be unique in Gaudiya Vaisnava history that eventually there will be so many initiating spiritual masters in one institution--so expansive are Srila Prabhupada's plans and potencies for spreading the Krsna consciousness movement. The GBC's management is required even in the matter of gurus, and yet our system includes a means for reciprocation in etiquette between both the GBC body and the initiating spiritual master. That is, the GBC body by three-quarters vote will maintain the power to select a guru, and yet the GBC has agreed to make all endeavor to accept the candidates seriously put forward by individual zonal GBC's.

Although the process for expanding the number of gurus in ISKCON is now introduced, it should be noted that a preacher should not feel that he cannot preach unless and until he is an initiating guru. A desire to be an initiating guru may, at times, be tinged with material desires, although such desire to initiate may ultimately be spiritual. We should purify ourselves of

material ambitions, which even may take the form of desiring to be an initiating spiritual master. Certainly a devotee can be satisfied in his service even without initiating.

In this connection we can consider taking on more service in ISKCON not only by rising upward in position within the society but also by intensifying our service in the assignment we presently have. The temple president, for example, should try to make the entire city in which he works Krsna conscious. Thus a temple president will not exhaust his service, even if he has made a significant proportion of the population of his city Krsna conscious. In order to do this he can tax his brain in so many ways and introduce innumerable preaching projects within his city. Thus a devotee can expand his service in that way, not simply thinking that he must first become a guru.

It may be asked why the GBC began the expansion this year by selecting three men from the GBC body since non-GBC men are also qualified and eligible devotees. The answer is that we feel that this is a natural way to begin this expansion process. The three devotees who were selected were eminently qualified, and there is a definite need in their zones for a new initiating guru.

The system for introducing new initiating gurus requires that each candidate receive a vote of three-fourths of the GBC, although normal GBC resolutions are passed by a straight majority or sometimes by a two-thirds majority. Thus, although the GBC is eager to expand, they have required a three-fourth majority vote to insure a very sober judgment and to give

thorough blessings upon the candidates who are put forward as new initiating gurus.

The qualifications of initiating gurus in ISKCON have already been explained in the GBC's paper of 1981 "The Descending Process of Selecting a Spiritual Master in the Krsna Consciousness Movement." There we stated qualifications under categories of need, qualities, and vows. This year the GBC has added to qualifications and vows by preparing a code of honor by which the GBC's and gurus for the various zones will honor the zonal system.

Code of Honor:

1. It should be understood that ISKCON is one world-wide preaching movement under the direction of the founder-acarya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. ISKCON is non-different from Srila Prabhupada and therefore all different parts of ISKCON are like parts of one body. A spiritual master in ISKCON recognizes that the society of his spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada, is guided by the Governing Body Commission and that it was the tradition of Prabhupada as well as Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His associates to award and recognize a particular preaching assignment to preachers. By recognition of prabhu-datta desa (a particular field for one to preach in), many powerful preachers can work harmoniously.

2. Srila Prabhupada encouraged one to preach all over the world, and yet an ISKCON guru should respect and support other ISKCON gurus in their preaching fields. An ISKCON guru should always have the aim of increasing the faith in the bona fide local spiritual masters and other leaders, and he should preach to that end. He should do this when he is visiting another zone and when he is preaching in his own zone.

3. The ISKCON gurus should encourage their disciples working outside their zone to feel that they are pleasing their guru just as much in that area in the world. A disciple should serve with enthusiasm wherever he may be in the world.

